

FOCUS GROUPS

A focus group involves bringing together a group of people to share their opinions, concerns and perceptions toward ideas, concepts, services, plans, goals etc..



Estimated Timescale: 1-2 Hours

Materials: Audio / Video Recorder, Pens & Paper

Who should be involved?

Anyone who you're designing with / for - cultural heritage professionals, designers, technologists etc.

Why should you use this method?

You should use focus groups if you want to come to a quick understanding of a community's life, dynamics and needs. Focus groups can give you a compelling look at how a larger set of the people you're designing for operates.

STEP 1 (ADVANCE PREPARATION)

- Identify the members of the group that you want to be part of the Focus Group. If you're trying to learn something specific, organize the group so that you have the best chance at hearing it.
- Identify key themes that you wish to discuss at the focus group. Within each of the themes, identify key questions that you might wish to ask to the group. In doing so, try to formulate questions that will generate discussion amongst the group.

STEP 2

- Begin the focus group with a presentation by the facilitator, outlining any relevant background information and the discussion themes.

STEP 3

- Following this, initiate an open discussion to allow for the input of the participants.
- Have one facilitator ask the questions and another facilitator take notes and capturing what the group is saying. The focus group could also be video / audio recorded.

WHAT NEXT?

- Following the focus group, review the notes and recordings in order to gain an understanding of the insights of the participants. This can be used as input into the user requirements of the intended design. The output of the focus group could also be used as input to subsequent co-design activities.
- In the weeks after using the method, give feedback to the participants to show how input has been used (so the dialogue continues.)

Tips for successfully carrying out this method

- The best focus groups seek to hear everyone's voice, get diverse opinions, and are strategic about group makeup.
- Convene the focus group on neutral ground, perhaps a shared space that everyone will have access to.
- Come prepared with a strategy to engage the quieter members of the group. This can mean asking them questions directly or finding ways to make the more vocal members of the group recede for the moment.