



## Covid-19 Audience Outlook Monitor

### Qualitative Research Tools

# Guidelines for Recruiting Virtual Focus Groups with “**Early Adopters: Topic Strategic Communications**”

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#### Checklist for Recruiting Your Virtual Focus Group

1. Establish eligibility parameters
2. Determine your incentive
3. Pull your email contact list
4. Create your screener survey
5. Extend invitation via email
6. Screen respondents
7. Recruit respondents
8. Confirm respondents
9. Send reminder message

## Topic Introduction

This topic is a discussion with arts audiences who feel they are ready to return to cultural events now or when the infection rate drops in their community. It is geared toward understanding people's need for information, expectations around communication as it relates to returning to cultural events.

## Step-by-Step Recruitment Details

### 1. Establish eligibility parameters

Limit participation to patrons who've been active with you within the past 18 months, or roughly within a year before Covid-19 dominated the landscape. This may include subscribers, members, ticket-buyers, or other event attendees. The more you can do on your end to pre-screen your recruits through your database, the fewer questions you'll need to ask them on your screener survey.

### 2. Determine your incentive

Offering an incentive is important to ensuring that people show up. It also respects their time. Typical incentives include Visa or Amazon gift cards of \$50, which can be [delivered electronically](#). If you cannot budget for gift cards, you may offer a voucher for future performance tickets, or a free membership, or a similar premium. Bear in mind that organizational incentives tend to bias the pool of respondents towards those with stronger ties to your organization.

### 3. Pull your email contact list

After you've established who will be invited to your focus group and what you will offer as an incentive you can pull your contact list. We recommend segmenting your list into random batches of 50 contacts and deploying them until you have adequately filled your groups. This approach minimizes the number of people you'll need to reject.



#### 4. Create your screener survey

The most efficient way to recruit your focus group is to deploy a simple survey using SurveyMonkey or SurveyGizmo. If you do not have survey software you can use Google Forms to create a pre-registration form, but you'll need to adapt these questions to collect information and follow up with your respondents one by one to either confirm or disqualify them for the group. You should embed your survey link into the email invitation and track respondents' email addresses automatically if you have that capability. Regardless, you'll need to collect contact information in your screener survey, if they express interest in participating. Including optional demographic questions will help you populate a diverse group. A sample survey is provided in the Appendix.

#### 5. Extend pre-recruitment invitation via email

Subject line #1: Please join our video discussion group

Subject Line #2: Special request from [Organization]

Message Content:

Dear [Name],

I'm contacting you because at some point over the past few seasons you've [attended one or more programs] offered by [Organization].

We are reaching out to ask if you'd be willing to participate in a small video discussion group to share your thoughts about **information related to health and safety measures for returning to cultural events**. The group will be moderated by a member of our staff and be no larger than five participants. You must have a webcam to participate. As a token of our appreciation for your time, discussion group participations will receive a [\$50 Visa gift card].

This is strictly research. No sales or fundraising is involved.

[Organization] is part of an international study of arts audiences to understand the **types of information, level of detail, and frequency of communication expected with regard to returning to cultural events** during and after the Covid-19 pandemic so we can best meet their needs.

Two time slots are offered:

[Date and time of discussion #1]



[Date and time of discussion #2]

If you are interested in participating, please [click here] [\[embed link to screener survey/form\]](#) to be considered for a slot. Only five slots are available for each time. If the hyperlink is not active, cut and paste this hyperlink into your browser: [\[Insert full link to screener survey/form\]](#)

Thanks so much for your consideration. Your participation would be enormously helpful to [organization].

If you are selected, we will send you detailed instructions for joining the video discussion.

Sincerely,

[Name of Sender]

## 6. Screen your respondents

Once you have closed your screening survey process and have a sufficient number of replies, use the data you have collected on your survey to choose participants. Try to populate each group with as much diversity as possible or as reflects your general audience demographics (e.g. age, gender).

Disqualify anyone who works for an arts organization. Some people feel they should also exclude anyone who is a board member of a nonprofit arts organization.

## 7. Recruit the qualified respondents

Example outbound message for [individual recruitment emails](#):

Subject Line: Invitation to Video Discussion Group: [Date and Time]

Dear [Name],

We are delighted you are interested in being part of our video discussion group on [Date from start time to end time]. If you are still available, I'd like to confirm your participation, and send you the video-conference details. [Name] will be moderating the discussion. We look forward to your reply. As a token of our appreciation, you'll receive [describe incentive] if you participate in the meeting.

Regards,



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[Sender's name]

## 8. Confirm respondents

Immediately upon receiving an affirmative acceptance, send the second confirmation message:

Subject Line: Confirmation: Video Discussion Group: [Date and Time]

Fantastic, [Name]. Here are the details. I'll also send you a calendar appointment with the same information, in case that is helpful.

We look forward to your participation in the discussion on [Date and time] via [videoconference platform]. If you're not familiar with the [videoconference] software, you might want to join the meeting a few minutes early. My cell phone is [Number] in case you need to reach me beforehand for any reason.

[Name]

Video Discussion Group re: [Going out to cultural events during and after Covid-19 pandemic]  
Moderator: [Name of Moderator]  
[Date and time]

Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

[Insert hyperlink to videoconference]

## 9. Send reminder message

Send a reminder to each participant by email 24 hours in advance of the session.



## Appendix: Sample Screening Survey for Early Adopters

### Online Survey Welcome Page

Thanks so much for your interest in participating in our video discussion about going out to cultural events.

This online registration form will allow you to indicate your availability for the 75-minute meeting.

Participation is limited to five people. If you are selected, a staff member of [Organization] will contact you personally in a few days to confirm your participation. If you do not hear from us, it means we have filled the group. But there should be other opportunities like this one in the future!

This is strictly research - no sales or fundraising is involved.

[next page button]

### Online Survey - Page 1 - Screen for Eligibility

Under what conditions will you resume attending arts and cultural events? (Select the one statement that best represents how you feel.)

I am ready to go out now, or as soon as it is legally allowed [use survey logic to continue]

When the “curve flattens” and the rate of new infections in my community drops to zero or near zero [use survey logic to continue]

When testing and treatment are broadly available and easy to access [use survey logic to disqualify]

After I’ve been vaccinated or developed immunity to the virus [use survey logic to disqualify]

Even after I’ve been vaccinated, I still don’t anticipate going to cultural venues any time in the foreseeable future [use survey logic to disqualify]

Don’t know [use survey logic to disqualify]

*[Disqualify those who select an answer item other than the one you’re looking for; since only a fraction of people will provide the answer you’re looking for, you’ll need to send out more emails.]*



## Online Survey - Page 2 - Background

*This page is for qualified respondents. The remainder should be skipped to the disqualification page. Please program your survey logic on the following questions accordingly.*

Now, please tell us just a few things about yourself.

Are you a practicing artist?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe your artistic practice. [open-ended/comments box]

*[You may or may not wish to screen out professional artists. If you wish to exclude artists, use your survey logic here to move them to the disqualifications page.]*

Do you work as a full time or part time staff member for a nonprofit performing arts organization?

Yes

No

*[We recommend screening out people who are arts professionals. If you wish to exclude arts professionals, use your survey logic here to move them to the disqualifications page.]*

How many times have you attended live performances at the following organizations or venues over the past two years?

Response Options: None; 1 or 2 times; 3 or more times

[Organization]

[Other Organization]

[Other Organization]

*[Add as many other organizations as you'd like; this will give you a sense of the breadth of the individual's participation profile]*

***[add any demographics you wish to include here]***



## Online Survey - Page 3 - Request for Cooperation and Contact Information

*This page is for qualified respondents based on your inclusion/exclusion criteria on page 2.*

Thank you so much for your interest in our video discussion group about **going out to cultural events** during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. Each discussion will last 75 minutes and will be held via [Zoom or another videoconference platform that you use].

Please indicate your availability for the follow dates and times:

I'm available on [Date and Time #1]

I'm available on [Date and Time #2]

Please provide your name, email address, daytime phone number, and any additional comments or instructions for how and when to reach you.

Name: [Comments Box]

Email: [Comments Box]

Daytime phone: [Comments Box]

Please share any instructions for how best to reach you: [Comments Box]

Since participation is limited, we will follow up with you personally if you are confirmed to participate. THANK YOU! If you do not hear from us, please consider this group to have been filled.

[End]





## **Disqualification/Thank You Page**

*Your survey logic should be programmed to bring disqualified to this page before exiting.*

Thank you for your interest, but we will not be able to confirm you for this group. We hope to provide you with a future opportunity to participate.





## Audience Outlook Monitor Research

### Early Adopters: Testing Information Needs and Communications Related to Returning to Activities

#### Before starting

- Introduce yourself
- Introduce other members of your team and explain that they'll be taking notes, but won't participate in the discussion
- Require participants to use their webcam during the discussion (a pre-condition that should be communicated in advance)
- Go around the virtual meeting space and let participants introduce themselves, introducing a simple ice-breaker question related to your organization (e.g., "How long have you been attending our programs?")

#### Intro

*Before we start, I'd like to give you just a little background on why we're here today.*

*[Participating Organization] is interested in better understanding how people feel about returning to arts and cultural programs when facilities are allowed to reopen, and what information we should provide our audience members about the steps we're taking to ensure their health and safety.*

*Your responses are confidential, and we'll not associate your name with any of your responses. With that assurance, please be as candid as possible with your responses. There are no right or wrong answers to my questions.*

*I promise to let you go in 75 minutes. Afterwards, we have a [describe incentive (e.g., a \$50 Visa gift card)] for you, as a token of our appreciation for your time today.*

*First I'd like to ask some questions about dining at local restaurants.*

1. *We've learned from survey research that many of our audience members are going out to eat at local restaurants. How many of you have been out to a restaurant in the past few weeks? [pause; take a show of hands] Was that indoor or outdoor dining? [continue]*

*Some of the people who are already going out to restaurants also say that they'd not be comfortable going out to theaters or concert halls, if they were open. Why do you suppose that some people are comfortable going out to restaurants, but not theaters?*

Probe: *What, if anything, gives you confidence that the restaurants you choose to visit are safe from a health safety standpoint?* [See if their answers refer to things that the restaurant does to lower health risks, or if they refer to their own actions (e.g., mask wearing, etc.)]

Probe: *At any point during a recent visit to a restaurant, did you see anything that concerned you from a health safety standpoint, or that you'd wished you'd known about in advance?* [This will help to identify “red flags” on an unaided basis]

2. *Can you think of an organization or business that's done a good job of communicating with you about health safety?*

Probe: *What did they do that stood out to you?*

3. *When you think about attending a [show/concert/exhibition] at [our theater/museum/facility], do you trust us to take all the necessary steps to ensure the health and safety of audience members, or will you wait to make a decision based on the information we provide you?*

Probe [if answer is “I trust you”]: *Do you equally trust all arts and cultural organizations, or just us? Why?*

Probe [if answer is “I'll wait to make a decision...”]: *Generally, do you want to absorb a lot of information about what the experience will be like attending our programs, or just a little?*

4. *What questions about health and safety would you need us to answer in advance? Please try to phrase your answers in the form of a question. [If necessary] For example, “How will valet parking work?” [spend a little more time on this question, and make sure to capture the results]*

Now I'm going to share my screen with you. [Activate screen share to show 1<sup>st</sup> page of PowerPoint]

*Here's a list of some topics that [Organization] might communicate with you in advance of attending.*

**Policies you might know about in advance**

1. Patrons feeling ill who choose to stay home will get full refunds
2. Patrons have certified that they are virus-free (to the best of their knowledge)
3. Patrons have agreed in writing to follow venue safety protocols
4. Safety protocols ensure equitable access and inclusion (e.g., access is not limited to high value donors)
5. *Do you have questions or comments about any of these policies that might be communicated in advance?*



6. *Would knowing about any of these policies in advance influence your thinking about attending our venue? Which one(s)?*

[Document the number of people who cite by number then advance to 2<sup>nd</sup> page of PowerPoint]

*Here's a list of health and safety protocols that might be followed at our venue.*

**Venue Protocols**

1. Our venue has been inspected and certified by health experts
  2. Protective equipment is available for audiences at the venue (e.g., masks, gloves, hand sanitizer)
  3. Security and thermal scanning have been implemented at all entrances
  4. Food and beverage areas and supplies are clean and disinfected
  5. Customer services have been moved outdoors when possible
  6. Touch-free protocols are in place (e.g., electronic tickets; pre-paid concessions with contactless pick up; pre-paid parking)
7. *Do you have questions or comments about any of these venue protocols?*
8. *Which one or two of these venue protocols would be most influential in your decision to attend?*

[Advance to 3<sup>rd</sup> page of PowerPoint]

*Here's a list of a few more health and safety protocols that might be followed at our venue.*

**Seating, Physical Distancing, and Ventilation**

1. Cloistered groups or “pods” can ticket and sit together
  2. Seating layouts are adjusted to comply with physical distancing protocols
  3. Staff (ushers, ticket takers) and audience members are sufficiently separated and protected at all times
  4. Entry and exit protocols are in place to comply with physical distancing protocols
  5. No intermission to minimize mingling
  6. Restrooms and amenities areas are staffed and monitored to comply with physical distancing
  7. Lounges and social opportunities comply with all safety protocols
  8. Access to information regarding venue ventilation
9. *Do you have questions or comments about any of these health safety protocols?*
10. *Which one or two protocols would be most influential in your decision to attend?*
11. *Reflecting on this conversation, is there anything you wish we had asked you about that we didn't?*
12. *Finally, what one piece of advice would you give us about communicating with audience members about coming back to our venue?*



Wrap-Up

- Thanks so much for your time today.
- Deliver honorarium

