

Arkansas Certified Career Ready Communities Initiative (ACCRCI)

Mission Statement:

ACCRCI is designed to stimulate the economic growth and development of a community by utilizing a certification process which promotes the availability of a viable workforce demanded by business and industry.

Initiative Statement:

A **Career Ready Community** is a self-defining community, county or regional partnership designated and certified as having a skilled and talented workforce. Career Ready Certification demonstrates community commitment to improve the employability of job seekers that businesses demand. The result will improve the prosperity and quality of life for individuals and drive economic growth. The success of the Career Ready Communities Initiative is contingent upon the partnership and support of the State Agencies represented by the Workforce Cabinet, State and Local Chamber of Commerce's, local school districts as well as local community and business leaders.

Objectives:

- Encourage each local community to make a commitment to earn Certified Career Ready Community status; a designation showing they have a viable workforce to meet current and future needs of business and industry.
- Encourage communities to put workforce at the forefront of their economic development agenda.
- **Pool resources**, talent, common goal-oriented effort and expectations for the good of the community from state agencies, community organizations, and education.
- Develop achievable goals with **state and local action plans** to improve the skills of job seekers.
- **Provide resources to job seekers, students and communities** to further their career expectations and improve the quality of their lives.
- Promote Career Ready Communities to new and existing business and industry employers as a viable opportunity of expansion of their workforce.

Eligibility:

Arkansas communities from small in size to a group of contiguous counties meeting the criteria of **Career Ready Communities**.

Process of Designating a Career Ready Community:

1. Community must submit an **application** to initiate the Career Ready process.
2. Community will submit documentation of **Minimum criteria** for Career Ready Community status:
 - **3%** of **existing workforce** must hold a Career Readiness Certificate
 - **25%** of **job seekers** must hold a Career Readiness Certificate
 - **70%** **high school completers** with a Career Readiness Certificate
 - **70%** **graduation rate** (National Governors Association rate excluding GED)
 - **25%** adult workforce with **two-year certificate/degree or higher**
3. Community application and **documentation** will be reviewed and validated prior to certification.
4. Community will be **publicly recognized and promoted** as a Certified Career Ready Community to new and existing business

Organization/Partnerships:

- Arkansas Department of Career Education
- Arkansas Department of Education
- Arkansas Department of Workforce Services
- Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges
- Arkansas Department of Higher Education
- Arkansas Economic Development Commission
- Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce
- Local school districts, Chamber of Commerce and Economic Developers
- Regional Workforce Investment Boards

Initial Focus

- **Target communities** at or near the minimum criteria for ACCRC status that have strong leadership and are willing to pilot a local action plan to obtain certification.
(2011- Target communities with the highest number of CRCs awarded)

Work Ready Community Recognition:

- Qualifying job seeker will receive the Arkansas CRC signed by the Governor
- High school will receive banner and certificate for achievement
- Community will receive Career Ready Community status with media press release, business and industry promotion, and public recognition from the Arkansas Workforce Cabinet including a banner or sign to be posted.