



Application Package

Effective February 20, 2018

All applications for Work Ready Community status submitted on or after November 11, 2017 must use this revised application and criteria.

Sponsored by:

Kentucky Workforce Investment Board
Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Kentucky Work Ready Communities

Thank you for your interest in the Kentucky Work Ready Community In Progress certification! As part of Kentucky's overall strategic plan to transform the workforce development system, the state created this framework whereby communities can agree to meet certain educational, workforce development and collaboration goals in order to earn "Work Ready Community In Progress" 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 must meet or create plans to meet certain thresholds in criteria such as – but not limited to - graduation rates, soft-skills development program implementation, educational attainment rates, and internet availability and speed. In addition, successful communities must demonstrate the ability to create partnerships and synergy between various key public agencies and employers throughout the process. The process aligns education, workforce and economic development strategies for the state and within communities by using a collaborative approach.

The enclosed materials will help you communicate your intent to participate and act as your official application for Work Ready Community in Progress status. After achieving this status, you will have up to three years to reach the thresholds and apply for Work Ready Community status.

The application packet includes the following documents:

1. **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** – about the Work Ready Community program;
2. **Letter of Intent** – required to be submitted at least 30 days prior to the application;
3. **Application Checklist** – a list of steps to take in preparing your application, information sources and what to expect after your application has been submitted;
4. **Work Ready Community In Progress Criteria and Thresholds** – a list of requirements that must be met in order to become a Work Ready Community In Progress;
5. **Application Form** – the basic application information including measurable criteria and a listing of program participants and endorsees;
6. **Plan Narrative Forms** – instructions for completing plans that are required for some criteria, and
7. **Letter of Commitment** – a sample commitment letter for use with partner agencies, employers, etc.

As you will see, the certification requirements are challenging but not impossible to achieve. We will constantly strive towards making this program one that is forward-leaning and holds relevance for you community both today and as you plan for the future.

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>.

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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 new 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 improve the criteria to best reflect 21st century priorities for workforce development initiatives. These changes were driven by the signals and demands of business and industry.
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 three 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 any cost to apply?** NO – there is no application fee.

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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.

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Letter of Intent to Participate

As part of Kentucky’s overall strategic plan to transform the workforce development system, the Kentucky Workforce Investment Board and its strategic partners created this certification in order for counties to validate the skill level of the workforce. Participating in this effort offers counties the opportunity to transform the local economy and gain a competitive advantage in attracting new businesses and jobs.

In order to qualify, communities must meet or create plans to meet certain thresholds in criteria such as – but not limited to - graduation rates, soft-skills development program implementation, educational attainment rates, and internet availability and speed. In addition, successful communities must demonstrate the ability to create partnerships and synergy between various key public agencies and employers throughout the process. The process aligns education, workforce and economic development strategies for the state and within communities by using a collaborative approach.

Additional information about the program is available at: <http://kwib.ky.gov/workreadycommunity.htm>.

Participant Information

This Letter of Intent represents the first step in the process to achieving Work Ready Community status. It is a symbol of your community’s commitment to validating and continuously improving the quality of your workforce and alerts state officials of this commitment so that technical assistance along with other resources (as available) can be targeted to such communities.

Please complete the following information and forward a signed copy of this document as instructed at the end of the letter.

NAME OF COUNTY _____

DATE _____

COUNTY TEAM LEADER

(This individual will serve as the primary contact for state officials with regard to opportunities, questions and program updates.)

Name _____

Title _____

Organization _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ **Zip Code** _____

Daytime Phone _____

Email _____

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COUNTY TEAM MEMBERS

(Please list the names and organizations serving on your county committee or team. If an organization has agreed to participate but not yet named a representative, simply use TBD for the name. You may list more than one organization for each stakeholder category, but must have at least one entity listed for each category. Attach additional pages as necessary)

Economic Development

Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Elected Officials

Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Education

Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Business & Industry

Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Workforce Development

Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Disabled, Veteran, Ex-Offender, & Medicaid

Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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Name (Print)	Organization	Title
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ESTIMATED SUBMISSION DATE

(Please indicate when you believe your application will be submitted to the state for review)

Month _____ Year _____

SIGNATURE

(Your signature below indicates your county team's commitment to working through the process to become a Certified Work Ready Community or Work Ready Community In Progress and authorizes the state to add your county's name to the list of others working toward this achievement.)

County Team Leader

_____ County

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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.

Complete and submit your Letter of Intent

You may submit this document at any time, but it must be received at least 30 days prior to submitting an application. This document will assist counties in their organizational efforts and offers an opportunity to request technical assistance in the preparation of the application.

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 In Progress Criteria for the official data sources.

Create Plans and Complete the Required Narrative

Several criteria require narratives to be completed that outline plans to reach established goals within a certain timeframe. Each of the required narratives and their details are outlined in the application materials. This step will require collaboration with members of the Local Application Committee.

Gather Letters of Commitment, Meeting Minutes, Attendee Lists & Signature

Signatures and letters of commitment are required from community leaders as outlined in the criteria requirements document.

Complete the Application Materials and Submit

You must submit the following items:

- a. The completed application form;
- 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;
- d. letters of commitment, and
- e. a list of meeting dates for any committee or subcommittee meetings, employer letters of support, or evidence of activities that have occurred in direct support of the Work Ready Communities program

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 one hard copy and one electronic copy (thumb drive, email or file transfer) of all materials via US mail or messenger and one electronic copy of the application page via email to:

Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board
Attn: Director, Kentucky WR Communities
300 Building, 4th Floor
300 Sower Blvd. Frankfort, KY 40601

Email: workready@ky.gov

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CRITERIA AND THRESHOLDS

HS Graduation Rate	High school graduation rate calculated with the method used in reporting for the State of Kentucky.
SOURCE: Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics (KCEWS)	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must include a plan to reach 90%+ graduation of eligible HS students in 3 years.

Community Commitment	A measurement of commitment from community and government agencies, demonstrating true collaboration and progress toward achieving goals that bring all local stakeholders together.
SOURCE: Meeting Minutes Sign-in Sheets / Attendance News Articles	<p>WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Application must show support (signatures/meeting participation) from the following stakeholders (at least one participant and signature per category):</p> <p>Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Heads of local Economic Development groups b. Other local economic development leadership <p>Elected Officials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. County Judge Executive b. Mayor(s) c. Council Members <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Secondary Education Leadership Representative b. Post-Secondary Education Leadership Representative c. KY Adult Education Skills U Representative d. Area Technology Center Leadership Representative <p>Workforce Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Local WIB Representative b. Area Development District Director/Leadership <p>Business and Industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. President, Chamber(s) of Commerce b. Local Area Business Leaders <p>Veteran, Disabled, Ex-offender, & Medicaid Population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Local OVR/OFB Representative b. Local CHFS/Medicaid Representative c. Representation from local re-entry council

Working Age Population without a HS Diploma or Equivalent (HSE)	Measurement of working age adults, which will allow your community to specifically target eligible workers outside traditional secondary education models.
SOURCE: ACS 18-64 5-year Estimate	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must present a plan to decrease measurement to 15% of population or less without HS diploma or HSE.

Attainment of Some College Experience or Higher	Studies indicate that exposure to programs such as dual-credit courses in high school substantially increase educational attainment and workers with marketable skills in the current economy.
SOURCE:	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS:

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ACS 18-64 5-year Estimate	Must present a plan to reach 43% or greater with some college credit/experience or higher.
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Attainment of Associates Degree or Higher	While High School level education is an important foundation, workers must strive to achieve at a post-secondary level to keep pace with business and industry demands.
SOURCE: ACS 25-64 5-year Estimate	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must present a plan to reach 25% or greater with Associate's Degree education or higher. Exception: The attainment rate can be modified to a goal of 20% if a majority of the county's 5-year job demand in approved KWIB sectors do not require an associates degree or higher. Evidence to verify the exception request should be provided in the Workforce Supply & Demand section of the application.

High School Work Ethic Seal	Employers note that many workers do not possess the work ethic to sustain a career, even through an entry-level position. This is a community's opportunity to step into building that intangible skill.
SOURCE: Local Board of Education	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must develop a plan of action to implement program including potential numbers of enrollments and anticipated graduates on an annual basis.

Kentucky Essential Skills Certificate	Employers note that many workers do not possess the soft skills to promote early success. This is a community's opportunity to purposefully step into building those intangible skills.
SOURCE: WIN	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must develop a plan of action to implement program including potential numbers of certificates awarded on an annual basis.

Career Readiness Certificates (NCRC, KCRC, etc.)	Different regions throughout the Commonwealth have shown variation in employers' demand for these certificates. As such, we encourage participation based upon a community's individual needs and assessment.
SOURCE: Applicable Administrating bodies or Vendors	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must develop a plan of action to implement program(s) including potential numbers of certificates awarded on an annual basis.

Licensures (Currently Suspended)	Licensures are an integral aspect of our Commonwealth's workforce, and it is vital that a Work Ready Community have a pulse on effectively supplying the market with the proper licensures based on areas of greatest need.
SOURCE: Kentucky Public Protection Cabinet	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must develop a plan of action to review/evaluate number of local licensures in response to local & statewide workforce demand.

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Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships are a valuable tool that expose our workers to on-the-job training as well as being highly effective recruiting programs for employers.
SOURCE: Kentucky Dept. of Labor	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must develop a plan of action to review/evaluate number of apprenticeships in response to local & statewide workforce demand.

Internet Availability and Speeds	Business is highly dependent upon technology and communities that have access to those resources will be best positioned for the workforce demands of the future.
SOURCE(S): BroadbandNow.com	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Population of 50K+ (Urban): Must develop a plan of action to meet 25 Mbps availability to 90% of population within 3 years. Population of <50K (Rural): Must develop a plan of action to meet 25 Mbps available to 60% of the population within 3 years.

Engaging Disabled, Veteran, Ex-Offender, & Medicaid Populations	While each of these groups is unique in their composition, it is vitally important to reach individuals in these classifications to achieve maximum workforce participation in your community.
SOURCE(S): KY Office of Voc. Rehab. KY Office for the Blind KY CHFS	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Must develop a plan of action to provide potential employment & engagement opportunities. Plan should address potential transportation and childcare barriers and result in overall Labor Force Participation rate increase in 3 years.

Workforce Supply vs. Demand	The future of the Commonwealth rest in Manufacturing, Healthcare, Business Services/IT, Transportation & Logistics, and Construction. Communities must strategically pursue filling these needs together.
SOURCE(S): Kentucky Center for Education and Workforce Statistics (KCEWS)	WORK READY COMMUNITY IN PROGRESS: Work with local workforce board to review and analyze 5-year occupational industry demand to create a system which supplies industry with the talent pipeline needed. Identify key sectors and occupations, and explain how the community is producing a workforce ready to fill those positions.

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APPLICATION

NAME OF COUNTY:	
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Working Age (18-64) Population w/o HS diploma or HSE (%):		Population with some college (%):	
Population with an Associate's Degree or Higher (%):			

	Number (#) Enrolled (Planned or Current)	Number (#) Awarded (Anticipated or Actual)
High School Work Ethic Seal		
Career Readiness Certificates (NCRC, KCRC, KY Essential Skills Certificate, etc.)		
Licensures (Sector Demand)		
Apprenticeships (Sector Demand)		

	Rural (<50K) or Urban (>50K)? (Circle One)	Population (%) with availability to 25 Mbps
Internet Availability & Speed	RURAL / URBAN	

	YES / NO		
Plan to engage Disabled Community?			
Plan to engage Veteran Community?			
Plan to engage Medicaid Community?			
Plan to engage Ex-offender Community?			
		Current Labor Force Participation Rate (%)	Increase over 3 years (%). (Write N/A for WRiP.)
Labor Force Participation Rate			

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NARRATIVES/PLANS

Narratives and Plans – Instructions (Narratives should be no longer than 2-3 concise paragraphs in length):

1. If your county does NOT meet the 90% graduation rate, you must complete Narrative 1 in order to apply to be a Work Ready Community in Progress.

Narrative 1: Graduation Rate: Present a plan to raise the graduation rate to 90% or greater within three years.

2. If your county does NOT meet the <15% working age population without a HS diploma or equivalent, you must complete Narrative 2 in order to apply to be a Work Ready Community in Progress.

Narrative 2: Working Age Population without High School Diploma or Equivalent: Present a plan to decrease this number to 15% of working age (18-64) adults or less within three years.

3. If your community does NOT meet the rate of 43% of the population having some college experience, you must complete Narrative 3 in order to apply to be a Work Ready Community in Progress.

Narrative 3: College Credit: Present a plan to reach 43% or greater of the population having some college experience within three years

4. If your community does NOT meet the rate of 25% or greater of your population possessing an Associate's Degree or higher, you must complete Narrative 4 to be a Work Ready Community in Progress.

Narrative 4: Associates Degree or Higher Attainment: Present a plan to reach 25% or greater of your population obtaining an Associate's Degree or higher within three years. Exception: The attainment rate can be modified to a goal of 22% if a majority of the county's 5-year job demand in approved KWIB sectors do not require an associates degree or higher. Evidence to verify the exception request should be provided in the Workforce Supply & Demand section of the application.

5. Discuss your Soft Skills Programs relative to High School Work Ethic Seal, Kentucky Essential Skills Certificate, and any supplemental programs for Career Readiness Certificates.

Narrative 5: Soft Skills Programs: Discuss your plan to implement programs to address work ethic/soft skills development and credentialing for both the secondary school and postsecondary adult populations within 3 years. This includes the High School Work Ethic Seal, Kentucky Essential Skills Certificate, and any supplemental programs for Career Readiness Certificates.

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.

6. If your county does NOT meet the broadband availability goals of access to 25 Mbps for 90% of Urban residents OR 60% of Rural residents, you must complete Narrative 6 in order to apply to be a Work Ready Community in Progress.

Narrative 6: Broadband Availability: Must present a plan to meet the broadband availability goals of 25Mbps, whether rural (60%) or urban (90%), within three years.

7. All applicants must complete Narrative 7.

Narrative 7: Licensures & Apprenticeships

From currently implemented licensure & apprenticeship programs, objectively demonstrate number of current licensures & apprenticeships with a plan to increase both in high demand KWIB sectors annually.

8. All applicants must complete Narrative 8.

Narrative 8: Engagement of Disabled, Veteran, Ex-offender & Medicaid Populations:

Please discuss how your community will develop a plan to provide employment & engagement opportunities to individuals in the aforementioned categories. Plan should address potential transportation and childcare barriers that may exist and ultimately result in an improvement in the local Workforce Participation Rate within a three year period.

9. All applicants must complete Narrative 9.

Narrative 9: Workforce Supply vs. Demand:

Please identify the top five occupational needs for each KWIB sector that are required currently and over the next five years. Discuss how your community works with your local workforce board to review and subsequently analyze occupational demand (by industry sector) in order to develop a system that supplies industry with the talent pipeline needed for a thriving business environment. You should also explain how your community is working with educational partners to fill those needs.