

EL MIRAGE "COMMUNITY FOR ALL AGES"
FOCUS GROUP SCRIPT

PARTICIPANT GROUP: _____

LOCATION: _____

NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: _____

DATE: _____

FACILITATORS: _____

I. Sign-in

- Have the guests "sign in" on a sign in sheet (no phone numbers or addresses)
- Distribute name tags
- Develop conversation to help participants feel at ease

II. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Introduction of Focus Group Facilitators: describe who is present, why they are interested in helping out the process, and the particular role each facilitator will have during the meeting (e.g., leader, note-taker, etc.)
- Describe purpose of focus group:

"Our focus tonight/today is on our community of El Mirage – the community we call home. We want to hear what you think about El Mirage as a place to live -- and to grow. We would like to learn what you like about this community, what you think some of the challenges that it faces, and we would like to know about your dreams and hopes for the future.

"In short, we want your ideas on how to build a strong and healthy community for all ages!!"

"The City of El Mirage has received a grant from the Arizona Community Foundation to get insight from all members of our community on how to build a strong and healthy place to live. They want us all to think about how we can create a community where all residents are valued – including youth, seniors families, and every person who lives in El Mirage. They want us to think about how we can get youth involved, and seniors involved, and having people of all ages *working together* to create a wonderful place to live."

"So, we are conducting many workshops like the one you are in tonight, to generate ideas for the future of El Mirage. We are speaking with youth

groups, seniors, families, homeowners, business people, government workers, people in churches, and people in clubs and service organizations to get their ideas. We want to involve as many El Mirage residents as possible. Then, from all of the ideas that are generated, the city will create an *action plan* – or a roadmap – of how to bring all the good ideas together – to create a community where people work together to create a wonderful place to live”.

“In summary, we want to hear your ideas on:

- What are the strengths of our community?
- What are the most pressing needs of our community?
- How can we bring people together to build a strong and healthy community?”

And ... your thoughts are so very important!

- **Clarify Process and Time Frame**

“We will be guiding through about seven questions, and asking for your thoughts on each question – one at a time. I will be moving us along so all the questions are discussed, and _____ will be taking notes. One of my roles is to make sure that the conversation moves from one person to another, so everyone will have an opportunity to contribute their ideas. We will each work hard to make sure that all will have the opportunity to say what is on their minds, but -- at the same time – make sure that we are done within an hour or so. We will cover a lot of topics, and that is what will make this time exciting!”

“I will try my best to allow you all to speak as much as you would like, but one of my jobs is to keep us moving along, so we can be done by _____” (*insert appropriate time depending on group size – average: one hour and fifteen minutes*).

- **Assurance of Confidentiality**

“We want you to be able to speak freely and openly about whatever dreams or concerns that you might have as a resident of El Mirage. We want to let you know that everything that is said tonight/today will remain completely confidential. In no way will anyone outside of this room be able to determine who said what. But we will use these conversations to create summary ideas that can be used as great ideas to build our community.”

- **Ground Rules**

“Before we begin, I would like to turn your attention to some of the ground rules that we have established to make this a fun and meaningful experience for you” *refer to poster!*

1. Everything said is confidential!
2. There are no right or wrong answers! Your ideas are ALL important!
3. Negative comments are just as important as positive ones!
4. Be honest! Please speak up when you have something to say!
5. But allow others the chance to speak - Please don't dominate!
6. Feel free to get up and move around at any time!
7. Have fun!

III. Warm-up question: (5 minutes)

"Let's begin by having each of you introducing yourselves in a fun way. In thirty seconds or less: tell us your name, how long you have lived in El Mirage, and one of your favorite, earliest memories as a young child." (or, use *any* ice-breaker that you think people would have fun with The idea is to help them feel comfortable in sharing with each other, and have a mix of seriousness and humor)

IV. Points of Pride (10 minutes)

"The first thing we would like to know is what you think are some of the positive things that are happening in El Mirage?"

"What are the great things that are happening in our community? What are you most proud of? Why do you enjoy living here?"

"Before we begin talking, we would like for you to take a moment or two in silence, and write down three or four things that come to mind on this worksheet."

Facilitator distributes Worksheet #1

As people are completing their worksheet, the Facilitator makes the following comment:

"As you complete your list, think about things that are happening that bring people together, and create a strong and healthy community."

When people are finished, the Facilitator starts with one person, and asks the person to share one item from his or her list. The Assistant writes down the response on a Flip Chart. The Facilitator then moves to the next person, and asks him or her to do the same. This continues until each person offers a response. Then, the facilitator asks all to offer ideas that have not already been recorded on the flip chart - either from their worksheet - or from new ideas that they just thought of during the listing.

The Assistant writes down all ideas that come from this discussions on flipchart.

V. **Things That are Working Well (10 minutes)**

“Thank you! That was great, and most helpful!”

“We want to continue with the same idea – things that are positive, and working well. Now we would like to have you think for a few moments about the things that are *working well* in this community. We would like you to think about organizations, services, and programs that have *really* served the needs of you, your family, and your friends well. What comes to mind?”

Facilitator leads group discussion, and Assistant writes organizations, programs, services that are identified.

When conversation begins to slow down, the Facilitator uses probes like the following to deepen the discussion (use your discretion, but try to pull out examples of programs and services that are meaningful to the participants – ones that have strengthened their lives.

“What are some good things that government does? What are some good things that businesses do? What are some good things that community centers do? What are some good things that churches do? What are some good things that clubs or non-profit organizations do?”

VI. **Challenges in El Mirage (10 minutes)**

“Now, we would like to have you think about ways in which things might be *better* in El Mirage. What are some of the greatest *challenges* in El Mirage today? What are our biggest problems as a community?”

“Before we begin talking, we would like for you to take a moment or two in silence, and write down three or four things that come to mind on this worksheet.”

Facilitator distributes Worksheet #2

As people are completing their worksheet, the Facilitator makes the following comment:

“As you complete your list, try to think about things that are happening that *work against* bring people together. Try to think of things that *work against* the creation of an ideal, strong and healthy community”

When people are finished, the Facilitator starts with one person, and asks the person to share one item from his or her list. The Assistant writes down the

response on a Flip Chart. The Facilitator then moves to the next person, and asks him or her to do the same. This continues until each person offers a response. Then, the facilitator asks all to offer ideas that have not already been recorded on the flip chart – either from their worksheet – or from new ideas that they just thought of during the listing.

The Assistant writes down all ideas that come from this discussions on flipchart.

VIII. Strengths of Youth (5 minutes)

“Next, we would like to have you think about the youth and young people of El Mirage. When you think of the young people of El Mirage, what gifts, talents and strengths come to mind?”

Facilitator guides an open conversation that moves participants toward thinking about the positive contributions youth can make toward the development of strong and healthy communities.

The Assistant records ideas on the Flip Chart.

As the conversation slows, the Facilitator could directly ask the following:

“What are the positive contributions that youth can make toward the development of strong and healthy communities?”

VIII. Strengths of Seniors (5 minutes)

“Now we would like to have you think of the seniors of El Mirage. When you think of the seniors living in our community, what gifts, talents, and strengths come to mind?”

Facilitator guides an open conversation that moves participants toward thinking about the positive contributions seniors can make toward the development of strong and healthy communities.

The Assistant records ideas on the Flip Chart.

As the conversation slows, the Facilitator could directly ask the following:

“What are the positive contributions that seniors can make toward the development of strong and healthy communities?”

IX. Strengths of Families (5 minutes)

“We have focused on the youth, and then the seniors of El Mirage. Now let us focus on the rest of the people in El Mirage – particularly the families of El Mirage. Think of the word “families” broadly – families with children, families with no children, even singles – the many people who make up the generations between “youth” and “seniors”. When you think of these many people in El Mirage, what gifts, talents, and strengths come to mind?”

Facilitator guides an open conversation that moves participants toward thinking about the positive contributions El Mirage “family units” can make toward the development of strong and healthy communities.

The Assistant records ideas on the Flip Chart.

As the conversation slows, the Facilitator could directly ask the following:

“What are the positive contributions that El Mirage family units can make toward the development of strong and healthy communities?”

X. Building a Community for all Ages (10 minutes)

“Thank you so much – very exciting ideas!”

“Now, let me turn your attention once again to the youth and to the seniors”

Facilitator refers to appropriate FlipCharts.

“Can you think of some meaningful things we could do in El Mirage to bring the youth and seniors together – so that these gifts, talents and strengths could be shared – and build bridges between seniors and youth in our community?”

“In other words, be creative! Try to think of really fun and meaningful things that could be done to have youth and seniors begin to interact with each other, so both groups can grow and learn from each other”.

Facilitator leads open discussion, and Assistant puts notes on the FlipChart

As conversation slows, the Facilitator asks the following:

“What specific things could be done to bring ALL generations together in El Mirage – to bring ALL people TOGETHER – youth, seniors, AND families -- so we can grow together into a strong and healthy community?”

Facilitator points to each of the three FlipChart sheets (youth, seniors, families) and follows with a second probe:

“Be creative! What could be done to help ALL of these groups interact with one another, so they can grow and learn from each other, and create a community where ALL people are valued?”

Important note: the above process is EXTREMELY important, and is at the heart of the focus group process. All other questions set the stage for having the participants share their ideas on these points. The facilitator should work hard to keep the ideas flowing, and show excitement as each idea is introduced!

XII. Putting Them in Charge of The Dream (10 minutes)

“Our last question is a really fun one. Think of the city of your dreams. Think of the community of your dreams – a community that is strong and healthy. We want to put you in charge for a few moments. Pretend that you are running the city – in charge of everything. What is the single most important thing you would want to do – to help the community grow into something that would serve its residents better?”

Facilitator guides open discussion, and Assistant records ideas on a FlipChart.

X. Close

“We thank you for coming today. We are so thankful that there are people like you who are willing to help El Mirage be the most wonderful place to live. Your great ideas will help our community grow. We want to remind you that your responses will remain entirely confidential. But, they will go a long way in shaping our community’s future.”

“Thank you, and good night.”

Focus Group

Some Ground Rules

1. Everything said is confidential!
2. There are no right or wrong answers! Your ideas are ALL important!
3. Negative comments are just as important as positive ones!
4. Be honest! Please speak up when you have something to say!
5. But allow others the chance to speak - Please don't dominate!
6. Feel free to get up and move around at any time!
7. Have fun!