Soft Skills Module 15

Career Planning and Portfolio Development
# Soft Skills Module 15

## Career Planning and Portfolio Development

### Summary

**Goal(s):**
Gain an understanding of career planning and portfolio development.

Display knowledge of how to apply for jobs/positions in contractual agreements.

**SMART Objectives:**
*Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-sensitive*

By the end of this module, students should be able to:

Objective SS15.1: Know the basics of career planning and portfolio development.

Objective SS15.2: Understand the process of applying for jobs/positions.

Objective SS15.3: Access and use available resources.

Objective SS15.4: Learn tips for success to land the job or contract during exploration.

Objective SS15.5: Develop great interviewing skills.

Objective SS15.6: Comprehend the elements needed to keep the job or contract.

**Instructor:**

**Delivery Method(s):**
Discussion, applied activities, role play, and development of the framework for a personal portfolio

**Length:**
Six Topics
Total Length: 10 hours

**Any Applicable Business and/or Soft Skills?**
All the soft skills learned throughout the program apply to this module.

Business Skills – applies specifically to marketing, relationship building and presenting knowledge, skills, and abilities in anticipation of a contract for services.

**Take Away Message(s):**
By the end of the module, students should, at a minimum, have an understanding of career planning and portfolio development and should have the portfolio framework along with the skills to apply in exploration for jobs/positions or contractual agreements.
Instructor Preparation

Title of Module: Career Planning & Portfolio Development

Instructor:

Because this module is the culmination of all the soft skills and braille modules/lessons, the instructor should open the session with comments about the frameworks that tie all together. Below is a sample of what might be shared.

As a result of the classes you have been taking, you have learned new knowledge, skills, and abilities. By now, you know your areas of strength and the areas that might be weaker. You have acquired and enhanced your soft skills in the areas of self-motivating factors, values, understanding how to learn, expanding your cognitive and critical thinking skills, knowing how to set and achieve goals, managing time, organizing, prioritizing, communicating, problem solving, employing ethical behavior, serving customers and self-management techniques. These soft skills are also referred to as executive thinking skills. All these elements add to your attributes – those essential skills that develop pre-employment contacts, job performance and career opportunities.

Now you are ready to create your portfolio – that is, organizing the job knowledge, skills, and abilities you have achieved through this program so when you transition to the community you are ready to begin developing your career either through employment with a business or organization or starting your own microenterprise. There is a difference between a job and a career. Your thoughts and mannerisms change when you are thinking about a career because you are thinking about long-term goals. As an example, you might find a job (microenterprise or employee) with a school or organization that needs a lot of braille services, but right this minute they need a proofer. Taking that position could lead to being hired as a braille transcriber to help out when the volume is high; as you work, your supervisor finds out that you have excellent tactile graphics skills, which leads to a higher paying position with more hours.

This module will provide you with a variety of knowledge skills and abilities to finalize the process and move you to the next step – getting the career you want.

It may be helpful if a master portfolio is available so students can see what the contents of one might include.

Agenda – topics to be covered in the module and length of each item

Topic: Career Planning & Portfolio Development  Time Allotted: 10 hours

Soft Skills Module 15-2
A. Career planning and portfolio development basics  
   (1.5 hours)

B. Preparing and applying for jobs/positions  
   (4 hours)

C. Access and use of available resources  
   (variable)

D. Tips for success  
   (1 hour)

E. Interviewing skills  
   (2 hours)

F. After hire – keeping everything together  
   (1.5 hours)

Materials & Supplies – items needed in order to carry out the agenda and classroom activities


2. Flip chart stand/pad or white board

3. Students need to bring their notebooks, journals and other tools developed

4. White board/flip chart stand and markers

5. Generic job descriptions and/or recruitment announcement for braille transcribers

6. Sample resumes

7. Sample interview questions

8. Master Portfolio example

9. Supplemental Video: “Job Interview Issues and How to Deal with Them” (15.E.5)

Classroom Preparation – steps to follow when setting up the learning environment

1. Students configured to facilitate group discussion, diads and triads as needed
2. Access to computer word processing to practice cover letters and thank you notes

3. Writing tools (pencils and black pens for master applications)

4. Projector, computer and screen set up for accompanying video
A. Career Planning and Portfolio Development Basics (1.5 hours)

Objective SS15.1: Know the basics of career planning and portfolio development.

 CONTENT PRESENTATION AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Ask students the following two questions and facilitate an open, whole class discussion. Use a few analogies that help get students thinking about the application of all they have learned.

**Question 1:** What is meant by the phrase Career Planning?

Sample analogy – If you were building a house you wouldn’t just go to the building supply store and buy what you think you might need – you would have a house plan (architectural plan) that spelled out what would be needed. The same is true with career planning. You can’t just look on the internet or in the newspaper and interview for a job which you do not have the knowledge, skills or abilities.

Ask students for some other analogies that support the need for career planning.

**Question 2:** What does it mean to develop a portfolio (if needed, ask for a definition of “portfolio” in the context of work/jobs/contracting)?

Sample analogy – The city wants a mural painted on the side of a very drab building. An artist is asked to come in for an interview and bring a portfolio. The artist’s portfolio contains the knowledge, skills, and abilities the interviewers are seeking. The portfolio has a resume, letters of recommendation, and pictures of the work of the artist.

Ask students for some other analogies that support the need for a portfolio, especially as a braille transcriber. After ample discussion and analogies for each question, have students review their notebooks, journals and anything else that would help them to identify significant knowledge, skills, and abilities important to their career planning and portfolio development.

Have the students complete the worksheet **My Attributes (15.A.1)** writing their knowledge, skills, and abilities (strengths), values, learning styles, time management, organization, prioritization, communication, problem solving, ethical behavior, customer service and self-management techniques.
After completing the handout, students should make a list in their journal of things they think they might want to have in their portfolio; ideas could include Braille and graphics samples, PowerPoint samples, Word document samples, resume, a final project, certificates/awards, letters of recommendation, etc.

B. Preparing and Applying for Jobs/Positions (4 hours)

Objective SS15.2: Understand the process of applying for jobs/positions.

CONTENT PRESENTATION AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Now that the students have revisited and know their strengths and attributes it is time to understand the preparation and application processes in getting a job/position in the 21st Century.

Pose the following question to the students:

How can you find job openings in your community when you are released?
What is the secret formula?

Write their responses on the board/flip chart pad and lead a discussion that addresses the following methods:

- Internet (networking through social sites such as Linked-in and Twitter).
- Check job search engine sites and tools, job banks, company web sites, targeted job sites (braille services), and sites listed by type of job.
- Talk to neighbors and friends; connect with contacts.
- Go back to your relations mapping exercise (Module 13, handout 13.B.4); now that you are in the preparing stages, what might you add to your map?
- Identify entities that use/need braille services and do some cold-calling.
- Use informational interviewing and inquiry approaches.
- Tell everyone (make sure you are ready with your 60 second infomercial about you).

Eighty percent of jobs found are through networking – not through public advertising such as newspapers or job internet sites.

The next section addresses two effective methods of tapping into the networking process by preparing for and understanding the job market.

The first is the informational interview. Explain the concept of informational interviewing and inquiry using the handout- Informational Interviewing and Inquiry (15.B.1). Copies may be printed for each transcriber-in-training to follow along. Share with
students that the informational interview and inquiry process does two things – connects you with a network and prepares you for the “real interview.” It provides a base of influence that you can use in career planning and the development of your portfolio.

**Activity:**

Based on the handout *How to Prepare for an Informational Interview (15.B.2)*, students should brainstorm several questions they would ask someone who is either working in a business or organization as a braille transcriber or has a microenterprise and contracts with business and organizations as a braille transcriber. Remind them that the questions and the anticipated interviewee’s responses should take up no more than 20 minutes.

Have students team up in pairs, sharing the questions they chose and the rationale for choosing – in other words, what are they looking for by asking the question? What information do they want? At the end of the activity have a general discussion about what they learned as a result of the activity.

**Activity:**

Students should create a 60 second personal infomercial; when ready each student presents her creation to the class. Make sure students are using the positive communications skills learned in Module 5 and taking the highlights from the *My Attributes (15.A.1)* handout.

The infomercial should communicate three to five critical elements they want an employer/interviewer to know. In order for the infomercial to be connected meaning that the employer/interviewer will listen and pay attention, students must do a level of investigation about the business or organization. While that may not be feasible during the program, there should be a review of how to gather the information once in the community (Module 13). Finally, remind students that this information is about them. It should answer two questions – “tell me about yourself” and “why should I hire you?” Refer students to handout *Infomercial Sample (15.B.3)* for a sample and a place to work out their own statement. Statements could relate to working as an employee or as a contracted microenterprise.

The second effective method of tapping into the networking process is gaining real and recent experience through volunteering. Some of the experience they reference will be in the braille training program they are completing; some will be the work done through
contracts the prison has arranged. Once in the community they will need to demonstrate their ability to do the work without the intense structure of a prison.

Again, students should refer to their relationship map. Students should identify businesses and organizations with whom they might set up informational interviews. Have students craft a question to use about opportunities within the business or organization to volunteer to keep their skills current. Allow students to share their questions with the class.

*NOTE:* If work or contracts are not forthcoming in a reasonable period of time, student may consider keeping skills current or upgrading skills through the following: on-the-job training, apprenticeships, online courses, postsecondary education and training or moving toward a college certification or degree.

The next step is to assist students in understanding and completing applications, designing a resume or business description, writing cover and thank you letters, and disclosing conviction histories. All students should leave the program with a master application in their notebook.

It is important to help students understand that most applications are completed on-line and submitted electronically to the business or organizations. Contracts are managed similarly (some will state no electronic submissions). The first step is to check for the closing date. Because of the way search engines work, it is not unusual to have an announcement come up in a search that is past the closing date.

Students should create a master or generic employment application. This tool will have more on it than is transferred to an actual application, but that is okay because students will have all their data in one place. Students should ensure they take the master application with them to informational interviews and inquiries as they never know when an interviewer might have them complete a business or organization application for an open position.

Most applications (printed or electronic) ask for basic information about the student’s job experience and education. This master application should contain everything – work and education both prior to incarceration and that done during incarceration. Once back in the community, if the student takes a volunteer position, that information should be transferred to the master application as well.
When completing applications it is critical to ensure that the student is using the language and words related to the knowledge, skills, and abilities listed on the announcement and/or in the job description. This is not a time to be too creative as this day in age computer word matching is used to select applicants. That means if the student’s words/language do not match/parallel the recruitment language, then most likely the student’s application will not be selected.

**Activity:**
Students should complete the **Generic Master Job Application (15.B.4)**. Help as needed.

**Activity:**
Give students a variety of generic job descriptions and/or recruitment announcements for braille transcribers. Ask students to find key words in the job descriptions and recruitment announcements and then match with the knowledge, skills and abilities they have listed on their master application or on the **My Attributes (15.A.1)** handout.

Circulate throughout the group, helping and pointing out language parallels they may not recognize or catch. Finally, put the points on the board/flip chart and/or distribute handout- **Pointers for Job Application (15.B.5)**.

Now students are ready to design their resume or brief business description. Again, several things have changed as a result of the electronic application process. Help students understand the purpose of a resume is not to repeat what is on the application, but an extension of the 60-second infomercial to present the knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes that make the student the best candidate for the job.

Give students sample resumes as examples and instruct them to begin to write their own for their portfolio. The **Checklist for Resume Development (15.B.6)** will help guide as well as evaluate. Students may also use handout **Action Words in Your Résumé (15.B.7)** to describe knowledge, skills, abilities and accomplishments will be most helpful. Have a couple thesauruses or access to the computer thesaurus for more words.

**NOTE:** Emphasize that resumes should always be saved in a PDF format so the formatting is not altered when the employer opens the document. (In MS Word 2010, click “File, Save As, PDF.”)
Give an overview of cover and thank you letters. Explain that all resumes must have a well-developed, yet simple “easy to quickly review” cover letter. Put the points of a cover letter on the board/flip chart:

- Short and easy to glance at
- Limited to one page with 2-3 short paragraphs
- Briefly emphasizes one to two skills and/or experiences valuable to an employer
- Positive and upbeat
- Free of spelling, typing and grammatical errors
- Explicit for each recruitment, application, and/or employer

The nine basic parts of a cover letter include:
1. Name, address, phone and e-mail
2. Date written
3. Employer or recruiting person’s name, title, company, address
4. The salutation: Dear___:
5. The BRIEF body:
   - How you heard about the opening
   - What you have to offer the business/organization
   - How you will follow up
6. Closing: Sincerely,
7. Signature
8. Your name (typewritten)
9. Enclosure (to let them know your résumé is enclosed)

Activity:
Students should practice developing several cover letters using Microsoft Word. They can use Sample Cover Letter (15.B.8) as an example of a standard cover letter.

Writing thank you notes is as critical as the cover letter. A nicely written thank-you note provides you the extra edge and puts your name in front of the employer/interviewer again. Important key elements of “thank you noting” include:

- Use the same format as the cover letter if sending a formal note.
- If a little more informal, a hand-written note on a note card may be very appropriate.
- If the application process was electronic, then an email thank you note is acceptable.
- If all was mailed, then a mailed thank you note is the way to go.
- Send the thank-you note right away.
CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN DISCLOSING A CONVICTION HISTORY

1. When should you disclose a felony conviction?
2. How long does a conviction stay on your background check?
3. Can you be bonded? How does that happen?
4. What preparation do you need to be able to explain your conviction history at the interview?
5. What occurs when you are upfront with the interviewer and share the pertinent information?
6. How can you decide whether the work you will be doing has a direct relationship to the crime for which you were convicted?
7. Other questions will arise during the discussion.

Disclosing a felony conviction:
It is said that honesty is the best policy; thus, individuals with felony convictions should be truthful when filling out employment applications. Many employers often do credit and background checks before interviewing; if the individual with a conviction history is not truthful up front, the employer will find out anyway. Upfront honesty allows the individual to control what and when the employer learns. There are ways to answer questions about convictions that can get the potential candidate invited to an interview.

Here are some ideas to consider:

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? If yes, please explain:
Write: Will explain at interview; I can be bonded.

Background information – Have you been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony within the past ten years that might unfavorably affect your suitability for this job?
Yes ☑ No – if yes, please explain.
Write: Will explain at interview; I can be bonded.

Have you been convicted of a crime within the past 10 years that directly relates to the position for which you are applying? If the crime you have been convicted of has no direct relationship to the position for which you are applying, you may answer “no.”

If the answer is yes, you should mark “yes.” For example, you were convicted of forgery and you are applying for a job as a bank teller. You would answer “yes” because your conviction has a direct relationship to the bank teller position.

Please explain your conviction.
Always write: “Will explain at interview.” This keeps your information more private. It is easier to talk about details than to write explanations.

Explain to students that it is not necessary to publicize your incarceration. Students should be honest in their depiction of work history and realize that conviction history is between an applicant and the interviewer, not everyone who sees your application. Just using the right language, being honest, and sharing your current values and ethics will make a big difference. In many environments, the language used in pre-employment and employment situations is “an individual with a conviction history.” This language is not to minimize the crime or conviction, but perhaps to reduce some of the stigmas associated with terms like convict, ex-offender, prisoner and criminal.

C. Access and Use of Available Resources (variable)
Objective SS15.3: Access and use available resources.

**CONTENT PRESENTATION AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION**

This lesson can be organized any way feasible within the correctional facility. The resources and references are generic as various areas have the same or similar services but refer to them under different names.

The best approach would be to ask community providers of publicly available career planning and portfolio development to visit the class and share resources available to students once they have been released. Knowing many students may be released to other communities, the safest way to capture applicable information is to look at those services that are universally provided in every state.

You may also find relevant information on-line that is downloadable and can be printed out for students as well as resources in the on-site library.

Here are some other basics:

- Local and state library systems have lending systems.
- Local community colleges have excellent career centers and services.
- The one-stop career center or workforce center: There is usually a state website that refers individuals to their local areas by county or zip code.
- Workforce Investment Boards also provide direct services – training and employment to individuals within the respective community.
- Vocational rehabilitation programs are available in every community or region within each state; again, there would be a state resource website.
- In some states if one does an internet search for public employment services, all of the systems come up with links to various services.
- Community integrations programs for individuals with conviction histories have a tremendous level of services and information.

D. Tips for Success (1 hour)

Objective SS15.4: Learn tips for success to land the job or contract during exploration.

**PREINSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Group students into triads, three to a group. Ask students to discuss what they have learned regarding constructing a career plan and developing the framework for a portfolio.

Students should write their items from their group discussion on flip chart paper and post around the room; review with students and ask questions to facilitate additional thoughts and recognize other items learned.
CONTENT PRESENTATION AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION

The following are additional Tips for Success, some that can be practiced while incarcerated and some to be practiced upon release. Share these with the students, and facilitate a discussion of how they could apply some of the tips now. When looking for a job or contracts it is important to stay positive. It has been said, that it is easier to find a job or contract when one is employed, than unemployed. The following important physical and mental elements can help you keep the edge.

It is critical to keep positive thoughts and energy in the forefront. There are numerous books written on what it takes to stay mentally tough. Take for example the works of James E. Loehr, mental toughness trainer and coach to numerous star tennis players. His research and wisdom comes down to a few but critical themes. They are:

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<th>Visualization</th>
<th>Seeing the end-goal or the final success</th>
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<td>Health and Exercise</td>
<td>Eating right and exercising regularly to keep the body fit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humor and Laughter</td>
<td>Creating increased endorphins and dopamine in the brain that help promote relaxation, and reduced pain and stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stress Management</td>
<td>Getting adequate sleep and enjoying positive outcomes like increased productivity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deep Breathing</td>
<td>Boosting brain power and metabolism, Improving the circulatory system, the digestive system, and the heart, reducing stress, and improving sleep</td>
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Finally, focus on the importance of having adequate reflection and thinking time; time to analyze what went well and what could be improved. Without this process, career planning and portfolio development may grind to a halt and become very difficult.

E. Interviewing Skills (2 hours)

Objective SS15.5: Develop great interviewing skills.

CONTENT PRESENTATION AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Interviewing skills fall into two important categories – the work done before the interview and the interview itself – do one without the other and the result is most likely not being hired.

Have students group in teams of four or five to brainstorm the things they should do before the interview. Have each team report out to the whole group while you write
their items on the board or flipchart. Ask the whole class if there are any things they would add to the list. Then students should compare the list on the board or flipchart with the Pre-interview Checklist (15.E.1).

Have students get back in their teams of four or five to brainstorm the things they should do during the interview. Have each team report out to the whole group while you write their items on the board or flipchart. Ask the whole class if there are any things they would add to the list. Then students should check the list on the board or flipchart with the Interview Checklist (15.E.2).

Show the supplemental Job Interview Issues and How to Deal with Them (15.E.5) video. Lead the class in a discussion of the video. Ask participants if they have comments and/or questions regarding it.

The questions businesses and organizations ask are readily available on the internet and in reference materials. Create a generic lists of questions to help students become familiar with interviewing questions and then ask students to predict what the questions might be if one was interviewing for an employment position or a contract as a braille transcriber. Talk through the questions and the answers to expose students to the types of information they should practice. Review the handout Interviewing Tips You Might Not Know (15.E.3) as a summary of things a candidate doesn’t always know. Finish the topic by reviewing the PREPARED Pre-Interviewing Strategy (15.E.4) handout.

F. After Hire – Keeping Everything Together (1 hour)

Objective SS15.6: Comprehend the elements needed to keep the job or contract.

CONTENT PRESENTATION AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Once employment is obtained, the focus is on both hard and soft skills. Hard skills are those that the job required – braille skills, graphics skills etc. Soft skills are those things student have been learning throughout this training and coursework. The notebook and journal as well as the portfolio should be filled with self-motivating factors, values, understanding how to learn, expanding cognitive and critical thinking skills, knowing how to set and achieve goals, managing time, organizing, prioritizing, communicating, problem solving, employing ethical behavior, serving customers and self-management techniques. Now it is time to put those learned concepts and activities into action.
ASSESSMENT

Ask students to independently respond to the questions on **Applying All We Have Learned (15.F.1)**. Have students share their answers with each other.

Finish this module with a few pointers – these are foundational; you know your students well, so add soft skills’ reminders as needed.

The portions that will be most important during the first few months will be those elements that require good work habits and temperament. Two elements of soft skills that are primary factors in the first few months are time management and attitude. Reliability and dependability will foster your employer and co-workers confidence in you. Following the rules with a positive attitude will make the work go smoother and the team interaction better.

Communication is another soft skill learned throughout the training. Asking for help, admitting to a mistake and taking responsibility to fix it, discussing a change or different way of working before just doing it, understanding how to approach your supervisor and when would be a good time to meet, and treating everyone with courtesy and respect are just a few of the important elements of communication.

Self-management skills are consistent with the other soft skills of problems solving, effectively handling mistakes, and addressing frustration. Sometimes when there are questions or protocols you are not familiar with, finding a mentor to assist can be very valuable. Be patient with yourself and your supervisor as it takes time to get used to a new job and a new routine.
Soft Skills Module 15

Career Planning and Portfolio Development Handouts
**My Attributes (15.A.1)**

Before you begin to look for work or contracts, you must be able to describe yourself. What are your skills? What are your values? What knowledge do you have? Re-visiting your special attributes will help you decide what direction to take and where to look, as you journey through the career planning process.

**Directions:** Review your notebooks, journals, treasure box, and anything else that would help you to identify significant knowledge, skills, abilities, and soft skills important to your career planning and portfolio development.

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15.A.1
Informational Interviewing and Inquiry (15.B.1)

Informational Interviewing and Inquiry
Informational interviewing and inquiry is an age-old process that today is frequently overlooked because of the emphasis on e-networking. Similar to e-networking you are looking for connections and information in your industry or career path. Informational interviewing and inquiry is only as good as the homework done before the interview (have students read Handout 15.B.1).

The following is the “short list” of Informational Interview and Inquiry steps that after students have read the 15.B.1 handout can be used for summarization of what was read. A way of involving the students is to present the subject heading (underlined) and ask them to describe what it means or represents based on what they have read.

**Identify the Information You Want**
Deciding which type of job, business or organization you want to learn about depends on your career priorities and choices. You should have a sense of what is important to you and what you want.

**Make a List of People You Know** (refer to your Relationship Map)
Choose people who can help you connect to other people within a business or organization. This networking part means you need to include anyone and everyone you know, from your barber/hairdresser to relatives who support your career development. That’s the super effect of e-networking, as each of your contacts has other contacts, and so forth.

**Make the Appointment**
Set up a 20 to 30-minute interview with the person identified who specializes in your areas of interest. Most people are more than happy to help you. Do not get discouraged if you find some people are just too busy to give you an appointment.

**Plan an Agenda for the Session**
This is your meeting. Do not assume the person will give you the information you seek unless you ask the right questions. Select questions that give you high levels of information. Be effective in your questions and efficient (close at the end of 20 minutes).

**Be Professional**
Dress and act the role of the position you are seeking. Know as much as possible about the business or organization before the interview so you can ask informed questions.

**Show Interest**
Open with, "Name gave me your name and told me you're considered to be an expert in this field. How did you get started?"
Be Ready to Answer Questions about the Elements You are Looking For
Have your 60 second infomercial prepared so if you are asked about career direction you are ready to respond. Bring a resume, but do not offer it unless requested. The critical point – this interview is to gather information about the work the person does/the field the person is in, not to sell you.

Get Names
Ask for other contacts in the field. If no names are suggested, be grateful for information or suggestions obtained.

Send Snail Mail or Email Thank-You Notes
Thank the person at the conclusion of the interview, but also send a note stating your appreciation for the time given. Stay in touch with your contacts by writing notes or emails, informing the person how helpful his/her suggestions have been to you.

Follow-up with Referrals Received
In this process, you may have to take risks and extend beyond your comfort level. Just remember that each step will take you closer to a job offer.
Infomercial Sample (15.B.3)

Good morning (or good afternoon or hello). I am Sheila Smith. I am looking for a position as a braille transcriber in a special education school environment. I am a certified literary braille transcriber. I have been a braille transcriber for three years and am skilled in creating tactile graphics as well. I pride myself on excellent communication skills and abide by the ethics and values required as a braille transcriber. The most important part of my work is ensuring that the individual who will read what I have transcribed will receive as much joy and pleasure as I did in making it possible.

60-second infomercial:

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Please note – you may need several infomercials because they should match-up with the business or organizations where you are conducting informational interviews and inquiry, looking for work or looking for contracts.
Pointers for Job Application (15.B.5)

- Check the closing date.
- Always read all instructions before you start.
- Print neatly with black ink.
- Check your spelling.
- Use key words from job description/recruitment announcement if there is one.
- Do not use, “see attached résumé” or “same as above” as it is perceived that you are taking the lazy way out.
- Never leave anything blank on an application; at the very least put N/A.
- Do not list wages from a prior job; state prevailing wage or “will discuss at interview.”
- If you left your last job because of incarceration and you are now back in the community you can state “relocated.”
- If you held jobs or have work experience while incarcerated, list the title of the jobs, duties, and dates. Complete the section of business name with the abbreviation of the correction facility and then your title (MVB – Braille Transcriber).
- Ask the last supervisor if you can list him/her with the direct phone number; otherwise list the facilities main number.
- Proofread on-line applications for spelling/grammar errors.
- Always print a copy of the online application before submitting.
Checklist for Resume Development (15.B.6)

**Functional Items**
- Contact information is clear (name, address, phone and e-mail)
- Easy to read
- One or two pages (no more)
- Looks professional
- Standard letter size paper
- Quality paper used
- Color – beige, off white, white, or gray
- Word processed and formatted correctly
- No pictures
- No typos, misspellings or grammatical errors
- Industry standards or recruitment keywords used (if resume is scanned)
- Official names used for schools and training programs
- References not listed (on a separate page for employer request later)
- No stated or implied salary information
- Someone else proofread it

**Descriptive Items**
- Visited business or organization’s website to learn more about mission and values
- Searched on website for position related key words
- Strong summary of qualifications
- Major qualifications that fit job announcement are described
- Every word sells my knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes
- Accomplishments are clearly stated
- All work history listed is within the last 15 years
- Information is relevant to the job recruitment information
- Specific results described
- Key words are match words on job description and/or recruitment notice
- Unstated but important skills identified (software expertise, foreign language, etc.)
- Employment history is listed – most recent first with names, locations, dates employed, duties, skills and achievements
- Education and training are listed with certificates and degrees including when/where graduated, majors/minor, academic awards/honors achieved
- Industry accreditations and certifications included
- Related volunteer work identified
- Key words and action-based language used

**Things Not To Do**
- Did not list a job objective
- Left off “references available upon request” – as implied and a waste of space
- No hobbies or interests listed
- No personal information listed

Soft Skills Module 15-23
**Action Words in Your Résumé (15.B.7)**

Use the following action words in your résumé to describe knowledge, skills, abilities and accomplishments.

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<th>Identified</th>
<th>Numbered</th>
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10 Useless Resume Words
- Outstanding
- Effective
- Strong
- Exceptional
- Good
- Excellent
- Driven
- Motivated
- Seasoned
- Energetic

10 eye-catching Words
- Created
- Increased
- Reduced
- Improved
- Developed
- Reassembled
- Accomplished
- Won
- On-time
- Under-budget

Employment and Career Development Division
Offender Employment Services
Washington State Employment Re-Entry Guide
New Directions 2010 Revision
Used with permission

Southsouthcareerbuilder.com
August, 2011

15.B.7

Soft Skills Module 15-24
Sample Cover Letter (15.B.8)

Contact Information:
- Name
- Address
- City, State, Zip Code
- Phone Number
- Email Address

Date:
Date to be sent, not written

Employer/Recruiter Contact Information
- Name, Title
- Company
- Address
- City, State, Zip Code

Salutation
Dear Dr./Mr./Ms. Last Name:

Body of Cover Letter
The body of your cover letter lets the employer know what position you are applying for, why the employer should select you for an interview, and how you will follow-up.

Example First Paragraph:
I am writing to apply for the braille transcriber position advertised through CareerWorkforce.com. A mutual colleague, Adam Jones told me about the position.

Example Middle Paragraph:
I am a certified expert braille transcriber including graphics with two years of transcription experience. I have exceptional communication skills and high values, which make me an ideal candidate for the position.

Example Final Paragraph:
Thank you for considering me for the position. I will follow-up with you by the end of next week to discuss more specifically my knowledge and attributes relative to your needs.

Closing:
Sincerely,

Signature (computer-generated for email or hand-signed for a mailed letter):
Signature:

Typewritten Name:
Right below signature

Enclosure:
Indicates resume is attached or included

15.B.8
Soft Skills Module 15-25
The Pre-Interview Checklist (15.E.1)

- Check your handshake out with a friend – too firm or too weak sends different non-verbal messages.
- Do your research about the business or organization (use the internet and the local community such as the chamber of commerce or the business association); not knowing an adequate amount about the business or organization is a turn-off for most interviewers.
- What business are they in and how do they do it?
- How do you fit in that business given what you know and how the job was described in the job description/recruitment announcement?
- Check out any recent news/press releases about the business or organization.
- Do they have competitors and how might that affect operations?
- Do you know enough to ace the tough questions?
- Take time to think about the types of questions the interviewer will ask.
- Take negative experiences and turn them into positives when asked questions such as
  - Think of past on-the-job situations when you’ve been challenged.
  - Describe a failure and what you learned.
  - Give a situation when you disagreed with a boss.
- Be ready for questions you can’t prepare for in advance.
  - An interviewer wants to determine how well you think on your feet and may ask a puzzle question such as “How many golf balls would it take to fill this room?” When you’re asked a question like this, don’t just take a guess — think aloud, and let the interviewer hear your thought process (“First I’d have to determine the room’s volume …” and so on). Other questions might be specific scenarios that may occur in the course of daily or weekly business.
- Prepare and practice Sound Bites.
  - Think of a job interview as something like an advertisement of you.
  - You’re the spokesperson as well as the product.
  - You need to respond with things/responses that stick in the interviewer’s mind and make him/her really want that product – you.
- A sound bite is succinct, specific, and memorable: for example, “I was the division’s top salesperson for three years straight,” or “I wrote the highest-clicking article in the site’s history.”
- A sound bite answers the question and never wanders in the response; the goal is specific, succinct, and memorable – and that takes practice.
- Talk to yourself in the mirror or go to a local resource and have a video of a mock interview – pay attention to the non-verbal messages (Module 5, Communication).
- Practice how you will talk about your criminal history with the interviewer.
The Interview Checklist (15.E.2)

Recognize and prepare for the Interview Phases:

**Introductory Phase:**
- Greeting and handshake
- General conversation usually ending with the interviewer telling a little about the business or organization and the position

**Questioning Phase:**
- The time the interviewer asks questions of you – what you bring to the business or organization and what the return on investment will be if you are the successful candidate

**Marketing Phase:**
- Time to use your sound bites – describe abilities and how your attributes will help the business or organization
- Also the point in which to convey information about your conviction history
- Show interest in the position and ask the questions you planned in advance

**Closing Phase:**
- Inquire how the business or organization will choose the person to be hired
- Engage in benefit/salary discussion if brought up
- Identify a good time to follow-up (day and time)
- Give one last sound bite about your desire work for the business or organization in the position
- Thank the interviewer
- Be aware of the time (do not extend it)

Note: the marketing and closing phase could be cut short if the time scheduled for the interview has been used up in the questioning phase. Make sure your answers are well-organized – that takes practice.
Interviewing Tips You Might Not Know (15.E.3)

Things to do

Dress well

- Be well-groomed
- Dress conservatively
- Have spotless hygiene
- Avoid too much perfume or aftershave, smelling of cigarettes or alcohol

Arrive on time

- 10 minutes early
- Earlier, then prepare for interview questions in the car
- Arriving more than 10 minutes early may make your interviewer feel rushed

Act confident

- Exhibit confidence, not “know-it-all” characteristics
- Smile
- Stand/sit up tall
- Make eye contact with the interviewer
- Have a firm handshake
- Respond to the interview questions with interest and enthusiasm

Respond to questions

- Listen
- Briefly paraphrase and identify a positive (that’s a great question)
- Identify specific skills that match the question
- Answer with adequate information but not so much that the interviewer loses interest

15.E.3
When it is your turn, ask intelligent questions

- Demonstrates your interest
- Sets you apart from the competition
- Monitor the time – one or two questions is perfect unless you have used the time to answer their questions and are on overtime now...then only ask one meaningful but quick question.
- If you can’t remember the questions write one or two down in your portfolio that you might ask
  - How long has the position been open? (it may be a new position in a growing company)
  - What traits or experience would a person need to be successful in this role?
  - What are the top two goals for the person you hire in this role?
  - What is your management style (or the management style of the hiring manager)?
  - What would you change about... the company, culture, department, etc.?
  - What are the next steps in this process?

Say "Thanks"

- Thank your interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.
- The next day, send a personal "thank you" note to each person you met with via email or snail mail (age appropriate).
- It will set you apart from the crowd.

Things not to do:

- Checking your PDA/Smart Phone
- Clasping or rubbing your hands together
- Dressing messily
- Watching the clock
- Crossing your arms
- Rolling your eyes
- Giving no eye contact to the interviewer
PREPARED Pre-Interviewing Strategy (15.E.4)

P = Plan Ahead (what you will say, wear, etc.)

R = Role play (interview – questions interviewer will ask and questions you will ask)

E = Eye contact (practice making eye contact and smiling)

P = Positive (think/be positive in responses and behaviors – smile!)

A = Adapt (flex to questions of the interviewer; be calm if interviewer is running late)

R = Relate (keep your comments and descriptions relevant to interview questions)

E = Enthusiasm and energy (show you have got enthusiasm/energy to do the work)

D = Do your best!
Applying All We Have Learned (15.F.1)

Independently respond to the following questions:

What skills and attributes will help you keep the job?

How can you analyze the communication processes and apply methods that fit your supervisor or the team, not you?

Which self-management skills do you believe will be easy to apply; which will be hard?

How will you handle mistakes that you make?

How will you maintain a positive attitude even on the hardest day?

What measures will you take to address and/or avoid conflict?

How will you identify goals and work to achieve them?

When will you apply information about your learning styles/methods to do your work?

How will you manage your time effectively?

How will you set priorities and organize your work to achieve them?

What other questions do you think you should answer?