

**National Evaluation of the Trade Adjustment Act Community College Career Training
(TAACCCT) Program**

TAACCCT FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Introductory Script

Hello, my name is _____. I am from [*The Urban Institute*, a non-profit research organization located in Washington, DC; *NORC at the University of Chicago*, located in Bethesda, MD; *Capital Research Corporation*, located in Arlington, VA].

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this group discussion. [Introduce colleague—second site visitor.]

We're here today because the Urban Institute and its partners, on behalf of the United States Department of Labor (DOL), are conducting a national evaluation of the Trade Adjustment Act Community College Career Training (TAACCCT) Grant Program. [Name of community college or project] is one of the grantees. We are studying how community colleges and their partners have developed training programs and services for students in high-demand occupations.

We want to understand the experiences and perspectives of the participants in the TAACCCT-funded program [name of TAACCCT project]. We are especially interested in learning what you think about the training you received for [name of industry sector], including your experiences with contextualized learning, enhanced tutoring, and accelerated programming. We are also interested in how you were recruited and oriented to the training or career path, any supports you received before and after training, your educational attainment and employment, and your level of satisfaction with the training program and the community college's efforts to serve students.

I want to remind you that your participation in the group discussion is voluntary. Your participation is not required in order to continue receiving training, services or benefits or to receive them at any point in the future. We very much appreciate your willingness to come today. This session will last about one and a half hours. You will receive a \$20 gift as a token of our appreciation, even if you decide not to stay to participate in the discussion.

This is a discussion, not a survey, so feel free to respond to what others are saying. Please make sure to be respectful of other people's opinions in doing so.

Importantly, we ask everyone here today to respect each other's privacy. What is said in the room should stay in the room. Information from this discussion will be included in a report to DOL, but all information you give us will be kept entirely private. We will use only first names in today's discussion; we will not identify you even by first name in our records, and we will not tell program staff what you said. The information that you tell us will not affect your relationship with the program and will not affect your training, services, benefits in any way.

We value the information you will share with us today and want to make sure we capture all of it. Therefore, we will be taping the session and [name of person] will be taking notes on a laptop computer. However, we destroy the tapes as soon as we have made complete notes of the meeting, and those notes will **not** use your names. Does anyone have an objection to taping this group? Also, as we said, we will not use your names in preparing any reports and will disguise your comments so that no one can identify

who made specific comments. We will ask you to sign for your \$20 gift in order to account for our financial disbursements, but we pass on only a coded identifier, not your name, to our accounting department.

Do you have any questions or concerns about what we plan to do? Again, your participation is voluntary and you may leave at any time during the course of the meeting.

PAUSE AND ADDRESS ANY QUESTIONS

GETTING STARTED

Ok, we're just about ready to get started. Discussion groups like this may be new to many and perhaps all of you—so let me make a few general points about what to expect. As the facilitator, I just ask the questions and moderate the discussion. What's really important is for all of you to speak up and participate so that we can have a lively and informative discussion. This will be an informal discussion. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions we ask. We are interested in learning each of your opinions. We very much appreciate your input.

It is important that only one person speak at a time so that we can follow what each of you say. There may be times during the discussion when I need to interrupt--either to ask you to explain what you have just said more clearly, or to move on to the next question to keep us on schedule. Again, this happens just to make sure that everyone has a chance to answer each of the questions, and that we listen to what each person says. We're hoping that each of you will speak up, and tell us your thoughts and feelings. In the past, most people have told us they enjoy these discussion groups very much because it gives them a chance to share their experiences and hear about others' experiences. Your participation here is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question if you wish.

We will talk for about one to one and a half hours. There will be no formal breaks. Please feel free to get up at any time to stretch, use the restroom, or get something to eat or drink. At the conclusion there is a very brief information form to complete. Following the discussion (or at any point during the discussion should you decide to leave before its conclusion) we will distribute the \$20 gift and you will be asked to sign a receipt form.

Once again, we are very pleased to have you here today. Are there any questions before we get started?

Note to facilitator: When a question asks "how many," be sure to say the count out loud so that it is recorded on the tape.

If a discussion group participant chooses to leave at any point, they are entitled to the \$20 incentive gift. Have an assistant ensure they sign the receipt and complete the information form, then give them the incentive gift.

To start, ask, "Does everyone know each other? And then go around the room with first name introductions.

Discussion Group Guide ¹

1. How/where did you hear about [name of training program or course]? ²
2. What made you decide to enroll in [name of training program or course]?
Probe for skills, credentials, interest in occupation/industry, flexibility compared to other training options, supports, etc.
4. Were there any requirements to enroll in the program? If yes, what were they?
5. Were your needs or skills discussed or assessed prior to enrollment? How was this done?
6. Once you enrolled, how were you oriented to [name of training program or course]? Describe the orientation process.
7. Were efforts made to make flexible schedules to meet the needs of working students?
8. How would you describe the program you enrolled in? How are the classes you are taking different from previous educational experiences?
Probe for accelerated learning models/interventions, including: modularized learning; stacked and latticed credentials; Integrated Basic Education and Skills training (I-BEST); contextualized learning; team teaching; self-paced learning; prior learning assessments.
9. In addition to the program, have you connected to other aspects of the college's services such as academic advising or financial aid or other supportive services? How so?
Probe for whether the program helped students connect to services or not. Services could include financial stability supports³; academic supports⁴; personal supports⁵; sources of public support used to ensure financial stability⁶; and career transition supports.⁷
10. Are you connected to organizations in the community that help you as you complete your education and training? What kinds of supports or services do you receive and from which organizations?
11. In addition to any classroom time, did you participate in training at a job site such as an internship or apprenticeship, or in a lab where work situations were simulated? Describe this experience.

¹ Probes for each question will be added based on the particular interventions used at the institution selected for fieldwork.

² Refer to the name of the TAACCCT-funded training program or course that students are enrolled in.

³ Assistance accessing traditional financial aid; assistance using nontraditional sources of aid to pay for education and training; funding for child care; funding for living expenses (e.g., rent, utilities, food, transportation, health care); financial emergencies (e.g., care repairs).

⁴ Tutoring; academic advising (e.g., course planning); academic preparation and course support (e.g., study skills).

⁵ Mentoring; case management; mental health, substance abuse, or other counseling; targeted, small group interventions; one-on-one case management used; life coaches; group support (e.g., group counseling, learning communities).

⁶ SNAP; WIC; TANF; Medicaid; CHIP; Section 8.

⁷ Career navigation; job search and placement; assistance gaining work experience, internship search, and placement.

12. Do you think the college will help you get a job in your field once you complete the program?
How so?

Probe for internship opportunities, referrals to local employers, job search services, or referrals to job search services.

13. Do you have a sense of how easy/hard it will be to find a job in your field once you graduate?

14. Are you satisfied with the education and training you are receiving from [name of training program or course]?

a. Did this type of training work for you?

b. How could it be improved?

Probe for technology-enabled learning, including simulations; assessment technology; online teaching/learning; real-time online interactions.

15. Based on your experience, what do you think are the best features of the [name of training program or course]?

a. How could the [name of training program or course] be improved to better serve students?

Thank you for your participation