

INSTRUMENT 2: CCDF LEAD AGENCY STAFF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The CCEE Supply Building research team will use this protocol to conduct interviews with Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) administrators and a key agency staff member in charge of strategies or initiatives to build or sustain the supply of CCEE. Interviews may be conducted one-on-one or jointly.

This protocol is a guide, not a script. All respondents may not be asked all questions. Interviewers will tailor questions to the specific strategies and roles and responsibilities of the respondents. Interviewers will add probes to further explore the responses provided. Interviewers will tailor the information in brackets.

(Note: In the following section, the interviewer will not read words in parentheses)

(Introduction) Thank you for agreeing to speak with us today. My name is [NAME], and I'm joined by my colleague, [NAME]. We're from the Urban Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization based in Washington, DC.

(Who is leading the research and funding it) The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) within the Administration for Children and Families (which we refer to as ACF going forward) contracted with the Urban Institute to lead a project called "Understanding Supply-Building and Sustainability Efforts of the Child Care and Early Education Market."

(Purpose) As part of the larger project, we are conducting case studies of several states about supply-building or sustainability strategies we identified through a web scan or survey. The goal of the case studies is to document and share information about the strategies and to use the information to inform recommendations for future research of child care and early education supply-building and sustainability strategies.

(Requirements) Over the next hour and a half, we will be asking you a series of questions designed to gather information regarding a strategy your state is implementing so we can learn more. You may not know the answer to every question, and that is fine. If there are any questions that you don't feel knowledgeable about or don't feel comfortable answering, just let us know and we will move on.

(Voluntary) This interview is voluntary. There will be no consequences if you decline or stop the interview. If you need to take a break at any time, please let us know.

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 90 minutes per response. This information collection is voluntary. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: Urban Institute, 500 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Washington, DC 20037.

(Consent to record) We'll take notes during our discussion, but if it's okay with you, we would also like to record this interview to help fill in our notes. If you would like me to stop recording at any time during the interview, please let me know. We will delete the recording once our analysis is complete.

(What we will do with the data) We will share the information that we gather during the interview with our federal project officers at the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, which is the research arm of ACF, as well as with staff at the federal Office of Child Care within ACF. Following the case studies, we will prepare and share with ACF written memos describing each strategy and our findings from interviews and focus groups. We may also use the information to develop a public report or brief that summarizes what we learned across all of the states that participate in case studies.

(Privacy) Importantly, we will identify your state in our memorandum to ACF. We will not identify you by name, but they will know we spoke with a CCDF administrator and/or other staff members from each participating state. [IF RESPONDENT IS/INCLUDES CCDF ADMINISTRATOR:] Because the identities of CCDF administrators are public information, this means they may be able to figure out your identity. If we produce a report or brief that is available to the public, we will keep your identity and the identity of all individuals we interview private. In addition, we will name the states that participated in the public report or brief to provide context but none of the information presented will be attributed to a particular state. Rather, we will describe themes across the states and strategies included in the case studies.

(Risks and benefits) There are no anticipated personal risks or benefits to participating in this research.

(OMB statement) An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB number and expiration date for this collection are OMB #: 0970-0356, Exp: 01/31/2027.

(Virtual interview/Zoom statement) We ask that you participate in a private setting away from earshot or viewing by unauthorized persons which includes family members, and we want you to understand that given the technical limitations of Zoom and similar internet platforms, we cannot guarantee the confidentiality of what might be said.

- Do you have any questions?
- Do we have your consent to proceed with our interview?
- Do we have your permission to record?

(If the interviewee says yes) Thank you. If you are ready, I will start recording now.

(If the interviewee say no, research assistant will be prepared to take close-to-verbatim notes.)

We know your state is implementing various strategies to build and sustain the supply of child care and education. In our interview today, we'd like to focus specifically on [NAME OF SELECTED STRATEGY].

Before we begin, let me provide you with a brief 'roadmap' of what we'll cover during the interview. We'll start with questions about your background and the strategy your state developed to build and sustain the supply of child care and early education. Then, we will discuss the implementation, ongoing planning, and funding resources for the strategy. Next, we will discuss any data you collect about the strategy, how you use the data, as well as the successes, challenges, and lessons learned about implementing the strategy.

(If the interviewee has participated in a screening call): Thank you again for participating in an interview with our team in [MONTH]. We will only ask questions about topics that we did not cover during that interview, or in cases where we need to clarify information.

Interviewee Background

(If the interviewee did not participate in a screening call): Let's start with a couple background questions about you.

- Please tell us about your current role and how long you've been in this position.
- What role did you have in developing [STRATEGY]? What role have you played in implementing [STRATEGY]?

Description and State Context

[First/Next], I would like to learn more about [STRATEGY]. As we have previously mentioned, we gathered initial information about [STRATEGY] from [LIST SOURCES: RESPONSES YOUR LEAD AGENCY PROVIDED TO PROJECT'S EARLIER SURVEY/A WEB SCAN OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION]. For some questions, we will want to confirm the accuracy of the information we gathered and see if you have any updates.

1. To begin, please describe [STRATEGY].
2. We learned that [STRATEGY] began in [YEAR] and ended in [YEAR]/is still ongoing. Is this correct? If not, what is the current status?
3. We learned that [STRATEGY] is/was focused on the following populations or locations. [List target populations specific to strategy]. Is this correct? If not, please describe who is/was it intended to reach.
(Probe: Did/does [STRATEGY] focus on any of the following: infants/toddlers; children in underserved areas; children with disabilities or special needs; children needing nontraditional-hour care; children living with families with low incomes; children experiencing homelessness; children living in rural areas; care for children living in areas with concentrated poverty and unemployment; different types of providers or providers serving these populations/locations).
4. Where is it implemented? (Interviewer will use answers to prior questions to explain whether "where" refers to a geographic location and/or physical location such as a child care provider, etc.).
5. What are the goals or outcomes [STRATEGY] is intended to achieve?
 - (If not clear from prior responses): Is [STRATEGY] intended to build or sustain CCEE supply? If so, please explain how.

6. (If not already mentioned): Is this strategy part of a broader effort in your state to build or sustain CCEE supply?

- If so, what other strategies under this broader effort are underway?

7. (Interviewer will ask questions below depending on the strategy)

[IF STRATEGY INCLUDES GRANT- OR CONTRACT-FUNDED SLOTS]:

- How are the funds disbursed? For example, do funds go directly to child care providers or through intermediary organizations to providers?
- Why did you think the grant-/contract-funded slots would be effective in achieving [goals or outcomes discussed in Q5]?
 - Did you expect it to impact the consistency in payments to providers?
- How does/did the state identify specific providers/areas for the [grant-/contract-]funded slots?
- What are the criteria providers need to meet (or services they have to agree to provide) to qualify for a contract/grant?
- How are providers selected if more apply than can be served/funded?
- How are payment rates determined? How do the rates reflect the cost of providing care to the different populations that are funded through these contract-/grant-funded slots? Are providers paid based on enrollment rather than attendance? Are providers paid full established subsidy rates?
- How do payment rates differ for contracted slots compared to traditional subsidy/voucher slots?
- How long are contracts for contract-funded slots for? What happens/will happen when a contract period ends? Is it recompeted? If so, how does the state re-evaluate where to locate them? What conditions would lead to the state revoking a contract from a provider?
- Do any contract-/grant-funded slots overlap with Head Start slots?
- What are the eligibility criteria for children to fill a grant-/contract-funded slot? What happens when children meet more than one eligibility criteria for grant-/contract-funded slots?
- [If children with disabilities or special needs is mentioned as a focus] How do you define "children with disabilities"/"children with special needs" for enrollment in a contract-funded slot?
 - a. Is this defined differently from how this is defined to determine CCDF eligibility? [IF YES] How is it defined differently and why was this decision made?
 - b. Is it defined differently than for other CCDF-funded programs? [IF YES] How is it defined differently and why was this decision made?

[IF STRATEGY INCLUDES STABILIZATION GRANTS]:

- What are the grants for?

- Why did you think the grants would be effective in achieving [goals or outcomes discussed in Q5]?
- How are they disbursed? For example, do the grants go directly to child care providers or through intermediary organizations to providers?
- What are the eligibility criteria for child care providers?
- How are providers selected if more apply than can be served/funded?
- What requirements do providers need to meet to receive the grants? Are providers expected to provide any extra or higher quality services as part of the grant? If so, please explain.
- Does the grant amount given to providers vary by certain criteria? If so, how do you determine how much each provider receives?
- How often are the grants distributed? (*Probe: one-time payment, monthly payments, annual payments, other*).

[IF STRATEGY INCLUDES INCREASED PROVIDER REIMBURSEMENT RATES OR OTHER CHANGES TO PROVIDER PAYMENT POLICIES]:

- Do you use differential rates, tiered rates, or add-on rates, or other payment rate strategies where you pay above the base rate for particular types of care or populations?
- If so:
 - Which of differential rates, tiered rates, add-on rates, or other payment rate strategies do you use?
 - For what types of care or for which populations?
 - What are the criteria for providers to qualify for [this/these] payment strategy/ies?
- Why did you think [this/these] payment strategy/ies would be effective in achieving [goals or outcomes discussed in Q5]?

[IF STRATEGY INCLUDES START-UP OR EXPANSION SUPPORTS]:

- What types of supports are offered? How often are supports offered?
- Why did you think [supports] would be effective in achieving [goals or outcomes discussed in Q5]?
- What requirements do providers need to meet to receive the supports?
- How are providers selected if more apply than can receive supports?
- How are supports offered (e.g., through the state, an intermediary, etc.)?
- [IF TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS A KEY ACTIVITY]:
 - What types of training and/or technical assistance are offered to recipients?

- (If not answered above) Why did you think [training and/or technical assistance] would be effective in achieving [goals or outcomes discussed in Q5]?
- What are the topics?
- Who delivers the training and/or technical assistance?
- How is the training and/or technical assistance delivered to recipients?
- What requirements do providers need to meet to receive training and/or technical assistance?

[IF STRATEGY INCLUDES QUALITY AND/OR LICENSING SUPPORTS]:

- What types of supports are offered? How often are supports offered?
- Why did you think [supports] would be effective in achieving [goals or outcomes discussed in Q5]?
- What requirements do providers need to meet to receive the supports?
- How are providers selected if more apply than can receive supports?
- How are supports offered (e.g., through the state, an intermediary, etc.)?
- [IF TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS A KEY ACTIVITY]:
 - What types of training and/or technical assistance are offered to recipients?
 - (If not answered above) Why did you think [training and/or technical assistance] would be effective in achieving [goals or outcomes discussed in Q5]?
 - What are the topics?
 - Who delivers the training and/or technical assistance?
 - How is the training and/or technical assistance delivered to recipients?
 - What requirements do providers need to meet to receive training and/or technical assistance?

[IF STRATEGY INCLUDES GRANTS FOR LOCALLY DEVELOPED/COMMUNITY DRIVEN INNOVATION PROJECTS]:

- What are the eligibility criteria to be selected or participate?
- How are awardees/participants selected if more apply than can be selected or participate?
- What activities are involved?
- Why did you think [activities] would be effective in achieving [goals or outcomes discussed in Q5]?
- [IF PROVIDING FUNDING IS A KEY ACTIVITY]:
 - What are the funds for?

- (If not answered above) Why did you think the funds would be effective in achieving [goals or outcomes discussed in Q5]?
 - What requirements do recipients need to meet to receive funds?
 - How are funds disbursed? For example, do funds go directly to recipients or through intermediary organizations?
 - Does the funding amount given to recipients vary by certain criteria? If so, how do you determine how much each recipient receives?
 - How often are funds distributed? (*Probe: one-time payment, monthly payments, annual payments, other*).
- [IF TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, OR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS A KEY ACTIVITY]:
 - What types of training and/or technical assistance are offered to recipients?
 - (If not answered above) Why did you think the [training and/or technical assistance] would be effective in achieving [goals or outcomes discussed in Q5]?
 - What are the topics?
 - Who delivers the training and/or technical assistance?
 - How is the training and/or technical assistance delivered to recipients?
 - What requirements do providers need to meet to receive training and/or technical assistance?

Initial Planning

The next couple of questions are about the planning and decision-making processes involved in the initial planning for the strategy.

8. What information did you use to inform the design/adaptation of the strategy?
(*Probe on whether the agency used program administrative data, surveys or interviews with child care providers, listening sessions or focus groups with families, interviews with key partners and other interested groups, and so on.*).
9. What key organizations, partners, or groups were involved in designing/adapting the strategy and what were their roles?
(*Probe on whether parents, providers, or other community members involved. If so, probe on how they were involved and why the decision was made to have them involved.*).
10. Earlier you said that [STRATEGY] is/was focused on the following populations or locations. [List target populations mentioned in response to Questions 3 and 4].
 - Why did you focus on those populations or locations?
 - How do you focus on those populations or locations? Is [STRATEGY] reserved only for these populations or locations, or are these populations or locations prioritized?
 - [IF CONTRACT-FUNDED SLOTS ARE RESERVED]: Is there a minimum number or percentage that are reserved for [POPULATIONS]?

- What information, if any, did you use to determine which populations or locations to reserve/prioritize?
- What efforts did you take to ensure [STRATEGY] reached these focus populations or locations?
- Were there any trade-offs you considered when deciding to focus [STRATEGY] on these particular populations or locations? If so, what were they?

Implementation and Ongoing Planning

Now I would like to learn more about who delivers and receives/participates in [STRATEGY] and how [STRATEGY] has changed over time.

11. What key organizations, partners, or groups have been involved in implementing the strategy and what are their roles?
12. Is [STRATEGY] reaching who it's intended to reach? *(Probe on populations listed in response to Questions 3 and 4).*
13. How has [STRATEGY] changed from [YEAR], when the strategy was initially developed/funded, to [March 2025 or last year of funding if no longer active]?
(Probe on whether the key activities have changed, the focus population, the selection criteria, funding levels, and so on).
 - Why did you make the changes? What information did you use to inform the changes?
(Probe on pandemic influence, reaction to early implementation or outcome data, reaction to parent/provider/community feedback, changes in funding source, etc.).
(Probe on whether the agency used program administrative data, surveys or interviews with child care providers, listening sessions or focus groups with families, interviews with key partners and other interested groups, and so on).
 - Were groups (other than your Lead Agency) involved in the decisions to make these changes? If so, which groups were involved? What were their roles?
(Probe on whether parents, providers, or other community members were involved).

Resources

Now I would like to learn about the funding sources that are used to support [STRATEGY].

14. We learned [funding source(s)] is/are/was/were used to support [STRATEGY]. Is this correct? If not, what are/were the funding sources? *(Probe: CCDF subsidy funds, CCDF quality set-aside funds, federal COVID-19 relief funding, Head Start/Early Start funds, state funding, and so on).*
15. [IF FUNDING SOURCES INCLUDE COMBINATION OF FEDERAL, STATE, AND/OR PHILANTHROPIC SOURCES:] Are each of the funding sources used to support [STRATEGY] overall or are certain funding sources used to support specific aspects of the strategy? If certain funding sources are used to support specific aspects of the strategy, why? Please explain.
16. Roughly, how much or what percentage of the overall funding for [STRATEGY] is from each of the funding sources that are used to support [STRATEGY]?
17. How have the funding sources for [STRATEGY] changed?

- o If so:
 - o Why did the funding sources change?
 - o How did these changes affect implementation of [STRATEGY]?

Data Collection and Use

My next set of questions is about information you collect about [STRATEGY] and whether you have or plan to evaluate [STRATEGY]. In the context of this interview, I am using the term “evaluation” to refer to a systematic process for collecting and analyzing information about the strategy's activities, characteristics, and outcomes.

18. Earlier, you described the types of outcomes you were hoping [STRATEGY] could achieve, including [INSERT GOALS/OUTCOMES DESCRIBED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 5]. What kinds of information [are/were] collected to assess progress towards these outcomes?

(Probe on whether data are collected on:

- i. *Number of/increase in slots*
- ii. *Number of/increase in slots for [priority, reserved populations asked in question 10]*
- iii. *Number of/increase in programs*
- iv. *Program quality/increase in slots in quality programs*
- v. *Other).*

19. Do you collect information about implementation of [STRATEGY]? If so, what kinds of information are being collected? *(Probe on whether data are collected on:*

- i. *Number of participants/take-up*
- ii. *Information on characteristics of participants*
- iii. *Provider satisfaction*
- iv. *Parent satisfaction*
- v. *Intermediary organization satisfaction*
- vi. *Consistency of implementation*
- vii. *Expenditure data*
- viii. *Other).*

20. Has [STRATEGY] been evaluated or are there plans to evaluate it?

- (If yes): What [does/did/will] the evaluation focus on?

21. How is available information about outcomes used? How is available information about implementation used?

(Probe on whether data are used for reporting purposes, for monitoring and/or to inform program improvement efforts, to inform ongoing planning, ongoing decisions about funding, and so on).

22. What have you learned from the information collected and/or from the evaluation(s) about how [STRATEGY] is working?

23. Do you have questions about [STRATEGY] that you think should be a priority for future research? If so, what questions do you have?

Implementation Experiences, Successes and Challenges

My last set of questions is about what has been going well and what challenges you have faced.

24. What has been going well with [STRATEGY]? What has been most successful?

25. What issues or challenges have you faced?

(Probe on any challenges related to reach and access, in particular for specific populations the initiative targets, funding [including the funding mechanism], sustainability, and so on.).

(IF STRATEGY INCLUDES GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR CONTRACTED SLOTS: Probe on any challenges related to recruiting providers to offer contracted slots, providers filling and maintaining enrollment in contracted slots, including slots for reserved populations, communicating the availability of contracted slots to families, supporting providers' sustainability when funding for contracted slots is reduced, procurement challenges).

26. What, if anything, would you have done differently?

27. What are your next steps in terms of refining, expanding, or continuing [STRATEGY]?

28. What advice would you give another state interested in implementing [STRATEGY]?

Wrap Up

Thank you! Those were all my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences that we didn't discuss?