

Focus Group Moderator Guide

Officer Retention and Promotion Barrier Analysis Study

Department of Defense Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI)

6.1.2. Phase II: Focus Groups

Research Objective: The Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) is conducting a barrier analysis to examine the beliefs and attitudes toward diversity and inclusion (D&I), retention and promotion, and experiences specific to racial/ethnic minority and female officers in the military. Participants will include active component junior officers (O-2 to O-3).

NOTE TO REVIEWER: Suggested question probes appear below each main question and may change. These are suggestions for the moderator to follow as deemed relevant and necessary in the natural flow of conversation. ODEI developed this guide for a 90-minute focus group. **Yellow highlights** indicate moderator instructions.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION (2.5 minutes)

Good morning/afternoon. My name is **[INSERT FIRST NAME]**, and I am a contractor from Booz Allen Hamilton supporting the Department of Defense Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, or ODEI. With me is **[INSERT NAME AND ROLE]**.

- Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw participation at any time during the focus group by verbally stating your desire to leave the focus group.
- The length of this focus group is 90 minutes. I will lead and facilitate the discussion. A notetaker will take notes and an observer will assist with technical support if needed.
- If you are using your web camera, you may stop sharing at any time during the focus group but are encouraged to use it if you feel comfortable.
- You may not disclose any controlled unclassified information, nor any personally identifiable information (PII) about yourself or others.

ODEI appreciates you offering your perspective and there are no right or wrong answers. Please provide your candid, honest thoughts. With your verbal consent, I will begin the recording. Do you consent to the terms that I have described? **[PAUSE] [BEGIN RECORDING]**

ICE BREAKER AND WARM UP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

[CHOOSE ONE ICE BREAKER OR PROBE]

- When did you know you wanted to join the **[INSERT BRANCH NAME]**? How did you know?
 - **PROBE:** What has been most rewarding for you?
 - **PROBE:** What has been the most difficult for you?

Thank you for sharing those experiences. We will be shifting gears now and discussing a variety of issues regarding minority experiences in the military, beginning with barriers to recruiting and accessions.

MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE (75 minutes)

Barriers to Recruiting and Accessions

- What do you think will assist the recruitment and accession of racial/ethnic minorities and women into the officer corps?
 - **PROBE:** What challenges exist in commissioning diverse officers, if any?

Great, thank you for your candid responses. For this next section, we are interested in learning more about barriers within training as it relates to racial/ethnic minorities and women.

Training Barriers

- To what extent do you believe the diversity and inclusion training that senior officers receive is adequate in terms of preventing and/or addressing racial/ethnic or gender discrimination?
- How do members in your unit react to diversity and inclusion trainings?
- How does diversity training help or hurt retention?

We will be moving on now to discuss gaps in career progression and mentorship as it relates to racial/ethnic minorities and women.

Gaps in Career Progression and Mentorship

- To what extent is the [INSERT BRANCH NAME] successful in terms of giving promotions to those who deserve it?
 - **PROBE:** In your opinion, which positions, or career fields, guarantee promotion?
 - **PROBE:** What can the [INSERT BRANCH NAME] do to become more successful in identifying who is most deserving of promotions?
- Which programs, if any, enable mentorship in [INSERT BRANCH NAME]?
- Which steps have you taken to receive mentorship?
- To what extent do you feel [INSERT BRANCH NAME] supports career progression of racial/ethnic minorities and/or women?
 - **PROBE:** To what extent do you feel [INSERT BRANCH NAME] supports *your* career progression?
- Describe any barriers that exist, if any, to your career progression.
 - **PROBE:** Do you believe that your racial/ethnic or gender identity play any role in these barriers?
- Have you, or someone you know, faced any challenges within [INSERT BRANCH NAME] based on racial/ethnic or gender identity?
 - **PROBE:** Did you take any steps to report this? [IF YES] Did leadership or senior officers take any steps to combat or address this?

For this next session, we would like to learn more about leadership and how they impact racial/ethnic minorities and women.

Leadership

- What are your leaders doing to retain racial/ethnic minorities and women?
- To what extent does [INSERT BRANCH NAME] create opportunities for minorities in positions of leadership?

- Does your leadership discuss diversity and inclusion topics outside of formal trainings, events, or programs?
- Do you believe that diversity and inclusion is a priority for [INSERT BRANCH NAME] leadership? How so?
 - **PROBE:** Do you believe diversity and inclusion *should* be a priority? Why or why not?

Thank you for responding so openly in the last section. Now I'd like to shift your attention to your workplace climate and culture and how that may affect racial/ethnic minorities and women.

Workplace Climate and Culture

- At times, organizations ask employees to describe the organizational culture of their workplace. For example, someone working for Apple might say they work in a culture of innovation while someone working for Target might say they work in a customer-focused culture. I'd like you to do the same. How would you describe [INSERT BRANCH NAME]'s culture?
- Would you describe your peers as inclusive of racial/ethnic minorities and women? Why or why not?

Thank you for your thoughtful responses. Our final section will discuss work-life balance.

Work-Life Balance

- To those who have children, how has having children impacted your career progression?
 - **PROBE:** What gaps exist in family planning or childcare in the military?
 - **PROBE:** Do any of these barriers affect your decision to stay in the military?
- To those responsible for dependent care of spouses or aging parents, which gaps exist in spousal support or eldercare in the military?
 - **PROBE:** How has this affected your career progression in the military?
- Describe any gaps that exist in benefits packaging as it relates to flexible work arrangements.
 - **PROBE:** Do any of these barriers affect your decision to stay in the military?
- Describe any gaps that exist in benefits packaging as it relates to mental health.
 - **PROBE:** Do any of these barriers affect your decision to stay in the military?

CONCLUSION (2.5 minutes)

[FALSE CLOSE; check if there are any additional questions from colleagues]

Those are all the questions I have for you – is there anything you would like to share that you have not had the chance to before we wrap up? [PAUSE]

Thank you very much for participating in this focus group. This information will be incredibly helpful for our report to ODEI in an effort for them to better understand beliefs and attitudes towards D&I, retention and promotion, and experiences specific to minorities in the military. We greatly appreciate your time and your feedback has been extremely helpful.

Please enjoy the rest of your [day/evening]!