Setting people up for the next job

Career development in employment support for people with disability

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Who we are

The national peak body for the career development profession

10

member associations

CICA is a council of ten professional associations, spanning school, tertiary, private practice and organisational settings.

4

quality frameworks

The Australian Blueprint, Professional Standards, Guiding Principles and the Benchmarking Resource.

1

shared purpose

Quality career development support for all Australians, at every age and stage of life.

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Why career development matters

It is bigger than the next vacancy

1

Wellbeing

Work shapes income, routine, social connection and purpose. Support that treats career as part of a whole life protects wellbeing, not just employment status.

2

Identity and individuality

A career is one of the main ways people express who they are. Career development starts from the person's own story, strengths and aspirations.

3

Capability for life

Career development builds skills people keep: self-knowledge, decision making, and the confidence to manage transitions long after our involvement ends.

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What happens without it

The cost of treating placement as the finish line

Churn and repeat presentations

A placement without career thinking behind it is more likely to break down, bringing the person back through the same door.

Poorly informed choices

Without support to explore options, people default to what is familiar or immediately available, not what fits or lasts.

Longer time out of work

International evidence consistently links quality career guidance with reduced time on income support and better skills matching.

Disengagement and lost confidence

Repeated short-term placements erode self-belief. People start to see themselves as the problem rather than the system around them.

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The Australian Blueprint for Career Development

A national framework for the skills people need to manage life, learning and work



Free to download

yourcareer.gov.au/theblueprint

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The Australian Blueprint for Career Development

A national framework for the skills people need to manage life, learning and work

The Blueprint sets out eleven career management competencies, organised in three areas and mapped across four phases of the lifespan.

It describes what career development looks like for everyone, from primary school to later working life. That makes it a natural fit for services supporting people at any stage.

A

Personal management

Positive self-concept, interacting with others, and changing and growing throughout life.

B

Learning and work exploration

Lifelong learning, locating and using career information, and understanding how work relates to society and the economy.

C

Career building

Securing and keeping work, making career-enhancing decisions, balancing life and work roles, and managing the career-building process.

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The Australian Blueprint for Career Development



	Career management competency	Awareness	Exploring	Starting out	Groundwork	Advancing
		Career Phases				
		Learning Area A: Personal management				
1	Build and maintain a positive self-concept	Build a positive self-concept	Build a positive self-concept while discovering its influence on yourself and others	Build a positive self-concept and understand its influence on your life, learning and work	Develop abilities to maintain a positive self-concept and understand its relationship to educational and career goals	Maintain a positive self-concept and understand its influence on career decisions
2	Interact positively and effectively with others	Develop awareness of what contributes to positive and effective relationships	Develop abilities for building positive and effective relationships in life	Learn to apply abilities for building positive and effective relationships with others	Apply abilities for building positive and effective relationships in life and work	Monitor how you apply your abilities for building positive and effective relationships in life and work
3	Change and grow throughout life	Observe family and community members and their roles and responsibilities	Discover that change and growth are part of life	Learn to identify, monitor, and respond to change and growth	Understand how change and growth can impact relationships in life and work	Develop strategies for responding positively to life and work changes
4	Manage wellbeing, mental and physical health	Develop awareness of a range of feelings and how they can be expressed	Develop awareness of a range of feelings, the ability to describe feelings, and who your support people are	Develop strategies for responding to circumstances that may impact wellbeing, mental or physical health	Develop ability to apply strategies that promote wellbeing, mental and physical health in daily life and to support others	Incorporate strategies that promote wellbeing, mental and physical health in life, learning, and work settings
		Learning Area B: Learning and work exploration				
5	Participate in lifelong learning supportive of career goals	Develop an interest in learning	Discover the importance of learning and its contribution to life and work	Link learning to personal career aspirations and understand the need to continue to learn throughout your career	Understand the importance of lifelong learning to the career-building process	Participate in continuous learning supportive of career goals
6	Locate and use career information effectively	Develop awareness of learning through reading hardcopy and online materials	Understand what career information is	Understand how to locate and use career information	Locate and evaluate a range of career information sources relevant to career aspirations	Use career information effectively in the management of your career
7	Understand the relationship between work, society and the economy	Recognise that people work in paid and unpaid roles	Discover how work contributes to individuals' lives	Understand how work contributes to the community	Understand how societal needs and economic conditions influence the nature and structure of work	Incorporate your understanding of changing economic, social and employment conditions into your career planning
8	Understand the changing nature of life and work roles	Imagine life as an adult	Learn to recognise gendered life and work roles and to question their appropriateness	Explore non-traditional life and work options and learn to challenge stereotypical thinking	Examine factors that influence and explore strategies that respond to gender bias and stereotypical thinking	Seek to eliminate gender bias and stereotypical thinking in your life and work
		Learning Area C: Career building				
9	Secure/create and maintain work	Learn to play, share, and collaborate with others	Explore effective ways of working	Develop qualities to seek and obtain/create work	Develop abilities and resources to secure/create and maintain work	Continue to update skills and resources to secure/create and maintain work
10	Make career-enhancing decisions	Develop awareness of decision making	Explore decision making	Develop decision-making skills and knowledge	Engage in career decision making	Engage in decision making that enhances your career
11	Maintain balanced life and work roles	Become aware of the connections between play, chores, and other family commitments	Explore and understand the interrelationships across life roles and how they change over time	Explore and understand the interrelationships between life and work roles	Consider the relationships between lifestyles, life stages, and life roles to career building	Incorporate life/work balance into the career building process
12	Understand, engage in and manage the career-building process	Recognise that careers exist	Understand what career-building is	Understand how people build their careers	Develop the skills and knowledge to engage in career-building	Manage your career-building

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The Blueprint is a framework grounded in career theory that can guide career development work and support career development learning across the lifespan.

Competencies
The Blueprint identifies twelve career management competencies, grouped into three learning areas:
A: Personal Management
B: Learning and Work Exploration
C: Career Building

Developmental Phases
Each competency in the Blueprint is expanded according to five Career Phases: Awareness, Exploring, Starting Out, Groundwork, Advancing.

Performance Indicators
Performance indicators demonstrate the achievement of career development competencies.

Career Development Learning
Career development learning is informed by experiential learning theory and contextualised according to career development learning needs of the client or client group and the setting.

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What CICA's research found

Trialling the Guidelines for the Career Development of Young People with Disability, 2012

Placement was rewarded, careers were not

The guidelines aligned closely with the Disability Service Standards, but contracts of the day encouraged rapid placement rather than career development.

One size needed tailoring

The guidelines worked across settings but needed flexible application. For some young people, advocacy mattered more than self-determination.

Networks and relationships were critical

Families consistently reported young people were disappointed at not making friends at work. Expanding support networks proved essential.

It changed practice quickly

After one workshop, a program coordinator sought a career development qualification, and management considered it for the whole team.

The trial produced practice guidelines and a self-assessment tool. That thinking lives on in today's Guiding Principles and Benchmarking Resource.

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The relationship is the intervention.

- Person-centred practice starts with the person's story, not the vacancy list.
- Trust built over time is what allows honest conversations about aspiration.
- Every quality framework CICA publishes puts the relationship at the centre.

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Career development and disability

The same entitlement, sometimes a tailored path

1	**A lifelong entitlement**	The Blueprint maps career development across the whole lifespan. People with disability are on that same lifespan, with the same right to a career, not just a job.
2	**Tailored, not different**	The competencies are universal. How they are developed may need adjusting: pacing, format, communication, and involving chosen supporters.
3	**The next job after this one**	Sustainable careers are built one transition at a time. Post-placement support is the natural place for career conversations to live.

Talk about the functional impact, not the label. Ask about aspirations, not only barriers.

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Aspirations, not only barriers

“an ordinary life”

How people with disability most often describe career success: a job they enjoy with room to progress, earning enough to live independently, being seen as just another member of the team. None of it changes at 40, or at 60.

In practice

Talk about the functional impact, not the label.

Ask about aspirations, not only barriers.

A deficit model starts from what a person cannot do, and limits the options from the outset.

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FOR EMPLOYMENT CONSULTANTS

Where to start this week

1 Ask one aspiration question

Not “what job do you want” but “what does a good working life look like for you?”

2 Pick one Blueprint competency

Download the Blueprint (free) and work with one competency, whatever the jobseeker's age.

3 Reframe disclosure

Functional impact and adjustments, not diagnosis. Most people do not know they can ask.

4 Say the quiet part

Treat every placement as a step in a career, and tell the jobseeker that is what it is.

Managers: one team, one competency, one review point in three months.

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WORKED EXAMPLE

One competency in practice

Competency 1

Build and maintain a positive self-concept

The competency most damaged by repeated short placements and long unemployment, at any age.

The same three moves work at 19 and at 55. Only the stories change.

Three moves

Ask. "Tell me about a time work went well for you, paid or unpaid."
Reflect. Name the strengths you heard, specifically and in their words.
Record. Put their words into the plan, so the plan reads like them.

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Bringing it to your organisation

For middle managers making the case to senior staff

Start now

- Download the Blueprint and the Guiding Principles. Both are free.
- Frame it as retention and sustainability, outcomes your leaders already care about.
- Trial career conversations in post-placement support with one team.

Build over time

- Use the Benchmarking Resource to self-assess your service against national practice.
- Build career development into professional learning, including CICA webinars.
- Explore qualification pathways and connections with registered practitioners.

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A job is an outcome.
A career is a life.

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