

## INSTRUCTOR GUIDE

### National Career Clusters® Framework Career Interest Survey: **Cluster-by-Cluster Edition**

#### **Purpose:**

This engaging activity helps learners reflect on what they enjoy doing, what they're good at, and the kinds of real-world problems they want to help solve. Their responses point them toward Career Clusters—broad categories of careers that match their interests and strengths.

This survey is based on Advance CTE's [National Career Clusters Framework](#). The Framework is a central organizing structure for available careers and for Career Technical Education (CTE) programs of study, and it consists of 14 Career Clusters. Use this tool to generate excitement for your school's or institution's CTE and other career development experiences and to help learners see how their talents can lead to meaningful futures.

#### **Total Time: 45 Minutes**


- **Survey + Tallying:** 15 minutes
- **Reflection + Discussion:** 30-45 minutes

Ideal for advisory; career activities; or as a launchpad to explore electives, CTE offerings, or state-mandated plans such as Career Development Plans or Individual Career and Academic Plans.

#### **What Learners Will Do**

- ✓ Read through 14 Career Cluster tables
- ✓ Check off things they like, personal qualities, and problems they care about
- ✓ Count their checks and record a total for each table
- ✓ Identify their top three Career Clusters
- ✓ Start connecting to careers and school programs that align

#### **What You Will Need**

- Printed surveys  (or use fillable PDFs with Adobe Acrobat Reader for auto tallying)
- *Optional:* Career Cluster Map, poster, or slide ([Guidebook](#); [Other resources](#))
- *Optional:* Handout or slide showing your institution's CTE program, elective catalog, work-based learning opportunities, etc.
- **Framework note:** This survey is based on the National Career Clusters Framework. Please also reference your state's Career Clusters to understand how local opportunities are organized.

## Introduction (2-3 Minutes)


“This activity helps you explore what kind of work might fit your interests—even if you’re not sure what job you want yet. Each table represents a group of related careers called Career Clusters. They connect to real school programs, hands-on skills, and jobs people do every day.”


Let learners know the following:

- There are no wrong answers
- Some Clusters might get lots of checks, some very few - and that’s ok
- This is just a starting point—not a test or decision

## Survey Completion (15 Minutes)

Each table = 1 Career Cluster

1. Learners go table by table, column by column
2. They check anything that sounds like them
3. At the end of each table, they fill in the “*Total # checked in this Career Cluster*” box
4. After completing all 14, they identify their top three Clusters (highest totals)
5. They use the Career Cluster Key to match table numbers to Cluster names
6. They write their top three Clusters on the lines provided 

 Optional Prompt:

“If your top three don’t include Clusters 5 (Digital Technology), 11 (Management & Entrepreneurship), or 12 (Marketing & Sales), take a peek at those too. They’re Cross-Cutting Clusters with skills that show up in every industry and nearly every company!”

## Quick Reflection and Discussion Activities

Choose or modify any of the following to spark dialogue and deeper thinking:

### Explore the Interconnected Nature of Career Clusters (30-45 minutes)

1. **Visit Cluster Pages:** Visit the Advance CTE website (<https://bit.ly/421MT7b>) and explore the Career Cluster pages for your top interest areas.
2. **Find Connections:** Look at how your top three Career Cluster interests connect. Each Career Cluster has a corresponding Industry Sector Profile to help you dig deeper and find examples of workplaces, skill needs, and potential career pathways that overlap across your top Career Clusters.
3. **Reflect:** Write down one new career or idea you discovered from exploring intersections among your top Clusters. Or create a visual representation of how your top interests overlap or connect.

### **Small-Group or Partner Questions (10-15 minutes)**

- “What about your scores surprised you the most?”
- “Did anything you checked match a class or activity you already enjoy?”
- “What kinds of problems do you want to help solve in the world? If they did not show up on the list, which Career Clusters would they fit into?”
- “Which Career Cluster did you give the fewest checks—and why do you think that is?”

### **Individual Journaling or Planning (10 minutes)**






- “Write two to three sentences about a Cluster you are excited to learn more about.”
- “List three careers from your top Cluster you want to explore next.”
- “Learn about one or two programs, CTE courses, or other opportunities that our school or district offers that might connect to one of your top Clusters.”

### **Optional Share-Out (5 minutes)**

- Create a board, slide, or wall where learners can post sticky notes:

“My top Cluster is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.”

## Extension Ideas (Optional)

-  Visit O\*Net Online, IndigoPathway, or another designated platform to explore sample careers
-  Show learners the Industry Sector Profiles and have them create a project where they take a deep dive into their career exploration areas.
  - Visit: <https://bit.ly/47fqdE3>
-  Invite a CTE instructor, employer, or learner panel to share their experiences
-  Connect Clusters to electives, internships, or service learning
-  Cross-Cutting Cluster Activity: Show learners the Getting Smart learner graphics to demonstrate how the Cross-Cutting Clusters like Digital Technology, Marketing & Sales, and Management & Entrepreneurship can be applied to any of the Career Clusters. Have learners select their top Cluster(s) from the survey and design a poster, infographic, or short concept project showing how one or more cross-cutting clusters could enhance careers in their chosen Cluster. This activity helps learners see how skills and interests overlap and open up broader career opportunities.
  - Visit: <https://bit.ly/3HPa8dX>

## Instructor Tips

- This survey is not a diagnostic tool—it's a conversation starter
- Use it to support the following:
  - CTE recruitment
  - State-mandated Individualized Education and Career Plans (ICAP, ECAP, CDC, ILP)
  - Scheduling of electives
  - Learner-led conferences
- Consider pairing this survey with the Motivators Edition to help learners explore both their *what* and their *why*.