

# Communications Toolkit



KENTUCKY  
**Work Ready**   
COMMUNITIES

Online at [workready.ky.gov](http://workready.ky.gov)

- Application Packet
- Panel Meeting Schedule
- Best Practices
- Data and Technical Resources
- Recommended Data Resources for Each of the Criteria
- County Map
- Videos
- Partner Websites



### Getting Started

Getting Started Guide 1-2-3  
Application Process Summary  
Engaging Employers  
FAQ



### Marketing Materials

Flyer – Community Outreach  
Flyer – Information for Site Selectors  
Endorsements



### Public Relations Materials

News Releases  
Talking Points  
Social Media Posts



### Best Practices

Available at [workready.ky.gov](http://workready.ky.gov)

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## Get Organized

**1.** Review the Application Package

[Download the most recent version at the [Kentucky Work Ready Communities web site](#)]

**2.** Form a committee or consider using an existing community committee, such as a P-16 Council, and select a Committee Leader.

**3.** Submit your county's letter of intent for Work Ready

[Available on the web site]

### KEYS TO SUCCESS

Engage business and industry as much as possible during this step.

Keep sign in sheets and meeting notes from all meetings, calls and events. You can submit these as part of your Community Commitment evidence.

2

## Inquire/Inform

**1.** Review your county's data

[Available on the [Resources page of the web site](#)]

**2.** Committee leader should assign tasks.

- Create sub-committee leads and teams for each of the criteria.

**3.** Committee leader should establish and manage a timeline and subcommittee goals.

### KEYS TO SUCCESS

Don't be discouraged if you discover there is a lot of work to do. Remember, success only comes before work in the dictionary, not life.

Ask for technical assistance from the state or your local workforce partners.

3

## Write Your Application

**1.** Committee leader should select the application editor.

**2.** Draft of the sub-committee plans submitted to editor, to compile the complete application.

**3.** Committee Leader should submit final application

- All committee members should have the opportunity to review and comment before submitting the application.

### KEYS TO SUCCESS

Be innovative, the panel looks for creativity and unique approaches to challenges.

[workready.ky.gov](http://workready.ky.gov)

## 1.

**Does being a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community help us?** Absolutely! Employers and potential employers who may consider your community as a location want to know about your workforce. When we look at the role workforce plays in decision-making by corporate executives regarding where to locate or expand a company's operations, we see a common theme — a well-trained workforce is critical to successful economic development and a state or community's ability to compete for jobs and investment.

A Kentucky Work Ready Community certification is a measure of a county's workforce quality. It is an assurance to business and industry that the community is committed to providing the highly-skilled workforce required in today's competitive global economy.

The Kentucky Work Ready Community program has the ability to transform a community. It encourages counties to take a credible inventory of the current and future workforce, identify the gaps and carry out strategies to achieve a more knowledgeable, trained workforce.

## 2.

**Why does Kentucky have a Kentucky Work Ready Community certification program?** If Kentucky businesses are going to compete in a global environment, we need to have a workforce that is highly skilled and ready to go to work. The quicker we can create the best workforce, the quicker we can differentiate our state to attract and grow jobs.

## 3.

**Are Kentucky Work Ready Communities promoted by the Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development?** The Cabinet is very supportive of the Kentucky Work Ready Communities program. The Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) works closely with the Cabinet to provide updates on the Kentucky Work Ready Communities program and which counties are certified. When considering talent, the Cabinet points to Kentucky Work Ready Communities as a differentiator.

## 4.

**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. As a result of this approach, Kentucky's program is the most comprehensive and innovative Work Ready program in the U.S.

## 5.

**Can multiple counties make a Kentucky 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 Kentucky Work Ready Community criteria individually and become certified, contiguous counties within Kentucky can promote themselves as a Work Ready Region.

## 6.

**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.

## 7.

**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. Most communities will apply for Work Ready Community in Progress - with detailed plans to meet the criteria where they fall short. A Kentucky Work Ready Community in Progress certification is an indication to employers that your county is on the move and that you are motivated to improve your workforce. If this status can be achieved, it becomes a framework to get your workforce to the next level.

Please use the Work Ready Community in Progress Application Package to apply for this status.

## 8.

**How long will we have to meet the criteria if we become a Kentucky 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.

## 9.

**What if a Kentucky Work Ready Community in Progress does not meet its 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 Kentucky Work Ready Community in Progress status, you must wait one year before reapplying.

## 10.

**If our community meets the criteria and becomes a Kentucky Work Ready Community, how long will that status last?**

Kentucky 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.

## 11.

**Is there a cost?** NO - there is no application fee.

## 12.

**What is the process after we submit our application?** First, the Kentucky 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 Innovation Board (KWIB), which will have final approval on granting Kentucky Work Ready Community or Kentucky Work Ready Community in Progress status on behalf of the Governor. You may receive questions from the panel via email in advance of the review panel meeting. You will have the opportunity to make a brief presentation and answer questions posed by the review panel during their meeting. Details will be provided in advance of the meeting. The process will vary in length depending on the timing of the application in relation to the next KWIB meeting.

## 13.

**When can we apply?** You may submit an application at any time. The review panel will meet at least 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 website at [workready.ky.gov](http://workready.ky.gov).

## 14.

**What if I need help getting started?** While pursuing Kentucky Work Ready Community status isn't easy, the process itself offers numerous benefits. We are here to help in any way that we can. You can contact us by phone at (502) 564-0372 or by email at [workready@ky.gov](mailto:workready@ky.gov). We can also put you in touch with other community leaders who have gone through the certification process to share ideas and advice.

Additionally, we have several resources available online, including a communications toolkit, best practices and data and technical resources.

Engaging employers is a critical component to being a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community. As you meet with employers in your county, here are some **IMPORTANT MESSAGES** to keep in mind:

- A Kentucky Work Ready Community certification will help our local businesses compete in a global economy.
- The Kentucky Work Ready Communities program was developed with input from business and industry, the workforce and economic development communities, education and more. As a result of this approach, Kentucky's program is the most comprehensive and innovative Work Ready program in the U.S. The certification not only addresses educational attainment, but also soft skills and digital literacy.
- A lot of companies are competing for the same talent, so counties across Kentucky are enlarging the pool of qualified talent with the Kentucky Work Ready Communities program.
- The six criteria required to become a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community are of value to employers: high school graduation rates, National Career Readiness Certificate holders, community commitment, educational attainment, soft skills development and Internet availability.
- Employers say the most important thing lacking from today's workforce is soft skills such as a strong work ethic, attendance, teamwork, respect, etc. As a Kentucky Work Ready Community, the county will put sustainable programs in place for high school students and postsecondary adults to learn these essential skills.
- In order to be certified, the county must have support from business and industry. Employer engagement is also a critical piece of the soft skills requirement. Employers are encouraged to actively participate in the Kentucky Work Ready Community certification process.



## NATIONAL CAREER READINESS CERTIFICATE

The National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC™) is an industry-recognized, portable, evidence-based credential that certifies essential skills needed for workplace success. The NCRC is accepted throughout the nation by employers as a measure of work readiness. The NCRC combines measures of cognitive skills with soft skills.

The NCRC helps employers quantify a potential employee's experience and probability of success. Employers are encouraged to recognize the certificate and give preference to NCRC holders when hiring new employees. A quality workforce helps companies keep and grow market share and remain competitive.

### Overview

The Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board in conjunction with the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet presents the Certified Kentucky Work Ready Communities program. The board will certify counties as Work Ready or Work Ready in Progress based on the quality of their labor force and the community commitment to continuous improvement of the workforce.

The program builds on the concept of "certified employability" from the individual level—as indicated by a person's attainment of diplomas, degrees, certificates or other credentials—to the community level.

*"We know many other communities are pursuing this, and we need to be in the game. We're not a big city and not near an interstate, so it is even more important to prove how great our people are."*

– Sandy Cole, Pike County



### Benefits

Telling economic developers you have a skilled workforce is one thing, but earning Certified Kentucky Work Ready Community or Kentucky Work Ready Community in Progress status provides tangible evidence that your workers are skilled and the county is committed to keeping them skilled.

Kentucky Work Ready Communities can:

- Attract new businesses and investment;
- Gain a competitive advantage over other communities;
- Help existing companies grow and add new jobs;
- Recruit creative, talented, and innovative people;
- Revitalize their economies and keep them growing.

Because certification requires collaboration and cooperation among key stakeholders (community college staff, secondary education, economic development professionals, elected and appointed officials, employers, chambers of commerce, school boards, community organizations, and others) communities can also reduce duplication of services and leverage resources to fill gaps and improve quality.

### Process

Each community must gather local support and commitment to apply for the Kentucky Work Ready Community designation. To earn the designation of a Certified Kentucky Work Ready Community, counties will have to meet and maintain six criteria based on input from economic development and business and industry representatives. Counties with a realistic plan to meet all six criteria can apply for Kentucky Work Ready Community in Progress status.

Once submitted, a review panel representing key organizations will review the application and make recommendations to the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board for certification.

### More

Details about the program, including an application form can be downloaded at: [workready@ky.gov](mailto:workready@ky.gov)

To arrange a community presentation about this program, send your request to: [workready@ky.gov](mailto:workready@ky.gov)

A Kentucky Work Ready Community certification is a measure of a county's workforce quality. It is an assurance to business and industry that the community is committed to providing the highly-skilled workforce required in today's competitive global economy.

The program was developed with input from business and industry, the workforce and economic development communities, education and more. **Kentucky Work Ready Communities is the most comprehensive and innovative Work Ready program in the U.S.**

The certification not only addresses educational attainment, but also soft skills and digital literacy.

*"Although we had several organizations focused on economic development, a centralized effort was not realized until work began for the Kentucky Work Ready Communities initiative. Now that all the key players are at the same table, we are focused on the economic future of our county and are now on the same page."*

– Heather Ray, Hopkins County



## **STRENGTHEN YOUR COMMUNITY**

The Kentucky Work Ready Community program has the ability to transform a community. It encourages counties to take a credible inventory of the current and future workforce, identify the gaps and carry out strategies to achieve a more knowledgeable, trained workforce. The quicker we can create the best workforce, the quicker we can attract and grow jobs.

## **GETTING CERTIFIED**

On behalf of the Governor, the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board certifies counties as Kentucky Work Ready when the following criteria are met:

### **Graduation Rate**

A high school graduation rate of at least 88.9 percent with a plan to raise to 98 percent by 2022.

### **National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) Holders**

A plan in place to reach 9 percent of the working age population (18-64) holding NCRCs within three years and 15 percent within five years.

### **Community Commitment**

Demonstrated support from the following stakeholders: economic development, elected officials, education, workforce development and business and industry.

### **Educational Attainment/GED**

The percentage of working-age (25-64) adults with at least a two-year degree must be at 25 percent with a plan to increase to 32 percent within three years (Kentucky average) and 39 percent within five years (national average), must present a plan to reduce the percentage of adults without a high school diploma or GED by 3 percent points in 3 years and 5 percent points in 5 years.

### **Soft Skills Measurement**

A sustainable program in place to address work ethic/soft skills development (attendance/punctuality, communication, teamwork, leadership, critical thinking, etc.) and credentialing for both the secondary school and postsecondary adult populations.

### **Internet Availability**

High-speed Internet service must be available to 90 percent of housing units.



**The following organizations support and endorse the framework and criteria of the Kentucky Work Ready Communities initiative:**

Kentucky Association for Career and Technical Education

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Kentucky Association of Counties

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Kentucky Association of Economic Development

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Kentucky Association of Manufacturers

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Kentucky Board of Education

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Kentucky Chamber of Commerce

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Kentucky Community & Technical College System

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Kentucky Council of Area Development Districts

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Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (KY Adult Education)

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Kentucky School Boards Association

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Kentucky Society for Human Resource Management

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## NEWS RELEASE

[workready.ky.gov](http://workready.ky.gov)

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- When we look at the role workforce plays in decision-making by corporate executives regarding where to locate or expand a company's operations, we see a common theme - a growing well-trained workforce is critical to successful economic development and a state or community's ability to compete for jobs and investment.
- If our businesses are going to compete in a global environment, we need to have a workforce that is highly skilled and ready to go to work. The quicker we can create the best workforce, the quicker we can differentiate our county and attract and grow jobs.
- A Kentucky Work Ready Community certification is a measure of a county's workforce quality. It is an assurance to business and industry that the community is committed to providing the highly-skilled workforce required in today's competitive global economy.
- Pursuing a Kentucky Work Ready Community certification aligns the workforce system, education and economic development.
- The Kentucky Work Ready Communities program was developed with input from business and industry, the workforce and economic development communities, education and more. As a result of this approach, Kentucky's program is the most comprehensive and innovative Work Ready program in the U.S.
- Kentucky Work Ready Community certification gives us an opportunity to demonstrate that our county has the capability to serve companies with a knowledgeable, trained workforce.
- There are two levels of certification - counties can apply to be a Kentucky Work Ready Community or a Kentucky Work Ready Community in Progress.

Work Ready certification means the county has reached all six thresholds for the criteria, but we must still demonstrate continuous improvement through specific plans and action.

Work Ready In Progress means that a county has reached some, but not all of the thresholds and has achievable plans to reach those goals within three years. It is an indication to employers that our county is on the move and that we are motivated to improve our workforce. If this status can be achieved, it becomes a framework to get our workforce to the next level.
- There are six criteria which must be met to be a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community. The thresholds are high, but attainable, and based on standards that are valued by employers and potential employers looking at an area.
- On behalf of the Governor, the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board certifies counties as Kentucky Work Ready when the six criteria are met.
- The criteria include high school graduation rates, National Career Readiness Certificate holders, community commitment, educational attainment, soft skills development and Internet availability.
- Kentucky has the most rigorous certification program in the nation to allow communities to demonstrate their workforce quality. This is an opportunity to differentiate our county and help Kentucky compete to attract jobs now and in the future.
- Kentucky Work Ready Community certification is an opportunity to promote the things we're already doing well, get county leaders on the same page and sharing the same message about the importance of talent, and work toward a common goal to attract jobs.

- The Kentucky Work Ready Community program has the ability to transform a community. It encourages counties to take a credible inventory of the current and future workforce, identify the gaps and carry out strategies to achieve a more knowledgeable, trained workforce.
- You can identify the skills of an individual with degrees, certificates and experience. The Kentucky Work Ready Communities program allows us to set a workforce quality standard for an entire county, and in the future, the entire state.
- Employers say the most important thing lacking from today's workforce is soft skills such as a strong work ethic, attendance, teamwork, respect, etc. As a Kentucky Work Ready Community, we will put sustainable programs in place for high school students and postsecondary adults to learn these essential skills.
- The National Career Readiness Certificate is accepted throughout the nation by employers as a measure of work readiness. The NCRC combines measures of cognitive skills with soft skills.
- A Kentucky Work Ready Community certification will help our local businesses and the companies we want in our community compete in a global economy. A lot of companies are competing for the same talent, so counties across Kentucky are enlarging the pool of qualified talent with the Kentucky Work Ready Communities program.
- While pursuing Kentucky Work Ready Community status isn't easy, the process itself offers numerous benefits. We will discover new programs we didn't know existed, reduce duplication of service, meet new people who have something to offer and build new relationships between organizations.
- To sustain the value of the certification, a county must continue to meet the thresholds and show continuous improvement where possible.

**f** We are pleased to announce that [insert county] is applying to be a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community! We are looking for employers, educators, workforce and economic development leaders and more who want to help transform our workforce. Please contact us.

**t** [insert county] is applying to be a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community! Contact us to get involved. #KyWorkReady

**f** We can measure the quality of a worker, but how do we measure the quality of a workforce? Being a Kentucky Work Ready Community is a powerful statement. We're almost there!

**t** Being a Kentucky Work Ready Community is a powerful statement. #KyWorkReady

**f** It is easy to identify the skills of an individual worker, we can look at degrees, certificates and experience, but how do we do the same for an entire county? As a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community, we can demonstrate the value of [insert county] workforce.

**t** As a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community, we demonstrate the value of [insert county] workforce. #KyWorkReady

**f** Being a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community indicates to current and potential employers that our community is serious about meeting their needs.

**t** [insert county] is serious about meeting the needs of current and potential employers. #KyWorkReady

**f** Workforce is one of the biggest components to help businesses grow. The quicker we can create the best workforce, the quicker we can attract and grow jobs. That's why we are working hard to become a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community.

**t** The quicker we can create the best workforce, the quicker we can attract and grow jobs. #KyWorkReady

**f** We are officially a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community! Thank you to everyone who came together to help make workforce skills a community priority.

**t** We are officially a certified Kentucky Work Ready Community! So proud of our community. #KyWorkReady

**f** Kentucky Work Ready Community certification gives us a standard to demonstrate that [insert county] has the capability to serve companies with a knowledgeable, trained workforce.

**t** [insert county] has the capability to serve companies with a knowledgeable, trained workforce. #KyWorkReady

**f** The National Career Readiness Certificate is accepted throughout the nation by employers as a measure of work readiness. We now have a plan in place to ensure that more people in our county get certified.

**t** We now have a plan in place to ensure that more people in our county earn the National Career Readiness Certificate. #KyWorkReady

**f** Our community has achieved true collaboration in bringing together education, workforce, economic development and elected leadership to make workforce skills a county priority.

**t** Our community achieved true collaboration in an effort to make workforce skills a county priority. #KyWorkReady

**f** A lot of companies are competing for the same talent, so we are enlarging the pool of qualified talent with Kentucky Work Ready Communities.

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**f** A well-trained workforce is critical to successful economic development and a community's ability to compete for jobs and investment. This is the value of being a Kentucky Work Ready Community.

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