3 Discovery

Authors: Katherine J. Inge, Ph.D., O.T.R.

Discovery as described in qualitative research includes methods to gather information by: direct observation, participating in settings, in-depth interviewing, conducting focus groups, and examining documents and materials. Discovery for customized employment uses these qualitative tools and other strategies to identify an individual's strengths, interests, and preferences as well as support needs in order to assist the job seeker in gaining and retaining employed. Discovery is a descriptive process and does not include administering standardized tests or evaluating the skills and competencies of individuals with disabilities. Discovery is capacity-based and does not focus on the job seeker's disabilities and skill deficits. Discovery is the foundation of customized employment and is one of the elements that differentiates it from other employment services. It is a fluid process and is a necessary step before job negotiation. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary defines the word discover as follows:

***Discover**: to make known or visible, to obtain knowledge for the first time, find out, to make a discovery, to find out what one did not previously know.*
(Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary)

Self-determination and person-centered planning values guide discovery. Dr. Michael Wehmeyer, a leader in self-determination, defines self-determination as "acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence or interference." The core values of person-centered planning include the following; all of which are essential elements of customized employment and discovery.

1. Services are directed by the individual with a disability.
2. Focus is placed on the individual's abilities and aspirations.
3. Emphasis is placed on supports rather than the person's disabilities.
4. Planning is individualized and not driven by the service system.
5. Community participation and membership is the outcome.

Table 1 on the following page lists a number of core practices that have been identified as important to providing customized employment services. There is no specific sequence to completing these core practices, although there may be a logical order to assisting an individual in finding employment. For instance, meeting with the person is a logical first step to providing services as is finding out about the person's interests and skills. Some of these core practices

occur throughout providing customized employment services such as mindfully listening to the person and building rapport. In addition, some of the practices may occur simultaneously such as observing a person in daily activities and conducting in-depth interviews with family and friends concerning the person's interests, skills, and preferences. While practices may be described in a specific order, discovery is "individualized" and varies for each job seeker.

TABLE 1

Customized Employment Practices

1.	Physically meet at a location of the individual's choice.
2.	Build rapport and get to know the individual.
3.	Mindfully listen to the person.
4.	Identify the individual's interests, skills, and abilities.
5.	Conduct in-depth interviews with family and friends concerning the person's interests, skills, and abilities.
6.	Observe the person in daily activities in a number of different community settings.
7.	Arrange for the job seeker to observe at local businesses that potentially match job seeker's interests, skills, and abilities.
8.	Conduct informational interviews with employers at local businesses that are representative of the job seeker's interests, skills, and abilities.
9.	Observe the job seeker engaging in job related tasks.
10.	Assist the job seeker in identifying a work experience(s) to refine / identify job interests, skills, and abilities.
11.	Collaborate with the job seeker, family, and friends in confirming the job seeker's interests, job interests, skills and abilities.
12.	Negotiate a customized job description.

Inge, Graham, Brooks-Lane, Wehman, & Griffin, 2018. (Reprinted with permission from the Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation.)

Identifying a Person's Interests

Some people with disabilities can tell you what they want to do for a job, and they have some or many of the skills for the preferred job. These individuals may not need customized employment or all the core practices of discovery. However, there are others who have job preferences but may not have all the skills for the preferred job and will need a customized job description. Still other job seekers will have no idea what they want to do and what they can do. The discovery process starts with the employment specialist beginning discovery where the job seeker participates and who they participate with in the community with family, friends, and other people who support the job seeker's interests, preferences, and abilities.

> *It is important to meet people as we find them. Not everyone has a helpful family. Not everyone has friends. Not everyone is part of the community. Not everyone can articulate what they want to do or has an idea of what they want to do. These may be the individuals that will benefit most from discovery.*
>
> *(Inge, Graham, Brooks-Lane, Wehman & Griffin, 2018)*

Conduct In-Depth Interviews with Family and Friends Concerning the Person's Insterests, Skills and Abilities

Conducting interviews is usually a part of providing employment services to individuals with disabilities. Typically, there is an intake interview during which people seeking services are asked about their goals for employment and other relevant information. Interviewing should not be used to "evaluate" the job seeker with disabilities, which is a very important distinction when using interviewing as part of discovery. In the context of discovery, interviewing is a way to learn about a person's experiences. What meaning do these experiences have for the person, and how will they impact employment?

Interviews can take a variety of forms such as structured with a list of pre-determined questions to more informal conversations with open-ended questions. Typically, interviewing for employment services has involved having a list of questions that the interviewer uses with little deviation from the "script." When attempting to learn about a person's life experiences during discovery, a more informal conversational approach may be most effective. However, talking with someone does not necessarily lead to a ***meaningful*** conversation. How questions are asked and how follow-up questions are phrased will impact whether the answers provide any insight to assisting a person in finding a job. The right questions may lead to "discovering" information that will assist in getting to know the job seeker. They can help the employment specialist uncover factors that facilitate employment as well as issues that may be barriers. ***"Being interested in others is the key to the basic assumptions underlying interviewing techniques."***[1] Being interested in the job seeker is fundamental to providing effective customized employment services. This involves putting aside any preconceived ideas or assumptions about the individual and listening to the person.

Conversation*: an informal, usually private, talk between two or more people in which thoughts, feelings, and ideas are expressed, questions are asked and answered, or news and information is exchanged.*

(Source: Cambridge Dictionary

Asking the Right Questions

Do not fall into the trap of talking too much when conducting interviews. Don't rush to fill up silent pauses. Waiting for the other person to answer a question is important. Don't assume if the person pauses that he or she does not have an answer. The person may simply be thinking about the response. Rushing ahead to another question may be a missed opportunity to learn more. Also, don't interrupt the other person, which may be interpreted as lack of interest in what the individual is saying.

Taking into account the individual's life experiences, the person may have very limited information on which to base their answers to questions. It is not unusual for an employment specialist to ask a job seeker, "What do you want to do for a job?" Some job seekers are able to describe what they want to do. However, many job seekers, for whom discovery will be a critical service, will have no idea what they want to do. The only work experiences that this person may have are

[1]Seidman, I. (2013). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and social sciences (4th ed.). (pg. 9). New York: Teachers College Press.

adult day programs or facility-based services or – "nothing." As an example, everyone in Mrs. Smith's class goes to the fast food restaurant to clean tables and help with stocking the condiment containers. Or, everyone who is receiving services goes to the local diner for a situational assessment cleaning the dining area. The person with disabilities who only has experiences with janitorial tasks or other service positions may respond that they want to clean at the fast food restaurant. Or, individuals who have only participated in facility-based programs may answer "no" when asked if they want to work in the community. These individuals simply may not know how to answer the question: "what job do you want?" They have such "poverty of experiences" that they simply do not know what they can or want to do.

Probe Questions: Having a list of questions for an interview may help in getting the conversation started. However, sticking to a scripted set of questions could result in a "stiff" or limited discussion that does not yield much information. The employment specialist should be prepared to listen and ask follow-up questions as the person talks. These follow-up questions or "probe" questions may produce some of the most useful information. A follow-up probe question involves asking the person to provide more detail about what has been said.

Asking "***What do you like to do?"*** provides a place to start a discussion but is only the beginning of getting to know the individual. For instance, a person might say that she likes to play with her dog. This response really doesn't provide much information. Many people say that they like pets or have pets, but this does not mean that they want a job working with pets. The employment specialist must be cautious, because some people have interests that they don't want to do for a job. Some people have interests that they do want to do for pay. Making sure whether a person's interests relate to the tasks they want to do for a job is incredibly important. Table 2 below presents some ideas about asking follow-up questions for the person who said she likes to play with her dog.

TABLE 2

Sample Probe Questions

The person states that she likes to play with her dog
• Tell me more about playing with your dog. What do you do when you are playing? • What do you like about playing with your dog? • Have you ever played with other people's dogs? Tell me about that. • What else do you and your dog do? Can you give me an example? • Tell me about other pets that you have. • What do you do with your pet every day? • Tell me about other animals that you like. • What do you like about this animal (name the animal or pet that the person told you)? • Etc.
The person responds that she walks her dog. Additional probe questions about walking the dog may reveal information on the person's skills.
• Does anyone help you? How does (person's name) help you? • Can you tell me more about where you and your dog go for a walk? • Have you ever walked the dog by yourself? Where did you go? • What is the best thing about taking your dog for a walk? • Etc.

Following up with additional questions might provide insight into whether "working with animals" is an employment theme, or the person just likes her dog. Working with animals as a theme could open up any number of possible places to consider for employment as listed in Table 3 on the following page. This is not an all-inclusive list but examples only; different communities

will have different opportunities. Generating a list of places where people work expands ideas for employment. Brainstorming as many as possible at this point is recommended. Narrowing down the focus can occur as informational interviews are conducted in community businesses.

TABLE 3 *Exploring Employment Opportunities*

Theme: Working with Animals
Places where people who are interested in working with animals work: • Animal control or pet shelter worker • Dog Trainer • Groomer • Kennel attendant • Pet sitter and dog walker • Pet store assistant • Service dog trainer • Veterinary assistant • Laboratory animal caretaker • State park or zoo employee • Etc.

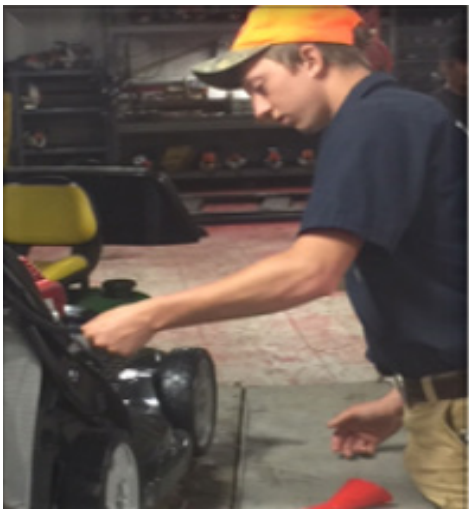
Closed Ended and Open Ended Questions: Another consideration is to ask questions that are open ended rather than those that can be answered with a "yes" or "no." Questions that can be answered with a yes or no response are referred to as closed ended questions. Asking "What do you do in your free time" may provide more information than asking, "Do you have hobbies?" Open ended questions may include words such as describe, explain, give me examples of, tell me about, and so forth. Consider using the words: who, what, where, when, how or why when asking open ended questions. The questions in Table 2 offer some examples of asking open ended questions. Table 4 below compares closed ended questions to open ended questions.

TABLE 3 *Exploring Employment Opportunities*

Closed Ended Questions (Yes / No)	**Open Ended Questions**
Do you have any hobbies?	What do you do in your free time (on the weekends)?
Do you like to go to the soda shop?	Tell me what you like to do at the soda shop.
Do you play games on your iPad?	Describe how you use your iPad to play games? Tell me about the games that you play on your iPad.
Do you spend time with friends?	Tell me about your friends. What do you do when you get together?

Questions About Life Experiences: Employment specialists may wonder why asking job seekers about their life experiences or daily activities is relevant to employment. As mentioned previously, a person may have little experience with work and asking questions about work may yield very little information. For instance, an employment specialist might ask the person what time of day he or she would like to work and not receive an answer. Alternative questions may include asking what time the person gets up in the morning, goes to bed, or participates in regularly scheduled activities. If the person always meets friends at the gym on Thursday and Saturday from 2:00 to 4:00 pm, then scheduling work at that time may be a good idea. The person may be unhappy that she cannot see her friends and "sabotage" working. As another example, the person may say that he likes to play games on an iPad. "Playing games" requires a wide variety of skills from simply looking at the iPad to interacting with other people such as

playing scrabble word games that require reading and spelling skills. Learning about the job seeker's daily activities can provide a great deal of valuable information about the person's skills as well as about the supports that people in the person's life provide.



It is important to be creative when determining how a person's interests translate to a customized job!

Using the previous example of the person who likes to play with her dog, the employment specialist needs to think "bigger" than simply getting the person a job working in a business where dogs are present. For instance, the person may not be satisfied cleaning the veterinarian's office or unpacking boxes at the local pet store simply because dogs are there. As another example, a young woman stated that she wanted to work with children. Her employment specialist assisted her in finding a job at a museum where children participated in interactive activities in the exhibits. However, her negotiated job duties included cleaning the museum and putting away materials after the children used them. She was not able to interact with the children and was very dissatisfied with her position, since she cleaning was not really what she wanted to do regardless of the workplace.

Talking with people about their interests can also reveal skills that could be used on a job. One young woman was asked what she would like to do for work, and she was unable to provide any answers. In addition, she seemed very frustrated by her inability to answer questions or suggest the type of work that she would like to do. The conversation was then switched to talking about her interests and hobbies, asking her what she had done the previous Saturday. The young woman became very animated and began to talk about collecting coins with her father. Additional probe questions revealed that she had an excel spreadsheet that she created listing all their coins as well as ones that they wanted including the values.

Selecting the Best Location

Where an interview takes place may have as big of an impact as how the questions are asked. If the person is not comfortable, the employment specialist may ask questions but not get useful answers. It is not unusual for meetings to take place in the agency's office. But, this might not be the ideal location for putting the person at ease and having a conversation about work.

There are a number of reasons for this recommendation besides making sure that the individual is at ease. Meeting in the person's home may provide as much information as the interview itself. Photographs or items in the home can provide a way to start a conversation and get the person talking about something familiar. Observing what is in the home also may reveal interests and skills that develop into an employment theme. For instance, an employment specialist noticed

artist supplies and a notebook in the home that stimulated a conversation on the person's interests and talents. Seeing the supplies and illustrations prevented the employment specialist from assuming that drawing comic figures was "just a hobby." As another example, an employment specialist learned by going to a job seeker's home that he spent a great deal of time in his grandfather's woodworking shop assisting with projects. This may never have come up in conversation if there had not been a meeting scheduled in the home.

When conducting discovery, it is recommended that the employment specialist meet with job seekers in their homes.

Conducting interviews in the person's home can be more time efficient. If the individual or family mentions a preferred activity, the employment specialist can ask to observe. Using the example of the young woman who likes to play with her dog, the employment specialist may ask if they could go for a walk or complete another activity that the person mentions. During a walk, for instance, the employment specialist can observe how independent and how much support the person needs for navigating street signs, stoplights, and so forth depending on the neighborhood. *This is not an assessment of skills*. This is an opportunity to identify the job seeker's functional skills as well as the supports that are needed to facilitate employment.

Sometimes, an employment specialist may not feel safe going to the neighborhood or home where the job seeker lives. Alternative locations where the person participates can be discussed or perhaps two employment specialists can meet with the individual, family members, or advocates. If the person asks to meet at a location other than home, the setting should be one where a confidential conversation can occur. Typical integrated community settings are recommended rather than segregated programs. As another example, a job seeker might suggest meeting at a restaurant, but that may not provide a confidential setting. Try to identify a place where the person participates in activities that can also provide a confidential area to meet and talk. As the employment specialist becomes trusted, the job seeker and the family may be comfortable with having a meeting in the home.

Selecting Who to Interview, How Long and How Many

When conducting interviews, it is important to interview individuals in the person's life that can provide detailed information. The goal is to gather a range of opinions and perspectives of the job seeker's interests, skills, and preferences. Interviewing should focus on collecting "rich" information rather than how many interviews are conducted. The word, rich, refers to the quality of the information gathered rather than the number of interviews. The number is not as important as the ***quality of the information*** collected for identifying the job seeker's employment preferences, interests, and skills.

Consider the following when deciding who to interview. Where does this person participate in activities? What family members and friends does the person spend time with daily or at least regularly? This may include family members, friends, neighbors, case managers, vocational rehabilitation professionals, teachers, and advocates. As in interviews with job seekers, employment specialists should go to the people being interviewed. In addition, be sure to confirm with the job seeker regarding who is to be interviewed and obtain permission. Most agencies have release of information forms, and employment specialists should not contact people for interviews without following the agency's protocol and getting the consent of the job seeker. The employment specialist should also consider including the job seeker when interviews with other

people are conducted. If included, the job seeker needs to be included in the conversation so that the person does not feel as if people are talking about them instead of with them. Interviews must be conducted respectfully with consideration for confidentiality.

Consider how many people should be interviewed. Employment specialists may wonder if the information that they obtain from the job seeker is accurate and representative of the person's skills and interests. The purpose for interviewing more than one or two people in the job seeker's life is to confirm information from multiple sources. In addition, different people may have very different experiences with the job seeker and participate in different activities that provide valuable information on the person's skills and interests. Interviewing multiple people also helps the employment specialist know when to stop interviewing. In other words, after conducting several interviews, the employment specialist may begin to hear the same stories and stops learning new information. It is important not to prolong the interviews. The goal is to collect quality information for identifying and exploring employment themes. Prolonging discovery can delay access to employment and is not desirable. Employment specialists must continually analyze the information and critically determine when no new information is being collected.

There is no "cookbook" answer as to how many interviews need to be conducted and exactly who should be interviewed when providing customized employment services.

Consider how long an interview should last. Arrange in advance the length of the interview and stay within that time. Typically, interviews should be scheduled for one hour to a maximum of 90 minutes. This is a reasonable amount of time to keep the person engaged. During the interview, it is recommended that the employment specialist record brief notes to help remember what is discussed. Immediately after, more detailed notes can be recorded. Writing down everything during the interview, may give the impression that the employment specialist is more interested in taking notes than listening to the person. The length of the interview also should reflect the length of time the employment specialist is able to remember the details discussed to record immediately afterwards.

Consider these points when supporting someone who is nonverbal. Some individuals with disabilities may not talk clearly or are nonverbal. In these cases, employment specialists may rely on interviewing people in the individual's life rather than information from the person. In situations where individuals cannot represent themselves verbally, it is even more important to observe them in familiar settings or settings reported to be important to the job seeker. These observations can be as important if not more important than what is learned through conversations. Observations can verify what is learned from interviews with other people as well as the job seeker. The job seeker's body language during activities can speak volumes paying attention to eye contact, facial expressions, interactions with materials and people, as well as the intensity of participation in the activity.

Observations in Familiar and Unfamiliar Settings

Observations should not be used to "screen" the job seeker and limit access to services in the way that formal assessments traditionally have been used.

Observing the job seeker will provide more information than interviewing alone. Observation confirms what was reported and may uncover more of the job seeker's skills than what was discussed during interviews. This includes observing the job seeker in familiar and unfamiliar places as well as in businesses that reflect the individual's employment themes. Observations should not be used to evaluate the job seeker's skills or limit access to services in the way that assessments traditionally have been used by employment programs. The intent is to observe in a variety of settings where the skills are used and document what is found without value judgements or making assumptions about the person's abilities. In addition, the job seeker should know of the observations in advance and permission obtained from the person and others involved as needed.

An important consideration when observing is the extent and how the employment specialist participates in the activities. The employment specialist wants to be as inconspicuous as possible during any observation. For instance, taking notes of the observation for everyone to see would certainly draw attention to the employment specialist and the individual. Taking notes immediately after the observation is preferred than taking notes during. The length of an observation should be considered related to the details that the employment specialist can remember for recording immediately afterwards.

There is a range of possible roles the employment specialist can assume from no participation (observation only) to total participation. Common sense dictates that in some environments the employment specialist will only be able to observe, while in others total participation is possible. Determining in advance how and how much the employment specialist is going to participate should be negotiated when the observation is scheduled. For instance, if the employment specialist is going to an individual's school or day program, the person in charge may assign a task that can be completed by the employment specialist to blend into the setting. Employment specialists should consider how their presence will detract from the purpose of the observation. Too much participation may prevent the typical activities from taking place. The amount of participation and how the employment specialist participates must be considered based on the unique needs of each person.

Consider where observations should occur. Observations should take place in familiar locations where the person participates in activities. Places selected should provide opportunities for the person to engage in activities. Simply observing the person where limited activities occur will not reveal much information that is valuable for discovery.

Said simply, the locations selected should be somewhere the person participates or does something; not just goes there.

However, a word of caution should be included here. Many individuals with disabilities participate more often in places with other people with disabilities than without disabilities. Observations in locations where individuals without disabilities participate should be included and are preferred over predominately observing job seekers in segregated settings. Behaviors that are observed in segregated settings can be very different than in integrated community environments. These behaviors have traditionally kept people from community businesses based on assumptions that they are unable to function or must learn skills before they can work.

In addition, positive functional behaviors may be observed in community integrated settings that might not have been expected or observed in segregated settings. As an example, one young man seemed to have very limited social skills as reported by the people in his life. During an interview, he mentioned one place that he liked to go was a community center with a pool near his home. The employment specialist decided to go with him to this familiar environment. The pair walked to the community center, and the job seeker independently crossed a four lane highway with a traffic light. When they arrived, they were greeted by friends (without disabilities) that he regularly met there. A different view of the individual's social skills emerged by going to a familiar place where he enjoyed participating. The employment specialist learned that he helped with the young adult swimming class and was an excellent swimmer. Without this observation, the employment specialist may have assumed that the job seeker needed a workplace that required minimal social skills.

The purpose of observations for discovery is not to teach individuals with disabilities skills or how to participate in activities that they have no history with or interest.

Observations in unfamiliar settings that are related to the individual's employment themes also may provide information during discovery. The emphasis is on identifying locations that match the job seeker's employment themes and interests. Trying to teach individuals with disabilities skills and interests so that they can become employed is contrary to the values of customized employment. Training occurs on the job in the business after the job is customized and not before. Otherwise, individuals with disabilities will continue to be unemployed and discovery will continue indefinitely.

Finally, environments for observations must be individualized for job seekers. Not all job seekers in an agency should engage in the same observation activities for discovery. As an example, field trips where groups of individuals with disabilities go together are not recommended and not a good discovery activity. While it may be tempting as well as easier to rotate everyone through a standard "menu" of activities, this may prolong discovery and not be useful. A job seeker could end up spending time doing activities that are of no interest and not reflective of anything that the person wants to do for employment.

Consider how many observations are needed. There is no cookbook answer as to how many observations are needed for discovery. This will partly depend on the number of places that the job seeker participates, the variety of the places, as well as the information that is gathered during the observations. As with deciding on how many interview are needed, the employment specialist needs to continually evaluate the information that is being gathered during observations. When the observation does not yield any new information, enough observations have been conducted. A simple guideline might be one or two observations per type of setting where the person participates or reflective of the person's employment themes. *Continuing to observe the person in the same place, particularly segregated settings, is not recommended.* This will only prolong discovery unnecessarily.

Consider how long observations should last. How long an observation lasts will depend on the activity being observed as well as the endurance or stamina of the person. This should be determined ahead of time and confirmed with the agency or individual as to how long a particular activity typically lasts. As with other activities, the employment specialist should consider observing for a period of time that is not intrusive to the location. As an example, observing for four hours when nothing new is observed after one hour may indicate that it is time to end the observation.

Consider the skills that the employment specialist can observe during the activity. As previously stated, the employment specialist wants to observe the individual participating in activities not just going somewhere. During the observation, the employment specialist should consider how the person's skills potentially can be used in a community business. As with all discovery activities, the employment specialist must keep an open mind during observations. The purpose is to highlight what job seekers "can do" rather than what they can't. In addition, observations can provide insight regarding accommodations and supports that will facilitate inclusion in community environments.

Employment Themes

Ideally, once the employment specialist and the job seeker have spent time together, ***themes*** have emerged that can be explored for employment. These themes will begin to appear during the initial interviews and observations. Employment themes are not the same as job descriptions, job duties, or skills. They are overall categories under which interests, skills, and work types can be grouped. Employment themes should be broad such as transportation versus cars, which facilitates brainstorming possible businesses to target for employment. Too often, employment specialists have made their "best guess" as to what a person might be interested in based on the local labor market. Because of this, people with disabilities have been directed to stereotypical jobs and entry level positions. Discovery is intended to facilitate the identification of employment themes that will guide job development in integrated businesses with the outcome of competitive integrated employment.

At this point in discovery, the purpose of developing employment themes is to provide focus for conducting informational interviews and observations in businesses. Social capital is a way to identify businesses on behalf of a specific job seeker. Social capital includes resources acquired from interactions between people or networks of people. Employment specialists may use their own social capital to identify businesses and should not forget that the family and friends of the job seeker have social capital as well. This extends to coworkers within an agency or other social networks that people belong to in their communities. Identify friends, neighbors, acquaintances that are associated with businesses that match the person's employment themes. These connections create opportunities to learn more about potential work tasks within businesses that meet the employment needs of job seekers.

The question is often asked as to how many employment themes should be identified. One recommendation has been to identify at least three themes for each job seeker. Clearly, one theme is not sufficient, since pursuing only one employment path may limit the person's options. In addition, after pursuing one idea that does not lead anywhere, the discovery process may need to begin again! For example, the person may decide that the one theme targeted is not of interest after informational interviews and observations within businesses are conducted. Considering multiple themes initially may facilitate discovery rather than slow it down if themes are explored simultaneously and not one after the other in sequence. Table 5 on the following page provides a list of sample categories that could be employment themes. It is not an all-inclusive list of possible employment themes.

TABLE 5

Sample Employment Themes

Art	Health services	Recreation
Construction	Information technology	Religion
Clerical	Leisure	Retail
Education	Hospitality	Sales
Fashion	Manufacturing	Service
Farming / Horticultural	Mechanical	Trade
Food service	Production	Transportation

Table 6 below provides a case study example of a young woman's emerging employment theme who met with an employment specialist in her home. During the interview, the employment specialist asked if she had any hobbies. The mother went into another room and brought out a box that contained various art projects. The art projects were simple, and it would be easy to assume that art was her hobby and not an employment theme. However, it is important to dig deeper and ask more questions.

TABLE 6

Interview Case Study Example

Case study: Mary met with her employment specialist at home for their first meeting. She talked about liking "art." Her mother brought out a box of projects to show the employment specialist, which included simple pottery and abstract watercolors.

Assumption: Mary might like art, but this appears to be a hobby.

Putting Assumptions Aside by Asking Follow-up Open Ended Questions

- Show me the last art project you made in this box? When did you make it?
- What is your favorite thing about pottery?
- Tell me about where you made your mug.
- When was the last time that you went there?
- What is your favorite thing about going to the pottery studio?
- Tell me about the people you have met there?
- Describe what you do with the other people who go there.
- Does anyone help you when you make your pottery? How do they help you?
- Describe other things that you do in the studio other than making mugs and dishes, etc.

Comments:

These sample questions demonstrate how having a conversation may lead to learning more about this young woman's skills and interests. In this example, the employment specialist learned that the young woman regularly went to a pottery studio. How the young woman interacts and participates there could provide important information for employment. In addition, it would be important to pursue whether the owner of the studio could be a connection to other businesses (social capital) for this young woman. Typically, this may have otherwise been overlooked or left uncovered.

Discovering her art interest led to observing the young woman at the studio and an informational interview with the studio owner. There the employment specialist learned more about possible job tasks that matched the young woman's skills. Employment specialists cannot be familiar with all the possible work tasks within businesses and observing and conducting informational interviews within business can lead to expanded job opportunities.

Informational Interviews

An informational interview is a business term, and the purpose is to learn about potential careers. It is an information seeking process. A job seeker who wants to learn more about a chosen field identifies people who are willing to talk about their careers or jobs. Think about an informational interview as "discovery" with a business to learn more about the work that is done at this type of

business. The employment specialist is not going to the business to ask about available jobs but to gather information. Informational interviews may be a natural precursor to observing a job seeker completing job related tasks matching an employment theme. Earlier information on conducting in-depth interviews should be applied to the interviews that the employment specialist and job seeker conduct with businesses.

When used for discovery, informational interviews are a way to get to know a business in a similar way that discovery activities focus on getting to know the job seeker.

Discovery considers who the individual is first, and then businesses are identified where informational interviews can be conducted. Employment specialists may conduct informational interviews on behalf of the job seeker, or the job seeker may choose to participate as much as desired. Obviously, if they choose to participate, job seekers can learn about the work that is done related to a particular employment theme first hand. The job seekers should make the decision to participate and to what extent or if the individuals prefer to have the employment specialist represent them.

Informational interviews could help the job seeker and the employment specialist learn more about how and if the person's interests and skills meet the needs of businesses. Businesses are selected based on what was learned about a specific job seeker during interviews with the individual, family, and support network, as well as during observations of the job seeker. Identifying employers to interview using the social capital of the job seeker, family, friends, acquaintances, as well as those of the employment specialist may facilitate informational interviews rather than relying totally on "cold calling" businesses.

The purpose of conducting informational interviews during discovery is not job development or asking if the businesses have open positions.

Informational interviews may create opportunities for job seekers to shadow employees and perform job duties during a brief on-site visit. Observations of jobseekers engaging in job tasks that fit their employment themes will provide important information. There are two goals in having the jobseeker engage in job related tasks. One is to observe the person's skills, and the other is to assist the jobseeker in deciding if he or she is interested in this type of work.

The business owner or employee being interviewed may suggest a tour of the business at the time of an informational interview. If, more information would be helpful, the employment specialist should ask to return for a more in-depth observation to learn about job duties that may be of interest to the job seeker. Whether the observation occurs immediately after the informational interview or at a later time is something that is arranged with each business. Obviously, job seekers should be included in the tours and observations whenever possible.

As mentioned previously, the goal of informational interviews during discovery is to learn about a business that represents the interests of the job seeker and not to ask for a job. The employment

specialist's creativity will be the key to learning about things that a person may be able to do that are not the typical stereotypical jobs that people with disabilities usually are offered. While the intent is not to ask for a job during discovery, observations within the business may uncover opportunities such as job duties that are not getting done, not being done frequently, or are not the responsibility of any specific worker as examples. This may lead to negotiating a job for the individual that is customized specifically for the person's skills and interests. Finally, the employment specialist should ask the employers where informational interviews are conducted for referrals to other employers that have similar businesses. This networking may provide opportunities to learn more about businesses that match a job seeker's employment interests eventually leading to job development activities.

Observations in Business

Observing the job seeker participating in businesses that are representative of their employment themes can take place simultaneously with observing them in familiar and unfamiliar activities. Simultaneously conducting core discovery practices can be helpful in completing discovery in a timely manner: not spending more weeks or months on discovery than necessary by completing core practices in one at a time sequence. The opportunity for the job seeker to observe or "job shadow" an employee doing work that is of interest will be invaluable in confirming employment themes. It is important to remember that the employment specialist should not make value judgements regarding whether the person can be employed in this type of business based on one informational interview or job shadow experience. This is not intended as an assessment but as an opportunity to confirm the person's interests for employment.

It is important to distinguish between job shadow experiences for discovery and other work experiences such as internships or volunteer experiences. As with other discovery activities, opportunities to observe in community businesses or job shadow experiences where the person has an opportunity to perform work tasks, is not intended as an evaluation of the job seeker. Nor should these opportunities be used to teach the person skills for work in order for the person to become employed. Finally, they should not be used as a pre-requisite for employment. Guidelines for observing in familiar and unfamiliar settings should also be used for observations in business.

Planning Discovery Activities

Planning discovery activities for each job seeker should be completed to ensure that activities are accomplished in a timely manner. A template for planning activities is located at the end of this chapter and can be used for discovery as well as for all customized employment activities including job development. Without planning, discovery could continue indefinitely without direction or specific purpose. The plan should have goals and objectives with specific timelines for completion as well as a summary of the outcome from the activity. Developing a planning document for each month:

1. gives the discovery activities focus;
2. provides accountability for the completion of the activities;
3. guides planning for the future.

At the end of the month, the plan should be evaluated to determine if additional activities are needed to finalize the job seeker's employment themes. On-going evaluation of the activities is critical to plan for a discovery end date and moving to job development.

Developing the Discovery Profile

Review of formal records is recommended at the end of discovery rather than in the beginning. Reviewing formal records and evaluations after getting to know the job seeker may facilitate "keeping an open mind" about the person's skills and employment outcomes. Having said this, it is important to ask about a person's medical history and any potential concerns (e.g., seizures, other health conditions, food allergies, etc.) that may impact discovery activities. In addition, there may be information that is not learned during discovery that would be helpful for job development.
How long discovery takes is individualized but has been estimated to be 30-40 hours. Agencies must be efficient with the time that is spent on discovery to ensure that it does not last longer than necessary. The purpose is to learn enough about the job seeker to begin informed job development. Employment specialists must evaluate the information that is collected throughout the discovery to determine when discovery should end and job development begins. *Remember, the purpose of discovery is not to teach a job seeker skills and interests during discovery prior to job acquisition*.

Once the discovery core practices are completed, a discovery profile is developed summarizing the various discovery activities. As mentioned throughout this chapter, on-going documentation must occur immediately after each discovery activity takes place. If this does not, the profile may not accurately reflect the person's interests, skills, and preferences limited by what the employment specialist remembers. Keep in mind that the Discovery Profile is descriptive and positive. It should provide documentation on the employment themes selected for job development and why they were selected as well as describe the individual's needed services and supports. Finally, the Discovery Profile must be approved by the job seeker and should be considered a confidential document similar to any other document about the individual.

The Discovery Profile template in the Appendix at the end of this chapter is offered as a guide to what may be included. This is only a guide and should be modified as needed by a specific agency. There are other forms available and agencies are encouraged to review other options that best match their needs. Remember, the order of the discovery activities is flexible and does not necessarily occur in sequence as may be implied by the Discovery Profile template. Employment agencies are encouraged to check with the funder of their services to determine if there are specific guidelines or forms that must be used.

In many ways, discovery is an evolving ongoing process. Once employed, workers with disabilities will develop and learn skills, which can facilitate additional customization of negotiated job descriptions. Employment agencies should keep this in mind when supporting individuals with disabilities to find and maintain competitive integrated employment that has been customized.

Appendix Customized Employment Forms

PAGE

Discovery Profile Template

Job Seeker:	**Date Discovery Completed**
Contact Information: (phone, e-mail)	
Person Completing the Profile:	
Individual(s) Completing Discovery Activities with the Job Seeker if Different than Person Completing the Discovery Profile (include relationship to the job seeker):	
Person:	**Contact Information:**
Person:	**Contact Information:**
(add additional people as needed)	
Family Contacts: (include relationship to the job seeker)	
Name:	**Contact Information:**
Name:	**Contact Information:**
(add additional family members as needed)	
Information Gathered During the Initial Home Visit (Include who participated and relationship to the job seeker; the person's interests, skills, and preferences as reported or observed; activities; hobbies; people in the person's life; social capital information; etc. If the visit did not occur in the home, explain where it occurred and why.)	
Information Gathered During In-depth Interviews (Include information on people interviewed and relationship to the job seeker; the person's interests, skills, and preferences as reported; activities; hobbies; people in the person's life; social capital information; etc.)	
Person Interviewed:	**Contact Information:**
Person Interviewed:	**Contact Information:**
(add additional family members as needed)	

Information Gathered During Observations in Familiar Settings (Include information on where the observations occurred and why this setting was selected; person's interests, skills, and preferences observed; etc.)	
Observatons / Settings:	**Findings:**
Observatons / Settings:	**Findings:**
(add additional family members as needed)	
Summarize Information from the Observations in Familiar Settings. (Include why this is important information for employment.)	
Information Gathered During Informational Interviews (Include information on where the informational interview occurred and the vocational theme that is represented; describe the work completed at this business and relationship to the person's interests, skills, and employment preferences; etc.)	
Person Interviewed Name:	**Findings:**
Person Interviewed Name:	**Findings:**
(add additional family members as needed)	
Summarize Information from the Informational Interviews. (Include information on tasks, special interests, skills, or talents and employment themes.)	
Information Gathered During Business Observations/Job Shadow Experiences (Include information on where the observation occurred and the vocational theme that is represented; describe the work observed or opportunity to participate in job duties; relationship to the person's interests, skills, and employment preferences, etc.)	

Business Description:	**Findings:**
Business Description:	**Findings:**
(add additional observations / job shadow experiences as needed)	
Summarize Information from Business Observations/Job Shadow Experiences (Include information on tasks, special interests, skills, or talents and employment themes.)	
Business Description:	**Findings:**
Business Description:	**Findings:**
(add additional interviews as needed)	
Vocational Themes (Include information on the themes identified for the job seeker that are recommended for job development. Include how these themes were identified. Describe how the individual's skills, interests, and preferences match these vocational themes.	
Additional Information on the Job Seeker's Support Needs Impacting Employment (Include any information here related to the review of formal records. Describe the supports in a positive way rather than including what the individual cannot do.)	

Customized Employment: Planning Template

Job Seeker:	Month Developed:
Vocational Theme:	Skills and Strengths:
Plan will be updated on:	Employment Specialist:

Date Scheduled	Customized Employment Essential Element	Description of the Activity (please include who is involved in the activity)	Date Completed	Outcome