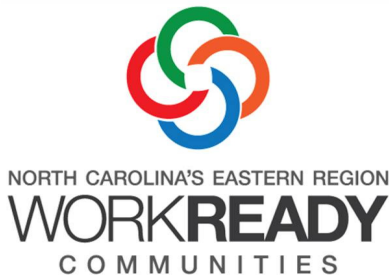


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North Carolina's Pilot Work Ready Program Reaches Halfway Point

The Work Ready program of North Carolina's Eastern Region has reached its halfway point. All 13 counties are participating in a rigorous initiative aimed to align the region's workforce with industry needs and to ensure that workers possess the appropriate skills to be successful employees. Several counties already have documented successes.



Kinston, NC – July 10, 2012 - North Carolina's first Work Ready Communities program in the Eastern Region is midway through its demonstration phase. All thirteen counties in the region are working toward a Work Ready certification by increasing their high school graduation rate, Career Readiness Certificates (CRCs), and employer involvement. County leaders representing K-12 schools, community colleges, chambers of commerce, workforce development agencies, and various large and small businesses are driving this effort. County representatives last convened in Kinston in April to assess regional opportunities for employer engagement.

The Eastern Region's Work Ready certification standards are the highest of states that have already adopted a Work Ready program. Georgia and Oklahoma established a statewide Work Ready program in 2006; at least four other states are also considering a similar program. Eastern Region counties are working toward a high school graduation goal of 80%, a Career Readiness Certificate goal of 25% of the labor force and to engage 10 of the county's 20 largest employers in the CRC.

A couple of counties in the region are already close to earning a Work Ready certification by having met their high school graduation and Career Readiness Certificate requirements. All but five of the thirteen counties achieved their CRC requirement, and Lenoir, Pitt, and Wayne counties have more than ten employers committed to using the CRC. Wayne County leads the region in CRCs with almost one-third of the area's total. Area businesses committed to the CRC are recognized on the program website www.ncworkready.org. The Eastern Region will announce eligible counties as early as the end of this year and at the end of the initiative in mid-2013. Soon companies committing to use CRC in hiring will have access to a job seekers portal for employees seeking jobs that possess a CRC.

Fast Facts

8,189: Career Readiness Certificates (CRCs) earned* in Eastern Region since launch of Work Ready Communities

3,471: CRCs needed for counties to meet Work Ready Goal

132,100: Total CRCs across North Carolina

24%: Eastern Region portion of CRCs in state

95: Number of employers in the Eastern Region that use the CRC

*As of June 1, 2012. Source: www.crcnc.com

The demonstration program is managed by the Eastern Region in partnership with the Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board. Support for Work Ready Communities is provided by the North Carolina Rural Center. The Eastern Region provides grant funding to counties to support employer engagement events and to supplement CRC testing fees.

North Carolina's Eastern Region is an economic development agency representing 13 counties in Eastern North Carolina. For more information visit www.nceast.org or contact, Steven Pearce, Marketing & Communications Coordinator at pearce@nceast.org.