

## IES Focus Group Script - Youth

### 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. IES partners with Iowa Comprehensive Human Services (ICHS) to meet the needs of young customers in the area. A variety of services and resources are available for young people to help them meet their needs, including tutoring, alternative education, summer employment opportunities, work experience, mentoring, and guidance and counseling services. 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 and ICHS.

- Why did you first come to IES (or ICHS)?
- On a scale of 1-5 (1 being easy and 5 being difficult), how would you rate the initial intake process? (follow-up: why?)
- What services and supports were you expecting to get? (Follow-up: were those expectations met?)
- How did IED 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

ICHS offers a number of services such as training for a specific job, training to be self-employed, guidance and counseling, Job Club, Leadership Development, mentoring, basic skills training, and follow-up services. There are also many resources in the community, which young customers can access with referrals from ICHS staff. As part of the Customer Service Plan, ICHS will establish a Youth Services Team to include DHS, Juvenile Court, the schools, the area education agency, and other partners. The following set of questions will serve to find out more about the services and supports you received.

- What services did you receive through ICHS? (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 ICHS staff members about support services?
  - If you received services from another agency, did staff at ICHS follow-up to make sure that your needs were met?
  - How comfortable did you feel asking for information about additional services?

#### Premise III: Job Preparedness and Other Supports

ICHS works to provide customers with opportunities for academic and occupational training, and exposure to the job market and employment. This is why ICHS works with each individual to identify their interests and needs, and help match them with the

services, classes, and other supports to meet their goals. We'd like to learn more from you about how you feel ICHS has helped you be prepared for whatever your next step is – more school, your own business, or a job or career.

- How did the services you received help you prepare for a job?
  - How relevant were the classes/services to your needs?
  - If necessary, are/were there skills training programs available for your interests and the job you want(ed)?
  - (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 ICHS once you secured employment?
    - How can IES assist with supports once you have a job?

#### Premise IV: Relationships with Other Service Providers, School, Employers, and the Community

ICHS staff create relationships with other providers (such as DHS and the Juvenile Court), high schools, community colleges, employers, and others. The relationships help ICHS provide information about the services they offer, refer customers to supports, and work with the partner agencies to determine overall needs of the customers and make sure they get them met. We want to know more about how IES and ICHS helped you meet your overall goals and how they can partner with other supports and help with connecting to employers.

- What is IES or ICHS known for? (among customers, in the community, etc.)
- How did ICHS work with your other service providers (both within and outside of the agency)?
  - § Was there a team of providers who met to discuss the overall service needs? (probe for more info here)
- If you are employed, is your employer knowledgeable about ICHS and Iowa Employment Solutions?
  - § If your employer knows you receive services from ICHS, how are 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.