



Wider Opportunities for Women

Making Connections to Careers

A workshop series for adults and teens

There is often a disconnect between the vague plans young people and adult jobseekers have for their future employment and the reality of how much income they will need to support themselves and, one day, their families. Without adequate knowledge of how much it costs to support a family and how much specific jobs pay, it is difficult for young people to plan for the education and training they need to be self-sufficient. This is particularly true for low-income individuals who may not be exposed to a wide variety of careers, particularly those with “ladders” leading to high wages and good benefits. Dead-end, low-wage jobs in service industries will never provide wages and benefits sufficient to support a family in most areas, and yet for too many low-income jobseekers —especially those who will not attend four-year colleges—these are the kinds of jobs to which they aspire.

In order to begin to address this need, WOW has developed a six-part interactive workshop series called “Connections to Careers.” The curriculum uses tools from WOW’s national Family Economic Security Project in order to make the need for sufficient wages graphically and personally clear to participants. The workshops are designed for teens and adults; facilitators can adjust the workshops according to age range of participants. The ideal number of participants for each workshop is 10 to 15.

Workshop # 1: Concepts of Work

Workshop 1 is designed encourage participants to begin exploring the concepts of work.

1) Good Work/Bad Work

A discussion of what participants think are the factors that make a job “good,” including salary and benefits. Participants will explore what they’ve learned from their own experiences with work and how those experiences influence their attitudes towards work.

2) Discussion about High-wage Jobs and Green Jobs in the DC Metro Area

Facilitator will pass out the “Metro Jobs” hand-out and ask participants to identify jobs of interest to them. There is also a discussion about what a green job is and opportunities to work in the green sector in the DC metro area.

Workshop # 2: What Does it Mean to be Economically Secure?

Workshop 2 is designed to make real the cost of living and working in the DC metro area and to introduce participants to the concept of a monthly budget.

1) Economic Security in the DC Metro Area

Facilitator works through an exercise and budget worksheet with participants that is based on the DC BEST in their county in order to determine how much income is needed to cover the basic costs of living based on family size and type.¹

2) Personal Budgeting

After the participants consider what economic security means for a different family composition, they will be asked what that means for them personally and to brainstorm their own cost of living and financial goals. Participants will map out their own monthly budget.

¹ The Self-Sufficiency Standard is a measure of how much income families need to meet their basic needs depending on where they live and who is in their family. The Standard adds up the costs of food, housing, child care, transportation, medical care, taxes, and other essentials to set a benchmark for what families will need to earn if they are not receiving any public or private subsidies or support.

Workshop #3: Career Visioning and Exploration

Workshop 3 is designed to get participants to explore their career goals, interests, and strengths in a big picture way.

1) Career Interest Game

In this exercise, participants explore personality types and the types of careers that are associated within each career cluster – Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Participants will determine which personality they most identify with and learn about the careers that best match their type.

2) Workplace Skills Assessment

Participants will brainstorm their strengths and things they enjoy. After completing the Workplace Skills Assessment, the group will discuss what skills are important to have within each career cluster. Participants will also reflect on the skills they currently have and the skills they will need to develop to fulfill their career goals.

Workshop #4: Career Goals and Planning

Workshop 4 explores the concept of goal-setting, the intricacies of career paths and the challenges that can come up along the way. It also introduces participants to green jobs and high-wage jobs in the DC metro area.

1) Career Mapping

Participants will discuss the difference between a job and a career path. Participants will think about their goals and objectives and develop a “vision of their lives” and a S.M.A.R.T goals plan for their future based on the career there are interested in (using the Job Profile Path Worksheet they did for homework after Lesson 3).

2) Barriers and Challenges

Following the career mapping exercise, students are given a list of potential barriers or challenges that they must then fit into the career map in order to show that problems can come up at many different stages. A discussion follows about how to overcome some of these barriers and about barriers that students have had to overcome already in their own lives.

Workshop #5: Marketing Yourself: Resume and Cover Letter Writing

Workshop 5 shows participants how to get their foot in the door to the career they are interested in and the tools necessary to get there.

1) Completing a Job Application

This exercise will encourage participants to complete a sample job application and discuss the components, such as references.

2) Resume & Cover Letter Writing

This exercise will go over the formats and contents of resumes and cover letters. At the end of the lesson, a resume and cover letter template will be passed out and will be expected to be completed and shared in Lesson #6. Partner agency staff may need to be engaged to provide resume assistance.

Workshop #6: Interviewing Skills

Workshop 6 covers interviewing tips and reviews the key ideas that have been implemented in the first five workshops.

1) Interviewing Skills

This exercise will cover important interviewing skills and tips, including a mock role play between the facilitator and an assistant and between participants.