**Exploring the Themes:** While developing themes, it is important to verify them. This is done by conducting Informational Interviews with experts in that field. We sometimes call this "finding the nerds"--in this context, "nerd" is a term of endearment! You want to have a conversation with someone who is passionate about the thematic area to get an idea of whether you're on the right track.

**List 9 Specific Businesses, 3 for each Vocational Theme:** Use the (emerging) Discovery Team to find these businesses. Make sure these businesses have not been selected by the employment staff alone!

The connections of the team can produce many more opportunities than the knowledge and connections of one person with their own limited awareness of community businesses. The employment-seeker, family members, neighbors, Rehabilitation Counselors, and all other team members can be great sources of business contacts and can call on their own personal connections to get ideas of places where others with similar vocational themes might work.

**Choose small businesses! Find for-profit, non-governmental, small businesses. Do not go to charity organizations or non-profits.**

At these businesses, you will have a better chance to speak directly with the business owner or manager, rather than with human resources personnel. The Discovery and Customized Employment process attempts to circumvent the HR filter. Human Resource professionals are fine people, but they sometimes know very little about the specific work that is done, or how it is done. We want to talk with businesses where the owners or managers are knowledgeable and skilled in making products or offering the services that the business provides.

In most small businesses the owner, manager, co-worker, and the person who makes the hiring decisions are the same person. This is the person you want to reach. Remember that you are not looking for a job at this point. You are gathering more information and advice related to the employment-seeker's Vocational Themes. You will do a similar but more focused activity when it comes to contacting businesses during the more active Customized Job Development stage.

**DO NOT GO TO STRICTLY RETAIL BUSINESSES!**