



Informational Interviews: Building Connections and Knowledge

/ Career Services Office

Overview

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- 2) Benefits
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 - Who to contact
 - Introductory email
 - Questions to prepare
 - After the meeting
- 4) Etiquette & Best Practices

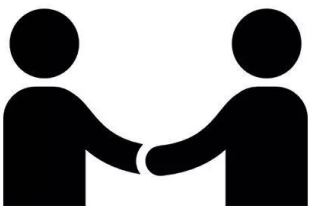


What is an informational interview?

- A meeting with a professional, typically employed in your field of interest, that allows you to gather career-related information, and build your professional network.

It is **NOT** a job-seeking meeting, although it is an important stepping stone in the job search process.

You have a much better chance of securing a future interview through personal/professional connections.



Mutually Beneficial Process

Benefits For You:

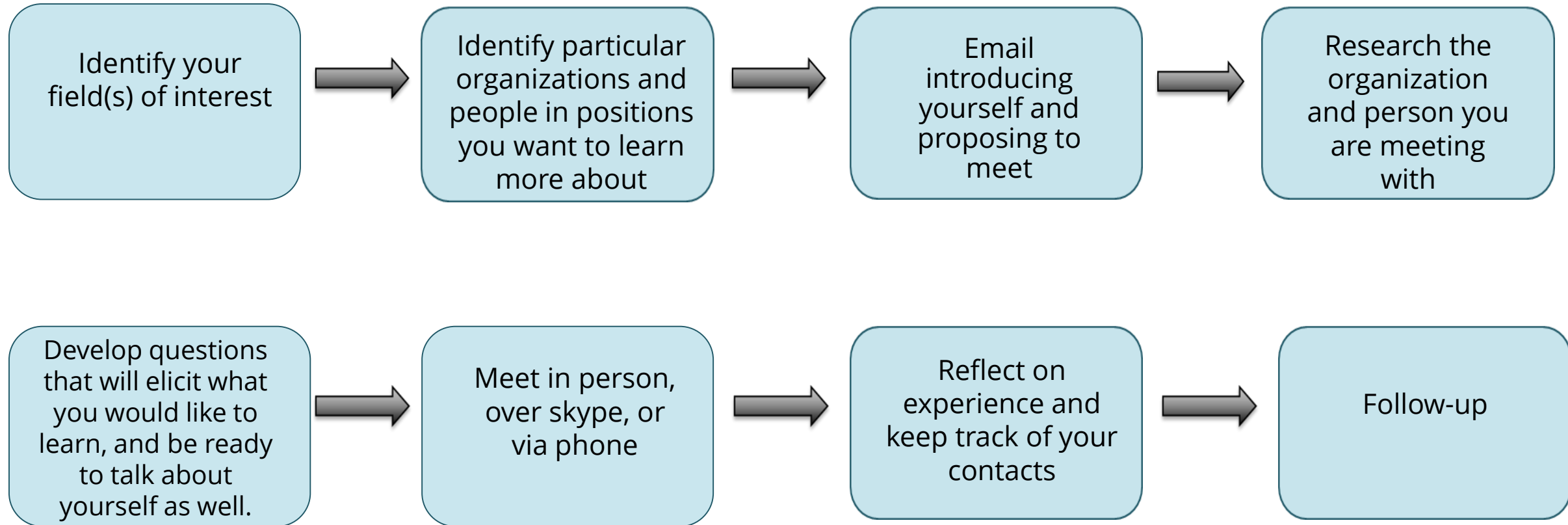
- Learn more about a field of interest
 - types of career paths/roles
 - advice on entering a field
 - desired skills and knowledge
 - challenges, trends and hot topics
- Learn that a field is (or isn't) for you
- Refine your career interests or generate new options
- Build confidence in yourself and decision to move into a particular field
- Build and expand your network
 - find a mentor
 - maintain relationships that can help in your future job search
- Practice talking about your experiences and telling your story
- Make a first-impression in a low-pressure situation
- Potential access to 'hidden' jobs or internships

Benefits For Them:

- Share information about their job and career path (people love talking about themselves and their passions).
- Pass along wisdom and advice
- Give back – they likely got started in the same way.
- Get connected to motivated talent
- Increased understanding of what potential employees in your demographic are interested in and looking for.
- Minimal time investment
- They can assess your initiative and communication skills



Steps in the Informational Interview Process



Where to start? Who to contact?

- Consider your existing network
 - Friends, relatives, career advisers, professors, past colleagues
 - Your existing network can provide you with a referral to a person
- Alumni (from CEU or your previous institution)
- Organizations of interest
 - Contact individuals with positions that interest you
 - Contact managers of departments you might enjoy working with
 - Avoid contacting someone from HR – you are seeking information
- LinkedIn as a tool
 - See who is connected to your network
 - Know more about someone's career background
 - Search alumni



Getting in Touch

The introductory email should be brief, direct, yet still ir



Email Structure:

- Greeting
- Brief introduction / intention
- How you 'found them' (if referred by a contact or through a professional organization)
- Your interest and experience related to the field
- Why you are interested in them / the organization
- Proposal to meet
- CV +

Preparing for the Meeting

- Research the person and organization
 - Reflects a genuine interest
 - You will be able to have a more in-depth conversation
- Draw up well thought-out questions beforehand
 - About the field
 - About the person's career path, current position and current company/organization
 - About how you can enter the field
- Have your 'elevator pitch' ready
 - Be able to talk about your current and past experience as it relates to the field
 - Be able to talk about your strengths, skills and interests
 - Be able to express your future ambitions

Reflect and Keep Track

After the meeting:

- Reflect on what you learned
- Document take-aways and remaining questions
- Look into recommended resources and/or contacts
- Send a thank you note (by email or snail-mail)
- Keep contacts and resources organized
 - Create a spreadsheet of organizations and contacts (including notes/details about each)
- Maintain connection
 - Update your contact about your career progress
 - Ask for further career advice

Etiquette and Best Practices

- Find a connection to make introductions easier (when possible)
- Be well prepared (it is your job to have questions ready)
- Be professional
- Be genuine and curious – possess a sincere desire to learn
- Be sensitive towards their time – stick to the set time (unless invited to stay longer)
- Ask for names of other people in the field to contact
- Don't speak with only 1-2 people and assume their views are representative of the field
- Be gracious – send a thank you note
- Stay in touch – update them on your progress or reach out with questions
- DON'T explicitly ask for a job. Instead ask for advice on how to obtain jobs in the field.

Now it's Your Turn

- 1) Identify an organization you are interested in
- 2) Begin drafting your own introductory email
- 3) Identify/draft a few questions you currently have related to this organization/field

Note: This can serve as a starting point, and as you identify the exact person to contact, you can update and refine your email and questions.