



CONNECTOR PROGRAM

ALBERTA

CONNECTOR PROGRAM
TOOLKIT
CONNECTOR



CPA

CHARTERED
PROFESSIONAL
ACCOUNTANTS
ALBERTA

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WELCOME

The Connector Program is a simple and highly effective tool that brings CPA candidates and members together to network, connect, and share information. We put **Participants** (people interested in making the connection to expand their network), directly in touch with local CPA members who volunteer as **Connectors**—people in the habit of making introductions and connecting others to opportunities.

Connectors are asked to make an initial commitment for a one hour informational meeting with a Participant. In the initial meeting connectors may answer career related questions and share their professional knowledge on their job, company or industry.

After the initial meeting, connectors are not obligated to provide additional assistance, but they may assist the Participant in other ways at their discretion, including:

- Inviting the Participant to a local networking event;
- Attending CPA association networking event with the Participant;
- Refer the Participant to other professionals within the Connector's network; or
- Refer the Participant to other external resources.

HOW IT WORKS

STEP 1

The Participant and Connector will receive an introductory email from the Coordinator introducing each other.

Connector and Participant matching is based on professional interests and goals.

The email provides a short biography on the other party for the matching.

STEP 2

The Participant will follow up with the Connector to arrange a mutually agreed on meeting time and location at the Connector's convenience.

STEP 3

The Connector and Participant meet for an initial 1 hour informational interview meeting. This the participant is encouraged to ask the connector questions related to their job, company, or industry.

STEP 4

At the end of the meeting, the Connector should clearly communicate next steps to the Participant, which may include any of the following:

- Invite the Participant to a local networking event with them;
- Attend a CPA association networking event with the Participant as their guest;
- Refer the Participant to other professionals within your network;
- Refer the Participant to other relevant external resources; or
- Advise the Participant that the connection will not be continued.

STEP 5

CPA request that both parties complete the post-meeting survey.

This Isn't Mentorship

While we encourage our Connectors to build relationships beyond the first meeting, this is not a mentorship program.

If Connectors feel comfortable after the initial meeting to provide further advice to a Participant, they are free to do so. However, the primary goal of the Connector relationship is to focus on networking opportunities.

Mentorship is of great value, and we offer a variety of mentorship opportunities. Those interested in mentorship programs the Career Development mentor program page for more information:

<https://www.cpaalberta.ca/Services/Career-Centre/Mentorship-and-Networking-Programs/Mentorship-Program>

Informational Interviews

An information interview is an opportunity for the Participant to learn from the Connector's professional experience by asking question related to their career progression, occupation, or industry.

Below are some sample informational interview questions you may be asked:

1. *In what way did accounting interest you, and how did you become an accountant?*
2. *What key jobs or experiences led you to the position you are in today?*
3. *What are your long range goals?*
4. *How does your present company differ from companies you have worked for in the past?*
5. *What is the work atmosphere at your company?*
6. *What challenges does your company presently have?*
7. *What is the highest position someone can hold in your company/department?*
8. *In your opinion, what would be the most rewarding accounting position in your company?*

Managing Referrals

It is not mandatory for a connector to provide referrals at the end of a Connector meeting, they are encouraged to do so. Participants may ask a Connector for up to two additional professional contacts they could contact for an informational interview.

Referrals are extremely valuable for the Participant:

- Gain information from multiple professionals that can be applied to their career or job search.
- Meet other knowledgeable and experienced professionals they normally wouldn't meet.

Participants in the Connector program may have a limited network and want build their professional connections. Remember, Participants in the program may be:

- Foreign-trained professionals in the process of obtaining their designation
- Early stage career professionals
- CPAs who transitioned through a Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) who new to the Alberta market.
- CPAs and Candidates who have recently relocated from another province, or have moved within Alberta; or

- CPAs and Candidates who are interested in developing or improving their networking skills.

The key to managing a referral request is appropriate communication if you will provide a referral as a connector.

THREE IS NOT A CROWD!

You are not limited to providing referrals via email or telephone. Consider holding a meeting with the three of you. It could be an opportunity for an early breakfast or morning coffee!

Setting Boundaries

Boundaries are rules, limits, and general guidelines which establish acceptable behavior. Participants have been advised that the role of a Connector is not to provide them with a job. That said, sometimes it is necessary to set limits in a conversation, which can effectively be accomplished by saying NO.

An effective way of setting limits in a conversation is by using **gentle refusal**. This skill provides a gentle and caring means to say “no” while still encouraging conversation with the other party.

It is important that those in the program respect the other party in the pairing and remain within the parameters of the program. Gentle refusal may be beneficial when:

- A person makes unrealistic demands or asks you to find them a job;
- A person wants guarantees or demands advice;
- A person asks personal or inappropriate questions that you are uncomfortable with;
- A person wants you to do the follow up, or research for them;
- A person seems adversarial, they are venting excessively about past work or job issues, or contradicts many of your comments saying things such as “Yes, but...”; or
- You just want to end the conversation as the meeting is going too long or you feel the participant is taking advantage of the situation.

A Model for Gentle Refusal

Example: The participant asks you for a job in your department

1. **Reflection** – Let the other party know that the question has been heard:
“It sounds like you really need a job right now”
2. **The Refusal** – Indicate in simple terms the limits and a reason for the limit:
“At the present time, I don’t have a job to offer you, or refer you to”
3. **Offering the invitation** – Indicate an alternative and invite the participant to follow up:
“I suggest you contact a CPAs Career Advisor; they might be able to give you some additional strategies and tactics to assist with your job search efforts”

Participant Responsibilities in the Connector Program

Participants are expected to:

- Follow up with the Connector to arrange a meeting time
- Research in advance, and come prepared to ask the Connector relevant questions
- Arrive for the meeting on time
- Demonstrate professionalism during the meeting and in all communications with the Connector.

Getting Involved in Connector Events

The Connector Program, in conjunction with the CPA Career Development Mentorship Programs, hosts networking events, speed interview events, and “lunch and learn” sessions throughout the year. We would appreciate the assistance from Connectors in any of the following areas:

Participating in a Speed Interviewing Event

Assist Participants to refining their interview skills where volunteer interviewers speak with participants in quick mock interview sessions. After each quick interview, the volunteer interviewers will provide participants with feedback on how they responded to questions and where they could improve. Sample interview questions to volunteers will be provided in advance of the event.

Participate as a Panelist

Lunch and learns and networking events bring together members of both the Connector Program and the Mentorship Programs to network and learn about different career paths, industries, and companies. As a panelist, you would be asked to share your career path and take relevant questions from attendees.

Resources

The profession provides several career and professional services that may be of great value to the Participant. Resources for CPA Members and Candidates include: Career and Diversity advisors, Resume Review events, Ongoing Career and Job search workshops, Professional Advisory services and the CPA Job Board.

CPA Career Centre resources:

<https://www.cpaalberta.ca/Services/Career-Centre>

The CPA Job board:

<https://jobs.cpaalberta.ca/>

Professional Advisory and Consultation Services:

<https://www.cpaalberta.ca/Services/Professional-Services>