

Youth Focus Group Questions (Sample)



1. How long have you been living in San Francisco?
2. What is the biggest challenge for you living in San Francisco? What progress have you made in overcoming this challenge?
3. What do you think is the biggest challenge for LGBTQQ youth in SF? How would you solve this problem?
4. What is your experience trying to access social services in San Francisco? How would you improve these services? What kind of housing/healthcare, etc. would work best for you?
5. How have you experienced discrimination in SF? (Follow-up questions about gender identity, sexual orientation, race, etc.)
6. What kinds of support around job search/job training would be most helpful for you? What opportunities would you like to have?
7. How have you been treated by service providers? How would you like to be treated by service providers?
8. What do you need to feel safe in San Francisco? How have you been treated by authority figures, police, shelter staff, etc.?
9. Who do you turn to for support? How does your family support you and your choices?
10. What do you think about mental health services for LGBTQQ youth? What kinds of services would you like to see?
11. Where would you like to be in 5 years and what would it take to get there?

04



Stepping Stone 4:

Skills Building

*Module 4 in the CFCL's Youth-Led
Participatory Action Research Series*

Stepping Stones



4.0 OVERVIEW

Stepping Stone 4 | Skills Building

Now that the research design is complete, it needs to be implemented. In order to do this, youth researchers will have to have the knowledge and skills to conduct research that yields accurate, reflective, and meaningful data. Stepping Stone 4 includes many interactive activities that build youth researchers' abilities in note-taking, listening, asking questions, and facilitation.

Teams probably won't have time to start skill-building until most of their research design is complete. Use tools developed during research design as practice for asking questions, taking notes, etc. You will not have to spend much time on this stepping stone if your team is conducting surveys. However, if youth researchers are engaging in qualitative data collection, look through Stepping Stone 4 for relevant activities that meet the needs of your teams and increases their capacity to conduct sound research.



Goals for Adult Allies

- » Conduct trainings on note-taking, listening exercises, and facilitation.
- » Support youth to take risks and try on new and different tasks.
- » Support youth's continued engagement and regular attendance at meetings.
- » Provide space for youth to check-in about any concerns related to the project.
- » Begin to think about locations for conducting research.

Stepping Stone Tips

This stepping stone is a breather after the arduous work of research design. Take advantage of these fun but critical activities to empower youth in their work. Remember, youth are being asked to participate in activities that may make them feel nervous, scared or unintelligent. Be prepared to support a range of emotions, to challenge their performance lovingly, and to cheer them on as they get the hang of it!

Time: 3 – 6 sessions.

Goals for Youth

- » Participate in skills development trainings.
- » Support teammates as they try on new things and build their skills.
- » Bring up any challenges in work or team and hold peers accountable to the work.

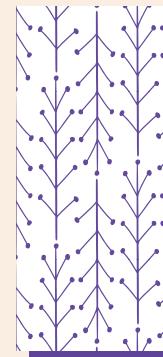


4.1 TIPS FOR CONDUCTING SURVEYS

- » **Introduce Yourselves!**
 - Introduce your name & who you are representing.
 - Give a brief project introduction and why the survey is important.
- » **Tell them it is anonymous, and they should be honest.**
 - No one will know who said what, but un-named quotes may be used.
 - You may want to collect optional contact info for follow-up.
- » **Tell them how much time they have to complete the survey.**
 - Make sure they are not rushed, so they can give thoughtful answers.
 - Giving a time limit can help to make sure they are focused.
- » **Let them know how the survey results will be used.**
 - People will take it seriously if they know it will make an impact.
 - This creates responsibility between the researcher and participant.
- » **Do something interactive to get their attention.**
 - If you are going into a classroom and students are unfocused or sleepy, you can ask questions about the topic you're surveying them about to get dialogue going before they fill out the survey.
 - You can show them a video, slideshow, or diagram as an opportunity to educate them about the issue you are working on.
- » **Bring the energy!**
 - If you are excited about the survey and the issue, they will be too!
 - If you are boring, they will not care about the survey.
- » **Make sure to bring:**
 - Extra pens or pencils.
 - Extra surveys, in case there are more people than expected.
 - Information about your project and contact information in case they want to get more information.
- » **Say Thanks!**
 - Thank participants for taking time to fill out the survey and helping you with your evaluation/research.
 - Thank the teacher or coordinator who gave you time to do the survey in their classroom or meeting.

4.2 ACTIVITY

Red Light Green Light (Follow-up Questions)



Objectives

- » To create follow-up questions for interviews and focus groups.
- » To develop skills around using follow-up questions.

Time Needed

20 – 30 minutes

Materials

- » Flip chart paper
- » Markers
- » Red and green cards for each participant

Introduction

New researchers and evaluators often have difficulty asking follow-up questions in interviews and focus groups. Knowing when to ask a follow-up question, what to ask, and when you have enough information are skills that come with practice, and feedback from other evaluators.

Instructions

Ask for 2 volunteers.

- » 1 person is the interviewer and the other is the interviewee. Give the interviewer a copy of their questions.
- » Hand everyone else red and green cards.
- » The interviewer will ask a question from the guide and the interviewee will answer.
- » The group will show a red card (a red light) until they feel that the interviewer has gotten enough information. Once that happens, they will show a green light. (You can ask group to write down follow-up questions that they hear.)

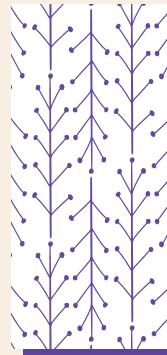
- » The interviewer cannot move onto the next question, until they are given a green light from everyone. Switch roles. Ask for new volunteers.

Debrief

- What went well? What can be improved?
- What do you need to work on for your focus groups? What can the group work on?
- What follow-up questions can you use in your actual focus groups?
- Why is this activity important for our focus groups?



4.3 ACTIVITY



Challenging Participants

Objectives

- » To develop skills in interview/focus group facilitation.
- » To build confidence in facilitation skills.

Time Needed

30 – 60 minutes

Materials

- » Challenging participant roles, written on individual pieces of paper (attached)
- » Sample focus group guide (see attached, or use your group's own focus group questions)

Introduction

Facilitation can be challenging. It takes learning new skills and practicing them. In focus groups, you are asking your research participants tough questions about their feelings, beliefs, ideas, and lives. For many reasons, participants are not always fully present during their focus groups. This can be challenging for the facilitator(s). In order to deal with difficult participants, it's important to practice and role-play scenarios before the real thing.

Instructions

Ask for a volunteer.

- » They are the first focus group facilitator—have them come to the front of the room or head of the table.
- » Pass out challenging participant roles to everyone else. Ask them to embody the role given to them once the focus group starts.
- » Ask the facilitator to begin the focus group.
 - Encourage and support them as they try to manage the group and all the challenges coming up.

Debrief

How did you see facilitators handling situations with challenging participants well?
How could things be handled differently? What else would you do that you might not have seen here?
How can we prevent having challenges in the first place?
How does this connect to our own group's process?

Challenging Participant Roles

PARTICIPANT ROLES	FACILITATOR APPROACHES
Everything the facilitator says makes you upset. You show your dislike for the facilitator in how you talk to them and how you answer their questions. You give them a lot of attitude.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Notice the participant's behavior in a way that respects them and the group. *Ask the participant if they need something they're not getting from you or the group. *Check the vibe of the whole group. *Point out group agreements, if they fit. *Check-in with participant during a break.
You are very quiet . You don't answer any questions. When you do answer, you give one-word responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Encourage everyone to speak and encourage participants to encourage each other. *Break out the large group into smaller groups. *Don't single the participant out. Instead ask for "people wearing black shoes to give their ideas or people with a sister to speak." *When the participant gives one-word answers, ask follow-up questions to bring out more of their thoughts.
You ask a lot of questions. You want clarification on everything the facilitator says. You answer a question with a question.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Directly remind participant of step up, step back. *Turn question over to group and ask someone else to answer. *If questions are off-track, add them to a "parking lot".
You are very eager. You interrupt the facilitator and always raise your hand first to try to answer all the questions. You make sure your opinion is heard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Directly remind participant of step up, step back. *Thank participant for their enthusiasm and ask them to use some of that to encourage others in the group.
You are very distracted. You answer your phone, ask to leave the room, write in your notebook, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Do a quick energizer to bring everyone's focus back into the group. *Directly ask participant to focus on group. *Refer to group agreements if needed. *Ask participant if they need something in order to focus and see if you or other group members can fulfill request.

4.3 ACTIVITY

Challenging Participants (cont.)

Other Challenging Participant Roles:

The Know It All: This person tries to answer every question first and talks for a long time every time they answer.

The Quiet One: This person is shy and looks down at the table and doesn't answer questions, or when they do, they say only short answers like "Maybe" or "I don't know."

The Chatty Pair: This person has a friend in the Focus Group and is often having little side conversations with that person or writing notes.

The Hyperactive One: This person has a lot of energy and interrupts often, talks on the phone, or gets up and moves around the room constantly.

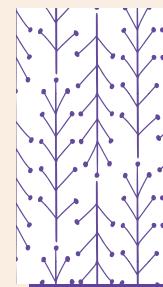
Any other roles you want to create?

Sample Focus Group Guide

1. How long have you lived in your community?
2. How has your community changed during the time you've lived there?
3. What do you think is the biggest challenge for youth in your community right now? How would you solve this problem?
4. What are your community's strengths?
5. What do you need to feel safe in your community?
6. Who do you turn to for support?
7. How are you actively involved in improving your community?
8. Where would you like to be in 5 years and what will it take to get there?

4.4 ACTIVITY

Getting It Down: Note-Taking



Objectives

- » To develop note-taking skills.
- » To explore note-taking methods.

Time Needed
20 – 30 minutes

Materials
» Paper
» Pens

Introduction

The notes from an interview or focus group are vital to the research project. In this activity, youth researchers compare different types of notes and create a list of advice to guide their note-taking.

Instructions

Divide group into 2 teams.

- » Group A will be an interviewer and an interviewee.
- » Group B will be note-takers, assigned a different note-taking style:
 - One person will just listen and try to remember the interview.
 - One person will take notes in outline form.
 - One person will take notes word-for-word.

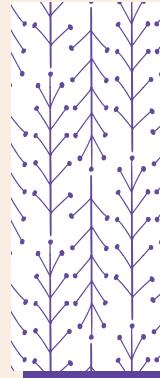
After interview is over, have note-takers (Group B) leave the room. Bring them back in one at a time and have them try to relay the interview back to the group.

Add a twist: make the person with the outline switch notes with the word-for-word person and have them try to present the other's notes.



4.5 ACTIVITY

Outlining Thoughts (Taking Notes in Outline Form)



Objectives

- » To build note-taking skills, specifically around outline form.
- » To learn and practice how to document the most significant and necessary pieces of information.

Time Needed

50 minutes

Materials

- » Flip chart paper
- » Markers
- » 2 different outline samples (one good, one bad – attached)
- » Blank outline form (attached)
- » Conversation starters written on separate slips of paper

Introduction

Note-taking does not come naturally to most of us. It is a concrete skill that we actually have to learn somewhere. There are many different styles of notes you can take, as is demonstrated in the activity *Getting It Down*. This activity specifically looks at how to take notes in outline form since it is one of the best ways to capture a lot of critical information quickly.

Instructions

Pass out two different outline samples. Lead the group in the following discussion:

- » Imagine you are standing at the front of a full room of people. Your research teammate is about to start firing questions at the group and your job is to capture what they are saying. Do you think you can write fast enough to get every word on paper? Could you have written everything I just said word-for-word?
- » The answer is, unless you're exceptionally speedy, probably not. Look at these 2 outline samples I have given you:
 - What information do they give you?
 - How is the information displayed?
 - Why do you think the note-takers chose to document in the way they did?
 - Does one give you more information than the other? Which one? Why do you say that?

Break the group into 2 teams. Ask each team to choose a note-taker and give each team a blank outline form. Have each team randomly choose a conversation starter from a container. Give instructions:

- » In your groups, you will use the conversation starter to begin a discussion between everyone except for the designated note-taker.
- » The note-taker will use the blank outline form to record the conversation in outline form.
- » Try to keep the conversation going until you hear that time is up (you'll have about 2 – 4 minutes to talk to each other).
- » The note-taker should do their best to keep up with the conversation.

Once time is called, bring both teams back together. Have each one read their notes to each other. See if the other group can figure out what the group was talking about based only on their notes.

Sample Conversation Starters

Use any of the following, or come up with your own:

- » How do you usually celebrate your birthday?
- » What's your biggest fear?
- » Describe your dream vacation.
- » What's the best Halloween costume you've ever worn?
- » Describe your favorite meal.
- » What's the most exciting thing that's happened to you this week?

Debrief

Note-takers: How was that for you? What worked well? What was hard to do?

Everyone else: Based on what we talked about in the beginning, what do you think the note-takers did really well? What do you think might be hard for you when you take notes?

If there is more time, have 2 new people practice taking notes, using different conversation topics.

Outlining Thoughts Samples

Outline Sample A ("good"):

Focus Group #2

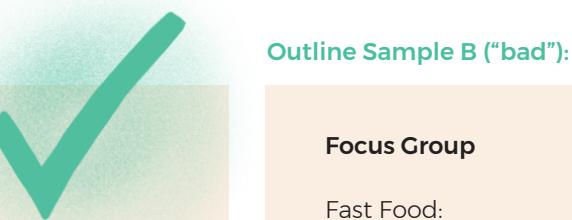
July 11, 2008, 2pm – 3pm

Facilitators: Juan and Sandi

Participants: 7 people present, all filled out demographic surveys

Research Question: Why do youth eat fast food?

- I. Location of restaurants and where we go.
 - A. FF restaurants on every corner of 'hood.
 - B. No other types of eating places.
 - C. No healthy food around.
 - a. "I love fruits and veggies, but they're hard to find on my block." – Kevin, 15 y.o.
- II. Taste important and it tastes good.
 - A. Grease and meat are yummy.
 - a. "It's addictive."
 - B. Tastes better & cheaper than cafeteria food.
 - C. Good and filling
 - a. "A burger and fries or pizza keeps me full during school."
- III.



Outline Sample B ("bad"):

Focus Group

Fast Food:

- I. Location
 - A. bad
 - B. that's it
 - a. "hard to find"
- II. Good
 - A. Cool
 - B. Grease
 - a. "Burger and fries"



4.5 ACTIVITY

Outlining Thoughts (Taking Notes in Outline Form) (cont.)

Blank Outline Form:

Focus Group/Interview #_____

Note-Taking Form

Date: _____

Time: _____

Facilitators: _____
Participants: _____

Critical Point #1: _____

Supporting Point A: _____

Supporting Point B: _____

Quote(s): _____

#2: _____

A: _____

B: _____

C: _____

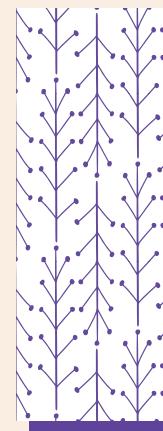
Quote(s): _____

#3: _____

A: _____

B: _____

C: _____



4.6 ACTIVITY

Show Don't Tell (Observations Practice)

Objectives

- » To learn and practice how to document observations in an unbiased way.
- » To understand how our feelings, judgments and biases can influence our observations.
- » To understand how our observations are critical to data collection.

Time Needed

30 - 60 minutes

Materials

- » Observations flip chart paper for each participant (see attached example)
- » Pens
- » Video or movie clip (optional)

Introduction

Observation can be a significant method for data collection, especially when the observations are conducted soundly. In this activity, youth researchers will have the opportunity to practice making observations and explore how their own judgment or bias may play into what they see. They will work on eliminating bias in their observations in order to report the full story. The data will be more powerful if it shows what's going on, rather than tells it.

Instructions

Give everyone a blank piece of paper. Have them observe a scene. If possible, take them somewhere to do this, like the mall or their school hallway or a park. If time or location prohibits this, then have them watch part of a movie or video. As they observe, ask them to write down full sentences to the following questions:

- » What are you seeing? What is going on? What do you notice? Who is in the scene?
- » What are they doing?
- » What are the people in the scene feeling? How do you know they are feeling this?
- » What cues are they giving (i.e. crying, laughing, yelling, etc.)?
- » What is the backdrop of the scene? Describe everything.

Once they have taken down notes for 5 - 10 minutes, gather in a central location. Give everyone an observations chart (see attached). Ask researchers to use their notes to fill in the chart:

- » Break down the sentences you have created in your observations. Put the pieces of the sentences into the categories that they fit into.
- » Be sure to write across the line, so sentences don't get jumbled when you put them back together.

Now, we are going to recreate the observations they made by eliminating any feelings that were attached to their notes. Ask them to take their chart to create new sets of notes:

- » Write out new sentences, but leave out the words or phrases that are in your *What are People Feeling?* column. (i.e. If that column includes "she was really angry at her boyfriend", leave that out of your new sentence and put together the other things you were saying about her. *How Did the Person Show their Feelings?* – "her face was bright red and she was yelling at the person with her".)
- » After everyone has worked through their sentences, have some people share a few things they came up with. Work with each other to remove the bias or judgment left in any of the statements.

4 + 5

ACTIVITY

Show Don't Tell (Observations Practice) (cont.)

Debrief

What were some important things we practiced today about observations? What do we need to be careful of or make sure we pay attention to?

What are we doing really well? Why is it more powerful to show people what we see, rather than tell them what we thought while we watched it?

Show Don't Tell (Observations Practice) Sample Flip Chart

Note #:	Who/What:	What's Going On/What are They Doing?	What are They Feeling?	How Do They Show Their Feelings?	Other Description of the Scene
Note 1					
Note 2					
Note 3					
Note 4					
Note 5					
Note 6					
Note 7					
Note 8					
Note 9					
Note 10					

05



Stepping Stone 5:

Final Reporting & Presentations

*Module 7 in the CFCL's Youth-Led
Participatory Action Research Series*