



**University of Central Arkansas  
Informed Consent Agreement  
Virtual Focus Group - Cover Letter  
Women of Color Business Owners Study**

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a virtual focus group for a research study. Before you give your consent to volunteer, please listen to the consent to participate information being read to you. It is important that you ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

**Investigators**

This virtual focus group session is sponsored by the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion Minority Vendor Partnership Initiative at the University of Central Arkansas and the Women's Foundation of Arkansas. The session will be monitored by Kristy Carter, director of marketing for the Division of Outreach and Community Engagement and member of the Minority Vendor Partnership Initiative committee at UCA and Principal Investigator of the study, who can be reached by email at [kcarter@uca.edu](mailto:kcarter@uca.edu) or by phone at (501) 450-3139.

**Co-Investigators Include:**

Dr. Shaneil Ealy, University of Central Arkansas  
Christy Horpedahl, University of Central Arkansas  
Victoria Mays, University of Central Arkansas  
Jodi McDougal, University of Central Arkansas  
Fredricka Sharkey, University of Central Arkansas  
Karen Walker, Focus Group  
Kara Wilkins, Focus Group Facilitator  
Dr. Angela Webster, University of Central Arkansas

**Purpose of the Research**

This research study is designed to gain feedback from women of color business owners who have established businesses or are self-employed in the Delta region of Arkansas. The data from this research will be used to identify gaps in the services that may or may not have been made available to you as you ventured to create your business. We want to know how the events of the COVID-19 outbreak have impacted your business. The information will be used to improve the level of services that UCA's Minority Vendor Partnership Initiative and the Women's Foundation of Arkansas provide to women of color business owners in the future.

## **Procedures**

By volunteering to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in (1) a virtual focus group discussion online using ZOOM; and (2) to complete an online survey.

The virtual focus group will last approximately one hour but will not exceed two hours. The focus group moderator will pose questions to the group and ask you to reflect on your experiences related to starting a business in your area of the State. Due to the nature of virtual focus groups, other participants will have knowledge of the information that you share. This session will be audio recorded for analysis purposes, and a representative from UCA will be taking notes in case anything goes wrong with the recording.

Following the virtual focus group, you will receive a link to complete the online portion of this study. The data that we collect through the online survey will provide an additional layer of information about your journey to business development that we did not capture during the virtual focus group. It will take you approximately 10-15 minutes to complete the survey. The online survey will be open until July 31st.

## **Potential Risks or Discomforts**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you experience any discomfort, you may stop your participation at any time by leaving the virtual focus group session.

## **Potential Benefits of the Research**

There are no foreseeable benefits to you personally for your participation in this study. Your participation will, however, help the Women's Foundation of Arkansas and the UCA Minority Vendor Partnership Initiative in providing ongoing services and educational programming for other minority communities in the future.

## **Incentive to Participate**

To thank you for participating in this research study you will receive a \$25 Walmart gift card. This gift card is yours to enjoy regardless of the extent of your participation in this focus group discussion. However, you must remain present for the entire time of the focus group to receive a gift card and complete the online survey. The principal investigator of the study will capture your address in order to mail the gift card to you.

Each focus group participant will receive one (1) \$25 Walmart gift card. Online survey participants (other than focus group participants) can elect to have their name entered into a drawing for a \$25 Walmart gift card.

## **Confidentiality and Data Storage**

Your name will be stored on a password-protected computer. Transcripts of digital audio recordings will be stored in a locked file cabinet in Kristy Carter's office. Printed transcripts of digital recordings will also be stored for at least three years after the study's completion in a



locked file cabinet in Kristy Carter's office. If we recount any information from the focus groups, we will use an alias.

### **Participation and Withdrawal**

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without penalty by simply leaving the ZOOM meeting. To withdraw from the study after data collection has been completed, please contact Kristy Carter at [kcarter@uca.edu](mailto:kcarter@uca.edu) or (501) 450-3139.

### **Research Deliverables**

The data collected in this study will be used to compile a report on Women of Color Business Owners in the Delta. The report will be posted on the Women's Foundation of Arkansas' website and available for public consumption.

### **Questions about the Research**

If you have any questions about the research, now or later, you may contact Kristy Carter at [kcarter@uca.edu](mailto:kcarter@uca.edu) or (501) 450-3139.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Central Arkansas. If you believe there is any infringement upon your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Compliance Officer at (501) 852-7460 or [researchcompliance@uca.edu](mailto:researchcompliance@uca.edu).

## **Debriefing statement for virtual focus groups:**

Thank you again for taking time to participate in this virtual focus group. We will take the audio recordings from this focus group and send it off to a third party transcription service who will then return the transcribed information back to us for analysis.

We will read through all of the responses and look for common themes among your answers to compile a report about your experiences. Your names will not be used in the final report. The final report will be shared with the Women's Foundation of Arkansas and posted on their website for public consumption.

The Women's Foundation of Arkansas and other philanthropic organizations will use the report to better understand the barriers that you perceive are present for women of color business owners when starting businesses in Arkansas. The end goal is to have a better idea of where best to direct their financial resources that will benefit women of color most when starting new businesses.

The University of Central Arkansas Minority Vendor Partnership Initiative will also use this information to create educational programming and other outreach initiatives to support women of color business owners with their business development needs.

For participating in today's virtual focus group, you will receive a \$25 Walmart gift card. Following this session, you will receive an email with the gift card waiver form attached to it. In order to claim your gift card, you must complete and return the gift card waiver form to Kristy Carter at [kcarter@uca.edu](mailto:kcarter@uca.edu). Upon receipt of the form, your gift card will be mailed to the address that you provide on the form.

If you would like to withdraw your responses from this study at this time, please let us know. If you would like to receive a report of this research when it is completed (or a summary of the findings), please contact Kristy Carter ([kcarter@uca.edu](mailto:kcarter@uca.edu) or (501) 450-3139). If you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the UCA Research Compliance Office at (501) 852-7460 or [researchcompliance@uca.edu](mailto:researchcompliance@uca.edu).

Thank you again for your participation.