



Application Package

Effective February 27, 2014

All applications for Work Ready Community status submitted on or after February 27, 2014 must use this revised application and criteria.

Sponsored by

Kentucky Workforce Investment Board

Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Kentucky Work Ready Communities

Thank you for your interest in the Kentucky Work Ready Communities In Progress certification. As part of Kentucky's overall strategic plan to transform the workforce development system, the state created this framework whereby communities can agree to meet certain educational, workforce development and collaboration goals in order to earn "Work Ready Community In Progress" certification. By taking part in the effort, you will have the opportunity to transform your community's economy and gain a competitive advantage in attracting new businesses and jobs.

In order to qualify, communities must meet or create plans to meet certain thresholds in criteria such as graduation rates, National Career Readiness Certificate holders and educational attainment rates. In addition, communities are required to bring various key agencies and employers together in the process. The process is designed to align education, workforce and economic development strategies for the state and within communities by using a collaborative approach.

The enclosed materials will help you communicate your intent to participate and act as your official application for Work Ready Community in Progress status. After achieving this status, you will have up to three years to reach the thresholds and apply for Work Ready Community status.

The application packet includes the following documents:

1. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – about the Work Ready Community program,
2. Letter of Intent – required to be submitted at least 30 days prior to the application,
3. Application Checklist – a list of steps to take in preparing your application, information sources and what to expect after your application has been submitted,
4. Work Ready Community In Progress Criteria and Thresholds – a list of requirements that must be met in order to become a Work Ready Community In Progress,
5. Application Form – the basic application information including measurable criteria and a listing of program participants and endorsees,
6. Plan Narrative Forms – instructions for completing plans that are required for some criteria, and
7. Letter of Commitment – a sample commitment letter for use with partner agencies, employers, etc.

As you will see, the certification requirements are designed to be challenging but not impossible to meet.

We hope that all counties will put serious consideration into applying. If you have questions about the program or process, we would prefer they be submitted via email. Please feel free to submit questions via the email link on the program's web site: <http://kwib.ky.gov/workreadycommunity.htm>.

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COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROGRAM

1. **Does being a certified Work Ready Community help us?** Absolutely! Employers and potential employers who may consider your community as a location want to know about your workforce. Being certified answers many of their questions and indicates that your community is serious about meeting their needs.
2. **How were the criteria and thresholds selected?** The Kentucky Work Ready Community Steering Committee, which consists of representatives from all major stakeholders in the project (including employers, education, workforce development, economic development, and more) worked to define the criteria initially. Further guidance was received by business and industry – their input drove the final selections.
3. **Can multiple counties make a Work Ready Region?** YES – While Work Ready Regions are not officially a part of this program currently, as long as the counties each meet the Work Ready Community criteria individually and become certified, contiguous counties within Kentucky can promote themselves as a Work Ready Region.
4. **Can any unit smaller than a county apply (such as a city or region not defined by county lines)?** NO – the smallest unit allowed to apply is a county. The reason for this has to do with how data is gathered and tracked. Standardized data for the criteria included are generally tracked at a county level.
5. **Our community does not meet the minimum criteria yet – can we still apply?** YES – In order for the program to have real value for business and industry, the criteria are intentionally stringent. In fact, we expect only a handful of counties to meet the criteria and immediately achieve Work Ready Community status. Most communities will apply for Work Ready Community in Progress – with detailed plans to meet the criteria where they fall short.
6. **How long will we have to meet the criteria if we become a Work Ready Community in Progress?** You will have up to three years to meet the minimum criteria. You will need to show continuous improvement within this three-year period.
7. **What if a Work Ready Community in Progress does not meet their goals in three years – can we reapply?** If you can demonstrate continuous improvement, the selection committee may decide to extend your goal deadline. If the committee does NOT extend your deadline and you lose Work Ready Community in Progress status, you must wait one year before reapplying.
8. **If our community meets the criteria and becomes a Work Ready Community, how long will that status last?** Work Ready Community Status will last for two years, at which time each community must be recertified to ensure they have not fallen below required criteria levels. The recertification process will be a shorter process than the original application and should be fairly easy as long as the local committee stays actively involved.
9. **Is there a cost?** NO – there is no application fee.

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10. **What is the process after we submit our application?** First, the Work Ready Community Review Panel will review the data to verify accuracy. Then the panel will review the narratives included. Based on this information, the committee will make a recommendation to the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board (KWIB), which will have final approval on granting Work Ready Community or Work Ready Community in Progress status. The process will vary in length depending on the timing of the application in relation to the next KWIB meeting. You will be notified of the outcome by the review panel.

11. **When can we apply?** You can apply at any time, though applications will be reviewed three times per year. The review panel will meet three times per year to review applications that have been submitted at least 30 days before the review panel meeting. Once established, the meeting dates, times and locations of review panel meetings will be posted on the program's web site.

Letter of Intent to Participate

As part of Kentucky's overall strategic plan to transform the workforce development system, the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board and its strategic partners created this certification in order for counties to validate the skill level of the workforce. Participating in this effort offers counties the opportunity to transform the local economy and gain a competitive advantage in attracting new businesses and jobs.

In order to qualify, communities must meet certain thresholds in criteria such as graduation rates, National Career Readiness Certificate holders and educational attainment rates. In addition, communities are required to bring various key agencies and employers together in the process. The process is designed to align education, workforce development and economic development strategies for the state and within communities by using for a collaborative approach.

Additional information about the program is available at: <http://kwib.ky.gov/workreadycommunity.htm>.

Participant Information

This Letter of Intent represents the first step in the process to achieving Work Ready Community status. It is a symbol of your community's commitment to validating and continuously improving the quality of your workforce and alerts state officials of this commitment so that technical assistance along with other resources (as available) can be targeted to such communities.

Please complete the following information and forward a signed copy of this document as instructed at the end of the letter.

NAME OF COUNTY _____

DATE _____

COUNTY TEAM LEADER

(This individual will serve as the primary contact for state officials with regard to opportunities, questions and program updates.)

Name _____

Title _____

Organization _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ Zip Code _____

Daytime Phone _____

Email _____

COUNTY TEAM MEMBERS

(Please list the names and organizations serving on your county committee or team. If an organization has agreed to participate but not yet named a representative, simply use TBD for the name. You may list more than one organization for each stakeholder category, but must have at least one entity listed for each category. Attach additional pages as necessary)

Economic Development

Name Title

Organization Name Title

Organization Name Title

Elected Officials

Name Title

Organization Name Title

Organization Name Title

Education

Name Title

Organization Name Title

Organization Name Title

Business & Industry

Name Title

Organization Name Title

Organization Name Title

Workforce Development

Name Title Organization

Name Title

Organization Name Title

CURRENT STATUS

(Please mark all that apply to your current status in the application process)

- Committee Formed
- Subcommittees Assigned
- Tasks Assigned
- Tasks Underway Tasks
- Completed Application
- Started Application Draft
- Complete
- Application In Final Local Review

ASSISTANCE REQUESTED

(Please indicate any assistance you would like to receive. Staff from the state board will follow up with your team leader to arrange for all technical assistance.)

- Program Overview Presentation
- Topic/Criteria Specific Presentation (Specify) _____
- Best Practice Linkages
- Printed Materials (Specify Topics) _____
- Conference Call to Answer Questions
- Other (Specify) _____

ESTIMATED SUBMISSION DATE

(Please indicate when you believe your application will be submitted to the state for review)

Month _____ Year _____

SIGNATURE

(Your signature below indicates your county team's commitment to working through the process to become a Certified Work Ready Community or Work Ready Community In Progress and authorizes the state to add your county's name to the list of others working toward this achievement.)

County Team Leader

_____ County

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CHECKLIST

Congratulations on your decision to apply for the Kentucky Work Ready Community program. This checklist includes recommended and required steps in completing your application.

□ Organize a Local Application Committee

This committee will play many important roles in the application process as well as the long-term qualification and requalification process. The committee should include individuals from key stakeholders in the community including employers, local workforce investment boards, economic development representatives, education (secondary and post-secondary), and elected officials.

□ Complete and submit your Letter of Intent

You may submit this document at any time, but it must be received at least 30 days prior to submitting an application. This document will assist counties in their organizational efforts and offers an opportunity to request technical assistance in the preparation of the application.

□ Gather information

Some of the required criteria are simple data points that can be gathered from official sources. These include high school graduation rate, educational attainment, and broadband access. See the Work Ready Community In Progress Criteria for the official data sources.

□ Create Plans and Complete the Required Narratives

Several criteria require narratives to be completed that outline plans to reach established goals within a certain period of time. Each of the required narratives and their details are outlined in the application materials. This step will require collaboration with members of the Local Application Committee.

□ Gather Letters of Commitment, Meeting Minutes, Attendee Lists and Signatures

Signatures and letters of commitment are required from community leaders as outlined in the criteria requirements document. Meeting minutes and signed attendee lists from the Application Committee meetings are also required.

□ Complete the Application Materials and Submit

You must submit the following items:

- a. the completed application form,
- b. additional high schools included and graduation rate calculations (only if you are including high schools not already in the state reporting graduation rate),
- c. required and optional supporting plans/narratives,
- d. letters of commitment, and
- e. meeting minutes, attendee list and signatures from the application committee meeting(s) – showing representation from all required stakeholders.

Once received, the Work Ready Community Review Panel will process your application, verify data, and review plans. If the committee approves status (either Work Ready Community or Work Ready Community in Progress) it will make a recommendation to the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board, which will have final approval.

Please submit one hard copy and one electronic copy (thumb drive or CD) of all materials via US mail or messenger and one electronic copy of the application page via email to:

Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board
Attn: Issac VanHoose
300 Building, 4th Floor
300 Sower Blvd.
Frankfort, KY 40601

Email to: workready@ky.gov

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CRITERIA and THRESHOLDS

Graduation Rate

SOURCE:

Kentucky Department of Education. See RESOURCES tab on the Work ready Communities web site.

High school graduation rate calculated with the method used in reporting for the State of Kentucky.

WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must present a plan to raise the rate to 88.9 percent* within three years and to 98% by 2022. Inclusion of private or parochial graduation rates not already included in the traditionally reported figure is allowed at the discretion of the county.

National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) Holders

SOURCE:

Kentucky NCRC Coordinator. See RESOURCES tab on the Work ready Communities web site.

The National Career Readiness Certificate is awarded based on the three WorkKeys® assessments – Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, Locating Information. It is accepted throughout the nation by employers as a measure of work readiness. Kentucky has an NCRC initiative underway.

WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must present a plan to reach 9 percent of the working age population (18-64) holding NCRCs within three years and 15 percent within five years. Plan should include promotional strategies, training availability, and encouraging employer recognition of the certificate.

Community Commitment

A measurement of commitment from community and government agencies to the process of becoming certified and remaining certified. This allows a community to demonstrate true collaboration and progress toward achieving strategic goals that bring together education, workforce, economic development and elected leadership.

WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Application must show support (signatures/meeting participation) from the following stakeholders (at least one participant and signature per category):

1. Economic Development – Suggested participants
 - a. Heads of local economic development groups
 - b. Other local economic development leadership
2. Electe l Officials – Suggested participants
 - a. County judge executive
 - b. Mayor(s)
 - c. Council members
3. Education – Suggested participants
 - a. Superintendents
 - b. Community college presidents
 - c. Adult education representative
 - d. Area Technology Center directors
 - e. College or university leaders
4. Workforce Development – Suggested participants
 - a. Local WIB representative
 - b. Area Development District director
5. Business and Industry – Suggested participants
 - a. President, chamber(s) of commerce
 - b. Business leaders

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CRITERIA and THRESHOLDS

Educational Attainment

The percentage of working-age (25-64) adults in a community with at least a two-year degree.

SOURCE:
US Census: American Community Survey - 5-year estimates and Kentucky Adult Education. See **RESOURCES** tab on the Work ready Communities web site.

WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must present a plan to be at 25 percent within three years and at 32 percent within five years and 39 percent within seven years.

AND

The percentage of working-age (18-64) adults in a community without a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma (e.g., GED®)

WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must present a plan to reduce the percentage of working age adults (18-64) in your county without a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma (e.g., GED®) as based on the American Community Survey by 3% points in three years and 5% in five years. A map listing counties within the commonwealth and their population of adults without a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma can be found on the Kentucky Adult Education website (<http://www.kyae.ky.gov>)

Soft Skills Measurement

A Certified Work Ready Community must have a program or programs to address work ethic/soft skills development and credentialing for both the secondary school and post secondary adult populations.

SOURCE:
See **RESOURCES** tab on the Work ready Communities web site.

WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must present a plan to achieve the list below within three years.

The specific design of these programs will be up to local officials, but must meet the following minimum standards:

- ☐ provide evidence of employer engagement in the program development process, including representation of the community's most prolific businesses and industries,
- ☐ provide evidence that employers recognize achievement of work ethic or soft skills credential in their hiring/advancement processes,
- ☐ programs must include measurable goals for annual improvement in the raw number and percentage of workforce credentialed,
- ☐ program plans must include a strategy to assure employers of the sustainability of the programs, and
- ☐ programs must address, at a minimum, the following topical areas: attendance/punctuality, communication, teamwork, leadership and critical thinking.

If requested, the state will provide examples of programs and credentials created by other communities as models, but it is expected that local areas will develop programs that are responsive to the specific needs and requirements of their target employers or industries.

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CRITERIA and THRESHOLDS

Availability of Internet as an indicator of digital literacy

SOURCE:
See RESOURCES tab on the Work ready Communities web site.

The percentage of households in a community with broadband Internet available. Data must come from www.broadband.gov.

WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must present a plan to meet the goals below within three years.

A rural county must have 3Mbps speeds or greater available to 90 percent of housing units with the exception of those they can show to be inaccessible (cost prohibitive) by technology other than wireless – where there must be 1.5Mbps speeds available to 90 percent of housing units.

Supplemental Criteria

SOURCE:
See RESOURCES tab on the Work ready Communities web site.

Some important measures will be considered by the review panel as supplemental to the primary criteria in your application. It is possible that if your community falls just short in one area, but is very strong in one of the following measures, the panel may make take this into consideration.

OCCUPATIONAL CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT: Explain in an optional narrative the prevalence of occupational credentials (industry recognized certificates). Sources for this may be employers, community colleges or other. This measure lacks a standard tracking method/standard goal so you should explain your methodology in determining and presenting this measure.

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GRADUATION RATE SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

The high school graduation rate criteria for Kentucky's Work Ready Communities program is based on the state's goal for graduation rates in public schools as specified by administrative regulation.

A graduation rate for the applicant county must include a combined rate for all public school systems within the county, including all independent districts. The goal for school year 2014-15 is 88.9%.

NOTE: The criteria for Work Ready Communities is tied to the state goal for graduation, therefore future changes to this regulation will be reflected in the evaluation of this criteria.

Supplementing the Rate

Counties with private, parochial or other non-public high schools issuing recognized diplomas may add these graduation rates to their public school rates at their discretion.

If included, the non-public school raw data corresponding to the variables on the Department of Education-specified equation must be used to generate the total county rate. Counties supplementing their rate using this method should submit a spreadsheet demonstrating their calculations.

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APPLICATION

1 Name of County

2 High School Graduation Rate (most recent state NCLB reporting)

List Source/Method: i.e. summer 2014 5 year adjusted Cohort method

Would you like to include high schools that are not in the traditionally reported graduation rate shown above?

If so, please enter revised graduation rate here. Please **attach** a list of schools included and your calculations.

3 Educational Attainment Rate (ages 25-64)

(Source: US Census, most recent American Community Survey five-year estimates)

4 Community Commitment

(check off)

Name of Organization

- Economic Development
- Elected Official(s)
- Education
- Workforce Development
- Business and Industry

Attach meeting minutes and meeting attendance sheets showing these signatures. Letters of Commitment from various organizations are helpful as well.

5 Percentage of Households with Broadband Internet Access Available

(Source: broadband.gov)

Rural or Urban County

6 Are you including criteria for occupational attainment?

(**Attach** narratives and list sources and calculations)

7 Your Contact Information (primary contact for your county application)

name	phone	email
Mailing Address		

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NARRATIVES/PLANS

Narratives and Plans – Instructions:

1. If your county does NOT meet the 98% percent graduation rate, you must complete Narrative 1 in order to apply to be a Work Ready Community in Progress.

Narrative 1: Graduation Rate: Present a plan to raise the graduation rate to 86.1 percent (state goal) within three years and to 98% by 2022.

2. All applicants must complete Narrative 2.

Narrative 2: National Career Readiness Certificate Attainment: Present a plan to raise the National Career Readiness Certificate rate to 15 percent of working age (18-64) adults within three years. Plan should include promotional strategies, training availability, and encouraging employer recognition of the certificate (three pages maximum).

3. If your community does NOT meet the Educational Attainment rate of 25 percent you must complete Narrative 3 in order to apply to be a Work Ready Community in Progress.

Narrative 3: Educational Attainment: Present a plan to raise the Educational Attainment rate to 25 percent within three years and 32 percent within five years and 39 percent within seven years (three pages maximum). A separate plan must also be presented to reduce the percentage of working age adults (18-64) in your county without a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma (e.g., GED®) as based on the American Community Survey by 3% points in three years and 5% in five years.

4. All applicants must complete Narrative 4.

Narrative 4: Soft Skills Program: Discuss your community program or programs to address work ethic/soft skills development and credentialing for both the secondary school and postsecondary adult populations. If there are no current programs you must present a plan to develop one meeting the standards below within three years.

The programs must meet the following minimum standards:

- provide evidence of employer engagement in the program development process, including representation of the county's most prolific businesses and industries,
- provide evidence that employers recognize achievement of work ethic or soft skills credential in their hiring/advancement processes,
- programs must include measurable goals for annual improvement in the raw number and percentage of workforce credentialed,
- plans must include a strategy to assure employers of the sustainability of the programs, and
- programs must address, at a minimum, the following topical areas: attendance/punctuality, communication, teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking. (four pages maximum)

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NARRATIVES/PLANS

5. If your community is a rural county and does not meet the broadband availability rate of 90 percent throughout the county because some areas are not accessible with 3Mbps speeds but you can show that these areas are covered 90 percent by 1.5 Mbps, you must complete Narrative 5.

Narrative 5: Broadband Availability: (rural county) County must have 3Mbps or greater speeds available to 90 percent of housing units with the exception of those they can show to be inaccessible (cost prohibitive) by technology other than wireless – where there must be 1.5Mbps speeds available to 90 percent of housing units. Present data to show that these areas are covered by 1.5Mbps at 90 percent availability (three pages maximum).

6. If your county does not meet the broadband availability goals, you must complete Narrative 6 in order to apply to be a Work Ready Community in Progress.

Narrative 6: Broadband Availability: Must present a plan to meet the broadband availability goals, whether rural or urban, within three years (two pages maximum).

7. If your county is presenting supplemental criteria, you must complete Narrative 7.

Narrative 7: Supplemental Criteria:

Occupational Credentials: Please show total numbers of industry-recognized credentials in your county among working age (18-64) population. Be sure to list the type of credential, number of individuals with each credential, sources and show any calculations. Employers and community colleges will be important sources in this effort. (three pages maximum)

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SAMPLE LETTER OF COMMITMENT

Dear Work Ready Community In Progress Steering Committee:

Please consider this letter documentation of our commitment to the Kentucky Work Ready Community Program for [county name]. [organization name] commits to participate in the program, support the program and work to spread the word and to gain participation from others in our community.

In addition to the above, we are willing to participate by:

- Sending a representative to an annual strategic planning retreat for our Work Ready Community effort,
- Attending periodic community meetings to discuss the program with others, and
- Accepting the National Career Readiness Certificate as a valid work readiness credential in our hiring and/or promotions processes (for employers).

Organization: _____
Key Contact Name: _____
Key Contact Title/Role: _____
Key Contact Phone Number: _____
Key Contact Email Address: _____
Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____

Signature _____