### **Choosing a Path to Explore**

**AGENDA**

* 1. Warm Up
  2. Identifying Career “Must-Haves”
  3. Break
  4. Evaluating Career Options
  5. Reflection/Summary
  6. Evaluations

**WARM UP**

How have you typically gone about making decisions in your life? How about decisions related to career? Are you satisfied with your approaches to decision-making?

**TOPIC PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION**

See participant handouts.

**ACTIVITY: Evaluating Career Options**

Ask if anyone would like to volunteer their options as a group example. If someone does, walk the group through the process on the board. Then allow time for people to fill out their own worksheets while providing individual support as needed.

Debrief as a group.

* + What were your results?
  + What was your reaction to your results?

Tips: If participants find their results just don’t seem “right,” it may be that they are missing an important factor. It is also important to take these results with a grain of salt – while this is a tool that can inform your decision making process, it shouldn’t be relied on as the sole step in the process. Other important steps in your decision making process might include consulting trusted supporters, performing further research, and listening to your intuition.

**REFLECTION & FOLLOW UP**

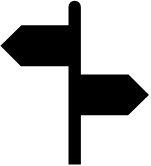
How helpful did you find the tool we learned today? Who could you discuss your results with this week?

### **Choosing a Path to Explore**

There are many decisions involved in career exploration. You might be asking: Which occupation do I want to explore? Which industry is the best match for me? Which college or training program do I choose? Which company do I most want to work for?

In Session 10, we used O\*NET and the BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook to help us identify different career options. Today, we’ll use a decision-making tool to evaluate our options, using our career must-haves as criteria. If you already know exactly what you want to do, this exercise could help reinforce your decision; if you are unsure of what you would like to do, this exercise may help you decide.

It is not the decision itself that is important today – it is learning how to use the decision-making tool. That way, you can use this tool on your own as you navigate the different decisions you’ll have to make along your career path.



### **Identifying Career Must-Haves**

In Opening Doors, we have spent considerable time thinking about our values,

interests, and needs, as they relate to work. Today we’ll take time to look back at the information we’ve gathered and we’ll determine which of the factors that we identified are our “career must-haves.” Career must-haves are the characteristics of an occupation, work situation, education program, etc. that are of the most value to you.

Categories of “must-haves” include, but are not limited to:

**Values** – Examples: independence, working in a team, learning. If independence were your top vocational value, the ability to work independently in a job would likely be a career “must-have.”

**Skills** – Examples: writing, working with numbers, teaching. If your favorite and strongest skill was writing, you might be looking for an opportunity that emphasizes this skill.

**Interest-type (RIASEC)** – Examples: investigative, social, realistic. If your strongest interest category was social, one of your must-haves in a job might be the opportunity to help others.

**Working Conditions** – Examples: flexible schedule, supportive supervisor, outdoors. If you felt a full-time schedule would be too stressful, then “part-time” might be one of your must-haves.

**Other –** Examples: salary factors, distance from home/location, availability of certain accommodations, length of training required, etc.

With help from the facilitators, take some time to go back through your portfolio to identify ten career must-haves.

### **Making Career Decisions**

At the outset, career-related decisions can feel overwhelming. These decisions can be more meaningful, and less intimidating, when we carefully evaluate our options. Today, we’ll look at our career options of interest, and we’ll learn to use a decision-making tool that will help us each choose a focus that fits our values, interests, and goals.

1. At this point in Opening Doors, you have likely identified some options for possible next steps toward your career goals. In the blank table on the following pages, list 3 options (ex: occupations, industries, schools, etc.) that appeal the most to you right now in the “Option” boxes.
2. In column 1, list at least 5 “career must-haves.”
3. In Column 2, assign weights (1, 2, or 3) to the must-haves. The greater the priority, the greater the weight. In order for this step to be effective, you can only have three 1s, three 2s, and three 3s.
4. In the “Score” columns, assign a score from 1-5 to each option based on how well each one satisfies the must-haves listed in column 1.
5. Next, determine the weighted score by multiplying each must-have weight (column 2) by the score you assigned each option for that must-have.
6. Add up the total weighted scores for each option.
7. Examine your results. The option with the highest score should, objectively, be your best option. If your results don’t seem to sit well with you, reexamine your must-haves, weights, and scores. Did you forget to include any must-haves? Did you accurately assign weights and scores?
8. Discuss your results with a couple of your trusted supporters.

**Example: Evaluating Career Options**

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| Column 1: Career Must-Haves | Column 2:  Assign Weights | **Write the top 3 options you’re considering below:** | | | | | |
| **Option #1**  *Nurse* | | **Option #2**  *Social Worker* | | **Option #3**  *High School Teacher* | |
| Weighted Score | Score | Weighted Score | Score | Weighted Score | Score |
| *Compensation* | *5* | *20* | *4* | *15* | *3* | *15* | *3* |
| *Friendly environment* | *3* | *9* | *3* | *12* | *4* | *12* | *4* |
| *Autonomy in the*  *workplace* | *4* | *12* | *3* | *16* | *4* | *12* | *3* |
| *Ability to achieve* | *5* | *25* | *5* | *20* | *4* | *20* | *4* |
| *Feeling of personal*  *satisfaction* | *4* | *20* | *5* | *20* | *5* | *16* | *4* |
| *Paid vacation time* | *3* | *15* | *3* | *15* | *3* | *25* | *5* |
| *Variety in the day* | *2* | *4* | *2* | *6* | *3* | *16* | *3* |
| *Job security* | *4* | *20* | *5* | *20* | *5* | *16* | *4* |
| *Ability to utilize*  *creativity* | *3* | *6* | *2* | *12* | *4* | *15* | *5* |
| **Total Scores** | | *131* | | *136* | | *147* | |

**Your Turn: Exploring Career Options**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Column 1: Career Must-Haves | Column 2:  Assign Weights | **Write the top 3 options you’re considering below:** | | | | | |
| **Option #1** | | **Option #2** | | **Option #3** | |
| Weighted Score | Score | Weighted Score | Score | Weighted Score | Score |
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| **Total Scores** | |  | |  | |  | |