

TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT NOTICE	NO. 40-15
	DATE June 16, 2016

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
 STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
 STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARD CHAIRS
 AMERICAN JOB CENTER DIRECTORS
 ETA REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

FROM: PORTIA WU /s/
 Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Announcement of the Evaluation of the Customer Experience in American Job Centers

1. **Purpose.** The Employment and Training Administration (ETA), in collaboration with the Department’s Chief Evaluation Office (CEO), is pleased to announce commencement of an exploratory evaluation to help the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL, or Department) learn more about the customer experience in American Job Centers (AJCs). DOL has contracted with IMPAQ International, LLC and ideas42 (the IMPAQ team) to conduct this study.

2. **Background.** Because of the flexibility states and local areas have in determining how to best implement the job training and employment programs delivered through the AJCs, the Department is conducting a variety of evaluations to build the body of evidence around “what works” in this system. This study will build on our body of existing work by giving DOL greater insight into the AJC customer experience, identifying experiential and service delivery strategies that are working well, and supporting the system’s customer focus under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The study’s approach will apply the insights of behavioral science, which stresses the importance of understanding customers’ experiences and how they make decisions as they progress through a service process. The growing field of behavioral science offers scientifically rigorous and behaviorally-inspired interventions, sometimes called “nudges,” to improve the design of public policies and programs.

3. **Customer Experience Evaluation Description.** The purpose of this exploratory evaluation is threefold: 1) to learn more about the customer experience in AJCs; 2) to highlight what guiding principles of a high-quality customer experience can be identified and shared to support the implementation of the WIOA; and 3) identify a set of behavioral science-based trials and “nudge” tools that will enhance the AJC customer experience. The study will focus on the experience of both job seekers and employers. A small number of AJCs that have met pre-determined criteria for representation within this exploratory study have been selected to participate. While on-site, researchers will carry out a combination of the following information gathering activities: discussions with AJC staff and customers, including

job/training seekers and employers; focus groups; observations; and the use of a kiosk-based customer exit survey. Additionally, researchers will conduct unannounced site visits as customers and observers at five to seven AJCs across the country in the next six months. These visits are very important, as they are central to gaining a better understanding of the customers and AJC business itself. The information learned will be used to inform the design for the above described information gathering activities. What DOL learns through this exploratory study will be used to identify potential behavioral science-based trials and tools to enhance the AJC customer experience as WIOA is implemented. Participating AJCs will not be named and individual research participants will be confidential. The research effort began in September 2015 and will conclude by December 2016.

4. **Anticipated Publications.** DOL anticipates developing three brief interim reports to share the information gathered with the workforce development system. These will be posted on the CEO and ETA websites and available publicly.
5. **Data Sources.** This exploratory analysis will draw upon the following information gathering activities: discussions with AJC staff and customers, including job/training seekers and employers; focus groups; observations; and the implementation of a kiosk-based customer exit survey. The information will be gathered over the course of one to three visits at selected AJCs.
6. **Action Requested.** States, Workforce Development Boards, and AJCs are encouraged to participate in the study, if selected, by working with DOL and the IMPAQ team in communication and other coordination activities, including coordinating site visits and participating in information gathering activities for this research.
7. **Inquiries.** Please direct questions to Mr. Wayne Gordon in the Office of Policy Development and Research at Gordon.wayne@dol.gov (202) 693-3179 or to your ETA regional office.