

## Career & Life Readiness

### Integrated Definition

A career and life ready individual has the knowledge and skills necessary for success in postsecondary education, economically viable career pathways, and personal effectiveness in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.



- Applied Knowledge
- Relational Skills and Personal Attributes
- Executive and Communications Skills
- Career Navigation Skills
- Post-Sec Transition Knowledge & Skills
- Financial Literacy
- Civic Engagement

Many state education and workforce agencies and local coalitions are working to define college readiness and career readiness. In reviewing the essential individual competencies and skills, one discovers a great deal of crossover in the general set of knowledge and skills that makes one ready for successful endeavors in life beyond high school, including both postsecondary education and the workplace. As such, the National Center for College and Career Transitions suggests that education and workforce partners utilize an integrated definition of Career and Life Readiness that is applied to all learners. An integrated definition allows all partners in the pathways system to work together to heighten awareness of these career and life readiness skills and to create mechanisms to teach and measure those skills.

The definition of College, Career, and Life Readiness includes the following seven components:

- Applied Knowledge
- Relational Skills and Personal Attributes
- Executive and Communications Skills
- Career Navigation Skills
- Postsecondary Transition Knowledge & Skills
- Financial Literacy
- Civic Engagement

## 1. Applied Knowledge

The thoughtful integration of academic knowledge and technical skills put to practical use in the context of postsecondary education, training, apprenticeship, and the workplace<sup>1</sup>.

**Applied academic skills** enable individuals to put skills based on academic disciplines and learning to practical use in education and workplace settings. These skills include:

- Reading
- Writing
- Using mathematical strategies and procedures
- Using scientific principles and procedures

**Critical thinking skills** enable individuals to analyze, reason, and solve problems. These skills include:

- Thinking critically
- Thinking creatively
- Making sound decisions
- Solving problems
- Reasoning
- Planning and organizing

**Career-related technical skills** enable individuals to enter an occupation or career pathway that requires a entry-level of knowledge and skills specific to that occupation or career pathway. These skills and knowledge include:

- Background knowledge and understanding of key concepts about the occupation, career pathway or industry;
- Understanding of essential safety concepts and procedures relative to the occupation or career pathway;
- The ability to use tools and technology applications proficiently as required for entrance into the occupation or career pathways.

## 2. Relational Skills and Personal Attributes

The interpersonal skills and personal qualities that enable individuals to interact effectively with instructors, fellow students, clients, coworkers, and supervisors.

**Interpersonal skills** enable individuals to collaborate as a member of a team or work independently, as appropriate, communicate effectively, maintain a positive attitude, and contribute to the overarching goals of the workplace. These skills include:

- Understanding teamwork and being able to work with others
- Responding to customer needs
- Exercising leadership
- Resolving conflicts through negotiation
- Respecting individual differences

**Personal Qualities** contribute to effective relationships in college, career, and life. These skills include:

- Demonstrating responsibility and self-discipline
- Adapting and showing flexibility
- Working independently
- Demonstrating a willingness to learn
- Demonstrating integrity
- Demonstrating professionalism
- Taking initiative
- Displaying a positive attitude and a sense of self-worth
- Taking responsibility for professional growth

## 3. Executive and Communication Skills

The analytical and organizational skills and the understandings that learners and employees need to successfully perform tasks and carry out projects in postsecondary education, training, apprenticeship, and the workplace.

**Executive skills** are the abilities individuals need to successfully accomplish work tasks. These skills include:

- Managing time and other resources effectively
- Understanding, evaluating, and using a variety of information
- Communicating effectively with others in multiple formats (speaking, writing, listening)

- Understanding relationships among the components of a system
- Applying information technology appropriately and effectively

**Technology use skills** enable individuals to successfully perform work tasks in today's technology-driven workplace. These skills include:

- Understanding technology and its appropriate uses
- Using technology efficiently and effectively

**Systems thinking skills** enable individuals to successfully perform work tasks by understanding relationships among the components of a system. These skills include:

- Understanding and using systems
- Monitoring systems
- Improving systems

**Communication skills** enable individuals to successfully perform work tasks by communicating effectively with others in multiple formats. These skills include:

- Communicating verbally
- Listening actively
- Comprehending written material
- Conveying information in writing
- Observing carefully

**Information use skills** enable individuals to successfully perform work tasks by understanding, evaluating, and using a variety of information. These skills include:

- Locating information
- Organizing information
- Using information
- Analyzing information
- Communicating information

**Resource management skills** enable individuals to successfully perform work tasks by efficiently and effectively allocate resources. These skills include:

- Managing time
- Managing money
- Managing materials
- Managing personnel

#### 4. Career Navigation Skills

Enable individuals to understand and act on information that affect their career pathways. This knowledge allows them to grow and advance in a career and make successful transitions to a different career field when necessary. These skills include:

- Developing an awareness of personal temperament, skills, and strengths
- Maintaining knowledge of industries, sectors, careers, and pathways
- Recognizing cross-sector transferable knowledge and skills
- Utilizing postsecondary search, application, and financing resources
- Developing the ability to network with others, perform job searches, complete job applications, interview for a position, and negotiate a job offer
- Managing personal career path; engaging in ongoing skill development

#### 5. Postsecondary Transition Knowledge and Skills

Enable individuals to choose a college, apply to college, seek financial aid, and adjust to college life<sup>2</sup>. These skills include:

- Analyzing postsecondary options based on career awareness
- Assessing postsecondary costs, financing options, and return on investment
- Applying for admission and matriculating to postsecondary education
- Developing an individual role and identity in the postsecondary setting
- Advocating for personal needs with administration and faculty

#### 6. Financial Literacy

Enable the individual to take responsibility for personal economic well-being.<sup>3</sup> These skills include:

- Finding, evaluating, and applying financial information
- Setting financial goals and planning how to achieve them
- Developing income-earning potential and the ability to save
- Using financial services effectively

- Meeting financial obligations
- Building and protecting wealth

## 7. Civic Engagement Skills

Enable the individual to take responsibility for executing the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a participatory democracy. These skills include:

- Developing awareness of major national, state, and local governance issues

- Understanding the timelines and trends of U.S. and global history, and the implications of history pertaining to current civic issues
- Committing to civic involvement, including voting
- Participating in civic-minded and community-based organizations

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<sup>1</sup> The first three components in this framework – Applied Knowledge, Effective Relationships, Executive and Communications Skills – are adapted closely from the Employability Skills Framework (the Framework) developed as part of an initiative of the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE) at the U.S. Department of Education

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Conley, D. (2008). What makes a student college ready? *Educational Leadership*. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct08/vol66/num02/What-Makes-a-Student-College-Ready%2%A2.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> This set of standards explains the personal finance knowledge and skills that K-12 students should possess. National Standards in K-12 Personal Finance Education, by Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2007, Washington, DC. Retrieved at: <http://www.jumpstart.org/national-standards.html>