

# Career pathways in the Australian Meat Industry:

A practical guide to  
career progression for  
new and current employees



**Government of South Australia**  
Department of Further Education,  
Employment, Science and Technology

**SouthAustraliaWorks**  
linking people, skills and jobs

This booklet is one of a series of publications prepared by the **Food, Tourism and Hospitality Skills Advisory Council SA Inc** in conjunction with **Meat and Livestock Australia**.

Together, the publications form one component in a broad strategic framework developed to assist the South Australian Meat Industry attract and retain a workforce appropriate for the industry's current needs and future growth.

The flagship publication, '**How to become an employer of choice in an industry of choice: a practical guide to workforce development in the Australian Meat Industry**' provided a broad range of information for employers about how to attract, recruit and retain the people they want to employ. It highlighted employee development and 'career progression' as key issues in both attracting and retaining good employees.

This new booklet is therefore designed to provide a guide to career progression—to help new and current employees identify and progress along pathways which will benefit individuals; the company they work for; and the industry as a whole.

The booklet is an initiative of the Food, Tourism and Hospitality Skills Advisory Council SA Inc (FTH Skills Council) with funding support from Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) and the South Australian Government through the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST).

# Why choose a career in the SA Meat Industry?

## The industry is important to the economy

The South Australian Meat Industry is progressive, innovative, and technologically advanced.

South Australia has a long history in the meat industry and is a recognised supplier of premium product in sheepmeat; beef; pork; and goat—in addition to the new ‘boutique’ alternatives of venison, emu, ostrich and saltbush dija (a specially reared mutton product).

Gross annual revenue of \$2.5billion means the meat industry is a significant contributor to the economy of South Australia and it is one of the State’s largest employer groups.

## You are important to the industry

Almost 4,500 South Australians currently earn their livelihood in the industry and growth predictions estimate there could be as many as 4,000 new jobs over the next five years, particularly in smallgoods manufacture and meat export.

## It offers you a real future!

The range of jobs on offer is interesting and diverse—not everything involves processing meat—and, for most positions, there are two ways to get there:

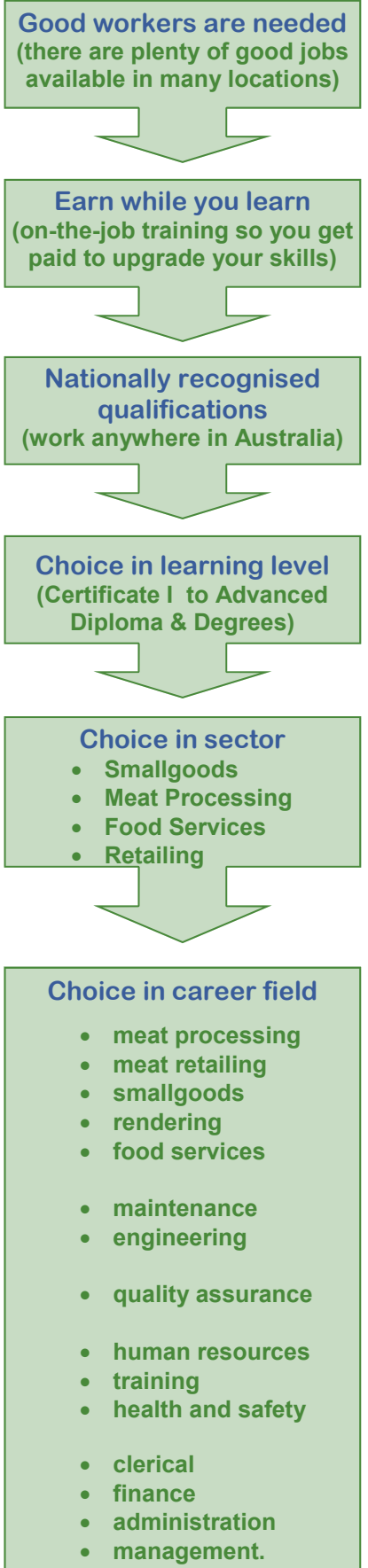
- Academic qualifications (such as Bachelor and Masters Degrees or Doctorates)
- Vocational qualifications (such as Certificates I-IV, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, and even Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas) based on your skills and the actual work that you do.

The ‘accessibility’ of your career goals is one of the things that make the South Australian Meat Industry an ‘industry of choice’.

You can continue to build on your qualifications as you work and there are opportunities to move into different career fields if that’s where you discover your true interest lies.

The qualifications you gain will be nationally recognised—which means you can take them anywhere in Australia—and because your training contributes to the needs of your company and the meat industry, you’ll find most of the costs are met for you.

There are even scholarships available for people who later decide they want to use their vocational qualifications to gain entry to a university.



## Career Progression: Why you need to take charge

The Australian Meat Industry offers real opportunities for people who want to 'get ahead' and build a career rather than just hold a job.

In fact, the industry really needs people who want to do that—people who want to upgrade their skills and progress along with the industry.

However, you can't just sit back and wait for things to happen naturally. You need to take charge of your future!

Career progression in the South Australian Meat Industry is about deciding where you want go and mapping a pathway to get there.

This booklet will help you do that—by offering tips on planning and hints on opportunities you might like to think about.

You don't have to do it all—just what works for you!

### Times have changed!

The traditional concept of work and career progression no longer applies.

People no longer move from school into a job-for-life—progressing steadily through the hierarchy of an organisation naturally in pace with seniority (either by age or length of employment with the company).

The shape of loyalty expectations for both the employee and the employer has changed dramatically and a whole range of external impacts—such as workplace reforms; skill shortages; labour shortages; multi-skilled workforces; part-time and casual workforces—all affect how you move along your career pathway, or if in fact you move at all.

Even the concept of 'career' has changed. It no longer simply means the stages you pass through to reach a certain occupation title in an organisation before you retire.

The concept of a person's 'career' today is much more broad—it incorporates all the roles taken through life (paid and unpaid) including work, learning, family and leisure activities.

### Career development vs career progression

Career development, therefore, is about your personal journey—the way you manage your life, learning and work activities.

It involves your whole life—not just your occupation—and is continuous because it includes life-long learning and lifestyle choices.

Career progression is more occupation-focused. It's about advancement within a job, within an organisation, or within an industry.

It's about recognising opportunities—and gaining the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to take advantage of those opportunities—so that you can advance in that job, company and industry.

### A practical guide

That's what this booklet is about—showing you the range of opportunities that are available to you in the Australian Meat Industry—and how you might tap into those opportunities which are personally appealing.

## Yes! You *can* get the qualifications you'll need!

Not everyone wants to become involved in management—and certainly very few people actually want to 'go back to school' in order to get there.

However, given the chance, most people want to learn how to do their job better and to have their learning recognised with qualifications so they can move into a better job.

That's what vocational qualifications are about.

### Vocational Qualifications

Vocational qualifications are closely tied to the work that you do and the interest you show in what's happening around you.

These qualifications take your experience and work skills into account—together with your attitudes and behaviours—and they can provide a clear pathway to your personal goals in almost every field of work within the meat industry.

- Training and assessment are tailored to the individual and the workplace so that both 'have meaning' for you
- The learning is practical and related to the skills required for the job—there's no unnecessary theory
- Most of the program is conducted on the job—at times suitable to you and your employer
- There's no need to complete stages within fixed time frames—the rate of progress is what is suitable for you personally
- The program is flexible, usually with a number of options along the way—so you can match your interests and goals if they change as you learn more.

The career pathway models later in this booklet show potential corridors to management for people who start out as labourers.

For example, people who begin packing or trimming carcasses in the Food Processing sector can advance through specific levels of training and gain qualifications along the way to become a Production Manager or Site Manager.

However, that may not be what you want—or what you're suited to. The important thing to remember about career progression is that you need to choose the right pathway for you. The next few pages will help you do that.

If you feel you are:

- too old
- too young
- too busy
- too insecure
- too uneducated

to do the required training and achieve appropriate qualifications to progress your career to where you want to go—

you're wrong!

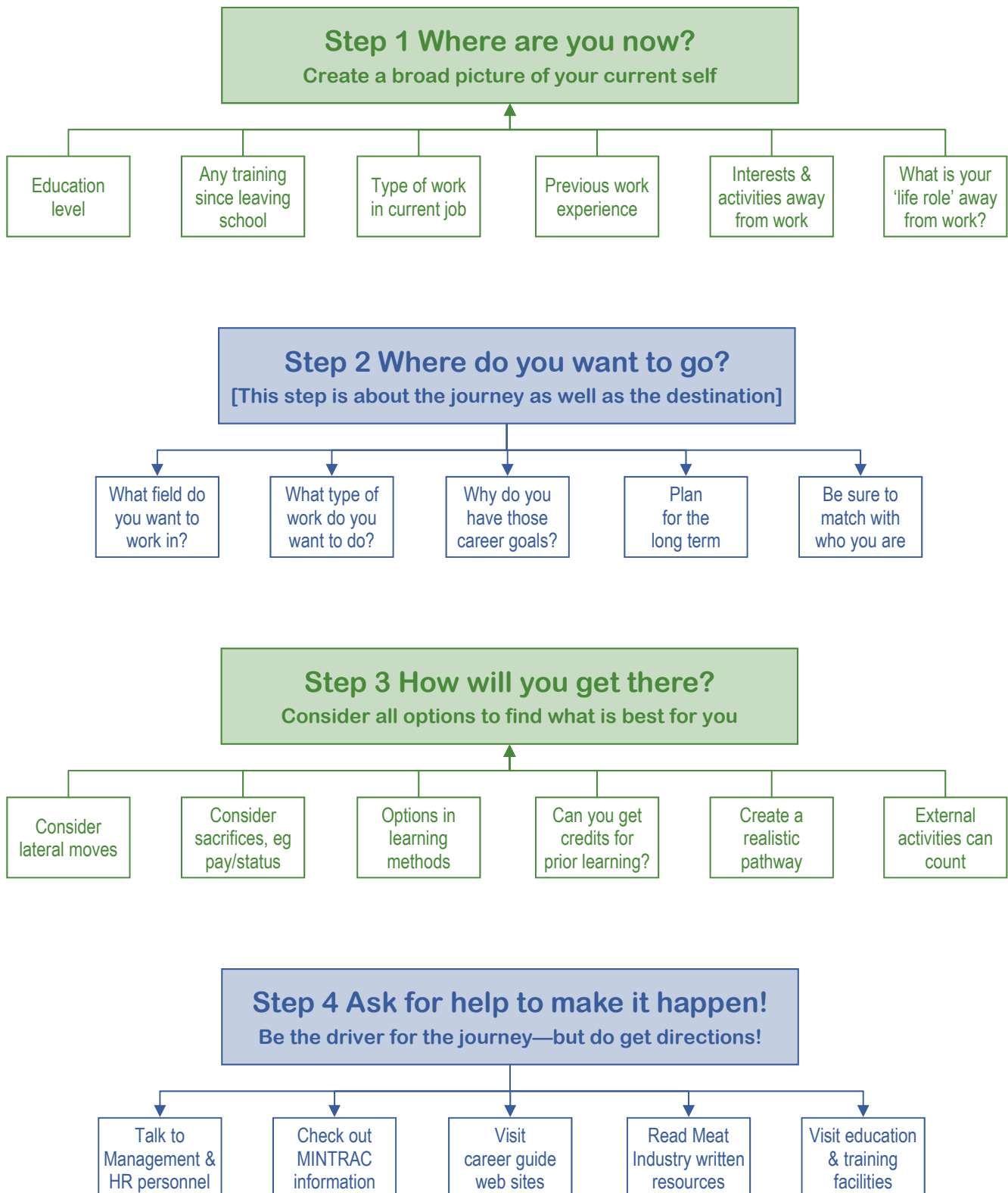
You probably feel that way because you don't yet understand how the system works!

Career progression in the SA Meat Industry is about tailoring a practical learning program to suit you and your employer.

You can learn at *your* pace—in *your* job—and in *your* place of work.

# Mapping your personal career pathway

Career progression is not simply about noticing a vacancy in your company and ‘throwing your hat in the ring’ for the job. As with most things in life, planning is the key to success. The model below gives an overview of what your planning process should look like and the next few pages provide more detail on each stage.



## Step 1: Where are you now?

### Consider the bigger picture

Defining 'where you are now' doesn't just mean naming the job you are currently working in.

It's about taking stock of the knowledge you hold; the specific skills you have; the amount of experience you have in specific tasks—and also thinking about the way you behave at work and your general attitude to your job, your workplace and the industry in general.

### Be clear about what you actually do

Do you regularly use good planning and organising skills in your work? Is team work and team building something you already do every day?

Do you problem-solve to keep the work flowing? Do you continually demonstrate that you have a good eye for detail?

This is not so much about the job you have—but the work you do and the way you behave.

### Non-work based skills and talents

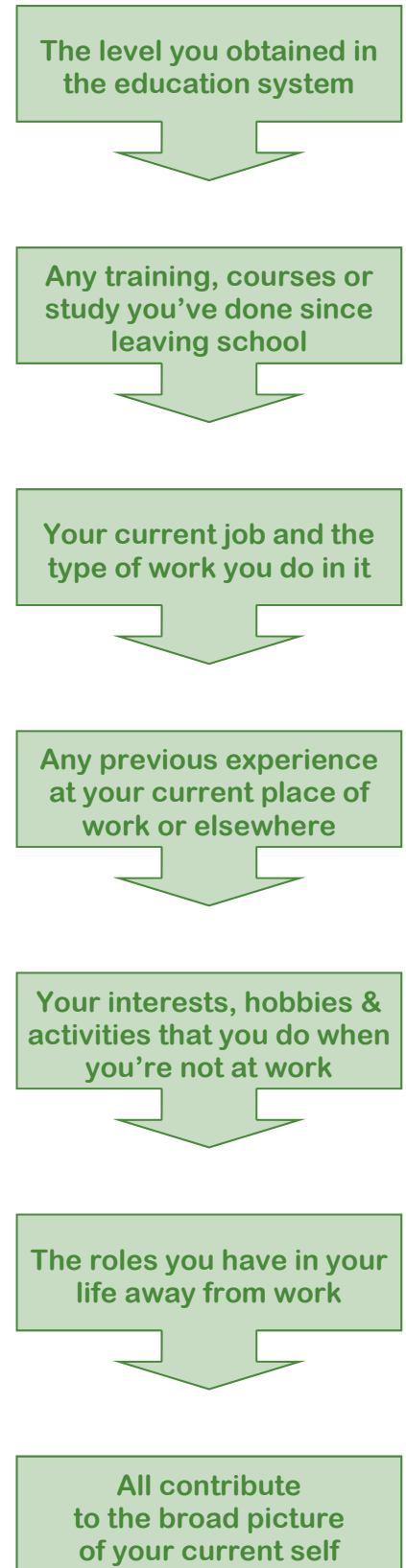
Your current job may be quite isolated, yet you may be a coach for the local football team (showing leadership skills) or a volunteer visitor at the local hospital (showing good interpersonal and communication skills)—even being great at computer games can mean you have good hand-eye coordination or IT aptitude!

Taking stock of these activities will not only help to define who you are now, but also help you to decide where you really want to go. (There's more about this in the next section.)

### Formal and informal education and training

Not all education and training takes place in a formal setting or has a certificate attached to it.

Have you been to workshops or seminars—either for work or just out of interest? Have you done any adult education courses or leisure courses? Even an art course or photography workshop says something about who you are, what you're good at, what type of work you'd like to do and perhaps what undiscovered skills and talents you already have.





## Step 2: Where do you want to go?

Think about the field you'd really like to work in



Decide on the work you'd really like to do



Consider why you've made those choices



Take the long term into account rather than just immediate needs



Make decisions to match with who you are and what you are 'cut out' to do



To make good decisions about where you really want to go!

In the old way of thinking, this question would be, 'What do you want to be?'. However, career progression is more about focusing on the journey rather than just the destination.

It's about recognising who you already are—your special talents, skills and interests—and then using these to set specific realistic goals and achieving them for yourself.

It's important to realise that your career goals don't have to mean moving out of the job you already have—you may simply want to learn how to do it better.

### Knowing 'why' will help decide 'where'

This step should also give some thought as to why you want to advance in your career.

Is it for more money? An improved status? Are you bored and want more interesting work? Do you feel you have something extra to offer? Have you discovered a new and real interest (maybe Health & Safety or Quality Assurance) that you didn't know about before you started work? Are you looking for a different work situation or environment?

### Knowing 'where' helps decide next steps

The models later in this booklet show a number of ways to progress your career in the South Australian Meat Industry. Deciding exactly where you want to end up in the future, will help you to choose which pathway you should be on now.

Once you know you're on the right path, you only need to focus on the goal immediately ahead. Some long term goals can seem unachievable until you break them into bite-sized pieces.

### Keep goals realistic—with who you are

This is not about dampening enthusiasm—it's about appropriate goal matching. For example, are you the one who naturally moves into a mentoring role when new employees arrive? Leadership and management could be for you!

Or are you more likely to struggle in group situations but have a fine eye for detail and love the challenge of analysing and solving puzzles? Maybe laboratory work is a more appropriate goal for you. Don't just aim for something because it's there!



## Step 3: How will you get there?

Training in the Australian meat industry is industry led, industry driven and generally industry funded. That commitment provides the opportunities for you—but you have to personally take the driver's seat for the journey.

### Use the roadmaps to plot your course now

Because you've taken the time to work out who you really are and where you really want to go, the likelihood of planning a successful career pathway is significantly increased.

The career progress models show where there are opportunities for pathway choices along the way, but it works best if you plot an appropriate course now. (For example, if you know you want to end up studying Occupational Health and Safety, perhaps you can get onto the OH&S Committee while in your current job.)

### Be prepared for lateral moves

Sometimes the pathway you plot will include a 'lateral' or sideways move, rather than travelling ever upward. There are very few opportunities to move diagonally—that is, move upward while shifting career fields.

There may even be sacrifices along the way (in terms of money or seniority) but if it's *your* pathway to where *you* want to go, the end result will be worth it.

### Consider various study options

Think about how you learn best. Do you do better when you can take time to read and re-read information and write out your thoughts? Or do you prefer discussing things and demonstrating what you know? Investigate whether your preferred learning style is available in the course you're planning.

Vocational qualifications generally are comprised of Core, Specialist and Optional Units. If you know you're heading in a certain direction, it may be possible to include specific optional units in an earlier certificate to make life easier later on.

### Don't forget your life away from work!

Life experience, work experience and previous study can all count toward what is known as 'Recognised Prior Learning' (RPL) toward a certificate or diploma. Planning ahead means you can take advantage of community opportunities now, for later RPL credits. Examples include workshops and short courses run by Industry Associations or Adult Education Organisations— even volunteering to help in management of a sports or youth club.

You may need to move sideways to another field of work

You may even need to lose money or seniority in the short term

But there will likely be a number of learning options to choose from

And you may get 'credits' for some things you can show you already know

Even for activities you have done away from the work place

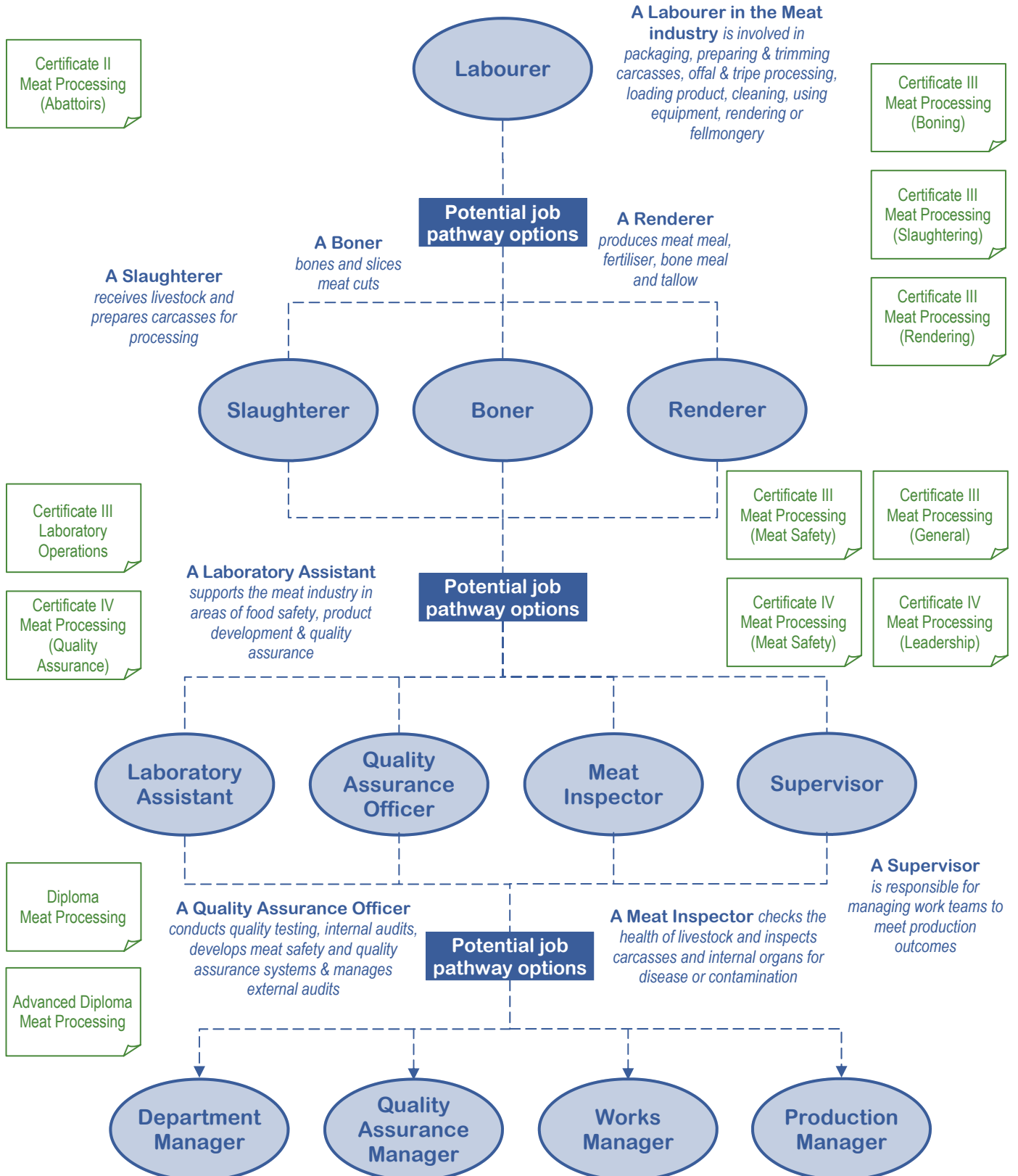
The most important thing is to take a pathway that is right for you

To get to where you've decided you want to be in the future.

# Career pathway examples: Meat Processing

This model shows how an employee who begins as a labourer at a Meat Processing Plant could move through various positions to become a manager in a specific field of interest.

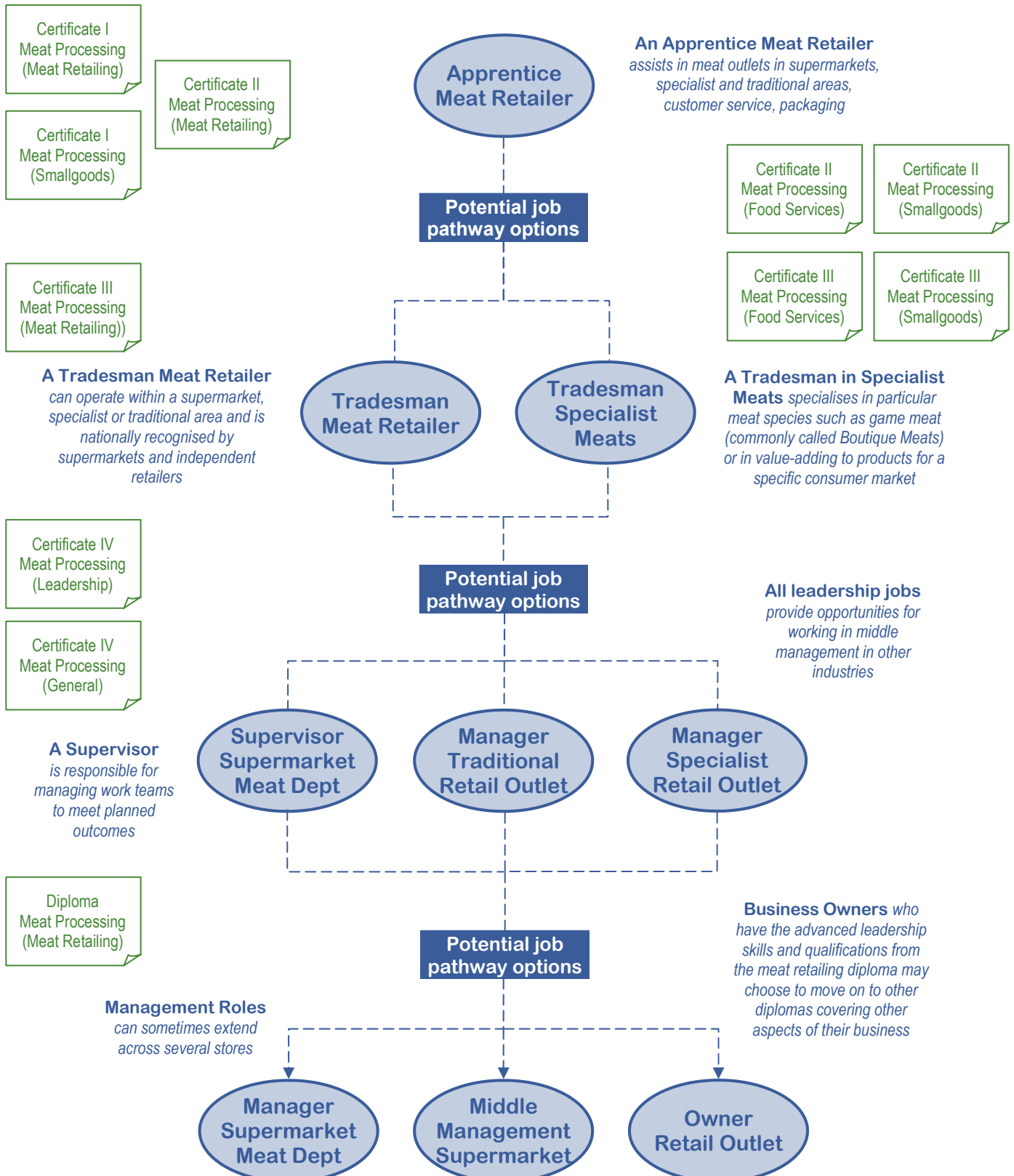
You don't always have to get these qualifications in order to be promoted into these jobs—and achieving a particular qualification doesn't mean you will always get the job you want.



# Career pathway examples: Meat Retailing

This model shows how an employee who begins as an apprentice meat retailer could move through various positions to own their own business or become a manager in a large supermarket chain.

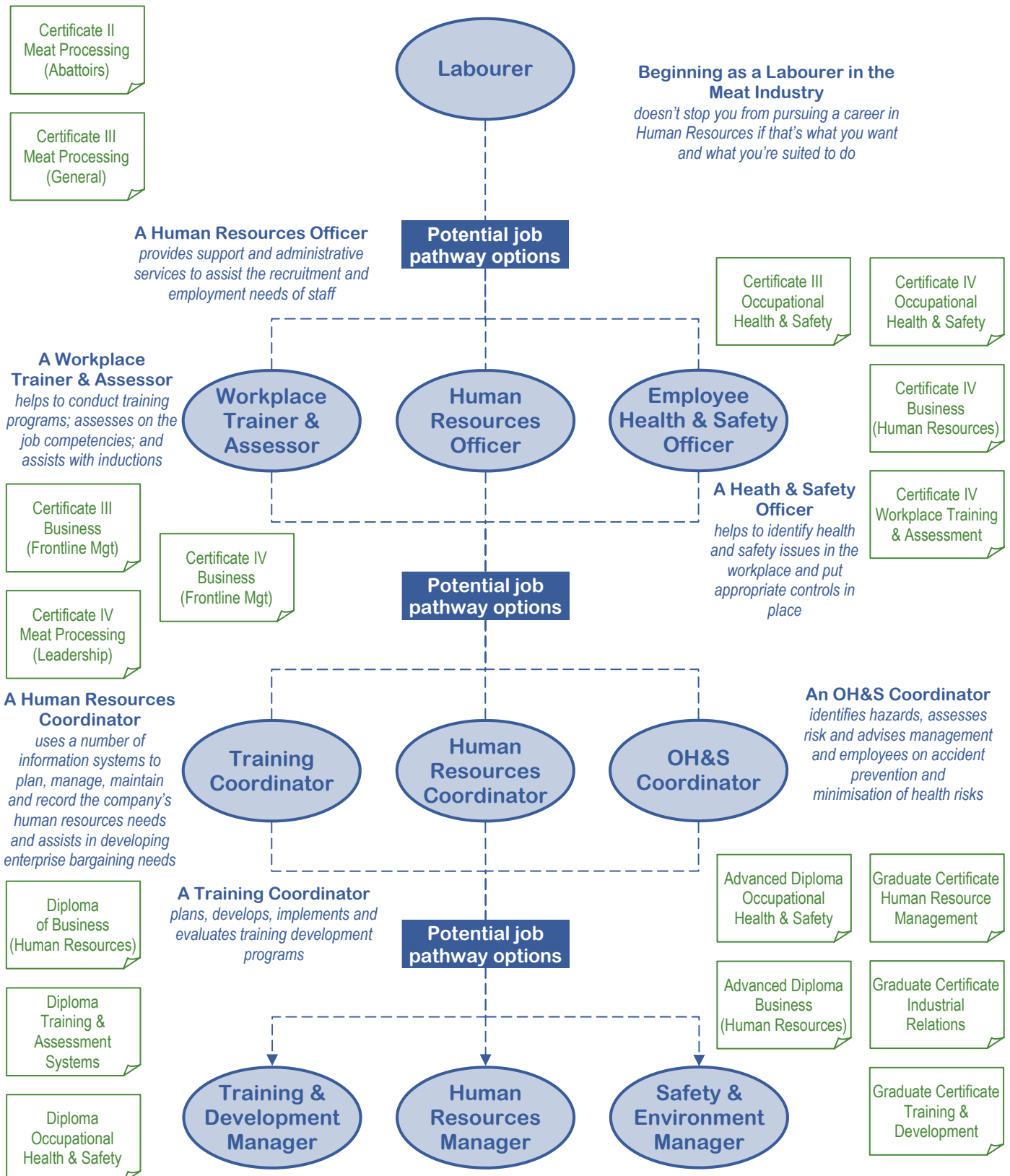
Promotions don't always happen immediately extra qualifications are earned. Experience in each level is important—and leadership training is important to being a good supervisor or manager.



# Career pathway examples: Human Resources

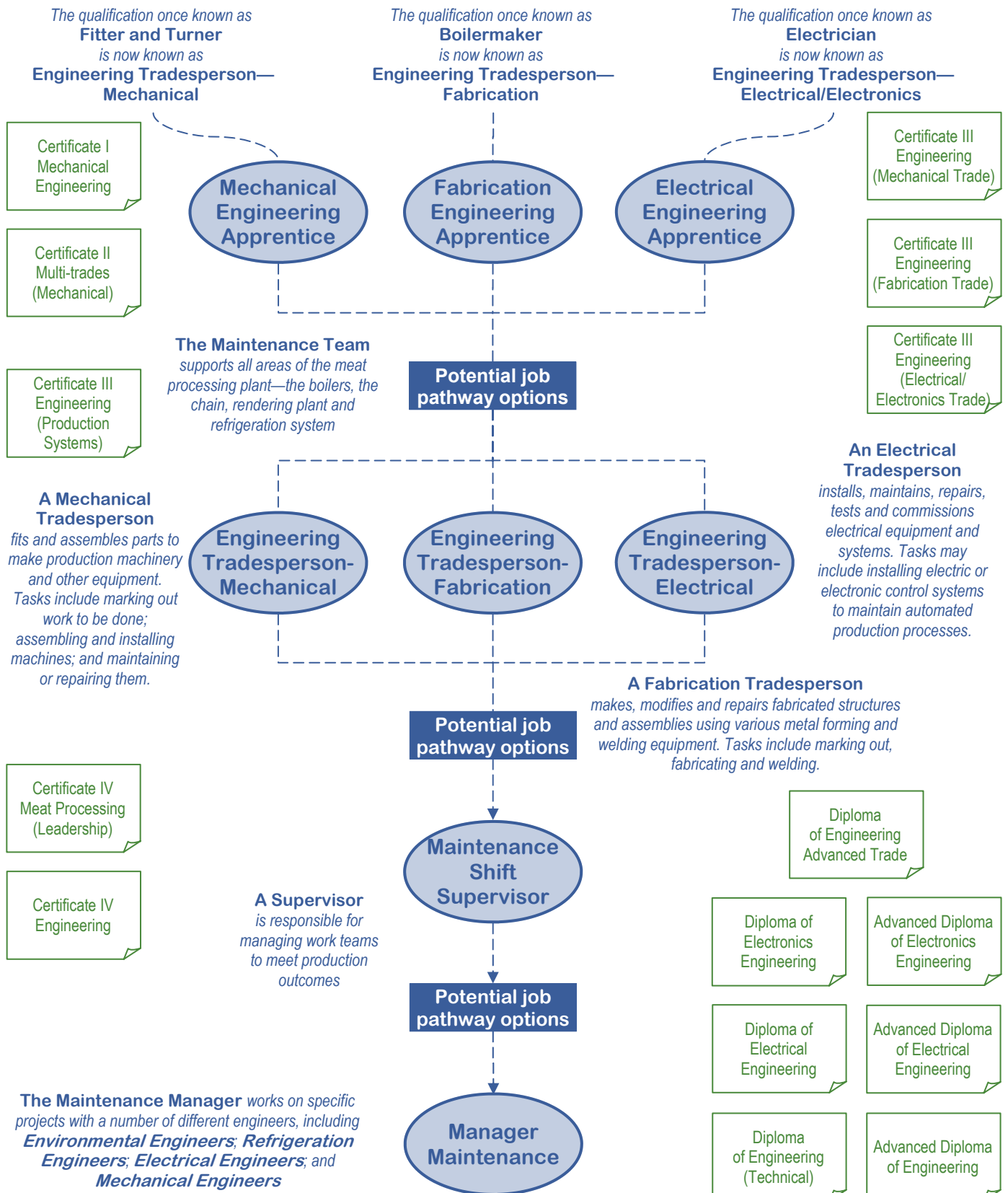
Talk to management or HR personnel and use web sites and other resources to find out more about jobs that interest you in HR. Research the percentage of the Meat Industry's workforce in these positions and the average wage or salary that applies to particular jobs.

Not all worksites will have all the jobs and levels shown in the model below and there are a number of other certificates which may be more specific to your interests or your workplace.



# Career pathway examples: Plant Maintenance

This model has been prepared to show pathways for Fitters, Boilermakers and Electricians. Other trades used in the Australian Meat Industry include Plumber/Gas Fitters; Automotive Mechanics; Mechanical Engineers; and Refrigeration Engineers. The maintenance field is a classic example of a diverse range of qualifications. Courses can be tailored to your needs and the specific needs of your workplace.



## Step 4: Ask for help to make it happen!

Find out about the future needs of your company and the industry



Talk about your goals & how they can be a 'win-win' for you and your workplace



Ask your boss for help to try out other jobs you're interested in



Use purpose-built resources such as MINTRAC, websites, & RTOs



Ask for booklets, fact sheets and other material that will help you



You're in charge—but good drivers seek directions before they hit the road.

### Management and HR Personnel

Talk to management or HR personnel about your goals and plans. Even if you can't personally see an opening for what you want to do, the company's needs are changing all the time and you may be just what they're looking for to fit their future plans!

This booklet has shown some of the ways a career pathway can be flexible, but there are other possibilities and the best people to help you decide on the best options are people who know your industry, your workplace, your job and you.

### Government web sites

The **'My Future'** web site is an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments and is full of useful information about career development in general. There's also detailed information about tasks in specific jobs (including meat industry jobs), work conditions, personal requirements, earnings, job prospects and training. Go to [www.myfuture.edu.au](http://www.myfuture.edu.au)

**Job Guide 2006** is an Australian Government website that allows you to search for specific information about jobs (including meat industry jobs); the type of work you would do; other positions it could lead to; and the training qualifications you would need—with specific information about requirements in South Australia.

Go to: [www.jobguide.dest.gov.au](http://www.jobguide.dest.gov.au)

### Australian Meat Industry

**Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA)** has published a *Career Development Handbook* which has excellent information, including examples of how people have progressed along specific career pathways and how you might prepare evidence to substantiate your claim for RPL credits. The MLA also has a number of graduate programs available which can help you further your career in the Australian Meat Industry. Go to: [www.mla.com.au](http://www.mla.com.au)

**Meat Industry National Training Resources Advisory Council (MINTRAC)** has comprehensive information about careers in the Australian meat industry; training; Traineeships; Apprenticeships; and Scholarships. Go to: [www.mintrac.com.au](http://www.mintrac.com.au)

### Education and Training Organisations

Universities, TAFE Institutes and other Registered Training Organisations will supply useful handbooks and course overviews.



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