

## **Attachment 6**

# **Exam Takers Focus Group Protocols and Consent Information**

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0990- . The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average (1 hours)(30 minutes) per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather the data needed, and complete and review the information collection. If you have comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate(s) or suggestions for improving this form, please write to: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, OS/OCIO/PRA, 200 Independence Ave., S.W., Suite 336-E, Washington D.C. 20201, Attention: PRA Reports Clearance Officer

## Exam Takers Email Invitation

[DATE]

Dear [PARTICIPANT NAME],

In an effort to gain knowledge about the Health Information Technology (IT) Workforce program's Competency Exam being implemented across the United States, we are asking you to participate in the Health IT Workforce Program Evaluation. This study is being conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) on behalf of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

We are setting up a focus group discussion for individuals who took the Health IT Workforce Program's Competency Exam and would greatly appreciate your participation. The 90 minute meeting will take place online by way of web-conference with approximately 10 other exam takers attending. The goal of this dynamic group discussion is to gather information in the form of opinions and viewpoints regarding your experience with the exam, overall procedures and whether the exam accurately assessed your competency in certain health IT workforce roles. Your feedback and insight will help ONC to evaluate the effectiveness of the Exam in preparing a well-trained workforce in the Health IT industry. As a token of our appreciation you will receive [INSERT INCENTIVE DESCRIPTION].

Please call [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] or e-mail [INSERT PROJECT EMAIL] to indicate your availability. Provide only your first name and your unique ID number [INSERT NORC SUID] along with the dates and times you are available. We will follow-up with a confirmation email with instructions, the informed consent form and schedule.

**Confidentiality.** Please keep in mind that NORC maintains strict confidentiality standards. Your responses will be reported in summary form only and will be safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. Your individual data will not be shared with your school, employer or anyone else. Your participation in this group interview is voluntary.

**Background Information.** The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act of 2009 created the Workforce Program to support the development of Health IT education programs for the purpose of facilitating the creation of a robust workforce dedicated to the rapid and widespread adoption and use of health information technology. Additional information on Health IT Workforce and other HITECH programs may be found here: <http://healthit.hhs.gov>.

NORC at the University of Chicago has a long history of conducting high-quality social science research to inform public policy and promote the public interest.

**Contact Us.** If you have any questions regarding the survey, please e-mail us at [EMAIL ADDR] or call our toll-free number at [STUDY TOLL FREE]. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, you may call the NORC IRB Administrator; toll free, at 866-309-0542.

Again, thank you for your time and we look forward to further contact with you.  
Sincerely,

Kristina Lowell, Ph.D.

Project Director  
NORC at the University of Chicago

## **Exam Takers Email Invitation – Follow-up**

[DATE]

Dear [PARTICIPANT NAME],

Hopefully you have received our previous email inviting you to participate in an online focus group discussion for individuals who took the Competency Exam for the Health IT Workforce Program. We would greatly appreciate your participation in this very important meeting and would like you to hear from you soon.

Please call [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] or e-mail [INSERT PROJECT EMAIL] to indicate your availability. Provide only your first name and your unique ID number [INSERT NORC SUID] along with the dates and times you are available. We will follow-up with a confirmation email with instructions, the informed consent form and schedule.

The 90 minute meeting will take place online by way of web-conference with approximately 10 other exam takers attending. The goal of this dynamic group discussion is to gather information in the form of opinions and viewpoints from you and other Health IT faculty members on your experiences regarding the exam.

As a reminder, NORC at the University of Chicago ([www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org)) on behalf of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (<http://healthit.hhs.gov>) is conducting a study to gain knowledge about the Health Information Technology (IT) Workforce Program being implemented at [INSERT NAME] and other community colleges offering the program. Your feedback and insight will help ONC to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program in preparing a well-trained workforce in the Health IT industry.

**Confidentiality.** Please keep in mind that NORC maintains strict confidentiality standard in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. Your individual data will not be shared with your school, employer or anyone else. Your participation in this group interview is voluntary.

**Contact Us.** If you have any questions regarding the survey, please e-mail us at [EMAIL ADDR] or call our toll-free number at [STUDY TOLL FREE]. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, you may call the NORC IRB Administrator; toll free, at 866-309-0542.

Again, thank you for your time and we look forward to further contact with you.  
Sincerely,

Kristina Lowell, Ph.D.  
Project Director

## **Exam Takers Confirmation Email**

[DATE]

Dear [PARTICIPANT NAME],

Thank you for your interest in participating in the Health IT Workforce **Exam Takers Focus Group Discussion** conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) on behalf of the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services!

This email contains important information you will need to attend the online meeting.

The Web-Conference meeting is scheduled for [INSERT DAY], [INSERT DATE] at [INSERT TIME]. The meeting should take no more than 90 minutes. Please be prompt and dial in at least 5 minutes prior to start.

1. The dial-in phone number is [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]
2. Pass code: [INSERT PASSWORD]
3. Link to the web-conference: [www.1800conference.com](http://www.1800conference.com) (Follow the prompts to log in using the phone number and pass code listed above).

We have attached the Project Information Sheet that explains in detail the purpose of the focus group and your rights as a participant. You will need to read this document prior to participating in the focus group discussion.

The goal of this dynamic group discussion is to gather information in the form of opinions and viewpoints from you and other Health IT faculty members on your experiences regarding the program. Your feedback and insight will help ONC to evaluate the effectiveness of the academic program in preparing a well-trained workforce in the Health IT industry. As a token of our appreciation you will receive [INSERT INCENTIVE DESCRIPTION].

If you have any questions or need additional information please do not hesitate to call us at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER] or e-mail [INSERT PROJECT EMAIL].

We are excited to meet you and thank you again for your time and participation in this important study.

Sincerely,

Kristina Lowell, Ph.D.  
Project Director

**Confidentiality.** Please keep in mind that NORC maintains strict confidentiality standards. Your responses will be reported in summary form only and will be safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. Your individual data will not be shared with your school, employer or anyone else. Your participation in this group interview is voluntary.

## **Project Information Sheet – Exam Takers**

**TITLE OF STUDY:** Health Information Technology Workforce Program Evaluation

**Project Director:** Kristina Lowell, Ph.D.

**Phone Number:** [INSERT PHONE NUMBER]

You are asked to take part in a research study being conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) – a not-for-profit company that conducts research in the public interest. NORC has been contracted by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation on their IT Professionals in Health Care Program. (We will refer to it as the Workforce Program.) An essential piece of this evaluation is to determine whether the Health IT Competency Exam has met its objective which is to be able to assess an individual’s competency in certain health IT workforce roles.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this research study is to further investigate the experiences of individuals who took the Competency Exam through focus group interviews. This qualitative research is designed to complement the existing surveys and to aid in the understanding of how effective the Health IT Competency Exam program is in achieving its goals.

### **Procedures:**

Approximately 8 individuals who took the Exam will participate in an online group discussion by way of web-conferencing led by an NORC researcher. This discussion will be guided by the moderator so that topics relevant to the exam taker’s experiences with the Competency Exam are explored in detail. There will be opportunities for all participants to voice any comments or concerns they have about any aspect of the program or its impact on their lives. This group session will be recorded and transcribed to help us remember what is said during the discussion and to make sure comments are captured accurately. Your participation in the Focus Group discussion will last for approximately 90 minutes.

### **Risks and Discomforts:**

You may choose not to answer any question you do not feel comfortable answering. You may choose to end your participation in this discussion at any time.

### **Benefits:**

Your statements will be used to identify areas for possible improvement of the Exam and its execution. They will also be used to better understand the needs and experiences of those who choose to take the Exam in the future.

### **Confidentiality:**

No participants will be identified by name in any report or publication of this study or its results. Your responses and comments will be reported in summary form only and your data is safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. NORC is obligated under law to protect your identity. Your comments will remain absolutely confidential, meaning we will not share what you specifically have to say with anyone. Your responses will in no way impact your employment, education, or any other life event. Additionally, as a participant of this group, you are bound by this obligation not to share information that you hear during this meeting with anyone outside of the group.

Recordings and transcriptions that contain references to your name, as well as lists of participants, will be stored securely by NORC and will not be shared outside of the NORC research team. All electronic files will be stored on NORC's secure servers, and if paper files are created they will be stored under lock and key or shredded after use.

**Right to refuse or to withdraw from the study:**

Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, or may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty, or losing benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. NORC has the right to stop your participation in the study at any time.

**Offer to Answer Questions:**

You have the opportunity to ask, and to have answered, all your questions about this research. If you have other questions, or if a research-related injury occurs, you may call the project director, Dr. Kristina Lowell, at [INSERT PHONE NUMBER].

**Institutional Review Board Approval:**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of Human Subjects at NORC. If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, you may call the NORC IRB Administrator, toll free, at 866-309-0542.

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## **Health IT Workforce Program Evaluation Exam Takers Focus Group Guide**

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Online meeting by way of web-conference

- **Overview, 5 minutes**
- **Consent Statement, 5 minutes**
- **Group Introductions, 5 minutes**
- **Group Discussion, 70 minutes**
- **Conclusion and wrap-up, 5 minutes**

### I. Overview (5 minutes)

Welcome, everyone, to this important meeting and thank you for taking the time to participate in this online discussion.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am with NORC at the University of Chicago (NORC) – a not-for-profit company that conducts research in the public interest. NORC has been contracted by the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of their IT Professionals in Health Care Program. (We will refer to it as the Workforce Program.) An essential piece of this evaluation is to determine whether the Health IT Competency Exam has met its objective, which is to be able to assess competencies in specific health IT workforce roles.

We have asked you and others who have taken the Exam to participate in an online dynamic group discussion to share your experiences, opinions, and feedback regarding the Competency Exam that you took recently. The goal of this meeting is to gather information to evaluate the usefulness of the Exam in preparing a well-trained workforce in the Health IT industry and to help ONC with their efforts to improve the management and implementation of the Exam. Your participation, insight and feedback will help ONC refine the Exam to make it more effective in measuring the competency of the workforce in the six workforce roles.

Before we begin the discussion, I'd like to take just a few minutes to make sure everyone here is clear about the protocol and objectives for today's meeting.

I will be facilitating the meeting today. My role is to ask questions that will encourage discussion and facilitate a good exchange of opinions and ideas from everyone here. I will make sure that everyone gets a chance to speak, and keep us focused and on topic. It is my goal to provide a safe, neutral and secure environment for you to talk freely and openly express your opinions, thoughts and viewpoints.

Your role as a participant is to answer the questions as honestly as possible. You might want to jot down your thoughts on a piece of paper in case you get distracted when others speak. You may provide a new idea or response for the group to discuss, expand on each



other's answers, or even disagree, respectfully of course. Most important to the success of the discussion is to hear as many views on the subject as possible. We prefer for the discussion to evolve into a dynamic and interactive conversation among all of you.

## II. Consent Statement (5 minutes)

Now I would like to take a few minutes to review the Project Information Sheet that was emailed to you. Approximately 8 exam takers will participate in today's meeting. The meeting will last for approximately 90 minutes. This group session will be recorded and transcribed to help us remember what is said during the discussion and to make sure comments are captured accurately but without real names or other identifying information. Please bear in mind that even if you previously agree to be taped you do not have to respond to a particular question if you feel uncomfortable doing so. Only NORC researchers assigned to this study will be listening to the recordings as they will help us write a report about the key findings from these discussions.

NORC is obligated under law to protect your identity and will not include your name or anything that identifies you in any report we write. Your responses and comments will be reported in summary form only and your data are safeguarded in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974. Your comments will remain absolutely confidential, meaning we will not share what you specifically have to say with anyone. Additionally, as a participant of this group, you are bound by this obligation not to share information that you hear during this meeting with anyone outside of the group.

Finally, I will remind you that your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, or may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty, or losing benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled. Your responses will in no way impact your current employment or your ability to attain employment in the future. You may refrain from answering questions and choose to end your participation in this discussion at any time.

Does anyone have any questions? If you should have any questions during or after the discussion or if a research-related injury occurs, you may call the project director, Dr. Kristina Lowell at [301-634-9488].

Does everyone agree to participate?  
Does everyone agree to be recorded?

## III. Introductions (5 minutes)

Let's take a few minutes to introduce ourselves to each other. Please tell your first name only, what you do for a living, and where you took the Exam. I'll start. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. While I do not work directly in the field health IT myself, I do [insert job description] for a living.

Do you have any questions? Let's begin.

#### IV. Group Discussion (70 minutes)

##### **A. Topic: Background and Recruitment/Motivation**

**First, I'd like to talk about your motivations for taking the Competency Exam**  
*approx 10 minutes*

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- 1) Background
  - a. Can you provide a brief description of your background in health IT?
    - i. For example, have you had any formal training in health IT, including any courses in health IT? If so, what topics did you cover? How much training have you received and when did you get it?
    - ii. What sort of professional and practical experience have you had in health IT?
- 2) Enrollment/Recruitment
  - a. How did you hear about the Competency Exam?
  - b. Why did you decide to take the Exam?
  - c. Was it easy to find information about the exam? Was it easy to register for and to find a location where you could take the exam?

##### **B. Topic: Relevance and Value**

**Now I'm interested in your thoughts and perceptions of the relevance and value of the Competency Exam.**  
*approx 20 minutes*

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- 1) Did you feel that the exam addressed the competencies that are critical to your area of expertise or interest? If yes, please describe. If no, why not?
- 2) Now let's talk about the pros and cons of taking the Competency Exam. Please describe.
- 3) Overall would you say that the exam tested the material you expected it to test?

##### **C. Topic: Overall Thoughts and Recommendations**

**Now I'd like to ask you for your overall thoughts of Competency Exam as well as suggestions and recommendations for improving the Exam.**

*approx 20 minutes*

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- 1) Overall Thoughts
  - a. How satisfied are you with your overall experience with the Exam?
  - b. Did you clearly understand the procedures for taking the Exam? Was anything unclear? If so, what?

- c. How much time did you spend preparing for the Exam and what sorts of things did you do to prepare for it?

2) Recommendations

- a. We'd like to hear your recommendations for improving the Exam. What questions or sections did you find to be most difficult? Were there questions or sections that you found to be simple? Confusing? Not relevant? Were there any questions that were left out that you think should have been included?
- b. In general, what, if any, changes would you like to see implemented?

**D. Topic: Employment Prospects**

**Lastly, I'm interested in your thoughts about the Exam and employment in health IT.**

*approx 20 minutes*

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- 1) For those of you who are currently employed in Health IT:
  - a. Do you believe that taking the Exam played a role in getting/keeping your job in health IT?
  - b. Do you feel the exam has helped you or might help you in the future to obtain a promotion?
  - c. In your opinion, did the exam test knowledge and skills that relate to your current job?
- 2) For all respondents:
  - a. How helpful do you believe the Exam is for securing a job in the health IT industry?
  - b. What are your thoughts or perceptions of the value of the Competency Exam as a way for employers to assess your skills and competency in Health IT?

V. Conclude (5 minutes)

This concludes our group session. Does anyone have any questions? On behalf of NORC and ONC, I'd like to thank you again for participating in this stimulating group discussion. If you have any questions later on, please feel free to contact us either by email or phone. [INSERT STUDY EMAIL AND PHONE].