

# RESEARCHING SECTORS

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Researching organizations prior to making any job search decisions can help determine which organization will provide the ‘best fit’ for your values, skills, and aspirations. You will want to ask yourself some basic questions, such as: What are the companies that best match me and my selected field? What are those companies’ projects/activities, and where in the world do they carry them out? How good is their balance sheet? How many employees are there in a company’s home office or in their overseas locales? What is the likelihood of career progression and job security?

In addition, research can help prepare you for a job interview (as well as an informational interview). An employer will evaluate your overall level of experience and qualifications, and also assess whether you are genuinely interested in joining the organization. Researching a company will enable you to demonstrate you have done your homework, show that you have a clear idea of where you will fit in terms of the company’s needs, and better prepare you to articulate how your skills will contribute to the success of the company, institution or program.

## AREAS OF REVIEW

**For all sectors, there are some basic areas which require investigation:**

- Organizational philosophy, goals and objectives.
- Structure and hierarchy.
- Location of offices.
- Services and products.
- Subsidiaries or partner organizations, as well the competition.
- Financial viability and forecast of anticipated growth.
- Key recent accomplishments and future plans.
- Names of relevant executives and their backgrounds.
- Sources of donor support

**For particular sectors, you may want to conduct research to answer the following questions:**

Corporations:

- Where are their markets?
- What is their standing in the industry?
- What is their recent record on downsizing?

Nonprofits:

- What are their priority programs and principal global issues?
- What are their principal funding sources? How diversified or not are these sources?
- Who are their clients/constituents?
- Are there any overt political affiliations?

Government Agencies:

- Political vs. career slots - does this help or hinder your potential?
- How does the bureaucracy work?
- Is there interagency activity?
- What international initiatives are there?

International organizations:

- What are their current project priorities and areas of growth or development?
- What are the mobility requirements?
- Are their nationality quotas in their hiring practices?

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## RESEARCH RESOURCES

**Among the key sources of information about employers, you should review the following:**

**Websites:** Virtually all employers in all sectors maintain websites with broad and diverse information. The web is an essential research tool. See “Useful Links” on the Career Services home page for a selective annotated list of links – to assist you target your initial research - in all sectors.

**APsia International Careers Guide:** accessible in SAISWorks, Resources > Document Library, keyword ‘APsia’.

**Vault Career Library:** accessible from SAISWorks Home page.

**Directories:** These range from occupational to industry, from business to geographical - each providing information about size, financial status, products and services. They are particularly helpful for you to identify which organizations to target and assess what the competition is in a particular field. For example, the National Trade and Professional Associations Directory will identify a relevant Association and provide information about their member organizations. Washington is frequently host to annual meetings and ad hoc conferences which allow for you to develop your networks, gather information and generally enhance your job searching profile

**Trade Associations:** Examples of local groups which have proved useful for SAIS students to belong to and/or network with are: Women in International Trade, the Greater Washington Society for Association Executives, the Society of International Development, Information Technology Association of America and Interaction.

**Newspapers and Periodicals:** Always review major national and international newspapers such as The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, and Asian Wall Street Journal have indexes to assist you locate company data; international and local interest sections will also carry important information. Magazines like the Far Eastern Economic Review and The Economist also are important. The SAIS library has newspapers from all over the world - invaluable resources for specific international job locations.

**Fellow Professionals:** Whether these are SAIS alumni, contacts from other Alma Maters, or friends of the family, such individuals are important sources of factual and anecdotal information in your job search. Even if they work for different companies, they can provide you with insight on the relative standing of competitive organizations or institutions.

**Public documents:** Sector information is often available on company/organization/ government web sites. Increasingly, multilateral agencies have public information policies requiring them to make information available to the public about their projects and programs. The Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS) is available in the main library.

**And some advice on process...**

1. Be persistent and imaginative to identify the best research tools for particular companies or organizations. Exchange ideas with other students!
2. One piece of information will often lead you to many other sources of information. Be prepared to ‘unpeel the onion’ as your research progresses – to discard less reliable data, carefully review and assess information, and know when you have enough reliable data to move on.
3. Washington is the information capital! Use the city, its array of public institutions, and the terrific network of SAIS alumni to aid your research efforts.