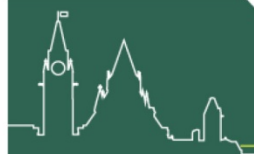




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Standards for the Conduct of Government
of Canada Public Opinion Research

**Qualitative
Research**

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Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Public Opinion Research

Qualitative Research Winter 2015

Prepared by Public Works and Government Services Canada

TABLE OF CONTENTS

IMPORTANT NOTES	3
A. APPLICABILITY OF THESE STANDARDS	3
B. APPLICABILITY OF OTHER STANDARDS	4
C. EXCEPTIONS	4
D. DEFINITION OF TERMS	4
E. FOUR-YEAR REVIEW	5
 1. RETAINING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE	 6
1.1. Participant Rights	6
1.2. Avoidance of Embarrassment or Discomfort	7
1.3. Right to Privacy and Anonymity	8
 2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN OR VULNERABLE PARTICIPANTS	 10
2.1. General	10
2.2. Consent of a Responsible Adult	11
2.3. Process for Obtaining Consent	12
2.4. Collection of Personal Information	13
2.5. Presence of Responsible Adult	13
 3. PROPOSAL DOCUMENTATION	 14
3.1. Introduction	14
3.2. Technical Specifications of the Research	15
 4. DESIGN OF DISCUSSION AGENDA	 21
4.1. General	21
4.2. Client Participation and Approval	21
4.3. Discussion Guide	22
4.4. Stimulus Materials and Other Supporting Materials	24
4.5. Considerations for Observers	25
 5. PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT	 25
5.1. Accountability of the Research Firm	25
5.2. Recruiting Specifications	25
5.3. Sample Source and Recruitment Method	27
5.4. Incentives	29
5.5. Recruitment Screener	31
 6. CONDUCT OF QUALITATIVE SESSIONS	 35
6.1. Accountability for Conduct of Sessions	35
6.2. Respect for Participants	35

6.3.	Use of Multiple Moderators/Interviewers	35
6.4.	Interim Debriefing and Moderator/Interviewer Coordination	36
6.5.	Observation of Sessions	36
6.6.	Records of Sessions	37
6.7.	Incentive Payments	38
7.	DATA ANALYSIS	38
7.1.	Accountability for Data Analysis	38
7.2.	Basis for Data Analysis	38
8.	RETENTION OF TECHNICAL DATA AND RECORDS	39
8.1.	Retention of Technical Data	39
8.2.	Retention of Records	39
9.	SECURITY OF DATA AND RECORDS	41
9.1.	Protection of Data/Servers	41
9.2.	Temporary Storage of Data on Servers	42
9.3.	Transmission of Data Internationally	42
9.4.	Disclosure of Participants' E-mails in Batch Transfers	43
9.5.	In the Event of Any Data Breach	43
9.6.	Location of Teleconference Bridges	43
9.7.	Delivery of Data to Clients	43
9.8.	Destruction of Technical Data and Records	43
10.	REPORTING	44
10.1.	Topline Report	44
10.2.	Report Requirements	44
10.3.	Library and Archives Canada	48

IMPORTANT NOTES

The following standards are for custom qualitative public opinion research projects conducted for the Government of Canada¹. If you have any questions related to this document please contact the Public Opinion Research Directorate at Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) by e-mail at DGSIOpinionPublique.ISBPublicOpinion@tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca or by telephone at 613-995-9837.

A. APPLICABILITY OF THESE STANDARDS

These standards apply to custom qualitative public opinion research projects conducted for the Government of Canada by contracted third parties. Custom qualitative studies are those in which ownership of the resulting information rests with Canada. In qualitative research, information is obtained from some members of a target population through unstructured or semi-structured moderated procedures. Such procedures include group discussions and individual interviews conducted in-person, by telephone or through electronic means. Qualitative research results cannot be statistically projected to the broader target population.

The standards do not apply to qualitative research undertaken directly by departments within the Government of Canada using only internal resources. Nonetheless, PWGSC encourages the use of these standards as a resource in support of the planning and execution of internal qualitative research projects.

To ensure that these standards are a primary consideration for researchers as they develop qualitative research proposals, we recommend the following statement be included in all qualitative research-related Statements of Work and Requests for Proposals issued by the Government of Canada:

The Standards for the Conduct of Government of Canada Qualitative Public Opinion Research must be respected and applied in whole to all aspects of the conduct of the research. The project authority must be informed should the firm determine that certain elements of the standards cannot be accommodated in the course of the contract. Justification must be provided and written permission received from the project authority in these instances.

These standards are to be understood as in addition to relevant laws, regulations, and policies, e.g. the [Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act](#), the [Privacy Act](#), the [Financial Administration Act](#), the [Library and Archives of Canada Act](#),

¹ Research projects may involve more than one approach (e.g. quantitative and qualitative) or more than one mode (e.g. in person, online and by telephone). As such, it may be necessary to consult more than one set of standards.

[Public Opinion Research Contract Regulations](#) and the [Communications Policy of the Government of Canada](#).

B. APPLICABILITY OF OTHER STANDARDS

Where no relevant Government of Canada Standard exists, researchers must meet or exceed industry standards including those of the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA).

C. EXCEPTIONS

Throughout this document, when a standard is intended as a *requirement*, the term *must* is used. When a standard is intended as a guideline, derived from best practices, the term *should* is used.

These standards were developed with “typical” studies in mind. It is recognized, however, that qualitative public opinion research projects have individual characteristics, which can sometimes clash with a “one size fits all” approach. Therefore, while departments and agencies are generally encouraged to apply the standards, they can also choose to waive a standard when they believe the characteristics of a study warrant it.

This document notes some of the more common instances in which it would be appropriate to waive or modify standards. As departments and agencies are responsible for the quality of the research they undertake, no related procedure is required. However, in keeping with due diligence, they must discuss the intention to waive standards with the Public Opinion Research Directorate. They must also consider specifying which standard is being waived and the related rationale in Statements of Work and other documents such as research proposals and final reports.

D. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following definitions apply throughout the document.

The **research firm** is the organization contracted to conduct the research. This includes the research firm project manager with supervising authority and accountability for the project on behalf of the research firm. This individual might be the lead moderator/interviewer, but not necessarily.

The term **researcher** includes individuals from the research firm and subcontractors involved in the conduct of a qualitative project. Depending on the context, this can include the research firm project manager, the lead moderator/interviewer, other moderators/interviewers, recruiters, or facility staff who interacts directly with potential participants.

A **moderator/interviewer** is a person who conducts qualitative sessions. This includes someone who conducts group sessions (typically called a moderator), and someone who conducts a session with a single participant (sometimes called an interviewer).

The **lead moderator/interviewer** is a person who conducts at least some of the qualitative sessions for the project and who has primary responsibility and accountability for the development of the discussion materials, conduct of the qualitative sessions including any sessions conducted by other moderators/interviewers, and data analysis. This person may be the research firm project manager, but not necessarily.

The **recruiter** represents a division of the research firm or a subcontractor which recruits people to participate in qualitative sessions. Recruiting includes the processes of screening, validation and confirmation.

Unless otherwise specified, the term **session** refers to a qualitative research session of any type, including one-on-one interviews and group discussions, conducted by whatever medium, whether synchronous² or asynchronous³.

The term **discussion agenda** refers to all materials used in the course of the qualitative sessions, including the discussion or interview guide, supporting stimulus materials, participant worksheets or preparatory materials, materials for session observers, etc.

E. FOUR-YEAR REVIEW

These standards have been developed to help ensure uniform high quality in qualitative public opinion research projects conducted for the Government of Canada. It is recognized that changing technologies and other factors may necessitate their revision over time. As such, the intention is to review the standards every four years.

² Synchronous qualitative sessions are those in which participants and moderator interact together in real time. In-person and telephone sessions are inherently synchronous methods, while online sessions can be conducted in either a synchronous or asynchronous fashion. Synchronous sessions may also be described as “real time.”

³ Asynchronous qualitative sessions are typically conducted online, in which people participate at times of their choosing. There is typically no real-time interaction among participants or with the moderator. An example includes discussion boards, also sometimes called bulletin boards.

1. RETAINING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

Researchers must make every reasonable effort to gain, retain and increase public confidence in research organizations and in public opinion research conducted for the Government of Canada. It is the responsibility of the research firm to ensure that these standards are adhered to by all parties involved in recruiting participants and conducting the research.

1.1. Participant Rights

Researchers must act in a manner respectful of research participants and ensure the protection of their rights as these relate to participation in qualitative research. Research sessions must be conducted free of embarrassment and in an environment of trust and goodwill.

1.1.1. Informed Consent and Use of Information

- 1) Researchers must not make use of surreptitious, misleading, or unsolicited data collection or recruitment techniques that are intended to collect personal information without the participant's awareness and consent.
- 2) In obtaining the necessary agreement from participants, the researcher must inform them of the study sponsor and of the general subject and purpose of the research (see [subsection 5.5.2.](#)). Exceptions may apply.
- 3) Research procedures must be limited to the gathering of information relevant to the stated research objectives. Researchers must ensure that the information collected will not be used for any other purpose unless the participant provides explicit informed consent for that additional use (e.g. to help resolve a customer complaint).
- 4) The information collected as part of a qualitative research project (e.g. recording, transcripts, etc.) must not be used for direct marketing or other sales approaches to the participant or the participant's household.
- 5) Researchers must provide potential research participants the opportunity to ask questions about the study and answer any questions they might have in a clear, honest and non-deceptive manner.

1.1.2. Right to Refuse

- 1) Researchers must respect the right of an individual to refuse to participate in a qualitative research session, to refuse to answer specific questions or to terminate their participation at any point.

1.1.3. Identity of Research Firm

- 1) The research firm responsible for the project must be identified to potential participants and contact information must be provided.

1.1.4. Use of Lists for Recruiting

During the recruiting process, if participants ask where the recruiter obtained their name, the recruiter must state the nature and source of the list used.

- 1) When the list comprises individuals **outside** the Government of Canada (e.g. clients of a particular department, Canadians more generally), the researcher must ensure the list is permission-based for research purposes, including, when appropriate, obtaining written assurances from the list provider (who may be the client) that this is the case.
- 2) When the list comprises employees **within** the Government of Canada, employee lists may be used even if no explicit permission to use that information for research purposes has been obtained so long as the research topic is relevant to the participants' employment.
- 3) To the extent possible the moderator/interviewer must ensure that the data contained in permission-based lists and employee lists are up-to-date.
- 4) A client-supplied list provided for a specific project must not be used for any other projects or for adding names to the researcher's databases.
 - a) If the list has been updated by the researcher during the project (i.e. to correct errors or fill in missing information), the updated list must be returned to the client upon completion of the project.
 - b) All client-supplied lists in the researcher's possession at project completion must be destroyed.

1.2. Avoidance of Embarrassment or Discomfort

- 1) When the research topic is judged to be sensitive to most people, potential participants must be told explicitly the subject and content of the research session during recruitment in sufficient detail to allow them to make an informed decision about their willingness to participate.
- 2) The researcher must take all reasonable steps to ensure that participants are not in any way hindered or embarrassed by any research procedure, and that they are not in any way adversely affected as a result of it. The researcher must address sensitive subject matter in a way that will minimize participant' discomfort and apprehension.
- 3) In some cases, a mismatch between specific participant demographic attributes and those of the researcher might add to a participant's sensitivity, awkwardness or embarrassment about a research topic. When this is a possibility, the option of using a researcher whose attributes better match the participants' attributes should be discussed with the client.

1.3. Right to Privacy and Anonymity

1.3.1. Protection of Personal Information

- 1) Information contained in lists of potential and actual participants constitutes personal information as defined in relevant legislation ([*Privacy Act, R.S. 1985, c. P-21*](#), and the [*Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, S.C. 2000, c. 5*](#)) and must be treated as confidential. Note that a participant's e-mail address is personal information and must be protected in the same way as other identifiers.
- 2) Collection of e-mail addresses:
 - a) Researchers are prohibited from using any subterfuge in obtaining e-mail addresses of potential participants, such as collecting e-mail addresses from public domains, using technologies or techniques to collect e-mail addresses without individuals' awareness, or collecting e-mail addresses under the guise of some other activity.
 - b) Organizations may make the e-mail addresses of particular staff members available on Web sites, business cards and other promotional material to encourage outside contact on matters related to these individuals' professional responsibilities. E-mail addresses may be collected from such public domains for the purpose of "business-to-business research" (e.g. research directed at private sector firms, non-profit organizations, agencies of other levels of government, professional associations) when the topic can reasonably be judged relevant to those responsibilities. Consider, as a hypothetical example, the Chief Financial Officer of Company X, whose e-mail address is provided on the company Web site. It would be permissible to invite this individual via e-mail to participate in qualitative research study on the opinions of Canadian executives about challenges facing companies in the financial sector and/or Canadian companies more generally. It would not be permissible to use this e-mail if the research concerned the preferences of consumers for particular household products.

1.3.2. Consent to Observation and Recording

- 1) If there are to be observers and/or recording of a qualitative session, this must be explained to potential participants **at the time of recruitment**.
 - a) The information regarding observers must include a brief description of their role and objective (e.g. a member of the client group interested in hearing opinions directly, the members of a creative team seeking input on communications material).
 - b) The method of recording (e.g. audio or video) must be specified.
- 2) Participants must provide their explicit informed consent to the presence of observers and/or to recording of the session **prior to the start of the session**.

- a) The manner in which this consent is obtained may vary depending on the research modality (e.g. by signing a consent form prior to an in-person session, by stating consent in an e-mail reply prior to an online session).
- b) In requesting consent to be recorded, the researcher must state to whom any recording will be provided and for what purpose.
- 3) The moderator/interviewer must remind participants of the presence of observers and/or recording **at the start of the session**.
 - a) If a participant declines to provide consent to be observed or recorded once the session has started, the moderator/interviewer must decide whether to proceed without recording/observation or to exclude the individual from participation. This decision must be based on consideration of what best serves the project (e.g. depending on the costs of replacing a difficult-to-recruit participant, the presence or absence of a note taker, the number of remaining participants in the session, the importance of client observation). It is a best practice to discuss this possibility with the client at the outset of the project.

1.3.3. Protection of Anonymity

- 1) Material containing participant identity (e.g. participant lists) or other information that might allow participants to be identified must not be released by the researcher to clients or other third parties, unless participants have given their explicit informed consent. The request for informed consent must include a statement about to whom and in what form the information will be provided and how the information will be used, in a manner consistent with relevant federal legislation ([*Privacy Act, R.S. 1985, c. P-21*](#), and the [*Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, S.C. 2000, c.5*](#)).
- 2) If participants have given explicit informed consent for material to be passed on in a form which allows them to be personally identified, the research firm must ensure that the information will be used only for the purpose for which the participant has given consent, OR, if requested by the participant, to resolve a customer complaint.
- 3) If clients are to be provided with recordings or transcripts of research sessions, the research firm must first delete any references that might disclose the identity of any participant (e.g. use of full name, reference to employer or position).
 - a) The research firm must obtain written confirmation from the client that the recordings or transcripts provided will be used for research purposes only.
 - b) The confirmation must also state that the recordings or transcripts will not be shared with a third party, except in those cases where participants have given explicit informed consent for such sharing.
- 4) When verbatim comments are quoted in any summary or report of the research findings, they must not be attributed to the participant, directly or indirectly, without the participant's explicit informed consent. Care must be taken when

reporting verbatim comments that nothing in the comment, including content, vocabulary or style of speaking/writing, could identify the individual participant.

- 5) In qualitative sessions, every effort must be made to ensure that a participant's identity is not revealed to other participants or to observers.
 - a) If an observer recognizes a participant, the observer must inform the researcher who then must inform the participant of this fact and obtain explicit consent to participate under those circumstances.
 - i. The researcher should inform the client of the risk that participants may be less candid under these circumstances and that it is best not to observe the research sessions.
 - b) It can occur that an observer is acquainted with a participant but only finds out after the session has started. If this occurs, the moderator must tell the observer to immediately terminate their observation.

1.3.4. Privacy Policy and Policies Related to Cookies and Software

- 1) The research firm's privacy policy must be made available to potential participants at the time of recruitment [see [subsection 5.2.1.](#), paragraph 3)] and, subsequently, upon request.
- 2) When a participant's computer is used as part of a qualitative session, the researcher must have a readily accessible policy statement concerning the use of cookies, log files and, if applicable, software.
 - a) This statement may either be included in the privacy policy or it may appear in a separate document.
 - b) Software must not be installed on participants' computers without their knowledge or consent. In addition, participants must be able to remove the researcher's software easily from their machines, and instructions for its removal under various popular operating systems must be made available.

2. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH INVOLVING CHILDREN OR VULNERABLE PARTICIPANTS

2.1. General

- 1) For the purposes of these standards, a child is any person under the age of 16.
- 2) The researcher must take special care when conducting qualitative research with children and vulnerable persons. The welfare of children and vulnerable persons must be the researcher's primary consideration. These participants must not be disturbed or harmed in any way by the research experience.

- 3) Sensitive topics or issues that could upset children (e.g. relationships with other children or with parents, sexual activities, use of drugs or alcohol) or vulnerable persons (e.g. social embarrassment related to the source of their vulnerability) must be dealt with using special care to minimize any discomfort or apprehension.
- 4) These issues are of particular concern for online qualitative research sessions. Children may be familiar with using the Internet, but research has found them to be naive and trusting, readily disclosing information about themselves or their households without realizing the implications of doing so. Understandably, parent groups, consumer groups and legislators are particularly concerned about potential exploitation of children on the Internet. It is for this reason that these standards place a particular burden of care for children on the researcher.
- 5) All explanations related to the purpose of the research project, the observation and recording of research sessions, privacy and cookie policies, adult consent and other notices must be capable of being understood by children.
- 6) In addition to these standards, the researcher must observe all relevant laws and national codes specifically related to children.

2.2. Consent of a Responsible Adult

- 1) The consent of a responsible adult (e.g. parent, guardian) must be obtained prior to inviting a child under 16 to participate in qualitative research. Sufficient information must be provided to this responsible adult to enable an informed decision about giving such consent. In particular, the researcher must specify the nature of any potentially sensitive questions when seeking the responsible adult's consent. (See [subsection 2.3.2.](#) for details on what constitutes acceptable forms of consent.)
- 2) The name of the responsible adult giving consent and their relationship to the child must be recorded.
- 3) Adult consent only allows the researcher to invite the child to participate. The child must be given an opportunity to refuse to participate in the research. To that end, the researcher must inform the child of the purpose of the research in terms understood by them.
- 4) It might be difficult to determine with certainty the age of the participant and whether or not the consent of a responsible adult is required, particularly when all interactions with the participant are by telephone, e-mail or over the Internet. Despite those difficulties, the researcher must make every reasonable effort to comply with the rules set out in these standards.
- 5) An exception is when it is not possible to obtain consent from a responsible adult (e.g. for street kids) **and** the benefits of the information are judged by the client to outweigh the possible harm to participants (e.g. youth engaged in risky behaviour).

2.3. Process for Obtaining Consent

2.3.1. Contacting the Responsible Adult

- 1) It is permissible to ask children to provide contact details for a responsible adult in order for consent to be sought, as long as this purpose is made clear in the request.
- 2) When contacting a responsible adult for permission for a child to participate, the researcher must provide:
 - a) the name and contact information of the researcher and the research firm;
 - b) an explanation of the objectives of the research and nature of the data to be collected from the child;
 - c) if potentially sensitive topics are to be addressed, a description of the nature of those topics;
 - d) an explanation of how the child will participate in the research session (e.g. through an in-person group discussion, by telephone, through chat sessions); and
 - e) an explanation of how the data will be used.
- 3) When recruiting children by telephone, the recruiter must first speak with a responsible adult, inform them that the intent of the call is to recruit a child in the household as a research participant, and to obtain consent for their child's participation in the research.
- 4) When recruiting children using an adult online panel or list, the researcher must first e-mail the adult panelist or list member requesting consent for their child's participation in the research.
- 5) When children are being recruited from Web sites, the following measures must be implemented:
 - a) On Web sites aimed at persons under age 16, a notice to children informing them of the research project must clearly and prominently state the requirement for adult consent. This notice must:
 - i. include a clear explanation of the subject matter and objectives of the research and the name and contact information of the researcher;
 - ii. include a request for the contact information (e.g. e-mail address) of the parent or other responsible adult; and
 - iii. indicate how the authenticity of the adult consent will be verified (e.g. through a separate follow-up by telephone, regular mail, etc.).
 - b) On Web sites aimed at adults, a notice to responsible adults must be posted seeking consent for their child to participate in the research. This notice must include:
 - i. a heading explaining that this is a notice for the responsible adult;
 - ii. the name and contact details of the researcher and the name of the sponsor;

- iii. an explanation of the objectives of the research and nature of the data to be collected from the child;
 - iv. an explanation of how the data will be used;
 - v. a description of the procedure for giving and verifying consent; and
 - vi. a request for a parent's contact e-mail address, address or phone number for verification of consent.
- c) Recruiting questionnaires posted on Web sites must require participants to state their age prior to asking for any other information. If the age given is less than 16, the child must be excluded from giving further information until the appropriate consent has been obtained.

2.3.2. Acceptable Forms of Consent

- 1) A consent form signed by the responsible adult must be obtained whenever feasible – e.g. at a focus group facility prior to an in-person session.
- 2) When signed consent forms are not feasible, the following are acceptable forms of confirmation of consent:
 - a) a verbal confirmation by telephone;
 - b) a return e-mail from a responsible adult giving their consent is acceptable as long as additional steps are taken to ensure that the consent actually came from a responsible adult – e.g. following up with an e-mail or other correspondence with the responsible adult must be confirmed with a telephone conversation.
- 3) Because vocal characteristics can help confirm that the speaker is an adult, interaction by telephone with the consenting adult is strongly recommended.

2.4. Collection of Personal Information

- 1) Personal information relating to other people (e.g. parents) must not be collected from children. Consistent with the *Privacy Act* and *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*, "personal information" here means information about an identifiable individual. The exception is the contact information of a responsible adult for the sole purpose of obtaining consent [see [subsection 2.3.1.](#), paragraph 1)].

2.5. Presence of Responsible Adult

- 1) For research with children under 13, the responsible adult must be close at hand during the qualitative session.
- 2) The expression "close at hand" does not necessarily mean present in the same room as the child, but only that the adult must be physically near the child (e.g. in an adjoining room) and readily available to the child and moderator/interviewer.

- 3) For research with children between 13 and 15 years of age, consideration should be given to having a responsible adult close at hand during the session. Agreement on whether or not this presence is required must be reached with the responsible adult when consent is provided.
- 4) Even if the adult presence is not required, if either the child or responsible adult wants the adult to be close at hand during the session, this request must be accommodated.

3. PROPOSAL DOCUMENTATION

Public opinion research contracts are partially based on the accepted final supplier proposal; therefore it is important that the proposal include sufficient detail to ensure that all requirements are clearly documented. The Research Proposal must be a written document that provides the following information, at a minimum.

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. Purpose

- 1) Describe the research firm's understanding of the problem/issues to be investigated, including how the Government of Canada will use this information.

3.1.2. Research Objective

- 1) Detail the information needs/research questions the research will address, the nature of the information that will be collected and how this information will serve the overall research purpose.

3.1.3. General

- 1) The proposal must state the names and roles of the team members involved in the project. Indicate who will be the project manager with supervisory authority and accountability for the project; who will be the lead moderator/interviewer; who will prepare the study materials; who will conduct the qualitative sessions, including how language requirements will be addressed; and, who will prepare the analysis and report of the sessions.
 - a) When more than one moderator/interviewer is employed for a project, the proposal must provide a rationale for this fact with reference to improved research efficiency and/or outcomes.
 - i. In such cases, the proposal must identify the individual who will be the lead moderator/interviewer for the project.
 - b) When multiple moderators/interviewers are used, the proposal must describe the method whereby each will be made equally familiar with the project objectives and discussion agenda; how they will work together to ensure

- consistency of approach as the research progresses; how results from sessions conducted by different moderators/interviewers will be accurately included in the final report.
- c) If moderator/interviewer demographic characteristics relative to those of the participants are judged to be relevant or a potential issue, describe the issue and propose a solution to address it.
- 2) The proposal must identify all subcontractors, along with their relevant qualifications, proposed for participant recruitment or any other key aspect of the project.
 - 3) The proposal must state that no moderator/interviewer or subcontracted firm will be replaced except in consultation with the client and following written agreement from PWGSC.
 - 4) The proposal must state that the research will be registered with the [Research Registration System](#) maintained by the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA) and commit to informing the client when the registration has been completed.
 - 5) When conducting research with members of the general public, the proposal must state that the participants will be registered with the [Qualitative Research Registry](#) (QRR) maintained by the MRIA except where compelling reasons exist not to do so. This requirement does not apply to research conducted using client-provided lists.
 - 6) The research firm must state that a signed statement of political neutrality will be submitted as part of the final research report.
 - 7) The proposal must state agreement that the executive summary and report may be posted on the Library and Archives Canada (LAC) Web site or on any other Government of Canada (GC) Web sites.

3.2. Technical Specifications of the Research

3.2.1. Research Design

- 1) The research firm must recommend a research design they believe is cost efficient, will produce quality results, and is appropriate to meet the objectives of the research. The research firm must also provide a rationale for their recommendation.
 - a) If the recommended design is the same as that described in the Statement of Work, the research firm must state that they believe the design in the Statement of Work is cost efficient, will produce quality results, and is appropriate to meet the objectives of the research.
 - b) The criteria for stating that the design in the Statement of Work is cost efficient is that it achieves a good balance of quality, appropriateness in meeting the GC client's objectives, timings, other requirements, and cost.

- 2) State the research medium to be used (e.g. in-person, telephone, online text-based synchronous, online webcam, online asynchronous) and the reasons for this choice.
 - a) If conducted by telephone (or voice over IP), state whether online conferencing will be used to present stimuli to participants via the Internet (Web-assisted teleconference sessions).
- 3) State the type(s) of qualitative research session(s), i.e. whether groups or individual interviews.
- 4) Provide the definition of the target group(s) in terms of its specific characteristics and geographic composition.
 - a) In the case of group sessions, specify and explain any planned participant characteristics by which groups will differ from one another in their composition. Also specify and provide the rationale for the selection of any target population characteristics by which participants in a group will differ from one another, or be matched, during the recruiting process (i.e. the criteria for heterogeneous or homogenous group composition).
 - b) With regard to the proposed geographic composition, provide a rationale with reference to geographic requirements in the Statement of Work, the research objectives, official language requirements, project cost effectiveness, etc.
 - c) State any special characteristics that will exclude an individual from participation.
 - d) List the default recruiting specifications described in [subsection 5.2.2.](#), that will be used, and provide a rationale for any that will not be used.
- 5) State the total number of qualitative sessions to be conducted.
- 6) State the duration of each qualitative session.
- 7) State the total number of participants planned for the research project (expressed as a range).
 - a) In the case of group sessions, state how many groups are planned, the intended number of participants in each (expressed as a range), and the number that will be recruited (or over-recruited) to achieve this target. Provide a rationale for any planned over-recruitment, including special circumstances (e.g. seasonal travel conditions, holiday periods).
 - b) In the case of individual interviews, provide the method and numeric level of over-recruiting to achieve the desired number of completed interviews and any special circumstances influencing the choice of the over-recruitment number.
- 8) State the official language in which each qualitative session will be conducted and provide a rationale for that language selection (e.g. requirements in the Statement of Work).

- a) If a session is to be conducted in a language other than French or English, justify this language choice with reference to the Statement of Work, research objectives and target population.
- 9) If a formal pretest is to be conducted, describe:
 - a) how the pretest will be conducted;
 - b) the characteristics of participants in the pretest;
 - c) the number of pretest sessions and total number of pretest participants; and
 - d) how results of the pretest will be used and reported.

3.2.2. Facilities

- 1) As appropriate to the qualitative methodology, describe the type of facility that will be used to conduct the session(s).
- 2) Describe any technical requirements (e.g. laptop computers for participants, high-speed Internet connection) or any special arrangements (e.g. sign language interpreters, wheelchair access) required of the facilities.
- 3) For online research, briefly describe any software, plug-ins or cookies that might be installed on participants' computers and state that the policies for their easy removal by participants will comply with these standards [see [subsection 1.3.4.](#), paragraph 2)].
- 4) If simultaneous translation is required, state the number of interpreters that will be provided for each session.
- 5) Indicate whether sessions are to be recorded and/or a note-taker will be used. If the sessions are recorded, indicate the method of recording.
- 6) Describe any provisions for client observation, and the assumed maximum numbers of observers, whether in-person, by teleconference, or online.
 - a) If there are concerns that having observers present may adversely affect data quality, these concerns should be noted [see [subsection 6.5.](#), paragraph 5)].
 - b) If observers are to be present in the same room as participants, describe how their presence will be accommodated [see [subsection 6.5.](#), paragraph 4)].
- 7) For online research, state that all data collected in the course of the project will be stored on servers and back-up servers located solely in Canada [see [subsection 9.1.](#), paragraph 2)].
 - a) This includes the usage of the recording function of a teleconference service provider to produce audio recordings of group discussions or interviews, when applicable (see [subsection 9.6.](#)).
 - b) An exception is made when participants reside in a jurisdiction outside Canada. In that case, the researcher must ensure that data are stored in a manner consistent with the laws of that jurisdiction [see [subsection 9.1.](#), paragraph 4)].

3.2.3. Participant Rights and Considerations

- 1) Describe the procedure for obtaining participants' informed consent to any recording and/or observation of the qualitative sessions (see [subsection 1.3.2.](#)).
- 2) For research with vulnerable persons or children under 16, state that the requirements laid out in [section 2.](#) of this document will be followed.
- 3) For research with children under 16, state whether it will be a requirement for a responsible adult to be close at hand when the session is conducted and, if not, provide the rationale.
- 4) If the research topic is judged to be particularly sensitive—whether as judged by the researcher or as stated in the Statement of Work—the proposal must state how this will be addressed. In particular, the research proposal should:
 - a) State that the topic will be explained clearly to potential participants during the recruitment stage of the project [see [subsection 1.2.](#), paragraph 1)].
 - b) Recommend research procedures to minimize the impact on participants (e.g. one-on-one interviews rather than group discussions, the absence of observers, the absence of session recording) [see [subsection 1.2.](#), paragraphs 2) and 3)].

3.2.4. Participant Recruitment

- 1) The proposal must state that the research firm will be accountable for all participant recruitment procedures. (If a third-party is to be subcontracted to conduct the recruiting, the proposal must provide the name of that third party and include relevant information concerning their qualifications [see [subsection 3.1.3.](#), paragraph 2]).
- 2) Regarding the recruitment method to be used, the proposal must state:
 - a) Whether the method will be random (i.e., Random Digit Dialing – RDD) or non random (e.g. panel, referral), and provide the rationale for that choice.
 - b) Whether recruitment will be conducted by telephone, by e-mail, online, through social media, by advertising or by some other method or combination of methods, and as needed provide the rationale for the choice(s).
- 3) The proposal **must** describe the specific recruitment **procedures** to be followed, as appropriate to the method(s) used (e.g. telephone [RDD], e-mail, advertising, database, list, referral).
- 4) The proposal must describe the sample **source(s)** to be used, and the rationale for those source(s).
 - a) If recruiting by telephone through random digit dialling, describe:
 - i. the sample frame;
 - ii. the number and frequency of call-backs.

- b) If list-based recruiting, describe:
 - i. the source of the list;
 - ii. the anticipated size of the list;
 - iii. the types of information about participants included on the list;
 - iv. the assumed incidence of individuals who meet the target group qualifications;
 - v. the assumed proportion of records with valid contact information; and
 - vi. any other information relevant to the list's effectiveness in recruiting.
 - c) If recruiting by opt-in database, describe:
 - i. the relevant participant characteristics available in the database;
 - ii. the extent of record keeping on each individual's participation in past qualitative research;
 - iii. the methods used to add names to the database;
 - iv. the sufficiency of the size of the database to meet the recruiting requirements; and
 - v. whether the firm responsible for the database uses the MRIA's [Qualitative Research Registry](#) when recruiting from the database.
 - d) If recruiting by panel, the proposal must affirm that the panel provider follows industry best practices in maintaining panel quality.
 - e) If recruiting by networking/referral, describe:
 - i. the types of networking contacts anticipated; and
 - ii. how the referral/networking process would work.
 - f) If recruiting by e-mail, state that the procedures outlined in [subsection 5.3.2.](#) will be followed.
 - g) If recruiting by advertising, describe:
 - i. the advertising media;
 - ii. the advertising targeting specification and/or advertisement locations;
 - iii. information to be included in the advertisement copy; and
 - iv. recruiting procedures to be followed with people who respond to the advertisement.
- 5) Provide the definition of the target group(s) in terms of its specific characteristics and geographic composition.
- a) In the case of group sessions, specify and explain any planned participant characteristics by which groups will differ from one another in their composition. Also specify any participant characteristics on which within-group variation will be monitored or controlled during the recruiting process.
 - b) With regard to the proposed geographic composition, provide a rationale with reference to geographic requirements in the Statement of Work, the research objectives, official language requirements, project cost effectiveness, etc.
 - c) State any special characteristics that will exclude an individual from participation.
 - d) List the default recruiting specifications described in [subsection 5.2.2.](#) that will be used, and provide a rationale for any that will not be used.

- 6) Describe any recruitment validation and confirmation procedures that will be used to ensure the presence of qualified participants in the research sessions.
- 7) When relevant, identify any concerns about recruitment, including the length of the screening/recruitment questionnaire. State what procedures will be followed to address those concerns.
- 8) Where applicable, provide details on the type (monetary or otherwise) and the amount of participant incentives, with a rationale.

3.2.5. Design of Discussion Agenda

- 1) State that the lead moderator/interviewer will be directly involved in and accountable for the design and development of the discussion/interview agenda.
- 2) If possible, provide a tentative outline of the discussion guide or a list of topics that will be covered in the sessions.
- 3) Describe and provide a rationale for any special techniques or other special procedures that will be used in the sessions.
- 4) Describe any requirements for work to be done by participants before or after the session.
- 5) Describe any stimulus materials to be presented in the course of the discussion/interview and their method of presentation.
- 6) Provide a rationale for the inclusion of all stimuli and other materials with reference to their value in meeting the research objectives.
- 7) Describe assumptions about the production of any stimulus materials to be used in the session, including:
 - a) whether the production of these materials, and their translation, is the responsibility of the client or the research firm;
 - b) the media and production quality of the materials; and
 - c) the approximate date of their required availability.
- 8) If there are concerns that the client-specified research topics may not be covered within the time allocated for the sessions, state these concerns and propose solutions (e.g. reducing the number of topics or lengthening the sessions).

3.2.6. Data Analysis

- 1) State that the lead moderator/interviewer will be directly involved in and accountable for the data analysis.
- 2) Describe the material that will be used when preparing the analysis (e.g. recordings, transcripts, detailed notes).
- 3) If tools such as text-analytic software will be used to supplement the data analysis, describe what cross-check procedures will be used to ensure the validity of the output.

3.2.7. Deliverables

- 1) List all deliverables including their scope, format, language, means of delivery, and number of copies, including at a minimum:
 - a) recruiting questionnaire (screener);
 - b) discussion/interview materials;
 - c) final report (state, if possible, its approximate length);
 - d) a signed statement of political neutrality;
 - e) the nature, location, approximate length and number of any presentations; and
 - f) any other deliverables required in the Statement of Work.

3.2.8. Project Schedule

- 1) Provide a detailed work plan with dates and responsibilities identified.

3.2.9. Project Cost

- 1) Cost information must be presented in the format designated by PWGSC.

4. DESIGN OF DISCUSSION AGENDA

The discussion agenda includes all materials used in the course of the qualitative sessions, including the discussion guide, supporting stimulus materials, participant worksheets or preparatory materials, and materials for session observers.

4.1. General

- 1) The agenda must be designed to collect all the information necessary to the objectives of the research, and only that information.
- 2) The agenda should be evaluated in terms of:
 - a) coverage of the research objectives; and
 - b) providing an effective plan for eliciting the required information.
- 3) All contents of the discussion agenda must be treated as proprietary, and appropriate precautions must be taken to prevent any part of its content being disclosed during the course of the research project to any individual not authorized by the client.

4.2. Client Participation and Approval

- 1) The content of the agenda must be developed in consultation with the client. Client approval of the agenda, in both official languages, must be obtained prior to conducting the first qualitative session. Client approval of the discussion

agenda must include approving both the content (instructions and questions) and the time estimates (see subsections [4.3.2.](#) and [4.3.3.](#)).

- 2) When possible, the client should observe at least the first qualitative research session and provide input to the moderator/interviewer on any changes needed to improve the agenda's effectiveness [see [subsection 6.4.](#), paragraph 2)].

4.3. Discussion Guide

The discussion guide is the tool whereby the moderator/interviewer keeps the research session moving forward while ensuring that all research objectives are appropriately covered. It lays out the topics and questions to be covered, in the general order they may be discussed, and notes when other agenda elements (e.g. stimulus materials, participant worksheets) will be introduced.

4.3.1. Introduction to the Discussion

- 1) Disclosure to participants – At the outset of the research session the moderator/interviewer must provide an introduction that states:
 - a) the name of the moderator/interviewer, the type of firm that employs them (e.g. “an independent marketing research company”) and the name of that firm (see [subsection 1.1.3.](#));
 - i. Note that for online text-based sessions, the demographic and other attributes of the moderator/interviewer are disclosed to participants only through statements made to them. The moderator/interviewer must not under any circumstances give false or misleading information about his or her identity or demographic characteristics.
 - b) the research purpose and research sponsor, described, at a minimum, in the same manner as in recruiting [see [subsection 1.1.1.](#), paragraph 2) and [subsection 5.5.2.](#), paragraph 7)];
 - c) for synchronous research sessions, the expected length of the session;
 - d) for asynchronous sessions, the time commitment (daily, weekly) expected of participants, as well as the general expected activities (e.g. number of times they should log in each day, and other activities they may be asked to do);
 - e) the presence of any observers, their role and purpose, and the means of observation (e.g. by one-way mirror, closed-circuit TV, on a teleconference bridge, monitoring of online bulletin boards) (see [subsection 1.3.2.](#));
 - f) the presence and purpose of any recording being made of the session (see [subsection 1.3.2.](#)); and
 - g) that participants' identities will remain confidential (unless explicit, written consent to disclose personal information has been provided).

- 2) Guidance to participants – The introduction should contain guidance to participants designed to facilitate their effective participation, including:
 - a) the value to the research of knowing participants' candid views;
 - b) for group discussions, the value to the research of knowing divergent opinions with no expectation that group consensus be reached on any point; and,
 - c) for online research (including Web-assisted teleconference sessions), explanations of any technical requirements to participate (e.g. how to maintain an online text "conversation"), including how to get technical support if required (e.g. through a "help" link on an online platform).

4.3.2. Level of Scripting

"Level of scripting" refers to the extent to which the guide's introduction and questions are written out in full versus in a short-hand, bulleted or summary form. In general, the level of scripting of the guide should be determined jointly by the client and lead moderator/interviewer. The appropriate level of scripting will balance the need for flexibility in administering the guide and the client's need for clarity and confidence that the research objectives are being appropriately addressed.

There are some differences in level of scripting by research medium:

- 1) In-person/telephone/webcam: The level of scripting of the discussion guide will be determined jointly by the client and lead moderator/interviewer.
- 2) Synchronous text-based online: The introduction must be fully scripted, because (a) this is unlikely to require significant adaptation to individual participants, and (b) this will speed up presentation of the material to participants and leave more time for substantive questions. The level of scripting of the remainder of the discussion guide will be determined jointly by the client and lead moderator/interviewer.
- 3) Asynchronous text-based online: The introduction and all main questions must be fully scripted. This is because this material is posted without any possible "real-time" adaptation of the wording, and it is therefore very important to get the wording just right. The level of scripting of probes and follow-up questions will be determined jointly by the client and lead moderator.

Regardless of level of scripting, the moderator/interviewer must have flexibility during the qualitative session to adapt his or her language to the language and thinking of the participant(s).

4.3.3. Time Requirements of Discussion Guide

- 1) In designing the guide, the moderator/interviewer must ensure that sufficient time is allowed for substantive responses and meaningful discussion of each topic.
- 2) The discussion guide must be divided into sections, and must include duration estimates of each section.

- 3) If there are concerns about timing, the lead moderator/interviewer should consult with the client to prioritize the research topics. Topics with lower priority should have the annotation “if time permits” as a guide to time management.

4.3.4. Changes to Discussion Agenda

Generally, the discussion agenda should be applied consistently throughout the course of the fieldwork. Nonetheless, it is common to make some adjustments and changes to the administration of the agenda during the course of qualitative fieldwork. Learning from earlier sessions can be used to refine the procedures and questions and thereby improve the quality of information gathered in later sessions.

- 1) *Informal changes* involve adapting the discussion agenda to the language and interests of participants.
 - a) Informal changes normally do not require a written revision of the agenda.
 - b) When multiple moderators/interviewers are used, the lead moderator/interviewer must ensure that discussions about any such informal changes are included in interim moderator/interviewer briefings [see [subsection 3.1.3.](#), paragraph 1) b)].
- 2) *Formal changes* are significant modifications to the agenda, including dropping or adding topic areas, adding, modifying or removing stimulus materials, etc. Formal changes must be undertaken with caution and must be justified with reference to improving the overall research outcome and to meet research objectives.
 - a) The need for any formal revision of the discussion agenda must be decided jointly between the client and the lead moderator/interviewer.
 - b) Formal changes to the guide must be provided in writing and approved by the client. The nature of these revisions and their rationale must be described in the method section of the research report [see [subsection 10.2.5.](#), paragraph 3) h)].
 - c) When multiple moderators/interviewers are used, the lead moderator/interviewer must ensure that all moderators/interviewers are briefed on any formal or significant informal changes and their rationale (see [subsection 6.4.](#)).

4.4. Stimulus Materials and Other Supporting Materials

Stimulus materials may be used in research sessions as required to clarify discussion points and/or to elicit participants’ opinions (e.g. advertising concepts, materials for projective exercises). Other supporting material might include questionnaires or worksheets designed to capture participant reactions to particular issues.

- 1) The stimulus materials and supporting material included in the draft discussion agenda for client approval should, to the extent possible, appear as participants will experience them during the session. This requirement includes, when

relevant, providing an opportunity to review materials online as participants would view them.

- 2) The lead moderator/interviewer must ensure that any worksheets, questionnaires or other material used to collect participant comments do not solicit information that would violate the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.
 - a) These materials may be associated with a participant only to the extent necessary to enable appropriate data analysis (e.g. first name of participant, identification of the particular session).

4.5. Considerations for Observers

- 1) The moderator/interviewer must ensure that observers have access to the discussion guide.
- 2) When the agenda includes stimulus materials, the moderator/interviewer must ensure that observers have access to those materials or reasonable representations of them.
 - a) In some cases, the most cost-effective method for observers to view stimulus materials will be during their presentation to participants (e.g. a video clip).
 - b) When the session includes presentation of client-supplied stimulus materials, the moderator/interviewer and client should plan in advance how copies or representations of the material will be made available to observers.
- 3) The moderator/interviewer should provide guidance to the client on what observers can expect from the qualitative research session, how to prepare for and participate as an observer, and how to interpret the information.

5. PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

5.1. Accountability of the Research Firm

The lead research firm must be accountable for all activities related to participant recruitment, including those undertaken by any subcontractor.

5.2. Recruiting Specifications

The objectives of participant recruitment are (a) to ensure that all participants meet target group specifications as well as relevant default recruiting specifications that are industry best practices, and (b) to ensure that participants show up and complete the qualitative sessions.

5.2.1. General

- 1) The research firm must provide a briefing and/or direction to those responsible for recruiting participants covering all aspects of the project relevant to recruitment.
- 2) When recruiting children under the age of 16 or vulnerable individuals, the research firm must ensure that all the standards described in [section 2](#) (*Qualitative Research Involving Children or Vulnerable Participants*) are followed.
- 3) The researcher's Privacy Policy and, when appropriate, policies related to cookies or other software [see [subsection 1.3.4.](#), paragraph 2)] must be made available to participants at the time of recruitment in a manner appropriate to the recruitment method.
 - a) If recruiting by telephone, the recruiter must have information readily available to inform the participant that the privacy policies can be made available on request via regular mail, by e-mail, or by providing an Internet address, as preferred by the participant.
 - b) If recruiting by e-mail or online, a link to the policies must be prominently displayed.
 - c) If recruiting through advertising, the Internet address of the policies must be included in the ad.
- 4) The research firm must ensure that all participants meet all the requirements specified for the study in the contract or as subsequently amended in agreement with the client. These requirements include any characteristics such as marital status, age, sex, income, occupation, household composition, etc.
- 5) It must be determined at the time of recruitment that all participants are able to speak, understand, read and write in the language in which the session is to be conducted, as appropriate to the specific recruiting and session procedures.
- 6) For online qualitative sessions (including Web-assisted teleconference sessions) all participants must indicate they have some level of comfort in using a computer to access and interact with online content and, when required, to participate through typing or use of a webcam.
- 7) When geographic location is identified as a requirement because of participant characteristics associated with that location, the research firm should try to incorporate those characteristics into the recruitment criteria (e.g. length of residence, experience with a service, product or activity relevant to the research topic, or specific attitudes or knowledge relevant to the research topic).
- 8) The research firm and the client should agree prior to the start of recruitment on a set timeline for progress reports, including participant profiles. Additional requests for reports should be accommodated within a reasonable time frame.
 - a) Reports to the client on recruiting progress must not contain any information that could directly or indirectly lead to the disclosure of the identity of anyone who has either agreed or declined to participate.

- 9) The research firm must inform the client as soon as possible of any problems arising during recruiting that may require adjusting the research design or of any other issues that warrant the client's attention.

5.2.2. Default Recruiting Specifications

The following default recruiting specifications must be in operation for any qualitative research recruiting, unless exceptions have been agreed to by the client and the research firm. The reason for not observing any of the default recruiting specifications (e.g. a need to include experts in the topic area, qualified participants comprise a very small group) must be noted in the Research Proposal.

- 1) Participants must meet all the requirements specified for the study in the contract or as subsequently amended in agreement with the client.
- 2) No participant (nor anyone in their immediate family or household) may work in an occupation that has anything to do with the research topic area, in related government departments/agencies, nor in advertising, marketing research, public relations or the media (radio, television, newspaper, film/video production, etc.).
 - a) In addition, consideration should be given to excluding a participant who has worked in any such occupation in the past 5 years, as appropriate to the specific research objectives.
- 3) No participants acquainted with each other may be knowingly recruited for the same study, unless they are in different sessions that are scheduled separately.
 - a) An exception is made when the research requirements specify a personal acquaintance between two or more session participants (e.g. to contrast the opinions of domestic partners or business associates on the issues of interest).
- 4) No participant may be recruited who has attended a qualitative research session within the past six months.
- 5) No participant may be recruited who has attended five or more qualitative research sessions in the past five years.

5.3. Sample Source and Recruitment Method

5.3.1. General

- 1) The recruitment method and sample source must be as stated in the research proposal [see [subsection 3.2.4.](#), paragraph 2) and paragraph 4)] unless an argument can be made that to modify or replace them will benefit the research. Should a modification be required, the moderator/interviewer must obtain client consent before altering the sample source or method of recruitment.

- 2) When lists are used for recruitment:
 - a) the list must contain only essential information required for recruitment or analytic purposes; and
 - b) during the recruiting process, if participants ask where the recruiter obtained their name, the recruiter must state the nature and source of the list used.
- 3) When recruitment is done by referral, the name of the person or organization who gave the referral must be provided to the potential participant.
- 4) The recruiter must provide participants with an easy means for opting out of any further contact.

5.3.2. Recruitment by E-mail

- 1) Recruiters should reduce any inconvenience or irritation an e-mail invitation might cause the recipient by clearly stating its purpose in the first sentence and keeping the total message as brief as possible.
- 2) The method for collecting and storing e-mail addresses used for recruitment must follow the standards specified in this document (see [subsection 1.3.1.](#)).
- 3) Recruiting e-mails must not use false or misleading e-mail addresses, including spoofing the “from” label of the e-mail.
- 4) When sending batch recruitment e-mails, a method must be used (e.g. a “blind” cc or other software tools) to ensure the identity of a potential participant is not revealed to any other potential participants.
- 5) Members of the general public must not be recruited for qualitative sessions through unsolicited e-mails. Whenever e-mail is used for recruitment, potential participants must have a reasonable expectation of such contact for research purposes. This expectation can be assumed when the following conditions are met:
 - a) a substantive pre-existing relationship exists between the individuals contacted and the research firm, the client, or the list owner (who are identified in the e-mail);
 - b) individuals have a reasonable expectation based on the pre-existing relationship, that they may be contacted for research; and
 - c) individuals on the list are offered the choice to be removed from it and the list has excluded all those who have previously taken the appropriate steps to be removed.
- 6) When conducting business-to-business research, unsolicited research invitation e-mails may be used for recruitment provided that:
 - a) when recruiting from lists, the conditions of [subsection 5.3.2.](#), paragraph 5) c) are met;

- b) the e-mail address used is publicly available on the Web site of a business or professional association, and the research topic is relevant to the professional responsibilities of the potential participant [see [subsection 1.3.1.](#), paragraph 2) b)]; and
 - c) recruiters meet or exceed the anti-spam policies of their Internet service providers and e-mail service providers.
- 7) Each component of the recruitment e-mail must be carefully worded and formatted to avoid unduly biasing the sample, and to ensure that the privacy and confidentiality of potential participants is maintained. Important considerations include:
- a) having in place a method to ensure that participants have received important information or attachments (e.g. by requesting a reply, through an automated return receipt, follow-up by telephone);
 - b) in order to reinforce the intent of the e-mail and its credibility:
 - i. clearly convey in the subject line that the e-mail is about public opinion research and not about selling something;
 - ii. clearly identify the recruiting firm and/or moderator/interviewer in either the subject line or sender line; and
 - iii. reveal the study sponsor as early as possible in the e-mail, including, if possible, in the subject line.
 - c) whenever possible include all content in the body of the e-mail rather than in attachments;
 - i. if attachments are needed, inform the participant of their content (e.g. pre-session “homework”) and format prior to sending them;
 - d) avoid asking screening questions in the body of the e-mail, particularly if any question skipping or branching is required, and provide instead a link to a screening questionnaire implemented online.

5.4. Incentives

- 1) Participants in qualitative sessions are typically offered incentives for their participation in a research study.
- 2) The use of participant incentives may be considered in circumstances such as:
 - a) To motivate potential participants to take part in a given study;
 - b) When a time commitment is required on the part of the participant, particularly when the participants are required to do some preparatory work, the study is complex, transportation costs, etc.;
 - c) The target population is low incidence (e.g., 5% or less of the population) or the population is very limited;
 - d) The population is made up of hard-to-reach target groups (e.g. physicians, CEOs, off-reserve Aboriginals, newcomers to Canada);

- e) When it can be demonstrated that:
 - i. There will be a cost saving (e.g., incentives are less expensive than large numbers of recruiting call-backs); and
 - ii. The use of incentives is required to meet the study schedule.
- 3) Incentives could be of monetary or non-monetary nature:
 - a) Monetary incentives should be used in qualitative research when there are strong reasons to believe that they would substantially improve the level of participation or the quality of responses.
 - b) Monetary incentives may be in the form of "cash" disbursements (either directly to the participant, or for example, to a charity of their choice) or gift certificates. The amount of an incentive should correspond to rates that are currently paid in the market research industry and should be appropriate to the target population.
 - c) Non-monetary incentives, such as the provision of research findings (e.g. the executive summary, research highlights or final report) could be offered when conducting special-audience research.
- 4) The use of participant incentives (monetary or non-monetary), to gain participant cooperation, should be carefully weighed against the potential for bias in the study (e.g., the use of incentives could affect the composition of a study group and/or the possibility that the response to some research questions may be influenced).
- 5) The use of incentives will also require decisions and documentation as to:
 - a) When incentives will be provided, whether at initial contact or post-research;
 - b) How the incentives will be paid out/distributed by the research firm and the associated cost for this disbursement (e.g. professional time and direct expenses).
- 6) Incentives should not be provided to employees of the Government of Canada for research conducted during working hours.
- 7) Ethical considerations should be taken into account especially when providing incentives to youth, or vulnerable groups (e.g. payment is not coercive, or exposes young or vulnerable persons to a risk that they would otherwise have avoided).
- 8) Rules and legal requirements pertaining to prizes and draws vary among provinces and territories. Consult your legal team for further information.

5.5. Recruitment Screener

5.5.1. General

- 1) The screening process must be as short as possible in order to limit recruiting cost, reduce participant burden, and frustration for those who do not qualify.
 - a) The screener must include only questions essential to qualify participants (i.e., segmenting participants on key dimensions important for interpreting participant input).

5.5.2. Screener Introduction

All Government of Canada screener introductions must meet the following standards:

- 1) Follow the [Official Languages Act](#) and policies;
- 2) Identify the Government of Canada or the department/agency sponsoring the research;
- 3) Identify the research firm in charge of the project. The intent is to provide a point of contact for potential participants and increase their confidence in the legitimacy of the research project:
 - a) In cases where the recruiter and the research firm are different organizations, at a minimum, the recruiter's firm must be identified in the introduction. The research firm must also be identified during the recruitment process, but this can be done at a later point in time (e.g. at the invitation to participate);
 - b) When recruiting **by telephone** recruiters must identify themselves by name (a pseudonym may be used for the interviewer as long as the individual remains identifiable internally by management for quality control purposes) and they must name the firm they represent; if requested the recruiters must provide the address and/or telephone number of the firm they represent as a means whereby a representative of the research firm can be contacted; and
 - c) When recruiting **by e-mail, online or through advertising**, a means must be provided whereby a representative of the recruiter or research firm can be contacted (e.g. an Internet address, telephone number, e-mail address);
- 4) Explain that the study is a research project, not an attempt to sell or market anything;
- 5) Inform potential participants of the time required to complete the screening process;
- 6) Briefly describe the nature of the qualitative session and the manner of participating in it;
- 7) Inform potential participants of the general subject and purpose of the research, including how it will benefit them or the public. The subject and purpose of the study may be expressed in general terms so long as these terms cannot be construed as an attempt to misinform potential participants;

- a) The preceding paragraph notwithstanding, when the research topic is judged to be sensitive, potential participants (or in the case of children under 16, a responsible adult) must be told explicitly the subject and content of the research in sufficient detail that they can make an informed decision about their willingness to participate, or to consent for their child to participate, in such a discussion [see subsections [1.2.](#) paragraph 1) and [2.2.](#) paragraph 1)]; and
 - b) When there is reason to believe that stating the subject and purpose of the research is such that stating it at the outset will negatively affect potential participants' willingness to participate, stating these may be deferred to after the screening questions but must precede the invitation to participate.
- 8) Inform potential participants that their participation in the research is voluntary and completely confidential;
 - 9) If recruiting by telephone, obtain the potential participant's consent to continue with the screening process;
 - 10) The screener introduction may make mention of an incentive when one will be offered, to motivate participation and cooperation. It is preferable not to state the amount prior to screening participants to reduce the risk of recruiting those who may modify their responses aiming to qualify for a given session. However when a high level of recruitment difficulty is expected, the amount may be stated in the screener introduction.

5.5.3. Invitation to Participate

Once it has been determined that an individual qualifies, the invitation to participate may be extended. The invitation must meet the following standards:

- 1) Identify the research firm (unless this information has already been provided in the screener introduction);
- 2) Describe the session procedures and the manner of participation in sufficient detail to allow potential participants to assess their comfort with the process. The recruiter (or recruiting questionnaire) should ask explicitly whether they are sufficiently comfortable with the session requirements to participate;
- 3) Provide facility and venue related information;
 - a) For in-person sessions, state the exact location of the facility and provide any information necessary for finding and gaining access to the facility, including, as appropriate, information about public transportation and parking;
 - b) For telephone sessions, provide details about gaining access to the call; and
 - c) For online sessions (including Web-assisted telephone sessions) provide details about gaining access to the online platform and how to access technical support.

- 4) Provide the date(s) and time(s) of session(s).
 - a) For synchronous sessions, emphasize the importance of punctuality and of arriving/joining a few minutes prior to the scheduled start.
 - b) For online sessions, emphasize the importance of logging on prior to the start of the session to ensure there are no technical difficulties.
- 5) For synchronous research sessions, state the expected duration of the session;
- 6) For asynchronous sessions, describe the time commitment (daily, weekly) expected of participants, as well as the general expected activities (e.g. number of times they should log in each day, and other activities they may be asked to do);
- 7) Inform potential participants of any recording and/or observation of the session [see [subsection 1.3.2.](#), paragraph 1)]. It should be made clear that by agreeing to participate the individual has given their consent to these procedures. They must be told that they will be asked to provide their explicit consent [in the manner appropriate to the research modality see [subsection 1.3.2.](#), paragraph 2)a)];
- 8) Describe any incentive that will be provided, exactly what is required to receive it;
 - a) In the case of synchronous sessions, state what impact late arrival will have on the eligibility for the incentive.
- 9) State that the potential participant may not send a replacement on his/her behalf;
- 10) State any requirements for participation appropriate to the study (e.g. a reminder to bring reading glasses if needed, that children should not be brought to the research facility);
- 11) When appropriate, state what preparation is required (e.g. pre-session exercises) and obtain the participant's agreement to complete these;
- 12) Provide contact information for an individual who can respond to questions or concerns prior to the session and who should be notified in case the participant cannot attend as scheduled;
- 13) Make available the recruiter's privacy policy and, when relevant, policies regarding cookies and software [see [subsection 5.2.1.](#), paragraph 3)];
- 14) Once the invitation has been accepted, obtain the participant's consent to be contacted again for validation and confirmation purposes;
 - a) For in-person sessions, point out that identification will be required of participants when they arrive at the facility.

5.5.4. Validation

The objective of validation is to verify that participants meet recruitment criteria for participation as identified in the screening process. A validation process must be included as part of the recruiting process.

- 1) The moderator/interviewer must ensure that validation has been completed prior to the session for which an individual has been recruited. The moderator/interviewer must not rely solely on validation in the session itself (nor, for in-person sessions, at the research facility prior to the session) nor after the session.
 - a) Upon arrival of the participants or at the outset of a session, even though pre-screening has occurred, the moderator/interviewer still needs to pay close attention to make sure that each individual meets the recruiting requirements.
- 2) The validation process should be applied to all recruited participants except those from a client-supplied list or other source that has already been fully validated.
- 3) For research with the general public, the recruiter must ensure that validation includes verifying participants through the MRIA's [Qualitative Research Registry \(QRR\)](#).

5.5.5. Confirmation

The objective of confirmation is to ensure that individuals are able and willing to participate in the session for which they have been recruited. A confirmation process must be included as part of the recruiting process.

- 1) The moderator/interviewer must ensure that confirmation is completed sufficiently in advance of the qualitative session to allow a reasonable attempt at replacing a participant when necessary.
- 2) The confirmation process for participants recruited on-line or by email should be done by telephone, wherever feasible, because voice contact often provides additional information about the participant's likelihood of attending.
- 3) If recruiting has been done by telephone it is a best practice to confirm attendance by telephone with an offer to follow up with an e-mail that provides important logistical details (e.g. exact time and address, map to location, specific rules of participation).
- 4) The confirmation must remind participants of the most important information contained in the invitation to participate, as appropriate to the specific research project (see [subsection 5.5.3.](#)).

6. CONDUCT OF QUALITATIVE SESSIONS

6.1. Accountability for Conduct of Sessions

The lead moderator/interviewer is accountable for the conduct of all qualitative sessions undertaken during the research project.

6.2. Respect for Participants

The potentially intrusive and disclosing nature of qualitative research sessions requires that the emotional well-being of all participants be a primary concern of the moderator/interviewer and the client sponsoring the research. No research objective may override the moderator's/interviewer's responsibility to protect participants' privacy and to maintain respect for their values and opinions.

- 1) Particular care must be taken when a research topic has been judged to be sensitive.
 - a) In such instances, participants must be informed in detail of the potential sensitivities at the time of recruitment [see [subsection 1.2.](#), paragraph 1)].
 - b) When the participants are children under 16, the responsible adult providing consent to participate must also be informed in detail of the potential sensitivities prior to consenting [see [subsection 2.2.](#), paragraph 1)].
- 2) When a topic turns out to be sensitive to a particular individual in ways not anticipated before the session, the moderator/interviewer must respect any concerns they express.
- 3) If a participant at any time or for any reason during a session feels unable to proceed, the moderator/interviewer must provide them with an opportunity to withdraw.

6.3. Use of Multiple Moderators/Interviewers

- 1) If multiple moderators/interviewers are used, the reasons for their use must be as specified in the research proposal [see [subsection 3.1.3.](#), paragraph 1) a)] unless a case can be made later to include different or additional moderators/interviewers and approval is obtained from the client.
 - a) The lead moderator/interviewer must ensure that all moderators/interviewers are appropriate for the purpose of their particular session(s) (e.g. are fluent in the language of participants, demographic attributes that match those of the participants').
 - b) In the case of online sessions, the lead moderator/interviewer must ensure that all moderators/interviewers are familiar with the software used and have access to appropriate technical support.

- 2) If possible, all moderators/interviewers should be present for key client briefings. Prior to undertaking the fieldwork, the lead moderator/interviewer must ensure that all moderators/interviewers are fully familiar with the research topic and relevant background information, the research purpose and objectives, use of the discussion guide, and all stimulus material to be used during the session.

6.4. Interim Debriefing and Moderator/Interviewer Coordination

- 1) The client and lead moderator/interviewer should agree in advance whether client debriefings immediately following the qualitative sessions are required.
- 2) The client should observe at minimum the initial session with each major target group and provide appropriate input and feedback that might affect the conduct of subsequent sessions.
- 3) The lead moderator/interviewer should conduct these initial sessions so that learning from the first sessions can be communicated to other moderators/interviewers. When feasible, other moderators/interviewers should observe as a part of familiarizing themselves with administration of the discussion agenda.
- 4) All moderators/interviewers must confer on a regular basis about issues raised in the various sessions with particular emphasis on those issues that might warrant modifications to the discussion agenda [see [subsection 4.3.4.](#), paragraph 1) b) and paragraph 2) c)].
 - a) The lead moderator/interviewer must communicate significant emerging issues in a timely manner to the client and to all other moderators/interviewers.
 - b) When the client has agreed to modifications to the discussion agenda, the lead moderator/interviewer must ensure that all other moderators/interviewers receive the revision and are briefed on its use.

6.5. Observation of Sessions

The presence of client observers is an important aspect of qualitative research. Observers benefit by getting a more concrete understanding of participants' views than they might get from reading a research report.

- 1) The standards pertaining to obtaining participants' informed consent to observation [see [subsection 1.3.2.](#), paragraph 2)] and ensuring that their confidentiality and anonymity are not put at risk by observation [see [subsection 1.3.3.](#), paragraph 5)] must be followed.
 - a) Observers must not make their own electronic recordings of the session unless participants have given explicit consent to such recordings. If participant consent is given, observers must comply with the standards for release of recordings to clients or third parties [see [subsection 1.3.3.](#), paragraph 3)].

- 2) The moderator/interviewer must ensure that observers have access to the discussion agenda.
- 3) The moderator/interviewer should check with observers at appropriate points during the session to see if they have any additional questions for the participants.
 - a) For synchronous sessions the moderator/interviewer should explain to observers the method (e.g. text chat, paper notes) and frequency of passing notes to the moderator/interviewer during a session. Notes should be used very sparingly so as to not disrupt the session (e.g. during the break, at the end of the session).
- 4) When observers must be present in the same room as participants due to the type of facility used, the number of observers should be limited (ideally only one). The observer(s) should be seated apart from the participants in an unobtrusive location, preferably out of participants' main sight lines.
- 5) Under certain conditions the moderator/interviewer might be concerned that the presence of observers will adversely affect the quality of the information obtained (e.g. by reducing participant frankness), in which case they should recommend to the client that no observers be present. To the extent possible, this recommendation should be made in the proposal, especially in the case of in-person focus groups where there will be cost implications. These conditions include cases where:
 - a) observers' specific role and purpose might inhibit participant comments on a topic; and
 - b) the sensitivity of the topic is such that the moderator/interviewer believes participants would be inhibited by the presence of any observers.

6.6. Records of Sessions

- 1) The moderator/interviewer must produce a detailed record, to the extent possible, of each qualitative session to be used in turn for analysis and reporting. These records should preferably be made by recording (e.g. audio, video, and transcripts of content from online sessions).
 - a) When feasible, backup recording mechanisms should be put in place to guard against the failure of the primary recording mechanism.
 - b) When recording is not possible, the moderator/interviewer must ensure that notes are made in as much detail as the circumstances allow.
- 2) The standards for obtaining participant consent to recording and for ensuring participant anonymity and confidentiality must be respected [see subsections [1.3.2.](#), paragraph 3) and [1.3.3.](#)].

6.7. Incentive Payments

- 1) When participants are provided with an incentive, the research firm must ensure that appropriate records of these payments are kept, in accordance with the client's documentation requirements.
 - a) Any such records provided to the client must maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.
- 2) For synchronous sessions, incentive payments may be made to recruits who arrive up to 10 minutes after the scheduled start time and cannot be admitted into the session, or within another time interval agreed to by the client and specified to participants at the time of recruitment [see [subsection 5.5.3.](#), paragraph 3) a)].
- 3) If a participant is turned away from a qualitative session, within the agreed-upon time frame for paying incentives, as might occur in the case of over-recruiting, the moderator/interviewer must ensure that the participant is provided the incentive described at the time of recruitment.

7. DATA ANALYSIS

7.1. Accountability for Data Analysis

- 1) The lead moderator/interviewer must be directly involved in analysis of the qualitative data and must have overall accountability for that analysis.

7.2. Basis for Data Analysis

- 1) The moderator/interviewer must work from session recordings, transcripts or detailed notes when preparing the analysis.
- 2) When multiple moderators/interviewers have been used, the lead moderator/interviewer must ensure that each has provided their insights and/or hypotheses, particularly any that reflect unique aspects of the region, language or participant characteristics of the session(s) they conducted.
- 3) When tools such as text-analytic software are used to supplement the data analysis, the lead moderator/interviewer must undertake appropriate cross-check measures to ensure the validity of the output.

8. RETENTION OF TECHNICAL DATA AND RECORDS

The Government of Canada requires that research suppliers retain sufficient records of all studies for a period of **three years** so that, if requested, a study can be replicated or its data reanalyzed. This section describes which type of data and records must be retained and for what period of time. If the Government of Canada's time requirements in terms of record retention differ from those of the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association (MRIA), the longer period of time of the two must be applied.

8.1. Retention of Technical Data

- 1) The research firm must maintain the technical data on all studies for a period of **three years** so that, if requested, the study can be replicated.
 - a) The exception is client-supplied stimulus materials. Retention of client-supplied stimulus materials used in the research is the responsibility of the client, and is subject to the retention policies of the client.
- 2) Technical data that must be maintained (including by forming part of the research report/appendix) includes, but is not limited to:
 - a) recruiting materials, including the screener and any documentation on quota requirements or other written instructions given to the recruiter;
 - b) discussion/interview guide;
 - c) any researcher-generated materials (e.g. questionnaires) given to participants in the course of executing the project;
 - d) any other project files including project management information necessary to be able to replicate the study design; and
 - e) any e-mails and other correspondence necessary to be able to replicate the study design.

8.2. Retention of Records

Records in qualitative research are the actual data that are analyzed by the lead moderator/interviewer to produce the report. The MRIA makes a distinction between primary and secondary records and stipulates different retention time periods for each type.

Primary records are those of what the participants said, did and/or wrote, unaltered by the moderator/interviewer or a third party. They consist of audio or video recordings, completed questionnaires (if used in the course of the project), and computer-generated transcripts of online text-based sessions.

Secondary records are those that have been altered in some way by the moderator/interviewer or a third party. They consist of notes taken by a note-

taker or an interviewer during the conduct of a session, transcriptions of audio or video recordings, and summaries and/or coding of answers to questionnaires.

The objective of the retention of records of qualitative research conducted for the Government of Canada is to enable verification or reanalysis if required. Therefore, the following standards apply.

- 1) Sufficient records to allow verification or reanalysis **must be retained** by the research firm for a period of **three years**. This includes the following:
 - a) Secondary records must be retained by the research firm for a period of three years;
 - b) In cases where no secondary records exist (e.g. when there is no note-taking or no transcription) primary records must be retained by the research firm for a period of three years;
 - c) When audio recordings of simultaneous translations of the sessions or translations of text-based sessions exist, both the original and the translated versions of the records must be retained by the research firm for a period of three years; and
 - d) When secondary records exist, primary records may be destroyed after **12 months**, providing that those secondary records are sufficient to produce the report.
- 2) It is the responsibility of the research firm to ensure that the necessary records are maintained securely while remaining accessible to authorized parties for the necessary period of time:
 - a) In cases where a facility has the only copy of sessions' records, the research firm must make arrangements with the facility to ensure that the records are retained in accordance with [subsection 8.2.](#), paragraph 1); and
 - b) In the case of text-based online sessions, the research firm must keep in its physical possession the computer-generated transcripts of the sessions (i.e. they must upload it onto their computer from the facility's computer) in accordance with [subsection 8.2.](#), paragraph 1).
- 3) The lead moderator/interviewer should maintain any records of participants' informed consent (e.g. signed consent forms to being observed and/or recorded; e-mail or verbal acknowledgment of sessions being recorded) for **three years**, or for as long as the records for which a consent was provided are maintained, whichever is longer.

9. SECURITY OF DATA AND RECORDS

9.1. Protection of Data/Servers

- 1) Protection against illegal or unsanctioned access: Researchers must use up-to-date technologies to protect public opinion research data collected or stored on Web sites or servers against illegal or unsanctioned access by third parties (e.g. “hacking”). The researcher must also control access to all databases on which any data relating to the research is stored so that only individuals with the appropriate security clearance are able to access the database, either by using a password or other form of access control (such as biometric controls).
- 2) Protection against legally-sanctioned access: Because some jurisdictions allow their authorities, under certain circumstances, to access all data stored on servers located in that jurisdiction (e.g. in the United States under provisions of the *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act*, known as USA PATRIOT Act: see the [Treasury Board Secretariat’s overview](#)), the researcher must ensure that all the databases containing any information related to the research are stored on **servers and back-up servers** located solely in Canada.
 - a) If the client has first consented in writing, these servers may be located in another country where:
 - i. equivalent protections are given to personal information as in Canada under legislation such as the [Privacy Act, R.S. 1985, c. P-21](#), and the [Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, S.C. 2000, c. 5](#), and under any applicable policies of the Government of Canada; and
 - ii. the laws do not allow the government of that country or any other entity or person to seek or obtain the right to view or copy any information relating to the research without first obtaining the client’s written consent.
 - b) In connection with giving consent to locating a database in another country, the client may, at their option, require the researcher to provide a legal opinion (from a lawyer qualified in the foreign country) that the laws in that country meet the requirements of paragraph 2) a), or may require the researcher to pay for the Government of Canada to obtain such a legal opinion. The Government of Canada has the right to reject any request to store research data in a country other than Canada if there is any reason to be concerned about the security, privacy, or integrity of the data. The Government of Canada may also require that any data sent or processed outside of Canada be encrypted with Government of Canada-approved cryptography and that the private key required to decrypt the data be kept in Canada in accordance with key management and storage processes approved by the Government of Canada.

- c) The researcher must ensure that all servers, including back-up servers, on which any data relating to the research is stored are physically and logically independent (meaning there is no direct or indirect connection of any kind) from all other databases, unless those databases are located in Canada [or in another country approved by the client under paragraph 2) a)] and otherwise meet the requirements of this section.
 - d) The researcher must ensure that all data relating to the research is processed only in Canada or in another country approved by the client under paragraph 2) a).
 - e) The researcher must ensure that all domestic network traffic (meaning traffic or transmissions initiated in one part of Canada to a destination or individual located in another part of Canada) is routed exclusively through Canada, unless the client has first consented in writing to an alternate route. The client will only consider requests to route domestic traffic through another country that meets the requirements of paragraph 2) a).
- 3) The researcher must not subcontract (including to an affiliate) any function that involves providing a subcontractor with access to any data relating to the research unless the client first consents in writing.
 - 4) Protection of data collected during international public opinion research projects: When the target population for a research project comprises individuals resident in a jurisdiction outside Canada, researchers must ensure that data are stored in a manner consistent with the relevant laws of that jurisdiction.
 - 5) Protection against physical damage to servers: Researchers must also put in place measures to ensure the “physical” security of data and servers.

9.2. Temporary Storage of Data on Servers

If the temporary storage of data collected takes place on a server that is operated by another provider, the researcher must place the provider under the obligation to take the necessary steps to ensure that the requirements described in [subsection 9.1.](#) are met. Temporary storage of the collected data on the server must be terminated at the earliest possible time.

9.3. Transmission of Data Internationally

Before data is sent over the Internet to another country, researchers must check with competent authorities that the data transfer is permissible. The recipient may need to provide safeguards necessary for the protection of the data and ensure compliance with the requirements described in [subsection 9.1.](#)

9.4. Disclosure of Participants' E-mails in Batch Transfers

Researchers must have adequate safeguards in place to ensure that when e-mails are sent in batches, the addresses of the participants are not revealed.

9.5. In the Event of Any Data Breach

In the event of any data breach, the client must be informed immediately and provided with details about both the nature and the extent of the data breach.

9.6. Location of Teleconference Bridges

When using the recording function of a teleconference service provider to produce audio recordings of group discussions or interviews, it is important to make certain that those recordings are stored on servers and back-up servers located solely in Canada.

- a) To minimize the risk of either unsanctioned or legally-sanctioned access to such audio recordings, the researcher is advised to download these recordings to their own computers or servers as promptly as possible after the sessions and to delete the copies on the teleconference service provider's servers.

9.7. Delivery of Data to Clients

- 1) When delivering qualitative research technical data or records to clients, special care must be taken to protect participants' rights to privacy and anonymity as specified in subsections [1.3.1.](#) and [1.3.3.](#) of this document. The following points require particular attention.
 - a) When providing recruitment lists to clients, either updates or final lists, special care must be taken to remove all personal information protected under the [Privacy Act](#) and [Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act](#).
 - b) The same care must be taken when providing supporting documents for the payment of incentives.
- 2) In cases where primary or secondary records are requested by the client, special care must be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants unless participants have given their explicit informed consent to the contrary. See [subsection 1.3.3.](#) of this document for detailed requirements related to the protection of anonymity of qualitative research participants.

9.8. Destruction of Technical Data and Records

- 1) At the end of the mandatory retention period stipulated in [section 8.](#), all technical data and records must be disposed of in such a way as not to risk the security of the information obtained.

- 2) The research firm is responsible for ensuring that all subcontractors (e.g. recruitment firm, moderators, interviewers, group facilities) dispose of all technical data and records they may have in their possession in such a way as not to risk the security of the information obtained.

10. REPORTING

10.1. Topline Report

A topline report is one due very shortly after completion of the research sessions. Topline reports are often based on the memory of moderator(s)/interviewer(s) rather than the full analysis of transcripts or recordings. As a result, they can have uncertain validity. For this reason, qualitative research projects should generally not require a topline report.

- 1) If the client requires a topline report:
 - a) the client must provide a justification in the research request sent to PWGSC that indicates a clear need for it; and
 - b) the Statement of Work must specify the expectations with respect to:
 - i. which subset of key topics is to be reported in the topline report; and
 - ii. whether or not the topline is to be based on a review of the relevant raw material (e.g. transcripts, recordings);
 - c) if the topline report is not to be based on a review of the relevant raw material the client must explicitly acknowledge that:
 - i. the results presented may change and/or be incomplete; and
 - ii. it may not be prudent to make decisions based on the topline report.
- 2) When a topline report is produced the lead moderator/interviewer must state:
 - a) what analysis the report is based on including the sources used in that analysis; and
 - b) that the results may change once a thorough analysis of the qualitative research data is performed in the preparation of the final report.

10.2. Report Requirements

10.2.1. General

The research report has two primary purposes. The report must:

- 1) describe the research results clearly and concisely and interpret their implications in terms meaningful to the client's objectives; and
- 2) for archival purposes, provide information about how the research was conducted in sufficient detail that all procedures could be undertaken in the same manner again.

In addition, in order to support the legal requirement that the client provide research reports to Library and Archives Canada (LAC), the research firm must ensure that the report conforms to the LAC deposit instructions (see [subsection 10.3.](#)).

10.2.2. Authorship Requirement

The lead moderator/interviewer must be directly involved in writing the research report and must have overall accountability for its content.

10.2.3. Use and Limitations of Qualitative Research Results

The report must accurately represent the applicability of qualitative research results, including both the limitations and unique value of the specific research methods used.

- 1) The Executive Summary and the Research Method sections of the report [see [subsection 10.2.5.](#), paragraph 3) c)] must state that:

- a) the results are directional in nature; and

- b) the results of qualitative research are not statistically projectable.

The following statement is an example of how these limitations might be expressed:

Qualitative research is designed to reveal a rich range of opinions and interpretations rather than to measure what percentage of the target population holds a given opinion. These results must not be used to estimate the numeric proportion or number of individuals in the population who hold a particular opinion because they are not statistically projectable.

- 2) The report should describe how the qualitative research methods used had produced findings of unique value to the study objectives, e.g. with reference to the richness and depth of participant responses.

10.2.4. Required Components of the Report

The final research report must be deposited in English and French, and include the following four components:

- 1) Cover page [see [subsection 10.3.](#), paragraph 1) a)];
- 2) Executive Summary [see [subsection 10.3.](#), paragraph 1) b)];
- 3) Main Body (see [subsection 10.2.5.](#)); and
- 4) Appendices [see [subsection 10.3.](#), paragraph 1) c)].

10.2.5. Main Body of the Report

This section describes the minimum requirements for the contents of the main body of the report.

- 1) A description of the **research background**, including:
 - a) the research purpose; and
 - b) the research objectives.
- 2) A detailed description of **research participants**, including:
 - a) the target group for the research project;
 - b) the total number of participants, broken down by the key attributes relevant to the research objectives (e.g. region of residence, gender, occupation);
 - c) when relevant, any attribute that is less well represented than intended, and the possible reasons for this shortfall;
 - d) if group discussions were conducted, the number of participants in each group and their demographic composition, so long as revealing these demographics does not put participant anonymity at risk.
- 3) A **method** section, including:
 - a) the research procedures:
 - i. type of research session(s);
 - ii. number of research sessions;
 - iii. research modality (in-person, online, telephone, etc.);
 - iv. research setting or location;
 - v. the dates of the research; and
 - vi. the sample source (e.g. lists).
 - b) the recruitment methods, including any incentives provided;
 - c) a statement that the results are directional and not statistically projectable to the target population;
 - d) the ways in which the qualitative research method(s) used provide unique value in meeting the research objectives;
 - e) information about the moderator(s) and/or interviewer(s), including:
 - i. when multiple moderators/interviewers were used, the rationale for doing so; and
 - ii. when moderator(s)/interviewer(s) were selected to match participant attributes (e.g. gender, ethnicity, language), the rationale for doing so.
 - f) whether the groups sessions, when used, were homogenous or heterogeneous with respect to participant characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, professional status) and provide a rationale for the approach taken;
 - g) the method(s) used to record the output of the qualitative sessions (e.g. audio recording, video, capture and storage of chat interactions);
 - h) any formal changes made to the discussion/interview agenda in the course of data collection [see [subsection 4.3.4.](#), paragraph 2)] and their rationale;
 - i) a brief description of quality control procedures, including:

- i.* the procedures followed to verify the demographic and other recruitment criteria of participants, including, when relevant, use of the MRIA's [Qualitative Research Registry](#);
 - ii.* when multiple moderators/interviewers have been used, the procedures followed whereby each remained equally up to date on trends emerging from the various sessions; and
 - iii.* any other quality controls and procedures used, if applicable.
- 4) A detailed description of key **results** and **conclusions** linked to the research objectives.
 - a) In order to avoid any implication that results are projectable, the report must **not** include percentages or precise proportions.
 - b) The report must **not** reveal anything that might put the anonymity of participants or the confidentiality of their input at risk. Care must be taken when reporting verbatim comments to ensure that nothing in the content, vocabulary and/or style of speaking or writing, could serve to identify any individual participant.
 - c) **Recommendations** may be included in the report when requested or approved by the client at the outset of the project.
 - i.* The intended source of those recommendations, whether the participants or the research firm, must be clearly stated.
 - ii.* Recommendations from participants must be reported as “findings” or “conclusions” and not be included in a “recommendations” section of the report.
 - iii.* When the client consented to recommendations for action from the research firm, these may be included in a “recommendations” section of the report. The research firm must have sufficient background knowledge (e.g. client objectives, capabilities and resources) to ensure these recommendations are appropriate and realistic.

10.2.6. Appendices

The following materials must be provided in appendices attached to the final report:

- 1) All discussion/interview materials, including, when relevant, the invitations, recruitment screeners, discussion/interview guides, descriptions or representations of any visual or auditory aids, participant worksheets and all other data collection documents, **in all languages in which the research was conducted**;
- 2) Any other technical information about the execution of the research, and not already contained in the body of the report, that would be needed to replicate the research project; and
- 3) A statement of political neutrality signed by the research firm.

10.3. Library and Archives Canada

It is a legal requirement for institutions to send written public opinion research reports to Library and Archives Canada (LAC) within six months of the completion of the data collection.

- 1) Pursuant to the *Public Opinion Research Contract Regulations*, the *Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research*, and LAC deposit instructions, final reports **must** include the following **at a minimum**:
 - a) on the covering page,
 - i. the title of the project;
 - ii. the name of the research firm who entered into the contract;
 - iii. the contract number and the award date;
 - iv. the POR Registration Number;
 - v. the delivery date (the date the final version of the report was received by the project authority);
 - vi. the name of the client department or agency sponsoring the research;
 - vii. the departmental contact information in the form of a generic e-mail address;
 - viii. In the English report, there must be a note stating, "Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français."; and
 - ix. In the French report, there must be a note stating, "This report is also available in English.";
 - b) a narrative executive summary in English and French, submitted separately and consisting of,
 - i. a statement of the research purpose and objectives;
 - ii. a summary of key findings;
 - iii. a brief description of the methodology used;
 - iv. a statement that the research results are not statistically projectable to the target population but only directional in nature [see [subsection 10.2.3.](#), paragraph 1) a)];
 - v. an indication of the total expenditures of the POR study;
 - vi. an outline of how the results were used, if possible; and
 - vii. how the information is expected to be used.
 - c) appendices containing,
 - i. the research instruments used and if applicable, the test material; and
 - ii. all other information about the recruitment or execution of fieldwork that would be needed to replicate the research initiative.