



# Informational Interview Guide

## Informational Interview Fact Sheet

*A fact sheet that provides a definition and learning objectives for the activity.*

## WBL Connector Checklist

*A checklist of steps to guide WBL Connectors in creating successful Informational Interviews for all parties.*

## Student/Learner Checklist

*A checklist for students/learners participating in an Informational Interview that facilitates deeper learning from the work-based learning experience.*

## Teacher/Faculty Tip Sheet

*Tips for teachers/faculty that describes ways to connect the experience to the larger curriculum.*

## Employer Tip Sheet

*Tips for employee volunteers participating in an Informational Interview to support their engagement.*

## Employer Fact Sheet

*Facts about Informational Interviews to help employers decide whether their company or organization can participate.*

## Implementation Tools

### Informational Interview Research Activity

*A worksheet for student/learner to complete before the activity.*

### Informational Interview Student/Learner Reflection

*A worksheet and discussion guide that supports student/learner reflection after the activity.*



## Informational Interview Fact Sheet

### Informational Interviews

Using informational interviews to support learning is a structured Career Exploration activity in which students/learners formally interview an employer partner about his or her industry, educational and career path, and chosen profession. Students may also explore the range of career opportunities within the company or industry, opportunities for growth and the salary ranges for different occupations.

Designed to meet specific learning objectives, informational interviews are educationally rich, are tied to the curriculum, and help students/learners connect what they're learning in school with the workplace. Unlike a guest speaker activity, where speakers usually address a group in the classroom, informational interviews are one-to-one interactions and generally take place at the company's workplace. They may also be conducted via telephone or online – ideally utilizing Facetime or ZOOM.

Informational interviews are one activity in the continuum of authentic work-based experiences provided to all students/learners engaged in career-related programs or course of study in the Earn & Learn community.

### Informational Interviews are designed to:

- Provide exposure to potential careers and jobs.
- Provide a realistic picture of the business, its role in the community and the career paths and occupations of its workforce.
- Help students/learners make the connection between school and the workplace.
- Inform career planning.

### Informational Interviews are structured to:

- Offer students/learners the chance to practice and demonstrate key professional skills, including communication, critical thinking, workplace appearance and timeliness.
- Enable students/learners to begin identifying areas of career interest.
- Build knowledge about the education and training needed for a particular job, career path and entry into the industry.

### Informational Interviews are supported by:

- Classroom preparation, including research on the industry and participating businesses.
- Employer orientation and support.
- Opportunities to reflect upon the experience verbally and in writing.

### Informational Interviews are connected to:

- Individual career development/training plans.
- Future work-based learning activities.
- The student/learner's next steps.

## Informational Interview Support Materials

### Checklists, Tip Sheets and Fact Sheets:

- Coordinator Informational Interview Checklist
- Student/Learner Informational Interview Checklist
- Teacher/Faculty Informational Interview Tip Sheet
- Employer Informational Interview Tip Sheet
- Employer Informational Interview Fact Sheet

### Required Forms and Documents

- WBL Travel and Media Consent Form
- Career Development Plan

### Implementation Tools

- Informational Interview Research Activity
- Informational Interview Student/Learner Reflection

#### **Tips for Success** **Work-Based Learning Essential Elements**

An effective Informational Interview includes structured activity before, during and after the experience. Pay attention to these tips to ensure meaningful experiences that result in enriched learning.

- ✓ Conduct Effective Planning
- ✓ Prepare for Success
- ✓ Identify Learning Objectives
- ✓ Create Authentic and Engaging Experiences
- ✓ Connect to Careers
- ✓ Support Student/Learner Growth
- ✓ Ensure Activities are Safe and Legal
- ✓ Provide Ongoing Support
- ✓ Provide for Reflection, Presentation and Feedback.
- ✓ Connect to the Student/Learner Next Step
- ✓ Assess and Document the Experience

Sustaining and growing Informational Interviews and all other work-based learning activities depend on maintaining positive relationships with the participating employers. These employers should be treated as valued customers and partners with frequent check-ins to address their needs and support their participation.

## Work-Based Learning Connector Informational Interview Checklist

Quick tips for Work-Based Learning Connectors<sup>1</sup> to ensure a successful informational interview.

### Before the Informational Interview

- Identify all interested teachers/faculty and help them plan for the informational interviews.
- Address any relevant school policies that may apply (in the way that field trips may be handled).
- Make sure the employer partners are good matches for the careers students/learners are interested in.
- Prepare teachers/faculty and encourage them to support the informational interviews and reflect them in their classroom activities. Share the Teacher/Faculty Tip Sheet.
- Have teachers/faculty help create learning objectives and work with students/learners to prepare a list of questions to ask in the interview.
- Create and provide appropriate support materials for distribution to employee volunteers who will participate in an interview. Share the Employer Tip Sheet.
- Work with employee volunteers to help them prepare for the interview. Discuss best methods for being real with and engaging students.
- Arrange for student/learner transportation and other logistics.
- Find out if safety gear is required and, if so, arrange for it to be provided.
- Have the student/learner call or email the staff member/company to confirm the details for the informational interview. Ideally, it should take place at the worksite.

### After the Informational Interview

- Document the informational interview in ELENA. Review feedback from interviewed employees, students/learners and teachers/faculty and summarize results. Make recommendations for improvements.
- Help students/learners update their career development plan and think about any next steps they would like to take to further their career goals.
- Work with teachers/faculty to connect the informational interview to the classroom.
- Send thank-you notes to employer partners.
- Publicize the informational interviews and the companies that participated by placing a story in the local newspaper or posting on the school website or social media.
- Suggest the students/learners share their experiences on social media and tag the partner businesses.
- Consider other potential public relations benefits and opportunities.

### Sample Informational Interview Timeline

**Beginning of the school year:**

Identify interested teachers/faculty and brainstorm companies that could participate.

**Two months in advance:**

Invite business partners to participate. Find out the best days and time for the employer partners.

**One month in advance:**

Confirm student/learner participation. Have students/learners research the industry or company.

**One week in advance:**

Send employers logistics for the day and questions to expect. Have students/learners confirm the interview day and time.

**After the Interview:**

Send thank-you notes to all hosts and ensure student/learner reflection activities take place.

<sup>1</sup> This includes Earn & Learn work-based learning connectors and others who facilitate, arrange and support work-based learning activities for students/learners and other learners.

## Student/Learner Informational Interview Checklist

An informational interview is a chance for you to interview someone at a company about his or her industry, education, and career path. You can ask why the person decided to choose this career and how they got to where they are. You'll have the opportunity to ask questions, practice professional behavior and become more comfortable communicating with professionals.

Have fun with this one. You'll be surprised what you learn, and you might want to follow in that person's footsteps!

### Have you done all you can to prepare?

- Fill out and turn in any required forms.
- Do some research on the company you'll visit. Check out their website and learn as much as you can about the place, its history, what they do and how it impacts your community.
- Figure out what to wear. Look for employee photos on the website/social and mirror the dress code.
- Get information on all the logistics, including how to get there and where to go when you arrive.
- Prepare a list of questions about the company, the industry, career opportunities, and what kind of education and training is needed for different jobs.
- Practice introducing yourself as a professional (name, grade, organization or school, why you chose to take part in the interview, and what you'd like to do with your future).

### Have you thought about what you can do to make the informational interview a big success?

- Be respectful. Arrive on time (be at least 10 minutes early) and make sure your phone is turned off.
- Be an active participant. Pay attention and ask good questions.
- Make connections between what you're learning in the interview and what you're learning in class.
- At the end of the interview, shake hands, thank the person for his or her time and ask if you can stay connected via LinkedIn or email. Ask for a business card.

### When the informational interview is over, how will you keep moving your career forward?

- Reflect on the day. Talk to your teachers/faculty and classmates about the informational interview and your feelings about what you experienced. Would you work there or somewhere similar?
- Participate in evaluating the experience and give ideas to improve future interviews. What worked and what didn't? Be honest! It will help make future interviews more impactful.
- Update your career development plan and think about next steps in moving your career plans forward.
- Send a follow-up email thanking the interviewee for his or her time. If you're interested in working there or learning more, say so and ask for next steps.
- Is there more you want to know about this field or company? Would you be interested in going on another interview in the future?
- Share your experience with your peers on social media. Perhaps a blog post about the event?

## Teacher/Faculty Informational Interview Tip Sheet

Note: If you're coordinating an informational interview, have a look at the Connector Informational Interview Checklist.

Informational Interviews are designed to:

- Provide exposure to potential careers and jobs.
- Provide a realistic picture of the business, its role in the community and the career paths and occupations of its workforce.
- Help students/learners make the connection between school and the workplace.
- Inform career planning.

### Before the Informational Interview

- Review the Informational Interview Fact Sheet and this tip sheet.
- Identify desired student/learner learning objectives.
- Assess how the interview can support classroom activities and help meet curriculum goals.
- Have students/learners research the involved companies and the careers they offer and prepare questions for the interviewees.
- Build excitement for the activity and talk to students/learners about what they can expect to learn.
- Send participating employee volunteers information about the school and curriculum. Talk with them about how to be real with and fully engage students.

### After the Informational Interview

- Thank the employer and participating employees.
- Debrief with the WBL connector and together identify follow-up activities for the students/learners.
- Ask students/learners to assess the effectiveness of the informational interviews and make recommendations for improvements. (use the WBL Activity Evaluation)
- Provide individual and group reflection activities for students/learners and help them make the connection between training topics and the workplace.
- Help students/learners update their career development plan and think about any next steps they would like to take to further their career goals.
- Have students/learners write thank-you notes to the employer partners.
- Assess the impact and value of the informational interviews with the connector and utilize employer, teacher/faculty and student/learner feedback to improve future informational interviews.
- Document and archive information about the informational interview.

### Go Deeper

- Make the informational interviews part of a project and have students/learners prepare and deliver a presentation to others at your school about the participating companies.

#### The Classroom Connection: Preparation and Reflection

##### Before Informational Interviews

Set students/learners up for success by having them:

- Research participating companies and industries.
- Discuss how the interviews can help them meet learning objectives.

##### After Informational Interviews

- Spark student/learner reflection with an activity.
- Ask, "What new things did you learn about this job and industry?"
- See if they want to find out more or further explore careers in the industries represented.

## Employer Informational Interview Tip Sheet

Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed by one of our students. As you think about how to best prepare for the interview, keep the following success factors in mind.

### Before the Informational Interview

- Provide teacher/faculty or connector with company website link(s) and info about your industry and profession to help students/learners prepare for the interview.
- Ask the instructor about the student/learner who will interview you and find out what he or she is currently focused on in the classroom so you can explain how the academic content being learned is applied in the workplace. Provide real-world examples.
- Though it's best if the interview takes place at your work, if it's happening at the school, ask where to park and enter the building.
- If the interview will be held at your workplace and safety gear is necessary, arrange for it to be available.
- Let the connector know if you would like the student/learner to contact you directly to arrange the interview.

### Suggested Talking Points:

- Describe your career journey.
- Talk about obstacles you overcame.
- Discuss need for perseverance, hard work and getting along well with others.
- Manage expectations about the world of work.

### Tips to Share:

- Avoid job hopping.
- Build your network (talk about how to do that).
- Be a continuous learner and stay abreast of industry changes.

### During the Informational Interview

- Describe a typical day at your company and help students/learners understand as much as they can about the culture of the workplace and the nature of the world of work.
- Talk to the students/learners about the range of career options in your company or industry. What will it take to be hired when education and training is completed?
- Be real. If possible, share mistakes you've made and how you addressed problems. What was your experience like in school? Did you struggle at all? If so, share that story!
- How did you get to the job you're in today? Share the educational and career path you took to your current position.
- Talk about how school subjects (such as math and language arts) and good habits (such as punctuality and consistent attendance) are important skills in the workplace.

### After the Informational Interview

- Provide feedback to the connector to improve future informational interviews.
- Consider how you might use the interview to promote your company's visibility in the community.

### Go Deeper

- Explore ways that you might further interest students/learners in your company.
- Talk to the connector about being a classroom speaker or guest trainer, helping with curriculum, or hosting students/learners for Job Shadows, Jobs or Internships.



## Employer Informational Interview Fact Sheet

In an Informational Interview, students/learners formally interview an employer partner about his or her industry, educational and career path, and chosen profession. Students may also explore the range of career opportunities within the company or industry, opportunities for growth and the salary ranges for different occupations.

Designed to meet specific learning outcomes, Informational Interviews are linked to the curriculum and help students/learners connect what they're learning in school with the workplace. Informational Interviews are one-to-one interactions and generally happen at the company's workplace. They may also be conducted at the school or organizations or via telephone or online – ideally utilizing Facetime or Skype.

**Program Level:** All grades. All Levels.  
**Employer/ Student/Learner Ratio:** 1:1  
**Duration:** 30 mins to an hour  
**Frequency:** One time  
**Location:** Worksite preferred  
**Costs:** Staff time  
**Special Considerations:** Employee selection. Company visitor and volunteer policies or practices.

### Why are informational interviews important for students/learners?

- Informational interviews expose students/learners to potential jobs and careers and help build occupational knowledge.
- They illustrate the education and training needed for entry into certain positions and industries.
- They let students/learners know about your company's processes and products/services and the role your business plays in the community.

### What are the benefits to my company?

- Exposes potential future workers to job opportunities and careers with your company, as well as the required skills and education to be successful in your industry.
- Introduces students/learners to one or more of your employees.
- Helps your employees understand how to communicate with the next generation of workers.
- Provides an efficient way to introduce and engage multiple employees with your commitment to education and connect your company with the community.

### What do I need to do next?

- Determine who will coordinate the informational interview(s) for your company and have them connect with the work-based learning connector to address scheduling, planning and logistics.
- Arrange for a presentation to those employees who will participate in the interviews.
- Distribute the Employer Informational Interview Tip Sheet to interested employees.
- Consider any impacts on company policy.

### Resources

- Review the Employer Participation Options Fact Sheet to learn more about how to get the most out of your partnership with Earn and Learn.

## Informational Interview Research Activity

Complete the following research assignment as part of your preparation for the upcoming informational interview. This research will be the basis for in-class discussion and presentations prior to the day

Student name:
Interviewee's company:
Company's web address:
Company's physical address:
Company's mission statement:
What is the company's primary business?
What departments exist within the company?
What companies do you think are in competition with the interviewee's company?
After researching the company, what are some questions that you will ask the person you're interviewing?
Based on your research, what do you think you will like most about the informational interview?
Based on your research, what is your biggest concern about the informational interview?
If you could come away from the informational interview having learned one thing, what would that be?
Anything else you learned while doing your research that you'd like to share with your teacher or the class?

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## Informational Interview Student/Learner Reflection

Now that the informational interview is over, take some time reflect on what you learned and how the experience might inform your college and career plans in the future.

Student/Learner Name:

School:

Interviewee's Company:

Date of Interview:

What aspects of the informational interview were interesting? Which were not? Why?

What did you like about the informational interview? What would you change?

Would you consider a career in the interviewee's field? Why or why not?

What was the most memorable aspect of the informational interview? Why?

What did you learn about the interviewee's company and its employees? Please explain.

What knowledge and skills are you learning in school that are likely to be used at the interviewee's workplace? Please explain.



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## Work-Based Learning Toolset Informational Interview Guide

What knowledge or skills do you need to strengthen to be successful at a workplace like the interviewee's? Please explain.

Would you recommend that other students/learners take part in an informational interview? Explain.

Anything else you'd like to say about the informational interview?

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