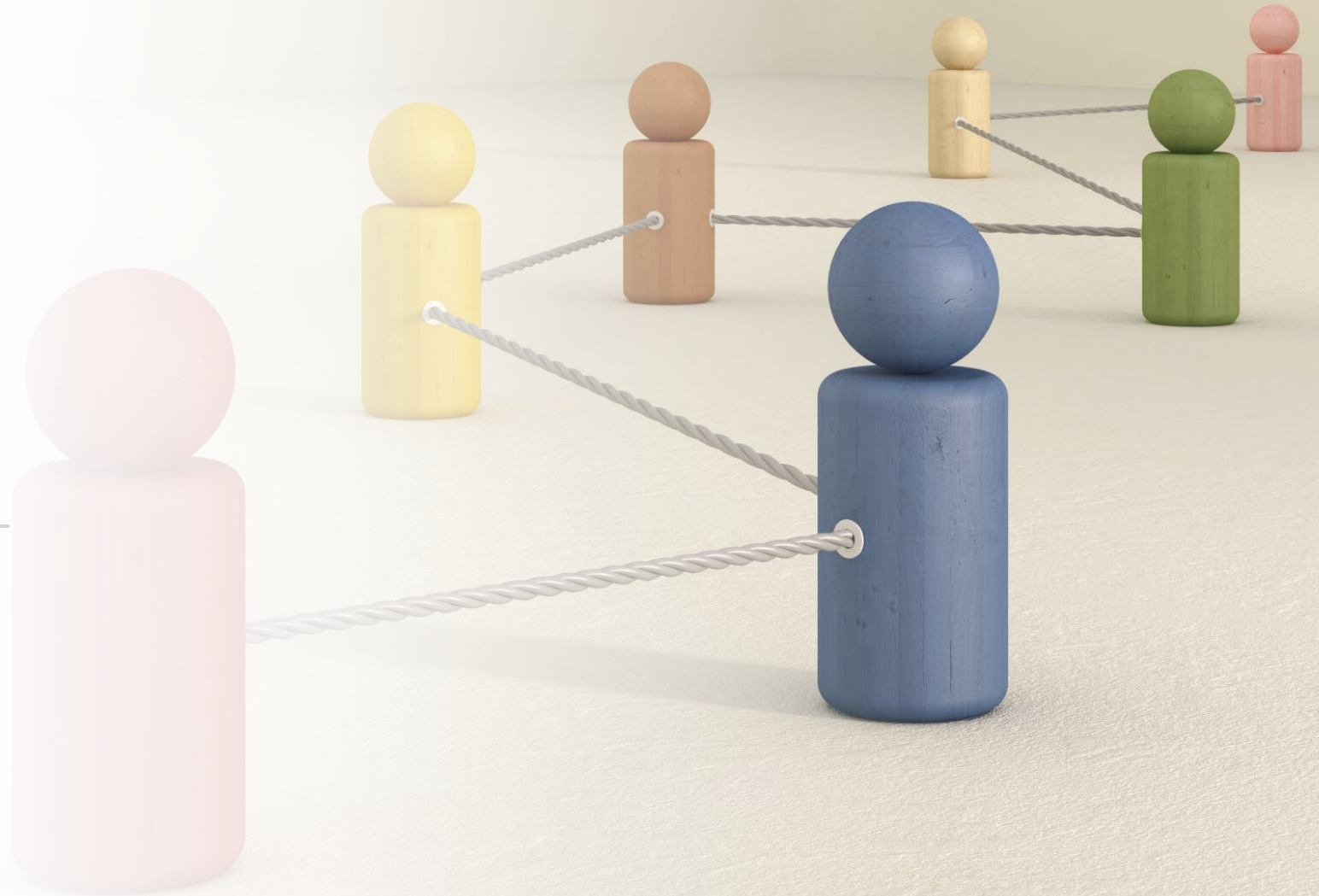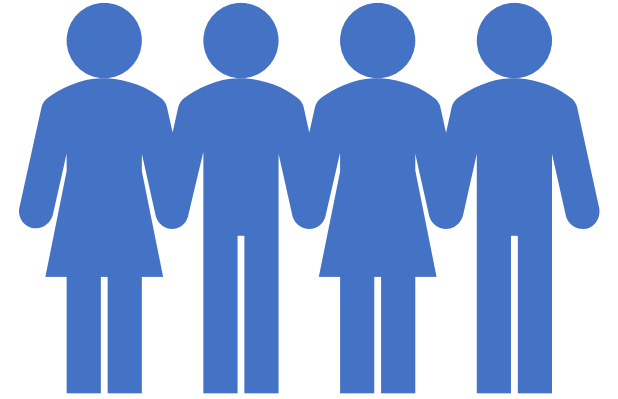# Interactive Focus Groups

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Big Picture: Why are we talking about Interactive Focus Groups?

- Interactive focus groups are a great tool to have in your toolbox, regardless of your organization's experience with evaluation.

- Interactive focus groups are a great tool to have in your toolbox for all stages of a program.

- Interactive focus groups are a great tool to have in your toolback from a variety of perspectives:

  - 1. Client perspective on interactive focus groups: less intimidating

  - 2. Provider's/organization perspective on interactive focus groups: you don't need to be an evaluation expert to use this tool- you can do it!

  - 3. Evaluator's perspective on interactive focus groups: it is a legitimate way to collect meaningful data.

Focus group or Interactive Focus Group

Focus Group

Feedback from a group of people about a service or program

5-12 clients are asked questions about a service or program and then are expected to respond verbally with their thoughts/opinions.

One or two clients/participants might dominate the conversation while other clients may stay quiet.

Interactive Focus Group

Feedback from a group of people about a service or program

5-12 clients are asked questions about a service or program, but this time they are given different ways to communicate their thoughts/opinions.

Clients/participants are more likely to find at least one communication method that feels comfortable.

Example #1

- Add characteristics to the gingerbread person to make them the perfect Youth Leader
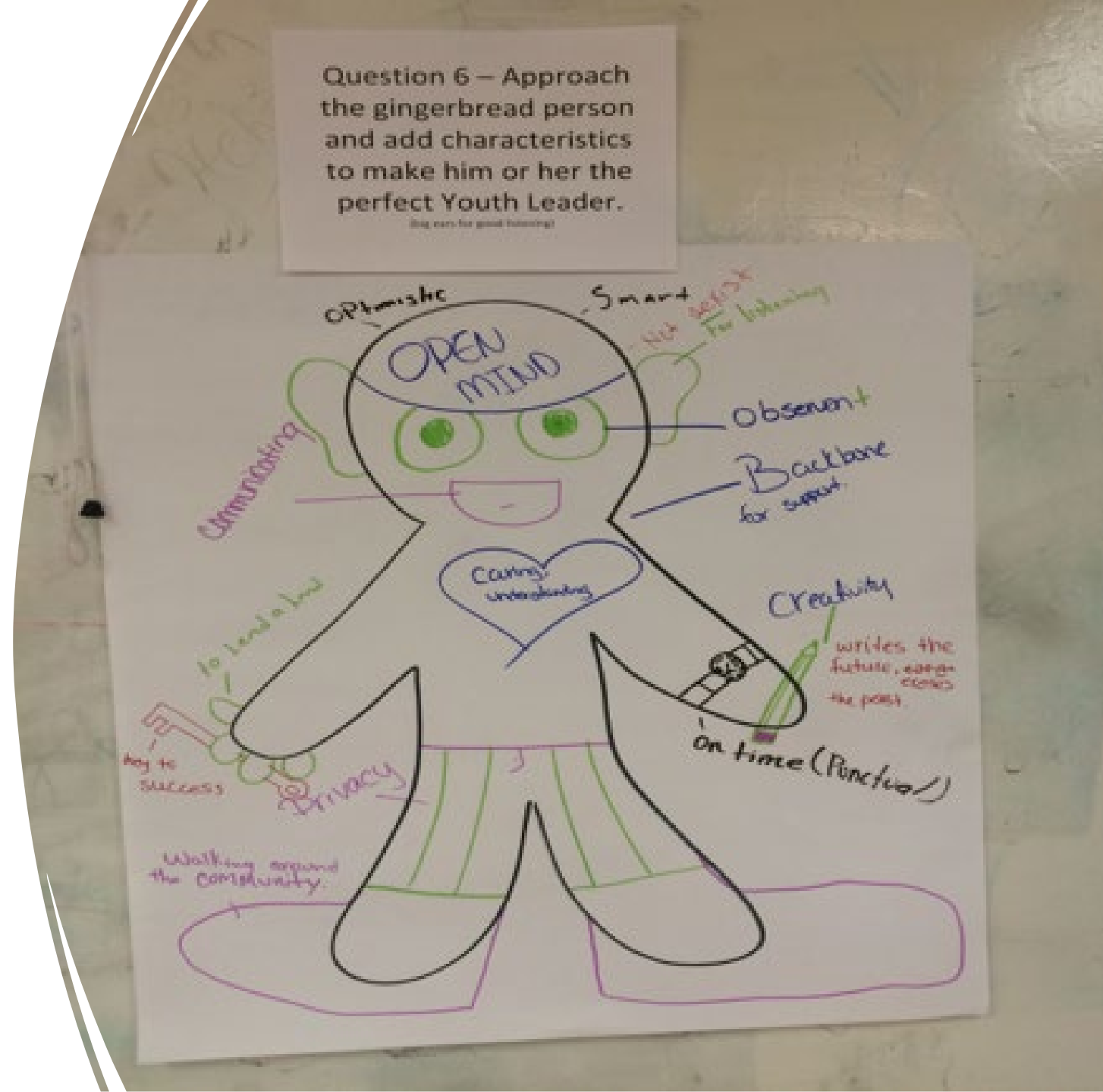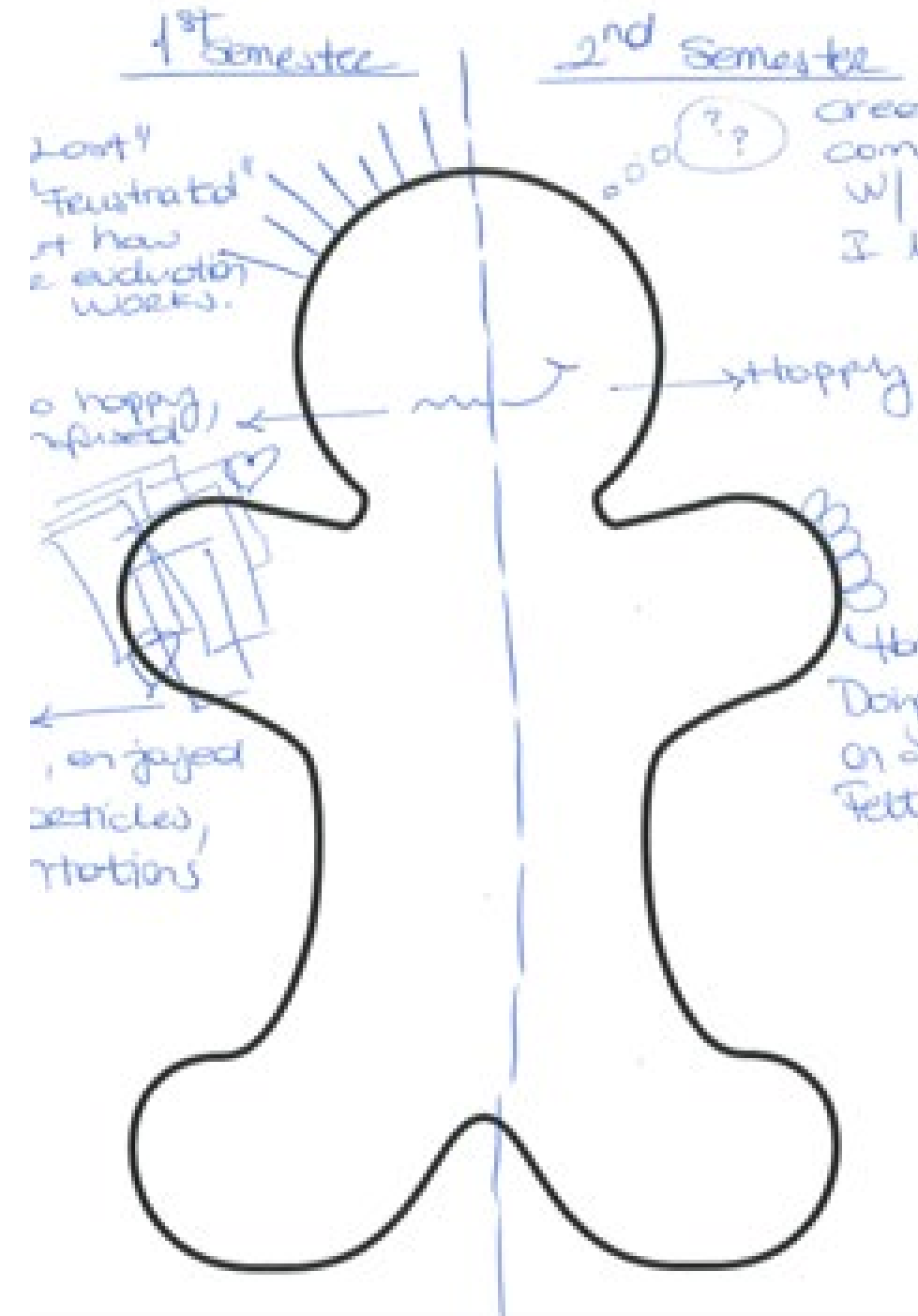
Example #2

- Activity: Draw
  the tools you now have in
  your evaluation toolbox!

Example #3

Activity: Draw what you felt like in the course on this gingerbread person.

Other Possible Activities

- Gingerbread Person – individual or group
  - Express sentiments about something (feeling)
- Speed Dating/Answers– pairs
  - Short questions
  - Answer with a partner (more private)
- Group Lists – groups of no more than 5 (usually)
  - Less private, but gives opportunity to brainstorm
- Individual Answers – individual
  - Entirely private
  - Opportunity to share freely
  - Can be drawn, listed, paragraph, bullets, etc.
- Plus and Delta – big group, individual, smaller groups

Who?

- With children
- With adults
- With anyone- it's a flexible tool that you can customize and make suitable for your community!

Why?

1. IT'S A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TOOL

2. ALLOWS CLIENTS TO RESPOND USING MULTIPLE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION (DRAWING, WRITING, SPEAKING)

3. SPEEDS UP TRANSCRIPTION TIME

4. THEY ARE FUN!

But how?

Build a protocol (think of this as your lesson plan):

1. Staff identifies the evaluation goal- what do you learn from the participants in the interactive focus group?
2. Staff assigns each evaluation goal at least one evaluation question- these are the questions that you will actually ask clients/participants.
3. Match each evaluation question with at least one activity.
4. List materials needed to complete each activity.
5. Assign timeframe to each activity.
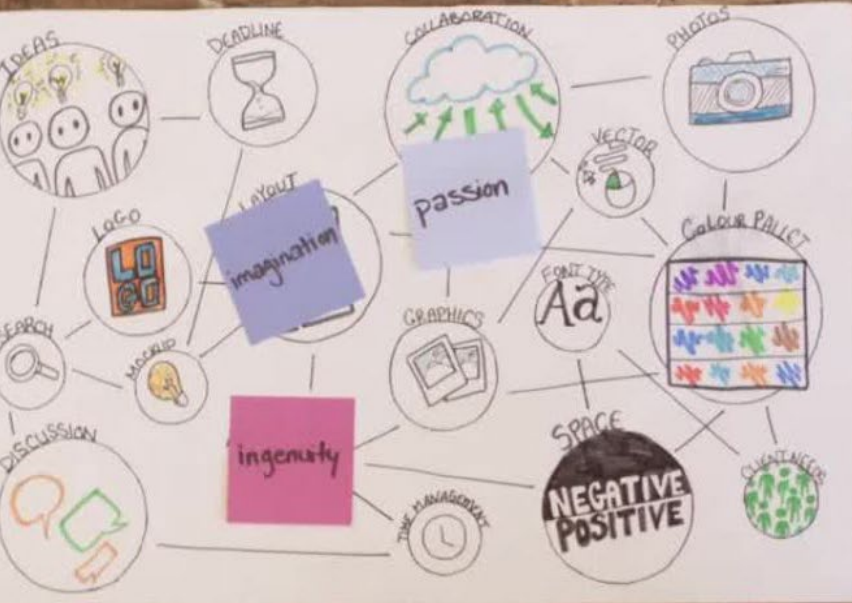
An Example of How to Build a Protocol

1. Identify an evaluation goal(s): What is it that your evaluation team wants to know from the participants of the focus group?

A. To find out what clients love about the parenting class.

B. To find out what clients hate about the parenting class.

2. Assign each evaluation goal at least one evaluation question that you will ask your clients/participants. *Hint*: your question might sound different than your goals.

A. To find out what clients love about the parenting class.

B. To find out what clients hate about the parenting class.

Evaluation Question: "What did you look forward to when you attended each parenting class?"

Evaluation Question :"If it were up to you, what would you change about the class?"

2. Match each evaluation question with at least one activity

A. To find out what clients love about the parenting class.

B. To find out what clients hate about the parenting class.

Evaluation Question: "What did you look forward to when you attended each parenting class?"
Activity: Speed answers. Parents will be asked to partner with another parent and answer the question, "What did you look forward to when you attended each parenting class?

Evaluation Question: "If it were up to you, what would you change about the class?"
Activity: Group lists. Parents will be asked to gather in groups of 3 at a hanging post-it note, and to respond to, "If it were up to you, what would you change about the class?"

3. List materials

A. To find out what clients love about the parenting class.

B. To find out what clients hate about the parenting class.

Evaluation Question: "What did you look forward to when you attended each parenting class?"

Activity Speed answers. Parents will be asked to partner with another parent and answer the question, "What did you look forward to when you attended each parenting class?

Materials: note cards and pens

Evaluation Question: "If it were up to you, what would you change about the class?"

Activity: Groups lists. Parents will be asked to gather in groups of 3 at a hanging post-it note, and to respond to, "If it were up to you, what would you change about the class?"

Materials: large post its (with prompt written at the top) and markers

Materials

In person

- **Gingerbread Person** – either flipchart with gingerbread person drawn **or** printouts of gingerbread person, markers either way
- **Speed Answer Round** – flashcards, tape, markers, questions printed or written on the board
- **Group List** – flashcards, tape, markers, printed out "box" or a visual that shows the activity we're doing
- **Plus and delta** – flipchart, markers, also pens, paper for those who may not want to share out loud

Virtual

- **Gingerbread Person** – Jamboard
- **Speed Answer Round** – Jamboard – use sticky note function
- **Group List** – Jamboard – use sticky note or image function
- **Plus and delta** – Jamboard or survey

4. Assign a timeframe to each activity

A. To find out what clients love about the parenting class.

B. To find out what clients hate about the parenting class.

Evaluation Question: "What did you look forward to when you attended each parenting class?"

Activity: Speed answers. Parents will be asked to partner with another parent and answer the question, "What did you look forward to when you attended each parenting class?

Materials: note cards and pens

Time: 5 minutes (9:30-9:35am)

Evaluation Question: "If it were up to you, what would you change about the class?"

Activity: Group lists. Parents will be asked to gather in groups of 3 at a hanging post-it note, and to respond to, "If it were up to you, what would you change about the class?"

Materials: large post its (with prompt written at the top) and markers

Time: 10 minutes (9:45-9:55am)

Example protocol

- [Interactive focus group: Summer Institute 2022](#)
- [Interactive focus group template](#)

Notes on building the protocol

1. ==Activities==:
   - Be intentional about which activity is matched to which question

2. ==Materials==:
   - Think about what it will look like for you to code and analyze the data when you are planning your materials. For example, for one activity, participants will respond individually on a note card. For another activity partners will be writing down their partner's responses on a notecard. This will require 2 colors of notecards.
   - Materials for a virtual interactive focus group will not look the same as materials for an in-person interactive focus group. Virtual materials will look mostly like: Jamboards, chatboxes, polls, etc.

3. ==Timeframes==:
   - Actual time in each activity should allow for movement, explanation, questions
   - Activity times in the protocol will be shorter than how long the overall activity actually takes

4. Virtual vs. In-person:
   - Everything will take longer if it is virtual, so make sure your protocol reflects that.

You ran an interactive focus group! Now what?

1. Take pictures of everything. The sticky notes posted on the walls, the notecards at the tables, etc.

   - For virtual groups, be sure to save all digital pieces (jamboards, etc.)

2. Debrief: Ask yourself, how did it go? What could have been better?

3. Review data: try to highlight the diversity of ideas and the common themes (this will be covered in more detail in the September ECHO).
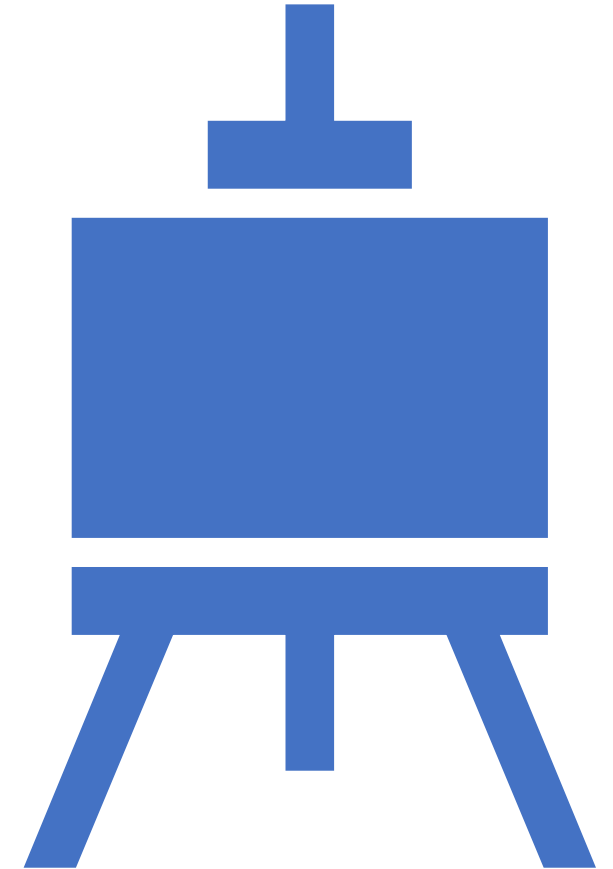
Questions?
Thoughts?
Ideas?
Suggestions?