



Cities Connecting Children to Nature

Focus Group
Meeting Design

Focus Group Meetings:

GROUP I:

Wednesday, July 27, 2016 10:30-11:30 AM Spanish:

- Facilitator: Memi Cardenas
- Note Taker: Cara Welch
- **Location:** Austin Voices Lanier Family Resource Center, 1111 Fairfield Drive

Wednesday, July 27, 2016 6:00-7:00 PM English

- Facilitators: Andrew Wallace-Bradley & Morgan Nachman
- Note Taker: Julia Campbell
- **Location:** Austin Voices Lanier Family Resource Center, 1111 Fairfield Drive

GROUP II:

Tuesday August 2, 2016, 6:00pm – 7:00pm

- Facilitators: Andrew Wallace-Bradley & Morgan Nachman
- Note Taker: Julia Campbell
- Spanish Translator: Memi Cardenas
- **Location:** Pleasant Hill Library, 211 E. William Cannon Dr.

GROUP III:

Thursday August 4, 2016, 6:00pm – 7:00pm

- Facilitator & Spanish Translator: Memi Cardenas
- Note Taker: Julia Campbell
- Thursday August 4, 2016, 6:00pm – 7:00pm
- **Location:** Carver Museum, 1165 Angelina St, Austin, TX 78702

Attendees: 10-12

Purpose:

To conduct in depth engagement with targeted community members that represent populations that are underserved by the Austin Parks and Recreation Department. The goal is to understand their barriers to connecting to nature and seek feedback on improvements that the Parks and Recreation Department can make in the future.

Outcomes:

- Community members should leave the focus group with an understanding of the Children & Nature mission and how their input will have an effect the Implementation Plan.
- CCCN Core Planning Team will have meaningful input that can be added to the Implementation Plan.

- There is a mutual understanding about the purpose of this project, how people can participate and what steps are moving forward.

Meeting Design

Facilitators: Andrew Wallace Bradley and Morgan Nachman

Project Lead: Julia Campbell

Resources:

- Sticky notes
- Pens
- Map of Austin for table exercise

Agenda Item	Activity	Time
Welcome	Project Background- Julia Campbell <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the project • Where are we in the process • What we have heard so far 	5 minutes
Introductions	Introductions- Facilitator will lead group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start by introducing yourself to the group, asking the note-taker to introduce himself / herself, and going over general rules for discussion (see below) • “Today we are going to be talking about children in nature. I will be walking you through a series of questions that will lead us to how we can better work together with the Parks Department to provide children better access to nature.” 	5 minutes
Topic I	Discovery- Facilitator will lead group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the group to take one minute to think and write down their ideas on a sticky note • Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Think back to the time that you spent outside as a child. What did you do? Share one of your favorite memories with the group. ○ Share your favorite memory of being outside in nature with your children. ○ What prevents you from doing these activities with your children today? ○ How important is it for you to get outside in nature with your family? ○ What keeps you from making it more of a priority? 	10-12 minutes
Topic II	Dream- Facilitator will lead the group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the group to take one minute to think and write down their ideas on a sticky note • Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are common themes that you heard from the group? 	10-12 minutes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are common barriers that the group shares, or things that are preventing families from getting outside in nature? ○ What's one thing you wish you could do with your family today? ○ Ideally if you were able to get outside in nature with your family every day, what would you be doing? ○ Where would you go? 	
Topic III	<p>Design- Facilitator will lead the group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask the group to take one minute to think and write down their ideas on a sticky note ● Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is your favorite thing to do outside in nature with your family today? ○ Where do you go? ○ What would you like to see more of in your neighborhood? ○ If you were to walk to a park, what would you like to see in that park? ○ If you were to drive 15-20 minutes to a destination park, what would you hope to do and see in that park? ○ What specifically can the Parks and Recreation Department do to encourage you and your family to get outdoors more often? 	10-12 minutes
Closing	<p>Next Steps- Julia Campbell</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How and when can participants see a report of the community engagement ● What are the next steps for the project 	5 minutes

ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

The principle role of the facilitator is to stimulate and moderate the table discussion by asking questions, identifying key points, and managing the group process. The facilitator will keep the table focused on the session's topic and use the provided questions as a guide to help participants learn both through self-discovery and from each other.

The facilitator is not a teacher or a preacher, but should be looked upon as a resource for the group. The facilitator does not have the answers or may even not be the most knowledgeable person about the topic under discussion. To help the group participants further understand the topic or issue being addressed, it is acceptable for the facilitator to share knowledge, seek information or ask supplementary questions. For the most part however, the facilitator should concentrate on helping the participants achieve the program goals.

Your neutrality is very important to the success of the exercise; it helps all participants feel comfortable sharing their diverse array of perspectives. Your role should never be to promote a particular point of

view, but rather to further the discussion. By the end of the workshop, group members should not know your views on the issues being discussed.

As you facilitate the conversation, your role is to help the group find areas of consensus. You don't need to get all participants to agree 100% with all group decisions, but you want to try to find a final result that all group participants feel they can live with.

General rules for discussion:

- Speak one at a time.
- Help everyone participate.
- Listen to and respect all points of view.
- Respect time: go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.
- Be willing to hear experiences from different perspectives.
- Suspend judgment as best you can.
- Seek to understand rather than persuade.
- Speak for yourself about what has personal heart and meaning.

Additional Guidelines for the Facilitator

Be prepared. Read the guide and think ahead of time about how the discussion might go. This will allow you to give your full attention to the group.

Don't let any one person dominate. If you allow people to interrupt or let one or two talkers take over, the more polite people will get angry and frustrated. At the first sign of trouble, refer to the ground rules the group has set. If you need to gently cut someone off, you can say "I want to see if we could get some other folks into this conversation."

Draw out quiet participants. Don't put anyone on the spot, but watch for opportunities to bring quiet people into the discussion. Learn participants' names and use them.

Keep the discussions on track. Since important issues are usually related to each other, it is easy for groups to move into other areas. Participants need the freedom to explore connections and ideas, but try to keep the discussion related to the session's topic.

Allow for pauses and silences. People need time to think and reflect. Sometimes silence will help people build up the courage to make a valuable point. You may find it helpful to count silently to ten after asking a question.

When in doubt, ask the group. If you're having trouble enforcing the ground rules, or deciding what topic to spend time on, ask the group what they would like to do.

Test for support among ideas. "There seem to be several people who share this view that..."

Manage the allotted time. You are responsible for keeping the group on track and making sure that the group has time to complete the entire exercise. "We have about 5 minutes left and I want to see if there are any other key ideas that we have not heard so far..."

Test for clarity. Repeating back what you hear from participants can be a helpful tool for summarizing and achieving clarity. “I want to make sure everyone understands what you’re saying...”

Helpful Hints

- If you get a question you cannot answer, alert PARD staff to answer the question.
- There is a “Parking Lot” to gather off-topic comments. There may be valuable comments from participants on subject matter other than what is on today’s agenda. Instead of letting these issues distract the group, encourage participants to use the Parking Lot.
- If someone starts to ramble on, please let them know we want to be sure everyone has a chance to introduce themselves and/or be heard. In fact, you can use this tactic at any point in the workshop to encourage brevity.