As a result of being active in Meetup groups, I had informational interviews with two group members.

Informational Interview 1 with Judah Drelich, math/physics student transitioning into data science and a student at Springboard. Judah asked me about

1. What were my previous career experiences?
2. What are my day-to-day tasks as a research scientist?
3. What part of being a research scientist do I enjoy the most?
4. What part of being a research scientist do I enjoy the least?
5. Why am I interested in machine learning?
6. What books do I recommend reading about data science and machine learning?
7. How could he improve his interview skills?
8. How can he improve his soft skills?

My answers were

1. I spent several years in software development and consulting, followed by 4.5 more years teaching mathematics, and slightly over 1 year as a research scientist.
2. I develop numerical programs for applications in statistical signal processing.
3. My favorite part of my job is solving a problem that I was stuck on for 2-3 days.
4. My least favorite part of my job is dealing with departmental politics.
5. Machine learning offers a wide range of applied problems in the mathematical sciences.
6. Some good books in data science and machine learning are [Deep learning with Python](https://www.manning.com/books/deep-learning-with-python), [Reinforcement Learning: An Introduction](https://www.amazon.com/Reinforcement-Learning-Introduction-Adaptive-Computation/dp/0262193981), and [An Introduction To Statistical Learning](https://www.amazon.com/Introduction-Statistical-Learning-Applications-Statistics/dp/3031387465).
7. By practicing informal interviews with friends and conducting informational interviews with strangers.
8. I asked Judah to improve the lighting in his room and to sound more confident when he talks.

Informational Interview 2 with John Hopkins, Senior Scientist at Kimera Labs transitioning into data science. John asked me about

1. What do I like about being a scientist?
2. Why am I interested in transitioning into the role of a data scientist?
3. What was my first impression of him?
4. Would he face age discrimination in data science?
5. How can he network with other data scientist and machine learning engineers?
6. What do I like most about working with numerical algorithms?
7. How can he improve his LinkedIn profile?

My answers were

1. Being a scientist is enjoyable as you get to work on interesting problems which are of fundamental importance to understanding basic principles.
2. I would like to develop machine learning algorithms to help humans in need of aid.
3. John was a lot older than a younger aspiring data scientist who recently graduated from university. I was impressed by his background and his desire to learn new skills.
4. I don’t think he will face age discrimination. An older data scientist will have acquired more soft skills and business management skills.
5. Go to Meetup groups and attend in-person conferences. Also talk to work colleagues about opportunities to network with professionals in the area.
6. It is always better to understand how to write an algorithm from scratch. Understanding core concepts from computer science and numerical analysis allows you to write algorithms on your own (as opposed to depending on an external library).
7. I told John that he should update his LinkedIn profile and highlight his interest in data science. He has recently updated his profile and has summarized his transferrable skills.

As a result of both informational interviews, I have reached out to others on LinkedIn and asked for about 30 minutes of their time. I have contacted data scientists and machine learning engineers in Ann Arbor and outside of Michigan. I have also activated the premium membership of LinkedIn so that I can directly message others and gain further access to career resources.