



# Focusing on Higher Quality Focus Groups

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## ABSTRACT

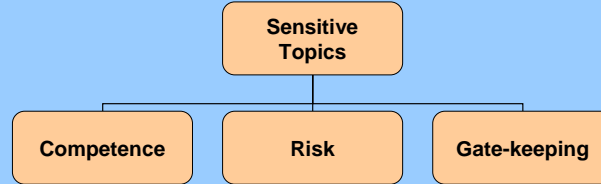
The Decision Center for a Desert City (DCDC) is developing innovative tools and asking hybrid research questions to build a model of research to examine science and policy integration. Through the collaboration of stakeholders in focus group research, we are gaining insight into more rigorous forms of social science research. As a result of our group exercises, we find a range of sensitive topics dictated by climatic variability and local political discourse where its added value is rooted in the facilitation and integration of knowledge across various fields of research.

## RESEARCH DESIGN – FOCUS GROUPS

Participants: Water Scientists, Water Attorneys and Consultants, and Water Policy Experts

Interview and Discussion Questions: (1) How relevant is the model to your needs as a decision-maker (or the needs of decision-makers) in your workplace? (2) What is your opinion of the scientific adequacy and the technical information presented in this model? (3) Do you think that the information presented here is fair, unbiased, and respectful of stakeholder values?

## DATA STRUCTURE



COMPETENCE-RELATED CODES		
Code	Definition	Kappa Score
Model Construction	Decision rules for model calculations (i.e., formulas, estimations, algorithms)	.872 (very good)
Framing Bias	A preconceived policy goal, perspective, or opinion is expressed in WaterSim presentation or scenarios	.745 (good)
Scientific Validity	Scientific adequacy of the model based (esp., accuracy, reliability, precision)	.657 (good)

RISK-RELATED CODES		
Code	Definition	Kappa Score
Adequacy of water supply	The need to preserve present water supplies to make them last in the future	.657 (good)
Unsustainable lifestyle	The need for change behaviors and lifestyles in ways that conserve present water supplies	1.000 (perfect)
Vulnerable communities	Phoenix's water system is vulnerable to shocks or complete breakdown	.657 (good)

GATE-KEEPING CODES		
Code	Definition	Kappa Score
Science/Policy Collaborations	Events/processes that foster collaboration between scientists and policy actors on water policy issues	1.000 (perfect)
Agenda Setting	The idea that decision-making agendas should be 'co-produced' by scientists and policy makers	.877 (very good)
Political Uncertainty	Unpredictable factors related to politics, legislation, and industry that make water decision-making difficult	.657 (good)

## FINDINGS

(1) Scientific Validity is the most sensitive because it requires the respondent to make complex methodological judgments (IR mean=3.1, FG mean=0.9, p=.001).

(2) Vulnerable communities is extremely sensitive because it involves making statements that Phoenix is at risk for a partial or complete breakdown of water provision system (IR mean=0.9, FG mean=0.1, p=.008).

(3) Political uncertainty is the most sensitive because it involves revealing privileged information about the inner working of the policy sphere and the limits of decision-makers abilities to execute lower-risk environmental policies agenda (IR mean=0.2, FG mean=2.4, p<.0005).

