

# NEXT GENERATION OF ENHANCED EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES (NEXTGEN)

## **ATTACHMENT A** **Guide for Semi-structured Stakeholder Interviews**

## NextGen Guide for Semi-structured Stakeholder Interviews

- I am calling from Mathematica Policy Research to ask you about innovative employment interventions. Your participation in this information-gathering interview is voluntary and, should you wish to participate, the information you provide will be kept private within the project team. This interview should take about 30 minutes.
- We are conducting the Next Generation of Enhanced Employment Services Project, or NextGen Project, for the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the Administration for Children and Families. This project aims to identify and evaluate innovative interventions designed to promote employment and economic security among low-income individuals with complex barriers to employment. It could include about nine rigorous evaluations.
- *If asked:* The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation is also conducting a companion study, Building Evidence on Employment Strategies for Low-Income Families Project (BEES). The projects are both designed to test innovative employment interventions that are rooted in the best available research and aim to help low-income people move toward economic independence. The projects are coordinating closely. Depending on the types of interventions we find that warrant evaluation, the two projects may focus on different interventions or different populations.
- Additionally, our project [*and the BEES project if above noted*] is working closely with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to incorporate a focus on employment-related early interventions for individuals with current or foreseeable disabilities who have limited work history and are potential applicants for Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- As representatives of the NextGen Project, we are looking for interventions, and the programs that offer them, that help people with “complex challenges to employment” find and keep jobs. “Complex challenges to employment” is a broad concept that could encompass, for example, physical and mental health conditions, substance misuse, a criminal history, or limited work skills and experience.
- We’re looking for innovative, promising interventions to increasing employment for populations that face complex challenges. It could be a new type of strategy, a new way of delivering services, or trying out an existing program model with a new population or in a new setting.
- Interventions that involve employers or are market-oriented approaches (such as social enterprises) are a plus, but it is not necessary for the program to involve employers. Right now, we are casting a wide net for interventions that might be a good fit for the study; we will select interventions to invite to participate in the study later.
- We’ll first assess the programs. We have some funds available to work with some programs to refine their operations to get the interventions working as well as possible before evaluation. All programs participating in the evaluation will receive some funding to support their participation in a rigorous evaluation. For interventions focused on people with current or foreseeable disabilities who are potential applicants for SSI, there may be additional funds that can be used to bolster the intervention—for example, by adding an employment service component to an existing intervention or by increasing the services already being provided.

- With programs selected for evaluation, we'll collaboratively design and implement a random assignment study to test the intervention's effectiveness. We will also study the intervention's implementation and costs. We will collect information from the programs delivering the interventions on how they deliver services and how much the services cost. The evaluation will last about two to three years for the participating programs.
- Programs that participate in random assignment studies can benefit by learning about the effectiveness of their interventions and how to improve them. They will build their capacity to collect and use data to inform their operations. They also gain an objective assessment of their intervention that policymakers and funders will trust. If the study shows the intervention is effective, it might be easier to pursue additional funding.
- 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 OMB control number. This information collection has been approved under OMB information collection request 0970-0356, which expires on June 30, 2021.
- Please tell us about any interventions or programs you know about that might be good candidates for inclusion in this project. *Probe for the following information:*
  - Intervention or program name
  - Program setting (e.g., nonprofit organization, Vocational Rehabilitation agency, TANF agency)
  - Target population
  - Basic description of services provided
  - Point of contact
- Do you recommend anyone else with whom we should speak who may know of innovative employment interventions or programs?