



# 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.*

## Learner<sup>1</sup> Checklist

*A checklist for 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.*

## Remote and Virtual Options Sheet

*An options sheet for WBL Connectors describing remote and virtual informational approaches and activities.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

## Implementation Tools

### Informational Interview Research Activity

*A worksheet for learners to complete before the activity.*

### Informational Interview Learner Reflection

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

### Remote and Virtual Fact Sheets

*Supplemental resources designed to help support remote or virtual activities.*



## Informational Interview Fact Sheet

### Informational Interviews

Using informational interviews to support learning is a structured Career Exploration activity in which learners formally interview an employer partner about his or her industry, educational and career path, and chosen profession. Learners<sup>2</sup> 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 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. In some cases, hybrid informational interviews may be conducted via Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or some other technology; are conducted on-line; and learners participate via a remote classroom. There are also virtual simulations available where a recording of a live informational interview, conducted by a teacher or small group of learners, can be viewed on-line and serve as a foundation for an activity and/or discussion in the classroom.

Informational interviews are one activity in the continuum of authentic work-based experiences provided to all 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 learners make the connection between school and the workplace.
- Inform career planning.

### Informational Interviews are structured to:

- Offer learners the chance to practice and demonstrate key professional skills, including communication, critical thinking, workplace appearance and timeliness.
- Enable 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.

---

<sup>2</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

Informational Interviews are connected to:

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

## Informational Interview Support Materials

Checklists, Tip Sheets and Fact Sheets:

- Connector Informational Interview Checklist
- Learner Informational Interview Checklist
- Teacher/Faculty Informational Interview Tip Sheet
- Employer Informational Interview Tip Sheet
- Employer Informational Interview Fact Sheet
- Remote and Virtual Informational Interview Options Sheet

Required Forms and Documents

- WBL Travel and Media Consent Form
- Career Development Plan

Implementation Tools

- Informational Interview Research Activity
- Informational Interview Learner Reflection
- Remote and Virtual Fact Sheets

### **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 Learner Growth
- ✓ Ensure Activities are Safe and Legal
- ✓ Provide Ongoing Support
- ✓ Provide for Reflection, Presentation and Feedback.
- ✓ Connect to the 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>3</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 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 learners to prepare a list of questions to ask.
- 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 learners<sup>4</sup>.
- Arrange for learner transportation and other logistics.
- Find out if safety gear is required and, if so, arrange for it to be provided.
- Have the learner call or email the staff member/company to confirm the details for the informational interview. Ideally, it should take place at the worksite. If it's a telephone or online hybrid activity, confirm the technical details, time and format.
- If conducting the activity in a remote classroom, test and practice with the interface prior to the presentation. Ask for permission to record and share the interview with others in the future.
- If learners are interviewing employer partners over the phone or using another technology, ensure appropriate permissions, guidance and protections are in place and share those policies with employer partners and learners.

### After the Informational Interview

- Document the informational interview in ELENA. Review feedback from interviewed employees, learners and teachers/faculty and summarize results. Make recommendations for improvements.
- Help 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

### 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 learner participation. Have learners research the industry or company.

**One week in advance:** Send employers logistics for the day and questions to expect. Have learners confirm the interview day and time.

**After the Interview:** Send thank-you notes to all hosts and ensure learner reflection activities take place.

<sup>3</sup> This includes Earn & Learn work-based learning connectors and others who facilitate, arrange and support work-based learning activities for learners.

<sup>4</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

- story in the local newspaper or posting on the school website or social media.
- Suggest the learners share their experiences on social media and tag the partner businesses.
  - Consider other potential public relations benefits and opportunities.

### **Tips for Conducting Hybrid Informational Interviews**

- Select and personally practice using the selected technology.
- Make sure all students have access to appropriate technology.
- Do a test run with your students as well as the presenter.
- Have all students who will participate in the activity brainstorm and prepare questions they would like the Interviewee to answer.
- Select a small group of students (or individual student) and have them pose the group's questions to the interviewee using the selected on-line platform or conduct the interview yourself. Record the activity.
- Decide how you want to organize and moderate the session. Sometimes it takes one person to manage the session and another to monitor the technology and address questions.
- Decide which student reflection activities will take place and how you will support them.
- Remember, it's possible that parents or guardians will be around and would be a good resource for potential future speakers.
- Make sure you get feedback on the activity from the interviewee and the students.
- Record and post the presentation for others to view and use in their classrooms.

## Learner<sup>5</sup> 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 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).
- If you are participating in an online activity, make sure you have practiced using the technology, and are ready 5 minutes prior to the start time.

### Virtual Interview Tips

Have you...  
Arranged for internet access and tested your device?  
  
Practiced with the online tool you are using?  
  
Shared your questions with your teacher and student representatives?  
  
Reviewed the on-line practices and protocols fact sheet?

### 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.

---

<sup>5</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.



- 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?
- If you are representing others in your pathway, make sure you prepare for your presentation with your teacher or connector.

## 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 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 learner learning objectives.
- Assess how the interview can support classroom activities and help meet curriculum goals.
- Have learners research the involved companies and the careers they offer and prepare questions for the interviewees.
- Build excitement for the activity and talk to learners about what they can expect to learn.
- If conducting a virtual Informational activity online, make sure both you and your learners are comfortable with and have practiced using the technology.
- Send participating employee volunteers information about the school and curriculum. Talk with them about how to be real with and fully engage learners<sup>6</sup>.

### After the Informational Interview

- Thank the employer and participating employees.
- Debrief with the WBL connector and together identify follow-up learner activities.
- Ask 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 learners and help them make the connection between training topics and the workplace.
- Help learners update their career development plan and think about any next steps they would like to take to further their career goals.
- Have 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 learner feedback to improve future informational interviews.
- Document and archive information about the informational interview. If appropriate, share recordings of an on-line interview for use in a hybrid activity.

### Go Deeper

- Make the informational interviews part of a project and have 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 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 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.

<sup>6</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

## Employer Informational Interview Tip Sheet

Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed by one of our learners<sup>7</sup>. 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 learners prepare for the interview.
- Ask the instructor about the 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.
- If you are conducting the interview remotely, make sure you review the format, timing and logistics prior to the interview itself. Make sure you are comfortable with the interview being recorded and shared with others at the school.
- Let the connector know if you would like the 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 learners understand as much as they can about the culture of the workplace and the nature of the world of work.
- Talk to the 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 learners in your company.
- Talk to the connector about being a classroom speaker or guest trainer, helping with curriculum, or hosting learners for Job Shadows, Jobs or Internships.

---

<sup>7</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

## Employer Informational Interview Fact Sheet

In an Informational Interview, learners formally interview an employer partner about his or her industry, educational and career path, and chosen profession. Learners<sup>8</sup> 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 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 via telephone or online – ideally utilizing Facetime or Skype.

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

### Why are informational interviews important for learners?

- Informational interviews expose 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 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 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.

---

<sup>8</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.



## Remote and Virtual Informational Interview Options Sheet

Conducting informational interviews remotely requires a careful look and policies and procedures regarding learner contact via phone or the internet with industry partners outside the school setting.

Informational interviews are usually conducted individually at the workplace or the school, however they may take place over the phone or using technologies such as FaceTime, Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet when appropriate permissions, guidance and protections are in place.

Virtual and hybrid informational interviews approaches are more straight-forward in terms of conducting them in an on-line environment, yet they lack the power of direct learner and industry partner interaction. There are also a number of virtual simulations available where a recording of a live interview with an industry partner can be viewed on-line and serve as a foundation for an activity and/or discussion in the classroom

### Remote Informational Interview Options

Remember, remote activities promote “live” learner contact with adult professionals and front-line workers via the use of technology. Appropriate permissions, protections and guidance should be developed to support these experiences.

#### Informational Interviews by Phone or Internet

A learner formally interviews an Industry Partner over the phone or internet about his or her industry, educational and career path, and chosen profession.

#### Steps to Success

- Review the Informational Interview Guide. Review and distribute appropriate tip sheets and check lists.
- WBL Connector and/or Teachers recruit a range of Industry Partner(s) and support learners in selecting those they would like to interview.
- In some cases, learners may identify and reach out to an industry partner they would like to interview.
- Consider having learners interview someone they know about their career path and industry (could be a parent guardian, friend, coach, pastor, shopkeeper, etc.).
- WBL Connector and/or Teachers help learners select and test the platform as well as schedule the interview with the industry partner.
- Learners then contact, asks questions and interacts with the interviewee.
- Teacher support reflection activities and helps learners update their employability skills profile

#### Special Considerations

- Ensure appropriate permissions, guidance and protections are in place and share those policies with employer partners and learners

- Distribute and collect necessary permission forms
- Get employer permission to record and reuse the session
- Make sure learners are comfortable with the selected technology

## Virtual Informational Interview Activities

Remember, virtual activities are generally simulations and provide learners with employer exposures through recordings, on-line research and related classroom activities.

### Virtual Informational Interviews

Learners review a prerecorded interview with an industry professional in the remote classroom and engage in a guided discussion after the interview. What did you learn? What surprised you? What do you wish the person had been asked? How can you follow up to learn more? (See below for some sample links. Consider having learners conduct on-line research to locate prerecorded interview session with employers and use those on the classroom.

### Hybrid Informational Interviews

*Hybrid options are those that combine some virtual activities with some live remote interactions with employers.*

A model where small groups interview an industry partner via Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or some other technology, record the session and then use it to form the foundation for a classroom activity and discussion.

## Resources and Links

Below you will find examples websites or resources that provide recordings of informational interviews with industry professionals.

GLADEO - <https://gladeo.org>

A next gen career exploration platform featuring interviews with industry professional

Road Trip Nation <https://roadtripnation.com>

Nearly 1000 Leaders from 29 Industries share their stories on video

Grant Associates/DOE Industry Professionals Speaker Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKhLFrSEoKgbFqv4qqmO2vw/featured>

### Tips for Conducting a Hybrid Informational Interview Activity

- Select and personally practice using the selected technology.
- Make sure all learners have access to appropriate technology.
- Do a test run with learners as well as the presenter.
  - Have all learners brainstorm and submit questions.
- Decide how you want to organize and moderate the session. Sometimes it takes one person to manage the session and another to monitor the technology and address questions.
- Decide which learner reflection activities will take place and how you will support them.
- Remember, it's likely that parents or guardians will be around and would be a good resource for potential future speakers.
- Make sure you get feedback on the activity from the speaker and the learners.
- Record and post the presentation for others to view and use in their classrooms.

## 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

Your 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?

Adapted from original material created by NAF. Used with permission.

## Informational Interview Learner<sup>9</sup> 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.

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.

---

<sup>9</sup> Learners include: K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

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 learners take part in an informational interview? Explain.

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

Adapted from original material created by NAF. Used with permission.