

VCU Needs Assessment Focus Group Protocol (AF AM Community)

Introduction (5 minutes)

I'm _____. I'm working with researchers at an organization called Rockman et al, a research company based in Bloomington, Indiana and San Francisco, California. We are working with VCU to help them gather feedback about your interests in 'science and society' issues, and to discuss any practical concerns that you may have about attending an informal science event in your community. "STEM" (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) knowledge is required in lots of situations in modern life, from understanding a conversation with your doctor about your diabetes to voting for the politician you determine to have the best drinking water policies. Hearing your views on 'science and society' issues will help this research team to better to provide adult informal (non-school) education in this area in your community.

- Your participation in the focus group is completely voluntary, and you can decide to not participate at any point.
- Show of hands - have any of you participated in a focus group before?
- Ground rules: I want to hear from all of you and for everyone to have a chance to speak and be heard. So, I'd like that only one person speak at a time. I'd appreciate it if you'd try not to talk over each other. If you don't feel like you're getting a chance to chime in, just give me a wave and I'll make sure you get a chance to talk.
- Also, this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. I want you to be honest and open - please share both positive and negative feedback. It's the best way for me to know what's going on. Also, it's okay to disagree with each other.
- During discussion, focus group members will be asked to use first names only, and at the end, they will be asked to keep all discussions of the focus group confidential and within the group only.
- Questions? Thank you very much in advance for your time.
- We'll aim to keep the focus group to about an hour.
- Is it OK if I record our conversation?

II. Introductions and warm-up (5-7 minutes)

To get started, I'd like to ask you to introduce yourself. Please tell me your name and something you like to do in your spare time (*keep this brief*).

III. Perceptions of science and society (25 minutes)

Now, I'd like to ask you some questions about what you think about science.

How much do you enjoy keeping up with news about science – a lot, some, not much, or not at all?

Overall, has science made life easier, or more difficult for people? How so?

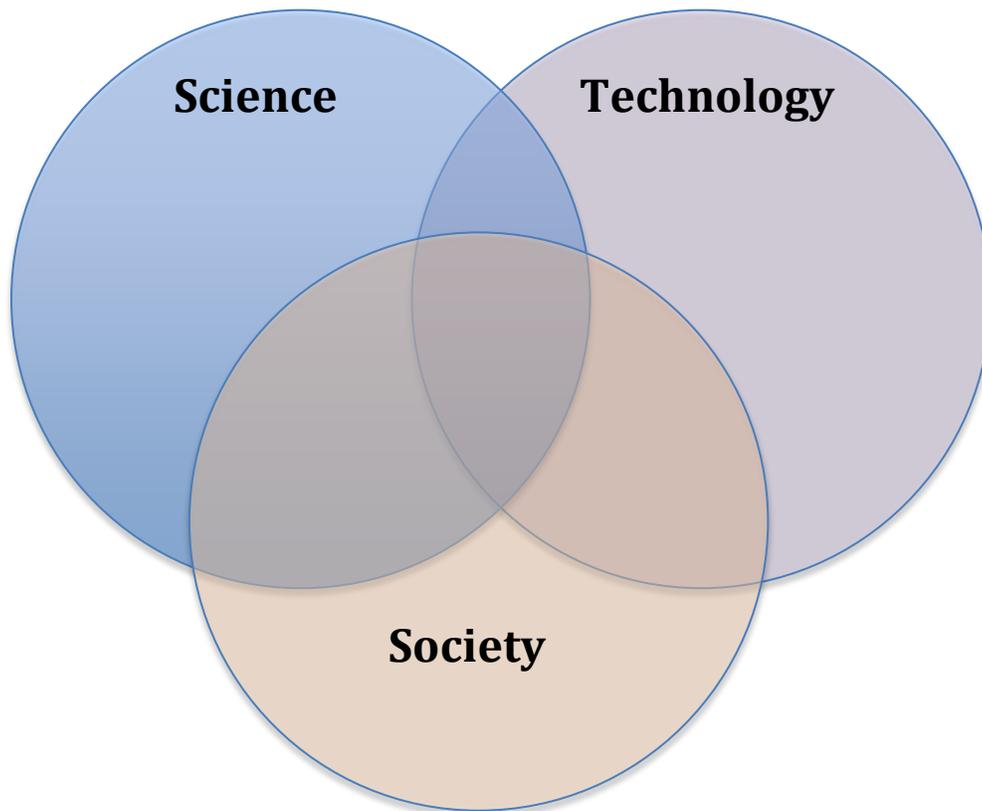
Has science had a mostly positive or mostly negative effect on {Topic} in the U.S.? Topics: Food, health care, the environment

Can you describe what scientists do at their jobs? Do others in the group have other ideas? Agree? Disagree?

If you had a chance to talk to a scientist, what would you like to know?

Venn Diagram Exercise

- On post-it notes participants will list topics they are interested in the areas of science, technology, and society.
- The research team will prepopulate some post it notes with specific topics.
- Participants will then place their post-its or the pre-populated post-its on posters in the shape of a Venn Diagram (See Below).
- This will serve as a starting point for a discussion on how the three categories overlap, why they selected the topics they did, what topics fit in all three categories.



IV. Participation in science events (25 minutes)

When was the last time you:

- Attended an event about science?
- Read an article about science?
- Watched a tv show, movie, documentary about a science topic?

What factors influence your interest in attending an informal science event in your community in the future? Topic, location, etc.

What is your preferred length of time for an evening event?

- 30 minutes
- 45 minutes
- 1 hour
- 1 hour and 30 minutes
- 2 hours
- Longer than 2 hours

Discuss Preferences

Next I will introduce several different presentation and participation formats that could be incorporated into an event. For each format I would like to know what you like and what you do not like.

- Videos
- Lectures
- Panel Discussion
- Small Group Discussions
- Rotating Stations
- Hands on Activities

Discuss Preferences

What would be your ideal event format, for example a lecture and Q&A or a video followed by a panel discussion? Feel free to combine elements from the list we just discussed.

During an event what percentage of time should be dedicated to:

- Socializing (Before and After)
- Presentation
- Reviewing Materials Independently
- Q and A

- Participants will be given a hand out to write down their preferences and then will discuss as a group.

What are the required or preferred accessibility and other accommodations an event would need to have in order for you to feel comfortable attending?

Mapping Activity

- Every participant will be given a map of Richmond.
- On the map they will be asked to indicate approximately where they live
- Next they will be asked to draw a shape indicating then distance from their home they would be willing to travel to attend an weekday evening event.
- Would the shape change if the event were held on a Saturday? If so, please draw a second shape.
- Inside the shape please mark and create a legend of specific venues, public spaces, restaurants, bars, etc, at which you would be interested in attending an event.
- Group Discussion