



## **MARKET RESEARCH FOR DC HBX**

Insights from Six Focus Groups with Consumers and  
Small Business Owners in the District of Columbia

May 27, 2013

## BACKGROUND

**DC HBX sponsored six focus groups** with consumers and small businesses on May 9-10, 2013. The purpose was to:

- Measure awareness of the exchange and new coverage opportunities.
- Test descriptions of the DC HBX and willingness to use the exchange to find health coverage.
- Test motivations and barriers to using the exchange.
- Test descriptions and terminology for “tax credits.”
- Gain a sense of affordability using a sample premium amount.
- Explore preferences about customer assistance.
- Test potential DC HBX names, taglines, and logos.

## FOCUS GROUP DETAILS

One focus group was conducted with each segment:

- Small business owners (3-10 employees), mix of those who do not offer coverage and those who do
- Small business owners (11-50 employees), mix of those who do not offer coverage and those who do
- Low-to-moderate income (200-400% FPL) Latinos, ages 18-64, mix of uninsured and those who buy private insurance
- Young invincibles (ages 18-35), low-to-moderate income individuals (200-400% FPL), mix of uninsured and those who buy private insurance
- Lower-income (200-300% FPL) African Americans ages 18-64, mix of uninsured and those who buy private insurance
- Moderate income (300%+ FPL) African Americans ages 18-64, mix of uninsured and those who buy private insurance.

Research participants were recruited from across all of the Wards in the District of Columbia. Key findings from this research can be found on the following pages.

## OVERALL FEELINGS

**There is low awareness of the details of the Affordable Care Act.** Few know about the exchange, tax credits, or new coverage options.

**Once the exchange is described, there is strong interest** in using it to find affordable coverage.

Elements that are particularly popular include: cannot be denied because of pre-existing conditions, financial help to pay for coverage, side-by-side comparisons, and the ability to get help (i.e., call center, assisters, etc.)

**Small business owners like the ability to set a defined contribution** and offer their employees choices.

**The idea of financial help through tax credits is appealing** but confusing.

## CONCERNS

**There is strong concern about the DC government being directly involved** in running the exchange. Discussing an independent board does not allay those concerns. They worry about efficiency and accountability.

**There is also some concern about having insurance brokers closely involved** with the exchange.(more so by individuals but also among small business owners). There is a perception that they will give biased information.

**Lower income individuals are not as comfortable online** and will need ready access to customer assistance. While many will likely use telephone assistance, many lower income individuals in the focus groups also said they would like in-person help. Enrolling in health coverage is important and they want to make sure they do it correctly.

## CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE

**The call center concept was popular** across the board. Many consumers can envision picking up the phone and seeking advice when using the online exchange.

**24/7 access to customer assistance is an important feature** to highlight. All participants in the focus groups like hearing about this feature.

The fact that customer assistance will be **based in DC** is a real plus.

**Waiting times and long phone trees are a concern.** DC consumers and small business owners want to be able to reach a “real person” quickly or be told how long they will have to wait and be given the option of calling back.

Small business owners and younger, uninsured individuals also express interest in receiving help through **online chat**.

## NEXT RESEARCH STEPS

**The next step is a survey** of n=800 DC consumers 18-64 with an oversample of n=260 uninsured individuals 18-64. The survey will be conducted in English and Spanish and 25% of the sample will be reached by cellphone.

The survey will confirm the insights from the focus groups. The survey will:

- Measure awareness of the exchange and new coverage opportunities.
- Test descriptions of the DC HBX and willingness to use the exchange to find health coverage.
- Test motivations and barriers to using the exchange.
- Gain a sense of affordability using a sample premium amount.
- Explore preferences about customer assistance.

The survey is scheduled to go into the field the first week of June.

**INSIGHTS INTO BRANDING**



## NAMES AND TAGLINES

We tested 4 names in the focus groups. The top name is ***DC Health Link*** by a large margin and across all groups. Reasons why this name works so well:

- "It's ours."
- People like having "DC" in the name.
- They like the word "health"
- Several participants said the purpose of the exchange is to "link" people to coverage.

No other name came close in terms of level of support.

With taglines, there was not as much clarity. Four out of the 10 taglines tested rose to the top. They are:

- Get the facts. Get covered.
- Find the plan that's right for you
- Find the health plan that fits
- Search. Compare. Select.

## LOGOS

The logo at the right may be the best choice for the District since it appealed to small business owners as well as consumers. They felt it looked new – not similar to other logos in the District – and clean. It also struck a serious tone – which they felt was important since health coverage is a serious topic to them. Most liked the linking of the “D” and the “C” to visually show how they will be linked to health coverage.

Other logos tested in the research either seemed too familiar or reminded them of DC government.

There was strong agreement on colors – consumers and small business owners want red and blue to represent DC.



For more information about this research,  
contact Michael Perry at [mike@perryundem.com](mailto:mike@perryundem.com)