

The Hierarchy of Frontline Worker Needs | Facilitation Guide

The Hierarchy of Frontline Worker Needs - including livelihood, stability, community, and culture - serves as a framework to better understand the key drivers of the frontline employee experience. This conversation guide is designed to help HR practitioners, L&D professionals, and team managers engage in open, meaningful conversations with frontline workers in one-on-one settings or small focus groups.

The questions are designed to uncover gaps in the organization's ability to meet workers' needs and help identify opportunities to improve their day-to-day experience. Approach these conversations with curiosity and empathy, creating a space where people feel comfortable sharing their perspectives.

Livelihood: Meeting Basic Needs

- How well do you feel your pay reflects the work you do and the effort you put in?
- What would fair compensation look like to you in this role?
- Are there aspects of your job where you feel you're going above and beyond without recognition or proper compensation?
- How do benefits offered by the organization, such as healthcare or paid time off, help you balance your personal and professional needs?
- Are there benefits you wish were offered that could make a difference in your life?
- How easy or difficult is it for you to access and understand your benefits?
- If you could change one thing about how this job supports your livelihood, what would it be?

Facilitation Tip: Let workers elaborate on what they feel is fair compensation and whether current benefits make a meaningful difference in their lives.

Stability: Fostering Confidence Through Consistency

- How predictable is your work schedule, and how does this affect your ability to balance life and work?
- How far in advance do you typically receive your schedule? Is that enough time to manage your life outside of work?
- How easy or difficult is it for you to request time off or swap shifts when needed?
- Do you feel you were well-prepared for your role when you first started?
- What additional training or resources would help you feel more confident on the job?
- Are there areas of your job where you feel unsure or underprepared?
- Are there times when you feel uncertain about what's expected of you at work? If so, can you share an example?
- Do you feel the organization communicates clearly about changes that might impact your role or location? If not, can you share an example?

Facilitation Tip: Probe for specific examples of scheduling instability, unclear expectations, and training gaps. Then explore the impact of each.

Community: Creating Belonging and Connection

- Do you feel like an important and valued member of the team? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that your team works well together to achieve shared goals? Why or why not?
- Have there been specific moments when you've felt either connected to or disconnected from your team? Can you provide an example of those moments?
- Do you feel your efforts are recognized and appreciated? If not, what kind of recognition would be meaningful to you?
- When conflicts arise within the team, do you feel they are addressed and resolved effectively?
- Do you feel that your manager understands and supports your needs?

- How comfortable do you feel sharing your ideas, concerns, or feedback with your manager or peers?
- Are there specific ways your manager could better foster a sense of connection and trust within the team?

Facilitation Tip: Encourage workers to reflect on moments when they felt included and valued, as well as times when they didn't, to better understand gaps.

Culture: Connecting Work to Purpose

- Do you feel a sense of pride in the work you do and its impact on the organization? Why or why not?
- How do you see your role contributing to the company's overall goals or mission?
- Which is a stronger motivator for you: contributing to company goals or supporting the success of your peers? Why?
- Do you feel the company's stated values are reflected in day-to-day operations and management decisions?
- Do you feel the workplace culture fosters inclusivity and respect for different perspectives?
- Are there aspects of the workplace culture that make it harder for you to stay engaged or motivated?
- Are there ways you think the company could better recognize the unique contributions of frontline workers?
- Which aspects of the company culture do you appreciate the most, and how could they be strengthened?
- What would make you feel more involved in shaping the culture and priorities of the organization?

Facilitation Tip: Focus on uncovering areas where corporate values or messaging might feel disconnected from the frontline experience.

Using This Guide

1. **Set the Tone.** Begin by clearly explaining the purpose of the conversation and why participants are being asked to join. Emphasize that the goal is to better understand their experiences and identify opportunities to improve the workplace. Make it clear that their input is valued and will play a role in shaping meaningful changes.
2. **Focus the Conversation.** Avoid trying to cover all parts of The Hierarchy of Frontline Worker Needs in a single session. Instead, focus on one specific area, such as livelihood or community, to allow for a deeper, more productive discussion. This approach not only keeps the conversation manageable but also makes follow-up actions more achievable, given the limited resources you may have to implement improvements.
3. **Encourage Depth.** Use follow-up questions like "Can you tell me more about that?" or "What would make that better?" to explore participants' thoughts more thoroughly. Encourage examples and stories to gain a clearer understanding of their experiences.
4. **Engage Actively.** Listen without judgment. Be mindful of both verbal and nonverbal cues. Make sure participants feel heard and that their input is valued.
5. **Follow Through.** After gathering feedback, prioritize taking tangible actions based on the insights shared. Communicate updates to participants about how their input is shaping changes, reinforcing trust and accountability.

By focusing your conversations and following through on the insights you gather, this guide will help you build a deeper understanding of frontline needs and empower your workforce to thrive.