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EDUCATION FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

## **OACC SYMPOSIUM: ACCELERATING STUDENT SUCCESS STRATEGIES TO IDENTIFY AND MAKE USE OF 'BEST BET' COLLEGE PROGRAMS**

March 2012

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**JOBS FOR THE FUTURE**

**COUNSELING TO  
CAREERS**

HELPING STUDENTS SELECT BEST BETS

- I. Background

- II. Counseling to Careers and Best Bets

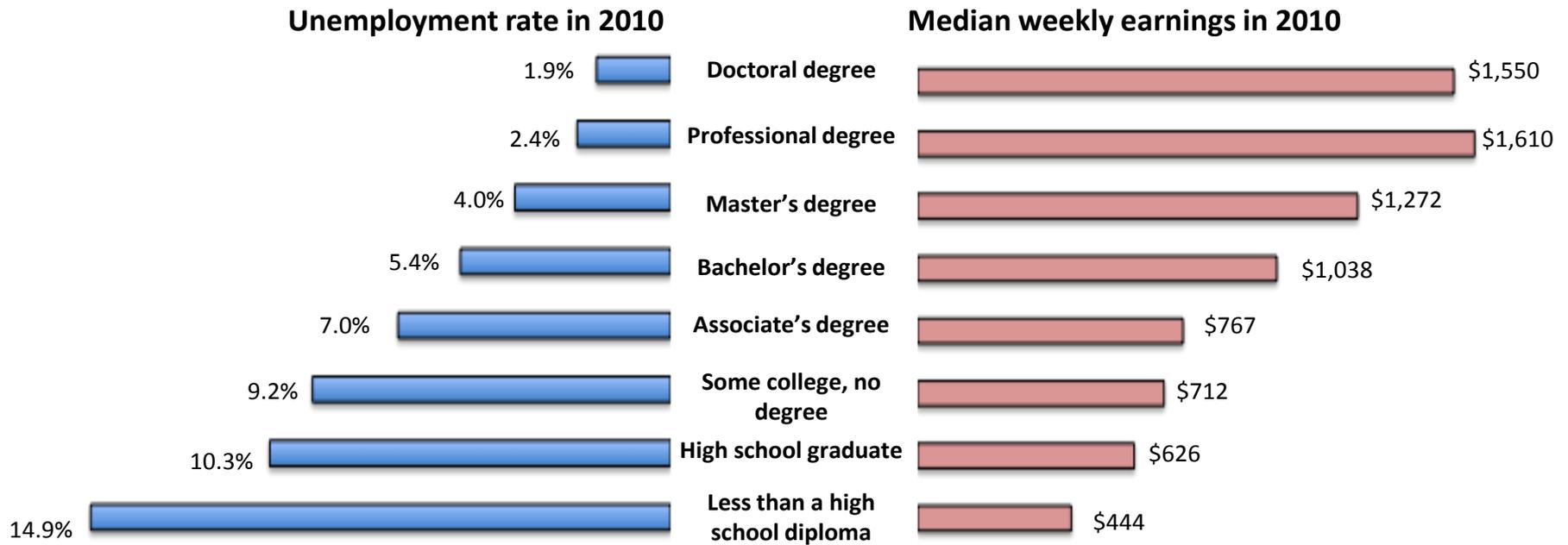
- III. Identifying Best Bets: Strategies to Get Started

- I. Using Best Bets and Their Implications



Think a good counselor might help???

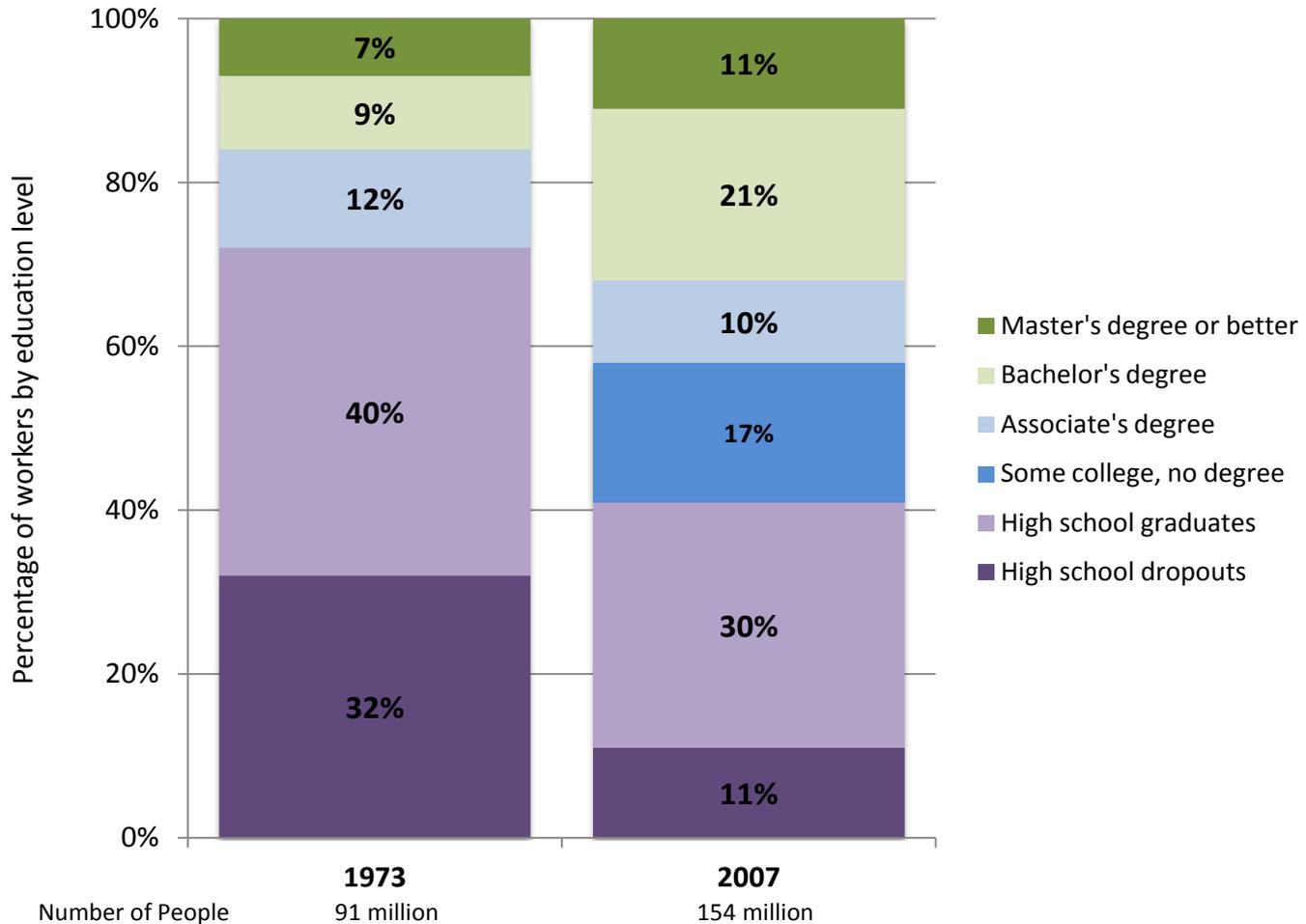
High school completion is no longer sufficient for entry into a family-sustaining career.



**Among jobs with the most anticipated openings, those that require postsecondary training or an associate's degree pay 79% more (\$16,000 annually) than those that require only work experience or on-the-job training.\***

SOURCE: Bureau of Labor Statistics; \*Median of 2010 median salaries for the ten occupations with the highest number of projected job openings between 2010 and 2020, by education level.

This has been a growing trend over the past few decades.



Certain occupational pathways have higher returns on investment than others.

- The challenge is that accelerated postsecondary programs that lead to well-paying jobs and show evidence of persistence have typically been difficult to identify and access.
- There may or may not be reliable or up-to-date information to help students make a good match
  - No *Princeton Review* or *U.S. News & World Report* rankings
  - Labor market information is not very user-friendly
  - Program information may not be readily transparent or accessible – especially what students really need to enter and succeed
  - Employer needs are not always clear, nor are the hiring channels from postsecondary to demand jobs (or advancement)

**Helping students find a good match can be a real challenge.**

Counseling to Careers is a research and training package that helps colleges and their community partners get the best possible information in hand to identify “best bet” pathways for use by counselors and students.

- JFF developed and tested Counseling to Careers with youth-serving organizations and community colleges across the country
- Typically taken the form of a four-month engagement with follow-up support
  - Organizations are represented by a team of senior staff and counselors, designating a team lead with time and capacity to lead a localized research effort
  - Features a two-part training with interactive lessons and ready-to-use tools and resources that drive on-the-ground research between sessions
- It places less of an emphasis on how to advise students – instead, it focuses on building systems to make information more transparent and put that information in the hands of counselors

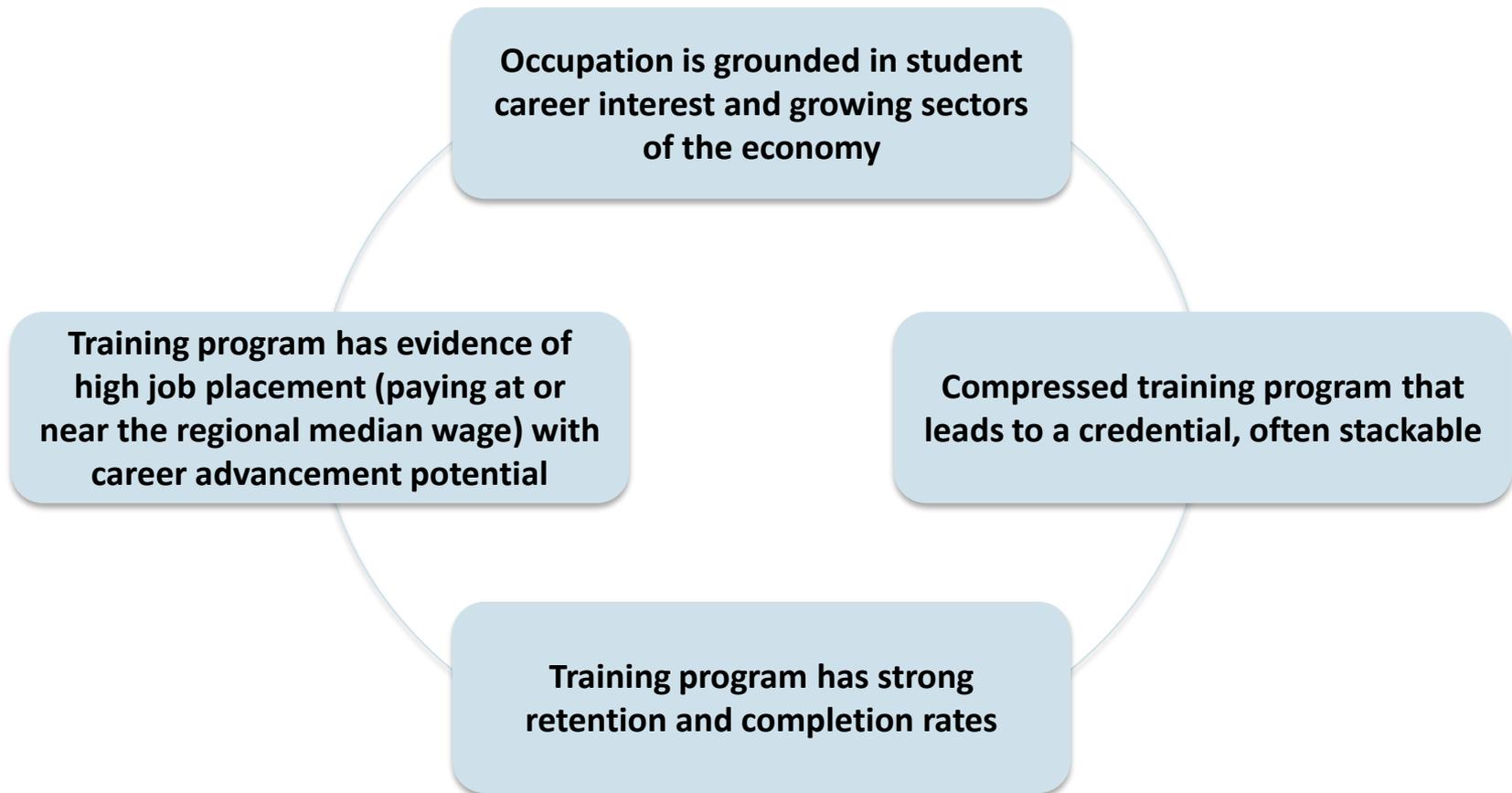
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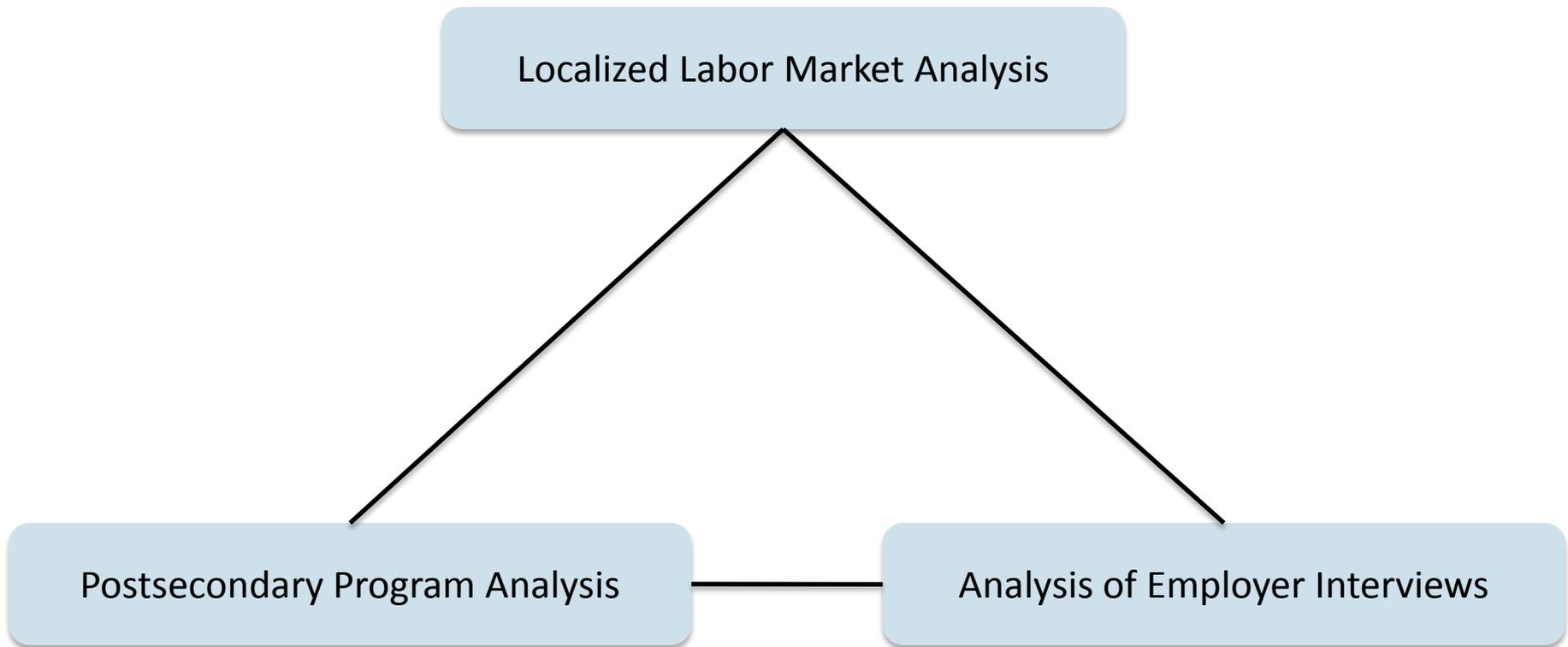
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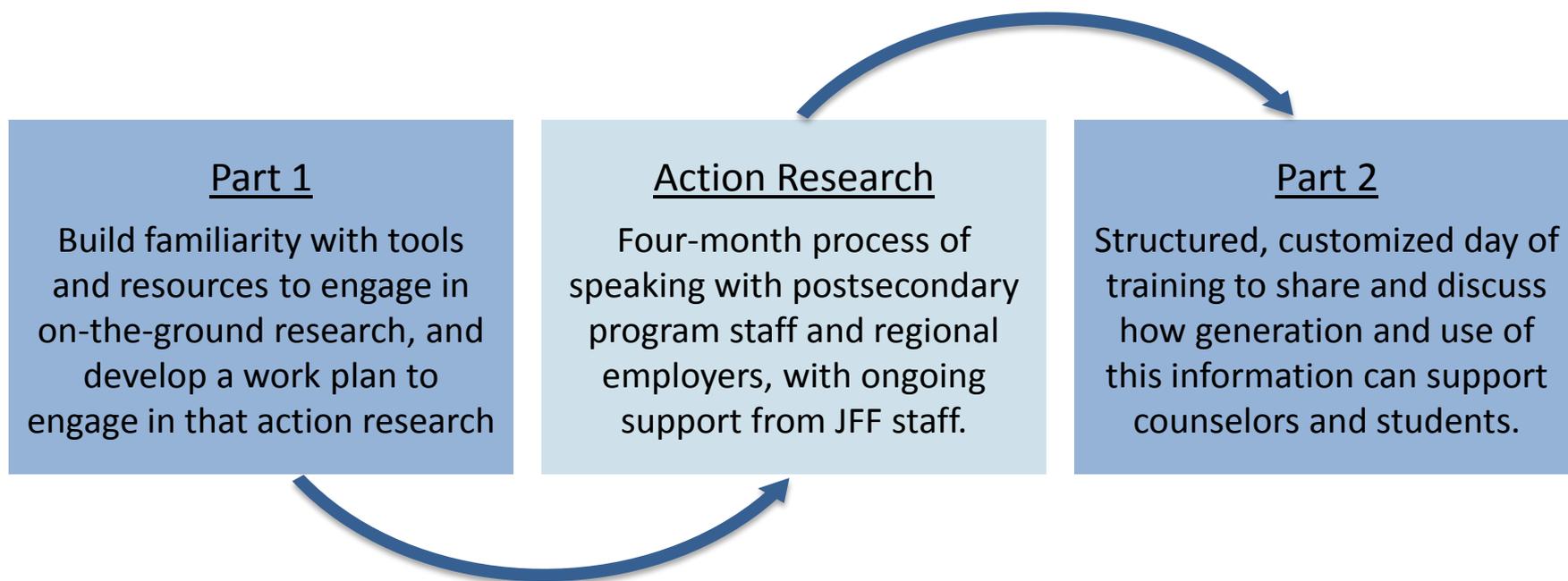
Best bet occupations and associated postsecondary training programs have several common characteristics.



To find them, we focus on helping triangulate information across key areas and then packaging that information in profiles for use by counselors and students.



Typically this takes the form of a two-part engagement with ongoing support throughout; today we'll walk through some of the tools and resources from Part 1.



I. Background

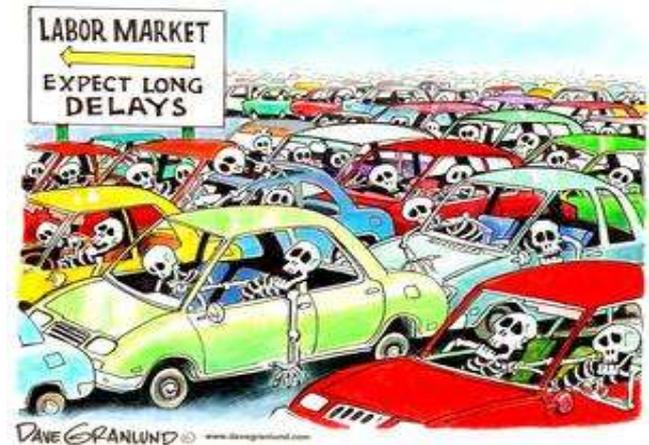
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Understanding the local labor market can help to identify and/or align aspects of your programs to in-demand careers and career pathways.

- At the same time, there are many challenges associated with labor market data
  - Data is not always easy to find and interpret; language is not always clear
  - Some of the most important occupational information (e.g., median wage, most common level of education/training, job openings) is spread out across a number of disparate databases
  - Occupational categories may not keep up with the reality of jobs
  - The data may not always reflect the reality on the ground
  - The process can feel overwhelming



We provide organizations with profiles and databases of their regional labor markets, offering an initial snapshot of in-demand occupations.

## UNIT 2 UNDERSTANDING YOUR LOCAL LABOR MARKET COLUMBUS, OHIO REGIONAL PROFILE



The chart below offers a regional view of the largest occupations that require less than a bachelor's degree and have median wages at or above the regional median (\$16.62). Jobs with a high national percentage of employees with a bachelor's or higher may be difficult to access without a BA in some regions. Supervisors/managers, sales representatives, and executive secretaries are excluded from this list.

OCCUPATION	REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT (2010)	REGIONAL WAGE PER HOUR (2010)			NATIONAL % WITH A BA+ (2010)
		10th Percentile	Median	75th Percentile	
Registered Nurses	17,740	\$21.69	\$28.70	\$35.16	55.9%
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	12,070	\$11.53	\$17.07	\$20.43	15.0%
Secretaries and Admin Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	10,640	\$10.60	\$16.66	\$20.12	16.8%
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	9,520	\$13.30	\$19.79	\$23.45	5.0%

**This helps narrow in on an initial set of occupations and postsecondary programs.**

CareerOneStop.org is a free resource that offers a wealth of information for students as they think about occupations of interest – and related occupations.

- Profiles of occupations including:
  - State and national trends in employment and wages
  - Knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the job
  - Tasks and activities associated with the job
  - Typical educational levels and work experience of 25 to 44-year-olds on the job
  - In-demand and industry-sponsored occupation videos – in English and Spanish
- Compare wages by occupation across several regions
- Links to websites with additional information for career advisors, workforce professionals, counselors, and job placement staff to help students explore careers and find jobs



While labor market data is helpful, we know it has limitations – we look to employers and workforce development organizations to fill in the blanks.

For a given occupation,  
you should know:

**Wages**

However...

- Find out about benefits (e.g., health insurance, tuition remission, retirement plans, long-term disability insurance) – students need to know about the value of these incentives
- Wage gains associated with career advancement

**Growth**

- Growth does not always mean job opportunity, and projected declines may still yield high numbers of quality jobs
- Occupations with projected declines may still have numerous job openings due to people leaving jobs for various reasons (replacement jobs)

**Job Openings**

- Contact employers and workforce development organizations to find out if occupations really have job openings in your region

**Education,  
Training, and/or  
Work Experience**

- The level of education/training required for jobs may differ by region and employer
- Major economic events (e.g., a recession) can affect the education/training/work experience employers require/prefer when hiring

With labor market information in hand, professionals in three key areas can help to identify a range of best bets.

- **Workforce staff** to get fine-tuned information on real-time labor market demand and actual pathway trajectories
- **Employers** to understand job feeder patterns and get information on skills and experience desired for actual job hires
- **Postsecondary technical program staff** to get information on pathway programs to better understand which students would be a good fit for the program



Workforce staff and employers can provide valuable information about demand as well as the technical and professional skills most needed of new employees. For example:

- ✓ **Demand and recruitment:** What jobs are currently in demand, and what is their short-term and long-term outlook? What are the preferred credentials and skills needed to access those jobs? How are employers recruiting for jobs, and what qualities/skills/experiences distinguish successful candidates from others?
- ✓ **Job characteristics:** What are typical working and lifestyle considerations for the job? Why type of personalities would/would not be a good fit?
- ✓ **Postsecondary connections:** Who typically trains and supplies your job candidates? Do you offer further education/training opportunities?
- ✓ **Career advancement opportunities:** Can/do employees advance in the organization? Are there well-defined career ladders – if so, what do they look like?

Postsecondary program staff can help clarify how programs align with demand as well as lift out key information students should know before choosing a program. For example:

- ✓ **Program Design and Structure:** How long is the program, and what content does it cover? What is the program's instructional approach (e.g., hands-on vs. lecture-based)? Does the program offer flexible scheduling/online courses?
- ✓ **Entering and Succeeding in the Program:** Are there minimum scores required on the COMPASS or other tests? Is there a waitlist, and if so, what can students do in the interim? What supports exist to ensure students are successful?
- ✓ **Alignment with Employers:** How does the program involve employers? What jobs does the program prepare graduates for? Can students with a criminal background work in the field?
- ✓ **Program Outcomes:** What are rates of persistence and completion? What percentage of graduates get hired/transfer to other postsecondary programs? Where do they typically get hired, and what can they expect to earn?

Using this information, colleges and community partners can identify best bets by:

1. Analyzing the data against best bet criteria
2. Selecting initial best bets and providing information to students and community partners
3. Staying in contact with students who choose these programs to ensure they really are best bets and make adjustments as needed

## A Best Bet

- Program and occupation satisfies all or most of the best bet criteria

## Could Be a Best Bet

- Program and occupation satisfy all or most of the best bet criteria but are not currently accessible to some students

## Not a Best Bet

- Program or occupation does not satisfy one or more key aspects of the best bet criteria

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It's important to collect and package information in one coherent document or database to help students and their families make informed decisions.

## Sterile Processing Technician



**WHAT I DO:** I am a medical professional who sterilizes and sets up supplies and equipment needed for surgery, physical

### WHAT MAKES MY JOB HOT?

#### Short-term training:

- Training programs are typically 2-5 months long, including both lecture and lab/clinical practice. Programs prepare students to take a professional certification exam.
- Program graduates often receive a *Certificate of Completion in Central Processing*, which—along with professional certification—can get them an entry-level job as a Sterile Processing Tech.

#### Faster than average growth:

- In Massachusetts, this job is expected to grow 12% from 2006-2016.

#### Good pay (Boston 2009 figures):

- Typical entry-level wage: \$13.60/hr.
- Median wage: \$18.44/hr. (50% of Sterile Processing Techs earn less than this number, and the remaining 50% earn more)

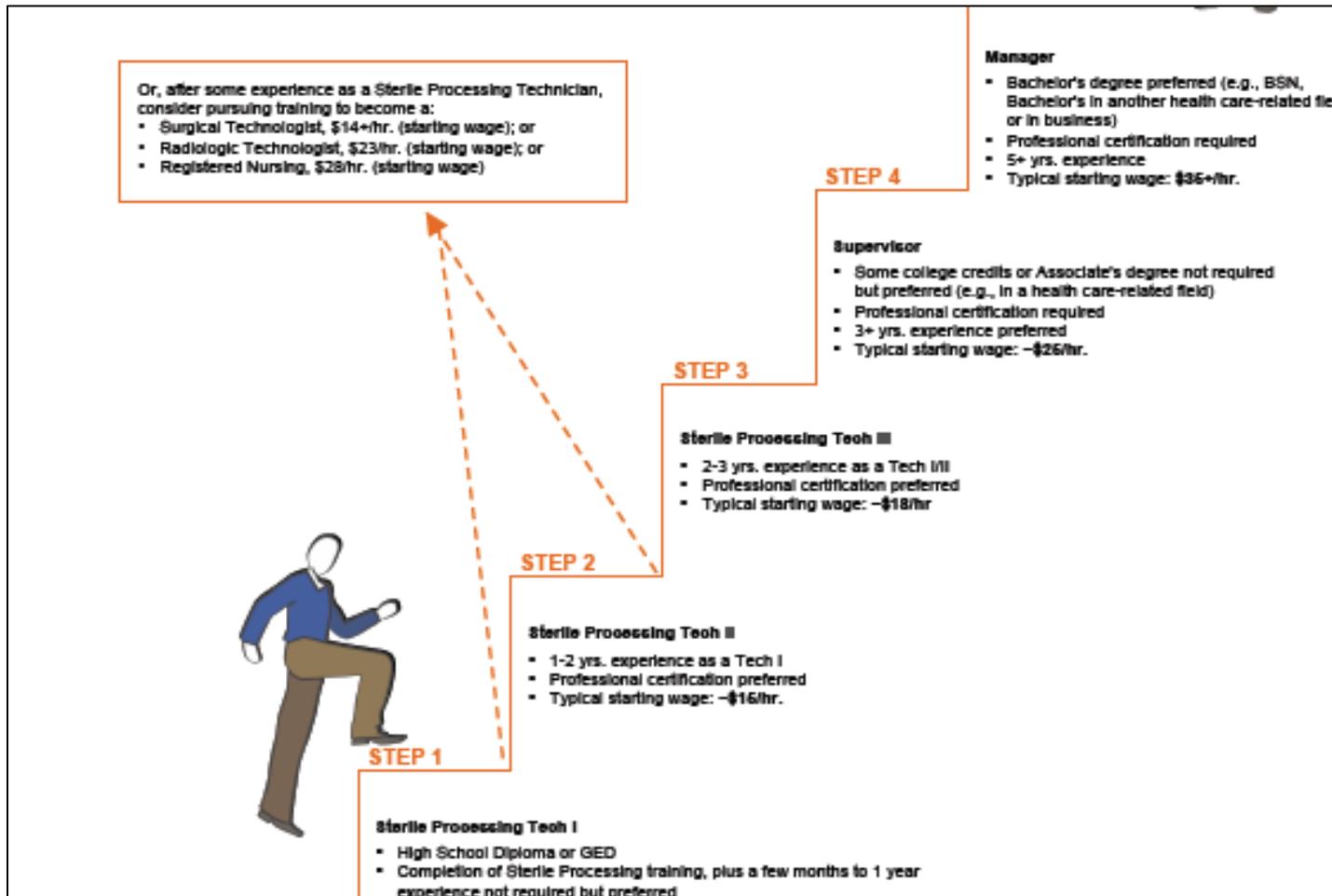
#### Typical job benefits include:

- Medical & other insurance
- 401(k) retirement savings plan
- Tuition and certification fee reimbursement

#### Room for advancement:

- A Sterile Processing Tech can move up to become a Sterile Processing Tech II, then III, and can then advance to become a Supervisor or Manager.

They should include information about the occupation and associated training as well as the steps and opportunities associated with advancement in the field.



Think about what you'd want your students to know about a program before they sign up – and sign a check.

1. What skills do you think this program teaches?
2. What jobs are students being preparing for?
3. Would this program be a good fit for your students? How do you know?

## Biotechnology

Biotechnology simply defined is the use of living organisms to make products beneficial to humans. There is a wide range of opportunities in the biotechnology field from using yeast to make pharmaceuticals to growing artificial skin cells to be used for burn patient grafts. This field is rapidly expanding providing many new job opportunities.

The Biotechnology Certificate Program is designed to provide students with an overview of the science of biotechnology as well as the technical skills necessary for employment in the industry. There are a variety of jobs available locally offering good salaries and benefits. Courses from the certificate degree can be applied towards an Associates Degree.

Program Coordinator

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Admissions Requirements

See College requirements

Next Step

Employment in the biotechnology industry. Courses could transfer to an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree in biotechnology.

Courses

<p><b>Cluster A</b> Cell Biology Introduction to the Chemistry of Living Systems Introduction to Microcomputer Applications</p>	<p><b>Cluster B</b> Molecular Biology General Microbiology</p>
<p><b>Cluster C</b> Techniques in Biotechnology</p>	

The organizations we've worked with have found that Counseling to Careers can be applied in a number of ways.

- Improve postsecondary guidance and transitions
  - Organizations have developed brochures and profiles to make information more transparent and help students and families become more informed consumers
- Strengthen relationships between colleges and community partners
  - New lines of communication have opened up across departments within college campuses – including between the continuing education and credit-bearing sides of colleges
  - Community colleges and partners (including WIBs, employers, CBOs, and school districts) have reported that this has helped to strengthen (or develop new) relationships with each other
- Inform the development of new/revision of existing pathways
  - New nursing program at one college; revision of a solar panel program at another
  - Informed district leaders as they review their CTE pathways

Questions?

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