Method: Focus groups or Workshop

Purpose: To obtain information from a group of people (ideally 6 to 10), coordinated by a facilitator and can be face to face (F2F) or by web conference or video conference. The data collected is mainly qualitative data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages in this method</th>
<th>Deficiency in this method</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Useful for understanding participants experiences</td>
<td>• Focus groups require a well designed plan to keep on track and achieve maximum results—questions need to be well thought out and relate to the research objectives</td>
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<td>• Explores different viewpoints and ideas which can provide greater depth and range to the research—brainstorming can explore ideas further</td>
<td>• Toody needs to be able to effectively facilitate the group and ensure the findings are unbiased and impartial</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Establishes rapport and generates enthusiasm</td>
<td>• Toody may need to be able to write/summarise key points and comments made and listen at the same time</td>
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<td>• Flexible—Toody can deviate from the plan if clarification or more depth is needed in responses</td>
<td>• Time consuming and expensive</td>
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<td>• Get immediate feedback</td>
<td>• Conflict may arise in the focus group which could detract rather than add value to the research</td>
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<td>• Observe non-verbal communication</td>
<td>• Not anonymous. Participants may need to sign consent forms for the release of information. Also Toody needs to request permission if the focus group is video taped</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Refine ambiguous questions/define terms</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Change/reword questions</td>
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Toody will run these focus groups to:
• gather a range of community opinion on WiFi in the library, identify community needs in relation to WiFi and the most effective ways of meeting these needs

• identify what the challenges will be for the library staff at Pelican Waters, how their work practices will change and what training will be needed to cater for the implementation of WiFi

• gain an in-depth understanding of how the proposal to implement free WiFi will benefit Pelican Waters residents and tourist operators and what issues may result from this implementation

• identify gaps between current library practices and the desired practices

• look into the opportunities for implementing WiFi in the council library and document the recommendations in the research report findings and recommendations.

Tips for facilitating focus groups

Planning for the focus group or workshop:

• Read background information and develop a plan which includes the schedule, questions and the required resources.

• Set the goals and objectives and link these to the research objectives.

• Decide who to include in the focus group – make sure the sample is representative of a cross section of Pelican Waters residents, tourists and visitors.

• Book appropriate facilities.

• Give the participants advanced notice of when and where the focus group will take place if it is face to face or the time and relevant access requirements if it is via video conference or web conference.

• Issue an agenda or focus group outline so that participants can prepare for the focus group.

• Decide on the structure and types of questions. Carefully design the questions and make sure they link to the research objectives and are unbiased. Use open, closed and probing questions. Think about the effect each question will have
• Determine the method/s of recording the information provided by the focus group participants and arrange for necessary tools eg video equipment.

• Have a contingency plan if there are last moment drop outs from the planned participants.

Conducting the focus group

• Use an ice breaker, develop a rapport with the focus group and generate enthusiasm in the research topic.

• State the purpose of the focus group and provide an outline on how the focus group will be run.

• Get permission from the participants to use the findings from the focus group and to video the focus group if required.

• Explain to the participants the relevance of their participation and how the data collected will be analysed and incorporated into the research findings and recommendations.

• Adhere to the focus group schedule and bring it back on track if participants start to go off on tangents—logically order questions and highlight the level of detail required in the responses.

• Brainstorm to encourage lateral thinking, ideas and depth of discussion.

• Paraphrase and summarise responses where necessary.

• Close the focus group by asking the research participants if they want to add anything else which may contribute to the research.

• Inform the participants of the next step in the research process.

• Set up a follow-up focus group (if required).

• Thank the focus group participants for their time.

Produce a focus group report on the group’s findings

• Write up the findings from the focus group as soon as possible (particularly if the focus group is not video taped).

• If the focus group has been videoed, review the video and produce the report – acknowledge all participants.

• Write an initial summary and then go into detail, noting the main points of the focus groups and the conclusions.
• Forward findings to the participants for evaluation. Make appropriate changes to the report based on this feedback.