



CAREER PATHWAYS ADVANCEMENT PROJECT QUICK GUIDE

8 Steps to Conduct an Environmental Scan for Career Pathways Advancement: A Quick Guide for VR Staff

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Career pathways advancement is a strategy your agency can use to help people with disabilities move beyond entry-level jobs and toward the strategic development of career trajectories that lead to professional growth, development, and success.

The overarching goal of career pathways is systems alignment among vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies and key partners that ensures people with disabilities have access to high-quality training leading to industry-recognized certifications and successful career-focused employment.

Conducting an environmental scan to determine career pathways can be a valuable exercise in understanding the current and future trends, opportunities, and challenges within various industries and sectors. **Here's a 8-step guide to help you, as a VR staff person, conduct an effective environmental scan:**

Career Pathways Advancement Example: Nebraska VR

Nebraska VR received funding from the Rehabilitation Services Administration to pilot the Career Pathways Advancement Project (CPAP). The overarching goal of CPAP is to support VR-eligible individuals with disabilities to advance in high-demand, high-quality careers by developing career pathways focused on career advancement. Nebraska VR cited industry-specific business engagement as an important aspect of the model for specific career pathways. For example, Nebraska VR's partnership with the Department of Labor has led to better coordination with the manufacturing industry. This partnership created more opportunities for businesses to share first-hand information about the skills job seekers need to succeed in various industry roles and can provide valuable insights for training development, career counseling, and finding a good match for VR clients.

STEP 1. Define your goals and objectives.

Start by clarifying the purpose of your environmental scan. What specific career pathways are you interested in exploring? Are you looking for growth opportunities, emerging industries, or potential changes in your current field? Defining your goals will provide direction and focus for your scan.

STEP 2. Identify relevant sources.

Gather a variety of sources that provide information about the current state of different industries. Some key sources to consider include:

- » **Industry reports and studies:** Look for reports from reputable research organizations, industry associations, and consulting firms that provide insights into specific sectors.
- » **Government publications:** Check for reports and publications from government agencies that highlight trends, policies, and initiatives relevant to different industries.
- » **Industry publications:** Explore industry-specific magazines, journals, and online platforms that cover news, trends, and advancements in various fields.
- » **Online resources:** Browse websites and social media platforms to access up-to-date information, industry forums, and discussions.



STEP 3. Analyze economic indicators and labor market trends.

Examine economic indicators that impact career pathways. Economic data can give you a sense of industries that are expanding, contracting, or undergoing significant changes. Additionally, look into labor market trends to identify sectors with high demand for skilled workers. Consider factors like job growth rates, in-demand skills, salary trends, and job market forecasts.



STEP 4. Research emerging technologies.

Investigate emerging technologies and their potential impact on different industries. Consider the fields of artificial intelligence, automation, and other emerging sectors for example. Identify how these technologies are reshaping career opportunities and which skills will be in high demand.

STEP 5. Engage with professional networks.

Leverage your professional network by speaking with individuals who are currently working in industries you're interested in. Conduct informational interviews to gain insights into their experiences, the current state of their industry, and potential future developments. Attend industry conferences, seminars, and networking events to meet professionals and get real-time labor market information.

STEP 6. Consider geographical factors.

Look into your regional and local career opportunities. Certain industries may thrive in specific locations due to factors in your area. Research regional economic development plans or initiatives to identify potential growth areas.

STEP 7. Interpret findings and prioritize pathways.

Once you have gathered information from various sources, evaluate and analyze the data. Identify recurring themes, growth sectors, and areas of opportunity. Prioritize the career pathways that align with the interests, skills, and long-term goals of the job seekers you serve.

STEP 8. Create skill development plans for job seekers.

Based on your findings, identify the skills and knowledge required for your clients' chosen career pathways. Develop a plan to acquire or enhance those skills through education, certifications, workshops, or online courses. Follow up with your clients to ensure they are taking advantage of opportunities to continuously update their skills in a rapidly changing job market.

Remember that an environmental scan is an ongoing process. Industries and trends evolve, so periodically revisit your findings to ensure you stay up to date with the latest information and have conversations with your clients about adjusting their career plans accordingly. By following these steps, you'll be equipped with valuable insights and knowledge to help VR clients make informed decisions about their career pathways based on the current and projected state of various in-demand industries.

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VISIT: [Nebraska VR's CPAP website](#) to learn more about this effort.

ACCESS: [ICI's Career Pathways Toolkit](#)



www.exploreVR.org