CommuniVax Focus Group Guide
for Community Members

1.0 INTRODUCTIONS (10 MIN)

My name is [INSERT NAME], and I’m a researcher with [INSERT INSTITUTION]. I will moderate the focus group this evening. Before we get started, I want to introduce the other study staff. After that I will go over the format and some ground rules for this evening.

With me this afternoon are my colleagues [INSERT NAMES] who are all part of the research team and will be observing and taking notes tonight.

In the focus group, we will consider 3 main questions:

• What factors (+/-) are influencing the willingness and abilities of members of the local [X POPULATION] community to be vaccinated against COVID-19?
• In what ways could/should the COVID-19 vaccination campaign enhance the ability of individuals, families, and/or whole communities to recover from the hardships experienced before and during the pandemic?
• What changes in public health, health care, and governmental institutions might local members of the local [X POPULATION] community see as necessary to improve their short-term confidence in COVID-19 vaccines and their long-term trust in authorities?

We will spend approximately 25 minutes on each question and then conclude with some of your final, brief reflections on what you heard today. We have a lot of ground to cover and limited time; as a result, in lieu of a break, individuals are asked to mute sound and video should they need to step away from the discussion.

GROUND RULES

1. TIME: Our schedule is very tight, so we will ask you all to stay as focused as possible, and please try to stay on the zoom throughout the session.

2. PARTICIPATION: The format of these sessions will be group discussion. As we ask questions, we would like you all to discuss these issues with one another. Please participate! Each of you has been asked to join us for a specific reason, so we really want your input. Also - I expect that each of you has a lot to say about many of our topics. My main job is to make sure that we can hear from everyone. Please don’t be offended if I ask you to hold a comment or question so that we can get input from someone else. If you are having a hard time getting a word in to the discussion, please use the “raise hand” function in Zoom. Does anyone need help finding that?
3. RESPECT: There aren’t right or wrong answers to anything we will discuss; none of us is more expert than others on these issues. We will be asking questions that might highlight real conflicts of values and judgment within this group – that is fine, that is exactly what they are supposed to do. We expect there to be disagreements, and we only ask that everybody remember to keep comments to one another as respectful as possible.

4. QUESTIONS?

PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS

Before we start the discussion, I’d like to go around the room and ask you each to tell us your first name and give one concrete example of how COVID-19 has affected your work, home life, and/or leisure time, and if did not affect you, then please explain why you think so.
2.0 SEGMENT A – VAX ACCEPTANCE AND ACCESS (25 MIN)

A. SET UP

Across the country, COVID-19 infection and mortality rates are highest in non-white groups, particularly Black, Indigenous, and Latino populations. The current vaccines can help mitigate COVID-19 transmission and burden. At the same time, national pandemic polling data suggest that members of hard-hit racial and ethnic minority groups – especially Black communities – have less confidence in COVID-19 vaccines than many of their white counterparts.

B. QUESTIONS

- If you have been vaccinated, what motivated you to make that decision? If you have not been vaccinated why?

- How do your decisions for your selves compare to the decisions of your family members and friends? What personal preferences do people give for being vaccinated or not? What do you think about these?
  - What differences do you see by characteristics like gender, age, race/ethnicity?

- Are there people in your community who would get vaccinated but can’t? What’s preventing them from being vaccinated?
3.0 SEGMENT B – COVID-19 VAX AND PANDEMIC RECOVERY (25 MIN)

A. SET UP

The pandemic has had disproportionate physical and financial impacts on U.S. racial and ethnic minorities, particularly those with limited means. The greater health burden involves many complex factors including exposure at jobs that have inadequate sick leave policies or that do not fit a “work from home” model, tight living conditions that enable viral transmission more readily, lower rates of insurance coverage that lead to postponed treatment, and mistrust of the health care sector due to historical trauma, ongoing bias, and for some, concern over immigration status. The greater economic burdens include job loss and interrupted income, the threat of eviction or foreclosure, growing food insecurity, loss of employer-provided insurance, and the choice between minding children who must learn remotely or continuing paid employment outside the home.

B. QUESTIONS

• In what ways does this broad brush stroke picture accurately reflect your own experiences; where do similarities begin/end?

• How have the pandemic’s compound stressors – physical, financial and psychological – shaped your own response to the COVID-19 vaccination campaign?

• What linkages, if any, do you see between the success of the local COVID-19 vaccination campaign and the ability of your, your family, and/or whole community to overcome the hardships experienced before and during the pandemic?
A. SET UP

The development of safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines has occurred at an unprecedented and rapid pace. This scientific achievement was possible because of the many human and financial resources applied, in the context of a great need. That’s been the timeline on the supply side. But, there is also a timeline on the demand side. And as some people say, COVID-19 vaccination will happen at “the speed of trust.”

B. QUESTIONS

• If it was your job to get COVID-19 under control here in your hometown, and to protect community health and safety, then what would you be doing different from what is happening now?

• What immediate changes to your public health, health care, and/or governmental institutions would cause you to place more trust in COVID-19 vaccination and the authorities recommending/administering vaccinations?

• What would public health, health care, and governmental institutions have to do over the long-term to hold onto your trust so that – if/when another serious infectious disease broke out in your community – you would line up quickly for a vaccination and take your family with you?
5.0 WRAP UP (5 MIN)

A. CLOSING THOUGHTS

Are there any other brief comments that you feel are important to share that have not been covered tonight?

B. FOCUS GROUP EVALUATION

We’d love to hear back from you about how we can improve the research study.

If there was one thing you would definitely change about the focus group, then what would it be?

Thank you for your time tonight.