

# Ensuring Productive Focus Group Data Collection

You will be following a focus group guide with open-ended questions in a particular sequence.

You will need to strictly follow focus group protocol questions to:

- Gain better insight and specifics of what's being said
- Encourage engaging conversations about our data collection needs
- Participants should feel free to converse with each other and should be encouraged to explain their answers  
**Facilitator Tip:** Assure the group it's ok to be conversational
- Avoid topic drift by appropriately intervening to enable increased opportunities for data collection  
**Facilitator Tip:** The first time this happens, point it out and explain how important it is we stay on topic to get the most out of our time. Let them know your role will be to bring the group back on topic
- Recognize when a topic is changing and/or that an idea is left incomplete  
**Facilitator Tip:** Stop the group and ask what needs to happen for the idea to become an action; or, if there's anything else needing to be added
- Support dialogue that generates ideas and innovative proposals  
**Facilitator Tip:** Use opportunities to draw out any "yes" or "no" responses to gain a deeper understanding of why or how participants answered the way they did. For example, ask "will you please give me an example," or what do you mean when you say that." There are also some follow-up "probes/open-ended questions" that inspire responses. These are questions that inspire participants to talk about their experiences, lives, and thoughts about circumstances. For example, ask "how does that impact you or your family", or "can you tell me more about your experiences around that?" and "as you think about that, what comes to mind regarding how this could be addressed?"
- Remind everyone that all voices in the focus group support the data collection  
**Facilitator Tip:** Offer cues to participants monopolizing time and don't be afraid to "interrupt" so other voices can be heard. Show respect for others ideas and build upon their ideas

## Your Facilitator Data Collection Tone and Guidance

- Use Neutral language in response to comments. Instead of "good" say "okay" instead of "I agree or I love that" say "thank you"
- You will encourage discussion with neutral follow-up questions (referred to as probes) such as:
  - Say a little more about that.
  - Can you give me an example of...?
  - Does anyone else feel differently? Has anyone else had a different experience?
  - What else do you feel is important?
  - What else would you like to see happen?