



Association of Computer-based Systems of Career Information (ACSCI)

Consumer Guide for Evaluating Career Information and Services

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The Association of Computer-based Systems of Career Information (ACSCI) promulgates industry standards for developers of career information and services. These standards drive the development of products that meet stringent standards of quality and ethical practice.

This publication provides an ACSCI Standards-based approach for consumers to use in evaluating career products and services prior to purchase. The ACSCI Standards Committee produced this publication to assist counselors, agency professionals, government officials, and other people who make major purchases of career information and services. The committee hopes that these brief checklists will assist purchasers in analyzing differential features of career products and will enable consumers to make informed decisions about career information and services.

There are two parts to the checklists. The first deals with *content* (p.3), and the second applies to *delivery* (p.7).

Many developers of career information and services signify their product's compliance with industry standards by posting the ACSCI Logo (above) with the tagline, "Meets ACSCI Standards."

The ACSCI Standards Committee recognizes LeeAnn Roth, Director of Nebraska Career Information Services, for her assistance in developing the checklists.

The complete text of ACSCI Standards, including implementation checklists, instructions, and glossary of terms, is posted on the ACSCI website at <http://www.acsci.org>.

ACSCI Standards Committee
Fall 2005

Career Information and Services Content Checklist

Vendor _____ Product/Service _____

Person completing review _____ Date _____

Rating System:

M Meets standard (defined as *most knowledgeable reviewers would concur that the standard is substantially met in both letter and spirit* and meets the standard for users at school or agency)

D Does not meet standard.

NA Does not apply.

Career Information

Career information comprises educational, occupational, industry, financial aid, job search, and related information for career development. Career information should be accurate, current, developmentally appropriate, relevant, specific, unbiased, understandable, and valid for intended audiences.

Accuracy

_____ Information is based upon empirical sources that can be validated or checked for consistency.

_____ Data resources and methodologies are available to users.

_____ Factual information is clearly distinguished from advice or information based on anecdotal reporting.

_____ Information is free from grammatical and spelling errors.

Currency

_____ Information is reviewed annually and updated at an interval appropriate to ensure currency.

_____ Data resources used are the most current available.

_____ Non-current data is purged or, at a minimum, identified as not current.

Developmentally Appropriate and Relevant

_____ Intended audiences are identified, and the information is developmentally appropriate and relevant.

Specificity

_____ Career information includes concrete details.

_____ Career information is realistic.

Understandable

_____ Information uses language appropriate for the intended audience(s).

_____ Information avoids, as much as possible, the use of jargon and technical language.

_____ The volume of detail is appropriate for the intended audience(s).

Unbiased

_____ The content is free from stereotypes relating to age, disability, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, nationality, occupation, physical characteristics, poverty level, race, religion, sexual orientation, and social class.

_____ Statements are impartial (that is, free from evaluative terms, not biased toward or against one kind of work, education, or user).

_____ The career information serves the interests of end users in their individual career development and does not include or omit information in order to serve the vested interests of the entity, its sponsors, its customers, or any party other than the end user.

Occupational Information

Occupational information includes the basic characteristics of work being performed by individuals who hold jobs having similar duties, levels of responsibility, skills, knowledge, entry requirements, and physical demands.

_____ The scope of employment (for example, 90 percent of employment in the United States) that the occupational information covers is clearly explained and identified.

_____ Information adequately describes the occupation. At a minimum, occupational topics include an overview or description of the occupation, work-related activities, and requirements for entering the occupation.

_____ Additional topics have clear labels, derive from reliable sources, and are included for all relevant occupations.

_____ Occupational information is presented consistently using uniform content, analysis, and formatting in order to enable effective comparisons of occupations.

_____ The source materials for occupational information and the date of issuance or publication are clearly presented.

Industry Information

Industry information includes characteristics of the labor market and economic conditions affecting employers who produce similar products or provide similar services.

_____ Industry information provides a general description of the industry and describes the types of employers in the industry.

_____ Supplemental information topics have clear labels, derive from reliable sources, and are included for all relevant industries.

_____ Industry information is presented consistently so that users may compare industries.

_____ The source materials for industry information and the date of issuance or publication are clearly indicated.

Education and Training Information

Education/training information includes postsecondary educational programs and the schools or other providers offering them, including public and private colleges, universities, career schools, technical schools, and trade associations.

_____ Program and training information describes the basic characteristics of postsecondary education and training programs that are available to the public.

_____ School information adequately describes characteristics that may be of interest to users in choosing a school. At a minimum, school topics include the name of the school, its location, its website, and the name of a contact (when possible) for information about the school.

_____ A policy statement that describes criteria for inclusion or exclusion of schools and programs from listings is available.

_____ The education information is presented consistently so that users may make comparisons.

_____ Education information, whenever appropriate, specifies the time period for which information is applicable.

Financial Aid Information

Financial aid includes information about sources of college student financial aid, procedures for applying for aid, and the criteria for awarding such aid. Financial aid awards include grants, scholarships, loans, and employment. Currency is of the utmost importance in presenting financial aid information.

_____ Financial aid information includes all eligibility, renewal, and repayment factors for each award and clearly designates those awards that are based on financial need. The entity provides definitions of financial-aid terminology.

_____ A policy statement that describes the criteria for inclusion or exclusion of awards is available.

_____ The information indicates the number of awards given and the number of applicants for the specific award, when it is available.

_____ Financial aid information specifies the application deadline, renewal deadline, and, if applicable, expiration date of information

_____ At a minimum, in order to ensure currency, the financial aid information is reviewed and updated annually.

_____ When matching criteria are used to link end users with relevant awards, how such data are stored and the length of time that any personally identifiable data will be stored is clearly indicated.

_____ Only data relevant to and necessary for matching existing awards is collected.

_____ Due to the especially sensitive nature of some of the data collected, there is no release of any personally identifiable data gathered for the purpose of matching individuals with financial aid sources without the informed consent of the individual, or in the case of minors, the informed consent of the individual's parent or guardian.

_____ The financial aid award information is presented consistently so that users may make comparisons.

Job Search Information

Job search information includes information about what employers seek in prospective employees, job vacancy listings, techniques for obtaining employment, and methods of documenting preparation, experience, and references.

_____ Job search information is appropriate to the age and experience of the audience.

_____ Any cost associated with provision of job search information or services is clearly specified and agreed to in advance of service provision.

_____ Methods for updating job vacancy listings or other time-sensitive content related to job search are in place. Posting dates and the frequency of updating are disclosed.

Localization of Key Information

Information is presented in a localized context. Localized information may be included as part of a product or may be a feature that permits product users to add localized information.

_____ Labor market information, including occupational outlook, wage, current employment, employers, industries, and licensing information, is made available at the state level and, to the extent possible, at the level of sub-state regions or metropolitan areas.

_____ Education and training information, including apprenticeship information, and postsecondary program and institutional information, is made available at the state level, and, when possible, at the level of sub-state regions or metropolitan areas.

_____ The information is of interest to your users.

Career Information and Services Delivery Checklist

Vendor _____ Product/Service _____

Person completing review _____ Date _____

Rating System:

M Meets standard (defined as *most knowledgeable reviewers would concur that the standard is substantially met in both letter and spirit* and meets the standard for users at school or agency)

D Does not meet standard.

NA Does not apply.

Program Delivery

For components to be useful, vendors should deliver them in such a manner that users will be able to access the components, use or navigate them, and know when linked entities or third parties are providing content or processes to the user.

_____ Program provides appropriate contextual guidance that enables use of the product.

_____ Program identifies components for which use requires the assistance or oversight of a trained professional.

_____ The interface is appropriate for use by the intended audience.

_____ The interface is accessible to persons with disabilities in accordance with applicable laws.

_____ The content of linked sites is audience appropriate.

_____ The off-site links are in working order and continue to meet the criteria for inclusion.

_____ Users receive an indication upon leaving the system site and instructions or navigational aids for returning.

Program Accessibility

The program should be demonstrably effective with and accessible to people of varying abilities, experience, and backgrounds.

_____ The program uses equipment and technology that is reliable, widely available, cost effective, and appropriate for a wide variety of users.

_____ The program is sufficiently intuitive and attractive to enable and motivate a variety of users to explore options, make decisions, and create career and educational plans.

_____ The program is easy for people to use independently.

_____ The program has interface(s) that facilitate use by people with a wide range of abilities.

_____ The program enables use by persons with disabilities through accommodations that make all components accessible.

_____ The program provides alternative interfaces and delivery modes to enable access to the largest degree practicable.

Confidentiality

The vendor and program should strive to maintain the utmost confidentiality and privacy of client data and records. In their role as public or quasi-public utilities, vendors should conform to a high standard of privacy and confidentiality, a standard that faithfully embraces the principle of informed consent whenever sensitive or personal data are involved.

_____ No data is collected on any individual or shared in any way without the individual's informed and explicit consent.

_____ For any processing in the program that is based on client data (for example, name, address, test scores, interests, personal preferences), the program explains to the user how the data are being used.

_____ Client records, records of individual delivery system use, or any other personal data obtained or used by the program for whatever purpose are secure and confidential.

_____ There is a provision for erasing client data after services are no longer being provided to that individual.

_____ Any use of data for research purposes excludes any personally identifiable data, except when clients authorize their data to be used for research purposes.

_____ Career planning and management tools indicate who has access (and for how long) to user information stored or posted by the tools.

_____ Users can save, store, or print information for future reference. Likewise, users have the option to delete any stored information.

Support and Service

Vendors should provide support, technical assistance, and a method of communicating with users to ensure that the needs and concerns of those using the component(s) are being met. Some examples of support methods include documentation, help files, e-mail, toll-free numbers, letters, and on-site support visits.

_____ Documentation for use and methodology is available for all major components of the program, including assessments, planning, search/sort, and career management processes, is available.

_____ Program documentation includes details of major components, principal uses, theoretical underpinnings, and relevant research or empirical validation of the system.

_____ The program includes instructions or on-line help for users to make appropriate use of various components and information modules. The vendor provides documentation in print or on-line that explains how to use the program and how to get additional help.

_____ Assistance is available upon request to help users understand the information being provided.

_____ Assistance is available upon request to aid in the operation of any component(s).

_____ Assistance is available to help users with disabilities to access the information or services being provided.

_____ Accurate and concise information that describes organizational activities, products, and services and the organizational mission is available to prospective and end users.

_____ Technical assistance is provided to users who need it. The method(s) of technical assistance are stated clearly, prominently displayed, and easily accessed.

_____ The vendor has a staff member available to address questions and concerns of end users and practitioners.