

Kentucky's 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan Briefer

Every four years, each state is required to submit a Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan that outlines the strategic and operational direction for workforce development. This plan must be created in coordination with the governor's state workforce board, in the commonwealth, the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) serves in this capacity.

Kentucky is submitting a Combined State Plan, which include the core WIOA programs encompassing:

- Title I: Workforce Development Activities targeting Dislocated Workers, Adult, & Youth;
- Title II: Adult Education & Literacy;
- Title III: Wagner-Peyser, general employment services; and
- Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation.

Additional workforce programs are also included in the plan:

- Unemployment Insurance (UI);
- Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG); and
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA).

The plan opens to a discussion about Kentucky's economic and workforce analysis followed by the strategic and operational components are addressed. The underlying theme of this plan has the Kentucky Strategic Plan as the north star and the four goals of employer engagement, education attainment, workforce participation, and resource alignment as the driving forces. The spirit of collaboration, partnership, alignment, and collective impact is seen in the activities discussed throughout the WIOA State Plan.

Executive Summary

The Commonwealth of Kentucky is in the best period of economic growth in the state's history. The Combined Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan supports and capitalizes on this historic time of opportunity and results by coordinating with the Kentucky's workforce development system, including Kentucky Adult Education, Career Development Office, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Office of Unemployment Insurance, and the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board. These strategies and collaborative efforts within the Combined WIOA State Plan for 2024-2027 address the needs of learners, workers, and employers in the commonwealth.

Since the beginning of his administration, Governor Beshear has announced more than 1,300 private-sector new-location and expansion projects totaling over \$45 billion in announced investments, creating more than 68,000 jobs. This is the highest investment figure secured during the tenure of any governor in the commonwealth's history and \$24 billion more than the next highest total.

Importantly, these are high-quality, good-paying jobs that sustain families and communities. Governor Beshear has also announced some of the largest economic development projects in state history, which have solidified Kentucky as the electric vehicle battery production capital of the United States. These include AESC's \$2 billion 2,000-job gigafactory project in Warren County; Ford Motor Co.'s \$2 billion 2,200-job commitment in Louisville, as well as its \$2 billion 2,100-job project at the Kentucky 1 plant in Hardin County; Shelbyville Battery Manufacturing's \$712 million investment, creating 1,572 jobs in Shelby County; and Toyota's \$1.3 billion investment in Scott County, among others. A wide set of additional economic investments supported and allowed for this growth, and private businesses continue to trust and believe in Kentucky's ability to provide a skilled and ready workforce to fill these jobs of the future.

To ensure the commonwealth continues to be successful in meeting the new demands of businesses and workforce, as well as supporting the needs of existing businesses, the KWIB, in collaboration with the Department of Workforce Development (administrators of WIOA), develops and provides strategic directions to Kentucky's workforce development system. The opportunity to build pathways to good quality jobs in a wide array of industries is better now than at any time in Kentucky's history. The established partnerships across the workforce development system are well-positioned to serve all Kentuckians, including expanded access to talent that WIOA was designed to serve, such as disconnected youth, formerly incarcerated individuals, veterans and their families, individuals with disabilities, adults with foundational skill gaps, and many others.

To accomplish these tasks, Governor Beshear's charge for all of Team Kentucky is to embrace a "Forward, Together" model, working collaboratively to provide the highest level of support to Kentucky job-seekers, workers, and businesses through a coordinated approach. This call to action directly aligns with KWIB's vision to "create a workforce development system that is value driven for employers, aligns education with industry demands, prepares Kentuckians for the future of work, and drives economic development." This vision is supported by the four goals of Kentucky's Workforce Strategic Plan: employer engagement, education attainment, workforce participation, and resource alignment.

In this 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan, Kentucky's strategic and operational activities are outlined with the overarching theme of continuous improvement to align services and resources, collaborate across systems, and strengthen and develop partnerships to better serve the needs of individual customers, businesses, and workforce system staff in a rapidly evolving economy. From highlighting successful local programs executed by the 10 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA) to showing how the Department of Workforce Development is innovating to meet business and individual customer needs, the Kentucky Career Centers (KCC) provides a system-wide branding to support this work.

The WIOA State Plan was developed with input from various stakeholders essential to the commonwealth's strategic and operational direction through localized and statewide listening sessions, as well as input from individuals representing businesses, elected officials, community-

based organizations, government, and individual consumers. All of these stakeholders provide unique and informative perspectives on a reimagined workforce development system. This state plan is meant to be a living document that encourages the workforce development system to continue to work collaboratively to best meet the needs shared by the stakeholders.

Additionally, this plan takes into consideration the changing dynamics of technology, more opportunities to align workforce partners to serve employers and business, and the importance of early childhood education as a workforce development strategy. Specifically, the Pre-K for All program are noted in the modification of the plan as strategies to address alignment in business services and opportunities for addressing early childhood education.

Furthermore, strategies within this plan align to the U.S. Department of Labor's *America's Talent Strategy*. Kentucky's workforce development system is intentionally industry-driven with employers signaling demand, skills, and credentials of value. Additionally, on the workforce talent side, the responsiveness of the workforce system focuses on worker mobility to secure good jobs that are high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand. Together the workforce system operates an integrated model to ensure all resources are delivered to both individuals and employers with accountability, flexibility, and innovation at its core.

To create a workforce development system that meets the needs of employers and workers, educational opportunities and training must be aligned with industry demands to prepare Kentuckians for the future of work while also driving economic development. The 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan embraces the collaborative spirit of Team Kentucky to move the commonwealth Forward, Together.

Highlights

- The Kentucky Strategic Plan is the north star of the plan with the four goals serving as pillars: employer engagement, education attainment, workforce participation, and resource alignment.
- Contribution from local listening sessions is included throughout the plan; contributors included: local businesses, local elected officials, community-based organizations, system partners, and individual customers.
- Strengths focus on the collaborative spirit of the workforce development ecosystem and connect various activities under the four goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan.
- Weaknesses are focused on the barriers to employment consisting of access to childcare, transportation, and affordable housing. The solution to these barrier hinges on partnership across state and local entities.
- The flow of action is shared: KWIB providing strategy, Education and Workforce Collaborative providing direction, and the Department of Workforce Development providing execution.
- Partnership opportunities with employers and educational institutions discussed; Work-Based Learning (WBL) serving as an effective tool for both learners and businesses.
- Coordination with economic development is discussed, Work Ready Communities – Next Generation, and overall collaboration to serve current Kentucky employers and new and expanding businesses.
- Operationally, information is provided from Kentucky Office of Adult Education (highlighting Title II), Career Development Office (highlighting Title III and JVSG, TAA programs), Unemployment Insurance, and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (highlighting Title IV).