
Participant Guide May 2026: Networking

Network to Work Lessons & Materials
are on the Participant Portal at:
A4td.org / a4tdtraining

Meeting Ground Rules:

- Silence your phones
- Maintain confidentiality
- Listen to others
- Participate
- Use the “Parking Lot”

Today’s Agenda:

1. Materials

- Welcome! Please sign in.
- Your **Career Navigator** (CN) and **Case Management Participant Assistant** (CMPA) have your meeting agenda and various program materials available for you on the table.
- Please be sure to provide us with any changes in your address, phone or email.

2. Welcome and Opening Remarks

- **Introductions: Introduce yourself:**
 - Name and host agency
 - Job goal
 - A success you had this month in your training, job search, or elsewhere.
- “What do you hope to take away from or learn at today’s meeting?”

3. We Celebrate You! Participant Success

- Certificates are handed out.

4. Employer Guest Speaker: _____

- **Job Search Skill Topic:** “Networking”

NOTES: _____

5. Job Readiness: Networking

NOTES: _____

- **Activity/Discussion – “All About Networking”**

NOTES:

6. Workplace Safety Video:

- **What Causes Accidents?** This video provides valuable information about our personal responsibility for preventing and spotting unsafe conditions.
- Webpage: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBf6BTX1bmM>

NOTES:

7. Miscellaneous Matters

- **Additional information**

NOTES:

8. Jobs in the Area / Peer to Peer Support and Sharing

- **Staff will share job contacts** / potential opportunities that you should apply for when the opportunity matches your job goal.
- **Participants:**
 - Share job contacts and opportunities you know about.
 - Share any wisdom or insight you have gained from your own job search.
 - Share any challenges you are facing for which you'd like group support or input.

NOTES:

9. A4TD News & Notes

- **Jobs, Jobs, Jobs!**
 - American Job Centers (AJC)/CareerOneStop: It is a SCSEP requirement that participants use the American Job Centers/ CareerOneStop board as part of their job search. Please keep your resume updated.
 - Job Search: As a SCSEP participant, you have agreed to actively learn skills and participate in a job-search. Complete your Job Search Activity Log (JSAL) monthly. Log in to the CareerOneStop/AJC job site twice per month.
 - Offsite Training: Offsite Training and Supportive Services are available. Talk to your CMPA or CN about what you believe would be helpful.
 - Do you have family or friends that could benefit from the SCSEP Program? Take a flyer, have them apply on our website, or contact your CN/CMPA!
- **All A4TD Training Centers will be closed** on Friday, June 19, in observance of Juneteenth. Day. Your Host Agency may be closed on this day. If it is, please make plans with your CMPA and your Host Agency supervisor to make up your hours **during the same pay period**.
- You must notify your local A4TD training center staff / Case Management Participant Assistant office:
 - If your personal information changes (address, phone #, etc.)
 - If there are any changes to your family size, income, or employment status.
 - If during training, you become the relative or domestic partner of another participant or of a staff member at your host agency.
- **A4TD and Senior Community Service Program (SCSEP) News**
 - A4TD has been selected to operate the National SCSEP grant in New Hampshire! A4TD currently operates SCSEP across Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Connecticut. The addition of New Hampshire builds on A4TD's long-standing work connecting older adults with meaningful employment opportunities.
- **Timesheet Reminders:**
 - Names, Places, Dates, Signatures: all must be filled out!
 - Do not forget to total the right-hand column and at the bottom.
 - Offsite training must be explained with the hours breakdown and name of the provider (organization, school, or online platform).
 - It is your responsibility to save your paystubs.
 - For today's meeting in the "Explanation of Offsite Training Activities column", write "Network to Work meeting".
 - You cannot train more than 8 hours on any single day, even a day with a Network to Work meeting.

10. Conclusion of the Meeting

Next Meeting:

- _____ day, June _____, 2026 at _____
- **The June meeting topic is Resumes.**
- To prepare for next month’s meeting, write three bullet points describing your training tasks and successes from your Host Agency assignment to add to your resume.”

- Bring your Job Search Activity Log (JSAL) to the next meeting.

May 2026 Topic: Networking Resource Document

What Is Networking?

Networking is the ongoing process of staying connected with people and expanding your circle of relationships to support your employment goals. For many older adults, networking may already be a natural part of daily life: talking with friends, former coworkers, neighbors, family members, or people you meet in your community. These conversations can lead to valuable information, guidance, and opportunities.

Networking is a way to learn about possibilities through connecting with others—people you know well, casual acquaintances, and even new people you haven't met before. It builds on your life experience and the relationships you've developed over many years.

Networking is not one-sided. It is not about asking for a job, selling yourself, or using others. Instead, effective networking is about building and renewing mutually beneficial relationships. It involves sharing your experience, listening to others, exchanging information, and offering help when you can. At its heart, networking is about helping others while also helping yourself.

The Benefits of Networking

Why is networking so important, especially for older adults? Many job openings are never advertised online. Networking is one of the most effective ways to learn about these "hidden" opportunities and to reconnect with the job market in a more personal way.

Networking can also lead to referrals or recommendations, which can make a big difference in getting noticed by an employer. A personal introduction or a good word from someone who knows your work and your character often carries more weight than submitting an online application alone.

When you network, you can share your background, skills, and career goals while learning from others. These conversations are a two-way exchange. You may receive many types of support, including:

- * Information about job openings or industries
- * Invitations to informational interviews to learn more about a role or workplace
- * Introductions to people within an organization or field
- * Feedback on your resume or help preparing for interviews
- * Advice on re-entering the workforce, changing careers, or updating skills
- * Help following up on an application or identifying next steps

Just as importantly, networking helps you stay engaged, confident, and connected during your job search. Your experience, knowledge, and perspective are valuable. Networking is one of the best ways to share with others.

You are Already Networking - and May Not Realize It

Many people see networking as something that only very assertive and outgoing people do well. The truth is that everyone networks. You probably network without even knowing it. Every time you have a discussion with someone about your life - whether it be that you are looking for a job, a plumber or a good yoga class - you are networking. In short, you are sharing information about yourself and the workings of your life while also seeking information from another person. You are reaching out to people you know and trust for assistance; they, in turn, may refer you to people they know and trust.

Networking is nothing more than getting to know people. You are already networking every day and everywhere you go. You're networking when you strike up a conversation with the person next to you in line, introduce yourself to others at your grandchild's school, meet a friend of a friend, catch up with a former co-worker, or stop to chat with your neighbor. Everyone you meet can help you move your job search forward. Adopting a networking lifestyle—a lifestyle of connecting and helping others in good times and bad—will help you find the right job, make valuable connections in your chosen field, and stay focused and motivated during your job search.

Key Networking Tips for Older Adults (from NCOA)

- **Tap into the “hidden job market.”** Many job openings are never advertised, so networking is one of the most effective ways to uncover opportunities that don't appear on job boards.
- **Start by listing everyone you know.** Your network already includes former coworkers, friends, neighbors, family, professional contacts, and people from community activities or volunteer work—some going back 10–15 years.
- **Create a strong elevator pitch.** Prepare a short, clear explanation of who you are, what you do, and what kind of opportunity you're seeking so you can confidently introduce yourself.
- **Let people know you're open to opportunities.** Word-of-mouth is powerful; when your network knows you're job searching, they can share leads or make introductions.
- **Request informational interviews.** Casual conversations with people in roles or industries that interest you can provide insight, advice, and connections—without the pressure of a formal job interview.
- **Use online networking tools effectively.** Keeping an up-to-date LinkedIn profile helps you stay visible, showcase your experience, and connect with a wider professional audience.
- **Seek mentors, regardless of age.** Mentors don't have to be older—sometimes younger professionals can offer valuable guidance, especially on current trends and technology.
- **Get involved in your community.** Volunteering, attending industry events, joining boards, or participating in local groups can expand both your professional and personal networks.

Networking Don'ts

Your networking strategy should include job fairs and other gatherings of professionals. To make the most of these events and have the best outcomes, avoid these Networking Don'ts:

Being unprepared.

You never know when the opportunity to network may arise, so you want to be prepared to make a good first impression. Keep your resume up to date and ensure your appearance is neat and clean.

Using the event to peddle your resume.

Pushing your resume on anyone or leaving your resume on every table can make you look like you are only there to advance your own cause. Most people will discard an out-of-context resume that's been forced on them. Bring your resume — but keep it to yourself, unless your new contact asks for it.

Going on a business-card collecting spree.

A networking event is not a hunt, and there is no reward for collecting the most business cards. Your goal should be to create meaningful connections, not to capture that business card and move on to the next target. It is better to slow down and focus your attention on the person you are in conversation with. An hour spent with one good contact with whom you seem attuned is a networking success.

Treating anyone as unimportant / not taking time to make a real connection.

Treat everyone you meet like they can make a real difference in your life. Be respectful and present, even if the connection is brief.

Failing to ask for help.

Some feel asking for introductions or advice makes them look weak, but making a request is at the core of the networking process. Networking works when people make new connections. By being polite and humble, you can reinforce the relationships you have and build new ones.

Being glued to your cell phone.

Networking events can be uncomfortable and cell phones can provide an easy escape. However, scrolling through email doesn't make you look smart, busy, or important; rather, it makes you look unapproachable, or worse, disrespectful. If you are expecting an important call, feel free to keep that phone nearby — but turn off the ringer and resist the urge to check for texts and emails.

Failing to follow up or respond to another's challenges.

Post-event follow up is an opportunity to reinforce your professional image. If you promised someone you would send an article, make an introduction, or schedule a meeting, do it within 24 hours. If someone has a challenge that you can help with, respond no later than the next morning. Positioning yourself as a resource to others will make you more valuable to them and their contacts over time.

Forgetting to be grateful.

Remember that no one owes you anything—not a meeting, introduction or a recommendation. Be reasonable in your expectations. Don't ask for favors you would normally only ask of trusted friends or long-time colleagues. If you just met someone, don't insist that they introduce you to the head of their company. Be grateful for any help or advice you receive. Follow up with a hand-written thank-you note, a personal email, or a quick phone call to acknowledge the other person's effort.

The Networking Conversation

As you go into a networking conversation, it is important to have prepared a brief “elevator speech” that concisely tells a bit about you, your skills and what you’re looking for. It should be tailored to each meeting, as it will be different when you’re seeking a referral than when you are trying to gather information about a particular job. It is very important to be clear in your goal. Is it a referral to someone else, information on a company or industry, a personal introduction? Don’t be shy in telling the person how they can help. People feel good when they can help each other, so the more specific you can be about how they can help, the better.

Ask interesting questions. You should be aware of the present situation and ask the right questions in an appropriate manner. Here are some great networking questions:

“What brings you here?”

Asking this question demonstrates an interest in the other person as opposed to an interest in how that person can help you. Their response will give you a sense of what they are working on and help you to figure out how you can be of service to them.

“How did you get involved in the industry/company?”

Once you know a little bit more about somebody’s professional background, ask them how they got their start. It can provide valuable takeaways for you, as well as make you seem more likable. Showing interest and enthusiasm makes a memorable and lasting impression.

“Since you work in the industry, how do you feel about X?”

Asking about a specific, timely event in an industry or company is a great way to show that you are knowledgeable and thoughtful. First impressions matter, and in addition to being nice and approachable, the best thing you can do is to demonstrate how you think and what you know.

“How would someone get their foot in the door in your company/industry?”

While the ultimate objective of networking is often to get a job, coming out and asking somebody you just met to help you get one can be pretty off-putting. However, that doesn't mean you can't approach the topic at all — you just have to do so delicately. This question is a subtle way to ask about opportunities, and if you are lucky, they will ask you if you are interested and then provide you with a business card to follow up with them after the event.

“Based on your journey, what do you wish someone would have told you earlier in your career?”

This is a great question to ask if you're speaking with somebody who is more senior than you are. It allows them to impart the knowledge they've acquired over the years with you, as well as appeals to their ego. Generally speaking, people are much more comfortable sharing their wisdom than they are sharing their contacts, and that wisdom is valuable as well.

“How do you spend your time outside of work?”

Since networking is all about forming connections with others, it’s okay to engage in casual chitchat. Questions like this one help people open up and discuss their passions and make it clear that you don't expect the interaction to be purely transactional.

“What’s the best way for me to get in touch / follow up with you?”

Asking this question this way is much better than saying ‘may I have your card?’ It shows you view the individual as a person, not merely a contact, and that your interaction is not simply transactional but rather about relationship building.

Sources:

“7 Perfect Questions to Ask While Networking” by Emily Moore, March 5, 2019, from Glassdoor.com. <https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/networking-questions/>

“10 Networking Mistakes that Make you Look Unprofessional”, by Natalia Autenrieth, from TopResume.com. <https://www.topresume.com/career-advice/networking-mistakes-to-avoid>

Professional Networking for Older Adults: 8 Tips to Get You Started, from National Council on Aging <https://www.ncoa.org/article/professional-networking-for-older-adults-8-tips-to-get-you-started/>