BUSINESS

'Work Ready' counties give

Certification of nearly half of state's counties aids industrial recruiting

By Kristy Eppley Rupon
The State

A "work ready" certification for nearly half of the counties in South Carolina could mean more jobs for the state.

Twenty-two of the state's 46 counties have met specific standards for certification through the South Carolina Work Ready Communities initiative, Lt. Gov. Yancey McGill and Lt. Gov.-elect Henry McMaster said.

That puts South Carolina on its way to becoming the first state in the nation to be certified as a whole, they said. The state now has more certified counties than any other state in the nation.

"We're leading the charge, and that's exactly where we want to be," McMaster said.

The certification gives South Carolina an edge over other states when recruiting industry, he said, comparing it to the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval.

Each certified county has met specific workforce and education goals, such as proving it has training facilities and the capacity to train workers for specific industries, and getting buy-in from education and vocational institutions.

That is a signal to businesses being recruited by economic developers that the state has a strong workforce poised to fill jobs.

Certification is another tool in the state's economic-development tool bag, McMaster said. Combined with other assets — coastal and inland ports, a good climate and low taxes — the program makes the state more attractive to industries looking for sites to open new factories.

SC edge

Already South Carolina has:

» Certified 66,261 workers as career ready.

» 1,946 businesses supporting the initiative.

» 265 job categories available for certification.

Certified counties are: Abbeville, Allendale, Anderson, Bamberg, Beaufort, Berkeley, Cherokee, Clarendon, Colleton, Dorchester, Edgefield, Fairfield, Florence, Greenwood, Laurens, Marlboro, McCormick, Newberry, Pickens, Saluda, Sumter and Williamsburg.