



SYSTEM ALIGNMENT GUIDANCE

To clarify the utility of specific certifications to employers, identify clear educational and career pathways for individuals, and coordinate workforce development efforts, the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) requires that candidates for NSSB Certification Recognition illustrate how their certification aligns with the national skill standards system. This document describes the framework of the NSSB Skill Standards System, provides guidance on identifying and documenting alignment with the national system, and includes the System Alignment Forms necessary to document your alignment with the national system.

Overview of the NSSB Skill Standards System Framework

The NSSB framework for a nationwide, voluntary skill standards system begins by dividing the economy into 15 industry sectors – segments of the economy that share similar skill requirements. Individuals who acquire these skills will be equipped to work in many different industries. The NSSB Industry Sectors are:

Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing

Business and Administrative Services

Construction

Education and Training

Finance and Insurance

Health and Human Services

Manufacturing, Installation and Repair

Mining

Public Administration, Legal and Protective Services

Restaurants, Lodging, Hospitality and Tourism, and Amusement and Recreation

Retail Trade, Wholesale Trade, Real Estate and Personal Services

Scientific and Technical Services

Telecommunications, Computers, Arts and Entertainment, and Information

Transportation

Utilities, Environmental and Waste Management

The NSSB has been developing coalitions of representatives called Voluntary Partnerships (VPs) within specific industry sectors. While conducting research in many industries, the NSSB has sponsored four official VPs at this time. They are: the Education and Training Voluntary Partnership, the Hospitality and Tourism Voluntary Partnership, the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council, and the Sales and Service Voluntary Partnership. For a description of each VP, including points of contact and details regarding their scope of work, consult the *Voluntary Partnership Information* document in this packet.

To illustrate alignment with the NSSB Framework, you will need to document:

- ✍ The industry sector(s) your certification falls under.
- ✍ The jobs, occupations or specific industry that your certification covers.
- ✍ The Voluntary Partnership(s), if applicable, that covers the scope of your certification.
- ✍ Any apprenticeable occupations, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Apprenticeship Training, which your certification covers.

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Components of the Skill Standards System

To date, the focus of the NSSB has been on developing skill standards for front line workers through first line supervisors in high performance workplaces. Skill standards on their own are useful, but they are just one part of the equation. After all, skill standards may tell us what to work toward, but they don't tell us whether we have succeeded. That is why the NSSB Skill Standards System contains skill standards, assessments and certification. To further define the expectations of the workplace, the NSSB uses three tiers of specificity that include:

Core:	Elements common across an entire industry sector.
Concentration:	Elements that cross a functional area across an entire industry sector.
Specialty:	Elements that are occupational or job-specific or elements that apply only to one portion of an industry sector(s).

The three tiers allow individuals to understand the varying degrees of depth and breadth of skill and knowledge needed for each level and tailor their education and training to match their career goals. Employers can use this information to make the most appropriate hiring choices based on the potential employee's specific or general areas of expertise. Whatever the career interests of the worker or the needs of the employer, the NSSB Skill Standards System can accommodate.

While NSSB-sponsored Voluntary Partnerships develop the system components for Core and Concentrations, the NSSB recognizes there will be no national system without linkages to the work of other organizations such as trade associations, unions, professional societies or other organizations that develop specialty certifications. The specificity of the specialty, combined with the broader and general focus of the NSSB Core and Concentration areas will combine to form a cohesive, flexible nationwide system.

Candidates for NSSB Certification Recognition are **strongly encouraged** to work with the relevant Voluntary Partnership in their industry to examine the alignment for your certification with the Core and Concentration areas identified by the VP. The VP can explain the job and occupations covered under each concentration and the content of the skill standards for the Core and Concentration areas.

If your certification is covered under a Voluntary Partnership(s), you will need to document:

- ✍ With which concentration(s) your certification aligns. This may include overlaps in job classifications, occupational areas and/or skill standards content.

NSSB Common Nomenclature

In order to develop a comprehensive system, the NSSB developed a common nomenclature. **Skill standards** specify what one needs to be able to do and how well one needs to be able to do it. **Assessments** are a measure of work or worker characteristics that is used to evaluate performance, skill, or knowledge, and a **certification** is what an individual receives after successfully completing an assessment.

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Skill standards as defined by the NSSB have two components: the **work**-oriented component that describes what needs to be done on the job and how well; and the **worker**-oriented component, which describes the knowledge and skills an individual needs to possess in order to perform work competently. Together, the **work**-oriented and the **worker**-oriented components of skill standards provide individuals with a comprehensive picture of the knowledge, skills, and performance required for success in today's workplace.

The **work**-oriented component includes three elements:

- **Critical Work Function:** The major responsibilities of work covered by a concentration.
- **Key Activity:** The major duties, responsibilities or task clusters involved in carrying out a critical work function.
- **Performance Indicator:** Information on how to determine when someone is performing each key activity competently.

If your certification is covered under a Voluntary Partnership(s), you will need to document:

- ✍ Any linkages with Critical Work Functions included in the standards developed by a Voluntary Partnership(s)
- ✍ Any linkages with Key Activities included in the standards developed by a Voluntary Partnership(s).

Description of the **worker**-oriented portion includes the following types of knowledge and skills:

- **Academic:** The skills and knowledge associated with the academic disciplines.
- **Employability:** The applied skills and knowledge required for effective performance across broad ranges of occupations.
- **Occupational:** The technical skills and knowledge specific to a particular trade or occupation.

Academic and Employability knowledge and skills will be common across every industry cluster. The definitions of the academic and employability knowledge and skills are included later in this section. Occupational skills and knowledge will be defined by each Voluntary Partnership to meet the needs of the industry.

To illustrate the alignment with NSSB Knowledge and Skills, you will need to document:

- ✍ The Academic and Employability skills and knowledge your certification covers
- ✍ The Occupational Skills your certification covers

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NSSB Academic and Employability Knowledge and Skills

Adaptability: Change one's own behavior or work methods to adjust to other people or to changing situations or work demands; be receptive to new information, ideas, or strategies to achieve goals.

Analyzing and Solving Problems: Anticipate or identify problems and their causes; develop and analyze potential solutions or improvements using rational and logical processes or innovations and creative approaches when needed.

Building Consensus: Build consensus among individual or groups by facilitating agreements that involve sharing or exchanging resources or resolving difference in such a way as to promote mutual goals and interest; by persuading others to change their point of view or behavior without losing their future support; and by resolving conflicts, confrontations, and disagreements while maintaining productive working relationships.

Gathering and Analyzing Information: Obtain facts, information or data relevant to a particular problem, question, or idea through observation of events or situations, discussions with others, or research or retrieval from written or electronic sources; organize, integrate, analyze and evaluate information.

Leading Others: Motivate, inspire and influence others toward effective individual or team work performance, goal attainment, and personal learning and development by serving as a mentor, coach, and role model and by providing feedback and recognition or rewards.

Listening: Attend to, receive, and correctly interpret verbal communications and directions through cues such as the content and context of the message and the tone, gesture, and facial expression of the speaker.

Making Decisions and Judgments: Make decisions that consider relevant facts and information, potential risks and benefits, and short- and long-term consequences or alternatives.

Mathematics: Understand, interpret, and manipulate numeric or symbolic information; solve problems by selecting and applying appropriate quantitative methods such as arithmetic, quantitative reasoning, estimation, measurement, probability, statistics, algebra, geometry, and trigonometry.

Organizing and Planning: Organize and structure work for effective performance and goal attainment; set and balance priorities; anticipate obstacles; formulate plans consistent with available human, financial, and physical resources; modify plans or adjust priorities given changing goals or conditions.

Reading: Understand and use written information that may be presented in a variety of formats, such as text, tables, lists, figures, and diagrams; select reading strategies appropriate to the purpose, such as skimming for highlights, reading for detail, reading for meaning, and critical analysis.

Science: Understand and apply the basic principles of physical, chemical, biological, and earth sciences, understand and apply the scientific method, including formulating and stating hypotheses and evaluating them by experimentation or observation.

Self and Career Development: Identify own work and career interests, strengths, and limitations; pursue education, training, feedback, or other opportunities for learning and development; manage, direct, and monitor one's own learning and development.

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Speaking: Express ideas and facts orally in a clear and understandable manner that sustains listener attention and interest; tailor oral communication to the intended purpose and audience.

Using Information and Communications Technology: Select, access, and use necessary information, data, and communications-related technologies, such as basic personal computer applications, telecommunications equipment, Internet, electronic calculators, voice mail, email, facsimile machines, and copying equipment to accomplish work activities.

Using Social Skills: Interact with others in ways that are friendly, courteous, and tactful and that demonstrate respect for individual and cultural differences and for the attitudes and feelings of others.

Working in Teams: Work cooperatively and collaboratively with others to achieve goals by sharing or integrating ideas, knowledge, skills, information, support, resources, responsibility, and recognition.

Writing: Express ideas and information in written form clearly, succinctly, accurately, and in an organized manner; use English language conventions of spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence and paragraph structure; and tailor written communication to the intended purpose and audience.

NSSB Certification Recognition: Establishing valuable linkages to the national skill standards system!