

# Business + Child Care Focus Group Outline

## Who Makes a Good Facilitator?

Ideally, the focus group facilitator would be someone from outside the organization. This allows everyone who is in the focus group to be a participant, and no one has to “hold the process” for the discussion. A facilitator also should have some experience guiding discussions with groups of people. This includes planning the agenda (although a sample one is provided below), structuring the dialogue so it is both focused *and* open, maintaining enough “control” so everyone has a chance to speak, and managing the scheduled time effectively. If it is not possible to get an outside facilitator, ask someone from within the organization who a) is **not** a senior leader and b) has some experience with leading group discussions.

## Forming the group

A focus group provides more personal and in-depth information about the survey responses. A good size is about 8 people (6-10...any fewer and it is not much of a group, any larger and you will not be able to hear from everyone). If your organization is large, consider hosting two or more focus groups so you can get input from a representative sample of employees and offer them at different times if there are different shifts. Plan for the meeting to be an hour and try to have it at a time that causes the least disruption in the workday.

To ask or invite? Generally, it is recommended to invite those interested to volunteer. If more than the limit sign-up, it is okay to politely thank some and not choose them. The idea is that you will form a group that is as diverse as possible (age, gender, race, ethnicity, position type, family composition, etc.). If you have lots of people from one “category” it is fine to decline some if that is needed to keep the size to about 8 and still have a diverse group. If you invite specific people, you can make sure you have a diverse group, but it may inhibit morale.

Prior to meeting, share the survey responses (summary, no direct quotes) with the focus group members but do not expect them to have read it (some may, some may not). Come prepared to summarize responses and/or have printed summaries.

## General sequence of the meeting

- Introductions (if needed) and welcome
  - Give background on the company’s interest in this topic (benefits + practices for family-related needs)

- Share about Let's Grow Kids if seems helpful/relevant
- Meeting review
  - Thank people for coming
  - Review the purpose of the group and the goals of the meeting (to gather more specific details and direct feedback from employees who in one way or another represent their peers about the survey responses)
  - Go over the flow of the meeting -- how it will proceed, participation, confidentiality and its limitations (see rest of outline for guidance)
- Opening question: What is your impression of [EMPLOYER NAME] being a family-friendly place to work?
- Continue with facilitating the discussion using the sample questions that follow and/or develop your own prior to the meeting

### Helpful guidelines

- Have someone else take notes (an assistant to you, not a focus group member) so you can give your full attention to the conversation
- Encouraging participation
  - Summarize and check for understanding
  - Ask if the group agrees/has other thoughts
  - Phrase the same question in a different way
  - Ask if anyone else has any comments on that question
  - Ask a follow-up question
  - Make brief eye contact, especially with those who may not have spoken
- End on time
  - Give a warning when time is almost up
  - Give contact information in case there are additional thoughts
  - Thank participants again

### Sample questions to ask each group

1. Tell me more about... (details from opening question).
  
2. Do you hear coworkers talking about struggles with child care and other family-related needs?
  - If so, what ones seem most challenging to deal with?
  
3. Ask about a specific growth area identified in the survey results...

- What do you think about...?
  
  - What do you think [**EMPLOYER NAME**] could do about it?
4. Ask about a specific idea the employer has suggested as a way to help with family-related and child care needs...
- Do you think it would be helpful if [**EMPLOYER NAME**] offered/helped with...?
  
  
  - Why or why not?
5. Are there other recommendations that you have, or suggestions you would like to make?
6. Is there anything else you wanted to share today or you think would be helpful for me to know?