

Purpose of the Discovery and Exploration Process

The Discovery and Exploration process is about learning critical and helpful information about the job seeker's interests and skills, in order to create employment opportunities with local employers to make a great match to the preferred work and the person's existing skills, and to identify what they can be reasonably expected to learn on the job as needed.

What It Is Not, What It Is

The Discovery and Exploration process does not include applying for jobs, searching want ads, or attending job fairs. This process is not intended to "keep the job seeker busy" or to offer a program for them to attend.

Discovery and Exploration is about helping job seekers get into the labour force through developing a thorough understanding of the skills and interests of the job seeker. It is about helping someone find a job that is right, but it is not about a "dream job." The concept of a dream job is disconnected from the reality of earning real income in a real workplace and labour market.

Many people with disabilities have limited life and even more limited work experiences. Often the dream job concept comes from just a handful of previous experiences that were meaningful to the person. It is also important to be open to growth and change and not lock the job-seekers into a narrow set of possibilities. Instead of promising a dream job, it is better to understand what vocational themes are revealed in a person's employment dreams and help match that to realistic job opportunities.

Discovery and Exploration is not a test the process explores real experiences in real environments to reveal clues about vocational interests. It is not for direct questions about identifying a particular job or field of work, and it is not about traditional vocational testing and assessments (we know these are highly ineffective).

For example, if the job seeker volunteers, the Discovery Specialist will make arrangements to visit the person while volunteering. The Discovery Specialist is there to learn and observe what skills the job seeker is using and how those skills might relate to interests and employment themes that emerge during the Discovery and Exploration process. The Discovery Specialist would not assume that a person volunteering at a thrift store would be matched to a job in a clothing store. This approach focuses on information gathering BEFORE discussion of job opportunities.

Assessments often keep the person trapped in a system of comparison and many assessments are only related to a small number of work opportunities.

The Discovery and Exploration process has a strong connection with person-centred planning principles: it uses the person's interests to develop life opportunities. We balance interests with skills: the skills the person currently has, and the skills the person can learn on the job.

Interests may help with finding the direction for employment but skills are what the person needs to offer to an employer. The Discovery and Exploration process is what is used to uncover the person's existing skills and identify those that can be developed through coaching and direct instruction and/or workplace supports and/or technology.