

Developing a Career Path using the Occupational Mobility Explorer (OME)

Time Allotment: 45-60 minutes
Grade Level: High School, College

Activity Rationale:

As part of our work to foster maximum employment and a strong overall economy, the Federal Reserve System conducts research that increases understanding of the U.S. labor market and promotes economic mobility and opportunity for all. Published by the Federal Reserve Banks of Philadelphia and Cleveland, report findings show a high degree of similarity between the skills that employers seek when filling lower-wage jobs and the skills demanded for higher-paying jobs.

Activity Description:

This activity allows students to explore opportunity occupations throughout their local community or region by using the Occupational Mobility Explorer (OME) tool to build awareness of career paths that align to their professional aspirations. The OME allows users to visualize how job skills needed for specific occupations can transfer to higher-paying occupations in the same geographical area.



Objectives:

- Explore regional occupations of interest
- Develop and visualize potential career paths using the OME
- Identify the top shared and requested skills needed to transfer between roles in a career path



Materials:

- For each student: Student worksheet (digital or print out)
- For the instructor: OME User Guide
- PowerPoint lesson



Preparation:

Instructors should familiarize themselves with the OME tool. It may be helpful to for the instructor to create a personal career path to display for students.

Lesson Procedure :

Compelling question (2 minutes):

When thinking about your future career, what factors do you consider to be most important (for example, pay, hours, benefits, etc.)?

Introduction (5 minutes):

Begin by showing students the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics page on [Fastest Growing Occupations](#) . Explain that these are the 20 occupations with the highest projected percent change of employment between 2023-33.

1. Discuss why it might be important to look at these occupations.
2. Ask students to identify which jobs do not require a 4-year degree, and:
 - a. Prompt discussion around the similarities between these jobs (i.e., Are they based around emerging technology? Will they always be in-demand?)
 - b. Ask them what similarities do they notice about the highest paying jobs? (i.e, do they require higher levels of education?)
3. Ask: What jobs might be more in demand within our community?
 - a. Ask: Are there any occupations you're interested in that might also be needed within our community?
 - b. Ohio instructors can utilize this resource: <https://topjobs.ohio.gov/top-jobs-list/ohios-top-jobs-list>

Selecting potential jobs (10 minutes):

Hand out copies of the OME worksheet. Students will use this worksheet to guide their selection of different careers from the BLS website. While students could spend a large amount of time on this section, we encourage instructors to set a 10-minute time limit.

4. Walk students through the different features of the Occupational Outlook Handbook [page](#), and let them know that they are working to identify three jobs of interest.
 - a. On the left-hand side of the main page are “Occupation Groups”. Students can select a group and see a list of several different jobs within that grouping.
 - b. The “Select Occupations by” feature allows students to sort jobs by median pay, education level, etc.
 - c. [Field of Degree](#): Students can select a field of study from the list. Scroll down to Table 2 for any field and find the “top employing occupations for workers” in that field.
5. Users should select three jobs for the remainder of the activity.

Soft Skill Identification (10 minutes):

Students will learn about the difference between “soft” and “hard” skills and identify the soft skills needed for their careers of interest.

6. Share the definition of soft skills: personal attributes that enable you to interact more effectively with others. Explain the difference between “soft” skills and “hard” skills. Hard skills are learned in schools and/or during job-specific training.
 - a. Ask students to think of and share some examples of soft skills.
 - b. Share the top 10 soft skills according to the [National Soft Skills website](#): dependability, motivation, communication, commitment, creativity, problem solving, flexibility, teamwork, leadership, time management.
7. Have students return to their worksheet with their three jobs. using the [BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook](#). After searching for each job
 - a. Look for the tab “How to Become One” and click on it.
 - b. Scroll down to Important Qualities and use this information to identify the soft skills for the occupation. Record this information on the worksheet
 - c. Find the education requirements and median annual wage. Record this info on the worksheet

Optional extension:

Ask students to identify if these three selected jobs will allow them a to afford their lifestyle using the [Living Wage Calculator](#).

Building a career path (20 minutes):

8. After identifying three potential jobs, students will utilize the OME tool to create a career path for one of them.
 - a. Explain the difference between a job and a career: A job is a specific role you hold to earn income and has defined tasks and responsibilities. A career is a broader term encompassing your professional life, including multiple jobs within a field over a longer period. Jobs will be specific steps along the path that is your career.
 - b. Walk students through how to use the OME with your own job example or one of the jobs examples below:
 - i. Retail salesperson -> Stock order fillers -> Cargo and freight agents
 - ii. Cashier -> Customer service representation -> Supervisor of office/administrative work
 - iii. Explain that students should be selecting jobs for their path that increase pay and are of potential interest. Return to the compelling question from the beginning of this lesson.
9. Identify the top three shared and requested skills between jobs 1 and 2 and jobs 2 and 3.
 - a. Categorize them as soft or hard skills on the worksheet.
10. Examine a local job posting within this career path.
 - a. Record the soft and hard skills that you find on the job posting.

Optional extension:

Depending on the starting career, you can extend your OME career path. Just choose the last career on your path and use it as the starting career for a second path.

Assessment/Follow-up discussion questions (located on student worksheet):

Did this activity help you identify new jobs you had not previously thought of?

What skills were most requested between the three jobs you were most interested in? Are there any similar skills between the jobs in your OME career path?

What are some soft skills that you are currently developing (in school or at work)? Can you think of any tasks that you could take on which will support new skill development?