

FROM: Ann Houston, Communications and Marketing
Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education
1500 W. Seventh Avenue Stillwater, OK 74074
Phone: 405-743-5112 Cell: 405-742-6838 ahous@okcareertech.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WorkKeys Works for Oklahoma Employers, Job Seekers

Matching the right employee to the right job at the right time creates a healthy workplace and positive economic impact on the state.

The employee payoff is job satisfaction, increased self-confidence, opportunities and wages within the company. The employer payoff is found in reduced turnover and associated training costs, increased productivity and company overall success, impacting the state's bottom line.

WorkKeys and the Career Readiness Certificate help companies find the right employees.

According to Bill Guest, executive director of the National CRC Advocates, Oklahoma is a leader in the Career Readiness Certificate national movement.

“Certification of workplace skills is of critical importance to employers as they seek to improve their talent supply-chains,” Guest said. “That is why we approached Oklahoma first and why we were not surprised that Oklahoma was the first state to commit to developing an aggressive plan to take their program to the next level. Oklahoma's employers are fortunate to have access to a workforce that is certified to possess valuable workplace skills based on nationally recognized third party assessments.”

WorkKeys is a job assessment system that measures work skills. The WorkKeys assessments for Career Readiness Certificate involve three 55-minute assessments in the areas of applied math, reading for information and locating information. High school students, adults and incumbent workers can earn a CRC signed by Gov. Brad Henry upon scoring at certain levels on all three assessments. Those scoring at level three or above on all three assessments receive a bronze certificate, four or above - silver, five or above - gold and six or above - platinum.

Since 2006, more than 41,000 Oklahoma high school students and adults have taken the WorkKeys assessments, learned their strengths and weaknesses and received at least a bronze level Career Readiness Certificate.

The number of Oklahoma CRC employer partners is also picking up steam with 54 Oklahoma businesses from 21 towns finding success with the system.

“The CRC bridges the gap between an organization and a qualified workforce,” said Susan Kuzmic, CRC project specialist at the Oklahoma Department of CareerTech Education. “It benefits everyone involved in the hiring process and employee training.”

Job seeker and incumbent worker testing and employer job profiling has been made accessible statewide through a partnership between the ODCTE, Oklahoma Department of Commerce and the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development.

Oklahoma provides 150 CRC assessment sites at technology centers, workforce centers, community colleges, adult education centers and tribal career centers. All 29 CareerTech centers as well as many

workforce centers across the state provide KeyTrain to prepare for the WorkKeys assessments. The assessments for the CRC and incentive WorkKeys job profiles are funded by the Governor's Council.

WorkKeys was developed by ACT, a company best known for the ACT Assessment college entrance exam, is also an international leader in educational assessment and workforce development services. During the past decade, ACT authorized job profilers have completed WorkKeys job and occupational profiles for thousands of jobs across every employment field and used by thousands of companies and schools across the United States and internationally.

According to Gilbert Hall, senior training coordinator, OG&E has been using WorkKeys during the hiring process since 2008. Many company incumbent workers, as well as new employees, have now taken the WorkKeys assessments. OG&E employs 3,600 Oklahomans and serves 780,000 Oklahoma and Arkansas customers.

“OG&E wants employees who may be able to transition from one job to another, so we invest in our people and our training programs,” said Hall. “We believe that WorkKeys assessments will help us find the right type of candidates for open positions.”

Like Hall, David Forgety, human resources manager for VF Jeanswear Seminole Distribution Center also knows WorkKeys works. The facility has been located in Seminole for 50 years, has 367 employees and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In 2007, the WorkKeys system was launched.

Today, Forgety reports that the company has reduced turnover by 17 percent, identified gaps in training and developed job task lists, reduced training costs and increased productivity 21 percent higher than the expected curve. Overall, absenteeism has also improved 38 percent and the increased employee morale and job satisfaction has helped increase personal earnings for employees and promotions within the company.

Keeping people employed benefits the company and the community.

“We profiled six positions ranging from order picking and receiving to supervisor and office positions,” Forgety said. “It is not a ‘silver bullet’ that will fix all of your workforce problems. However, we have found WorkKeys to be an excellent foundational tool in a fully loaded tool belt.”

For more information about WorkKeys assessments, KeyTrain and the Career Readiness Certificate visit www.okcareertech.org/cac/workkeys