

Kentucky Work Ready Communities

Narrative 2b: National Career Readiness Certificate Plan

Adopted by Governor Beshear in June of 2011, the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) is a positive investment for Kentucky as it supports the development of the state's workforce, including the under-employed and unemployed. The current recorded number of NCRC holders stands at a county total of 351 NCRC holders¹ or 0.4% of the total civilian workforce of 75,440 people.² Increasing the number of Warren County's NCRC holders is tantamount to providing a workforce that meets the needs of employers in the area; therefore, the Warren County Work Ready Steering Committee plans to augment the current percentage of NCRC holders to 15% of the civilian workforce by 2017.

Supply and Available Resources

It is necessary to have readily available resources to reach the 15% goal. All state agencies involved in the NCRC program must be able to provide these resources, which include funding, training facilities and classes, and supplies. Warren County currently supports an infrastructure that can foster the growth of the number of NCRC holders throughout the county, with the three most notable NCRC certification entities being the Bowling Green Technical College, the local Office of Employment and Training, and Kentucky Adult Education. Maintaining such an infrastructure is imperative to our percentage growth.

The Bowling Green Technical College's Adult Learning Center offers an NCRC certification service to the community free of charge. This service includes online courses, instructor-led courses, and a self-study program. Funded through the state, this office's dedicated staff has administered NCRC examinations to 42 students since their inception in 2010³.

The local Office of Employment and Training (OET) also offers NCRC testing to local businesses and aims to recruit new partnering companies over the next five years to grow the number of NCRC holders. To fund this initiative, the OET offers two forms of financial assistance:

- Prospective business partners are evaluated by Bowling Green Technical College for the Kentucky WINS program to receive reduced cost NCRC testing for their employees if approved.
- The OET currently offers buy-one-get-one-free NCRC certification tests throughout Warren County.

With the commitment from local employers to support the NCRC certification in their hiring practices, the OET, KCTCs and WIA will be able to partner and test more than 300 potential NCRC holders per month.

Kentucky Adult Education, in partnership with Kentucky Community and Technical College, is also a vital component to growing the number of NCRC certifications in Warren County. This program targets community members who score below the high school diploma level on the Test of Basic Adult Education (TABE). Individuals meeting both criteria are then offered free NCRC courses, testing, and certification.

Ensuring that funds remain available to these three entities is integral for the Warren County Work Ready Steering Committee to reach its goal of increasing its number of NCRC holders to 15% of the general population by 2017.

¹ As of January 4, 2012

² U.S. Census, 2010 American Community Survey 1-year estimate

³ As of January 5, 2012, estimate by BGTC Adult Learning Center

Generating Local Demand

In order to increase the importance of the NCRC in Warren County, it is necessary that a local demand for NCRC holders be generated among business and industry partners. The Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce, the Barren River Area Development District, the City of Bowling Green and the County of Warren will assist in promoting the program to employers, particularly through the Chamber's relationships with its partners and existing targeted businesses.

The Chamber is a 5-Star Accredited Chamber by the United States Chamber of Commerce, the 2009 Chamber of the Year by the American Chamber of Commerce Executives, and the fourth-largest chamber in Kentucky. With a partnership of more than 1,200 businesses and organizations, which represent more than 40,000 business owners, managers and full- and part-time employees, the Chamber has proven success in reaching these partner representatives through programs, networking events and communications.

The NCRC message can easily be incorporated into Chamber's messaging platform, thereby seamlessly promoting the importance of in online and print communications, workforce development and targeted existing business programs, activities and events. The Chamber can emphasize the importance of the NCRC to Warren County businesses. Furthermore, the Chamber's economic development staff meets with Warren County existing targeted businesses regularly to discuss those businesses' growth, employees and needs, and can emphasize the value of the NCRC for hiring decisions and workforce productivity.

The Warren County Steering Committee will also initiate the *Work Ready Champion* program⁴ to build a pool of companies that consider the NCRC, aiming to secure businesses' commitment to recognizing the NCRC as a tool in hiring and training practices, similar to the commitment already made by Shiloh Industries, Inc. This promotional effort will aim to specifically reach the targeted business sectors of

- Advanced manufacturing
- Automotive parts and suppliers
- Fabricated metals, industrial machinery, plastics,
- Food processing (products, equipment, packaging and distribution)
- Green-building products (wood)
- Logistics and distribution
- Long-term niche sectors: cellulosic bio-fuel, cyber defense and medical devices

The promotional strategies of this initiative will highlight the following benefits of the NCRC to employers, including

- Improved quality of new hires
- Reducing training time and costs
- Reduced employee turnover
- Increased productivity

Soliciting these commitments will complement the Chamber's current work with existing targeted businesses and its efforts to promote and increase workforce development through programs like the Warren County Industrial Training Consortium, the Work Ethic Seal Program and additional training opportunities.⁵

⁴ See Appendix 1

⁵ See Narrative 5 of this application

Marketing and Communications

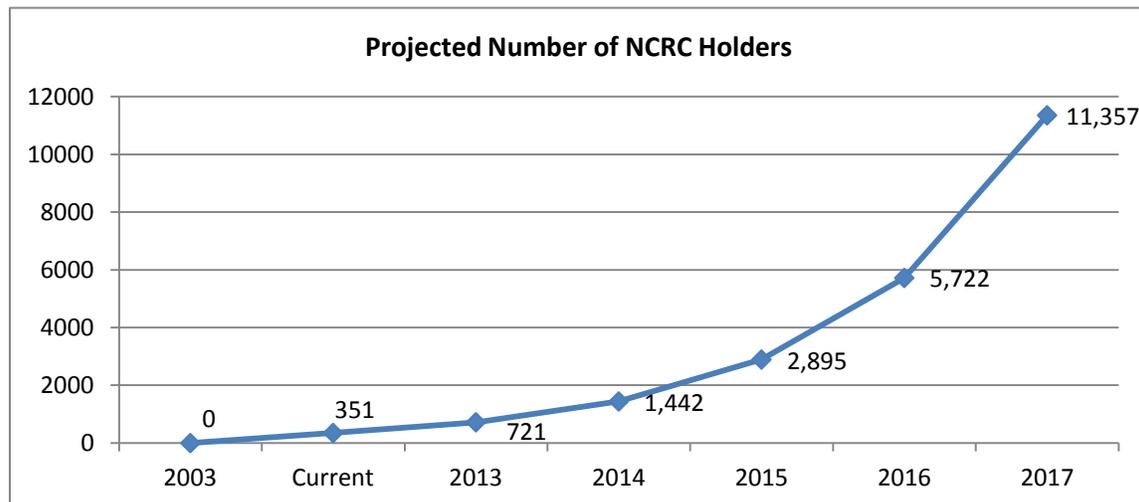
Marketing of the NCRC includes both top-down and bottom-up marketing communication strategies and will be presented as meeting the core employability skills needs of world-class business and industries. Suggested elements for marketing the NCRC may include, but are not limited to

- Recording and disseminating NCRC testimonials from local prominent businesses to recruit new businesses⁶
- Include NCRC information and resource availability at workforce development presentations and events, such as a booth at the South Central Kentucky Job fair
- Providing NCRC information in discussions with existing targeted business meetings as part of the programs that can heighten these businesses' workforce hiring processes and productivity
- Display Chamber endorsement by promoting statewide NCRC website in newsletters and including a NCRC link/segment on the Chamber website (www.bgchamber.com)
- Creating a NCRC pamphlet for use at Chamber promotional events
- Including NCRC information at Work Ethic Seal student events

Coupling the Work Ready Champion program with other Chamber efforts, the Warren County Steering Committee plans to both market committed Work Ready Champion companies for branding efforts, but also to record and evaluate the progress of generating such demand in Warren County Business and Industries.

Goals and Evaluation

In order to track the progress of creating a work ready labor force, the Warren County Steering Committee has developed the following timeline to serve as benchmarks and yearly goals in a five-year plan to increase the number of NCRC holders to 15% of the civilian labor force. Based on the current NCRC number of 351, the Steering Committee has established a five-year timeline that projects there will be 11,357 NCRC holders in 2017. This projected number will equal 15.05% of the current workforce in Warren County, meeting the 15% goal.



The Warren County Work Ready Steering Committee has developed the above plan to change the status quo among business and industry by generating demand, promoting, and increasing the number of NCRC holders to 15% of the civilian work force in order to establish a Work Ready Community that meets the needs of tomorrow's business arena.

⁶ See Appendix 2