

Activity: Prepare for an informational interview with a City Year alum (or person you would like to learn more about)

Purpose: An informational interview is a brief meeting or call between a person who wants to investigate a career (or particular company, college, graduate program, etc.) and a person working in that career (or company, going to that school, etc.). The purpose is not to ask for or get a job. The interview usually lasts 20-30 minutes. Source: [UNCW Career Center](#)

How to identify someone in the City Year alumni network you would like to learn more about:

- **Alumni résumé collection:** More than 35 alums have shared their résumé as a supplemental resource from the LACY 1 session on Thinking like an HR manager. Read through the career and education experiences of any alum you find interesting. [Access alumni résumés here](#) (for current AmeriCorps members only).
- **Alums on LinkedIn:** If you are already part of the [City Year Alumni Association group](#) on LinkedIn, you can spend some time just scrolling through alums and their job titles. Find an alum you would like to learn more about by visiting their LinkedIn profile page. If you aren't already a member of the alumni group on LinkedIn, you can request to join.

How to make the initial touchpoint after you identify an alum you want to learn more about:

- **Alums who shared their résumé:** In most cases, [alums who shared their résumé](#) made their contact information public so you can email them at the address on their résumé. They have agreed to be contacted directly by AmeriCorps members.
- **Alums you find on LinkedIn:** There are more than 40,000 City Year alums, current staff and former staff on LinkedIn. You can learn more about the benefits of LinkedIn and how to start running targeted searches by visiting the [LinkedIn page](#) on the City Year Alumni website.
 - **Note:** It's very easy to send a request to connect with someone on LinkedIn. However, you should always include a very short personal message when requesting to connect. The default message from LinkedIn will say, "I'd like to join your professional network," unless you personalize it.

DEFINITELY PERSONALIZE your LinkedIn request message. It can be very simple: "Hi [name], I'm a currently serving AmeriCorps member with City Year [city]. I'm interested in [enter your career or education interest], and I'd like to join your network. Thank you, [your name]." Personalizing will increase the likelihood that they accept your invitation. Once they accept, consider that a signal to continue the conversation [even if they don't personalize a message back]. Once you are connected on LinkedIn, you now have their email address [under contact info] and can continue the conversation via email and ask for an informational interview.

How to write an email requesting an informational interview phone call:

Note: The shortest distance between you and a really good connection with anyone you want to connect with is a short, well-written email. For more in-depth tips on the importance of writing in networking and building your network, including City Year examples of different kinds of emails, please read this resource: [The Importance of Writing in Networking](#).

- The email format for a first email can be really simple:
 - **Greeting:** “Hi [name], Hope you are doing well. My name is _____, and I am a currently serving AmeriCorps member with City Year [site].”
 - **Context for how you found them:** “I came across your [résumé or LinkedIn profile] through the City Year alumni network.”
 - **Share your career or educational goals or interests in one-three sentences.**
 - **Make the ask:** “I’m sure you are busy, but I would greatly appreciate if you would be willing to schedule a 20-30-minute phone call over the next couple of weeks so I can learn more about your career/education path in [add the industry, graduate program, etc.]?”
 - **Close with gratitude:** “Thank you in advance for considering my request and hope to hear from you. Sincerely, [your name]”

How to prepare for an informational interview:

- Visit the person’s LinkedIn profile (or read through their résumé if they are among the alums who shared) to learn about their career, education and volunteer experiences (especially early career experiences after City Year) – knowing this background info can help you be more specific in the questions you ask.

Come up with a flow of your conversation that will cover 20-30 minutes. Some ideas to start and kinds of questions you might ask:

- **Starting out:** Thank them for their time. Acknowledge current circumstances (ex: “Hope you are doing okay, and I appreciate you taking time to chat with me during everything that is happening. I appreciate it.”) Say who you are, a little about your service and where you are at with your sense of career clarity.
- If they have some connection to City Year, ask them about how they got connected.
- Can you share your career trajectory? What are the key influences, experiences, education that helped shape your path in that profession?
- What advice can you share for an early career job seeker looking to enter this field?
- Organizations/schools in this field they like and recommend you explore further. (A good question to ask: “Are there any people, companies or organizations you particularly admire that are doing good work in my area of interest?”)
- **Closing the conversation:** Thank them for their time and ideas. Assuming you enjoyed the conversation and want to stay connected, it’s always a good idea to close with something like

“Can I follow up with you if I have further questions and to keep you updated on my progress?”
Just about everyone will say yes to this question.

Follow up with a thank-you email:

- Send an email within 24-48 hours of the call (by emailing the person instead of sending a mailed thank-you card, you will maintain a history of correspondence and can reference back to help the person remember you).
- Share something you learned or took away from the conversation.
- Reference any next steps (if discussed during the meeting). For example, the person may have offered to share a resource or connect you to another person in their network. Follow up to remind them what they offered to do.
- Inquire if you can stay connected and keep the person updated on your progress.

About the City Year Alumni Association: City Year’s remarkable AmeriCorps alums, now a network 37,000 strong, increasingly are taking on leadership roles in communities where they live and work, making significant contributions as innovative leaders who can mobilize diverse groups to tackle complex challenges across a range of professional fields. These professions include education, business, law, health, corporate social responsibility, government and public policy, among others. [Learn more.](#)