REFLECT ON ASPIRATIONS, SKILLS AND VALUES

‘We keep moving forward, opening up new doors, and doing new things, because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.’

~ Walt Disney

Perhaps the most important aspect of successfully managing a career is having a good handle on your own aspirations, skills, interests, and values.

Over the course of your lifetime, you will spend almost one quarter of your life at work. That’s a lot of time, and so it is important for your work to be as fulfilling and rewarding as it can be.

A rewarding career often means there’s a good match between what a person is interested in, the skills they have, their values and beliefs and the type of work they do. No matter what stage of your career you’re at, it’s important to have a good understanding of yourself, what you’re good at and what you like to do. This applies equally to those who are thinking of making a career change, or those who may want to take this opportunity to reflect on their career strengths.

In this section you will examine three key areas related to your personal style, interests and current life situation.

MATCHING YOUR CAREER VALUES WITH THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

What Makes A Satisfying Career?

What we each determine as a successful career is a very personal thing and able to be judged only by ourselves. For some, a successful career is characterized by advancement to senior positions, increased financial rewards and greater responsibility; for others, the ability to make a contribution, to be able to learn and develop skills, and to have a personal sense of accomplishment is regarded as a satisfying achievement. As such, career success is not always defined by promotion, but more by a sense of personal fulfillment. Ultimately it is up to individuals to decide what they want from their careers.

➢ The key lies in matching your career values to your work environment and exploring your own definition of career success.

Explore the Work Environment

Working in the Alberta Government can be rewarding with a great diversity of occupations and career choices.

Consider carefully the different occupations and working environments before making career choices. In Step 2 we will take an in-depth look at the world of work and explore the types of occupations that might suit you, where you can find opportunities and the types of work skills that may be required in the future.

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**What’s the right environment for you?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management career stream</th>
<th>Non-management career stream</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>− Broad scope of decision making</td>
<td>− Opportunity to enhance technical expertise</td>
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<tr>
<td>− Opportunity to lead wide ranging strategic planning</td>
<td>− Growing professional opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>− Often involves managing people and budgets</td>
<td>− Allows focus in one area</td>
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<tr>
<th>Small ministry</th>
<th>Large ministry</th>
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<tr>
<td>− Can offer a broad range of experiences and exposure</td>
<td>− Ability to move around to many different areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>− May be extensive decision making opportunities</td>
<td>− May be able to develop expertise in a range of subjects</td>
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<tr>
<td>− Offers opportunities to interface with all levels in the organization</td>
<td>− Multiple opportunities for development</td>
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<th>Central ministry</th>
<th>Line ministry</th>
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<tr>
<td>− Strong central focus in APS</td>
<td>− Focus on issues and practices relevant to that ministry</td>
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<tr>
<td>− Cross government perspectives and exposure</td>
<td>− Interactions with citizens as the primary external client group</td>
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<tr>
<td>− Often involves generic issues with an internal client group</td>
<td>− High need for technical expertise</td>
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<th>Remote location</th>
<th>Central location</th>
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<tr>
<td>− Close relationships with the community</td>
<td>− Access to infrastructure, facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>− Strong opportunities to affect change</td>
<td>− High degree of choice</td>
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<tr>
<td>− Broad exposure to different work areas</td>
<td>− Strong networking opportunities</td>
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<th>Program delivery area</th>
<th>Policy development area</th>
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<tr>
<td>− Opportunity to focus on business excellence and continuous improvement</td>
<td>− Strong focus on emerging issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>− Opportunity to directly interface with clients</td>
<td>− Consultation with broad range of stakeholder groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>− High involvement in service delivery</td>
<td>− Research based</td>
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**Key factors** to consider in matching your career values to the work environment are:

- Autonomy and degree of delegation
- Decision making processes
- Organizational culture
- Ability to influence outcomes
- Dynamic or structured environment
- Degree of pressure or requirement for quick solutions and actions

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EXPLORE YOUR INTERESTS, VALUES AND ABILITIES

One of the most important steps in finding out what you are capable of and interested in is to undertake a self evaluation. There are literally thousands of on-line tools available that can explore your unique strengths and weaknesses, beliefs, learning styles and personality. They are primarily aimed at assisting you to understand your skills, interests, abilities and values to allow you to make better career choices. You may have assessed these when you first entered the workforce ... good career managers will continually re-evaluate and re-assess to ensure they are in sync with their career directions.

It is important to recognize that a self assessment will not tell you what career path to choose. It does however, provide you with the first steps in determining compatibility of your career and self development choices.

Your career highlights

Consider your career highlights and major achievements to date. What are the activities that you are most proud of? This may give you an insight into your personal strengths and preferences.

Levels of Excellence Tool

The Levels of Excellence Tool is a guide for competency development based on the Alberta Public Service Competency Model. It provides you with a starting point to help you narrow down which competencies - and which levels within those competencies - are most relevant in your role. For more information, including a self-assessment tool for the levels of excellence check out: Alberta Public Service Levels of Excellence.

OTHER ON-LINE SELF-DISCOVERY TOOLS

The on-line world is evolving all the time. There is a vast array of self discovery and assessment tools used to further explore your personal style, abilities, interests and aptitudes available for free on the www today.

If you are interested in delving further into this first phase of gathering information about yourself and your personal style some interesting sites can be found in the portal.
GATHERING FEEDBACK FROM OTHERS

“The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing”

~ Albert Einstein

A critical piece in your self-evaluation journey is finding out whether your perceptions about yourself are consistent with what your supervisor, peers, clients or people who work for you have to say. This means exploring both positive and negative aspects of their perceptions.

But how exactly can you get this kind of feedback and make it a constructive and useful tool for your career management?

Why would you want to gather feedback?

• To ensure that your perceptions based on self-assessment are in alignment with those of others.
• To develop individual competencies that will enhance skill sets required for your job and prepare you for your next move.

Real feedback is a gift! It is about understanding how to get better and – we all have areas where we can improve. The key in working effectively with feedback is the mindset you choose to go into it with. You will get lots of data and information, and what you do with this data has the potential to enrich your work experience in powerful ways.

So go in search of feedback!

Who could you approach? Approach people who are familiar with how you work. The more familiar - the better the feedback.

Supervisor
- Peers
- Clients
- Team members
- Direct reports
- Stakeholders
- Staff who report to you

• This doesn’t mean only getting feedback from friends or people you are comfortable with – remember sometimes our greatest learning comes from times of greatest stretch!
• Don’t put people on the spot though – give them time to gather their thoughts.
What kinds of things should you be asking these people?

**Conversation starters to help you get feedback:**
- I value your insights and would appreciate spending some time with you to get feedback on my performance.
- How could I do this differently so I can get a better result?
- I’d appreciate your thoughts on my recent project/presentation/……, could we take some time to discuss?
- I’m considering my learning plan options and would value your input.
- Do you have any advice on how I could approach this more effectively?
- What would this look like if I was doing it really well?
- Thanks for letting me know – can we talk about this some more once I’ve thought about it?
- I don’t think I handled that very well – could we talk about your observations?
- That meeting went really well – can you help me reflect on why?

**When** is feedback successful? When it:
- Is easy to understand
- Translates into action
- Is reliable, and given in the spirit of assisting you meet your development goals
- Received with an open mind

Ideally feedback should be happening on a continuous basis rather than a one-off discussion once a year. That said, an excellent time for soliciting feedback is during your performance management discussions.

What other things should I keep in mind throughout this process?

Rule of thumb: The people that you choose to ask for feedback should know you well enough to be able to provide you with relevant information. You may choose people like your supervisor who has observed your broad range of behaviors and skills, or you may approach someone you have worked with on a narrower scope that can provide feedback on specific areas.

Not all competencies are related to every job. It may be beneficial to have a discussion with your supervisor or manager about which competencies are most related to your job, and gather feedback in those areas.
Responding to feedback with grace:

- Reflect and consider feedback in the spirit in which it was given.
- Ask for clarification if you are not sure and seek advice on a better way – “Can you be more specific?” “What was the effect of that?” “Can you give me an example?”
- Seek to understand rather than agreeing or disagreeing.
- Resist the temptation to interject or offer rationale – listen and wait to respond.
- Be clear about what would help you.
- Don’t forget about the positives and areas that are your strengths.
- Don’t take feedback personally and keep it at arms length from your self-worth.
- Remember nobody is perfect!
- Avoid pre-judging what may transpire.
- Resist quick fixes to issues that are important, complex and challenging.
- Be patient with yourself and others.
- Pay attention to yourself. Notice what happens for you and the patterns in your work – become a silent witness to your emotions, reactions and actions.
- Thank the person for taking time to give you feedback.
- Remember – giving feedback can be a difficult task too.

Assessment Services

This government-wide service assists with individual development by using multi-source feedback (gathered from supervisors, peers and direct reports), which is based on the Alberta Public Service Competency Model. It is an excellent way to gather feedback and translate it into action through assistance in development planning.

For more information, visit Assessment Services.

A less formal way of gathering feedback can be through a simple survey. A sample form can be found on the portal.

Other Considerations?

1. Think about your past work experiences. What did you like, and what would you want to be different?
2. In the past what learning experiences have inspired you the most? Would you be willing to undertake formal studies? If so, at what level?
3. What kind of environment do you like to work in (outdoors, near home, in the city, with a small group of people, …)
4. Are you prepared to relocate to another area?
5. As you are retiring from the workforce, think about what will be important to you as you look back over your career?
6. What would the best possible career be for you?
Look for emerging themes in your reflections about yourself. This is not to say you must do ‘X’ or be a ‘Z’, but rather gives you some interesting data from which to think about your career options.

For example, I like working with people, I enjoy the outdoors, I’m motivated by high pressure situations….

APPENDICES

Types of skills

- **Self management skills** include qualities like being dependable, responsible and having a positive attitude.
- **Transferable skills** such as social skills, communication skills, leadership and problem solving skills can be applied in many different situations.
- **Technical skills** are the skills needed for a particular job (eg: mechanics need specific auto repair skills).

🔍 Your interests

Your work will be more enjoyable if you are doing something that interests you. Which types of activities do you enjoy?

- Solving problems
- Influencing others
- Being physically active
- Working with facts and figures
- Administering programs
- Researching
- Developing public policy
- Teaching and developing people
- Making presentations
- Helping people
- Using your imagination
- Building or fixing things
- Creating things
- Working with theory
- Practical applications
- Deciphering information
- Recognizing patterns
- Brokering solutions
Your abilities

Which of the following activities do you do well?

- Working with numbers
- Thinking strategically and developing business plans
- Adapting to change
- Creating things and using your imagination
- Appreciating customer needs and expectations
- Imagining in three dimensions (e.g.: blueprints)
- Using and understanding words and ideas
- Performing physical tasks
- Understanding how things work and putting them together
- Communicating effectively in a range of diverse situations
- Developing others
- Presenting convincing arguments to influence outcomes
- Noticing differences in detail and recognizing errors
- Learning scientific and technical principles and gathering information systematically
- Planning and developing projects, coordinating and handling details
- Listening, expressing feelings and getting along well with others
- Working with complex problems and coming up with workable solutions
- Paying attention to results and outcomes
- Working in teams
- Leading and inspiring others
- Building relationship with stakeholders and the community
- Reflecting on your own abilities
- Resource and project management

Consider how these abilities relate to the APS Competencies. Can you match your skills?

✔️ For a more comprehensive look at these competencies and the Alberta Public Service Competency Model access the portal.

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CAREER VALUES

There are many factors that provide you with a personally satisfying career. The ones listed below will provide you with a start. Try and think of others that are important to you.

Your key values and drivers

Which of the following motivate you?

- Helping society
- To be of service to people
- Competition
- Variety
- Able to make a contribution
- Prestige
- Personal satisfaction
- A personal sense of accomplishment
- Having time to pursue other activities
- Doing work I like
- Freedom to make decisions
- Being in a position to make important decisions
- Getting respect from others
- Financial rewards
- Having the opportunity to learn new things
- Public recognition
- Wealth and material comfort
- Getting to the next level
- Independence
- Job stability
- Able to influence direction

- What would success look like for you?
- What contribution do you want to make to the APS?
- What impact do you want to have?
- What will your ‘footprint’ be?
- What would you want to be communicated about you?
- Are there some jobs that you would prefer not to do?
- What kinds of jobs jump to mind that fit your values?

How do your values support the APS Values?
Respect, Accountability, Integrity and Excellence