



Focus Group Guide

The Climate Assessment Process



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Focus Group Guide



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Product No. 22-15

Internet Site

The Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) website, located at www.deomi.org, provides a variety of tools and information to support conducting a focus group and the climate assessment process.

Cover

The cover was created by DEOMI's graphic artist, Mr. James Ladner.

This Guide

This guide was developed to provide assistance to leaders in conducting a focus group. It is not intended to be all inclusive and methods and strategies discussed within it may be tailored based on unit needs and desires. Suggested improvements and additions to this guide should be submitted to the DEOMI Research Directorate, 366 Tuskegee Airmen Drive, Patrick Air Force Base, Florida 32925.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of Mr. Jay C. Steinke, Mr. Shawn Seman, Mr. Scott Emison, Mr. Loring Crepeau, SFC Michael Christian, SFC Jerry Nkansah, and many others for their assistance and insight in the development of this publication.

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Updates

This guide was updated in July 2017 to incorporate revised factors from the DEOMI Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) version 4.0 to version 4.1. This update primarily effects the worksheet at Appendix A.

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References

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Overview

A commander has decided to conduct a focus group in their organization. You have been tasked to assist in this process. So, where do you start? What should you do? This guide will provide you with considerations you may wish to explore as you begin. But first, let's look at some common questions that typically arise regarding this endeavor.

What is a focus group and why do we do them?

Typically, a focus group is conducted as one part of a climate assessment. A climate assessment is a systematic procedure to gather data about an organization and provide insight to how the organization is functioning to meet its mission. The assessment is like putting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Each individual component may look different but it interlocks with another until the full picture (climate) can be seen. The climate assessment provides leaders a "snap shot" in time about the key factors of an organization as perceived by its members. The assessment can provide both positive and negative insight into the unit's command climate. A complete organizational assessment usually consists of a comprehensive review of all or a combination of four distinct assessment methods: surveys, interviews, observations, and a review of records/reports, each which provide more pieces to the puzzle.

A focus group is nothing more than a group interview. Focus groups are usually conducted to gain or clarify opinions or perceptions identified in a survey about a specific concern. The DEOMI Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) is one tool and a great starting point in identifying these areas. Focus groups are an excellent method for clarifying the cause and effect relationship between survey findings and unit practices. Focus groups are not just a tool to identify only negative issues in organizations. A focus group can also capture strengths, positive trends, program effectiveness, morale and other key factors affecting the workplace.

However, a focus group can also be conducted any time the leadership requires detailed information/perspectives from unit members about an issue or concern. A focus group can be conducted as an informal discussion with unit members on a variety of topics, programs, or initiatives that the leadership wishes to explore. Leaders can use the information to gain insight into the unit, environmental conditions, program/initiative effectiveness, and other special issues. Asking members what they think about an area tends to build ownership and can foster a feeling that their opinion counts. Knowing the purpose/intent of a focus group can assist the moderator in selecting participants and questions necessary to acquire the needed information. Conducting a focus group has several advantages over other interview techniques:

- Time: Because more than one person is being interviewed at a time, more information can be gathered using the same amount of time devoted to an individual interview.
- Determine commonality of perceptions: If several people share the same view, this may help validate the perception. However, be aware commonly held perceptions may be the product of organizational folklore and not have any basis in fact (i.e., group think).
- Sharing of information: The group interaction will often provide elaborated responses and encourage the sharing of ideas, including proposed solutions. One comment may serve as a lead-in to other comments or information critical to the areas being explored.



- Formal communication check: The focus group can provide a check on the information channels and show patterns in a unit by revealing how well or poorly information gets passed among sections and members.

Pitfalls

It is important to remember that like survey data, the information acquired from a focus group is no more than members' perceptions on what they believe are occurring. It may not be factual. While the information may validate and reinforce the perceptions indicated in a survey, it may not be true. It is important to validate these perceptions by looking at other unit information to confirm whether what people believe is in fact occurring. A comparison of these perceptions with hard, factual, unchanging unit data found in records, reports, and other sources is essential to prove or disprove, support or not support, or quantify what is truly happening in the organization.

However, it is important to note that for some people, their perceptions are their reality. It is important to determine what is causing these perceptions. Whether it is due to the lack of information, its misinterpretation, or some other reason, the impetus of these perceptions must be determined. Failure to do this may lead the commander to develop plans to address a symptom, rather than the real issue itself.

Who conducts the focus group?

While a focus group can be conducted by one person, it is very difficult to capture all relevant details. To be more effective, several individuals should be involved. A moderator and co-moderator skilled in facilitation techniques and, if possible, a separate recorder should be available. Having some knowledge about possible trends, unit members and the mission can also be helpful. Key member roles may include:

- The moderator: Develops the plan, leads the session, asks the majority of the questions, and provides a final report to the leader requesting the focus group.
- The co-moderator: Assists with follow-up questions if necessary and observes participant reactions and behaviors. Assists in identifying follow-on areas to explore and analyzing information for the report.
- The recorder: Documents questions asked and the responses received. May interject (minimally) to seek clarification on responses. Helps categorize responses into themes and provides an analysis of the results. If a separate recorder is not available, the co-moderator may be delegated this task.

TIP: Depending on the purpose of the focus group, moderators from an adjacent unit or higher-level command may be requested to foster trust, confidentiality, and anonymity to the process.

If there is little trust between the group and the moderators, among the group members themselves, or within the organization, the focus group may not produce valuable information or honest feedback about the issues being explored.



Confidentiality/Anonymity

While it cannot be guaranteed, moderators should try to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of focus group participants. The goal of the focus group is to get honest and sincere feedback regarding the areas of interest. If participants believe the information collected will be used for a “witch hunt” the leader may not get the information they desire. Comments should be summarized in a way that protects individual participants. You should not attribute a particular comment, either positive or negative, to a specific individual. However, this does not extend to

TIP: As technology develops, new and innovative ways for conducting sessions may become feasible. Using computer-based avatars and instant messaging capabilities, moderators can have active sessions while also providing additional anonymity to participants.

legal issues or Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) violations or threats, perceived or otherwise. If during the focus group a violation becomes apparent, this information should be referred to the appropriate commander/law enforcement office. If during the focus group an individual indicates a desire to make an equal opportunity (EO) or equal

employment opportunity (EEO) complaint, the individual should be referred to the appropriate EO/EEO office or commander for action.

Protection of Sensitive Data

A focus group is used to raise, identify, and clarify issues which have a potential to impact the human relations climate. It does not serve as part of an official investigation nor a substitute for the military/civilian complaint process and should not be used for these purposes. Information from a focus group can reveal personal problems and other concerns. Use common sense and good judgment when working with this information. Participants may mention names and make allegations about others’ personal conduct. If this occurs, do not identify individuals by name or provide verbatim comments in any written report. This summarized, anecdotal information can be provided verbally to the unit commander during the outbrief. In some cases, the commander may need to know all the particulars, including the name of the source.

Questionnaires

Some moderators may prefer written questionnaires to acquire demographic, rank, and positional data. Additionally, they may request for members to provide some exploratory themes

TIP: Provide questionnaires to participants as they arrive and ask them to fill them out while waiting for others.

and questions for participants to reflect upon. If using a questionnaire, participants should not place their names on it. Have extra pens available and ensure you collect all questionnaires when the session is completed.

Note Taking/Recording

Capturing information from the focus group is an essential task. Careful thought about how to document this information beforehand can pay big dividends when you are trying to analyze the information at the end. A focus group can generate a tremendous amount of information. For the most part, you should summarize comments as you go through the process.



Participant comments should not be attributed to a specific individual. However, occasionally you may hear a comment that adds significant emphasis and focus to the participants' concerns. For example, a direct quote on the problems experienced with a specific piece of equipment or a regarding a specific process, may help clarify the focus for future corrective measures. In this case, try to capture the comment verbatim or as accurate as possible without documenting the name of the individual making the comment.

After the session, the responses should be categorized or coded into comparison/tabulation themes (Appendix A is a worksheet that may assist you in this endeavor). Another method is using an Excel worksheet where responses can be documented, coded, and sorted for later analysis.

TIP: Discourage leaders from attempting to identify participants if they receive unfavorable responses. Remember, the comments gathered are perceptions and may not reflect reality. Caution leaders not to overreact. Moderators should use every effort to protect the process so members feel confident, trusted, and encouraged to openly and honestly provide their perspectives.

Following specific steps can ensure all relevant details and necessary tasks are identified and accomplished. The 3-step process below has been developed to guide you in this endeavor. In subsequent pages, additional information is provided to help clarify relevant points in the process and to provide you with other items to consider.

3-Step Focus Group Process

Step 1: Prepare for the Focus Group

- Identify the purpose and determine what you want to know. Obtain clear guidance on the intent and information required from the requestor. Analyze DEOCS indicators; identify concerns and areas needing additional clarification.
- Determine demographics and number needed for focus groups (all male, all female, mixed gender, by rank, by section, etc.; 8–15 members per group).
- Identify participants (random sample) based on the information you are trying to collect; review demographics to ensure groups are equal and balanced.
- Select a secure, comfortable, quiet, private, and easily accessible location.
- Schedule time (60–90 minutes per group) with an appropriate break between groups.
- Identify questions to use:
 - Frame questions to get information needed.
 - Use open-ended questions (those that require respondents to expound upon an issue).
 - Avoid closed-ended questions (those that get a yes/no response).
 - Use follow-up questions to clarify comments.
- Identify staff: Moderator, co-moderator, and recorder.
- Identify data submission method: How are you going to present findings (written notes, PowerPoint, formal report format)?

Technique: Use staff members from an outside agency/organization to promote confidentiality and anonymity.



Step 2: Conduct the Focus Group

- Open the session.
 - Introduction (who you are and explain your credentials)
 - Purpose (explain why you are there conducting session)
 - Confidentiality/anonymity: Exception for UCMJ violations/threats, etc.
 - Ground Rules: No attribution/retribution (precise details elaborated later in guide)
 - Open discussion.
 - Use of the information. Who is asking for this information and why is this being conducted?
- Conduct the session.
 - Open-ended and exploratory questions.
 - Provide all an opportunity to participate.
 - Do not allow the group to get out of control. Manage personnel dynamics; keep the group focused.
 - Dominators: Have something to say about each topic.
 - Experts: Talk from authority, may attempt to sway others.
 - Observers: Shy, quiet, and observant but non-participatory members.
 - Ramblers: Will not keep answers short, succinct, or to the point.
- Close the session.
 - Final thoughts.
 - Reminder: Reemphasize no attribution/retribution.
 - Encourage participants not to share which participant made comments during session.
 - Thank the group for participating.

Step 3: Collate and analyze the data.

- Categorize comments into themes.
- Identify trends (both positive and negative).
- Report your findings.



Determine What You Want to Know

Probably the most important early step in the process is to determine what you wish to know. What information are you attempting to acquire? What is the intent and purpose of the focus group? Is it part of a formal climate assessment? Is it to gain clarification on indicators identified in a survey? For example, has a recent survey identified potential areas of concern as reported by some unit members? Are there significant differences in how some unit members (based on section, rank, race, gender, etc.) view an issue? Are the concerns focused in a single section or do they seem to be unit-wide?

Alternatively, is the focus group being conducted to inquire about the success of an established program or initiative? Or is it to address a leader's gut feeling that something is not right? Whatever the case, you should have an idea of the type of information you are trying to gather. Knowing this will help determine who needs to participate (i.e., a certain group or a cross-section of the organization), how many individuals need to participate, and what questions should be developed to get the desired information. You must remember participation is voluntary. You should never force members to participate in focus groups if they do not wish to do so.

Select Participants and Determine a Sample

Once you know what your intent is, you can determine who needs to participate in the focus group sessions. There should be an adequate number of participants to properly characterize the issues across the subgroups you are examining. Typically, the higher the number of overall participants, the more likely their perspectives are valid. However, involving more individuals takes more time and becomes less manageable. It takes between 60 and 90 minutes per focus group, depending on the number of questions and feedback received. Thus, you need to strike a balance between the time available for conducting the focus groups and the number of individuals needed to obtain sufficient input. Additionally, the larger the organization and the higher the confidence level (lower margin of error) you seek, the more members need to be involved. The subsequent chart provides an example of a typically required number of focus groups and the time required to accomplish them.

The optimum number of participants for a single focus group is between 8 and 15. The group needs to be large enough so that individuals are less likely to monopolize the session. At the same time, the group needs to be small enough so that everyone has the opportunity to discuss issues they feel are important, within the established session time limit.

Developing a random sample methodology can help ensure the results are valid, which enhances the assessment's value to leadership. Ideally, random sampling provides a typical sample of the unit's population. However, in small units, there may be a very limited number of members representing a specific group, and a random sample may fail to adequately include individuals belonging to that demographic group. When this is the case, it may be necessary to consciously



select members of these groups to ensure their input is acquired. One way to do this is to obtain a unit roster of available unit members (either for the entire unit or for sub-elements).

Depending on how many people you wish to have participate in focus groups, randomly select candidates so that a properly representative group (i.e. with adequate numbers of minorities, women, junior enlisted, etc.) is created. Depending on unit size, pick a random number and then select every 2nd, 6th, 10th, etc. member from the roster to participate. If you only need to conduct focus groups for specific groups of people (e.g., certain sections, men, women, officers, junior enlisted, etc.), a roster of those subgroups can also assist in acquiring a random sample.

Next, confirm the sampled group is demographically represented. Are majority and minority members proportionally represented in the initial sample? To be represented, the percentage of majority and minority members selected should be reflective of the percentage of these populations in the unit at large. If not, adjust as needed to get adequate group participation.

Lastly, demographic groups should be separated (stratified by category). For example, junior members should not be in the same focus group as senior members; supervisors should not be in the same group as subordinates; officers should not be in the same group as enlisted; family members should not be in the same group as service members, etc. Family members should also be separated into groups, such as junior enlisted spouses, senior enlisted, officer, etc. This is essential in developing open and honest discussions and to prevent guarded comments, intimidation, or undue influence that might occur.

The below chart provides examples of the minimum number of focus group participants needed to obtain a 95% validity level with a +/- 5% margin of error (confidence interval).

Group Size (Unit/Subgroup Size)	Number of Focus Group Participants *	Number of Focus Groups **	Time Needed ***
30	28	2 – 3	2 – 5 hours
100	80	5 – 10	10 – 15 hours
150	108	7 – 13	14 – 20 hours
200	132	9 – 17	18 – 26 hours
300	169	11 – 21	22 – 32 hours
500	217	15 – 27	30 – 41 hours

* Dependent on desired validity percentage/margin of error. www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm

** Dependent on number of individuals per focus group.

*** Dependent on number of focus groups.

Online sample-size calculator programs can assist an organization in determining an appropriate number of focus group participants, depending on the validity rate the commander seeks and the actual size of the organization/group. Additionally, there may be individuals in the organization who wish to participate but were not selected through the random selection process. A separate focus group session for volunteers should be placed in the schedule and announced to the members.



Location Considerations

The location provides the atmosphere and sets the tone to facilitate participants' comfort and willingness to disclose information. Consider the following when selecting a location:

- **Setting:** The setting is more than just the physical room. It should provide a reasonably intimate and comfortable environment. The focus group should run without interruptions. Arrangements should be made so phones or individuals not participating do not interrupt the focus group.
- **Room size:** The room should be large enough to accommodate 8 to 15 people comfortably but not so large that acoustics become an issue.
- **Room condition:** The room should be clean, well maintained, and with no distractions. Remember that the setting can also reflect upon the importance of the task.
- **Room setup/seating arrangement:** Pick a room where you have a reasonable expectation of privacy and a lack of interruptions. Preferably arrange chairs in a circle or semi-circle so that members can see one another. Participants can also be placed around an oval or rectangular table. Avoid arrangements where individuals are seated behind one another and cannot view other members (e.g., classroom seating). Seating arrangements are dictated by the number of participants and room size, so be flexible.
- **Location:** Conduct focus groups at a neutral location if possible. The location should be close enough to the unit area to minimize travel but far enough away to foster confidentiality and trust. If conducting focus groups for family members, consider using a centralized location with easy access and provide a strip map. Be aware that even if family members asked not to, some may bring children to the focus group. Have a plan and consider having a family support group volunteer provide supervision and a separate area for children near the focus group site.

TIP: Do not conduct focus groups in a command conference room in the command group area. Doing so might inhibit some members from attending or providing honest and sincere feedback.

Scheduling Considerations

A typical focus group can take between 60 and 90 minutes. Avoid going longer than two hours, as participants' attention and comfort level will decrease. Schedule at least an hour between focus groups for consolidating and reviewing information from the completed focus group and to provide a break for the moderators. If conducting focus groups with family members, consider conducting multiple focus groups. Schedule one group during local school hours to accommodate stay-at-home parents and one later in the evening to accommodate working parents. When scheduling during school hours, do not schedule the start time earlier than 9:00 a.m. or later than 1:30 p.m., so that it starts after children have gone to school and it can be finished in time for parents to be home for the arrival of school-aged children.



Develop Questions

The survey, survey analysis, and specific unit commander concerns are key sources for developing focus group questions. Questions play a major role in facilitating. Questions invite participation and get people to think about issues from different perspectives. The skilled use of questioning techniques is not as simple as it seems. The focus group should allow for the development of questions tailored for specific needs. You should keep your questions limited; the maximum that can be effectively asked in the time allowed is about 12. Therefore, a careful analysis of the information needed and the questions to ask is required before you begin.

There are several types of questions that can be used, depending on the information you are trying to gather.

- Open-ended questions: Elicit a more complete response and more effective participation, and require more than a “yes” or “no” answer. The majority of your lead-off questions should be open-ended questions to stimulate as many responses as possible.
- Direct questions: Ask explicitly for a reply on a specified topic. Use the *who, what, when, where, why, and how* strategy. These questions are more likely to be directed at a specific individual.
- Paraphrased questions: The moderator repeats the participant’s last response in his/her own words and then follows with a question seeking additional, related information.
- Narrow questions: The moderator selects the subject matter to discuss and refines the question to acquire specific information.
- Polling questions: An uninvolved focus group member (e.g., participant who is quiet or displaying body language that signals a lack of interest or an unwillingness to participate) is a challenge. To encourage quiet or withdrawn group members, it is helpful to use a polling technique in order to elicit each participant’s feelings about a particular issue. Avoid serial questioning (e.g., asking each participant to comment in the same order on every issue).

The following types of questions are not helpful, can be counterproductive, and should be avoided:

- Loaded questions: A loaded question contains a controversial or unjustified assumption response, taking the respondent in a direction the facilitator wants to go.
- Leading questions: These are accompanied by a suggestion of what the answer should be.
- Yes/no questions: These are closed-ended and do not elicit useful information explaining the participants’ feelings or opinions.



Focus Group Sequence

Introduce the Session

Once the group has gathered, the moderator should introduce the focus group facilitators, outline the purpose for the focus group, and establish the ground rules for the session. Explain the purpose of note-taking and how the information gathered will be used. You may also wish to discuss the aspects of confidentiality and anonymity and exceptions to those rules.

Establish Ground Rules

To help managing the group and its expectations, a list of ground rules for the discussion should be presented. These ground rules should be posted in an area visible for all participants and where the moderator can refer to them if an individual's behavior must be addressed. Some ground rules may be prepared in advance. To encourage group ownership in the process, ask the group for additional rules or principles to guide the conversation. Below are some rules to consider:

- Only one person speaks at a time.
- Remain respectful of others' opinions, both positive and negative.
- Confidentiality: This is a non-attributional environment. Do not discuss what others had to say about an issue after departing.
- Be truthful and honest in your answers.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- Stay focused on the question/topic; limit distractions.

Ask Questions

Begin your session by asking generalized questions and then move to more specific information. Limit your questions to a single idea per question. Avoid compound questions asking for more than one answer at time. Use predominately open-ended questions that facilitate open dialogue about positive and negative issues affecting the unit. Use follow-up questions to gain clarity about their initial responses or to get additional information. Use common language, and don't talk down to the participants.

Employ effective listening techniques and give eye contact to the speaker. Don't read your notes for the next question while an individual is speaking. Watch the speaker's body language and that of other participants. Don't be judgmental or express your own views. This includes being careful not to phrase questions to suggest an appropriate response. This is about what the participants feel and believe, not what the moderator thinks is going on.

If you ask a question and get dead silence, let it work for you. Look around the room and observe individual behaviors. How are they responding to the question? Don't rush a response. Someone will eventually feel inclined to answer. You may follow up with, "I see that this question seems to make many uncomfortable. What makes this question hard to answer?"

As you near the time limit for your session, begin to wrap up with your final questions. If you find that the group has much more to say as you near your time limit, you can poll the group



to see if they wish to stay longer. If you do extend the focus group time, ensure it does not impact later groups. You can also provide those members who wish to talk further with a subsequent time when they can meet with you privately to discuss issues in more detail.

Manage Participants

All kinds of personality types will be present in your focus group. Some will be very vocal, willing to speak their mind and provide input on any topic. Others will be quiet and reflective and may not be willing to open up or provide their perspective. Still others may have their own agenda and try to influence their fellow participants. Some may ramble on continuously. The effectiveness of the focus group and the value of the information you receive can be dependent on how well you identify and manage your participants. Below are some typical personality types you may identify in your focus group and some strategies to manage their participation.

- **The Dominator:** Has something to say about each topic. May try to dominate the conversation. Thank the dominator for his/her input and then state, "I'd like to hear what some others think about..." Avoid eye contact and scan the group for indicators that others wish to engage.
- **The Expert:** Talks from authority and may attempt to sway others to his/her thinking. Thank this person for his/her opinion and then make eye contact with others and ask them for their thoughts on the matter.
- **The Observer:** May be very shy, quiet, or reflective. This person observes the group but has little to say. Make eye contact with this individual and ask a direct question. Smile at the person and encourage him/her to respond.
- **The Rambler:** Goes on, and on, and on. Refocus this individual on the question. Shift eye contact to another individual and ask for his/her perspective.

Close the Session

Thank the members for their participation and information. At this point, the recorder may summarize the areas and issues covered. Remind participants that this is a confidential, non-attributional session and that what was said in the room stays in the room. Ask for any final questions or comments. Close the group and remain available for any individual who may request to speak with you after the session.



Collate and Report the Data

Collate and Analyze the Information

Shortly after the session ends, the moderator and staff combine notes. The analysis should begin by reviewing the purpose of the focus group (what information was the commander trying to acquire?). The data analysis process should be systematic (follow a prescribed, sequential flow) and verifiable (another person would come to a similar conclusion using the available documents and the raw data). At this point, you should consolidate participant responses into themes for easier comparison. Some responses will be easy to place into themes. Others will be more difficult and may fall into several areas. Learning about the unit and their mission can help in determining the categories on which to focus, as you may get different results than you initially anticipated.

You should also compare notes on shared observations. How did participants respond to the questions? What were their body language and behaviors and overall mood of the discussion? Did they appear comfortable or uneasy with the questions? Was there any change to the questions based on their responses to the initial one? Be attentive to:

- Descriptive phrases or words used by participants as they discussed key questions.
- Themes in response to key questions.
- Subthemes indicating a point of view held by participants with common characteristics.
- Potential trends and patterns that emerge.
- New avenues of questioning that should be considered in the future. Should certain questions be revised, eliminated, or added?

When conducting the analysis consider the following five factors:

- **Words** – actual words and meanings should be determined. How did the participants describe experiences or actions based on the questions asked? One might make frequency counts of commonly used words. Cluster similar concepts together.
- **Context** – examine the context of words by finding the triggering stimulus and interpret the comment in light of that context.
- **Internal consistency** – trace the conversation flow and note changes or even reverses of participants' position based on interaction with others.
- **Specificity of responses** – responses that are specific and based on experience should be given more weight than responses that are vague and impersonal.
- **Find the big ideas** – look for trends, patterns, or ideas that cut across the entire discussion. Greater weight should be given to responses in first person rather than third person hypothetical answers.

Separate out the different types of data, perceptions, interpretations, and feelings and label them clearly. Appendix A provides a method for coding respondent questions using the DEOCS organizational effectiveness and equal opportunity/equal employment opportunity/fair treatment and sexual assault and response factors (which are listed on the second page of the worksheet).



Other areas to consider include communication, discipline, pride and cohesion, motivation and morale, esprit-de-corps, supervisory or command support, training, equipment, resources, family support, and command policies.

Provide a Report

There is no standardized format for providing your results, and a report can take many forms. Use whatever method fits the situation and the material presented. You may be requested to provide an oral report or a written report for your task. It all depends on what the requesting leader requires. It also depends on if this element is part of a final overall climate assessment report or an interim report on trends/indicators found to this point as it relates to other areas you have explored.

When you provide the report, remind your leadership that you summarized data in such a way as to protect the confidentiality of individual participants. Some leaders may tend to overreact to the information gathered, especially if it indicates problems within the organization. It is important to remind the commander the information is subjective in nature and reflects members' perceptions of issues. While the information gathered during a focus group may tend to reinforce perceived issues and perceptions noted from other sources, it may or may not be factual. But, it should point a leader in directions for further study, examination, and review.

It is extremely important after providing feedback to the leadership that they do not attempt to conduct a follow up session with participants in an attempt to identify individuals or punish participants for sharing comments during focus group. It is key that leaders focus on addressing issues identified during the focus group rather than the individuals making the comments. If a leader elects to conduct a follow-up session in an attempt to identify participants who stated issues/concerns and punish them, alternative agencies and higher level commanders should be advised of the situation.

Summary

Interviews and focus groups are excellent ways to get direct feedback from group members on the behaviors being exhibited within the organization. Used properly these methods can provide unique insight into both positive and negative behaviors affecting the organization and its members. And, directly involving members into the process can also increase individual buy-in and ownership for solving problems and improving unit effectiveness. Just remember to validate the perceptions discovered through interviews/focus groups with other assessment methods to truly determine what is actually going on, before you make any significant organizational changes.



Appendix A

The below two-page worksheet is provided for potential use in documenting responses. It is not all-inclusive and may be tailored to meet unit-specific needs. Use multiple copies to capture responses to additional questions. Use coding to categorize comments into themes and consolidate for later review.

Focus Group Worksheet	
Moderator(s):	Focus Group Time/Date:
Unit:	Session #:
Focus Group Location:	Number of Participants:
Group Rank Makeup:	Demographics (# by race, sex):

Use separate pages for additional questions

Initial Question:	
Responses:	Code
*	
*	
*	
*	
*	
*	
*	

Follow-up/Clarifying Question:	
Responses:	Code
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Codes (based on DEOCS factors)

- (A) Unwanted Workplace Exp.
- (B) Sexual Harassment
- (C) Sex Harassment Retaliation
- (D) Discrimination - Sex
- (E) Discrimination - Race
- (F) Discrimination - Disability
- (G) Discrimination - Age
- (H) Discrimination - Religion
- (I) Bullying

- (J) Inclusion at Work
- (K) Hazing
- (L) Connectedness
- (M) Engagement
- (N) Senior Leadership
- (O) Trust in Leadership
- (P) Job Satisfaction
- (Q) Group Cohesion
- (R) Organization Commitment
- (S) Organizational Processes

- (T) Organizational Performance
- (U) Retaliation-Sexual Assault
- (V) Bystander Intervention-SA
- (W) Other Sexual Assault Prev. & Response Items
- (Z1) Other Areas/Concerns
- (Z2) Family Concerns
- (Z3) Communication Concerns

Appendix B

Focus Group Supplies List. The below non-inclusive list provides items that may be necessary for your focus group, depending on individual moderator desires/plans.

- This guide
- Note taking forms/notebook paper for record taker
- Questionnaire (if desired)
- Paper/pens/pencils for each participant
- Chairs for each participant
- Table (oval or rectangle)
- Tape recorder, video recorder (if desired)
- Butcher paper or dry erase board (for ground rules)
- Colored magic markers or dry erase markers
- Tape
- Extension cord or batteries (if using electronic recorders)
- Refreshments

