**WRP Student Guide to Informational Interviews**

An **informational interview** is a formal one-on-one discussion with a person who works in a career field or employment area that you are interested in learning more about. It is a safe space for prospective employees to ask more direct career path and job-related questions, engage in discussion, and network. While informational interviews are not for a specific position or job, it is important to conduct oneself in a professional and courteous manner.

A **Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) informational interview** is a scheduled discussion with a WRP Recruiter, who is a Federal Government employee. During the course of the informational interview, you will begin with introductions, then have a conversation where you ask for career advice and learn about federal service. This will be followed by a discussion about your resume and application, where the Recruiter will provide feedback and general suggestions. This is your chance to learn and seek advice from someone in a federal career about how to succeed in your future career path.

How to Prepare

* Conduct research on the various career pathways or agencies you are interested in.
* Practice introducing yourself and review asking your questions ahead of time. This will help with the flow of the interview and allow you build more confidence.
* Make sure that you are familiar with your resume, have had your school’s career or writing center review your resume, and are prepared to discuss it with the Recruiter and receive constructive feedback.
* Remember the informational interview is not an interview for a specific position or job. It is an opportunity for you to learn about prospective opportunities.

Points to Remember:

* Let the interviewer start.
* Provide a brief introduction of yourself.
  + This should include the school you attend or graduated from, your degree/major/area of study, and a brief 1 minute introduction to your most important accomplishments and goals.
* Be courteous and professional.
* If you are unsure, ask for clarity.
* Don’t be afraid to ask questions; this is an opportunity for you to learn and engage.
* Take a moment to think about the question or gather your thoughts before responding.
* Take turns talking and listening.
* Breathe.

**Good informational interview questions should be…**

* Open-ended, leading
* Short and easy to say
* Direct and clearly stated
* Interesting, engaging, and thought-provoking

***Potential Questions to ask the Recruiter:***

Below are some sample questions you can ask the interviewer. You can also come up with your own. It may be helpful to outline your questions by topic areas or category headings. You should be prepared to ask between 5-10 questions during your interview.

Example Federal Government questions:

* How did you get started in your government career?
* How did you get into this line of work?
* How do most people enter this profession?
* Can you tell me about Federal Government work culture?
* What do you think is important to obtaining a federal job?
* Does the Federal Government offer career development and advancement opportunities?
* Does the Federal Government offer mentorship?
* What do you like about working for the Federal Government?
* How do you stay current in the Federal Government?

Example Skill-Related Questions:

* What type of skills do agencies look for when hiring new employees?
* Can you suggest some ways that a student can obtain skills and/or experience in this field?
* What basic or transferrable skills are most helpful to a career in government?
* What skills are needed to be successful in this field/government?
* What skills were most helpful for you in advancing in your career?
* What general skills do I need for this career path?
* What personal attributes are essential to success?
* What are some keys to success in the Federal Government?
* What didn’t you know before you got into your career field that you wish someone had told you?
* How do you advance in your field?

How do you network in your job and what are some different ways to network effectively?

Example Job-Related Questions:

* I really like doing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Do you have an opportunity to do this type of work in this career?
* Can you describe a typical work day at your job?
* What is the most rewarding part of your job?
* What excites you the most about your job?
* What types of tasks do you spend most of your time doing?
* Do you work more in a team or independent environment?
* How would you describe the work environment?
* What would you like to see change in the Federal Government?
* What has changed during your career in the Federal Government?
* What area of the Federal Government is experiencing the most growth?

Example Education Questions:

* What educational prep would you recommend for someone interested in a career in the Federal Government?
* Is continuing education or an advanced degree important to advancement and success in this career field or the Federal Government?
* Do you recommend working before pursuing an advanced degree?
* Are there any related fields within the Federal Government I should look into?

Example Resume Questions:

* What makes a resume impressive or stand out?
* Is my resume appropriate for the occupation/field that I am interested in?
* How often should I update my resume?
* Would you mind taking a look at my resume and giving me any suggestions you might have for its improvement?