

## APPENDIX 7– Focus Group Moderator Guide

Focus Group Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Focus Group Attendees: \_\_\_\_\_  
Focus Group Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Focus Group RSVPs: \_\_\_\_\_  
Focus Group Moderator: \_\_\_\_\_

### MODERATOR NOTES:

- *It is not necessary for every participant to answer every probe question. Nor is it necessary to ask every probe question if the information emerges during discussion of the main question. Use your best judgment to get an overall sense of participants' experiences and manage the time so that you get through all questions.*
- *About 5 minutes before starting the focus group, announce that the discussion will begin shortly. Suggest participants help themselves to refreshment; tell them where restrooms are located; make sure everyone has signed and turned in a consent form.*
- *Begin promptly at the appointed time and conclude no later than the designated time.*

### OPENING (5 minutes)

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you very much for participating in this focus group session. NewPoint Strategies is working with the National Women's Business Council to understand how women-owned businesses can gain access to and grow their businesses through corporate markets. This study has been reviewed and approved by the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB); without OMB's approval, the session could not be conducted.

I am [moderator] and will be facilitating the discussion. I'd also like to introduce [recorder/other team members] who will be assisting with and observing the session.

Before we get started, let me share a little background and housekeeping details.

This focus group is an essential element of our study, which includes a review of the literature on the topic of women-owned businesses, surveys, and quantitative data. We will conduct a total of 8 focus groups in major cities across the country to capture the important and authentic voices of women-owned businesses on this topic.

A focus group, as you probably know, is a conversation among us on specific topics. Today's session is scheduled for a total of 2 hours, so we will wrap up by [insert time]. My job is to ask the group a series of questions to get the conversation going, keep us moving from topic to topic so we cover everything in the allotted time, and to make sure we hear from everyone. Each of you was invited because you have important perspectives that we need to hear. Your opinions are important to us, and we want your candor. It is not important that we agree with each other; in fact, we want to explore opinions and learn where people see the same issue in different ways.

Many large corporations offer supplier diversity programs that are designed to increase their purchasing from women- and minority-owned businesses. Our conversation today will focus on your experiences with corporate supplier diversity programs and how these programs have or could be used to support the growth of women-owned businesses. The information you share in this group will not be attached to your names; all reports will use aggregated data. We will only use first names here. We are audio-recording the conversation so we have a full and accurate record of what was said for our analysis. Your name will not be connected to the tape in any way and after the tape is transcribed, the tape itself will be destroyed. In order for the transcriber to hear what you say and accurately transcribe what is said, it is important that only one person speak at a time, so when you have something to say, please wait until the last person has finished speaking. And, please do try to speak loudly so we can all clearly hear what you say.

Are there any questions?

### **INTRODUCTIONS (10 minutes)**

Let's get started by introducing ourselves. Please share your first name only, a very brief description of your business, how many people you employ, when and why you started your business, and whether you are a certified WBE or WOSB.

*[MODERATOR: For certified owners, ask by which agency/organization. Make observations about the commonalities of and differences between the diverse experiences of the group.]*

*[ASSISTANT: Complete seating chart with first names and last initial.]*

### **MOTIVATIONS AND EARLY EXPERIENCES AS A BUSINESS OWNER (20 minutes)**

1. What motivated you to become a business owner?

2. When you decided to become a business owner, what were your goals and expectations for the business? (Consider revenue, number of employees, number of locations, markets, innovations, relationships, etc.)
  - a. What risks were you willing to take to achieve your business goals and expectations (e.g., financial, technical, time, temporary rejection, etc.)?
  - b. What unexpected challenges did you actually face when you first started your business (e.g., time it took to get meetings with potential funders/buyers; prospects not understanding your value proposition; technology requirements; etc.)?
  
3. Looking back, what were the game changers that helped you succeed as a business owner? [*MODERATOR: Define game changers as realizations, connections, advice, or people who supported the business and literally helped the business owner meet or exceed the expectations for the business. Game changers could also include systems, assets, information, certification as a WBE, or anything else that the business owner needed in order to really be successful but did not originally have access to when she first started.*]

#### **BUSINESS GROWTH (40 minutes)**

4. To what extent are you motivated to grow your business and why?
  - a. How are you preparing for the growth of your business (e.g., market studies, technology upgrades, increased networking, seeking financing, etc.)?
  - b. What do you see as barriers or impediments to your ability to continue to grow your business?
  
5. If you have attempted to grow your business by increasing the number and value of contracts with large corporations, what have been the experience and the risks?
  - a. How could the process/experience have been improved?
  
6. How do you typically learn about contract opportunities with large corporations?
  - a. Has being certified as an M/WBE, if applicable, assisted you in gaining contracts or growing your business? In what ways?
  - b. Are the benefits to certification applicable as your business grows larger, or is it more important in the initial stages of your business life?
  - c. Does certification help convey your value to a corporation?

Probe race and gender, etc.

- a. Do you think that gender, race, ethnicity, or your cultural background allows some advantage or puts you at a disadvantage?
- b. Do you think that being certified as a M/WBE causes some corporate buyers to view your company as eligible only for work identified as appropriate for women/minority-owned businesses?

[MODERATOR: A 2011 Institute for Supply Chain Management study said "The challenge in running the programs (Supplier Diversity Programs) that stands out most is 'finding quality suppliers' with over 70% of the participants including it in the challenges. No other challenge comes close statistically..."]

7. Why do you think companies have such a challenge finding qualified women and minority vendors?

### **EXPERIENCE WITH CORPORATE SUPPLIER DIVERSITY PROGRAMS (35 minutes)**

[MODERATOR: As mentioned earlier, many large corporations offer supplier diversity programs that are designed to increase their purchasing from women and minority-owned businesses.]

8. Does your organization have a business strategy that includes approaching corporate supplier diversity programs? Why or why not?
9. Are there services offered by corporations and/or corporate supplier diversity programs that are or would be of interest to you (e.g., mentorship/business development training, matchmaking with prime contractors, notice of subcontracting opportunities, introductions to corporate buyers/procurement decision-makers, access to or better terms for trade credit or financing, etc.)?
10. If you have experience with corporate supplier diversity programs, can you please give examples of specific ways they were helpful or how the experience was frustrating; in your opinion, what made them helpful or frustrating?
11. If you were the director of a corporate supplier diversity program, what is the most important thing you would do to increase opportunities for women-owned businesses?