Cleveland Community College

*Cleveland County Work Ready Certificate*

Cleveland Community College collaborated with local partners and industry to develop and deploy the Cleveland County Work Ready Certificate. The Cleveland County Work Ready Certificate is a local industry-recognized, industry-specified credential that prepares the unemployed and underemployed with the essential entry-level job skills that employers expect.

**DETAILS**

Although the pool of unemployed/underemployed candidates in Cleveland County remains high, local industries consistently struggle to fill vacant job positions. Industries find that many applicants lack basic employability skills and perform poorly in the job interview.

Based on a focus group meeting with local industry leaders the Cleveland County Work Ready Certificate program was developed and is designed to provide job candidates with the essential skills that employers expect. Working with local employers, Division of Workforce Solutions, and Region C Workforce Development Board personnel, CCC developed a 48 hour program of essential skills training that teaches people on how to effectively articulate their skills, pass the company test, utilize information technology, and meet employer competency expectations.

Cleveland County Work Ready Certificate training classes are taught at the Division of Workforce Solutions office, the local library, as well as the CCC campus. The local industry-recognized certificate consists of 4 modules and 48 hours of total training. CCC also partners with the Cleveland County Schools and Communities in School to identify parents that may benefit from the CCWRC.

Implementation began in October 2013.

**Partner Type(s):**
- Business/Industry (direct involvement)
- Economic Development
- Workforce Development Board
- Career Center (DWS, NCWorks)
- Public Schools
- Nonprofit organization(s): Communities In Schools)
- Other: Kings Mountain Public Library

**Impact/Outcomes**
Since October 2013, approximately 200 people have enrolled in the Cleveland County Work Ready Certificate program. Approximately 100 people have successfully completed the program and received a certificate. Approximately 70 percent of those that complete the program have found jobs and are now employed.
Our customers are both employers and job candidates. Local employers’ perception of the available labor pool skill level has been enhanced. Applicant resumes are more effective and interviews are more productive. Certificate holders are able to effectively conduct job searches and build resumes that showcase their skill sets and are prepared for the job interview. Testimonials from graduates indicate their ability to land a job has been enhanced and many are utilizing these skills to land a new job before finishing the program. Local industries have reported more productive job interviews and increased retention.

**Funding Source(s)**
The Work Ready Certificate classes are structured to meet HRD (Human Resource Development) class requirements.

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**REFLECTIONS**

**Innovation or Best Practice**
The Cleveland County Work Ready Certificate is a customer-driven approach to help local industries fill job vacancies with qualified candidates. The Cleveland County Work Ready Certificate program is also being used as a source for specialized entry-level job pathways that focuses on specific industry needs. Elements of the certificate are being integrated and bundled into specialized career readiness pathways that are industry-driven.

**Lessons Learned**

The Cleveland County Work Ready Certificate program started with each class running 48 hours for a total of 192 hours. Classes had to be shortened to increase completion and graduation rates. Classes were too long to keep people interested, plus, it took away from time needed to search for a job. The program is now a total of 48 hours (12 hrs. each class). Crucial topics have been drilled down and reduced to only essential information so that skills can be implemented in job search quickly. Some people are actually using the information to land jobs before they graduate from the program. In this case...dropouts ARE a success.

We learned that on-going communications among local partners is crucial. We now have bi-monthly Workforce Development Collaboration meetings at CCC with the Region C Workforce Development Board, Department of Workforce Solutions, and Cleveland County Economic Development Partnership.

**Scalability**
The Cleveland County Work Ready Certificate provides training in broad-based essential job skills that employers require. The CCWRC can also be bundled with training in specific entry-level job pathways to meet the specific needs of local industry.

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**RESOURCES**

**Workforce Learning Summit Presenter**
Ken Mooney, Vice President, Continuing Education, Cleveland Community College

**For Further Information**
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