

## Topic Guide for Site Visit Data Collection - Workers

### Employment Processes as Barriers to Employment in the Lower-Wage Labor Market Study

**Introductions/purpose of the study:** *Racial bias can be present in any step of the employment process, including how jobs are advertised, applications are screened, tasks and work hours are assigned, mentoring is offered, compensation is set, and retention and promotion decisions happen. To meaningfully improve racial equity in employment, it is important to understand the many ways in which employment processes in hiring, promotion, and wage setting can contribute to racial disparities in employment.*

*This project, conducted by Abt Associates and the University of Chicago and sponsored by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is reviewing what is known about how employment processes can present barriers for workers of color, and identifying potentially promising strategies to address biases in the low-wage labor market. As part of this research, we would like to learn more from organizations that are implementing strategies intended to eliminate racial bias in employment practices.*

*We would like to talk to you to learn more about the work you're doing at [SITE NAME].*

**Privacy statement:** *The discussion today should last about 75 minutes. Your participation is voluntary. You may decline to answer any questions that you do not feel able to answer or comfortable with answering. Before we start, I want to let you know that although we will take notes during the discussion, information is never attributed to the name of the respondent in written summaries. Those summaries will be used to inform conversations with ACF about future research and will not be made public. Findings from across all of the individuals we talk to will be included in reports and presentations to help inform future ACF research, by describing how and why organizations seek to address racial bias in employment, who is involved in such efforts, common challenges and promising practices. Those reports and presentations may be public. We will maintain privacy of records unless otherwise compelled by local, state and federal laws.*

*<For interviews with more than one respondent> We also ask that everyone present on this call respect one another's privacy and not share information that was learned on this call.*

*Do you have any questions before we get started?*

**The Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This collection of information is voluntary and will be used to understand how employment processes can present barriers for workers of color and to identify promising strategies to address bias in the low-wage labor market. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to be 75 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and reviewing the collection of information. 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. The OMB number and expiration date for this collection are OMB #:0970-0356 Exp: 02/29/2024. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Andrew Clarkwest (Abt Associates); Andrew\_Clarkwest@abtassoc.com.

## Using the topic guide

The guide is organized into topical sections to structure the discussions with workers at an employer implementing the intervention. Discussion facilitators will use information gathered via exploratory calls and reviews of publicly available information to customize this topic guide to be most relevant to each site. Different from an interview/interview protocol where each bullet point would be a framed question, the topic guide outlines potential topics as not all will be relevant to each site.

## Respondent information

- Name, title, organization/affiliation, length of involvement with the organization and with the program
- Educational background and prior work experience
- Overall role/job responsibilities

## Respondent's Understanding of Local context

- Understanding of local economic context, including:
  - o Major industries, experience of industry under study, recent economic trends, other issues that affected economy (natural disaster, company closing);
  - o Unemployment rate and labor supply issues
  - o Types of jobs available
  - o Wages
  - o Availability of benefits/other forms of compensation
- Relevant topics of discussion in the broader public sphere around challenges faced by low-income workers and relevant policies and other ways to address them (e.g., local proposals about minimum wage or sick leave)
- Demographic context: Racial/ethnic demographic breakdown; percent below the poverty line, education levels
- Current climate on race relations (e.g., recent events that have affected perceptions of/discussions of racial bias)
- Remote work opportunities
- Perceptions of how contextual factors have affected their job search and/or employment experience

## Worker background and experiences

- Current employment status (e.g., working full or part-time, looking for work, satisfied with current job or looking for new job)
- Typical job search experiences
- Motivations for applying for those jobs
- Experience applying for jobs (mode, ease of application process); challenges
- Typical job characteristics
  - o Type of job
  - o Initial wage and raise potential
  - o Benefits available and take-up of benefits
  - o Hours (worker preference vs. hours available; scheduling)
  - o Training/mentoring provided
  - o Opportunities for promotion
  - o Reasons for leaving

- Experiences while employed that have caused challenges to remaining in the job, receiving pay increases, or receiving promotions
- Overall satisfaction with employment experiences
- Overall perceptions of racial discrimination in labor market

## Worker experience with intervention

(Note: these questions may not be applicable to all workers, particularly those whose connection is through an employer making direct changes)

- Initial introduction to intervention (how learned about it)
- Understanding of goals of intervention
- Motivation for becoming involved

## Intervention design and implementation

- Composition of the Applicant Pool (if applicable)
  - o Steps in application process (before the intervention and after the intervention, as applicable)
  - o Perception of suitability of application process, regarding:
    - Locations/sources of posting
    - Steps in application process (e.g., technology needed)
    - Application requirements
    - Language in job posting
    - Other things that might affect decision to apply to job
  - o Understanding of changes to application process
  - o Perception of whether changes to application process will reduce racial bias in who is aware of and applies for jobs
- Who is hired from the applicant pool (candidate review process) (if applicable)
  - o Candidate review process pre-intervention
  - o Candidate review process post-intervention
  - o Understanding of changes to candidate review process
  - o Perception of whether changes to review process will reduce racial bias in assessing applicants and making job offers
- Quality of Employees' Initial job Assignment (if applicable)
  - o Overall job characteristics (pre-intervention and post-intervention)
    - Initial wage and raise potential
    - Benefits available and take-up of benefits
    - Hours (worker preference vs. hours available; scheduling)
    - How decisions were made about which new hires are assigned to which roles
    - Opportunities for promotion
    - Employee autonomy in the role
    - Workers' perception of job quality
  - o If intervention has begun, perception of changes that have occurred in job assignment
  - o Perception of whether intervention will reduce racial bias or improve experience in job assignment for workers of color.

- Employees' Development and Support (if applicable)
  - o Development and support, pre-intervention and post-intervention, including:
    - Supervision structure
    - Formal and informal mentorship
    - Formal and informal training
    - Workers' perception of development and support
  - o If intervention has begun, changes that have occurred in level and equity in development and support provided
  - o Perception of whether the intervention has or will reduce racial bias or improve experience in development and support for workers of color
- Advancement and Termination (if applicable)
  - o Advancement and termination processes and results, pre-intervention and post-intervention
    - Performance criteria and reviews and disparities in outcomes
    - Disciplinary processes and disparities in outcomes
    - Disparities in job tenure
    - Job advancement
    - Workplace culture
    - Reasons for leaving job
  - o Workers' perception of for the intervention to reduce bias or improving experiences in advancement and termination and potential for workers of color.

## Reflections

- Most important results of the intervention
  - o Percent of workers of color hired/retained
  - o Increase in wages for POC workers
  - o Reductions in wage disparities
  - o More consistent hours
  - o Benefits
  - o Rates of promotions
  - o Job satisfaction
  - o Autonomy
- Measuring Outcomes
  - o Metrics that should be used
  - o Appropriate timing and frequency of measuring outcomes
- Overall perceptions of importance of addressing racial bias in employment processes
- Potential policymaker approaches to address racial bias in employment processes
- Overall successes and challenges