

USING FOCUS GROUPS IN EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT IN CES

CASE EXAMPLE: FRED HUTCH CANCER RESEARCH & NMSU U54 PROJECT

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CONTEXT

- Federally funded U54 partnership
- Aim: reduce cancer & chronic disease disparities
- Team: Fred Hutch (research), NMSU (land-grant), CES (community)





HOW DID YOU USE FOCUS GROUPS?

- No evaluation plan
- Used across stages: cooking demos, student check-ins, closeout reflections
- Captured experience, knowledge gain, community perspective

WHY FOCUS GROUPS?

- Pilot → needed participant voices
- Numbers alone = insufficient
- Combined with surveys, debrief notes, observations

Community member: “Without focus groups, we’d have numbers but no meaning.”

BUILDING THE PROTOCOL

- Clear timeline, group composition, purpose
- Bilingual facilitation (English/Spanish)
- General → specific outcome questions

ADAPTATIONS



- Dinner vs lecture → chose dinner
- Evening timing for availability
- Hospitality: food, informal time
- Structured respect (elders, leaders, youngest)

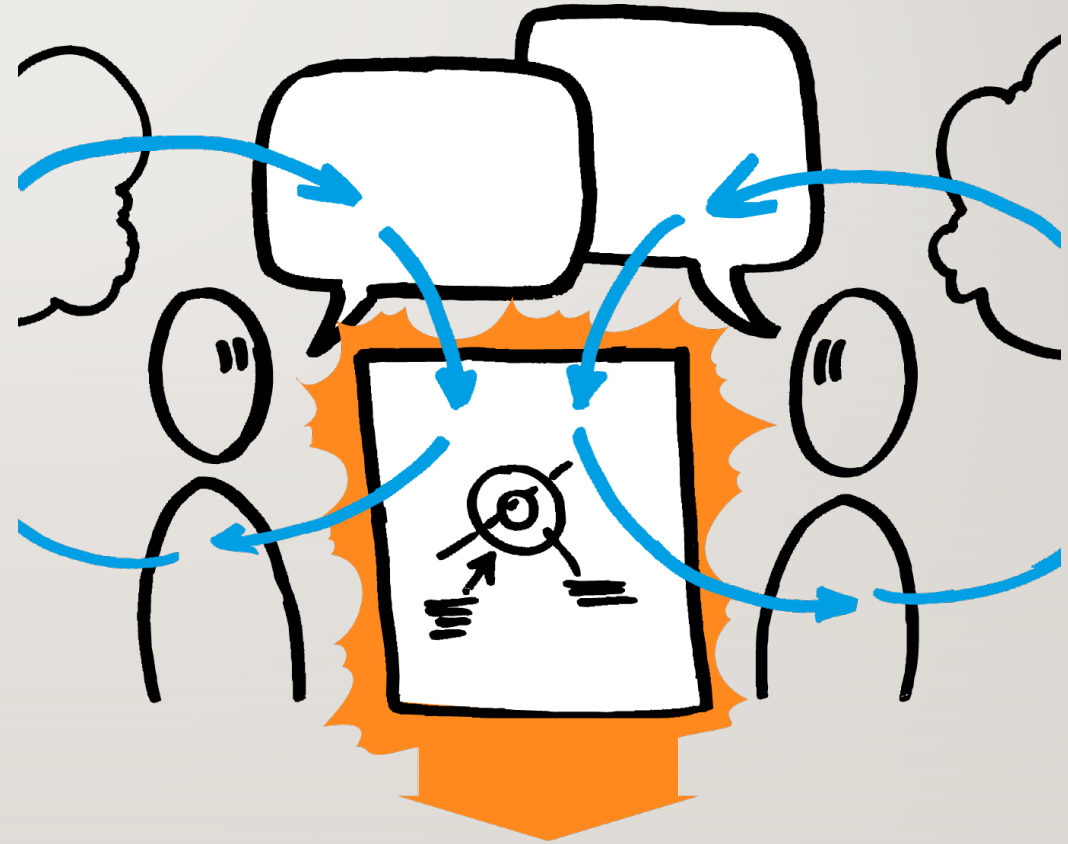
ANALYSIS

- Audio + notes
- Thematic analysis
- Themes jumped off the page
- Fewer, deeper questions = richer insights



HOT TIPS

- Start with purpose
- Skilled facilitation
- Logistics = respect
- Assign roles (moderator, note taker, tech)
- Close the loop with participants



MOMENTS



- A participant once said, 'I didn't realize this was evaluation. I thought it was just a good conversation.' That was the best compliment.
- A faculty member joked, "We'll just figure it out as we go!" And in a sense, we did but focus groups gave us a compass.
- The dinner vs lecture debate showed us that comfort leads to candor.
- We once forgot to plug in the recorder. We laugh about it now, but it taught us to always over prepare.
- And a community member reminded us: "You can't just measure us ,you have to hear us".

FOCUS GROUPS AND EXTENSION

- Focus groups = spaces for voice, advocacy, respect
- Extension lesson: evaluation = partnership, not just measurement

Community member: “You can’t just measure us — you have to hear us.”





THANK YOU AND QUESTIONS?

In our project, we had no evaluation plan to start with, how would you have approached that challenge?