



Virginia Board of Workforce Development

Virginia Career Readiness Certificate 2015 Annual Report

Mindy Fast, Program Director, Continuing Education

Virginia Community College System

mfast@vccs.edu

(804) 819-4985

Sara J. Dunnigan, Executive Director

Sara.dunnigan@governor.virginia.gov

(804) 663-7464

BACKGROUND

With support from the Board of Workforce Development, the numbers of Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) recipients continue to grow to certify the workplace readiness skills of Virginians. The CRC, issued by Virginia and based on ACT's WorkKeys® assessments – Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, and Reading for Information – is a portable, evidence-based credential that provides individuals a workplace skills certification that employers can use to make reliable decisions on hiring and training. By putting the right people in the right jobs, businesses can be more productive and profitable.

Community colleges, partnering with their local WIB and One-Stops Centers, improved connections to businesses, enhanced outreach efforts and expanded access to WorkKeys testing. While the Commonwealth saw a small decrease in the number of CRCs achieved from the previous year, WIBs and One Stops still exceeded their goal for CRC achievement among WIOA participants. In FY2015, Virginia awarded approximately 9,393 CRCs, about an 8% decrease over the previous year's figures. This number was reported from the Virginia CRC database. Over the lifetime of this program, over 100,390 Virginians have received a CRC.

To raise awareness of the CRC in Virginia, the Virginia CRC website, hosted by the Virginia Community College System, was refreshed allowing viewers to quickly learn about the CRC and access CRC data in Virginia and providing businesses access to examinees to help identify qualified workers in their region. New marketing brochures were designed and distributed to community colleges, local WIBS and One Stop Centers highlighting the value of the CRC to individual job seekers and employers.

In FY2015, VCCS allocated funding to drive business awareness and recognition of the CRC in recruitment and promotions. Colleges provided reduced cost testing and job profiling services to businesses in their regions that indicated an interest in using the CRC in their human resources practices. Several businesses in Virginia either prefer or require a CRC for applicants or selected employees to help identify or raise the skill levels of their workforce. These businesses include but are not limited to Monogram Foods, Volvo Trucks, WestRock, and Eastman Chemical.

CRC ATTAINMENT FOR WIA RECIPIENTS

WIBs were guided by the requirements set by the VWC in November 2012 to incrementally increase the attainment of the CRCs by WIA recipients to 25% by FY2015. This year, WIB regions went beyond the prescribed 25% goal by identifying strategies to overcome any barriers to the CRC for WIA recipients.

In FY 2015, the 15 WIB regions in Virginia had 2,001 active participants who had earned a CRC, a decrease from the prior year attainment of 3,871 CRCs. The number of CRCs decreased reflecting the decrease in WIA participants. The CRC attainment among the FY2015 participants, however, was 39%.

ACT'S CERTIFIED WORK READY COMMUNITY IN VIRGINIA'S SOUTHERN REGION

July 2013, the Commonwealth of Virginia implemented ACT Certified Work Ready Communities through a local and regional economic development approach — utilizing Southern Virginia's Dan River Region as its pilot. Based on county-level education, employment rates, and population data, in mid-2013 ACT set common goals to be met by the region for the designation of "work ready". These common goals include 2,311 emerging, transitioning and current workers earning the National Career Readiness Certificates (NCRC) and 287 employers recognizing, preferring, or recommending the NCRC as a part of their hiring process. In April 2014, the Commonwealth established its local criteria, in addition to ACT's common criteria, consisting of a threshold high school diploma or equivalent attainment rate of 70% or more of working adult population. In June, 2015, Henry County became the first designated certified work ready county in Virginia, meeting their goals for workers attaining the NCRC and of employers engaged with the NRCR. The Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia certifies localities or regions that meet established benchmarks for these criteria.

Southern Virginia's WRC initiative is an effort to align workforce and education to meet the unique economic needs of the region. Southern Virginia is the first regional-state hybrid in the country to be selected by ACT to participate in this program. It is guided by key community and state leaders including elected officials, economic development, business leaders, chambers of commerce, educators and workforce development.

Southern Virginia's vision for the Certified Work Ready Communities is to create a new regional workforce story that leads to business retention, expansion and relocation. The CWRC program works in concert with the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC), issued by ACT and includes the same three assessments as Virginia's CRC, and serves as one form of evidence that a community has a skilled labor force for targeted industries.