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2006 is off to a great start for the National Work Readiness Credential project. As we move closer to the June 2006 date when the National Work Readiness Credential (WRC) assessments will be ready to deliver, the founding partners (District of Columbia, Florida, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Washington, and JA Worldwide) continue to achieve important milestones in the project. The updates below provide more information about the accomplishments this year.

### **National Work Readiness Field Tests Have Been Completed**

The field tests for the [WRC](#) have been completed. Over the past several months field tests have been conducted in the six states and national partners that are developing the WRC. Due to nationwide interest, additional field test sites were added in Los Angeles, CA; San Francisco, CA, Louisville, KY; Cleveland, OH; and Midland, TX. The purpose of the field tests was to collect data to demonstrate the validity and reliability of the assessment as a measure of entry-level work readiness. The assessment contractors are now analyzing the data in preparation for a cut score workshop to be held the first week of April. We are looking for supervisors with three or more years of experience supervising entry-level workers to participate in the workshop. If you are interested contact [Melanie.daniels@sri.com](mailto:Melanie.daniels@sri.com)

### **What did the Field Test Participants Say about the Assessment?**

According to one field test participant, "I think this test will be a success because this is an easier and more exciting way of taking an exam. It also puts you in real working experiences and helps you exercise the skills you need in a working environment." The individual's comments were captured in an on-line survey asking test takers to evaluate the assessment content and their testing experience upon completion of the assessment.

Many of the positive responses focused on the ease of taking the test on the computer over a paper and pencil test, the relevance of the test content to work situations, finding the test to be interesting and challenging, and feeling that taking the test was an educational experience. Taking the test on a computer did not make taking the test more difficult for 86% of the participants.

### **JA Worldwide Joins the National Work Readiness Credential Partnership**

[JA Worldwide](#) (JA) is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that reaches more than 7 million students worldwide through programs that prepare middle and high school students for future economic and workforce issues they will face as well as programs that teach elementary school level children how they can impact the world around them as individuals, workers and consumers. JA has joined the Project in order to work with other state and national partners in building and disseminating a work readiness credential that will enable more young people and adults across the country to demonstrate they have the knowledge and skills to contribute to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace. JA plans to integrate preparation for the WRC into its programs for secondary school students. JA programs in Cleveland and San Francisco participated in the field test process as a first step toward this goal.

**CENTER FOR WORKFORCE PREPARATION**

An Affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce  
[www.uschamber.com/cwp](http://www.uschamber.com/cwp)

## **The National Work Readiness Council is Formed**

As part of the transition from development to operation of the WRC, the seven development partners (DC, FL, JA Worldwide, NJ, NY, RI, and WA) have incorporated the National Work Readiness Council in Washington, DC. The National Work Readiness Council is a 501(c)3 organization that will be responsible for administering the oversight and management of the certification process. The partners are currently establishing a Board of Directors for the new organization and preparing for a search for an Executive Director. For more information on the National Work Readiness Council, please contact Sondra Stein, consultant, 202-463-5619 or [sstein@uschamber.com](mailto:sstein@uschamber.com)

## **Request for Proposal Issued to Identify a Partner to Deliver the Assessment**

On February 15, 2006 the National Work Readiness Council issued a request for proposals to perform test delivery, scoring, reporting, and related services (including ongoing item development and test construction based on the existing assessment instrument) for the National Work Readiness Certification assessments. The NWRC seeks a vendor who will actively partner with the new organization in building broad recognition and use of the credential across the country, in large, medium and small employers, government agencies, organizations that provide workforce development services, colleges, and schools.

To request a copy of the proposal, please contact Sondra Stein, consultant, 202-463-5619 or [sstein@uschamber.com](mailto:sstein@uschamber.com). Responses to the request for proposals are due March 31, 2006.

## **What does the WRC Assess and How will it be Delivered?**

When the WRC is available in June 2006, employers, training providers, and educators will have access to an assessment tool to assist them in evaluating an individual's readiness for entry-level work. The WRC assessments measure nine skills that employers agreed were critical to successful performance of entry-level work.

These nine skills are organized into four online assessment modules which include Reading, Math, Situational Judgment, and Oral Language. The first three are multiple choice assessments based on short work-based scenarios that the test taker responds to. These scenarios reflect work activities that employers from across industry sectors agree are an essential part of entry-level work responsibilities—regardless of occupation. The Oral Language Test is a state-of-the art listening and speaking performance test, which assesses essential workplace uses of speaking and listening in English. The four assessments take approximately 2 ½ hours to complete, and each module can be completed separately within a four week period.

## **A Guide for Trainers and Instructors of Job Seekers**

[\*Getting Ready for the Work Readiness Credential\*](#) is a new guide that provides workforce preparation trainers and instructors with information on how to help entry-level jobseekers develop the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the standard for work readiness defined by the WRC. The WRC builds on the solid research foundation of the [\*Equipped for the Future \(EFF\) Standards Framework\*](#), which defines the overall goal of adult learning as helping all adults develop and enhance their skills and knowledge so that they can better carry out their responsibilities as citizens, family members, and workers.

To prepare jobseekers to pass the WRC assessment, trainers and instructors need to help them develop proficiency in the EFF skills to a level that will allow them to successfully carry out the critical entry-level tasks and behaviors. This guide facilitates the learning process by:

- explaining the WRC Profile;
- describing the EFF skills in detail, with a focus on how the skills are linked to the tasks, and to a specific level of performance associated with those tasks;
- providing specific steps describing how instructors and trainers can help jobseekers improve their proficiency in relevant EFF skills linked to entry-level tasks; and
- providing links to curriculum and teaching materials.

### **NYEC and DC Project**

In an effort to connect more young people in the District of Columbia to a path leading to a high school credential, GED, employment, and post-secondary education, the State Education Agency, Adult Education (SEA) of the District of Columbia, a partner in the development of the National Work Readiness Credential (WRC) has joined with the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) to conduct a pilot of the Credential at two D.C. youth-serving organizations, Covenant House Washington and the Latin American Youth Center. The aim of the pilot project is to prepare young people, ages 16 to 24, who are participating in job readiness training programs at both organizations to pass the National Work Readiness Credential assessments and earn the WRC. As a first step toward evaluating how well their current programs prepare young people for the Credential, young adults at Covenant House participated in the WRC field test last month. Both programs will try out curricula and other learning tools based on the [Equipped for the Future Standards](#). NYEC will use the pilots to develop a guide for youth programs and practitioners on how to prepare participants for the National Work Readiness Credential in youth program settings nationwide. For more information on the project, contact Mala Thakur at [mt@nyec.org](mailto:mt@nyec.org).

To learn more about the WRC and how your business, community, or organization can become more involved:

- Visit the [WRC online](#)
- Contact Karen Elzey, senior director, Center for Workforce Preparation, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, [kelzey@uschamber.com](mailto:kelzey@uschamber.com) or 202-463-5644
- Contact Sondra Stein, consultant, Center for Workforce Preparation, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, [sstein@uschamber.com](mailto:sstein@uschamber.com), or 202-463-5619.