

Tips for the Education Policy, Research and Program Management Job Search

Please make note of the following steps and resources for moving along in your search for a position in policy analysis, research and program management in the field of education.

- 1) Reflect on your previous experience and its relevance to your career goals going forward.
- 2) Explore and prioritize opportunities.
- 3) Build your network.
- 4) Tweak your resume and cover letter.
- 5) Attend career fairs and other recruiting events.
- 6) Prepare for Interviews.

1) Reflect on your previous experience and its relevance to your career goals going forward.

- Are you making a transition from a direct service role such as a teacher or counselor? If so, you can show how this hands-on experience with the people that are ultimately affected by policy and programs can allow you to bring insight and credibility to the position.
- Did your previous career involve an analytical or managerial role in another field? If so, you will need to point to what motivates your interest in education and note how your skills can transfer.

2) Explore and prioritize opportunities.

- Consider where you see yourself participating regarding a given issue or initiative in education.
 - **Advocacy / Communications:** Are you interested in advocating for, facilitating or communicating about legislation?
 - **Analysis:** Do you want to use your analytical skills to conduct research that would inform policy making or evaluate existing programs?
 - **Implementation:** Would you be interested in designing, implementing and/or managing programs that emerge from issues and needs in education?
- Consider the many possible contexts in which you could work, including:
 - *Government (Federal, State or City)*
 - *Higher Education*
 - *Research/Consulting Firm*
 - *Think Tank/Advocacy Organization*
 - *Direct Service/Program-based Organization*
 - *Foundation*
- Many resources for exploration are available in the resource section of our *Education and Academia* community and other career communities depending on your interest. Be sure to update your career interests and check job listings on [Handshake](#) as well.

3) Build your network. Connecting with others in your profession of choice can provide insight into what it's like to work at a particular organization in policy, research or program management as well as how to market yourself effectively in the job search. Informational interviewing is a great way to gather advice and build your network, though it's important to remember that the purpose of this type of meeting is to gather information and advice, not ask for a job or job interview. Here are some resources to get started:

- [QuakerNet](#) (Penn's Alumni Online Community)
- Penn Alumni LinkedIn Groups
- Penn Alumni Clubs
- Professional Associations are also a good resource for networking.

4) Tweak your resume and cover letter. Career Services advisors can provide critiques during appointments, walk-ins, or via e-mail. Keep in mind that the turnaround for e-mail critiques during busy seasons can be up to one week. Therefore, it is best to tweak your resume format as much as possible before a critique with a counselor. Resources for this are available in the [Prepare Application Materials](#) section of our website.

5) Attend Career Fairs and other recruiting events. Events such as career fairs, information sessions, and meet & greets allow you to meet a number of recruiters in one place so that you are able to connect with employers of interest. For those interested in policy-related careers, Career Services hosts a **Policy and Government Career Fair** in the fall and other fairs covering a variety of fields, including education, are held as well. In addition, **GSE Employer Meet and Greets** are offered. Check [Handshake](#) for updates on career fairs on campus.

6) Prepare for Interviews. The key to successful interviewing is thorough and thoughtful presentation. It is crucial that you prepare answers that reflect concrete and relevant examples.

- desire to work at a given organization and knowledge of the organization's mission, values and services.
- highlights from relevant experience (e.g., direct service, research and/or analytical tasks performed in jobs, internships, volunteer work, or class projects)
- strengths/weaknesses
- understanding of current issues in education

It is also extremely useful to practice interviewing. Career Services offers mock interviews as well as other tips and resources that can be found in the [Interview](#) section of our website.