

State's workforce training deeply flawed, study says

A certification program that is a centerpiece of the state's workforce training is deeply flawed, a study argues.

Article can be found at <http://www.crainsnewyork.com/article/20140421/BLOGS04/140419839/states-workforce-training-deeply-flawed-study-says>

[Chris Bragg](#)

Published: April 21, 2014

A certification program that is the cornerstone of New York's job-training strategy for young adults is deeply flawed and almost entirely ignored by employers, a [report](#) to be released Monday says.

The certification program, the National Work Readiness Credential, is meant to help prep young, inexperienced workers for their first forays into employment. Job-training centers that take two major streams of state government funding are required to administer the certification test for the credential and offer eight-week training sessions.

But of about 12,000 young adults who did at least some of the preparation for the test in 2011, only 317 ended up passing, according to JobsFirstNYC, an organization that works to connect young people with jobs. The group found that 68% of white people who ended up taking the test passed while 69% of African-Americans failed.

Meanwhile, out of 22 national retail outlets with stores in New York and 100 overall, none ask job applicants if they have the credential, the JobsFirstNYC survey found.

The test for National Work Readiness Credential focuses on readying employees to deal with potential workplace situations. Yet it contains a number of questions irrelevant to retail-based New York City employers, according to Lou Miceli, executive director of JobsFirstNYC. For instance, test-takers are asked a number of questions taken from the State Troopers exam quizzing them about traffic regulations, Mr. Miceli said. "It's a burden to the organizations that have to train people for the test and there's no information that's of any value to the employer," Mr. Miceli said.

According to JobsFirstNYC, the Cuomo administration has been unresponsive to the findings since initial results were privately shared by the group in 2012. The Department of Labor has also rebuffed open records requests seeking more information about the progress of the program, the group says. A Department of Labor spokesman did not return a request for comment.

There are some 172,000 people between the ages of 18 and 24 who are neither working nor in school in New York City.

In 2002, the state Department of Labor joined with several other states to create the National Workforce Readiness Credential as a benchmark of core skills needed for entry-level job-seekers.

As an alternative to the current certification program, Mr. Miceli said the state would be better off focusing on providing training for in-demand industries—home health care, food handling and commercial drivers—or at least offer training for job certification certificates more widely recognized by employers.

Greg Hambric, the regional recruiter for Modell's Sporting Goods, said he had never heard of the National Workforce Readiness Credential until asked about it during the course of the JobsFirstNYC study. Instead of a test, Mr. Hambric said he relies on the interview process to determine whether new workers will fit into his company.

"You engage them and look for specific internal characteristics and personality traits," Mr. Hambric said. "They're new to the workforce, and I wouldn't want to require a credential. You don't want to scare them off."

[The National Work Readiness Credential Who Pays the Price JobsFirstNYC April 2014](#)



**The National
Work Readiness
Credential:
Who Pays the Price?**



CRAIN'S
NEW YORK BUSINESS

Entire contents ©2014 Crain Communications Inc.