

CAREER READINESS CERTIFICATE

FAQs for Students and Job Seekers

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 your skills in reading for information, applied mathematics, and locating information.

Q: How does WorkKeys and Career Readiness Certificate system work?

A: Each WorkKeys test has a score level range. These scores indicate your ability to perform more complex skills as the score levels increase. The higher the scores, the better the odds that you will be able to perform at a higher level of skill. By comparing your skill levels or Career Readiness Certificate level with the skill levels required for a job, employers can determine whether or not you might be a good fit for that particular job.

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 you have certain fundamental skills needed in the workplace. The WorkKeys assessment is used to determine those skill levels. Depending on your scores, you may 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. Each certificate is assigned a number for security and tracking purposes.

When you complete the ACT assessment registration for WorkKeys, you also create an account in Oklahoma Job Link (Workforce Oklahoma). This allows current or potential employers to verify scores and completed training or to track training needs.

Q: What are the core areas or skills being assessed for the Oklahoma Career Readiness Certificates, 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. The test is made up of multiple-choice questions based on reading passages that reflect actual reading demands of the workplace. The reading materials at Level 3 are short and direct. The material becomes longer, denser, and more difficult as readers move toward Level 5.
- 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. You will be asked to find information in a graphic or insert information into a graphic. You must also compare, summarize, and analyze information found in related graphics. At Level 3, the graphics are simple, and you'll be asked to fill in missing information. At Level 5, you will use the information in one or more complex graphics to draw conclusions and make decisions.
- Applied Mathematics – measures skills used when applying mathematical reasoning and problem solving techniques to work-related problems. The test questions require you to set up and solve the types of problems and perform the types of calculations that actually occur in a workplace environment. You can use a calculator, and the formula sheet that includes all formulas required for the assessment is provided.

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

Q: What format is used for the assessments, and how long do they take?

A: Since you can see your scores instantly, the preferred assessment method is on a computer. However, if absolutely necessary, you can take the assessments with pencil and paper. In this case, it will take 10 days to receive your scores. The assessments take about 45 to 55 minutes each.

Q: Where are the assessments administered?

A: There are nearly 100 Oklahoma Career Readiness Assessment Centers across the state. To find the center closest to you, please call (888) 980-WORK.

Q: What if I want to find out whether I have any gaps in my 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. You 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. Other workforce-related agencies, employers, or high schools, colleges, and technology centers may use either KeyTrain or a program called WIN.

Q: Does the Oklahoma Career Readiness Certificate replace the need for other credentials like a high school diploma, GED, college degree, or CareerTech competency certificate?

A: Absolutely not. The certificate is a supplemental credential and is not intended to be used as a substitute for any of those. However, for people who don't have any other credentials, the certificate represents a solid start toward future training and educational attainment.

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

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.

Q: How will having an Oklahoma Career Readiness Certificate benefit me?

A: A portable skills credential that's easily and nationally recognized facilitates job placement, retention, and advancement in our mobile society. For high school, careertech, and college students, this assessment and certification process provides them with an objective view of what they can do and what they need to improve upon in order to maximize their chances of having successful careers.

Other benefits include:

- Confidence that your skills meet the needs of employers in Oklahoma and across the country,
- A clear road map for skill improvement and training and education needs,
- Improved opportunities for career changes and advancement.