Guide | Planning and Leading Educator Focus Groups

01 Define the purpose

Clearly define the purpose of the focus group. Determine what you hope to achieve from the focus group and make sure it aligns with the museum's educational program strategy.

02 Identify participants

Identify teachers from various grade levels, subject areas, and school types. Ensure that the participants represent a diverse range of perspectives and experiences.

03 Choose a location

Select a location that is convenient and comfortable for the participants. Consider using a space within the museum or a nearby location that is easily accessible. Virtual focus groups are also an option!

04 Recruit participants

Reach out to potential participants through email, social media, and word of mouth. Leverage existing relationships with schools and libraries. Provide clear information about the purpose of the focus group, the time commitment, and any incentives that may be offered.

05 Develop questions

Develop a list of questions that will guide the discussion. Ensure that the questions are open-ended, and will elicit valuable feedback from the participants. Some tips for developing questions include:

- Start with general questions that allow participants to introduce themselves and establish rapport with each other and the facilitator.
- Ask questions that elicit participants' experiences and perspectives related to the museum's educational resources, such as "What do you think are the most important aspects of a successful educational resource?" or "How do you currently incorporate museum resources into your classroom?"
- Use probing questions to follow up on participants' answers, such as "Can you give an example of how you have used museum resources in your teaching?" or "Why do you think that aspect of an educational resource is important?"
- End with specific questions that elicit feedback on potential educational resources, such as "What types of resources would be most helpful to you in your teaching?" or "What do you think are the key features of a successful in-class educational resource?"

06 Prepare materials

Prepare any materials that will be needed for the focus group, such as consent forms, note-taking sheets, or evaluation forms.

07 Conduct the focus group

Begin the focus group by introducing the purpose and goals of the discussion. Encourage all participants to share their thoughts and ideas. Use active listening skills to ensure that all participants have a chance to

speak, and take notes throughout the discussion to record any important points or ideas. Use the prepared questions to guide the discussion and ensure that all relevant topics are covered.

Facilitation tips and tricks:

- Establish ground rules for the focus group, such as allowing everyone to speak without interruption, being respectful of other participants' opinions, and refraining from using electronic devices during the discussion.
- Use nonverbal cues, such as nodding or maintaining eye contact, to show that you are listening and engaged.
- Be flexible in your facilitation approach and adjust your questions or approach as needed based on the dynamics of the group.
- Encourage participation from all participants, including quieter or less vocal participants.
- Summarize key points or themes as the discussion progresses to ensure that all participants are on the same page and to provide a sense of closure to each topic.

08 Analyze data

Analyze the data collected from the focus group and identify any key themes or patterns. Use this information to inform the development of the educational resources.

09 Follow up

Send a follow-up email to the participants, thanking them for their participation and summarizing the key findings from the focus group.

10 Revise the plan

Use the feedback and insights from the focus group to revise the plan for the in-class educational resources.

By following these steps and incorporating facilitation tips and tricks, you can conduct a successful focus group with teachers and use their feedback to create valuable in-class educational resources that align with the museum's goals.