Learning Resources Inc
Assessing, Developing & Documenting Soft Skills

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A Model for Soft Skill Competencies' Development

An effective work-ready development plan for jobs at different levels - introductory, high-performance or leadership - must involve and support three primary groups:

- Employers
- Workforce developers (including schools - secondary and post-), One-Stop Career Centers, CBOs and their full range of customers served: learners, displaced workers, those with disabilities, justice transitioners, youth, vets and others
- Workers (future and incumbent)

Job requirements at all levels and in all sectors are a mix of technical, academic and interpersonal skills. LRI's expertise is in interpersonal skills. The comments below outline a systematic approach to interpersonal skill development that complements academic and career and technical skill building. LRI's approach incorporates:

- A clear definition of the skills required by employers for current and future jobs at different levels.
- A hiring system that confirms the documentation of these skills as part of a selection processes.
- Assessment of incumbent and future workers to determine strengths and development needs.
- Individual development planning to address skill gaps.
- Development focused on key gaps between the skills a job requires and an individual's competencies
- Re-assessment to monitor development.
- Post-assessment to document/credential skills achieved and to support both administrators and the continuous improvement of outcomes.
- A process that enables workers to measure current skills against the requirements of next-level jobs to enable individuals to augment current skill levels and prepare for future positions of greater responsibility.
- A robust database of outcomes available on individual, group, regional and state bases.

Benefits of this approach include:

Employers

- Benchmarking effective incumbents and specifying the soft skill requirements of new positions provides standards that can be shared with developers of incumbent or future workers. Benchmarking establishes the specs that workforce developers' applicants must meet.
- Hiring is more efficient when it focuses on people who have credentialed the competencies that relate to job skills employers have identified.
- New hires with credentialed soft skills are more quickly productive and they turnover less.
- Assessment also clarifies for incumbents the skills required for future positions of increased responsibility and it supports the planning for and development of new skills.

Workforce Developers

- Focus on the specific skills required for jobs within key sectors, regions or employers.
- Address the skills gap between employer needs and individuals' current competencies and use curricula and other tools to develop missing skills.
- Improve placement because applicants' skills align with employers' requirements.
- Developers are also employers; they can establish their own Development Strategy by: Benchmarking staff; adding soft skill assessment to their selection process; making better hiring decisions; and, supporting new workers' soft skill development as needed.
- Making soft skill development a part of how developers do business better enables organizations to develop talented workers.
- Strengthen their credibility with employers who see them walking their talk.

Workers

- Pre-assessment of future and incumbent workers provides objective information that supports the establishment of individual development plans that address specific skill gaps between what specific jobs require and current competence levels.
- Re-assessment enables individuals to monitor soft skill development. In a Pathways world this supports individuals who must 'break-out' before program completion and find jobs that align with individuals' developing skill levels.
- Individuals' credentials are fully aligned with the skills employers have specified as crucial.

Adapting LRI's model to local, regional, national or sector needs establishes stakeholders with a sustainable and state of the art economic and workforce development system. Can LRI be of assistance to your program?

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