



One in a series for Helping All People Rebound and Advance

► Universal Career Navigation Services

Why it Matters

Americans hold an average of 12 jobs during their working lives, and nearly one in four change their job or career every 12 months. The COVID-driven downturn has accelerated this pace of near-constant change.

The process of exploring occupations, choosing a career path, and applying for jobs can be chaotic and seemingly random, and the results are often unsatisfying for people from low to moderate incomes and Black, brown, and Indigenous populations. Those jobseekers need timely and accurate information about career options and skills that are in demand. They also need unbiased ways of assessing and representing their skills, as well as personalized support from culturally competent professional counselors and mentors who can show them how to build professional networks, engage in self-advocacy, identify good jobs and good employers, and combat barriers based on race and class.

Yet most career navigation services and resources are geared toward corporate workers and large

employers. People from underrepresented communities generally only have limited access to underfunded and fragmented forms of support.

Current Challenges

- **Only about 27 percent** of college students visit their campus career services office, and those who have largely report that the services were unhelpful.
- Public K-12 schools tend to have unworkably high ratios of students to counselors, and many counselors can barely meet students' needs for psychological and social supports, let alone provide them with individualized career advice.
- Although American Job Centers provide services to millions of jobseekers each year, they are hamstrung by **a fragmented vendor market, a lack of useful technology solutions**, limitations to publicly available labor market information, and cost-prohibitive real-time labor market information solutions.

DEFINITION

Career navigation services

A collection of tools and resources designed to help people of any age make informed choices about their employment, training, and educational options. The most valuable offerings are tailored to individuals' interests and talents, are available in multiple languages, and include interactive tools and services designed to help people adopt a growth mindset and develop decision-making, critical thinking, and goal-setting skills. They also serve to interrupt the perpetuation of historic biases.

What's Needed

States must develop universal career navigation services that are tech-enabled, place-based, advancement-driven, and available to workers and learners in real time, so they can make informed decisions about employment and education pathways.

What State Policymakers Can Do



Foundational Steps

- ▶ Collect and publicly release education and employment outcomes of participants in public and private education and workforce training programs so that prospective students, their families, employers, institutions, and governments can make informed decisions about which careers and programs provide strong returns on investment in the labor market. Ensure that publicly available information is provided in multiple languages for students and families.
- ▶ Offer education, workforce, and economic development providers incentives to collaborate at a regional level to identify and publicize in-demand occupations that pay family sustaining wages. Their collaborative marketing efforts should be based on analysis of real-time and traditional labor market information and employer input.



Advanced Steps

- ▶ Provide guidance, technical assistance, and funding to high schools and colleges on how to help every student develop a career plan prior to graduation. Use state resources to expand the use of tech-enabled career navigation tools in schools, and thereby increase the capacity of career counselors to serve at-risk, low-income, and first-generation students, who are likely to need the most personalized support as they explore career options and learn how to build social networks.



Transformational Steps

- ▶ Invest in a statewide career navigation technology platform that would be accessible to all jobseekers and students. The platform would be administered by the state workforce system and designed for use across the state's education, workforce development, economic development, unemployment insurance, and human services systems. To encourage people to make exploring career options part of their daily lives, it should be a user-friendly tool with a mobile interface, and it should be integrated into the internet of things ecosystem.

State Spotlights

Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, and Tennessee

These states emphasize career readiness in their state K-12 plans required under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. They have incorporated career readiness indicators into their K-12 accountability systems and allow systems to use federal and state funds to support career readiness services. Several states also require college and career plans for all students. For example, Massachusetts is implementing My College and Career Plan (MyCAP) and Tennessee uses Kuder's College and Career Planning System.



Colorado

Colorado has a free online platform, My Colorado Journey, to provide students, jobseekers, and service providers with a range of tools and timely resources to guide job searches and career planning efforts, locate education and training offerings, and access financial aid and community services. Made possible through a multi-agency partnership that is led by the Colorado Workforce Development Council and includes the Colorado Departments of Higher Education, Labor and Employment, and Human Services, the tool brings together fragmented data systems, services, and programs to create a unified and personalized experience for registered users, who are walked through specific action steps to achieve their job, career, and educational goals.



Michigan

Many of the Michigan Works! jobs centers use a virtual platform called WEDGE to help jobseekers hone their interview skills by video-recording their responses to common interview questions. Jobseekers then review their responses and work with career coaches to identify areas for improvement. Using the WEDGE platform and taking advantage of strong relationships with employers, West Michigan Works! has become a national leader in connecting jobseekers to in-demand careers. The center offers jobseekers easy access to job listings and ensures that they receive training for the skills those jobs require.



JFF Resources

Career Navigation Technology 2020

This JFF Labs report reviews next-generation career navigation tools that can help the tens of millions of people who are often overlooked or underserved by traditional approaches to career navigation.

[Read Now ▶](#)

Out of the Wreckage of COVID, the Rebirth of College Career Services

JFF President and CEO Maria Flynn discusses college career services in the New England Journal of Higher Education.

[Read Now ▶](#)

State Policy Road Map for an Equitable Economic Recovery

This resource is a part of a series that provides state policy solutions focused on people, places, and systems – with the goal of closing equity gaps and driving economic advancement for all.

[Read Full Series ▶](#)