

Industrial Competitiveness Fund (POP 103)
(Additional data)

Business Oregon is a co-collaborator with the Community College and Workforce Development (CCWD) and the Oregon Employment Department (OED) on the national Certified Work Ready Community (WRC) initiative. The CWRC program prepares Oregon's workforce for today and tomorrow's industries needs and can be used to market Oregon's skilled workforce as a competitive advantage for business. Participating in this initiative helps unify and align Oregon's employment, education, workforce and economic development strategies – which ultimately creates jobs, makes businesses more competitive, and attracts new businesses to the state.

The CWRC program comprises the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) and Letters of Support by businesses that prefer it as part of their hiring practice. The National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) is a portable, industry-recognized credential which verifies “work readiness” as measured by 3 core foundational skills: applied mathematics; reading for information; and locating information.

OED and CCWD operate WorkSource as an integrated delivery system at the local level to provide services to both job seekers and employers. CCWD is the program sponsor and funding institution for both the NCRC and the CWRC (see 2013-2015 agency budget below), and other workforce training programs. The Oregon Employment Office through its WorkSource Centers provides the infrastructure and staff to help administer the NCRC program and other employment programs and services (i-Match, labor and industry analysis, etc).

CCWD and OED carry out marketing of their respective agency tools and resources. CCWD markets the NCRC and CWRC program services and benefits. OED carries out marketing that promotes awareness of their One-Stops and WorkSource Center locations and services.

As a partner agency, Business Oregon’s funding request for Certified WRC will provide financial resources to work closely with local and regional economic development organizations and workforce partners to increase business development outreach and marketing efforts that are critical to new business growth that are directly tied to economic development strategies.

Work Ready Communities Initiative --

Two key elements of the WRC initiative include:

- Regional Marketing, Branding, and Business Development Promotion: Business Oregon works with local businesses, economic development practitioners and workforce teams to help generate business expansion and job creation opportunities. Regional marketing funds help communities to make pro-active investments that define and drive opportunities that lead to business growth and increased employment. These marketing and promotion efforts enable communities to participate in activities such as industry shows, business recruitment fly-outs, and/or site selector recruitment visits to their areas as a core part of helping drive new business growth. Per FY: 10-15 proposal applicants/\$15,000 to \$22,500 each) Funding: \$550,000
- Key industry cluster skills analysis: Critical industry sectors fuel the state’s economy. Oregon’s key industry strategies support regional sector partnerships of employers, economic development entities, workforce development organizations, education and

other stakeholders that address common skill needs (or gaps) in target industries. Sector partnerships are intended to remove bottlenecks that inhibit recruitment, hiring, training or worker placement in an industry. The intended outcome of these efforts are to prepare workers for the higher wage, higher skill, in-demand occupations these sectors offer. Identifying and analyzing sets of skills and competencies of various industries will serve to give Oregonians an edge that allows portability and transferability of skills and expertise across a wide range of occupations. Business Oregon will contract for 4- 5 targeted cluster analysis that would serve as a mechanism to translate the skills that businesses need from the workforce system and help businesses better define their own recruitment and training needs for greater economic growth. Funding: \$450,000

Total Funding: \$1,000,000

Workforce System Partners/Collaborations



Community College and Workforce Development Package 201: Workforce Initiative

PURPOSE

This package includes \$10 million General Fund for a workforce initiative that expands the Back to Work Oregon (\$3.35 million) and provides funding for the Certified Work Ready Communities program proposed in CCWD ARB Package 104 (\$1 million), the National Career Readiness Certificate (\$1.8 million) programs, sector-related workforce training (\$2 million), and provides technical assistance to local workforce programs (\$1 million). The package has three full-time permanent positions that include one Program Analyst 4, one Program Analyst 3, and one Administrative Specialist 2 (\$463,000).

National Career Readiness Certificate (\$1.8 million General Funds)

A significant component of CWRC is the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC). Oregon’s NCRC was launched by Governor Kitzhaber in 2011 and is a portable, industry-recognized credential which verifies “work readiness”. The NCRC clearly identifies an individual’s WorkKeys® skills in Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics and Locating Information enabling employers to identify job applicants with potential to match the skills

required of specific jobs. The NCRC has been identified as one of Governor Kitzhaber's key workforce development strategies and was utilized in combination with On-the-Job Training in the Back to Work Oregon program. This program was implemented in the 2011-13 biennium and is designed to help get Oregon's economy back on track by putting 1,325 unemployed Oregonians into full term jobs. More recently, Governor Kitzhaber has included the CWRC concept as part of his 10 Year Plan for Oregon Project, *Economy & Jobs Policy Vision*; it is also a key strategy in the Oregon Workforce Investment Board's (OWIB) 2012-2022 strategic plan. Building on this strong foundation, Oregon CWRC will include pathways for communities to excel in certifying a skilled workforce.

Certified Work Ready Communities (\$1 million General Funds)

A CWRC is a community-based framework for economic and workforce development that certifies counties/regions as "work ready" when established goals have been met. It links workforce development to education, aligns with the economic development needs of communities, regions and states and certifies individuals for jobs based on skill levels. In Oregon, certification as a Work Ready Community indicates that a community is taking steps to ensure its citizens have the talent necessary to succeed in existing jobs, master new technologies and embrace innovation. Certification signifies that a community wants to transform its economic base and gain a competitive edge in attracting new businesses and jobs. CWRC programs, utilizing the NCRC to signify work readiness, have been launched successfully in several states to assess and improve worker skills, reduce employer hiring and training costs, market communities and attract new business. The shared belief among those states is that improving the skills of the current and emerging workforce is a powerful economic development strategy.

Supporting Sector Strategies (\$2 million General Fund)

Sector strategies are employer-driven partnerships to meet the needs of key industries within regional labor markets. Partners include business, labor, economic development, and education and training partners. Sector partnerships remove bottlenecks that inhibit recruitment, hiring, training and worker advancement within an industry. They create formal career paths to good jobs, reducing barriers to employment and sustaining or increasing middle-class jobs and prepare workers for the higher wage, higher skill, in-demand occupations these sectors offer.

Despite an overall labor surplus, many employers are reporting that they are unable to find the skilled workers they need. Through the NCRC process Oregon workers can be assessed and certified that they have the skills needed in these critical employment areas. Both the NCRC and CWRC can provide the certainty as to the quality of the workforce and the community's ability to meet the demands of business growth. Oregon's communities need to be able to demonstrate the skilled workforce necessary for companies to locate and grow here. Certifying and marketing these strengths to existing and potential new businesses can be a powerful economic development tool that can help Oregon businesses.

Technical Assistance to Local Workforce Programs (\$1.0 million General Fund)

This funding will be used for evaluation, marketing, and outreach in support of building capacity and providing training in the field to implement the NCRC programs across the state. The work will be performed through personal services contracts.