



EMPLOYER HANDBOOK

© 2018 by ACT, Inc. All rights reserved.

This handbook, and all the materials it contains, are the property of ACT, Inc., which maintains sole ownership of the handbook, information and materials, and all other intellectual property related to ACT WorkKeys® the National Career Readiness Certificate® and the ACT work readiness system. Any reproduction or use of this handbook or the information it contains without written authorization by ACT is expressly prohibited.

ACT WorkKeys and ACT WorkKeys NCRC are registered trademarks of ACT, Inc., in the U.S.A. and other countries.

WRC0012 v.1

Table of Contents

Getting Started with the ACT® WorkKeys® NCRC®	1
Section 1 – Quick Start Guide	2
Section 2 – Resources	7
Section 3 – Details	13
A. Statement of Use	
B. The ACT WorkKeys NCRC Methodology	
C. Expanded Methods for Implementing the ACT WorkKeys NCRC	
Section 4- Answers to Frequently Asked Questions	16
Appendices	
Appendix A - Testing Procedures	19
Appendix B - ACT Work Readiness System Information	21
Appendix C - Applying the ACT Work Readiness System	22
Appendix D - Competency Models	23
Brochure: Maximize Your Workforce Investment	

Acknowledgements

ACT WorkKeys[®]
NCRC

ACT certifies that
Jane P. Sample
has earned the ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate[®] at the **Gold** level.

Registered Candidate # 0000000000
Test Date 07/2010

Help us improve the handbook

Employer engagement will drive change in the workforce. The success of this national initiative relies on its wide-scale application to work settings across the country. We welcome your input and invite you to e-mail your comments and feedback to wrc@act.org.

Legal Notice

This handbook contains information regarding use of the ACT WorkKeys system and the ACT WorkKeys NCRC (collectively “the Tools”) by an employer. It is not intended to be legal advice, and employers should consult their own legal counsel regarding the federal, state, and local laws (collectively “Laws”) that may be applicable to such employers. ACT is not responsible for employers’ use of the Tools in a manner that is in violation of such Laws, and use of the Tools does not ensure compliance with such Laws.

Getting Started with the ACT® WorkKeys® NCRC®

Congratulations on your organization's decision to participate in the ACT WorkKeys NCRC program! You are joining ranks with some of the most respected companies in the nation as you begin to draw on the national standard in career readiness certification.

This handbook is designed to help you maximize the benefits of the program by assisting the people who will be responsible for implementing the ACT WorkKeys NCRC in your organization. It offers guidance to enhance your knowledge of the credential and describes processes that will accelerate program implementation.

The handbook is arranged in four sections to facilitate a fast and effective launch of the program.

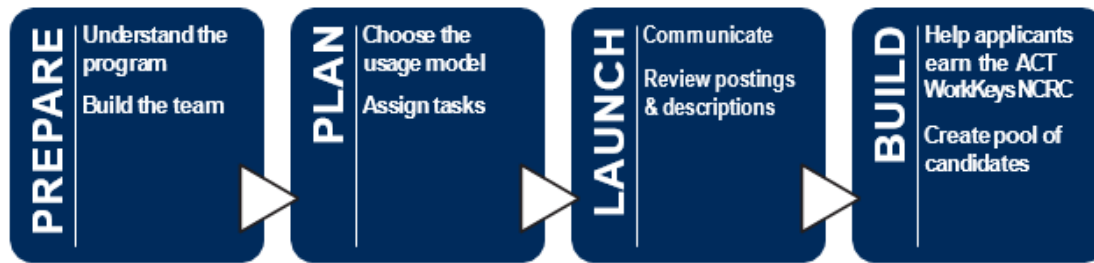
Quick Start Guide: An overview of the implementation steps that will help you get started immediately and will demonstrate how easily the system can be integrated into your practices and processes.

Resources: Documents included for your use in the Quick Start Guide, such as training outlines, sample announcements, and brochures. Resources are marked throughout the Quick Start Guide with a red star (★).

Details: A deeper look at the various components and principles of the ACT WorkKeys NCRC.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Section 1 – Quick Start Guide: Four Steps to Faster Implementation



PREPARE

A small amount of initial organization will ease the way later on. Before anything else, complete the Employer Listing Registration Form if your organization recognizes the ACT WorkKeys NCRC in your county's effort to become a certified ACT Work Ready Community. Visit www.workreadycommunities.org/business/form.

- 1. Understand the program.** Decide the level of your organization's commitment to the ACT WorkKeys NCRC and how it addresses current needs. Be prepared to explain these decisions in concise, consistent terms. Keep track of messages that seem to be the most effective.
- 2. Build an implementation team and coach members to participate and communicate.** Look for representation from the following areas:
 - Executive level (program sponsor, decision maker)
 - Human Resources staff
 - Heads or representatives of major departments

Every team needs a leader and the full participation of its members. All members need to master the handbook content, the Details section, and the FAQs. Understanding the program and its benefits will speed implementation. Assign your leader the responsibility for receiving all information related to the use of the ACT WorkKeys NCRC and disseminating this information throughout the organization.

PLAN

A number of early decisions and key assignments will dictate how the program is introduced.

1. **Choose the usage model.** Determine how your organization will introduce and use the credential. Study the Details section and Frequently Asked Questions later in this handbook.
2. **Assign tasks.** As appropriate, give each team member one or more of the implementation steps listed in the next two phases (Launch and Build).

LAUNCH

Clear communication about the ACT WorkKeys NCRC and the implementation process is the key to a trouble-free launch.

1. **Communicate.** Many people won't support concepts or initiatives they don't fully understand. Your team will need to work hard to inform the organization about the value and meaning of the credential. Be sure to emphasize the importance of your organization's participation. In addition, your adoption of the ACT WorkKeys creates benefits that extend to much broader gains for your community, regional workforce, and local economy. A public announcement of your decision will demonstrate your organization's vision, motivate prospective applicants for your jobs, and spur further adoption of the movement. Everyone benefits when workforce skills improve.
 - Identify all stakeholders who will be "touched" by the program as you develop the communications plan. They will likely include:
 - Human Resources representatives
 - Recruiters or other partners involved in the hiring process
 - Managers and supervisors
 - Members of the training department and your training partners
 - Executive sponsors
 - Develop an internal communications plan:
 - *Introduce the program to key personnel.* The introduction can take place via e-mail or as part of employee meetings. You need to provide a full explanation of the initiative and the goals that will be achieved. Members of the internal audience should be asked to identify others who would benefit from the information. A sample e-mail with key introductory points is included in the Resources section. ★
 - *Conduct training sessions for staff.* Sessions should cover the basics of the program and the benefits of participation. The audience should include key stakeholders and other personnel who will be working

with the ACT WorkKeys NCRC and will benefit from training. A sample training outline is provided in the Resources section. ★

- *Announce the program organization wide.* E-mail is an effective means of accomplishing this. A sample message is included in the Resources section of this handbook. ★
- *Prepare for questions.* Communications and training activities can be based on material provided in the Resources section, appendices, and the FAQs in Section 4. The Resources section also includes materials that will help you explain the program. ★
- Communicate with external audiences:

Messages need to focus on the benefits to your organization. For example:

Our firm has adopted the ACT WorkKeys NCRC. We will use this credential to:

- *Improve employee retention, performance, and productivity;*
- *Identify and target training needs; and*
- *Facilitate communication among educators, workforce developers, and employers.*

You can base messages on information provided in this handbook and its appendices. A sample press release is included in the Resources section. ★

2. Review job postings and descriptions and incorporate ACT WorkKeys NCRC language into these and other documentation.

- For each position, add text describing the usage model that applies: for example, “We recommend an ACT WorkKeys NCRC for all applicants to this position.” (Some companies apply different language to different positions.)
- Next, integrate the certificate with internal hiring practices:
 - Incorporate an overview of the ACT WorkKeys NCRC into training conducted for newly hired employees.
 - Brief managers, supervisors, human resources representatives, and training personnel on the importance of this step.
 - Establish reporting procedures that measure success. Demonstrating measurable gains to the organization will sustain the program.
 - Begin with simple evaluation metrics based on clearly defined data that can easily be collected and analyzed. Plan to add detail to your evaluation methods as the initiative moves forward.

BUILD

Once the program is operating, you can shift your focus to maximizing its benefits to your organization. Success will be achieved when large numbers of applicants for your jobs earn ACT WorkKeys NCRCs and present them with their applications. At that point, you will have access to a pool of applicants who are fully prepared for opportunities at your organization.

When your organization recommends that applicants present the ACT WorkKeys NCRC, you need to provide direction to individuals who have not earned the credential. To earn the ACT WorkKeys NCRC, individuals must successfully complete three assessments of work-related skills. This means applicants need to find a testing site and arrange for testing. The Resources section provides an example of a one-page document that can be supplied to applicants. It includes space to provide the location of local testing sites and times when tests are available.

1. Help applicants earn the ACT WorkKeys NCRC.

Most organizations rely on one of two options to make assessments available to their applicants:

- *Partner with established testing sites.* The tests supporting the ACT WorkKeys NCRC are widely administered throughout the United States and delivered by a broad range of organizations, including many in the public sector. Hundreds of ACT-approved testing sites offer the assessments leading to the ACT WorkKeys NCRC. Some sites administer tests for the general public while others provide tests only to the populations they serve. To find a test center, visit [here](#).
Employers who rely on public testing sites benefit from establishing solid working relationships with test centers in their area. Test site personnel need to be aware that your job applicants will be completing the tests. Companies can also invite local agencies to establish test sites on their behalf.
- *Administer assessments at their own locations.* Many business users prefer to establish test sites and administer tests in their facilities. This requires them to invest extra time and energy, but they receive a number of important advantages in return. For example, the use of computerized tests enables employers to test applicants at any time and review results immediately after a test is completed.

The assessments on which the ACT WorkKeys NCRC is based are used by hundreds of companies and are frequently administered in business settings. Test protocols (Appendix A) are designed to accommodate a wide variety of locations. Employers that are interested in establishing a testing site at their facility can contact workkeys@act.org or call 800-967-5539. An ACT representative will guide you through the process.

2. Create a pool of qualified applicants.

In order to build a pool of candidates who already possess the ACT WorkKeys NCRC, some employers have implemented special incentives to encourage individuals to earn a certificate. A partial list follows:

- Reimburse candidates who present an ACT WorkKeys NCRC and are hired by your organization for the cost of the certificate (assuming the applicant paid for it).
- Award bonuses to candidates who present certificates.
- Recognize newly hired employees with certificates in internal communications.

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

The following resources can be contacted regarding questions about the ACT WorkKeys NCRC:

- ACT WorkKeys NCRC Help Desk: 800-967-5539 (toll-free phone)
- Landing page for WorkKeys for Employers: visit [here](#).

Section 2 - Resources ★

Resources provided in this section are designed to support the launch of the ACT WorkKeys NCRC program in your organization.

All of these resources are identified in the Quick Start section of this handbook.

- Sample e-mail message to internal stakeholders
- Suggested training outline
- Internal organization announcement
- One-page statement for applicants who need to earn the ACT WorkKeys NCRC
- Press release about your organization and the ACT WorkKeys NCRC
- Support materials for your internal campaign

Sample E-mail Message to Internal Stakeholders

[Organization] has decided to participate in the ACT® WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate® (ACT® WorkKeys® NCRC®) program. The ACT WorkKeys NCRC is a nationally recognized credential and measure of career readiness that documents an individual's qualifications in terms of essential skills associated with success in the workplace. Based on the experience of other companies, we believe that implementing this system will enable us to achieve improvements in many areas, including employee turnover, quality, training efficiency, and others. A short overview of the program is attached. (See the *Maximize Your Workforce Investment* brochure at the back of this handbook.)

In the coming weeks, we will be scheduling training sessions to outline the program and to answer questions about our implementation. It is vital for you as a [hiring manager, department head, human resources staff, recruiter/partner, etc.] to understand the program in detail. In addition, I am asking that you suggest other members of your staff who should be involved in the training sessions. Please send the names of these individuals to me by __.

Your participation and cooperation will be essential in helping this program become part of our organization's culture. Your support represents an important contribution to our success. I will be happy to schedule a meeting with you to discuss the program further and to answer any specific questions.

Suggested Training Outline

In order to maximize your success with the program, it will be important to make sure key personnel fully understand the program and its potential benefits. Here is some suggested content. Your presentation should touch on all of the main points, if only briefly.

➤ **The basics**

- The skills gap in applied workplace skills
- The ACT work readiness system
- Essential skills common to most jobs
 - Applied Math
 - Workplace Documents
 - Graphic Literacy
- The ACT® WorkKeys® NCRC® – objective and portable

➤ **Benefits of the system**

- Information about candidates for the jobs
- How skills affect turnover, productivity, and quality
- Using the system to reduce training costs

➤ **Using the credential at your organization**

- Areas targeted for improvement
- Implementation plan and team
- Initial phases – introduction and launch
- Measuring results, reporting outcomes
- How hiring manager/key stakeholders participate and benefits

➤ **Q&A and handouts** – Use the materials in this handbook for your training sessions. It can help to review and handout:

- The FAQ section
- Part or all of the Details section
- Appendix B and Appendix C – ACT WorkKeys information
- *Maximize Your Workforce Investment* brochure

Sample Internal Announcement for Your Organization

To: All Employees

From: Human Resources

Re: The ACT® WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate®

In the coming months, you will hear more about our organization's participation in the ACT® WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate® program. The ACT WorkKeys NCRC is a nationally recognized credential that helps identify the presence of essential skills that are common to many jobs and are associated with achieving success in the workplace. Higher levels of skills in such areas as Applied Math, for example, are an important part of many of today's jobs.

Our organization decided to participate in this national movement to help identify skill gaps with current and prospective employees.

This program will be apparent to you in several ways in the near future:

- You will begin to see our job postings ask for the ACT WorkKeys NCRC
- We will announce our participation in the program to the community
- We will have various internal training sessions about the program
- [Optional] We may encourage current employees to get a certificate

The ACT WorkKeys NCRC program promises to be a very positive initiative for our organization. If you have questions about the program or if you are interested in finding out how you can test for the ACT WorkKeys NCRC, please contact Human Resources at _____.

Statement for Applicants Who Need to Earn the ACT WorkKeys NCRC

The following sample illustrates how you can refer job applicants to organizations that administer ACT WorkKeys NCRC assessments, so that applicants can submit their ACT WorkKeys NCRC as part of the application process.

Dear Applicant:

Our organization recommends that you submit an ACT® WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate® (ACT® WorkKeys® NCRC®) along with your application for employment. You can learn more about the ACT WorkKeys NCRC by visiting www.act.org/workkeysforjobseekers.

The ACT WorkKeys NCRC is based on scores achieved on three WorkKeys assessments:

- Applied Math
- Workplace Documents
- Graphic Literacy

Three organizations in our region administer the tests. Their representatives will be pleased to help you complete the testing process and earn a certificate.

1. ABC Community College Address
Phone
Hours for testing: Monday and Wednesday, 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
2. The XYZ One-Stop Center Address
Phone
Hours for testing: Tuesday and Thursday, 8 a.m. to noon
3. ABC High School—Adult Education Department Address
Phone 13
Hours for testing: Tuesday and Thursday, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Training and skill development programs are available at these locations should you need additional preparation or want to increase your scores and certificate level.

Press release

Headline: [Company] Adopts ACT® WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate® to Acquire Highly Skilled Candidates

Copy: City, State—[Company] today announced it will adopt the [ACT® WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate®](#) program to acquire the exact skills needed to grow its business and improve the quality of its workforce.

The NCRC® is the nation's most recognized work readiness credential, which individuals receive after taking ACT® WorkKeys® assessments—a series of proctored assessments that measure a range of hard and soft skills relevant to any occupation, at any level, across industries. [Company] will ask its future job candidates to take these assessments and submit their NCRC skills credential with their applications.

"We're thrilled to be offering this program to our applicants and feel it will help us establish a pool of highly skilled candidates for our workforce and the region at large," said NAME. In this way, we hope other companies in the area adopt the ACT WorkKeys NCRC to further contribute to the talent pool and grow our economy."

[Add testing and training locations in your community]

Boilerplate:

[Add company boilerplate]

About ACT & ACT Workforce Solutions:

ACT® WorkKeys® Assessments are the cornerstone of the ACT workforce solutions, created by ACT, an internationally recognized assessment and learning company, best known for the ACT® college entrance exam. WorkKeys Assessments have been used for more than two decades to measure essential workplace skills and help people build career pathways. Successful completion of three WorkKeys Assessments—WorkKeys Applied Math, WorkKeys Workplace Documents, and WorkKeys Graphic Literacy—can help an individual earn an ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), a portable credential that documents essential work skills. More than four million WorkKeys NCRCs have been issued across the United States.

Section 3 - Details ★

A. Statement of Use

The ACT WorkKeys NCRC can contribute to the full range of human resource functions with a minimum investment on the part of employers. These functions can include recruiting, hiring, promotion, training, succession planning, mentoring, performance evaluation, and other areas. Individual employers must ultimately determine the best means of using the credential to achieve their business goals.

The starting point for all employers is to “recognize” that applicants for all or some of their jobs possesses the ACT WorkKeys NCRC. This means that an employer will reference ACT WorkKeys NCRC in job descriptions, postings, and advertisements. Suggested language might include “XYZ, Inc., recommends the ACT WorkKeys NCRC,” or “Completion of the ACT WorkKeys NCRC is recommended.”

For employers that choose to use the ACT WorkKeys NCRC as a qualifying credential, the ACT WorkKeys NCRC, along with other criteria, will be considered as part of the selection process. Using the ACT WorkKeys NCRC as one of these multiple criteria adds new information to hiring practices. Essential skills become one in a series of factors that help employers determine whether an applicant is qualified for a job. And like any other credential or qualification, its use within selection processes must be appropriate, relevant, and justifiable.

Employers who recommend the ACT WorkKeys NCRC are not encouraged to specify a credential level as the singular qualification for a job. The level of ACT WorkKeys NCRC earned, absent any other information, will not determine whether an applicant is qualified; instead, the ACT WorkKeys NCRC augments and confirms criteria that are commonly used to inform hiring decisions.

Opportunities for employee development represent another important benefit provided by the ACT WorkKeys NCRC, and it is particularly true when the local applicant pool is limited. In such cases, an employer sometimes needs to hire individuals who might not possess a skill set that is sufficient for their new jobs or for expanded responsibilities in the future. The ACT WorkKeys NCRC can help employers identify skills gaps and tackle the most pressing training needs of their newest employees.

B. The ACT WorkKeys NCRC methodology

The ACT WorkKeys NCRC helps employers identify whether individuals possess the skills commonly associated with success when entering employment, advancing to a new position, or starting a training program. The credential documents the presence of essential work-related skills that are important across a wide range of jobs. It confirms the relationship between an individual's skills and skill levels associated with on-the-job performance set by the employer.

Four certificate levels differentiate skill levels among individuals. Higher levels of certificates signify readiness for a wider range of jobs. Certificates are issued to individuals who successfully complete three work-related assessments and achieve a level of 3 or above in each.

The ACT WorkKeys NCRC is meaningful to employers, current and prospective employees, educators, and trainers. It is based on research data compiled by ACT and linked to education and training programs that enable individuals to improve their skills. The credential relies on highly reliable skills assessments and represents a nationally recognized standard for career readiness.

The credential is based on a set of principles that demonstrate its capabilities, benefits, and value. These principles also help define the relationship between the ACT WorkKeys NCRC and other career readiness credentials, issued by state and local entities across the country, that also rely to some degree on ACT WorkKeys assessments. ACT is fully committed to supporting all career readiness credentials that are based on the ACT work readiness system, although it encourages these programs to adopt all ACT WorkKeys NCRC principles and join the national system, so that the data from these programs can benefit the system as a whole. This will continue to help ensure that the NCRC is recognized and transportable across the nation.

ACT WorkKeys NCRC Credentialing Principles

- Based on three ACT WorkKeys assessments:
 - Applied Math
 - Graphic Literacy
 - Workplace Documents
- Assessments completed under standard conditions that include proctored administration in secure testing environment
- Awarded at four levels:
 - Bronze- requires a minimum scores of 3 or above
 - Silver- requires a minimum scores of 4 or above
 - Gold- requires minimum scores of 5 or above
 - Platinum- requires minimum scores of 6 or above
- The front of the certificate displays the level earned and a 9 digit registration number
- The back of the certificate displays the WorkKeys assessment scores earned and the skills verified for each of the assessments completed.
- Certificates can be electronically verified by employers

For more information, visit www.act.org/workforce

C. Expanded Methods for Implementing the ACT WorkKeys NCRC

Most organizations choose to rely on the ACT WorkKeys NCRC as an effective means of establishing and building a local talent pipeline, by documenting the presence of skills that are directly related to the widest range of jobs, occupations, and work roles. It also serves as an important connecting point for businesses, educators, and workforce developers who are pursuing common goals related to raising skills and improving performance.

Higher levels of adoption are also possible. Combining the credential with other WorkKeys system components positions the ACT WorkKeys NCRC as a cornerstone supporting a comprehensive range of human resources management functions, including recruitment, training, succession planning, mentoring, and performance evaluation.

These expanded options clearly create the potential to improve hiring processes and enhance return on investment. To implement them, each individual employer will need to complete additional steps that pertain to research, planning, and preparation. (These steps are not covered in this handbook but are available at www.act.org under the heading ***Job Profiling***) An employer must ensure that the methodology it chooses to implement is fully aligned to the requirements and responsibilities that are specific to an employer's jobs and work environments.

Additional information on the ACT work readiness system, which has led to measurable improvements in business performance for hundreds of employers across the nation, is provided in Appendices B-D. Employers who wish to learn more about the system can contact WorkKeys representatives by e-mailing workkeys@act.org or phoning 800-WORKKEY (967-5539).

Section 4 - Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Why do individuals need the ACT WorkKeys NCRC?

The ACT WorkKeys NCRC is designed to complement other traditional credentials, such as a high school diploma, community college degree, or certificate of technical proficiency. While these credentials mark the fulfillment of an individual's classroom learning experiences, the ACT WorkKeys NCRC confirms competence in a specific set of workplace skills.

Why is the ACT WorkKeys NCRC based on Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents assessments?

ACT has analyzed nearly 21,500 individual jobs across the country to determine the skills and skill levels needed to succeed in them. According to our findings, three skills are highly important to most jobs.



These three skills are covered by the ACT WorkKeys Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents assessments, respectively.

What benefits do employers receive by using the ACT WorkKeys NCRC?

The ACT WorkKeys NCRC can reduce hiring time and costs. Improvements in the skills documented by the ACT WorkKeys NCRC have been shown by research to improve the quality of new hires, reduce training time, reduce turnover, and increase productivity.

What makes the ACT WorkKeys NCRC unique?

The ACT WorkKeys NCRC is based on highly reliable ACT WorkKeys tests that have been used by thousands of employers across the nation since they became available nearly two decades ago. The development and maintenance of the WorkKeys assessments involve intensive research and data analysis that are performed in accordance with formal industry standards. ACT is guided in the development of ACT WorkKeys assessments by the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (1999), developed by the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National

Council on Measurement in Education. Development of the ACT WorkKeys system is similarly guided by standards established in the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*. Because the ACT WorkKeys system assesses essential foundational skills representing the bedrock of a skilled workforce, its assessments can be applied to virtually any job.

What is the life cycle of the ACT WorkKeys NCRC?

Each ACT WorkKeys NCRC includes a date of issuance. The skills measured by any credential tend to change with time; thus, generally, they should be renewed after five years.

Who developed ACT WorkKeys and the ACT WorkKeys NCRC?

ACT WorkKeys and the ACT WorkKeys NCRC were developed by ACT, an internationally recognized assessment and research organization. ACT is best known for the ACT test, which helps students transition into college. ACT is equally committed to helping individuals transition into and within the workplace using the ACT WorkKeys NCRC.

Is training available to improve the skills documented by the ACT WorkKeys NCRC?

Yes. The skills documented by the NCRC are tied to targeted curricula, enabling educators and trainers to help individuals increase their skills and enhance job prospects. More information can be found at www.act.org/workkeys.

How will I know credentials presented by applicants are valid?

All individuals who earn the ACT WorkKeys NCRC can provide a 9 digit registration number that can be verified at www.act.org/workkeys when credentials are included with the application materials requested by your organization.

Are there multiple ways to use the ACT WorkKeys NCRC?

The essential employability skills documented by the ACT WorkKeys NCRC serve to position the credential as the cornerstone for a wide range of applications and initiatives that can address the full spectrum of human resources processes. From the external perspective, the ACT WorkKeys NCRC represents an effective means of helping individuals prepare for meaningful employment and careers. At the same time, however, employers can choose to implement the credential as part of internal programs that are specific to their needs and objectives. Adopting expanded strategies and additional assessment tools is necessary to move beyond the ACT WorkKeys NCRC-only option.

Can other WorkKeys elements be incorporated with the ACT WorkKeys NCRC?

The ACT WorkKeys NCRC and the WorkKeys system are closely related by virtue of the assessments and skill areas that the credential encompasses. However, they differ greatly in

terms of the breadth of their capabilities and the manner in which employers use them. The ACT WorkKeys NCRC serves as a widely recognized credential that signifies the presence of three foundational skills that are relevant to a broad range of jobs. The ACT work readiness system, on the other hand, supports a much wider range of applications, including the capability to evaluate the relevance of additional skills that can be more important to some occupations and to assess individuals for these skills. The system also offers a research-based methodology for identifying the skills and skill levels that are relevant to jobs and their work environments. The methodology is based on job profiling processes that employers use to identify job applicants with skills and skill levels that pertain directly to their jobs. Many employers choose to fully implement the ACT work readiness system in order to expand on the fundamental benefits of the ACT WorkKeys NCRC. Additional information is presented in Appendix B and Appendix C, and can also be obtained at www.act.org/workkeys.

What is the Talent assessment?

Although the ACT work readiness system is most widely recognized for its capability to assess knowledge and skills that are related to jobs and work, it also includes a suite of instruments—the Talent Assessment—that measure non-cognitive attributes and characteristics. It measures personality and behavior in terms of 12 work-related personality characteristics that include cooperation, discipline, and stability. Talent also uses four compound scales that combine characteristics related to workplace roles, such as work discipline.

Why do some employers use the ACT WorkKeys NCRC with Talent?

Most employers recognize that cognitive skills are not the only factors that help to predict job performance. Non-cognitive factors—personality characteristics, behaviors, and work-related interests and values—also play an important role in job performance. The WorkKeys Talent assessment can help employers understand the type of behaviors that are shared by successful performers and identify applicants with personality characteristics that are likely to lead to success. Integrating these factors with the essential skills documented by the NCRC gives employers a broader view of an applicant's qualifications.

Is the ACT WorkKeys NCRC incorporated into skill certification systems?

Yes. The Manufacturing Skills Certification System that has been established and endorsed by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) incorporates the ACT WorkKeys NCRC and the Talent Assessment as its uniform entry point. More information is provided in Appendix D.

Appendices

Appendix A: Testing Procedures

The ACT WorkKeys assessments that support the ACT WorkKeys NCRC can be delivered at an established ACT WorkKeys testing site or at your organization, provided that appropriate facilities, equipment, and staff are available. Companies and other organizations can establish their own test centers by following the guidelines set by ACT. Here is an overview of the testing methods and procedures followed by approved ACT WorkKeys test centers.

1. Test delivery methods

ACT WorkKeys assessments are available for delivery in two formats—as computerized assessments delivered via the Internet and as paper-and-pencil assessments. The requirements for each of these delivery modes can vary, and the specific program for which the examinee is being tested commonly determines the format under which tests are delivered.

2. Internet-based testing

Personal computers that meet hardware/software requirements and have sufficient broadband connectivity are needed to support computerized delivery. Examinees are not permitted to bring writing instruments or scratch paper into the testing room, but local site administrators can provide these materials to them. Scratch paper is collected at the end of the testing session and must be shredded when it is no longer needed. The use of dictionaries and other aids is not allowed. Examinees are not permitted to bring cellular phones, pagers, or other communication devices into the testing room. Approved calculators can be used by examinees completing ACT WorkKeys Applied Math.

3. Paper-and-pencil testing

Testing sites must provide examinees with a work area that offers adequate writing surfaces and seating space, sufficient lighting, comfortable temperatures, a quiet atmosphere, and freedom from distraction. The use of scratch paper, notes, or dictionaries is not permitted. Examinees can perform calculations and record notes in their test booklets. Cellular phones, pagers, and other communication devices cannot be brought into the testing room. Approved calculators can be used by examinees completing ACT WorkKeys Applied Math.

4. Supervising examinee activities

Careful attention must be devoted to selecting the appropriate testing staff. People who are selected for these responsibilities need to be responsible individuals who are familiar with testing practices and capable of detecting and addressing prohibited behaviors and emergency situations. Individuals who might eventually take any of the WorkKeys

assessments should not serve on the testing staff. All testing staff, room supervisors, and proctors are to remain attentive to responsibilities throughout the test event. Examinees must feel that the staff are taking all steps needed to provide an irregularity-free administration. To protect the validity of the individual test scores and maintain the security of test materials, the testing staff must:

- Walk around the room during testing to be sure that examinees are working on the correct test and to help prevent prohibited behaviors.
- Avoid engaging in any task that is not related to test administration.
- Avoid engaging in conversation during the testing.
- Prevent unauthorized personnel from entering the testing room.
- Not leave the testing room unattended at any time.
- Complete detailed documentation of any irregularities observed during the testing session.

A verbal announcement of time remaining is read five minutes before the end of each assessment.

5. Using external test sites

There are a variety of ACT-approved testing sites that deliver the three ACT WorkKeys NCRC assessments. Some of these sites offer testing for anyone, while others may offer testing only for students in their schools or for employees in their organization. To find an approved test center, visit [here](#).

Appendix B: ACT Work Readiness System Information

WorkKeys foundational skills assessments measure cognitive abilities. These “real world” skills are valuable for virtually any occupation—skilled or professional—and at any level of education.

Benchmarking

Linking ACT WorkKeys results to job requirements enhances the system’s power, value, and utility.

Our online job profiling database at http://profiles.keytrain.com/profile_search/ provides results from studies of over 21,500 jobs. ACT consultants and authorized profilers can analyze the needs of specific jobs for organizations, or studies can be developed using hands-on tools available from ACT.

Assessments

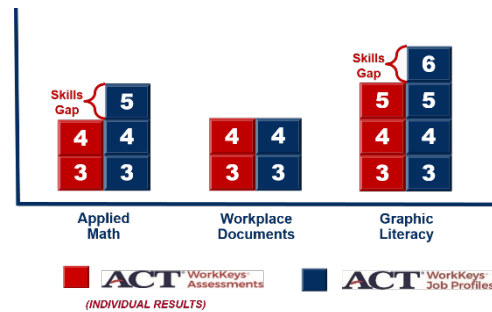
Once you know what skill levels are needed for your jobs, ACT WorkKeys assessments are used to assess employees and applicants to predict their likelihood for success in your organization. ACT WorkKeys measures foundational skills in the following areas:

- Applied Math
- Applied Technology
- Business Writing
- Fit
- Graphic Literacy
- Talent
- Workplace Documents
- Workplace Observation

For more information, visit www.act.org/workkeys.

Training

Because our benchmarking and assessment tools use the same scale, a simple comparison between the benchmark job requirements and employee assessment scores will identify skill gaps. This allows you to apply training dollars very precisely—to just those employees who need it, in the specific areas where they need it.



Appendix C: Applying the ACT Work Readiness System

The ACT work readiness system is used by individuals, educators, and government agencies to identify, measure, and develop skills needed for success in a wide range of jobs and occupations. Its greatest strength is its common language, which serves as the basis for its assessment, research, and development components.

The vision for the ACT work readiness system emerged in the late 1980s, when a series of research reports were predicting that the United States workforce would experience dramatic change and worker shortages. The ACT work readiness system was designed as a methodology for identifying and assessing skills and skill levels that, through research techniques, could be related to work and shown to be essential to performance in a specific job.

The three components on which the system is based—research, assessments, and skill development tools—enable users to apply ACT WorkKeys capabilities at all stages of the employment cycle.



Appendix D: Competency Models

The universal importance of the essential skills documented by the ACT WorkKeys NCRC gives a variety of users the opportunity to position the ACT WorkKeys NCRC as an important component of comprehensive career preparation and planning programs.

Competencies are job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully perform critical work tasks in a defined work setting. They serve as the basis for skill standards that specify the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success in industry sectors and specific jobs. A competency model is a collection of competencies that, taken together, define successful performance in a specific job or work setting.

Models are expressed as images—a pyramid, for instance—that encompass levels beginning with essential skills and advancing to competencies used throughout industries and sectors. Skills that are pertinent to a particular employer and job appear at the top of the pyramid.

The U.S. Department of Labor, through the Competency Model Clearinghouse, has worked with businesses and associations to construct models for many industry sectors.

The model for the advanced manufacturing sector is the basis for ACT's partnership with the National Association of Manufacturers. ACT is now working with other groups to help them deploy the ACT WorkKeys NCRC in their industries.

ACT WorkKeys NCRC anchors NAM Skills Certification System

The initial focus of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) system, which was launched in 2009, involves the core basic skills required for entry-level workers in all manufacturing sectors. It relies on the ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate to document essential employability skills that are needed to perform in today's manufacturing jobs.

Once they document essential skills, individuals will focus on higher levels of the competency model, addressing:

- personal effectiveness competencies, such as dependability and the willingness to learn;
- academic competencies;
- workplace competencies; and
- industry-wide technical competencies,

The system maps to both career pathways in the manufacturing economy and postsecondary educational pathways. Pathways are developed through community colleges to provide students and transitioning workers with industry-recognized skills certifications that are educational credentials with real value in the workplace.

For more information about the NAM-endorsed Skills Certification System, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIfYCzUMfuY>



MAXIMIZE YOUR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

Ineffective hiring wastes time and money. But how can you identify the best applicants? Businesses need reliable processes to pinpoint the job skills they need for success and growth. Tools like assessments, curriculum, and job profiles are used to determine, build, and measure workplace skills and can be used to increase the effectiveness and productivity of your hiring processes.

Effective hiring means a stronger company

To find high-quality candidates for a new production facility, CG Power Systems teamed up with ACT to implement skill assessments. They worked with a Job Profiler to develop minimum qualifications for each position and provided training and onsite testing.

CG POWER SYSTEMS:

Reduced turnover
to below

3%

Increased
production quality



*"Implementing this certificate is probably the most significant thing we've ever done for our workforce. Six Sigma and Lean Manufacturing are important to success, but **WorkKeys® testing** and the **National Career Readiness Certificate®** will strengthen both our company and our people."*

– Marc Schillebeeckx, President,
CG Power Systems



Reduce turnover and get the right applicants fast

Berner Foods wanted to reduce employee turnover and product waste. They weren't finding applicants with the skills needed to keep up with the rapidly changing processing jobs. They implemented the **WorkKeys Assessments** and the **ACT® WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate® (NCRC®)** in their hiring and promotion processes.



*"**WorkKeys** and the **NCRC** provide a foundation for building a career. It's also a foundation on which Berner Food & Beverage can build a succession plan."*

– Stephen Kneubuehl, President and CEO,
Berner Food & Beverage

BERNER FOOD & BEVERAGE:

Reduced nonconforming
product by

80%

Reduced the number
of terminations by

92%

WORKKEYS PRODUCTS and SERVICES



ACT[®] WorkKeys[®] Assessments

WorkKeys Assessments measure foundational workplace skills that can affect job performance and are developed to solve actual workplace problems. Employers and HR departments can benefit from combining both cognitive and non-cognitive assessments to provide a stronger, more comprehensive picture of a potential candidate.

ACT[®] WorkKeys[®] NCRC[®]

Individuals who have earned an **NCRC** have demonstrated they have the core foundational skills to be successful in a job. Based on data from over 21,000 profiled jobs, it takes the guesswork out of the hiring process, providing you a more qualified talent pool.

ACT[®] WorkKeys[®] Curriculum

ACT WorkKeys Curriculum helps individuals build the essential career-relevant skills needed for learning, personal development, and effective job performance. Providing curriculum access to potential and current employees will build the skills needed within your organization.

ACT[®] WorkKeys[®] Job Profiles

ACT WorkKeys Job Profiles bring the specifics of a job into focus. By linking job tasks with WorkKeys Assessments, you can pinpoint benchmarks for hiring, recruiting, advancement, and training.

To see how ACT WorkKeys can help your organization and community, go to act.org/workkeysforemployers



© 2018 by ACT, Inc. All rights reserved.

MS4889



Rev 1

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.