

REO Employer Protocol

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is [redacted] and I work for **Mathematica/Social Policy Research Associates**. As you may have heard, I'm part of a research team that is evaluating programs around the country being funded by the Department of Labor to provide education, training, and employment services under the Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) grant. The purpose of the evaluation is to examine the impact of these services on the outcomes of justice-involved individuals. The program that is operated by [name of grantee/subgrantee organization] is one such program. Throughout the conversation we'll have today, when I ask about the [Program Name], I'm asking about the reentry program you work with at [name of grantee/subgrantee organization].

My goal today is to learn more about your companies and their involvement with REO. I have several questions to ask you about the ways in which you've been involved with this REO-funded program and your impressions of the program. While we may use quotes and draw information from this conversation, we will pool this information together with similar conversations we are having with employer partners around the country and will not identify anyone here by name or in a way that you or your company could be identified. Also, since there are several of you here, we ask that you similarly keep this conversation private. I know you are busy, and I appreciate you taking the time for this conversation.

For my own notes, I'd like to record our conversation. This recording will not be shared outside of the research team. Is it OK with you if I record this?

Do you have any questions before I get started?

Employer Background

Prior to the interview, find out as much as you can about the respondent and the employer. Please pre-fill as much information as possible in response to the following questions.

- Please tell me about yourselves, including:
 - Your name and job title.
 - How long you've been at the company and in this position.
 - Your personal level of involvement in hiring people.
- Please tell me about your company, including:
 - The name of the company and years in business.
 - The types of services your company provides or products it produces.

- Number of employees and locations.

REO Involvement and Coordination

- Please tell me about how you or your company first got involved with the [name of grantee/subgrantee organization] and the REO program.

- How did you first hear about [name of grantee/subgrantee organization]? How long have you been working with them?
- How did you first hear about this organization?
- Why did you choose to get involved?
- How has your involvement changed over time, if at all?
- How did this change with the start of the REO program, if at all?

- In addition to hiring or working with participants, please tell me about any other ways your company is involved with the REO program.

- Did your company help the REO program design its training or employment services? If so, please describe.
- Does your company play an ongoing advisory role with the REO program? If so, please explain that role.
- Does your company provide other types of services for the REO program beside hiring (such as curriculum input, conducting mock interviews, etc.)? If so, please describe.

- How often do you communicate with REO program staff?

- With whom do you typically communicate?
- What do you communicate about?
- Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for the communication process?

Opportunities for Justice-Involved Individuals

- Please tell me about your current workforce.

- Are there enough qualified workers in your area? If not, what types of job skills are you looking for?
- How do you usually find the individuals you hire?

- Please tell me more about individuals you hire that are justice-system involved.

- Do you have a history of hiring justice system involved individuals prior to working with the REO program?
- Approximately how many of your employees are justice-system involved or have been previously involved?
- What positions do they typically hold and what are their responsibilities?

- o How many hours do they typically work and what is their pay on average?
 - o How many REO program participants have you hired and how many are currently employed in full time employment?
 - o What strengths do you feel justice-involved individuals bring to your company?
 - o Are there other factors, such as local or state policies or tax breaks, that make hiring these individuals advantageous?
- What challenges have you encountered in hiring and retaining justice system-involved individuals?
 - o Probation or Parole requirements?
 - o Occupational licensing or other restrictions on the type of work they can do at your company?
 - o Their lack of soft skills?
 - o Their lack of vocational skills?
 - o Lack of access to adequate transportation, child care, or other work supports?
 - o Bonding or insurance issues?
 - o Anything else?
 - o How have you handled these challenges?

Internships, On-the-Job Training, and Registered Apprenticeships

I now want to ask you about some different types of employment and training you might provide to REO participants, including internships, registered apprenticeships, and on-the-job training as well as permanent employment.

- How many of you have provided each of the following to REO participants?
[site visitors: please note how many and who has provided each type of opportunity]
 - o Internships?
 - o On-the-Job Training or OJTs?
 - o Registered Apprenticeships, or pre-apprenticeships, that is those registered with and approved by the Department of Labor?

[site visitors: depending on the size of your group and complexity of their answers, you may ask the following questions sequentially for each type of opportunity or all at once.]

- Please tell me about these [internships/OJT/registered apprenticeship] positions.
 - o What responsibilities do these positions involve?
 - o How many hours per week are these positions? How long do they last?

- o Are these positions paid? If so, how much and how are these positions funded?
- o About how many of these positions do you offer to REO participants? Over what period of time?
- o Did you offer these types of positions prior to working with the [name of grantee/subgrantee organization] or the REO program?
 - If so, did you offer these positions to justice system involved individuals?
- o What qualifications are you looking for?
- o Have you placed REO participants in these positions into permanent work? If so, why and what positions? If not, why not?

Overall Challenges and Successes with REO

- What have been the biggest benefits of working with REO participants?
- What have been the biggest challenges in working with REO participants?
- How do REO participants benefit most from your involvement with the program?
- How has your relationship with the REO program strengthened your business?
- Do you have plans to work with the [grantee/organization] long term? If so, why? If not, why not? Does the potential end of their current REO funding affect this decision?
- What have you learned from this experience about employing justice-involved individuals?
- Is there anything else you think we should know about your relationship with the REO program?