Advancing Best Practices and Cultural Relevance of HM&RF Programs for Indigenous Communities (I-HMRF)

Instrument 1. HM&RF administrators and facilitators: Focus Group Protocol

What are we hoping to learn from this activity?

For sites where HM&RF services are currently offered, this data collection activity will engage:

- **HM&RF administrators and program leaders** to (1) Understand why and how their program operates HM&RF services and why they applied for the funding, (2) Discuss how they find information about HM&RF and other grant opportunities, and (3) Provide perspective on their HM&RF program's high-level goals and promising practices, and the successes and challenges they face in administering these services for Indigenous participants.
- **HM&RF facilitators** to (1) provide perspectives into the promising practices and successes and challenges they face in serving Indigenous participants and (2) uncover any promising practices.

Activity assumptions

A facilitated focus group guided by a flexible set of key questions.

- Invite ~3-8 participants
- Plan for 60-90 minutes
- Token of appreciation ($50 for non HMRF grantees)

Pre-work

The moderator will work with contacts in the selected site(s) to customize the opening of the Group, considering who should open the Group and how (for instance, whether that be an opening prayer, song, or story). Additionally, the moderator will create a copy of the protocol for each group that customizes the questions for the invited participants, depending on whether administrators, facilitators, or both will be present for the conversation.

Instructions for moderators

You will be conducting a focus group. You may need to skip some questions in order to focus on the questions that are most relevant to the participants. Ahead of the focus group, tailor this protocol based on the invited participants.

Before you begin, read the verbal consent script below to describe the study to respondents, and ask each participant to respond to the two requests for consent: (1) for participating in the focus group and (2) for permission to record the focus group. Do not start recording until after the participants consent. Do not record the focus group if you do not have the participants' consent to do so. If this happens, be prepared for the notetaker to take detailed notes.

Introduction and consent script

Thank you for taking time to speak with me today. My name is [NAME] and I work for an organization called Mathematica. Mathematica is an organization that is committed to improving public well-being and promoting a more equitable and just world. Today, I will be facilitating a discussion with you to learn about your experience…

- [*IF ADMIN*: overseeing a [Healthy Marriage and/or Responsible Fatherhood] program that serves Indigenous participants to better understand your motivations for offering these services, what has worked well for you, and where you have encountered challenges].
- *IF FACILITATOR*: providing [Healthy Marriage and/or Responsible Fatherhood] services to Indigenous participants to better understand what has worked well for you and where you have encountered challenges].

Before we move into the discussion, I would like to share some information about what you can expect and confirm your consent to participate today.

This conversation is to support a project called the *Advancing Best Practices and Cultural Relevance of Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Programs for Indigenous Communities* project, or what we call I-HMRF. This project is sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Your participation in the conversation is completely voluntary, and you may skip any questions you don't wish to answer or stop at any time. If you participate in the focus group, you will receive $50 to thank you for your participation. There are no known risks to joining today's conversation, and there is no penalty or consequence for deciding not to participate. There are also no right or wrong answers to the questions I will ask; I'd just like to hear your perspectives based on your experience. We will use the information you share with us to write a summary of what we learned, but we will not attribute any of your comments to you in our reports.

We expect this discussion to take about 60-90 minutes. We value the information you will share with us and want to make sure we capture it accurately by recording it. Only the team that is working on the study will have access to the recording and the transcription. We will destroy the recording and the transcription at the end of the study.

Do you have any questions?

You should have received a form today that has all the information I just mentioned about participating in this focus group. If you think of questions after we are done today, you can call the number that's provided on the form. If you didn't get a form, just let [PROGRAM] know and they'll

give you one.

Before we can begin, I need to confirm your participation by asking you two questions:

- Do you agree to participate in this focus group?
- [*If yes*] Do we have your permission to record the discussion?

Introduction to the focus group

I would like to start by acknowledging this land and the people who reside on it. [Insert land acknowledgement].

Next, I'd like to agree on some shared norms for our discussion.

- This will be an informal discussion. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. We are interested in learning everyone's perspective.
- There may be times in the discussion when you have different opinions than other people do, and that is okay. We want to hear all opinions.
- There will be no formal breaks, so please feel free to step away whenever you need to.
- We would like one person to talk at a time so we can understand everyone clearly, but we hope each of you will share your thoughts at some point.
- We also ask you to respect each other's privacy and not share what we talk about here with anyone else.

There is a lot we look forward to asking you about, so I may change the subject or move the discussion ahead from time to time, just to keep the conversation moving. Please know that if we do this, it is only to make sure we can cover all questions today. After today, if there is more you would like to speak about on a particular topic, please feel free to reach out to us. [*IF IN-PERSON:* We will provide our contact information on a handout. / *IF VIRTUAL:* We have attached a contact information handout document to this virtual meeting invitation]. Your thoughts matter to us.

Anything else to add to our shared norms before we begin?

Do you have any questions before we start?

[If permission granted by all participants, start recording].

Now, before we get to the questions, I am going to read a statement required by the Paperwork Reduction Act, which is a law that describes how federal agencies can collect information from the public.

This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to inform future program development related to HMRF Indigenous grantees. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average **75** minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, 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. The OMB number and expiration date for this collection are OMB #: 0970-0531, Exp: 9/30/2025. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Lauren Tingey; LTingey@mathematica-mpr.com.

Participant Introductions

Please introduce yourself to the group by sharing your name, your Tribal affiliation or ancestry if applicable, and your role at [PROGRAM] and what that role entails.

Description of current program services

I'd like to start by hearing about the services you offer through [PROGRAM].

1. In your own words, what would you say is the goal or mission of [PROGRAM]?
2. What are the key services or support that [PROGRAM] provides, and how do those align with the program's goals?
    a. *Probe:* What supports does this program provide for participants?
3. [*IF FACILITATOR*] What are your goals as a facilitator?
    a. *Probe:* What do you hope participants will learn or gain from these services, supports, or activities?

[*IF ADMIN*] Motivation for and challenges pursuing HM&RF funding

Currently, only two programs in the U.S. are federally funded to provide healthy marriage and/or responsible fatherhood services in Indigenous communities. We are interested in learning more about what might motivate or prevent more organizations from applying for this type of funding.

4. What was [PROGRAM]'s motivation for applying for federal funding to offer [HM and/or RF] services?
5. How did you first hear about the opportunity for federal [HM and/or RF] funding?
6. Are there any other grant funding opportunities you stay informed about? If so, what are they and how do you stay informed?
7. Was there any part of the [HM and/or RF] grant funding application process that was challenging for you? If so, please tell me about that.
    a. *Probe:* How might the application process be made simpler to complete?
8. Are there aspects of the funding requirements that are challenging for your program to accommodate? If so, what are they? (Challenges may be things such as identifying or adapting a curriculum to meet funding requirements for the curriculum).
    a. *Probe:* What changes might you suggest to the requirements to encourage more

organizations to apply?

9. Are there aspects of the funding requirements or the notice of funding opportunity announcement specifically that your program has not found to be relevant for most Indigenous participants? What were they?

[*ALL*] Promising practices, successes, and challenges

Our team is interested in learning what is working well and what is challenging for [HM and/or RF] programs when providing services for Indigenous communities so that we can share these lessons with other programs.

10. When thinking about participant recruitment, what aspects of your current [HM and/or RF] program services are most enticing or interesting to potential Indigenous participants?
    a. *Probe:* Are there any aspects that are not enticing or interesting to potential Indigenous participants? If so, which ones? For instance, aspects that might seem irrelevant or even off-putting.
11. *[IF FACILITATOR]* Once a participant has been recruited and has engaged with services, are there aspects of your [HM and/or RF] services that you find Indigenous participants are particularly receptive to?
12. How does your [HM and/or RF] program support or encourage participants to attend and/or engage with services?
    a. *Probe*: Are there aspects of the services that you notice make attendance challenging?
13. How have the [HM and/or RF] services your program offers helped participants make progress towards their goals?
    a. *Probe:* Is there a success story or anecdote you might share of a time when you noticed this kind of progress or transformation?
14. Are there aspects of the [HM and/or RF] services that are challenging for you to oversee? What makes them challenging?
    a. *Probe:* Are there aspects of the [HM and/or RF] services that facilitators have noticed are not helpful for or relevant to your clients? Please tell me about them.
15. Are there any [HM and/or RF] services that [PROGRAM] doesn't currently offer that you believe would be beneficial for the people you serve?
    a. *Probe:* What feels like it might be missing from the current list of activities or supports?
    b. *Probe:* What supports would your program need to offer these services?

16. What lessons have you personally learned about overseeing these types of [HM and/or RF] services that you think other programs serving Indigenous participants might find helpful, especially ones that are new to this content or this population?

    a. *Probe:* What do you wish you had known when you began in this role about how best to approach this work?

Closure

Those are all the questions I have for you today.

17. Any final comments, thoughts, or questions you would like to share before we wrap up?

[*IF IN-PERSON:* We will provide our contact information on a handout; / *IF VIRTUAL*: We will share a link in the chat] to provide optional anonymous feedback if you have anything else you would like to share with us after the session.

Thank you for sharing your experiences!