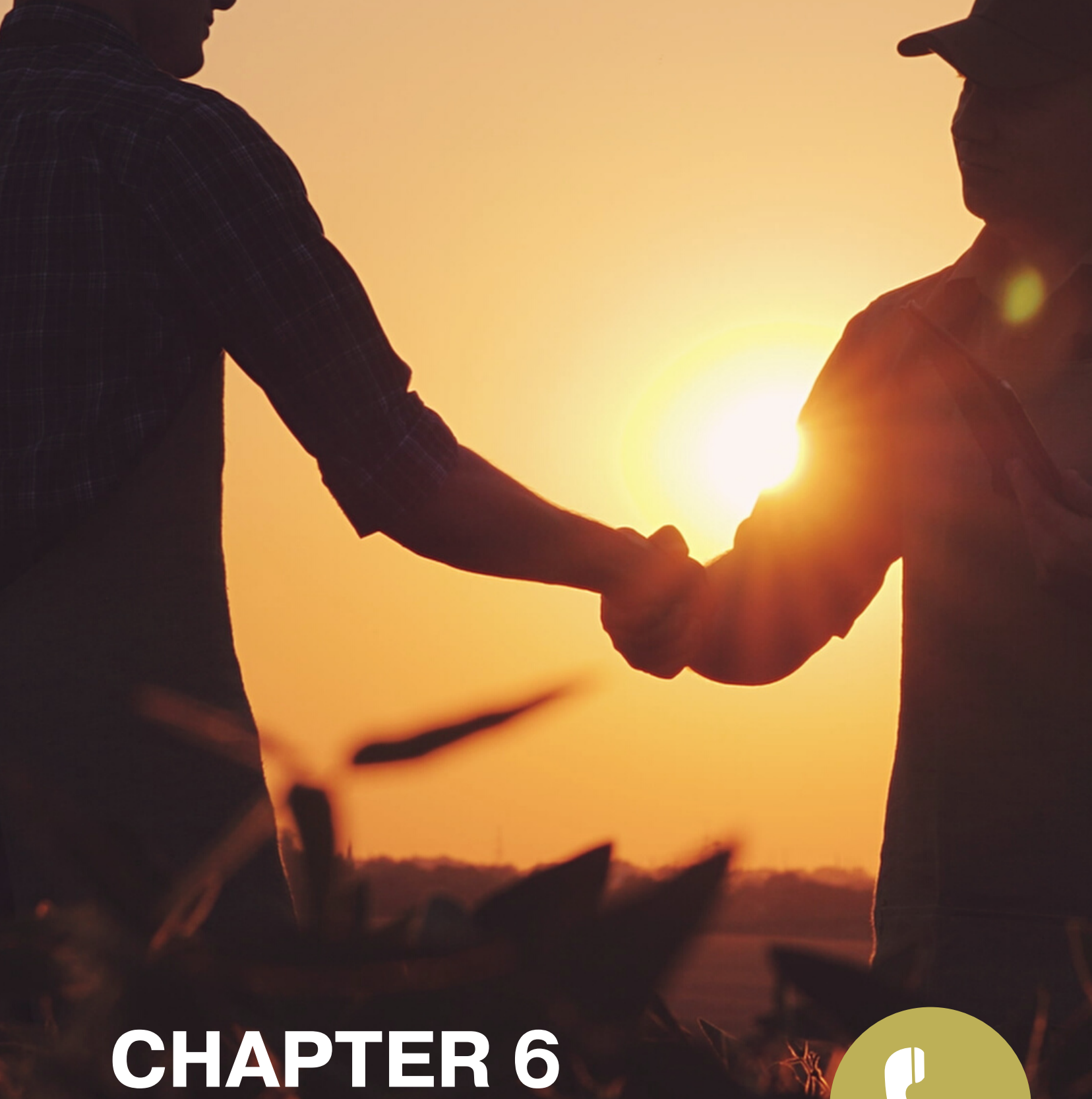


THE FARMER'S JOB HUNTING WORKBOOK

A New Career Beyond The Farm's Fences



WISCONSIN
Farm Center



CHAPTER 6

INTERVIEWS AND FOLLOWING UP





INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Phone Interviews

Depending on the company and position, you might be required to have a phone interview, and these are just as critical as an in-person interview.

DO:

- Identify the best place to take the call beforehand. Pick a place that is completely quiet and free of distractions, with good reception if using a cell phone.
- Make sure that your family and roommates know the date and time of your interview and where you will be taking the call. Ask them to refrain from visiting that area during the time of your interview. If you have children, consider asking a family member, trusted friend, or babysitter to keep them for a few hours while you prepare and take the call.
- Have a pen and paper at the ready to take notes. Use it to take notes throughout the interview as needed.
- Be in your interview area at least five minutes prior to the scheduled interview time.
- Make sure your cell phone is charged and working prior to the interview.

DO NOT:

- Eat while you are on the phone.
- Play on the computer, watch TV, text or take part in any other activities that might distract you from the interview.

Video Conference Interviews

Video conferencing for interview is becoming more and more common, especially for the first phase of interviews or when a position is remote. All tips outlined in phone interview section can be applied to video conferencing in addition to a few more key items.

DO:

- Dress as you would if you were attending an in-person interview. Remember – first impressions are very important.
- Ensure that the area you are taking the video call in is neat, clean and appropriate.
- Make sure that your internet connection is solid. Check the connection the morning of the interview so you have time to resolve issues if needed. If you experience technical difficulties that cannot be resolved prior to the interview, give the interviewer a call or send an email to let them know. Ask if you can reschedule or complete the interview over the phone. If you do not have good Wi-Fi, contact your local library since they often provide free Wi-Fi and have quiet spaces and meeting rooms available. Other places that may provide free Wi-Fi include local businesses, chambers of commerce, technical colleges, town halls, and/or UW-Extension offices.
- Keep your entire face in the frame of the video.

DO NOT:

- Fidget too much. Avoid playing with your hands or other items such as pens or paper.



DRESS CODE

One of the most important parts of an interview is creating a good first impression. Employers want to know that you will be a positive representative of the company and are taking the interview seriously. One of the easiest ways to make a good first impression is to dress professionally. A good rule of thumb is to dress one or two steps above the position you are applying for. Use the following information to help you decide what attire is best for your interview.

Overview

- All clothing should be neat and clean. It should be free of holes, tears, fraying or stains, and recently washed. If wrinkled, iron the clothing prior to wearing for the sharpest look.
- Always cover tattoos with clothing to the best of your ability. Do not use band aids or other items to cover the tattoos.
- Fingernails should be trimmed and free of dirt. If wearing fingernail polish, wear a neutral color that complements your attire.
- If you wear glasses, always clean them up right before going into the interview.
- Your hair should be neatly groomed in a way that keeps hair out of your eyes.
- Jewelry should be modest and kept to a minimum. Avoid wearing more than two earrings in each ear and any large, shiny jewelry.

Women

- Business Professional: Knee-length professional dress, skirt, or full-length dress pants with a matching jacket
- Business Casual: Button down shirt or professional blouse and slacks or knee-length pencil skirt. A blazer or cardigan is recommended but optional.
- Casual: Nice blouse with dark jeans or knee-length skirt. A cardigan is recommended but optional.
- Note: With any of these attire choices, wear flats or heels that are comfortable and easy to walk in. Avoid open-toed shoes and sandals.

Men

- Business Professional: Button down shirt, tie with a suit jacket and pants, and black professional dress shoes.
- Business Casual: Button down shirt, black or navy slacks and Oxfords or loafers. A blazer and tie are recommended but optional.
- Casual: Collared shirt (polo or button down), dark jeans or slacks and clean, closed-toe shoes.



WHAT TO BRING

Job interviews are the time for you to sell yourself as the prime candidate for the position. One of the best ways to sell yourself is to come to the interview prepared.

DO:

- Bring at least three copies of your resume and cover letter. Make sure to print them single-sided and preferably on nice resume paper. Paper clip them together into packets so that they can easily be handed to the interviewer(s).
- If applicable, bring a document of supplemental materials that shows examples of your work.
- Bring a nice notebook and pen with you. You might need to take notes during your interview or write down next steps in the interview process.

DO NOT:

- Bring any food, water or gum into the interview. These will just cause distractions for both you and the interviewer.
- Bring a cell phone or anything that could interrupt your interview. If possible, leave your cell phone hidden in the car. If you can't or don't feel comfortable leaving it in the car, turn the sound all the way down, put it on silent or turn it off, and keep it out of sight.

INTERVIEWING

Arriving at the Interview

Much like the way you dress, your arrival at the interview is a part of creating a good first impression.

DO:

- Arrive at the interview in a clean vehicle. Take your car through the car wash the day before your interview and clean any trash out of the inside of the vehicle.
- Arrive at the interview location about 10 minutes early and check-in for your interview at least five minutes early. Take the five minutes in-between arriving and checking in for your interview to visit the restroom or just take a few relaxing breaths in your car. Give yourself time to not feel rushed while also showing the interviewer that you are prompt and timely.
- Introduce yourself to the receptionist or another employee at the business. Let them know that you are there for an interview and who you are going to be meeting with.

DO NOT:

- Arrive late. There is nothing worse than showing the interviewer that you can't be on time. It's also important not to arrive too early. Ideally, arrive 10 to 15 minutes prior to the time of your interview.
- Use your cell phone while waiting for the interview. Use the time to clear your head and get focused for your interview.



Greeting the Interviewer

To continue making a good first impression, be prepared to greet the interviewer.

DO:

- Shake their hand. Make sure your grip is firm but not too tight.
- Introduce yourself. Look them in the eyes and tell them your name, the position for which you are interviewing, and that it is nice to meet with them.
- Follow the interviewer's lead on the interview. Let them ask you questions and introduce small talk.
- Ask if you can take a seat before doing so.

DO NOT:

- Overdo the small talk. Always let the interviewer lead the conversation and keep your thoughts brief.

The Questions

The main purpose of an interview is to determine if you are a good fit for the job and company, so it is imperative that you are prepared to answer an array of different questions.

Below is a list of potential interview questions with recommendations on how to answer the most popular questions. While you don't have to rehearse your answers to these questions, ensure that you have gone through them and have a general idea of what you would discuss if the question is asked.

Qualifications / Work History

- **Tell us about yourself.**
 - Almost all interviews will begin with this question so the interviewer can get a general overview of your qualifications, work history, personality and personal and career aspirations. Try to keep this overview to 45-60 seconds to ensure that it is not too long or too short, and make 75 percent of the response about your qualifications and work history. Avoid talking about political and religious preferences or any other personal information that could be considered controversial.
 - Example: My passion for mechanics began at the age of eight years old when my father invited me to help him rebuild an antique tractor at our family farm located in Anywhere, WI. This interest led me to receive a Bachelor's of Science in Agriculture Mechanics from Anywhere State University. Upon graduation, I started working for Barns Dairy Farm as a mechanic and general farm laborer where I maintained and repaired all farm equipment and buildings as needed. After two years in this position, I was promoted to Lead Mechanic that allowed me to supervise other employees for the first time. A few years later, life led me to return to my family farm as an owner and operator. I have been running the farm for the past 15 years. Due to tough economic times, I have made the



decision to sell the farm and again pursue my passion for mechanics full time. Outside of work, I enjoy volunteering as a club leader for Anywhere County 4-H Mechanic Club and a member of the Anywhere County Dairy Promotions Board. In my spare time, I love camping with my family, hunting for deer and fishing during the summer.

- **Why are you the best candidate for the position?**
 - Review each of the qualifications for the position ahead of time and share how your experiences make you meet all of those qualifications in the interview. If you have experience beyond the requested qualifications, let them know how those experiences would help you in the position. Talk about what experiences or qualities that you have that help differentiate you from other candidates. Think of this as a sales pitch for yourself.
- What relevant experience do you have?
- What will you contribute to this team?
- **Why do you want to / did you leave your current job / occupation / the farm?**
 - Do not use this time to complain about circumstances beyond your control, including the weather, machinery and equipment, your family or your supervisor. Find a response that focuses on your change of career goals or a fact that will better your life. If you were fired, tell the interviewer the truth up front, let them know what went wrong and your plans to make sure it never happens again.
- Tell me about a time you made a mistake at work and how you overcame it.
- Tell me about a time you were on a team at work. What worked well and what didn't work well.
- **Tell me about a time you were faced with a challenge at work. How did you overcome it?**
 - Think back to a time that you were faced with a difficult situation and handled it to the best of your ability. Make sure that you pick an actual experience and share details of the event to make sure your response is believable.
- Describe a situation in which you had to work with a difficult person. How did you handle the situation? Is there anything you would have done differently in hindsight?

Work Habits and Preferences

- What are you looking for in a supervisor?
- What are you looking for in an employer?
- What did you like and dislike about your previous employer?
- How would you react if your supervisor was wrong?
- Do you prefer to work individually or with a team?
- How do you feel about working overtime?
- **What are your salary expectations?**
 - Answer this question with care because overpricing or underpricing yourself can hurt you in the end. Look for a salary range on the job description and stick within that range. If the job description does not define a salary range, search for the median salary for others in the same position. Use that as a starting point for determining the salary you request. Always let them know that you are open to negotiation.



Personality / Goals

- **Why are you interested in this position?**
 - This is your time to show off what you know about the company. Before the interview, research the company's website or articles about the company. Look at their message, values, recent projects, etc. to find things that would make you excited to work for them. Share those things with them. In addition, continue to let the interviewer know why you would feel comfortable in this position.
- Where do you see yourself in one year / five years / ten years?
- **What are your professional and personal life goals?**
 - The interviewer is attempting to find out if you plan to stay with the company long term and if your future goals will get in the way of your ability to do the job. When talking about personal goals, ensure that they do not come across in a way that would make the interviewer feel that your personal goals might excessively interfere with your job such as having to take excessive vacation time.
- **What is one of your strengths?**
 - Using the job description, identify one strength that you have that will help you the most in this position. Try to choose something this is directly correlated with you as person. Responsible, adaptable, open-minded, good communicator, and perseverance are a few examples of good strengths.
- **What is one of your weaknesses?**
 - Choose a weakness before the interview that will not jeopardize your chances at getting the position and can also be framed in a positive way. Try to show the interviewer how you have turned this weakness into a strength or show examples of how you have improve upon this weakness.
- **How do you handle stress and pressure?**
 - Many jobs come with some degree of stress, and the interviewer is looking to find out if you will be able to handle the stress level of the position. Let them know of ways that you overcome stress and even use it to your advantage. Never tell the interviewer that you do not experience stress as they might feel that you haven't taken jobs seriously in the past.
- Why did you decide to make a career change?
- What do you like to do outside of work?
- If you were an animal, which one would you be and why?

Asking Questions

After the interviewer has asked all of the questions they have for you, they will probably ask if you have any questions. Your answer should always be yes! This is your time to figure out if the job is a good fit for you and show the interviewer that you are serious about the position.

The following is a list of potential questions you could ask the interviewer. Choose five questions prior to going into the interview and memorize them. Plan to ask three of the questions or more if time allows.



Job Description, Duties and Advancement Opportunities

- What does a day in this position look like?
- What opportunities are there for growth and advancement?
- How much overtime is expected?
- What percentage of the time would I travel? How are travel expenses handled?
- What do you see as the biggest challenge of this job?

Business Structure and Culture

- What is your favorite part of working for this company?
- What is the culture of the company?
- How many employees work in this office? How many people would be on my team?
- Who would be my supervisor? What can you tell me about him/her?
- Why did this position come open?
- Do you provide training opportunities?
- What are the company's plans for growth and development?

Other

- What does the timeline for hiring this position look like?
- When can I expect to hear from you regarding this position?
- If offered a job, when would you like me to start?

DO NOT

- Ask "Yes" or "No" questions. You want to ask questions that create a conversation between you and the interviewer.
- Ask personal questions.
- Ask what the company does. You should know a general overview of the company before coming to the interview.
- Ask about vacation time or schedule changes. Wait to discuss these items until you have been offered the job.
- Ask if you got the job. Be patient with them.

Closing the Interview

After the question portion of the interview is complete, it is important to close the interview in a way that leaves a positive lasting impression on the interviewer.

DO

- Thank the interviewer(s) for taking the time to consider you for the position.
- Let them know that you are very interested in the position and that you hope to hear from them soon.
- Give them a firm handshake.



POST-INTERVIEW RECORDING FORM

Company Name: _____ Date: _____

Position Title: _____

Interviewer Name: _____ Title: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Notes: _____

Company Name: _____ Date: _____

Position Title: _____

Interviewer Name: _____ Title: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Notes: _____

Company Name: _____ Date: _____

Position Title: _____

Interviewer Name: _____ Title: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Notes: _____



FOLLOW-UP LETTER / EMAIL

Within 24 hours after an interview, send a thank-you note to the employer to demonstrate courtesy and express your continued interest in working for the company. If possible, this note should be sent through email so the interviewer will receive it immediately. If email is not an option, you can hand deliver a typed letter to the business or send it in the mail.

1. Your Return Address – Letter Only

Place your full return address at the top of the letter.

2. Date – Letter Only

Provide the date that you intend on sending or hand delivering the letter.

3. Employer's Address – Letter Only

Address each thank you letter to the person who interviewed you. If there were multiple interviewers, address it to the head interviewer or hiring manager.

4. Salutation – Letter & Email

Use the format of "Dear Mr. / Ms. (last name):" to start off the letter.

5. First Paragraph – Letter & Email

Immediately thank the interviewer for taking the time to interview you. Make sure to include the position title and business name and let them know that you are still excited about the position.

6. Second Paragraph – Letter & Email

This paragraph should invite the interviewer to contact you for further questions. Thank them again for considering you for the position and let them know that you are looking forward to hearing back from them soon.

7. Signature – Letter & Email

- Letter – In closing, use the term "sincerely," leave four blank spaces for your signature and then type your name. Directly under your name include all of your contact information including phone numbers and email. Prior to mailing or hand delivering, sign your name between the word "sincerely" and your typed name using a black or blue pen.
- Email – In closing, use the term "sincerely," double space and then type your name and contact information including your address, phone number and email.



FOLLOW-UP LETTER EXAMPLE

345 Sixth Street
Anywhere, WI 53555

June 1, 2022

Terry Smith
General Manager
XYZ Corporation
234 Maple Street
Anywhere, WI 53555

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to interview me for the maintenance mechanic position with XYZ Corporation. I enjoyed the opportunity to visit with you and came away from the interview even more interested in this position and being a part of your team.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions regarding my qualifications for this position. I would be happy to visit with you by phone or email. Thank you again for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe Worker".

Joe Worker
Phone: 123-456-7890
Email: joeworker@workerfarms.com



FOLLOW-UP EMAIL EXAMPLE

Dear Mr. Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to interview me for the maintenance mechanic position with XYZ Corporation. I enjoyed the opportunity to visit with you and came away from the interview even more interested in this position and being a part of your team.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions regarding my qualifications for this position. I would be happy to visit with you by phone or email. Thank you again for your time and consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Joe Worker
345 Sixth Street
Anywhere, WI 53555
Phone: 123-456-7890
Email: joeworker@workerfarms.com

THE JOB OFFER

If you don't get the job offer, don't get discouraged, and don't take it personally. There could be any number of reasons why you weren't chosen for the position. Turn your focus to other jobs you have applied for, and continue searching for new jobs that could be an even better fit.

If you do get the job offer, and it includes a benefits package, it may be overwhelming to interpret. The Job Center of Wisconsin can help you determine whether the package is right for you, and navigate negotiating the offer if necessary. If you don't already have a contact at the Job Center from your search, visit www.jobcenterofwisconsin.com for assistance.

Congratulations on all you have accomplished in the days, weeks, months or years leading up to this point in your job search. Whether or not you have received a job offer, it is a tremendous achievement to recognize the need for change and identify the type of change you'll make. Thank you for making use of the Farmer's Job Hunting Workbook as part of your search!