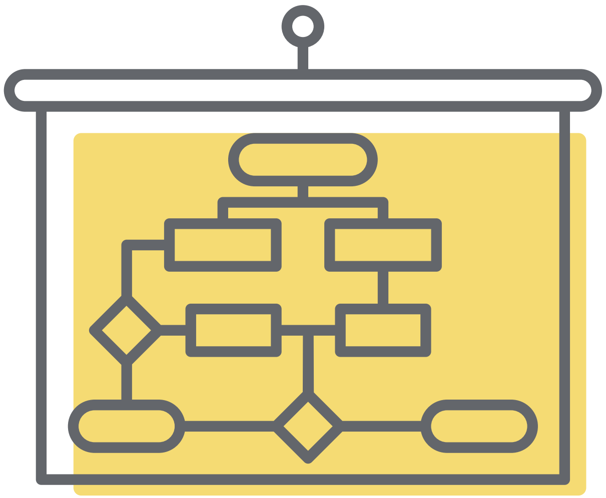
Fair Trade
ACADEMY™

GUIDE TO PLAN THE DATA COLLECTION VIA FOCUS GROUP



Purpose

This tool is intended to suggest **a series of steps** to support the Fair Trade Committee and the Certificate Holder in **planning the collection** of information through **focus groups**, which are a component of the **Needs Assessment** process.

Description

Focus groups are small groups of people (usually 6 to 10) who share **common characteristics** and come together to **discuss** and learn about their opinions, feelings, and experiences on a **specific topic**, while **a moderator leads the discussion**. For the Needs Assessment, the discussion should be about the needs of the Premium Participants, their families, and communities.
This tool is a guide that can be used to prepare and conduct a focus group and has an example to help clarify the instructions. The tool has been developed to be used after step 1 - Define a strategy to assess our needs - where they had to establish which methodology to use to carry out their Needs Assessment (via survey, focus group or both) based on the characteristics of the Premium Participants.

Materials

Depending on the step you are in, you will need different materials:

- Print the materials;
- Stickers;
- Pens or markers;
- Have a voice or video recorder;
- Notebook or computer to take notes;
- Pen or pencil; and
- Watch or timer.

Time

This tool can be used in different sessions to guide the process but can be read in its entirety in 30 minutes.

Procedure

STEP 1

Define the subject

Before drafting the plan for the focus group, it is necessary to define **the topic that should be discussed in order to determine the root needs of the Premium Participants, their family, and community.** If you have done surveys before and want to go deeper into the results, this would be an excellent opportunity. Consider having **only one topic per focus group**.

STEP 2

Select the moderator and the person who will record the data

To carry out the focus group you will need a moderator to lead the conversation and a person to record what is discussed. The moderator can be an internal or external person. It is recommended that the moderator be **someone with experience in leading group sessions and preferably be familiar with the social, cultural, and economic context of the people attending the focus group**.

If it is not possible to find an expert, you can select a person with the following characteristics:

- Warm personality to build trust and motivate participation;
- Able to mediate the mood of the conversation;
- Ability to listen and pay attention; and
- Good time management skills.

The person in charge of taking notes or recording can be **an internal person who has the ability to write or knows how to record video or voice with an electronic device**.

STEP 3

Develop a series of questions to guide the conversation

To get people talking about their needs, it will be necessary to ask a series of questions to direct the conversation. Closed questions can be answered with a single word, such as “yes” or “no,” while **open-ended questions ask for more detail**. An example could be the question “Does your house have water? “yes” or “no” could be the answer, but if the question is asked “How does the lack of water in your house affect you? The answer could list many details and more information.

The following is a suggested order for the conversation:

a) Discuss the causes of the problem or need.

Example: How long have you had this problem? Why do you think this problem exists? What has been done in the past to solve the problem?

b) Find out how the participants are affected by the problem.

Example: What do they do to solve the problem in their homes or community?

c) Talk about how having the problem or the need makes them feel.

Example: How has the problem affected them emotionally?

It is important that the moderator be present during the development of the questions and be aware that during the conversation people’s answers may lead to many other related questions that were not initially considered.

STEP 4

Define the duration of the session

It is suggested that the meeting last **between 40 to 90 minutes**, if the time is exceeded people could get tired. Also, keep in mind that some people tend to speak for a long time, so it is important for the moderator to **have good time management**.

STEP 5

Select the participants and invite them

Think about **what characteristics people should have in common**. For example, if the topic is water shortage, the right people would be men and women of any age who do not have water in their homes.

It is recommended that between **6 to 10 people attend in order to have control of the time and so that everyone can participate**. If the people to be invited are geographically dispersed, it may be convenient to hold several focus groups or provide transportation.

The call should be made in advance, two weeks in advance is recommended, to ensure the availability of the participants. The message should include the topic of the focus group, the objective of the activity within the framework of the Needs Assessment, the confidentiality of topics discussed during the meeting , the characteristics they are looking for from people, the number of people they need, dates, times, place and how they can register.

STEP 6

Prepare the meeting place

Focus groups work best when participants feel comfortable. It is important that **the place where the meeting will be held is quiet** and that people can sit in a circle, and since they will be talking for a long time, offering them water will help them clear their throat.

STEP 7

Check-in attendees

As people arrive at the meeting, **it will be necessary to take attendance for evidence.**

STEP 8

Welcome

As in any activity, it is important to welcome attendees and introduce the facilitator and other team members.

At the beginning of the session, consider:

- **Remind people of the objective of the activity** within the framework of the Needs Assessment, the duration of the session and the confidential use of information.

- **Give people a chance to introduce themselves**, indicating name and area of work. If possible, bring stickers and markers or pens so that people can write their names.

- **Establish the general rules** for the smooth running of the activity:

o Ask for the floor by raising your hand;
o Do not interrupt the speaker;
o Try not to take up too much time so that everyone can participate; and
o Respect the opinion of others.

STEP 9

Moderate the conversation and record the data

Once the basic information has been mentioned, it is time to ask the participants for permission to record voice or video in order to record the entire conversation and not lose any detail, in addition, it is recommended that the person in charge of recording the data take notes.

From that moment on, the moderator will conduct the session under the guide of the questions previously asked. At all times, he/she should politely ask people to participate in answering the questions in order to create an atmosphere of trust.

Keep in mind that sometimes the discussions tend to go off topic, so the moderator should be attentive to redirect participants to the main topic, **but if something worthwhile is mentioned, the opportunity should be taken**.

Another recommendation is to **identify the roles that participants naturally assume** during the group session, for example, some may be leaders, and others influencers. On the other hand, there may also be shy attendees, the right thing to do is to make them feel confident to express their opinions, never leave them aside.

STEP 10

Conclusion

At the end of the activity, the moderator can **summarize what was discussed and thank people for their participation, emphasizing the value of their contributions to the Needs Assessment**. On the other hand, it is important to mention the next steps and when they will have more news about the process of creating the Premium Plan projects, as well as to give them a contact number in case they have doubts or further questions.

STEP 11

Analysis of the information

Once the focus group is over, the moderator and the person who recorded the data, as well as other team members who participated, should **meet to make a report of the findings of the focus group**, in this document they can put the things **that caught their attention, things they did not know were happening, quotes from what a participant said (not revealing their name or identity)**, among other data that they think is important for their Needs Assessment.