

IES Focus Group Script – Adults and Dislocated

I. Welcome and purpose of the focus group

- SPPG facilitator welcomes everyone and introduces self. About SPPG.
- The purpose of this focus group is to review the current services and supports offered by Iowa Employment Solutions (previously known as CIETC – Central Iowa Education and Training Consortium) (for youth – you may know your service provider as Iowa Comprehensive Human Services or ICHS). Through this and two other focus groups in central Iowa, Iowa Employment Solutions hopes to learn more from customers about successes, barriers, and supports that will assist the agency in responding to the needs of job seekers, employers, and the community. IES has drafted a customer service plan and they wish to hear from customers whether the plan reflects the expectations and needs of customers.
- SPPG's role in this effort is to facilitate focus groups with three categories of customers – adults, youth, and dislocated workers. You have been invited to participate in this focus group because you have received services from Iowa Employment Solutions (or CIETC) (for youth – from ICHS) within the last eighteen months.
- Information from this and the other focus groups will be summarized and incorporated into a report to Iowa Employment Solutions and its partner agencies.

II. Introductions

- Self-introductions of participants.
- Ask each participant to introduce him/herself by name, where they received workforce services, and the time period they received services (and ask them to identify if they are currently receiving services).

III. Structure of the focus group

- Use of a script for consistency across this and other focus groups. There is not a right or wrong response to the questions we ask. We're only interested in what you THINK about the issues we raise. The script is made up of a series of statements that we believe to be true, with some explanation about why we want to talk about them. Each statement is followed by a set of questions we want you to respond to.
- Your honesty is important to us. You won't hurt our feelings by the comments you make. Our job is to find out what you think and use that information to help in planning.
- Please BRIEFLY respond to the question – and try not to react to what the person before you said. You'll likely hear things you agree with, and things you disagree with. That's fine.

IV. Rules for the session

- Everyone will participate, and no one will dominate
- Be ready to volunteer your comment; I will call on folks if nobody speaks up
- Please be brief in your comments and get to the point right away.
- If I cut you off, please don't consider me rude. I am just trying to move things along and ensure everyone participates. In the same vein, take time to freely express yourself. Like I said, if we are falling behind schedule, I'll move us along. It's my job.
- Session will be limited to 1 ½ hours.

- Notes will be taken on laptop by SPPG staff.
- Non-attributable comments. We are not interested in who said what, just what is said.
- Any questions?

Premise 1: Workforce Center Process

Iowa Employment Solutions (IES) is one of fifteen one-stop workforce centers in Iowa. The agency serves eight counties in central Iowa with a one-stop center in Des Moines and five satellite offices. IES serves a variety of customers, including people looking for a new job, those in need of more skills training, and those who have lost their jobs. A variety of services and resources are available for all customers to help them meet their needs. IES tries to provide customers with information, job search assistance, education, training, and other supports to help them get the jobs they want and keep them. The goal is to meet the needs of each individual who walks in the door, starting with an intake process. For the next several questions, I'd like to ask you about the process you went through to get services at IES.

- Why did you first come to IES (or CIETC)?
- On a scale of 1-5 (1 being easy and 5 being difficult), how would you rate the intake process? (follow-up: why?)
- What services and supports were you expecting to get? (Follow-up: were those expectations met?)
- How did IES staff work with you?
 - How were staff able to meet your needs?
 - How comfortable did you feel asking for assistance (i.e. computer questions)?

Premise II: Services

Iowa Employment Solutions offers a number of services such as assessments, skills training, basic skills development, and workshops, including resume development, job searching, GED classes, and some customized educational services. In a one-stop center, there are partner agencies that offer services as well (i.e., veterans services, disability navigators, and family self-sufficiency assistance). There are also many resources in the community, which customers access with referrals from IES staff. The following set of questions will serve to find out more about the services and supports you received.

- What services did you receive through IES? (ask them to list out)
- Are there additional services or skills you need to be successful?
- How did you participate in deciding what services and supports you needed?
- How knowledgeable were IES staff members about support services?
 - If you received services from another agency, did staff at IES follow-up to ensure that your needs were met?
 - How comfortable did you feel asking for information about additional services?
- How aware of local support services (i.e. child care assistance, public assistance, housing assistance, food stamps) are you? (follow-up: were you able to access those that you needed?)

Premise III: Job Preparedness and On-the-Job Supports

Iowa Employment Solutions' long-term goal for customers is to get and keep a job that meets the needs of the employee, the employer, and the community. This is why IES keeps track of the types of jobs in the area and the skills needed by those employers. IES assists customers in determining their interests and competencies, and what training or assistance is needed to get and keep the type of job they want. We'd like to learn more from you about how prepared you feel you are/were for the job market.

- How did the services you received help you be prepared for your job?
 - How relevant were the classes/services to your needs?
- If necessary, are/were there skills training programs available for what your employer needs?
- (for dislocated) How did the services help you identify and take advantage of your current skills and career interests?
- (for those still seeking) How well do you feel you convey your skills and knowledge to potential employers?
 - How can IES assist with that?
- (for those with jobs) Was there any on-the-job training by your employer or by anyone else?
- Were there any follow-up services from IES once you secured employment?
 - How can IES assist with supports once you have a job?

Premise IV: Employer and Community Knowledge and Recognition

IES employs staff who are called Job Developers. They create relationships with employers in the community, make them aware of the services offered by IES, and help recruit and refer potential employees to them. This benefits employers and customers by matching skills with jobs that are currently available. IES seeks to understand better the level of knowledge of their services among employers and community agencies.

- What is IES known for? (among customers, in the community, etc.)
- Would you or do you refer people you know to IES? Why or why not?
- Is your employer (or previous employer) knowledgeable about IES?
 - If your employer knew you received services from IES, how were you treated?

Premise V: Round Robin

For our final discussion topic, we have what we refer to as the King or Queen of the world question. We asked you a lot of questions, some general and many specific. Regardless, we asked you about what we wanted. Is there something you want to make sure you tell us?

So pretend you are king or queen of the world. Resources and money are not an issue. You can do anything. What is the issue you wanted to make sure we heard and took back to IES/ICHS to improve workforce services and supports, and what would you do to fix it?

Now I'm going to go around the room to make sure everyone has a chance. So be relatively brief, but do take the time to express yourself. If you have said everything you came to say, just let me know.