



**ACT**® WorkKeys®

# Powering ACT Work Ready Communities

In 2019, there were ACT® Work Ready Communities (WRC) established in 29 states, and *Site Selection* magazine uses data from the program to determine its Top 10 Competitive States for economic development success.

Across the nation, the ACT Work Ready Communities initiative, is helping counties, states, and regions build a more productive workforce and encourage economic growth. The ACT work readiness system provides the following comprehensive, evidence-based solutions:

- **ACT® WorkKeys® Job Profiling** helps employers define their workforce and pinpoint the skills they need.
- **ACT® WorkKeys® Assessments** provide workforce professionals with trusted measures of work readiness skills.
- **ACT® WorkKeys® National Career Readiness Certificate®** (NCRC®) gives economic developers evidence of a skilled workforce to help attract business and industry.
- **ACT® WorkKeys® Curriculum** helps educators ensure students have the foundational skills employers need.
- **ACT research** into college and career readiness helps leadership better understand their workforce.

By implementing ACT Workforce Solutions, ACT Work Ready Communities across the nation are improving workforce productivity for everyone—from students coming into the workforce, to prospective and current employees, to transitioning workers—giving them opportunities to build essential skills and continue learning. As a result, businesses thrive and communities have a competitive edge in economic development.

**ACT**® Work Ready  
Communities

[workreadycommunities.org](http://workreadycommunities.org)

# Getting communities **work ready**

The ACT Work Ready Communities framework starts at the grassroots level, with communities linking workforce development to education, aligning economic development needs, and matching individuals to jobs based on skill levels.

The data-driven approach of the ACT Work Ready Communities framework enables a community to clearly demonstrate it has a skilled workforce valued by local employers.

ACT uses its assessment and certification expertise to help community leaders develop a sustainable mechanism to close skills gaps and collect workforce skills data. The goal is to certify a county, state, or region as “work ready” when specific criteria for building a skilled workforce are met.

The collective outcome of ACT Work Ready Communities, powered by ACT workforce solutions, is a collaborative workforce development initiative that gives individuals the verifiable proof they need to show employers that they are ready to succeed. The result is a robust talent pipeline that benefits individuals and employers.



## Understanding specific skills needed for jobs

To understand their workforce needs, employers first need to define the skills required for success on the job. WorkKeys Job Profiling analyzes the tasks and skill levels for specific jobs and links them to the skills measured by WorkKeys Assessments. Used together, they give employers confidence in their hiring, training, and advancement decisions. This process of job analysis also takes advantage of the expertise

of current employees, increasing their opportunity for engagement in hiring and placement decisions.

The relevance of the WorkKeys Assessments to U.S. jobs is supported by a database of over 22,000 job profiles generated by businesses to link the tasks of their jobs to the skills measured by the assessments.

## Assessing Skills needed for jobs

ACT offers a number of research-based assessments to measure workforce skills. ACT WorkKeys Assessments don't simply give an indication of reading and writing competency. Instead, they measure a range of foundational skills relevant to any occupation, at any level, across industries. Scores on three assessments—Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents—determine if

an individual qualifies to earn the WorkKeys NCRC.

ACT WorkKeys Assessments have been used for more than two decades to measure skills related to workforce success. Since 2008, people of all ages have taken more than 20 million WorkKeys Assessments.

## Certifying workforce skills

A key component of the ACT Work Ready Communities initiative is for individuals to earn, and employers to recognize, the WorkKeys NCRC. The WorkKeys NCRC is accepted nationwide as a reliable credential for employers to assess an individual's skills in Applied Math, Workplace Documents, and Graphic Literacy. These real-world skills are needed for virtually any job across all occupations.

Issued at four levels—Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum—the WorkKeys NCRC helps take the guesswork out of hiring, training, and promotion decisions. It also offers a trusted

way for communities to provide evidence of their skilled workforce, helping to retain and grow existing and new business and industry, the foundation for a strong economy.

More than 5 million people have earned a WorkKeys NCRC, including high school and college students, job seekers, and current employees across the country. And more than 27,000 employers recognize or recommend the certificate in support of their counties becoming a certified ACT Work Ready Community.

## Adding training to improve skills

When individuals need to improve their workplace skills, they turn to the WorkKeys Curriculum. Students, job seekers, and employees use the training to enhance their work readiness, improve their WorkKeys Assessment scores, and increase their chances of attaining or improving their WorkKeys NCRC level.

WorkKeys Curriculum uses interactive courses to link new learning with the essential skills

required for occupations. Students and prospective employees can close skills gaps, and current employees can sharpen the skills needed for workplace success.

WorkKeys Curriculum is a powerful tool to help individuals become career ready and learn and adapt on the job—as the job changes.



## Backing it up with research

ACT Workforce Solutions are anchored by more than five decades of ACT research into college and career readiness. This provides individuals and communities with proven tools to build a workforce with the essential skills that are critical to workplace success—and the ability to continue learning.

With ACT research, community leaders can better understand the essential skills needed to build, develop, and maintain a successful workforce and foster a thriving economy.

## Taking the **next steps**

Visit [workreadycommunities.org](https://workreadycommunities.org) to find out how counties, states, and regions are using the ACT work readiness system to turn their workforce into a competitive advantage for economic growth.

**ACT<sup>®</sup> Work Ready Communities**  
[workreadycommunities.org](https://workreadycommunities.org)