



## Covid-19 Audience Outlook Monitor

### Qualitative Research Tools

#### Guidelines for Recruiting Virtual Focus Groups with “**Early Adopters: Topic Drivers for Returning to Cultural Events**”

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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 general 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 experiences with cultural organizations since the pandemic hit, where they are getting their information, their levels of comfort with different types of venues and experiences, and their feelings about health safety measures.

## 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 **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 how people feel about **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,

--

[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 60-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 60 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.





## Covid-19 Audience Outlook Monitor

### Qualitative Research

**Virtual Focus Group Protocol: “Early Adopters” (i.e., those who say they will resume attending “as soon as legally permitted” or “when the curve flattens and the rate of new infections in my community drops to zero or near zero”)**

Before starting, Moderator should:

- Introduce self
- Introduce anyone else on the videoconference and explain that they’ll be listening but won’t be visible in the discussion.
- Explain GTM control panel

#### Intro

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

*Cultural organizations in [local region] are cooperating on a study of audiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study is led by the consulting firm of WolfBrown and it’s called Audience Outlook Monitor. You all were kind enough to register for this group, so thanks for participating. The study is supported by the [participating organization]. I’m an employee with [participating organization].*

*The purpose of our discussion today is to delve a little deeper into your feelings about returning to cultural venues for performances and events.*

*Your responses are confidential, and we’ll not associate your name with any of your responses outside of the study. With that assurance, please be as candid as possible with your responses. Our conversation is being recorded for training purposes and may be shared with other organizations participating in the Audience Outlook Monitor project.*

*I promise to let you go in 60 minutes. Afterwards, we’ll email you an electronic [organization incentive], as a token of our appreciation for your time today.*

### Introductions & Participation Profile (15 minutes)

*First I'd like to ask each of you to introduce yourself.*

1. *Please tell us your first name, give us a bit about your work, if you work, and what kinds of cultural programs you enjoyed attending before the pandemic hit.*

*Probe: If you had to pick one or two cultural organizations that figure prominently in your experience, what are they?*

*Probe: When you go out to cultural events, who do you usually go out with?*

### Returning to Cultural Programs (45 minutes)

2. *What's been your experience with cultural organizations since the pandemic hit?*

*Probe: Have cultural organizations done a good job of staying in touch with you?*

*Probe: Have you visited any museums since they've re-opened?*

*Probe: Have you made any plans to attend cultural programs over the coming months?*

3. *What's your sense of the COVID-19 situation in [local region]? Are things getting better, holding steady, or getting worse?*

*Probe: What are your sources of information?*

4. *Under what conditions would you go out again to [our venue]? [Test to see if their comments align with their survey response about readiness"] [selectively probe]*

*Probe: What information or assurances do you need from us in order to feel comfortable coming to [our venue]?*

*Probe: Of all the things we might do to make our facilities safe from a health standpoint, what one or two things would make the biggest difference in your thinking about returning to our venue?*

*Probe: Will you comply with health safety requirements such as wearing masks and adhering to social distancing guidelines, as a condition of going back to our venue?*

*Probe: Do you trust other audience members to follow the rules?*

5. *You all indicated that you're ready to resume attending cultural events either as soon as it is legally permitted, or when the local rate of infections is near zero. You did NOT answer that you were waiting to be vaccinated. I'm curious to know a little more about why you're willing to start going out to cultural programs before some other people are.*

*Probe: Can you elaborate more on what you mean or said??*

6. *Reflecting on this conversation, is there anything you wish we had asked you about that we didn't?*

7. *Before we close, what advice would you give to arts groups about communicating with their audiences about reopening?*



### Wrap-Up

- Thanks so much for your time today.
- You'll receive an email with the electronic [*organization incentive*], which you can use as soon as their programing resumes.

