



MWCA Best Practices

SUBMISSION FORM

WIB Name/WSA: **Ramsey County Workforce Solutions (WSA #15)**
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Work Keys

When business begins to pick up and companies feel confident enough to bring back workers, they expect that workers will be “at the ready”. It is projected that businesses will be expecting workers to return with increased skill levels. Jobs will have changed, requiring workers to have an increased capacity for production. Specialists may have become generalists, requiring skill building in new areas. Advanced adaptability, critical thinking and problem solving skills will be foundational to a worker’s success.

In 2008, Workforce Solutions adopted the ACT Work Keys system to certify the foundational skills of our job seekers. The Career Readiness Certification (CRC) requires the job seeker to take three assessments. The assessments are Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, and Locating Information. Bronze, silver or gold certificates are issued based on the assessment scores. Through a partnership with Adult Basic Education services, basic skills remediation is provided onsite three days a week to increase skill of those who do not score high enough for a certificate or at the level they want. Our ABE instructor uses an internet-based version of Key Train, the companion learning system to Work Keys, as a primary instructional tool for learners. With access to Key Train a learner works through modules customized to their needs and can access the modules from any internet-based computer at any time. After brushing up, job seekers are offered a retest to ensure they have learned the skills and then are issued the appropriate certificate.

To date, we have certified 175 job seekers and are continuing to test job seekers throughout 2009. Taking the assessments allows job seekers to know what skill level they currently possess. Some learn that their skills have become a bit rusty which prompts them to brush up. Others are pleasantly surprised that they “still can do this stuff”. Once a certificate is received, job seekers are encouraged to list the CRC on their résumé and talk about it in interviews.

Work Keys is a powerful system, backed by significant research through ACT that links businesses, education and workforce development with a common language to measure skills. For the whole system to work, it is critical that all three entities recognize the credential and know what it means. We want our local businesses and HR professionals to ask for Career Readiness Certificates so they can be assured that their candidates have the basic skills. Work Keys has proven that building and documenting the basic skills of the workforce makes a bottom line difference for businesses. In 2009, Workforce Solutions will focus on securing commitments from the local business community to use and support the Work Keys system.

Beginning in the fall of 200 two additional Ramsey County locations have been added as Work Keys assessment and training sites. This expansion has been made possible through the state’s FastTrac funding. Job seekers will access these services at the St Paul Workforce Center and in the Ramsey County Human Services building at 160 E. Kellogg in downtown St Paul.

Workforce Solutions is very happy to spotlight Cerenity Care Center of White Bear Lake as our first local business to adopt the Work Keys system. Cerenity is using the Work Keys Reading for Information

assessment to assure that their applicants for Nursing Assistants have the reading comprehension skills to succeed on the job. Applicants for the Nutritional Services Aides will be the next group Cerenity