

SFU



FINDING WORK

A TRANS-POSITIVE GUIDE

SFU
CAREER AND
VOLUNTEER SERVICES

simon fraser
student society
Out on Campus

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About This Guide	3
Introduction	5

Explore

Do Your Research	7
Know yourself first	7
First steps	7
Doing your research	7
Frequently asked questions	8
• Identifying trans-positive organizations	

Apply

Online Presence	10
Importance of an online presence.	10
Standing out on LinkedIn.	10
What Google shows about you.	11
Using other social media.	12
Frequently asked questions	13
• When you don't want to be out online	
• When you do want to be out online	
Applications	14
Making a first impression	14
• Making it through the applicant tracking system (ATS)	
Resume	15
• Writing your resume	
• Designing your resume	
• Organizing your resume	
Cover letter	17
References	18
Frequently asked questions	19
• Using your preferred name	
• Accounting for gaps / discrepancies in your work history	
• Communicating with your references	

- Interviews 22**
- Preparing for your interview. 22
- Questions you may be asked. 22
- The STAR method. 23
- Asking your own questions 23
- The day of your interview. 24
- Frequently asked questions 24
 - Handling inappropriate questions

Work

- In the Workplace. 27**
- Transitioning 27
 - Coming out at work
 - Official or logistical changes
 - Setting boundaries
 - Just be yourself
- Know your rights 30
 - The BC Human Rights Code
 - Standing up for your rights
- Frequently asked questions 32
 - What is considered harassment
 - Protection under the Human Rights Code

- Helpful Resources 33**
- Thank You 36**

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The land we work on

Much of the work for this guide took place on Traditional Coast Salish Lands of the səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), kʷikʷəłəm (Kwkwetlem), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish) and xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam) Nations. As students, faculty, and staff at Simon Fraser University, we acknowledge Indigenous peoples' historical relationships with the unceded land on which we live, work and play. To the writers and editors of this guide, this means listening to Indigenous students and colleagues, paying attention to the issues that affect Indigenous students in and outside of the world of career and education, and reflexively providing inclusive services that empower students to find and do what it is that they want to do.

Disclaimer

Creators of the guide have put forth their best effort to outline best practices for career and work using appropriate and inclusive language (e.g., “trans”, “two-spirit”, “LGBTQ2+”, etc.).¹ Referenced third-party content, however, does not necessarily represent the views of Career and Volunteer Services nor should recommendations made in this guide be taken as legal or medical advice.

SFU Career and Volunteer Services

Careers are influenced by many factors, such as one's lived experience, key political or personal moments, education, and chance encounters. Developing your career is rarely as straightforward as going from point A to point B. It's a journey of setbacks and challenges, introspection, reflection, and personal growth.

We could enter university wanting to be a teacher and learn, through a work placement, that the day-to-day work of teaching is not actually something that satisfies us—and pivot toward other work that does. That's okay.

What you choose to do with your career is up to you. The Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC) eloquently defines career as “about the life you want to lead—not just a job, occupation or profession”. It is about who you want to be in the world, what lifestyle you're seeking, and how you want to leave an imprint.²

Our philosophy at Career and Volunteer Services, adapted from CERIC's definition, is that your career is an accumulation of chance and choice: what opportunities you choose to seek, what you choose to contribute using your skills and knowledge, who you meet and what opportunities you run into along the way, and more. This is because the world is unpredictable; it is constantly changing, and so are you.

A big part of our work is providing students with access to information, resources,

1 “Why we used trans* and why we don't anymore”, Retrieved November 2021 from Trans Student Educational Resources <https://transstudent.org/issues/asterisk/>

2 Canadian Education and Research Institute for Counselling (CERIC) (2012, October). Guiding Principles of Career Development. Retrieved May 17, 2021, from <http://ceric.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Principles-of-Career-and-Career-Development-Infographic-2.pdf>

and tools they can use to navigate moments of uncertainty—such as those at the beginning or transitional point of a career—and make informed decisions about what to do next.

We offer useful, current, and top-notch services and resources that support the career development of SFU students and alumni (from 0–12 months following degree completion), including free one-on-one appointments, events, workshops, and access to subscription-based career exploration sites.

If you're not sure where to start your career or work search journey, consider booking an appointment with a Career Education Specialist. Among the topics you can discuss at a one-on-one consultation are:

- What can I do with a degree in...?
- What work or volunteer experiences might I want to seek next?
- How can I figure out what I want from work and career?
- How can I leverage my skills and experiences for applications to jobs or graduate/professional schools?
- What is a work search strategy that suits the type of work I'm looking for?
- Any other career-related question you have!

Ready to explore, or have a strategy to discuss? Email careers@sfu.ca or call 778-782-3106 to book an appointment with a Career Education Specialist. Need more info? Visit our [website](#) to learn more.

INTRODUCTION

Who the guide is for & why we made it

We created *Finding Work: A Trans-Positive Guide* to support trans individuals in their search and attainment of meaningful work. Trans is the umbrella term we use to include all those who identify as transgender, gender-fluid, gender-diverse, two-spirited, or those who do not fit within a gender definition. The idea to create the guide first came up in 2017, when a colleague reached out to us for a trans-specific work search resource for one of their students—something we didn't have. So, we went to work.

Meanwhile, the world of work continued to change and evolve, just as approaches to career development and education continued to change and evolve. Overtime, the fundamentals of an effective work search have not changed. Those tried-and-true methods are essentially what we have captured in the various chapters.

We created this guide out of care for trans students and out of the recognition that trans people bring unique skills and knowledge to their professions. We want potential employers to get the best possible opportunity to see the skills and talent of trans students, which is why we've tailored work search know-hows specific to the wants and needs of trans students, as best we could research and anticipate.

Overview

We have organized the guide in this manner to reflect the “big three” stages of securing employment: exploration, applications, and, finally, starting work.

In this guide, we share tips on how to research trans-positive workplaces, have a professional online presence, prepare job applications that highlight your strengths and reflect your skills and personality, and how to do a successful interview. We inform you of your legal rights at the workplace, steps you can take if you feel like they are being violated, and ways to find more information or support. In consulting the guide, we are confident that you will take away the tools and knowledge to find work that fits you. Along with this resource, Career Education Specialists from Career and Volunteer Services are available to answer any question that you may have about career or finding work through [one-on-one consults](#).

This guide was created out of care for trans students and out of the recognition that trans people bring unique skills and knowledge to their professions.



EXPLORE

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Know yourself first

While you may have searched for work in the past, we want to emphasize that there are some subtle differences in approach when you are seeking a career-building role, versus a more casual one.

Knowing who you are—your values, strengths, interests and personal qualities—and how you want to show up in the world is key to a strategic work search. Once you are reasonably clear on what you want and what’s important to you, you’ll be set to engage in research. Choosing to research at this stage, rather than earlier or later, allows you to focus on best-fit opportunities from the get-go, saving you time and energy in the long run. If you are unsure what types of roles to look for or want to gain clarity on your career possibilities, consider booking a free, one-on-one career-exploration consultation with a [Career Education Specialist](#). If you prefer something more informal, consider attending a free [Career Exploration workshop or event](#).

First steps

One way to begin your research is by compiling a list of organizations that you think could be a good fit for you and your skills and interests. A good formula to follow is to identify the names of five “dream” organizations; five “alumni” organizations you have a connection with via your affiliations, associations, or communities; five organizations with job openings; and five organizations that are “trending” (doing new or interesting things).

Tools like LinkedIn and Indeed are great for finding organizations that interest you. If you happen to identify more than five organizations—for one, several, or all the given categories—include them in this stage.

Once you have your initial list of 20-or-so organizations, research them individually using those same platforms in addition to the internet. Then, eliminate and add new names as you learn more about each organization’s mission, values, and work opportunities. If you feel that you connect with the organization, keep them on the list. If not, remove them from the list. Keep on doing this until you end up with a list of five to ten organizations that you want to reach out or apply to. This method may seem tedious at first, but it has proven to be a great way to filter through a noisy world of enticement to get to the organizations you are truly drawn to or curious about. Again, if you want guidance with the process or want to learn more about this method, consider connecting with Career and Volunteer Services for a personalized [one-on-one consult](#).

Doing your research

The insights that you gather through taking this first step (research) will not only assist you in making more targeted applications later but makes your work search more strategic and intentional. By identifying early on whether the policies and programs offered within an organization align with your own needs and values, for example, you eliminate the extra time and energy you would spend applying for work that you ultimately wouldn’t want. For some of you, your research on an

Research is the key to an effective (and efficient) work search!



organization's programs and policies—such as those that determine if and how they support their trans employees—might turn out to be a key factor in deciding which organizations to include, and which to exclude on your list. Research is the key to an effective (and efficient) work search.

Frequently asked questions

Are some organizations more accepting of transgender individuals? Should that guide my career choice?

Certain organizations may have a reputation for being less accepting of transgender individuals while others frequently show their support for the LGBTQ2+ community. Some organizations are also not quite as vocal about their values and involvement with the transgender and LGBTQ2+ communities. With that said, focus on exploring career opportunities that you believe you would enjoy and excel at, and where you will be able to use your skills to the best of your abilities. Identify your desires, strengths, natural interests, personal qualities and influences as those will guide you through your work search. This will help pinpoint areas of interest, various fields and sectors, and different organizations you may be interested in working for.¹

How do I identify trans-positive organizations?

There are many things to consider when identifying trans-positive organizations, such as:

- Policies regarding equal opportunity, as well as diversity and inclusion: Look for policies relating specifically to the recruitment of transgender individuals. You may also take the extra step to reach out to the Human Resources department for information.
- Policy language and terminology: The language organizations have used in their policies, such as “gender identity” or other appropriate terminology, may suggest that they have recognized the importance of supporting trans-employees and have researched best practices.
- Award-winning employers for equality and inclusion: Several awards exist to recognize employers for their equal opportunity and inclusivity practices, as seen in [Canada's Best Diversity Employers](#). This website not only presents winners but details the initiatives and programs that earned them the title.
- Designated officers: Organizations with dedicated “equality and diversity” or “sexual harassment” officers provide a good indication that they have taken the initiative to provide added support and protection for its employees.
- Specific policies on transitioning within the workplace: Some organizations have useful and practical guides for employers to support staff undergoing gender reassignment.
- Support systems and programs: Programs and policies that support trans-employees, such as those that relate to confidentiality, harassment, allocation of resources (such as office space and equipment), access to development (such as training, internal job vacancies and promotions), pensions, and insurance.

¹ Erickson-Schroth, L. (2014). *Trans* bodies, trans* selves: a resource for the transgender* community*. p. 162 Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA.

APPLY

ONLINE PRESENCE

Importance of an online presence

In a digital world, there are clear benefits to having a professional online presence. That is why we have chosen to start the second chunk of the big three, “Apply,” with a section on online presence. Being online is about more than “personal branding” (we don’t particularly like this framing). People from various fields get advanced degrees and accreditations to gain credibility and influence to work on the issues they care about. Developing an online presence follows similar reasoning, in that you seek to build meaningful connections that can support you in realizing your career goals. Be it to secure employment or a steady flow of opportunities, learn more about a field of interest, or stay top of current trends, an online presence is your ticket to utilizing the power of the internet for your career.

The only “must”

Having an online presence that is consistent with your offline presence can open doors to new opportunities and people you otherwise would not have access to. If you are hesitant or uncomfortable with putting yourself online, we get it. You may want to keep your personal life private, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Use separate accounts for professional and personal endeavours. Choose which platforms you want to use, and, consequently, which ones you might want to opt out of or keep private. Our recommendation to everyone, however, is to create a LinkedIn profile, even if you are tempted to rationalize not needing one at the beginning of your career. It is the most utilized professional “network” in the world. By having a LinkedIn profile, you are simply putting your name “on the map.”

Standing out on LinkedIn

Different, still relevant

You might have noticed that we put quotation marks on the word “network.” In the past, LinkedIn indeed functioned much like a social network. However, it has grown so significantly in scale and participation since its inception that much of the “networking” activities that took place on the platform are happening at a less frequent rate. In that way, LinkedIn dynamics have shifted to what is much more characteristic of a marketplace, where people exchange (“trade”) skills, labour, expertise, advice, services, etc. If you know what Yellow Pages are (a giant directory of businesses), this is what some career practitioners are using as an analogy for today’s LinkedIn, except that LinkedIn is a searchable directory of working people, or people “in the market” for work.¹

Being found

Essentially, LinkedIn is your way of being “found” or noticed by the places and people you might want to work at or with, today or someday. When someone searches your full name on Google or LinkedIn, you want to have some sort of

Being online is about more than “personal branding.”

You can build meaningful connections that help you realize your career goals.



¹ Work It Daily [channel name]. (2019). *Life After LinkedIn: What Comes Next?*, from <https://youtu.be/a-d01dtpTj0>

control over what they will find. At minimum, you will want to have a LinkedIn account with an up-to-date profile that accurately reflects you as a professional, even if you choose not to use it actively. A professional, accurate, and interesting LinkedIn profile that has good search engine optimization (SEO) will show up near the top of the search results on both Google and LinkedIn. This is desirable for several reasons: we have made it easy for a recruiter or hiring manager to find us; our top search result comes from an account that is under our own control; and, we have overshadowed potentially unwanted search results about us. Our top tip for being found is advice that you'll likely hear over and over again: use as many well-researched keywords in your profile as practical!

Not that bad

Try not to feel intimidated by the profiles, content, and number of connections of seasoned LinkedIn users when you first start using LinkedIn. Everyone on LinkedIn started out with an account, profile, and zero LinkedIn "connections." It is as good a start as any. If you are worried about yet another account to keep track of, or dislike the idea of "networking," try to remember that the platform is a tool. You control how you want to use it, including how often you want to use it.

What Google shows about you

Take a moment to search yourself on Google—preferably from a different computer (with a different IP address than the one you use regularly) or in incognito mode—using different combinations and variations of your name and interests. Choose search terms from the perspective of someone who is trying to find you online after meeting you at an event. What do you find? You may find photos, posts, and comments that you have uploaded in the past; such are a part of your digital footprint.

It is important that when a potential employer looks for you, first, that they can find you, and second, that what they find leaves them with a positive, professional impression of you. If you are a trans person and you do not want to be "out" during your work search, you may want to consider the chance that you could be "outed" by an older post, such as an image of you when you presented as (a) different gender(s). In the case that you do find results you don't want potential employers or colleagues to see, you have several options.

- If you are the owner of the account that posted the content, log in, change the privacy settings on the post or delete the post, and then [request to remove outdated content from Google Search for good measure \(this will take about three days to be approved by Google's team\)](#). You must do it in this order, as Google will only approve the removal of results that come from content that has already been deleted and thus no longer accurate as a search result.
- If you did not post the unwanted content, contact the person who posted it to have it deleted. If that fails, contact the platform where it is posted with the same request. Again, you may find it necessary to request an outdated content removal from Google Search after it is deleted (as above).
- If none of the above two options work for you, you might benefit from flooding out old content with new, search engine optimized content, such as a blog post authored using your full name.

Using other social media

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat ... the list goes on. You likely have accounts on some or all these platforms. As you may have intuited, each platform serves different purposes (e.g., Instagram is visual and aesthetic, Twitter is conversational and ideas-oriented, and Facebook is where we join groups and find virtual “communities”), but they all share one commonality: the so-called “social” in social media.

In many ways, social media is a critical part of how we communicate and get work done.² Depending on the type of work you are looking for, having professional accounts for social media might be useful for your career development. For example, many academics use Twitter to announce new projects, share current events, and engage with other users. Content Creators might use YouTube as their main platform (for ad monetization) and promote and bring traffic to their content via TikTok and Facebook. A person interested in film, photography, or the arts might use Instagram to share their work and follow the work and lives of professionals they look up to.

While professional opinions of using social media for work are divided—some say go for it, some say it’s a distraction with a low return on investment—we do think that there is value in using “other” social media (in addition to LinkedIn) to find work.³ Below we share general tips for how you can use other social media to your advantage for just that purpose.

Seeing & being seen

Social media is all about communication. Besides being a place where one can discover new ideas and trends and connect with others, social media can also allow you to bring attention to you or your work. Think of it as a tool for you to share bits and pieces of your portfolio (collection of work and work process) that are relevant to your audience/network/connections on that specific platform. Highlight your specific expertise. A question that you can ask yourself when deciding what to share is, “Does this support the story that I am trying tell about myself and what I care about?” In short, you want to “see” others, and you want others to “see” you, too.

Be yourself

It’s become quite common to be advised that one should be “authentic” when portraying oneself on social media. More important than a characteristic as fluid and nuanced as “authenticity,” we think, is to be the three-dimensional person that you are: someone with interests, hobbies, insights, and ideas.⁴ Employers aren’t looking for someone who is all-business, all the time. By allowing your personality to show through on social media, not only do you demonstrate to employers that you are interesting, but that you might also be a good fit for their workplace or team, depending on what kind of workplace culture or team they have. A final tip about being yourself is not to make everything, in fact, about yourself. Reciprocal relationships are important in real life, and online too. Be mindful that you are not interrogating people for potential connections, as that would be a sure-fire way to turn relationships into non-relationships.

Being online is about more than “personal branding.”

You can build meaningful connections that help you realize your career goals.

2 Sree Sreenivasan. “How to Use Social Media for Your Career.” New York Times. Retrieved March 25, 2020, from <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/business/social-media-for-career-and-business>

3 Patrick Gillooly. (2016, December). “Don’t Quit Social Media. Put It to Work for Your Career Instead.” New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/03/jobs/dont-quit-social-media-put-it-to-work-for-your-career-instead.html>

4 “Up Your Social Media Game to Find a Job.” [2019, May]. Randstad. Retrieved from <https://www.randstad.ca/job-seeker/career-resources/job-search-tips/how-to-use-social-media-to-find-a-job/>

Research!

Finally, research opportunities and organizations on social media. Use Twitter to follow organizations you want to work for; many job opportunities are shared through tweets and retweets. Join or start community-based Facebook groups that interest you, such as “SFU Women in Sustainability,” and engage with people in those groups by asking questions, replying to questions, and sharing opportunities. Supporting others and allowing others to support you are both ways to build your online network around a sense of community.

Frequently asked questions

What can I do about my online presence if I don't want to be out during my work search?

As we mentioned earlier, editing your Google search results is one way. Additionally, you may want to review your Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms, paying particular attention to your bio and display names across all of them. Make sure that the information on them match the gender you have chosen to present as for your work search and edit your privacy settings on images and posts that might reveal to an employer that you are trans. As always, it is up to you whether you are comfortable with being out or not.

I would like to be out during my work search. How can my online presence communicate that I am trans?

If you are out, and you want this to be known to potential employers, you may want to indicate this through your bios and display names on LinkedIn and other social media accounts by adding pronouns after your name wherever it appears first, such as: “Firstname Lastname (they/them/theirs) is a freelance photographer with experience in...”. However, it is not always a given that a recruiter or employer will find you online or be able to tell that you are trans through your online presence alone. Therefore, you may want to reinforce your choice of pronouns across all your application/work-search documents (covered in the next section) and/or disclose your gender identity in some other way.

There is no law or rule that you must disclose to a prospective or existing employer that you are trans. Just as there is no one right way to transition, there is no one right way to be out during your work search. You can even decide to come out to employers (who may or may not already know that you are trans) in the moment, such as before, during, or after an interview; it really is up to you.

APPLICATIONS

Making a first impression

Applications are what many of us first think of when we hear the words “work” and “search” uttered in the same sentence. Earlier, we covered the importance of having an online presence. However, when you apply for a specific position through a publicly shared job posting rather than through a connection, your application could be the first and only impression that an employer has of you before deciding whether to invite you for an interview.

Although your online presence can certainly support your application in that regard—by strengthening their positive impression of you—it is in no way a guarantee that they will look for you on LinkedIn or Google, prior to making that decision. Therefore, to get a meeting with the hiring team, you need a strong application. Below, we share tips on how to articulate your strengths and interests through two of the most common application documents: your resume and cover letter (also known as “work search documents”). Additionally, we guide you through the process of selecting and obtaining references if your application so requires.

Make your content count

Now that you have spent some time researching organizations and reflecting on what you want from a job or career, it’s time to create a resume and cover letter that reflect your skills, interests, and fit for the organization or role. As such, you will likely have many variations of resumes and cover letters as you apply for different types of roles. Do not make the mistake of sending a generic cover letter and resume to multiple employers; their Human Resources (HR) personnel will be able to tell. In the less-than-30 seconds that the average hiring manager spends reviewing a job application, your standout resume and cover letter could make all the difference. Great content and visual appeal make an application stand out. But, between the two, prioritize content.

Deconstructing the job description

A job posting can often be thought of as an employer’s wish list for their ideal candidate. Carefully reading through a job description provides you with clues as to what qualifications and experiences the employer places high importance on. Luckily, those clues also help you focus your resume and cover letter. After highlighting keywords and themes within a job description, identify specific examples from all of your experiences: paid work, volunteer roles, course work, and your co-curricular or extracurricular activities that best meet those themes and keywords. Remember your examples, or write them down somewhere, because you will use them in the next steps to prepare an effective job application.

Making it through the applicant tracking system (ATS)

Before we get into the nitty-gritty of writing resumes and cover letters, it is important to understand where those documents are going—and it isn’t always to a human. Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) are used across different sectors and industries. Medium to “big player” organizations receiving large volumes of applications almost always use an ATS. ATS are used by Human Resources

It’s time to create a resume and cover letter that reflect your skills, interests, and fit for the organization or role!



(HR) departments to keep track of applicants, filter applications, and search keywords for wanted skills and experience on applicants' resumes and cover letters. They generally do searches starting from the entire pool of applicants for a specific position, and then filter from there. So, yes, this means it is possible that your application gets filtered out before it is ever seen by a human. Therefore, "sprinkling" correctly spelled keywords throughout your application documents—your resume and cover letter—is key to getting your application noticed by HR.

Another important tip is to pay attention to the format of your application documents. Many ATS are easily confused by the use of many columns, complicated fonts or graphics, and out-of-margin text that are common in creative or graphic resumes and cover letters (such as those from Canva and other template-based graphic design websites), although these sensitivities are dependent on the brand of ATS that an organization uses. In any case, your safest bet is to find out what ATS system the organization that you're applying to uses and learn more about which formats (such as .docx versus .pdf) it reads well, and which it struggles with. If this information is not available, go with a Microsoft Word document (.doc or .docx) as it is compatible with most systems.

If you want to run your resume and cover letter through an Artificial Intelligence (AI) system to check for keywords, [jobscan.co](https://www.jobscan.co) offers free ATS analyses for first-time users. To use it, you need your resume, cover letter, and the original job posting. In short, be generous with using exact keywords from the employer's job posting when you're writing your application documents, and format your documents according to ATS best practices.

Resume

You want your resume and cover letter to reflect who you are and what you have to offer, with a focus on your skills and experience in relation to the job you are applying for. Remember, you want to show an employer that you are a good fit for the position and the organization.

A standout resume weaves together three elements: Content, Design, and Layout.

Writing your resume

The most effective resumes include a clear focus highlighting your understanding of the role and the needs of the employer. This can be done by presenting your experience, qualifications, and skills. Your content needs to clearly convey to readers what you have to offer and how your skills, experiences, and qualifications best meet the position requirements.

Use action verbs to make statements more dynamic. Use specific examples and quantify wherever possible (how much, how long, etc.) to make your points more convincing. Consider using the following formula to develop strong bullet points:

What?

The task you completed or the responsibility you took on.



So what?

How your actions had a positive effect on your team, clients, customers, or organization.

Build a strong resume

A standout resume weaves together three elements: Content, w, and Layout.

Designing your resume

You can make your resume more visually attractive and readable by following the CRAP (Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, Proximity) design principles. They are:

- Contrast** Contrast refers to formatting different kinds of information on your documents differently. For example, you might make your resume header font look differently than the font used for your bulleted statements. Creating contrast can be done through changes in font size, text boldness, and spacing. If you choose to use contrasting elements, try and make the differences very different. Subtle differences often end up looking either unnoticeable or done in error. Be bold with your contrast!
- Repetition** Repetition of certain elements in your resume helps you build visual consistency and create relationships between the information you choose to show. Using repetition effectively strengthens the unity of your job search documents and creates visual interest. You can repeat fonts, shapes, lines, symbols, etc. With that said, you may want to avoid repeating elements so often that it becomes overwhelming for your potential employer.
- Alignment** Alignment describes the placement of information in a straight line or the visual connection that elements have to one another on a page. Nothing should be placed on your resume randomly or without thought. For some, it is common to use up to three vertical alignments using tabs or columns. This may help you develop a more professional and sophisticated look for your resume, but again, be careful with columns if your potential employer uses an ATS.
- Proximity** Proximity refers to placing items of content that are meaningfully related closer together. For unrelated items, try and keep them away from each other. The closeness or lack of closeness between two pieces of content indicates their relationship. When several intellectually connected items are grouped together, they become one visual unit and help organize information and reduce clutter.
- Visual Appeal** Depending on the field you want to work in, you may want to play around and look for ways to blend being creative and professional with your design. While searching out what suits you and shows your personality best, remember to be intentional with your choice of fonts and colour. You may also want to consider using symbols or a personal logo in your letterhead to help your resume stand out from others.
- Readability** When designing your resume, consider your potential employer and how they will read your resume. Ensure that your font choice and size are legible. It is also suggested to consider the surrounding white space around your content—try different line spacing and margins in order to make the document as reader-friendly as possible.

Organizing your resume

The layout of your resume can influence whether your prospective employer will continue reading your documents. By presenting your information with logic and flow, you can show your organization and critical thinking skills, as well as greater consideration for the reader (your potential employer). Earlier, we shared tips on optimizing your resume for Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS). Layout is an area to be especially careful with when applying to an organization that uses an ATS, because ATS use layout to sort and parse information for searches. Here are a few things to consider when constructing your resume for high impact:

- Letterhead** While designing your resume, you may want to develop your own letterhead. As this is the first element your potential employer will see on your resume, it would be a good idea to use this area to express your creativity and show your personality. As previously mentioned, playing around with font, colour, size, symbols, and a personal logo can all help make your letterhead stand out.
- Headings** After your letterhead, the next area of your resume that will typically be scanned are your headings. It is best to use standard headings to organize your resume, as ATS use them to recognize and categorize information from your resume; using a creative heading in place of something standard risks having entire sections of your resume skipped by the algorithm. In other words, title your work experience as "Work Experience," skills as "Skills," education as "Education," and so on.
- Additionally, consider some of the CRAP principles of design when formulating the layout of your resume. You may want to ask yourself whether you are using a consistent heading style through the resume, how the headings contrast with the rest of the content font, and how readable and easy to follow along your headings are.
- Strategic Ordering** Start in descending order from the top of the first page based on relevance to the position you are applying for. Consider using targeted headings to highlight your most relevant experience. For example, "Teaching Experience," "Software Development Experience," or "Customer Service Experience" is more targeted and eye-catching than "Work Experience."

Tell a story with your cover letter

A strong cover letter prioritizes fit and connection to the organization and its values.

Cover letter

A strong cover letter prioritizes your fit and connection to the organization and its values. You can do this by relating to their mission or specific policies, programs, or projects, and by illustrating for them the contributions you'd make if hired. To write a successful cover letter, you need to answer cover two main points: why you want the job, and evidence that you can do the job.

Components

A well formulated cover letter contains the following three components:

- Introduction paragraph (focus on "why")
- Body paragraphs (focus on "how")
- Closing paragraph (be strong and concise)

Introduction Paragraph	The introduction paragraph is your opportunity to demonstrate that you align with the employer’s values and priorities. Answering not only what interests you about the position, but “why” may be key in differentiating you from other applicants.
Body	The body of your cover letter will provide examples that demonstrate “how” you can perform the tasks and exhibit the skills needed for the role you are applying for. You may have more than one body paragraph—focus each on a central theme or skill cluster. Consider using the CARE method to help the reader understand the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C Context of the situation A Actions that you took R Results of those actions E Evaluation of your actions
Closing Paragraph	In your closing paragraph, restate your interest, summarize your fit with the employer’s needs and enthusiastically request an interview. Ensure that your font is legible and clear, and that your format (including the letterhead) remains consistent with what you used within your resume.

If you want further guidance on your work search documents, check out the [Career and Volunteer Services website](#) for:

- Free web resources and workshops
- Free review appointments with a Career Peer or Career Education Specialist.

References

Selecting and formatting your list of references will be the last part of your job application. Sometimes they are requested at the application stage, other times at the interview stage. Either way, you should be prepared to choose and ask people you have worked with in the past to be your references. Ideally, you will choose people who you have a good relationship with and who will be happy to vouch for your credibility, competency, and professionalism. This is important because employers want to know how you work and interact with other people. An employer may ask you to bring your references to the interview or contact you after the interview to request them. A good rule of thumb is to be proactive and bring your references to the interview.

Selecting references

Before bringing your list of references to an interview, you should first consult with the people that are going to be referencing for you. Taking these additional steps can make the work search process easier for you and elevate you above other candidates in the eyes of the prospective employer.

When choosing your references, consider individuals who would provide you with a strong, relevant reference and recommendation. Select individuals who know you well and in different contexts. A faculty member, or teaching assistant, a current or former supervisor from either your paid work or volunteering or a coworker may be excellent choices if they are able to and willing to speak to your skills, accomplishments, work ethic, for example. Ideally, you want to have a minimum of three references.

Before you include someone on your reference list, make sure you have spoken to them. Ask each of your references if they feel comfortable vouching for you—your credibility, skill and knowledge, personal characteristics, and work ethic. If a reference doesn't feel that they know you well enough or have sufficient information to be a reference for you, you'll want to know this in advance. For the individuals who agree to serve as a reference for you, make sure that you have a conversation with them about the job you are seeking, the name of the organization which skills and assets that you would like them to focus on, and let them know why you asked them to act as a reference on your behalf. Also, send them the resume and cover letter you used to apply for the position.

Some organizations may have policies which prevent their employees from giving references. In these cases, all that a current or former supervisor may be able to do is confirm that you are or were an employee and the dates of your employment.

If you want to use an individual from a previous work or volunteer role as a reference, consider how long it has been since your experience with them.¹ The more time that passes, the more difficult it may be for your reference to answer a prospective employer's questions about you. Even if you had an excellent working relationship at the time, do not assume the individual will remember that now. If you want to still want to cite the individual as a reference, you will want to speak with them about the role the organization and what you'd like them to focus on about you. Providing them with a copy of your resume and cover letter is important.

When you check in with each of your references, remember to confirm their current contact information. If your references know you by a different name/gender you'll want to contact them and let them know you are job-seeking, and to inform them of the name and pronoun you use now. This may prevent any confusion that may arise if they were contacted without this information.

Formatting your references

List your references on a separate page and include the person's name and job title, organization name, address, contact information (phone and/or email), and relationship to you. When formatting your references, keep the look of your reference sheet consistent with your resume and cover letter.

Frequently asked questions

What name should I use on my application, cover letter and resume?

For your cover letter and resume, you may use your chosen name. But when filling out an application form that specifically asks for your legal name, you should use your legal name. It is your legal name that will be needed for the purpose of background checks, social insurance documents, and insurance forms. If you have taken steps to legally change your name, then you can use your new legal name for all these purposes.²

For your cover letter and resume, you may use your chosen name.

When filling out an application form that specifically asks for your legal name, you should use your legal name.

1 Prepare your references. (N.D.) Retrieved August 7, 2018, from <https://www.lynda.com/business-skills-tutorials/prepare-your-references/429634/481054-4.html>

2 FAQs for Transgender* for Job Seekers. (2015) Retrieved December 19, 2018, from <https://www.uvm.edu/career/faqs-transgender-job-seekers>

If you have not changed your legal name to your chosen name, you may also choose to indicate that you have a legal name other than the name you've chosen to go by, by placing your chosen name in quotations marks after your legal first initial or name,³ such as:

- J. "Brandon" Beck
- M. "Nelson" Lloyd
- Maya "Nelson" Lloyd

I am in early transition and afraid that my resume will out me to potential employers. What do you recommend?

This is a valid concern. This is ultimately your decision, so do what is comfortable for you. Certain actions can be taken to help you feel more comfortable, such as using the name that matches your gender identity or expression. This may be a prompt for an employer to see you the way you want to be seen. If you are very early in your transition, for example, are genderqueer, or are afraid you won't "pass" as the gender that you identify with, using your new name may potentially "out" you. If you are still not sure, reaching out for support from a [Career Education Specialist](#) at Career and Volunteer Services, support groups, and other transgender* and gender-diverse employees may be useful to you to determining the best route for you.⁴

Can my resume include jobs I held under a different name/before my transition?

Yes, and you will likely want to include your work and volunteer history. Transitioning does not mean you have to start over professionally. You will want to showcase your skills from previous experiences.

How do I account for the time I was out of work because of transition and/or due to discrimination or other barriers to employment on my resume?

For gaps on your resume, you would account for gaps in employment in the same way you would approach time out of work due to transitioning. For shorter gaps, you may include only the year and not the month when listing dates of your previous work experiences. Another way to minimize gaps by adding professionally relevant activities to your resume (such as volunteering, temporary or part-time work, or school).⁵

3 Supporting Transgender* and Gender Non-binary Job Seekers. (n.d.). Retrieved August 9, 2017, from https://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sd/news_article/109566/_PARENT/CC_layout_details/false

4 Erickson-Schroth, L. (2014). *Trans* bodies, trans* selves: a resource for the transgender* community*. Pg 156 Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA.

5 Erickson-Schroth, L. (2014). *Trans* bodies, trans* selves: a resource for the transgender* community*. Pg 162 Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA.

How do I account for the time I was out of work because of transition and/or due to discrimination or other barriers to employment on my cover letter?

You may use your cover letter to explain longer gaps but try and avoid getting too in depth about why. Instead, focus on using your cover letter to tell a story. Highlight your skills and experience by using specific examples of what you'll contribute to the role and organization. Use the following questions to guide your story:

- Will you do the job? Concretely and concisely describe your interest in the work; use your research to connect your interest to the organization and role.
- Can you do the job? Provide evidence of the skills, experience, qualifications you possess.
- Are you going to fit in here? Focus on how who you are and what's important to you align with the role and the organization.

What if my references don't know that I'm trans, that I've changed my name, or that I've transitioned? Or what if my references do know that I'm trans, but I don't want my employers to know right now?

In these scenarios, there are a few options you may want to choose from. You may choose one, or a combination of these options depending on your situation:

- Speak to your references. Explain that you're applying for jobs, that you'd like to continue to list them as a reference, and that you want them to refer to you by the name and pronoun you use now.
- Use different references. If you choose not to come out to references or a prospective employer, you may want to provide different references. Look to your most recent and current experience for references. Remember, you may choose references from volunteering, internships, part-time or seasonal work and classes where either a faculty member or teaching assistant (TA) may serve as a reference.

INTERVIEWS

Preparing for your interview

Congratulations! You've been invited to a job interview. It is likely that the hiring person or team already sees that you are qualified and want to use the interview to meet and learn more about you. The interview is your chance to show them that you are a good fit for the organization and role you're being considered for. Beyond that, it is up to the hiring manager or team. Thus, the key to doing your best at an interview is preparation.

Getting information

Begin by gathering information and finding out if you know anyone at the organization where you've been invited for an interview. Connections at the organization could provide you with insights about their internal culture or operations that you might not be able to get anywhere else. Based on the information that you gather, prepare for the interview by anticipating questions, brainstorming a variety of answers, preparing your own questions for the interviewer(s)—and practice.

Practice

Completing practice interviews will help you feel more comfortable during a real interview. Learning how to use different types of questions to talk about your relevant skills and experiences go a long way to setting yourself up for a successful interview. By practising, you are essentially preparing to tackle any question that might come up during your interview—even the ones phrased differently from what you're used to. The more you practise your responses to different questions, the more natural and comfortable you will feel (and come across) during your interview.

For additional practice, SFU students can use [Interview Prep](#), an interview tool that lets you select interview questions, and record and play back your responses. If you want feedback on your responses, you also have the option of sending the Interview Stream recording to a peer, mentor, or [Career Education Specialist](#) for review. You may also want to do a mock interview with a [Career Peer](#) or [Career Education Specialist](#) at Career and Volunteer Services or practice with a few friends or family members. No matter how you prepare, just remember that the interview is a two-way street; both you and the employer are trying to gauge whether you will be a good fit for the organization and role.

Questions you may be asked

It is useful to know that most interview questions tend to fall into three categories—General, Situational and Behavioural. Each category contains questions that, in some way, help the recruiter determine if the person being interviewed (you) would be a good fit for the company.

The interview is your chance to show the hiring team that you are a good fit for the organization and role you're being considered for.



General

General interview questions often ask seemingly simple questions such as “Tell me about yourself.” Keep in mind that these types of questions are a fantastic opportunity to show your understanding of the organization’s needs by highlighting your skills and knowledge, and relevant experiences from your background. To stay concise, you may aim for two or three main points to avoid repetition and lengthy responses.

Situational

Situational interview questions are focused on what you would do in a specific situation, such as “Tell me what you would do if...?”. You want to explain what you would do in the given situations and provide a rationale for why you would do it. Provide real life examples if you have them.

Behavioural

Behavioural interview questions help your employer understand how you have handled situations in the past. Many employers feel that the best predictor of future performance is past performance. Themes of these questions may include everything from teamwork to conflict resolution to problem solving. These questions often start with “Tell me about a time when...” Remember, they are looking for specific examples.

The STAR method

To provide more specific and confident responses, consider using the tried-and-true STAR method:

- **S** | Situation: Describe the situation you were in.
- **T** | Task: What goal were you working toward in this situation?
- **A** | Action: What action did you specifically take and why?
- **R** | Result: Describe the outcome of your actions.

Prepare your own questions

During an interview, you will likely be given a chance to ask the interviewer(s) questions of your own. Employers consider the answers you give and the questions you ask. Don’t miss this opportunity to impress. Ask well-researched, tailored questions that demonstrate genuine interest in the in the role and the organization.¹ Therefore, do not come up with questions on the day of! Prepare your questions well in advance, preferably as you’re researching and prepping for the interview. Make a list of a minimum of two to three questions that you have about the workplace or organization, and feel free to take the list with you to the interview.

¹ Top 14 Questions to Ask in An Interview. Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <https://theinterviewguys.com/top-14-questions-to-ask-in-aninterview/#>

On the day of the interview, you might find that some of the questions you prepared in advance get answered before you get to ask them, so it's best to have a good handful of options. The following sample questions may guide you in deciding whether an organization is a good fit for you: ²

- What is the organization and team culture like?
- What does the company value the most, and how do you think my work for you will further these values?
- Will I be working with a team and if I am, can you tell me a little about each of them? ³

The day of your interview

Dress professionally

How you present yourself at an interview, including how you dress, is one way to make a good impression. Dress professionally for the gender that you identify with. Not only will this allow you to be more comfortable, but it may also inform the interviewer's choice of pronouns. Another option you have is to dress gender neutrally. Either way, the key is to look as professional as possible while remaining as comfortable as possible. ^{4,5}

Open & engaging body language

Use open, engaging body language, such as leaning forward in your chair and making eye contact, not closed body language. Practice your handshake and your eye contact. Show respect by standing when someone enters the room and practice giving a good firm handshake.

Frequently asked questions

What happens if the employer asks me an inappropriate question?

A potential employer, supervisor, or any member of the selection committee may not ask questions related to race, sexual orientation, religion, marital status. You may, however, encounter questions of this nature during an interview. If a potential employer were to ask you an inappropriate question, here are some options of how you can approach them:

- Answer the question if you wish and are comfortable responding.
- Respond to the "intent" of the question. You can try to learn their intentions by asking, "May I ask what you are trying to learn from that question?"
- Ask the interviewer how the question is relevant to the specific duties, tasks, or role.
- Choose not to answer. You have the right to not respond. You could let the hiring manager or interviewer know that the question makes you uncomfortable or that the question is illegal.

Interviews are understandably a nerve-wracking process.

The research, practice, and preparation you do before you head into an interview will help increase your confidence and build stronger responses.

2 Editor, T. D. (2013, October 15). 51 Interview Questions You Should Be Asking. Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <https://www.themuse.com/advice/51-interview-questions-you-should-be-asking>

3 Here's how to use the interview to determine if a company's culture will be a good fit for you. (n.d.). Retrieved August 17, 2017, from <https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/assess-company-culture-best-fit>

4 Erickson-Schroth, L. (2014). Trans* bodies, trans* selves: a resource for the transgender* community. Pg 162 Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA.

5 FAQ's for Transgender* for Job Seekers. (2015) Retrieved December 19, 2018, from <https://www.uvm.edu/career/faqs-transgender-job-seekers>

Remember, if you feel at all apprehensive about responding to questions you believe are inappropriate and that make you feel uncomfortable, you do not need to continue the interview. You may politely let them know that you would like to withdraw from the application process.⁶ It is up to you to decide what to disclose in an interview.

Interviews are understandably a nerve-wracking process. The research, practice, and preparation you do before you head into an interview will help increase your confidence and build stronger responses. If you are feeling unsure about your interview preparation and strategy, and you would like further assistance, reach out to Career and Volunteer Services.

⁶ Erickson-Schroth, L. (2014). *Trans* bodies, trans* selves: a resource for the transgender* community*, p. 159 Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA

WORK

IN THE WORKPLACE

You've received a job offer! You may want to take some time before you start your role to consider the potential situations that you may encounter in a new organization and role.

In the workplace, disclosure of your sexual orientation or gender identity is entirely up to you. If you are thinking about coming out in the workplace, there are things to consider that may guide your decisions. There are both risks and benefits. You'll want to weigh the pros and cons of coming out at your workplace and how much risk you are personally willing to take.

For some, benefits of coming out at work outweigh the risks. Benefits may include:

- Developing closer, more open relationships with colleagues, customers, and clients
- Building self-esteem from being known and loved for who you really are
- Being more productive at work
- Reducing the stress of hiding your identity
- Connecting with other trans people

You may also help others by:

- Dispelling myths and stereotypes about trans people
- Making it easier for future generations of trans people to come out
- Becoming a role model for others

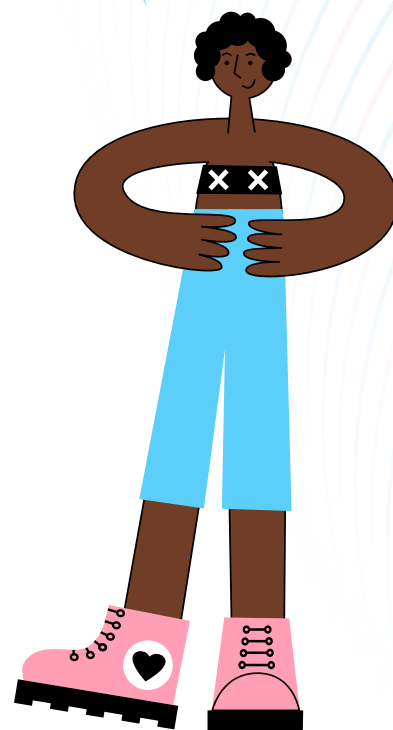
For many people, coming out may involve an increased risk of being exposed to harassment, discrimination, violence, losing relationships, or losing employment. One in five LGBTQ employees have experienced harassment.¹

Another point to consider is whether you see potential for long-term employment at your current job. Some trans-people would rather leave their birth gender behind and start fresh in a new workplace with their correct gender. If you have not already done so, do some research to see whether your employer has protections against gender identity or expression discrimination: look on the internet, use a trusted connection at the organization, or connect with the organization's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) department or group. If your workplace does not have an EDI unit, connect with the Human Resources Department.

Transitioning

There is no one right way to transition at work. It all depends on what you are comfortable with. Some people choose to transition slowly, while others want to disclose sooner. If you do choose to come out in the workplace, here are some strategies. The following tips offer a starting place:

There is no one right way to transition at work. It all depends on what you are comfortable with.



¹ Out and Equal Workplace Advocates. The 2017 Workplace Equality Fact Sheet. <https://outandequal.org/>

Create connections and find allies

Many trans people choose to tell a coworker they trust; someone you may rely on at work. Coming out to your coworker could boost your confidence and may set the stage for you have the conversation with others, including to your supervisor. .

Human resources

If you work for a large organization, the Human Resources department may be useful resource for you. You could work with Human Resources staff to come up with a plan for transition that works for you, your supervisor, and your organization before you share your intent to transition with others. You may want to talk to them about your pronoun preference, upcoming name change, and presentation.

Come out to your supervisor

Coming out to your supervisor could provide an ally with the power to make your transition at work smoother. Many employers are open to accommodating trans employees but are unsure of how to help and nervous about doing the wrong thing. Plan out how you want to communicate the information. When you decide to come out to your supervisor, schedule a one-on-one meeting. You may want to have someone from Human Resources (HR) accompany you. Your supervisor may request your permission to relay the information to your team to ensure there is full transparency and support, which is critical to a professional and safe environment. You may have to educate your employer about what it means to be transgender*. You might want to give your employer some pamphlets, links to websites, books, or other information to help them understand.

Come out to your coworkers

When coming out to your coworkers, you may disclose as much or as little information as you feel comfortable. You are not legally obligated to disclose your transition to anyone. You get to decide what if any information you share and how much. You'll want to weigh the costs and benefits. If you decide to come out, it could make your transition in the workplace smoother.

Depending on your comfort level, you may want to work with your Human Resources department or your supervisor to figure out how disclose to your colleagues. You may want to speak first to those you trust first informing them of your name and pronoun change. In most cases, it is best to keep the facts simple when talking about your transition.

Official name change

If you have legally changed your name prior to your start date, feel free to skip this step. If, however, your transition occurs while on the job, there are steps you may take in the workplace. Human Resources should update your hire paperwork to reflect your gender marker and preferred name and pronoun.

Set boundaries

You'll want to establish your limits early so you feel safe at work. If some of your coworkers' questions make you uncomfortable, set boundaries and tell them how you feel. If you come across inappropriate circumstances, you may want to inform your supervisor and Human Resources.

Just be yourself

Once you've come out, there will likely be an adjustment period. You may need to be your own advocate or get support from trusted allies.

- Take your whole self to work; you may grow exhausted and miserable if you take on a persona.
- One of the most prominent and ongoing issues during a transition can be related to pronoun or name changes. In the context of work, it's important to engage and prepare Human Resources to support you in changing your name in things like the email and telephone system, ID cards, insurance profiles, general Human Resources systems, pension plans, etc. Try to have patience as your Human Resources team tries to get up to speed with best practices.
- If you feel anxiety in larger group settings such as going to lunch, ask a few coworkers to join you when going to the cafeteria. You may even consider a buddy-system for the first little while.
- A common option is to inform your supervisor before you start wearing new gender-specific clothing.
- Some people change their clothing styles at transitional moments, such as after a holiday or at the beginning of a new semester. Others change the next day.
- For some, transitioning your clothing style more slowly and having a period of wearing more gender-neutral clothing can help you and others at work ease into your new presentation.
- Many workplaces have dress codes, including sales environments, money and finance, and food service. Certain retail stores require that every sales person wear at least some of their products each day.
- In some places, dress codes are legal, and you may need to navigate gender-specific requirements. Dress codes can be different for women and men, and not allow for dressing "in-between" the two options.
- In some work environments, there are unspoken dress codes that are not strictly enforced or required but are generally followed. These are not legally binding, but they can affect the way we are perceived by our coworkers and bosses.^{2, 3, 4, 5}

One of the most prominent issues during a transition can be related to pronoun or name changes. It's important to engage and prepare Human Resources to support you in changing your name.

2 Pride. (2015, December 02). How to Transition in the Workplace. Retrieved August 23, 2017, from https://www.pride.com/transgender*/2015/12/02/how-transition-workplace

3 Employment. (2016, June 27). Retrieved August 23, 2017, from <http://www.transrightsbc.ca/know-your-rights/employment/>

4 Erickson-Schroth, L. (2014). Trans* bodies, trans* selves: a resource for the transgender* community. Pg 162 Oxford: Oxford University Press, USA.

5 5 Essential Tips For Coming Out As Transgender* At Work. [n.d.]. Retrieved August 09, 2017, from http://www.trans.cafe/posts/2016/3/24/5-essential-tips-for-coming-out-as-transgender*-at-work

Know your rights

Staying safe and comfortable

As a transgender* individual, you have specific rights in the workplace within the BC Human Rights Code.⁶ In British Columbia, trans-people have the right to equal access to employment. This means an employer cannot refuse to hire you because you are transgender*. An employer cannot fire you because you disclose you are transgender* or because someone outs you. Being aware of these rights and others may go a long way in ensuring you are safe and comfortable at your organization.

Spotlight on the Human Rights Code

The parts of the code that are important for you to know include:

- The right to equal pay for equal work. This means an employer cannot pay you differently from other employees because you are trans.
- The right to have your chosen name and pronouns used in the workplace, regardless of your legal name and legal sex. This includes all internal forms, work email addresses, and ID badges. If your chosen name is not the same as your legal name, your employer may need to include your legal name on some government forms. You can ask your employer to include a note with these forms that indicates your chosen name.
- The right to change your gender identity and presentation on the job. This will likely go much smoother if you talk to your supervisor or human resource person first. This applies even if you do not plan on having surgery.
- The right to access a washroom or change room that is appropriate for your gender.
- The right to wear a uniform that corresponds to your gender identity.
- The right to be protected by the employer from bullying and harassment you might face related to your gender identity or expression.
- The right to keep your trans-status confidential if you so choose. If your employer is aware that you are transgender*, they must keep that information confidential.
 - The right to take time off work for medically necessary treatments, including gender-affirming surgeries. You do not need to tell your employer what kind of surgery you are having. Your employer has the right to know and ask:
 - When you expect to be off.
 - How long you will be off.
 - Whether the procedure might affect your ability to do your job, and if so, how.
 - Whether you will need any special accommodation on your return to work. Your employer can ask for a note from your doctor confirming any of these things.
 - Trans-people who need regular access to medical professionals due to transition may be excluded from military service.

⁶ Employment. (2016, June 27). Retrieved August 23, 2017, from <http://www.transrightsbc.ca/know-your-rights/employment/>

Exception in the BC Human Rights Code

In BC, there is an exception in the BC Human Rights Code that allows non-profits that serve an identifiable, “vulnerable” group (such as women) to discriminate against trans people. This was used to prevent one woman from volunteering with a domestic/sexual violence organization because she was transgender* (Nixon v. Vancouver Rape Relief Society, 2005 BCCA 601). Fortunately, many women’s organizations (including every organization affiliated with the Ending Violence Association of BC) welcome and include trans-women. Unless the employer falls under one of these two categories, they must not discriminate against trans-people.

Standing up for your rights

If you feel you are in a situation where your rights have been compromised or violated, there are a number of ways you can stand up and change the situation. Depending on your level of comfort, you may decide to take any of the following actions:

- Record what happened. Be sure to include the five W’s for each incident and include as much detail as possible:
 - What happened
 - Where it happened
 - When it happened
 - Who was involved
 - Why it happened
- If you feel safe doing so, talk with the person who is causing the problem. For information about advocating for yourself in an assertive way, see the Self-Advocacy for Trans* People guide on the Trans* Rights BC website.
- If a person continues to mistreat you after you have spoken with them, you can bring it up with your supervisor or human resource manager. If the person mistreating you is your supervisor, you can bring it up with their supervisor. Your employer has legal obligations under human rights and workers’ compensation law to make sure you are not bullied or harassed in the workplace.
- If that still doesn’t stop the behavior, you can make a formal complaint to someone outside your work. You have two options: Take the issue to WorkSafeBC. They will send someone to investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve it. If that is unsuccessful, you can file a formal complaint. A WorkSafeBC mediator will try to help both sides reach a settlement. If the problem remains unsolved, they will appoint an officer to review the situation and decide how the problem should be addressed. This decision can be appealed.
- Take the issue to the BC Human Rights Tribunal

Interviews are understandably a nerve-wracking process.

The research, practice, and preparation you do before you head into an interview will help increase your confidence and build stronger responses.

Frequently asked questions

How am I protected under the Human Rights Code?

In BC, you are protected under the Human Rights Code if it is due to a personal characteristic covered by the Code. The protected characteristics are listed below:⁷

- Race, colour, ancestry, place of origin
- Religion
- Marital status
- Family status (does not apply to buying property)
- Physical or mental disability
- Sex (includes being a man, woman, inter-sexed or transgender*. It also includes pregnancy, breastfeeding, and sexual harassment)
- Sexual orientation (includes being heterosexual, gay, lesbian or bisexual)
- Age (19 and older, does not apply to buying property)
- Criminal conviction (only applies to employment)
- Political belief (only applies to employment)
- Lawful source of income (only applies to tenancy)

What is considered harassment and how am I protected under the Code?

Harassment is a form of discrimination. It can be words or actions that offend or humiliate you. It is harassment when someone repeatedly says or does things to you that are insulting and offensive. The Code protects you when harassment is based on a protected characteristic. There are many types of harassment. Examples of harassment include:

- Unwelcome sexual suggestions or requests
- Unwelcome touching or physical contact
- Staring at or making unwelcome comments about someone's body
- Jokes based on gender, sexual orientation, or racial stereotypes
- Comments that make fun of or insult people because of their sex, pregnancy, race or physical or mental disability

⁷ BC Government. Human rights in British Columbia: What you need to know. Retrieved May 17, 2021, from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/human-rights/human-rights-protection/what-you-need-to-know.pdf>

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Expressing your gender and identity is an act of courage that can be challenging. Fortunately, there are allies in the community who are ready to support you. These include support groups and organizations. In addition, there are websites, and documents which you may find helpful during your work search and while you're working. Although not directly used and referenced, various resources and information provided inspiration throughout the development of this guide. Countless individuals and organizations advocate for the safety, freedom, and equal rights of trans individuals and communities. Below you'll find a compilation of resources that you may find useful in combination with this guide, organized by type of service or expertise offered: career, community, and legal.

Work & Career Services

SFU Career and Volunteer Services

www.sfu.ca/students/career

Access to free career exploration and work search strategy appointments, resources, workshops, and events for all current SFU students and alumni of up to one year after graduation.

SFU Career and Volunteer Services—Jobs Posting Sites

www.sfu.ca/students/career/jobs-on-campus

Job boards specifically curated for SFU students and alumni, including *myExperience*, *Jobs on Campus*, *Get Involved*, and a list of general, government, and not for profit job posting sites.

Transgender* Job Bank

www.tjobbank.com

A website compiling LGBTQ+ friendly job postings of progressive employers where one can search and apply for various work opportunities in different cities all on one site.

Out for Work

www.outforwork.org

A non-profit organization dedicated to helping LGBTQ+ students with career exploration and development of career opportunities while providing assistance to help enhance work search skills and strategies.

University of Toronto—Career Guide for Trans and Nonbinary Students

sgdo.utoronto.ca/resources/your-journey-guide

A career guide designed to support trans and nonbinary students in applying for jobs. Covers how to leverage resources and make career decisions that work for you.

Expressing your gender and identity is an act of courage that can be challenging. Hopefully these resources help you feel confident at work!



Trans* Care

www.phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/trans*-care-bc

Provincial Health Authority's program that aims to enhance the coordination of trans health services and supports across the province, bringing gender-affirming care closer to home wherever possible.

Community Information, Support & Referral Services

QMUNITY

qmunity.ca

The largest community hub located in Downtown Vancouver that responds to BC's queer communities' needs and helps them thrive.

Prism Services (Public Services)

www.povnet.org/node/4836

Vancouver Coastal Health's clinical, education, information and referral service for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and Two Spirit (LGBTQ2S) communities.

Trans* Care

www.phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/trans*-care-bc

Provincial Health Authority's program that aims to enhance the coordination of trans health services and supports across the province, bringing gender-affirming care closer to home wherever possible.

Legal Information & Advocacy

LBGTQ2 Secretariat (Public Services)

www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/free-to-be-me

Information and resources related to the Government of Canada's work to improve equality for LGBTQ2 communities through the development of inclusive federal policies, programs and laws.

Transgender* Law Center

transgenderlawcenter.org

The largest national trans-led organization through legal expertise and dedication to racial justice as seen through their work helping Transgender* Non-Conforming (TGNC) immigrants and Black trans-women. TLC works to change laws and policies to help all people regardless of their gender identity or expression live safely, authentically, and continually fighting for freedom.

National LGBTQ Task Force

www.thetaskforce.org

An organization constantly developing programs, training, and education helping the LGBTQ+ community mobilize and support one another in the fight for equal rights.

Human Rights Campaign

www.hrc.org

An organization with over 3 million members that advocates equal rights, benefits, and safety in the workplace for LGBTQ+ people around the world.

National Center for Transgender* Equality

www.transequality.org

The National Centre for Transgender* Equality advocates policy change and education in support of transgender* people through initiatives to ensure that the perspectives and priorities of transgender* people of colour are recognized, navigating around the legal issues and processes surrounding transitioning, advocating transgender* rights, and support for families with trans-youth.

GLAD

www.glad.org

A long-standing organization of legal advocates and defenders who are dedicated to educating on and fighting for the rights of the LGBTQ+ community including anti-discrimination law, transgender* law, and HIV law.

Transgender* Law and Policy Institute

www.transgender*law.org

A non-profit organization working together with GLAD to educate and advocate the rights of the LGBTQ+ community with information on new regulations, resources, statistics, and policies.

Transgender* Workplace Law and Diversity (USA)

transworkplace.blogspot.com

An informative blog run by Dr. Jillian T. Weiss, Professor of Law and Society at Ramapo College, and attorney representing LGBTQ+ employees in the United States. Dr. Weiss discusses resources, news, and issues to provide for all those concerned with information regarding transgender* issues and gender transition in the workplace.

THANK YOU

The creation of *Finding Work: A Trans-Positive Guide* was a huge team effort. We would like to extend a special thanks to all those who helped, including

- on and off campus groups,
- the students who took part in our focus groups,
- the SFU Queer community, and
- a former Career and Volunteer Services (CVS) practicum student who self-identified as trans.

We specifically want to acknowledge the contributions of **Edna Batengas**, **Marwan Noueihed** and **Sicellia Tsui**. They each played a pivotal role in the guides journey from its inception to the final edition.

Edna Batengas kick started the project by coordinating and conducting focus groups, researching the subject matter and identifying resources, writing our first draft and creating the initial design concepts.

Marwan Noveihed and Sicellia Tsui collaborated on reading and revising the early drafts, fact checking and taking the design and overall organization of the guide to the next level. Sicellia brought the project home. Ms. Tsui's writing and editorial skill, keen eye for detail and reader sensibility brought the guide to life.

Lastly, thank you to **Sydney Boulton**. Sydney is the creative mind behind the design, layout and format of the *Finding Work: A Trans-Positive Guide*. Without Sydney, we would not have crossed the finished line.

As well, thank you to those at SFSS Out On Campus who shared with us work search challenges faced by trans students and contributed to our overall learning process for the guide.

Finally, thank you to the CVS staff and to our director, **Tony Botelho**, who patiently supported this first attempt at developing an educational tool made specifically for trans students.

Taking an idea and turning the idea into something tangible isn't easy, but what a privilege. Leading this project and learning from the amazing people that contributed so much to make this happen is one of the highlights of my career!

Penny Freno

Career Education Specialist