Communications Experts Focus Group Recruitment Email and Discussion Protocol
September 2021

Email Invitation

Dear [name],

We are reaching out to invite you to participate in a focus group designed to help inform the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation's (OPRE) outreach and communication efforts. Over the next few months, OPRE is developing a Strategic Communications Framework, which will be informed by key stakeholder and audience groups who are the target of OPRE's work.

You have been identified as a communications expert and as a key communicator in the research community who can provide valuable feedback about OPRE's communications. As such, we are requesting your participation in **one** of the following 90-minute focus groups to inform OPRE's communications efforts:

- Friday October 15, 1:00-2:30 ET
- Tuesday November 2, 3:30-5:00 ET

Each focus group will include four to nine other individuals and will cover the following topics:
1. How you approach research communication in your work;
2. Your perceptions of OPRE's research;
3. Your experience with OPRE's website, social media, and conferences;
4. Your use of OPRE's research; and
5. Your recommendations for making OPRE's research more useful and accessible to you.

Child Trends will be facilitating this conversation to synthesize feedback across focus groups. This conversation will be recorded for note-taking purposes. If you are interested and able to participate, please RSVP to Naomi Ward at nward@childtrends.org by date XX.

If you have any questions about this work or would like to designate an alternate from your organization, please contact me, Sarah Daily, project director at sdaily@chidltrends.org at any time.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration of this invitation.

Best regards,

Sarah Daily

Discussion Script

Introductions

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us today. My name is [Facilitator's Name], and I will be your facilitator for today's discussion. I am a Sr. Research Scientist at Child Trends and direct our Early Childhood Unit on Equity, Quality, and Access. I'm joined by my colleagues, [Facilitator's Name] and [Facilitator's Name], do you both want to take a moment to introduce yourselves?

Thank you. Let's also take a moment to introduce everyone on the line today.

Purpose and Agenda

As a reminder, the purpose of our discussion today is to gather your insights on how you communicate research in your work, and then to talk more specifically about your perceptions of OPRE's work; how you use their website, social media, and products; and any recommendations you might have for how OPRE might increase the reach and impact of their work.

[Notetaker] will be taking notes during our conversation so we can accurately document this discussion. The information will be used internally by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation to inform their strategic communications planning, with the goal of improving outreach to and engagement with stakeholders. This information is not intended for publication. We will synthesize

themes across focus groups and will not use individual names or affiliations in our analysis. Similarly, we ask that you keep the names, ideas, and affiliations of members participating in this focus group private. We would also like to record this discussion to make sure our notes are accurate. We'll go ahead and start the recording unless anyone objects.

As we get started with the conversation, we want to encourage a discussion among our group, but also welcome your comments in the chat if that is preferable for you.

Do you have any questions for us before we get started?

Your use of research with your target audiences

Let's start by taking a minute to talk in general about how you communicate research to your target audiences.
- Who are the key audiences for your research findings?
- What channels do you use to share research findings with your key audiences? Why? Which channels perform best for the audiences you serve?
- What types of products do you use to share research findings with your key audiences? Why? What types of content perform best with the audiences you serve?
- What are strategies you use to engage earned media to support dissemination of research-based information?
- In thinking about the work of your own organization, how do you measure the effectiveness of your research dissemination?
  - o Do you have specific measures or metrics you use?
  - o How do you use the data from those measures to improve outcomes in the future?
- Are there other organizations or agencies that you think are doing an exceptional job of getting research out in formats that are helpful to your work and audiences?

Your perceptions of OPRE's work

Using the zoom chat feature, please take a moment to list out some of the key words or phrases that come to mind when you think about OPRE, their work and their research.

Use of OPRE's tools for engagement (website, social media, conferences, webinars)
- How do you typically learn about a new OPRE study or resource?
  - o *Possible probes: The OPRE newsletter, an email alert, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, a listserv, or another organization?*

Website
- How do you typically find research and resources on OPRE's website?

- How easy is it for you to find research and resources on the OPRE site?
- What hinders your ability to find OPRE research and resources on the website?
- What can OPRE do to improve the user experience of its website and make research and materials easier to find?
- If you don't use the OPRE website, why not?

Social Media Communications
- In general, what role do you think social media plays in the dissemination of research products?
- What social media outlets are you most likely to find and or share OPRE resources and tools on?
    - o Possible follow-up: Are there other platforms that OPRE is not on that you wish OPRE was, and/or that your organization uses successfully?
- What would increase you or your organization's engagement with OPRE on social media?

Newsletter
- How often do you use the OPRE newsletter to learn about and access new research, resources, and tools?
- How useful is the newsletter to you and how could it be improved?
- How does your organization use newsletters or email communications to share research in ways you think might be applicable?
- If you don't use the OPRE newsletter to find research, why not?

Events
- Have you been to any of OPRE's conferences? (e.g. RECS or NRCEC)
    - o If so, which one?
    - o Why did you attend?
    - o Were you able to gain the information you expected to by attending the conference?
    - o What aspects were done successfully/unsuccessfully?

- Have you attended any of OPRE's webinars?
    - o If so, which one?
    - o Why did you attend?
    - o Were you able to gain the information you expected to by attending the conference?
    - o What aspects were done successfully/unsuccessfully?

Recommendations
- What is one adjustment you would make to OPRE's communications to make them more effective?

    Possible follow up questions:

- What would enhance your ability to use and share OPRE's work?
- Are there specific formats you recommend OPRE use more of in communicating their research?
- Are there specific dissemination channels or strategies you would recommend OPRE use more?
- What could OPRE do to help you better share OPRE research and resources?
- Are there members of the media or organizations would be a good fit for pitching OPRE resources?
  - How would you tailor OPRE communications for earned media?
- Are there aspects of or changes in the communication landscape not discussed that you think OPRE should be aware of?

Wrap-up

Are there any topics, recommendations, or considerations we haven't discussed that you think would be beneficial to discuss before we close?

Thank you all so very much for your time and input!