Career Navigation – Interview guide for adult education program directors

Respondent name	
Respondent title	
Respondent organization/state	
Respondent email address	
Interviewer	
Note taker	
Date of interview	

Introduction

Thank you for meeting with me [us] today. My name is _____ and I am joined by my colleague, _____.

The U.S. Department of Education is sponsoring a large-scale study called Connecting Adults to Success: Evaluation of Enhanced Career Navigator Training. Mathematica is conducting this study for the Department in partnership with Manhattan Strategy Group and Social Policy Research. We want to find out how much adult learners benefit from an enhanced training program for career navigators.

We are speaking to program directors at adult education programs that are participating in the study. We will use information from these interviews to describe the context that career navigators work in and the training and professional development they receive.

Your answers in this interview will be used only for research purposes. Your participation is voluntary; if there is any question you do not feel comfortable answering, we can skip that question and move on to the next. The reports prepared for the study will not associate interview responses with a specific adult education provider or individual . The study will not disclose the names of individual participants, except as required by law. Mathematica follows the confidentiality and data protection requirements of the U.S. Department of Education's IES (The Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183).

With your permission, we'd like to record the interview to help us keep accurate notes. The recording will be securely stored and available only to the study team working on the evaluation. Do we have your permission to record? [If yes, start recording.]

My colleague, _____, will take notes during our conversation. The notes will not be used for any reason except to make sure we have accurate information. They will not be shared with anyone outside the study team. Do you have any questions before we begin? Do you agree to participate in this interview?

Before getting started, I want to clarify some terms that we will use.

- **When we talk about adult learners,** we are focused on students, ages 16 and older, enrolled in Title II-funded Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, English Language Acquisition, or Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education classes.
- **When we talk about career navigators,** we mean individuals who provide a range of supports to help these learners progress on a career path. Supports include career exploration and planning assistance, connecting learners to postsecondary institutions and workforce training organizations, identifying and removing barriers to progressing on a career path, helping learners

understand relevant programs and policies (such as Ticket to Work and the Americans with Disabilities Act), assistance accessing financial supports for education, and support developing study and work skills. These services are sometimes offered by or coordinated through a career navigator or a similar role, which may be a full- or part-time role for the staff member in question. Career navigators may also be referred to as college navigators, career coaches, transition coordinators, counselors, or other similar titles. Throughout this interview, we will use the term "career navigators" for all such roles.

This interview should take about 30 minutes and we'll cover [*CONTROL SITES*] three / [*TREATMENT SITES*] four areas: (1) the organizational context that your career navigators work in; (2) the services they offer; (3) the training and supports that are intended to help career navigators do their jobs; [*TREATMENT ONLY*] (4) your thinking on the upcoming enhanced training program; and (4/5) the state and local context that might influence the career navigators' work.

A. Organizational context for career navigation

Let's start by getting a sense of the environment that career navigators are working in at your organization.

1. Aside from adult education, does your organization provide any of these other programs or services:

    a. Other education/training or credentialing programs and supports (such as certification programs, programs for college credit, or related supports like tutoring, academic advising, or financial aid)

    b. Placement in jobs, internships, or apprenticeships

    c. Services for specifically for clients with disabilities

    d. Services to meet clients' basic needs (such as food, health, housing, or childcare services or vouchers)

    e. Other services (please describe)

2. About how often do your career navigators meet or network with the staff who provide these other services—would you say it's about:

    a. Daily

    b. More than once a week

    c. Weekly

    d. Biweekly

    e. Once a month

    f. Less than once a month

3. How do they interact? What are the typical purposes of their interactions?

B. Services offered by career navigators

Let's talk about the navigation services available to adult learners. We are learning about the particular services from navigators themselves, but we'd also like to hear your perspective at the organizational level.

1. How much do services vary *across individual career navigators* working at your organization?

2. Are there services that career navigators *should ideally offer* but typically do not?

   a. What types of services are missing? Why are they not offered?

   b. What skills or resources would navigators need to be able to offer such services?

C. Experience, training, and professional development to support career navigators' work

Next, we'd like to learn about how you hire career navigators and how they are trained and supported for their key roles and responsibilities. We understand that career navigators sometimes wear many hats and that their FTE may even be split across different roles. For these questions, please focus on how you hire and train for the *navigator* role only.

1. What do you look for when hiring or transitioning someone into a career navigator role?

   a. What, if any, education or credentials do you **require** for the job?

      i. Do you **prefer** any education or credentials for the job?

   b. Do you require prior navigation or related experience?

   c. How many years of related experience do you require?

   d. What are the other required skills or qualifications for the job?

      i. Are there other skills or qualifications you prefer for the job?

   e. What other competencies or skills do you typically look for?

2. [*ALL*] How long do career navigators typically stay in that role?

3. [*IF KNOWN FROM RECRUITMENT*] We understand that the following professional development (PD) and trainings are required for career navigators in your organizations [*NAME TRAININGS*] – is that correct?

   [*IF UNKNOWN OR NEED CLARIFICATION*] What PD and trainings, if any, are career navigators *required* to take? Again, for these questions, please focus on the *navigator* role only.

   [*FOR EACH TRAINING*]

   a. Who requires this PD/training – for example, the state or a local agency?

   b. Who offers this PD/training?

   c. What does the PD/training involve in terms of content, format, length or frequency of sessions, etc.?

4. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being "not at all" to 5 being "very well", how well do these required PD/trainings meet the needs of the career navigators working in your adult education programs?

    a. How do you know this – put another way, what information do you have to assess the quality or usefulness of PD/trainings?

    b. What, if any, training or professional development needs are not met?

5. What other career navigator-specific PD/trainings do career navigators participate in – that is, that aren't *required*?

    a. Who offers this PD/training?

    b. What does the PD/training involve in terms of content, format, length or frequency, etc.?

    c. Do all navigators participate in this PD/training? How do you decide who does or doesn't?

6. What kind of ongoing supervision, coaching, mentoring, and other professional development do the adult education career navigators get from your organization?

    a. What does this additional support involve in terms of content, format, or frequency?

7. How do you assess career navigators' job performance?

    a. How do you handle situations where their performance needs to improve?

D. Plans for the enhanced training program [==*TREATMENT ONLY*==]

Now let's talk about the upcoming training that your career navigators will be participating in as part of this study.

1. Our understanding is that your organization indicated a preference for the [*NAME NCADA OR NCTN*], is that correct? What interested you most about this training?

    [*IF ASSIGNED TO PREFERRED TRAINING, MOVE DIRECTLY TO ITEMS 1.a AND 1.b BELOW*]

    [*IF NOT ASSIGNED TO PREFERRED TRAINING, NOTE]* We understand that you were not actually assigned to your preferred training – for the rest of these questions, let's focus on the training you will receive.

    a. What competencies are you hoping staff will develop or what needs are you trying to address through the training?

    b. How do you see this training fitting in with the training and other professional development your career navigators already have?

2. What, if any, challenges do you expect related to the upcoming training?

3. What resources or supports have you or will you put in place for your career navigators to participate in the training and then apply what they learn? For example, some programs might reduce their career navigators' caseload so they can prepare or participate in training; or they

might schedule extra supervisory check-ins afterward to see how it's going as career navigators try to use what they learned.

E. Community context

To wrap up, we'd like to ask a few questions about the state and local contextual issues that most influence the career navigators' work with adult learners.

1. What's the job market like for the adult learners your career navigators serve?

2. What other things about the community are important for your organization's ability to support the educational and career success of adult learners?

    a. What factors influence the career navigators' work more specifically?

    b. What factors influence the adult learners they work with?

3. We have basic demographic information on the people you serve through career navigation, but what about them do you think is most important to understand their education and career outcomes?

That concludes our interview questions. Thank you for your time. Do you have anything else you would like to add or any questions for us?