

NSLI-Y FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL: ALUMNI

Moderator: “Hello, my name is _____, and I will be leading this focus group discussion. We are here to gather information about your experience with the U.S. State Department’s National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y) Program. This information, along with information collected through other focus groups, interviews, and surveys, will help us assess the impact that NSLI-Y has on students and their host and home communities.” The moderator asks each focus group participant to share his/her name and occupation with the other participants in the focus group. After introductions from participants, the moderator explains the focus group procedures.

Moderator: “This focus group discussion will last approximately one and a half hours. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I am going to ask you. We want to capture the full range of opinions that you may have, so please feel free to disagree. However, please speak one person at a time, because we are taping the focus group session. Recording the focus group will allow me to concentrate on your responses and ensure that I do not miss anyone’s input during the discussion. If at any time, anyone feels that they would prefer to speak with the recorder off, please let me know and I will stop the recorder. Also, please note that the information that is shared here should stay here and not be shared with others who did not participate in the focus group.”

TOPIC I—INTRODUCTION TO THE NSLI-Y PROGRAM

1. How did you become aware of the NSLI-Y Program?

- 1.1. Thinking back to your first exposure to the NSLI-Y program, how did you hear about NSLI-Y and what was your **primary reason** for being interested in the program? (and why that language?)
- 1.2. What about the program appealed or appeals to you, and what were the aspects of the program that you found most useful or beneficial? Why did you find those particularly useful or beneficial?
- 1.3. Were there any aspects of the program that seemed to be less than useful? If so, what are they, and how would you have changed them?
- 1.4. What, if anything, surprised you most about life in your program location? What would you say was the most important or striking thing you learned about it? How did the experience change your perspectives on the country or your world view more generally?

TOPIC II—INFORMATION SHARING

2. To what extent, if at all, have you shared information with your family and others in your home community about your experience and the culture of your host country?

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- 2.1. What kinds of information about the U.S. did you share while on the program (through formal or informal opportunities)?
- 2.2. To the best of your knowledge, how has the information that you shared impacted the people you shared it with? [Probe on greater interest in the U.S./international affairs, interest in traveling internationally, being more globally/internationally-minded, changes in your view of the world]
- 2.3. How would you describe your current relationship with your host families? [Probe on extent of ongoing contact.]
- 2.4. What kinds of information about the host country did you share when you returned (through formal or informal opportunities)?
- 2.5. To the best of your knowledge, how has that information you shared impacted your audiences? [Probe on greater interest in host country/international affairs, interest in traveling internationally, being more globally/internationally-minded and tolerant, changes in your view of the world]

TOPIC III—THE NSLI-Y IMPACT

3. **Any study abroad experience affects participants in some ways. From your perspective, what differences did you see in yourself after coming back from your NSLI-Y program?**
 - 3.1. Describe some of the changes at the personal level that you saw in yourself. [Probe on leadership, self-confidence, motivation, goal orientation, resilience/flexibility, communication skills, values, world view, etc.] Do you recall specifically what led to those changes?
 - 3.2. Did you make any changes to your studies or planned studies? If so, what were they? [Probe on language fluency, additional language study, greater interest in/more definite plans to study abroad, undergraduate major selection, etc.] What made your new path more compelling or interesting to you?
 - 3.3. Now, moving from high school to career tracks is quite a journey with lots of inputs along the way, but for those of you who are starting their careers, would you say that NSLI-Y contributed to your selection of a career track? How so? [Probe on leadership, changemaking, global/international work, use of languages, intercultural communication skills, etc.]

TOPIC IV—IMPACTS ON COMMUNITY

4. **One of the overarching goals of the program is in some way to contribute to making American communities more secure and resilient and improving American global competitiveness. How, if at all, in your view does NSLI-Y contribute to those goals?**
 - 4.1. One of the key elements of resilience is how you cope with adverse situations. Do you have any examples you would be willing to share of how you have applied your skills in coping with adversity to a problem in your home community or community where you currently reside?
 - 4.2. Shifting to competitiveness now, do you have any thoughts you would be willing to share on how this program contributed to has improved or could improve competitiveness in the world economy (either for your home community when you began the program or where you live now)?
 - 4.3. What, if any, impacts do you think the program has had on your host community?

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CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

5. To close out the focus group, I wanted to ask about your continued engagement with ECA and the NSLI-Y program. Have you engaged in any NSLI-Y alumni activities? If so, what did you find useful about them? If not, what benefits would you need to get out of it to get you engaged?

Moderator: *“Thank you for your participation in this study. We appreciate your comments and information.”*

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