

# RFA Workforce & Good Jobs and Equity Fellows

The Empowerment Lever:  
Practice & Policy Centered on Workers' Experience and Priorities

August 2, 2023

## Let's warm up that chat box...

....What is one thing you are looking forward to in August?

- The program will begin shortly
- Please turn on your video
- Please mute your microphone
- You are welcome to use the chat box for discussions or questions throughout the session!
- Please rename your screen to
  - “Name, Preferred Pronouns, State, City/County”
  - *Example: **Brooke Valle, She/Her, Avon Lake, OH***



# Welcome and Introductions

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# Today's Facilitator



TRAILHEAD  
STRATEGIES

# By the end of this session we will...

- ✓ Review the basic concepts of empowerment
- ✓ Learn from work going on in the field
- ✓ Consider ways to measure worker voice and power
- ✓ Explore ways to use human centered design to build systems and policies that empower workers
- ✓ Reflect on the applications to your own projects and agencies

# Job Quality Levers

Procurement



Empowerment



Policy



HR Practices



Education & Enforcement



# Today's Lever - Empowerment



## **Empowerment**

Provide employees, partners and customers of your agency with voice and representation. Empowerment practices recognize historical and systemic inequities and intentionally equip individuals to participate at the decision-making table in real and meaningful ways.

# Sample mechanisms for empowerment

We can have the most impact when we thoughtfully design policies and practices centered on local workers' experiences and perspectives.

Population-focused programs w/feedback mechanisms

Worker boards with policy impact

Prevailing wage and stable scheduling laws

Employee ownership options

Industry-wide standards

Trusted Communicators for Outreach

Many of these mechanisms also support education and enforcement, which we will talk about in next month's session. Make sure to join us on Sept 6th!





# Learning from the Field:

Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity  
Harris County, Texas  
Essential Workers Board

# Guest Speaker



**Danielle Igbani**

Program Manager

Department of Economic Equity and  
Opportunity

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<https://ewb.harriscountytexas.gov/>



Harris County  
Essential Workers Board

# Harris County Essential Workers Board

Supported by:

Harris County Department of Economic Equity and Opportunity



# Background

- Essential workers are uniquely positioned to identify and recommend solutions to workplace issues, as they have first-hand insights into hazards and issues workers face on the job
- The Essential Workers Board was created to advise Harris County on programs and policies to improve the health and economic outcomes of essential workers and the overall public
- This board is the first of its kind in the U.S.



**Harris County's Commissioners Court**

# Purpose

- Provide feedback and recommendations to DEEO and other appropriate county departments on county programs and policies that recognize and support essential workers
- Serve in an advisory capacity to the Commissioners Court on such programs and policies where appropriate
- Encourage and support the development and implementation of programs and policies that:
  - Protect communities, workers, and businesses during public health emergencies and other occupational safety and health hazards
  - Support equitable solutions to achieving protections on the job, including fair wages and benefits and occupational safety and health for all essential workers

# Objectives

- Evaluate and provide feedback on existing and future development and implementation of programs and policies that address essential workers' rights
- Share information, insights, and lived experiences of essential workers to assist Harris County in identifying areas of concern and developing recommendations to maximize essential workers' rights
- Serve as a public forum for the discussion and exploration of essential workers' rights and community engagement efforts

# Board Implementation

- Research best practices in supporting advisory boards at the local government level
- Determine logistical, procedural, & budgetary aspects
  - Bylaws, interpretation needs, meeting space, stipends, etc.
- Commissioners Court creation of EWB & approval of bylaws (11.30.21)
- Commissioners Court approval of stipend policy (5.10.22)
- Commissioners Court appointment of initial 5\* members (5.24.22)
- Members begin recruitment process (6.15.22)
- Board member orientation (1.25.23)
- Board completed recruitment (7.25.23)

# Member Appointment

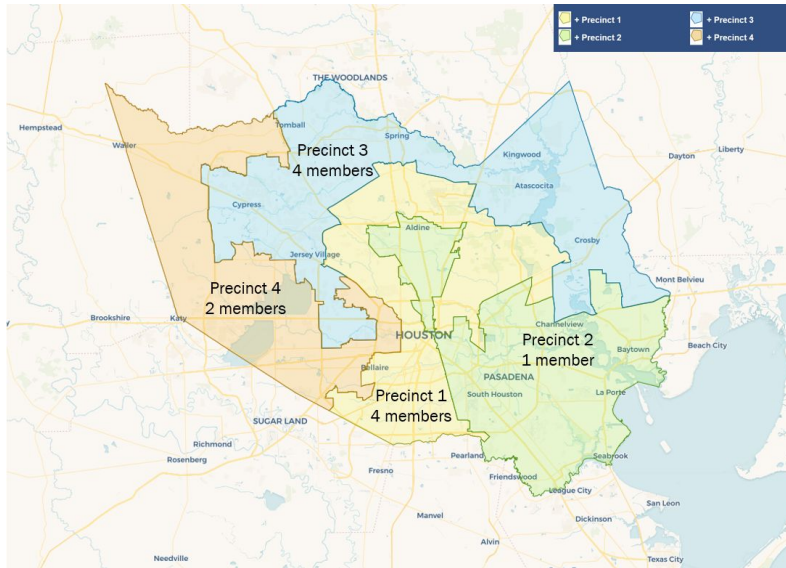
- Inaugural 5 members appointed by Commissioners Court
- Those members recommended the remaining 8 members
  - Application review process
  - Final approval by Commissioners Court





# Board Composition – Geographic & Ethnic Representation

## Geographic Distribution



## Ethnic Representation

- 6 Hispanic members
- 4 African American members
- 1 White member

# Board Composition – Industry Representation

## **Currently Represented Industries**

- Construction
- Domestic work/Home care
- Education/Childcare
- Grocery, Convenience, or Drug Store
- Healthcare or Public Health
- Janitorial
- Retail

## **Industries Pending Representation**

- Airport/Transportation
- Food Services, Hospitality, or Leisure Services

# Operating Costs

- Stipends

- \$100 per board member per meeting of the full board for up to 6 meetings per year, not to exceed \$600 per member for the year

- Devices

- DEEO purchased 1 mobile hotspot and 1 iPad for each of 13 members

- Translation & Interpretation Services

- Vendor requires a minimum of 2 hours per session for interpretation
- Board utilizes interpretation at least 6 times per year
- Occasional document translation

# Challenges

- Low volume of member applicants led to extended recruitment period

# Future Goals

- Now that board members have recommended their final member to Commissioners Court, they are looking forward to being able to begin providing feedback on specific policies.



# Live Q+A

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# Learning from the Field:

MIT Sloan School of Management  
Worker Voice

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# Guest Speakers



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# Measuring Voice for Job Quality

Yaminette Diaz-Linhart & Arrow Minster

August 2nd 2023

# Overview

- Work Matters
  - Good Jobs: A Working Definition
  - Voice, Power, Representation
  - Why might workers voice?
  - Strategies to promote voice
  - How might we measure voice?
  - Strategies to measure voice
- 
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# Work Matters

## Work as a Social Determinant of Health

- 8+ hours a day of work outside of household work, personal care and leisure
- One vs multiple jobs
- Working conditions
- Include both benefits and harms

## Experience of Work

- Work as a curse
- Work for money
- Work for personal fulfillment
- Work for social relationships
- Work as caring for others
- Work as identity
- Work as service or calling

# Good Jobs: A Working Definition

## Economic Stability

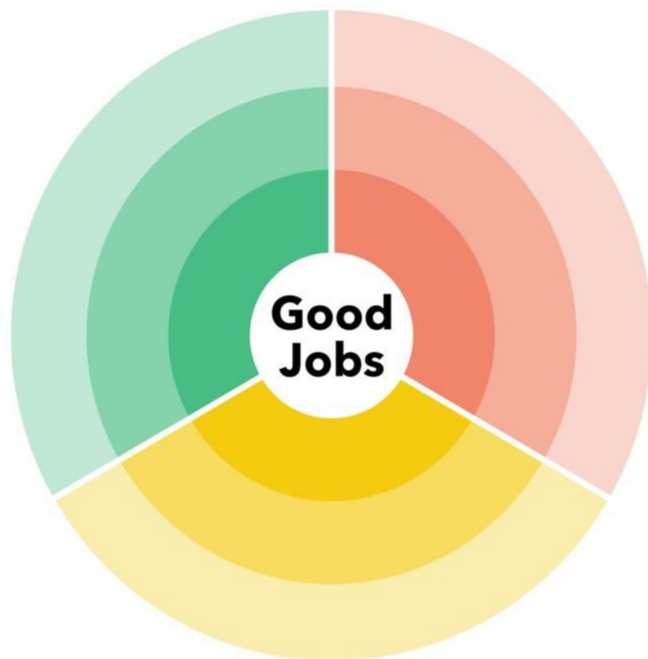
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- Stable, family-sustaining pay
- Sufficient, accessible, and broadly available benefits
- Fair, reliable scheduling practices
- Safe, healthy, and accessible working conditions

## Economic Mobility

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- Clear and equitable hiring and advancement pathways
- Accessible, paid training and development opportunities
- Wealth-building opportunities



## Equity, Respect & Voice

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- Organizational and management culture, policies, and practices that:
  - are transparent and enable accountability
  - support a sense of belonging and purpose
  - advance DEIA\*
  - and address discrimination.
- Ability to improve the workplace, such as through collective action or participatory management practices

\*DEIA: diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility

# Voice, Power and Representation

## VOICE

Individual or collective efforts of workers to have a say or influence on workplace issues of interest to them and/or to their employers

## POWER

Ability of workers to get employers to do something the employer would not do on their own (i.e. bargaining power)

## REPRESENTATION

A group or organization that speaks for a collective group of workers

**What issues or reasons inspire you to empower workers?**

# Strategies to Promote Voice

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## INDIVIDUALS

Connect regularly with other workers and organizations to voice

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Develop work relationships that promote a culture of health, safety and well-being

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## ORGANIZATIONS


Include workers in decisions for both the day-to-day work and the strategic planning of the organization

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Facilitate and make time for creative + collaborative programs between workers and management

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# Crafting empowerment



**Prioritizing the issues**

**Centering the dialogue**

**Engaging with assignments**



# Measures on Voice

Variables	Sample Questions
Promotive voice	“I proactively give suggestions for issues that may influence the work I do” (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree), Liang et al. 2012
Prohibitive voice	"I advise against undesirable behaviors that would hamper performance at my job" (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree), Liang et al. 2012
Voice (GSS)	"I have a lot of say about what happens on my job" (1=strongly agree; 4=strongly disagree), Karasek et al., 1998
Voice Gap	"At your primary job, how much of say or influence do you have on the following issues e.g., wage, benefit, etc.” (1=none; 5=as much as I ought to have), Kochan et al., 2019

# Measuring Impact

	Workers' interests	Employer's interests
Collective	<p>“Speaking up collectively <b>with others</b> about subpar working conditions” (3 questions)</p>	<p>“Speaking up collectively <b>with others</b> on ways to improve the quality of m organization’s product/service” (3 questions)</p>
Individual	<p>“Speaking up <b>as an individual</b> if I feel disrespected” (3 questions)</p>	<p>“Speaking up <b>as an individual</b> on way to make work more efficient” (3 questions)</p>

**What measures might be most meaningful  
for your empowerment mechanism?**



# Live Q+A

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# Using Human Centered Design as a Tool to Center Workers

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# Key Terms

Human Centered Design	A problem-solving technique that puts real people at the center of the development process, enabling agencies and teams to create programs, services, and policies that resonate and are tailored to the needs of the intended beneficiary, or end-user.
Persona	Fictitious characters developed in the human centered design process that represent the needs, experiences, and circumstances of a larger group of target beneficiaries. Personas should be developed based on first-hand knowledge of the target beneficiaries' lived experience.
Journey Map	A visualization of the process that a person goes through in order to accomplish a goal. In its most basic form, journey mapping starts by compiling a series of user actions into a timeline.

# Bringing the Work to Life

One of the primary ways government economic and workforce agencies can empower workers is to thoughtfully design policies and practices centered on local workers' experiences and perspectives.

1. Consider who is at the table.
2. Take time to hear from users/participants directly.
3. Design personas who provide realistic representations of target beneficiaries of your programs and policies.
4. Strengthen your understanding of the key opportunities and challenges your target beneficiaries may face moving toward your intended outcome through journey maps.

# Personas and Journey Maps



**Sharon  
Neeson**

## Demographics

Job: Small business owner (no employees)  
Age: 52  
Family status: Married with kids in high school  
Education: MBA  
Location: Boston, MA

## Goals and motivations



### Wants and likes

Because she's already juggling so many things, she wants low-touch solutions.



### Pain points

Not super technical, so expects a high level of customer support. Even willing to pay extra for it.



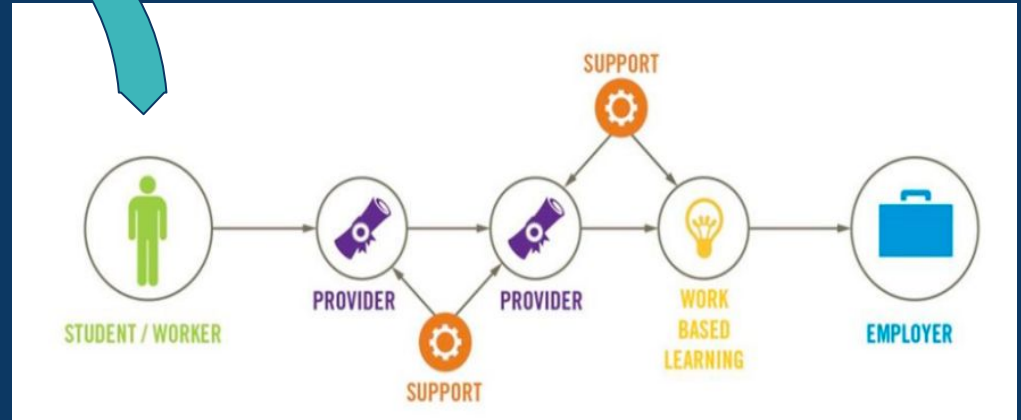
### Goals

Looking to grow her business while still maintaining a work-life balance.



### Buying habits

Very intentional buyer; will not purchase unless she's sure it will provide value.







# Plenary Discussion

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# Plenary Discussion

- **What aspects of today's session resonated with you?**
- **Are there ways you might implement these empowerment approaches in your own agency?**
- **Based on what is within your control, what is one step you can take to move the needle?**



# Wrap Up & Next Steps

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# Next Step Commitments

**In the chat please write:**

- The action you are committing to complete between now and your next meeting with RFA
- What you need from RFA to be successful

# Recent Research and Analysis

- ✓ [How State and Local Governments can Strengthen Worker Power and Raise Wages](#) by CAP Action
- ✓ [Whole of Government Approach to Increasing Worker Power](#) by the Roosevelt Institute
- ✓ [Principles of Sectoral Bargaining: A Reference Guide for Designing Federal, State, and Local Laws in the U.S.](#) by Harvard University's Center for Labor and a Just Economy
- ✓ [Worker Voice in America's Working Future](#) by MIT Sloan School of Management
- ✓ [Economic Analysis and Research Network \(EARN\)](#) - advances an inclusive, worker-centered economy through state and local policy change, rigorous research, and collaboration between researchers, advocates, and community groups across the country

## Other Info

- ✓ [Executive Order Establishing Task the White House Task Force on Worker Organizing and Empowerment](#) White House Press Release

# Upcoming Sessions and Resources

- ✔ **September 6th, 4:00pm EST - Education and Enforcement: Ensuring Existing Workplace Protections are Understood and Followed**

[Register here](#)

- ✔ **September 20th, 4:00pm EST - RFA State and Local Workforce Fellowship Cohort Close-Out Celebration**

[Register here](#)

- ✔ **Stay tuned for case studies on HR and Empowerment. We will be sharing them as they are completed.**

**WE WANT TO SUPPORT YOU!**

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE QUICK POLL ON THE  
SCREEN**



**THANK YOU!**

**Please send any follow-up questions to:**

- [morgan@results4america.org](mailto:morgan@results4america.org)
- [kelsey@results4america.org](mailto:kelsey@results4america.org)

**Need additional support with your projects?  
Reach out to schedule office hours.**