

# NSSB Skills Today

Winter 2001

National Skill Standards Board  
Setting the standard for workforce excellence

## S&SVP Forges Ahead on Skill Standards System Development

*Partnership Receives Approval For Its Skill Standards*

The Sales & Service Voluntary Partnership (S&SVP) moved one step closer towards finalizing its industry skill standards system following NSSB approval of skill standards in two concentrations: Customer Service and Sales. During the period ending September 16, 2001, the public was invited to review the standards and provide their comments via the Partnership's Web site. The Partnership used this input to refine the skill standards in preparation for NSSB approval.

"The Sales & Service Voluntary Partnership now has the basis for assessment and certification that will help recognize the skills necessary for success in retail and related industries," stated Kathy Mannes, Manager of Workforce Initiatives with the National Retail Federation, and Project Manager for S&SVP. "We look forward to the standards being put to use by all the stakeholders who have worked so hard to get us to this point."

The S&SVP becomes the second Voluntary Partnership to publicly release industry-recognized skill standards this year. The S&SVP joins the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) in having achieved this goal; the MSSC released industry skill standards in May.

The Partnership is working with the NSSB to begin the development of a pilot assessment and certification for the customer service concentration. The Board of the Sales & Service Voluntary Partnership met in October to review plans for assessment and certification and to prepare an action plan for this effort.

Other initiatives related to the development of Customer Service & Sales Skill Standards will include:

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## NSSB Kicks Off Certification Recognition Program

*NCCCO First Organization to be Recognized*

In an historic move to build a strong partnership with industry certifiers, the NSSB voted on September 19, 2001, to recognize the certification process of the National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO – [www.nccco.org](http://www.nccco.org)). The NCCCO becomes the first organization to receive recognition for its industry certification process under the NSSB's innovative Certification Recognition Program.

Over the past two decades, the number of industry certifications has grown

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### WHO WE ARE:

The NSSB is building a voluntary national system of skill standards, assessment and certification that will enhance the ability of the United States workforce to compete effectively in a global economy. These skills are being identified by industry in full partnership with education, labor, civil rights and community-based organizations. The standards will be based on high performance work and will be portable across industry sectors.

## NEWSCAN

### NSSB Releases Its Annual Report

The NSSB is pleased to announce the release of its 2000-2001 Annual Report. This publication offers a comprehensive look at the organization's activities throughout the country and its accomplishments through June 2001.

In addition, the report offers insight into the activities of the NSSB's four Voluntary Partnerships and two industry groups that are actively working to develop systems of skill standards, assessments, and certifications for their respective industry sectors.

This seven-part report describes:

- NSSB Principal Highlights
- The NSSB and its Mission
- Industry Ownership of the System
- Forming the System Implementation Network
- NSSB Clearinghouse
- Quality Assurance
- Future Objectives

To receive a copy of the annual report (subject to availability), please write to us at [publications@nssb.org](mailto:publications@nssb.org). Or visit our Web site at [www.nssb.org](http://www.nssb.org) and click on the Publications link to download an electronic copy.

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## Message from the Executive Director



**Edie West**  
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Since the inception of the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) in 1994, we have never experienced a time when the need for workers with strong, flexible, and transferable skills was more apparent.

Consider for a moment the sudden need for a larger, more and highly skilled security workforce. Empathize with the struggle of many recently displaced transportation and hospitality workers. And reflect upon the challenges facing families in many towns and cities where both major corporate downsizing and small business cutbacks are resulting in lost jobs and wages, and decreases in revenue for states and local communities.

And then consider the central mission of the NSSB – to serve as a catalyst in the development and use of a voluntary national system of skill standards and nationally validated assessments with industry-recognized certifications. This is a mission that can result in the empowerment of each American worker with enhanced

job skills that are portable to the individual; transferable within industries; and recognized and desired by American employers, thus contributing to the increased productivity and global competitiveness of the U.S. economy.

The NSSB's work to develop and promote a voluntary national system of skill standards, assessments, and certifications stems from a clear, long-term vision. At the same time, however, the NSSB is rapidly developing practical tools and processes, which may contribute to immediate short-term solutions.

For example, the NSSB is currently welcoming opportunities to partner with organizations interested in ensuring higher skills for security workers by the setting of new standards for these skills. We can do this quickly because the NSSB now has tested methodologies and technologies to make it happen. But, the NSSB approach ensures a definition of standards that will be linked to a common format and language allowing for the recognition and portability of skills and certifications across a national industry sector framework.

I am not sure how many people have truly grasped the significance or the currency of the NSSB mission. The NSSB's

emerging voluntary national skill standards system is a tool for all Americans to use in business and organizational settings, in career counseling settings, in educational settings, and in personal settings:

- It is information for all Americans about skills needed in best practice businesses and organizations across the country.
- It is a system of certification giving all Americans information about achievement.
- It is information about the quality of standards and certification.
- It is a linkage to local, state, and national education and training, career development, and human resource delivery systems.
- And, uniquely, it is an organization framework that all Americans can understand and use for their own benefit.

In closing, I wish to thank each of you for being involved in this work to date. And as we approach a new year, I hope each of you will continue your association with us – with renewed commitment and vigor – as we continue the work of building out this dynamic new system.

## MSSC Releases Skill Standards on CD-ROM

*CD Includes Academic and Employability Skill Examples*

Since the release of *A Blueprint for Workforce Excellence: Core and Concentration Skill Standards for Manufacturing* in May, the MSSC has been active in promoting its industry skill standards and planning for their subsequent implementation. Several coalition groups have already begun using the skill standards to develop curricula and enhance their training programs, two of the main goals of industry skill standards.

In an effort to further advance these objectives, the MSSC has released its industry skill standards on CD-ROM. After collecting data from several current and potential users of the standards, MSSC leadership concluded the need for an interact-

ive version of the standards. This electronic version is available for purchase and includes all of the information contained in the hard copy version, plus the following additional features:

- A "How To" slide presentation on use of the CD-ROM;
- A searchable Table of Contents;
- The ability to search through each concentration easily;
- The ability to do keyword searches throughout the entire document;
- The ability to link to the MSSC website and other resource websites; and
- Academic and Employability (A&E) skill examples.

The Academic and Employability skill examples on the CD-ROM significantly enhance the content of the MSSC skill standards. They provide additional tools to enhance the curricula for classes and training programs by providing the context in which individuals will learn and train.

For pricing information and to order the CD-ROM version of the MSSC skill standards, contact Emily Brennan at 202-216-275, or via email at [brennane@nacfam.org](mailto:brennane@nacfam.org).

## E&TVP Takes A Big Step Forward In Developing Skill Standards

*Industry Research Nearly Complete*

Following in the footsteps of the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) and the Sales & Service Voluntary Partnership (S&SVP), the Education & Training Voluntary Partnership (E&TVP) has moved another step closer towards its goal of developing draft skill standards by the end of 2001.

Since the project's inception in October 1999, the E&TVP has undertaken intensive research to define the industry demographics that will fit into a skill standards system and to gather information to help develop industry standards. Two rounds of focus groups conducted earlier this year have yielded information on critical work functions, key activities and performance indicators that will accelerate the development of skill standards for the industry sector's 12-million strong workforce. The conclusion of the group's third round of focus groups marks the end of the

initial stage of system research.

"Every day the employers and employees in the Education and Training Industry Sector provide services vital to our economy," stated Chaé Carriere, E&TVP Project Coordinator. "The Partnership hopes that national industry skill standards will help employers ... benchmark their success and secure the economic security of their employees."

Round Three focus groups, which began in early November, define the worker knowledge and skills component of the skill standards. The end of all three rounds of focus groups marks the end of the project's final phase of data collection and will aid in finalizing draft industry skill standards.

On the training side, the E&TVP has been defining the workforce engaged in adult education and training. Based on a Work

Analysis Plan submitted to the NSSB, the Partnership was advised to review existing adult trainer certifications to determine their alignment with NSSB criteria. Once this work is complete, a recommendation can be made on how to proceed with data collection and analysis of training-based skill standards. This work is likely to be handled by the American Society for Training and Development.

The Partnership hopes to complete draft skill standards by the end of the year. A national validation survey to reinforce the findings of the focus groups will be carried out during the winter months.



To stay up-to-date on the E&TVP's activities, visit the Partnership's Web site at [www.etvp.org](http://www.etvp.org).

## NSSB Kicks Off Certification Recognition Program

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dramatically to more than 3,000 industry-based specialty certifications sponsored by over 600 trade organizations and businesses. This number of certification programs makes the task of choosing suitable certifications challenging.

The NSSB's Certification Recognition program is designed to recognize quality certifications developed by trade organizations and businesses in each of the 15 industry sectors. The NSSB developed criteria to identify those certifications whose development processes meet expert professional and technical standards for quality assurance. NSSB Certification Recognition gives users a benchmark to choose the best certifications based on nationally recognized, industry-based skill standards.

"The NSSB is pleased to recognize the certification process developed by the NCCCO," stated NSSB Executive Director Edie West. "With the large number of certifications currently on the market, it is important for users to be able to identify those that meet selected process criteria.

Davis J. Lauve, NCCCO President and President of Nichols Construction Corporation, commented on the Board's vote. "We are delighted that the National Skill Standards Board has approved the CCO crane operator certification program," he stated. "Employers across the nation can be assured that crane operators certified through the CCO program have had their knowledge and skills assessed through a system that has been judged fair and reliable and that meets the very highest professional certification standards."



The National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators was formed in January 1995, to develop effective performance standards for crane operators in all segments of general industry and construction. Candidates for CCO certification must pass a two-part core and specialty written test as well as a hands-on, practical

examination on one of the four types of cranes. They must also have at least 1,000 hours of crane operations experience and meet medical criteria. Successful candidates must recertify every 5 years. Since testing began in April 1996, more than 14,000 crane operators have been tested through over 600 separate test administrations conducted in 46 states. NCCCO certification is designed to assure both industry and the public that operators are skilled and knowledgeable. Other goals include enhancing lifting equipment safety, reducing workplace risk, improving performance records, stimulating training, and giving due recognition to the professional skill of crane operation.

With the certification program in full swing, the NSSB invites other certification organizations to apply for NSSB Certification Recognition. For more information on the program, contact Bridget Brown, Director of Program Development, at 202-254-8628, or by email at [brown-bridget@nssb.org](mailto:brown-bridget@nssb.org), or visit our homepage at [www.nssb.org](http://www.nssb.org) and click on the Certification Recognition Program link.

# S&SVP Forges Ahead on Skill Standards System Development

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- An awareness campaign to promote industry skill standards and develop collaboration for launching assessment and certification efforts.
- Development of a publication presenting the Customer Service & Sales Skill Standards as a valuable training, education, and workforce development resource.
- Establishing Retail Skills Centers and customer service training programs in conjunction with One-Stop Centers and the Workforce Investment Act.
- Linkages with the Career Clusters projects initiated through the U.S. Department of Education.

As part of its campaign to promote the use of the impending industry skill standards, the National Retail Federation and its subsidiary, the NRF Foundation, are seeking real life sales and service professionals to "tell their stories" about

their industry careers. One aim of this effort is to demonstrate ways in which successful sales and service industry workers realize the benefit of skill standards as they build their careers. Once collected and finalized, these profiles will be available on both the NRF and S&SVP Web sites at [www.nrf.com](http://www.nrf.com) and [www.salesandservice.org](http://www.salesandservice.org), respectively.

In addition, the S&SVP is utilizing the RELE (Retail Employer Link to Education) Initiative to promote the integration of skill standards into curriculum models, classroom instruction, and workplace learning opportunities. Such programs help young people develop life-long career skills through classroom instruction and workplace learning experiences.

Finally, the NRF Foundation continues to integrate industry skill standards in its day-to-day efforts through its Retail Skill

Centers located in various shopping centers throughout the United States. The Sales & Service Skill Standards model, which is the backbone of the centers' training programs, offers a consistent, standards-based approach to developing successful customer service and sales skills.



For more information about the S&SVP's many ongoing efforts, visit its Web site at [www.salesandservice.org](http://www.salesandservice.org). Click on the link "Hot News" on the home page to view the draft skill standards online.

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