

# Online planner guides students' post-secondary education journey

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What do you want to be when you grow up? Karen McCredie, executive director at EducationPlannerBC, believes this question is being asked of young people today more than ever.

"For one thing, the high cost of a post-secondary education makes it vitally important that tuition fees are well-spent and focused on specific outcomes. The trouble is, deciding what to become isn't easy — and finding and enrolling in the right learning institution is daunting, to say the least," says McCredie.

EducationPlannerBC enables youths and their parents to weed through the plethora of options and plan a meaningful education and career path by providing the tools to search and apply to public post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.

A great starting point for students setting out on their education and career path is the EducationPlannerBC website. The site is home to the provincial post-secondary application service and valuable resources. Students can access information such as program and career planning, admission requirements and financial aid options. After researching the many options, they can then easily apply to any of B.C.'s 25 public post-secondary institutions by accessing the transcripts for application. Better still, there is no cost to access this helpful resource.

*Website users can learn about literally thousands of post-secondary programs, and a variety of filters enable them to focus their search.*

- Karen McCredie, executive director at EducationPlannerBC

Considering the sheer scope of possible higher education options existing in the province, it took a substantial amount of time and effort to make EducationPlannerBC a comprehensive resource. "The concept began back in 1996 and was borne out of the desire of those in the post-secondary sector to make the transition into higher education as seamless as possible," McCredie says.

The Ministry of Advanced Education formally announced the launch of the program in 2016 in a two-phased approach. The first phase saw the successful launch of the website; the second oversaw numerous enhancements to the application services available to post-secondary institutions. McCredie adds that further phases will be considered depending on need.

McCredie, who worked in the post-secondary sector

for 30 years before joining EducationPlannerBC, says, "The system is constantly evolving and improving thanks to a strong team of technical and academic people, with everything done in-house."

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One tool enables them to add programs to their list to easily compare tuition, length and location. The favourites can be viewed side-by-side or all in one place. Meanwhile, a new tool, Find Your Path, allows those who know what career they want to explore related education and skills training pathways.

While Ontario was the first province in Canada to offer post-secondary application services, EducationPlannerBC is Canada's first online system. Other provinces such as Alberta and

Quebec have developed online services of their own.

The program's influence extends beyond British Columbia. "We receive over a quarter of a million applications yearly from across Canada," McCredie says.

McCredie and her colleagues aren't content coasting on the system's success, realizing that the service they provide is even more important as the cost of tuition and the complexity of applying for post-secondary education continue to rise. Evidence of that is the recent redesign of the EducationPlannerBC website, incorporating innovative tools that guide students' education and career journey.

The program has broadened its outreach to engage with new communities and unique student populations. In-person engagement opportunities have also been expanded.

"We visit high schools either in person or virtually to give students an idea of what we offer," she says, adding that this effort reaches about 20,000 students and 5,000 parents annually.

When asked what students contemplating their future should know about EducationPlannerBC, McCredie says, "We're here to help with all aspects of post-secondary and career planning. As for students who may have heard about us, I would encourage them to talk to their career counsellors and arrange to have us visit their school for a presentation."

"Finally, I would say this to our new website users: be brave and open to new programs. It might not yet be clear what your ideal career is, but discovering what our post-secondary institutions offer is a good way to find out."

To learn more, visit [www.educationplannerbc.ca](http://www.educationplannerbc.ca)



EducationPlannerBC is a helpful online resource that helps students and parents plan a meaningful education and career path. GETTY IMAGES