

USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL
CERTIFICATIONS IN WIA PROGRAMS

**Using Skill Standards and
Occupational Certifications in WIA Programs**

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Authors:

Patricia O'Driscoll, MPA
Mikala L. Rahn, PhD

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Acknowledgements

This is a guide to be used to offer a training or a course.

Coalition of states

Section 1: Overview of the Workforce Investment Act and the Guide

Introduction to Section 1

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 brought a series of changes to the nation's job training system. Most important among them is the legislation's emphasis on accountability and measuring progress toward state and local goals for performance. Unlike previous job training legislation, state and local performance goals are now tied to rewards and consequences from the Secretary of Labor.

While WIA signaled a significant change in workforce training, its passage also coincided with efforts that began in the 1980s and 1990s to improve education and workforce training by specifying more closely the knowledge and skills that students should master in a given course or program.

At the core of many of these initiatives was the realization that to improve curriculum and instruction and to bring improved participant outcomes, there was a need to better measure the knowledge and skills of both students and workers. Thus, what these efforts collectively had in common was the notion of setting a "standard" that could, in turn, be measured and used to improve student outcomes or to modify programs.

Standards have been set in specific academic areas, more general workplace readiness and skills necessary for specific occupations. While standards offer guidance in terms of what knowledge and skills are important for programs to teach, occupational certifications (typically designed and administered by industry associations in the private sector) demonstrate that participants have acquired employer-recognized credentials and provide benefits to both certified individuals and employers alike.

The provisions of WIA and its focus on accountability provide an ideal opportunity to bring a skill standards-based approach to workforce training, which is one strategy to meet new accountability requirements. This guide is designed to support WIA practitioners at all levels in their efforts to do just that. In particular, this guide addresses how skill standards and occupational certifications support governance and oversight, program and service delivery and accountability and reporting requirements under WIA.

Topics in this section include:

- Background to the Workforce Investment Act,
- Incorporating skill standards in key WIA provisions,
- How the guide is organized, and
- A needs assessment worksheet to help you plan how to use the guide to incorporate skill standards and occupational certifications in your own programs.

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Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide information for WIA practitioners in the use of skill standards and occupational certifications in light of new requirements contained in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), federal job training legislation that replaces the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). WIA requires that states develop a system of accountability both for participants and for practitioners. In particular, two measures required of states are relevant to the subject of this guide: the credential attainment rate and the skill attainment rate.

Under WIA, states, and in turn local practitioners, must demonstrate progress and positive outcomes for participants. While past job training legislation (JTPA) required that programs and states count participant outcomes, WIA ties these outcomes to a system of accountability that includes incentives and consequences for low performance. Because of the focus on measuring skills and counting credential attainment, it is, therefore, critical that practitioners at all levels (from state and local oversight bodies to local practitioners) become aware of the kinds of skill standards that exist as well as the occupational certifications that are available to job training programs. This guide is designed not only to raise awareness about skill standards and occupational certifications, but also to guide attendees in their integration and implementation in program design and day-to-day operation.

Background to the Workforce Investment Act

On July 1, 2000, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) was officially repealed and replaced by the provisions contained in the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). The differences between these two pieces of legislation have important implications for governance, program and service delivery and accountability at both the state and local level. Because of its focus on accountability and an emphasis on a customer-driven model, it will be critical for WIA programs to make significant changes in how services are delivered and results are reported to oversight bodies.

The overarching goals for WIA are to improve the quality of the workforce, reduce welfare dependency and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the nation. Therefore, it emphasizes a systemic approach to workforce development in order to reduce fragmentation and bring coherence to the variety of programs that currently provide job training services. WIA also amends adult education and literacy, the Wagner-Peyser Act (Employment Services) and the federal Rehabilitation Act in order to align these services with the new workforce investment system.

The cornerstone of WIA is a One-Stop customer service delivery system. Prior to the passage of the legislation, the Department of Labor supported the development of One-Stop systems throughout the US. The idea behind the One-Stop is to assure a “no wrong door” approach to service delivery so that:

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- participants have easy access to services they are qualified to receive no matter which agency they approach,
- training activities are coordinated and
- communication occurs between service providers.

In addition to the idea of a One-Stop delivery system, WIA emphasizes accountability at the state, local and program levels. WIA requires that states develop a system of accountability both for participants and for practitioners. In particular, two measures encourage the use of skill standards and occupational certifications: the credential attainment rate (adults and dislocated workers) and the skill attainment rate (youth). A standards-based system that guides curricula and instruction, assessment and individual certification is a useful approach to implementing many aspects of the provisions of WIA.

Incorporating Skill Standards in Key WIA Provisions

This guide's approach to incorporating skill standards in specific elements of the job training system organizes the provisions contained in WIA into three broad headings: (1) governance and oversight, (2) program and service delivery and (3) accountability and reporting requirements. Taken together, these three categories of the provisions in the legislation contribute to a systemic approach to job training that can incorporate a standards-based system. This system includes standards, curriculum and assessment (and certification where available).

- 1. Governance and Oversight.** Under WIA, at the governance and oversight level, Workforce Investment Boards replace Private Industry Councils (PICs) at the state and local levels and have the responsibility for setting policy, determining eligibility of providers and establishing oversight of the accountability system. To support a standards-based system, oversight bodies can set clear expectations, establish incentives and consequences for programs and make necessary support available to encourage the use of skill standards in programs.
- 2. Program and Service Delivery.** Under WIA, program and service delivery for adults and dislocated workers is organized under a One-Stop training system. Under the One-Stop training system, providers are partners in the system and operate under a memorandum of understanding with the One-Stop operator. This system allows for improved communication and a common framework for their operations that is designed to be customer friendly. WIA also establishes Individual Training Accounts, which allow eligible participants to choose among providers. Youth programs are operated under a separate funding stream and require program operators to provide a range of services to youth.
- 3. Accountability and Reporting Requirements.** WIA mandates that state and local WIBs collect a wide range of information from programs about participants.

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Programs must also report on a number of performance measures that measure participant success. This information is available to participants so that they may make informed decisions when they use their Individual Training Vouchers.

Below you will find a more detailed description of key provisions in WIA.

(1) Governance and Oversight under WIA

WIA establishes Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) at the state and local level. Governors appoint the members of State WIBs, which must be made up of a majority of business owners. Local WIBs are designated at the local level and must also include a majority of business owners. WIBs must include representatives of individuals and organizations in the workforce development system, including community colleges, One-Stop partners and providers of adult education and literacy services.

WIBs are charged with bringing all partners together to implement a systemic approach to the numerous disconnected programs that existed under JTPA and other training initiatives. State WIBs are accountable to the Secretary of Labor and may receive incentive funds based on a model of continuous improvement. State WIBs must produce an annual report about the state's workforce investment system and its progress toward state goals.

The Governor is charged with establishing procedures for use by local WIBs to determine the eligibility of providers. These procedures must take into consideration the recommendations of local WIBs and training providers within the state and take into account the economic, geographic and demographic factors of local workforce areas. To remain eligible, providers (including community colleges and all other training providers) must (1) submit performance information, program cost information and any additional information required by the local WIB and (2) annually meet performance levels (at a minimum those set by the state, although the local WIB may require higher levels of performance).¹

Youth Councils, appointed by WIBs at the state and local levels, guide Youth Programs. The Youth Council assists in developing a youth activities plan. Youth Councils include WIB members and others interested in youth employment issues. This may include former program participants and agencies that serve youth.

(2) Program and Service Delivery under WIA

Adult and Dislocated Worker Services. Services are directed through a *One-Stop delivery system*, which is run by a One-Stop operator appointed by the local WIB. Both required

¹ Brustein, Michael and Robert Knight, *A Guide to the Workforce Investment Act of 1998*, National Association of Private Industry Councils (NAPIC).

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and optional partners are brought into the One-Stop system through memoranda of understanding with the operator. WIA establishes three levels of service for adults and dislocated workers: core, intensive and training services. If adult funds in a local area are defined as “limited” by the Governor and local Workforce Investment Board, priority for intensive and training services must be given to recipients of public assistance and other low-income individuals.

- *Core services* are available to all and include job search assistance, career counseling and information about the labor market and employment opportunities
- *Intensive services* are provided to those who are unable to obtain work through core services or employed workers who need additional assistance to remain employed. Intensive services include comprehensive assessments, individual employment plans, case management and short-term prevocational services.
- *Training services* are available only to those who are unable to obtain or retain employment through intensive services. Training services include occupational skills training, On-the-Job training (OJT), customized training, skill upgrading and retraining, job readiness training, adult and literacy education, and other training services.

WIA also establishes *Individual Training Accounts* (ITAs), a voucher system intended to give participants the ability to choose a training provider that best meets their needs. One-Stop systems must provide participants with a list of eligible providers and related performance information about the program. Payment for training is arranged through the ITA once the participant has selected the training programs that best meet his or her needs. There are several exceptions to the use of ITAs. WIBs may still contract for on-the-job or customized training, in places where there are not enough training providers to meet the competitive purpose of ITAs, and for community-based organizations or other private agencies that offer programs to special populations that face multiple barriers to employment.²

Youth Services. Under WIA, all youth services have been combined into one funding stream (including summer employment). Youth who are eligible for services must be low income youth aged 14-21 faced with one or more of six barriers to school completion or employment: (1) deficient in basic literacy skills; (2) school dropout; (3) homeless, runaway or foster child; (4) pregnant or a parent; (5) offender; or (6) requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. Youth ages 19-21 can also be served under the adult funding stream.³

Youth providers must assess the academic and skill levels and service needs of each participant. They must also develop a service strategy for each participant and provide

² Feldman, Lloyd. “The Workforce Investment Act, Implications for Community Colleges.” American Association of Community Colleges <<http://www.aacc.nche.edu/leg/docs/WIA.htm> (3/3/01)>.

³ Wonacott, Michael E. *The Workforce Act and CTE*, In Brief, Fast Facts for Policy and Practice, No. 6, 2000. National Dissemination Center for Career & Technical Education.

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preparation for postsecondary education where appropriate, unsubsidized employment and effective connections to intermediaries with strong links to employers.⁴

WIA moves youth job training programs away from short-term intervention to long-term individual development by requiring that youth programs have 10 program elements available to each participant. Program elements include:

- tutoring or instruction leading to secondary completion,
- alternative secondary school services,
- summer employment linked to academic and occupational learning,
- paid and unpaid work experience,
- occupational skill training,
- leadership development,
- supportive services,
- adult mentoring,
- follow-up services for at least one year after participation and
- comprehensive guidance and counseling

(3) Accountability and Reporting Requirements under WIA

WIA introduces a performance accountability system whose purpose is to “assess the effectiveness of state and local areas in achieving continuous improvement of workforce investment activities. The new system focuses on whether individuals are prepared for and obtain meaningful, unsubsidized employment. Accordingly, a framework is now in place so that taxpayers will know the return on federal dollars.”⁵ Under this system,

Adult employment and training activities and dislocated worker programs must track:

- Attainment of recognized credentials relating to achievement of education or occupational skills
- Entry into unsubsidized employment
- Retention in unsubsidized employment six months after entry into employment
- Earnings received in unsubsidized employment six months after entry into employment

Youth programs must track:

- Attainment of basic skills, and, as appropriate, work readiness or occupational skills
- Attainment of secondary school diplomas or their recognized equivalent
- Placement and retention in postsecondary education or advanced training or placement and retention in military service, employment or qualified apprenticeships⁶

⁴ Brustein, Michael and Robert Knight, *A Guide to the Workforce Investment Act of 1998*, National Association of Private Industry Councils (NAPIC).

⁵ Brustein, Michael and Robert Knight, *A Guide to the Workforce Investment Act of 1998*, National Association of Private Industry Councils (NAPIC), p. 37.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

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These core performance measures include performance levels that are negotiated by the state with the Secretary of Labor and must be reported annually. Local areas must also adopt levels of performance for each indicator.

State and local areas must also develop and report on customer satisfaction indicators. These consist of measures of employer and participant satisfaction with services received from workforce investment activities (e.g. through surveys of participants).

Information collected from programs (core performance, cost and customer satisfaction) will be sent to One-Stop centers so that they can distribute it as consumer information for use by participants in selecting their training providers through the use of ITAs.

Key Questions

→ *How will WIA affect state and local job training programs?*

One word: “Accountability.” The passage of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 revamped the federal role in the nation’s workforce training system and marked the most significant set of changes since the passage of the Job Training Partnership Act in 1980 (JTPA). Like JTPA, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) is based on individual outcomes and building a system that is accountable to employers and trainees alike. However, the accountability in WIA reforms mandates that states show results, which will in turn bring change at the local area and program levels.

In addition, WIA requires that services be provided through a One-Stop system with “no wrong door” for job seekers and employers. The idea behind the One-Stop is to assure a “no wrong door” approach to service delivery so that participants have easy access to services they are qualified to receive no matter which agency they approach, training activities are coordinated and communication occurs between service providers.

Under WIA, services for adults and dislocated workers are now divided into core (open to all job seekers), intensive (those who are unable to find a job and who are eligible for services) and training (for those who qualify for an Individual Training Account).

Unlike JTPA, instead of simply counting program outcomes and processes, each state is expected to make progress toward its goal on a number of accountability measures. Examples of these accountability measures include diploma or equivalent attainment rate (for youth programs) and employment retention rate after 6 months (for adults and dislocated workers).

WIA also includes a skill attainment rate for youth and an educational/occupational credential rate for adults and dislocated workers. While many of the performance measures contained in WIA are straightforward, measuring the skills of youth and adult and dislocated workers will be a challenge for programs. In light of these new requirements, this guide has been designed to help WIA practitioners meet the

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requirements and provides information about how programs can be designed and re-tooled around a system of skill standards and occupational certifications.

→ Why are skill standards and occupational certifications important for WIA programs and practitioners?

A standards and certification-based program helps to ensure accountability to program participants. Standards and certification improve the quality of programs through focusing on curriculum outcomes and aligning:

- contracting processes between providers and state and local governments,
- training program content to employer-based needs, and
- assessment procedures to training program content so that the skills that are measured are those that will be useful in the real world of work.

The measurement of performance is of critical importance at both the state and local level. One core performance measure mandates that adult and dislocated worker programs measure the “attainment of recognized credentials relating to achievement of education or occupational skills.” Another core performance measure mandates that youth programs measure the “attainment of basic skills, and, as appropriate, work readiness or occupational skills.” By adopting a skills standards based system, states and local areas will be better equipped to measure their progress on these core performance measures.

→ Why are skill standards and occupational certifications important for WIA participants?

Training participants are learning skills that have been deemed by employers to be important in the workplace and will have the option to gain credentials that are portable and recognized by employers. This supports employment portability and a potential avenue for advancement for participants. Employer participants recognize the value of an industry-endorsed occupational certification and are able to hire an employee whom they know possesses a set of industry-relevant skills and the knowledge they need to get the job done.

→ What sources can be used for these certifications?

WIA programs wishing to incorporate a standards-based approach to training can find skill standards and certification tools from a variety of sources, including:

- Recognized credentials
- Basic skills
- Work readiness skills
- Occupational skills

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→ *How will skill standards and occupational certifications affect my program?*

A standards-based system provides guidelines for all elements of the training program process. For example, state WIBs can use “ability to teach using skill standards” as one criteria in the RFP process to certify providers in the WIA One-Stop system. A standards-based system gives local Workforce Investment Boards parameters for evaluating the effectiveness of programs that may provide different types of services (e.g. workplace readiness vs. occupational training). In turn, a standards-based system can serve as a key organizing tool for technical assistance to providers as they strive to meet their performance targets. A set of standards provides a consistent framework for all providers under the WIB.

→ *What is the purpose of this guide?*

The purpose of this guide is to provide information for WIA practitioners in the use of skill standards and occupational certifications in light of new requirements contained in WIA. WIA requires that states develop a system of accountability both for participants and for practitioners. The use of skill standards and occupational certifications are one strategy for meeting new WIA accountability requirements.

Practitioners at all levels from state and local oversight bodies to local practitioners will benefit from improved awareness of the kinds of skill standards that exist as well as the occupational certifications that are available to job training programs. This guide is designed not only to raise awareness about skill standards and occupational certifications, but also to guide attendees in their integration and implementation in program design and day-to-day operation.

→ *Who is this guide for?*

In order for programs to meet new accountability requirements and increase the quality of their programs, it is important that all levels of the system, from the local up to the state are aligned around common policies, objectives and outcomes. This guide is targeted toward WIA practitioners and administrators at the state and local levels. The information in this guide may also be useful to local program practitioners, program providers, Workforce Investment Board members, employers and others in the WIA job training system.

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→ *How is this guide organized?*

This guide is organized in five sections. This first section is designed to introduce changes in the Workforce Investment Act and how the concepts of skill standards and occupational certifications may be used as one strategy in strengthening programs and implementing accountability measures. Four additional sections follow this introduction and are designed as standalone workbooks that can be used in a formal training environment, facilitated within a program or taken at an individual pace.

This introduction concludes with a Needs Assessment that can be used to begin to formulate goals for the training and for implementing skill standards and occupational certifications. The guide is designed for all levels of implementation from individual programs to state WIA boards. It is intended to serve economic conditions in a rural setting to an urban setting and emphasizes taking a tailored approach that meets your particular context. The guide also emphasizes the use of existing resources and envisions a multitude of approaches to skill standards and occupational certifications—from adopting existing publicly or commercially available products to adapting existing resources to developing your own.

The following four sections follow this introduction:

Section 2: *Incorporating skill standards into the Workforce Investment Act system*, sets the stage by describing what a standards-based approach to job training would look like. It includes a description of skill standards and efforts to develop them at the national, state and local levels. This section answers the questions “What are skill standards? Why are they important? What types of skill standards are available? What does a system look like?”

Section 3: *Developing policies, procedures and curriculum to support skill standards in WIA programs* takes the theoretical approach laid out in Section 2 and applies it specifically to training programs operating under the Workforce Investment Act. This section shows how to incorporate standards into the policies, procedures and curriculum of Workforce Investment Boards at the state and local level, the One-Stop system, program providers, provider certification and accountability reporting requirements.

Section 4: *Establishing assessments and a work readiness certificate* shows how to incorporate a standards-based approach to the assessment and evaluation of training participants and programs under the provisions of the Workforce Investment Act. A work readiness certificate shows employers that participants have mastered a wide range of skills and demonstrates they are ready for work (includes skills such as punctuality, problem solving and communication). These skills are more general and are a baseline requirement for all members of the workforce. This section is particularly relevant to providers of youth services and those programs that provide *Intensive Services* to adults.

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Section 5: *Selecting and implementing occupational certifications* demonstrates how to incorporate a standards-based system in the oversight of specific training programs. Occupational certifications have been developed by industry and exist in a wide range of occupations and professions. Using these certifications provides a basis for the oversight of programs responsible for providing *Training Services* to eligible WIA participants. Certain elements of occupational certifications may also be relevant to providers of youth services to show the extent to which program participants have attained occupational skills. This section provides a process for analyzing the occupational certifications that exist and selecting those that make the most sense given state and local employment and training conditions.

Two appendices are also attached. Appendix A is a guide for facilitators and includes tips and suggestions for the trainer. Appendix B provides additional resources including information about how to obtain skill standards and occupational certifications.

EXERCISE

Based on the information in this section and your own experience, for this exercise, assume you are an advocate for the use of skill standards and occupational certifications. Read the fictitious scenarios below and answer the questions that follow.

Example A: No State System

In this state, the use of skill standards occurs in an ad-hoc basis in local areas without a legislative requirement or support and guidance from the state level. Policies to use national skill standards where available may exist but there is no central board, commission or agency to guide their use at the local level or to promote them among providers and employers. There is also no centralized support from state agencies for the development or use of skill standards.

Given this scenario, what would you do as a WIB?

Given this scenario, what would you do as a training provider?

Example B: Full Blown System of Standards

In this state, support for skill standards has occurred either through the education or workforce training community or employers or both. High level political entities such as the Governor's office or the legislature support the development of skill standards through legislation, agency support or cross-agency collaboration. Skill standards committees exist and a process for endorsing skill standards is in place. Skill standards

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are emphasized in a wide range of educational settings from vocational-technical education to workforce training to the postsecondary education system. Promotion and use of skill standards occurs regularly and is incorporated into various aspects of state policy and practice. Technical assistance, regulatory requirements and other state “levers” are used to ensure that skill standards are readily available and implemented at the local program levels.

Given this scenario, what would you do as a WIB?

Given this scenario, what would you do as a training provider?

Example C: Emphasis on One (or a Few) Key Area(s)
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In this state, skill standards are an important strategy for improving the quality of workforce education and the workforce in general. However, they are viewed as one strategy among many and progress in implementation has occurred more slowly, starting with one (or a few) key areas of the state’s economy. Because of the importance of the key area(s) to the state’s economy (or the state’s history or other reason), the state has decided to devote attention in the skill standards area in one area without diluting their work across multiple skill standards efforts. While this helps to ensure high quality in its single effort, other areas of education and workforce training receive little guidance in terms of skill standards because the effort in the state is limited.

Given this scenario, what would you do as a WIB?

Given this scenario, what would you do as a training provider?

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

The following worksheet is designed to begin the process of identifying your needs and experience related to skill standards and occupational certifications and the types of support that may be required to implement.

Questions for Section 2 *Incorporating skill standards into the Workforce Investment Act system*

What standards resources are you familiar with?

- The National Skill Standards Board
- SCANS (Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills)
- State or local academic standards (K-12)
- CASAS or TABE (basic skills assessments)
- National Occupational Skill Standards (Please list):

Has your state been involved in standard-setting activities?

- Yes, my state has a state skill standards board developing industry skill standards
- No, my state is not involved in developing skill standards
- Yes, my states has academic standards for populations 16 and older
- No, my state is not setting academic standards
- Yes, my state has work-readiness or employability standards
- No, my state is not involved in developing employability standards
- Don't know. I'm not familiar with any standard setting efforts at the state level

**What experience have you had with skill standards or occupational certifications?
(e.g. state or local skill standards setting, program implementation using skill standards)**

What standards are you familiar with?

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Rate your level of knowledge related to the following topics:

Background to nationally recognized, industry-based skill standards and occupational certifications

1	2	3	4	5
no knowledge				very knowledgeable

National Skill Standards Board

1	2	3	4	5
no knowledge				very knowledgeable

Different Types of Skill Standards

1	2	3	4	5
no knowledge				very knowledgeable

Why skill standards and certifications are important

1	2	3	4	5
no knowledge				very knowledgeable

Rate your knowledge and familiarity with the following terms:

Career, occupational or technical skill standards

1	2	3	4	5
no familiarity				very familiar

Academic standards

1	2	3	4	5
no familiarity				very familiar

Employability standards

1	2	3	4	5
no familiarity				very familiar

Values, attitudes, personal and social skills

1	2	3	4	5
no familiarity				very familiar

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What goals do you have for this training?

What goals do you have in terms of incorporating Skill Standards?

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Questions for Section 3 *Developing policies, procedures and curriculum to support skill standards in WIA programs*

What role do you play in the WIA system? (check all that apply)

- Member of state or local WIB
- Member of state or local Youth Council
- Employer
- Union
- Workforce Development Organization
- Adult Services Practitioner (provide direct service to participants)
- Youth Services Practitioner (provide direct service to participants)
- Oversight and regulation of training and service providers
- Postsecondary Faculty
- Other _____

Do policies exist in your state/area/program that encourage or require the use of skill standards and/or certifications? If yes, please describe.

How do you currently incorporate the use of skill standards and/or certifications in the following areas?

One-Stop:

Provider Eligibility:

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Youth Services:

**How are skill standards or certifications used in the following types of training?
What kinds of policies are in place to support these efforts?**

Core services:

Intensive services:

Training:

What goals do you have for this training?

What goals do you have in terms of...

Skill Standards:

Curriculum:

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Policy Development:

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Questions for Section 4 *Establishing assessments and a work readiness certificate*

How familiar with assessment are you?

1	2	3	4	5
no familiarity				very familiar

Has your area or program implemented a work readiness certificate?

Are you familiar with SCANS skills and other work readiness skills?

1	2	3	4	5
no familiarity				very familiar

What goals do you have for this training?

What goals do you have in terms of...

Incorporating standards-based assessment in WIA programs?

Establishing a work-readiness certificate?

Questions for Section 5 *Selecting and implementing occupational certifications*

What experience or knowledge do you have about occupational certifications?

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Has your state/area/program implemented or considered implementing any specific occupational certifications?

Does labor market information exist that suggests a certification in a specific area would be of benefit to the local economy, employers or participants?

What information do you need to implement occupational certifications?

What barriers have you encountered or do you foresee in implementing occupational certifications?

What benefits would you like to see in implementing occupational certifications?

What is the current status of the following areas in your program, state or local area?

Assessment:

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Occupational Certification:

Training:

Section 2: Incorporating Skill Standards into the WIA System

Introduction to Section 2

This section introduces the concept of incorporating skill standards into the WIA system. The first part introduces the need for nationally recognized, industry skill standards and occupational certifications and the benefit of standards to employers, providers and trainees. Guidelines and activities included in this section will assist you in the development and adoption of skill standards. Many resources for skill standards exist through organizations and at the state, regional and local levels. Information about finding these resources are contained in Appendix B.

This section introduces the concept of skill standards but also emphasizes that WIBs or providers have a range of options—from adopting existing standards developed by a third party to adapting existing standards to developing their own. In this section, you will understand the need for skill standards, understand the process for developing standards, and establish a plan for incorporating standards into various components of the WIA system. Topics include:

- Benefits to a skill standards system
- The National Skill Standards Board (NSSB)
- Elements of a skill standards system
- Definition and types of standards
- Development and adoption of skill standards

The need for nationally recognized, industry-based skill standards and occupational certifications

According to *A Nation of Opportunity, Building America's 21st Century Workforce*, close to half the adult population in the United States (approximately 90 million adults) have skills in the lowest two of four levels on the literacy scale used in the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS).⁷ In addition, skill levels do not appear to be improving. In fact, young adults aged 21 to 25 had lower skills than young workers tested on the same assessment a decade earlier.⁸

⁷ The NALS literacy scale measures three areas of literacy: (1) prose literacy (skill in understanding information from text), (2) document literacy (the ability to locate information in various formats) and (3) quantitative literacy (the knowledge required to apply arithmetic operations to solve problems). More information about NALS can be found at: <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/>.

⁸ 21st Century Workforce Commission, *A Nation of Opportunity: Building America's 21st Century Workforce*, c/o National Alliance of Business, Washington, DC, June 2000. (www.workforce21.org).

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These low levels of literacy are occurring at a time when success in the workforce is increasingly dependent on higher levels of education (associates degree or higher or specialized technical training). The nation continues to be at a critical juncture—where the skills possessed by the workforce are not be able to keep up the with the demands of workplaces that require educated and trained individuals in the jobs that command the highest wages. To improve this situation, political representatives, government agencies, educational institutions, employers, and others supportive of skill standards believe that it is critical for all parties in the education and job training system build reforms based on clearly defined skill expectations for students and workers alike.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, concern about the nation’s economic competitiveness and the ability of the workforce to meet the new demands of a global economy prompted the implementation of a wide range of reform initiatives in many aspects of the nation’s public education and workforce training systems. These initiatives occurred at the federal and state levels and affected secondary and postsecondary vocational education, traditional K-12 education and the workforce training system.

At the core of many of these initiatives was the need to better measure the knowledge and skills of both students and workers in order to improve curriculum and instruction and to help bring improved participant outcomes. Thus, what these efforts collectively had in common was the notion of setting a “standard” that could, in turn, be measured and used to improve student outcomes or to modify programs. At the root of the standard setting efforts that began at this time was the idea that both educational and training programs and individual participants should be “accountable” for program outcomes.

In turn, the notion of a system of accountability based on agreed-upon standards emerged. In order for this system to function, it was thought that several components would be necessary. These components began with standards and included appropriate assessment of performance, the alignment of curriculum and instruction to the standards, the provision of information to stakeholders and consumers to make decisions, and rewards and sanctions to individuals and programs based on performance. The final component of this system was the certification of skill standards signaled by a diploma, certificate or other indicator of participant mastery.

While the evolution of these efforts have prompted numerous definitions of a standard and a common language around these systems is yet to be agreed upon, in its simplest form a *standard* equals an *outcome* and an outcome is a *measurable aspect of student/trainee/worker performance*. In other words, a standard defines what a student/trainee/worker will be able to do and how they need to demonstrate it. A standard can include many skills, competencies or tasks to be mastered.

BASIC DEFINITION OF A STANDARD

Standard = Outcome

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Outcome = A measurable aspect of participant performance
Participants will be able to...
Participants will demonstrate...

How the process of establishing national skill standards and occupational certifications developed in the United States

Skill standards have been developed in a number of ways—some by private industry, others at the state level for the improvement of vocational or academic education, and still others by industry organizations.

In the early 1990s, Congress and many states responded to the call for industry-based skill standards by industry groups, public officials, educators and training providers with numerous initiatives at both the federal and state levels. These initiatives had many elements in common including the notion that it was necessary to better connect what was learned in school to the needs of the workplace. A few examples include:

1. The 1990 reauthorization of the **Carl D. Perkins Applied Technology Education Act**, which provides federal support for secondary and postsecondary vocational education. This legislation established a system of performance measures and standards and required that states report on both basic and advanced academic skills and attainment of job and occupationally related skills.
2. The **School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994** provided seed money to states and local partnerships to better connect secondary and postsecondary education, to allow students to explore career options through experiential learning in the workplace and to bring employer and labor organizations to the table.
3. **Goals 2000: Educate America Act**, which included the **National Skill Standards Act of 1994**. This Act established the National Skill Standards Board, charged with the development of a voluntary national system of skill standards, assessment and certification.

At the same time, states also implemented various initiatives to improve both public education and workforce training systems. States developed standards for academic learning and many established workforce commissions or boards charged with improving workforce training through the use of industry-based skill standards developed at the state level. While the goals of these state and federal efforts had much in common, the result has been a patchwork of standards development that ranges from a selection of specific occupations to more general industry clusters to somewhere in between.

Key Questions

→ ***What types of skill standards have been developed?***

The range of standard setting has resulted in a variety of standards that specify different aspects of performance. Some standards specify academic skills, others focus on general

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work readiness that all workers need, still others specify the skills required of broad industry clusters under which many occupations would be grouped. The following definitions and examples demonstrate the different types of standards that have been developed through the various state and national efforts discussed above.

Academic/basic skills: Specify skills and knowledge of workers or students related to specific academic disciplines, such as reading, writing, mathematics, history or science.

Example—Understand numbers, ways of representing numbers, relationships among numbers, and number systems. For example, develop a deeper understanding of very large and very small numbers and of various representations of them.⁹

Employability: Specify skills and knowledge that are necessary for all types of jobs and workplaces. These skills often include “soft skills” such as interpersonal skills, the ability to communicate and personal responsibility. However, they also include more general workplace expectations such as using technology or equipment and the ability to allocate resources.

Example—Applies Technology to Task—Understands overall intent and proper procedure for set-up and operation of equipment¹⁰

Industry skills: Specify skills and knowledge that are necessary for an entire industry or cluster of occupations. In this kind of skill standard, the entire economy is divided into broad industry sectors such as health or manufacturing in order to develop general standards that all workers in these sectors will need.

Example from Health Industry—Abstracting and Coding—Information service workers will know how to read and interpret a medical record, using knowledge of medical terminology. They will extract required information from the medical record. For example, locate information in the record for various purposes, such as filing, coding, or information processing.¹¹

Technical/Occupational: Specify skills and knowledge specific to a single job or occupation. These skill standards emphasize more narrow technical skills that signal to employers job-specific competencies necessary to perform a given occupation.

Example from ASE Automobile Technician Standards—Engine Repair Tasks—Perform engine vacuum tests—determine needed repairs; remove engine

⁹ National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, <http://standards.nctm.org/document/chapter7/numb.html>

¹⁰ Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, Competency 5—Works with a variety of technologies

¹¹ National Health Care Skill Standards, Information Services Cluster , <http://www.wested.org/nhcssp/nhcss03.htm#health>

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(front-wheel drive)—prepare for tear down; inspect and replace pans, covers, gaskets, and seals.¹²

→ *How does occupational certification fit into standard-setting efforts?*

While the widespread standard setting efforts by states and at the national level was new in the early 1990s, standards and certification programs established by industry were not. Certification is a specific type of assessment that gives workers an opportunity to work in a certain field or occupation. Certification is available in a wide range of occupations and professions and is generally developed by industry associations or professional organizations. Apprenticeship programs, often run cooperatively by labor and management, provide another form of certification.

In fact, certification programs have a long history in the US. Many are operated by national trade associations or other industry groups. Examples include the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the American Association of Medical Assistants and the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence. In addition, many unions, mostly in the construction trades, have operated competency-based apprenticeship programs. A study conducted by the US Office of Vocational and Adult Education identified 174 certification programs for managerial, professional, technical, sales and administrative support workers. While many certification programs exist, there is no coordination among them even within industry sectors, they are not national in scope and have little influence on entry or advancement in labor markets nationally. In addition, they lack formal links to education and training systems, which limits their impact on curriculum and instruction.¹³

¹² National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation, Inc. *ASE Program Certification Standards Automobile*, 1993, Herndon, VA.

¹³ Hoachlander, Gary and Mikala L. Rahn, *National Skill Standards, Everyone Agrees on the Destination. Getting There is Another Story*. Vocational Education Journal, January 1994.

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The National Skill Standards Board System of Voluntary Skill Standards

To help remedy this patchwork of standards and certification, the National Skill Standards Board was established as Title V of the Goals 2000, Educate America Act through the National Skill Standards Act of 1994. The passage of this Act was intended to support the development of a voluntary national system of skill standards, assessment and certification. In order to meet the goal of a national, voluntary system, the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) was established to serve as an organizing forum for the development of a national system. Standards, assessment and certification are the three cornerstones of the NSSB's national strategy.

The NSSB includes a coalition of leaders from business, labor, employee, education and community and civil rights organizations to build this system. Its mission is to:

*Encourage the creation and adoption of a national system of skill standards that will enhance the ability of the United States to compete effectively in a global economy. These voluntary skill standards will be developed by industry in full partnership with education, labor, and community stakeholders, and will be flexible, portable, and continuously updated and improved.*¹⁴

The organization of skill standards will occur around families of related jobs in the following fifteen industry sectors:¹⁵

- 1) Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- 2) Business and Administrative Services
- 3) Construction
- 4) Education and Training
- 5) Finance and Insurance
- 6) Health and Human Services
- 7) Manufacturing, Installation and Repair
- 8) Mining
- 9) Public Administration, Legal and Protective Services
- 10) Restaurants, Lodging, Hospitality and Tourism and Amusement and Recreation
- 11) Retail Trade, Wholesale Trade, Real Estate and Personal Services
- 12) Scientific and Technical Services
- 13) Telecommunications, Computers, Arts and Entertainment and Information
- 14) Transportation
- 15) Utilities and Environmental and Waste Management

Instead of devising or prescribing the skill standards for these clusters, the NSSB was charged with establishing the guidelines used to *endorse* the standards created by industry groups. Under the NSSB framework, there are three groupings of standards in the NSSB's "common framework":

¹⁴ The NSSB Mission Statement, available at <http://nssb.org/missionstatement.htm>

¹⁵ The NSSB: A Brief Description, available at <http://nssb.org/briefdescription.htm>.

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- *Core standards* are the broadest requirements that are common to an entire industry sector. For example, core standards would specify the skills common to the *transportation* industry as a whole.
- *Concentrations* are the major areas of work carried out across an industry sector that cover families of related occupations. In the transportation industry, concentration standards would cover a job family such as *trucking*.
- *Specialty Standards* are the standards that address work requirements that are unique to a particular job within an industry, or for a particular sub-industry within an industry sector. In the transportation industry example, specialty standards for a specific occupation such as *tractor-trailer driver*.¹⁶

Since its inception, NSSB has worked through Voluntary Partnerships (industry partnership sectors) and partnerships with states to develop and promote the use of national industry skill standards and occupational certifications. NSSB offers many resources to state and local practitioners. See **Appendix B: Resources** for more information on existing or developing standards efforts through their partnerships.

Key Question

→ *Why do we need a system of nationally recognized, industry-based skill standards and occupational certifications?*

¹⁶ This example is from the NSSB Web site (www.nssb.org) from its *Summary of the NSSB Guidelines for a Voluntary National Skill Standards System*.

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Business and Industry are demanding them. In order to find out how entry level and incumbent workers are “measuring up,” employers and Congress championed the call for nationally recognized, industry-based skill standards and occupational certifications in the early 1990s. Employers, educators, training providers and employees would use these standards and certifications to communicate workplace needs and to demonstrate work process proficiency. In a publication supporting the development of national skill standards, the National Alliance of Business (NAB) gave the following seven reasons in answer to the question “Why do skill standards matter?”¹⁷

(1) “Labor markets are changing.”

Hiring would be simplified for employers if they knew the kinds of skills that employees possessed through an employer’s knowledge or approval of a set of skill standards or a particular occupational certification.

(2) “The business environment is changing.”

Technical change in the workplace means that employers need employees who can keep up with this constantly changing environment. Skill standards articulate what employers want to see from employees.

(3) “Entry-level skill demands are escalating.”

The work environment is increasingly characterized by requirements for higher levels of performance. Workers must also work in teams and solve problems. Skill standards articulate a range of skills from specific occupational skills to more general workplace readiness skills that all workers need.

(4) “New jobs—and whole new industries—are emerging.”

Technology has prompted the creation of new jobs that could not be imagined even less than a decade ago. In order to keep up, workers need to be flexible and regularly upgrade their skills.

(5) “Workers are changing jobs.”

Workers can no longer depend on doing the same job for their entire career. Workers increasingly must change jobs and continue to upgrade their skills and education. Adaptability is at a premium in this environment.

(6) “Training needs are changing.”

In order to keep up with changes in the workplace, companies must offer new kinds of training and to make efficient decisions about limited training resources. Skill standards and assessments help to articulate what training is necessary.

(7) “The Business/Government Relationship is changing.”

The success of the economy is dependent on the cooperation of business, government agencies and educational institutions in order to ensure that training and education remains connected to real labor market needs. Skill standards provide the essential language needed to do that.

A changing economy. Over the past thirty years, the US economy and the needs of employers and the workforce have undergone significant shifts. No longer isolated from outside change, the US economy has become part and parcel of a new rapidly changing global economy that increasingly relies on technology to bring products to market and

¹⁷ National Alliance of Business, *Skill Standards: Benchmarks of Excellence*, Washington, DC.

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3) Why are industry-based skill standards important in your local context?

Key Questions

→ *What are the benefits of a skill standards-based system?*

While a complete national skill standards-based system that includes occupational certification is yet to be realized, proponents of skill standards have suggested a number of reasons for their implementation:

They apply equally to all individual job seekers and trainees. They provide an objective benchmark that industry agrees is important to a given job or industry cluster. Skill standards clearly communicate what is required of workers and how to advance to higher level positions.

They provide an organizing framework for workforce initiatives. By articulating the skills and knowledge needed by the workforce in various industries, skill standards and occupational certifications allow oversight agencies to coordinate and allocate resources to training initiatives that are benchmarked by industry.

They increase the likelihood of workforce initiatives to serve participants and employers. Workforce initiatives organized under skill standards and occupational certifications provide information that is immediately useful for employers and trainees. Workforce training programs are more closely linked to needs of the economy. Program efforts are focused on real and immediate employer needs and the usefulness of training for participants in terms of employment prospects.

They improve communication and can facilitate better cooperation and collaboration among employment training and education programs and employers. Skill standards and certifications lay out the needs of industry, allowing training and education institutions to put aside guesswork and update programs to reflect real needs. Everyone can speak the same language and move in the same direction.

→ *How will a standards-based assessment and certification system benefit individual employers, training providers and job seekers and incumbent workers?*

Benefit to employers. Skill standards provide a means to effectively address skill shortages and make recruitment, hiring and training and re-hiring and re-training more efficient. Employers are able to clearly communicate their knowledge and skill performance expectations to job applicants/incumbent workers and employment/training and education providers. A more effective employer-employee matching system will

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enable employers to focus resources in areas where employees need training and cut down on retraining and remediation expenses. Skill standards enable employers to hire flexible workers with the necessary knowledge and skills. In turn, employers can be more responsive to the market, are able to compete effectively and increase productivity and the quality of services they deliver.

Benefit to training providers. Skill standards enable WIA agencies to better serve customers (employers, employees, trainees and others), allocate and coordinate training resources by clearly communicating the actual knowledge and performance expectations of business and industry, meet performance requirements, document outcomes, improve program accountability, and ensure program quality. Skill standards and occupational certifications can be infused in all aspects of program delivery including training practices and procedures, instructional methods, teaching materials and classroom/work site training activities.

Benefits to job seekers and incumbent workers. They allow workers to have skill transferability and mobility in the workforce. Job seekers and incumbent workers gain knowledge about what they need to learn to be successful in different types of work. They can have a realistic picture of employer requirements and plan what they must do to advance in their careers. Because they have additional information about employer requirements, they are able to make decisions about the education and training that they need.

EXERCISE

How specifically do you see your state or local area benefiting from a skill standards-based system?

Organizing Framework for Workforce Initiatives:

Improved Communication/Collaboration:

Service to Employers:

Service to Training Providers:

Service to Job Seekers:

Service to Incumbent Workers:

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Other:

Four elements of a skill standards system

A skill standards-based system is an important cornerstone of improving workforce development initiatives as well as collaborating and communicating across programs. A skill standards system can be infused in all elements of education and training programs. The system is built on four components: standards, curricula and training, assessment and, finally, individual certification. Each one of the components described in the chart below is considered in the following sections of the guide.

FOUR ELEMENTS OF A SKILL STANDARDS SYSTEM	
Section 2: Standards	<p>Standards are the measurable competencies that individuals must master to be successful. Standards may also specify the level of competence required for mastery. Standards are developed in the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic or basic skills • Career, occupational or technical • Work-readiness • Values, attitudes, personal and social skills
Section 3: Curricula, training and instruction	<p>Skill standards are the learning goals that form the basis for curricula and training and instruction methods. Curriculum is bolstered by labor market information that provides specific guidelines about how program offerings match the types of opportunities available to trainees.</p>
Section 4: Assessment	<p>As trainees advance through the program, various assessment strategies are used to evaluate students against the program or course standards. Assessment occurs both during a program or course and at the end to assess mastery of program goals.</p>
Section 5: Certification	<p>Certification is a form of assessment that can be the final outcome for individuals in employer-recognized skill standards systems. Trainees and individuals are given the opportunity to take certification exams when they are ready to enter the labor market. Certification by recognized organizations verifies the individual's capacity to meet standards set by industry. Because employers recognize the validity of the certification, this process allows individual worker mobility from employer to employer, within a given company and from region to region. Certification also signals to employers the knowledge and skills possessed by applicants.</p>

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First Steps in Defining or Adopting Skill Standards

The first step in defining or adopting skill standards is understanding the labor market conditions nationally, within the particular state and within the particular region or locality. Aligning or developing standards, curricula, training, instruction, assessment and certification is one of the most important effort WIA systems and programs can undertake. However, beginning this process without understanding labor market conditions and employer needs could result in taking a completely wrong direction. Take the time to gather information in order to prioritize and inform the development of a skills standards system. The following methods may be helpful in this process:

- Complete a literature review of available labor market projections
- Investigate new and emerging industries or employers within the state or region
- Develop a strong employer advisory group that is part of or advisory to the WIB
- Conduct focus groups around the state or region on employer needs
- Administer an employer survey to solicit input on labor market and employer needs and trends.

The information gathered will assist in prioritizing standards development or adaptation, adoption by programs, and, ultimately, assessment development. Select key industries or occupational areas to begin your efforts. After selecting key industries, efforts should focus first on the resources that are currently available in that industry (including existing skill standards and occupational certifications) before new standards and assessments are considered. Appendix B provides a broad range of resources to guide states and localities on what exists.

EXERCISE

What Is Needed to Succeed in Today's Workplace?

Quiz: Where are today's jobs?

1. What percent of today's jobs are low-wage?
2. What is the education level of persons who hold the 30 million elite jobs?
3. Who is employed in retailing jobs?
4. What percent of U.S. jobs are office jobs?
5. What percent of U.S. jobs are in health care?
6. What percent of today's jobs require some education beyond high school?

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Employers compete for individuals with a combination of strong academic and technical skills including the ability to:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Answers in Appendix A

Source: *What Teachers are Doing to Improve the Quality of High School Career/Technical Studies*, Dr. Richard Makin.

- How is your state or region gathering information on labor market and employer needs?

- How is this information used?

- How can the information be collected and use of the information be improved?

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Types of Skill Standards

BASIC DEFINITION OF A STANDARD

Standard = Outcome
Outcome = A measurable aspect of participant performance

Participants will be able to...
Participants will demonstrate...

After information has been gathered on labor market and employer needs, WIA practitioners at the state and local level should discuss how the needs fit into WIA training program components. Skill standards will be needed for the following program components:

- Pre-Employment
- Academic Reinforcement
- Occupational Training

This section provides an overview of different types of skill standards which can be adopted, adapted or developed for the various components of the WIA system and the range of participants (including youth, adults and dislocated workers).

Career, occupational or technical

These types of standards specify the skills and knowledge that participants must be able to demonstrate in specific careers, occupations or industries. Career, occupational or technical skills range in specificity. For example, they may specify all tasks and duties related to a particular occupation or may be broader in scope by detailing the skills and knowledge necessary for one sector or group of occupations within an industry. For WIA programs, career, occupational and technical standards provide a basis for gaining entry level employment and upgrading skills to achieve advancement in a career.

Career, occupational and technical standards are developed by industry groups and associations as the foundation for certification programs. These types of standards have also been developed at the state level with the cooperation of industry and employers in order to better inform vocational program curriculum and assessment. In addition, many states have implemented industry skill standards boards or commissions in order to support the implementation of more systemic workforce development initiatives.

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EXAMPLE—The Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) has developed standards for manufacturing, which have been approved by the National Skill Standards Board for public review and comment, using the following three categories that make up the NSSB’s “common framework”:¹⁹

- 1) *Core standards* are the knowledge, skills and performance that are common and critical to all frontline jobs within manufacturing-related sectors and concentrations.
- 2) *Concentrations* are the knowledge, skills and performance that are needed for major areas of frontline responsibility, covering families of related jobs and occupations. The families of related jobs and occupations proposed by MSSC include: production; health, safety and environment assurance; logistics and inventory control; maintenance, installation and repair; production process development and quality assurance. For example, a Quality Assurance critical work function (standard) is to “ensure materials meet quality specifications.”
- 3) *Specialty Standards* are the standards that address work requirements that are unique to a particular job within an industry, for a particular sub-industry within an industry sector or an individual industry or company.

EXAMPLE—The National Retail Institute, one of the pilot projects funded by the National Skill Standards Board, developed standards for the Professional Sales Associate. Key duties and tasks include:²⁰

Provide personalized customer service

- Initiate customer contact
- Build customer relations

Sell and promote products

- Determine customer needs
- Build the sale
- Close the sale

Monitor inventory

- Take inventory
- Transfer inventory

Maintain appearance of department/store

- Maintain stock, selling and customer service area
- Maintain product presentation and displays

Protect company assets

- Identify and prevent loss
- Follow safety procedures

Work as part of a department/store team

- Support co-worker
- Create competitive advantage

¹⁹ These standards are available for review at the NSSB Web site: <http://www.nssb.org>

²⁰ This document is available at <http://nssb.org/projects/retail.pdf>

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EXAMPLE—In 1992, Illinois established the Illinois Occupational Skill Standards and Credentialing Council (IOSSCC) through the cooperation of the Illinois State Board of Education and other workforce development agencies. The IOSSCC has established industry-led subcouncils to develop skill standards and credentialing systems by grouping the state's economy into fourteen categories, which are used to identify the occupations and occupational clusters that will be included in the system. One goal of the system has been for it to be specific enough to be used for curriculum and assessment.²¹

Within each of the occupational areas that have been endorsed by the IOSSCC, skill standards have been identified within several critical work functions. Each skill standard also includes the conditions of performance, the work to be performed and performance criteria that will be used to complete the skill standard.

The following example is from the Administrative Support Cluster.²²

Skill: Create and update/revise office manual or instruction book of procedures for employees (within the Organizing and Planning Functions)

Skill Standard:

Conditions of Performance: Given the following equipment or materials
Verbal and/or written instructions; Computer; Appropriate software; Printer; Reference books such as a dictionary, word division manual, punctuation guide and capitalization guide; Current office reference manual that includes information on routine office procedures; Two procedures that need to be updated including changes needed; New security system information (access levels, security codes, etc.); Equipment/software manuals

Work to be Performed:

Prepare, print and store the following documents:
Two updated procedures for employee office manual
Newly developed office procedure for computer security system

Performance Criteria:

Forty-five minutes will be given to complete the projects.
The documents will be error free when printed for evaluation.

²¹ *Taking Off! Sharing State-Level Accountability Strategies, Using Academic and Vocational Accountability Strategies to Improve Student Achievement*, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California, Berkeley, April 1999.

²² This standard is available at <http://www.standards.siu.edu/products/prodlist.html>, Administrative Support Cluster, page 42-3.

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Academic

These standards are usually associated with the outcomes related to academic disciplines such as math, science, English or social studies. Academic standards have been developed by national discipline organizations and at the state and local school district level. Generally, they specify what is expected in each discipline by grade level. In addition, basic academic skills form the core of adult literacy programs. For WIA programs, academic skills are integrated within many of the required elements for youth programs, such as summer employment linked directly to academic and occupational learning. For adults in WIA programs, academic skills may be part of the assessment of skill levels and diagnostic testing for the purpose of identifying employment barriers.

EXAMPLE—Basic Skills from the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS)—see example on the following page for more information about SCANS

Basic Skills

Reads, write, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens, and speaks

Reading—locates, understands, and interprets written information in prose and in documents such as manuals, graphs, and schedules

Writing—communicates thoughts, ideas, information, and messages in writing; creates documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts

Arithmetic/Mathematics—performs basic computations and approaches practical problems by choosing appropriately from a variety of mathematical techniques

Listening—receives, attends to, interprets, and responds to verbal messages and other cues

Speaking—organizes ideas and communicates orally

Through support from the US Department of Education in the early 1990’s, several professional organizations developed national academic standards in many subjects. The following organizations may be contacted for more information on these projects and for the standards:

Math: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)
1906 Association Drive, Reston VA 20191-1593
703-620-9840, www.nctm.org

Science: National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council (NAS)
2102 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington DC 20418
202-334-2000, www.nas.edu/nrc

English/Language Arts: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
1111 West Kenyon Road, Urbana IL 61801
217-328-3870, www.ncte.org

The **Council for Basic Education** is another organization that provides information and technical assistance related to academic skill standards. More information about this organization may be found at www.c-b-e.org.

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Nearly all states have also developed academic skill standards. Many of these resources are available through state departments of education. A list of state departments of education can be found on the **US Department of Education** Web site: <http://www.ed.gov/Programs/bastmp/SEA.htm>

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Work-readiness or Employability Skills

Work-readiness skills cut across workplaces and industries and specify the knowledge and skills necessary to be a generally productive member of the workplace. For example, these kinds of skills include problem solving, teamwork and communication.

EXAMPLE—In 1990, the Secretary of Labor appointed the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), which issued a groundbreaking report *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for America 2000* in 1992. This report outlines the skills necessary for all workers to succeed in high-performance workplaces. The Commission issued its report after conducting research and interviews of workers in a wide variety of occupations and holding discussions with business owners, public employers, unions, and workers and supervisors in shops, plants, and stores. Since issuing its report, the skills identified by SCANS have been used widely to improve academic and vocational curriculum and in workforce development initiatives.²³

Summary of SCANS Competencies and Foundation Skills

Competency 1—Resources

Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources (time, money, materials and facilities, and human resources)

Competency 2—Interpersonal

Works with others (participates as a member of a team, teaches others new skills, serves clients/customers, exercises leadership, negotiates, and works with diversity)

Competency 3—Information

Acquires and uses information (acquires and evaluates, organizes and maintains, interprets and communicates, and uses computers to process)

Competency 4—Systems

Understands complex inter-relationships (understands social, organizational, and technological systems; monitors and corrects performance; and improves or designs systems)

Competency 5—Technology

Works with a variety of technologies (selects, applies to task, and maintains and troubleshoots equipment)

Foundation 1—Basic Skills

Reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens and speaks

Foundation 2—Thinking Skills

Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, knows how to learn, and reasons

Foundation 3—Personal Qualities

Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity and honesty

²³ Information about SCANS and documents are available on-line at <http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS/>

USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS IN WIA PROGRAMS

EXAMPLE—The New Jersey State Board of Education adopted Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards in conjunction with Core Curriculum Content Standards²⁴ in traditional academic areas. The Workplace Readiness Standards specify that all students will:

- develop career planning and workplace readiness skills
- use technology, information and other tools
- use critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills
- demonstrate self-management skills
- apply safety principles

Values, attitudes, personal and social skills

Each of these kinds of skills is important to functioning in a work environment. However, they are difficult to measure and, at times, can be controversial because they may be viewed as inherently lacking objectivity. Despite these difficulties, employers often comment that the most highly desired workers possess skills such as being on time, integrity and honesty.

WIA emphasizes a philosophy of “work-first.” In other words, participants rotate through each step of the system, from core services (open to all) to intensive services and, finally, to training services if they qualify. At each step, the goal is to place participants in employment. Because of the value placed by employers on these types of skills (e.g. punctuality and responsibility), it is critical for WIA programs to include standards of this type in its training and placement services. In some instances, WIA programs will need to be cautious in implementing these types of skill standards by paying close attention to the local context and the interest in and comfort level of defining and measuring these kinds of skills.

EXAMPLE—One example of this kind of skill was described in the SCANS report. The third foundation skill “Personal Qualities” includes the following:

Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity and honesty.

- Responsibility—exerts a high level of effort and perseveres towards goal attainment
- Self-esteem—believes in own self-worth and maintains a positive view of self
- Sociability—demonstrates understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and politeness in group settings
- Self-management—assesses self accurately, sets personal goals, monitors progress, and exhibits self-control
- Integrity/honesty—chooses ethical courses of action

²⁴ These standards are available at <http://www.state.nj.us/njded/cccs/05ccwrready.html>

USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS IN WIA PROGRAMS

EXERCISE

1. What is the labor market and employer need information gathered telling you about the programs and services needed for...

Youth:

Adults:

Dislocated Workers:

2. In what industries are you targeting your occupational training?

3. What standards are you using or plan to use in your occupational training?

4. What standards are you using in your WIA programs for....

Academic Reinforcement:

Pre-Employment:

5. What types of standards are in need of development?

For what industries?

Populations?

Programs?

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Components?

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Skill Standards and WIA Training

Skill standards are the basis of a standards-based training and education program. While standards form the cornerstone of goals for all learners in a given program, curriculum and training and instructional methods provide the substantive content and activities that brings the standards to life for participants as they gain knowledge and skills.

[Mikala, should this table be included, how should it be revised?]

WIA Training	Relevant Types of Skill Standards	Examples [example standards]
Pre-employment	<p>Level 1: Broad-based academic and work-related standards and certification</p> <p><i>Level 2: Occupational Cluster or Industry Skill Standards and Certifications may also be incorporated</i></p>	<p>Level 1: SCANS or School Counseling</p> <p>Level 2: Retail Standards</p>
Academic reinforcement	<p>Level 1: Broad-based academic and work-related standards and certification</p> <p><i>Level 2: Occupational Cluster or Industry Skill Standards and Certifications may also be incorporated</i></p>	<p>Level 1: Science</p> <p>Level 2:</p>
Occupational training	<p>Level 2: Occupational Cluster or Industry Skill Standards and Certifications may also be incorporated</p> <p>Level 3: Occupational or Job Specific Skill Standards and Certification</p>	<p>Level 2:</p> <p>Level 3:</p>

(Chart above needs work)

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Placeholder for Work Keys Example:

Addresses academic and workplace readiness standards by specific occupation.

Need to call Jamie Justice re: Work Keys and WIA

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SKILL STANDARDS WORKSHEET

Industry Selected:

Target Population:

Location in WIA System:

Occupations or Jobs Targeted for Placement:

Core standards are the broadest requirements that are common to an entire industry sector. For example, core standards would specify the skills common to the *transportation* industry as a whole.²⁵

Academic:



Employability:



Occupational:



²⁵ This example is from the NSSB Web site (www.nssb.org) from its *Summary of the NSSB Guidelines for a Voluntary National Skill Standards System*.

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Concentrations are the major areas of work carried out across an industry sector that cover families of related occupations. In the transportation industry, concentration standards would cover a job family such as *trucking*.

Academic:



Employability:



Occupational:



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Specialty Standards are the standards that address work requirements that are unique to a particular job within an industry, or for a particular sub-industry within an industry sector. In the transportation industry example, specialty standards for a specific occupation such as *tractor-trailer driver*.

Academic:



Employability:



Occupational:



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EXERCISE

What are your next steps in adopting or developing skill standards?

Check Yourself

- Examined benefits of skills standards system:
 - ⇒ Organizing Framework for Workforce Initiatives
 - ⇒ Improved Communication/Collaboration
 - ⇒ Service to Employers
 - ⇒ Service to Training Providers
 - ⇒ Service to Job Seekers
 - ⇒ Service to Incumbent Workers
- Researched labor market and employer needs
- Determined industries sectors and occupations to focus efforts
- Determined fit between needs/priorities and WIA training efforts in pre-employment, academic reinforcement and occupational training
- Determined fit between needs/priorities and populations served: youth, adults and dislocated workers.
- Examined existing resources in terms of standards and assessment (see Appendix B)
- Adopted existing standards where there is a good fit with needs
- Determined types of standards to be developed associated with occupational training
- Developed standards
- Developed employer process for review and buy-in of standards
- Planned for next steps after standards development (including integration with accountability system)

Section 3: **Developing policies, procedures and curriculum to support skill standards in WIA programs**

Introduction to Section 3

This section introduces the concept of incorporating standards-based curriculum in the policies and procedures of WIA programs. The first part introduces standards-based curriculum and is followed by information and activities to implement standards-based training and instruction. Guidelines and activities to incorporate standards in three core components of the WIA system follow these introductory activities.

In this section, you will establish a plan for incorporating standards-based curriculum in:

- Governance and oversight
- Program and service delivery
- Accountability and reporting requirements

Developing standards-based curriculum

In order to make standards useful for instructors and on-the-job trainers, they must be translated into language that is specific enough to inform curriculum and allows for the integration of skills across different types of standards (e.g. workplace readiness vs. occupational technical). In addition, skill standards are usually specified as the broad outcome for participants in the program. In order to translate this into the courses or segments of training that participants will be a part of, each of the program elements will need to include a subset of the overall program standards. When the training is complete or participants graduate from a program, they must meet *all* standards. Therefore, it is important that all members of a training program collaborate to make sure that all courses, training experiences and other services are planned in concert and are working together to make sure that participants meet the program's overall goals (standards).

Implementing standards-based training and instruction provides a cohesive system that includes:

- instruction that targets instructional strategies to the multiple ways people learn
- multiple modes of training including classroom, job site, and computer-based learning
- variety in instructional strategies including lecture, demonstration and group discussions.

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In standards-based curriculum, *how* the standards are taught might vary program to program—*where* the standards are taught varies widely—but *what* is taught is similar. After the training is complete or participants graduate from a program, they must meet *all* outcomes or standards. See Appendix B for resources on developing standards-based curriculum, projects developed under the National Skill Standards Board and other organizations involved in curriculum development.

Governance and Oversight

Process for Incorporating Skill Standards:

1. Set Clear Expectations and Policies

Skill standards are available from a variety of organizations at several levels of specificity. Industry skill standards vary from those that are occupationally specific to standards based on the skills needed to perform in a broad industry cluster. Skill standards are developed at the state level or by national organizations and may incorporate academic, technical or workplace skills, general workplace readiness or personal qualities important in a particular field.

Because WIA programs provide training in pre-employment, academic reinforcement and specific occupational training, it is important that policies related to skill standards are flexible enough to consider what aspect of skill standards would be relevant to a particular program. Thus, policies and procedures set by the WIB must be relevant to the match between the skill standards that are available and the variety of training offered by the WIA system. When WIBs develop criteria for determining provider eligibility, skill standards can be matched to the appropriate type of training.

2. Establish incentives for programs to use skill standards and/or consequences for those that don't

The most important point of contact between the oversight boards and training programs is the contracting process. It is at this point that requirements for the use of skill standards can be established. If a board completes their homework, the WIB can be very proactive in soliciting providers that meet their particular labor market, employer and standards-driven needs. Find providers of occupational training based on your labor market needs. Only use providers that use a standards-driven system for academic reinforcement and pre-employment programs.

Incentives include a preference for the use of training vouchers with standards-based programs. WIBs can establish criteria for training providers that receive training vouchers to incorporate national skill standards and certifications in their programs. These criteria may include providing opportunities to trainees to attain certification where possible.

USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS IN WIA PROGRAMS

EXERCISE

Current criteria for programs to qualify for Individual Training Accounts:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How can current criteria be modified to incorporate skill standards?

3. Make necessary support available

In order for program directors, managers and instructors to incorporate skill standards in daily training activities, sufficient support must be available from state and local WIBs. Types of support that can be offered include:

- *Technical Assistance* includes on and off-site training for program operations, reporting mechanisms and improving curriculum in training courses to incorporate skill standards in all operations.
- *Materials/documents/other resources* for practitioners includes user-friendly publications that guide practitioners. Other information can be distributed via an Internet site with links to relevant national and state organizations.
- *Professional Development* for practitioners that ties skill standards to training activities, classroom activities and individual monitoring or case management strategies is essential to incorporating skill standards at all levels of the system.
- *Program Certification* (e.g. NATEF) is another alternative for incorporating skill standards in curriculum and assessment. Because programs generally must meet criteria set by industry groups in all aspects of their programs (including facilities, curriculum and instruction), programs that are nationally certified demonstrate adherence to industry-set standards.

USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS IN WIA PROGRAMS

A checklist of necessary elements for implementation: Governance and Oversight

- ✓ Stakeholders are involved in the adoption or setting of standards (for example, committees organized by industry area that include employers, training providers, industry associations and others)
- ✓ Labor market information is accurate, current and readily available
- ✓ Policies are in place that encourage skill standards incorporation
- ✓ RFP process reflects the WIB's goals for incorporating skill standards in all aspects of program and service delivery
- ✓ Training providers have access to appropriate ongoing technical assistance as needed
- ✓ Professional development opportunities are available to individual instructors and program managers
- ✓ Training providers have sufficient information and opportunity to incorporate a standards-based system (for example, sufficient planning time, access to local information and a process that is aligned to current expectations for program success)
- ✓ Incentives and consequences for training programs are readily aligned with the use of skill standards

**USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL
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⇒ *Where would we like to go?*

List current goals for Governance and Oversight:

⇒ *How can we get there?*

Action Steps:

Who is currently involved?

Who needs to be involved?

Where should we start?

USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS IN WIA PROGRAMS

Program and Service Delivery

Process for Incorporating Skill Standards:

1. Incorporate skill standards, curriculum and assessment in One-Stop operations

Under WIA, services are directed through a *One-Stop delivery system*, which is run by a One-Stop operator appointed by the local WIB. Both required and optional partners are brought into the One-Stop system through memoranda of understanding with the operator. One-Stop centers, initiated by the Department of Labor beginning in 1994, have been formally included in WIA legislation as the key coordinating body for local and state workforce investment systems. Despite the growth of One-Stops and the formal adoption in federal legislation, the degree of implementation varies along a spectrum—from providing information to actual service coordination. In general, One-Stop centers:

Provide Information. These are likely to be self-service information centers that describe what training services and labor market information in the local area. In these centers, there may be caseworkers or counselors available to provide guidance in the use of this information. However, there is often a lack of staff for these activities. A One-Stop center may offer workshops and direct help to specific client groups.

Co-Location. Under this model, offices of education and training providers co-locate offices in one place. They provide information about services that are available and personal information and advice from staff of specific programs or institutions.

Service Coordination. In some cases, One-Stops have begun to coordinate service provision in their area. Services may include adult basic education, welfare-to-work, and others contained in a single building. The emphasis focuses on accessibility and convenience for clients. These One-Stops may also coordinate child care and other social services such as substance abuse or violence prevention.²⁶

Depending on the emphasis of the One-Stop operations in your area, the use of skill standards may be incorporated in:

- MOUs
- Technical Assistance
- Reporting and performance requirements

²⁶ Grubb, Norton W. et al. *Toward Order From Chaos, State Efforts to Reform Workforce Development Systems*. National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California at Berkeley, MDS-1249, January 1999.

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2. Focus on curriculum outcomes and improving the quality of programs.

Adult and Dislocated Worker Services. WIA establishes three levels of service for adults and dislocated workers: core, intensive and training services. For adults and dislocated workers, skill standards may be used to improve each of the levels of service under WIA.

- *Core services* are available to all and include job search assistance, career counseling and information about the labor market and employment opportunities. Employability skill standards may be used in the provision of accurate and appropriate employment opportunities. Users may be offered information about employability skill standards or an employability skill certificate may be issued that signifies they possess these kinds of skills for a job search. As employers become aware of employability certifications and skill standards, they may increasingly use these in screening their employees.
- *Intensive services* are provided to those who are unable to obtain work through core services or employed workers who need additional assistance to remain employed. Intensive services include comprehensive assessments, individual employment plans, case management and short-term prevocational services. Work readiness, values and personal qualities and academic skill standards may be useful in this level of service.
- *Training services* are available only to those who are unable to obtain or retain employment through intensive services. Training services include occupational skills training, On-the-Job training (OJT), customized training, skill upgrading and retraining, job readiness training, adult and literacy education, and other training services. All types of skill standards are relevant to these activities.

Youth Services. Under WIA, all youth services have been combined into one funding stream (including summer employment). Youth who are eligible for services must be low income youth aged 14-21 faced with one or more of six barriers to school completion or employment: (1) deficient in basic literacy skills; (2) school dropout; (3) homeless, runaway or foster child; (4) pregnant or a parent; (5) offender; or (6) requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure and hold employment. Youth ages 19-21 can also be served under the adult funding stream.²⁷

WIA moves youth job training programs away from short-term intervention to long-term individual development by requiring that youth programs have 10 program elements available to each participant:

²⁷ Wonacott, Michael E. *The Workforce Act and CTE*, In Brief, Fast Facts for Policy and Practice, No. 6, 2000. National Dissemination Center for Career & Technical Education.

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Youth Program Element	Use of skill standards
tutoring or instruction leading to secondary completion	Academic
alternative secondary school services	Academic
summer employment linked to academic and occupational learning	Work-readiness; academic; occupational and values, attitudes, personal and social skills
paid and unpaid work experience	Work-readiness, occupational
occupational skill training	Work-readiness, occupational, academic
leadership development	Values, attitudes, personal and social skills
supportive services	Values, attitudes, personal and social skills and work-readiness
adult mentoring	Values, attitudes, personal and social skills; academic; work-readiness
follow-up services for at least one year after participation	Work-readiness; academic; occupational and values, attitudes, personal and social skills
comprehensive guidance and counseling	Work-readiness; academic; occupational and values, attitudes, personal and social skills

3. Provide information about how to incorporate skill standards in curriculum to develop quality training programs.

(Curriculum Process—how specific on curriculum should we go?) Developing standards into units of study (or classroom activities)

Standards and curriculum (program content) for these kinds of programs will include three types:

- Pre-employment
- Academic reinforcement
- Occupational training

[May need some kind of chart describing how this all fits together]

USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS IN WIA PROGRAMS

A checklist of necessary elements for implementation: Program and Service Delivery

- ✓ One-Stop delivery system emphasizes skill standards in curriculum and instruction development
- ✓ Programs are aligned to national certification when available
- ✓ Programs use national certifications or skill standards as the basis for developing competency-based learning objectives, curricula, instructional methods, teaching materials and work site activities
- ✓ Students are prepared using the requirements of employers as described in skill standards and certification examinations
- ✓ Participants are provided with opportunities to take exams and receive certifications
- ✓ If certifications are not available, appropriate assessment strategies allow participants to demonstrate skills

**USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL
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Standards integration in Program and Service Delivery

⇒ *Where are we?*

What direction have providers been given in terms of standards-driven curriculum?

How are the following programs incorporating standards-driven curriculum?

One-Stop

Youth Service Providers

On-the job

What standards are currently available or in use?

- Academic
Types/Source: _____
- Work-readiness
Types/Source: _____
- Values, attitudes, personal and social skills
Types/Source: _____
- Occupational
Types/Source: _____

**USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL
CERTIFICATIONS IN WIA PROGRAMS**

⇒ *Where would we like to go?*

List current goals for improving Program and Service Delivery:

⇒ *How can we get there?*

Action Steps:

Who is currently involved?

Who needs to be involved?

Where should we start?

USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS IN WIA PROGRAMS

Accountability and Reporting Requirements

Strategies for Incorporating Skill Standards:

1. Use skill standards in Performance Measures

Two performance measures are of particular relevance to skill standards and certifications:

Performance Measure #1: For Youth Age 19-21 and Adults and Dislocated Workers—Attainment of recognized credentials relating to achievement of education or occupational skills

Performance Measure #2: For Youth Programs—Attainment of basic skills and, as appropriate, work readiness or occupational skills

WIBs can incorporate language in their policies to encourage or require the use of skill standards or occupational certifications in measuring progress toward local and state performance goals. Youth programs can incorporate work readiness and basic academic skills in their assessment of participant skill levels. Occupational skill development is also required in youth programs. However, more general occupational or industry areas may be more useful than specific occupational certifications for youth programs. For example, occupational skills may be evaluated in the health industry or retail services or office/administrative services. Section 5 provides more detailed information about and a process for incorporating occupational certifications in various aspects of WIA programs.

2. Provide information to consumers (strategies for reporting to the users of ITAs)

WIA legislation requires the following information from each individual program in order for it to be certified:²⁸

- Program completions rates for all individuals participating in the programs conducted by the provider
- Percentage of all individuals participating in the program who obtained unsubsidized employment (the provider may include information specifying the percentage of the individuals who obtained unsubsidized employment in an occupation related to the program conducted)
- Wages at the time the individual is placed in employment

²⁸ Brustein, Michael and Robert Knight, *A Guide to the Workforce Investment Act of 1998*, National Association of Private Industry Councils (NAPIC), p. 24.

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- Placement rate in unsubsidized employment of participants who completed (not just those who participated) in the program
- Retention rates in unsubsidized employment of participants who completed the program six months after the first day of employment
- Wages received by participants who have completed the applicable program six months after the first day of the employment involved
- Rates of licensure or certification, attainment of academic degrees or equivalents or attainment of other measures of skills of the graduates of the program
- Information on program cost, such as tuition or fees, for participants in the program

WIA also allows states to collect information on rates of licensure or certification of participants who complete the program and the percentage of individuals who complete the program and obtain industry-recognized occupational skills in the subject, occupation or industry for which the training is provided. This information is compiled by the state and provided to each One-Stop operator so individuals may access this information when choosing a program.

3. Make linkages to other workforce initiatives

WIA legislation requires and encourages linkages across many division and historically divided lines including:

Cross Program Policy Alignment—Incorporation of nationally recognized, industry-based skill standards and occupational certifications into the policies, plans, and practices of WIA, Perkins III and postsecondary programs

Statewide use—Utilization of skill standards and occupational certifications by statewide industry consortia and education partnerships

Use in grants and projects—Integration of standards and certifications into skill shortage grant initiatives and apprenticeship training projects

A checklist of necessary elements for implementation: Accountability and Reporting Requirements

- ✓ Data systems are available and user friendly
- ✓ Technical assistance is provided to generate performance levels and ensure that these levels are determined fairly
- ✓ Reporting requirements are aligned to governance and oversight procedures
- ✓ Reporting requirements are the least burdensome possible and collect information that will be used to improve programs
- ✓ Reporting procedures are user friendly and support internal program management
- ✓ Reporting format for consumers (holders of ITAs) provides useful, clear and relevant information for choosing an appropriate training program

**USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL
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Standards integration in Accountability and Reporting

- *Where are we?*

What reporting requirements do we currently have for programs?

Do these reports provide us with the necessary data to measure attainment of academic and occupational skills and credential attainment?

Are we requiring that programs submit information on certification and licensure of program participants?

What format do we use for informing holders of ITAs about programs that are available to them? Does this reporting format include occupational certifications when available and why these are important?

**USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL
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- *Where would we like to go?*

List current goals for improving Accountability and Reporting Requirements:

⇒ *How can we get there?*

Action Steps:

Who is currently involved?

Who needs to be involved?

Where should we start?

USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS IN WIA PROGRAMS

EXAMPLE: State of Alaska use of skill standards and national occupational certifications in workforce development policy, practice and accountability²⁹

The following example shows how one state has approached the integration of skill standards and national occupational certifications through their adoption in its five-year *State Unified Plan*, June 2000 to June 2005. This Plan addresses how services will be provided in federally funded, state funded and locally implemented workforce development programs.

In May 2000, the Alaska Legislature passed a law that required the Alaska Human Resource Investment Council (AHRIC) to “facilitate the development of a statewide policy for a coordinated and effective technical and vocational education training system in this state” and “plan and coordinate federal, state, and local efforts in technical and vocational education programs.”³⁰

Alaska’s Future Workforce Strategic Policies and Investment Blueprint describes a situation in the state where surpluses of unskilled and unemployed workers combine with a lack of qualified workers for the high-skill, high paying jobs that are projected for the future. In addition, it describes education and training programs in local areas as often fragmented or under-funded.

To address the specific economic needs of Alaska’s workforce, which includes many isolated, rural communities with opportunities limited to a few industries, Alaska agreed on a vision for a Workforce Investment System that focused on “building connections that put Alaskan’s into good jobs.” “Good jobs” are described as those with adequate pay, benefits and career advancement opportunities that can sustain an individual and their family economically without reliance on public subsidy.³¹

Under its Unified Plan, Alaska has put in place policies that integrate and efficiently coordinate education and training resources in a comprehensive statewide system. Within this plan, skill standards and national occupational certifications will play a key role. Alaska plans to implement the use of skill standards and national occupational certifications at all levels of its Workforce Investment System from governance and oversight at the policy level to program and service delivery to its accountability and reporting requirements.

The *Blueprint* described six Guiding Principles that will be used to strengthen Alaska’s training programs, educational institutions and other programs under the WIA system:

²⁹ Information for this example has been summarized from two sources: (1) *Alaska’s Future Workforce Strategic Policies and Investment Blueprint* adopted by the Alaska Human Resource Investment Council (AHRIC), December 12, 2000 and (2) *Alaska Unified Plan Executive Summary*, Alaska Human Resource Investment Council, For State Unified Plans Submitted under Section 501 of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, State of Alaska for the period of June 2000 to June 2005.

³⁰ *Alaska’s Future Workforce: Strategic Policies & Investment Blueprint*, <http://www.gov.state.ak.us/ltagov/voced/main.htm>.

³¹ *Alaska Unified Plan Executive Summary*, p. 6.

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Guiding Principle #1 Needs Driven. System is labor market driven, and responsive to interrelated workforce, community and regional economic development needs.

Guiding Principle #2 Accessible. System is expanded to provide greater access and opportunity in both rural and urban Alaska.

Guiding Principle #3 Interconnected. System uses coordinated programs and service delivery to promote progressive, lifelong occupational learning, skill transferability, credential portability and worker mobility.

Guiding Principle #4 Accountable. System delivers quality services that are aligned with and responsive to current and emerging needs of core constituents—students, job seekers, employers, families and communities.

Guiding Principle #5 Collaborative Governance. System promotes collaborative state and local policies and partnerships to ensure a close fit between education and training, labor market demands, and the needs of constituents regionally and statewide.

Guiding Principle #6 Sustainable. System is “built to last” and supported by increased funding and sustainable investment policies.

Within several of these guiding principles, the *Blueprint* describes a variety of strategies (among many others) that Alaska will employ to specifically target the use of skill standards and occupational certifications:

- Invest in vocational and technical education and training programs that are market-responsive and consistent with nationally, recognized, industry-based skill standards and occupational certifications through expanded use of career pathways, business, labor and education partnerships, registered apprenticeships, and on-the-job training.
- Establish standards to align skill development, assessment and attainment levels with labor market needs, and achieve nationally, recognized, industry-based skill standards and occupational certifications.
- Adopt nationally recognized, industry-based skill standards and occupational certifications, as well as program and instructor certification procedures, for secondary and postsecondary occupational education and training.
- Complete development of secondary and postsecondary Career and Technical Education Program Standards for Alaska.

While Alaska has embedded the use of skill standards and occupational certifications firmly in policy and its accountability strategies, the next steps in implementation will be to focus on providing technical assistance and other guidance at the program level to ensure that these implementation strategies become a reality for program participants.

**USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL
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EXERCISE

Action Plan/Summarizing Questions
Governance and Oversight
Program and Service Delivery
Accountability and Reporting Requirements

USING SKILL STANDARDS AND OCCUPATIONAL CERTIFICATIONS IN WIA PROGRAMS

Section 4: Establishing assessments and a work readiness certificate

Introduction to Section 4

Section 4 begins with a summary of the types of standards described in Section 2. This summary is followed by an introduction to the general purposes of assessment, different types of assessments and how to use assessments given different types of standards. This section also outlines a process for establishing a work readiness certificate. This certificate can be used as a signal to employers that participants possess key general workplace competencies.

While establishing a set of program or course standards is the first step to determining the knowledge and skills that are critical to participant success in all components of the WIA system, it is equally important to establish assessments that accurately and appropriately measure these competencies. In addition, traditional pen and paper assessments may not be the most suitable strategy for measuring skills such as responsibility or teamwork—both general employability skills that employers say are important to workplace success. Therefore, it is important to consider the assessment of participant skills from a holistic or systemic perspective using multiple strategies that capture the various elements of training and goals for the WIA system.

In this section, you will learn:

- general principles of standards and assessment
- how to select different types of assessments to match your standards and assessment purpose
- how to determine participant success
- how to use these skills to establish a work readiness certificate

Standards

BASIC DEFINITION OF A STANDARD

Standard = Outcome

Outcome = A measurable aspect of participant performance

Participants will be able to...

Participants will demonstrate...

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To re-cap from Section 2, skill standards fall in four broad categories:

(1) Career, occupational or technical: These types of standards specify the skills and knowledge that participants must be able to demonstrate for specific careers, occupations or industries. They may specify all tasks and duties related to a particular occupation or may be broader in scope by detailing the skills and knowledge necessary for one sector or group of occupations within an industry.

(2) Academic: This type of standard is usually associated with the outcomes related to academic disciplines such as math, science, English or social studies. They are usually specified by grade level and also form the core of adult literacy programs.

(3) Work-readiness/Employability: These skills cut across workplaces and industries and specify the knowledge and skills necessary to be a generally productive member of the workplace. They may include skills such as problem solving, teamwork and communication. Other skills such as using technology or equipment and allocating resources are also considered under the work-readiness category.

(4) Values, attitudes, personal and social skills: These skills are also related to general work-readiness but reflect critical personal traits that many employers emphasize and help participants achieve successful life skills. Under JTPA, these skills fall roughly under the category of work maturity, which includes: attitudes/behaviors, appropriate dress/cleanliness, punctuality/attendance and interpersonal skills such as respect, cooperation and choosing ethical behavior.

EXERCISE:

1. What types of skill standards are you using in core services, intensive services or training services?

Core services:

Intensive services:

Training services:

2. Where is improvement needed?

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The following table describes how these categories relate to the three levels of service for adults under WIA. To a degree, all of the different types of standards should be used in WIA programs for youth.

WIA Service Delivery Category	Program Type/Provider	Relevant Skill Standards
(1) <i>Core services</i> are available to all and include job search assistance, career counseling and information about the labor market and employment opportunities	One-Stop. Services may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information • service co-location (multiple agencies) • service coordination (multiple agencies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work-readiness
(2) <i>Intensive services</i> are provided to those who are unable to obtain work through core services or employed workers who need additional assistance to remain employed.	One-Stop Pre-employment contractor (e.g. community-based organization). Services may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comprehensive assessments • individual employment plans • case management • short-term prevocational services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic • Work-readiness • Values, attitudes, personal and social skills
(3) <i>Training services</i> are available only to those who are unable to obtain or retain employment through intensive services.	Training provider (e.g. community college, approved vendor), employment/ internship. Services may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational skills training • On-the-Job training (OJT) • customized training • skill upgrading and retraining • job readiness training • adult and literacy education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career, occupational or technical • Academic • Work-readiness • Values, attitudes, personal and social skills

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Linking Standards to Assessment

A standards-based training system is based on the assessment of the skills and knowledge of participants as defined in the program or course standards (participant outcomes). In designing a standards-based training system, it is important to consider how programs can be guided to choose the best way to assess trainee skills, given the constraints associated with developing assessments that are fair and reliable. Traditional multiple-choice tests, skill checklists and other alternatives such as portfolios or performance exams provide a range of choices available to programs in the WIA system. However, assessment strategies must incorporate the most effective way to measure a given standard or desired outcome. Not all assessment strategies are useful in measuring all standards.

The following process for choosing assessment strategies includes identifying the purpose of the assessment, the knowledge and skills to be assessed and the selection of the best strategy after considering questions of quality and feasibility.³²

General questions to consider:

- What are the knowledge and skills (standards) to be measured?
- What are the essential standards?
- What assessment strategies would best measure the attainment of those standards?

Purposes of Assessment

Assessment serves three general purposes:

**Measuring individual *participant learning*,
Assessing *mastery* of skills and
Collecting *information* about a program's performance.**

When an assessment is used to measure an individual participant's learning, it provides valuable information that can be used to improve curriculum and instruction and to gauge how individuals are performing. A certification of skill mastery, on the other hand, is used to signal to employers and others that a trainee has accomplished a certain set of skills. These are discussed in more detail in Section 5 of this guide, *Selecting and implementing occupational certifications*. The third general purpose of assessment is to collect information about how a program is performing. This information is reported for project oversight purposes and can be used to monitor and improve programs, establish accountability strategies or evaluate trends across programs or at different points in time.

³² The process outlined in this section is summarized from *Using Alternatives Assessments in Vocational Education*, a publication of the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, University of California, Berkeley, 1997. The authors are Brian M. Stecher, Mikala L. Rahn, Allen Ruby, Martha Naomi Alt and Abby Robyn.

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Types of Assessment

As trainees progress through a program, they are exposed to a variety of courses, training situations and on-the-job training. Trainees are expected to learn different kinds of skills and knowledge that range from learning factual information about a given procedure to improving their decision-making or team building skills. The knowledge and skills they are gaining require different modes of assessment in order to determine whether their level of performance is sufficient.

In designing a standards-based training system, there is a range of assessment strategies to choose from. The following chart describes several strategies and the strengths associated with each.

Assessment Strategy	Strengths
<p>Written assessment</p> <p><i>Multiple-choice</i> An answer is selected in response to a prompt. Prompts may include brief questions, written paragraphs, tables of information or diagram.</p>	Efficient method for testing knowledge of specific facts or skills. These tests take a short amount of time, can be easily scored and are relatively less expensive to develop.
<p><i>Short-answer</i> A word, phrase or sentence is provided in response to an open ended question</p>	Efficient method for testing knowledge of specific facts or skills. Can also be used to assess more complex types of thinking such as logic, interpretation or analysis
<p><i>Essay/writing sample/scenario</i> A longer written assessment that requires an explanation in writing to solve a problem, analyze a situation or respond to a real-life scenario</p>	Method that allows for the integration of several skills or areas of knowledge. Provides a measurement of knowledge in context and the ability to provide more complex analysis.
<p>Performance/presentation Hands-on activities that require a demonstration of ability in performing certain actions. This category provides a wide range of options including designing a product, gathering information and interpreting the results or preparing a report or presentation</p>	Method allows for judging performance on employment-related skills and simulating real-world experiences. Allows for the demonstration of specific procedures of a work-related task or for demonstrating problem solving skills in an unfamiliar context
<p>Project Projects generally focus on a theme (work-related or other) and incorporate a variety of methods that may include a research paper, oral presentation and hands-on activities</p>	Method that is cumulative and integrates a wide variety of skills and knowledge including speaking, writing and hands-on skills. Shows progress and growth over time
<p>Portfolios A portfolio is a collection of student work and documents of his or her performance. May contain any additional materials that are relevant to the purpose of the portfolio. Does not necessarily focus on a theme. May contain work samples, official records and student-written</p>	Method that is cumulative and incorporates other materials. Is not focused on a theme, but can be used to represent a student's best work, growth over time or readiness for a specific occupation.

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information (such as a description of the portfolio or journal of growth)	
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Matching Assessment Strategies to Standards

The basic goal of any assessment system is to show whether a participant has met the program or course’s specified set of standards. There are many strategies available for this purpose; program managers and instructors must make choices to fit their program requirements and participant needs. These choices are made given a variety of constraints such as:

- their contractual reporting requirements,
- the amount of time available,
- whether the assessment strategy is an appropriate way to measure a given standard and
- what will work best for participants given their learning style and the level of training they may need.

The following chart provides examples of possible matches of types of standards to assessment strategies.

Type of Standard	Possible Assessment Strategies
<i>Career, occupational or technical skills</i>	<p>Written assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Multiple choice or short-answer</i> exams may be useful for specific factual questions related to a given occupation or career cluster. For example, safety or health regulations are useful in this type of assessment because they specify what is a <u>right</u> or a <u>wrong</u> answer. • <i>Essays, writing samples or scenarios</i> are useful in determining a participant’s skill level related to a broader workplace context. For example, a scenario provides insight into the participant’s ability to make job-related decisions and the quality of their judgment. A writing sample (such as composing a business letter) may be tailored to be directly related to what will be expected on the job. • <i>Performances or presentations</i> are the best strategy for simulating real-world experiences and can be used during on-the-job training or in a classroom or training situation. By performing a given task, participants demonstrate their level of understanding and ability to follow directions for job-related tasks.

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<p><i>Academic</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Multiple choice or short-answer</i> exams are a good strategy for measuring reading comprehension, math problems, grammatical and spelling knowledge and other fact-based problems. • <i>Essays, writing samples or scenarios</i> are another strategy for assessing a participant’s general writing ability and reading comprehension. Math word problems provide insight into both a participant’s math knowledge and his or her reading comprehension. • <i>Projects</i> are another strategy for assessing academic skills. Because projects usually focus on a theme (that may be work-related), they offer opportunities for assessing academic skills from multiple perspectives.
<p><i>Work-readiness</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Performances or presentations</i> provide the most appropriate way to measure these kinds of skills in a workplace context. Because a performance or a presentation requires that participants use a variety of skills (for example, oral communication, listening and responding to feedback, research and writing), they show a more complete picture of the skills that a participant may or may not possess. • <i>Portfolios</i> are another strategy for documenting work-readiness skills. Resumes, cover letters, quizzes, journals and other pieces included in the portfolio form an overall picture of participant skills and their progress and growth over time. These may be particularly useful for employers to see how participants are progressing and in what areas on-the-job training should focus.
<p><i>Values, attitudes, personal and social skills</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Scenarios</i> are one strategy for participants to demonstrate how they would make decisions on the job related to ethics, working with diversity and other characteristics that are necessary in the modern workplace. • <i>Performances or presentations</i>, especially on-the-job or in an internship, are the best gauges for these kinds of skills. These skills are often difficult to judge and require that the evaluator make a judgment. Some are easier to measure (such as attendance and punctuality), while others are more difficult (such as attitude and ethics).

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Considerations in Assessment

In addition to matching the appropriate standards to types of assessment, two additional considerations are also important: *when* to assess and *how* to assess.

When →	On Demand (e.g. Pop Quiz) Assessment occurs at a given point and time <i>during</i> the training experience or course	Cumulative (e.g. Portfolio) Assessment occurs at the <i>end</i> of the training experience or course
How →	Selected Response (e.g. Multiple-choice test) Trainees are able to select their answer from a list of choices	Constructed Response (e.g. Essay) Trainees must compose or create their own response to a question or scenario

For example, if a program provider is working with a trainee on skill standards related to interviewing, an **on-demand** assessment would be best. Interviews are conducted in front of employers—on the spot. Trainees are required to perform on demand in an interview. Therefore, a mock interview might be the best assessment. However, if a program provider is trying to demonstrate improvement over time, a **cumulative** assessment such as a portfolio would provide information on performance over a period of time. If a program provider is testing standards for writing, the trainee will need to be tested using a **constructed response** where the trainee is asked to construct a written response. If a program provider needs to assess the retention of facts, a **selected response** assessment in the form of a multiple choice test may be appropriate.

What is being tested...how it should be tested...and when it is being tested all contribute to selecting appropriate types of assessments and developing the overall system.

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EXERCISE

Core Services

Purpose of Assessment:

Standards to be Assessed:

Type(s) of Assessment:

When Assessed:

How Assessed:

Intensive Services

Purpose of Assessment:

Standards to be Assessed:

Type(s) of Assessment:

When Assessed:

How Assessed:

Training Services

Purpose of Assessment:

Standards to be Assessed:

Type(s) of Assessment:

When Assessed:

How Assessed:

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Using Existing Resources

There are many resources already developed related to assessment. It is important to first research assessments both commercially available and in the public sector that have been developed that may meet your needs—especially in the academic and employability areas. Below are descriptions of some resources, Appendix B includes further resources.

Assessment of Academic Skills

CASAS: The CASAS Quality Assessment and Accountability Systems are used in adult education and training systems. The system has been approved and validated by the US Department of Education for use in adult literacy. The CASAS system is designed to support programs to establish measurable goals, document learner outcomes and report program impact to stakeholders. CASAS is designed to meet the requirements of national initiatives such as WIA and welfare reform. CASAS includes over 140 standardized assessment instruments that can be customized to measure specific competencies. Assessment instruments measure functional reading, math, listening, speaking and higher order thinking skills in work and everyday adult life contexts. Scores are reported as scaled to grade level competencies in typical education programs as reflected in up to high school completion. CASAS contains a list of more than 300 competencies that are correlated to SCANS competencies. More information about CASAS can be found at <http://www.casas.org>

TABE: The Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) are produced by CTB/McGraw-Hill. They assess reading, mathematics, language and spelling skills and are leveled to represent content that is typically found in educational programs at the specified grade level. They also produce a Spanish version of the tests. TABE is available in paper-and-pencil or computer-based formats and can be self-scored or scored by the company. More information about TABE can be found at http://www.ctb.com/products_services/tabe/faq_general.shtml#1

New Standards Project: This project is run by the National Center for Education and the Economy (NCEE), a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC. NCEE has developed internationally benchmarked standards and performance assessments in mathematics and English language arts. Science and applied learning standards are currently available; assessments in these areas are under development. NCEE offers professional development and customized technical assistance for districts and states. In addition, NCEE's Workforce Development Program includes a *High Skills State Consortium* that includes 10 states (California, Florida, Indiana, Maine, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Washington and Wisconsin), which was formed to support members as they improve their workforce development systems. NCEE offers participating states a number of technical assistance services. NCEE also sponsors an initiative to improve education for Out-of-School youth by piloting its standards and assessments in alternative learning environments. NCEE is involved in the efforts of the National Skill Standards Board. Its president, Marc Tucker, serves as chair of the Board's Standards, Assessment, Certification Policy Committee. More information about NCEE can be found at: <http://www.ncee.org>

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Assessment of Work-readiness Skills

TABE: CTB-McGraw Hill's TABE assessment also offers two work-related tests. The Work-Related Foundation Skills assessment measures basic skills using applied concepts, following the recommendations of Perkins (federal vocational education) and SCANS. There are four forms of this test with questions written from the context of the following occupational areas: health, business/office, trade/technical and general. The Work-Related Problem-Solving assessment uses job-related contexts to measure problem-solving abilities. It uses open-ended questions, which requires students to write in responses and the test to be hand-scored.

Work Keys: Work Keys is an assessment system developed by ACT in response to the SCANS report that is designed to assess workplace skills in the following categories: Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, Listening, Writing, Teamwork, Applied Technology, Locating Information and Observation. The Work Keys system is composed of three parts: job analysis, skill assessment and instructional support. Work Keys uses job analysis by employers and educators to determine the level of skill required in specific occupations. Participants are then assessed to ascertain the current skill level of individuals. Work Keys then provides information to instructors to support improving participant skill levels. More information about Work Keys can be found at: <http://www.act.org/workkeys/legislat/index.html>

Center on Education and Training for Employment: This Center at the Ohio State University offers a variety of curriculum support and assessment materials to support the integration of curriculum and assessment strategies. The Center has developed Career Cluster Integrated Technical and Academic Competencies (ITAC) in a wide range of broad industry clusters (arts & communication, business & management, environmental & agricultural systems, health services, human resources & services, industrial & engineering, and hospitality & tourism). These packages include competencies based on national academic, employability and occupational standards and sample workplace scenarios common to the occupations in the industry. The Center also offers support for **Work Keys** through its Work Keys Targets for Instruction and Targets for Learning—products that support teaching and assessing workplace academic skills in secondary, postsecondary and adult training programs. These products are aligned with Work Keys and provide sample problems and lists of resources for instructors. More information about the Center can be found at: http://www.cete.org/products/main/ai_01.html or <http://www.cete.org/products/main/itac.html>

SCANS 2000: The SCANS 2000 center is located at the Johns Hopkins University Institute for Policy Studies. This organization is run by Dr. Arnold Packer, former Assistant Secretary of Labor and former Executive Director of SCANS at the US Department of Labor. This organization is currently developing a *Career Transcript System* for high school graduates, entry level workers and incumbent workers. The Career Transcript would document acquisition of SCANS competencies and is intended to be used by employers to evaluate and develop current employees and in the hiring process. More information about SCANS 2000 can be found at: <http://www.scans.jhu.edu>

AES International: Founded in 1993 to provide tools in support of the SCANS report, AES International has developed AES Skill Command® Job Profiling Tools based on five levels of difficulty in each of the SCANS competency areas. These tools are designed to help set performance standards for any job based on SCANS. The AES Skill Coach® has been selected as an assessment engine for the Johns Hopkins University Career Transcript System described above. More information about AES International can be found at <http://skillcommand.com>

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Learning Resources, Inc.: This company offers video-based assessments that are used in the SCANS 2000 Career Transcript System described above. The assessments provide a feedback report for individuals who take the video-based assessment. Assessments are available for Entry Level Worker, Office Worker, Manager, Supervisor, Customer Service, Retail Sales Associate (based on the NSSB sponsored National Retail Federation's skill standards), Sales, Bank Teller/Financial Services and Supermarket Worker. More information about Learning Resources, Inc. can be found at <http://www.learning-resources.com>

EXERCISE

⇒ What resources exist in your state that may meet your needs?

⇒ What resources exist nationally that may meet your needs?

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Determining Success and Scoring Assessments

Once participant outcomes (standards) have been determined and an appropriate assessment strategy is selected, the assessment must be scored. Traditional forms of assessment such as multiple choice tests, true/false or fill in the blank are straightforward to score because there is a pre-determined right or wrong answer. However, scoring a non-traditional or alternative assessment such as an oral presentation or a project requires thoughtful work. By incorporating alternative scoring methods, other aspects of performance may also be measured (such as effective communication, ability to problem solve or willingness to take on responsibility). Using other scoring methods yields important information both for the participant and the instructor.

This section outlines how participant success on assessment instruments may be determined using two strategies:

- (1) Rubrics and benchmarks
- (2) Self, peer and employer evaluation

Rubrics and benchmarks

The first scoring strategy is to use a rubric. Rubrics are used to develop a scale of performance (e.g. from beginning to master level) and may be holistically or analytically scored. Within the rubric, benchmarks may be developed that exemplify the level of work quality required at each number on the scale.

Holistic scoring looks at the overall quality of the product (e.g. a writing assignment, oral presentation or built project). Holistic scoring includes a scale that determines the participant's overall level of competence. Within each of these levels, criteria are established that communicate what is expected at each level.

For example:

- A resume that "Needs Work" may have frequent typographical errors, is disorganized and does not include required information (such as the participant's name, address and telephone number).
- A "Proficient" resume is typed and neat, is presented in an organized format, is free from typographical errors and includes all required information.

Example of holistic scales:

1	2	3	4
Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced	Master
Needs Work	Fair	Good	Proficient
Needs Improvement	Improving	Good Progress	Excellent Progress

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The second type of rubric scoring is called *analytical* scoring and rates participant work based on a variety of criteria that are weighted according to their importance in the overall score. Again, criteria are established using a numerical scale. However, analytical scoring includes several categories, where some of the categories are determined to be more important than others. As in the resume example, it may be more important for the resume to be free from typographical or grammatical errors rather than the format that is used. Therefore this category receives a weight of “3” (see the following example).

Example of analytic scoring:

In this example, a participant’s resume is evaluated using three categories of criteria that have been determined to have different levels of importance. Within each of these categories, the evaluator of the resume would be given a description of performance (or benchmarks) at each scoring level. This example shows that the participant received 29 out of a possible 36 points.

Score	1 beginning	2 intermediate	3 advanced	4 master	Weight & Total Possible		Total Score
Criteria for Resume							
(1) Neatness & Organization		✓			x2	8	4
(2) Required Information				✓	x4	16	16
(3) Spelling & Grammar			✓		x3	12	9
Total					36		29

Self, peer and employer evaluation

Another important component of evaluation is the opportunity for self-reflection, to learn from your peers and to find out from employers whether performance is up to workplace standards. When participants are given the opportunity to evaluate their own performance, they often identify their own errors or areas of weakness. This gives them the opportunity to analyze how to improve their performance. In addition, peer evaluation provides an opportunity for teams or group work to be improved. When participants are able to critique or offer suggestions for improvement in other participants, they are given an opportunity to compare it to their own performance. They learn what to look for in a performance or a product and how it can be improved. Single employers or panels of employers also make good evaluators and provide participants with an important “real world” perspective. Mock job interviews, presentations and other performances provide perfect occasions for inviting employers to evaluate participant performance. The following example shows a rubric that could be used to solicit self, peer and employer feedback in a videotaped mock job interview situation.

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Example: Self, Peer and Employer Scoring Guide

Videotaped Mock Job Interview

Participant performance:

1=Needs Improvement 2=Needs some improvement 3=Good 4=Excellent

Scoring criteria	Mock Job Interview Evaluators			
	Self	Observer	Observer	Employer
<i>Beginning the interview</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced self • Made appropriate eye contact • Offered handshake 				
<i>Responses to questions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Appeared prepared for job and employer ⇒ Had prepared questions ready for employer if asked ⇒ Answered questions thoroughly 				
<i>Resume and references</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Brought copy of resume ⇒ Presented resume to employer ⇒ Brought references ⇒ Offered references to employer 				
<i>Negotiation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asked about wages and benefits • Asked about promotion possibilities • If asked, used negotiation skills to communicate minimum wage/benefit requirements 				
<i>Closing the interview</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Asked when he/she would be contacted ⇒ Expressed interest in the job ⇒ Expressed gratitude for interviewer's time 				
<i>Appearance and demeanor</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Wore appropriate dress ⇒ Friendly ⇒ Confident 				

Establishing a work readiness assessment

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This section of the guide outlines a process for establishing a work readiness assessment using information about standards and assessment and skills developed in the first part of this section. A work-readiness assessment may include a variety of skills that ensure participants are generally ready for the workplace. Under JTPA, the US Department of Labor specified three competency skill areas: (1) pre-employment/work maturity, (2) basic education skills and (3) job specific skills.

US Department of Labor Competency Skill Areas

Pre-employment skills include:

- world of work awareness
- labor market knowledge
- occupational information
- values clarification and personal understanding
- career planning
- decision making
- job search techniques (resumes, interviews, applications and follow up letters)
- survival/daily living skills (such as using the phone, telling time, shopping or using public transportation)

Work maturity skills include:

- ⇒ positive work habits
- ⇒ attitudes and behaviors (such as punctuality, regular attendance, neat appearance, getting along and working well with others, exhibiting good conduct, following instructions and completing tasks, accepting constructive criticism, showing initiative and reliability, and assuming the responsibilities involved in maintaining a job)
- ⇒ developing motivation and adaptability
- ⇒ establishing and maintaining effective interpersonal relations
- ⇒ coping and problem-solving skills
- ⇒ acquiring an improved self-image

Basic education skills include:

- reading comprehension
- math computation
- writing
- speaking
- listening
- problem solving
- reasoning
- ⇒ using these skills in the workplace

Job specific skills include:

- Primary job specific skills (skills required to perform the actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate or advanced levels)
- Secondary job specific skills (skills associated with set-up procedures, safety and work-related terminology)

Pre-employment, work maturity and basic education skills align closely with many of the skills recommended for all workers in the SCANS report. Therefore, SCANS has become

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a common resource for establishing assessments that measure more general work-readiness competencies (as opposed to competencies required in specific occupations). Efforts to establish work-readiness standards and assessments have also been undertaken by a number of educational organizations, states and industry organizations.

In comparisons of these efforts, substantial overlap with SCANS was found. The skills identified by these various groups fell roughly into six categories: (1) basic skills, (2) cognitive skills (creative thinking, problem solving), (3) personal skills (responsibility, self-management), (4) social skills (team member, leadership, negotiation), (5) work organization skills (allocation of human resources, understanding organizations) and (6) technology (understand and apply technologies).³³

Summary of SCANS Competencies and Foundation Skills

Competency 1—Resources

Identifies, organizes, plans, and allocates resources (time, money, materials and facilities, and human resources)

Competency 2—Interpersonal

Works with others (participates as a member of a team, teaches others new skills, serves clients/customers, exercises leadership, negotiates, and works with diversity)

Competency 3—Information

Acquires and uses information (acquires and evaluates, organizes and maintains, interprets and communicates, and uses computers to process)

Competency 4—Systems

Understands complex inter-relationships (understands social, organizations, and technological systems; monitors and corrects performance; and improves or designs systems)

Competency 5—Technology

Works with a variety of technologies (selects, applies to task, and maintains and troubleshoots equipment)

Foundation 1—Basic Skills

Reads, writes, performs arithmetic and mathematical operations, listens and speaks

Foundation 2—Thinking Skills

Thinks creatively, makes decisions, solves problems, visualizes, knows how to learn, and reasons

Foundation 3—Personal Qualities

Displays responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity and honesty

³³ Klein, Steven G. *Skill Standards: Concepts and Practices in State and Local Education, A Synthesis of Literature and Alternative Conceptual Frameworks*, MPR Associates, Inc. Berkeley, CA, May 1996.

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EXAMPLE: City of Los Angeles Youth Employability Enhancement System

The following example of the City of Los Angeles Youth Employability Enhancement System shows how one community integrated SCANS into the oversight and operations of its youth job training programs. This example shows how a systemic approach to assessment can be used as a tool to bring about change in the guiding principles used at all levels of the system—from administrative oversight and program reporting requirements to daily operations and training activities within programs.

In 1999, the City of Los Angeles Community Development Department completed the development work necessary to establish a SCANS-based youth employment competency system.³⁴ After the development period, a facilitator was hired to provide professional development in the implementation of the system. A collaborative approach was used in order to have all providers re-examine their individual goals in light of the new assessment system. Providers were divided into teams in order to collaborate in professional development and implementation.

The assessments in this system are used for reporting purposes for the Youth Employability Enhancement Rate (YEEN), one of two performance standards adopted for youth programs under JTPA. The YEEN measures the percentage of participants whose employability is improved as a result of training provided.

In designing this system, all learning objectives within the Youth Employment Competency System were cross-walked to SCANS including the pre-employment/work maturity, basic education and job specific skills as defined by the Department of Labor (listed in the introduction to this section). By integrating curricular activities across the three JTPA content areas, program outcomes would be achieved that are aligned to both JTPA performance standards and SCANS competencies. In turn, by combining job training, classroom learning and other training activities, a participant’s training plan would essentially “hit” all required JTPA areas while at the same time meeting SCANS Competency Areas and Foundation Skills.

For example, under the SCANS Competency “Allocate Resources,” participants are asked to show they can “allocate time” by demonstrating the following skills:

Pre-employment	Work Maturity	Reading	Math	Writing
Is on time for interview	Present at work/training on scheduled days	Read and interpret personal daily calendar, work schedules, timeline charts, transportation schedules	Develop and effectively utilize personal daily calendar, work schedules, timeline charts, transportation	Record information completely and accurately in personal daily calendar, work schedules, timeline charts,

³⁴ Information for this example was summarized from the *City of Los Angeles Youth Employability Enhancement Manual*, March 1999, developed through the efforts of a workgroup of city staff and JTPA subcontracting organizations, facilitated by the Center for Youth and Communities, Brandeis University.

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		schedules	transportation schedules
<p>The Youth Employment Competency System is built on assessments in the three skill competency areas and is used to streamline the pre-assessment process and the demonstration of skills at the end of the training period:</p> <p>(1) Pre-employment and Work maturity pre and post-assessments. The Pre-employment pre-test includes a checklist in five categories (making career decisions, using labor market information, preparing a resume and cover letter, completing an application and interviewing). The system also includes a supplemental checklist to be used to evaluate participant documents (resume and cover letter) if these are available. The Pre-employment post-test includes specific tasks in the above categories that can be evaluated to determine participant proficiency. Work maturity skills are also evaluated using a pre- and post-test that are based on a checklist of skills and tasks.</p> <p>(2) Basic Education Skills. The CASAS assessment system is used to determine competency in this skill area. Specific guidelines regarding how to use CASSAS scaled scores are given in order for programs to document participant progress and competency in these areas. (Information about CASAS is included in the Resource Box earlier in this section).</p> <p>(3) Job Specific Skills: SCANS Competencies and Foundation Skills are used to develop work site and classroom training. A pre-assessment checklist determines whether participants have experience in the occupation in which training will be provided or if they have received training in that occupation. Once a work site training placement has been established, the work site supervisor or staff person assigned to monitoring the placement develops a Job Specific Skills Training Outline and Evaluation for Work Site Training. These are individually designed and skills are assessed on a five-point scale.</p>			

As proposed in this section, a work-readiness assessment will be useful for the WIA system in order to establish a locally determined profile of the ideal entry-level employee that can be portable from employer to employer. A work-readiness assessment will use a common customized set of foundation skills for all types of program participants including youth/adult emerging and transition workers, dislocated workers and incumbent workers.

Using information about standards and assessment from this section and the example above, the following work sheet can be used to begin to develop a work-readiness assessment that is appropriate to your local/state needs considering the variety of communities that exist, the types of industries that are available and the minimum level of work readiness that is required in your area. This worksheet helps you to begin the planning process. However, it is important to remember that many resources exist that

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you can use in whole or in part depending on the amount of time and resources that can be devoted to this project.

Work-readiness Assessment Planning Worksheet

Summary of Developmental Steps:

1. Establish goals and purpose for work-readiness assessment
2. Involve key stakeholders in planning process to ensure responsive to local/state needs
3. Determine cross-program, cross-industry essential skills to be measured and included in assessment
4. Develop assessment plan to measure all essential skills
5. Develop pilot and implementation plan that involves key program stakeholders and that ensures appropriate professional development and opportunities for revision if necessary
6. Provide ongoing technical assistance and feedback mechanisms in order to ensure quality and improvement in system
7. Integrate assessment system within operational structure and administrative procedures
8. Involve stakeholders in promoting assessment system within employer, education, training and other workforce initiatives important to the ongoing development, implementation and improvement of the assessment system. Issue certificates that are responsive to stakeholder needs if system is designed to certify participant skills.

1. Goals and Purpose for work-readiness assessment

Brainstorm goals for assessment system:

Clarify purpose:

1. Measuring participant progress
2. Certifying skill mastery
3. Program improvement

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2. Involve key stakeholders in planning process to ensure responsiveness to local/state needs

List stakeholders who need to be involved (include names and organizations)—employers, educators, training providers, other project partners:

List other stakeholders who should be invited to participate who may not be represented in current system (organizations/community members):

List resources for development of assessment system to be contacted (include resources both within and from outside the community):

Existing resources to be examined and included in effort (See Appendix B for resources):

3. Determine cross-program, cross-industry essential skills to be measured and included in assessment

Academic/Basic Skills

Work-readiness (cross-industry)

Values, attitudes, personal and social skills

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4. Develop assessment plan to measure all essential skills

Consider these guiding principles for participant success in your plan

- Use multiple assessment strategies
- Provide expectations through clear and challenging standards to participants
- Shift teaching procedures to teaching participants to research, plan, evaluate, think and solve problems
- Build on participants' interests and experience
- Motivate through consequences

Also, consider:

- scoring procedures
- inter-rater reliability techniques
- mechanisms for data security

Summary of Assessment Development Process

Step 1: Develop/adopt a set of standards (include validation process)

Step 2: Select subset of standards to be measured (consider frequency/importance)

Step 3: Select appropriate assessment to measure selected standards

Step 4: Develop assessment and the curriculum leading to or integrated into the assessment (lesson plan development)

Step 5: Determining success on the assessment (scoring/grading)

⇒ Rubrics (holistic, analytic scoring)

⇒ Benchmarks

⇒ Self, peer and employer evaluation

Step 6: Go back to step 2 until all standards have been measured once

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5. Develop pilot and implementation plan that involves key program stakeholders and that ensures appropriate professional development and opportunities for revision if necessary

Pilot and implementation plan timelines

Professional development plans

6. Provide ongoing technical assistance and feedback mechanisms in order to ensure quality and improvement in system

Technical assistance will be provided by:

Technical assistance will be provided in the following ways (e.g. training sessions, conferences, on-site TA, telephone/Web site):

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7. Integrate assessment system within operational structure and administrative procedures

How will work-readiness assessment impact operational structure?

- WIB (e.g. guidelines, accountability procedures, oversight):
- One-stop (e.g. contracting procedures, reporting mechanisms):
- Service providers (e.g. contracting and reporting procedures aligned to work-readiness assessment):

8. Involve stakeholders in promoting assessment system within employer, education, training and other workforce initiatives important to the ongoing development, implementation and improvement of the assessment system. Issue certificates that are responsive to stakeholder needs if system is designed to certify participant skills.

- Promotional Plan Timeline and Responsibilities:
- Use of Certificates (if applicable):

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More Issues in Selecting Assessment Strategies

Two other issues must also be considered in developing a standards-based assessment system of job training: *technical quality* and *feasibility*.

Technical quality refers to the level of quality that the information from the assessment provides. Does it closely measure the skills that are desired? Can it be used to certify skills? Will it result in the same score if administered again? On the other hand, questions of *feasibility* refer to the practical considerations of expense in development, administration, implementation and scoring.

These two issues (quality and feasibility) are often intertwined. For example, if an assessment is used to certify skills, it must have a high level of quality. As the requirements for the assessment become more rigorous, development and implementation costs rise, especially when authentic assessments such as portfolios or performance tasks are used. In general, multiple-choice and short-answer exams are the least expensive to administer and score. Moving beyond these types of assessments often requires an investment of time and money. These considerations must be weighed against the added capability of alternative forms of assessment to measure skills that are difficult to measure with a multiple-choice question.

EXERCISE

⇒ What other issues do you need to address within your system?

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EXAMPLE: SCANS 2000 Center *Career Transcript System (CTS)*

The following example is a SCANS-based assessment system has been developed by the Johns Hopkins University's SCANS 2000 Center to be used by high school students, incumbent workers, welfare-to-work and WIA participants. The transcript certifying their workplace readiness skills is available on-line to current and prospective employers. The system emphasizes post-placement, job retention efforts.

Following the publication of the SCANS report by the Secretary of Labor, SCANS has been used in a wide range of settings. At the SCANS 2000 Center located at the Johns Hopkins University, efforts have centered on the development of an on-line *Career Transcript System (CTS)*, which includes three critical components that work together to support participants in job placement and, most importantly—job retention.³⁵ The three components of the CTS include:

- 1. Assessment and Certification**—Using both diagnostic and performance-based assessments, all students/workers are assessed in their level of SCANS skills. These assessments are used to track, develop and coach students and workers. Assessment information is summarized in an online *Career Transcript* that shows classroom and work site learning as well as any other experiences that contribute to the student or worker's skills.
- 2. Professional Development**—The SCANS 2000 Center provides an initial training in the use of the CTS as well as ongoing support through an Internet-based Electronic Learning Network that includes other implementers around the country.
- 3. Teaching tools**—Eight project-based CD-ROM modules have been developed by the SCANS 2000 Center to be used by program participants to learn about real-world workplace problems and how to solve them in the classroom or work-site setting.

To date, the CTS has served over 900 people in a variety of settings including community colleges, welfare-to-work programs at seven community colleges around the nation, the United Steel Workers at Bethlehem Steel and in the Baltimore City Public Schools. While on-going assessment and on-line availability are key components of the CTS, the SCANS 2000 Center attributes its promising results to the program's focus on post-placement and job retention efforts. Students and workers using the CTS benefit from the support of a mentor or liaison that works closely with the workplace supervisor in a team to develop goals and strategies to attain those goals.

Organizations get started by identifying and training Workplace Liaisons. The system includes a standardized pretest, followed by job-based performance assessments and the creation of the Career Transcript. These steps are followed by the establishment of an Individual Development Plan for each participant and ongoing monthly assessments that are used to update the on-line Transcript. The CTS uses two assessments: *Workplace Success Skills* distributed by Learning Resources Incorporated and *Skill Coach* distributed by AES International. An example of the Career Transcript follows:

³⁵ Information for this example was summarized from program descriptions provided by the SCANS 2000 Center at Johns Hopkins University.

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[insert sample of Career Transcript here—see PDF file—permission received from
SCANS 2000 center]

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Summary of Assessment Development Process [MAKE INTO A GRAPHIC??]

Step 1: Develop/adopt a set of standards (include validation process)

Step 2: Select subset of standards to be measured (consider frequency/importance)

Step 3: Select appropriate assessment to measure selected standards

Step 4: Develop assessment and the curriculum leading to or integrated into the assessment (lesson plan development)

Step 5: Determining success on the assessment (scoring/grading)

⇒ Rubrics (holistic, analytic scoring)

⇒ Benchmarks

⇒ Self, peer and employer evaluation

Step 6: Go back to step 2 until all standards have been measured once

EXERCISE

What are your next steps in developing standards-driven assessments?

What are *your next* steps in developing a work-readiness certification?

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Check Yourself

Examine Assessment System for:

Core Services

- Purpose of Assessment
- Standards to be Assessed
- Type(s) of Assessment
- When Assessed
- How Assessed
- Determine Scoring

Intensive Services

- Purpose of Assessment
- Standards to be Assessed
- Type(s) of Assessment
- When Assessed
- How Assessed
- Determine Scoring

Training Services

- Purpose of Assessment
- Standards to be Assessed
- Type(s) of Assessment
- When Assessed
- How Assessed
- Determine Scoring

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Section 5: Selecting and implementing occupational certifications

Introduction to Section 5

The fourth element of a standards-based training system is the certification of individual skills. Certification is a specific type of assessment that gives workers an opportunity to work in a certain field or occupation or hold title to that occupation (for example an auto mechanic or certified medical assistant). Certification is available in a wide range of occupations and professions and is generally developed by industry associations or professional organizations. Apprenticeship programs, often run cooperatively by labor and management, provide another form of certification.

Occupational certifications are important to WIA providers because they provide an opportunity to assess participant skills using industry-approved standards, guidelines and assessments. These certifications carry employer recognition and portability for those participants who successfully attain certification. For programs in the WIA system, occupational certifications provide a key benchmark to determine the quality of training offered by various providers in the system. By instituting policies that require WIA training programs to use occupational certifications where available, the WIA system establishes an important oversight and administrative lever to monitor the quality of programs.

In this section, you will:

- Learn about occupational certifications
- Design a strategy for researching and selecting potential occupational certifications
- Begin planning how to implement and integrate occupational certifications in WIA operations and oversight

Background on Occupational Certifications

Skill certification exams and processes for individuals have been developed in a wide range of industry areas. These are typically developed by an industry association or professional organization and usually certify skills in a single occupation or group of specific occupations.

Certification is distinguished from licensure by several characteristics. Licensure is a “mandatory credentialing process established by a government entity, usually at the state level.”³⁶ When a profession is licensed (such as a registered nurse, cosmetologist or

³⁶ *Certification, Licensure and Other Credentials*. Donald A. Balasa, JD, MBA. American Association of Medical Assistants. <http://www.aama-ntl.org/ed/certlic.html>

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insurance agent), it is illegal for an individual to practice without it. In addition, licensing requirements usually vary from state to state. Therefore, it may be difficult for someone licensed in one state to acquire a license in another state. On the other hand, certification is a voluntary credentialing process, “usually national in its scope and most often sponsored by a non-governmental, private-sector entity.”³⁷

An evaluation of industry skill standards conducted by the Institute for Educational Leadership found in a survey of organizations involved in credentialing and accrediting programs that approximately 1.1 million workers held certifications under the programs they identified. This represents approximately one percent of the workforce, with the largest concentration in the service industry sector (including business services, health care, engineering services and personal services).³⁸

Occupational certifications use a variety of assessments (e.g. portfolios, pen and paper tests, work samples, transcripts of grades and education, interviews, documented work experience, etc.) all aimed at certifying the experience and skills of workers in that occupation. There is great variety in terms of how long the certification lasts, how to renew it and what type of continuing education is required to maintain certification.

Another option for incorporating skill standards and quality components in education and training programs is through the use of program accreditation (as opposed to individual certification). For example, the National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) has developed a certification program for training programs in the automotive industry. The Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) program has established well-known benchmarks for quality instruction and is known by instructors, trainees and consumers. While the program accreditation process does not certify individual participants, it does ensure that programs meet standards for the content of instruction. In the ASE example, program standards are set in the tasks, tools and equipment, hours and instructor qualifications.³⁹ While program accreditation does not result in an individual certification, it can provide an important means for measuring the quality of programs in an objective, industry-approved manner.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Wills, Joan L. *Industry Driven Skill Standards Systems in the United States, Volume III*. Institute for Educational Leadership, Center for Workforce Development, Washington, DC.

³⁹ more information about ASE certification can be found at <http://natef.org/program.cfm>

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EXAMPLES

Certified Medical Assistant. The American Association of Medical Assistants (AAMA) administers a certification exam to certify allied health professionals specifically trained to work in “ambulatory” settings such as physicians’ offices and clinics. According to the AAMA, Medical Assistants are “multi-skilled personnel who are capable of performing administrative and clinical procedures.” In order to sit for the AAMA exam, you must be a student or graduate of a medical assisting program accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). In order to retain certification, Certified Medical Assistants must re-certify every five years either through examination or through continuing education. More information about Certified Medical Assistants can be found at: http://www.aama-ntl.org/cma_def.html

CompTIA A+ Certification. A+ Certification is a testing program run by the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA). CompTIA certifies the competency of entry-level computer service technicians (defined as those with 6 months experience). The examination is a computer-based, multiple-choice test covering general hardware and software technologies (not specific products). According to CompTIA, the A+ certification is “backed by major computer hardware and software vendors, distributors, resellers and publications.” Its certification is intended to show that individuals possess the knowledge and skills necessary for success as an entry-level computer service technician. No prerequisites are necessary, only payment of a fee to take the exam. Industry experts have defined the knowledge and skills in its certification. More information about CompTIA can be found at <http://www.comptia.org/certification/aplus/index.htm>

The movement toward developing skill standards at all levels of education and training has occurred under a variety of initiatives at the state and federal level. Some initiatives emphasize certification in specific occupations, others emphasize the development of curriculum standards or objectives in broader industry categories. Thus, there is a wide range of options for WIA programs interested in incorporating occupational skill standards and certifications. While many options exist, the United States continues to lack a unifying organization or umbrella of organizations to bring order to these various individual efforts at the industry, state and federal levels.

The National Skill Standards Board is in the process of developing skill standards and certification options using broad industry categories. However, this process requires a significant amount of work, commitment and resources from the private sector and a continued commitment from the federal government. While the NSSB is in the process of issuing its first set of skill standards in the manufacturing sector, the assessment and certification aspects of the project have yet to be developed. Thus, while this national system continues to be developed, for local and state WIA programs, the adoption of skill standards and occupational certifications will require a significant amount of research,

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comparison and strategic planning. (See Appendix B for more information on specific NSSB projects)

RESOURCE BOX

In an attempt to organize occupational certification, training and other workforce information, America's Learning eXchange (ALX) Consortium has been developed with a mission to:

Develop an easily-accessible Internet-based network, as an integrated component of America's Labor Information System (ALMIS), which will (1) serve as a public conduit for information about, and access to, education and training resources and (2) foster the emergence of a coherent, efficient electronic marketplace for those resources.

America's Learning Exchange offers a Web-based database of information about training and education resources, financial aid options and course offerings. The Web site is a searchable database that contains courses, programs, seminars, providers, accreditation and certification information organized by industry area or subject area. This Web site is available at <http://www.alx.org>. The Web site is also connected to America's Job Bank (<http://www.ajb.org>), America's Career InfoNet (<http://www.acinet.org>) and America's Service Locator (<http://www.servicelocator.org>).

Research and Selection Process for Occupational Certifications

In order to implement occupational certifications in WIA oversight, within the One-Stop system and for specific training providers, substantial planning and research will be required. The following worksheet is to be used to begin this process.

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<u>EXERCISE</u>	
<p><i>Primary stakeholders</i>—In considering the planning stage of implementing occupational certifications, key stakeholders must be involved in the research, evaluation and review process in order to make sure that various concerns are addressed. Given the above discussion regarding the expected outcomes for implementation (which may range from one or two specific occupations to a more general approach for all training providers), brainstorm who and/or what organizations/departments/employers may need to be involved in the research and planning process.</p>	
Category:	Who Should Be Involved:
Individuals/institutions from business and industry	
Labor	
Economic Development	
Education	
Employment/training	
Workforce Development	

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Incorporating occupational certifications into your WIA System

This guide provides a two-part process for incorporating occupational certifications into your WIA System:

Planning and Research Process

Step 1: Gather Labor Market Information

Step 2: Designate occupations to be included in the initial search effort

Step 3: Locate and research existing certifications in the designated occupations by developing a database to record, organize and assess the data.

Step 4: Review findings

Step 5: Select Occupational certifications for initial implementation

Planning the Implementation of Occupational Certifications

Step 1: Designate local implementation teams, working groups and dedicated personnel

Step 2: Acquire and commit resources needed to fund institutional efforts and cover participant costs

Step 3: Negotiate agreements with selected certification/examination providers

Step 4: Incorporate steps/approaches to instituting nationally recognized, industry-based occupational certifications

Step 5: Design staff orientation, staff development and training, organizational capacity building (work in concert with other initiatives if possible)

Step 6: Initiate and incorporate appropriate program design modifications/operational adjustments

Step 7: Provide ongoing support for occupational skill standards

Note: This process is a simplified version of the process used by the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) to research and implement occupational certifications. The NSSB's *Occupational Certification Feasibility Review Document (OCFRD)* is described in more detail in Step 3 of the Planning and Research Process.

Planning and Research Process

Step 1: Gather Labor Market Information

- Two-thirds of the fastest growing occupations over the next decade are in the computer and health fields
- The most rapid growth will be in occupations requiring an associate degree or higher. However, one in four job openings will be in occupations where only short-term on-the-job training is needed

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- Although total employment increased by about 2 million in 1999, over 1.1 million workers lost their jobs that year through layoffs and plant closings.⁴⁰

The above statistics are examples of labor market information. Collecting labor market and workforce information is a key element of selecting which occupations to focus on and where to implement occupational certifications in areas that will bring the most benefit to the WIA system. This information is useful whether it focuses these efforts in terms of the number of participants served, the number of employers affected or the impact on individual participants in terms of wages and employment growth potential.

Labor market information includes information about labor market conditions and trends, such as employment and unemployment, wages by industry and occupation, current job vacancies, and data about individual workers or job seekers. This information also includes education and training resources. Many of these systems are available on-line and can be tailored to examine specific occupations or at the regional or state level.

Both WIA and Perkins (federal vocational education) legislation emphasize the importance of workforce information and establish several strategies to improve these systems at both the federal and state levels. Under WIA, the Secretary of Labor in cooperation with state agencies under the Workforce Information Council issued its first annual plan *Quality Information...Informed Choices: New Directions for the Workforce Information System*. The report details its priorities of improving local labor force and unemployment data, occupational wage data, and state and area projections.⁴¹

Labor market information can be used both by individual participants accessing their local One-Stop system or it can be used by employers, training providers and others to tailor training and recruitment of both employees and training participants.

RESOURCE BOX

Where to Find Labor Market Information⁴²

- *State employment statistics agencies* are the key source of workforce information at the state and local levels. Links to state workforce information sites may be found at <http://www.workforceinfocouncil.org/links.htm>
- The *Association of Computer-based Systems of Career Information* provides links to state career information delivery systems at <http://www.acsci.org>
- The US Department of Labor's *Bureau of Labor Statistics* provides comprehensive national career information in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook*. This is the primary source of employment, wage and other national data and can be found at <http://stats.bls.gov>

⁴⁰ Sommers, Dixie. *Work Force Information and Career-Technical Education*. In Brief, Fast Facts for Policy and Practices, No. 10. National Dissemination Center for Career & Technical Education. 2000. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor.

⁴¹ More information about the Workforce Information System can be found at <http://www.workforceinfocouncil.org>.

⁴² This information is from Sommers, Dixie. *Work Force Information and Career-Technical Education*. In Brief, Fast Facts for Policy and Practices, No. 10. National Dissemination Center for Career & Technical Education. 2000. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor.

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- Information about the *Occupational Information Network, O*NET* is available at <http://www.onetcenter.org> and the system itself is available at <http://online.onetcenter.org>

EXERCISE: Environment Scan

Current/projected labor market demands and skill shortages in high wage, high performance, high growth occupations	
Current occupational skill training conducted	Type and number of programs
	Location and scheduling/frequency of programs
	Number of participants enrolled
Economic development plans and requirements	Has this planning occurred? In what ways will it impact the effort to incorporate occupational certifications in the WIA system?
Business and industry certification requirements, including current use of nationally recognized occupational certifications	Are occupational certifications currently in use? Where/how extensively?

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Step 2: Designate occupations to be included in the initial search effort

Based on the preliminary information gathered in Step 1, the following questions can be used as a guide to determine the areas in which to focus occupational certification efforts.

EXERCISE—Environment Scan

What types of training are currently offered where large numbers of participants are concentrated?	
What types of training are currently offered where there is a large demand for placing participants?	
What is the current “match” between the training that is offered, the demands of employers and local hiring needs?	
Are there specific occupations or industry areas where employers are unable to meet their hiring needs?	
Are there specific occupations or industry areas where training currently occurs that need to be upgraded?	

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Checklist for Selecting Initial Occupational Certifications to Begin Effort

- ✓ Occupational Certifications are selected in areas that represent high demand, high placement potential for participants
- ✓ Specific employer support for implementation will occur—there is a demand for employees and there is support for employee certification
- ✓ Implementing occupational certifications will result in improved training environment (for example, more employment placements or higher wage jobs)
- ✓ Occupational certifications will affect a key area of training (either in terms of numbers served or workforce placement potential)

EXERCISE

Given your responses to the Environment Scan questions in the exercise and the *Checklist for Selecting Initial Occupational Certifications*, list one or two potential areas that you would like to investigate:

Step 3: Locate and research existing certifications in the designated occupations by developing a database to record, organize and assess the data.

The next step in the process is to conduct research and evaluate your options. This process may involve a detailed analysis of options or a more cursory scan of options to examine. Depending on the extent to which occupational certifications are under consideration, this process may require staff assignments, contacting organizations and other research to determine whether the given occupational certification will meet your expected outcomes and primary stakeholders.

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EXERCISE

Who will be responsible for researching and organizing data (e.g. a committee or assigned staff person)?

What is the timeline for collecting and organizing data?

What process will be used to communicate this information and make decisions regarding occupational certifications to implement?

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The following format developed by the National Skill Standards Board is one way to categorize this information for review and implementation planning. This format provides a very detailed way to gather information. Other criteria or a database of information may also be used in this process.

Occupational Certification Feasibility Review Document (OCFRD) ***National Skill Standards Board***

One strategy for researching, collecting and tracking information regarding occupational certifications has been developed by the National Skill Standards Board. The Occupational Certification Feasibility Review Document (OCFRD) provides an organizing tool to compare certifications and can be used to develop a database of information.

Occupation:

Brief description of the occupation:

Certification title:

Certifying Organization:

Contact person

Title

Address

Phone

Fax

Email

Certification Information Summary:

- 1) Skills/knowledge certified
 - a) skills/knowledge areas included
 - b) Industry identification/validation of these skills/knowledge items
 - c) Specialization options available
- 2) Proficiency level(s)/score(s) required for certification (mastery/minimum qualification focus)
- 3) Existing sets of skill standards related to this certification
- 4) Population for whom this certification is intended

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- 5) Pre-requisites for taking certification examination
 - a) previous occupational certification(s)
 - b) academic credentials/degrees
 - c) work experience
 - d) reading/writing/mathematics ability
 - e) membership in certifying organization/other groups
 - f) additional requirements

- 6) Specific education/training in preparation for certification examination
 - a) Flexible teaching/learning pathways possible/encourage or prescribed courses/curricula/materials/instructional techniques necessary (such as those of the certifying organization or specific vendors)
 - b) Discrete, competency-based learning objectives/curriculum drivers contained in certification package
 - c) Alignment with commonly used education/training periods (e.g. quarters/semesters)
 - d) Need for particular education/training venues (e.g. classrooms/laboratories/mock-ups/worksites)

- 7) Certification exam assessment and administrative procedures
 - a) Assessment methods used (e.g. question and answer/observation of performance/product review)
 - b) Validity/reliability of assessment protocols
 - c) Test administration process
 - d) Length of examination/number of components
 - e) Turnaround time to receive results
 - f) Variations allowed in assessment protocols (e.g. by type of employer/region of the country)
 - g) Retesting process

- 8) Availability of certification examination
 - a) Dates offered
 - b) Test site locations
 - c) Potential for administration in new places

- 9) Certification award:
 - a) Format of certification
 - b) Life-span of certification
 - c) Recertification requirements and procedures

- 10) Utilization requirements
 - a) Institution/program certification
 - b) Instructor training/certification
 - c) Facilities/space/equipment/materials/supplies necessary

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- 11) Costs to individuals
 - a) Initial application/testing fees
 - b) Mandatory course training fees
 - c) Optional course training fees
 - d) Retesting fees
 - e) Recertification fees

- 12) Costs to institutions
 - a) License fees—if any—for programs/institutions
 - b) Initial implementation costs for programs/institutions
 - c) Maintenance costs for programs/institutions

- 13) Certification recognition and impact:
 - a) Scope of industry acceptance and use (e.g. national/state/regional/local)
 - b) Accreditations/endorsements
 - c) Length of time certification has been in existence
 - d) Number of individuals certified to date
 - e) Percentage of those certified that obtained employment in the certified occupation
 - f) Percentage achieving certification on first attempt, second attempt, etc.
 - g) Certification satisfaction of regulatory/licensure requirements
 - h) Certification portability

EXERCISE

⇒ How will you research, collect and track information regarding occupational certifications at the **state-level**?

⇒ How will you research, collect and track information regarding occupational certifications at the **local-level**?

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Step 4: Review Findings

Based on the information collected in step 3, the data must be analyzed, reviewed and summarized. The categories and questions listed below provide criteria for reviewing the findings.

<p><i>Suitability</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will the certification meet local needs?• Will the certification provide participant benefits that are worth the investment?• Is the occupational certification known to employers? Will it result in greater hiring potential for certification holders?• Is there enough demand for this occupation to warrant the investment in training and certification?
<p><i>Relevance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the occupational certification relate closely to the goals and objectives outlined for training providers in the WIB's oversight process?• Will training procedures be improved through the use of the occupational certification?• Is there enough interest from training providers, employers and participants in entering these fields?• Is employment in the occupation in demand?• Will occupational certification holders have an advantage in the marketplace?
<p><i>Impact on existing needs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How will the certifications impact existing needs? (for example: more placements? higher quality jobs? meeting employer demand?)• How will certifications impact program and service delivery? (for example: improve quality? bring new providers into the system? better align program and service delivery to employer needs?)
<p><i>Resource implications</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How much will the occupational certification cost?• How will participants pay for certification?• What training will be required?• What changes in oversight, documentation and reporting will be required?• What investments in equipment or other process (e.g. program certification) will be required?• How will costs be recouped? What is the benefit from implementing the occupational certification?

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Potential design modifications/operation adjustments necessary to incorporate these certifications/examinations into current occupational training endeavors:

Does the occupational certification require curriculum alignment changes?

- Who will provide the training to providers?
- What kind of information is necessary? Is it readily available or will it need to be created? (e.g. manuals, protocols, participant information)
- How will these transformations be implemented (e.g. by a vendor, by One-Stop staff, within training provider organization)

What are the implications for programs?

- Will programs need to be certified?
- Will instructors need to be certified?
- Are certified programs currently available?
- Are certified instructors currently available?

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Step 5: Select occupational certifications for initial implementation

Based on findings from Step 4, select occupational certifications for initial implementation.

Occupational Certifications for initial implementation (specific occupations or industry areas to research):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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Planning the Implementation of Occupational Certifications

After selecting occupational certifications for initial implementation (selection process), it is time to plan the implementation of occupational certifications (implementation). Below is a seven-step process for planning to implement.

Step 1: Designate local implementation teams, working groups, and dedicated personnel

Prior to implementation, it is important to take the time to designate and convene local implementation teams, working groups and dedicated personnel. Buy-in and commitment is essential to a smooth implementation process.

EXERCISE

<i>Description of local implementation team (include goals and responsibilities)</i>	
Goals:	
Responsibilities:	
Members of local implementation team (or teams depending on how many certifications or industry areas to be implemented)	
Name	Organization
Types of work groups needed to implement certifications (include local training providers, members of the WIB, instructors, program administrators and others that will be affected by implementation)	

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<i>Possible linkages and partnerships to contribute to a unified workforce development system:</i>	<i>Who should be involved:</i>
Overall K-12 Education	
Perkins III	
Postsecondary occupational/technical education	
Proprietary entities	
Apprenticeship	
Job Corps	
Business/industry training efforts	
<i>Dedicated personnel to be assigned to effort:</i>	

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Step 2: Acquire and commit resources needed to fund institutional efforts and cover participant costs

In every great effort, resources are needed for implementation. Implementation requires funds to get the effort off the ground as well as to fund participant costs when participants begin to sit for occupational certification tests. What resources will you need and where will they come from?

Occupational Certification Title:	
Resources Necessary	
Costs of Certification/Examination	
Training Costs/Professional Development Costs	
Infrastructure Costs (equipment/facilities)	
Implementation Costs (new procedures, manuals, guidelines, technical assistance)	
Source of Resources	
Agency/One-stop Operator/WIB	
Training Provider	
Employers	

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Step 3: Negotiate agreements with selected certification/examination providers

An agreement will be needed with each certification provider in order to spell out costs, terms, timeline and other important items. This agreement serves as a contract between the funding agency, training agency and certification provider.

EXERCISE

Name and Information of certification/examination provider
Number and list of training providers to be included in occupational certification efforts/agreement with provider
Projected number of participants taking certification exam (per year)/cost to participant/cost to training provider
Where and how certification exam will be offered
Provider technical assistance or support to be provided
Length of agreement/other important contract terms to be negotiated

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Step 4: Incorporate steps/approaches to instituting nationally recognized, industry-based occupational certifications in the following areas

(1) Deployment procedures

- Develop implementation, professional development and marketing plan (for employers, participants, One-Stop provider)
- Provide opportunities for participants and others to take certification examinations and publicize when and where these will be available
- One-Stop usage for core/intensive services
- Make certification information available to all
- Include occupational certification in training plans
- Include occupational certification information in One-Stop center information given out by One-Stop

(2) Infrastructure elements

- Develop WIB oversight policies and processes that incorporate occupational certifications
- Incorporate program accountability and reporting requirements that align with occupational certification requirements
- Design program articulation options with multiple exit points

(3) Quality control criteria

- Develop process for collecting and evaluating information about certification from employers, participating training providers and participants
- Develop follow up process for participants gaining certification at regular intervals to evaluate labor market experience

EXERCISE

Describe your steps/approaches:

(1) Deployment procedures:

(2) Infrastructure elements:

(3) Quality control criteria:

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Step 5: Design staff orientation, staff development and training, organizational capacity building (work in concert with other initiatives if possible)

The implementation of occupational certifications requires dissemination of information and a training plan with staff development. If a certification is adopted by the state WIB, training will be needed for local WIBs and providers to understand the overall purpose, benefits and implementation process.

EXERCISE

Possible topics of staff development and training:
⇒ Support local WIBs in understanding the purpose and benefits What? How? When? Who?
⇒ Support training providers to align learning objectives, curricula, instructional methods, teaching materials, and work site activities to occupational specifications What? How? When? Who?
⇒ Integration of occupational and academic skills & contextualized learning What? How? When? Who?
⇒ Teaching/training to employer knowledge and skill requirements, benefits and hiring implications What? How? When? Who?
Other topics:

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Step 6: Initiate and incorporate appropriate program design modifications/operational adjustments

Obtaining program certification
Instructor training/certification
Required facilities/space/equipment/materials/supplies

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Step 7: Provide ongoing support for occupational skill standards

Establish ongoing committees that look at how occupational certifications are working and to keep up to date.
Market, gain acceptance/use by employers and secure “champions”
Ongoing oversight
Incorporation into reporting requirements
Use in performance incentives

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Check Yourself:

Planning and Research Process

- Step 1: Gather Labor Market Information
- Step 2: Designate occupations to be included in the initial search effort
- Step 3: Locate and research existing certifications in the designated occupations by developing a database to record, organize and assess the data.
- Step 4: Review findings
- Step 5: Select Occupational certifications for initial implementation

⇒ What needs to happen next in your planning and research process?

Planning the Implementation of Occupational Certifications

- Step 1: Designate local implementation teams, working groups and dedicated personnel
- Step 2: Acquire and commit resources needed to fund institutional efforts and cover participant costs
- Step 3: Negotiate agreements with selected certification/examination providers
- Step 4: Incorporate steps/approaches to instituting nationally recognized, industry-based occupational certifications
- Step 5: Design staff orientation, staff development and training, organizational capacity building (work in concert with other initiatives if possible)
- Step 6: Initiate and incorporate appropriate program design modifications/operational adjustments
- Step 7: Provide ongoing support for occupational skill standards

⇒ What needs to happen next in your implementation process?