New Mexico Department of WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

Exploring Careers with Career Solutions

Facilitator's Guide

Pathway2Careers

Education with Destination

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Introduction

How to Use this Guide

This guide outlines strategies for the use of the New Mexico Career Solutions site as a tool for career exploration with students. A series of lessons are presented that highlight relevant features of the site and provide recommendations for helping students use the site to engage in effective career exploration.

Lessons in this guide are cumulative and build upon the knowledge acquired in previous activities. It is suggested that lessons be used in the order in which they appear in this guide. To enhance the use of the lessons, it is recommended that teachers and facilitators review the process of career exploration described below before implementing lesson activities in the classroom with students.

It should be noted that lessons presented in this guide are not considered exhaustive or all-inclusive of the full range of career exploration tools and activities that are available to teachers and students. Rather, this guide is best viewed as one resource, among many, that can be implemented in the classroom to support effective career exploration with students.

The Process of Career Exploration

Career decisions can appear deceivingly simple. After all, how hard can it be to simply pick a job? In reality, effective career exploration is a multifaceted process that involves careful evaluation of both personal and external factors. Helping students navigate this process can result in more robust career decisions with the potential for greater job satisfaction and employment security throughout their employment experiences.

Methods of career exploration vary, with most focusing primarily on personal factors, such as work interests and values, as key components in determining career fit. These methods can often neglect external factors, such as the job market and wage, as important components in selecting stable and growing careers. Therefore, the most effective processes of career exploration encompass both personal and external factors as critical components in developing informed career decisions.

Personal Factors: Each student has a set of personal work interests and values that align better with some occupations than others. These include personality traits, work needs, beliefs, ideas, and other individual characteristics that can influence job satisfaction. Students who enjoy being around others, for example, will find more fulfillment in jobs that involve large amounts of social interaction as opposed to more independent work tasks. In making successful career choices, students must carefully evaluate these personal characteristics to ensure their occupation choices effectively align with individual needs, as well as what is most important and meaningful to them.

Components of an Informed Career Decision

Personal Factors

- Work Interests
- Work Values
- Lifestyle Aspirations

External Factors

- Job Market Trends
- High-Value Careers
- Local Job Opportunities

Informed Career Decision

Components of an Effective Career Plan

Education and Training

Financial Resources

Support Services

Work Experience

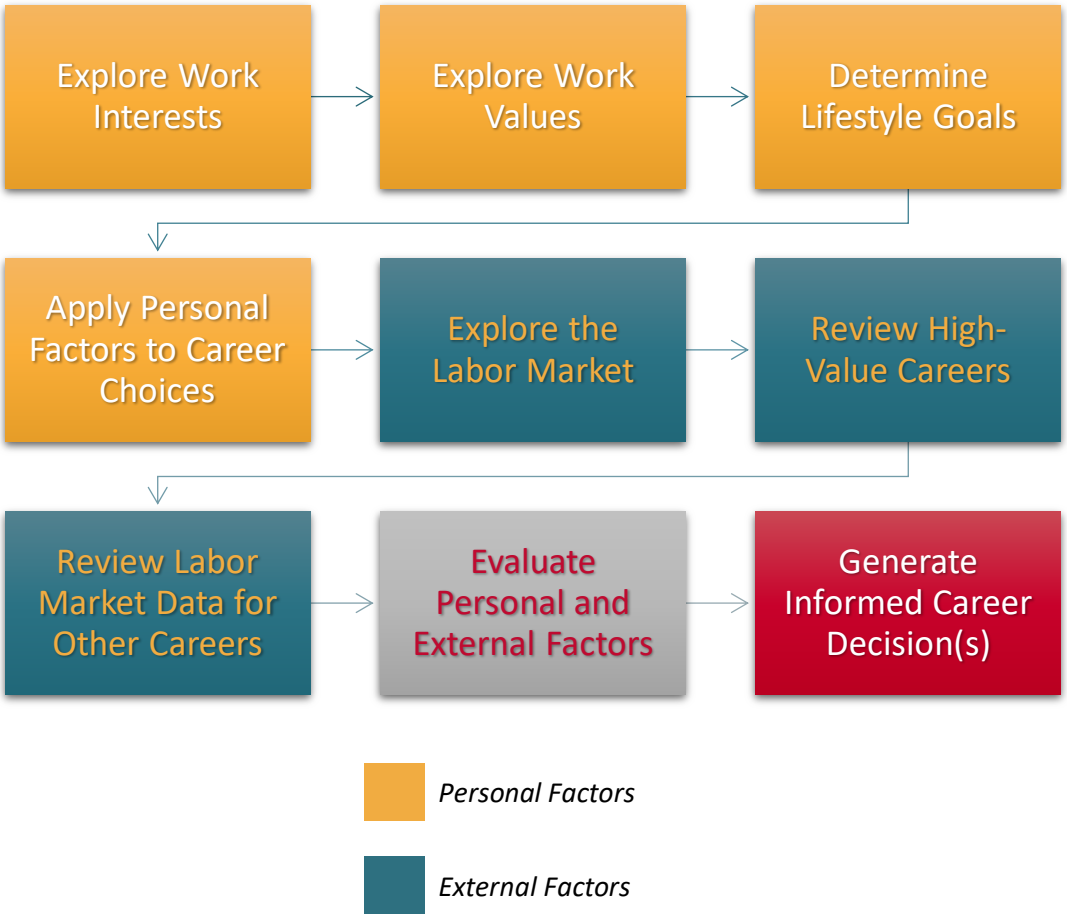
Job Search Strategies

Motivation and Drive

External Factors: Personal interests and values, alone, do not always guarantee successful employment. Students must also examine external factors, such as the job market, to determine demand and projected wages for various occupations in their local communities. Armed with this information, students can make decisions about occupations that offer greater opportunity and better wages. They can also use this information to prepare for highly competitive fields and the unique challenges careers in these fields may present. When students are aware of their local job market, they can make decisions that take into account the probability of employment and the likelihood that anticipated wages will assist in meeting lifestyle goals.

Exploring Careers Using Personal and External Factors

When personal and external factors are included in the career exploration process, it can be challenging to determine which comes first. The good news is that exact placement of these factors does not significantly alter the exploration process. Regardless of where one begins, similar outcomes will be achieved, assuming both factors are included at some point in the process. It can be helpful for students to begin with the exploration of personal factors to help them maintain a sense of personal connection to the process. For this reason, the process outlined below begins with the exploration of personal factors, followed by a review of external factors. This is the general approach followed in the organization of the lessons in this guide.



Developing an Effective Career Plan – Education and Training

Once a career decision has been made, the next step is to develop an effective career plan that guides students through the steps needed to achieve employment success. Effective career plans clearly outline the education and training needed to obtain specific degrees or certificates for entry into a profession. The most successful plans also include detailed financial plans, job search strategies, support services, and methods for maintaining motivation and drive. Students who are provided the opportunity to create career plans are significantly more likely to succeed in achieving their career goals.

To assist in starting this process, a brief introduction to the education and training component is provided in this guide. It is recommended that other components of the planning process be explored as students continue beyond career exploration and advance into the planning stage of career preparation activities.

Lesson Overview

Each of the lessons presented in this guide will include the following sections.

- Overview
- How to Use This Tool
- Connecting with Students
- Activity
- Exploring the Results
- Next Steps

The chart below provides a summary of each lesson and the suggested order of presentation.

Lesson Title	Career Solutions Tools	Lesson Topics
Lesson 1: Getting Started	Site Overview, Registration, Career Exploration Worksheet	• Strategies for helping students get started and navigate basic site features • Interpreting results from the Career Exploration Worksheet
Lesson 2: Exploring Work Interests	Work Interests Assessment	• Helping students connect with personal and external factors in career exploration • Methods for guiding students through the Work Interests Assessment

Lesson 3: Exploring Work Values	Work Values Assessment	• Review of personal factors and their role in career exploration • Strategies for exploring and applying results from the Work Values Assessment
Lesson 4: Determining Lifestyle Goals	Why I Work	• Information related to developing and evaluating lifestyle goals • Ideas for exploring careers that align with lifestyle goals
Lesson 5: Using Personal Factors to Identify Careers	Occupation Library, Compare Occupations	• Methods for using various types of personal factors to make career decisions • Strategies for incorporating personal factors into career comparisons
Lesson 6: Incorporating External Factors	Occupation Finder	• Overview of labor market information • Ideas for incorporating labor market information into career exploration
Lesson 7: Making Informed Career Decisions	My Dashboard	• Techniques for organizing and consolidating career information • Methods for applying multiple types of career information to career decisions
Lesson 8: Connecting Careers to Education	Education and Training	• Overview of effective career plans • Strategies for searching for and identifying appropriate education experiences

Lesson 1: Getting Started

Overview

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions has made available a career exploration system for students that connects them to their interests and career goals. The online system is very diverse and has multiple tools and access points for students to explore. Students can begin by registering and creating an account that is uniquely theirs and can be updated as often as needed. An account also gives students the ability to save occupations and jobs they find, as well as research education programs that align with their career interests.

Once students have completed the registration process, they can complete the Career Exploration Worksheet, which is a baseline self-assessment tool. The self-assessment tool can be completed as an offline project, but is best completed online once a student has registered.

This lesson contains….

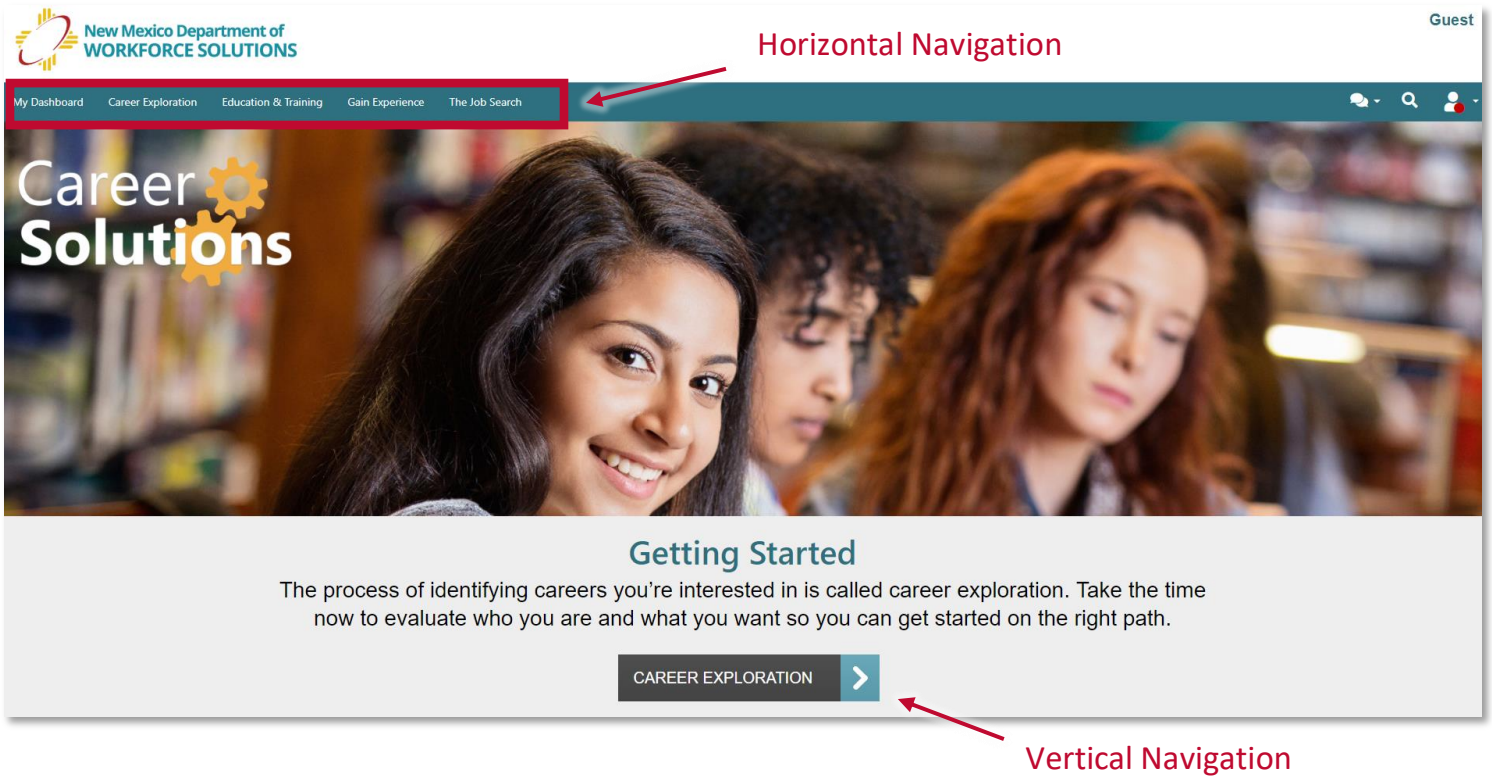
- A brief overview of the Career Solutions site.
- Information on how to set up student accounts.
- Strategies for helping students get started and navigate basic site features.
- Information on how to interpret results from the Career Exploration Worksheet.
- A review of next steps for students using insights gained from this lesson.

How to Use This Tool

Basic Overview

The Career Solutions site can be accessed at nmcareersolutions.com. The homepage should look similar to the image below, with tabs appearing at the top of the page, as well as several links that appear as you scroll down the page.

In general, the site provides both horizontal and vertical navigation, meaning that you can explore main features of the site by accessing tabs across the top of the screen (horizontal navigation) or scrolling down and clicking on links as they appear down the page (vertical navigation).



Horizontal Navigation – Tabs across Top of Screen

My Dashboard

- This is a personalized area of the system that tracks student progress and saves information as each student moves through the career exploration process. This allows students to determine which activities they have completed and examine information they have saved related to their interests, career goals, education opportunities, jobs, and more. It is recommended that students review this information frequently to maintain a global picture of their career exploration progress.

Career Exploration

- This is the heart of the system that walks students through various steps of the career exploration process, beginning with tools to explore their personal interests and values and ending with tools that guide students through occupations and the job market. A majority of this guide will focus on the use of this section of the system in supporting career exploration activities.

Education and Training

- This area connects students with a variety of tools and resources that assist them in making education decisions and developing plans for completing education requirements. Tips and checklists are available, along with links to information pages and online forms that help simplify the education process. Students are guided through the various steps needed to identify, plan, select, apply, and finance their education journey.

Gain Experience

- Within the Gain Experience section, various opportunities are displayed for students to acquire work experience through volunteer, apprenticeship, internship, and other types of programs. This section is useful for students seeking to learn more about various occupations and gain job experience that can increase their employability. Because experience is often cited as a requirement for employment in a variety of professions, it is highly recommended that students take advantage of opportunities to gain skills and build familiarity with their desired field of work.

The Job Search

- This area is most useful when students are ready to apply for a job. Students are presented with tips and tools related to locating jobs and connecting with employers. Specific activities are available that help students build resumes, write professional letters, engage in effective networking, and prepare for interviews. Students should be encouraged to access this section when they are ready to engage in the job search process.

Vertical Navigation – Moving Down the Page

Career Exploration

- This link is the same as what is provided in the tabs across the top of the screen. A description of this area of the system is provided above.

Why I Work

- Clicking on this link takes students to a financial tool that helps determine how much money they will need to support future lifestyle needs and goals. It works like a basic budget, where students identify their needs/wants and review the cost for each item. When students are done, an estimated minimum annual salary is calculated that students can use when selecting a career pathway.

Internships

- This link directs students to a page from the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions that connects students with local internships and student work opportunities. Information is provided on the value of internships as well as methods for locating and applying for internships. Students can browse internships in their area and apply online.

Learn More

- Clicking here displays a helpful graphic that describes the differences between jobs, occupations, and careers.

For Parents and Educators

- This section of the site provides detailed information on parents' and educators' role in the career exploration process. It also outlines key features of the site and provides links to additional resources.

Into the Future: Middle School Students

- This provides a very brief introduction to career exploration for middle school students. Here students learn about the differences between jobs, occupations, and careers. They are encouraged to work through the career exploration activities and begin planning high school course selections.

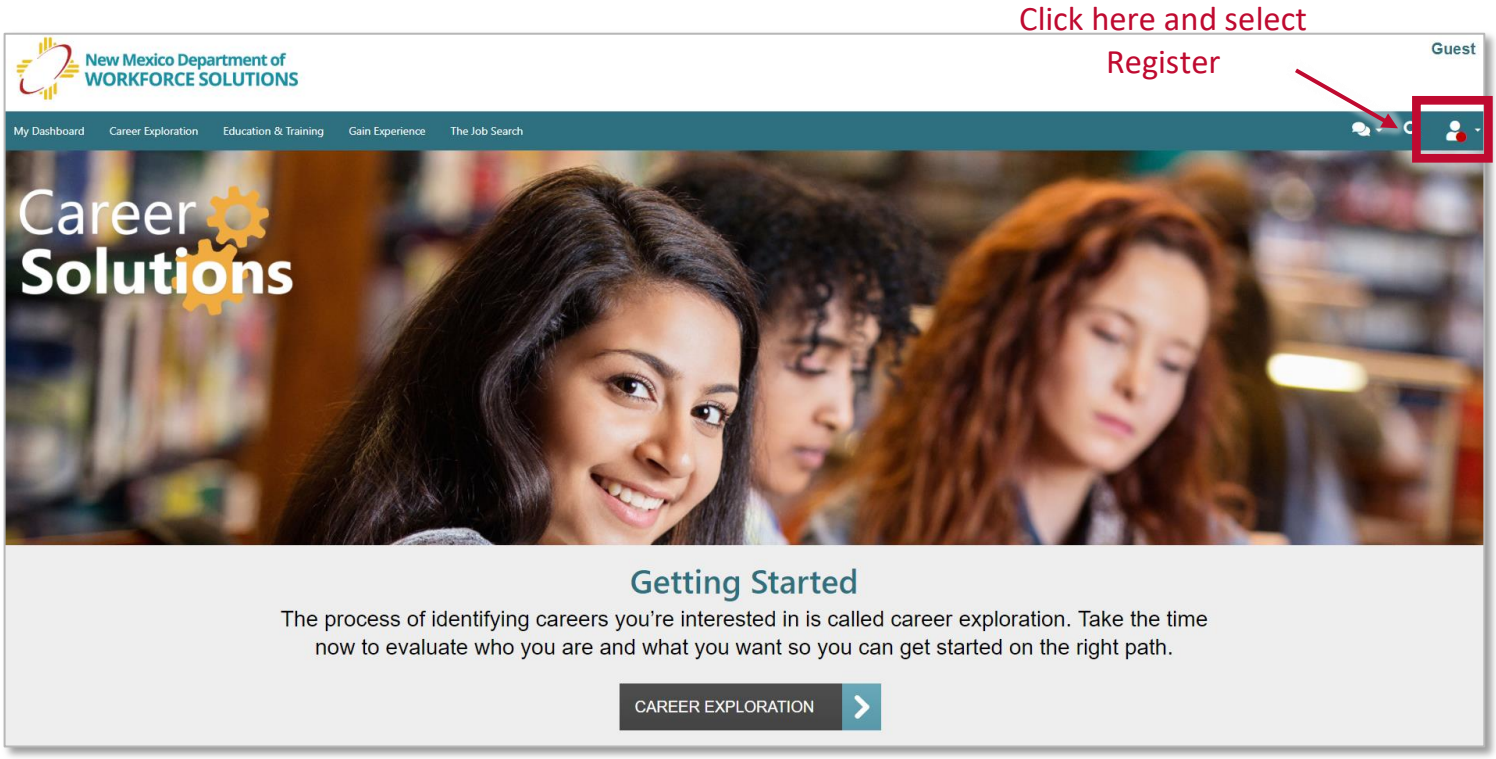
Quick Links

- Additional resources are presented under Quick Links that can be useful in the career exploration process. These include the New Mexico Career Guide and the BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook. In addition, information on job fairs and work permits can be accessed here.

How to Register

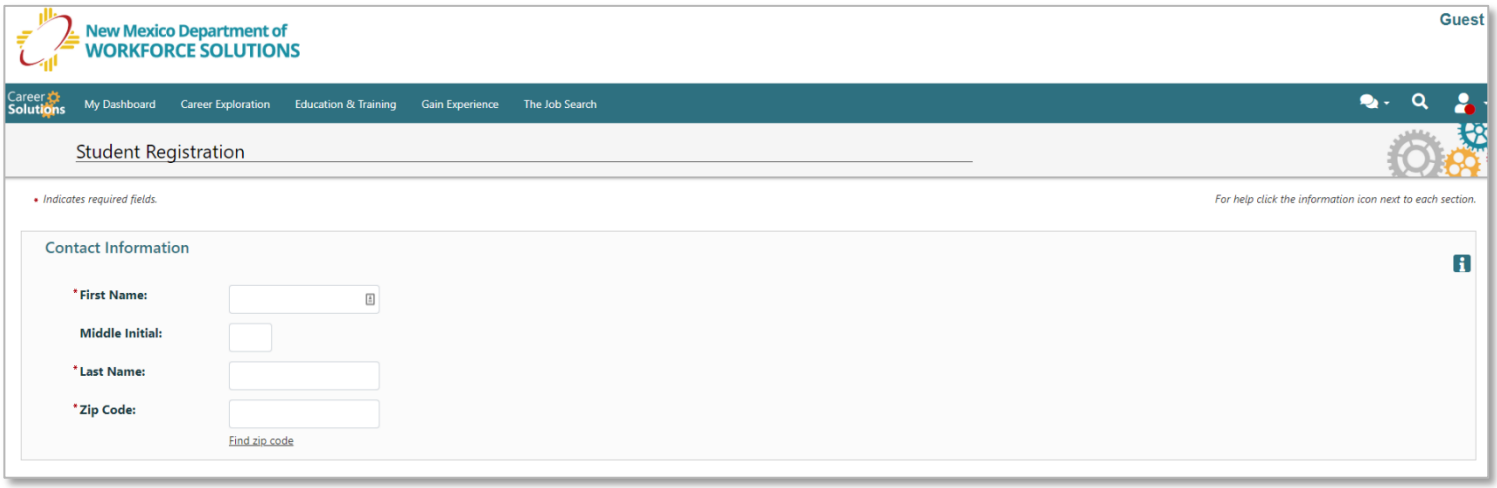
Although students are not required to create and account, there are several advantages to registering as a user on the Career Solutions site. The primary advantage is that student activity and information can be saved, allowing for students to renter the site at any time and pick up where they left off.

It is important to communicate to students that the information entered on the site is completely private. Their personal information is not shared with or made available to others. Accounts are for students' benefit, allowing them to save progress and revisit information they have gathered during previous sessions.



Follow these steps to register.

- Click on the person icon in the top right-hand corner of the screen.
- A page similar to the one below will appear.
- Complete the form. Information with a red asterisk (*) is required.
- Select a secure username and password that can be easily remembered.

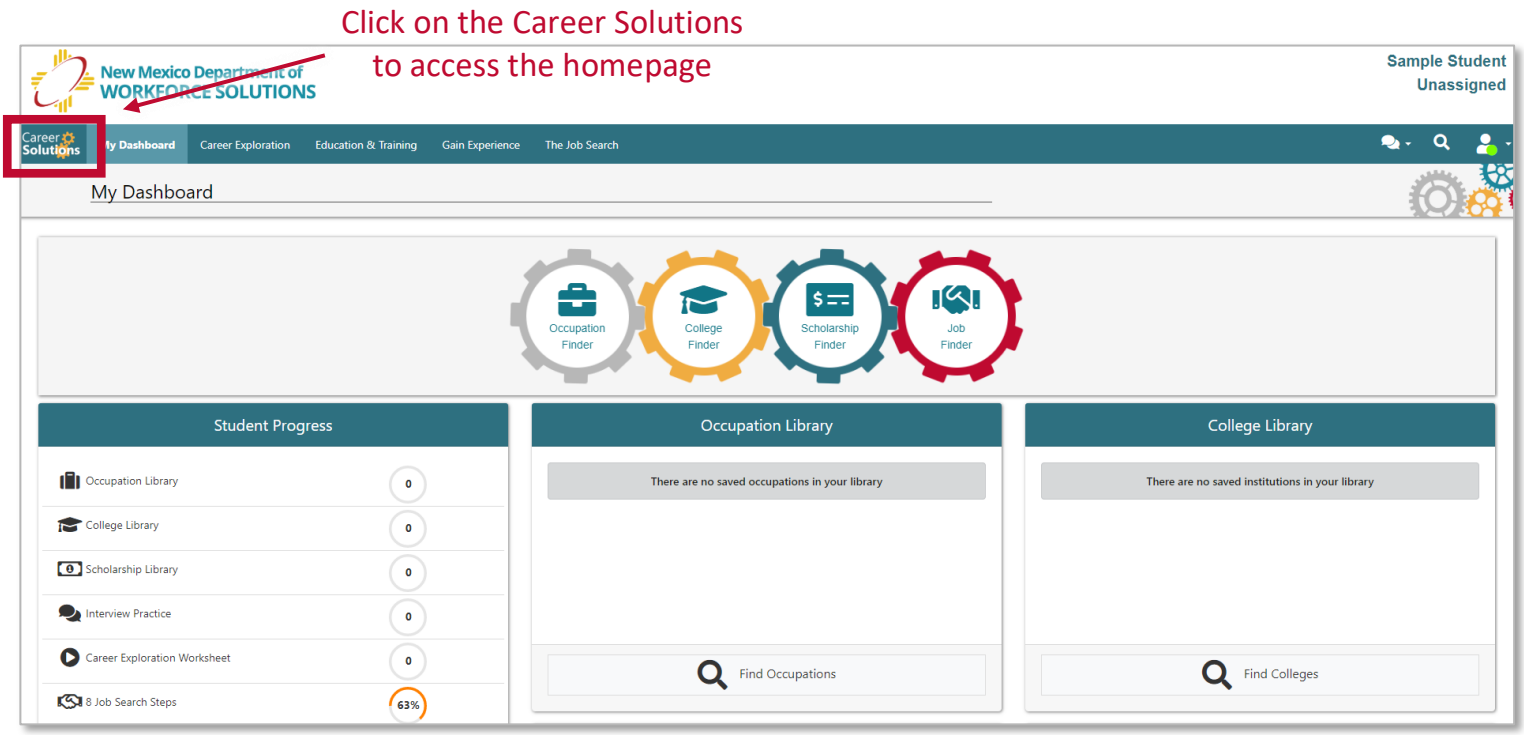


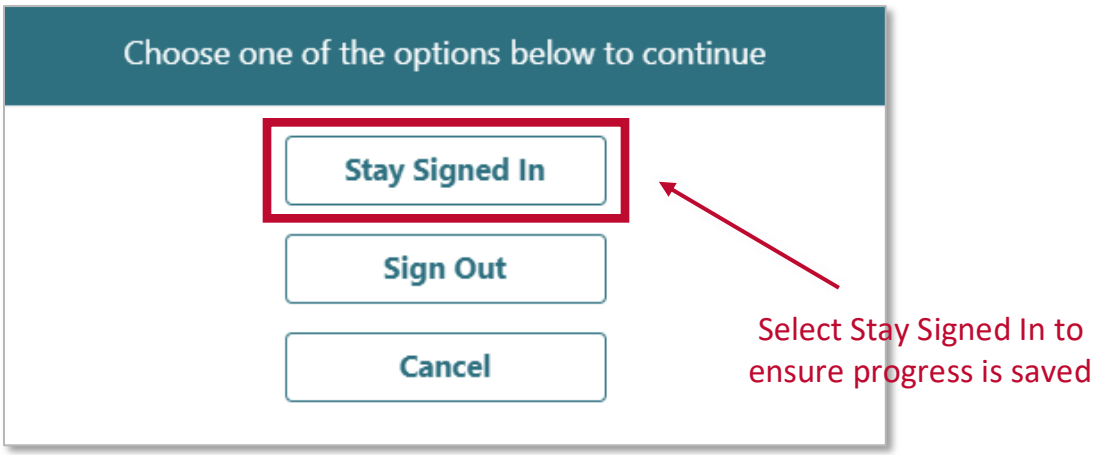
How to Sign In

To sign into the system, click on the person icon and select Sign In. From here, students can enter their username and password they created during the registration process.

After signing in, students are directed to the Dashboard that provides an overview of their progress and saved information. To get back to the homepage, they can simply click on the Career Solutions tab at the top left-hand corner of the screen.

Before returning to the homepage, a box may appear asking if the user wants to remain signed in. Select Stay Signed In to be sure progress and activities are saved within the profile.





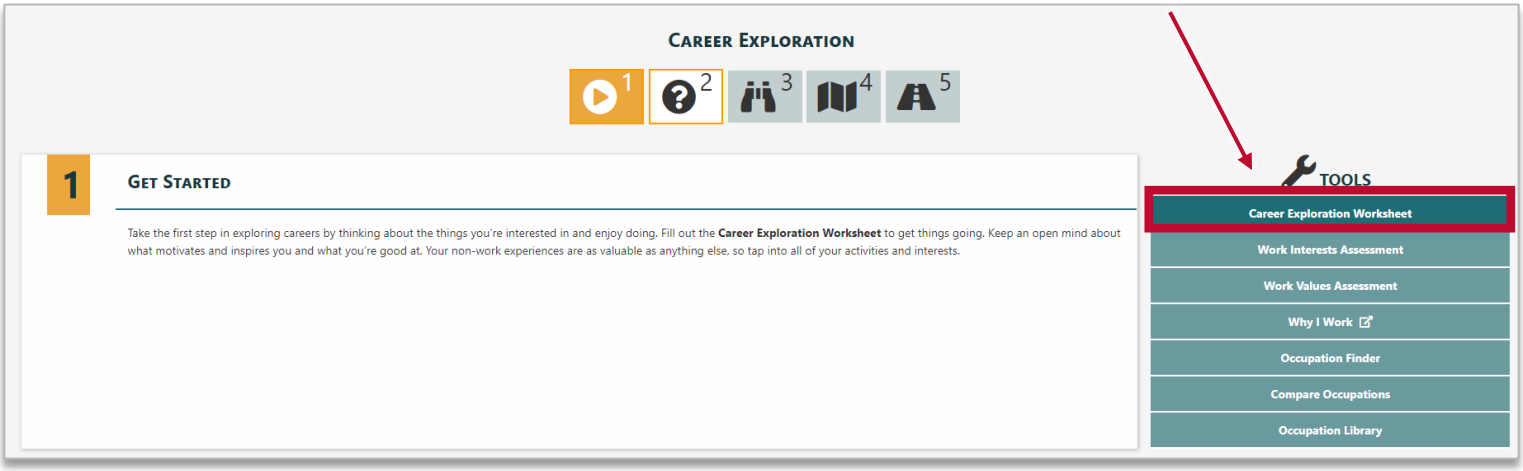
Accessing the Career Exploration Worksheet

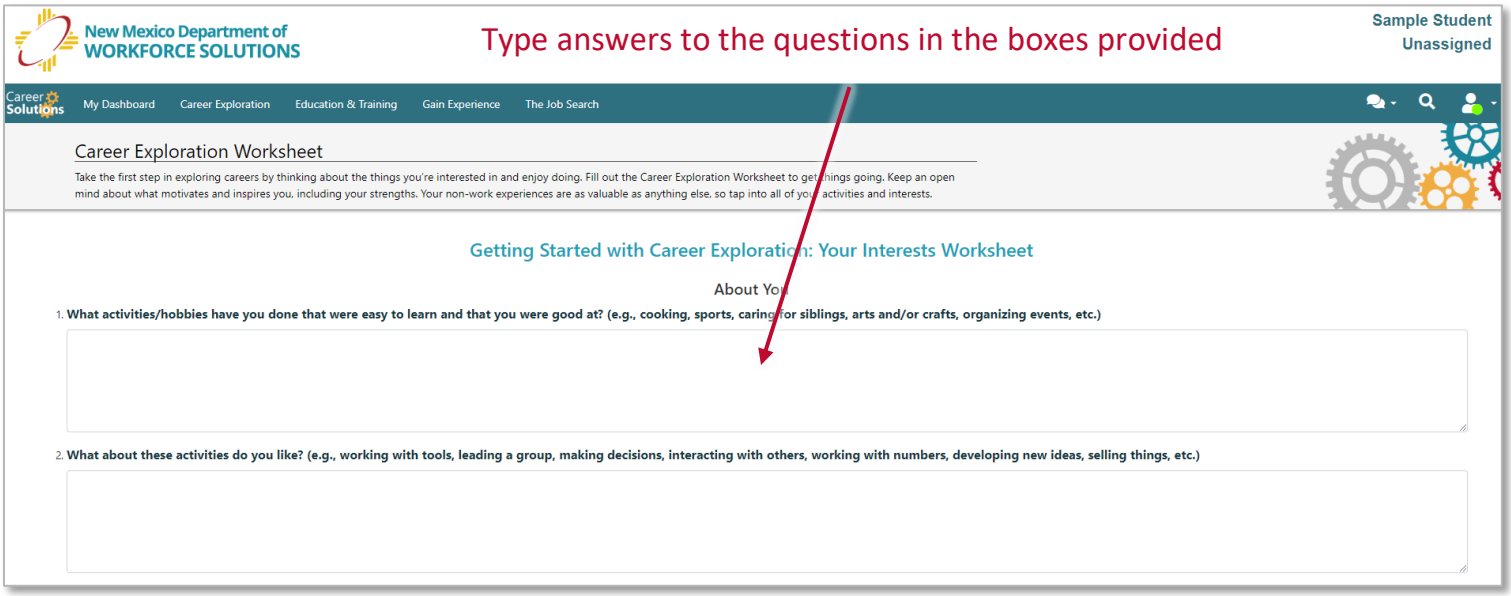
The Career Exploration Worksheet is a self-assessment tool designed to get the student thinking through their interests. There are no right or wrong answers. Some students may have a variety of interests, while others may be limited in their understanding of careers. The worksheet can be completed as an online or offline activity. Additional information on how to implement this worksheet in the classroom is provided in the Connecting with Students section below.

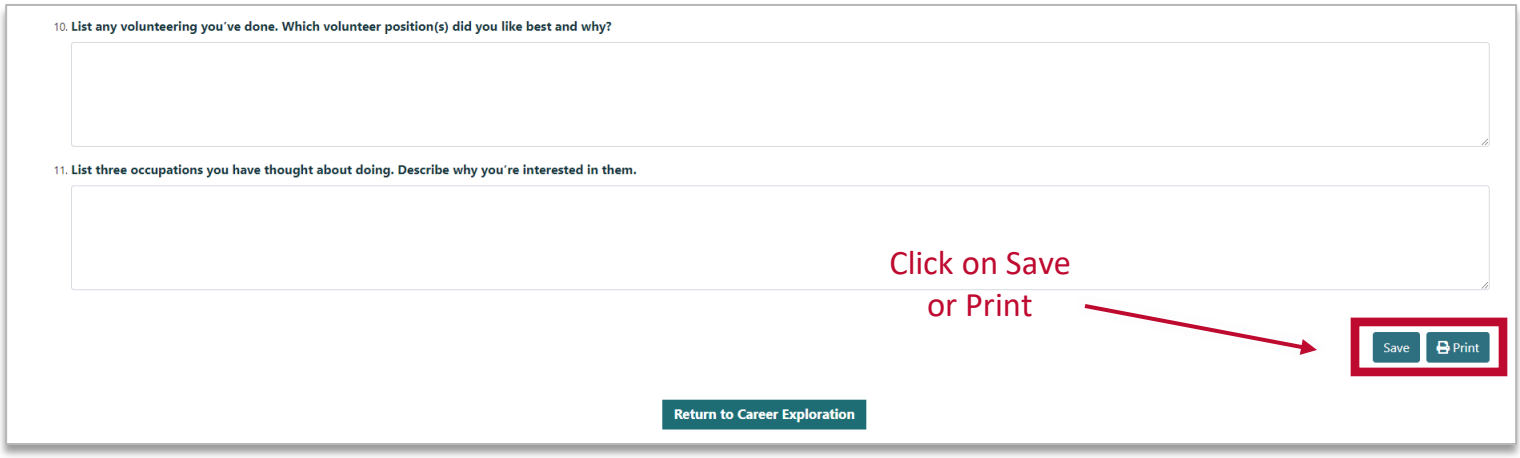
Follow these steps to access the Career Exploration Worksheet.

- Sign into Career Solutions.
- Click on Career Exploration at the top of the screen.
- Click on the Career Exploration Worksheet in the list of tools to the right of the screen.
- A screen will appear with a series of career related questions.
- Provide answers to the questions and click Save and Print.

Click on Career Exploration Worksheet




New Mexico Department of WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
Type answers to the questions in the boxes provided
Sample Student
Unassigned
Career Solutions
My Dashboard
Career Exploration
Education & Training
Gain Experience
The Job Search
Career Exploration Worksheet
Take the first step in exploring careers by thinking about the things you're interested in and enjoy doing. Fill out the Career Exploration Worksheet to get things going. Keep an open mind about what motivates and inspires you, including your strengths. Your non-work experiences are as valuable as anything else, so tap into all of your activities and interests.
Getting Started with Career Exploration: Your Interests Worksheet
About You
1. What activities/hobbies have you done that were easy to learn and that you were good at? (e.g., cooking, sports, caring for siblings, arts and/or crafts, organizing events, etc.)
2. What about these activities do you like? (e.g., working with tools, leading a group, making decisions, interacting with others, working with numbers, developing new ideas, selling things, etc.)


10. List any volunteering you've done. Which volunteer position(s) did you like best and why?
11. List three occupations you have thought about doing. Describe why you're interested in them.
Click on Save or Print
Save
Print
Return to Career Exploration

Connecting with Students

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will be given the opportunity to…

- Discuss the importance of career exploration.
- Identify the main features of the Career Solutions system.
- Recognize the advantages of registering as a user in the Career Solutions system.
- Complete the Career Exploration Worksheet.
- Evaluate personal abilities, interests, and needs as they apply to the selection of a career.
- Determine next steps in exploring career opportunities and developing a career plan.

Classroom Discussions and Presentations

Introduction

Career exploration can be an exciting, but also stressful activity for students. To introduce this lesson, take a moment to engage in a brief discussion about the purpose of career exploration. Below are some helpful talking points and questions to share with students.

Talking Points

Below are some helpful comments to share with students.

- Choosing a career is an important decision that can affect job satisfaction and the ability to achieve lifestyle goals. Taking time now to make an informed career choice can payoff in the long-run.
- No matter who you are or what skills you think you do or do not possess, you have the opportunity to make a good career choice. Hundreds of good jobs are out there in multiple career fields.
- Career exploration is important for everyone, no matter where you plan to go next – college, trade school, career, and so on. Ultimately, everyone eventually enters into a career.
- The goal of career exploration is to gain a thorough understanding of personal factors, such as your work interests and values, as well as external factors, such as the job market and availability of jobs, to make an informed decision on the career(s) that will be right for you.

Discussion Questions

As a class or in small groups, have students reflect on the following questions. Help students talk about and work through their positive and negative feelings regarding career exploration.

- What are some benefits of exploring careers options now?
- What do you find exciting about exploring career possibilities?
- Do you believe career exploration is a useful activity for you? Why or why not?
- What are some examples of good jobs that do not require a four-year degree?
- What are some concerns you have about choosing a career?

Exploring the System

After discussing the importance of career exploration and helping students work through both positive and negative perspectives on the process, students can be introduced to the Career Solutions system.

The "How to Use this Tool" section above provides a summary of useful information to share with students.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Communicate the purpose of the system as a career exploration site that can help students connect interests to career goals and develop effective career plans.
- Help students locate the site at nmcareersolutions.com.
- Review features available through both vertical and horizontal navigation.
- Review the advantages of registration and help students register as a user.
- Assist students in signing into the system for the first time.
- Direct students to the Career Exploration Worksheet.

Classroom Activity

Career Exploration Worksheet

The Career Exploration Worksheet (available within the Career Solutions system) can help students begin the process of exploring their interests and connecting these interests to careers. As a basic self-assessment tool, the worksheet provides insight into students' likes, dislikes, strengths, needs, education goals, and work interests. Students can use this information to learn more about themselves and determine occupations that may align better with their personal attributes, needs, and wants.

To locate the worksheet, review the "How to Use this Tool" section above.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Print a copy of the worksheet and/or provide electronic access to the worksheet for each student.
- Introduce the worksheet to students as a self-assessment tool that helps them learn about themselves
- Provide assurances to students that their answers are private and will not be shared with others.
- Encourage students to complete the worksheet in the classroom or at home.
- Assist students in interpreting and using the information in the career exploration process.

Exploring the Results

Because there is no right or wrong way to complete the worksheet, there is also no right or wrong way to interpret the results. Students should be encouraged to reflect on what their responses mean to them and how their answers might relate to their career selection. For each section (About You, Your Education Interests, and Your Work Interests), ask students to think about what their responses say about the types of jobs that would be a good fit for them. It may be helpful for them to review the worksheet and start envisioning what their future job might look like and why. Placing students into small groups to share these visions could be helpful.

Career Exploration Worksheet

Take the first step in exploring careers by thinking about the things you're interested in and enjoy doing. Fill out the Career Exploration Worksheet to get things going. Keep an open mind about what motivates and inspires you, including your strengths. Your non-work experiences are as valuable as anything else, so tap into all of your activities and interests.

Getting Started with Career Exploration: Your Interests Worksheet

About You

1. What activities/hobbies have you done that were easy to learn and that you were good at? (e.g., cooking, sports, caring for siblings, arts and/or crafts, organizing events, etc.)

2. What about these activities do you like? (e.g., working with tools, leading a group, making decisions, interacting with others, working with numbers, developing new ideas, selling things, etc.)

3. What activities do you dislike and why do you dislike them?

4. How much money do you want to earn? How much money do you think you need to earn to live comfortably?

5. Do you want to stay in the same city or town you're living in now, or would you like to live and work somewhere else in the state or country?

Your Education Interests

6. List some school subjects you've done well in. Did you enjoy these subjects? (e.g., geometry, language arts, physics, art, etc.)

7. If you could learn something new right now, what would it be? Why?

8. Are you interested in or considering continuing your education after high school? If so, have you thought about what type of education you'd pursue? (e.g., university, apprenticeship, training)

Your Work Interests

9. List any jobs you've had. Which job(s) did you like the best and why?

10. List any volunteering you've done. Which volunteer position(s) did you like best and why?

11. List three occupations you have thought about doing. Describe why you're interested in them.

Next Steps

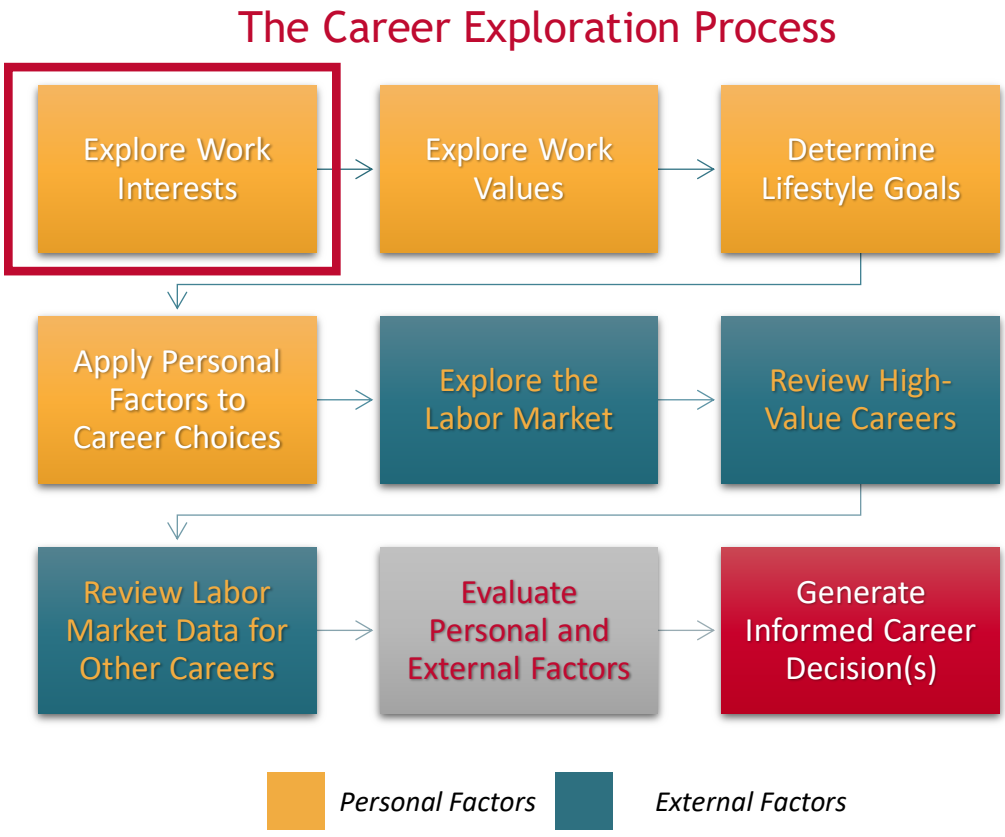
At the end of the lesson, take a moment to review and assess the learning objectives. Engage students in a brief discussion of the learning opportunities that were made available in the classroom.

In this lesson, students were provided the opportunity to…

- Discuss the importance of career exploration.
- Identify the main features of the Career Solutions system.
- Recognize the advantages of registering as a user in the Career Solutions system.
- Complete the Career Exploration Worksheet.
- Evaluate personal abilities, interests, and needs as they apply to the selection of a career.

After providing a brief overview, encourage students to…

- Continue the self-reflection process.
- Think about their personal attributes and what they want/need from a career.
- Determine how they might use this information in selecting a career.
- Prepare for future lessons that will involve additional self-discovery activities.



Helpful Tip: *This diagram will be presented at the end of each lesson to identity the next step in the career exploration process.*

Lesson 2: Exploring Work Interests

Overview

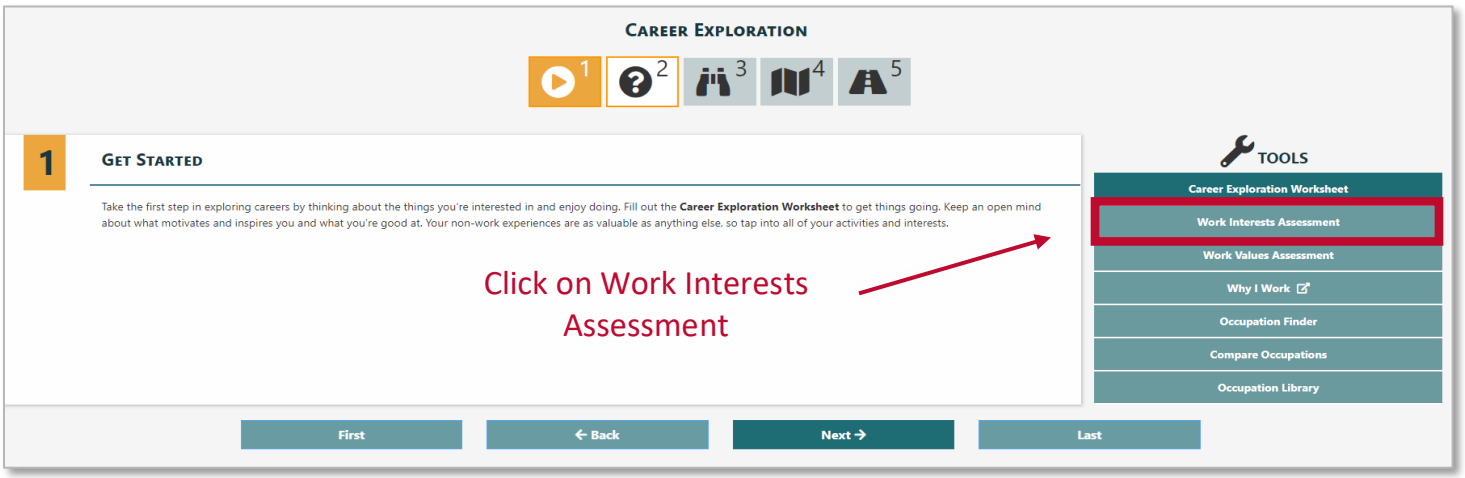
Career assessments give jobseekers a better idea of the types of jobs and activities that are a good fit. The primary purpose of these assessments is to identify personal attributes and provide insight into career fields where these attributes are most likely to be fulfilled. They do not tell individuals what specific career they should choose. Rather, they point individuals to types of careers to explore. The New Mexico Career Solutions system has two assessments that can help individuals narrow their career search and create exposure opportunities. Both assessments are brief, with each taking about fifteen minutes. The first assessment presented to users is the Work Interests Assessment.

This lesson contains….

- A review of how to access the Work Interests Assessment.
- Ideas for helping students connect with personal and external factors in career exploration.
- Strategies for introducing career assessments to students.
- Methods for guiding students through the Work Interests Assessment.
- A review of next steps for students using insights gained from this lesson.

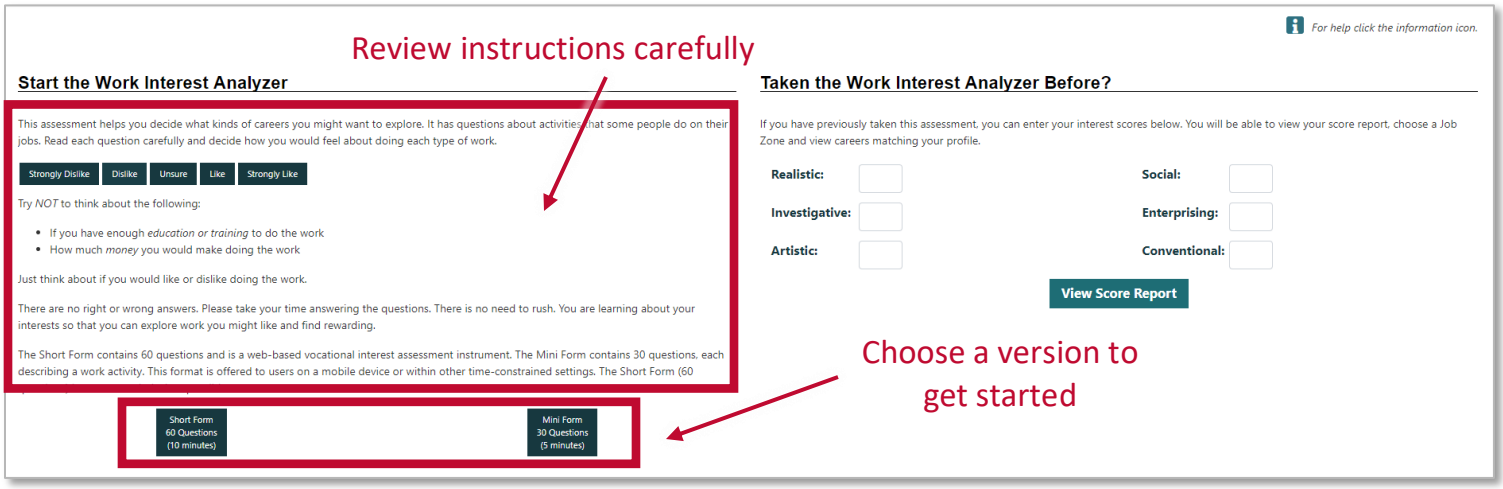
How to Use This Tool

Before beginning, be sure to sign into the system. The Work Interests Assessment is located within the Career Exploration section. Simply click the Work Interests Assessment link in the list of tools to the right.

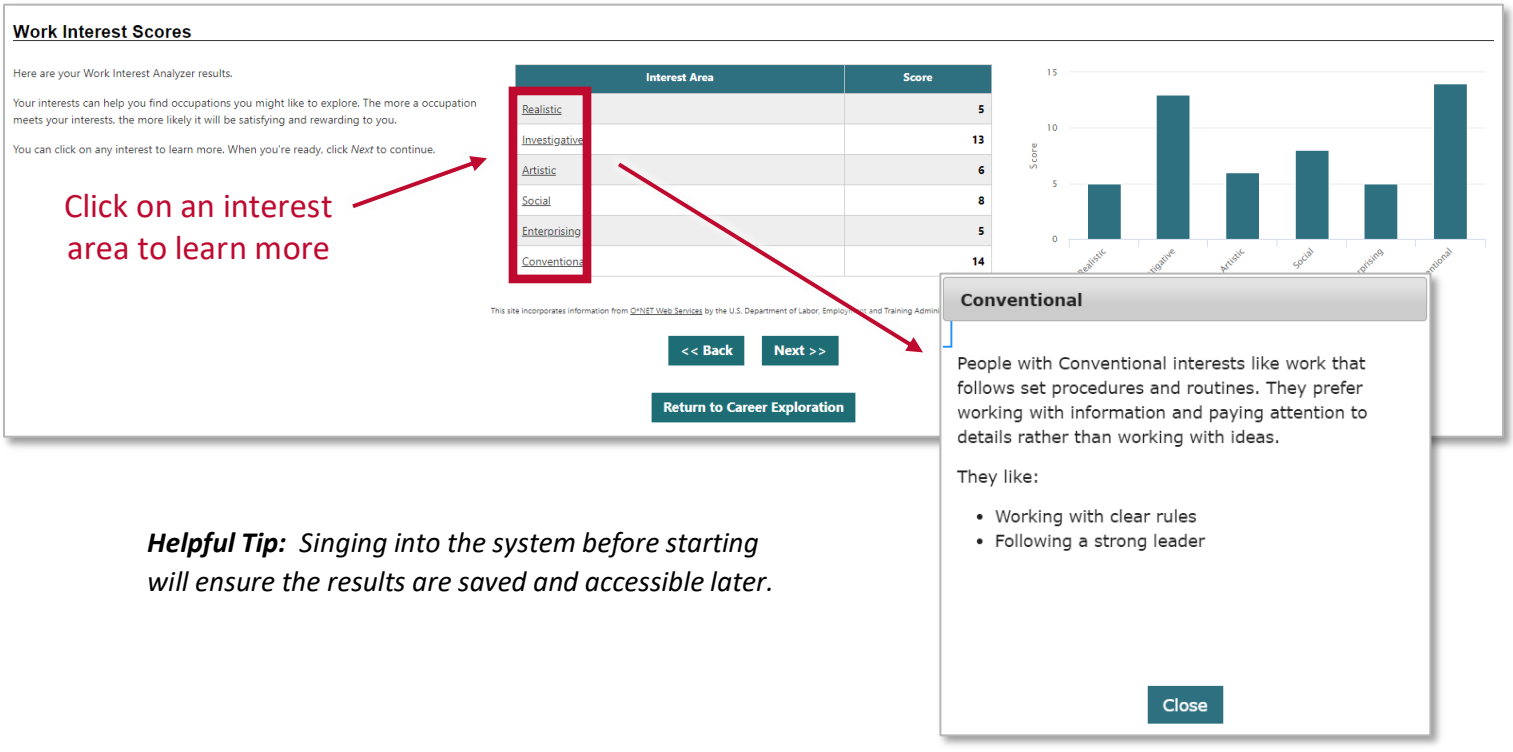


The page below will appear. Instructions for completing the assessment are located to the left. These instructions should be reviewed carefully before starting the assessment.

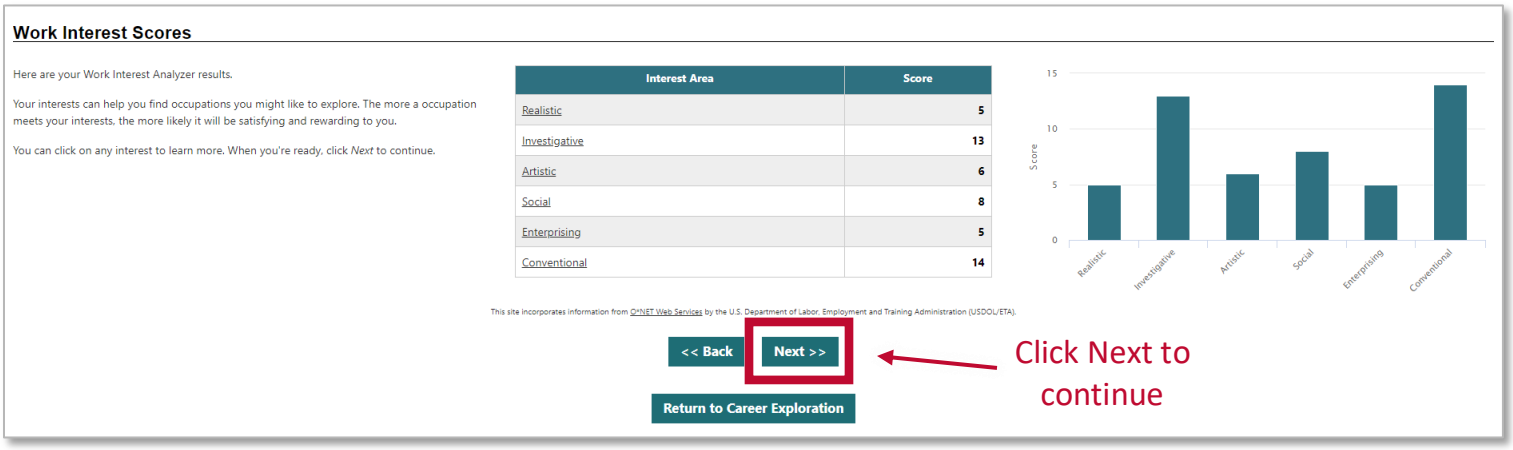
Helpful Tip: *The Work Interests Assessment available in this system was developed by O*NET. For additional information on this assessment, as well as print versions of this tool, click here or go to https://www.onetcenter.org/IP.html#overview.*



After completing the assessment, the results will appear on a page that looks similar to the image below. Interest areas will be listed and some will have higher values than others. Students should be encouraged to review their top interest areas with the highest values, as these are most indicative of their personal interests.



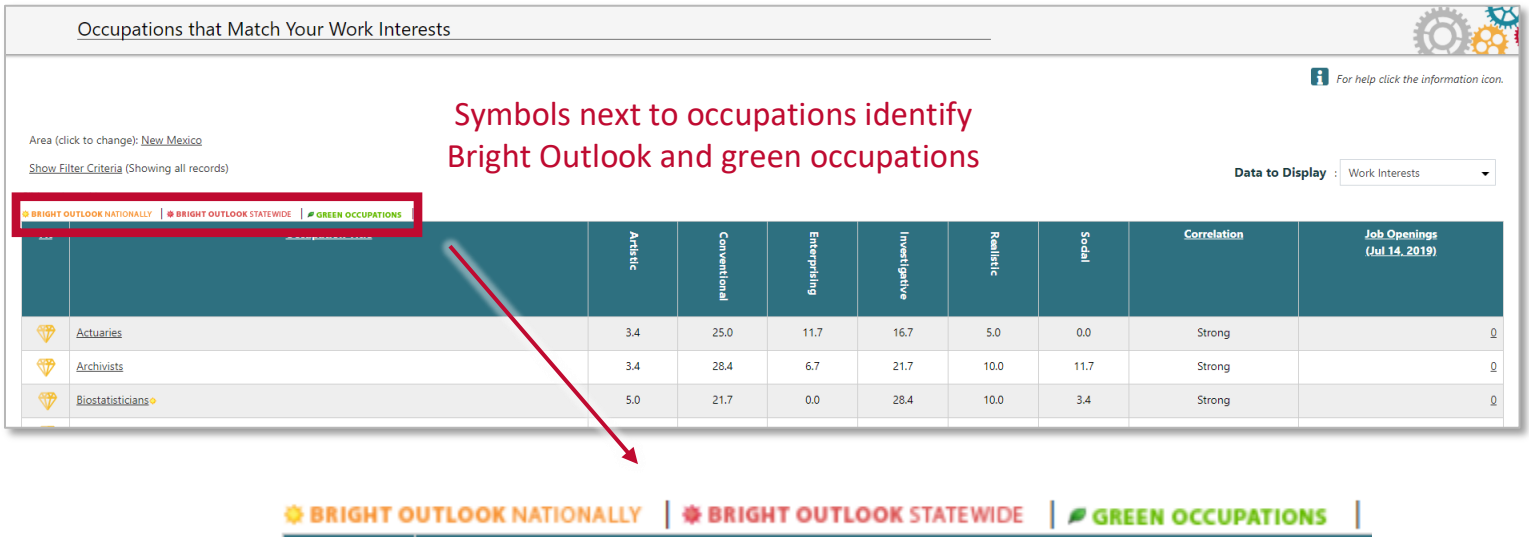
Helpful Tip: *Singing into the system before starting will ensure the results are saved and accessible later.*



After exploring top interest areas, click Next to continue. A page like the one below will appear that lists occupations that match the top work interests identified in the assessment. The occupations with the strongest correlation are presented in alphabetical order.

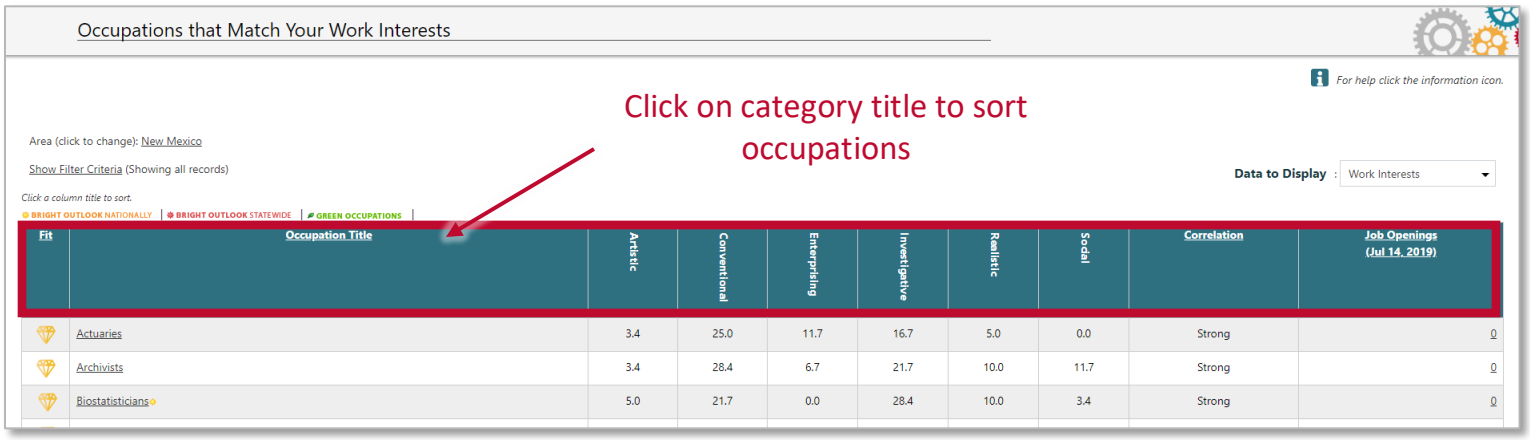
Some notable features of this page include…

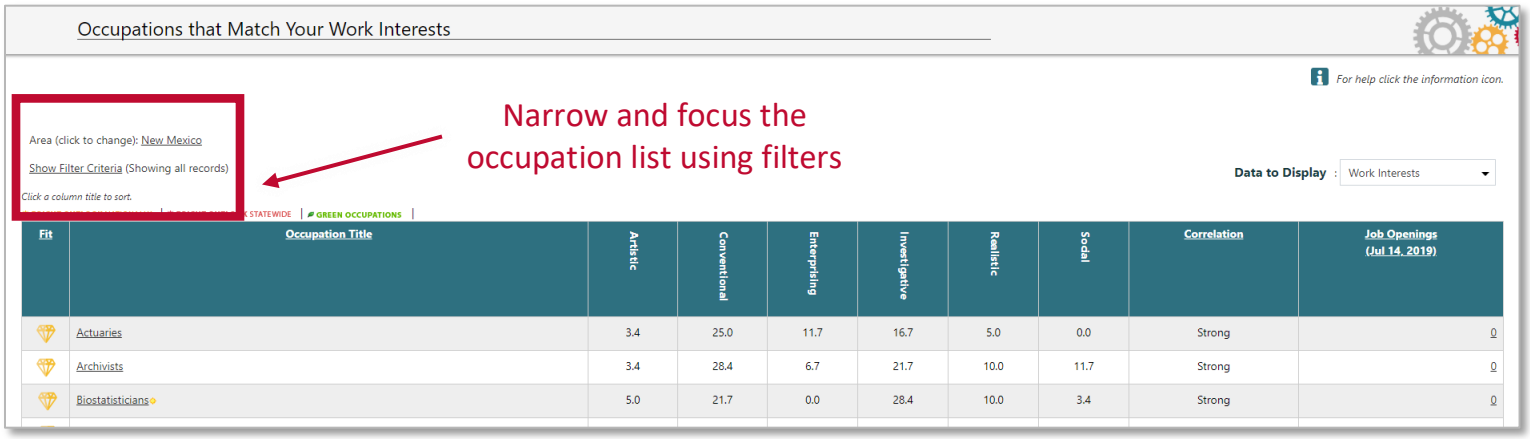
- Sorting occupations by clicking on category headings.
- Symbols next to each occupation to identify Bright Outlook and green occupations.
- Filters at the top left that can help narrow and focus the list of occupations.
- A menu at the top right that allows for different types of data to be displayed.

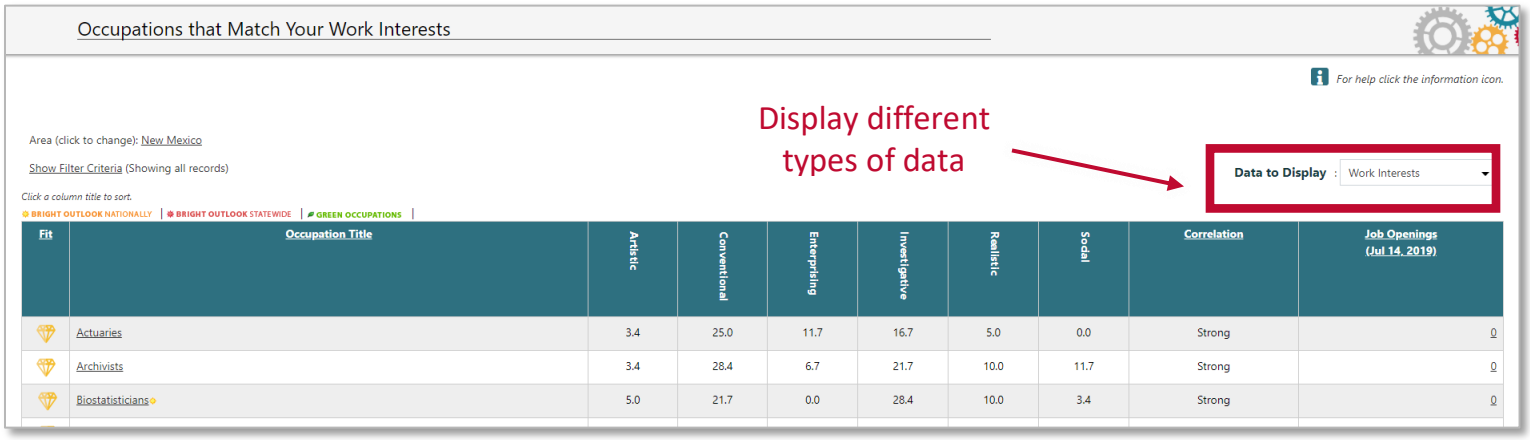


Helpful Tip: *Bright Outlook occupations are defined by O*NET as having at least one of the following criteria.*

- *Projected to grow faster than average (employment increase of 10% or more) over the period 2018-2028*
- *Projected to have 100,000 or more job openings over the period 2018-2028*



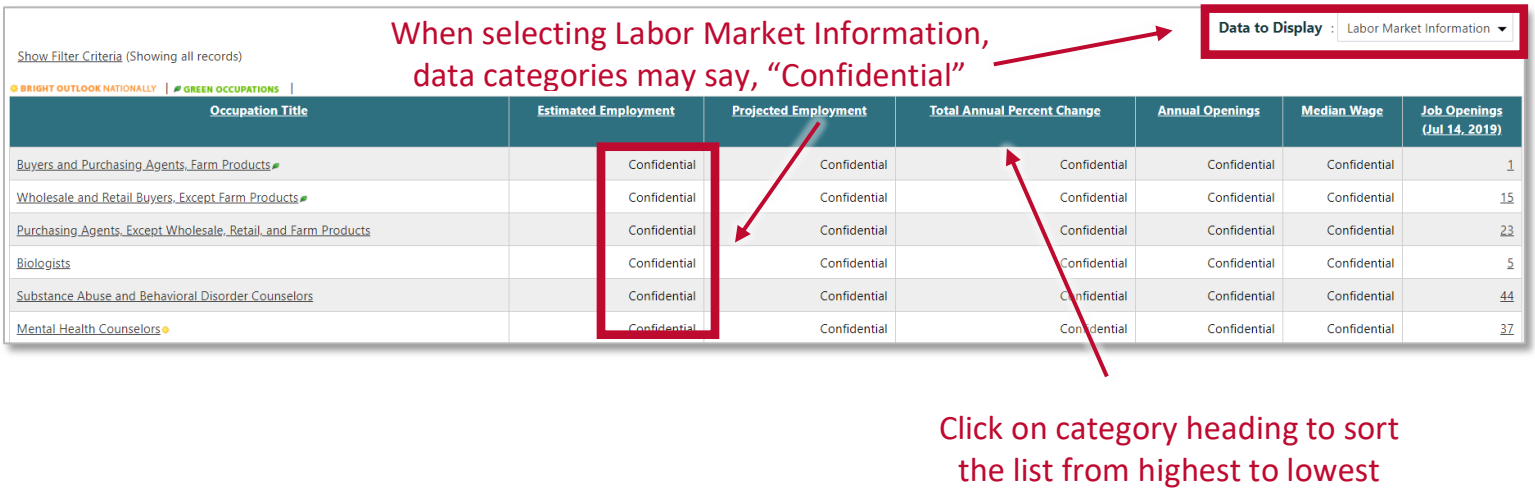




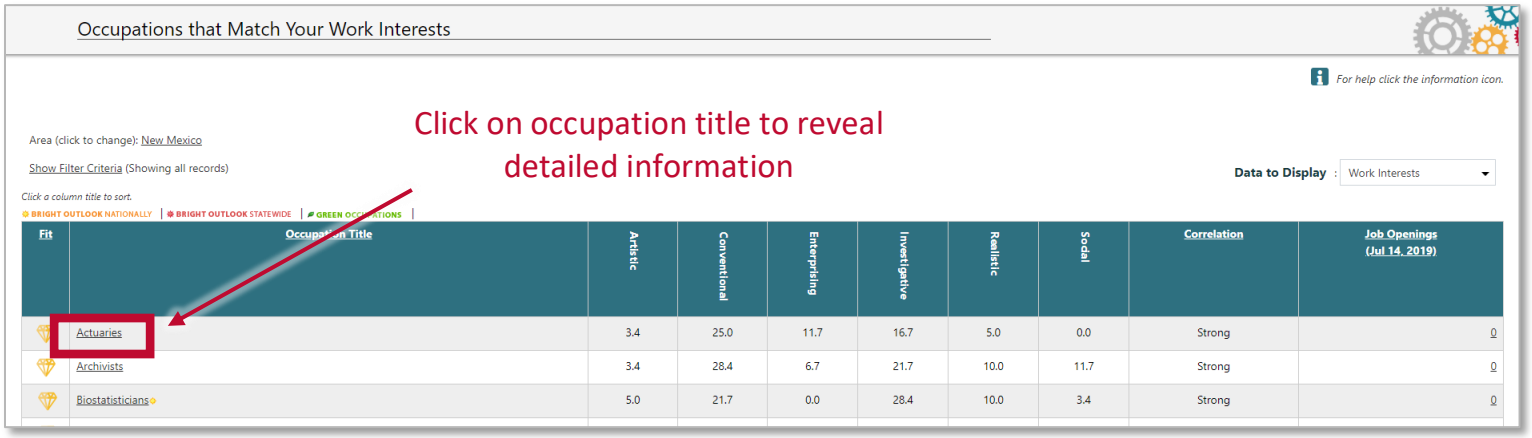
Helpful Tip: *When selecting data types, a message may appear that says, "There were no occupations that matched your criteria." If this happens go to the dropdown menu and select the data type again. On this second attempt, a list should appear.*

There were no occupations that matched your criteria.

Helpful Tip: *When selecting labor market information as a data type, the list may automatically sort from lowest to highest, which means a lot of data categories will say, "Confidential." Data is often labeled "confidential" when there is a limited number of people in an occupation. Clicking on any of the category headings will sort the list from highest to lowest and data will appear.*

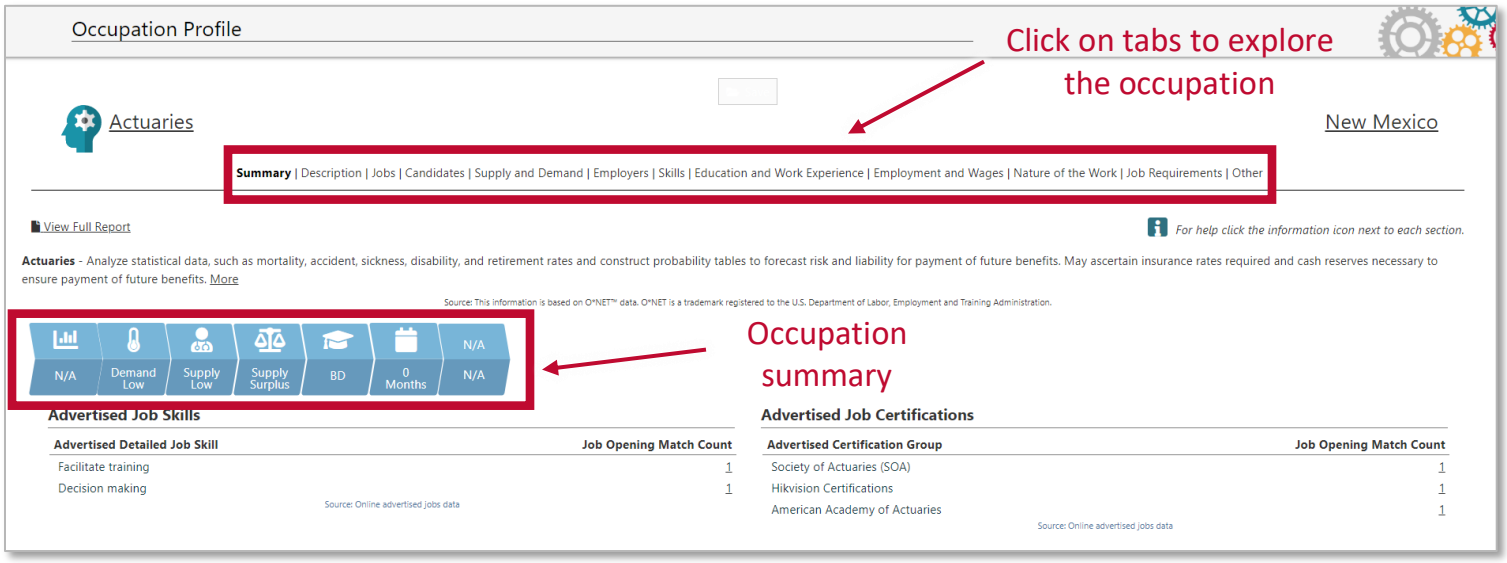


To examine each occupation in more detail, click on the occupation title that appears in the list. The next page that appears will contain a wealth of information about the occupation, including a summary of work activities/duties, labor market information, education requirements, and more.



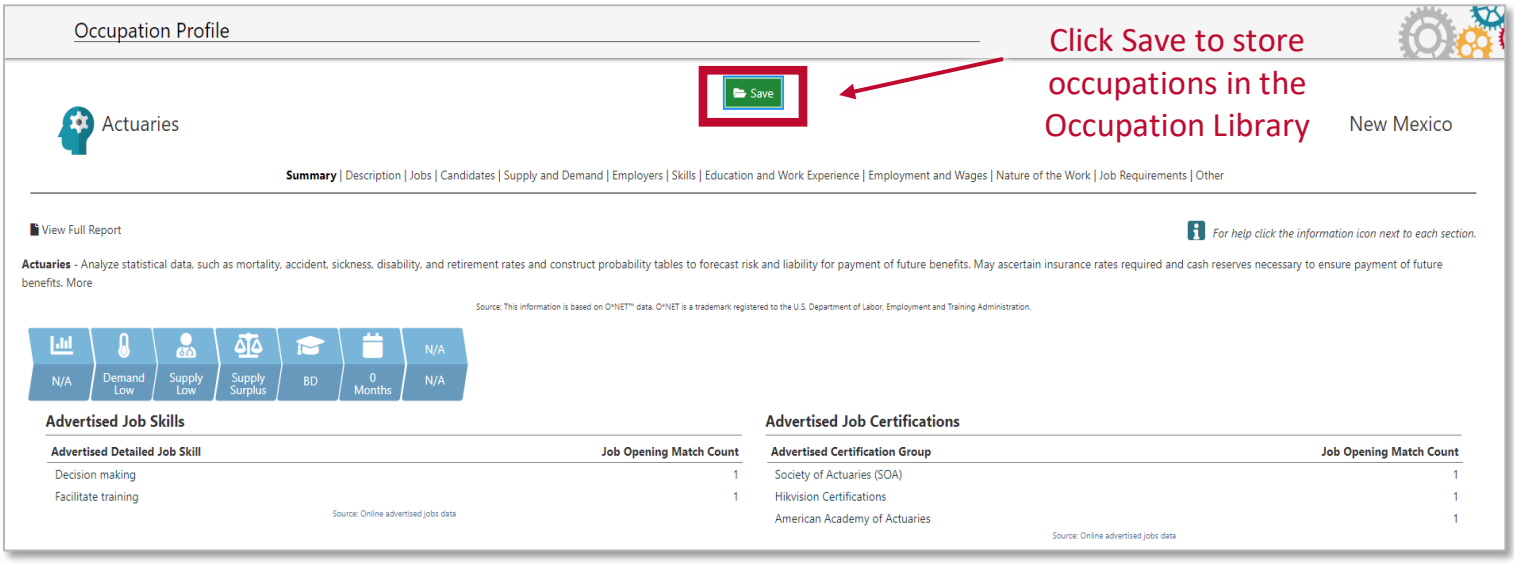
To explore the occupation profile, scroll down the page or click on the tabs that appear at the top of the profile. The occupation summary (under the job description) provides a very quick idea of the market for the occupation, as well as the required education and work experience.

Helpful Tip: *The information displayed on this page is based on O*NET data. If additional information is needed, it may be helpful to visit the O*NET site at onetonline.org.*



IMPORTANT: As students complete the activities within each lesson, they need to save occupations they believe are a good match. These saved occupations will be referenced in future lessons.

Helpful Tip: *If the option to save does not appear, click the white box at the top of the screen. It will turn green. Clicking it again will save the occupation.*



Connecting with Students

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will be given the opportunity to…

- Examine the major components of an informed career decision.
- Review the process of gathering and evaluating career information.
- Discuss how work interests are measured and used.
- Identify their personal work interests.
- Apply their work interests to the career selection process.
- Evaluate careers based on their interests.
- Determine next steps in exploring career opportunities and developing a career plan.

Classroom Discussions and Presentations

Introduction

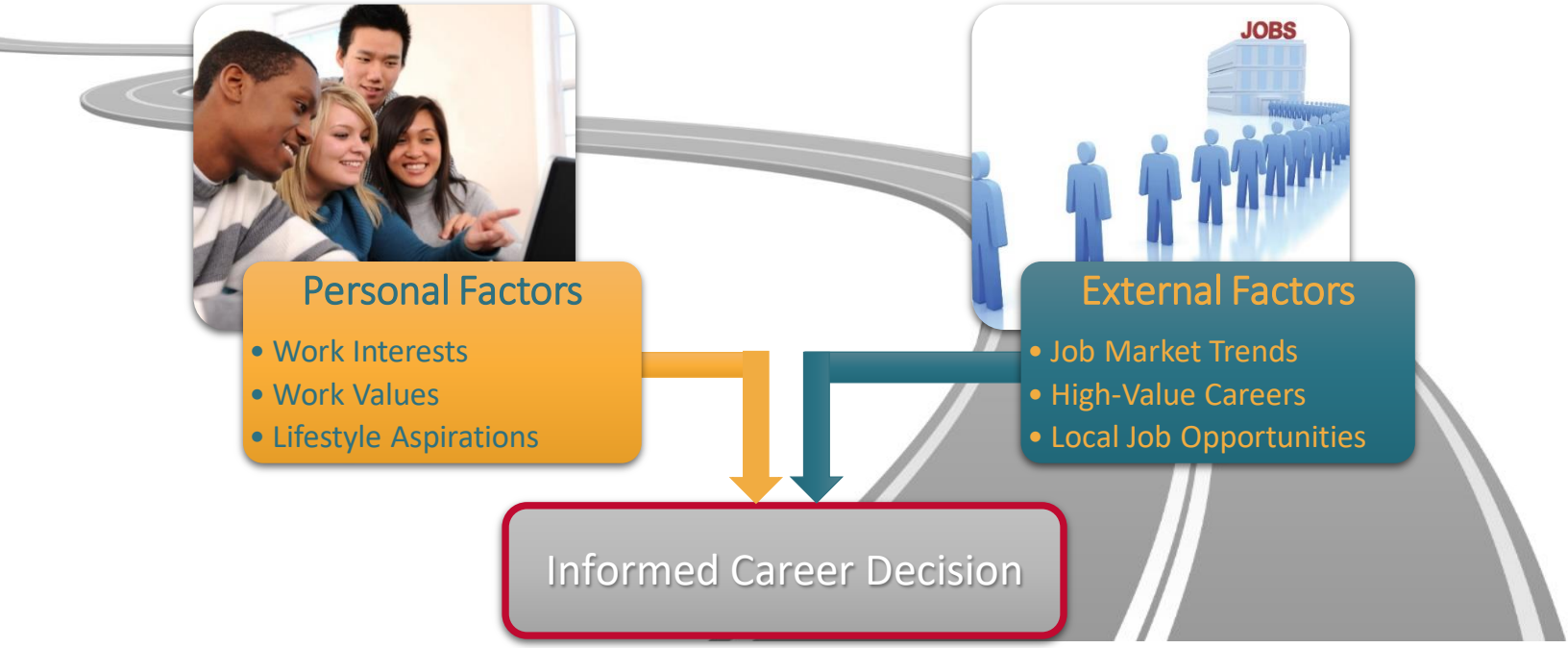
Helping students see the "big picture" can build a foundation for learning that defines where they are going and why. It is recommended that this lesson begin with an introduction to the career exploration process, including a review of the major components of an informed career decision (i.e., personal and external factors). This information will provide a helpful roadmap for future activities. Students can also benefit from an introduction to career assessments and their use in the career exploration process.

Talking Points

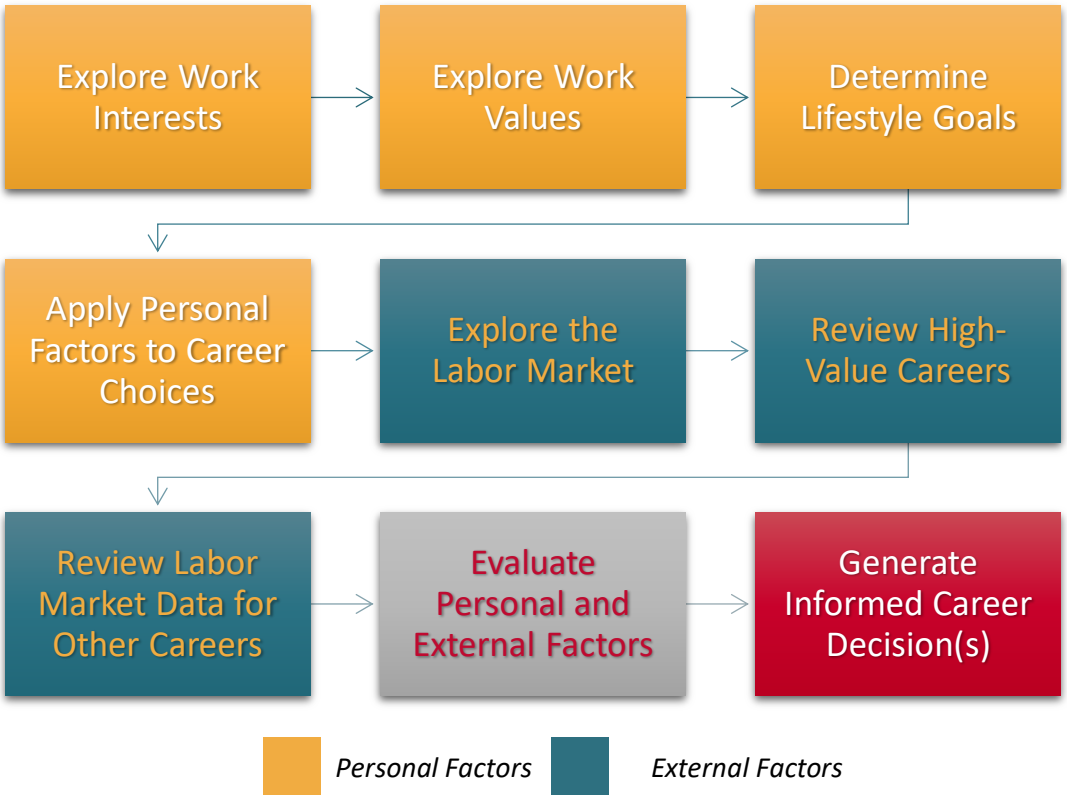
Below are some helpful comments to share with students.

- The ultimate goal of career exploration is to make an informed decision. This often requires a careful review of personal factors and external factors. (***Helpful Tip:*** *Print and share the diagram below. Use this to introduce the components of an informed career decision.*)
- The career exploration process involves multiple steps focused on gathering information related to personal and external factors. The final step is to evaluate all information and determine occupations that offer the best fit and greatest opportunity in the job market. (***Helpful Tip:*** *Print and share the diagram below. Use this to introduce the career exploration process.*)
- There are many ways to begin the career exploration process and there is no right or wrong path. It is often best to start with the exploration of personal factors to develop a personal connection.
- We'll be starting with the Work Interests Assessment in Career Solutions. This is a basic survey that helps identify the types of work you may be interested in doing.
- This assessment is a tool that can help guide your career selection process. It is not a comprehensive personality test, nor is it a definitive measure of occupations you should or should not consider. This tool can help identify potential career fields that align with things you like to do.

Components of an Informed Career Decision



The Career Exploration Process



Discussion Questions

As a class or in small groups, have students reflect on the following questions. Help students talk about and work through their positive and negative feelings regarding career exploration.

- What are some personal factors that you believe will be most important in selecting a career?
- What kinds of external factors do you think will affect your career decision?
- How much does it matter that you find an occupation that you enjoy? Why?
- Do you think it's possible to find a job that you love? Why or why not?
- How might you determine if a job is something you would enjoy?
- Do you think personal surveys or assessments are helpful? How might these be harmful?

Exploring the System

After discussing the components of an informed career decision and helping students work through their positive and negative perspectives on the career process and career assessments, students can be introduced to the Work Interests Assessment in Career Solutions.

The "How to Use this Tool" section above provides a summary of useful information to share with students.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Encourage students to sign into the site to ensure their data is saved.
- Help students locate the Work Interests Assessment.
- Carefully review the instructions posted with the assessment with students.
- Discuss what results will look like and what students should focus on.
- Review features available in the system to explore the results and matching careers.

Classroom Activity

Work Interests Assessment and Occupation Comparison

The Work Interests Assessment is a common career exploration tool that many jobseekers find helpful in choosing careers. Students should be encouraged to complete this assessment to focus their thoughts and beliefs about the types of careers they might enjoy. This information is most useful when students have the opportunity to review the results and apply their discoveries to the comparison of various careers.

To locate the assessment, review the "How to Use this Tool" section above.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Introduce the purpose of the Work Interests Assessment as a tool that can help jobseekers identify desired work activities and potential career fields that align with their interests.
- Review the instructions posted with the assessment in Career Solutions.
- Provide an opportunity for students to complete the assessment in the classroom or at home.
- Review the results of the assessment with students.
- Encourage students to complete the Occupation Comparison Sheet (see below).
- **Remind students to save occupations they believe are a good match.**

Occupation Comparison Sheet

Instructions: Complete the Work Interests Assessment in Career Solutions. Identify two occupations for which you have a strong correlation. Answer the questions below for each occupation.

Occupation 1:	**Occupation 2:**
What are some of the job duties for this occupation?	What are some of the job duties for this occupation?
Describe the work environment for this occupation.	Describe the work environment for this occupation.
Describe some of the requirements for this job, including skills, licensing, knowledge, and abilities.	Describe some of the requirements for this job, including skills, licensing, knowledge, and abilities.
List three jobs that are related to this occupation.	List three jobs that are related to this occupation.

Do you think you would find the daily work of these occupations interesting? Why or why not?

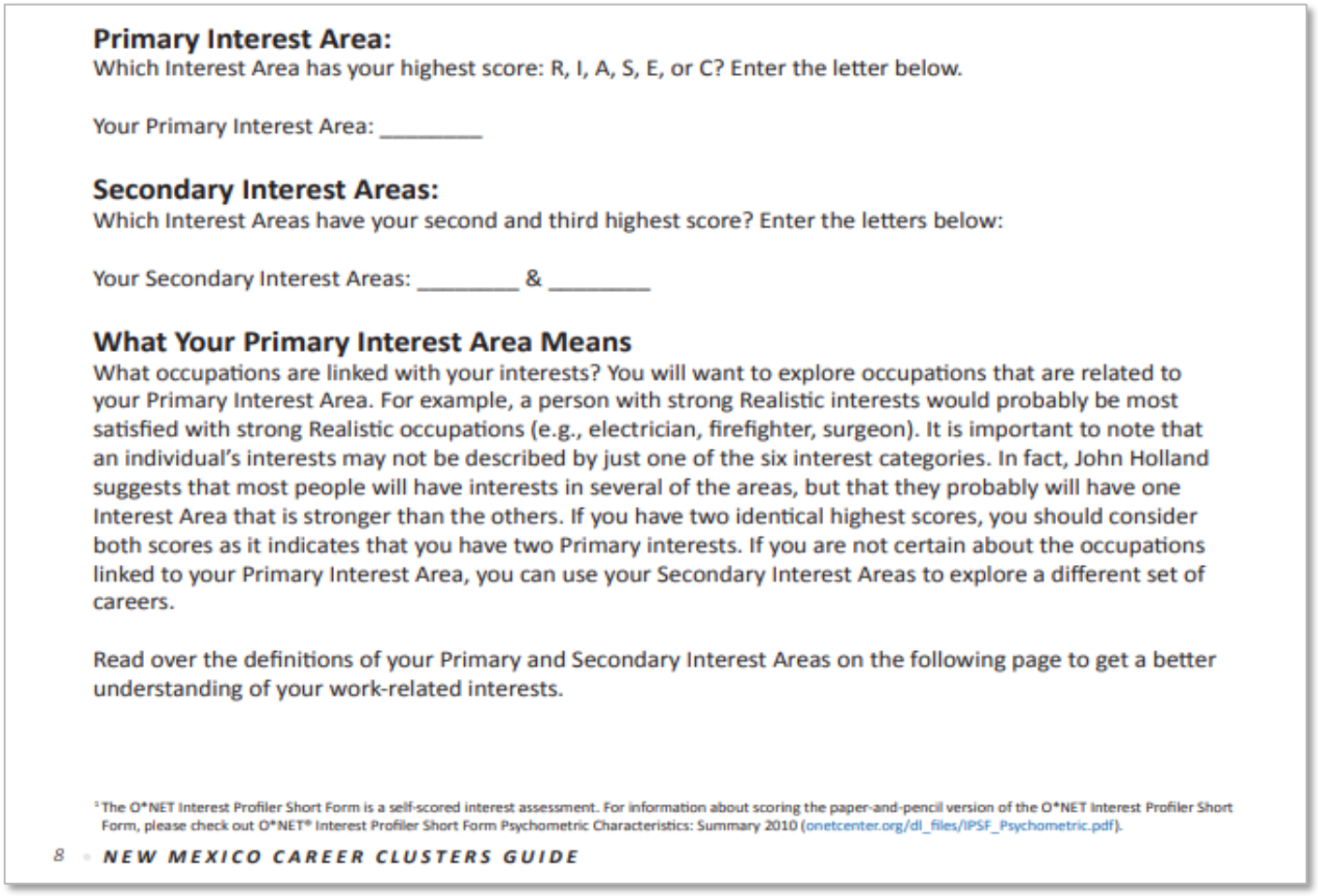
Which occupation do you think would be the best fit for you? Why?

Exploring the Results

After completing the Work Interests Assessment, there are typically one or two top interest areas that emerge. These will be areas where the numeric results from the survey are highest. To interpret these results, it is highly recommended that you refer to page 8-11 of the New Mexico Career Clusters Guide. For your convenience, a portion of this guide that provides definitions for each of the interest areas is copied below. Students should be encouraged to learn more about their top interest areas by exploring the definitions in Career Solutions (presented with the results) and the New Mexico Career Clusters Guide.

In the Career Solutions System, occupations that match students' top interests will automatically appear. Occupations with the strongest correlation to their interests will be presented in alphabetical order. Each occupation will vary in the content of the work, but the underlying nature of the work activities should be similar. Thus, students may find it helpful to explore occupations in fields or subject areas they enjoy.

In making career comparisons, the comparison sheet above is a sample of an activity that students should engage in frequently. Creating a side-by-side comparison helps tease apart the finer details of an occupation. This will help them get practice making career choices and identifying what is most important. Their chosen career in this activity is not meant to be their ultimate career choice. It is best viewed as an example of a career match that is stronger than others and can be evaluated to determine features that make it a more desirable career choice.



Primary Interest Area:
Which Interest Area has your highest score: R, I, A, S, E, or C? Enter the letter below.

Your Primary Interest Area: _____

Secondary Interest Areas:
Which Interest Areas have your second and third highest score? Enter the letters below:

Your Secondary Interest Areas: _____ & _____

What Your Primary Interest Area Means
What occupations are linked with your interests? You will want to explore occupations that are related to your Primary Interest Area. For example, a person with strong Realistic interests would probably be most satisfied with strong Realistic occupations (e.g., electrician, firefighter, surgeon). It is important to note that an individual's interests may not be described by just one of the six interest categories. In fact, John Holland suggests that most people will have interests in several of the areas, but that they probably will have one Interest Area that is stronger than the others. If you have two identical highest scores, you should consider both scores as it indicates that you have two Primary interests. If you are not certain about the occupations linked to your Primary Interest Area, you can use your Secondary Interest Areas to explore a different set of careers.

Read over the definitions of your Primary and Secondary Interest Areas on the following page to get a better understanding of your work-related interests.

[1] The O*NET Interest Profiler Short Form is a self-scored interest assessment. For information about scoring the paper-and-pencil version of the O*NET Interest Profiler Short Form, please check out O*NET® Interest Profiler Short Form Psychometric Characteristics: Summary 2010 (onetcenter.org/dl_files/IPSF_Psychometric.pdf).

8 NEW MEXICO CAREER CLUSTERS GUIDE

STEP 1

The Interest Profiler measures interests in each of the six Holland RIASEC types.[2] This section provides definitions for each of the six types. Each definition includes examples of activities that individuals with that interest type like to perform, as well as examples of famous people whose field of work matches the interest type.

Realistic – The "Doers"

People with Realistic interests like work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. They enjoy dealing with plants, animals, and real-world materials like wood, tools, and machinery. They often enjoy outside work. Often people with Realistic interests do not like occupations that mainly involve doing paperwork or working closely with others. Famous realists: NASCAR driver Danica Patrick, TV carpenter Norm Abram, wildlife expert Steve Irwin, and multi-talented athlete Jim Thorpe.

Social – The "Helpers"

People with Social interests like work activities that assist others and promote learning and personal development. They prefer to communicate more than to work with objects, machines, or data. They like to teach, give advice, help, or otherwise be of service to people. Famous helpers: educator Booker T. Washington, mental health care reformer Dorothea Dix, TV psychologist Phil McGraw, and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

Investigative – The "Thinkers"

People with Investigative interests like work activities that have to do with ideas and thinking more than with physical activity. They prefer to search for facts and figure out problems mentally rather than to persuade or lead people. Prominent investigators: astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, primatologist Jane Goodall, mathematician/computer scientist Grace Murray Hopper, and neuroscientist Ben Carson.

Enterprising – The "Persuaders"

People with Enterprising interests like work activities that have to do with starting up and carrying out projects, especially business ventures. They like persuading and leading people and making decisions. They enjoy taking risks for profit. These people prefer action rather than thought. Prominent persuaders: TV mogul Oprah Winfrey, business magnate Donald Trump, U.S. Senator Marco Rubio, and Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg.

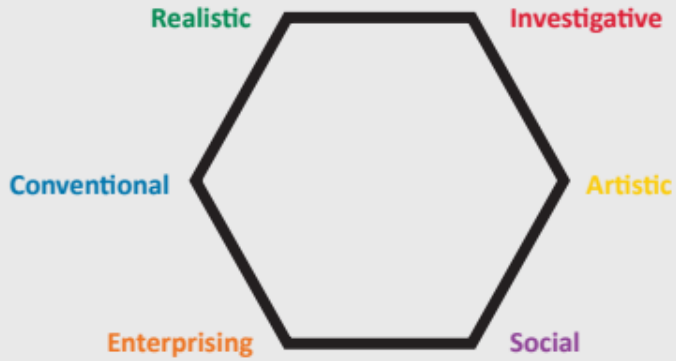
Artistic – The "Creators"

People with Artistic interests like work activities that deal with the artistic side of things, such as forms, designs, and patterns. They like self-expression in their work. They prefer settings where work can be done without following a clear set of rules. Well-known artists: painter/sculptor Leonardo da Vinci, actress Halle Berry, writer J.K. Rowling, and singers Lady Gaga and Tony Bennett.

Conventional – The "Organizers"

People with Conventional interests follow procedures and maintain accurate written and numerical business records. They prefer working in structured settings where roles and tasks are clearly defined. Well-known organizers: businessman J.C. Penney, Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, and professional organizer Alejandra Costello.

John Holland suggested that viewing the Interest Areas on a hexagon can help people understand how their interests overlap or how they may be distinctly different. Interests that are most similar touch each other on the hexagon (e.g., Social, Enterprising, and Conventional). On the other hand, interests across the hexagon from each other (e.g., Conventional and Artistic) are least likely to have similarities. Sometimes people's combined interests are opposite from or not adjacent to each other. In this case, people sometimes choose to focus on the most different interest as a hobby or to find a unique work setting that merges their interests.



[2] The O*NET Interest Profiler is compatible with Holland's (1985a) Theory of Vocational Personality, one of the most widely accepted approaches to vocational choice. Information for Interest Areas is extracted from the O*NET Career Exploration Tools owned by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Training Administration (DOL/ETA). All O*NET Assessment/Counseling Tools are copyrighted. O*NET is a trademark of DOL/ETA.

Next Steps

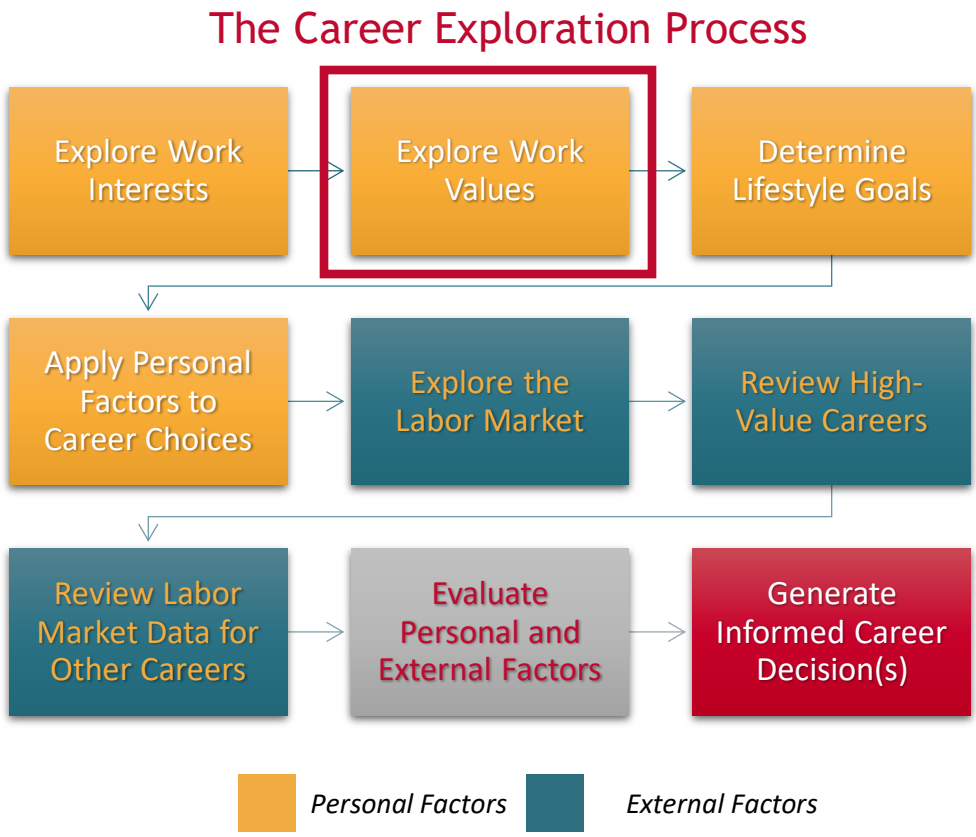
At the end of the lesson, take a moment to review and assess the learning objectives. Engage students in a brief discussion of the learning opportunities that were made available in the classroom.

In this lesson, students were provided the opportunity to…

- Examine the major components of an informed career decision.
- Review the process of gathering and evaluating career information.
- Discuss how work interests are measured and used.
- Identify their personal work interests.
- Apply their work interests to the career selection process.
- Evaluate careers based on their interests, as well as the job market.

After providing a brief overview, encourage students to…

- Continue the self-reflection process.
- Think about their work interests and the types of occupations that fit these interests.
- Determine how they might use this information in selecting a career.
- Prepare for future lessons that will involve additional self-discovery activities.



Helpful Tip: *Reviewing the steps in the career exploration process at the end of each lesson can help students identify where they've been and where they are headed next.*

Lesson 3: Exploring Work Values

Overview

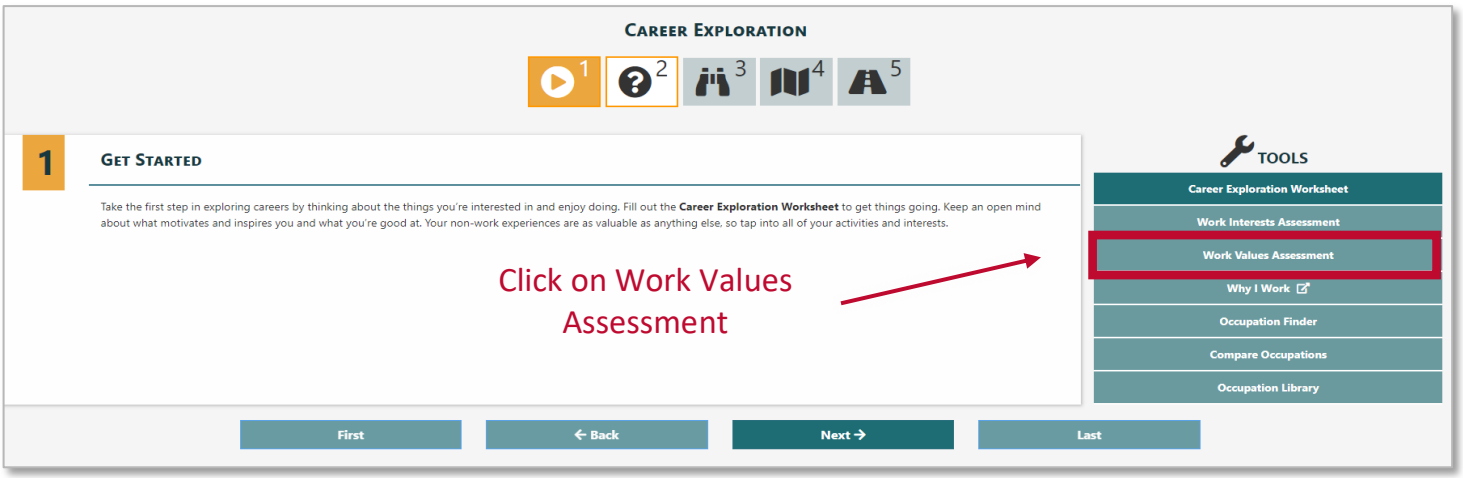
There are several types of career assessments, with each providing insight into unique personal factors that can affect job satisfaction and workplace performance. The Work Values Assessment, available within the Career Solutions system, helps jobseekers learn more about their needs with regard to the type of work they do. In other words, it helps individuals understand what motivates them to work and what they need to feel satisfied in their work environments. The Work Values Assessment is relatively brief survey, taking about fifteen minutes, and can be completed online with instant results. Students can benefit greatly from this assessment in gaining a deeper understanding of what they need from their job.

This lesson contains….

- A summary of how to access and use the Work Values Assessment.
- A review of information to share with students about assessments and personal factors.
- Strategies for using the Work Values Assessment with students.
- Methods for exploring and applying assessment results.
- A review of next steps for students using insights gained from this lesson.

How to Use This Tool

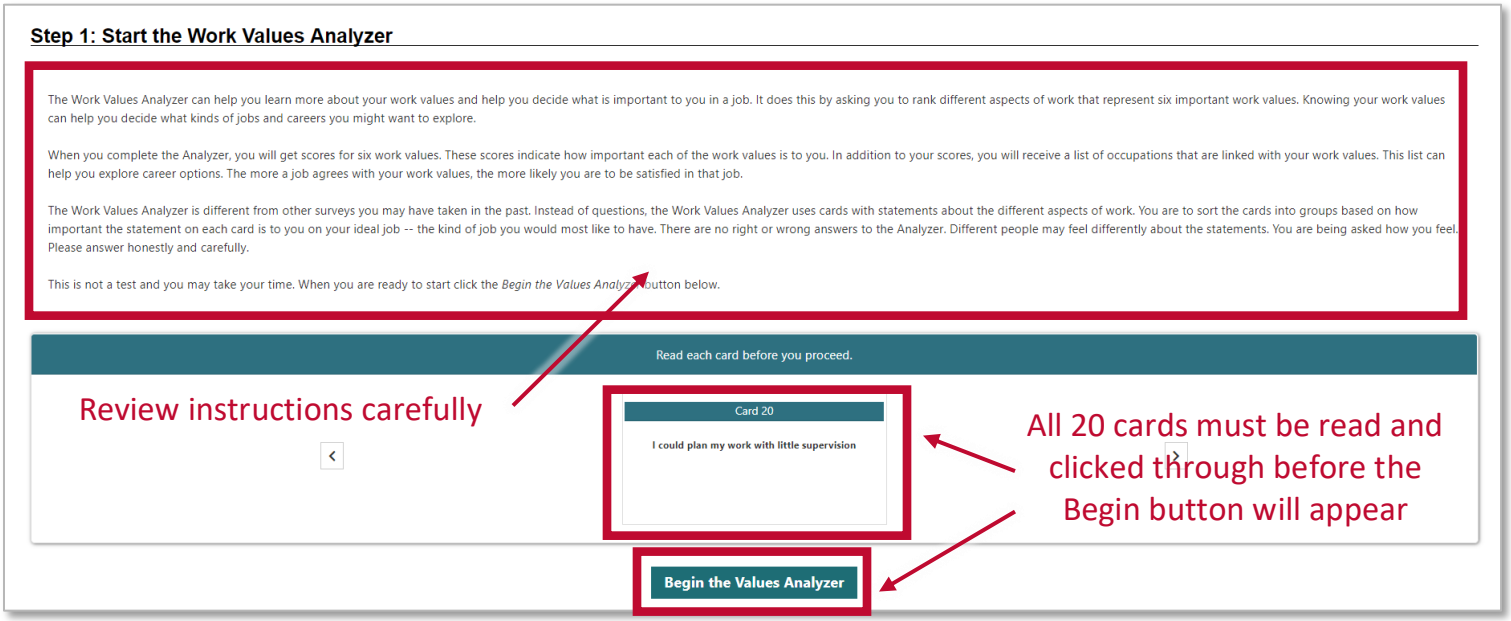
Before beginning, be sure to sign into the system. The Work Values Assessment is located within the Career Exploration section. Simply click the Work Values Assessment link in the list of tools to the right.



The page below will appear. Instructions for completing the assessment are located in the center of the screen. These instructions should be reviewed carefully before starting the assessment.

Helpful Tip: *All twenty cards must be read and clicked through before the Begin button will appear. While reading the cards, think about the personal importance of each item in selecting a career.*

Helpful Tip: *The Work Values Assessment available in this system was developed by O*NET. For additional information on this assessment, as well as print versions of this tool, click here or go to https://www.onetcenter.org/WIL.html.*

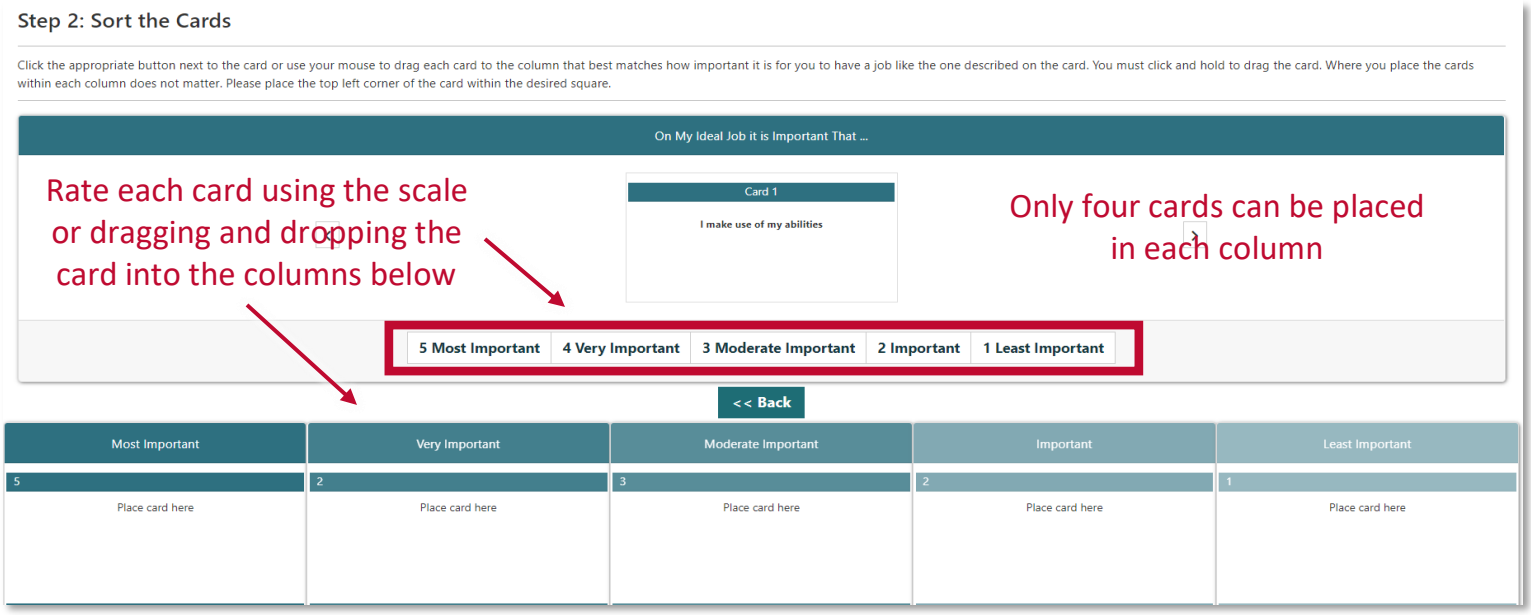


After starting the assessment, a page will appear with the opportunity to sort all twenty cards into five different columns. The sorting can be done either by clicking the rating scale under each card or by dragging and dropping the cards into the columns.

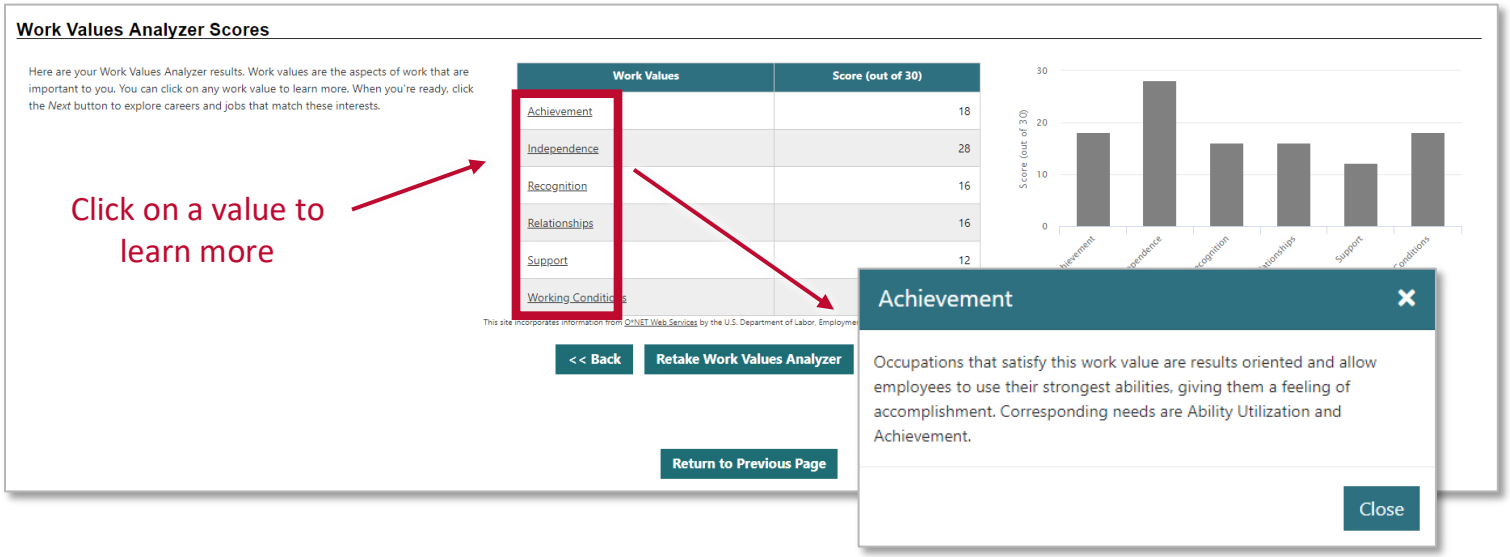
Helpful Tip: *Only four cards can be placed in each column, meaning that difficult decisions may need to be made about some of the items on the cards. If needed, cards can be dragged to other columns at any time.*

From the O*NET Importance Locator manual:

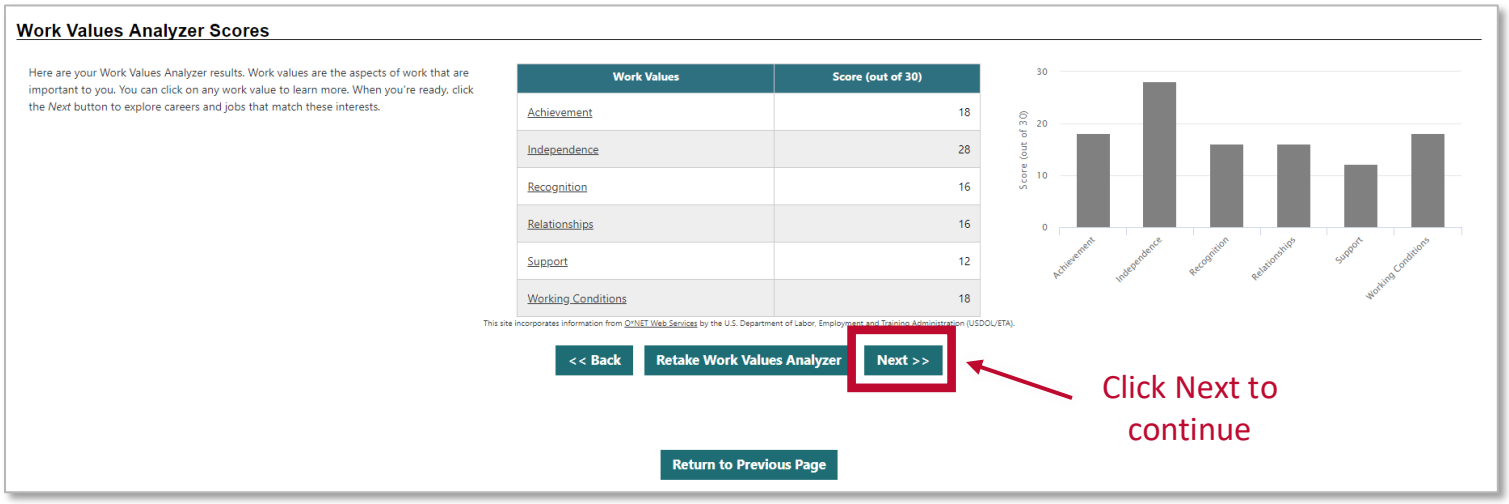
> ***Put exactly 4 cards in each column.*** When you are done, the four most important statements should be in Column 5, the four next most important should be in Column 4, and so on. The four least important statements should be in Column 1. You may have to move the cards around until you have exactly 4 cards in each column.



After completing the assessment, the results will appear on a page that looks similar to the image below. Work values will be listed and some will have higher scores than others. Students should be encouraged to review their top values with the highest scores, as these are most indicative of their personal work values.

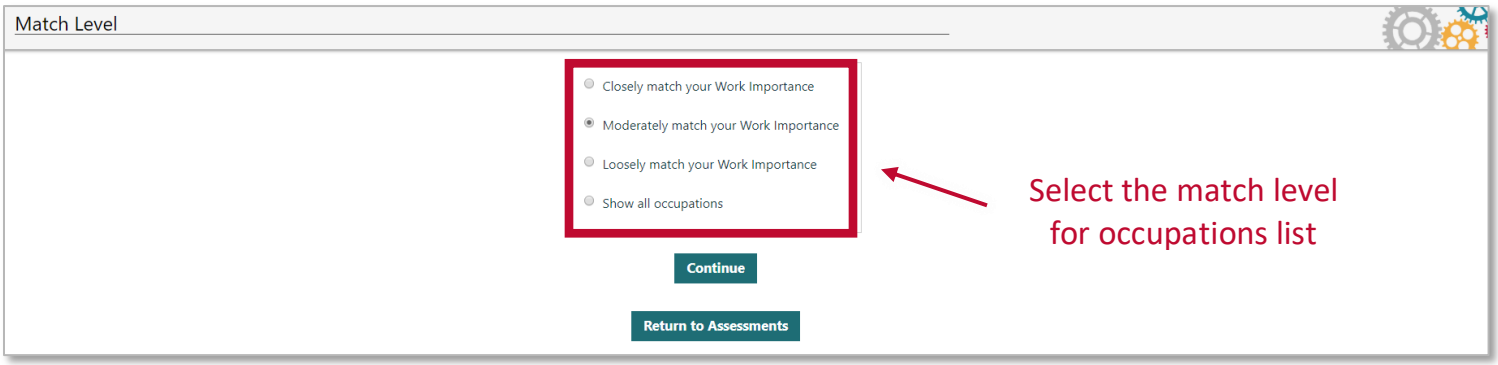


Helpful Tip: *Singing into the system before starting will ensure the results are saved and accessible later.*



After exploring top work values, click Next to continue. A page will appear with the option to select the match level for the occupations that align with the work values results. The stronger the match selected, the shorter the list. Likewise, the weaker the match, the longer the list.

Helpful Tip: *The strength of the match selected does not change the occupations that appear at the top of the list. Rather, it simply adjusts the length of the list displayed. If a close match is selected, the list will just be shorter than if a loose match was selected.*

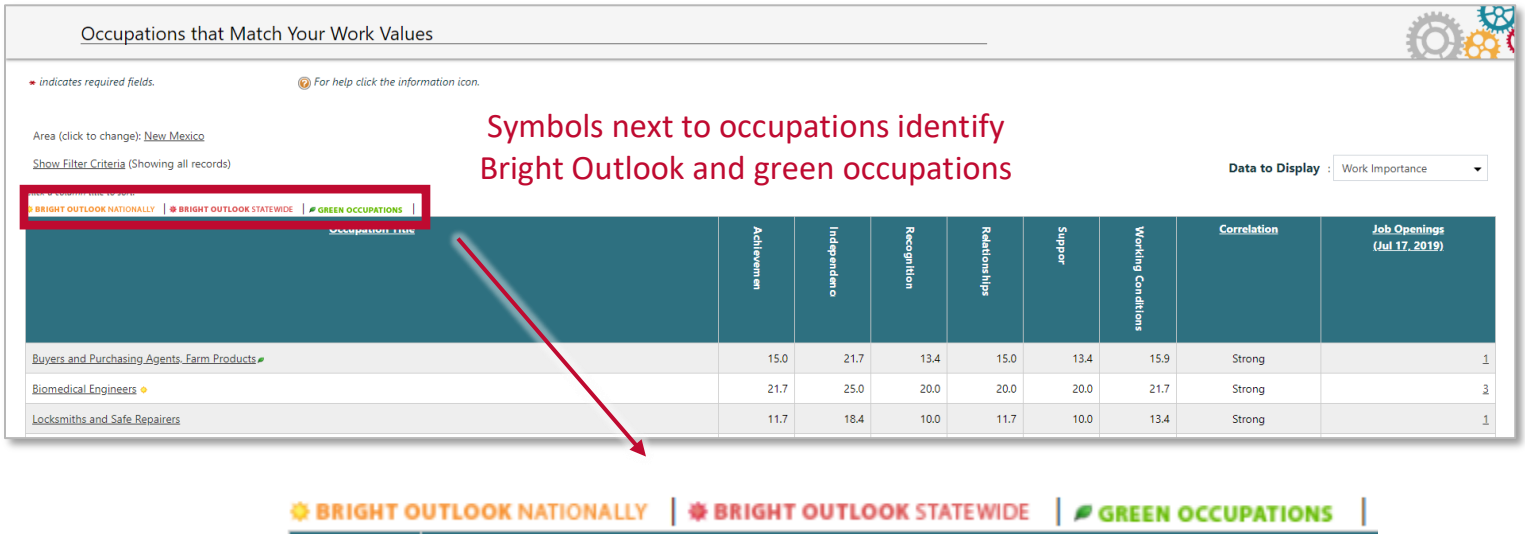


Once a match level is selected, a page like the one below will appear. The occupations with the strongest correlation to the top work values identified in the assessment are presented in alphabetical order.

Some notable features of this page include…

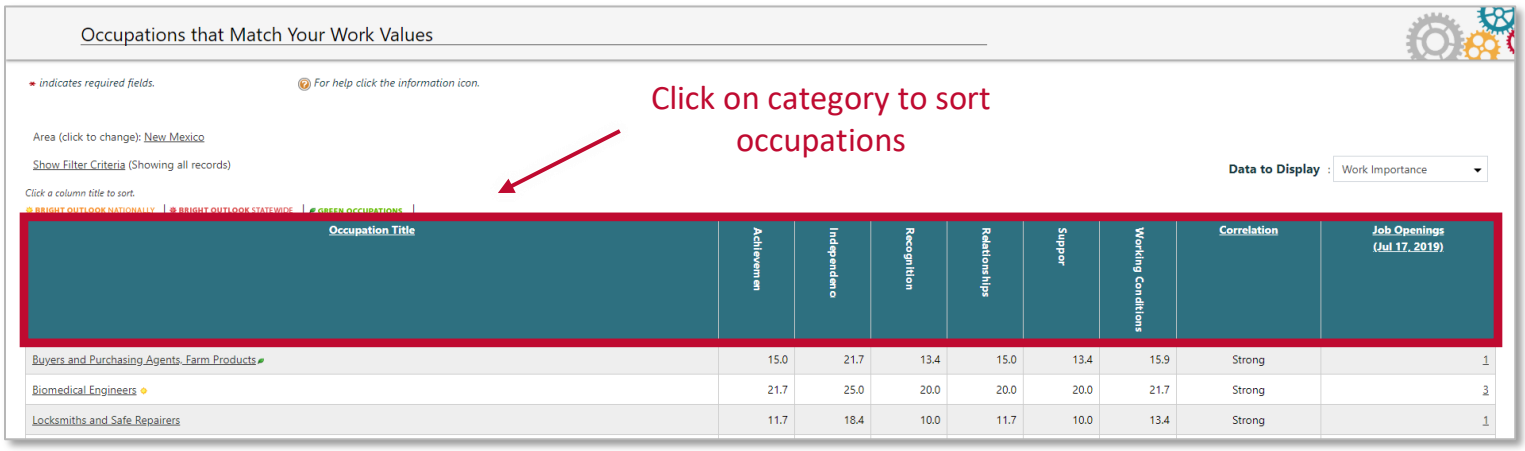
- Sorting occupations by clicking on category headings.
- Symbols next to each occupation to identify Bright Outlook and green occupations.
- Filters on the top left that can help narrow and focus the list of occupations.
- A menu on the top right that allows for different types of data to be displayed.

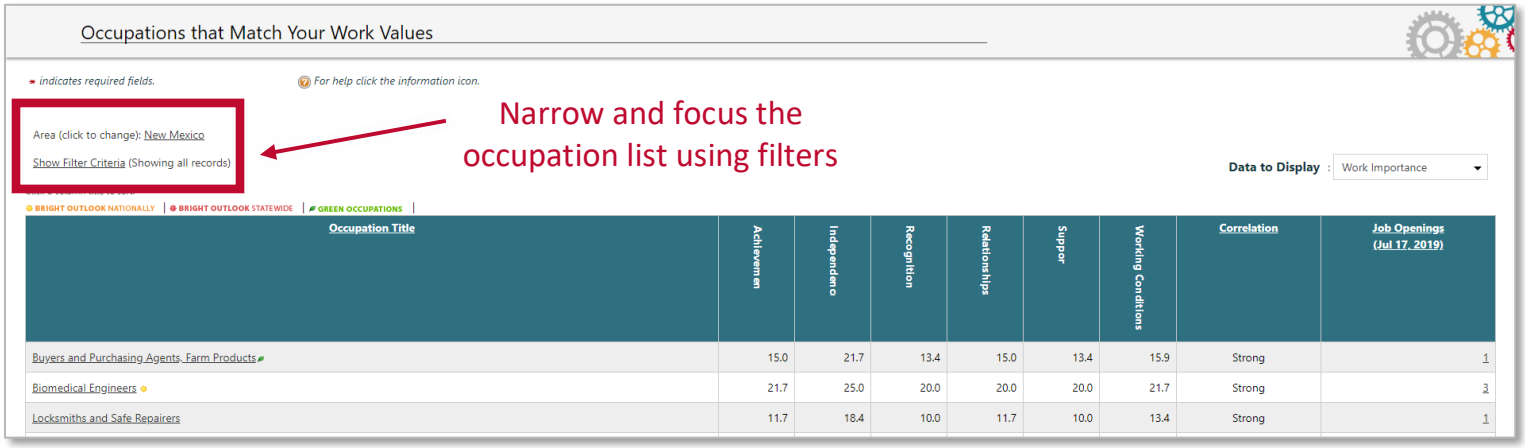
Helpful Tip: *The features available in the occupation list that appears are similar to those that were presented in Lesson 2. For your convenience, the instructions have been copied below.*

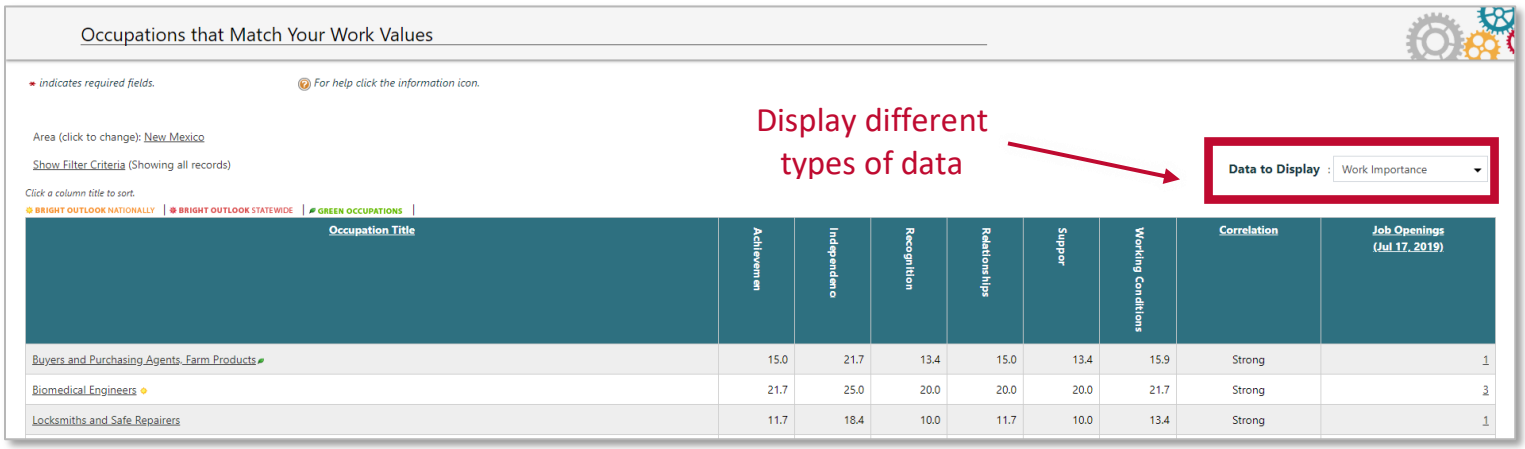


Helpful Tip: *Bright Outlook occupations are defined by O*NET as having at least one of the following criteria.*

- *Projected to grow faster than average (employment increase of 10% or more) over the period 2018-2028*
- *Projected to have 100,000 or more job openings over the period 2018-2028*







Helpful Tip: *When selecting data types, a message may appear that says, "There were no occupations that matched your criteria." If this happens go to the dropdown menu and select the data type again. On this second attempt, a list should appear.*

There were no occupations that matched your criteria.

Helpful Tip: *When selecting labor market information as a data type, the list may automatically sort from lowest to highest, which means a lot of data categories will say, "Confidential." Data is often labeled "confidential" when there is a limited number of people in an occupation. Clicking on any of the category headings will sort the list from highest to lowest and data will appear.*

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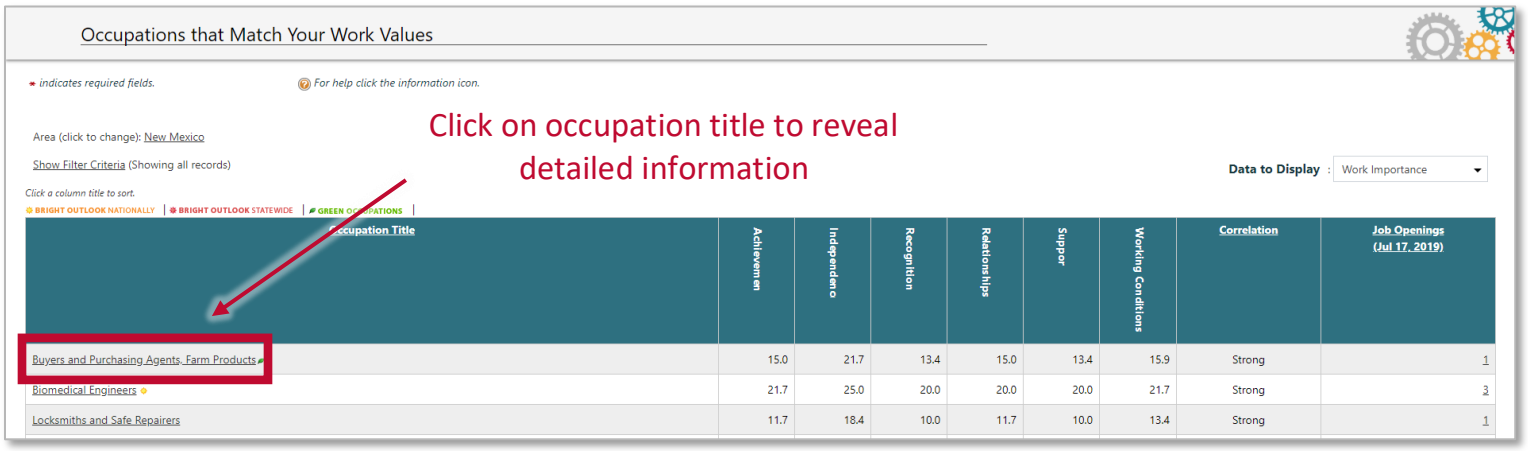
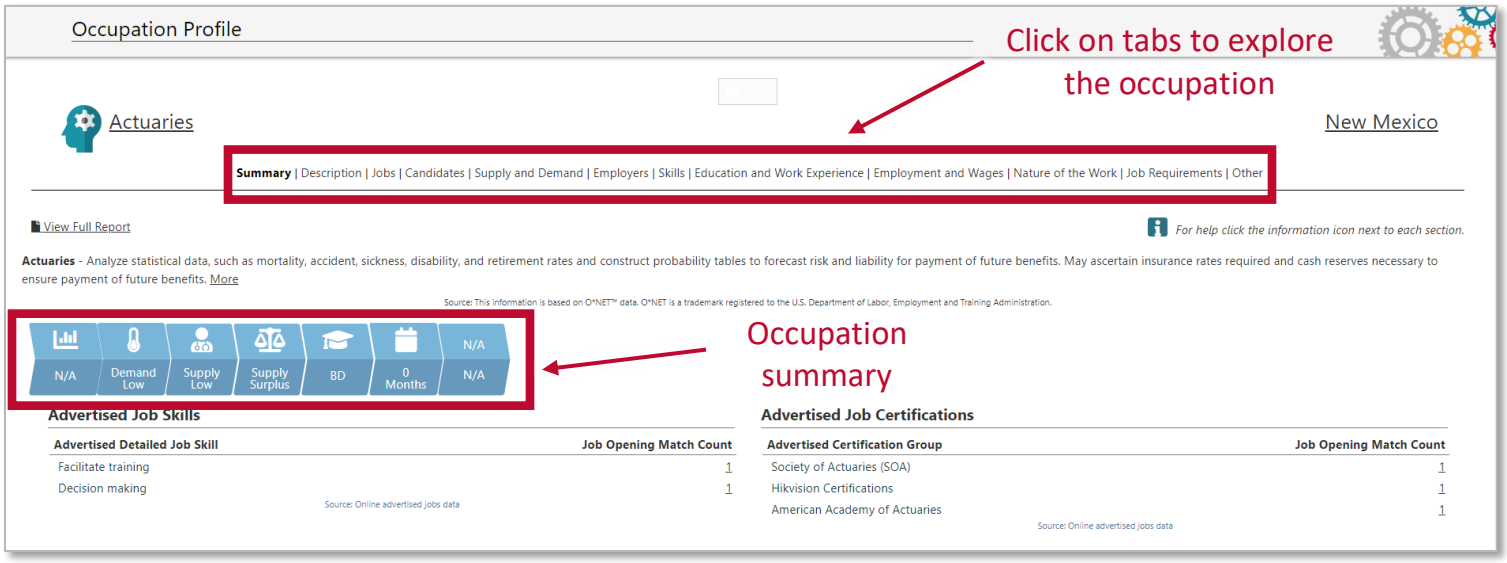


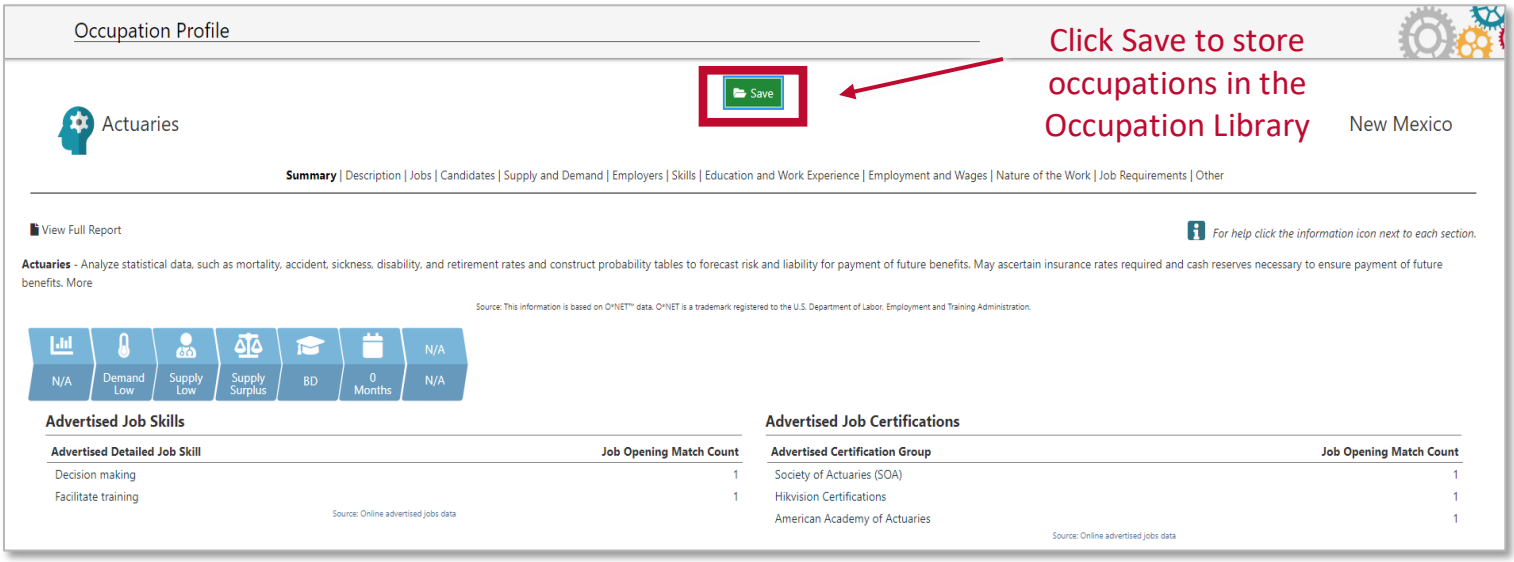
To explore the occupation profile, scroll down the page or click on the tabs that appear at the top of the profile. An occupation summary (under the job description) provides a very quick idea of the market for the occupation, as well as the required education and work experience.

Helpful Tip: *The information displayed on this page is based on O*NET data. If additional information is needed, it may be helpful to visit the O*NET site at onetonline.org.*



IMPORTANT: As students complete the activities within each lesson, they need to save occupations they believe are a good match. These saved occupations will be referenced in future lessons.

Helpful Tip: *If the option to save does not appear, click the white box at the top of the screen. It will turn green. Clicking it again will save the occupation.*



Connecting with Students

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will be given the opportunity to…

- Review the components of an informed career decision.
- Discuss the benefits of career assessments in choosing a career.
- Evaluate work values and their connection to work satisfaction.
- Identify personal work values and apply these to the career selection process.
- Assess careers based on their work values.
- Determine next steps in exploring career opportunities and developing a career plan.

Classroom Discussions and Presentations

Introduction

At this point in the career exploration process, it can be helpful to delve a little deeper into career assessments and their use in developing informed career decisions. To encourage the effective use of these tools, students will need to understand why they are useful and how they should be applied to the career exploration process. Importantly, however, students also need to be aware of the limitations of these tools so they can avoid common misuses of the information. Taking time to provide this foundation can help students develop a healthy relationship with self-discovery tools and embrace their use in effective planning.

Talking Points

Below are some helpful comments to share with students.

- Recall that the ultimate goal of career exploration is making an informed career decision. This often involves careful consideration of both personal and external factors.
- While there are many ways to begin the career exploration process, we have chosen to start with the identification of personal factors to help establish a more personal connection early in the process.
- Career assessments are common tools used to uncover personal interests and values that can be important to consider when choosing a career that you will find meaningful and fulfilling.
- These assessments typically involve brief surveys or activities that produce results that can suggest the presence of particular traits, attributes, values, and interests.
- It is important to keep in mind that assessments are not perfect and they can sometimes be wrong. Also, results from assessments can change over time as you accumulate life experiences. Because of these limitations, assessment results should never be considered as the primary or sole factor when determining career pathways that are right for you.
- Assessments are best viewed as hint or a clue to attributes that you may possess. They merely suggest factors that you may want to consider when selecting a career.
- The Work Values Assessment is frequently used in the career exploration process. It helps you identify what is most important to you when engaging in work activities.

- Understanding what you value in a job can help you seek occupations that align with these values. For example, if you value working with others, it would make sense to consider social occupations.
- The Work Values Assessment is useful in identifying your values and applying these to occupations.

Discussion Questions

As a class or in small groups, have students reflect on the following questions. Help students talk about and work through their positive and negative feelings regarding career exploration.

- What is your general opinion of surveys or tests designed to measure personal attributes?
- How can you determine if a survey is trustworthy, with the ability to produce valid results?
- How might something like the Work Values Assessment be helpful to you?
- When you engage in work-related activities (at home, school, or elsewhere), what motivates you to complete the task? How might you increase your motivation to finish the task?
- When you engage in work-related activities (at home, school, or elsewhere), what helps make the work more enjoyable? What makes the work less enjoyable?
- How might these motivating and enjoyable elements of work play a role in your career selection?
- What do you hope to learn from using career assessments, like the Work Values Assessment?

Exploring the System

After discussing the advantages and disadvantages of career assessments and helping students work through their positive and negative perspectives on them, students can be introduced to the Work Values Assessment in Career Solutions.

The "How to Use this Tool" section above provides a summary of useful information to share with students.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Encourage students to sign into the site to ensure their data is saved.
- Help students locate the Work Values Assessment.
- Carefully review the instructions posted with the assessment with students.
- Discuss what results will look like and what students should focus on.
- Review features available in the system to explore the results and matching careers.

Classroom Activity

Work Values Assessment and Occupation Comparison

The Work Values Assessment is a common tool that is frequently completed in career exploration activities. Many find this assessment useful in learning about what the need to find satisfaction and fulfillment in the work they do. Students should be encouraged to complete this assessment to gain a deeper understanding about what motivates them to work and what promotes enjoyment in their work activities. When this information is used to identify potential career matches, students can gain a sense of jobs they may like.

To locate the assessment, review the "How to Use this Tool" section above.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Introduce the purpose of the Work Values Assessment as a tool that can help jobseekers identify what is most important in achieving satisfaction and fulfillment in their work.
- Review the instructions posted with the assessment in Career Solutions.
- Provide an opportunity for students to complete the assessment in the classroom or at home.
- Review the results of the assessment with students.
- Encourage students to complete the Occupation Comparison Sheet (see below).
- **Remind students to save occupations they believe are a good match.**

Exploring the Results

After completing the Work Values Assessment, there are typically one or two values that will emerge that will have higher scores. Students should be encouraged to focus their attention on these top work values and learn more about what these values mean. When interpreting these results from this assessment, the use of the O*NET Score Report may be helpful. This report provides a summary of the different work values and how to apply the results to the selection of careers. For your convenience, a page from this report that lists definitions of each of the work values is provided below. As a reminder, detailed information on the Work Values Assessment used in the Career Solutions system can be found by clicking here or visiting https://www.onetcenter.org/WIL.html#overview.

Once the top one or two work values have been identified and students have taken time to explore definitions for these values (by clicking on the value titles in the results chart or exploring other sources), the next step is to apply this information to the selection of careers. The Career Solutions system automatically displays careers that have the strongest correlation with the student's work values. The occupations listed will differ in the content of work, but should be similar in the in the values that are present in the main work activities. Thus, students should be encouraged to explore careers in content areas they find most interesting. For example, they may find a career in the field of agriculture more interesting that one in finance.

In making career comparisons, the comparison sheet below is a sample of an activity that students should engage in frequently. Creating a side-by-side comparison helps tease apart the finer details of an occupation. This will help them get practice making career choices and identifying what is most important. There are no right or wrong answers in these comparison activities. Their chosen career in this activity is not meant to be their ultimate career choice. It is best viewed as an example of a career match that is stronger than others and can be evaluated to determine features that make it a more desirable career choice.

Occupation Comparison Sheet

Instructions: Complete the Work Values Assessment in Career Solutions. Identify two occupations for which you have a strong correlation. Answer the questions below for each occupation.

Occupation 1:	**Occupation 2:**
What are some of the job duties for this occupation?	What are some of the job duties for this occupation?
Describe the work environment for this occupation.	Describe the work environment for this occupation.
Describe some of the requirements for this job, including skills, licensing, knowledge, and abilities.	Describe some of the requirements for this job, including skills, licensing, knowledge, and abilities.
List three jobs that are related to this occupation.	List three jobs that are related to this occupation.

Do you think you would find the daily work of these occupations enjoyable and fulfilling? Why or why not?

Which occupation do you think would be the best fit for you? Why?

What Your Work Values Mean

You can think of work values as aspects of work that are important to you. The Work Importance Locator measures the importance to you of the six work values listed below. At the very least, please read the definitions for your two highest work values to get a better understanding of these work values for exploring jobs.

Achievement

If **Achievement** is your highest work value, look for jobs that let you use your best abilities. Look for work where you can see the results of your efforts. Explore jobs where you can get the feeling of accomplishment.

Independence

If **Independence** is your highest work value, look for jobs where they let you do things on your own initiative. Explore work where you can make decisions on your own.

Recognition

If **Recognition** is your highest work value, explore jobs with good possibilities for advancement. Look for work with prestige or with the potential for leadership.

Relationships

If **Relationships** is your highest work value, look for jobs where your co-workers are friendly. Look for work that lets you be of service to others. Explore jobs that do not make you do anything that goes against your sense of right and wrong.

Support

If **Support** is your highest work value, look for jobs where the company stands behind its workers and where the workers are comfortable with management's style of supervision. Explore work in companies with a reputation for competent, considerate, and fair management.

Working Conditions

If **Working Conditions** is your highest work value, consider pay, job security, and good working conditions when looking at jobs. Look for work that suits your work style. Some people like to be busy all the time, or work alone, or have many different things to do. Explore jobs where you can take best advantage of your particular work style.

2

Next Steps

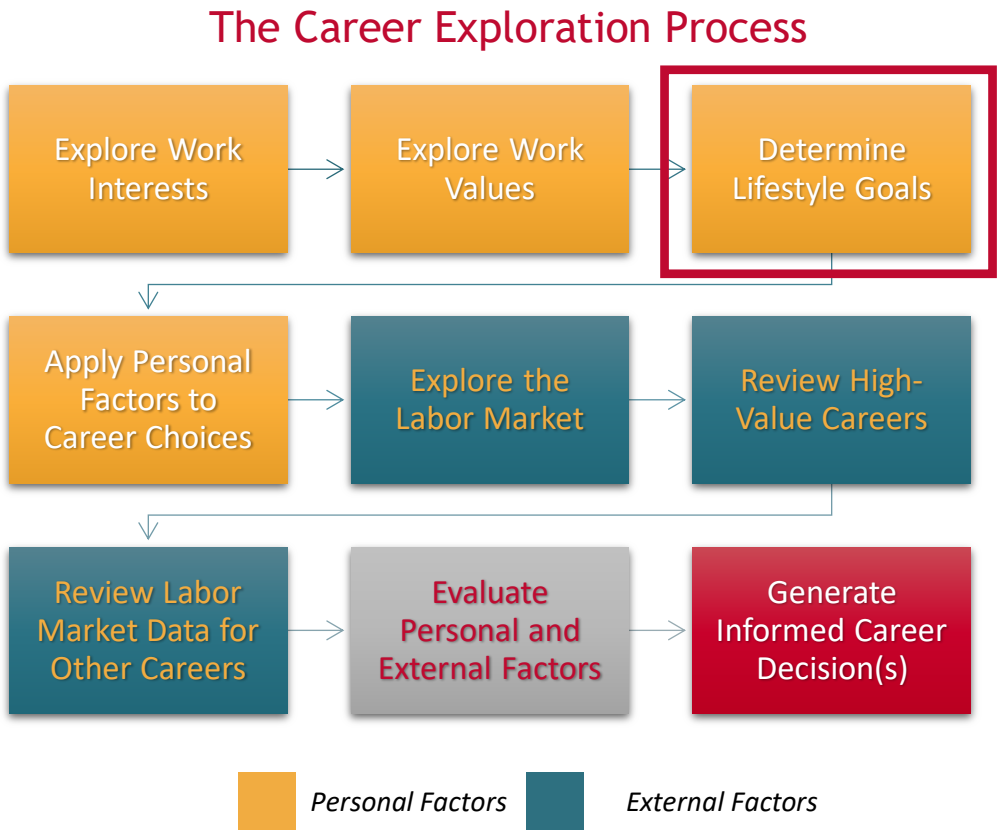
At the end of the lesson, take a moment to review and assess the learning objectives. Engage students in a brief discussion of the learning opportunities that were made available in the classroom.

In this lesson, students were provided the opportunity to…

- Review the components of an informed career decision.
- Discuss the benefits of career assessments in choosing a career.
- Evaluate work values and their connection to work satisfaction.
- Identify personal work values and apply these to the career selection process.
- Assess careers based on their work values.

After providing a brief overview, encourage students to…

- Continue the self-reflection process.
- Think about their work values and the types of occupations that fit these values.
- Determine how they might use this information in selecting a career.
- Prepare for future lessons that will involve additional self-discovery activities.



Lesson 4: Determining Lifestyle Goals

Overview

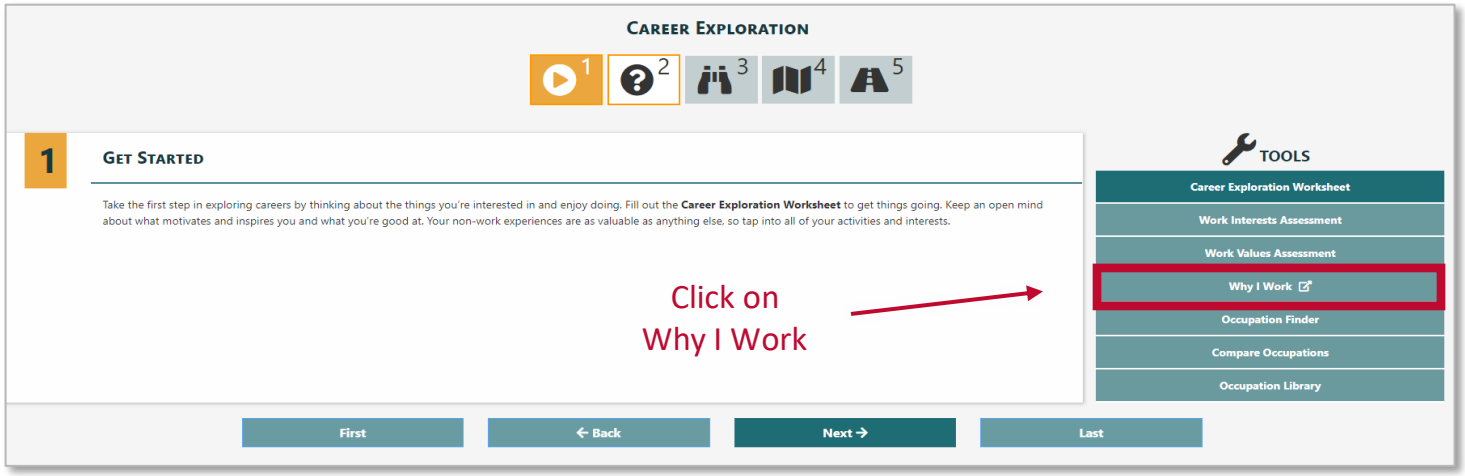
The Why I Work tool is a financial tool that can help students create a budget and map out future expenses, lifestyles, and needs. This is a basic budget that aids students in understanding the long-term value of their financial and lifestyle choices, desires, and needs and the expected benefits, earnings, and educational and training needs of potential professions. This can be a valuable tool in identifying jobs that are beneficial in the long-term and aid students in their attempt to make career choices.

This lesson contains….

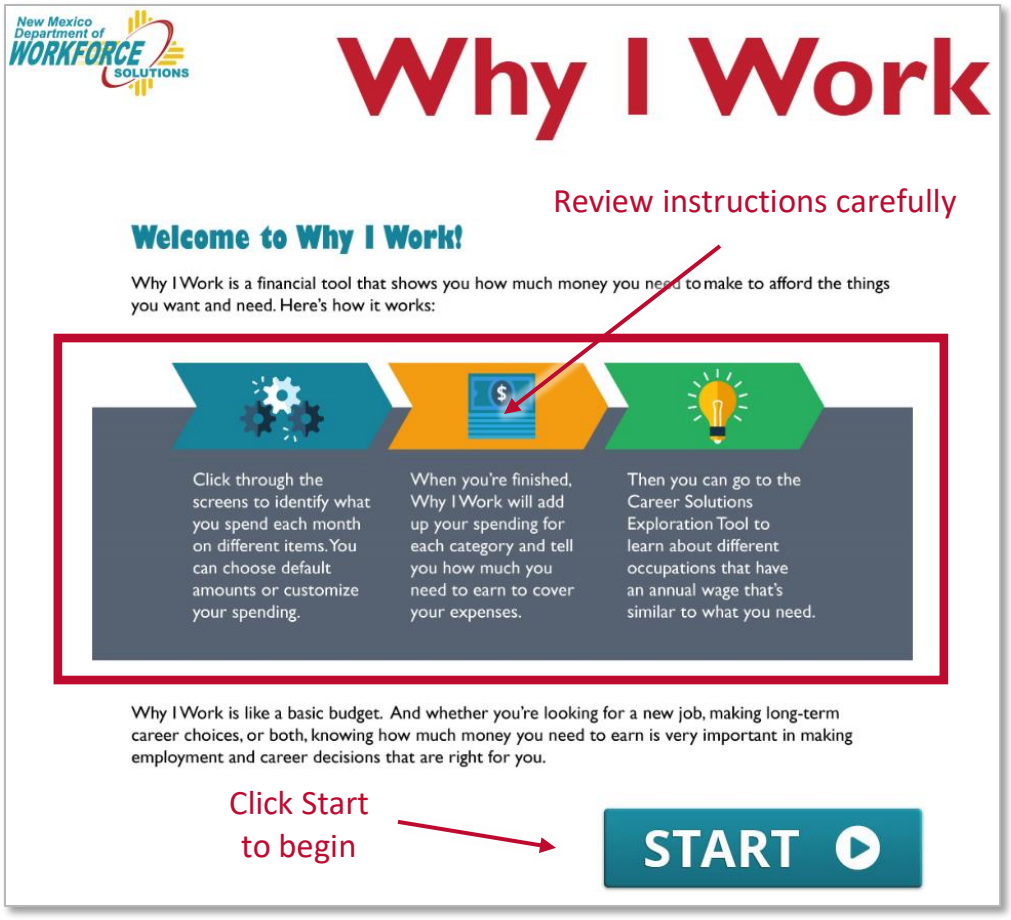
- A summary of how to access and use the Why I Work tool.
- Information to share with students about developing lifestyle goals.
- Strategies for helping students evaluate goals and methods to achieve them.
- Ideas for helping students explore careers that align with their goals.
- A review of next steps for students using insights gained from this lesson.

How to Use This Tool

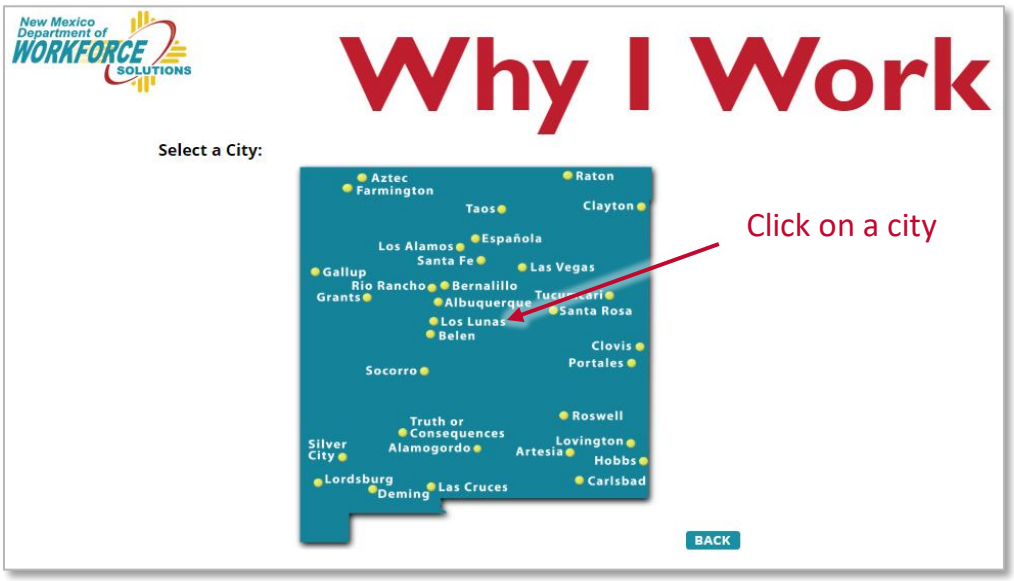
Before beginning, be sure to sign into the system. The Why I Work tool is located within the Career Exploration section. Simply click the Why I Work link in the list of tools to the right.



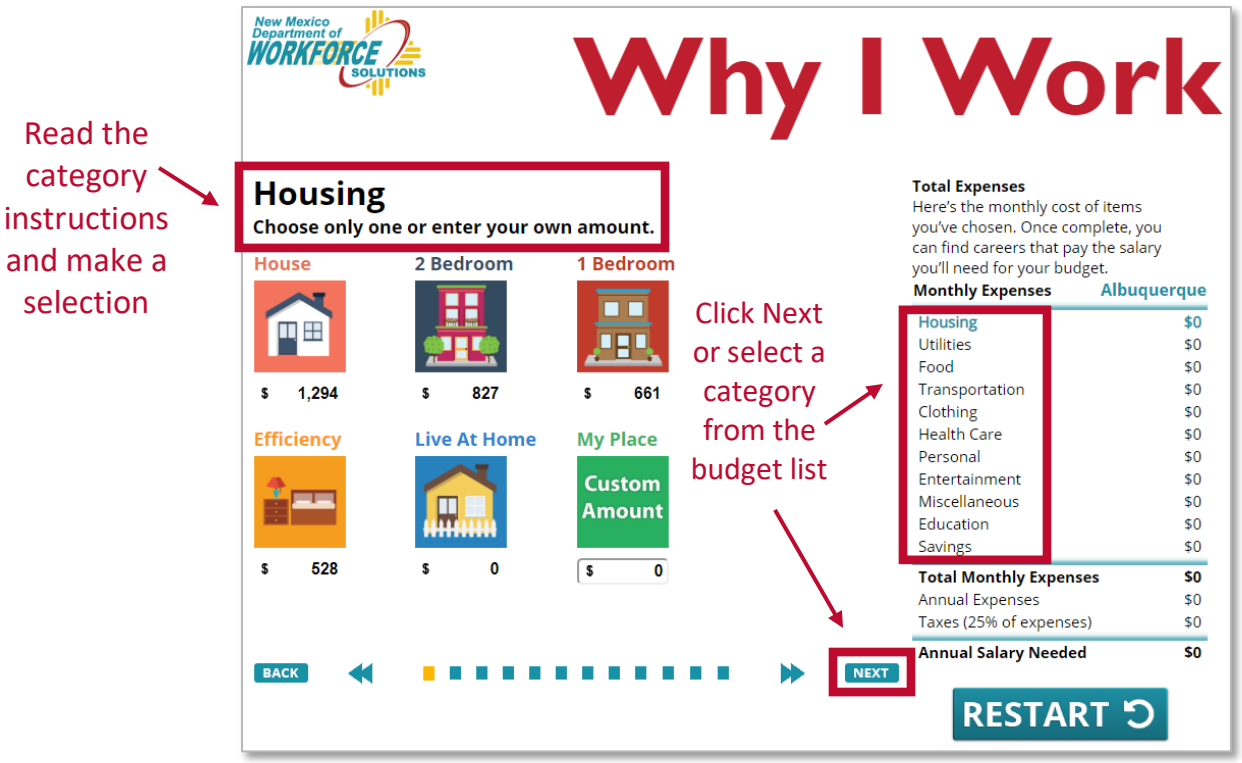
The page below will appear. Instructions for using the tool are located in the center of the screen. These instructions should be reviewed carefully before using the tool. When ready, click Start to begin.



On the next page, the opportunity to select a city will be presented. Students should be encouraged to click on the city that is closest to their desired work location.



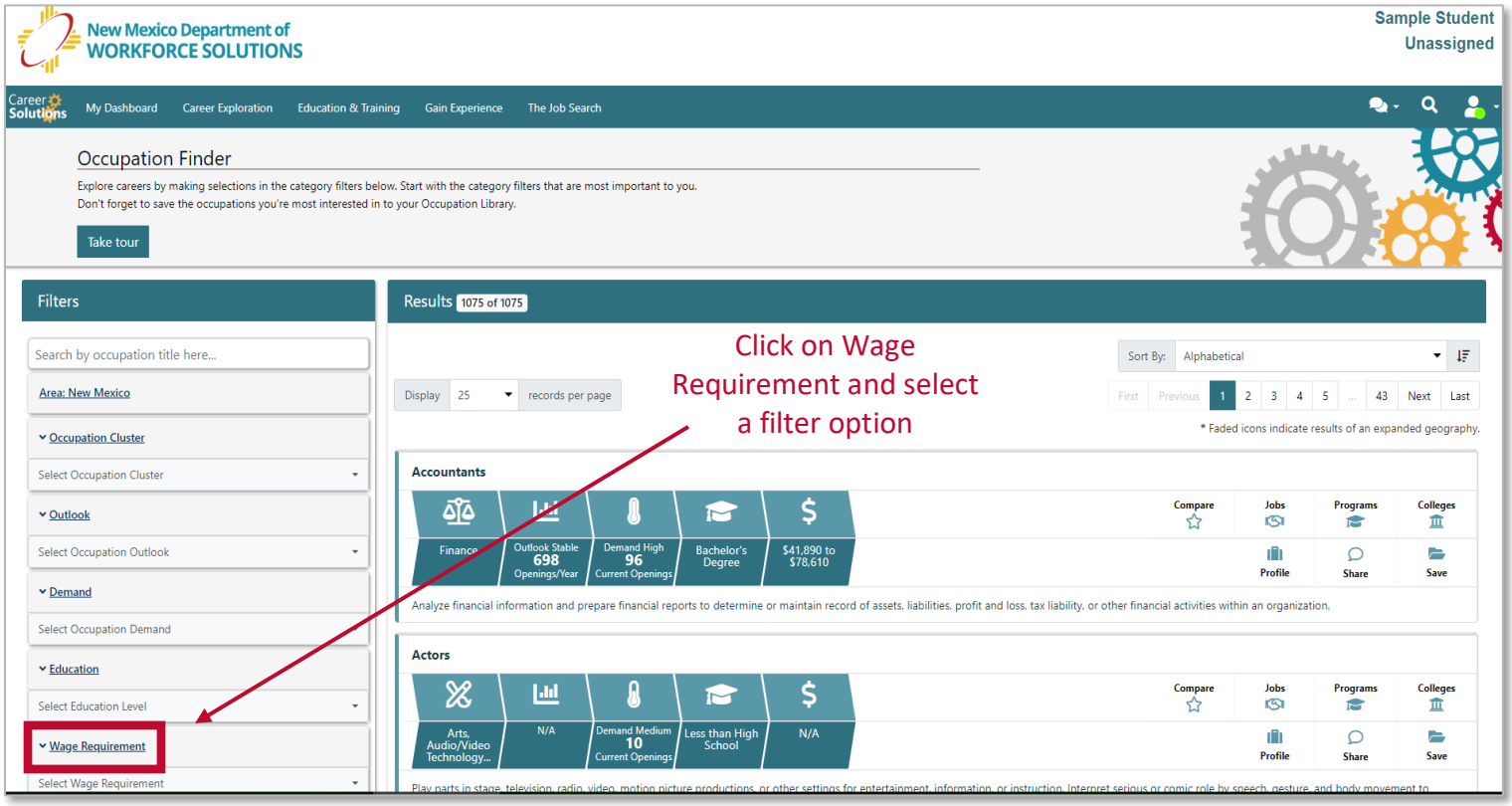
The next few pages will present various different lifestyle choices related to housing, basic needs, hobbies and interests. When items are selected, they are automatically incorporated in the monthly budget to the right of the screen. Click Next or select a budget category to the right to move through each of the pages.

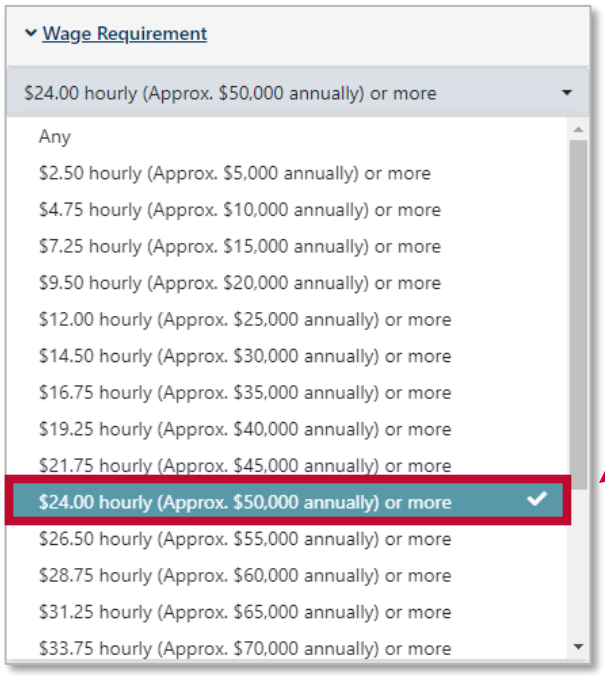


After selections have been made in all categories, the page below will appear with a summary of the anticipated monthly budget and annual salary. The next step is to explore occupations that offer an annual wage that will support the lifestyle needs and wants outlined in the budget. The option to see expenses in other cities is also available.

Helpful Tip: The data presented in the Why I Work tools was collected from multiple government sources. A complete list of these sources can be viewed by clicking Sources at the bottom of the screen.

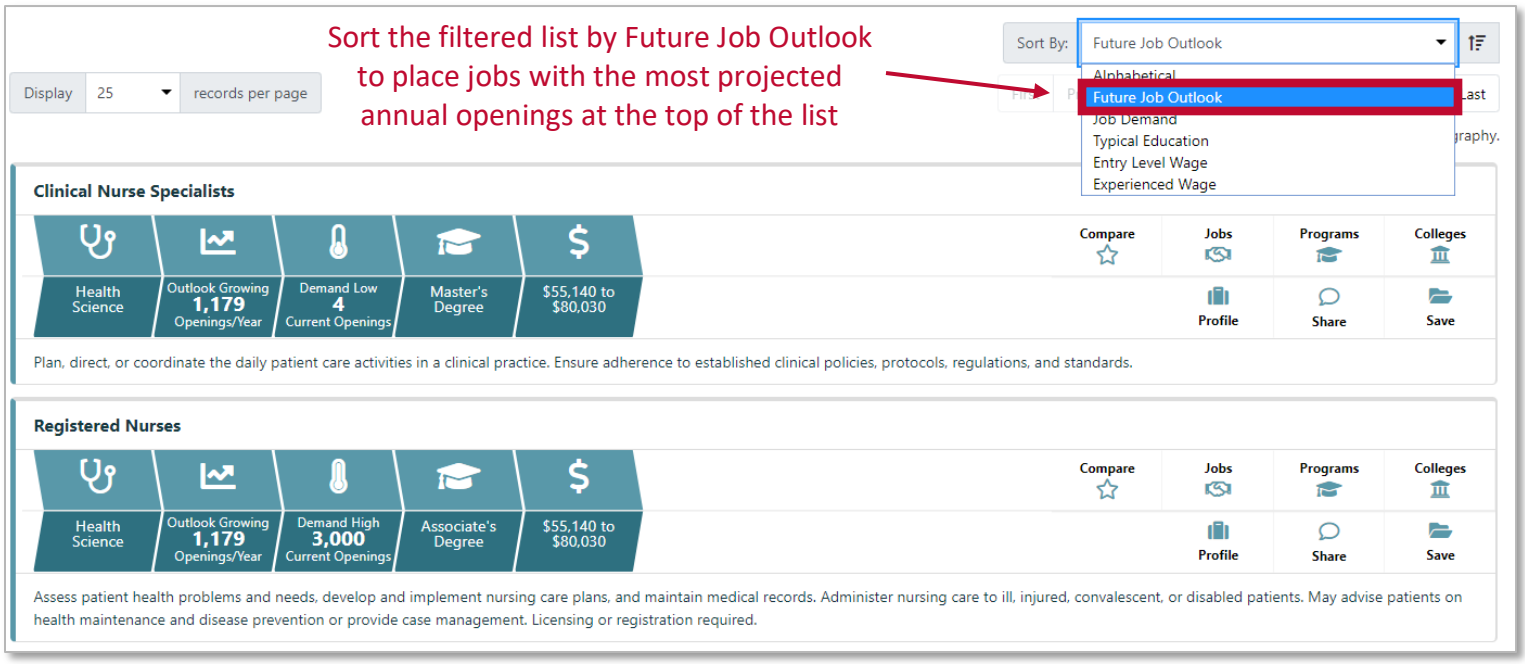
When the option to explore occupations is selected, users are directed to the Occupation Finder within the Career Solutions system. Initially, all occupations will be displayed. To filter occupations by wage, click on Wage Requirement to the left of the screen and select an option.





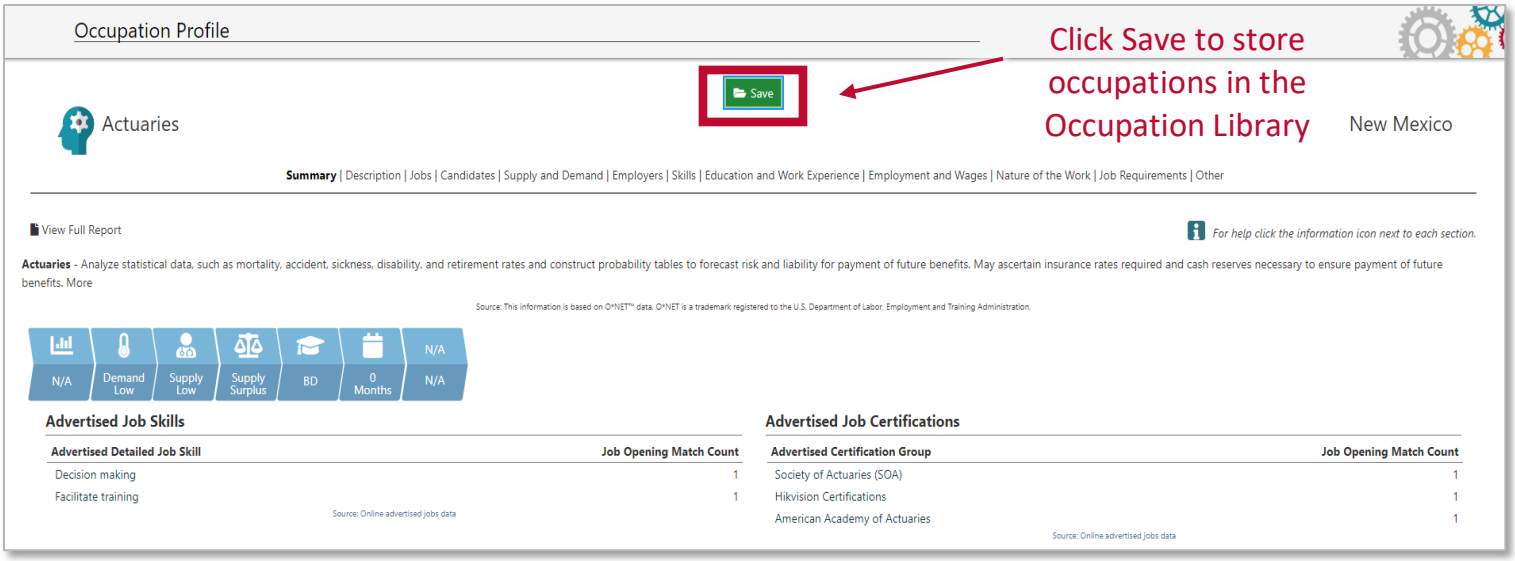
Select an annual income that aligns with the results from the Why I Work tool

Once a wage filter is selected, the list of occupations will automatically adjust to eliminate occupations that do not meet the filter criteria. Initially, the list will be sorted alphabetically. It may be most useful to sort the list by Future Job Outlook, which would put jobs with the most projected annual openings at the top of the list. Students can scroll through the list and explore high-demand occupations that meet their wage requirements.



IMPORTANT: As students complete the activities within each lesson, they need to save occupations they believe are a good match. These saved occupations will be referenced in future lessons.

Helpful Tip: *If the option to save does not appear, click the white box at the top of the screen. It will turn green. Clicking it again will save the occupation.*



Connecting with Students

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will be given the opportunity to…

- Discuss the importance of exploring lifestyle needs and goals.
- Identify how lifestyle choices align with career selection.
- Reflect on their personal needs, hobbies, and interests.
- Explore the financial aspects of their lifestyle needs and goals.
- Apply annual income estimates to the career exploration process.
- Determine next steps in exploring career opportunities and developing a career plan.

Classroom Discussions and Presentations

Introduction

Students often have specific lifestyle aspirations that need to be considered when engaging in the career exploration process. These aspirations are an important part of each student's vision for the future. While these goals and dreams are helpful and encouraged, many students lack awareness of what is needed to support them. Having adequate financial resources is a critical part of the equation. When students are able to afford essential needs and wants, their overall satisfaction with their life circumstances can reach their desired level. To help students plan and prepare for the future, it is important for them to get a sense of how much their future lifestyle will cost and the jobs that are available that can support their vision for the future.

Talking Points

Below are some helpful comments to share with students.

- Recall that the consideration of personal factors, such as interests and values, is an important part of making an informed career decision.
- Included among these personal factors is you vision for the future. What type of lifestyle do you hope to achieve? What are some needs and wants you see as you progress into your future?
- Understanding your lifestyle aspirations can help you develop a plan for achieving these goals.
- Knowing how much it will cost to achieve your lifestyle goals in an important part of the planning process. This information can help you make career decisions that align with your financial needs.
- Whether you aspire to live a simple life with only the basic necessities or you want a more extravagant lifestyle, you will need an idea of how much your needs and wants will cost.
- Establishing your budget and securing adequate income is the first and most critical step toward making your vision for the future a reality.
- The Why I Work tool, available in the Career Solutions system, can help you develop a budget and identify occupations that align with your needs.

Discussion Questions

As a class or in small groups, have students reflect on the following questions. Help students talk about and work through their positive and negative feelings regarding lifestyle goals and career exploration.

- Take a moment and envision your desired future. Where do you live? What type of home do you have? What interests and hobbies do you engage in?
- Is your desired future something you think you can attain? Why or why not?
- What will it take to achieve your desired future? Which of these steps do you think will be most challenging? Which do you think will be the easiest?
- Do you think it is important to consider how much a job pays? Why or why not?
- What do you think your annual income needs to be to support your desired future? How did you come up with this number?
- How do you think this needed income might affect your career choices?

Exploring the System

After discussing the advantages and disadvantages of exploring lifestyle aspirations and helping students work through their positive and negative perspectives on assessing their financial needs, students can be introduced to the Why I Work tool in Career Solutions.

The "How to Use this Tool" section above provides a summary of useful information to share with students.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Encourage students to sign into the site to ensure their data is saved.
- Help students locate the Why I Work tool.
- Carefully review the instructions posted with the tool with students.
- Discuss what results will look like and what students should focus on.
- Review features available in the system to explore the results and matching careers.

Classroom Activity

Evaluating Lifestyle and Career Choices

Planning for the future requires careful consideration of numerous details and a thorough understanding of what it will take to achieve specific goals. Many students have a general sense of what they would like to achieve, but few have a firm grasp of the finer details, such as dining preferences, medical needs, technology requirements, and more. In addition, there is often minimal awareness of how much specific lifestyle choices cost. Providing an opportunity for students to reflect on their future and develop a more concrete sense of their financial needs can encourage more effective planning. Knowing where they are going and what it will take to get there are the two most critical components of the planning process.

To locate the Why I Work tool, review the "How to Use this Tool" section above.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Introduce the purpose of the Why I Work tool as a budgeting instrument that can help estimate the cost of various lifestyle choices.
- Review the instructions posted with the tool in Career Solutions.
- Provide an opportunity for students to explore the tool in the classroom or at home.
- Review the results of the tool with students.
- Encourage students to complete the Evaluating Lifestyle and Career Choices sheet (see below).
- **Remind students to save occupations they believe are a good match.**

Exploring the Results

Students may find it useful to know that the budget numbers generated in the Why I Work tool are based off of government statistics gathered from multiple sources. Sharing the data sources document (click here or see "How to Use this Tool" above) can help students develop more confidence in the information that is displayed.

The final budget that appears should be treated as a *rough* estimate of various lifestyle choices. Students should be reminded that their financial needs may increase or decrease as additional elements are added or subtracted from their future lifestyle. Also, various economic, geographic, and environmental factors can affect the cost of living, which can cause numbers to fluctuate. In general, the budget provides a rough sense of an income target for students. It is not intended to be an exact measure of financial needs.

As students explore careers that align with their budget, they will encounter several occupations that do not appeal to them. At this point, it can be helpful to encourage students to keep an open mind and explore as many occupations as possible. While a title may not appeal to them, taking time to delve deeper into an occupation may reveal tasks and duties that are more intriguing than expected. Reminding students to use their work interests and values as additional guiding factors during their search can help them connect with occupations at a deeper level.

The Evaluating Lifestyle and Career Choices sheet is an open activity with no right or wrong answers. Students should be encouraged to reflect on their answers and the significance of this information in the career exploration process. The last two questions may be most useful for students to reflect upon. These questions get at the importance of financial aspects of their career, as well as their motivation to work toward these financial goals. The degree to which they value financial flexibility can play a significant role in the occupations they are willing to pursue. Likewise, if they believe they are able to meet challenges of well-paying occupations, they will be more open to a broad range of possibilities. Those who struggle to see how they can meet particular challenges will need encouragement and direction toward resources that can offer assistance.

Evaluating Lifestyle and Career Choices

Instructions: Determine your lifestyle budget using the Why I Work Tool in Career Solutions. Explore several occupations that fit within your budget needs. Answer the questions below.

Question	Answer
Of the lifestyle choices you considered, which are most important? Why?	
Which lifestyle choices did you adjust as you were building your budget? Why?	
How much will you need to support your desired lifestyle?	
List three occupations that fit your budget needs that you might consider pursuing.	
Of these three, which occupation do you find most appealing? Why?	
Would you consider an occupation that pays less than what your budget requires? Why?	
What challenges might you face as you pursue occupations that fit your budget? How can you meet these challenges?	

Next Steps

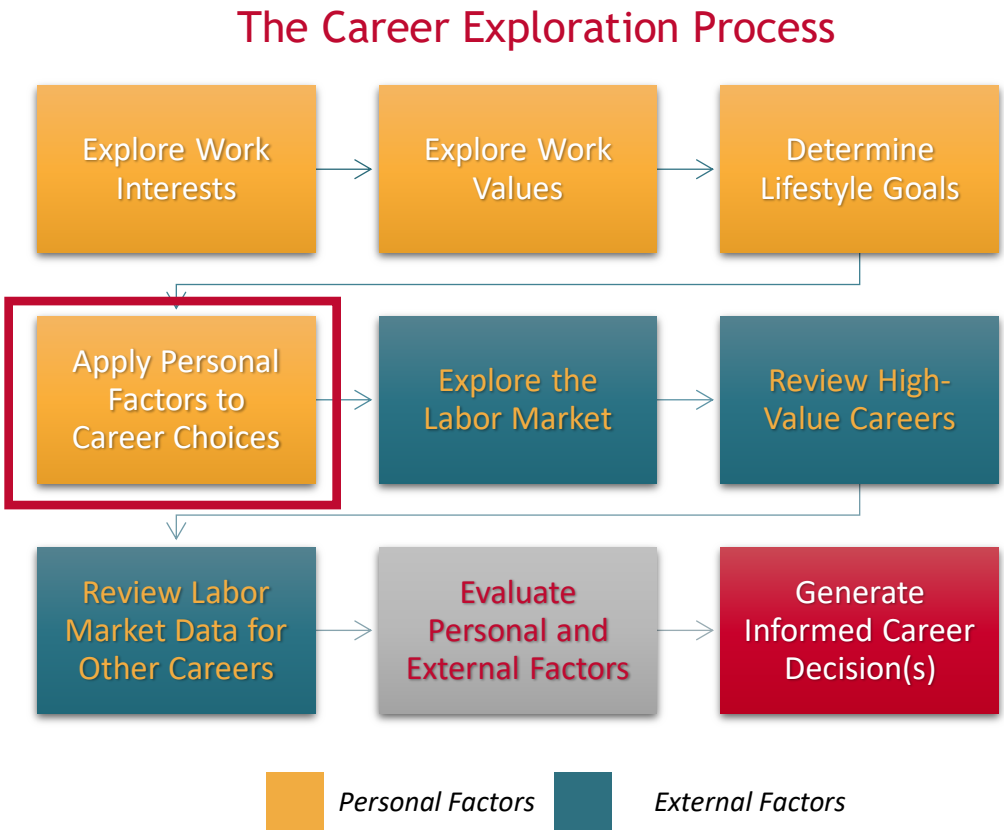
At the end of the lesson, take a moment to review and assess the learning objectives. Engage students in a brief discussion of the learning opportunities that were made available in the classroom.

In this lesson, students were provided the opportunity to…

- Discuss the importance of exploring lifestyle needs and goals.
- Identify how lifestyle choices align with career selection.
- Reflect on their personal needs, hobbies, and interests.
- Explore the financial aspects of their lifestyle needs and goals.
- Apply annual income estimates to the career exploration process.

After providing a brief overview, encourage students to…

- Continue the self-reflection process.
- Think about lifestyle choices and the types of occupations that fit their financial needs.
- Determine how they might use this information in selecting a career.
- Prepare for future lessons that will involve additional self-discovery activities.



Lesson 5: Using Personal Factors to Identify Careers

Overview

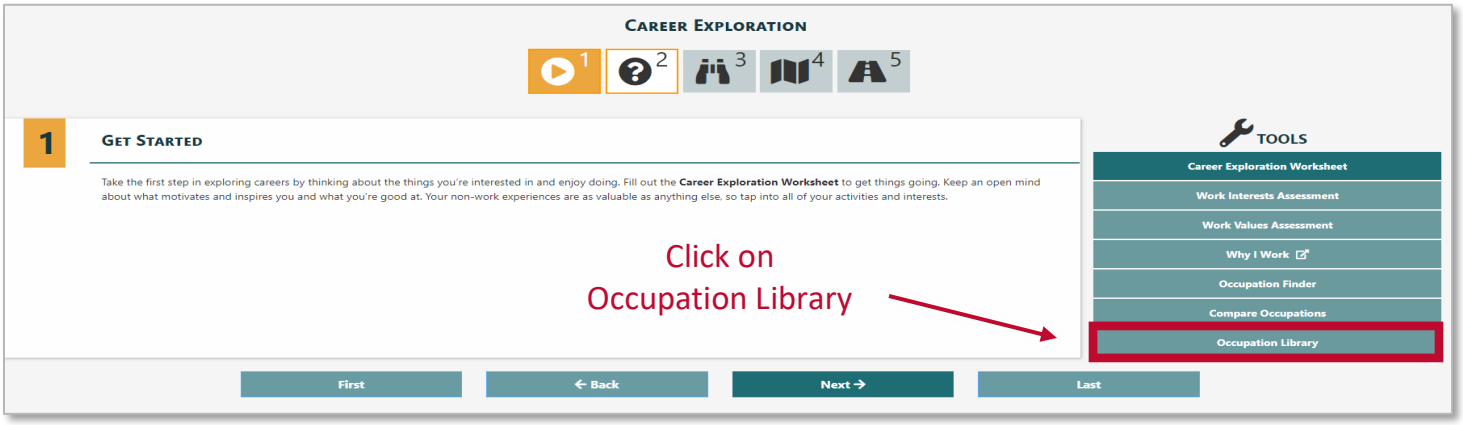
As students gain insight into various personal factors, the next challenge to arise is how to consolidate and find meaning in what they have learned. To maximize the knowledge gained from their self-discovery activities, they need strategies for organizing and applying this information to the career exploration process. This involves a review of where they have been and opportunities to see connections among their personal interests, values, and goals. Once they see the bigger picture, this can be used as a lens to evaluate career opportunities. Students will need practice comparing careers and evaluating them through their personal lens. Within the Career Solutions system, the two primary tools that can assist with career comparisons is the Occupation Library and the Compare Occupations feature.

This lesson contains….

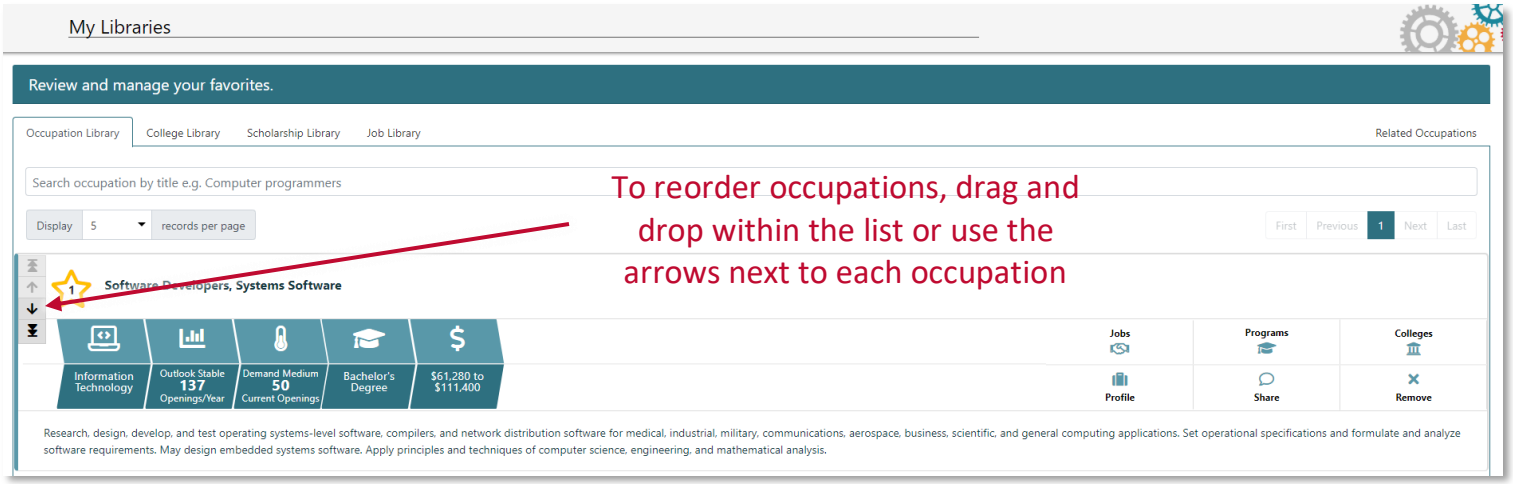
- A summary of how to use the Occupation Library and Compare Occupations features.
- Information to share with students on how to consolidate and review personal factors.
- Methods for using various types of personal factors to make career choices.
- Strategies for incorporating personal factors into career comparisons.
- Ideas for helping students make career decisions that align with personal needs.
- A review of next steps for students using insights gained from this lesson.

How to Use This Tool

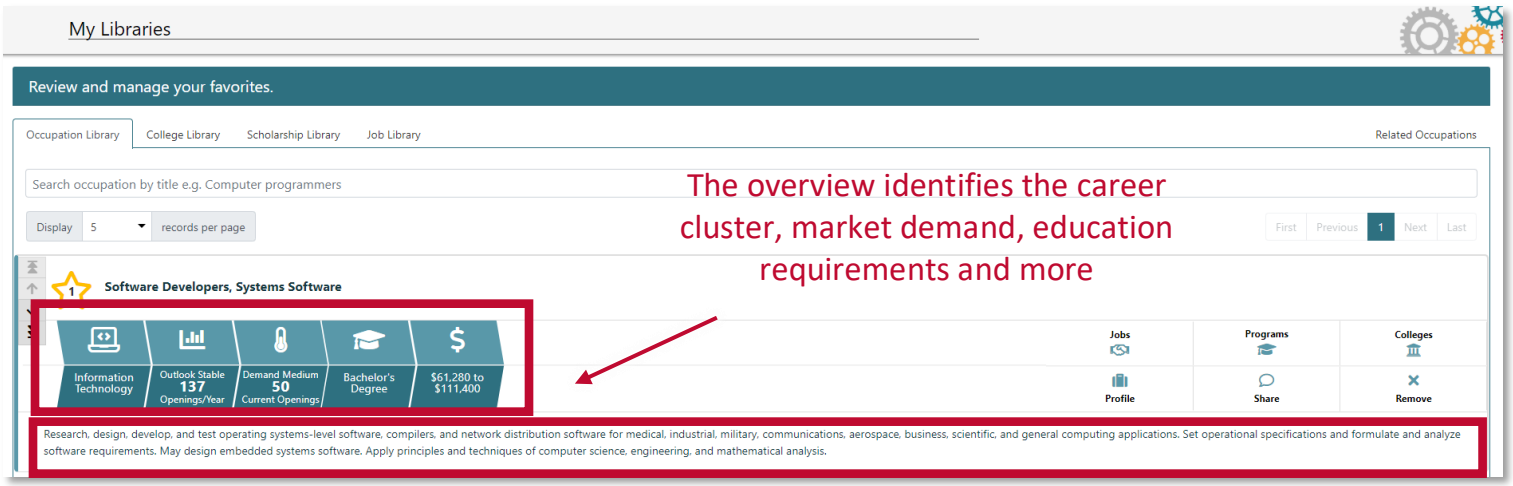
Before beginning, be sure to sign into the system. The Occupation Library is located within the Career Exploration section. Simply click the Occupation Library link in the list of tools to the right.



A page similar to the one below will appear. All occupations that were saved from previous activities are displayed on this list. Initially, they will appear in the order in which they were saved. To reorder occupations, simply drag and drop them within the list or use the arrows next to each occupation.

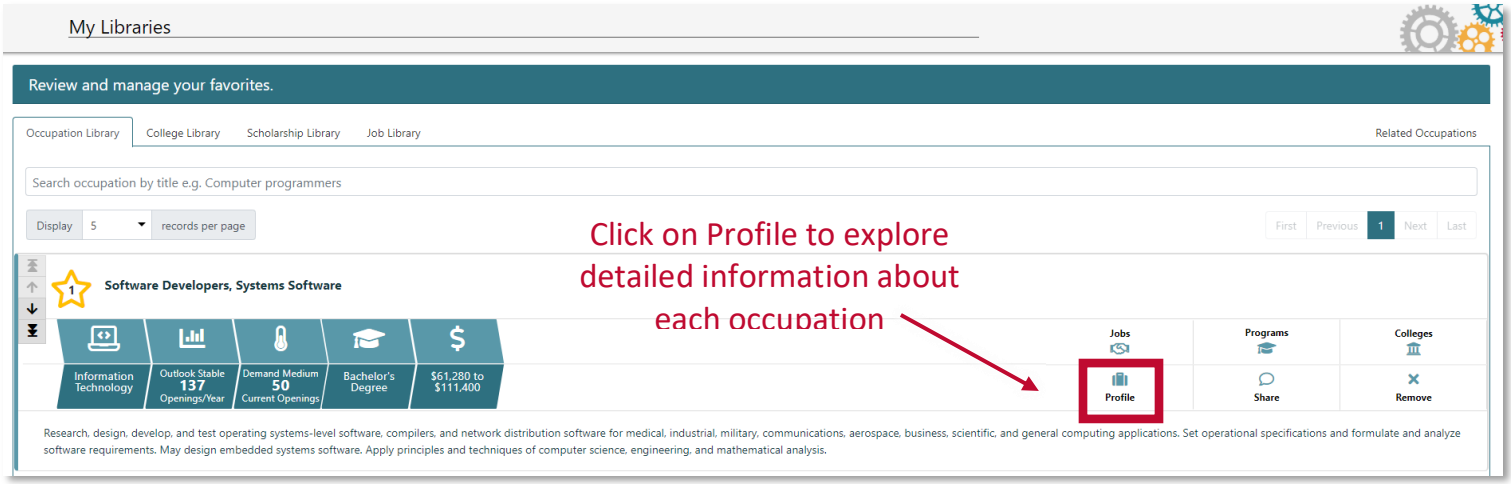


For each occupation a brief overview is presented that identifies the career cluster for the occupation, as well as market demand, education requirements, and other useful pieces of information. These summaries can provide a quick sense of opportunity within an occupation and job requirements.



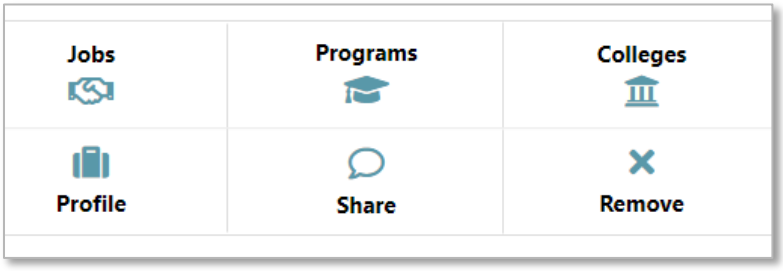
Several links are displayed with each occupation that provide a wealth of information about jobs, programs, colleges, and more. To simplify the exploration process at this stage, it is recommended that focus be directed primarily to the Profile section. This section helps familiarize students with basic job descriptions and requirements for each occupation.

Other sections, such as the Programs and Colleges sections, are useful, but should be explored at a later point to avoid confusion. It is best, for now, to place emphasis on gathering basic occupation information.

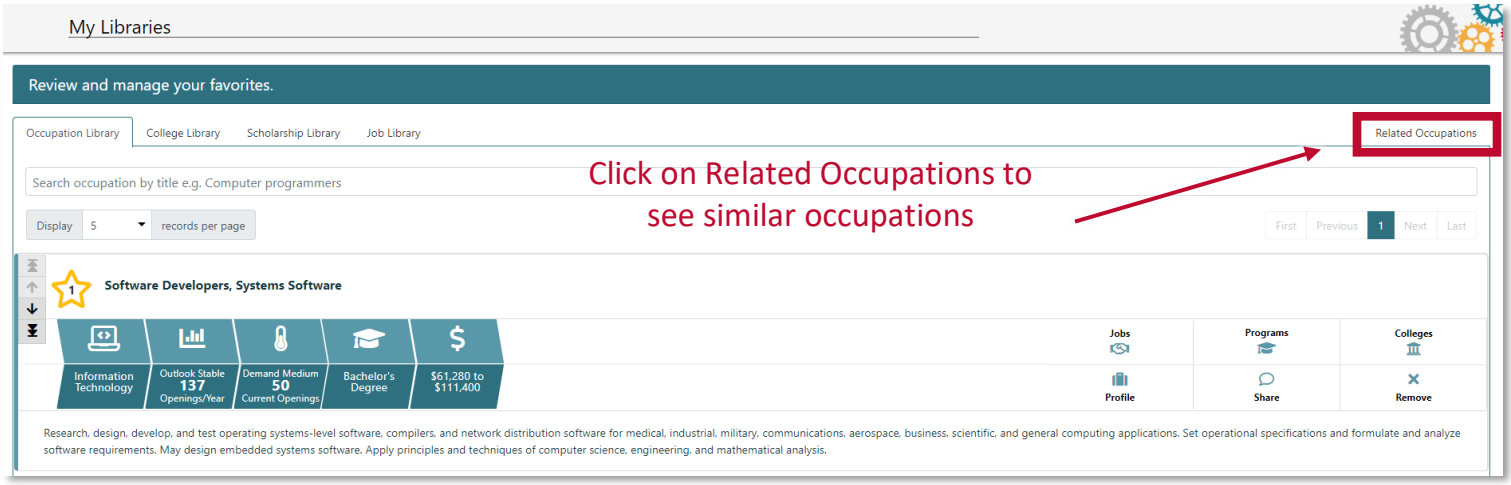


Students may venture into the Jobs section. If questions arise, here are a few tips that may help.

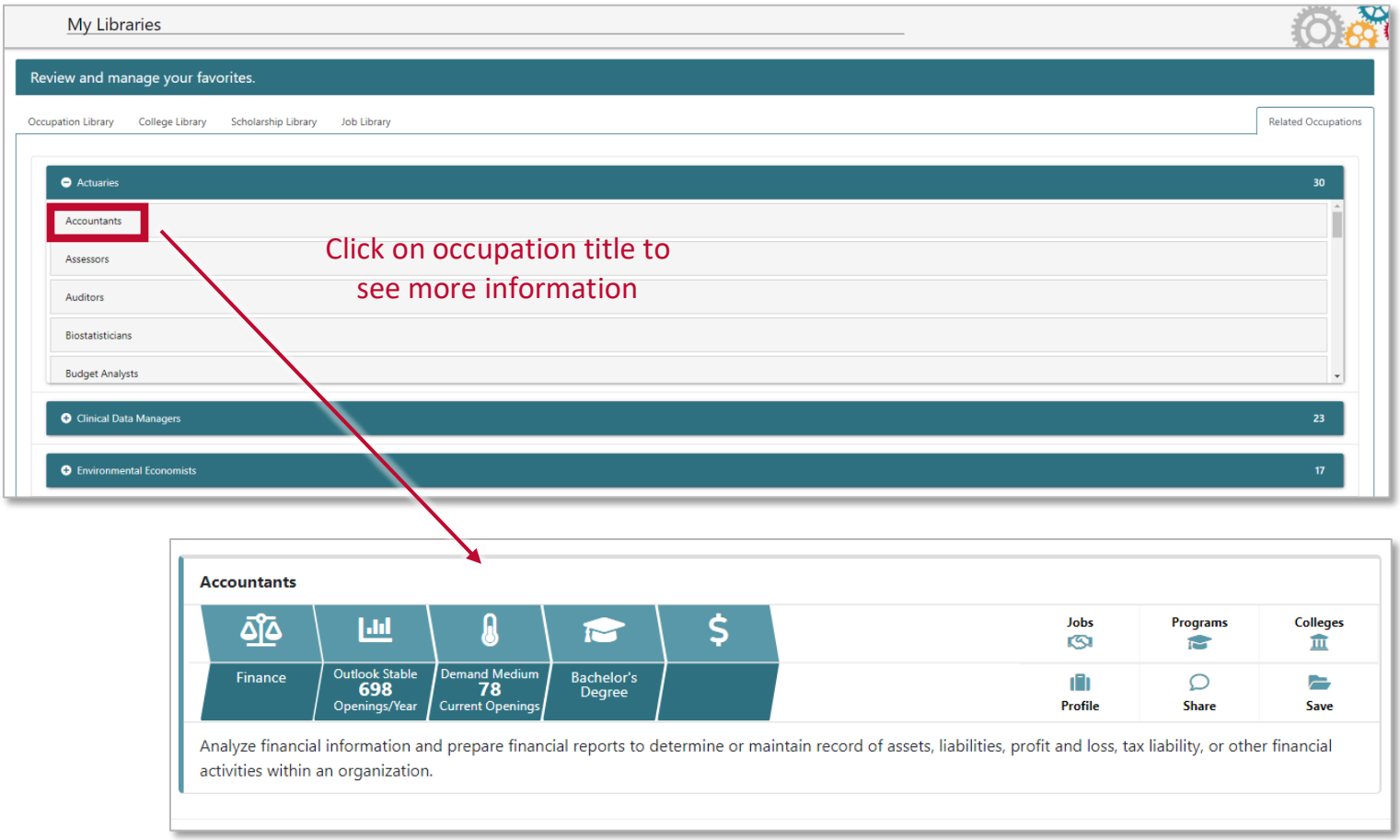
- The jobs listed on the page are for the entire state of New Mexico.
- The area can be limited by clicking "Change job search criteria" at the bottom of the page.
- Job information is not guaranteed (see disclaimer at bottom of the Jobs page in Career Solutions).
- There is no direct method for applying for jobs within the system.
- To gain more information about the jobs, students can visit the employer websites directly.
- The job listings are pulled from various sources. These are displayed at the bottom of the Jobs page.
- The Jobs section is best used to gain a sense of what employers are looking for in certain occupations.



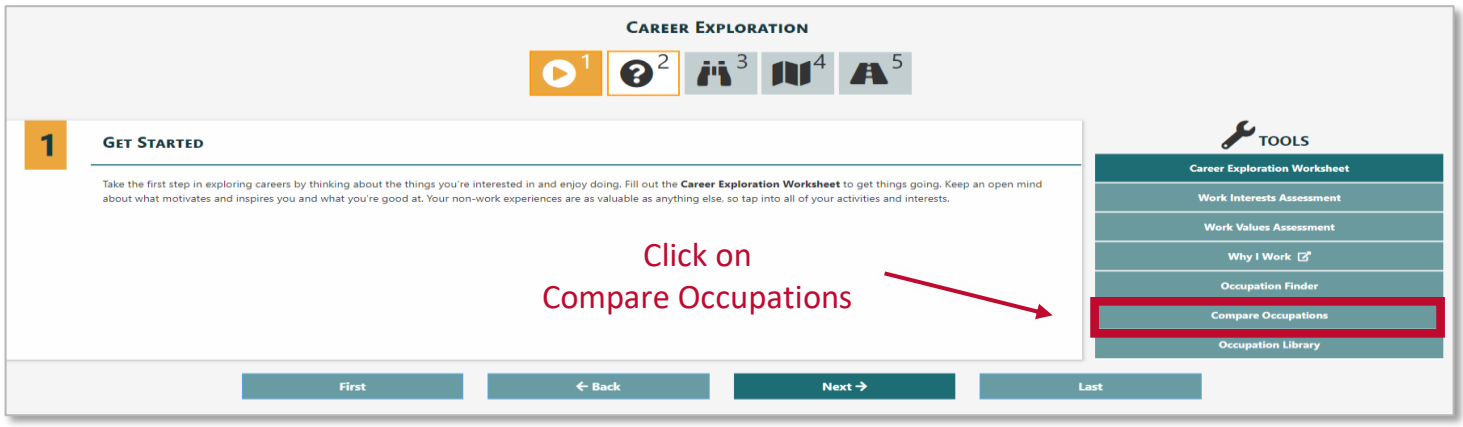
To explore occupations that are similar to those saved in the library, click on Related Occupations at the top right of the occupation list. For each occupation, five related occupations will be provided.



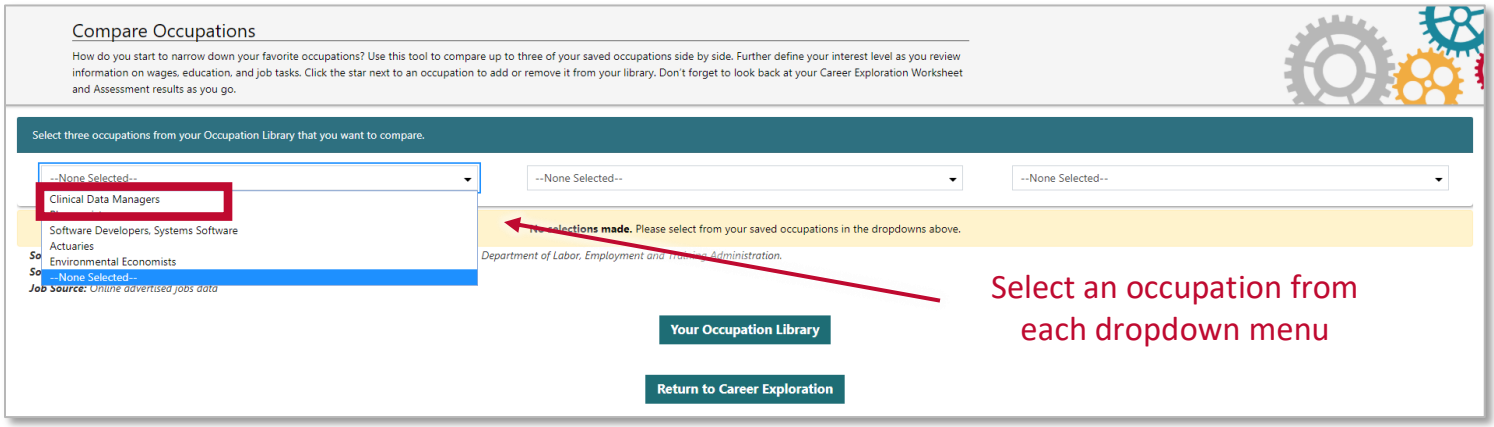
When exploring Related Occupations, a page similar to the one below will appear. Clicking on the occupation title will produce a box with additional information.



One of the most useful tools within the Career Solutions system is the Compare Occupations tool. This is located in the Career Exploration Section. Click on Compare Occupations in the list of tools to the right.

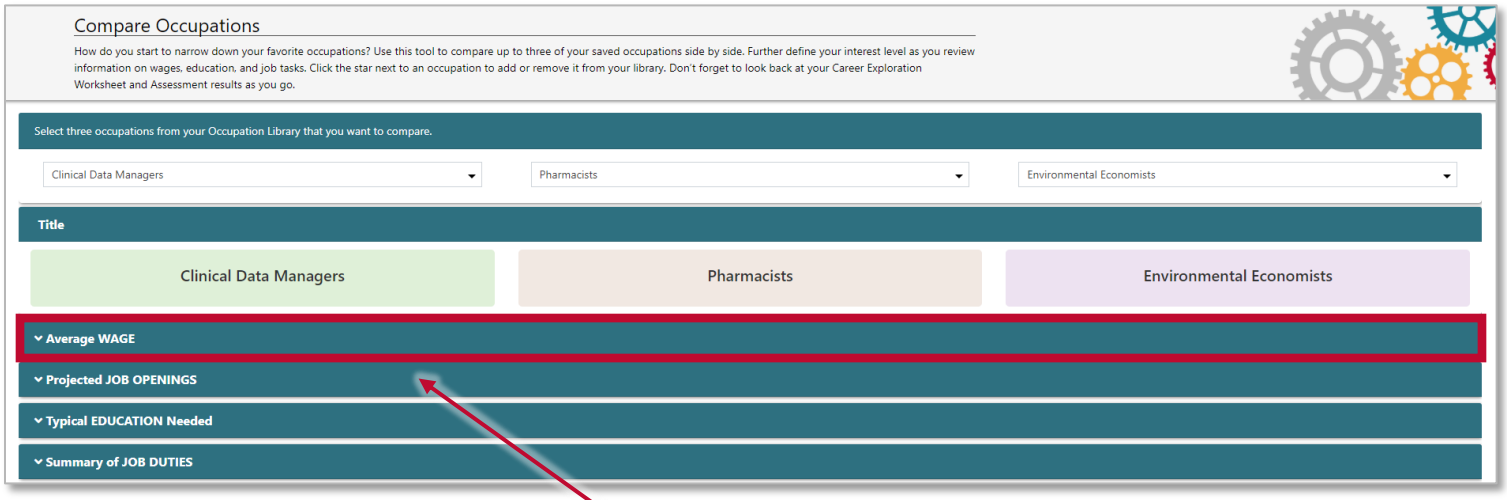


When this tool is selected, the page below will appear. Here, there is the option to compare up to three different occupations that are saved in the Occupation Library. Use each dropdown menu to select an occupation from the library.

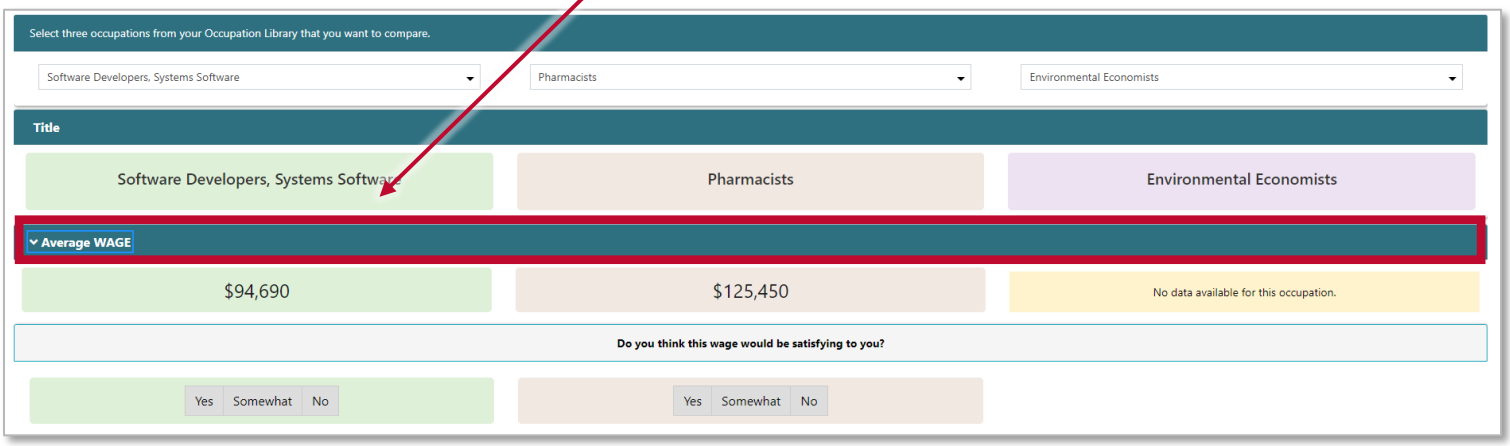


Helpful Tip: *It may take some time for the data to appear. So, if nothing appears at first, wait a few seconds. The information will appear below the dropdown menus.*

After three occupations have been selected, various comparison categories will appear. Clicking on each category will display relevant information for each occupation.

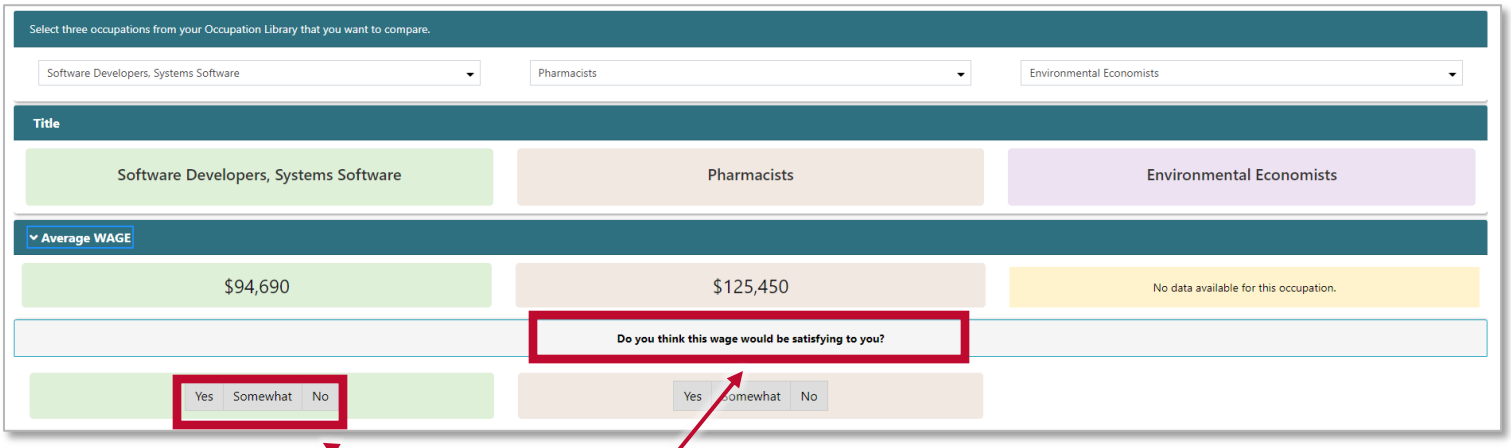


Click on categories to reveal data related to the category



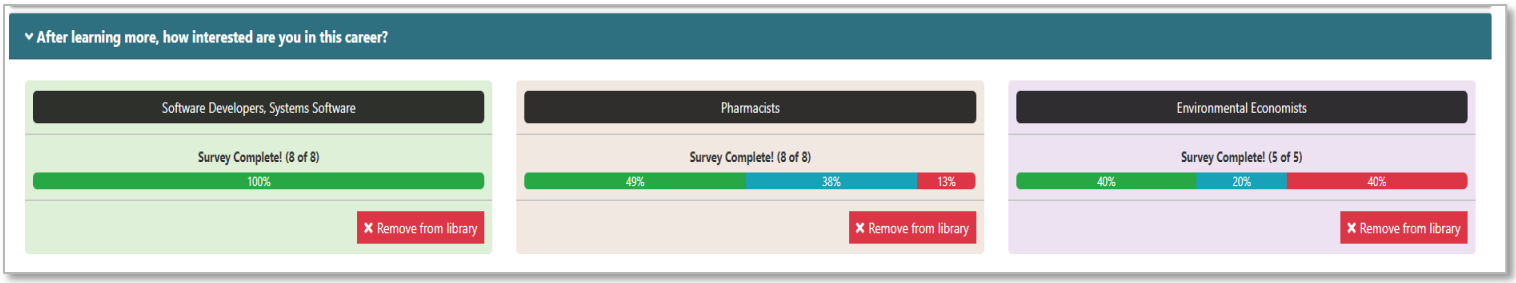
Helpful Tip: *For some occupations, data will be missing. This often means the data was suppressed by the government agency that collected the information. For occupations where only few individuals are employed, displaying certain types of information, such as annual income, could reveal personal information. Therefore, this data is suppressed at a local or state level to protect individuals' privacy. Students can go to onetonline.org to review national data and get a general sense of an occupation's wage, demand, or other statistics.*

As students review content for each of the occupations, they can answer questions about how they feel about the information. Question are presented and students can respond with either Yes, Somewhat, or No.



Read questions and choose a response

When all of the questions for all categories have been answered, the results will appear at the bottom of the screen. Three colors will be displayed – green for Yes responses, blue for Somewhat responses, and red for No responses. Occupations with the highest percentage of Yes responses can be considered a closer match than those with a lower percentage.



Connecting with Students

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will be given the opportunity to…

- Summarize their personal factors, including interests, values, and lifestyle goals.
- Identify how these personal factors can be combined to develop a more unified picture.
- Apply their various personal factors, in a unified approach, to the selection of potential careers.
- Compare various occupations based on goodness-of-fit and alignment with personal factors.
- Generate a list of occupations that are potential career opportunities.
- Determine next steps in exploring career opportunities and developing a career plan.

Classroom Discussions and Presentations

Introduction

At this stage in the career exploration process, students will need an opportunity to consolidate everything they have learned from the various self-discovery activities. Because each activity has been completed independent of the others, it can be difficult for students to see the connections and develop a unified picture of what it all means. Taking time to help them summarize and review this information can provide a more solid framework for them to use as they engage in career exploration. This unified picture of who they are and what they need can ensure they are making informed decisions that take everything they have learned into account. Skipping this step can leave students confused or hyperfocused on only one factor or another. The goal of this lesson is to build a global lens that can guide students toward the best career choices possible.

Talking Points

Below are some helpful comments to share with students.

- So far, we have engaged in several self-discovery activities that involved the Work Interests Assessment, the Work Values Assessment, and the Why I Work tool in Career Solutions.
- Each of these activities have produced results that give insight into different personal factors that can affect your satisfaction with various careers.
- At this point, we need to take a moment to review this information and understand what it means.
- Most importantly, we need to get a sense of how this information can be combined to understand the bigger picture of who you are and what you need from the work you do.
- Once we have this bigger picture, we can apply this to the selection of careers to ensure a more unified approach is used, as opposed to just focusing on just one factor or another.
- As a reminder, the results you received from your self-discovery activities are not perfect. They serve merely as hints or suggestions of what you may need or want from your career.

Discussion Questions

As a class or in small groups, have students reflect on the following questions. Help students talk about and work through their positive and negative feelings regarding career exploration.

- Of all the assessments and tools that you have used so far, which do you think is most helpful? Why?
- Which assessment or tool do you believe is least helpful? Why?
- Do you believe the information you gained from the assessments and tools in Career Solutions will help you make a better career choice? Why or why not?
- When looking at a specific career, how might you use the information you learned about yourself to decide if the career is a good fit for you? What specific information might you use to make a decision?
- Do you find it difficult to keep all of your personal factors in mind when looking at careers? How could you organize this information to make it easier to remember and use?
- Have you discovered any careers so far that you really like? What are they and why do you think these are good career choices for you?

Exploring the System

After discussing the advantages and disadvantages of career assessments and helping students work through their positive and negative perspectives on using personal factors in making career decisions, students can be introduced to the Occupation Library and Compare Occupation tools in Career Solutions.

The "How to Use this Tool" section above provides a summary of useful information to share with students.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Encourage students to sign into the site to ensure they can access saved data.
- Help students locate the Occupation Library and Compare Occupations tools.
- Review the basic features of these tools, including how to organize, explore and compare occupations.
- Assist students in identifying information that is most useful to explore at this stage.
- Discuss the results from the Compare Occupations tool and how to interpret this information.

Classroom Activity

Using Personal Factors to Identify Careers

Connecting with careers at a personal level can help students maintain a sense of personal identity in the career exploration process. Indeed, a career is an important source of personal fulfillment and students often seek employment that aligns with their personal needs. As they gain insight into the factors that can affect job satisfaction, students will need opportunities to consolidate and apply this information. When they have a more unified sense of who they are and what they need from work, they can make stronger career choices. Career comparisons become more focused on specific needs, as opposed to more general feelings about jobs they may or may not like.

To locate the Occupation Library and Compare Occupations, review the "How to Use this Tool" section above.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Discuss the need to review and organize personal factors explored in previous activities.
- Communicate the power of using personal factors in comparing careers and making decisions.
- Review the Occupation Library and Compare Occupations tools in Career Solutions.
- Identify the purpose of these tools as resources for storing and comparing occupations.
- Provide an opportunity for students to explore the tools in the classroom or at home.
- Encourage students to complete the Using Personal Factors to Identify Careers sheet (see below).
- Assist students in understanding the benefits and limitations of using personal factors to identify careers.

Exploring the Results

As students consolidate and organize their thoughts about their personal factors, they will start to develop a more solid sense of self that can guide the career selection process. After completing this activity, they will have a summary of the basic interests, values, and lifestyle goals that have the potential to affect their sense of fulfillment in their work. Students should be encouraged to keep this summary in a convenient location so it can be referenced frequently as they continue the career exploration process.

Ultimately, the goal of this activity is for students to practice making informed career decisions using their personal factors. The occupations that emerge from this activity are expected to be a stronger personal match, with the potential for increased job satisfaction. Students may want to consider exploring these occupations further, given the potential for these occupations to meet fundamental needs.

As always, a brief disclaimer should be added to help students keep results in perspective. Placing too much emphasis on the personal factors identified in this process can fail to recognize the unique and complex nature of each student. While the specific factors highlighted in these activities can be useful, they should never be used as the sole deciding factor in making career decisions. They are merely part of a larger picture and opportunities should be provided to acknowledge personal differences with students.

Using Personal Factors to Identify Careers

Instructions: Use the information and tools available in Career Solutions to answer the following questions.

1. Review your results from the assessments and tools that you have used in Career Solutions. Use these results to complete the table below.

Work Interests Assessment	Work Values Assessment	Why I Work
List your top two work interests and provide a brief definition of each.	List your top two work values and provide a brief definition of each.	Briefly describe your future lifestyle and list the annual income you will need to support your lifestyle.

2. Review each of these factors and sort them from most important to least important – 1 being most important and 5 being least important. For each factor, ask yourself, "**How important is it to me that my future occupation satisfies this need?**" Keep in mind that work interests and values can be separated and do not have to be listed consecutively. For the Why I Work section, you can simply list, "My Lifestyle Goals" and rate this anywhere form 1-5 in the list below.

1

2

3

4

5

3. Go to the Compare Occupations tool in Career Solutions and choose three occupations to compare. (Note: These occupations are pulled from your saved occupations in your Occupations Library.)
    - Write the occupation titles in the top row of the table below.
    - List your personal factors, in order of importance, in the first column.
    - Review each occupation in Career Solutions and mark an X in the table for each factor match that you find. For this activity, it is best to focus on the following categories in Career Solutions – (1) Interests, (2) Values, and (3) Wage (wage is related to lifestyle goals).
    - Add the number of X's for each occupation and write the total in the last row.
    - The occupation(s) with the most X's can be considered a better personal fit.
    - If a tie is found, the occupation with more X's at the top of the list is a better personal fit.

Personal Factor	Occupation 1	Occupation 2	Occupation 3
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
Personal Factor Match Total			

4. Which of the three occupations did you find to be the better fit? Would you consider pursuing this occupation? Why or why not? If no one occupation stood out, what other factors could you consider to help find the right fit for you?

5. Would you use a process similar to this again to help you make career decisions? Why or why not? How might you improve this process to make it more useful for you?

6. Go back to the Compare Occupations tool in Career Solutions and compare the same three occupations. This time, go through and answer the questions on the Compare Occupations page for each category and review the results at the bottom of the Compare Occupations page.

   Using this method, which occupation did you find to be the better match?

   Was it the same occupation that matched your personal factors above? If a different career emerged as a better fit, what factors do you think made the difference?

   Are there any of the comparison categories (wage, education, etc.) in this tool that you would consider excluding because they are not important to you? Why or why not?

7. Go back to your Occupation Library and use some of the strategies outlined above to compare occupations. List at least 2-3 additional occupations that could be a good personal fit for you.

Next Steps

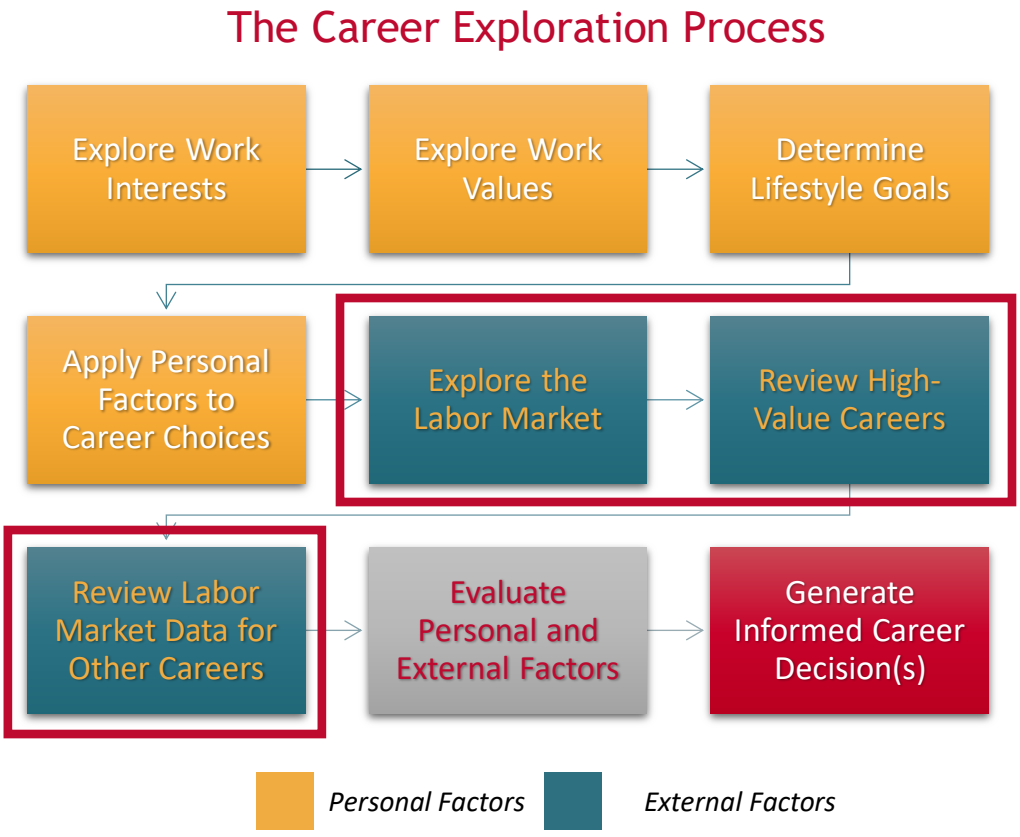
At the end of the lesson, take a moment to review and assess the learning objectives. Engage students in a brief discussion of the learning opportunities that were made available in the classroom.

In this lesson, students were provided the opportunity to…

- Summarize their personal factors, including interests, values, and lifestyle goals.
- Identify how these personal factors can be combined to develop a more unified picture.
- Apply their various personal factors, in a unified approach, to the selection of potential careers.
- Compare various occupations based on goodness-of-fit and alignment with personal factors.
- Generate a list of occupations that are potential career opportunities.

After providing a brief overview, encourage students to…

- Continue the self-reflection process.
- Think about their personal factors and the types of occupations that fit their personal needs.
- Determine how they might use this information in selecting a career.
- Prepare for future lessons that will introduce external factors.



Lesson 6: Incorporating External Factors

Overview

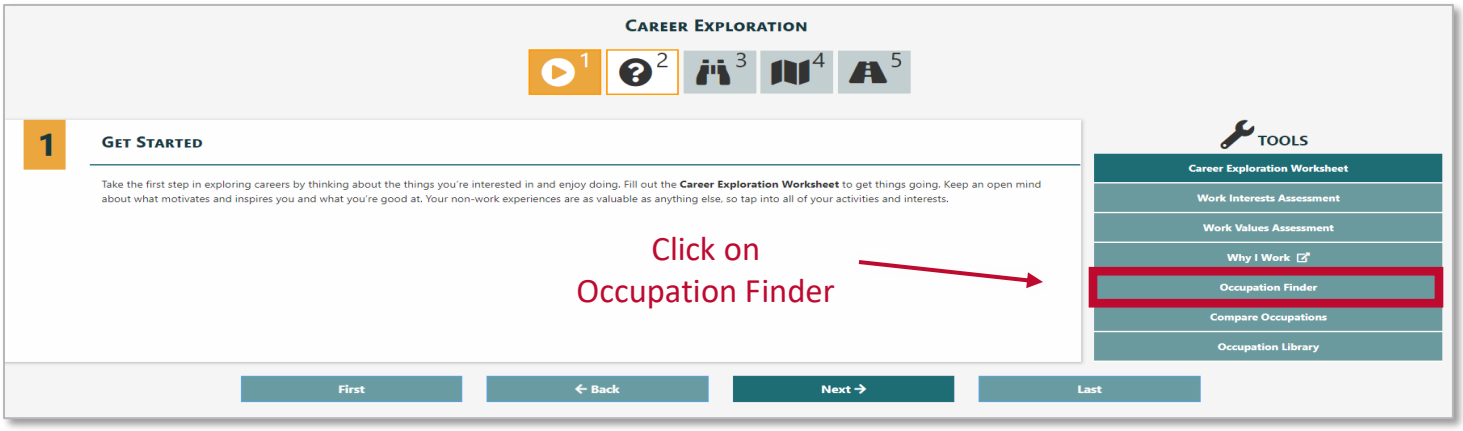
Personal factors, including work interests, values, and lifestyle aspirations, have traditionally played a central role in career exploration activities. This makes sense, given that many jobseekers place personal fulfillment in their work at the top of their list of job search criteria. However, to make the best career decision possible, additional factors should be considered. There are a number of external factors that often go unnoticed or get dismissed as irrelevant criteria. Most important among these is the labor market. Awareness of the labor market can help individuals take job demand, growth rates, wage, and other helpful statistics into consideration. One of the greatest dangers for any jobseeker is to unknowingly prepare for a career that has limited opportunity. Understanding what the market will be like can help individuals avoid risky occupations and embrace those with the greatest potential.

This lesson contains….

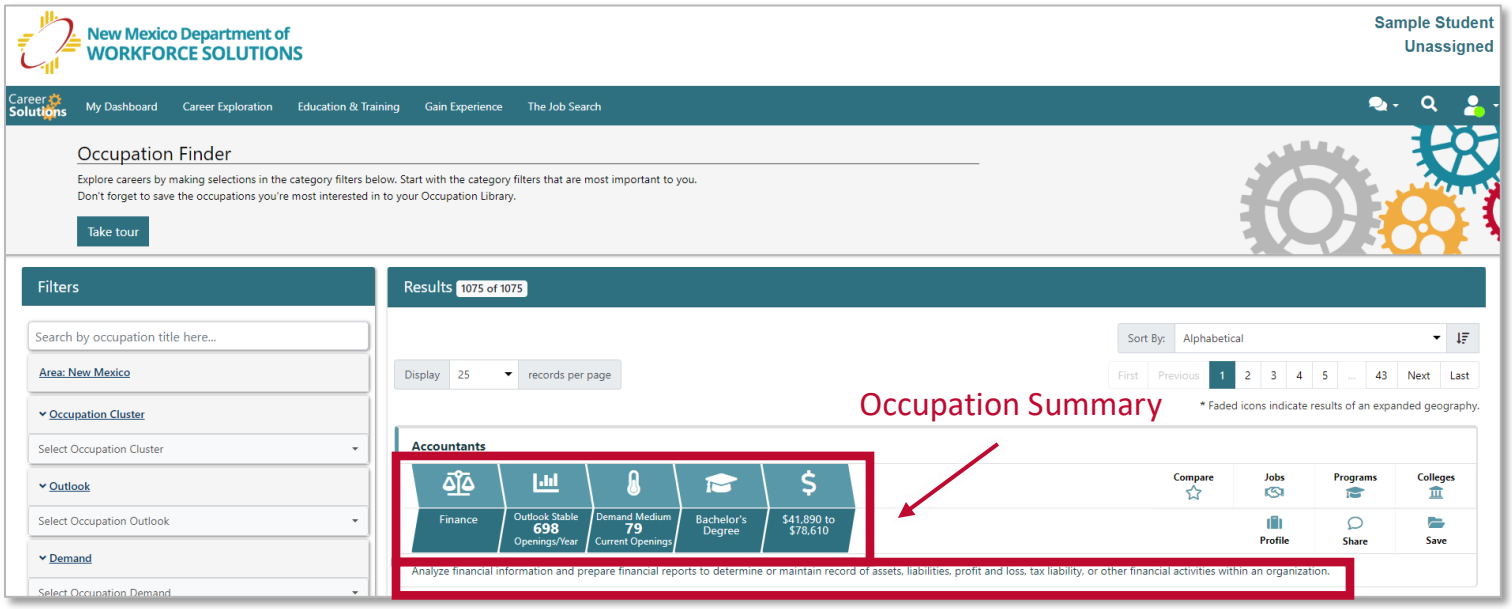
- A summary of how to access and use the Occupation Finder.
- An overview of labor market information to share with students.
- Strategies for identifying high-value careers with students.
- Methods for incorporating labor market information into career exploration.
- A review of next steps for students using insights gained from this lesson.

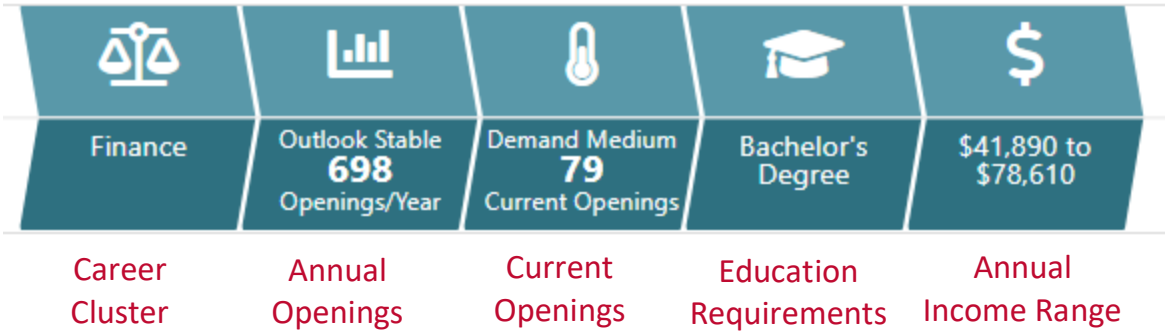
How to Use This Tool

Before beginning, be sure to sign into the system. The Occupation Finder is located within the Career Exploration section. Simply click the Occupation Finder link in the list of tools to the right.

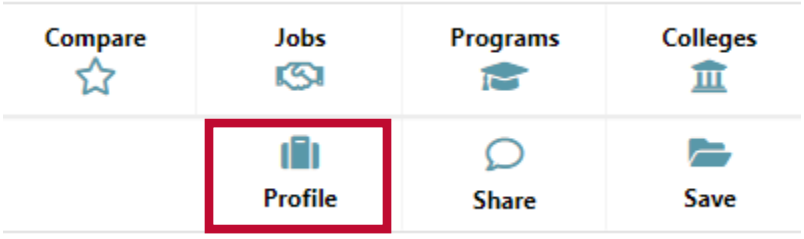


When the Occupation Finder is opened, a wealth of information will appear on the page. Initially, all occupations within the system will be displayed. For each occupation a brief summary is provided that identifies the career cluster, market demand, education requirements, and wage.





To simplify the exploration process at this stage, it is recommended that focus be directed primarily to the Profile section. This section helps familiarize students with basic job descriptions and requirements for each occupation.

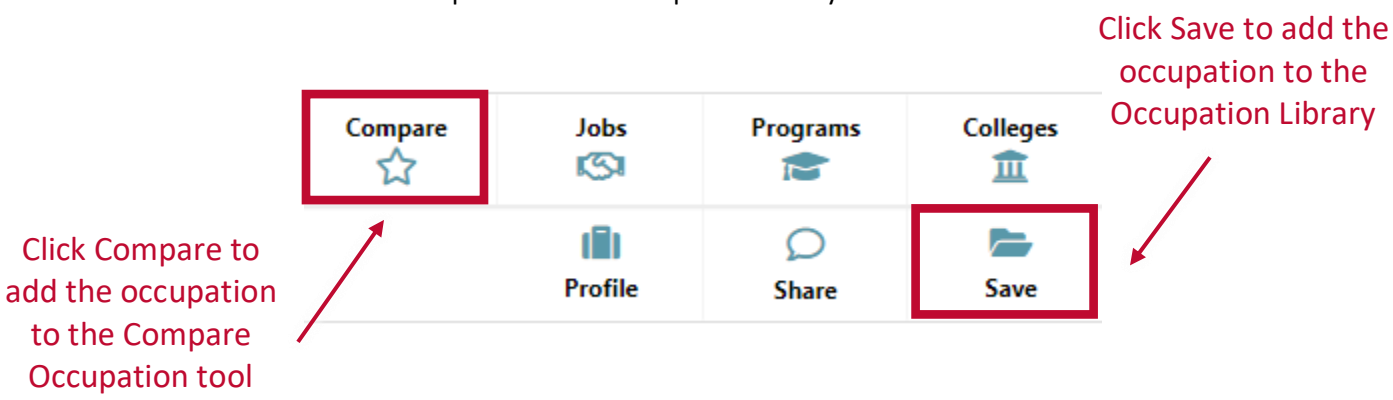


Other sections, such as the Programs and Colleges sections, are useful, but should be explored at a later point to avoid confusion. It is best, for now, to place emphasis on gathering basic occupation information.

Students may venture into the Jobs section. If questions arise, here are a few tips that may help.

- The jobs listed on the page are for the entire state of New Mexico.
- The area can be limited by clicking "Change job search criteria" at the bottom of the page.
- Job information is not guaranteed (see disclaimer at bottom of Jobs page in Career Solutions).
- There is no direct method for applying for jobs within the system.
- To gain more information about the jobs, students can visit the employer websites directly.
- The job listings are pulled from various sources. These are displayed at the bottom of the Jobs page.
- The Jobs section is best used to gain a sense of what employers are looking for in certain occupations.

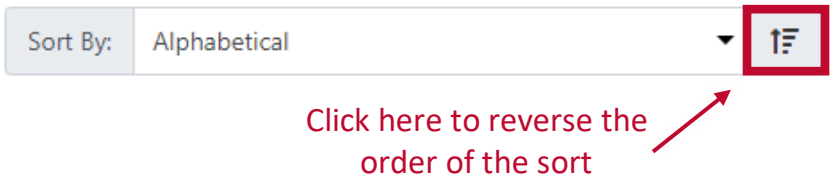
There are two additional tools listed beside each occupation that can be helpful. The Compare button adds the occupation to the Compare Occupation tool. Up to three careers can be marked for comparison at a time. The Save button will save the occupation to the Occupation Library.



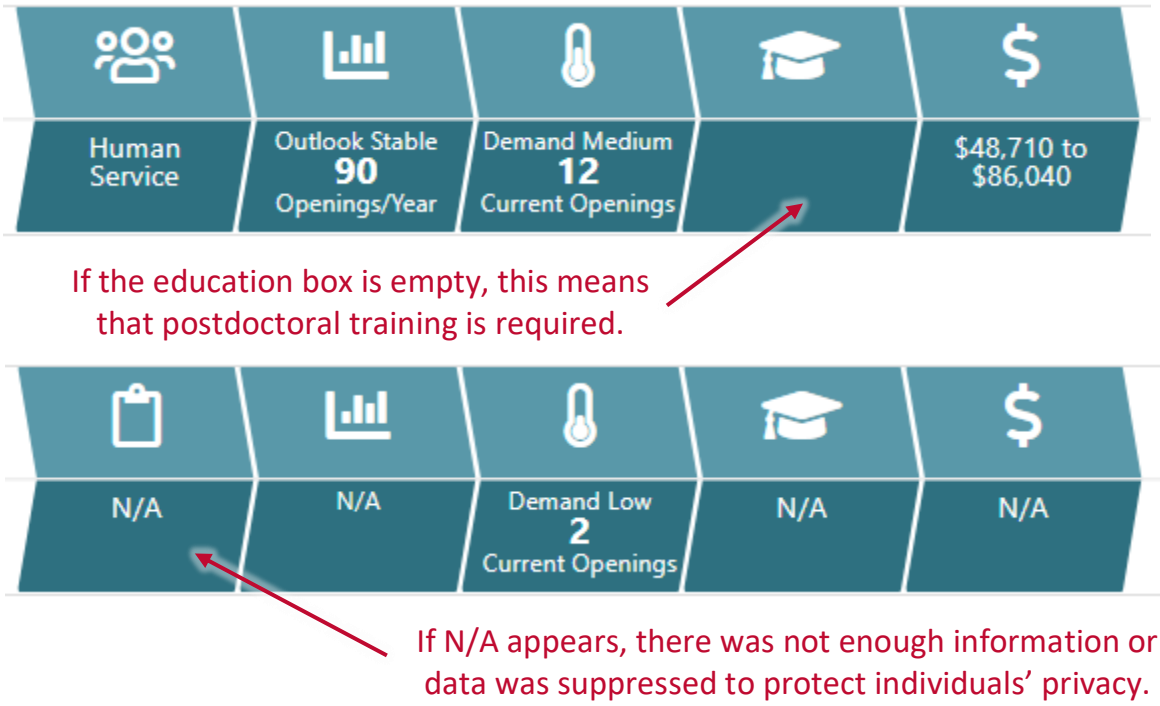
To sort occupations, there is a dropdown menu at the top of the occupation list. This menu provides the ability to sort by various categories. Each sort category is explained below.

- **Alphabetical:** This will arrange occupations in alphabetical order.
- **Future Job Outlook:** This will sort occupations by annual openings. Occupations with the most openings expected each year will appear at the top or bottom of the list.
- **Job Demand:** This will sort occupations by current openings, placing jobs with the most current openings at the top or bottom of the list.
- **Typical Education:** This will sort occupations by degree level. Those requiring higher degrees will appear at the top or bottom of the list.
- **Wage – Entry / Experienced:** This will sort occupations by wage. Occupations with higher entry level or experienced wages will appear at the top or bottom of the list.

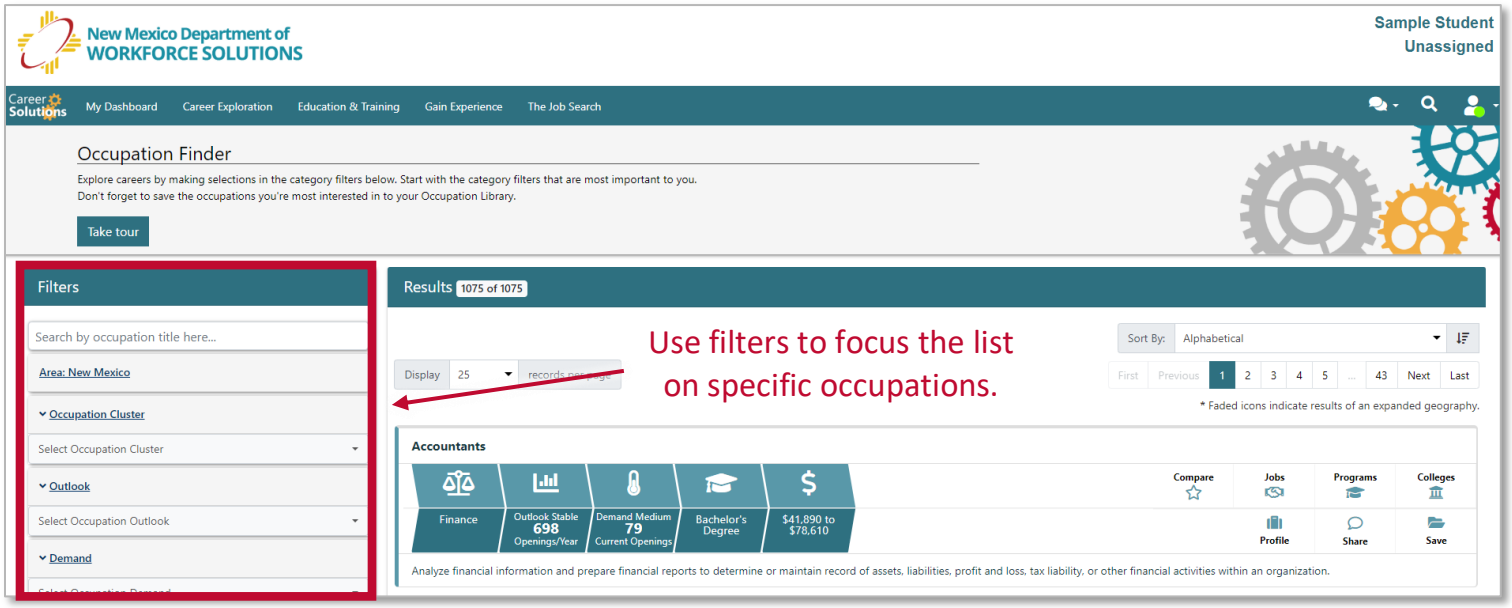
Helpful Tip: *When a sort category is selected, the list may initially be sorted from lowest to highest. To reverse the order, click on the button next to the sort dropdown menu.*



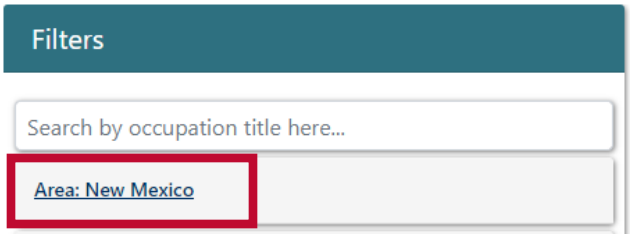
Helpful Tip: *If the education box is empty, this means that postdoctoral training is required. If N/A appears, there was not enough information or the data was suppressed to avoid revealing private information.*

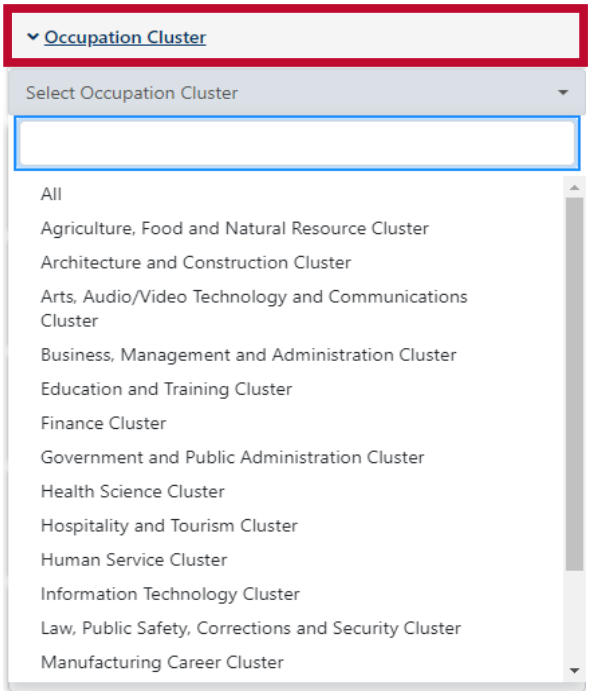


In addition to the ability to sort occupation, there are various filters listed on the left side of the screen that can help focus the list on specific occupations.



Helpful Tip: *Information displayed in the Occupation Finder is for the state of New Mexico. Regional information is not available within this specific tool. For national data, visit onetonline.org.*



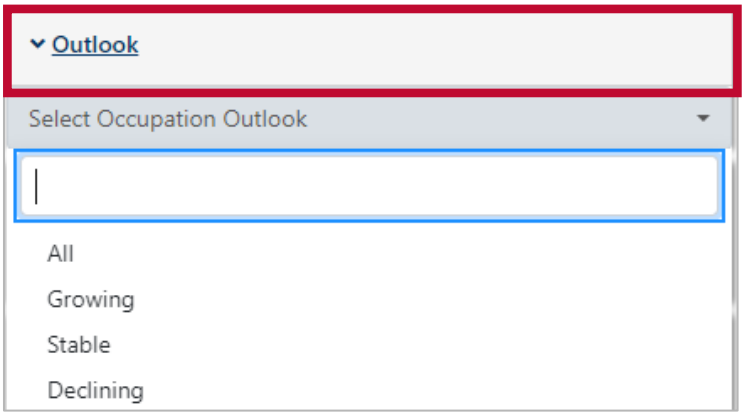


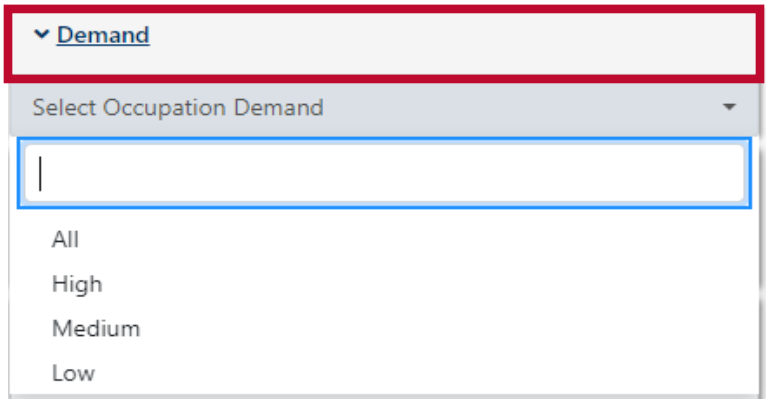
To limit the occupation search to a specific career cluster, use the **Occupation Cluster** filter. Selecting a cluster will focus the list on occupations in that cluster.

Helpful Tip: *The career clusters listed within this filter option align with the [National Career Clusters Framework](). These clusters are described in detail in the [New Mexico Career Clusters Guide]().*

The **Outlook** filter provides the option to limit the occupation list based on growth rates. Growing, stable, or declining occupations can be displayed.

Helpful Tip: *Selecting Stable or Growing and the sorting the list by Future Job Outlook (highest to lowest), will put occupations with the greatest opportunity (with regard to growth and annual openings) at the top of the list.*

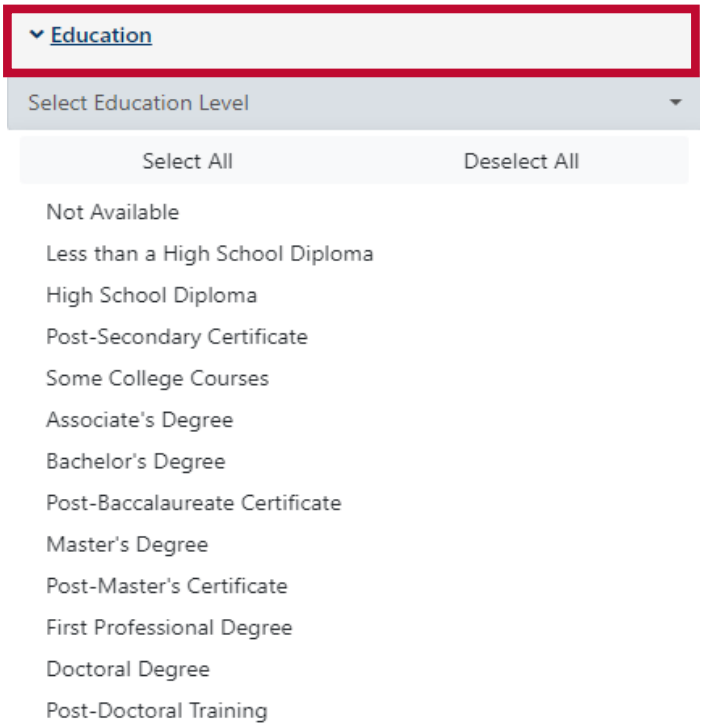


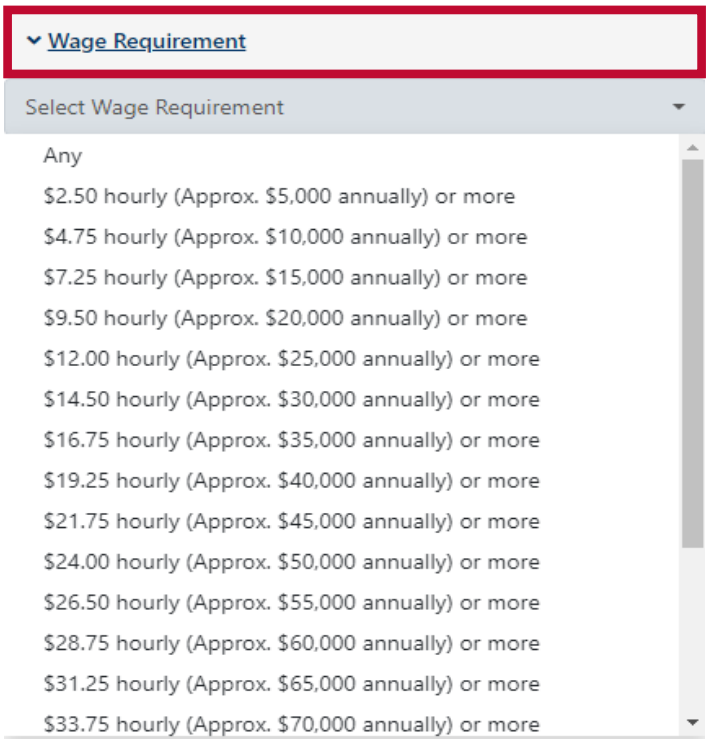


The **Demand** filter can be used to focus the list of occupations on current openings. Selecting High will display occupations with several current openings. Medium or Low will display occupations with some or few current openings.

The **Education** filter can help limit the list to occupations that have specific education requirements. One or many education types can be selected at one time.

Helpful Tip: *Most advanced occupations will fall within the master's degree, doctoral degree, and postdoctoral training categories. There are only a handful of careers that require an advanced certificate, such as a post-baccalaureate or post-master's certificate.*

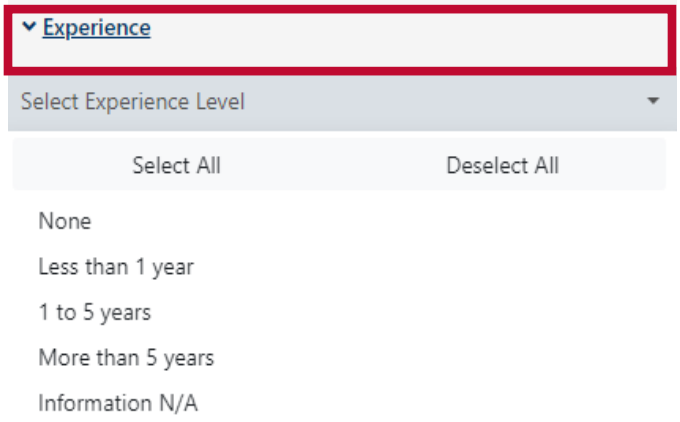


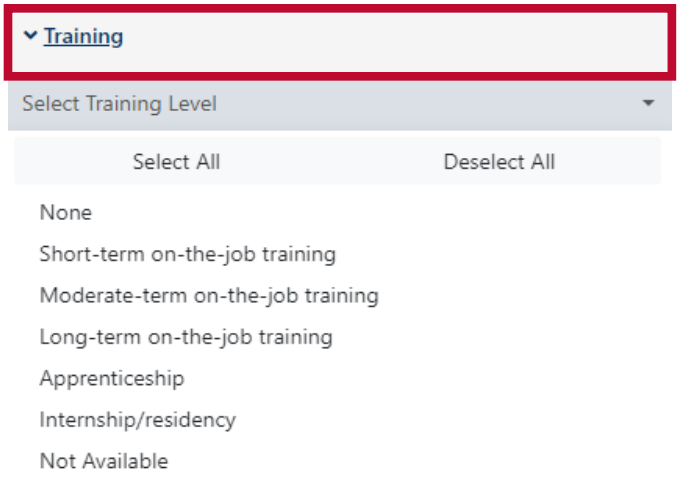


The **Wage Requirement** filter will allow for occupations that meet a specific wage criterion to be displayed. The wages displayed in this filter are the entry level wages.

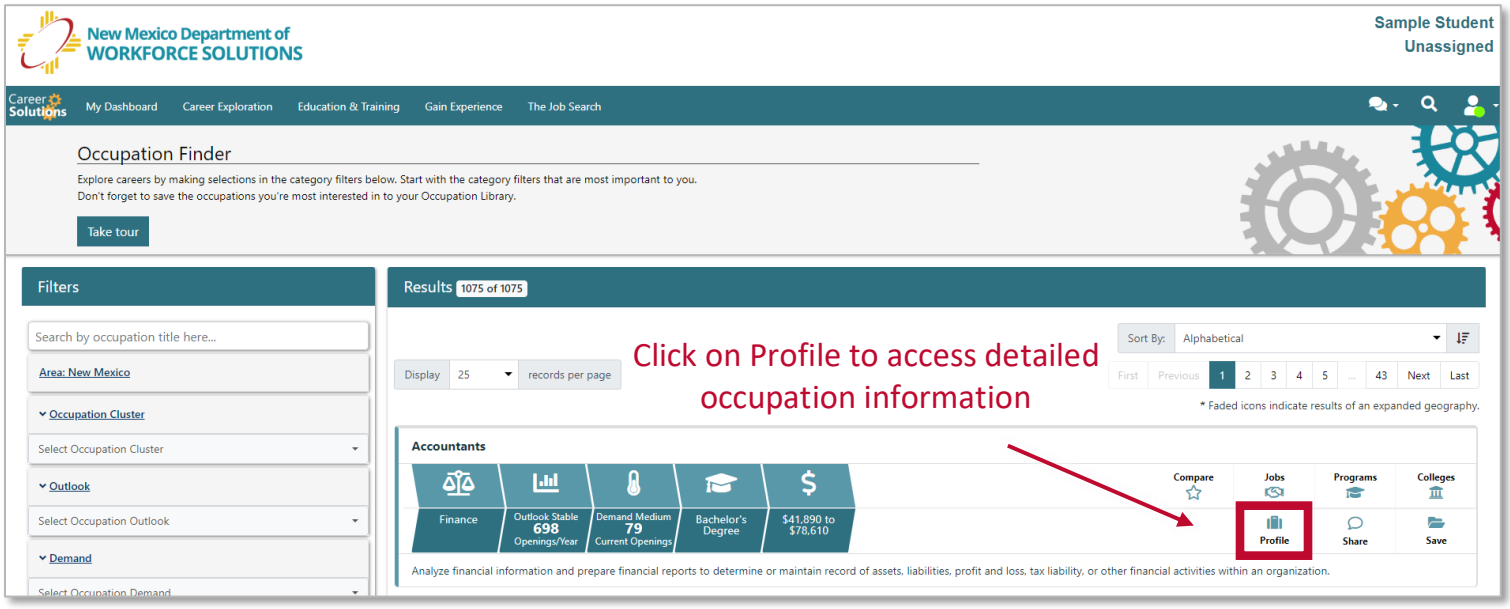
Helpful Tip: *Once a wage is selected, the list of occupations can be sorted by Entry Level Wage (lowest to highest) to explore occupations closest to the selected income level.*

The **Experience** and **Training** filters provide the ability to filter occupations based on how much experience is required and the amount of training that may be necessary. For both of these filters, multiple one or many options can be selected.



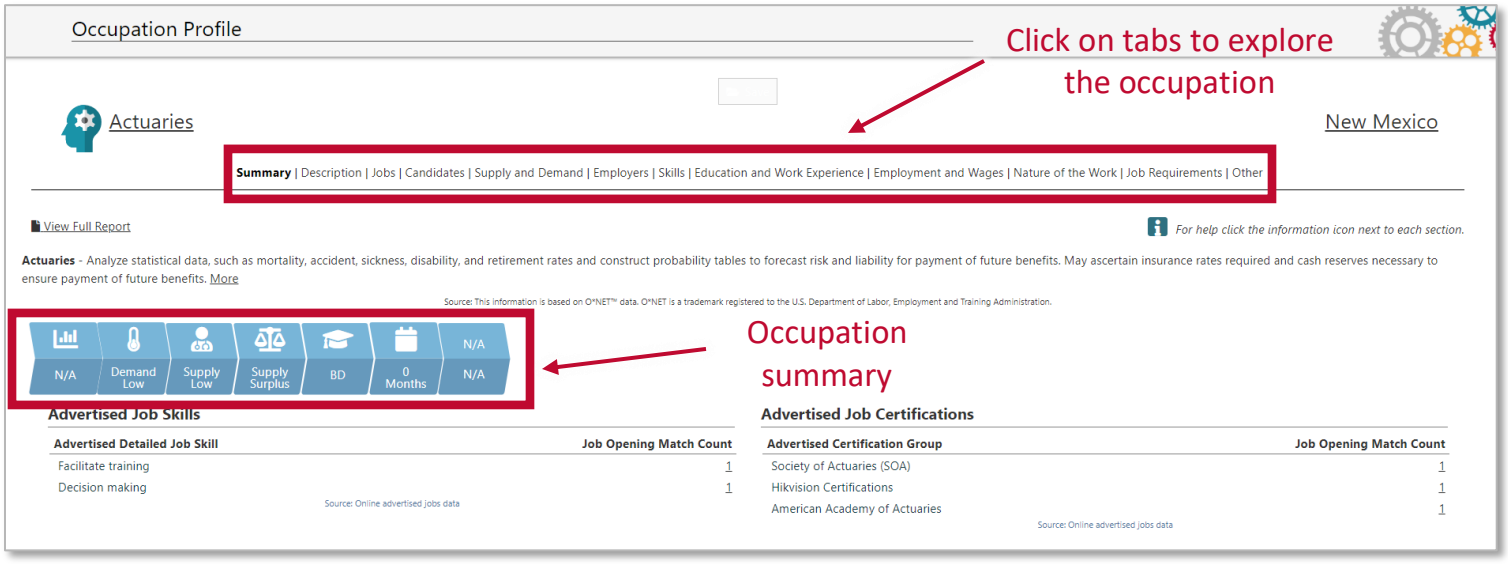


Detailed information about each of the occupations that appear in the list can be found by clicking on Profile. The occupation profiles display information related to job duties, requirements, market demand, and more.



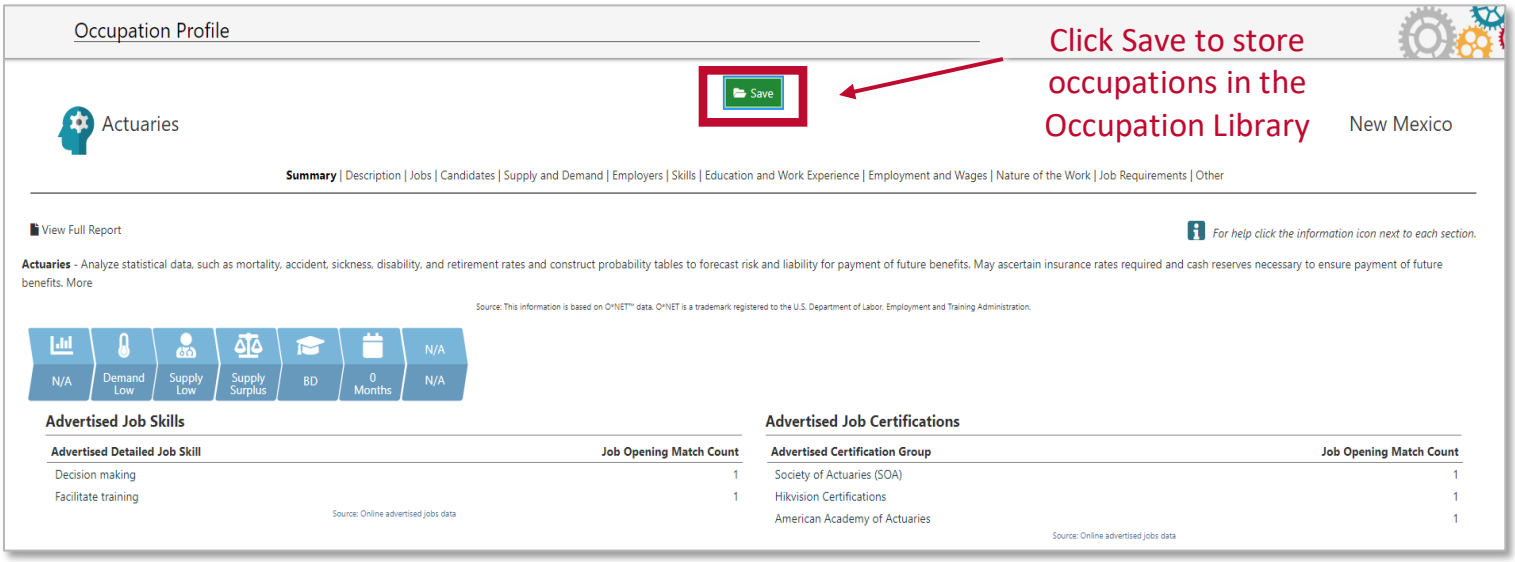
To explore the occupation profile, scroll down the page or click on the tabs that appear at the top of the profile. An occupation summary appears under the job description. This summary provides a very quick idea of the market for the occupation, as well as education and work experience that may be required.

Helpful Tip: *The information displayed on this page is based on O*NET data. If additional information is needed, it may be helpful to visit the O*NET site at onetonline.org.*



At the top of each page, there is the option to save the occupation to the Occupation Library. It is recommended that students save desired occupations so they can be reviewed and compared.

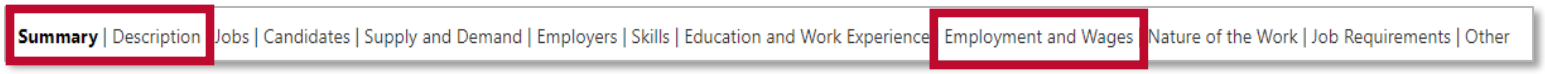
Helpful Tip: *If the option to save does not appear, click the white box at the top of the screen. It will turn green. Clicking it again will save the occupation.*



There is a lot of information displayed in the occupation profile and it can be easy for students to get overwhelmed. They will need some guidance to help focus their attention.

The following sections are recommended at this stage in the exploration process.

- Summary
- Description
- Employment and Wages



Helpful Tip: *Unless a specific city, county, or region is specified in a table, the data displayed is for the entire state of New Mexico.*

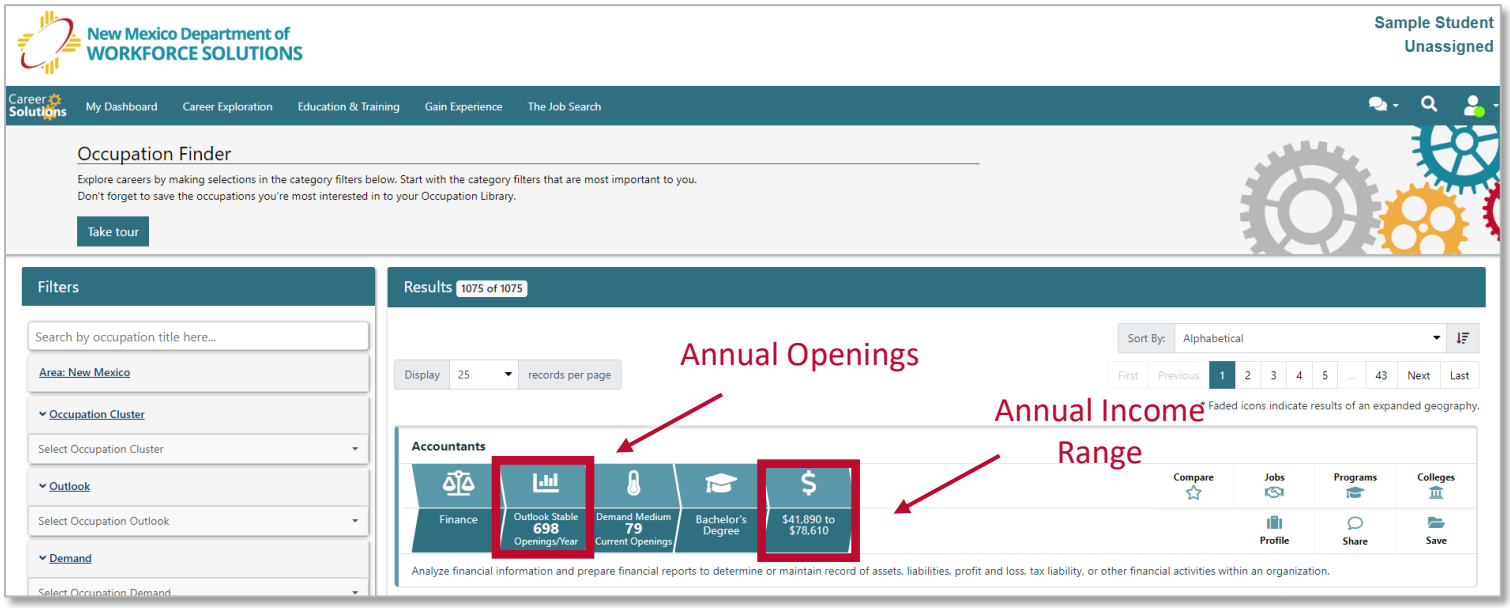
Helpful Tip: *Information in the occupation profiles was gathered from various data sources, including online advertised jobs data. Reading the table descriptions (at the top of each table) and the source information (at the bottom of each table) can help identify where the data came from.*

Identifying Labor Market Information

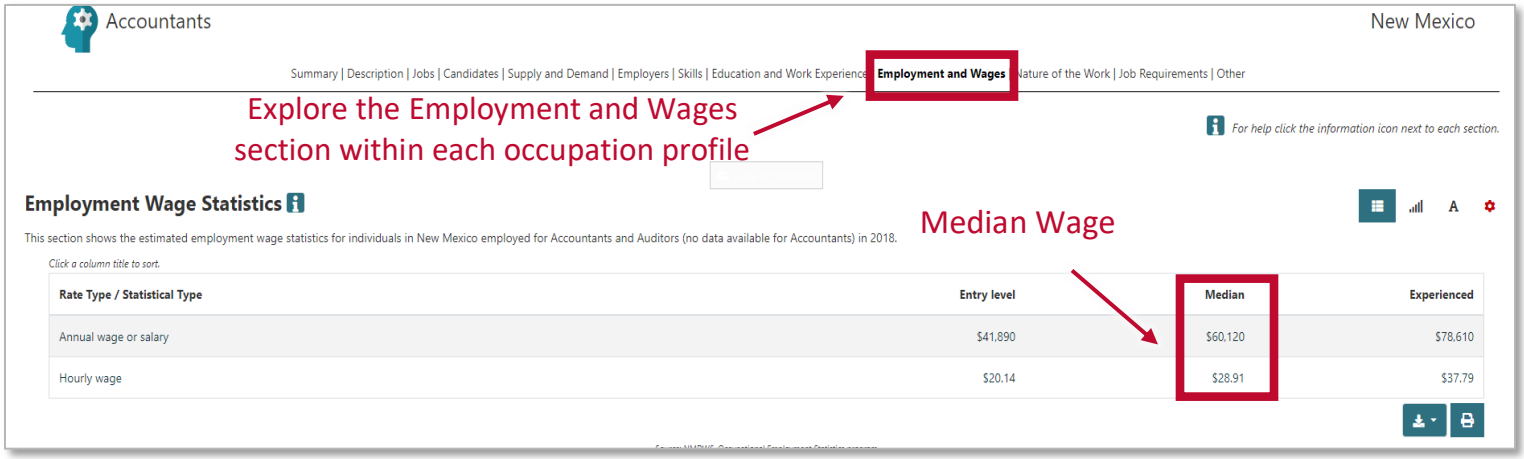
Labor market information is plentiful within the Career Solutions system. To simplify the exploration of this information, focus can be directed to employment demand and wages.

The data category that is often used to assess demand is **Annual Openings** (i.e., the average number of job openings that are expected each year). Wage is typically assessed by examining **Median Wage** (i.e., the midpoint at which about 50% of individuals employed in the occupation are expected to earn more and 50% are expected to earn less).

There are a couple places where this information is displayed. The first is on the main page of the Occupation Finder (see below).



The second location is on the Employment and Wages page within each occupation profile.



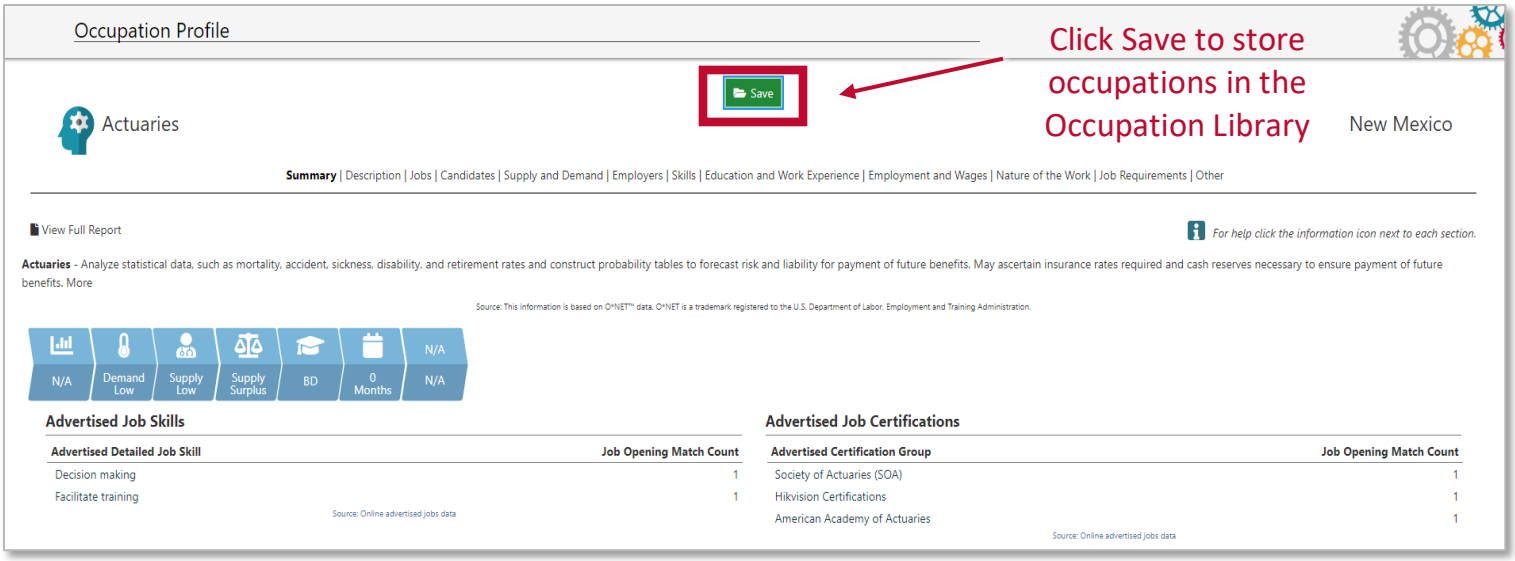
Information related to annual openings is displayed further down under the heading Projected Annual Openings.

Below the Projected Annual Openings table, annual openings for each of the workforce development regions in New Mexico is displayed.

When students concentrate on these two data categories – Annual Openings and Median Wages – it can simplify the exploration of labor market information, keeping them focused on some of the most critical information needed to make informed career decisions. Students can explore other types of helpful data within the system, but it is suggested they spend time understanding these two first.

IMPORTANT: As students complete the activities within each lesson, they need to save occupations they believe are a good match. These saved occupations will be referenced in future lessons.

Helpful Tip: *If the option to save does not appear, click the white box at the top of the screen. It will turn green. Clicking it again will save the occupation.*



Connecting with Students

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will be given the opportunity to…

- Review the major components of an informed career decision.
- Identify external factors that can play a role in employment success.
- Evaluate the usefulness of labor market information in making career decisions.
- Locate and apply labor market information to the selection of careers.
- Determine next steps in exploring career opportunities and developing a career plan.

Classroom Discussions and Presentations

Introduction

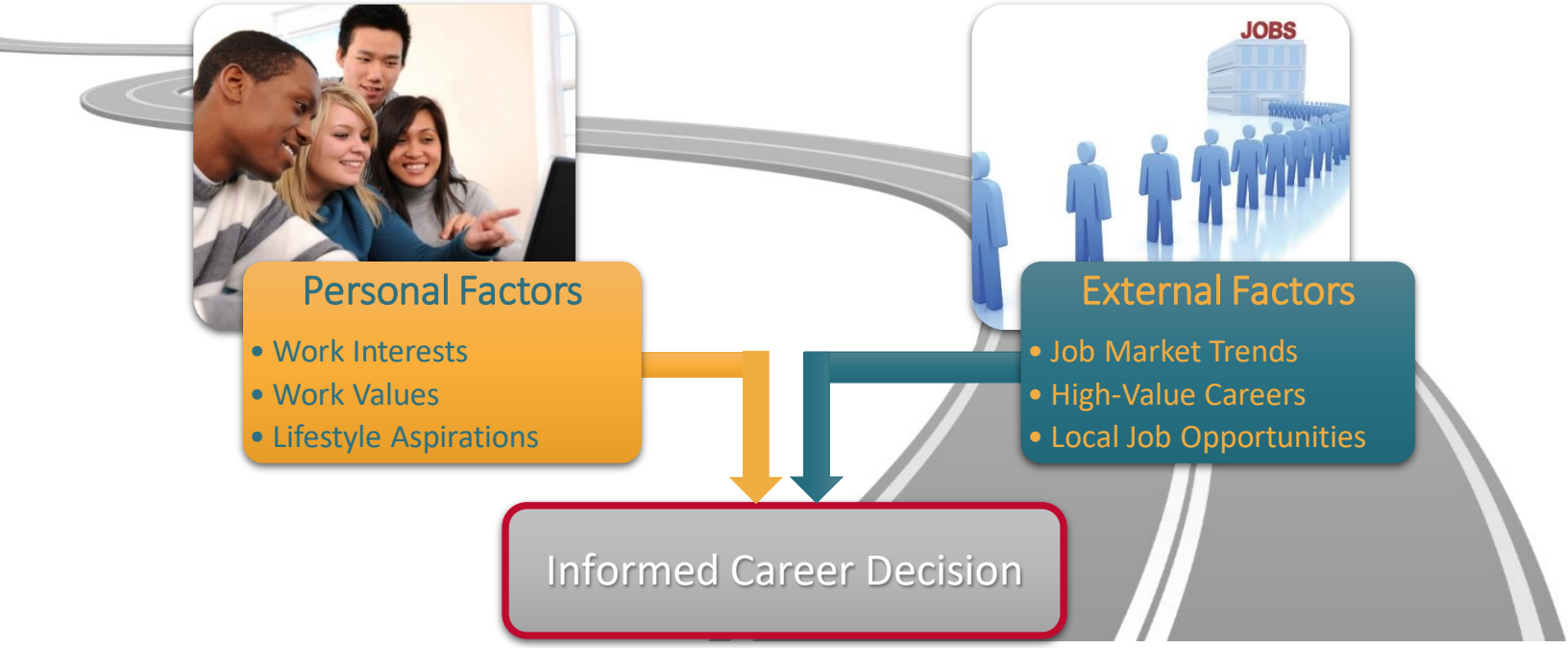
Personal factors play a significant role in making informed career decisions. Equally important, however, are external factors, which include elements in the student's environment that can affect employment success. These factors are often neglected because of the misconception that success or failure resides primarily within the student. In other words, students succeed or fail by nature of who they are and what they can do. This ignores a huge piece of the puzzle – where they live. No matter what a student is capable of, if jobs are not available, employment failure is inevitable. Because the environment can be a supporting or limiting factor, it should be considered when making career decisions. Knowing what jobs are plentiful with a living wage can help students prepare for occupations with the greatest opportunity. Likewise, understanding which jobs are limited or offer low wages can help students avoid these occupations or prepare for difficult employment.

Talking Points

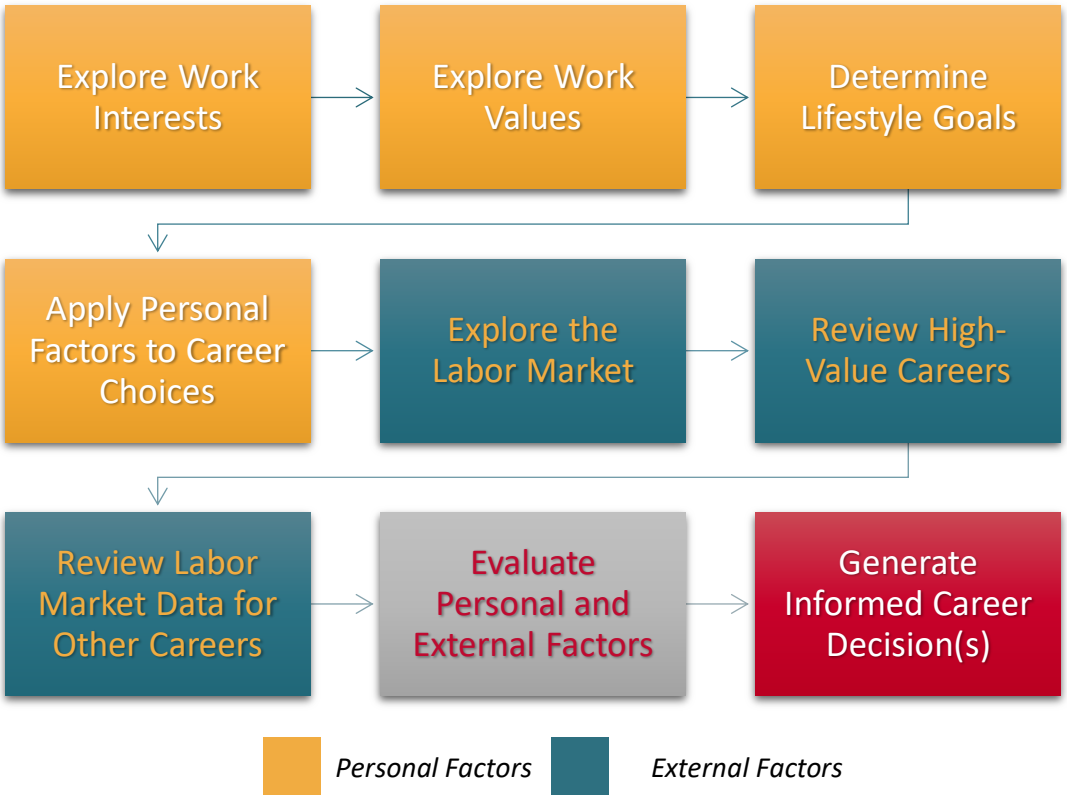
Below are some helpful comments to share with students.

- The ultimate goal of career exploration is to make an informed decision. This often requires a careful review of personal factors and external factors. (***Helpful Tip:*** *Print and share the diagram below. Use this to introduce the components of an informed career decision.*)
- At this time, we are going to shift into external factors, which includes elements in your environment that can affect employment success. These factors are equally important as personal factors.
- There are a number of different external factors that should be considered when making career decisions. Most important among these is the labor market.
- Understanding the labor market can provide a sense of what jobs pay well and which are projected to be most plentiful. In other words, it gives you a picture of where the demand is for good jobs.
- This can be powerful information that can help you identify occupations with the greatest opportunity and avoid occupations that may be declining or have the potential to be highly competitive.
- The intent is not to discourage certain occupations. Rather, the goal is to empower you with the opportunity to choose and prepare for the realities of the job market.

Components of an Informed Career Decision



The Career Exploration Process



Discussion Questions

As a class or in small groups, have students reflect on the following questions. Help students talk about and work through their positive and negative feelings regarding career exploration.

- What are some external factors that could affect your ability to work in your desired occupation?
- Is there anything you can do to change these factors to improve your chances of getting a job?
- When you think of the labor market, what comes to mind?
- How might it be helpful to know the wage and number of job openings for a particular occupation? How might you use this information in choosing a career?
- Would you consider pursuing a career that paid less than $35,000 a year? Why or why not?
- Would you consider pursuing a career that had only a few job openings in your area? Why or why not?
- Do you think it is possible to find a career that you like that pays well and has a lot of job openings?

Exploring the System

After discussing the advantages and disadvantages of exploring external factors and helping students work through their positive and negative perspectives, they can be introduced to the Occupation Finder in Career Solutions.

The "How to Use this Tool" section above provides a summary of useful information to share with students.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Encourage students to sign into the site to ensure they can access and save data.
- Help students locate the Occupation Finder.
- Review the basic features of this tool, including how to locate useful labor market information.
- Assist students in identifying information that is most useful to explore within this tool.
- Discuss how this tool can be used to focus student searches on specific occupations.
- **Remind students to save occupations they believe are a good match.**

Classroom Activity

Understanding the Labor Market and High-Value Careers

Many students intuitively recognize the need to find a career that fits their interests and personal needs. What is less obvious, though, is the need to set themselves up for employment success by understanding the labor market. Their excitement about the possibilities can sometimes be so powerful that they fail to broaden their scope and reflect on the viability of various career choices. This poses a significant danger for students who can end up spending large amounts of time and money on degrees and certificates that have limited application in the marketplace. Thus, it can be extremely valuable for students to take time to explore the labor market and gain awareness of what occupations offer opportunity versus those that may present employment challenges. Understanding what to expect as they enter the job market can help students prepare for the realities they will face as they seek employment.

To locate the Occupation Finder, review the "How to Use this Tool" section above.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Discuss the importance of incorporating external factors into career exploration.
- Briefly summarize the benefits of using labor market data to make informed career decisions.
- Review the Occupation Finder tool in Career Solutions.
- Identify the purpose of this tool as an information database that contains several occupations.
- Provide an opportunity for students to explore this tool in the classroom or at home.
- Encourage students to complete the Understanding the Labor Market and High Value Careers sheet.
- Assist students in understanding the benefits and limitations of using labor market data in making career decisions.

Exploring the Results

Exploring labor market data for various careers can be a unique experience for students. For some, it can be an eye-opening experience that grounds the career exploration process in reality, resulting in both positive and negative emotions. It will be important to help students work through these emotions and understand that there are numerous pathways to success. All pathways are possible, but some may require a bit of maneuvering to achieve the best possible outcome.

Upon completion of the activity, students will have evaluated their saved list of potential careers, as well as other career choices, through the lens of the labor market. Some will choose to limit their list to only high-value careers, while others will opt to include careers that pose potential employment challenges. Regardless of how students choose to use the information, the message to be communicated is that of preparation. Students will need to be prepared to seize valuable opportunities and seek additional training, when needed, to maintain a competitive edge in more restrictive or specialized fields.

Understanding the Labor Market and High-Value Careers

Instructions: Read the information below and use the Occupation Finder in Career Solutions to answer the following questions.

Helpful Terms and Definitions

When looking at labor market data, there is a wealth of information that can be used to identify good jobs with ample opportunity for employment. It can be most helpful to focus on two important pieces of information – annual openings and median wages. These two pieces of information can be used to locate high-value careers. Take a moment to review these helpful definitions.

Annual Openings
The average number of job openings expected each year.

Median Wage
The midpoint at which 50% of individuals employed in the occupation earn more and 50% earn less.

High-Value Careers
Careers that are high in demand (high annual openings) **and** high in median wage (greater than $35,000)

The Occupation Finder in Career Solutions can be used to review labor market data for various careers. For each career listed in this tool, a summary is presented that displays the annual openings. Median wage can be found in the profile for each occupation under Employment and Wages. Some examples are provided below.

High-Value Career: Accountants – 698 annual openings expected each year, median wage is $60,120

Accountants

Finance	Outlook Stable 698 Openings/Year	Demand Medium 83 Current Openings	Bachelor's Degree	$41,890 to $78,610

Median $60,120

Low-Value Career: Physical Therapist Aids – 34 annual openings expected each year, median wage is $28,220

Physical Therapist Aides

Health Science	Outlook Growing 34 Openings/Year	Demand Low 1 Current Openings	High School	$20,120 to $32,260

Median $28,220

Evaluating Your Saved Occupations

1. Go into your occupation library and review the list of occupations. Choose three occupations and complete the table below.

Occupation Title	Annual Openings	Median Wage	High-Value Career Yes/No

2. After completing this table, are there any of these occupations that you would not consider pursuing as a career choice? Why or why not? (List the occupation titles)

3. Repeat this exercise for the remaining occupations in your library.

   How many occupations in your library meet the criteria for a high-value career?

   How many occupations in your library do not meet the criteria for a high-value career?

   Does this affect how you feel about some of the occupations in your library? Why or why not?

Evaluating High-Value Careers

Locate the Occupation Finder in Career Solutions. Set the Wage Requirement to $35,000 or more and sort the list by Future Job Outlook, highest to lowest. What will emerge is a list of high-value occupations. Those with the most annual openings will appear at the top of the list.

Helpful Tip: *You may need to click the direction button next to the sort menu to get the list to sort from highest to lowest.*

1. Explore the list of high-value careers. List 2-3 careers that you would consider pursuing and why. (You may find it helpful to select an occupation cluster from the filter menu to help focus the list on occupations that fit your interests.)

Occupation Title	Why would you consider pursuing this occupation?

2. For you, how important is it that your future career is a high-value career with several job opportunities and a high wage? Why?

Evaluating Low-Value Careers

Locate the Occupation Finder in Career Solutions. Clear all filters and select a cluster from the Occupation Cluster filter that fits your interests. Explore the list of careers within this cluster.

1. Identify 2-3 low-value occupations (with few annual openings or wages under $35,000) that you would consider pursuing. Add these occupations to the table below.

Occupation Title	Why would you consider pursuing this occupation?

2. What are some potential challenges that these low-value occupations might present with regard to getting a job or achieving lifestyle goals?

3. How might you overcome some of these challenges?

4. Why would it be helpful to know this information now before you start preparing for a career?

Next Steps

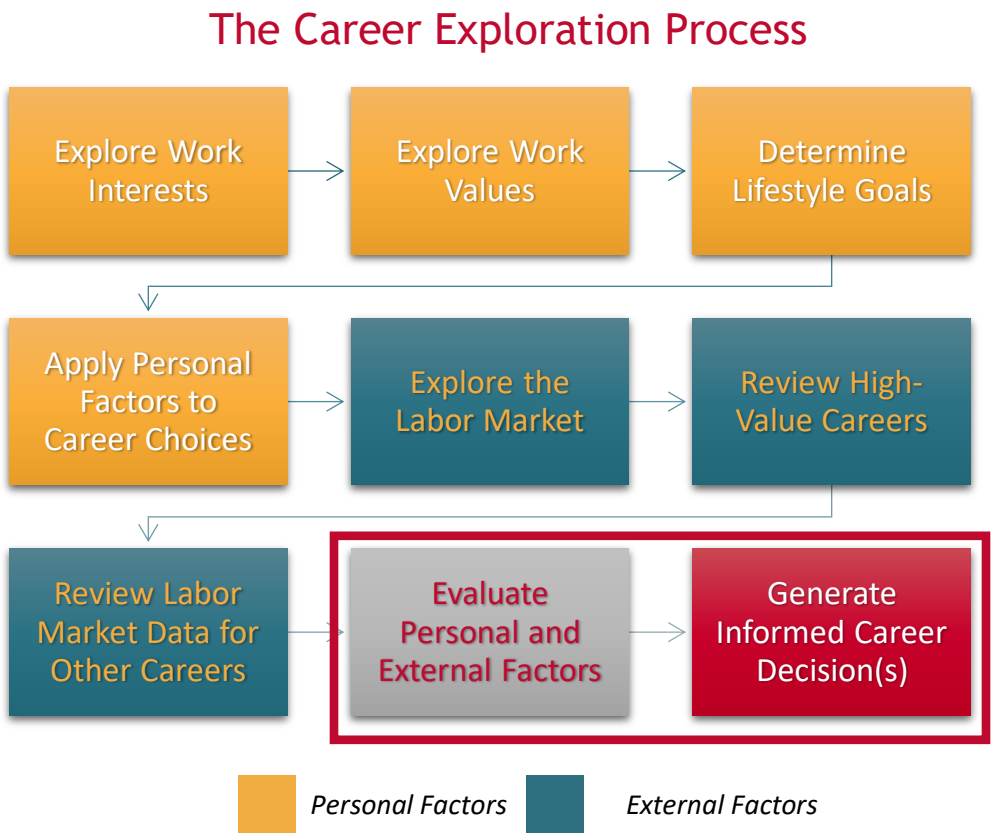
At the end of the lesson, take a moment to review and assess the learning objectives. Engage students in a brief discussion of the learning opportunities that were made available in the classroom.

In this lesson, students were provided the opportunity to…

- Review the major components of an informed career decision.
- Identify external factors that can play a role in employment success.
- Evaluate the usefulness of labor market information in making career decisions.
- Locate and apply labor market information to the selection of careers.

After providing a brief overview, encourage students to…

- Continue their reflection on external factors that can affect employment success.
- Think about external factors most relevant to them and the types of occupations that fit their needs.
- Determine how they might use this information in selecting a career.
- Prepare for future lessons that will focus on using all factors to generate an informed career decision.



Lesson 7: Making Informed Career Decisions

Overview

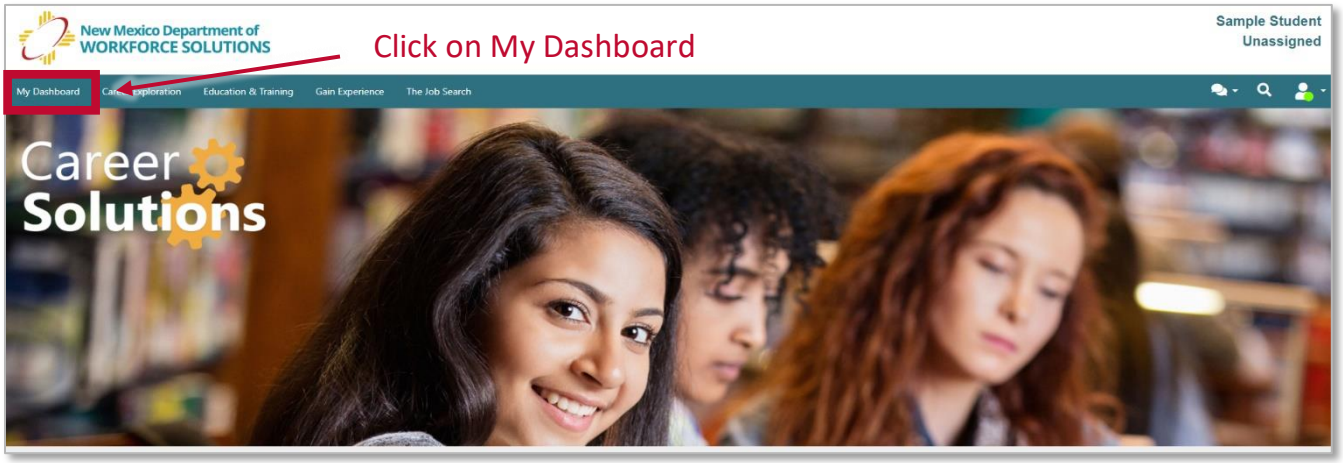
By now, students have collected a great deal of information that can be applied to their career decisions. They have explored personal factors, including their work interests, values, and goals, as well as external factors, focusing primarily on the labor market. To be successful in selecting careers, they will need to develop strategies for incorporating all of this information into the decision-making process. Because each piece of information is relevant and critical, students should be encouraged to review all information to determine the significance of each element in their personal career choice. This is an invaluable exercise that can help ensure that students make informed decisions that meet as many of their personal needs as possible, as well as capitalize on the opportunities available in their local regions.

This lesson contains….

- Information on how to access and use the My Dashboard feature.
- A review of personal and external factors as part of informed career decisions.
- Methods for helping students organize and consolidate career information.
- Strategies for applying multiple forms of career information to the decision-making process.
- A review of next steps for students using insights gained from this lesson.

How to Use This Tool

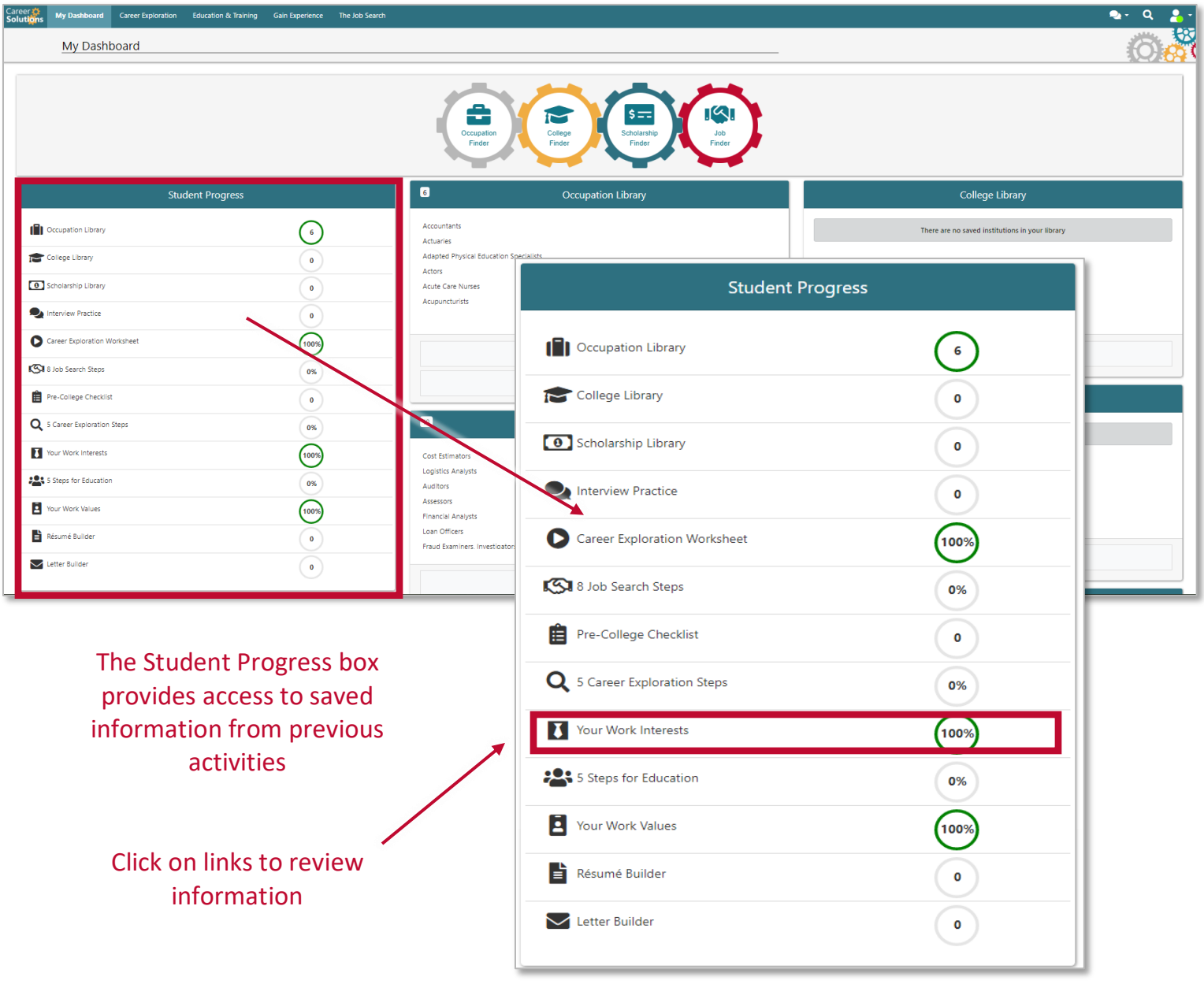
Before beginning, be sure to sign into the system. The My Dashboard feature should appear after signing in. It can also be accessed by clicking on My Dashboard at the top of the screen.



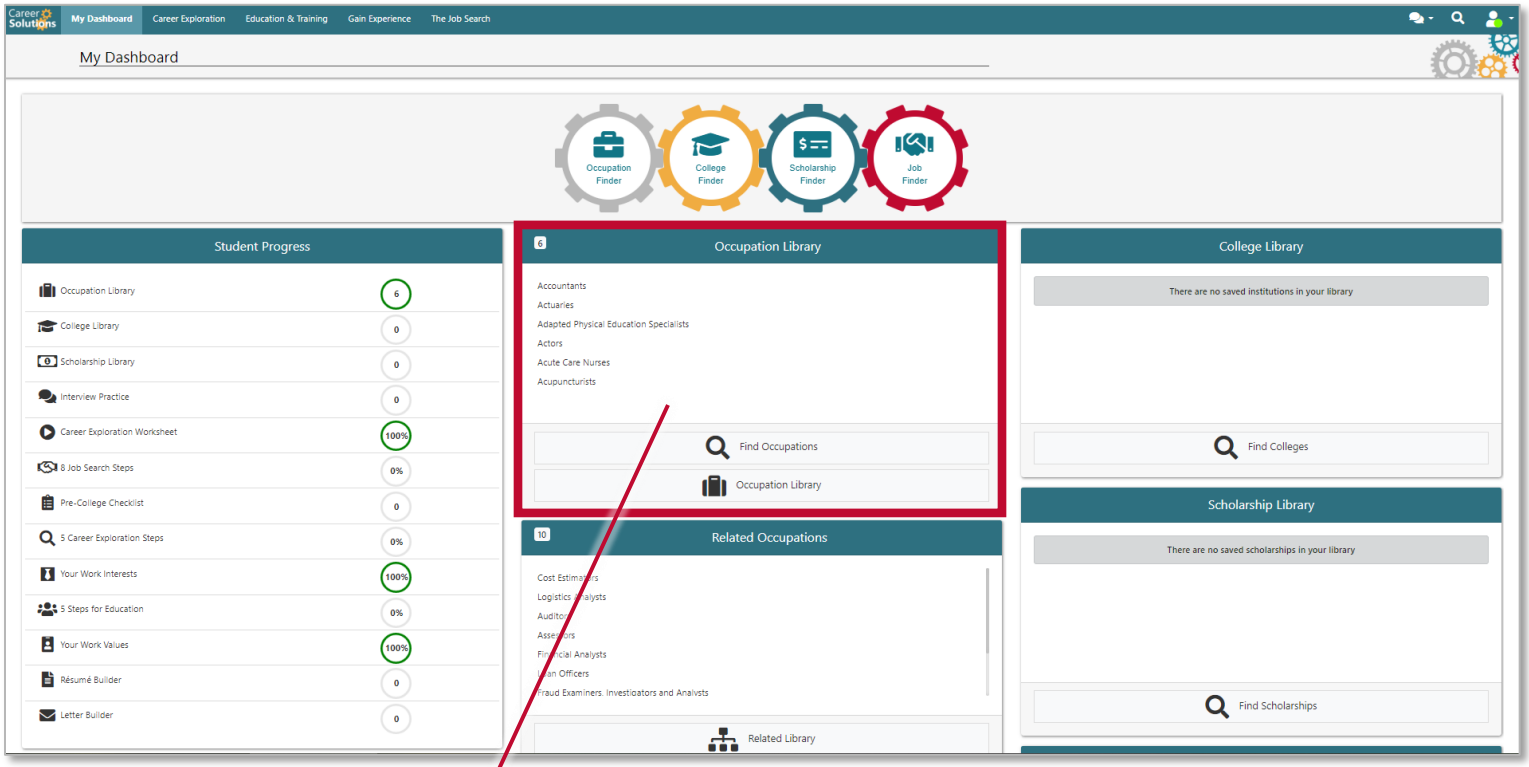
The My Dashboard feature offers a place for students to review the work they have done in the Career Solutions system. There are many blocks (or widgets) on this page that summarize progress and display helpful information. For this exercise, it is recommended that students focus on the following blocks.

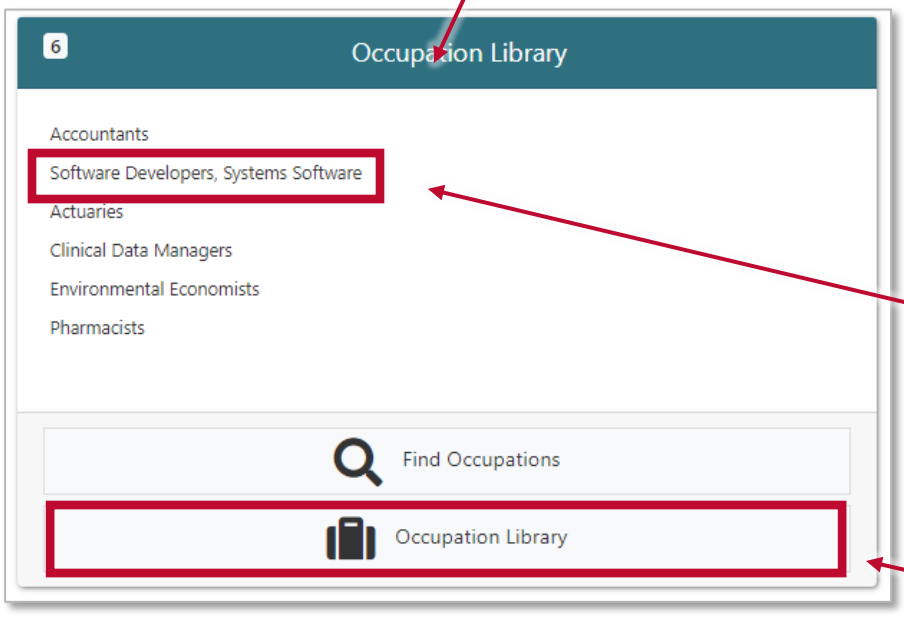
- Student Progress
- Occupation Library
- Related Occupations
- Occupation Finder

In the Student Progress box, information pertaining to previous activities can be reviewed. Saved information should be available in the Occupation Library, Career Exploration Worksheet, Work Interests and Work Values.



The Occupation Library block displays saved occupations. This block can be used to quickly access detailed information about potential career choices. It also offers quick access to the Occupation Library tool.



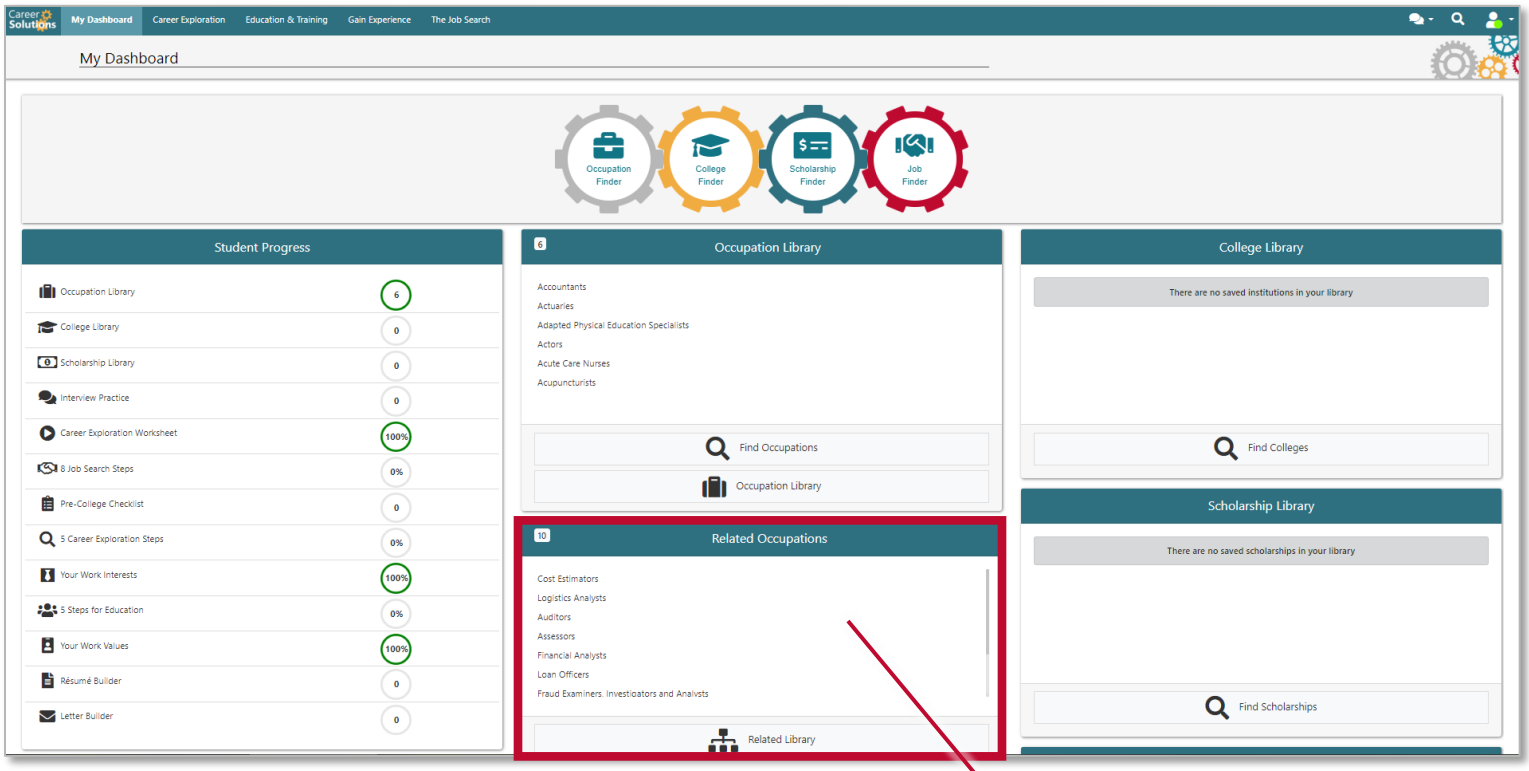


The Occupation Library box lists saved occupations

Click on links to access occupation information

Click on the link at the bottom for quick access to the Occupation Library

The Related Occupations box displays a list of occupations that are related to those saved in the Occupations Library. Detailed occupation information can be explored by clicking links within the box. There is also a link at the bottom that provides quick access to the Related Occupations page (that is part of the Occupation Library).

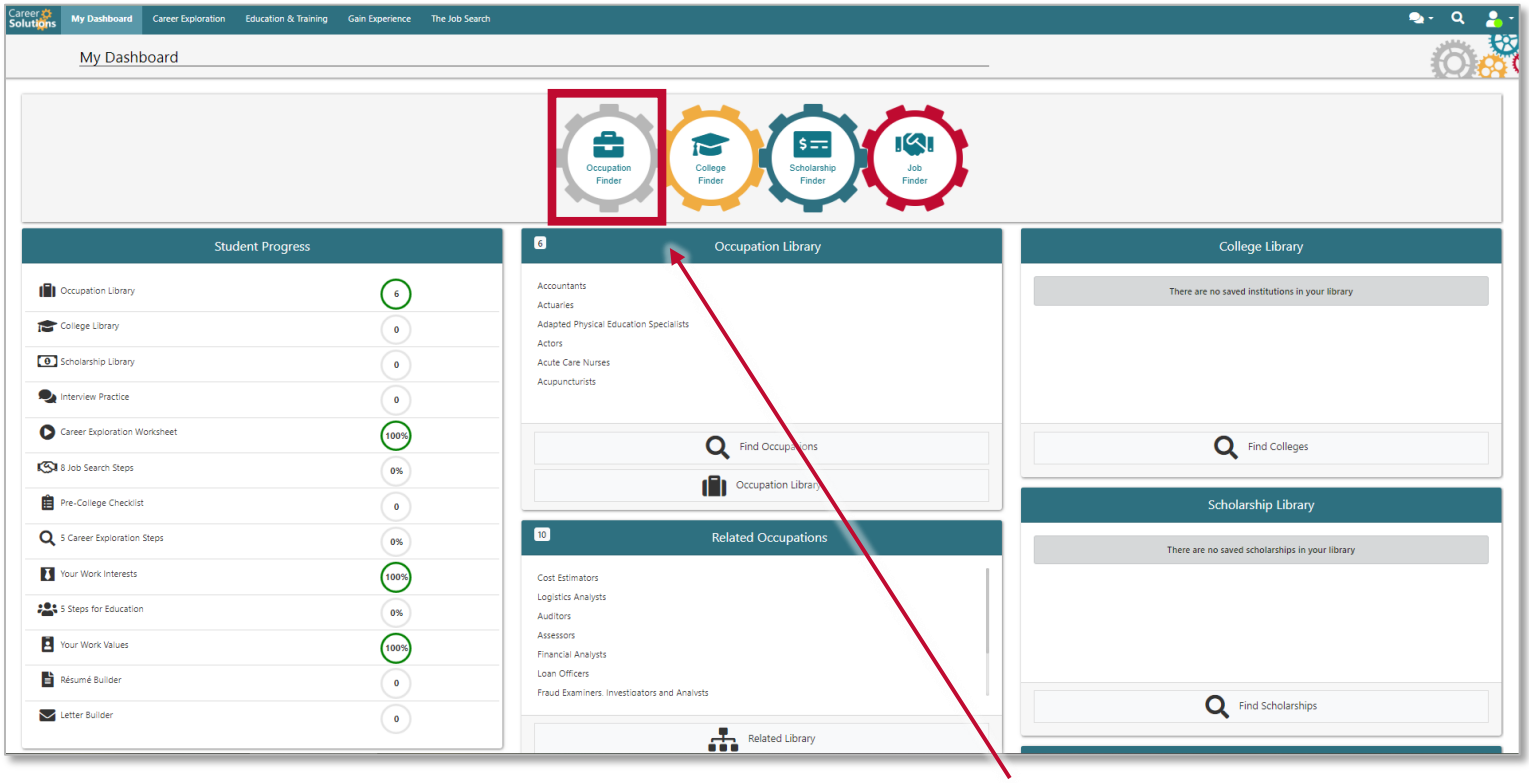


The Related Occupations box displays occupations that are related to those saved in the Occupations Library

Click on links to access occupation information

Click the bottom link for quick access to the Related Occupations page

The last area of the My Dashboard feature that can be most useful to students at this stage of career exploration is the Occupation Finder. A link to this tool is provided at the top of the page. Students can use this tool when they are ready to explore additional careers and add new occupations to their library.



Click on Occupation Finder to explore and add occupations to the library

Connecting with Students

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will be given the opportunity to…

- Review the components of an informed career decision.
- Evaluate the personal and external factors that can affect their employment success.
- Consolidate and apply their personal and external factors to the selection of careers.
- List top career choices and compare these occupations to determine a primary career path.
- Determine next steps in developing a career plan.

Classroom Discussions and Presentations

Introduction

This is the point in the career exploration process where everything comes together. Students can gather what they have discovered about their personal and external factors and begin applying this knowledge to the selection of a career. This involves a few steps, with the first focusing on consolidating and organizing information. From here, students will need to evaluate this information and determine the best use of the information in supporting their career decisions. Once a method or approach has been identified, students can use this as a lens in which to evaluate careers. The ultimate goal is to help focus their efforts and provide direction to their career search so they can more easily identify career targets with the greatest potential for employment success.

Talking Points

Below are some helpful comments to share with students.

- By now, you have gathered a lot of information related to personal factors and external factors that can play a role in achieving employment success.
- Each piece of information is relevant and critical to making an informed career decision. So, it is important to take time to review and evaluate everything.
- Bringing it all together to create one big picture can provide some clarity that will be needed to determine how you will use this information to select a career.
- Organizing this information and determining a method for using this information can help simplify your career search and focus your efforts on identifying careers with the greatest potential.
- Skipping this organizational step can result in focusing on only one component or another, like income or work environment, which can neglect other critical pieces that can affect your future success.
- It is best to take the time now to develop a global strategy that incorporates as much information as possible to help ensure you make the best decision possible.

Discussion Questions

As a class or in small groups, have students reflect on the following questions. Help students talk about and work through their positive and negative feelings regarding career exploration.

- What has been the most helpful thing that you have learned about yourself or the career exploration process that could have the greatest impact on your career decision? Why?
- What information do you think will be the least useful in making a career decision? Why?
- What might help you organize everything that you have learned and develop a more complete picture of your personal and external factors?
- What strategies might you use to incorporate both personal and external factors in career decisions?
- Do you believe that you will be able to find a career that accommodates most of your personal factors, while also taking into account external factors?

Exploring the System

After discussing what students have learned about the career exploration process and helping them work through their positive and negative perspectives, they can be introduced to the My Dashboard feature in Career Solutions.

The "How to Use this Tool" section above provides a summary of useful information to share with students.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Encourage students to sign into the site to ensure they can access and save data.
- Help students locate the My Dashboard feature.
- Review the basic features of this tool, including how to navigate the information blocks.
- Assist students in identifying information that is most useful to explore on this page.
- Discuss how this tool can be used to explore information saved from previous activities.

Classroom Activity

Making Informed Career Decisions

This is the moment we have all been waiting for – decision time! Students can now bring everything together and engage in the process of making informed career decisions. While seemingly simple, this can be a relatively complex task. After all, students have amassed a collection of various types of information and seeing the relationship between these pieces can be challenging. Therefore, they will need assistance in evaluating what they have learned and using this information to develop effective career search strategies. Activities that provide the opportunity for students to gather and review their career factors, as well as guide them through the use of these factors, can help them understand the value of the career exploration process. The enhanced sense of direction and purpose that emerges from this process is a valuable outcome that can promote career choices with the greatest potential for employment success.

To locate the My Dashboard feature, review the "How to Use this Tool" section above.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Celebrate the opportunity to use insights from previous activities in making informed career decisions.
- Discuss the importance of incorporating personal and external factors into career exploration.
- Review the My Dashboard feature in Career Solutions.
- Identify the purpose of this feature as a place where saved information can be easily accessed.
- Provide an opportunity for students to explore this tool in the classroom or at home.
- Encourage students to complete the Making Informed Career Decisions sheet (see below).
- Assist students in understanding the benefits and limitations of using focused career exploration strategies in selecting potential careers.

Exploring the Results

In completing this activity, students will have had the opportunity to develop: (1) a list of specific personal factors, sorted from most important to least important, (2) a definition of high-value careers, along with insight into the personal significance of the labor market as an external factor, and (3) a list of at least five top career choices that take into account both their personal and external factors. The ability to complete these tasks is no minor achievement. Students have progressed through a long journey of self-discovery and exploration of various factors that have led them to this point. Taking a moment to recognize this achievement with students can provide validation of their efforts and recognize the career exploration skills they have acquired.

At the same time, students will need to be cautioned that the outcome of this activity does not have to be final. Rather, the list they have generated is a suggestion of potential career choices. The career exploration process can and should continue. Apprenticeship opportunities, volunteer experiences, and work-based learning can be embraced as additional discovery opportunities. Furthermore, students should be encouraged to experiment with different search strategies that could reveal other career opportunities. Rather than see this activity as an endpoint, it can be perceived as a starting point to more enriched career exploration.

Overall, students have accomplished much and they stand at the edge of enormous potential and opportunity. Celebration and excitement are often part of the story. Empowering them with tools that will support their journey can help them realize their potential and achieve fulfillment in their future career choice.

Making Informed Career Decisions

Instructions: Use the My Dashboard feature in Career Solutions to explore information that you have saved from previous activities. Use this information to answer the questions below.

1. Complete the table below. (**Note:** This table was completed in an earlier activity. It can be recreated or you can simply insert your responses from the previous activity.)

Work Interests Assessment	Work Values Assessment	Why I Work
List your top two work interests and provide a brief definition of each.	List your top two work values and provide a brief definition of each.	Briefly describe your future lifestyle and list the annual income you will need to support your lifestyle.

2. Review each of these factors and sort them from most important to least important – 1 being most important and 5 being least important. For the Why I Work section, you can simply list, "My Lifestyle Goals" and rate this anywhere form 1-5 in the list below. (**Note:** This table was completed in an earlier activity. It can be recreated or you can simply insert your responses from the previous activity.)

1
2
3
4
5

3. What are high-value careers? What types of labor market information can you look at to help you identify high-value careers?

4. For you, how important is it that your future career is a high-value career? Would you consider a career with low job availability or low wage? Why or why not?

After answering question 1-4, you should now have an idea of your top personal factors and a sense of how important high-value careers are to you. There are many ways to use this information and no one way is better than another. Below is one approach that you might find helpful.

Based on your answer to question 4, determine whether a high-value career is essential and choose one of the decision-making pathways below. Answer the questions for your chosen pathway.

High-Value Career is Essential

High-Value Career is Not Essential

Questions for "High-Value Career is Essential"

Choosing this pathway means that your career choices will initially be screened to determine whether they are high-value. Those that do not meet the criteria for a high-value career will be eliminated from your search. Careers can then be evaluated based on their fit with your personal factors to make a career decision.

1. Examine the saved careers in your Occupation Library. Choose three careers that are high-value careers with several annual openings and median wage above $35,000.

2. Use the Compare Occupations tool in Career Solutions to compare these occupations.
   - Write the occupation titles in the top row of the table below.
   - List your personal factors, in order of importance, in the first column.
   - Review each occupation in Career Solutions and mark an X in the table for each factor match that you find. For this activity, it is best to focus on the following categories in Career Solutions – (1) Interests, (2) Values, and (3) Wage (wage is related to lifestyle goals).
   - Add the number of X's for each occupation and write the total in the last row.
   - The occupation(s) with the most X's can be considered a better personal fit.
   - If a tie is found, the occupation with more X's at the top of the list is a better personal fit.

Personal Factor	Occupation 1	Occupation 2	Occupation 3
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
Personal Factor Match Total			

3. Which of the three occupations did you find to be the better fit? Would you consider pursuing this occupation? Why or why not?

Questions for "High-Value Career is Not Essential"

Choosing this pathway means that your career choices will initially be screened to determine whether they are a good fit with your personal factors. Those that do not align with your personal factors will be eliminated from your search. Careers can then be evaluated with regard to the labor market to make a career decision.

1. Examine the saved careers in your Occupation Library. Choose three careers that you believe have the greatest potential to match your personal interests, values, and goals.

   Use the Compare Occupations tool in Career Solutions to compare these occupations.
   - Write the occupation titles in the top row of the table below.
   - List your personal factors, in order of importance, in the first column.
   - Review each occupation in Career Solutions and mark an X in the table for each factor match that you find. For this activity, it is best to focus on the following categories in Career Solutions – (1) Interests, (2) Values, and (3) Wage (wage is related to lifestyle goals).
   - Add the number of X's for each occupation and write the total in the last row.
   - The occupation(s) with the most X's can be considered a better personal fit.
   - If a tie is found, the occupation with more X's at the top of the list is a better personal fit.

Personal Factor	Occupation 1	Occupation 2	Occupation 3
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
Personal Factor Match Total			

2. Examine annual openings and median wage for these occupations. Which of these, if any, meet the criteria for a high-value career?

3. Based on your review of personal fit and labor market data, which of these occupations would you consider pursuing? Why?

For All Decision-Making Pathways

1. Repeat the steps in your chosen decision-making pathway a few more times and work on generating a list of three potential careers. Arrange this list with your top career choice listed first.

Occupation Title	Why is this a good career choice for you?

2. Did you think this activity resulted in the best possible career choices for you? Why or why not?

3. What additional factors might you want to consider before making a career decision?

Next Steps

At the end of the lesson, take a moment to review and assess the learning objectives. Engage students in a brief discussion of the learning opportunities that were made available in the classroom.

In this lesson, students were provided the opportunity to…

- Review the components of an informed career decision.
- Evaluate the personal and external factors that can affect their employment success.
- Consolidate and apply their personal and external factors to the selection of careers.
- List top career choices and compare these occupations to determine a primary career path.

After providing a brief overview, encourage students to…

- Continue their reflection on personal and external factors that can affect employment success.
- Think about factors most relevant to them and the types of occupations that fit their needs.
- Determine how they might use this information in selecting a career.
- Prepare for future lessons that will focus on developing an effective career plan.

Components of an Effective Career Plan

Education and Training

Financial Resources

Support Services

Work Experience

Job Search Strategies

Motivation and Drive

Lesson 8: Connecting Careers to Education

Overview

After students have identified potential career choices, the next step is to develop an effective career plan that outlines a path to achieving their career goals. As with career exploration, there are several critical components to a strong career plan, including education, financial resources, support services, work experience, job search strategies, and methods for maintaining motivation and drive. Each of these components play a specific role in supporting students as they progress along their career journey. To begin the planning process, it can be helpful to start with identifying appropriate education and training experiences. Most high-value careers require at least some postsecondary education, meaning that, for many students, education and training will be an essential and necessary component of their career plan.

The intention of this lesson is to introduce the career planning process and help students connect their career choices to education pathways. Students are encouraged to explore other elements of effective career plans (e.g., financial resources, support services, etc.) when they are ready to step beyond the career exploration process and become fully immersed within the career planning process.

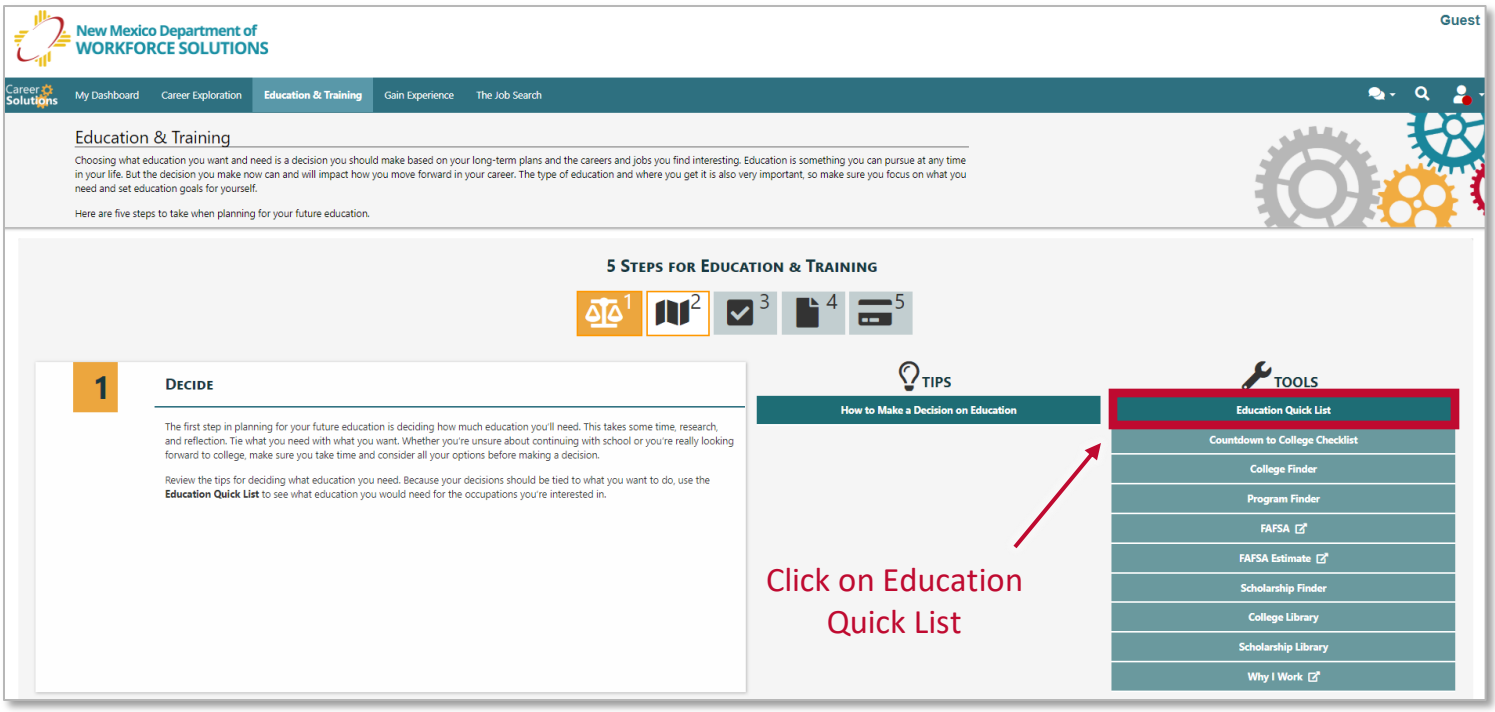
This lesson contains….

- Information on how to access and use the Education and Training section.
- A review of the components of an effective career plan.
- Methods for helping students start the career planning process.
- Strategies for searching for and identifying appropriate education programs.
- A review of next steps for students using insights gained from this lesson.

How to Use This Tool

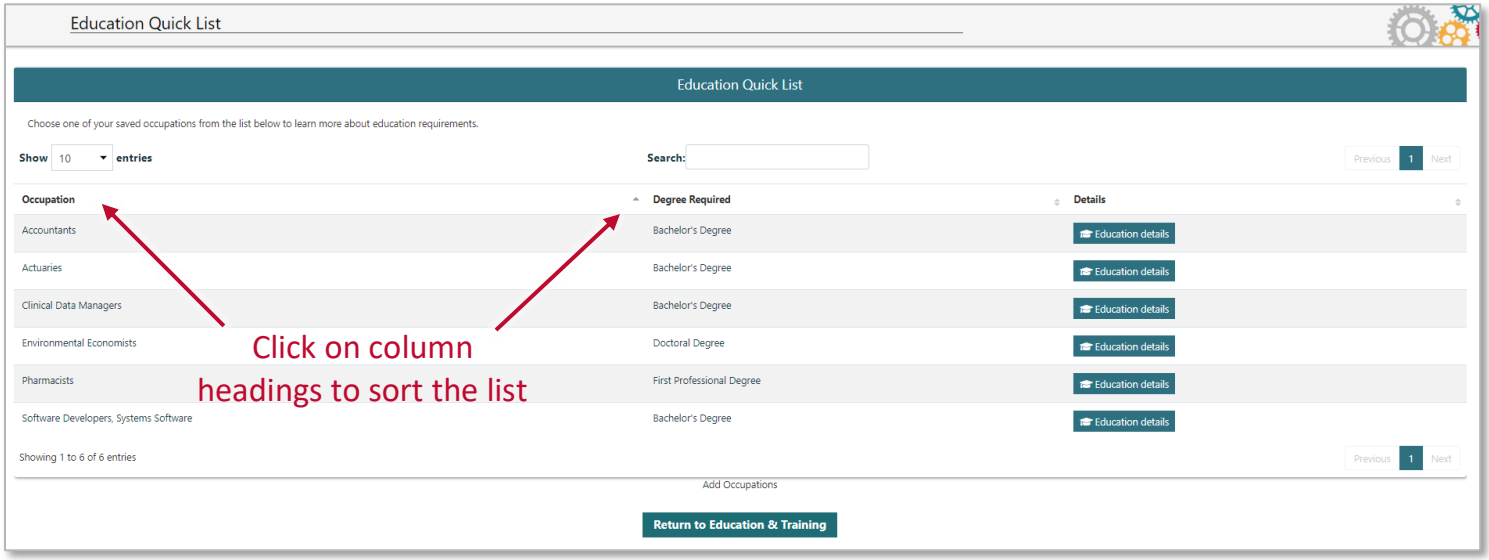
Before beginning, be sure to sign into the system. The Education and Training tab is located on the homepage for Career Solutions. Simply click the Education and Training link at the top of the page.

Once within the Education and Training section, a page similar to the one below will appear. A list of links to the right of the page provide access to several helpful tools. The Education Quick List is a good place to start.

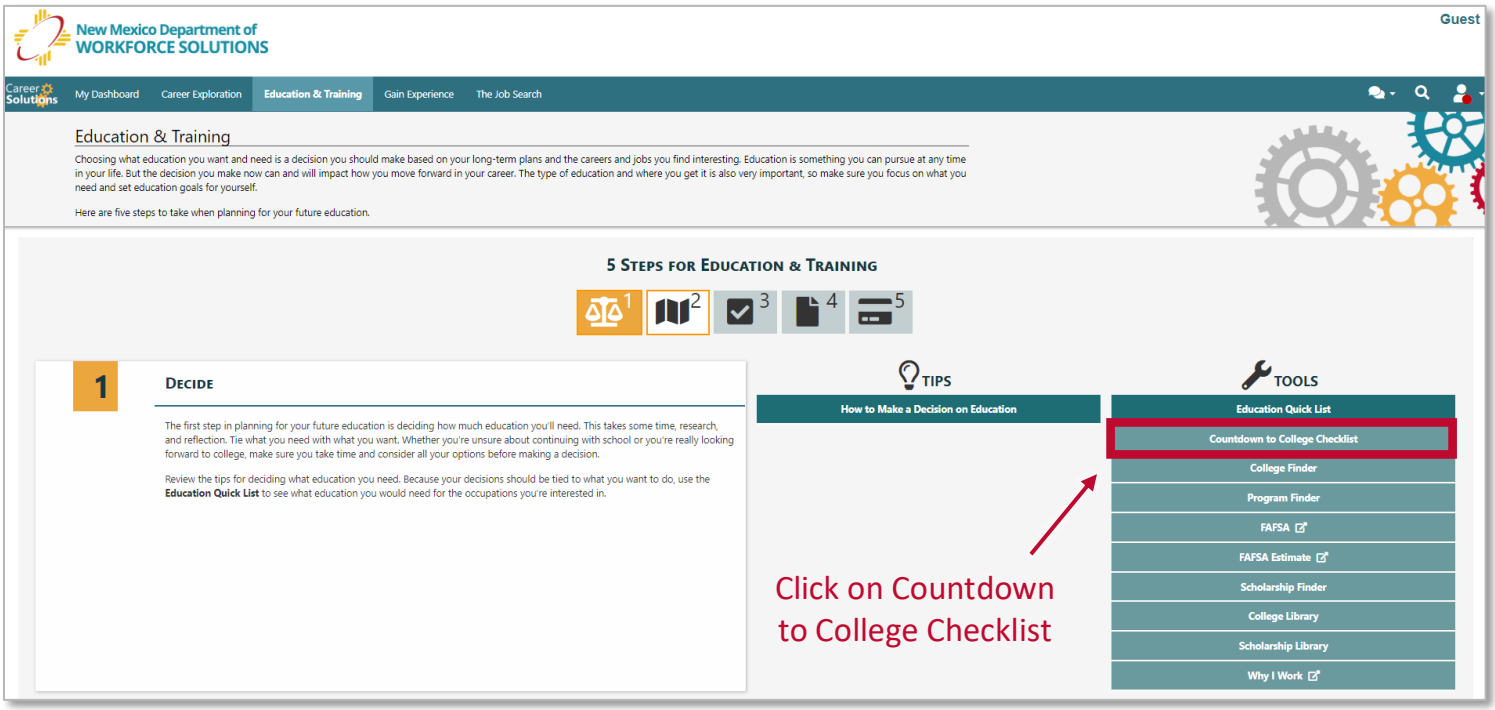


The Education Quick List displays all saved occupations within the Occupation Library and the required degree for each occupation. This page can be used to quickly compare requirements and get a general sense of education that may be needed for students' top occupation choices.

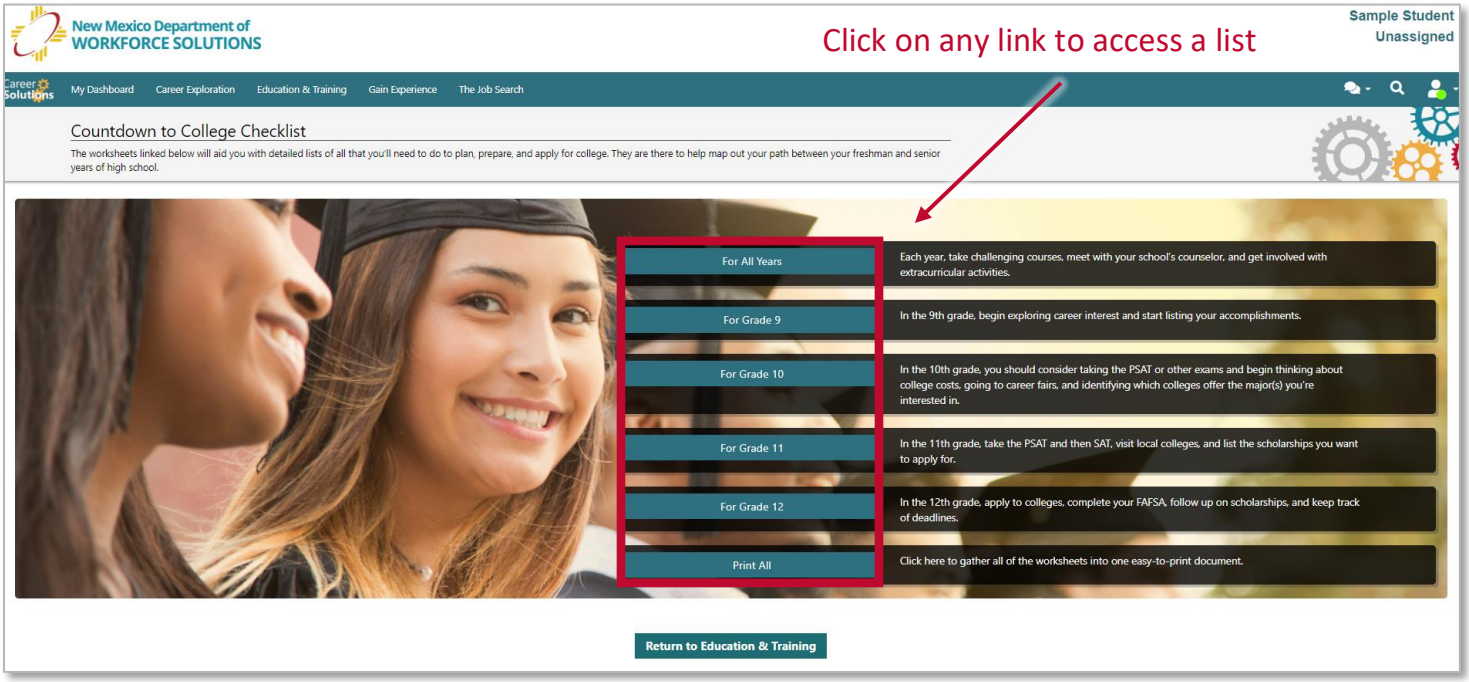
Clicking on the column headings will sort the list alphabetically or from lowest-highest (or vice versa).



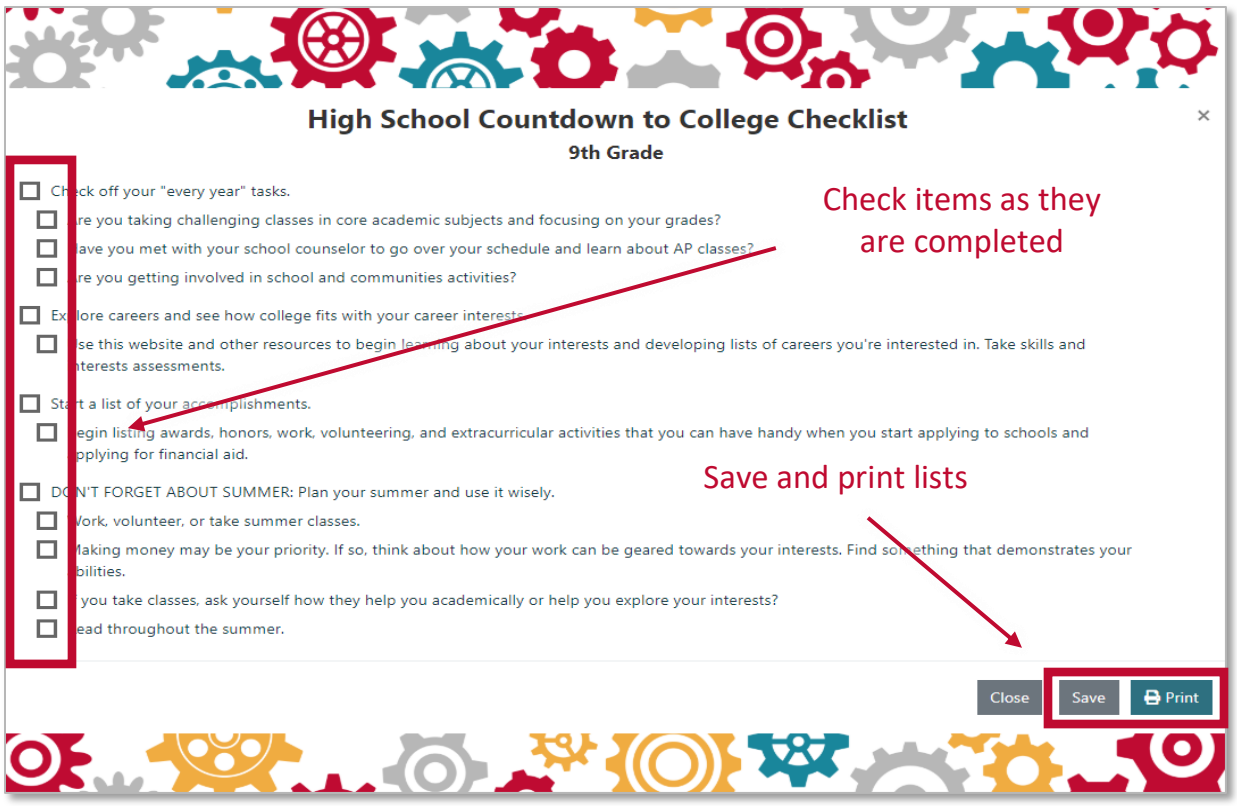
An additional helpful tool is the Countdown to College Checklist. This page contains worksheets that guide students through the tasks they need to complete as the move through grades nine through twelve.



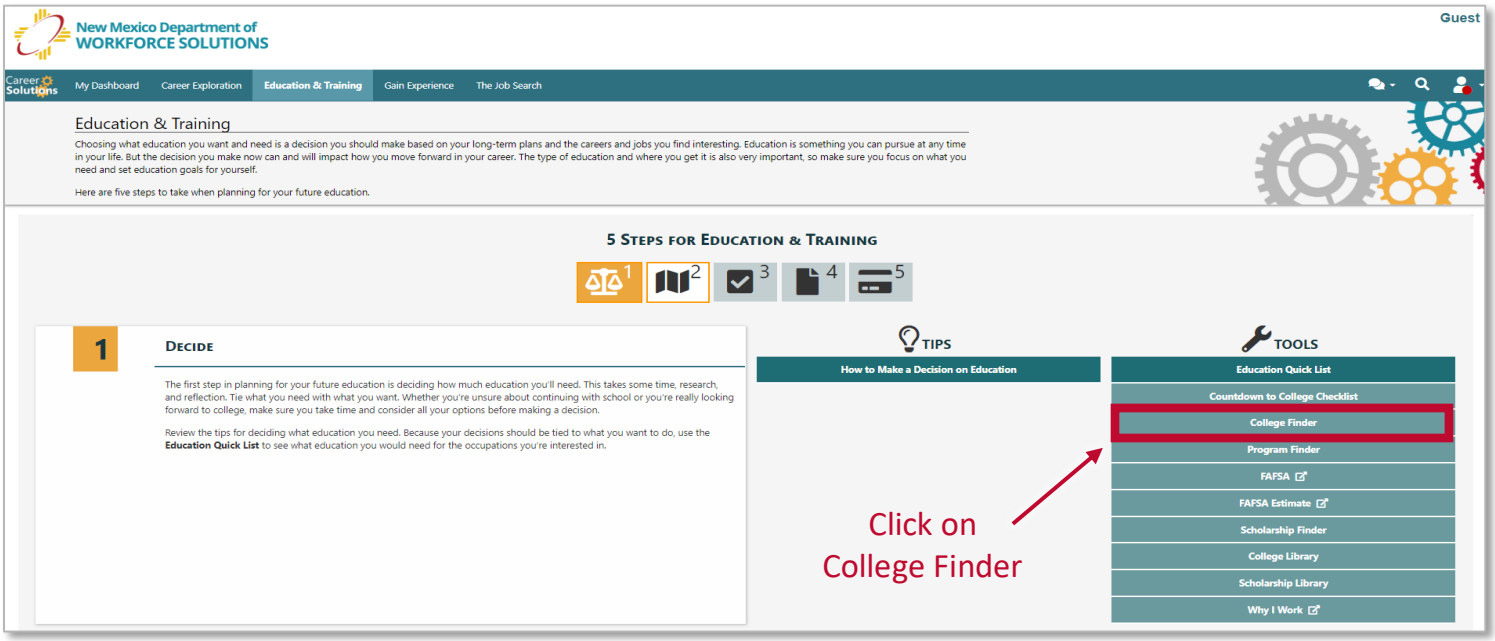
The first worksheet is for all years and should be reviewed by all students, regardless of year. The remaining lists are for specific years. Clicking on any link will reveal the list for the selected year.



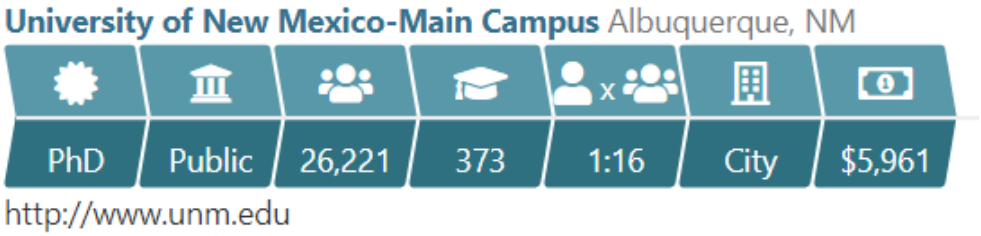
Each worksheet can be completed online and saved at any time. There is also the option to print each worksheet so that it can be completed outside of the system.



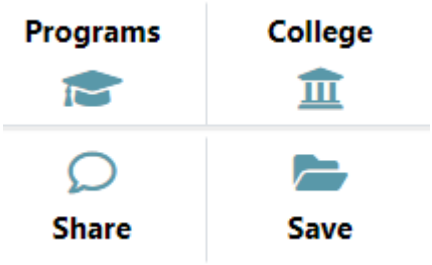
One of the more robust tools in the Education and Training section is the College Finder. This tool lists several colleges in the state and provides the ability to explore education options using filters and sorting features.



For each institution listed, a summary is provided that displays the highest degree offered, as well as whether the institution is public or private, and the number of students enrolled. Additional helpful information includes the number of degree programs, the faculty-to-student ratio, locale, and tuition rate.

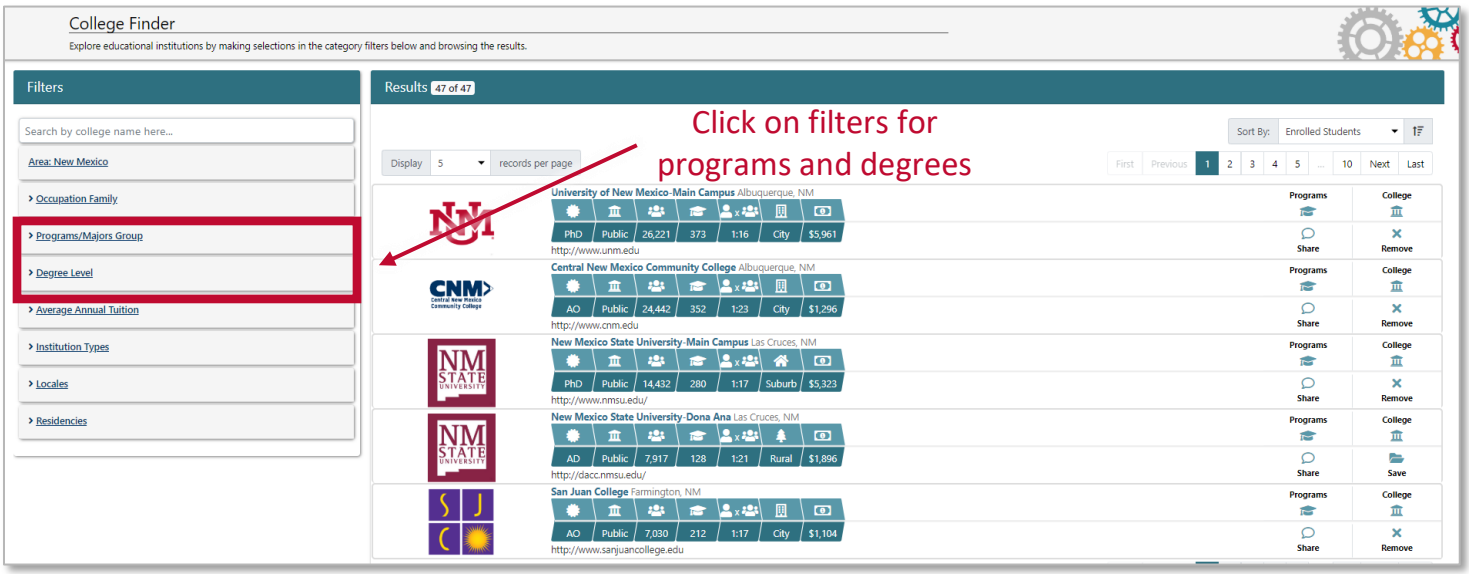


To explore programs offered and specific college details, click on the Programs or College link to the right of the summary. There is also the option to share or save the college in the College Library.

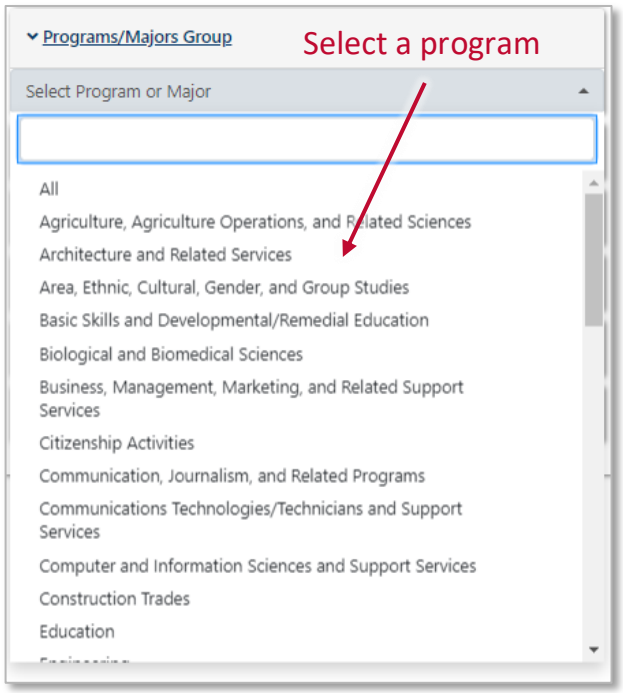


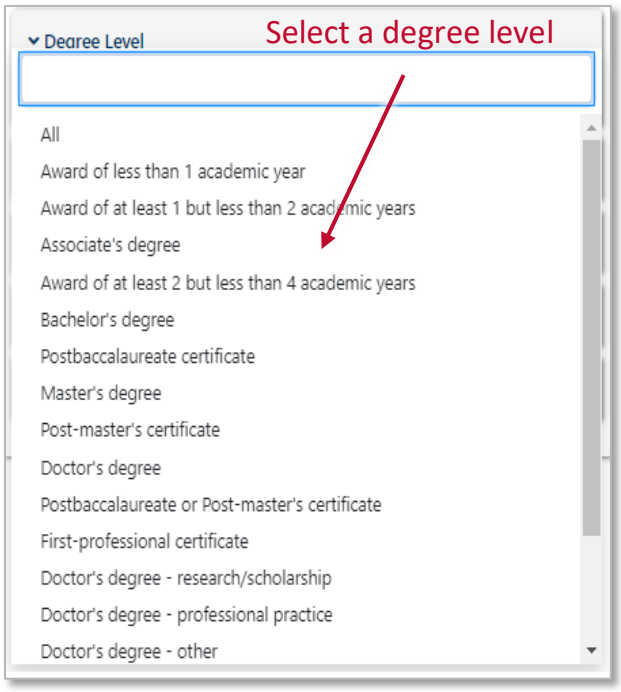
Given that many students will have already identified potential occupations by this point, they will likely find this tool most useful to explore academic institutions that offer degrees and programs that align with their career choice.

To do this, they will want to use the filters focused on programs and degrees.



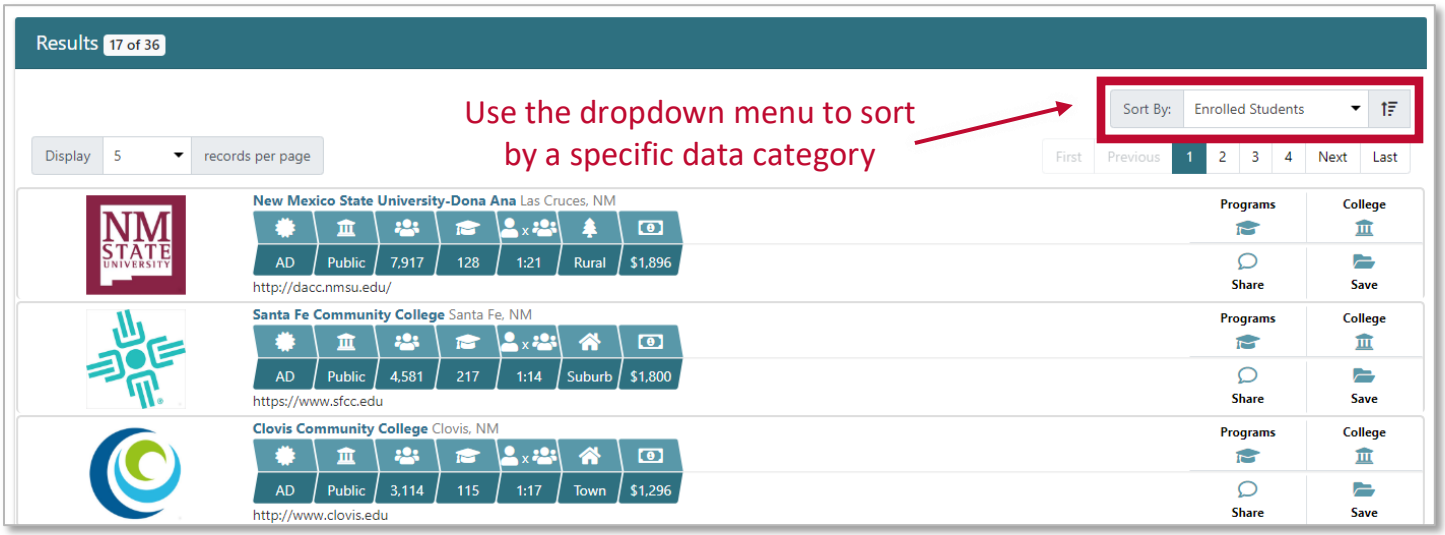
Using these filters, students can select the academic program/major group associated with their career choice and the degree level they need to achieve to prepare for their career.



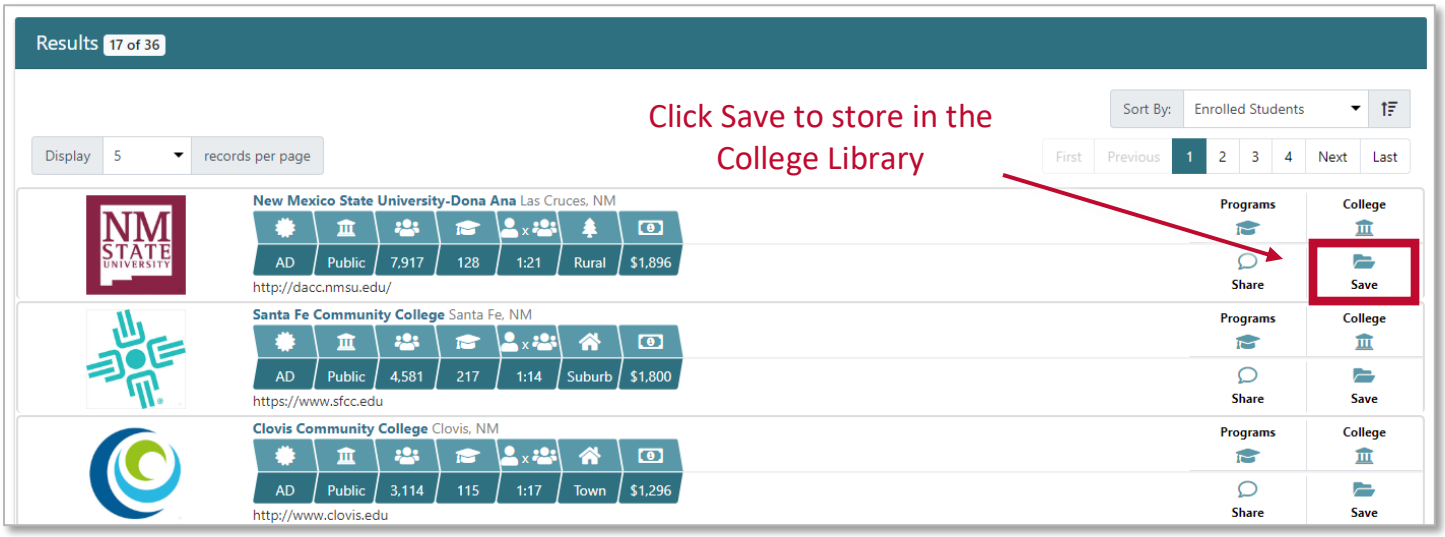


The list that will emerge will consists of academic institutions that offer programs within the selected program/major group. These institutions will also offer degrees within the selected degree type.

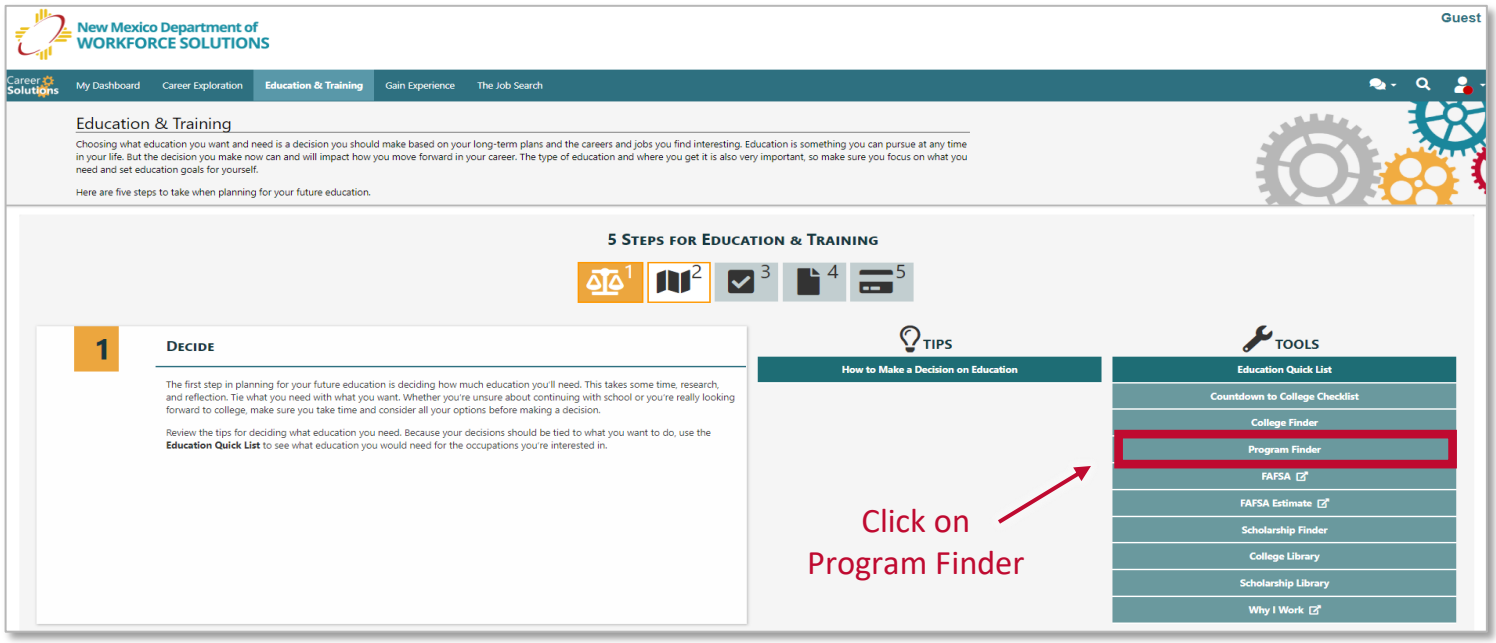
Initially, the list will be sorted by the number of enrolled students. To sort by other categories, such as tuition rates or number of programs offered, use the dropdown menu in the upper right corner.



When students have found an institution that fits their needs, they can save the college in their College Library by clicking Save.

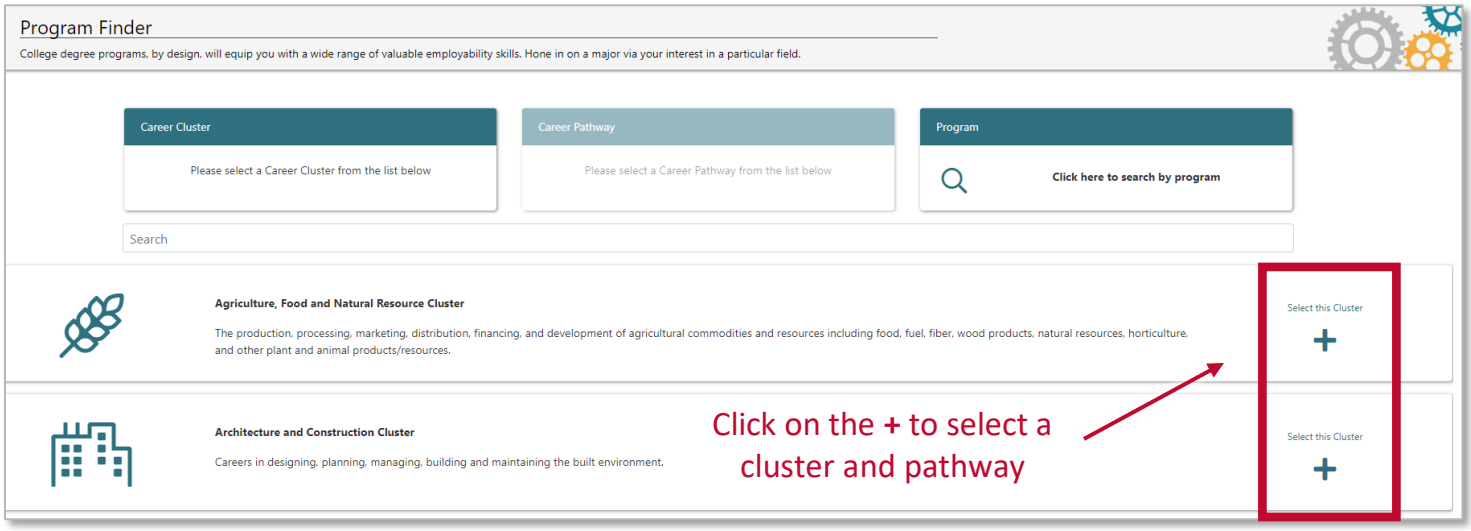


Another helpful tool within the Education and Training section is the Program Finder. This tool is useful for identifying programs that are associated with specific career fields. Students who want a postsecondary experience, but have not made a final career choice, can use this tool to explore postsecondary programs that match their broad career interests.

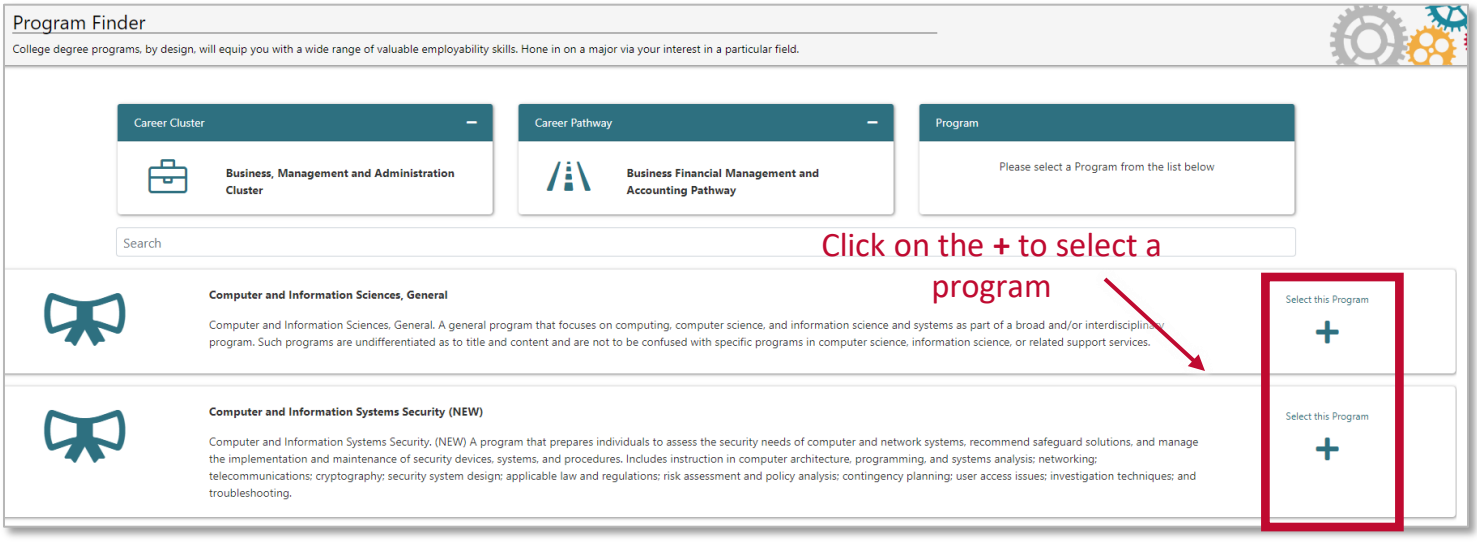


To use this tool, students first need to select a career cluster and pathway that aligns with their work interests (see Lesson 2).

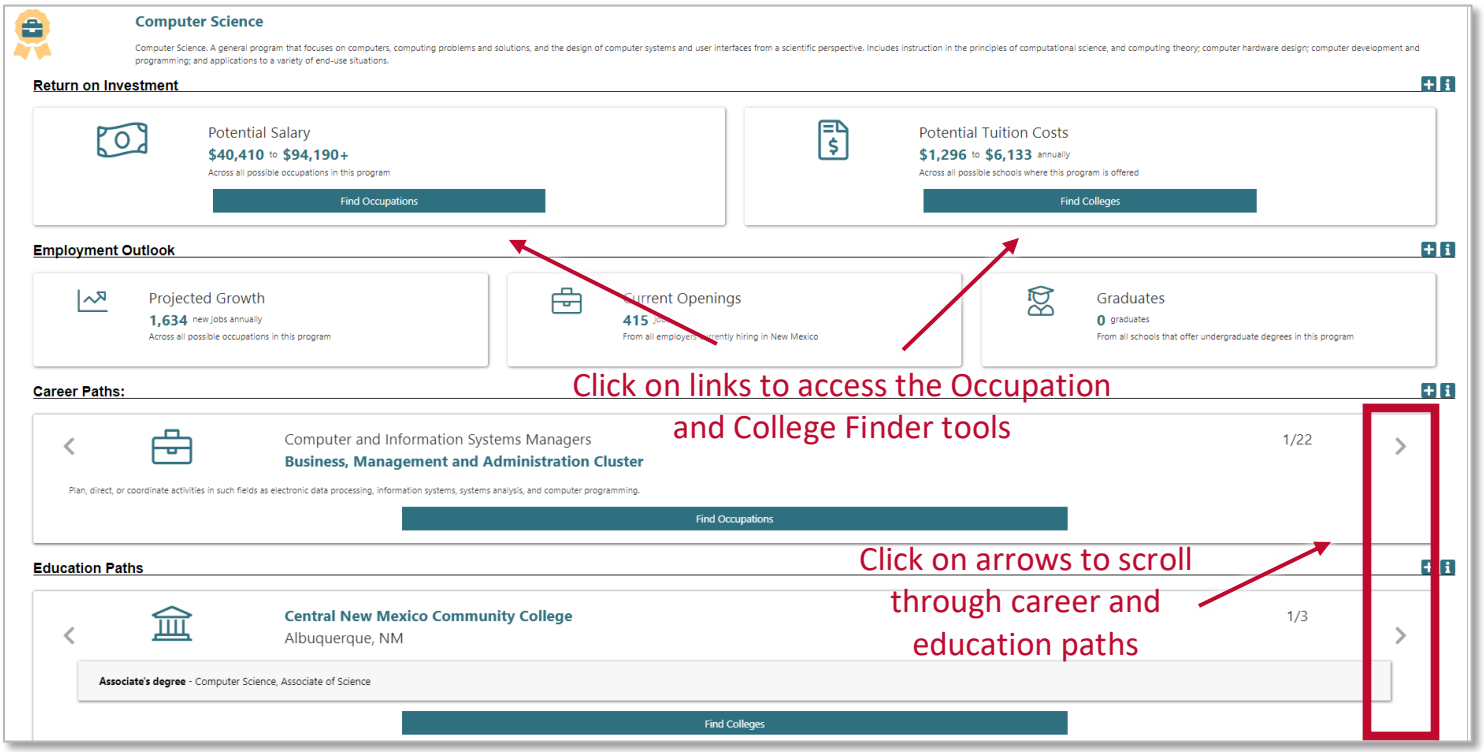
Helpful Tip: *Students may find it helpful to review information about career clusters and pathways in the New Mexico Career Clusters Guide.*



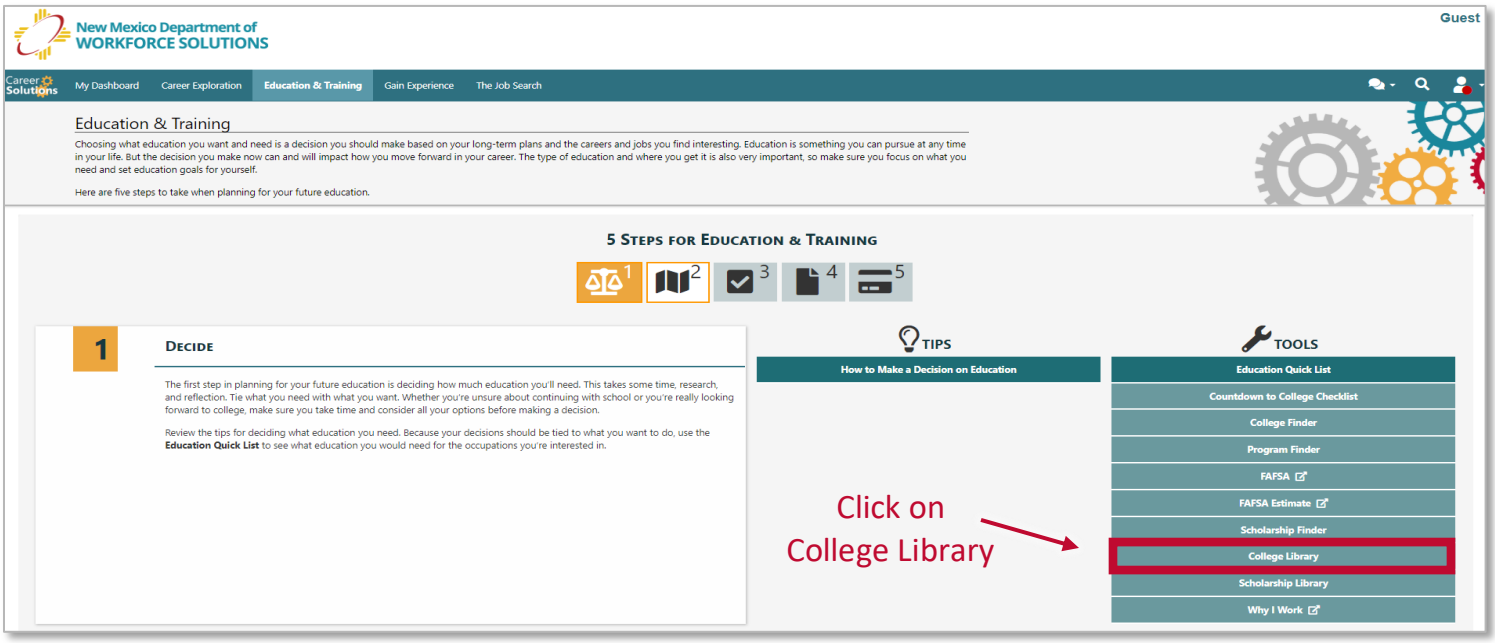
Once a cluster and pathway have been selected, a list of related programs will appear. Students can review the list and select a program based on their interests.



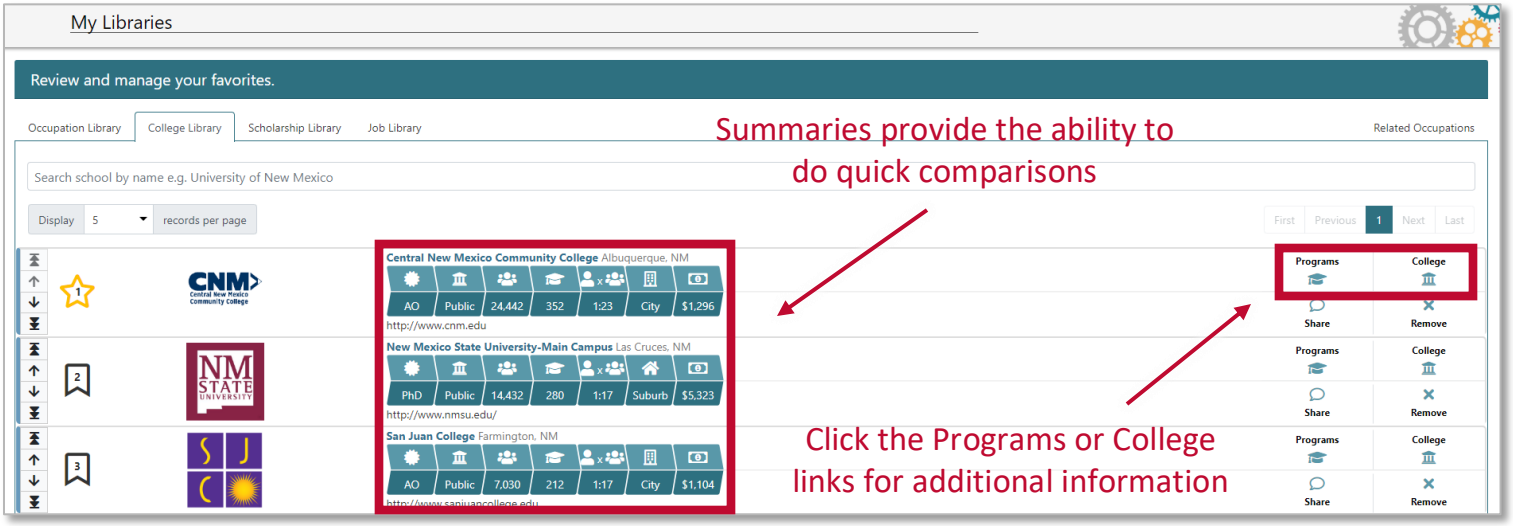
For each program, there is an information page that displays potential salary and tuition costs, along with associated career paths and education options. Some helpful features are identified below.



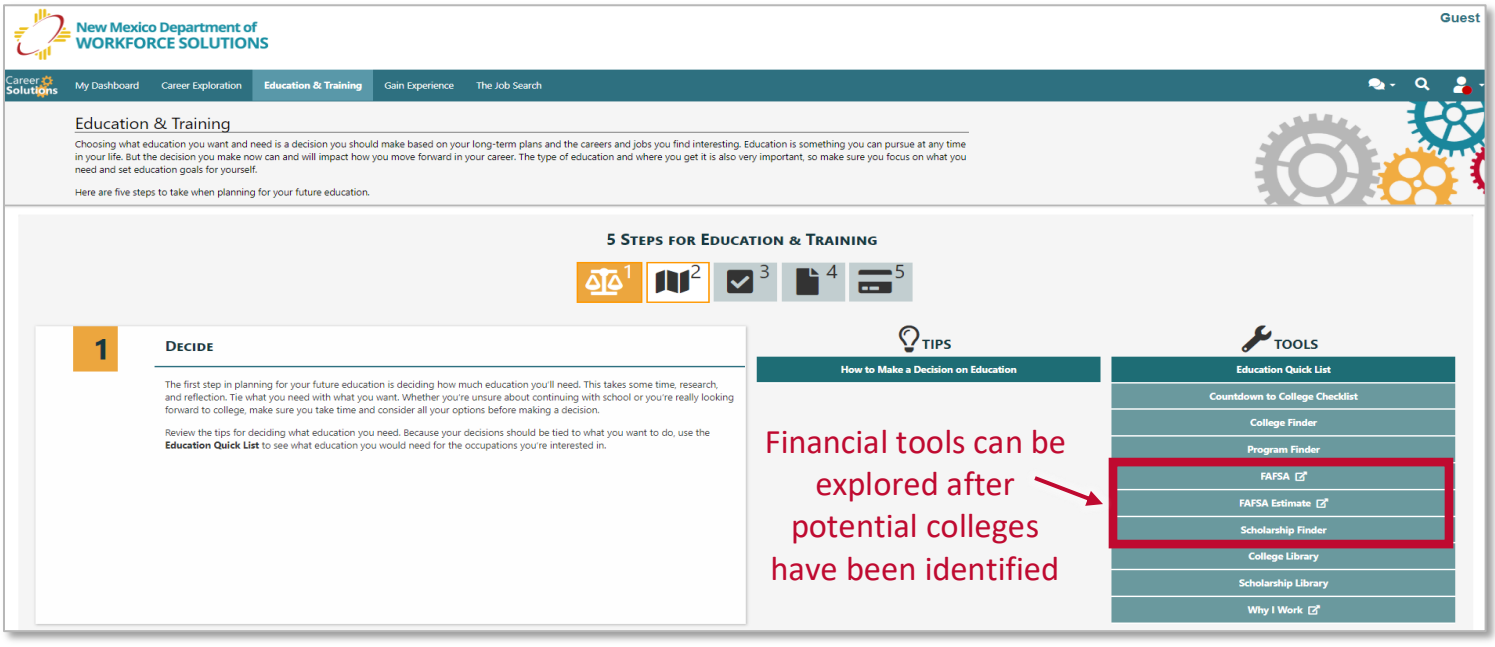
The final feature that students will find useful at this early stage of the career planning process is the College Library. This library functions much like the Occupation Library, providing a quick rundown of saved colleges with a brief snapshot of what each institution offers.



The College Library page provides a place for students to review and compare potential college choices. The summaries can help students quickly identify major distinguishing features between each education option. To delve further into each college, students can click on the Programs or College links to the right.



The other tools presented in Education and Training section, including the FAFSA links and the scholarship tools, focus on how to access financial resources. These tools will be most useful after students have made a college selection. It is recommended that students explore these areas at a later date when they are ready to enter the financial stage of the career planning process.



Connecting with Students

Learning Objectives

In this lesson, students will be given the opportunity to…

- Discuss the components of an effective career plan.
- Identify the benefits of exploring postsecondary education options.
- Examine the education requirements for their selected career(s).
- Evaluate potential education institutions that align with their career goals.
- Determine next steps in developing a career plan.

Classroom Discussions and Presentations

Introduction

The career selection process can be an exciting time for students. To help them continue this momentum and build resources that create a bridge to their career, they will need assistance in developing an effective career plan. This is where many students experience frustration that centers largely around unfamiliarity with career preparation processes. Providing a streamlined approach to navigating career resources can significantly enhance students' chances of achieving employment success. Because the education component is often the most complex and requires a fair amount of preliminary planning to meet deadlines, this is a good place to begin. In starting this step, students will first need to examine potential career choices and identify the education requirements. Once identified, they can seek postsecondary institutions that will help them attain the necessary degrees and certificates. Ultimately, their education choice will be a driving mechanism that directs many of the remaining components of their career plan.

Talking Points

Below are some helpful comments to share with students.

- Having identified some potential career choices, the next task is to develop a career plan. (***Helpful Tip:*** *Print and share the diagram below. Use this to introduce the components of an effective career plan.*)
- Career plans are made up of various important components that can support your journey to employment success. Getting your education and training in place can be an important first step.
- It can be challenging to identify they type of education you need and where you will go.
- Because the process can be complex, it is a good idea to start the education search early to ensure you have ample time to make the best decision possible, as well as meet any admissions requirements.
- Developing basic strategies to navigate the education search process can help you quickly identify the tools and information that are most useful.
- Finding the right academic institution that meets your education needs, as well as your personal and financial goals, can be just as important as your career choice.
- Taking time now to research education choices can help ensure you achieve your education goals.

Components of an Effective Career Plan

Education and Training

Financial Resources

Support Services

Work Experience

Job Search Strategies

Motivation and Drive

Discussion Questions

As a class or in small groups, have students reflect on the following questions. Help students talk about and work through their positive and negative feelings regarding career planning.

- Have you done any career planning yet? That is, have you started to think about what needs to be done to achieve your career goals?
- What do you think will be most exciting part about preparing for your new career?
- When you think about preparing your career, what do you think will be the most challenging task? How might you deal with this challenge?
- How important do you think education and training will be in helping you attain your career goals?
- What potential roadblocks do you see in getting the education and training you might need? Do you think these roadblocks can be overcome? Why or why not?
- What do you hope to get out of your education and training experience?
- What type of academic institution do you hope to attend (community college, trade school, university, etc.)? Why?

Exploring the System

After discussing the components of effective career plans and helping students work through their positive and negative perspectives on the career planning process, they can be introduced to the Education and Training section in Career Solutions.

The "How to Use this Tool" section above provides a summary of useful information to share with students.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Encourage students to sign into the site to ensure they can save data.
- Help students locate the Education and Training section.
- Review the basic features of this tool, including how to access checklists and locate colleges.
- Assist students in identifying information that is most useful to explore in this section.
- Discuss how to use the information displayed to connect with colleges.

Classroom Activity

Connecting Careers to Education

In achieving their career goals, students will have to navigate a great deal of unfamiliar territory, most of which centers around the education and training requirements they need to attain to gain entry into their desired occupation. As such, they will need a fair amount of assistance in exploring their career choices and the education requirements associated with these choices. Fortunately, there are several online systems, including Career Solutions, that identify requirements for occupations, as well as academic institutions that offer programs that can help students meet these requirements. Connecting students with these systems and helping them navigate the tools within them, can help streamline the process and promote informed education decisions. This can be incredibly valuable in removing a common roadblock that students encounter in not knowing where to go next or even where to start looking.

To locate the Education and Training section, review the "How to Use this Tool" section above.

It is recommended that teachers and instructors…

- Discuss the importance of understanding education requirements and locating academic institutions.
- Review the Education and Training section in Career Solutions.
- Identify the purpose of this section as a place to explore education options and resources.
- Provide an opportunity for students to explore this tool in the classroom or at home.
- Encourage students to complete the Connecting Careers to Education sheet (see below).
- Assist students in understanding the benefits and limitations of using the strategies outlined in the worksheet to explore education requirements and academic institutions.

Exploring the Results

The purpose of this activity is to help students become familiar with the process of identifying education requirements and locating academic institutions that can help them achieve these requirements. Upon completion of the worksheet, they will have had the opportunity to compare requirements for various occupations and explore options for meeting these requirements. Ultimately, their efforts will culminate in the selection of at least one potential school that offers programs and degrees related to their chosen occupation. Students will have also reviewed college checklists and assessed their progress in completing the steps needed to prepare for postsecondary education.

The outcome of this activity is likely to be the generation of more questions than answers. As students begin to connect with schools, they will naturally be interested in learning more. At this point, it can be helpful to advise students to visit school websites and make plans to visit schools in person. Another likely outcome can be anxiety as students begin to think through the necessary steps to gain admission to their desired school. It will be important to remind students that is best to focus on one step at a time and tackle small pieces each day/week. Also, sharing resources that can help support them through the process, such as counselors and coaches, can reassure students they are not alone and others are available to help.

Overall, the point of this activity is to help students get started in the career planning process by opening the door to their academic journey. This is a powerful first step that can begin to bring their career goals into focus. Moving from what they need to how to get it can be a significant leap that provides the critical momentum needed to continue to the finish line – employment success!

Connecting Careers to Education

Instructions: Use the information and tools presented in the Education and Training section in Career Solutions to answer the questions below.

Identify the What and Where – *What education do you need and where can you get it?*

Before you begin exploring education options, it can be helpful to get a sense of the type of education you will need for your chosen career path. Once you know what you will need, you can begin the process of locating appropriate academic institutions. The questions below will help you work through these steps.

1. Visit your occupation library and review the education requirements for your top career three career choices. Complete the table below. List the occupation titles in the top row. (***Helpful Tip:*** *Education information is displayed within each occupation profile*.)

Education/Training Requirements	Occupation 1	Occupation 2	Occupation 3
Most Common Degree Requirement			
Most Common Certificate Requirement			
Most Common Training Program			
Typical Amount of Work Experience			

2. Review the table above. Which of the three career choices seems most appealing, now that you have the education and training requirements listed? Why?

3. Choose one of the three occupations that you explored above. Use the College Finder in Career Solutions to find three academic institutions you might like to attend that fit the education requirements for the occupation. Complete the table below. (***Helpful Tip:*** *Using the program and degree filters will help focus the list on institutions that meet minimum requirements.*)

Occupation Title: **Program:**		**Degree:** **Certificate:**	
	Academic Institution 1	**Academic Institution 2**	**Academic Institution 3**
Number of Students Enrolled			
Number of Degree Programs			
Location (city, suburb, rural, etc.)			
Tuition			

4. Review the table above. Which of these three academic institutions would you be most likely to choose? Why?

5. What other factors might you want to consider before making a final decision about a school?

Identify the How – *How will you achieve your education goals?*

Exploring education options and navigating the application and funding process can be somewhat challenging. To help you keep focused and on track, there are checklists available in Career Solutions. Take time to review these checklists and answer the questions below.

1. Review the check list for All Years, as well as the checklist for your current year. How many of the items on the All Years list have you completed? How many for your current year list?

2. Did you encounter any items that you have questions about? Where might you go to get additional information or assistance?

3. What important deadlines are coming up? What might you need to focus on now to be sure you're ready for the next step or submission date?

4. Review the checklist for next year. What would you consider as the top three tasks that you need to complete that year? If there is not a list for the next year, look ahead and generate these items on your own.

Broadening Your Scope – *What other types education programs might you be interested in?*

Identifying the type of education you will need and where you will get it is one way of selecting an academic institution. Another method is to explore programs of study that fit your interests and determine which institutions offer these programs. This approach often works best if you are struggling with an occupation choice and would prefer to study within a particular field before making a career choice. The questions below will walk you through this process.

1. Use the New Mexico Career Cluster Guide to select a career cluster and pathway the fits your work interests. List your selected cluster and pathway below. (***Helpful Tip:*** *Your work interests were identified using the Work Interests Assessment in Career Solutions and should be saved in the system.*)

2. Use the Program Finder in Career Solutions to select your cluster and pathway. Once these have been selected, choose a program that you think would be a good fit. List your chosen program below.

3. What are some occupations associated with this program of study?

4. What academic institutions offer this program of study?

5. Does this approach to exploring education options and careers work better for you? Why or why not?

Next Steps

At the end of the lesson, take a moment to review and assess the learning objectives. Engage students in a brief discussion of the learning opportunities that were made available in the classroom.

In this lesson, students were provided the opportunity to…

- Discuss the components of an effective career plan.
- Identify the benefits of exploring postsecondary education options.
- Examine the education requirements for their selected career(s).
- Evaluate potential education institutions that align with their career goals.

After providing a brief overview, encourage students to…

- Continue their reflection on the career planning process.
- Connect with potential academic institutions to get additional information.
- Explore resources that can help them navigate entry into postsecondary opportunities.
- Prepare for future planning activities that can help outline their career pathway.

Components of an Effective Career Plan

Education and Training

Financial Resources

Support Services

Work Experience

Job Search Strategies

Motivation and Drive

Additional Resources

Additional national and state-based resources that support career exploration activities are provided below.

	O*NET Online	onetonline.org
	O*NET Resource Center	onetcenter.org
	My Next Move	mynextmove.org
	CareerOneStop	careeronestop.org
	Occupational Outlook Handbook	bls.gov/ooh/
	Bureau of Labor Statistics Career Clusters	bls.gov/careeroutlook/2015/article/career-clusters.htm
	National Career Clusters Framework	careertech.org/career-clusters

New Mexico
Career Awareness Websites and Resources

Career Resources

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions strives to be a gateway to employment. This site presents links to multiple resources, including: career systems, planning tools, education options, and more.

Career Solutions is an online career exploration and planning website for youth and young adults. The website provides access to interactive tools that assist individuals in exploring careers and planning their future.

The New Mexico Workforce Connection Online System is New Mexico's official online portal to virtual job matching services, employment resources, the Unemployment Insurance System, labor market information, and more.

Career Guides

The New Mexico Career Clusters Guide is designed to be a tool for planning and preparing for a career. It provides a structure for selecting careers based on linking personal attributes to occupations and training requirements.

The New Mexico Career Guide is an all-in-one job seeker resource. It includes sections on career exploration, planning, experiences, education, the job search, and school listings.

Labor Market Tools

New Mexico Career Pathways displays regional labor market information for school districts organized around the National Career Clusters Framework. The site includes interactive tools, regional reports, podcasts, and more.

The New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions site offers a Labor Market menu. This menu presents links to data, statistics, dashboards, resources, and publications related to labor market information.

LASER is a comprehensive labor market information system. Several search tools and functions are available that allow current and historic labor market data to be customized to meet individual needs.

Plans and Pathways

The Next Step Plan is a personal, written plan developed by each student at the end of grades 8-11 and during grade 12. The purpose of the plan is to target students' postsecondary interests and outline studies for high school.

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NMPED
Public Education Department

New Mexico
Career Awareness Websites and Resources

Work-Based Learning Experiences

New Mexico Department of WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
INTERNSHIPS | STUDENTS WORK

The New Mexico Internships / Student Work site connects individuals to practical work experiences in their local community. Helpful guides and information pages are available to explain and direct the process.

NEW MEXICO CTLP

The Career Technical Leadership Project (CTLP) manages organizations that engage students in career and technical education activities as an integral part of the instruction program to meet the needs of a well-trained workforce.

New Mexico Ag Ed & FFA

The New Mexico Agricultural Education & FFA Association provides opportunities for leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

EDUCATORS RISING
NEW MEXICO

Educators Rising cultivates highly skilled educators by guiding young people on the path to becoming accomplished teachers, beginning in high school and extending through college and into the profession.

Postsecondary Education

HIGHER EDUCATION DASHBOARD

The purpose of this site is to display information related to New Mexico's higher education institutions, including: key performance indicators, institution facts, contact information, and location map.

NMEAF

The New Mexico Educational Assistance Foundation provides resources for financial planning to fund higher education. This site presents several tools and information pages related to funding higher education.

For additional information, please visit:

NMPED
College and Career Readiness Bureau

ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/college-career-readiness

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RESEARCH • POLICY • PRACTICE

	Target Audience				User Level			Career Exploration					Career Planning					Labor Market Information (LMI)					Support Services				
	Youth and Young Adults	Adults and Jobseekers	Educators and Policymakers	Employers	Easy	Moderate	Advanced	Career Exploration Assessments	Career Cluster/Pathway Overviews	Job Descriptions	Work-Based Learning Experiences	Save, Review, and Compare Tools	Resume and Interview Tools	Local Job Listings	Local Career Events and Services	Education and Training Information	Financial Planning Tools	LMI for Career Clusters	Local/Regional Focus	State Focus	Regional Reports and Analyses	LMI Guides and Resources	Youth services	Disability Services	Family Services	Financial Assistance and Services	Career Guidance / Counseling
Career Resources																											
Department of Workforce Solutions	•	•		•		•					•				•	•	•						•	•			•
Career Solutions	•				•			•		•	•	•	•	•		•	•			•						•	
Workforce Connection		•		•		•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	•	•	
Career Guides																											
Career Clusters Guide	•	•			•			•	•	•						•	•	•		•							
Career Guide	•	•			•					•	•		•			•	•			•							
Labor Market Tools																											
Career Pathways			•		•				•									•	•	•	•	•					
Department of Workforce Solutions Labor market Information		•		•		•													•	•	•	•					
LASER		•		•			•												•	•	•						
Plans and Pathways																											
Next Step Plan	•		•			•										•											

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Work-Based Learning Experiences																											
Internships / Student Work	•	•	•	•	•					•	•	•	•	•													
Career Technical Leadership Project	•		•	•	•				•		•				•											•	
Agricultural Education & FFA	•		•		•			•	•	•	•				•	•										•	
Educators Rising	•		•		•						•				•	•										•	
Postsecondary Education																											
Higher Education Dashboard	•	•	•			•										•											
NMEAF	•	•			•												•									•	