Career Paths

Setting Up and Conducting Informational Interviews

April 23rd 2025

AAN | EASA APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY NETWORK

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AGENDA

01 Introduction

02 Overview

Definition, Benefits, Who and How to Contact, What to Ask

03 Exercise & Discussion

04 Feedback & Links

UPCOMING WEBINARS

May 21st

Turning Your CV into a Resume

June 18th

Explaining Anthropology to People in Your Life

FACILITATOR

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Founder and Principal
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Anthropology Career Readiness Network (ACRN)

Our Mission

Helping to prepare the next generation of anthropologists to meet tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.

Our Resources

- **"How-to" Tools for Job Seekers and Instructors including our 2024 Workbook: *Career Tools for Anthropology***
- **Speaker's Bureau**
- **World of Work Blog**
- **Client-based Class Projects**
- **Departmental Advisory Initiative**
- **and more!**

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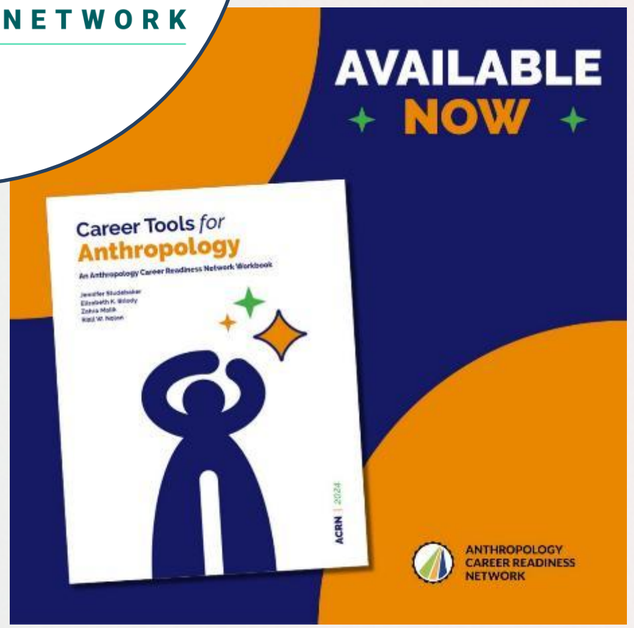

anthrocareerready.net

Let’s define “informational interviews”

An informal meeting to learn about an industry, organization, or role from a professional who can provide career insights and advice

Purposeful

- Establish a connection
- **Gather information**
- Obtain advice
- Gain access

What are other benefits of informational interviews?

- Learn from what you hear
- Improve your ability to ask questions
- Increase your confidence in leading a structured conversation
- Provide you with insights about aspects of the work people enjoy and find difficult
- Assess how well this type of work aligns with your interests and values
- Give you some control over your career search
- Build your professional contacts, including through referrals of new interviewees

How do informational and job interviews differ?

	Informational Interviews	Job Interviews
Conduct background research	On the organization and interviewee	On the organization, job opening, and interviewee (if known in advance)
Prepare documents	Bio or resume	Resume, cover letter, and portfolio (as appropriate), customized to the position
Draft interview questions	On the organization and/or interviewee	On the position, reporting relationships, and work environment
Develop and practice storytelling examples	*Not applicable*	On your experiences and accomplishments related to the position
Gather specific insights	Obtain answers to your questions; expand your knowledge of the organization	Determine the “degree of fit” between your capabilities and what the organization seeks

How do you find interviewees?

Good friends are strong ties

- Contact your “good friend” whose friends may be willing to speak with you

- Some of your friend’s friends are in the foreground on the right: **blue**, **red**, and **green**

Your friend’s friends are your weak ties

They cannot be very helpful (e.g., in the foreground in green) They cannot be very helpful (e.g., in the foreground in green)

Focus on “The Strength of Weak Ties” *

Acquaintances are weak ties

- Contact your “acquaintances” who might be willing to participate in an informational interview

Acquaintance’s acquaintances are too distant from you

- They cannot be very helpful (e.g., in **green**)

* Granovetter, M.S. 1973 “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6): 1360-1380, May.

How do you contact interviewees?

To Do List:

- Prepare a short and simple request via **email** or by **phone**
- Ask for **15-20 min**. of their time to do an informational interview
- Explain
  - Why you hope to meet with this individual
  - That Person X “advised me to contact you”
  - That you are seeking information and advice, ***not*** a job

Sample Script:

“Dear Dr. Sanchez,
Maria Smith suggested that you would be able to give me some career advice.

I am in my third year of graduate school at UC San Francisco and am exploring careers where I can use my medical anthropology background. I am bilingual in English and French.

I understand that you work at WHO as a medical anthropologist.

Would you have 15 minutes sometime over the next few week to speak with me by phone or Zoom? Thank you and I look forward to hearing back from you.
Suzanne Carter”

What are some useful questions to ask?

Related to Interviewee's Work:

- How would you describe the work you do?
- What is a typical (or composite) day like for you?
- What do you enjoy best about your job?
- Which aspects of your job are the most challenging?

Related to Career Advice:

- What qualifications are necessary to do the work you do?
- What career path would you recommend for someone entering your field?
- How does your organization find the people it hires?
- Can you suggest others in your field (or organization) with whom I might speak?

Review what you need to do and get started

To Do List:

- Arrive on time
- Dress appropriately
- Smile and introduce yourself
- Ask your questions
- Keep the conversation going
- Take notes
- Thank your interviewee

Keep a spreadsheet for recall and future discussions with your interviewee

Contact and Email	Date	Background	Advice	Referrals	Follow Up
Noemi Sanchez, Noemi.Sanchez@gmail.com	April 18, 2025	Medical Anthropologist at WHO	Do public health internship; take course in program management	Dominique LePoutre, DLePoutre@gmail.com	Thank you sent via email; request LePoutre interview the week of April 28
Dominique LePoutre, DLePoutre@gmail.com	May 11, 2025	Epidemiologist at WHO			

To summarize, we covered six topics

Benefits of informational interviews

Differences between informational and job interviews

Finding interviewees through “weak ties”

Contacting interviewees

Developing questions to ask

Capturing what you learned in your interview notes and spreadsheet

Exercise

- **Goal:** Practice doing an informational interview with your partner

- **Tasks:**
  - Ask about your partner’s current (or former) job
  - Take notes
  - Figure out if you would like to do your partner’s job

- **Debrief:** What did you learn?

DISCUSSION

What tips would you offer others about doing informational interviews?

Raise hand, ask in chat, or use Q&A feature.

Discussion

Some tips for you

- Informational interviewing can be done while you are at university or after you graduate
- Being prepared with background research on the interviewee and organization will make the informational interview most effective
- Always thank your interviewee
- Consider asking your interviewee if you may contact them in the future
- Try to enjoy the opportunity as well as learn from this experience

SAVE THE DATE!

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Turning Your CV into a Resume

May 21st 2025
6 PM CET

FEEDBACK

Share your thoughts!

https://tinyurl.com/CP20250423

Submit a topic:

www.padlet.com/careerpaths/aan

Watch the recordings:

www.tinyurl.com/AANCPYT

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