

# Touch the Future Career Fair



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**4-H Youth Development**

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## 4-H CAREER EDUCATION MAIN ACTIVITY

# Touch the Future Career Fair

**Learn how to create a “Touch the Future Career Fair” where teens aged 14 to 19 have the opportunity to get career exploration questions answered, meet professionals from a variety of career pathways and begin to consider future career decisions.**

## About This Activity

The Touch the Future Career Fair activity provides teens aged 14 to 19 an opportunity to get career exploration questions answered. This is accomplished by bringing them together with professionals from a variety of career pathways. The information participant’s gain helps guide them in future decision-making. The career fair can be used alone, or expanded to include various activities, like resume writing and interviewing. Using the activities that follow, create a learning experience that fits the needs of the youth you’re working with.

This idea came from 4-H Personal Development team member, Bertha Rogers, Youth Development Educator from Baraga County MSU Extension who partnered with the Western Upper Peninsula for more than 14 years on their Touch the Future Career Fair. It involves more than 1,000 8th and 10th graders annually.

The 4-H Personal Development team also offered a similar experience at 4-H Exploration Days 2006. Participants left excited about further career exploration. The sample agenda includes both a 5-hour version (used at 4-H Exploration Days 2006) and a 2 1/2-hour version. The 5-hour session included resume writing, job applications, informational interviewing and the career fair. Use the items listed under materials to create a Touch the Future session specialized for the group you’re working with.

*Age:*

Ages 14 to 19

*Objectives:*

Participants will:

- Have fun!
- Increase their career education knowledge by interviewing professionals from a variety of career pathways during the career fair.
- Increase their knowledge of resume writing.
- Learn how to complete a job application.
- Learn how to conduct a career fair interview (informational interview) and practice interviewing for the career fair.

*Learning and Life Skills:*

- Perfecting a proper business handshake
- Translating non-work experience to resume language
- Acquiring and using information
- Conducting a career fair (information gathering) interview
- Increasing communication skills and becoming comfortable interacting with community professionals — a stepping stone to job interviewing
- Connecting school learning and activities to the world of work

*Michigan Curriculum Framework:*

The following Michigan benchmarks are addressed in this curriculum. More information can be found at [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/MichiganCurriculumFramework\\_8172\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/MichiganCurriculumFramework_8172_7.pdf)

- Thinks analytically and creatively about important themes, concepts, and ideas
- Uses the English language arts to identify and solve problems
- Understands and appreciates the aesthetic elements of oral, visual and written text
- Uses the English language arts to develop the characteristics of lifelong learners and workers, such as curiosity, persistence, flexibility, and reflection
- Uses methods of social science investigation to answer questions about society

- Able to construct new knowledge for themselves through research, reading, and discussion
- Able to reflect in an informed way on the role of science in human affairs

## What You'll Need

### Materials:

- TFCF Announcement\*
- TFCF Promotional Flyer\*
- TFCF Agenda\*
- Letter to youth participants\*
- E-mail request to career professionals\*
- Confirmation letter to career professionals\*
- Career Fair Professionals List\*
- Career pathway signs\* for rooms or booths and tape to post them with
- Career Fair Informational Interviewing Questions\*
- Michigan 4-H Pathways to Career Education Resource List
- Thank-you letter to career professionals\*
- Touch the Future Career Fair Participant Evaluation\*
- Nametags\*
- Pen or pencil
- Felt marker
- Career Video (optional)
- Participant packets (optional) Handouts can be compiled in a folder before the event or empty folders can be supplied and later filled by the participants as the event progresses.
- Bottled water or beverage
- Small gift for each professional (optional)
- Print out "thank you" messages centered on colorful 8½ by 11 papers to be signed by the youth at the Career Fair. Include with career professionals thank you-letter. (optional)

\* These handouts are also available online at [http://4h.msue.msu.edu/4h/resources/career\\_ed\\_activities](http://4h.msue.msu.edu/4h/resources/career_ed_activities) as downloadable documents in Microsoft Word format.

### Equipment Needed:

- Laptop, LCD and screen (if using PowerPoint slide shows)
- Video player and screen (if showing a video)
- Clock or timer to track participant movement during the career fair.
- Computer lab access (if using optional activity mentioned under Try This, Too)

### Time:

Time needed is determined by content selected. For the Exploration Days Touch the Future Career Fair, youth interviewed nine professionals in groups of two to three for 12 minutes each. With brief set-up and wrap-up times included, the career fair took 2½ hours. A total of five teaching hours were used over a two-day period at Exploration Days. (See sample agenda for 5-hour or 2 ½-hour versions).

### Setting:

For the first half of the five-hour activity, a classroom setting with moveable tables and chairs is ideal. The group will form a circle and do small group activities if you include the Action Verb Circle Activity or Name That Career Activity. If you incorporate career exploration on the Internet, you'll need to meet in a computer lab setting or project on a screen if a computer lab isn't available. For the career fair, individual interview rooms for each professional works best with room for two to three youth to join them. An open setting with individual tables in a large room is the next best thing. If this type of setting is selected, give each career pathway as much space as possible.

## Procedure

### Before the Event:

- Plan your preliminary details by determining:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

- Create an agenda (see sample TFCF Agenda) and identify who will be responsible for each part of the agenda .
- Prepare to send out:
  - Announcement
  - Promotional Flyer
 (Note: You may want to create a response form or list a contact person for more information in order to have a means of collecting names.)
- Gather names of participants:
  - Collect names and addresses of youth participants and send them an informational letter or e-mail.
  - Create an alphabetical list to use to check in participants the day of the career fair.

- Identify career professionals:
  - Determine number of career professionals with one career professional for every 2 to 3 youth.
  - Decide which career pathways to include.
  - Invite professionals. Consider involving youth in this process to help them build their communication skills.
    - Send e-mail invitations or make phone calls. See sample e-mail text.
    - Create Career Professionals list. See sample.
    - Send confirmation letter. Include the following with the letter:
      - \* Career Fair Agenda
      - \* Career Fair Professionals List
      - \* Career Fair Informational Interviewing Questions youth will use during the event.
      - \* Any other materials/information pertinent to your gathering
- Prepare nametags for everyone involved. Make first names larger and bold so they're easy to read for career professionals to address youth by their name.
- Create career pathway signs to post outside interview rooms or display on tables (depends on your set-up)
- Create participant packets in advance with handouts you'll refer to and distribute during registration or pass out handouts as you refer to them.

## The Day of the Career Fair Event

### Room Preparation:

To set up the room:

- Put nametags in alphabetical order on the registration table along with the registration check-in list. You'll want a pen or pencil to check off participants as they arrive. Have a few blank nametags and a felt marker, just in case a nametag is missing or a name is misspelled so one can be handwritten.
- Provide bottled water or beverages.
- Put up signs outside of interview rooms or display on tables or booths, for example, "Agriculture and Natural Resources."

### Starting the Event — Program Overview and Inspirational Welcome (15 minutes):

Options would be to show a career video, such as *Career Pathways* or ask one of the career fair professionals to say a few words. If you choose to open the

career fair yourself, here are examples of ways to express some key points:

- "Welcome to our Touch the Future Career Fair. I commend each of you for attending today's career fair. It's an investment in your future—your work future to be exact."
- "During your lifetime, you'll spend a lot of time working, so it's important to find work that makes you happy. How many of you already have a job or have held a job before?"
- "Think about how people introduce themselves. In addition to saying their name, they typically state their occupation. For example, when I introduced myself today I said, 'Hello. My name is Laura Allen and I provide leadership for Career Education in the MSU Extension, 4-H Youth Development Office.' We link our life's work very closely to our identity."
- "When you enjoy the career path you choose it can help make day-to-day living rich and rewarding. For instance, the work I do with youth and volunteers brings me a lot of happiness. How might life be different for me if I didn't like the work I do? I might not feel as energetic or might feel stressed a lot which isn't a healthy choice."
- "Today's session will help you get comfortable with information gathering from career professionals. I'm excited that all of you have chosen to be a part of this experience so let's get started with the next item on our agenda."

### Before Going Into the Career Fair Interview Area:

- Pass out the Career Fair Informational Interviewing Questions and talk about how participants will be asking the questions. Mention that the handout of questions is meant to be a guide and they are welcome to ask their own questions. If there are groups of youth interviewing professionals together, tell them to take turns asking questions. It's helpful for each team to identify who will get things started.
- Instruct the participants to greet the career professionals as they enter each room with a business handshake and by introducing themselves.

### During the Career Fair (two hours):

- Have professionals in the interview rooms ready to greet the youth. (Remind them that youth are expected to introduce themselves as they enter and give a business handshake.)
- Rotate every 12 minutes (You determine the exact time given the number of youth, professionals and total time available.)

- (Optional) Give a small gift to each professional before they leave.
- (Optional) Have youth sign the large “thank you” messages centered on colorful 8 ½ by 11 papers. Include it later with your thank-you letters to professionals.

### Wrap Up and Evaluations:

- Mention Michigan 4-H Pathways to Career Education Resource List handouts in their packets or distribute them at this time.
- Close by giving them the TFCF Evaluation to fill out.

### Try This, Too

- Create a career display.
- Display career resource materials. (See Michigan 4-H Pathways to Career Education Resource List.) You may be able to check books out from your local library or borrow them from a school career educator.
- If a computer setting is available, do career exploration using the Internet. (See the Michigan 4-H Pathways to Career Education Resource List for links.)
- Purchase *The Job Hunting Handbook* by Harry Dahlstrom and work through it with your group. Available at [www.DahlstromCo.com](http://www.DahlstromCo.com)
- Use the “Where Does it Come From?” Activity as an icebreaker.
- Use the Perfect Business Handshake Activity as an icebreaker along with The Perfect Business Handshake handout.
- Use the Career Fair Interviewing and More Activity – including the Career Fair Interviewing and More PowerPoint, Winning Job Interviews handout and Sample Interview Questions if you have time for an expanded version of the Career Fair.

### Talking It Over

Ask the group the following questions:

- Has your career pathway choice changed as a result of the career fair?
- Did the professionals describe their jobs the way you expected them to?
- Do you need to study subjects you didn’t expect to in preparation for a career path?
- What were you surprised to learn?
- What did you like most about meeting the professionals?
- How do you think you’ll use what you’ve learned?

### For More Information

To explore other Michigan 4-H Youth Development career development information, visit <http://4h.msue.msu.edu>. Click on the “Programs” tab then select “Careers.”

