



*Ensuring that by 2025,
60% of Jackson County residents will have
a post-secondary degree or valuable credential*

GUIDE TO CAREER PLANNING

Steps to a Successful Career Plan:

- 1. Ask Yourself: Who am I?** You need to understand who you are as well as identify your strengths and weaknesses, before you can make an effective career plan.
- 2. Career Exploration (Discover Your Options)** Identify your career options. Seek a career that connects who you are with what you want in work.
- 3. Gather Information** Identify information you need to make a decision. The more you know, the better you can make an informed plan.
- 4. Narrow the Field (Evaluate Your Options)** Compare all your career options to find the perfect one for you.
- 5. Make a Decision** Decision-making time! Evaluate the options and choose. Your goal should be the most appropriate career for you, not the “correct” one.
- 6. Plan for the Future** Develop and implement a plan of action. Seek to gain experience in the field and plan for your future needs.

Who Am I?

- 1. What do I really like to do?** Find your interests—they will lead you to interesting careers.
- 2. What is important to me?** Your values will also impact on the careers you find fulfilling.
- 3. What lifestyle do I want?** Determine your priorities and how you want to lead your life.
- 4. What do I do well?** Interests and values are part of exploration. You also need to know your strengths. Those skills can be transferable or specific to careers.
- 5. What personal traits do I possess?** Skills reflect what you do well but it is also necessary to understand how you do what you do.

CAREER EXPLORATION

Fortunately, you do not have to go through all the career options in the world to find a suitable occupation. In order to start your career exploration, you need to create a list of different occupations that might match your interests and skills. Before you begin narrowing down your possibilities, do some brainstorming to broaden your options.

Remember when everyone used to ask you what you wanted to be when you grew up (or maybe they still do)? What were your answers? Write them down. What did you enjoy doing as a child? Write these activities down. Look back at your list of interests, skills, values, and traits that you possess. Can you think of any occupations that might match with these characteristics?



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GATHER INFORMATION

There are plenty of Internet resources that contain useful occupational information. You can even research individual occupations through search sites. Many useful websites can be found on Career Services homepage at www.careerservices.txstate.edu. Two suggestions are:

The Internet

- **The Occupational Outlook Handbook** www.bls.gov/oco Provides essential information about prospective changes in the work world, qualifications needed for certain jobs, the nature of the work, working conditions, employment levels, and outlooks for a wide variety of jobs and careers.
- **America's College Board Online** www.collegeboard.com/html/careerbrowser.html Lists careers descriptions organized by type of career.

Libraries, Employment Offices, and Career Services

The advantages of using these resources are that they can be accessed over the Internet, and they have knowledgeable staff who can help you find the information you need.

Volunteering

There are many advantages to volunteering. It gives you a firsthand look at possible occupations, provides a great way to network, enhances your resume, and will help you explore the pros and cons of possible fields.

Job Shadowing

Job shadowing gives you an insider's view into career positions you are targeting, giving you a chance to learn what the career is all about without a significant time commitment.

NARROW THE FIELD

Now it's time to evaluate each of the options that you have identified and narrow your possible career options to a few

Now that you have a list of interesting occupations, the Internet can help explain those professions in even more detail. A site recommended to help narrow your scope is:

- **Career Cruising: careercruising.com** Provides a wealth of information on most careers, including salary and industry trends, job outlook, and links to career information.



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MAKE A DECISION

You have now come to the point where you need to make some choices. This may be more painful than the research. Follow these steps to help you through the process of making a decision.

- 1. Name the Decision** Stating precisely what it is that you need to decide may help give you some perspective on the situation. What exactly is it that you need to know? What does a career mean to you in the first place? Five years? Ten years?
- 2. List the Alternatives** Write down at least two occupations that stood out during your search.
- 3. Evaluate the Alternatives and Decide** Write down the potential outcomes of each occupation (both positive and negative) for you and for others who are close to you.
- 4. Test Your Choice** Think of ways to test the alternatives you have chosen. Options include summer jobs, taking a related course, volunteering, job shadowing, interning, etc.
- 5. Evaluate your Decision** How well did your choice work? If you need to, you can begin the process again.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Having chosen one of the career options, you can now begin developing and implementing a plan of action through internships, cooperative education, relevant summer employment, volunteer work, and campus activities. Some additional steps that you will need to take are:

- 1. Investigate Any Additional Education or Training Needed** Does the career path require additional courses and are you willing to complete these?
- 2. Develop a Job Search Strategy** Plan how you will find a job once you meet the requirements. Networking and gaining experience can help get your foot in the door.
- 3. Write Your Resume and Compose a Cover Letter** Career Services has 48-hour resume and cover letter critiquing, as well as Career Counselors that can give professional advice. There are also numerous resources in the Career Services Library.
- 4. Prepare For a Job Interview** Draft answers to difficult questions that you could be asked. Career Services is available for mock interviews throughout the year.
- 5. Gather Company Information** Investigate a potential employer to prepare for the interview, as well as to ensure that it is a workplace that fits your needs.