Participant Profiles

As part of getting to know the context in which our courses/programs will take place, it is imperative that we come to know the people that we will be working with as well as those who will have a more direct impact on the design and implementation of the courses/programs. This is important because in order for our courses to be more meaningful, relevant, and impactful, we must know our participants and their communities very well. In addition, facilitators are often involved in programs that they are passionate about and feel has personal relevance to them. Often, as facilitators, we will join and/or develop programs in ways that are relevant and meaningful to ourselves, so it is especially important to clarify who we are and what we think in relation to our programs. It is also important for co-facilitators to know each other’s strengths, passions, etc. Furthermore, facilitators are also being formed by the courses/programs that they are involved in. Finally, we should also consider the profiles of community members, administrators, curriculum developers, etc. and anyone else who might have voice in any of the course development phases. The questions below are therefore intended to help develop these various profiles so that courses/programs are better adapted for and emergent from those who are most intimately involved in them.

Below are guidelines for the kinds of information that we might begin to gather about each of the participants. Given the extensiveness of some of these questions, it would probably not be appropriate for us to hand this document to our participants and ask them to answer all of them. Rather, they are only intended to help stimulate questions to ask and information to collect that is most relevant for your course/program and its participants.

**Objectives**: (*Goals, Hopes, & Aspirations*)

* *Course/Program Specific Considerations*:
  + Why are participating in this course/program?
  + What do you hope to get out of this course/program?
  + In what ways do you hope that your life and/or community will be different by the end of this course/program?
  + What hopes/goals do you think God/ Sacred has for you as you begin this course/program?
  + What impact on your own life do think a course/program like this should have? How about on your community? On our world?
  + If you had to write 3-5 goals for yourself and/or your community to achieve by the end of this course/program, what would they be? Why are these specific goals important to you at this time in your life?
* *General Considerations*:
  + What are your hopes, dreams, and aspirations for your life?
  + What do you consider to be your most central vocational calling?
  + Where do you hope to see yourself in 1, 5, 10, 30 years? What kind of person do you hope to become as you continue to grow?
  + What kinds of goals do you have for yourself and your community physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, for relationships, as a community and/or organization, etc.?
  + What hopes, dreams, goals, etc. do you think your family, culture, ethnicity, religious tradition, country, etc. has for you and your community? How important are these to you? Which of these do you think are more relevant for you and your community?
  + What are some goals that you think God/ Sacred has for your life and/or your community? In what kinds of directions do you think God/ Sacred is trying to lead you and/or your community in over the long-term?
  + What hopes do you have for your community, state, country, world? How would you like to see things change for the better?
  + What do you think are the most pressing issues that need to be addressed in your own life and/or the life of your community? Why is it so important to address these issues at this time?

**Assessments**: (*Expression & Sharing*)

* *Course/Program Specific Considerations*:
  + For this course/program, what kinds of feedback might be helpful for you and/or your community to help you continually grow/learn?
  + What kinds of activities do you think or are you hoping that this course/program will have that can help you to better know how you are doing and what kinds of changes you and/or your community might need to make?
* *General Considerations*:
  + How do you and/or others in your community usually prefer to communicate with friends and family (e.g., text, email, call, visit, etc.)?
  + How do people in your family, community, culture, ethnicity, religious tradition, country, etc. generally express themselves to one another? Which of these modes of expression do you generally find to be most helpful and effective for you?
  + If you really wanted to get your point across to someone and could do it in any way possible, what do you think would be the best way to do this (e.g., tell them directly, create a video/movie, produce a story, paint a picture, write a song, choreograph a dance, etc.)?
  + In your own life, how do you monitor how things are going for yourself (e.g., listening to your body, sharing with friends/family, journaling, relying on friends/family to tell you, etc.)? For instance, how do you know when you are anxious about something, need a break, are inspired to act, etc.?
  + If you were asked how things are going in your life and/or in your community generally right now, what would you base your answer on? What are some of the sources that you and/or your community rely on to help you to know how things are going (e.g., sacred texts, comparisons with friends/family, the media, mentors that you look up to, etc.)? On what do you base your evaluations on? To what or whom do you compare yourself to?
  + How do you think God/ Sacred communicates with you? How do you know when God/ Sacred is inviting you and/or your community to do something in your life?
  + How do you know when things are getting better/worse in your community? What are signs that you look for?

**Activities, Organization, & Resources**:

* *Course/Program Specific Considerations*:
  + If you have been in a course/program like this before, what are some activities that helped you to grow/learn best in that course/program? What activities seemed to help you the least?
  + What are some activities that you would like and/or were hoping to engage in this course/program?
  + Reading or hearing about this course/program, what do you generally know about the content/activities that we might be engaging?
  + Are there specific content, resources, activities, etc. that you were hoping to engage in this course/program or that you think might be helpful for you?
  + Would it be more helpful for you if we moved through each part of this course/program in a step-by-step fashion or if we first learned a little about it and/or experienced each part of the course/program and then came back around to them later in more in more depth (i.e., in a more circular/spiral and repetitive manner)?
  + What kinds of activities and resources do you think might help to bring positive change to you and/or your community through this course/program?
* *General Considerations*:
  + What are your and/or your community’s favorite hobbies? What kinds of activities do you and/or your community generally prefer to do (e.g., reading, watching movies, surfing the internet, building things, being outdoors, etc.)?
  + What kinds of activities are commonly found in your family, community, culture, ethnicity, religious tradition, country, etc.? Which of these activities, hobbies, etc. are most meaningful and important to you?
  + Do you generally prefer to work in groups or on your own?
  + What strategies do you use to help yourself to change/learn when you need to?
  + What kinds of things spark you to make changes in your life (e.g., fictional movies, documentaries, talking with friends and family, watching the news, volunteering, etc.)? What kinds of things help you to be your best and truest self?
  + What are some things that you think best help you grow in your and/or your community’s relationship with God/ Sacred?
  + What kinds of activities, movements, etc. do you think helps to make positive change in you and/or your community?
  + When you work on projects, either at work or at home, do you generally prefer work through them one after another or do you prefer to work on many projects at the same time, jumping from one to another as you feel motivated?
  + Would you consider yourself as more of a linear, step-by-step thinker and doer, or more a spiral, divergent, and/or creatively expansive person? If you had to choose, would you prefer to be more of an artist or a scientist? Are you more of a logical, intuitive, or relational decision-maker?
  + When you complete projects, do you generally prefer to have things set up and well-organized beforehand or to allow things to unfold naturally on their own with little planning and preparation?
  + What kinds of topics do you and/or your community usually feel inspired and energized by (e.g., science, technology, history, mysteries, romance novels, gardening, politics, other cultures, trivia games, soap operas, etc.)?
  + Are you more comfortable being in small groups where everyone has a chance to share and be heard/interact or in large groups where you don’t necessarily have to speak/act?

**Teaching and Learning Theories**: (*Growing & Developing*)

* *Course/Program Specific Considerations*:
  + What kinds of changes (e.g., learning, growth, development, etc.) are you hoping will happen in this course/program?
  + Are hoping that you will experience large and sudden changes or smaller gradual ones?
  + What are some factors that you think this course/program will need to help contribute to these kinds of changes?
  + What kinds of changes do think that this course/program should work towards in the community?
  + How do you think God/ Sacred will be present within and through this course/program to foster change in your own life? In the community?
* *General Considerations*:
  + Do you generally think that people can change throughout their life or are we born a certain way and that’s basically how we stay over the course of our lives? Explain.
  + How do you think people and communities generally grow and change? What do you think generates/ fosters these changes?
  + How do you think change happens in specific areas (e.g., physical, emotional, intellectual, in relationships, for organizations/communities, etc.)?
  + What does your family, community, culture, ethnicity, religious tradition, country, etc. believe about the nature of transformation (e.g., how does it happen, what influences it, etc.)?
  + What, personally, helps you to develop in positive ways?
  + If you had to choose an analogy for how you and/or your community changes and grows, such as a caterpillar that cocoons into a butterfly, what would it be?
  + Do changes in your life and/or community come more gradually over time or as sudden transformations or both? Explain.
  + Describe a time in your life when you and/or your community went through a big change. What are some things that you think contributed to this?
  + How do you think God/ Sacred acts to help you and/or your community to change? What kinds of changes do you think God/ Sacred generally invites/lead you and/or your community to make?
  + How do you think change happens in neighborhoods and cities? What factors do you think contribute to this change?

**Environment Considerations**: (*Physical or Virtual*)

* *Course/Program Specific Considerations*:
  + For this course/program, describe what you think might be the ideal environment to host this in (e.g., location, lighting, smells, sounds, layout, etc.). Why might this environment be ideal for you right now?
  + If you have been in courses/programs like this one before, what environmental factors were most helpful for you (e.g., candles, incense, access to nature, images, location, videos, websites, etc.)? What factors were least helpful? Why do you think these were most/least helpful?
  + Through what kind of environment will help you to feel closest to God/ Sacred in?
  + If this course/program were to be held in your neighborhood, where would you recommend that it be?
* *General Considerations*:
  + Describe your home environment right now (e.g., does it feel large/small, spacious/crowded, organized/cluttered, etc.). How do you generally feel about it? What are some things you might change about it?
  + Describe the environments of your family, community, friends, religious community, neighborhood, etc. In what ways do you feel comfortable/ uncomfortable in these locations?
  + If you could go anywhere in the world, to any kind of natural or human-made environment (physical or virtual), where would it be? What are some of the feelings that this place evokes for you? What are some things about this place that draw you to it?
  + In what kinds of environments do you feel closer to God/ Sacred? In what kinds of environments do you feel most distant from God/ Sacred?
  + Do you generally prefer to be indoors or outdoors? In well-lit areas or ones that are more gently illuminated?
  + Do you prefer places with strong pleasant smells or ones that are more subtle and neutral?
  + Do you prefer to be more on the warm or cool side temperature-wise?
  + Do you prefer places or websites with lots of pictures and images, or ones that are more plain and simple?
  + Do you generally prefer places with silence or ones that are filled with sound (e.g., talking, music, movement, etc.)?

**Developing Generalized/Group Profiles**

Such information, obviously, can be gathered directly from participants via questionnaires, interviews, small group discussions that are held at the beginning of the course/program, etc. From this data, we can look for general themes in each area that can help to guide our course/program development efforts.

In addition to considering individual participants, we can also create profiles of groupings of participants. This method is especially helpful for courses/programs with large numbers of people and/or courses/programs that we do not have access to the participants’ backgrounds beforehand. In these cases, we might generate 2-5 generalized participant profiles that capture what we think might be the common kinds/groupings of people who will take part in our course/program. We might also generate a profile(s) for participants who might attend that do not fit into any of these common profiles (e.g., unique profiles). For each of these generalized and unique profiles, we can fill in the details for each of the sections listed above.

As may be seen below, there are several activities and sources that can help us to generate and refine these profiles. We may use information provided to us directly from participants, our experiences with participants with the course/program currently or in the past, resources that provide more information about the community we’re working with, etc. Another way is to use personality type theories to help guide the course/program’s development. These theories can provide us with insights into what the different sections above might be for different personality types. For an example of how generalized profiles might be created using the Myers-Brigg type theory, see the [corresponding document](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8GQm3tzIFOeTWFwMllSR19GakU/view?usp=sharing). Of course, discerning care must be given in deciding which type theory will be most appropriate for our particular course/program, ensuring that the theory more accurately represents the participants who are likely to be participating in the course/program. We must also discern the extent to which we use these type theories in supporting our course/program development efforts.

**Participant Profile Development Activities**

The following are activities that we might use to help us in both gathering such participant profile data and creating generalized/unique profiles of common and unique participants.

* Interviews
* Observations
* Artefact Collecting (e.g., assignments, discussion boards, etc.)
* A Day in the Life of…
* Photo Montage of Life
* Autobiographies
* Speed Dating
* Facebook Profiles (participants create a fake profile to turn in)
* Personality Type Theories
* Case Studies from similar populations
* Resources Search (e.g., journals, autobiographies, documentaries, etc.)