

SWIC Ready to Work Communities Task Force

**August 13, 2013
3:00 – 4:00 PM Eastern**

Meeting Notes

Participants: Becky Nickoli, Chip Orben, Dennis Wimer, Mark Goldman, Mark Maassel, Mellisa Leaming, Randy Holmes, Richard Rampley, Roger Feldhaus

Staff: Nate Klinck, Department of Workforce Development

I. Welcome and Introductions

Mark Goldman began the meeting at 3:05pm and welcomed the taskforce members in attendance.

II. Discussion Topics

- **Ready to Work Communities Framework-Discussion Draft**

- Nate Klinck led the taskforce through the document he developed identifying potential certification criteria. He asked that taskforce members respond to each of the criterion that was included in the document:

- 1. % of workforce (25+) with a high school diploma or equivalent**
 - Taskforce members generally agreed that this criterion should be included in the certification framework
 - There was some discussion on what age range to utilize (whether it should include individuals under the age of 25); the taskforce generally agreed to use the 25+ age group as that age group is traditionally considered to be the “workforce”
- 2. % of workforce (25+) with an industry-recognized credential or associate degree**
 - Taskforce members thought that this criterion would be important to utilize within the framework, but identified some challenges with “industry-recognized credentials.”

- Challenges included what the definition of “industry-recognized” is and how the definition would need to be made clearer. Additionally, the taskforce expressed concerns regarding a valid methodology for collecting and measuring these types of credentials along specific geographic boundaries.
 - There was also some discussion about the age range for this criteria and whether the age should be increased above 25.
- 3. % of workforce (25+) with a bachelor’s degree or higher**
- Taskforce members agreed that this criterion should be included in the framework as is.
- 4. % of workforce with NCRC+ or other validated soft skills assessment**
- Taskforce members continued discussions regarding soft skills certification/assessments from previous meetings. There is not consensus on whether the framework should include soft skills criteria. Members shared the difficulty of effectively measuring soft skills attainment, and about whether businesses “recognize” soft skills assessments and certifications.
 - Members suggested that perhaps the taskforce could request that staff from ACT provide a presentation to the taskforce or that staff from other states that utilize soft skills assessments/certifications as part of a work readiness program could discuss findings with the taskforce.
 - Taskforce members generally agreed that this is an area that the taskforce will need to continue to do research and that this criterion should only be added if businesses and economic development view it as value-added to the overall certification program.
- 5. High School Graduation Rate**
- Taskforce members agreed that this criterion should be included in the framework, though the importance of establishing a timeframe for graduation rates was brought up.

6. Post-secondary completion rate (industry-recognized credentials or associate degree)
 - Taskforce members were unsure of including this criterion in the final framework. One of the reasons offered were that the same type of criterion (% of workforce with industry-recognized credentials/associate degrees) is already included in the criteria. Another reason given is that communities don't have much oversight or control over the post-secondary institutions within their borders, so even if the community recognized it had a problem with the quality of post-secondary institutions, it would not have a process to affect change and improvements at the institutions.
 - Taskforce members expressed that it might be valuable to include some type of criterion that represents/identifies the community commitment to ensuring citizens are engaged in lifelong learning. One such idea that the taskforce discussed was the possibility of including post-secondary enrollments.
7. % of high school graduates with work ethic certification
 - Taskforce members shared similar thoughts about this criterion that they did with the % of workforce with NCRC+ or other validated soft skills assessment.

- **WorkEthic Certification and ACT National Career Readiness Certification**
 - Due to time constraints, the taskforce was unable to discuss this topic, but agreed to include it as the key discussion point for the next meeting of the taskforce. Taskforce members were asked to review relevant information regarding these two programs and to be prepared to discuss whether the framework/program that the taskforce creates should include these types of certification.

III. Establish Date and Time and Assignments Due at Next Meeting

Mr. Goldman adjourned the meeting at 4:05pm. Nate Klinck will reach out to members in the near future to schedule the next meeting of the taskforce. The meeting is likely to take place the first week of September.