

Clark County 2nd in Ohio to join job skills program

business

By [Matt Sanctis](#) - Staff Writer

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Posted: 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, October 10, 2017

Clark County has a new tool to evaluate the region's workforce and potentially lure more employers to the region.

The county will roll out an ACT Work Ready program that helps communities identify skill gaps and look for ways to improve the local workforce, said Amy Donahoe, director of hiring and employer services for the Chamber of Greater Springfield.

Several area agencies, including the chamber, Clark State Community College and Ohio Means Jobs of Clark County, have been working for close to a year to certify Clark County for the program, she said.

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The announcement was made during a roundtable discussion Tuesday with local business owners focused on the region's efforts to better link skills of Clark County workers to the kinds of jobs available. Clark County will be one of only a handful of counties in Ohio that has implemented the program, Donahoe said.

Preble County also achieved the certification, while Wayne and Lucas counties in Northwest Ohio are working toward certification.

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"Site selectors are looking at us and asking if we have a certified workforce," Donahoe said. "Until now we've had to say no."

The certification is a portable credential that shows job candidates have the essential skills to be successful. The idea is to show employers that potential workers have the basic aptitude for math, reading comprehension and other skills that can translate to various jobs.

The program is more common throughout the southern U.S., Donahoe said. Jo Alice Blondin, president of Clark State Community College, said she's seen firsthand that the program was attractive to employers while she served in her previous role as chancellor of Arkansas Tech University's Ozark campus. The program has been implemented statewide across Arkansas, she said.

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“It’s a way to scale up to all the businesses in the community and identify the skill levels they need and identify a pool of applicants,” Blondin said.

Clark County has made several strides to better link its workforce to local employers in recent years, said Horton Hobbs, vice president of economic development for the chamber. He cited Silfex, a manufacturing firm that **recently announced a decision** to open a plant in Springfield and create 400 jobs. The company chose Springfield in part because of its workforce, Hobbs said.

“We are righting the ship,” Hobbs said. “We have a long way to go.”

DETAILS: Clark State plans 4-year degree in manufacturing to meet job demand

Schools, the chamber, Ohio Means Jobs and other agencies have developed several programs in recent years to close a skills gap between workers and the available jobs, he said. That includes internship programs developed between businesses and local high schools.

Although progress has been made, local workforce development agencies will need to continue to work with business owners to find more opportunities to provide training for Clark County workers, said Toni Overholser, director of workforce and business solutions at Clark State.

“This is not a panacea or a one-shot deal,” she said of Tuesday’s meeting. “Our plan is to do this frequently.”

Complete coverage

The Springfield News-Sun provides readers with important news about jobs and the region’s economy, including recent stories on Silfex’s plan to expand in Springfield with 400 new jobs and the role the region will play in development driverless cars.

By the numbers

2 – Counties in Ohio certified as an ACT work ready community

4 – Total Ohio counties involved in the program

611 – Certificates in Clark County awarded

1959 – Year ACT was founded

Source: www.workreadycommunities.org

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