

ADVANTAGE

CAREER RESOURCE GUIDE



An innovation of
**California
Volunteers**





ADVANTAGE

CAREER RESOURCE GUIDE

Welcome to AmeriCorps Advantage

By choosing to become an AmeriCorps member, you have made an inspiring decision to serve your country and community. Thank you! We need you out there--whether you are tutoring young people, connecting veterans to services or other meaningful work, you must know you are making a difference. You are gaining skills and learning from your peers and from the lives of those you serve. This journey is not simply about what you are giving, but how this experience shapes you and prepares you for a life of impact.

This is where the AmeriCorps Advantage comes in. As a former Career Counselor, I have led thousands of AmeriCorps members through sessions as they discern their future career options. And you have told us you need a guide—one that you can walk through during your year of service. Thanks to your prodding – we did it! I hope you'll use the resources and tools in this Guide as a pathway to opportunity.

Your AmeriCorps year is just the beginning of your life story...let's explore what's to come in your next chapter.

Yours in Service,

Karen Baker
Chief Service Officer

To access the digital version of the AmeriCorps Advantage Career Resource Guide go to:
<https://californiavolunteers.ca.gov/granteecentral/advantage-career-resource-guide>

For hard copies of the Guide contact CaliforniaVolunteers at 916-323-7646.



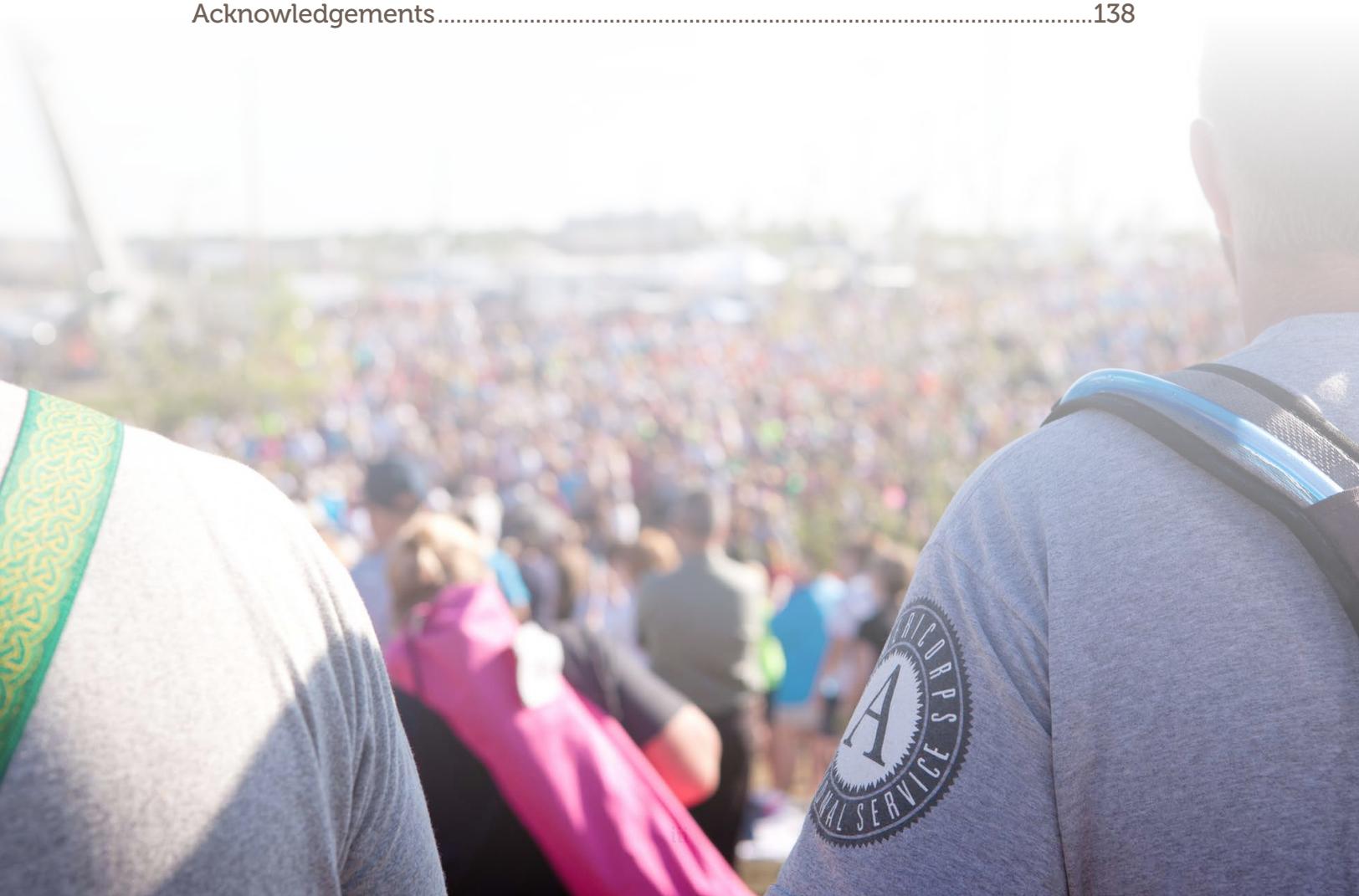
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“

My mother always told me that happiness was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down “happy”. They told me I didn’t understand the assignment. I told them they didn’t understand life.

John Lennon

”



Chapter 1. Introduction

Career Benefits of AmeriCorps Service

You are probably well aware of and excited about the tangible skills you will gain during your year with AmeriCorps. What you may not realize is that along with the practical skills you will acquire over the coming year, you will also be developing intangible skills and resources that will lead to greater career success. According to a 2014 article by Maria Caruso on the AmeriCorps Alums' website, the Top 5 Skills AmeriCorps Alums provide employers are:

1. **Initiative:** Alums are immediate contributors who lead by example as well as through direction, delegation, motivation, and inspiration.
2. **Interpersonal and Intercultural Communication:** Alums serve with and excel in partnering and communicating with diverse racial, religious, ethnic, cultural, and geographic groups.
3. **Adaptability:** Alums have a proven ability to quickly learn new concepts and skills.
4. **Collaboration:** AmeriCorps fosters members' ability to work individually and as a team, instilling a strong work ethic and responsibility to and appreciation of one's colleagues.

5. **Accountability:** Alums understand the responsibility that comes with being accountable for their own actions, the actions of team members, and their individual and collective results.

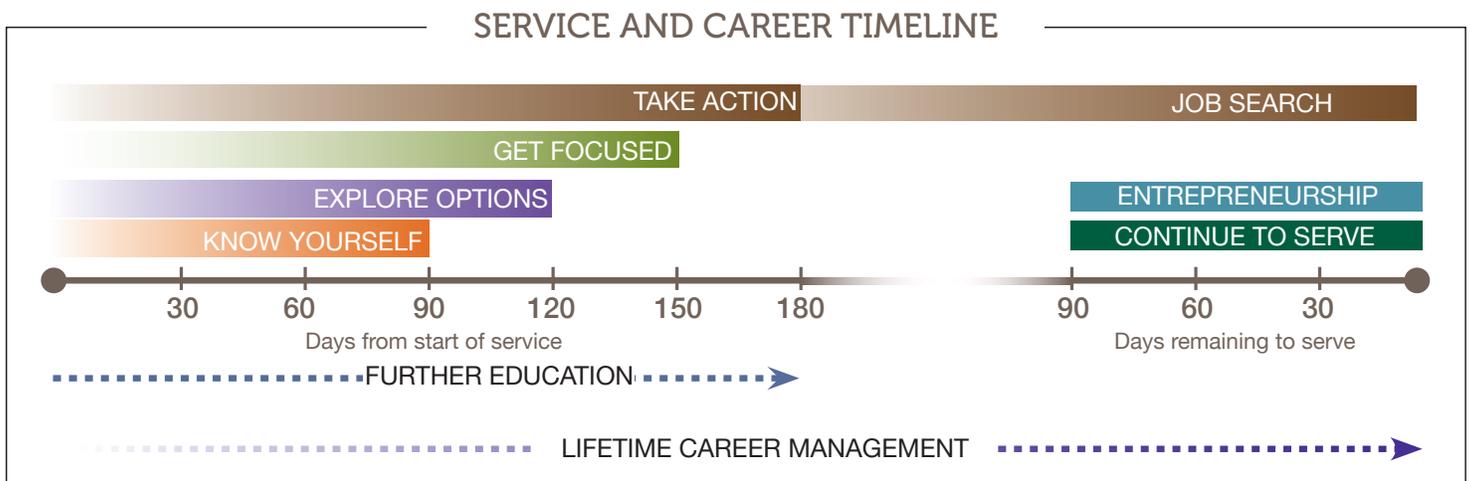
Other intangibles gained during your year of service will likely include:

- **Increasing your awareness of the world of work:** Knowing what a professional work environment consists of and how to function as a professional team member in that environment. Understanding that completing your assigned responsibilities on time and with high quality impacts the entire organization, not just you.
- **Learning to solve problems and face challenges head on:** Success in your career will be directly tied to your ability to identify and solve problems. As found in the 2017 AmeriCorps Alumni Outcomes Study conducted by Abt Associates, 90% of Alums reported that their service experience improved their ability to solve problems.
- **Developing a service mindset:** One could argue that the most significant long-term benefit AmeriCorps members receive is the satisfaction of incorporating service into their lives and making a difference in their community and country.

- **Beginning to Build Your Professional Network:** Your year of service will likely present multiple opportunities to network with people in the nonprofit world, many of whom started out as AmeriCorps members themselves. In addition, you may have the opportunity to meet those working in government, higher education, and the private sector, where your year of service is respected as a training ground for leaders and career ready employees.
- **Becoming Career Ready:** Basic employability skills- professionalism, communication, critical thinking, organization, work ethic, perseverance, positive attitude, teamwork, leadership, customer service, and willingness to learn- are in high demand and these are exactly the competencies you will be working to enhance as the year unfolds. Employers want to hire people who are self-aware and know how to use their talents, strengths, and interests... **SO LET'S GET STARTED!!**

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Your year of service presents an amazing advantage to accelerate your career development. The experiences, connections, resources, and support available to you are tremendous. If, during your year of service, you read through the chapters in this guide, follow the timeline outlined below, and use the AmeriCorps Advantage Action Plan on the following pages to plan and track your progress outlined below you will be well on your way to a satisfying career. Each member has their own unique set of experiences, skills, and areas for development so make this plan your own- add or remove tasks as appropriate, set target dates and monitor your progress to keep yourself on track.



AmeriCorps Advantage Action Plan

Action Step	Target Date	Completed Date
Chapter 1. First Steps (First 30 days)		
Take the Career Fitness Pre-test		
Conduct a Career Development Interview		
Get inspired through AmeriStories: http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/join-ameri-corps/ameristories		
Register for an account with CareerZone		
Get a notebook that you can use throughout the year to complete exercises in this Guide and record your career thoughts		
Secure a professional email, record a professional phone message, and add a signature line to your outgoing email		
Chapter 2. Know Yourself (First 90 days)		
Complete the Envision Your Career Future Exercise		
Complete the Positive Experience Stories Exercise		
Complete the Work Importance assessment on CareerZone		
Complete a personality and/or personal strengths assessment		
Complete an interest assessment		
Complete the Skills Profiler on CareerZone		
Answer the questions about your passions		
Complete "Make Money Choices" on CareerZone		
Complete the "Pulling it all Together" worksheet		
Discuss the results of your assessments with your supervisor and/or program manager. Reflect on how your results can help you determine your short-term and long-term career plans		
Make a list of other issues you need to take into consideration as you explore career options (health, finances, etc.)		
Create a list of career options that you want to explore		
Chapter 3. Explore Options (First 120 days)		
Research career options online through the Occupational Outlook Handbook, the O*NET, CareerZone, California CareerCafe and other online tools		
Conduct informational interviews and/or do some job shadowing with people working in positions that are of most interest to you.		
Conduct at least 3 Informational Interviews		

AmeriCorps Advantage Action Plan (continued)

Action Step	Target Date	Completed Date
Chapter 4. Get Focused/Make Decisions (First 150 days)		
Compare information from your self-assessments to data gathered through your research on various careers		
Use one or more of the tools provided in the Guide to evaluate the pros and cons of the careers that interest you		
Create an Action Plan that includes S.M.A.R.T. goals		
Discuss your Action Plan and goals with your supervisor/program manager and enlist their support in helping you to succeed		
Consider your "Plan B"		
Chapter 5. Take Action- Job Search (First 180 days/60-90 days left)		
Complete your Job Search Data Worksheet		
Create a Resume		
Draft a Cover Letter		
Develop a list of references who are willing to speak positively about you to potential employers. Confirm name, title, and contact information of anyone at your service site who you plan to use as a reference.		
Create a portfolio of your work (if appropriate for your field)		
Create a LinkedIn profile		
Clean up your online presence		
Write and practice delivering your 30-second Introduction		
Complete the My Network Worksheet		
Begin to implement a networking plan		
Make a list of 5-10 organizations that you would like to work for and look for ways to connect with people in those organizations		
Search for positions on relevant job boards		
Attend a career fair		
Consider contacting one or more staffing agencies		
Look in the newspaper, magazines, journals, websites for job listings		
Identify a position to apply for and create a customized resume and cover letter		
Review the Commonly Asked Interview Questions		
Create S.T.A.R. Stories for your skills and experience		
Identify two interview outfits		
Conduct at least 2 mock interviews (interview yourself if you're feeling brave!)		

AmeriCorps Advantage Action Plan (continued)

Action Step	Target Date	Completed Date
Research salary ranges for the types of positions you are applying for		
Create a spreadsheet to track your job applications – LAST 2-3 MONTHS		
Complete a weekly Job Search Activity Sheet – ONGOING DURING JOB SEARCH		
Chapter 6. Pursue Your Path - Other Options (First 180 days/60-90 days left)		
Further Your Education (Within first 30 days up to 180)		
Explore options for using your Segal Education Award		
Identify colleges, universities, technical schools, certification programs that will help you reach your goals		
Complete any necessary testing		
Complete college applications		
Apply for financial aid through http://fafsa.ed.gov		
Explore other funding options and scholarships		
Continue to Serve (During last 3 months of service)		
Visit the Corporation for National & Community Service website to learn about considerations for serving an additional term: https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/ed-award/multiple-terms		
Entrepreneurship (During last 3 months)		
Complete the Entrepreneurship Assessment through CareerCafe		
Visit the Small Business Administration Website for Tips and Resources for getting started		
Chapter 7. Experience and Evaluate - ONGOING		
Keep a journal of your accomplishments and reflections		
Seek feedback to continue to improve your skills		
Thank those who have supported you during your year of service		
Collect contact information from your network		
Join AmeriCorps Alum Association and Facebook page; Follow the AmeriCorps Alums Twitter feed @AmeriCorpsAlums, #NationalService, #AmeriCorps		
Take the Career Fitness Post-test		
Notify your network of your next endeavor		
Stay in contact with your network		

**EXERCISE****CAREER FITNESS PRE-TEST & ROADMAP TO LIFE AFTER AMERICORPS**

As you set out on your Career Development how career ready are you? Complete the Pre-Test below and/or refer to the Roadmap to Life After AmeriCorps (Appendix 1) as you begin your year of discovery.

Career Fitness Pre-Test

	YES	STARTED	NEED TO DEVELOP
I know the five stages of the career development process.			
I am aware of my strengths.			
I know my weaknesses and have developed methods for improvement.			
I understand how my personality influences my career satisfaction.			
I can identify 5 things I need in a career for it to be satisfying.			
I am clear about my most important work-related values.			
I can describe the type of work environment in which I would feel happiest and most productive.			
I know how to explore career options.			
I have developed a list of career options to explore and research.			
I have conducted an informational interview in the past year.			
I can clearly and confidently state my career goals.			
I have a written career development plan.			
I have identified steps to take in the next six to twelve months to achieve my goals.			
I have an updated, accomplishment-based resume.			
I have developed a list of professional references.			
For my past job-related experiences, I can list: 5 work activities, 5 skills used, 5 accomplishments			
I understand how to network effectively.			
I have developed and can effectively deliver my 30-second Introduction.			
I know how to use social media in my job search.			
I'm aware of other ways to look for a job besides online job boards.			
I have practiced my interviewing techniques and am prepared to answer the most commonly asked interview questions.			
I actively seek feedback and mentoring from others.			
I maintain a network of contacts for learning and sharing ideas.			
I know how to project a professional image both in-person and online.			
I keep current about issues related to my career interests.			
I attend events, conferences, or trainings to learn more about my current field or fields I might explore.			
I have joined and become active in a professional association related to my interests.			
I know how much money I need to meet my needs.			
I have taken ownership of my career development.			

Count the number of "Yes" Answers you had.

22-29: Congratulations! You have likely been working on your career fitness already and have just a few items to add to your career management toolkit. Keep up the good work!

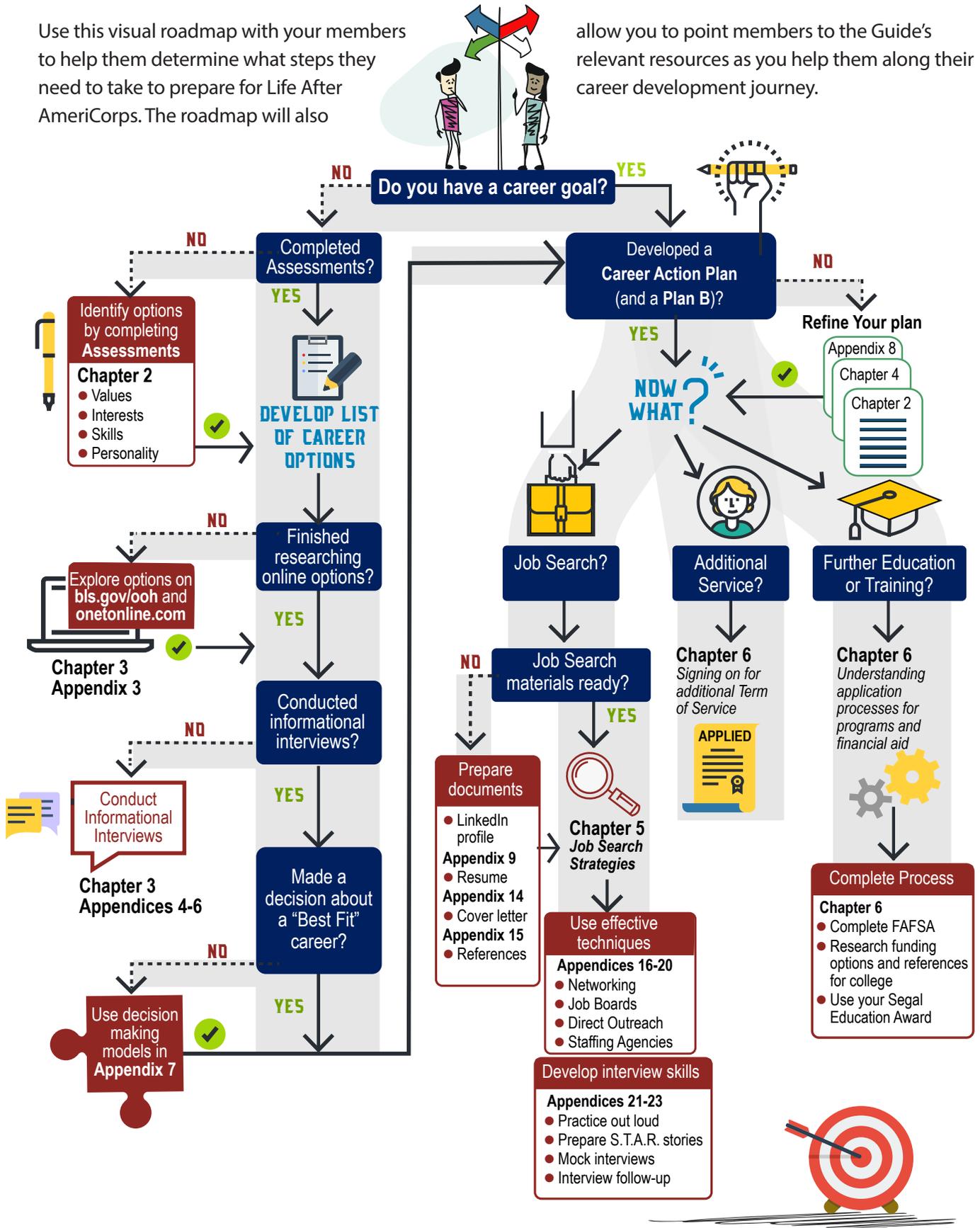
11-21: You are headed in the right direction but have some work to do to more effectively manage your career. Build on the skills you already have developed to enhance your career fitness level.

Less than 10: Now is a good time to get started in building your career management skills so you are "career fit" at the end of your year of service.

Career Development Roadmap to Life After AmeriCorps

Use this visual roadmap with your members to help them determine what steps they need to take to prepare for Life After AmeriCorps. The roadmap will also

allow you to point members to the Guide's relevant resources as you help them along their career development journey.



THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

What is a Career?

You may have held jobs in the past that helped pay the bills or provided you with some extra spending money. While important in building basic skills, these experiences may not have been in a field of interest that you are passionate about or included the types of tasks you imagine yourself doing for years.

Desiree for example has held jobs that don't have much in common including being a barista at Tasty Brew Coffee, babysitting for neighbors, and doing landscaping work for Green Acres. With this mix of positions, who knows what her next job might be and her experience in one job is not likely to lead to increased pay or responsibility in her next job.

Your year of AmeriCorps Service provides you with a luxury that the majority of people never have during their lifetime- the resources, support, and time to think not just about your next job, but also about how you want your career to progress. Like Desiree above, you may have seen friends and family go from one job to the next liking some positions better than others but never feeling truly excited about or connected to their work. By taking time to understand yourself, explore a variety of career fields, make decisions, and set a plan for pursuing your goals you will increase the chances of finding a meaningful career that you love, not just a job. And research shows that when we do work we love, happiness increases.

Looking again at Desiree's work experience, if she enjoys her work as a barista with Tasty Brew Coffee, she might decide to move up to being a shift leader. Then as she discovers her affinity for supervising others she could become the assistant manager, then store manager, and eventually move into a regional manager position overseeing stores in a large geographic area. Along the way,

Desiree's salary and responsibilities increase, she finds satisfaction in mentoring new managers, and perhaps, after a successful 10-year career with Tasty Brew, she leverages her management skills, food service industry experience, and passion for creating welcoming environments for customers to secure a Senior Level Management position with a leading national hotel chain.

The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines career as:

"The pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement especially in public, professional, or business life" and "a profession for which one trains and which is undertaken as a permanent calling."

In other words, a career is a person's journey throughout their lifetime, particularly as it relates to their work. A career is a series of positions over a long period of time, rather than just one position. It also encompasses internships, volunteer work, and of course your AmeriCorps service. While we've all heard the analogy of climbing a career ladder, for most, it is more like rock climbing- sometimes you have to move laterally or go down a step or two to start heading back up. Desiree's career trajectory if she stays with Tasty Brew is linear but for many, the path is not so clear cut, but rather filled with twists and turns, missteps and mistakes, success and failure, and life can throw us challenges when least expected that impede our career growth for a number of years. Mix in some luck and coincidence and you have the makings of your own exciting and unique adventure!

**EXERCISE**

Conduct a Career Development Interview to Learn about Someone Else's Career Journey

Talk with a supervisor, program manager, former teacher, or mentor who has been working for at least ten years. Ask them the following questions:

- What has been your career journey from your first job to your current job?
- How does your education and training relate to your work?
- What might you do differently if you were starting over?
- What advice would you have for someone starting out on their own career journey?

Career Self-Reliance and the Career Development Process

We all have a desire to find satisfying work but if we only rely on others to give it to us, it will likely be a long wait filled with disappointment. Finding a career that is personally fulfilling means taking responsibility for your career development. Do a little math and calculate the number of hours, days, and years you have left to work (consider that the average age of retirement in the US is 65 but many people choose to, or need to, work into their seventies). Now think about how you want to spend those hours. Do you want to leave how you spend those hours up to chance or do you want to become career self reliant and create a meaningful career for yourself? Your supervisor, program manager, friends, family and others will provide resources, guidance, and connections, but you are in the driver's seat!

If you chose to take responsibility for your own career happiness then understanding the Career Development Process is the first step on your journey.

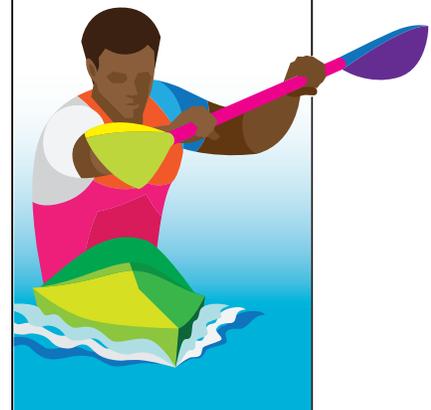
Career development isn't a one-time activity that is crossed off your "To Do" list by the time you reach your mid-twenties. It is a lifelong process that you will likely cycle through multiple times as you become more self-aware, experience life cycle events, gain new skills, and seek new experiences. The following chart summarizes the five phases of this ongoing career development cycle:

1. Know Yourself
2. Explore Options
3. Get Focused
4. Pursue Your Path
5. Experience & Evaluate



Get inspired by reading the career experiences of AmeriCorps Alums at AmeriStories: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/join-ameri-corps/ameristories>

You can let the current take you where it may. Or grab the oars and guide yourself towards the experience you want.



CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



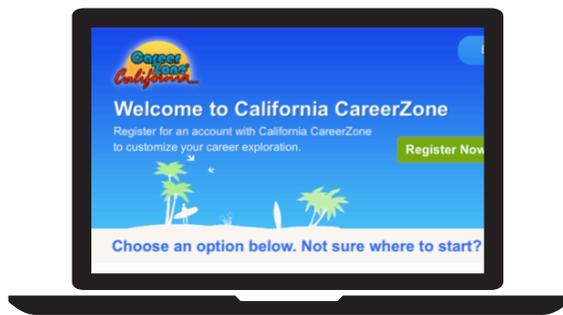
When someone is dissatisfied with their job or needs to find work, they typically jump to Phase 4. They start scanning job boards and sending out resumes with a dartboard approach hoping something will stick. However, this rarely leads to greater career satisfaction. Consequently, with each career transition it is important to start back at Phase 1- looking inward to know yourself.

Information, tips, exercises, and resources for each phase will be presented as you work your way through this Guide. Use the chart on pages 3-5 to pace yourself and stay on track with building your career fitness and reaching your career goals so you are ready to launch when your AmeriCorps service is completed.

Career Counseling Services

Career management can sometimes seem like a lonely business but the truth is that you're not alone. Beyond your support network, there are plenty of professionals whose business it is to assist you in reaching your career goals. Their expertise and support can be great motivation and help move you forward in your search. If you've completed college within the last year, check in with your college career center, as they will often provide services to alumni. In addition, college alumni associations may offer career services if you are a member. Career counselors and coaches can also be located through:

- California's OneStop Career Centers:
 - Most counties in California have at least one One-Stop Career Center; locate one near you at: <http://www.careeronestop.org>.
 - Most of the resources and tools are free to job seekers!
 - Provides workshops for job seekers, students, businesses, and career professionals.
 - Many One-Stop Centers also serve as employment centers. Employers go there to find employees.
 - Staff members are there to help you, if you have questions, ask someone!
- Private career counselors can be found through the National Career Development Association website: <http://www.ncda.org>.



note

As you work through this Guide, it will be helpful for you to have an account on the California CareerZone website. Take a few minutes now to register for a free account at: <https://www.cacareerzone.org/index>.



BEFORE YOU MOVE ON...

As you move through the activities in this Guide, you will learn the importance of creating a professional image and how that will impact your career success. As a first step, be sure your voice mail message and email address convey that you take yourself seriously and so should employers.

Voice Mail Message:

- ✓ **Do:** Record a personal message: *"Hello, You've reached Desiree. Please leave a message and I will return your call as soon as possible. Thank you."* Speak clearly. No music or other noise in the background.
- ✗ **Don't:** Use the default message, just record your name, or have an unprofessional message: *"Hey, I'm not here. Call me later."* Mumble. Have your favorite song playing or have other noise in the background.

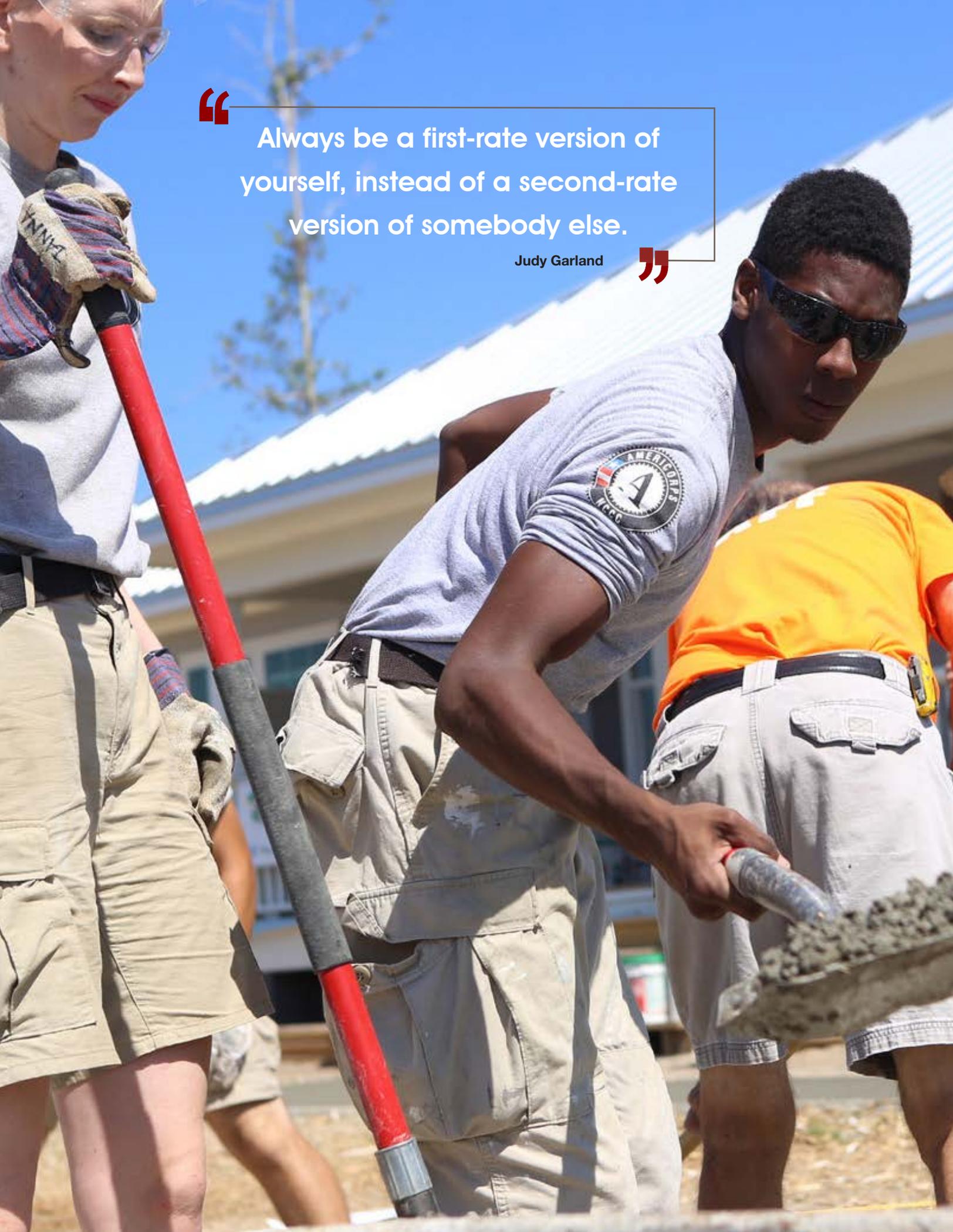
Professional Email Address:

Consider having an email address dedicated to your career activities. Do not use this address to forward jokes, photos, or chain mail.

- ✓ **Do:** Use your name: First and last; middle initial if necessary or desired (e.g., isabeljones@gmail.com). And if you need to go further in finding an available address add something that relates to your career field (e.g. jonathan4education@gmail.com)
- ✗ **Don't:** Use nicknames (e.g., lifeoftheparty@gmail.com), personal interests unrelated to your career (e.g., susanlovescupcakes@gmail.com) or addresses that are easily mistyped (e.g., henry.m3p_smith@gmail.com).

For an added touch of professionalism, use a signature line at the bottom of your message:

Your Name
 Title
 Organization
 Phone and Email Address



“

Always be a first-rate version of yourself, instead of a second-rate version of somebody else.

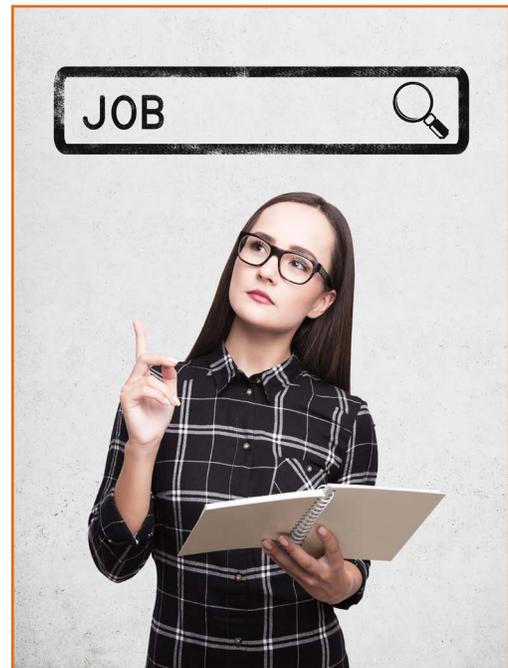
Judy Garland

”

Chapter 2. Know Yourself

Knowing who you are is the first step in the career development process as it is nearly impossible to find satisfying work when you don't know what you want to do. Self-assessment is the foundation of career management and without this knowledge it can be difficult to know what industry, job title, or work environment will bring you satisfaction. A good fit career matches your values, personality, interests, and skills. As you discover more about yourself in each of these areas, you can use these insights to pursue career satisfaction. In addition, factors such as health, life roles, geography, and financial considerations impact each person's "best-fit" career.

It is important to keep in mind that there is more than one "perfect" job for you and there are likely multiple career paths that would bring you satisfaction. However, by taking time to understand yourself, identify your preferences, and be clear about your lifestyle goals you will be able to create a roadmap for your career exploration and focus your search for meaningful work that you enjoy. In addition, you will be better able to articulate what you are looking for as you move forward in Phase 2 of the Career Development Process.



Are You Ready to Start Your Journey of Self Discovery?

Complete at least one of the following two exercises to begin the process of defining your future:



EXERCISE Envision Your Career Future

Sit quietly, close your eyes, and imagine your ideal career. What kind of setting are you in? What tasks are you performing? Are you working alone or with others? What are you wearing? How do you feel about yourself? Describe your vision in as much detail as possible in your notebook.



EXERCISE Positive Experience Stories

1. Identify eight positive experiences (work related or not) that you have had throughout your life (perhaps even going back to childhood). Times when you felt confident in your abilities, proud of the impact you had, fully competent and “in the zone”, or particularly satisfied with what you were doing.
2. Write a brief paragraph describing each experience:
 - What were you doing?
 - What skills were you using?
 - Who were you interacting with?
 - What were the results of your efforts?
 - Why was it meaningful to you?
3. After writing the eight paragraphs look over them and make note of what patterns or themes you see. These can be clues to your “best-fit” careers.

CAREER ASSESSMENTS

Completing career assessments can help you identify occupations and work environments that may be satisfying to you. Assessments will not tell you exactly what job you should do but they can confirm your career thoughts or generate options that you might not have considered. Assessments come in many shapes and sizes. Some are available online, some are provided to you in this guide, and others can be accessed through a career professional who has been trained to properly administer and interpret the assessment. As you work through the assessments presented below, keep in mind that these assessments are not tests. There are no right or wrong answers and the more honestly you answer the questions, the more authentic your results will be.

Clarify Your Work Values

Each of us has a constellation of work values and these often change over time. What was important to you at 17, may be less of a priority at 23, and will likely be different when you are 40. Sometimes our priorities change due to personal growth and sometimes our priorities change because of factors

note

An excellent tool for identifying your work values can be found on the California CareerZone: Work Importance Profiler: <https://www.cacareerzone.org/wip/>.

outside of ourselves such as needing to care for an elderly relative, becoming a parent, or changes in our health. Because our values change over time, it is useful to be clear about what your current priorities are so that career decisions can be based on these priorities. Your career values give you a framework for decision-making, act as a filter through which to evaluate options, and can motivate you to pursue a career that honors your priorities.

**EXERCISE**

Log in to your CareerZone account and complete the Work Importance Profiler

Record your Top 10 Values at this point in your career and what they mean to you.

Discover Your Personality Preferences and Personal Strengths

Those who study personality type theory subscribe to the idea that each of us is born with natural preferences, similar to being born right or left-handed. By understanding our preferences and identifying careers that align with these preferences, we can gain greater satisfaction and sustainability in our work. As Paul D. Tieger and Barbara Barron-Tieger state in their book *“Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type”*:

“The right job enhances your life. It is personally fulfilling because it nourishes the most important aspects of your personality. It suits the way you like to do things and reflects who you are. It lets you use your innate strengths in ways that come naturally to you, and it doesn’t force you to do things you don’t do well (at least not too often!).”

Common personality and personal strength assessments include the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Kiersey Temperament Sorter, Paul Tieger’s Personality Type Assessment, the NERIS Type Explorer, the Truity Personal Strengths Inventory and Gallup’s StrengthsQuest (focused towards college students) and StrengthsFinder. There are a variety of options for exploring your personality preferences and personal strengths.

- Kiersey Temperament Sorter: <http://www.keirsey.com>.
 - PersonalityType.com Assessment: <http://www.personalitytype.com>
 - NERIS Type Explorer: <https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test>.
 - The Big Five Personality Test: <https://www.truity.com/test/big-five-personality-test>.
 - Truity Personal Strengths Inventory: <https://www.truity.com/test/personal-strengths-inventory?>
- If you are a current college student check with your campus career center to see if they offer the Myers-Briggs Type (MBTI) assessment or StrengthsQuest free of charge on an individual basis or through a workshop.
- Contact a career development professional who has the required certification to administer and interpret the MBTI. While there would be fees associated with this service, you may find the expert support and interpretation valuable. The National Career Development Association website is the go to source for finding a well trained career counselor: http://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/consumer_find.
- Complete the StrengthsQuest Assessment: <http://www.strengthsquest.com/home.aspx> or purchase the StrengthsFinder book: <http://strengths.gallup.com/110440/About-StrengthsFinder-20.aspx>.
- Read *“Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type.”*

- To complete a free online assessment visit one of these sites:



EXERCISE Personal Strengths Assessment

Review the results from the personality and/or personal strengths assessment(s) you completed. What are your preferences and how do you want to use them in your career? Use your notebook to record any descriptions, words, or phrases that resonate with you. Write down any “best fit” careers that interest you.

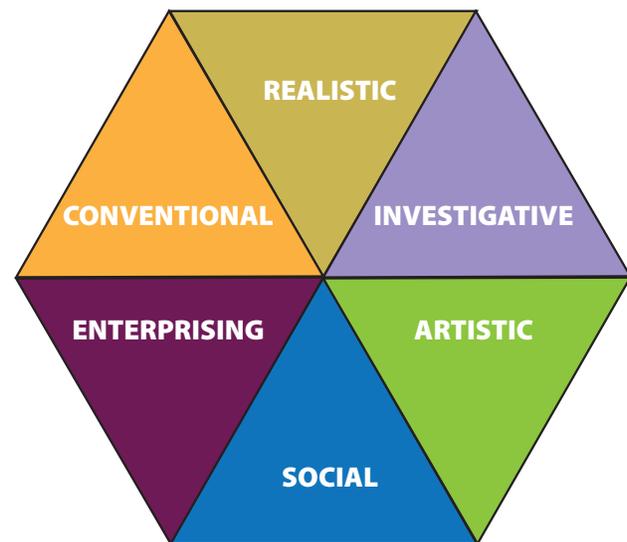
Identify Your Interests

What interests you and how you like to spend your time can provide clues to the type of work you might enjoy. By comparing your likes and dislikes with people who find satisfaction in various careers, you are able to determine if you might find happiness in that career yourself.

John Holland was a psychologist who devoted his career to researching issues related to career choice and satisfaction. He developed a well-known career theory that suggests that people and work environments can be categorized into six occupational themes: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional (called the “RIASEC” theory). This model provides a framework for matching interests to the characteristics of these themes.

You can explore these six themes, assess your level of interest in each, and identify careers that correspond to each theme by completing one of these free assessments:

- The Interest Profiler on the California CareerZone: <https://www.cacareerzone.org/ip/>.
- The Holland Code Career Test: <https://www.truity.com/test/holland-code-career-test>.
- The Interest Profiler on MyNextMove: <https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>.



EXERCISE Interest Assessment

Review the results from the Interest Assessment you completed. What are your interests and how do you want to use them in your career? In your notebook write down any “best fit” careers that interest you.

Inventory Your Skills

Completing a skills inventory will help you determine what you are capable of right now, what skills you have an interest in developing, and how those skills relate to specific careers. When evaluating your skillset there are three types of skills to consider:

1. **Job Specific Skills:** These are skills that relate to a specific job such as being able to operate a forklift, process payroll, identify native plants, or complete an individual education plan for a student. List five of your job specific skills in your notebook.
2. **Transferable Skills:** These are skills that can be used across a wide range of jobs and include competencies such as communication, helping, writing, analyzing, repairing, leading groups. List five of your transferable skills in your notebook.
3. **Motivated Skills:** These are the skills, whether job specific or transferable, that you truly enjoy using and want to spend most of your time using as you move forward with your career. List five of your motivated skills in your notebook.

note

City Year has developed a helpful resource that shows how skills gained in service translate to careers in business, medicine, technology, law, public policy, communications, education, psychology and counseling, and social work. Details can be found at: www.cityyear.org/join-the-corps/benefits/life-after-city-year



EXERCISE

Log in to your CareerZone account and complete the Skills Profiler <https://www.cacareerzone.org/skills/>

What skills would you most enjoy using in your work (even if you aren't currently proficient in them)? What skills would you like to improve? Record these skills in your notebook.

Passions

Passions can absolutely help guide us towards satisfying work environments and career fields. However, if we only pursue our passion we may grow tired of it, find it becomes more work than enjoyment, or be unable to support ourselves. "Follow Your Passion" is a common piece of advice. However, many expect their passion to reveal itself in the form of a job title, which is highly unlikely. How many would define their passion as pharmaceutical salesperson, curriculum developer, or accounting assistant?



EXERCISE Discover Your Passions Exercise

To help identify your passions complete the following statements:

- I feel really good about myself when:
- I lose track of time whenever I am:
- The types of problems I enjoy solving include:
- The hobbies I enjoy are:
- My special talents and abilities that I really like are:
- I tend to accomplish the following things faster than other people:
- I find myself easily absorbed in:
- The educational and/or training subjects I enjoy most are:

Other Considerations

As you proceed through the self-assessment process, it is important to determine what other areas may also impact your career decisions. Some of these areas might include financial concerns, health issues, learning styles, family roles, and/or geography. Use your notebook to track any other factors you need to consider.



EXERCISE Money Considerations

To get a sense of how much money it will take to meet your lifestyle needs create your budget through “Make Money Choices” on California CareerZone: <https://www.cacareerzone.org/budget/>.



note

AmeriCorps Career Webinars:
“Tips for Financial Success”:
<http://www.americorpsalums.org/?CareerWebinars>



EXERCISE Pulling it All Together

Complete “Pulling it All Together Worksheet” in **APPENDIX 1**.

Keep in mind that we are always growing, learning, and having new life experiences that shape our identities so getting to know yourself isn't a one-time exercise. It is a process of continual discovery. When you find yourself seeking greater job satisfaction or needing to make a change, return to these assessments and exercises to reevaluate and refocus your career. When your values and/or interests change, you acquire new skills, or your life circumstances are altered don't be afraid to make a career change- in big ways or small- from what you initially set out to do!

30-Second Introduction

As you begin to get a clearer picture of your values, personality, interests, and skills, you will want to be able to articulate that vision of yourself to others in the form of a 30-Second Introduction. A 30-Second Introduction, also known as an Elevator Pitch because it is just long enough to deliver in a typical elevator ride, is a quick summary of who you are, what you want to do, and how someone can help you. Usually less than one minute in length, this statement can be used in an email, on a phone call, or in-person to share your story and ask for assistance. You will use it when doing informational interviews, networking, at career fairs, when introducing yourself at a meeting or training session, or maybe even when you step into an elevator and find yourself riding to the top floor with someone whose work you've always admired!



“No one else wants exactly what you want so it's worth dreaming big and being picky.”

Helen Horyza, Career Counselor,
President of Elevations, Inc. and
author of Elevations!



Your 30-Second Introduction should include your name, education, key experiences (including what you are doing during your year of service!), top skills, and eventually your career goal. You can also include a personal attribute, activity, or something that makes you unique that might capture someone's interest. Finally, you should include a request for assistance. Here is an example:

"My name is Ellen Fielder. I have two years experience as an office assistant in nonprofit organizations and have taken classes in early childhood education at Santa Monica City College. I have strong customer service, organization, and communication skills. Currently I serve as an AmeriCorps member with the Birth & Beyond program where I make home visits to families and share information and resources with them about proper infant care. In my spare time I am training for a half-marathon."

AND TO BE ADDED ONCE YOU HAVE MORE CLARITY ABOUT YOUR CAREER GOALS:

"I will be completing my year of service in 6 weeks and am looking for a program assistant position with a nonprofit organization in the Los Angeles area. I am especially interested in working with elementary aged children. Would you know of anyone in the LA area who might be willing to share information with me about how to find opportunities in that field?"

Because you are always growing and learning about yourself, your 30-Second Introduction will change to reflect that growth. How you introduce yourself during the first few months of your year of service may be quite different from how you introduce yourself at the end of your year of service so be sure you are continually revising and updating your pitch!



EXERCISE 30-Second Introduction

Write and practice your own 30-Second Introduction.





BEFORE YOU MOVE ON...

After completing the self-assessment work, in this chapter you should be more aware of your unique combination of values, personality preferences, interests, motivated skills, and passions. And from the online assessments you should have a list of some occupations that might be a good match for you. However, you still may be unsure about which career is the “best fit.” Don’t worry; it’s normal to be uncertain! Knowing yourself is only one piece of the puzzle. Connecting this new awareness of yourself with information and facts about what’s available in the workplace is the next important step along your career development journey.

As you begin to focus on exploring your career options, three suggestions adapted from the California Conservation Corps’ “Career Development and Transition Program” are valuable to keep in mind:

1. **Do not feel like you are limited to the occupations that may have been suggested to you by the assessments.** You can explore occupations that are not on the list and definitely explore any career that you’ve had a prior interest in even if it didn’t turn up as a match.
2. **Be realistic about your short-term career goals but aim high for the future.** Just because you do not have enough education right now for your ideal occupation does not mean that it should not be a goal. You can look for occupations you can do right now and occupations you would be interested in for the future.
3. **Question what you think you know.** Read through some of the occupational profiles you will be guided to in the next chapter, even though you think you know what those occupations do. You might be surprised by what you find out about a plumber or social worker. Also, if you don’t know what a specific occupation is that came up as a match for you (like an instructional coordinator or a geologist), make sure you take time to use the tools and resources offered in Chapter 3 to find out.



“

Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ”

Chapter 3. Explore Options

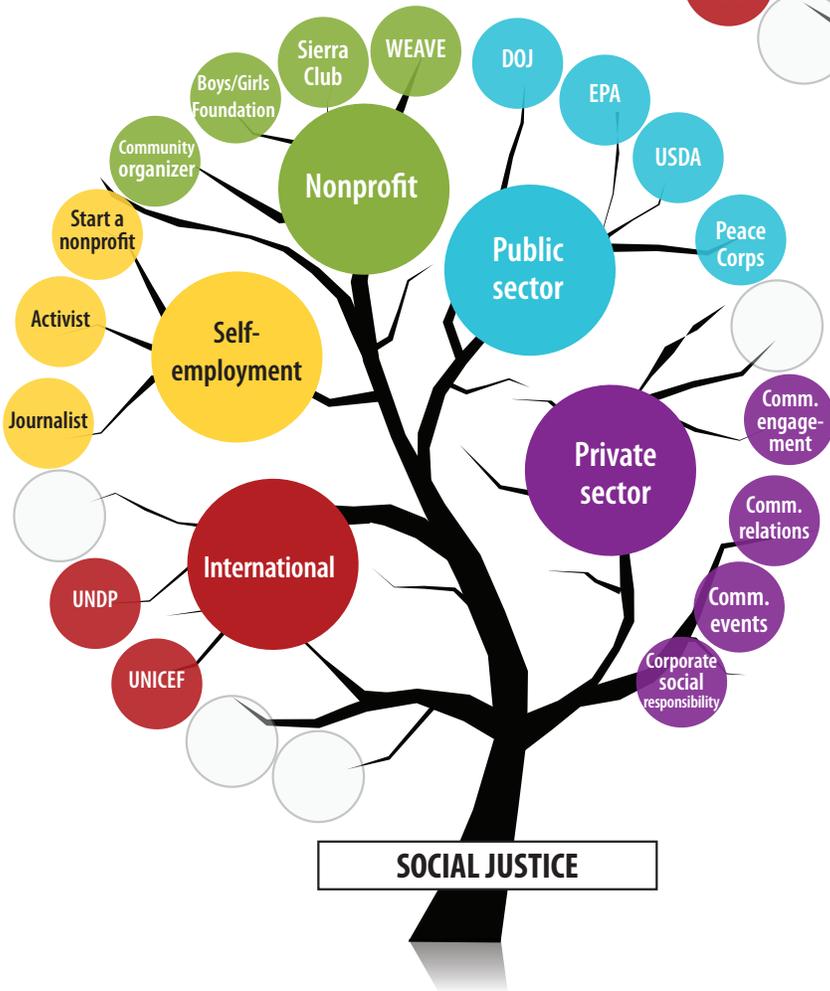
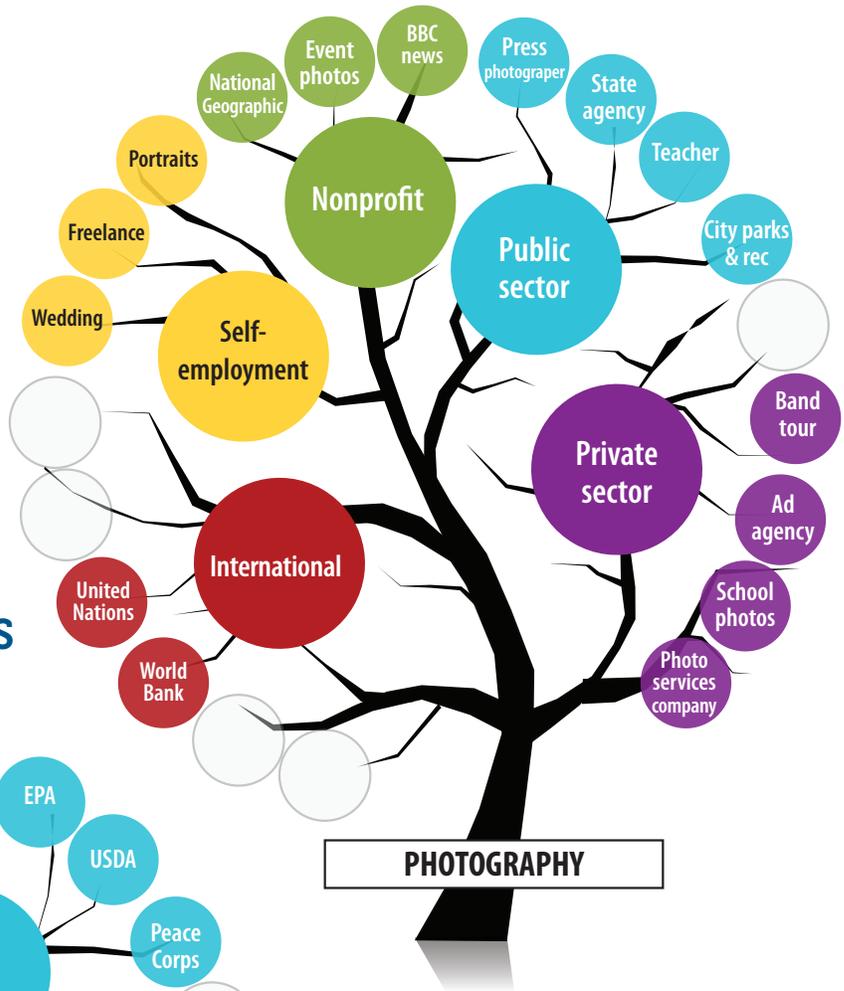
Using the “best fit” careers you identified in Chapter 2 as a jumping off point, it is now time to think broadly about and explore the possibilities before you. For example, if, through your self-assessments, you identified teaching, human resources, and social services as career directions that interest you, where are all the possible sectors of the economy where you could do that type of work?

The U.S. economy can be divided into several sectors. These include:

- **Public Sector** - Government entities including local, state, and federal government agencies (U.S. Department of Agriculture, California Department of Fish and Game, Orange County, City of Fresno, Eureka Unified School District).
- **Private Sector** - Both publicly traded companies (AT&T, Google, H&M) that trade shares on the stock market to members of the general public and privately owned companies (Dell, Albertsons, Mars) that are owned by a small number of people and their shares are not traded on the stock market. Surplus revenue in these organizations is distributed to the shareholders. or private owners.
- **Nonprofit Sector** - Organizations that use revenue to achieve their mission- typically focused on community and/or social good- rather than distributing surplus revenue to shareholders. There are nonprofits that seek grant funding and donations from the general public (Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, and Child Abuse Prevention Center) and those that are funded by a single individual, family or corporation and often grant funds to other nonprofit organizations (The Irvine Foundation, The McConnell Foundation, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation).
- **Self-Employment or the “gig economy”**- This is a situation in which someone works for themselves- selling their product or services to others- rather than working for an employer who pays them a salary. This work could be done in the public, private, nonprofit, or international sectors. For example, a contract grants writer or a freelance graphic designer.
- **International Employment** - Across any of the above sectors- may be an option that you also want to consider.

One technique to expand your thinking about career options in relation to these sectors is to fill out a “Baker Tree of Options”. Your central trunk can be a passion, an area of interest, or a skill that you particularly enjoy using. Like the branches of a tree, your career choices are broad and varied. Karen Baker, Chief Service Officer for CaliforniaVolunteers shares this example as it relates to someone who is interested in pursuing photography. An additional example focused on social justice is below.

BAKER TREE OF OPTIONS





EXERCISE Tree of Options

Using the template in **APPENDIX 2**, create your own “Tree of Options” for one or more of the career fields you identified through your self-assessments.

Now that you have your “Tree of Options”; or perhaps you have a grove of “Trees” because you are considering several possible paths, you need to gather information about the different possibilities that you have identified. As you explore you may also add new options to your tree.

By following the career exploration steps in this chapter, you’ll begin to understand employer’s needs, the requirements for specific jobs, and which careers are in demand in your area of interest. Obtaining realistic and accurate information about a wide range of industries and specific occupations will give you the information you need to determine your viable options and make informed decisions about your career goals. You’ll need to gather information and answer questions about:

- Industry trends
- Job descriptions
- Education and training
- Fastest-growing jobs
- Industry key words
- Certifications and licenses
- Job titles
- Work environments
- Career paths
- Salary ranges

To answer these questions, you will need to do some research, but where do you begin?

Resources and Methods for Exploring the World of Work

There are a wide variety of resources and methods for exploring career options and the world of work. Begin your process by gathering information from online resources and books. Then you can use that knowledge to begin conducting informational interviews, job shadowing, doing internships and volunteering, taking a class, and researching companies to further your understanding.

As you explore these resources use the Occupational Exploration Worksheet in **APPENDIX 3** to track your findings and prioritize your options.



EXERCISE Occupational Exploration Worksheet

Use the online resources listed on the next page to complete an Occupational Exploration Worksheet for at least three of your “best fit” occupations.

Online Resources:

- Your first stop for exploring career options should be the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH): <http://www.bls.gov/oooh>. The OOH, compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, describes the job duties, working conditions, education and training requirements, earnings levels, current employment levels, projected employment change, and employment prospects for hundreds of occupations. Each profile also includes a list of related occupations and sources for additional information. The OOH homepage allows you to select occupations by pay, education level, growth rate, and number of new jobs projected.
- Under the “More Info” tab on the OOH site, you will find a link to the O*NET: <http://www.onetonline.org>. This site is similar to the OOH but has more detail on the traits, characteristics and skills needed for a wide range of jobs. In addition, from the O*NET homepage you can find occupations by Skill Area, Industry, STEM, Green Economy, Growth Rate and “Bright”/ Emerging Careers. Through the “Crosswalks” section of the site you can identify occupations related to your areas of interest or do an Advanced Search to find occupations that use a specific skill, ability, tool, or software.
- Return to your CareerZone account where you can explore job families, clusters, and occupation listings: <https://www.cacareerzone.org/clusters>.
- California CareerCafe is both a website and an app. The “Explore Pathways” page presents California’s 15 leading industry sectors. You can chose a sector that appeals to you and find videos, resources, and links to career options within that sector: <http://www.cacareercafe.com/explore/>.
- National Career Development Association Occupational Trends provides timely articles on occupational trends: http://ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/occupational_trends.
- The Sloan Career Cornerstone Center is an expansive resource center for anyone interested in exploring career opportunities in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, computing, and medicine: <http://www.careercornerstone.org>.
- The AmeriCorps Alums website has a variety of webinars that provide information on a range of careers in the public, private, nonprofit, and international sectors that may be of interest to AmeriCorps members (scroll to the middle of the page to the “Exploring Careers” listings): <http://www.americorpsalums.org/?CareerWebinars>.
- You can also do a Google search using keywords for occupations, skills, or areas of interest. For tips on how to conduct effective Google searches go to: https://www.google.com/intl/en_u/insidesearch/tipstricks/all.html.
- To identify what certifications or licenses are required for specific occupations the CareerOneStop site offers two search tools: <http://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/training/find-certifications.aspx> and <http://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/training/find-licenses.aspx>.
- If you are looking to pursue a career in teaching, <http://www.teach.org> is a good source of information on certification requirements.



Public Libraries

Your local public library has a wealth of career-related information including career related books, publications about specific companies and industries, and local newspapers and business journals, which can all help you learn more about careers. In addition, libraries typically have public computers and free access to the Internet. Some even have career centers with staff trained to help you explore careers and conduct a job search. After all, librarians are the original “search engines”! To find a public library near you visit: <http://www.publiclibraries.com/california.htm>

Job Boards

Search for job openings for some of the occupations that interest you. Read through a dozen or so to identify themes, phrases and key words. To analyze job descriptions easily use a site like TagCrowd (<http://tagcrowd.com>) to create a word cloud of a job description. This will quickly give you a visual representation of what is most prominently mentioned.

Informational Interviews

Talking to people about their careers and what they do in their jobs is one of the most powerful ways to explore the world of work and build your professional network for future career development. Richard N. Bolles, author of *What Color is Your Parachute*, said, “The most dependable and up-to-date information on jobs

and careers is found by talking to people.” This involves getting out into the field to learn what an occupation is really like. It serves as a reality test and when you bring your curiosity to the conversation, it will give you insights into how well that type of work would fit for you.

An informational interview is a focused 15-30 minute conversation with a professional who is working in a job, career field, or organization that interests you. These discussions can be in person, over the phone or through email, although an in person interview is recommended if at all possible. The interview allows you to learn about what your contact does in their job, what their career path has been, and ask other questions to learn more about their occupation. As you listen, you can uncover how people feel about their work and how that relates to your own values, personality, interests, and skills. In addition, hearing about an occupation first hand tests your assumptions and expectations against the reality of the job. Conducting an informational interview is about getting an inside look at an occupation and gathering information about a particular industry- it is not about asking for a job. It does however build connections with organizations and industries you may want to work in which is helpful if there ever is an opening that fits you.

Follow These Steps For Conducting A Successful Informational Interview

Developing Contacts for Informational Interviews

Places to find names for interviews are your family, friends, neighbors, current/former supervisors and co-workers, Program Manager, Grantee Board Members, AmeriCorps Alumni (find them on LinkedIn or the AmeriCorps Alumni website: <http://www.americorpsalums.org>), professional associations, service organizations, college alumni groups, social networking websites (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook), company websites, professional and trade associations, and business publications.

Asking for an Informational Interview

As an AmeriCorps member, you have a built-in advantage—professionals are typically open to helping people who are exploring career options, especially those who are giving back to their community through service.

- You can phone or email a person directly to set up the informational interview (see sample emails and telephone scripts in **APPENDIX 4**).
- State the purpose of your contact by introducing yourself as an individual who is investigating career fields in this person's professional area.
- Explain how you got the person's name; don't be afraid to "name drop".
- Schedule a time for the person to meet you in person or talk on the phone.
- Be respectful of the person's work setting and ask if it is a good time to discuss scheduling an appointment.
- Remember to express appreciation.
- Be ready for the possibility that not everybody is going to say yes. If your contact is not able to see you for an informational interview, respect his/her decision. Thank your contact for their time and ask if there is someone else they can refer you to for more information.

Best case scenario: Your contact answers, you make plans to get coffee, and you have a great meeting with them. But what if he or she doesn't answer? Wait a week, then send a follow-up email.

You'd be shocked at the number of people who don't respond to your first query but do get back to you after the second. Perhaps your first email just arrived at an inopportune time to answer and was then forgotten.

However, if you've sent the second email and you still hear nothing, move on to your next prospect. There are plenty of people who will talk to you, so don't spend too much energy chasing down one person.

Preparing for an Informational Interview

- Know what type of information you are seeking. Prepare a list of questions (see suggested questions in **APPENDIX 5**).
- Learn as much as you can ahead of time about the career field, as well as the organization and the work role of the person you are interviewing.
- Think through what you want to say about yourself (remember your 30-Second Introduction). Be ready to answer questions about your areas of interests, previous experiences, and future plans. If you are unsure about your future career goals, it is all right to say you are exploring your options, but you should be able to identify some general, tentative goals.
- You may want to send a resume beforehand or have one ready in case it is requested.
- Dress professionally.
- Bring paper and pen.



EXERCISE Informational Interviews

Conduct at least 3 Informational Interviews and use the Occupational Exploration Worksheet in **APPENDIX 3** to track your findings.

Conducting an Informational Interview

- Be on time.
- Offer to pay if you are meeting someone at a coffee shop.
- Reiterate your reasons for meeting.
- Ask open-ended questions; do more listening than talking.
- Don't mistake informational interviewing for job search interviewing. **DO NOT ASK FOR A JOB!**
- Take brief notes during the interview. Afterwards, try to remember more of the details and record these as well. **Do not be tied to your list of questions, let the interview have a natural flow.**
- At the end of the interview ask for additional referrals, websites or professional associations.
- Be respectful of the interviewee's time.
- Avoid overly personal questions.

Following up after an Informational Interview

- If you made a commitment to send information such as an article, a reference or some other document, follow up in a timely manner.
- Send a thank you letter or e-mail which conveys: Appreciation for time, referrals and information; Compliments regarding knowledge, expertise and helpfulness; Use of the information or how the meeting assisted you; Interest in keeping in contact regarding your progress. A sample is provided in **APPENDIX 6**.
- Be sure to record the person's name and contact information, as they are now part of your network. You may also want to connect with them on LinkedIn, just be sure to send a personalized connection request.

- Send the person updates to let them know how you've implemented their advice and how your career is progressing.

Job Shadowing

After you've conducted an informational interview with someone, if you still feel like this occupation would be a good fit, you may want to see if you can shadow the person you talked to or someone else in the field. Job Shadowing is a process where you can go to work with a person and observe them doing their daily tasks. In some cases, you may even be able to help with some of the work. This is an excellent way to see how much you will enjoy working at that job and in that work environment.

Internships and Volunteering

Internships (both paid and unpaid) and volunteer work can be excellent ways to immerse yourself in a job, industry, or work environment to evaluate whether or not it is a good fit. Perhaps you are considering a career in nursing because of your interest in science so you take on a volunteer position at your local hospital only to find that you don't enjoy being around people all day so perhaps laboratory work would be a better fit for you. Or you do an internship as a student aid at an elementary school and find that while helping sixth graders complete their math homework is boring, you love helping the kindergartners learn their numbers. Other career development benefits gained from internships and volunteering include:

- Building confidence in your skills.
- Developing new skills.
- Reality testing as you try out a career option.
- Creating a bridge to a career position.
- Making connections.

Many organizations offer internships and/or opportunities to volunteer. Check out some of these websites to uncover an opportunity that interests you:

Internships

- <http://Internships.com>
- <https://www.internbound.com>
- Department of Labor internships: <https://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/internship/>

Volunteering

- <http://Volunteermatch.com>
- <http://Pointsoflight.org>
- California Governor's Office on Service and Volunteerism: <http://www.californiavolunteers.org>
- Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE): <http://www.score.org>



"It's your life, take the time to discover occupations that match your interests, skills, and lifestyle goals so you can pursue a career path that works for you."

John Merris-Coots, Program Director,
California Career Resource Network.

Take a Class

There are an unlimited number of classes you can take to build your knowledge and skills. These classes also can be a way to determine if the subject matter of a career holds your interest. There are a variety of options for taking a class from traditional community college courses, to adult learning programs to online options from sites such as Lynda.com, Udemy, or Coursera.

Research Companies that Match Your Values

As you explore career options you may find that things such as the work environment and mission of the organization are more important to you than the job tasks. If this is the case, then researching companies that match your values may be a good use of your time. For information on how to identify companies that you might be interested in working for see the section in Chapter 5 about Direct Outreach to Employers.

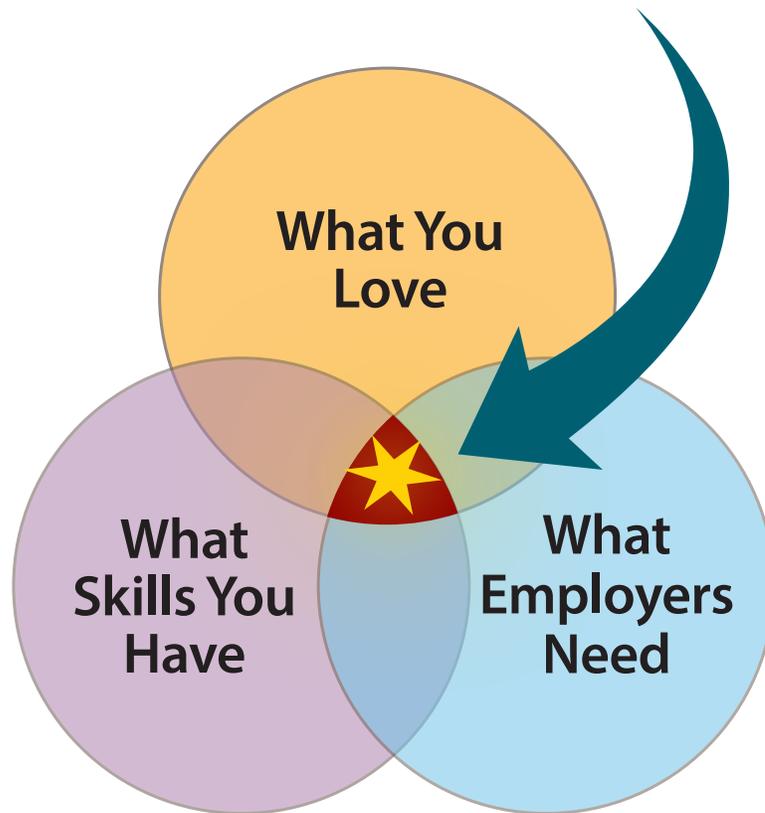
Regardless of where you begin, as you explore, don't lose track of the values, personality preferences, interests, motivated skills, and other factors that are most important to you. Be true to yourself!



BEFORE YOU MOVE ON...

In an ideal world your career will land you in the “sweet spot” where what you love, what you’re skilled in, and what employers need all meet, but that coming together doesn’t happen by accident. Planning, preparation, and persistence will be necessary to make it all happen. Luckily, you have this Guide, and the support of your supervisor, program manager and the AmeriCorps network to help you!

Finding the sweet spot





“

A goal is a
dream with a
deadline.

Napoleon Hill
American Writer

”

Chapter 4. Get Focused

Make Decisions and Create an Action Plan

Reflect on what you've learned so far about yourself and about the world of work from the previous three chapters. You've likely gained valuable insights and gathered a great deal of information. This knowledge of yourself and the world of work will allow you to make sound decisions as you move forward with your career planning. Hopefully, you've taken some time to reflect on what excites you AND what is realistic. At this point in the process, for some, the path forward is crystal clear but for others the seemingly endless possibilities may feel overwhelming.

Making a Career Decision

Integrating the results of your self-assessments with the information you gathered in the career exploration phase will help you set specific and realistic goals so you can begin to own your career development. You will want to consider what you are able to do and what you are willing to commit to. This choice doesn't have to be your career for the next 30 years, just focus on the next positive step. You can, and will, make adjustments along the way; remember it is common to go through the Career Development Process multiple times in your life. Most people will have 12-15 jobs over their lifetime and it is not uncommon for someone to have 2-3 career changes.



EXERCISE Decision-Making Models

Looking at the careers that you are still considering from your "Tree of Options" (or "Trees" as it may be), for your time after AmeriCorps, put each of these careers through the test of one or more of the decision-making models below (worksheets for each model can be found in **APPENDIX 7**). They are all effective so select a model that works best for you. Use this model to narrow your options and select a path forward.

- **Decision Making Tools**
 - Career Options Evaluator Tool
 - Pros and Cons List
 - SWOT Analysis
 - You may also want to utilize the Thinking Caps Decision Making Model from California Career Café which can be downloaded as a PDF from this link: <http://www.cacareercafe.com/start/decisions/>

As you move through the decision making process you may need to do additional self-assessment and/or delve more deeply into exploring the career options at the top of your list. There's no rush to make a decision so if you are feeling stuck take a break from thinking about it for a week and come back to it later with a fresh perspective. Ask others for input and feedback but remember to be true to yourself!

Create an Action Plan with S.M.A.R.T. Goals

At this point, you may have decided on a very specific career path (e.g. I want to be a high school counselor in a rural community in northern California) or you may have narrowed your options down to a specific sector, industry, or type of work (e.g. I want to work in the public sector on projects that create more livable urban communities). If you have a very specific path that's wonderful! If you've become clearer about your path forward but you don't have a specific job title in mind that's wonderful too!

Once you've chosen a path to pursue, whether it is very specific or a bit more general, you'll need to create a plan of action to help you get from where you are today to where you want to be. Your Career Action Plan states your career goal and breaks down this big goal into small, doable steps or mini-goals. An effective plan will be in writing and have specific steps and deadlines. Multiple studies have shown that when we write down our goals we are much more likely to achieve them.

The most helpful goals are S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Realistic, and Time-Bound) goals. Use the guidelines below to ensure your goals are S.M.A.R.T.

Set "S.M.A.R.T" Goals

- Specific: What exactly do you want to accomplish?
- Measurable: How will you measure your progress?
- Action-Oriented: How will you make it happen?
- Realistic: Is your goal attainable?
- Time-Bound: In what timeframe will you reach the goal?

"If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else."

LAURENCE J. PETER

NOT-SMART AND SMART GOAL EXAMPLES

✗ **Not SMART** - Learn how to write grants.

✓ **SMART** - Register for the "Going After Grants" workshop on May 3, 2019" at the Nonprofit Resource Center, report what was learned to my team by June 1, 2019 and apply the relevant concepts while helping my supervisor complete the Irvine Foundation grant application.

✗ **Not SMART** - "Be less defensive when people give me feedback."

✓ **SMART** - "At my monthly progress meetings, ask my supervisor for feedback on what I am doing well and what suggestions they have for how I could improve. At the end of each meeting write this information in a notebook and try out the suggestions. Each week record what worked and what didn't in my notebook. Seek additional input at my next monthly progress meeting."



EXERCISE Goals to Reality

Use the Career Action Plan in **APPENDIX 8**, or create your own, to map out the steps you will take to turn your goal into reality.

Using your Career Action Plan as a tool to communicate your goals, take the initiative to schedule a time to talk with your supervisor, program manager, and others to enlist their support and ideas. Post your Career Action Plan on your refrigerator, your bulletin board or some other spot where you will see it daily. This will allow you to keep your goals in focus!

Now, work your plan. Initially, it may seem overwhelming but take that first step. Your Career Action Plan is a living document so it can, and will, be updated and revised as you continue to move forward. Don't forget to build in rewards as motivators to complete tasks and remember to celebrate your successes along the way!



BEFORE YOU MOVE ON...

Always Have a "Plan B"

Even with the best planning, life is unpredictable, and so are careers. Putting all your eggs in one basket doesn't leave you with many options if Plan A falls apart. The disappointment can be a blow to your self-esteem and sap your energy to move forward with your career. However, if you've already created a fallback plan, you can move on to your next best option more quickly. Plan B may involve taking a job that doesn't match with your dream job but is in the same industry. For example, working as an office manager in a veterinary office rather than becoming a veterinarian. It might mean taking a job that is a step down but that allows you to gain valuable supervisory skills that, once mastered, will make you more marketable for your goal of acquiring a management job. A Plan B could even involve having to continue your education in your home town versus attending a more prestigious program in another city so you can be on hand to help care for an elderly relative. Plan B may even involve enrolling in an additional year of AmeriCorps service. If you have a fallback plan you'll be more likely to adapt and be resilient if the job search doesn't go your way, you aren't accepted into the graduate program you thought was a slam-dunk, or life puts an unexpected obstacle in your path.

It is very important to remember that having to pursue Plan B doesn't mean you've failed or have to give up on Plan A. It just means you have to take a different route than you had originally planned, which when it comes to careers is a very common occurrence. Just ask around!

"A goal without a plan is just a wish"

ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPERY

“

The results you achieve will be in direct proportion to the effort you apply.

Denis Waitley, American Writer

”



Chapter 5. Pursue Your Path – Job Search

If you've jumped ahead to this chapter, STOP! Return to the beginning of the Guide.

There are no shortcuts in the career development process and the information presented in the previous chapters is critical to launching a successful job search that will lead you to a satisfying and sustainable career. Career Development is like farming- if you don't care for the soil and nurture the seeds while they grow, you won't have any crops to harvest.

Looking for a job is a job in and of itself. It is filled with ups and downs, ambiguity and uncertainty. It requires persistence, motivation, optimism, risk-taking and a bit of luck. However, if you take charge of your job search, use proven techniques, and remain determined, you can accelerate the process of finding your next opportunity. Think of other times when you've persisted through something difficult- conquering all the levels of a video game, saving money to buy a large ticket item such as a new phone or car, or finishing finals in high school or college. Use these successes as inspiration for tackling your job search. Consider your job search an opportunity rather than a burden and you'll be more likely to enjoy the process AND find satisfying work.

Deciding at what point during your year of service you should begin applying for positions can be a challenge. You've made a pledge to complete your service term, which is important to honor, and at the same time you will likely want to minimize the time between the end of your service term and your next position. A typical job search can take from six weeks to six months; a standard that is often applied is that for every \$10,000 you want in salary, you will need to search for 1 month (so for a \$30,000 position your search might take 3 months). However, there are many factors that can impact the length of your search- some of which are out of your control but many of which are in your control:

- The current state of the economy both nationally and in the city or cities where you are looking.
- The number of jobs available in your field in the location you are interested in (there are very few marine biologist jobs in Kansas!).
- Your flexibility in moving to another location.
- How in demand your skills are.



- How open you are to a range of opportunities, job titles, and work environments.
- The quality of your job search materials (resume, cover letter).
- The degree to which you do strategic networking.
- Your interviewing skills.
- And MOST importantly, the amount of time and energy you devote to your search.

As you undertake your search and begin talking to employers about possible openings, you may want to say something along the lines of, “I am completing a year of AmeriCorps Service in (state month) so I am interested in exploring opportunities with your organization is this a good time to apply”? If you do receive a job offer before your term of service has been completed, let the employer know that you are obligated to complete your service but are very interested in the position and are hopeful that you can arrange a start date to coincide with the completion of your term.

Preparing for Your Search

Before you can begin applying to positions, it is important to spend some time creating or updating your resume, drafting a basic cover letter, preparing your references, developing a portfolio if appropriate, updating your online brand, and preparing your 30-Second Introduction. Taking the time at the outset to develop these tools will not only help you feel confident that you are making the best impression possible on potential employers but you will also be building your confidence along the way and setting the stage for successfully applying to and interviewing for positions.

Resumes

Your resume is often the first impression an employer will have of you; it serves as your first work sample. An effective resume is a focused, concise summary of your qualifications, customized for the specific position for which you are applying. It serves as a marketing tool that presents your accomplishments, strengths and experience to prospective employers. Remember, the primary purpose of a resume is to get you an interview!

There is no one “right” way to create your resume, but there are some general guidelines and strategies that will help you write a resume that catches the reader’s attention and presents your experience in a compelling manner.

Creating a new or updating an old resume may seem like an insurmountable task, but don’t be intimidated. Begin to conquer your fear with these three steps:

➤ **Seek inspiration:** Ask friends, colleagues, AmeriCorps Alums, mentors, supervisors, and program managers if they are willing to share their resumes with you. This is a great way to view a variety of different formats (and see how others have developed their careers!). You could also visit a bookstore or library and browse through the resume books to identify resume formats and phrasing that appeal to you. Top resume writing books are listed in the Recommended Reading at the end of the Guide. You can also look at resume samples online but be wary of poor examples!



“Use your resume as a record of successes or ‘homeruns,’ giving quantifiable details about how you brought value to the organization.”

Mary Konow,
owner of MK Career Designs

► **Break the task up into smaller steps:** Take each section and work on it over several short sessions. If you take it in stages over a few days or a couple weeks you'll have a completed resume in no time.

► **Get organized:** Gather all the facts before you sit down to write your first draft, including job titles and dates, contact information for employers, salary history, previous job descriptions, past performance reviews, educational history, certifications, licenses, training completed, technical skills, honors and awards, and anything else that you think will help you create your resume. The Job Search Data Worksheet included in **APPENDIX 9** is a valuable tool to use.



EXERCISE Job Search Data Worksheet

Complete the Job Search Data Worksheet in **APPENDIX 9**.

Resume Formats

Select the right format for you, your industry, and your experience.

Chronological

A Chronological resume lists and describes your work history in reverse chronological order with your most recent position first. Considered the most traditional resume style, it is straightforward and clearly presents your background to the reader. A chronological resume is best when:

- You are looking for a position in the same field as your current position.
- You want to highlight your most recent employer.
- Your most recent position highlights the skills and qualifications required for the position you are applying to.
- Your career path shows steady progress and increasing responsibilities.
- Your work history has been consistent with minimal gaps in employment.

Functional

A Functional resume focuses on your areas of skill or expertise (e.g., teaching, public relations, customer service, leadership, communication) rather than describing your work experience for each job. It also includes a short employment history section. A functional resume is best when:

- You are changing careers and want to focus on your transferable skills.
- You have been employed by the same organization for a long time.
- Your work history contains gaps in employment.
- You have had a wide range of jobs that don't point to a specific career path.
- The skills and experience you want the employer to notice are from a long time ago.

Resume Tips and Guidelines

Employers spend just 10-15 seconds to initially review your resume, quickly scanning the document to find past responsibilities and accomplishments. To improve your chances of capturing their attention, review these tips and guidelines, which apply to any resume format:

- Your resume should focus on where you want to go rather than documenting where you've been.
- Have a foundational resume that you can customize for each position.
- Always ask yourself if what you are putting in your resume is relevant to the position you are applying for. If it's not, it is just taking up space and will distract the reader from more relevant information.
- Consider the Field of Work
The industry you are targeting will influence the style of your resume. Applying for a job as a data analyst with an insurance company would call for a traditional, straightforward resume. On the other hand, applying for a marketing assistant position with a technology start up would call for a resume that showcased your creative flair. Your resume should communicate your understanding of the job and the industry so make sure you're communicating the right message.
- One page or two? It depends!
If you are just starting out in your career and can make the case for why you are a good fit for the job in an easy to read one page resume, then there is no need to have two pages. However, if you have relevant information to share and it won't fit on one page then two pages is perfectly fine. If you are only using a few lines on the second page, do some editing and reformatting so you can stick to a one-page format. Otherwise, don't worry if you are only using ¼ to ½ of the second page.
- How far back to go?
Typically a resume will present your past ten to fifteen years of experience unless there is something further back that is particularly relevant to the position.
- Always put the most important information first to ensure the reader sees it.
- Refer to the exercises and self-assessments you completed earlier in this Guide. These can provide words and phrases that can be used in your resume.
- Emphasize accomplishments rather than job duties. Accomplishment Statements will help make your resume different from someone else with the same position description. Accomplishment Statements, not fancy graphics, bright paper, or other unnecessary flair are what make your resume stand out in a crowd.
- Quantify information whenever possible using numbers, percentages, and dollar amounts.
- Include keywords relevant to the position and industry. If you've done the work in the previous chapters- analyzing position descriptions, informational interviewing, and occupational research- you should already have a list of these.
- Do not use abbreviations or acronyms unless you are absolutely certain the reader knows what the abbreviations mean. Remember that someone without industry knowledge, such as a recruiting specialist, may be screening your resume.
- Make your resume easy to read.
 - Use plenty of white space.
 - Use bullets to highlight key points.
 - Use a readable font and size- Arial or Calibri 11pt fonts are good choices; 12pt font for section headers, and 14pt font for your name. Avoid using anything below 11pt font!
- Indent or double space to separate sections.

- Be selective and strategic with your use of color, fonts, and graphics.
- Do not use personal pronouns such as “my” or “I”.
- Keep your verb tense consistent. Use present tense for your current work and past tense for previous positions.
- Make sure your resume is clean and professional looking (e.g., no hand corrections, misspellings or grammatical errors.) Use spell check AND ask someone to proofread your resume. Sometimes a word can be spelled correctly but it is the wrong word!
- If you are submitting a hard copy of your resume use high quality paper in light tones, such as white, ivory, or light gray. Use the same paper for your cover letter, references or any other attachments to your resume.
- If you are submitting an electronic version of your resume it should be in PDF format and use a professional subject line if sending it in an email (e.g. Sam Avakian Resume for Program Assistant Position).
- Have your resume critiqued by someone knowledgeable about your field.
- Every time you send out your resume, you need to re-evaluate. You may need to shift the order of the text or rewrite certain sections (more later in this chapter on customizing your resume).
- Leave off personal information and hobbies unless they are particularly relevant to the position. For example, if you spend your time fostering kittens and are applying for a position with the SPCA.
- Be truthful and don't exaggerate.

note

AmeriCorps Career Webinars:
 “Translating AmeriCorps onto Your Resume”: <http://www.americorpsalums.org/?CareerWebinars>

Tips and Guidelines

To get started on your resume, follow the 6 Step Resume Writing Process below. Have your Job Search Data Worksheet handy so you can access the information you've already gathered, which may be needed on your resume.

1. Open a new Word document. Avoid using resume templates. Although they are attractive, they often don't allow you to customize the information, they force you to include sections that aren't appropriate for your experience, and they can be difficult to update.
2. Set your margins to .75 at the top and sides, .5 at the bottom.
3. Set your font to 11pt Arial or Calibri. Anything smaller will be difficult on the reader's eyes. Your name can be in 14pt and section headers can be in 12pt.
4. Type your contact information at the top: It is becoming more common to not list your street address but just your city, state, phone, email, and LinkedIn URL. If your school address is temporary or you are searching for jobs outside of the area in which you currently live, consider using both a local and permanent address.
5. Decide which format- chronological or functional- best fits your situation.
6. Now list and complete the components that you need to have in your resume, which may include:
 - Objective: On modern resumes, the Objective is completely optional. You do not need to write that fluff sentence or two about why you want the job. Your interest in the job can be expressed in your cover letter. If you just can't give up the idea of having an Objective on your resume, simply list the job title and job number and save those extra lines of space for more important information.

- Summary of Qualifications: (see Summary of Qualifications Guide in **APPENDIX 10**).
- Experience (paid work, internships, extracurricular leadership roles, or significant volunteer experience can be included):
 - For a Chronological Resume starting with your most recent position list organization, location (city and state only), job title, start and end dates in months and years. Under each job list bullet points that are accomplishment based to show what you did in each position. (Use the Accomplishment Statements Guide in **APPENDIX 11** and list of Action Words in **APPENDIX 12**). You may also want to review the “Choose Your Words” information on California Career Café: <http://www.cacareercafe.com/prepare/resume/>
 - For a Functional Resume, select the 3-4 skill categories you want to use and write 4-5 Accomplishment Statements for each category. Then add a Work History section where you can list your job titles, employer, location, and start and end dates in months and years.
- Education, Certifications, Licenses, and Training – List your formal education first, including name of institution, and location, degree earned, major, minor, educational honors/awards, study abroad, (GPA only if you graduated within the past two years and it was 3.0 or higher). In some instances, listing relevant course work completed may be appropriate. Add any relevant certifications, licenses, or training.
- Other components might include: Honors and Awards, Volunteer Service, Languages, Publications, Professional Affiliations, Activities, and Interests and Hobbies (but only if they are relevant to the position!).
- Do not include References on your resume.

You don't even need to say “References Available Upon Request.”

SAMPLE CHRONOLOGICAL AND FUNCTIONAL RESUMES ARE FOUND IN APPENDIX 13.



EXERCISE

Draft Resume

Create a draft resume and seek feedback.

Cover Letters

While a resume presents the facts, a cover letter, (sometimes referred to as a letter of interest or letter of intent), is a chance for you to show your personality, not to mention your written communication skills. Some employers place a great deal of weight on your cover letter and some employers won't even bother reading it. Unfortunately, you never know what the approach will be of the person reading your materials, so you have to create a strong cover letter that is tailored to each position. To write a great cover letter follow these guidelines:

- While your resume can be two pages, your cover letter should only be one page.
- Use the same header information, font, and margins for your cover letter that you use on your resume. If you are submitting hard copies, use the same paper. This will allow you to present a unified package.
- Use a standard business letter format with date and address of employer.
- The ideal situation is to have the name of a specific person that you can address the cover letter to. However, if, after conducting some research, you are not sure who to address the letter to, you can address it to “Dear Human Resources”, “Dear Hiring Committee”, or “Dear Recruiter”. Do not use “To Whom It May Concern” or Dear Sir or Madam”. These are outdated terms.

- A three paragraph format is a good formula to follow for the text of the letter:

Paragraph 1: State the position you are applying for, what interests you in the position and/or organization, and the name of anyone who referred you to the position or who you've had previous contact with at the organization.

Paragraph 2: The information in this paragraph should explain why you are a good fit for the specific position you are applying for and why the organization should hire you. Try focusing on three core parts of the job and telling brief stories (1-2 sentences) that highlight your experience, skills, and personal attributes that are relevant to the job requirements. Show how you can contribute to the organization's success.

Paragraph 3: Keep this to two or three sentences that express your enthusiasm for the position, address next steps such as an interview, and thank the reader for their time and consideration of your application. Also, indicate how you can be contacted.

- Have an appropriate closing signature such as "Sincerely" or "Best Regards" and be sure to sign the letter.
- Proofread carefully as correct spelling and grammar are critical!

SAMPLE COVER LETTERS ARE FOUND IN APPENDIX 14.

note

AmeriCorps Career Webinars:
"Write a Cover Letter that Won't Get Ignored": <http://www.americorpsalums.org/?CareerWebinars>



EXERCISE

Cover Letter

Create a cover letter and seek feedback.

References

The purpose of a List of References is to provide a potential employer with a list of people who can verify and elaborate on your professional experience and personal character. Employers will rarely ask for actual letters of recommendation but if you have one AND it is current and relevant to the position, you might consider providing it to the employer.

- Like the cover letter, the reference page should match the resume header and font.
- Have 3-5 work-related references who can address your skills and experience in a work setting. References should not be close friends or family.
- While your references can be current or previous supervisors, you also might want to include a co-worker, a colleague from another organization that you interacted with, a customer or a client, or even a teacher.
- Place references on a separate sheet of paper from your resume and only distribute when asked.
- ALWAYS contact someone to ask if they are willing to serve as a positive reference before listing them as a reference!
- Share your resume with your references and provide them with information on the types of jobs to which you are applying.
- If an employer notifies you that they will be checking your references, let your references know to expect a call and share with them why you are interested in the position and why you think you are well qualified.

SAMPLE LIST OF REFERENCES CAN BE FOUND IN APPENDIX 15.



EXERCISE References

Create a list of references.

Portfolio

In some fields such as graphic design or event planning, having a portfolio (a collection of your best work) to share with a potential employer can be extremely valuable in demonstrating your skills and capabilities; sometimes you are even required to have a portfolio. There are online tools you can use to create a portfolio of your work such as cargocollective.com, dribbble.com, and carbonmade.com, but a hardcopy portfolio is also a useful tool. Your portfolio should be organized, visually appealing, and easy to understand. Follow these guidelines to create an effective portfolio:

- Put items in a loose-leaf binder.
- Use sheet protectors.
- If possible, keep a master copy of all work and use copies in the portfolio as an employer may want to keep items from your portfolio.
- Keep your portfolio to a manageable size: 5-15 pages.
- Omit page numbers—this provides you the freedom to rearrange as necessary.
- Use consistent headings and brief descriptions of all work samples.
- Use index tabs and/or title pages to separate sections.
- Use a computer to create all text.
- Use quality paper.

Your Online Brand

No longer just a fad, the use of social media in hiring is now standard practice. Employers use social media to communicate their brand to prospective employees and they encourage their employees to post job openings on their social media sites so that positions are well advertised and attract quality candidates. At the same time, job seekers use social media to showcase their accomplishments and network with other professionals. Developing a professional online presence can help you “brand” yourself and provide you access to a wide variety of networking and career opportunities.

Let’s focus on the three primary social media sites that will impact your job search:

LinkedIn, which has always been a professional platform, and **Facebook** and **Twitter** which employers use to promote their workplace and job seekers use to brand themselves and stay connected to people and organizations that interest them.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the world’s largest professional networking site, with over 500M users worldwide. It has become a must-have in the life of any professional and certainly for all job seekers. According to a Jobvite 2016 Recruiter Nation survey, 87% of recruiters use LinkedIn. Your profile serves as an online resume and the site is a powerful database to help you connect with like minded professionals, search for job openings, and conduct research on people and organizations as you prepare for informational and job interviews. With a strong profile and a strategic approach to making connections, you will have a competitive advantage.

LinkedIn provides easy to follow instructions on how to create an account, develop your profile, and begin connecting to friends and colleagues. Here are some helpful tips:

- Before building your own profile, read other's profiles to get an idea of how to create your own.
- Turn off the "notify my network of updates" while you are creating your profile or making a large number of changes.
- Fully develop your profile, using as many sections as are relevant to your experience, as this will maximize your chance of showing up in a hiring manager's search.
- Create a personalized LinkedIn URL for use on your resume.
- Make sure your profile is public.
- Upload a professional looking head and shoulders profile picture in which you are looking at the camera and smiling.
- Have a clear, concise summary that communicates your brand and focuses on your experience, career goals, and interests.
- Create a professional headline that sums up your professional identity in a short phrase.
- Ensure your resume and LinkedIn profile mirror each other. You should summarize your work experience but your profile can also include more details on your accomplishments and projects. Your LinkedIn profile can be a bit more conversational and show your personality.
- Make social impact a part of your professional identity by adding your volunteer experience, causes you care about, and check the box that you are interested in doing skill based volunteering or serving on a nonprofit board.
- Connect with everyone you know- friends, family, current and previous co-workers, classmates, professors, AmeriCorps members and Alums- to expand your network. Always, customize the message for any connection request you send.
- Seek Endorsements and Recommendations and give them in return
- Add and prioritize relevant skills.
- Follow companies that interest you and maximize group affiliations (industry, school, AmeriCorps) that match your experience and interests.
- Publish status updates, comment on posts, ask questions in groups, engage with your connections and the companies you follow.

To Pay or Not to Pay: Having a free account on LinkedIn allows you to access a wide range of tools and until you have exhausted all of the free resources, it is probably unnecessary to pay for a Premium account.



EXERCISE LinkedIn Profile

Create a LinkedIn profile or update the profile you have by using the following resources:

Set up an account at <http://www.linkedin.com/start/join>

LinkedIn's Help Page will provide you with tips for developing your profile: <https://help.linkedin.com>

LinkedIn offers several helpful webinars on setting up your profile and getting the most out of LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/help/linkedin/answer/530?lang=en>



LinkedIn 101 for Young Adults: <https://linkedinforgood.linkedin.com/lifg-resources/linkedin-training-content>

LinkedIn's Official Cheat Sheet for Attracting Great Opportunities: <https://blog.linkedin.com/2017/february/17/-tips-for-building-a-great-linkedin-profile-career-expert>

LeisureJobs Ultimate LinkedIn Cheat Sheet is a comprehensive guide to creating an outstanding profile: <http://www.leisurejobs.com/staticpages/18285/the-ultimate-linkedin-cheat-sheet/>



► **Twitter**

Like your LinkedIn profile you can use Twitter to showcase your expertise, experience, and accomplishments only in a more concentrated form; like a mini resume. Follow industry leaders, organizations you are interested in, and recruiters in your field of interest. Also consider following career experts such as @dailymuse or @jobsearchamanda, and sending private notes to potential mentors. And of course follow AmeriCorps related handles such as @americorps, @americorps alums, @National Service, and @AmeriCorps Vista. This will allow you to monitor what is happening in your field, learn about job opportunities, and join Twitter chats. You can also retweet news from these organizations or tweet articles about your field that you find helpful, which shows engagement and enthusiasm. Remember to fill out your Twitter bio appropriately so people can get a sense of what you are all about and it's a good idea to include a link to your LinkedIn profile.

According to CareerBuilder.com

ONE in FIVE

employers use social networking sites to research job candidates and close to

59%

of them are influenced by your online presence.



► **Facebook**

As you begin your job search, you will need to decide if you are going to keep your Facebook profile purely personal- setting your privacy settings at the highest level- or leave your profile more open, understanding that anything that appears on your page is something that a potential employer might see. Some job seekers create separate personal and professional profiles, with the highest privacy settings on their personal account and a more career focused image on their professional account.

Just as you will need to consider whether or not to include religious and political affiliations or sexual orientation on your resume, you must consider whether you want this type of information to be available via social networking sites. One approach is that if you wish to only work for an employer with whom you can be openly religious and political then making that information available on your web page will make it more likely that you will land with an employer open to your identity and expression.

Across all social media platforms the goal is not to completely sanitize your personality but to put boundaries in place and manage your online presence so that potential employers see you as a professional who they want on their team.

Launching Your Search

Now that you've taken time to prepare the documents you'll need for your job search—resume, cover letter, references, portfolio, and online brand, you are ready to launch your search!

There are a variety of methods that are proven to be effective when undertaking a job search. This Guide will provide you with information on the most useful techniques including:

- Networking (“In Real Life” and online)
- Directly contacting potential employers
- Searching online job boards
- Attending Career Fairs
- Working with staffing agencies
- Reviewing printed job listings

You should use all of these techniques during your job search and each will be explored below. However, because 80% of all jobs are found through networking, this is how you should be spending the bulk of your time during your job search and this is where we will begin.

Networking

Dictionary.com defines networking as a “supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups that have a common interest”. As part of your job search process, networking involves getting your name and abilities out to the community where you wish to be employed; gathering valuable information on industries, companies and hiring authorities related to your field of interest; identifying people who may be in a position to offer you a job or lead you to others who can; and sharing your knowledge, resources, and support with those with whom you connect.

To advance in your career or be selected for an interview from a stack of resumes, being qualified is not always enough. Nearly 4 out of 5 jobs are filled through some form of networking. Therefore, your career success depends on having connections that can help you build bridges to your next opportunity. Networking is also the method by which you will uncover the “Hidden Job Market”, where a great many openings that will never be advertised on a public job site can be found. Here's an example of how networking can benefit you in the job search:

An Example of Networking in Action

- Anabelle shared with her supervisor that she is very interested in Urban Forestry...
- Anabelle's supervisor told her about an urban planning conference so...
- Anabelle decided to volunteer to help at the conference with registration...
- At the conference, Annabelle met 3 people who worked in urban forestry for different cities in California ...
- Anabelle followed up with these contacts after the conference and shared her resume with them along with her desire to secure a job in the San Francisco bay area working on urban forestry issues...
- One of her contacts put her in touch with a nonprofit that had just received funding for a new position...
- Anabelle reached out to the Executive Director of the nonprofit; she interviewed for the job and was hired!

Of course networking helps you with your job search, but more importantly it builds long-lasting connections, expands your knowledge, and increases your ability to get things done. Establishing and nurturing a strong professional network is THE most important fuel to power your long-term career success.

A great beginning point for networking is to revisit the people with whom you conducted informational interviews. Now that you are closer to the end of your year of service and are ready to launch your job search, you can reach back out to these contacts to provide them with an update and seek their input about possible job openings and suggestions for others to reach out to for networking. Hopefully, you have already connected to them via LinkedIn, so touching base may be easier.

In addition to this group of people who you have already established rapport with, try some of the suggestions below to expand your network, putting you in a position to meet new contacts and increasing your chances of uncovering job opportunities. While you might imagine you need to have high-powered, influential contacts for networking to be effective, the reality is that everyone you meet is connected to the world of work and can likely help you with information, suggest someone to talk to, or even share a job opening. In other words, don't pass up the opportunity to network with anyone!

In-Person Networking:

- Reach out to people you may naturally come in contact with given your AmeriCorps service including co-workers, peers, supervisors, program staff, grantees, and civic leaders.
- Connect with your local AmeriCorps Alumni Group. A list of chapters can be found at: <http://www.americorpsalums.org/?ActiveChapters>
- Engage in social activities and clubs such as a softball team, running group, or taking a weekend hike with the Sierra Club.
- Join a MeetUp Group: <https://www.meetup.com>. There's something for everyone from practicing a language to karaoke!
- Engage with those you come in contact with through daily activities such as standing in line at the coffee shop, a visit to the dentist, or your apartment complex property manager.
- Explore a hobby by taking a ceramics class, visiting an art show, attending a cooking demonstration or photography seminar.
- Attend workshops, seminars and conferences in your field. Even better than just attending these activities volunteer to help. Often volunteers will be given free attendance and if you ask to work at the registration table, you'll have the opportunity to meet lots of people!
- Serve as a volunteer with an organization that interests you or where you will find people dedicated to the same cause such as Habitat for Humanity or a Fun Run for Diabetes.
- Become active in Professional Associations. There is an association for every occupation; there's even an association for associations! A useful publication to find an association is National Trade and Professional Associations. You can also ask your networking contacts about the association(s) to which they belong.
- Participate in Affinity Groups- such as the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Sacramento Chamber's Metro Edge for young professionals, the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) or the National Society of Black Engineers, or a Chamber of Commerce mixer.
- Take a class to improve your skills such as a graphic design, communication, or writing course, or get involved in Toastmasters International where you can hone your public speaking skills.
- Attend a traditional "networking" event, if you must, but be aware that this may be the least effective use of your time as you find yourself surrounded only by other job seekers.

Struggle with Small Talk? Try These Conversation Starters:



What did you do today? Are you from this area?
 Have you lived in (name of town) long?
 What are you studying?
 What type of work do you do?
 What is your connection with (name of organization, event, person)?
 How do you know _____?
 What are your plans for this weekend?
 What brought you here today?
 How's your day going?

Online Networking

► **LinkedIn:** Begin with your first-degree connections to see who is in their network that you might want to connect with and see if they are willing to make an introduction or if you can use their name in reaching out to have a conversation. Also, tap into the AmeriCorps Alumni LinkedIn group, and other LinkedIn Groups such as your school's alumni group, or groups related to your field of interest. If you are applying for a job, check your LinkedIn connections to see if you have a first-degree or second-degree connection to someone at that organization who may be able to provide you with some insight into the position or perhaps even put in a good word for you.

► **Facebook:** Facebook is primarily used to project the brand you want employers to see but it can also be used to identify connections in specific companies. In the search bar type "Friends of my friends who work at 'Name of Company,'" or "Friends of my friends who live in 'Location'". This will generate a list of people that you can ask your friend to make an introduction to or follow up with directly.

When you are networking via social media remember to follow the same etiquette as networking in person. While you might tend to be less formal online because you are typically communicating with friends in this medium, remember that whenever you are communicating with a potential employer, you want to maintain your professionalism.

From the suggestions provided above, you are hopefully beginning to understand that networking is less about shaking as many hands as possible and more about making meaningful connections in a way that is authentically you. So if attending a "networking" event with a room full of strangers makes you nervous, don't worry you can still be a successful networker by engaging in your field of interest, attending events with a purpose such as a lecture or workshop, and never passing up an opportunity to connect with others whether at the gym, the line at the coffee shop, or dog obedience class.



EXERCISE Building Your Network

Take some time to think about building your professional network by completing the “My Network” worksheet in **APPENDIX 16**.

Now that you have a few ideas about the people, places and activities you can use to begin building your network, you may be wondering how to start reaching out? For some, networking comes easily. They are energized by talking with people and are comfortable reaching out to strangers. For others, the thought of networking makes them want to run and hide. If the mere mention of “networking” makes you cringe then think of it as simply connecting with like-minded people who you may want to work with now or in the future. Enlisting the help of a friend or fellow AmeriCorps member to attend events with you may ease your nervousness. Also, making a “warm” call (a mutual connection has put you in touch) to a networking contact is much easier for most people to make than a “cold” call.

For how to craft an email requesting a networking meeting or how to make a telephone call to a networking contact, you can modify the samples given in **APPENDIX 4** for requesting informational interviews or use the Networking Letter Samples in **APPENDIX 17**.

Despite your feelings about networking, people really do want to help and the more specific you can be with your request the better. Asking someone if they know of any job openings in the education field is a very broad request. On the other hand, sharing that you are interested in working with special education programs in the Ventura County school district and asking if they might have a connection there that you could talk with is a specific request to which your contact can more easily respond.

No matter what your feelings about networking, the following Do’s and Don’ts adapted from The Corporation for National and Community Service’s website will help you be successful in this critical aspect of the job search.

Do’s

- ✓ Ask people questions about them. By listening you can see how your work might intersect.
- ✓ Serve as a resource for others: let others know about projects, job openings, etc.
- ✓ Call or e-mail contacts you have been referred to; they may be waiting to hear from you.
- ✓ Let people know what you need
- ✓ Look out for what others need. It’s great to help people, and if you help them first, even better.
- ✓ Ask people for help with open-ended questions, like “How can we work together?”
- ✓ Collect and distribute business cards; make notes on the ones you collect to remember the context of where you met someone.
- ✓ Follow up with meetings and phone calls by sending thank-you notes (see sample in **APPENDIX 18**).
- ✓ Use a spreadsheet to keep track of all your networking activity (see Networking Activity Log in **APPENDIX 19**).

Don’ts

- ✗ Don’t ask for a lead from somebody then never follow up.

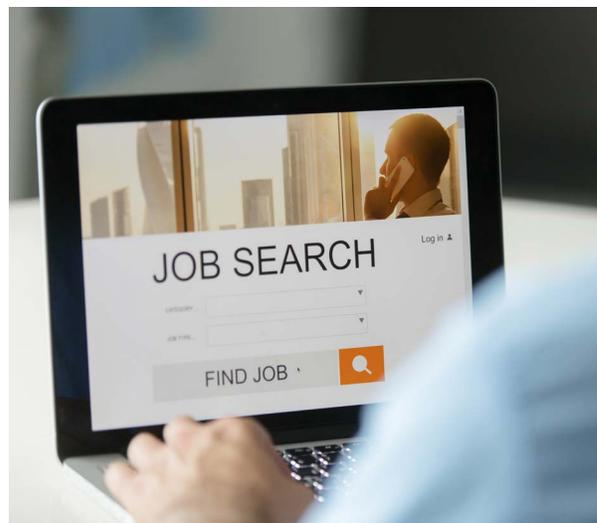
- ✗ Don't abuse the connection. When you use someone else's leads, you are not only representing yourself, but also their trust in you.
- ✗ Don't be one-sided. Share your connections when possible.
- ✗ Don't over-contact your lead. If you don't hear back within a week after a positive phone call or meeting, follow up with a polite e-mail.
- ✗ Don't over-promise, only commit to what you know you can do.

When you have a meeting with someone show up, bring a pen and a notebook, have your resume on hand should your contact ask for it, be positive and curious, ask open-ended questions, and always ask who else your contact suggests you reach out to. Networking is a two-way street. It is not just about what other's can give you, but also about connecting with people in a meaningful way and creating a mutually beneficial relationship.

Remember the people who have helped you! The professional network you build during your year of service will pay dividends throughout your career so nurture these relationships. Stay in touch, provide updates on your career progress, keep your connections in the loop when something good happens, send an article that you think your contact might find interesting, and offer to be a resource. In the future, these contacts may be people you work for, collaborate with on projects, call on to ask questions, or maybe one day they will even work for you!

note

The **AmeriCorps Alums website** offers several informative webinars on networking that are well worth your time to watch: <http://www.americorpsalums.org/?CareerWebinars>



Job Boards

Using online job boards will be an integral part of your job search. It can also be one of the most frustrating because you can become overwhelmed with the sheer number of sites and struggle to find positions that match your skills and experience. The Job Boards section of the Website and App Resources at the end of the Guide are a good place to start, but tap into your network and check relevant professional associations and publications to identify niche job boards that focus on positions specific to your occupation, career goals, and area of interest. For example, the AmeriCorps Alums Job Board: <http://americorpsalums-jobs.careerwebsite.com/jobseeker/search/results/> would be an excellent resource. Explore a variety of job boards and find the ones that are best for you. Here are some tips to help you more efficiently and effectively use job boards:

- Filter your search by job type, salary, location, keywords, and recently posted so you can spend your time looking at openings that are most relevant.
- Take advantage of job alert functions. Don't only rely on these alerts but use them to be instantly notified of new postings that match your qualifications.

- Avoid applying to every job at a particular company. Do your research to identify the positions and/or department that are most appropriate. Applying to a few closely related positions is fine but you'll lose credibility if you apply to everything.
- Research any employer listed before submitting a resume and any other personal information.
- If you see a job listed on a general job board such as Indeed, visit the company's website and apply directly through that site rather than through the general job board.
- Always submit your materials as a PDF so formatting stays in tack and if submitting via email use an appropriate subject line such as "Application for (Job Title)".
- If you've uploaded your resume to a job board, refresh it every few weeks, as many sites will direct recruiters to newly posted resumes first.

Direct Outreach to Employers

Finding open positions on job boards is standard practice in the job search but why not be proactive and reach out directly to employers to inquire about potential job openings? Expressing your strong desire to work for the organization and explaining how you would be an asset to the company might just grab the employer's attention.

Ideally, find a contact outside of human resources so you can get your resume in front of someone who might be in a position to hire you. If you send your information directly to a human resources representative, you are likely to get the standard reply, "Thank you for your interest. All of our positions are listed on our website." Search LinkedIn to see if you have a connection to anyone at the company or someone who might be able to help you make a connection to someone at the company.

Use these ideas and resources to develop a list of companies to target:

- Create an employer bucket list- where would you LOVE to work?
- Don't overlook small businesses. We all know the big name employers- Google, American Red Cross, Apple- but, according to the US Small Business Administration, small businesses currently provide 55% of all jobs and the number is growing rapidly.
- Explore the hundreds of employers who have committed to recruiting AmeriCorps Alums through the Employers of National Service initiative. For a searchable list of the over 460 participating employers throughout the US- from Accenture to Tetra Tech- visit: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/employers-national-service/search-network>.
- Read your local "Business Journal" and the "Book of Lists." Most major cities have a weekly Business Journal that has both online and print news. In these journals you will find a "Top 25 List". One week it will be the top 25 advertising firms, the next it will be the top 25 public sector employers. At the end of the year, the "Top 25" lists from the entire year are published in a "Book of Lists". This book is invaluable in identifying potential employers. Purchasing the book is quite expensive but most libraries and OneStop Career Centers will have a copy.

Search through some of the "Best of" lists of employers. For example,

50 Best Companies for Diversity: <http://www.blackenterprise.com/featured-stories/2016-50-best-companies-diversity/>.

100 Best Corporate Citizens: http://www.thecro.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/100best_1.pdf.

B-Corps meet high standards of social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability, and aspire to use the power of markets to solve social and environmental problems: <https://www.bcorporation.net/community/find-a-b-corp>

Fortune Magazine's 100 Best Companies to Work For: <http://beta.fortune.com/best-companies/>

Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index for LGBT employees: Human Rights Campaign Corporate Equality Index 2016: <http://www.hrc.org/campaigns/corporate-equality-index>

Working Mother Magazine Best Companies For Working Mothers: <http://www.workingmother.com/best-companies>

USE THE SAMPLE LETTER IN APPENDIX 20 AS A STARTING POINT FOR WRITING A LETTER TO YOUR IDEAL EMPLOYER.

Career Fairs

So you hear a career fair is coming to town and your excitement grows that this will be your chance to make contact with a real person from the company of your dreams. But when you get to the event there are long lines, when you do get to the front of the line and shake the recruiter's hand you don't know what to say, and most of the companies attending do not have jobs that match your skillset. Having reasonable expectations about what you can gain from a career fair and being properly prepared will reduce your frustration and improve your level of success. This 5-Step process adapted from Boise State's University Career Center will ensure you make a great impression:

➤ **Step 1:** Find out what companies are going to be at the fair. Almost every career fair will post a list of companies planning to attend the event (often with a link to their website). View this list and identify companies you're interested in speaking with at the fair.

➤ **Step 2:** Do some research on the companies you're interested in by browsing their website and looking at their careers page. While you are on their website, look for information about who they are, what they do, what needs they might have, what their mission and goals are, and what projects or initiatives they are working on. You may also want to look up some of their employees on LinkedIn to get a feel for the background and experience of their staff (you might even find someone at the company that you are connected to!). All this research will give you topics of conversation when you meet the company representative. One of the best things you can do at a career fair is to ask a few thoughtful questions specific to each company. This will allow you to have a real conversation with an employer. You don't want to just ask "So what jobs do you have?" or "What does your company do?" Instead write down specific questions that show you've taken the time to research the company. And always ask, "What are the next steps if I'm interested in a position with your company?"

➤ **Step 3:** Prepare your introduction and be ready to answer the company representative's questions. You can start with your 30-Second Introduction and think about how you might modify it for each specific employer that you want to speak with at the fair. Common questions an employer might ask include: "What do you know about our company?," "Tell me about yourself," "Tell me about an accomplishment that you are proud of," "What are your career goals?" and "What are your strongest skills?"

➤ **Step 4:** Prepare resumes to bring with you to the fair. Many people think you have to bring a general resume to a career fair, but that isn't true. Because you will have identified the companies you are interested in, researched those companies, and possibly identified positions that are available, you can create customized resumes for each employer. Not every employer will accept hard-copy resumes but it's always best to be prepared.

Don't forget that a career fair is a professional setting so appearance and presentation matter. You should dress as if you were going to an interview and bring a portfolio or bag (not a backpack) with pen and paper inside as well as your resumes. Plan to arrive early when employers are fresh and eager to meet people; as the day goes on their energy and enthusiasm (and yours!) is likely to fade. Be sure to collect business cards for anyone you talk to so you can follow up with any actions they suggested, and always send a thank you note to anyone you speak with.

To find career fairs in your area visit one of these websites:

http://www.edd.ca.gov/jobs_and_training/Job_Fairs_and_Workshops.htm

<http://jobfairsin.com>

<https://www.hirelive.com/calendar>

<https://www.nationalcareerfairs.com>

Rate Your Shake

Having just the right handshake- not too weak and not too strong- is key to making a great first impression with the company representative and for other aspects of your job search such as networking and interviewing. People are much more likely to remember you when you have a good, firm handshake.

Characteristics of a memorable handshake:

- *Stand up*
- *Make eye contact*
- *Grasp the full hand*
- *Share a greeting such as "Good to see you" or "Nice to meet you"*



Working with Staffing Agencies

Companies and organizations hire staffing agencies to find qualified candidates to fill temporary, temporary-to-permanent, contract, or direct hire part-time and full-time positions. It is not uncommon for an organization to use a staffing agency to "try out" an employee with the hope of hiring that person once they are able to evaluate their skills and abilities.

You can search for agencies through the National Association of Personnel Services: <http://www.recruitinglife.com/membership/membership-directory.cfm> or do a Google search to find local staffing agencies and reviews of their services. Some staffing agencies, such as OfficeTeam, Robert Half, AppleOne, Select Staffing, and Adecco, have a national network of offices. Other staffing agencies are more regional such as Pacific Staffing in the Sacramento region.

An advantage of working with a staffing agency is that some offer free access to online training. For example, OfficeTeam and Robert Half have over 8,000 online training courses to help you continue to develop your skills. In addition, many staffing agencies provide benefits to their placements.

Here is a “**Top 10 List**” of tips for working with staffing agencies provided by Pacific Staffing:

1. Understand the staffing firm’s recruitment process. You can research information on the firm’s website or call to inquire about the process; this will help set your expectations and ease frustration.
2. Ask if the firm is a good resource for your job search/experience; i.e.; in what types of positions/industries does the firm place candidates? Will it match your experience or what you are searching for?
3. Determine if the firm charges job seekers and if so if that’s right for you or if you want a firm that does not charge job seekers.
4. Listen to the direction/recommendations from the recruiter regarding updating or reformatting your resume, preparing for interviews, typical pay expectations for positions (though you can still ask the recruiter to negotiate on your behalf).
5. Let the recruiter know if you are working with other agencies; it is fine to do so as a job seeker, but the recruiters will need to know so they do not present you to the same position.
6. Be honest and upfront about your expectations for pay, how far you are willing to commute, what is important to you in a job, and what type of environment is best. This will allow the recruiter to better match you with the right company culture and position.
7. Ask for feedback when sent out on interviews.
8. Be as flexible as possible to interview via phone, Skype, or in person – many clients have tight schedules and can only set aside certain times to interview. This can be difficult if you are already working, but the candidate is usually the one that has to be more flexible at this point to the game.
9. Recruiters understand you are not stopping your own job search but let the Recruiter know you are looking and if you accept an offer, have the courtesy of notifying them you are no longer searching.
10. Keep in touch with recruiters via social media; you never know when you may need them again or can refer someone else. Many firms have cash or other incentive referral bonuses.

Printed Job Listings

Printed newspapers, journals, industry magazines, and newsletters, while much less popular these days, do still have job listings and can be a source for finding your next job. So if you have a few minutes, over your morning coffee or tea, take a few minutes to scan these types of publications to see if they offer up any job opportunities.

Long-distance Job Searches

Perhaps you’ve always wanted to live in Austin, you have family in Chicago that you’d like to live closer to, or you’ve always wanted to work overseas. If this type of relocation is part of your career plan then take note of the following suggestions for conducting a long-distance job search.

- Research the local job market and make a list of potential organizations that align with your interests and skills (the city’s Business Journal or business section of the local newspaper are good starting points).

- Identify geographically specific job sites such as a local newspaper, which likely has an online job board.
- Check your LinkedIn profile for any connections you might have in the geographic area (AmeriCorps or college alumni can be an easy starting point).
- Join the local chapter of the professional association related to your field and make contact with the chapter leadership for suggestions on how to get connected.
- Brush up on your phone and video interviewing skills, as this will likely be how you will initially be interviewed.
- Be prepared to make at least one trip to the location of your choice (set up as many informational interviews/networking meetings as you can during your visit).
- Make note in your cover letter that you are planning to relocate and mention a specific date if possible.
- Remove your address from your resume and, if you can, list an address in the new location.

Applying and Interviewing for Positions

As you begin the last couple of months of your year of service, the time will come for you to begin identifying job openings that interest you and for which you want to apply. Luckily, because of the work you've done since the beginning of the year to prepare for this moment, you have a resume and cover letter that you can customize to the position, you have a sense of what accomplishments you will share in an interview, and you may even have a contact in the organization who can provide you with some insight or put in a good word for you.

The information and resources below will help you customize your resume and cover letter, prepare for interviews, and increase your chances of getting an offer for a job that launches you into the next phase of your career.

Start with the Job Description

Customizing your resume, writing a cover letter that addresses the specific job qualifications, notifying your references, and perhaps filling out an application is a time consuming process so before you decide to apply for a position, read the job description/job announcement very carefully and make sure you qualify for the job. While you don't have to match the qualifications exactly, you do need to meet the minimum qualifications. For example, if a position requires 3-5 years of event planning experience and you've done

event planning for the past 2 ½ years, go ahead and apply but if the sum total of your event planning experience is that you planned your friend's 21st birthday party and helped organize the prom in high school, don't waste your time, or the employer's. Take the time to read beyond the job title and thoroughly review the job announcement to understand the position and the education, experience, and skills required.

Whenever possible apply directly through the organization's own website. Do not upload a generic resume to a job board and then just hit "submit" when you see a job that interests you. As discussed earlier in this Guide, you should be customizing each resume and cover letter to the specifics of each position. Here's how to do just that:

Customizing Your Resume and Cover Letter

The resume and cover letter you submit are tools to get you an interview. These two or three pages of information must make it clear to the employer that you have the skills, knowledge, and abilities to fulfill the responsibilities of the position. By customizing each resume and cover letter to match the qualifications of the job and the organization, the employer will see you as a good fit and you'll be much more likely to be called for an interview. Follow these steps:



- As you review the job description, make note of or highlight the skills, knowledge, and abilities required. Also look for information in the description about the work environment (team, individual, fast paced). Even jobs with the same title vary in duties so read each description thoroughly.
- Research the organization, department, and/or program. What is the culture? What kind of projects do they work on?
- Now consider your skills, knowledge, education, and accomplishments as they compare to each aspect of the job and what you've learned about the organization. Ask yourself, "what in my background proves that I can do this job?" Pull items from your Job Search Data Worksheet that are most relevant to include in this customized resume. Or create new accomplishment statements to include if necessary (be sure to add any new content to your master document for future use).
- Review your resume and make any small changes so that it is focused toward the specific job. This might involve swapping out one accomplishment statement for one that is more relevant, reordering the bullet points so that the most important information is listed

first, or revising the Summary of Qualifications so it includes a skill that is relevant to the open position but that you didn't have listed.

- Follow the same process for customizing your cover letter by including what draws you to the specific job opening or organization, outlining a few accomplishments that show you can fulfill the duties of the job, and customizing the salutation.
- When you are done customizing your documents, read them very carefully for accuracy, spelling, and grammar. Cutting and pasting is a great way to save time but can also lead to mistakes like forgetting to replace "I'm excited about the possibility of working for UC Davis", when your applying for a job at Cal State Fullerton!

note

Always submit your resume, cover letter, and references in PDF format rather than a Word document.

Completing the Job Application

The information included on a job application is similar to what you would include on a resume but will also likely include listing job duties, employers' addresses, supervisors' names, titles and phone numbers, salary information, and reason for leaving positions. Use your Job Search Data Worksheet as a resource for completing an application and follow these rules:

- Read the application over before starting and carefully follow all instructions.
- Be neat! Use a blue or black pen. If the application can be filled out online, take advantage of that option.

- Fill out all areas. Use N/A if a question is not applicable to your situation.
- Emphasize experiences related to the job. Use the key words and skills the job announcement is looking for, if you possess them.
- It's acceptable to write "Open" if there is a question about your salary requirements.
- Do not falsify information!
- Ask someone to double-check your answers before submitting.

Following Up after Applying for a Position

Follow-up shows interest, initiative, and a sense of responsibility to a possible employer. Here are some guidelines for following up:

- Wait a few days, but no longer than one week after applying (or after the final filing deadline if there is one) before emailing the employer to check in. If emailing doesn't get you a response, you can try leaving a phone message.
- Identify yourself and the position for which you've applied.
- Confirm that they have received your materials and ask if there is any other information they need.
- Ask if they can provide you with an update on the next steps.
- Express your continued interest in the position.
- Thank them for their time.



"The key to job search (and maybe life!) is follow up, follow up, follow up."

Constance Stevens,
Owner, Career Crossroads

Interviews

Interviews are inherently anxiety producing and probably rank right up there with public speaking as one of the most dreaded activities. While you probably won't eliminate all your anxiety, with proper preparation you can increase your confidence, understand your strengths, discuss your experience in a focused manner, establish a few talking points, and ace your interview!

Types of Interviews

Screening

Often conducted by someone from the organization's human resources department, these interviews are intended to determine if a candidate meets the minimum job requirements. These are usually short interviews used to screen for specific experience, skills and/or education.

Phone

Phone interviews are often conducted as part of the initial screening process to check for basic qualifications. However, phone interviews may also be done if you are applying for positions outside of your current location or if the human resources department or company headquarters is located far away. A phone interview can happen unexpectedly or be planned- another reason to screen your calls during a job search. It is also acceptable to ask if you can call back at a more convenient time but make it within a couple of hours if at all possible. To put your best foot forward in a phone interview follow these tips:

- One advantage of a phone interview is that you can have your resume, the job description, and notes to remind you of key points you want to make right in front of you during the call. However, do not simply read your responses, as it will be obvious to the interviewer that you are reading a script.
- Take the call in a quiet place with no distractions.

- If you are using a cell phone make sure the connection is clear and that the interviewer can hear you.
- Do not use a speaker phone unless you know it is of high quality and will not pick up background noise.
- Some find that dressing for the interview, even though no one can see you, helps them feel more professional and confident.
- Similarly, taking the call in front of a mirror helps you feel like you are making eye contact with someone, encouraging you to smile, which will come across in your voice.
- Because there won't be any visual communication cues, bring a little extra enthusiasm to the interview so that your interest comes through.
- Be patient with silence as interviewers may be writing notes or determining what to ask next.
- Speak clearly and with professionalism.
- Adjust the height of your webcam and/or chair so that you are looking directly into the camera and that your head and shoulders are visible. Consider doing a practice run with a friend.
- Look into the camera not at the screen in order to make proper eye contact.
- Close all other programs so you don't have alerts popping up during your interview and so that you are making the most of your computer's capabilities to run the interview program.
- Get completely dressed. Tempting as it might be to only dress professionally on the visible top half, if for any reason you have to stand up you'll be embarrassed!
- Keep pets far away and have a babysitter for any children. Both have a tendency to show up at the most unexpected and inopportune times!
- While it is fine to have a glass of water near by should you need it, do not eat or drink anything else during the interview.
- Have a pad of paper and pen handy should you need to take any notes.
- Be prepared to handle brief delays in transmission and if your screen does freeze up, call right back.

Video

Increasingly common, video interviews are often done via Skype or some other video conferencing platform even if you live in the same community as the interviewer. Most of the tips for a successful phone interview also apply to video interviews but there are also some specific recommendations for video interviews:

- In advance of the interview, register for whatever platform the interview will be conducted on (use an appropriately professional user name) and be familiar with how it works.
- Be aware of what will be in view for the interviewers. Have a clean, simple backdrop for your interview.
- Check the lighting to be sure you are easily visible and that there aren't any shadows covering your face.

Panel

Panel interviews are very common and can consist of two to as many as a dozen people representing various levels and roles within an organization. Typically, the panel has a list of prepared questions and each panel member takes turns asking these questions. It is important to make eye contact with each panel member as you answer questions. Panel interviews typically last 45 minutes to an hour.

Group

In a group interview, you, and the other candidates are interviewed simultaneously, by either one interviewer or a panel of interviewers.

The interviewer asks a question and then gives each person a chance to provide an answer. This format allows an organization to screen many applicants at once and also provides the interviewer an opportunity to observe group interactions. Pay close attention to what others say during the interview and try not to repeat their responses.

Multiple Level

This format involves being interviewed by a variety of people, often representing increasing levels of responsibility, in a series of interviews over the course of a day. You may be passed from one department panel or individual manager to another. This may even involve an interview over a meal. In preparation for this type of interview, ask the scheduler to explain whom you will be meeting with for each interview so you can prepare questions that would be appropriate for each person or group.

Assessments and Tests

According to the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 13% of US employers use personality assessments in their hiring so don't be surprised if you are asked to take some type of personality assessment during the process. Be as open and honest as possible when completing these assessments and don't overthink your answers; these assessments have no "right" or "wrong" answers so there is nothing you can do to prepare. Just like the employer wants to find a "good fit" employee, you want to find a "good fit" job and company so provide authentic answers.

Depending on the organization and type of position you are applying to, you may be asked to complete a drug test or a criminal background check prior to being hired. These tests and background checks are common if the position requires driving, operating heavy equipment, handling money, or working with minors.

Before the Interview

What you do before the interview is nearly as important as what you do during the interview. You wouldn't expect an Olympic gymnast to win a gold medal without ever having practiced their routine, so don't expect to perform well in an interview if you haven't put in the work to prepare. Take these important steps to ensure you will ace your interview:

1. As soon as you're invited for an interview, get the details by asking:

- What type of interview it will be- panel, phone, video, etc. - and whether you will be asked to complete any assessments.
- The expected duration of the interview so you know how much time to allow.
- The address and if there are any specific directions to the interview site or details on parking.
- Each interviewer's name and title.
- Whether you should bring a writing sample or portfolio of your work.
- Who you can contact if you have any other questions.

2. Know yourself

Most of us feel uncomfortable talking about or "selling" ourselves to other people. Try to reframe the concept of "selling how great you are" to telling the interviewer(s) what you know and what you can do. So instead of saying you are the best, you can state that you have 5 years of experience in program development or supervising teams. This is not embellishment or "bragging", it is fact. Shift from "bragging" about yourself to sharing information. After all, the interviewer wants, and needs, to hire someone but they must have the necessary information on each candidate to make a sound decision about who is the best fit. Your job therefore is to provide them with that information. This

reframing may help you feel more comfortable about the interview process and make it easier for you to discuss your qualifications.

Fully understanding how your skills, knowledge, personal characteristics, education, volunteer service, and other assets relate to the job description is top priority in preparing for your interview. Consider how each of these areas relates to the employer's needs. For each job requirement, think of an example you can share that proves you can meet that requirement. You can draw from these examples throughout your interview to make the case for why you are a strong candidate. Be sure to review your resume just prior to the interview so information about job titles, dates of employment, and other details of your experience are fresh in your memory.

While the interviewer will ask most of the questions, it is helpful to have an outline of the 4-5 key points you want to cover so that you can weave these into your answers.

3. Research the department, organization and industry

Visit the organization's website, do a Google search, tap into your network, and check to see if the organization has a LinkedIn or Facebook page. Gather as much information as possible about the organization's products, services, programs, mission, and organizational structure. Don't forget to also use LinkedIn to do some research on the background and experience of the people with whom you will interview.

4. Analyze the job description and anticipate questions

Take time to carefully read through the job description making an inventory of the education, training, certifications, skills, knowledge, and personal characteristics required. Given the responsibilities of the job, think about what the interviewer will

want to know. Put yourself in the place of the interviewer and write questions that relate to each of the job duties creating a question bank that you can pull from as you practice. Also make note of areas where you may not be as strong and develop a strategy for addressing those weaknesses.

5. Practice, Practice, Practice!

Use the list of **COMMONLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN APPENDIX 21** along with the list of questions you developed from analyzing the job description and begin honing your answers to this wide range of potential questions. Practice answering both behavioral and situational interview questions, which are described below.

Practicing out loud will help you work out phrasing, eliminate filler words like "um", "like", and "you know", and ensure that your answers are concise and to the point. If you are speaking for more than about 90 seconds, you are probably going on too long. Practicing in front of a mirror will allow you to be aware of your facial expressions and mannerisms. Video taping yourself can be very valuable in helping you identify blind spots and polish your presentation.

Let's review the different types of Interview Questions you are likely to encounter:

Behavioral Questions

One of the most reliable ways for an interviewer to predict how you will perform in the future is to hear how you have performed in the past. Therefore, many employers prepare behavioral interview questions that ask you to describe how you have handled a specific situation. You may also be asked technical questions such as how you have performed certain procedures or processes that are common in your field of work. In responding to these types of questions, use the S.T.A.R. method to shine:

Use “S.T.A.R.” stories to prove you can perform each aspect of the job. Your STAR stories will be the foundation of your answers and provide the details and depth to your interview that will make you stand out as a top candidate.

S.T.A.R

S= Situation

Describe the setting: *“As the Fundraising Chair for Los Angeles Crisis Nursery’s summer picnic...”*

T= Task

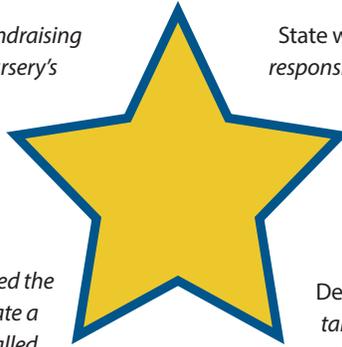
State what needed to be done: *“I was responsible for getting food for 100 people donated from local businesses.”*

A= Action

Explain the action(s) you took: *“So I used the Chamber of Commerce website to create a contact list of local restaurants that I called, emailed, or visited in person to tell them about the event and how the money raised would be used to help parents in the community.”*

R= Result

Describe the outcome: *“After 2 weeks of talking to businesses I was able to get all the food donated and also got a \$100 donation to purchase flowers to decorate the tables.”*



EXERCISE S.T.A.R. Stories

Use the S.T.A.R. Worksheet in **APPENDIX 22** to create your own S.T.A.R. stories.

Situational Questions

This form of questioning presents “What If” scenarios that relate to the types of situations and challenges that might arise in a particular position. They often begin with “What would you do if” or “How would you handle”. To anticipate situational questions that might arise in an interview think of the challenging situations you might be asked to handle in the position. When responding to these types of questions, remember to answer with **C.A.R.E.**

C- Considerations: what do you need to consider in deciding how to approach the issue?

A- Action: what action would you take?

R- Result: what result would you anticipate?

E- Evaluation: how would you evaluate the actual result?



Unusual or Puzzle Questions

Some interviewers pride themselves on asking unexpected or tricky questions to try to assess your ability to think on your feet, solve problems under stress, or deal with the unexpected. They view these questions as a way to uncover the real you as opposed to the answers you've rehearsed. In responding to these types of questions, it's less about your exact answer and more about how you perform under pressure. Here are some tips to help you succeed:

- Take your time to think the question through and organize your thoughts: It's okay to say, "That's a tough question!" or "Let me give that some thought."
- Ask clarifying questions to get as much information as you can.
- Show you have a sense of humor. Don't be put off by an oddball question, show that you can have some fun.
- Respond professionally. Even though the question may have surprised you or seem silly, maintain your composure and give an answer that highlights an aspect of your skills, knowledge, or personality that relates to the job.

Test your skill by answering the Top 10 Oddball Interview Questions of 2015 compiled by Glassdoor:

"What would you do if you were the one survivor in a plane crash?" Asked at Airbnb.

"What's your favorite 90s jam?" Asked at Squarespace.

"If you woke up and had 2,000 unread emails and could only answer 300 of them how would you choose which ones to answer?" Asked at Dropbox.

"Who would win in a fight between Spiderman and Batman?" Asked at Stanford University.

"If you had a machine that produced \$100/day for life what would you be willing to pay for it today?" Asked at Aksia.

"What did you have for breakfast?" Asked at Banana Republic.

"Describe the color yellow to somebody who's blind." Asked at Spirit Airlines.

"If you were asked to unload a jumbo jet full of jelly beans, what would you do?" Asked at Bose.

"How many people flew out of Chicago last year?" Asked at Redbox.

"What's your favorite Disney Princess?" Asked at Cold Stone Creamery.

OTHER UNUSUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS CAN BE FOUND IN APPENDIX 23.

Salary Questions

These types of questions can often catch you off guard but you should be prepared to answer questions about salary. If asked about salary requirements or desired salary, provide a range based on your research of what is typical for the position, industry, and organization for someone with your level of experience. It is also good to mention that something within that range, depending on the benefits offered, would be acceptable. A high salary might sound attractive at first until you learn the details of any benefits that might be included. Any job offer is a combination of salary and benefits—from medical coverage, vacation, sick leave, flexible work schedules, mileage reimbursement, tuition assistance, even job title—so be sure to consider what aspects of the total compensation package are most important to you not just salary (this is discussed further in the section about salary negotiation). Another option is to sidestep the question by stating that you are very interested in the position and that as long as the salary is in line with the responsibilities of the position and comparable to similar positions, you are sure that if offered the job you could come to an agreement on the salary.

In some instances, either in an interview or on a job application, you may be asked for your salary history. This is fairly straightforward in most instances- state past salaries/hourly rates along with any benefits that were included. For example, *"I was paid \$10.50/hour plus vacation, medical benefits, and mileage reimbursement for work-related travel."*

As an AmeriCorps member the answer to the salary question may seem more complicated but it really isn't. To start with, when discussing salary history always think of your entire compensation package- stipend, housing, health insurance, educational award (it is taxed as income!). Don't shy away from your income level during your year of service; embrace it! No one is expecting that you are getting rich as an AmeriCorps member but they do recognize your sacrifice and desire to better yourself and your community. For example, you could say something like, *"I decided to give a year of service to help better my community and fulfill my desire to be engaged in positive civic change. While AmeriCorps does provide a small stipend and an educational award, my compensation from this position is not a useful point of reference, but I'm excited to work here and the salary I would be looking for is..."* Also, see the section below on Salary Negotiation for further information.

Inappropriate Questions

Most employers will be well trained on what questions are inappropriate or illegal to ask in an interview. However, should you be asked one of these inappropriate questions here are some suggestions on how to respond:

How old are you?: *"If you're asking me how many years I've worked in this field, I've been working for 3 years"*

Do you have children?: *"If you're wondering if I can work evenings, then the answer is yes, I am available to work evenings when necessary"*

Do you have a car?: *"If your wondering if I have reliable transportation so that I will be at work on time, then the answer is yes"*

As you practice interview questions, be sure you can answer the questions that you most fear- gaps in employment, job-hopping, being fired, your biggest weakness, a conflict you've had with a co-worker. Whatever questions make you most uncomfortable, preparing a well-thought out answer in advance will not only allow you to provide an effective answer but also reduce your overall interview anxiety as well.

6. Prepare questions to ask the interviewer(s).

Asking pertinent questions shows your interest in the position and demonstrates that you have done your research. Plan ahead and prepare 2-3 questions to ask the interviewer. Here are some possible questions you might ask:

- What other departments do you interface with most frequently?
- What are the key factors to be successful in this position?
- What are the current top priorities for the position/department/organization?
- What projects would you like to have completed within the next three months?
- What would you expect a top performer to accomplish in the first 30, 60 or 90 days?
- What are the biggest challenges facing someone in this position?
- You asked me a lot of questions about _____. Tell me more about the specific expectations you have for this area.
- What is the most important quality I need to succeed in this position?
- What are the common attributes of your top performers?
- What are some things that drive results for your company?
- Where do you see the organization in 5 years?
- Can you tell me a little about the team I'd be working with?

- What do you enjoy most about working for this organization/department?
- How would you describe the department's/company's culture?
- What was the last big achievement that was celebrated?
- What are some of your favorite office traditions?
- What are the next steps in the process?
- When might I expect to hear from you about next steps?

7. Prepare materials to bring to the interview.

This would include a copy of your resume, cover letter, and application as well as a list of references that you can leave behind if you haven't already submitted them. All of these items should be put neatly in a folder or portfolio. You might also have a letter of recommendation, a few relevant work samples, and depending on the type of position, a professional portfolio of your work. Whatever you bring, other than your professional portfolio, you should be comfortable leaving behind and not having it returned. You do not want to put the burden on the employer of asking them to send back any of your items.

8. Consider Your Appearance

Like it or not your outward appearance including what you wear to an interview make a lasting impression. During the interview you want the focus to be on the information you share about how well qualified you are for the position and not on a distracting aspect of your appearance. If you are uncertain about what to wear to an interview, here are some quick tips:

- Clean clothes free of wrinkles.
- Clean, professional shoes (no tennis shoes, sandals or flip flops).
- Minimal jewelry and remove distracting piercings.
- Cover tattoos if interviewing at a conservative company or if you're unsure of how a tattoo will be perceived by the employer. You can simply wear clothing that covers your tattoos or use a cover up sleeve or tattoo concealer makeup.
- No sleeveless clothing, spaghetti straps, bare midriffs or low-cut tops.
- No hats or sunglasses and if you wear prescription glasses make sure they are clean and in good repair.
- Skirts should be just above the knee when seated and not too tight.
- Invest in clothes that fit your body and budget. You can save money by shopping at a local thrift store or connecting with a program, such as Dress for Success (<https://www.dressforsuccess.org>), that provides interview clothes. You may also want to check with your local OneStop Career Center for help in locating a resource for donated interview attire.
- Go light on the cologne/perfume or do not use fragrance at all since some people have sensitivities to these products.
- Simple classically professional outfits win over fashion statements; dressing nice for an interview is different than dressing nice for a cocktail party.
- Pay attention to personal hygiene, shower and use deodorant. If you tend to sweat in stressful situations (like interviews!), place a tissue or handkerchief in your pocket so you can wipe your palm discreetly before shaking hands.
- Keep your hair brushed away from your face.
- If you carry a purse, portfolio, briefcase or messenger bag, make sure it is in good condition and professional; no backpacks.
- If using nail polish use a clear or neutral tone.
- Keep facial hair relatively short and neat and make sure you are freshly shaved.
- Have a couple of interview outfits so you have options if asked back for a second interview.



If you look in the mirror and question whether what you are wearing is professional enough, then it probably isn't. Seek input from others and remember, even if the dress code is casual on a day-to-day basis at an organization, give the interview the respect that it deserves and dress professionally. It is always better to be dressed a bit more conservatively than it is to be too casual. If you present yourself as a serious professional, the interviewer will see you in that light as well!

9. Practice Self Care

Leading up to your interview be sure to take care of yourself so you will be at your best the day of the interview. This includes getting plenty of sleep, eating well the night before and prior to your interview, avoiding alcohol, drugs and too much caffeine, and doing something to relax you whether that be yoga, taking a run, deep breathing exercises, throwing a Frisbee with your dog, or going to a movie with friends.



EXERCISE Mock Interviews

Participate in at least two mock interviews and have the interviewers complete the Mock Interview Evaluation in **APPENDIX 24** to evaluate your performance.

During the Interview

With all the work you've done, you will certainly walk into the interview feeling well prepared and confident. Make the most of your time during the interview by following these guidelines:

- Arrive about 10 minutes prior to your scheduled interview time and present a professional attitude and appearance from the moment you arrive at the building (you never know who might be watching!). Those interviewing you, and other staff, will begin to evaluate you as soon as they see you. Go by yourself. If a friend or relative drives you, have them wait in the car. Be sure your phone is in silent mode and put away.
- First impressions count so start by making eye contact, smiling, and offering a firm handshake to everyone you meet. Bring a positive attitude and enthusiasm for the organization and the position.
- Remember the importance of nonverbal communication including facial expressions, body language, mannerisms, and other habits you might be inclined to fall into when you are nervous such as cracking your knuckles, fiddling with your hair, or talking fast. Try to

minimize any of these distracting behaviors and use a professional posture that communicates interest and engagement. When the interviewer offers you a seat, sit upright but not too stiffly in your chair. Relax and lean slightly forward towards your interviewer. Rest your hands, loosely clasped in your lap or on the table or desk in front of you. Keep your feet flat on the floor or cross your legs at the ankles.

- If offered a bottle or glass of water, accept! You may not be thirsty at the start of your interview but after talking for 20 minutes a drink of water may be welcome.
- Be very careful with humor that you think is funny, someone else may find it offensive.
- Listen carefully. It's okay to pause for a moment when asked a question to quickly think about how you want to answer or what is the best example to use. If you don't understand a question, ask for clarification or for it to be repeated.
- Be sincere, concise, and honest. Limit your responses to just a couple of minutes and only include details that are relevant to the position. Being prepared with your S.T.A.R. stories should make this easy to manage. You can always ask if they would like you to elaborate, share another example, or provide additional information.
- When answering questions provide the most relevant information for the position you are applying for. Just as you customize your resume and cover letter for each specific job, you will want to customize your answers to interview questions. What you share as your key strengths for one position may be a bit different than the strengths you share for another position. And your answer to "what is your greatest accomplishment?" might be different for a camp counselor job than it is for a grant writing assistant position.
- If offered the opportunity at the end of the interview, ask a couple of the questions you've prepared. This will show that you've done your research and indicate your interest in the organization. Remember do not ask about salary or benefits.
- Interviewers will typically ask if you have anything to add. This is the time to share any information you feel is relevant but hasn't yet been discussed (recall the 4-5 key points you outlined when preparing for the interview). Also, take the opportunity to present a few sentences that remind them of your qualifications, reiterate your interest in the position, communicate your enthusiasm for the organization, and let them know you want the job.
- Shake everyone's hand when you leave and express your thanks for their time and consideration.



What NOT to do in an Interview

Below are some behaviors that can result in an unsuccessful interview.

- ✗ Being late
- ✗ Lying or being misleading
- ✗ Lack of preparation
- ✗ Not providing specific examples
- ✗ Not having a career goal
- ✗ Not knowing about the organization or department

- ✗ Trouble communicating or maintaining a conversation
 - ✗ Speaking poorly of past employers
 - ✗ Sharing personal information
 - ✗ Using humor inappropriately
 - ✗ Lack of eye contact
 - ✗ Weak handshake
 - ✗ Dressing unprofessionally
 - ✗ Having your cell phone buzz or ring or worse yet, answering a call during your interview!
 - ✗ Overemphasis on compensation/benefits or what the company can do for you
 - ✗ Not asking questions when given the opportunity
 - ✗ Neglecting to recognize and thank the interviewer for their time
 - ✗ Lack of interest and enthusiasm for the position
- Thank the interviewer(s) for their time.
 - Reiterate your interest in the position and why you feel you are qualified.
 - Provide any information you forgot to mention in the interview.
 - Highlight something specific from the interview discussion- perhaps something you learned about the organization that surprised you, or a personal connection or experience you shared with a panelist (such as both having served in AmeriCorps), or something that resonated with your own values or interests.
 - Follow up on anything they asked you to send such as a writing sample or list of references.

After the Interview

You're done, you made it through! Your work is over, right? Think again. There are a few very important steps to complete.

1. Evaluate

As soon as possible after the interview, write down all the questions you remember and evaluate your performance. This will give you areas for improvement and additional questions to practice for your next interview.

2. Offer Your Thanks

Surprisingly very few candidates take the time to show the courtesy of sending a thank you letter/email but, when well done and error free, it can make you stand out as a top-notch candidate. Your note doesn't have to be long- a couple of short paragraphs will suffice- but you **MUST** send one. In your note you can:

If you are communicating via email, you can send one email to everyone on the panel or send personalized emails to each person. Hopefully, you collected everyone's names and contact information way back when you were initially contacted for the interview but if not, either do some online research to gather people's contact information or reach out to the person who scheduled the interview to ask for the names and contact information of the panel members.

If you are sending a hard-copy thank you, either print it on nice paper like you would use for submitting a hard-copy resume or use a professional thank you card. This is not the occasion to send a cute thank you note with a kitten in a basket of flowers on the front! (unless you've applied for a position at the SPCA!). If you choose to write your letter by hand, have a friend verify that your handwriting is legible.

A SAMPLE THANK YOU NOTE CAN BE FOUND IN APPENDIX 25.

3. Follow Up Appropriately

If you don't hear back from an employer you may automatically think you didn't get the job, but that's not always the case. The employer may have had every intention of making a decision within the timeframe they shared at the interview but other priorities came up and filling the position was pushed aside. For example, you interview on a Monday morning and the employer tells you they will be back in touch by the end of the week but now it's the following Wednesday and you haven't heard a thing. In cases like this it is perfectly fine to check on the status of the position. Think about following up as a way to continue the conversation not as a way to push for a decision. Use the method of communication you've used throughout the interview process (phone, email, LinkedIn) to make contact with the organization's representative and follow these steps:

- If you weren't given a timeframe for when they expected to make a decision, wait at least a week to ten days after your interview before emailing; if emailing doesn't work you can try leaving a phone message.
- Identify yourself and the position you've applied for, indicating that you had an interview last week.
- Ask if they can provide you with an update on the status of the position.
- If they tell you they are still deciding, express your continued interest, ask if they need anything else from you, and tell them you look forward to hearing from them.
- If they tell you that the position has been filled, thank them for considering you, ask if they might have any other similar positions opening up soon, and thank them for their time.

4. Handle Rejection

If you didn't get the job offer, re-evaluate the interview and respond to the phone call or email notifying you that you weren't selected. Always be polite, thank the organization for the opportunity to be considered, and let them know that you would be pleased to be considered for future opportunities. While this position may not have worked out for you, you want to continue to project a professional image as in the future you may want to apply to another position with the same organization or someone from that organization may share your name with a colleague who is looking to fill a position.

You can also ask for feedback, but know that employers are often hesitant to provide any more detail than "we selected someone who was more qualified".

Handling Job Offers and Salary Negotiations

Congratulations, you've been offered the job! First and foremost, thank the employer and communicate your enthusiasm. Before you jump at the offer, listen to the details. It's perfectly fine to hear their offer and ask for 24-48 hours to consider, check in with other job applications that you may have pending, and think about whether or not you want to negotiate any aspects of the offer such as start date, vacation, or salary. While you do not want to bring up any of these topics during an interview, now that you have an offer you can ask questions about these.

Before starting any salary negotiation, it is important to do your research and know your value. The following websites are helpful resources for gathering salary information so you know what is realistic:

- Glassdoor, <http://www.glassdoor.com>
- Salary.com, <http://www.salary.com>
- California Career Zone, <http://www.careerzone.org>

- CareerOne Stop: <https://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/wages/find-salary.aspx?frd=true>

To determine where you might fall in the salary range provided, consider your skill set, years of experience, and level of education. Salaries can vary widely depending on geographic area and industry, so be as specific as possible in reviewing salary data.

If you feel the salary offered is low, let the employer know that given the research you've done and the skills and experience you would bring to the job you are looking for something in the range of \$X-\$X. Once you state your desired amount, it is very important to stay quiet and let the employer speak next. Although it is tempting to jump in to fill the silence, state your desired salary with confidence knowing it's based on research and then stop talking! Keep in mind that the employer may not have the ability to offer you more money so be respectful, know what you're willing to accept (how low can you go?), and consider asking for non-monetary benefits (see below), which the employer may more easily be able to offer.

Salary is certainly a major aspect of any job offer but what other aspects of compensation such as health benefits, vacation time, sick leave, flexible work schedules, a laptop, training opportunities, or other perks may you want? How can these play a role in your negotiation strategy? Prioritize your needs, and then evaluate a job offer. Perhaps you are willing to forego a higher salary for an extra week's vacation or the organization paying for you to acquire an important industry certification. You may want to review your work values from the self-assessment phase to refresh your memory about what is most important to you.

Staying Organized During Your Job Search

As you begin your job search there will be many details to manage from remembering which resume you submitted to a specific job, to who

referred you to a particular contact, to when you should follow up about an opening, to the date of an upcoming career fair. Creating a system to organize yourself will allow you to take full advantage of the opportunities that come your way and present a professional image at each stage. Follow these tips to help:

- Use a calendar or reminder app to track appointments, deadlines, schedule networking meetings, interviews, and make note of when to follow-up on positions to which you've applied. Create a daily and/or weekly "To Do" list.
- For each job you apply to, make a file (electronic or hard copy) that has the customized resume and cover letter you submitted for the position. You can add your research on the company and the position, and any other information related to the job.
- Create a Job Application Tracker (**SEE SAMPLE IN APPENDIX 26**) that includes each job you applied to, important dates, follow-up steps, contacts, and notes.
- Check your phone and email messages at least twice a day. If an employer contacts you a speedy response is critical. Consider letting phone calls go to voice mail so you can prepare for and be professional (not in a loud setting or rushed) when you call back.
- Complete a weekly Job Search Activity Plan (**SEE SAMPLE IN APPENDIX 27**) to set goals for yourself, keep the process moving forward, and evaluate your efforts.

Evaluate Your Job Search Effectiveness and Make Adjustments

If your job search isn't progressing as you had hoped, maybe it's time to try a different strategy. Evaluate what is going well and what has been a struggle. Revisit sections in this Guide that address the areas you are struggling with to see if you can learn more about the best approach.

Perhaps you are applying for positions that aren't a good match for your skills, or your resume could be revised so that it is more focused or includes more relevant accomplishment statements. Maybe another mock interview would help you hone your interview skills, or you need to expand your networking efforts.

Don't hesitate to reach out to your supervisor, program director, or others in your network to seek their input and ideas. Discussing your successes and challenges with other job seekers also can be tremendously helpful as you learn from each other. Sometimes an outside perspective is just what you may need to provide that new idea, resource, or contact that will reinvigorate your search. Often just a slight correction in your approach can open up much greater opportunity so don't shy away from making adjustments throughout the job search process.



BEFORE YOU MOVE ON...

Attitude

The job search process is an emotional roller coaster. In the span of 24 hours you might learn you didn't get a job you thought you were perfectly qualified for, realize you submitted the wrong cover letter for another job, get a personal referral to a recruiter who works for your dream organization, and get a call back for a second interview at another organization. These normal ups and downs of the job search can play havoc on your emotions so follow these tips to keep a positive attitude and maintain your well-being:

- Have a strong support system of friends, family, other job seekers, mentors, supervisors, and your program manager.
- Surround yourself with positive, encouraging people and limit your time with those who tend to be negative.
- Manage your job search stress levels by getting plenty of rest, eating well, and exercising regularly.
- Start a job search support group- good for your emotional well-being and for networking!
- Visualize yourself being successful in your job search.
- Keep your sense of humor (read the comics daily, watch a funny movie).
- Build in rewards for your hard work.

Rejection is an inevitable aspect of the job search- networking meetings that go no where, job applications that you never hear back about, unreturned emails and phone calls- but keep at it. Successful job hunters will tell you to put your trust in the job search process and know that if you are following the techniques outlined in this Guide you are on your way to hearing an employer say, "You're hired!" Remember that every "no" puts you one step closer to "yes". Regroup, evaluate what's working and what's not; enlist the help of others to inject new ideas into your approach. If you're feeling down, do something you know you enjoy.

"The best way to predict the future is to create it."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN



“

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.

”

Eleanor Roosevelt

Chapter 6. Pursue Your Path – Other Options

While undertaking a job search may be the path forward for many members as they complete their year of service, other members may be thinking about completing an Associate's or Bachelor's degree, pursuing a graduate school program, entering a specialized training program, signing on for an additional year of service, or contemplating striking out on their own as a self-employed entrepreneur. Each member's path will be unique depending on the career goals they have set for themselves. Whichever path you take, the information below will help you reach your goals.

Training and Apprenticeships

The California Employment Development Department (EDD) provides a full list of training and apprenticeship providers at: <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/resources/training-and-apprenticeships.html>. You can search by field of study, name of provider, type of school, location, or by occupational profile. There is also information on how to pay for training, and other helpful resources. Apprenticeship opportunities can also be found through the CareerOneStop: <http://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/training/find-apprenticeships.aspx>.

Completing an Associate's or Bachelor's Degree

If you've decided that completing your Associate's or Bachelor's degree is your next step after AmeriCorps there are a number of steps to pursue and deadlines to meet. If you have a particular college or university in mind, make an appointment to meet with one of their admissions counselors to discuss programs, requirements and deadlines. If you are currently attending community college, work closely with the Transfer Center and guidance counselors to understand the requirements for transferring. It can also be helpful to tour the institution you are interested in transferring to in order to speak with their admissions office. If you are not sure where you want to complete your degree then your first step will be to do some exploring. Just like researching a potential employer, gathering information on colleges and universities will help you make a sound decision. Community college, private universities, or public institutions of higher education all have their own pluses and minus. In addition, factors such as cost, location, school size, and testing requirements all need to be considered. Finding the right fit is important to ensure success in reaching your educational goals.

According to the National Career Development Association, by 2020

Approximately

65%
of job
openings

will require at least some post-high school degree, whether that be technical training, certification, Associate, Bachelor's or higher degree.

A good starting point for exploration is Big Future. This interactive website through College Board (<https://collegeboard.org>) allows you to find colleges that meet your criteria, explore ways to pay for college, and make a step-by-step plan for getting through the college selection and application process. CSUMentor (<http://www.csumentor.edu>) has all the information you need to explore the California State University system campuses and how to prepare and apply. Information on the process for admission to the UC system can be found at: <http://admission.universityofcalifornia.edu> and if you would like to explore private colleges (which often have significant funds available to support students with financial need) more information can be found at the website for the Common Application at: <http://www.commonapp.org>.

Pursuing Graduate School

Attending graduate school is an important decision that will impact your life on multiple levels- intellectually, financially, and with your time and energy. Whether or not this path is right for you, and determining the best timing for pursuing further education, depends on a variety of factors. These include how important an advanced degree (Credential Program, Masters, or PhD) is to entering or advancing in your chosen occupation, if you have the time and energy to balance the rigor of a graduate program with other responsibilities, and how having a degree will impact your earning potential vis-a-vis the cost of obtaining the degree. Conducting informational interviews, doing online research, and meeting with representatives- faculty, current and former students, admissions and financial aid officers- from the programs you are considering will help you make an informed decision. You may also want to revisit your “Tree of Options” to evaluate the level of importance graduate school has in helping you reach your career goals. Here are some pros and cons to consider:

PROS

- Career Advancement
- Greater Earning Power
- Research Opportunities
- Career Change
- Update Skills and Knowledge
- Focused Learning on Area of Interest

CONS

- Avoidance of Job Search
- Financial Drain/Taking on Debt
- Work/School-Life Balance
- Increased Stress
- No Guarantee of Higher Pay or Advancement
- Appearing Overqualified

Pursuing graduate school immediately following your year of service may be the right path for you but if the timing isn't right, be flexible. There are many options for continuing your schooling later in your career or even while you are working full-time.

To find a grad school that is right for you, search for programs, understand application requirements, and learn about deadlines visit one of these sites:

- Peterson's: <https://www.petersons.com/search/schools?searchType=26>.
- Grad School Match: <https://www.gradschoolmatch.com>.

note

AmeriCorps Career Webinars:
 “Applying to and Choosing a Graduate School”: <http://www.americorpsalums.org/?CareerWebinars>

If an online degree program would work better for you than a traditional college or university you are in luck! AmeriCorps has a partnership with 2U, which allows alumni to pursue a graduate degree online. Alums who are new 2U students, can receive a \$5000 benefit if they are accepted and enroll in a 2U-powered program. Programs are offered in Social Work & Counseling, Education, Health Care, and Business & Government. More information can be found at: <http://www.americorpsalums.org/mpage/GraduateProgram2>.

Participate in a Virtual Grad School Fair. AmeriCorps Alums' Virtual Grad School Fairs are a chance for graduate schools and AmeriCorps alumni to have live one-on-one conversations about higher education opportunities. Participating schools often match the Segal Education Award or provide additional incentives to AmeriCorps alumni who apply. For details on upcoming fairs visit: <http://www.americorpsalums.org/page/GradSchoolFairs/>.

Funding Options for College

The cost of furthering your education is a sizable financial investment that should not be taken lightly. At the same time, there are a range of options from federal loan programs to grants and fellowships, to institutional and private scholarships, and sometimes even funds from your employer, that you may be able to access.

Federal Aid

The US Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Programs site: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/> outlines types of aid, who can access aid, how to apply for aid, and how to repay your loans. Students can use federal student aid to pay for a variety of academic expenses, including tuition, room and board, fees, textbooks and other academic supplies. Use FAFSA4caster: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/FAFSA/app/f4cForm?execution=e1s1> to get an estimate of how much aid you might receive from the U.S. Department of Education. To qualify for federal aid, students must first complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at: <https://fafsa.ed.gov>. Graduate students are usually considered independent students and, therefore, are not required to supply parent information on the FAFSA. There are a wide range of loans, grants and work-study offerings that you can explore through the Federal Student Aid website at: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/>.

According to the Federal Student Aid Program,

There is more than

**\$150
billion**

in Federal financial aid available
to college students

State of California Aid

The California Student Aid Commission: <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=33> outlines the financial aid programs offered for California residents. These range from the Cal Grant Program to the Law Enforcement Personnel Dependents Grant Program to the California Middle Class Scholarship. Be sure to visit their website to take advantage of any resources you may be eligible to receive.

Institutional Aid

The financial aid office at the college or university you are looking to attend can be a valuable resource. Public universities have a wide range of scholarship programs and almost all private colleges have large endowments that help support students based on both financial need and academic achievement. Contact the financial aid office early on in the application process to inquire about institutional grants, fellowships, and scholarships as well as deadlines for submitting any required financial aid applications. These applications can be due up to 9 months before you plan to attend.

Some institutions believe so strongly in the ability of AmeriCorps Alumni to be successful in college that they will match your Segal Education Award, which allows you to stretch your dollars even farther. A list of colleges and universities that match the Segal Award can be found at: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/segal-ameri-corps-education-award/matching-institutions>.

Assistantships

Assistantships provide financial support while you earn your graduate degree and involve working part-time for the college or university as either a teaching assistant in the classroom or a research assistant in a lab environment. Graduate assistants typically work part time in the department of their graduate program and are paid with a stipend or contribution to their tuition; some programs also include health insurance. If you are interested in this type of aid, you must be proactive by making contact with faculty members, sometimes as much as a year in advance, to learn about the application process and begin to make connections with faculty.

Private Scholarships

Seek out and identify private scholarships through these resources:

- U.S. Department of Labor's scholarship search tool through the OneStop Career Center: <http://www.careeronestop.org/toolkit/training/find-scholarships.aspx>.
- FastWeb: <http://www.fastweb.com/college-scholarships>.
- Religious, community, or civic organizations in your community.
- Local businesses (Golden1 Credit Union).
- Professional associations related to your field of interest (National Association of Social Work Foundation Scholarships).
- Ethnicity-based organizations (Bureau of Indian Education Scholarships).

Private Loans

Students who are unable to secure a federal student loan can apply for a private student loan from banks and other financial institutions. Terms and conditions for private student loans vary, depending on the lender. Additionally, some private loans have variable rates, which can increase or decrease the cost of the loan. It's also important to note that unlike a federal student loan, a student's credit record is significant when applying for a private student loan. Students without an established credit record may need a co-signer. One of the largest private student loan programs is Sallie Mae (<https://www.salliemae.com/student-loans/>), which has been around since 1972. It has fixed and variable loan rates for graduate students.

Using Your Segal Education Award



The award is named after Eli Segal, one of the pioneers of the national service movement and the first CEO of the federal Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

After successfully completing your AmeriCorps' term of service, you are eligible to receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award. You can access the entire award or whatever portion you need until the total amount has been used or the award expires, which is seven years after completing your term of service. Under certain circumstances, you can be granted an extension. AmeriCorps VISTA members are eligible to earn an end-of-year cash stipend in lieu of an education award. There are a variety of ways you can use your education award:

- Repay qualified student loans.
- Pay certain current or future educational expenses (including tuition, books, etc.) at eligible (Title IV) colleges and universities. These schools are throughout the US and some are overseas. You can link to a list of schools through the Corporation for National and Community Service website at: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/ed-award/title-iv>. You may not use the award to cover past due balances at an educational institution.
- Pay for the cost of earning a certificate in a special field of training such as paralegal, cosmetology, EMT, massage, automobile mechanic, yoga teacher training or even learn to fly!
- Under certain conditions, AmeriCorps members 55 years and older can transfer their award to their children or grandchildren.
- Cover the cost of outdoor education programs such as Outward Bound or National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), with prior permission from CNCS.
- Pay for program fees and expenses related to international service-learning through Global Service Corp (<http://globalservicecorps.org/site/AmeriCorps/>), which has programs in Tanzania, Thailand, and Cambodia.
- Help with the cost of taking enrichment classes like guitar, cooking, or photography at a community college.
- Cover the expense of attending writer's conferences or other professional development activities as long as the tuition is paid to an eligible Title IV institution.
- There are a number of schools that will "match" your Segal Award, thus doubling your benefit! See this link for a list of matching institutions: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/segal-ameri-corps-education-award/matching-institutions>.

For complete details on how and where to use your education award spend some time on the Corporation for National and Community Service's website that address the topic: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/alumni/ameri-corps-and-your-education>. While you're there, be sure to watch the short, informative video on how you can use your award: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/edaward>.

If you have any questions, contact the National Service Hotline at 1-800-942-2677.

Signing on for an additional term of service

If you received a satisfactory performance review you are eligible to serve an additional term of service. Members may serve up to four terms of service in AmeriCorps State and National programs, five one-year terms for VISTA, and an unlimited number of terms for AmeriCorps NCCC as long as you take a 10-month break in service after every two consecutive terms. However, a member may only receive the total value of two full-time education awards.

While some members do choose to serve for an additional term, it is important to be clear about why you've chose this path. Perhaps you are extremely committed to the work you are doing and still feel you have a great deal to learn, additional skills to develop, want to take on a Team Lead role, or there are additional professional development opportunities you will be offered during a second term. You may also want to serve a second term in another program to expose yourself to another type of occupation.

If continuing to serve is the path you've chosen visit: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/ed-award/multiple-terms> for details on how to move forward. Read information carefully and evaluate the considerations as they relate to the information you gathered through the self-assessment process in Chapter 2 and your career exploration in Chapter 3.



Entrepreneurship

If you're more the entrepreneurial type and are considering starting your own business there are many factors to consider from legal requirements, tax implications, marketing, and payroll. Passion for your work will take you only so far in dealing with the variety of tasks involved in business ownership so before you jump into the deep end of the pool, complete this helpful lesson on the CareerCafe website to see if you have the right mix of qualities to become a successful entrepreneur: <http://www.cacareercafe.com/entrepreneurs/qualities/>. For additional information and support on starting your own business the Small Business Association is a key resource. Take a look at all they have to offer at: <https://www.sba.gov>. Also, spend a good amount of time networking so you can pitch your idea to those in a position to support you with funding, ideas and other resources.



BEFORE YOU MOVE ON...

While there are many legitimate financial aid and scholarship opportunities available, you should also take steps to avoid scams by reading the Federal Student Aid information on protecting yourself: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/scams>.



“

Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle.

Steve Jobs ”

Chapter 7. Experience & Evaluate

As you'll recall from Chapter 1, career self-reliance involves taking responsibility for reaching your career goals and finding meaningful work. Of course you will enlist the support of your supervisors, program managers, mentors, the AmeriCorps community, family, and friends but the bulk of the work lies with you.

Career development is a life-long process and continuing to actively plan your next steps will make you more likely to achieve your goals. Managing your career over your lifetime involves cultivating a professional image, being a continuous learner, attending to your network, recording accomplishments, and seeking feedback. Let's examine each of these areas in more depth.

Cultivate a Professional Image

According to a workplace study done by the Center for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania, 96% of HR executives/managers reported that a job applicant's professionalism affects the likelihood of being hired. Therefore, improving your professional image is likely to have a positive impact on your ability to achieve your career goals. Keys to professionalism include:

Workplace Etiquette:

- Stand up, make eye contact, and shake hands whenever you are introduced to someone.
- Be courteous and remember to say thank you.
- Keep your work area neat.
- Learn the names of your co-workers and greet them when you arrive in the morning and say good-bye when you leave.
- Be friendly but don't let your friendly disposition keep you from doing your work.
- Clean up after yourself whether in the break room or the supply room.

Appearance:

- Follow the office dress code.
- Don't let a messy, overflowing purse or bag detract from your professional image.
- Practice good hygiene.
- Use perfumes, cologne, after shave, and lotions sparingly if at all.

Time Management:

- Be on time or arrive a few minutes early every day, and call if you are running late.
- Make efficient use of your time and other's time. This includes asking questions to clarify, taking notes when someone is giving you directions, and planning ahead.
- Return calls and emails promptly (aim for responding within 24 hours, sooner if the issue is time sensitive).
- Stay organized: use a calendar, reminder apps, "To Do" lists, and other organizational tools to ensure you work efficiently and meet deadlines.

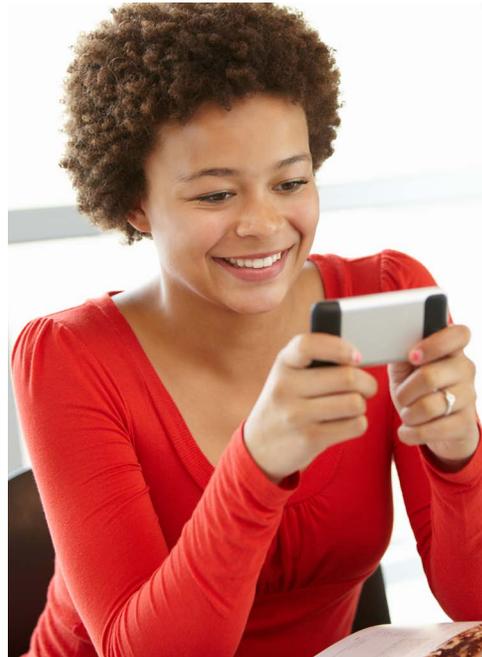
Conscientious Work Habits:

- Emails should be grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. They should not include text abbreviations.
- Always double-check that you have selected the right email recipient and don't say anything in an email that you wouldn't say to someone's face.
- Be alert and remember sleepiness doesn't look good in the workplace.
- Be a team player; recognize others' accomplishments as well as your own.
- Be respectful of diversity.
- Always bring a pad of paper and a pen to meetings.

High ethical standards:

- Keep your word and follow through.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it.
- Own your mistakes. No one is perfect and you will make mistakes on the job. The important thing is to admit your mistake and show an eagerness to correct it.
- Don't take credit for other's ideas.
- Don't get involved in gossip or other people's drama, and be very careful about discussing your own personal issues at work.

- Be careful with jokes and humor. What one person finds funny, another may find offensive.
- Stay Sober. Do not get drunk or use drugs on the job or at work-related events. It might be tempting to have a few drinks at the office holiday party but jobs have been lost because people said or did something inappropriate while under the influence.
- Don't swear. According to a nationwide survey by Harris Interactive in 2012, 81% of employers say swearing brings an employee's professionalism into question and 57% would be less likely to promote someone who repeatedly swears in the office.

**A word (or two!) about cell phones in the workplace:**

Rachel Wagner, President of Rachel Wagner Etiquette and Protocol, is a Certified Etiquette and International Protocol Consultant. She offers the following tips for cell phone etiquette in the workplace:

- **Give 100% focus to the person in front of you.** Don't interrupt a face-to-face conversation with someone by taking a call or texting.

- **At a business lunch, a mobile device shouldn't be part of the place setting.** Keep it stashed in a jacket pocket, handbag or briefcase.
- **In meetings, avoid "reading under the table."** Most people know to turn their phone to silent in a meeting. However, it's not the occasional phone ringing that's so annoying. It's the people who scroll through their emails, check their Facebook page, text, tweet, or check sports scores—in their lap. People notice this more than you think. It's not only distracting and discourteous to the speaker, but also to those around you. Paying attention to your messages instead of the meeting sends a signal that the people in the room are not important to you. And that's a dangerous message if those people are clients, or have power over your job or career path.
- **Have a professional ring tone.** Whether it's your personal cell phone or one issued by your company, a professional ring tone is important to convey a professional image of you.
- **In a cubicle, turn your mobile device to silent.** It's annoying and distracting if your phone rings and you're there, but it's more irritating to coworkers if it rings and rings when you're away from your desk.
- **Take personal calls in a private place.** Hearing someone talk loudly on a cell phone, especially about personal business is distracting and discourteous to coworkers trying to do their jobs. It's best to go to an empty conference room or other private location to make a personal call. And keep personal calls to a minimum so that you don't appear unfocused to your team or your boss.
- **Never use your cell phone in the restroom.** This is not the place to share personal or confidential company or client information. You never know who might be in listening range.

Be a Continuous Learner

- Ask questions and be curious.
- Take advantage of training opportunities such as workshops and seminars that may be offered by your employer whether online or in-person. Online training is convenient as it can be done at your convenience 24/7 but in-person classes have the added advantage of offering a ready-made networking opportunity.
- Continue to build job specific and transferable skills especially those that you have identified as necessary requirements for the next step in your career. You can do this through on-the-job-training; community college courses; online sites such as Udemy, Coursera or Lynda.com; or through taking open enrollment or extension classes through a college or university.
- Stay current in your field by reading industry publications, blogs, and e-newsletters.
- Stay up-to-date with technology.
- On LinkedIn, follow companies and join groups to keep informed on career development topics and engage in your field of interest.



"Cultivate a career growth mindset of being a lifelong learner and long distance runner, this will help you navigate career changes with curiosity, creativity, and compassion."

Dr. Maureen E. White, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office of Workforce & Economic Development Division

Attend to and Continue to Build Your Network

- Be actively involved in your profession and industry to gain exposure to a wide network of people and stay abreast of trends.
- Go to lunch with a colleague or co-worker you don't usually see. This will help build the relationship and lead to stronger collaboration.
- Participate on organization-wide or cross-functional committees or teams to increase your awareness of what is happening outside of your department.
- Keep your LinkedIn profile up-to-date by adding accomplishments and newly acquired skills as well as connecting with new colleagues.

Record Accomplishments

As a career self-reliant professional, keeping track of your career successes, significant projects, and newly developed skills is important because you can use these accomplishments to market yourself for your next position. A simple way to do this is to make a list of your job responsibilities and then every 6 months write what you've achieved in each of those areas. Keeping a career journal to track projects, accomplishments, and reflections can also be a valuable tool to recall details, identify patterns, and continue your journey of self-discovery.

Evaluate and Seek Feedback

- Take time every six months to take stock of what's working well in your career, and what's not. What skills do you still need to develop and what are you doing to improve in those areas?
- Check in with your supervisor quarterly to get feedback on how you could improve your effectiveness.

Identify a Mentor

Establish a mentor relationship with a senior staff person or someone in a related position who can support you. A mentor might work at your current organization or be someone you worked with in the past or who has been helpful to you in your career. It could be someone who is 20+ years ahead of you in their career but could also be someone who is only 3-5 years ahead of you in their career development- both would have valuable insights to share. Meet with these mentors and let them know how you are doing and ask them questions about how to continue to move your career towards your goals. Also, it's never too early for you to be a mentor! Be open to giving a hand to new AmeriCorps members or other employees who are seeking guidance.

Change Positions Smoothly

When you decide it is time to move on to another position, do so with professionalism- how you leave a job is just as important as how you start a job. Schedule a time to speak with your supervisor to let them know you are a finalist for a position or have been offered a new position (the timing of this will likely depend on whether or not you've listed your supervisor as a reference). Typically 2 weeks notice is the standard amount of time you are expected to give an employer before departing, although depending on the specific circumstances, this might be a bit shorter or longer. Before your last day, discuss pending projects with your supervisor and come to agreement on what you will complete prior to your departure. Collect contact information from co-workers so you can stay in touch and thank your colleagues. Leaving a job in a positive fashion is important for continued references, maintaining your network, and not burning bridges with those with whom you've built positive working relationships.

Be Open to Career Serendipity

This guide has set out a career development process that when implemented has a high probability of success. However, career serendipity, a phrase coined by career counselor Constance Stevens, or chance can certainly play a role in the process. As John Lennon wrote in his song “Beautiful Boy”, “Life is what happens while you’re busy making other plans.” Consider Riley’s story of career serendipity:

Riley tried a couple of career search efforts and jumped from one job to another for 3 years after high school. Nothing seemed to fit. Then he met a man at his regular coffee shop who was hearing impaired. Over the course of a couple of months they struck up a friendship and Riley began to learn about the lack of services available in the community for the hearing impaired. Riley began volunteering at the NORCAL Services for Deaf & Hard of Hearing, returned to community college to learn sign language and now is a successful interpreter helping the hearing impaired in accessing needed health care.

Ideas for increasing your career serendipity:

- Put yourself in the position of being in the right place at the right time by continuing to network and stay involved in your field.
- Take a class that relates to your hobby
- Join a recreational sports team
- Volunteer for something outside of your field
- Take a different form of public transportation or change up your usual ride time so you are with a new group of people
- Never pass up the opportunity to network

Stay Connected to AmeriCorps



In addition to these important career management tools, you are fortunate to have the added advantage of the AmeriCorps network. Staying connected to this community of professionals can be a tremendous boost to your long-term career success. Join the AmeriCorps Facebook page; follow AmeriCorps’ handles on Twitter (@americorps, @americorps alums, @National Service, and @AmeriCorps Vista); and join the AmeriCorps Alumni Network at <http://www.americorpsalums.org>. AmeriCorps Alums is the official national network that connects the one million alumni from all AmeriCorps programs to the people, ideas, and resources that can support you in reaching your goals. It only takes a few minutes to register and it’s free! Once you are registered you can access resources to help you:

- **Network:** Connect with hundreds of thousands of alumni either in person or through social media. There are 80 AmeriCorps Alumni Chapters across the country and an active community on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
- **Find a Job:** The site offers a monthly career newsletter, a Career Center and Coach, professional development webinars, virtual resume reviews, and more.
- **Identify Schools and Financial Resources for Continuing Your Education:** AmeriCorps partner schools and innovative programs like the Virtual Grad School Fair attract schools that value your national service experience.

- **Serve:** Continue a “lifetime of service” through local volunteering, service campaigns, and skills-based volunteering.
- **Get Benefits:** Take advantage of free tax return assistance and other member discounts and benefits from national partners.



Career Authenticity

Each of us is a unique individual with different life experiences, resources, strengths and weaknesses. We all have assets that help us achieve our goals and obstacles that block our progress. Because of this uniqueness, no two career development processes or job search efforts will look the same, nor should they. Use this document per its title, as a “Guide” to create the framework for your career journey. Seek the advice and support of your supervisor and program manager along with other trusted people in your network. Throughout your process, capitalize on your strengths and don’t stress too much about your weaknesses

(while at the same time taking steps to lessen their impact on your effectiveness).

Dr. Howard Figler provided an excellent example of this concept in his book “The Complete Job-Search Handbook, 3rd Edition”:

Job Seeker #1 says, “I hate the telephone. It’s too impersonal, and it makes me nervous. I would rather deal with people face-to-face, which is more natural. So I ... talk to people or meet them someplace, and one thing leads to another...”

Job Seeker #2 says, “The telephone is my ally. I keep on the phone for days and weeks until I get ten solid leads or interviews... this is more efficient.”

Both techniques will help move your career forward, and you are likely to be more successful playing to your strengths than avoiding making progress on your career development because a certain technique makes you uncomfortable.

Delve into the suggested reading, websites, and apps at the end of the Guide to continue to expand your understanding of yourself and the world of work. Through this continued discovery you will find your “best fit” career for now and in the future, which will lead to satisfying work that brings you happiness.

In other words, be authentic in your approach. Know yourself, listen to your inner voice and choose your own path!

“There is no passion to be found in playing small-in settling for a life that is less than you are capable of living.”

NELSON MANDELA

Complete the Career Fitness Post-Test to see how your career self-reliance has improved since beginning your year of service.

Career Fitness Post-Test

	YES	STARTED	NEED TO DEVELOP
I know the five stages of the career development process.			
I am aware of my strengths and skills.			
I know my weaknesses and have developed methods for improvement.			
I understand how my personality influences my career satisfaction.			
I can identify 5 things I need in a career for it to be satisfying.			
I am clear about my most important work-related values.			
I can describe the type of work environment in which I would feel happiest and most productive.			
I know how to explore career options.			
I have developed a list of career options to explore and research.			
I have conducted an informational interview in the past year.			
I can clearly and confidently state my career goals.			
I have a written career development plan.			
I have identified steps to take in the next six to twelve months to achieve my goals.			
I have an updated, accomplishment-based resume.			
I have developed a list of professional references.			
For each of my past job-related experiences, I can list <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 work activities • 5 skills used • 5 accomplishments 			
I understand how to network effectively.			
I have developed and can effectively deliver my 30-Second Introduction.			
I know how to use social media in my job search.			
I'm aware of other ways to look for a job besides online job boards.			
I have practiced my interviewing techniques and am prepared to answer the most commonly asked interview questions.			
I actively seek feedback and mentoring from others.			
I maintain a network of contacts for learning and sharing ideas.			
I know how to project a professional image both in-person and online.			
I keep current about issues related to my career interests.			
I attend events, conferences, or trainings to learn more about my current field or fields I might explore.			
I have joined and become active in a professional association related to my interests.			
I know how much money I need to meet my needs.			
I have taken ownership of my career development.			

Count the number of “Yes” Answers you had.

22-29: Congratulations! You have worked on your career fitness and have just a few items to add to your career management toolkit. Keep up the good work!

11-21: You are headed in the right direction but have some work to do to more effectively manage your career. Build on the skills you already have developed to enhance your career fitness level.

Less than 10: It's always a good time to get started in building your career management skills. Continue to use this Guide and the connections you've developed over your year of service to get “career fit!”

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INSIGHTS FROM AMERICORPS ALUMNI



Melissa Calvin-Furbee

Senior Vocational Counselor, County of Humboldt,
Employment Training Division

AmeriCorps, Straight-Up, Eureka High School, '99-'00

Best thing members can do during their year of service to make themselves career ready:

Take part in every opportunity AmeriCorps provides you- every volunteer activity, every event. Soak up all knowledge and exposure you can.

Job search tip for members:

Really focus on discovering what transferable skills you have to offer and note ones you received from your AmeriCorps experience.

How being an AmeriCorps Member helped me with my career development:

AmeriCorps provided me foundational level knowledge and experience for the start of my professional career in the social services field. It allowed me to witness the realities that vulnerable populations face, and provided me the practical skills that complemented my theoretical college-based knowledge.

Erin Havens

Working on a graduate degree in International Agriculture at UC Davis

AmeriCorps VISTA, '15-'16, Silicon Valley HealthCorps: Harvest/Outreach Manager, Neighborhood Harvest Program

Best thing members can do during their year of service to make themselves career ready:

Networking/connecting with local partnering organizations and attending as many meetings and events as possible. This helped me to understand the types of jobs in the field and the kind of work that different organizations were doing. It also gave me ideas and contact information for people who I could reach out to in the future.

Job search tip for members:

Send your resume to organizations that you are interested in, even if they are not hiring. That way, they can keep you in mind or may even be able to refer you to other places to look.

How being an AmeriCorps Member helped me with my career development:

After my year with AmeriCorps working with an urban agriculture nonprofit, I started graduate school in international agriculture. I have found that I can build on the hands-on knowledge and the connections I made during my time with AmeriCorps to inform my current research projects and coursework.

Bridget Hinton

Education Program Assistant, Oregon State University Extension

AmeriCorps, Jesuit Volunteer Corp, '14-'15 and '15-'16

Best thing members can do during their year of service to make themselves career ready:

The first 2-3 months of service can be really overwhelming especially if you are in a new community. There is a lot of pressure to have a wonderful year-to have a life-changing experience. Take time to recognize the ways in which you might be overwhelmed and communicate them to your supervisor, friend, or other important people connected to your year of service. You might want to write them down so at the end of your experience you can reflect back on how you handle transition and see how you have grown. You can take that information and apply it to your next transition.

Job search tip for members:

As the year starts and until the end I would encourage folks to talk with their supervisor about looking for work. Ask for suggestions, recommendations and tips. Ask if you can sit in on an interview that might be taking place at the organization to have an “insiders” perspective. Go over your resume with your supervisor; have them look over your job description to make sure you paint an accurate picture of your year.

How being an AmeriCorps Member helped me with my career development:

Ultimately I think AmeriCorps provides on the ground experience through the requirement of “direct service” and this gave me some wonderful specific examples to take with me in interviews.

Guadalupe Huerta

*Constituent Advocate, City of Los Angeles
AmeriCorps Vista, LAUSD Community Partnership
Program, '12-'13*

Best thing members can do during their year of service to make themselves career ready:

Networking is crucial; most placements provide a wide array of connections, essential in career development. This provides opportunities for informational interviews, as well as future contacts within the industry of the AmeriCorps placement. The people I met during my service year, both

corps members and non-corps members, helped me grow professionally and staying connected with them has been vital to my career development.

Job search tip for members:

My best advice for the job search is to reach out to your network. Often times, there are positions available that are not posted on any websites or job boards that someone in your network may know about. Additionally, knowing someone who is connected to a job, whether it is because they currently work there or they know someone, will place you in a different candidate pool. This is especially crucial if a potential job is in a saturated market with many applicants. Having a personal connection, or “in,” makes all the difference in getting your resume highlighted from the larger pool, and increases the likelihood of getting an interview.

Also, I would like to add that an interview should be prepped for as you would an exam. Create potential questions and answers, and research the company or organization heavily.

How being an AmeriCorps Member helped me with my career development:

Being an AmeriCorps member put me at the center of policy development and change occurring at LAUSD. I learned about the educational landscape of Los Angeles and gained the skills to work with various stakeholders throughout the community. I learned how to handle difficult situations with the support of a team.



Laura Lee

*HR Business Partner, General Mills,
City Year LA, '11*

Best thing members can do during their year of service to make themselves career ready:

Challenge yourself and learn what it means to perform well on a team. In many roles and organizations, I have found that being a good teammate is very valuable. Building empathy necessary to work well with your colleagues will be transferable anywhere you go.

Job search tip for members:

Work on your networking skills and be open-minded about who you meet. You literally never know where your next opportunity will come from or when things will pop up. Try to maintain organic connections and continue to tend to your network as you grow professionally.

How being an AmeriCorps Member helped me with my career development:

Being an AmeriCorps Member taught me countless valuable lessons I still carry with me to this day. Through my work with my teams I learned about collaboration, empathy, resilience, and gained clarity on my own leadership style. These qualities have made me a better teammate and a more effective manager in the workplace and graduate school.

Trevor Merris-Coots

*Graduate student in Global Security Studies at John Hopkins University
AmeriCorps NCCC member, North Carolina, '09-'10 and '10-'11*

Best thing members can do during their year of service to make themselves career ready:

Networking is an important part of any career. AmeriCorps members have a unique opportunity to network with a variety of professionals across the country.

Job search tip for members:

No one gets their dream job on the first try. Be patient and open to try new things. AmeriCorps is a perfect training ground for that.

How being an AmeriCorps Member helped me with my career development:

During my second term of service, the federal government temporarily shut down, halting our work. The experience convinced me that I needed to be on the inside of politics to make sure that people who need help are not left in the cold because of political grandstanding.

Law Murray

*NBA Associate Editor, ESPN
City Year Philadelphia '09-'10 and Los Angeles '10-'11*

Best thing members can do during their year of service to make themselves career ready:

Share your experiences as a means towards networking. Find a way to get meetings with people in the field that you are interested in, have an understanding of your skill set, and be prepared to discuss how you can take your experience and translate it into your career.

Job search tip for members:

Get face-to-face with recruiters, hiring managers, or people who can advocate on your behalf. Every opportunity I've had since 2012 came about because I was proactive in getting meetings before I had finalized job applications. Don't apply to anything blindly.

How being an AmeriCorps Member helped me with my career development:

My career developed because I embraced the diversity of skills you acquire. Long hours every week with an eclectic team makes for incredible work, and that translates when you have many different responsibilities and work with a revolving door of co-workers. Plus, you gain an appreciation for respecting where you work.

Greg Norrish

*Special Projects for the Director's Office, California Department of Social Services
AmeriCorps NCCC, '08-'09 (Habitat for Humanity NOLA, Road Home in SLC, and Boys and Girls Club in Sacramento)*

Best thing members can do during their year of service to make themselves career ready:

Individually, I think it's important to learn to be comfortable being in a learning role. Learning about the programs you're working in, the people you're serving, and the variables they are up against. You might feel like you've seen it all after your service year but you'll be expected to have the same approach to every new job you take on. No two people or populations are alike. Secondly, establish strong relationships with your sponsors. Seek out the highest-level employee of that organization and allow your work ethic to set you apart. These are the people that you will be writing down as references, or perhaps asking for jobs, after your year of service.

Job search tip for members:

Don't describe your experience solely through the lens of AmeriCorps. Explain in great detail what you've done with each project. One year may seem like a long time for you but you're competing against people with many more years. To separate yourself, you'll need to highlight each project. These are mini-jobs that should stand out individually because they provide you with a scope of experience most people your age don't have. And please, spend the time to make your resume look great and always send it as a PDF.

How being an AmeriCorps Member helped me with my career development:

Truthfully, AmeriCorps prepared me to be more resilient. I failed many times during my year of service- as a leader, personally, and professionally. Service dedicated careers are never going to be easy, linear, or monotonous. AmeriCorps helped me to embrace the path I've taken from nonprofit,

to graduate school, and now in government. AmeriCorps also showed me that innovative thinkers truly do have a place in service work. It's welcome in nonprofits and is certainly being more sought after in government. If you're one of those people who push boundaries, hold on to that.

Meghan Paynter

*Patient Associate, Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Board Member City Year Alumni Association
National Advisory Board
City Year LA, '12-'13 and '13-'14*

Best thing members can do during their year of service to make themselves career ready:

Try to get involved in different aspects of your year of service that are not generally your areas of strength. One of the biggest benefits of City Year is that you get to learn what you are good at as well as what you can improve in. Both of these are equally important. Employers love to hear that you are aware of your strengths AND your weaknesses and that you are actively working on improving your weaknesses. (No one expects you to be flawless; but they do expect you to be proactive.)

Job search tip for members:

If the employer is accepting resumes by email, in the body of the email, do not hesitate to put a quick blurb about your passion for the work and desire for that job. Tell them that you are eagerly awaiting a response and show them what a proactive person you are through your writing.

How being an AmeriCorps Member helped me with my career development:

City Year gave me confidence. It showed me that I can work in one of the most difficult and exhausting lines of work and can persevere purely because of my passion for it. It taught me that as long as what I do is meaningful, I would never tire. By showing me my strengths, identifying my weaknesses, and helping me work on them, I became a more competitive applicant for any job.

Appendix 1

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Review the information you've gathered from all the self-assessments you've completed. Record the information that is most important to you on this page.

Top 10 Value

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Personality Preferences

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

The letters mean:

Interests

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Motivated Skills

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Top Five Strengths

(if you completed StrengthsFinder 2.0)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Passions

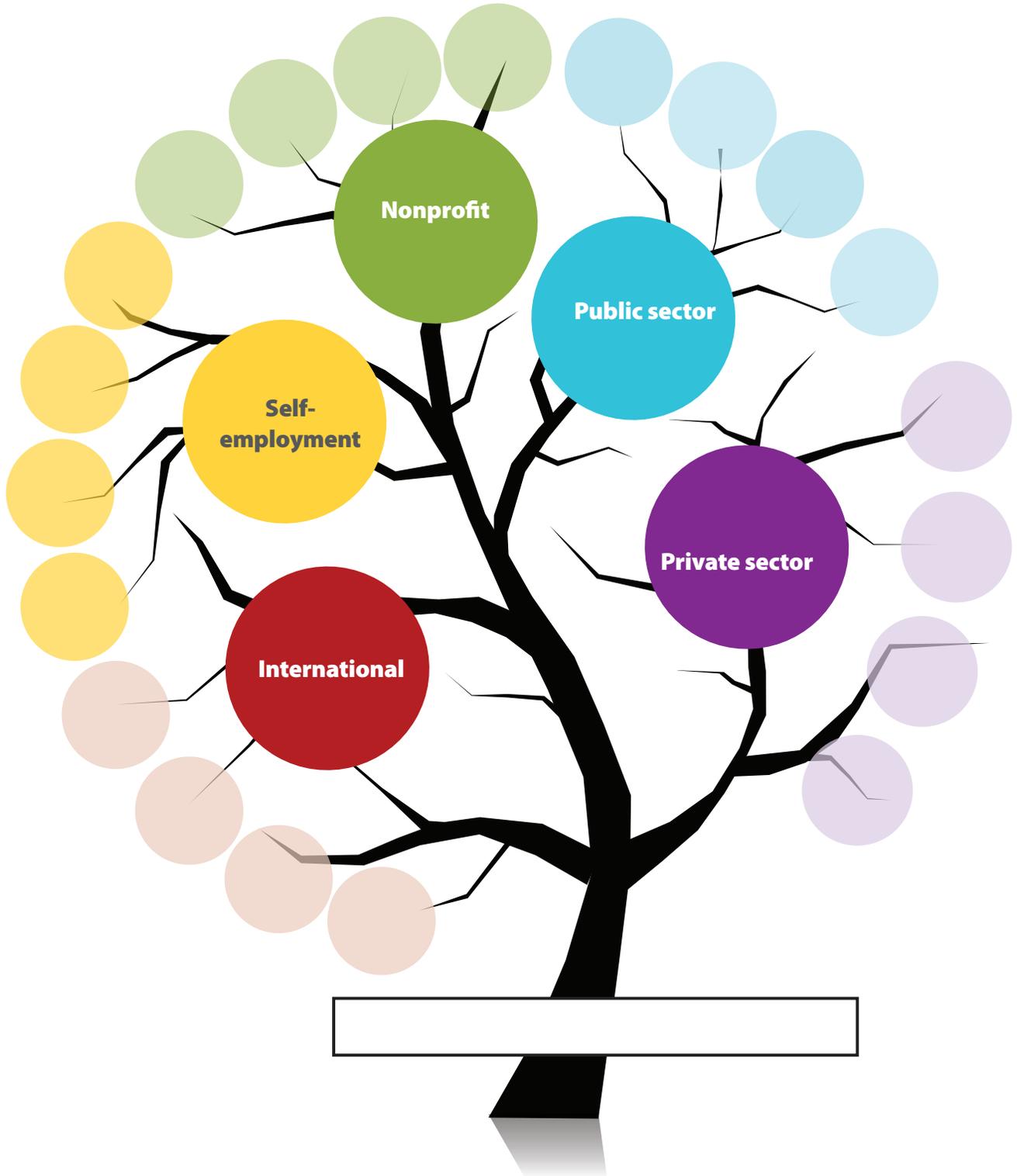
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Other Considerations

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Appendix 2

BAKER TREE OF OPTIONS



Appendix 3

OCCUPATION EXPLORATION WORKSHEET

Research the occupation using the Occupational Outlook Handout and the O*Net to find the following facts:

OCCUPATION

What does the worker do on a typical day?

What skills are required?

What important qualities are needed? (physical requirements, temperament, values)

What education is required?

In what type of organizations would you find this occupation?

WORKING ENVIRONMENT (CIRCLE CHOICE)

Indoor/outdoor

Clean/dirty

High/low stress

Work schedule

OPPORTUNITIES

What is the demand for workers? Increasing? Decreasing? Salary Range:

Opportunities for advancement?

Where is job training available?

SUMMARY OF OCCUPATION

What do you like about this occupation?

What do you dislike about this occupation?

Do you think you would be good at this occupation?

What obstacles might you face in getting a job like this?

Is this an occupation you would consider pursuing?

Are there related occupations you would like to explore?

What other questions do you still have about this occupation?

Appendix 4

Sample Emails and Telephone Scripts Requesting an Informational Interview

Email Samples

–SUBJECT LINE EXAMPLES

Referral from _____
 Research on _____
 Request from AmeriCorps Member

Hello Mr. Heller,

I came across your name in an article about _____ in last week's issue of the Business Journal. I was impressed by your approach to the challenge of _____.

–OR

I was given your name by _____ who suggested that we should meet given our shared interest in _____.

–OR

I am a _____ with a background in _____. I also have experience in _____.

–END WITH:

I wanted to reach out and introduce myself and am hoping that your schedule might allow for us to meet briefly for coffee or to schedule a time to speak by phone to discuss (topic of shared interest). I'm sure you are busy, so even 20 minutes of your time would be much appreciated.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Follow Up Email if You Don't Hear Back

Dear Mr. Heller,

I hope you're having a great week. I wanted to follow up on my request for an informational interview. As I outlined in my previous email, [reason why this person has impressed you] and I'd love to hear about (topic of interest). I'm happy to meet whenever and wherever is convenient for you. However, if your schedule is too full, I completely understand and perhaps you could provide me with the name and contact information for someone else who could assist me.

Thank you for your time,

Telephone Scripts

When Trying to Reach Your Contact:

Your initial call might go something like this:

Hello, this is Cecilia Perez. May I speak with Gabe Patel?

If he or she is not in and/or the person answering the phone asks why you are calling, you can say:

Sally Green suggested I call him regarding some research that I am doing about the field of _____. When would it be convenient for me to call back?

Assuming the person provides you with the information, you can respond:

Thank you very much. I'll call back at (restate time).

When You Do Reach Your Contact:

If referred by someone, your call might go something like this:

Hello, this is Cecilia Perez. Sally Green suggested that I call you regarding the possibility of setting up a brief interview with you. She tells me that you are an excellent source of information on the field of _____.

If you've uncovered the contact person on your own, your call might start in one of these ways:

Hello, this is Cecilia Perez. I am calling because (select the appropriate option):

Of your expertise in the field of (field of interest)

Of your recent promotion to (job title)

Of your association with (professional or other relevant organization)

You are a fellow alumni of (name of college or university).

You are a former AmeriCorps member.

After you've opened the conversation, continue with your explanation of the purpose of your call:

I'm interested in exploring career options and am meeting with a few people to gather information and advice. Would you have 20-30 minutes that we might be able to meet for coffee? Or I could come to your office if that is more convenient.

If your contact agrees, confirm the date, time, and place, and be sure to get clear directions to where you will be meeting. Before you meet with your contact, send a confirmation email expressing your thanks in advance for their willingness to help you.

If your contact does not have time or does not wish to meet with you, you could say:

I appreciate how busy you must be. Could you suggest someone else in your company or in this line of work with whom I could meet?

If your contact asks if you are looking for a job, be honest, but recognize that you are contacting this person for informational purposes. Your reply might go like this:

Eventually, as I come to the end of my year of service I will be applying for jobs, but at this time my meeting with you would be to get your advice and gather information.

Appendix 5

Suggested Informational Interview Questions

Setting the stage/background

- How long have you been working in this field/ at this organization/in this department?
- How did you get into this occupation?
- What were the jobs you had previously that helped you get your current job? What steps did you take?
- What did your supervisor/employer require in terms of skills and abilities?
- What type of background was your supervisor/ employer looking for?

Job search process

- How long did a job search process take for you? In what kind of job market?
- What were some of the things you learned during that process?
- What suggestions would you have for me in preparing myself for changes in my career?

Present aspects of job

- What is a typical day like for you?
- What are the responsibilities of your job?
- What are the most interesting aspects of your job?
- What are the basic requirements for your job?
- What courses/training/professional organizations would you recommend in order to get into this field?
- What entry-level jobs are helpful in transitioning into your occupation?
- What is the best way to transition from my current job to a job in your department/ occupation?
- What are the salary ranges for various jobs in this department/occupation?

- What aspects of a career in this field do you consider positive/negative?
- Would a person with my current background fit into this field?
- What are the most common challenges in this department/occupation?
- Is travel/overtime/flexible schedules a part of the work environment in this industry?
- How does your job compare with others in the same department?
- Who are the experts in this field? Why are they considered experts?
- What professional associations are there in this industry? In your occupation?
- What journals or magazines would you recommend I read?
- Are there some websites that you suggest I explore?
- Who else should I talk to about this occupation?

Future

- Where do you see a job like yours leading to within the organization/within your department?
- How do you see jobs in this area changing over the next few years?
- What can I do to prepare myself to keep up with these changes?

It is not intended that you ask ALL of the above questions. Choose your questions wisely and modify them appropriately. Remember, the person you are interviewing is extending a courtesy to you, and it is best to show respect for their time and willingness to share information; informational interviews typically should last no more than 30 minutes, so plan accordingly.

Appendix 6

Informational Interview Sample “Thank you.”

Dear Ms. Sim,

I wanted to express my appreciation for your taking the time to meet with me last week to discuss opportunities working with the Fresno Public Library. Your knowledge of the field and explanation of the different career paths available was very interesting. In particular, your insights about the benefits of pursuing a Masters in Library Science were valuable.

Thank you also for referring me to Mr. Stevenson at the UC Santa Cruz library. I was able to talk with him via Skype and he provided a useful overview for what it is like to be a librarian in an academic setting. I think it is a path that I would really enjoy!

I look forward to staying in touch with you as my career exploration continues. I am attending a talk next month on new technologies for libraries, so I will let you know about any resources I learn of that might be useful in your library.

Best regards,

Grace Tsu

Appendix 7

DECISION MAKING MODELS

CAREER OPTIONS EVALUATOR TOOL

	Career Option 1	Career Option 2	Career Option 3
My Career Values			
My Personality Preferences/Strengths			
My Career Interests			
My Motivated Skills			
My Other Important Factors			
TOTAL			

Ratings:

4- Excellent Fit 3- Good Fit 2- Somewhat of a Fit 1- Not a Fit ?- Need More Information

PROS & CONS LIST

Career Options:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

	PROS	CONS
OPTION 1		
OPTION 2		
OPTION 3		
I choose to:		
Picture the outcome of your choice:		

Does this choice feel right? Yes ____ No ____ . Ask someone to help you think through the pros and cons. What other details do you need to make a well-informed decision?

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS Positive factors within your control (passion for the work, experience, existing skills)	WEAKNESSES Negative factors within your control that you can improve upon (lack of schooling, skill gaps)
OPPORTUNITIES Positive factors outside of your control that you could capitalize on (career field is growing, Segal Education Award to pay for needed training)	THREATS Negative factors outside of your control that you should try to minimize (competition from more highly trained people, keeping up with rapid changes in the field)

Appendix 8

CAREER ACTION PLAN - Example

MY LONG-TERM CAREER GOAL: *Become a Grant Writer for a Nonprofit Organization that Serves Refugees in southern California within 3 years*

Short-Term Goals to Help Reach Long-Term Goal	Actions to Take	Obstacles: What Might Get in My Way	Resources: Who or What Can Help Me	Completion Date
Register for the "Going After Grants" workshop on May 3, 2019" at the San Joaquin County Nonprofit Resource Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register for class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting the time off work to go to the workshop Finding transportation to the workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speak with my site supervisor at least 1 month before the workshop to explain how the training will help me reach my long term career goal and request that I can attend Identify the bus schedule and nearest stop at least 1 week before the workshop 	May 3, 2019
Volunteer to proofread grants being written in my current organization and help with at least 2 grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talk to lead grant writer about my idea Show them examples of my writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding time to review the grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask my site supervisor if I can have some time to assist with this activity 	June 15, 2019
Make at least 5 connections with people working for nonprofits in southern California that serve refugee populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with people on LinkedIn in related fields Reach out to AmeriCorps Alums in related organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsure how to use LinkedIn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AmeriCorps Advantage Guide section on networking and using LinkedIn 	July 31, 2019
Following my year of service, secure an entry-level grant assistant position with a nonprofit that serves refugees in southern California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare my resume Begin searching for openings in last month of service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating my resume feels overwhelming Accessing reliable Internet access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AmeriCorps Advantage Guide tools for preparing resume Register with the local OneStop Career Center 1 month before the end of my service so I can use their computers 	September 2019

CAREER ACTION PLAN

MY LONG-TERM CAREER GOAL:

Short-Term Goals to Help Reach Long-Term Goal	Actions to Take	Obstacles: What Might Get in My Way	Resources: Who or What Can Help Me	Completion Date

Appendix 9

JOB SEARCH DATA SHEET

Contact Information

Include Full Name you use for Employment, City and State, Email Address, Contact Phone number, LinkedIn URL:

Education

List the following information about schools you have attended in reverse chronological order: Name of School, location (city, state, country), Major, Minor, Degree/Certificate, Relevant Coursework, Graduation Year, GPA (if above 3.0):

If you completed your degree in the last 3 years list major accomplishments related to your education: academic recognition, internships, special projects, winner or participant in competitions, accelerated programs, scholarships, etc.

What extra-curricular activities have you been involved in during school? (volunteer work, sports, clubs, jobs, offices held, study abroad etc.)

Certifications and Licenses-What certifications and licenses have you obtained? Include dates of completion/expiration

Work History

For each position (paid work, internship, volunteer) you have held in the last 10 years AND any previous employment that is pertinent to your career goals, please provide the following information:

Position Title, Company Name, Address, Dates of Employment (Months and Years), Specific accomplishments, Salary, Supervisor's Title and Phone Number, Reason for Leaving, Job Duties:

Position 1:

Position 2:

Etc...

Professional Associations

List memberships in professional organizations, and also note leadership roles, special designations/recognitions, and the dates you've been involved:

Honors and Awards

Please list awards, granting organization, year received, and other pertinent information:

Presentations and Publications

Please share titles of articles in periodicals, books, presentations at professional meetings, etc.:

Special Skills

Please list expertise with computers, specialized equipment, languages, etc.:

Military Service

Please share branch of service, rank, security clearances, and other information that can be disclosed and is related to your career goals:

Personal Characteristics

What am I doing when I am at my best (i.e., energized, feeling fulfilled, lost in the moment)? Give several examples.

What are the top 3 reasons that a company would want to hire you?

What sets you apart from others with equal qualifications?

What positive feedback would your supervisor or peers share about your performance at work?

In what ways do you bring value to your supervisor, company, team, and clients (if applicable)?

What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?

What specific achievements reflect these strengths?

What would your previous supervisors list as your strengths and greatest skills? What could they always count upon you to accomplish?

What were you known for in the workplace? What would you like to be known for in your new position?

Appendix 10

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

This section of your resume should summarize your strengths and qualifications for the position including, but are not limited to, years of service, skills, areas of knowledge, training, experience and professional traits **RELEVANT** to the job. This section answers the question “**Why should we hire you?**” Below are two examples.

Volunteer Coordinator for The Nature Conservancy

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Experienced in recruiting, training and motivating large and diverse groups of volunteers to accomplish environmental education projects.
- Strong organizational skills to plan events, complete projects on time, and track all details.
- Background in designing newsletters and email communication to update volunteers on activities.
- Demonstrated communication and interpersonal skills to work effectively with staff and the public.
- A team player experienced in working in a fast paced environment with a wide range of people.
- Proficient in MS Word, Excel, and PowerPoint with expertise in creating volunteer databases.
- Fluent in Spanish.

Office Assistant for a law firm

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Experience working in professional office settings including two years with the Orange County District Attorney’s Office.
- Strong customer service skills to answer questions from the general public and make referrals.
- Well-organized, self-motivated, and able to work independently to manage multiple priorities.
- Skilled in handling confidential, sensitive information in a professional manner.
- Recognized for writing clear and concise reports, letters, and emails.
- Computer skills include: MS Office Suite, Photoshop, and HTML programming for website design.

Options for ways to start your Summary of Qualifications bullet points:

Able to ...	Expertise in ...	Proficient in ...
An accomplished ...	Extensive experience in ...	Recognized for ...
Background includes ...	Familiar with ...	Significant achievement in ...
Broad understanding of ...	Hands on experience in ...	Skilled in ...
Computer skills include ...	Highly effective at ...	Solid experience in ...
Consistently recognized for ...	Knowledgeable in ...	Specialize in ...
Demonstrated skill ...	Outstanding record of ...	Strength in ...
Experience in ...	Over “#” years experience in ...	Well versed in ...

Appendix 11

ACCOMPLISHMENT STATEMENT GUIDELINES

Accomplishment Statements:

- Focus on one activity or project AND include the outcome or impact.
- Begin with an action word (see the list in **APPENDIX 12**).
- Are quantified in numerical or percentage terms to communicate size and scope.
- Consist of one or two brief sentences that use one or two lines on your resume

Ask yourself the following questions to begin to generate your own accomplishment statements from your year of service, work experiences, volunteer service, and/or school activities:

- What has improved or changed for the better due to your efforts?
- Have you served on a committee or worked on a team to accomplish a project?
- What have you learned during your year of service?
- What have you done during your year of service that has made you proud?
- Did you meet or exceed performance standards? How?
- Did you design or modify a system or procedure to make it better?
- How have you made a difference?
- What challenges have you overcome during your year of service?
- Have you received outstanding evaluations on some aspect of your work?
- Have you increased participation, donations, sales or productivity? How?
- Did you develop and/or implement a new approach to doing something that was more effective?
- Did you create something new- a program, event, form, newsletter, etc.?
- Have you saved your organization time or money?
- Have you successfully managed a project? What was the scope of the project? The results?
- What did you accomplish that no one expected or asked of you?

Examples of Accomplishment Statements:

- Designed response system to better address customer issues reducing complaints by 60%.
- Oversaw all facets of record keeping system for a 100 employee nonprofit including payroll, employee benefits, accounts payable, accounts receivable, and fundraising database with 2,500 records.
- Developed a youth volunteer program including training 40 participants and writing a handbook for supervisors and managers. Program was awarded "Best New Program" from the Chamber of Commerce.
- Promoted organization's services to under-represented groups through 25 classroom presentations, networking at monthly support group, and meeting with over 50 community organizations.
- Served as active participant on a committee to create new 5-year strategic plan for the Parks and Recreation Department. Plan was approved by the City Council with minimal revisions.
- Coordinated publishing of a statewide program resource guide involving the production, marketing, and distribution of 4,000 books to 300 locations throughout the state.
- Researched and wrote successful grant proposals to increase operating budget. Secured over \$15,000 in 2017.
- Collaborated with a team of 3 co-workers to design and deliver daily classroom tutoring, 2 after school clubs, and a day long community engagement event to promote a positive school environment.
- Taught nutrition education classes to up to 25 refugees helping them increase their knowledge of healthy eating habits in the U.S.
- Developed outreach relationships with community agencies, schools and private businesses increasing public education and welfare.

Appendix 12**ACTION VERBS**

A	cared	crafted	energized	guaranteed
accelerated	cataloged	created	enforced	guided
accomplished	categorized	critiqued	engineered	H
accounted	centralized	cultivated	enhanced	halted
achieved	chaired	D	enlightened	handled
acquired	championed	dealt with	enlisted	headed
acted	changed	debated	ensured	helped
adapted	charged	decided	envisioned	hired
added	charted	decreased	equipped	honored
addressed	checked	defended	established	hypothesized
administered	clarified	defined	estimated	I
advanced	classified	delegated	evaluated	identified
advertised	cleaned	delivered	examined	illustrated
advised	coached	demonstrated	executed	imagined
advocated	collaborated	deployed	exhibited	implemented
aided	collated	designed	expanded	imported
allocated	collected	detailed	expedited	improved
analyzed	comforted	detected	experimented	improvised
answered	communicated	determined	explained	inaugurated
anticipated	compared	developed	explored	increased
applied	compelled	devised	exported	indexed
appointed	compiled	diagnosed	expressed	indicated
appraised	completed	directed	extracted	influenced
approved	composed	discovered	F	informed
arbitrated	computed	dispatched	facilitated	initiated
arranged	computerized	dispensed	fashioned	innovated
ascertained	conceived	displayed	fed	inspected
assembled	conceptualized	dissected	filed	inspired
assessed	concluded	distributed	finalized	installed
assisted	condensed	diversified	financed	instituted
attained	conducted	diverted	fixed	instructed
attended	conserved	documented	folded	integrated
audited	consolidated	doubled	followed	intensified
augmented	constructed	drafted	forged	interacted
authored	consulted	drove	formed	interfaced
authorized	continued	uplicated	formalized	interpreted
automated	contracted	E	formulated	interviewed
B	contributed	earned	fostered	introduced
balanced	controlled	edited	forecasted	invented
bolstered	converted	educated	found	inventoried
bought	conveyed	effected	founded	invested
brainstormed	cooperated	elected	furnished	investigated
briefed	coordinated	eliminated	G	J, K
budgeted	copied	empathized	gained	judged
built	corrected	empowered	gathered	justified
C	correlated	enabled	gave	kept
calculated	corresponded	enacted	generated	L
captured	counseled	encouraged	greeted	launched

learned
 lectured
 led
 leveraged
 lifted
 liquidated
 listed
 listened
 located
 logged
 lowered
M
 made
 maintained
 managed
 manipulated
 manufactured
 mapped
 marketed
 mastered
 masterminded
 maximized
 measured
 mediated
 memorized
 mentored
 merged
 met
 minimized
 modeled
 modernized
 modified
 monitored
 motivated
 multitasked
N
 narrated
 navigated
 negotiated
 networked
 nominated
 normalized
 notified
 numbered
O
 observed
 obtained
 offered
 officiated
 opened
 operated

orchestrated
 ordered
 organized
 oriented
 outlined
 outsourced
 overcame
 overhauled
 oversaw
P
 packed
 participated
 patrolled
 perceived
 perfected
 performed
 persuaded
 piloted
 pinpointed
 pioneered
 planned
 positioned
 posted
 practiced
 predicted
 prepared
 prescribed
 presented
 presided
 prioritized
 processed
 procured
 produced
 programmed
 progressed
 projected
 promoted
 propelled
 proposed
 prospected
 protected
 proved
 provided
 publicized
 published
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Q
 qualified
 quantified
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R
 raised
 ran
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 rationalized
 read
 realigned
 realized
 reasoned
 rebuilt
 recaptured
 received
 recognized
 recommended
 reconciled
 recorded
 recruited
 redesigned
 reduced
 reengineered
 referred
 refined
 regained
 regulated
 rehabilitated
 reinforced
 rejuvenated
 related
 rendered
 renegotiated
 renovated
 reorganized
 repaired
 reported
 repositioned
 represented
 researched
 resolved
 responded
 restored
 restructured
 retrieved
 revamped
 reversed
 reviewed
 revised
 revitalized
S
 satisfied
 scanned

scheduled
 screened
 secured
 selected
 separated
 served
 served as
 serviced
 set up
 shaped
 shipped
 showed
 shredded
 simplified
 sold
 solicited
 solidified
 solved
 specialized
 specified
 spoke
 started
 staffed
 standardized
 started
 stimulated
 strategized
 streamlined
 strengthened
 stressed
 structured
 studied
 substantiated
 succeeded
 suggested
 summarized
 supervised
 supplied
 supported
 surpassed
 surveyed
 sustained
 symbolized
 systematized
 synthesized
T
 tabulated
 tailored
 talked
 targeted
 taught

tended
 terminated
 tested
 theorized
 thwarted
 told
 totaled
 tracked
 trained
 transacted
 transcribed
 transferred
 transformed
 transitioned
 translated
 transported
 transposed
 treated
U
 uncovered
 undertook
 unified
 united
 updated
 upgraded
 used
 utilized
V
 validated
 verbalized
 verified
 virtualized
 visualized
W
 weighed
 withstood
 won
 worked
 wrote

Appendix 13

SAMPLE RESUME - Chronological

HAILEY A. BURCIAGA

Sacramento, CA 95823, haileyaburciaga@gmail.com, 530-574-2622, linkedin.com/in/hailey-burciaga

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- An open-minded, patient, and understanding caregiver with knowledge of elder and hospice care
- Experienced in coordinating care with other medical professionals as well as family members
- Strong written and oral communication skills to effectively document activities, make presentations, and clearly explain complex procedures
- Extensive knowledge of safety net and health care resources in the greater Sacramento region
- Fluent in Spanish and competency in cross-cultural communication

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

B.A., American Ethnic Studies and Spanish, May 2016

Sonoma State University

- 3.5 GPA; Dean's list for 3 semesters

International Student Exchange Program (ISEP), Montevideo, Uruguay, March-July 2015

- Studied Spanish Literature at Universidad Católica del Uruguay

EXPERIENCE

Service Associate (AmeriCorps Member), August 2017-present

Care for You, Sacramento, CA

- Provide direct care for up to 5 individuals per day including respite, friendly visiting, and transportation services in order to monitor health and provide social interaction.
- Evaluate type of care needed and facilitate referrals to appropriate community organizations.
- Train Spanish-speaking volunteers and manage Spanish-speaking care receiver/volunteer matches.
- Created a process to more effectively assess volunteers' availability and appropriateness for care receiver matches reducing the number of complaints.

Youth Education Program Coordinator (AmeriCorps Member), August 2016-July 2017

Catholic Community Services, San Jose, CA

- Managed Youth Tutoring Program including academic enrichment activities and tutoring for 150 middle school students. Developed and facilitated well-received workshops to train 18 tutors and recruited an additional 10 high school student tutors.
- Assisted with Feed the Hungry program including management of 5 volunteer crews each consisting of 6-8 retired volunteers. Prepared daily lunch for 90-120 patrons experiencing homelessness, served and accompanied patrons during lunch, and deescalated conflicts between patrons.
- Assisted with Street Outreach program for people experiencing homelessness. Provided immediate intervention by passing out food, water, hygiene supplies, and bus tokens.

Service Learning Assistant, September 2015-May 2016

Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA

- Introduced concepts of service learning to more than 40 students.
- Facilitated one-on-one reflection activities to build students' confidence and professionalism.
- Assisted with coordination of student service placements increasing successful placements by 25%.
- Initiated a mentoring program with campus administrators and 5 underserved students.

Hailey A. BurciagaPg. 2

Residential Assistant, August 2013-June 2014**Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA**

- Advised over 80 students regarding personal and academic difficulties. All students completed their academic year in good standing.
- Created a supportive community environment through social programs, event planning, educational programs and many informal discussions.
- Interpreted and adjudicated campus policies.

Summer Community Associate, May 2014-August 2014**Atria Covell Gardens, San Jose, CA**

- Helped establish and maintain a comfortable, receptive and positive living community for residents.
- Collaborated with staff to develop a new exercise program that increased residents' health and well being.
- Assisted in creating and managing weekly off-site excursions to local events such as farmer's markets, theatre shows, and museums.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Grief Group Facilitator, Placer Hospice, Roseville, CA, April 2017-present

- Facilitate discussions and activities for grieving teens

Hospice Volunteer, Hospice of the Bay, San Jose, CA, June 2016-August 2016

- Provide respite care for full time caregivers

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Member of American Society on Aging

SAMPLE RESUME - Functional

CEDRIC GREEN

Culver City, CA 99999

123-555-1212, cgreen@gmail.com

linkedin.com/in/cedric-green

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

A highly organized administrative assistant who thrives in fast-paced educational settings. Strong experience in scheduling, drafting correspondence, handling multi-line telephones, and providing customer service to teachers, students, and parents. Able to independently and responsibly manage a heavy workload with tight deadlines, shifting priorities, and frequent interruptions. Proficient in MS Office, Adobe Creative Suite, and Internet research.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Administrative Support and Office Management

- Served as primary executive support to the school vice principal as well as a diverse group of 60 teachers and 25 professional staff.
- Initiated and received meeting requests, sent reminders, prepared documents and arranged room accommodations as necessary.
- Managed complex electronic calendars using sound judgment and anticipating conflicts.
- Processed appropriate expense vouchers and forms for reimbursement according to school district policies and procedures.
- Created and maintained several complex confidential paper and electronic filing systems, many with hundreds of records or files.

Research and Analysis

- Researched financial details of district budget and reported findings to supervisor.
- Tracked data to determine cost of extra curricular activities offered and prepared a list of recommendations for reducing expenses.
- Reconciled over 250 past due accounts collecting 90% of funds.
- Analyzed, interpreted and explained complex policies to teachers, students, and parents.
- Served on WASC accreditation committee resulting in only 2 minor issues to be resolved.

Communications

- Created and edited written communications including parent correspondence, reports, and weekly email updates ensuring the use of proper grammar, punctuation and composition.
- Represented the school at district's monthly safety roundtable meetings.
- Built positive relationships with diverse campus representatives.
- Created, edited and presented well-received PowerPoint presentations on a variety of topics.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Executive Assistant to Vice Principal, Bayside High School, Marina Del Rey, CA, July 2013-present

Administrative Assistant, Facilities Department, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA, October 2011-May 2013

Office Manager, ACME Industries, Los Angeles, CA, May 2008–September 2011

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION

Associate of Arts, Business, Cabrillo College

CPR Certified

Appendix 14

COVER LETTER SAMPLE FORMATS

Kieran McDonald

2020 Main Street, #135

Ukiah, CA, 90000

email, phone, LinkedIn URL

Date

Name *(If you don't know the hiring manager's name or title, try calling the employer and asking "To whom should I address my cover letter?")*

Title

Company

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Mr./Mrs. _____ or Hiring Committee or Selection Panel,

First Section: State why you are writing, the position you are applying for and how you heard of the opening: *I am writing to apply for the Staff Services Analyst position with the Department of Consumer Affairs.* You may also want to mention why you are particularly interested in working for this employer: *I worked for the Department of Consumer Affairs at the beginning of my career and would welcome the opportunity to rejoin the team.* In addition, if relevant, you can mention how you heard of the opening if it was from an employee or someone known to the organization.

Second Section: This section is your sales pitch and should answer the question, "Why should we hire you?" Summarize your qualifications for the position. Describe the specific skills, accomplishments and personal traits that qualify you for THIS particular job. You might refer to your education, training and previous experiences that are relevant to the opening. Providing a recent example or two helps make your point. If this paragraph gets too long, break it into two paragraphs or use bullet points to list your qualifications or key points. This section is similar to the Summary section of your resume but is written in a more narrative form- the two should mirror each other.

Third Section: Thank the employer for reading your letter and pave the way for next steps: *Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.* Mention any enclosures. Convey enthusiasm for the position, department, company and industry. Keep this paragraph short. It needs to provide a polite, professional and concise close to your application.

Sincerely,

Kieran McDonald

Enclosure: Resume

SAMPLE COVER LETTER - A

WENDY WRITER

1234 American Ave.
San Bernardino, CA, 90000
email, phone, LinkedIn URL

Date

Ms. Smith
Human Resources Director
Sierra Club
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Ms Smith:

I am enthusiastically submitting my resume for the position of staff writer with your southern California chapter. I was pleased to see this opportunity become available, as I have long been a fan of the Sierra Club's work. The way the organization makes environmental issues accessible to non-environmentalists, particularly in the pages of Sierra Magazine, is impressive and has captured my attention more times than I can count. I would love the opportunity to be part of your work.

Reading over the job description for the position, I recognized myself. I have more than five years of experience in nonprofits, writing everything from newsletters to websites to brochures. In addition to in-house publications, my work has been published in several local newspapers. Additionally, I am a fast, versatile writer, and specialize in taking complicated information and presenting it in an easy-to-understand, upbeat format. I have never missed a deadline (in a recent performance review, my manager called me "the fastest writer on the planet") and pride myself on being able to juggle many different projects. In addition to my strong writing skills my coursework in biology and environmental studies provide me with the necessary background to understand the terminology and science of the topics the Sierra Club covers in it's materials.

I think my skills and experience are an excellent match for what you are seeking and I am excited about the possibility to work with you. I look forward to meeting with you to further discuss how my background and skills qualify me for this position. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Wendy Writer

Enclosure: Resume

SAMPLE COVER LETTER - B

Gabe Forlenza

City, CA, Zip Code, 123-456-7777, email@website.com, LinkedIn URL

Date

Recruitment Associate Hiring Committee

Kaiser Permanente

Address

City, CA, Zip Code

Dear Recruitment Associate Hiring Committee:

It is with pleasure that I submit my resume and application for the Recruitment Associate position with Kaiser Permanente in Oakland, which I learned about from Senior Recruiter Anthony Alvarez at the HireNow Career Fair last week. I am impressed with the personalized approach Kaiser takes to recruitment and my values align with the organization's commitment to preventative medicine.

I have solid experience in recruitment, interviewing, job placement, and onboarding new staff. Currently, as the Volunteer Coordinator for the Boy's and Girl's Club of San Jose, I recruit a diverse group of community members to participate in serving the program. During the past year, I have accomplished the following:

- Increased the number of volunteers by 50% through a social media campaign, presentations to chambers of commerce, and calls to local businesses.
- Developed a standard list of interview questions so that all volunteers are properly screened according to the organization's policies and procedures
- Interviewed over 75 potential volunteers and assigned them to positions that match their skills and interests
- Created a database to track and sort all applications, reducing the time from application to onboarding

I have always had success in communicating with diverse candidates while working with other team members in a fast paced environment to achieve results. This, along with my strength in planning, organization, and attention to completing administrative tasks, leads me to believe that I would be an asset to your team.

Having recently completed a year of service with AmeriCorps, I am looking for a position in the health care industry where I can positively impact the level of care received by patients. I believe the Recruitment Associate position aligns with this goal and I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss my background and qualifications with you in the near future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Gabe Forlenza

Enclosure

Appendix 15

SAMPLE LIST OF REFERENCES

ANA NGUYEN

Any Town, CA 95555

Phone • email • LinkedIn URL

REFERENCES

Name of Reference

Professional title

Company/Organization

Business phone

Business email

(Business relationship to you, such as Former Manager, Colleague, Direct Report, etc.)

Name of Reference

Professional title

Company/Organization

Business phone

Business email

(Business relationship)

Name of Reference

Professional title

Company/Organization

Business phone

Business email

(Business relationship)

Name of Reference

Professional title

Company/Organization

Business phone

Business email

(Business relationship)

Name of Reference

Professional title

Company/Organization

Business phone

Business email

(Business relationship)

Appendix 16

MY NETWORK WORKSHEET

- Who makes me laugh?

- Who are two of my greatest fans?

- Who do I know who has influenced me?

- Who knows everybody?

- Who is smart about career issues?

- Who have I enjoyed working with? (supervisor, co-workers, customers, previous employers, current and previous positions)

- Who do I follow online?

- Who is in my career field?

- Who did I go to school with or learn from? (high school/college classmates, teachers, professors, advisors, alumni)

- What are the Professional Associations in my field of interest?

- Who do I come in contact with in my personal life? (family, friends, neighbors, merchants, religious leaders, social groups, sports teams, book clubs, service organizations)

Appendix 17

NETWORKING LETTER SAMPLES

.....

Hello Paul,

I hope all is well! I still have great memories of our time working together in the media room at the education conference last summer.

As you may know, I have been at my current position with LA City Year for almost a year now. Recently I've decided to look for a position in the public relations field and am reaching out to you to ask for your help with any leads or contacts you might be willing to share.

I am looking for an entry-level public relations position in San Francisco, ideally in the tech or consumer products field. I am particularly interested in joining an agency, but would also consider interesting in-house work.

If you know of any job opportunities or have connections to individuals that you might be willing to share with me, it would be greatly appreciated. Below, I have included a list of my target positions and dream companies. I have also attached my resume for your reference, which you can feel free to pass along.

Thanks in advance for your help!

.....

Hi Susan,

I hope all is well! I saw the photos on Facebook of the fundraising event you held last month—it looked fantastic.

I'm reaching out because I'm currently seeking a new position. As you know, I have been completing a year of service with the Food Literacy Program through AmeriCorps, but I'm ready for a new challenge in the tech PR world.

I recall you used to work at Ogilvy, which is on my short list of dream companies. Do you still have any contacts there, and if so, is there someone there that you would be willing to put me in touch with? Any introductions you could make would be greatly appreciated.

In addition, if you know of any job opportunities or leads that you might be able to share with me, please send them my way. I've attached my resume for your reference; feel free to pass it along.

Thanks in advance for your help! Please keep me posted on how things are going and if there's anything I can do to return the favor.

.....

Hello Erin,

Thanks so much for the great leads and feedback you've sent my way. I just wanted to update you that I'm still searching for that perfect opportunity in the PR field, so if you have any leads come your way, please pass them along.

Appendix 18

NETWORKING THANK YOU NOTE SAMPLE

You might send this message via email but you can make a positive impression by sending a handwritten thank you note in the mail. Be sure your writing is legible and use a professional looking thank you card.

Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name,

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today about my efforts to secure a nutrition education position in the San Jose area. I appreciate the time you spent discussing my career goals and recommending strategies for achieving them. In addition, I found it very helpful to get your input on my resume and I have already made the changes you suggested.

It was interesting to hear about your colleague who recently received a grant to do nutrition related work for the San Jose schools. I plan on following up with her early next week. I will also use the online networking resources you recommended to further my job search.

Again, thank you so much for your help. I greatly appreciate the assistance you have provided me and I will update you as my search moves forward.

Best Regards,

Your Name

Appendix 20

SAMPLE LETTER TO TARGET EMPLOYERS

Date

Name of Contact at the Company

Person's Title

Name of Company

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear _____,

(Name of company) has always impressed me with their commitment to (something that draws you to the organization). I am currently completing my year of service as an AmeriCorps member with (your organization) and am reaching out to you because I thought you might be interested in my background as a _____.

Having spent the past year _____, I am looking to join an organization like yours where I can use my knowledge of _____, _____ and _____.

Highlights of my qualifications include the following:

- _____
- _____
- _____

I have attached my resume for your review and would appreciate an opportunity to discuss how my background and experience might align with the needs of (name of organization). I will call you next week to follow up and in the meantime I can be reached at (phone) or (email).

Sincerely,

Your Name

Enclosure

Appendix 21

COMMONLY ASKED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell me about yourself.

This is usually meant to be a warm-up question, so keep your answer brief but don't answer with "what do you want to know?" This is a chance for you to make a great first impression so answer with confidence in your ability to do the job and enthusiasm for the position. You should: summarize your background; point out key experiences, education, and skills related to the position; and share why you are interested in the position.

What are your strengths?

Match your experience, training, skills and professional traits to the position. Three strengths is a good number to mention (i.e. "I believe my three greatest strengths are X, Y and Z. An example of X is ..., an example of Y is ..., and an example of Z is..."). Refer to the skills and accomplishments statements you have pulled together that relate to the specific job.

What is your greatest weakness?

Use an example that shows you are aware of your weakness and have made improvement or know how to accommodate for it so it doesn't impact your performance. Choose something work related that is genuine; do not say that you are a perfectionist or work too much. Instead think of a situation or task that you've struggled with in the past. This could be anything from having difficulty remaining cool under pressure, being afraid of public speaking, or getting too caught up in the little details of a project and missing the big picture.

Identify what Actions you've taken to improve your skill-set or overcome this shortcoming. For instance, if you've been too efficient for your own good in the past and ended up cutting corners, you can explain what measures you've taken to ensure you now produce high quality, error-free work.

Discuss the Results of your actions. Are you no longer struggling with this skill at the office? Have your customer scores or employee assessments improved? Are you performing better at your organization?

What accomplishment are you most proud of in your career?

Choose an accomplishment that you can relate to the skills needed for the position.

Give an example of a difficult situation you had at work and how you handled it.

The purpose of this question is to demonstrate how you handle stress, solve problems, and think on your feet. Use an example that is relevant to the position. State the situation briefly and use most of the time sharing how you positively resolved the issue.

Why do you want to work here?

Share your knowledge about the organization and how your skills, experiences and interests fit the position and the organization.

What are your long-term career goals?

The purpose of this question is to determine if you are the type of person who sets goals and if you have a plan for achieving those goals. You do not have to state a specific job title. Your goal might be to have updated knowledge, become proficient in a particular skill, or obtain additional education or a certification.

Tell me about your communication skills?

Communications skills include written and oral abilities. Refer to written reports, correspondence, proofreading/editing, marketing/outreach materials. Discuss oral presentations, leading meetings, customer relations, one-on-one interactions and interpersonal skills. Teamwork, advising and helping others are additional areas that demonstrate communication skills.

How do you handle stress?

This is a chance for you to mention the types of stressful situations you've been in- perhaps list 3 or 4- and then choose one to describe in more detail using the S.T.A.R. method. Remember to choose something that will be interesting and relevant to the interviewer given the job you are applying for.

Why are you leaving your current position? / Why are you looking for a job?

As an AmeriCorps member this question has a simple answer- your year of service is coming to an end. You can state what you've enjoyed about your service term, what you've learned about yourself and the skills you've developed. Then translate that into why the position you are applying for is the next step in your career development.

What makes you stand out when compared with your peers?

You might begin your answer to this question with one of these statements:

- "My supervisor has told me that..."
- "I seem to always be asked to handle..."
- "My co-workers tend to come to me for help with..."
- "In thinking about my skills, I think I am particularly good at..."

Describe a mistake you have made/failure you had and how you handled it or what you learned from it.

Key in answering this type of question is to acknowledge you know that you sometimes make mistakes or have failures but that when you do you take responsibility and quickly take action to fix the mistake/failure. Also, that you take time to think about how you can avoid that type of mistake/failure in the future. Use an example that happened a while ago and that had a positive outcome.

What is the last book that you read? / What's your favorite website or App?

You can use this question to show that you are passionate about the type of work, keep up to date on trends in your industry, or show a side of your personality that doesn't come through on you or other application materials. Whatever you do, don't say, "I don't like to read".

Tell me about a time when you...

- had to balance multiple projects or prioritize competing projects.
- went "above and beyond" to get the job done.
- had to cope with strict deadlines.
- did something innovative or "out-of-the-box".
- worked with a group/team to complete a project (be sure to include your role in the project).
- had to deal with an upset client, customer, or co-worker.
- overcame an obstacle to accomplish a goal.

With each of these questions you will want to have a specific example that you can share- use your S.T.A.R. stories so you provide a complete but concise example.

Do you have any questions?

You should have a couple of questions to ask that show you've done some research on the position and organization. Having a few questions already prepared shows you are organized and motivated. See page 64 for a list of questions.

The AmeriCorps Alumni website <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps/alumni/alumni-employment-toolkit-employer-frequently-asked-questions> offers answers to the following questions, which relate to your service work:

- What is National Service?
- What is AmeriCorps/VISTA/NCCC/Peace Corps?
- What is [insert your project sponsor/grantee/host site name]?
- What did you do?
- Why didn't you get a job/internship/go to school/volunteer instead?
- What did you gain/learn?

Appendix 23

UNUSUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. If you had to plan a parade what would be the theme?
2. If you were an animal, what would you be?
3. What's something you've always wanted to do but haven't? Why haven't you done it?
4. Can you sell me this pencil?
5. If you could be doing anything in the world and money didn't matter, what would it be?
6. If you could have a superpower what would it be and why?
7. What are your superpowers?
8. If you were given \$500 to plan a company event what would it be and why?
9. How weird are you on a scale of 1-10?
10. If you were a dessert, what would you be?
11. If your life were a movie, what would the trailer be like?
12. What types of advantages does having a headquarters in Vegas give a company?
13. What question were you expecting us to ask that we didn't?
14. What is something weird that makes you happy?
15. What is your favorite website?
16. What was the last book you read?
17. What is your favorite fictional character?
18. Have you ever had a mentor?
19. What would your autobiography be titled?

Appendix 24

MOCK INTERVIEW EVALUATION

Name of Candidate _____

Interviewer _____ Date _____

Criteria	1	2	3	4	Score
Communication Did the candidate speak in an articulate and professional manner?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Showed lack of interest ■ Nervous ■ Incomplete thoughts ■ Not articulate ■ No use of professional language ■ Response riddled with “um’s, uh’s, er’s, etc.” ■ Unacceptable behavior and language when greeted and closing the interview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Showed some interest ■ Spoke in a somewhat nervous manner ■ Lacked confidence in knowledge ■ Limited use of professional language ■ Many “um’s, uh’s, er’s, etc.” ■ Used typical behavior and language – did modify behavior to fit the interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Showed interest throughout the interview ■ Spoke articulately most of the time ■ Used general words at times instead of details ■ Integrated a good amount of professional language throughout response ■ Some “um’s, uh’s, er’s” ■ Acceptable behavior, well mannered, professionalism lacking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Very engaged ■ Spoke clearly and articulately ■ Was confident in knowledge ■ Integrated professional language throughout the response ■ No “um’s, uh’s, er’s” etc.” ■ Professional behavior and language (handshake, “hello”, “thank you”, eye contact, etc.) 	
Information Sharing Did the candidate integrate knowledge, content and experiences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Failed to integrate knowledge, content or experiences (STAR/CARE technique not used) ■ Inaccurate and/or incomplete responses ■ Listener was confused ■ Showed no interest and knowledge of position/organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Integrated some knowledge, content or experiences (use of STAR/CARE technique inconsistent) ■ Responses were somewhat rambling or missing details ■ Listener needed to clarify responses ■ Showed little interest and knowledge of position/organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Integrated knowledge, content or experiences in a generally organized and accurate manner (use of STAR/CARE technique inconsistent) ■ Responses were fairly concise ■ Showed some interest and knowledge of position/organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fully integrated knowledge, content and experiences in an organized, accurate and detailed manner (use of STAR/CARE technique was consistent) ■ Engaged listener with unique answers ■ Showed interest and knowledge of position/organization 	
Body Language Did candidate’s body language convey interest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Body language conveyed disinterest and/or extreme nervousness ■ Gestures were somewhat limited, unnatural and/or stiff ■ Hand and/or facial movements were inappropriate or distracting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Body language was difficult to interpret (Too nervous and/or too casual) ■ Eye contact was made intermittently ■ Occasionally slouching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Body language conveyed interest in responding ■ Occasional loss of eye contact ■ Brief slouching, but quickly corrected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Body language conveyed eagerness to respond ■ Eye contact made consistently ■ Sitting straight in chair, good posture and poise ■ Hand and facial movements were natural, timed effectively and emphasized key points 	
Asking Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No questions asked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asked basic questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some basic questions mixed with thoughtful questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Asked thoughtful questions that showed they had done their research and had a desire to perform well in the position 	
Total					

Any additional comments:

Appendix 25

INTERVIEW THANK YOU NOTE SAMPLE

SAM WHITE

9876 Main Street, Apt. #7 | Culver City, CA 77777
samuelbwhite@myemail.com | 555-555-1212

Date

Ms. Angela Stone
Principal
Eastside Middle School
3148 Acme Ln.
Anytown, CA 91111

Dear Ms. Stone:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you and the math department staff regarding the teaching assistant position at Eastside Middle School. I was impressed with the commitment you all have to supporting students who are struggling to meet grade level standards. I would love to be a part of growing the afterschool study program we discussed.

I am confident that my strong teaching skills, extensive experience with underserved youth, and ability to work effectively in a team with other educators would meet your expectations and allow me to make significant contributions to Eastside Middle School. In addition, my fluency in Spanish would help me quickly build rapport with students from my first day on the job.

As you requested, I am enclosing a letter of recommendation from my current supervisor at Westside Middle School, where I served as an AmeriCorps member during the past school year.

I appreciate your consideration for this exciting opportunity and look forward to hearing from you soon about the next steps in the process. Please let me know if you have any further questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Sam White

Enclosure

**This letter could also be formatted as an email or a handwritten note*

Appendix 26

JOB APPLICATION TRACKER

Job Title	Company	Contact Information	Deadline	Applied	Interview	Thank you	Follow Up/Notes/Connections
<i>Special Events Assistant, #1234</i>	<i>UC Davis</i>	<i>Name, email, phone</i>	<i>7/15/19</i>	<i>7/12/19</i>	<i>8/13/19</i>	<i>8/14/19</i>	<i>L&C Alum</i>

Job Title	Company	Contact Information	Deadline	Applied	Interview	Thank you	Follow Up/Notes/Connections

Appendix 27

JOB SEARCH ACTIVITY PLAN

Use this plan as a guide. You may not do all activity each week (for example Career Fairs will only happen a few times during your job search). However, you should be networking and applying to positions on a weekly basis!

WEEK:	Goal	Actual
Overall, how many hours will you spend on your job search?		
Part 1: Networking		
Number of networking phone calls to new contacts?		
Number of networking meetings: via phone?		
Number of networking meetings: face-to-face?		
Number of new networking contacts identified?		
Hours spent researching potential new networking contacts:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What went well? ▪ What would you change? ▪ Have you recorded your networking activity on your Networking Activity Log? 		
Part 2: Applying to Positions		
Hours spent reviewing online job boards?		
Number of jobs applied to?		
Hours spent reviewing printed job listings?		
Number of staffing agencies contacted?		
Career Fairs Attended?		
Time spent researching and directly contacting potential employers?		
Have you recorded each job you've applied to on your Job Application Tracker?		

Part 3: Interviews

Number of job interviews

- What went well?

- What could you improve?

- How and when did you follow up?

Have you updated your Job Application Tracker to reflect the positions you've interviewed for?

Review

Describe one key success:

One thing you would not do again:

One obstacle that is impeding your progress:

What can you do to overcome that obstacle:

One issue you would like feedback/information on:

What do you need additional help with and who can you reach out to for assistance:

Other Thoughts?

RECOMMENDED READING

Self-Assessment

- *Do What You Are: Discover the Perfect Career for You Through the Secrets of Personality Type*, by Paul Tieger & Barbara Barron-Tieger
- *Personal Branding for Dummies*, by Susan Chritton
- *StrengthsFinder 2.0*, by Tom Rath
- *The Career Fitness Program: Exercising Your Options (11th Edition)*, by Diane Sukiennik, Lisa Raufman
- *What Color is Your Parachute*, by Richard N. Bolles
- *How to Say It on Your Resume*, by Brad Karsh with Courtney Pike
- *Cover Letter Magic*, by Wendy Enlow and Louise M. Kursmark

Interviewing

- *101 Toughest Interview Questions: And Answers That Win the Job!*, by Daniel Porot
- *The Job Interview Phrase Book: The Things to Say to Get You the Job You Want*, by Nancy Schuman

College

- *2018 Book of Majors*, by College Board
- *College Handbook 2018*, by College Board
- *Colleges That Change Lives*, by Loren Pope
- *Fiske Guide to Colleges 2018*, by Edward Fiske
- *K & W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities*, by Princeton Review

Job Search

- *Cracking the Hidden Job Market: How to Find Opportunity in Any Economy*, by Donald Asher
- *Getting from College to Career*, by Lindsey Pollak

Resumes and Cover Letters

- *The Resume and Cover Letter Phrase Book*, by Nancy Schuman and Burton Jay Nadler

USEFUL WEBSITES AND APPS

These sites were all active as of June 2017. Visit <http://californiavolunteers.org>, which contains any updated links.

Please notify CaliforniaVolunteers if any links are not working so they can be updated.

WEBSITES

General Resources

- AmeriStories: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/amicorps/join-amicorps/ameristories>
- California Career Café (resources, tips, and support): <http://www.cacareercafe.com>
- California Career Center: <https://www.calcareercenter.org>
- California Career Zone: <https://www.cacareerzone.org>
- Google Search Tips: https://www.google.com/intl/en_u/insidesearch/tipstricks/all.html
- National Career Development Association (NCDA): <http://www.ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/resources>

- One Stop Career Centers: <http://www.careeronestop.org>
- Public Libraries in California: <http://www.publiclibraries.com/california.htm>
- Quintessential Careers: <https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential>
- Succeed at Work: <http://www.californiacareers.info/documents/Misc/succeedAtWork2016.pdf>
- Wetfeet: <https://www.wetfeet.com>

Self-Assessments

- California Career Zone: <https://www.cacareerzone.org>
- Personality and Strengths Assessments:
 - <http://www.keirseey.com>
 - <http://www.personalitytype.com>
 - <https://16personalities.com/free-personality-test>
 - <https://www.truity.com/test/big-five-personality-test>
 - <https://www.truity.com/test/personal-strengths-inventory>
 - <http://www.strengthsquest.com/home.aspx>
 - <https://gallupstrengthscenter.com>
 - http://www.mbtionline.com/?utm_source=CPP&utm_medium=Brand&utm_campaign=referral
- Interest Assessment: <https://www.truity.com/test/holland-code-career-test>
- Skills Assessment: <https://www.skillscan.com/products-services/individual-user-products>

Career Exploration

- Glassdoor.com: <https://www.glassdoor.com>
- Google Alerts (get notifications from Google on new information about an organization or area of interest): <http://www.google.com/alerts>
- California Labor Market Information (wages, benefits, training, and other information as

well as resources for finding jobs and training: <http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/customers/job-seekers.html>

- My Next Move (Search careers by key words or industry. Also presents Green Careers, Bright Careers that are growing quickly, careers sorted by level of preparation needed, and civilian jobs similar to military jobs): <https://www.mynextmove.org>
- National Career Development Association Occupational Trends: http://ncda.org/aws/NCDA/pt/sp/occupational_trends
- O*NET: <https://www.onetonline.org/>
- Occupational Outlook Handbook: <http://www.bls.gov/ooh>
- Salary.com: <http://www.salary.com>
- Sloan Career Cornerstone Center (Explore career paths in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, computing, and healthcare): <http://careercornerstone.org/index.htm>
- Tag Cloud: <http://tagcrowd.com>

Networking

- AmeriCorps Alums: www.americorpsalums.org
- Young Nonprofit Professionals Network: <http://www.ynppn.org>
- LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com>
- Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com>
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com>
- Blogger (free blog hosting): <http://www.blogger.com>
- Professional Association Database: <http://www.cacareercafe.com/association-lessons/>

Job Search

- Annual Reports for conducting company research: <http://annualreports.com>
- Companies with diversity: <http://www.blackenterprise.com/featured-stories/2016-50-best-companies-diversity/>
- Companies with LGBTQ+ Equality: <http://www.hrc.org/campaigns/corporate-equality-index>
- Companies with flexible work, paid leave, support for women's advancement: <http://www.workingmother.com/best-companies>
- Dress for Success: <https://www.dressforsuccess.org>
- Find and Get the Right Job: <http://www.californiacareers.info/documents/Misc/findGetRightJob2016post.pdf>
- Internships and Volunteering:
 - <https://www.internbound.com>
 - <https://www.dol.gov/oasam/programs/internship/>
 - <http://www.californiavolunteers.org>
 - <https://jobs.ca.gov/Public/Jobs/Students.aspx>
- Job and Career Fairs:
 - http://www.edd.ca.gov/jobs_and_training/Job_Fairs_and_Workshops.htm
 - <http://jobfairsin.com>
 - <https://www.hirelive.com/calendar>
 - <https://www.nationalcareerairs.com>
 - <http://www.recruitinglife.com/membership/membership-directory.cfm>
- Meetup: <https://www.meetup.com>
- Susan Ireland's Resume Site: <http://susanireland.com>

Job Boards

- AmeriCorps Alums Job Board: <http://americorpsalums-jobs.careerwebsite.com/jobseeker/search/results/>
- BCorp Jobs (For-profit companies certified by the nonprofit B Lab to meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency): <https://www.bcorporation.net/community/jobs-board>
- Careers in Government: <https://www.careersingovernment.com>
- CommonGood Careers: <http://commongoodcareers.org>
- Craigslist: www.craigslist.org
- Diversity Employers: <http://www.diversityemployers.com>
- Employers of National Service Participants: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/special-initiatives/employers-national-service/search-network>
- Encore Careers for those closer to retirement:
 - <http://encore.org>
 - <http://www.workforce50.com>
- Federal jobs: <https://www.usajobs.gov>
- Feminist Jobs: <http://jobs.feminist.org>
- Getting Hired for people with disabilities: <http://www.gettinghired.com>
- Glassdoor: www.glassdoor.com
- Global Service: <http://globalservicecorps.org/site/AmeriCorps/>
- Idealist: <https://www.idealists.org/en/>
- Indeed: <http://www.indeed.com>
- Jobs in California: <http://www.caljobs.ca.gov>
- Jobsonline: <http://www.jobsonline.com>
- LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com>
- Overseasjobs.com: www.overseasjobs.com

- Peace Corps: <https://www.peacecorps.gov>
- State of California jobs: <https://jobs.ca.gov>
- US Jobs: <http://us.jobs>
- Work for Good: <https://www.workforgood.org>

Education and Apprenticeships

- Apprenticeships: <http://www.careeronestop.org/FindTraining/Types/apprenticeships.aspx?frd=true>
<https://www.mynextmove.org/find/apprenticeship>
- California Community Colleges: <http://www.doingwhatmatters.cccco.edu>
- California State University: <http://www.csumentor.edu>
- CareerOneStop Training and Education Center: www.careeronestop.org/FindTraining/find-Training.aspx
- College Navigator: <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>
- Graduate School Search: <https://www.petersons.com/search/schools?searchType=26#>
<https://www.gradschoolmatch.com>
- Petersons Guide to Colleges: <https://www.aacc.nche.edu/programs/workforce-economic-development/back-work-50womens-economic-stability-initiative/>
- Plus 50 Initiative: plus50.aacc.nche.edu/Pages/Default.aspx
- University of California: <http://admissionuniversityofcalifornia.edu>

Financial Aid

- AmeriCorps and Your Education: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/alumni/ameri-corps-and-your-education>

- AmeriCorps Multiple Terms and Education Award: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/ed-award/multiple-terms>
- FAFSA: <https://fafsa.ed.gov>
- Federal Student Aid: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/>
- FinAid: <http://www.finaid.org>
- California Student Aid Commission: <http://www.csac.ca.gov/doc.asp?id=33>
- Sallie Mae: <https://www.salliemae.com/college-planning/>
- Scholarship Database: <http://www.fastweb.com/college-scholarships>
- Segal Education Award Matching Institutions: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps/segal-ameri-corps-education-award/matching-institutions>
- Segal Education Award: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/edaward>

Financial Management

- JumpStart: <http://www.jumpstart.org/reality-check.html>
- Money Management: <http://www.calcareercenter.org/Home/Content?categoryID=85>

APPS

General Resources

- Career Surfer

Interviewing

- Interview Buzz Lite
- Interview Buzz Pro
- Interview Prep Questions

Job Search

- CalJobs
- CityHour
- Glassdoor
- GoGig
- Indeed
- Job Aware
- LinkedIn
- Rake

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<http://www.mkcareerdesigns.com>
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<http://www.californiacareers.info>
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Chancellor's Office, Workforce & Economic Development Division, <http://www.cccco.edu>
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- LinkedIn
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- Kohara Media
Laurie Widman, Art Director and Graphic Design. <http://www.koharamedia.com>
- Weiss Career
Andrea Weiss, M.S., National Certified Counselor, Master Career Counselor. <http://www.weisscareer.com>
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