



Clinical Laboratory Leadership Feedback on DLS Professional Development Service Offerings

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Interview Guide

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Clinical Laboratory Leadership Feedback on DLS Professional Development Service Offerings: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Introduction and Consent (5 minutes)

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for volunteering to speak with us about your experience with CDC laboratory training and professional development offerings. My name is [INSERT NAME] and I will be facilitating our discussion today. My colleague [INSERT NAME] will be taking notes. We are from Booz Allen Hamilton and are conducting these interviews on behalf of CDC's Division of Laboratory Systems. Before we begin the discussion, I would like to provide a bit of background about the goals of today's interview.

CDC's Division of Laboratory Systems provides a wide-range of training resources and professional development opportunities for public health and clinical laboratory professionals. We are conducting focus groups with laboratory bench staff and interviews with laboratory leadership such as yourself to understand how CDC can make laboratory training and other professional development opportunities more accessible, effective, and tailored to public health and clinical laboratory professionals. These interviews are being conducted to explore how leadership use CDC training and professional development offerings to address current and prospective competency needs of laboratory staff.

This interview will last about 60 minutes. Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. We greatly appreciate your honesty and openness, so we can paint as accurate a picture as possible.

We would like to record our conversation today simply to ensure the accuracy of our notes and final report. Both the audio recording and interview notes will be kept in a secure location. The audio recording will be destroyed once the notes are deemed accurate. We will remove any identifying information from the notes and our final report in order to maintain your confidentiality.

Do you have any questions about the interview? Do we have your permission to record our discussion and proceed?



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Background (5 minutes)

Before we begin, we would like to provide definitions for a few terms that we will use frequently during our discussion.

- **Definition of Training:** When we mention training, we are referring to both informal (e.g., on-the-job instruction) or formal (e.g., a lecture-based course, a hands-on workshop, an eLearning/virtual course) trainings. *Source: CDC Quality Training Standards*
 - Please know that some of these trainings are done in collaboration with APHL (the Association of Public Health Laboratories), and others are not. Trainings are available at www.cdc.gov/labtraining
 - CDC Trainings and Training Resources such as:
 - Basic/introductory e-learning courses in microbiology (e.g., “Routine Microscopy Procedures”), molecular biology (e.g., “PCR and Real-time PCR”), and laboratory informatics (e.g., “Life of a Specimen”)
 - Safety eLearning courses (e.g., “Fundamentals of Centrifuge Safety”, “Fundamentals of Chemical Fume Hood Safety”, and “Fundamentals of Working Safely in a Biological Safety Cabinet”)
 - Packaging and shipping seminars held locally in public health laboratories around the country
 - In-person “hands-on” workshops held in CDC’s Training Lab in Atlanta (Topics: TB, PFGE, Mycology, PFGE Sequencing, Parasitology)
 - The 2015 CDC-APHL Competency Guidelines for laboratory professionals
- **Definition of Professional Development:** Though training is a kind of professional development activity, when we use the term “professional development”, we are referring to activities other than training, activities such as internships, fellowships, mentoring, temporary job assignments, leadership development programs and resources, etc. [By “fellowships”, we are referring to *post-Masters* or *post-doctoral* (e.g., PhD, ScD) programs that are typically 1- or 2-year experiences that train individuals in public health laboratory practice (e.g., APHL-CDC Laboratory Fellowships, CDC’s Laboratory Leadership Service) or clinical laboratory practice (e.g., ASM’s CPEP program). We are not referring to fellowships that are completed by MDs after their clinical residencies nor to clinical rotations or internships completed by MLT or MLS students as part of their degree program]. *Source: CDC*
- **Definition of New Staff:** Where we mention new staff, we are referring to individuals who are either new to being employed as a clinical laboratory professional or those who are simply new to their current employer. So, these are likely recent graduates who have been working in a clinical laboratory less than one or two years OR they could be more seasoned/experienced staff who recently got a job with a different employer and so are “new” to that laboratory organization.



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Interview Questions (45 minutes)

To get us started, please state your role/title and describe your main job responsibilities with respect to staff training and professional development.

Section I: Utilization of CDC Training Resources and Professional Development Opportunities (10 minutes)

For the first section of the interview, we want to explore how your staff use CDC training resources and professional development opportunities.

1. What knowledge, skills, and abilities do your staff most frequently seek CDC resources for?
[Probes (if needed)]
 - How often do your staff use CDC resources for training and professional development?
 - What is the perceived need for trainings or professional development opportunities that are technical versus non-technical in nature?
 - o Examples include skills in written and oral communication, project management, leadership, training or mentoring other staff, and professional ethics.
 - What is the perceived need for trainings or professional development opportunities that are cross-cutting in nature?
 - o Examples include laboratory safety, quality/quality management systems, laboratory informatics, packaging and shipping) versus ones that are very pathogen-, technology-, or test-specific.

2. How effective are current CDC training resources and professional development opportunities in meeting your workforce development needs?
[Probes (if needed)]
 - What does “effective” mean to you when assessing these resources and opportunities?
 - Do you supplement CDC training resources or professional development opportunities with additional content or activities? If so, please explain which trainings and professional development opportunities you have had to supplement and why.
 - How does this differ between new staff and more experienced staff?

3. How do you determine which CDC training resources and professional development opportunities to recommend to staff? Please describe the key factors involved in your decision.
[Probes (if needed)]
 - Cost (i.e., free)
 - Convenience
 - Build particular knowledge, skills, and abilities (i.e., relevance/address competency gaps)
 - P.A.C.E. or other continuing education credit available

4. Are any CDC trainings strongly recommended or mandated? If so, which ones?
[Probes (if needed)]
 - Are these offerings included in your laboratory’s professional development strategy and/or plan for staff?

5. How do you ensure that CDC training resources and professional development opportunities are accessible by all staff who wish to participate?



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[Probes (if needed)]

- If a staff member expresses an interest in a training or professional development opportunity, are they able to participate, or is there an approval process or other steps they must take?

Section II: Current and Prospective Gaps (20 minutes)

For this section of the interview, we want to explore how you use CDC training resources and professional development opportunities to address current and prospective knowledge, skills, and abilities your laboratory staff want and/or need to improve.

6. Currently, what do you perceive to be the most common gaps in knowledge, skills, and abilities of your laboratory staff that CDC training resources and professional development opportunities do not address?

[Probes (if needed)]

- Would you consider these the most critical gaps in knowledge, skills, and abilities within your laboratory that CDC training resources and professional development opportunities do not address? If different, please explain.
 - Are the most common gaps and most critical gaps the same or different for new versus experienced staff members? If different, please explain.
7. Thinking about the future environment of the laboratory and the expected knowledge, skills, and abilities that your laboratory staff will need, what do you see as the greatest needs/biggest gaps in what trainings and professional development that CDC offers?

[Probes (if needed)]

- Technical (e.g., fundamental testing techniques or skills, informatics)
- Technology (e.g., new assay platforms, advancements in automation)
- Workforce changes (e.g., retirements, low retention rates among younger staff, or staff advancing to managerial/leadership positions)

Section III: Facilitators and Barriers (10 minutes)

Let's talk about challenges and facilitators, the things that make it hard or easy to choose, access, and utilize CDC laboratory training resources and professional development opportunities.

8. In your experience, what factors positively influence your staff's ability to participate in CDC trainings or professional development opportunities?

[Probes (if needed)]

- Time (e.g., no travel required, working hours allowed for training and professional development, allotted training hours for training and professional development)
- Cost (e.g., paid for by employer, inexpensive)
- Access (e.g., high frequency of trainings, types/modality of trainings)



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9. In your experience, what factors negatively influence your staff's ability to participate in CDC trainings or professional development opportunities?

[Probes (if needed)]

- Awareness (e.g., not always aware of what's available)
- Time constraints (e.g., high workloads, travel required)
- Cost constraints (e.g., institutional support to fund training, too expensive, travel required)
- Relevance (e.g., types of trainings are not adequate or relevant to your job)
- Access limitations (e.g., travel required, low frequency, requires high-speed Internet access, CDC TRAIN access or performance issues)
- How does this differ between new staff and more experienced staff?

10. How can CDC better support your workforce development needs, particularly in the areas of training and professional development?

[Probes (if needed)]

- What workforce development programs/initiatives would you like to see?
- What workforce development challenges would you like to see CDC get (more) engaged in helping solve?

Section V: Closing

To wrap up our conversation, we want to ensure that you have the opportunity to share additional information that you believe would be useful.

11. Is there anything that we missed during our conversation today that you believe would have been valuable to know and/or discuss?

12. Do you have any questions for us?

Wrap Up and Thank You (5 minutes)

Thank you for your time and valuable insights. Your participation will help CDC make training and professional development opportunities that better meet the needs of clinical and public health laboratory staff. If you have any further questions regarding our conversation today, please contact our team at [INSERT EMAIL]. Enjoy the rest of the [day/conference/training, as applicable].