Job Skills Methodology

Job Skills go beneath occupational titles to list the specific knowledge, work activities, and tools & technologies typically required in an occupation and can aid in training, career planning and career transitions. The knowledge, work activities, and tools & technology attributes can form the training foundation for all occupations. The source of the data is the Occupational Information Network (ONET - www.onetonline.org), a product of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training agency.

This approach is different than the more commonly used ONET KSAs methodology – Knowledge (same component as in the Job Skills methodology), Skills, and Abilities, to define an occupation's needed characteristics. The reason for this change in focus is that the Skills and Abilities portion of KSAs are difficult to isolate and train for because these attributes are a combination of characteristics that are mostly inherent to an individual and or obtained during K-12 education. For example, the ONET occupational basic skill, Active Learning – or the understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem solving and decision making - is difficult to train for in the workforce development education system. On the other hand, the work activity, using hand or power tools, is a much more tangible and attainable skill that can be trained for utilizing local community colleges or technical schools. The fundamental principle of Job Skills is concrete, specific skills that can be trained for rather than focusing on conceptual attributes that are not realistically actionable through training.

There are four components to the Job Skills methodology as a basis for understanding how to train for different occupations – knowledge, general work activities, detailed work activities, and tools & technologies.

A Knowledge Area is a key educational or experience requirement for an occupation (e.g. Computers and Electronics).

General Work Activities are types of job behaviors that occur across multiple occupations (e.g. interacting with computers).

Detailed Work Activities are types of specific job behaviors or duties particular to an occupation (e.g. use computers to enter, access or retrieve data).

Tools & Technologies are machines, equipment, tools, and information technologies that one could be expected to use in a particular occupation (e.g. Microsoft Access).

These required skills can be isolated for each occupation (upon request from CWIA) or summarized across different occupational groups (on www.paworkstats.pa.gov under Job Skills by Occupational Group), industries, and industry clusters. Furthermore, this information can be used to identify skills gaps from occupation to occupation or between demand data as defined by occupational based job postings, employer job orders, demand occupations (HPOs), occupational projections or from employer vacancy surveys and supply data as obtained from PA CareerLink registrants, Unemployment Compensation recipients, welfare recipients, or surveys of the unemployed.

Finally, job seekers can perform a skill analysis to list those skills they believe they possess or are interested in obtaining and compare those to the occupations in demand and obtain training skills gaps. CWIA has such an analyzer on its website.