



**Jobs for  
the Future**

# A Worker Forum Blueprint

## Bridging the Gap From Feedback to Action

### AT A GLANCE

A step-by-step employer guide to designing, facilitating, and evaluating worker forums that evolve and elevate worker voice practices, closing the gap between feedback and action that creates change.

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# Introduction

At Jobs for the Future (JFF), we believe that investments in the career mobility and well-being of employees are investments in long-term business outcomes.

Acting on employee voice is a key component of that investment, and employers that amplify workers' voices and involve employees in decision-making, innovation, and co-creation of solutions benefit from more engaged and empowered workforces. Leaders who harness employees' expertise boost employee well-being and performance, fuel innovation, increase retention, and enhance business agility.

However, a 2024 national survey of 515 frontline and entry-level workers conducted by the JFF Worker Forum in partnership with [CoLabL](#) revealed important challenges for connecting employee feedback to meaningful workplace changes. While 69% of the respondents said that they believe their employers offer adequate channels for frontline workers to provide feedback and contribute to decision-making, only 45% said that they feel their opinions and suggestions are valued by management, and only 42% said that their employers take action in response to their feedback.

These statistics reveal a significant opportunity to enhance internal collaboration, workplace culture, and innovation. JFF advocates for employers co-creating business solutions alongside their workforce through structured worker forums. Such efforts not only bridge the gap between feedback and action but also lead to higher-quality jobs, improved business performance, and a workforce that feels connected and valued.

This guide offers employers a step-by-step blueprint for designing, facilitating, and evaluating a worker forum, ensuring that worker voices are heard, valued, and translated into meaningful actions that benefit both employees and the organization.

# Getting Started

Being intentional with the design of a worker forum aids in setting up the participants for success and advancing the desired outcomes. To design an engaging and purpose-driven worker forum, consider the following:

## 1. Set Clear Goals

Identify key goals for the worker forum; we suggest no more than three to keep the forum focused and efficient. These goals should align with your company's strategic priorities and reflect key issues raised by employees through surveys, listening sessions, or town hall meetings. The goals could focus on improving communication, fostering innovation, or increasing job satisfaction.

### Examples of Goals

- To strengthen employee engagement in feedback channels (or address survey fatigue).
- To create action plans aligned with trending employee survey topics.
- To strengthen psychological safety and advance a stronger feedback culture.
- To increase employee recognition.

## 2. Select Facilitators

Choose one or more facilitators to guide the forum effectively. Skilled facilitators ensure that all voices are heard, maintain safe spaces for open dialogue, and guide the conversation toward actionable outcomes. Ideal facilitators for a forum should be trained in competencies like active listening, conflict resolution, co-creation, and building trust. You will also want to consider whether an internal facilitator or external facilitator is right for your organization:

- **Internal facilitators:** Internal facilitators understand the company's culture and can leverage existing relationships to streamline responses to feedback and promote cross-functional collaboration.
- **External facilitators:** Third-party facilitators offer an impartial approach and can introduce innovative practices from other organizations.
- **Hybrid facilitation:** A combination of both internal and external facilitators can provide the best of both approaches.

## 3. Design the Forum Experience

Create a forum that is time-efficient and focused on results:

- Organize shorter, focused "sprints" with regular meetings every two weeks over three to four months.

- Define clear deliverables, such as a final report with recommendations and action plans for leadership that support accountability.
- Set clear expectations early about time commitments, schedules, and milestones, to maintain participant engagement and accountability.

### Example Worker Forum Experience Map

Session	Agenda
Session 1	Orientation and community building.
Session 2	Community building, context setting with guest speaker(s), including Q&A.
Session 3	Community building, brainstorm ideas and/or solutions, skill development on making decisions and driving influence.
Session 4	Community building, prioritize up to three ideas or solutions, draft pitch presentations (idea/solution + action plan).
Session 5	Community building, skill development on giving presentations and other forms of communication.
Session 6	Community building, practice presentations with feedback from coaches.
Session 7	Community building, deliver presentations to senior leaders and/or decision-makers, engage in feedback discussions.
Session 8	Community building; debrief on the worker forum experience; outline next steps, including follow-ups to final deliverable and applications of lessons learned.

#### 4. Identify Ideal Forum Participants

Select participants who represent a diverse cross-section of your workforce, considering factors like race, gender, ethnicity, tenure, and job level. A diverse forum will help elevate a variety of perspectives and leverage the unique strengths, skills, experiences, and perspectives of workers across a company hierarchy.

Ensure that participants have the support of their managers to promote accountability and to ensure that recommendations will be taken seriously.

## 5. Recruit Forum Participants

Take a multi-faceted approach to participant recruitment to reduce bias in the selection process and increase accessibility for workers with varying levels of technology access, experience, and confidence:

- Use videos, short in-person pitches, and nominations to attract interest.
- Provide clear recruitment materials outlining the forum's goals, time commitment, expectations, benefits, and deliverables.
- Engage worker voice champions, middle management, and past forum participants throughout the recruitment process.

Provide constructive feedback to workers who are not selected and identify additional engagement opportunities for them, such as surveys and focus groups.

# Driving Engagement & Action

To maximize engagement from start to finish and close the gap between gathering feedback and taking action, do the following:

## 1. Use Multiple Communication Channels

Send reminders, meeting agendas, and follow-ups through email, text, or internal messaging platforms (Slack or Teams, for example). Store all materials in a shared folder for easy access and include a link in every communication about the forum.

## 2. Host an Orientation Session

Kick off the forum with a one-hour orientation to review goals, time commitment, expectations, and deliverables. Set the tone for an interactive, focused, and safe space for employees to voice their opinions. Invite participants to set intentions and share stories on worker voice to build excitement and encourage engagement. Consider inviting past forum participants to provide practical insights.

## 3. Foster Psychological Safety and Build Community

Incorporate icebreakers and community-building activities into each session to build trust and relationships. Align these activities with the session objectives.

Co-create group norms with participants, such as active listening, confidentiality, respectful communication, and equal participation. Revisit these norms at each session.

Use quick pulse surveys between sessions to gather additional insights and adjust as needed to maintain engagement.

#### **4. Reward and Recognize Engagement**

Incentivize participants with stipends, gift cards, paid time for their participation, or other rewards. Publicly recognize contributions with certificates of appreciation or company-wide announcements.

Offer support to participants who are less engaged than others to understand why, boost their confidence, and strengthen their connections with the forum.

#### **5. Develop Skills and Networks**

Provide opportunities for participants to build and strengthen their skills in communication, presentation, problem-solving, and advocacy. Invite senior leaders to participate as speakers and coaches, creating opportunities for reverse mentorship, networking, and shared understanding across all levels of an organization's hierarchy.

#### **6. Organize an Implementation Team**

After the forum, organize a small implementation team of forum participants and key decision-makers. This team will ensure that co-created solutions are put into action.

Invite forum participants to nominate themselves or others for the implementation team and secure executive sponsors to support its work. Use the action plan from the forum to guide the implementation phase, incorporating adjustments as necessary.

## **Evaluating Impact**

Establish an evaluation plan aligned with the forum's goals. This allows you to assess the forum's impact on both participant skill development and business outcomes, which supports continuous learning. Take the following steps as you develop your evaluation plan:

#### **1. Create a Scorecard**

Develop a scorecard that tracks three to five key metrics of forum success, including the implementation phase. Use the scorecard to monitor progress, identify challenges, and document lessons learned.

Here's an example of what a scorecard could look like:

Goal	Target Metrics	Progress Toward Goals	Lead(s)	Notes
<b>Strengthen employee engagement in feedback channels.</b>	75% survey participation.	63% survey participation.	Yasmin	80% of departments achieved 75% participation or higher.
<b>Create action plans aligned with trending employee survey topics.</b>	<p>Organize a worker forum made up of 12 to 15 employees representing a diverse cross-section of our workforce, based on factors like race, gender, ethnicity, tenure, and job level.</p> <p>Achieve a 75% worker forum attendance rate.</p> <p>Develop action plans for the top three priorities.</p> <p>Establish implementation teams for each priority, and draft clear project plans and timelines.</p>	<p>14 employees confirmed.</p> <p>85% attendance rate in worker forum.</p> <p>Top three priorities identified.</p>	David and Sharice	Executive champions needed to support top three priorities.
<p><b>LESSONS LEARNED</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More time is needed for context setting with worker forum participants.</li> <li>2. Executive champions are critical for influencing decision-making and resource allocations.</li> </ol>				

## 2. Share Progress Reports

Maintain transparency by sharing regular updates with employees. Use internal communication channels (such as Slack, Teams, the company intranet, or company-wide emails) and town hall forums to provide details about what is working, what is not, and what is planned for the future. With permission, highlight participants' voices using quotes, stories, or videos.

## 3. Focus on Continuous Improvement

Incorporate findings from the forum into future forums, including the design, recruitment, engagement, and evaluation phases. Secure resources to sustain worker voice practices, ensuring that these practices evolve and remain a core part of organizational culture.

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*Sustaining effective worker voice initiatives requires continuous evolution and leadership commitment at all levels. By following this guide, employers can build an inclusive culture that prioritizes worker feedback and drives meaningful action and change across the organization.*

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