

## Foundational Focus Group Discussion Guide

**Research Objective:** Examine attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors related to preventive measures (e.g., mask wearing, social distancing, avoiding crowds) and vaccine confidence for those who have had at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

**NOTE TO REVIEWERS:** The discussion guide is written in a purposefully colloquial style to better engage with participants. Question probes are below some main questions and may change. These are suggestions for the moderator to follow and will be used as deemed relevant and necessary in the natural flow of discussion. The discussion guide is developed for a 90-minute session. Moderator instructions are highlighted in **yellow** and bracketed.

<b>Guidelines and Introductions</b>	<b>10 MINUTES</b>
<b>Personal Risk Perceptions</b>	<b>10 MINUTES</b>
<b>Sources of Information</b>	<b>15 MINUTES</b>
<b>Vaccines</b>	<b>25 MINUTES</b>
<b>Measures Taken to Slow the Spread</b>	<b>25 MINUTES</b>
<b>Wrap-Up</b>	<b>5 MINUTES</b>
<b>TOTAL TIME</b>	<b>90 MINUTES</b>

### GUIDELINES AND INTRODUCTIONS (10 MIN)

#### Guidelines

Thank you for speaking with me today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work for a private research company. Today we want to get your thoughts and opinions about COVID-19 and how it is affecting life in the United States. We would also like to better understand what precautions you and your family take when it comes to avoiding infection from the virus.

Before we begin, I want to go over a couple of things:

- There are no wrong answers. Our whole purpose for being here is to hear what you think, so please speak up, especially if what you have to say is different than what someone else is saying. You may represent what a lot of other folks think.
- There may be times I ask you to clarify or ask you to tell more about what you just said. This is simply to make sure I understood and accurately capture what you think, not because I'm challenging your point of view.

- Your participation is voluntary. If I ask any questions you do not wish to answer, you do not have to answer them.
- We want to hear from everyone, but I ask that you speak one at a time, although I understand it can be difficult, especially online. I simply want to make sure I hear everything that everyone says.
- Nothing you say will be tied back to you. Your name and any identifying information will not be used in any of our reports.
- There are some other people listening in who are helping me take notes so that I can fully focus on our conversation and be respectful of your time. At the end of the group, they might have a couple of clarifying questions for us.
- I'll be video recording our conversation; it will only be used to confirm our notes. Only the research staff will have access to this taping and no personally identifiable information will be used in connection with the recording. Does everyone agree to be recorded? **[ASK FOR AGREEMENT THROUGH A SHOW OF HANDS OR HEAD NOD]** I am going to start the recording now.
- Our discussion should take no more than 90 minutes. I appreciate the time that you carved out to be here, and I want to be respectful of that, so I may interrupt us so that we stay on track.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

### **Introductions/Ice Breaker**

I'd like to start by getting to know each of you a bit better. So, I'm going to have everyone go around and share their first name, where you live, and your favorite type of food to make at home.

I can go ahead and get us started.

**[MODERATOR INTRODUCES SELF, ANSWERS THE QUESTIONS, AND THEN HAS EACH PARTICIPANT INTRODUCE THEMSELVES AND RESPOND TO THE ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS.]**

**[MODERATOR TO PROBE AS NEEDED TO GET PARTICIPANTS COMFORTABLE AND TO ESTABLISH RAPPORT.]**

**[MODERATOR: FOCUS ON THE BOLDED QUESTIONS. QUESTIONS IDENTIFIED AS PROBES SHOULD BE USED AS NEEDED TO OBTAIN/CLARIFY INFORMATION. SUBQUESTIONS NOT IDENTIFIED AS PROBES SHOULD BE ASKED AS TIME PERMITS.]**

### **PERSONAL RISK PERCEPTIONS (5 MINUTES)**

Thank you. To start off, I want everyone to think about COVID-19.

- **What is the top thing on your mind today when it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic?**
- **How concerned are you personally about getting COVID-19 now, after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine? [PROBE ON REASONS WHY CONCERNED OR NOT.]**
  - Have your concerns about getting COVID-19 changed since before you received a vaccine? If so, how?
- **How concerned are you about family getting COVID-19? Friends? Community members?**
- **How have your concerns about getting COVID-19 changed since the beginning of the pandemic, if at all?**
  - Have your concerns about getting COVID-19 changed since learning about new variants of the virus? **[PROBE]**: What have you heard about the variants?

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION (15 MINUTES)

- Where do you turn for information about COVID-19?
- What resources do you think provide the best information about COVID-19?
- I'm going to show a list of sources on the screen, and I want everyone to tell me which sources you find most trustworthy in providing information about COVID-19 and which sources you find least trustworthy. **[SHOW LIST OF SOURCES:** Your State Government; The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); U.S. Federal public health officials; The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA); Pharmaceutical companies; Local public health officials (e.g. state, county, city, or town); The American Medical Association; Medical websites, like WebMD or the Mayo Clinic; Your local hospital leadership (e.g., Chief Medical Officer); President Biden; Vice President Harris. **[PROBE ON REASONS WHY SOURCES ARE MOST OR LEAST TRUSTWORTHY, AS NEEDED. MODERATOR MAY USE THE WHITE BOARD TO JOT DOWN THOUGHTS.]**
- Here's another list of sources. Again, I want everyone to tell me which sources you find most trustworthy and which sources you find least trustworthy. **[SHOW LIST OF SOURCES:** My family physician; Friends; Immediate family members; Extended family members; Neighbors in my community; Local schools; My employer; My local government; My place of worship; Tribal leaders (AI/AN focus groups only)]. **[PROBE ON REASONS WHY SOURCES ARE MOST OR LEAST TRUSTWORTHY, AS NEEDED. MODERATOR MAY USE THE WHITE BOARD TO JOT DOWN THOUGHTS.]**
- How often do you visit social media platforms to get information about COVID-19?
  - Which platforms?
  - How trustworthy do you find information about COVID-19 to be on these platforms?
    - **[PROBE]:** How does this vary based on who is posting the information?
- What advertisements have you seen about COVID-19, if any? Where have you seen or heard these ads? **[PROBE IF NEEDED]:** Television, radio/podcasts, print, social media?

- How trustworthy do you find information about COVID-19 to be in these media sources?

## **VACCINES (25 MINUTES)**

Now I'd like to talk more about vaccines.

- **FDA-authorized vaccines to prevent COVID-19 are now available at no cost. You were all asked to participate in this group because you indicated you had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Is that correct?**  
**[MODERATOR: ALL PARTICIPANTS SHOULD HAVE RECEIVED AT LEAST ONE DOSE OF A COVID-19 VACCINE, BUT YOU MAY NEED TO ADJUST QUESTIONS SLIGHTLY IF ANYONE SAYS THEY HAVE NOT.]**
- **How soon did you get vaccinated once you were eligible?**
  - What are some of the things that were on your mind when deciding if and when to get vaccinated?
  - **[For those who had COVID previously]** How did getting COVID-19 affect your thoughts about getting a COVID-19 vaccine?
- **What questions or concerns did you have about getting a COVID-19 vaccine?**
  - What kinds of information did you look for to better understand if you should take a COVID-19 vaccine when it was available?
  - Where did you look for information about COVID-19 vaccines?
  - Did recommendations from certain individuals or groups impact your decision; for example, your personal doctor or public health officials?
- **I'd like to hear about your experiences getting a COVID-19 vaccine, starting with how you got your vaccine appointment. How did you register for your vaccine appointment?**
  - What issues, if any, did you experience when trying to schedule your COVID-19 vaccination appointment? **[PROBE IF NEEDED]:** Issues with technology/Internet, language, transportation to/from vaccine sites, availability or accessibility of vaccines, work commitments, childcare, etc.
  - How long did it take you to get an appointment?
  - Where did you get information about appointments and scheduling?
  - Did anyone help you navigate the process?
- **How did you prepare for your vaccine appointment?**

- **[PROBE IF NEEDED]:** Getting documentation, looking for information about process, preparing for side effects (e.g., taking time off work)
- **Where did you go to get a COVID-19 vaccine?**
  - Did you have a preferred site? If so, why? Were you able to go to that preferred site?
  - How far did you have to travel to your appointment?
  - What were you required to show or bring when you were vaccinated, if anything?
- **Which vaccine did you get? If you had a vaccine preference, did you receive your preferred vaccine?**
  - How did the type of vaccine factor into your decision to get vaccinated?
- **For those of you who got a vaccine that required a second dose, what were you told about a follow-up appointment?**
  - What issues, if any, did you experience when trying to schedule your COVID-19 vaccination appointment?
- **For those of you who have gotten a second dose of a vaccine, how did your second appointment compare to your first?**
- **What side effects did you experience after you received a COVID-19 vaccine?**
  - How did your side effects compare to your expectations?
- **What have you told other people about your experience getting a vaccine?**
  - For those who have shared with others about their experience getting a vaccine:
    - Who are you talking to about your experience? [PROBE]: Family? Friends?
    - How are you sharing your experience with others? [PROBE]: Personal conversations? Social media?
  - For those who haven't shared with others: What are the main reasons that you haven't told others about your experience?
  - How likely are you to recommend that other people get vaccinated?
- **What is your understanding of when a person is considered “fully vaccinated” from COVID-19? [PROBE IF NEEDED ON NUMBER OF DAYS OR WEEKS, HOW MANY DOSES.]**

- Do you consider yourself to be fully vaccinated? [PROBE FOR REASONS WHY OR WHY NOT.]
- **If public health officials recommend everyone get a booster shot, or require an annual COVID-19 vaccine, how likely would you be to get those vaccines in the future?**

### **MEASURES TAKEN TO SLOW THE SPREAD (25 MINUTES)**

**Now that you've gotten a vaccine, let's talk about how that has impacted your activities and behaviors.**

- **How has your day-to-day routine changed, if at all, since you've been vaccinated? [PROBE FOR ANY ACTIVITIES THEY DO NOW, PLACES THEY GO, ETC.]**
  - For those whose routine has changed, when did it change? [PROBE FOR HOW LONG AFTER FIRST DOSE OR SECOND DOSE, IF APPLICABLE.]
- **How important do you think it is to take precautions to slow the spread of COVID-19?**
  - How important do you feel it is for you to take precautions now that you are vaccinated?
  - Do you feel differently depending on whether you're fully vaccinated or still require a second dose?
- **Let's talk about mask wearing. Since being vaccinated, can you describe a situation where you wore a mask?**
  - What are the reasons that people wear masks during the COVID-19 pandemic?
  - What are some reasons why someone wouldn't wear a mask when they were out in public?
  - For those of you who wear masks regularly, how long do you plan to continue wearing a mask in public?
- **Next, social distancing. Since being vaccinated, can you give me an example of how you have socially distanced?**
  - How well does it work at preventing the spread of COVID-19?
  - How difficult is it for you to socially distance?
  - For those of you who practice social distancing, how long do you plan to continue doing so?

- **How often do you attend large gatherings or social events?**
  - **[PROBE]:** What kinds of gatherings or social events are you thinking of?
  - What precautions do you take when attending these events?
  - Is your behavior different based on whether the gathering is outdoors or indoors?
  
- **What have you heard about guidelines for mask wearing and social distancing for people who are fully vaccinated?**
  - Where have you heard this information?
  - What are your reactions to these guidelines?
  - How do these guidelines impact your likelihood to take preventive measures?
  
- **How do you think mandates in your community or state impact how often people practice measures like mask wearing?**
  
- **Do mandates impact how often you practice these measures?**
  
- **What are your thoughts about state governments or the federal government relaxing mandates for preventive measures, such as mask wearing or social distancing?**
  - **[PROBE]:** If you are in a state where mandates have been relaxed, what are your thoughts? Do you feel comfortable with mandates being relaxed? Safe?

### **WRAP-UP (5 MIN)**

- Those are all the questions I have for you. I just want to check to see if any of my colleagues have any final questions.
  
- Is there anything you would like to share that you have not had the chance to before we wrap up?
  
- Thank you very much for participating in this discussion. I appreciate your time, and your feedback has been extremely helpful. Please remember not to share anything we've discussed here today.