## *Tool: Focus group / Listening session guide*

**Can also be used with individuals as an Interview Guide**

**Introduction**

[Introduce all facilitators – name and connection to pantry] Thank you all for taking the time to join us today. [Pantry name] is working on a project to increase choice and we are here to learn from you and hear your feedback on how the pantry can better serve the community. In particular, through this discussion we want to hear your thoughts on how we operate and how we might make it easier for people to choose their food.

**Ground rules**

Before we jump in, I want to go over a few ground rules for our conversation:

* We want you to be as comfortable as possible sharing your thoughts. We will use first names only. All feedback is anonymous – your feedback will not be connected with your name or affect the services you receive from this pantry.
* We also ask you to keep our discussion confidential and not tell others who was here or what individuals said. It’s fine to share the topics discussed, but please don’t share who said what.
* We want all voices to be heard and want everyone to have the chance to share. Please give others the chance to speak if you have already shared.
* We value everyone’s opinion and may “agree to disagree.” If your opinion is different than someone else’s, that’s ok. We welcome all thoughts and understand that we’ve had different experiences. Everyone’s experiences are equally valid and important.
* If something in our discussion makes you uncomfortable, feel free to take a break from the room. We hope you will come back and rejoin the conversation after.
* If there is something you want to share after today’s conversation, please let a pantry staff or one of the facilitators know.

Do these ground rules sound reasonable? If you agree, please nod you head or say “I agree.”

**Verbal consent:**

Our conversation today will take approximately XX minutes, and will be recorded for notetaking purposes only. Your participation in this conversation is voluntary and you can stop at any time. If you are uncomfortable with any of the questions, you do not have to answer. If you choose not to finish the interview/participate in the full focus group, we will keep and analyze your responses up to that point. Your responses will be anonymous in any reporting we do about what we learned in these interviews.

Do we have your permission to record this conversation? *Ensure everyone verbally consents.* 

Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Ice breaker:** We’re going to go around the table, and we would like everyone to say their first name. Then, think about your favorite place to shop for food. Please tell us what you like most about it.  Why is it your favorite?

We are working with this food pantry, and we want to ask you some questions about choosing food.

1. Typically, when you come to this pantry to get food, everyone gets the same bags of food. Do you ever get food that your family doesn’t like or doesn’t eat? Ask for examples.

1. What types of food or other items would you like to get from this pantry? Ask for examples. Are there non-food items, like toilet paper, that you would like to get from this pantry?

1. Have you ever visited a food pantry that lets you choose your own food? Tell me about that. What was that like?

1. This food pantry is thinking about ways to allow people to choose their own food, like at a grocery store. They want to set up the space so people can see and touch the food items and choose their own food or choose not to take certain food items. What suggestions would you have for us to make this a good experience for you and others?
2. We may have to put some limits on food items so there is enough for everyone. Do you have suggestions for how we can describe limits on signs at the pantry? For example, “please take up to 2 items” or “take what you need and leave enough for others”.
3. We know it can be hard for people to ask for help and get enough food for their families. What would make it easier for people in this neighborhood to come here to get food?
4. (If these changes are possible for the pantry to implement) Mention the current days and hours when neighbors can shop. Are there other times during the week that would be better for you to come to get food?
5. Would you like to volunteer at the pantry?
6. Is there anything else you want to tell us?

1. Thank you very much for your time today! Describe the process for getting a stipend.

*Additional Guidance on Focus Group Facilitation:* [*Trinity Duke How to Conduct a Focus Group*](https://irep.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/98/2016/05/Trinity_Duke_How_to_Conduct_a_Focus_Group.pdf)

## *Example: Focus group recruitment flyer*

A poster with text and images of people sitting on yellow chairs

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