



How-to guide: Focus Group Workshops

During 2011, the Connect SD project brought together several community organizations in City Heights to encourage discussion during the focus group workshops. Our goal was to create intra-community connections among the organizations; connections that would be maintained for the long-term. These organizations may not have interacted with each other before. By gathering people onto a common ground, we were able to create a dialogue between them about prominent issues within their community. In order to spread this method of community development, this paper will cover the basics on how to organize and lead a focus group on issues that are specifically emphasized in your community.

Procedures

Let us start off with a simple step-by-step procedure on how to plan and execute a focus group workshop.

Step 1: Select the discussion topics and create the material that will be presented

During the Connect SD focus groups, we covered the topics of “multiculturalism,” “intergenerationalism,” and “social justice.” We felt that these were the top issues that many individuals in the City Heights community struggled over on a daily basis. Additionally, after some research, we found that many of the local organizations made these issues part of their mission statements.

The material that was created explored how people were able to recognize and connect these issues to their current community, as well as determine what could be done next to better it (see attachment A: “Focus Group Worksheet”).

Step 2: Organize the time, date, and venue location

When researching different community organizations, note when their group meeting times and event dates. Arrange for a time when the majority of the groups are available to increase the number of participants.

The venue location should be chosen within the community that is being targeted. The Connect SD focus groups were conducted at a community center within the City Heights limits, so that the participants would have easier access and feel more at home in their surroundings.

Step 3: Outreach to community groups and organizations

This may be the most time-consuming section of the planning process. Outreaching includes: emailing and calling community contacts; presenting at group meetings; distributing flyers to organization members; and following up on the RSVPs. Although a focus group is typically meant for a smaller group of people, we wanted to extend the invite to as many community members as possible. By doing this, we hoped that we could increase the connections that could be made between organizations.

Step 4: Create agenda for team members

The agenda is a key piece of material for both the participants and moderator. The participants will be able to follow along as the workshop goes on, while the moderator will be able to keep the discussion on topic (see attachment B: “Focus group agenda”).

Step 5: Conduct focus group

Keep in mind that the main purpose of a focus group workshop is to generate ideas and have an open

discussion between participants. So a moderator should not lead, but guide the ideas and keep the discussion from going off-topic. In an ideal situation, the participants will be able to carry their own discussion while the moderator pipes in with other questions and keeps time.

Things to consider

While our focus group can be replicated, the team at Connect SD recognizes that different issues plague different communities. The same set of topics may not necessarily affect the communities in the same way. Due to this, we hope that this paper will be taken as a reference on how a focus group could be conducted. Instead of taking it at face-value, we would like our focus group workshop to be used as a blue print that can be molded to various topics at hand.

Here is an example of how our focus group workshop was reformed to accommodate the different factors (see attachment C: “Senior Workshop”). The workshop was molded based on several factors: the age of the audience, the time allotted, and the number of participants. In this event, the Connect SD team was given the opportunity to present to a large number of high school seniors from Hoover High School. We were given an hour to introduce our material to this audience before switching to another group of students. As it is shown in the material that was prepared for this event, we were able to form a slightly different workshop while still keeping the contents of the focus group.

For more information about the San Diego Asian Film Foundation, go to www.sdaff.org

Attachment A: “Focus Group Worksheet”

Name:

Organization:

Connect San Diego Focus Group Worksheet

Please use this worksheet to record your impressions, ideas, questions, comments, etc. as we watch three short films and have a large group discussion.

Key Words

Throughout this focus group, we will focus upon the following words as a key part of our discussion. Please consider what these words mean to you and your organization and how you can use them to further your goals.

Intergenerationalism

Media arts

Multiculturalism

Social Justice

Short Films

To help further the conversation about intergenerationalism, multiculturalism, social justice and what role media arts plays in developing these ideas, we will be showing three short films that show these themes. Please consider the following questions when watching the films.

Paty, Me Quiero Casar Contigo (Paty, I Want to Marry You) Directed by Paulina Do, 2005

- How do you see multiculturalism displayed in this film?
- How do you see multiculturalism shown in City Heights? (How do you interact with other cultures?)

Age Strong Intergenerational Project (Directed by the Age Strong Intergenerational Project, 2010)

- What scenes you could relate to in the film?
- After watching the film, why do you think it is vital to create awareness between different generations?

The Apollos (Directed by Nick Parker and Jazmin Jones, 2006)

- In the context of the film, what is the social struggle and how do these people bring about social justice?

- What are some social issues in City Heights, and what some ideas you can suggest to create social justice?

Attachment B: “Focus Group Agenda”

***For moderator/staffONLY*:**

5:30PM (3 min) introduction: of staff in the room; mission of Connect SD; explanation of recording devices in room.

5:33PM (15 min) ice breaker: definition of the words (multiculturalism, social justice, intergenerationalism). Take magazines or draw out the definition. (their definitions will be compared and contrasted during the discussion of films) ****they can do this while eating****

5:48PM (37 min) show short films: *make sure to pass out key word worksheet for people to follow along*

(1 min) Intro

(6 min) Film: Multiculturalism - "Paty, Me Quiero Casar Contigo"

(8 min) Reflection; intro to next film

(6 min) Film: Intergenerationalism - “Age Strong Intergenerational Project”

(8 min) Reflection; intro to next film

(6 min) Film: Social justice and media/promoting your cause through media - “The Apollos”

(8 min) Reflection

6:25PM (15 min) discussion: how can media arts be used to address issues; how can this be applied to City Heights; what are some similarities; what are the differences

6:40PM (10 min) wrap-up discussion: next steps - where do we go from here; what do we do from here ****end by 6:50PM****

Total time:

aim for 1.5 hour focus group, but if it’s a nice rolling discussion... they can go over the time

For focus group participants ONLY

**Connect SD: City Heights focus group
Agenda**

1. Introduction of staff and Connect SD program
2. Definition of themes
3. Short film screening
 - a. Multiculturalism - "Paty, Me Quiero Casar Contigo" (2006)
 - b. Intergenerationalism - “Age Strong Intergenerational Project”
 - c. Social justice and media - “The Apollos” (2006)
4. Discussion of how one can apply all above issues to City Heights
5. Wrap-up discussion: where do we go from here?

Attachment C: “Senior Workshop”

Connect San Diego Hoover High Senior Workshop

As part of this senior workshop, we will watch two films and have a small group and a large group discussion. Please read over the questions about each film and use this sheet to record your ideas and questions.

Paty, Me Quiero Casar Contigo (Paty, I Want to Marry You) Directed by Paulina Do, 2005

- What topics do you think are the most important in this film—intergenerationalism, multiculturalism, and social justice? Please explain why.
- What social issue(s) can you remember from the film? How do(es) the social issue(s) connect to the director’s personal story and to her community? Please explain your ideas.

The Apollos (Directed by Nick Parker and Jazmin Jones, 2006)

- What topics do you think are the most important in this film—intergenerationalism, multiculturalism, and social justice? Please explain why.
- What social issue(s) can you remember from the film? How do(es) the social issue(s) connect to the director’s personal story and to his community? Please explain your ideas.