

# OSHA

## Focus Group on the Experience of Special Government Employees (SGEs) in the Voluntary Protection Programs

### Design Challenge: What are we trying to solve?

- The Voluntary Protection Programs (VPP) recognize employers and workers in the private industry and federal agencies who manage exemplary safety and health management systems and maintain injury and illness rates below national Bureau of Labor Statistics averages for their respective industries. In VPP, management, labor, and OSHA work cooperatively and proactively to prevent fatalities, injuries, and illnesses through a system focused on: hazard prevention and control; worksite analysis; training; and management commitment and worker involvement.
- The SGE Program was created to allow for industry employees at VPP sites to work alongside OSHA, especially on VPP on-site evaluations. These SGEs are critical in helping OSHA leverage its limited resources to support VPP. Their involvement is extremely valuable to our program. Currently, the SGE program is seeing a decline in SGE participation, specifically in participation in SGE activities, especially on-site audits.
- The goal of the focus group is to identify friction points in the SGE program that is hindering SGE participation, especially participation in on-site evaluations.

### Impact Goal of the SGEs Focus Group Sessions:

**Long-term impact:** Greater SGE participation on on-site audits and other SGE activities.

**Short-term impact:**

- Identify friction points of the SGE Program to make it easier for SGEs to participate.
- Identify communication opportunities, outreach, and issues.
- Identify regional discrepancies, if any.
- Remain open for other feedback.

### SGE Population and Recruiting Strategy

- There are currently 1,084 SGEs across the country. We will be sending out a screener survey to identify individuals who are attending the VPPPA Safety+ Conference. From that list of attendees, we will select individuals to participate.
- There will be two sessions hosted at the VPPPA Conference, with 5-6 individuals in each session. There will be one facilitator and one note taker. We have plans to host two virtual focus groups at a later time to ensure that a wide variety of SGEs are interviewed.

## Script:

Facilitator may choose to voice the following burden statement or an abbreviated version at the start of the focus group:

### Burden Statement

A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor an information collection subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act unless the information collection has a currently valid OMB Control Number. The approved OMB Control Number for this information collection is 1225-0093 (expires 02/29/2024). Without this approval, we could not conduct this focus group. Public reporting for the focus group is expected to be 15 minutes per response, with four responses per session. All responses to the focus group are voluntary. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this information collection, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Madeline Martinez at [Martinez.Madeline.M@dol.gov](mailto:Martinez.Madeline.M@dol.gov).

### Abbreviated version of Burden Statement

- Control No. 1225-0093 (expires 02/29/2024)
- Estimated burden time: 60 minutes
- All responses to this survey are voluntary.
- Send comments about this survey to Madeline Martinez at [Martinez.Madeline.M@dol.gov](mailto:Martinez.Madeline.M@dol.gov)

### Introduction

1. **Welcome:** Welcome to the SGE Focus group. I am Madeline Martinez, the SGE Coordinator for the National Office and I will be moderating this conversation today. This is \_\_\_\_, they will be taking notes and helping with moderating when needed. We are here today to discuss your experience within the SGE program. We want you to share your honest and open thoughts with us.
2. **Ground rules:** All conversations here will be kept confidential. While we are taking notes, we won't attribute any comments to one specific person, and your names won't be disclosed. We want you to feel comfortable sharing your opinions. We want to hear from everyone, so if you don't speak for a while, I might call on you to get your feedback. There are no right or wrong answers, everyone's opinions are valid. Does anyone have any questions so far?

**Focus group questions:**

Participants' current experience with SGE activities: Facilitators may use any one of these opening prompts.

- Outside of this conference, I want you to think about your most recent SGE activity or activities—you may have participated in an audit, conducted application reviews, mentored new SGEs or none of the above. Tell us about your last six months as an SGE--
- How many SGE activities do you participate in? What kind of SGE activities do you participate in?
- Give us an example of a good activity for you.
- Give us an example of an activity that could have been better for you.

Participants' engagement with the OSHA office: Facilitators may use any one of these following prompts.

- Our office manages the overall Voluntary Protection Programs and we want to meet you where you are as volunteer Special Government Employees. How do you learn about activities and on-site audits?
- Were there any activities or opportunities that you missed out on? Tell us about your experience.
- Consider the information that OSHA provides you – these may be website, listserv, and direct contacts. Give us an example of an activity you were excited for—how did you find out about it and what did you do?
- What are some barriers to participation that we are not considering? This could be your experience or that of your colleagues.
- How might we encourage SGEs to participate in more activities? We are open to any out-of-box ideas!

Benefits to company: Facilitators may use any one of these following prompts.

- How does your company support your SGE activities? Walk us through an example.
- What opportunities are there for you to share your experience as a SGE at your company?
- How might your companies better support your SGE activities?
- Are on-site audits or other activities beneficial to your company? Walk us through an example.

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Benefits to self: Facilitators may use any one of these following prompts.

- What are some of the lessons you have learned from on-site audits and other SGE activities? Walk us through an example.
- What do you like best about the SGE program? What does the SGE program mean to you?
- If you could make one improvement to the SGE program, what would it be?

Close out:

- Is there anything we missed during this conversation?

Thank you for your time, and honest feedback and opinions. We appreciate the work you do for the SGE program and the VPP. Please reach out to us if you have any questions.