

## **ATTACHMENT G**

### **Moderator's Guide for Consumer Focus Group Session**

#### **OMB Control No. 2070-0221 Approval expires 5/31/2025**

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**Moderator's Guide for Consumer Focus Group Session – General Adult Consumers  
Testing Awareness and Perceptions of EPA's Safer Choice Label and Alternate Labels**

**Need in the room:** Pencils and highlighters for all participants; an easel for the moderator.

**Note:** *The focus group session outlined below is designed to test awareness and perceptions of the primary Safer Choice label, with options for testing alternate labels. This document contains three modules of questions: background information, questions on the Safer Choice program and label, and questions on the Design for the Environment logo or other alternate labels. For a given focus group session, one to two modules of questions will be used, while ensuring that the burden does not exceed 2 hours per response.*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (RELEVANT TO ALL MODULES)

**Introduction [15 minutes]**

Welcome and thank you for joining us. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I will be your moderator for this focus group session, which is about providing information to help consumers find products made with ingredients that meet stringent criteria for their effects on people, pets, and the environment. I'd like to hear how you feel about this topic, and I'm also interested in your perceptions about some visual materials, which I will show you a bit later. I want to let you know that I am not an expert in this topic; rather, I am an independent moderator trained to facilitate our discussion.

Our client for this research is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), located in Washington, D.C. The EPA's mission is to protect human health and the environment. This research has been approved by the OMB, and the control number is \_\_\_\_\_. I have a copy of the burden statement associated with this research for you [hand out].

Our discussion should take about 2 hours.

**Disclosure**

- Observation: There is a one-way mirror with observers in the next room who are interested in hearing your views, but don't want to interrupt the conversation.
- Audio taping: This session will be recorded by audio to enable us to capture everything that is being said today. We will use the tape to write our report to our client.
- Your answers will be private to the extent permitted by law, so feel free to say exactly what is on your mind. Nothing will be attributed to any particular person in our aggregated report; however, we will be sharing all results with our client.

**Ground rules**

- Need to hear from everyone, one at a time please
- No right or wrong answers, want personal opinions
- Moderator is impartial, please be candid
- It's okay to be critical. If you dislike something you hear, it's fine to disagree but please be willing to offer your own views and opinions.
- If anyone needs to use the restroom, they are located [specify]. There is no need to stop the discussion.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

***Participant introductions***

- Brief introductions around the table – tell us a little about yourself (e.g., name, occupation, family, pets)

**Awareness and Use of Certification Seals [10 minutes]**

Let's start our session by taking a look at some products you may have seen in a local supermarket or retail store.

[Show several products in a category, perhaps cleaning products – include at least one with a green certification and at least one without]

- Which one of these products would you choose to purchase in the supermarket?
  - o Why?
- Let's look more closely at this product [pick up a product that has a green certification mark on it]
  - o Have you seen this mark before?
  - o What does it mean?

The mark on this product indicates a green certification program, which is a program intended to help consumers purchase safer and/or more environmentally sustainable products. These programs are also known as “eco-label” programs.

Are you familiar with green certification programs?

- Which ones are you familiar with? [Prompt if necessary: Cradle-to-Cradle, EcoLogo, Energy Star, EWG verified, Good Housekeeping Green Ratings, Green Seal, USDA Organic, USDA BioPreferred, WaterSense]
- Have you ever used any of these programs to help you decide which products to buy?

**PERCEPTIONS OF THE SAFER CHOICE PROGRAM AND LABEL**

**Perceptions of Safer Choice Program [15 minutes]**

Different certification programs have different purposes – for example, EnergyStar specifically helps consumer purchase products that are more energy efficient, whereas the USDA Organic program lets consumers know which products are certified organic. I want to talk about an EPA program intended to help consumers select products with ingredients that can help protect the environment and are safer for people, families, and pets. I'll distribute a description of this program, and you can read along with me.

The U.S. EPA's Safer Choice program is a voluntary program that helps protect people and the planet by certifying products that contain safer ingredients. For more than 30 years, the Environmental Protection Agency has been evaluating the human health and environmental concerns associated with chemicals and empowering businesses to make safer chemical-based products. When you see the Safer Choice label on a product, it means the EPA scientists have

reviewed each ingredient for potential human health and environmental effects and that the product contains only the safest chemical ingredients available.

- Has anyone ever heard of the Safer Choice program?
  - o Have you used it to help you decide which products to buy?
- What's your overall impression of this program?
  - o Does it sound useful to you?
- As you shop in your local supermarket or retail outlet, would it be helpful to you to have some easy way of knowing if a product has ingredients that have been determined to be safer for people or if it can help protect the environment?
  - o If you could get that information at a glance just by looking at the product, do you think it might influence your purchase decision?
    - Why or why not?
  - o If the products in a particular category all cost about the same, do you think you'd choose the product that has been certified by the EPA to have ingredients that are safer for people and the environment?
    - Which of those two claims would motivate you more to purchase a certified product – safer for people or protects the environment?

### Testing Safer Choice Label [45 minutes]

I'd like to show you the Safer Choice label, which appears on product packages to let consumers know which products have been certified by EPA to have safer ingredients for people and the environment. I'd like to get your thoughts regarding this label and whether it is effective in communicating the goals of this program.



- How would you sum up your first impression of this label?
  - o Would you notice it if you saw it on a product?
  - o Is it attractive?
    - Why or why not?
- What does this label mean to you, the consumer?
  - o How well do you think the message comes across in this label?
  - o Is it easy to understand at a glance?
- Is this label credible? Do you believe it will deliver on what the label conveys?
  - o Why or why not?
- Does this label give you any information about the product's impact on human health?
  - o If so, what does it tell you?

- Does this label give you any information about the product's impact on the environment?
  - o If so, what does it tell you?
- Does this label provide enough information to help you choose between various products in a category?
  - o Why or why not?
- How well do you think the name conveys what the program is trying to do?
- How well do you think the visual label conveys what the program is trying to do?
- How likely would you be to use this label to help you decide on a product to purchase?
  - o Why or why not?
- Have you seen products in stores with this label on it?
  - o Where? When? Was it prominently displayed? Was there an abundance of product stock?
- Have you purchased a product with this design on it?
  - o When? Which product? Which store? Did you enjoy the product?
  - o Why did you purchase? What motivated you?
- Have you seen promotions for products with this label?
  - o Where? When? Was it compelling? Why? Why not?
- What would it take for you to seek out a product with this label?
  - o Why is this important to you? Unimportant to you?
- What is most important to you when deciding which products in this category you would purchase?
  - o Why? Is this always the case? Why or Why not?
  - o What is your thought process when deciding to purchase these products? Are you apprehensive? Do you not give it much thought? Why? Why not?
  - o Do you discuss these purchasing decisions in your family? Among friends? Neighbors?
  - o Who or what do you consider influential in terms of impacting your purchasing decisions or attitudes toward products? Why?

#### PERCEPTIONS OF AN ALTERNATE (E.G., DfE) LABEL

#### **Testing Alternate (e.g., DfE) Logo [45 minutes]**

*Background information will be provided on the alternate label being tested. For example: I'd like to show you a logo that EPA uses on certified antimicrobial products, such as disinfectants and sanitizers, that have chemical ingredients that meet stringent criteria for human health and environmental effects. This label is called the Design for the Environment, or DfE, logo.*

I'd like to get your thoughts regarding this [alternate] logo and whether it is effective in communicating the goals of this program.



- How would you sum up your first impression of this label?
  - o Would you notice it if you saw it on a product?
  - o Is it attractive?
    - Why or why not?
- What does this label mean to you, the consumer?
  - o How well do you think the message comes across in this label?
  - o Is it easy to understand at a glance?
- Is this label credible? Do you believe it will deliver on what the label conveys?
  - o Why or why not?
- Does this label give you any information about the product's impact on human health?
  - o If so, what does it tell you?
- Does this label give you any information about the product's impact on the environment?
  - o If so, what does it tell you?
- Does this label provide enough information to help you choose between various products in a category (e.g., disinfectant products)?
  - o Why or why not?
- How well do you think the name conveys what the program is trying to do?
- How well do you think the visual label conveys what the program is trying to do?
- How likely would you be to use this label to help you decide on a product to purchase?
  - o Why or why not?
- What would it take for you to seek out a product with this label?
  - o Why is this important to you? Unimportant to you?
- What is most important to you when deciding which products in this category you would purchase?
  - o Why? Is this always the case? Why or Why not?
  - o What is your thought process when deciding to purchase these products? Are you apprehensive? Do you not give it much thought? Why? Why not?
  - o Do you discuss these purchasing decisions in your family? Among friends? Neighbors?
  - o Who or what do you consider influential in terms of impacting your purchasing decisions or attitudes toward products? Why?

For comparison, I'd also like to show you another label, the Safer Choice label. This is a label that EPA allows to be used on certified cleaning products other than disinfectants that have

chemical ingredients that meet stringent criteria for human health and environmental effects. In other words, products with the label contain only safer ingredients.



I'd like to get your thoughts on how this label compares to the [DfE] label that we just discussed, and whether the two are similar.

- Does the [DfE] label seem similar to the Safer Choice label?
  - o Why or why not?
- Would you say the two labels are similar or the same?
  - o What are the differences between the two labels?
- If you were in the store shopping for household goods, do you think you would be able to tell the difference between these two labels?
  - o What makes it clear that the labels are different?
- What message do you think EPA is trying to convey about products with the DfE label?
- Would it be fair to say that the two labels are similar but distinct?
  - o Why or why not?

#### CONCLUSION (RELEVANT TO ALL MODULES)

#### **Communication Preferences and Wrap Up [5 minutes]**

As a result of our discussion [tonight], are you interested in learning more about the EPA program we have discussed this evening?

What would be the best way to provide additional information for you? Where would you be most likely to pay attention to it? [e.g., website, product packaging, point of purchase information or display, magazines, or newspapers]

On behalf of the U.S. EPA, I want to thank all of you for your input today. Please stop by the reception desk to receive an incentive for joining us this evening. [Collect all materials]