

Appendix B

Focus Group Guides and Materials

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Appendix B. Focus Group Guides and Materials

B.1 Steps To Get You Started When Conducting a Focus Group

People who collect data frequently conduct focus groups (or group interviews) to obtain insight into the personal views, practices, and experiences of a targeted audience. The membership of the group that is convened is clearly specified. The questions that are raised during a focus group all pertain to a particular topic or research question.

For each of your focus group sessions, you will ask 8 to 12 people in your community to take part in a group discussion about their experiences relating to particular topics. All members of the focus group will be asked to respond to a series of questions. There are no correct or incorrect answers to the questions.

Before you convene your focus group session, you must consider the following:

- **Who will conduct the focus group?** Focus groups are best if conducted by someone trained in facilitating group discussions. The person should be a good listener and should be able to identify key issues for deeper exploration, to engage all participants in the discussion, and to keep the discussion on track within the time limits. The facilitator should be empathetic but must remain objective throughout the focus group session.
- **Where do I hold a focus group?** Focus groups should be held in a safe and accessible central location. It is best if public transportation is available, but at a minimum parking should be available for participants. The environment should be a neutral one that allows participants to comfortably express themselves without receiving any visual or other reminders of a need for caution. Thus, when conducting a session on food assistance, it would not be wise to hold the session in a welfare office where food stamps are distributed. Examples of neutral locations may be a church or local community group meeting room.
- **What type of room setup works best?** Traditionally, focus groups are held in a conference room setting. It should have a table that is sufficiently large to allow participants to face each other when they speak.
- **What do I need in the room for the focus group?** The following equipment may be used for the focus groups:
 - Cassette tape recorders with a jack for an external microphone
 - External microphones (e.g., omni directional/boundary microphone)
 - Extension cords for tape recorders
 - Cassette audiotapes (4 per session)
 - Duct tape
 - Easel
 - Flip chart pad
 - Markers
 - Pens and note pads
 - Batteries for tape recorders (as backup)

- 3-prong electrical adapters
- Sign-in roster
- Blank name tent cards

- **Whom will I include in the focus group?** A focus group is most successful if the participants have enough in common to be willing to speak freely but have different experiences to offer. For example, if you are conducting a focus group on people’s shopping experiences, you will want to include people who are responsible for the household food shopping, but people who may live in different neighborhoods and therefore shop at different stores. In a group discussing the community’s local food system, you will want to include different types of food producers and distributors.
- **How many participants shall I have?** Although focus group participation is generally restricted to 8 to 12 respondents, you may vary this according to your needs. Just remember—if the number of respondents is too small, you may not get the desired free flow of responses. If it is too large, your moderator may have to play the role of “traffic cop,” restricting private conversations and spontaneous responses.
- **How do I find participants?** Participants may be recruited using many different methods. You can stop people at a central location and ask them to answer a short questionnaire to see if they meet your criteria. This strategy, however, is very time consuming. It is easier to focus on finding the type of people you want in your group by recruiting people from specific locations where your target audience is likely to be. For example, if you want to speak to people who make the grocery and food decisions in low-income households, you should try to recruit people from supermarkets where low-income households are likely to shop. You might choose to stand at the store and recruit people, or you might place a flyer on the checkout counter that provides people with very general information about the topic, the need for participants, and an incentive to participate. A phone number for more information should be included. Another way to recruit people is to identify a neighborhood that you want to recruit people from and to either go house to house to ask people to participate or find phone numbers for the households and call them to request their participation.
- **Can someone from the community help me with recruitment?** Identifying a community liaison with connections to the groups of people you want to reach can be very helpful. This person can help you identify the best methods for recruitment in a community, and he or she also may be able to identify appropriate participants and because of an existing relationship, enlist their participation with greater ease. When using a community liaison, it is important to work together to establish recruitment parameters and to use an official screener so that personal biases do not influence the recruitment process.
- **How do I select participants?** To help you select participants, screeners provide a set of questions that identify the people who meet your criteria. The screener starts with an introductory script to use when first speaking to potential participants. It describes the group’s purpose very generally and then asks for a person’s willingness to answer a few questions. The questions are worded to automatically screen out people if they do not meet the specific criteria. Each group discussion requires the development of a new set of criteria and thus a new screener. For some discussions, food assistance program participation will be essential, whereas for others, income

and shopping store usage may be the most important criteria. Screeners have been developed for each focus group as needed. It is important to note that for some groups, screeners are not necessary. For example, key informants can be selected through a more direct method simply by determining who the people are in the community who would be most knowledgeable about the topic and who represent a selected group of organizations. Screeners are used when the participants are supposed to represent a much larger population group within the community.

- **How do we show our appreciation to participants?** Participants are the key ingredient to a successful focus group and deserve to be thanked in several ways. Along with offering a light meal or refreshments at a focus group meeting, it is also customary to reimburse participants for their time. The amount will depend on your community, the sponsoring organization's budget, and the difficulty you have in recruiting participants. Participant reimbursements can range from \$15 to \$50 or more. There are times when monetary payments are impossible, ill-advised, or undesirable. Participants in these situations may instead receive vouchers to be used at specific stores (grocery stores may be applicable in this case) or other such indirect payments. The payment type and amount should be planned before recruitment and should be mentioned to potential participants to entice them to attend the meeting. Payments must be consistent across all participants and groups within a community.
- **What will be discussed?** We have provided you with the questions. See the following focus group guides. You can also add questions that pertain to your specific community.
- **How do I keep the session moving?** There are two types of problems that you might have when conducting groups. One is that people can wander off the topic. It is important to keep people focused and to tell them up front that you will interrupt them if the discussion is going too far off topic. The other problem is getting people to discuss issues openly. Sometimes a question will not provoke people to respond adequately to an issue. You may have to rephrase the question or probe to get them to explore some related or underlying issues. For example, if people are silent when asked why they may not participate in a food assistance program, the probes might include: *Is it inconvenient for you to go to apply for the program? Did you ever have a problem when you applied? Are the benefits enough to provide you with help?* It is also important that participants know that their comments will be in confidence and will be reported anonymously.
- **What can I do to focus the discussion?** In addition to using the discussion guide, it is often necessary to use a blackboard or blank newsprint on an easel to present or develop a list of topics to be discussed in detail by the group. Prepared lists should be written before beginning the group. Lists to be developed by the group are written by the facilitator as he or she gathers information from participants. The interview guides provide suggestions regarding the use of these lists.
- **When do participants answer the surveys?** Surveys may be included in some focus group sessions, although often they are not necessary. When participants arrive, they can be given short surveys to complete. The surveys should be multiple choice in format and should not require a great deal of time. These surveys help to focus peoples' attention on the subject matter and provide more specific information to the data collectors.

- **How will the session be recorded?** Generally, focus group sessions are audiotaped, thus allowing the sponsoring agency to listen to group reactions after the event. However, note takers can provide greater insight than can a tape recorder. The tape recording should be reviewed after the meeting to supplement the notes taken. Tape recorders often do not pick up sound as well as you might expect; therefore, it is important to consider the notes as the first source of information with the tape as backup. One or two individuals may be assigned the role of note taker. If sufficient resources are available, the tape could also be transcribed.
- **How should note takers record their notes?** Note takers should focus on three things:
 1. *Observations of the group.* Are people excited or lacking in interest? Do people have a lot to say, or are they reluctant to speak? Are some people dominating the discussion while others are silent? Is the group cohesive or are there great differences of opinion?
 2. *Quotes illustrating the varied opinions being presented.* There is much value in capturing the exact words that are used by participants. These words are the actual “data,” the essence of the meeting. Try to capture as much of the conversation as possible using the exact words that people speak. These quotes will be included in the final report.
 3. *Summary of key discussion points.* As each question is posed, individuals will offer their opinions, but there is often some nonverbal communication that also relays the group’s perceptions, feelings, and thoughts on the issue. These reactions should be captured by the note taker and summarized along with the general discussion. Note that the group does not have to reach consensus. The summary can give all sides of the issue.
- **How long is the focus group session?** A focus group generally lasts about 1½ hours. It is not desirable to go beyond this time because interest may diminish and fatigue may set in. If you envision that the questions will take more than 1½ hours to answer, consider eliminating some questions.
- **How do I begin the focus group?** The moderator will open the focus group by thanking all participants for volunteering the time to participate. The moderator assures participants that their responses will be held anonymous and that the data collected will be used for research/decision-making purposes. Then, before beginning to ask the set of questions, everyone introduces themselves and answers an ice-breaker question (e.g., what is your favorite food?, why do you like this community?)
- **How do I end the focus group?** Thank participants for coming and assure them that their responses will help you in making decisions that will assist households in the community get a sufficient amount and variety of food to feed their families.

B.2. Key Informant Focus Group

Date: _____

Moderator: _____

Number of Participants: _____

The key informant focus group will help you to identify areas of concern within your community and to understand community food security issues from the perspective of community representatives. The information gleaned from this discussion will be used in shaping the assessment process to be used in your community. It also will help you begin to form an informal network that can provide assistance throughout the process and can help in publicizing and using the results.

Participants can include the following people:

- Clergy
- Political/community officials
- Food assistance providers
- Emergency food providers
- Community nutritionists
- welfare office staff
- Case/social workers
- Advocates
- Low-income household members

Using the categories above, review all the appropriate key players in your community. After creating a list of all people, select at least one representative from each group above. In addition, try to select people by gender and race or ethnicity to reflect the community in which you live.

We are including handouts that define key terms and issues to be discussed during the interview or focus group. We suggest that these materials be provided to people to read at the group session.

In addition, you can use the Discussion Guide for a Key Informant Focus Group during the interview. It can easily be augmented to reflect the particular concerns within your community.

**What Is Household Food Security?
Definitions From the Life Sciences Research Office
(Anderson 1990)**

Food security—Access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum

- ❖ The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods.
- ❖ An assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

Food insecurity—Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

Hunger—The uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food. The recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food.

What Is Community Food Security?

Community food security is a relatively new concept with roots in a variety of disciplines, including community nutrition, nutrition education, public health, sustainable agriculture, and anti-hunger and community development. As such, no universally accepted definition exists.

Community food security can be viewed as an expansion of the concept of household food security. Whereas household food security is concerned with the ability to acquire food at the household level, community food security focuses on the underlying social, economic, and institutional factors within a community that affect the quantity and quality of food available and its affordability or price relative to the sufficiency of financial resources available to acquire it.

Policies and programs implemented under the community food security label address a diverse range of issues, including participation in and access to Federal food assistance programs, economic opportunity and job security, community development and social cohesion, ecologically sustainable agricultural production, farmland preservation, economic viability of rural communities, direct food marketing, diet-related health problems, and emergency food assistance access.

Communities may be considered to be food insecure if

- There are inadequate resources from which people can purchase foods;
- The available food purchasing resources are not accessible to all community members;
- The food available through the resources is not sufficient in quantity or variety;
- The food available is not competitively priced and thus is unaffordable to low-income households;
- There are inadequate food assistance resources to help low-income people purchase foods at retail markets;
- There are no local food production resources;
- Locally produced food is not available to community members;
- There is no support for local food production resources; and
- There is any substantial level of household food insecurity within the community.

B.2-1 Discussion Guide for a Key Informant Focus Group

Introduction

Thank you for your willingness to take part in this group discussion. The purpose of the discussion is to explore each of your perceptions regarding the presence of food security in this community.

I'd like to begin by defining food security. The handouts I've given you define both household food security and community food security. Although they are integrally connected, they are also quite separate situations. For example, a household may be food insecure—household members may not be able to afford to purchase food from normal retail food outlets and they may have had to take several different actions to stretch their food or may have gone without food on numerous occasions. However, in the community, food may be affordable, available, and accessible through normal markets. That is, community food security may not be a problem, but some households in the community may be food insecure.

Let's try to discuss these two issues separately. First, let's talk about household food security:

1. Do you think that many households in the community have a problem with food security? What is the extent of the problem?
2. Why do you think that household food security is a problem? (That is, how do you see the problem manifest itself?)
3. How do people cope with the problem of food insecurity?
4. What are the contributing factors?
5. Now, let's talk about the community:
6. Do you think that food is accessible, available, and affordable in the community? (Probe to explain how it is or is not.)
7. Are there differences in different parts of the community?
8. What do you think are the biggest problems related to food security at the community level? Why do you think these exist?
9. How does the community address food insecurity? What resources are in place to avoid the problem if it doesn't exist?
10. What else could be done to improve the community's problems with food insecurity?
11. Who are the key players?
12. Are alternative food sources easily accessible and used in the community? What are they? Who organizes them?
13. Finally, I would like to focus on local food-related policies:
14. Are there any local ordinances or other policies that affect food production, distribution, and consumption? (e.g., zoning rules that affect supermarket development, food purchasing regulations for local schools or institutions, policies on the use of city-owned land for community gardens)

- 15.** Are there any transportation policies that affect food access?
- 16.** Are there any farmland preservation efforts?
- 17.** Are there local funding sources for community food security-related activities?
- 18.** Is there an integration of food-related issues into the community planning process?

B.3 Focus Group on Household Food Security

Date of Focus Group: _____

Focus Group Moderator: _____

Number of Participants: _____

A focus group on household food security highlights the household-level experience with food insecurity and related coping mechanisms that may be used. Participants in these groups should include people at risk of experiencing food insecurity. Thus, the screener uses a rough income-level question to identify those who are most likely to be at risk because of income level, and a question on food satisfaction to identify those who apparently are not having any direct problem of food insecurity. People should be recruited from various segments within the community.

Included in the focus group materials are

- A recruitment flyer to distribute at central community locations
- A screener to use when recruiting focus group participants to ensure that participants will include people who have some degree of food insecurity
- A short survey and answer sheet to use with focus group participants to introduce the topic and gather personal information more confidentially than is possible in a group discussion
- A focus group moderator's guide to help structure the discussion

**DO YOU EVER HAVE PROBLEMS GETTING ENOUGH FOOD
FOR YOUR FAMILY?**

**DO YOU EVER WORRY ABOUT HOW TO MAKE YOUR FOOD
SUPPLY LAST LONGER?**

**If you answered yes to either question above and you live in (name of
community), you may be able to join us for a group discussion on food
use in your home.**

**For more information,
call (put in a name) at
(phone number).**

Refreshments and a small participation award will be provided!

B.3-1 Screener for a Focus Group on Household Food Security and Coping Mechanisms

Hello, I'm calling from _____. We are conducting some group discussions to learn about the community's food resources. Part of that process includes speaking to people in our community about the food that is used in the household. Are you the person in the household who does most of the food shopping and preparation? (IF NOT, REQUEST TO SPEAK TO THAT PERSON. ONCE SPEAKING TO THAT PERSON, REINTRODUCE). Would you be willing to answer a few questions?

- a. Yes
b. No
- Interviewer Initials _____
(Thank and terminate)

1. Note gender: Male _____ Female _____
2. Have you recently been asked to participate in a group discussion on food assistance, food security, or anything else having to do with household food use?
- a. No
b. Yes (Thank and end discussion)
3. Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the last 12 months:
- a. Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat
b. Enough but not always the kinds of food we want
c. Sometimes not enough to eat
d. Often not enough
4. People do different things when they are running out of money for food in order to make their food or their food money go further. In the last 12 months, did you ever run short of money and try to make your food or your food money go further?
- a. Yes
b. No

IF Question 3 is "a" AND Question 4 is "b", thank and end discussion. Otherwise, continue.

5. How many people live in your household?
- a. 1 person
b. 2 people
c. 3 people
d. 4 people
e. 5 people

- f. 6 people
- g. 7 people
- h. 8 or more people

6. Can you please tell me, to the best of your knowledge, what the total, combined income was for all of the members of your household over the past year—was it:

For **1** person:

- a. less than \$11,000¹ or
- b. more than \$11,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **2** persons:

- a. less than \$15,000 or
- b. more than \$15,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **3** persons:

- a. less than \$18,000 or
- b. more than \$18,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **4** persons:

- a. less than \$22,000 or
- b. more than \$22,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **5** persons:

- a. less than \$26,000 or
- b. more than \$26,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **6** persons:

- a. less than \$30,000 or
- b. more than \$30,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **7** persons:

- a. less than \$33,000 or
- b. more than \$33,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **8 or more** persons:

- a. less than \$37,000 or
- b. more than \$37,000 (Thank and end discussion)

We are conducting an informal discussion about food use in the household. The discussion will take place at _____ on _____. The discussion will last for approximately _____ hours. We will pay you _____ as a way of thanking you for participating in this discussion. Would you be interested in attending?

¹ Income levels should be updated annually. This information can be found at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Internet site, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty.htm>

- a. Yes (Record name, age, address, phone number)
- b. No (Thank and end discussion)

Respondent's Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

B.3-2 Short Survey on Household Food Security

A focus group on household food security will provide information on the magnitude of this group of people’s food insecurity problems, how they cope with them, and their perceptions of how the community does and can impact household food security issues. However, the focus group will not provide information on how widespread food insecurity is within the community.

A short survey on household food security is included in this toolkit to use with focus group participants. The survey serves several purposes but also has some obvious limitations. First of all, the survey is an indirect way of helping participants to understand what is meant by food insecurity. Secondly, the survey provides insight into the food security status of the participants, which helps to put the answers to the focus group questions into context. However, the results should never be used to categorize the food security of the community. The results of a survey used with only 9 to 12 participants cannot be considered representative of the community.

The survey may best be administered in a group setting using a mixture of techniques. To ensure that all participants understand the questions, the facilitator can begin by reading each question out loud to the group. Participants can have a simple answer sheet with the question number and corresponding responses. (See the answer sheet provided with the survey.) The facilitator should emphasize that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers, but simply that the responses given should come as close as possible to each person’s actual experience. As each question is read, participants can mark the appropriate answer on the sheet. This can help to eliminate confusion over question meaning and skip patterns that exist in the survey. When the facilitator is asked questions such as, “What does ‘balanced meal’ mean,” he or she should reply “whatever it means to you; whatever you think it means.” (This is the same procedure followed by Census Bureau interviewers in collecting the national household food security data.

The survey, which is based on the food security survey developed by USDA and used in numerous national surveys, is quite easy to analyze. Detailed instructions are available in USDA’s *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security, Revised 2000* and available at www.fns.usda.gov/fsec on the Web. Assuming that participants provide answers to all the questions, the following guidelines can be used to score household food security status. First, add the number of positive answers (items with the number “1” circled) from questions 2 to 16. Questions prior to question 2 are preliminary and not included in the scoring. Households without children answer fewer questions and are thus scored differently.

Number of Positive Answers		Food Security Status
Household With Children	Household Without Children	
0–2	0–2	Food secure
3–7	3–5	Food insecure without hunger
8–18	6–10	Food insecure with hunger

B.3-3 Short Survey Household Food Security Instrument

We would like to ask you a few questions about the food eaten in your household in the past 12 months and what you may have done to make sure that everyone in the household had enough food. Please read/listen to the question and then check the appropriate answer.

(Skip the shaded sections if you do not have children younger than 18 years old living in your household.)

Part A

Section 1

1. Which of these statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the past 12 months?

- Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat
- Enough but not always the kinds of food we want
- Sometimes not enough to eat .
- Often not enough to eat.....
- Don't know

- 1a. Here are some reasons why people don't always have enough or the kinds of the foods they want to eat. Please indicate if any of the following is a reason why YOU don't always have enough or the kinds of food you want.

- Not enough money for food.....
- Kinds of food I want are not available.....
- Not enough time for shopping or cooking.....
- Too hard to get to the store
- On a diet.....
- No working stove available
- Not able to cook or eat because of health problems
- Don't know or not applicable

2. People have made several statements about their food situation. For these statements, please indicate whether the statement was *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the past 12 months.

The first statement is “I worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more.” Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the past 12 months?

- Often true.....
Sometimes true.....
Never true.....
Don't know.....

3. “The food that we bought just didn't last, and we didn't have money to get more.” Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the last 12 months?

- Often true.....
Sometimes true.....
Never true.....
Don't know.....

4. “We couldn't afford to eat balanced meals.” Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the last 12 months?

- Often true.....
Sometimes true.....
Never true.....
Don't know.....

5. In the past 12 months, did you or other adults in your household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?

- Yes..... (Go to Question 5a)
No (Go to Question 6)
Don't know..... (Go to Question 6)

5a. [IF YES ABOVE, PLEASE ANSWER] How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or only 1 or 2 months?

- Almost every month
- Some months but not every month
- Only 1 or 2 months
- Never.....
- Don't know or not applicable

6. In the past 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

7. In the past 12 months, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

8. In the past 12 months, did you lose weight because you didn't have enough money for food?

- Yes.....
- No
- Don't know.....

9. In the past 12 months, did you or other adults in your household ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?

- Yes.....
- No (Go to box 1)
- Don't know..... (Go to box 1)

9a. [IF YES ABOVE, PLEASE ANSWER] How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or only 1 or 2 months?

- Almost every month
- Some months but not every month
- Only 1 or 2 months
- Never.....
- Don't know

Box 1

Do you have children younger than 18 years old in your household?

No Thank you—you are finished with this survey.

Yes Please continue with Question 10.

The next questions are about children living in the household who are younger than 18 years old. If there are no children in your household, do not answer these shaded questions.

10. “We relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed the children because we were running out of money to buy food.” Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the past 12 months?

- Often true.....
- Sometimes true.....
- Never true.....
- NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18
- Don't know.....

11. “We couldn't feed the children a balanced meal because we couldn't afford that.” Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the past 12 months?

- Often true.....
- Sometimes true.....
- Never true.....
- NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18
- Don't know.....

12. “The children were not eating enough because we just couldn’t afford enough food.”
Was that *often* true, *sometimes* true, or *never* true for your household in the last 12 months?
- Often true.....
- Sometimes true.....
- Never true.....
- NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18
- Don’t know.....
13. In the past 12 months, did you ever cut the size of any of the children’s meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?
- Yes.....
- No
- NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18
- Don’t know.....
14. In the past 12 months, did any of the children ever skip meals because there wasn’t enough money for food?
- Yes..... (Go to Question 14a)
- No (Go to Question 15)
- NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18 (Go to Question 15)
- Don’t know..... (Go to Question 15)
- 14a. [IF YES ABOVE, PLEASE ANSWER] How often did this happen—almost every month, some months but not every month, or only 1 or 2 months?
- Almost every month.....
- Some months but not every month.....
- Only 1 or 2 months.....
- Never
- Don’t know.....
15. In the past 12 months, were the children ever hungry but you just couldn’t afford more food?
- Yes.....
- No
- NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18
- Don’t know.....
16. In the past 12 months, did any of the children ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn’t enough money for food?
- Yes.....
- No
- NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18
- Don’t know.....

B.3-4 Answer Sheet for Household Food Security Survey

Please indicate the correct answer for each question by circling the number in the right column labeled “answer #.” Please circle only one number (answer) for each question except question 1a. Do not answer the shaded questions if there are no children younger than 18 living in your household.

Question #	Answers	Answer #
1.	Enough of the kinds of food we want to eat	1
	Enough but not always the kinds of food we want	2
	Sometimes not enough to eat	3
	Often not enough to eat	4
	Don't know	5
1a.	Not enough money for food	1
	Kinds of food I want are not available	2
	Not enough time for shopping or cooking	3
	Too hard to get to the store	4
	On a diet	5
	No working stove available	6
	Not able to cook or eat because of health problems	7
	Don't know or not applicable	8
2.	Often true	1
	Sometimes true	1
	Never true	2
	Don't know	3
3.	Often true	1
	Sometimes true	1
	Never true	2
	Don't know	3
4.	Often true	1
	Sometimes true	1
	Never true	2
	Don't know	3

GO TO NEXT PAGE

Question #	Answers	Answer #
5.	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know	3
Answer 5a only if answer to 5 is "Yes."		
5a.	Almost every month	1
	Some months but not every month	1
	Only 1 or 2 months	2
	Never	2
	Don't know or not applicable	3
6.	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know	3
7.	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know	3
8.	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know	3
9.	Yes	1
	No	2
	Don't know	3
Answer 9a only if answer to 9 is "Yes."		
9a.	Almost every month	1
	Some months but not every month	1
	Only 1 or 2 months	2
	Never	2
	Don't know	3
Box 1	No children Children younger than 18 in household	You are done Please continue

GO TO NEXT PAGE

Question #	Answers	Answer #
10.	Often true	1
	Sometimes true	1
	Never true	2
	NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18	3
	Don't know	3
11.	Often true	1
	Sometimes true	1
	Never true	2
	NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18	3
	Don't know	3
12.	Often true	1
	Sometimes true	1
	Never true	2
	NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18	3
	Don't know	3
13.	Yes	1
	No	2
	NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18	3
	Don't know	3
14.	Yes	1
	No	2
	NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18	3
	Don't know	3
Answer 14a only if answer to 14 is "Yes."		
14a.	Almost every month	1
	Some months but not every month	1
	Only 1 or 2 months	2
	Never	2
	Don't know	3
15.	Yes	1
	No	2
	NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18	3
	Don't know	3
16.	Yes	1
	No	2
	NO CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 18	3
	Don't know	3

B.3-5 Moderator’s Guide for a Focus Group on Household Food Security

Thank you for agreeing to be part of a focus group on household food security. For those of you who have never participated in a focus group, I just want to tell you that it is a research technique commonly used in social science research to gather data from informed sources. Your answers to our questions should not be considered “right” or “wrong.” Rather, they are information that you can supply based on your experiences, observations, or feelings.

We are collecting information about households and their food usage—whether people have enough, why they may or may not, and what they do about it. We are working with a community group that wants to understand if our community needs to improve the food resources available for all people.

Please be assured that all your responses are confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only. Our summary report will make no references to names.

The purpose of this discussion is to help us understand how serious food insecurity and hunger may be in our community. Food insecurity refers to not having access to adequate amounts of affordable foods through normal means, such as buying food at supermarkets or farmers’ markets or even gardening. Hunger is often the result when there is not enough food in a house for all the household members. We are conducting this group discussion as part of a larger effort to understand how much of a food insecurity problem there may be in our community and what we can do about it.

I want to start by saying how difficult it can be to discuss these issues publicly. But almost everyone, if not everyone, in this group is familiar with these problems. They are nothing to be embarrassed about. Your candid responses and discussion will be most helpful to us as we try to develop a community-based action plan.

Before we begin, let’s go around the room and introduce ourselves. But instead of telling us just your name, why not tell everyone your name, how long you have lived in this area, and what your three most favorite foods are?

Household Food Security

Let’s start by thinking back to this past year. Give some thought to the times when you either didn’t have enough food for everyone in your home or worried about whether you would have enough food.

1. How many people would say that they either ran out or worried about running out of food during the past year?
2. I’m wondering about the frequency of these things happening. How many people would say that they either ran out or worried about running out of food every month? Did these things happen at specific times of the month? Or at certain times of the year?
3. How many people would say that they either ran out or worried about running out of food every month? Do these things happen at specific times of the month? Or at certain times of the year?
4. Do these events (running out of food or worrying about it) follow any pattern? That is, does something else happen regularly that causes you to run out of food or to worry about it? (*Probe for: medical emergencies, large bills, helping family members with their needs, changes in job status*)

5. I'm wondering about what you do if there isn't enough food. Let's start by discussing the things you might do to make the food you have last longer. What are some of these things? (*Probe for: cut amounts of food, cut size of meals, skip meals, water down ingredients, eat cheaper foods like potatoes or pasta, serve less expensive foods, serve less nutritious foods because they are cheaper, serve children nutritious foods but eat less or less nutritious foods yourself*)
6. People sometimes go to different places to get enough food to go around when they are running short of money. What types of places have you gone to for food and how often? (*Probe for: food assistance programs, food pantry, soup kitchen, other "free" food resources*). Which of these places works the best for you? Why? Do they each have a different role—do you go to them at different times or use them differently?
7. You also may have a less formal "help" network, that is, people you know who will lend you money, give you food, feed you, or let you buy on credit. Can you describe some of these networks? Do you ever provide this type of support for family members or friends?
8. What would you say is most important in helping you cope with times when food or food concerns are a major problem?
9. We've focused up to this point on household issues and strategies. Switch your thinking a bit to the community. What do you think the community (government, businesses, people) could do to make it easier for people to get enough food? Think about how they could work to make food accessible, available, and affordable.

Thank you!

B.4 Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns

Date of Focus Group: _____

Focus Group Moderator: _____

Number of Participants: _____

A focus group on household food purchasing will provide information on shopping patterns and other resources used by community members to obtain food. It will also provide information on barriers that impact the use of resources. To gather the most information possible, participants should include people who shop at various stores or use various alternative food resources throughout the community.

The materials for this group include

- A recruitment flyer to be posted widely throughout the community (targeting food markets and resources)
- A screener to use for recruitment purposes to ensure that participants include users of various types of stores
- A focus group moderator's guide to help structure the discussion

HELP US UNDERSTAND THE COMMUNITY WE LIVE IN!

Information Needed on

**Food Shopping
Grocery Store Use
Other Local Food Sources**

Do you live in (name of community)?

**If you are interested in joining
a group discussion,
please call (put in a name) at
(phone number).**

Refreshments and a small participation award will be provided!

B.4-2 Screener for a Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns

Before beginning the screening process, select three markets that you would like to have representative shoppers from in the focus group. These should either be in three different neighborhoods or be three different types of stores (e.g., large supermarket, small grocery, or small convenience store). Place flyers [see sample] with critical information about the focus group at each store (after obtaining permission from the store manager), requesting that interested parties contact the group organizer. Alternatively, flyers can be distributed with each bag of groceries or left at the checkout counter. These may be more widely read than a flyer posted on a board. As people call, use the following screener to select participants. Choose approximately one-third of the people for the group from each store.

Store A _____

Store B _____

Store C _____

Thank you for calling. We are conducting some group discussions to learn about the community's food resources. Part of that process includes speaking to people in our community about where they buy their food, why they go there, and what influences their use of different stores. Are you the person in the household who does most of the food shopping and preparation? (IF NOT, REQUEST TO SPEAK TO THAT PERSON. ONCE SPEAKING TO THAT PERSON, REINTRODUCE.)

1. Note gender: Male _____ Female _____
2. Have you recently been asked to participate in a group discussion on food purchasing, food security, or anything else having to do with household food use?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes (Thank and end discussion)
3. How many people live in your household?
 - a. 1 person
 - b. 2 people
 - c. 3 people
 - d. 4 people
 - e. 5 people
 - f. 6 people
 - g. 7 people
 - h. 8 or more people

4. From the following categories, please tell me what your household income was for the past year:

For **1** person:

- a. less than \$11,000² or
- b. more than \$11,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **2** persons:

- a. less than \$15,000 or
- b. more than \$15,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **3** persons:

- a. less than \$18,000 or
- b. more than \$18,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **4** persons:

- a. less than \$22,000 or
- b. more than \$22,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **5** persons:

- a. less than \$26,000 or
- b. more than \$26,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **6** persons:

- a. less than \$30,000 or
- b. more than \$30,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **7** persons:

- a. less than \$33,000 or
- b. more than \$33,000 (Thank and end discussion)

For **8 or more** persons:

- a. less than \$37,000 or
- b. more than \$37,000 (Thank and end discussion)

5. Do you ever shop at

- a. Store A ___ Yes ___ No
- b. Store B ___ Yes ___ No
- c. Store C ___ Yes ___ No

² Income levels should be updated annually. This information can be found at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Internet site, <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty.htm>

Select approximately equal numbers of people for the group from shoppers at each store.

We are conducting an informal discussion about food shopping for the household. The discussion will take place at _____ on _____. The discussion will last for approximately _____ hours. We will pay you _____ as a way of thanking you for participating in this discussion. Would you be interested in attending?

- a. Yes (Record name, age, address, phone #)
- b. No (Thank and end discussion)

Respondent's Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

B.4-3 Moderator’s Guide for a Focus Group on Food Shopping Patterns

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group session. For those of you who have never participated in a focus group, I just want to tell you that it is a research technique commonly used in social science research to gather data from informed sources. Your answers to our questions will not be considered “right” or “wrong.” They are merely information that you will supply based on your experiences, observations, or feelings.

We are collecting information about shopping patterns—the stores you use and why—and about other places in the community that people might go for food. We are working with a community group that wants to understand if our community needs to improve the food resources available for all people.

Please be assured that all your responses are confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only. Our summary report will make no references to names.

Before we begin, let’s go around the room and introduce ourselves. But instead of telling us just your name, why not tell everyone your name, how long you have lived in this area, and what your three most favorite foods are?

Food Stores

Let’s start with some questions about food shopping:

1. There are many different types of stores you can shop at for food—large supermarkets, medium or small neighborhood grocery stores, warehouse stores, specialty stores (bakeries, butchers, fish markets), and gas station or convenience stores. I would like to find out about the types of stores used for the majority of your shopping.

Use a printed list of food stores that all can see. This list should be developed beforehand to include all the stores in the area. Review the list with the group and categorize the stores into warehouse stores, large supermarkets, medium grocery stores, small grocery stores, and gas station or Seven-Eleven type stores.)

Let’s go through this list, and for each type of store, please raise your hand if it is the type of store you use to buy most of your household groceries? *(Next to each store type, write down the number of people who use it for their shopping.)*

2. Now let’s now focus on the stores used by people for the majority of their food shopping. Why do you use these stores the most? *(Go through each store type selected separately and probe for convenience, variety offered, cleanliness, safety, location, etc.)*
3. How do you get to the store? Is transportation for shopping a problem? How long does it take you to get there?
4. How often do you do a big shopping for food (not counting trips for just a few items)? How many “fill-in” trips do you make (that is, trips for one or two small items)?

5. Now think about all the different types of stores that you shop at. Are you satisfied with the stores you use most frequently? (Probe for quality of food and service, location, cleanliness, food cost, and variety.)
6. Are there other stores that you would rather use but that you don't? Why not? (Probe for transportation difficulty, cost and variety of food, don't accept food stamps, or hours of operation.)
7. We are trying to understand why people shop the way they do. What influences the number of times you shop? (Probe for transportation, storage, availability of stores or food in the stores).

There are several other places to get food for your household. I am curious to know how many of you use these resources and why or why not.

Alternative Food Sources

8. Let's start with home grown or produced food. How many of you grow your own food in a home garden or fish or hunt for your food? Why/why not?
9. How heavily do you rely on these foods in your regular food supply? At which times of the year?
10. Are there community gardens in your community? (*Community gardens are gardens that are planned and maintained by community members.*) How many of you grow food in a community garden? Why/why not?
11. How heavily do you rely on these foods in your regular food supply? At which times of the year?
12. Do you regularly get food at no cost from neighbors or others you know who grow or hunt their own food?
13. Are there farmers' markets in your community? Does anyone ever go to a farmers' market to buy food? Why/why not?
14. Are there food co-ops in your community? *A food cooperative or co-op is an organization owned and controlled democratically by its members. It may be organized as a buyers club or a store where people who are not members may also shop.* Does anyone ever use food co-ops? Why/why not?
15. Are there any community-supported agriculture programs in your community? *Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is a partnership between a farm and community members. Members support the farm by paying a set fee that is used to help pay for seeds, fertilizer, water, equipment maintenance, labor, etc. In return, the farm provides, to the best of its ability, a healthy supply of seasonal fresh produce throughout the growing season.*
16. Does anyone belong to this program? Why or why not?

General Reflection

17. Now one last question. Imagine that you have the opportunity to do something in the community to help people have an easier time getting the types of foods that they want or need. What would you do? *If no one makes suggestions, probe for the following:*

- Bring stores closer to our homes.
- Try to get the foods we want available in the stores.
- Establish and enforce standards of cleanliness for stores.
- Provide public transportation to the large supermarkets.
- Start a food co-op.
- Start farmers' markets in the community.
- Create outreach programs for alternative resources.
- Establish a community garden.

18. B.5 Focus Group on Household Food Assistance

Date of Focus Group: _____

Focus Group Moderator: _____

Number of Participants: _____

The focus group on household food assistance will provide information on residents' experiences with food assistance programs. Participants will include people in the community who have participated in at least one of the following food assistance programs:

- Food stamp program
- WIC
- Free or reduced school lunch or breakfast
- Food pantries/soup kitchens

For each of the programs listed above, the focus group should include at least two people who have participated in the program or whose family members (children) have participated. The materials provided to assist you with this group include the following:

- A recruitment flyer to be distributed in locations across the community where program users might see them
- A screener to be used for recruiting participants who have used an array of programs
- A moderator's guide to help structure the discussion

HELP WANTED:

People are needed to participate in a group discussion on food assistance programs.

If you have ever used or applied for

- **Food stamps**
- **WIC**
- **Free or reduced school meals**
- **Food pantries or soup kitchens**

and you live in (name of community), you may be able to join us for a group discussion on food assistance programs.

**For more information,
call (put in a name) at
(phone number).**

Refreshments and a small participation award will be provided!

B.5-2 Screener for a Focus Group on Household Food Assistance

Hello, I'm calling from _____. We are conducting some group discussions to learn about the community's food resources. Part of that process includes speaking to people in our community about their experiences with food assistance programs like food stamps, WIC, free or reduced school meals, and food pantries or soup kitchens. Could I speak to the person in the household who would apply for nutrition assistance? (ONCE SPEAKING TO THAT PERSON, REINTRODUCE.) Would you be willing to answer a few questions?

- a. Yes Interviewer Initials _____
- b. No (Thank and end discussion)

1. Note gender: Male _____ Female _____

2. Have you or anyone in your household ever inquired about, applied for, or participated in any of the following programs:

- | | | |
|--|---------|--------|
| a. Food stamps | ___ Yes | ___ No |
| b. WIC | ___ Yes | ___ No |
| c. Free or reduced school lunch or breakfast | ___ Yes | ___ No |
| d. Food pantries/soup kitchens | ___ Yes | ___ No |

If people have NO experience in any way with food assistance programs, thank them and end the discussion. The group should include people who have had experience with at least one program, and all programs should be represented by participants.

3. Have you been asked recently to participate in a group discussion on food purchasing, food security, or anything else having to do with household food use?

- a. No
- b. Yes (thank and end discussion)

We are conducting an informal discussion about the use of these food programs. The discussion will take place at _____ on _____. The discussion will last for approximately _____ hours. We will pay you _____ as a way of thanking you for participating in this discussion. Would you be interested in attending?

- a. Yes (Record name, age, address, phone number)
- b. No (Thank and end discussion)

Respondent's Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

B.5-3 Moderator’s Guide for a Focus Group on Household Food Assistance

Thank you for agreeing to be part of a focus group on your experiences with household food assistance programs. For those of you who have never participated in a focus group, I just want to tell you that it is a research technique commonly used in social science research to gather data from informed sources. Your answers to our questions will not be considered “right” or “wrong.” They are merely pieces of data that you will supply based on your experiences, observations, or feelings.

We are collecting information about food assistance. We are working with a community group that wants to understand if our community needs to improve the food resources available for all people.

Please be assured that all your responses are confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only. Our summary report will make no references to names.

The purpose of today’s discussion is to find out about your experiences with the programs—what has been most helpful and what has been most problematic. I recognize that everyone may not have had experiences with each of the different programs, so please be patient when we discuss a program that you haven’t used. We will begin by talking more generally about food assistance programs in the community and then focus on specific programs.

Before we begin, let’s go around the room and introduce ourselves. But instead of telling us just your name, why not tell everyone your name, how long you have lived in this area, and what your three most favorite foods are?

1. Let me start by asking you to list all the food assistance programs that you have participated in while living in this community. (WRITE THE LIST ON A BOARD OR NEWSPRINT.) (Probe to be sure that all major programs are included: food stamps, WIC, school breakfast and lunch, and elderly meals. Accept the inclusion of emergency food programs such as pantries, food banks, soup kitchens, and daycare, after school, and summer program snacks and lunches.)

Now I would like to ask you some questions about food assistance in general. At this point, let’s focus on some specific Government-sponsored programs like food stamps, WIC, and school meals. Do not include food pantries, banks, soup kitchens, and other community-based emergency food programs.

2. How important are food assistance programs to your household? What makes them important?
3. What would you say are the best features of the food assistance programs you use? That is, what makes them really work for you? (Probe for staff attitude, location, easy access)
4. What are some problems you have had when using or trying to use the food assistance programs?

Now I want to spend a little time focusing on specific programs:

Let’s think about the food stamp program.

5. What are the best features of this program?

6. What are some reasons why you may not be participating in the program or problems that you have with the program? (Probe for transportation problems, eligibility, lack of comfort using the food stamps, the application process, attitudes of food stamp office staff, didn't know about the program, etc.)

Now let's talk about the WIC program:

7. What are the best features of this program?
8. Why have you or family members not participated in WIC, or what problems have you encountered? (Probe for transportation problems, eligibility, lack of comfort using the WIC coupons, the limitations of the coupons, the application process, attitudes of WIC office staff, didn't know about the program, etc.)

Let's focus on school breakfast and lunch programs:

9. What are the best features of this program?
10. What problems have you had with these programs, or why haven't your children participated in them? (Probe for school not offering the program, eligibility, program costs too much, the application process, children embarrassed, children unwilling to eat the food, didn't know about the program, etc.)

What about meals programs for the elderly, like Meals on Wheels or congregate meal programs?

11. What are the best features of this program?
12. Are there reasons why you or elderly members of your family have decided not to participate in these programs? (Probe for no available program, didn't know about the program, don't like the food, food isn't appropriate for health needs, etc.)

I would like to shift the discussion to emergency food programs (soup kitchens and pantries).

13. Has anyone used emergency food providers in the community like (*name the emergency food programs in your community*)? (Food pantries, soup kitchens) Why or why not? (Probe for didn't need it, not comfortable getting free food, transportation, food quality, program environment, safety, hours of operation).
14. How much do you rely on emergency food providers for food assistance?
15. Would you seek help at emergency providers before applying for food assistance programs? Why or why not?

General Reflection

16. Now one last question. Imagine that you have been given the money and opportunity to do something in the community to help people use food assistance programs to the best degree possible. What would you do? *If no one makes suggestions, probe for the following:*

- Outreach or information programs
- Application assistance programs
- One application for all programs
- Change in hours of program operation
- Transportation improvements
- Training for professional staff on the programs and on the community's culture

B.6 Focus Group on Community Food Production Resources

Date of Focus Group: _____

Focus Group Moderator: _____

Number of Participants: _____

This focus group will help you gather information on how local food producers are involved in helping to ensure that the community is food secure. It will gather information from both the food producers and others involved in the local food system. These people include the following:

- Local farmers
- Farmers at farmers' markets
- Community-supported agriculture
- Community gardens
- Local dairies
- Local fisheries
- Local food producers
- County extension agents
- Food systems activists

Participants will be selected from a list of all potential candidates. If the list is 15 people or fewer, include all people. If it is more than 15 people, select at least one representative from each type of group available. No more than 15 people should be included in one group discussion. You might want to speak to everyone by conducting two separate groups, or you might want to randomly sample people in each category. Start by separating the list into categories. Select the people from each category by choosing every other person, until the full list is between 12 and 15 people. Have substitutes ready in case some selected people are unable to attend the group.

Before beginning the focus group, you may want to distribute definitions of food security and other relevant topics. This step can help to focus the discussion, and participants can refer to the materials as the moderator uses the guide to discuss issues of community food production as they relate to community food security. These definitions are included in the toolkit with materials for the key informant focus group.

B.6-1 Moderator’s Guide for a Focus Group on Community Food Production Resources

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group session. For those of you who have never participated in a focus group, I just want to tell you that it is a research technique commonly used in social science research to gather data from informed sources. Your answers to our questions will not be considered “right” or “wrong.” They are merely pieces of data that you will supply based on your experiences, observations, or feelings.

We have been asked by the community to collect this data so that it can consider ways to improve the system now being used to ensure that every household gets the foods they require and in the quantities that they need.

Please be assured that all your responses are confidential and will be used for statistical purposes only. Our summary report will make no references to names.

I’d like to begin by defining food security. I have handed out some long definitions that define both household food security and community food security. Although they are integrally connected, they are also quite separate situations. For example, a household may be food insecure—its members may not be able to afford to purchase food from normal retail food outlets, and they may have had to take several different actions to stretch their food or may have gone without food on numerous occasions. However, in the community, food may be affordable, available, and accessible through normal markets. That is, community food security may not be a problem, but some households in the community may be food insecure.

Local food producers help to ensure community food security by producing food locally and making it available to community members. Today we are going to focus on the local food system, that is, local food producers and distributors and their relationship with the community.

Before we begin, let’s go around the room and introduce ourselves. But instead of telling us just your name, why not tell everyone your name, how long you have lived in this area, what you like most about being involved in food production or distribution, and what you like least?

1. Let’s start by listing all the local food producers, processors, and distributors in the community. (Probe to include community-level organizations not just industry.)
2. What is your involvement with the local food system? (Probe for selling food through it, buying food through it, providing financial or other organizational support.)
3. Have there been any major changes in food production resources? (Probe for loss of farmland, farm startups, use of sustainable production methods.)
4. What types of resources exist to help make locally produced food available to the community? (Probe for direct marketing outlets [such as farmers’ markets, roadside stands, pick-your-owns] and contract sales to local food stores, restaurants, schools, colleges, hospitals, or prisons and CSA programs.)
5. Do you think there is local government support for community efforts such as farmers’ markets, community-supported agriculture, community gardens, etc.? By this I mean political and economic support?
6. Who are the major community supporters of the local food system?

7. Are community residents involved in developing and running the system? How frequently do they use community food producers or markets?
8. What are the major barriers to making the community food system as successful as possible?
9. Are there any mechanisms in place to make these resources available to low-income residents? (Probe for subsidized shares in CSA, locating farmers markets near low-income neighborhoods.)
10. What changes can you suggest that would improve the local food system?