Workshop Methods

The intent of the workshop is to facilitate interaction among the participants and to generate critical thinking. The primary format for this will be small group activities and nominal group discussion (Focus Groups). The purpose of using the group discussion format is to provide a structured format for discussing specific issues and exchanging ideas in an open forum. It is designed to help participants learn why and how people perceive and think about a specific issue.

The lessons include four basic stages: Introduction, Transition, In-Depth Investigation, and Closure.

Stage 1. Introduction

- Establish a high-energy, yet comfortable environment so participants are comfortable disclosing opinions and feelings.
- Provide information on what to expect during the discussion.
- Go over ground rules for discussion. This includes information on the use of round-robin questions, flip charts, rank ordering of responses, and summary statements and conclusions.

Stage 2. Transition

- Obtain an idea of the participants’ overall perceptions or views about the topic using opening questions on the topic that are designed to be answered quickly and to identify characteristics that the participants have in common.
- These questions are intended to foster dialogue and interaction.

Stage 3. In-Depth Discussion

- Questions that solicit detailed, substantive information about participants’ views toward the most important issues that relate to the core purpose of the discussion.
- The questions also enable participants to elaborate on responses about the topic.

Stage 4. Closure

- Create an opportunity for participants to alter or clarify positions they have made in earlier discussions.
- Verify conclusions drawn across topics by giving a short overview of the purpose of the session and a summary of the results.