

Round 4 TAACCCT Employer Study - Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today.

My name is _____ and I'm a researcher from [*Abt Associates*, located in Bethesda, MD; the *Urban Institute*, a non-profit research organization located in Washington, DC; *Capital Research Corporation*, located in Arlington, VA]. With me today is [*name and affiliation*]. I'm here today because the Abt Associates and its partners, on behalf of the Department of Labor, are conducting a national evaluation of Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) Grant Program. One component of this evaluation is to learn what the key ingredients are for strong relationships between employers and institutions that support training initiatives like TAACCCT.

During this part of the study, we will interview approximately 40 employers who were involved in TAACCCT projects and who were identified as having strong relationships with the college leading the TAACCCT effort. As a part of this group, we are contacting you to learn more about your involvement in the TAACCCT-funded project and your relationships with the college that is leading these activities in your area. We will ask you about yours and your colleagues' involvement in the project and then discuss how you participated in the development of the training program. We will go into more depth on the nature of your relationship with the college and benefits and costs of your involvement in the TAACCCT project.

We will use what we learn from you and other employers to contribute to a report on strong employer relationships for the Department of Labor and for others who want to build better relationships with employers to support the training of skilled workers to meet employer needs.

Before beginning the interview, I (we) want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study and remind you that your participation is voluntary. I (we) know that you are busy and will try to be as brief as possible. We have many questions, but please do not feel as though we expect you to be able to answer every question. The interview today should last about **60 minutes**. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to know what you think.

In addition, before we start, I want to let you know that although we will take notes during these interviews, information is never repeated with the name of the respondent in any reports or in any discussions with supervisors, colleagues, or the Department. When we write our reports and discuss our findings, information from all the people we speak with is compiled and presented so that no one person can be identified.

To help me accurately report on the information you share, it would help if I could record this call; of course, I can turn off the recorder at any point if you so desire. I do not have a recorder on now; is it okay with you for me to turn it on?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Do I have your permission to begin the interview?

A. Employer Background

1. Respondent name, title, and company/organization name (confirm)
2. Role in the company/organization (i.e., brief job description)
3. Employer characteristics (Collect this and other relevant information about the employer prior the interview via Internet and college survey data, where possible. Confirm if needed)
 - a. Type of company/organization (e.g., for-profit, non-profit, government)
 - b. Industry
 - c. Occupations for which new or current workers are being trained by [Name of TAACCCT Project]
 - d. Approximate number of employees
 - e. Type of worker being trained through TAACCCT (e.g., new workers, incumbent workers, both)

B. Employer Roles in Developing and Implementing Workforce Development Initiatives

1. How long have you been involved in [Name of TAACCCT Project]? Who are others at [Name of Company/Organization] involved in [Name of TAACCCT Project]? What is your role on this initiative? What are the others' roles in the project? [Probe: if others at company/organization are involved, ask their name and titles.]
2. We understand some of the ways you and others at [Name of Company/Organization] have participated in [Name of TAACCCT Project] are [list from the college survey response to H5/confirm]. Are there other ways you and your colleagues have been involved?
 - a. Let's talk about these activities and how you were involved in each.
 - b. What made you and your colleagues want to be involved in these particular activities?
 - c. How did your involvement in these activities change over time?
 - d. What were the reasons you didn't get involved in other ways, such as [list some activities they didn't participate in]? Were other employers involved in these ways?
3. Have you and others at [Name of Company/Organization] been involved in initiatives similar to [Name of TAACCCT Project] or other initiatives that support training workers? What were your experiences like with these initiatives? Who was the lead organization (e.g., WIB, college, CBO)? What was your role in these initiatives? How did these experiences with previous initiatives affect your willingness to participate in [Name of TAACCCT Project]?

C. Nature of Relationships

Initial Steps in Building a Relationship:

1. How did you first learn about [Name of TAACCCT Project]? What factors led you to collaborate with [Name of TAACCCT College] on the [Name of TAACCCT Project]? How did the availability of grant

funding through [Name of TAACCCT Project] play a role in [company name] deciding to partner with [Name of the TAACCCT College] on this initiative?

Possible factors: seed funding from DOL; opportunity to shape curriculum; access to incumbent worker training; need for new, well-trained workers

2. What was your understanding of [Name of Company's/Organization's] commitment to the [Name of TAACCCT Project]? How was it explained to you and others at your company? Was [Name of Company's/Organization's] commitment put in writing such as a memorandum of understanding?
 - a. [If for hiring new workers] Was there an agreement to hire a certain number of participants from [Name of TAACCCT Project]? How many new workers have you already hired from [Name of TAACCCT Project] to date? Do you expect to hire more? Why or why not?
 - b. [If for training current/incumbent workers] Was there an agreement to train a certain number of your current employees by [Name of TAACCCT Project]? How many of your employees have been trained through [Name of TAACCCT Project] to date? Do you expect more to be trained by [Name of TAACCCT Project]? Why or why not?
3. Was [Name of Company/Organization] initially approached by the [Name of TAACCCT College] to become involved in [Name of TAACCCT Project] or did you and your colleagues approach [Name of TAACCCT College]? [Based on answer, ask the following set of questions:]
 - a. [If approached by college] How was [Name of Company/Organization] initially approached to participate in [Name of TAACCCT Project]? What about the approach made you or others at [Name of Company/Organization] want to participate? Was there any part of the approach that made you hesitant to participate? If someone were to ask you to participate in a similar initiative, how would you prefer to be approached?
 - b. [If approached college on own] Why were you and your colleagues interested in being involved in [Name of TAACCCT Project]? How did you hear about the project? After making contact with the project leadership, was there anything that made you hesitant to go forward with your involvement in the project? Have you become involved in other initiatives in a similar way?

Communications with Initiative Leaders and Partners:

4. How often and in what ways has [Name of Company/Organization] communicated with the leadership and staff of [Name of TAACCCT Project]? How about the leadership or staff of [Name of TAACCCT College]? Would you characterize these communications as formal or informal? Do you and your colleagues communicate with [Name of TAACCCT College] leadership or staff one-on-one, as part of a group of companies, or both? [Probes on frequency: monthly, weekly, daily; probes on ways of communication: mostly in-person, phone, email]
5. What topics do you discuss during these communications? How is information or a decision from [Name of TAACCCT College] leadership communicated to you and/or to all partners involved in the project? How do you work to resolve any issues?

6. Has [Name of Company/Organization]'s communication with TAACCCT leadership/staff worked well? Has this been the right amount of communication? Why or why not? [How could the communication be improved or could have worked better for you and your colleagues?

Types of Partners:

7. Have you been involved with any other agencies, organizations, or employers as a part of [Name of TAACCCT Project]? How so?

[Probes for Types of partner organizations: community colleges (other than the TAACCCT college); public workforce system (workforce development/investment boards and American Job Centers); other employers and industry associations; unions; educational institutions; community and faith-based organizations; human service agencies; economic development agencies, others]

[Probes: developing curriculum, providing guidance to TAACCCT college staff, creating industry-recognized credentials]

8. Has [Name of Company/Organization] worked with any of these agencies or organizations or employers on past initiatives? If so, please describe these efforts. [Probe for involvement/partnerships with public workforce system such as being a customer at a local American Job Center]

Collaboration with Other Employers (only for groups of employers that are partnering on one grant project):

1. Did you collaborate with other employers as a part of [Name of TAACCCT Project]? Did the collaboration work well or were there challenges? How so?
2. Are some employers *more* involved with [Name of TAACCCT Project] than other employers? For example, did you or another employer take a lead role?
3. Were you hesitant to work with other employers on this effort? If so, what were your concerns? How did [Name of TAACCCT College] address these concerns?

Sustainability of Collaboration:

9. Do you see your relationship with [Name of TAACCCT College] continuing after the TAACCCT grant ends? [If yes:] What aspects of the relationship do you plan to continue?
10. Which aspects of the relationship may not continue? Why won't they continue? [Probes: lack of resources available, not hiring for this position anymore, quality of the training provided, changes in the industry and required skills]
11. As a result of collaborating on [Name of TAACCCT Program], has [Name of Company/Organization] changed any workplace practices? [Probes:]
 - Company or position-specific training requirements
 - Wage increases
 - Tuition support provided
 - Inclusion of financial or other support (e.g., trainers, equipment) to [Name of TAACCCT College] in company's/organization's annual budget

- Changes to responsibilities of [Name of Company/Organization]'s human resources department to include partnership with college or other training initiatives
12. How would you recommend that leaders of future workforce development initiatives work with employers to build better partnerships?

D. Value of Involvement in Workforce Development Initiatives to Employers

1. Before you became involved in [Name of TAACCCT Project], what benefits did you expect to gain from your relationship with [Name of TAACCCT College]? [Probes:]
 - Possible benefits: qualified job candidates available, new workers hired, increased skills of current employees, longer tenure of current employees, increased productivity, reduced errors, internal advancement/promotion, increased profits, and sustained partnerships with workforce development leaders
 - Identify quantifiable/monetary benefits versus altruistic benefits
 - Short-run vs. long-run benefits
2. How were these benefits the same or different from other initiatives you've been involved in?
3. As you became more involved with [Name of TAACCCT Project], how were these expected benefits realized? Did these expected benefits change? Where there benefits you didn't expect that materialized? Or some that never came to fruition?
4. What were some of the costs you expected from your involvement in [Name of TAACCCT Project]?
 - Time to participate (e.g., estimated hours/week or month)
 - Resources contributed
 - Sharing information about company with college and external partners (other employers)
 - Not able to be involved in other initiatives due to time/resource commitment on this project
5. Were these costs to participate about what you expected? How did they change over time? How were these costs the same or different from other initiatives you've been involved in?
6. How are you measuring or documenting whether your involvement in [Name of TAACCCT Project] resulted in these benefits or costs? What types of information are you using to measure the benefits and costs? In what ways did you use this information to make decisions around [Name of Company/Organization's] continuing your relationship with [Name of TAACCCT College]?
7. Do you know whether the benefits outweigh the costs of your involvement in [Name of TAACCCT Project] yet? How so? Overall, do you feel your involvement in [Name of TAACCCT Project] was worthwhile to [Name of Company/Organization]? In what ways?
8. How do the results from this relationship compare to other training/workforce development initiatives? Are you more or less likely to become involved in similar initiatives based on this experience? Would you become involved with a project like this again?
9. Would you recommend that other businesses become involved with a project like this in the future? If yes/no, why?