



The Kentucky Work Ready Communities Steering Committee is seeking endorsements from various state and national organizations for a new program which certifies a county based on the quality of its workforce. But, this program is actually doing much more to transform the talent pool in Kentucky.

Every major survey of business and industry as well as every major economic development publication indicate that the presence of a skilled workforce is one of, if not THE, top deciding factor when a company decides to expand, relocate or open a new facility. The availability of talent ranks ahead of tax incentives, utility costs, infrastructure, and other traditional factors in almost every credible study.

Understanding this, the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board created a framework to give counties in the commonwealth the opportunity to use a common framework of criteria to prove and improve their workforce assets.

The Kentucky criteria are based on input from economic developers and business and industry. Communities seeking certification must work a collaborative process with local employers, economic development, education, workforce and elected officials. This puts a new focus on providing the skilled workers needed to fill jobs at the local level where accountability is critical for real change to take place.

Achieving certification at either of the program's two levels, Work Ready and Work Ready In Progress, is no easy task. Counties must build partnerships, inventory local and regional assets, identify skill needs and gaps, and collaborate to plan and implement initiatives to bring about changes and improvements to keep up with the demands of the job market.

In less than a year, 18 counties have sought and been recommended by the committee for certification. Thirty four additional counties are currently working through the application process. This unprecedented success has resulted in new partnerships being formed, resources being leveraged and newly energized communities focused on getting and keeping good jobs in an increasingly competitive global environment.

Your endorsement of the initiative sends a message that this work is critical and is a valuable tool in each county's effort to secure a prosperous future for its citizens.

To view the specifics of the initiative, click on this link:

<http://kwib.ky.gov/workreadycommunity.htm>

What does it mean if a county is certified as Work Ready?

The Kentucky Workforce Investment Board certification of counties as Work Ready assures business and industry, site selectors, and economic developers that:

1. The combined **high school graduation rate** for all public districts meets or exceeds the commonwealth's goal of 82.32 percent.
2. The county has a plan to certify 15 percent of its working age population with the **National Career Readiness Certificate** within three years.
3. A **leadership team**, including economic development, education, elected officials, workforce development, and business and industry, meet regularly to collaborate, implement and monitor improvements to the quality of the workforce.
4. The county meets or exceeds the **educational attainment** goal of 25 percent of its working age population holding associates or higher degrees and a plan to reach 39 percent within five years.
5. The county has a **soft skills development** program for secondary students and postsecondary adults focused on attendance, teamwork, communication, leadership and critical thinking.
6. Ninety percent of the households in the county have internet access of speeds of 3 Mbps or higher available as an indicator of **digital literacy**.

Additionally, some counties demonstrate their ability to meet or exceed GED attainment goals and issue a significant number of industry-recognized certificates.

What does it mean if a county is certified as Work Ready In Progress?

The Kentucky Workforce Investment Board certification of counties as Work Ready In Progress assures business and industry, site selectors and economic developers that a county meets some of Work Ready criteria and has a plan to meet all of the requirements within 3 years.

We encourage you to look at some of the applications filed by various counties as you consider endorsing the program. This is the most compelling evidence of the value this initiative has in improving Kentucky's workforce. To review the applications from certified counties, simply click on the county map at <http://kwib.ky.gov/workreadycommunity.htm>

What we are seeking in terms of an endorsement

In order to provide additional credibility and value to the certification, we are requesting a resolution of endorsement (attached) from your board, executive committee or other appropriate body. In addition, we would like to add the contact or contacts of your choice to our email news list to keep you updated on the initiative. We would also ask to include your logo on a special endorsement display area which will be added to our new web site.