



## WISCONSIN PERFORMANCE &amp; ASSESSMENT OF SKILL STANDARDS

## NEWSLETTER



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 NATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
POLICY – MSSC CREDENTIALS

On January 16, 2004, the Bush Administration released fifty-seven recommendations in a landmark report entitled, *Manufacturing in America: a Comprehensive Strategy to Address the Challenges to U.S. Manufacturers* – also known as the “President’s Manufacturing Initiative”. Yet the challenge remains to convince Congress and other stakeholders in the American economy of the critical importance of manufacturing and the role of public policy in the sector’s competitiveness.

To provide continuous industry feedback on the recommendations in the “*Manufacturing in America*” report, generate new recommendations, and suggest next steps, the National Council for Advanced Manufacturing (NACFAM) Board created seven Forum Issue Teams (FITs). One of the focus areas is on *Workforce Education and Training*.

A report for this area, consolidated at a June 9, 2005, meeting of the Leadership Council of NACFAM, made recommendations to “improve the image of manufacturing jobs

through providing access to better career data and increasing investment in education and training at all levels to enable workers and students to secure industry-recognized credentials --especially the emerging nationwide Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC), Production Technician Certification for foundational skills, along with specialty skill certifications.”

An excerpt from the final NACFAM report of the above meeting follows:

**WORKFORCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING**  
**1. Increased federal investment in employment and training should include support for industry-recognized credentials, specifically the emerging national Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) certification system for core production standards along with other specialty standards (e.g., NIMS, AWS, ACS) to ensure that educators and trainers are meeting industry skill needs and to improve the prestige of skilled manufacturing workers.**

- Broaden endorsement of MSSC Certification to ensure that education is training to industry needs,
- Establish a relationship with the “Career Clusters” effort of the State Directors for Career & Technical Education by submitting the MSSC Assessment as the foundational assessment for the Manufacturing Career Cluster,
- Promote the MSSC Certification system through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) system,
- Include the Departments of Energy, Justice, and Defense in the MSSC certification system utilization since they have

“American manufacturers are a cornerstone of the American economy and embody the best in American values. They enhance U.S. competitiveness while improving lives domestically and internationally.”

*Manufacturing in America: a Comprehensive Strategy to Address the Challenges to U.S. Manufacturers, January 16, 2004*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>MSSC Credentials</i>	1
<i>Phase II—Wisconsin Certification of Foundation Skills</i>	2
<i>A Look in Your Toolbox</i>	3



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## PHASE II – WisPASS - WISCONSIN CERTIFICATION OF FOUNDATION SKILLS

<b>Governor Doyle “Grow Wisconsin”</b>	Wisconsin strives to produce the highest quality products made by a highly trained workforce. Its manufacturing sectors can improve in productivity and remain the envy of the country. Increasing the skills, knowledge and abilities of workers is our best economic development tool.
<b>MSSC Standards and Credentials</b>	The Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) has established production foundation skill standards and translated them into four online assessments. The first phase of WisPASS validated those tests, and are the cutoff scores now being used to meet baseline competency and certification.
<b>The Online Assessments</b>	The four tests use multiple choice questions and a factory simulation to accurately peg an individual’s level of workplace “know how”. When each module is completed, the test-taker immediately knows where s/he stands against criteria that is based on critical work knowledge and academic/technical skills.
<b>Portable Credentials</b>	The results show that the production worker (test taker) knows how to meet customer needs, keep equipment/tools functioning, keep a safe and productive work area, maintain quality, communicate with co-workers and customers, work as a team member and find process deficiencies. Successfully passing all four modules results in receipt of an MSSC certificate.
<b>Test Centers In Wisconsin</b>	Phase II of WisPASS is establishing test centers across Wisconsin that will be equipped to proctor the MSSC assessments. More importantly, these centers will begin to respond to training gaps revealed by the test results. To assist in this, McGraw-Hill has published a textbook, “High-Performance Manufacturing.”
<b>Wisconsin Certification</b>	Each test center acts independently to respond to training needs of students pursuing manufacturing careers, of dislocated workers and of companies with worker gaps. Portable MSSC credentials means that the right person will be identified for the right opening. Factory performance and productivity in Wisconsin are enhanced and Governor Doyle’s plan to grow the state is realized.

*(Credentials - Continued from page 1)*

vested interest in identifying and training to critical skill needs in advanced manufacturing,

- Review use and acceptance of the terms “standards” versus “competency” for effective promotion and use of industry-validated skill standards certification systems

**2. Target federal investment to establish and integrate secondary and post-secondary career/technical education (CTE) systems in high-demand occupational areas in manufacturing based on requirements to meet critical regional skill and economic development needs.**

**3. Charge broad-based partnerships (MEPS, WIBS, education) with responsibility and accountability in the use of federal funds to improve assistance for and retraining of incumbent and displaced manufacturing workers.**

**4. Improve the image of careers in manufacturing by gathering more federal data on the attractiveness of manufacturing occupations, including their pay and bene-**

**fits relative to many other occupations, and making this data widely available to help guide career decisions**

**5. The established Interagency Working Group on Manufacturing (chaired by the Secretary of Commerce) should create an Engineering and Advanced Technologies Education sub-group to leverage existing and ongoing activities and resources at the DOE, DOJ, and DOD Defense (to review the National Security Workforce).**

### NEXT STEPS

NACFAM is working with the Assistant Secretary of Labor, Emily DeRocco, the National Association of Manufacturers, the AFL-CIO and others to bring industry, government, and labor together to create a national workforce strategy built around the MSSC certification system for foundational competencies. NACFAM is currently planning a large policy conference in the fall, possibly co-located with the November rollout of the MSSC Certification System. The conference will convene high-level thought-leaders to examine the issues above and develop a broad national workforce strategy to meet industry and economic development needs.

## A LOOK IN YOUR TOOLBOX

Different workers carry different tools. Below are four general categories of people and a summary of the needs for each, presented with logical goals and tools required.

Manufacturing Managers - Your Worker's Toolbox		Production Worker - Your Career Toolbox	
Quality Work - Sharp Tools	Every industrial process relies on tools. Some rely on automated processes, but most have a person-machine interface and some are very dependent on hands alone. Productivity and a quality outcome depend largely on employee competence – his/her toolbox.	Passion Passion! <b>PASSION!!</b>	Pride in one's work is the basis of self worth, born of passion and commitment. If you have chosen a career in manufacturing and enjoy being part of that creative process - an outlet for your hands-on talent - you need a toolbox.
HR – Right Test Tool	A valid assessment is the tool that the HR manager uses to find employees with baseline skills. Production supervisors make sure to align and hone the technical and specialty skills in each worker's toolbox.	Help HR Win	An assessment is one tool that every good HR manager uses to find employees with baseline skills. If you take such a test, you want to score well and are concerned that it reveals your strengths. Both you and HR want to set up each employee to win.
Employees as Winners	When an employee carries a full toolbox, the supervisor no longer needs to worry about winners and losers – everyone wins.	Set Goals and Prepare	You have been taught the basics in grade school and, with your passion for a creative life, have acquired some important core skills, either in high school or later. It is never too late to build up your own tool kit.
Leaders Needed	In fact, the supervisor is looking for people who are able to get the most out of their efforts, their tools and others on their team. Leaders find and nurture others.	Carry Your Own Credentials	Once you have been trained in the basics of industry, and know about quality, safety, making sure equipment works, and how products are made, it is time to test yourself. Perhaps you have had experience in teamwork, communicating and leading. But you need to see where you stand; perhaps with a certificate to show prospective employers.
A Matter of Trust	Empowering leaders requires the ultimate in trust-giving. It <u>does not</u> imply abdicating responsibility for the process – safety, quality, on-time work or customer satisfaction. It <u>does</u> validate having the right tools in the right hands.	Lifelong Satisfaction	Once you are successful in joining a manufacturing firm, your career planning doesn't stop. Success is finding pride in what you do. You may think that leading a team is fun. Don't be afraid to change. You have the toolbox.
No Time to Waste	In the interests of U.S. industrial health, those workers with baseline competencies must be placed in the right positions just as they are needed and they must be trained/skilled and nurtured in their careers.		<i>(Continued on page 4 - Toolbox)</i>

**MSSC Certification—Delivers the Right Tools For Careers, for Competency and for Manufacturers.**

(Toolbox - Continued from page 3)

<b>Educator - A Toolbox For Your Students</b>		<b>Employment Specialist - A Toolbox For Finding Jobs</b>	
Customer Needs	As educators and trainers your primary customers are your students. The question of their future careers is key to understanding your “customers” most important life needs. For example, how do you fill up a toolkit for their careers in manufacturing?	Finding a Career Match	With the proper assessment, people who were in the labor pool should be able to first determine what future career suits them. When they reassemble their resume and foundation skills, the focus should be on roles that unleash their passions, building on previous experience, satisfaction and success.
Foundation Knowledge	There is no question that life’s challenges require a sound grasp of academic subjects, to include English, mathematics, and science. For workers in today’s technically-focused workplace this is mandatory, as are baseline skills such as communication, teamwork, quality, safety and problem solving.	Rewarding Job	Finding a job implies compatibility with interests, capabilities, experience and life-style. Often the latter is quantified as income that supports a family. Today, while “career ladders” dwindle as organizations flatten, there are lateral opportunities for growth in the manufacturing workplace. These offer the level of growth and pay advances that identify a satisfying job.
Manufacturer’s Needs	Industrial leaders across the nation set core competency needs, validated in a more recent Wisconsin survey. An overwhelming majority of firms cannot find production workers with these skills. This talent shortage is a major challenge, at the same time offering educators the opportunity to respond efficiently and effectively.	Each Worker’s Goals	“Employment Specialists” use tools that assess the level of talent that a job-seeker possesses from the past. The online assessments based on the national MSSC standards serve two functions; they both show a level of competency and reveal gaps that need to be addressed by further training. They establish baseline goals.
Training to The Job	The critical competency needs of industry have been captured both in a validated online assessment, and in a 2005 textbook that is organized around “High-Performance Manufacturing Portable Production Skills,” published by McGraw-Hill. With embedded learning activities in technical curriculum, and by tailoring training programs that address common skill gaps, educators will develop competent/credentialed workers.	Responsive Training	The real goal of each job hunter is to build a convincing resume that shows contribution of education, work success and current knowledge and tools. S/he wants this immediately to show to prospective employers, and be hired. Training that is tailored to individual competency gaps, from an available/aligned textbook is the fastest way to satisfy each unique profile.
Effective Teaching	The assessment tool is a crucial first step in the continuous process of checking how effective traditional instruction and tailored-response programs are. The feedback loop sharpens the tools.	Portable Credentials	Once the assessments are “passed” at the level that establishes the essential competencies, MSSC issues a certificate that becomes a valid and portable part of each job-seeker’s toolbox.

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