South Carolina Work Ready Communities Application

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Dear Community Leaders:

Thank you for your interest in the South Carolina Work Ready Communities (SCWRC) initiative. By taking part in this effort, you will have the opportunity to transform your community's economy and gain a competitive advantage in expanding existing businesses and attracting new businesses and jobs.

In order to qualify, your county will need to reach targeted goals. This will include a certain number of individuals in your workforce obtaining a National Career Readiness Certificate™ (NCRC), and a set number of employers recognizing, preferring or recommending the NCRC. County goals for each of South Carolina's 46 counties may be viewed at www.scworkready.org.

The enclosed packet will guide you through the application process. Once your application is submitted, it will be reviewed by a panel comprised of the SCWRC State Leadership Team and members of the South Carolina Workforce Investment Board (SWIB). Once approved by the panel, a recommendation for approval will be made to the SWIB.

Application Packet Includes:
1. Checklist for Application - steps to take for submission
2. Criteria for Certification
3. Application
4. Sample Letter of Commitment

Certification goals may seem aggressive, but they are most certainly attainable! With a strong local leadership team, and a well-developed plan, your county can earn status as a SC Work Ready Community. Counties will have up to two years to achieve certification.

We sincerely hope all of our 46 counties will give consideration to choosing to participate in the SCWRC. Please feel free to contact our statewide SCWRC Coordinator, Elisabeth Kovacs, at (803) 737-2681, or submit questions via email to scworkready@dew.sc.gov. Information can also be accessed at scworkready.org. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

R. Michael Johnson, Chair
State Workforce Investment Board

SOUTH CAROLINA WORK READY COMMUNITIES

CHECKLIST

Congratulations on your decision to apply to become a South Carolina Work Ready Community! This list includes recommended and required steps in completing your application.

☐ **Organize your County WRC Steering Committee**
Counties must build their Work Ready Communities (WRC) Steering Committee with local stakeholders. Members should have a strong commitment to the Work Ready Community effort as they will be essential to the long term success. Each team should have a designated, individual leader or "champion" who will have the time to ensure goal obtainment for your county.
The champion will set the stage for the initiative, form committees if needed, and lead efforts to galvanize and gain buy-in from community stakeholders.

Members should include those with decision making authority to include, but not limited to:
- ✓ School District Representative (Superintendent, Principal, et al.)
- ✓ Tech College Representative (President, VP, et al.)
- ✓ Industry Representatives (from 2 or 3 major industries in your county)
- ✓ Chamber of Commerce Representative
- ✓ County Economic Developer
- ✓ Local Workforce Board Representative (Board Member or Administrator)
- ✓ Other Workforce Partners, as needed (Adult Ed, Vocational Rehabilitation, DSS, DEW, etc.)
- ✓ Elected Officials, as needed (Mayors, School Board Members, State Legislators)

☐ **Assess your County Criteria and Goals**
Each county has goals specific to its population, labor force and number of businesses. Counties are categorized into small, medium, and large. Find your county's required goals by going to
www.scworkready.org

☐ **Develop a Plan to Reach Your County Goals**
As a part of the application process, you will be required to submit an action plan for achieving your county goals. You MAY also submit complementary information regarding your community if your WRC Steering Committee considers the information significant.

☐ **Prepare and Submit Application**
You will be required to gather letters of commitment from each of your WRC Steering Committee members. A sample of this letter can be found in the application package. The name of the lead/champion for this initiative will need to be included. When your county application is approved, you will be notified of your participation in the SC Work Ready Communities initiative.

☐ Mail electronically to scworkready@dew.sc.gov or South Carolina Work Ready Communities, 1550 Gadsden Street, Suite 515, Columbia, South Carolina 29201.

CRITERIA FOR CERTIFICATION

Community Commitment

Evidence of strong commitment from Key Stakeholders is a necessity. This allows a community to demonstrate true collaboration and progress towards achieving strategic goals that bring together education, workforce, and economic development.

Application must show support including signed letters of commitment from each one of these required stakeholders:

- ❖ School District Representative (Superintendent, Principal, et al.)
- ❖ Tech College Representative (President, VP, et al.)
- ❖ Industry Representatives (from 2 or 3 major industries in your county)
- ❖ Chamber of Commerce Representative
- ❖ County Economic Developer
- ❖ Local Workforce Board Representative (Board Member or Administrator)
- ❖ Other Workforce Partners, as needed (Adult Ed, Vocational Rehabilitation, DSS, DEW, etc.)
- ❖ Elected Officials, as needed (Mayors, School Board Members, State Legislators)

National Career Readiness Certificate

National Career Readiness Certificates™ (NCRC) are to be obtained at the county level by individuals representing the following workforce groups: current (private and government workers), emerging (High School Juniors/Seniors and College Students), and transitioning (unemployed and Adult Education participants). NCRCs are obtained by individuals completing the three (3) basic WorkKeys$^{®}$ assessments:

- Reading
- Math
- Locating Information

Individuals scoring at least a 3 on the three basic WorkKeys assessments will obtain an NCRC. Click here to see your county's required goals www.scworkready.org/criteria-2/ .

Private and Public Employer Support

Local business support is based on the number of businesses in a county. Click the link below to see your county's required business support goals. To gather business support, businesses can complete a SC Work Ready Communities postcard and return it to their local WRC representative/team member or they can choose to sign-up directly at www.workreadycommunities.org by clicking on the South Carolina state page. Businesses participating and county business goals will be posted on the national ACT Work Ready Communities website, as well as the SC WRC website www.scworkready.org/criteria-2/ .

County Graduation Rate

Counties are required to meet a 73.1% graduation rate based on a 3-year county (**not District or State**) average and/or a 1-2% increase in the 3-year average baseline aligned with the SC Department of Education annual improvement goals. Click the link below to see your county's current 3-year average. wwwscworkready.org/criteria-2/

Soft Skills

25% of a county's total NCRC goal (not certificates earned) will be required to take the ACT WorkKeys® Talent assessment. This is a measure of soft skills that provides insight into personal characteristics that are directly related to on-the-job success. This will result in individuals obtaining an NCRC Plus.

Complementary Information-*optional*

If your county falls slightly short of meeting required goals but has plans in place to enhance your workforce in the future, the SCWRC Review Panel will recognize these efforts. The SCWRC Review Panel will consider complementary information which may enhance your acceptance as a SC Work Ready Community.

> Examples related to the SCWRC initiative:
> 1). If your county has a plan in place to increase your high school graduation rate and/or a dropout prevention plan, include it in your application.
> 2). If your county has a significant number of occupational credentials (industry recognized credentials) among your residents, you may wish to document this for review. This measure lacks a standard tracking system, but community colleges and local employers may be able to assist. Explain your methodology.
> 3). If your county has an active Business and Industry Roundtable or HR Association or Workforce Committee engaged in some of the SCWRC related efforts, include plans already in place or potential plans for growth and development of a stronger workforce.

Counties will have two years from the date their application is approved to meet the requirements of the National and State CWRC initiative. ACT required data will not change; however, SC Graduation Improvement Rates will be updated annually. Once attained, a county's certification status is valid for two years. Counties will have an opportunity re-certify as a Certified Work Ready Community during the next application phase which will include new goals. Counties not meeting certification during the first phase will have an opportunity to become a Certified Work Ready Community during round two.

APPLICATION

The purpose of the South Carolina Work Ready Communities initiative is to provide counties with a framework to validate that they have a skilled workforce ready to fill current and future jobs. A county that submits this application to the SC Department of Employment and Workforce is declaring that there is a commitment from county leadership and partners to proceed in the certification process.

Name of County:

Counties are required to build a Work Ready Community Steering Committee with participation from various groups. Members should be those with decision making authority. The list below is the minimum, local team member participation expected. Counties are required to select a Team Leader/Champion who is committed to reaching the county's specific goals and has the time available to ensure success. It is anticipated that county teams will meet as necessary in person or by conference call with Steering Committee members or their representatives in order to ensure county goals are met in the desired timeframe.

Commitment of Key Stakeholders - Please list their names, title, and organization.

School District Representative (Superintendent, Principal, et al.):

Tech College Representative (President, VP, et al.):

Industry Representatives (from 2 or 3 major industries in your county):

Chamber of Commerce Representative:

County Economic Developer:

Local Workforce Board Representative (Board Member or Administrator):

Other Workforce Partners, as needed (Adult Ed, Voc Rehab, DSS, DEW, etc.):

Elected Officials, as needed (Mayors, School Board Members, State Legislators):

Letter of Commitment: A letter of commitment to the Certified Work Ready Community effort needs to be included from every WRC Steering Committee member listed above. The letter of commitment template is provided on page 10.

Narratives for Criteria Supporting NCRC and Business Engagement
Please respond to both sections A and B.

A. Provide a narrative outlining your county's plans to reach established goals and your proposed timeline/deadlines within the two-year period. This plan from your WRC Steering Committee has a three (3) page maximum (12 point font, single-spaced) and should include the following:

Explain your county's plan for achieving the NCRC goals required for certification. Be specific in your explanation as it relates to the numbers in these categories:
- Transitional—unemployed individuals/adult education participants
- Emerging—high school juniors/senior, college students and recent graduates
- Current workforce—workers currently employed in the private or public sector
- Veterans

B. Present strategies to build business support and recognition of the National Career Readiness Certificate in your county. Describe the county's plan to engage employers in this initiative and to reach the established goals.

Complementary Information
A). Are you including additional information?

B). If yes, please **attach** additional information.

Name and Contact Information of Team Leader/Champion

Name and Title:

Organization:

Address:

Office Phone:

Email:

Signatory Authority (County Council Chair or County Administrator)

I am pleased to confirm that   is interested in becoming a SC Work Ready Community. Therefore by signing this *Application*, I am certifying that our county is ready to proceed with the Certified Work Ready Community certification process.

Signature:

Date:

Applications for Work Ready Community Certification will be accepted bi-annually. Initial applications will be due **February 1, 2013.**

Completed applications can be submitted by mail or electronically to:
scworkready@dew.sc.gov or
SC Work Ready Communities Initiative
1550 Gadsden Street, Suite 515
Columbia, SC 29201

SAMPLE LETTER OF COMMITMENT

Dear Work Ready Review Committee:

Please consider this letter documentation of my commitment to South Carolina's Work Ready Community (SCWRC) initiative for _____ County. I commit to participate in the program and will encourage and promote the SCWRC in my local communities.

In addition to the above, myself or a representative from my entity will participate in all necessary meetings in preparation for this effort and will recommend the National Career Readiness Certificate to local employers and job seekers.

Organization Name

Company Website

Key Contact

Contact Title/Role

Contact Phone Number

Contact E-Mail

Address

City

County

Zip

Signature: _____   Date: _____

A letter of commitment must be provided and signed by every individual serving as a member of the county's WRC Steering Committee.
Letters of support from other interested/supporting local entities can also be provided but do not replace team member letters of commitment.