

**OUTLINE DISCUSSION GUIDE**  
**FOCUS GROUP STUDY**  
**SENIOR CITIZENS**

Good (morning, afternoon, evening). My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

The New Jersey State Library has launched an ambitious project to gain a better understanding of the programs and services the residents of our community want to have available at their public library.

The Library is very pleased you have agreed to join us today.

We are here to talk about how your experiences have been using your local public library. The discussion we are going to have is called a focus group. For those of you who have never participated in one of these sessions before, I would like to explain about this type of research.

Focus groups are used to gather qualitative information from a small group of individuals who have a common interest in a particular subject—in this instance, your interest in adult programs and services available at your public library.

These informal discussions will provide the Library with invaluable information about how the Library can better serve seniors in the future.

In focus groups, there are no right or wrong answers. We want to hear from everyone in the room. You were invited here because we believed you would have important ideas regarding the subjects pertaining to public library services that we want to explore. Don't hesitate to speak up when you have a point you would like to make.

I will be moderating the session and trying to move us along so that we touch on all of the key subjects on our agenda. I would like to avoid getting bogged down on issues that are not relevant to everyone in our group discussion. If I sense we are spending too much time on one subject, I will jump in and try to move the discussion along.

I will tape record this discussion so that I don't have to take notes. I like to follow what is being said and then carefully listen to the tapes later so I can accurately convey the ideas and opinions that you have shared.

My role as moderator is to summarize the group's feelings. I will not refer to any participant by name in the report I prepare. The information will be kept confidential and used only by the Library to develop new services and programs that will better address your needs and those of other seniors the future.

**QUESTION ONE:** I'd like to kick off our discussion by going around the table and having each of you tell the group about yourself—where you live, a little about your family, and anything else you think the other people in the group might find interesting.

**QUESTION TWO:** I would like to ask you a general question about public libraries.

**QUESTION TWO-A:** Why do you think it is important to have a good public library in our community?

**QUESTION TWO-B:** In your opinion, what are some of the most important roles that libraries play in your communities?

**QUESTION THREE:** Are there changes taking place in the community that most affect seniors? Are there ways that you think the Library should help you by responding to these changes?

**QUESTION FOUR:** I'd like to talk a little bit about your experiences using our public library. How often do you go there? What are the main reasons that you go to your library?

**QUESTION FIVE:** What are some of the programs and services available at the library? PROBE FOR:

- Books
- Magazines and newspapers
- Reference services
- Computers and online services
- Videos and audios DVD's
- Free special programs
- Online databases
- Interlibrary loan
- Copy machine
- Tax forms
- Opportunity to volunteer
- Website
- Other?

**QUESTION SIX:** Are there programs and services the Library provides that are specially tailored to the needs of seniors?

- Information for caregivers
- Talking books
- Large print collections
- Assistive technology for individuals with physical challenges
- Books to go
- Books by mail

Internet computer tutorials

Movies

Book discussion group

Creative writing

Information about government programs

Services to nursing homes, senior centers and residences

Other?

**QUESTION SIX A:** You have just talked about a lot of programs and services that are available at your library. Of all the ones that have been mentioned, which three are the ones that are most important to you?

**QUESTION SEVEN:** In general, how satisfied are you with the materials, programs, services, and technology for seniors available at your library?

**QUESTION EIGHT:** When you are at the Library and need help, do you feel comfortable asking the staff for assistance?

**QUESTION NINE:** Do you have access to the Internet in your home? Do you use it to get information from the Library? Have you visited our library's website? When you visit it, what type of information are you generally seeking?

**QUESTION TEN:** How many of you have used online databases at your Library? How many of you access the Internet at your library? How important do you think it is for the public library to provide seniors with access to technology?

**QUESTION ELEVEN:** Let's pretend that your library could be changed in some way. Imagine yourself walking into a space that looks or feels different. What is it you see in your imagination?

**QUESTION TWELVE:** When you come to the Library do you feel like you are coming to a place that is safe, clean, and welcoming?

**QUESTION THIRTEEN:** What do you think are the best strategies for letting seniors know about the programs and services that the Library has for them?

**QUESTION FOURTEEN:** What are the other organizations in our community—such as a senior center—that seniors belong or go to? In what ways do you think library programs and services differ from those offered by these other organizations?

**QUESTION FIFTEEN:** Is there anything else you would recommend that the Library might do to get more senior citizens to use their public library and provide seniors with better services in the future?