

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Leveraging Online Learning in Career and Technical Education

Partner SkillsUSA, Inc.

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SkillsUSA is a national organization focused on enhancing career and technical education (CTE) and preparing a skilled workforce through skill competitions, leadership development, and industry partnerships. Since 2018, SkillsUSA and Education Northwest have partnered to create a robust set of online and blended learning materials to help learners in various settings (middle schools, high schools, postsecondary institutions, and workforce development programs) build workplace skills and explore and pursue career pathways.

Building modules for pathway exploration

Education Northwest has worked in close partnership with SkillsUSA staff members over several years to collect information and insights about SkillsUSA members and program participants. This data has been essential in designing materials that meet learners' specific needs and contexts.

Education Northwest has helped SkillsUSA build a suite of career readiness and leadership development offerings aligned with best practices in online and blended learning. We began by designing and delivering multiple sets of comprehensive introductory and advanced career exploration "Experiences" based on the [**SkillsUSA Framework**](#). These Experiences feature mobile-friendly, accessible online learning modules, project-based learning activities, instructor guides, and introductory videos. Topics covered include continuous improvement, change management, initiative, reliability, and customer service, among many others.

Education Northwest staff members also helped SkillsUSA pivot and adapt to online staff training and leadership development for students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our current work involves adapting the Experiences products to create more streamlined and accessible e-learning modules.

“Education Northwest is instrumental in the ongoing impact of SkillsUSA’s e-modules, which are designed to help learners progress in the development of transferable employability skills. Their understanding of middle school, high school, college/postsecondary, and adult learners and the goals of career and technical education make them a key partner for positive change and impact. Their commitment to understanding the work and being exemplary in actualizing it is immeasurable and valued.”

– Anita Foor, SkillsUSA

Expanding the reach of the SkillsUSA Framework

SkillsUSA has used the modules developed through this partnership to offer:

Training products for schools, districts, community colleges, and other organizations to complement CTE technical instruction with career development and job-preparation instruction while generating revenue for SkillsUSA

Equitable and accessible remote training and leadership development for member students and SkillsUSA advisors and staff members

Training on workplace and leadership mindsets and skills grounded in the SkillsUSA Framework as a standard offering available to SkillsUSA chapters and participants

To date, 2,605 students have completed SkillsUSA’s Framework Certification. A total of 33,289 have completed the Career Essentials Fundamental unit, 15,967 have completed the Career Essentials Advanced unit, and 1,159 have completed the Career Essentials Exploratory unit. In addition, 2,178 students have earned the industry-validated Career Essentials Credential or a related micro-credential.