

Employment Processes as Barriers to Employment in the Lower-Wage Market: *Interventions to Address Racial Bias*

Formative Data Collections for ACF Research

0970 – 0356

Supporting Statement Part B

MAY 2023

Submitted By:
Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

4th Floor, Mary E. Switzer Building
330 C Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Project Officer:
Megan Reid

**Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for
Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes**

Part B

B1. Objectives

Study Objectives

The objectives of the Employment Process as Barriers to Employment in the Low-Wage Labor Market (EPB) study are to systematically review what is known about how employment processes can present barriers for workers of color, as well as explore and identify potentially promising strategies to address biases in the low-wage labor market. Together with the study's review of pertinent literature and collaborator calls on racial biases and disparities in the lower wage labor market (conducted under a previous information collection request¹), the information gathered from the site visit discussions will be used to help identify anti-bias strategies that could be the subject of further study, as well as broader research questions that could build evidence on policies or practices that can disrupt bias in employment processes.

Generalizability of Results

This study is intended to present internally-valid descriptions of interventions that attempt to mitigate racial bias for workers in the low-wage labor market, not to promote statistical generalization to any wider population of workers or employers.

Appropriateness of Study Design and Methods for Planned Uses

As described in Section A2 of Supporting Statement A, the formative data collection under this study will inform the development of Administration for Children and Families (ACF) research, enable ACF to maintain a research agenda that is rigorous and relevant, and ensure that research products are as current as possible. Site visits are appropriate for collecting information about interventions and promising anti-bias strategies that may be the subject of further study, in order to build evidence on practices that can disrupt bias in employment processes. As noted in Supporting Statement A, this information is not from a strictly statistically representative set of respondents, nor is it intended to be used as the principal basis for public policy decisions and is not expected to meet the threshold of influential or highly influential scientific information.

B2. Methods and Design

Target Population

The research team will conduct interviews with representatives from the following groups at four sites: program managers, staff, partners, employers and workers.

The research team will use non-probability, purposive sampling to identify potential respondents who can collectively provide the required breadth of perspective on the study's research questions. Because participants will be purposively selected, they will not be representative of the population of program managers, staff, partners, employers and workers.

Respondent Recruitment, Sampling and Site Selection

The research team will select four organizations to be the subject of site visits. Those four will be selected from among a pool of nine prospective sites that participated in exploratory calls. The four are

¹ OMB #0970-0356; Title: Employment Processes as Barriers to Employment in the Lower-Wage Labor Market

Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes

not intended to be representative but will be selected because they meet criteria that the project established as reflecting a range of different potentially promising interventions for reducing bias in employment processes. The nine sites were identified by conducting a scan of potential sites that were attempting to address racial bias in the lower-wage labor market that use one or more mechanisms identified as promising through a literature review that the project team conducted. Possible sites were identified through a combination of internet research and input from experts. The study team identified sites for exploratory calls that were likely to meet the following criteria:

- Targets the low-wage labor market;
- Is not a legal or regulatory intervention;
- Seems plausibly amenable to further study via site visits;
- Uses at least one of the six specified mechanisms to address racial bias:
 - Increasing transparency in hiring, placement, and promotion decisions to reveal disparities;
 - Increasing worker power and voice to influence employment processes;
 - Standardize practices to reduce subjective decision making where bias can enter;
 - Skills-based (rather than credential-based) hiring;
 - Making human resources technology more equitable (in both their design and use); or,
 - Workforce strategies to build networks and connect to resources to overcome barriers.

In determining the final set of sites, the team also considered whether as a group they:

- Address a range of employment processes;
- Address different types of bias present in employment processes (direct and indirect; explicit and implicit; cognitive, algorithmic, or structural bias);
- Are relevant to a range of industries and occupations;
- Represent a range of geographic locations; and
- Include applicants and workers of color of various races, ethnicities and genders.

As noted above, respondents are not intended to be representative. The research team will, however, consider specific experiences and areas of expertise in selecting respondents in order to obtain a range of perspectives and experiences. Once the list of sites is finalized, a senior member of the research team will reach out to a representative of the organization by email with a request to participate in site visits. If the representative agrees, the research team will then arrange an in-person or virtual site visit. The research team will work with the organizational representative to identify specific respondents within each category to participate in a tailored discussion.

If the representative of the organization declines or does not respond, the research team will reach out to alternate organizations using the same process. If a specific respondent within a site does declines or does not respond, the research team will work with the organization to identify an alternate.

B3. Design of Data Collection Instruments

Development of Data Collection Instruments

Each site visit will address key aspects of designing and implementing interventions to address racial bias in the low wage labor market. Those include motivations for implementing the intervention; design and implementation of the intervention; organizational context and surrounding labor market and social context; workers' and jobseekers' experiences; and reflections on implementation successes, challenges, and expectations for sustainability and changes in the future. The Site Visit Discussion Guides 1-3 contain topics relevant to specific categories of respondents. Because interventions will vary

Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes

fundamentally in type, the set of interviewees and specific questions covered in each site will be structured differently. In turn, each instrument will need to be tailored by site. The project team will not ask all questions of the same type of respondent in every site and will not pretest instruments. They will instead use the instruments to guide discussions. An interviewee demographic form (Instrument 4) will collect information from respondents including, name, gender, race and/or ethnicity. The purpose of collecting this information is to understand demographics by site and intervention. Prior research has found that racial disparities on employment outcomes vary by gender. In turn, the experience of racial bias is likely to differ by gender as well. The demographic information collected will be connected to responses but not to names and stored in a restricted file with study assigned identification numbers associated to each response.

B4. Collection of Data and Quality Control

The EPB Study team (Abt Associates and their partners) will collect the data.

Prior to starting data collection, the research team will conduct a training for all data collection staff that will cover the purpose of the data collection, how to tailor the instrument to specific categories of respondents so that only relevant topics are covered, and how to summarize findings following the discussion using a template. The research team's task lead will review all discussion summaries and will request clarification if needed.

B5. Response Rates and Potential Nonresponse Bias

Response Rates

The discussions are not designed to produce statistically generalizable findings and participating is wholly at the respondent's discretion. Response rates will not be calculated or reported.

Nonresponse

As project collaborators will not be randomly sampled and findings are not intended to be representative, non-response bias will not be calculated. Demographic characteristics will be documented and reported in written materials associated with the data collection.

B6. Production of Estimates and Projections

The data will not be used to generate population estimates, either for internal use or dissemination.

B7. Data Handling and Analysis

Data Handling

Research team staff will take notes during site visit discussions and use audio recording devices to record the interviews as back-up to the notes. The notes and audio recordings will be stored in a secure Microsoft Teams folder accessible only to members of the research team and will be used by the site visit teams to develop site summaries. The research team project director and site visit task lead will review all discussion summaries for clarity and completeness and will request additional information from the team that facilitated the discussion as needed.

The site visit team will also collect basic demographic information via paper form from interviewees while on site. The form will include a study assigned identification number rather than a name. The site

Alternative Supporting Statement for Information Collections Designed for Research, Public Health Surveillance, and Program Evaluation Purposes

visitors will enter information from the form into a spreadsheet in the secure Microsoft Teams folder and will destroy the copy of the form.

Data Analysis

Following each site visit, the research team members that facilitated the discussion will summarize the site visit in a template that captures key discussion points about the intervention being implemented at the site and specify what type of bias the intervention seeks to disrupt and at what step in the employment process the intervention takes place. As relevant, information from across the visits will feed into a (non-public) report to OPRE that presents questions for future research on employment barriers and options for research designs to address those questions.

Data Use

The project will use the information collected on interventions aimed at disrupting bias to inform a (non-public) report to ACF that presents questions for future research on employment barriers and options for research projects that ACF might pursue to address those questions. If the data collection ends up producing pieces of information that seem to be of value to OPRE's external constituencies—such as practitioners who work with populations that ACF serves—then it is possible that that information could be included in approved dissemination products tailored to those audiences. We do not foresee these dissemination products to be directly developed from this one information collection activity. Information from this activity may be incorporated into broader dissemination products. But the primary intent of the data collection is to contribute to ACF's research agenda focused on programs that promote self-sufficiency of households with low incomes.

B8. Contact Persons

Andrew Clarkwest, Project Director, andrew_clarkwest@abtassoc.com

Karin Martinson, Principal Investigator, karin_martinson@abtassoc.com

Megan Reid, OPRE/ACF Contracting Officer Representative, megan.reid@acf.hhs.gov

Ciara Bridges, Program Assistant, ciara.bridges@acf.hhs.gov

Attachments

Instrument 1: Discussion Topic Guide – Program managers, program staff, and partners

Instrument 2: Discussion Topic Guide – Employers

Instrument 3: Discussion Topic Guide - Workers

Instrument 4: Interviewee Demographic Form

Appendix A: Draft Site Visit Outreach Email

Appendix B: Project Description