



TEN TIPS is a new series from the APA Transportation Planning Division's Emerging Professionals Group. Each installment of the series includes tips from experienced transportation planning professionals aimed at helping students and new planners navigate the industry.

Finding the Best Company Fit

1. First, do some online research about the specific projects they work on. Then, **ask for an informational interview (note: NOT a job interview) to speak with the project manager** of the projects that are most interesting to you. Think about how you could've contributed to the project (be specific...what skills would you offer?). *David Fields, AICP, Principal, Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates*
2. Look for a balance of "fitting in" to a company's culture and bringing a new or different viewpoint to the group. *Catherine Duffy, AICP, Transportation Planner, Toole Design Group*
3. Follow your passion and don't settle for just getting a job. *Chris Comeau, AICP CTP, Transportation Planner, Bellingham Public Works Engineering*
4. Meet the people and try to understand the culture. **Consider your preferences for daily work - meetings, individual research, field work, office work, writing, data analysis, etc.** Assess the options for growth and diversity of tasks. *Lindsey Morse, AICP, Research Associate, Railway and Transport Strategy Centre, Imperial College London*
5. Find out what their core values are and make sure it is a good fit for you. Being passionate about your work is key. *Cynthia Hoyle, FAICP, Alta Planning + Design*
6. Research, research, research. And then do a little more research. Many agencies and companies have LinkedIn pages with information on them, you can see who's in your network and who may know something about a particular agency you're considering working for. And **don't be afraid to ask questions about corporate policies, culture, and norms during interviews.** *Shelby Powell, AICP, Deputy Director, NC Capital Area MPO*
7. Many times you will know instinctively if an employer is a good fit is good for you, but **do not be afraid to stretch yourself out of your comfort zone.** That is when you will learn the most. *Dharm Guruswamy, AICP CTP, Corrective Action Plans Program Manager, FTA WMATA Safety Oversight, Federal Transit Administration*
8. Decide what is important to you - types of projects, travel, money, etc. and then ask people who work at different organizations how they measure up on those items that matter most. Set up informational interviews where possible. *Marsha Anderson Bomar, AICP, Senior Principal, Stantec*
9. It is incredibly important to your career path to pick the right first one or two jobs. **Find places that are industry leaders and have a history of providing mentorship....and I don't mean a formal mentor program, but an agency where young planners have gone onto greater things because of what they learned.** *Dan Haake, AICP, Freight/Rail Planner VI, CDM Smith*
10. There are two components to this - corporate culture and your own passions. Research firms which are involved in the work you're excited about and go through your network to learn about the firm itself (LinkedIn is a great resource). **Different offices may reflect diverse cultures within the firm.** *Randall Rook, AICP, Rail and Transit Planner/Engineer, AECOM*