Career Exploration

DURATION

Two to three class sessions of approximately 45 minutes each

OVERVIEW

With this set of resources, students will build upon their understanding of what they learned during the *Preparing for a Professional Internship* self-paced module. Borrowing from the Project Based Learning approach and using the Seven Essential Project Design Elements, students will apply and practice each of the 4Cs skills they learned about in the module (Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity) to meaningfully investigate potential careers. Working in collaborative groups, students will research potential careers based on interest and a set of provided criteria and after self-guided research will develop a creative and effective way to communicate what they have learned to their peers. These resources are intended to be used after students have completed the self-paced module; however, educator summary sheets and suggestions for those using it independent of the module are provided.

BACKGROUND[1, 2]

According to a 2019 U.S. News and World Report survey, while only 2% of U.S. high school seniors had completed an internship, 70% of those internships resulted in a job offer.[1] These statistics should encourage more students to consider professional internship experiences as part of their pathway towards their future careers. Internships allow students to earn *and* learn in an environment that is structured to help bolster their future success. Moreover, internships provide students with an opportunity to try a career path or industry before committing time, studies, and funding

1 https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/articles/the-rise-of-high-school-internships

toward higher education. They have also been shown to send students to college and trade schools more prepared than they would be otherwise.[2]

The 21st Century Skills are a set of knowledge and skills that help you be successful in every part of life—school, work, community, and relationships; they include life skills, career skills, habits, and traits. There are five skills that consistently appear in surveys asking companies what they look for when choosing interns or offering employment: information processing, teamwork, planning/prioritizing, decision-making/problem solving, and verbal communication. These align with four of the 21st Century Skills known as the 4Cs: critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. By teaching, enhancing, and giving students the opportunity to practice these valuable skills, educators are setting them up for success in professional internship experiences and future careers.

MATERIALS
All Sessions
- Computer with ability to project, one for educator

Session 1
- **21st Century Skills Summary handout**, one for educator
- **Career Exploration Roadmap student handout**, one per group
- **Career Exploration Table student handout**, one per group
- **Project Outline student handout**, one per group

Session 2
- Device with internet access, one per student or group

Session 3
- **Career Exploration Reflection student handout**, one per student

USING THIS GUIDE
The goal of this guide is to give educators a complete set of resources for facilitating lessons on career exploration. It provides slide-by-slide instructions to ensure educators are prepared to explain, discuss, and facilitate the hands-on content in the presentation. The presentation is designed to cover two to three class sessions, but it can be flexible depending on the students' needs and the time available. However, sessions should be presented in order.

The accompanying presentation was created with PowerPoint so that it can be used in a variety of classrooms. If you are using a laptop with a projector, simply progress through the PowerPoint by clicking to advance. All of the interactive aspects of the presentation are set to occur on click. This includes images, text boxes, and links which will appear in your web browser. If you are using an interactive whiteboard, tap each slide with your finger or stylus to activate the interactive aspects of the presentation. Notes for each slide provide information on how to proceed.

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2 https://ebiztest.naceweb.org/store/2017/internship-and-co-op-report/

PROCEDURE

Session 1 (Slides 1–6)

Overview: Students will review what they learned in the module about the 21st Century Skills and the 4Cs, and groups will use a roadmap worksheet to choose a career to research based on various criteria options.

Slide 1

- Before students get started on the career exploration project, review what they learned in the module about 21st Century Skills and the 4Cs.

  - *Note:* If your students did not complete the *Preparing for a Professional Internship* self-paced module, use page 1 of the **21st Century Skills Summary handout** to provide them with an understanding of the concepts before moving on to Slide 2.

- Explain to students that as you reveal each question, they should turn to the person sitting next to them and discuss it for about a minute.

- Click to display the first question, "What are 21st Century Skills?" After approximately one minute, ask for 1-2 volunteers to share what they remember from the module. Correct any misconceptions as they occur.

- Click to do the same for each of questions 2–4.

Slide 2

- Remind students that recognizing and practicing these skills now can help them prepare for a professional internship, and a successful internship can be the first step in a successful career, but that it isn't the *only* first step. Reinforce that there isn't *one right way* to enter into the career force.

- Ask students to consider for a moment how they could best ensure their own future success. As you reveal each statement on the slide, instruct them to hold a thumbs up in the air if they agree with the statement or a thumbs down if they disagree.

  - *Note:* This is not intended to be an official poll, and there is no need to keep track of responses. The purpose of the exercise is to encourage students to reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs.

- Click to display the first statement, "I need to go to college to get a good job." Give students the opportunity to hold up a thumbs up or thumbs down before moving on to the next statement.

- Click to do the same for each of statements 2–4.

- Let students know that they will be researching different careers during this exploration activity, and it will be important for them to note the different requirements for entering into each one.

Slide 3

- During the career exploration, students will be given the opportunity to apply and practice each of the 4Cs in a real-world scenario. In order to facilitate that application, they will be working in collaborative groups, or teams.

- Remind them that effective collaboration with their peers can lead to better problem solving, increased productivity, flexibility, and more successful communication.

- Using your preferred method for grouping students, separate them into teams of four.

Slide 4

- Distribute one **Career Exploration Roadmap student handout** and one **Career Exploration Table student handout** to each group. Remind students that throughout this project, starting with their roadmaps, they will have to work *collaboratively*, figuring out how to make sure every person in the group is heard and respected while coming to decisions that are most efficient and beneficial for the group. Emphasize that this might not mean every person always gets what they want but that every point of view is considered in the process of coming to a decision that is best for the entire team.

- Students will complete the roadmap flowchart using the accompanying table in order to determine which career their group will research. They will begin by discussing within their teams which of the 4Cs they believe to be most important in a successful career.

    ○ *Note:* If your students did not complete the *Preparing for a Professional Internship* self-paced module, use page 2 of the **21st Century Skills Summary handout** to provide them with an understanding of each of the 4Cs before beginning the roadmap.

Slide 5

- Click to reveal the first step, "choose a 4C." Instruct students to circle their 4C of focus, based on their group's discussion. They should fold their exploration table along the dotted lines so that only the relevant box is visible.

- Click a second time. Groups will then decide whether they are interested in researching professional careers that require college degrees or those that do not require a bachelor's degree or higher. Remind students that just because a career does not require a degree does not mean that there are not educational or training requirements. They should put an X through the box in the table they did not choose.

- Click again. Groups should work together to decide if they are interested in careers that have a STEM focus or careers that rely more heavily on literacy skills and the humanities. They should cross out the careers they will not be pursuing.

- Click a final time. Provide groups with approximately five minutes to discuss the careers that remain as options in their tables. Each member of the group should weigh in on their thoughts regarding which career the group should research, remembering that they will be responsible for communicating their research to their peers. Once students have made their final decision, they should circle the career they have chosen.

Slide 6

- Emphasize that an important part of collaboration is recognizing the unique strengths of each member of a team and delegating tasks so that each person's talents are being utilized effectively.

- Distribute a **Project Outline student handout** to each group and review with the class. Provide some characteristics that might be associated with each role, such as:

  - Project Manager: strong leadership skills; perseverant; punctual; good verbal communication skills

  - Online Researcher: technologically savvy; discerning and critical; observant

  - Recorder: good written communication skills; detail-oriented

  - Presentation Lead: outgoing; creative; innovative

- Give them the rest of the session to discuss their strengths and challenges and determine who will be assigned each job listed in the project outline. They should write the assignments down.

- Students should review the task list before the session ends. There is a space for project notes, so groups can keep track of the decisions they make and thoughts that come up along the way. Remind students to bring the handout back to the next session.

Session 2 (Slides 7–8)

Overview: Students will work in cooperative groups to complete their project tasks and create a way to deliver what they have learned about their chosen career to their peers.

Slide 7

- Briefly review what was covered in the first session. Emphasize that the 4C Communication is not only important within their cooperative groups to effectively research their career, but it will also be vital that they demonstrate strong communication skills while presenting their research to their peers.

- Remind students that communication is both the sharing of information in different ways and also understanding the information that is shared by others.

- Provide an opportunity for students to brainstorm presentation methods or ways to communicate their research findings to their peers. You may also consider providing students with options from which they can choose. As time and space allow, the following non-exhaustive list may be used:

  - Use of presentation software such as PowerPoint or Google Slides

  - Video presentation

  - Social media story

- Gallery walks
- Poster, pamphlet, or binder
- Website creation
- Blog post
- Infographic

Slide 8

- Once groups have decided upon their presentation method, review the task list on the **Project Outline student handout**. Based on their assigned jobs, students should further assign each task.

- Point out to students the "group reflection" section at the end of the handout. Encourage them to set aside time to discuss why they are interested in their chosen careers and communicate that in some way as part of their presentations.

- Groups should use the remainder of the session to research their careers, record their information, plan their presentations, and create any needed materials.

Session 3 *Optional* (Slides 9–10)

Overview: As time allows, students will present their research to their peers. A reflection tool to be used at the conclusion of the exploration is provided.

Slide 9

- Determine the class time needed and the space available to provide each group with the opportunity to present their research in their chosen method. As there are many potential presentation methods, this might take the form of additional class time, various publication methods, community or whole-school events, interviews, etc. Suggestions are provided in the Extensions for Educators section for how to extend this activity into a longer-term project.

Slide 10

- Upon completion of the exploration activity, distribute a copy of the **Career Exploration Reflection student handout** to each student.

- Click to reveal the first question. Provide time for students to respond on their handouts.

- Click again to show the second question. Again, provide time for students to respond on their handouts.

- Click a third time to reveal the final question. Allow students to complete their reflection handouts.

- As time allows, provide students with the opportunity to share their responses or facilitate a whole-group discussion on the reflection questions.

CONTENT AREA STANDARDS

Career Technical Education Curriculum (CTE) Model Standards

- Standard 1 – Apply appropriate technical skills and academic knowledge.
- Standard 2 – Communicate clearly, effectively, and with reason.
- Standard 5 – Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Standard 9 – Work proactively in teams while integrating cultural and global competence.
- Standard 10 – Demonstrate creativity and innovation.

Common Core State Standards for ELA

- RI.11–12.7, SL.11–12.1, SL.11–12.4, SL.11–12.5, SL.11–12.6

Science and Engineering Practices

- Planning and Carrying Out Investigations; Asking Questions and Defining Problems; Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions; Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communicating Information.
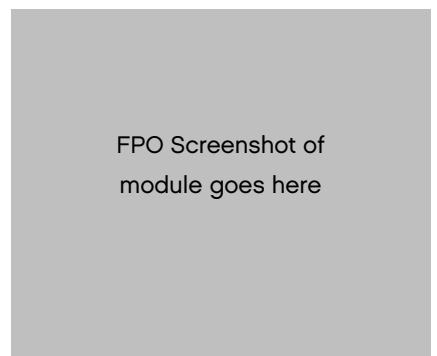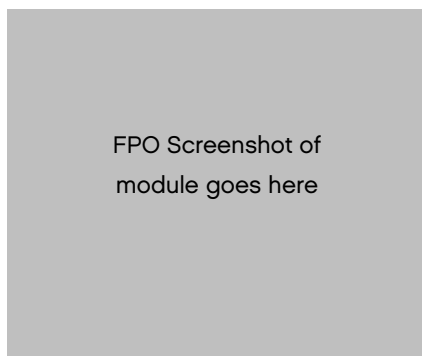
EXTENSIONS FOR EDUCATORS

- Have each group seek out, contact, and interview a professional in the field currently working in the career they researched. If time allows, organize a "career day" during which the professionals can visit the classroom and speak with the class about their position. Non-local professionals can attend electronically.
- Facilitate students in organizing a school-wide or community career fair in which each group can set up a table representing their chosen career. They can share their presentation with visitors, provide take-home materials, and collect a list of local companies that might be hiring for the position or schools/training facilities that provide programs to prepare for the career.
- Design a class website that leads users through the career exploration process and provides information on various careers.
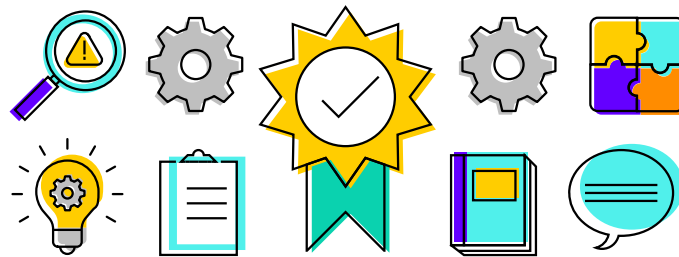
WHAT ARE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS?

21st Century Skills are certain skills seen as highly desirable by internship providers and future employers. They are the skills that help you be successful in every part of life—school, work, community, and relationships. They are life skills, career skills, your collection of knowledge, and your habits and traits that are absolutely necessary to be successful in the modern world.

FPO Screenshot of module goes here	FPO Screenshot of module goes here	FPO Screenshot of module goes here

## WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF 21ST CENTURY SKILLS?

Critical thinking, productivity, creativity, literacy, communication, perseverance, problem solving, collaboration, digital literacy, innovation skills.

WHAT ARE THE 4CS?

Some of the most important 21st Century Skills to possess are known as the 4Cs: Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity.

WHY ARE THE 4CS IMPORTANT?

These skills can help you stay adaptable so you can apply your knowledge from one situation to another. They help you find new information, build your knowledge, and effectively work and communicate with others in innovative ways.
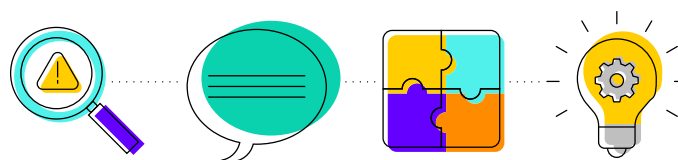
SUSTAINABLE
FUTURES

CRITICAL THINKING

Being able to think critically will help you apply your knowledge to new situations and make connections across various situations. When you display critical thinking, you analyze available information, facts, observations, research, and evidence to draw conclusions in a rational way.
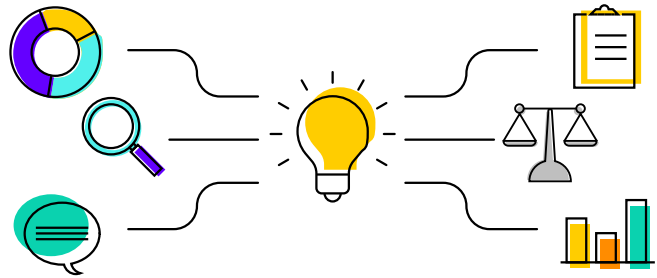
COMMUNICATION

Strong communication skills will let you convey information effectively and receive information successfully. Effective communication skills are important so that you can understand while also being understood. They show that you can effectively and efficiently transmit important information.

COLLABORATION

Effective collaboration with your peers or colleagues can lead to better problem solving, increased productivity, flexibility, and more successful communication. Collaborative work environments are usually more positive and engaging places to work.
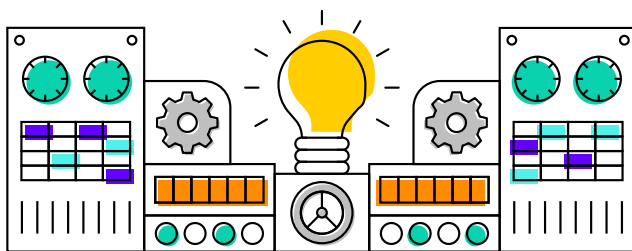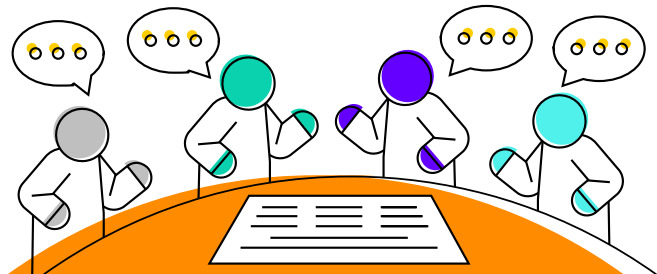
CREATIVITY

Creativity is the process of forming something new and valuable. Creativity can help you come up with innovative approaches and solutions and become a valuable asset to an organization as an intern or an employee.

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

Career Exploration Roadmap

Circle the 4C that your team believes is most important to a successful career:

CRITICAL THINKING

COMMUNICATION

COLLABORATION

CREATIVITY

Is your team interested in a professional career that requires a college degree or a career that can be entered into without attaining a bachelor's degree or higher?

COLLEGE DEGREE

NO DEGREE REQUIRED

Is your team interested in careers in the STEM fields or careers that rely more on literacy and humanities skills?

STEM

LITERACY & HUMANITIES

OUR TEAM WILL RESEARCH THE FOLLOWING CAREER:

SUSTAINABLE
FUTURES

Career Exploration Table

CRITICAL THINKING	
COLLEGE DEGREE	NO DEGREE REQUIRED
STEM	
Computer Programmer	Automotive Technician
Accountant	UX Designer
Geologist	Electrician
Chemist	Air Traffic Controller
Mechanical Engineer	
LITERACY & HUMANITIES	
Social Worker	Police Officer
Judge	Childcare Worker
Psychologist	

COMMUNICATION	
COLLEGE DEGREE	NO DEGREE REQUIRED
STEM	
Cartographer	Social Media Manager
Software Developer	Crane Operator
Technical Writer	
LITERACY & HUMANITIES	
Lawyer	Athletic Coach
Human Resource Specialist	Retail Manager
Reporter	Bus Driver
Public Relations Specialist	Police Dispatcher
Marketing Professional	
Teacher	
Social Worker	
Career Advisor	
Lawyer	

COLLABORATION	
COLLEGE DEGREE	NO DEGREE REQUIRED
STEM	
IT Professional	Web Developer
	Project Manager
LITERACY & HUMANITIES	
Event Coordinator	Customer Service Representative
Museum Curator	Food Service
	Actor
	Chef

CREATIVITY	
COLLEGE DEGREE	NO DEGREE REQUIRED
STEM	
Architect	HVAC Technician
Environmental Engineer	Cybersecurity Professional
Food Scientist	Car Mechanic
Data Scientist	Carpenter
Video Game Designer	
Robotics Engineer	
LITERACY & HUMANITIES	
Journalist	Photographer
Creative Director	Landscaper
Editor	Illustrator

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

JOB	TEAM MEMBER ASSIGNED
Project Manager	
Online Researcher(s)	
Recorder	
Presentation Lead	

TASK	TEAM MEMBER ASSIGNED	COMPLETED
Identify reliable online sources for research		☐
Record research findings		☐
Determine presentation method		☐
Assign presentation roles		☐
Organize information presentation		☐
Create necessary visuals		☐
Facilitate rehearsal/ensure preparedness		☐
Communicate research to peers		☐

PROJECT NOTES

SUSTAINABLE
FUTURES

CAREER ELEMENT	INFORMATION
Job Description	
Education/Training Requirements	
Career Pathway	
Expected Salary	
What Do They Do?	
Where Do They Work?	
Important Qualities	
Similar Jobs	

GROUP REFLECTION	
Why does this career interest our group members?	

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

How did you use each of the 4Cs during the *Career Exploration* project?

1. CRITICAL THINKING

2. COMMUNICATION

3. COLLABORATION

4. CREATIVITY

Either through your team's research or the research of other groups, did you learn about a career that interests you for your own future? Explain.

What do you think is the key takeaway from the *Preparing for a Professional Internship* module and the *Career Exploration* project?