

Using Delphi Method for Needs Assessment Training 2024

Using Focus Groups in Delphi Method to Conduct Participatory Research: Implications for Extension

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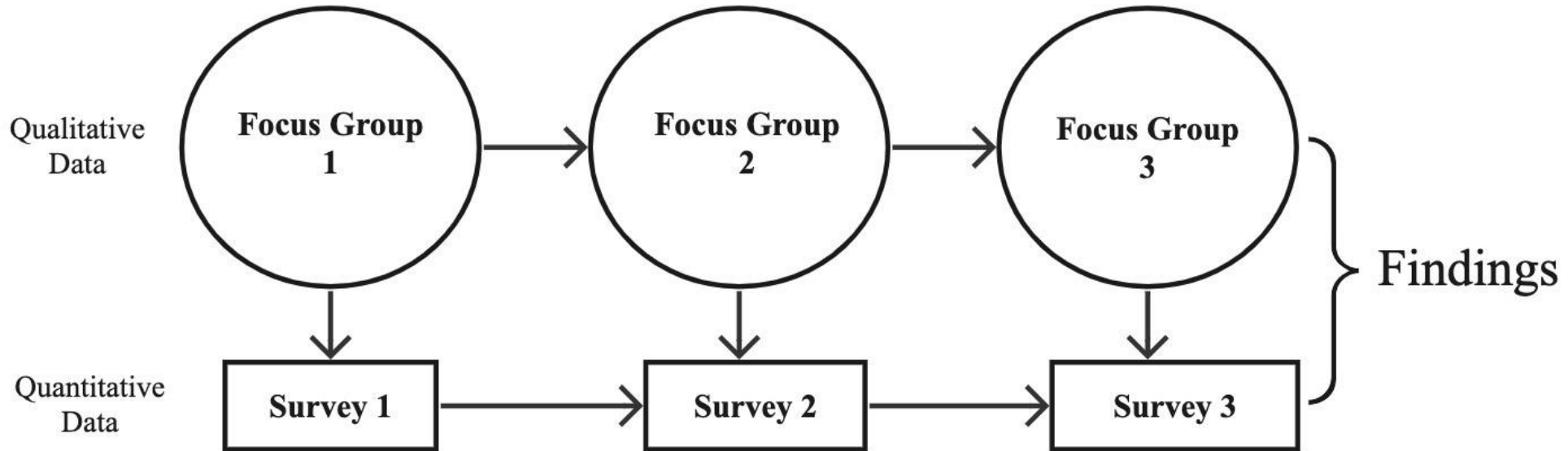
About the Study

- Part of a larger **multi-year research project**
- Sought to identify **needs, barriers, and possible interventions** to increase access to farmers markets for low-income shoppers and people of color.
- **Mixed-methods** design
- **Community-engaged approach**, despite pandemic pivot to virtual

Why we modified Delphi method

- Create a **virtual** community-engaged method during pandemic.
- Need to ground truth or '**member check**' preliminary needs assessment findings to confirm accuracy, seek consensus, and glean additional qualitative feedback.
- Desire to **build consensus** with opportunities for dialog, buy-in, compromise, trust building, and increased understanding between stakeholders in the process
- Hope to **prioritize** top barriers and possible interventions based on different expertise and perspectives from lived experiences.

Modified Delphi Method



Modified Delphi Method

	Modified Delphi	Traditional Delphi	Focus Group Method
What it is	A planned and systematic combination of focus groups and surveys after each round of Delphi	An iterative survey that begins with open-ended elicitation round followed by 2 close-ended rounds asking expert panel to rank items from round 1	A planned, relaxed dialogue among small group of people on a specific topic
When to use	To understand the needs, barriers, issues in-depth , beyond ranking of the Delphi items	To develop and achieve expert consensus on a complex issue or when available knowledge is subject to uncertainty	To identify problems and encourage divergent thinking in a group setting
Who is at the table	Experts and community stakeholders with lived experiences	People with organizational affiliations or expertise in the area	People with similar characteristics and lived experiences
Main benefit	Gaining richer contextual information in addition to achieving consensus	Achieves consensus which can be challenging when working on complex issues	In-depth information on the common needs, issues, barriers
Limitation	Time-consuming to run and analyze data	Not recommended for outcomes evaluation	Not recommended for decision-making



Our process

What we did

- **3 consecutive virtual Delphi focus groups** (Zoom)
- **3 surveys followed each focus group** (Qualtrics)

Who was invited

- **Expert panel:** farmers market vendors, low-income shoppers, community advocates, and farmers market managers
- **Inclusive space** for **English and Spanish-speaking participants** with **real-time simultaneous interpretation**

Format

- **Focus groups** included a total of **12 people**, with opportunity for smaller breakout group; space for open discussion
- **Delphi Survey** link and QR code were provided at the end of each focus group; opportunity to express opinions anonymously

What we found: Barriers

Barriers	% Agree/ Strongly Agree (n=12)
Lack of awareness about which forms of payment besides cash are accepted at markets	90
Lack of awareness about market season	90
Lack of awareness about CalFresh/Market Match at market	89
Lack of awareness about pandemic EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) at markets	89
Lack of awareness about market locations	80
Lack of awareness about market dates	80
Lack of awareness about market staff available to assist with questions	80
Lack of awareness about market times	70

What we found: Interventions

Interventions	% Somewhat Important/ Important (n=12)
Making sure new CalFresh users know about CalFresh at farmers markets and Market Match	100
How important is it to use the following advertising channels to increase awareness about the farmers markets? Radio	100
How important is it to use the following advertising channels to increase awareness about the Farmers Markets? Signage, road signs, street banners	100
How important is it to advertise markets in the following ways? Inform community residents about CalFresh eligibility	100
How important is it to advertise markets in the following ways? Coupons/vouchers	100
Other Marketing Interventions: Make info booth easier to find	100



Lessons Learned

- Provides qualitative information to understand the 'why' behind consensus.
- Holds promise for application in Extension.
- Replication needed to refine and improve delivery.
- Requires significant time for planning, delivery, and data analysis.

Reflections

We found that additional methods may still be needed for **decision-making and program ideation**. This is because...

- Both standard and modified Delphi method **do not rank** interventions that are the highest priority.
- Both standard and modified Delphi method evaluate items independently of one another and **may not be appropriate for interrelated topics** (e.g. a suite of interventions that go well together).
- Modified Delphi method could use more **time to discuss lack of consensus/disagreement**.
- **Be clear** about by who and how info will be used to ensure results are actionable.

Using the Findings in the Field

- Resulted in a list of consensus priorities which were whittled down based on feasibility for implementation
- Method led to both data overwhelm and validation of what was already known anecdotally.
- In hindsight, community partner wished the method had been...
 - more targeted
 - deeper
 - exploration of contention
 - unpacking what had been tried and failed

Citation for more information

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