

# Frequently Asked Questions: ACT® Certified Work Ready Communities

## *Questions about the initiative*

1. What is the Certified Work Ready Communities initiative (CWRC)?

The ACT Certified Work Ready Communities (CWRC) initiative is a national effort, led by ACT, to provide a framework for states, regions and communities to build an economic development, community based approach grounded in certifying counties as Work Ready. States or ACT award this certification when counties achieve goals (based on common criteria) of individuals in the workforce earning a National Career Readiness Certificate and businesses recognizing or recommending the NCRC. States may add additional criteria to their unique initiatives. The website provides documents outlining the initiative. Please click on the "Resources" tab at the bottom of the Home page and select "About the CWRC Initiative."

2. What is the process for States to become involved?

There is an application that must be completed and submitted. As part of the application process, a state leadership team will need to be established. Please go to the website and click on 'Resources' tab on the home page. Then click 'How to get engaged.' This will provide more information on the process and a link to the most recent application.

3. What does it mean for a state to be actively participating in the CWRC Initiative?

It means the statewide leadership team has applied and been accepted into the CWRC Academy – the Academy is the mechanism by which ACT engages with states. The application is available on the website and will be updated periodically. We anticipate opening one to two application windows per year. The next window for releasing the application is late fall 2012.

4. Can a county or a region apply?

Yes! ACT is now accepting applications from individual counties to participate in the CWRC initiative as part of a new pilot program. More information, including a one-pager and application, are available at <http://www.workreadycommunities.org>

5. How does a county participate in the Certified Work Ready Community process?

States accepted into the ACT CWRC Academy develop a process to "on board" counties as "participating." When a county comes on board via the state process (which may vary from state to state – please check with your state CWRC leadership team), the state notifies ACT -- then ACT marks the county as "participating" on the CWRC website. Counties may also apply to participate directly in a new pilot program with ACT if there is not an active state-level CWRC program in place.

6. What are the certification criteria and how were they developed?

For more information on the common criteria, please reference the "Common Criteria" and "About the Criteria" documents in the resources section of the CWRC website at <http://www.workreadycommunities.org>.

First, the State CWRC team sends census data to populate ACT CWRC Template to calculate goals. Data is broken down to the county level.

Counties are divided into categories based on population.



## County sizes

- Small Counties (up to 29,999)
- Medium Counties (30,000 to 99,999)
- Large Counties (100,000 – 499,999)
- Very Large Counties (500,000 – 999,999)
- Mega Counties (Over 1,000,000)

Data is tabulated at the ACT CWRC office with the following multipliers used to calculate goals:

ACT Certified Work Ready Communities Criteria multipliers:

County Size	Current Workforce	Transitioning Workforce	Emerging Workforce	Employers Supporting
Small	0.25%	15%	25%	5%
Medium	0.15%	12%	25%	5%
Large	0.05%	10%	15%	2.5%
Very Large	0.025%	5%	5%	1%
Mega	0.01%	2.5%	2.5%	0.5%

The county goals are formulated using the county's figures, at the time the state begins to participate, in the categories of Current Workforce, Transitioning Workforce, Emerging Workforce and Businesses Supporting. Every county starts at different places, in terms of certificates, when the state begins to participate and goals are calculated. Keeping this in mind it is complex to compare counties of different sizes to one another based on overall goals.

### 7. Who certifies a county?

Each participating state establishes county level goals through the CWRC Academy that include the common ACT CWRC county goals, and may include additional goals specific to each state. When a county surpasses the common CWRC goals, ACT notifies the participating state leadership team.

***Participating states confer the Certified Work Ready Community status to the participating county.***

After that point, the county moves from "participating" to "certified" on the CWRC website.

For counties participating in the pilot county program, ACT is working with the National Workforce Solution Advisory Board on most appropriate process and entity to certify the county.

### 8. What does it mean when a county gets certified?

A county becomes eligible for CWRC status when it has met its NCRC and business engagement common criteria goals PLUS what, if any, additional state criteria are in place for certification (additional state criteria would only apply for counties in participating states). The CWRC recognition means a county has a system in place to provide employers' irrefutable data that it can deliver a quality workforce with the skills employers need.

### 9. What happens after initial certification?

After communities achieve their initial certification, they will have the opportunity to continue to maintain this certification in partnership with their state and with ACT. This ensures that a



community continues its process toward measuring, certifying and improving the skill level of its workforce.

10. What does it mean for a business to be engaged?

A business can choose to recognize, prefer or recommend the NCRC in support of their county becoming a certified work ready community. Businesses engaged will only be displayed in states participating in the ACT CWRC initiative.

A business can indicate its support by signing up on the CWRC website; there are three categories for employers supporting as follows:

- Employers with four or fewer employees
  - Very small employers (with four or fewer employees) may now indicate their support on the CWRC website. Every four of these very small employers will count as one employer toward the overall “employers recognizing” goal for the county. Also, this very small employer category is limited to contributing a maximum of 25 percent toward the overall employer recognition goal.
- Employers with five to 99 employees
  - Employers in this category may only select the county where they have a physical location
- Employers with 100 or more employees
  - If you are a business with more than 100 employees, you may show your support for all counties within 25 miles of your facility.

11. Who can sign a business up?

Anyone authorized to act on the business' behalf can visit the CWRC website and fill out the online form indicating their support. ACT reserves the right to approve participating businesses posted on the website. Again, this functionality is only available to businesses in states actively participating in the ACT CWRC initiative.

***About the data***

12. How often is the data updated?

NCRC county data will be updated monthly beginning in July 2012. Prior to that date, county level data will be updated one additional time scheduled for June 2012.

13. Why are you not showing data greater than zero and less than four?

We did not want to release any individually identifiable information. Therefore, any NCRCs fewer than four are represented by a +.

14. I am aware that my state has more NCRCs than are reflected on this website. Why are they not showing up here?

The state page reports the NCRCs issued since 2006 created and stored in the ACT RegiSTAR system. The county page reports NCRCs earned via computer based testing after Jan. 1, 2012 and created/stored in the RegiSTAR system. Beginning July 1, 2012, NCRCs earned via paper and pencil will be included in the county page reports. The CWRC website does not include state CRCs based on WorkKeys that are not NCRCs created and stored in RegiSTAR.



15. What is considered a counted certificate?

In order to be counted towards a community's certification goals, the assessment taker must have provided his or her county of residence and current workforce status. If the assessment is taken via WKIV, the examinee is required to provide this information. If the assessment is taken via the paper answer sheet, then the examinee will provide demographic information if the WK administrator ensures it has been collected.

The NCRC must also be stored in RegiSTAR.

16. May I have a print out of state or county level data in an excel file?

Print functionality is online now for county-level data.

17. Is it possible to get county level data for states that are not participating?

County level data is presented for all 50 states. However, Certified Work Ready Community goals are only available for participating states and individual counties participating in the county-level pilot program.

18. What does the NCRC Plus mean, and how does that relate to a community's goals?

The NCRC Plus includes a personal skills assessment – also known as a soft skills assessment. NCRC Plusses do count toward the total NCRCs earned in support of a community's goals.

19. Do the National totals on the home page reflect NCRC-Plus certificates?

Yes.

20. What does the "percent WKIV" mean?

The WorkKeys assessments are offered via a pencil and paper format and also a computer-based format known as WKIV - WorkKeys Internet Version. The ability for an examinee to take the WorkKeys assessments via a computer is an indicator of computer literacy. If an examinee took all three assessments via WKIV, then that NCRC counts in the percent earned WKIV calculation.

21. Will ACT post specific data on US Territories?

At this time, we only have data for the 50 states. However, we plan to expand to territories in the future.

22. What do we mean by the emerging, transitioning and current workforce?

Emerging workforce consists of high school juniors and seniors, college students (can be technical, vocational, community college or four-year college programs), and recent graduates (within the last 12 months).

Transitioning workforce means currently unemployed or currently participating in an adult education or GED program (or recent completed within the last 12 months).

Current workforce means currently employed in either the private or public sector.

Information about recent veterans (discharged within the last 12 months) is also captured; veterans will be counted in the transitioning workforce category.

23. What is an improved certificate and how is that counted?

When an individual re-takes an assessment and earns a new NCRC at a higher level (for example, moving from not earned to bronze, or from silver to gold), ACT captures and reports that information



as an improved certificate. It is a measure of the number of individuals who are closing their own skills gaps. Beginning July 1, 2012, ACT will begin to report at the county level every improved NCRC.

24. How are you capturing an individual's county of residence and current employment status?

At the time of assessment, test-takers are asked to self-identify their county of residence and current employment status. They may only select one option for current workforce status -- they are instructed to select the option that best describes them.

25. What if an individual's county of residence or current employment status changes?

The county of residence and current workforce status data is designed to be a snapshot in time when the certificate holder took the assessment and earned an NCRC. There is no way to update this unless the individual retakes at least one WorkKeys assessment. **HOWEVER, if an individual retakes an assessment and earns a NEW certificate at a higher level, then any updates to county of residence or current workforce status would be reflected in our reports.**

26. What happens if an examinee does not complete the county of residence or current status on a paper answer document?

If the county of residence and current status information is missing the NCRC earned by the individual will not count towards a county's goals.