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Oklahoma Department of Commerce Certifies Nine Centers for Workforce Excellence

(OKLAHOMA CITY) –Sean Kouplen, Oklahoma Secretary of Commerce & Workforce Development, alongside members of the Governor’s Council for Workforce and Economic Development and industry leaders, announced today the certification of nine Centers for Workforce Excellence (CWE) under the Oklahoma Works Together program.

“Governor Stitt has worked to implement his ‘Oklahoma Turnaround’ initiatives in a variety of areas. Workforce development, recruitment and retention play an essential role in positioning Oklahoma as a Top 10 state for business, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic,” Kouplen said. “Oklahoma Works Together establishes a local, industry-based workforce model that we can use to help existing businesses find workers and attract new industry to Oklahoma.”

Working on a local level, Oklahoma Works Together is supported by state agencies and focused on deploying resources, leveraging existing programs, and aligning curriculum with local and regional employment demand. A CWE provides a point of contact within each identified region that serves existing and prospective employers’ workforce needs by coordinating resources and services. The program, established in late 2019, brought together groups from across the state to work hand-in-hand with business leaders, public education, higher education, economic developers, state agencies and CareerTech to devise a replicable workforce model that can be deployed statewide.

Throughout the year, an Oklahoma Workforce Committee comprised of stakeholders from throughout the state worked to identify existing state resources and developed a strategic framework that aligns workforce with the needs of business and industry.



OKLAHOMA
Works Together

A Certified Center for
Workforce Excellence

“This framework facilitates the integration of resources within Oklahoma’s workforce and education system to ultimately launch a highly-effective and visible program that businesses can trust to support their growth and expansion,” said David Stewart, chair of the Oklahoma Workforce Committee and CEO of MidAmerica Industrial Park. “Oklahoma Works Together is a collaborative model that incorporates best practices and ensures decisions are industry-driven to meet localized workforce needs today and in the future and will be the catalyst that moves Oklahoma’s workforce to a top ten status.”



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Oklahoma Works Together identifies and certifies localized collaborations which meet and exceed superior workforce development standards as a CWE. Nine organizations completed an accreditation process based on the newly established standards and guidelines, including: Broken Arrow, led by the Broken Arrow Chamber and Economic Development Corporation; El Reno, led by the Canadian Valley Technology Center; Duncan, led by Duncan Area Economic Development; Pryor, led by MidAmerica Industrial Park; Muskogee, led by the Port of Muskogee, Ponca City, led by Pioneer Technology Center; Rogers County, led by Claremore Industrial and Economic Development Authority and Tulsa Ports; Tulsa, led by the Tulsa Regional Chamber; and a partnership between Tulsa and Oklahoma City led by Tulsa Community College and Rose State College.

“We greatly appreciate the work of Secretary Kouplen and members of the Governor’s Council and are privileged to be among the designees for a Center of Workforce Excellence,” stated Dr. Jeanie Webb, President of Rose State College. “Moving forward it is the goal of Rose State College, Tulsa Community College, the Career Technology Centers, industry partners and our communities to work together providing answers to the workforce needs with educational pathways, stackable credentials, partnerships, and training. It’s an amazing idea and an opportunity that will propel our state to the next level of economic development.”

A CWE leverages Oklahoma’s extensive secondary and post-secondary education assets with a network of employment-related agencies with proven results to benefit employers in specific industries through the following objectives:

- Each CWE is data driven and designed to meet the specific need of the local economy and the predominate industry sector(s).
- The CWEs are led and supported by employer groups to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
- Each CWE engages all stakeholders in the process and leverages the expertise and resources to increase efficiency.
- The CWEs align educational pathways from K-12, CareerTech and Higher Education providing articulation opportunities.

“A Center for Workforce Excellence is considered a one-stop-shop, but it definitely is not a one-size-fits-all for employers. These specialized teams customize a workforce training and recruitment plan based on the labor needs of an employer and its geographical setting,” said Brent Kisling, executive director for the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. “Oklahoma Works Together is yet another great marketing asset for Commerce when working with businesses prospects seeking to expand or relocate.”

“Oklahoma has a robust education system that provides opportunity for all levels of workforce and career development options,” Stewart said. “With a statewide network of more than 100 combined campuses, Oklahoma is well-positioned to deliver training with accredited programs, custom curriculum and relevant equipment.”

"This certification allows us to build upon our current focus of work in a strategic, collaborative approach with area businesses, educational institutions and other partner agencies," said Rue Ramsey, vice president of workforce and talent strategies at the Tulsa Regional Chamber. "This program



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positions our state to be a leader in workforce development strategies, ensuring we have the skilled talent needed for continued growth and post-pandemic recovery.”

The Oklahoma Workforce Committee will begin a second round of Oklahoma Works Together accreditation for certification as a CWE in February 2021. For information about becoming certified as a CWE, contact Max McKnight, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, at 405-743-5573.

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Editor’s Note: A map of the nine Oklahoma Works Together Certified Centers for Workforce Excellence is attached.