



**Clarendon County Certified as a Work Ready Community
1st in South Carolina, 2nd in the United States**

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(Manning, South Carolina) - Today, Clarendon County earned the Certified Work Ready Community designation through the ACT and South Carolina Work Ready Communities (SCWRC) initiative. Clarendon is the first county in South Carolina and the second in the United States to become a Certified Work Ready Community.

The initiative is a national effort, led by ACT, to provide a framework for states to strengthen economic development using a community-based approach grounded in certifying counties as "work ready." To earn a Certified Work Ready Community designation, counties have to reach goals in earning National Career Readiness Certificates, meet or exceed the 3-year graduation rate average or improvement percentage, and engage business support.

"Strengthening South Carolina's world-class workforce is one of our main priorities, and we are extremely proud to celebrate Clarendon County becoming a Certified Work Ready Community," said Governor Nikki Haley. "It speaks volumes for South Carolina's workforce and business community that the entire state is participating in this nationally recognized initiative with the goal of improving economic opportunity."

"A highly skilled workforce is critical to improving the economic soil conditions in South Carolina," said State Superintendent of Education Mick Zais. "The prospects for long-term economic growth and job creation improve as adults gain the skills necessary to compete for jobs in the workforce, enlist in the military, or enroll in an institution of higher education. The path to prosperity for South Carolina's economy begins, but does not end, with a highly skilled workforce."

"The South Carolina Work Ready Communities initiative enables counties to demonstrate that they have a ready workforce that is globally competitive," said Lewis Gossett, President and CEO of the South Carolina Manufacturers Alliance. "South Carolina has become the location of choice in economic development largely because of its skilled workforce. Clarendon County's achievement in becoming a Certified Work Ready Community sends a message nationally and internationally that South Carolina is committed to having the best business environment possible."

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ABOUT SCWRC- The South Carolina Work Ready Communities initiative is a public-private initiative whose mission is to empower counties in developing a workforce that meets the needs and challenges of a global economy. Developed by ACT, a Work Ready Community is a measure of the quality of a county's workforce. South Carolina was one of four pilot states selected by ACT to participate in the ACT Certified Work Ready Community program. For additional information, please visit www.scworkready.org.