netWORKS

a guide to expanding the employment networks of low-income people

by Laura Wyckoff and Carol Clymer

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the employment networks
of low-income people

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Public/Private Ventures is a national nonprofit organization that seeks to improve the effectiveness of social policies and programs. P/PV designs, tests and studies initiatives that increase supports, skills and opportunities of residents of low-income communities; works with policymakers to see that the lessons and evidence produced are reflected in policy; and provides training, technical assistance and learning opportunities to practitioners based on documented effective practices.

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INTRODUCTION
netWORKS: who it's for, how it was developed, why you might use it

People at every income level get jobs through people they know, from a Fortune 500 company CEO to a parking lot attendant. But there are significant differences between their networks. The CEO's network includes well-connected people in highly paid positions; the networks of low-income workers are likely made up of other low-income workers, family members and friends with few connections to better jobs. To compound the problem, low-income people often have less opportunity to expand their networks through formal networking groups and other activities that are available to upper- and middle-income workers.

In some ways, employment and training organizations, their programs and staff serve as a network for low-income job seekers. With employer contacts and the ability to vouch for skills and reliability, organizations can be important bridges to better jobs. However, programs may become even more effective by helping their participants build their own networks, which they will be able to use well after graduation.

Wait just a minute, you might be thinking. *Where is this going? I'm a frenzied manager of an employment and training program. Or an overworked trainer. Or a job developer with a newly graduated class needing placements. Is netWORKS suggesting I tackle network building when my days are already packed and my resources limited?* Well, yes. And there are compelling reasons for you to help your participants build strong networks:

- Low-income job seekers have small employment networks. Surveys of more than 1,100 low-income job seekers revealed that 75 percent had fewer than five people who could offer help with finding a job. In a separate survey of 740 low-income noncustodial fathers, 99 percent reported having a network of fewer than five contacts.
- Employers prefer to hire through networks. In one study, 88 percent of a group of employers hiring for lower-skilled positions reported using informal referrals to recruit workers.

What are employment networks?

Employment networks are the connections people have with relatives, friends, current and former coworkers and acquaintances who may have information about job opportunities or be able to exert influence over hiring decisions and promotions.

Who was netWORKS developed for?

Any organization that seeks to help participants get good jobs, stay employed and advance, including:
- Employment and training organizations
- One-Stops
- Civic/community-based organizations engaged in local employment issues
- Schools that offer life skills classes or school-to-career programs
- Community colleges and vocational schools and programs
- Youth-serving organizations
- Faith-based organizations that sponsor job training, placement, mentoring programs or networking groups
- Professional associations with community outreach initiatives

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Who might use netWORKS?

- **Program managers looking for ways to improve services and their organizations' performance;**
- **Trainers helping participants develop effective job seeking skills; and**
- **Job developers, who can be more successful when participants are actively involved in their own job search.**

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Exactly what resources does netWORKS provide?

- **10 classroom activities for teaching networking skills, most with additional outside assignments**
- **8 tip sheets for providing authentic ways for participants to practice networking and expand their networks**

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- Job seekers find employment through others. Research indicates that one third to one half of all job seekers find employment through informal networks of friends, family members and others.

- If the current trend continues, people will change jobs an average of 10 times during their lifetimes. Good contacts, accurate employment information and job leads can be crucial when these changes occur.

For all these reasons, organizations should consider including network development in their employment training. However, expanding participants' networks need not be an additional burden for a busy staff running a jam-packed program. (In fact, your organization may find that providing networking activities and groups can be an effective way for staff to manage/stay in touch with large caseloads.) This guide offers practical strategies and easy ways to infuse networking into your program's existing activities.

For example, if you are a trainer, you undoubtedly discuss the value of networking with your participants. You explain that most people get jobs through other people, and that it's important for participants to tell everyone they know that they are looking for a job. If you are a job developer, you probably encourage your participants to share job leads. You may send job seekers on informational interviews to both gather information and make valuable contacts. *netWORKS* organizes these common networking techniques into short, interactive, classroom activities, reinforced by outside assignments. And for trainers, job developers and managers, the guide provides tip sheets to incorporate a networking twist into the common components of many employment and training programs. It outlines tips on how participants can practice networking with mentors, guest speakers and their own job developers, for example. The tip sheets also offer suggestions on how to extend networking into the real world by having participants volunteer for community projects and attend employment-focused networking events.

Do organizations actually try to expand their participants' personal networks?

Here are some organizations that do:

- *The Community College of Baltimore County* in Baltimore, MD, teaches the importance of networking and encourages participants to ask for job leads, especially from former coworkers and employers.

- *EXCEL! Networking Group, Inc.,* a membership group in Washington, DC, provides professional networking opportunities to people with disabilities, including monthly networking meetings at a local church, a listserv, a website and a newsletter.

- *Family Pathfinders* in Texas connects low-income job seekers with groups of mentors, often from churches, who can serve both as a support and an employment network.

- *The HOPE Program* in Brooklyn, NY, provides job readiness classes and arranges internships for hard-to-employ individuals. Participants conduct informational interviews at their internship sites, share the information and continue to network with their peers at monthly alumni meetings.

- *i.c.stars* in Chicago builds networking into every component of its program from the day the participants begin training to beyond their graduation.

- *Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc.,* in Portland, OR, promotes volunteering for community projects as a way to meet others working in the trades.

- *Street Tech* in San Pablo, CA, focuses on networking in its IT Basics classes, sponsors a networking party and provides Internet networking opportunities.

- *StreetWise Partners* in New York City recruits young professionals to mentor participants from a variety of programs, offers structured activities and encourages its mentors to make introductions that lead to good jobs.

netWORKS was developed by examining programs that intentionally focus on helping participants build their employment networks. These programs go well beyond talking about the importance of networking. They actively teach networking skills and provide networking opportunities. They expect their participants to produce business cards, attend networking parties and expand their contacts through functions sponsored by professional associations. To help you visualize how you might incorporate networking, several of these programs are profiled in this guide. Their contact information appears on page A.2. More information about them can be found in a companion publication, *Getting Connected,* which you can download at www.ppv.org.

In short, throughout this guide, you will find practical, economical ways to help your participants expand their employment networks and gain networking skills. These skills can be as important in getting a job as completing an application, developing an effective résumé or interviewing successfully.

incorporating network expansion into your program

not to worry, it's flexible

Networking is an important skill for everyone. Research, personal experience and common sense confirm this. However, as many organizations do not have the time nor the budget to add networking as a distinct component of their training, the activities, assignments and tips in *netWORKS* are designed to be integrated with services commonly offered by employment and training programs.

All classroom sessions and activities in *netWORKS* are self-contained and can be used independently. However, because participants can often benefit from a series of networking opportunities, resources are organized in five sections, with later activities building on the earlier ones (see the table of contents). You can pick and choose classroom activities and tip sheets from the sections and then adapt them to fit both your program and your participants' needs.

Okay, no one reads instructions before having a look at the "goods." So after thumbing through the guide, return to the outline below to get started helping your participants expand their personal employment networks.

how to use the materials in netWORKS

① Decide which activities/experiences will benefit your participants

- Use the five section headings as a starting point for deciding which activities to offer your participants. For example, newcomers to the workforce might profit from the classroom activities in Section 1, Learn Why Networking Is Important to You. If your participants are veteran networkers but are retraining and need different contacts, use the tip sheets in Section 4, Network in the Real World.

- Use the classroom activity Take a Look at Your Network in Section 1 to help you determine the strength of your participants' networks and their networking skills. Choose activities and experiences based on their responses to this assessment. For example, if participants indicate that they don't have a good friend or mentor who can give useful advice about jobs, consider offering the classroom activity Assemble an Inner Network or Maintain Your Network *in Section 5*.

But there is just no time in my program . . .

If you can't incorporate network expansion into your program, try taking just a few minutes for your participants to complete the handout from Take a Look at Your Network on page 1.1; and then, based on their responses, have a conversation about the importance of networking and the ways people can find employment information.

Okay, consider a mini-workshop developed from activities in Target Network Members in Section 2 and Maintain Your Network in Section 5 as a way for participants to strengthen contact with people who can help them get promoted or advance in their careers. This is also a great way for your program to stay in touch with its graduates.

Wait! Offering a few lessons is easy, but it's really difficult to organize networking experiences.

True. But it's important that participants get a chance to practice and actually meet more people who can help them—and whom they can help. Most of the networking opportunities outlined in the tip sheets take place during events/ activities that programs might already offer. Others require identifying outside volunteer or networking opportunities, preparing participants to attend and then discussing their experiences.

• Think about how you can tailor the networking materials to the individual needs of your program's participants and the type of jobs your program targets. For example, for participants preparing for careers where they are likely to attend workshops or conferences or join professional associations (careers in finance or healthcare, for instance), offer the classroom activity Make Networking Conversation in Section 2 and use the tip sheet for Plan a Networking Party in Section 3. Use the tip sheet Network Online in Section 5 for participants headed for jobs in information technology—as well as for other job seekers with computer access.

② **Fit network expansion into your program**

• Use the matrix on the next page to identify where networking activities are likely to fit into your program. For example, you might want to use the classroom activities Learn How Most People Find Jobs in Section 1 during your program orientation and the tip sheet Network with Guest Speakers in Section 3 when employers and others visit.

• Schedule activities/experiences to build upon existing skills. Some activities naturally precede or follow one another, although all materials are self-contained. For example, you might offer the classroom activity Use a Business Card in Section 2 before using the tip sheets that prepare participants to attend an alumni group or an employment-focused networking event.

• Choose experiences that allow participants to personally interact with employed individuals, employers and others who can offer information and job leads and, potentially, become part of the participants' employment networks.

③ **Train staff and/or volunteers to use the materials**

• First, consider how to incorporate networking into your program's existing services without overloading your staff. For example, have staff members who are already planning events, such as employer appreciation ceremonies, graduations or alumni reunions, integrate networking by adapting information from tip sheets in Sections 3 and 4.

• Have staff members become familiar with the materials by using them to expand their own as well as the organization's employment contacts. Trainers might practice delivering the classroom activities Learn How to Expand Your Network, Develop a Personal Commercial or Make Networking Conversation during a staff meeting or organizational retreat. Participating in the activities can improve staff's understanding of the importance of networking and assure buy-in for incorporating the resource into your program.

FITTING NETWORKING INTO YOUR PROGRAM

> *Our program is shorthanded. Every staff member is busy.*
>
> **Consider asking community volunteers or employer partners to teach and participants to help plan networking activities. As a bonus, interacting with volunteers will help expand your participants' networks.**

	Activities and Tips in *netWORKS*	program orientation	career exploration	pre-employment	job-specific training	mentoring	job placement/job club	retention/advancement	alumni groups
Section 1: Learn Why Networking Is Important to You	Classroom Activity: Take a Look at Your Network	●		●			●	●	●
	Classroom Activity: Learn How Most People Find Jobs	●	●	●			●	●	●
	Classroom Activity: Learn How to Expand Your Network		●	●			●		
Section 2: Gain Networking Skills	Classroom Activity: Develop a Personal Commercial		●				●		
	Classroom Activity: Use a Business Card			●	●		●		●
	Classroom Activity: Make a Networking Conversation	●		●			●		
	Classroom Activity: Target Network Members		●	●			●	●	●
Section 3: Practice Networking in a Safe Environment	Tip Sheet: Network with Guest Speakers		●	●	●		●		
	Tip Sheet: Network with Mentors							●	
	Tip Sheet: Plan a Networking Party			●					●
Section 4: Network in the Real World	Classroom Activity: Conduct Informational Interviews		●	●			●		
	Tip Sheet: Network with Your Job Developer						●	●	
	Tip Sheet: Network at Volunteer/Community Events			●			●		●
	Tip Sheet: Attend an Employment-Focused Networking Event		●	●		●	●	●	●
Section 5: Continue to Build Your Network	Classroom Activity: Assemble an Inner Network			●			●	●	●
	Classroom Activity: Maintain Your Network			●				●	●
	Tip Sheet: Network Through Alumni Groups							●	●
	Tip Sheet: Network Online		●	●			●	●	●

Program Components

④ **Prepare to use the classroom activities and their accompanying networking assignments**

Use this checklist prior to each classroom session:

☐ Read through the activity, noting the background that grounds it in research or common sense, the objective, and the approximate time it takes to complete the session. Study the steps that make up the activity.

☐ Decide when to offer the activity and how to integrate it into other program components. Consider how to customize the activity for your participants.

☐ Preview sample responses/discussion points so you can guide the group, offer examples and help clarify and focus ideas. Be prepared to lead a conversation and exchange of ideas around the key points. Don't simply read them aloud to the group.

☐ Prepare resources and gather supplies:
   • A flipchart
   • Markers
   • Special preparation/supplies required for some sessions

☐ Prepare flipchart pages, as shown in the example below. Prior to the session, record the text shown in darker print. The text in light print represents sample responses that might be generated during the activity:

Business Cards

Vital Information	*Marketing Yourself*
name	*legible/easy to read*
credentials	*simple/uncluttered*
telephone #	*conveys industry values:*
fax #	*for example, banking*
email address	*or graphic design*

☐ Photocopy handouts to be used during the session. Handouts are included with most classroom activities. For your convenience, they reappear at the end of this guide, beginning on page A.3.

☐ Determine how/when you will follow up on the networking assignments. Schedule follow-up sessions, and let participants know when they will report on their assignments.

⑤ **Use tip sheets to help participants network using skills they have learned in classroom sessions**

- Use the tip sheets to incorporate networking into the activities/training that your organization already provides. For example, if your program provides mentoring, the tips for Network with Mentors in Section 3 suggest ways to encourage mentors to serve as bridges for participants to diverse, better-connected employment networks. The tip sheet also suggests how participants can reciprocate by offering information from their own experiences and perspectives.

- Develop organization-sponsored networking opportunities for participants, if you have the time and resources. For example, the tip sheet Plan a Networking Party in Section 3 offers guidance on organizing an event and preparing employers and other guests to help participants practice networking in a safe environment.

- Help participants identify networking opportunities outside the program. For example, Network Online in Section 5 offers information on how to find and develop online networks and access employment information over the Internet.

⑥ **Use effective strategies to teach and practice networking**

- Keep in mind that expanding networks requires interaction. Participants will not develop relationships and make valuable connections by passively listening to statistics on how people find jobs through other people. They will learn best by talking with peers, family, staff members, employers and anyone else with employment information and job connections.

- Consider materials in *netWORKS* to be adaptable outlines/guides, not rigid scripts, for conducting classroom sessions and providing networking opportunities. Share your own networking experiences, and connect networking concepts to the participants' real lives.

- Use an interactive approach to teach participants about networking. Remember that participants who have been unsuccessful in traditional educational settings often don't respond well to classroom lectures.

- Be encouraging and generous with positive feedback. Networking does not come easily to everyone, especially introverts or those with limited experience speaking confidently about themselves or responding to the needs of others. Consider that "fear of networking" usually comes from fear of rejection. Encourage participants to take a chance, and then try to ensure that they have positive experiences. Be especially sensitive and supportive of shy or alienated individuals during activities such as Develop a Personal Commercial in Section 2 and Attend an Employment-Focused Networking Event in Section 4.

Try these:

- **Model employment networking for your participants.** *"John, I want you to meet Bob, our board chairman. John just got his commercial driver's license and is applying for work with the school district."*

- **Discuss with participants positive networking experiences.** *"The job hadn't been advertised, but my friend, who worked there, knew about an opening and told me. Lots of companies like to hire people recommended by their employees."*

- **Arrange for personal testimonials about the effectiveness of networking.** *"We have a panel of graduates here today, and they're going to share how they found their jobs."*

- **Reinforce what the participants learn about networking.** *"Remember how we talked about targeting contacts? Well, there are 40 RSVPs for the event. Take a look at the list, and think about two or three people you will try to meet."*

- **Encourage participants to form peer networks.** *"Pat and Thuy both have internships at ICP. You guys are going to let the rest of us know what they expect from their administrative assistants, right?"*

- **Pointing out network-expanding opportunities.** *"Doesn't your pastor serve on the youth committee? Why don't you ask him about jobs over at the rec center?"*

- **Expect participants to take an active part in their job search by networking.** *"During your informational interview, you might discover job opportunities for some of your classmates."*

- Be alert for words/concepts that may be unfamiliar to your group. Define, restate and help participants connect what they are learning about networking to their personal experiences of seeking information and helping others.

- Be aware that fatigue can develop when all members of a large group present or debrief about their experiences. Have participants present in pairs or small teams.

- Follow up on all networking assignments. Most classroom activities and some tip sheets include ideas on what to do later to reinforce what participants are learning.

- Understand that helping individuals expand and use their own personal employment networks is different from the networking that your organization does on behalf of the participants. Although you and your participants may form a long-term relationship, you will be most helpful when you foster skills and independence by encouraging participants to form their own networks, ones that function long after program graduation.

- Throughout the program, continually emphasize the importance of expanding employment networks. The best reinforcement for networking is when participants get information from their personal networks that results in jobs. Broadcast your participants' networking successes.

⑦ **Promote network-expanding attitudes/atmospheres/interactions**

- Emphasize the reciprocity of networking. Encourage participants to pass along job leads and "insider information" on application processes and interviews. Reinforce networking assignments/activities by promoting and discussing reciprocity.

- Encourage participants to form relationships with their peers during training so they become ongoing resources for one another. Have them work in teams, describe their career goals to the group and exchange contact information.

As a bridge to employment, you and your organization need not do all the networking for participants. By incorporating the activities and tips in this guide, you can help your participants develop networking skills and expand their own networks.

SECTION **1**

Learn Why NETWORKING Is Important to You

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Take a Look at Your Network

background: *To help people expand their networks, it is important to know about their current knowledge, skills and network use.*

objective: *To determine how well participants understand the importance of networking and to gauge the extent of their networks and how effectively they use networking to get employment information.*

special consideration: *Use step 2A if the handout will serve solely as pre-assessment to help you plan more networking activities. Participants' answers will suggest which activities and tip sheets you might use. The questions are arranged in somewhat the same order as the materials appear in netWORKS. For example, the first five questions relate to the activities in Section 1: Learn Why Networking Is Important to You; questions 6 through 10 relate to Section 2: Gain Networking Skills, and so forth. You can also use the handout again as a post-assessment tool.*

Use step 2B to stimulate a conversation about networking, especially if discussing the handout is the only networking activity you will offer.

time: *15 minutes using step 2A*
45 minutes using step 2B

STEPS

1 *Tell* participants that you want to get a sense of what they already know about networking.

→
Taking a Look at My Network

Distribute the Taking a Look at My Network handout, and have participants complete it.

2A *Collect the handout* to help you decide which activities are most relevant for your participants.

– OR –

▐▐▐▶

2B *Give a brief introduction* about the importance of employment networking, using the following points:

➜ People are more likely to find jobs through friends/family than through other ways—studies indicate that 30 to 50 percent of job seekers find jobs through other people; only 14 percent get jobs through newspaper ads.

➜ Many jobs are never publicly advertised; job seekers find out about them through other people.

➜ Most people change jobs several times during their working years and routinely need to know about new jobs or advancement opportunities.

➜ Once people find jobs, they can network within their companies to identify career ladders and learn how employees receive promotions and advance.

➜ Introverted/shy individuals can network too; they may be more comfortable listening and offering help, which will most likely be reciprocated.

Ask participants to share their answers to the assessment questions.

Have the group members discuss what they might do for themselves to build strong networks. Suggest the following ideas if the group does not:

Ways to Build Strong Networks

○ Identify all friends, family members, former employers and coworkers and social and professional contacts (your doctors, clergy members, counselors) to make certain they know you are job hunting.

○ Talk with as many people as possible about your skills and goals— you never know when you will meet someone who can help you on your job search or whom you can help.

○ Develop a "personal commercial" to use when opportunities arise.

○ Develop confidence by practicing networking with people you know.

IIII➡

o   Seek information from people likely to know about job openings
    and advancement opportunities.

o   Retain/update contact information, including when, why and how
    you met, in order to develop ongoing relationships with people who
    can be helpful.

o   Share information with others—successful networking requires that
    you give information as well as receive it.

o   Attend gatherings/events with the intention of discussing employment
    and exchanging information.

o   Carry business cards, and use them appropriately.

Taking a Look at My Network, page 1 of 3

(for easy photocopying, handout reappears on page A.3)

1. Of the three choices listed below, how do most people find jobs?
   - ○ Newspaper ads
   - ○ Employment agencies or programs like this one
   - ○ Through people they know

2. How many people do you know whom you can talk with about finding a job?
   - ○ No one
   - ○ 1 to 5 people
   - ○ 6 to 10 people
   - ○ 11 to 20 people
   - ○ More than 20 people

3. Do you discuss employment or career goals at church, sporting or social events?
   - ○ No
   - ○ Occasionally
   - ○ Often

4. How often do people discuss their own jobs and career goals with you?
   - ○ Never
   - ○ Occasionally
   - ○ Often

5. Do you have a list of people you can call on for ideas and referrals when you need a job?
   - ○ No
   - ○ Yes, although I might not know how to get in touch with all of them
   - ○ I know exactly who to call and how to get in touch with them

6. Can you quickly and convincingly market your skills and talk about your employment goals when you meet someone?
   - ○ No
   - ○ Yes

7. Do you have business cards?
   - ○ No
   - ○ Yes

||||➡

Taking a Look at My Network, page 2 of 3

8. How confident do you feel introducing people to one another?
    ○ I'm not at all confident
    ○ I can do it, but I feel awkward
    ○ I'm confident at making introductions

9. How comfortable do you feel talking about the job you would like to have with people you don't know?
    ○ I'm not comfortable at all
    ○ It's tough, but I've done it
    ○ I'm comfortable when talking about my skills and job goals

10. Do you know people who have connections to well-paying jobs and will give you information and referrals?
    ○ No, I don't know anyone with connections to well-paying jobs
    ○ Yes, but my connections are really limited
    ○ I know several people who could help me get a well-paying job

11. Are you comfortable asking questions during presentations and exchanging information with teachers, trainers, job developers and guest speakers about employment topics?
    ○ No
    ○ I might ask questions, but I would feel nervous
    ○ Yes, I can do that

12. Do you exchange information about jobs and careers with a mentor?
    ○ No, I don't have a mentor
    ○ I have a mentor, but we don't talk about jobs or careers
    ○ Yes, I have a mentor, and we talk about employment

13. Do you volunteer for community activities such as neighborhood patrols, block cleanups, school board meetings, etc.?
    ○ No
    ○ Yes

‖➡

Taking a Look at My Network, page 3 of 3

14. Have you interviewed someone to get information about a job or a company that you are interested in working for?
    ○ No
    ○ Yes

15. Do you know about associations or events for people working in occupations where you want to find employment?
    ○ No
    ○ Yes. I know about the following groups and events: _____ .

16. How many employment networking events have you attended?
    ○ None
    ○ One or two, ever
    ○ One, maybe two, each year
    ○ I attend networking events regularly. These include: _____ .

17. Do you make an effort to keep in touch with people so if you need a job or need to change jobs, you can use them as a resource?
    ○ No
    ○ Yes

18. Have you used email and/or Internet chat rooms to exchange job or career information with others?
    ○ No
    ○ Yes

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Learn How Most People Find Jobs

background: *Research indicates that most of us find jobs through other people. Therefore, your participants should develop a network of contacts who could supply employment-related information and connect them with good jobs.*

Material in this activity has been adapted from the JOBS project, Michigan Prevention Research Center of the Institute of Social Research, University of Michigan.

objective: *To introduce participants to the importance of employment networking and have them begin identifying members of their networks.*

special preparation: *Before photocopying the handout My Connections, fill in information about yourself as the first entry. Also anticipate how much space participants will need to record their network information; then make the appropriate number of copies of the second page.*

networking assignment: **My Connections**

time: 20 minutes

STEPS

1 *Display* How Most People Find Jobs (previously prepared). Have the group compare the information with their own experiences.

How Most People Find Jobs

HOW MOST PEOPLE FIND JOBS

35% *Applying directly to an employer; especially effective with a personal referral (in one study, 88% of employers used personal referrals to recruit workers)*

28% *Friends and family*

14% *Want ads*

11% *Employment service*

3% *School placement*

9% *Other*

—BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

Discuss the following points:

➜ Applying directly to employers and getting jobs through friends and family are the most effective ways to find jobs.

➜ Job seekers can increase their chances of being hired if they know someone who can refer them to employers. Both ways of finding work involve networking.

2 *Point out* that networking is an exchange of valuable information. In everyday life, people network to find the best mechanic or who offers affordable childcare.

<offer a personal example of networking to find a service >

Ask the group for examples of their own networking experiences.

Now *ask the group* to define "employment networking."

Definition Employment networking means exchanging information about job opportunities with family, friends and acquaintances. It includes giving and receiving job leads.

<give examples of how you got jobs through networking>

Have the group brainstorm ways to network. Suggest the following ideas if the group does not:

Ways to Network

o Tell friends and family that you are looking for work

o Ask someone whether she knows of any job openings

o Give someone a job lead

o Describe your training, skills and career goals to someone

o Develop relationships with people who could help you with information and connections to jobs ⫸

- Develop relationships with people whom you could help with information and connections to jobs
- Have someone recommend you to his employer
- Recommend someone to your employer
- Attend workshops, classes and job club meetings
- Participate in networking events

Point out that:

➜ Network members do not have to be really close friends/family or directly connected to employment opportunities. Anyone could offer information, job leads or referrals.

➜ Networking is reciprocal: If you do something for someone, he or she is likely to do something for you.

➜ Useful networks also include people outside one's usual group. These people might have valuable information and leads to a different set of connections and jobs.

<give personal examples to illustrate these points>

3   *Ask participants* what they might say to start a networking conversation. Use the following examples if necessary:

Ways to Start a Networking Conversation

- *"I'm about to finish training, and I'm looking for a job in the financial field."*
- *"Last time we talked, you were working at Security Bank. Do you know whether they are hiring in the data processing department?"*
- *"Doesn't your cousin work for the city? Do you think she would take a moment to talk with me about her job?"*

My Connections

Distribute and preview My Connections.

Discuss the information you provided about yourself as the first entry on the handout.

Tell participants that they should:

1. Record the names of the people they know and information about each. **NOTE:** If participants have no one they can identify as a connection, have them list members of the program staff and fellow participants.

2. Contact people on their list to discuss employment by:

   - Letting their "connections" know they are in training, looking for a job or considering a career change;

   - Asking their "connections" for other contacts, if appropriate; and

   - Offering a business card or résumé, if these are available.

3. Report back on their networking experience on a specific date. Give participants at least a week to gather the information.

REINFORCE LATER

How Most People Get Jobs

Ask participants to discuss how they built their list of connections and what happened when they contacted people.

Suggest that participants add to their own lists as their fellow participants talk about their connections and experiences. For example, if someone put his second cousin on his list, others could consider adding and contacting their cousins.

Ask each participant to share a name from his or her list and tell the group what type of employment information the contact offered.   ⦚➡

Remind participants that networking involves exchanging, not just receiving, information.

Have them take turns choosing someone from their list and telling the group what type of employment information this person could be interested in and what information they could share with this network member. For example, participants might share information offered by a guest speaker or a mentor with a network member. Or they might pass on job postings they've seen on the Internet.

My Connections, page 1 of 2

(for easy photocopying, handout reappears on page A.6)

family • friends • former coworkers • former teammates • employers • teachers • schoolmates • neighbors • community members • church members • club/organization members • teachers at my child's school • people I do business with, like my dry cleaner, dentist or grocer • others

name/phone number	works at: has connections with: could have information about:
name/phone number	works at: has connections with: could have information about:
name/phone number	works at: has connections with: could have information about:

My Connections, page 2 of 2

name/phone number	works at:
	has connections with:
	could have information about:
name/phone number	works at:
	has connections with:
	could have information about:
name/phone number	works at:
	has connections with:
	could have information about:

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Learn How to Expand Your Network

background: *Our networks are expanded when we meet people who have different sets of friends and acquaintances. These "bridging contacts" are useful for gaining employment information not available from our own networks. Therefore, it's important that participants meet people who can become bridges to better-connected networks.*

objective: *To introduce the concepts of network expansion and bridging.*

special preparation: *Ask participants to bring their completed handout,* My Connections, *if you offered the session* Learn How Most People Find Jobs.

networking assignment: *Network Bridge Hunt*

time: 45 minutes

STEPS

1 *Display* the previously prepared Our Group's Network chart below (without the numbers):

Our Group's Network

OUR GROUP'S NETWORK

# of people in our personal networks

12	9
2	10
8	30
30	0
6	2

Total number in our network 109

Have participants estimate how many people—including friends and family—they can talk with about careers, employment and/or job leads.

Record these numbers on the flipchart and total the numbers, including the number in your own network.

Point out the following information about the group's network:

➜ Although some members of the group will know the same people, just being in the group has already expanded everyone's employment network.

➜ Potentially, everyone has access to the networks of all group members. How can individuals gain access to one another's networks?

➜ In order to be an effective job seeker/networker, people must work at making connections. What can group members do to expand their connections?

➜ Group members should always consider:

• Who do I know with information that might be helpful to my fellow participants?

• Who might my fellow participants know who could give me helpful employment information?

Tell participants that they will engage in an activity that can expand the connections of people in the group.

2 *Ask a volunteer* to describe where he or she would like to work (in a bank, hospital, school, for the government, for a small company, etc.).

Ask the group whether anyone knows someone connected to the industry/employer identified by the volunteer. *(If no one has a connection, tell the first volunteer that you and the group will be on the lookout for connections for him/her. Then ask others about their job goals until someone in the group has a connection to a volunteer's goal.)* ⫼⟩

Display the previously prepared Bridging Networks flipchart below:

Point out that the participant with the connection could serve as a bridge to another network of people with information about jobs.

Record on the flipchart:

1. The name of the person who volunteered his/her career goal (on the job seeker face)

2. The name of the participant with a contact (on the bridge face)

3. The names of other participants (on other faces in Our Group)

4. The name of the bridge's contact (on the contact face)

<describe your own experience of having someone serve as a bridge to a well-connected network that offered valuable employment information>

Discuss how network bridging works by asking the following questions and offering examples:

Q How might you ask one of your contacts to connect you with someone who has information about a job or the industry you are interested in?

Example: *"Would you know someone I could talk with about...?"*

Q Why is meeting someone in another network beneficial to you?

Examples: Access to people in the new person's network

Access to different information/job leads

Meeting new people can enhance your life   ⫸

Q Why would you want to connect people to one another?

Examples: The opportunity to be helpful to another person, which feels good.

Do someone a favor, and he or she is likely to reciprocate.

Network Bridge Hunt

Distribute and preview the Network Bridge Hunt handout.

Tell participants that they should:

1. Identify 10 potential bridges to other networks.

2. Record the information on the handout.

3. Report on their findings on a specific date.

Give participants the option of working with a teammate on the assignment.

Encourage them to discuss their employment goals with the bridges—especially those they know personally and, if possible, with new contacts in different networks.

REINFORCE LATER

How to Expand Your Network

Ask for volunteers to share their handouts and talk about whom they identified as bridges to different groups of people.

Ask whether anyone shared employment information with the people they identified as bridges and, if so, what was the result.

Ask whether anyone made new contacts through the bridges.

Point out that it's sometimes difficult for people to make introductions to their friends, acquaintances or business connections.

Have participants suggest ways they can gain the confidence of others. Use the following questions/examples to promote discussion:

Q Why might people you don't know well be reluctant to introduce you to others? What can you do to gain their confidence?

Examples:

- Make a good first impression by being friendly and sincere but not pressuring.

- Build a relationship slowly over time, not asking for anything until the person feels comfortable with you.

- Be first to do something helpful.

- Follow up promptly on any information or referral.

- Send thank-you notes/emails when people are helpful.

Q People who don't know you well may feel uncomfortable offering job leads and vouching for your skills to others. What can you do to make them feel confident about your abilities?

Examples:

- Let the person know about your experience and what you are learning in training.

- Find ways to demonstrate your skills when the person is present.

Network Bridge Hunt

(for easy photocopying, handout reappears on page A.8)

Try to identify 10 "bridges" who could introduce you to their network members.

❶ Staff member in this program

Name:

Could introduce you to:

❷ Friendly person who likes to network and knows many people

Name:

Could introduce you to:

❸ Person who knows a lot of working people

Name:

Could introduce you to:

❹ Person who works for a company with fewer than 15 employees

Name:

Could introduce you to:

❺ Person who works for a company with at least 100 employees

Name:

Could introduce you to:

❻ Person who works at a job that interests you

Name:

Could introduce you to:

❼ Person who works at a job that interests someone else in the group

Name:

Could introduce you to:

❽ Person who recently retired from a job

Name:

Could introduce you to:

❾ Person who quit a job to take another

Name:

Could introduce you to:

❿ Person who owns a business

Name:

Could introduce you to:

SECTION 2 Gain NETWORKING Skills

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Develop a Personal Commercial

background: *The opportunity to exchange information with new acquaintances is often very brief. Participants can make good first impressions and begin to network effectively when they are able to speak confidently and succinctly about their skills and goals.*

objective: *To briefly and confidently communicate employment skills and goals.*

special preparation: *Prepare your own personal commercial for step 1.*

special supplies: *A timer with a buzzer for step 1.*

special consideration: *To allow everyone to present their commercials and receive feedback, limit the group to no more than 15 people. Depending on whether the participants would be comfortable, you might videotape their commercials to facilitate feedback during step 3. Important: Consider working individually with shy, disenfranchised or alienated participants who find it absolutely nerve-wracking to speak about themselves in public.*

networking assignment: ***My Personal Commercial***

time: *45+ minutes*

STEPS

1 *Ask the group* to remain silent.

Set a timer for 30 seconds, and allow it to buzz.

Tell the group that 30 seconds is how long they might have to make a new networking contact and that they should have a "personal commercial" ready.

▯▯▯➡

Display the previously prepared Personal Commercial Basics flipchart below:

> **PERSONAL COMMERCIAL BASICS**
> · Make a friendly connection
> · Say your name clearly
> · Suggest what you can offer
> · Know what you are asking for, if you have a chance to ask (advice, information, referral, job lead)
> · Speak naturally and sincerely
> · Make a memorable, positive impression

Ask for two volunteers: one to play the role of a new acquaintance, and the other to set the timer for 30 seconds.

Give your own personal commercial to your "new acquaintance," stopping as soon as the timer buzzes.

Have the group assess your "commercial" against the basics.

2   *Have the group brainstorm* times when a personal commercial is useful and appropriate. Make certain the ideas below are included:

When a Personal Commercial Is Useful

- Introducing yourself during a roundtable discussion (meeting with your peers to discuss issues and exchange views)

- Starting a conversation at a party

- Beginning to establish a relationship

- Making your presence known

- Marketing yourself or your organization

- Publicizing your accomplishments

- Updating family/friends on your activities/employment goals

- Introducing yourself when scheduling an informational interview

- Leaving a voice message when you call to arrange a job interview

- During an interview, when someone says, "Tell me about yourself."

3

My Personal Commercial

Distribute and preview the My Personal Commercial handout.

Give participants 10 to 15 minutes to develop their commercials.

Set the timer and have them practice their commercials with a partner, giving and receiving feedback. Give them a few more minutes to polish what they might say.

Have participants take turns delivering their commercials to the group.

Encourage the group to offer constructive feedback on the commercials, based on the flipchart Personal Commercial Basics from step 1. Make certain that the last comments made for each participant are positive.

Tell participants that they should practice their personal commercials in front of a mirror, with a tape recorder or with family and friends.

Suggest that they practice and polish their "commercials" and then be prepared to use their improved version when opportunities arise. ▮▮▶

REINFORCE LATER

Develop a Personal Commercial

Begin classroom sessions/workshops/job clubs/alumni groups by having participants present their personal commercials.

Point out/discuss the following opportunities for them to use their personal commercials:

➜ When they introduce themselves in group situations;

➜ When they meet new participants, staff or visitors;

➜ When they greet guest speakers; and

➜ During mock interviews.

Have the group offer encouragement and, later, feedback when they hear their peers present their personal commercials.

My Personal Commercial, page 1 of 3

(for easy photocopying, handout reappears on page A.9)

the assignment Develop your own commercial to share information about yourself and your employment goals. Use page 3 as a worksheet.

think about Personal Commercial Basics:

1)   Make a friendly connection.

2)   Say your name clearly.

3)   Suggest what you can offer.

4)   Know what you are asking for, if you have a chance to ask
(advice, information, referral, job lead).

5)   Speak naturally and sincerely.

6)   Make a memorable, positive impression.

to consider You will sound more natural if you don't memorize a set speech. Instead, identify one or two positive things to say about yourself and what you can offer. Concentrate on communicating these.

Adapt your speech to the person with whom you are talking.

examples of adapting a personal commercial:

networking with a friend
"Hey, Margie! I'm just about finished with training, and I'm starting to look for work. I'm hoping to use some of the computer skills I've learned. Got any ideas?"

networking on a bus or in an elevator
"Sounds like you work for a good company. I'm just finishing training and looking for a job myself. Who would I contact at your company about job openings?"   ⅢⅢ➡

My Personal Commercial, page 2 of 3

networking with a group when asked to introduce yourself

"Hi, my name is Anthony Hansen. I found out about Primo Financial Training from my job counselor at the One-Stop. Until last year, I worked in construction. I'm thinking that I could be a real asset in the office of a large construction company. I'd like to talk with people who are doing that sort of job and really see what's involved. If anyone has any ideas or contacts, please let me know. Thanks."

networking with an employer/employee in your targeted industry

"Hi, I'm Anthony Hansen. I am three weeks from finishing my last course at Primo Financial Training, and I'll be looking for a position to use the skills I've learned. Before I decided to change careers, I worked in construction. I'm thinking that with my new computer skills, I could be an asset to a contractor or an engineering firm. You're at T & R Builders, aren't you? Do you know whether your firm could use someone with my skills and experience? Who would I talk to?"

during an interview when someone says, "Tell me about yourself."

"Okay, the first thing you should know about me is that I take having a job very seriously. I come to work on time every day, and I'm willing to put in extra hours during crunch time. I worked in construction before training in computers, and I think I could be a real asset to your company. I'm detail-oriented. I like everything to add up, but I don't get frustrated easily. I'm a team player. I know that in a small business people need to take on responsibility and wear more than one hat. I'd really like to work for your company." ▐▌▶

My Personal Commercial, page 3 of 3

Several things I can say about myself (think about your education and training, skills, experience, personality, goals and the positive things that people say about you):

•

•

•

•

•

Draft of my commercial:

Things to remember from the feedback I've received:

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Use a Business Card

background: *Employment networking often involves exchanging contact information. For participants to network in a professional manner, they should have business cards and understand their use.*

objective: *To design/produce business cards and learn how/when to exchange them.*

special preparation: *If your program provides business cards for participants, the assignment part of this activity can be ignored. Otherwise, you will need to determine how the cards will be designed—on site with software, instruction and materials provided by your organization, or at a copy or print shop that could provide several design options. Microsoft Word provides a business card template for Avery Labels. Another alternative is to order cards online. Prior to the activity, ask participants to bring business cards from friends, family members and acquaintances or from stores and other businesses that make cards available for customers/clients. Encourage them to tell people they are in training and need the card for a class assignment. In doing this, participants can practice their networking skills. You should also supply a variety of cards for participants to review and discuss.*

time: *30 minutes*

STEPS

1 *Hold up a business card and have the group discuss* why this tiny piece of paper is a powerful tool for networking. Point out the following:

➜ Business cards are a professional way to exchange contact information; people will remember you better if they have your business card.

➜ Cards help you to market yourself or your company.

➜ Business cards can serve as a brief "résumé" if they include accurate contact information and an outline of your skills and certifications.

⫸

2 *Have participants circulate* the business cards you asked them to collect. Point out that many companies provide business cards for their employees, but interns, apprentices and people training for jobs and looking for work can also carry business cards.

Display the previously prepared Business Cards flipchart below:

Business Cards

> *Business Cards*
>
> *Vital Information*   *Marketing Yourself*
> *name*   *legible/easy to read*
> *credentials*   *simple/uncluttered*
> *telephone #*   *conveys industry values:*
> *fax #*   *for example, banking*
> *email address*   *or graphic design*

Have the group discuss what a business card should convey using the collected cards as examples. Record their responses on a flipchart under "vital information" and "marketing yourself."

3 *Point out* that business cards are most effective when used appropriately, not forced on people or scattered about like cat litter.

Also tell the group that a business card does not replace a résumé—which gives much more information and can be tailored to specific jobs; however, it is sometimes awkward to carry or inappropriate to offer a résumé.

Describe the situations below with the class. Have participants suggest appropriate responses for each situation.

1. When you are offered a card: *"Thank you, here's my card, too."*

2. When you are asked for your contact information: *"I happen to have a card."*

3. When someone offers to send you information: *"I'd really like to get that material. Here's a card with my address."* ⫸

4. When someone expresses an interest in something you've said and wants to hear more: *"I'll be happy to call you. Do you have a card? Here's mine."*

5. When you've just met someone you want to have in your network: *"It was a pleasure to meet you, and I hope we have a chance to talk again. Here's my card."*

Point out that if you offer your business card, people will most likely give you theirs.

Emphasize the importance of asking for a business card after a job interview. This will ensure that participants have accurate information about the interviewer and can follow up with a thank-you note.

Tell participants to design, produce and bring their own business cards to show and exchange with group members on a specific date. Give instructions on how to do this. (See "special preparation" in the introduction for this activity.)

Suggest that they choose a partner before they produce the card to help make certain that there are no typos, that the card includes all vital information and that it conveys a positive image. Also tell participants that they must have you preview the card before it is produced and distributed.

▏▎▍➡

REINFORCE LATER

Use Business Cards

Have participants exchange their business cards with each other and with program staff during a classroom session, job club or special event.

Have participants make notes on the cards they receive to remind them of the cardbearer's identity, where they met and the type of information they could give to or get from the individual.

Point out that they can use the business cards they collect to stay in touch and share information and, therefore, expand their networks.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Make Networking Conversation

background: *Expanding networks requires meeting people, exchanging employment information and maintaining connections. Participants need to understand how to make and follow up on introductions in ways that promote networking.*

objective: *To become confident at making introductions and taking part in networking conversations.*

special preparation: *Photocopy the Networking!! sign handout—on cardstock, if possible. (Copy the handout Recognizing Networking as usual.)*

networking assignment: **Recognizing Networking**

time: *45 minutes*

STEPS

1 *Ask participants to recall and describe* a key introduction in their lives. For example, being introduced to their boyfriend/girlfriend, spouse/partner, a wonderful friend, a good job or a great childcare provider.

<describe an employment-related introduction that you are grateful for and how you reciprocated>

Point out that:

➔ Introductions are often the first step in expanding a network.

➔ Networking is a reciprocal activity: People who benefit from introductions are likely to return the favor.

2 *Have two participants volunteer* to be introduced. Tell the group that you are going to introduce them in two ways. ▐▐▶

First, introduce the volunteers by name only, with no further information:

Example: "Ann, this is John. John, this is Ann."

Next, introduce them by offering personal information:

Example: "Ann, this is John Jones. John, this is Ann Smith. You two are in the same field. Ann was just certified as a forklift driver."

Discuss why the second introduction is less awkward, stimulates conversation and can lead to networking about jobs.

Display/discuss the chart A Good Networking Introduction (prepared earlier):

A Good Networking Introduction

> *A GOOD NETWORKING INTRODUCTION*
> · *Allows people to make connections and be helpful to one another*
> · *Offers information about what people have in common so they can start a conversation*
> · *Offers information about skills and employment so they can exchange information about jobs*
> · *Suggests the type of information one of the people is interested in hearing from the other*

Point out that the first time people meet they might not talk about employment, but it's important to keep the conversation going so networking can take place.

Ask the group for examples of what the two volunteers introduced in the previous step might say to one another to follow up on the introduction. Use the examples below as prompts if necessary:

For the person looking for a job:

Examples:
- *"Your own job sounds interesting. Tell me about it."*
- *"How did you get started in ...?"*
- *"I'd appreciate any leads or advice on finding a job in ..."*

- *"May I give you my business card in case you hear of a job I might be interested in?"*
- *"Whom would I contact at your company?"*

For the person trying to help:

Examples:

- *"How do you know <the person who introduced them>?"*
- *"What got you interested in that field?"*
- *"Have you tried ABC Company?"*
- *"I don't know of any openings right now, but if I hear of something, how do I get in touch?"*
- *"You should contact . . . ."*

3   *Tell the group that they will practice making networking introductions and conversation.*

Have participants form teams of three, and then instruct them to:

1. Take turns introducing themselves to their teammates;
2. Offer one another some personal information; and,
3. Talk about their skills and job goals.

Networking!!

Distribute the Networking!! sign handout. Explain the activity by saying that:

1. One member of each team will introduce the other two members to one another in front of the group.
2. The team members will then begin a conversation that includes employment networking.
3. The group will listen closely and hold up their Networking!! sign when they hear employment networking taking place.
4. The group will offer feedback on the teams' introductions/conversation.

Demonstrate by asking a team to volunteer. Have one member introduce the other members to you. Begin a conversation with the team that leads to networking.

Once the group members recognize that you are networking and hold up the signs, have them:

1. Assess the introduction, using the flipchart A Good Networking Introduction;

2. Discuss how the people being introduced followed up on the introduction; and

3. Identify and discuss the networking that took place.

Have other teams make introductions and networking conversation in front of the group and receive its feedback.

Recognizing Networking

Distribute and preview the handout Recognizing Networking.

Suggest to the group that employment networking happens all the time in many different places, and it is important to recognize networking—and to take part when appropriate.

Tell participants to watch for/initiate employment networking and record their experiences on the handout to share with the group on a *specific date*.

REINFORCE LATER

Make Networking Conversation

Have volunteers share the information from their handout Recognizing Networking. Ask the following questions to promote discussion:

Q What makes a conversation a networking conversation?

Q How did the conversations they overheard begin?

Q What type of information was exchanged?

Q Did anyone offer someone a job lead?

Q What happened during the conversations they started?

Q Did they offer or receive contact information or job leads?

Networking!! sign

(for easy photocopying, handout reappears on page A.12)

Networking!!

Recognizing Networking

(for easy photocopying, handout reappears on page A.13)

Be on the lookout for employment networking at the times and places below—or any time and place. Try to start or join in the conversation when you see an opportunity. Record briefly what was said and what happened so you can describe it to the group.

☐ on a television show, during a video or in a movie—what took place:

☐ outdoors, on the sidewalk, in a park, etc.—what took place:

☐ on public transportation—what took place:

☐ in an office—what took place:

☐ waiting in line—what took place:

☐ at a meeting—what took place:

☐ at a social event—what took place:

☐ among family members, neighbors or friends—what took place:

☐ among people in this program—what took place:

☐ during a conversation you started—what took place:

☐ at any other time and place—what took place:

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Target Network Members

background: *People do not need to know one another well to offer valuable employment information. Even "weak ties" to other networks can produce job leads for participants.*

objective: *To build peer networks, teach that networking involves reciprocity and encourage participants to identify people who might help them achieve their employment goals.*

networking assignment: ***Identify Valuable Contacts***

time: *30 minutes*

STEPS

1

Have participants form teams of three or four people and then share their job interests with their teammates.

<share your own job interest/career goal>

Ask teams to choose the job interest of one teammate to explore.

•••➡
Identify Valuable Contacts

Distribute and preview the handout Identify Valuable Contacts.

<identify acquaintances, people whom you have not known well, but who have provided valuable employment information to you: a friend of a friend, someone whom you spoke with during an informational interview, etc.>

Have the teams develop a strategy for gathering information and identifying employment contacts for their teammate, using the handout.

When the strategies have been discussed, ask a member of each team to introduce the teammate whose job interest was discussed.

⫶➡

Have teams briefly describe their strategies for identifying potential network members for their teammate.

Encourage the whole group to offer leads and suggestions.

Refer to page 3 of the handout and tell the teams to:

1. Research their teammate's job interest using the strategies they've developed on the handout.

2. Identify at least three people—by name, if possible, or position—who could be valuable members of their teammate's employment network.

3. Be prepared to report to the group on a specific date about how their teammate should meet people in his/her field of interest.

REINFORCE LATER

Target Network Members

Have volunteer teams report on their efforts to identify people who could offer valuable employment information to their teammates. Use the following questions/examples to promote discussion:

Q Who are the potential network members?

Q Why might they have valuable information?

Q How could their teammate meet these people?   ⫸

Examples:

- Someone might refer/introduce their teammate.

- Teammate could conduct an informational interview.

- Person could be a guest speaker.

Ask volunteers to explain how they might use similar strategies to identify people who could be helpful to them.

Remind participants that good networking includes exchanging information and that the people who received help during this activity should keep their teammates' interests in mind.

Identify Valuable Contacts, page 1 of 3

Here are some questions that can get your team thinking about how to expand your teammate's employment network—and expand yours, too. For each of the strategies, decide who will do what. *For example, a team member who knows someone connected with the teammate's interest could arrange for the teammate to meet that person.*

Teammate's job interest: _____

● Does your team know someone doing a job similar to the one in which your teammate is interested? Or someone who knows someone?

   Strategy for finding people doing similar jobs:

● Does your team know of local companies that are hiring for the job your teammate is interested in? Do you know anyone who works at these companies? How could your teammate meet current employees and those in charge of hiring?

   Strategy for finding out about companies of interest to your teammate:

● How/where can your teammate learn more skills for the job? Who could give him or her good advice about training? If training takes place on the job, with whom can he or she talk? Who would be a good contact at training programs or schools?

   Strategy for learning about training for your teammate:

Identify Valuable Contacts, page 2 of 3

● Are there professional associations/organizations for people who do the job that interests your teammate? How can your teammate interact with members of these organizations? Do these organizations have networking events or sponsor volunteer activities?

Strategy for getting information about professional organizations for your teammate:

● In what other ways can your teammate network about the job he or she wants?

Ideas about further networking opportunities:

Identify Valuable Contacts, page 3 of 3

Networking assignment outside of class
As a team, pinpoint at least three people whom your teammate could consider for his or her network. At the next session, present to the group the names and contact information of these people and suggestions for how your teammate could meet these potential network members.

Three potential network members for your teammate:

1 Name: _____

   Contact information: _____

   How to meet this person: _____

2 Name: _____

   Contact information: _____

   How to meet this person: _____

3 Name: _____

   Contact information: _____

   How to meet this person: _____

SECTION **3** Practice
NETWORKING
in a Safe
Environment

tip sheet
Network with Guest Speakers

background: *Programs often invite guest speakers to talk about employment opportunities and issues. Because these speakers know about program goals and understand that participants are learning new skills, they offer a risk-free way for participants to practice networking and expand their contacts.*

objective: *For participants to receive information and expand their employment networks by actively engaging guest presenters.*

PROGRAM EXAMPLE: **i.c.stars High Tea, Chicago, IL**

During each four-month training cycle, i.c.stars offers its 12 young participants a daily opportunity to interact with people in the business world—from recent program graduates to the CEOs of prominent Chicago companies. These presentations take place around a large rectangular table set with teacups and plates of cookies. In another room, while the tea is being laid out, a participant acts as host for the day, interviewing the guest presenter in order to make a proper introduction to the group. After the presenter has been introduced, the participants take turns briefly introducing the person to their right until everyone has been greeted. With the host keeping time, the presenter speaks for 15 minutes, offering information about his or her background, career and company. During the remaining time, the participants ask questions. When the event is over, participants especially interested in the presenter's topic might ask for a business card, offer theirs and inquire whether they may contact the presenter later. After the guest leaves, participants discuss the event and the information they have received. The host follows up with a thank-you email message to the presenter. At the end of each training cycle, participants will have met approximately 80 individuals, many who are valuable connections to the local information technology industry. ⫸

tips for finding presenters

- Your organization's board members and business advisory council

- Referrals from board members

- Program mentors/other volunteers

- Employers who have hired grads

- Human resources staff of companies

- Chamber of Commerce staff

- Speakers from professional organizations/associations connected with the participants' occupational interests

- Counselors/recruiters from colleges and other training organizations

- Employed program graduates

- Employees in the participants' targeted occupations

- Employer members of the local Workforce Investment Board

- Staff of local economic development agencies

- Community leaders

- Politicians with a commitment to employment issues

- Individuals with whom you have a personal connection

tips for preparing guest presenters

- Develop a presentation schedule two or three months ahead of time so guests have options for when they will visit.

- Invite guests well in advance, but remind them a week before the scheduled presentation and then confirm with them the day before they are slated to present.

- Make certain that guests have the correct address and a phone number where you can be reached the day of the presentation. Outline their transportation options; provide directions and parking information.

- Describe how the presentations take place: who will introduce them, how long their presentation should take and what type of questions participants are likely to ask.

- Describe the program, training and participants so guests can offer relevant information. Ask them to speak about:

  ◦ Their company and its employment opportunities;

  ◦ Their own careers and who helped them get their jobs;

  ◦ Industry trends and employment outlooks;

  ◦ Skills that could increase the participants' employability;

  ◦ What it takes to be successful in their career area; and

  ◦ What they look for in a successful applicant (if the speaker is an employer).

- Let guests know that participants are learning to network and that their presence represents an opportunity to practice networking skills. Ask them to bring business cards. Ask them to suggest:

  ◦ People the participants might contact for informational interviews or job shadowing;

  ◦ Volunteer opportunities where they could meet people with information and connections; and

  ◦ Trade/professional association and networking events that participants could join or attend.

- If the guests are employers, make certain that they understand they are not obligated to interview or hire participants.

tips for preparing participants

- Preview the schedule of speakers with the participants. Discuss which guests may be able to offer information/connections that are especially relevant to an individual participant's career interest.

- Have small teams of participants research guests, their companies and their industries, and then report their findings to the entire group prior to the guests' visits. This will allow participants to ask informed questions and interact knowledgeably.

- Have participants volunteer as hosts for each presentation and prepare to briefly interview the guest, introduce him or her to the group, keep time, help facilitate the discussion and follow up with thank-you notes. Volunteers may also share these roles.

- Review how to make introductions, if participants will introduce one another to the guest.   ⫸

- Prior to the first presentation, consider having the group run through their introductions, discuss the types of questions they might ask and prepare to bring their business cards.

- Model networking during presentations. Help participants make connections. For example, if appropriate, tell the speaker that a participant has an interest, expertise or experience applicable to the presenter's company.

tips for promoting networking during guest presentations

- Make presentations an ongoing, regularly scheduled part of training so participants are comfortable networking with guest speakers.

- Have presentations take place in an environment that promotes informal exchange. Avoid having speakers stand behind a podium lecturing to participants seated in rows.

- Schedule a variety of speakers, including employed program graduates who can discuss how they use skills developed in training on their jobs, how they got their jobs and how and when they share employment-related information with others. Ask for the group's input when inviting guests.

- Have participants identify, schedule and invite presenters—all ways to increase their visibility and networking opportunities.

- Have participants practice their communication skills by taking turns introducing the speakers, introducing one another (if the group is small enough), asking questions and serving as the facilitator. Encourage them to take an active part in the event and make their presence known to the presenter in appropriate ways.

- Debrief about the presentation soon after the guest's visit. Have participants discuss the event, not only in terms of the information provided, but also in terms of networking. Have them assess their introductions and other interactions with the speaker and with one another. Have them identify ways they might be helpful to the speakers and how they might follow up to maintain the connection. Discuss possible outcomes of following up. ⫸

REINFORCE LATER

Network with Guest Speakers

Hold the debriefing as soon as possible after the speaker's visit.

Review the information provided by the speaker.

Have the participants discuss and assess the networking that took place. Ask the following questions to promote discussion:

Q What was the most useful information the speaker provided? How will you use the information?

Q What sort of impression do you think the speaker got of the program? Is he or she likely to tell others about it?

Q Was the speaker a good connection for you? In what way? How will you follow up? (Not everyone should follow up with every speaker.)

Q What did you do well in terms of networking? What could you have done better? What other questions could you have asked?

tip sheet
Network with Mentors

background: *Many programs provide mentors who listen empathetically, offer counsel and help participants manage personal challenges. Mentors can also be encouraged to help participants expand their networks by introducing them to family, friends and professional colleagues.*

objective: *To encourage mentors and participants to exchange employment information, introduce one another to their personal networks and develop ongoing relationships.*

PROGRAM EXAMPLE: **StreetWise Partners**, **New York, NY**

Every Saturday during a 12-week cycle, 30 low-income job seekers convene in the conference room of a large midtown Manhattan corporation. There they each meet with two young professionals recruited from the financial, insurance, consumer goods and media industries. Together, participants and their mentors, who serve as supporters and coaches, listen to guest speakers and hear about upcoming events and job openings. They then turn to the laptop computers provided by the corporate host and begin work. Depending on their needs, clients learn computer skills, hone their résumés and listen to advice on workplace protocol. Each three-hour session ends with small group meetings, during which participants and mentors discuss participants' employment goals and share what has been accomplished during the preceding week. Participants also practice talking about their skills, experiences and job interests while group members offer feedback. Although mentors teach computer and soft skills, StreetWise Partners does not attempt to duplicate the training of agencies that refer participants to the program. Instead, the mentors try to build confidence and expand the participant networks by providing "bridging ties to better jobs." StreetWise encourages mentor-participant interaction between sessions. Some exchange email or meet after work. As relationships develop, mentors may make introductions that could eventually lead to jobs within their companies. ⫸

THINGS TO CONSIDER ABOUT MENTORS AND EMPLOYMENT NETWORKING

Mentors are often attracted to programs by the interpersonal aspects of mentoring: being a role model for a young person or providing support and advice to a single parent. In fact, some programs shy away from asking mentors to introduce participants to their professional/social networks, provide insider employment information, offer job leads or vouch for participants at their workplaces. However, through training and offering networking opportunities, programs can encourage mentors and participants to include one another in their informal employment networks.

tips to promote employment networking with mentors

- Offer information about the importance of networking during mentor orientation. The fact that most people find jobs through those they know and the idea of serving as a bridge between networks would be important for mentors to consider as they interact with participants. Adapt some of the activities in this guide for mentor training; for example, Learn How Most People Find Jobs or Learn How to Expand Your Network.

- Encourage mentors to discuss and model the social skills useful in employment networking, such as making introductions and offering job leads. Suggest that they invite participants, when appropriate, to events sponsored by their companies or professional organizations.

- Have participants invite their mentors to training events such as field trips, guest presentations, networking parties and program graduation. By attending, mentors can meet and network with other mentors as well as program participants.

- Encourage participants to demonstrate to their mentors what they learn in training. Provide opportunities for mentors to teach and/or coach job-specific skills so participants can demonstrate their interest and abilities and mentors will feel comfortable vouching for them.

- Have both mentors and participants consider how to develop a reciprocal relationship. Although participants may provide limited employment-related information, they may have information of interest to their mentors. You might suggest that participants provide the following information:

  - Information about the program;

  - Insight into a different culture; and

  - Feedback on employment policies as they affect low-income, hourly wage workers.

- Assure mentors that simply helping participants practice networking is valuable, and they should not feel obligated to arrange interviews or jobs.

tip sheet
Plan a Networking Party

background: *Going to events with the intention of making new contacts can be intimidating for people unaccustomed to networking. Programs can lower anxiety by inviting guests who attend the event in order to help the participants practice their networking skills.*

objective: *To practice networking skills.*

PROGRAM EXAMPLE: **Street Tech Networking Party, San Pablo, CA**

At this party, everyone has a name tag, a program and a soft drink. Businesspeople come straight from work in their business suits. Street Tech participants move about fingering the business cards they hope to exchange. Guests and participants know this is a low-risk event, a networking "party," a way to help participants practice networking skills. But how to break the ice? After a brief welcome, the emcee steps up, plays a hip hop video on the big screen and instructs the crowd to follow the moves. It's loud, it's infectious and everyone's ready to talk when the music fades.

All Street Tech staff and participants are involved in planning the networking party. Using a database of employers, professional contacts and supporters, the organization emails invitations five weeks in advance announcing guest speakers and explaining that the event is practice for participants. Because the party takes place twice a year, planners take care to vary the activities: parties have featured an expert on networking as a guest speaker, participant presentations about the organization's computer recycling efforts, contests with donated prizes for collecting the most business cards and participant/guest teams who compete to answer questions about Street Tech, a community technology center. During the party, staff members make introductions, facilitate conversation and make certain that participants don't form their own groups or monopolize particular guests.

Participants understand that getting jobs in information technology requires making contacts and developing relationships. To prepare, they practice making introductions, shaking hands and looking people in the eye during their weekly IT Basics class. They develop a 30-second personal "commercial" that explains their skills and job goals. ▥➡

Prior to the party, StreetTech staff members pepper them with the types of questions they might be asked, including queries about the program, their classes and why they chose a career in technology. Participants also research the guests' companies so they can ask knowledgeable questions. Soon after the party, participants discuss their experience and then send thank-you notes; often they inquire about internships or jobs or follow up in other appropriate ways. Street Tech graduates are invited back to the biannual networking parties.

tips on whom to invite to a networking party

Make certain you invite "friendly contacts" who are familiar with your organization's goals and are willing to help participants practice their networking skills. See the Tips for Finding Presenters on page 3.2 for ideas.

tips for preparing the networking party guests

- Begin planning the party itself at least two months in advance, but constantly be on the lookout for potential guests. Whenever possible, invite people working in the fields related to your participants' career goals. Ask participants to make suggestions about whom to invite. If your organization holds several parties per year, guests may not be willing to attend each event; set up a system of "rolling participation."

- Throwing a networking party is a large undertaking. Make certain that several— if not all—staff members are involved in planning the party. Along with scheduling, drawing up a guest list, sending invitations, preparing the room, ordering refreshments and other party logistics, staff will need to make certain that participants are prepared. Have participants help plan the party, and consider asking community volunteers for their help.

- Invite guests well in advance, but send them an email reminder shortly before the event.

- Be clear about the party's objective. Let guests know that the aim of the event is to let participants practice their new networking skills. Suggest that they may need to take more responsibility for facilitating conversation than would be necessary at other events. Tell them they should model social skills and effective networking interactions.

- Ask guests to bring business cards and exchange them with participants. Make certain that participants have their business cards ready. See Use a Business Card on page 2.8.

- Create a win-win situation. Tell guests that, along with allowing participants to practice networking, the party will offer them the opportunity to network with other professionals.

- If the guests are employers, make certain that they understand they are not obligated to interview or hire participants.

- Let participants know that the aim of the party is to practice their networking skills.

- Have participants practice introducing one another, shaking hands and offering their 30-second personal commercials (see page 2.1). Have them anticipate questions that guests might ask, including those about their training and job goals.

- Have participants brainstorm questions they could ask to get the conversation going. Use the following questions as examples if necessary:

Questions to Start a Conversation at a Networking Party

- *"Have you tried the anchovy cheese dip? It's delicious."*
- *"How did you find out about our program?"*
- *"Do you know someone on our staff?"*
- *"Have you been to a networking party before?"*
- *"What other networking events do you attend?"*
- *"What's your advice about meeting other people in the field of. . .?"*
- *"Tell me about the company you work for."*
- *"How long have you worked for the company?"*
- *"I'd like to meet other people in your company (or industry). Who would you suggest I talk with? Could you introduce me?"* ▐▐▶

- Once guests have RSVP'd, have participants research their companies so they are prepared to ask questions about products, services, and job and advancement opportunities.

- Prepare individual participants to meet specific guests who could offer information especially relevant to their job goals.

- In addition to networking, have participants volunteer to take turns greeting guests, taking coats or offering refreshments.

- Encourage the more outgoing participants to take responsibility for introducing shyer participants.

REINFORCE LATER

Plan a Networking Party

Have the participants discuss their networking experience shortly after the party.

Have them bring any business cards that they collected.

Ask the following questions to promote discussion:

Q What went well for you at the party? What could you improve?

Q What was the most useful information you learned? How will you use that information?

Q Did you meet someone who would be a good contact for a fellow participant?

Q What will you do with the business cards you collected? How will you store those you want to refer to later?

Q Did you connect especially well with any of the guests? How? How will you follow up?

Q What are your next steps in building your network?

SECTION **4** NETWORKING in the Real World

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Conduct Informational Interviews

background: *Interviewing individuals working in companies/job/careers of interest to the job seeker has been called "the most effective way to network." Participants should learn to conduct informational interviews not only to get information but also to expand their networks.*

objective: *To prepare participants for informational interviews that will help them obtain employment information and make valuable contacts.*

networking assignment: **Informational Interviewing**

time: *45 minutes*

STEPS

1 *Have the group brainstorm* several well-known people in different professions. List the names on a flipchart.

Have participants suggest several questions they would really like to ask each person on the list about his or her work. List their questions on the flipchart. If necessary, use the example questions below to get them started.

> **Q** What's it like to be commander in chief of the armed services?

> **Q** How do you keep your spirits up when your team loses a game?

> **Q** What do you actually do as the CEO of Microsoft?

> **Q** What's the best thing about being the host of your own show? What's the worst?

Now ask the participants to suggest questions they would really like to ask the manager of a company, questions they would not ask in a job interview. Offer the following examples if participants do not suggest them: ▐▐▶

Questions to Ask During an Informational Interview

- How did you become interested in this line of work?
- How did you get your first job in this industry?
- Why were you hired for this job?
- What's your typical day like?
- What is the best preparation for this field?
- What skills are needed in the field, and which ones should I concentrate on at this point in my job search?
- Is it hard for an "outsider" to get hired?
- Are there real opportunities for an entry-level worker to advance?
- What's the best thing about your job? What's the worst?
- How do you maintain a balance between your work and your personal life? Is it difficult?

Tell participants informational interviewing is a way to get different types of information about companies and jobs and to make valuable contacts. Informational interviews are not job interviews where applicants try to convince employers to hire them.

2   *Point out* that most people like to talk about themselves and their work and are willing to be interviewed if the interviewer is truly interested and prepared.

Tell participants that they will conduct informational interviews. Have them suggest ways they can demonstrate their interest and what they should do to prepare. Discuss the following ideas: ▐▶

Ways to Prepare for an Informational Interview

- Research the job/company before the interview.
- Know what information you want.
- Be prepared to take notes.
- Have a written list of questions.
- Stick to the time limit you proposed (20-30 minutes max).
- Dress professionally.
- Be a good listener.
- Send a thank-you note within 24 hours of the interview.

Emphasize that the purpose is to get information and make a connection. They should not ask for a job.

3 *Ask the group* what a person should say when requesting an interview. Record the responses on a flipchart. Make sure they include the following:

What to Say When Requesting an Informational Interview

- Give your name.
- State why you are interested in speaking with the person.
- Emphasize that you are seeking information, not a job.
- Let the person know if you have been referred by someone.
- Offer to take the person for coffee instead of meeting at his or her work site.
- State the time needed for the interview.

Have two volunteers role-play a conversation in which one requests an informational interview with the other. Have the group offer feedback on the role play.

Have participants role-play and discuss several more "interview requests."

Informational Interviewing

Distribute and preview the handout Informational Interviewing.

Tell the participants to identify someone they know to interview, such as their supervisor or coworker if they are interns, their mentor, a guest speaker or someone they met during a job shadow, or an employed friend or family member.

(Have the group brainstorm potential interviewees if individuals are unable to identify someone to interview.)

Tell participants that they will report back to the group about their experiences on a specific date.

REINFORCE LATER

Informational Interviewing

Have the participants share their experiences conducting an informational interview. Ask the following questions to promote discussion:

Q What helpful information did you receive?

Q How do you feel about the interview? What went well? What will you do differently next time?

Q What information could you pass on to your network members?

Q What information did you provide to the person you interviewed? *For example, about the training program and what you are learning.*

Q Do you feel you could talk to the person again if you have further questions? Why or why not?

Q Did you receive information, referrals or leads that you should follow up on? How will you follow up?

Discuss with participants how they might stay in contact with the person they interviewed, if appropriate. Make sure they consider the following pointers:

Pointers for Following Up on an Informational Interview

- Send a thank-you note.

- Send a résumé, if the person asked for one.

- Call to ask a follow-up question or offer information.

- Invite the person to be a guest speaker or to attend a program-sponsored event, if appropriate and the person seemed interested.

- Let the person know that you completed training, if you talked about the training program.

Tell participants that since they are experienced interviewers, they should schedule additional informational interviews with people in their fields of interest, especially with people they have not yet met.

Informational Interviewing, page 1 of 2

(for easy photocopying, handout reappears on page A.17)

the assignment Conduct an interview with someone who could offer information about jobs in your field of interest.

checklist
- [ ] Decide whom to interview
- [ ] Request interview
- [ ] Prepare questions
- [ ] Confirm interview the day before
- [ ] Remember interviewing etiquette, including a thank-you note
- [ ] Analyze the interview, and follow up, if appropriate

prepare questions Because you don't want to ramble or waste the person's time, think carefully about what information you want to obtain and do research in advance. *For example: Do you want information about the person's job? The company the person works for? The industry the person works in?*

Also, although your primary purpose is to get information, you will want to share something about yourself. Prepare a comment or two that allows you to do that. *For example, "I've been taking care of my disabled mother for several years, and I'm really eager to get back to work. That's the reason I'm collecting information on various jobs."*

You can use the questions below as examples. Adapt them to your own interests and interviewing style.

ABOUT THE JOB

What is your job like? What do you do? What are your responsibilities? What is most satisfying/ least satisfying about the job? What is most challenging? How did you get interested in this job? How did you prepare for the job? What jobs have you had that led to your current job? I'm interested in a similar job because. . . . Do you have advice about what I can do to work toward a position like yours? Could you take a look at my résumé and tell me what you think?

ABOUT THE COMPANY

How did you get your job with the company? What do you like about working for the company? What would you say about the company's future? Your future with the company? What are the employment opportunities in your company? I've been developing skills in. . . . Is this useful in your company? What might I do to be hired and be successful in a company like yours? ▸

Informational Interviewing, page 2 of 2

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

How did you get interested in working in this industry? How did you get your foot in the door? What do you like/dislike about working in the industry? What are some other jobs in the industry? I'm interested in the job of. . . . What would you say are the major qualifications? Who else would you suggest I talk with about this type of job?

Your list of the top 10 questions to ask during an informational interview. In reality, you may have time to ask only four or five questions.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

tip sheet
Network with Your Job Developer

background: *With their employment expertise and contacts, job developers are in a unique position, not only to place participants, but to help them build employment networks.*

objective: *To encourage network building among job developers and participants.*

tips for the job developers

- Begin a relationship with participants early in the program so you can learn about their interests and direct them to people who can offer information specific to their career goals.

- Take an active role in helping participants build their own networks. Teach or help other staff members promote networking skills. Offer examples of how personal networking has resulted in jobs for you and for program graduates. Connect current participants with successful program graduates. Help plan and attend networking events sponsored by your organization. (See Plan a Networking Party on page 3.8.)

- Make certain that the participants' job search includes personal networking. Ask the following questions to reinforce this expectation:

    Q Which family members and friends have you told that you are looking for a job? Did they have information or job leads? Do you have others you can talk with about employment?

    Q What information/leads have you gotten from former employers or coworkers?

    Q What meetings or events have you attended recently? Did you exchange information about employment with anyone?

    Q Have you told people you met through this program that you are looking for a job? Fellow participants? Your tutor or mentor? People you talked with during informational interviews? Guest speakers? People you met during field trips?

    Q Have you told the person who referred you to the program that you have finished training and are ready to work?

- Allow participants to listen as you contact your personal network members on their behalf. Encourage them to contact people in similar ways, either to get information and job leads for themselves or for fellow participants.

- Introduce individual participants to your own network members. Prompt participants to follow up on these contacts (when appropriate) until following up becomes natural for them.

- Take individuals or small groups of participants with you to job sites and introduce them to employers and workers. In addition to discussing what the participants learned about the job, talk about how networking took place. Discuss how they might follow up, for example, with a thank-you note, a request for an informational interview or a résumé accompanied by a cover letter that mentions the visit.

- Take one or two participants with you to networking events. (Don't take so many that they form their own group or overwhelm the refreshment table.) Model networking skills. Introduce the participants to people you know, but expect them to mingle and introduce themselves to others. Discuss the experience afterward.

- Review a list of the participant's network members using the handout My Connections on page 1.12 and discuss how these individuals might be helpful. Reinforce the importance of letting as many people as possible know about the job hunt.

- Expect reciprocity. For example, ask participants to let you know about openings that they are not interested in and jobs they applied for but didn't get so you can pass on job leads. Better still, encourage them to give the information directly to their fellow job seekers. Ask whether they have contacts in particular industries or companies or job leads in specific neighborhoods.

- Offer an incentive and recognition for participants who provide job leads that result in jobs for others.

tips for helping participants network with their job developers

- Encourage participants to share information with their job developers. Information might include job leads, contacts, wages and benefits paid by companies, working conditions, advancement opportunities and rumors about workforce expansion or layoffs.

- Maintain a relationship with participants after they are employed. Make it easy for them to stay in touch. Encourage them to call or email when they receive a raise, get promoted, or change jobs. Ask them to contact the job developer about openings where they or their network members work. Share program and personal news.

- Ask graduates to talk with new participants and become a part of their employment network.

tip sheet
Network at Volunteer/ Community Events

background: *Although many events are planned explicitly for employment networking, participants may feel less anxious about practicing their new skills when community service, not networking, is the focus.*

objective: *To help participants identify events, demonstrate their skills and network at volunteer/ community events.*

PROGRAM EXAMPLE: **Oregon Tradeswomen**, **Portland, OR**

In the classroom at Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc., a group of 6 to 15 women—and occasionally a man—meet weekly around a long table. They are enrolled in Tradeswomen's Pathways to Success, a 13-week program aimed at helping women and minorities get a start in the trades, an industry known for employers' reliance on informal employment networks for hiring. (Historically, women and minorities have not been part of these networks.) Along with learning basic job-specific skills, such as reading a tape measure and operating power tools, participants learn about how hiring takes place and about the unwritten rules of the workplace.

To begin each Pathways meeting, staff members announce trades-related volunteer opportunities. These include Habitat for Humanity construction projects, neighborhood cleanups, staffing the organization's annual three-day Women in Trades Career Fair and volunteering to talk about nontraditional careers to girls in middle and high school and at the Girl Scouts' GirlFEST. Participating in these projects allows Pathways participants to develop job skills, interact with potential employers and build their employment networks. In addition, participants can add industry-related experience to their résumés, especially important in gaining points for placement on union apprenticeship lists. After volunteering, participants report back on whom they met and what information they exchanged.

Along with identifying volunteer opportunities, the program arranges field trips to job sites, union halls and training facilities, where participants are introduced to employers, workers and staff members. And, as part of their exploration to decide whether they want a career in the trades, participants are encouraged to conduct informational interviews, often with those who have graduated from Pathways. ⫸

The women interviewed can become members of the participants' network and serve as allies in the workplace. The last week of a training cycle overlaps with the first week of the next so that new participants can meet and talk with graduates.

tips on identifying volunteer events

- Newspaper or Internet listings *(www.volunteermatch.com, for example)* for both short-term and ongoing volunteer opportunities, such as food banks, homeless shelters, tutoring in the schools.

- Events or projects sponsored by associations/organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, local real estate associations and unions.

- Events sponsored by nonprofits such as the Red Cross, United Way, Second Harvest, food banks, humane societies and Meals on Wheels.

- Community projects, such as neighborhood cleanups, festivals, fairs and fundraisers.

- Nationally recognized events/projects, such as Race for the Cure and Habitat for Humanity.

- School events/projects/opportunities, such as fundraisers for field trips, library acquisitions or athletic teams; tutoring; and chaperoning trips/events.

tips for preparing participants for volunteer events

- Remind participants that they are volunteering both out of the goodness of their hearts <u>and</u> with the intention of networking. (Point out that they can also add the experience to their résumés.) In anticipating meeting new people, suggest they develop or polish up a "personal commercial" and go prepared to make/respond to introductions that could lead to networking.

- Discuss with participants how volunteering allows them to demonstrate soft skills such as working well with a team, taking and giving directions and showing up on time.

- Have participants anticipate who might attend the event and plan to meet specific individuals.

- Encourage participants to volunteer for events that allow them to meet people outside their usual social circles. Or, if they choose to volunteer for an event in their own neighborhood or one that is sponsored by their church or children's school, suggest that they work with people they do not already know well.   ⫸

- Help participants identify events/projects that will allow them to demonstrate job-specific skills, such using a computer, tools or other equipment. Events/projects could include:

  - In the trades, participants might volunteer for community projects, such as fixing up the homes of the elderly or putting together playground equipment.

  - Healthcare trainees could volunteer for blood drives or campaigns to inform the public about healthcare issues such as HIV/AIDS, vaccinations, lead poisoning or physical fitness.

  - Participants training for office occupations could volunteer for a nonprofit making phone calls, producing marketing materials, or sending out thank-you notes to donors.

- Suggest that participants do not volunteer as a group as they are likely to stick together and avoid meeting and talking with new people.

REINFORCE LATER

Network at Volunteer/Community Events

Have the participants report to the group on their networking efforts soon after their volunteer experience. Ask the following questions to promote discussion:

- **Q** Who did you meet? What did you learn about them? What did you discuss? Do you feel as if you connected especially well with any of the volunteers/staff/others?

- **Q** What was the most useful information you learned? How will you use the information? How will you follow up?

- **Q** Would you recommend volunteering for this event/organization to others in the group or in your personal network? Why or why not?

- **Q** What are some ways you can keep in touch with the people you met?

tip sheet
Attend an Employment-Focused Networking Event

background: Events held specifically for employment networking are often sponsored by professional and special interest groups and designed for mid- and upper-level management. Usually there is a charge for attending. However, programs can let participants know about this type of networking opportunity and help them attend, when appropriate.

objective: To teach participants how to identify and take part in employment-focused networking opportunities.

tips for incorporating employment-focused networking events

- Encourage participants to attend employment-focused networking events as part of their job search. See tips on identifying networking opportunities on page 4.14.

- Have program staff, management, board members, mentors and other volunteers who belong to groups that sponsor networking events invite participants as guests.

- Consider starting a scholarship fund to help participants pay to attend networking events or join industry-related organizations.

- Sponsor a networking event as a service to the business community (as well as an opportunity for participants to make contacts). Get people to the event by offering valuable information or the opportunity to meet a well-known person. Make certain that guests far outnumber participants. For scheduling, planning and preparing participants to attend, adapt the information for sponsoring networking parties on page 3.8. For ideas about whom you might invite, see, under Network with Guest Speakers, the tips for finding presenters on page 3.2.

- Sponsor a networking event specifically for employed program graduates and their coworkers, who may be ready for a better job or additional training. Offer information on how to get a promotion, move to a better job, find resources for additional training, buy a house, start an IRA, buy a computer or plan an inexpensive family vacation. To encourage sharing employment information, start with an activity such as having attendees introduce themselves to other attendees and describe the best thing about their jobs. Offer a door prize. Offer an incentive for providing job leads to the program's job seekers.

tips for identifying networking opportunities

- Find groups or events for the unemployed sponsored by churches, community organizations and One-Stops. These and other free or inexpensive networking opportunities are often listed in local newspapers, sometimes near the Sunday classified job ads. Check for websites that list local/regional events; *for example, www.techvenue.com for information technology networking.*

- Check the Internet for local networking opportunities. Try the local Business Alliance or Chamber of Commerce site. Read local industry news and e-zines for information and clues about whom participants might try to meet at events.

- As an organization, join industry- or occupation-based associations and local business groups that provide networking opportunities. Call ahead for permission for staff to take participants to meetings and events and introduce them to other members. (This is usually not a problem when the staff person is a member or paying admission.) Arrange for participants to help register or seat guests as a way for them to easily meet people.

- Encourage participants to identify appropriate special interest groups and attend their networking events. Groups united by gender, ethnicity, disability, limited English-speaking skills and neighborhood residency are all possibilities.

- Have participants ask guest speakers and people with whom they conduct informational interviews which professional organizations they belong to, whether these offer employment-networking opportunities and whether nonmembers might attend meetings and/or events.

- Develop a database of organizations/associations that offer networking opportunities. Include membership information and dates and times of meetings and events. Have participants add to or update information as they identify opportunities and attend events. ⫸

REINFORCE LATER

Employment-Focused Networking Events

Have the participants share their experiences with the group soon after they have attended an event. Use the following questions to promote discussion:

Q Who sponsored the event? Was there an admission fee? Who attended?

Q What happened when you walked in? Who greeted you? Did people wear name tags? How was the room set up? If there was seating, how did you know where to sit?

Q Who did you meet? Who introduced you to whom? Who were you able to introduce?

Q Did you exchange employment-related information? What did you learn that was helpful? What information did you receive related to your career goals? A company you might want to work for? A job you might like to explore? Were you offered job leads? How will you follow up?

Q Do you recommend that others attend this event? Why or why not?

For more discussion questions, see Reinforce Later on page 3.11, under Plan a Networking Party.

SECTION 5 Continue
to Build Your
NETWORK

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Assemble an Inner Network

background: *People should maintain an ongoing network of contacts who can provide employment information and job leads as the need arises. Parts of this activity have been adapted from a lesson developed by staff at i.c.stars, a Chicago IT training organization.*

objective: *To identify an inner circle of network members who can offer information and/or guidance on employment goals and to practice connecting people to one another. This activity could be especially appropriate for programs that do not provide mentors for their participants.*

networking assignment: *My Inner Network*

time: *45 minutes*

STEPS

1 *Ask participants to identify a person* who knows them well and gives them good advice about important decisions.

<give an example of someone who is your best advisor>

Have them describe the person and tell why he or she might be a good employment network member. Responses might include:

- Knows about your goals
- Looks out for your interests
- Shares information
- Keeps in touch

Suggest that having a small group of people who know you, your skills and career goals can be helpful for finding a job and moving into better ones.

⫸

2

My Inner Network

Suggest to the participants that they develop their own inner networks to help them reach their employment goals.

Distribute the handout My Inner Network. Read aloud from the handout's first page.

<identify who in your own network fits some of the descriptions listed>

Have participants record on their handout the five people they would choose for their inner networks.

Give participants a few minutes to consider—or reconsider— their choices.

Ask volunteers to share and explain their choices to the group.

Preview the remaining pages of My Inner Network.

Tell participants to contact the people they have chosen as inner network members and arrange a time to meet and exchange information, including their own employment plans.

Point out that if some or all of their network members meet together, they all can exchange information. However, if participants can't arrange group meetings, they should arrange to meet—or at least talk with their inner network members individually.

Tell participants they should report back to the group on a specific date about developing their inner network and the information they received from network members. ⦚➡

REINFORCE LATER

Assemble an Inner Network

Have participants report on how they went about developing an inner network. Use the following questions to promote discussion:

Q How successful were you in getting people to agree to meet or talk with you? Who met with you? What was said?

Q Did you get good advice? Referrals to jobs or other people? Promises that your inner network members would help you toward your goals?

Q How well did you use your networking skills? For example, making introductions, talking about yourself or helping others make connections.

Q How do you plan to keep in touch on an ongoing basis? How will you continue to develop relationships with your network members?

Q Are there others you would like to bring into your inner network? Who are they and how will you involve them?

My Inner Network, page 1 of 3

(for easy photocopying, handout reappears on page A.19)

A group of trusted network members can be important for helping you develop your career, make job changes, make decisions about training and education and provide up-to-date information on employment and jobs. Inner network members could include classmates, family members, friends and neighbors, as well as people connected to the occupation you want to enter.

INNER NETWORK

1. Your Supporter During Good Times and Bad!
Who do you know who can offer you personal support as you look for the right job? For example, a parent, a close friend or a fellow program participant.

_____

2. Your Cheerleader!
Who do you know who understands your goals and can inspire you to achieve them—and inspire others to help you?

_____

3. Your Personal Planner!
Who can help you plan for the future?

_____

4. Your Employment Expert!
Who do you know who is a professional in your field of interest and can offer employment information?

_____

5. Your Straight Shooter!
Who do you know who will be honest, tell you when you are slacking off and make positive suggestions on how to improve?

_____

My Inner Network, page 2 of 3

To form a strong, ongoing network, it's important to keep in touch and let network members know that you value them. Also, remember that connecting other people is part of networking. Try this:

❶ Contact the people you have identified as your inner network. Invite them to meet. Prepare to share your plans, goals, job search and other employment-related information—and to introduce people. (They will have something in common because they all know you.)

examples of what you might say

"I was thinking about how you encouraged me (to enroll in the program, get more training, pass my GED, go into healthcare, start looking for a permanent job). I've really appreciated your (help, support, advice), and I'd like to tell you about my plans (and hear what you're up to). I'd also like you to meet some other people who have been helpful to me. Could you meet for coffee at. . . ?"

"You always have a handle on what's happening in the . . . industry. Could I pick your brain about my plans? Could we meet after work on. . . ?"

"Hi, I met you (when you were a guest speaker, during a field trip, at an event, through my job developer). I've made some decisions that I'd like to discuss with you and some others who have taken an interest in my career. Would you be willing to meet. . .?"

"You know, if I'd taken your advice about . . . , I'd be further along than I am now. I'd really like to tell you about my current plans and see what you think. I am planning to meet with a few others who have been helpful to me and thought you might be interested in stopping by. We're having coffee on . . . . at . . . . Can you come?"   ⟫➡

My Inner Network, page 3 of 3

❷ **Meet with your network members, tell them about your plans and get their input.**

to consider

Plan to introduce people who have not yet met. Give a bit of information about each so they can make networking conversation. *"Shandra is the person who kept me going when I wasn't sure I could pass the math part of the GED. She's working in accounting at the water department."* Be prepared so you don't waste anyone's time. Know what you will say and what type of guidance you want.

you might

Describe how you've prepared for employment and identify your short- and long-term goals. *"I have my CNA now and a job in an assisted care facility, but I'd really like to work in a hospital setting. I'm wondering if any of you have advice about how I could make that move."*

Get your network members' responses and ideas. Take notes.

Discuss actions you will take and how your network members might assist. *"I didn't know the hospitals had jobs hotlines. I'll start checking those. Also, I'll get in touch with your friend at public health. She might have good ideas."*

Make plans for staying in touch. *"Thanks for all your help. I'll let you know how it goes."*

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY
Maintain Your Network

background: *One government study indicated that most middle-aged people have changed jobs about 10 times. This trend of having many jobs during a lifetime is likely to continue. Therefore, it is important to develop relationships and maintain an ongoing network of contacts who can provide employment information and job leads as change occurs.*

objective: *To help participants maintain a network in anticipation of job changes.*

networking assignment: ***Keeping in Contact***

time: *30 minutes*

STEPS

1 *Ask participants* how many jobs they have held, including their current job, if they are working.

<describe your own work history>

Expect Change

Display Expect Change (previously prepared). Have the participants compare the information to their experiences.

> EXPECT CHANGE
> The average middle-aged person in the USA today has held nearly 10 jobs.
> ·US Bureau of Labor Statistics

Ask participants what this statistic suggests about their careers. Discuss the following points:

➜ They are not likely to keep the same job until retirement.

➜ Everyone must prepare to change jobs several times during their working lives.

➜ Leaving one job for another is not a sign of failure.

➜ People need skills to deal with changes, including how to obtain employment information and job referrals (networking).

Point out that changes can include losing a job but can also include promotions and moving to a better position at another company.

2   *Have the group brainstorm* how people can prepare for inevitable job changes. Make certain networking is mentioned and the following is discussed:

Ways to Prepare for Changing Jobs

o   Be informed about industry trends and how your company is doing.

o   Know what skills are valued by employers; develop skills that are transferable to other jobs.

o   Update your résumé periodically.

o   Keep an eye out for advancement opportunities.

o   Keep up your interviewing skills.

o   Maintain contact with your network before you need a job; don't wait until the last minute to get in touch.

o   Stay in touch with former employers and coworkers, both for references and job leads; always leave a job responsibly—don't burn bridges.

o   Watch for opportunities when network members change jobs.

o   Join professional associations to stay on top of the job market.

3   *Have participants discuss* why maintaining an employment network is important. Suggest the following ideas if they do not: ⫸

Network members could:

- Have advance information about layoffs, mergers, outsourcing and other actions that affect job security;
- Have access to information about promotions/better jobs;
- Introduce you to key new contacts; and/or
- Recommend you to their own employer if you lose your job or are looking for a better one.

Network members are more likely to be helpful if you:

- Maintain contact before needing their assistance; and
- Offer them information/assistance prior to asking for it yourself.

Have participants suggest ways to stay in touch with network members before they need their help. Suggest the following methods if participants do not:

Ways to Stay in Touch with Network Members

- Call or email people that you don't routinely see.
- Invite network members for casual conversation over coffee or lunch.
- Update network members on changes in your life: graduation from a training program or a change of address.
- Call or send a card at the holidays.
- Contact network members with information of interest to them.
- Make yourself available; return calls in a timely fashion.
- Go to events/places where you are likely to encounter your network members: your previous job site, hangouts, conferences, networking events.

Tell participants that it takes an occasional effort to stay in touch.

Distribute and preview the handout Keeping in Contact.

*Keeping
in Contact*

Have participants contact at least two members of their network with whom they have not spoken recently and report back to the group about their network maintenance on a specific date.

REINFORCE LATER

Maintain Your Network

Have volunteers tell the group how they contacted their network members, what happened and what information they exchanged.

Ask participants whether their personal network members provided information that would be of interest to fellow participants.

Encourage people to introduce their network members to other participants, if appropriate.

Encourage participants to record and store contact information for their network members. Discuss record systems appropriate for your group, such as address books, 3x5 cards, notebook pages (similar to the handout My Connections on page A.6), or electronically in an email address book or on a spreadsheet.

Keeping in Contact

(for easy photocopying, handout reappears on page A.22)

Because most people change jobs several times during their careers, it's wise to keep in touch with network members. You never know when you will need employment information—or want to give information to others.

Try this

Identify two valuable members of your network to whom you have not spoken recently. Decide how you will contact them and what you will say. Make a note of what happens. Make sure to jot down any change to their contact information.

Example

name: *Bradley Pitz*

contact information: *lives with my cousin, 14 State St, Vineland, CA 99999*

how to get in touch/what to say: *call and let him know I found a job*

what happened: *he said he's looking for work, so I told him about this program and promised to pick up an application for him*

1

name:

contact information:

how to get in touch/what to say:

what happened:

2

name:

contact information:

how to get in touch/what to say:

what happened:

---

tip sheet
Network Through Alumni Groups

background: *Some organizations sponsor alumni groups/meetings to support graduates and help them maintain employment. Your program's alumni activities could also become opportunities for alumni—and current participants—to network with one another.*

objective: *To use alumni groups/meetings as a means for participants to exchange information and build networks.*

tips for promoting networking through alumni groups

- Meet at the same time each week or month or quarter. Hold meetings at a place convenient for working graduates, perhaps in the conference room of an employer partner or a meeting room at a community center or shopping mall. Schedule time before the meeting for mingling and greeting new members or guests. Provide finger food and soft drinks. Offer a door prize or hold a raffle at the end of the program.

The Hope Program in Brooklyn, NY, provides monthly alumni events where graduates network and offer support to one another. The program provides full meals and childcare during the meetings.

- As much as possible, have participants plan and run the meetings, but enlist a skilled networking staff member or program volunteer to assist and advise the group.

- Plan an occasional meeting around networking activities. For example, if the alumni did not take part in classroom activities during training, you might offer information from Take a Look at Your Network on page 1.1, Learn How to Expand Your Network on page 1.14, and/or Develop a Personal Commercial on page 2.1, or have them take part in a networking party.

- Use the information from the tip sheet Network with Guest Speakers on page 3.1 when speakers are the focus of alumni meetings/events.

- In addition to giving members the opportunity to discuss job successes and work-related challenges, encourage them to identify new acquaintances and how these could become members of their networks. ⟩⟩➡

- Offer combined events for graduates and current participants so employed alumni can share success stories with job seekers.

- Develop a directory of members with contact and employment information and, perhaps, their personal and career interests. Members can then think about information that might interest others and keep in touch with one another outside of meeting times.

- As your program promotes networking to its alumni, aim for activities where members:

    - Exchange employment-related information with one another;

    - Seek information from individuals or the group during their job searches;

    - Offer and follow up on job leads;

    - Offer to contact someone on another's behalf;

    - Describe job openings in their companies;

    - Discuss pending career or job changes and seek input;

    - Introduce one another to new members or guests in a way that promotes networking;

    - Present their success stories of employment networking; and

    - Develop relationships that allow contact outside of meeting times when individuals have pertinent information to share with one another.

tip sheet
Network Online

background: *Many programs encourage participants to use the Internet as a tool for accessing job listings and company websites. The Internet also offers opportunities for exchanging employment information and job leads with others, including people outside the participants' usual networks.*

objective: *To help participants use the Internet for employment-related networking.*

the digital divide

For low-income, entry-level workers, online networking presents challenges similar to those of traditional, face-to-face networking. Many online networking opportunities exist for mid- and upper-level employees, business owners and entrepreneurs, while relatively few seem appropriate for hourly wage workers. Potentially valuable contacts such as college alumni and members of professional associations have their own sites unavailable to most program participants. Resources, in this case equipment and Internet access, are required, and many promising sites and services charge a fee and/or require an invitation to join. And, although participants in information technology programs have an easier time e-networking, participants in other fields may find it frustrating to use the computer and access the Internet.

Given all these challenges, online networking still offers the opportunity to interact with people participants might otherwise have difficulty meeting—and exchange employment information with peers.

tips for getting started

If participants do not have an email address, encourage them to sign up for a free one at yahoo.com or hotmail.com. (If they use these portals for contacting employers, have them make certain their target companies do not filter out messages with these addresses.)

Make participants aware of places where free Internet access is available, including One-Stop employment facilities and public libraries. Using a computer, email and the web is second nature to many, especially younger participants; however, provide technical assistance to those who need it to get started. ▶

tips on e-networking opportunities

Here are a few examples of online opportunities that could be effective for low-income participants, including some that can facilitate face-to-face contact. For frequently updated information about online employment-related resources, see the Riley Guide at www.rileyguide.com.

- When job seekers are introduced to sites with job postings, staff can encourage them to explore the accompanying networking services.

- Some employment networking sites are available to anyone, without a fee or invitation. This includes Monster Networking, associated with the large job database www.monster.com. Job seekers enter their zip code and their occupational interest and then view a list of network members. They can then select and read the profiles of likely local contacts. Actually contacting individuals requires signing up for a 30-day free user upgrade, which includes providing information for one's own profile.

- Internet services can serve as a first step for making face-to-face contact with people/groups with similar interests. The website www.meetup.com provides lists by city and region of groups that get together monthly, usually at a restaurant or other public place. Meetups are based around activities, organizing for a cause, or exchanging information. By signing up for a group, members receive email updates on upcoming group events. In addition to joining groups, programs or participants could organize their own groups and schedule monthly meetups through the service.

- www.linkedin.com and www.orkut.com sites are aimed at helping users increase their business contacts and offer services similar to those that foster friendships, dating and other social interaction. With the idea that people will find the most appropriate, trustworthy contacts among people who know one another—or people who know someone who knows someone—interested users often must be invited to join online networking groups. Although protocol differs, first-time users usually post a brief profile and identify the type of information they can give or want to receive, such as job openings, industry-related information, leads to potential clients or investment opportunities. At some sites, users wanting to network with others send a request through the site outlining the information they want to receive. If contacts are interested, they email back agreeing to an exchange. At other sites, users can choose not to be contacted except through their network. ⫸

Street Tech of San Pablo, CA, a community technology center that provides technology training to the underserved, offers its participants access to a special group within LinkedIn. Members of the group are supportive of Street Tech's mission and predisposed to offer information and advice to participants as well as network with one another.

The Bay Area Video Coalition in San Francisco sponsors www.myjobpath.org, a website that promotes employment networking and teaches networking skills. The site contains lessons, video clips—including one that shows job seekers practicing their 30-second elevator pitches/personal commercials—and links to additional networking-related information. Users can store leads and plan and follow up on their networking experiences. In addition, participants served by organizations in San Francisco's Information Technology Consortium can access "promatch," a section of the site that connects job seekers with industry professionals who can review resumes and provide mock and informational interviews.

- News groups and discussion forums offer places to share common interests. Group members post opinions, questions and requests for information to which others respond. Exchanging information about common interests, hobbies and causes can serve as an icebreaker and establish trust before employment information is eventually requested. Along with participating in groups organized around interests, hobbies and causes, participants could check out groups for job seekers, industry- or occupation-related groups or special interest groups, such as those for working mothers, the disabled or for former employees of certain large companies. Perhaps the most valuable information can be obtained in moderated groups that require registration before people are allowed to participate. (Spam, scams and time-wasting messages are endemic in unmoderated groups with anonymous participation.) Identifying appropriate groups is not straightforward. Sites that could be helpful in finding groups are www.groups.google.com, www.groups.msn.com and www.groups.yahoo.com.

  Because these groups seem to appear and disappear in a nanosecond, program volunteers could help develop and update a list of appropriate groups for participants.

- Craigslist, an online bulletin board active in more than 100 communities, offers local job listings, but it also provides discussion forums, including one entitled "jobs" at www.craigslist.org.

- Programs or the participants themselves could set up their own group as a way to exchange information and job leads after graduation. For example, groups could be set up at sites such as www.groups.msn.com or www.myfamily.com.   Ⅲ➡

Mayfair Improvement Initiative of San Jose, CA, a community-based intermediary coordinating efforts to improve housing, literacy, employment and public safety, sponsors an online network created for both employed and unemployed residents. Users can send and receive job leads from the group members and from area job coordinators.

tips for participating in news groups and discussion forums

Employment-related networking online has much in common with networking face-to-face. Friendliness and honesty are valued. People introduce themselves. When appropriate, users describe their skills, jobs and career goals. People build relationships, offer information and connections and assume others will reciprocate. With this in mind, here are some suggestions for effective e-networking through online services and usenet groups:

- If registration is required, register honestly. Provide accurate information. Let the group know who you are, how you hope to benefit from participating and what you can offer the group.

- Analyze how users interact before participating. For example, is the language professional or casual? How do members address one another? How do they handle differences of opinion? Try to adopt a similar tone and style.

- Participate regularly. Be encouraging to others. Reciprocate. Try to balance asking for help and information with offering help and information.

- Follow up on offers of assistance, tips or job leads outside the groups so personal information is not broadcast widely and does not interfere with ongoing group discussions.

tips about email networking

- Email can be an important way to begin or maintain relations with people in one's own network. For example, program graduates can exchange employment information and job leads as they learn more about opportunities with their companies, meet and develop relationships with coworkers, receive promotions and change employers. They can also stay in touch with program staff and mentors. Participants can sign up for free email accounts at www.hotmail.com or www.yahoo.com and then exchange addresses. ⫸

- In addition, participants can expand their networks by following up electronically with guest speakers, people with whom they conducted informational interviews and those they met at networking parties and events. A thank-you message coupled with a question could begin a relationship.

Mentors with StreetWise Partners, New York City, stay in touch with participants by email. For example, when participants are preparing for specific job interviews, mentors have researched the companies, helped participants anticipate interview questions and offered advice on questions to ask based on the companies' mission and values.

REINFORCE LATER

Network Online

Have participants periodically share their experiences with networking online, including the following:

- Show the group emails they have exchanged that include employment networking;

- Make short presentations about news groups or discussion forums they have joined, including examples of employment information shared by network members; and

- Demonstrate on the computer how to sign up for services, groups and forums.

★ Summary and Resources

Summary

netWORKS was developed to be a flexible resource for any employment and training organization seeking to expand its participants' employment networks. Managers, trainers and job developers can choose, adapt and integrate activities into their existing programs. As opposed to simply telling participants that networking is important, the guide's interactive classroom sessions and outside assignments and experiences—based on the best practices of other organizations—actually expand networks as participants hone new skills. In fact, *netWORKS* provides much of what is needed to offer networking opportunities to your participants from orientation through training and after their graduation. But three important ingredients are missing, and you must supply these:

The first is patience. Employment networking is not the tidy web of interlocking contacts that is often depicted. Instead, it is convoluted and intertwined. No one can foresee the outcome of contacting a former coworker, conversing with a guest speaker or conducting an informational interview. Attending a networking event might result in a valuable contact, an invitation to apply for a job or a handful of business cards to be followed up on later. Networking is often daunting, especially for participants who are not confident talking about themselves nor sure if they have anything of value to offer others. All of this is a fluid process whose payoff may be well down the line.

The second ingredient is your commitment to promoting employment networking. Perusing the want ads and passing around job postings are time-honored, comfortable job search techniques for many programs. They are easily facilitated. However, as workforce development professionals know, people get jobs through other people, and developing diverse networks can provide insider information and referrals to positions otherwise unavailable to participants. Your participants need to know this too, and, with your help, develop skills and attitudes that build employment networks.

And finally, the activities here are just words on paper until you bring them to life with your creativity, your personal contacts and your community resources. Learning to network can be a welcome departure from studying for the GED, revising a résumé or filling out job applications. Make networking dynamic! Make it fun!

Contact information for programs that expand their participants' employment networks

These organizations, their leaders and participants provided the background, information and inspiration for *netWORKS*.

The Community College of Baltimore County
800 South Rolling Road
Catonsville, MD 21228
www.ccbcmd.edu
Contact: Joan Edwards, Director of Special Projects
410-455-6922, jedwards@ccbcmd.edu

EXCEL! Networking Group, Inc.
P.O. Box 2734
Merrifield, VA 22116
www.excelability.org
Contact: Robert Rudney, Chairman
703-465-2642, rudney_robert@bah.com

**Family and Community Services
(formerly Family Pathfinders)**
Health and Human Services,
Office of Family Services Special Projects & Family
and Community Services
909 West 45th Street
Building 2, Mail Code 2010
Austin, TX 78751
www.hhsc.state.tx.us
Contacts: Connie Williams, Project Manager
512-206-5661, connie.williams@hhsc.state.tx.us
Martha Ward, Project Manager
512-206-5669, martha.ward@hhsc.state.tx.us

The HOPE Program
One Smith Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201-5111
www.thehopeprogram.org
Contact: Josh Shepherd, Deputy Director
718-852-9307, jshepherd@thehopeprogram.org

i.c.stars
212 West Superior, Suite 300
Chicago, IL 60610
www.icstars.org
Contact: Sandee Kastrul, Executive Director
312-640-3851, skastrul@icstars.org

Oregon Tradeswomen
1714 NE Alberta Street
Portland, OR 97211
www.tradeswomen.net
Contact: Connie Ashbrook, Executive Director
503-335-8200, connie@tradeswomen.net

Street Tech
2300 El Portal Drive, Suites F & G
San Pablo, CA 94806
www.streettech.org
Contact: Barrie Hathaway, Executive Director
510-234-1300, barrie@streettech.org

StreetWise Partners, Inc.
11 Park Place, Suite 701
New York, NY 10007
www.streetwisepartners.org
Contact: Margaret Crotty, Executive Director
212-971-0078, streetwise@streetwisepartners.org

Taking a Look at My Network: PAGE 1 OF 3

1. Of the three choices listed below, how do most people find jobs?
   ○ Newspaper ads
   ○ Employment agencies or programs like this one
   ○ Through people they know

2. How many people do you know whom you can talk with about finding a job?
   ○ No one
   ○ 1 to 5 people
   ○ 6 to 10 people
   ○ 11 to 20 people
   ○ More than 20 people

3. Do you discuss employment or career goals at church, sporting or social events?
   ○ No
   ○ Occasionally
   ○ Often

4. How often do people discuss their own jobs and career goals with you?
   ○ Never
   ○ Occasionally
   ○ Often

5. Do you have a list of people you can call on for ideas and referrals when you need a job?
   ○ No
   ○ Yes, although I might not know how to get in touch with all of them
   ○ I know exactly who to call and how to get in touch with them

6. Can you quickly and convincingly market your skills and talk about your employment goals when you meet someone?
   ○ No
   ○ Yes

7. Do you have business cards?
   ○ No
   ○ Yes

Taking a Look at My Network: *PAGE 2 OF 3*

8. How confident do you feel introducing people to one another?
   - ○ I'm not at all confident
   - ○ I can do it, but I feel awkward
   - ○ I'm confident at making introductions

9. How comfortable do you feel talking about the job you would like to have with people you don't know?
   - ○ I'm not comfortable at all
   - ○ It's tough, but I've done it
   - ○ I'm comfortable when talking about my skills and job goals

10. Do you know people who have connections to well-paying jobs and will give you information and referrals?
    - ○ No, I don't know anyone with connections to well-paying jobs
    - ○ Yes, but my connections are really limited
    - ○ I know several people who could help me get a well-paying job

11. Are you comfortable asking questions during presentations and exchanging information with teachers, trainers, job developers and guest speakers about employment topics?
    - ○ No
    - ○ I might ask questions, but I would feel nervous
    - ○ Yes, I can do that

12. Do you exchange information about jobs and careers with a mentor?
    - ○ No, I don't have a mentor
    - ○ I have a mentor, but we don't talk about jobs or careers
    - ○ Yes, I have a mentor, and we talk about employment

13. Do you volunteer for community activities such as neighborhood patrols, block cleanups, school board meetings, etc.?
    - ○ No
    - ○ Yes

Taking a Look at My Network: *PAGE 3 OF 3*

14. Have you interviewed someone to get information about a job or a company that you are interested in working for?
    ○ No
    ○ Yes

15. Do you know about associations or events for people working in occupations where you want to find employment?
    ○ No
    ○ Yes. I know about the following groups and events: _____ .

16. How many employment networking events have you attended?
    ○ None
    ○ One or two, ever
    ○ One, maybe two, each year
    ○ I attend networking events regularly. These include: _____ .

17. Do you make an effort to keep in touch with people so if you need a job or need to change jobs, you can use them as a resource?
    ○ No
    ○ Yes

18. Have you used email and/or Internet chat rooms to exchange job or career information with others?
    ○ No
    ○ Yes

My Connections: *PAGE 1 OF 2*

family • friends • former coworkers • former teammates • employers • teachers • schoolmates • neighbors • community members • church members • club/organization members • teachers at my child's school • people I do business with, like my dry cleaner, dentist or grocer • others

name/phone number	works at:
	has connections with:
	could have information about:
name/phone number	works at:
	has connections with:
	could have information about:
name/phone number	works at:
	has connections with:
	could have information about:

My Connections: *PAGE 2 OF 2*

name/phone number	works at:
	has connections with:
	could have information about:
name/phone number	works at:
	has connections with:
	could have information about:
name/phone number	works at:
	has connections with:
	could have information about:

Network Bridge Hunt

Try to identify 10 "bridges" who could introduce you to their network members.

---

❶ Staff member in this program

Name:

Could introduce you to:

---

❷ Friendly person who likes to network and knows many people

Name:

Could introduce you to:

---

❸ Person who knows a lot of working people

Name:

Could introduce you to:

---

❹ Person who works for a company with fewer than 15 employees

Name:

Could introduce you to:

---

❺ Person who works for a company with at least 100 employees

Name:

Could introduce you to:

---

❻ Person who works at a job that interests you

Name:

Could introduce you to:

---

❼ Person who works at a job that interests someone else in the group

Name:

Could introduce you to:

---

❽ Person who recently retired from a job

Name:

Could introduce you to:

---

❾ Person who quit a job to take another

Name:

Could introduce you to:

---

❿ Person who owns a business

Name:

Could introduce you to:

My Personal Commercial: *PAGE 1 OF 3*

the assignment   Develop your own commercial to share information about yourself and your employment goals. Use page 3 as a worksheet.

think about   Personal Commercial Basics:

1)   Make a friendly connection.

2)   Say your name clearly.

3)   Suggest what you can offer.

4)   Know what you are asking for, if you have a chance to ask (advice, information, referral, job lead).

5)   Speak naturally and sincerely.

6)   Make a memorable, positive impression.

to consider   You will sound more natural if you don't memorize a set speech. Instead, identify one or two positive things to say about yourself and what you can offer. Concentrate on communicating these.

Adapt your speech to the person with whom you are talking.

<u>**examples of adapting a personal commercial:**</u>

networking with a friend
"Hey, Margie! I'm just about finished with training, and I'm starting to look for work. I'm hoping to use some of the computer skills I've learned. Got any ideas?"

networking on a bus or in an elevator
"Sounds like you work for a good company. I'm just finishing training and looking for a job myself. Who would I contact at your company about job openings?"

My Personal Commercial: *PAGE 2 OF 3*

networking with a group when asked to introduce yourself

"Hi, my name is Anthony Hansen. I found out about Primo Financial Training from my job counselor at the One-Stop. Until last year, I worked in construction. I'm thinking that I could be a real asset in the office of a large construction company. I'd like to talk with people who are doing that sort of job and really see what's involved. If anyone has any ideas or contacts, please let me know. Thanks."

networking with an employer/employee in your targeted industry

"Hi, I'm Anthony Hansen. I am three weeks from finishing my last course at Primo Financial Training, and I'll be looking for a position to use the skills I've learned. Before I decided to change careers, I worked in construction. I'm thinking that with my new computer skills, I could be an asset to a contractor or an engineering firm. You're at T & R Builders, aren't you? Do you know whether your firm could use someone with my skills and experience? Who would I talk to?"

during an interview when someone says, "Tell me about yourself."

"Okay, the first thing you should know about me is that I take having a job very seriously. I come to work on time every day, and I'm willing to put in extra hours during crunch time. I worked in construction before training in computers, and I think I could be a real asset to your company. I'm detail-oriented. I like everything to add up, but I don't get frustrated easily. I'm a team player. I know that in a small business people need to take on responsibility and wear more than one hat. I'd really like to work for your company."

My Personal Commercial: *PAGE 3 OF 3*

Several things I can say about myself (think about your education and training, skills, experience, personality, goals and the positive things that people say about you):

-
-
-
-
-

Draft of my commercial:

Things to remember from the feedback I've received:

Networking!!

Recognizing Networking

Be on the lookout for employment networking at the times and places below—or any time and place. Try to start or join in the conversation when you see an opportunity. Record briefly what was said and what happened so you can describe it to the group.

☐ on a television show, during a video or in a movie—what took place:

☐ outdoors, on the sidewalk, in a park, etc.—what took place:

☐ on public transportation—what took place:

☐ in an office—what took place:

☐ waiting in line—what took place:

☐ at a meeting—what took place:

☐ at a social event—what took place:

☐ among family members, neighbors or friends—what took place:

☐ among people in this program—what took place:

☐ during a conversation you started—what took place:

☐ at any other time and place—what took place:

Identify Valuable Contacts: PAGE 1 OF 3

Here are some questions that can get your team thinking about how to expand your teammate's employment network—and expand yours, too. For each of the strategies, decide who will do what. *For example, a team member who knows someone connected with the teammate's interest could arrange for the teammate to meet that person.*

Teammate's job interest: _____

● Does your team know someone doing a job similar to the one in which your teammate is interested? Or someone who knows someone?

   Strategy for finding people doing similar jobs:

● Does your team know of local companies that are hiring for the job your teammate is interested in? Do you know anyone who works at these companies? How could your teammate meet current employees and those in charge of hiring?

   Strategy for finding out about companies of interest to your teammate:

● How/where can your teammate learn more skills for the job? Who could give him or her good advice about training? If training takes place on the job, with whom can he or she talk? Who would be a good contact at training programs or schools?

   Strategy for learning about training for your teammate:

Identify Valuable Contacts: *PAGE 2 OF 3*

● Are there professional associations/organizations for people who do the job that interests your teammate? How can your teammate interact with members of these organizations? Do these organizations have networking events or sponsor volunteer activities?

Strategy for getting information about professional organizations for your teammate:

● In what other ways can your teammate network about the job he or she wants?

Ideas about further networking opportunities:

Identify Valuable Contacts: PAGE 3 OF 3

Networking assignment outside of class

As a team, pinpoint at least three people whom your teammate could consider for his or her network. At the next session, present to the group the names and contact information of these people and suggestions for how your teammate could meet these potential network members.

Three potential network members for your teammate:

1 Name: _____

   Contact information: _____

   How to meet this person: _____

   _____

2 Name: _____

   Contact information: _____

   How to meet this person: _____

   _____

3 Name: _____

   Contact information: _____

   How to meet this person: _____

   _____

Informational Interviewing: PAGE 1 OF 2

the assignment Conduct an interview with someone who could offer information about jobs in your field of interest.

checklist
- ☐ Decide whom to interview
- ☐ Request interview
- ☐ Prepare questions
- ☐ Confirm interview the day before
- ☐ Remember interviewing etiquette, including a thank-you note
- ☐ Analyze the interview, and follow up, if appropriate

prepare questions Because you don't want to ramble or waste the person's time, think carefully about what information you want to obtain and do research in advance. *For example: Do you want information about the person's job? The company the person works for? The industry the person works in?*

Also, although your primary purpose is to get information, you will want to share something about yourself. Prepare a comment or two that allows you to do that. *For example, "I've been taking care of my disabled mother for several years, and I'm really eager to get back to work. That's the reason I'm collecting information on various jobs."*

You can use the questions below as examples. Adapt them to your own interests and interviewing style.

ABOUT THE JOB

What is your job like? What do you do? What are your responsibilities? What is most satisfying/least satisfying about the job? What is most challenging? How did you get interested in this job? How did you prepare for the job? What jobs have you had that led to your current job? I'm interested in a similar job because. . . . Do you have advice about what I can do to work toward a position like yours? Could you take a look at my résumé and tell me what you think?

ABOUT THE COMPANY

How did you get your job with the company? What do you like about working for the company? What would you say about the company's future? Your future with the company? What are the employment opportunities in your company? I've been developing skills in. . . . Is this useful in your company? What might I do to be hired and be successful in a company like yours?

Informational Interviewing: *PAGE 2 OF 2*

ABOUT THE INDUSTRY

How did you get interested in working in this industry? How did you get your foot in the door? What do you like/dislike about working in the industry? What are some other jobs in the industry? I'm interested in the job of. . . . What would you say are the major qualifications? Who else would you suggest I talk with about this type of job?

Your list of the top 10 questions to ask during an informational interview. In reality, you may have time to ask only four or five questions.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

My Inner Network: *PAGE 1 OF 3*

A group of trusted network members can be important for helping you develop your career, make job changes, make decisions about training and education and provide up-to-date information on employment and jobs. Inner network members could include classmates, family members, friends and neighbors, as well as people connected to the occupation you want to enter.

INNER NETWORK

1. Your Supporter During Good Times and Bad!
Who do you know who can offer you personal support as you look for the right job? For example, a parent, a close friend or a fellow program participant.

_____

2. Your Cheerleader!
Who do you know who understands your goals and can inspire you to achieve them—and inspire others to help you achieve them?

_____

3. Your Personal Planner!
Who can help you plan for the future?

_____

4. Your Employment Expert!
Who do you know who is a professional in your field of interest and can offer employment information?

_____

5. Your Straight Shooter!
Who do you know who will be honest, tell you when you are slacking off and make positive suggestions on how to improve?

_____

My Inner Network: PAGE 2 OF 3

To form a strong, ongoing network, it's important to keep in touch and let network members know that you value them. Also, remember that connecting other people is part of networking. Try this:

❶ **Contact the people you have identified as your inner network. Invite them to meet. Prepare to share your plans, goals, job search and other employment-related information—and to introduce people. (They will have something in common because they all know you.)**

examples of what you might say

"I was thinking about how you encouraged me (to enroll in the program, get more training, pass my GED, go into healthcare, start looking for a permanent job). I've really appreciated your (help, support, advice), and I'd like to tell you about my plans (and hear what you're up to). I'd also like you to meet some other people who have been helpful to me. Could you meet for coffee at. . . ?"

"You always have a handle on what's happening in the . . . industry. Could I pick your brain about my plans? Could we meet after work on. . . ?"

"Hi, I met you (when you were a guest speaker, during a field trip, at an event, through my job developer). I've made some decisions that I'd like to discuss with you and some others who have taken an interest in my career. Would you be willing to meet. . .?"

"You know, if I'd taken your advice about . . . , I'd be further along than I am now. I'd really like to tell you about my current plans and see what you think. I am planning to meet with a few others who have been helpful to me and thought you might be interested in stopping by. We're having coffee on . . . . at . . . . Can you come?"

My Inner Network: *PAGE 3 OF 3*

❷ **Meet with your network members, tell them about your plans and get their input.**

to consider

Plan to introduce people who have not yet met. Give a bit of information about each so they can make networking conversation. *"Shandra is the person who kept me going when I wasn't sure I could pass the math part of the GED. She's working in accounting at the water department."* Be prepared so you don't waste anyone's time. Know what you will say and what type of guidance you want.

you might

Describe how you've prepared for employment and identify your short- and long-term goals. *"I have my CNA now and a job in an assisted care facility, but I'd really like to work in a hospital setting. I'm wondering if any of you have advice about how I could make that move."*

Get your network members' responses and ideas. Take notes.

Discuss actions you will take and how your network members might assist. *"I didn't know the hospitals had jobs hotlines. I'll start checking those. Also, I'll get in touch with your friend at public health. She might have good ideas."*

Make plans for staying in touch. *"Thanks for all your help. I'll let you know how it goes."*

Keeping in Contact

Because most people change jobs several times during their careers, it's wise to keep in touch with network members. You never know when you will need employment information—or want to give information to others.

Try this
Identify two valuable members of your network to whom you have not spoken recently. Decide how you will contact them and what you will say. Make a note of what happens. Make sure to jot down any change to their contact information.

Example

name: *Bradley Pitz*

contact information: *lives with my cousin, 14 State St, Vineland, CA 99999*

how to get in touch/what to say: *call and let him know I found a job*

what happened: *he said he's looking for work, so I told him about this program and promised to pick up an application for him*

1

name:

contact information:

how to get in touch/what to say:

what happened:

2

name:

contact information:

how to get in touch/what to say:

what happened:

P/PV