



Work Ready Communities

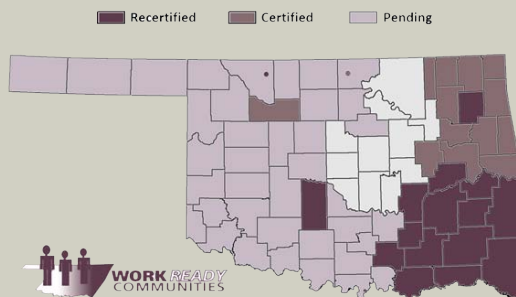


To ensure that Oklahoma offers industry the innovative talent needed to compete in a knowledge-based economy, the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and the Governor's Council for Workforce & Economic Development launched the Certified Work Ready Communities program.

Work Ready Communities expands the state's skills assessment and certification effort currently offered to individual employees, job seekers, and employers through the [WorkKeys and Career Readiness Certificate program](#).

How Businesses, Employees, Job Seekers, and Schools Use WorkKeys/Career Readiness Certificates

WorkKeys, a nationally recognized workplace skills assessment test, measures communication and problem-solving, which are valuable to any occupation. The Career Readiness Certificates (CRCs) are given based on WorkKeys scores and provide a portable credential documenting that the potential or incumbent employees possess certain fundamental skills required by employers here and across the country.



[Businesses](#) use this nationally recognized program to recruit and hire new employees and promote and train incumbent workers; [job seekers](#) use WorkKeys and CRCs to identify education or training gaps and to validate their qualifications; and [school systems](#) use this program to develop curriculum that bridges the gap between education and the working world and to help students plan their study paths and careers.

Communities To Use Work Ready to Pull Ahead of the Pack

When individual workers or job seekers receive certification, they can claim with certainty that they perform at their required skill level. Beyond that, their willingness to test their skills and fill in any gaps with the necessary training and education proves their commitment to lifelong learning and on-the-job training.

When communities are certified Work Ready, they gain a competitive advantage over non-certified communities because they can quantify a skilled workforce to an existing employer or a new business considering Oklahoma for a new location.

According to Barbara Hawkins, Chairman of the Pryor Chamber of Commerce, Pryor worked

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closely with its local *Workforce Oklahoma* center and the Northeast Oklahoma [Workforce Investment Board](#) to become one of the first communities to use WorkKeys and encourage its businesses to become [Career Readiness Champions](#).

Pryor used existing adult education programs to prepare clients to take the WorkKeys assessment and most all have since received certification. Currently, the chamber and its partners are working with the public school system to implement WorkKeys and CRCs. And, Pryor has also become one of the state's first Work Ready Communities pilot program participants.

"We are a relatively small community yet we were selected by Google," Hawkins says. "In addition to the infrastructure at MidAmerica Industrial Park, our area's ability to offer these companies a highly skilled and certified workforce was a deciding factor. If we continue to place workforce readiness at the top of our priority list and emphasize lifelong learning, there's no telling what we'll be able to accomplish. I certainly believe Pryor and Mayes County have a head start and will continue to be leaders in the work ready efforts."

Other benefits cited by those who have participated in similar programs nationally include:

- Improved high school graduation rates;
- Attracted new businesses and investments;
- Gained a competitive advantage over other communities, states, and regions;
- Helped existing companies grow and add new jobs;
- Recruited creative, talented, and innovative people.

Eligibility

To be Work Ready Certified, the community must meet the following requirements:

- 3% of the existing workforce must be credentialed with CRCs;
- 25% of the available workforce must be Career Readiness Certified;
- Either a minimum of 85% graduation rate or 82% of high school seniors with Career Readiness Certificates.

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