

**MSSC Manufacturing Skills Certification
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS CONNECTIONS**

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

And

IMPLEMENTATION Q & A

Technical Assistance For Project Applicants

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Project Development Considerations

Gaining the Perspective and Engagement of Manufacturers and Labor

One key to success in implementing the MSSC system in Wisconsin is engaging the support and involvement of manufacturers and their workers. Obtaining the perspectives and advice of manufacturing employers and organized labor about implementing the MSSC certification system locally can help foster that support and involvement. To do so, areas/regions considering applying for MSSC project funds are encouraged to connect with existing manufacturing groups established through GROW or other regional sector-based efforts to assist in planning and implementation efforts. These groups can be important resources to help understand how the MSSC system can be of value to employers and workers and how the program can be structured to realize that value. They can form the foundation for creating local "champions" who can talk with authority and enthusiasm about the MSSC program to others. They may also be able to provide practical advice and assistance in developing employer outreach efforts and engaging them in the MSSC training and certification processes.

Coordinating Manufacturing Related Workforce Programs

Wisconsin has a wide variety of publicly supported programs directed to advancing the manufacturing workforce. Areas applying for MSSC Manufacturing Skill Certification project funds are expected to coordinate planning and service delivery with these programs to the extent possible. To facilitate that coordination, applicants are encouraged to consider conducting an inventory of existing advanced manufacturing-related programs and services in the workforce development area and/or GROW region. Using an inventory to identify key programs/activities, stakeholders, and current and/or potential funding sources/levels may be particularly useful in planning this project and future projects for the area. Engaging key stakeholders and coordinating both planning and service delivery activities for key programs -- for example employer outreach/marketing, staff development, assessment, and training services -- may help advance a "system wide" approach and more efficient use of resources to assist manufacturers and their workers.

MSSC Manufacturing Skill Certification and Workforce Advancement Training

Planning for the MSSC Manufacturing Skills Certification and the Workforce Advancement Training (WAT) grant programs are occurring at approximately the same time. WDBs will be submitting MSSC project proposals on March 30 and technical colleges will be submitting WAT program proposals on April 20. Most WAT projects have been directed to manufacturers and are expected to be so again. This provides WDBs and technical colleges a particular opportunity to work together in organizing services on behalf of manufacturing employers and their incumbent workers. Cooperating on employer outreach activities and linking MSSC assessment with technical college training through the WAT program (or other sources) may be of particular value in a coordinated approach for use of these funds.

One approach, for example, could target services to manufacturing employers who have had previous WAT training services and would focus on "next steps" in development of an employer's workforce. This approach might include joint WDB/Job Center and technical college outreach and MSSC orientation to selected employers, MSSC assessment and certification for selected workers, and follow-up training to address skill gaps revealed through the MSSC assessment process. This approach could be used with a group of employers or a single

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employer (using the MSSC Employer Diagnostic tool). The MSSC grant funds could be used to support employer outreach/orientation efforts and MSSC assessments, while WAT funds could be used to support training. (The MSSC assessment, by clearly identifying employer-specific training needs, might also provide a mechanism to encourage employer-paid training in place of WAT grant funds.)

Both the WAT program and, to a lesser extent, the MSSC Manufacturing Skills Certification program include a competitive funding process. As a result, funding of proposals that incorporate joint programs as suggested above cannot be guaranteed. However, both programs emphasize coordination between technical colleges and WDBs; proposals that incorporate meaningful program connections are more likely to receive favorable consideration than those that do not.

Engaging High Schools in MSSC Efforts

The Council on Workforce Investment has emphasized the importance of engaging the K-12 system in implementation of the MSSC standards and assessment system. The project guidelines allow opportunity for high schools to become MSSC assessment centers, for youth to be served, and for education partners to participate in staff development activities. In addition, a number of activities beyond this project have occurred or are planned to facilitate the involvement of the K-12 system.

- DWD/DWS will be incorporating the MSSC manufacturing skill standards into its Youth Apprenticeship standards/curriculum, a process that will soon be underway.
- The MATC MSSC-WisPASS office has organized a K-12 advisory group of high school technical education teachers and Youth Apprenticeship Coordinators to develop recommendations for connecting MSSC standards with K-12 curriculum and for promoting manufacturing careers to high school age youth.
- The MATC MSSC-WisPASS office has invited Youth Apprenticeship Coordinators and high school instructors to attend MSSC orientation sessions and instructor training, and will continue to do so. A number of high school teachers have already participated.

Incorporating MSSC manufacturing skill/certification standards into high school curriculum is a longer term goal that is not included in the WIA MSSC Certification project. Given longer term goals and recognition that success in MSSC assessment requires a level of manufacturing experience that most students will not have, DWD does not anticipate that high schools will be among planned assessment centers, or that many high school students will be served under the project. However, it does anticipate that high school staff, including technical education teachers and Youth Apprenticeship and Tech Prep Program coordinators, will be included in staff development efforts supported by that project.

Assessing Work Readiness/Basic Skills

For participants to succeed in the MSSC assessment process, they will need good math and reading skills. MSSC indicates that, in addition to some manufacturing experience, individuals need to be at the 9th grade level in math and the 10th grade level in reading to pass the MSSC assessments. Some form of work readiness and/or basic skills assessment may be advisable for some individuals interested in MSSC training and assessment before they are considered for MSSC Skills Certification Project activities.

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Among assessment tools sometimes or often used in Job Centers that can provide information about math and reading levels are Work Keys and the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)/short version. The TABE is the tool most frequently used in Job Centers, and it can easily be made available for those Job Centers that don't currently have it. Start up costs are approximately \$200. For more information, contact Roger Gantzarow, Roger.Gantzarow@dwd.state.wi.us or (608) 266-8390.

Job Centers may also want to consider the USES Ability Profiler for a more general assessment. This assessment, which replaced the GATB (General Ability Test Battery) and is available free of charge through the Job Service in Job Centers, identifies Job Zones to show where the individual has potential for success. Other useful work readiness/basic skills assessment tools, which are most likely available through technical colleges rather than Job Centers, are Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), Adult Basic Learning Examination (ABLE), and Adult Measure of Educational Skills (AMES).

For all of these assessments (except the USES Ability Profiler), individuals scoring at levels that fall into the "Low Adult Secondary Education" profile based on the U.S. DOL functional descriptions would be at the math and reading levels needed for the MSSC assessment. To learn more about these tools and their functional literacy levels, see U.S. DOL/ETA Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 15-03, Attachment D: Educational Functioning Level Descriptors. (http://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/corr_doc.cfm?DOCN=1535).

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Implementation Q & A

What is the value to workers and employers in engaging in the MSSC skills certification process?

Modern manufacturing requires high performance knowledge and skills in order to increase productivity, innovation and competitiveness. The MSSC skill certification system offers students, workers, and employers opportunity to objectively measure the extent to which they possess the foundational skills and knowledge needed for the high performance 21st century manufacturing workplace.

For employers, participation in the MSSC process may enable an employer to:

- Meet company needs for workers with the right core skills and knowledge to keep pace with technological and process changes that can lead to increased productivity and innovation.
- Decrease recruitment costs and improve ability to attract, motivate and retain qualified workers
- Analyze and benchmark their workers against high performance national standards, identify gaps in skills, and more effectively target training to increase their return on their training investment

For manufacturing production workers and those planning to work in the manufacturing field, participating in MSSC training and assessment, and obtaining a portable, industry-recognized certificate that demonstrates attainment of advanced manufacturing foundation skills may:

- Improve career advancement opportunities and earnings
- Improve job security through certification of certain skill sets
- Offer flexibility to work in all manufacturing sectors and all production occupations

What is the value to WDBs and Job Centers in being involved in the MSSC system?

Participation in the MSSC certification system offers a number of opportunities for WDBs to add value to Job Centers and the overall workforce investment systems, among them providing:

- a tool for identifying manufacturing-specific training needs and more effectively targeting training resources to Job Center customers, both job seekers and manufacturing employers
- a framework for coordinating referral, assessment, training, and employer services between Job Centers, technical colleges and other partners
- a tool for communicating and strengthening relationships with area employers
- an avenue for developing fee-for-service strategies to help support the Job Center system, including employer-specific assessment and add-on services

Can there be more than one MSSC Assessment Center in a WDA?

Yes. Assessment centers must be located in entities that are eligible to be MSSC-certified as specified in the project guidelines, but no limit on the number of assessment centers in an area has been established. However, the number of assessment centers planned should reflect the expected need and capacity for MSSC assessment services, considering factors such as level of manufacturing employers, manufacturing employment levels (including dislocated workers),

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geographic accessibility, the capacity of staff and facilities to provide the assessment and related services, etc. Technical colleges that have expressed interest in becoming an MSSC assessment center, but have not be able to receive funding through other sources (e.g., MATC-WisPASS), and WDA comprehensive job centers should be consider among the first priorities for funding under this grant.

How does this project impact local WIA performance standards?

If only WIA statewide activity funds are used to provide participant services, project activities will not be included in ASSET and WIA performance standards will not be affected. If, however, local WIA formula funds contribute to the cost of participant services, participant information and outcomes must be reported in ASSET and will be included in data measuring WDA performance.

Does MSSC recognition in a MSSC production technician module (safety, quality, manufacturing processes, maintenance) or overall MSSC manufacturing production technician certification count as a certificate/credential under the WIA performance standards system?

MSSC certification as a manufacturing production technician, which requires passage of all four MSSC assessment modules, will count as a certificate/credential under the WIA performance standards system. However, recognition for passing a single MSSC module will not count toward achievement of a WIA certificate/credential.

Do all projects need to include a commitment to worker advancement, including wage advancement, for all MSSC assessment and training?

While all projects are expected to demonstrate specific results, only the training component includes a required workforce advancement accountability measure. This measure is specific to those who complete training and are MSSC certified. What constitutes the workforce advancement measure(s) is suggested, but no single measure is required. The concept is consistent with WIA performance standards and legislation related to customized training, which requires that employers receiving customized training services are expected to continue to employ workers trained and programs are expected to establish performance standards, including standards for placement and/or retention rates, wages and benefits. Projects are encouraged to develop accountability measures that parallel WIA measures if local formula funds will be used.

Is MSSC training on the approved ITA list or do we anticipate that it will be?

Whether or not MSSC training needs to be included on the ITA list depends on how the training is offered. If it is offered as a customized training opportunity, it does not have to be on the ITA list. If it is a slot program, it does. If the training is offered only to youth, ITAs are not required. If WDAs expect to purchase and slot adults into MSSC-specific training (whether purchased directly through MSSC or offered through area technical colleges), WDAs should pursue the existing DWD/DWS process for establishing the ITA on the state approved list. Under the existing state system, programs are proposed and approved by the WDA where it is offered, but once it is approved, it is available statewide.

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Can the grant pay for the time teaching staff are being trained to provide MSSC training?

No. Project funds cannot be used to pay for the time teachers/instructors participate in training to become a certified MSSC instructor. However, the cost of staff time while participating in MSSC teacher training can be considered a contribution to the 25% in Local Leveraged Resource (LLR) required under the project. Applicants are encouraged to consider what other local funds can be used to pay for teachers/instructors to attend training, as necessary to encourage participation.

Can funds available through this grant provide for dedicated computer equipment to support MSSC assessment activities?

Yes. Funds available from this project can be used for dedicated computer equipment, and other equipment that may be needed to enable individuals to participate in MSSC-related pre-assessment and MSSC assessment activities. It may also be used for other equipment needed to ensure a viable MSSC-certified assessment center and ability of that center to conduct MSSC-related activities clearly linked to MSSC recognition and certification. Equipment purchases under this program are governed by the rules/policies governing other WIA programs.

Can grant funds be used to pay for work-readiness assessment tools in Job Centers, for example Work Keys, to identify skill gaps and support achievement of MSSC certification?

No. Funds available through the MSSC Certification project funds are limited to MSSC-specific tools and activities. This includes MSSC pre-assessment, which is specifically geared to determining if an individual is ready to take the MSSC assessment modules and/or needs more training that will improve their chances of passing the assessment. Assessments such as those provided through Work Keys, TABE or other assessment tools that are used to determine work readiness, skill levels and/or skill gaps are generally considered intensive services that are available in or through referral by Job Centers and are not supported with these project funds. However, project applicants are encouraged to consider the need for these assessments in the context of who is expected to be served by the project, and incorporate them into the project as local leveraged resources (LLR) if appropriate.