CCR Anti-Racism Project 2023-2024

Toolkit for Focus Groups

Canadian Council for Refugees   Conseil canadien pour les réfugiés

Canadian Race Relations Foundation   Fondation canadienne des relations raciales

Introduction

A core principle of the CCR's work is ensuring that the voices of people with lived experience are heard, particularly those affected by key issues in our advocacy. The experiential wisdom people share helps us advance our advocacy work.

In accordance with this principle, the CCR is inviting member organizations across Canada to lead information collection opportunities through focus groups with refugees and newcomers. Focus groups are a method of research used by the CCR to create dialogues within communities to learn about their experiences and in this instance to gather input about priority issues of systemic racial barriers faced by racialized newcomers.

This guide is intended for those interested in participating in the CCR Anti-Racism project. If you have any questions or concerns after reading the guide, please contact Shilik Hamad at shamad@ccrweb.ca.

A. Anti-Racism Project objectives

For the purpose of this guide, we provide a simplified overview of the project. If you want to read about the project in more detail, you can refer to the AR project page.

Year 1 – Identifying systemic racial barriers and prioritizing issues

We will organize a series of consultations within:

- The refugee and immigrant-serving sector through dedicated virtual meetings and at regular CCR meetings (like the Consultation and Working Group meetings).

- The refugees, migrants, and newcomer communities through consultations (focus group discussions) with affected groups to share their experience and select priority issues.

Following a common framework, these focus group discussions will allow us to collect diverse input, by representing different regions in Canada, and population groups with specific realities (e.g., LGBTQI communities) and present the results as shareable resources summarizing the information gathered on systemic racial barriers faced by racialized newcomers and highlighting the priority issues.

Year 2 – Establishing recommendations for policy changes and advocacy strategies

We will organize another series of consultations within the same target groups to:

- Refine the information following the identification of priorities.

- Consult on recommendations for policy changes and advocacy strategies to address priority issues.

Following the agreed upon advocacy strategies, we will develop shareable resources with policy recommendations and engage in constructive dialogue with government, institutions, and organizations.

B. Cultural sensitivity and anti-oppression

As we recognize the sensitivity and emotional labour that can often come with discussing experiences of systemic racism and discrimination, the CCR will provide members an anti-oppression training designed to conduct focus groups like this one for the AR project.

More details for the anti-oppression training will be communicated to members soon.

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C. Purpose of focus groups

The purpose of these focus groups is to gain in-depth understanding of systemic racial barriers faced by racialized newcomers, particularly those of African descent, including in seeking justice and in accessing public services. This qualitative approach into understanding how people are affected by systemic racism will help us generate a list of up to 5 priority issues and process the information into shareable resources with policy recommendations, in line with the advocacy strategies chosen for year two of the CCR Anti-Racism project.

D. Your role as a CCR member organization

Our 2-year AR project relies on our members to implement consultations within their communities about the ways in which systemic racism affects newcomers and refugees. As we hope to hear from participants across the country, we encourage members to commit to these roles:

- Recruit refugees and newcomers in your community to participate in the focus group or survey.

- Creating an inclusive, safe space for participants to feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Include mental health support if applicable / possible.

- Develop your own discussion topics and questions for the focus group, approved by the CCR.

- Lead a meeting of the focus group to share information about the Anti-Racism project and ask participants for their input, according to the guidelines below.

- Provide support for participants as appropriate (e.g., refreshments, reimbursement of travel costs, potentially a small honorarium).

- Write up the input from participants and send it to the CCR.

E. Timeline

Between March – May 2023

- Defining the framework for the consultations (CCR with members) and sending the call out to participants (members).

Between May – July 2023

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- Conducting the focus groups and communicating the findings to the CCR (members).

Between August – October 2023

- Reviewing the information and working on generating 5 priority issues (CCR with members).

- Translating the findings into shareable resources (CCR).

- Defining recommendations for priority issues and developing a strategic plan on advocacy and actions designed to create systemic change with the government and other stakeholders (CCR with members).

Our 2-year AR project relies on our members to implement consultations within their communities about the ways in which systemic racism affects newcomers and refugees. As we hope to hear from participants across the country, we encourage members to commit to these roles:

F. Budget

We encourage organizations that have the capacity to set aside a budget to cover the costs of the focus groups (including refreshments, participants' travel costs, ideally a small honorarium for participants).

Larger organizations might also consider assisting smaller centres or community organizations by providing budgetary support, especially for resources such as mediators or reimbursements.

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Anti-Racism Focus Group Guidelines

1. Who to invite

Any racialized newcomers and/or refugees living in Canada who feel comfortable providing input on the challenges they face due to racism, with an emphasis on those affected by anti-Black racism.

2. Keep in mind

- Participants should understand that we will be discussing barriers specifically tied to racism, while acknowledging that other forms of discrimination and intersectionality can impact their experiences at the same time.

- Contributions will remain anonymous to the CCR, but organizations are encouraged to keep a confidential record of participants' contacts who wish to be included in year 2 of the project.

- The focus groups will not be able to address specific cases. (i.e., we cannot offer direct support and/or solutions).

- Focus groups should have diverse participants or bring together people with a common shared experience or population groups with specific realities (e.g., LGBTQI communities, Youth, privately sponsored refugees, people from one region of the world), based on who the organization works with.

- Compile the notes from the session(s) and share with the CCR (email to shamad@ccrweb.ca). Include the basic information about the session (date, location, number of people who participated). Provide us with the complete name of the organization(s) leading the session, so that we can acknowledge you correctly in the AR project.

- Collect the list of emails from the session for those interested in receiving updates but keep their contributions confidential. (CCR will send you the updates to pass on). We can invite them to the second year of focus groups for finding solutions to the systemic barriers.

- Give us feedback about how your focus group went and how we could improve this guide for future groups! Email us at shamad@ccrweb.ca.

ANNEX A: Template for Focus Group invitation

CCR Anti-Racism Project: Let's address systemic barriers.

Come to our Anti-Racism focus group to participate in a national initiative to address the systemic barriers created by racism for newcomers and refugees in Canada.

People with racialized refugee experience are being invited to participate in consultations across Canada so that we can identify what the priority issues are for systemic racism in the country.

Who should participate? Anyone who identifies as a racialized person with refugee or newcomer experience. It does not matter where you are from, how long you have been here, or how you got here, we want to hear your thoughts on what racist barriers you have experienced with Canada's current system, especially in seeking justice or public services.

Please note: The Anti-Racism project will not be able to address specific cases. We understand that we will be discussing systemic barriers specifically tied to racism, while acknowledging that other forms of discrimination and intersectionality can impact their experiences at the same time. The CCR cannot intervene in personal situations of discrimination and/or racism.

When and where? [TBD]

Sign up! [add information]

Other information:

- Info about languages that will be used, or other translation help.

- Whether travel costs will be reimbursed.

- Food and refreshments available.

- Mental health resources available.

- Any honorariums / reimbursements.

ANNEX B: Template for Focus Group outline and agenda

1. Opening and introductions

2. Establish 'Group norms'

Take a few minutes at the start to establish some basic norms to keep the group running smoothly, such as talking one at a time, respect for different opinions, etc. Each group will have a different dynamic, so see what would be most appropriate for this group. This is also an important opportunity to discuss systemic racism, go over any anti-oppression practices, and clarify the objective of the AR focus group.

3. Background on the CCR Anti-Racism Project

Relevant documents to share will be provided.

4. Discussion

Recognizing that our members may work with different identity populations or demographics of newcomers and refugees, we invite members to frame their own discussion topics and questions for the focus groups in approval with the CCR.

To inspire you, here are some examples or topics that can help frame your focus groups:

- Government Processes: systemic racism within government and immigration.

  - What kinds of systemic racism and inequity do we experience within these processes?

- Internal structures: Looking at systemic racism within our own organizations and departments.

  - How can our organizations build a more anti-racist structure?

- Housing/Employment/Education: Identifying the challenges faced specifically by racialized newcomers.

  - What systemic racial barriers are created for newcomers and refugees in these sectors?

The CCR encourages members to facilitate focus groups based on your organization's specific expertise and demographics you may work with. This is the most crucial part of the meeting!

Depending on the make-up and interests of the group you may want to focus on just one or two general topics.

5. Finalizing input for the 'Addressing Barriers' part of the project

If possible, get agreement on 3-5 top issues and identify the messages on these issues that the group would like to see included in the Anti-Racism project.

6. Closing and explanation of next steps

Possibility of group meeting again? Make sure people sign up if they wish to receive updates. Give a chance for people to add any final thoughts on the discussion or process itself.

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ANNEX C: Anti-Racism Focus Group – Consent form

Feb 2023 – AR Project Consent Form

Purpose

You have been invited to participate in a focus group for the CCR Anti-Racism project, in collaboration with [Your organization / project] under the direction of the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) and Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF). The purpose of this focus group is to identify systemic racial barriers that newcomers and refugees living in Canada experience. The information learned in this focus group will be used to gather priority issues of systemic racism and consult on recommendations for policy changes and advocacy strategies.

Procedure

You will be placed in a group of 6 – 12 individuals. A moderator will ask you several questions while facilitating the discussion. As approved through [Your organization / project], this focus group will be audio-recorded, and a note-taker will be present. Your responses will remain completely confidential, and no names will be included in the final report. You can choose yes or no to participate in the focus group, and you may stop at any time during the time of the study. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers to focus group questions. We want to hear the many varying viewpoints and would like for everyone to contribute their thoughts. Out of respect, please refrain from interrupting others. However, feel free to be honest even when your responses counter those of other group members.

Benefits and Risks

Your participation may benefit you and other participants through sharing personal experiences and conversations to increase awareness of systemic racism. [Your organization / project] recognizes the sensitivity and emotional labour that can come with talking about systemic racism and discrimination, you and we encourage you to prioritize your mental health and well-being during your participation and to stop at any time if needed in the study.

Confidentiality

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to respect the privacy of other focus group members by not disclosing any content discussed during the study. Staff within the Canadian Council for Refugees will analyze the data, but—as stated above—your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in any reports.

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If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact Shilik Hamad using shamad@ccrweb.ca

<u>**I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions stated above.**</u>

Full name:

Signature: Date:

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ANNEX D: Focus Group meeting checklist

- Timing: You could make the meeting longer or shorter, but we recommend planning for 90 minutes to 2 hours.

- Agenda and focus group set-up: As much as possible, organize the focus group and agenda so that people can talk to each other. Provide these in advance and at the focus group.

- Visual aids: Share the power point slides or print papers explaining the background of the AR project and presenting the main discussion questions. Make copies of the AR project objectives and outline: You can share this document during the meeting and ask participants to think about how they want to participate in the AR project.

- Co-facilitate: If possible, have two facilitators – this will help ensure that the conversation stays on track and on time, and move the conversation forward!

- Have a designated note-taker (or two!): particularly someone who will type up the notes to share with the CCR (in English or French please!)

- Use accessible language: keep your language as simple as possible, clarify, avoid jargon, keep sentences short and clear.

- Plan for different language levels: Depending on who is attending, plan as much as possible to accommodate people expressing themselves in different languages.

- Collect email addresses from those who want to be kept updated: we are aiming to keep people updated on the Anti-Racism project, so if they would like to stay updated, please internally note their emails! (The CCR will send you the information for you to pass on to attendees in your group.)

- If people are shy or some people are dominating: Break the group up into smaller groups and have a co-facilitator in each group. Or go around the meeting to ask each person if they want to say something.