

NETWORKING MEETINGS: MORE THAN JUST AN INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

Trachtenberg School
of Public Policy
& Public Administration

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

NETWORKING MEETING GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION TO NETWORKING MEETINGS

Interchangeable with the term “informational interviews,” *networking meetings* are a conversation with someone who is currently in a position, field, or organization of interest to you. These meetings are **brief** and **succinct** but are typically one of the **most useful aspects** of a successful career exploration.

INITIAL OUTREACH & PREPARATION

➤ IDENTIFY EMPLOYERS/INDIVIDUALS OF INTEREST

- Research LinkedIn, job boards, potential employers, faculty and academic and professional affiliated organizations/associations
 - Leadership Directory (accessible via Handshake > Career Center > Resources)
 - [GW Research Guides](#)
 - [GW Company Information](#)
 - [GW Industry Information](#)
- To focus your outreach, think about what opportunities available, your level of connection and where you have the greatest interest.

➤ **REQUEST AN INTERVIEW**

- If there are no shared connections, consider “cold” contacting the professional by writing a brief statement about yourself, your career goals and your interest in talking to them. In your email, think of a **hook** that will grab the reader’s attention. (See examples later in this guide)
- Tap into your current network and LinkedIn connections for a “warm” contact so they can make an introduction. (See examples later in this guide) Once a meeting is arranged, let the person who made the introduction know that you’ve followed up and also send them a thank you afterward for connecting with their contact.

➤ **FOLLOW UP IF NO RESPONSE FROM INITIAL REQUEST**

- Give the person 7-10 days to reply to your original response. If you do not hear from the person after this window of time, “reply” to the original email to inquire if a meeting can be established. By replying to the original email, the person you are contacting can reference your initial inquiry.

➤ **PREPARE BY RESEARCHING THE EMPLOYER AND INDIVIDUAL**

- Review the website, LinkedIn page, and any articles/news about the organization and individual.
- Avoid asking questions that you could find answers to online. Prior to the interview, learn about the person’s background, time in the field and company, as well as any common area of interests to make a connection.
- Take notes in advance so that your questions are thorough and specific to this person.

DURING AND AFTER THE NETWORKING MEETING

➤ **MEETING PROTOCOL**

- Listen and modify your questions to fit the conversation.
- If in person, bring your resume but only provide a copy if they ask to it.
- When your meeting is nearing the time you have allotted, mention to the person that you are aware that you only have 5-10 minutes left. This indicates that you respect their time and also allows them to possibly continue the conversation longer.
- Try to have an “ask” at the end to expand your network/knowledge:
 - I would be interested in talking to someone in the development department at your organization, is there anyone there that would be able to connect me to for another meeting?
 - Are there similar organizations you think should be on my radar that are doing comparable work?
 - I saw in your bio that you also worked at xx organization and was wondering if you’d be open to doing an e-introduction to someone in their Monitoring and Evaluation Department?
- If you’d like to stay in touch in the future, ask them how they prefer to be contacted and how often:
 - Would it be okay if I reached out to you via email if I see an opportunity at your organization?
 - If I had follow up questions as I continue this process, would you be open to another brief conversation in the future?
- Express appreciation for their time when wrapping up.

➤ **APPRECIATION MESSAGE**

- Within 24 hours, send a thank-you email to the individual for meeting. If someone else helped you make that connection, also send them a thank-you email. (See examples in this guide)
- Comment on how the meeting expanded your knowledge of the field and cite the follow-up steps you plan to take.

➤ **LINKEDIN REQUEST**

- In most networking situations, it is common to request to connect with the person on LinkedIn after a meeting. You should personalize the message and thank them again for their time.

➤ **TRACKING NETWORKING**

- Record and take notes about what you learned about the person, field and employer.
- Maintain a list of people you have interviewed or plan to interview. Document when your conversations took place, information shared, contact suggestions and future follow-up steps.

➤ **ONGOING FOLLOW UP**

- Maintain networking relationships by emailing or phoning as appropriate.
- Send a link to a current news story, information about an upcoming conference, or news of a personal accomplishment that may appeal to your contact.
- Keep your networking connections updated on your work in the field.
- Request additional connections or career advice as appropriate based on the conversation. You want to be mindful that you are planting seeds for long-term career growth so be aware of the pace and appropriateness of your “asks.” It can be helpful to ask how often they are comfortable with you reaching out to them so that they guide the frequency/level of connection.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Career Path:

- What drew you to this field/line of work initially?
- What encouraged your decision to make the career transition from private to non-profit sector?
- What was it like to work under Senator Jane Doe? What did you learn from your experience?
- Aside from your past experience as an AmeriCorps VISTA, what other service opportunities have you undertaken? Is service a value which your organization promotes?
- Your jump from Program Consultant to Director of Company X in only 3 months was an incredible accomplishment. What led to this career transition?
- What skills did you learn from serving in the United States Navy, and how do you apply these skills in your current position as the Director of Recruiting and Training for Company X?

“A Day In the Life”:

- What aspect of your job do you find most engaging? Least engaging?
- What is your typical day (week) like in your position?
- What surprises you most about this job? What kind of challenges do you deal with on a daily basis?
- What are the most valuable skills in your job? Which experiences enabled you to develop these?
- What kinds of skills and abilities do you think are needed for this type of work? Are there specific types of people that you think thrive in this line of work?
- What kinds of decisions do you need to make on your job? Who is involved with this decision making?

Organizational Culture:

- What is the average length of time for an employee to stay in your current job? Do people usually transition to another position within your organization or move on to another employer?
- What kind of movement is most common here in the company’s internal professional development? Lateral, Upward? What does it take to be promoted in this company?
- Could you talk more about work/life fit? How does your job affect your life?

- Can you describe the work environment in your organization in terms of individual effort vs. teamwork, pressure, deadlines, workload, etc.?
- This past month, you have presented several times at local institutions on your policy work in Uganda. Are you encouraged by your organization to publish and/or speak about your research?

Tailored to Company/Field:

- What types of accomplishments tend to be valued and rewarded in this field?
- Where is the company/industry headed in the next 5-10 years?
- What are some trends or challenges that are most impacting your organization right now?
- I've read the company's mission and values, but can you share how you see that played out on the job?
- What do you think are the company's biggest successes? What does the company do really well?
- Was the recent USAID grant I heard that your organization received part of a new initiative or to expand existing programs? What impact do you see this having on the direction of your agency?
- Based on current events, how did your organization deal with the sequestration?
- The recent merger with Company X expanded the organization. Based on this merger, do you foresee the opening of new markets or greater globalization? Building of new facilities or products?
- According to *The Washington Post*, since you have been with ABC Industries, the clientele has increased by 62%. Can you describe the strategies implemented to reach this achievement?
- How did the organization's recent move from New York City to Alexandria, VA impact operations?

Advice for Breaking into the Field:

- What training or education is needed to get started in the field? What is helpful for advancing?
- What skills should I focus on acquiring or refining in order to be successful? OR In your experience, what are the must-have top 3 skills needed by someone looking to be successful in this industry?
- What are some of the ways I can become more familiar with this field? Are there conferences/associations/resources you'd suggest?
- What do you read — in print and online — to keep up with developments in your field?
- If you were starting out now, how would you get into this field? What strategies would you use to get your foot in the door? What advice would you give to someone in my position?
- What related fields and/or organizations do you think I should consider looking into?

Next Steps:

- If you had a chance to do it all over again, what would you have done differently?
- Is there anything I haven't asked about that you'd think would be helpful for me to know?
- Would it be all right if I kept in touch with you? How would you prefer that I keep in touch?
- Is there anyone else you think I should talk to as I continue to gather information?

EMAIL INTRODUCTION TEMPLATES

CONTACTING “WARM” CONNECTIONS (PEOPLE YOU KNOW)

SUBJECT: Met you at APPAM conference + request for informational interview

Hi First Name,

It was so nice to meet you at the APPAM conference last week -- we chatted after First Name's workshop. As a refresher, I'm an MPP student at GW and am currently in Dr. Newcomer's Program Evaluation class.

I want to follow up to request an informational interview to learn more about your company and the path that led you to this work. I'm interested in working in the environmental policy field and would like to explore potential opportunities to collaborate.

I would be delighted to have a chance to connect with you either in person or over the phone. Please let me know if you have any availability over the next few weeks. I'm usually free in the mornings.

Thanks for your consideration!
Your First name

SUBJECT: Following up from conference + scheduling a time to meet

Hi First Name,

It was great to meet you yesterday and I'm glad to be connected with you on LinkedIn! I really enjoyed that corporate social responsibility conference -- the break-out workshops, in particular.

I'd love to swing by your office or grab coffee or lunch sometime soon. I'm interested to hear more about your career path and the work you do within Deloitte's CSR division.

Do you have any availability over the next few weeks? I'm happy to work around your schedule.

Looking forward,
Your First Name

SUBJECT: Following up from GW TSPPPA dinner + request for quick call

Hi First Name,

I enjoyed meeting you last night at the "Dinner with Alum" GW event. Thank you for taking the time to speak with us!

It was very helpful to hear about your work in the Loudon County Department of Management and Budget. I'm planning to move to Richmond after graduation -- do you have advice regarding opportunities to work on the local level there?

If you have time for a quick phone call, I'd love to ask a few follow-up questions. I'm free all day this Friday and next.

Thanks!
Your First Name

CONNECTING THROUGH AN INTRODUCTION

Subject: Referred by First Name Last Name

Dear First Name,

First Name Last Name recommended I contact you. He thinks very highly of you and encouraged me to reach out to ask about your experience as a policy analyst. I'm a second year student in the Trachtenberg School's MPP program at GW, and I would like to be a policy analyst in the federal government. I'd love to chat with you for 20 minutes about your experience.

Are you available for coffee or to speak sometime next week? My schedule is fairly open on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday and I'd be delighted to come by your office to talk.

Best,
First Name Last Name

Thanks for the introduction, First Name (moving you to the BCC line).

First Name, it's great to meet you. As First Name mentioned, I'm in the second year of MPA degree and am interested in nonprofit fundraising positions. I'd love to talk with you about your experience in development and advancement.

Do you have time for a 20-minute phone call next week? I'm generally available on Wednesday mornings and Thursday afternoons. I can work around your schedule.

Thanks for your consideration,
First Name Last Name

CONTACTING "COLD" CONNECTIONS (PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW)

SUBJECT: GWU MPP Student Seeking Advice

Dear First name Last Name,

After reading about your success expanding foreign relations with China in The New York Times, I investigated your organization further to learn more about its plans for global expansion. As a graduate student studying national security at The George Washington University, I'm currently exploring careers that merge my interests in foreign affairs and diplomacy. With a strong desire to learn more about organizations and positions that oversee the policies for a given region of the world, I would love to connect with you to learn more about your position as a Foreign Affairs Specialist at Company ABC.

I imagine your schedule is very busy and would greatly value any insight you could offer. If you have time to speak with me over the phone or in person, I would be very appreciative. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

First Name Last Name
name@email.com; 202-123-4567; www.linkedin.com/in/name

SUBJECT: GWU Student Seeking Advice on International Development/USAID

Dear First Name Last Name,

As a graduate student at George Washington's Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration, I am focusing on international development and your insights into USAID's Democracy and Governance programs would be extremely helpful.

Do you have 20 minutes to answer some questions about your experience at USAID? I know this may be a busy time of year, so please let me know how I can accommodate you.

Thank you for your time,
First Name

SUBJECT: GWU student seeking to connect about your work at the Urban Institute

Dear First Name,

I am a MPP student at GW and found your profile in the Trachtenberg School alumni group on LinkedIn. My focus is on economic policy – I have utilized the research of the Urban Institute during my degree.

I would love to hear more about your work in housing and economic policy and any advice you'd have for someone entering this field.

Do you have 20 minutes to chat about your experience? I would be happy to meet you at your office or a convenient coffee shop. I'm generally available on Mondays and Thursdays.

Thank you for your consideration,
First Name

ASKING FOR AN INTRODUCTION

Subject: Following up from recent discussions on career path

Good afternoon.

As we have discussed recently, I am in the process of exploring careers for post-graduation as I will be completing the MPP program this spring. One career path that I am interested in learning more about is legislative positions on Capitol Hill.

I have been doing some research on LinkedIn, and I understand that you are connected with First Name Last Name, currently working as the Legislative Director in Senator XX's Office.

Would you be willing to introduce me to her so that I could conduct a short 20/30 minute informational interview? I would like to learn more about the portfolio of issues that she manages for Senator XX and gain a better understanding of careers on the Hill.

Thank you, and I appreciate it!

-First Name

SUBJECT: Following up from ICMA conference’s coffee break conversation

Dear First Name,

It was great connecting with you briefly as we stood in line for coffee at the ICMA Conference! I enjoyed hearing about your work for the city of Philadelphia, especially with impact your team is having on integrating bicycling plans into the transportation policy.

As I mentioned, I’m looking to return to the Philadelphia area after graduation and am exploring a number of career paths. You mentioned that you might have some ideas of individuals I could talk to who are working in the transportation and community planning fields. I would be very interested in any introductions you could make so that I could arrange some informational interviews when I’m visiting Philly next month.

Thank you again for your time and suggestions!

Kind regards,

First Name

LINKEDIN INTRODUCTION TEMPLATES

COLD CONTACT MESSAGE

If you want to send a “cold” contact message to someone with whom you’re not connected on LinkedIn, you need to either use InMail (found by clicking on the three dots in the upper right hand corner of their profile) or compose a brief message in a text box after clicking on the “Connect” button.

It will encourage you to customize that invitation, but it’s important to keep within current LinkedIn character limits, so you have to keep the message very short.

Dear First Name Last Name,

As a graduate student at GW’s Trachtenberg School, I’m focusing on international development. Your insights into USAID’s Democracy and Governance programs would be extremely helpful.

I wanted to connect and see if you might also have 15 minutes to answer questions about your experience?

Thank you,
First Name

Dear First Name,

My focus is on economic policy - I have admired and utilized the research of the Urban Institute. I'm currently pursuing my MPP at GW while working full-time.

Do you have 20 minutes to answer some questions about your experience? I’m generally free on Mondays and Fridays.

Best,

First Name

Dear First Name,

I'm a MPA student at GW and found your profile via a shared connection. I'm interested in your career path from non-profit management to Deloitte.

I'd love to hear more about your experience changing fields. Do you have 20 minutes to chat?

Thanks for your consideration,
First Name

Dear First Name,

As a graduate MPA student at GW and professional in the field, I'm interested to learn more about your work at McKinsey & Company in the Atlanta office. I'm considering relocating to that area after graduation.

Do you have 20 minutes to chat by phone in the next two weeks?

Best,
First Name

CONNECTION REQUESTS TO SOMEONE YOU DON'T KNOW YET

First Name,

I've been appreciating the insights you share in your Public Policy Highlights Report. I'm interested in connecting with you here on LinkedIn.

First Name

First Name,

I loved your article, "Cracking "The Confidence Code" - Unlocking the courage to put yourself out there." I hope you'll accept my invitation to connect.

First Name

First Name,

Our mutual friend and connection, First Name Last Name, has been singing your praises. Now that I've read more about your work, I can see why!

I'd love to connect with you on LinkedIn -- and hopefully in person in the future.

Christina

MESSAGE TO SOMEONE WHO VIEWED YOUR PROFILE

Thanks for stopping by my profile, First Name.

If you were just browsing, no need to respond. But, if there are any questions I can answer for you, I'd be more than happy to do so.

First Name,

I was delighted to see that you viewed my profile because I'm very interested in your company's work.

Any chance you're open to scheduling a 15-minute phone call? I'm generally available Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

Thanks!

FOLLOW UP NOTE IF PERSON DIDN'T RESPOND TO INITIAL MESSAGE

Sometimes individuals accept your request to connect on LinkedIn, but miss the personalized note you sent in the message or they might not notice/respond to your direct/In Mail LinkedIn message.

This can happen when people view LinkedIn on their phones or on their desktop due to the updated appearance of the "Received Invitations" page.

In that case, you should search for the individual's work email (Google search, check the organization's website, call the main number of the organization to ask for their email, etc.) and send a follow-up message.

If you are already connected on LinkedIn, when you click on the person's profile, look for the "Contact and Personal Info" tab on the right. Click on "Show more" for the drop-down box, which should include email address and sometimes other info like social media profiles and company website.

SUBJECT: Following up on LinkedIn connection + scheduling a time to meet

Dear First Name,

Great to connect with you on LinkedIn! I just wanted to follow up on the message I sent as I'd love to hear more about your experience shifting from federal to state government. Do you have 15-20 minutes to chat in the next few weeks?

Thanks for your consideration,
First Name
LinkedIn.com/your name

SUBJECT: Following up on LinkedIn message + request for quick call

Dear First Name,

Hope this message finds you well! I wanted to follow up on my LinkedIn message about finding a time to connect about your work at Environmental Defense Fund. As a graduate student who just completed a summer internship at The Nature Conservancy, I'm very interested in learning more about current trends and your work in the renewable energy field.

Do you have 20 minutes to chat by phone in the next two weeks? My schedule is flexible so I can easily accommodate your availability.

Best,
First Name
LinkedIn.com/your name

FOLLOWING UP AFTER A NETWORKING MEETING

While it is most common to send a short email thank you message (which allows the contact to respond and continue the conversation), in some cases, you might opt to send a brief handwritten thank-you note by mail (in addition to the email) which has a more personal touch.

SUBJECT: Thank you!

Hi First Name,

Thank you for your time -- I enjoyed our meeting and hearing more about your work and career path. I'd be delighted to find ways to work together to support your team's housing policy initiatives. Once the new Policy Analyst position becomes available, I'd be interested in learning more about that role and discussing my qualifications.

Have a great weekend!
First Name

SUBJECT: Thank you for your time!

Hi First Name,

Thank you for taking the time to speak about your role at the DC Fiscal Policy Institute and your advice on expanding my policy work at the local level. I enjoyed our conversation and found it extremely informative. In particular, I joined the DC Fair Budget Coalition as a result of your recommendation.

Warmest,
First Name

SUBJECT: Thank you for our meeting!

Hi First Name,

I really appreciated the opportunity to meet with you. I found your insight, information, and advice very helpful. I'd love to connect with your contact at ICF International when you have a moment to pass along her contact information. I also plan to check out the Young Professionals in Foreign Policy association.

I look forward to staying in touch--
First Name

THANK YOU TO PERSON WHO INTRODUCED YOU TO A NEW CONTACT

Hi First Name,

Thanks for the introduction to Melanie! We had a productive conversation – she's a terrific resource. It was also nice to hear more about your previous work together. I appreciate your input on how to tailor my application for LMI. I'll keep you posted on that process.

All best,
First Name