



Course 1: The Strategic Postdoc

Module 1: Positioning Yourself for the Postdoc

Session 3: Build a Game Plan

Activity 3.2: Building a Game Plan, Backward-Designing your Career

Using the backward design method is a powerful way to position yourself for success. It begins by starting at the end (your dream job) and walking backwards to see what you need to do to get there. This series of questions will help you start the backward design process. This form is meant to give you a starting point for your game plan, but you may need to iterate through this process several times during your postdoc search.

Step 1: Determine Your Dream Job.

What type of career do you want to pursue? Remember to consider your needs, preferences, and values. Do some self-reflection. Research your options.

Step 2: Make a list of the qualifications.

What does it take to be competitive for this job? Check job boards to learn more about qualifications you might need. Arrange informational interviews with people in that role. Find a mentor who has your dream job and ask them for career advice. Go to career services for a consultation.. Check out [IDP](#) and [ACRA](#).

These are CAREER GOALS!

These are long-term goals that reflect the qualifications you need to land the job.

Step 3: Make a list of desired skills, techniques or deliverables needed in your postdoctoral training to meet the career goals you identified.

What do you currently know, and what is the gap between what you know and what you need to know for your dream job? What do you need to learn and what skills do you need to develop during your postdoc? What deliverables (e.g. papers, grants, teaching opportunities) would make you more competitive for your dream job?

These are TRAINING GOALS!

These are specific goals that identify what training you need to get to fulfill your career goals.

Step 4: Find postdoctoral training that is right for you!

Which type of postdoc best aligns with your training and career goals? Research the different types of postdoc and choose the one that best supports your training goals. Use resources such as the National Postdoc Association ["Prospective" Postdoc Guide](#).

Now you know what **TYPE OF POSTDOC** to pursue!

Step 5: Finding your postdoc advisor.

*Which type of postdoc advisor will support your training goals? **REFLECT:** For this final step, use your needs, preferences, and values (NPVs) to guide your decision-making process. Compare your NPVs to the NPVs of potential postdoc advisors. Revisit this step frequently as you determine which potential postdoc advisor would be a good fit for you.*

This is the type of POSTDOC ADVISOR that is a good fit for you.

You now have all the building blocks to design your postdoc strategy!