

**FY20 NEEDS AND RESOURCES ASSESSMENT**

Focus Group Implementation Guide

Focus groups are designed to gather information from groups of people related to specific ideas. As you plan and conduct these focus groups, think of them as a conversation with a plan and purpose. The benefits of focus groups are that participants engage with other people and they can build on or respond to others’ responses. The challenges of focus groups are that some people can dominate the conversation and they can get off track.

As the facilitator, try to stay neutral and do not provide responses to the participants unless they ask you a direct question that you can answer without providing your position. It is important for the participants to be able to share their thoughts and ideas without perceived judgement. Let the participants know that their individual responses will be confidential and will not be identified; however, you cannot guarantee that other people in the focus group will keep the information confidential.

• Use the protocol as a guide for the conversation, but use your professional judgement to follow-up or seek additional information from participants

• Jot down main themes under each question as possible (if appropriate and possible, audio record focus groups, but inform groups that you are recording)

• Ask follow-up questions to clarify participants’ responses as needed

• Redirect or try to rephrase question if conversation gets off-track or indicate that you need to continue based on time constraints if you feel the conversation is no longer productive related to the purpose or intent of the question (see next bullet, though)

• Get through as many questions as possible, but don’t worry if you don’t get to all questions. Focus groups can be unpredictable related to responses, length, and it is more important to be flexible to gain information

• Review the reporting template prior to the focus groups to better understand how you will summarize the information received from the focus groups

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Focus Group Protocol

**Introduction**

The purpose of this focus group/meeting is to gain information about young children and their families living in this community and in South Carolina. We are gathering this information as part of a state-wide needs assessment that will help identify priorities for communities, regions, and the state. Your name or any identifying information will not be included with responses provided.

**Question 1**

What are your hopes (goals) for your child and young children in this community (county, region)?

*Rephrase as needed:* What do you want for them now and/or in the future?

**Question 2**

How well is this community currently doing in ensuring these hopes (goals) are achieved?

**Question 3**

What are the supports, programs, or other things within this community that help young children meet these hopes and goals?

**Question 4**

What prevents young children from meeting these hopes (goals)?

*Rephrase as needed:* What are barriers or challenges that children and families face in this community?

**Question 5**

What do you think are the top priorities in promoting positive outcomes for young children in this community?

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Focus Group Roster

1. **Name of County?**
2. **How many focus groups did you host? (Please circle the number that applies.)**

1 2 3 4 5

1. **How many people participated in the focus group or groups?**

Parents/Caregivers of Young Children (0-5 years):

Organizational Representatives:

Other:

**4**. **Summarize (4-6 sentences) the responses to Question 1: What are you hopes (goals) for your child and young children in this community (county, region)?**

1. **Summarize (4-6 sentences) the responses to Question 1: How well is this community currently doing in ensuring these hopes (goals) are achieved?**
2. **Summarize (4-6 sentences) the responses to Question 3: What are the supports, programs, or other things within this community that help young children meet these hopes and goals?**
3. **Summarize (4-6 sentences) the responses to Question 4: What prevents young children from meeting these hopes (goals)?**
4. **Summarize (4-6 sentences) the responses to Question 5: What do you think are the top priorities in promoting positive outcomes for young children in this community?**
5. **In general, indicate the areas of the priorities identified in the focus group (check all that apply).**

□ Early learning and development (example: high-quality child care/early education, school readiness/success in school)

□ Health and wellbeing including physical health and mental health (example: well-child visits, healthy food, early intervention, parent wellbeing)

□ Family and community (safe communities, family-oriented activities, jobs for families)

□ Other (please specify):