Kentucky Work Ready Communities

Application Package

Sponsored by
Kentucky Workforce Investment Board
Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Kentucky Work Ready Communities

Dear Community Leader:

Thank you for your interest in the Kentucky Work Ready Communities program. As part of Kentucky's overall strategic plan to transform the workforce development system, the state created this program whereby communities can agree to meet certain educational, workforce development and collaboration goals in order to earn "Work Ready Community" 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 are being asked to meet certain thresholds in criteria such as graduation rates, National Career Readiness Certificate holders and educational attainment rates. In addition, communities will be asked to bring various key agencies and employers together in the process. The program is designed to align education, workforce development and economic development strategies for the state and within communities by using for a collaborative approach to the process.

The enclosed materials will help you communicate your intent to participate and act as your official application for ***Work Ready Community*** status. If your community does not meet the minimum criteria today but is committed to meeting them in the future, you may apply for ***Work Ready Community in Progress*** status and given up to three years to meet the minimum thresholds.

The application packet includes the following documents:

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

As you will see, the program requirements are designed to be challenging but not impossible to meet. We expect a handful of communities will meet all of the criteria in a relatively short period of time while most will take from one to three years to complete.

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.

Sincerely,

Ed Holmes
President
EHI Consultants
Chair
Kentucky Workforce Investment Board

Crystal Gibson
Vice President Public Affairs
Citigroup
Project Champion
Kentucky Work Ready Communities

CONTENTS

1. Common questions about the program 4
2. Checklist for completing the application 6
3. Criteria for Work Ready Community Qualification 7
4. Graduation Rates: Special Instructions 10
5. Application Form 11
6. Narratives required 12
7. Sample Letter of Commitment 15
8. Approval process flow 16

Kentucky Work Ready Communities

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.

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.

Kentucky Work Ready Communities

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.

✓ 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 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 (page 7). 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 (page 11),

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 (page 12),

d. letters of commitment (page 15), 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 two complete copies of all materials via US mail and one electronic copy of the application page (page 11) via email to:

Kentucky Workforce Investment Board
Attn: Tom West
Capital Plaza Tower, Third Floor
500 Mero Street
Frankfort, KY 40601

thomas.west@ky.gov

Kentucky Work Ready Communities

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: 82.32 percent*. Inclusion of private or parochial graduation rates not already included in the traditionally reported figure is allowed at the discretion of the county.

WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must present a plan to raise the rate to 82.32 percent* within three years.

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: Must present a plan to raise the rate to 15 percent of working-age adults (18-64) within three years. Plan should include promotional strategies, training availability, and encouraging employer recognition of the certificate.

WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Same

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: 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. Elected 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

WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Same

Educational Attainment **SOURCE:** **US Census: American Community Survey - 5-year estimates. See RESOURCES tab on the Work ready Communities web site.**	The percentage of working-age (18-64) adults in a community with at least a two-year degree. **WORK READY COMMUNITY**: Must be at 25 percent and present a plan to raise this to 32 percent within three years (KY average) and 39 percent within five years (national average). **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.
Soft Skills Measurement **SOURCE:** **See RESOURCES tab on the Work ready Communities web site.**	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. **WORK READY COMMUNITY:** Must provide evidence of the existence of a program or programs for both secondary and post secondary adults. 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. **WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS**: Must present a plan to achieve the above list within three years.

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.braodband.gov. **WORK READY COMMUNITY**: An urban county must have 3Mbps speeds or greater available to 90 percent of housing units. A rural county must have 3Mbs 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. **WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS**: Must present a plan to meet the above goals within three years.
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. **GED ATTAINMENT vs. GED Goal**: Complete an optional narrative explaining your community's GED attainment rate as compared to the GED attainment goal. Goals can be found on the Kentucky Adult Education site (http://www.kyae.ky.gov/) under the Performance/Accountability tab (GED targets, under the category *County Goals and Targets*).

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.

Recently, the commonwealth began a transition to a new method of calculating these rates, called the Cohort method, which will soon be consistent among all states. The transition uses an interim methodology called the Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate (AFGR), which will be used for three years beginning with data reported this year for 2010 graduation rates. The chart below identifies the methodology required by the new regulations for reporting and the corresponding goals for each year's results.

Reporting of Kentucky's Graduation Rate					
Data from School Year "Class of…"	**Nonacademic Public Release**		**Adequate Yearly Progress Determination in NCLB Reports (July/August)**		
	Timeline	**Graduation Rate Calculation Used**	**Timeline**	**Graduation Rate Calculation Used**	**State Goal *Percentage Targets***
2008-2009	May 2010	Leaver	Summer 2010	Leaver	86.75*
2009-2010	Fall 2010-Winter 2011	AFGR	Summer 2011	AFGR	82.32**
2010-2011	Fall 2011-Winter 2012	AFGR	Summer 2012	AFGR	To be defined in future regulation
2011-2012	Fall 2012-Winter 2013	AFGR	Summer 2013	AFGR	
2012-2013	Fall 2013-Winter 2014	Cohort	Summer 2014	Cohort	
*Goal defined in 703 KAR 5:001, Assessment and accountability definitions **Goal defined in 703 KAR 5:060, Interim assessment process					

These are the goals that will be used to determine compliance with the Work Ready Communities certification standards.

Requirements

A graduation rate for the applicant county must include a combined rate for all public school systems within the county, including all independent districts.

In order to calculate this rate, the raw data for each variable in the Department of Education-specified equation should be a combined total of that variable for all included districts. This data is available from the Kentucky Department of Education.

The goal under the new AFGR method is defined in the document at this link (see section 2 Data Collection.2.f.1):

http://www.lrc.ky.gov/kar/703/005/060.htm

Achieving the Goal

For the most recent reporting period, a county shall be considered to have met the criteria threshold when the total rate for the county meets one of the following two criteria specified in KAR 5:060, section 2 (f):

GRADUATION RATE SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

1. A graduation rate that is equal to or greater than the annual 2010-2011 reporting goal of 82.32 percent; or
2. A graduation rate that closes the gap between the previous year's graduation rate of a school or district and the graduation rate goal of ninety (90) percent by at least ten (10) percent per year.

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.

Kentucky Work Ready Communities

APPLICATION

1 Name of County

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

List Source/Method: i.e. summer 2011 AFGR 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 18-64)

(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 narrative(s) for supplemental criteria for GED or Occupational Credential Attainment?

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

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

name	phone	email	address

NARRATIVES/PLANS

Narratives and Plans - Instructions:

1. If your county does NOT meet the 82.32 percent graduation rate, you must complete Narrative 1 in order to apply to be a Work Ready Community in Progress.

> **Narrative 1: Graduation Rate**: (WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS) Present a plan to raise the graduation rate to 82.32 percent (state goal) within three years (three pages maximum).

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 county meets the Educational Attainment rate of 25 percent but is less than 39 percent you must complete Narrative 3.

> **Narrative 3: Educational Attainment:** Present a plan to raise the Educational Attainment rate to 32 percent within 3 years [KY average] and 39 percent within five years [national average] (three pages maximum).

4. If your community does NOT meet the Educational Attainment rate of 25 percent you must complete Narrative 4 in order to apply to be a Work Ready Community in Progress.

> **Narrative 4: Educational Attainment:** (**WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS**) 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).

NARRATIVES/PLANS

5. All applicants must complete Narrative 5.

Narrative 5: Soft Skills Program: Discuss your community program or programs to address work ethic/soft skills development and credentialing for both the secondary school and post secondary adult populations. 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)

Communities applying for Work Ready Community in Progress that do not have a program must present a plan to develop one as described above within three years.

6. 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 4Mbps speeds but you can show that these areas are covered 90 percent by 1.5 Mbps, you must complete Narrative 6.

Narrative 6: Broadband Availability: (rural county) County must have 4Mbs 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).

7. **I**f your county does not meet the broadband availability goals, you must complete Narrative 7 in order to apply to be a Work Ready Community in Progress.

Narrative 7: Broadband Availability: Must present a plan to meet the broadband availability goals, whether rural or urban, within three years (two pages maximum).

NARRATIVES/PLANS

8. If your county is presenting supplemental criteria (either GED, occupational credentials or both), you must complete Narrative 8.

Narrative 8: Supplemental Criteria:

GED: Please show your county GED attainment as compared to county goals (at http://www.kyae.ky.gov/ under the Performance/Accountability tab - GED targets, under the category *County Goals and Targets*). (two pages maximum)

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)

Kentucky Work Ready Communities

SAMPLE LETTER OF COMMITMENT

Dear Work Ready Community 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_____

Kentucky Work Ready Communities

APPLICATION PROCESS SUMMARY

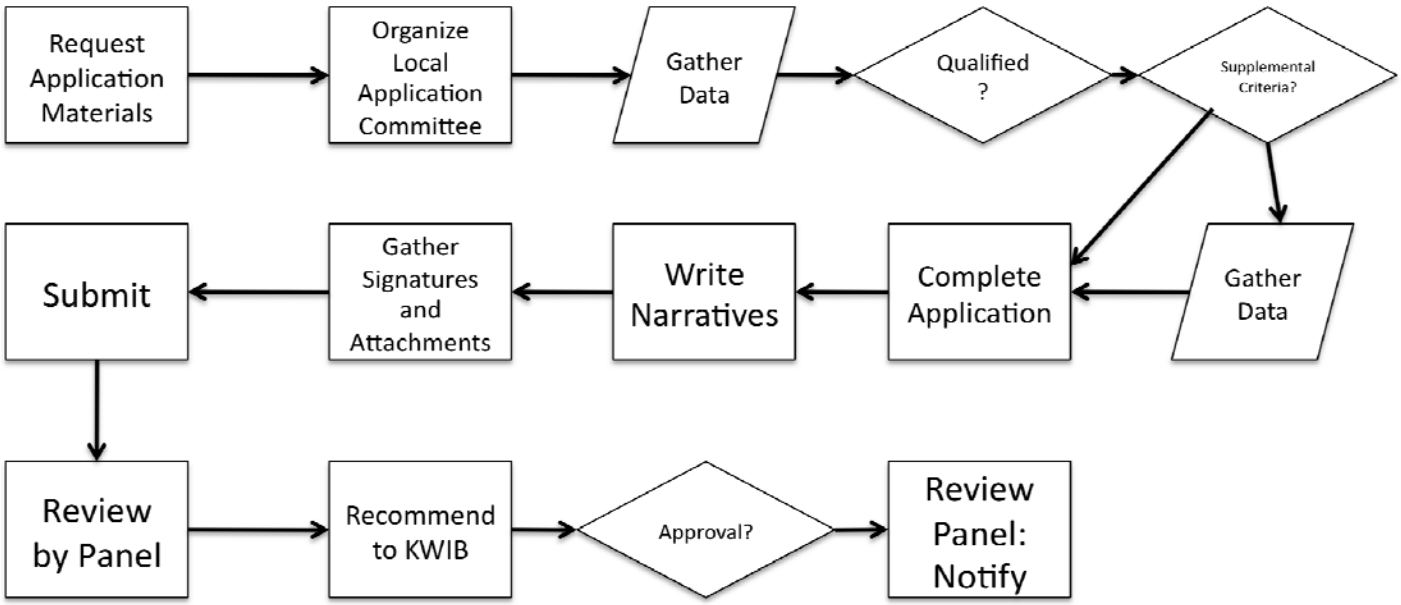
While the application preparation requires a good amount of data gathering, planning and goal setting by collaborators in each county, the application steps should be as simple and clear as possible.

In its most basic form the application process includes roles for the county, the review panel and KWIB as follows:

COUNTY
Initiate application materials → Make decisions and gather support → Gather data → Complete the application → Submit the application to the Review Panel

REVIEW PANEL*
Verify initial data → Review plans → Make a recommendation to KWIB

KWIB
Final approval. KWIB votes to certify and the certificate package is issued by KWIB staff.

*The Review Panel is appointed by the KWIB and includes representatives from:

- KWIB (Member)
- KWIB (Staff)
- Kentucky Association for Economic Development
- Cabinet for Economic Development
- Kentucky Association of Counties
- Kentucky Community & Technical College System
- Kentucky Department of Education
- Kentucky Adult Education
- Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- Kentucky Labor Cabinet