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# ***Appendix I: Conduct O\*NET Incentive Experiments***

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## Establishment POC Monetary Incentive

Response rates at the establishment level have seen the largest decline over the past 8 years (See Appendix D of the 2024 OMB Package for response rates to date experience), and it is imperative that continual efforts are taken to increase and stabilize these rates. O\*NET POCs include HR Managers, Office Managers, Store Managers, and Small Business Owners, etc. and the level of effort requested from an O\*NET POC is very different from what POCs are asked to do on most other establishment surveys. O\*NET POCs are asked to roster employees, distribute questionnaires including possible replacements, and follow-up with non-respondents, whereas other surveys typically only ask the establishment POC to complete a questionnaire directly. Currently, POC incentives are limited to the Toolkit for Business (which may have no immediate utility for some POCs) and a certificate of appreciation. Also, though a \$20 POC pre-incentive experiment was conducted and analyzed between 2002-2004 and showed that POCs with and without the incentive were equally likely to participate, we would like to revisit the notion of offering a monetary incentive after the completion of all recruiting and sampling activities. POC participation is a critical point of nonresponse (including at the employee level), and the survey environment has changed drastically since the initial experiment.<sup>1</sup>

As part of this effort, RTI hosted a focus-group (n=9) representing different establishment types and sizes in the fall of 2021 (See **Appendix B pg. 13**). Focus group participants were receptive to the notion of receipt of some payment for their effort and participation but also noted that in some instances there may be restrictions on what can and cannot be received. As such we propose a POC incentive experiment amount of \$25 for the completion of both recruiting and sampling activities for establishments with occupations of interest. The \$25 amount is suggested for 2 reasons: a) it differentiates the amount that a POC receives from a participating respondent (the POC may incur up to 90 minutes of time for all

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<sup>1</sup> O\*NET's prior Survey Methods Task Leader, Dr. Paul Biemer (retired), has suggested that POCs may be deterred from participating when they are requested to do a large volume of work and receive no direct compensation, while the persons they are distributing questionnaires to are currently receiving \$10 regardless of participation. Dr. Biemer also suggested that the earlier 2002-2004 evaluation may not have properly stratified the analysis by correlated establishment characteristics which may have influenced the overall conclusions on the effectiveness of the POC incentive.

their efforts), and b) some businesses have restrictions on the total amount that an employee may receive so \$25 is suggested to minimize exceeding that specified amount.

### Employee Respondent Monetary Incentive

Given O\*NET efforts to increase participation at the establishment/POC level by protecting each respondent's anonymity, participation at the employee level relies exclusively on interactions between the establishment's POC and the sampled employees. This makes it difficult to ascertain the exact reasons for employee nonparticipation, including the observed decline over the years as noted above.

Since the inception of data collection activities in 2001, O\*NET has continued to offer a \$10 prepaid incentive to selected employees identified through the establishment method. With changes over time such as inflation (e.g., \$10.00 in January 2001 equals \$17.42 in June 2023<sup>2</sup>), hourly pay rate increases (e.g., the average rate of \$20.17 in April 2006 rose to an average of \$33.34 in April 2023<sup>3</sup>), and the ongoing increases to the minimum wage across States, coupled with received respondent comments (e.g., "THIS IS REALLY WORTH AT LEAST \$20." and "\$10.00 WAS NOT ENOUGH TO FILL OUT THIS SURVEY!"), additional information is necessary to properly assess the continued or possible decline in the effectiveness of the \$10 pre-incentive amount alone.

As stated above, employee participation is dependent on the POC's interactions and efficiency of the survey invitational material since there is no direct contact between the selected employees and the O\*NET BLs. As such we propose retaining the \$10 pre-incentive amount as a means for promoting consideration of participation and offering an additional post survey completion incentive (split-incentive design).<sup>4</sup>

To evaluate the effectiveness of the post survey completion incentive, we propose testing three potential changes<sup>5</sup> to best assess cost effectiveness and impact on mode of questionnaire submission on response rates:

- 1) \$0 for paper completion / \$20 for web completion
- 2) \$10 for paper completion / \$20 for web completion

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<sup>2</sup> Extracted on July 26, 2023 from [CPI Inflation Calculator \(bls.gov\)](https://www.bls.gov/inflation-calculator/).

<sup>3</sup> Extracted on July 26, 2023 from [United States Economy at a Glance \(bls.gov\)](https://www.bls.gov/economy-at-a-glance/). June 2006 was the earliest available data.

<sup>4</sup> Prepaid incentives not only create a sense of obligation to participate among selected employee, but they also provide concrete evidence that the post survey completion incentive will be paid.

<sup>5</sup> The maximum experiment amount of \$20 was derived from both the expected continual increase in inflation over time coupled with the expected impact of the changes to the federal minimum wage (i.e., respondent's perception that the incentive amount is adequate for their time to complete the survey).

3) \$20 for paper completion / \$20 for web completion

The proposed difference in amounts offered between paper and web was designed to assess the feasibility of encouraging respondents to complete via the web to reduce processing costs (e.g., the current cost for processing a single returned paper questionnaire is approximately \$7.60 for return postage and data keying and are expected to increase); to gain efficiencies by receiving the questionnaires faster to optimize data collection efforts (Model-Aided Sampling); continuing to maximize anonymity (no mailing of post-incentives to provided names/addresses); and to increase data quality by reducing entry and/or keying errors when completed via the web while also recognizing that not all selected employees are willing or able to complete the survey via the web (i.e., need to assess if offering differing amounts could actually negatively impact participation among selected employees who will complete only via paper). Additionally, if a large percentage of participants in the experiment groups complete via the web, this may provide valuable information regarding any feasibility of excluding the paper questionnaire in future data collection efforts to save printing and processing costs.

Occupation Expert (OE) Respondent Monetary Incentive

Similar to establishments and employees, the response rates for the OE Method have also seen some decline over the past several years. As noted in Section 9.3 of the Supporting Statement Part A, selected OE respondents are offered a pre-paid incentive amount of \$40 as a means of comparability with the current employee respondent incentive amount of \$10 when requested to complete more than one domain questionnaire. By assumption, if employee respondents are offered a maximum of \$30 in total from their respective incentive experiment and this was a successful outcome, then OE respondents should have their incentive amounts adjusted accordingly. However, tripling the \$40 to a maximum of \$120 seems unfeasible especially given the higher response rate among OEs where we have direct contact to solicit participation. We propose as a means of accessing equitable compensation to offer 2 post completion amounts: an additional \$20 or \$40. This would be offered regardless of paper or web completion (i.e., since OE are contacted directly, they are able to provide their preferred mode of completion). These additional incentive amounts could be offered electronically or provided by money order, based on the respondent's preference.

Implementation

With a total of 2 POC incentive groups and 4 employee incentive groups, we would have a total of 8 groups for comparison purposes for the Establishment Method. For OE, this would encompass 3 groups for comparisons. Assignment of each group would be randomly made at the establishment level to reduce any potential selection bias or BL assignment impact. For OEs, random assignment would be made at the time of sample selection.

4 levels of assessment could be conducted:

- 1) Impact of POC incentive on establishment response rates for completing recruiting and sampling activities.
- 2) Impact of employee incentives on employee response rates including impact to paper vs. web submission.
- 3) Impact of POC incentive on employee response rates (i.e., receipt of payment to the POC may bolster their efforts to encourage employee participation).
- 4) Impact of OE incentives on OE response rates by differing incentive amount.

To maximize the benefits of the proposed experiments by including the largest variety of occupations as well as ensuring sufficient sample sizes by response propensity characteristics (e.g., size, industry), we recommend conducting these experiments over a period of 10-12 months starting in mid-2024 after OMB approval. If results demonstrate a positive gain in both response rates and data quality from offering different incentive amounts, a subsequent request for revision will be submitted to OMB to modify the current incentive paradigm where appropriate.

The POC experiment proposed here would be limited to only occupation-eligible establishments. In 2021, the 7,800 selected employees originated from approximately 1,550 participating establishments (approximately 5 selected employees per establishment). With an assumed establishment recruiting and sampling rate of 30%, we estimate that approximately 5,200 establishments would be eligible to contribute to the POC incentive experiment results (or 2,600 in each group) during a full 12-month period. Power calculations in **Appendix A (pg. 10)** indicate that only 2,300 selected establishments would be required to obtain 80% power. This 2,300 sample size corresponds similarly to the group sample size from the 2002-2003 initial POC experiment groups and would adequately allow for detecting differences in rates of 3-4%.

Additionally, sample sizes for each of the employee incentive groups are approximately 540. As previously noted, a total of approximately 7,800 employees (or 650 per month in average) were selected in 2021. With 4 proposed employee level groups, it would require, on average, approximately 4-5 months to select 540 employees per group. Additionally, the average time between the questionnaire ship date and the questionnaire return date averaged approximately 32 calendar days with a median of 22 calendar days (the 25% and 75% percentiles were 11 and 42 calendar days, respectively). As such we would expect closer to a total of 6-8 months to ensure that all applicable questionnaires were received based on sample size only. This design is similar to the O\*NET employee incentive experiment conducted in the pretest.

Similarly, sample sizes for each of the proposed OE incentive groups are approximately 520. Given the proposed increase in utilization of the OE Method as described in the OMB

supporting statements, we estimate that this experiment would also require approximately the same duration as for the employee incentive experiment (6-8 months).

Offers of the incentives would be made to the POC after completion of the screening activities and the identification of at least one present occupation of interest (i.e., moving to the recruitment and sampling stages). Offers of the employee incentives would be provided as part of the survey invitation materials and offers of the OE incentive would be provided as part of the eligibility and recruitment protocols.

### **Data Collection Protocol**

The data collection portion of the experiment will closely follow the protocol of the main data collection program, which is described in detail in Section B.2 of the O\*NET Data Collection Program OMB Clearance Package Supporting Statement (1205-0421).

***POC Incentive.*** The \$25 monetary incentive will be provided to the POC in the form of a money order. We are using money orders for several reasons. First, because the POC mailing may be opened by persons other than the POC, we believe that cash is more likely than a money order to be misappropriated before reaching the POC. Further, in case some POCs want to donate the money to charity, a money order facilitates the forwarding of the payment to a charity and provides a record of the transaction for the POC. We prefer money orders to checks because checks have less face validity, are somewhat more difficult to transfer to a third party and would require more time and cost for the survey contractor to produce. Blank money orders can be purchased in bulk by the survey contractor and are easier, quicker, and less expensive than using checks. In sum, money orders are more secure than cash and offer all the advantages of checks plus additional credibility, ease of transfer, and cost savings.

***Data Collection Procedures.*** The data collection procedures for the experiment will be the same as those described in Section B.2 of the OMB Clearance Package, with a few exceptions. The ways in which the experiment will differ from this protocol are described below:

- The Advance Package, which is sent to the POC prior to the Recruitment Call, will contain a newly developed material that describes the program's various POC-, company-, and employee-level incentives. For the experiment phase of data collection, we will incorporate two versions of this material: one that references the \$25 POC incentive and one that excludes it. Additionally, the current "Who, What and How" brochure containing frequently asked questions regarding the O\*NET Data Collection Program will be updated for the treatment group to reflect the additional POC incentive.

- During the Recruiting Call, the BL will explain the various program incentives to the POC. This explanation will be expanded for the cases in the incentive group to include the \$25 money order.
- Near the end of the Sampling Call, the BL will inform the POC of the forthcoming shipment of questionnaires and will remind the POC that the shipment will include the \$25 money order discussed earlier.
- Questionnaire shipment: For cases in the incentive group, the money order will be included in the *shipment* of questionnaires to the POC or redemption instructions provided for POCs who opt for forwarding email invitations to their selected employees. For shipped incentives, the money order will be enclosed in an envelope with the message “Your Special Gift Enclosed” printed on the outside. The payee line on the money order will be left blank so that the POC can specify the desired payee (i.e., the POC, the company, or a charity of his/her choice). We will also enclose a one-page instructional sheet to help the POC complete the money order.

***Employee Incentive.*** For selected employees in the incentive groups, if they complete their survey via the web they will be able to receive a Visa e-gift card redemption instructions on the same web site immediately after submission. If an employee completes via paper, they will need to provide an address and a money order (same as the POC incentive) will be mailed to them.

***OE Incentive.*** For selected OEs in the incentive groups, if they complete their survey via the web they will be able to receive a Visa e-gift card redemption instructions on the same web site immediately after submission. If an OE completes via paper, they will need to provide an address and a money order (same as the POC and employee incentives) will be mailed to them.

### **Analysis Plan**

Three key areas will be addressed in the analysis: establishment response rate, employee response rate and OE response rate.

***Establishment Response Rate Analysis.*** For the analysis of establishment response rate, we will start by testing the one-sided hypothesis using the usual test of two proportions (*t*-test). This test computes the difference

$$d_{C-I} = p_C - p_I \tag{1}$$

where  $p_C$  is the estimated response rate for the control group and  $p_I$  is the estimated response rate for the incentive group. If this difference is less than the standard error of  $d_{C-I}$  (denoted by

s.e.(dc-1) times  $(-1.645)$ , the 5<sup>th</sup> percentile of the standard normal distribution, then we will reject  $H_0$  that the two response rates are equal and accept  $H_a$  that the response rate for the incentive group is greater than the corresponding response rate for the control group. For maximum precision, this test will be performed on unweighted data; however, the outcome for weighted data should be similar and can also be computed.

When computing response rates, several alternatives are possible and could have differing implications for the tests results. One response rate is simply the total number of establishments that agree to participate at the recruitment stage divided by all known eligible establishments. However, this response rate may produce ambiguous results because some establishments refuse prior to the recruitment stage, the point at which the incentive is first discussed. Therefore, a response rate definition that better reflects the effect of the incentive is one with the same numerator as before but replaces the denominator with the number of establishments that complete the recruitment call. We propose to use this response rate calculation as the primary indicator of the incentive effect. Other response rate calculations can also be explored in the analysis, however.

It is possible that establishment size and other characteristics of establishments interact with the incentive treatment. For example, smaller establishments may have a different reaction to the monetary incentive than larger establishments. Geographic region may also play a role in the results. In addition, we may wish to consider the differences of incentive effects by data collection wave. Therefore, we will conduct additional analyses of the establishment response rates to assess the incentive effects for various population subgroups using logistic regression analysis. The basic model for this analysis for two variables—establishment size and geographic region—and the treatment effect is as follows:

$$\log\left(\frac{p_{ijk}}{1-p_{ijk}}\right) = u + u_i^T + u_j^S + u_k^G + u_{ij}^{TS} + u_{ik}^{TG} + e_{ijk} \quad (2)$$

where  $p_{ijk}$  denotes the response rate for the subgroup defined by the  $i^{\text{th}}$  treatment condition (T),  $j^{\text{th}}$  size category (S), and  $k^{\text{th}}$  region (G) and the  $u$ -variables denote the model effects associated with the variables in the superscript labels. We are particularly interested in testing the interaction terms in this model to determine whether the effect of the incentive condition varies by establishment size and/or geographic region. More complex analyses involving other variables thought to influence the incentive effect, such as data collection wave, will also be explored using logistic regression models.

It is also possible to explore the interactions of BL characteristics with the incentive effect using a model similar to that in equation (2). However, models that simultaneously explore

BL and establishment interactions with the treatment conditions will require the use of hierarchical or multi-level log-linear models. These will also be investigated if the single-level model analyses suggest important BL effects.

***Employee Response Rate Analysis.*** The analysis of employee response rates will follow essentially the same approach as that discussed for the establishment response rates. The employee response rate, for this analysis, will be defined as the ratio of the number of returned questionnaires divided by the number of questionnaires sent out. As for the establishment survey analysis, we will use logistic regression to assess the interaction effects of variable characteristics of establishments on the employee-level incentive effect.

Additionally, the employee incentive experiment will be conducted simultaneously with the POC experiment however, the POC experiment will have a longer duration in order to finish data collection (i.e., approximately 5 employees are selected from each participating establishment. It is also assumed that the employee incentive will have only negligible impact on a POC's willingness to participate).

***OE Response Rate Analysis.*** The analysis of OE response rates will follow essentially the same approach as that discussed for both the establishment and employee response rates. The OE response rate, for this analysis, will be defined as the ratio of the number of returned questionnaires divided by the number of OEs who agreed to participate and were provided with questionnaires and/or login instructions (i.e., OE respondents may opt to not receive any hard copy material). The usual test of 2 proportions (as described above under the establishment response rate analysis) will be utilized to assess the impact of the different incentive amounts on the OE response rates (i.e., very little additional information is known regarding OEs prior to contact or completion of the questionnaire background section. Hence multi-variable analyses will not be feasible).

Since both Establishment Method and OE Methods are already conducted simultaneously, the OE incentive will also be conducted simultaneously along with both the POC and employee level incentive experiments. The OE experiment in expectation should require the same approximate duration as the employee experiment.



## Appendix A

### Power Analysis Details for O\*NET Incentives Experiment

#### Key Assumptions Applied to the POC and Employee Power Calculations

- 1) The power analysis assumed a difference of at least 3-4% for the POC experiment and at least 7-8% in both the employee and OE experiments between test and control incentive conditions would be statistically and practically meaningful for inferring a positive improvement in response rates from the increased incentive amounts.
- 2) The power analysis was conducted using an alpha (significance) level for marginal mean differences at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Focusing on  $\alpha = 0.05$  was intended to ensure a sufficient number of selected respondents will be selected for each of the test incentive conditions (POC and employee). This approach also conforms with the conventional significance level used for statistical inference.

**Table A.1 Sample Establishments for POC Incentives Experiment**

POC Incentive Groups	Sample Size
\$0 Incentive (Control)	2,300
\$25 Incentive	2,300
POC Incentive Totals	4,600

**Table A.2 Selected Employee Sample Sizes for the Three Experimental Conditions for the Employee Incentives Experiment**

Employee Incentive Group	Sample Size
\$0 paper / \$0 web (Control)	540
\$0 paper / \$20 web	540
\$10 paper / \$20 web	540
\$20 paper / \$20 web	540
Employee Incentive Totals	2,160

**Table A.3 Sample Establishments for the Two Experimental Conditions for the OE Incentives Experiment**

<b>OE Incentive Groups</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>
\$0 Incentive (Control)	520
\$20 Incentive	520
\$40 Incentive	520
<b>OE Incentive Totals</b>	<b>1,560</b>

- 3) One-sided tests were assumed, which are directional. The effect in the desired direction was used. That is, the null hypothesis of no effect from increased incentives is rejected if the response rates with higher incentives are at least 3.5 percentage points larger than response rates under current incentive levels for the POC and 7.5 percentage points for both the employee and OE incentive levels.
- 4) The statistical power assumed was 0.80.
- 5) The establishment recruiting and sampling rate was assumed to be 30%; the employee response rate was assumed to be 47%; and the OE response rate was assumed to be 58%.
- 6) For calculations, the treatment and control groups for each test were expected to have the same number of selected units.

As shown in the table below, the power analysis calculations indicated a total of 2,300 establishments (4,600 ÷ 2) will need to be assigned to each POC incentive condition; 540 assigned to each of the employee incentive conditions; and 520 assigned to each of the OE incentive groups.

## Assumptions and Calculations for Sample Sizes

<u>Assumptions</u>	<b>POC Incentive</b>	<b>Employee Incentive</b>	<b>OE Incentive</b>
<b><u>Probabilities:</u></b>			
Null Hypothesis - No Treatment Effect	0.300	0.470	0.580
Alternative hypothesis for each treatment group	0.335	0.554	0.655
Difference (minimum detectable effect)	0.035	0.075	0.075
<b><u>Sampling Allocation:</u></b>			
Null hypothesis proportion	0.500	0.500	0.500
Alternative hypothesis proportion	0.500	0.500	0.500
<b><u>Test Information:</u></b>			
Alpha	5%	5%	5%
# of sides in test	1	1	1
Power	80%	80%	80%
t-alpha	1.671	1.671	1.671
t-beta	0.848	0.848	0.848
<b><u>Sample Size (n) Calculations:</u></b>			
Required for each condition	~2,300	~540	~520

Notes:

1. Formula for sample size calculation for two proportions (using normal approximation) based on Fleiss (1981) but modified to use the *t*-distribution rather than the standard normal *z*-distribution.
2. Rates were obtained from recent 2021 and 2022 observed data collection results and designed to be slightly conservative.

## Appendix B

October 2021

# Focus Group Report on O\*NET Establishment Data Collection

## O\*NET Data Collection Program

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## CONTENTS

1.	Introduction.....	2
1.1	Background and Overview .....	2
1.2	Purpose of This Report .....	2
2.	Methods .....	3
2.1	Overview.....	3
2.2	Materials and Discussion Development.....	3
2.3	Recruitment and Sampling Procedures .....	3
3.	Results.....	4
3.1	Pre-Notification Postcard.....	4
3.2	Introductory Phone Calls and Information .....	9
3.3	Working with the POC to Sample Employees and Distribute Questionnaires .....	12
3.4	POC Incentives .....	15
3.5	O*NET Allies Campaign and Benefits.....	16
3.6	How Do We Stand Out .....	18
3.7	Final Thoughts and Suggestions .....	19
4.	Conclusions and Recommendations .....	21
	Appendix A. Focus Group Recruitment Screener .....	24
	Appendix B. Focus Group Moderator’s Guide.....	28

### List of Tables

Table 1.	O*NET focus group participants .....	4
Table 2.	Initial Reactions to Pre-Notification Postcard (Large Establishments) .....	5
Table 3.	Initial Reactions to Pre-Notification Postcard (Small Establishments) .....	6
Table 4.	Willingness to take a phone call and assist after having received the postcard.....	7
Table 5.	Opt-In or Contact Us Option on the Postcard.....	8
Table 6.	Postcard Addressee .....	9
Table 7.	Introductory Call.....	10
Table 8.	Informational Materials .....	11
Table 9.	E-mail or Hard-Copy Informational Materials? .....	12
Table 10.	Employee Sampling and Questionnaire Distribution .....	13
Table 11.	E-mail or Hard-Copy Questionnaire Distribution?.....	14
Table 12.	POC Incentives .....	15
Table 13.	Non-Monetary POC Incentives .....	16
Table 14.	O*NET Allies Campaign and Benefits.....	17
Table 15.	How Do We Stand Out? .....	18
Table 16.	Final Thoughts on O*NET .....	19

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and Overview

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor, O\*NET is a comprehensive system for collecting, organizing, describing, and disseminating information on occupational requirements and worker attributes. The O\*NET database is the most comprehensive source of occupational and skill information in the United States. Under contract to the National Center for O\*NET Development, RTI provides sampling, data collection, data processing, and data analysis services to populate and maintain the O\*NET database.

## 1.2 Purpose of This Report

This report provides a summary of the findings from three focus groups conducted with potential points-of-contact (POCs) working in a variety of establishment sizes and industries. These POCs were specifically recruited because their job descriptions indicated they serve in managerial or supervisory roles within their place of work and would potentially be the decision-makers as to whether their establishment and employees would assist with O\*NET data collection. The focus groups were conducted virtually via online video streaming technology (Zoom) rather than in-person. This was not only due to the COVID-19 pandemic but also provided the ability to recruit participants throughout the United States rather than being restricted to those in the Raleigh/Durham area.

In Section 2, we provide background information on the development of focus group materials, protocols, and the methods used in recruiting POCs into the focus groups (see Appendix A for the Moderator's Guide). Section 3 of this report presents the summarized results of the focus groups. Section 4 is a discussion of the focus group findings in addressing the following research goals:

1. Would a pre-notification postcard increase their likelihood of participation?
2. What factors influence their decision to assist with the initial eligibility screening (presence of target occupations) at their establishment?
3. What factors influence their decisions to serve as POC and distribute questionnaires to their employees?

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Overview

This section provides a description of the methods used in recruiting POCs into the focus groups.

### 2.2 Materials and Discussion Development

In preparation for the focus groups, RTI created a moderator's guide that would inform participants about the discussion topics, provide an understanding of their context, and deliver them in a sequential order to generate the best possible feedback from the participants. The moderator's guide was focused on informational materials, BL-POC interaction, and the multi-stage establishment data collection protocol.

### 2.3 Recruitment and Sampling Procedures

RTI used an Amazon MTurk recruitment service to distribute an initial online screener to respondents. The screener consisted of 8 questions and its purpose was to (1) identify candidates who might be asked to serve as a POC based on their job role and (2) gather information on the industry, environment, and size of company in which they work. The recruitment screener is provided in *Appendix A*. RTI evaluated screener information from 231 respondents from which a small group of individuals were selected and invited to take part in online video focus groups. Through e-mail and telephone contacts, RTI secured the participation of nine individuals. RTI provided participants with informational materials for their review prior to the group discussions. Participants were asked to review a pre-notification postcard and an information package.

RTI began the recruitment effort with the intention of conducting two focus groups: one group of five individuals from large businesses (100+ employees); and one group of four individuals from small businesses (less than 50 employees). Even after confirming their participation and following up with reminder emails, some participants did not join the online discussion on their scheduled day. Four participants took part in group one, three participants took part in group two, and thus a third group was scheduled with two recruited participants. One participant joined the online discussion and the other had technical issues attempting to join the discussion, establishing a total number of eight participants.

*Table 1* provides participant characteristics of those eight participants.



**Table 1.**  
**O\*NET focus group participants**

#	Sex	Age	Industry	Establishment Size (# of employees)
1	Male	25-34	Finance/Economic	More than 250
2	Male	35-44	Computer/Technology	100-249
3	Male	25-34	Finance/Economic	100-249
4	Female	25-34	Manufacturing	More than 250
5	Female	45-54	Retail Sales	1-9
6	Male	35-44	Furniture Sales	10-26
7	Female	35-44	Computer/Technology	30-49
8	Male	35-44	Government/Affordable Housing	100-249

Each focus group lasted 120 minutes and each participant was provided a \$150 electronic Visa gift code as a token of appreciation for their time. This was increased to \$200 for the group three participants in an effort to secure participation. Overall, we sought to gather a broad range of participants in terms of industry, and company size (large v. small).

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 Pre-Notification Postcard

The moderator’s protocol addressed the various components of O\*NET establishment data collection. The first point of discussion was the pre-notification postcard. Participants received PDF copies of the front and back of the proposed pre-notification postcard prior to the discussion, and it was also shared with them on the screen during the discussion. Participants were asked their thoughts on the appearance of the postcard, perceived legitimacy, readability, and how they would react to receiving it at their place of work.

We purposefully did not go into any detail to this point about the O\*NET program or what is asked of participating establishments to elicit initial reactions to only the postcard. Asking participants at the beginning of each focus group was beneficial because their responses were spontaneous and offered without influence from the context of later discussion. The initial verbatim reactions to the postcard among large-establishment POCs are listed in *Table 2*.

**Table 2.**  
**Initial Reactions to Pre-Notification Postcard (Large Establishments)**

- 
- It is informative and professional. It looks legitimate, goes into a good ONET overview. It's very direct and having the phone number and email is good.
  - I want to know more about what this is going to be about. I'd like to be ready and prepared for the call. I might be able to go to the website at the bottom to get more info, but that isn't entirely clear.
  - "You will receive a call" might be a little vague. I doubt I would answer if I get a call from a random research number. I would want to get more information about when this call is going to occur as I might not answer the call if it were anonymous. Perhaps you could provide a link to schedule a call?
  - Department of Labor is very prominent and might freak me out. I would like to see O\*NET bigger, so I understand it's a program, not DOL trying to get to me. I would like to know how much time the call is going to take, could I have the option to call you and schedule a time?
  - It looks super formal and very official like a US Government thing which would make me feel nervous. How did you get my information? It would be ideal if there was information about how you got my info and why I was selected. Maybe have an idea about the number of people you are reaching out to or who all is being asked to participate. That would freak me out less.
  - We get tons of mail. If this gets put in there, it might still be a cold call. I would rather receive an email pre-notification than a postcard in the mail, I think it would be more apt to get to me. The email would also be easier to click on the address to verify.
  - Email would be better, especially now with Corona, I'm working from home and any mail that gets sent to the office it might not even make its way to me.
  - Email would be the most efficient and beneficial.
  - I check my email constantly. I don't miss work emails, but I miss real mail all the time or I don't read it because it is junk mail.
  - It seems clean and simple. It is good that it allows the recipient to check DOL website to make sure it is legitimate. People are hesitant to respond to things these days, so it is good to be able to verify.
  - I would read it. The top half is a little text heavy. It appears legitimate. Having the verification is good and it looks professional. Contact info for more questions is nice as well.
  - I would want to know if this is for the company as a whole or a particular group/division. If it were directed to our office manager/director, not sure if they would do anything with it as it is unclear if they respond for their group or the organization as a whole.
  - My reaction would be why am I personally getting this? Where did you get my information? Why is my information in a government database somewhere? Why and how was I chosen? Tell me more about why I am receiving this.
- 

As *Table 2* illustrates, POCs from large companies indicate they would like more information on the postcard regarding the purpose of the forthcoming phone call. In addition, multiple participants also suggested a means of contacting us to schedule the forthcoming call. Some participants indicated an email pre-notification would be preferred over a postcard mailing.

**Table 3.**  
**Initial Reactions to Pre-Notification Postcard (Small Establishments)**

- 
- I thought it was legitimate looking – bright and colorful. One thing that caught my attention and inspired confidence is the box on the back with the website link. Without that people might think it is a spam offer and throw it away. It definitely lends some legitimacy to it. With the .gov website on there, people know this is actually a government thing. Very easy to understand, a lot of information and the font may be a little small for some people. Looks very professionally done.
  - I agree about the font and legitimacy. Depending on who receives this card, some of this information might appear like it could go over their head or it might be intimidating to some readers. People sometimes react to anything from the government with a little bit of trepidation. But when sending something like this it should look legitimate, it should have this qualifier and should say it is sponsored, so it's sort of a slippery slope there.
  - I like it – The front looks plain and bland compared to the back. I might change the font to be a little more personable. Other than that, I like it.
  - I like that it is a postcard because if it was a letter, I would not open it but I can read the postcard.
  - I did like the message. I might not answer a phone call if I don't know them. Maybe include the number we will be calling from, if possible.
  - By sending this out early and giving a heads-up...they might be more likely to pick up the phone. With so many spam calls that I get, I am hesitant to pick up the phone – I might let it go to voicemail and see if they leave a voicemail.
  - Some of the verbiage could be a little intimidating. We are a small business owner, so you need to grab their attention quick and make sure they understand. You want to get your message across as short and sweet as possible while still seeming legitimate. That's where I think this could be improved a little bit, as well as including the number they will be calling from.
  - I understood the message, and I get the “Descriptive occupational information”, but it came across a bit wordy. Maybe phrase it better so it's clear as to what it is. Just that you are eliciting help. Something on here needs to emphasize this is going to help people but we need your help to do it. I think that might reach people who have a lot going on in their lives and businesses but needs to convince them this would be beneficial to small business owners like me if I do my part. It comes off a little sterile and clinical.
  - Lead with “We need your help to keep this information current.” It's in there but lead with that. Bring it up higher or put more emphasis on it. Nothing wrong with doubling down and saying something similar again, maybe earlier. Some people might glance over it and think it sounds complicated or time consuming but emphasizing that not only could this be beneficial to you and your business but also to other small businesses like you, they might be willing to participate.
- 

As *Table 3* illustrates, one key takeaway from POCs at small establishments is that the postcard might appear intimidating due to the prominent DOL presence. The last comment is particularly interesting as it gives a recommendation on how to appeal to small establishments by emphasizing the need for their help.

We then posed the direct question of whether each participant would consider helping and/or participating if they received a call from an O\*NET representative a few weeks after having seen the postcard. These responses are summarized in *Table 4*.

**Table 4.**  
**Willingness to take a phone call and assist after having received the postcard**

- 
- I would definitely take the call. It's 50-50 whether I would be the one at my level or the owners to participate, but at the very least I would answer the call and let them know the owner's decision. There's a good chance I would be the one facilitating anyway, but I would definitely take the call and let them know regardless. [Small Establishment]
  - I would take the call as long as I had the OK from higher ups. This would be something that would be right up my alley with my job description, so yes, I would. [Small Establishment]
  - I would answer the call but if it were a few weeks after the postcard, I would have forgotten about it. [Small Establishment]
  - I would. I have a little background on how it benefits workers. The DOL label is prominent and if the first thing that would catch my attention, and I would review it right away to make sure I hadn't done something wrong, and I would definitely take the call. [Large Establishment]
  - Since it is DOL I would see what it was about and I would likely go to the website to see if it was required. If optional, I would not do it. It takes time out of my day from work. [Large Establishment]
  - If it was 5 to 10-minute call, then I would take it. If you could say the call is quick, that would make a difference in my decision. [Large Establishment]
  - The only way you could get me to take the call is that I would need the possibility of some type of incentive for participating. Otherwise, I would opt out as I don't like dealing with the government. If the postcard said that my colleagues might be eligible for an incentive that might compel me to think it would be fine. I think you need to mention some kind of incentive else I probably would just throw it out. [Large Establishment]
  - I might be reluctant to participate if it is not required. Once you've done it now, they put you on this list and now things are required. Some of this information gets collected about my company, and now we're in the Department of Labor's system, and now we get other regulatory reporting that they might require from us. [Large Establishment]
  - I would participate if I received it. [Small Establishment]
  - With bigger companies, there's always a chain of command, so if I'm going to be asked to do this with or for a government agency, before I can do that I'm going to need to clear it with my bosses, or they may need to clear it with their bosses. So, after seeing the initial postcard or getting a phone call, I'm going to need to decide whether to put in all this effort, or because it's voluntary just not do it. So, because I would need to take it to my bosses, I would take the path of least resistance and just ignore it. [Large Establishment]
- 

As evidenced by the responses in *Table 4*, the postcard would seem to have a more significant impact with POCs from small businesses. These individuals indicated a willingness to take a phone call and consider participating after having received the postcard, whereas multiple POCs from larger establishments would likely not for a variety of reasons.

One of the suggestions coming out of the first group discussion was an opt-in option or a means of contacting us to schedule the phone call. We asked subsequent participants about this idea. Relevant comments from all groups are summarized in *Table 5*.

**Table 5.**  
**Opt-In or Contact Us Option on the Postcard**

- 
- Perhaps you could provide a link to schedule a call? [Large Establishment]
  - Could I have the option to call you and schedule a time? [Large Establishment]
  - A way to opt-in would make me more willing to participate. I see there is an email and phone number, but it feels very optional. It would be beneficial if there was a second request to opt-in to a date/time for a phone meeting. [Small Establishment]
  - I like that idea a lot. You could schedule a time and I could block the time out. [Small Establishment]
  - I would like an opt-in option, but it might not work for others. I would rather call you all myself. [Small Establishment]
  - The easier to do that the better, whether it is through an online portal or email address they can contact you. Give them the contact information so they can reach out rather than just the cold call efforts. [Large Establishment]
- 

Multiple group 1 participants suggested the postcard include a means of contacting us directly to schedule the call and participate. As **Table 5** shows, all subsequent participants responded positively to this idea.

Participants of each group were asked about the addressee on the postcard. Specifically, whether it being addressed to someone else such as a manager, owner, president, or CEO may change their reaction or likelihood of reading and/or participating. This question was posed because individuals presiding in such roles are the contact names most often provided within the Dun & Bradstreet sample utilized for O\*NET establishment data collection. These responses are summarized in **Table 6** on the following page.

**Table 6.**  
**Postcard Addressee**

- 
- I think the addressee is important. The lead manager or owner might not be the person that reads or parses the mail. You don't want to be too generic. Even though the owners may make decisions to participate in this, they might not be the ones that get the mail. [Small Establishment]
  - If this were addressed to the CIO or owner, I would be the one to handle this and make the decision. If I got something like this, I would likely act on it or at the very least check the link to make sure it is legitimate. I have never seen this but I see the value in it so I would have some interest in participating. [Small Establishment]
  - It's smart that it's in the form of a postcard. If it were in an envelope and addressed to the owner, I probably would not open it unless they told me to. But because I can just flip it over and read it, it doesn't necessarily have to be addressed to me. [Small Establishment]
  - It would make me a lot more likely to ignore it, especially if it were addressed to the CEO. I would 100% not want to do anything on his/her behalf without any sign-off. [Large Establishment]
  - I totally agree. If it came addressed to the CEO, I would just shuffle it back to the mail distribution center and treat it as a goof-up. I wouldn't touch it or receive the call or anything like that. [Large Establishment]
  - I agree [with two comments immediately above]. [Large Establishment]
  - I probably would still read it and try to figure out what to do with it. I would give it to HR or one of our admins. [Large Establishment]
- 

Comments listed in *Table 6* indicate that most large establishment POCs receiving the postcard addressed to upper management would be likely to ignore the request and would feel more apprehensive about assisting. Whereas POCs at smaller establishments would still read the postcard, consider assisting, and perhaps redirect it to the appropriate decision maker if it were not addressed to them.

### **3.2 Introductory Phone Calls and Information**

The next phase of our discussions surrounded the introductory phone calls to establishments and the information packages provided during or after those calls. Focus group participants all received examples of information packages in electronic format. We also played an audio file of a mock call for each group to hear, to provide an example of how we go about introducing ourselves to POCs, providing them with the necessary information, and screening their establishment for eligibility. Participants were then asked for their reactions to the phone conversation and the informational materials provided. Responses related to the introductory call are summarized in *Table 7*. Responses related to the informational materials are summarized in *Table 8*, followed by preferences pertaining to email versus hard-copy delivery in *Table 9*.

**Table 7.**  
**Introductory Call**

- 
- The constant reinforcement of DOL makes me think it is more like a scam. At least hearing it over the phone. Maybe if I had something in writing. [Large Establishment]
  - I see the benefits and wouldn't mind doing it. It doesn't seem too stressful given that information. [Large Establishment]
  - I would be ok giving my email address for the info if they were friendly and not pushy or too time-consuming. [Large Establishment]
  - If I were to help out, I would need to believe and understand the mission and what it is going to be used for, the ways it benefits others. [Large Establishment]
  - [Following the comment immediately above] I agree – that would make me feel better about it. [Large Establishment]
  - I would accept the call. The process seemed pretty straightforward. [Large Establishment]
  - I screen calls all the time. Honestly, the best way to reach me is email. I am not the best at fielding calls from people I don't need to get back to. [Large Establishment]
  - I would review the list with them – seems simple. We are a small business, but we have lots of different occupations, so this is clear in explaining who we are looking for. [Small Establishment]
  - I would return the call or voicemail if it was accompanied with an email so I know what you're doing. [Small Establishment]
  - My impression is that the caller got into it too quick. It might be better to explain more about RTI and what the O\*NET project is. They said DOL quick – I wouldn't emphasize DOL yet. I would focus on you being nonprofit. Explain RTI first and then explain your connection to DOL. [Large Establishment]
  - People get nervous when they hear this is about the government. [Large Establishment]
  - I would help – it was clearly explained and not demanding. People want to participate and not feel pressured. My only question, as someone in a small business, is that a lot of our workers wear many hats. It would be hard to narrow down to determine their primary job focus. [Small Establishment]
  - The conversation was pleasant and brief – I would have talked to you. [Small Establishment]
  - For me, I would have asked you for credentials just because the amount of spam we receive. We also have government contracts, so we are a little suspicious. [Small Establishment]
- 

Takeaways:

- One participant explained that the reference to DOL makes it feel like a “scam”, while one participant felt it would be better to focus on RTI (being nonprofit) and less emphasis on DOL. A few other participants explained that people get nervous/suspicious when they find out it is related to the government.
- A few participants would accept the call if the rep clearly articulates the benefits (mission) of the O\*NET program and if the caller was “friendly” and not “pushy”.
- One participant explained that the best way is to reach out by email rather than taking calls from someone they do not know.

**Table 8.**  
**Informational Materials**

- 
- As an IT guy – I would question opening a file from someone you do not know. Sounds kind like a scam. Maybe if I received the postcard, but if not definitely more weary. [Large Establishment]
  - I think the email is very clear. It seems simple. [Small Establishment]
  - The phrasing – I didn't get what ONET was until I clicked on the brochure. The link makes it easy to understand. I was surprised that I had to go this far to really understand. You should include the what-who-how link on the initial postcard so that people will understand the basics before the call. [Small Establishment]
  - I agree that this should be more information sooner, so they understand what ONET is. The info at the bottom of the email needs to be provided sooner. [Small Establishment]
  - It feels a little impersonal. It is meant to be professional, but I might be very busy when I got to this and it feels like a lot of work but actually it is pretty simple. Make it a little easier to read and I like including something on the postcard so people can do their due diligence. [Small Establishment]
  - The email looks clear. The only thing I would recommend is maybe list day/time options for the call so they can respond and know when the call will be scheduled. [Small Establishment]
  - I don't think it goes into a lot of detail of what the POC is to do, but I think it does go into what is the purpose and what we are obtaining so it gives you background and information to make your decision on if you want to move forward. [Large Establishment]
  - I like the one-page email. It's not long and gives you an overview quickly of what it is. Gives you the option if you want to investigate more you can using the hyperlinks. It's clear and reiterates what the call was about. [Large Establishment]
  - I like how it is straight and to the point. If you want the details- it is there if you at the bottom. The detail is there for you to search for it without being too busy or overwhelming. [Large Establishment]
  - I think it helps legitimize the effort and provides info you can't get into on the call. It's a lot of information so I might want to look over the info and then get back to the representative. [Large Establishment]
- 

Takeaways:

- Overall, most participants felt the information in the email was clear and liked the links for more information. They felt it helped legitimize the study.
- Only one participant was concerned about opening attachments.
- A few participants from small establishments suggested explaining what O\*NET is without having to click one of the links, with one suggesting we include an FAQ link earlier on the pre-notification postcard. One participant suggested making the email easier to read/more personal.
- One participant suggested listing days/times for the telephone call so the participant can respond and schedule a time for the call.



**Table 9.**  
**E-mail or Hard-Copy Informational Materials?**

- 
- I definitely prefer an email rather than hard copy.
  - I am 100% for email.
  - Always email.
  - I think since you have them on the phone – email seems to be the most efficient format. If physical form, this is a lot to print and ship.
  - Most would rather have electronic copies. I would prefer email and I can save it on my computer and access it.
  - I exist in a paperless office. I lose paper all the time so I would prefer email.
  - I would not want to receive a hard-copy package. I prefer emails.
- 

Takeaways:

- The participants generally preferred e-mail over hard-copy materials.

### **3.3 Working with the POC to Sample Employees and Distribute Questionnaires**

The third phase of our discussions centered around the process by which we guide the POC in creating rosters for employee sampling and provide the questionnaires for the POC to distribute to the selected employees. The participants were given an in-depth description of this process, followed by the playing of an audio file of a mock call for each group to listen along together. Participants were then asked for their reactions to the phone conversation and the role of the POC, as well as what factors would drive their decisions whether or not to participate. The reactions are summarized in *Table 10* followed by preferences pertaining to email versus hard-copy delivery in *Table 11*.

**Table 10.**  
**Employee Sampling and Questionnaire Distribution**

- 
- Easy to understand, a little lengthy from the POCs perspective but straightforward. [Large]
  - For me, I would not participate since I would need to get clearance from the higher ups. They probably wouldn't sign off to begin with, but then I'd also have to go out of the way to explain it to them and try to get their sign-off. It's tougher with larger organizations. If it is a small business, it would be easier. It would be a lot of work and a lot of effort and I probably wouldn't be able to get the clearance anyway. [Large]
  - It depends. If it were directly related to me – I probably would, but I would not if the scope were outside of my department. [Large]
  - I probably would help and distribute it, knowing the benefits and purpose and what people use this for. [Large]
  - As long as there is an incentive included, I would do it. [Large]
  - If someone below me got it and they are going around doing this on company time, it would upset me if I didn't give approval first. [Large]
  - Might increase cooperation to be able to inform higher-ups it is confidential and what the data is for and that information was not going to be shared. [Large]
  - I would help you, once I understood what it was. I don't see any harm in doing it. [Small]
  - This was broken down in simple terms for the POC. Very interactive, I thought it was very good. [Small]
  - I like that it was clear that the people that you are targeting you are asking them to do it on their own time which is good. Even for the person distributing may need to do this on their own time not company time depending on their policies. So, you are looking at something that is a bit of a time commitment. While I would be willing, I would need to think about how much time this is going to take me and how I can fit it into my day. So, it is a little bit of a big ask depending on how many surveys. [Small]
  - If I was the person getting the call, putting identifiers on the envelopes might make me uncomfortable. Where I work employee ID is a very sensitive thing, I suppose initials would be fine but that's the only thing that would give me pause. [Large]
  - I don't think I would be hesitant to participate. Once you get over the cold call part, the rest seems fine. [Large]
- 

Takeaways:

- Participants from large businesses were more reluctant to follow-through than those of small businesses. The larger businesses would need clearance from supervisors/senior staff. While one participant felt their management would never agree (so why bother), another participant felt it would increase cooperation if they could let management know that it is confidential, and data was not shared.
- Several participants would help if the benefits/purpose were clearly articulated.
- A few participants explained that they are busy, and this would take time away from the work that they do.

**Table 11.**  
**E-mail or Hard-Copy Questionnaire Distribution?**

- 
- I think it is appealing to have both options. For me personally I would only want the email. I understand the need to be flexible, but for me the email is the most important option and the one I would choose. [Large]
  - I would prefer email 100%. I don't even want an option. As an employee if I received the packet myself, I wouldn't want to fill it out. An email I would. [Large]
  - I only want the email. I don't want the option; the mail thing sounds much more complicated. With email I don't need to get anything or do anything. It is so much easier. I can do it on my phone. [Large]
  - I agree that email is so much easier. That being said, I understand why you need to have both options because there are places where employees don't have email addresses. [Large]
  - Hard copies would be better during normal non-COVID times. Many companies will not have emails, like construction or industrial jobs. Personally, I would rather have physical copies so I can hand it to them and explain in my own words why they are getting it. [Large]
  - I like the flexibility. As long as the return shipping costs are provided, I would probably go the physical route. I do have my employees' email addresses but with this it just might be better to do the physical route. I think it's good you provide multiple options. [Small]
  - I like having the option of either. [Small]
  - There is something about getting a \$10 bill and saying "thank you in advance for filling this out". But I do think you need to keep both options. For some types of jobs it would be better to go up and hand it to them. For my job, the \$10 bill – they would be more willing to do the questionnaire for the cash in hand. [Small]
- 

Takeaways:

- Participants generally preferred emails. However, they recognize the need to have both options. Some industries might not communicate with employees through email.
- Email was perceived as the less burdensome of the two approaches, especially among participants from large establishments.
- Multiple participants from small establishments did acknowledge the importance of having both options, while expressing a preference for the physical mailing with cash. One participant noted employees would probably be more likely to complete the questionnaire due to the \$10 cash in hand.

### 3.4 POC Incentives

Participants in each of the groups were asked whether any POC incentives, either monetary or non-monetary, would have any impact on their decision to participate. These responses are summarized in *Table 12* and *Table 13*.

**Table 12.**  
**POC Incentives**

- 
- Yes, definitely an incentive for a POC. Something more than the oak frame certificate. The person organizing it should also get a monetary incentive instead of an attaboys and a frame. [Large]
  - I agree it would help, but with my company, I would have to report that as a vendor donation or something like that. If it is \$10 – it is not worth the time. If higher, it might be worth it but it is a lot of paperwork that I would have to fill out. [Large]
  - Same with my work – any gifts I have to report. It wouldn't be about the compensation, it just wouldn't be worth the effort to seek approval and then my company asking why I'm doing it. And my higher-ups wouldn't sign off on it. [Large]
  - I honestly don't know the policy on gifts. I would not be concerned about 10 bucks. I probably wouldn't say anything. [Large]
  - I think just the certificate is fine. You realize that you are doing something important so you might not need to be financially compensated. Emphasizing the public service side is good. [Large]
  - I don't think I would personally care one way or the other. But I can see why other people would be upset with emphasis placed on the certificate when employees are getting cash, yet I have to take my time to do this. I don't think I would care about the certificate. Some people will want some other form of compensation. [Small]
  - Don't emphasize the certificate – but send it anyhow as a nice surprise. But I think they should also get a cash incentive. I would feel weird that my team gets \$10 but what exactly is in it for me? I can understand why that might be troublesome or why some people might not follow through with what they say they are going to do. [Small]
  - Maybe a gift card to a restaurant or something. Something non-monetary but still something extra. [Small]
- 

#### Takeaways:

- Participants were mixed in their feelings toward an incentive. Some participants would not want the incentive as they would need to report it, while other participants felt that it would be better than the certificate, given their co-workers are receiving \$10 to complete the survey. However, \$10 does not seem to be motivating and one participant suggested a gift card to a restaurant or something of more value.
- Only one participant felt the certificate would be fine, emphasizing the contribution towards public service.

**Table 13.**  
**Non-Monetary POC Incentives**

- 
- A non-monetary incentive would not entice me. [Large]
  - Anything non-monetary that has some value, I would still have to report it. [Large]
  - Same [as comments above] with me I would have to report it. So I would prefer cash over nonmonetary, but because I have to report it I still wouldn't do it. [Large]
  - Maybe standard office supplies, something like a pen, calendar, or a desk planner would be helpful. [Large]
  - I don't think anything would make me more willing to. I would know from the beginning if I am receptive to it or not. I already understand, especially in a small business setting how beneficial this could be to myself and to other small business owners. [Small]
  - Maybe have a raffle – a giveaway with an entry to win something. It doesn't have to be expensive. [Small]
  - Maybe an Amazon gift card perhaps? The raffle idea is great – 1, 2, 3 winners or whatever. [Small]
- 

Takeaways:

- Participants were not convinced that anything of nonmonetary value would encourage them to participate. A few participants would still need to report this as a gift, so it might as well be a monetary incentive.
- A few respondents suggested office supplies, a raffle, or Amazon gift card (although this is likely to be a monetary incentive).

### **3.5 O\*NET Allies Campaign and Benefits**

We described to each group a hypothetical “O\*NET Allies” campaign along with potential benefits or rewards that may go along with it. The benefits described were:

1. Inclusion of their business name and URL in a published listing of O\*NET Allies within the O\*NET website.
2. Use of an exclusive O\*NET Ally graphic badge for inclusion on their website and promotional materials.

Participants were asked if this might have any impact on their decision to participate. These responses are summarized in *Table 14*.

**Table 14.**  
**O\*NET Allies Campaign and Benefits**

- 
- I think that it would make me more apt to participate. Especially the idea of being able to publish it on our own website. I don't know about "Ally" but maybe "Partner" or something like that. And also a nice logo that would make us stand out more as we sell our software, it would be a nice box we can check saying that we helped out. Partner sounds a lot better, like a partnership or friendship. Ally doesn't sound as closely acquainted, it's more distanced away. [Large]
  - Yes, it would make me want to go ahead and do it or push it along to the right people. It benefits both sides. [Large]
  - Small businesses might be more on board with this, publishing their URL or company name. A large company I can't see being that compelled to get the word out about the company. If it's like a worldwide or national company that everyone knows, I'm not sure how valuable that marketing utility is. [Large]
  - Part of that benefit would be that in our marketing we could say we helped out for the better good, but unfortunately a lot of people aren't familiar with this work or this organization, so it wouldn't really mean as much as saying we are partnering with the boys and girls clubs or a cancer research company. [Large]
  - Yeah, I certainly don't think it would hurt. Especially the certification badges. There's many of those now, like with lead and various certifications. Especially for larger businesses that rely on having their name out there. "Ally" has some political connotations, so I know maybe more conservative people might not like the term. I would say it is somewhat politically charged, that would be my only concern. [Large]
  - Honestly, that would need to be vetted with the owner. On the one hand I can see the benefit in promotion, any advertising is good advertising. But some companies might not want that since you emphasized the anonymity. Something like that might be appealing if you offered it as an opt-in option. [Small]
  - We have a lot of restrictions on how we advertise. If I were the small business owner I might be inclined. My company president might not want any affiliation because they don't want to be seen as aligning ourselves with any organization. I can see this as value to some companies. An opt-in would be great. [Small]
  - I don't think it would make any difference to me. [Small]
- 

Takeaways:

- Participants like the idea. In general, they were not fond of the name "Ally", but rather "Partner" or some other descriptor. While participants saw the benefits to both O\*NET, with participation, and the small business, with name recognition/free marketing, this would still need to be vetted through upper management/business owner.

### 3.6 How Do We Stand Out

Due to the frequency of sales calls, telemarketing, and illegitimate phone scams that businesses currently are subject to, one of the primary barriers to successful recruitment of establishments is that potential POCs mistake our telephone calls for these. We asked participants in each group for any insights on how best to make O\*NET telephone calls stand out from other types of telephone calls they receive. The responses are summarized in *Table 15*.

**Table 15.**  
**How Do We Stand Out?**

- 
- It would be ideal to have a way to schedule the call in advance. Then I know to expect the call and what it will be about. Sometimes it's not an issue of me not wanting to give them time or assuming they are a scammer. The first part of the call we heard is already about 6-minutes. I could set time aside to go over this and not feel rushed. If we have the ability to set the appointment it would go a long way in getting people to do it. [Small]
  - Scheduling is a great idea. You might even want to give a pre-email rather than a postcard. If there was a checkbox in the email to [YES, I will take your call] followed by a scheduler with some good time frames to call that might be helpful since I am often multitasking and need to give you the time. [Small]
  - I get so many calls that you just don't trust people anymore. Somehow you need to be quick and say it in the right way. Explain it is not a sales call. A pre-schedule or something like that would help. [Small]
  - I think an email beforehand would make a difference. In an email you can send more information than you can convey in a call. If I received a call after that, I would really feel like I wanted to help. But just the postcard, I'm not going to type in the address. But in the email, I can click on it. Or even forward it to someone higher up. [Large]
  - The opening call, and perhaps in the opening sentence, mention that it is a nonprofit. Hearing about a nonprofit makes me think the caller isn't trying to sell me something and I'll take a chance and listen to them. For the most part people have a positive view of nonprofits and they are willing to hear someone out and it just kind of disarms them a little bit. [Large]
  - I agree with that I think the nonprofit is huge, especially in the beginning of a cold call. I think in the first minute or two when explaining try to make it more appealing, more "catchy." [Large]
  - Talk about the history of RTI/O\*NET and the history of the program and how long you've been working on it. Also stressing the fact that it is not a commercial endeavor, that it is a public service and free to everybody. [Large]
- 

#### Takeaways:

- Participants felt that it would be more useful to have an email rather than a postcard prior to the call.
- They preferred a way to schedule the call-in advance. The participants suggested a scheduler or opt-in capability to arrange the call. This also addresses the issue of a cold-call and reluctance by participants to answer the phone if they do not know/expect the caller.

- A few participants suggested focusing on the fact that RTI is a nonprofit would be good at the beginning of the call with some scripted language to catch the attention of the potential POC, acknowledging that this is not a sales call. Discuss history of RTI/O\*NET and discuss how the program benefits the public.

### 3.7 Final Thoughts and Suggestions

Each focus group ended with asking participants to share any final thoughts on O\*NET a resource and any final suggestions they wish to offer for establishment data collection. The responses are summarized in *Table 16*.

**Table 16.**  
**Final Thoughts on O\*NET**

- 
- Very beneficial to high schools and young adults investigating careers they may want to get into.
  - The cause sounds good, I wasn't familiar with it before. If our company was less restrictive, I would be willing to participate and help.
  - If you sold this more, specifically as a resource to help young people, then the branding sounds better to me than a worker database. That sounds kind of like the US Census. I have no interest in doing that. If you marketed O\*NET slightly differently or played up the benefits to young adults and students that would make a difference.
  - If I just received the phone call, I wouldn't do it. But knowing more about it I definitely think it's a worthy cause. There definitely needs to be some branding out there, to get both the POCs and the companies involved. Would love to be able to advertise that we helped, but what is O\*NET? It might be good to get yourselves out there as well, as a partner with the organizations you've surveyed.
  - I think it is a pretty valuable resource. I also appreciate how not pushy you attempt to be in this process. I think it is very respectful. I like the anonymity aspect of it, I think that will encourage the individual employees to participate. There are a lot of data concerns out there. This is another reason I like the paper route. We encounter so many things online with cookies, tracking, etc. Emphasis that this is partnered with a government agency and anonymity will make people feel more comfortable about participating.
  - Sending the pre-postcard or pre-email and letting them know to look out for a phone call will go a long way with me. I might have to talk to my boss first, because people won't know if they have permission, so something in advance will go a long way as well as the ability to schedule.
  - Seems applicable to various audiences. A lot of academic purposes, info for people figuring out the line of work they are interested in. I had never heard of it so it is not widely marketed. Overall, it seems like an important program. I've never heard of it and I'm pretty plugged in to the government. DOL should market it more, so it has name recognition.
- 

#### Takeaways:

- After understanding the O\*NET program and reflecting on how it benefits many people, the participants felt this was a valuable program and would be willing to participate. However, participants still felt they would need to vet this with upper



management, and it might be difficult to get their approval. They felt the program and its benefits should be emphasized early in the discussions with the POC.

- Participants were not familiar with O\*NET prior to the group discussions and felt that people may be more receptive if it were more heavily marketed and more widely known.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the collective feedback compiled from the focus groups, RTI recommends the following:

- **Proceed with efforts to implement a pre-notification postcard to be sent to small establishments (1-9 employees).**
  - Findings show that having received a pre-notification postcard will increase the likelihood that a POC will take our call and consider participating, especially among smaller establishments.
  - Large establishment POCs agree that a postcard/request addressed to upper management would make them *more* apprehensive about assisting. Whereas POCs at smaller establishments would still read the postcard, consider assisting, and perhaps redirect it to the appropriate decision maker if it were not addressed to them.
  
- **Consider revising the pre-notification postcard in the following ways:**
  1. Add an opt-in option for establishments to call or email to indicate their interest and schedule a time to be called.
    - Multiple participants suggested a means of contacting us to schedule the forthcoming call.
  2. Add verbiage to clarify the purpose of the forthcoming phone call, or possibly a link to the FAQ brochure.
    - POCs from large companies indicate they would like more information on the postcard regarding the purpose of the forthcoming phone call.
  3. Show the O\*NET logo on top and larger and the DOL seal beneath and smaller.
    - Multiple POCs at small establishments felt that the prominence of DOL on the postcard might appear intimidating.
  4. Emphasize “We need your help to keep this information current.” by making it bold font.

- **In addition to the postcard refinements noted above, consider other changes to our standard introductory protocol, such as:**
  1. Lead with a pre-email prior to call to a POC whenever a viable email address can be easily found.
    - Multiple participants suggested an introductory email pre-notification that would precede the introductory call would make them more likely to take the call and assist.
    - Some participants suggested a scheduler or opt-in capability to accompany the email in order to arrange the call. They felt this may also help address the issue of a cold-call and reluctance by participants to answer the phone if they do not know/expect the caller.
  2. Add more detail into our standard telephone introductions, emphasizing O\*NET as a free resource, RTI as a non-profit organization, and less emphasis on DOL.
    - Multiple participants indicated they would accept the call if the representative clearly articulates the benefits/mission of the O\*NET program. They felt the program and its benefits should be emphasized early in the discussions with the POC.
    - One participant explained that the reference to DOL makes it feel like a “scam”, while one participant felt it would be better to focus on RTI (being nonprofit) and less emphasis on DOL. A few other participants explained that people get nervous/suspicious when they find out it is related to the government.
  
- **Continue leading with email delivery of the information package as the preferred option and continue offering both options for questionnaire delivery. Consider offering mail/paper/cash as the preferred option for questionnaires and reserving email as a backup option.**
  - The participants generally preferred e-mail over hard-copy delivery of the information package materials.
  - Participants generally preferred emails. However, they recognize the need to have both options for certain industries or situations.
  - Email was perceived as the less burdensome of the two approaches, especially among participants from large establishments.

- Multiple participants from small establishments did acknowledge the importance of having both options, while expressing a preference for the physical mailing with cash. One participant noted employees would probably be more likely to complete the questionnaire due to the \$10 cash in hand. This is consistent with RTI's findings of a higher employee response rate among employees who receive this delivery method.
- **Consider creating a summary document to provide to POCs at larger companies who need to take this request to upper management for approval.**
  - Participants from large businesses were more reluctant to follow-through than those of small businesses. The larger businesses would need clearance from supervisors/senior staff. While one participant felt their management would never agree (so why bother), another participant felt it would increase cooperation if they could let management know that it is confidential, and data was not shared.
  - After understanding the O\*NET program and reflecting on how it benefits many people, the participants felt this was a valuable program and would be willing to participate. However, participants still felt they would need to vet this with upper management, and it might be difficult to get their approval.
- **Consider an optional monetary POC incentive.**
  - Some large establishment participants would not want the incentive as they would need to report it, while small establishment participants felt that it would be better than the certificate, given their co-workers are receiving \$10 to complete the survey. One large business POC said they would only consider participation if there were an incentive, even if it were only entry into a raffle.
  - Participants were not convinced that anything of non-monetary value would encourage them to participate. A few participants indicated they would still need to report this as a gift, so it might as well be a monetary incentive.
- **Continue to explore ways to advertise and market O\*NET to the general public.**
  - Participants were not familiar with O\*NET prior to the group discussions and felt that people may be more receptive if it were more heavily marketed and more widely known.

**APPENDIX A.  
FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT SCREENER**

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**O\*NET POC Focus Groups**

**Recruitment Screener**

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**ARE YOU...**

- MALE**
- FEMALE**
- OTHER**
- PREFER NOT TO SAY**

**HOW OLD ARE YOU?**

- UNDER 18**
- 18-24**
- 25-34**
- 35-44**
- 45-54**
- 55-64**
- 65+**

**ARE YOU CURRENTLY EMPLOYED...**

- FULL-TIME**
- PART-TIME**
- BOTH FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME**
- NOT EMPLOYED**

**ARE YOU SELF-EMPLOYED OR DO YOU WORK FOR AN EMPLOYER?**

- SELF-EMPLOYED**
- WORK FOR AN EMPLOYER**
- BOTH**
- NEITHER**

**WHICH OF THE BELOW BEST DESCRIBES THE TYPE OF INDUSTRY OF YOUR PRIMARY FULL-TIME EMPLOYER?**

- CONSTRUCTION**
- EDUCATION**
- FOOD AND BEVERAGE**
- PHARMACEUTICAL**
- ENTERTAINMENT**
- TELECOMMUNICATION**
- MANUFACTURING**
- AGRICULTURE**
- TRANSPORTATION**
- COMPUTER AND TECHNOLOGY**
- HEALTHCARE**
- MEDIA & NEWS**
- HOSPITALITY**
- ENERGY**
- FASHION**
- FINANCE & ECONOMIC**

- ADVERTISING & MARKETING**
- RESEARCH**
- MINING**
- AEROSPACE**
- REAL ESTATE**
- GOVERNMENT**
- OTHER**

**SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_**

- NONE/UNEMPLOYED**

**WHICH OF THE BELOW DESCRIPTIONS IS MOST SIMILAR TO YOUR PRIMARY DAY-TO-DAY WORK ENVIRONMENT (IF THIS HAS CHANGED DUE TO COVID, PLEASE RESPOND BASED ON YOUR PRE-COVID WORK ENVIRONMENT)?**

- GENERAL OFFICE SETTING**
- HEALTHCARE OFFICE/HOSPITAL/CLINIC**
- CONSTRUCTION SITE**
- STORE (RETAIL, GROCERY, SPECIALTY, ETC.)**
- RESTAURANT**
- MY HOME/TELEWORKER**
- OFF-SITE/SERVICE CALLS**
- MANUFACTURING FACILITY**
- POWER PLANT**
- AIRPORT**
- OTHER SPECIFY: \_\_\_\_\_**
- NONE/UNEMPLOYED**

**APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY EMPLOYEES WORK OUT OF THE SPECIFIC LOCATION IN WHICH YOU WORK (PLEASE CHOOSE THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER THAT WORK AT OR ARE BASED OUT OF THE SAME PHYSICAL ADDRESS, NOT THE ENTIRE COMPANY SIZE)?**

- 1-9
- 10-29
- 30-49
- 50-99
- 100-249
- 250+
- NONE/UNEMPLOYED

**PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR JOB TITLE AND A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ROLE IN YOUR PRIMARY FULL-TIME JOB?**

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**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN OUR SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE.**

**WE WILL REVIEW YOUR RESPONSES AND CONTACT YOU IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOCUS GROUP.**



**APPENDIX B.  
FOCUS GROUP MODERATOR'S GUIDE**

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**O\*NET POC Focus Groups**

**Moderator's Guide**

September 24, 2021

October 1, 2021

October 8, 2021

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**Introduction of self and the study**

- Thank you for attending today's group discussion. We will be talking today about a survey research study on occupations that is being conducted by RTI International. RTI, which is short for Research Triangle Institute, is a non-profit research company headquartered in Research Triangle Park, NC which is in the Raleigh/Durham area.
- MODERATOR: My name is \_\_\_\_\_ [Explain title – job description/years of service at RTI].
- NOTETAKER: My name is \_\_\_\_\_ [Explain title – job description/years of service at RTI].
- NOTETAKER: My name is \_\_\_\_\_ [Explain title – job description/years of service at RTI].

**Basic Ground Rules (Structure, Participation, Anonymity, Recording, etc.)**

**Warm-up**

First, let's go around and have everyone introduce themselves to the group. Please tell us your first name ONLY, where you are from, and a little about your business and job role. Again, you do not need to provide the name of your business.

Prior to being invited to this focus group, had any of you ever heard of or used O\*NET before?

## **Initial Reactions to Postcard**

We had emailed each of you some materials to review, I'd like to start with the postcard. You received a PDF file showing the front and back of a postcard from the United States Department of Labor and the O\*NET Data Collection Program. It was addressed to Pat King at Pat's Shoe Repair, but this postcard might be sent to any type of business, including yours and might be addressed to you or someone else. I'd like to hear each of your thoughts on the postcard, its appearance, was it easy to read and understand, did it make sense, did it appear legitimate, is it likely something you would read if it arrived at your place of work?

If you got a call from an O\*NET representative a few weeks after the postcard, would you consider helping/participating?

If the postcard had included an opt-in option to reach out to us to help, would you consider it?

Was the amount of information in the postcard appropriate?

## **Background of the study and purpose**

We also provided a Word document that included an example email with two attachments and several hyperlinks. If you read through that information, you hopefully have a good sense of what our program entails, but let me give you a little background that may help...

RTI has been contracted with the U.S. Department of Labor to conduct data collection for the Occupational Information Network (O\*NET for short). O\*NET is a free resource provided by the Department of Labor through a series of websites that utilize a database of occupational information. It is the nation's primary source of information on virtually every occupation in the United States. There's a website geared towards those exploring different careers, another geared towards military personnel transitioning to the civilian workforce, another geared towards HR professionals and employers with various tools like writing job descriptions and maintaining a skilled workforce.

All the information on the knowledge, skills, abilities, or education required for any occupation, as well as the types of tasks performed, work environment, work context is housed within the O\*NET database and made freely accessible online.

Keeping all this occupational information up-to-date and accurately maintained is done by getting people who actually do the work to complete questionnaires. To do that, RTI randomly samples businesses across the United States and reaches out to them for assistance in getting those questionnaires to the employees doing the work.

Once a business has been selected, we attempt to identify and recruit a point-of-contact (POC) at the selected business to determine (1) if the occupation is present at their specific business location and (2) if present, agree to distribute questionnaires to a randomly selected group of employees (only at one specific location, and no more than 20 max for one business).

In recent years, it has become more and more challenging to recruit businesses and POCs to participate in this voluntary program. We are seeking your help today in identifying ways to boost participation.

## **Brief Introduction to Components**

We have structured this discussion to focus on two specific areas. First, we want to discuss the initial contact efforts and materials used to recruit businesses and points-of-contact at the businesses. Second, we will discuss the process of selecting employees anonymously and having the POC distribute questionnaires to employees.

## **Initial Recruitment Process and Materials**

Now that you know a little more about our program and our process, let's revisit the materials you received.

Tell me your thoughts about how official the postcard appeared?

What about the graphics and layout of the postcard?

What would you do if you received this postcard?

What if you received it but it wasn't addressed to you specifically, maybe it was to some other name such as the CEO of your company?

The example email you received has more information about the O\*NET program. You might have received this after one of our O\*NET representatives had called you, provided a brief description of who we are and why we are calling, and asked to send you the email. What do you think of the email and the information within it?

Typically, our representative would ask you to proceed by opening the PDF attachment entitled "Occupations List" and begin reviewing that list with you to determine if any of the occupations are present at your location. The list may have only one occupation, or it may have up to 10. Would you be willing to review the list with them? Why or why not?

[PLAY MOCK CALL AUDIO RECORDING, STOP AFTER LIST REVIEW IS COMPLETE]

Would you be more apt to consider assisting if you received the email information in the form of a hard copy mailing with a hard copy letter from the Department of Labor and a hard copy O\*NET brochure?

Are there reasons you might not assist the O\*NET representative over the phone?

Are there things we could do or say to change that?

What do we do to make our calls stand out from all the telemarketing, sales, scams, robocalls, etc?

### **Working with the point-of-contact (POC) to sample employees and distribute questionnaires.**

Let's talk about what happens after establishing a point-of-contact who reviews the list of occupations and tells you which ones are present. At that point we ask them to help keep all their employees anonymous by just gathering a list, for their eyes only, of the employees who are in each of the occupations that are present. To limit their burden, we would only look to sample from a maximum of 5 occupations, so potentially 5 lists of employees. Regardless of the number of employees they have, we would randomly select no more than 8 per occupation, or up to 20 total for a single location/POC. The employees remain anonymous, the POC provides a total headcount of the lists, and our system will randomly select which employees (i.e., person #8, person #12, etc.) to distribute questionnaires.

Once that random sampling is complete, the POC can opt for a hard-copy mailing of paper questionnaires (a single package with each questionnaire sealed in an envelope with \$10 cash) to hand out to the employees (with a web address should they wish to complete online) or the POC can opt instead for a web-only option where we send emails to the POC to then forward to each of the selected employees, each email with instructions on how the employee can redeem a \$10 digital gift card. If the POC chooses, we can exclude the \$10 altogether for everyone.

With either option, the POC will be mailed a framed certification of appreciation from the U.S. Department of Labor in an oak frame as a token of appreciation for their help.

[RESUME MOCK CALL RECORDING, PLAY FULL CALL TO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS OR HOW THE CONVERSATION MIGHT GO].

If you were the POC, would you agree to gather lists for a random sampling and distribute questionnaires (either by hand or via email)? Why or Why not?

Which materials are most impactful?

Do you fully understand what your participation entails based on the informational email?

What part(s) of the process would concern you or make you hesitant?

What are your opinions on mail versus email options?

### **POC Incentives**

- What types of incentives for the POC might entice you to participate?
- What about non-monetary incentives such as an O\*NET Desk Clock? Pen? Calendar?

### **“O\*NET Allies”**

As a POC, would you be enticed by an O\*NET Allies program in which participating businesses could be rewarded with privileges such as:

- 1) Inclusion of their business name and URL in a published listing of O\*NET Allies within the O\*NET website.
- 2) Use of an exclusive O\*NET Ally graphic badge for inclusion on their website and promotional materials.

What do you think of the term “Ally”?

### **Conclusion / Wrap-Up**

Overall, what do you think of O\*NET, the online resource of occupational information?

What factors most influence whether or not you would consider assisting voluntarily?

Is there other information you would like to have before making a decision? Is there too much information?

Do you any final comments about the way we gather data to update and maintain the O\*NET database?