
DISCUSSION GUIDE: NATIONAL EQUITY CONTRACTORS

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is XX and I work for XX. As I explained in my email, I am part of a research team documenting the progress made by national contractors and state grantees under the U.S. Department of Labor's apprenticeship efforts. This conversation is part of a series of discussions we are having with the national industry and equity partners to understand the approaches being used to expand apprenticeship and increase diversity within apprenticeship programs, as well as the progress that has been made toward DOL's goals.

Our conversation today should take between 1.5 hours to 2 hours. I would like to record our conversation just to make sure my notes are complete; the recording will not be shared with the Department of Labor. Is that ok? If you would like to say anything off the record during our conversation, please let me know and I will stop recording. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I. Respondent background

1. Can you first tell me your title and role in your organization, and your role on the contract?

II. Intermediary goals and partnerships

I would like to spend a few minutes learning more about your approach to creating opportunity partnerships for apprenticeship programs over the past year.

2. I understand that, through this contract, you are focusing on increasing the number of [women, people of color, Hispanics, youth, and people with disabilities] in apprenticeship.

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- What were you hoping to change about the apprenticeship experience for each target population?

3. Can you describe how the partnerships that you have established for this contract have changed over time?

- Have the organizations involved in the partnerships established in the first year changed?
- Have you developed new partnerships in the past year? How did these partnerships emerge? What is the focus of each partnership – a target population? A target industry? A target occupation? A target region?
- What have the partnerships achieved in the past year toward their goals?
- Have there been new challenges in maintaining the partnerships?

4. What infrastructure have you put in place to make sure existing partnerships are effective and sustainable?

5. Have the states or cities you're working with changed over this past year? Why?

6. What were your goals for your contract this past year? How were these goals different from your goals in the first year of the contract?

- What progress have you made toward your target of increasing participation in apprenticeship of target groups?
- What progress have you made toward your target of increasing completion of apprenticeship of target groups?

7. To what extent, if any, are you working collaboratively with other OA-sponsored intermediaries?

8. To what extent, if any, are you working collaboratively with states that have received state expansion grants?

III. Strategies to increase access and entry

I would like to understand how you and your opportunity partnerships are conducting outreach to and increasing entry into apprenticeship for the populations you are focusing on.

9. What strategies have your partnerships used this past year to directly increase access to and entry of your target populations in apprenticeships? How do the strategies differ by population?

- How does the partnership reach members of these groups?

10. How have your outreach strategies changed since the first year? What have you learned about the process that has changed your approach?

- Which strategies have worked the best? What seems to be more effective – directly reaching the target population or working through sponsors?
- What tools and resources have you developed to improve outreach?
- Do you have measures to track the progress or effectiveness of outreach?

11. Are the partnerships using pre-apprenticeship programs as a way to increase targeted populations' participation in apprenticeships? Why or why not?

- If so, what are they doing to increase the development of pre-apprenticeship programs for your target populations?

- What progress are you making toward your target of increasing participation in pre-apprenticeship for your target groups?
- What organizations are sponsoring these programs? What occupations and industries are involved?
- Do pre-apprenticeship participants from these target populations typically go on to apprenticeship programs? Why/why not?
- Are there specific models of pre-apprenticeship that appear to be more effective in filling the pipeline or leading to completion?

12. How have you helped sponsors develop action plans around increasing access and entry for diverse groups?

- What are the selling points that you use to encourage them to participate in the development of action plans?
- What types of sponsors are generally the most willing to address diversity and inclusion?
- Have the action plans been effective?

13. How have you helped sponsors identify and adopt recruitment and selection procedures that promote diversity?

- What types of new procedures or practices do you encourage sponsors to adopt?
- How many sponsors have implemented new procedures? How close is this number to your target outcome for increasing sponsor participation in diversity promotion? Can you give some examples?
- Which new procedures have been effective?

14. Have you worked with sponsors to develop or update affirmative action plans?

- What is the focus of these plans?
- Are there particular strategies or outcomes that are specified in the plans?
- Did you develop a template for this purpose or look at existing best-practices?
- How many sponsors have developed or updated an affirmative action plan?
- How much time do employers require to develop affirmative action plans? What is the cost of developing these plans?
- Did you educate sponsors on the new 29.30 Equal Employment Opportunity regulations? If so, what was the feedback you received?

15. How have you helped sponsors develop non-discrimination policies and practices?

- What best practices have you identified that promote inclusive environments for your target populations?
- How many sponsors have you worked with to implement these practices?
- Are these policies established in company guidelines, or are they otherwise recorded? What legal implications do these policies have for the sponsors, employers, or apprentices?

16. What challenges have you faced in promoting apprenticeships for these populations and working with sponsors or partners to implement inclusion/diversity policies?

- How do you address sponsors' concerns that that promotion of diversity might limit the quality of their apprenticeship applicants?
- How are you assuring sponsors that apprentice applicants from targeted populations have sufficient skills/qualities to complete their apprenticeships?

IV. Strategies to improve retention

I would like to spend a few minutes talking about improving retention for apprentices from underrepresented groups.

17. What efforts are the partnerships making to increase the provision of supportive services to members of the target populations?

- What types of supportive services are being offered, either by the partnerships themselves or by sponsors?
- How many sponsors are providing supportive services as a result of your efforts?
- How many non-sponsor partners are providing supportive services as a result of your efforts?
- How many apprentices are receiving supportive services as a result of your efforts? How close are you to your target of increasing apprentices receiving supportive services?
- Are there needs for supportive services that are still unmet for these populations?
- What challenges exist to providing support services for apprentices from these groups?
- Did you educate partners about supportive services available through WIOA or the workforce system?

18. What other strategies are being implemented through your partnerships that promote better retention of underrepresented groups in apprenticeship?

V. Dissemination

Now I would like to focus on how you are sharing what you are learning to support effective practices around diversity and inclusion.

19. What tools and resources have you developed in the past year to promote more diverse and inclusive apprenticeship programs?

20. Who are your main target audiences for these resources?

21. What modes are you using to disseminate these resources? (e.g. webinars, case studies, toolkits, staff training, etc.)

22. What modes have you found to be the most useful to your target audiences?

23. Is your project doing anything to document the success of apprentices from targeted populations?

VI. Staffing structure

24. I am interested in learning about the staff involved in this contract and how that's changed over the last year. What are the different roles for the staff working on the activities we have discussed?

- Do you have particular staff who are working to develop new RA or pre-apprenticeship opportunities for these target populations?
- Do you have staff working with sponsors and/or employers on diversity and inclusion policies?
- Do you have staff working on tools and approaches to marketing RA to prospective apprentices?

25. What experience/skills do these different staff bring to the contract? What new experiences/skills have you sought this past year?

26. Do you have outside consultants or experts working with you on these efforts? In what roles?

VII. Lessons learned and next steps

I'd like to wrap up by getting your thoughts on what you have learned from this experience.

27. How would you describe the receptivity of employers to your efforts to increase diversity in apprenticeships?

28. Will the opportunity partnerships you developed continue beyond the end of your contract? Will there be any changes in how they operate?

- Would you recommend any specific organizations in the opportunity partnerships that we should speak with?

29. If given continued funding, what would you hope to accomplish in the next year of your contract?

30. How would you describe the outcomes of these partnerships?

31. What lessons have you learned from this process?

Is there anything else you would like to mention beyond what we have discussed?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us on this important topic.