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Participant Incentivization POV: Ready PSA Campaign Creative Testing Research

Industry standards recommend at least \$50-\$100 for in-person research, such as focus groups, in order to appropriately motivate participation, ensure that a sufficient number of participants arrive and actively participate in the qualitative sessions, and to adequately compensate participants for lost wages from participating.^{i, ii, iii, iv} Providing an incentive avoids bias of receiving responses only from individuals generally predisposed to be helpful. Our incentivization recommendation (\$75) was selected in order to ensure respondents are incentivized for wages lost and to motivate respondents (working and homemaker parents) to keep their commitment to take time out of their busy schedules to attend a focus group session. The participation is in-person (rather than by telephone), at a common location to accommodate group interaction and discussion, which involves greater level of effort and analysis than many typical types of polling or audience testing.

The average minimum cost of participation is estimated, as follows:

- Lost Wages: According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics^v website (www.bls.gov) the wage rate category for all occupations is estimated to average \$22.33 per hour and including the fully loaded wage rate multiplier (x1.4) and factoring in our 75 minute group session and 10 minute screening call, it is anticipated that respondents may warrant wage compensation of nearly \$45. This estimate may be low as we frequently seek participation by those in urban areas where the cost of living and cost of transportation is higher than the standard, and respondents may need to commute to the facility.
- Child Care: Child care will likely need to be arranged in order for members of our demographic target to participate.^{vi} We are seeking specialized participants who are parents of children age 6-17 and/or caregivers who will need to take time on a week night, so their cost of participation is different and may, for example, involve hiring of baby sitters, rather than singles who typically volunteer for focus groups and do not incur those additional expenses/financial burdens. So, this incentive serves as a reimbursement for their time and their overhead costs, as well. Assuming that childcare can be acquired at a rate equal to that of minimum wage (~\$7.25^{vii}), it is expected that members of our target may require additional \$9.06 compensation, at a minimum. Twenty-nine states and DC have minimum wages above the federal rate.

In addition to simply covering reasonable costs of participation, focus group incentives must encourage potential participants to agree to allocate their time to the qualitative research session and maintain that commitment on the day of the research. Because the Ready campaign seeks to motivate behavior change among those who are not currently performing recommended behaviors – and thus not already committed to the campaign issue -- adequate investment must be made to ensure active participation among individuals who may not already be attuned to emergency preparedness topics^{viii}. Furthermore, the higher incentivization of \$75 will help to ensure recruitment of a diverse sample and that our communication materials resonate with a variety of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds.

With the above considerations in mind, our incentives must surpass the minimum costs our respondents may incur as a result of their participation and provide some motivation to participate. Should our study fail to offer appropriate compensation to participants, participants may not be motivated to keep their committed timeslot; thus, focus groups may need to be re-scheduled, further burdening those participants who have agreed to take part.

Because focus groups are unique from other data collection methods, in terms of the time investments made by participants, as well as the barriers to participation (e.g. loss of wages, childcare, etc.), the industry-supported incentivization of \$75 is warranted by the Ready PSA Campaign Creative Testing Research.

- ⁱ Kelley, S. 2014. How much is enough: Understanding participant incentives. Mediabarn, Inc. <http://www.mediabarninc.com/blog/2014/participantincentives/>
- ⁱⁱ Jeff Anderson Consulting. 2014. What you can expect from your focus group investment. AH! Advertising. <http://www.jeffandersonconsulting.com/marketing-research.php/focus-group/focus-group-costs>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Wagner, M. 2009. Planning successful focus groups. Promotions West, Inc. http://promotionswest.com/Welcome_files/Planning_Successful_Focus_Groups.pdf
- ^{iv} Krueger, RA and Casey, MA. (2009). Focus Groups: A practical guide for applied research. Fourth Ed.
- ^v Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2014. May 2013 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates United States. United States Department of Labor. http://www.bls.gov/OES/current/oes_nat.htm#00-0000
- ^{vi} Laughlin, L. 2013. Who's minding the kids? Child care arrangements. United States Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p70-135.pdf>
- ^{vii} State minimum wages. 2015. National Conference of State Legislatures. <http://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/state-minimum-wage-chart.aspx#1>. Accessed August 6, 2015.
- ^{viii} Krueger, RA and Casey, MA. (2009). Focus Groups: A practical guide for applied research. Fourth Ed. Sage Publications.