



The ACT Work Readiness System

Powering ACT Work Ready Communities

Across the nation, the ACT Work Ready Communities (ACT WRC) initiative, powered by the ACT work readiness system, is helping counties, states, and regions build a more productive workforce and encourage economic growth. The ACT work readiness system provides the following comprehensive, evidence-based solutions:

- **ACT job profiling** helps employers define their workforce and pinpoint the skills they need.
- **ACT WorkKeys®** assessments provide workforce professionals with trusted measures of work readiness skills.
- **The ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™** gives economic developers evidence of a skilled workforce to help attract business and industry.
- **ACT Career Curriculum**, which includes the ACT Career Ready 101 and ACT KeyTrain® training programs, helps educators ensure students have the essential work skills employers need.
- **ACT research** into college and career readiness helps leadership better understand their workforce.

By implementing the components of the ACT work readiness system, ACT Work Ready Communities across the nation are improving workforce productivity for everyone—from students coming into the workforce, to prospective and current employees, to transitioning workers—giving them opportunities to build essential skills and continue learning. As a result, businesses thrive and communities have a competitive edge in economic development.

In 2015, there were ACT Work Ready Communities established in 24 states, and *Site Selection* magazine uses data from the program to determine its Top 10 Competitive States for economic development success.

ACT® Work Ready Communities

workreadycommunities.org

Getting communities “work ready”

The ACT Work Ready Communities framework starts at the grassroots level, with communities linking workforce development to education, aligning economic development needs, and matching individuals to jobs based on skill levels.

The data-driven approach of the ACT WRC framework enables a community to clearly demonstrate it has a skilled workforce valued by local employers.

ACT uses its assessment and certification expertise to help community leaders develop a sustainable mechanism to close skills gaps and collect workforce skills data. The goal is to certify a county, state, or region as “work ready” when specific criteria for building a skilled workforce are met.

The collective outcome of ACT Work Ready Communities, powered by the ACT work readiness system, is a collaborative workforce development initiative that gives individuals the verifiable proof they need to show employers that they are ready to succeed. The result is a robust talent pipeline that benefits individuals and employers.



Understanding specific skills needed for jobs

To understand their workforce needs, employers first need to define the skills required for success on the job. ACT job profiling analyzes the tasks and skill levels for specific jobs and links them to the skills measured by ACT WorkKeys assessments. Used together, they give employers confidence in their hiring, training, and advancement decisions. This process of job analysis also takes advantage of the expertise of current employees, increasing their opportunity for engagement in hiring and placement decisions.

ACT job profiling is supported by a database of more than 20,000 job profiles with skills information for more than 90 percent of US jobs, making ACT a leader in workforce data collection.

Assessing skills needed for jobs

ACT offers a number of research-based assessments to measure workforce skills. ACT WorkKeys assesses “hard” skills such as teamwork, workplace observation, business writing, and applied technology and “soft” skills such as fit, work behaviors, and attitudes related to success in the workplace. Scores on three assessments—Applied Math, Locating Information, and Reading for Information—determine if an individual qualifies to earn the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™ (ACT NCRC®).

ACT WorkKeys assessments have been used for more than two decades to measure skills related to workforce success. Since 2008, people of all ages have taken more than 20 million ACT WorkKeys assessments.

Certifying workforce skills

A key component in the ACT WRC initiative is for individuals to earn, and employers to recognize, the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate. The ACT NCRC is accepted nationwide as a reliable credential for employers to assess an individual's skills in applied math, reading for information, and locating information. These real-world skills are needed for virtually any job across all occupations.

Issued at four levels—bronze, silver, gold, and platinum—the ACT NCRC helps take the guesswork out of hiring, training, and promotion decisions. It also offers a trusted way for communities to provide evidence of their skilled workforce, helping to attract business and industry and building the foundation for a strong economy.

More than 3 million people have earned an ACT NCRC, including high school and college students, job seekers, and current employees across the country. And more than 10,000 employers recognize or recommend the certificate in support of their counties becoming a certified ACT Work Ready Community.

Adding training to improve skills

When individuals need to improve their workplace skills, they turn to the ACT Career Curriculum. Students, job seekers, and employees use the training to enhance their work readiness, improve their ACT WorkKeys scores, and increase their chances of attaining or improving their results on the ACT NCRC.

The curriculum uses interactive courses to link new learning with the essential skills required for occupations. Students and prospective employees can close skills gaps and longtime staff can sharpen the skills important for workplace success.

The ACT Career Curriculum is a powerful tool to help individuals become career ready and learn and adapt on the job—as the job changes.





Backing it up with research

All components of the ACT work readiness system are anchored by more than five decades of ACT research into college and career readiness. This provides individuals and communities with proven tools to build a workforce with the essential skills that are critical to workplace success—and the ability to continue learning.

With ACT research, business leaders can better understand the essential skills needed to build, develop, and maintain a successful workforce and foster a thriving economy.

Taking the next steps

Visit **workreadycommunities.org** to find out how counties, states, and regions are using the ACT work readiness system to turn their workforce into a competitive advantage for economic growth.



workreadycommunities.org

