Collecting Audience Feedback:

A Guide for Effective Use of Focus Groups in Nonprofits, Cultural Institutions, and Service-Oriented Organizations

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INTRODUCTION

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest continually-operating public art museum in the United States, founded in 1842 by arts patron Daniel Wadsworth. Since opening its doors to the public in 1844, the Wadsworth Atheneum has paved the way for encyclopedic museums across the country. Progressing Daniel Wadsworth’s vision, the museum’s collection has grown to hold approximately 50,000 works of art that span 5,000 years. Through the preservation, expansion, and exhibition of its outstanding collections, and scholarship, education, and programs of outstanding quality, the museum seeks to engage diverse audiences with the stimulating experience of art, history, and culture.

About this Guide

This guide developed as a result of the museum’s participation in the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Nonprofit Support Program’s Building Evaluation Capacity Program, taught by Anita M. Baker, Ed.D., of Evaluation Services. Cross-departmental teams took part in both the Building Evaluation Capacity Program Class of 2013 and the subsequent Alumni Program, greatly increasing the depth and breadth of evaluation efforts at the museum. With the introduction of the Building Evaluation Capacity Grant program, the museum received a grant to institutionalize the process of gathering visitor and community feedback. This funded staff training and the focus groups projects described in this guide. In sharing our work and process, we hope to help other non-profits, cultural institutions and other service-oriented organizations feel empowered to utilize this useful evaluative method.

Thank you to our funder:

nsf
Nonprofit Support Program
Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
GETTING STARTED

What is a Focus Group?

Usually, the term “focus group” is associated with marketing, where potential consumers provide feedback on a product or advertising before it is released to the public.

In this guide, the term “focus group” describes an evaluative tool that is loosely inspired by these marketing focus groups, in that they both can provide useful information about the desires and motivations of a specific audience. As an evaluative tool, focus groups can be used for formal reports or studies, though this guide emphasizes a more informal style of focus group used to inform program development and give organizations a better sense of the audiences they aspire to serve. While focus groups are a qualitative form of evaluation, providing nuanced perspectives on a specific topic of interest, quantitative components (such as focus group attendance, supplementary surveys, or votes/tallies taken during the focus group) can also be incorporated, providing context for participant feedback.

A focus group conducted by or for a nonprofit, cultural institution, or similar service-oriented organization is necessarily distinct from a focus group held by a marketing firm or corporation. Instead of testing products for the free market, these organizations are testing their programs, resources, events, exhibitions or other services for specific subcategories of the public. In addition, these informal focus groups can take place before, during, or after a service is in place—in evaluation terms, they can either be front-end, formative, or summative (see glossary for full definitions).

When to Consider a Focus Group

Understanding the benefits and limitations of focus groups can help you determine if it is the right fit for your specific evaluation needs. Perhaps the most compelling reason to conduct a focus group is the rich and nuanced nature of the data it provides. Qualitative data, as compared to quantitative data, tends to provide a lot of depth and detail but reflects a much smaller number of people and cases.

The ideal number of participants per focus group is 5-10; even if you conduct multiple sessions, you will still likely only be able to hear from a small sub-set of your target population. Any of your findings are applicable only to the individuals involved and not able to be generalized to the population as a whole. In considering a focus group, imagine what data would be most useful to report to
your stakeholders: is your data going to be most compelling as a list of quotes that express participants’ personal experiences, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts? If you need hard numbers or statistics or the ability to speak about a whole population, focus groups are unlikely to provide the data you need.

Interviews also can produce great qualitative data, but there are several distinct advantages to focus groups over interviews. Rather than asking participants to reflect on their experience generally, you control what respondents see and experience while participating in order to direct their feedback. This allows you to capture their immediate reactions to ideas, designs, or concepts. The group setting also allows the moderator to encourage discussion among the participants. Be prepared for them to ask questions or for the conversation to feel more like an informal dialogue. This can lead to deeper insights than may be possible with a one-on-one interaction. This shared experience can create a strong sense of constituent buy-in; however, similar to an interview, if an organization does not act on the feedback, participants may feel ignored or alienated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROS</th>
<th>CONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The data can provide rich and nuanced feedback about a topic.</td>
<td>The process can be effort-intensive, taking time to plan and conduct.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can easily collect quotes to use in reports and grant applications.</td>
<td>It does not provide quantitative data unless other evaluative methods are incorporated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are able to control what participants see and experience during the focus group.</td>
<td>You usually cannot draw broad conclusions about populations because the number of focus group participants might be too small.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can build trust and a sense of investment among participants.</td>
<td>If you choose not to act on feedback, focus group participants may feel that their input was ignored.</td>
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</table>

As you consider a focus group, use the Focus Group Planning Worksheet in the Toolkit section of this guide. Planning and reflection can help to clarify whether a focus group is the right tool for your organization and your specific project:
Planning for a Focus Group

During the early stages of planning a focus group, or any evaluation project, it is important to consider what your goals are: What do you want to know? From whom? What kind of final data will be most useful to you? Given a captive audience of your constituents, it is tempting to ask them anything you might want to know, but this will dilute the data you are able to gather. Having a clear vision of your ultimate goals will prove invaluable throughout your planning.

Consider:

➔ **What do you want to know?**

As you’re are brainstorming about the focus group, try to hone in on the two to five overarching questions that you seek to answer through your evaluation project. While the focus group protocol will likely ultimately have many more questions, it is important that they all work together to a common end. What information do you (or your stakeholders) need to drive your decision making?

➔ **From whom?**

As you work to develop your overarching questions, consider who you would need to speak with to answer them. Purposefully and mindfully reflecting on your audience can provide great clarity not only to the purposes of the focus group, but also to an overall understanding of the specified audience.

Consider the logistics of recruitment. You will want a group of 5-10 people and they should be similar types of people, but not close friends. Do you need to conduct multiple groups to answer all of your questions? How will you group them? What steps will you need to take to reach out to your target audience?
What kind of final data will be most useful to you?

Finally, consider the end purposes of the data and your primary objectives for gathering this feedback. You may construct a focus group very differently if you were planning to publish your results in a peer-reviewed journal than you would for an idea-gathering session for a possible program. For example, your organization can use the data to:

- Support grant applications and reports.
- Collect suggestions and ideas for a new project.
- Encourage community buy-in for a project.
- Check in with your existing constituents.
- See what other projects inspire your constituents.
- Determine how a budget should be allocated.
- Assess the viability of a potential project.
- Present the data to the Board of Trustees.
- Share data with partner organizations.

There are infinite purposes, and identifying your goals—and the final product you envision—will help to guide your planning:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>How will the data be used? What are your goals?</th>
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You may also want to consider how the information you collect in your focus group will connect with other existing evaluation projects. Surveys, interviews, observation protocols, record reviews, and other evaluative methods can provide greater context for the feedback you gather in the focus group. You may even
decide to use prior evaluation data as a topic for the focus group by drawing
participants’ attention to existing information. In addition to planning how the
data will be used, take time at the beginning of the planning process to strategize
about how evaluation efforts can potentially support each other:

| What other evaluation strategies (if any) are you using to gather
data about this audience? |
<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record Review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How is this data connected? ____________________________

____________________________

____________________________

RECRUITMENT

Identifying Your Audience

Identifying your audience can be a time-consuming process, especially if you are
hoping to build a new constituency for your organization. The process of
identifying your audience should be done as early in the planning as possible.

Use the tool below to develop an audience profile and identify the limits of your
audience. With a clear sense of the intended audience, you will be able to more
efficiently identify potential participants and develop a protocol that is specifically
targeted to the focus group attendees.

The Audience Profile (on the following page) is also available in the Toolkit:
In determining the target audience for your focus group, you may need to provide some supplementary definitions to clarify your intent. For example, if you identify your audience as “underserved teens,” you will need to define what you mean by “underserved” (living below the poverty line? enrolled in low-performing schools?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Audience Profile</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use the questions below each category to identify the important aspects of your audience. If it does not matter for a given category, circle ANY.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: ________________________________ ANY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Where do they live, work, or spend time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Connected to a specific place, or within a radius?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender: ________________________________ ANY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Male, female, or non-binary gender?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age/Life Stage: __________________________ ANY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Age ranges, numerical (13-18) or descriptive (teen)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Above or below a certain age range (65+)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest/Affinity: _________________________ ANY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Connected by a self-identified interest (cooking, art, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stakeholders for an organization or specific cause?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role/Identity: ____________________________ ANY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Familial role, such as parent, grandparent, caregiver, etc.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Role in community: leader, business owner, donor, etc.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other status: immigrant, home owner, commuter, etc.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Organization: __________________________ ANY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Currently served by organization or not? Never served?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participants, staff, volunteers, partners, clients, etc.?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: ________________________________ ANY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is their employment or socioeconomic status relevant?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is their self-reported race or ethnicity relevant?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
anyone not currently served by the organization?). The same is true for descriptors such as “at-risk”, “local”, or “potential visitors.”

Other components of audience identity may be problematic, and your organization will need to be sensitive to the fact that some people will not want to share information about their socioeconomic, sexual, medical, criminal, or even racial background and status. Using an example in the previous paragraph, an “at-risk teen” may not feel that the descriptor is accurate to their experience, and could be offensive rather than affirming. In communications with potential participants, be clear, transparent, and also mindful of the labels you use.

This process of determining participation is similar to the process of identifying an audience for a piece of writing. For example, this focus group guide is developed for staff or volunteers at nonprofits, cultural institutions, or service-oriented organizations who are considering using focus groups with their audiences. Once the audience is identified, try describing it in a single sentence. This will confirm the decisions that you have made regarding your target participants and make it easier to describe your intended participants to colleagues or other stakeholders:

In one sentence, the focus group participants are...

The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art conducted two sets of focus groups in the 2015 calendar year. One was for Spanish-speaking families who have attended the Second Saturdays for Families program, and the other was for staff at LGBTQ youth-serving organizations in Connecticut. In both cases, the audience was identified by program staff at the museum and the language describing the intended audience was used in direct communications with participants.

To provide additional examples, the following are descriptions of audiences that an art museum such as the Wadsworth Atheneum may target as participants:

- Adults who identify as artists, either professional or amateur.
- Teens that attend schools in neighborhoods below the poverty line.
- Returning visitors of any age that have attended the museum twice or more within the last calendar year.
- Arts, humanities, and cultural organizations with a city address.
The logistics of recruitment are outlined in a later section of this guide. Once an audience is determined, the process of inviting, confirming, and following up with participants should be as systematic as possible.

**Audiences and Representatives**

Depending on the purpose of your focus group, you may elect to recruit the constituents you are hoping to ultimately serve, or, in some cases, representatives that understand and can express the needs of those constituents. While you can engage both groups as participants, it is best if each focus group contains only one or the other, as your questions will vary depending on who is in the room.

The following table outlines some considerations when choosing to use constituents or representatives in your focus group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When to use Constituents</th>
<th>When to use Representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You want information directly from the audiences you plan to serve.</td>
<td>You believe the representatives will provide insight into their constituents that they may not self-report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You feel that no one else would be able to accurately represent the needs of your identified audience.</td>
<td>Your constituents are minors, and consent might be an issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have a pre-existing relationship with constituents that you wish to strengthen.</td>
<td>You hope to partner with the representatives in the future to serve the identified audience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To provide an example, the Wadsworth Atheneum invited representatives to a focus group regarding programming for LGBTQ youth. The representatives were staff members at Connecticut organizations that served LGBTQ teens and young adults through programming or services. The museum decided to engage the representatives instead of the teens themselves for the following reasons:

- Teens and young adults under age 18 would need parental consent.
- Transportation to the museum could be an issue for this age group.
• LGBTQ organization staff are aware of many LGBTQ exhibits, programs, and potential partners that the youth themselves may not know about.
• The museum can build partnerships with these organizations as a result of the focus group, and will already have buy-in from the staff members that participated.

However, for the Second Saturdays for Families focus group, Wadsworth staff wanted to collect direct feedback from families that had attended the event, and a representative would not be able to speak fully to their experience at the museum.

Outreach and Communication

The best method of communicating with potential participants will vary based on the audience. E-mail can reach large numbers of people, but may be a bit impersonal if it seems too much like a form letter. A combination of an e-mail invitation and a follow-up via phone is a good way to provide participants with all the necessary information while motivating and reminding them to follow up on their commitment. The initial correspondence should be clear and informative, clarifying the purpose of the focus group and the expectations of the invitee. Like an invitation to any event or party, the basic logistics should be included:

WHO is leading the focus group?
WHEN is the focus group?
WHERE is the focus group?

WHY is the focus group being held? Why am I invited?
WHAT is my role? What will happen during the focus group?
HOW will the results be used?

The information regarding WHO, WHEN, and WHERE is logistical, while the WHY, WHAT, and HOW may require some more in-depth explanation. Examples from the Wadsworth’s invitation e-mails are as follows (the full text of both invitations is available in the Appendix):

WHY is the focus group being held? Why am I invited?
• “Because this exhibition explores topics of self-expression, gender & sexuality, and contemporary art, we believe it could be particularly resonant with the LGBT and queer youth your organization serves.” (Guise & Dolls Focus Group)

WHAT is my role? What will happen during the focus group?
• “We will be conducting focus group discussions – in English and Spanish – to help us learn more about what inspires those who come for Second Saturdays to come to visit at other times.” (Second Saturdays Focus Group)

**HOW** will the results be used?

• “We hope to collect feedback regarding interpretation and programming for the exhibition as well as ideas for engaging these teens and young adults with the museum in the future.” (Guise & Dolls Focus Group)

**Incentives and Rewards**

Incentives and rewards can also be included in the initial invitation to encourage participation. These incentives do not have to be expensive, and in fact may be something the organization can easily offer; for example, the Wadsworth offered free family memberships to all participants in the Second Saturdays for Families focus group. For the staff representatives from LGBTQ youth-serving organizations, the Wadsworth offered each organization a catalogue of the *Warhol & Mapplethorpe: Guise & Dolls* exhibition. As an added benefit, both prizes facilitated continued involvement with the museum after the focus group, encouraging families to visit and LGBTQ staff to learn more about the museum’s collection and the *Warhol & Mapplethorpe* exhibition.

**Follow-up with Participants**

Before, during, and after the focus group, be sure to manage participant expectations. Participants may not have engaged in focus groups before, and may expect that the organization will act quickly in response to all of their suggestions. Being honest and transparent about the intent of the focus group will help to manage these expectations early on. Also, people likely will feel more positively about their time and involvement if they are able to see the result. This may come in the form of a formal report, an informal e-mail update, or an invitation to the program or exhibition that was developed with their feedback in mind.
DEVELOPING THE PROTOCOL

During the initial planning stages, the protocol must be constructed to facilitate data collection. The protocol is merely a list of the questions that will be asked and discussed, structured to facilitate efficient recording of responses.

Developing Your Questions

The ideal focus group includes 2-5 key questions you want to explore through your focus group. For example, in planning for the Wadsworth’s *Warhol & Mapplethorpe* focus groups, the museum identified five overarching themes (with implicit questions) that we used to structure the protocol:

- **Relevance** (How are the themes presented in the exhibition relevant to LGBTQ youth?)
- **Welcoming** (How can we help make sure LGBTQ youth feel welcome at the museum/exhibition and its programs?)
- **Experimentation Gallery** (What type of themes would you like us to explore in our interpretive space adjacent to the exhibition?)
- **Partnership** (How can we work together with you or other partners in relation to this exhibition?)
- **Follow-Up** (How can we continue our relationship with your organization and constituents?)

Articulating your overarching themes can help focus your efforts and ensure that all stakeholders agree on the main topics. Once they are agreed upon, break down the themes into specific questions. What information do you need to address them? At this stage, it’s usually easy to brainstorm questions, because there are so many things it would be useful to know. Use your overarching themes to help guide your decision making as you narrow down your pool of questions.

Other criteria of good questions you might want to consider are:

- Make sure each question is specific and in language appropriate for your audience.
- Keep the questions short and easy to remember.
- Avoid covering multiple topics in a single question.
- Check that questions aren’t phrased to be leading participants towards a desirable response.
- Consider whether sharing contextual information or defining terms is needed to help clarify question meaning for respondents.
Carefully consider the total number of questions you want to include on your protocol. The more time you provide for each question, the richer the resulting data will be. Consider prioritizing your questions and saving less important items for the end, to address only as time allows.

**Structuring Your Protocol**

Most focus group protocols start out with one or two “warm-up” questions that help connect the participants to the topic. For example, you may ask participants how many times they have participated in something related to your topic, or how familiar they are with the topic in general. These are followed by the key questions of interest, presented in an order that makes sense, is likely to inspire response, and fits into the allowed time schedule. Most focus group questions should be truly open-ended to elicit rich data.

Warm-Up Questions:
- Have you heard of this program/topic before?
- Have you participated in programming at our organization before?

If there are difficult or sensitive questions, these are often sandwiched between more general topics/questions, or held until closer to the end of the focus group so there is time for all respondents to warm up to the group.

The focus group protocol generally ends with questions, such as the following asking for final commentary. Although this may not result in any new information, wrap-up questions allow participants to volunteer any feedback that did not fall under the specific questions asked.

Wrap-Up Questions:
- Does anyone have anything else to add to this?
- Was there anything else that you thought we were going to ask?
- Was there anything else you feel we should have asked?
- Is there anyone else you think we should talk to about this topic?

**Using Probes to Dig Deeper**

In some cases, you will want further details to help clarify or expand on the feedback you receive. Probes are reminders in the protocol to dig deeper into the
topics raised during the discussion or request specifics. For example, the following types of general probes may be useful to add to some questions:

- Please tell me (more) about that.
- Could you explain what you mean by that?
- Can you tell me something else about that?
- So you’re telling me that ______, right?

The following example from the Wadsworth’s Second Saturdays for Families focus group includes a list of probes after certain questions, reminding the moderator to follow up as applicable before moving to the next question:

**Focus Group Protocol Sample: Excerpt with Probes**

4. Distribute the Family Guides - have them review [BE SURE THEY HAVE TIME TO READ THEM]. How many have ever used these?
ROUGH COUNT:_____________________

OBSERVATION NOTES – How do participants react to the guides as they review them?

4a. Now that you know about them would you use them?

4b. What would make these more user-friendly? (Probe – length- should it be shorter, focus on one work of art, check also about availability/visibility – Do they know where these are located?, how could the Museum make sure people know where these are?) Check here for the need to have these in Spanish – same question about Spanish/English, or Spanish only; also inquire about tone of Spanish

4c. What do you think would be preferable: guides in Spanish only (and English only), or guides in both Spanish and English in the same document? (Be sure to point out that the latter will make the appearance of the document different)

4d. If yes to availability in English and Spanish, would you prefer separate use of English and Spanish like the current family guides or an integrated use of languages side by side on the same page?

Even if probes are listed on the protocol, you do not have to use them if you feel that you have already received enough feedback about a question. Likewise, if a probe is not listed in the protocol, you can still use the general probe listed above if you find it to be necessary in context.
Formatting Your Protocol

Protocols can take the following forms:

- Paper guide/list with all the questions, note taker sets aside one page for each question.
- Paper guide with space following each question so notes can be written directly on the form as the conversation takes place.
- Electronic version of the paper guide so the scribe can type while the conversations are happening.
- PowerPoint presentation of all questions, so individual items can be projected while the scribe takes notes electronically or on paper.

Although it isn’t required, questions can be shared in advance or provided to participants on paper during the session. Similarly, the questions can be projected on a screen during the focus group to remind participants of the topic or question currently being discussed:

Focus Group Protocol Sample: PowerPoint Excerpt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#EG1</th>
<th>#EG2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any reactions, positive or</td>
<td>How do you think we could address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>negative, that you would like to share?</td>
<td>these topics in the <em>Guise &amp; Dolls</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experimentation gallery?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Supplementing with Other Data

As you are designing your focus group protocol, be sure to think about what else you will need to know about your respondents. You can build some of these easy to count questions, such as whether or how many times they have done something, right into your protocol (see question 4 in the example above). Other information such as background characteristics of participants should be asked during a brief survey that can be completed at the beginning or end of the focus group as part of the registration process.
CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS

Strategies for conducting focus groups will vary somewhat depending on the purpose for the group. Once all the initial planning has taken place (see previous sections), there are a few final preparatory steps that must occur and there are standard practices that are used while actually running the groups to ensure that useful data are obtained. Additional props, handouts, or visual aids you want participants to provide feedback on should be secured prior to the focus group.

Preparing for the Focus Group

It is imperative that the focus group moderator and the scribe meet (at least virtually) before any group is conducted, and that both facilitators carefully review the protocol. It is also useful to annotate the protocol as needed to highlight any probes or special directions, especially if there are supplementary props, handouts, or visual aids that will be used. It is also advisable for the focus group moderator to practice or conduct a mock group to make sure the protocol and plans are likely to work. The moderator should also prepare to troubleshoot:

- **How will I get the conversation going if the group is particularly reticent or quiet?**
  Try throwing in a question you feel pretty certain everyone will have an opinion about, even if you have to go out of order on your protocol. Remind the group that their voices and responses are valued and needed.

- **What will I do if the group gets too rowdy or out of control?**
  Remind everyone of the ground rules that were set at the beginning of the group – see next section – also remind them how important it is for them to get through the whole protocol, assuring them that their responses have been heard but the group has to move on to other (hopefully safer) topics.

- **How will I handle participants that monopolize the conversation or who never speak?**
  Invariably, there will be some respondents who are more vocal than others. It’s generally not a good strategy to go around the room one by one asking for responses, but it can be useful to reach out to specific respondents by name saying: “Anita, we haven’t heard much from you, would you like to add anything?”, or “We’ve heard a lot from this side of the room, how about anyone over here?” If you have someone monopolizing the conversation, try saying something like the following: “Thanks for all your input. So what do others think? Do you agree, or have any other thoughts or opinions?” Try to
make sure they know it is okay to disagree and remind participants that varied opinions or experiences are what you are after.

**What will I do if someone says something inappropriate or hurtful?**

Again remind everyone of the ground rules and move to questions that are safer. If necessary, let the respondent know that certain types of comments are out of bounds for the purposes of the focus group.

In addition to considering issues like those above, the focus group moderator and scribe should spend some time familiarizing themselves with who is on the participant list (minimally how many people are expected, what other characteristics they have that are relevant to the group, such as age, experience) and consider whether name tags or other materials are needed. If print materials are needed, be sure there are enough copies to easily use or share. If audio/visual components are needed, be sure to test them out in the room where the group will be conducted BEFORE the focus group begins.

**Focus Group Environment**

Generally, focus groups involve fairly small numbers of respondents: 5 to 10 people per group is ideal. If there are a large number of eligible or desired participants, consider holding multiple focus groups— but ensure that the same protocol is used. A seasoned focus group moderator and a talented scribe can manage more people, but multiple small groups—3 to 4 groups per topic/focus is a good general rule—is better than one very large group.

When setting the tone for a focus group, consider what types of respondents are present (e.g., people who come to the museum to participate in programming, but never or rarely visit on their own; people who all have children in a local school district, or who are in a specific age group, or who are all directors of agencies that serve a population of interest), or are looking for lots of variation or random groups. Whoever you recruit, it is always useful to strive for a neutral setting and to use circle seating when possible to avoid a false sense of hierarchy.

Always establish ground rules for the focus group at the outset. These rules, reminders, and guidelines are often stated verbally at the beginning and can also be displayed somewhere in the room. Usually a focus group begins with the moderator welcoming the group, introducing the moderator and the scribe,
reminding everyone of the purpose of the focus group, and establishing ground rules for the session:

**FOCUS GROUP GROUND RULES**

1. We want everyone to participate. (Individuals may be called on to speak).
2. There are no right or wrong answers.
3. Be considerate as you share your opinions and responses, don’t interrupt or try to over-ride others.
4. Everything that is shared here is confidential. Do not discuss this further after the group with individuals who weren’t part of the group.
5. The comments of the group are being recorded, but comments will never be attributed to individuals.*

*Be sure to mention specifically if the group is to be audio recorded.

Sometimes participants are asked to sign a consent form showing that they have voluntarily agreed to participate and that they plan to abide by the ground rules. As stated by Elliot & Associates in their *Guidelines for Conducting a Focus Group*, it may also be helpful to also remind participants that a focus group is NOT: a debate, group therapy, a conflict resolution session, or problem solving session.

**Special Accommodations**

Don’t forget to consider whether your groups will need any special accommodations. This may include language translation, support for participants with hearing, vision, or mobility challenges, or even childcare for participants. Mentioning any special accommodations offered in the focus group invitation can help potential participants feel more comfortable in the knowledge that their needs will be met before committing to attending.
Role of the Moderator

The moderator has one of the most important jobs. Ideally the person who moderates the focus group is someone who is trained (or who uses the advice of trained focus group moderators—like that contained in this guide), has adequate knowledge of the topic, and has at least some things in common with the participants.

If the focus group is being conducted for formal reporting purposes, it is important to secure a trained moderator, especially someone who is well-versed in evaluation and the standards of evidence and data collection. If the focus group is being conducted to test out an idea or to gather basic feedback from constituents to help inform programming decisions, a more novice facilitator can be effective.

The focus group moderator begins the session with a welcome, then introductions (usually the moderator and the scribe, and sometime all the participants or other key stakeholders) and directions, followed by clarification of the purpose of the focus group, sharing of any other contextual information and also clarifying what will happen to the results. At the outset, ground-rules and the overall tone are established.

As the group is conducted, the focus group moderator must:

- Present a smooth introduction that includes a welcome, overview and ground rules.
- Use the pre-determined questions identified in the protocol.
- Use pauses and probes (such as “Would you explain further”).
- Use an assistant moderator or scribe to handle logistics and to take notes.
- Establish a permissive environment that inspires response to and conversation about the protocol questions. Facilitate discussion among participants.
- Control verbal and nonverbal reactions to participants.
- Respond to issues and comments, but not answer the protocol questions (that is for the respondents to do). Stay as neutral and unbiased as possible despite discussions that ensue from protocol questions.
- Use subtle group control (managing “experts,” dominant speakers, reluctant participants, ramblers) to help participants feel relaxed and comfortable.
- Keep everyone on track and focused on the discussion topic and effectively complete the protocol.
A good focus group moderator uses a three-step conclusion process: summarizing with confirmation; reviewing focus group purpose and acquiring any missing data; and thanking participants and clarifying any follow-up or next steps.

**Role of the Scribe**

The scribe is responsible for recording information during the focus group. This can include audio recording (as long as participants have agreed to being recorded) and/or note taking. The scribe’s notes are a collection of quoted responses to the focus group questions. If necessary, the scribe can also devise a system to track which respondent has answered, for example by assigning each respondent a number and then attaching that number to the quotes as the group proceeds.

Often scribes also serve as assistant moderators helping to manage the group and making sure logistics work during the actual group (e.g., getting people into the room, providing name tags, seating, collecting additional surveys). Sometimes scribes are used to open or close groups or to help with or conduct follow-up after the group. As stated previously, the scribe should meet at least virtually with the moderator before conducting a group and should definitely be familiar with the protocol, especially with how to record information.

Scribes usually provide a transcript of the group, and sometimes an initial summary and group assessment. It is ideal for the moderator and scribe to meet immediately after each session to review notes and record initial assessment of the group and basic key findings.
ANALYZING FOCUS GROUP DATA

Most focus group data are qualitative and the results of analyses are narrative in form. Quantitative data, such as counts of participant types in the introduction or methodology sections, or enumerated qualitative results (e.g., counts of types of responses) are sometimes included as well. A primary and straightforward strategy involves development of summary statements based on review of coded or grouped answers, substantiated with quotes to exemplify the summary.

The following basic steps should be taken to organize and analyze focus group (or any qualitative) data:

1. Segment or partition the data (i.e., divide it into meaningful analytical units).
2. Review and reduce the data using codes.
3. Organize, summarize and display the data.
4. Draw conclusions, verify/validate the results.
5. Revise summaries and displays accordingly.

It is standard practice for the scribe to transcribe the responses and develop a basic summary which includes lists of all the comments in answer to the questions. As stated above, it is ideal if the scribe and moderator meet together immediately following the group to summarize and plan for next steps.

Tools can include simple strategies such as using color highlighters to signify responses that match with a specific theme. If you have a large group of responses you can actually type each response into an Excel database (or other spreadsheet), and assign numeric or letter codes to each answer, then use spreadsheet functions to sort and even count the number of responses in different theme areas. Software designed specifically to assist with the coding and enumerating process is available for purchase.

Qualitative Data Analysis for Focus Groups

Using the transcribed responses:
1. **Segment or partition the data (i.e., divide it into meaningful analytical units).**

In other words, choose sets of the responses to look at and consider separately, rather than trying to summarize all the results at once. For example you could start by looking at all the answers to just question 1 on your protocol, or just to the two warm up questions you used, or just to the three questions about satisfaction. Once you’ve “segmented the data,” do all the remaining steps and then repeat them for other segments (i.e., other sets of questions).

2. **Review and reduce the data using codes.**

Start your analysis by reviewing all the answers on the summary transcript, to the questions in the segment you have selected, to see if the same kinds of words or references come up repeatedly (e.g., most of these answers include some type of reference to being satisfied, or dis-satisfied, or to involvement of youth) and then make lists of the “themes” or repeated concepts. You can also look for evidence of pre-determined themes such as awareness or preferences. Assign codes such as a single letter or number or even a color to associate answers with identified themes. Highlight quotes that exemplify the theme by underlining them or marking them with a highlighter.

If you have conducted multiple sessions, combine all the answers to each question from all the groups. If you are interested in doing a more complex analysis, you can also compare the answers of different groups, especially if they have differing characteristics, like groups of parents of older children as compared to groups with younger children.

For example, in the Second Saturdays for Families focus group, the Wadsworth asked questions about the use of Family Guides and then reviewed the answers to determine levels of awareness about the Guides and preferences regarding format and translation. A review of the answers from multiple groups showed multiple responses within these themes:

- Limited awareness but recognition of usefulness.
- Preferences for the current format of the Guides.
- Preferences for Bilingual materials.

3. **Organize, summarize and display the data.**

A common strategy for organizing, summarizing and displaying focus group data is to construct summary statements within themes, list them, and include quotes that support the key finding:
Excerpt from the “Becoming Repeat Visitors” Focus Groups Report: Summary Statements

**Wadsworth Atheneum’s Resources and Materials for Families**

An important goal of the focus groups was to gather feedback from participants regarding the various family resources available at the Wadsworth and to solicit ideas on how the Wadsworth can increase utilization of these resources. When we distributed copies of the family guides and played clips of the audio tours, participants were unanimously enthusiastic about the materials. They said they would definitely use them now that they knew about them . . .

**Family guides: Limited Awareness but Recognition of Usefulness**

- Only one of the participants, the woman who reported visiting often with her niece and granddaughter, was aware of the family guides. When we handed out the guides and they had a chance to look through them, they all agreed that it was a great resource for families.
  - “When I come with my granddaughter and my niece, the first thing we do is look at the pamphlets. I tell them to keep in mind what they read and then look for all the paintings. I love the guides because they give us something to look for and learn about.”
  - “I think my son would like these. He would like all these activities.”

The process to identify themes or key finding summary statements and supporting quotes then needs to be repeated with the next segment of data until all useable information has been summarized. Please note that this coding and review process is iterative. Two readers may see the responses as representing different themes, and one response may represent more than one theme or inform more than one summary statement. If you can get the data into a display like the one above, you are ready for the final stages of analysis.

4. **Draw conclusions, verify/validate the results, make preliminary recommendations.**

This step includes organizing the data as shown above, and then summarizing across themes or summaries to inform recommended action steps. If possible, the results should be reviewed by multiple stakeholders (even in some cases representatives from the original focus group if possible). This helps to verify that the analyst has read an accurate meaning to the responses and properly identified themes, as they will inform this final step.
DEVELOPING AND USING FOCUS GROUP REPORTS

The focus group report is usually compiled by the moderator with assistance from the scribe as needed. The report format can be formal or informal and it is usually fairly brief. Generally, the report follows the following outline although the order can be modified depending on stakeholder need and other variations are also completely acceptable as long as key stakeholders find them useful (see the appendix for examples of focus group reports).

1. **Introduction** – includes details about the topic or focus, the program or organization.

2. **Focus Group Goals, Strategies and Participants (Methodology)** – explains why and how the group or groups were conducted and who the respondents were, as well as other methodological details (such as how recruitment was accomplished, or how results were encoded) as desired.

3. **Key Findings** – includes summary statements, usually organized by protocol question detailing results of responses to the questions, commonly in the format of lists with quotes to substantiate key findings statements. Broad key findings can also include sub-findings.

4. **Special Discussion or Detail Section** – optional, but can include discussion of subgroup results, or additional analyses of specific questions, comparisons across groups if multiple groups were conducted, etc.

5. **Conclusions, Recommendations and Issues for Further Consideration** – generally includes a brief list or restatement of key findings together with action steps suggested by the focus group participants and the focus group moderator and scribe as appropriate. Other topics/suggestions/ideas identified by participants and/or the moderator can also be included.

It is also useful to include an appendix that has a full copy of the annotated protocol, with links or copies of pictures of materials used when conducting the group, and any other methodological details such as copies of invitations, participant details, or coding strategies. If a full report is not needed, an executive summary with a list of key findings and recommendations may be sufficient for your needs. This summary can also serve as an executive summary to a full report.
TOOLKIT A: PROJECT CHECKLIST

☐ Read the guide to determine if a focus group is the right tool for your needs.

☐ Fill out the Focus Group Planning Worksheet to clarify your goals, strategize about how you will use the data, and identify your intended audience.

☐ Begin to develop Focus Group Protocol. The protocol does not need to be complete before invitations are sent, but the process of devising questions may call for a

☐ Develop a list of potential participants or participant sources for invitations.

☐ Compose and distribute invitations to participants.

☐ As participants RSVP, collect phone numbers and ask if they have any specific needs that will need to be met during the focus group.

☐ Finalize the Focus Group Protocol.

☐ The day before the focus group, call all participants and remind them about the focus group. Answer any final questions about parking, sign-in, etc.

☐ Conduct focus group according to the protocol.

☐ Immediately after the focus group, clean up and fill in notes while the focus group discussion is still fresh in your mind.

☐ The day after the focus group, send a thank-you note to participants and follow up on any incentives that were not distributed at the focus group itself.

☐ Use the Focus Group Report Outline as a resource for developing a report or summary.

☐ Follow up with participants on a continual basis as needed, such as sharing the final report or announcing changes that were made using their feedback.
TOOLKIT B: FOCUS GROUP PLANNING WORKSHEET

A focus group is the right tool for this evaluation project because...

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

How will the data be used? What are your goals?

• ________________________________________________________________________________

• ________________________________________________________________________________

• ________________________________________________________________________________

• ________________________________________________________________________________

• ________________________________________________________________________________

• ________________________________________________________________________________

What other evaluation strategies (if any) are you using to gather data about this audience?

Interviews          Surveys          Observations

Record Review          Other__________

How is this data connected? __________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________
Audience Profile
Use the questions below each category to identify the important aspects of your audience. If it does not matter for a given category, circle ANY.

**Location:** _____________________________ ANY
- Where do they live, work, or spend time?
- Connected to a specific place, or within a radius?

**Gender:** _____________________________ ANY
- Male, female, or non-binary gender?

**Age/Life Stage:** ___________________________ ANY
- Age ranges, numerical (13-18) or descriptive (teen)?
- Above or below a certain age range (65+)?

**Interest/Affinity:** ___________________________ ANY
- Connected by a self-identified interest (cooking, art, etc.)?
- Stakeholders for an organization or specific cause?

**Role/Identity:** _____________________________ ANY
- Familial role, such as parent, grandparent, caregiver, etc.?
- Role in community: leader, business owner, donor, etc.?
- Other status: immigrant, home owner,

**Relationship to Organization:** _____________________________ ANY
- Currently served by organization or not? Never served?
- Participants, staff, volunteers, partners, clients, etc.?

**Other:** _____________________________ ANY
- Is their employment or socioeconomic status relevant?
- Is their self-reported race or ethnicity relevant?

In one sentence, the focus group participants are...
TOOLKIT C: FOCUS GROUP REPORT OUTLINE

Preparing the Data for Analysis

1. Segment or partition the data (i.e., divide it into meaningful analytical units).
2. Review and reduce the data using codes.
3. Organize, summarize and display the data.
4. Draw conclusions, verify/validate the results, make preliminary recommendations.

General Report Outline

1. Introduction
   a. Details about the topic or focus
   b. Info about the program or organization
2. Methodology
   a. Goals
   b. Strategies
   c. Participants
3. Key Findings
   a. Key Finding Summary Statement
      i. Sub-Finding (if any)
         1. List of Quotes
4. Special Discussion or Detail (optional)
   a. Additional analyses of specific questions
   b. Comparisons across groups
5. Final Thoughts
   a. Conclusions
   b. Recommendations
   c. Issues for Further Consideration
6. Appendix (optional)
   a. Annotated Protocol
   b. Materials Used
   c. Additional Information
APPENDIX A: SAMPLE INVITATIONS

Dear Wadsworth Friend,

Are you the parent of a school-age child returning to join us during the November 8th Second Saturdays for Families event?

Can you spare an extra 45 minutes to share some important insights to help us promote Wadsworth visitation? We especially need to hear from those who are bilingual or who mostly speak Spanish at home.

We will be conducting focus group discussions – in English and Spanish – to help us learn more about what inspires those who come for Second Saturdays to come to visit at other times. Answer this email and let us know if you are interested.

Coffee and pastries will be included and participants will receive a free family membership! Children are welcome to join and remain with you during the discussion.

Three focus groups will be held, at the Museum, on Saturday, November 8th: two in English from 9:00 – 10:00; and one in Spanish from 10:30 – 11:30 AM. Please let us know if you are planning to attend Second Saturdays this weekend or have been to at least two programs in the last two years and would be willing to participate.

Please note – participation in this is limited, so please let us know right away if you can participate. We’ll get back to you soon to let you know your selection status. (Free tickets for a future visit will be provided to all who answer our call for participants.)

These focus groups are part of our ongoing efforts to understand and engage our visitors so that they experience the Wadsworth as their place to come together and experience the power of art. The focus groups will be conducted by Anita Baker and Vivian Figueredo of Evaluation Services. Both are external consultants who have helped guide the work of the Wadsworth.

Participation is entirely voluntary. Please be assured that your responses during the focus group will be kept strictly confidential and that the Wadsworth Atheneum will not release any information that can be linked to you.

Please RSVP to this message if you would be willing to attend, and let us know if you want to attend a group conducted in English or in Spanish. It will be very helpful if you can let us know whether you speak English only, English and Spanish, Spanish only.

Feel free to email or call me with questions about the focus group.
Dear Staff of [Organization Name]:

The Wadsworth is planning an exhibition for Fall 2015 titled, *Guise & Dolls: Warhol & Mapplethorpe* [link to exhibition page], featuring the gender-bending photography of these two artists. Because this exhibition explores topics of self-expression, gender & sexuality, and contemporary art, we believe it could be particularly resonant with the LGBT and queer youth your organization serves.

We are organizing a focus group here on **Tuesday, June 9, 2015** from 4-5pm for staff representatives from LGBT youth-serving institutions in Connecticut. We hope to collect feedback regarding interpretation and programming for the exhibition as well as ideas for engaging these teens and young adults with the museum in the future.

The information about the focus group is in the attached PDF document. We will provide light refreshments and coffee. Please RSVP either way—we look forward to seeing you here on the 9th!
APPENDIX B: SAMPLE PROTOCOLS

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL
Second Saturdays Participants Input: Becoming Repeat Visitors
Bilingual Language Group March 14, 2105

CUESTIONARIO DE GRUPO FOCAL DE WADSWORTH ATHENEUM
Aporte de los participantes de los Segundos Sábados: Convirtiéndose en visitantes habituales
Grupo bilingüe y de habla española 14 de marzo 2015

Facilitator Materials:

Q1 – Participant survey
Q4 – Sample family guides
Q5 – Sample of other formats for family guides
Q6 – a) “Trapeze” handout, b) “Trapeze” audio clip
Q7 – a) “Retroactive I” handout, b) “Retroactive I” audio clip
Q13 – “Priorities” survey
Q14 – HPS flyer

GENERAL
1. Have participants complete the brief Background Stats survey.
2. Have you ever visited the Wadsworth during any time that was NOT Second Saturdays? (Probe: have you ever come to the museum on your own?
ROUGH COUNT: __________

Distinguish what is meant by “coming to the museum on their own” (i.e., without programming) – then ask them the following:

3a. IF YES, What did you do when you visited independently? (Probe: 1- with or without children; 2 - used Lets Move, used Highlights Audio Tour, used Family Guides, visited the Connections Gallery, sketched, other)

3b. If NO, What has kept you from trying a visit on your own? Or bringing your school-aged children on a “self-guided” visit? (Probe: transportation, language, time, comfort level of parent to led experience, comfort level during non-event days, i.e. not lots of other children and families at the museum)

2. ¿Alguna vez han visitado el Wadsworth en un día que no haya sido un Segundo Sábado? (Sondear - alguna vez han venido al museo por su cuenta?)

ANOTAR UN ESTIMADO DEL NUMERO DE RESPUESTAS AFIRMATIVAS AQUI: __________
Distinguir lo que se entiende por "venir al museo por su propia cuenta" (ej. Un día sin programa) – luego preguntar lo siguiente:

3A. Si es así, ¿qué hicieron en el museo cuando visitaron por su cuenta? (Sondear: 1 ¿vinieron con o sin sus hijos? 2 – ¿utilizaron ¡A moverse!? ¿el audio tour de obras destacadas? ¿las guías familiares? 3 – ¿visitaron la galería Connections?, ¿bosquejaron?, ¿otros?)

3B. Si no, ¿Qué les ha impedido visitar por su cuenta? ¿Traer a sus hijos de edad escolar para una visita por su cuenta? (Sondear: transporte, idioma, tiempo, nivel de comodidad de los padres para guiar la experiencia, nivel de comodidad durante días sin eventos, es decir, no muchos otros niños o familias en el museo.)

3. How accessible and welcoming is the Wadsworth to you and your family? (Probe for: whether they feel intimidated, if they know how to access assistance especially Spanish-language supports such as the translated print and audio materials.)

   a. When you come here to attend Second Saturdays or some other program?
   b. If you’ve come here on your own.
   c. How welcoming and accessible do you think the Museum is for Spanish-speaking visitors overall?

3. ¿Qué tan cómodos y bienvenidos se sienten cuando visitan el Wadsworth? (Sondear: ¿hay algo del museo que les haga sentir incomodos? ¿saben cómo pedir ayuda si necesitan algo durante su visita al museo? ¿en particular, saben cómo encontrar los materiales en español que ofrece el museo?)

   a. ¿Cuando vienen a Segundo Sábado o algún otro programa?
   b. ¿Cuando han venido por su cuenta?
   c. ¿Qué tan accesible es el museo para los hispanoparlantes? Se sienten bienvenidos aquí por lo general?

PRINTED MATERIALS

4. Distribute the Family Guides - have them review [BE SURE THEY HAVE TIME TO READ THEM]. How many have ever used these?

ROUGH COUNT:__________________

OBSERVATION NOTES – How do participants react to the guides as they review them?

   4a. Now that you know about them would you use them?

   4b. What would make these more user-friendly? (Probe – length- should it be shorter, focus on one work of art, check also about availability/visibility – Do they know where these are located?, how could the Museum make sure people know where these are?)
Check here for the need to have these in Spanish – same question about Spanish/English, or Spanish only; also inquire about tone of Spanish

4c. What do you think would be preferable: guides in Spanish only (and English only), or guides in both Spanish and English in the same document? (Be sure to point out that the latter will make the appearance of the document different)

4d. If yes to availability in English and Spanish, would you prefer separate use of English and Spanish like the current family guides or an integrated use of languages side by side on the same page?

4e. If you didn’t see this in Spanish, would you ask for it?

4. Distribuir las guías de familia y pedir que las revisen [ASEGURAR QUE HAYA TIEMPO PARA QUE LAS LEAN]. ¿Alguna vez han usado estas guías?

ESTIMADO DE RESPUESTAS AFIRMATIVAS: __________

NOTAS DE OBSERVACION – ¿Cómo reaccionan los participantes al revisar las guías?

4a. ¿Ahora que las conocen, las utilizarían?

4b. ¿Qué haría más fáciles de usar? (Sondear: ¿las guías deberían ser más cortas?, ¿centrarse en una obra de arte? Compruebe si saben dónde encontrar las guías. ¿Qué podría hacer el museo para que los visitantes sepan cómo encontrar las guías?)

Compruebe aquí la necesidad de que las guías estén disponibles en español – ¿es necesario que estén en español e inglés, o sólo en español? También indagar sobre el tono en el que está escrita la guía en español

4c. ¿Qué sería preferible: guías en español solamente (y sólo en inglés), o guías en español e inglés en el mismo documento (aunque la apariencia de este último sería diferente)?

4d. Si es preferible que estén en ambos idiomas, ¿prefieren los dos idiomas separados como están ahora o preferirían ver los dos idiomas lado a lado?

4e. Si no vieran la guía en español, ¿la pedirían?

5. We’d like to show you some other formats for Family/Museum print guides. (Show them the three guides – but DO NOT LET THEM HANDLE or KEEP ANYTHING – Just, hold them up and discuss them)

5a. Do you like any of these formats more than the current one used by the Wadsworth?

5b. How important would it be for this guide to have Spanish translation? (Try to distinguish between cultural importance and access/need; also, in terms of priorities, if the Museum can only make some changes, would making sure print guides have Spanish translation be a top priority?)
5c. If Spanish translation is deemed important – then ask again about Spanish and English in a single document vs. Spanish versions and English versions

5. Nos gustaría mostrarles otros formatos para las guías de familia. (Mostrar las tres guías, pero NO PERMITIR QUE LAS AGARREN O SE QUEDEN CON ELLAS – Solo mostrar y discutir)

5a. ¿Prefieren alguno de estos formatos a los que usa Wadsworth actualmente?

5b. ¿Qué tan importante sería que estas guías incluyan una traducción al español? (Tratar de distinguir entre importancia cultural y acceso/necesidad; si el museo solo puede hacer unos cuantos cambios, ¿traducir las guías al español sería alta prioridad?)

5c. Si traducción al español les parece importante, preguntar de Nuevo si prefieren español e inglés en el mismo documento en versiones separadas.

AUDIO TOURS

6. Are you aware of the Lets Move Audio Tour? ROUGH COUNT: ________________

Play audio clip, show picture of “Trapeze” (in English and Spanish for bilingual group; Spanish only for Spanish group)

6a) Now that you know about this would you use it? Why or why not?

6. ¿Han escuchado acerca del audio tour ¡A moverse! que ofrece el museo? ESTIMADO DE RESPUESTAS AFIRMATIVAS: __________

Reproducir audio clip, Mostrar imagen de “Trapeze” (Reproducir clip en inglés y español para el grupo bilingüe, sólo en español para el grupo español.)

6a) ¿Ahora que saben sobre esto, lo utilizarían? ¿Por qué o por qué no?

7. Are you aware of the Highlights Audio Tour? ROUGH COUNT: ________________

Play audio clip, show picture of “Retroactive 1” (in English and Spanish for bilingual group; Spanish only for Spanish group)

7a) Now that you know about this would you use it? Why or why not?

7. ¿Han escuchado acerca del audio tour de obras destacadas (Highlights Audio Tour)? ESTIMADO DE RESPUESTAS AFIRMATIVAS: __________

Reproducir audio clip, Mostrar imagen de “Retroactive 1” (Reproducir clip en inglés y español para el grupo bilingüe, sólo en español para el grupo español.)

7a) ¿Ahora que saben sobre esto, lo utilizarían? ¿Por qué o por qué no?
8. Any comments on the tone of the translation for either of these audio clips?
   8a) Currently, these audio clips are rarely used. Any thoughts on why and what would make
   them more user-appealing?
   We need the group to help us understand how important it is to have things in English and Spanish
   because it gives a message of welcome-ness vs. how much it Spanish language translations are needed
   to enhance the experience of visitors

8. ¿Alguien tiene algún comentario sobre el tono de la traducción de estos clips?
   8a) En la actualidad, estos clips de audio se utilizan muy poco. ¿Tienen ideas sobre el porqué?
   ¿Qué los haría más atractivos para los usuarios?
   Necesitamos que el grupo nos ayude a entender porqué es importante tener materiales en inglés y
   español, ¿es porqué señala a la comunidad de habla hispana que es bienvenida? ¿O es porqué son
   necesarios para mejorar la experiencia de los visitantes?

9. How can we make sure families know these materials are available? That they are also available in
   Spanish?

9. ¿Cómo podemos asegurar que las familias sepan que estos materiales están disponibles? ¿Y que
   están disponibles en español?

MOBILE APPS

10. Some museums use web-enabled or hand-held apps that are Interactive to help engage families.
    Would something like this be useful for your family? (Probe: Would you download an app onto your cell
    phone or iPad BEFORE coming to the museum, or at the museum?)

    EXAMPLES:
    Audio/labels - Clark mobile app
    Family game - http://naguide.org/na/index.html#

    10b. Would you use interactive features on the website on your home computer?
    Would it need to be in Spanish to use it?

10. Algunos museos utilizan aplicaciones portátiles o habilitadas para la web que son interactivas para
    involucrar a las familias. ¿Algo así sería útil para sus familias? (Sondear: ¿bajarían una aplicación a su
    teléfono móvil o iPad antes de venir al museo, o una vez aquí?)

    EJEMPLOS:
    Audio/etiquetas - Clark mobile app
    Juego de familia - http://naguide.org/na/index.html#

    10b. ¿Usarían funciones interactivas del sitio web de Wadsworth en sus computadoras en
    casa? ¿Tendrían que estar en español para que las usen?

OTHER SELF-GUIDED or TOURS (programs)
11. **Guided Tours.** Other than at Second Saturdays, have you ever participated in one of these?
ROUGH COUNT: ____________________

Now that you know about them would you take a guided tour?

**What would make a guided tour appealing to you?** *(Probe: importance of having a tour in Spanish or access to a bilingual docent – NOTE if you have already covered this completely back in Question 5 – SKIP IT HERE)*

11. **Visitas con guía:** Aparte de Segundos Sábados, ¿han participado en una visita con guía del museo?
ESTIMADO DE RESPUESTAS AFIRMATIVAS: __________

Ahora que saben sobre ellas, ¿tomarían una visita guiada?

¿Qué les podría interesar más en tomar una visita guiada? *(Preguntar acerca de la importancia de contar con un tour en español, o de tener acceso a un docente bilingüe – NOTA – si el tema ya ha sido cubierto)*

12. Some museums use “tools” to help engage children, like special sketch pads or backpacks. Do you think this would make you want to come to the museum by yourself (or outside of Second Saturdays program hours)? Would the materials need to be in Spanish to use it?

12. Algunos museos usan "herramientas" para captar el interés de los niños, como cuadernos de dibujo o mochilas con actividades. ¿Algo así los haría querer venir al museo por su cuenta (o fuera de los Segundos Sábados)? ¿Tendrían que estar los materiales en español para usarlos?

**PRIORITY**

13. [HAND OUT SURVEY] The museum will be opening a new display of the European art collection in the fall. It has limited resources for new programming and strategies (including those to help Spanish-speaking visitors make the most of the Museum experience for themselves and their families). They need your help to prioritize what is most important for you. Given that:

How important is it to you...

- a. that you are greeted in Spanish?
- b. that there is a printed piece with suggestions for how to make the most of the visit – specifically for Spanish-speaking visitors (this would include information about where other audio/print or apps are available in Spanish)?
- c. that there are Spanish-speaking docents or staff who can answer questions in Spanish?
- d. that there are tours in English given by bi-lingual docents who can explain or discuss visitors’ thoughts/questions in Spanish?
- e. that there are tours and programs like Second Saturdays conducted in Spanish only?
- f. that there are print materials such as family guides available in Spanish?
- g. that there are mobile apps that include audio and label copy in Spanish for various works in the museum?
- h. that there are interactive games, in Spanish, available to help guide family visits?
Nota: Please note we are trying to distinguish between cultural welcoming and actual access/need for any of the above to be in Spanish.

13. [REPARTIR ENCUESTA] Este otoño, el museo abrirá una nueva exposición de la colección de arte europeo. Tiene recursos limitados para nuevos programas y materiales (incluyendo aquellos para ayudar a los visitantes hispanoparlantes a disfrutar del museo). Necesitan su ayuda para priorizar lo que es más importante para ustedes. Dado eso:

Qué tan importante es...
- a. ¿que alguien le dé la bienvenida en español?
- b. ¿que haya un documento impreso con sugerencias sobre cómo aprovechar su visita como hispanoparlante? (incluyendo información sobre dónde encontrar otros materiales impresos/de audio o apps disponibles en español)
- c. ¿que haya un docente de habla hispana o empleados que puedan contestar preguntas en español?
- d. ¿que se ofrezcan tours en inglés con docentes bilingües que puedan explicar o discutir con los visitantes en español?
- e. ¿que hayan tours o programas como Segundo Sábado dirigidos en español solamente?
- f. ¿que hayan materiales impresos como las guías de familia disponibles en español?
- g. ¿que hayan apps móviles que incluyan audio y etiquetas en español para varias obras en el museo?
- h. ¿que hayan juegos interactivos en español disponibles para las familias?

Nota: Favor notar que queremos distinguir entre dar la bienvenida de manera cultural y lo que sea una necesidad esencial para que las personas hispanoparlantes puedan disfrutar el museo.

14. DO you have children in the Hartford Public Schools? Have you seen this flyer? How important is it to have flyers and messages coming to your homes in Spanish? SHOW THEM THE NEW FLYER

14. ¿Tienen hijos en los colegios públicos de Hartford? ¿Alguna vez han visto este volante? ¿Qué tan importante es que estos volantes y otros mensajes que llegan a sus hogares estén en español? MOSTRAR NUEVO VOLANTE

15. If the Wadsworth had to prioritize which outlets should be used for promotion? (e.g., Spanish-language radio, website, local placement of flyers) What would you recommend? Any other outlets they should consider?

15. Si el Wadsworth tuviera que priorizar que medios usar para promocionar al museo, ¿cuáles deberían ser sus prioridades? (por ejemplo, radio hispana, sitios web, volantes en lugares públicos)? Qué se debería priorizar? ¿Hay otros medios que debería considerar?

IF TIME
16. What other ways do you get information about things to do with your family? Which are most important to have Spanish translations?
17. Final Comments/Ideas/Thoughts about promoting visiting outside of Second Saturdays?
Si hay tiempo
16. ¿De qué otras maneras consiguen información acerca de cosas para hacer con su familia? Cuáles sería importante tener en español?
17. ¿Algún comentario final/idea sobre cómo promocionar las visitas al museo aparte de los Segundos Sábados?
Portraits of Patti Smith by Mapplethorpe

Portraits of Lisa Lyon by Mapplethorpe

Portraits by Mapplethorpe

Portrait of Warhol by Mapplethorpe

#R1
Are there themes in this exhibition that you think will resonate with LGBTQ youth and young adults?

#R2
Are there themes in this exhibition that will be difficult to address with LGBTQ youth or young adults?

#R3
What would you want LGBTQ youth and young adults to “walk away with” after viewing this exhibition or participating in a related program?

#W1
What can the Wadsworth do to ensure that its galleries are a “safe space” for LGBTQ youth and young adults?
How can we ensure that this exhibition and related programs are inclusive and intersectional for all audiences?

**EXPERIMENTATION GALLERY**

Please use the handout to take notes. We will discuss these ideas as a group after looking at all five slides.

- **provide a broad introduction to LGBTQ topics and/or terminology**
  - Chicago History Museum
  - The Identity Project
  - No He Campaign

- **address difficult but important ideas**
  - Center for Civil and Human Rights
  - Immigration Museum
  - Open Field at the Walker Art Center

- **invite community partners to present programming**

- **provide opportunities for creative self-expression**
  - Queer Mapping project at the Whitney Museum of American Art
  - Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art

**#EG1**

Do you have any reactions, positive or negative, that you would like to share?
**#EG2**

How do you think we could address these topics in the *Guise & Dolls* experimentation gallery?

- Provide a broad introduction to LGBTQ topics and/or terminology
- Include images or voices of contemporary LGBTQ communities
- Address difficult but important ideas
- Invite community partners to present programming
- Provide opportunities for creative self-expression

**#EG3**

Are there any other examples of museum interactivitys or exhibits you would like to share?

Do you feel they were successful or unsuccessful? Why?

**#P1**

How do you see your organization getting involved with this exhibition?

How do you see your constituents getting involved with this exhibition?

**#F1**

After this exhibition, how should we continue to engage LGBTQ youth and young adults with the Wadsworth?

**#F2**

In your opinion, are there any other organizations or individuals we should approach for feedback or partnership?
APPENDIX C: SAMPLE REPORTS

Excerpted Findings from the “Becoming Regular Visitors” Focus Groups
November 8, 2014 and March 14, 2015

Focus Group Goals and Participants
On November 8th, 2014 two focus groups were conducted—one in English, one in Spanish—during the Second Saturdays for Families event at the Wadsworth Atheneum. Participants included individuals who had participated in at least two Second Saturdays in the past two years. Four individuals, three females—including one teenage girl attending with her mother—and one male, participated in the English-language group. Nine individuals, all women, participated in the Spanish-language group.

On March 14, 2015 two Spanish-language focus groups were conducted during the Second Saturdays for Families event at the Wadsworth Atheneum. Most participants were bilingual with the exception of one couple that had recently immigrated from Cuba. Participants included individuals who had participated in at least one Second Saturday in the past year. Five individuals, three women and one man, participated in the 9:30 a.m. group. Nine individuals, six women and three men, participated in the 12:30 p.m. group.

All focus groups were moderated by Vivian Figuero, owner of VCF Consulting.

The purpose of the focus groups was to gather participants’ thoughts on how to encourage Latino families to visit the museum outside of Second Saturdays, seek their feedback on the museum’s existing and potential materials for families, and gather input on the Spanish translations of the museum’s family materials.

Feedback on visiting the Wadsworth Atheneum outside Second Saturdays

Visibility of museum in Latino community
• Most participants believed that Latinos don’t frequent the museum simply because they don’t know about it or what it offers:
  o “I think it’s because people are not aware of what is going on at the museum because they are not advertising through channels or media that Latinos respond to.”

Appeal of programmed activities
• While participants thought better promotion would attract more families outside Second Saturdays, most believed they would still be more likely to come on days with programmed activities, which they seemed to agree are generally more appealing. In particular, most felt the appeal of the museum for kids is limited unless there are activities:
  o “They definitely need to have activities, that’s one of the things that brings me to Second Saturdays.”
Perception of the museum as not kid-friendly (when compared to other venues)
• The museum is perceived as a quiet and calm space, and many participants talked about how the environment is not particularly appealing or welcoming to children:
  o “I came once with my five kids, but they couldn’t touch anything. I have two kids with disabilities and they had trouble behaving appropriately. I kept getting bad looks from other patrons. I felt uncomfortable because I know that when people come here they expect it to be quiet. But I also want to be able to come with my kids.”
  o “When you invite kids, they want to explore. Part of art is exploring and touching. The museum feels too much like a china shop.”
  o “You have to keep in mind that the museum is competing with the science center, which is more interactive for kids.”

Transportation barriers
• Several of the participants, particularly in the Spanish-language group, mentioned transportation issues as an impediment to visiting the museum more frequently:
  o “Many families [in Latino communities] have transportation issues. They should offer a shuttle to bring them. Right now shuttles are only available on Second Saturdays.”

Work schedules
• In the Spanish-language group, a few participants mentioned the fact that many in their communities work on Saturdays. They believed offering programming during the week may draw additional families:
  o “Many people work on Saturday. Another option would be to have another group during the week so parents can bring their children after school or later in the evening.”

Feedback on the Wadsworth Atheneum’s resources and materials for families

Family guides
• None of the participants, even those who came frequently to Second Saturdays or visited the museum on their own, were aware of the family guides. When we handed out the guides and they had a chance to look through them, they all agreed that it was a great resource for families.
  o “This is so cool! And it’s just out there by the front desk? I don’t tend to grab extra papers because I have so much stuff to carry already. And I don’t usually look at the displays unless I’m looking for something in particular.”

Audio tours
• Only one of the participants was aware of the “Let’s Move” or “Highlights” audio tours, but she had never used them because she thought that there was a charge. Most agreed they would use the resource now that they knew about it.
  o “I think these are good. All parents will benefit because we don’t always know what we are looking at and this will help us explain things to our children.”
  o “I didn’t even know that the museum had them. I’ve come 5 or 6 times and I never knew about these.”
• “I will definitely use these. I always learn more this way. It’s a great way to learn interesting facts.”

• We observed that when we played the audio clips for the group, the children in the room who had previously been playing and coloring became quiet and began to listen. One young boy took the picture that went along with the clip and began looking at it intently, putting it into the light to see it more closely. His father later commented:
  • “You noticed that my son came over and listened for bit. He doesn’t necessarily do that.”

Spanish translation
• Most participants in the Spanish-language group expressed a strong preference for bilingual materials (such as the bilingual family guides) over single-language materials (English-only or Spanish-only). They explained that most families have members of varying levels of English fluency – a teenager might prefer an English brochure while her grandmother may require it in Spanish. Participants explained that they would prefer to have both languages on the same document to limit the amount of paper they have to carry. Another argument in favor of bilingual materials was that many families are making an effort to raise their children bilingual – having bilingual materials would support families in this effort. One participant noted that bilingual documents also symbolize the unity of the English and Spanish communities.
  • “For educational reasons, it’s good that they are in both languages.”
  • “I think keeping it bilingual is also a way of bringing people together – it’s a way to connect the people of the two languages so that they don’t feel separated.”
  • “I like how it is now. I can fold it over if I speak English and fold it back if I speak Spanish. I can even compare the two if I wanted to learn how to say the word in the other language.”
  • “I think it’s convenient in this format. I can share it with my wife who reads Spanish and I can read it in English.”
  • “I don’t think it should be side by side because people would get confused.”

New e-resources
• Participants expressed some interest in possible new electronic resources, such as interactive website features and mobile apps:
  • “An app might be good if you had the option to type in the number of the artwork or scan a QR code and learn more about what’s in front of you. That might be interesting; that way when my kids have questions I could actually have something to tell them.”
  • “I don’t know that we would sit in front of a computer and play games on the museum’s website.”
  • “I think it would be good if you have the picture on the screen at museum and they can touch the button and then hit them with facts. Instead of them touching the painting they could touch the screen. I think it would be fun for them so they could interact more.”

• Of the samples demonstrated, several participants liked the e-detective game from the Nelson-Atkins Museum’s website:
“I think something like that would be nice because then the kids can stay entertained during the visit.”
“Something like that is good because it attracts kids to the museum and keeps them engaged.”
“I think I would use something like that with my 5-year-old to get her excited about our visit.”

Suggestions and other feedback

Get the word out in the Latino community
• Target the Latino community through Spanish-language media and other community resources – radio, channel 3, hispanavision, libraries, buses and bus stops, the city’s website, nonprofit organizations that work with Hispanic families:
  o “It’s really important to advertise to the Hispanic community. Many families at the community center where I work don’t know they are welcome at the museum. I think it’s because people are not aware of what’s going on here because the museum’s not advertising through channels and media that Latinos respond to.”
  o “I think that television is the best way. There are some in the community who can’t read even if you put it in Spanish. If you could put it on television people would respond.”
• Partner with Latino merchants to promote the museum – SAMA [Spanish American Merchants Association] and business owners along Park Street
• Continue efforts to partner with schools:
  o “They should start with the schools. Begin with the school’s community liaison and go from there.”
  o “The schools could offer transportation or a bus pass so that families can arrive and participate. If we don’t get a ride, we can’t come. A lot of us have no car.”

Raise kid-appeal
• Invest in more interactive exhibits and activities that are attractive to kids:
  o “Would they be willing to convert a whole room for kids or for families where it’s hands-on and the kids wouldn’t have to worry about getting into trouble?”
  o “When you have kids, they’re going to want to touch. It’s important to carve out a space for them.”
  o “You need to create space for kids all year round. A space that is always hands on and where they feel that they are welcome.”
  o “Having some materials that the kids could use – like to color – that would be good. It would help them interact with the art in a closer way.”
• Have a “Kids’ Concierge” – someone at the front desk who helps families plan their visit around kids’ specific interests. Set up a kiosk or interactive information center in the museum’s lobby where families can find all the resources available to them for their visit in one place.
  o “It would be nice if when you came in the staff made suggestions for you...like a kid’s tour.”
  o “I think the front staff should be suggesting [the family guides] to me and others when they come in.”
Continue to translate materials into Spanish
- Continue translating materials into Spanish in the following order of priority: 1) marketing materials; 2) family guides; 3) website; 4) audio tours:
  - “First, promotional material is paramount. After that, focus on the printed guides so families have something to look at when they come.”
  - “It would be important to have the website in Spanish.”
- Keep convening focus groups with Latino community:
  - “When I saw the ad for the focus group I thought, ‘Wow, I can have my voice heard. I have to go.’ Many people would be happy to collaborate even without a reward; being listened to is motivation in itself.”
  - “Keep having these focus groups, especially when your are making the changes during the different stages of the translation plan.”
  - “I really appreciate that you brought us together to have this conversation. It shows that the museum really values us.”

Prioritize hiring bilingual staff over development of materials
- Based on the feedback gathered in November, participants in the March focus groups were presented a list of strategies to help Spanish-speaking visitors make the most of the museum and asked to circle the three they considered most important. The results showed that participants strongly favored the idea of having access to Spanish-speaking staff at the museum over other strategies. The table below presents the findings from the survey with answers in descending order of importance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is it to you…</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>that there are tours in English given by bi-lingual docents who can explain or discuss visitors’ thoughts/questions in Spanish?</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that there are Spanish-speaking docents/staff who can answer questions in Spanish?</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that there are mobile apps that include audio and label copy in Spanish for various works in the museum?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that you are greeted in Spanish?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that there is a printed piece with suggestions for how to make the most of the visit – specifically for Spanish-speaking visitors?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that there are tours and programs like Second Saturdays conducted in Spanish only?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that there are print materials such as family guides available in Spanish?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that there are interactive games, in Spanish, available to help guide family visits?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introduction
Established in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is one of Connecticut’s principal cultural and civic institutions and a museum of international significance. In
June 2015, the Wadsworth conducted an informal focus group with staff from LGBTQ youth-serving organizations in Connecticut to gather feedback about programs and interpretive strategies for the Warhol & Mapplethorpe: Guise & Dolls exhibition. The exhibition was on view from October 17, 2015 to January 24, 2016.

Focusing on New York in the 1970s and early 80s, Warhol & Mapplethorpe: Guise & Dolls explored the vibrant and tumultuous era of change through the work of Andy Warhol and Robert Mapplethorpe, both of whom created significant bodies of work in self-portraiture, in which particular disguises, characters and ambiguous personalities are evoked. The first dual museum exhibition to feature these two visionary artists, Guise & Dolls will include the artists’ portraits of each other, self-portraits and a selection of iconic portraits of sitters that address role-playing and gender roles—masculinity, femininity and androgyny.

The focus group was conducted with the generous support of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving’s Nonprofit Support Program (NSP). The Wadsworth participated in the NSP’s Building Evaluation Capacity (BEC) and BEC Alumni courses from 2013-15. This focus group was held through the NSP’s pilot grant program to support evaluation projects at local nonprofit organizations.

**Methodology**

The focus group was conducted on June 9, 2015 from. There were 5 participants present from 4 different organizations. Lauren Cross, Community Programs Specialist, developed the protocol and was the facilitator for the focus group. Alexandra Gray, Education Intern, was the scribe, and took notes on a laptop word processing program during the focus group. Anita Baker, Ed.D. of Evaluation Services provided project support and advice and observed the focus group.

The audience was identified as “LGBTQ youth and young adults,” a sub-set of a primary target audience for the museum’s Community Engagement Initiative: “Hartford youth during out-of-school time.” For focus group participants, the museum identified and invited “staff from LGBTQ youth-serving organizations in Connecticut” to serve as representatives for the needs of the target audience.

The protocol was developed in advance of the focus group, in the format of a PowerPoint presentation that included images and questions. The structure included (1) a brief facilitator-led presentation about the Warhol & Mapplethorpe exhibition, (2) a set of questions for participants, (3) a second presentation outlining some interpretive strategies used at other institutions, then (4) additional questions related to the interpretive strategies and other topics.

The questions were categorized into five different topics, and brief letter codes were developed to keep track of the category of each question: Relevance (R),
Welcoming (W), Experimentation Gallery (EG), Partnership (P), and Follow-Up (F). Although these codes appeared on the PowerPoint presentation to assist the scribe in keeping track of the questions, participants were not told about the categories or what each code was meant to signify.

On June 9, focus group participants were welcomed, and the facilitator requested permission for the session to be audio recorded. Coffee and light refreshments were offered. As participants waited for the focus group to begin, they completed supplementary surveys intended to collect a brief snapshot of each participating organization and the ways that they engage LGBTQ youth and young adults. The survey also included some space for participants to take notes while listening to the presentation. Participants who arrived late were also notified of the audio recording and were asked to fill out a survey during or after the discussion.

As a gesture of thanks and goodwill, the museum donated a Warhol & Mapplethorpe print catalogue to each participating organization.

Survey Results
The survey results provided brief profiles of the participating organizations. Notable highlights of the results from the survey included:

- 3 of 4 participating organizations incorporate the arts into its programming for youth and young adults.
- Only 1 organization had previously brought a group of youth or young adults to the Wadsworth (to the knowledge of the respondent).
- Participants identified the following as methods that their organizations use to communicate with youth and young adults: personal e-mail, newsletter and/or e-blast, text message/Snap Chat, phone, social media (Twitter, Facebook), Meetings (in-person), and website and/or blog.

Focus Group Results
The questions in the protocol were divided into five categories: Relevance (R), Welcoming (W), Experimentation Gallery (EG), Partnership (P), and Follow-Up (F), and results are described below using these designations. The specific questions included in each section are included, followed by specific findings and quotes from participants.

Relevance (R)
The questions regarding relevance were as follows:

**R1.** Are there themes in this exhibition that you think will resonate with LGBTQ youth and young adults?
R2. Are there themes in this exhibition that will be difficult to address with LGBTQ youth or young adults?

R3. What would you want LGBTQ youth and young adults to “walk away with” after viewing this exhibition or participating in a related program?

Overall, participants felt that there were many themes that would resonate with their youth, and only identified a few challenges. Participants cited the high-profile transition of Caitlyn Jenner, recent murder rates of transgendered women, and the connections that would resonate with their constituents:

“But where do celebrities fit in? Caitlyn Jenner. Warhol celebrated pop culture in amazing ways. Pop culture does shape social justice. People in social justice work like to pretend that it doesn’t.”

Selfies and self-portraits were mentioned at different points in the conversation as a possible theme to help present-day LGBTQ youth connect with the artwork:

“A lot of the transgender kids, they use portraits of themselves to show how they are feeling about themselves. So I know that they use a lot of selfies to do the same thing as what your theme is, and I think that will be really good to connect.”

One image in the presentation—a Mapplethorpe self-portrait depicting nudity and bondage—was identified as possibly challenging to address with younger audiences. Suggestions for addressing this image included strategically-placed wall dividers, warning labels for some sections, and making sure staff and volunteers are available to guide visitors. More than one participant stressed that the expression of sexuality in *Guise & Dolls* should not be treated differently from similar depictions of sexuality in the rest of the museum’s collection:

“How people respond to heterosexuality and sex is different than how people respond to same-sex—even much less explicit—things in the same context.”

Participants also discussed the importance of LGBTQ history in understanding the context and significance of the artworks in the exhibition. One participant said that teen and young adult constituents may not understand the risks and dangers of being LGBTQ or expressing LGBTQ identities at the time Warhol and Mapplethorpe created the works in the exhibition:

“We all have identities and other social contexts in which we live, and even that there’s multiple ones, there’s not just one way, there is this sense that there is a history and a culture and people that are like you made a profound difference in
the world. In the 70s and 80s, the idea that our job was to push the cultural boundaries, that we were outlaws. Our job was to push the culture forward."

As part of this conversation, participants named some of the historical moments that relate to these risks and dangers: the AIDS crisis, the sexual revolution, Studio 54, the 1989 Mapplethorpe exhibition at the Wadsworth, and present-day suicide rates among LGBTQ youth. Overall, participants made connections between the themes of the exhibition and topics they believed were relevant to their constituents:

"I remember it, but the kids will say ‘that’s like hundreds of years ago.’"

"I think it gives people the effect to live in the situation, so now they understand the artwork so much more because they understand the history of it and what it would be like to live in that era and then deal with that controversy. The bravery of people to execute and put out one of these pieces of art—it wouldn’t just be a piece of artwork, it would be a piece of their history."

Welcoming (W)

W1. What can the Wadsworth do to ensure that its galleries are a “safe space” for LGBTQ youth and young adults?

W2. How can we ensure that this exhibition and related programs are inclusive and intersectional for all audiences?

Multiple participants stressed the importance of training front-line staff and docents to address the exhibition’s content in an informed, sensitive, and accurate way. Front-line staff and volunteers have varying experience with LGBTQ issues, and could negatively affect a visitor’s experience if they are not properly trained to discuss these topics:

"Training with the staff. Mapplethorpe has been accused of being racist. Make sure docents are aware of that conversation."

The availability of gender-neutral bathrooms was also mentioned as a strategy for ensuring inclusivity with visitors of all genders, especially teens:

"Gender neutral bathrooms... everybody would feel comfortable."

The exhibition information provided during the presentation was drawn directly from text in grant documents and the Guise & Dolls catalogue, and this was made known to participants at the beginning of the presentation. None of the participants pointed out errors or offensive depictions in any of the language, although the facilitator mentioned that similar text would be used in the upcoming catalogue and labels.

Experimentation Gallery (EG)
The Wadsworth’s experimentation galleries are dedicated spaces that include interpretation of various forms (technology, tactile manipulatives, etc.) to engage audiences of many ages, backgrounds, and learning styles. Focus group participants were introduced to a selection of recent interpretive spaces and strategies from other museums, and asked to identify which, if any, they would like to see used in the Guise & Dolls experimentation gallery space:

**EG1:** Do you have any reactions, positive or negative, that you would like to share?

**EG2:** How do you think we could address these topics in the Guise & Dolls experimentation gallery?

**EG3:** Are there any other examples of relevant museum interactives or exhibits you would like to share? Do you feel they were successful or unsuccessful? Why?

Of the interpretive spaces and strategies presented, only two were discussed by the group: the terminology signage at the Chicago History Museum and the interactive station at the Human Civil Rights Museum. One participant said that providing definitions of words used in the exhibition would "really help the non-LGBTQ community."

Other ideas for in-gallery interpretation that were mentioned at different points in the focus group included dress up clothing for visitors to interact with and MTV-style confessionals with brief video recordings that visitors can view. At one participant’s organization, there is a box of clothes and accessories so constituents can “go play dress-up for a while,” and experiment with gender in a safe environment. The participant offered this idea as potentially adaptable to the Experimentation Gallery:

“In the interactive portions, since the focus will be on self-portraits, will you have the opportunity for youth to use accessories?... it could either be focused on the parts of yourself you really like and want to exaggerate or the parts of yourself you want to hide.”

One participant also mentioned the technique of silk-screening, which Warhol employs in some of the works in the exhibition:

“Explaining the different types of artwork they did and the mediums they used. I still don’t know what silk-screening is, but I know Warhol did it.”

**Partnership (P)**
The questions regarding relevance were as follows:

**P1a:** How do you see your organization getting involved with this exhibition?

**P1b:** How do you see your constituents getting involved with this exhibition?
Multiple participants expressed an interest in bringing their students for an existing program or new project related to the exhibition. The themes of creativity and art-making were mentioned in some of the responses:

“The best way to draw students in is to make them feel that people like them are doing something... you want them to be able to connect...If you offer something that has nothing to do with them, they'll never be interested.”

“Do something that engaged young people to engage their creative sides. Just going on a tour and pointing out certain gay art or LGBT art.”

Throughout the conversation, participants asked about what adult programming, especially films, would be presented in conjunction with the exhibition. While gathering feedback about the personal interests of participants was not a goal of the focus group, it provided insight into the interests of the broader LGBTQ community.

“Do something special for first Thursday. There’s lots of films you can show, documentaries. Just capture that time.”

Follow-Up (F)

F1: After this exhibition, how should we continue to engage LGBTQ youth and young adults with the Wadsworth?

F2: In your opinion, are there any other organizations or individuals we should approach for feedback and partnership?

At different points in the conversations, participants expressed the importance of maintaining relevance with youth after the Warhol & Mapplethorpe exhibition is over. One participant asked about the next MATRIX artist and whether youth would respond to the work. Another participant mentioned the museum’s Second Saturdays for Families program, with increased emphasis on adolescent visitors.

Participants identified or asked about other speakers or artists they would like to see in programming that would not necessarily be designed for a youth audience. These included Patti Smith, Kehinde Wiley, and Grace Jones. In addition, participants suggested partnerships outside of the realm of visual arts, including Looking In Theatre at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts and Latino Community Services. Local celebrations of LGBTQ history and culture were also mentioned.

Recommendations

In response to participant feedback, Lauren Cross, Community Programs Specialist, developed the following recommendations using her specific knowledge of the
Wadsworth’s capacity, resources, and ongoing programs and opportunities. The recommendations are organized based on the topics identified above:

**Welcoming (W)**

**Docent/Staff Training**
Reach out to a partner to assist with training of docents and front-line staff regarding the exhibition and LGBTQ visitors in general. Staff should also consider including gender-neutral bathrooms when visitors ask for directions. For example, without making assumptions about the gender identity of the visitor asking, staff can orient all visitors in the same way, such as: “The men’s and women’s rooms are near the café, and the single-user/gender-neutral/family bathroom is on the second floor.”

**Relevance (R)**

**Art-Making & Identity**
Participants mentioned selfies, photography, Polaroids, and silk-screening as potential topics for in-gallery interpretation or other arts education. These themes may be compelling to youth audiences served by other museum programs such as the Community Arts Program or Summer Community Studio. These projects could also be adapted for interested adults at First Thursdays or other adult events.

**Experimentation Gallery (EG)**

**Create a “Brave Space”**
Immersive, creating a “brave space” that addresses the ways that the world is less dangerous than it used to be for LGBT people—and that it is still dangerous for some. Some suggestions included an area with dress-up clothing, an interactive timeline, especially one that shows protests and other moments in LGBTQ history, creating a sense of shared experience among visitors.

This is also an opportunity to provide a local context for the exhibition’s themes; in 1989, the Corcoran in Washington, DC refused to exhibit Mapplethorpe’s “controversial” photographs, but the next venue on the exhibition’s tour, the Wadsworth, followed through with the exhibition as planned. This installation could include ephemera and other non-art objects to provide additional context for the images in the exhibition: for example, photographs, newspaper clippings, personal objects from the past and present, and oral histories to connect present-day visitors with relevant events in LGBTQ history.

“And making it a brave space is incredibly important... art engages us and challenges us.”

In addition, the suggestion of “selfies” or Polaroid portraiture could also be used in this space, celebrating the faces of the LGBTQ community in Connecticut. Dress-up items may be used for visitors to safely explore the process of self-presentation employed by both Warhol and Mapplethorpe in the exhibition.
Partnership (P)  
**Beyond Visual Arts**
In addition to suggestions directly related to figures in the exhibition (Patti Smith, Grace Jones), participants also suggested partnerships that extended beyond the visual arts. The museum could reach out to these and other partners in different fields such as theater, health services, or LGBTQ advocacy. Participants mentioned Pride Month (June), Coming Out Day (in October), and an upcoming Hartford Pride festival to be held in September 2015. In planning programming for the exhibition, the Wadsworth should consider partnerships that address the themes in the exhibition that may not be tied to the creation of art.

Follow-Up (F)  
**Connect to Artists & Mentors**
Focus group participants expressed a desire for their youth constituents to see themselves in museum spaces, and to consider successful artists, especially LGBTQ artists, as role models. While there are ongoing opportunities for youth to visit the museum and participate in programs, there is a potential to provide more targeted experiences for partners hoping to connect their constituents with artist mentors. The Wadsworth’s MATRIX program may be a good opportunity for this, as it engages a diverse range of contemporary artists in rotating exhibitions. There is also a precedent for youth-oriented contemporary art connections through the Artist Residency program, which engages local youth with MATRIX artists in community-oriented projects. Artist Talks and the Artists on Art series in the mobile guide are also opportunities for the museum to connect youth with artists they may relate to and identify with.

**Conclusion**
The Warhol & Mapplethorpe Focus Group was successful, and the museum gathered much rich information about the needs of LGBTQ youth in Connecticut. Participants from local LGBTQ youth-serving organizations were willing to share their professional insights and offer ideas about how the exhibition could connect to their youth. The feedback collected will be used to inform projects connected to Warhol & Mapplethorpe as well as future projects that engage LGBTQ youth and the organizations that serve them.
APPENDIX D: GLOSSARY

Focus Groups are a type of group interview, where respondents are asked to discuss a list of topics while the interviewer facilitates, records and later analyzes the discussion.

Formative evaluations focus on ways of improving and enhancing programs, and are conducted in the early or ongoing stages of a program.

Front-end evaluations gather feedback on potential themes and content and ways of presenting them, and are conducted in a program’s planning stages.

Interviews are a one-sided conversation between an interviewer and a respondent. Questions are mostly predetermined, but open-ended. Respondents are expected to answer using their own terms.

Observations are conducted to view and hear actual program activities. They can be focused on programs overall or on participants in programs.

Qualitative data consist of detailed description of situations, events, people, interactions and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts; excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records and case histories. Qualitative data collection methods permit the evaluator to study selected issues in depth and detail and typically produce a wealth of detailed data about a much smaller number of cases.

Quantitative data comes from questionnaires, tests, standardized observation documents and program records. Quantitative data collection methods permit the complexities of the world to be broken into parts and assigned numerical data. To obtain quantitative data it is necessary to be able to categorize the object of interest in ways that permit counting.

Record Review is a catch-all category that involves accessing existing information or information that was collected for other purposes to use as evaluation data.

Summative evaluations are aimed at determining the essential effectiveness, and are often conducted at the conclusion of a program. They are especially important in making decisions about terminating, maintaining or extending a program.

Surveys are a data collection instrument with a series of questions with pre-determined response choices. They can include all independent items or groups of items (scales) that can be summarized. Surveys can also include open-ended items for write-in or clarification.

Definitions from: