CAREER PLANNING TOOL

Year-End Career Checklist

Close out 2026 with your wins on record, your materials current, and a clear plan for 2027.

How to Use This Checklist

1. Block 30 to 45 minutes. Work through one or two sections at a time.
2. Check off each item as you finish it. Skip anything that does not apply to you.
3. Finish with the 2027 Goal Worksheet on page 5.

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Practical Tips. Proven Strategies. Real Results.

Look Back Before You Look Ahead

December is the best time to capture what you did this year. The details fade fast. Write them down now, while they are fresh.

1 Capture Your 2026 Wins

DO FIRST

These notes feed your resume, your review, and your next interview.

- [ ] List your top 5 accomplishments from this year.
- [ ] Add a number to each one: dollars, percentages, time saved, or people served.
- [ ] Note any project you led, team you managed, or decision you owned.
- [ ] Save praise emails and messages from managers, peers, and clients in one folder.
- [ ] Write down new skills, tools, or certifications you picked up.

2 Prepare for Your Year-End Review

BEFORE YOUR REVIEW

Walk in with evidence. Your manager may not remember everything you did.

- [ ] Compare your results to the goals set at the start of the year.
- [ ] Bring your top 3 wins, each with a clear result.
- [ ] Prepare one or two growth areas you want support with.
- [ ] Decide what you want next: a raise, a promotion, new scope, or training.
- [ ] Ask what it would take to reach that next level in 2027.

3 Update Your Resume and LinkedIn

THIS MONTH

Update before you need it. A rushed resume rarely shows your best work.

- [ ] Add this year's results to your current role, using your notes from Section 1.
- [ ] Rewrite task-focused bullets to show decisions, leadership, and scope.
- [ ] Check that your LinkedIn headline reflects what you do now and where you are headed.
- [ ] Add new skills and certifications to your LinkedIn profile.
- [ ] Search your name in a private window and update anything outdated.

4 Review Your Pay and Benefits

BEFORE DEC 31

Some benefits reset on January 1. A few minutes now can save real money.

- [ ] Confirm your open enrollment choices and deadlines for 2027.
- [ ] Check your FSA balance. Ask HR whether your plan has a grace period or carryover.
- [ ] Review your retirement contributions and set your rate for 2027.
- [ ] Use any paid time off that will not roll over.
- [ ] Compare your pay to current market data for your role and location.

5 Strengthen Your Network

THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays give you an easy reason to reach out. Use it.

- [ ] Send a thank-you note to 3 people who helped your career this year.
- [ ] Reconnect with 5 former colleagues you have not spoken with in a while.
- [ ] Check in with your references. Let them know what you are working toward.
- [ ] Thank any recruiters you worked with and share your current goals.
- [ ] Pick one professional group or event to join in the first quarter of 2027.

6 Check Your Job Security

NOW

Know your exposure so you can plan ahead, not react.

- [ ] If your employer depends on federal funding or contracts, ask how it is planning for the December 11, 2026 funding deadline.
- [ ] Watch for signs of change: budget freezes, reorganizations, or leadership turnover.
- [ ] Build or top up an emergency fund that covers several months of expenses.
- [ ] Keep copies of your offer letter, reviews, and benefits summary outside work systems.

Funding deadline: stopgap funding law signed September 2026.

7 Organize Your Career Files

THIS MONTH

One organized folder saves hours when an opportunity comes up fast.

- [ ] Create a personal "career file" folder you control, outside your work accounts.
- [ ] Save your latest resume, cover letter, and LinkedIn summary.
- [ ] Store performance reviews, certificates, and training records.
- [ ] Note renewal dates and continuing education credits for any certifications.
- [ ] Keep a current list of references with their titles and contact details.

8 Plan Your 2027

BEFORE JANUARY

Focus on what you control. Your skills, your network, and your next move.

- [ ] Decide your main career goal for 2027: grow in place, get promoted, or make a move.
- [ ] Pick one skill to build that your target roles ask for.
- [ ] Set 3 actions for the first 90 days of the year.
- [ ] Put check-in dates on your calendar for March, June, and September.
- [ ] Complete the 2027 Goal Worksheet on the next page.

Coach's note: Don't wait for the "right time" to plan your next move. News cycles, budgets, and politics will always be in motion. Build your plan around what you can control.

How Did You Do?

30 or more items

You are ready. Start 2027 with momentum.

15 to 29 items

Good progress. Finish the open items by mid-January.

Under 15 items

Start with Sections 1 and 3. They matter most.

2027 Goal Worksheet

Write three goals you control. Keep each one specific enough that you will know when it is done.

1 Goal

THE GOAL _____

WHY IT MATTERS _____

FIRST STEP _____

DONE BY _____

2 Goal

THE GOAL _____

WHY IT MATTERS _____

FIRST STEP _____

DONE BY _____

3 Goal

THE GOAL _____

WHY IT MATTERS _____

FIRST STEP _____

DONE BY _____

Skill to Build

_____

_____

People to Reach Out To

_____

_____

Your Next Step

A checklist gets you organized. A coach helps you turn it into results. If you want a plan built around your goals, PCS can help.

CAREER COACHING

Start 2027 With a Strategy

Work one-on-one with Nakiya Parkes to set your direction and get your materials ready.

- Clarify your 2027 career goal and the steps to reach it
- Reposition your resume and LinkedIn for the next level
- Prepare for your review, a promotion conversation, or your next interview
- Build a job search plan that fits your industry and timeline

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