

Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

NEWS RELEASE

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Kentucky Workforce Investment Board adjusts Work Ready Communities Program requirements

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 11, 2012) – The Kentucky Workforce Investment Board (KWIB) has adjusted some requirements for the Work Ready Communities initiative and made the certification process more user friendly for applicants.

The Work Ready Communities certification from KWIB and the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet assures employers that a local workforce has the talent and skills necessary to staff existing jobs and to master the innovative technologies new jobs will require.

“Work Ready Communities is an innovative program that was started in Kentucky a year ago and has proven successful in priming communities for advancement in economic and workforce development,” Ed Holmes, chair of KWIB. “Since it is a new program, Kentucky is leading in uncharted territory, and we need to adjust our course from time to time. In addition, more states are venturing into the area of certifying communities as Work Ready, so we are changing the name of the program to Kentucky Work Ready Communities.”

To be designated a Kentucky Work Ready Community, business, education, economic and elected leaders must collaborate and apply for the certification. Counties have to meet criteria in six areas including high school graduation rate, National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) holders, demonstrated community commitment, educational attainment, soft-skills development and digital literacy. Boyle, Daviess, Henderson, Warren and Woodford counties have been certified as Kentucky Work Ready Communities.

If a community is close to certification and is committed to reaching the criteria in three years, it may be designated as a Work Ready Community in Progress.

Changes to Criteria

The NCRC attainment requirement for both the Kentucky Work Ready Communities and Work Ready Communities in Progress has been changed. Now, a community has to present a plan to reach 9 percent of the working-age population (18-64) in three years. Previously the requirement was 15 percent in five years.

In addition, the program now requires a plan to reduce the percentage of working age adults in a county without a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma by

3 percentage points in three years and 5 percentage points in five years. Previously, there were no benchmarks set for this area.

In the year since Kentucky developed and began implementing the Work Ready Communities program, five counties have been certified as Work Ready, 13 have been designated as Work Ready Communities in Progress and 34 are going through the application process or have shown an interest in the program.

Beginning December 14, communities interested in applying for either level of certification will be required to submit a letter of intent at least 30 days prior to submitting their application. This will enable state officials to offer technical assistance to those communities during the application process.

Another change is anticipated for next summer when the Kentucky Work Ready Communities steering committee is expected to present the KWIB with measurable goals for soft skills development participation.

“Counties are currently required to have a program to develop soft skills, such as critical thinking, teamwork, workplace etiquette and more,” said Crystal Gibson, chair of the Kentucky Work Ready Communities Review Panel and vice president of Public Affairs at Citigroup. “Establishing verifiable benchmarks and expectations for participation in these programs will be the focus of our work over the next several months.”

The Kentucky Work Ready Communities program is one of 25 actions steps that are being implemented by the board to help Kentucky meet the changing demands of a global market and difficult economy. The action steps outlined in KWIB’s *WorkSmart Kentucky Strategic Plan* were adopted after extensive input from employer and individual customers, local and state workforce professionals, economic development officials, educators and business leaders.

The KWIB membership includes officials from the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, The Cabinet for Economic Development, the Kentucky Labor Cabinet, and the Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet, who are working with various state agencies and partners to improve the state’s education, workforce and business resources. In addition, KWIB works with 10 Local Workforce Investment Boards across the state that provide training, education and employer services for businesses and communities.

The 42 members of KWIB serve as an advisory board to Gov. Beshear on workforce training and development issues. The KWIB is charged with creating a statewide vision for workforce development and adopting a plan to move Kentucky forward economically through workforce training and development.

For more information about KWIB and the Kentucky Work Ready Communities program, visit <http://www.kwib.ky.gov/index.htm>.