

The Otak Career Guide

UNDERSTANDING THE OTAK
CAREER GROWTH PROGRAM



2nd Edition

Understanding Career Growth at Otak

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE OTAK CAREER GROWTH PROGRAM

A Note to Our Team

Your career is not something that just happens to you.

It's something you build through experience, relationships, performance, curiosity, and sometimes courage.

At Otak, we believe that when people grow, the entire firm grows with them.

We created the Otak Career Growth Program to bring clarity to that process. Not to control it. Not to over-engineer it. But to make sure everyone understands:

- How roles are structured
- What growth looks like
- How advancement decisions are made
- And how you can shape your own path here

This guide is your starting point for understanding how career growth works at Otak.

UNDERSTANDING THE OTAK CAREER GROWTH PROGRAM

The Otak Career Growth Program is:

- A Roadmap for navigating your professional journey
- A collection of Resources to support development
- A Guide to Growth that clarifies expectations and pathways

It provides a structured framework for understanding:

- Where you are today
- What growth opportunities exist
- What knowledge, skills, and experience are required to progress
- How career development aligns with Otak's broader firm strategy

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Career Growth Program was developed to:

- Empower your journey
- Unlock your potential
- Align your career aspirations with the needs of the firm
- Build the strongest and best workforce

These objectives are rooted in:

- Otak's Strategic Plan
- People Services Strategic Plan
- DEI Strategic Plan

The program ensures clear, consistent expectations for advancement and supports transparency in development conversations.

Career Growth Philosophy and Pathways

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT
WAYS CAREERS GROW AT OTAK

One Career, Many Pathways

At Otak, career growth is not defined by a single path or destination.

People contribute to the firm in many different ways, and meaningful careers can take many forms. Some deepen their technical expertise. Others grow into leadership roles, build client relationships, or explore new disciplines over time.

At Otak, career growth is:

- **Intentional** – It requires effort and reflection.
- **Collaborative** – Development happens through conversations with mentors, supervisors, and colleagues.
- **Ongoing** – Growth is not limited to performance reviews or promotions.
- **Non-linear** – Progress does not always move in a straight line.

Our goal is to create an environment where employees can develop their strengths, expand their impact, and build careers that are both fulfilling for them and valuable to the communities we serve.

Along the way, you will work alongside colleagues who support your development and share in the impact of the work we do.

HOW RESPONSIBILITY EVOLVES OVER A CAREER

As employees progress through career levels, the scope of responsibility associated with their roles typically expands.

Early career roles focus primarily on developing technical capability and supporting project teams. As experience grows, employees begin taking on greater responsibility for project delivery, coordination with other disciplines, and technical decision-making.

At more senior levels, professionals often contribute in broader ways, including mentoring colleagues, leading projects, strengthening client relationships, and helping identify new opportunities for the firm.

CAREER GROWTH IS NOT ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL

Early in your career, you may explore elements of several pathways as you develop skills and gain experience.

Over time, many people begin to focus more deeply in the areas that align with their interests and strengths. That might mean:

- Developing deep technical expertise within a discipline
- Taking on project or operational leadership responsibilities
- Building client relationships and supporting business growth
- Expanding your experience across different practice areas

Growth can look different for different people.

Some people manage teams.

Some influence projects and decisions without formal authority.

Some specialize deeply in a technical field.

Others broaden their experience across disciplines.

All of these paths represent meaningful professional growth.

What matters most is continuing to develop your skills, expand your impact, and contribute to the success of your team, your clients, and the communities we serve.

CAREER PATHWAYS

Because careers can develop in many different ways, Otak organizes roles around several broad pathways that reflect the different ways people contribute to the success of the firm.

Most roles at Otak include elements of technical work, collaboration, client interaction, and leadership. Over time, many people find that their interests and strengths align more closely with certain types of contributions.

To support these different directions, Otak organizes career growth around three primary pathways. You may primarily align with one pathway, but many roles incorporate responsibilities across more than one.

The three pathways reflect different ways people contribute to Otak's success and to the work we do supporting thriving communities.

1. Professional/ Technical

Focus: Discipline expertise and project delivery.

This pathway is about:

- Technical excellence
- Increasing independence
- Project responsibility
- Mentorship

Growth here often means:

- Taking on more complex work
- Leading technical components
- Advising others
- Influencing quality and standards

What success looks like:

- You are trusted to deliver high-quality work with minimal oversight
- Others seek out your expertise.
- You mentor and elevate those around you.
- Your technical judgment impacts outcomes.

Advancement is based on consistently demonstrating the expectations of the next level over time, not simply time in role. This ensures promotions reflect readiness, impact, and contribution.

2. Operations

Focus: Leading people and business performance.

This pathway emphasizes:

- Team leadership
- Resource management
- Accountability
- Business results

Growth here often means:

- Expanding scope of responsibility
- Managing larger teams or functions
- Owning outcomes beyond individual contribution

What success looks like:

- Teams perform well under your leadership.
- You make sound decisions under pressure.
- You balance people development with business performance.
- You take ownership of results.

Leadership roles build on demonstrated capability — not just strong technical performance.

3. Practice Development

Focus: Clients, markets, and growth

This pathway emphasizes:

- Relationship building
- Market awareness
- Opportunity development
- Strategic positioning

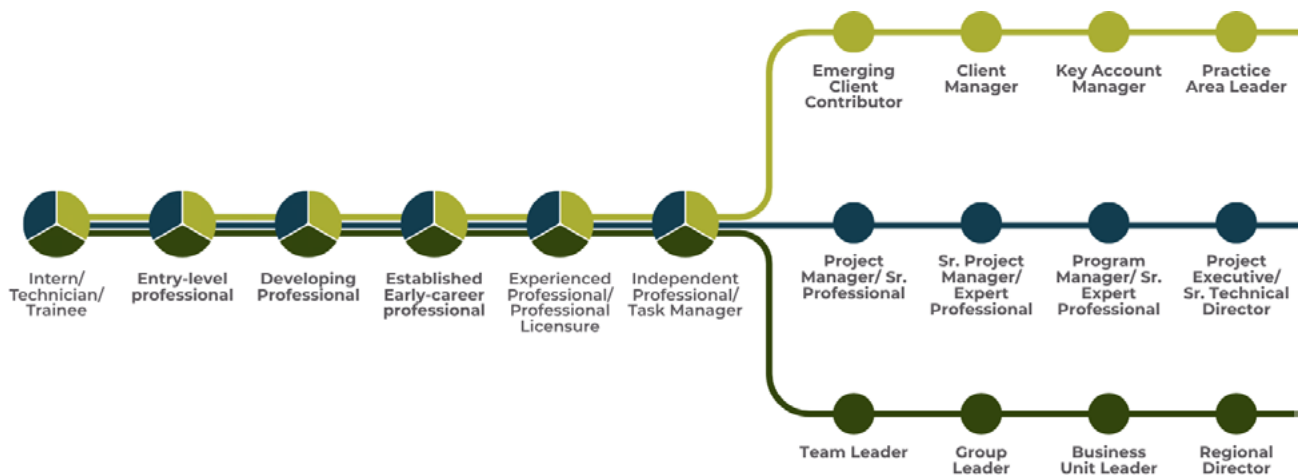
Growth here often means:

- Managing key accounts
- Leading pursuits
- Shaping growth strategy
- Expanding Otak's presence in the market

What success looks like:

- Clients trust you.
- You identify and pursue opportunities.
- You help connect people and capabilities.
- You contribute to sustainable business growth.

In today's structure, practice development often overlaps with technical or operational roles.



How Roles Are Structured

UNDERSTANDING JOB FAMILIES, FUNCTIONS, AND TITLES

How Roles are Structured

To support fairness and clarity, Otak uses a consistent job architecture. Because roles serve different purposes inside and outside the organization, we use several terms to describe them.

Understanding the distinction between **job families**, **job functions**, **job titles**, and **working titles** will help you better understand how roles are structured across the firm.

UNDERSTANDING ROLE TERMINOLOGY

Job Function → Classification and level

Job Title → Organizational role

Working Title → External or specialty description

JOB FAMILY

Job families group together roles that involve similar types of work or professional disciplines (for example Engineering, Survey, or Planning). They help organize roles with related responsibilities into consistent career streams.

Otak's job architecture currently includes the following job families. As the firm evolves, additional job families may be introduced to reflect new areas of expertise or business needs.

TECHNICAL

- Administrative & Project Support
- Architecture
- Construction Management & Inspection (CMI)
- Engineering
- Computer Aided Design and Drafting (CAD)
- Planning
- Landscape Architecture
- Project Management
- Scientists
- Survey
- Visitor Use Planning and Management (VUPM)
- Project Controls

CORPORATE SERVICES

- Finance
- Information Technology
- Human Resources
- Marketing & Business Development
- Legal

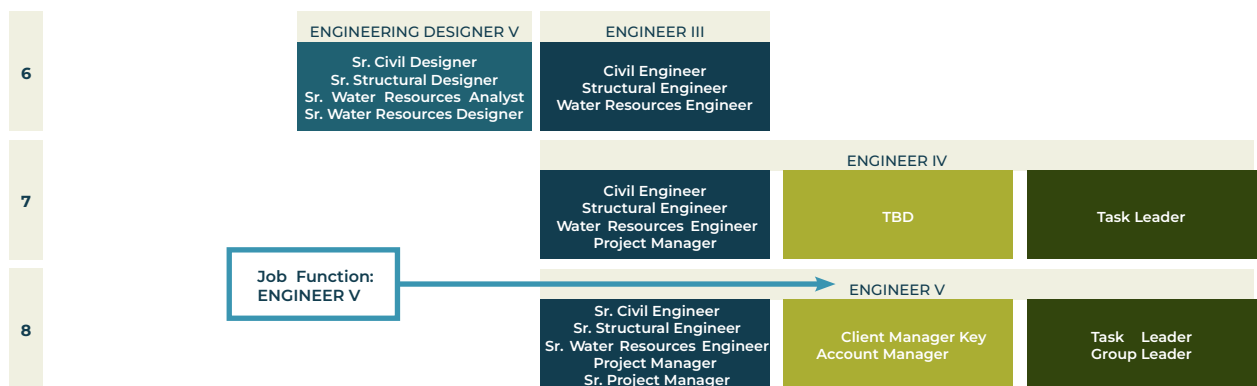
Roles are assigned to a job family based on the type of work performed. While many Otak practice areas align closely with a single job family, some teams include employees from multiple job families who work together on shared projects or services.

JOB FUNCTION

Your Job Function is your official classification. The Job Function, aka the “billing title” or “labor category” is the basic building block of the Career Stream. The job function describes:

- Scope of responsibility
- Level of decision-making authority
- Required knowledge and experience
- Pay grade alignment

This is how we ensure consistent leveling across the company.



JOB TITLE

Your Job Title describes the role you hold within Otak.

It is:

- The title that appears on the organizational chart
- The role entered into our internal systems
- The title typically referenced in internal communications

Your job title reflects the nature of the role you perform within your business unit.

For example:

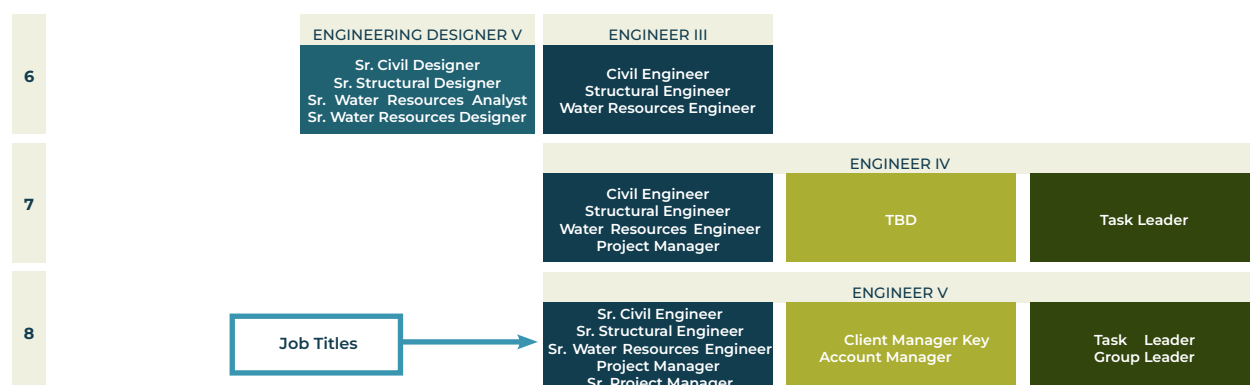
- Job Function: Engineer V
- Job Title: Senior Project Manager

In this example:

Engineer V defines the level and classification of the role.

Senior Project Manager describes the organizational role.

The working title may further describe a specific focus or market area.



WORKING TITLE

Your Working Title, sometimes called a “business card title,” is an optional customized title used externally and set by the business unit or department.

It may:

- Match your job function, or
- Reflect a specialty or market focus

Working titles do not change job classification or pay grade. For example:

- Job Function: Engineer V
- Job Title: Senior Project Manager
- Working Title: Senior Project Manager – Stream Restoration

In this example:

- **Engineer V** defines the level and classification of the role.
- **Senior Project Manager** describes the organizational role.
- **Senior Project Manager – Stream Restoration** reflects a specific market or practice focus.

Each of these terms serves a different purpose. Job functions support consistent leveling and compensation, job titles describe roles within the organization, and working titles help communicate an employee's focus or expertise externally.

JOB TITLE (INTERNAL)

Senior Project Manager



Engineering Designer



Architect



JOB TITLE (EXTERNAL)

Same

Senior Project Manager

Engineering Designer

Architect

Different

Practice Area Leader



Director of Surveying

Business Unit Leader



Puget Sound Water Resources Manager

Senior Engineer



Senior Civil Engineer & Stormwater Lead

Career Growth Tools

RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT
DEVELOPMENT CONVERSATIONS

The Career Growth Toolkit

The Career Growth Program includes four tools. Each serves a different purpose.

1. CAREER STREAMS

A Career Stream is a visual map of job functions within a job family.

It:

- Illustrates progression from entry to senior leadership
- Shows potential crossover between pathways
- Aligns job functions with defined pay grades

The Career Stream demonstrates possible pathways but does not guarantee timing or availability of roles. Career Streams work together with the Career Level Summary and Career Level Matrix to provide a complete picture of role expectations.

Pay Grade	Intern	Technical	Professional Technical	Practice Development	Operations
1	ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN Civil Designer Structural Designer Water Resources Analyst Water Resources Designer				
2		ENGINEERING DESIGNER I Sr. Civil Designer Sr. Structural Designer Sr. Water Resources Analyst Sr. Water Resources Designer			
3		ENGINEERING DESIGNER II Sr. Civil Designer Sr. Structural Designer Sr. Water Resources Analyst Sr. Water Resources Designer	ENGINEER I Civil Engineer Structural Engineer Water Resources Engineer		
4		ENGINEERING DESIGNER III Sr. Civil Designer Sr. Structural Designer Sr. Water Resources Analyst Sr. Water Resources Designer	ENGINEER II Civil Engineer Structural Engineer Water Resources Engineer		

2. CAREER LEVEL SUMMARY

The Career Level Summary provides a high-level description outlining:

- Core responsibilities
- Required knowledge and skills
- Education and experience expectations
- Distinguishing characteristics between levels

It serves as a concise reference for understanding progression expectations.

Technician

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Level I

This is the typical entry-level position for a recent graduate with a Bachelor's in an architecture- related field, working in a learning capacity and receiving on-the-job training.

Responsibilities

- Performs elementary architectural assignments and works from the designs of others.
- Receives specific and detailed instructions to compile data and perform elementary design computations.

Knowledge

- Has elementary design knowledge of commonly used concepts, practices, and procedures within the field, including design platforms and software.
- Applies established methodologies and procedures to perform assigned tasks.

Education & Experience

- Required:
 - Bachelor's degree in Architecture or other relevant field and no experience.
 - OR an equivalent combination of technical school training and on-the-job design experience.

Career Stream

At this level, potential career path options are:

Technical / Not Licensed

TECHNICIAN I

Design Technician

3. CAREER LEVEL MATRIX

The Career Level Matrix provides detailed distinctions across levels, organized under categories such as:

- Organizational Scope and Impact
- Influence and Leadership
- Knowledge and Expertise

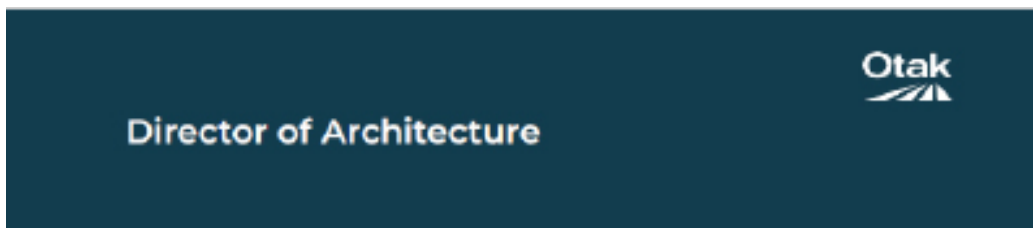
Attributes are additive. Advancement requires consistent demonstration of next-level expectations over time. Placement within a level is determined through holistic evaluation of sustained performance, not isolated tasks.

Otak Organizational Career Levels Operations						
Level	Supervisor		Manager		Director	
	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5	O6
OVERVIEW	Leads a team accountable for the performance and results of a small to medium group.		Leads a large team accountable for the performance and results of multiple, diverse groups or departments at the BU level. Frequently provides leadership through subordinate managers.		Leads a team accountable for the performance and results of operations in a region or company-wide function.	
TYPICAL TITLES	Task Leader		Business Unit Leader		Regional Director	
ORGANIZATIONAL SCOPE AND IMPACT	Impact to the group or department		Impact to the group or department		Impact to the group or department	
	Position has direct impact on the productivity of the work performed by assigned employees. Monitors daily operations of a work group.		Position has significant impact on the specific work group of a Business Unit. Responsible for the organizational design and operation of an entire BU or multiple work groups.		Has responsibility for the operations of an entire Region or function(s) of the company, in which actions can measurably increase or decrease operating results. O6 has responsibility for a material portion of Company assets or processes—IT, HR, Finance, Human Resources. This includes planning, staffing, budgeting, managing separate priorities, and recommending and implementing changes to methods. Responsible for the organizational design of operations or company-wide function. Position has significant impact on entire region or large company-wide function.	
	Impact on operations		Impact on operations		Impact on operations	
	Supports goals and priorities for new or revised services, programs, processes, standards, or operational plans.		Establishes annual or medium priorities, goals, and operational plans for an entire small Business Unit or work groups of a large business unit, leads definition and direction for new or revised services, programs, processes, policies, standards, or operational plans, based upon Regional and Corporate strategies. Receives assignments in the form of objectives and determines how to use resources to meet schedule and results.		Establishes annual or medium priorities, goals, and operational plans for a large Business Unit or multiple, diverse complex work groups.	
	Strategic planning		Strategic planning		Strategic planning	
	Assesses and forecasts daily work tasks and goals for immediate work group; may recommend resolutions for issues to direct manager.		Recommends and collaborates with senior management to resolve strategic issues.		Collaborates with executive management team on definition and direction for new or revised services, programs, processes, policies, standards, or operational plans, based upon corporate long-term strategies.	
	Policy-making		Policy-making		Policy-making	
	Administers and implements policies and procedures; typically affecting direct reports, interpreting and adjusting as circumstances require.		Administers policies that directly affect employees and recommends work group or department policy changes; may have the authority to make exceptions to policies and procedures under guidelines that require judgment and discretion on issues of significant dollar, or stakeholder relationship, impact.		Recommends innovation and improvement to policy or procedures that require judgment and discretion on issues of significant dollar, or stakeholder relationship, impact; involved in developing, modifying, and executing corporate policies.	
	Departmental budget impact		Departmental budget impact		Departmental budget impact	
	May have responsibility to maintain and monitor budget of a program, team or other portion of a business unit.		Typically has responsibility to maintain and monitor budget of a program, team or other portion of a business unit.		Responsibility to maintain and develop budget; generally will have signature authority for a moderate-to-large budget for the department or multiple work groups.	
	Financial and external risks		Financial and external risks		Financial and external risks	
	Typically is not responsible for financial or external risks.		May have some responsibility for managing minimal financial or external risks that require occasional interaction with senior management.		Has responsibility for managing large financial or external risks that may require frequent interaction with executive leadership.	

4. JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Job Descriptions describe in detail the duties, responsibilities, qualifications, and other pertinent information associated with a particular job or position within Otak. This documentation offers a transparent and thorough overview of the job's intricacies, encompassing expected tasks, goals, reporting relationships, and any other pertinent information. This resource is designed to assist both our current team members and potential candidates in gaining a comprehensive understanding of specific roles within our organization.

It's important to note that job descriptions may not cover every task or responsibility, and they do not restrict management's authority to assign additional duties as needed.



Job Classification	Architect VIII or Architect IX	FLSA Status	Salaried, Exempt
Position Title(s)	Director of Architecture, Practice Area Leader (PAL)	Job Class	EMT
Reports To	Chief Operating Officer (COO)	Revision Date	December 4, 2023
EEO-1 Classification	1.1 Executives	Salary Grade	TBD

Summary

The Director of Architecture and Practice Area Leader (PAL) is an executive level position responsible for the overall leadership, client development, and strategic direction of the Architecture Practice. The PAL sets the overall direction of the practice and ensures its ongoing and efficient operation through the establishment and implementation of practice area goals and objectives, the realization of profits compatible with the interests of Otak's clients and the firm, and the growth and development of the practice's team. The PAL is a seasoned and successful business leader who actively and collaboratively serves as a member Otak's leadership team and participates in the promotion and development of Otak's mission, vision, and core values consistent with the overall strategy of the company.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

- Develop and communicate a clear architectural vision in alignment with the organization's overall goals.
- Lead the architectural team in setting strategic priorities, business practices and goals, fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration.
- Provide leadership and managerial guidance on a national level, inspiring the team to ensure that the company's vision and mission are achieved by setting appropriate milestones and benchmarks.
- Capitalize on the talent and abilities of the Architecture Practice's team to find strategic advantages and leverage them for project, practice and company success.

Advancement and Development

HOW PROGRESSION AND
OPPORTUNITY WORK AT OTAK

Understanding Career Progression

The Career Growth Program provides visibility into how roles and expectations are structured at Otak. It helps employees understand what skills, experience, and impact are associated with different levels so development conversations can be more focused and productive.

Career Streams illustrate possible directions for growth, but they do not represent guaranteed roles, automatic promotions, or fixed timelines.

Advancement occurs when an employee consistently demonstrates the expectations of the next level and there is a business need for that role.

Career progression is influenced by several factors, including:

- Demonstrated readiness for the next level
- Consistent performance and impact over time
- Business needs and available opportunities
- Organizational structure and team needs

For many employees, growth may involve deepening expertise, expanding responsibilities, or gaining new experiences before moving to a different role or level.

The Career Growth Program helps employees and managers have clearer conversations about development and future opportunities.

HOW OPPORTUNITIES EMERGE

The Career Growth Program illustrates potential roles across Otak, but not every role exists in every business unit or practice area.

The availability of roles depends on factors such as:

- Business needs
- Client demand
- Organizational structure
- Growth within a particular practice area

As Otak evolves, new roles may emerge while others may exist only in certain teams or regions. Because of this, career progression may look different across the firm. Growth may involve expanding responsibilities within a role, gaining experience in new areas, or pursuing opportunities that arise as the firm grows.

ADVANCEMENT AND COMPENSATION

The Career Growth Program defines expectations and pathways.

Otak's compensation program aligns salary structures to defined job functions and levels.

Important clarifications:

- Each job function corresponds to a pay grade within the salary structure.
- Advancement requires formal review and sustained next-level performance.
- Compensation adjustments are governed by the Pay Administration & Promotion Policy.
- Salary placement reflects experience, contribution, internal equity, and market alignment.
- Development conversations do not automatically result in promotion or salary changes.

The Career Growth Program and Compensation Program are aligned but distinct. Our goal is transparency and fairness.

Taking the Next Step in Your Career

TURNING INSIGHT INTO ACTION

Getting Started: Reflect – Explore – Act

Career growth starts with ownership, but it develops through collaboration with supervisors, mentors, and colleagues.

Here's a simple way to begin.

REFLECT

- What gives me energy at work?
- What strengths do others consistently recognize?
- Do I want to grow deeper in my expertise, or broaden my experience?
- What type of responsibility appeals to me?

EXPLORE

- Which pathway feels most aligned right now?
- What experiences would prepare me for the next level?
- Who can I learn from?
- What gaps exist between my current role and the next one?

ACT

- Schedule a development conversation.
- Identify 1-2 specific skills to build this year.
- Seek feedback.
- Say yes to stretch opportunities.
- Revisit your plan regularly.

Growth conversations are not one-time events.

Final Thoughts

The Otak Career Growth Program is not a guarantee of advancement.

It is a shared framework designed to create clarity, consistency, and opportunity.

We believe that when expectations are clear and development is intentional, people do their best work. And when our people do their best work, we are better able to serve our clients and help build thriving communities. Your growth matters not only to you, but to the teams you work with, the clients you support, and the communities we impact every day.

This program exists to:

- Make expectations visible
- Support fair and consistent decisions
- Encourage meaningful development conversations
- Align individual growth with company direction

At Otak, we want you to grow with confidence. We want you to deepen your expertise, expand your influence, explore new possibilities, and take on challenges that stretch you. As you continue developing your skills and expanding your impact, you strengthen those around you and help deliver work that supports thriving communities.

Your career here is not pre-written.
It is built thoughtfully, collaboratively, and over time.

Use this guide as a starting point for conversations about your development, your interests, and the path you want to build at Otak.

