

Looking for work can be frustrating. For young people with no work experience and/or few qualifications, the process can be even more challenging. In fact, for most youth in South Africa, the period between school-leaving and finding employment can last a number of years.<sup>1</sup> This can result in young people becoming even less attractive to potential employers or becoming so hopeless that they give up looking for work altogether. Try these ways to help young people find and apply for jobs.

**Go through these questions to help a young person master the basics of applying and interviewing for a job:**

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### CREATE A PROFESSIONAL CV

- Does your CV show off your eye for detail: is it free of spelling mistakes and does it have a tidy lay-out – no gaps and different font types?
- Has someone read over it to look for errors?
- If you haven't had a job before, does your CV include any work experience you did through school, an internship or your volunteer work?
- Can you include testimonials – short quotes from your volunteer organisation, a teacher or professor to showcase your character and skills?

### MAKE EVERY COVER LETTER COUNT!

- Do you tailor each cover letter to the job you're applying for and address it to the right person?
- Is it to the point – no more than 3 paragraphs?
- Does it showcase what you can bring to the job – rather than what the job can do for you? Does it highlight the qualities, skills and experience that make you well-suited to the job and organisation?
- If you do not have work experience, have you included your volunteer work, key strengths or contributions you have made to the community?
- Has someone reviewed it for mistakes?

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### STAND OUT IN AN INTERVIEW

- Do you research the job and the company before an interview, including looking through their website? This shows you have done your homework!
- Can you answer questions about issues/trends related to the industry you want to work in?
- Are you ready to answer questions such as, 'what is your biggest weakness', 'what are your long-term career goals?' and 'why do you want to work here?'
- Have you practiced your interview skills? Remember to look the interviewer in the eye, shake their hand, speak clearly and smile.

### THE REALITY OF JOB-HUNTING IN SA: TALKING POINTS TO TACKLE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT:

**Transport costs:** Did you know high transport costs are a key barrier preventing youth's access to the job market? Young people often have to travel long distances to where there is work. Discuss if and how the young person can save up to find work or access tertiary education.

**Data costs:** Looking for jobs online or on their phone costs money. Discuss with the young person where they can access free wi-fi or Internet to ensure they are able to consistently look for work and/or access job notifications on their phone!

**Networking:** Many jobs are not advertised on job sites but 'hidden' in community newspapers, family or community social networks, through internships or by visiting company websites directly. Has the young person tried finding work or work experience through these channels?

**Following up:** If the young person has submitted a job application, have they followed up with a phone-call to make sure it reached the correct person? Do they send emails after an interview to say thank you and/or to politely ask for feedback on why they did not get the job so they know what they need to work on?

**Education and skills development:** Is the young person able to develop computer skills, or attend a skills training programme WHILE they job hunt? Can they intern to gain work experience to put on their CV or start/contribute to a community venture to show their initiative?

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCE:

[www.jobstarter.co.za](http://www.jobstarter.co.za) is a mobile platform for young people of all education levels, where first time jobseekers can plan, prepare and be connected to employment opportunities.

