

Massachusetts Department of Education
Adult and Community Learning Services

Program Monitoring Tool

The mission of ACLS is to provide each and every adult with opportunities to develop literacy skills needed to qualify for further education, job training, and better employment, and to reach his/her full potential as a family member, productive worker, and citizen.

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ACLS Program Monitoring Tool

Introduction

The Massachusetts Indicators of ABE Program Quality

Indicators of Program Quality are characteristics, processes and/or structures that must be present in an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program to ensure that the highest quality services possible are offered to students. In 1992, the National Adult Education Act mandated that states adopt Indicators of Program Quality to evaluate and monitor program effectiveness. ACLS developed the Indicators of Program Quality by engaging with the field to identify appropriate measures, standards, and resources. Although the Indicators of Program Quality have been reorganized over the years, they reflect the values identified in consultation with ABE practitioners since the early 1990s. They continue to represent the foundation on which the ACLS Program Monitoring is built. The Program Monitoring Tool is comprised of the Indicators of Program Quality (IPQ) and the related standards and criteria. These are the foundation of program monitoring.

The ABE accountability system and all compliance requirements are outlined in full detail in the *Massachusetts Guidelines for Effective Adult Basic Education*. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/abeguide.doc>. It may be helpful to refer to these Guidelines in preparation for the monitoring. ACLS further encourages programs to use the Indicators of Program Quality and the related standards and criteria in this document for program self-evaluation prior to the monitoring.

Finally, for information related to compliance on the Performance Standards for Community Adult Learning Centers, including definitions, exclusions, notes, and where the data can be found, visit the Performance Standards page on the ACLS website: http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/pawg/fc340_345_359.html. Additionally, information regarding the ACLS assessment policies may be found on the ACLS web site: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/assessment/>.

Indicators of Program Quality	
Indicator	Descriptor
Indicator 1: Curriculum Development, Implementation and Instructional Methods	Curriculum development and instruction are aligned with and incorporate learning standards from the Massachusetts ABE Curriculum Frameworks, and contribute to students' progress toward achieving their goals.
Indicator 2: Student Educational Progress	Students demonstrate gains in literacy and/or English skills and abilities that impact their roles as workers, family members, community members, and as lifelong learners.
Indicator 3: Instructional Support Services	The program offers counseling and other services to support instruction and meet students' needs.
Indicator 4: Community Linkages	The program has developed linkages that connect community assets to student needs.
Indicator 5: Program Continuous Improvement Planning	Program continuous improvement planning embodies effective organizational structures and processes to serve the needs of adult students.
Indicator 6: Professional Development	Exemplary professional development opportunities enhance educator professionalism to provide quality instruction for students.
Indicator 7: Program Management, Leadership and Accountability	Program management and accountability are efficient, and effectively address all components of service delivery

Steps in the Program Monitoring Process — A guide for the Program Director and Program Staff

Setting Dates

1. The Program Director is notified via letter from ACLS that the program has been selected to be monitored.
2. The Program Specialist assigned as liaison to the program will serve as the Team Leader for the monitoring. A second Program Specialist will be assigned to the monitoring team as well as a representative from the Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB). A third ACLS staff person may be assigned for the monitoring of large and/or geographically dispersed programs.
3. The Team Leader contacts the Program Director and negotiates dates to schedule the following:
 - a) A pre-monitoring meeting for the entire program staff to be led by the Monitoring Team;
 - b) A program monitoring (including back-up dates within one month of the scheduled monitoring visit in case of inclement weather, etc.);
 - c) An exit meeting, during which the monitoring team reviews findings (areas of non-compliance), as well as recommendations and commendations (promising practices), with the program staff. A representative of the local SABES office is invited to the exit meeting to learn of promising practices and to identify how SABES may assist the program with developing a corrective action plan to address any findings and/or recommendations from the monitoring team.

Pre-Monitoring Meeting

4. At least one month prior to the monitoring, the Team Leader schedules a pre-monitoring meeting with the program. The purposes of the meeting include:
 - a) familiarizing as many program staff as possible with the monitoring process and its purpose;
 - b) providing an opportunity for the program staff to meet the monitoring team and vice versa;
 - c) helping program staff determine ways to prepare for the monitoring;
 - d) providing examples of the types of data the team will need; and,
 - e) clarifying the time and input needed from each staff person during the monitoring visit
5. The Team Leader sends written confirmation of the dates and times for the following: pre-monitoring meeting (2 or more hours), the monitoring (3 or more days), and the exit meeting (2 or more hours).
6. The Program Director accesses the Monitoring Tool from the ACLS web site (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/acls/>) and distributes copies to staff for review prior to the pre-monitoring meeting. ACLS recommends that the program use the Monitoring Tool to complete a program self-evaluation with the active involvement of as many staff as possible.
7. During the monitoring, the Team will:
 - a) interview a representative sampling of (if not all) staff, students, advisory board members, and community planning representatives; and,
 - b) review program records, including: curricula, including lesson plans and instructional materials; counseling, student and personnel files; program and staff development plans; and meeting minutes.

The Exit Meeting

8. The Exit Meeting: Within a month of the conclusion of the monitoring, the Monitoring Team delivers (by e-mail) a final report with key findings, recommendations, and commendations (promising practices). All findings require resolution through a corrective action response. Shortly after the program has received the final report, the Monitoring Team reassembles at the program to review highlights of the final report and allows time for a discussion of the report at an Exit Meeting. The date of this meeting will be negotiated with the Program Director and the Monitoring Team. Programs should make every effort to include the following groups in the Exit Meeting: students, teachers, counseling staff, support staff, the organization's leaders (e.g., Superintendent, President, Executive Director), the Advisory Council, grant coordinators.

Program Feedback

9. Program Feedback: Within a month of the Exit Meeting, the Program Director may send written comments to the Team Leader with feedback about the monitoring process and/or final report. Program feedback will be reviewed with the ACLS administrator and responded to on a case-by-case basis. The Department will assume the report has been accepted by the program without exception if no comments are received within the month.

The Corrective Action Response

10. All findings will require a corrective action response and a resolution to be determined by the monitoring team and communicated to the Program Director.

Recommendations Not Related to Compliance

11. Recommendations that are not compliance issues do not require corrective action. However, the program may elect to include and document such recommendations in its annual continuous improvement process.

The Massachusetts Indicators of Program Quality: The Standards and Criteria

Quality Indicator 1: Curriculum development and instruction are aligned with and incorporate learning standards from the Massachusetts ABE Curriculum Frameworks and contribute to students' progress toward achieving their goals.

Standard 1.1. The program is working toward one, unified, program-wide curriculum for each service (e.g., ABE or ESOL).

Criterion	Source of Information
A. The program is working to make its curriculum consistent with the Massachusetts ABE Curriculum Frameworks.	A. Staff interviews, documentation such as evidence of alignment that might include one or more of the following: scope and sequence, outline of curricula, thematic units or sample lesson plans
B. Where the sequence of three class offerings is met through collaborations, the curricula at the collaborating programs are complementary with each other and aligned with the Frameworks.	B. Staff interviews and evidence that the MOA is reviewed and updated (if needed) annually. The MOA references the alignment of curricula between agencies
C. The program uses the benchmarks in the Curriculum Frameworks to help coordinate instructional levels.	C. Staff interviews
D. The program has regular and ongoing common planning time for the purpose of developing curricula.	D. Staff interviews

Standard 1.2. Curricula incorporate “authentic” real-life contexts that are responsive to the needs, skills, goals, and interests of adult students in their roles as workers, family and community members, and lifelong learners.

Criterion	Source of Information
A. The program uses lesson plans and instructional materials with contexts relevant to students in their roles as family members, workers, members of community, and lifelong learners.	A. Staff and student interviews
B. The curricula and associated materials reflect the diverse educational, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the students served.	B. Staff and student interviews

Quality Indicator 1: Curriculum development and instruction are aligned with and incorporate learning standards from the Massachusetts ABE Curriculum Frameworks and contribute to students' progress toward achieving their goals.	
Standard 1.3. The design and delivery of instructional services meet the minimum requirements of the Guidelines for Effective ABE.	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. The program offers at least a sequence of three classes at the same part of the day (morning, afternoon or evening).	A. Staff and student interviews-Comparison of program implementation with approved Program Design
B. Each class in the sequence offers 32-48 weeks of instruction per year.	B. Staff and student interviews-Comparison of program implementation with approved Program Design
C. Each rate-based class offers a minimum of 5 hours of instruction per week.	C. Staff and student interviews-Comparison of program implementation with approved Program Design
D. Student enrollment is consistent with the approved number of slots per class.	D. Staff and student interviews-Comparison of program implementation with approved Program Design
Standard 1.4. The program provides adequate and appropriate instructional materials to all students.	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. The program provides all students with instructional materials for classroom use at no cost, and for review at home either at no cost or for a refundable deposit.	A. Student and staff interviews
B. The program uses the \$80/slot to provide students with appropriate texts and consumables (paper, pens, pencils, notebooks, binders and workbooks, educational software, worksheets, dictionaries, manipulatives, etc.).	B. Student and staff interviews

Quality Indicator 1: Curriculum development and instruction are aligned with and incorporate learning standards from the Massachusetts ABE Curriculum Frameworks, and contribute to students' progress toward achieving their goals.	
Standard 1.5. Instructional methods and practices reflect a variety of approaches to implement the curriculum.	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. Instructors have written lesson plans.	A. Staff interviews and documentation. Lesson plans contain learning objectives, activities, materials, wrap up, and assessments
B. Instructional methods include interactive activities to engage a range of learning preferences, e.g., visual, aural, tactile, kinesthetic, etc.	B. Student and staff interviews. Lesson plans reflect a range of instructional activities to accommodate students' diverse learning styles
C. Instructional strategies include whole group, small group, and individualized instruction to respond to the needs of the student population at diverse levels and with different learning styles.	C. Student and staff interviews and lesson plans
D. A variety of tools and technologies (e.g., audio-visual, computers, video, tape recorders, telephones, calculators, etc.) are used to support learning.	D. Student and staff interviews and lesson plans
E. The Technology Coordinator supports the effective use of technologies throughout the program for instruction.	E. Staff interviews and documentation
F. The Technology Coordinator provides training and technical assistance to staff as needed.	F. Staff interviews and documentation
Standard 1.6. Program uses a variety of assessment tools and methods, in addition to the assessments required by DOE, to measure student progress and align with and inform instruction.	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. Program uses ACLS required standardized assessment tools to measure student progress and inform instruction.	A. Teacher interviews and student records
B. In addition to the standardized assessments, the program uses program-developed assessments to measure student progress and inform instruction.	B. Teacher interviews, student interviews and documentation, e.g., samples of classroom-based and placement assessments

Quality Indicator 2: Students demonstrate gains in literacy and/or English skills and abilities that impact their roles as workers, family members, community members, and as lifelong learners.

Standard 2.1. Program’s assessment practices follow ACLS Assessment Policy and Procedures.

Criterion	Source of Information
A. A minimum of 2 staff members are trained to administer and/or score each assessment required by their program design: ESOL = BEST Plus and/or REEP; and/or ABE = MAPT. Note: Only one trained staff member is required for TABE L	A. Teacher interviews and program/teacher files
B. All staff administering and scoring assessments have successfully completed trainings to administer and score the state-required tests and have certificates on file at the program.	B. Staff interviews and program teacher files
C. The program documents that procedures are followed to ensure consistent test administration and scoring among program staff.	C. Staff interviews; review of program assessment policy

Standard 2.2. Program staff (teachers, counselors, etc.) uses assessment results to drive the continuous improvement of curriculum, instruction, and student learning.

Criterion	Source of Information
A. Staff regularly communicates with students regarding goal setting and progress towards goals.	A. Staff interviews and student interviews
B. Classroom and standardized assessments are used on an ongoing basis to inform students of their progress.	B. Staff and student interviews and/or samples of student work

Standard 2.3. Students make progress toward and achieve their goals (“Countable Outcomes”).

Criterion	Source of Information
A. Program has a student goal-setting process.	A. Staff interviews and student interviews
B. Goal setting is done with a staff member who is likely to have an ongoing relationship with the student.	B. Staff interviews and student interviews
C. Goals must be determined by the student and negotiated with a staff member.	C. Staff interviews and student interviews
D. Student goals are recorded as articulated by the student and communicated to the staff member.	D. Review of student records and Cognos goals cube; staff and student interviews
E. Student goals inform instruction and are incorporated into program’s curriculum development process.	E. Staff and student interviews, reviews of curriculum and lesson plans
F. Student goals are revisited on a regular basis.	F. Staff interviews and student interviews
G. The achievement of Columns A, B and C goals are recorded in the SMARTT System	G. Program documentation and staff interviews
H. Attainment of Column A and Column B goals are documented according to the DOE’s Countable Outcomes policy.	H. Program documentation and staff interviews

Quality Indicator 3. The program offers counseling and other services to support instruction and meet students' needs.	
Standard 3.1. Educational counseling is provided to all students.	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. Students can identify available counseling services.	A. Student interviews.
B. The program has the capacity to provide counseling in the native language of the most predominant non-English speaking student language group.	B. Student and staff interviews.
C. The program makes every effort to communicate key aspects of program policy and procedures such as expectations regarding attendance, class participation, fire drills, emergency evacuation, etc., to all language groups.	C. Translated handbooks, policies, and emergency procedures; staff and student interviews.
D. There is a posted schedule stating days and times that counseling is available to students.	D. Schedule; student interviews.
E. Counseling schedule is sufficiently flexible to meet students' needs.	E. Student interviews.
Standard 3.2. The program Counselor/ADA Coordinator provides reasonable accommodations for students with physical and learning disabilities either through the Program's own resources or by referral to outside agencies.	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. The program has a system (policy, staffing and resources) in place to provide reasonable accommodations for students with self-disclosed disabilities (physical and/or hidden) through its own resources or by referral to outside agencies.	A. Policy handbook; staff interviews.
B. The Counselor/ADA Coordinator orients new staff and trains all staff at least annually regarding ADA issues.	B. Staff interviews; schedule of trainings completed; agenda or learning objectives and participant list for each training.
C. The Counselor/ADA Coordinator keeps documentation of counseling including ADA related activities in locked files to assure confidentiality.	C. Review of non-confidential student records.
D. Programs provide physical accessibility to all. Students with disabilities must be able to access all services.	D. Observation.

Quality Indicator 3. The program offers counseling and other services to support instruction and meet students' needs.

Standard 3.3. The program has adequate retention strategies in place.

Criterion	Source of Information
A. Within 30 days of enrollment, each student receives an orientation that includes information on the attendance policy, counseling services, grievance procedure, rights and responsibilities and basic rules and regulations.	A. Student and staff interviews, documentation of orientation.
B. The program provides each student with a student handbook that clarifies and explains program policies. These may include, for example, policies regarding attendance, absenteeism, grievance procedures, educational counseling (and all student support services), assessment, course offerings, severe weather, fire drill instructions, drug and alcohol policy, expectations for staff and student behavior and other appropriate program specific information.	B. Copy of student handbook; student and staff interviews
C. The program has an attendance policy that is applied effectively.	C. Written attendance policy; student and staff interviews.
D. The program implements a process that follows up on student absences.	D. Student and staff interviews.
E. The program provides any ancillary services (e.g., childcare, transportation) for which it receives funding.	E. Student and staff interviews.

Quality Indicator 4. The program has developed linkages that connect community assets to student needs.	
Standard 4.1. The program has engaged the partnership in the community planning process in order to provide opportunities for students to access support services and participate in community activities.	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. The program has secured the active involvement of a wide range of community and voluntary organizations as members of the partnership.	A. Community partnership membership list with affiliations; meetings minutes with attendance; director and/or community planner interview; (optional: interviews with representatives from partnership)
B. The partnership reviews community assets and needs to identify major changes in the community.	B. Director and community planner interviews (optional: most recent assets and needs report and/or most recent update)
C. The program is actively engaged as a community partnership member in implementing a strategic plan to meet unmet needs.	C. Director and community planner interviews; most recent version of strategic plan with changes highlighted.
D. Through the community partnership, the program helps students access resources in the community. Students benefit from a broad array of educational, employment and training, and health and human services available in order to successfully pursue their goals and aspirations.	D. Director and/or community planner interview; documentation
E. The program is actively working to increase awareness and appreciation of ABE as a key ingredient in any plans to improve the quality of life in the community and the region.	E. Director and community planner interviews
Standard 4.2. The program is working toward the integration of its ABE services with workforce development services.	
A. The program is implementing the plans for ABE/workforce development integration as outlined in their grant proposal.	A. Staff interviews, student interviews, and documentation.

Quality Indicator 5. Program continuous improvement planning embodies effective organizational structures and processes to serve the needs of adult students.	
Standard 5.1. The continuous improvement planning process is purposeful, ongoing, and systematic, and is focused on the program's effectiveness in supporting learners in the attainment of language and literacy skills.	
Criteria	Source of Information
<p>A. Program continuous improvement planning includes a systematic approach to collecting and using data in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess program strengths and needs; • identify priorities for program improvement; • identify goals; • develop a continuous improvement plan to meet those goals; • implement the plan; and, • evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and revise as needed. <p>The process looks at each component and the interrelationship of components within the program, e.g. intake, orientation, assessment, counseling, instruction, follow-up, etc.</p>	<p>A. Continuous improvement plan; other documentation such as meeting minutes, student surveys, etc.; staff and student interviews.</p>
<p>B. The program uses a variety of methods to gather and document input from students in order to determine satisfaction with the program and to direct planning for program improvement.</p>	<p>B. Staff and student interviews and documentation of methods used to gather input from students (e.g. student surveys, meeting notes, etc.)</p>
<p>C. The program uses a continuous improvement planning process that solicits and incorporates staff input.</p>	<p>C. Continuous improvement plan; staff interviews; staff meeting minutes that include attendance.</p>
<p>D. The program provides two to four weeks of paid time for direct service staff to devote to issues of planning and development during weeks that classes are not in session.</p>	<p>D. Staff interviews.</p>
<p>E. The program holds full staff meetings on a regular basis (at least quarterly) that allow for the maximum possible participation of both full and part-time staff and documents meetings with minutes.</p>	<p>E. Continuous improvement plan; staff interviews; staff meeting minutes that include attendance.</p>
<p>F. A limited number of designated staff is responsible for program continuous improvement planning, and these staff hours are designated on the program staffing chart.</p>	<p>F. Continuous improvement plan; SMARTT plan, other documentation, and staff interviews.</p>
<p>G. The continuous improvement plan is documented, and all staff understand their role both in the planning process and in helping to achieve the program's goals.</p>	<p>G. Continuous improvement plan; staff interviews.</p>
<p>H. The program director is proficient in using Cognos to retrieve and analyze program data.</p>	<p>H. Director interview.</p>
<p>I. Program staff review data on an ongoing basis, including Cognos data; all staff meet at least twice per year to analyze data that affect daily operations, program planning, and continuous improvement planning.</p>	<p>I. Continuous improvement plan; staff interviews; staff meeting minutes that include attendance.</p>
<p>J. Program maintains a minimum of two staff proficient in using SMARTT.</p>	<p>J. Staff interviews, in particular with the two staff trained in SMARTT. Staff development documentation.</p>

Quality Indicator 5. Program continuous improvement planning embodies effective organizational structures and processes to serve the needs of adult students.	
Standard 5.2. The program uses a continuous improvement planning process that solicits and incorporates Advisory Council input.	
Criteria	Source of Information
A. A Program Advisory Council helps the program meet its goals. The Advisory Council is separate from any governing board, Board of Directors or Community Planning Partnership. The program uses a planning process that solicits and incorporates student and Advisory Council input.	A. Advisory Council meeting minutes; interview with at least one Advisory Council member.
B. The Advisory Council is made up of a diverse group of stakeholders from the community.	B. Advisory Council meeting attendance as reflected in minutes; list of members and their affiliations or constituencies they represent.
C. The Advisory Council meets at least three times per year with minutes kept on file.	C. Advisory Council meeting minutes; interview with at least one Advisory Council member; director interview.
D. Students participating on the Advisory Council are provided with training and ongoing support.	D. Student interviews; director interview.

Quality Indicator 6. Exemplary professional development opportunities enhance educator professionalism to provide quality instruction for students.	
Standard 6.1. The program uses an integrated process for program and professional development, and provides adequate staffing to lead that process.	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. The program director and Program/Staff Development (P/SD) Facilitator ensure that the program uses a continuous planning process that links program goals with individual professional/staff development plans.	A. Staff interviews; continuous improvement plan; individual staff development plans
B. Every staff member (including administrators) creates an individual professional development plan annually that addresses individual professional goals and relevant program improvement goals.	B. Staff interviews; continuous improvement plan; individual staff development plans
Standard 6.2. All staff has engaged in staff development activities for at least 2.5% of his/her total paid hours and not less than 12 hours per year.	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. Documentation is on file that each staff member has engaged in relevant staff development activities for at least 2.5% of his/her total paid hours and for not less than 12 hours/year. (This 2.5%/12 hour minimum is in addition to the 15-hour New Staff Orientation required in the first year of hire.)	A. Staff development plans; staff, P/SD Facilitator interviews; documentation
B. The director and program/professional development facilitator work together to ensure that information about professional development opportunities, including ACLS mailings, the SABES calendar, and other resources, are shared with all staff.	B. Staff interviews
C. The program provides access to SABES and/or alternative professional development opportunities for all staff by providing substitutes or using other strategies to support staff development.	C. Staff interviews
Standard 6.3. Program ensures that all staff complete the trainings that are required for their roles.	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. The program's director has completed the New Directors' Orientation (NDO) or is within her/his first 12 months of hire.	A. Director interview and documentation
B. The program's director has completed the ABE Program Design training or is within her/his first 12 months of hire.	B. Director interview and documentation
C. All administrators and direct service staff members have completed the New Staff Orientation (NSO) within one year of hire (18 months for administrators who also complete the NSO).	C. Staff interviews and documentation

Quality Indicator 7. Program management and accountability are efficient, and effectively address all components of service delivery.	
Standard 7.1. The program has effective and equitable personnel policies and procedures.-	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. All staff receive an employee policies and procedures handbook that addresses key employee issues, such as, absenteeism, travel reimbursement, benefits, grievance procedures, performance appraisal, expectations of staff, working hours, professional development, and benefits.	A. Employee handbook and staff interviews
B. The demographics of the program staff reflect the ethnicity, linguistic and cultural background of the student population.	B. Staff and student interviews
C. Hiring interview teams include key stakeholders (e.g., student and staff representation).	C. Staff and student interviews
D. All staff receive an orientation to the program.	D. Staff interviews
E. All staff are paid for the number of hours and at the hourly rate reflected in the Program Design approved by ACLS. This includes hours and rates on the DOE Direct, DOE Indirect and Match staff plans.	E. Staff interviews
F. The amount of staff time applied to each key function is consistent with the approved Staffing Chart.	F. Staff interviews
G. The program supports a Technology Coordinator to provide training and technical assistance to staff in utilizing effectively a variety of technologies for communication and administration.	G. Staff interviews
Standard 7.2. The program provides staff supervision.	
Criterion	Source of Information
A. The program has an organizational chart that includes the umbrella organization as well as the entire ABE program.	A. Organizational chart
B. Program has up-to-date written job descriptions for each job category of the ABE program.	B. Staff interviews & review of files
C. The program provides ongoing supervision.	C. Staff interviews
D. Staff evaluations are conducted regularly – at least annually - and include (for instructional staff) classroom observations, written feedback and follow up.	D. Staff interviews

Quality Indicator 7. Program management and accountability are efficient, and effectively address all components of service delivery.

Standard 7.3. The program is able to provide access to their bookkeeping/ accounting system and can demonstrate how grant and matching share related expenditures are coded and tracked.

Criterion	Source of Information
A. The program is able to provide access to their bookkeeping/ accounting system and can demonstrate how grant and matching share related expenditures are coded and tracked.	A. Staff interviews.
B. The inventory of computers, copiers, furniture and other major items purchased with DOE funding is updated annually. There is a policy for disposal of such items when they become out of date.	B. Equipment inventory; equipment disposal policy.
C. There is a time and effort record maintained for each staff person that reflects appropriate alignment among the hours worked on the grant, the hours in the budget, and the payroll.	C. Staff timesheets and staff payroll records. Director interview and staff interviews.

