

MSSC Forwards Standards to the NSSB for Approval

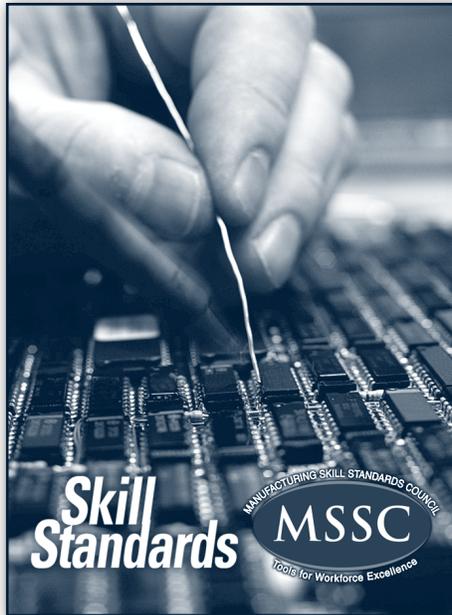
In a groundbreaking event that brings the country closer to realizing the goal of a skilled workforce, the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC) made history as it approved the nation's first ever voluntary, national set of manufacturing skill standards at its Semi-Annual Meeting held November 14-15, 2000, in Dallas, Texas. Before an audience of hundreds of representatives from the many industries, employee organizations, educators, trainers, and community-based and civil rights organizations that made this effort possible, the leadership of the MSSC announced the arrival of skill standards to the manufacturing industry—one that employs nearly 15% of the country's workforce and accounts for nearly one-fifth of the nation's GDP. The MSSC's skill standards now go to the National Skill Standards Board (NSSB) for final approval.

Approval by the NSSB will be of national significance for it will mark the end of the development phase of the nation's first ever manufacturing-based skill standards and will place a final stamp of approval on more than three years of intensive research involving over 700 companies, 3700 workers, 250 subject matter experts, and 30 facilitating organizations.

"The MSSC skill standards are the result of a tremendous effort by companies, labor, educators and trainers, and other interest groups in this country who have worked together to deliver a definitive set of standards," states John Rauschenberger, Manager of Workforce Research at the Ford Motor Company and MSSC Chair. "This is the first time in our nation's history that skill standards have been developed under a common format and language for all sectors of manufacturing. We are confident that these standards will be widely used throughout the manufacturing community."

America's manufacturing industry is markedly different than it was 50 years ago. Gone are the days when companies required low-skilled workers to perform repetitive tasks in order to produce more goods for market. As the U.S. economy has matured over the past 20 years, many companies have relocated labor-intensive production abroad to take advantage of more favorable wage scales—eliminating American jobs in the process. However, today's consumers demand quality products from companies—requiring highly skilled and productive workers capable of performing well in a dynamic and increasingly computerized workplace. The need for American companies to remain globally competitive, the current tight job market in all

industry sectors, and industry's struggles to recruit qualified workers all highlight the demand for a skill standards system that will help create a more productive workforce throughout the economy.



The MSSC standards are designed to ensure that workers are able to perform their jobs in today's dynamic and increasingly high performance workplace. They contain detailed information on the type of work that is involved (critical work function, key activities, and performance indicators) as well as the knowledge and skills (academic, employability, and occupational/technical) that are needed to perform in a position. These standards span six broad concentrations of work in the manufacturing industry:

- Production
- Health, Safety and Environmental Assurance
- Logistics and Inventory Control
- Maintenance, Installation & Repair
- Production Process Development
- Quality Assurance

Once approved by the NSSB, the MSSC skill standards will be made available to the public for review and comment for a period of sixty days that is expected to begin in January 2001. The public's feedback will be useful in helping to

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.

NewsScan

NSSB Publications: Communicating the Message

As the national skill standards effort gains momentum, the participation of individuals and organizations with the expertise to make this system a reality becomes more important. To promote the development of skill standards for our workforce, the NSSB has come out with a series of useful publications that explains the skill standards framework, common language format, and the importance of their participation in building the system.

The NSSB is pleased to announce the release of *Achieving Equality Through Opportunity*, a guide for representatives of community-based and civil rights organizations (CBOs, CROs) that outlines the rationale for their participation in the development of the national skill standards system. This publication (also referred to as the CBO Guide) provides comprehensive information on the requirements for civil rights compliance in standards development and assessment and describes the general criteria of a Voluntary Partnership.

The NSSB also announces the release of *Built to Work*—a comprehensive guide for Voluntary Partnerships and other interested parties offering valuable information on developing a voluntary skill standards system framework using the NSSB's Common Language Format, and general guidance on developing skill standards during this first stage of system building.

The information contained in *Built to Work* is complemented by the *Skill Scales Companion Guide*, a user-friendly manual containing additional tools on developing skill standards. This companion guide examines both the work-oriented and the worker-oriented components of skill standards and provides guidance on establishing the level of skill and knowledge required for each skill standard.

To obtain a PDF copy of any of these publications, simply log on to NSSB Online at <http://www.nssb.org>, click on the Publications button and download your choice from the list. To receive a hard copy (subject to availability), simply submit a request via fax to (202) 254-8646, email to publications@nssb.org, or mail to:

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Message from the Executive Director



Edie West
Executive Director

As we turn the page to 2001, our mission to create a voluntary, national skill standards system in the United

States becomes one (or more) step closer to reality. The work of two of our Voluntary Partnerships will soon come to fruition, and others are not far behind. We salute all those who have stood by our effort, often making personal sacrifices to ensure progress. We can take pride in our accomplishments as we share in the challenges that await us.

As the NSSB enters its sixth year, our work

and that of our Voluntary Partnerships intensifies as we anticipate the arrival of standards in some industry sectors and monitor continued standards development efforts in others. Grateful for the daily messages of support for our efforts at building the system, we continue to pursue the mission that we've all accepted with renewed confidence and optimism. The monumental task that we've undertaken over these past several years has been challenging to say the least. Yet, the promise of a voluntary, national skill standards system that will help our workers prosper and ensure our country's economic growth makes this effort well worth it.

On behalf of everyone at the NSSB, thank you for working with us toward this vision that we all know will benefit so many companies, educational entities, and individuals throughout this country. Together, we've made remarkable

progress towards attaining our goal. Let's strengthen our bonds for 2001 and present a united system front for the betterment of our country and its people.

To that end, let us know how we can be helpful. While working to fulfill the total mission of the Board, we aim to respond quickly to your individual needs and requests. You can help by communicating your thoughts to us — not just when there is a problem or concern, but on an ongoing basis. An open, honest, and fruitful dialogue will ensure that you receive the best assistance we have to offer.

Thank you for your good work, and from all of us at the NSSB, Happy New Year!

Sales & Service Readies Its Standards for Approval and Looks Towards the Future

For the past two years, the Sales & Service Voluntary Partnership (S&SVP) has made remarkable progress in the development of the first set of national, voluntary skill standards for the retail, wholesale, real estate and personal services industries - a sector that accounts for nearly 30% of U.S. GDP and employs nearly 20% of the nation's workforce. The organization is close to completing work on skill standards that are critical to creating a skilled workforce and helping companies improve the level of service to their customers. While the development process continues, the partnership is also preparing for implementation at the national and local levels.

The year 2000 proved to be a successful one for the S&SVP as it moved into the final stage of skill standards development. One of the major tasks was to conduct a national validation study to ensure that the standards are reliable, legally defensible and meet workforce demands. More than 2,300 workers participated in this survey. The final sample met or exceeded goals for demo-

graphic areas such as ethnicity and gender. Preliminary results support the partnership's three concentration areas: sales, customer service, and inventory management.

The partnership will present its skill standards to the NSSB for review in a few months' time and looks forward to beginning the next phase of its work: the development of assessments that will lead to certification.

"There continues to be a high level of excitement and interest among industry partners within our cluster to get to standards and certification. So much of the hard work has been done, but the real celebration will begin when we see national certification truly changing people's lives," remarked S&SVP Board Member Katherine T. Mance, S&SVP Board Member and Vice President of Research, Education, and Government Affairs at the National Retail Federation (NRF).

In addition to skill standards development, the S&SVP is making steady progress in its endorsement and implementation plans. The Board of Directors recently approved the

partnership's guidelines on endorsing products and programs that will help individuals develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the industry skill standards. Providers of training programs and materials, including consultants, publishers, not-for-profit organizations, and educational institutions will be encouraged to develop products based on the S&SVP skill standards.

To receive endorsement, materials must meet the established criteria, which are listed on the partnership's Web site at <http://www.salesandservice.org>. The partnership is currently recruiting Expert Review Panel (ERP) members from industry and education to review products submitted for endorsement. For further information regarding this recruitment process, contact the S&SVP at 202-783-7971 or via email at ssvpinfo@nrf.com.

In a targeted effort to strengthen employer-education collaboration in preparation for implementation, the NRF Foundation (the

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MSSC Standards

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develop effective assessment tools and to begin developing a comprehensive delivery system. The MSSC will use this period to compensate for any demographic or industry sector data gaps - in effect, "fine tuning" the skill standards to enhance their value to users.

To bring the skill standards directly to the public, the MSSC will organize a number of site demonstrations in various regions to educate stakeholder representatives on uses for the skill standards. The MSSC hopes to gain valuable

input on:

- Standards content
- Standards implementation and systems building features
- Assessment and certification needs
- Continuous improvement processes

As the organization moves into the assessment development phase, efforts will continue to ensure the alignment of hundreds of existing specialty standards with the new MSSC skill standards. The MSSC expects to have a development plan for a comprehensive assessment and certification program by spring 2001.

Three years of hard work and effort by

thousands of dedicated employers, employee organizations, educators and trainers, and community-based and civil rights organizations came to fruition this past November as the MSSC finished development of its skill standards. With the first phase of the system nearly complete, the MSSC looks forward to developing assessments that will accurately measure a person's abilities in meeting its rigorous standards, leading to certification and progress towards a skilled and qualified workforce that will keep this industry sector competitive the world over.

For more information about the MSSC and its progress, visit their Web site at <http://www.msscusa.org>.

E&TVP: Roadmap for Developing Skill Standards Approved

Continuing on an accelerated path in the development of skill standards in its industry sector, the Education and Training Voluntary Partnership (E&TVP) recently received NSSB approval to move forward with its Work Analysis Plan, which outlines the organization's agenda throughout the skill standards development process. In addition to the plan, the NSSB approved the partnership's concentration areas and proposed sampling plans, all of which will set the foundation for developing industry skill standards.

"We are very excited about the NSSB's approval of our Work Analysis Plan. The approval marks the culmination of a lot of work by a lot of people and finally, we are set to begin developing the skill standards," remarked Konyka Dunson, E&TVP's Project Coordinator.

Having been recognized by the NSSB as the third Voluntary Partnership in October 1999, the E&TVP has come a long way in drafting the framework for a skill standards system in this important economic sector, which employs nearly one-tenth of the nation's workforce. Actively supported by the American Association of Community Colleges, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Society for Training and Development, the National Education Association, the National School Boards Association, and many other organizations, the E&TVP plans to develop skill standards for front-line workers and first-line supervisors in much the same fashion as the Manufacturing Skill Standards Council. The E&TVP has developed the following concentrations for front-line workers, based on the age and developmental levels of the learners being taught:

- Infant/Toddler (ages 0-2)
- Early Childhood (ages 2-6)
- Middle Childhood (ages 6-12)
- Early Adolescence/Adolescence (ages 12-18)
- Special Education (all ages)

The Partnership will move quickly to convene focus groups of workers from two main, broad occupational groups: early childhood educators and educational assistants. The E&TVP's working plan calls for separately developing skill standards for workforce trainers, a move designed to simplify the development process. The Partnership plans to aggressively recruit a diverse group of workers from a sample of high-performance organizations using rigorous criteria to ensure adequate and balanced representation of all ethnic and age groups. This round of focus groups is scheduled for completion in February 2001.

The work will build upon the E&TVP's recent accomplishments in the standards development phase. The organization has completed the following three successful focus groups on researching critical work functions and key activities in the following concentrations:

Middle Childhood / Springfield, Oregon
Early Childhood / Burbank, California
Special Education / Providence, Rhode Island

The E&TVP will hold additional focus groups in these research areas throughout the winter in the following states:

- Arkansas
- California
- Georgia
- Maryland
- Minnesota
- New Mexico

Results of this research will be presented to the NSSB for review in March 2001.

On January 10-11, 2001, a meeting of the Decision Council convened to decide a number of important issues. Participants reviewed and discussed the focus group



data, began planning a strategy to develop skill standards for the training workforce, and refined the criteria for identifying high performance organizations in the area of education. The results of this meeting will help chart the course for the organization for the first half of 2001.

In a mere 15 months, the Education and Training Voluntary Partnership has come a long way towards developing a skill standards system for this very important industry sector. The approval of the Work Analysis Plan puts the group on a solid footing as it endeavors to develop industry-recognized skill standards and introduce them to the American public in 2001.

The NSSB Visits With the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education

Making progress in its effort to find ways to implement the proposed national system of skill standards at the state level, representatives of the NSSB traveled throughout Georgia from October 25 through 27, 2000, to learn more about the state's technical college system and to witness the state's workforce development efforts in action. At the invitation of Dr. Kenneth Breden, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE), NSSB Board Member Susan Auld along with Executive Director Edie West and Staff members were given a fast-paced tour of various technical colleges, an economic development center, a local high school, a storefront Certified Customer Service Specialist Academy, and a number of businesses.



NSSB representatives visited the nearby Economic Development Center where Jackie

Rohosky, Assistant Commissioner of Economic Development Programs, briefed the group on the state's successful Quick Start program.

Since its inception in 1967, Quick Start has provided quality, customized training to over 325,000 workers at more than 3,000 businesses and industries statewide. The program targets new or expanding businesses to help them begin operations faster and run more efficiently. Since 1996, Quick Start has offered two comprehensive certification programs in the areas of manufacturing and customer service to meet the workforce demands of employers. Successful candidates are recognized as Certified Manufacturing Specialists or Certified Customer Service Specialists, depending on the program of their choice.

Training through the Quick Start program is provided by the state's system of 33 technical colleges and institutes and four affiliated uni-

versity programs. During 1999, the Quick Start program served 266 start-up companies and trained nearly 34,000 candidates. Quick Start also offers a Certified Economic Developer Trainer (CEDT) program for state-level and technical college personnel whose job responsibilities focus on business and industry training for the state's economic development. All personnel working in the area of economic development at the technical colleges are required to be Certified Economic Developer Trainers.

NSSB and DTAE representatives visited a Storefront Certified Customer Service Specialist Academy and a high school technical center in the city of Rome, meeting with trainees, business owners, and educators. In addition, the group visited an area high school technical center and spoke with students enrolled in the Certified Manufacturing Specialist program that is sponsored by the state's Quick Start program.

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Georgia Tour

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The tour also brought the NSSB representatives for visits to two of the state's 33 technical colleges. The Georgia technical college system experienced a 16% rise in enrollment in 1999 – its ninth consecutive annual increase. NSSB representatives and their hosts visited the Coosa Valley Technical College and the South Georgia Technical College campuses to learn about the programs that these two schools offer. While at South Georgia, the NSSB representatives visited with business leaders from Lockheed Martin and other companies that utilize the college to train their workforces, to learn more about the benefits of their partnership with the college. To witness firsthand the benefits to business of the state's workforce efforts, NSSB representatives toured Cybershield International, Inc., a 200-person company located in Canton, Georgia, and Outboard Marine Corporation (OMC), a 91-year old business located in Calhoun, Georgia.

At the conclusion of the visit, the NSSB and Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education representatives, Georgia business leaders, and local Technical College officials met to discuss ways to collaborate on improving the skill level of the current workforce in the State of Georgia. All the parties agreed to work together to discuss possible ways of implementing the national skill standards system into the Georgia Technical College programs. To underscore this effort, the NSSB and the DTAE drafted a memorandum of understanding to examine how the emerging MSSC skill standards can be linked to the Quick Start Manufacturing Specialist Certification. The NSSB hopes to learn from this experience and expand its state contacts further as it moves towards the implementation of the proposed national skill standards system and the fulfillment of its mission.

Sales & Service

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organization managing the S&SVP's efforts) has released *The RELE Connection: A Toolkit for Building Employer-Education Partnerships*. This toolkit contains guidelines, sample activities, and resource materials for use by employers, educators, and partnership builders to integrate skill standards into curricula and enhance work-based learning experiences. For more information about the toolkit, log on to the NRF Foundation's Web site at <http://www.nrf.com> or contact Corinne Berkseth at the NRF Foundation at 202-661-3041.

The Sales & Service Voluntary Partnership stands on the verge of delivering the nation's first set of voluntary skill standards for its industry sector – a move that will profoundly contribute to the nation's long-term economic growth. To learn more about the S&SVP, monitor its progress, or become involved in its efforts, log on to its Web site at <http://www.salesandservice.org>.

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