

Volume I:

Request for Clearance for Adult Training and Education Study (ATES) Focus Groups 2013 on Participation in Work-Related Training

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Justification

The Departments of Education, Commerce, and Labor and the National Science Foundation have been working jointly with the Office of Management and Budget, the Council of Economic Advisors, and the Office of the Under Secretary of Education, via an Interagency Working Group on Expanded Measures of Enrollment and Attainment (GEMEnA), on the development of survey items focused on participation in training and education among the US adult population. The items resulting from this effort will allow for updates to items used in existing federal data collections so that they reflect current trends in adult training and education. They also will support the development of a new federal survey focused on education, training, and credentials.

This request is focused on GEMEnA's third strand of work: to ***consider new and revised measures of participation in education and training designed to prepare out-of-school youth and adults for work***. Existing federal data collections with survey items on enrollment and participation will benefit from a freshening of questionnaire items to better reflect current trends in delivery (including the expansion of on-line learning) and expanded policy interest related to federal and state investments in education and training for work. To begin this strand, GEMEnA commissioned a background paper¹ to describe the two main types of education and training for work that occur outside of traditional credit-bearing postsecondary education: non-credit coursework and formal on-the-job training. Along with the first two strands of work, this strand will support the development of a new federal household survey focusing on education, training, and credentials. These focus groups are part of the survey development.

In particular, this submittal requests approval for focus groups on a specific type of adult training and education – work-related training. The proposed focus groups represent initial attempts at better defining work-related training, as well as understanding the prevalence and nature of work-related training among the US adult population.

Research Design

A professional focus group moderator will conduct 6 in-person focus groups during evening or lunch hours. Participants will be recruited by email listservs and telephone.

The main focus group research questions are as follows:

- a. What language do people use when they talk about their work-related training? Do people differentiate work-related training from other types of education and training?
- b. What forms does work-related training take?
- c. Can participants distinguish between place/location of the training and its sponsor?
- d. What are people's motivations for pursuing work-related training?
- e. What benefits do people feel that they get out of work-related training programs?
- f. Can participants talk about barriers to getting training?
- g. What level of investment is required to participate in work-related training (in terms of both time and money spent)? Do employers help cover the cost of work-related training?

¹ http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/gemena/pdf/NoncreditPaper_AIR_Final508.pdf

To adequately address these research questions, it is necessary to recruit participants who have participated in work-related training in the past two years. In each group, we will target people who are working or have recently worked in particular occupations, as recommended by GEMEnA:

1. Construction workers, skilled trades (such as carpenters and electricians), and mechanics
2. Secretaries/administrative assistants and retail sales workers
3. Health services: including licensed practical nurses (LPN), registered nurses (RN), and health technicians
4. Financial services: including insurance sales agents, accountants/auditors (including clerks), personal financial advisors, financial analysts
5. Teachers and teacher assistants at the preschool through secondary level
6. Computer and information technology services: including computer support specialists, computer systems analysts, and software developers

These occupations were selected because they are among the most common occupations by educational attainment (as reported in the American Community Survey). They also were selected in order to represent a variety of fields that are anticipated to take part in different types of work-related training (e.g., classroom-based courses vs. hands-on training). Participants must be currently working in the target occupation or, if they are unemployed, their last/most recent job must have been in the target occupation.

We will conduct one focus group for each occupation group. We expect 48 to 60 focus group participants in 6 groups of 8 to 10.

Estimated Response Burden

We expect the focus groups to last 90 minutes.

Table 1. Estimated response burden

Respondents	Number of Respondents	Number of Responses	Burden Hours per Respondent	Total Burden Hours
Recruitment Screener for Individuals for Focus Groups and Cognitive Interviews	120	120	0.05	6
Focus Groups	60	60	1.5	90
Total	120	180	-	96

There is no direct cost to respondents.

Recruitment and Payment to Respondents

To thank the participants for their time, travel, and information, those completing the focus groups will receive a \$75 incentive.

Assurance of Confidentiality

Participation is voluntary and respondents will read a confidentiality pledge before groups are conducted. This statement is as follows: “The American Institutes for Research is conducting this study for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education. This study is

authorized by law under the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA, 20 U.S.C. §9543). Your participation is voluntary. Your responses are protected from disclosure by federal statute (20 U.S.C. §9573). All responses that relate to or describe identifiable characteristics of individuals may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose, unless otherwise compelled by law.”

No personally identifiable information will be maintained after the analyses are completed.

Cost to Federal Government

The anticipated cost for the target 60 interviews is \$55,916.06.

Project Schedule

Activity	2013 Dates
Recruitment	May-June 2013
Conduct focus groups	May-June 2013