

CAREER READINESS CERTIFICATE

FAQs for Employers

Q: What is Oklahoma's Career Readiness Certificate program?

A: It is a means of verifying workplace literacy and numerical competency. The program uses scores from WorkKeys, an assessment developed by the same company that produces the ACT college entrance exam. With a database of more than 14,000 job profiles, the Career Readiness Certificate attests to a candidate's skills in reading for information, applied mathematics, and locating information.

Q: What is the Career Readiness job profiling component, and how does it tie in to the overall efficiency of a company or organization?

A: The Career Readiness job profiling service offers a concrete way for businesses to analyze the skills needed for specific jobs and to describe those needs to educators, students, and job applicants. By comparing job profile information with individuals' scores on the WorkKeys assessments, businesses can make reliable decisions about hiring, training, and program development.

Q: Why use Career Readiness measures?

A: Over the past 10 years, Career Readiness has become a widely accepted common language for skills definition among employers, educators/trainers, and potential or incumbent employees. The strength of Career Readiness indicators comes from their:

- Objectivity – skill levels are easily and universally understood, unlike school grades.
- Simplicity – skill levels are described in terms of single-digit numbers with clearly defined meanings.
- Compliance with federal law (ADA, EEOC).
- Legal defensibility.

Q: What are the core areas or skills being assessed, and why those particular skills?

A: The following WorkKeys assessments are used:

- Reading for Information – measures the skills used when people read and use written text to do a job. Texts include memos, letters, directions, signs, notices, bulletins, policies, and regulations.

- Locating Information – measures the skills people use when they work with workplace graphics such as charts, graphs, tables, forms, flowcharts, diagrams, floor plans, maps, and instrument gauges.
- Applied Mathematics – measures skills used when applying mathematical reasoning and problem solving techniques to work-related problems.

Of the thousands of jobs profiled nationally using the Career Readiness system, about 85 percent use these three core areas.

Q: What is the difference between the Career Readiness Certificate program and WorkKeys?

A: The WorkKeys assessment system is a national testing product whose results are used to award a credential called the Career Readiness Certificate.

Q: What are Oklahoma Career Readiness Certificates?

A: Oklahoma Career Readiness Certificates are portable credentials that show an individual has certain fundamental skills needed in the workplace. The WorkKeys assessment is used to determine those skill levels. Depending on their scores, potential or incumbent employees receive one of the following certificates:

- Gold – awarded to those who score at or above level 5 in each of the core areas
- Silver – awarded to those who score at or above level 4 in each of the core areas
- Bronze – awarded to those who score at or above level 3 in each of the core areas

Certificates come in two different formats: an 8x10 inch certificate signed by the governor and a wallet-sized version.

Q: What if incumbent or potential employees want to determine whether they have any gaps in their skill levels before taking the actual assessments?

A: Pre-assessment, which is an abbreviated version of the actual assessments, can be taken to determine if additional training is necessary. Individuals can pre-assess at any assessment site – college campuses, One-Stop sites, and CareerTech centers.

Q: What types of training will be offered, and where?

A: Skills upgrade training will be provided by all CareerTech centers using a program called KeyTrain, which is ACT-approved curriculum. Also, OKWorks and Adult Education in Oklahoma will offer ACT approved curriculum for skills upgrade. Core areas include:

- Reading for Information – measures the skills used when people read and use written text to do a job. Texts include memos, letters, directions, signs, notices, bulletins, policies, and regulations.
- Locating Information – measures the skills people use when they work with workplace graphics such as charts, graphs, tables, forms, flowcharts, diagrams, floor plans, maps, and instrument gauges.
- Applied Mathematics – measures skills used when applying mathematical reasoning and problem solving techniques to work-related problems.

Q: How can I verify assessment scores?

A: When individuals complete an ACT registration form to take the WorkKeys assessment, they also create an account in the Oklahoma Job Link (Workforce Oklahoma) system. Once they complete the assessments, scores are uploaded into a secure database, and numbers are assigned to each certificate for tracing and security purposes. Employers can verify scores and training completed through the Oklahoma Job Link system using certificate numbers.

Q: Who is driving the Oklahoma Career Readiness initiative?

A: This is an initiative of the Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development (GCWED) and its partners: Oklahoma Department of Commerce, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, Oklahoma State Department of Education, Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Oklahoma Office of Handicapped Concerns, Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services, and Workforce Oklahoma Centers.

Q: Where is Oklahoma in the implementation process?

A: Currently, the program involves the assessment of 17,000 potential and incumbent employees and more than 70 pre-assessment, assessment, and training sites. Businesses interested in having incumbent employees participate in the program should contact Susan Kuzmic, Oklahoma Department of Commerce, 405-815-5204, Susan_Kuzmic@odoc.state.ok.us.

When fully implemented, assessment sites will be set up across the state on college campuses, at One-Stop sites, and in CareerTech centers.

Q: Since employers are being asked to commit to the concept of Career Readiness, what are the ROI results linked to the program?

A: According to findings from various case studies, WorkKeys users typically see results that have a direct impact on their bottom line, including:

- Reduces turnover
- Reduced employee training time
- Fewer production errors
- Decreased employee time to competency
- Taking the guesswork out of hiring decisions
- Established legal defensibility in the selection process
- Maximized efficiency from training practices
- Improved effectiveness of training dollars
- Career Readiness helps businesses adhere to ISO 9000 standards and ensure quality business practices.

Q: What costs are involved, and who pays?

A: At this time, there is no charge for participating in the Career Readiness Certificate program.

Q: Are other states using Career Readiness Certificates? If so, why?

A: In 2003, seven Mid-Atlantic States agreed that a portable credential demonstrating an individual's attainment of workplace literacy skills would benefit the region's economy. They formed the Career Readiness Certificate Consortium, which now has approximately 40 member states. States are developing these initiatives for the following reasons:

- To create programs that are critical to a state's economic viability
- To build a coordinated system of assessments addressing both academic and workplace readiness and minimizing duplication
- To complement the K-12 school accountability system and higher education reforms
- To complement efforts to increase industry-based certifications
- To provide a better-trained workforce for employers and greater employment opportunities for a state's workers.