



Focus Group Invitations

Extending invitations to participate in a focus group should be carefully done. Even with the initial approach, you are conveying information about the effectiveness of the library to people who are our VIP stakeholders. We want to be respectful, organized, and informative in how we invite people.

A personal approach, in person or on the phone, is most effective. We all get lots of email solicitations, and have become accustomed to deleting them without qualms. A personal message is harder to ignore.

Here is a way to express the invitation:

"Hi, _____ [*person's name*]. This is _____ calling from _____. I hope that you're well, and I'm calling because the library is has a project that we think you have some expertise on.

We are redesigning our services to families with young children. As a planning step, we're trying to identify and understand the pressures and opportunities faced by families with young children in our area.

So we're asking a few people to come to the library to tell us about what families in our community with young children need. Because of your familiarity with _____ [*the person's area of expertise*], we think you have some insight about families that would be valuable to us.

I'm wondering if you might be willing to join what we're calling a focus group. It's a small group of about X [*number of people you've decided on*] people focused on providing their insight about one issue to help an organization, in this case, the library.

We're planning X *[number you've decided on]* sessions; you would attend just one which will take less than an hour. Do you think this is something you might be willing to consider participating in?"

[If no, thank them for considering and end the conversation in a friendly way.

If yes or maybe, answer questions and share details of the sessions: date, time, place, childcare you're offering, incentives you're offering.

If the person agrees to participate, ask for his/her email so that you can send the details to them.]

"We're so grateful that you would do this for your library, _____ *[person's name]*. Thank you, and I'll be in touch with an email soon."

Take care with the email containing details about the focus group, being sure that it's complete, answers all anticipated questions, has no typos or spelling mistakes, and provides contact information for the participant should a last-minute cancellation be necessary.

Here's an example of the follow-up email:

Dear Mrs. Fisher,

Thanks so very much for agreeing to participate in the Your Public Library's focus group on services to families with young children. We truly appreciate your willingness to share what you know that we need to know to make our library better for young families.

Here are the details you need to know:

The focus group will take place on Monday, February 18th.

We respect and value your time and that of other participants. We will start right on time at 7:00 p.m. and we will finish no later than 8:00 p.m.

We'll meet at the library in the Carnegie Meeting Room, first door on the right as you enter the library. There will be light refreshments.

The focus group discussion will be led by a colleague from another library organization to ensure a frank and open discussion.

Please let us know if you are bringing your children, and if so, their ages. We will have childcare for them during the focus group, and ask you to arrive ten minutes early to help them get settled.

If you have questions, please don't hesitate to email or call me at 518-437-9880 ext. 228.

If a last-minute emergency prevents you from attending, please call the information desk at 518-437-9880 to let us know.

Again, thank you for your generosity in agreeing to help your library. We'll see you on the 18th!

Sincerely,

Mary Fellows
Manager, Youth and Family Services
Your Public Library
518-437-9880 ext. 228

Remember, these people are our VIP stakeholders. Whatever we can do to create, maintain, and leave them with a belief that the library and its staff are effective and valuable is worth our time and care!