A RECORDER’S ROLE

Recorders gather information from participants as accurately as possible. She or he:

- Helps set up the room and the recording equipment.
- Records each session using a high-quality recorder, and then transcribes the content.
- Asks questions if invited by the moderator to do so.
- Often provides an oral summary if deemed helpful.
- Debriefs with the moderator after the focus group session; suggests ways to improve the experience.
- Usually provides feedback on analysis and reports.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A RECORDER

- Sit in designated location, facing the door in case anyone arrives late so that you may greet them.
- Take notes throughout the discussion, making note of patterns, interpretations, and ideas.
- Avoid participating in the discussion. Only engage with participants when seeking to clarify an item.
- Offer feedback to moderator about the process.

A RECORDER’S ROLE

- Assume that people will refer to your notes. Provide as much clarity as possible. Seek to gather data verbatim.
- Organize your information in ways that make it easy for others to understand and use.
- Forward notes to the assigned person within 72 hours who will archive information received.
- Email or upload the audio recording to the assigned person with 72 hours of the session.

RECORDER’S RESPONSIBILITIES FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Quotable quotes – those well-said statements that illustrate an important point of view. Listen for sentences or phrases that are particularly enlightening or eloquently express a unique point of view. Place name or initials of speaker after the quotations. Usually, it is impossible to capture the entire quote. Capture as much as you can with attention to the key phrases. Use three periods … to indicate that part of the quote was missing.

Key points and themes for each question. Typically, participants will talk about several key points in response to each question. These points are often identified by several different participants. Sometimes they are said only once but in ways that deserve attention. At the end of the focus group, the assistant moderator will share these themes with participants for confirmation.

Follow-up questions that could be asked. Sometimes the moderator may not follow-up on an important point or seek an example of a vague but critical point. The assistant moderator may wish to follow-up with these questions at the end of the focus group.

Big ideas, hunches, or thoughts of the recorder. Occasionally the assistant moderator will discover a new concept. A light will go on and something will make sense when before it did not.

Make note of factors which might aid analysis such as passionate comments, body language, or non-verbal activity. Watch for head nods and eye contact that would indicate agreement, support, or interest.