# Aspiration Career Conversation Guide: **Pre-Assessment**

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## Purpose

The Aspiration Career Conversation Guide has been created to support managers to gain an understanding of an individual’s experience, career goals and motivations as part of talent segmentation. It can also be used independently from talent segmentation to provide insight into aspiration and support individual development.

When used as part of talent segmentation, the insights from this conversation and other assessment data, will support managers to map an individual on the *APS Talent Segmentation Model* (*the Model*). Career conversations should ideally be revisited regularly to ensure managers are aware of changes to an individual’s aspirations and any subsequent shifts to their development pathway.

## Who will use it

* Managers – to understand the individual’s career aspirations, experiences and motivations to support mapping on *the Model*.

## When should it be used?

* When used as part of talent segmentation, this conversation should take place prior to making an assessment of performance and potential or mapping on *the Model*.

**Note:** This conversation guide provides a base that should be expanded upon and tailored to the individual’s needs.

## Use a coaching mindset in the conversation

Conducting career conversations from a coaching mindset will assist you (the manager) to build, motivate, guide and support career development and develop a highly skilled, professional workforce where individuals are empowered to proactively manage their own career.

Career conversations are most effective when facilitated from a **coaching mindset**. Managers who coach well can improve individual performance, engagement and well-being (Gabriel et al. 2014; Jarosz 2021). Points to remember as a coach when in a coaching conversation:

* You are facilitating the performance and learning and development of another person;
* You are not trying to ‘teach’ a person;
* You are helping people to see opportunities for improvement and identify practical ways forward for themselves;
* Use a blend of observation, talking, listening, questioning and reflecting with the individual;
* Your focus is on enabling the individual to perform independently and to take personal responsibility for their own success;
* You are exploring their strengths and opportunities;
* You are curious about their experiences and aspirations
* You are understanding what they have previously undertaken and guiding what they do next.

| STEPS | ACTIONS |
| --- | --- |
| 1.  Prepare for the conversation | * Adopt a coaching mindset (refer to the key points above). If you require additional training on facilitating a coaching conversation, refer to [the APS Academy course catalogue](https://www.apsacademy.gov.au/courses?keys=coaching). * Consider the following questions: * What do I know about the individual’s aspirations? * What are your observations of the individual’s work performance? * What areas do they shine, and where do they need more focus? * What do I currently know about the individual’s experiences, challenges and strengths? * What type of roles do I see the individual excelling in, in the future? * Do I see any gaps in the individual’s skills and capabilities? What might hold the individual back in a more senior role?   **Note:** This is not a performance review. It is a career conversation focused on understanding an individual’s career aspirations, experiences and motivations. |
| 2.  Schedule the conversation | * Set aside at least 60 minutes to ensure there is sufficient time for the conversation and it is not rushed. * Try and hold the conversation separately to a performance review discussion. * When scheduling the conversation, ensure employee care is considered. You can do so by: * Providing the individual with a copy of the Aspiration Self-Reflection Template (see page 9) in advance to help them prepare for the conversation. * Ensuring the individual is aware and agrees to the intended purpose and outcome of the meeting. * Providing all necessary information to the individual prior to the conversation (e.g. how many people will be in attendance, the location of the room) to ensure the individual is comfortable. * Providing options to create a suitable environment for both parties  (e.g. face to face or virtual meeting). |

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| --- | --- |
| STEPS | ACTIONS |
| 3.  Have the conversation | * **Start the conversation** by confirming that the purpose of the conversation is to understand the individual’s career aspirations. You might open with: ‘This is time for us to explore your career goals and an opportunity for you to share your achievements, experiences - what you have done in previous roles and your motivations - how you work best. I would like to learn more about your career journey so far*.*’ * Listen actively, give the individual the time and space to explore the open questions, let them do most of the talking. * Allow the individual to lead the conversation. The questions do not need to be asked chronologically, they can prompt, guide and direct the conversation as needed. * Share some of your own experiences, however be mindful that the individual will have different experiences and may have different aspirations to you. * Reassure the individual that these conversations are ongoing. If they do not have answers to all of your questions during the conversation, encourage them to think about it and continue to engage with them after the conversation. * At the **end of the conversation**, check that you and the individual have: * A shared understanding of their career aspirations, past experiences and motivations. * An understanding of how the outcomes of this conversation will be recorded and what action (if any) is required of both parties.   **Note*:***As there may be an extended period of time until a final development plan is put in place, ensure that you continue to engage the individual in development opportunities throughout this period. |
| 4.  Post conversation | * Review and retain a copy of your notes from the conversation. * With an understanding of the individual’s aspirations, use this information to inform the assessment of an individual’s potential (refer to the APS Framework and Manager Guide to Identifying Potential). * The assessment of an individual’s potential (as per above) will be used to inform mapping on *the* Model. |

**Note:** Career conversations should be continually revisited to ensure that shifts in the individual’s potential and/or performance is reflected in their development activities and managers are aware of these changes.

## Conversation Starters

The questions below are suggested starting points which can be used as a guide for conducting aspiration focused career conversations. They are not designed to be used as a script, you should tailor them to your context. Approach these questions in a considered way and be mindful that some questions may prompt a range of emotional responses.

**Open the conversation** by confirming that the purpose is to understand the individual’s career aspirations. You might open with: *‘This is time for us to explore your career goals and an opportunity for you to share your achievements, experiences - what you have done in previous roles and your motivations - how you work best. I would like to learn more about your career journey so far.’*

## Career history

* What has led you to this point in your career?
* What roles have you had before you joined this team?
* Have you mainly worked in policy, program, service delivery etc.?
* What aspects of your previous roles did you enjoy?
* What aspects of your previous roles have you excelled in?
* What recent work achievement are you most proud of? Why?
* What aspects of your current or past role(s) have challenged you?
* How did you overcome/work through these challenges?

## Motivation

* Why have you chosen a career in the public service?
* What motivates/demotivates you in your current role?
* What aspects of your current role do you enjoy? What do you find most rewarding/least rewarding about your current role?
* Where do you think your skills can be best utilised?
* How do you cope when under pressure or in ambiguity?
* How do you maintain your enthusiasm and resilience?
* Do you feel as though there are roadblocks preventing you from performing at a higher level?

## Aspiration

* Career Aspiration
* What are your short term and long term career goals?
* What is your area of interest at work?
* Where would you like to be in the next 12 months, 5 years, 10 years?
* Do you aspire to build your skills and knowledge in a specific field or would you prefer to explore more broadly?
* What areas would you like to develop to enhance your current skills?
* Do you feel you have capacity to undertake further development opportunities?
* What experiences or types of learning (e.g. more on-the-job, shadowing or formal learning experiences) do you need in order to step into your desired role(s)?
* What support would you need from your manager/the organisation to make this happen?
* What steps have you taken in your current role to develop your identified strengths and development needs?
* Are there any upcoming events, challenges or barriers that may impact your current career plans?
* How does your current role align and help to achieve your goals?
* What contribution would you like to make in our agency and in the broader APS?

## Leadership Aspiration

* Should the individual have aspirations to be a manager in the future, refer to the questions below:
* How interested are you in undertaking leadership roles?
* How strong do you consider your general management skills?
* How comfortable are you in leadership roles?
* How much opportunity have you had to demonstrate your leadership skills?
* How do you think your peers would rate your leadership capability?

**At the end of the conversation**, confirm that you and the individual have a shared understanding of their career aspirations, past experiences and motivations as well as an understanding of how the outcomes of this conversation will be recorded and what action (if any) is required of both parties.

## Career Self-Reflection Template

This template is for individuals to complete in preparation for their career conversation.

Note: There are no right or wrong responses. This is a chance for you to reflect on your own career aspirations, achievements and motivations.

| Name |
| --- |
| Position Title |
| Team |
| Department |

| **Career Goals Self-Reflection Questionnaire** |
| --- |
| I have chosen a career in the public service because…*Think about your field of work/agency when considering what has led you to this point in your career.* |
|  |
| My greatest strengths and development needs in the workplace are… |
|  |
| I enjoy coming to work when…*Think about your motivations and de-motivations.* |
|  |

| In my current role, I enjoy…*Think about what you are enjoying in your current role and whether you want to try a new role, if so, why?* |
| --- |
|  |
| In the past 12 months, my top three achievements have been:*Think of work that you have completed that you feel proud of. This may be a project that you have worked on, an improvement that you have made, a key program that you’ve delivered.* |
|  |
| In the next 1-2 years, I see myself…*Think about your short term career goals.* |
|  |
| I will work towards my next career step by…*Think about what you may need to help you work towards that next step. This could include on-the-job training (e.g. stretch opportunities, management experience), learning from others (e.g. shadowing another leader) or formal learning experiences (e.g. workshops or conferences).* |
|  |
| Are there any factors that would enhance or hinder my ability to achieve my current career plans? *Think about any challenges, barriers, major life events or external factors that may require you to re-prioritise.* |
|  |
| (Leadership) I am a leader who… / I imagine myself as a leader who…*Reflect on the type of leader you currently are, what you enjoy and what you find challenging. Alternatively, do you have the desire or aspiration to be in a management/leadership role in the future? If so, what type of leader you would like to be?* |
|  |
| My overarching career goals are… |
|  |

## Bibliography

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Indeed Editorial Team (21 June 2022) [100 Reflection Questions for Personal and Career](https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/reflection-questions), Indeed, Career Development.

Jarosz J (2021) The impact of coaching on well-being and performance of managers and their teams during pandemic, *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 19(1): 4-27.