

FINDING YOUR CAREER FOCUS - AN EXERCISE -

(Adapted from NYU Wagner School's *Composing Your Career*)

Why Do This Exercise: You may know you are committed to a public service career but it helps to figure out what that really means. The more focus you have going into your graduate program or job search, the better you can take advantage of opportunities.

Resources Needed: To do this exercise you need 1-2 hours of time, access to the internet and a printer, a pen or highlighter, and a folder.

Objective: This exercise helps you think about issues, organizations and skill sets that attract you. It has 3 steps:

1. Brainstorming & collecting job postings that attract you
2. Analyzing the data collected to discover/confirm interest areas
3. Synthesizing into 2 (or more) areas of public service to focus on

Remember:

- √ There are NO right answers
- √ Your career interests may change as you get into your graduate work.
- √ This is just the first step in an exciting exploration of possibilities.

Step 1 - Brainstorm: Look through websites (see website suggestions below) and find & print the description of 15-20 organizations or job postings that appeal to you because:

A. **You are drawn to this kind of organization (regardless of the jobs posted).** *Circle the parts you like and put it in your folder.*

OR

B. **You are drawn to this kind of job (regardless of the organization it is with).** *Circle the part you like and put it in your folder.*

At this point, don't worry about **why** something sounds appealing. Once you have at least 15, continue to the next step.

Helpful websites: Links to websites that post jobs in public service:

<http://www.hhh.umn.edu/career/students/careeropportunities.html> Humphrey job and internship postings.

Use the user name **hhhpostings** and the password **postings**.

<http://www.hhh.umn.edu/career/students/websitesforcareers.html> A list of widely varied websites related to public service careers. Check out those in areas you find interesting.

www.mncn.org Postings for nonprofit jobs in MN

www.idealists.org Postings for nonprofits in the US and internationally

www.usajobs.gov US federal job postings

<http://devex.com/jobs> International development job postings

www.planning.org/jobs Jobs posted with the American Planning Association

<http://publicservicecareers.org> Job postings (& check out "Why Public Service?")

Step 2 - Analysis: Examine the selections you've collected and look for patterns or common themes. If it helps, have friends look at this with you. Themes may be in the form of:

- **Issues** (*anything related to immigration or children & families, for example*)
- **Populations served** (*I really care about homeless children, seniors, immigrants, rural populations, etc*),
- **Approach to the work** (*I love organizations that use data to make their programs more effective.*)
- **Geography** (*I am drawn to jobs in New England or Washington, DC or Africa.*)
- **Type or size of organization** (*I want to be in a small to medium nonprofit and do everything, or [conversely] I want a specialized role in a large organization*)
- **Professional role** (*I am drawn to jobs managing complex projects or planning large events or analyzing data or advocating for a policy issue or informing others about complex issues, etc.*)

Step 3 - Synthesis: Using any patterns/themes you've found, describe at least two (more if you'd like) career track that you find appealing at this point. Now take stock of your qualifications and experience as they relate to this career and think about how you can start to plan and prepare as you embark on your graduate program. Use this chart to structure your thoughts.

Specify the theme or pattern – include as many of these elements as you can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ issue area ○ population served ○ approach to work ○ professional role ○ skills used ○ type/size of org ○ geographic area 	<i>Sample: Working with immigration issues as a program evaluator or program coordinator for a medium-sized nonprofit in Washington DC</i>		
Qualifications I bring already:	<i>Undergraduate degree in Political Science & Sociology</i>		
Experience I already have that relates:	<i>Summer internship with the School for New Americans</i>		
Graduate courses that would be helpful:	<i>Immigration Law, Program Evaluation</i>		
Internships I would want:	<i>Evaluation work - through MESI?</i>		

Questions? Contact Martha Krohn (krohn036@umn.edu) or Lynne Schuman (schum001@umn.edu)