

Using the Foundation Skills Framework for Documenting Progress

Role of Assessment

Much controversy exists over the most appropriate and efficient way to obtain an accurate picture of skill attainment and evidence that education and training services are successful and effective. Many people believe a variety of instruments and approaches provides the most accurate and meaningful assessment information. For example, assessment of the work-based foundation skills and knowledge is perhaps most meaningful when the assessment is valid and reliable and there is a close match between what is taught, tested, and needed on the job. Standardized assessments consistently provide the most reliable and valid information, but they do not always match what is taught in programs or needed on the job. Performance-based and informal assessments can be developed to match what is taught, but they do not always provide reliable information. This section provides information about a variety of assessment instruments and approaches to assist in developing a comprehensive assessment plan.

Most important, goal setting, instruction, and assessment should be ongoing and interrelated, especially if achievement is expected to be evident in assessment results.

Self-Appraisals

Self-appraisals provide opportunities for customers to have input and actively participate in the assessment process. They also offer providers insight into participants' perceptions of their foundation skill strengths and areas of need. The Foundation Skills Self-Appraisal was developed specifically for this project and reflects the broad work-based foundation skills model of the framework project.

- **Foundation Skill Self-Appraisal** was developed to provide a springboard for discussion about customers' foundation skills and knowledge areas of strength and need. The questions were designed to address the 21 foundation skills and knowledge components. Results may be used in combination with other assessment information for instructional planning.

Standardized Assessments

Standardized assessments have established validity, reliability, and standards of comparison that allow data comparison within and across programs. Some also provide diagnostic information that providers may use to develop individualized education plans. As such, standardized assessments provide the kinds of information that can be used to establish baseline data for learners and programs and also to measure program effectiveness. See the Bureau of ABLE homepage for links to Bureau-approved assessments and information.

In terms of demonstrating learner achievement, standardized tests may be most appropriate to use in longer-term programs (30+ hours) since at least 30 hours of instruction are generally necessary to document significant learning gains. However, in short-term programs where instruction is highly focused on work-related needs, standardized assessments may not be valid or reliable measures of skill attainment.

Standardized tests may define the skills in a broader way than the skills may be realized in the workplace. For example, the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) measure

the ability to read a text and answer questions about it. A workplace education program, however, may focus on developing only the specific skills to read and understand a procedure and apply the information in a specific context.

Foundation Skill Rubric

Many of the foundation skills and knowledge areas do not have links to assessments that are appropriate for measuring them. One alternative is to develop a rubric, or scoring guide, to describe performance of that skill on a continuum. A rubric can be designed around an individual foundation skill goal or objective. Rubric development requires expertise and experience and may be time-intensive; PA WIN program developers and instructors use the **Foundation Skills Rubric** process to document learner gains in PA WIN-funded programs.