

## Work Readiness Credential An Update

The Work Readiness Credential (WRC) was developed to provide a national, portable knowledge-based assessment certificate that affirms individual job seekers have demonstrated the foundation knowledge and skills that are needed for successful performance as entry-level workers<sup>1</sup>.

The WRC is intended to address the following purposes:

- ❑ To enable adults and older youth to demonstrate to prospective employers that they have the knowledge and skills needed for successful performance as entry-level workers.
- ❑ To streamline the hiring process for business, by identifying a work-ready pool of job applicants.
- ❑ To improve the ability of local, regional and state workforce development systems to reliably identify and consistently refer work-ready applicants to their business customers.
- ❑ To improve the ability of these systems to help individuals develop the knowledge and skills required to be fully competent entry-level workers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace.

The WRC is based on a standard defined by business for entry-level work readiness. The standard was defined by collecting and aggregating information across industry clusters to create a non-industry-specific composite profile. This profile reflects the knowledge, skills, and abilities that front-line workers, supervisors, managers, and other workforce experts agree are most important to successful performance of entry-level work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace.

To earn the Work Readiness Credential, candidates must pass all four of the tests in the assessment battery:

- ❑ Work Readiness Reading Test
- ❑ Work Readiness Math Test
- ❑ Work Readiness Oral Language Test
- ❑ Work Readiness Situational Judgment Test

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<sup>1</sup> *Entry-level jobs are non-supervisory, non-managerial, non-professional positions. These may be unskilled positions or they may be skilled positions where the required job-specific skills can be learned while on the job.*

The WRC is administered through the National Work Readiness Council, of which New Jersey is a founding member. The Council began the soft launch of the WRC about a year ago to beta test the delivery system of the assessment. Through the limited rollout, the Council was confronted with a number of startup issues, such as glitches in the delivery system which resulted in slow downs and stoppage and local test site equipment failures and transmission problems. Working through these issues, the Council gained a wealth of information about how to improve the internet-based delivery. The Council also received valuable suggestions about test redesign and supports for test takers. Armed with input from testing centers, test takers, and testing professionals, modifications to the delivery system were made and the revised system was introduced to the public in the beginning of 2007.

In the spring, the Council began looking at test design issues, curriculum supports and practice test and diagnostic information. Castle Worldwide, our test delivery and redesign partner, is finalizing a more transparent test blueprint that is being used to revise the test and build new forms; but which can also be used for diagnostic purposes.

The Council expects that revisions to the Situational Judgment Test (SJT) will make it more reflective of workplace ethics in a broader cross section of entry-level employment. Scenarios in the revised SJT will also be better aligned to skill levels, providing a richer, though more challenging assessment of these critical skill areas.

Another version of the Oral Language Test (OLT) is being developed that will allow for instantaneous scoring like the other three tests in the WRC. This change will enable test takers to receive immediate results for all four tests, allowing them to know instantly if they earned the Credential. Though the current version of the OLT is widely seen as unique, adding an important dimension to the skills assessment of entry-level workers, many employers and workforce system professional don't have the luxury of waiting two to three weeks to receive the results of this test. The Council plans to offer the older version of the OLT as an option which can be used when immediate results aren't needed.

Testing sites have asked us to provide more diagnostic information to test takers who do not pass the test. The Council purposely kept the number of test items down, to ensure a 2 ½ – 3 hour test. To provide richer diagnostic information, the number of test items would have to expand which would result in a longer test. The Council is looking at creating a diagnostic test which could be used as a pre-test to determine readiness to take the WRC or a post-test to map out skill areas that need improvement.

We have moved into phase 2 of our launch. Though we are still tightly controlling the expansion of testing sites, acceptance is more based on a willingness to work with us to collect data, meet modest testing volume targets, and participate in follow-up studies. There are currently more than 80 sites in 21 states and the District of Columbia. In NJ, there are currently 7 testing areas all of which are administered in partnership with the local Workforce Investment Boards. The testing sites are at the following locations:

- ❑ Bergen One-Stop Career Center
- ❑ Burlington One-Stop Career Center
- ❑ Camden One-Stop Career Center
- ❑ Cumberland/Salem One-Stop Career Center
- ❑ Hudson One-Stop Career Center
- ❑ Newark One-Stop Career Center and Essex County College
- ❑ Union County College

We have tested more than 2,100 people during the controlled and deliberative first phase of implementation.

Additional information on the Work Readiness Credential is available at [www.workreadiness.com](http://www.workreadiness.com). For New Jersey specific information, contact your local Workforce Investment Board or the state WRC project coordinators Lansing Davis or Judy Formalarie at 609-633-0605 or through their respective emails [Lansing.Davis@dol.state.nj.us](mailto:Lansing.Davis@dol.state.nj.us) or [Judith.Formalarie@dol.state.nj.us](mailto:Judith.Formalarie@dol.state.nj.us).