

Navigating a Career Transition

Moving into a new professional field requires taking a step back and taking stock of your past education and experiences that have all contributed to what you have to offer a new employer. The start of a new year is a great time for reflection. Before we can effectively pitch ourselves, we must look inward. Here are some concrete steps you can take to prepare for an effective career transition.

Conduct an audit of your skills and areas of expertise

Read through your most recent resume and highlight in green any time you see a skills word appear. These are often action verbs you've used to begin your bullet points such as "Collaborated with team", "Analyzed data", "Conducted outreach", "Marketed", "Designed curriculum", "Managed programs", etc.

Now use blue to highlight your topical knowledge/areas of expertise. For example, you may highlight things such as "post operative care procedures", "HIV/AIDS", "lab protocol", etc. If you have skills or areas of knowledge from your academics that are not highlighted on your resume, think about where you may be able to add them to your resume, or at the very least, jot them down in the margins of your resume so you can see all of your areas of expertise in one place for the purpose of this exercise.

Take a step back. Which of the highlighted words could be relevant to jobs in public health, even if they were developed in a different environment? For example, if you have five years of project management experience in an education setting, that's still five years of project management experience. Those skills (coordinating logistics, creating relationships with stakeholders, marketing a program, recruiting participants, etc.) can all transfer to public health settings. These are called **transferrable skills** and you will want to be sure they are highlighted in your resume and cover letters.

Understand what skills and knowledge areas are required in public health

Begin by clicking on the [landing page for your concentration](#) on the SPH website. Read through the list of competencies you will gain through both your core and concentration specific courses. Additionally, read through public health job descriptions of interest using some of these [public](#)

[health job boards](#). Whenever you come across a skill or knowledge area in the job description that is highlighted in your resume, put a check mark next to that word in your resume.

Once this exercise is complete, transfer your transferable skills and knowledge areas to a fresh sheet of paper for easy access going forward.

Identify skills/knowledge gaps

In the above exercise, did you notice certain skills being requested in public health job descriptions often that you don't yet have? Based on your curriculum, will you be gaining them in your courses? If not, check out [CUNY Upskilling](#) which offers free online skills-building courses available to CUNY students.

Seek to further understand your new field through informational interviews

A big part of being able to effectively move into a new space, is understanding that space. Informational interviews are a great tool to help you do that. They are short 20 - 30 minutes phone or video discussions (can be in person post-covid) with people who have experience in your field of interest. During these discussions, you will ask questions to the public health professional to more deeply understand what their day-to-day job and career path has looked like.

People you may wish to reach out to for informational interviews can include:

- SPH faculty
- Classmates already working in the field
- Colleagues in different departments at your current job (where relevant)
- Family, friends, mentors
- SPH alumni (Join LinkedIn, navigate to the CUNY SPH page, and click on alumni to sort through alumni profiles and send connection requests.)
- Employers and speakers you meet through SPH events.

Common informational interview questions include:

1. Tell me about a typical day at your job
2. What do you love most about what you do?
3. What common challenges come up for you at work?

4. What skills are most sought after for those in this type of role?
5. What's the culture of your organization like?
6. (After telling them a little about your own background) What skills or experiences do you think I should highlight to employers as I navigate this career transition?
7. What job search tools and resources did you use when you first got started?

Prepare to tell your story of transition

Schedule a 1:1 Career Coaching appointment with the Office of Career Services to work together to tell your career transition story on your resume, in cover letters, in networking discussions, and in interviews. [Book an appointment online now!](#)