



Application Package

The purpose of the Work Ready Washington initiative is to provide **regions** with a framework to validate that they have a skilled workforce ready to fill current and future jobs. Washington State is partnering with ACT in this endeavor and this will be accomplished by meeting established goals of individuals earning a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) and the businesses participating by recognizing, preferring or recommending the NCRC in their hiring practice.

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Washington Work Ready Communities

Dear Community Leaders:

Thank you for your interest in the Work Ready Washington 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 the targeted goals. This will include a certain number of individuals in your workforce obtaining a National Career Readiness Certificate, and a set number of employers recognizing, preferring or recommending the NCRC in their hiring. County goals for each of Washington's counties may be viewed at workreadycommunities.org.

The enclosed packet will guide you through the application process. Once your application is submitted, it will be reviewed and a recommendation will be made to the Work Ready Washington certifying body, which will make the final determination for certification. This body is made up of a comprehensive team of participants from Centers of Excellence, Community Colleges, Workforce Development Councils and business representatives.

With this being the being first round of applications, we anticipate most communities will not have achieved their county goals; therefore, most successful applicants will be granted a "*Work Ready Community in Progress*" status. If your community has already achieved its goals, a *Work Ready Community* status will be awarded.

APPLICATION PACKET INCLUDES

1. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) – about the Work Ready Communities initiative
2. Checklist for Application-steps to take for submission
3. Criteria for certification
4. Application
5. Letters of Commitment

Certification goals may seem challenging at first glance, but with a strong leadership team, and a well-developed plan, they are most certainly attainable! Once granted "in progress" status, counties will have up to two years to achieve certification.

We sincerely hope all of our counties will give consideration to Work Ready Washington application. Please feel free to contact our Work Ready Washington coordinator, Dawn Karber at 509.533.8471, or submit questions via email dkarber@wdcspokane.com. We look forward to working with you.

Washington Work Ready Communities

FAQs

- 1. Will being a Work Ready Community help us? How? Absolutely!** Current and potential employers who may consider your community as a location will want to know about the quality of your workforce. Certification answers many questions and tells employers you are serious about meeting their needs. Being part of the Certified Work Ready Community (CWRC) initiative will give your community exposure on ACT's national website, as well as on Washington's website.
- 2. Who is eligible?** Any region in Washington may apply. A region may be one county or a group of counties. Upon review and approval, the county may be granted a Certified Work Ready Community "In Progress" status after the application is filed and accepted. No unit smaller than a county may apply. If a region is made up of multiple counties then each county would be noted as being involved in the initiative.
- 3. How does a county achieve certification?** A county will become eligible for certification when it reaches its goals. Goals and process are explained in the application packet and individual county goals can be found on ACT's site workreadycommunities.org. By clicking on the Washington map, every county in Washington can be accessed and clicking on a specific county will display the intended goals. If an application is a group of counties then each county will be assessed and awarded certification on its own.
- 4. Is there a fee to apply?** No, there is no cost to apply.
- 5. How do we apply?** First you will form a local committee, as outlined on the application process. Your local committee would need to have representatives from the region—either county or group of counties. You will need a signed commitment letter (*sample included*) from each member of the local team. You must submit your narrative plans for achieving the posted county goals. The application can be filled out online, saved, and submitted via email to: Dawn Karber at dkarber@wdcspokane.com.
- 6. What is a National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC)?** The NCRC, developed by ACT, is an industry-recognized, portable, evidence-based credential that certifies essential skills for workplace success. Go to www.act.org/certificate. The NCRC measures skills employers believe are critical to job success. Individuals can earn the NCRC by taking three WorkKey® assessments:

1. Applied Math
2. Locating Information
3. Reading for Information

7. **Where does an individual obtain an NCRC?** The certificates can be obtained as an enrolled customer at one of the state's testing centers. Those can be found at the Work Ready Washington website – www.workreadywa.com.
8. **How long will we have to meet our criteria to achieve CWRC status?** Each county will have up to two years to accomplish goals and meet the criteria to become certified.
9. **What is the difference between a Certified Work Ready Community and a Work Ready Community "In Progress" status?** The Work Ready "In Progress" status is for communities who have not yet reached the goals set for them, but have plans in place to achieve those goals. The "In Progress" status will be granted by the Washington Work Ready certifying body after the submission and acceptance of their application. The Certified Work Ready Community refers to a community that has achieved its goals and been granted this status by the Washington Work Ready certifying body.
10. **When can we apply?** You may apply at any time, but the applications will only be reviewed three times a year. **Applicants will be renewed on an as-needed basis at this time.** Please refer to the Work Ready Washington *calendar* following the application package for specific dates.
11. **Who will have the final determination for awarding certification?** A review committee will evaluate the application and recommend the certification status to the Washington Work Ready certifying body who shall then have the final vote.

Washington Work Ready Communities

CHECKLIST

Congratulations on your decision to apply for the Work Ready Washington initiative. This list includes recommended and required steps in completing your application.

✓ **Organize your local team/committee**

Regions are encouraged to build their teams with local stakeholders. Members should have a strong commitment to this effort as they will be essential to the long term outcome. We suggest each team have a leader who will have the time to ensure success for your region. Each team should include members from local Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development Professionals, County Executive/local government officials, Education Leadership (K-12), local Workforce Investment Boards, local employers, and local community colleges. A region which is made up of multiple counties must have members from each county from the groups noted above. For example, if your county is made up of three counties you will need to have a representative from an Economic Development Professional from one of those counties. However, representatives in each area from each county involved are acceptable and encouraged.

✓ **Assess your county goals, using ACT National Framework**

By going to the workreadycommunities.org site you will find a map of Washington. Each county has goals specific to its population, (small, medium, and large) and by clicking on your county you will find your local goals. These goals have been chosen by ACT and are based on the 2010 Census.

✓ **Develop your county plan to reach threshold criteria**

You will be required to submit a plan for achieving your goals to Work Ready Washington with your application to participate. If approved, your county or counties in your region, will be given the Work Ready Community in Progress status. You MAY submit a supplemental narrative regarding your region that your Team considers significant information.

✓ **Prepare Application**

You will be required to gather letters of commitment from each of your Team members. A sample for this letter may be found in the application package. The name of the primary contact person for the region will need to be included.

✓ **Email to:**

Dawn Karber, COO
Spokane Area Workforce Development Council
dkarber@wcdspokane.com

Washington Work Ready Communities

CRITERIA FOR CERTIFICATION

Community Commitment*-required*

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

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

Committee Makeup

1. Chambers of Commerce
2. Economic Development Professionals
3. Elected Official-suggestions: County Executive, County Council member, Mayors
4. Education Representatives such as -- Superintendents, School Board, and K-12 leaders.
5. Community Colleges, including Centers of Excellence if relevant
6. Local Workforce Development-Workforce Investment Board (LWIB)
7. Employers/Businesses

National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC)*-required*

This assessment is accepted throughout the nation by employers and is being used in 44 states. It is a measure for employers to ensure job seekers possess a qualified degree of work readiness.

Work Ready Community-- Each Washington county must achieve their assigned goal numbers of credentials for their local workforce.

These goal numbers have been determined by county size, (small, medium and large). The determination was made by ACT. They are posted on the ACT website for Work Ready Communities, under the map of Washington at workreadycommunities.org.

Businesses Supporting*---required*

The number of businesses supporting the Certified Work Ready Communities Initiative will be another goal for each county.

Work Ready Community --- Businesses will sign a Letter of Partnership, and agree to recognize, prefer or recommend the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) in their hiring. To print the Business Partnership Letter [click here.](#)

Businesses participating and business goals will be posted on the National ACT Work Ready Communities site, as well as on the Work Ready Washington website. Business goals were determined by ACT based on county size.

Supplemental Criteria*---optional*

In addition to specific required data, the review panel will consider supplemental criteria which may enhance your acceptance as a Certified Work Ready Community. Your region may be slightly short on data, but have plans in place to enhance your workforce in the future.

EXAMPLES: *must be related to program*

1. Your region may have a plan in place to increase your high school graduation rate, working to keep students from dropping out, this could be included with application
2. Your region may have a significant number of occupational credentials (industry recognized credentials) among your residents, and you may wish to document this for review. This measure lacks a standard tracking system, but community colleges, Centers of Excellence and local employers may be able to assist here. Explain your methodology.
3. Your region may have an active K-20 Council already engaged in some of these efforts; include plans already in place, or expansion for future growth, to develop a stronger workforce.
4. Any systemic efforts around building the NCRC in as a component of local/regional workforce system initiatives.

Work Ready Washington

APPLICATION

1. Name of County(ies)

2. Commitment of Key Stakeholders (check)

Organization Name

Important: The steering committee must be compromised at a minimum of the following individuals representing the following:

Local Chamber of Commerce

Economic Development

Elected Official(s)

Education

Community College

Workforce Development –

Local WIB

Employer/Business

Attach commitment letters from committee members; other organizations supporting your effort are helpful-see sample letter

3. Narratives for Criteria supporting NCRC and employer engagement-*required*

Narratives that outline plans to reach established goals within a certain period of time must be completed. Present/submit a plan from your regional team, three pages maximum to:

a) Explain your county plan for achieving the NCRC numbers required for certification.

Be specific in your explanation as it relates to the numbers in these categories:

- 1. **Transitional** – unemployed workers/job seekers
- 2. **Emerging** – graduating students
- 3. **Current Workforce** – workers currently employed in the private or public sector
- 4. **Veterans, Workforce Investment Act participants, WorkFirst participants, Former Offenders and other relevant groups for your region**

b) Present strategies to build employer support and recognition of the NCRC in your county.

Describe the county's plan to engage employers in this initiative and for reaching the established goals. Include plans for outreach to employer champions.

4. Are you including narrative(s) for supplemental criteria?

Attach narratives for supplemental criteria.

**5. Your Steering Leader (Primary contact for your regional application)
Contact Information**

(Name)

(Phone)

(email)

(Address)

Your checklist before mailing electronically, or posting:

Signed Commitment Letters from Steering committee members	
Narrative plan for your community's effort to meet NCRC goals	
Narrative plan for your community's initiative to meet employer engagement goals	
<i>Are you including supplemental information?</i>	

LETTERS OF COMMITMENT --- *SAMPLE*

Dear Work Ready Review Committee:

Please consider this letter documentation of our commitment to Work Ready Washington initiative for _____ County(ies). _____ (organization name) commits to participate in the program, and will encourage and promote the CWRC in our local communities.

In addition to the above, we will also send our representative to all necessary meetings in preparation for this effort, we will recommend the National Career Readiness Certificate to local employers and job seekers, and acknowledge the certificate in our hiring practices.

Organization Name _____

Company Website _____

Key Contact _____

Contact Title/Role _____

Contact Phone Number _____

Contact E-Mail _____

Address _____

City _____ County _____

Zip _____

Signature and Date _____