



# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Job Centers:

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A Practitioner's Guide

## Acknowledgments:

Jobs for the Future (JFF) thanks Region 6 of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration for their support and guidance on this project with special thanks to Virginia Hamilton of Region 6 for her leadership. JFF expresses appreciation to the principal researcher and author of this guide, Ben Kushner, Independent Consultant. Matthew A. Poland of JFF provided research, content, and direction in the development of this guide. Dimitri Linde of JFF provided research support as well.

### **JFF also would like to thank the following workforce development professionals who informed research findings:**

Candace Moody, CareerSource Northeast Florida (Florida); Jodi Leipold-Mostel, Pennsylvania CareerLink – Allegheny East (Pennsylvania); Troy Henry, Western Addition Neighborhood Access Point (California); Deb Baillargeon, Workforce Central Career Center (Massachusetts); Shelly Rodriguez, Loudoun County Workforce Resource Center (Virginia); Kristi Siargent, Prince William SkillSource Center (Virginia); Dave Buck, CareerSource Cambridge (Massachusetts); Deborah Wright, Maywood One-Stop Center (Illinois); Larry Fitzpatrick, Maywood One-Stop Center (Illinois); Darlene Morse, CareerPoint (Massachusetts); Tina Robertson, FutureWorks Career Center (Massachusetts); Lynn Hoffman, ResCare Workforce Services (Nevada); Kirk Kain, Southeast Area Social Services Funding Authority (California); Jaime Cruz, Workforce Connections (Nevada); Allison Schiavo, Goodwill Central Coast (California); Julie Tate, One Stop Career Center – Workforce Connections (Nevada); Maria Flores, One Stop Career Center – Workforce Connections (Nevada)

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**Jobs for the Future (JFF)** completed this project with federal funds awarded to **Maher & Maher** under contract number DOLQ131A22098 DOL-ETA-14-U-00011, from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Jobs for the Future (JFF) designs and drives the adoption of innovative, scalable approaches and models—solutions that catalyze change in our education and workforce delivery systems.

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## JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

**Jobs for the Future** works with our partners to design and drive the adoption of education and career pathways leading from college readiness to career advancement for those struggling to succeed in today's economy. [www.jff.org](http://www.jff.org)

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The tools and offerings available to people looking for jobs have undergone a massive change in the last ten years. Technology has enabled access to information and resources that can significantly enhance the way people look for education, skill building, and job openings. Technology has also helped us capture and aggregate data about the labor market, skills, and trends in industry sectors; there are data now that simply did not exist just a few years ago.

Understanding what these web-based tools are can expand the services offered at American Job Centers and other workforce service providers by leveraging free and low-cost training, career exploration, and job search opportunities. As the public workforce system shifts to a more customer-focused service design in response to the enactment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), knowing more about what is available can help practitioners tailor services to best meet the needs of their individual customers.

This guide will help practitioners<sup>1</sup> at American Job Centers and other workforce service providers offer a wider range of services to meet the needs of their customers. Offering practitioners a compendium of effective career exploration resources, the guide includes a look at tools for assessment, skill development, and job search, with tips on how to evaluate which are most effective. This guide will provide advice on how to keep the organization's service offerings current, relevant, and fresh, as well as specific advice for supporting customers from special populations.

The guide was developed with input from the leading workforce practitioners listed in the acknowledgments above. Guiding the research and writing of the guide with their feedback and promising practices noted in key areas throughout, they offered keen insight into tools they currently use and others they were interested in learning more about.

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<sup>1</sup> "Workforce Practitioners": In this guide we use the term "practitioners" to refer to staff members who advise, counsel and work with job seekers in multiple ways. They may be located at Job Centers, colleges, workforce service providers, or community-based organizations.

## Working with Diverse Customers and Diverse Needs

Practitioners across the country are working with job seekers who have diverse needs. These needs may vary by education level, life circumstances, work experience, skill and language levels, aptitudes, and cultural differences. WIOA requires strong service integration with many new federally funded programs, which means there will be an even more diverse mix of customers in American Job Centers than before. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Labor funds programs for certain populations who have not had easy access to education and jobs. Some job seekers can conduct their own career exploration and job search, and many of the special populations served need more intensive services. In most cases, however, job seekers are typically directed to begin one of the five steps that are most common in career development and job search:

- Assessment of interests, skills, and the capacity to conduct an independent search
- Career exploration to survey the labor market and match the job seeker's skills with employers' needs
- Skill building to address job readiness
- Hard-skill training for occupation-specific requirements
- Job search and job matching

Practitioners can use this guide to learn how to identify some of the more useful online tools and services available for job seekers, many at little or no cost; they can learn how to regularly update their service offerings. This guide is written for those unfamiliar with these tools, as well as for those experienced with the resources who want to assess their efficacy. The guide does not evaluate tools or endorse any particular product. Rather, it provides

enough information for practitioners to research and form their own opinions. Many of the sites and tools described here are proprietary software, or "apps," offered for free or with a nominal per-use fee. Others require a more significant investment, such as the purchase of licenses. Finally, the guide does not cover the range of in-person services critical to individuals with barriers to employment who may need supplemental help.

## II. TOOLS FOR ASSESSMENT

To meet customers where they are, practitioners often use different kinds of assessments. This section focuses mainly on interest, work style, and skills assessments that offer feedback on the quality and range of a job seeker's occupational skills. While there are other types of assessments that may be used by a workforce practitioner, especially for serving special populations, these are three of the more common types.

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### Interest Assessments

For many customers approaching the job market for the first time, career exploration and job search should begin with an interest assessment. With this type of assessment, job seekers learn what they like to do, what tasks interest them, and what careers they should pursue to find satisfaction in their work. Groups of individuals coming from a public assistance program such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), or special populations such as disconnected youth, entry-level workers, and individuals returning to their communities after incarceration (reentry) are among those that may particularly benefit from interest assessments. Additionally, job seekers who are considering a career change and returning veterans may find the interest assessment beneficial.

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### My Next Move

My Next Move is a profiler that helps the user explore career options based on their interests. The online program asks 60 questions that the user answers on a scale from "Strongly like" to "Strongly dislike," based on their work activity preferences. The result of the assessment is an individualized rating for each of the Holland Code career interest areas: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Within each interest area the user can also see career and occupation suggestions based on how much preparation, training, and education they would like to pursue. The average job seeker with good reading and basic computer skills can gain a strong understanding of their career interests with this program. Others may need help generating and interpreting results. Use of this program is free. It was developed through grants by the U.S. Department of Labor and it connects to the O\*NET database system.

This site also has features designed for specific job seeker populations including a “Job Accommodations” page addressed to job seekers with disabilities. The accommodations page includes a list of hyperlinked services, agencies, and tools that have been aggregated by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN). My Next Move for Veterans is tailored to the unique needs of this group, including a translation tool that converts Military Occupation Codes into civilian Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes.

<https://www.mynextmove.org/>

<https://www.mynextmove.org/help/accom/>

<http://www.mynextmove.org/vets/>

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### What Color is Your Parachute?

The venerable and perhaps most well-known guide for job seekers written by Richard Bolles offers an online version, called “eParachute.” It includes self-assessment exercises (called “self-inventory”), suggested career paths based on the results, and suggested courses of study. An inexpensive one-year subscription is required. Organizations are also offered significantly discounted volume pricing, course catalog importing for educational institutions, co-branding, and limited customization on request.

<http://eparachute.com/>

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### O\*NET Resource Center

For the job seeker with good language and reading skills, the O\*NET Resource Center taps into the vast library of occupation descriptions offered by the Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The landing page offers four formats for taking the profiling test, from 60 to 180 questions. Assessment test results link the user directly to career exploration and job matching information. This is recommended for the more advanced user, college graduates, and/or displaced workers, among others.

<https://www.onetcenter.org/>

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## What should you look for in interest assessments?

In order for a job seeker to effectively use interest assessment tools, they need a level of self-awareness, some understanding or experience in the workplace, and good language and reading skills. Practitioners recommending assessment tools should keep that in mind, as some of the questionnaires are more complicated than others. For some job seekers, it may be best to work alongside the job seeker and help in the use of the tool. The job seeker’s patience and determination may also be a

factor, because some of the tools ask as many as 100 questions. Shorter assessments are usually better in this respect in order to retain the attention and concentration of the user. Some are more engaging than others, using pictures or even games to make the assessment experience more pleasant. An example of a picture-based assessment is Woofound, described in the next section.

## Work Style Assessments

For the purposes of career counseling, this guide refers to the personality assessments in this section as “Work Style Assessments” in reference to their applicability to a practitioner’s work. The tools offer another way to examine whether a career choice is a good fit. They are designed to offer insight on how to interact with others based on work style and personality types. Prompted by behavioral statements such as “You prefer to act immediately rather than speculate about various options,” the user selects from a range of choices from “Very true” to “Not true.” The results offer a report of the user’s “type” of work style. Knowing their work style, the user can explore careers that are likely to offer them satisfaction.

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### Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

MBTI tests are designed to categorize the subject by one of sixteen “types,” and has been a generally popular and accessible method of self-discovery. Each type has a four-letter designation that can inform the user how they relate to the outside world and how they take in information. Extrapolation and analysis of the test results are based on Carl Jung’s work on psychological types. There is a wealth of resources available online to analyze the subject’s personality type and use the analysis to explore career options.

*Free testing:*

<http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp>

<http://www.truity.com/test/type-finder-research-edition>

*Analysis of results:*

Four temperaments are divided into sixteen profiles on this site:

[http://www.keirsey.com/4temps/overview\\_temperaments.asp](http://www.keirsey.com/4temps/overview_temperaments.asp)

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### DiSC

The DiSC Workplace Profile offers an extensive analysis of the user's work style delivered in results that are displayed in a disc shape. It entails a 20-minute questionnaire that leads to a report focusing on four different reference points filling a circle: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. This tool is unique in how it examines what motivates the user and identifies what they might find stressful, possibly indicating work situations to avoid. Similar to a full MBTI analysis of "type," the DiSC report provides tips on how the user can effectively work with associates who have different work styles.

This test site offers a free quiz for basic results or a per-use fee of \$59.25 for the full survey and profile. Kits for trainers are also available. The site is easy to use and the free test only takes about 10 minutes, giving practitioners an opportunity to test with clients before purchasing. The site allows the user to compare their personal results with others and provides some possible career areas as well.

<https://www.discprofile.com/>

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### Woofound

Woofound is another profiler that is based on personality types rather than interests. The unique feature in Woofound is the questionnaire that displays pictures of work activities; the user simply checks either one box labeled "That's Me" or another box labeled "That's Not Me." The results of the questionnaire show ratings for each personality type. A screen behind the button "View Your Career Matches" will bring the user to a series of occupation profiles with information such as the experience level and education credential required.

By choosing a career profile, the user can learn the degree to which a career matches their personality, a salary level, the projected employment growth, and whether the career has a "bright future." On the results page, a button called "View Career Details on O\*NET" connects the user to the vast library of occupational information available in the O\*NET database. This program can be used by job seekers at many different education levels. The questionnaire is excellent for people with lower English and reading skills. The interpretation and planning phases would require some help from a practitioner. There is a cost-free version that includes testing and some analysis and a fee-based licensing version for multiple users and more extensive reporting.

<https://woofound.me>

### StrengthsFinder

This desktop assessment tool, with a mobile device option, identifies the user's top strengths. The underlying theory is that people succeed when they identify and develop their strengths. The price range (\$15 to \$89/user) is based on the number of strengths identified. Practitioners may find the coaching kits used to build strengths useful; they are connected to the program for an additional fee. The separate tool for entrepreneurs could be used in workforce agencies offering services in this area. This tool is likely more suited for experienced and management-level workers.

<https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/>

## What should you look for when evaluating work style assessment tools?

Some assessment tests require a strong concentration level and determination. The user may also need good language and reading skills as some tests can ask anywhere from 40 to 70 questions. Woofound may be a better option for customers with low literacy skills or learning disabilities, while My Next Move may give a more comprehensive analysis for people with more advanced reading and comprehension. Practitioners should also consider the results of the assessment. Do they help you and your customers gain a better understanding of their skills, work style, and/or interests that are presented in a manner applicable to their career path choices? Similar to interest assessments, practitioners should be looking for an engaging and accessible user experience that delivers useful results.

## Promising Practices

In several of the interviews with Job Center staff, Woofound was used by their staff with positive results. A Job Center Director from San Francisco reported that this tool helped one of his job seekers realize that he didn't like office environments, which was affecting his performance in previous jobs. He was able to redirect his job search to positions that allowed for more outside travel and interaction, one role including testing driverless cars for Google.

## Skill Assessments

Skill assessments can be used to identify skills acquired through training and experience throughout a job seeker's career. In some cases, a job seeker's skills can be identified through interest and personality assessments. Skill Assessments may also refer to skill proficiency, which is a measure of how well the job seeker performs at work. This section is focused on tests for proficiency in areas like language skills, basic computer skills, career readiness and essential skills, technical or occupational skills, basic math and reading, typing, etc. In most cases, the tools offer assessment tests, remedial training, and a certificate of completion or proficiency.

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### ACT WorkKeys

ACT, a national authority on education and workplace assessments and training, offers WorkKeys testing for workplace skills, including job readiness such as communication, problem solving, and organization. Testing is also available for hard skills like applied mathematics, reading for information, and locating information computer skills, and soft skills. Costs vary by number of licenses. WorkKeys is widely used by employers and the brand is considered reputable.

[www.act.org/workkeys](http://www.act.org/workkeys)

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### Aztec

Offering assessment and remediation assessments, Aztec is ideal for GED preparation, assessing reading and math for Adult Education, and assessing English language skills. In terms of cost, bulk rates on licenses are available.

<http://www.aztecsoftware.com/products-services/>

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### Kenexa Prove It!

Kenexa offers a menu of tests including behavioral assessments for careers in clerical, software, technical, call center, industrial, financial, legal, medical, and other fields. Also offered are components for workplace readiness and Microsoft Office Suite proficiency. Costs for assessments vary and training is available for users.

<https://www.proveit2.com/assessment/>

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### Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)

A number of companies offer TABE preparation tests and associated skill-building courses at varying cost. There are tests for basic skills, language skills, math, reading, sciences, GED, and career preparation.

<http://www.ctb.com/ctb.com/control/main?p=home>

*For test prep, search using the keyword 'TABE.'*

## What should you look for when evaluating skill assessment tools?

The best recommendations for skill assessment tools may come from conversations with your local employers. What tests are they currently using? How familiar are they with the skill assessment or the credential that is associated with a passing grade? Do they find that doing well with certain assessments indicates future success in a particular job? Another key source of information on an assessment's efficacy is the education community. Local career technical colleges, community colleges, and universities administer their own assessment tests and evaluate the tests of national brands. Depending on the collaboration in your community between Job Centers and local schools, it may be possible to arrange for job seekers to be assessed at partner sites. Practitioners may want to make sure tools can be calibrated to identify various levels of comprehension or performance based on the job they are being assessed for. For instance, an administrative assistant may only need basic proficiency in Excel, but an office manager may need more advanced proficiency.

### III. TOOLS FOR CAREER EXPLORATION

After taking an assessment test, the job seeker will need time to analyze the results and take what they learn to the next step: career exploration. In the context of this guide, career exploration occurs after the job seeker has an idea of the occupations and careers they want to pursue. Most assessments mentioned previously offer job titles and occupations that can be used for the career exploration phase. Through networking with professionals in the field, job seekers can learn even more information beyond titles, required skills, abilities, and competencies.

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#### mySkills myFuture

mySkills myFuture is a tool using a skills-matching process to help job seekers identify career options based on their experience. The user begins by entering their previous job titles to reveal other career options, the training necessary for those careers, the local training centers, and jobs available in a given location. The site is ideal for more self-directed job seekers who've had previous experience – those who can identify occupation titles and those looking for advice on how to pursue training that advances their career goals.

<http://www.mySkillsmyFuture.org>

### Promising Practices

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CareerSource NEFL (Northeast Florida) sees their role as curator for service delivery to professional job seekers. They use their own career development portal called CareerTrax ([www.mycareertrax.com](http://www.mycareertrax.com)) that has menus for career exploration and tools to conduct occupational research, including what to ask during an informational interview. There are links to tips on how to disclose a disability and how to speak about a prior criminal record. There are also links to public sites, including a “Dress for Success” video at CNN.com.

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#### Road Trip Nation

Geared toward youth transitioning from education to career, Road Trip Nation has a number of videos describing career options and industry sectors. The videos were made by young people in their own career exploration. A brief questionnaire on the welcome page helps narrow the search and locate the most relevant information. This site may be ideal for those who have less of an idea of careers they are interested in and need to gather more information. Using a more entertaining platform for job seekers to gain information through interviews with professionals, it is ideal for young people or perhaps dislocated workers considering a career change.

<http://roadtripnation.com/>

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#### Occupational Outlook Handbook

The Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH) is a vast and deep online labor market information resource published by the BLS. The online experience connects with BLS career exploration programs such as My Next Move (profiled earlier) and America's Career InfoNet to offer wage information, useful "day-in-the-life" occupational profiles, future occupational growth potential in the field, alternative occupations, local training and education resources, and comparisons of the job markets of other states. The landing page enables the user to browse the site by occupational group, sector, industry, or field. The resources are so vast, in fact, that this site would be recommended for the more advanced or experienced career explorer. For youth, entry-level workers, and others who may need more assistance, the OOH should be consulted together with a more experienced workforce practitioner.

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/>

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#### CareerOneStop

The section "Explore Careers at a Glance" includes assessments and questionnaires that link to O\*NET resources for career exploration. <http://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/explore-careers.aspx>

The CareerOneStop site also includes a video library that highlights career and occupation information:

<http://www.careeronestop.org/Videos/default.aspx>

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## Future Plans

Recently named a finalist in the U.S. Department of Education's Reach Higher Career App Challenge, Future Plans is a fee-based, online service for students, with additional information for parents and guidance counselors. Assessment results include information on the user's abilities, work values, personality, interests, and compatible, in-demand occupations. Individual or group pricing is available.

<http://www.futureplansusa.com>

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## TORQ

TORQ, the Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotient, is an online program that identifies transferable skills and assists the user in his or her job search. It is especially helpful to the experienced worker who is changing careers. Since it is connected to the O\*NET system, it accesses the vast BLS databases. Some states have incorporated this program in their career management systems for job seekers.

<http://www.torqworks.com/>

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## Knack

The Knack app's science-driven games uncover abilities, competencies, interpersonal skills and work skills, and gives users a platform to showcase them for employers. The Knack app maps the professions that match a user's "knacks," and helps leverage their strengths on the road to a successful career and personal fulfillment. It also connects users directly to a set of employers with job openings.

<https://www.knack.it/>

## National Industry Associations

Practitioners should consider the information available through national associations that advocate for specific sectors and industries. By exploring these national associations, the practitioner and job seeker can learn what's new in the field so that they are better prepared for interviews and meetings. Through emailing or calling the national associations, job seekers or practitioners can learn about local activities and training sites. It may also be beneficial to learn about nationally recognized, portable or stackable certifications and credentials that are recommended by top employers and sector leaders. Practitioners should build and continuously update their own list of national, state, and local associations to offer as a resource for job seekers.

For manufacturing, visit <http://www.themanufacturinginstitute.org/> for information on talent development and career exploration in the manufacturing workforce. A research division of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), the Institute also has population-specific programs for women, veterans, and the “Dream It Do It” program for youth.

**For health care**, job seekers can visit the National Association of Healthcare Assistants at <http://www.nahcacareforce.org/> and navigate to state and local associations that provide training and information for nurses, certified nursing assistants, and other health care support roles.

**For Information Technology**, job seekers can visit CompTIA at <https://www.comptia.org/> for information on IT certifications and occupational profiles and videos.

**For career options in Retail**, job seekers can visit the National Retail Federation at <https://nrf.com/career-center> and explore their “Find a Job in Retail” page or the “Retail Careers SmartBrief” section offering a free newsletter with retail-specific topics and profiles.

## Promising Practices

CareerSource NEFL (Northeast Florida) decided to create landing pages for Industry sectors targeted for economic development in the region: Health care, IT, Finance, Logistics, and Manufacturing. Both job seekers and employers become regular visitors to the site and through blogs and other links, the site will become a kind of social media tool for career exploration and job search.

## What should you look for when evaluating Career Exploration tools?

In using career exploration sites, the most important factor to consider is the ultimate goal of the job seeker. Educated job seekers changing careers who are comfortable navigating websites can get lost in the vast databases of information. Practitioners should help them hone their search and decide if they're looking for salary information or careers with the most job growth potential. Is the job seeker trying to connect one occupation to other related occupations that offer a better wage? Do they need information on portable or stackable credentials?

It's a good idea to ask local employers if they belong to a national industry association and whether they recommend any of the career exploration sites. In addition, some employers might have their own career development office that uses online portals for career exploration. Job seekers may also benefit from learning the classification codes for their preferred sectors, industries, and occupations. Those codes (NAICS for the industry and SOC for the occupation) can be used in many search engines. Most of the exploration sites contain these codes in their occupational profiles.

## IV. TOOLS FOR SKILL BUILDING

After skill assessments are analyzed, it may be useful to refer a job seeker to skill-building sites. Some require a fee for testing and training and in most cases a licensing arrangement can be made with the company to take advantage of volume discounts. There is now a “21<sup>st</sup> Century Skill” spin on skill building: the smart phone has become a teaching aid, with apps that have game-playing components as the user learns languages, vocabulary, and other skills. Most of the tools and services mentioned in the Skill Assessment section above offer skill building or remedial training components as well as test preparation and, in some cases, third-party certification. In addition to those tools, practitioners should consider the following options that focus more specifically on skill building:

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### Duolingo and MindSnacks

These online language learning tools can be accessed through browsers and apps on smart phones. The programs incorporate gaming elements, allowing users to accrue points to measure progress. Both offer language skill building and MindSnacks has an English vocabulary option geared to students preparing for the SAT. These tools can be used for English speakers to learn another language, and for job seekers who need our services, they provide a user-friendly way to learn English. A very basic option is free and a multiple-language option with a substantial list of lessons is about \$20 for a one-time subscription.

<https://www.duolingo.com/>

<https://www.mindsnacks.com/>

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### Tutor.com

This website pairs users with tutors who can help with studying, test prep, and homework in math, English, science, writing, and social studies. Users and tutors are connected through a whiteboard platform that allows for chatting, speaking, and screen- and file sharing. Costs range from an introductory 30-minute session for \$9.99 to a three-hour per month tutor for \$114.99.

<http://www.tutor.com/>

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### GCFLearnFree

This tool offers tutorials in basic technology (typing, e-mail, internet, operating systems), Microsoft Office, reading, and career (job search, personal finance, workplace skills), among others. Tutorials are self-paced and can be accessed through mobile devices. GCFLearnFree is a free program offered by the Goodwill Community Foundation.

<http://www.gcflearnfree.org/>

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### Udemy.com

Udemy is an online learning platform that hosts courses in a range of categories including health and fitness, the arts, and job-specific skills. Individual courses vary in cost; some are free.

<https://www.udemy.com/>

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### Lynda.com

This subscription-based platform offers tutorials in business, software, and design skills. Site specialties include AutoCAD and Final Cut Pro. Courses in business include leadership, marketing, and project management. There are over 4,000 classes on the site. Basic memberships start at \$20 per month for individuals, with group plans available. Free trials and sample lessons are available.

<https://www.lynda.com/>

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### Khan Academy

Well-known for its free instructional videos, assessments, and a personalized learning dashboard for self-paced learning, Khan Academy is considered to be at the forefront of Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs. Content includes short tutorials in history, math, science, computer programming, grammar, and parts of speech, among others. There are also prep courses for standardized tests such as the SAT and MCAT.

<https://www.khanacademy.org/>

## Promising Practices

For skill building, CareerSource NEFL (Northeast Florida) opted to connect job seekers to the state's career readiness certificate called Florida Ready to Work. There are assessment tests and skill-building programs that lead to certification. It is similar to the WorkKeys and KeyTrain approach taken by other states.

To upgrade customers' skills, Jacksonville is using or recommending online courses like GCFLearnFree, Lynda.com, Udemy.com, and even Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing.

CareerSource also uses Learning Express for Essential Skills training (also called soft skills or employability skills). This is recommended for customers transitioning from public assistance programs. The WIB pays a flat fee for a one-year, unlimited-use subscription.

Learning Express has a technical skills component as well. The service offers test preparation courses in occupational areas such as allied health, civil service, commercial driver's license, cosmetology, culinary arts, electrician, emergency medical services, firefighter, green careers, law enforcement, nursing, plumbing, real estate, and teaching.

PA CareerLink in Pittsburgh/Allegheny County refers customers interested in computer literacy skill building to GCFLearnFree (described in the Skill Building Section). Through the career development portal JobGateway, PA CareerLink customers can also access KeyTrain to improve skills in math, locating information, and reading for information. KeyTrain is offered by ACT, a national authority on education and workplace assessments and training. <http://www.keytrain.com/index.asp>

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### Cengage Learning and Ed2Go

Cengage is an online training and education provider that offers academic, career training, and skill-building courses. Their Workforce Development page includes the Ed2Go portal for online courses at participating local colleges around the country. The user can browse by subject and search for schools by zip code. Tuition rates vary.

Cengage Learning:

<http://solutions.cengage.com/WorkforceDevelopment/>

Education to Go Career Training Center: <http://www.ed2go.com/>

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### Learning Express

Learning Express offers e-learning resources for adult basic skills, workplace training, student academics, soft skills, and other training. The costs vary for products that are designed for the specific use of workforce organizations.

<http://www.learningexpresshub.com/corporate/products>

## What should you look for when evaluating Skill Building tools?

Job seekers and practitioners should consider whether the skill-building tools are effective in their training. For example, has the user seen an improvement in math skills? Are they learning the language? Can they remember a process or task described in the training? Ease-of-use is another important factor. Are the instructions and the navigation at the right effort level for the user? How much coaching will be necessary? For occupational skills, it may be a good idea to learn how the tool was developed and whether it is based on research or prior versions of a well-researched tool. Local employers or industry associations may be willing to offer advice or recommendations on the tools as well.

### V. TOOLS FOR JOB SEARCH AND JOB MATCHING

Job boards remain popular with job seekers and employers. What is different now is the development and advancement of job matching software that matches candidates' skills, abilities, competencies, likes, dislikes, and employment history with open job orders. The newer technology behind job matching software actually uses a form of artificial intelligence that connects job seeker qualifications with job orders placed by employers.

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#### State Job Boards

Most states have a centralized, state-sponsored job posting site that is available to customers of the career centers and affiliated partner organizations. For these systems, such as CalJOBS (California) or Employ Florida, workforce practitioners in the state workforce system network usually have vetted many of the posted job orders. Many states also feed their job boards by connecting to national commercial sites such as Monster or Career.com. Connecting to these sites expands the number of postings but also introduces some of the challenges described below.

<https://www.caljobs.ca.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>

<https://www.employflorida.com/vosnet/Default.aspx>

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#### Monster

Job seekers can search job listings that include the employer's contact information and the date the job opening was posted. The site includes tools for resume building, cover-letter tips, and tips for older workers. There are six communities for peer-to-peer information sharing. Users can also upload their resume, or create one using the program, for employers to scan.

[www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)

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### Career Builder

Users can upload a resume or create a profile that is scanned by employers. Job searches can be conducted by occupation category, location, and by participating companies. Buttons can help refine searches by location, company type, and size.

<http://www.careerbuilder.com/>

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### Indeed

Useful as a meta-search, this site will pull postings from a multitude of other job boards as well as job postings directly from company websites. A basic, user-friendly welcome page invites users to input the desired job title and location. Resumes may also be posted. There is an advanced job search option that allows the user to refine the search by keywords, company name, and/or desired salary.

<http://www.indeed.com/>

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### Dice and DHI Group

Dice and its affiliate company DHI are targeting skilled professionals in Information Technology, Security, Financial Services, Energy, Health care, and Hospitality. A user-friendly welcome page invites the user to enter job titles or keywords along with locations or zip codes.

<http://www.dice.com/>

## Promising Practices

**CareerSource NEFL** (Northeast Florida) connects job seekers to the state's job matching site called Employ Florida. The state site connects with other national job matching sites such as Monster and Indeed while also including job orders collected and vetted by other CareerSource offices in the state.

To complement this job matching strategy, CareerSource NEFL suggests that local job seekers also work with employment agencies and connect with other job matching sites. The employment agencies often serve as a go-between so that priority employers can temporarily hire workers while evaluating their performance for a future full-time job opening.

PA CareerLink uses Pennsylvania's career development portal, JobGateway, for job matching and other services. Through JobGateway, users have access to a comprehensive menu of services including interest and skills assessments, career exploration, and job matching. As one example, Pennsylvania purchased the TORQ program for use by any job seeker with a JobGateway account. TORQ assesses skills and interests and is especially effective for identifying transferable skills. Equipped with the skills information, job seekers can then use the JobGateway employment opportunity board to search available jobs in the area. Workforce professionals with employer contacts vet most of those jobs.

### Resume and Interviewing Tips for Job Seekers with Barriers to Employment

Job Matching portals and many other sites provide tips on building a resume and how to present yourself at an interview. Specialty sites that focus on job seekers with barriers to employment include Step Ahead (developed by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities) and The Consultants' Corner pages of the Jobs Accommodation Network.

### Step Ahead Interview tips:

<https://www.iseek.org/exoffenders/find-job/interview-tips-ex-offenders.html>

Step Ahead Resume tips:

<https://www.iseek.org/exoffenders/find-job/resume-tips.html>

The Job Accommodation Network Consultants' Corner for resume and interview tips:

<http://askjan.org/corner/vol01iss13.htm>

## What should you look for when evaluating Job Search and Job Matching tools?

Most of the examples used above are well-established sites popular with employers and job seekers alike that are more likely to have legitimate postings. Practitioners will want to look for sites that offer detailed job listings from a variety of businesses or organizations, or ones that are specific to the sector, like Dice. Practitioners may find meta-search sites like Indeed useful as they save time for job seekers by pulling postings from many sites at once. Although the job seeker must spend a good deal of time completing a master "application" to build their job seeker profile, the software that scans that profile to match it with job orders seems to be more effective in job matching when compared with the older method of uploading a "scannable" resume.

While state job boards are more reliable in terms of the legitimacy of postings, there are a few other challenges with the major job boards. Oftentimes an attractive job is posted by a recruiter, not an employer, raising questions about the job's authenticity. There are also unreliable postings and scams that waste the job seeker's time. Finally, in order to browse jobs and load a resume, it may be necessary to open an account with the service provider. Although major companies do not charge a fee for this service, the job seeker may become vulnerable to email spam or job matching scams.

### Social Media

Detailed descriptions of the various social media sites that can be accessed in a job search are beyond the scope of this guide. These sites, however, play a significant role in our communication and by extension, modern job searches.

Particularly for youth services, social media are an essential way to market services, continuing to engage program participants and post-service follow-up. Facebook Groups and Google Hangouts both offer a mechanism for staff to communicate with groups of job seekers or for teachers to connect with students outside of class. Meetup is geared toward forming groups that meet physically for a specific purpose or shared affinity. Even Twitter can be used for sharing short bits of information with particular people on a "Twitter list." The social media site that is arguably most broadly applicable to a job search is LinkedIn.

### Promising Practices

**CareerSource NEFL is including LinkedIn as part of the social media strategies they promote to job seekers. One LinkedIn group, established by CareerSource, has members who are professional job seekers with a four-year degree and some management experience. Employers are also encouraged to join the group. Prospective members are screened and the discussions are moderated by CareerSource NEFL. Another LinkedIn group is intended for veterans. While these services are offered free through LinkedIn, CareerSource NEFL also encourages some job seekers to upgrade to LinkedIn's Premium service to take advantage of the enhanced networking and job matching features.**

**CareerSource NEFL also wants to be sure that job seekers are fully aware of their social media footprint. They encourage some job seekers to use the fee-based service "Rep 'N Up." The service investigates a job seeker's social media presence, then suggests what controversial or offensive items should be removed from their social media accounts.**

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### LinkedIn

Offering the ability to create a profile, essentially an online resume that can be shared with other professionals, LinkedIn is quickly becoming one of the most ubiquitous professional networks in the world. Users can add work history, skills, references, and even samples of work to their profile, then connect with other users. It also offers the ability to create and join groups that share a common interest, such as working in a particular sector or sharing particular interests and skills. Although it originally attracted primarily higher-skilled professionals, more and more middle-skill and entry-level workers, managers, and recruiters are joining.

Job seekers at any level can use LinkedIn's free tools to create their profiles, network and search recommended job listings based on the user's profile. Groups are also free to join, create, and engage via postings and sharing content. Paid accounts offer a few more services such as visibility into how their qualifications "stack up" against the competition, get details on others who are viewing their profile, and the ability to contact recruiters directly.

The free services will suffice for the average job seeker though. Simply the opportunity to network via LinkedIn is highly valuable for job seekers who need to practice this vital job search skill and build their networks at the same time. Practitioners can use LinkedIn and other social media tools to maintain contact with and track progress of customers post-service by asking them to join groups for their program as well.

<http://www.linkedin.com>

## On-Demand Economy Opportunities

In the last several years a new part of our economy has been emerging, taking advantage of gaps in the marketplace and offering new possibilities for job seekers. The On-Demand Economy, also known as the “sharing economy,” “gig economy,” or “peer-to-peer economy,” consists of online marketplaces for on-demand services, e.g., Uber, Lyft, and TaskRabbit. These virtual marketplaces match a supply of labor with demand for services in real-time. Unlike a traditional labor market, the barriers to entry for both supplier and customer are relatively low; entry only requires access to a phone application (and at least one basic skill if you are a supplier).

The On-Demand Economy offers several advantages for job seekers that practitioners can help them take advantage of. For the long-term unemployed, working with On-Demand companies offers an opportunity to build their resume and close gaps in employment. TaskRabbit, for instance, offers a way for people to market their skills and obtain quick, short-term jobs in a multitude of areas, from painting and plumbing, to technical writing and copy editing.

Second, clients who need income, or who want to access training but don't have an accommodating job schedule, may find the flexibility of creating their own hours for On-Demand Economy opportunities, such as driving for Uber.

Although the public workforce system does not get “entered employment credit” for customers who make money by accessing On-Demand Economy opportunities, customers often need income while they are building skills, looking for work, and going to school. These options should be part of the repertoire of options that workforce practitioners talk about with their customers.

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### Uber

Drivers using this ridesharing phone app can provide rides and accept fares virtually.<sup>2</sup> Drivers can make their own hours, choose their work location, and get paid bonuses for working certain hours, driving during “surge pricing” periods, referring other drivers, and a base hourly rate for making a certain number of trips per hour. Uber reports that some drivers make \$19/hr. (likely gross pay, but not indicated in the report).<sup>3</sup> Self-reporting from Uber drivers indicates they earn roughly

between \$14-\$25 per hour gross on average, before taxes and expenses.<sup>4</sup> (The wage range depends on how many rides per hour, distances, times of day, etc.) After taxes and expenses, however, the hourly rate is likely several dollars lower (see What to look for in On-Demand Economy Opportunities, below).

[www.uber.com](http://www.uber.com)

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<sup>2</sup> Other requirements include being age 21, passing a basic background check and access to a four-door vehicle model 2001 or later.

<sup>3</sup> [https://newsroom.uber.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/BSG\\_Uber\\_Report.pdf](https://newsroom.uber.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/BSG_Uber_Report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.idrivewithuber.com/how-much-do-uber-drivers-make/>

<http://uberdriverdiaries.com/>

Other low-skill opportunities exist for workers in the On-Demand Economy via apps that provide housecleaning services, food delivery, and general residential maintenance services. Higher-skilled clients can access higher-paying jobs such as technical writing, copy editing, and translation through sites like Amazon's Mechanical Turk, and TaskRabbit. With Mechanical Turk, the person offering work sets the price per task and workers accept the job along with the price, whereas on TaskRabbit, the worker offers his/her services at a price per hour, to be accepted by the person hiring the work. While neither TaskRabbit nor Mechanical Turk offers training, SamaSchool offers training programs for their On-Demand Economy opportunities.

<https://www.mturk.com/mturk/welcome>

<https://www.taskrabbit.com/>

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### **Samaschool**

Samasource, a nonprofit agency, offers virtual training followed by virtual employment opportunities. Through its Samaschool service, students are offered scholarships based on need and then develop work skills that are common in the freelance digital economy, including Programming and IT, Design and Multimedia, Customer Support, Virtual Assistance, Finance, Legal, etc. The students may then become an independent contractor to Samasource as they are matched to the company's employer clients. Most students take on their virtual workplace assignments as resume builders or for professional development.

<http://samaschool.org/online/>

### What to look for in On-Demand Economy Opportunities

For opportunities in the On-Demand Economy, more established companies such as Uber, Lyft, TaskRabbit, and Amazon's Mechanical Turk are a better bet, given the many new companies that may have limited track records and questionable sustainability. For workers to really thrive in the On-Demand Economy, entrepreneurial skill is highly valuable for marketing one's services, continually looking for and taking advantage of opportunities, and managing self-employment. Thus, entrepreneurial training can go hand in hand with taking advantage of this market. In addition, practitioners looking to vet opportunities for their customers should make sure the terms of service of the app or tool are clear and well-understood by customers who access them, including how payment is received, what service fees are charged, etc.

While many opportunities like TaskRabbit can be used and accessed in rural areas, demand for them may be lower than in urban environments (although that could change in the future). For ridesharing apps like Uber or Lyft, the demand is almost entirely in urban areas. But since the tasks are completed online, the demand for work offered through Amazon's Mechanical Turk or Samasource is independent of the worker's location.

In terms of pitfalls in the On-Demand Economy, workers are responsible for their own expenses (supplies, gas, car insurance, maintenance costs, etc.)

and need to plan their finances accordingly. Finally, it is important for customers accessing On-Demand Economy opportunities to understand that they are responsible for paying their taxes (instead of paying them through employer withholdings) as a 1099 Independent Contractor with the IRS. Many workers accessing these opportunities don't fully understand these responsibilities. They should consult with a workforce practitioner or Certified Public Accountant in order to save and properly plan for paying taxes on a quarterly basis. More details about 1099 Independent Contractor requirements can be found on the IRS website:

<https://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/Independent-Contractor-Self-Employed-or-Employee>

### Promising Practices

**CareerSource NEFL (Northeast Florida) recommends that job seekers explore opportunities with Uber and Craigslist (another national job board) as they tap into the On-Demand Economy. In some cases, a fee-for-service job matching service like Flexjobs is recommended because the employers found there are pre-screened. Job seekers are counseled to weigh considerations such as the monthly cost, the length of time for membership, and the reputation of the service before agreeing to pay fees that begin at around \$15/month.**

## VI. SEARCHING FOR AND IMPLEMENTING NEW TOOLS AS A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY JOB CENTER

### **Step 1:** Conducting a Regular Environmental Scan for New Tools

21<sup>st</sup> Century Job Centers and workforce service providers should regularly scan for new tools and features and incorporate them in their service menus. In dense urban areas, there may be many options to consider that are both local and national in scope. Rural areas may have to rely more on the national tools and on resources that are incorporated in the state's career development services. There may be opportunities such as national convenings or webinars where practitioners can inquire about, share, and compare promising practices with other colleagues in the field. Many tools can also be evaluated by consulting partners such as employers, colleges, and social service organizations in your area.

### **Step 2:** Evaluating Tools

Cost and ease-of-use are always key features when considering career development tools. Some tools described in this guide provide simple free versions with upgraded features for a fee. It is recommended that before purchasing a license for new software, practitioners ask for a demonstration in order to appraise the product's value, the ways different populations might use it, and whether or not the customer service and help desks are responsive to their customers' needs. Tools from companies that don't offer demonstrations or trial versions should be avoided. Practitioners should also carefully research the costs for tools offered to their customers and avoid free samples that lead to expensive tools or courses being suggested later in the process, especially if there was already a purchase made up front. The full cost of a legitimate tool should be apparent up front, not hidden or revealed only after the initial engagement.

Some of the products mentioned in the guide are already used by state and local workforce organizations as part of their workforce development menu of services. It is advisable to learn about the services offered at the state level to see if your

organization can be integrated with their service delivery to save on costs. Practitioners should also learn whether WIOA funds or state funds can be used to pay for programs or for individual apps. Local chambers of commerce and industry organizations may be interested in contributing to programs that support the talent pipeline and benefit workforce development.

As a final note in evaluating tools, with respect to a dual-customer approach, job centers and workforce service agencies may want to consider which of these tools are valuable to their employer partners. Polling employer partners for their feedback on various tools and incorporating them in the process of selecting tools will build stronger connections to them as well as help practitioners find the best tools for their services in their service area.

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### **Step 3:** Incorporating New Tools

Organizations should then regularly update the menu of tools available to job seekers. This may mean adding new tools after being fully evaluated as described above, in addition to fixing broken hyperlinks and deleting outdated services from the current offerings. As new tools are offered, regular feedback from staff, customers, and employer partners can help determine the effectiveness of new tools or how their use could be adjusted to meet the needs of job seekers and employers. Ongoing evaluation of tools that may be particularly useful to job seekers with barriers is strongly recommended. Some of the tools have online community boards that offer peer-to-peer technical assistance for job seekers and practitioners to take advantage of as well. An iterative process can then be established to follow these three steps at regular intervals, perhaps once every three to six months.

## VII. CONCLUSION

With the plethora of new tools available online and through smart phone apps, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Job Centers, colleges, community-based organizations, and workforce service providers can change service delivery for their customers. Practitioners equipped with the most effective, current, online, and app-based tools can offer new assessments, career exploration, skill building, job search, and job matching options to their job seeking customers. And with interactive interfaces, enticing displays, and even gaming components featured in these tools, career counseling is even becoming more fun.