



***Get into Energy
Career Coaching Best Practices
and Coaching Framework***

***A Report for the Center for Energy
Workforce Development***

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Career Advising Best Practices

For those between the ages of 16 and 26, the concept of choosing a career may be a difficult one to grasp. For many in this age group, particularly those who may be both out of school and out of work, the goal is to get a job. A career is something other people do. Maybe people who are older, or have a college degree.

The fact is, these individuals can and should consider career pathways that are available to them, even at the younger end of that age group. There are opportunities within various industries, like energy, that can provide them with a source of income and a sense of accomplishment for many years to come.

There are basic elements to any successful career advising model. For those working with this age group, however, there are some additional components to consider that can help the clients understand the many options that are available to them.

Blended Advising

Exemplary advising services often use a blend of individual or group advising in person or by phone, and the use of tools and resources available in an online format, such as the Kuder tools and the other resources identified herein. It is the inclusion of the human element that can really make a difference for those in this age group. As we determined during our research into the nine states, that is also what was missing most often in the services that were offered. There were many “self-service” models where job-seekers could use tools to start their career planning process, but we saw few instances where these were accompanied by advising to help the individual understand what he or she was learning, identify achievable goals, and keep them on track.

Basic Career Advising

A basic career advising system includes a number of key elements:

- Trained career and education advisors
- Assessments of values, skills, interests, and learning style
- Planning and research tools (web-based or otherwise)
- Readily accessible information on career pathways in key industries and the skills needed for jobs in them
- Readily accessible information on education and training providers with relevant programs
- Resources to meet needs of those seeking advising services
 - Financial Aid
 - Veterans’ Assistance
 - Prior Learning Assessment

Trained Career and Education Advisors

Ideally, a career and education advisor should have knowledge of a variety of industries, general labor market trends, education and training providers, interpretation of assessment results, resources related to career and education planning, and methods for clients to seek credit for prior learning.

Appropriate advisors can come from a variety of sources, such as One-Stop Centers, schools and colleges, social service and pipeline organizations, and industry mentoring programs. Since Get Into Energy targets such a specialized population, it would be ideal to be able to provide training that is industry specific and also addresses the special needs of those within the 16-26 age group who have faced economic challenges during their lives.

Advisors help their clients to be more focused and efficient in the time and energy they spend in identifying goals, training and education providers, and potential career opportunities. The job of the advisors is to advise, to guide, not to make decisions for a person. A major component of the advising process is the empowerment of the individual to research, analyze results, and make the best choice for his or her career goals. For those between the ages of 16 and 26, this process may represent the first time they have had this power over their own lives. Advisors working with this age group should be aware of this, and part of the training for these advisors would be to familiarize them with some confidence-building and decision-making techniques that they can use with those they are advising.

As individuals ponder the options available to them, the advisor can provide valuable input about the labor market, helping to identify industries with growing opportunities, such as the energy industry. Closely related is the advisor's knowledge of education and training providers, the courses of study they offer, related costs, and special programs that might provide assistance with financing, study skills, or credit for learning the student is bringing to the program. Again, advisors working in conjunction with this program would require special knowledge of the needs of the industry and the education and training opportunities that relate to those needs, areas that would be covered by special training for them.

Assessments

When advisors work with new clients, they often find that individuals have an idea of what they might want to do. This idea is often based on what others tell them they might be good at, what might seem easy to achieve, or the latest occupation to be featured on television. For example, the number of people requesting information and education on forensic investigations over the past five years has far outstripped the job opportunities this line of work will produce—primarily due to CSI on television.

For young people, in particular, there may be occupations available to them that they have never heard of, never mind ever considered. To help open their minds to the possibilities, an advisor will use a variety of assessments linked to their interests and skills, values, and even their learning style.

Kuder provides assessments that cover three of these areas: interests, skills, and values. These assessments form the beginning of the career exploration process as they match an individual's interests and skills to specific career options. The importance of this step cannot be overstated. This is often the difference between holding a job and having a career. Those who hold a job may be doing something that does not fit their interests, but it was available so they took it. It may not allow them to use the skills that they most enjoy using, and so does not provide fulfillment that a better fit might. The use of Kuder's specially developed career interest inventory related to energy, construction and manufacturing jobs will be an especially useful tool for the advisor and the

individual alike, helping to identify specific career options and saving time for those whose interests do not match the target industries so they can focus their career search elsewhere.

Hand-in-hand with the Kuder skills assessment is the SkillsUSA employability assessment, which is also geared to the energy industry. Once someone has expressed clear interest in the industry, this assessment will help determine the qualities they have that are desirable within the industry, and those they may need to develop further.

The concept of values is one that is sometimes overlooked in the career advising process, but is a vital element. The values that one can identify as important in the workplace include opportunity for advancement, ability to work in a team (or alone), work that serves society, type of supervisor, ability to make a lot of money, etc. When values, skills and interests are in alignment in a particular position or industry, the individual is more likely to succeed and remain in the occupation or with the employer.

Another important assessment looks at learning style. This is important for anyone considering education or training to prepare for a career. Adult learners have many choices in how they approach their education; perhaps the most obvious is the choice between online and in-person learning. There are many adult learners who feel that online learning will be easy for them because it may not require them to be in a certain place at a certain time. Rude awakenings are not rare. For some, these classes are harder than traditional classroom situations because of the self-discipline required, a trait they may not yet have. A learning style assessment can help determine the best type of learning for an individual, helping to assure classroom success. There are several such assessments available. One that CAEL has used successfully is the Paragon Learning Style Inventory. Another source for a learning assessment is the Bridges Transitions Access program which is available through many state workforce offices.

Many of the agencies and schools profiled during our research use a variety of assessments related to skills or interests. Few mentioned values or learning style as an area of interest or importance.

Another vital area of knowledge for advisors related to assessments is the National Career Readiness Certificate from ACT. Growing in acceptance nationally, this certificate actually represents performance on three ACT assessments: Applied Math, Reading for Information, and Locating Information. The level of certificate gained indicates the individual's readiness to perform in a variety of jobs. Those achieving the platinum level, for example, the highest, would be considered ready to perform in up to 95 percent of jobs identified by ACT, which has profiled over 16,000 different occupations. Advisors should know where individuals can take the NCRC assessments, and the level of acceptance within their state.

Planning and Research Tools

There are many resources available to job seekers, as identified in the research of the nine states. One-Stops and school career centers often provide access to these resources, but an advisor can also be an excellent source of information, guiding a client through the myriad information sources to those that are most appropriate to their particular goal. Again, the advisor should not do the research, but may steer a client to the resources that will be most relevant.

Research into specific industries or job titles, specific schools or areas of study is a natural follow-up to the assessment process. Sources include websites from the government, industries (like Get into Energy), colleges and universities, companies, and a variety of other sources. With so much of this research web-based, some clients may need to learn more about the Internet and computer usage before they can begin this process. Here again, the advisor can be a source of information and referral to appropriate services, often available at a One-Stop or community college that provides such training.

Accessible Information on Career Pathways

Without understanding all the possible stops along the way, it is sometimes hard to imagine how to get from here to there in a career. A young person may start out with a specific goal that will require a number of steps to achieve. On the other hand, their goal may be modest, only because they don't understand just how far a path can take them within an industry. Here an advisor with knowledge of career pathways can help to open up a vision of what can be.

Career pathways models such as Get into Energy and work that has been done by CAEL and others in biotech, transportation and logistics, healthcare, and financial services can help an individual understand the forward and lateral moves that can bring a career goal within reach by identifying the skills and knowledge that will be required at each step along the way.

Accessible Information on Education and Training Providers with Relevant Programs

Hand-in-hand with knowing what knowledge and skills are needed for a particular pathway or occupation, is knowing where to get the education and training that can provide that knowledge. Much career pathways research includes this vital information, and when it does not, the advisor must know where it can be found. In the case of the energy industry, for example, this would require knowing about the Energy Providers Coalition for Energy (EPCE), the Banner Center for Energy in Florida, and the Center of Excellence for Energy Technology in Washington State.

Knowledge of apprenticeship programs is also important for those advisors working with this population. Opportunities to learn while earning through an Energy Apprenticeship program in California could mean the difference between someone staying the course in energy or moving to another job because of an immediate need for financial support.

Resources to Meet Special Needs

An advisor must recognize the special situations that a client brings. In the 16-26 age group, this can include quite a variety of situations, including returning veterans, single parents, learning disabilities, need for financial aid to cover education expenses, and consideration of prior learning assessment (PLA).

Financial aid is an area of particular importance, as many in this age group may be on their own financially, and the prospect of education may be difficult to conceive without such assistance. Advisors should be familiar with the many options available, including loans, grants, work-study, and company-paid tuition assistance. Following is a summary of federal student aid programs with which an advisor should be familiar:

Program	Type of Aid	Program Details	Annual Amount
Federal Pell Grant	Grant: does not have to be repaid	Available almost exclusively to undergraduates	2008-09: \$400-\$4,731
Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)	Grant: does not have to be repaid	For undergraduates with exceptional financial need; Federal Pell Grant recipients take priority; funds depend on availability at school	\$100-\$4,000
Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG)	Grant: does not have to be repaid	For Pell-eligible students enrolled at least half-time in their first or second year of study or in a certificate program of at least one year at a degree-granting school	
		First year: must have completed a rigorous secondary school program of study;; graduated from high school after Jan. 1, 2006; not have been enrolled in an ACG-eligible program while at or below age of compulsory school attendance	1 st year: Up to \$750
		Second year: must have completed a rigorous secondary school program of study; graduated from high school after Jan. 1, 2005; have at least 3.0 cumulative GPA at the end of their first year of postsecondary study	2 nd year: Up to \$1,300
Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant	Grant: does not have to be repaid unless you fail to carry out the service obligation, in which case you must repay TEACH Grant as a Direct Unsubsidized Loan with interest accrued from the date the grant was disbursed	For undergraduate, post baccalaureate, and graduate students who are taking or will be taking course work necessary to become an elementary or secondary teacher; recipient must sign an Agreement to Serve saying that they will teach full-time in a designated teacher shortage area for four complete years (within eight years of completing academic program) at an elementary or secondary school serving children from low-income families in a high-need field	Up to \$4,000 a year Graduate students: Total amount may not exceed \$8,000
Federal Work-Study	Money earned while attending school; does not have to be repaid	For undergraduate and graduate students; jobs can be on campus or off campus; students are paid at least federal minimum wage	No annual minimum or maximum amounts
Federal Perkins Loan	Loan: must be repaid	For undergraduate and graduate students; must be repaid to school that made the loan; interest 5 percent	Undergraduate students: up to \$5,500; graduate and professional students: up to \$8,000
Subsidized Direct* or FFEL** Stafford Loan	Loan: must be repaid	Subsidized: The US Department of Education pays interest while the borrower is in school and during grace and deferment periods; student must be attending at least half-time and have financial need; fixed rate is set annually for new borrowers	\$3,500-\$8,500, depending on grade level
Unsubsidized Direct* or FFEL ** Stafford Loan	Loan: must be repaid	Unsubsidized: The borrower is responsible for all interest; must be at least half-time; financial need not required; fixed rate is set annually for new borrowers	\$3,500-\$20,500 (less any subsidized amounts received for same period), depending on grade level and dependency status
Direct* or FFEL** PLUS Loan	Loan: must be repaid	For parents of dependent undergraduate students and graduate and professional students; students must be enrolled at least half-time; financial need not required Borrower must not have adverse credit history PLUS Loans are unsubsidized, the borrower is responsible for all interest	Maximum amount is cost of attendance minus any other financial aid student receives; no minimum amount
<p>* This type of loan is from the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program. The loan is known as a Federal Direct Stafford (or PLUS) Loan.</p> <p>** This type of loan is from the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program. The loan is known as a FFEL (or Federal) Stafford (or PLUS) Loan.</p>			

Advisors also need to know about programs within specific states, like Georgia's HOPE scholarships and grants. A 23-year old with a GED may not realize that he is still eligible to take advantage of this program.

Assistance for veterans also includes financial aid for education, and advisors should be familiar with the many nuances of the new G.I. Bill.

Programs for single mothers or those with learning disabilities can often be identified through the local One-Stop center or other community organizations, or through a community college. Advisors should be aware of such programs in their area.

There are many programs in the various states that offer mentoring opportunities for older youth. Minnesota's Wired for 2020 is a good example of such a program which can provide ongoing support and encouragement, as well as direct exposure to the area of interest for the young person. Those in the target population may find themselves easily discouraged by the education requirements for the job they seek, or the number of years it may take to achieve their ultimate career goal. A mentor can help keep them focused and make connections for them now that will serve them later.

One way students at the older end of the 16-26 age range may be able to accelerate their progress toward a degree and their career goal, thereby saving time and money, is to seek out opportunities to gain college credit for prior learning. This is often mistakenly referred to as "credit for life experience," but the credit is actually given for college-level learning that has occurred during that experience. Many colleges and universities currently grant credit for learning that can be exhibited through examination, or learning that has taken place through volunteer service, training or in the military which can be shown through the creation of a portfolio. The amount of credit given and the areas that will be considered for credit may vary from department to department and campus to campus.

There are a variety of methods used to assess learning for possible college credit:

- ♦ Credit by examination (CLEP, DSST, challenge exams: simulation, demonstration, interview, oral presentation)
- ♦ Development of a portfolio of prior learning with supporting documentation
- ♦ Transfer credit evaluation (Minimum grades, accreditation, related to area of study)
- ♦ Training and certifications evaluation, including training from work or military service

How it Works

Career advising for this population contains many of the same elements it would for other age and income groups, but there are some stark differences, as well. Individuals are being asked to consider a commitment to work and the requisite training that they may have never considered before. Many may also be lacking in confidence about their ability to succeed because of prior challenges in the workforce or education system. These individuals may require more support than many of those who normally seek help in the One-Stops, for example.

In terms of caseload, we recommend that an advisor who is working solely on the Get Into Energy project could work with as many as 100 individuals at a time. For someone in a pipeline organization, or a One-Stop with additional caseload responsibilities, caseload related to this project would be

based on individual advisor capacity. The time estimates for services below give an indication of the commitment required for each individual.

Step One- Intake (30-60 minutes)

An advisor meets with an individual for the first time, preferably face-to-face. During this session, there is basic sharing of information for agency/organization records, a general discussion of the individual's career goals, and the start of rapport-building to establish what will be an ongoing relationship. It is during this session that the advisor considers whether the individual is appropriate for the Get Into Energy program based on stated career interests, background, attitude, etc. The advisor will recommend assessments and also consider whether there is anything in the individual's learning path that could be considered for prior learning assessment (e.g., military training, an internship, etc.)

Step Two- Assessments (2-4 assessments)

Assuming that the individual has been determined appropriate for employment in the energy industry (based on the intake session), the advisor will recommend that the individual take several assessments, including the Kuder Interest Inventory, the SkillsUSA Employability Assessment, perhaps a Values assessment, and if it is likely the individual will need formal training or education, a learning style assessment. The advisor will work with the individual to schedule these and set a time to review the results.

Step Three- Assessment Interpretation (1-2 hours)

While some assessments may provide results to the individual immediately, others may require some interpretation by an advisor. It is important that the results of all assessments be considered together to create a "big picture" view for the individual of the challenges he or she may face in preparing for a career. Such challenges may include the amount of training indicated by the assessment results, or an indication that perhaps manufacturing or construction (or some other area) would be more in line with the individual's interests and skills. If the latter is the case, the advisor would, at this point, make a referral to the identified manufacturing or construction lead, or work with the individual outside of the Get into Energy advising model to identify next steps.

Assuming that the person is a fit for Get Into Energy, the advisor would discuss the challenges with the individual and help to create a strategy to meet those challenges. For example, if the individual will require a great deal of training, the advisor could help identify an apprenticeship program that would provide income while training, or grants that might be available based on the individual's income level.

Step Four- Learning Plan (1 hour)

For the majority of individuals, it is anticipated that there will be a need for education and training. The advisor will work with the individual to identify a specific career objective and, based on this, help to identify training providers or special programs provided by the industry or labor unions that could help meet those needs. The result from this session should be a written plan that spells out the steps the individual must take to satisfy the requirements for the chosen career path including specific courses or programs of study, stackable credentials to be sought, and ideas for financial assistance.

Step Five- Identification of Education Provider (Two half-hour sessions)

Once the learning plan has been developed, the individual will be tasked with doing research on the available education and training options. This is part of the empowerment of the advising process. It is important to remember that the decision on an education provider or training path must be the individual's not the advisors. It is anticipated that the individual will do some legwork but then have questions for the advisor before a final decision is made. For this reason, it is recommended that this step be broken into two half-hour sessions. For some, both half hours will not be needed.

Step Six- Ongoing Support (Up to one year; 15-30 minute sessions)

Ongoing support will be a vital component for this population. Many are going to be in the workforce for the first time; others have had unsuccessful attempts at jobs; others may be reaching beyond what they have ever considered possible for themselves before. For this reason, the advisor must be available on an ongoing basis to provide a connection, encouragement, and to serve as a general resource about all things career-related. We recommend monthly contact for the first three months, either in person or by phone for 15-30 minutes. After that, bi-monthly contact through the first year can help to assure success for the individual.

OPTION- While these recommendations are for individual sessions, advisors who are working with multiple clients geared for the Get into Energy program should also consider the use of group sessions. These allow for a greater transfer of knowledge and sharing of experiences and may make some individuals feel more comfortable and more supported.

Summary

Low income individuals between the ages of 16 and 26 may need more help than others in their age group to identify career options, the education and training that can help them achieve their goals, and special services that may be available to them. Advisors working with this population must augment their advising skills with knowledge of these programs and how to access them if they are going to help young adults be successful in their career path.