

Talking Points

Clarendon County is 1st in SC to become a “Certified Work Ready Community”

August 23, 2013

Bottom Line

- We are here today to celebrate because Clarendon County is the 1st in South Carolina to be recognized as a Certified Work Ready Community.
- The Certified Work-Ready Communities Initiative is a locally-driven, public-private partnership through which South Carolina’s communities can show businesses that we have the commitment and the skilled workforce that they need in order to succeed.

Background

- See pages 3-4 for additional background on ACT and the Certified Work Ready Community initiative. The talking points from last year’s announcement at Midlands Tech cover these points.

Key Points

- South Carolina was one of the four original pilot states selected to participate in ACT’s Certified Work Ready Communities Academy, to help us build a framework that’s customized to suit our specific needs.
- Late last year, we announced that we were ready to receive applications from counties that wanted to be part of this initiative. To apply, they had to put together local partnerships between the business community, our educators, our economic developers, and other stakeholders.
- In their applications, the county-based teams documented their strategies for providing assessments to high school, college, and adult education students, along with the unemployed who are preparing to enter or re-enter the workforce. They also defined their goals for assessing skills, profiling jobs, and bringing prospective employees and employers together, too.
- You know what? Every single county in the state applied for the opportunity to pursue this certification. But only one county could be first...
- Congratulations to Clarendon County for being South Carolina’s 1st – and the nation’s 2nd – Certified Work Ready Community.
- Note: To learn more, folks can visit “SCWorkReady.org” for more information.

- **NOTE: For reference, these are the criteria for a Certified Work Ready Community:**
 - A certain number of individuals in that county must earn National Career Readiness Certificates (NCRC), based on the county's population.
 - Counties must demonstrate a certain level of private sector support, also tied to population.
 - A county must have a 73.1% high school graduation rate, based upon a 3-year rolling average. This figure was developed in collaboration with the SC Department of Education.
 - 25% of the individuals who obtain a NCRC in that county must take the Talent Assessment, which measures those "soft skills" that are so important to employers.

Why Are We Doing This?

- When I call executives to try to bring jobs to South Carolina, they talk about taxes, and they talk about our business climate, but they always ask about our workforce. Do we have the skilled workers that they need? This initiative helps us make sure that my answer can always be, "Yes!"
- There are about 170,000 job seekers here right now, but at the same time, there are over 56,000 jobs that are available, just waiting to be filled. This initiative is about matching-up those who are looking for work with businesses that are ready to hire.
- Through our partnership with ACT, we are:
 - Testing job-seekers, to assess their skills
 - Profiling unfilled jobs, to see what expertise is needed in order to perform that work capably
 - Using the results of the job profiles and the job-seekers' tests to see what specific skills gaps are keeping them from finding employment
 - Providing the training that is needed, so that businesses can get the employees they need, and South Carolinians can get back to work
- Counties that raise their hands are showing the kind of local commitment that businesses want to see when I'm trying to attract them to South Carolina.

About Alucoil and Samuel Chastain

- Alucoil manufactures high-quality aluminum composite panels for building and construction applications.
- Its parent company is based in Madrid – Grupo Aliberico purchased Manning's "Intrabond USA" in 2011 and has invested \$5 million to update the plant. They have 15 employees here and hope to double in the next year.
- Alucoil produced the exterior cladding for the School of Business' new home at the University of South Carolina.
- Samuel Chastain (Sam-WELL) is Alucoil's Vice President and General Manager.

Talking Points [INCLUDED FOR BACKGROUND]
ACT Certified Work Ready Communities Academy (CWRC)

February 9, 2012

Bottom Line

- ACT has selected South Carolina to be 1 of 4 states to participate in the Certified Work Ready Communities Academy.

Who is ACT?

- ACT is an independent, not-for-profit organization that provides a broad array of assessment, research, information, and program management solutions in the areas of education and workforce development.

How does the state work with ACT today?

- Multiple state agencies work with ACT – Department of Commerce, Department of Education, Department of Employment and Workforce, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Technical College System.
- State and local agencies have more than 100 separate agreements with ACT today. *[NOTE: We negotiated this down to a single statewide contract in 2013.]*
- The “work readiness system” has 4 main components:
 - WorkKeys Assessments – Up to 9 tests that measure an individual’s job-related skills.
 - Job Profiles – Process for helping employers determine what scores on which tests will indicate an individual’s suitability for the job.
 - KeyTrain – A series of learning modules to help individuals improve skills and close gaps.
 - National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) – A nationally-recognized credential issued to individuals who meet assessment thresholds (bronze, silver, gold, platinum levels).

What is the Certified Work Ready Communities Academy?

- This is a year-long initiative...a partnership of these state agencies and the business community (led by the SC Manufacturers Alliance), working with ACT, to improve job-readiness programs.
- The Certified Work Ready Communities credential sends a strong signal to companies all across America – that South Carolina is open for business and that we have the skilled workforce they need.

Does this work?

- In a 2010 survey of individual participants in Georgia...
 - Over ¾ said that the Career Readiness Certificate helped them know what employers are looking for.
 - 75% said that the certification gave them an advantage over other applicants.
 - 70% said it gave them the confidence to find a job.
 - A majority said it opened doors for them in a recent job search.
- In a 2010 survey of businesses in Georgia...
 - 86% said it helped them find higher-quality employees.
 - A majority said it saved them money and reduced employee turnover.

Why does this all matter?

- Right now, we have people who need jobs, even though we have employers who have positions that they can't fill. This Academy is about helping us to figure out what skills those jobs require and what skills our unemployed and underemployed need to develop in order to get those jobs.
- We're shifting to a model where we have one statewide licensing agreement with ACT. This means better pricing for unlimited access to their services. It's better outcomes for less money.
- Bringing our agencies together through this Academy also means we'll get to a single data repository. Many South Carolinians have interactions with multiple state agencies – now we'll be able to share that information more readily, to provide better services.
- Participation in the Academy also gives us and our county-level partners access to ACT's data, to help us further target our efforts where they can have the most impact.
- When we identify skills gaps, train individuals in those areas, and match them up to jobs employers can't fill today, then everybody wins.