

Sample agenda and discussion process for a focus group about a smoke-free bylaw

A focus group is a way to initially gather input about going smoke-free in your building. It is not to make decisions. In your recruitment of participants for the focus group, explain clearly that at this time you seek their opinions, not decisions.

Focus groups

A focus group is a meeting at which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea or packaging.

A focus group:

- *usually involves six to 10 people led by a host through a series of questions;*
- *is about 45 to 90 minutes long;*
- *is structured around a set of carefully predetermined questions – usually no more than four to six questions; and,*
- *allows an individual to state their opinions and ideas, to listen to the opinions and ideas of others in a small and safe group setting, and possibly change or enhance their opinions and ideas.*

Organize and conduct a focus group in your building

1. Choose the questions you wish to ask

Questions in a focus group typically follow a process of:

- Engagement questions:** introduce participants to, and make them comfortable with, the topic of discussion
- Exploration questions:** have participants talk about the main topic
- Exit question:** check to see if anything was missed in the discussion

Sample questions for a focus group about a smoke-free bylaw could include:

- What is your experience with smoking in our building? What are positive aspects, if any? What are negative aspects, if any?
- What do you like about the idea of a smoke-free bylaw in our building?
- What do you dislike about the idea of a smoke-free bylaw in our building?
- What additional information do you need in order to decide if you agree with a smoke-free bylaw in our building?
- What next steps do you suggest?

2. Decide about the logistics of the focus group

Think about the date, time and location. Have a recording method (e.g.; someone who types on a laptop, writes on a flip chart or uses a recording device).

3. Recruit for and invite participants to the focus group

Think about the residents and other stakeholders who could influence or be affected by a smoke-free policy. Think about the backgrounds and interests of the stakeholders. Try to recruit a mix of participants (e.g.; people who smoke, don't smoke, have lived in the building for a long time, are newcomers to the building, are different ages).

Personally talk with each person and invite them to the focus group. Explain the purpose and the process. Tell them that it will be recorded and ask their permission.

4. Conduct the focus group

Use name tags.

a. Welcome and overview

- Introduce yourself.
- Explain the purpose and process of the focus group.

b. Introductions by all participants

- Ask each person to say:
 - Name
 - Unit
 - Years lived in the building
 - One thing they like about living in the building (*this question helps everyone to start on a positive note by thinking about why they like their home*)

c. Ask the questions

- Ask the first question, then go around the table and have each person speak.
- As you ask the next questions, you can encourage participants to speak when they choose. Ensure that each person has an opportunity to talk about each question.
- Ask:
 - Who else has thoughts about this – maybe something a little different?
 - What else have people experienced in this area?
 - You've been discussing several different ideas; what haven't we heard yet?
 - We want to hear all your opinions. Who has something else to discuss?

d. Summarize the discussion

- Give a short two-to-three-minute summary of the main themes you heard.
 - Ask participants: did I correctly describe what was said?

e. Thanks and closing

- Thank everyone for participating.
- Explain how you plan to use the information and what you plan to do next.
- Explain how residents will be engaged.