

An Introduction to Work Ready Communities

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October 20, 2011

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Work Ready Communities

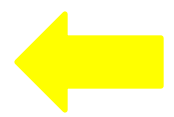
The **Advocates** and the **States' CRC Chat Group** co-hosted a best practices preconference session at ACT's Workforce 2011 in Chicago.

We had 50 representatives from 20 states plus DC join us for this preconference session. Links to notes, images of flipcharts and sign in sheets from the session are located in the right column of this page. The attendance and energy level at this session were a clear indication of strong emerging interest in Work Ready Communities.

ACT has ongoing efforts to lay the groundwork for a national initiative in partnership with governor-led state leadership teams. For more information on ACT's efforts, please contact:

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Rev: 2011.10.18



Work Ready Communities Documents

Name
Arkansas Career Ready Communities 19MAR2011 Draft
Georgia Certified Work Ready Fact Sheet MAR-2011
Georgia Certified Work Ready Presentation JAN-2011
Work Ready Communities Preconference Agenda 18-April-2011
Work Ready Community Matrix (PDF Sheet 1)
Work Ready Community Matrix (XLS)
Work Ready Community Matrix Definitions (PDF Sheet 2)
WRC Preconference Discussion Questions 18-April-2011
WRC Preconference FINAL Notes
WRC Preconference FINAL Report-Out Themes
WRC Preconference Flipchart Image 1
WRC Preconference Flipchart Image 2
WRC Preconference Flipchart Image 3
WRC Preconference Flipchart Image 4
WRC Preconference Flipchart Image 5
WRC Preconference Flipchart Image 6

Career Ready
Work Ready Communities Preconference Session

Co-hosted by  **CRC Advocates** and the STATES CHAT GROUP
SKILL UP AMERICA'S WORKFORCE

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NOTE:
 50 People from
 20 States plus, D.C.



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Communities

Overview of Certified Work Ready Community Initiative



Certified Work Ready Communities



Division of Workforce Development

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03/06/11

As part of Georgia's Work Ready initiative, counties throughout the state have made a commitment to earn Certified Work Ready Community status, a designation showing they have the talented workforce that business demands and the means to drive economic growth and prosperity.

Earning Certified Work Ready Community status ensures citizens have the talent necessary to staff existing jobs and to master the innovative technologies new jobs will require in the future. By taking part in the effort, Georgia counties are transforming their economies and giving themselves a competitive advantage in attracting new businesses and jobs.

To be designated a Certified Work Ready Community, counties must drive current workers and the available workforce to earn Work Ready Certificates, demonstrate a commitment to improving public high school graduation rates and build community commitment for meeting these goals. Each community has created a team of economic development, government and education partners to meet the certification criteria. Counties are given three years to reach the goals necessary to become a Certified Work Ready Community. Those counties willing to complete the process in 18 months are eligible for state-funded grants and serve as models for the initiative, showcasing successes and best practices for others to follow.

[Continue to Georgia Certified Work Ready Communities](#)

» Improve your Skills. Hire the Best. Get Started with Work Ready.

You can access Work Ready tools and info in every Georgia county. Learn how to:

- [Schedule a Work Ready assessment](#)
- [Access gap training to improve your level](#)
- [Inquire about a Work Ready job profile](#)

Statewide

» Related Information

- [How do I complete a job profile?](#)
- [How do I Get Certified?](#)

» Downloads

- [Georgia Work Ready Overview \[pdf\]](#)
- [Certified Work Ready Community Team Leaders \[pdf\]](#)
- [Work Ready as an Economic Development Tool \[pdf\]](#)
- [HSGR increase policy \[pdf\]](#)

» Certificates Earned by County



Access monthly Work Ready Certificate reports by county (PDF download).

Statewide

Communities To Use Work Ready to Pull Ahead of the Pack

When individual workers or job seekers receive certification, they can claim with certainty that they perform at their required skill level. Beyond that, their willingness to test their skills and fill in any gaps with the necessary training and education proves their commitment to lifelong learning and on-the-job training.

When communities are certified Work Ready, they gain a competitive advantage over non-certified communities because they can quantify a skilled workforce to an existing employer or a new business considering Oklahoma for a new location.

According to Barbara Hawkins, Chairman of the Pryor Chamber of Commerce, Pryor worked closely with its local *Workforce Oklahoma* center and the Northeast Oklahoma [Workforce Investment Board](#) to become one of the first communities to use WorkKeys and encourage its businesses to become [Career Readiness Champions](#).

Pryor used existing adult education programs to prepare clients to take the WorkKeys assessment and most all have since received certification. Currently, the chamber and its partners are working with the public school system to implement WorkKeys and CRCs. And, Pryor has also become one of the state's first Work Ready Communities pilot program participants.

"We are a relatively small community yet we were selected by Google," Hawkins says. "In addition to the infrastructure at MidAmerica Industrial Park, our area's ability to offer these companies a highly skilled and certified workforce was a deciding factor. If we continue to place workforce readiness at the top of our priority list and emphasize lifelong learning, there's no telling what we'll be able to accomplish. I certainly believe Pryor and Mayes County have a head start and will continue to be leaders in the work ready efforts."

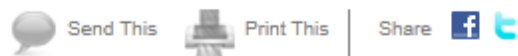
Other benefits cited by those who have participated in similar programs nationally include:

- Improved high school graduation rates;
- Attracted new businesses and investments;
- Gained a competitive advantage over other communities, states, and regions;
- Helped existing companies grow and add new jobs;
- Recruited creative, talented, and innovative people.

Eligibility

To be Work Ready Certified, the community must meet the following requirements:

- 3% of the existing workforce must be credentialed with CRCs;
- 25% of the available workforce must be Career Readiness Certified;
- Either a minimum of 85% graduation rate or 82% of high school seniors with Career Readiness Certificates.



Work Ready Communities Initiative

What is the Work Ready Communities Initiative?

CFED and its partners in the *Work Ready Communities Initiative* (Initiative) have created a certification system for North Carolina counties, along with a strategic design for its demonstration in North Carolina's Eastern Region. A county is designated as "work ready" if its stakeholders prove committed to continuous improvement of their educational and workforce systems, and if it meets certain standards of educational and workforce quality on a 16-item certification index. The Initiative will increase community engagement in workforce improvement issues, as well as provide policymakers with a comprehensive tool to evaluate a community's needs.



While currently intended for application in North Carolina, the concept of certifying communities as work ready has already taken off in Georgia and Oklahoma, with those states using more limited criteria. The products and processes developed by CFED throughout the Initiative could be adapted for use in other states interested in using community certification to improve their education and workforce development systems.

What is a Work Ready Community in North Carolina?

A *Work Ready Community* is one that is both ready to learn and ready to earn. It is a North Carolina county that is committed to improving the skill level of its workforce, and that achieves critical standards of workforce quality. In a *Work Ready Community*, public- and private-sector stakeholders efficiently utilize the Career Readiness Certificate (CRC), the most widely recognized work-ready certificate among employers and educators across the country and a viable "work ready" proxy in North Carolina. A *Work Ready Community* has a critical mass of employable workers, as conveyed by 25 percent of the labor force holding a CRC, and above-standard performance on institutional proxies of labor force quality (high school graduation rate, associate degree rate, certificate holders, etc.). The Initiative also directly includes employers in the certification process by specifying thresholds for their involvement with the CRC.

Please contact Lisa Buckley at lbuckley@cfed.org for more information on the Work Ready Communities Initiative.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE WORK READY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

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Michigan NCRC Foundation Milestones

The Michigan Merit Exam was launched in 2007 with two WorkKeys assessments, Reading for Information and Applied Math. In 2009 the test was modified to add the third assessment, Locating Information.

The Council for Labor and Economic Growth (CLEG), Michigan's State Workforce Board, unanimously approved the Michigan NCRC proposal from the CLEG committees that were tasked to research and recommend a certificate for Michigan.

In 2009, the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth made the Michigan National Career Readiness Certificate (MI NCRC) and the three WorkKeys assessments upon which it is based, the certificate and required worker skills assessments, for Michigan's workforce system.

In addition, in 2009 the Michigan Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth provided funding to pilot the Energy Conservation Apprenticeship Readiness (ECAR) Program that utilized the NCRC as a cornerstone to prepare individuals for apprenticeship training.

The Michigan NCRC is positioned as part of the Governor's No Worker Left Behind (NWLB) program, Michigan's signature workforce development program.

The Michigan Department of Corrections, Office of Employment Readiness, incorporated the NCRC into the Academic and Career Technical offerings.

Michigan was the first state to align its workforce development system with its education system by using the same outcome assessments.

Examples of Local Efforts

Presentations at:

- Saginaw County Business & Education Partnership & at regional partnership meeting
- Great Lakes Bay Regional Summer Institute
- Semi-annual county-wide school board meeting
- Valley Society of Human Resource Managers
- Saginaw County Chamber of Commerce PERC
- Boards and service clubs
- Individual employers

**Michigan Status
WE Need
Work Ready Communities**

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 - Alignment Model
 - Alignment Process
 - High Schools
 - Colleagues

Conferences

The ACT National Conference:

ACT's **Workforce 2012** conference will be held at the Westin Hotel, Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, April 11-13, 2012.

Link to: [ACT Conference Website](#)

Michigan NCRC Conference:

The eighth annual Michigan NCRC Conference (formerly Michigan WorkKeys Conference) will be held October 20th and 21st, 2011 at the Lexington Lansing Hotel in Lansing.

Link to: [Michigan NCRC Conference](#)

Rev: 2011.08.29



Conference Documents

Name
2008 Michigan WorkKeys Conference Booklet

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- [Michigan Registration...](#)
- [Gillespie_Holton_Schanker_Boost_Career_College_Knowledge_OCT_2010](#)
- [Griffiths_Caswell_WorkKeys_and_MME_Going_for_the_Platinum_OCT_2010](#)
- [Guest NCRC Employer Engagement OCT 2010](#)
- [Guest Skills Now Presentation OCT 2010](#)
- [Guest Welcome Remarks OCT 2010](#)
- [Heller_Career_Coaching_NCRC_and_PSA's_OCT_2010](#)