

Instrument 3. Discussion Guide for HMRF Client Focus Group

REFRAME: Race Equity for Fatherhood, Relationship, and Marriage Programs to Empower Black Families Project

Introductory Statement and Consent

Thank you for your interest in today's discussion. This listening session is being conducted as part of the *Race Equity for Fatherhood, Relationship, and Marriage Programs to Empower Black Families (REFRAME)* project with the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation and sponsored by the Office of Family Assistance, both in the Administration for Children and Families, an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. MEF Associates is conducting the study for them, with Insight Policy Research as partners. MEF Associates and Insight Policy Research are social policy research organizations located in the Washington, DC area. We are not employees of the federal government.

(Pause here and introduce all of our team members).

The federal government funds a lot of different types of programs to help support families. Some of them work with nonresident dads, some with married or partnered parents, and some with adolescents. Many of those programs serve a larger number of Black individuals. We know that Black families have cultivated strengths and resilience due, in part to the unique systemic and structural challenges that they have experienced. We know this means supporting Black families might be different from how to best support other groups of families.

We want to hear from you today about your experiences raising a Black family, what strengths your family has, what goals or dreams you have for your family, and how a program that wants to help you raise a great family can better meet your needs. Your participation is voluntary. You are not required to meet with us or answer our questions, and you may stop participating in the discussion at any time without any consequences. While we will encourage you to contribute to the discussion, you may choose not to answer any question you wish and can leave the discussion at any time.

You will receive a gift card in the amount of \$50 as a thank you for your time.

The discussion will take about 90 minutes. We're going to listen and take notes on what you say. In our reports we're going to share the ideas and suggestions you gave, but we're never going to attach your name to anything you say in our reporting.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number for this information collection is 0970-0531 and the expiration date is XX/XX/XXXX.

[INTERVIEWER: PRESS RECORD and confirm by asking: “Do you give your permission for me to begin the interview at this time?”]

Ground Rules for Focus Groups

Before we begin, let me go over a couple of focus group guidelines.

- While we will ask some questions to guide the discussion, our goal is to hear from you, and for you to respond to each other.
- This discussion is meant to be informal and relaxed.
- We won't have any breaks, but if you need to get up to use the restroom, stretch or get a drink, please do so as needed.
- During the discussion, please ask me if something is not clear.
- There are no right or wrong answers. It is okay to share your opinions or thoughts even if they are different from what others have said. We want everyone to participate, and the opinions and experiences of everyone in the room are important. We want to hear different perspectives.
- Please talk one at a time so that I can hear everything that is said.
- Please remember to mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- I want to hear from all of you. Some people talk more than others, and I'll be encouraging everyone to speak up.
- You do not have to answer any specific questions you do not want to answer. If at any point, you want to pause the recording while you make a specific comment, please tell me.
- The discussion today is private. Please do not discuss or share anything you heard after you leave the focus group.

Do you have any questions before we start?

A. Introductions and Program Background

1. Please introduce yourself by telling us a bit about yourself (example; age, number of children, length of time in the program, whether you are in a relationship and if so, how long in your current relationship, best thing about being a parent)
 - a. Please share which program you are a part of.

B. Personal goals and sources of support

1. What are your main priorities right now, what are you trying to accomplish? What are your long-term goals? What would success for YOU look like?

Probe

- a. What does success in accomplishing those goals mean to you? (i.e., starting a business, buying a home, educational opportunities for your children, being satisfied in your marriage, raising children who thrive, moving in together, having a loving and trusting relationship)
- b. What does it mean for you to thrive or to have a healthy state of well-being?

2. What are your main sources of support in accomplishing these goals? (i.e., friends and family, partners, religious organizations, programs, counselors, mentors etc.)
3. What has the program done toward supporting your goals?

C. HMRF program's role in supporting client coping and resilience

4. Has participating in [program] help you achieve your goals?
 - a. If so, in what ways?

- b. If not, what could the program have done?
5. To what extent have you shared the life goals you just spoke about with the program staff? How are staff or the program supporting you in accomplishing those goals?

Probe:

- a. What aspects of the curricula, program staff, overall structure, case management, or job support helped specifically? What aspects of your goals have not been addressed by the program?
- b. What do you wish the program provided in helping you accomplish your goals?
- c. How do the relationships you have formed within the program (e.g., between peers or between yourself and your facilitator) support your goals?
6. How well do you believe the staff are able to relate to the things you are going through and the way you want to live your life? (Please explain)
 - a. How do the handouts, activities, and questions you're asked during the program reflect your life experiences?
 - b. How can programs change these materials or use them better?
7. How does the program help you cope or keep your head up as you are going through challenges? How have the curricula, program staff, overall structure, case management, or job support helped specifically? Please provide an example.
8. How has the program or other programs you have worked with helped you grow over time and continue success?
 - a. How has the program continued to support your ongoing skill development?
 - b. How has the program supported your long-term goals and success?
 - c. What skills have you learned that have helped you become better at navigating the challenges within your community, family, household, relationships, workplace, etc.?
9. Has HMRF programming supported you in bouncing back stronger than before after overcoming adversity?
 - a. In what ways?
 - b. If not, what could the program have done?
10. How, if at all, does the program recognize your strengths (i.e., talents, experience, successes, expertise, history etc.)?
11. How can the program better incorporate your perspective and recognize your strengths?
12. How can the program best relate to your day-to-day experience?
 - a. Do you feel that the program elevates and honors your experience as a father, mother, family, couple, individual, or youth?
13. What supports do you need to strengthen your relationships and involvement with your families and current or future partner? What supports do you need to engage in HMRF programming?
14. What do you wish the program did better? What steps could they take to better serve you and other Black clients?
15. Thinking about the people that decide how these organizations and programs are designed, what is the most important thing they need to know about supporting Black clients?

D. Closing

1. Before we end, is there anything else you would like to say that you wanted to say earlier, but didn't get a chance to?