Self-Assessment Tool

FOR MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES, AND 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

Why Use the Self-Assessment Tool?

As this report notes, every library and museum leader has a vested interest in defining his/her institution's role in supporting 21st century skills. Becoming more strategic and deliberate around a vision for improving or assisting in the development and expansion of 21st century skills among audiences is a vital first step. This tool helps libraries and museums scan the organization and focus planning efforts around core areas of library/museum operations.

Discovery

The Self-Assessment Tool was created to help museum and library leaders determine where their institutions fit on the continuum of 21st century skills operations and programming. Because the tool is not intended to prescribe specific activities, but to offer promising practices, each museum and library can use the tool to better determine the mission-appropriate ways in which it wishes to develop its audiences' 21st century skills. Due to the increased expectation for accountability in libraries and museums, metrics are offered to help establish specific goals that can be tracked over time.

Leading Questions

The tool is designed to help answer critical questions about how a library or museum can implement a vision for promoting 21st century skills, such as:

- What is the institution's vision for enhancing the 21st century skills of our audiences?
- What are effective human resource and leadership strategies for addressing 21st century skills?
- How can our organizational infrastructure more effectively support 21st century skills?
- How can we partner with other organizations and individuals to ensure our efforts are aligned with the entire community's learning systems?
- How might we monitor our progress toward our stated goals around 21st century skills?

Overview and Definitions:

The Rows

The self-assessment tool is segmented into three rows, labeled "Early Stage," "Transitional Stage," and "21st Century Stage." The tool itself contains the specific indicators that help a library or museum complete its self-assessment.

The Columns

This tool includes four core areas for museums and libraries to consider in a 21st century skills initiative: Institutional Assets, Leadership & Management, Partnering, and Accountability. Each of these areas, depicted as columns in the self-assessment tool, should be analyzed to determine the level of purposeful attention given to 21st century skills integration.

INSTITUTIONAL ASSETS:

How might human resources, collections, programs, physical facilities, and information technologies be directed to enhance the institution's support of 21st century skills in its audiences?

LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT:

What 21st century skills best align with the institution's strategic plans? How does the museum/library address issues of access, resources, and sustainability regarding 21st century skills? Are leadership and management decisions open and transparent?

PARTNERING:

How can partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and other cultural institutions help achieve a broad, community-wide vision around 21st century skills? How can these partnerships scale and be sustained over time?

ACCOUNTABILITY:

How can the institution track progress and enable continuous improvement?

How to Use the Self-Assessment Tool

The Self-Assessment Tool helps museums and libraries categorize themselves on a continuum of 21st century skills strategies, from "early stage" to "transitional stage" to "21st century stage." Each institution may fall within several different stages (e.g., a library/museum may have a "21st century stage" approach to programs but have an "early stage" approach to accountability). This tool allows any library or museum—regardless of its focus, size, or budget—to better envision and implement a 21st century skills action plan. **It is important to note that this self-assessment is best utilized as a broad, high-level planning tool, rather than as a specific, tactical manual.**

Before You Start:

Build your 21st century planning team thoughtfully. Consider including individuals from throughout the institution and community. It is important to note that the institution will place itself in various places within the continuum of 21st century skills alignment. Some aspects of the museum/library's work may be "transitional," whereas other areas of work may be "21st century" or "early." This is a natural and expected result of the self-assessment process.

Step 1:

Organize the institution's analysis around each of the categories across the top of the tool: Institutional Assets, Leadership & Management, Partnering, and Accountability. Note the subsections within each of these major categories.

Step 2:

Under each subsection, find the level (e.g. "early stage," "transitional stage," "21st century stage") that best describes your library/museum. It is possible that your institution falls between two levels—if that's the case, follow a consistent approach (choose a higher or lower level, but be consistent in this approach as you move through the tool).

Step 3:

After identifying where your museum/library falls within each category, compare your institution's position to the "21st century stage," which represents an overall vision for 21st century skills and audience engagement. If the institution falls at the "21st century stage," consider ways to improve the work that is already being conducted.

Step 4:

Use these self-assessment outcomes to initiate a dialogue with the museum/library board, colleagues, and other stakeholders, with the goal of further defining the institution's priorities around 21st century skills.

Step 5:

Commit to revisiting this process over time to determine progress and consider improvements.

Stage Definitions

Early Stage

Emerging: Up to 25% of the institution's operations and programming are focused on supporting 21st century skills among audiences.

Committed: Museum/Library serves as a trustworthy, authoritative source of knowledge and expertise.

Transitional Stage

Purposeful: Between 25-75% of the institution's operations and programming are focused on supporting 21st century skills among audiences.

Engaged: Library/Museum acts as a collaborative partner with other institutions to create and deliver audience-centered learning programs.

21st Century Stage

Comprehensive: Over 75% of institution's operations and programming are focused on supporting 21st century skills among audiences.

Embedded: Museum/Library partners with a wide array of institutions, individuals, and organizations to co-create and co-deliver audience-centered learning experiences across the entire community.

Institutional Assets

People (Human Capital)

Early Stage	• Up to 25% of staff members have received training as appropriate on how to support the institution's goals for engaging audiences around collections and 21st century skills. • Museum/Library leaders have analyzed how the institution's recruitment, hiring, and training practices can better support 21st century skills among audiences.
Transitional Stage	• Between 25-75% of staff members and volunteers know how to support the institution's goals for engaging audiences around collections and 21st century skills. • Between 25-75% of staff members receive formative feedback (via formal evaluations and/or peer review) about their abilities to support the institution's 21st century skills work. • Library/Museum staff members have begun implementing a plan to enhance the institution's human capital needs regarding 21st century skills.
21st Century Stage	• Over 75% of staff members and volunteers understand and deploy best practices to support the institution's goals for engaging audiences around collections and 21st century skills. • Where appropriate, over 75% of recruitment, hiring, and performance review practices include incentives that support staff and volunteer excellence in the institution's 21st century skills initiatives. • A comprehensive plan to enhance the abilities of staff and volunteers to support 21st century skills initiatives is in place and specific progress benchmarks are being tracked. • Staff members and volunteers are active in the surrounding community and use these experiences to inform and deepen their interactions with (and/or support of) museum/library visitors.

Institutional Assets

	Physical	**Information Technology (IT)**
Early Stage	• Up to 25% of the decisions involving the institution's physical facilities include considerations for engaging audiences around 21st century skills (e.g., space is considered for community meetings/workshops, special events, 21st century skills related programming). • Information about physical facilities (e.g., capital improvements, renovations or changes to operating hours) is shared broadly with audiences via one-way communication methods such as posters, handouts, email, and website announcements.	• Up to 25% of staff members and volunteers are networked with each other and use current technology platforms in daily work. • Library/Museum utilizes technology systems to communicate basic information (hours of operation, contact information, program schedules) to audiences through typical one-way communication methods (website and email announcements).
Transitional Stage	• Between 25-75% of the decisions involving the institution's physical facilities include considerations for engaging audiences around 21st century skills (e.g., space is considered for community meetings/workshops, special events, 21st century skills related programming). • Museum/Library works with current and potential audiences to identify and prioritize physical (building) improvements that enable 21st century skills programming. • Physical facility planning is integrated with Information Technology (IT) infrastructure planning whenever possible.	• Between 25-75% of staff members and volunteers use online networks and current technology platforms to connect with each other and audiences. • IT planning and decision-making processes encourage and integrate community stakeholder input. • Library/Museum uses technology systems to enable two-way communication with audiences about special events and programming (e.g., audiences receive answers to their questions and provide feedback about events through online communication channels including social media).
21st Century Stage	• Where appropriate, over 75% of the decisions involving the institution's physical facilities include considerations for generating and sustaining audience engagement around 21st century skills (e.g., physical facility is open and accessible; collections and databases are available online; facility offers evening hours, current technology platforms and flexibly designed physical/virtual meeting spaces; and institution offers multiple access points in neighborhoods, schools, community centers and/or online to engage diverse populations). • Strategic planning for physical and IT infrastructure is fully aligned with the institution's goals to enhance audiences' 21st century skills, as well as with community priorities. • IT and physical facilities infrastructure are managed as parts of an integrated system that supports two-way interactions between audiences and staff (e.g., audiences and staff regularly collaborate with one another in onsite and online settings).	

Institutional Assets

	Collections	**Programs**
Early Stage	• Collections occasionally support purposeful 21st century skills enhancement among audiences (e.g., objects and materials occasionally serve as a foundation for enhancing skills like critical thinking, civic literacy and creativity among audiences, through curricula resources, special exhibits, and guest lectures). • Some parts of the collection are being considered for digitization.	• Some programs include consideration of 21st century skills as learning outcomes for audiences. • Some programs put audiences at the center of the designed experience (e.g., programs are customized to heighten audience engagement; visitors can interact with the collection, each other and staff in hands-on, interactive ways; and programs are conducted at times when audiences can easily participate).
Transitional Stage	• Collections often support purposeful 21st century skills enhancement among audiences (e.g., historical objects, books, and/or art often serve as the foundation for enhancing skills like critical thinking, civic literacy, and creativity among audiences). • Museum/Library has conducted a comprehensive analysis and developed an institutionally-appropriate plan for digitizing its collection, or parts of its collection. Some collection assets are already digitized and easily accessible online to the public. • A significant percentage of the collection is enhanced by active audience participation in, and contribution to the resources (e.g., audiences add value by collaborating with library/museum staff to enhance commentary, co-create content and interpretation, share artifacts, and add value to research activities). • Museum/Library engages community stakeholders and other institutions where appropriate in major collections strategies.	• Many programs include consideration of 21st century skills as learning outcomes for audiences. • Many programs put audiences at the center of the designed experience (e.g., programs are customized to heighten audience engagement; audiences can interact with objects in the collection, each other and staff in hands-on, interactive ways; programs are conducted at times when audiences can easily participate; and programs are enhanced by technology-enabled communication and interactions such as online discussions, dialogue, events). • It is common for audiences to help develop and refine library/museum programming, particularly if a program directly addresses an identified community need. • The library/museum is recognized as an active partner in creating and delivering programs that align with community needs.
21st Century Stage	• Most designed audience experiences include consideration of 21st century skills as learning outcomes for audiences. • Most designed audience experiences are enhanced by active audience participation in, and contribution to, the institution's expertise and resources (e.g., audiences add value by collaborating with library/museum staff to co-create programs, content, and interpretation, share artifacts, and add value to research activities). • Most programs are enhanced by technology-enabled platforms that encourage and support audience-institution collaboration and communication (e.g., audiences can comment on and collaborate around collections and programs in online settings). • The institution is implementing a comprehensive, institutionally-appropriate digitization plan with the goal of enhancing online access to the collection. • Collections and programming activities are fully aligned with institutional and community goals regarding learning and 21st century skills (e.g., the institution regularly reviews how a collection and/or program can better enhance 21st century skills among audiences). • Audience interests, priorities and needs are central to the development and delivery of most programs and collections (e.g., knowledge creation is viewed as a reciprocal process and collections-based experiences are personalized and customized for audience interests/needs).	

Leadership & Management

Vision & Planning

Early Stage	• Museum/Library leaders value 21st century skills and are actively exploring how to integrate these skills into the institution's strategic planning processes. • Where appropriate, museum/library leaders selectively include perspectives from key stakeholders and audience representatives in strategic planning efforts.
Transitional Stage	• Strategic planning for the museum/library includes a comprehensive approach to integrating 21st century skills into key leadership documents (vision, mission, strategic plan). • Museum/Library leaders have identified community learning needs and priorities as part of the strategic planning process. • Key community and audience representatives contribute meaningfully to the institution's strategic planning process.
21st Century Stage	• The institution has analyzed its vision, mission, and strategic plan and has incorporated 21st century skills in ways that reflect the needs and priorities of the institution and the community. • Museum/Library has developed and is implementing a prioritized action plan to enhance the institution's approach to 21st century skills (e.g., library/museum has conducted a comprehensive inventory and has produced a list of its key assets and resources focused on 21st century skills; there is a high level of awareness of these resources across the community and among key stakeholders/target audiences). • Audiences, partner institutions, and community groups are actively engaged in the development and refinement of museum/library strategic planning documents.

Leadership & Management

Access

Early Stage	• Access (affordability; universal design principles; physical access to the building, facilities, objects and collections; and technological access to information assets while protecting individual privacy) is considered as a key dimension in strategic planning. • Library/Museum has identified high priority audiences in need of specific 21st century skills outreach; this information is shared with internal program staff. • Library/Museum occasionally surveys community members and target audiences to identify and prioritize access-related issues.
Transitional Stage	• Library/Museum has conducted a comprehensive analysis and developed a plan to enhance access (e.g., affordability; universal design principles; physical access to the building, facilities, objects and collections; and technological access to information assets while protecting individual privacy). • Library/Museum selectively participates and/or leads programs that enhance 21st century skills in high priority / high need populations. • Library/Museum often initiates meetings with target audience representatives to advise the museum on access related issues and to remove actual or perceived barriers to access
21st Century Stage	• Library/Museum is implementing and tracking progress against its plan to enhance access (e.g., affordability; universal design principles; physical access to the building, facilities, objects and collections; and technological access to information assets while protecting individual privacy). • Library/Museum regularly works with community groups to promote dialogue around issues of equity and access (e.g., the institution co-sponsors community town halls, book clubs, special exhibits, lecture series, and online programs relating to issues like global awareness and appreciation of diversity). • Library/Museum is recognized as a community leader and partner in developing and delivering equitable and accessible 21st century skills programs.

Leadership & Management

Resource Allocation & Sustainability

Early Stage	• Up to 25% of resource development and allocation decisions include consideration of issues relating to audience engagement and 21st century skills.
Transitional Stage	• Between 25-75% of resource development and allocation decisions include consideration of issues relating to audience engagement and 21st century skills. • Funding opportunities related to 21st century skills have been identified and are selectively being pursued.
21st Century Stage	• Over 75% of resource development and allocation decisions include consideration of issues relating to audience engagement and 21st century skills. • Fundraising for 21st century skills operations and programming is vigorous and successful. • Partner organizations, community groups, and audiences are actively engaged in collaborative resource development and allocation support to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of the community's 21st century skills learning efforts.

Partnering

Business Partners, Community Partners, Education Partners

Early Stage	• Up to 25% of museum/library's 21st century skills initiatives are delivered through partnerships with other institutions, stakeholders, and audiences (such as schools, civic and social service organizations, business, community colleges, universities).
Transitional Stage	• Between 25-75% of museum/library's 21st century skills initiatives are delivered in collaboration with partners (e.g., the institution partners with local schools to deliver literacy workshops).
21st Century Stage	• Over 75% of museum/library's 21st century skills initiatives are co-created and co-delivered in sustainable, collaborative partnerships with other institutions and community/audience groups. For example, the museum/library works with: - Business groups to co-create and co-deliver programs and services (such as workshops or shared web portals) focused on workforce skills like innovation, communication, and technology skills. - Community groups to co-create and co-deliver programs and services on such topical issues as environmental literacy, financial literacy, health literacy, or civic literacy. - Education groups (e.g., pre-K, schools and institutions of higher learning) to co-create and co-deliver curricula, programs, resources and services that enhance such skills as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and innovation. - Museum/Library regularly leads and/or works in partnership with other entities to identify and address significant gaps in the community's learning ecosystem around 21st century skills (e.g., by identifying high priority skills needed by the population that are not being addressed, and working with partners to address such needs).

Accountability

Goal Setting / Metric Development / Continuous Improvement

Early Stage	• Up to 25% of the institution's learning initiatives include measurable outcomes related to 21st century skills; these metrics are being tracked over time. • Audience satisfaction surveys are conducted annually and shared internally to inform continuous improvement efforts.
Transitional Stage	• Between 25-75% of the institution's learning initiatives include measurable outcomes related to 21st century skills; these metrics are being tracked over time. • Audiences are regularly asked to contribute feedback for use in the development of 21st century skills goals, metrics, and continuous improvement plans.
21st Century Stage	• Over 75% of the institution's learning initiatives include measurable outcomes related to 21st century skills; these metrics are being tracked over time. • The institution's vision around 21st century skills is aligned with major operations across the institution and is an integral component of the continuous improvement process (e.g., assets, leadership & management, partnering and accountability processes each have 21st century skills-related metrics that are monitored for continued improvement over time). • Library/Museum has aligned its 21st century skills initiatives with community needs and interests (e.g., library/museum skills metrics are aligned with community-wide improvement initiatives, such as indices that track quality of life, learning, and/or competitiveness issues). • Library/Museum engages audiences, partner organizations, and the wider community in its continuous improvement processes (e.g., audience and community groups provide real-time feedback and appropriate levels of hands-on support to assist the institution in tracking and improving its approaches to 21st century skills learning).