



Focus Group



Is a moderated discussion where few selected participants exchange on a given topic along a given structure to obtain their feedback and opinions.



Information
Ideation
Consultation
Co-Decision



<25 people
25-50 people
50-100 people
> 100 people
> 1000 people

Preparation:
1 month for invitation of the participants, selection of venues and catering



Implementation:
0,5 hours

Follow-up:
A couple of days for analysis and documentation



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At least two persons for preparation, moderation and documentation

The Method: What is it, when to use it and what outcome to expect

A focus groups is a form of a collective interview where few selected participants discuss a specific topic structured around more or less three main questions.

Focus groups can be used for a variety of occasions, such as urban planning, policy development, or assessing needs of a specific group. It is suitable for reaching groups who are less likely to get involved in (larger) participatory processes and makes discussing easier for those who are not used to discuss or deliberate due to its small group size.

The outcome of the discussion provides decision-makers or NGOs a detailed and authentic idea of the concerns of a community and citizens can exchange with others and provide their feedback on a topic of concern.

The Process: How to conduct it in an in-person setting or online using a PC/laptop with video option

The method follows three phases:

1. Preparation: First, the organizers frame the topic, define three to five main questions, and invite the desired target group that should discuss the topic. Secondly, it needs to be determined how the upcoming discussion can be documented carefully. For voice recording or filming of the discussion, make sure consent of all participants is obtained prior to the event. Thirdly, when conducting online, assure all participants can access and manage the virtual room by giving it a test run upfront.

2. Conduction: Once the group is present, the facilitator explains the goal and agenda and rules for respectful interaction. The discussion is opened with an introductory question and evolves through moderated exchange. Once everything is discussed, the facilitator offers a summary of the process and informs the group about the next steps.

3. Follow up: Usually a report with crucial findings, recommendations and conclusions including quotes is created which may be provided to the ones interested in the outcome.

Blended participation

- A focus group can be part of a broader blended participation process by transmitting the results into a (online) consultation, (online) planning cell or a broader face-to-face participatory process.

Digital communication

- Virtual chat rooms can enable exchange of otherwise hard to reach citizens. Also, they create a possibility to conduct several focus groups simultaneously, comparing results later on.

Good to know

- Every participant should contribute
- Contributions can be made verbally with other means (drawing, body-language etc.)
- Discussion-rounds shouldn't be too long
- To enhance participation, be sure to invite citizens who have a direct interest in the topic
- Consider hiring a translator to ease communication with some target groups
- Works great for marginalized or minority groups
- Offering incentives (financial compensation, food etc.) might attract participants
- The results are not representative for the opinion of society at large
- Read further:
 - <https://participedia.net/method/4777>