Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board

TEAM KENTUCKY
EDUCATION AND LABOR CABINET

2026-2029
Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board Strategic Plan

Kentucky's Workforce Vision

"Create a workforce development system that aligns education with industry demands, prepares Kentuckians for the future of work, and drives economic development."

Your New Kentucky Home

Message from Governor Beshear

Every day, our New Kentucky Home is evolving into a place where talented workers connect with good-paying jobs. We are experiencing record economic investment that has created historic opportunities for Kentuckians in the cities and rural areas throughout the Commonwealth. In addition, our workforce innovation efforts provide employers the opportunity to recruit and retain job seekers from all talent pools. Across the Commonwealth, workforce innovation thrives because of public-private collaboration, and every single Kentuckian has an opportunity to earn and learn on the job.

With a record-breaking number of new and expanding private-sector projects announced, businesses recognize the value of investing in Kentucky, which often results in robust job creation with rising wages throughout the Commonwealth. Kentucky has a skilled workforce ready to take on these new jobs and careers. The Governor, thorough our New Kentucky Home, our public workforce system, and the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), provides the strategic vision to continue building a Kentucky that is meeting the workforce and business needs today and into the future.

This State-led, public-private collaboration allows for workforce innovation to thrive in our New Kentucky Home. Within the strategic vision for Kentucky:

- **We prioritize business engagement.** Our state workforce system integrates vibrant on-the-job learning opportunities through work-based learning models, such as registered apprenticeships.

- **We educate our people.** Through our workforce system, Kentuckians can become lifelong learners who continuously sharpen their skills.

- **We grow our workforce and ensure good jobs for Kentuckians.** prioritized by addressing systemic barriers to employment in **workforce participation**, such as access to childcare, affordable housing, and transportation.

- We view the value of workforce development as a **return on investment** for Kentuckians through **coordination** and lasting collaboration between business, labor, government, education, and the nonprofit sector to ensure all Kentuckians can enter good jobs and employers are able to hire qualified Kentucky talent.

Team Kentucky continues to ensure our Commonwealth has a strong, healthy, educated workforce. Together with our existing business community and those looking to invest, our people will build stronger communities and a healthy, thriving economy.

Message from KWIB Business Chair Lori Ulrich

With the leadership of Governor Beshear and the support of all the programmatic cabinets and agencies in Kentucky's state government, the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) is uniquely positioned to lead unified public-private workforce development efforts. Through this Strategic Plan, the KWIB lays out the Commonwealth's strategy to support Kentuckians seeking good jobs and careers, as well as quality training and education. By focusing on our most important resource: Kentuckians, we ensure that our businesses will have the best talent available to thrive in the Commonwealth.

As the Chair of the KWIB, I am proud to emphasize the importance of a strategy that has embodied both state and local workforce demands. This plan outlines opportunities that will enable Kentuckians to attain good jobs that ultimately strengthen our communities. Our Strategic Plan focuses on ensuring Kentuckians have the education they need for the jobs of today and tomorrow. We focus on engaging with employers on skills demands, educating Kentuckians, growing workforce participation, and ensuring return on investment. The four strategic pillars are the guiding principles for Kentucky's competitiveness in workforce development.

In addition to the ongoing business community engagement in the development of this plan, also critical has been programmatic executive branch cabinets, labor organizations, nonprofits, and other stakeholders including local government leaders. These entities helped craft the priorities and they are necessary to ensure success at the local, state, and regional levels. The Commonwealth's workforce development is strongest when the business community can meet talent and workforce demands through the collaboration of stakeholders.

I urge the readers of this strategic plan to get involved in solutions building on the state, regional, and local level. It will take collaboration among all entities to continue making Kentucky the competitive destination for talent, jobs, and community resilience.

Lori Ulrich
KWIB Business Chair

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Executive Summary

The Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) is the state workforce development board and serves as a strategic advisor to the Governor to help set the vision for workforce development. This strategic plan provides the focus and collective vision across government, business, labor, education, and nonprofit sectors to ensure that Kentucky's economic needs are met by robust workforce development.

This strategic plan maintains the four core strategic goal pillars: (1) education of workforce; (2) employer engagement; (3) workforce participation; and (4) coordination and return on investment. For each of these goals, we have identified action items. We identified these items with input from key workforce development stakeholders, such as Kentucky business leaders, labor unions, state government officials, local and municipal government representatives, all levels of the education continuum, and nonprofit community-based organizations.

The input was the result of a focused and deliberate gathering known as the "KWIB Strategic Advance" when the members of the KWIB, and business board chairs representing the 10 Local Workforce Development Boards, had an opportunity to craft the key priorities for Kentucky's workforce development efforts. These priorities were focused through the committee structure of the KWIB and agreed upon by the leaders of the board.

The identified priorities center around collaboration, specifically to:

1. Increase work-based learning and apprenticeships through business and education collaboration
2. Strengthening the ties between state and local economic and workforce development
3. Increase community engagement with Kentuckians as workers
4. Demonstrate the effectiveness of Government and business collaboration in workforce development value through return on investment

Moreover, the collaboration among these stakeholders allows for proactive approaches to developments in technology, and impacts on the workplace and workers. It emphasizes meeting needs and addressing problems through partnerships to ensure Kentuckians enter good jobs in the five key sectors identified by the KWIB and determined by quantitative and qualitative review of jobs that are in-demand, experiencing growth, and paying living wages. The sectors identified are (1) education (2) healthcare; (3) manufacturing and logistics; (4) construction; and (5) professional, scientific, and technical services. Furthermore, such collaboration provides the foundation necessary for Kentucky communities to understand and invest in their local and regional workforce needs and resources through the revamped Work Ready Communities program.

While the state workforce development board provides the vision and direction, Kentucky's 10 local workforce development boards play an essential role in this work. The local workforce development boards have vast knowledge of their communities' economic health, business demands, and the barriers that workers face. This strategic plan aims to align the overarching strategic goal pillars with the local workforce development boards.

Ultimately, this strategic plan is designed by Kentuckians for Kentuckians to ensure our Commonwealth continues to positively develop its workforce through education and training. Every year and every quarter, progress will be tracked and made to demonstrate the collective approach to workforce development in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Strategic Goals and Themes

The following themes highlight key focus areas to ensure the workforce development system aligns education with industry demands, prepares Kentuckians for the future of work, and drives economic development.

- **Work-Based Learning (WBL) and Training.** The importance of integrating WBL with academic pathways and ensuring accessibility for all, including youth and underrepresented populations, with a focus on expansion, improvement, and alignment across systems.
- **Barriers to Workforce Participation.** Persistent barriers such as lack of childcare, healthcare, transportation, and housing, as well as addiction, impact all goal areas and underscore the need for services that support all Kentuckians, particularly underrepresented populations.
- **Employer Engagement and Partnerships.** Stronger collaborations between employers and workforce systems are essential to address hiring challenges, understanding legal and cultural nuances, and increasing talent pools for workforce demands. Engaging employers in apprenticeship programs and skill development efforts further enhances workforce participation and partnership effectiveness.
- **Use of Data.** The importance of improved use of data for predictive and proactive workforce solutions, along with further expanding data-sharing agreements with non-traditional workforce partners and ensuring the availability of timely, quality data, for informed decision-making and effective collaboration.
- **Storytelling and Communication.** Raising awareness of workforce services, programs, and successes among workers, employers, and policymakers, coupled with a unified branding.
- **Engaging All Kentuckians to Find a Good Job**. Expanding opportunities for veterans, older workers, new Kentuckians, those seeking second chances, and individuals with disabilities is essential for strengthening Kentucky's workforce.
- **Coordination and Return on Investment.** While Kentucky has made great progress on coordination, efforts must be made to move toward more consistent coordination. Strategies to coordinate community and state resources toward shared goals are critical for fostering collaboration and achieving greater impact.

TEAM KENTUCKY FORWARD

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board | TEAM KENTUCKY Education and Labor Cabinet

Strategic Goal: Education

Kentuckians need the best education our Commonwealth can provide so that they as individuals can provide for their families and achieve their career goals. To create an environment of growth across the entire education continuum from preschool to adult learners, to reach the statewide focus of having 60% of Kentuckians with a postsecondary credential by 2030, and to further attract global investment in the Commonwealth. The development of technology has had great impact on education, the general demographic decline in population, the limited potential of growing the educator workforce due to stagnate wages, and critical need of investments in early childhood education to equip young Kentuckians with foundational skills.

Priority #1: Work-Based Learning (Learner Perspective) - Expanding Access to Earn and Learn Opportunities

Strategic Action: Create seamless opportunities and expand options for learners to engage in WBL by developing clear explanations of commonly used terms, accessing available funds, and establishing a network of WBL experts that support learners.

Qualitative Metrics (with quantitative metrics as milestones reached):

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Gather data of WBL outcomes as it relates to postsecondary attainment (CPE/KYSTATS data) and employment, including subpopulations outcomes.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Create informational definitions for internships, mentorships, job shadowing, work exposure, registered apprenticeships, etc.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Research and maximize opportunities with tuition reimbursement among employers providing tuition assistance (used and unused) and provide case studies of best practices for employers and learners to increase awareness and encourage use of these opportunities.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Launch a statewide network of experts on WBL, specifically with Career & Technical Education (CTE) across Kentucky school districts.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Measure and report on utilization of created materials based on learners involved, businesses with WBL growth, and number of WBL experts across Kentucky supporting CTE students.

Priority #2: Increasing the Teacher Pipeline

Strategic Action: Establish a strong and accessible educational foundation for the next generation of educators. Growth of educators involves an understanding and awareness of current statewide and regional needs, creative and innovative strategies to attract dedicated professional into education as "next career" opportunity and marketing all possible pathways.

Qualitative Metrics (with Quantitative Metric of Milestones Reached):

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Collaboratively examine data on teacher demand statewide and regionally; focusing on demand for K-12, CTE, and postsecondary technical instructors; additionally, gather data on the demand for early childhood educators.

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Research and create a guide on qualifications and requirements to be a technical instructor in the Commonwealth; from K-12 CTE instructors, KCTCS technical instructors, government technical instructors (example Department of Corrections), registered apprenticeship instructors, and other opportunities.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Increase awareness and understanding of future educators and technical instructors regarding the full spectrum of opportunities and options to enter the education sector.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Measure annually enrolled and graduated students in various education pathways (K-12, postsecondary institution, registered apprenticeship, etc.), measure annually number of instructors across the education spectrum, and strive for growth based upon annual trends.

Priority #3: Expanding Access & Achievement in Education for All Kentuckians

Strategic Action: Ensure all Kentuckians can achieve across the educational spectrum including credentials earned, WBL opportunities, early postsecondary opportunities (such as dual credit), and employment. Education achievement starts with early childhood, including preschool preparation demonstrated by Pre-K for All.

Quantitative and Qualitative Metrics:

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Present state and regional baseline data on access and completion of dual credit opportunities, CTE completions, engagement and completion of WBL, postsecondary entry and achievement, and employment; the data should include disaggregation categorized by learners.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Increase awareness and understanding of stakeholders on gaps related to achievement, opportunity, and expectations, best and promising practices, and the importance of engagement with employers throughout. This includes awareness and importance of early childhood education.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Measure impact from baseline numbers collected to annual data gathered to understand the impact of implementing best practices.

Strategic Goal: Employer Engagement

Employer engagement is critical and highlights the active role businesses across the Commonwealth can play getting individuals into good jobs, as well as hiring, training, and developing world-class talent. The workforce development system needs tools, resources, and solutions that are simple to understand, and actionable in order to engage businesses, and this requires the appropriate government technical assistance to support this coordination.

Priority #1: Work-Based Learning (Business Perspective) - Expand, Scale, and Improve

Strategic Action: Develop Business-to-Business Work-Based Learning (WBL) Guide & Best Practices (ex: five steps to starting an apprenticeship; five steps to hiring WBL high schoolers; five steps to utilize government-based on-the-job training incentives; five steps to hiring WBL postsecondary learners). Key partners include business and industry associations in disseminating information and providing ongoing feedback.

Qualitative Metric:

Immediate Measurement (within one year) completed guides on:

(1) Pre-apprenticeships, youth apprenticeships, and registered apprenticeships

(2) High school internship/co-op

(3) WIOA/government on-the-job training

(4) Postsecondary internship/co-op

(5) Business or industry WBL/apprenticeship models

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Utilization of WBL guides across businesses through assessment of industry associations; improvement where necessary based on feedback.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Document successful case studies, measure the increase of WBL opportunities based on qualitative analysis from industry association.

Quantitative Metric Measurement:

Registered Apprenticeship growth will be measured quarterly and annually, analyzing baseline numbers for new apprentices, active apprentices, and program completers, and demonstrating the last three-year and four-quarter trends.

- Number of companies participating in Registered Apprenticeships
- Number of active apprentices
- Number of apprenticeship programs
- Entry vs. completion wages
- Program retention rate (percentage of apprentices who complete the program)
- Job retention rate (percentage of program completers still employed 12 months post-completion)

Priority #2: Expanding Talent Pools for Business Hire

Strategic Action: Expanding access to all talent pools by leading with skills and widening avenues to hiring Kentuckians.

Qualitative Metrics (with Quantitative Metric of Number of Case Studies Produced):

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Five case studies in skills-first widening of talent pools; five case studies per year at minimum.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Utilization across businesses through assessment of industry associations; improvement where necessary.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Increase of employment opportunities based on qualitative analysis from industry association.

Priority #3: Unified Business Services

Strategic Action: Streamline systems, processes, and services to manage state, regional, and local relationships across the workforce and education ecosystem for better, more coordinated service delivery.

Qualitative Metrics (with Quantitative Metric of Milestones Reached):

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Develop a framework, including launch of a common needs assessment, workforce planning templates, and an outline for streamlined relationship management.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): State and local integration with the implementation and assessment of progress, identification of challenges, and scaling expansion to more local workforce development areas.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Development of a statewide unified business services training model with standardized resources and a train-the-trainer framework to support continuous improvement in creating the “Kentucky Unified Business Services Professional.”

Strategic Goal: Workforce Participation

In order to meet the demands of the economy and businesses, workforce development must align the right person with the right knowledge, skills, and abilities and employment options. Workforce participation is a leading indicator that impacts the future Labor Force Participation Rate. Workforce participation represents the talent acquisition, development, and management processes which support the depth, skill, acumen, and flexibility of the workforce to meet the demands of emerging employment trends and priorities across the Commonwealth including, but not limited to, barrier mitigation and deployment of support services to promote employment sustainability and career advancement.

Priority #1: Addressing Barriers to Employment & Finding Solutions

Strategic Action: Workforce participation is critically connected to experience of job seekers and workers. Emphasis is placed on the individual as the “center-of-gravity” through the approach of understanding barriers for those unemployed, under-employed, and seeking employment opportunities.

Quantitative and Qualitative Metrics:

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Conducting focus groups of individuals that are unemployed, underemployed, and seeking employment. Written analysis will lead to the overarching themes in the barriers to employment from the individuals’ perspective.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Analyze baseline data in the barriers to employment that are impacting all Kentuckians, such as: access to childcare, reliable transportation, and affordable housing. Data will reflect statewide and regional perspectives, with best practices gathered from successful approaches.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Measure the growth of public-private partnerships that address the barriers of employment and the growth in the number of programs and individuals that have successfully increased access and opportunity to employment, while reducing barriers to employment.

Priority #2: Employment Best Practices, a Worker Perspective

Strategic Action: Leveraging information gathered in overcoming unemployment, under-employment, and career growth. Best practices will be used to grow career access and opportunities through the partnership between organizations that serve Kentuckians with barriers to employment and employers that have strategically embraced growth talent pipelines.

Quantitative and Qualitative Metrics:

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Development of case studies on overcoming unemployment, underemployment, and career growth, at least three per category.

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Development of case studies from organizations that serve individuals with barriers to employment. This includes gathering of participants, placements, wages, and retention data points to demonstrate value to potential employers.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Available statewide and regional supportive services established that address barriers to employment.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Growth in individuals attaining employment by the utilization of services, best practices, and stronger employer involvement. The baseline quantitative data will be measured against annual updates on labor force participation rate, in addition to, wages, placements, and retention.

Priority #3: Addressing Barriers to Hiring, a Business Perspective

Strategic Action: Critical to the workforce development formula is employer willingness to hire, train, and develop all potential talent. Having a constant pulse check on employer perspective in hiring, development, training, and skills required will be conducted.

Qualitative Metrics (with industry pulse check):

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Creation of a simple survey of industry associations (starting with Kentucky's top industries) to keep track of challenges and barriers to employment, training, and development, as well as gathering data on benefits and quality of job indicators.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Ongoing analysis of data points gathered that can be shared regularly with stakeholders.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Ensuring a proper response to the information gathered from the regular pulse check is addressed among government and nongovernmental stakeholders that serve individuals with employment barriers.

Strategic Goal: Coordination and Return on Investment

To strengthen workforce development in the Commonwealth, the sector must achieve system alignment, continuous collaboration, and cross-government partnerships, while also serving individuals and employers at the highest level possible. Such alignment requires common metrics to measure progress, beneficial feedback loops, and serving all customers of the workforce development ecosystem with the required flexibility.

Priority #1: Common Return on Investment (ROI) Metrics

Strategic Action: Creation of common return on investment (ROI) metrics that are easily understood by businesses and all stakeholders is critical in reviewing snapshots, as well as long-term analyses. The common metrics include the number of participants, job placements, and average wages.

Quantitative Metric:

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Deploying common metrics and ROI analysis within the public workforce system as defined by WIOA.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Deployment of common metrics and ROI analysis within the larger workforce development ecosystem by leveraging the Education and Workforce Collaborative.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): In collaboration with KYSTATS, utilization of real-time snapshot of ROI with comparison to trends over the past four years, updated annually. Demonstration of ROI based on pre-program wages (ex: pre-WIOA) to post-program wages over a period.

Priority #2: Continuous Focus on Supply and Demand

Strategic Action: With a special emphasis on the Kentucky's top sectors, ongoing understanding of the demand of jobs and the skills employers have compared to the supply of talent produced by training and education partners.

Quantitative Metric:

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Creation of a supply and demand dashboard, demonstrating jobs and skills compared to supply of talent.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Analysis of supply and demand with wages, opportunities, and career ladders in the specific top sectors.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Ongoing analysis, including measuring job opportunities compared to family sustaining wages (demonstrated as a statewide and regional figure).

Priority #3: Continuous Organizational Collaboration

Strategic Action: System alignment, continuous collaboration, cross-government partnerships, and public-private partnerships that leverage workforce investments through combined services; allowing for unified education, training, and outreach opportunities by all stakeholders.

Quantitative Metric:

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Development of cross-agency best practices that demonstrate service versus agency (example: collaboration on reentry).

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Development and launch of a streamlined approach to access services by external users without having to understand intricacies of government.

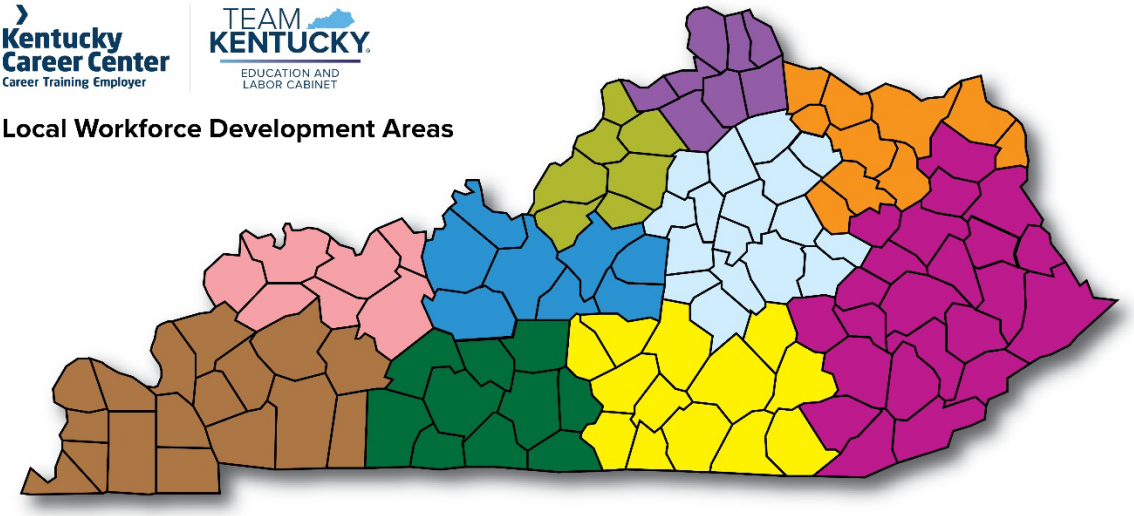
Long-term Measurement (within four years): Develop unified outreach opportunities with industry associations, local chambers, and community social clubs, equipping all stakeholders with training materials to educate stakeholders on workforce development services in the Commonwealth.

Appendix – Public Workforce System Resources

Kentucky Career Center
Career Training Employer

TEAM KENTUCKY
EDUCATION AND LABOR CABINET

Local Workforce Development Areas



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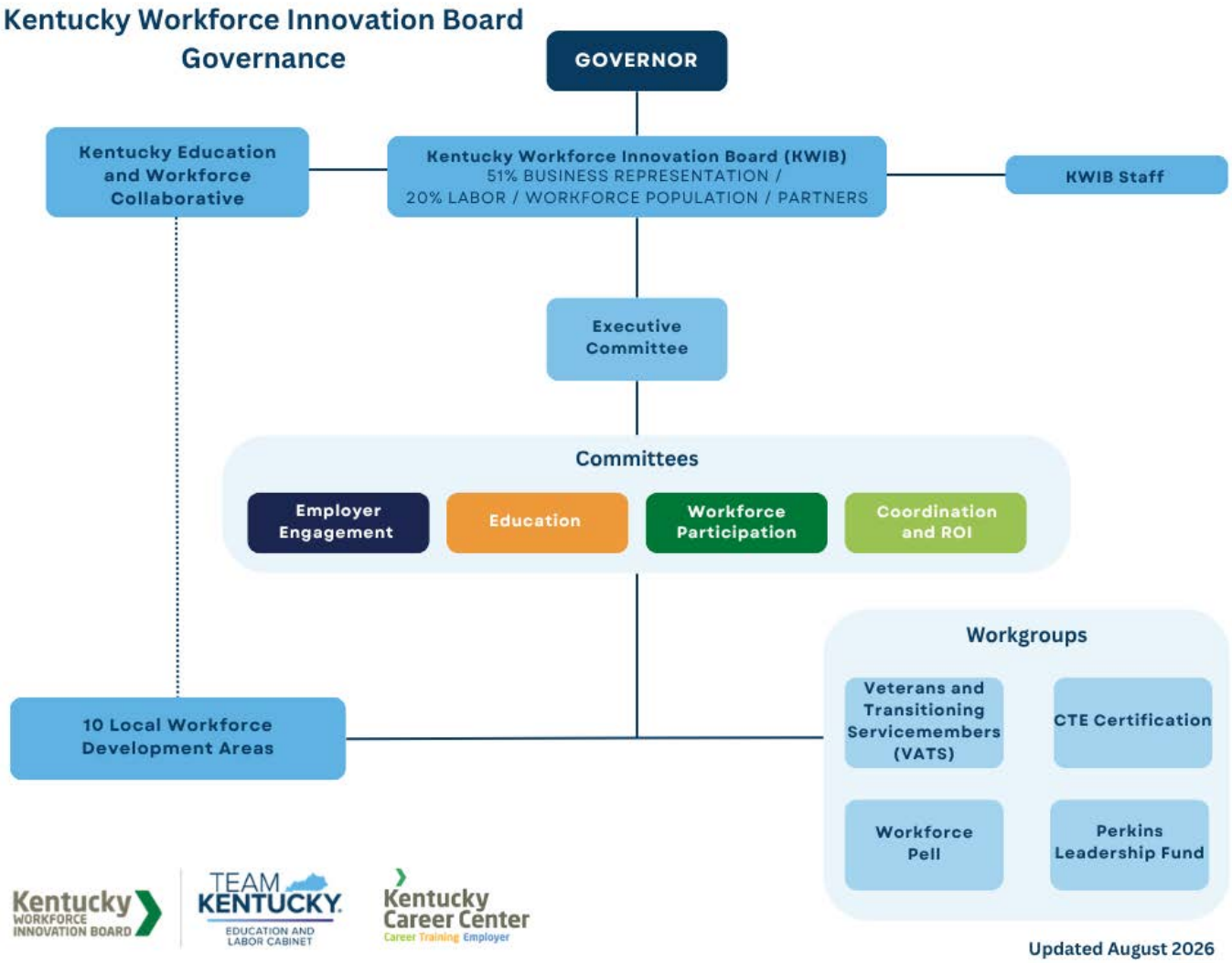
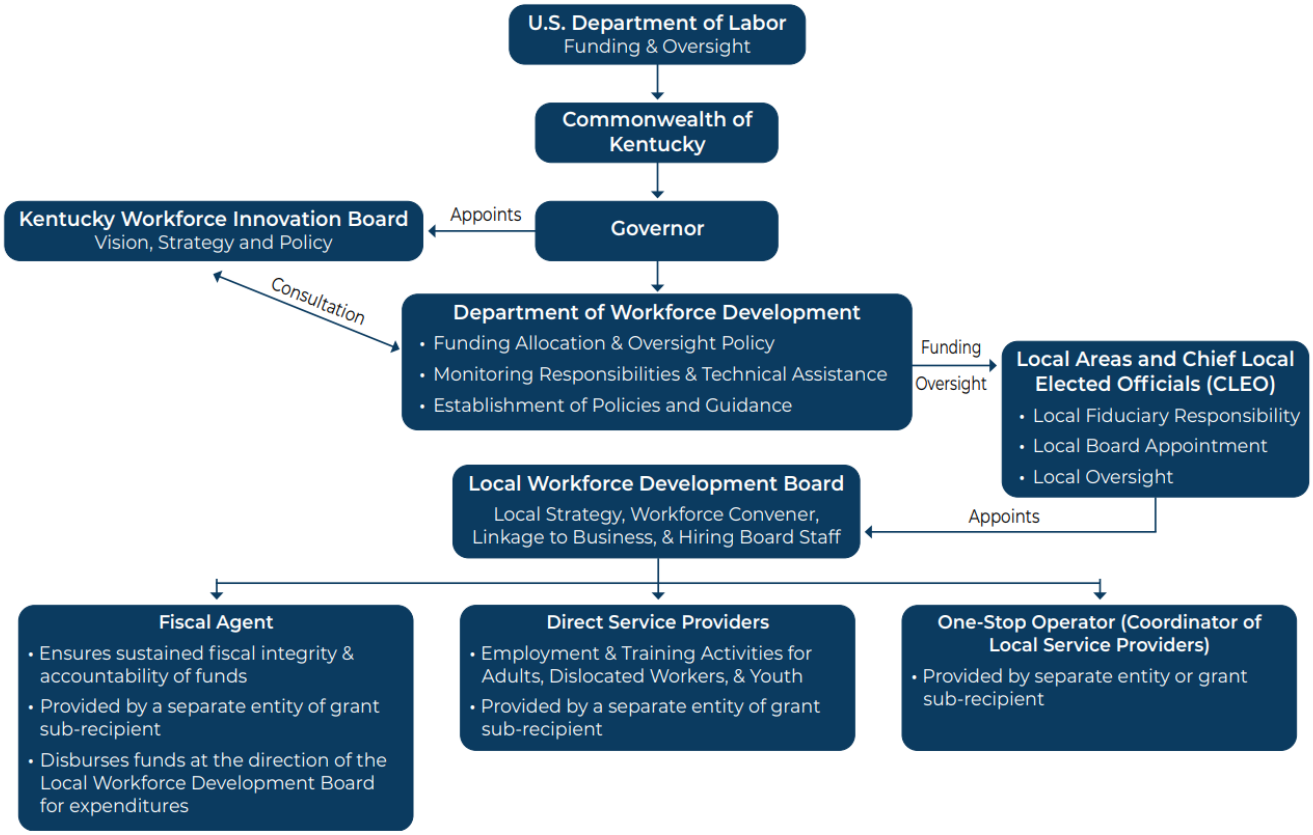

Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board Governance
GOVERNOR
Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative
Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB)
51% BUSINESS REPRESENTATION /
20% LABOR / WORKFORCE POPULATION / PARTNERS
KWIB Staff
Executive Committee
Committees
Employer Engagement
Education
Workforce Participation
Coordination and ROI
Workgroups
Veterans and Transitioning Servicemembers (VATS)
CTE Certification
Workforce Pell
Perkins Leadership Fund
10 Local Workforce Development Areas
Kentucky WORKFORCE INNOVATION BOARD
TEAM KENTUCKY EDUCATION AND LABOR CABINET
Kentucky Career Center Career Training Employer
Updated August 2026

WIOA Title I: Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth

Kentucky Governance

Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board



Kentucky's
Top Five In-Demand Sectors

Recently, the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) voted to adopt Kentucky's top five in-demand sectors. The two-phase, data-informed identification and verification process is described below with sample occupations provided. Additionally, the KWIB voted to incorporate a five-year review process utilizing the two-phase approach of quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Kentucky's Top Five In-Demand Sectors:

1. Healthcare
2. Manufacturing and Logistics
3. Construction
4. Education
5. Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (PS&TS)

Background

The process of identifying the top five in-demand sectors in Kentucky took place through a two-phase approach, through a quantitative and qualitative review process. The data gathering and analysis was provided by the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS).

The quantitative review process initiated in the Sector Strategies Workgroup with membership consisting of KWIB members, business and industry representatives, education partners, government representatives and workforce development practitioners. The workgroup settled on the key quantitative data approach of reviewing occupations that are in-demand, experiencing growth, and have living wages. Specifically, the formula set by the quantitative group:

1. Entry Annual Wages OR Median Wages (25%)
2. Occupational Demand (50%)
3. Growth Rate (25%)

Importantly, the business members of the workgroup emphasized the importance of occupational demand and giving it more percentage weight above the other elements. The list of key occupations was then connected to their respective industry sectors. The quantitative workgroup reviewed various ranking methods in the review process (i.e. incorporating location quotient) and ultimately settled on the fact that all methods lead to similar sector output.

Once the quantitative workgroup agreed on the formula and the data derived, the work of the qualitative workgroup began. The qualitative workgroup consisted of statewide

education and training organizations that not only administer various training dollars, but also understand industries that may be experiencing growth in the future not yet reflected in data.

Example Occupations

1. **Healthcare**
   a. Registered Nurse
   b. Medical and Health Services Managers
   c. Nurse Practitioner
   d. Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder and Mental Health Counselors
   e. Clinical Laboratory Techs
2. **Manufacturing and Logistics**
   a. Assemblers and Fabricators
   b. Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers and Weighers
   c. Machinist
   d. Industrial Production Managers
   e. Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
3. **Construction**
   a. Construction Laborers
   b. Carpenters
   c. Electricians
   d. Plumbers, Pipefitters and Steamfitters
   e. Project Management Specialists
4. **Education**
   a. Elementary School Teachers
   b. Secondary School Teachers
   c. Middle School Teachers
   d. Educational, Guidance and Career Counselors and Advisors
   e. Postsecondary Teachers
5. **Professional, Scientific and Technical Services**
   a. Software Developers
   b. Management Analysts
   c. Paralegals and Legal Assistants
   d. Computer User Support Specialists
   e. Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists

Impact and Future Review

Identifying these sectors allows Kentucky to focus time and investment into growing the opportunities in industries and occupations that are in high demand, are experiencing growth and pay living wages. Investment in these sectors and occupations go beyond the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as the Kentucky workforce development ecosystem operates in a collaborative and strategic direction.

The five in-demand sectors provide a statewide lens, while local workforce development boards can incorporate an additional two sectors that are reflective of their local economies.

In addition to adopting the top five in-demand sectors, the KWIB voted to incorporate a review process every five years utilizing the two-phase approach of quantitative and qualitative review.

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