

Speaking points for the interviewers are highlighted in blue. **Questions are in bold.**  
Notes for the interviewer are highlighted in *red italics*.

## INTRO

Hi! I'm [Name], a [Role] in the [BOS/SF/NY] office, it's nice to meet you!

To give you a bit of overview of our time together, we'll have about forty minutes, most of which will be spent on the case itself. If we have time at the end, I'm happy to answer any questions you have about Bridgespan and our work.

As a reminder, I have not received your resume. This is an intentional part of Bridgespan's recruiting process to reduce bias. Before we get started with the case, I'd love to learn more about what drew you to apply to Bridgespan.

Great! I'd love to revisit that if we have time at the end, are you ready to dig in to the case?

- This case reflects recent work that Bridgespan did with a philanthropy client.
- Before asking you any questions about the case, I'll give you some background information. Some details (e.g., geographies, numbers, methodology) have been altered to simplify this case interview, and they do not reflect the true data and analysis used in this project
- Feel free to ask questions for clarification as we go through the case –we're going to cover a lot of ground. We'll move quickly, and I may change topics
- What I'm looking for is how you think about the problem, and how you structure your thinking. There is no right or wrong answer, and I might ask follow-up questions to learn more about your thought process.
- There is math on this case, but you are welcome to use a calculator. Do you have one handy?
- For the math section, it will be helpful for you to walk me through your logic and calculations, so that I can follow along with you to make sure you are on the right path
- Don't be afraid to pause before responding to a question so that you can gather your thoughts. It feels awkward, especially over the phone, but please take your time.

## Context:

Your client is Career Launcher, a workforce development nonprofit that provides skills training and connections to employer networks for high-demand technology careers. Their intensive 12-week long programs focus on historically disadvantaged populations and are completely tuition-free, with various program options such as cybersecurity and IT support. Career Launcher also partners with employers to identify in-demand skill sets and to hire and support graduates.

Since its inception, Career Launcher has trained more than 11,000 individuals and expanded to fifteen in-person locations nationwide. Throughout their steady expansion, Career Launcher has maintained high standards for their programming. This includes an 85% graduation rate, with 90% of graduates being people of color. After completing the program, the average graduate increases their annual income from \$10k to \$42k.

These strong outcomes have created a compelling case for Career Launcher to receive additional funding support. They recently were awarded \$10M through a grant competition, with a goal of scaling and expanding their impact on economic equity. While Career Launcher is very excited about this new funding, they are also apprehensive about the rapid growth it entails. They have hired Bridgespan to help them come up with different paths for achieving this scale, and evaluate those paths to determine the best strategy going forward.

**Key questions to discuss with the interviewee:**

**1. Do you have any questions about the information I just gave you? [If not stated already] Can you play back the main questions the client is seeking to answer?**

**2. Now that they have this additional \$10M, what are some different paths that Career Launcher could take to scaling their impact? First let's develop options, and then we will talk about how to evaluate them.**

*Sample answer:*

*[sub-bullets are included for reference; candidates should not be expected to go to this level of detail]*

*Launch new in-person locations:*

- *Purchase/rent classroom space, or find partners willing to share space and infrastructure*
- *Hire instructors and administrative staff*
- *Develop recruitment pipelines*
- *Find employer partners to make hiring commitments*

*Expand reach of existing locations:*

- *Invest in additional capacity for existing programs*
- *Offer new programs*
- *Invest more in recruitment to boost the # of applications received*
- *Work with employer partners to increase their hiring commitments or find new partners*

*Develop remote learning model:*

- *Adapt course materials and instruction to online instruction*
- *Offer support for applicants without the required computer equipment or internet access*
- *Partner with employers that have hiring needs in many cities (e.g., Target, federal government) or allow employees to work from home (e.g., Google, Facebook)*
- *Invest in non-location specific recruiting pipelines (e.g., social media advertising)*

*[Interviewer can tailor response based on how close the interviewee came to identifying three main paths]*

Thank you for those ideas. Career Launcher has decided to focus on three different options to evaluate:

- Launch new in-person locations in fifteen additional cities
- Expand existing locations to train more students in their fifteen current cities
- Launching fully remote learning options

### 3. What criteria would you use for evaluating these different options?

#### Sample answer for criteria:

##### *Need and demand for programming:*

- *Potential reach and impact*
  - *# of individuals within commuting distance that fit target profile (e.g., no college degree, below poverty line)*
  - *Demographics of individuals within potential reach (e.g., race, socioeconomic status)*
- *Unmet need or “competitors” (presence of similar workforce development programs)*

##### *Ability for applicants to succeed*

- *Wraparound services available to help students graduate (e.g., transit fees, daycare, flexible classroom hours for parents or students working full-time, etc.)*
- *Unemployment rates or # of unfilled tech positions*
- *Presence of large employers that Career Launcher could potentially partner with*
- *Quality of available jobs (e.g., pay at or above living wage)*
- *Interest in Career Launcher graduates (either from past experience or word of mouth)*

##### *Ability to execute*

- *Effectiveness of teaching (particularly relevant for remote programming)*
- *Existing partnerships or connections with local employers (could be national employers with offices in that location)*
- *Cost of expansion and ongoing programming costs (more expensive to hire teachers and rent space in some cities)*
  - *Cost of expansion can be reduced if there are partner organizations with existing infrastructure and space available*
- *Additional funding sources if \$10M is not sufficient to cover expansion costs, and ongoing funding when that grant is used up*
- *Ability to effectively attract applications from qualified individuals*

##### *Equity considerations (if not mentioned in other answers)*

- *% of the location’s population in target profile that are people of color or women*
- *Income disparities across race and gender in location*
- *Cost of living (e.g., difficult for students to be able to afford to live and commute to class)*
- *Access (e.g., cost of buying or renting computer equipment for course, internet connection for remote students, etc.)*

### 4. What are a few potential pros and cons for each option?

#### Sample answer for pros and cons:

##### *New locations:*

- *Pros*
  - *Able to repeat proven in-person model with significantly expanded applicant pool, limited need to develop or adapt new materials and programs*

- Can leverage existing employer partnerships for large companies with offices in multiple cities
- **Cons**
  - Cost and difficulty of finding new classroom space and key staff, doubling # of locations is a significant drain on capacity of centralized staff
  - Risk of not being able to find sufficient employer partners
  - Some cities may have access considerations (e.g., high cost of living, limited public transit options)
  - Starting from scratch in terms of reputation with prospective applicants and many employers

*Expanding existing locations:*

- **Pros**
  - Likely has a lower upfront cost, with existing physical locations and staff
  - Can build off of existing reputation with prospective applicants and employer partners
- **Cons**
  - Assuming they are already using an optimal recruitment strategy for prospective applicants, reaching new applicants will be more difficult and expensive
  - Limited upside for significant increase in impact, as the low-hanging fruit should have already been taken (e.g., best applicants and employer fits)

*Remote learning model:*

- **Pros**
  - Applicants are no longer limited by proximity and commutability to in-person locations, many of which are in high-cost cities
  - The benefit and reach of exceptional teachers is no longer limited to the geography they currently serve
  - Reduced costs through efficiencies such as larger class sizes and pre-recorded content
- **Cons**
  - Course materials and delivery need to be adapted for online learning
  - Fully remote jobs may require different training programs entirely
  - Not all applicants will have the required computer equipment or internet access for online instruction
  - Unknown effectiveness of online instruction relative to their proven model of in-person programming, larger class sizes leave less time for 1:1 tutoring
  - Harder to partner with location-specific organizations to provide wraparound services

*Model answers could also identify that the three main options have increasing levels of risk and upside (expanding reach in existing cities is lower risk and lower upside, developing a fully remote model is higher risk and higher upside, new locations in additional cities is in the middle for both)*

**Analytical section**

As Career Launcher began its diligence on these different options, they became worried about the complexity and challenge of launching new in-person locations. As a result, Career Launcher is focused on the other two scaling paths: expanding reach in existing cities, and developing a remote learning model.

The next step is having you calculate and compare the costs of these two paths. I'm going to share some numbers with you, and then ask you to calculate the cost per graduate in each of the two models. You should feel free to use a calculator (or Excel) to do so.

If Career Launcher decides to pursue the strategy of **expanding in existing cities**:

- They believe that they could support **4,000 students** to graduate from the program each year
- **Their ongoing annual costs would be:**
  - o Instructor salaries: \$1.75M
  - o Career advancement expenses: \$400k
  - o Expenses to recruit new employer partners: \$250k
  - o Salaries for new employer partnership team dedicated to existing cities: \$800k

If Career Launcher decides to pursue a **remote learning program**:

- They believe that they could support **2,500 students** to graduate from the program each year
- **Their ongoing annual costs would be:**
  - o Instructor salaries: \$375k
  - o Career advancement expenses: \$175k
  - o recruitment expense: \$175k
  - o Learner supplies (e.g., computer equipment): \$375k
  - o Overhead: \$400k

**5. (A) With this information, could you please calculate the annual cost per graduate?**

- *Remote learning*
  - o *Ongoing annual variable cost: \$1.5M*
  - o *Ongoing annual cost per graduate:  $\$1.5M / 2,500 \text{ students} = \$600 \text{ per student}$*
- *Expanding in existing cities*
  - o *Ongoing annual variable cost: \$3.2M*
  - o *Ongoing annual cost per graduate:  $\$3.2M / 4,000 \text{ students} = \$800 \text{ per student}$*

**(B)** One other piece of information for you – in order to launch a remote learning program, Career Launcher would have to make a one-time investment of \$1.5M in online learning tools in Year 1.

Taking that additional expense into account, how many years will it take for the cumulative costs of the remote option to average out to a lower cost per student than the cost per student of the expansion option?

	<i>Year 1</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>Year 3</i>	<i>Year 4</i>
<i>One-time cost</i>	<i>\$1.5M</i>			
<i>Annual cost</i>	<i>\$1.5M</i>	<i>\$1.5M</i>	<i>\$1.5M</i>	<i>\$1.5M</i>
<i>Cumulative total cost</i>	<i>\$3M</i>	<i>\$4.5M</i>	<i>\$6M</i>	<i>\$7.5M</i>
<i>Total # of students</i>	<i>2,500</i>	<i>5,000</i>	<i>7,500</i>	<i>10,000</i>
<i>Average cost per student</i>	<i>\$1,200</i>	<i>\$900</i>	<i>\$800</i>	<i>\$750</i>

**6.** Thanks for doing those calculations. What would you recommend based on all the information so far?

*Candidates may identify the “remote learning” option as the best path forward for expansion due to the lower annual cost per graduate. Candidates will ideally pull back to the bigger picture of considerations that they identified upfront and use that to add nuance to the answer. For example, remote learning would be new for Career Launcher, which means the capabilities required will be new for the organization, and there may be a higher execution risk. Expanding reach in current cities is closest to Career Launcher’s existing (and highly successful) model, which likely means a higher likelihood of continuing to experience strong results (relative to moving to remote).*

#### **Concluding questions:**

**7. One of the key priorities for Career Launcher is ensuring that they continue their strong track record of equitable results, in terms of participant demographics, graduation rates, and career outcomes. What are some ways that they can achieve this goal as expand?**

*Sample answer:*

- *Insuring that in-person locations are easily accessible from affordable neighborhoods*
- *Providing remote learners with suitable computer equipment, and offering financial support to enhance accessibility (e.g., enhanced internet access, nearby co-working space, etc.)*
- *Offering post-graduation career mentorship from individuals with shared identities (given the low % of women and people of color in tech careers)*
- *Partner with local organizations to provide wraparound services to students (e.g., transit fees, daycare)*
- *Offer zero-interest loans with flexible repayment terms to students that could not otherwise afford to lose the income from 12 weeks of work*
- *Ensure evening or weekend classroom sessions are available for students that are working while enrolled in a program*

**8. One last question: If the Career Launcher leadership team chooses to go with your recommendation, what would you say to the CEO in regards to next steps to take and risks to watch out for?**

*Answer will depend on what insights the candidate has arrived at in the case. Ideal answers will be concise summaries.*