

NCRC Employer Outreach—Consultative Selling to Businesses

Business Engagement Training Outline

NCRC Business Training Overview: a review of ACT and the Oregon NCRC materials and guidance related to working with businesses.

- a. Review and discussion of employer resources for business presentations
- b. Clarification of what it means to “prefer” or “require” the NCRC
- c. Advice on how to use ACT job profiles
- d. Discussion about using NCRC with current workers
- e. Debrief

Introduction to Consultative Sales: To look at the NCRC as a tool for servicing an account.

- a. Integrating the NCRC into existing conversations with companies and groups
- b. Possible responses to employer questions
- c. Debrief

Next steps: Next steps and feedback

- a. How will you use this info?
- b. Feedback on training

Helpful Resources

Oregon’s Work Ready and NCRC Web site—<http://www.oregonworkready.com/>

ACT Workkeys – Occupational Profiles—<http://www.act.org/workkeys/analysis/occup.html>

ACTs website page for employers—<http://www.act.org/solutions/career-success/>

ACT’s national Work Ready Communities Web site—<http://workreadycommunities.org/>

Fact Sheet: “Preferring” vs “Requiring” the NCRC

Oregon employers can signal their intent to use Oregon’s NCRC by signing a Letter of Support indicating they will prefer the NCRC as one factor among many in the hiring process. Individual employers must ultimately determine the best means of using the certificate to achieve their business goals. The vast majority of employers will be successful with preferring the NCRC. Employers that require the NCRC will need to have profiled each job for which they require certification.

Frequently asked questions:

During the *recruitment* of job candidates, can an employer that prefers the NCRC stipulate that applicants take the assessment?

Yes. However, employers cannot require that applicants earn a certificate, and employers cannot specify levels of certification preferred.

During *selection* of a candidate for a job opening, can an employer that prefers the NCRC consider levels of certification?

Employers may compare ACT’s descriptions of what a person can actually do at the various NCRC score levels (3, 4, 5) with the requirements of a specific job opening to get a general sense whether these are comparable. Employers may also consult the ACT Occupational Database to see which levels of certificate have been associated with similar jobs that have been profiled.

act.org/workkeys/skillsearch.html. However, to correlate a specific certificate level (Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum) with a specific position for recruitment and selection of a candidate, a formal job profile must be developed by an ACT licensed job profiler, per ACT guidance.

During the recruitment and selection of job candidates, must an employer who requires the NCRC have profiled each job for which they require certification?

Yes. Moreover, employers who require the NCRC may face legal risk if they hire an applicant who has not earned a certificate.

Couldn’t an employer assume that all jobs in the company meet the minimum level of proficiency that a bronze certificate provides?

The only way to know for certain what level of skill proficiency is required in particular jobs is to do a company and site-specific profile. While common sense may indicate that all jobs will require that skill level, ACT strongly advises that to require a bronze level NCRC without a profile puts the company at legal risk. (See profiling fact sheet for more information.)

Questions asked by business about the NCRC and some possible answers for discussion...

What is the benefit to me (or my company)? There are a number of potential benefits.

1. You can get a clear sense of the skills that applicants possess. The NCRC tests applied skills so you can see whether they can use the math and reading skills you need.
2. More information about job candidates can help you make a better match for your job openings by knowing that people have the right skills.
3. Saves time and \$ by reducing the size of the app pool
4. Sharpen selection process by finding candidates more likely to succeed
5. Making a good fit improves retention.

Who developed WorkKeys and the NCRC?

WorkKeys and the NCRC were developed by ACT, an internationally recognized assessment and research company. ACT is best known for the ACT test, which helps students transition into college. ACT is equally committed to helping individuals transition into and within the workplace using the NCRC.

How the NCRC is related to ACT?

1. The NCRC is a part of the ACT WorkKeys® system. It documents applied skill ability in three foundational skill areas (Applied Mathematics, Reading for Information and Locating Information).
2. There are a total of nine WorkKeys® skill areas which ACT uses to precisely analyze the requirements of any job.
3. ACT has identified the three skill areas that make up the NCRC as critical to success in most jobs.

Why job applicants are using the NCRC?

1. The NCRC gives job applicants a tangible way to document their skills and stand out to employers.
2. It is taking longer for people to find jobs. Earning an NCRC can be a critical confidence booster in this tough job market.
3. Earning a certificate can help a job applicant stand out to employers who prefer the NCRC in their hiring practices, both in Oregon and throughout the nation.

Why do individuals need the National Career Readiness Certificate?

The NCRC is designed to complement other traditional credentials, such as a high school diploma, community college degree or certificate of technical proficiency. While these educational credentials mark the fulfillment of an individual's classroom learning experiences, the certificate confirms competence in a specific set of workplace skills.

Why is the NCRC based on the Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics and Locating Information skills?

ACT has analyzed nearly 18,000 individual jobs across the country to determine the skills and skill levels needed to succeed in them. According to our findings, three skills are highly important to most jobs.

- **Reading for Information**—comprehending work-related reading materials, from memos and bulletins to policy manuals and governmental 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.

A solid foundation of these three skills is associated with a well-qualified workforce.

Why doesn't the NCRC assess soft skills?

The NCRC is only one of many tools that a business can use as part of its hiring process. The NCRC focuses specifically on the basic skills that the profiling of 18,000 jobs has shown to be of critical importance for employers. While any one assessment can't guarantee that an employee will show up on time ready to work, those who take the NCRC do have to show commitment to a fairly extensive testing process that includes following directions and taking more than two hours of assessments.

We already have a pretty good hiring process. Why would we need to add another assessment?

NCRC is not just an assessment; it's a certification. It is meant to complement what you already do by adding an objective certification of basic skills. It's undergone a rigorous development and evaluation process and is used by thousands of employers in more than 30 states.

How will I know credentials presented by applicants are valid?

All individuals who earn the NCRC can provide a certificate registration number that can be verified at www.nationalcareerreadiness.org when credentials are included with the application materials requested by your company.

What liability does the NCRC create for my company?

Used correctly, the NCRC should not create any liability for a company, however if you have concerns it may be best to consult with your attorney and/or ACT.

Has the NCRC stood up to EEOC requirements?

The NCRC has undergone rigorous review in order to comply with EEOC requirements. Using it according to instructions is the only way to assure that these EEOC requirements are met.

Has there been any case law related to the NCRC?

As of August 2012, ACT reports three legal cases that it is aware of involving profiling. Both had occurred within the preceding 28 months; ACT was not aware of any cases during the previous 16 years. In one case, the employer was following ACT guidance on use of profiling and WorkKeys® and prevailed. In the other two cases, the employer was not following ACT guidance and was fined.

I only hire through staffing companies. Can they work with the NCRC program?

Yes. You can let them know that you prefer the NCRC and to post that you prefer that candidates have an NCRC in I-MatchSkills and your job ads. The staffing agency you work with can contact me if they have any questions or we could meet together to talk about how this could work.

Who else is using the NCRC?

The NCRC is available in 44 states. Thousands of companies of all sizes are using it.

How would I let applicants know I would prefer them to have an NCRC?

You would indicate that when you list your job with I-MatchSkills and you can include it on job ads.

What does it mean if I sign a letter of support?

It means that you would prefer that candidates who apply for your job have an NCRC.

How much does it cost?

Through a statewide license, there is no cost to you as an employer to request that job applicants with NCRCs are forwarded to you.

What's the catch?

There is no catch. If you choose to prefer the NCRC as part of your hiring process, all it means is that we will send you applicants with NCRCs when you post your jobs.

Is the NCRC incorporated into other skill certification systems?

Yes. The Manufacturing Skills Certification System that has been established and endorsed by the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) incorporates the NCRC and WorkKeys Personal Skills assessments as its uniform entry point.

Can I require a specific level? (Please see the prefer vs. require fact sheet)

You cannot require candidates to have a specific NCRC level unless you have profiled your positions.

Why doesn't the state of the Oregon just fix the K-12 system so we don't need all these additional tests to know that someone is work ready?

Option 1: The NCRC is has been identified as one of the tools that local school districts can use to prove that students can meet diploma requirements.

Option 2: This offers you an objective way to know if these potential job applicants have the basic skills needed by companies like yours. Because they are asked to apply these skills in a non-school setting, the NCRC offers a good way to see how future workers can use their skills.

Why would I use I-MatchSkills for my job listings to take advantage of this?

I-MatchSkills is the tool that we use to match individuals with NCRCs to your job listings. Those who hold NCRC's will be enrolled in I-MatchSkills.

What if I don't want to list my jobs in I-MatchSkills?

The easiest way for us to be able to referred candidates with the NCRC is to list your jobs in I-MatchSkills.

NCRC Key Messages:

- The NCRC helps ensure the right fit for a job. Different jobs require different levels of foundational skills. The NCRC helps job seekers understand what level of foundational skills they currently have, and what additional preparation they might need for jobs that require a higher level of skills. The NCRC helps employers understand what level of skill is required for the right fit between a candidate and a job opening.
- The NCRC delivers big results for a small investment. Many academic credentials take months or years to earn. For most job seekers, earning a NCRC will require only a brief initial skills review and about a half-day devoted to the assessment. Even for job seekers who are not ready to earn their certificate, the time it will take to become ready will likely be measured in weeks rather than months or years.
- The NCRC builds confidence. Many people have a higher level of foundational skills than they expected. Because this is a certification, based on a precise and valid assessment process, job seekers can trust what the NCRC says about their skills. This builds confidence. Employers can have more confidence in their evaluation of a job candidate who holds an NCRC—it is easy to know what the skill level is and what it means.
- The NCRC, like all certificates and credentials, represents an investment in the future. Pay-off isn't always immediate—earning an NCRC, like earning any degree or certificate, doesn't guarantee a job offer the next day. But the NCRC demonstrates that the job seeker is making an investment in their future. That matters.