

## Focus Groups

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## Focus Groups Center B

**OMB Control Number = 2035-NEW, Expiration Date = mm/dd/yyyy**

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*Topics and issues to be discussed in each focus group:*

1. Satisfaction with the Center's services
  - a. Ease of accessing services and obtaining timely responses
  - b. Usefulness of services
  - c. Areas of improvement of services, including additional services to offer
  
2. Environmental justice and energy justice challenges faced in the community
  - a. Historic and current challenges and solutions that work
  - b. Future challenges and ways to address those challenges
  - c. Technical assistance, training and support needs to address those challenges
  
3. Experience with federal grants
  - a. Experiences with federal grants
  - b. Barriers/Solutions to applying for federal grants
  - c. Barriers/Solutions to managing federal grants
  - d. Problems identified with the federal grants system and creative solutions
  
4. Approaches to strengthening knowledge and skills for applying and managing federal grants
  - a. Experience with training or knowledge/skills development programs – including other TA providers (e.g., other federal agencies within the Thriving Communities Network, state/local agencies, philanthropic organizations, etc.)
  - b. Knowledge and skills needed
  - c. Successful approaches to strengthen knowledge and skills
  - d. Services or products Center B could offer/develop

5. Outreach to potential program participants (i.e., people from communities with environmental justice concerns who may apply to federal grants)
  - a. Communication mechanisms to reach potential program participants for their awareness on Centers' services
  - b. Ways to explain how to access eligible services
  - c. Types of events or activities to reach potential program participants, including input on optimal scheduling and duration
  - d. Accessibility approaches to fully engage everyone
  - e. Ways to explain the Center B Program
6. How to effectively engage with decision-makers at all levels of government and private sector entities to inform policy development and program design and delivery
  - a. Successful experience with government agencies' or private sector entities' community engagement approaches
  - b. Ways to meaningfully engage with government agencies or private sector entities
  - c. Knowledge and skills needed
  - d. Successful approaches to strengthen knowledge and skills
  - e. Services or products the Center could offer/develop
7. How to engage community members
  - a. Experiences with leading community engagement and building partnerships and coalitions
  - b. Knowledge and skills needed
  - c. Successful approaches to strengthen knowledge and skills
  - d. Services or products the Center could offer/develop
8. How to make the various federal grants for environmental justice and energy justice projects accessible to a broader set of applicants
  - a. How to communicate this information in organized and accessible ways
  - b. Services or products the Center could offer/develop
9. Finding and understanding financing options for pursuing environmental justice and energy justice projects
  - a. Partnership opportunities
  - b. Ways to minimize duplication of efforts with federally funded programs
  - c. Services or products the Center could offer/develop

## Focus Groups Center C

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### Introduction

*[share screen/share presentation if applicable]*

Welcome and thank you so much for taking the time to join us today. I am *[representative role]* with *[partner]*.

We are the *[state]* office of Center C, which is the Center C. Through our network of state and national partners, we provide training and technical support to communities that are working on environmental justice issues.

We are holding this meeting in partnership with *[local organization/stakeholder]* to learn how Center C can best help address your environmental justice concerns. These sessions will also serve to understanding successes and strengths in the community that have supported their efforts. Specific questions to be addressed:

1. What are the current environmental justice issues in the community?
2. What are the biggest problems communities face in trying to address environmental justice issues?
3. What successes have communities had in addressing environmental justice issues?
4. What support can the Center offer to communities to advance their environmental justice goals?

We value your input as a community member and are excited to have you here. We are joined today by *[note-taker]* who will be taking notes to ensure we don't miss any of your insights.

### Logistics

I want to start by sharing some logistics that will help our discussion today.

- *[Virtual Events]* **Closed captioning**- Click on the cc button on the zoom dashboard, then click show subtitles. If you don't want to see live captions, choose hide subtitles.

- *[Virtual Events]* **Unmuting**- Your microphones are currently muted, but you are free to unmute if you would like to speak. At least to get started, we ask you to use the hand raise feature in Zoom. That will help me ensure that only one person talks at a time and that everyone who wants to talk has an opportunity to do so. We expect that everyone will have many opportunities to share during today's listening.
- *[Virtual Events]* **Chat Box**- Please notice that there is a chat box on the bottom left hand of your screen. Please feel free to use it as needed. We will have a team member monitoring the comments.
- *[In-Person Events]* **Raise hands for responses**- We ask that you raise your hand as an indication for a response. This will ensure we don't miss anyone and that everyone can be clearly heard.
- *[In-Person Events]* **Use of microphone (if, necessary)**- We ask that you use the microphones placed around the room to ensure your information is captured in the recording device and for colleagues to hear your responses.
- *[Both]* **Recording**- One last piece of housekeeping before we get started, while we are taking notes during the session, we are also going to record the session. The recording will not be shared outside of the Center C team, and we will not link your name to any comments. This purely is for our own notes and analysis.

**Do we have permission to record?**

*[If respondents answer no, say "Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. Please feel free to send any comments related to this topic to us via email or in the event chat."]*

*[For respondents who answer yes, begin recording and continue to the next section.]*

*Note for Moderators: Questions for specific audiences are included in parentheses. Audience abbreviations: - **CBOs** = Community-based organizations, **LAs** = local city/county departments/agencies and non-governmental agencies, **SAs** = state government and non-governmental organizations/agencies*

**General Challenges, Solutions and Support (CBOs and Local Agencies)**

Let's start by discussing environmental justice and energy justice challenges that are faced in your community.

1. What issues is your community facing right now related to environmental justice?
  - a. Where is this happening?
  - b. How long has [this issue/these issues] been going on?
2. How has the community been working on this [issue/issues]?
  - a. Who is involved in addressing [this issue/these issues] (e.g., community members, leaders, community-based organizations, government agencies)?
  - b. Have these efforts helped to improve [this issue/these issues]? If no, why not?
  - c. What barriers has the community faced in addressing [this issue/these issue(s)]?
  - d. How is the community working to address these barriers?

3. What does the community need to address [this issue/these issues]?
  - a. What would be most helpful to address [this issue/these issues]?
4. How can Center C\* assist in addressing [this issue/these issues]?
  - a. What services can Center C offer to address these EJ issues?
  - b. What technical assistance services in particular can Center C offer to strengthen knowledge and skills to address [this/these] EJ issues?

*\*Note: if the community is more familiar with ["Alternative to Center C"] you can use that language interchangeably with "Center C"*

### **Federal Grant Applications (CBO and Local Agencies)**

One of the main goals of Center C is to increase access to funds for local communities experiencing EJ issues. The Center C wants to provide opportunities to increase knowledge and skills among community organizations and partners so that local communities can successfully receive and manage these funds. To that end, we are interested in learning more about how Center C can support communities who are experiencing environmental justice issues to receive grant funding and other support to address these issues.

5. First, what experience has the community had in applying for or receiving federal grants to support their efforts?
  - a. [If they have had experience] What kinds of grants were these?
  - b. What experience have they had with federal grants systems?
6. What knowledge and skills are needed to successfully apply and win federal grants?
  - a. Optional- How have you improved your knowledge and skills related to applying for federal grants?
7. How can we as a Center assist in improving your/the community's ability to apply for a federal grant?
  - a. What training, services, or products would be helpful?
8. How can the various federal grants related to environmental and energy justice be made more accessible to a broader set of applicants?
  - a. What ways are best to get the word out about these grants?

### **Assistance with Federal Grant Applications (State Agencies)**

We are interested in learning more about how we can strengthen knowledge and skills for CBOs to apply for and manage federal grants in effort to assist communities in reaching their goals.

9. What knowledge and skills are needed to successfully apply and win state/federal level grants?
  - a. Optional- What resources do you have to assist organizations in strengthening their knowledge and skills related to applying for state-level grants?

10. How can we as a Center work with *[state agency]* assist in improving submissions to federal grant applications?
  - a. What training, services, or products would be helpful in assisting individuals across the state?
11. How can the various federal grants related to environmental and energy justice be more accessible to a broader set of applicants?
  - a. Any communication strategy suggestions?

### **Community Engagement (ALL Attendees)**

We are interested in understanding the best way to provide outreach to communities and those who have environmental justice concerns and may want to apply for federal grants.

12. What is the best way to explain the Center C program and the ways we can assist the community?
  - a. What communication channels are the best to reach communities to raise awareness of the Center and funding opportunities?
  - c. Are there events or activities that have a larger reach than others? If so, what are some details to consider? (i.e., access, accessibility, space)
13. As far as engaging community members that are not here in this discussion today, what are your experiences with reaching other individuals?
  - a. What successful approaches have been used in the past to engage those that may be interested in these topics but are not always engaged?
14. What experiences have you had in engaging different decision-makers in addressing environmental justice issues in your community?
  - a. How have you engaged with local city or county officials regarding environmental justice issues?
  - b. How have you engaged state officials in environmental justice issues?
  - c. How have you engaged those from the private sector?
15. How can we engage these decision makers in policy development and programs to address environmental justice issues?
16. What technical assistance is needed to help communities understand local policies and engage decision makers in areas like policy development?

### **Collaboration Efforts (ALL)**

Lastly, we'd like to discuss thoughts around other ways to finance these projects and ways to partner in the community to build capacity and avoid duplicative efforts.

17. What entities and organizations have collaborated in the past to successfully implement environmental justice programs or projects (e.g., CBO, university/college, city/county, state-level departments, business owners)?
18. What are some ways in which we can assist in avoiding future duplicate efforts in the community?
19. Are there any additional topics related to environmental and energy justice issues that we didn't discuss that you would like to comment on?

### **Wrap-Up**

We appreciate everyone taking the time to have this discussion with us today. This information is very informative and will assist as we move forward with efforts to support local communities in addressing environmental justice challenges in the community. Please be sure to be on the lookout for future discussions and opportunities.

[End recording]

*Towards the end of the session, be sure to provide a quick summary for attendees on action items and next steps. Circulate the sign-up sheet and remind attendees to add follow-up information such as additional contact information, websites, organization names, etc.*



## Focus Groups Center I

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  - b. Future challenges and ways to address those challenges
  - c. Technical assistance, training and support needs to address those challenges
3. Experience with federal grants
  - a. Experiences with federal grants
  - b. Barriers/Solutions to applying for federal grants
  - c. Barriers/Solutions to managing federal grants
  - d. Problems identified with the federal grants system and creative solutions
4. Approaches to strengthening knowledge and skills for applying and managing federal grants
  - a. Experience with training or knowledge/skills development programs - including other TA providers (e.g., other federal agencies within the Thriving Communities Network, state/local agencies, philanthropic organizations, etc.)
  - b. Knowledge and skills needed
  - c. Successful approaches to strengthen knowledge and skills
  - d. Services or products TCTACs could offer/develop
5. Outreach to potential program participants (i.e., people from communities with environmental justice concerns who may apply to federal grants)
  - a. Communication mechanisms to reach potential program participants for their awareness of the Centers' services

- b. Ways to explain how to access eligible services
  - c. Types of events or activities to reach potential program participants, including input on optimal scheduling and duration
  - d. Accessibility approaches to fully engage everyone
  - e. Ways to explain the TCTAC Program
6. How to effectively engage with decision-makers at all levels of government and private sector entities to inform policy development and program design and delivery
- a. Successful experience with government agencies' or private sector entities' community engagement approaches
  - b. Ways to meaningfully engage with government agencies or private sector entities
  - c. Knowledge and skills needed
  - d. Successful approaches to strengthen knowledge and skills
  - e. Services or products the Center could offer/develop
7. How to engage community members
- a. Experiences with leading community engagement and building partnerships and coalitions
  - b. Knowledge and skills needed
  - c. Successful approaches to strengthen knowledge and skills
  - d. Services or products the Center could offer/develop
8. How to make the various federal grants for environmental justice and energy justice projects accessible to a broader set of applicants
- a. How to communicate this information in organized and accessible ways
  - b. Services or products the Center could offer/develop
9. Finding and understanding financing options for pursuing environmental justice and energy justice projects
- a. Partnership opportunities
  - b. Ways to minimize duplication of efforts with federally funded programs
  - c. Services or products the Center could offer/develop