Introducing the NEW Career Solutions
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Career Solutions, the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions’ (NMDWS) career exploration and planning website for younger audiences, has been updated, enhanced, and modernized. On July 1, 2016, www.NMCareerSolutions.com was launched, replacing the old website (www.dws.state.nm.us/careersolutions). Over the past six months, staff from NMDWS's Economic Research and Analysis Bureau (ER&A) worked with Geographic Solutions, the vendor for the department's Labor Analysis, Statistics, and Economic Research (LASER) and NM Workforce Connection websites, to create a youth-oriented career planning website that is interactive and engaging. The website has mobile functionality and can be easily accessed using a tablet or mobile phone. This article provides a description for each section and the tools that are available throughout the site.

Career Solutions Homepage
The Career Solutions homepage is where students and other users can access the different sections of the website, as well as resources that are considered particularly important and useful. Students can now Register and Sign In to Career Solutions and save their career exploration and planning activities. Students can access their saved information through two buttons, Your Occupation Library and the Career Solutions Toolbox. Other links from the homepage include information for parents and educators and occupation highlights, in addition to a quick job search menu and information on the difference between a job, an occupation, and a career. The homepage has been designed for easy navigation to career exploration and planning topics that students need.

Registration and Sign In
The registration process requires minimal information—name, zip code, email address, username, and password. The email address is used to prevent multiple registrations by the same person and also for the “forgot password” process. By registering with Career Solutions, students can take full advantage of all the interactive tools and services within the website. Students will be notified when they click on a tool that requires registration if they aren’t signed in. Students will also have their progress saved and can return to the section they were working on and pick up where they left off the next time they sign in. Tools and services that require registration will be noted with an asterisk (*) in this article.
Your Occupation Library and Career Solutions Toolbox

Your Occupation Library* provides students with a way to view a list of occupations they’ve saved while using the site. The information in Your Occupation Library is designed to help students decide which occupations might be right for them throughout the career exploration and planning process.

Quick reference icons for occupations provide students with a summary of the most important labor market facts for their saved occupations. Each occupation in the library has links to additional Education Info and Occupation Info, as well as options for students to “star” the occupations they’re most interested in or remove the occupation from their library.

The Occupation Info link shows students an Occupation Profile with the most relevant and important labor market facts for that occupation. Information includes common job duties, current job openings, education and training requirements, wage information, and projected future demand and job openings. The Education Info link shows students a short Education Profile that includes the education and training requirements, as well as institutions providing training and education for the occupation. Students can always click on the Occupation Details tab at the top of each profile for more information about the occupation.

The Career Solutions Toolbox also allows students to share their progress with a parent/guardian, career counselor, teacher, or friend. For example, after signing in, students can:

- REVIEW answers to their career exploration worksheet;
- SHARE their assessment results with a parent/guardian and discuss what they value in a job and career;
- PLAN their education with their career counselors and determine classes they need to take for college preparation;
- CREATE a resume and cover letter for a job application and revisit and revise them later on; and
- PRACTICE job interview questions and improve their answers after getting feedback from mentors.
Occupation Highlights

*Occupation Highlights* gives students quick and easy access to listings of opportunities based on different critical labor market factors. Listings include occupations with the fastest projected growth and most future job openings and occupations with the highest wages.

Quick Links

*Quick Links* provides access to commonly sought information related to career exploration and employment. This is where students and other users can find information on how to contact ER&A. A particularly useful quick link is *For Parents and Educators.* This section provides a wealth of information to parents/guardians and educators on how to use the Career Solutions website and how they can assist their students/children in exploring careers and planning for their future in the world of work.

Quick Job Search

*Quick Search* is simply a fast and easy way for a student, or any user, to look for current job openings. The student’s job search can be specific to his/her location.

Jobs, Occupations & Careers

One of the hurdles of career exploration and the job search can be terminology. “Jobs,” “Occupations,” and “Careers” are used throughout the Career Solutions website. The Jobs, Occupations & Careers link helps students understand the difference between the three before they start delving into their exploration and planning.

Build Your Path

Build Your Path is an information-based section that was created to show students why they’re visiting the Career Solutions website, why they should explore careers, and what options and tools are available to help plan for their future. It is a great place to start when first engaging students in career exploration and planning because it explains the importance of thinking about and preparing for the future and helps students understand what resources are available to them.

In Build Your Path, students visually navigate through each section of the website to get an overview of the section and the tools available. After students have learned about a step of the career planning process, they can select which step to learn about next or they can dive into specific sections of the website and start using the resources and tools immediately. Build Your Path guides them through career exploration, searching for a job, and pursuing education beyond high school and provides information on other options beyond work and school.

Career Exploration

All students should go through the *Career Exploration* section of the website to determine their options for career paths and the steps needed to pursue specific careers. As they learn the difference between a job, an occupation, and a career and select occupations they are interested in, they can begin to take real and measurable steps towards preparing for their future.

Get Started

The first step in Career Exploration is for students to fill out the *Career Exploration Worksheet*. The goal of the worksheet is to get students to begin thinking about what they are interested in and want from a job and career. Students can save their worksheet to their Career Solutions Toolbox and print it to share with a parent/guardian, career counselor, or teacher. Revisiting their worksheet answers throughout the exploration process can help students narrow down their interests and evaluate whether or not certain occupations would be right for them.

Assessments

*Work Interests and Work Values Assessments* provide suggestions to students on what career options might suit their interests and expectations based on answers to questions and activities. While they aren’t designed to tell students which career is right for them, they can encourage students to think about what they want from a job and a career and suggest occupations they hadn’t considered. These are similar to the assessments in previous versions of Career Solutions, but they are laid out differently. Each should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Explore & Inform

One of the most exciting additions to the Career Solutions website is the *Explore Occupations* tool. The Explore Occupations tool is designed like an online shopping cart; it allows students to view occupations based on select filters that they get to choose. Students can filter to see occupations by group, wage, education requirement, or experience and training requirement. For example, students can filter for the highest paying occupations that don’t require education beyond high school. Results can be sorted by future job growth, job demand, education, or wage. Once students have a list of occupations, they can click on Education Info or Occupation info for
that occupation to see the Occupation Profiles, or they can save the occupation to their Occupation Library.

Students can select Search Occupations if they already have an idea of what they would like to do or if they would like more information about a specific occupation. After selecting an occupation, students can view the Occupation Profile and then save the occupation to their Occupation Library.

Other Resources provides additional options for students to research careers beyond labor market facts. Information on job shadowing, internships, volunteering, networking, and informational interviews is included in this section.

Plan
After students have researched occupations and produced a list of occupations they're interested in within their Occupation Library, the next step is to narrow down that list. Compare Your
**Saved Occupations** shows students the most important information for three of their saved occupations side by side. Students answer questions as they review and compare their occupations, and their answers are used to grade their interest in each occupation. Students can choose to star or remove an occupation from their library after their review. Even with just one occupation in the library, the Compare Your Saved Occupations tool can be used to see if the occupation meets the student’s expectations and goals.

**Act**

After students have completed career exploration and narrowed their list of occupations, it’s time to act. Do the occupations being considered require education? If so, students can visit the Education & Training section to learn more about education options and ways to start planning for their education. Will the student enter the workforce now? If so, the student can visit The Job Search section to learn how to apply for jobs. There are other ways to gain experience besides working or going to school. Information on volunteering, internships, AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, Apprenticeship, and the military can be found by visiting the Gain Experience section.

**The Job Search**

Almost everyone will be employed at some point during their lives. Students may work while in high school, and many will work after graduation, whether they go to college or not. The Job Search section of Career Solutions provides students information and tools related to looking for and apply for jobs and being competitive in the job market.

**8 Job Search Steps**

The **8 Job Search Steps** is a step-by-step tutorial that takes students through the job search process. General information and specific tips for networking, contacting employers, attending job fairs, creating a resume and cover letter, applying for jobs, following up with employers, and negotiating a job offer are available in the steps. Tools that can be accessed include the Resume Builder*, Letter Builder*, and Try Your Hand at Interviewing*.

The Resume and Letter Builder* tools assist students in preparing resumes and cover letters. Any resumes and cover letters a student creates are saved within their Career Solutions Toolbox and can be revisited and revised at any time. Students also have the option to upload resumes and cover letters to be saved within their Career Solutions Toolbox.

Try Your Hand at Interviewing* is an exciting new addition to Career Solutions. This tool allows students to practice answering common interview questions. Preparation tips are provided for each question. Once students practice answering the question,
suggestions are shown for things they should consider including (or not including) in their answer. Students can review and print their answers so they can review them with a parent/guardian, counselor, teacher, or mentor.

**Job Search Library**

The **Job Search Library** is where students can find job search tools and resources outside of the 8 Job Search Steps. Students should always go through the steps, but if they want to access tools and resources quickly when returning to Career Solutions, the Job Search Library is there for them.

**WorkKeys®**

The WorkKeys Assessment system provides assessments that measure skills and job readiness. The **WorkKeys** section of Career Solutions provides specific information on the types of assessments students can take at local NM Workforce Connection offices, like Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, Business Writing, and Workplace Observation. These assessments are highly valued by employers and a great way to gain a competitive edge in the job market.

**Find Help Nearby**

Students can locate their nearest NM Workforce Connection office within the **Find Help Nearby** section. These offices provide additional job search and career readiness assistance to New Mexico’s job seekers, including funding for additional training, resume and interviewing classes, and much more!
Education & Training

Education is a major investment, but it has also never been more valuable. For students considering education beyond high school, planning early and knowing about the resources available are incredibly important. The Education & Training section of Career Solutions walks students through the process of deciding whether or not to continue their schooling and, if they choose to continue, what they need to do and think about to prepare.

5 Steps for Education

5 Steps for Education takes students through the process of making choices about their future education and teaches them about planning, financing, and selecting the education that’s right for them. General information and specific tips and tools for selecting schools, planning ahead, applying to programs, and budgeting for and financing education (including access to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) website) are available. Tools include the Education Quick List*, Countdown to College Checklist*, School Finder, and Program Finder.

The Education Quick List* gives students a way to quickly view education profiles for their saved occupations, including which schools have programs for those occupations.

The College Countdown Checklist* was added to Career Solutions to make planning for education more structured and organized for students. The checklist provides students with tasks they should be following through each year of high school in order to apply to and prepare for college. Students can save their checklist to their Career Solutions Toolbox and print it out to share with a parent/guardian, counselor, teacher, or mentor. Users not signed into the website can use the Print All button to print blank copies for use outside of Career Solutions. Any progress students make in the checklist will be saved; they don’t have to complete the list all at once.

The School and Program Finder tools give students the opportunity to find schools and specific education programs outside of the Education Quick List. Students can use keyword searches or look at listings to learn about educational institutions and the programs they offer.

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5 Steps for Education Beyond High School

5 Steps to Follow When Continuing Your Education

Your decision about whether to continue your education after high school or not isn’t one you should make quickly or take lightly. Most importantly, it’s a decision you should make for yourself based on your personal long-term plans and the careers and jobs you’re interested in. Education is something you can pursue at any time in your life. But the decision you make now can and will impact how you move forward in your career. The type of education and where you get it is also very important, so make sure you focus on what you want and need and set education goals for yourself.

Here are five steps to take when deciding on and planning for your future education.

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First  Back  Next  Last
Education Library

The Education Library is where students can find education tools and resources outside of the 5 Steps for Education. Students should always go through the steps, but if they want to access tools and resources quickly when returning to Career Solutions, the Education Library is there for them.

Education Finder

The Education Finder is provided separately within the Education & Training section and gives students a quick and easy way to find information on schools and specific education programs.

The NEW Career Solutions has a lot of exciting functionality and useful information for New Mexico’s youth. Make sure to visit www.NMCareerSolutions.com to explore what the site has to offer. If you have any questions or comments regarding the site, please contact ER&A at (505) 383-2729 or at nmdws.economicresearch@state.nm.us.