

VIRGINIA CAREER READINESS CERTIFICATE
Project Status
December 1, 2010

Since January 2008, with support from the Virginia Workforce Council (VWC), the numbers of Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) recipients continue to grow to certify the workplace readiness skills of Virginians.

The CRC program's basis is the ACT developed skills database, which contains more than 17,000 detailed job profiles, representing one of the largest databases in existence today. These profiles were produced by ACT-trained profilers to analyze each job with the help of subject matter experts (employees already doing the job successfully and their management) to define the tasks and skills needed to perform the job to acceptable levels of performance. By matching the job profile information with individual scores on the WorkKeys® assessments, employers are equipped to make reliable decisions about hiring and training.

As required by the CRC legislation passed during the 2008 General Assembly session, VWC adopted a budget to develop outreach and incentive activities to enhance and expand Virginia's CRC program. For FY 2010, the budget included more than \$250,000 from a combination of federal and state funds as well as in-kind resources to support the continued implementation of the CRC. Since the legislation was approved, the program has seen a significant increase in activity.

The Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA) continues to provide leadership for the CRC initiative, as established by a contract between CCWA and the Virginia Community College System in 2008. CCWA is the workforce development partnership of J. Sargeant Reynolds and John Tyler Community Colleges.

In Fall 2010, a CRC coordinator was hired to strengthen statewide outreach for the CRC, monitor performance and build up regional consortia of community colleges, workforce investment boards and One-Stop Career Centers in an effort to continue to stimulate additional growth for Virginia's CRC program.

Continued licenses with software providers, WIN and KeyTrain, allow community colleges and One-Stop Centers to administer Internet-based, skill gap-training to assist CRC test-takers to improve their test scores.

Community colleges, paired with their local One-Stops, improved partnerships with businesses, enhanced outreach efforts and saw increases in the number of CRCs achieved from the previous year. In FY2010, Virginia awarded 5,708 CRCs, which was a 10 percent increase over the previous year. Over the lifetime of this program, over 25,000 Virginians have received a CRC.

In July 2010, the VCCS invited government and state agency leaders to an informational session on the CRC. These leaders had an opportunity to complete the CRC giving them hands-on experience of the assessment.

The Virginia Community College System continued a contract with ACT so all community colleges can participate as members of the WorkKeys® Solutions Provider Network. This will provide new ways for the colleges to build long-term relationships with local employers and meet the needs of job seekers, workers and local businesses through expanded use of the CRC.

An enhanced statewide CRC database and website will be completed by Winter 2011 providing a user-friendly tool for employers to search data on the skill levels of Virginia's workforce. The database will also provide employers, jobseekers and economic development and workforce professionals with information about the CRC. A search is underway to engage a vendor to develop and maintain the more robust set of requirements needed for a CRC database and website as the program grows.

Below is a regional breakdown of bronze, silver, and gold CRCs awarded between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010.

| FY 2010 Career Readiness Certificates in Virginia | | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------------|
| WIB REGION | BRONZE | SILVER | GOLD | TOTAL CRC'S |
| Alexandria/Arlington | 5 | 8 | 2 | 15 |
| Bay Consortium | 44 | 122 | 26 | 192 |
| Capital Region | 228 | 564 | 190 | 982 |
| Crater Region | 210 | 368 | 84 | 662 |
| Greater Peninsula | 85 | 203 | 57 | 345 |
| Hampton Roads | 173 | 416 | 143 | 732 |
| New River/Mt. Rogers | 66 | 132 | 52 | 250 |
| Northern Virginia | 208 | 490 | 273 | 971 |
| Piedmont Workforce Network | 22 | 52 | 17 | 91 |
| Region 2000/Central Virginia | 92 | 141 | 40 | 273 |
| Shenandoah Valley | 101 | 211 | 84 | 396 |
| South Central Virginia | 99 | 206 | 41 | 346 |
| Southwest Virginia | 25 | 76 | 23 | 124 |
| West Piedmont | 64 | 122 | 10 | 196 |
| Western Virginia | 25 | 80 | 28 | 133 |
| STATE TOTAL | 1,447 | 3,191 | 1,070 | 5,708 |

To sustain the progress that has been made, the VWC has budgeted \$200,000 to support the CRC initiative in FY 2011.

In order to accelerate the CRC initiative, it is recommended that the Commonwealth, as an employer, implement the use of the CRC program as a hiring criterion or as a tool to assess and increase skills of existing state employees for all state agencies. If state agencies would require the CRC be one of the required qualifications for all classified staff positions, not only would it significantly enhance the visibility of the certificate, but it would also demonstrate that the Commonwealth of Virginia is utilizing the Governor's endorsed certificate of workforce readiness. In addition to benefiting state agencies and institutions in their efforts to hire qualified employees, the CRC can also be used to periodically assess the skills of the current workforce and identify skill gaps that can be remedied through use of the statewide gap-training software. While several very notable employers, including Northrop Grumman, Inova Health Systems, Canon Virginia, and MeadWestvaco, play a key role in marketing the CRC's value, one of the goals during the coming year is to persuade one of the Commonwealth's largest employers, state government, to embrace the CRC as an effective assessment instrument of foundational workplace skills.

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