

HOW TO RUN A FOCUS GROUP

FIXUS NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON COMMON VALUES, GOALS, AND ASPIRATIONS

The FixUS National Dialogue on Common Values, Goals, and Aspirations is an ongoing effort to engage a broad, diverse array of Americans in the process of charting a path forward for our country. The roots of our division are complex, integrated, and long-term in the making. That is why we are initiating this effort with the full humility that solutions will not be top down. Rather, we believe that the only meaningful, plausible solutions to our current situation must be ground-up and citizen-driven.

Our efforts to identify common values and goals for the country have been kick started by a recent FixUS-Ipsos nationwide poll on these topics. While the poll's findings indicate that various groups hold sharply differing views on the current and future path of our country, there is still cause for optimism in that Americans still hold a lot in common. The work of the FixUS national dialogue will be to fully understand these points of commonality by engaging Americans through focus groups, polls, and other means of engagement.

Hosting your own focus group is a great way to spread the word about our efforts and bring new voices to our work.

1. Spread the word

Review materials related to the FixUS-Ipsos poll on American goals and values. Check out the [FixUS website](#) to read our press release and key findings, as well as explore a PowerPoint presentation which summarizes the poll results. Attach the PowerPoint when emailing people in your network to ask if they would like to participate in a focus group centered on these topics, and feel free to use these slides to frame the discussion during your focus group.

2. Organize!

Identify a time that works for you and generate a meeting link on your videoconferencing platform of choice. Assemble a list of invitees and try to recruit participants with diverse perspectives from across the political spectrum. Review the template emails listed below in this toolkit. Customize them as needed and send your invitations. Be sure to keep track of RSVPs and plan to send confirmation emails to people who would like to attend.

3. Prepare Questions

Anticipate the order in which you will ask your questions and how much time will be devoted to the discussion of each one. You may want to consider questions like:

- What findings in the poll most resonated with you, and why?
- What findings in the poll, if any, are the most cause for concern?
- What are some interesting things that the poll could have asked about but didn't?

4. Engage!

Now it's time to host your focus group! For your session to run smoothly and to make sure everyone feels included, explain and adhere to the following guidelines:

- If a large group, participants should “raise their hand” on the videoconferencing platform prior to speaking, should only speak when called on by the moderator, and keep their remarks limited to 60 seconds at a time.
- Individuals not speaking should be muted in order to prevent distraction from ambient noise.
- Remind participants that despite any disagreements they may have, they are all expected to proceed in a civil manner. Share the FixUS Civility Pledge with participants as a set of guidelines for how people should engage.

Don't forget to generate an audio recording of the session!

- If you are using Zoom, the host can locally record the meeting on a computer by selecting the “record” button. Ensure that the recording option is turned on in the “Recording” tab of your Account Settings.
- Please remind participants that you are recording the session and issue a verbal notification before recording.
- For example, you could say “We are recording this session for the purpose of capturing qualitative feedback. Any quotes extracted from this recording will be attributed only by first name and with the speaker's permission. This recording will not be distributed.”

5. Reflect

Send a follow up email to participants asking them for feedback. Include a link to the [feedback form](#). Be sure to fill out the form yourself so we can hear your perspective on what it's like to lead a session like this. Also, be sure to [email](#) us the audio recording of your session.

Template Follow Up Email

Hello,

Thank you for your participation our focus group! I appreciated your contributions to the discussion and I hope that you found it to be a beneficial experience. While there is a great deal to say about the topics we discussed, time constraints usually prevent participants from getting to express all of their opinions. That is why I'd like to invite you to fill out this [feedback form](#). I hope that you will use this form to share any additional thoughts on the topics we discussed or on the structure of the focus group itself.

Thank you again for your participation and I hope that you continue to stay engaged with FixUS.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

Template Invitation to Join Focus Group

Hello,

I hope you are well. I wanted to reach out to tell you about a project I recently became involved with- FixUS. FixUS is an effort to address our national divisions and the dysfunction in our politics. The project is producing numerous pieces of research and has many different opportunities for people of all walks of life to get involved.

In September 2020, FixUS commissioned a poll in order to establish a better understanding of Americans' common goals and values. You can find more information about the poll's results on the FixUS website. I'm sure you'll agree that the poll is quite interesting, which is why I'd like to invite you to participate in a virtual group discussion centered on its findings. The discussion will be held on [INSERT DATE AND TIME].

I hope that you are able to join me and a small group of Americans concerned over the state of our country for what I am sure will be an interesting and thought provoking discussion. It is critical that concerned citizens stay engaged with one another during times of such great division and challenge.

Please let me know if you are able to make it. I look forward to hearing from you and please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]

Template Confirmation Email

Hello,

Thank you for agreeing to join our FixUS discussion! As a reminder, the meeting will be held on [INSERT DATE AND TIME].

Our discussion will be held virtually and can be accessed through the following link:

[INSERT NAME OF PLATFORM (I.E. ZOOM, WEBEX, ETC.)]

[INSERT HYPERLINK TO JOIN]

Before the call, please take some time to review the results of the FixUS-Ipsos poll, which can be accessed on the FixUS website. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]