SPF SIG protocol:
Infrastructure Facilitated Discussion

Overview

This facilitated discussion is part of a larger process of gathering information from SPF SIG communities. Master Trainers will facilitate two discussions with each coalition in order to capture infrastructure information and perceptions of community readiness. The first discussion will take place by April 27, 2012 and focus on the coalition's prevention infrastructure. Please note that the discussion cannot take place at the first coalition meeting.

The discussion is part of a systematic process of gathering information about the needs of each community and the capacities or strengths currently available to meet those needs. These discussions will help the coalition members learn from one another and potentially support a common vision for the coalition. In addition, the Master Trainers will have a unique opportunity to get to know the coalition better, learn about the local infrastructure, and build a relationship with coalition members.

Data collection

Preparing for the discussion

- ***Schedule the discussion.*** Select a date for the facilitated discussion in which the full coalition will be present. Ask the coalition coordinator to encourage members to attend this particular meeting so you have as many members present as possible.
- ***Review background materials.*** Refer to earlier Master Trainer Academy presentations on facilitated discussions, qualitative data collection, and note taking to prepare for the discussion.
- ***Practice using the facilitated discussion guide***. Read through the guide a few times to get familiar with the language, the timing, and the flow. You want to make sure you are completely comfortable with the guide before you implement it at a coalition meeting.
- ***Partner with another Master Trainer.*** Plan to have at least two Master Trainers attend each facilitated discussion. One Master Trainer will be primarily responsible for facilitating the discussion while the other will be primarily responsible for taking notes. If you have a third Master Trainer assigned to your community, he/she may attend as an additional note taker. You can decide which Master Trainer will take each role. This can also provide opportunities for trainers to problem solve together and validate their perceptions of the discussion.

- ***Gather your materials.*** Make a copy of the facilitated discussion guide for both the facilitator and the note taker. The note taker may take notes on paper or a laptop, whichever is the most comfortable. You will also need access to a flip chart or white board and the appropriate pens or markers. Be sure to bring an audio recording device and extra batteries.

Leading the discussion

- ***Build rapport with the group.*** Be sure to have a friendly and open attitude to make the group feel comfortable. You may have a trusted ally in the group, such as the coalition coordinator, who can introduce you. You may also want to take some time before beginning the discussion to do an ice breaker or trust-building activity.

- ***Develop ground rules.*** Make sure to address some rules about taking turns speaking, respecting each other's perspectives, refraining from discussing individuals, especially in an identifiable way, and maintaining confidentiality about what was discussed in the group once the group is over. Discussing these rules up front will ensure that participants understand the expectations and increase their comfort and trust in sharing.

- ***Read the script verbatim.*** Read the script verbatim when leading this discussion, including the introduction, transitions, and specific questions. You can add some follow-up questions to help guide the discussion, but please stick as close to the guide as possible.

- ***Listen actively***. Show participants that you are actively listening and interested in their thoughts.

- ***Remain neutral***. It is also important you remain neutral and impartial, even if you have strong opinions about the topics of discussion. Do not agree or disagree with what participants say or offer your opinion.

- ***Keep track of the time.*** The times noted next to the questions are for your reference. Please try to keep the conversation moving by abiding as closely to the time recommendations as possible. Make sure you give everyone an opportunity to share their opinions and be sure no single person dominates the discussion.

Consent

You are collecting this information from members of the coalition who are expected to work together and work with you, which may make some people concerned about sharing information. The information being asked is not likely to be sensitive, but it is important to build trust among the group and make participants feel comfortable sharing.

Be sure to ask the participants to agree to keep whatever is discussed private. Also, do not forget to get everyone's permission to record the discussion.

Also, do not discuss any individual's responses, or even participation, with any other members of the coalition. If you model responsible confidential data practices, the coalition members will understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality in all other evaluation areas.

Taking notes

Note takers are responsible for capturing what was said during the discussion and reporting it back to Wilder Research. Therefore, you will want to be sure you focus on the conversation and take clear and concise notes.

Plan to audio-record the discussion, as long as all participants give their permission. Recording the discussion can help you go back and fill in your notes after the discussion. You should still try to capture the main points everyone makes and note who made which points, but the recording can be used to fill in gaps or provide more exact wording later.

Notes also serve as "back-up" in case something happens with the recording equipment or participants wish not to be recorded, so clarity and consistency are very important.

It can be helpful to draw a small figure of the seating arrangement before starting the discussion. This way you can identify each participant by an assigned number, rather than their name. This makes it quicker and easier to identify who says what. This also allows you to protect participants' privacy.

In your notes, try to capture:

- ***Quotes.*** These are the well-said sentences or phrases that illustrate an important point of view. Place the number assigned to the speaker next to quote to indicate who said it. The addition of the number will make it easier to find the statement in the tape recording and it will help identify patterns in who shared which thoughts.
- ***Non-verbal cues from participants.*** Remember that non-verbal cues, such as head nodding, laughter, discomfort, and pauses, can mean different things in different cultures. Make note of non-verbals but don't make assumptions about what they mean.
- ***Key points and themes for each question.*** These will likely be identified by several different participants. Or sometimes they are said only once, but in such a manner that deserves attention. Make note of who contributed each key point or theme by adding their number(s) to the theme.

After the facilitated discussion

After the discussion, clean up and format your notes. This includes proofreading the notes for spelling and grammar, elaborating on points, and filling in information using the audio recording.

Whether you use a laptop or handwrite notes, we ask that the final notes are typed into the *Facilitated Discussion Guide Template*. The template should capture everything that was said during the discussion. Each note taker is required to provide a detailed description of what was heard, but does not need to turn in a verbatim script of the discussion.

Next, both the facilitator and the note taker(s) each need to fill out the *Facilitated Discussion Synthesis Form* to summarize the discussion. Facilitators and note takers should discuss their synthesis forms before they are submitted to make sure nothing was missed.

Submit copies of the *Facilitated Discussion Guide Template* and *Facilitated Discussion Synthesis Form* to Julie Atella at julie.atella@wilder.org within two weeks of the facilitated discussion.