

# STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY GUIDE



Your Resource to Gain and Maintain Employment



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# INTRODUCTION

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One third of your adult life or about 33% of your time, that's how long you'll end up working. For Americans, it totals a whopping 90,000 hours over their lifetime, while for Brits, it's slightly lower at 84,000 hours.

Either way, it's a lot of time. Shouldn't you at least enjoy your job?

Apple founder Steve Jobs famously said:

"If you don't love something, you're not going to go the extra mile, work the extra weekend, challenge the status quo as much."

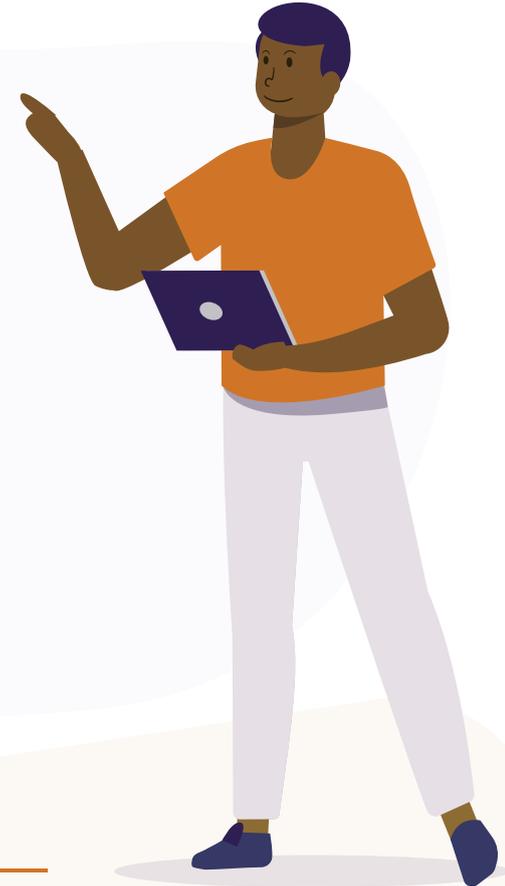
Winnie Harlow, Raheem Sterling and Shenseea all love what they do and it shows!

With so much time spent working, finding your dream job should be a priority, but sadly, many people fail to do it. Don't make the same mistake! Figuring this out should be your 'passion project', something that excites you and sparks your curiosity.

If the light bulb hasn't gone off for you just yet, hang in there, and make it your mission to discover and eventually land your dream job.

This guide suggests some useful tips to find your way.

So have an open mind, get ready to do the work and enjoy the journey.



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**HAPPY SEARCHING!**

# CAREER PLANNING

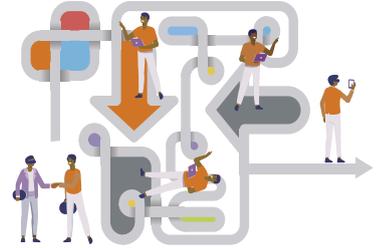
## What is a Job?

A job is a set of tasks a person does to earn money. And while Jamaican parents will have you believe there are only two jobs, doctor and lawyer, there are actually more: agricultural engineer, spa manager and film director, just to name a few.



## What is a Career?

A career is a series of jobs over a person's working life. A career covers a long period and shows progress: starting out as an assistant in a small cubicle to becoming the CEO in the corner office is one example of a successful career.



## Career Examples

### AGRICULTURE



Agricultural Engineer | Engineer |  
Project Manager | Senior Project Manager

### TOURISM



Spa Receptionist | Massage Therapist | Spa Supervisor |  
Assistant Spa Manager | Spa Operations Manager |  
Assistant Spa Director | Spa Director

### FILM PRODUCTION



Production Assistant | 2nd 2nd Assistant Director |  
2nd Assistant Director | 1st Assistant Director |  
Director

## What's the difference between a job and a career?

| JOB                                  | CAREER   |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| A specific position with an employer | A series of jobs, usually with different employers |
| Current role                         | Life's work  |
| Generally short-term                 | Always long-term                                   |

## What is career planning?

Career planning is finding work that offers the best chance for you to show your skills, interests and personality. Choosing a career is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. It will have a big impact on every area of your life: from the number of hours you work each week, to how much money you earn, to even the country or city where you end up living. It is not a choice to be taken lightly and should never be left up to chance.

Since you want to get this decision right, you must take the time to think about and plan your career. Check out this guide's 7 steps to find the perfect fit for you.



# STEP 1: Take Self-Assessment Tests

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The best way to kick-start your career planning is to take self-assessment tests. They give you clues into who you are and what motivates you; do you need your ‘coil dem thick like dumplin’ or can you get by with a ‘likkle bit a money’? The tests can shed light on what career fields offer the best chance for you to shine. There are different types, including:

## VALUES



### What’s most important to you in a job?

- EXAMPLES: salary, the amount of interaction with people, community development
- Free Online Test: MyPlan.com’s Values Assessment
- Website: <https://www.myplan.com/assess/values.php>

## INTERESTS



### What activities do you love to do?

- EXAMPLES: build cabinets, conduct chemical experiments, edit footage
- Free Online Test: My Next Move’s O\*Net Interest Profiler
- Website: <https://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>

## PERSONALITY



### Who are you?

- EXAMPLES: From openness, conscientiousness and agreeableness to extraversion and neuroticism
- Free Online Test: Big Five Personality Test
- Website: <https://openpsychometrics.org/tests/IPIP-BFFM/>

## APTITUDE



### What are your abilities and strengths?

- EXAMPLES: verbal reasoning, error checking, situational judgment
- Free Online Test: Holland Code (measures a mix of interests, talents and aptitude)
- Website: <https://www.truity.com/test/holland-code-career-test>

Since there is no limit on the number of tests you can take, you should do several, especially if they're free! You can do them online or at your school, which usually offers them through a professional development course or within Student Services.

Go into each test with an open mind. Once you're done, the test will generate a list of jobs based on your responses. Remember, these results are not final but simply giving you ideas about which line of work to consider. Carefully review the lists and prioritize the jobs that fascinate you.

## ACTIVITY

Take 3 self-assessment tests online. From the list of jobs recommended, write the top 5 that interest you.

1

2

3

4

5



# STEP 2: Conduct Career Research

Once you've picked your 5 job options, it's time do some research. Finally put your social media detective skills to good use and learn as much as you can about these professions. For each, you should be looking for:

- **Primary responsibilities**
- **Salary**
- **Benefits**
- **Work hours**
- **Job demand**
- **Education and training requirements**



## Where can you find this info?

### ONLINE

- Use search engines to get general info about each job.
- Browse listings on local job search engines:  
[www.caribbeanjobs.com](http://www.caribbeanjobs.com)  
[www.go-jamaica.com/jobsmart](http://www.go-jamaica.com/jobsmart)  
<https://jm.linkedin.com>
- Check out LinkedIn to view profiles of professionals working in your chosen fields.



## SCHOOL

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- Visit Student Services and log into the Ministry of Labour and Social Security's Labour Market Information System.
- Chat with a career advisor in Student Services.
- Ask Student Services or the Library to recommend career planning books.



## NEWSPAPERS

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- Flip through job listings in the career sections of the Jamaica Gleaner and the Jamaica Observer every Wednesday and Sunday.



## ACTIVITY

Search local job search engines for your top 5 job options from your self-assessment tests.



# STEP 3: Set S.M.A.R.T Goals

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## What is a goal?

A goal is simply a target to work towards, like passing all your exams, landing a good job or getting 10,000 followers on Instagram, though that last one probably shouldn't be a priority. Goals are like having a contract with yourself. Unlike dreams or wishes, which tend to be vague, the best goals are "S.M.A.R.T":

### S

#### SPECIFIC

○ These goals are well-defined and focused, leaving no room for confusion.

○ EXAMPLE

I will get my associate degree in \_\_\_\_\_.  
(academic programme)

### M

#### MEASURABLE

○ With these goals, your progress can be tracked. You can easily check off your accomplishments and see what you have left to get done.

○ EXAMPLE

I must complete \_\_\_\_\_ credits to graduate from college.  
(number of credits)

# A

## ATTAINABLE

- For these goals, there is a good chance they can be achieved and you have already put yourself in a position to get them done.
- EXAMPLE  
To get my degree, I have enrolled at \_\_\_\_\_.  
(school)

# R

## RELEVANT

- These goals are genuinely important to you and you are passionate about achieving them.
- EXAMPLE  
I need to get this degree because I want to land my dream job as a \_\_\_\_\_.  
(job title )

# T

## TIME-SENSITIVE

- The goals must include reasonable deadlines. You should create a schedule that gives you enough time to complete all the steps needed to achieve the goals.
- EXAMPLE  
I am planning to complete my degree by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(target graduation date - month/year)

# S.M.A.R.T GOAL

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To achieve my goal of becoming a/an \_\_\_\_\_, I will complete \_\_\_\_\_ credits in the  
(dream job) (number of credits)

\_\_\_\_\_ programme at \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.  
(programme) (school) (month/year)

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## Are there different types of goals?

Goals are divided into two timeframes:

### SHORT-TERM GOALS

- Are immediate goals, which can be done relatively quickly, usually within 12 months
- EXAMPLES: take a personality test, write a cover letter or read a book



### LONG-TERM GOALS

- Are 'big picture' goals, which typically take more than 12 months to complete; they require planning and a great deal of effort to pull off
- EXAMPLES: graduate from college, learn a second language or become an industry expert



## Why are goals important?

Goals are important because they affect how you live your life. They guide how, where, with whom and when you choose to spend, or waste, your time, energy and money.

### Setting goals helps to:

- Give your life direction
- Provide you with a greater sense of purpose
- Motivate you to live your dreams
- Encourage you to become the best version of yourself
- Track your accomplishments
- Increase your self-confidence

## ACTIVITY

Write 3 S.M.A.R.T goals for your career.

1

2

3



# STEP 4: Gain Work Experience

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While online research, reading and career counselling are very useful, they can only get you so far. Remember, you had to personally test all the options before deciding if you were 'original', 'spicy' or 'barbeque'. Likewise, to truly get a feel for a job, you have to jump in and try it out. Luckily, there are ways for you to get practical work experience:

## INTERNSHIPS

- provide entry-level work experience within companies. They can last a single week or may be spread over several months. Interns learn more about their chosen career, develop skills, do basic tasks and get their first taste of corporate culture.



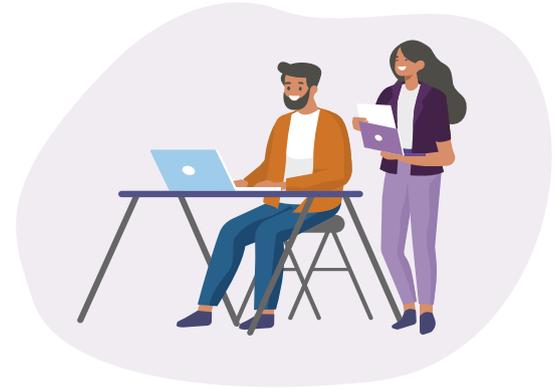
## VOLUNTEERING

- positions are usually offered by non-profit groups and are generally hands-on, charitable work. Volunteering is a great way to give back to your community, show your civic pride, meet new people and develop work skills.



## JOB SHADOWING

- involves watching a professional as they work. It offers a glimpse into the day-to-day activities of a particular role. And while it does not include hands-on work, participants can expand their career knowledge, get introduced to key contacts and find a mentor. Job shadowing can run from as little as a few hours to as long as several weeks.



| FEATURES                          | INTERNSHIP | VOLUNTEERING | JOB SHADOWING |
|-----------------------------------|------------|--------------|---------------|
| offers short-term work experience | yes        | yes          | yes           |
| involves performing basic tasks   | yes        | yes          | no            |
| paid position                     | sometimes  | never        | never         |

## ACTIVITY

- Contact Student Services for work experience opportunities and apply for them.

# STEP 5: Build Your Professional Brand

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‘Brand’ refers to reputation. It is how something or someone is presented in public. What do you think when you see the names “Flow”, “Popcaan” or “NCB”? Your reaction, whether positive, negative or indifferent, comes down to the brand. You don’t have to be a celebrity to have a brand. Everybody has one: for some, it is carefully crafted, while for others, it is accidentally created.

## BUT HOW, AS A COLLEGE STUDENT, DO YOU BUILD YOUR BRAND?

### Develop “hard” and “soft” skills

- A skill is the ability to do a task, job or activity well. You can be skilled at cooking, using TikTok or dribbling a basketball. Skills are learned and can be improved by increasing knowledge and through practicing. They are broken into two groups: “hard skills” and “soft skills”.
- “Hard Skills” refer to technical knowledge or training, an understanding of how to operate a tool, software programme, application or system. Every industry requires its own set of hard skills. A reservation agent will need to use a point of sale (POS) system. A veterinarian technician will have to take samples using a syringe. While a video editor should know their way around Adobe Premier Pro.
- Hard skills are important because they are the basic building blocks for doing a job and are needed to maintain a uniform standard within a field.
- To develop hard skills:

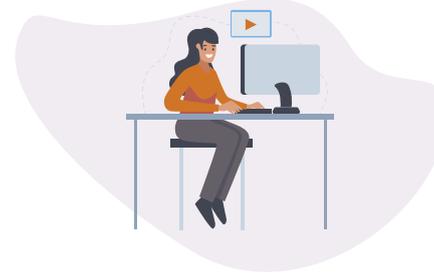
## TAKE FORMAL TRAINING COURSES

- Sign up for in-person or online classes.



## GO THE 'SELF-TAUGHT' ROUTE

- Teach yourself by reading 'how-to' books, watching tutorial videos and using other training materials.



## LEARN FROM A PROFESSIONAL

- Ask an expert to show you how to do the work.



## LEARN ON THE JOB

- Gain experience through on-the-job training.



○ “Soft Skills” refer to good personality traits and relationship skills. It is the way you behave and interact with others. In-demand soft skills for Jamaican employers include:

- **Communication (written and verbal)**
- **Positive attitude**
- **Team player**
- **Taking initiative**
- **Tech-savvy**

○ Unlike “hard skills”, which are industry specific, “soft skills” can be used across all lines of work. Soft skills are important because they help you to stand out in a noisy job market. If you and another candidate have the same educational background, an employer may make a final decision based on soft skills. Soft skills also improve your likeability, making you easy to work with.

○ To develop hard skills:

### **SIGN UP FOR A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSE AT YOUR SCHOOL**

- Actively participate in exercises, presentations and group assignments designed to enhance soft skills.



### **GET INVOLVED**

- Join clubs and societies, volunteer and get active in religious groups. Run for leadership positions that allow you to show off your soft skills.



## ASSESS YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Do some soul-searching and identify your strong and weak soft skills. Make a plan to get better and become the best version of yourself.



## SOCIALIZE WITH PEOPLE YOU ADMIRE

- Maybe it's a classmate who always gets good grades or a friend active on campus. Don't be "badmind!" Hang out with people with good qualities you can copy.



## READ

- Find inspirational posts, online articles, books and guides on self-improvement.



## MAKE SOFT SKILLS A HABIT

- Include them in your daily routines: text in proper English, even if it makes you seem 'uppity', go to linkups on time and find healthy ways to deal with conflict.



## ACTIVITY

- List 3 hard skills you would like to develop.
- List your 3 weakest soft skills and explain your plan to improve them.

### Get your cover letter, resume and portfolio in tip-top shape!

- Your cover letter is an opportunity to ‘sell yourself’ to a potential employer. Make sure you’re giving yourself the best chance to close the deal! Use perfect grammar, wow them with your experience and pitch yourself as a problem solver.
- Recognize there is no such thing as a ‘one size fits all’ resume. Since different industries have different demands, research resume trends that best suit the needs of your career. When writing your resume, think like an employer. It’s not enough to just list your experience but to explain when, where and how much you contributed.
- Use your time in college to build your portfolio, a collection of examples of your work. Internships and volunteer jobs are great ways to generate work samples but you can also do personal projects to practice and document your craft. When it comes to presenting your portfolio, don’t be afraid to get creative! Use audio, pictures, videos, a personal website and other multi-media avenues to get the attention of employers. Get inspired by looking online for ways others have shared their portfolio.

## ACTIVITY

- Search online for resume trends in your field.



## Master the art of 'interviewing'

- You've landed yourself an interview and the job seems just within reach. All you have to do now is charm your interviewer, convince them you're the best candidate and get them to take a chance on you. Sounds easy enough, right? If acing job interviews isn't your area of expertise, not to worry, there are easy ways to shine in an interview:

### FIND OUT EVERYTHING YOU CAN ABOUT THE COMPANY

- Visit the organization's website and social media pages. Flex your detective muscles to uncover the business' history, products and services, and future plans. During the interview, you can 'casually drop' this info to show off your company knowledge.

### PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

- As with anything else, the more you practice, the better you get at it. Practicing allows you to get familiar with common interview questions. By going through the questions with someone, you'll be able to prepare your responses, get feedback, improve your answers and rehearse your delivery.

## ACTIVITY

- Find 10 interview questions online to practice.

### GET TO KNOW YOUR INTERVIEWER

- Ask who will be doing your interview and check out their LinkedIn profile. See if you share anything in common: maybe you attended the same school, volunteered at a similar organization or have mutual contacts. Use this info to 'break the ice' during the interview.



## Figure out your 'professional look'

- And you thought career planning was boring! Now onto the fun part! Even before you start applying for jobs, you need to put together looks for work. If you can't tell the difference between your party and work wear, you need to get that sorted ASAP!



### KNOW THE DOS AND DON'TS OF PROFESSIONAL CLOTHING

- Tight pants, short skirts and low cut tops may be 'gram-worthy' but they'll be criticized in the workplace. To learn what works and what doesn't cut it for professional clothing, do a little research online. If your school offers professional development courses, take them, even if they aren't mandatory or don't offer any credits. They could just save you from public shame!

### UNDERSTAND DIFFERENT DRESS CODES

- Work doesn't just happen inside a workplace: it's the annual awards dinner, the staff retreat and the company Christmas party, where someone is guaranteed to wear something inappropriate. Don't be that guy or girl. Different occasions call for different wardrobes: black tie, formal, cocktail, business and business casual. If that previous sentence looks like a foreign language to you, you need to do some homework!

### USE CLEVER WAYS TO EXPRESS YOURSELF

- Work within the limits of professional dress codes but find quiet ways to show off your personality. Pick a style, from ultra modern to classic chic, dominate your look with a favourite colour and choose accessories that stand out.

## ACTIVITY

- Search online for work dress codes and note what is required for each.

### Consider your online presence

- What you post can and will come back to haunt you. Nowadays, companies do background checks on future employees by looking them up online.
  - Take a look at your social media. Will an employer see your online image as favourable or will it cost you a job?
  - Get rid of any content that paints you in a poor light, even if it means asking friends to untag or delete racy pictures.
  - Start thinking before you post. Consider how a GIF, photo, or video could boost or hurt your job hunt.



## ACTIVITY

- Delete racy pictures from your social media.

# STEP 6: Network

When companies need to fill a position, they first look at their staff to see if anyone is qualified to do the work. No luck there? They then review their network of contacts to find someone for the vacancy. These approaches fall under the 'hidden job market', those available positions not advertised. You'd be surprised to learn many posts do not make it past these initial searches. It is only when these methods fail an employer will finally break out the piggybank and run a job ad. So if you want to increase your chances of landing a job, you've got to network!

A network refers to the people you know: your family, friends, teachers, doctors and so on. Networking is a deliberate effort to increase your 'circle' by connecting with new people who can potentially help your career. Think back to when your friend got a job because of their cousin's husband's supervisor. That's the power of networking!

## HOW CAN YOU NETWORK?

### JOIN CAREER ASSOCIATIONS

- Every occupation belongs to a professional group. Locally, agriculture workers have the Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS), tourism officials meet through the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA), and members of the film industry form part of the Jamaica Film and Television Association (JAFTA). Once you've chosen a career, it is your responsibility to join its relevant association.



## TALK TO INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

○ People who work within your industry know the ‘ins and outs’ of the field; they include influencers, decision makers and some even have the power to help you land your dream job. Talking to them may seem scary but they can offer some good advice. Getting to them can be tricky but there are opportunities:

- Go to association meetings - they offer a great chance to mingle with new people.
- Attend seminars - schools regularly invite industry professionals to give talks.
- Make the time to go, introduce yourself to the speakers and ask questions.
- Connect on LinkedIn - read their articles, attend their virtual events and comment on their content.



## ACTIVITY

- Using private messages on LinkedIn, ask 3 professionals if they are willing to discuss their work experience.

## GET A MENTOR

- A mentor is someone who offers guidance based on their own experience; an individual you look up to and can ask for advice. As you network, try to develop a close relationship with at least one industry professional. Having a good mentor can get you on the right track to achieving your goals.

# STEP 7: Search and Apply for Jobs

You're almost at the finish line! You've got your impressive cover letter, resume and portfolio; your stylish, professional wardrobe; and you've cleaned up your social media. You're ready to make your own money and go wild on Amazon. But first, you need a job!

## SO WHERE DO YOU LOOK?

### ASK YOUR NETWORK



- Follow up with your 'circle' and tell them about the type of job you're looking for. See if they know about any vacancies or can connect you to someone who does.

### VISIT STUDENT SERVICES



- Meet with a career placement officer to discuss your job options. Based on your interests, work experience and career plans, decide on roles you should target. Log into the Ministry of Labour and National Security's Labour Market Information System to view vacant posts.

### SEARCH ONLINE



- Visit local job search engines for listings in Jamaica. Also, consider scrolling through global sites for remote work opportunities, if that's an option for your field.

### CHECK OUT NEWSPAPER LISTINGS



- Review the career sections of the Jamaica Gleaner and the Jamaica Observer, published weekly on Wednesdays and Sundays.

## SUBMIT JOB APPLICATIONS

- Create a target list of positions to apply for, carefully reviewing each job ad, and making note of deadlines and application requirements.
- Prepare different versions of your cover letter, each in response to a specific job listing.
- Make sure your resume shows you have the know-how and skills to do the tasks outlined in the job ad.
- Whether you submit on or offline, your application should be on-time and error-free.

## ACTIVITY

- List the jobs you plan to apply for.



# WHAT IS STUDENT SERVICES?

Student Services is responsible for supporting and developing students. If you need to 'get it together', the department offers a range of services from healthcare to financial aid. And, as you would have recognized throughout this guide, Student Services is a terrific resource for career planning.

## HOW CAN STUDENT SERVICES HELP WITH YOUR CAREER PLANS?

### CAREER COUNSELLING

#### ○ Offers self-assessment tools

Student Services may provide free access to self-assessment tests, some of which are not available online or require payment.

#### ○ Hosts counselling sessions

The department's career advisors are trained to discuss your career options and can help you to decide on a career path.

#### ○ Provides access to clubs and societies

Head over to Student Services to learn about clubs and societies on campus, including career-related clubs, such as 4H Club and Tourism Action Club, which allow you to explore your career further.



## CAREER SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

- Student Services will routinely host events designed to develop your employability skills and introduce you to industry professionals.



## JOB PREP

- The department can get you ready for your job search by assisting you with writing your resume and cover letter; putting together your portfolio; and practicing for interviews.



## JOB LISTINGS

- Student Services will give you access to work experience and job vacancies through:
  - The Ministry of Labour & National Security's Labour Market Information System
  - Job Fairs
  - Job Ads



## JOB PLACEMENT

- Visit Student Services to help you land a job: whether full-time, part-time, short-term internships, seasonal roles or volunteer positions.





