

## Topic Guide for Site Visit Data Collection - Employers

### 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 90 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 90 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 Employers involved with 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 organization
- Educational background and prior work experience
- Overall role/job responsibilities

## Perception of Local Context

- Local economic context, including:
  - Major industries, experience of industry under study, recent economic trends, other issues that affected economy (natural disaster, company closing);
  - Unemployment rate and labor supply issues
  - Types of jobs available
  - Wages
  - 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)
- Role of remote work
- Perceptions of how various contextual factors affect the intervention

## Employer background and experiences

- Industry
- Size of employer (revenue, size of workforce)
- Objectives/success metrics for business
- Location(s)
- Types of jobs at employer, including low-wage jobs
- Composition of workforce
- Employer's approach to recruitment/retention/staff development
- Challenges employer has faced in recruitment/retention/staff development
- Employer's approach to diversity, equity and inclusion historically (e.g. DEI initiatives, trainings, specific DEI roles within organization)
- Respondent's role within organization
- Respondent's assessment of racial bias as an issue within jobs at employer

## Employer Motivation

- Employer's initial introduction to intervention
- Decision to participate in intervention (e.g., advocates within the organization, any sources of reluctance)
- Roles and individuals at employer who are involved in intervention
- Areas of conflict/harmony with other business objectives

## Intervention goals and design

- Goals of intervention
- Problem/source of bias that intervention aims to address
- Respondent's perception of intervention's promise in addressing bias
- Origin of intervention (if employer was involved):
  - Intervention implementation
  - Development of intervention
  - Who started the intervention
  - Who else was involved in initial planning (including involvement of workers of color)
  - Reason the intervention was started
  - Notable events that played a role in the start of the intervention

## Intervention design and implementation

- Outreach and recruitment for workers (if applicable)
  - Target population
  - Outreach and recruitment strategies (e.g., website, social media, word-of-mouth, fliers, referrals, community events, other agencies/programs)
  - Effectiveness of strategies
  - Challenges the intervention encountered and how they were overcome
  - Ongoing challenges
  - Successes
  - Promising approaches for others addressing bias in employment processes
  - Plans for intervention continuation/expansion/changes
- Composition of the Applicant Pool (if applicable)
  - Before the intervention, composition of the applicant pool (consider race, ethnicity, age, gender, educational status, immigration status, involvement with criminal justice system, other areas of interest to the intervention)
  - Intended changes to the composition of the applicant pool
  - If intervention has begun, changes to the composition of the applicant pool that have occurred
  - Current recruitment process
  - Changes they are making to recruitment/outreach:
    - Posting in different places/ways
    - Changing application process
    - Changing application requirements

- Changing language in job posting
    - Other
  - Rationale for why changes might lead to changes in applicant pool
  - Challenges the intervention encountered and how they were overcome
  - Ongoing challenges
  - Successes
  - Promising approaches for others addressing bias in employment processes
  - Plans for intervention continuation/expansion/changes
- Who is hired from the applicant pool (if applicable)
    - Overall proportion of applicant pool that is hired
    - Before the intervention, disparities in who is hired vs. applicant pool by: (consider: race, ethnicity, age, gender, educational status, immigration status, involvement with criminal justice system, other areas of interest to the intervention)
    - Anticipated changes to the composition of who is hired post-intervention
    - If intervention has begun, changes that have occurred in terms of applicant pool
    - Candidate review process pre-intervention
    - Candidate review process post-intervention
    - Rationale for why changes in process might lead to changes in composition of who is hired
    - Challenges the intervention encountered and how they were overcome
    - Ongoing challenges
    - Successes
    - Promising approaches for others addressing bias in employment processes
    - Plans for intervention continuation/expansion/changes
- Quality of Employees' Initial job Assignment (if applicable)
    - Overall job characteristics, pre-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
    - Racial disparities in job characteristics, pre-intervention
    - Anticipated changes in terms of quality of job assignments
    - If intervention has begun, changes that have occurred in job assignment
    - Rationale for how intervention may shift quality in job assignment
    - Challenges the intervention encountered and how they were overcome

- Ongoing challenges
- Successes
- Promising approaches for others addressing bias in employment processes
- Plans for intervention continuation/expansion/changes
  
- Employees' Development and Support (if applicable)
  - Development and support, pre-intervention
    - Supervision structure
    - Formal and informal mentorship
    - Formal and informal training
    - Workers' perception of development and support
  
  - Anticipated changes in terms of development and support
  - If intervention has begun, changes that have occurred
  - Rationale for how intervention may reduce racial bias in in the development and support that employees receive
  - Challenges the intervention encountered and how they were overcome
  - Ongoing challenges
  - Successes
  - Promising approaches for others addressing bias in employment processes
  - Plans for intervention continuation/expansion/changes
  
- Advancement and Termination (if applicable)
  - Advancement and termination processes and results, pre-intervention
    - Performance criteria and reviews and disparities in outcomes
    - Disciplinary processes and disparities in outcomes
    - Disparities in job tenure
    - Job advancement
    - Reasons for leaving job
    - Workers' perception of advancement and termination
  
  - Anticipated changes in terms of advancement and termination
  - If intervention has begun, changes that have occurred
  - Rationale for how intervention may lead to desired changes
  - Challenges the intervention encountered and how they were overcome
  - Ongoing challenges
  - Successes
  - Promising approaches for others addressing bias in employment processes
  - Plans for intervention continuation/expansion/changes

## Reflections

- Most important outcomes of their intervention
  - Percent of workers of color hired/retained
  - Increase in wages for workers of color

- o Reductions in wage disparities
- o More consistent hours
- o Benefits
- o Rates of promotions
- o Job satisfaction
- o Autonomy
- Measuring Outcomes
  - o Specific metrics used
  - o Appropriate timing and frequency of measuring outcomes
  - o Other metrics considered
- Overall perceptions of importance of addressing racial bias in employment processes
- Other potential actions employers could take to reduce racial bias in employment processes
- Potential policymaker approaches to address racial bias in employment processes
- Overall successes and challenges