ACT® WorkKeys®

The ACT WorkKeys assessment system measures job skills that are valuable for any occupation—skilled or professional—at any level and in any industry.

ACT® National Career Readiness Certificate™

The ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™ is an industry-recognized, portable, evidence-based credential that certifies achievement of foundational skills essential for workplace success.

USDOL competency models

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Aerospace
- Automation
- Bioscience
- Construction—Heavy
- Construction—Residential
- Energy
- Entrepreneurship
- Financial Services
- Geospatial Technology
- Health: Electronic Health Records, Long-Term Care, Supports, Services
- Hospitality/Hotel and Lodging
- Information Technology
- Mechatronics
- Retail
- Transportation
- Water Sector

KEY FACTS

Industry competency models and the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate

What are industry competency models, and why are they important?

Industry competency models are descriptions developed by the US Department of Labor (USDOL) to establish the skills, knowledge, and abilities required in growing industry sectors. The models help individuals obtain the training needed for various career paths in a specific industry, and they identify skills that are transferable across an industry. They are important because they promote an understanding of the skill sets and competencies that are crucial to building a globally competitive American workforce.

How does the ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (ACT NCRC®) align with the models?

Each USDOL industry competency model is built on a series of tiers. At the base, Tiers 1–3 represent the essential foundational skills. The ACT NCRC, based on ACT WorkKeys assessments, certifies these skills and enables an individual to rise to the next tier—to advance toward success in a chosen occupation.

US Department of Labor—Industry Competency Model
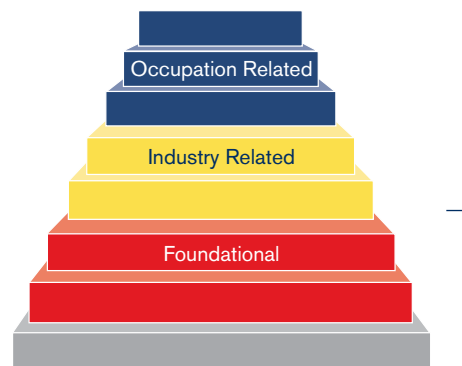
Source: US Department of Labor

Foundational skills, as the term implies, are competencies that form the foundation for success—in educational and training programs as well as in the workplace. The USDOL defines two kinds of foundational skills: cognitive (mathematics and reading) and noncognitive (integrity, dependability, and reliability). All cognitive and noncognitive skills measured by ACT WorkKeys assessments and certified by the ACT NCRC are considered "foundational."

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These skills are essential to a wide variety of occupations and industries. In fact, ACT's extensive body of research shows that the career readiness skills addressed by the ACT NCRC are required for **77%** of a recent sample of jobs profiled in ACT JobPro®— one of the largest databases of its kind in the nation—and **all** of the USDOL industry competency models. Employers confirm that foundational skills are linked to job performance and have also discovered that these skills are a prerequisite for workers to learn industry-specific skills.

How do we use industry competency models?

- **Educators and training providers** can design career pathway training programs that prepare individuals to meet the skill demands of local industries. Career pathways are aligned with fundamental skill sets or competencies, including workplace, personal effectiveness, and academic skills necessary for the development of additional skill sets for a given industry sector or occupational ladder. Sponsored by the USDOL, the Competency Model Clearinghouse (**www.careeronestop.org/competencymodel/pyramid.aspx**) provides validated industry competency models and tools to help customize career ladders/lattices for various US industries.

- **Employers** can define successful performance in a particular work setting. Because competency models specify essential skills, an employer can customize a model and apply it to human resource functions such as recruitment and hiring, training and development, and performance management.

- **Industry professionals and employers** can consult the models to effectively communicate workforce skill needs to educators and training providers. Models are also valuable tools for business planning purposes.

- **Career seekers and current employees** can learn from the models what knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics are needed to successfully interview for, perform at, and advance in a job within an industry. Whether individuals are seeking employment, advancing in their jobs, or transitioning careers, they can benefit from career exploration, planning, and development with the use of a competency model framework.

How do ACT solutions intersect with industry competency models?

ACT's workforce development solutions help people build their skills and establish portable credentials for career pathways that are based on industry competency models. These models define the essential skills necessary in economically vital industries and sectors of the American economy. Also, our solutions closely align to the competencies identified for industry sectors.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Industry competency models, developed by the US Department of Labor, establish the skills that specific jobs require—enabling an individual to define a clear pathway toward a chosen career. Built on a series of tiers, each model has the ACT NCRC at its base. The ACT NCRC aligns with these models to certify the foundational skills an individual needs to advance to the next tier.

ACT works with associations and advocacy organizations representing the needs of industry sectors to develop a national skills credentialing system.

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