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**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Record-Breaking Number of S. C. Counties Certified as Work Ready**

COLUMBIA—Lt. Gov. Yancey McGill and Lt. Gov.-Elect Henry McMaster announced today that nearly half of South Carolina's counties are now certified as work ready, outpacing the nation in an initiative that showcases the highly skilled workforce that businesses require in a competitive economy.

Eighteen counties were recognized for achieving certification through the South Carolina Work Ready Communities (SCWRC) initiative. The counties are: Abbeville, Allendale, Anderson, Bamberg, Beaufort, Berkeley, Cherokee, Dorchester, Edgefield, Fairfield, Florence, Greenwood, Laurens, Marlboro, Newberry, Pickens, Sumter and Williamsburg.

"Such momentum demonstrates how dedicated these local communities are to attracting businesses," Lt. Gov. McGill said. "I want to congratulate all our new certified work ready counties and encourage others to keep working towards their certification goals."

The 18 newly certified counties have all met specified workforce and education goals, demonstrating to businesses a strong workforce and commitment to economic growth. The Palmetto State now has 22 counties with this designation, which is more than any other state in the nation.

"With almost half of our counties now certified, we are well on our way to becoming the first certified work ready state in the nation," Lt. Gov.-Elect McMaster said. "The next four years will be critical, focusing on economic development and these initiatives will help bring prosperity and growth to our state. This will show the rest of the country and world that South Carolina is ready and open for business."

SCWRC provides a framework to strengthen economic development using a community-based approach grounded in certifying counties as work ready. To become a South Carolina Work Ready Community, each county has to reach or exceed goals in the following categories: National Career Readiness Certificates (WorkKeys® testing), graduation rates, soft-skills and business support.

"Counties of all sizes are catching on to the effectiveness of the Work Ready program and realizing that certification allows each area to market itself to new and existing businesses and ultimately results in more jobs for South Carolinians," said Cheryl M. Stanton, executive director of the SC Department of Employment and Workforce.

The latest work ready counties join the ranks of Clarendon, McCormick, Colleton and Saluda, which previously received the South Carolina Work Ready Community designation.

South Carolina was one of four pilot states selected to participate in the ACT Certified Work Ready Community program. For additional information, visit [www.scworkready.org](http://www.scworkready.org).

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