

Introduction

This guide has been adapted from information provided by Health Workforce New Zealand (HWNZ). It is intended for use by Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners who are undergoing postgraduate study funded by HWNZ. This guideline and the career plan template are designed to support staff with choices around career development in order to support them to achieve their full potential.

Management

The four step process

There are a range of career planning models and their design features vary. However, most, if not all, are based on four steps or some variation of them. These four steps can be summarised as:

1. Knowing yourself
2. Exploring possibilities
3. Making choices
4. Making it happen

(Please refer to the diagram on Page 2 of this guideline)

At each stage of the process it is expected that conversations between the employee and manager and/or other relevant person(s) will occur.

The first two stages may be quite brief – the nurse will be largely responsible for doing the work on “knowing yourself” and “exploring possibilities”. This information does not have to be shared with the manager; however, employees are encouraged to discuss possibilities with a variety of people, which may include their manager(s).

Manager involvement may need to be more intensive during the third and fourth sections of the career plan: making choices and developing a plan to make things happen.

Career discussions may occur between the employee and one or more of the following: manager, a professional supervisor, a professional leader, an educator, a career development specialist, or people experienced in a particular field.

The four steps to career planning – what needs to happen



1. Knowing Yourself

Employee develops a clear view of their strengths, aspirations, values, resources and needs.

Things to work through include:

- Which aspects of their work they enjoy and which they don't
- Identifying skills, interests, values, motivators and personality type
- The extent to which their current or future role meets their aspirations and needs
- Any other specific preferences or pressures they may be facing.
- Identifying development needs

2. Explore Possibilities

Employee researches options available, the career pathways to achieve these options.

Things to work through include:

- Finding out what the relevant prerequisites and required steps are for each option
- Speaking with people who have been working in various fields
- Feedback from current and past managers, professional leaders, career advisors, mentors, colleagues etc
- What job experiences or training will be beneficial in pursuing each option and are those experiences or options realistically available
- Identifying more than one option

4. Make it Happen

Making it happen involves the employee and the manager agreeing with a course of action.

Things to work through include:

- Recording a plan of action
- Action steps that may require further training, gaining useful experience or developing a specific technical skill
- Implementing the plan
- Periodically reviewing

3. Make Choices

Making choices involves considering the suitable options and matching what the employee would like to do with what the workforce needs.

Things to work through include:

- Considering workforce information. Identifying areas of growth and workforce shortages
- Considering competition for and availability of named options
- Identifying any obstacles or barriers and how they can be overcome
- Considering what is involved in pursuing each option and is the employee up for it.



Future-proofing and keeping it real

Career plans will often include 'future-proofing' especially early in careers.

- **Future-proofing**

- Many employees select a career option but later change their mind. It is advantageous, especially for employees who are considering specialising, for a career plan to keep options open.
- It is quite valid, for example, for a new graduate registered nurse to have a career plan that the choice at this point is "I don't know, and I'd like a bigger taste of a range of options" or "I am inclined towards these three or four options, and I'd like to gain experience in these options."

- **Keeping it real**

- In the early stages of a career, it may make sense for an employee to keep options open and look at a range of training and experience options for future proofing reasons (see above).
- After the early stages, care needs to be taken to ensure that employees are not doing a series of random funded courses (because they "sound interesting").

What is in a good career plan?

The career plan will:

- Briefly record relevant information from "Knowing yourself" and "Exploring possibilities" and "Making choices"
- Specify an agreed (between the employee and the manager or supervisor) course of action covering some or all of:
 - Skills the individual needs to develop
 - Qualifications needed
 - Other learning opportunities to meet agreed goals
 - Possible "stepping stone" jobs
 - Experiences that may be useful
 - Strategies for overcoming any obstacles
 - Networks/information/support needed to achieve goals
- Specify who will do what to implement the career plan
- Specify when and/or in what circumstances progress in implementing the plan, and the plan itself, will be reviewed.

The training plan that supports a career plan may encompass some or all of "on the job" experiences, formal education, informal education and mentoring/coaching/support.

Responsibilities of managers and employees

Managers, career planning professionals, coaches, mentors, etc are responsible for:

- Creating a career development culture
- Organising a good career planning process
- Communicating relevant information such as what the career pathways are, and current and future workforce needs
- Highlighting information sources
- Providing opportunities (including on the job experiences, formal and informal training, etc) for exploring options and for development
- Giving advice and support

Employees/trainees are responsible for doing most of the work (after all, it's their careers) e.g.:

- Self assessment/awareness and assessing their own needs
- Understanding DHB etc workforce needs
- Gathering relevant information
- Thinking about and assessing options, making decisions, and making things happen.

REFERENCES:

Wraight, B. (2010). *Career planning: Guiding principles*. Heath Workforce New Zealand, Wellington.

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CREATED BY: ADON – Workforce Development		REVIEWED BY:	
AUTHORISED BY: WCDHB DON			