

INTERVIEW DISCUSSION GUIDE for ENs

In this discussion guide:

- *Notes and instructions for site visitors are in italics.*
- *Some questions are followed by **PROBES** to provide additional detail or context for a better understanding the responses.*

[Below are suggested introductory remarks. While it is not necessary to follow this as a script, it is important that you cover all of the main points contained here.]

I work for IMPAQ International, and we are conducting a study of the Ticket to Work (TTW) program for people with disabilities (PWD). The U.S. Department of Labor contracted with us to conduct this study. In this study we are looking at Employment Networks (ENs) under the TTW program that are operated by the public workforce system, as well as ENs operated by other kinds of agencies.

As part of our study, we will be interviewing selected managers and staff in your organization to understand your organization's experience with serving Ticket to Work customers. We are not evaluating your agency or your services. We are gathering information to better understand how the program works and looking for promising practices that can potentially improve services for all TTW ticket holders. We will be asking about a wide range of different practices, and we do not expect any programs to be doing all of the things we ask about, so please answer as honestly as you can, and don't worry about trying to make your program "look good".

Everything that we discuss during this interview will be **kept private to the extent allowed by law and used only for purposes of this study**. This means that your responses will not be shared with USDOL or anyone else in any way that could identify you or your organization. Should we determine that it would be valuable to identify your program in our report, we will invite you to review any description of your agency or practices and ask for your permission before attributing the information to your program. Before we begin, do you have any questions about the purpose of the evaluation or our confidentiality policy?

To start, do you mind if we tape record our session? This will help if we need to go back to make sure we captured the full discussion.

Public Burden Statement: An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. The OMB control number for this project is 1230-XXXX. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 60 minutes per respondent, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability, Employment Policy, 200 Constitution Ave, N.W. Washington, DC 20210.

1. Organizational Structure

1.1 **DIRECTOR** Could you please tell me a little about the service area for this location of your organization?

PROBES:

- Is your service area mostly urban, suburban, rural?
- Are there substantial low-income populations?
- What are the main industries here?
- Is there a lot of unemployment?
- Have there been any recent changes in the local population or economy that affect employment opportunities for your customers?

1.2 **DIRECTOR** Does your organization provide other workforce or disability services in the community, in addition to serving as a TTW Employment Network?

1.3 **DIRECTOR, TTW MRG** Does your organization focus on specific populations (such as youth, Veterans, TANF, ex-offenders, a specific industry, etc.)?

1.4 **ALL** What is your position in this organization? What is your official job title? What is your role in this organization?

PROBES:

- What is your role with regard to the TTW program?
- How long have you been working at this organization, and how long have you been involved with its Ticket to Work program?
- Are your TTW duties an official part of your job description?
- What kind of background do you have as a TTW specialist? As a disability services specialist? With workforce development in general?

[NOTE IF RESPONDENT'S TITLE/ROLE IS:]

- *DEI Disability Resource Coordinator*
- *Disability services specialist*
- *TTW intake specialist*
- *Certified benefits counselor*
- *Disability Program Navigator*
- *Specialist for veterans with disabilities*

1.5 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** How are TTW activities administratively organized at your organization?

PROBES:

- Who do you report to, and who do you work with here on TTW?

- How many dedicated staff work with TTW customers?
- [If not a disability-specific organization:] Does your organization have a disability services specialist? What roles does the disability specialist play in the TTW program?
- Besides your own organization, are other entities part of your EN?

2. Overview of the TTW Program

2.1 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** What programs and services are offered, either on-site or by referral, by this organization and its partners to TTW ticket holders?

2.2 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** Please describe your agency's first involvement in the TTW program.

2.3 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** *[If first involvement was not becoming an EN]* When did your agency become an EN?

2.4 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** How long did it take for your EN to become what you would consider "fully operational?" Please describe the start-up process.

PROBES:

- What challenges did you encounter during early implementation?
- How did you address them?
- What challenges do you face now?

2.5 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** How many tickets does your agency currently have assigned?

2.6 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** How does your EN identify and recruit potential TTW customers?

2.7 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** Roughly how many ticket holders have you worked with personally?

2.8 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** Do you know roughly what proportion of ticket holders interested in your program actually end up assigning their tickets to you? Why is that?

PROBES:

- Does your agency ever decline to accept a ticket or recommend ticket holders assign their ticket to a different agency?
- If so, what are the characteristics of the ticket holders whom you tend to serve or not serve?

2.9 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** Do you know how much ticket revenue your agency has received so far this year? Last year?

PROBES:

- Does revenue come directly to the EN?
- How is it used?

2.10 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** Does your agency have any goals for the number of ticket holders you should try serve? Is there a minimum? Is there an optimum number?

1. Initial Customer Contact

Now I'd like to ask you about [your organization's] communication with customers and your service delivery process. First, let's start with initial contact with ticket holders.

- 3.1 **ALL** When your organization conducts outreach to customers or potential customers (meaning **all** customers, not just those with disabilities):
- Do you provide information about alternative ways to contact you? These might include email, an accessible website, a TDD/TTY number, a telephone relay service, etc.
 - Do you indicate whether communication aids and services for PWD are available?
 - [If not a disability services agency] Do you conduct any targeted outreach specifically to individuals with disabilities?
 - Do you conduct any targeted outreach specifically to SSA ticket holders?

- 3.2 **ALL** Could you please describe what a potential customer's initial contacts with your organization are like? We'd like to know about the experience for **all** customers, whether they're identified as having a disability [*or being a SSI/DI beneficiary*] or not.

PROBES:

- Is the initial contact typically in-person, online, or on the phone?
 - Is there some kind of registration or sign-up procedure that a new customer goes through?
 - Are all customers provided with information on your services and programs for PWD when they first interact with your staff?
 - Are all customers provided with information on how to seek accommodations and communication aids and services?
 - Are all customers offered assistance in filling out forms and application materials?
 - What about Ticket to Work customers? Are their initial contacts with your organization different from other customers?
- 3.3 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** Can customers and potential customers find information about your services online? Does the website inform potential customers that your agency is an EN? Does it include information about the TTW program?

****If the agency has a Website** [*include Website produced by the parent organization*]: Can you support individuals who are not knowledgeable about, comfortable with, or able to use computers? How?

- 3.4 **ALL** Do you consider your website to be accessible to PWD?

PROBES: For example, does the website have:

- Text descriptions of graphics or pictures?
 - Equivalent alternatives for information presented in audio or video?
 - Online forms that can be filled out using assistive technology?
- 3.5 **ALL** [*If organization does not exclusively serve PWD*] How does your staff determine if a customer or prospective customer has a disability?

PROBES:

- Do staff expect PWD to identify themselves?
- If the organization asks for this information, do they ask it of all customers, or just some?
- If the latter, how do you decide who to ask?
- Do you identify PWD:
 - Through records or databases shared by social services programs in the area?
 - Through referrals from another agency or organization: How much do you know about the disability status of customers when they are first referred here? Could you please tell me about the referral process for TTW?
 - Based on staff judgment
 - An assessment process: used with all customers receiving services? If so, how does this assessment help identify PWD? An assessment used with select individuals? If so, how are these individuals selected?

1.6 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** How does your EN determine if an individual is a prospective TTW customer?

1. Service Delivery

I'd like to ask you a few questions about the service delivery process. Please describe what happens when a new customer comes to you for services. We'd like to learn how your service delivery works in general, and how customers with disabilities, particularly ticket holders, are served at your location.

4.1 **ALL** *[If not a disability services agency]* First, if a new customer is identified as having a disability, do they typically then go through the regular process of signing up for services? Or does their disability trigger a referral or assignment to a specific staff person?

[Note whether they say they refer some or all PWD to other agencies and organizations that specifically serve PWDs instead of serving them through their own programs and funding.]

4.2 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** How is a new customer identified as being a ticket holder? Do they typically then go through the regular process of signing up for services?

4.2 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** Please describe the service planning process.

PROBES:

- What kinds of assessments might you do?
- How is the service planning process for ticket holders different from your other customers? (More complex? Difficult? Challenges?)
- Is this because ticket holders tend to get different kinds of services than other customers with disabilities?

4.3 **ALL** Do staff offer customers accommodations when completing skills assessments or other service planning activities?

PROBES:

- At what point in the process are accommodations offered?
- Are examples of possible accommodations provided or does staff just ask whether individuals need accommodations in general?
- What are some examples of accommodations that have been provided to customers who may have difficulty completing assessments or other service planning activities?

4.4 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** Does your staff explicitly consider strategies for overcoming disability-related barriers when doing service planning?

PROBES: Do staff...

- Informally review strategies with customers?
- Record strategies in their case notes?
- Use a planning tool to incorporate strategies?
- Not discuss strategies for overcoming disability-related barriers with customers

[If the organization does any type of service plan, ask about examples of specific strategies that might be used, what the procedures are for reviewing plans, and whether supportive services used to help overcome barriers to training or job search.]

4.5 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** How often do you discuss or review these strategies for overcoming disability-related barriers?

PROBES:

- Do you track services or outcomes for customers with disabilities? How are services and outcomes tracked for TTW customers?
- Do you track barriers and accommodations provided? Is this done differently for TTW customers versus others?

1.6 **ALL** Are services for ticket holders and other PWD provided in the same setting as other customers, or are some services provided to PWD in a setting separate or different from other customers?

PROBES: *[Reminder: For disability service agencies the focus is on distinguishing practices for ticket holders from other PWD. For agencies serving the general population, the primary focus is on distinguishing practices for PWD from other customers.]*

- If you do have separate or different programs or activities for PWD (or ticket holders), why is that?
- Do you offer PWD (and ticket holders) the opportunity to participate in "regular" programs and activities despite the existence of these separate programs?
- Under what circumstances do customers with disabilities (or ticket holders) participate in separate versus "regular" programs?

Now I'd like to ask some questions about how your organization works with other agencies and organizations to provide services and programs to ticket holders and other PWD.

- 1.7 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** What disability and/or employment services organizations in the community do you partner with? Who are they, and what is their relationship to your organization? Please describe how your organization works with partners in the community to provide services to ticket holders.

PROBES:

- Which agencies refer clients to you?
- To which agencies do you refer customers with disabilities for services?
- Do you refer jobseekers with disabilities to an agency such as Vocational Rehabilitation instead of serving them here?
- What kinds of services do you provide directly to PWD here at this location, vs. refer to other agencies for?

- 1.8 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** To what extent are individual ticket holders served by multiple agencies?

PROBES:

- Which agencies (workforce ENs, non-workforce ENs, VR, AJCS, disability services agencies, other agencies)?
- How are decisions made about which agencies will serve them and whether they are offered co-enrollments?
- How many are co-enrolled in WIOA training services?
- Do you use Integrated Resource Teams (where caseworkers from different agencies collaborate to leverage resources for individual customers with disabilities)?
- Do ticket holders with the most significant disabilities tend to seek services from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) or other ENs instead of from you?

- 1.9 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** Are VR services offered to PWD at this location? How do you coordinate with VR in providing TTW services?

PROBES:

- Are VR counselors considered to be co-located with you here? [Note: here we are interested in what they consider to be co-located.]
- How much time does the VR counselor spend here, and how long have VR services been offered on site?
- Does VR staff have their own designated space at this location?
- Is VR under an Order of Selection?
- Do you work with your VR agency in the Ticket-to-Work program?
- Does your EN provide services under Partnership Plus?
- Aside from referrals, does your organization coordinate other services or activities with VR?
- Has VR provided training to staff about serving PWD?

- Do you collaborate with VR on job accommodations? Interpreter services? Assistive technology?

4.10 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** Does your organization contract with external providers? For which services?

PROBES:

- Do the external providers with whom you contract adequately address the needs of PWD?
- For ticket holders, is a different set of external providers available through the EN?

4.11 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** Do you feel there is an adequate supply of training resources available to PWD that you can contract with or refer to?

PROBE: Do reimbursements to external training providers take into consideration the costs of providing accommodations, communication aids, and services to PWD?

4.12 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** Does your organization provide benefits counseling (e.g. SSI/SSDI, Medicaid, Medicare) as part of the normal set of services offered to PWD?

PROBES:

- Who provides the benefits counseling to PWD?(In-house staff? An outside benefits counselor or other consultant? Both?)
- Is benefits counseling is offered only to a subset of customers, and if so, which customers are eligible for it? (All customers with disabilities? Only ticket holders?)

4.13 **ALL** Keeping in mind the full range of services you offer here, are there any specific barriers to programs or activities that limit access for PWD?

PROBE:

- Are these barriers different for TTW ticket holders versus other customers?
- How does the organization ensure that customers with disabilities have an opportunity for meaningful participation in program offerings, and that staff and services do not discriminate on the basis of disability?
- How do they provide accommodations to ensure that PWD have equal opportunities to access the full range of services?

4.14 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** When providing accommodations, does your staff:

- Consult with organizations such as the Job Accommodation Network that provide assistance with job accommodations for PWD
- Include supervisory staff members who know how to proceed if a PWD customer requests an accommodation? (**PROBE:** Does this include determining whether a requested accommodation is reasonable? Access to funds to pay for accommodations?)
- Maintain or have ready access to personnel who can install, set-up and maintain adaptive equipment and materials?

Now I would like to ask a few questions about how your organization assures PWD the confidentiality of their disability information.

4.15 **ALL** Are customers informed both verbally and in writing that disclosure of a disability is strictly voluntary?

PROBE: How? Verbally? In writing? Can we see an example?

4.16 **ALL** Are customers informed that information about their disability will be kept confidential? Can you tell me about the process?

PROBE: Are any confidentiality procedures different for TTW ticket holders versus other customers?

4.17 **ALL** How do staff discuss with PWD the pros and cons of talking about their disability with employers and/or potential employers? Can you tell me about the process?

4.14 **ALL** Can you think of any (other) ways that providing services to ticket holders is different from providing services to other individuals with disabilities?

4.18 **ALL** Does the staff receive training focused on any of the following subjects? Please tell me about it, including how often that training is offered.

PROBES:

- Orientation to serving PWD for new employees [Does this go beyond ADA orientation/compliance training to include information about how to serve PWD?]
- Basic disability etiquette
- Procedures for arranging communication aids and services for PWD
- Orientation to TTW, the Employment Network, and procedures for serving ticket holders. Other specific employment strategies for PWD (e.g., supported employment, customized employment)
- How to help PWD use the assistive technologies currently available at this location
- Knowledge of specific types of disabilities and implications for service delivery
- Community resources and in-house resources that can support PWD
- Avoiding assumptions about the capabilities of PWD when evaluating skills or job opportunities
- Emergency evacuation procedures for PWD
- Other disability training? Please describe.

4.19 **ALL** How is staff training delivered?

PROBES:

- In-person? Online?
- Who conducts the training? In-house staff? Trainers or speakers from other organizations?

- How many of the staff participate in this training?

2. Assistive Technology

5.1 **DIRECTOR** Does this facility provide computer workstations for customers/clients to use for job search, training, or other purposes related to finding or keeping a job? If so, do you have **at least one** computer workstation with assistive technology for PWD?

5.2 **ALL** *[If they have at least one computer workstation with assistive technology for PWD]*
How many workstations have assistive technology?

PROBES:

- How often do customers make use of this workstation/these workstations?
- In your experience, do TTW ticket holders make more frequent use of adaptive and assistive technology than do other customers with disabilities?
- Given the size and caseload of this facility, do you have an adequate number of workstations with assistive technology, or do individuals with disabilities sometimes have to wait for one to become available?
- At this location, would you say there are un-met needs for assistive technology?

5.3 **ALL** How many staff members are familiar with how to use this workstation/these workstations? Is there always someone available who knows how to use it?

5.4 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** Is adaptive technology readily available, i.e., set up and ready to go, or is it put away when not in use and has to be requested?

5.5 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** Does your organization regularly budget for adding, maintaining and updating assistive technology?

3. Involvement of PWD at the Organization / Facility

Now I would like to ask you a few questions about to what extent and in what ways PWD are involved in planning or operations of your agency and programs.

6.1 **ALL** Are there members of your staff who have personal experience with disability? What about on the Board or governing team?

PROBES:

- What role do they play?
- In what ways is it significant that they have personal experience with a disability?

6.2 **ALL** Are PWD consulted to help identify/resolve accessibility issues?

6.3 **ALL** Are PWD consulted on how to improve outreach to the disability community?

6.4 **ALL** Do PWD serve as advisors to the staff regarding Ticket to Work or other programs?

4. Addressing the Needs of PWD with Specific Disabilities

7.1 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** Can you describe the types of disabilities that are common among the ticket holders that you serve? What kinds of PWD do you *not* serve or rarely serve?

PROBES:

- Deaf/hard of hearing?
- Blind/visually impaired?
- Wheelchair users?
- Individuals with intellectual disabilities (aka developmental disabilities)?
- Individuals with psychiatric disabilities (aka mental health clients)?
- SSI recipients vs. SSDI recipients?

7.2 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** What kind of supports do you have for customers who are deaf or hard of hearing?

PROBES:

- Have staff received training on how to use communication aids?
- How often do they typically get used?
- Are customers offered the option to write their response on paper or on a computer?
- Is the staff familiar with how to use telephone or web-based options for communicating (e.g., telephone relay service, TDD/TTY)?
- Is the staff familiar with the etiquette of a text-based telephone call?
- Does your facility have technology or web-based options available for customers to call in?
- Does your facility provide technology or web-based options for customers to make outgoing calls?
- Does your facility provide sign language interpreters? Does the need come up often?
 - Is it easy to get interpreters?
 - How much time in advance do you need to schedule an interpreter?
 - How do you cover the cost?
- Is information presented orally also available in writing?

7.2 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** What kind of supports do you have for customers who are blind or visually-impaired?

PROBES:

- Materials in accessible formats (e.g., Braille, large print, audio recorded)?
- Has staff received training on how to accommodate customers who are blind?
- How many staff members know procedures for making materials accessible?
- How often do they typically get used?

- Does your facility have a Braille printer for use by customers and staff?

7.3 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** What kind of supports do you have for customers with cognitive and/or psychiatric disabilities?

PROBES:

- Have staff received training on how to serve customers with cognitive and/or psychiatric disabilities?
- Do staff members offer assistance with the completion of forms?
- Is a quiet environment made available for people to read materials?
- Does the staff present information so that it is understandable to people with different cognitive abilities?
- Do staff members offer breaks or the option to continue the session on another day, if needed?

7.4 **TTW MGR, SERVICE STAFF** Can you give some examples of techniques the staff use in communicating with customers who have speech impairments?

PROBES:

- Have staff members received training on serving customers with speech impairments?
- How long ago?
- How many staff members have been trained?
- Have staff been trained to ask questions that require only short answers or a nod of the head?
- Are customers offered the option to respond to a question in writing or on a computer?
- Are customers asked if there is someone who could interpret on their behalf?

5. Physical Facility

8.1 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** Tell us a little about your physical location. For example, is your facility near public transportation? In a safe/well lighted area? Relatively flat (not on a steep hill) terrain? Do you think your physical location affects which ticketholders might choose your EN?

5.2 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** Are there other aspects of your physical facility that might make it attractive to or cause barriers for ticketholders?

6. Lessons Learned

Before we go, I would just like to ask you to reflect a moment on your experience with the TTW program and any advice you might offer to other ENs.

9.1 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** What lessons have you learned about implementation of TTW that you might share with other ENs? Anything that has gone particularly well?

9.2 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** Can you think of any major challenges that you have overcome?
Anything you would have done differently?

9.3 **DIRECTOR, TTW MGR** As you think about the future, are there any major improvements
you would like to make to your TTW services?