



A GOVLOOP TOOLKIT

Ready, Set, Jump: How to Make the Leap to a New Job or Career



We all know that feeling: The restlessness or boredom or frustration that tells us we are ready to make a change. But the last thing we want to do is to rush into something new, only to realize later that we made a change for the sake of change and didn't really advance our career. **It doesn't have to be that way.**

This toolkit brings together insights and resources from a variety of workforce experts to help you prepare to take that next career step. Each section addresses a different dimension of the search, from internal soul-searching to writing your resume. We hope you find it helpful.

6 Questions to Consider

In a blog post for GovLoop, Charron Hopson-Swift recommended that, when considering a new job or new career, start by reflecting on the following questions. The goal is simple: To get clarity on issues before you launch on the job search in earnest.

1. Why do you want to make a change?

What aspects about your current situation do you not like? Or, in what ways have you outgrown it? If you take some time to reflect on this early on, it might help clarify your next step.

2. How do you envision that next job or career?

What does this new job or career look like? What does it not look like? What's it called? How will it draw upon your current skills/experience?

3. What's it going to take?

Are you lacking certain skills that you need to be an attractive candidate for this new role? Do you need certifications? Classes? Licenses?

4. What's your plan?

What's your primary goal? What's your ideal timeline? What tasks need to be done to move forward?

5. What's your personal brand?

Given your vision, how do you need to position yourself (your experience, skill sets, strengths, etc.) in a way that connects with your target "audience" (i.e., the people you want to hire you) and makes you stand out?

6. Who can help you out?

Who are the passionate and successful people working in your field of interest, and how can you connect with them?



BONUS QUESTIONS

In a two-part series, GovLoop contributor Shakima Tozay, offered several critical questions to ask yourself before accepting a new project or career opportunity. Here are three of them:

1. How does this opportunity align with your values?

Do you know what your values are? Values act as guides for a way of life, your true north.

2. In what ways can you add value?

How can you add your unique strengths and abilities to this project or assignment? Are there improvements you could make by bringing your expertise and personal perspective?

3. If you say "I do," what else would you need to give up to make room for this?

Is there something you can delegate to someone else, reduce the time spent on it or move it off your to-do list completely?

Self-Coach for Growth

For some people, getting a career coach is just the ticket. A coach will ask you questions to help you reflect, work with you to explore your capabilities and to identify and help you overcome what's holding you back.

But not everyone can afford to hire a career coach. With that in mind, career coach David Shindler suggests reflecting on your path using a common coaching framework called **GROW (Goal, Reality, Options, Will)**. Write down your answers to the following questions:

GOAL

What is my Goal? Is it clear, fuzzy, or true? If you don't have one, move to the next stage (Reality). Be focused.

What would success be like? What would I feel? What would others be saying? What would be the impact on my life? Be imaginative.

Why is this Goal important to me? How does it fit with my values? Motivate and inspire yourself.

REALITY

What assumptions am I making about my current situation? Play Devil's advocate.

What will I check out to confirm, reassure myself or discover?

Is my Goal still the right one for me? Get clear.

OPTIONS

What options could I pursue to reach my Goal? Be curious.

What will I explore in more depth? Be proactive and organized.

What are the pros and cons of each? Which one pulls my heartstrings the most? What does my intuition tell me? Find the balance between being optimistic and realistic.

WILL

How likely am I to pursue this option? What score out of 10 would I give myself? Be honest.

If I score less than 8, I'm not serious about doing something. Say I score a 6, what would a 7 mean for me? Take small steps to increase your commitment.

What will I do next and when? What might stop me? How will I overcome that? What will help? Be purposeful and resourceful.

"It's worth bearing in mind that the GROW approach is not linear or fixed," Shindler writes. "You might want to start with assessing your Reality to get clarity about your Goal. Through exploring Options, a different Goal might emerge or change shape."

To learn more, check out his blog post at [CareersInGovernment.com](https://careersingovernment.com).

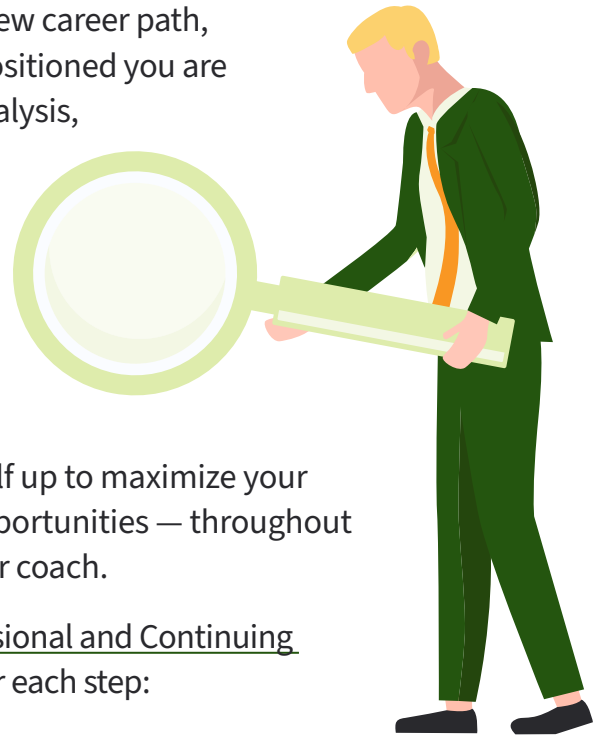
An Honest Self-Assessment

When you have identified a potential opportunity or a new career path, you might want to think more deeply about how well positioned you are to succeed. One way to do that is to conduct a **SWOT** analysis, assessing your **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**.

The SWOT framework was developed in the 1970s to help organizations consider how they fit in a given market but has since proven popular as a career management tool.

“By doing a personal SWOT analysis, you can set yourself up to maximize your talents, diminish weaknesses and make the most of opportunities — throughout your career,” says Bonnie Hovel, a leadership and career coach.

In a [guest article for the University of Washington Professional and Continuing Education website](#), Hovel offers questions to consider for each step:



STRENGTHS

- What advantages do you have that others may not? Any relevant skills, certifications, education or connections, for example?
- Which of your achievements are you most proud of?
- Do you have a passion or talent for something that you haven't yet tapped into in your work?

WEAKNESSES

- What tasks do you avoid because you don't feel confident doing them? For example, do you have trouble organizing projects? Talking to clients?
- Do you have any personality traits or tendencies that hold you back in your field? For instance, if you have to conduct meetings regularly, a fear of public speaking would be a weakness.
- Do you notice others outperforming you in particular skill areas?

OPPORTUNITIES

- Have you researched what jobs and skills will be in demand in the future?
- What trends (management or otherwise) do you see in your organization, and how can you take advantage of them? Is role experimentation encouraged? If your focus is on changing careers, what trends do you see overall in your field, such as an increase in specific skills?
- Is there a need in your organization that no one is meeting?

THREATS

- Is your organization modernizing its business processes, leaving you feeling like you might need additional training?
- What obstacles do you currently face at work? Are there changes in social norms or the economy that could affect your career choices?
- Are colleagues competing with you for projects or roles?

Check out [Hovel's article](#) to learn how to put a SWOT analysis to good use.

How to Brag on Yourself, Effectively

Whether you are writing a resume or discussing your achievements in an interview, you don't want to muddle your message. One way to showcase your accomplishments is to use the Challenge-Context-Action-Result (CCAR) Model, says Katherine "KC" Coffman, an International Coach Federation (ICF) certified executive and leadership coach.

In a blog post for [Federal Career Connection](#), Coffman offers guidance on how to use CCAR. After reading her [full article](#), use the form below to describe an accomplishment that you might want to highlight in a resume or interview.

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT:

□ CHALLENGE

Describe a specific problem you resolved or goal you achieved, and define the organizational impact of the challenge: division level, organizational level, agency-wide, governmentwide, national effects, or impact.

□ CONTEXT

Give the hiring manager insight into your challenge by providing a succinct description of the background and setting you worked in to address the challenge. Discuss who you worked with (i.e., individuals, teams, clients, inter-agency, or intra-agency, etc.). Provide specific factors that made the challenge substantial by describing the resources, laws, deadlines, or other factors that impacted the complexity of the situation.

□ ACTION

Provide a clear description of your strategic thinking and vision, and discuss the specific actions you personally took to address the challenge and achieve results. Include evidence of your innovation and creativity, technical skills and leadership skills.

□ RESULT

Demonstrate the quality and effectiveness of your actions by clearly providing specific measures and/or outcomes that had an impact on the organization. Show your measurable results in terms of improved customer service, increased efficiency, reduced costs, or money saved.



Job-Hunting Wisdom From the GovLoop Community

GovLoop recently asked its readers to offer advice to govies who are mulling the next step in their careers. Here is some of what we heard (with responses being edited, combined and sequenced for clarity):

Consider joining a local Toastmasters club. It can help you strengthen your confidence, improve your connections and learn new skills. It also looks great on a resume.

Don't waste your time. Consider only those agencies that offer what you are really looking for.

Invest in education and/or certifications. It shows that you are serious about moving up.

Think about why you are looking for a change: Is the job not challenging? Are co-workers not compatible? Is it the current hybrid work environment?

Explore new fields through short courses or other training opportunities.

Learn who the key players are in the organization where you want to work, and get networking.

Consider the pros and cons of both staying and leaving. Write your answers down.

If staying in your current field, talk to your mentor, supervisor and or peers about potential upward paths or new assignments.

If you want to change roles within your agency, find out who is currently in that role and connect with them. Ask for an informational interview or shadow opportunity.

Research, research, research.

If looking within the federal government, keep in mind that not all jobs are listed on USAJobs.gov.

Consider becoming a consultant and being your own boss.

If you're looking for more resources to help you take the next step in your career, be sure to check out the [NextGen Government Virtual Training Summit](#). GovLoop hosts two free virtual summits every year that are focused on providing public servants with everything you need to advance your career.