



## **ACT Hosts Second Annual ACT Work Ready Communities Symposium**

### *Attendees from 26 States Share Best Practices in St. Louis*

ACT held its second annual [ACT Work Ready Communities](#) Best Practices Symposium on Oct. 7 and 8 in St. Louis, Mo., providing an opportunity for participating state and community leaders to share their success stories from the nationwide initiative.

[Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon](#) welcomed 115 attendees from 26 states and shared the initiative's [value](#) in developing and quantifying work-ready skills in his state. "A skilled workforce is essential to a strong economy, and we are proud that Missouri leads the nation in this initiative to train workers and match them with employers needing those skills," Nixon said. "My administration has been committed to strengthening Missouri's workforce and making sure local communities have the tools and resources needed to attract new jobs and new investments to every corner of our state. By promoting initiatives like certified ACT Work Ready Communities, we will continue our economic growth by providing more Missouri businesses with the workforce they need to create jobs and prosper."

[ACT](#) created the ACT Work Ready Communities initiative in 2012 to provide states, regions and communities with a framework for community-based workforce development to drive economic growth. Participating organizations use the [ACT National Career Readiness Certificate™](#), based on three foundational workplace skills assessments from the [ACT WorkKeys® system](#), to measure and close skills gaps. The approach allows a region to align its workforce development efforts to strengthen economic development.

The 13 counties that have achieved certification as ACT Work Ready Communities since the program's launch were recognized for their achievement:

- Avoyelles and Rapides Parishes, La.
- Butler County, Mo.
- Clarendon County, S.C.
- Colleton County, S.C.
- Franklin County, Mo.
- Henry County, Mo.

- Jasper County, Mo.
- Jefferson County, Mo.
- McCormick County, Mo.
- Ripley County, Mo.
- Saluda County, S.C.
- St. Francois County, Mo.

Members of the [National Workforce Solutions Advisory Board](#) discussed their role in advising the ACT Work Ready Communities initiative and described recent meetings in Washington, D.C., with state chamber presidents, the Manufacturing Institute, key congressional staff leadership and U.S. Department of Labor leaders.

“The symposium served as a unique opportunity to engage a number of people involved in economic development about the importance of the workforce and closing the skills gap at the local level,” said Neal Wade, chairman of the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama and a nationally known economic developer.

National leaders participated in panels to share ideas on building successful ACT Work Ready Community initiatives from the perspective of employers, community colleges, and state and county organizations. Debra Lyons, ACT vice president of community and economic development, encouraged sharing lessons learned by reminding attendees that “a candle loses nothing by lighting another candle.”

Keynote speakers included Jeff Finkle, president of the [International Economic Development Council](#), and Mark Arend, editor-in-chief of [Site Selection](#) magazine.

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*ACT is a mission-driven, nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people achieve education and workplace success. Headquartered in Iowa City, Iowa, ACT is trusted as the nation’s leader in college and career readiness, providing high-quality achievement assessments grounded in more than 50 years of research and experience. ACT offers a uniquely integrated continuum of solutions that help people succeed from elementary school through career, providing insights that unlock potential. To learn more about ACT, go to [www.act.org](http://www.act.org).*