

National Career Readiness Certificate Talking Points

What is the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC)?

The NCRC, issued by ACT, is a portable, evidence-based credential that certifies essential skills needed for workplace success.

How does an individual earn the NCRC?

An individual must score at least a level “3” on three WorkKeys assessments: *Applied Mathematics*, *Locating Information*, and *Reading for Information*.

What is the primary purpose of the NCRC?

The NCRC complements such traditional credentials as high school diplomas, community college degrees, and certificates of technical proficiency. Academic credentials mark the fulfillment of an individual’s classroom learning experiences. The NCRC relies on standardized assessments and confirms an individual’s competence in a specific set of workplace skills.

What is the significance of the assessments associated with the NCRC?

Studies performed by **ACT on more than 18,000 jobs** identified the tasks that are most important to job performance, as well as the essential skills needed to perform them. These data serve as evidence showing the skills documented by the NCRC to be highly important to the widest range of jobs, making them the foundation for a qualified workforce. Skills are measured by three assessments:

- *Reading for Information*—comprehending work-related reading materials that range from memos and bulletins to policy manuals and regulations
- *Applied Mathematics*—applying mathematical reasoning to work-related problems
- *Locating Information*—using information from such materials as diagrams, floor plans, tables, forms, graphs, and charts

What cognitive skills are measured by the NCRC?

- Problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Reading and using work-related text
- Applying information from workplace documents to solve problems
- Applying mathematical reasoning to work-related problems
- Setting up and performing work-related mathematical calculations

- Locating, synthesizing, and applying information that is presented graphically
- Comparing, summarizing, and analyzing information presented in multiple graphics

What qualities make the NCRC unique?

The NCRC is based on highly reliable standardized assessments that have been used by thousands of employers across the nation since they became available nearly two decades ago. They are part of the WorkKeys job skills assessment system, which is developed and maintained by ACT in accordance with formal industry standards established by the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (1999; developed by the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education) and the *Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures*. To adhere to these standards, ACT performs intensive research and data analyses on an ongoing basis. More than 15 million WorkKeys assessments have been administered since the system was launched.

Does the NCRC expire?

No, each NCRC includes a date of issuance and does not expire. Generally, certificates should be renewed after five years. The skills measured by any credential tend to change with time.

Who maintains the NCRC and the WorkKeys system?

The WorkKeys system and the NCRC are maintained by ACT, an internationally recognized assessment and research company that is solely responsible for developing, distributing, and scoring WorkKeys assessments. Although ACT is most widely recognized for helping millions of people transition to college via the ACT[®] college admissions program, ACT is similarly committed to establishing evidence-based solutions that help young people and adults successfully transition to meaningful jobs and careers.

How has the NCRC been adopted by industry sectors and skill credentialing systems?

Organizations representing several industry sectors have adopted the NCRC as the gateway credential to certification systems and career pathways strategies. The Manufacturing Institute, the research arm of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), became the first one to do so when it established the NAM-Endorsed Manufacturing Skills Certification System (MSCS). It positioned the NCRC as the initial step in pathways to industry-recognized credentials offered by the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC), the American Welding Society (AWS), and the Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME). The National Center for Construction and Engineering Research (NCCER) uses the NCRC to introduce its credentialing programs for the construction sector. The Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD) has integrated the NCRC into its “Get Into Energy” career pathways initiative. The MSCS and the CEWD strategies emphasize the role of competency models developed by business and industry for the U.S. Department of Labor. Advocates in other sectors are investigating similar initiatives.