

# conducting focus groups with CALD communities

This tip sheet will help you plan and facilitate a focus group with participants from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

## What are focus groups used for?

A focus group can give you insight into people's issues, beliefs and behaviours. It can be used to:

- obtain multiple perspectives on a single issue
- test hypotheses, messages or resources
- plan, develop and evaluate initiatives

## Recruiting participants

Establish selection criteria for your participants to make sure you collect useful and relevant information.

Consider the following:

- Demographic factors (birthplace, ethnicity, language/s spoken, age)
- Gender (in some cases, gender-specific groups are more appropriate)
- Experience with your issue or service?
- Literacy levels in English or preferred language

Allow enough time to recruit participants. You may be able to get help from:

- Multicultural services such as migrant resource centres
- Ethno-specific organisations
- Social groups, senior's groups and sporting clubs and universities

If you do not have access to suitable participants, be prepared to pay an agency to recruit participants.

## Language-specific or multicultural group?

Use a multicultural group only if it is to be held in English. If the participants do not have a high level of spoken English and interpreters are required, hold a different group for each language.

## Preparing questions

Take some time to prepare your focus group questions, especially when they will be repeated in another language. Each word you use will affect the answer you receive.

- Keep your questions simple and open-ended (eg 'What health services do you use?').
- Use as few words as possible to avoid misinterpretation.
- If the question assumes certain knowledge (eg 'What is your experience of Centrelink services?') participants may not know how to answer it.
- Avoid jargon (eg 'post-acute care') and acronyms (eg HACC).
- Prepare 4-5 questions that cover all the major pieces of information you need.
- Within each question, you can prompt for further details (eg if the question is 'What health services do you use?', prompts might be 'Where would you go if you had a minor illness, like a cold?' and 'Where would you go if you needed help immediately?')

## A checklist for your focus group

- Reimbursement for participants (cash or vouchers)
- Culturally appropriate food and drink
- Child care (if your participants include parents with children)
- Transport for participants (this helps ensure a high turnout)
- Contact details for all participants
- Consent forms (translated)
- Interpreter (check language and dialect; check whether a male or female interpreter is required)
- Colleague to observe, take notes and co-facilitate
- Recording equipment

## Facilitating a focus group

### Interpreters or bilingual workers?

You can either run the focus group yourself (with the assistance of an interpreter) or organise a bilingual facilitator to run the group.

Using an **interpreter** gives you more ability to manage the discussion. Interpreters can be organised fairly quickly, and have professional language qualifications. When you book the interpreter, check whether they are experienced in working with groups.

Participants may sometimes feel more comfortable with a **bilingual worker**, and the discussion may flow more smoothly and quickly. If you want to participate, however, you will need your own interpreter. If not, you will need someone to transcribe and translate the discussion.

### Tips for facilitation

- Brief the interpreter/ facilitator on the process and rules for conducting a focus group.
- Understand that participants may have little or no experience of focus groups.
- Explain to participants what you are looking for, and why their input is important.
- Explain that the discussion may be recorded.
- Remind participants that their input will be treated as strictly confidential.
- Set some ground rules (eg one person speak at a time; everyone's opinion is valid).
- Seek clarification: repeat people's answers to check if you have got them right.