

CJC Implementation Research Protocol: Admission and Placement Director and Placement Officer

Abt Associates IRB Approval No. XXXX

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Introduction of and Informed Consent for the Study *(read to all respondents)*

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview today.

My name is **(insert name here)**, and I'm a researcher from MDRC, located in **(Oakland CA or New York, NY)**. I'm here because Abt Associates and MDRC, on behalf of the United States Department of Labor (DOL), are conducting a five-year study of the Cascades Program.

We are visiting to conduct in-person interviews with center staff and partners (such as referral partners and employers) to learn what is happening on the ground and what are the challenges of implementing this new program. Interviews will cover the organizational characteristics of the center, as well as its mission and vision, and how it fits within the Job Corps network.

These interviews will provide important qualitative information on the implementation at Cascades. We will use what we learn from these interviews to contribute to a report about the impacts and implementation of the Cascades program. This report will be submitted to DOL to inform the federal government about this new model.

Privacy Statement *[Interviewer must read this to all respondents]*

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 and are going to talk to many different people, so please do not feel as though we expect you to be able to answer every question. The interview today should last about **(insert time estimate from the appropriate protocol)**. This interview is *not* part of a Job Corps audit or a compliance review. We are interested in learning about your ideas, experiences, and opinions about Cascades' implementation. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to know what you think.

You can send comments regarding the time estimate or any other aspect of this interview, including suggestions for reducing the duration, to **(insert contact name and provide address if necessary)**.

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 any one from DOL. 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 tape record this call; of course, I could 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?

Outreach, Admission and Placement

- These questions will be asked of the Admission and Placement Director, the staff person who is responsible for outreach and applicant recruitment and will also be asked of one of the Placement Officers.
- Placement Services (asked during the second visit only)
- Text in italics is background information for the interviewer.
- The interview should take around 60 minutes.

Staff Title: Title

Staff Initials: Initials

Interviewer: Interviewer last name

Write-up: Last name of person doing write-up

INTERVIEW DATE/TIME:

Respondent Background [For Admission and Placement Director and Placement Officer]

You may use this section to verify information you already know about the interviewee or as a means of rapport building with the interviewee.

1. Please describe the major responsibilities of your position. Describe
2. How long have you been at Cascades? 0.00 years
3. How long have you been in your current role at Cascades? 0.00 years
4. How long have you worked at other Job Corps Centers? 0.00 years
5. What made you interested in working at Cascades? Describe

For Placement Officer only:

6. Where did you work prior to your employment at Cascades? Describe
7. What role did you have at your previous employer? Describe
8. What is your educational background? Describe

Cascades' Values and Center Environment [For Admission and Placement Director and Placement Officer]

The next questions are designed to learn more about how the values and culture of Cascades are put into action in the day-to-day activities of staff. Listen for how infused is the career and college orientation in staff's mindsets and actions? Similar, how infused is the teaching of non-cognitive skills in all staff's interactions with students?

9. How would you describe Cascades' values and philosophy? Describe

10. How would you describe the environment that Cascades intends to create for students?
 [Probes: How do you want students to feel when they are at Cascades? What strategies are used to create this environment?] Describe

Recruitment and Referrals [For Admission and Placement Director]

The bulk of this interview focuses on ways that students learn about Cascades. Focus on the center’s primary methods of recruitment and their relationships with referral partners.

11. How would you describe the target student for Cascades? Describe [Probe on the type of student they are looking for, not only in terms of education levels, but also motivation for applying to the Cascades program and the interest in the targeted industry]
12. What do you think attracts students to Cascades? Describe
13. Currently, what are the center’s primary methods of recruitment? [Examples: fliers, word of mouth, referrals from partner organization, tabling]

Recruitment Method	Description
Referrals from partner organizations	Describe
Leafleting	Describe
Word of mouth	Describe
Tabling at community events	Describe
Social media	Describe
Type of recruitment method	Describe
Type of recruitment method	Describe
Type of recruitment method	Describe
Type of recruitment method	Describe
Type of recruitment method	Describe

14. What are the most useful outreach methods at this time? [Probe: Which methods do the best job of connecting you with students who are appropriate for Cascades?] Describe
15. Who are your main referral partners currently? [Probe: Ask specifically about school districts.]

Name of referral partner	Description of referral relationship [how the process works, how active is the relationship]
School District	Describe
Name of partner	Describe
Name of partner	Describe

Name of partner	Describe
Name of partner	Describe
Name of partner	Describe
Name of partner	Describe

16. How would you describe the qualities of a strong referral partner? [Probe: Which referral partners send you the most appropriate students?] Describe
17. To what extent do you work together with these referral partners to bring a student in? [i.e., are you in direct contact with partners about the status of referrals or are referrals passing on info about Cascades to students and guardians?] Do your partners understand the type of student Cascades is interested in recruiting? How do you communicate, formally and informally, the standards that guide their referrals to you? Describe
18. Who is responsible for monitoring the referrals coming in? Describe
19. To what extent at this point in time, is the task of outreach and recruitment shared among staff? Describe
20. How do you balance your outreach and intake responsibilities currently? Describe
21. What are the biggest challenges to recruitment now? [Probe: competition from other organizations, transportation, lack of visibility in the community, the Cascades eligibility criteria, the study?] Describe
22. Are there additional supports that you think would be helpful to improve recruitment? Describe

Overview of Intake and Admission Process [For Admission and Placement Director]

This set of questions asks the interviewee to outline their intake process. Focus on understanding the steps in the process and where a student might drop off.

23. Starting with the initial referral to Cascades and ending with eligibility determination, can you please describe the process you use to determine whether a student is appropriate for enrollment in Cascades? [In Round 2: “Starting with the initial referral to Cascades and ending with eligibility determination, has the process changed?”] Describe
24. Currently, at what point would you say students are most likely to drop out of the process? Describe
25. What do you think are the main reasons that students drop out of the intake process now? Describe
26. What steps, if any, do you take to re-engage students who drop out during intake? Describe
27. What are the main factors you now use to determine who is eligible? Describe

28. Is the motivation of the student currently used as a factor in determining eligibility?
Describe
29. Have you encountered any challenges in recruiting students who fit your eligibility criteria? At what point in the process are students most likely to be screen out [i.e., cannot pass the STAR 360 assessment at the threshold level, are not interested in being part of the study so they drop out of the enrollment process]? Describe
30. When and how are the parents involved? Describe
31. What are currently the best strategies in identifying students that are a good fit for Cascades? Describe
32. What are the current challenges to identifying students that are appropriate for Cascades services? Describe
33. What do you think are the biggest differences now in the students who end up going to Cascades compared to regular Job Corps students? Describe
34. Since the start of enrollment, have you changed the admissions process or eligibility criteria for Cascades? How has the process changed? What problems were the changes designed to address? What effect have the changes had on the enrollment process? Describe

Waiting List & Enrollment [For Admission and Placement Director]

The center may have a waiting list, and we want to understand how they manage that list. We also want to know when the A&P staff's responsibilities end.

35. Do you have a waiting list? yes If so, what is it like? [Probe: How many students are typically on it? Are there times of year when it is longer than others?] Describe
36. How do you currently keep students on the waiting list interested in Cascades until a new cohort is enrolled? Describe
37. When do your admission responsibilities end? (e.g., At eligibility? Once students come for their first day on center? After the on-site orientation?) Describe

Three-Day On-Site Orientation [For Admission and Placement Director]

38. Describe what currently takes place during the three-day orientation. Describe
39. Why do students drop-out typically at that point? Describe

Engaging with Employers [For Placement Officer]

40. What type of information or resources do you use – like labor market information, or other market research – to identify growth opportunities in specific occupational groups? Describe
41. Do you have an advisory group or industry experts who provide you with additional information on industry trends, skill requirements, job leads or connections to area employers? Describe

42. Do you handle placement for all industries or do you specialize in one industry? Describe
43. At the moment, how do you identify employers who are hiring for these and other positions? Describe
44. How do you determine what an employer company's needs are or what they are looking for? Are you able to determine what they anticipate their future needs to be and, if so, how? Describe
45. How many employers, roughly, would you say you're in regular contact with? Do you initiate contact with these employers or do you they call you when new openings occur? Describe
46. What types of employers are they? [e.g., large, small, local, etc.] Describe
47. How do you describe the Cascades program to employers (i.e., how do you sell your services to them)? Describe
48. What system do you use to track your contacts and employer specific information? Describe
49. Do you work with partner organizations, such as temporary staff agencies, to place participants? Describe
50. How do you find new employers? [Probe: Are you leveraging external partnerships such as sector partnerships, industry groups, or postsecondary /training providers?] Describe
51. Do you ask employers to come to the program to visit, present and/or interview? Describe
52. Are there other ways employers partner with you (e.g., conduct tours of their facilities, donate equipment, or funds, conduct mock interviews, provide input on designing curricula)? Describe

Overview of Placement Process [For Placement Officer]

This set of questions asks the interviewee to outline their placement process.

53. How would you describe the typical student you work with to place? (Probe: How prepare are they to be employed? What are their technical skills like? What are their non-cognitive skills like?) Describe
54. When and how do students start the placement process? Describe
55. Please describe the process you use to determine what is an appropriate job for a particular student. (Probe: What are the main factors you considered to determine if it will be a good fit?) Describe
56. How do you or the student approach the employer then? Do the students interview? Describe

57. What have you found to be the best strategies for approaching employers to take a student and/or perhaps getting to reconsider their pre-conceived job requirements? Describe
58. In thinking about your interactions with employers, about how often would you say you are actively trying to identify new job openings, compared to how often you are responding to an employer coming to you seeking qualified candidates? In short, do employers come to you with job needs/openings? Are you usually able to fulfill/address them?
59. What are the biggest challenges in making placements? Describe
60. Do employers conduct drug screening? Does Cascades conduct their own drug screening prior to referring qualified candidates to employers? Describe
61. What are the biggest challenges in working with employers? Does this differ by the type of employer (small, large, family owned)? Describe
62. What do you think are the biggest differences in placing students who go through Cascades compared to regular Job Corps students? Describe

Placement [For Admission and Placement Director]

63. Describe how your Placement Officers currently work with the Grad-90 coordinators in each Pathway to ensure a smooth transition into employment for each student. (Probe: If Placement Officers are not yet placing students in jobs, how are they preparing for that phase of the program?) Describe
64. How would you compare the work of the Placement Officers to job developers or placement officers at other Job Corps programs? (Probe: If they don't know other centers, ask about other E&T programs but note the reference group) Describe
65. What are the advantages of having the Placement Officers in the same department as Admissions staff? Do they interact? What, if any, are the disadvantages?
Describe advantage
Describe disadvantage
66. What do you look for in hiring a Placement Officer? (Probe: Experience in job development, in working with youth, in the IT or healthcare sector?) Describe

Post-Placement Contact [For Placement Officer]

67. Do you currently follow up with the program graduates that you've placed to see how they're doing on the job? How often are you follow up with newly placed individuals? Are there set times when you follow up (e.g. within a week after placement, more intensely within the first 60 days)? Do they ever have issues? If so, how do you handle those? Describe

68. Do program graduates call you when they are struggling or confronting issues on the job? How do you handle these issues? Do they call you before quitting or after they quit? Do you seek to replace graduates who have quit or have been dismissed?
69. Do you currently seek out or get feedback from employers about how their hires from this program are doing and whether these workers meet their needs (did they have the skills required, do they have the soft skills needed, etc.)? How do you get feedback? And about how many employers provide feedback? Describe
70. Do employers call you when there's a problem with one of their hires from Cascades to have you intervene? Do they call you before making a decision to dismiss a Cascades hire due to poor performance of another problem they are having on the job? Describe
71. What are you hearing from employers? Are they satisfied with your services? Are there gaps or issues with the candidates you send them? What do you typically do with that information? Describe
72. How closely aligned is the skills training and non-cognitive skills training with the workforce needs of employers? Are Cascades students getting trained for the skills employers are seeking in their new hires? Describe
73. Did you ever receive feedback from employers that led you to suggest changes to the skills training curriculum or topics covered in the skills training classes? If so, can you give me an example of feedback you received, and the corresponding changes that were made? Describe
74. Are you currently, or do you have future plans for, running additional programming for graduates of the program? Describe

Random Assignment [Admission and Placement Director and Placement Officer]

Here we would like to learn how random assignment was implemented and how it may have affected the way that Cascades operates.

Placement Officer Only:

75. Did random assignment have an impact on how you placed students? Describe

Admission and Placement Director Only:

76. How have the research procedures been incorporated into the intake process? Describe
77. What challenges have you encountered implementing the research procedures? Describe
78. Have you made any changes to your eligibility requirements to meet the recruitment demands of the study? Yes (select one)
Eligibility changes: Describe changes to eligibility