

# LISTENING TO YOUR CONGREGATION

## HOW TO ORGANIZE A FOCUS GROUP



A focus group is a number of people brought together by an organization in hopes of receiving feedback about a product or initiative. I recently participated in a zoom focus group for my favorite sports team. The team was seeking feedback about how they might improve the game day experience for fans. I enjoyed hearing from the other fans who shared, but the most impactful thing for me was how good it felt to be heard. It meant a lot to have a chance to share my thoughts with real people representing the team. People were able to share practical ideas and feedback with the team that I imagine will be very helpful to their organization. Who in your church needs to be heard? What will you ask them? What might you learn?

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### GETTING STARTED

**Select a focus group team:** This can be the same group as the listening team leading the rest of the listening process or you can open it up to others. You will need 1-2 people to host the conversation and ask questions. You will also need another person there to take notes.

**Plan out your focus group:** Who do you want to be in the focus group? A diverse group of people is ideal to hear from a variety of voices. I would recommend no more than 10 participants in each focus group, but feel free to host multiple gatherings. Try to keep the conversation to an hour. Consider offering participants a small token of appreciation for their time (a book, a small gift card, etc). What questions will you ask? Make sure most of the questions are open-ended. How will you make sure each participant is given an equal amount of time to share? Open the focus group with an overview of the listening process and the purpose of the focus group. Set some guidelines at the beginning (one person talking at a time, respect people's differing opinions and experiences, confidentiality etc).

#### **Potential Questions to Ask:**

*Tell us what drew you to this church at first?*

*What brings you back to the church week after week?*

*What are three words you would use to describe this church?*

*Where should we focus our energy and resources going forward?*

**Note:** Be sure to keep written records of the feedback you receive. This information will direct your listening process and might be important to your listening team's final report.