



**Strengthening Education, Workforce
and Economic Development**



WorkKeys® Case Studies

February 2009

Table of Contents



Introduction and Project Overview	-----1
Initial Evaluation	-----2
Profiling Process	-----3
Assessments	-----4
Final Evaluation and Round Table Discussion	-----7
ADC Case Study	-----8
Allied Air Case Study	-----9
Fairfield County Detention Center Case Study	-----10
Lexington County Communications Center Case Study	-----14
Lexington County Fire Service Case Study	-----16
Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative, Inc. Case Study	-----18
Sisters of Charity Providence Hospitals Case Study	-----20
Tyson Prepared Foods Case Study	-----22

Introduction and Project Overview



MIDLANDS EDUCATION AND BUSINESS ALLIANCE (MEBA) is a dynamic organization with an eye on the future. The primary focus of the Alliance is to connect students, parents, educators and employers to education and career opportunities in the Midlands through programs and partnerships of business, school, college, faith, and other community leaders.

In 2007, the South Carolina Department of Commerce awarded Midlands Education and Business Alliance (MEBA) a two-year grant to implement the Strengthening Education, Workforce and Economic Development (SEWED) project to increase career awareness, knowledge of and use of WorkKeys® and increase knowledge of services and access points to OneStop Career Centers. To promote these outcomes, MEBA has been using the grant money to: boost knowledge of OneStop Career Center services, create a research model focused on the utilization of WorkKeys within selected companies and improve the knowledge of educators, students and adult workers regarding continuing education opportunities, WorkKeys and OneStop Career Center services.

One component of MEBA's SEWED project was to research WorkKeys usage and conduct outreach in the Midlands business community to foster adoption of WorkKeys. WorkKeys is a job skills assessment system designed to measure real-world skills. It serves to connect work skills, training and testing for education and employers and is the basis for the National Career Readiness Certificate. For employers, WorkKeys offers a way to test and measure job skills in order to make comparisons between a person's skill levels and the job requirements. The stated goal was to expose and expand services to MEBA business alliance members as it relates to their knowledge and use of WorkKeys. The goal was to be accomplished through the following objectives:

- Establish a research base on the effectiveness of using WorkKeys from the viewpoint of nine (9) business partners.
- Create broader and non-traditional access points to increase the use of WorkKeys for the nine (9) business partners.

In efforts of establishing a baseline for the participation, a selection process was established. Business Alliance Members were informed of the WorkKeys initiative and given first option to participate in the case study. Additionally, MEBA reached out to Midlands Technical College to provide additional referrals and resources for participation.

At the conclusion of the selection process, ten (10) business partners were selected to participate in the SEWED Component Two WorkKeys project. MEBA conducted a pre-meeting before launching the project to educate the WorkKeys participants about the project components and the activities to be conducted during the grant period to enable each business partner the opportunity to fully utilize the WorkKeys process. Project components included the following

Phase One:	Initial Evaluation
Phase Two:	Profiling Process
Phase Three:	Assessments
Phase Four:	Final Evaluation and Round Table Discussion

Initial Evaluation



MEBA BEGAN THE WORKKEYS project by facilitating an initial evaluation of the employer’s employment needs and the identification of one (1) job position they were challenged in filling.

The Initial Evaluation Questionnaire was comprised of six (6) questions that would provide data necessary for the Assessments and Testing conducted by the One-Stop Career Center. The information gathered included: 1) General overview of the business partner; 2) Description of job profiled; 3) Description of application and hiring process; 4) Current hiring needs; 5) Current challenges regarding the position including turnover rates, training needs, etc. and; 6) Desired outcome from WorkKeys profiling project.

Of the ten (10) business partners participating in the Initial Evaluation Questionnaire two (2) of the participants were unable to complete the process. Carolina Adventure World was unable to complete the project due to a change in their service deliverables resulting in a reduction in their need for hiring in the position originally identified. The second business partner to not complete the process was Michelin which made a decision, upon obtaining a complete understanding of the WorkKeys project, to initiate a position assessment project company wide for multiple company positions beginning January 2009. In efforts of continuing to build upon the excitement of the WorkKeys project shown by Michelin, MEBA agreed to facilitate in the execution of the profiling and assessments as well as providing some financial remuneration to help offset the cost of such a large undertaking.

The Initial Evaluation questionnaires discovered a number of common challenges among these employers within their internal recruitment and hiring procedures. One hundred percent (100%) of the business partners identified finding qualified candidates as their number one challenge. Other challenges which they experienced include: 1) constant turnover; 2) job performance; 3) assessment of skill levels and; 4) attendance.

Career Cluster	Business Partner	Position to be Filled
Information/Technology	ADC of Lexington	Cable Splicer
Architecture & Construction	Allied Air	Customer Service Specialist
Hospitality & Tourism	Carolina Adventure World	Canopy Tour Operator
Law, Public Safety & Security	Fairfield County Detention Center	Corrections Officer
Law, Public Safety & Security	Lexington County Fire Service	Fire Fighter
Law, Public Safety & Security	Lexington County Communications Center	Dispatcher
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics	Michelin	PAP-Tire Building Position
Business Management & Administration	Mid-Carolina Electric Coop	Customer Service Representative
Health Science	Sisters of Charity Providence Hospitals	Cook
Manufacturing	Tyson Prepared Foods	Maintenance Technician

Profiling Process



EACH OF THE EIGHT (8) BUSINESS PARTNERS identified one job position to be profiled. Job profiling is a procedure to determine the most critical tasks for a job and to determine the WorkKeys skills and skill levels required to perform these tasks. The profilers were individuals affiliated with Midlands Technical College who had completed the ACT's WorkKeys job profiling training program. These individuals are professionally trained to:

- 1) facilitate the job profiling process while using the SkillPro® software and;
- 2) generate a report of the profile results.

In order to facilitate the profiling process, the employer selected several employees who then became the SME's (Subject Matter Experts). These employees were currently performing the tasks within the job position or people knowledgeable about the job being profiled (e.g. supervisors or people who have been recently promoted from the job).

Prior to the profiling session, the profiler developed an Initial Task List using information compiled from databases (e.g. Dictionary of Occupational Titles and O*Net), job related documentation (e.g. job descriptions, resources from similar job profiles, training materials), and information gathered from the tour of the facility. A focus group meeting was then facilitated by an ACT authorized job profiler. The job profiler then met with the SME's (employees) to perform a task analysis and skill analysis.

The task analysis consisted of three parts:

- 1) Meeting with the SME group to tailor the Initial Task List, ensuring that the Final Task List accurately and completely described the job.
- 2) The SME's independently rate each task for Importance and Relative Time Spent. The profiler calculates the criticality of each task using the SME ratings and sorts.
- 3) The task statements are organized by placing the most critical tasks at the beginning of the list. The SME's review and confirm the order of the tasks. The product of the task analysis is the Final Task List.

The skill analysis occurs after a task analysis is completed and consists of two parts:

- 1) The SME group identifies the on-the-job behaviors (i.e. tasks from the Final Task List) associated with the WorkKeys skills under consideration.
- 2) The SME group compares detailed descriptions of the WorkKeys skill levels to the tasks that require the specified skill. The job profiler seeks to bring the group to a consensus regarding the skill levels required at job entry and/or effective performance.

Assessments



UPON COMPLETION OF THE JOB PROFILE, recommendations were made to the business partner as to the WorkKeys assessment tools best suited to gather the information necessary to determine candidate competency. The assessments available were:

- i. Applied Technology
- ii. Team Work
- iii. Observation
- iv. Business Writing
- v. Writing
- vi. Reading for Information
- vii. Locating Information
- viii. Applied Mathematics

The development of the WorkKeys assessments were guided by professional standards for testing contained in the Guidelines, Standards, and Principles. The items on the WorkKeys assessments utilize a series of screens before the test development process is completed. The following represents a list of characteristics of the WorkKeys tests used to ensure they are job related and fair to test takers (see attachment 4):

- a) The assessments are criterion-referenced (job requirements are used as the reference).
- b) The test specifications are well defined.
- c) People who are familiar with various work situations and have insight into the use of a particular skill in different employment settings write the items.
- d) Items measure a particular workplace skill.
- e) Prior to construction of the released assessment, content and fairness experts review the items to determine possible differences in responses among racial and gender groups.
- f) Statistical analyses at the item and test levels are conducted to monitor the performance of various subgroups.

Each assessment was graded by the Midlands Workforce Development Board and/or Midlands Technical College for the exception of the Listening, Business Writing and Writing assessments which were conducted by American College Test (ACT).

Each of the eight (8) business partners made the determination based on the results of the profiling as to the manner in which they would utilize the WorkKeys assessment tools. Six (6) of the eight (8) business partners, seventy-five percent (75%), chose to utilize the WorkKeys assessment process within their recruitment and hiring procedures. Those business partners included: ADC of Lexington; Fairfield County Detention Center; Lexington County Communications Center; Lexington County Fire Service; Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative, Inc.; and Tyson Prepared Foods. The remaining two case study participants, Allied Air and Sisters of Charity Providence Hospital, determined that the use of the WorkKeys profiling results helped them to identify activities where additional priorities should be set or additional training for their employees would be useful.

Approximately 275 individuals, whether applicants or current employees of the WorkKeys participants, participated in the WorkKeys assessment process. The individuals were tested at a central location, local OneStop Career Centers.

The following chart provides specific data on the outcomes of each of the participating business partners.

Career Cluster	Company Name	Position Profiled	Number of candidates/employees Assessed through WorkKeys	Outcome through the utilization of the WorkKeys programs
Business Management & Administration	Mid-Carolina Electric Coop, a not-for-profit, member-owned electric distribution utility company	Customer Service Representative	6	8 candidates were hired - 5 of the 8 (63%) are still employed; 2 of the 5 (40%) have been promoted
Health Science	Sisters of Charity Providence Hospitals, a not-for-profit organization licensed as a 304 healthcare facility	Cook	Not applicable, process to begin in January 2009	Determined after 6 months of using the WorkKeys program for new hires to utilize the program as a professional development tool
Manufacturing	Tyson Prepared Foods, world's largest processor and marketer of chicken, beef and pork, the 2 nd largest Fortune 500 food company	Maintenance Technician	7 current employees	Utilized the process to determine skill level and training needs with current employees
Information Technology	ADC of Lexington (Supplier of network equipment, software solutions and integrations services for broadband, multiservice networks that deliver data, video and voice communications)	Cable Splicer	150	100 of the 150 assessed (67%) are employed with the company
Law, Public Safety & Security	Fairfield County Detention Center	Corrections Officer	2	Company began to utilize program at the end of the grant period due to the internal delays

chart continued on page 6

Career Cluster	Company Name	Position Profiled	Number of candidates/ employees Assessed through WorkKeys	Outcome Through the utilization of the WorkKeys programs
Hospitality & Tourism	Carolina Adventure World	Canopy Tour Operator	<p>MWDB Assessment Phase on hold due internal priorities at Carolina Adventure World</p> <p>Carolina Adventure World was unable to complete the project due to a change in company operations. The projected number of canopy tour operators they originally planned to hire was significantly decreased. Currently, only 4 canopy tour operator's work on a part-time basis. Therefore, the original purpose for using WorkKeys was no longer relevant.</p>	Not Applicable
Law, Public Safety & Security	Lexington County Fire Services (a government agency responsible for responding to fire, medical, rescue and other emergency calls)	Fire Fighter	50	Fully utilized the WorkKeys program through the new hiring process. Of the 50 candidates assessed, 38 (76%) achieved the desired scoring level, 100% of the 17 positions were filled successfully.
Architecture & Construction	Allied Air (supplier of heating and air conditioning equipment)	Customer Service Specialist	12	Already outsource new hire assessment process. Decided to utilize WorkKeys to determine skill level and training needs.

Final Evaluation and Round Table Discussion



AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE GRANT PERIOD, Midlands Education and Business Alliance called a meeting of the WorkKeys participants in order to gather final data regarding the value of the WorkKeys program for which they had participated for the past eighteen (18) months. This roundtable meeting was facilitated by an independent contractor with more than twenty (20) years experience in the area of program evaluation.

On January 9, 2009, seven (7) of the eight (8) business partners attended and participated in the round table meeting. The round table setting allowed each business partner the opportunity to share valuable information regarding their experience.

The following data and participant feedback represents the information collected through the round table discussions:

- 71% of the participants felt as though the profiling component was significantly beneficial.

“The profiling component helped to set a standard of necessary qualifications for new hires.”

ADC of Lexington

“The profiling component was very informative and provided us with good information.”

Allied Air

- 75% of the participants felt as though the WorkKeys assessments provided significant insight into the skill levels of those assessed including candidates and current employees.

“WorkKeys has helped to ensure that all new hires possess a certain skill level.”

ADC of Lexington

“WorkKeys provided a true test and an effective way to select qualified candidates.”

Lexington County Communications Center

“The Workkeys scores were used as a hard and fast standard.”

Lexington County Fire Service

“Workkeys provided the information necessary to help our department determine employee professional development and training needs.”

Allied Air

From this data, we can conclude that the common thread among all of the WorkKeys participants was that they each found the profiling component and the WorkKeys assessment tools valuable to their company’s ability to either identify strong candidates and/or offer current employees the tools necessary to increase existing performance levels.

The following pages provide a brief overview of each business participant and the results of participation in MEBA’s WorkKeys project.



ADC of Lexington Case Study

Position Profiled: Production Assembler/Cable Splicer

WorkKeys Assessments Used: Reading for Information
Locating Information
Observation

Web site: www.adc.com

About ADC

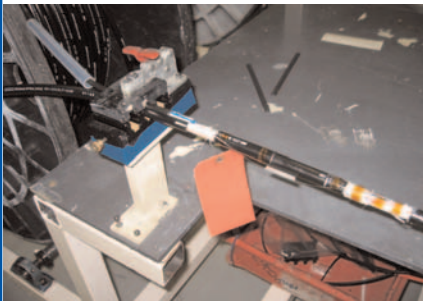
ADC helps the world communicate, supplying network equipment, software solutions, and integration services for broadband, multi-service networks that deliver data, video, and voice communications over telephone, cable television, Internet, broadcast, wireless, and enterprise networks. Its mission is to enable communications service providers worldwide to serve their residential and business customers more efficiently. ADC achieves this with talented and dedicated employees who are complemented with a diverse resource of suppliers.



Entrance to the ADC facility in Lexington, SC.

Hiring Needs Prior to Starting the Project

ADC needed to expand its team of Assembly Operators significantly and quickly. At the beginning of the SEWED project, ADC employed approximately 23 Assembly Operators and needed to hire at least 20 additional Assembly Operators. In order to ensure that the large applicants they needed to hire in such a short time period were appropriately qualified, ADC was eager to use WorkKeys. ADC looked to WorkKeys to help improve the caliber and qualifications of their new hires. ADC also wanted to establish a quantitative way to measure candidates and to determine a way to train current employees efficiently and effectively.



Cables are checked ensure accuracy and proper function.



Assembly Operators work on cables at the ADC facility in Lexington, SC.

Project Results:

Approximately 150 current and potential employees were assessed for the following skills: Reading for Information, Locating Information and Observation.

Of the 150 individuals assessed, 100 are currently employed by ADC as Assembly Operators. ADC credits WorkKeys with helping to:

- assess position applicants quickly and effectively
- elevate the performance level of previously hired employees
- ensure all new hires were at a certain skill level
- decrease potential turnover

Participant Feedback

“We were interested in using WorkKeys because of our need to hire so many new employees within a very short period of time. We wanted to ensure that we were hiring qualified candidates, and we looked to WorkKeys to set a minimum threshold for basic job skills required.”

“WorkKeys has definitely helped us identify the qualified candidates and to cull out a number of unqualified candidates. The employees we have hired using WorkKeys have been qualified and show strong potential.”

“In addition to setting a standard of necessary qualifications for new hires, WorkKeys has helped elevate the performance level of the temps we hired previous to implementing WorkKeys. Most of the temps were excited to be given the opportunity to participate in the WorkKeys Assessments. It offered them the opportunity for stable employment and as a result, they showed greater initiative and took more pride in their work.”

*Fred Holbrook,
Plant Manager, ADC of Lexington*



Allied Air Case Study

Position Profiled: Customer Service Specialist

WorkKeys Assessments Used: Reading for Information
Locating Information
Listening

Web site: www.alliedair.com

About Allied Air

Allied Air Enterprises brings together the collective strengths of six comfort brands—Armstrong Air™, AirEase™, Ducane™, Concord, Magic-Pak™ and Allied™ Commercial—to give distributors and dealers the ultimate source for heating and cooling solutions. From compact residential applications to large commercial projects, Allied Air Enterprises seeks to redefine ease-of-business through breadth of product, resources and competencies unparalleled in the market.



Allied Air Enterprises works to provide quality heating and cooling solutions.

Hiring Needs Prior to Starting the Project

The Allied Air Enterprises based in West Columbia, SC, was formed as the result of a consolidation of two companies that already existed—one in Bellview, OH, and one in Blackville, SC. Nine customer service specialists were employed at the Bellview facility and three were employed at the Blackville facility. Upon consolidation, all 12 customer service specialists were offered the opportunity to relocate to West Columbia. None of the 12 decided to relocate. As a result, Allied Air needed to develop a new customer service department and hire 12 new customer service specialists.

Allied Air worked with a local staffing agency to assist with the recruiting and selection process. Both processes were very thorough and produced quality results.

At the time Allied Air began participating in the WorkKeys project, they had no open customer service specialist positions to fill. Allied Air wanted to participate in the project to see if WorkKeys could be used to strengthen the customer service department in terms of training and professional development.

Project Results:

The profiling process was informative and provided good insight into the skills required for the position and the types of training that may be beneficial for current employees.

WorkKeys assessment scores provided information to help the customer service department determine employee professional development and training needs. All current customer service specialists were required to participate in the WorkKeys assessment phase as a way to determine individual skill levels. The goal was to be able to develop appropriate training and development tools according to the employees' skill levels, strengths and weaknesses. Most of the representatives tested at or above the required level.

Upon receiving the assessments scores, each representative began using the KeyTrain computer training tool to help improve relevant skills. All specialists began the training at the beginning level, regardless of how they scored on the WorkKeys assessment.

Many of the representatives were concerned about the stability of their job and the quality of their work

when told to participate in the WorkKeys assessments. When they received their scores and were asked to participate in the KeyTrain training tool for skill improvement, they were concerned about why it was recommended they begin at the beginning level rather than the level at which they scored on the assessment.

Project Feedback:

“I do believe WorkKeys can be useful as a hiring or professional development tool. The profiling component was especially informative and provided us with good information. WorkKeys provided the information necessary to help our department determine employee professional development and training needs.”

“We have such a strong selection and assessment process developed specifically for us by a local staffing agency that I do not believe WorkKeys could add benefit in terms of hiring. I also believe WorkKeys could have been more beneficial if it had been recommended that everyone begin KeyTrain according to their assessment level rather than having everyone beginning at the beginning level.”

“I do not believe we were able to capitalize on the potential benefits of WorkKeys because of how it was perceived by our employees. I believe it would have been a wonderful program to introduce when we first brought this group together as new hires, rather than after they had been employed for more than a year. Our customer service specialists are very qualified and the presentation of WorkKeys was a concern to them in terms of stability of their job and whether or not their performance was satisfactory.”

*Julie Evans
Customer Supply Chain Manager
Allied Air*

Fairfield County Detention Center Study

Position Profiled: Corrections Officer

WorkKeys Assessments Used: Observation
Locating Information
Reading for Information

Web site: www.fairfieldsc.com

About Fairfield County Detention Center:

The mission of the Fairfield County Detention Center is to protect the community, staff, inmates and property while remaining fiscally responsible to Fairfield County.

The goal of the Fairfield County Detention Center is to maintain a humane facility that safely and securely confines subjects awaiting trial or serving a sentence. The facility opened in February 1998 with a total of 14 staff employees. As of February 2007, the center has 26 employees.



Fairfield County Government Complex

Hiring Needs Prior to Starting the Project:

The FCDC desired to participate in the project in order to evaluate its hiring practices and assess the effectiveness of achieving pre-existing goals. They hoped WorkKeys could help to refine their hiring and training techniques, attain existing goals and focus on establishing new ones.

At the start of the project, the Fairfield County Detention Center (FCDC) had no staff vacancies but averaged two vacancies per year. Vacancies occurred mostly because of retirements. The FCDC also found it challenging to find and hire qualified applicants. Although they have no shortage of applicants, they struggle to find applicants who possess the skills necessary to complete and pass Criminal Justice Academy, which is a requirement of employment. Hired applicants unable to complete the academy must be let go within twelve months of their start date. FCDC hopes WorkKeys will assist them in reducing turnover due to inability to pass the Criminal Justice Academy and improving performance on the job.

Project Results:

At the conclusion of the grant period, FCDC had not yet used WorkKeys as a hiring tool, but only as an assessment for two current employees who had not yet participated in the Criminal Justice Academy.

In one instance, a candidate was hired because it appeared she had the skills and experience necessary to perform the job well. It was surprising when she did not pass the Criminal Justice Academy. Her WorkKeys assessment scores were received shortly after the notification that she did not pass the Criminal Justice Academy. Her WorkKeys scores, although received after the fact, predicted that she would be unable to satisfactorily complete the Criminal Justice Academy.

By participating in the profiling process and seeing the results of the two employees who participated in the WorkKeys assessment, FCDC believes WorkKeys will be very helpful as an assessment tool for new hires to determine whether or not they have the skills to pass the Criminal Justice Academy test and serve as an effective corrections officer for Fairfield County.

At the conclusion of the grant period, FCDC had four openings for corrections officers. They have revamped their hiring process which includes WorkKeys assessments. Job applicants are first screened according to their written application. Those who make it through the first screening will participate in two assessments—one is a situational assessment developed by the FCDC staff and one is a WorkKeys assessment. Candidates will be hired according to their performance on both.

Project Feedback:

“We believe that WorkKeys will be helpful in determining which job applicants will be able to pass the required Criminal Justice Academy. This knowledge will allow us to invest our time and money in those candidates we know have the ability to pass the academy and to be hired as a corrections officer. We have seen that WorkKeys will work for us in this way and we are very excited to start using it.”

“We believe WorkKeys will help us eliminate unqualified candidates and select the most qualified ones. We know WorkKeys will be a good measure for us and we are excited about using it going forward. We feel confident in the results it will help us achieve.”

*Brad Caulder
HR Manager, Human Resources
Fairfield County*

Lexington County Communications Center Case Study

Position Profiled: Telecommunicator Job (911 Operator)

WorkKeys Assessments Used: Reading for Information
Locating Information
Listening

Web site: www.lex-co.com

About Lexington County Communications Center:

The Lexington County Communications Center strives to utilize a team of professional telecommunicators who provide excellent customer service to any person needing assistance.

The 911 Communications division primarily handles the operation of the 911 Center, which dispatches emergency workers to the scene of emergency situations. The Consolidated 911 Communications Center operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is responsible for receiving and dispatching all 911 calls from citizens living in and visiting Lexington County.

The 911 Communications Center receives approximately 30,000 911 calls per month, which results in app. 8,635 fire calls; 21,715 EMS calls; 61,214 municipal police calls; and 104,593 Sheriff calls per year.

Lexington County 911 Telecommunications operators undergo a tremendous training regiment. They are state certified by the state of South Carolina as 911 Telecommunications operators and receive training in Emergency Medical Instructions, Fire Dispatching, Emergency Medical Dispatching, Police Dispatching and Call Taking. They also receive NCIC “National Crime Information Computer” certification through the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy and attend regular in-service training on topics such as stress management, quality assurance, Criminal Domestic Violence and severe weather to name a few.

Hiring Needs Prior to Starting the Project:

At the start of the project, the Lexington County Communications Center had six openings for E9-1-1 Telecommunications Operators.

Initial training for a telecommunications operator follows a 12-week training outline, however completion and proficiency can take 6 months to 1 year. Constant turnover (often due to lack of appropriate skills or confusion about the skill requirements of the position) has an adverse effect on shift morale and can be a never-ending cycle.

The Lexington County Communications Center hoped WorkKeys would help in their efforts to: 1) establish a recognized and standard skill level required for the position of an E9-1-1 Telecommunications Operator; and 2) utilize those standards during the selection process, benefiting not only the organization but also the employee.

Project Results:

Prior to using WorkKeys, the Center had no real assessment tool and was in need of an effective screening tool for hiring—a tool that would show which applicants are capable of doing the job, which applicants are trainable.

A total of 13 applicants have been assessed. The Center currently has 32 operator positions filled, with four left to fill.



Lexington County Administration Building

According to Center staff, WorkKeys has been extremely effective in hiring new qualified employees and in reducing turnover. They believe WorkKeys has helped them to hire better qualified, higher performing long-term employees. They have found the new hires to be able to catch on to the training and to work independently (without assistance from a peer mentor) more quickly.

The Center's training operator has also used WorkKeys with current employees as an evaluation tool to develop annual career tracking and development plans. It is seen as an investment in their employees and a way to help them grow and succeed at even higher levels.

Project Feedback:

“WorkKeys provided a true test and an effective way to select qualified candidates.” “WorkKeys has been exceptional for us. We love it. We never want to do without it. We will continue to use WorkKeys, even with current budget cuts, because WorkKeys helps us save money. It reduces turnover, boosts morale and makes training more effective—it helps in just about every way. We have already conducted more assessments than the grant would allow, because the results are worth much more than the expense.”

“Even our telecommunications training officers—operators who have been here a while and conduct the 12-week peer-to-peer training for new hires—are so pleased we are using WorkKeys because it makes their training better. When they were having to work with a new hire who didn't have the appropriate skills it was frustrating because the new hire would not catch on. Now, the new hires are immensely qualified.”

*Nikki Rodgers
Department of Public Safety, Communications Division
Lexington County*

Lexington County Fire Services Case Study

Position Profiled: Fire Fighter

WorkKeys Assessments Used: Locating Information
Observation

Web site: www.lex-co.com/departments/PublicSafety/FireService/Index.html

About Lexington County Fire Service:

The Lexington County Fire Service is responsible for protecting the lives, livelihoods and resources of Lexington County by planning and implementing effective strategies to successfully combat loss from fire through prevention, education, rescue, suppression and investigation services.

Hiring Needs Prior to Starting the Project:

At the start of the project, Lexington County Fire Service had 22 fire stations and was in the process of adding 2 more. They wanted to hire 17 additional fire fighters.

While Lexington County Fire Service experienced some turnover, the rate was not dramatic. The two main hiring challenges were:

- 1) Current employees who do not perform up to standard
- 2) Needing to hire so many additional fire fighters so quickly in order to staff the two new fire stations.

Lexington County Fire Service's goal in using WorkKeys was to hire better qualified candidates. The hope was that WorkKeys would be a part of a revised hiring process that would most accurately convey a candidate's competencies as they relate to the county's needs. Fire fighters are there to service citizens, and anyone providing services to the county's citizens must be of the highest possible quality.

In the past, Lexington County Fire Service has been able to hire only those candidates who have



Pictured are the first fifteen fire fighters to graduate from Lexington County Fire Service's new Fire Fighter Recruit School.

completed the fire academy program. However, with the need to hire so many new fire fighters so quickly, they desired to broaden their scope of viable candidates to those who may not have completed the fire academy program but who are assessed as having great potential.

Project Results:

Upon implementation of the project, Lexington County Fire Service's hiring process involved an initial screening of applicants where a team reviewed applications and selected applicants to move forward in the hiring process based on previous experience, reported skills, etc. Those applicants selected based on their applications then participated in the WorkKeys assessments.



Lexington County Fire Service began with approximately 100 applicants; 50 were selected to participate in the WorkKeys assessments. Of the 50, 38 applicants achieved the proper skill level or higher on the WorkKeys assessments. These applicants moved forward to participate in a panel interview, where 17 applicants were ultimately hired.

If an applicant did not score in the preferred range on the WorkKeys assessments, he or she did not move forward in the hiring process. The Workkeys assessments scores were used as a hard and fast standard; either a candidate passed or failed. Applicants who did not score at the preferred level did have the opportunity to participate in training on their own and to re-apply as positions were available.

All of the fire fighters hired using WorkKeys have made it through the training and certification process. No one hired using WorkKeys has had to leave because of poor performance.

All fire fighters are evaluated and receive an advisory after three months and then after six months of employment. All of the reviews for the fire fighters hired using WorkKeys have been “glowing.” These positive reviews point to a real strength in the area of teamwork.

In additional to new hires, Lexington County Fire Service also used WorkKeys to assess current employees in line for promotions. A few of these employees did not perform well or pass the WorkKeys assessment and as a result, were not promoted. These employees were given the opportunity to participate in training and retake the assessments. One employee did so, passed the WorkKeys assessments and was promoted.

Project Feedback:

“The employees hired using WorkKeys are above average. My real ruler of measurement is in looking at these employees’ evaluations. All of their evaluations have been glowing. Their record of success is evident —success with WorkKeys, success with recruit school, and success in their performance as evident in their evaluations.”

“The employees hired using WorkKeys and who have participated in our recruit school are highly skilled. They take their work very seriously. I believe this process has brought a sense of great professionalism to the job. WorkKeys will remain a part of our hiring process.”

*Lori Adler
HR Manager
Lexington County*

“WorkKeys has certainly helped us. It has been a valuable screening tool for us. It has seemed to raise the bar for the folks we are bringing on board.”

*Russell Rawl
Fire Service Coordinator
Lexington County*

Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative Case Study

Position Profiled: Customer Service Representative

WorkKeys Assessments Used: Locating Information
Observation
Teamwork

Web site: www.mcecoop.com

About Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative:

The mission of Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative, Inc., a not-for-profit, member-owned electric distribution utility, is to provide quality electric services at competitive costs with a commitment to member satisfaction.

Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative, Inc., (MCEC) is headquartered in Lexington, SC, and is owned by more than 40,000 member-owners who reside in Lexington, Richland, Newberry, Saluda and Aiken Counties.

MCEC is the fifth largest of the twenty electric cooperatives in South Carolina. Together these cooperatives serve more than 500,000 members in over 70% of the state. MCEC is primarily an urban cooperative, comprised of 88% single-family dwellings, and 12% commercial and industrial facilities.



Hiring Needs Prior to Starting the Project:

At the start of the project, MCEC employed 15 customer service representatives. Because customer service representatives are often promoted to other positions within the company, MCEC does experience turnover, resulting in the hiring of three to four customer service representatives per year.

MCEC has wanted to use WorkKeys for a number of years to assess the skill levels of our customer service representatives and to develop targeted training that addresses areas of need. By using WorkKeys, MCEC sought to gain validated work examples which set a standard for assessment.

MCEC was interested in participating because of the perceived benefit of having someone from the outside examine and evaluate the company's practices and provide insight about what it could do differently and better. MCEC wanted to see if WorkKeys would provide a better way to screen candidates—to better identify candidates with stronger work skills and to find candidates who were a better match for the position.

Project Results:

Due to retirements, promotions, and the addition of representative positions to the staff, MCEC has hired a total of eight customer service representatives during the project period. Of the eight hired, five are still with MCEC and three have left for personal reasons unrelated to their work performance. Of the five still with MCEC, two were promoted to the customer service representative position from other positions within the company. The five representatives still with MCEC are performing well. At the time the grant closed, MCEC was using WorkKeys to fill the three open positions.

MCEC did not see a remarkable difference between those candidates hired using WorkKeys and those hired previously, without using WorkKeys. However, MCEC, does believe they have not been using WorkKeys most effectively and insight recently gained about WorkKeys may make more of a difference.

The profile component of the WorkKeys project was very thorough and very helpful according to staff members at MCEC. However, there was a disconnect during the assessment phase that prevented the full

assessment files from being sent to the appropriate staff member directly involved in the hiring process. This disconnect did not provide the appropriate persons with a full understanding of the scores and the skill levels represented. MCEC believes that now, with a greater understanding of the assessments and score levels, WorkKeys could be of greater benefit.

MCEC believes one potential drawback with WorkKeys to their hiring process is that it prevents the customer service supervisors from spending quality face-to-face time with job applicants in order to ask situational questions and evaluate the candidate first-hand. According to MCEC, this type of situational evidence is very important to selecting a qualified customer service specialist.

Project Feedback:

“WorkKeys seems to be a valid gauge of some of the skill requirements of the customer service representative position, but not all, specifically in terms of more situational and practical responsibilities of the position. I anticipate that we will use WorkKeys in the future, as I believe it may be a helpful screening tool now that we have a better understanding of how to use it effectively. Perhaps we will use WorkKeys as a first measure and the situational screening tool as a second measure for assessing job candidates.”

“One way that WorkKeys could perhaps be of benefit as well is as a method to determine training opportunities for current employees.”

*Susan Maupin
VP, Human Resources
Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative, Inc.*

Sisters of Charity Providence Hospitals Case Study

Position Profiled: Cook

WorkKeys Assessments Used: Observation
Teamwork

Web site: www.providencehospitals.com

About Sisters of Charity Providence Hospitals:

Providence Hospital, located in downtown Columbia, is a 247-bed hospital founded in 1938 by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Augustine to minister to the community, in both body and spirit.

The mission of Providence Hospital is to meet the health care needs of the community by an expression of Christian concern for the sick, suffering and dying; to manifest love, truth and justice in health care; and to promote the advancement and application of new knowledge about health care.

Sisters of Charity Providence Hospitals is a Catholic, faith-based, healing community whose people are called by God to provide compassionate, loving care. Through unparalleled skill, competency, and stewardship, its people develop and sustain innovative centers of excellence to serve the health care needs of its communities.

Hiring Needs Prior to Starting the Project:

At the beginning of the project, Providence Hospital had five cook positions.

The hospital had recently started working with a new foodservice management company, some standards and responsibilities of the cook position changed. Throughout the course of the project, the hospital began working with another new foodservice management company.

Providence was challenged to find qualified applicants for open cook positions, and some current employees were not able to meet the new standards and responsibilities as well as needed. Providence wanted to determine which skills and at what level the position required and hoped WorkKeys could assist with this goal. Providence also wanted to be able to determine appropriate training needs and solutions for current employees. The goal was to develop a standard by which to hire new employees and a tool by which to determine training needs for current employees.

Project Results:

At the start of the project, job applicants would apply for position by completing an online interview, participating in the WorkKeys assessments, and participating in an interview. Providence followed this process for approximately six months, but realized it was not achieving the desired results because very few applicants were actually achieving the preferred WorkKeys scores. Some of the candidates that appeared very promising based on their online application and interview but because of the process Providence had put in place, they were unable to hire these candidates because of their WorkKeys scores.

At this point, Providence determined that WorkKeys would be more helpful as a training and development tool rather than a hiring tool. They have restructured the hiring process and are now able to hire candidates without the WorkKeys score requirement. Employees are required to participate in

the WorkKeys assessments as part of their orientation and/or training and those that do not score at the preferred level must participate in KeyTrain sessions to improve their skill level and scores.

At the close of the grant, all employees (a total of seven cooks) had completed the WorkKeys assessments. Out of the seven tested, only one met the preferred skill level. All employees who did not score at the preferred level on the WorkKeys assessments will participate in the KeyTrain sessions (scheduled for February 2009) and will retake the assessments in the late spring or summer of 2009.

Providence believes the WorkKeys assessments and the subsequent training will help improve the skill level of its employees as well as prepare them for a better future if employees are interested in promotions or a different career. Providence sees the process as a way to not only benefit the hospital but the individual employee as well.

Sisters of Charity Providence Hospitals plans to continue using WorkKeys as a development tool with our employees in both the dietary department as well as with environmental services.



*Sisters of Charity Providence Hospitals
downtown campus.*

Project Feedback:

“We have determined that it is of greater benefit to us to use WorkKeys as a training and professional development tool with current employees rather than as a hiring tool for assessing job applicants. Although using WorkKeys as professional development is still relatively new, we plan to continue using WorkKeys with our employees in the dietary department and those in environmental services. I believe we are in a good place with WorkKeys now and I am excited to see the results of using WorkKeys as a development tool with our employees.”

“The project has connected us with very helpful people. The faculty at Midlands Technical College has been an excellent resource for us. When we made the decision internally to use WorkKeys as professional development tool rather than a hiring tool, the faculty was very helpful and supportive of that transition.”

*Felicia Blake
Workforce Development Coordinator
Human Resources
Sisters of Charity Providence Hospitals*

Tyson Prepared Foods Case Study

Position Profiled: Maintenance Technician

WorkKeys Assessments Used: Applied Technology
Observation

Web site: www.tyson.com

About Tyson Foods, Inc.:

Tyson Foods, Inc., founded in 1935 with headquarters in Springdale, Arkansas, is the world's largest processor and marketer of chicken, beef, and pork, the second-largest food company in the Fortune 500 and a member of the S&P 500. The company produces a wide variety of protein-based and prepared food products, which are marketed under the "Powered by Tyson" strategy. Tyson is the recognized market leader in the retail and foodservice markets it serves, providing products and services to customers throughout the United States and more than 80 countries.

The company has approximately 114,000 Team Members employed at more than 300 facilities and offices in the United States and around the world. Through its Core Values, Code of Conduct and Team Member Bill of Rights, Tyson strives to operate with integrity and trust and is committed to creating value for its shareholders, customers, and Team Members. The company also strives to be faith-friendly, provide a safe work environment and serve as stewards of the animals, land and environment entrusted to it.

This case study focuses on the Columbia, SC, facility of Tyson Prepared Foods, which is Foodbrands America, a KPR Foods plant.

Hiring Needs Prior to Starting the Project:

At the start of the project, Tyson needed to hire six maintenance technicians.

Tyson's challenge was finding and keeping qualified candidates. Turnover was a problem because of employees leaving for competitive wages and poor employee attendance. Tyson was interested in using WorkKeys to help find, both internally and externally, and retain qualified candidates or candidates who show potential and can be trained.

Project Results:

Tyson did not use WorkKeys as an assessment tool for hiring but did test new hires and current employees in order to determine skill level and training needs.

Through the project, Tyson assessed a total of seven employees—five with maintenance technology experience and two without. The purpose was to determine the current skill level and training needs of the seven employees. Tyson wanted to have a baseline comparison between the skill level of those technicians with experience and those without. The result was very little difference between the scores of those with experience and those without.

Project Feedback:

“WorkKeys gave me insight into the participants’ skill levels so I could better determine training needs and plans. I would be interested in using WorkKeys as a hiring tool if it was approved by corporate and if the funding was available. Now that I have used it as an assessment tool to determine skill level and training needs, I have data that shows the variations in the skills needed and the skills our employees possess. I think WorkKeys could be helpful in determining whether or not a potential employee has the desired skills.”

*Tiffaney Conrad
Human Resource Manager
Tyson Prepared Foods
Columbia, SC Facility*