

[This protocol lists a number of questions that might be selected for a typical focus group. It is not intended that a focus group would include all of these questions. Instead, this serves as a “bank” of focus group questions from which to choose.]

Introduction

In order to help OVC TTAC better serve the field, we would like to learn more about [XX]. The purpose of this focus group is to [XX]. [Briefly introduce OVC and OVC TTAC.] Can everyone introduce themselves? Please give us your name and tell us what you do. (May do a background poll question if appropriate.)

This focus group involves having you answer a few questions to learn about your experiences with [XX], what you thought was particularly useful/helpful, what are some best practices in this area, and how OVC TTAC can help the field deliver [XX]. There are no wrong answers—we want your honesty and we expect differences of opinion. There are also no bad questions, so please feel free to speak up. The only limitation is to help us stay on time so we can cover all our questions. We will use your input, along with input from other groups like this around the country, to make decisions about [XX], including [XX].

[alternative opening text to be used in the case of needs assessments] This discussion is part of a larger needs assessment to better understand the needs and experiences of crime victims and survivors in [xx] to help improve victim services and supports. You were selected to participate in this discussion because we believe that it is important to hear from [xx] directly so that your voices and experiences can inform the needs assessment findings and help shape victim services in [x].

Participation in this focus group is voluntary. We will protect the privacy of your information in accordance with the Federal Privacy Act, and we will protect the confidentiality of your responses using procedures we have in place. We will de-identify people’s answers in anything we report. We are recording the session to be sure our notes are accurate, but again, we will not connect any names to any comments. Please let me know if there are any concerns about this process.

If you have any questions about this focus group, please contact [XX]. Any questions before we begin?

1. How many of you have been involved in <insert name of group, project, task force>? Have any of you heard of <insert name of product, tool, topic>? [Show of hands or possibly a tailored webinar poll question such as the one below]

[Poll Question]

Have you used <insert name of product, tool, topic>?

- Yes, I have used resources from <insert name of product, tool, topic> often.
- Yes, I have used resources from <insert name of product, tool, topic> a few times.
- No, but I am aware of the <insert name of product, tool, topic> and what it offers.
- No, I do not know much about <insert name of product, tool, topic> and what it offers.

(If focus group participants do not have experience with the tool under review, please spend some time (e.g., 5–10 minutes) showing them the tool/resource and how it works. Please encourage them to ask questions and make comments about what they see and do not see as you are showing them the tool.)

Think about your previous experience with reading, using, or learning about <insert name of product, tool, topic>. If you don’t have previous experience with this <product, tool, or topic>, think about what we just showed you and how it could be used in your work. (May have them write answers on notecards, use webinar poll questions, use flipchart, etc.).

2. How they learned about tool/resource

- Where did you learn about this tool (e.g., trainings, conferences, newsletters, website)? If they mention anything specific, ask which one (e.g., which training, which conference).
- Where would you usually go to find this type of information, tool, or topic?
- Once you heard about it, was this tool easy to find? Is it accessible to everyone who might need it? If not, what should be changed?
- Is there a better place to put this tool that users would find easier to locate?
- Are there other places that you already go to get this information? What do you like and dislike about them?

3. Appropriateness/comprehensiveness of information/content (may ask about tool overall or by module/component)

- Was this the type of information that you expected to see or were looking for? What was missing?

- *Was the information too advance/detailed or too basic?*
- *How is the information applicable to your work?*
- *Are there other topics that need tools similar to this one?*
- *Ask the audience about each module—do they have experience with it; is it appropriate, what they expected or were looking for; and find out specific information about how it meets their needs or can be improved to do so.)*

4. Ease of use

- *If it was difficult to use, how so?*
- *What would make it easier to use and understand?*
- *How do you feel about the way the information is displayed on the website or page? What do you like about it? What do you dislike?*
- *What about the web page layout, length, format, and readability?*
- *Is the level of interactivity of the tool appropriate?*
- *Is the length of information about right?*
- *What do you think of the content layout (e.g., bullets vs. paragraphs)?*
- *(If this tool is designed to be used to train others) If instructions are there, are they clear? Are they needed?*
- *Was the information/tool easy to understand and user-friendly? How so? If it was difficult to use, how so?*
- *If there are specific aspects of the tool where feedback is needed, visit those aspects and ask these questions for each aspect.*

5. Usefulness

- *How is the tool helpful?*
- *How is the tool not helpful?*
- *How did you or would you use the information/tool?*
- *If you won't need to use it, why? What do you need that is not here?*
- *If there are specific aspects of the tool where feedback is needed, visit those aspects and ask these questions for each aspect.*

6. Preparedness

- *What planning occurred prior to the incident(s)/event that made the response more effective?*
- *Which organizations/individuals participated in the planning process? What roles did they play?*
- *Who was missing from the planning process?*
- *What was most beneficial and challenging about the planning process?*
- *What would you recommend to others [doing similar planning for XX event/incident]?*
- *Did you have an emergency plan prior to the incident? If so, is it available as a public document?*
- *If so, does it outline emergency preparedness protocols? Does it include a checklist that delineates areas of responsibility? Is it designed to guide responses to Disaster—Natural, Mass Violence Events—Criminal, Bio-Terrorism—Criminal and Non-Criminal?*
- *Were there planned emergency preparedness drills and training for first responders on [mass violence/terrorism/XX]? Were there community planning drills? What role did the [State Office of Emergency Management/FEMA/XX organization] play in community preparedness? Did the emergency training combine preparedness strategies for the physical, psychological, and emotional effects of a disaster for victims and first responders?*
- *Are there existing crisis response procedures developed in partnership with schools, law enforcement, and community response agencies?*
- *If an emergency response plan does not exist, what are the existing challenges or barriers to establishing one?*
- *Is/was a needs assessment conducted to [XX purpose]?*

7. Partnerships and Collaboration

- *Which agency or organization serves as the lead agency and coordinator [for XX purpose]?*
- *Is there a [current/Pre-Event] MOU in place? Who are the members of the [response team/coalition/group], and how often do they meet? Is there documentation that supports the outcome of each meeting?*
- *Which partnerships are most critical in the planning process? During the [event/immediate response/short-term or long-term recovery phases]?*
- *What role does/did local government and community-based organizations such as [mental health, interfaith councils, victim services agencies, XX] play in [XX]?*

8. Communications

- Do you have any ideas for ways to support more information sharing between [organizations/groups/task forces/XX]?
- Do you have a way to reach out to other [organizations/groups/task forces/XX] when you have questions or need resources?
- Are/were there an established communication plan and protocols in place to ensure [XX purpose]? Were hotlines (800#s), social media, and/or websites created for access to assistance, compensation, and referrals?
- Is/was a crisis communication spokesperson or public information officer (PIO) identified to answer all media and related communication information? Is/was there a Crisis Communications Team; are/were key staff members convened to strategically review the situation and manage the communications? Is/was the crisis communications spokesperson or PIO responsible for ensuring that all tasks were completed?
- How can communication be improved?

9. Response

- Who was a part of the response? Who was missing?
- What were the greatest challenges to the response? What worked well in the response?
- Is/was there an emergency resource or checklist with the names of individuals and organizations that assist in an emergency response and what function they will serve? Is someone assigned to immediately begin to make phone calls to those on the list?
- When responding to an event, was there overlap or a duplication of services, and if so, how was it addressed? Who was responsible for finding a resolution, and how was it accomplished?
- What protocols are in place to identify or designate the lead law enforcement agency?
- Are/were there delivery systems protocols in place to ensure readiness; emergency medical services (EMS), hospital-based emergency department and trauma care, 911 call centers, transportation services for victims?
- What safety and security measures are/were in place to ensure victim safety?
- The American Red Cross has historically responded to natural disasters around the world; was/are there different protocols and strategies developed and in place when responding to mass violence incidents?

10. Victim Assistance Services

- What type of Victim Assistance Services and resources were/are in place or needed (e.g., family assistance centers, donations centers, shelters, emergency financial assistance, legal services)?
- Are/were centralized victim resource sites established at local family assistance centers? If not, will they be?
- What role did [XX] play in the response?
- Are/were there provisions established to assist with compensation, mental health services, and counseling on legal, financial, and other daily concerns of victims and family members?
- Are/were the diverse needs, beliefs, and cultures of special victim populations taken into consideration with respect to service delivery?
- Are there systems in place to assist victims of crime who wished to participate in the [apprehension, prosecution, sentencing, XX]?

11. Use of Technology

- What protocols are/were in place, and what role does/did technology play in [XX]? Is/was a centralized database or case management system developed or used? Are/were other tools used (e.g., websites, blogs, tweets, mobile apps)? Is/was technology used to [XX]? What communications tools or partnerships were used to establish hotlines (e.g., AT&T, Sprint, Verizon, T-Mobile)? What other technological strategies were used to aid [XX]?

12. Organizational Structure

- How is the [task force/organization/XX] organized? For example, what organizations are represented on the [task force, group, organization]? Who is in charge of organizing or running your meetings?
- What does the leadership of the [task force, group, organization] look like? Which organization leads the [task force, group, organization]? How often does leadership change on your [task force, group, organization]?
- Does the [task force, group, organization] use subcommittees or divide into different groups to address different issues?
- How frequent are meetings?
- How quickly does the group reach closure on issues that are raised?

13. Training and Resources

- Has your [group, organization, task force] received any [training/resources/XX]? Were they useful? Why or why not?

- What impact has the [XX] had on the [group, organization, task force]?
- Can you think of any training you've attended that has been particularly useful? Which trainings have you found to be the most useful to your [group, organization, task force]?

14. Task Force Impact

- On a scale of 1–10, 10 being very effective, how effective do you think the [task force/XX] is? How would you define “effectiveness” in this case? (For example, building a mission that is supported by all task force members, recruiting and keeping members, providing effective leadership, and setting and meeting task force goals.) What are the major barriers to effectiveness?
- On a scale of 1–10, 10 being very well, how well do you think the [task force/XX] functions? For example, are you effective in building a mission that is supported by all task force members, recruiting and keeping members, providing effective leadership, and setting and meeting task force goals?
- Can you comment on the [task force/XX]’s effectiveness at building a mission that is supported by all [task force/XX] members? On a scale of 1–10, 10 being very effective, how would you rank the [task force/XX]’s effectiveness? What about recruiting and keeping members, providing effective leadership, and setting and meeting task force goals?
- What accomplishments have you seen thus far as a result of the [task force/XX]? Has the situation changed for [victims/type of victim] as a result of your [task force/XX]’s efforts?
- Have you seen a change in [XX]? What do you think is the cause of this change?
- What do you think the [task force/XX]’s impact has been on [XX]? (e.g., Do you think there have been more victims identified? Do you think more traffickers have been arrested and prosecuted?)

15. Successes and Challenges/Barriers

- When you think of a “successful” [XX], what comes to mind?
- How would you define success for the [XX]? Any promising strategies you would like to share?
- What would you do to make your [task force, group, organization] more “successful” at its work?
- What are the most difficult challenges for [XX]?
- Were there any gaps in services that impacted [XX]? What were they, and how were they addressed?
- Were there any legal, statutory, legislative, or policy issues that impacted [XX]?
- Were there any fiscal or economic issues that impacted [XX]? Were there strategies in place to address [XX]?
- Is/were there charitable donations protocols in place to accept funds with local banking institutions or community-based organizations? Were there systems in place to establish a charitable foundation if needed to accept funds donated by the public?
- Is/was there a distribution protocol in place once a decision was made to disburse funds to victims?
- What were the challenges to establishing [XX] (e.g., timelines, identifying a location, participating agencies and organizations, communication)?

16. Lessons Learned and Best Practices

- Overall, based on your experience with [XX], what were the greatest lessons learned?
- What would you consider as best practices?
- What is the most important thing for other communities to know in [XX]?

17. Sustainability

- Does [XX] have funding other than what’s provided by [XX]?
- What kind of support or systems and structures exist to help [XX] sustain its efforts going into the future?
- Do you think that [XX] has planned for long-term [cooperation/survival/XX], even after funding ends?

18. Identified and Anticipated Technical Assistance Needs

- If OVC TTAC held online meetings or web-based training “Webinars,” would your [organization/group/task force/XX] have interest and technological capacity to participate?
- What websites do you typically access for information?
- Do you use [XX] to get your information? If not, why?
- What do you see as the identified and/or anticipated technical assistance needs?
- As you think through the needs of the task force, what would you identify as your top five needs?
- OVC TTAC has been tasked by [XX] to provide as much support as possible to the [organization/group/task force/XX]. Are there particular areas where you think your [organization/group/task force/XX] could use training or technical assistance?

19. Satisfaction

- *How satisfied were you with your overall OVC TTAC experience?*
- *How satisfied were you with the overall quality of support you received from OVC TTAC staff?*
- *How has working with OVC TTAC improved your [insert type of skill(s) related to training/event/tool objectives]?*
- *What were your expectations prior to [insert TTA]?*
- *How well were these expectations met?*
- *Identify three things you [plan to do or change] [did] as a result of the [insert TTA] you received. Please be as specific as you can (e.g., actions or changes in policy, practice, procedures, or programming).*
- *What barriers [do you anticipate facing] [have you experienced] in [insert response from previous question]?*
- *Was there anything not provided by [insert TTA] that would have been helpful in [insert outcome]?*
- *What aspect(s) of the training or technical assistance were most helpful to you, and why?*
- *What aspect(s) of the training or technical assistance were least helpful to you, and why?*
- *How could [reference answers from previous question] be improved?*
- *At the completion of [insert TTA], did you have specific action steps or a strategic plan?*
- *How well did these action steps align with the needs you identified prior to the training?*
- *How confident did you feel in your ability to implement these action steps?*
- *How supported did you feel by OVC TTAC staff in implementing these action steps?*
- *[3, 6, etc.] months later, in what ways have you implemented your action steps/strategic plan?*
- *Reflecting back, what would have changed about your action steps/strategic plan?*
- *How do you think you will continue to apply what you have learned through this [insert TTA]?*
- *Have you changed any policies at your organization? Any practices?*
- *Have you attended any additional trainings or events related to the [TTA] you attended previously?*
- *Would you recommend OVC TTAC trainings to others?*
- *Has your organization proposed or changed policies pertaining to [topic of TTA] since [insert TTA]?*
- *How has your professional networking or peer support changed since [insert TTA]?*
- *How has your access to resources on [topic of TTA] changed since [insert TTA]?*
- *Do you have any additional comments or suggestions that you would like to share about [insert TTA]?*
- *Do you have any comments or suggestions for future OVC TTAC-related trainings?*

We may also have tailored webinar poll questions, if online, to drive the conversation and be inserted throughout the focus group guide, such as:

- Are you aware of the tool?
- How many times have you used it?
- What future direction do you think we should take with this tool?
- How do you feel about the way the information is displayed on the website or page?
- How did you or would you use the information/tool? How was it or would it be helpful?
- How did you learn about this tool or resource (e.g., from a conference, your supervisor, etc.)? Where would you usually go to find this type of information, tool, or topic?

[Placeholder for set of questions relating to victim service needs assessments]

A sample of topic areas are listed below-

1. Services Delivery
2. Access to Services
3. Funding Assistance
4. Trainings and Staff Supports
5. Challenges and Barriers
6. Areas of Success and Outcomes

7. Serving Underserved and Marginalized Communities
8. Collaborations and Partnerships
9. Future Direction and Recommendations

Closing (2 minutes)

We're done! Thank you very much for your time. Your input and comments are very helpful. Do you have any questions for us?