

Expiration date: 3/31/2026

**Focus Group Moderator Guide (to be used by focus group moderator)**

Thank you for joining us today. I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm from Banyan Communications, a public health communications consulting firm. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is sponsoring this project. The purpose of this discussion is to hear your views and opinions on important health topics concerning wastewater monitoring. Your insights are very important to us, and your time today is appreciated. We will have about 60 minutes for our discussion.

Before we begin, I want to review a few ground rules for our discussion.

- There are no right or wrong answers.
- 1-2 notetakers from Banyan and observers from CDC may be observing to hear your opinions directly and take notes so that your opinions are accurately captured.
- Your identity and anything you personally say here will remain secure and no one will contact you after this interview is over.
- If at any time you are uncomfortable with my questions, you can choose not to answer.
- Be sure to only use first names during the discussion. Please do not use your last name. Also, if you bring up a friend or other person you know as an example in our discussions, please do not use their last name either.

Some virtual meeting considerations:

- Please mute your mic if you aren't speaking.
- Please do not speak over each other and wait until someone is finished before speaking. However, if mistakes happen, no worries.
- Let's use the "raise your hand" feature, especially if you can't get into the conversation. It's the button on the reactions panel. Let's give that a test.
- Please use the chat! If someone is speaking and you really need to get your idea out there, put it in the chat. We will get to it.
- If you can, please leave your camera on. It's helpful to see your faces!
- If you need to go to the restroom during the discussion, please do so. No need to inform us. Simply turn off your camera and mic before you get up.
- Please turn your cell phone to vibrate or silent mode.
- Please do not answer your phone during this group unless it is an emergency.

CDC estimates the average public reporting burden for this collection of information as 60 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data/information sources, gathering and maintaining the data/information needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. 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. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to CDC/ATSDR CDC/ATSDR Information Collection Review Office, 1600 Clifton Road NE, MS H21-8, Atlanta, Georgia 30333; ATTN: PRA (0920-1154).

- We ask that you please not drive or operate a vehicle while you are in this group as it is dangerous.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

- The session will be recorded and recordings will be destroyed after project completion.

If I have your consent to participate and record this session, we can begin [wait for consent of each participant]

FGD facilitator note: focus groups will be divided into different demographics (see table 1 in Supporting statement B for the list of different demographics). Certain questions will only be used for specific demographics. That is noted throughout this document.

*Today, we're going to talk about wastewater monitoring, which is also known as wastewater surveillance. Let's go around and introduce yourself - tell us the name you'd like us to call you and your pronouns. It's wonderful to meet you—let's get started.*

*First, I am going to ask a few questions about what you know about wastewater monitoring.*

### **Section A: Wastewater knowledge, awareness, and attitudes**

1. What comes to mind when you hear “wastewater”?
  - Probe: Perhaps you've heard it on the news, read it somewhere?
  - Probe: Perhaps you've heard about “sewage”?
2. *[For business leaders]* What type of business do you own, co-own, or make decisions that impact your staff?
3. Where do you typically go to get information about viruses or illnesses present in your community?
  - Probe: Healthcare provider
  - Probe: TV, social media, news
  - Probe: online, perhaps specific website?
4. What comes to mind when you hear “wastewater monitoring”? “Wastewater monitoring” can provide early warning signs of virus spread in communities.
  - Probe: Had you ever heard this term before?
  - Probe: Perhaps a specific virus or disease?
  - Probe: An organization that supports wastewater monitoring?
5. What do you know about wastewater monitoring?
  - Probe: Where did you learn this?
6. Where do you think wastewater monitoring data come from? Who collects wastewater samples, tests them, and analyzes the data?
  - Probe: health departments?
  - Probe: state or federal govt?
  - Probe: health care providers and health systems?
  - Probe: wastewater utilities?

### **Section B: Message and materials testing**

*Now I would like you to look at a few [INSERT MATERIAL] that discuss information on wastewater monitoring.*

*[Interviewer will display a concept (from **Attachment 9**) and give participants a few minutes to view and/or read the concept and then ask the questions below. Repeat until all predetermined webpages/materials for each participant have been reviewed. If time permits the interviewer may ask the individual to review other pages listed*

in **Attachment 9**. Pages will be rotated randomly through the demographic categories (**Supporting Statement B**) to ensure pages are seen by multiple participant categories.]

7. How would you describe your experience with data? Say more about that.
  - Probe: How often do you use data?
  - Probe: Do you use data in your personal or professional life?
  - Probe: What type of data do you interpret or understand?
8. How comfortable or overwhelmed are you by data? Say more about that.
  - Probe: At a certain time of the month maybe when the bills come in.
  - Probe: Using data on a smartwatch, like tracking steps.
  - Probe: Getting information from your doctors, such as lab test results.
9. How would you sum up in a few words your first impression of this [INSERT MATERIAL]?
  - Probe: What is the main idea that this is trying to get across?
  - Probe: What do you like? Dislike?
  - Probe: What makes you say that?
10. [If comparing two materials] Which [INSERT MATERIAL] do you prefer?
  - Probe: Why?
  - Probe: Which one provides more relevant information for you?
11. Is there anything confusing, unclear, or hard to understand?
  - Probe: If yes, what?
  - Probe (if needed): Are there any words or phrases that bother you or that you think should be said differently?
12. What do you think about the length?
  - Probe (for webpage): What do you think about how long you have to scroll?
  - Probe: Is it too long/short?
13. How do you feel about the color choices and graphics?
  - What do you like/dislike about them?
14. How could this information be improved?
  - Probe: Perhaps add what you can do now to protect your health?
  - Probe: Are there easier ways we could present this information?
15. What action would you take after seeing this information?
16. How would you prefer to see the data presented in [INSERT MATERIAL]?
  - Probe: As a trend, showing change over time? or current wastewater viral activity level?

- Probe: In an infographic?
- [For a process] Probe: What do you think of the steps? Are there any steps missing?
- Probe: Would you prefer to see information for your community, or would you like to see state or national information?

17. Is there anything you want to know about this topic that this does not tell you?

18. What do you think about these data? Do you think it can be trusted?

- Probe: Why? Why not?
- Probe: What might make you trust these data more?

19. Who do you think this information is trying to reach/is intended for?

- Probe [if they say themselves]: What suggested it was talking to you?
- Probe [if they say anyone but themselves]: Why don't you think this was meant for you?
- Probe [if they say anyone but themselves]: Why do you think this was meant for that audience?

### **Section C: Behaviors**

20. Have you ever seen or looked up wastewater monitoring data?

- Probe: Where did you see this data? Where did you go to find this data?
- Probe: If yes, why?

*[For business leaders]*

21. Do you look at or think about infectious disease trends (like flu season, increased cases of COVID-19) when making any sort of business decisions?

- Probe: What types of community level disease levels would affect your business?

22. [For those who have seen wastewater monitoring data] Have you ever made any business decisions based on wastewater monitoring data?

- Probe: Perhaps making a staffing plan in case people are out sick?
- Probe: Changing business tactics based on disease trends?
- Probe: Developing best practices for your business, such as mask wearing for employees or recommending guests/clients wear masks?
- Probe: Do you value wastewater data for making business decisions? Why?
  - What information is missing to help you make this decision?

*[For all participants]*

23. For those who have seen wastewater monitoring data] Have you ever made any decisions based on wastewater monitoring data?
- Probe: Perhaps not going out in public? Perhaps changing travel plans to stay home?
  - Probe: Perhaps taking precautions like wearing a mask in public places?
  - [For caretakers of children] Probe: Perhaps keeping your kids home from school, or away from other activities?
  - [For caretakers of elderly] Probe: Perhaps keeping the older adults that you care for more isolated, away from other people?

#### **Section D: Information Seeking**

24. Do you prefer the term wastewater monitoring, wastewater sampling, wastewater surveillance or wastewater testing? [present terms on a slide for participants to see]
- Probe: Why do you prefer it?
  - Probe: Is any term easier to understand than another? Say more about that.
  - Probe: Is any term more confusing than another? Say more about that.
  - Probe: What do you think of when you hear wastewater monitoring? What do you picture happening?
25. What would you like to know about wastewater monitoring?
- Probe: Perhaps how wastewater affects you?
  - Probe: Perhaps the wastewater collection process at wastewater treatment plant?
  - Probe: How would you like to learn more about wastewater monitoring?
  -
26. Wastewater monitoring can be used to detect many different types of pathogens, or diseases circulating in a community. What types of things would you like to see wastewater monitoring data on?
- Probe: Different types of diseases, such as flu, RSV, or antibiotic resistance?
27. Where would you go to learn about wastewater monitoring or find wastewater monitoring data?
- Probe: Are there specific organizations or channels you would like to learn from?
  - Probe: CDC website? State and local health websites? News media?
28. Would you seek out information about wastewater monitoring?
- Probe: Why/why not?

#### **Section E. Closing**

1. Before we close, I would like to know:
- What topics have we not covered on wastewater monitoring that you might want to learn more about?
  - Are there other channels/formats that we have not discussed that you would prefer to receive wastewater monitoring messages from?

Okay, that's all the time we have for today. Do you have any final thoughts?

Excuse me for one moment so I can check with our notetakers to ensure no additional questions need to be asked.

Thank you for your participation. We value your time and appreciate your feedback on how to improve information and messages about wastewater monitoring. Have a good day/evening.