



The Information Interview

A Process for Exploring, Advancing or Changing One's Career

The purpose of informational interviews is to obtain leads and information regarding an industry, a career path or a work group by talking to people you know or who have been referred to you. The information interview, also considered as “networking,” can be very effective because people enjoy being helpful and sharing their expertise. The information interview can also be used to explore new career options, learn more about a field and help with making a career change. Below are tips on how to get started.

1. Identify the Information You Want

Perhaps you are seeking information about a specific career field or line of business at the county (or outside the county), or maybe learn about a workgroup's culture? Perhaps you want to explore other types of jobs at King County where you could use your strengths, knowledge, or expertise? Get clear on what information you are seeking. Do some research on your own so you can ask specific questions. Explore [King County departments and agencies](#). Browse King County [job classifications](#). Use the King County's [Employee Directory](#) to identify services, groups and people.

2. Make a List of People to Contact

Identify and choose people who can help you connect to other people within King County, or externally, who might have the information you seek. Talk with your supervisor, manager, co-workers, peers, human resources staff or other people you know at the county who can provide you with names or introduce you to specific people. Keep track of who referred you to whom so you can get back to that person to let them know the results. Use [LinkedIn](#) to identify and connect with people outside of King County.

3. Make the Appointment

Reach out by phone or email to let the person know what information you are seeking and how they might be able to help you. The introduction could be: "Sarah, John Smith in IT suggested I speak with you because of your expertise. My name is Rick Stevens and I am interested in the _____ field. I could use advice from someone who is in this field. Do you have time in the next two weeks to meet for about 20 minutes either in person or by phone? I would really like to learn more about the _____ field from someone like you." Most people will be more than happy to help you.

4. Plan an Agenda for the Session

Remember this is your meeting so come prepared. After introductions, give a brief summary of your career goal, or what you want to learn from this person. Prepare plenty of questions to make good use of the time. Respect their time; do not overstay your welcome. At conclusion of the meeting summarize any action steps you will take and thank them for their time. Sample questions to learn more about a career field include:

- How did you get started in this field?
- What is a typical day like in your job?
- What do you like most / least about this career?
- Is your job typical of others in this field?
- What are current job prospects like in your department?
- Are there related fields I might want to investigate?
- What makes a resume impressive in this field?
- How do you stay current in your knowledge?
- What is your organization looking for in this career (skills, education, experience)?
- What might be a typical career ladder for this position?
- What would you recommend I do at this point to get into this field?



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- What are the future trends for this field?
- Are there other King County departments that employ people in this field?
- Is there anyone else within King County (or externally) you would recommend I talk to in this field?
- Might there be special duty assignments created for this occupation in the near future?
- What do you anticipate the need being for this occupation over the next year, several years?

5. Conduct Yourself as a Professional

Dress and act the role of the position you are seeking. Speak positively of others. Learn as much as possible before the information interview so you can ask informed questions.

6. Show Genuine Interest During the Meeting

Say something like, "Mary Jones told me you're considered to be an expert in your field. How did you get started?"

7. Be Prepared to Answer Questions About Your Career Goals

Have a short personal statement prepared that you can present if you're asked about your career goals. Bring a resume, but don't offer it unless requested. Remember, the purpose of this interview is to obtain information.

8. Get Names

Ask for other people in the county (or outside the county) that might be helpful to speak with. If no names are suggested, be appreciative of the information or suggestions given to you.

9. Send Thank-You and Follow-Up Email

Thank the person at the conclusion of the interview and send an email stating your gratitude for the time given. Stay in touch with your contacts by writing emails and informing them how helpful the suggestions have been to you. You may want to email them articles or information you came across that might be of interest to them as a way to stay in touch.

10. Follow Through on All Referrals You Receive

With practice you will get more and more comfortable talking and networking with people. Just remember that each step you take will get you closer to that job offer or special duty assignment.

11. Consider Creating an Individual Development Plan (IDP)

An IDP is a road map to help an individual to achieve their career goals. As you network with experts during your information meetings, ask them for suggestions on key knowledge, skills, and experiences to obtain and which you would include on your IDP. More information about the IDP, along with a template, can be found at www.kingcounty.gov/CSS.

12. Tailor Your Resume

Make good use of all the information you have gathered from your information interviews to update and tailor your resume to highlight your related qualifications for EACH specific career objective. Resume writing tips and examples can be found at www.kingcounty.gov/CSS.