

Work-Related Education and Training Focus Groups

Recruitment Criteria and Screener Questions

We will have **6 groups**.

We would like **8-10 people per group**.

The groups will be conducted in the **D.C. metropolitan area**. We would like to hold groups in both of Shugoll's locations – Bethesda and Alexandria/Fairfax.

All participants must have **participated in work-related training in the past 2 years**.

All participants must be part of the **active workforce** (that is, they must be working or unemployed and looking for work—ex: no retirees, no stay-at-home parents). The first two focus groups will include (if possible) 2-3 unemployed people; after this, we will reevaluate whether we want to keep including unemployed people in the groups. We will not include any participants who are currently working for the federal government (though military members are eligible to participate) or any full-time college students.

Each group will **focus on an occupation or set of related occupations**. These occupations were selected because they are among the most common occupations by educational attainment. They also were selected in order to represent a variety of fields that should take part in different types of work-related 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.

All participants must have at least six months of experience in the target occupation.

Within each group, there will be a **range of educational attainment** (taking into account what is reasonable for that occupation), as outlined on the next page.

Finally, there will be a **range of ages** across the groups. Approximately, one third of respondents should be age 30 or less, one third should be ages 31-40, and one third should be ages 41-55.

The maximum accepted age will be 55. For participants with less than high school or high school only, the minimum age will be 21. For participants with some college or a college degree the minimum age will be 25.

OCCUPATION/EDUCATION FOR EACH GROUP

Grp	Occupations	Occupation mix	Education mix
1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construction workers (laborers, equipment operators) 2. Skilled trades (carpenters, electricians, plumbers (also includes pipefitters and steamfitters)) 3. Mechanics 	A roughly equal mix from the three occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more than 2 should have a Bachelor's degree • At least 2 should have done an apprenticeship in the past 5 years
2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secretaries/administrative assistants 2. Retail sales workers (including retail sales supervisors/managers) 	A roughly equal split between the two occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more than 2 should have a Bachelor's degree
3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Licensed practical nurses (LPN) 2. Registered nurses (RN) 3. Health technicians (such as pharmacy technicians, radiologic technologists, clinical laboratory technicians) 	A roughly equal mix from the three occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LPNs and technicians: No more than 1 of each should have Bachelor's degree • RNs: At least one with Associate's degree, one with Bachelor's degree, and one with graduate degree
4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Insurance sales agents 2. Accounting/auditing clerks 3. Accountants/auditors 4. Personal financial advisors; financial analysts 	A roughly equal mix from the four occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 2 should have less than a Bachelor's • At least 2 should have a Bachelor's degree as highest degree • No more than 2 should have more than a Bachelor's degree (none is OK)
5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers: preschool 2. Teachers: elementary, middle, secondary 3. Teacher assistants (does <i>not</i> count graduate students who work as teaching assistants at their college or university) 	About half elementary/middle/secondary teachers; about half preschool and teachers assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary/middle/secondary: No more than two should have greater than a Bachelor's degree • At least one preschool teacher should have Associate's degree as highest • At least one assistant should have HS degree as highest
6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Computer support specialists 2. Computer systems analysts 3. Software developers 	A roughly equal mix from the three occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one CSS should not have a college degree. • No more than 2 should have more than a Bachelor's degree.

RECRUITMENT SCREENER QUESTIONS

1. Are you currently going to school full time?
 - If YES, terminate (We do not want any full-time students)
 - If NO, go to Q2.
 - *Adapted from 2013 NATES*

2. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
 - *See occupation/education table for group-specific criteria.*
 - *Source: 2013 NATES*

3. How old are you?
 - IF >55, terminate.
 - IF highest level of school is “less than high school” or ”high school” and age <21, then terminate.
 - IF highest level of school is “some college but no degree” or more and age <25, then terminate.
 - Across all 6 groups, we would like to have approximately this age distribution:
 - One third age 30 or less
 - One third ages 31-40
 - One third ages 41-55
 - *Source: 2013 NATES*

4. Are you currently employed for pay at a job or business, or are you temporarily absent from a job or business?
 - If YES, go to Q6.
 - If NO, go to Q5.
 - *Source: 2013 NATES [revised]*

5. Are you actively looking for work?
 - If YES, count as unemployed. Try to get 2-3 unemployed participants in the first 2 groups. Go to Q7.
 - If NO, terminate (respondent is not part of active work force).
 - *Source: 2013 NATES [revised]*

6. Are you currently working as a(n) [OCCUPATION]?
 - If YES, go to Q8.
 - If NO, go terminate (respondent is not working in desired occupation)

7. Have you worked in the past 2 years, that is since [month] 2011?
 - If YES, go to Q7b.
 - If NO, terminate. (respondent has not worked in this occupation during our desired reference period)

7b. When you LAST worked, did you work as an [occupation]?

- If YES, go to Q8.
 - If NO, terminate (respondent has not worked in this occupation during our desired reference period)
8. For how many months or years [have you worked/did you work] as a(n) [occupation]?
- If at least 6 months, go to Q9.
 - If less than 6 months, terminate. (all participants must have at least six months of experience)
9. In your [current/last] job as a(n) [occupation], [are/were] you employed in the civilian Federal government?
- If YES, terminate. (We do not want any civilian Federal government employees. Those in the military are OK and should continue with Q10).
 - If NO, go to Q10.
10. For your job as a(n) [occupation] – Have you participated in work-related training in the past 2 years, that is since [month] 2011? Work-related training includes courses taken for continuing education credit or to remain current in your field of work. It also includes apprenticeships, internships, and externships. Occupational seminars and workshops are another example of work-related training you may have participated in. The work-related training may have been provided by your employer, a professional or trade association, a school, a community group, or other organization.
- If YES, go to Q11.
 - If NO, terminate (all participants must have work-related training in past 2 years)
 - *If we cannot recruit enough people, we will extend reference period to three years.*
11. For Group 1 only: Have you participated in a formal apprenticeship program in the past 5 years, that is since [month] 2008? In this type of program, an apprentice receives both instruction and on-the-job training and is paid a training salary. Please do not count unpaid internships.
- In Group 1, we would like to have at least 2 participants who have participated in a formal apprenticeship in the past 5 years.
 - *Source: adapted from 2013 NATES*

Strand 3: Participation/Enrollment in Education and Training Related to Work

Focus Group Moderator's Guide

The moderator will welcome participants, introduce herself or himself, introduce staff and observers, explain the purpose of the group, and go over rules and logistics.

Welcome

Thanks for agreeing to be part of the focus group; we appreciate your willingness to participate.

Introductions

- Facilitator/Moderator:
- Rapporteurs/Note Takers:
- Observers:

Purpose

We have been asked by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and other federal statistical agencies to help them understand more about the education and training people get for work. You were invited here because we want to know more about what training you take in your line of work. Your participation is voluntary. We want you to share your honest and open thoughts with us. We are pleased that you are able to join us for this discussion and thank you again for agreeing to participate.

Logistics and Ground Rules

- Schedule/Time: 90-minutes
- Ground Rules
 - WE WANT **YOU** TO DO THE TALKING.
 - I will ask a series of questions and solicit your responses to those questions.
 - We would like everyone to participate.
 - I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
 - THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.
 - Every person's experiences and opinions are important.
 - Speak up whether you agree or disagree.
 - We want to hear a wide range of opinions.
 - WE WILL BE AUDIO RECORDING THE GROUP AND TAKING NOTES.
 - We want to capture everything you have to say.
 - We won't identify anyone by name in any reports.
 - PLEASE BE FULLY PRESENT AND ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE.
 - We need input from each of you.
 - Please set aside anything that might be a distraction.
 - We especially ask that you turn off electronic devices such as mobile phones, electronic reading devices, laptops, etc.

Opener

Let's get started with some introductions. Tell us your name, what your occupation or area of specialty is, and how long you have been in your field of work.

The opening "question" is intended to be friendly, conversational, somewhat relevant to the topic, and easy so respondents feel relaxed and part of a positive discussion.

Research Question: What forms does work-related training take?

- *Is it informal (reading relevant materials, talking to colleagues, etc.), or is it more formal (classes, courses, instructors, apprenticeships)?*
- *Are there credits or something similar that earns them "points" toward something?*
- *Is it 'customized' training? What language do participants use to describe their training?*

Today, I'd like to talk to you about any work-related education or training you have participated in recently. I'm sure most of you have completed coursework over the years that was part of your efforts to pursue an educational degree or certificate. While this type of education is very important, I'd like to clarify that today we do NOT want to discuss the education you got before you started working. Our interest is in more recent education and training you may have taken since you entered the workforce.

OK, let's get started – tell me about any education or training you have participated in related to your work, let's say in the last year or so. This could be any kind of work-related education or training. It can include training your employer gave you, training from a government program, or training you got on your own. If you've taken a lot of education or training related to your work, you can just think about the most recent one.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE LANGUAGE USED HERE, E.G. on-the-job training, apprenticeship training, a seminar or workshop, a college class for next activity. PAY ATTENTION TO WHETHER OR NOT PARTICIPANTS USE FORMAL NAMES OF TRAINING (like, "Cardiovascular System Level II").

- ALSO IF IT IS NOT CLEAR, TRY TO FIND OUT IF THEY ARE DESCRIBING FORMAL TRAINING OR INFORMAL TRAINING. (INFORMAL TRAINING HAS NO INSTRUCTOR AND NO ORGANIZED INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM—EXAMPLES OF INFORMAL TRAINING ARE ON-THE-JOB-TRAINING, MENTORING FROM A COLLEAGUE, READING TECHNICAL JOURNALS, GOING TO PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES)
- IF A PARTICIPANT MENTIONS SOMETHING THAT DOES NOT SEEM WORK-RELATED, ASK MORE ABOUT IT AND WHY THEY MENTIONED IT.

I've noticed you described your training using several different terms – I heard....(write on flip board). What other similar terms would you use to describe your training?

If few formal course or class names are mentioned – Only a few of you mentioned the formal name of your training. Does your training typically have a formal name, or not?

What are some of the types of skills or knowledge you learned from this education or training? For example, you might have learned management skills, company regulations and policies, computer skills, or the technical skills or knowledge related to performing your job.

IF PARTICIPANTS GIVE VERY DETAILED/LONG DESCRIPTIONS, ENCOURAGE THEM TO KEEP THE CONVERSATION MORE GENERAL.

Research Question: Who provides work-related training and what language do participants use to talk about the provider? (e.g. "employer provided" "company mandated" etc.)

- *Is it provided by the employer? Does it take place during working hours? (addressed above) Does it take place onsite or elsewhere? Is it provided as part of the job (on-the-job training)? Is it provided as pull-out training? (addressed above)*
- *Is it provided by a college or trade school? What about differences in training for people who work for small employers versus large employers, or are self-employed? (below)*
- *Who was in the training group? Colleagues? Other people in the field? (addressed above)*

Did your training have an instructor? Who was the instructor (e.g., an employee of your company, a community college instructor)? Give me an example from one or two of your training experiences.

If instructor not typical, What training materials did you use? Who produced these materials? (e.g., learning guides published by Microsoft, an on-line instructional program from a community college) Give me an example from one or two of your training experiences.

Where did the education or training take place? (e.g place of employment, conference center) Did anyone have training that took place at a community college or other school? If yes, what type of school?

Who else took the training with you? Was it a group? Your work colleagues? People from other companies? Again, if you took a lot of training, you can just talk about the most recent training.

Research Question: Is it 'customized' training? Did the respondent seek it out, or is it a common requirement for people who have their job?

Probe (especially if participants say their work colleagues were not in the training with them): Have any of your work colleagues with similar job responsibilities completed a similar education or training program at a different time or location?

Research Question: How long does this training last? Does it take place during working hours?

How long did this education or training last (hours/days/weeks/years)? Did it take place during work hours or not? When did you do it?

Research Question: Can/how do people differentiate work-related training from other types of education and training? This is just something we want to pay attention to throughout the group. If a participant mentions something that does not seem work-related, ask more about it and why they mentioned it.

Research Question: Is there a sequence to the training they get? E.g. an initial training followed up with additional training? Is it a formal sequence or something the participant just decided to do?

We've talked about education or training you participated in this past year. Are any of the things you mentioned part of a series, or something like that? Do you have to take one, then another in a particular order? Tell me more about those training series. What do you start with? Where do you end up?

Research Question: What is people's motivation for pursuing work-related training?

- *Is it required by their employer? Does it help them get a new job? Is it necessary to keep certifications active? Do they need to take CEUs?*
- *Can participants talk about future motivation as well as past motivation?*
- *Can participants talk about barriers to getting training?*

I'd like you to talk some more about the reasons you took the education or training we've just discussed. If you had several education or training experiences, you can just talk about your most recent one.

Probe: If their employer required it, was that the only reason you took it? If you took it to meet a certification or licensing requirement, was that the only reason?

Probes on bullet points above: Was it required? / Did you seek it out yourself or were you asked to take it?

Did you earn credits or earn points toward something by taking this training? Did this training help you earn or maintain a certification or license? Tell me about how that works.

Tell me a bit about the place you work at now or place you worked recently – is it a large business or a small business? How would you describe your company’s support for worker education and training in general? How supportive has your company been of your training needs?

Generally, would you like to have more or less training than you get now? Would you like a different type of education or training? Was there additional education or training you would have liked to pursue in the past year? If so, what kept you from pursuing it?

What about training you might take in the future for your current line of work? What kind of training do you think you’ll take in the next year or so?

Research Question: What do people feel that they get out of work-related training programs?

- *In what fields do people get work-related training? What types of skills are typically acquired in work-related training? Do people find that they use these skills in their jobs? Are they transferable or tailored? Would people list this training on their resume?*

Earlier we talked about the skills you learned as part of your training. What other benefits did you get from the education or training you took? Did you feel it was worthwhile? Why or why not?

Probes: Did you get a promotion or raise as a result of it? Did you get a new job or get a job interview? Did it help you do your job better or make you more employable? Is the training useful just at your current company, or would it be useful if you worked (in the same job) somewhere else? How else did it help you?

Research Question: How much money is spent for work-related training?

- *Who pays for the training? Do employers help pay for it? Is other financial aid available?*

How much of the education or training did your employer pay for, if any? Did someone else pay the costs? [Probe on how sure they are of who paid.]

Did you pay any of your training costs? If you paid any of the costs, would you be able to report how much you paid? You don’t have to say how much right now. I’ll ask you to write that down in a minute.

Those are all the questions I have for you. I’m just going to check now with the group observers to see if they have any other questions they’d like me to ask you. While I’m gone, could you please write down the name and a brief description of any education or training you took in the past year and how much you had to pay for the education or training out of your own pocket.

If we end up having to focus on the most recent training – end with this:

So far we’ve been talking about the training you participated in most recently. Now let’s talk about any other work-related education or training you’ve participated in over the past two years. How many other work-related education or training activities have you participated in? Were they similar to the most recent training experience you were discussing earlier? If they were different, tell me about the ways in which they were different from your

most recent training. [Probe on issues discussed above, such as a brief description of the training, where it took place, who paid for it, how much time was required, etc.]