

Appendix E – Apprenticeship Program Apprentice Focus Group Discussion Guide

Research to Support the Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship - 102212 -0001-001

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today. We work for the Urban Institute, an independent research organization based in Washington, D.C. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy has contracted with the Urban Institute to conduct research on apprenticeship programs that are inclusive of people with disabilities to support the Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship.

As we discussed with each of you on the phone, participation is voluntary and not affiliated with your registered apprenticeship program. That means that you do not have to participate. It also means that if you do choose to participate you can choose not to answer any question that you do not want to answer, and you can stop participating at any time. Your employer will not know whether you choose to participate, and participation will have no consequences for your apprenticeship program.

[OPTIONAL: Regardless of whether or not you answer all of our questions, you will receive a \$25 gift card as a thank you. Although we hope you’ll stay for the entire discussion, if you need to leave, just let us know, and we can pause and make sure you get signed out and receive your \$25 gift card.] We expect this discussion to last about 90 minutes.

Privacy Statement: We consider what you say in this focus group as private and will do everything we can to secure the privacy of the information you provide. Although we will be taking notes, when we report information from the discussion, we will not include your name. We do not share these notes with anyone outside of our research team, including Department of Labor, and we will destroy these notes after the end of our project. Information from this discussion may be included in a public report, but none of the information you share will be attributed to you. While we can assure you that no one on the research team will share what you say today outside of this conversation, we cannot control what other people will do with the information they hear. Because of that, we encourage all participants to think about whether they would be upset if someone repeated what they said outside of this conversation when deciding to share something with the group. We also encourage each of you to be respectful of one another and treat the information you hear today as private. We also ask that you consider using headphones or finding a private space to talk so that other people cannot hear or see this conversation.

Potential risks may include the possibility that other focus group participants could divulge your participation and statements, although we believe these risks of participating in this study are minimal.

We believe there are no direct benefits to you, but we hope that the findings from this study will benefit the Research to Support the Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship project by providing research insights on how apprenticeship programs can benefit workers.

Finally, to help us accurately capture the information you share, we would like to audio record this conversation. The recording is just a back-up for our notes and will be kept securely within our small

research team. The recording will be deleted once we have developed a full set of notes from the interview.

In a phone conversation we previously discussed the nature of this research, that your participation is completely voluntary, and the costs and benefits of your participation in the research. Can you confirm that you agree to participate in this focus group in the chat box either by responding “I agree to participate in this discussion” or “I do not agree to participate in this discussion”? Please send the message directly to [focus group lead].

Do you have any questions about what we are going to do before we begin?

There are a few things we ask that you keep in mind, since the conversation will be virtual and will involve more than one person:

- 1) Please enter the Zoom call at the start time. We will not be admitting people 5 minutes after the start of the call.
- 2) Please do your best to ensure privacy in your space/room while participating in the conversation. This can be an indoor or outdoor space that is as private from other people as possible. We recommend that if you are unable to be alone in a space that you plan to log on using headphones.
- 3) If possible, please participate in the video portion of the Zoom call.
- 4) Please do not use the virtual background option.
- 5) To respect others' privacy, please do not record, take screenshots, or otherwise document the contents of the discussion. And please do not discuss the conversation with others.
- 6) The research team might change the name you log on to Zoom with to a participant ID prior to letting you into the Zoom meeting in order to protect your privacy. If so, we will let you know the ID that you have been assigned.

Do you have any questions about these guidelines? Do you agree to these guidelines?

1. How did you hear about your apprenticeship program? What was the application and hiring process like?
 - a. Did you face any barriers or obstacles when you applied to your apprenticeship program?
 - b. Did your employer or program sponsor help to overcome those barriers or obstacles? If so, how?
 - c. If your employer or program sponsor didn't help you overcome those barriers to applying, is there something they could have done that would have made it easier for you to participate?
2. What attracted you to the apprenticeship opportunity? Why did you apply?

3. *Do you know if the Wheelhouse Group, the Partnership on Inclusive Apprenticeship, or any of its partners [name AIOs] played a role in the recruitment and hiring process for your apprenticeship program? If so, how did you interact with these organizations?*
4. *Has your employer provided you with the opportunity to self-identify your disability status (either that you have or do not have a disability)? If they did, when and how did they provide this opportunity?*
5. *Besides providing an opportunity for apprentices to self-identify their disability status, has your employer ever discussed company policy or practice for ensuring that the apprenticeship program is fair and inclusive of people with disabilities? If they did, can you describe what they mentioned?*
6. *Can you describe what it would mean to you for an apprenticeship program to be inclusive of people with disabilities? [Probe:]*
 - a. *Are there program features that all inclusive apprenticeship programs should have in your opinion?*
 - b. *Are there hiring and recruitment practices that all inclusive apprenticeship programs should use?*
 - c. *Are there certain tools or technologies that an employer in your industry should utilize?*
7. *Have you ever needed special accommodations from your employer? If so, did you request those accommodations or were they provided? Can you describe the experience?*
8. *If there was one area where your employer could improve, to make your apprenticeship program more inclusive, what would that be?*
9. *Did participating in your apprenticeship program help you to,*
 - a. *Improve your skills? How?*
 - b. *Earn credentials?*
 - c. *Secure an increase in pay?*
10. *What do you like most about your apprenticeship program? What do you like least?*
11. *Do you have thoughts on what could make your apprenticeship program more inclusive of people with disabilities?*