Employer Engagement

Questionbank

This tool was developed by **Generation Work / Cuyahoga County** and a cross sector working group with representatives from The Greater Cleveland Partnership and The Commission on Economic Inclusion, JumpStart, Ohio Guidestone, Towards Employment, and Youth Opportunities Unlimited. It was adapted for Cuyahoga County from materials developed by The Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program, including the Reimagine Retail Question Bank, a survey instrument to learn about employer engagement practices in workforce development, and their Toolkit to Engage Employers and Opportunity Youth on the Future of Work, developed collaboratively with the Institute's Forum for Community Solutions.

Generation Work / Cuyahoga County is part of a national initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation that launched in 2016 to improve education, employment, and earnings outcomes for young adults.

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Using This Tool

The primary purpose of this tool is to equip you with questions that can help you identify businesses that are a good fit for the job-seekers you serve. That said, there are a number of other ways this tool can be used including: learning about a business with an eye toward providing workforce services, developing expertise about industry norms and practices, and generally increasing your confidence when talking with business.

Experienced relationships take time and more than one conversation to build. Starting from a place of inquiry – asking employers about their workforce in the context of business goals, operations and culture – can help you to establish a knowledge base about practices in the sector, identify the businesses you want to build relationships with, and help you build credibility in discussions about strategies for promoting worker retention and advancement.

Let the Conversation Guide Your Questions

When you take a look at the Question Bank, you'll see that there are far too many questions to ask anybody in one session! You should pick and choose a mix of questions based on your objectives, the stage of your relationship, and what you already know about this business and the local industry. You may find that some questions feel right for first discussions and others would feel more comfortable once you've established rapport. With this in mind, each section begins with a relatively broad question. We suggest you listen closely and let the context you hear shape the questions you ask next from the detailed list that follows. Some of the follow-up questions included here – such as questions about turnover or wages – may be sensitive for business. It's valuable to communicate that there is no "right answer." Be sure to begin the conversation by saying a word about what you plan to do with the information shared to address any concerns the employer may have about confidentiality.

General Questions

Questions in this category help you develop an understanding of the business and its workforce practices, and to start to get to know the manager you are speaking with. This conversation can also help you understand the structure of the business and the types of decisions your point of contact has the authority to make.

- Please tell me a bit about your company and your open positions?
  - What can you share about what makes your company a great place to work?
  - What are your current workforce needs?
    - Are you working with any workforce agencies or community partners to help you solve for your talent needs?
  - In what ways do you see your talent pool growing or changing in the future?

Questions about Hiring, Compensation & Scheduling

Questions about hiring practices, compensation and scheduling can be sensitive for managers. At the same time, this information can help you assess the fit of this company's employment practices for your jobseekers' needs, enabling you to refer workers who will stay and succeed.

Hiring Practices

- **I am interested in learning about your hiring practices. Can you tell me more about the types positions you usually hire for?**
  - Where do you usually find your applicants? How do they find your job postings?
    - Do you use online tools to help recruit talent?
    - Do you use staffing/temporary agencies to fill positions?
    - Does your recruitment strategy have defined diversity goals?
  - What are the job requirements for your positions?
    - Is there a minimum educational requirement?
    - Are there any training or credentials that are necessary for this job?
    - Are there any pre-hire assessments that candidates need to complete as a part of the application process?
  - What are the skills or experiences that you are most interested in seeing from job candidates who apply for your positions?
  - How long do employees usually stay in their jobs?
    - (if low retention) Do you have any thoughts on why people leave?
      - Do you see any patterns in the groups with the most turnover?
    - (if high retention) Why do you think employees tend to stay?
  - From your perspective, do the job descriptions accurately depict the jobs that people do for your company?
  - What can a prospective employee expect from the interview process?
    - Are interviews uniform from hiring manager to hiring manager?
    - Have hiring managers been educated on the impact of bias in the hiring process?

Wages and benefits

- What are the typical wages and benefits for new employees?
    - What are the starting wages for the specific roles for which you are looking to hire?
    - What benefits do you offer? When do benefits start?
    - Compared to other local companies, are you aware of how your wage and benefits packages compare?
        - Do you compete for workers with other local companies?
    - Do you offer overtime pay?
    - Do employees typically work a consistent number of hours across a pay period?
        - If no, please tell me what a typical pay period may look like for an employee.
    - Is there a process in place for a part-time employee to move into a full-time position?
        - Can you tell me about that process?
    - Do you typically have enough hours for all your workers? (or, are there workers who would like to be working more hours than they have available to them?)
        - Do you conduct compensation analysis to ensure employees are rewarded fairly based on performance, skills and other job requirements?

Scheduling Practices

- Please tell me what the schedule is like for new employees. (# of hours, time of shifts, etc.)
    - How much does the schedule vary week to week? What causes the variances?
    - How much notice do employees receive about their upcoming work schedule?
    - Do you use on-call scheduling?
        - How does that work for your company?
    - Is the public transportation schedule a consideration for you when schedules are developed?
    - Are employees able to identify a preference in their schedule?

Questions about employee engagement, development & advancement

These questions help you learn about how this company provides opportunities for workers to learn, grow and contribute feedback and ideas. The workplace composition and diversity question bank will help you understand how those opportunities are made available across different groups of people throughout the organization.

Onboarding and Performance Feedback

- Can you please tell me about your onboarding process for new employees?
    - What does orientation look like at your company?
    - What sorts of key information will employees receive before their first day? (dress code, employee handbook, etc.)
    - What are your policies around attendance and being on time for work?
    - Is there a probationary period for new employees?
        - If yes, can you please tell me about it?
- I am also interested in learning more about the ways in which your company provides feedback to employees. Can you tell me how that works?
    - What types of feedback do employees receive and how often? (formal reviews, informal check-ins, etc.)
        - How does this feedback affect compensation? Do you conduct compensation analysis to ensure employees are rewarded fairly based on performance, skills and other job requirements?
    - Is there any sort of mentoring or coaching available?
    - What can employee do from the onset to set themselves up for success at your company?

Training and Development

- How does your company help employees continue to learn and grow on the job?
    - What kinds of training do you provide to employees?
        - Do you offer apprenticeships?
        - Who provides the training? (supervisor, co-worker, someone else)
        - How does an employee access training? Do they ask for it or is it something that's already built into their employment?
    - Which type of employers are your company's target audience for training?
        - Are training and professional development typically used to "catch up" employees who need more help or as advancement opportunity for highly successful employees?
    - Do you have individual training plans for your employees?
        - If yes, what do those typically look like?
    - In what ways, if any, is your workplace supportive of employees who would like to continue their education?
        - Is flexible scheduling available to accommodate someone going to school?
        - Do you offer any sort of tuition assistance or reimbursement of educational costs?

Advancement

- What are the characteristics necessary for an employee to be successful and advance at your company?
    - If a worker in [target occupation] wants to advance here, what position is the next step?
        - ☐ Can a worker get the experience or training needed for this position while employed in [target occupation]?
        - ☐ If not, does the business pay for training?
        - ☐ Can employees attend training during work hours?
    - Are there any raises structured into your compensation package, like a bump after 90 days?
        - ☐ Are employees aware of what it takes to earn a raise?
        - ☐ How do they know if they're on the right track to get a raise or advance?
    - Are there requirements that have to be met to be considered for a raise?
    - In what ways are employees able to demonstrate that they're ready for advancement?
    - Can you tell me a success story about an employee who has advanced from entry level?
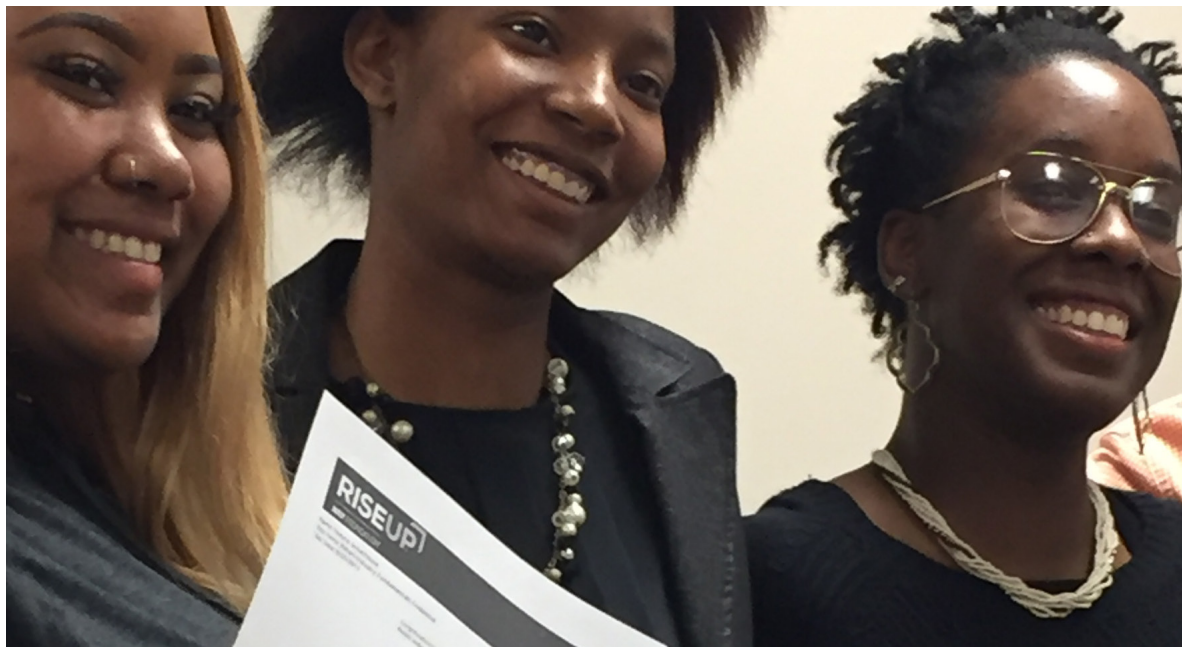
Workplace Composition and Diversity

- I am interested in learning more about your company's diversity goals. Can you please tell me about your workplace diversity priorities?
  - How many employees in [target occupation] are young adults?
    - ☐ How common is it for this occupation to be a young person's first job?
  - Does your company have diversity goals? Race, gender, age?
  - How would you describe the ethnic and racial diversity of your workforce?
  - What types of successes and challenges have you had in meeting your diversity goals?
    - ☐ On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is low, how would you rate your success in meeting your diversity goals?
  - What is the general age range of your employees? Does this vary by the type of position?
  - What is the gender breakdown of your employees? Does this vary by the type of position?

General Follow-up/Probing Questions

The following probing questions can be used as follow-ups to any of the previous questions in each section.

- **Can you tell me more about that?**
- **Why?**
- **What else should potential employees know about _____(topic)?**

For more information visit
https://www.towardsemployment.org/generation-work/