Participant Perspectives on HPOG 2.0: Design Report for In-Depth Interviews with HPOG 2.0 Program Participants

National and Tribal Evaluation of the 2nd Generation of Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG 2.0)

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OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Program awards grants to organizations that provide education and training to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals for healthcare occupations that pay well and are in high demand. A National Evaluation of 27 grants awarded in 2015 as part of the second round of HPOG grants (HPOG 2.0) is currently underway. The National Evaluation Descriptive Evaluation will include an interview study of participant experiences in HPOG 2.0.

This report presents a research design plan for the interview study of participant experiences. The goal of these in-depth interviews is to gain insights into the motivations, decision making, expectations, and experiences of HPOG 2.0 program participants. The interview study will draw on interviews with up to 140 HPOG 2.0 program participants selected from across the country.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to answer the following high-level research questions using participants’ own words:

1. Why did participants apply for the HPOG 2.0 program?
2. If they have chosen a particular occupation, why did they choose this occupation for training?
3. What challenges do participants face in completing the program?

PURPOSE

This design report presents detailed plans for the participant interview study, a component of the HPOG 2.0 National Evaluation Descriptive Evaluation. Since the participant interview study design is based on a similar interview study conducted previously for the Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE) Evaluation, the document begins by summarizing the methodological approach and findings of the PACE study. The document then lays out the high-level research questions and methodological approach for the current study. The report also covers the research design, including program and participant selection, and the approach to conducting the interviews. The report closes with a description of the briefs that will be produced to describe the findings and a proposed timeline. Appendices for the report include recruitment materials and interview protocols.

HIGHLIGHTS

This report presents a research design plan for the interview study of participant experiences. The goal of these in-depth interviews is to gain insights into the motivations, decision making, expectations, and experiences of HPOG 2.0 program participants. The interview study will draw on interviews with up to 140 HPOG 2.0 program participants selected from across the country.
**METHODS**

The design report outlines the methodological approach the participant interview study will use. The methodological approach includes conducting approximately 140 semi-structured in-depth interviews with HPOG 2.0 program participants from a sample of 14 HPOG 2.0 programs.

Data will be analyzed using applied thematic analysis to draw lessons about each of the key research questions, as well as looking for emergent themes in the data.

**GLOSSARY**

Applied thematic analysis: an approach to conducting analysis of interviews which both answers the research questions and allows for new concepts to be seen in the data.

HPOG, HPOG Program: the national Health Profession Opportunity Grants initiative, including all grantees and programs

HPOG grantee: the entity receiving the HPOG grant and responsible for funding and overseeing one or more local programs

HPOG program: a unique set of services, training courses, and personnel; a single grantee may fund one or more programs

HPOG partners: other organizations directly involved in the operations of an HPOG program

HPOG program participants: enrollees in education and training programs and related services supported by HPOG grants
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Program is administered by the Office of Family Assistance in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of the Program is “to conduct demonstration projects that provide eligible individuals with the opportunity to obtain education and training for occupations in the healthcare field that pay well and are expected to either experience labor shortages or be in high demand.” Building on the first round of HPOG awards in 2010 (HPOG 1.0), ACF awarded a second round of grants in 2015 (HPOG 2.0) for up to five years.

ACF’s Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) awarded a contract to Abt Associates and its partners the Urban Institute, MEF Associates, NORC at the University of Chicago, and Insight Policy Research to conduct the National and Tribal Evaluation of the 2nd Generation of the Health Profession Opportunity Grants. The evaluation is part of a larger portfolio of OPRE-funded research also evaluating the first cohort of HPOG grantees, including an impact study and a descriptive implementation study, an outcome study, and a systems change analysis for the HPOG 1.0 non-tribal grantees and a separate evaluation of the HPOG 1.0 tribal grantees.

The National Evaluation of the 2nd Generation of the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (hereafter referred to as the HPOG 2.0 National Evaluation) is assessing the implementation, impacts, and costs and benefits of the 27 non-tribal programs funded in the second round of grants. This document supplements the evaluation’s Descriptive Evaluation Design Report, which describes the approaches to assessing HPOG’s implementation, outcomes, and systems change. To augment the Descriptive Evaluation, this Research Plan describes the study team’s plans to conduct in-depth interviews with up to 140 HPOG participants across 14 HPOG programs. This effort builds on similar interviews done for a previous evaluation of nine promising career pathways programs (the Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education, or PACE, evaluation). This document provides brief background and findings from the PACE interviews, then presents the research design, data collection plan, and instruments for the HPOG 2.0 interviews.

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2 For additional information about the first set of evaluations, please see https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/evaluation-portfolio-for-the-health-profession-opportunity-grants-hpog or http://www.career-pathways.org/acf-sponsored-studies/hpog/.

The research questions for the participant interviews are:

1. Why did participants apply for the HPOG 2.0 program? To what other job training programs (healthcare and non-healthcare related) did they consider applying?
2. If they have chosen a particular occupation, why did they choose this occupation for training? What other occupations did they consider?
3. What challenges do participants face in completing the program?
4. How do participants’ finances influence their participation in the program?
5. How do HPOG 2.0 participants think about career ladders and pathways?
6. What supports have HPOG 2.0 participants received both in the program and outside the program, and what are participants’ experiences with those program supports (including personal, academic, and employment supports)?

This Research Plan discusses in detail the research questions for the study, including the data sources and steps required to implement and document the in-depth interviews and the briefs that will be produced to describe the findings. The report closes with a description of the project timeline with tasks defined in the broader HPOG 2.0 National Evaluation effort.
1. INTRODUCTION

The Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) awards grants to organizations that provide education and training to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients and other low-income individuals for healthcare occupations that pay well and are in high demand. HPOG is administered by the Office of Family Assistance in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Abt Associates is conducting a National Evaluation of 27 grants awarded in 2015 as part of the second round of HPOG grants (HPOG 2.0). The National Evaluation includes a Descriptive Evaluation of the implementation, outcomes, and local service delivery systems of the grants; an Impact Evaluation of the grants’ impacts on participants; and an analysis of the HPOG Program’s costs and benefits.

The research team will conduct in-depth interviews with program participants as part of the Descriptive Evaluation. The goal of these in-depth interviews is to gain insights into the motivations, decision making, expectations, and experiences of HPOG 2.0 Program participants. This document presents the research plan for conducting these interviews. The basic design is modeled after a similar study with participants in the Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education (PACE) Evaluation. Specifically, this document describes a plan to conduct approximately 10 interviews in each of 14 grantee programs for a total of up to 140 interviews.

The document begins with a review of the key findings from the PACE in-depth interviews (Chapter 2). The document then discusses in detail the research questions for the study, including the data sources and steps required to implement and document the in-depth interviews (Chapters 3 and 4). Chapter 5 briefly reviews the briefs that will be produced to describe the findings. The report closes with a description of the project timeline with tasks defined in the broader HPOG 2.0 National Evaluation effort (Chapter 6).

The Appendices include:

- A detailed review of the study’s research questions and sub-questions (Appendix A)
- An overview of the 27 non-tribal HPOG 2.0 grantees (Appendix B)
- Scripts for contacting and recruiting potential participants (Appendix C)
- The study’s informed consent materials (Appendix D)
- The interview protocol (Appendix E)
- The project timeline (Appendix F)

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5 Information about the PACE Evaluation can be found at the Pathways for Advancing Careers and Education overview website: [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/pathways-for-advancing-careers-and-education](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/pathways-for-advancing-careers-and-education)
2. PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS IN THE PACE STUDY

The research team will conduct a series of interviews with HPOG 2.0 participants similar to the intensive interviews conducted with both treatment and control group participants in the PACE Evaluation. PACE is an evaluation of nine promising career pathway programs funded through various mechanisms including HPOG. This chapter briefly reviews the methodological approach of PACE (Section 2.1) and the key findings from the PACE participant interviews (Section 2.2).

2.1 PACE STUDY METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The PACE study examined nine career pathways programs in 18 locations. Between February and November 2014, the research team conducted 123 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with both treatment and control study participants across all nine programs.

Sample
The research team contacted a random sample of individuals in each program who had enrolled in the PACE Evaluation in the prior six months. The research team used a random sampling frame stratified by participation status with the goal of capturing opinions and experiences of both those who remained in and who had left the program. The response rate was 84 percent for the first round of interviews; between 8 and 32 interviews were conducted at each program.

Interview Format
Researchers conducted interviews most often in public spaces such as libraries, coffee shops, or at the program site. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing the interviewer flexibility to probe respondents’ answers to ensure consistency in the topics discussed. These topics included respondents’ family, educational, and career backgrounds; educational and career goals; challenges they had faced or expected to face in achieving those goals; reasons for wanting to enroll in the career pathways program; and their program experiences to date. Interviews on average lasted 50 minutes.

Data Analysis
All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and imported into NVivo, a qualitative analysis software package. The lead researcher initially coded the interview transcripts based upon the major topics covered in the interview guide (e.g., memories of secondary schooling, career goals, reasons for wanting more education and training) and themes that emerged over the course of interviewing, such as respondents’ assessments of their own goals and the type of person they envisioned themselves to be. Text segments associated with certain broad categories were coded and analyzed using an inductive thematic approach (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell 2013). Inductive thematic analysis uses the observed patterns and themes in the data to build meaning from the dataset.

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6 This section summarizes the description of the qualitative interviews with PACE participants as described at the start of the PACE briefs. For an example, see Seefeldt, Engstrom, & Gardiner, 2016a, found here: [http://www.career-pathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PACE-Supports-Brief_2016-29-1.pdf](http://www.career-pathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PACE-Supports-Brief_2016-29-1.pdf).

7 Program participants were contacted 18 to 24 months after study enrollment for a second interview. The response rate for the second set of interviews was 28 percent.
2.2 REVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH PACE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

This section reviews the key findings from interviews with treatment group and control group participants in the PACE study. The sub-sections review findings from the briefs on treatment group participant motivations and thoughts on success (Section 2.2.1), treatment group participants’ perceived challenges (Section 2.2.2), treatment group participants’ experiences of program supports (Section 2.2.3), treatment group progress on their pathway (Section 2.2.4), and control group post enrollment activities (Section 2.2.5).

Treatment Group Participants’ Motivations and Thoughts on Success\(^8\)
Participants interviewed for the PACE study saw themselves as highly motivated and success-oriented individuals who were confident in achieving their goals. Participants’ motivations for pursuing career pathways training varied: wanting to move out of dead end jobs or jobs lacking upward mobility; a desire to increase income; making transformative changes in their lives; providing for their children; and wishing to be a role model for their children. Interviewees defined success in the program in numerous ways, most commonly, finishing the program; getting a good job in their chosen field; getting good grades; and understanding the material covered in the training.

Treatment Group Participants’ Perceived Challenges: Finances, Family, Academics, and Time\(^9\)
In the first round of interviews with treatment group participants, interview participants said they experienced a range of challenges in career pathway programs. Financial challenges included concerns or uncertainty about meeting day-to-day expenses, paying for current program expenses, financing future training and education, and managing student loans from previous education and training. Unexpected financial shocks such as an unexpected bill could place participants in a precarious financial position.

Some respondents had to deal with family-related challenges, such as divorce, domestic violence, and caring for older family members while participating in the program. Many parents felt guilty about the amount of time they spent away from their children while participating in the program. Participants also described academic challenges with learning new and difficult material and feeling ill-prepared for the program, in some cases a result of being out of school for long periods of time. Further, many participants were managing an already busy schedule and reported the challenge of having insufficient time to complete the program workload.

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Programmatic and Other Supports Accessed by Career Pathways Treatment Group Participants

Given the prevalence of financial challenges that participants faced, it is not surprising that participants reported that program-provided tuition support was crucial to successfully participating in the career pathway program. Other forms of direct financial assistance within the program – including resources to purchase class supplies and no-cost programming – helped participants to bridge gaps between aid provided and the total costs of program participation. Support from family members offered participants ways to minimize monthly bills and stay motivated, although not always without negative consequences. For example, participants adjusted living situations to reduce living expenses by doubling-up with family members. While this decreased financial stress and provided help with child-care, transportation, and emotional support, crowded living conditions were another source of stress. A majority of interviewees received financial support from government assistance, e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Medicaid.

Participants stated the importance of program academic supports, including help with completing paperwork and conversations focused on academic progress. Informal connections with peers were also an important source of support through the program.

Treatment Group Participants’ Progress on Pathways

Follow-up interviews with a small group of treatment group participants showed uneven progress for participants. A majority of participants were on a pathway of some kind and were continuing with training and/or work in their field of training. However, challenges remained for these participants that included: tight finances, low-paying jobs, and balancing family responsibilities with training. Some participants faced difficulties pursuing their pathways. Sometimes jobs were not available locally, the participant lost interest in the field, or other responsibilities presented a time barrier. For some participants who were employed, job turnover was common.

While most participants felt very positively about their career training program, most participants were no longer connected to their training program. The career pathway program model hopes to articulate the training as the first step in a pathway, yet participants saw the training as a completed discrete program, and did not link it to future training activity.


Control Group Participants’ Experiences

Thirty-nine (39) control group participants were interviewed six months after enrollment in the lottery for the PACE study. Despite not being able to receive training and other services provided by the program in the PACE study, many control group participants were able to enroll in other training programs. Some control group members were in the process of enrolling in training programs when they learned about the PACE study and decided to enter the lottery as a low-risk strategy to access financial resources for training. These participants reported that being assigned to the control group did not change their training plans. Similar to the treatment group, many control group members also reported financial challenges, although, many control group members, similar to their treatment group peers, had access to federal financial aid and other resources. On the other hand, a few members of the control group reported that they were not able to pursue training without the support of the program in the PACE study.

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3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

This chapter describes the research questions and methodological approach that inform the plan to conduct the HPOG 2.0 in-depth participant interviews. Section 3.1 describes the research questions, and Section 3.2 reviews the methodological decisions to conduct in-depth interviews and use an applied thematic analytical approach.

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research team developed a series of research questions based on the findings of the PACE interviews, conversations within the Abt research team, and consultation with ACF staff. The research questions cover the following topic areas: participant motivations and program selection; occupational selection; career pathways and barriers to completing the program, including finances; and participant supports (experiences with program supports and case management, as well as supports outside the program). Detailed research questions and sub-questions are included in Appendix A. This study seeks to answer the following high-level research questions using participants’ own words:

1. Why did participants apply for the HPOG 2.0 program? To what other job training programs (healthcare and non-healthcare related) did they consider applying?
2. If they have chosen a particular occupation, why did they choose this occupation for training? What other occupations did they consider?
3. How do HPOG 2.0 participants think about career ladders and pathways?
4. What supports have HPOG 2.0 participants received both in the program and outside the program, and what are participants’ experiences with those program supports (including personal, academic, and employment supports)? What challenges do participants face in completing the program?
5. How do participants’ finances influence their participation in the program?
6. If provided, what are participants’ experiences with case management (including personal, academic, employment)?

3.2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This section explains the choice of in-depth interviews to address the research questions and discusses our methodological approach of applied thematic analysis. Our discussion begins with how we will conduct the interviews (in-depth and semi-structured, Section 3.2.1) and continues with how we will analyze the information resulting from the interviews (applied thematic analysis, Section 3.2.2).

In-depth Interviews

The proposed study is modeled on the approach used by the PACE study team—in substance and in methodological approach. It will seek to answer the research questions articulated in Section 3.1 by analyzing and reporting on emergent themes from approximately 140 semi-structured in-depth interviews with HPOG 2.0 program participants from a sample of 14 HPOG 2.0 programs. The study design does not include interviews with control group members as PACE did, due to resource constraints to complete the study. The low response rates in PACE
suggested a significantly increased recruitment effort would be necessary to gain a sufficiently large sample size of control group members.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews offer advantages over other data sources that we might consider, such as surveys or structured interviews. While surveys or structured interviews delineate the categories and responses of interest with limited capacity for adjustment, in-depth interviews allow participants to explore and explain topics in their own words and narratives. Grounded in the trust established between interviewee and the interviewer, in-depth interviews allow the interviewer to understand what the interviewee is saying through the use of probing questions (Weiss, 1994). While allowing the interviewee to control the framing and language used, semi-structured interviews use an interview guide to ensure consistency in the topics discussed.

In this way, the semi-structured in-depth interview (1) facilitates consistent, reliable, and comparable data, (2) provides insight into the respondent’s perspective and experience, and (3) allows exploration of why and how participants behave in certain ways. Semi-structured in-depth interviews can provide an understanding of the mechanisms and decisions that may help explain particular program participant behaviors and outcomes observed in quantitative data analyses (Weiss, 1994).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are an appropriate methodological choice because the research questions for this study seek to understand the perspectives, experiences, and choices of participants in HPOG 2.0 programs. We also hope that these semi-structured in-depth interviews provide helpful insights for the team analyzing the HPOG 2.0 program outcome data.

**Applied Thematic Analysis**

The proposed study will seek to identify findings related to the research questions identified in Section 3.1 as well as emergent findings from the participant interviews. The research team proposes using applied thematic analysis as the methodological grounding for the study (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012) to enable analysis that allows for both approaches.

Applied thematic analysis draws on a variety of approaches to systematically analyze qualitative data sources. The approach is structured by the research questions while allowing new ways of understanding the research study topic to emerge from the data. Applied thematic analysis consists of a set of procedures that can be used as appropriate to answer the research questions and identify and examine new and emergent ideas across the data.

Within applied thematic analysis, the code book (a list of all codes for a given research study) is developed based on codes the researchers expect to be relevant to the research questions and study topic, and is established before coding. This code book is tested on the first several interviews; it is then refined based on observations of how well the code book works with the data and adjusted to include new codes observed as analysts code the data. These kinds of adjustments continue while all the data are coded. A code book is used to begin applied thematic analysis—sorting and categorizing of the data into codes, which are labels for classifying a short phrase, text or sometimes an entire paragraph, within the qualitative data. This classification allows the researcher to observe the frequency of any specific code and to understand the varied meanings and contexts associated with the particular code. For example,
we might have a code for participants’ references to lack of money. We would categorize all instances of the interview that mention the participant lacking money into that code.

Once the data is coded, we then look for “themes,” broader categories and patterns in the data at a higher level. After analyzing patterns in and reviewing the relevant and related codes, in the example of “lack of money” code, we might find the theme, “participants who have children more frequently express a lack of money to cover tuition costs.” Themes allow a researcher to answer a specific research question or to observe a new idea or theory within the broader study topic.

Applied thematic analysis draws on a variety of tools to surface these broader themes. Some of these approaches include diagrams of the relationships between codes; written “memos” that document observed relationships between themes; and constructing matrices of code frequency related to research questions. A critical part of this process is drawing on the knowledge of all of the research team, particularly the analysts conducting the coding.

**Validity** (the process of ensuring that the results are accurate) and **reliability** (the process of ensuring other researchers can repeat the analysis) are established through a variety of mechanisms in the coding, analytic, and reporting processes. Establishing validity and reliability begins in the research design and data collection phase. First, researchers use multiple methods and data sources to offer the opportunity to “triangulate” during the analysis phase. Triangulation is where researchers compare different data sources for perspectives on a particular topic. Where data sources have the same perspective, greater validity is established. Where there are differing perspectives, researchers must consider what may be causing those different perspectives. Researchers also work with all research team members to construct data collection instruments for training purposes and also to gain multiple perspectives to improve the quality of the data collection instrument. The combination of in-depth training of data collectors and monitoring of data as they are collected is important to ensure high quality, consistent data collection. Another way to establish validity of the data during data collection is to elicit feedback from participants after summarizing their interview. Participants can then correct any misunderstanding of what they have said or address any question they had difficulty understanding.

During the analysis, process validity and reliability are established through several tools and procedures:

- developing and using a precise code book;
- checking for consistent coding across coders by using multiple coders and inter-coder agreement checks;
- external and/or peer review of coding;
- documenting steps taken within the analysis process in an “audit” document within the project that can be reviewed by an external reviewer;
- triangulating data sources;
- using negative case analysis where analysts look for examples in the data that contradict the finding of a theme; and
- using verbatim quotes to support themes and interpretations (Guest et al., 2012).
Applied thematic analysis is very flexible and can be adjusted and used to build theoretical models as well as to find solutions to real world problems. For example, in the case of the proposed interviews, this analytical approach could be used to develop a theory of how program participants’ motivations to participate in HPOG influence their subsequent success in the program. On the other hand, the proposed interviews could make visible for policy makers the concrete, real world challenges that participants face and provide insights from participants about how programs might respond to address those particular challenges.
The study team will conduct in-person interviews with treatment group study participants at 14 HPOG 2.0 programs. This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research design and data collection approach, describing each of the steps required to conduct the in-depth interviews and to analyze and report key findings. Section 4.1 reviews program and participant selection. Section 4.2 reviews the interview protocol content. Section 4.3 describes the process for conducting interviews, while Section 4.4 lays out the plan for coding and analysis. Finally, Section 4.5 describes the planned approach for producing reports or briefs.

4.1 PROGRAM AND PARTICIPANT SELECTION

We will first select programs and then participants. We will select programs that represent a range of locations, program size and structure, grantee organizational types, and program characteristics. Our goal in sampling is to recruit roughly equal numbers of participants who have completed their training and who are still in the training program as well as some who have dropped out before completing training. We will select an equal number of participants across the selected programs. We will also aim to select participants at the program that represent the different socio-economic characteristics represented in the program. Section 4.1.1 discusses program selection in greater detail, and Section 4.1.2 discusses participant selection.

Program selection

In consultation with ACF, we will select programs based on a number of potential factors, including geographic diversity, program size, grantee organizational type, and program characteristics. Our purposive sampling strategy will seek to maximize variation in participant and program characteristics as much as possible, while also ensuring that programs are practical for conducting site visits. For example, while we will work to ensure there are some rural programs in the sample, some programs may not have sufficient participants located within reasonable travel distances to facilitate a successful data collection site visit. Sources of information for program selection will include Evaluation Design and Implementation Plans (EDIPs) prepared by each grantee in consultation with the National Evaluation team; the Participant Accomplishment and Grant Evaluation System (PAGES), the web-based management information system for HPOG 2.0; and responses from the first-round telephone interviews the National Evaluation team recently (Summer 2017) completed with all HPOG 2.0 programs. Appendix B provides a table summarizing the HPOG 2.0 programs, including their location, organization type, and 5-year enrollment goals.

We will provide ACF staff a recommendation of programs to be included in the participant interviews. We will then meet with ACF to narrow this list of programs together.

The following are the likely parameters for choosing our sample of programs. Given the small number of programs in our sample (14) we will be unlikely to sample based on all of these characteristics. We will discuss with ACF staff which of these parameters is most important to consider when constructing our sampling frame:

- **Organization Type:** We will seek to include different types of organizations in our sample: educational institutions, state agencies, community-based organizations, and Workforce Systems Agency organizations.
- **Program Size:** We anticipate including grantees with small, medium and large programs.

- **Prior HPOG grantees:** We will include both programs that were HPOG 1.0 grantees and those that were not.

- **Support Services:** Combining information from the first round telephone interviews about support services provided to participants with data from PAGES on support services taken up by participants, we will ensure that our sample of programs includes those where participants are using the full range of support services provided by the HPOG program and those where that is not true.

- **Innovative Program Design:** In collaboration with ACF staff, we will include in the sample some programs that are demonstrating innovative program designs or structures. Data about which programs are incorporating promising practices and innovations will be analyzed from the telephone interviews conducted with HPOG 2.0 grantees in 2017.

- **Geographic Diversity:** We anticipate choosing three programs from the East Coast, three programs from the Mid-West, three programs from the South-West, and three programs from the West Coast. We will choose two additional programs based on geographic areas of interest to ACF staff. We will also seek to include a mixture of rural and urban programs.

**Participant selection**

Drawing on participant data available in PAGES, we will select from the treatment group of each program a pool of up to 45 participants. We will then schedule interviews with 15 participants. Using data from PAGES, we will select participants according to the following criteria:

- **Participant Stage in the Training Program:** We will select a mixture of participants who have completed their training without taking a subsequent training (approximately 30 percent), participants who are still in a first training program (approximately 30 percent), participants who have completed a first training and are taking a second training (approximately 20 percent), and participants who have dropped out of a training program (approximately 20 percent).

- **Level of healthcare training:** As we consider participants to recruit into the study, we will aim to recruit participants who are completing/have completed different levels of healthcare training. The breakdown of program participants recruited will mirror the proportions of participants who are engaged in entry, mid-level, and high-level healthcare training across the sites selected for the study.

- **Demographic and Socio-Economic Characteristics:** In selecting program participants, we will aim to interview a sample representative of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of that particular program’s participant population. To do this, we will select a pool of up to 45 participants representative of the program from which we will select 15 participants using stratified sampling to ensure we get some representation from each group of interest. We will then attempt to recruit these participants to conduct an interview. We will identify alternates from the pool should we be unable to contact the 15 selected.
We expect an overall response rate of 67 percent, which would result in up to 140 completed interviews in total. While the PACE interview study conducted interviews with both treatment and control group participants at two points in time, given the budget for the HPOG 2.0 interviews, we anticipate interviewing mostly treatment group participants between three and six months after program enrollment. This timing will allow for some participants to have completed an occupational training program (for shorter programs) while also ensuring that we have some participants who are still participating in the HPOG 2.0 program. For those who have completed the program, we will be within a timeframe where participants will likely not have forgotten about their program experience. In order to capture the experiences of participants who have been in longer training programs or who are completing follow-on training, we will include up to three interviews at selected sites with participants who are between 12 and 15 months post-enrollment. Sites selected for inclusion in this extended time-frame will be sites where greater than 20 percent of participants are enrolled in longer training programs or completing follow-on training.

4.2 PROTOCOL CONTENT

The interview protocol is designed to provide a flowing conversation with program participants that moves through key topics of interest while ensuring that we are capturing data that will enable us to answer the research questions. Appendix E provides a draft interview protocol. Where relevant, the protocol draws on the interview protocols used in the PACE participant interviews, since these questions have already been field-tested and approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The interview will take 75 minutes on average, with a range of roughly 60 to 90 minutes. The interview protocol includes questions, prompts (also called “probes”) designed to elicit further elaboration of initial responses, definitions of key terms, and instructions to the interviewer. The protocol will be submitted (along with other study materials) in an OMB submission scheduled for Fall 2018. The interview protocol and procedures will also be reviewed by Abt’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The protocol has been pre-tested with four program participants. The pre-test resulted in clarifying three questions and moving some questions into more appropriate sections given the flow.

4.3 CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

This section presents procedures for training interviewers and scheduling and conducting participant interviews.

Training interviewers

A total of five Abt staff will carry out the interviews: the participant interview task lead and four additional staff. The participant interview task lead will lead the training of additional Abt staff who will be conducting interviews. Junior staff helping with scheduling and analysis will attend the training to learn about the protocol and process in greater depth, providing important context for later project work. They will also offer some team redundancy in case we need them to step in to help with conducting interviews. Prior to the training, each interviewer will review the

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13 While the PACE study team achieved a response rate of 84 percent, we have budgeted for a lower response rate to ensure that we recruit sufficient participants into the study. If the response rate is higher at the first two sites, we will adjust the recruitment strategy accordingly.
research design and interview protocols to become familiar with the research approach and protocol content and identify any questions they wish to raise during the training. The training will include:

- An overview of the HPOG 2.0 project and the PACE interviews.
- An overview of the research questions.
- A review of best practices for conducting semi-structured interviewing (e.g., establishing rapport, obtaining consent, audio-recording and note-taking, probing to elicit elaborated responses).
- Question-by-question review of the interview protocol to ensure that all interviewers have a common understanding of the interview questions and are trained to use the protocols consistently. Consistency across interviewers includes allowing sufficient “wait time” for respondents to answer questions and knowing when and how to probe for more detail or clarification.
- Role playing exercises to practice obtaining consent, administering the interview, responding appropriately to respondent questions, and re-directing the interview if a respondent strays excessively from the interview questions.
- Logistics for preparing for a program visit and then collecting the interview data. These logistics include procedures for scheduling interviews and program visits; steps to take in advance, during, and after completion of each interview; on-site procedures to ensure that the visit proceeds smoothly; and data security for interview data during program visits.

Recruitment and Scheduling Interviews
The participant interview task lead will work with the site liaisons from the National Evaluation team to notify the 14 local HPOG program directors selected for the participant interview study about the study and introduce the interview research team. We will coordinate an introductory call with the 14 selected HPOG program directors to explain the study and to get their assistance in scheduling the participant interviews. The participant interview team will work with program directors to contact the selected sample of HPOG 2.0 program participants in the treatment group by email, letter, phone, or SMS text (based on advice from the program director and consent provided by participants) at each program. Consent was provided by all participants enrolling in the HPOG program to allow for follow up surveys and other data collection activities. Since there may be some overlap between the in-depth participant interviews and other study activities, data collection teams will work closely with grantees to clearly communicate the purpose of each data collection component, and to minimize burden on grantee staff as much as possible.

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14 Consent was provided by all participants enrolling in the HPOG program to allow for follow up surveys and other data collection activities.
Once participants have agreed to participate in the interview, junior study staff will aim to schedule up to 15 interviews over a 5-day program visit. One senior study team member will conduct all the interviews at a site. Each interviewer will conduct up to three site visits. Each staff person will conduct the participant interviews and record the interviews for later transcription and analysis. Allowing for cancellations and no-shows, we anticipate that interviewers will complete about 10 interviews per program during a 5-day program visit, resulting in approximately 140 completed interviews across programs. Participants will receive a gift card valued at $50 to thank them for their time.

**Conducting Interviews**

Conducting the interviews will entail pre-visit preparation, interviewing and data collection, and post-interview follow-up. In advance of a scheduled program visit, the interviewer will review background information about the program and have a conversation with a member of the National Evaluation site liaison team to get information on the status of the program’s implementation and any issues of which the interviewer should be aware. The week of the program visit, staff will email and telephone to remind respondents of the upcoming interview time and location.

Each interview will consist of one Abt staff person and a respondent. During program visits, Abt staff will conduct one-on-one interviews in-person at the program location or another preferred quiet, private setting. Interviewers will take notes during the interviews with consenting respondents and also audio-record interviews with the permission of respondents. Recording these interviews allows for greater accuracy in capturing data, creates the possibility for data audits, and allows the interviewer to focus on the interview content and verbal prompts. Using a transcriptionist then enables a “verbatim transcript” of the interview (Jamshed, 2014). Each interviewer will hand-write notes in an interview template that contains interviewer instructions, each question and its associated probes, and a field for recording each response. We will not have computers during the interviews since having an interviewer type notes into a computer interferes with establishing good interviewer-interviewee rapport. Additionally, while the notes from the interview will be helpful, the most important data will come from the transcripts of the interviews.

Following the interview, the interviewer will note any issues that arose during the interview, such as questions that respondents had difficulty understanding, or potential modifications to the sequencing of items that might improve their flow. Following the first day of interviews on the first program visit, the study team will convene by phone to discuss these initial interviews to identify any questions needing clarification and to refine the protocol, if necessary.

**Privacy and Data Security**

Data security procedures for the participant interviews will be incorporated into HPOG 2.0’s overall Data Security Plan. The Abt IRB and Cybersecurity teams will review the additions and submit a revised Data Security Plan to ACF for review and approval. Data collected will include:

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15 Gift cards are provided to participants for local stores to ensure that they cannot use the gift cards to purchase alcohol, tobacco, firearms, entertainment, or lottery tickets. Approval of gift cards is pending OMB approval.

16 OPRE will also be informed of the schedule of site visits so that they can inform OFA.
- Personally Identifiable Information (PII) about participants (names, contact information, program take-up, and demographic characteristics) used for selecting participants to interview.
- Interview transcript data which may include sensitive information revealed during the interviews, e.g. topics such as health or finances.
- Informed consents and gift card receipts that include PII, including names.

All project data will be stored on the secure remote server that has dual authentication technology and which is accessible only to approved research team members. Participant names and contact information will be stored on the secure transfer site for easy and secure access on site visits. Audio data will be uploaded from non-secure digital recorders to a secure transfer site (Huddle) and then downloaded directly into the secure remote server for storage. Digital audio recorders will be cleaned (interviews deleted) after each day of interviews. Digital interview data will be destroyed at the end of the National Evaluation contract.

Paper informed consents, hand-written interview notes, and gift card receipts will be stored in locked bags during travel to and from the site visit. These documents will then be stored in locked file cabinets within Abt Associates’ offices to ensure greatest security. All paper informed consents and gift card receipts will be destroyed at the end of the evaluation contract.

The protocols and procedures for data collection will be reviewed by the Abt’s IRB as a modification to the study’s existing IRB submission. If the program is covered by a local IRB, it will review the protocols if requested.

### 4.4 CODING AND ANALYSIS

The study team will collect and analyze data concurrently. All interviews will be coded to allow for a clear and organized understanding of themes in the data and how these answer the research questions. To facilitate in-depth analysis and coding, interviews will be transcribed. All transcriptions and notes from the interviews will be organized and analyzed using NVivo 11.0, a software package designed for the management and analysis of qualitative data. This software facilitates efficient data organization and systematic, reliable, and replicable analyses. Within NVivo, each set of notes will be organized according to program and respondent.

After the first site visit, transcriptions from the interviews will be uploaded into NVivo. The analysis team, consisting of the task lead and three trained coders, will develop a preliminary coding structure based on the research questions’ key themes. Likely coding categories will include: participant motivations; participant experiences with the program; participant career pathways; participant barriers and challenges; supports received by participants. Each of these categories will include a series of sub-categories, codes, and sub-codes that analysts can use to categorize interview transcripts. For example, under participant experiences we might include the following sub-category--‘experiences of program’--broken into four different codes--‘positive,’ ‘negative,’ ‘neutral,’ ‘other.’ The analysis team members will read through the first site visit interviews and conduct a preliminary coding of the interview transcripts. The analysis team will then revise the coding structure to take into account any emergent themes that are relevant but not yet included in the coding structure.
Throughout data collection, the task lead will hold regular check-in meetings with interviewers to discuss emergent themes and data quality. Coders will also be a part of these check-in meetings to familiarize themselves with the themes emerging in the data. We will use these emergent themes to further refine the coding structure for the data, and then use this revised coding tree to code the remaining notes and interview transcripts. Previously coded interviews will be updated to account for revisions to the coding structure. We will check inter-rater reliability of coding between coders, and the task lead will discuss any conflicting interpretations of data with coders to ensure consistency of coding. Codes will have clear definition. If the definition needs to be adjusted based on a new understanding of a topic resulting from the interviews, we will adjust the definition and associated coding accordingly. One way that we manage coding is to start with sorting data into larger categories before finalizing smaller sub-categories of codes. This allows for some reflection of the emerging themes.

In conversation with ACF staff, the HPOG 2.0 Project Director, and Principal Investigator, the evaluation team will work with ACF staff to identify general observations and themes within each research question that warrant further analysis. With this guidance, the participant interview team will then further refine the codes of interest to provide a greater level of depth in the analysis.

Once coding is completed, we will analyze each of the codes in two different ways. First we will read through the interview data that have been categorized into each code to ensure that there is consistency and accuracy in what is in each code. This will also enable us to ascertain any emergent themes from the code to answer relevant research questions. We will write short summaries of how each code adds to our understanding of the research questions. Secondly we will query our qualitative data to identify patterns that cut across programs and notable differences in experiences within and between programs or groups (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). For example, if we are interested in understanding the motivations for participants who are parents, we can run a query for the motivations of all participants who are parents. We can then observe any patterns amongst this group. We will write brief summaries of observations for each query. Based on these different summaries, we will develop an analytic memo that summarizes the key findings for each research question along with additional observations from emergent themes in the data (Guest et al., 2012). This analytic memo will serve as the basis for further discussion with the evaluation team and ACF staff.
5. REPORTING

Abt will produce a series of briefs summarizing findings from the qualitative interviews, similar to the briefs produced for OPRE under the PACE contract. Depending on the findings from the analysis and ACF priorities, brief topics might include participant narratives about and experiences of career pathways; strategies to support participants during occupational training programs; how participants navigate working while participating in the training. The briefs will be written for a broad audience, professionally edited and formatted, and posted to ACF’s website. The final products will be 508 compliant.

17 The link to the home page where all the briefs can be found is: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/pathways-for-advancing-careers-and-education
6. TIMELINE

Chapter 6 carefully considers the interaction of the timing of the tasks for these in-depth interviews with the broader HPOG 2.0 effort. Section 6.1 reviews the timing of developing the research plan and submitting the OMB package. Section 6.2 discusses the anticipated timeline for data collection and analysis. Section 6.3 proposes a timeline for writing the summary briefs. Appendix F provides a Gantt chart of the proposed project timeline.

6.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND OMB MATERIALS

The research design phase occurs between September 2017 and June 2018 and includes:

- Preparation of a research plan
- Preparation of interview protocol and informed consent materials
- Preparation of materials to recruit participants (letter to participants, script for Abt staff to follow in recruiting participants)
- IRB approval

The OMB package will be prepared between March and August 2018, at which point the Abt team will submit the participant interview OMB materials as part of a larger OMB package for the HPOG 2.0 program evaluation. We estimate OMB approval will be received in Spring 2019.

6.2 DATA COLLECTION AND CODING AND ANALYSIS

Training Interviewers and Scheduling Program Visits: We will begin training interviewers and scheduling program visits once the OMB package is approved, which we estimate will occur in the Spring of 2019. We will wait to train interviewers until OMB approval to ensure as short a time as possible between the training process and conducting the interviews. This will keep interviewers up-to-date on any revisions required by OMB and help them maximize retention of learning from the training.

Program Site Visits: Assuming an OMB approval date of Spring 2019, program visits to conduct interviews will occur between July and December 2019.

Transcription of Interviews: Transcription of the interviews will occur as the interviews are completed by an external contractor.

Coding and Analysis: In October 2019, we will begin developing the coding tree and training coders so that coding and analysis of the interviews can begin in November and continue through February 2020. We will hold an interim meeting with ACF to discuss data collection progress in late September or early October 2019 and early reflections on themes observed in the field. We will write analysis memos summarizing key themes in February and March 2020. In March 2020 we will meet with the senior HPOG 2.0 impact evaluation team in preparation for a meeting with ACF in April 2020 to review the key themes from the interviews and determine the topics for the series of policy briefs. Based on ACF feedback at this meeting, additional analyses may be necessary.
6.3 Preparation of Briefs

As noted above, in April 2020 Abt will meet with ACF to discuss the key themes that emerged from the participant interviews and determine the topics for the series of summary briefs to be developed between June and December 2020. We will also discuss the appropriate timeline for release of the briefs. In Appendix F we outline a proposed timeline shaded to represent the possibility for revisions based on ACF review and feedback. For each brief we propose a process that includes drafting the brief and allowing for at least two rounds of ACF review and subsequent revisions. We anticipate that each brief will take approximately 4 months to produce, including editing and formatting. Briefs can be produced simultaneously or staged for release over the course of 6 months, dependent on ACF’s preferences. The timeline suggests that the first brief will be ready for release by October 2020.
REFERENCES


## APPENDIX A: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program Selection</strong></td>
<td>1. Why did participants apply for the HPOG program? To what other job training programs (health and non-healthcare related) did they consider applying for?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) What factors influenced their decision to apply for the HPOG program?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) What were the trade-offs participants made or challenges they had to overcome to complete the application and intake process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupational Selection</strong></td>
<td>2. What factors influence HPOG participants’ choice of occupation?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If participants have chosen a particular occupation, why did they choose this occupation for training? What other occupations did they consider?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) What are participant occupational aspirations? Does this program help the participant to attain those aspirations? If not, why not?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) What factors influenced choosing this particular occupation (e.g., staff input, assessment scores, criminal background history, etc.)?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When did they choose the occupation (before applying to the program, during the program)?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• To what extent did the HPOG application process affect their choice of occupation? For example, were they steered to particular occupational programs?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) To what degree did the length of the HPOG or other trainings influence their decision about what occupation to pursue?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Why are HPOG participants choosing CNA training over LPN training?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) How did program academic standards influence program participant choices about occupations, programs, or ongoing career pathways or ladders?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) What are the barriers to considering a particular occupation?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If participants have not yet chosen an occupation, why have they not yet chosen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) What is their plan for choosing an occupation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) What factors will influence their choice of an occupation?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) To what degree might the structure of the HPOG program influence their decision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) What barriers are influencing their choice of an occupation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Career Pathways</strong></td>
<td>3. How do HPOG participants think about career ladders and pathways?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) For participants with some prior career history, how have they navigated career pathways and tracks in the past?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) What are participants’ plans after they complete the HPOG training?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) Without an HPOG program, what factors would weigh in their decisions to attend training in the future?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>d) Are they going to school intermittently or continuously? Are they working while in training?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Does the program influence how participants think about their career ladder or pathway?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) Does the program encourage additional training?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g) What messages are they getting from the HPOG program they are in about career pathways and tracks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h) What message are they getting from other people in their lives about career pathways and tracks, including their employer if they are working?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Supports</td>
<td>4. What supports have HPOG 2.0 participants received in the program as well as outside of the program? What challenges do participants face in completing the program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Challenges</td>
<td>a) In what ways are participants’ families (kin networks) providing support or hindrance to the participant in completing the HPOG 2.0 program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) In what ways are participants’ employers providing support or hindrance to the HPOG participant in completing the HPOG 2.0 program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) In what ways is the HPOG 2.0 program providing support or hindrance to participants in completing the HPOG 2.0 program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) In what ways are participants’ social networks providing support or hindrance to the participant in completing the HPOG 2.0 program?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) What other factors are supporting or hindering participants in completing the HPOG 2.0 program?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) What supports would participants anticipate being useful in helping them continue additional training or find employment in a related field after they graduate the program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>5. How are participants’ finances influencing their participation in the program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) How are participants paying for training and living expenses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) What financial challenges have participants encountered that have impacted their ability to participate in this or other programs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) How have participants addressed or managed these financial challenges?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) What non-financial resources are participants drawing on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) How do participant attitudes towards finances influence the way they think about success in the program, and/or their career pathways?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) Did financial issues affect the initial choice of which occupation to go into? And are financial issues affecting the decision to go on to do additional career training in the pathway?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>g) Are there programs or benefits that participants receive that impact participants’ experience of the program?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>h) How do participants navigate choices about training and work to meet their financial needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Management</td>
<td>6. If provided, what are participants’ experiences with case management (including personal, academic, employment)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) What type of case management services have they received in the program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) What have been their experiences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Have case management services addressed and helped participants manage challenges to successful participation in the program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) What would they like to see more of? Or less of?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) What recommendations would they give to another program participant?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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APPENDIX B: HPOG 2.0 NON TRIBAL GRANTEES AND 5 YEAR ENROLLMENT GOALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State (city)</th>
<th>Grantee name</th>
<th>Organization Type*</th>
<th>HPOG 1.0 grantee*</th>
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<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX (San Antonio)</td>
<td>Alamo Community College District</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA (Roanoke)</td>
<td>Goodwill Industries of the Valleys</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA (Lynnwood)</td>
<td>Edmonds Community College</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>1,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA (Seattle)</td>
<td>Workforce Development Council of Seattle - King County</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of grantees: 10 7 4 6 14

* Educ. = Educational institution
WSA = Workforce Systems Agency
State gov’t = State government agency
CBO = Community-based organization
HPOG 1.0 grantee = Grantee from first round of HPOG grants
[Date]

[First Name] [Last Name]
[Street Address]
[City], [State] [Zip]

Dear <First Name><Middle Initial><Last Name>,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Evaluation. When you applied to participate in <PROGRAM NAME> in <Site> you agreed to be part of a voluntary research study. The study is being funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). ACF is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Abt Associates is conducting the study for ACF.

When you applied to be part of the program in [RA MONTHYEAR], you signed a consent form. The consent form explained that researchers will want to conduct one or more future surveys or interviews with you. These surveys and interviews will help Abt Associates and ACF learn how programs like <PROGRAM NAME> are working. We are interested in the experiences of everyone who applied to the HPOG program, even if you are no longer participating in the program.

We are writing to let you know that we are getting ready to conduct interviews with some <PROGRAM NAME> participants. This is in addition to a survey that you may be (or have been) contacted for. If you are selected for an interview, [INSERT NAME OF ABT RESEARCHER] from Abt Associates will email or call you to invite you to take part in an interview. If you choose to take part, one of our team members will schedule an interview at a convenient time for you.

During the interview we will talk about your experiences with [NAME OF PROGRAM] in depth. Topics in the interview will include:

- Your experiences in [NAME OF PROGRAM],
- Your goals for your career, and
- How you balance participating in and completing the program with the rest of your life.

This interview will be in person and will take between 60 and 90 minutes. If you participate in the interview, you will receive a gift card in the amount of $50 to thank you for your participation. The interview can be scheduled at a time and place convenient for you. Researchers plan on visiting [NAME OF CITY] between [DATE RANGE].
[INSERT NAME OF ABT RESEARCHER] may contact you in the next few days to discuss this part of the study. If you decide to take part, we will also arrange a time and location to meet.

Whether or not you choose to participate in the interview will not affect any assistance that you may receive now or in the future. If you choose to participate, any information you provide to us will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. Your name will not be used in any of our reports.

If you have any questions or would like to schedule your interview, please call Abt Associates toll-free at 1-866-xxx-xxxx.

Our research is incomplete without you. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Hannah Thomas
HPOG 2.0 Interview Task Lead
Abt Associates

The Paperwork Reduction Act Burden 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 control number for this collection is 0970-0462 and it expires XX/XX/XXXX. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Gretchen Locke at Gretchen_Locke@abtassoc.com; Attn: OMB-PRA (0970-0462).
Dear <First Name><Middle Initial><Last Name>,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Evaluation. When you applied to participate in <PROGRAM NAME> in <Site> you agreed to be part of a voluntary research study. The study is being funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). ACF is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Abt Associates is conducting the study for ACF.

When you applied to be part of the program in [RA MONTH/YEAR], you signed a consent form. The consent form explained that researchers will want to conduct one or more future surveys or interviews with you. These surveys and interviews will help Abt Associates and ACF learn how programs like <PROGRAM NAME> are working.

We are writing to invite you to do an in-person interview with us to find out more about your experiences with [NAME OF PROGRAM]. This is in addition to a survey that you may be (or have been) contacted about. We are interested in the experiences of everyone who applied to the HPOG program, even if you are no longer participating in the program.

Topics in the interview will include:

- Your experiences in [NAME OF PROGRAM],
- Your goals for your career, and
- How you balance participating in and completing the program with the rest of your life.

This interview will be in person and will take between 60 and 90 minutes. If you participate in the interview, you will receive a gift card in the amount of $50 to thank you for your participation. The interview can be scheduled at a time and place convenient for you. Researchers plan on visiting [NAME OF CITY] between [DATE RANGE].

[INSERT NAME OF ABT RESEARCHER] will contact you by phone in the next few days to discuss your involvement in the study. If you decide to take part, we will also arrange a time and location to meet.

Whether you choose to participate in the interview or not will not affect any assistance that you may receive now or in the future. If you choose to participate, any information you provide to us will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. Your name will not be used in any of our reports.

If you have any questions or would like to schedule your interview, please call Abt Associates toll-free at 1-866-xxx-xxxx.

Our research is incomplete without you. I look forward to talking with you soon.
Sincerely,

Hannah Thomas  
HPOG 2.0 Interview Task Lead  
Abt Associates

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Hello Mr./Ms.____________. My name is ______________ and I am part of the team that is evaluating the second round of the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG 2.0) Program. As the [LETTER OR EMAIL] we recently sent you noted, you have been selected from [NAME OF PROGRAM’s] participants. We are inviting those selected to take part in an interview about their experience in the HPOG 2.0 programs. We are interested in the experiences of everyone who applied to the HPOG program, even if you are no longer participating in the program. You may or may not have been already contacted about doing a survey. This interview is not the same as that survey.

In this interview, we would like to talk with you in more detail about your goals for your career, your experiences in [NAME OF PROGRAM], and how you balance participating in and completing the program with the rest of your life. I’m calling today because we will be in [CITY] between [DATE RANGE]. I would like to set up a time to interview you during that visit.

The interview can take place at a location and time that works best for you. It should take about 60 to 90 minutes to complete. If you participate in the interview, you will receive a gift card in the amount of $50 to thank you for your participation. If you have any questions about this phase of the study, I’m happy to answer them. Otherwise, can we find a time to do the interview?

<Arrange date, time, and location>
C.4. EMAIL REMINDER ABOUT SCHEDULING AN INTERVIEW

Dear [NAME],

Over the past few weeks, I’ve been trying to reach you by telephone to request your participation in an interview study as part of the evaluation of the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Program. Your input is very important and I’d like to schedule an appointment for us to talk. The interview should last about 60-90 minutes and after you complete the interview you will receive a gift card valued at $50 to thank you for your participation.

The HPOG study is funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). ACF is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). When you applied to [PROGRAM NAME] in [SITE], you agreed to take part in the HPOG study. These interviews will help the study team and ACF learn how programs like [PROGRAM NAME] are working. We are interested in the experiences of everyone who applied to the HPOG program, even if you are no longer participating in the program.

I would like to schedule an appointment to complete the interview at a time that is convenient for you. Please respond to this email or call me at [xxx-xxx-xxxx]. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have about the interview.

Thank you in advance for your time and assistance with this project.

Sincerely,

[Interviewer Name]

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Privacy and Consent Terms

Health Profession Opportunity Grants, Second Round (HPOG 2.0):
In-Depth Interviews

You are invited to take part in an important interview study about the experiences of participants in healthcare training programs. The study is funded by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Abt Associates is conducting the study for ACF. Your participation in the study will help us learn about how the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Program helps people improve their skills, find jobs, and advance in healthcare careers.

We need to tell you about the interview study and what it means to be part of it. Abt Associates is evaluating HPOG. The HPOG Program is run and funded by ACF. The HPOG evaluation is being led by Gretchen Locke of Abt Associates (Cambridge, Massachusetts). As part of the evaluation, you are invited to take part in a one-on-one interview with an Abt Associates researcher.

What does it mean to be part of the interview study?
Taking part in this part of the study is completely voluntary. If you take part in the interview study, an Abt Associates researcher will meet with you in-person to conduct an interview. The interview will last about 60-90 minutes. To thank you for your participation, you will receive a $50 gift card at the end of the interview.

What type of information will the study collect?
During the interview, the researcher will ask you questions about your job history; your goals and motivations; your finances; and your use of any education, training, and case management programs. You may consider some of these questions personal and sensitive. Because of this, the study team has taken many steps, outlined below, to protect your privacy.

Why do we need to audio-record the interview?
If you take part, we hope you will agree to audio-recording the interview. This means the interviewer can focus on listening to you and asking questions. Audio-recording the interview means we have an accurate record of what you said.

What are the risks and benefits of participating in this study?
The research team has taken careful steps to reduce the risks to you of participating in this study. Even so, you may still face some risks. These risks may include giving information that you consider to be personal and sensitive. Another risk is if someone outside of the study sees your interview information. We will make sure to take the names of people and places out of written or typed notes to protect your privacy.
Although you may not benefit directly from this study, your input will help us understand the issues faced by people like you. This allows the state and federal government to design better programs and services to help people like you achieve their career goals.

Your family, any services you may receive, including those from [NAME OF PROGRAM], and your employment will NOT be affected in any way by taking part or choosing not to take part in this interview study.

**Will my information be kept private?**

The research team is committed to keeping your personal information private to the extent allowed by law. However, there is a small risk of a loss of privacy. We will take strong precautions to make sure this does not happen. We will delete any information that includes your or others’ names, or names of places, when we type up the audio-recording. We will give your interview a study ID. Any piece of paper that includes your name or other identifying information will be kept in a locked storage area. Those documents and the audio recording of your interview will be destroyed after the study ends. Any computer files with your name or other identifying information will be protected by a password and stored on a secure network. Your personal information will be protected to the extent allowed by law. Our reports will combine your responses with responses from others. Any information that could identify you will be kept private and will not be in any report. We may report information from interviews in a presentation or science article.

As part of this study, you will be asked about your experiences at [NAME OF PROGRAM]. However, staff at [NAME OF PROGRAM] will not know that you are involved in this interview (unless you tell them). Anything you report about the program will not be linked to you.

There are some reasons why people other than the study team may need to see data you provided. This includes entities responsible for making sure the research is conducted safely and properly, including government offices. One such entity is the study sponsor, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will not see or have access to your name or address.

Data from your interview may be used by other researchers if they have permission from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Any time we share your information, we will make sure that it only has your study ID number on it and nobody will know your name. Anyone who reads your interview will follow the same rules as we do to keep your information private.

**Requesting Permission**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question. You can stop the interview at any time. All you have to do is say, “I want to stop.”
This agreement is effective from the date you sign it (shown below) until the end of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' research on these HPOG grants, or when you choose to withdraw permission. You may choose to withdraw your participation in the study at any time. If you do withdraw, researchers will continue to use information collected during the time you consented. To withdraw from the study, please call toll-free at 844-717-4691 (the Abt help line for this study).

You will receive a copy of this form for your records. All data collection funded by the federal government has to be approved by the Office of Management and Budget, or OMB. Data collection that is approved by OMB receives an OMB control number. An agency may not collect information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. A person is not required to respond to a request for information unless that number is displayed. The OMB control number for this study is 0970–0462.

For questions or concerns about the research, call Abt Associates toll-free at 844-717-4691. For questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, call Teresa Doksum of the Abt Associates Institutional Review Board toll-free at 877-520-6835. If you have questions, you may contact the study director, Gretchen Locke, at Gretchen_Locke@abtassoc.com or 617-349-2373. You may also contact the task lead for this interview study, Hannah Thomas, at 617-520-2632 or Hannah_Thomas@abtassoc.com.

**Consent to participate in this study**
I have read the information in this consent form. I have discussed my questions with a member of the research staff. I voluntarily agree to participate in this interview. I have received a copy of this signed and dated consent form.

I give my permission to be audio-recorded for this interview.

Participant Name (please print): __________________________________________

Participant Signature: _________________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________________________________

Name of Researcher obtaining this Authorization: ___________________________

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APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol for HPOG 2.0 In-Depth Interviews

Program Name: [NAME OF PROGRAM]

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is _____ and I work for a research company called Abt Associates. Abt has a contract with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to evaluate the Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Program. As part of our evaluation, we want to learn more about what the program is like for program participants. As you may know, HPOG funds [NAME OF LOCAL PROGRAM] and other, similar programs across the country. HPOG aims to provide training for jobs in healthcare. We want to hear from people like you about your experiences in HPOG and your ideas for ways to improve the program.

The information that you share during this conversation will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. Please feel free to share your thoughts openly so that we can provide helpful feedback to the Administration for Children and Families. However, if you do not feel comfortable answering a question, just let me know and we can move on to the next question. Participation is completely voluntary. If you choose not to participate there will be no effect on:

- any services that you or family receive,
- your employment, or
- your relationship with [NAME OF PROGRAM].

I have here an informed consent document. This document talks about your rights as a research participant and our responsibilities as researchers. Please read the informed consent form. If you wish to continue with the interview after reading it, please sign the document.

[Note to Interviewer: answer any questions the participant has about the informed consent. Ensure that you review with them whether or not they wish to be audio-recorded. Give them a copy of the informed consent].

Here is a copy of the informed consent for your records.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

[Note to interviewer: If respondent asks about what HPOG is or what this study is:

The Health Profession Opportunity Grants (HPOG) Program is designed to deliver training in the health professions to eligible individuals. It was originally created in 2010 as part of the Affordable Care Act. In 2015 a second round of grants were made to programs across 21 states. HPOG funds [NAME OF LOCAL PROGRAM] and other, similar programs across the country. Abt Associates and other researchers are evaluating this second round of grants – what we call HPOG 2.0. We want to better understand how participants like yourself experience the program. To do this, we are interviewing folks like you at 14 HPOG 2.0 programs across the country.]
Note to interviewer: Throughout the protocol we refer to either HPOG Program or HPOG training. The HPOG Program is the broader HPOG-funded initiative while HPOG training is the specific training course that the participant has selected. This information will be pre-filled from PAGES prior to the interview where possible.

Introductory questions about interviewee and HPOG participation: (approximately 20 minutes)

Current status with program

We’d like to start by getting to know you and how and why you enrolled in the HPOG program.

1. I’d like to start by hearing about how you came to be in the [LOCAL PROGRAM NAME] HPOG program

2. I want to confirm what specific training you [are/were] enrolled in. Tell me what healthcare occupation [you are pursuing/you pursued] in this program?
   a. Are you working toward a certificate or credential in your educational classes?
      i. [If yes] What certificate or credential are you working toward? When do you expect to receive this certificate or credential?
   b. Have you received any credentials to date from this program?
      i. [If yes] What have you received and when did you receive it?

3. Tell me about the jobs you have held during the past three years.
   a. For each job, can you tell me about the job, such as what you were doing, and your job title?
   b. [For each job, probe for name of job, type of work, whether in healthcare, number of hours per week, stability of hours and schedule, and hourly wage for most recent job]

4. Are you working right now? [If yes] Briefly tell me about your current job.

5. [If no longer enrolled in program] Were you working while participating in [NAME OF PROGRAM]?
   a. Tell me about the work you were doing while participating in [NAME OF PROGRAM].
   b. What factors influenced your decision to work while you were participating in [NAME OF PROGRAM]?

6. Tell me about where you are currently in the program and how it is going. [Follow up question if they don’t give you this information] Have you completed the program, stopped attending, or are you still enrolled?
   a. [If completed program] Were you able to complete the program all at once, or did you have to stop and start again? [Probe] Please tell me more about that.
i. **[If completed all at once]** Congratulations on finishing! Did you have any challenges in completing the program? If so, what kinds of challenges did you face? What helped you overcome these challenges?

ii. **[If had interruptions]** When and for how long did you stop? *[Probe for multiple spells]*

   1. Can you tell me a little bit about what happened or what was going on that interrupted or stopped your participation?

   2. *[Probe for dissatisfaction with program, financial issues, employment, family issues]*

   3. How did the HPOG program staff respond?

   4. How did the coursework professors/teachers respond?

   5. *(If had to drop-out for some period of time)* What else could program staff or professors have done to help you stay enrolled/complete the class/or to help you feel more supported?

   6. *[Probe]* Tell me more about that (e.g., experiences with program staff such as case manager, career advisors, etc.).

b. **[If still enrolled]** How long have you been participating in the HPOG program?

   i. Have you had to take breaks from the HPOG program or slow down your participation?

   ii. **[If yes]** When and for how long did you stop? *[Probe for multiple spells]*

      1. Can you tell me about what happened or what was going on that interrupted or stopped your participation? *[Probe for dissatisfaction with program, financial issues, employment, family issues]*

      2. Did the HPOG program try to help? If so, how? What else could they have done to help you stay enrolled in those moments? Can you say more about that?

c. **[If stopped attending]** Did you stop attending altogether, or did you stop attending for a short time?

   i. When and for how long did you stop? *[Probe for multiple spells]*

   ii. Can you tell me a little bit about what happened or what was going on that interrupted or stopped your participation? *[Probe for dissatisfaction with program, financial issues, employment, family issues, different issues at different times]*

      1. Was there anything that *[NAME OF PROGRAM]* could have done to help you stay enrolled? Can you say more about that?
Goals and Motivations
I want to come back to talk more about your goals and motivations for enrolling in [NAME OF PROGRAM] in more depth. Earlier in the conversation you said your goals for enrolling in the [NAME OF PROGRAM] were [XX]. Did I understand that correctly?

7. What kind of job do you hope to have in five years?
   a. What steps will you need to take to get there?
   b. What types of skills do you need to help you meet that goal?
   c. What challenges might prevent you from getting there?
   d. How might you overcome these challenges?

8. Before doing the program did you have any employment or educational goals? Can you tell me about them?

9. Across the span of your work-life, what have been the key turning points in your education or work experiences that have influenced these goals?

10. Have you noticed any changes in your own self-confidence or motivation as a result of attending this program?

11. What steps [have you taken/are you taking] to help meet your goals?
   a. How is [STEPS MENTIONED BY PARTICIPANT] going?
   b. Can you tell me what has helped you to take those steps?
   c. Can you say more about what makes it challenging?

12. Who have you found to be the most supportive of you in meeting your education and job training goals? Can you give me a specific example of how [INSERT PERSON/PEOPLE] have been helpful.
   a. [Probe for family, friends, program staff, employer, mentors] Can you give any specific examples of how [INSERT PERSON/PEOPLE] have been helpful or not?

13. Have you discussed your short- and long-term educational and employment goals with staff at [NAME OF PROGRAM]?
   a. In what ways have staff helped you or been supportive of you meeting your long-term and shorter term goals?
      i. [Probe: academic advising and supports, career maps, career navigation, and support services]
   b. Have you found staff unsupportive of your goals in any ways? Could you give me a specific example?
c. **[If not mentioned already]** Do you have regular meetings or other opportunities to discuss your short and long-term goals with staff? How useful are these? How have you used them?

d. **[If not mentioned already]** Do staff follow up routinely with you about your short and long-term goals?

i. **[If staff do follow-up]** How often do staff check-in with you about these goals?

e. What conversations have you had with program staff about taking more classes or enrolling in further training?

**Career Pathways**

Now, I’d like to talk a bit about career ladders and pathways.

1. What does “career pathways” mean to you?

2. Can you give an example or two of when you have encountered the concept of career pathways? For example, program staff might have given information about how different healthcare trainings could help you reach your longer-term goals.

a. **[If not mentioned before]** Are there any times that staff or professors in your program might have talked about career pathways? Or how different health training credentials can help you reach your long-term employment goals?

3. Earlier you mentioned that you are pursuing a career as a [OCCUPATION]. How, if at all, do you see the training from [NAME OF PROGRAM] helping you pursue your career as a [OCCUPATION]?

a. How, if at all, do you see the [NAME OF HPOG TRAINING] fitting together with other trainings that you are doing, plan to do, or have done?

b. What are your plans after you complete [HPOG OCCUPATION OR TRAINING COURSE NAME]?

i. Do you think you’ll go on to take more classes or enroll in further training? Why / Why not?

ii. **[If yes]** Tell me which classes you plan to take and why you plan to take those particular classes or training.

iii. What might stop you from continuing with additional training? What might help you overcome those challenges and continue with additional training?

**Occupation selection**

**[If the participant has selected an occupation]** You mentioned that you [are/were] pursuing [HEALTHCARE OCCUPATION OR FIELD] as part of the HPOG program. I’d like to talk about how you selected [HEALTHCARE OCCUPATION OR FIELD].

1. What motivated you to pursue an occupation in healthcare?
2. When did you choose your occupation for healthcare training? [Probe for before or during the program]

3. Did you consider any other occupations? [Ask for specific examples]

4. Tell me about any concerns you had in selecting your occupation.
   a. How did you overcome those concerns?

5. Did you talk with program staff or your instructors about your choice of [HEALTHCARE OCCUPATION OR FIELD]?
   a. [If yes] Can you give me specific examples of a few times when you talked with program staff? [Probe for whether staff provided advice or were hands off]
   b. [If staff provided advice] How did program staff advice influence your decisions or thinking about the program and your career?

6. Besides talking with program staff, were any program classes aimed at helping you select an occupation? For example career exploration, interviews with workers in your proposed field, job shadowing.

7. How did the enrollment process or program activities influence your occupational choice in any way? [If yes] Tell me more about that.
   a. [Probe for any academic standards required for specific programs or occupations that participant considered or program components aimed at helping select an occupation]

8. During the course of the program, [did you change / have you considered changing] the occupation you are training for?
   a. [If yes] What prompted this change?

9. Have you thought about adding any additional trainings while you’re in the current training?

[If the participant has not selected an occupation] You mentioned that you are not yet sure what occupation you intend to pursue as part of the HPOG program.

10. What occupations are you considering?

11. What factors are influencing your decision of these different occupations? [Probe for: enrollment process, support services, instructors or professors, family or friends, length of training, wages of future occupation, other information]

12. Have there been times during the program when you have received advice or support about which occupation to choose?
Experience of program training and support services (20 min)

I’d like to take some time now to talk about your experience at [NAME OF PROGRAM].

Intake and Enrollment in program

Let’s go back to the beginning, when you joined the program. I’d like to hear a bit more about the enrollment process to join the program.

13. Tell me about how you came to participate in [NAME OF PROGRAM].
   a. How did you hear about [NAME OF PROGRAM]?
      i. [Probe for possible sources: through friends, family members, TV, radio, Internet, newspaper, high school counselor, college staff, employer, etc.]
   b. What was your motivation for applying to [NAME OF PROGRAM]?
      i. [Probe] Was there anything going on in your life at the time, for example at home or at work, that made you want to enroll?
      ii. [Probe] When you enrolled, what goals did you hope to achieve?

14. Did you consider applying to any other job training or other education programs?
   a. [If yes] What other job training programs did you apply or consider applying to?

15. Other than HPOG, have you participated in any other type of job training?
   i. [If yes] What type of training? [Probe for each type of training reported]
      1. Who provided it?
      2. When did you participate?
      3. Did you receive any certificate or credential from the job training?
         a. [If yes] What type of certificate (in which occupational field)?

16. Tell me about completing the enrollment process. What was it like?
   a. [Probe for: forms completed, meetings with admissions or program staff, information required]
   b. Can you describe for me any assessments the program had you do as you were going through the enrollment process?
   c. Did you encounter any unexpected challenges? [Probe for issues such as childcare, transportation, finances, documents that were needed, education and qualifications, etc.]
      i. [If yes] How did you overcome these challenges?
   d. What financial information did you need to provide during the enrollment process?
e. How easy or hard was it to understand the financial costs to you for enrolling in the program?

f. Who did you speak to at [NAME OF PROGRAM] in completing the enrollment process? How well, if at all, did they support you? Can you give me specific examples?

17. What were the standards required for joining the [NAME OF PROGRAM]? [Probe for the following: assessment scores, criminal background history, or any other requirements (if applicable)]

18. When did you begin [NAME OF PROGRAM]?

19. Tell me about the classes you’ve taken as part of the [NAME OF PROGRAM].
   a. What did you think of them?
      i. [Probe for perceptions of instructor competence/quality, interesting/relevant content, accessibility, interactions with peers etc. Ask for specific examples.]
   b. What about the classes has been most useful to you so far? Least helpful?
      i. [Probe] Can you give a specific example?
   c. What about the classes has been most difficult for you? Have you been able to overcome that challenge? [If no] What has been the impact of that challenge? [If yes] How have you overcome that challenge?
   d. What has been most easy in the classes?
      i. [Probe] Can you give one or two specific examples?

20. What, if anything, have you had to pay to participate in [NAME OF PROGRAM]?
   e. If you had to pay out of pocket, how did you pay for it?
      i. [Probe for Pell grant, loans, scholarship, financial assistance from family members, employment or savings]

21. Tell me about the services or supports you received as part of the [NAME OF PROGRAM] that were outside of the classes.
   f. [For each service described, probe for the following:]
      i. Who in the program provides support or helps you receive supports or services?
      ii. How often do you meet with this individual? (e.g., on a set schedule, on demand, etc.)
      iii. What type of support does this person provide?
         1. Is the support helpful?
            a. [If yes] In what ways?
            b. [If no] Why not?
iv. How easy was it to meet with advisors, case managers, or other staff?

v. What did you think of the program supports? [Probe how they felt about each of the supports and services that the program provided.]

g. Probe for specific supports provided by [NAME OF PROGRAM] that were not mentioned by interviewee. [PREPOPULATED FOR EACH PROGRAM BY PAGES]

h. [Probe:] What and how much financial support did you receive from [NAME OF PROGRAM]? [Probe for whether respondent will need to pay back any loans]

22. How helpful were the financial supports and resources that you received from [NAME OF PROGRAM]?

23. How easy or difficult [was/is] it to get the financial support you needed from the program? [In particular, probe for challenges navigating the financial aid system, obtaining loans]

   i. [Probe] Can you give me specific examples?

   i. What about the services and supports has been most useful to you so far? Least helpful?

   i. [Probe] Can you explain that further?

24. Did the program meet your expectations of the program? Tell me more about that.

25. If you could wave a magic wand, what would you change about either the classes or the program services and supports?

Role of Finances

Thank you for sharing that. Now I’m going to ask you some questions about your finances.

Let’s start by talking about your finances while you have been enrolled in [NAME OF PROGRAM].

1. Tell me about how you and your family manage/d financially while enrolled in the [NAME OF PROGRAM]?

   a. What have been your sources of income during your HPOG training? [Probe for any earned income, gifts, public assistance.]

   b. Do you get any gifts that have helped you manage financially while enrolled in your HPOG training? For example, help with groceries, or a parent paying for kids’ clothes.

   c. [If working while in training] Earlier you talked about working while you were enrolled in the training. Can you talk me through the decision to keep working while you are in the training?

   d. What are the challenges that you face working while in the HPOG training?
e. **[If financial challenges are not mentioned]** What financial challenges are you currently facing? **[For each of the financial challenges mentioned, probe for details.]** **[Probe for debt, use of public programs to help make ends meet, working while in training]**

f. How different is your financial situation compared to when you first started [NAME OF PROGRAM]?

i. Did you experience any changes during your time in HPOG?

ii. Could you tell me more about that? **[Probe to get information as to what was going on to cause change or to maintain stability]**

iii. What about now? How would you describe your financial situation?

1. In what ways is it different?

2. What challenges are you currently facing financially? **[Probe]** Could you tell me more about that?

2. What advice and support have you received from any instructors or staff on these financial issues?

3. Earlier in our discussion you mentioned you were pursuing a career in [INSERT OCCUPATION]. Have any financial issues played a role in your choice of which occupation to go into?

4. Have financial issues influenced your choice of your training in any ways? **[Probe for length of training if not mentioned.]**

5. How [is/was] your training funded?

6. What, if anything, have you had to pay to participate in [NAME OF PROGRAM]?

   a. If you had to pay out of pocket, how did you pay for it?

      **[Probe for Pell grant, loans, scholarship, financial assistance from family members, employment or savings]**

7. Did the program provide other financial supports for costs not related to tuition?

   a. **[If yes]** Describe for me the different supports the program provided for you.

   b. **[If no]** How did you fund non-tuition training-related costs?

8. What other financial support would have been helpful from the program?

9. How helpful were the financial supports and resources that you received from [NAME OF PROGRAM]?

10. How easy or difficult [was/is] it to get the financial support you needed from the program? **[In particular, probe for challenges navigating the financial aid system, obtaining loans]**

    i. **[Probe]** Can you give me specific examples?
11. Are financial issues affecting your plans to go on to do additional career training?

**Balancing program and life**
You’ve talked about having to manage the demands of the program with the demands of home and [where relevant the demands of work.]

1. What has it been like to balance the competing demands of [NAME OF PROGRAM] with other aspects of your life and your other responsibilities?
   a. Have you encountered any unexpected challenges in managing these competing demands? [Probe for issues such as childcare, transport, difficulty of class, being able to afford tuition or supplies, etc.]
   b. [How did you deal / how are you dealing] with that? [Probe for specific information to understand the implications of how this influences their involvement in the program.]
   c. Do you have any sources of support from family, friends, or mentors that you can rely on to help you deal with these challenges?
      i. **[If yes]** Who provides support? What support do they provide? Is this support helpful? **[If yes]** In what ways?

2. Do you feel that program staff and instructors understand the fact that you and your classmates have responsibilities and competing priorities outside of class?
   a. [Probe] Can you give me specific examples of when they have been supportive or unsupportive? [Probe particularly for balancing work and training at the same time]

**Other Challenges**

3. What other challenges have you faced in completing the program that we haven’t talked about yet?

4. How have you overcome these challenges?

**Support beyond program (10 min)**

**Family and Friends support**
I’d like to ask you more about your family relationships and their role in your HPOG participation.

12. What do your family and friends say to you about your participation in [NAME OF PROGRAM]?
   a. [Probe as to whether they think participation is a good idea, feasible given the respondents’ circumstances, etc.]

13. How supportive are your friends and family regarding your educational goals?
   b. Could you tell me more about that? [Probe for concrete examples]
   c. How supported do you feel by your family and friends in reaching your goals? Can you give me some specific examples?
i. [Probe] Can you tell me about any times where family and friends have said something positive or negative about your goals?

ii. [Probe] Can you tell me about help or support your family and friends have given you?

iii. [If taking more classes] Are family and friends supportive of you taking more classes or enrolling in further training?

[If working and still in training]

I’d like to briefly talk about how supportive your employer is of your enrollment in the program.

1. How supported do you feel by your employer in attending [NAME OF PROGRAM]? Can you give me some specific examples of ways your employer supports you? Or does not support you?

[For all working respondents]  
I’d like to briefly talk about how supportive your employer is of your longer-term career goals.

2. Do you talk with your employer about your career goals and future education?

3. How supportive is your employer of your long-term career goals and future education?

Closing questions (5 minutes)

Before we wrap up, I’d like to end by asking you a few questions about your overall impressions and insights about [NAME OF PROGRAM] and the HPOG program.

1. What is your overall assessment of your time in [PROGRAM]? Would you recommend this program to others? Why or why not?

2. As I mentioned earlier, [NAME OF PROGRAM] is part of a national evaluation of programs that are trying to help individuals reach their career goals. What would you tell policy makers or other program staff about the types of services, programs, or other changes that people like you need in order to reach those goals?

3. Given everything we’ve talked about today, what else do you think would be useful for the researchers studying this program to know about your experience?

Thank you for your time in talking with us. Your input is invaluable to our research, and will play an important role in helping policy makers improve HPOG programs like [NAME OF PROGRAM]. If you have any further questions, you can contact the task lead for this interview study, Hannah Thomas. Here is her business card.

[GIVE THE PARTICIPANT THEIR GIFT CARD AND HAVE THEM SIGN A GIFT CARD RECEIPT FORM.]
# APPENDIX F: PROJECT TIMELINE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare Research Plan</td>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>Aug</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepare Interview Protocols</td>
<td>Oct</td>
<td>Nov</td>
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<td>Prepare IRB Package</td>
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<td>Prepare OMB Package</td>
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<td>OMB Package Submission</td>
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<td>Training for Interviewers</td>
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<td>Schedule Site Visits and Interviews</td>
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<td>Conduct Interviews</td>
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<td>Meeting with ACF to Review Themes</td>
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<td>Writing Brief 1</td>
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<td>Revisions to Brief 1</td>
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