

Overview

The Fast Track Assessment is a self-evaluation completed by the Academy Design Team (ADT)¹ to assess the alignment of existing practices with the NAF Design. It documents the current status of the academy and determines readiness to open as a NAF academy through the Fast Track admissions process. This assessment helps develop a Launch Year action plan and establishes a strong foundation for successful implementation.

The Fast Track Assessment evaluates alignment with NAF's design through four key elements:

1. Academy Development & Structure
2. Advisory Board
3. Program of Study (Curriculum & Instruction)
4. Work-Based Learning

Each element includes 2–5 standards, which are further defined by strategic actions—specific academy practices required to meet the standard.

Example:

- **Element** » Academy Development & Structure
- **Standard** » 1.4 Academy Leadership - Academy leadership is broad-based, strategic, and sufficiently staffed.
- **Strategic Action** » 1.4.b The academy has a designated staff member to support college and career readiness activities.
- **Selection** » Yes/No

Definitions

Definitions are available online by clicking underlined words. A glossary is included at the end of the sample Fast Track Assessment.

Completing the Fast Track Assessment

The Fast Track Assessment is completed collaboratively by the Academy Design Team, which may include the academy lead, teachers, counselor, school/district leadership, and advisory board members. The process includes:

1. Collaborative Review: Review the sample assessment and agree on responses to each strategic action.
2. Submit the Online Fast Track Assessment: Submit the online assessment in ASH. A provisional score of 15 or higher is required to proceed.
3. Gather Evidence: Use the Fast Track Evidence Checklist to compile and organize supporting documents.
4. Submit Evidence: Upload evidence into the online Fast Track Assessment in the Academy Support Hub (ASH) at least two weeks before the graduation meeting.
5. Confirm Readiness: Meet virtually with your portfolio manager to review evidence and clarify responses.
6. Schedule Graduation Meeting: Arrange the graduation meeting — the final step in the admissions process.
7. Final Review: Conduct an internal ADT review to ensure evidence is uploaded and all responses are accurate.

Evidence Upload and Notes

Use the online buttons next to each strategic action to upload supporting evidence or add notes. For some actions, evidence templates are provided, and when these are used, no additional documentation is needed.

Scoring & Review

A provisional score appears once the Fast Track Assessment is submitted. During the graduation meeting, the portfolio manager validates evidence and finalizes the score.

A score of 15 or higher confirms eligibility to become an open NAF academy and informs Launch Year planning.

Need Help?

Contact: support@naf.org or your portfolio manager.

Academy Development & Structure

1.1 Student Recruitment & Enrollment

The academy supports open choice enrollment that maximizes students' access to career and college opportunities and results in academy membership that reflects students of all backgrounds.

1.1.a All students are eligible to enroll in the academy, and open choice enrollment² results in academy membership that reflects students of all backgrounds.

- Yes
- No

Evidence (1.1.a)

Provide a document outlining the open choice enrollment process or add a link to it in notes section (URL to district policy).

Example: Academy application

1.1.b Recruitment efforts increase student enrollment each year to meet the threshold³ criteria.

The academy program is:

- Fully operational (Students enrolled in grades 11-12 for a 2-year program, grades 10-12 for a 3-year program, and grades 9-12 for a 4-year program).
- Not fully operational.

The academy:

- Enrolls at least 20 students per grade level.
- Enrolls less than 20 students per grade level

Evidence (1.1.b)

Provide the academy enrollment for each operating grade level.

Evidence Template:

[Academy Enrollment Template](#)

◆ [Threshold Requirement After Launch](#)

1.2 Personalized Learning Environment

The academy creates a personalized learning environment that is inclusive, promotes student agency, and encourages positive relationships to enhance student well-being and achievement.

1.2.a The academy fosters a personalized learning environment that promotes student success and attainment of college and career goals by (select all that apply):

- Connecting learning to students' interests, abilities, and aspirations.
- Implementing academy structures to encourage peer relationships and develop a sense of belonging among academy members.
- Developing personalized academy learning plans that the academy team regularly reviews to assess student progress toward college and career goals.
- Engaging a network of teachers, family, mentors, alumni, and advisory board members who connect with academy students to provide support for accomplishing their college and career goals.
- None of the above

Evidence (1.2.a)

Use the template to provide example(s) of how academy supports each selected strategic action.

Evidence Template:

[Personalized Learning Environment Template](#)

Examples: Educational Development Plan (EDP), career assessments, student choice project menu, peer leadership roles overview, academy spirit day flyer (e.g., T-shirt Day), quarterly data chat schedule, mentor pairing form/list

1.3 Data Collection & Review

The academy participates in the ongoing review of academy data to enhance academy development and benchmark student progress.

1.3.a The academy collects, analyzes, and reports academy and student-level data to inform academy practices and ensure educational access for students. The academy reviews (select all that apply):

- Academy-level data
- Student-level data
- Disaggregated data to identify achievement gaps among student groups
- None of the above

Evidence (1.3.a)

Use the template or notes section to provide example(s) of how academy uses data to support each selected strategic action.

Evidence Template:

[Data Review Process Template](#)

Examples: existing district data tracking tool or other academy data collection and reporting practices.

1.3.b The academy uses data from various sources to develop an action plan for continuous academy development.

- Yes
- No

Evidence (1.3.b)

Provide a document showing how the academy tracks goals and strategic actions or add a link to it in notes section.

Evidence Template:

[Action Plan Template](#)

1.4 Academy Leadership

Academy leadership is broad-based, strategic, and sufficiently staffed.

1.4.a The academy has a designated academy leader with release time, or an academy team with clearly defined responsibilities for managing all aspects of the academy program.

- Yes
- No

Evidence (1.4.a)

Use the template to list the names and roles of staff responsible for managing the academy program.

Evidence Template:

[Academy Team Roster Template](#)

1.4.b The academy has a designated staff member to support college and career readiness activities.

- Yes
- No

Evidence (1.4.b)

List the names and roles of staff who support college and career readiness activities.

If applicable, use the notes section to reference the evidence provided for 1.4.a.

1.4.c District, school, and academy leaders are ambassadors for the academy. The academy leaders (select all that apply):

- Use social media to promote academy practices and events.
- Share impact stories/data to increase support and advocacy for their academy programs.
- Share college and career readiness best practices with other leaders at local, state, or national levels.
- None of the above

Evidence (1.4.c)

Provide example(s) of how academy leaders promote the academy through each selected activity.

Evidence Template:

[Ambassadors' Template](#)

1.5 Professional Learning

District, school, academy leaders, and advisory board members participate in regularly scheduled professional learning sessions and collaboration meetings.

1.5.a The academy team (of more than three members) meets regularly for collaborative planning focused on student success and academy improvement. The academy team (select all that apply):

- Meets regularly
- Reviews student outcome data
- Plans for curriculum integration and/or projects
- Coordinates college and career readiness activities
- Updates academy goals
- None of the above

Evidence (1.5.a)

Provide minutes or agenda from the team's most recent collaborative planning session or use the notes section to describe the academy's approach to the selected activities.

1.5.b The academy participates in NAF-sponsored or other Career Technical Education (CTE) professional learning sessions. The academy team attended (select all that apply):

- NAF Next
- NAF-sponsored professional learning sessions (Webinars, Advisory Board Convenings, Professional Learning Modules, Educator Certifications, or other events)
- Other CTE training/professional learning sessions
- None of the above

Evidence (1.5.b)

Use the template or notes section to provide a list of event(s) for each selected item to describe the team's approach to professional learning.

Evidence Template:

[Professional Learning Template](#)

Advisory Board

2.1 Advisory Board Membership & Operations

A formally organized advisory board operates with broad-based community representation.

2.1.a Advisory board membership includes at least ten (10) members representing business, industry, government, alumni, community, and postsecondary education leaders. The advisory board (select all that apply):

- Includes at least ten (10) members.
- Includes at least 80% business, industry, government, alumni, community, and postsecondary education leaders.
- None of the above

Evidence (2.1.a)

Use the template to show how the academy meets each selected item by providing the advisory board roster, including member roles and responsibilities.

Evidence Template:
[AB Roster Template](#)

◆ *Threshold Requirement After Launch*

2.1.b The advisory board created a strategic plan with clear annual outcomes informed by academy data.

- Yes
- No

Evidence (2.1.b)

Use the template to provide the advisory board strategic plan or add a link to it in the notes section.

Evidence Template:
[AB Strategic Plan Template](#)

2.1.c The advisory board created by-laws to help the academy grow and sustain academy needs.

- Yes
- No

Evidence (2.1.c)

Use the template to provide the advisory board by-laws or add a link to them in the notes section.

Evidence Template:
[AB By-laws Template](#)

2.2 Support for Learning

Advisory board members actively support work-based learning⁴ activities, the program of study⁵, and the academy program design.

2.2.a Advisory board members actively support student learning.

The advisory board supports student learning by (select all that apply):

- Securing and coordinating work-based learning experiences outlined in the academy's work-based learning calendar/plan.
- Participating in virtual or in-person classroom activities or projects.
- Collaborating with academy leaders to inform, supplement, and/or update the career-focused curriculum.
- Providing professional learning opportunities for academy staff.
- None of the above

Evidence (2.2.a)

Use the template or notes section to describe how the advisory board supports the selected strategic actions.

Evidence Template:

[AB Support for Learning Template](#)

Examples: meeting minutes, strategic plan, existing district data tracking tool, revised curriculum/lesson plans, teacher training/experience agenda, or academy's work-based learning calendar/plan.

2.3 Support for Sustainability

Advisory board members seek to increase academy success and sustainability by advocating for support and sharing academy impact with community, postsecondary, and civic leaders.

2.3.a The advisory board works to engage community, post-secondary and civic leaders to promote and sustain academies as an integral part of the local workforce and economic development systems. The advisory board members (select all that apply):

- Promote NAF academies as a local workforce development strategy in their communities.
- Raise funds for paid internships, work-based learning activities, and/or scholarships.
- Recruit other business partners and postsecondary institutions to support WBL and college and career readiness.
- None of the above

Evidence (2.3.a)

Use the template or notes section to describe how the advisory board supports the selected strategic actions.

Evidence Template:

[AB Activities Template](#)

Examples: agenda from a community presentation, fundraising event invitation, email or flyer used to recruit partners, strategic plan

Program of Study (Curriculum & Instruction)

3.1 Academy Coursework

The academy's career-connected program of study features a comprehensive sequence of courses that adheres to OCTAE's Programs of Study Design Framework, with a particular focus on fostering authentic project-based learning experiences⁶ and conducting competency-based assessments⁷.

3.1.a The academy offers a career-connected program of study consisting of a sequence of courses within one of NAF's Future Ready Learning career pathways or aligned with the US Department of Education's 14 career clusters and associated pathways.

- Yes
- No

3.1.b Students demonstrate attainment of career-readiness competencies through authentic project learning experiences, like NAF Expeditions⁸ and KnoPro⁹ challenges, with industry professionals to solve real-world challenges. Academy students (check all that apply):

- Complete extended-length authentic project learning experiences that provide innovative solutions to real-world challenges.
- Engage industry professionals in completing authentic projects.
- Showcase original, relevant, and career/community-connected outcomes using dynamic presentation media or technology apps.
- None of the above

Evidence (3.1.a)

Use the template to provide the academy's career-connected Program of Study.

Evidence Template:

[Program of Study Template](#)

- ◆ [Threshold Requirement After Launch](#)

Evidence (3.1.b)

Use the template to provide a description of authentic project learning experiences that support the selected strategic actions for each operating grade level.

Evidence Template:

[Authentic Project Learning Template](#)

3.2 College & Career Readiness

Academy intentionally builds students' college knowledge, provides advanced academic opportunities, and helps students achieve certifications to enhance their college and career readiness.

3.2.a The academy intentionally builds students' college knowledge by helping them understand the postsecondary system and culture, research college options, visit college campuses, and navigate issues such as testing, applications, and financial aid. The academy provides students assistance with (select all that apply):

- College application preparation, including FAFSA
- College preparation and entrance exams (SAT, ACT, PSAT)
- Scholarship resources and applications
- College visits/fairs
- None of the above

Evidence (3.2.a)

Use the template or notes section to provide example(s) of how academy supports each selected activity.

Evidence Template:

[College & Career Readiness Template](#)

3.2.b The academy students experience advanced academics participating in Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge, or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, and enroll in postsecondary education options through industry recognized credentials/certifications and dual enrollment. The academy offers (select all that apply):

- Industry recognized credentials/certifications
- Dual enrollment, AP, Cambridge or IB courses
- None of the above

3.2.c The academy is committed to ensuring all seniors achieve NAFTrack Certification¹⁰ to enhance their college and career readiness.

- Yes
- No

Evidence (3.2.b)

Use the template or notes section to provide examples of the academy's advanced academics and postsecondary education options for each checked selection.

Evidence Template:

[Advanced & Postsecondary Template](#)

Evidence (3.2.c)

Use the notes section to describe how the academy plans to support seniors in meeting NAFTrack Certification or to acknowledge that an active NAF Membership Agreement is on file.

See [NAFTrack Certification requirements](#) effective Fall 2023 and beyond.

Work-Based Learning

4.1 Work-Based Learning Program

The academy plans and implements a high-quality work-based learning (WBL) program that features a full continuum of work-based learning experiences for students including career awareness¹¹, career exploration¹², and career preparation¹³.

4.1.a The academy intentionally plans and calendars work-based learning experiences throughout the school year to ensure a coherent sequence of career awareness, exploration, and preparation activities.

- Yes
- No

Evidence (4.1.a)

Use the template to provide a work-based learning calendar for each operating grade level.

Evidence Template:
[WBL Plan and Calendar Template](#)

4.1.b The academy's work-based learning experiences include a continuum of career awareness, exploration, and preparation activities that build in sophistication, duration, and intensity. The academy provides (select all that apply):

Career Awareness

- Career Fairs
- Guest Speakers
- Worksite Tours

Career Exploration

- Informational Interviews
- Job Shadows
- Mentorships
- Mock Interviews
- Partner Engagement Projects
- Resume Coaching/Review
- Skills Workshops

Career Preparation

- Apprenticeship/Youth Apprenticeships
- Clinicals
- Internships
- Mentored Industry Projects

- None of the above

Evidence (4.1.b)

Use the notes section to describe how academy supports each selected item.

Examples: existing district data tracking tool or other academy data collection and reporting practices

4.1.c The academy's work-based learning plans intentionally focus on supporting the development of students' aspirations¹⁴, skills¹⁵, and connections¹⁶. The academy's work-based learning plans support students' (select all that apply):

- Aspirations
- Skills
- Connections
- None of the above

Evidence (4.1.c)

Use the notes section to describe how academy supports each selected item.

Example: notes/reports from school/district generated student check-in forms

4.1.d Student voice and input are solicited and used to guide work-based learning program planning.

- Yes
- No

Evidence (4.1.d)

Use the notes section to describe how academy collects and uses student input to guide WBL program planning.

Examples: existing district data tracking tool or other academy data collection and reporting practices

4.2 Work-Based Learning Participation

The academy collects and analyzes work-based learning data to ensure full student participation.

4.2.a The academy tracks and analyzes work-based learning data at both the academy and student levels to ensure student participation across the full continuum of work-based learning experiences. The academy (select all that apply):

- Tracks participation at the academy level.
- Tracks participation at the student level.
- Analyzes student-level data to ensure participation in the full continuum of WBL experiences.
- None of the above

Evidence (4.2.a)

Use the notes section to describe how academy collects and analyzes data on work-based learning participation for each selected item.

Examples: existing district data tracking tool or other academy data collection and reporting practices

4.2.b The academy students participate in at least one work-based learning activity per year.

- Yes
- No

Evidence (4.2.b)

Use the notes section to describe how academy ensures all students participate in at least one WBL activity per year.

Example: existing district data tracking tool

4.2.c The academy students complete a career preparation activity¹⁷ of at least 80+ hours (or two 40+ hours) before graduation (i.e., internships, clinical experiences, youth apprenticeships/apprenticeships, mentored industry projects, etc.).

- Yes
- No

4.2.d The academy seniors complete at least two different phases of the work-based learning continuum during their academy experience (i.e., career awareness, career exploration, career preparation).

- Yes
- No

Evidence (4.2.c)

Use the notes section to describe how academy ensures all students complete a career preparation activity before graduation.

- ♦ *Threshold Requirement After Launch*

Example: existing district data tracking tool

Evidence (4.2.d)

Use the notes section to describe how academy ensures all seniors complete at least two phases of the WBL continuum.

Example: existing district data tracking tool

Glossary/Definitions

- 1 **Academy Design Team (ADT):** The ADT is a representative, multi-disciplinary group formed to design a NAF academy aligned with the four elements of the NAF design. Members include school and academy staff, district and school administration, parents, students, and business and postsecondary education partners. After admissions, the ADT transitions into the academy team to support successful implementation during the launch year.
- 2 **Open choice enrollment:** NAF academies facilitate access by accepting students based on student agency rather than educational records. Students who can accommodate the academy's program of study are eligible to enroll in the academy regardless of academic or disciplinary history. Academy selection may be subject to a lottery system that randomly selects academy students.
- 3 **Threshold:** NAF's Academy Assessment establishes thresholds or minimum performance requirements on selected strategic actions in the Academy Assessment. Academies must meet the designated thresholds as one of the prerequisites for achieving a Model or Distinguished level. **Threshold requirements** promote consistent, high-quality implementation in areas such as **outcomes-driven work-based learning**, which promotes meaningful student-professional interactions.
- 4 **Work-Based Learning:** Work-based learning is an educational approach designed to help students connect classroom content with workplace expectations. Students learn through integrated, real-world experiences led by industry professionals.
- 5 **Program of Study:** NAF's Program of Study maximizes students' opportunities for achieving NAFTrack Certification by capitalizing on multiple options to pursue career pathways. The academy's program of study features a comprehensive sequence of courses that adhere to OCTAE's Programs of Study Design Framework, with a particular focus on fostering authentic project-based learning experiences and conducting competency-based assessments.
- 6 **Authentic Project-Based Learning Experiences:** Authentic project-based learning experiences promote students' transfer of their expertise as they solve real-world challenges in their career industry or community. Students exercise agency in selecting their passion projects to demonstrate content knowledge and career-readiness competencies by developing innovative solutions with industry-professional guidance to design and produce original, relevant, and community-connected outcomes.
- 7 **Competency-Based Assessment:** A competency-based assessment is a way to measure industry skillsets or competencies. To prove their competency, students must demonstrate the ability to transfer their content knowledge and career readiness competencies to solve real-world challenges using the benchmarks provided by industry-defined standards.
- 8 **NAF Expeditions:** NAF Expeditions are career-connected project-based learning experiences that combine hands-on, real-world projects with career exploration and preparation in collaboration with industry professionals or mentors who guide them in the development of skills and provide feedback on their project. Learners engage in the Future Ready Learning Framework: Reflect, Stretch, Innovate, & Showcase using design thinking strategies or the engineering design process. NAF Expeditions also infuse technology applications and online resources to create dynamic solutions. Access NAF's **Future Ready Learning** for career-pathway expeditions.
- 9 **KnoPro:** **KnoPro** is a 100% FREE new platform provided by NAF for high school students who want to develop in-demand skills by completing real-world projects for cash and other prizes. KnoPro is an educator-designed platform that connects students and teachers with authentic industry challenges and professional mentors that help students build skills and develop their career aspirations. Unlike similar products that tend to focus on college students using text-heavy interfaces or charge schools or students for access, our platform was built specifically for (and with) high school students and teachers, with engaging videos, fun activities, essential resources, and opportunities to earn rewards and recognition.

10 NAFTrack Certification (NTC): NTC is NAF's employability credential that serves as NAF's seal of college and career readiness.

11 Career awareness activities: Students are introduced to careers and pathways through short work-based learning engagements where they can interact with industry professionals in small to large groups. Awareness activities are appropriate for all levels of students. Examples include:

- **Career Fairs** - Career fairs bring together business partners from a variety of careers to share information about their company, their job, and what education, skills, and knowledge are required for success in their careers.
- **Guest Speakers** - Guest speakers are industry professionals who share information about their industry, company, career path, and the knowledge and skills required to pursue and be successful in their career. Skills workshops elevate the traditional guest speaker experience by having professionals lead a session with students to help them develop a certain career readiness or technical skill during their time together.
- **Worksite Tours** - Worksite tours allow students to visit a company's workspace and see the environment, expectations, and requirements of the workplace, professions, and industries up close.

12 Career exploration activities: Students continue to hone their career interests while building Future Ready Skills in one-to-one or smaller group settings with industry professionals. Students receive feedback on their skill development from industry professionals and make connections to begin their professional network. Examples include:

- **Informational Interviews** - Informational Interviews offer students an opportunity to practice their communication skills by initiating contact with a business professional and interview them to learn more about their industry, company, and career path.
- **Job Shadows** - Job shadows allow students to spend time one-on-one with an employee observing and participating in their daily activities to learn more about their job and a typical workday.
- **Mentorships** - Career mentors are industry professionals who build ongoing relationships with students or student teams to explore potential careers, provide guidance on navigating college and career pathways, and build their professional network. Mentors model necessary skills and assist students in working toward skill mastery.
- **Mock Interviews** - Mock interviews allow students to practice their interviewing skills and get feedback from business partners.
- **Partner Engagement Projects** - Partner engagement projects are extended learning projects, generally less than 40 hours, that allow students to explore genuine industry and real-world challenges and provide students with an authentic learning experience while being guided by an industry professional which includes an advisory board member or local community partner. The industry professional is not required to provide the challenge but will offer support through project mentoring that includes supervising project development and problem-solving through intentional feedback and connection. Partner engagement projects are meant to prepare students for a more in-depth mentored industry project and can happen in or outside the classroom.
- **Resume Coaching/Review** - Resume review activities allow students to get feedback from business professionals as they prepare their resumes for mock interviews and internships.
- **Skills Workshops** - Skills workshops elevate the traditional guest speaker experience by having professionals lead a session with students to help them develop a certain career readiness or technical skills during their time together.

13 Career preparation activities: Students apply their learning through immersive industry-based experiences. Career Preparation activities allow students to establish connections and build a professional network. Industry partners are more directly involved in student development and provide feedback on applied skills in an industry-based setting. Examples include:

- **Apprenticeship/Youth Apprenticeships** – Apprenticeships are paid employer-led work experiences with written training plans and signed apprenticeship agreements which include supervised on-the-job training, job-related education components, and result in at least one industry credential.
- **Clinical Experience** – Clinicals are a supervised student experience that allows the student to put into practice skills they have learned in a health care program. Clinicals involve hospital and other health care settings which require some level of patient care or contact.
- **Internships** – Internships allow students to apply and further develop the skills they need to be successful in college and career as well as provide value to their internship host.
- **Mentored Industry Projects** - Mentored industry projects provide authentic learning experiences in which students connect with industry mentors to address challenges and solve problems in a community or industry. Industry mentors guide project work, offering feedback and direction throughout the project process. Students develop skills through professional interactions and understand connections between classroom content and their career aspirations.

14 Student Aspirations: Each student will have defined and mapped a plan for at least one career path. [Learn more.](#)

15 Student Skills: Each student will have worked to develop the [six Future Ready skills](#), received continuous feedback from industry partners, Advisory Board members, and/or local community professionals, and be able to articulate their strengths.

16 Student Connections: Each student will develop at least three professional connections. [Learn more.](#)

17 Career Preparation Activity requirements for NAFTrack Certification:

Students, and subsequently their academies, will get credit for internships, clinical experiences, youth apprenticeships/apprenticeships, and mentored industry projects that meet the following criteria:

- 80+ hours (or two 40-hour experiences)
- Paid, compensated, or volunteer
- Direct supervision by an accountable adult who is not the student's teacher
- Proficiency on an employer-validated skill assessment completed by the student's supervisor (not teacher, parent, or guardian)

These experiences should seek to strengthen students' skills and resumes, support student career exploration, increase students' social capital and network, and ideally and where appropriate, result in student payment.