

North Carolina has launched - **NCWorks Certified Work Ready Communities** - a statewide initiative to certify communities and counties as part of the state's workforce development strategy. This initiative resulted from collaboration between workforce development partners including the Office of the Governor, the North Carolina Chamber, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the North Carolina Community College System Office, and the North Carolina Department of Commerce. High school seniors in North Carolina public schools, who have a career and technical education (CTE) concentration (four technical credits in a career cluster), take the ACT WorkKeys job skills assessments needed to earn an ACT National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC). North Carolina community colleges serve as instructional and testing centers for adults and transitioning youth. The North Carolina Chamber serves as the organization that designates counties as *NCWorks Certified Work Ready Communities*.

Requirements

In order to be certified as *NCWorks Work Ready*, a community must meet each of the following criteria:

- A **letter of commitment** to workforce excellence from county leaders.
- Progress in the **high school graduation rate** toward the goal of 94 percent.
- Achieve the **number of National Career Readiness Certificates (NCRC)** indicated in the common criteria (based upon size of county and workforce status).
- Gain **commitment from employers** to recognize the NCRC.

Benefits

This initiative supports economic development in the state by providing a workforce with documented foundational skills. It also provides counties with data, processes, and tools that help drive economic growth. Other stated benefits include helping:

- **Business and industry** know exactly which foundational skills they need for a productive workforce – and to easily communicate their needs;
- **Individuals** understand which skills are required by employers – and how to prepare themselves for success;
- **Policymakers** consistently measure the skills gap;
- **Educators** close the skills gap via tools integrated into career pathways with stackable industry-recognized credentials; and
- **Economic developers** use an on-demand reporting tool to market the quality of their workforce.

Currently, 23 percent of North Carolina counties are participating in this initiative. Leading the way are Wayne and Lenoir counties - each received certification in April 2015. For more information, visit <http://ncchamber.net/foundation/ncworks-certified-work-ready-communities/>.



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