

Appendix D: Focus Group Discussion Guide

The following guide outlines a general flow of facilitated conversation during a focus group session. This guide will be used as a tool for the moderator to ensure that key research objectives are met and an adequate level of consistency across groups is achieved to draw reliable conclusions.

Notes to Reviewer

- The moderator will use the framework outlined as a guide, rather than a formal script. Questions will not be read verbatim.
- The moderator will use his/her judgment to determine whether to switch to other sections of the guide as discussion flows, based on the research objectives and to maintain a natural flow of conversation. The discussion guide may contain more content than can be covered in 90 minutes; optional question probes have been *italicized* to facilitate consistent prioritization of conversation topics across groups.
- **Bolded text indicates instructions for the moderator and will not be read aloud to participants. Instructions are also highlighted in green.**
- **Materials are highlighted in yellow.**
- **Room Setup: Conversation cards (Appendix D.1)** and a **pen** to be placed face down in front of each seat until the moderator instructs participants on when and how to use them. **Platform markup activity (Appendix D.2)**, to be placed in front of each seat until the moderator instructs participants on when and how to use them. In the corner of the room, there will be a **flip pad (Appendix D.3)** for the moderator to use.

Focus Group Breakdown: Total time – 90 minutes

Section A: Introduction & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Moderator will explain the purpose of the focus group and allow participants to ask any questions.

Section B: Warm Up (5 minutes)

The purpose of this section is to warm up conversation and explore the participants' intention to participate in the census.

Section C: Individual Platform Review (65 minutes)

The purpose of this section is to present and discuss individual platforms based on key decision making criteria. The order of platforms presented will be randomized across focus groups.

Section D: Conclusion (10 minutes)

Moderator will thank participants and ensure all questions have been answered.

Section A: Introduction & Icebreaker – 10 minutes

Moderator will explain the purpose of the focus group and allow participants to ask any questions. Participants will receive a copy of the consent form in the waiting area when they check in that provides the OMB approval number and contact information for the study (**Appendix D.4**).

Before the start of each session, the moderator will brief participants on the structure and the objectives of the focus group. Participants will be briefed as follows:

Good evening, and thank you all for taking the time to be with us today to share your thoughts and opinions. Before we get started, I want to first mention a few things about our discussion:

- I am an independent market researcher for a firm that conducts hundreds of groups like this each year. That means my job is to listen to you and encourage conversation, and I have no stake in the opinions you share. Love or hate something we talk about, it's all the same to me.
- Your thoughts and opinions are very important to us, there are no right or wrong answers, and your individual responses won't be shared outside of the research team.

We have 90 minutes together today. Before we jump in, let's go over some important things:

- Your participation is voluntary, and you don't have to answer every question.
- That said, you are here because your opinions are very important, and I do hope to hear from everyone at some point this evening. Please know that anything you share will be kept among the research team, and you will not be personally identified in any reports we prepare based on our conversation. We also ask that we all respect the privacy of everyone in the room, and that you don't share what is discussed with others.
- **[ASIAN GROUPS ONLY]** Please look around the room. What do you notice? Yes, we are all Asians here, and there is a reason for that. While you may all come from different backgrounds, nationalities, and speak different dialects, we have made it a priority to bring all of you in for this discussion today because you all represent important and different voices we wish to hear from. Thus, please understand we do value your opinions – both as an individual and also as a representative of your community.
- We are hosting groups like this across the country over many weeks, and there is no way I could remember everything we discuss. To help my team and me write a report, we will be audio [and VIDEO RECORDING IF AVAILABLE] recording this session. The audio files will be transcribed, but any information that could identify you will be removed from the transcripts, and the audio and video files will be destroyed when the report is complete. These transcripts and recordings will be a reference for my team and me as we write our report and will allow me to focus on our conversation rather than taking notes.

As applicable depending on the facility, explain that there are observers behind the glass and via livestreaming (if available): You may have noticed the glass behind me. I have some team members who are here helping me today who are observing and taking notes. We also have some team members who could not travel to be with us today and are observing remotely. We all want to learn from you, so it is important that you share your honest opinions.

On the note about your opinions, I want to be sure you all know that the goal of our conversation is not to agree with one another. If you disagree with something that is shared, it's important for us to hear

your perspective, because you may represent a lot of people. Similarly, if you agree with something that is said, I'd like to hear that too.

[ASIAN AND HISPANIC]: Lastly, we know English is your second language and you likely express yourself very differently when speaking your primary language. I only ask you do your best to express your true opinions and feelings, but please speak at the same volume as I am. Otherwise, my colleagues may not be able to hear you and the recording may not pick up your voice.

I think that's just about everything. If you need to use the restroom during our session, please feel free to do so. **Before we get started, please turn off your cell phone or switch it to silent mode.**

Any questions?

Okay, let's get started by introducing ourselves to each other. Please tell us: **(1)** your first name, **(2)** how long you have lived in (name the city or town), and **(3)** **[AIAN, RURAL, NHPI]**: a couple of your favorite TV shows. **[ASIAN AND HISPANIC]**: **(3)** how long you've been living in the U.S.

I'll go first. **Moderator will introduce self and then facilitate introductions of others.**

Great, very glad to meet all of you. Let's start our discussion.

Section B: Warm Up: Past Participation and Intention to Participate - 5 minutes

The purpose of this section is to warm up conversation and explore the participants' intention to participate in the census.

Today, our discussion will be about the U.S. decennial census. I'd like to start by sharing some information about what the U.S. decennial census is to be sure we're all thinking about the same thing for the rest of our conversation. **Moderator shows the following definition on the flip pad (Appendix D.3) and reads out loud:** The U.S. census is the count of all the people who live in the United States. It happens every 10 years – which is why it is called the decennial census. The Census plans to ask questions such as how many people live at your address or place and their age, gender, race, ethnicity, relationships, and citizenship. The next census is in 2020. For the rest of our conversation, please think about this when we say “the census.”

Now, you have some **cards (Appendix D.1)** in front of you. After I ask my next question, please hold up the thumbs up for yes, the thumbs down for no, and the person shrugging for unsure. **Moderator will show example cards.**

- Have you ever filled out a U.S. census form?
READ COUNT OUT LOUD to be captured by the audio recording (e.g., 2 yes, 3 no, and 3 unsure).
- If the census were held today – would you fill out the census?
READ COUNT OUT LOUD to be captured by the audio recording (e.g., 2 yes, 3 no, and 3 unsure).

Thank you everyone. It is helpful to know a little more about different experiences as we continue our conversation today.

Section C: Individual Platform Review – 65 Minutes (20-25 minutes per Platform)

The purpose of this section is to present and discuss individual platforms based on key decision making criteria. The order of platforms presented will be randomized across focus groups.

[AIAN, NHPI, AND RURAL]

Now, I'd like to show you some draft advertisement ideas that the Census Bureau may use to encourage people to participate in the 2020 Census. Some of these ideas may be developed into advertisements you might see on TV or on a billboard. It's really expensive to develop ads, so getting your feedback early on is important. Please keep in mind that these are still draft advertisement that need to be polished.

[ASIAN AND HISPANIC]

Now, I'd like to show you some draft advertisement ideas that the Census Bureau may use to encourage people to participate in the 2020 Census. Some of these ideas may be developed into advertisements you might see on TV or on a billboard. When these ads are completed, they will be available in many different languages – including the dialects you speak and read. Thus, it is important we hear your feedback based on these ideas – even though they are in English. Please keep in mind that these are still draft advertisements that need to be polished.

PLATFORM [COLOR 1] (25 minutes)

We'll talk about this one first: **Moderator will hand out the first draft advertisement.**

- **(First Impression)** Let's start general. What are your initial thoughts or reactions?

Moderator to hand out printed platform markup activity (Appendix D.2).

First, your name card has a number on it; please write that number in the top left corner of the page where it says "unique ID." This will help us keep your information private.

On the **markup activity (Appendix D.2)** I'd like you to do three things:

- Write down three words that summarize your overall reactions to the draft advertisement. Please feel free to write down these words in the written language you most feel most comfortable writing.
- Circle what catches your attention in a positive way
- Cross out what catches your attention in a negative way

Feel free to write any comments on your sheet. Afterwards, we'll talk about it. **Moderator will provide 2-3 minutes for individual completion.**

- What are the words that caught your attention in a positive way, or the words you circled?

- o Probe on reasons
- o Probe on what is relevant or relatable
- What are the words that caught your attention in a negative way, or the words you crossed out?
 - o Probe on reasons
 - o Probe on what is NOT relevant or relatable
- Was there anything else that caught your attention that you had a reaction to?
- Assuming this is accurately translated in your primary language, are there any issues you foresee about how the meaning of these words/phrases can change or be received differently? If so, how? Please explain.

Read each general question below, probe when necessary to better understand their impressions.

- **(Learn Something New)** What, if anything, did you learn from the draft advertisement?
 - o Did it make you want to learn more?
- **(Clarity)** How clear is the draft advertisement to understand?
 - o What, if anything, was confusing about the statement?
- **(In Own Words)** In your own words, what do you think the draft advertisement is trying to convey?
- **(Likes/Dislikes)** What do you like about it? What do you not like about it?
- **(Believability)** How believable is the draft advertisement?
 - o Probe on reasons why participants trust the draft advertisement or not
- **(Audience)** Who do you think the draft advertisement is trying to reach? Someone like you or someone else? Describe that person.
 - o **[ASIAN AND HISPANIC]** Keeping in mind that the draft advertisement would be translated to your language, who do you think the draft advertisement is trying to reach? Someone like you or someone else? Describe that person.
- **(Improvements)** What, if anything, is missing from the draft advertisement?
 - o **[ASIAN AND HISPANIC]** Imagine this is translated into your language; are there any issues or challenges you can see with how this would be translated into your primary language or dialect?
- **(Questions)** What questions, if any, come to mind when you see this?
- **(Desire to Know More)** Does this draft advertisement make you want to know more about the census? What do you want to know?
 - o Where would you go to find out more information?
- **(Think Differently)** Do you feel or think differently about the census than you did before seeing this draft advertisement? How so?
- **(Importance/Relevance)** After seeing this draft advertisement, how important do you think it is that you fill out the census? Do you think other members of your community would have similar reactions as you? Or would they differ? How so? Please elaborate.

PLATFORM [COLOR 2] (20 minutes)

We'll talk about this one next: **Moderator will hand out the second draft advertisement.**

- **(First Impression)** Let's start general. What are your initial thoughts or reactions?

Moderator to hand out printed platform markup activity (Appendix D.2).

Go ahead and write your unique ID in the top left corner again.

Again, on the **markup activity (Appendix D.2)** I'd like you to do three things:

- Write down three words that summarize your overall reactions to the draft advertisement.
- Circle what catches your attention in a positive way
- Cross out what catches your attention in a negative way

Feel free to write any comments on your sheet. Afterwards, we'll talk about it. **Moderator will provide 2-3 minutes for individual completion.**

- What are the words that caught your attention in a positive way, or the words you circled?
 - o Probe on reasons
 - o Probe on what is relevant or relatable
- What are the words that caught your attention in a negative way, or the words you crossed out?
 - o Probe on reasons
 - o Probe on what is NOT relevant or relatable
- Was there anything else that caught your attention that you had a reaction to?

Read each general question below, probe when necessary to better understand their impressions.

- **(Learn Something New)** What, if anything, did you learn from this draft advertisement?
 - o Did it make you want to learn more?
- **(Clarity)** How clear is this draft advertisement to understand?
 - o What, if anything, was confusing about the statement?
- **(In Own Words)** In your own words, what do you think the draft advertisement is trying to convey?
- **(Likes/Dislikes)** What do you like about it? What do you not like about it?
- **(Believability)** How believable is this draft advertisement?
 - o Probe on reasons why participants trust this draft advertisement or not
- **(Audience)** Who do you think this draft advertisement is trying to reach? Someone like you or someone else? Describe that person.
 - o **[ASIAN AND HISPANIC]** Keeping in mind that this draft advertisement would be translated to your language, who do you think the draft advertisement is trying to reach? Someone like you or someone else? Describe that person.
- **(Improvements)** What, if anything, is missing from this draft advertisement?
 - o **[ASIAN AND HISPANIC]** Imagine this is translated into your language; are there any issues or challenges you can see with how this would be translated into your primary language or dialect?
- **(Questions)** What questions, if any, come to mind when you see this?
- **(Desire to Know More)** Does this draft advertisement make you want to know more about the census? What do you want to know?
 - o Where would you go to find out more information?
- **(Think Differently)** Do you feel or think differently about the census than you did before seeing this draft advertisement? How so?
- **(Importance/Relevance)** After seeing this draft advertisement, how important do you think it is that you fill out the census?

PLATFORM [COLOR 3] (20 minutes)

Lastly, we'll talk about the last draft advertisement: **Moderator will hand out the final draft advertisement.**

- **(First Impression)** Let's start general. What are your initial thoughts or reactions?

Moderator to hand out printed platform markup activity (Appendix D.2).

Go ahead and write your unique ID in the top left corner again.

Once more, on the **markup activity (Appendix D.2)** I'd like you to do three things:

- Write down three words that summarize your overall reactions to the draft advertisement
- Circle what catches your attention in a positive way
- Cross out what catches your attention in a negative way

Feel free to write any comments on your sheet. Afterwards, we'll talk about it. **Moderator will provide 2-3 minutes for individual completion.**

- What are the words that caught your attention in a positive way, or the words you circled?
 - o Probe on reasons
 - o Probe on what is relevant or relatable
- What are the words that caught your attention in a negative way, or the words you crossed out?
 - o Probe on reasons
 - o Probe on what is NOT relevant or relatable
- Was there anything else that caught your attention that you had a reaction to?

Read each general question below, probe when necessary to better understand their impressions.

- **(Learn Something New)** What, if anything, did you learn from this draft advertisement?
 - o Did it make you want to learn more?
- **(Clarity)** How clear is this draft advertisement to understand?
 - o What, if anything, was confusing about the statement?
- **(In Own Words)** In your own words, what do you think the draft advertisement is trying to convey?
- **(Likes/Dislikes)** What do you like about it? What do you not like about it?
- **(Believability)** How believable is this draft advertisement?
 - o Probe on reasons why participants trust this draft advertisement or not
- **(Audience)** Who do you think this draft advertisement is trying to reach? Someone like you or someone else? Describe that person.
 - o **[ASIAN AND HISPANIC]** Keeping in mind that this draft advertisement would be translated to your language, who do you think the draft advertisement is trying to reach? Someone like you or someone else? Describe that person.
- **(Improvements)** What, if anything, is missing from this draft advertisement?
 - o **[ASIAN AND HISPANIC]** Imagine this is translated into your language; are there any issues or challenges you can see with how this would be translated into your primary language or dialect?

- **(Questions)** What questions, if any, come to mind when you see this?
- **(Desire to Know More)** Does this draft advertisement make you want to know more about the census? What do you want to know?
 - *Where would you go to find out more information?*
- **(Think Differently)** Do you feel or think differently about the census than you did before seeing this draft advertisement? How so?
- **(Importance/Relevance)** After seeing this draft advertisement, how important do you think it is that you fill out the census?

Section D: Conclusion - 10 Minutes

Moderator will thank participants and ensure all questions have been answered.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts today! As we conclude our discussion, I have a few final wrap-up questions.

- And, grab those **cards (Appendix D.1)** one more time. **(Moderator will show cards.)** After our discussion, if the census were held today, do you think you would fill out the census form? **Moderator will show example cards and then read the count out loud to be captured by the audio recording (e.g., 2 yes, 3 no, and 3 unsure).**
- What, if anything, that you saw today made you feel differently about filling out the census form? Tell me about that.
- If the census were held today, do you think other members of your community would be persuaded to fill out the census form? Why / why not? Are there any issues that you believe other members of your community would have about anything you saw today when it comes to filling out the census form.

[If time allows] If you don't mind, I'm going to step out for just a moment to see if my team has any additional follow-up questions. **[Ask follow-ups]**

Okay, thank you so much. I've enjoyed meeting you all. Is there anything else that you would like to share that we haven't touched on yet? Are there any final questions? If not, please leave all your materials on the table and have a lovely evening.

Appendix D.1 - Conversation Cards



Appendix D.2 - Flip Pad

