

Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act Statewide Annual Narrative

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Program Year 2024

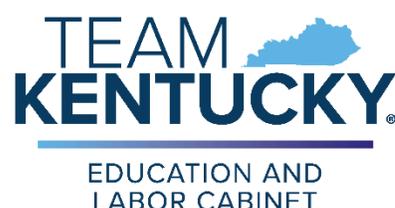


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Commissioner's Note

The Commonwealth of Kentucky's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program year 2024 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025) focused on strengthening the collaborative foundation that is redefining Kentucky's workforce system. During this period, the program advanced strategies aimed at serving more individuals and businesses in a holistic, focused, and results-driven approach which ultimately demonstrate why our New Kentucky Home is the best place for people and businesses to thrive.

Examples of collaboration are found throughout this annual narrative. Kentucky Career Center (KCC) partnerships at the local level, the integration of core Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs working under one umbrella of the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), and the industry-driven partnership of the Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT) all illustrate progress toward a more unified and effective system. The best of Kentucky's workforce development is achieved when bridges are built among government, education, and workforce organizations to serve Kentucky businesses and individuals across the commonwealth.

Collaboration between state and local partners continued to produce strong results that highlighted greater system effectiveness. Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) provided employment and training services to adults, youth, and dislocated workers. Kentucky Adult Education served more Kentuckians and increased measurable skill gains. KCC services connected more individuals to jobs, and individuals with disabilities who participated in specialized employment services had a higher average hourly wage. These results not only demonstrate the effectiveness of the KCC and WIOA core partners but also provide the strong foundation to expand opportunities in workforce development in the future.

Looking ahead, the commonwealth will continue to build on the progress made by expanding collaboration, innovation, and efficiency across the workforce system. Kentucky's foundation is strong, but continued growth depends on the commonwealth's ability to adapt, align, and act on new opportunities. By capitalizing on the partnerships and momentum established this year, Kentucky is well positioned to strengthen its workforce system and ensure that every Kentuckian and every business can share in the success of Our New Kentucky Home.

Mike Yoder, Ph.D.
Commissioner, Department of Workforce Development
Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet

Introduction

In the Commonwealth of Kentucky, workforce development functions as a coordinated and collaborative system. The Department of Workforce Development, under the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet, administers Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and works collaboratively to maximize services for individuals, businesses, and workforce stakeholders statewide. These efforts support access to high-quality and good-paying jobs, align training with in-demand industry sectors, and advance outcomes that strengthen communities and drive economic growth. Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) use WIOA funds along with state and federal grants to better serve Kentuckians.

The Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), an advisory entity to the Governor and the cabinet, offers direction for workforce development in the commonwealth, and works with the Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative to align resources, policies, and practices across the state.

Kentucky emphasizes lifelong learning opportunities through adult workforce development programs, registered apprenticeships, and career pathways. LWDBs, education partners, and employers collaborate to align programs with labor market needs, ensuring that Kentuckians have the skills to succeed, and employers can access a strong workforce.

In Program Year (PY) 2024, Kentucky attracted \$1.15 billion in economic investment, creating approximately 1,400 new jobs with an average wage of \$27.54 an hour. This remarkable growth demonstrates the private sector's ongoing confidence in Kentucky's workforce. Through strong partnerships, the commonwealth continues to drive economic momentum and build a brighter, more prosperous future for communities across the state.

The Commonwealth's Plan and Goals

Building the Workforce

Guided by the WIOA State Plan, state agencies, LWDBs, education providers, and industry partners work together to connect Kentuckians with good jobs and help businesses recruit, retain, and develop skilled employees.

Supporting Kentuckians

The state focuses on removing barriers to employment by providing training, education, career exploration, and work-based learning opportunities. Registered apprenticeships, flexible training pathways, and partnerships with employers in high-demand sectors prepare Kentuckians for evolving labor market needs while ensuring businesses have access to an adaptable workforce. Programs are designed to address barriers enabling citizens to pursue careers that provide stability and growth.

Aligning Resources

The Education and Labor Cabinet (ELC), Cabinet for Economic Development, Kentucky Department of Education, Council on Postsecondary Education, Kentucky Community Technical and College System, Kentucky Chambers of Commerce, and LWDBs established the Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT) to ensure that programs, resources, and initiatives align with workforce and economic development priorities. This group effort helps make workforce services more effective, efficient, and responsive.

Statewide Performance Summary

Program	Participants PY23	Participants PY24	Trainings PY23	Trainings PY24	Median Quarterly Earnings / Skills Gain PY23	Median Quarterly Earnings / Skills Gain PY24
Title I – Adult	2,792	4,287	1,496	2,225	\$8,571	\$8,722
Title I – Youth	1,523	2,013	522	694	\$4,789	\$5,035
Title I – Dislocated Worker	238	324	164	246	\$11,250	\$9,951
Title II – Adult Education & Family Literacy	13,221	15,994	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	55.9%	62.1%
Title III – Wagner-Peyser	27,021	24,157	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	\$8,117	\$8,300
Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	45,812	49,003	4,557	5,358	\$23.30/hr	\$23.62/hr

Kentucky’s WIOA programs continued to build on the successes of PY2023, reaching more residents and expanding opportunities across the state.

The Kentucky Office of Adult Education made notable progress in improving measurable skills gains from 55.9% to 62.1 percent and serving nearly 16,000 participants in its effort to build a stronger academic foundation.

Through WIOA programs, Kentucky’s ongoing commitment to equip residents with the necessary training, skills, and support strengthens the state’s economy.

Performance Accountability System

In PY2024, ELC made investments to improve reporting and performance measures for WIOA programs. These investments included updating the individual participant tracking system (KEESuite), statewide staff training, and performance reporting across all local workforce development areas. The table below highlights the performance goals for the commonwealth and how the state performed.

WIOA TITLE I ADULT	PY 2024 GOAL	PY 2024 ACTUAL
EMPLOYMENT RATE 2 ND QUARTER AFTER EXIT	76%	76.1%
EMPLOYMENT RATE 4 TH QUARTER AFTER EXIT	77%	75.8%
MEDIAN EARNINGS 2 ND QUARTER AFTER EXIT	\$8,722	\$7,500
CREDENTIALS ATTAINMENT WITHIN 4 QUARTERS AFTER EXIT	73%	78.7%
MEASURABLE SKILLS GAINS	55%	89.8%

WIOA TITLE I DISLOCATED WORKER	PY 2024 GOAL	PY 2024 ACTUAL
EMPLOYMENT RATE 2 ND QUARTER AFTER EXIT	79%	86.3%
EMPLOYMENT RATE 4 TH QUARTER AFTER EXIT	79%	88.9%
MEDIAN EARNINGS 2 ND QUARTER AFTER EXIT	\$9,951	\$11,970
CREDENTIALS ATTAINMENT WITHIN 4 QUARTERS AFTER EXIT	73%	80.4%
MEASURABLE SKILLS GAINS	74.3%	91%

WIOA TITLE I YOUTH	PY 2024 GOAL	PY 2024 ACTUAL
EMPLOYMENT RATE 2 ND QUARTER AFTER EXIT	70%	75.2%
EMPLOYMENT RATE 4 TH QUARTER AFTER EXIT	73%	73.1%
MEDIAN EARNINGS 2 ND QUARTER AFTER EXIT	\$5,035	\$5,921
CREDENTIALS ATTAINMENT WITHIN 4 QUARTERS AFTER EXIT	63%	72.5%
MEASURABLE SKILLS GAINS	50%	82.1%

WIOA TITLE III WAGNER-PEYSER EMPLOYMENT SERVICES	PY 2024 GOAL	PY 2024 ACTUAL
EMPLOYMENT RATE 2 ND QUARTER AFTER EXIT	66%	68.6%
EMPLOYMENT RATE 4 TH QUARTER AFTER EXIT	73%	66.4%
MEDIAN EARNINGS 2 ND QUARTER AFTER EXIT	\$6,994	\$8,300

Data Validation

Data validation ensures the accuracy, completeness, and reliability of the WIOA program. In PY2024, Kentucky captured participant services and outcomes across WIOA programs, as well as other workforce initiatives including Trade Adjustment Assistance, Jobs for Veterans State Grant, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments, Registered Apprenticeship, and National Dislocated Worker Grants.

The updated Kentucky Enterprise Engagement Suite served as the primary system for tracking participant enrollment, services, and outcomes. Validation processes combined automated checks with manual audits and partner reviews from the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Kentucky Career Centers and local workforce development agencies that ensures consistency and accuracy.

Training was reinforced through data validation classes and technical assistance for local administrators to ensure a consistent process. Follow-up sessions and additional training opportunities were used to foster continuous improvement. These efforts help ensure that outcomes, such as employment rates, earnings, credential attainment, and skill gains accurately reflect program performance.

State Waivers with the U.S. Department of Labor

The Commonwealth of Kentucky did not submit a waiver request to the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration during PY2024.

Department of Workforce Development: Core Partners

Kentucky's workforce development system is strengthened through coordinated efforts among the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and its core partners. Each partner contributes exceptional services while collaborating to remove barriers, align resources, and support both individuals and employers.

Kentucky Adult Education:

The Kentucky Office of Adult Education administers the Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, helping Kentuckians improve their quality of life through education, training, and workforce development. In PY2024, the program served nearly 16,000 participants, achieving a skills gain rate of 62.07 percent, and quarter median earnings of \$5,546, a significant increase from PY2023 when 13,221 participants were served with 55.89 percent skills gains, and \$5,066 as the quarter median earnings.

Academic and Workforce Preparation

Adult Education provides a wide range of services designed to equip learners with the skills needed for employment success. Programs include academic preparation for the GED test, English as a Second Language instruction, family literacy, workforce education and certification, postsecondary transition support, and education for inmates in the jail system. In 2024, the adult education program enrolled 300 participants in the Putting Kentuckians First program (designed to equip people with knowledge of community resources, education, and workforce programs), and assisted 73 inmates with obtaining identification cards, Social Security cards, and birth certificates to help remove barriers to employment.

Employer Engagement and Skills Development

Adult Education also partners with employers through Workplace Literacy programs and Integrated Education and Training. The initiatives span all five high-demand sectors: healthcare, manufacturing and logistics, construction, education, and professional, scientific, and technical services. Employment and retention rates consistently range from 60% to 75%. Programs focus on academic skills and essential workplace competencies, like communication, professionalism, and critical thinking. These efforts support individual growth, strengthen business performance, and build a more skilled statewide workforce.

Combined Impact

Through academic preparation, workforce training, and employer partnerships, the Kentucky Office of Adult Education equips learners with the knowledge, skills, and credentials needed to succeed in education and employment. By removing barriers, like removing GED fees and providing mobile GED services, improving essential skills, and supporting high-demand sectors, the program strengthens Kentucky's workforce, enhances business performance, and contributes to broader economic growth.

Local Spotlight: Adult Education

After spending 32 years incarcerated, a Kentucky resident was released in October 2024. Determined to rebuild a life with purpose, the individual chose to pursue a GED through the Kentucky Career Center's Adult Education Program to break the cycle and get on a better path. The [Kentucky Career Center Adult Education program](#) offers free services statewide to help adults gain the skills and credentials needed for better-paying jobs. Services include GED® preparation, workforce skills training, college preparation, and English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. These programs aim to improve an individual's employability, increase self-sufficiency, and boost the state's economy.

"This is my way of bettering my life, so I don't have to die out here in the streets. I used to give up. But now, I won't. I ask for help in class, no matter how much I need it. That's a big step for me."

This Kentuckian's vision extended beyond personal success, with a dream of becoming a mortician to provide dignified burials for those who have battled addiction and hardship. The journey was not easy. Struggling with literacy, self-doubt, and the stigma of the past, the individual faced each challenge with resilience.

Through the support of the Adult Education program, this person gained more than academic skills but also found community and self-confidence. "I didn't think I belonged here, but the people in this program showed me that I do. They helped me see a bigger picture. They're for me, not against me."

Every lesson learned and obstacle overcome brought this person closer to earning a GED and rewriting their story. This journey is a powerful reminder that redemption is possible, second chances are real, and with faith and determination, anything is within reach.

Career Development Office:

The Career Development Office (CDO) administers the Title III Wagner-Peyser program and works with Foreign Labor Certification, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA), Trade Adjustment Assistance, and the Jobs for Veterans State Grant. Through 13 comprehensive KCCs and a network of satellite and access points, the office connects job seekers to meaningful employment opportunities.

Wagner-Peyser Act Services

The Wagner-Peyser Act, enacted in 1933 and later aligned with WIOA, provides the foundation for Kentucky's public labor exchange. In PY2024, Wagner-Peyser services reached 24,157 participants, with a quarterly median earning of \$6,994.

Participants received individualized job search support, résumé and interview preparation, and individuals receiving unemployment insurance received reemployment services. Career readiness programs, including Ready for Industry and the WIN Career Readiness System, further equipped job seekers with industry-specific knowledge, foundational skills, and workplace competencies needed to succeed in high-demand occupations.

Co-Enrollment and Integrated Services

Kentucky encourages participants to enroll in more than one WIOA program (co-enrollment), ensuring adults and dislocated workers accessing Wagner-Peyser services beyond self-service are simultaneously enrolled in WIOA programs, and, when eligible, Trade Adjustment Assistance. Staff use the Kentucky Enterprise Engagement Suite to coordinate referrals, document activities, and track outcomes that creates a streamlined experience for participants.

Weekly orientation sessions at Kentucky Career Centers introduce participants to available services and connect them with partner programs. Employers often join these sessions to highlight job openings and host recruitment events. Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments participants, required through unemployment insurance, gain access to workshops and online training that build skills and support career advancement.

Employer Engagement

The Career Development Office works closely with employers through local workforce development Business Services Teams, workforce development boards, chambers of commerce, and economic development partners. Services include job fairs, hiring events, recruitment assistance, referrals, and labor market information to align workforce supply with industry demand. These partnerships strengthen employer pipelines while supporting participants in overcoming barriers to employment.

Transitioning Service Members

Dedicated staff at Fort Campbell provide services to service members, spouses, and their families to ensure access to training, job search support, and career development resources.

Local Spotlight: Kentucky Career Center Partnership

A Kentucky resident's path from unemployment to a fulfilling career as a lineman with Bird Construction showcased resilience and determination. With guidance from Gateway Community Action Agency and the KCC, the individual navigated the training and support needed to succeed.

A personal connection first led this person to the KCC, where staff helped the person overcome financial and practical barriers by providing tuition assistance, travel support, work apparel, and climbing gear.

This person noted that that the biggest challenge they faced was being able to afford the training, and they emphasized that the center's support allowed them to fully focus on completing the program.

This person started with Bird Construction the day training finished on May 12, 2025. Reflecting upon the experience, this Kentuckian encouraged others to reach out to career advisors, "they are very professional and willing to help."

From unemployment to a skilled lineman, this story highlights the impact of community support and the KCC in helping individuals build meaningful careers and brighter futures.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation:

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation administers Title IV programs that empower Kentuckians with disabilities to achieve independence, economic self-sufficiency, and competitive employment. In PY2024, the office served over 49,000 individuals and provided 5,358 trainings, that offered a wide range of services, including: career counseling, vocational training, postsecondary education, rehabilitation technology, pre-employment transition services, supported employment, and transportation assistance.

Specialized Centers and Educational Programs

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center and the Charles W. McDowell Center for the Blind provide residential and non-residential programs that develop occupational skills, Braille literacy, assistive technology proficiency, and career exploration. Working closely with partner agencies, community rehabilitation providers, and the Kentucky Department of Education, the centers ensure

smooth school-to-work transitions and help participants overcome barriers such as limited work experience, lack of identification, or transportation challenges.

Employer Engagement

Vocational Rehabilitation partners with employers to develop inclusive and skilled workforces. Initiatives like Project SEARCH and the Disability Hiring Academy connect individuals with disabilities to meaningful employment while providing businesses guidance on recruitment, retention, and workplace accommodations. Using labor market information, staff participate in job fairs and direct employer outreach to match services and trainings with local workforce needs.

Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning opportunities give participants hands-on experience and build workplace skills. Summer programs for students transitioning into employment, provide paid experiences that foster independence, career exploration, and confidence. These opportunities, combined with individualized support and employer partnerships, prepare participants for long-term employment success.

Office of Industry and Apprenticeship Services:

The Office of Industry and Apprenticeship Services leads Kentucky's Registered Apprenticeship program that help businesses recruit, train, and retain talent while providing participants with meaningful career pathways.

Registered Apprenticeship and Incumbent Worker Training

Registered Apprenticeships combine paid on-the-job training, related instruction, and mentorship to prepare participants for high-demand occupations. Opportunities span more than 1,500 fields: from traditional apprenticeship industries like healthcare and manufacturing to newly developed apprenticeship occupations like whiskey specialist, teacher, and library technician. In PY2024, Kentucky added 2,456 new apprentices, bringing the statewide total to over 5,500 active participants. Apprentices receive wage increases and milestone achievements, earn industry-specific credentials, all while gaining practical experience.

Targeted apprenticeship programs are addressing some of the state's most critical workforce needs. The Early Childhood Education Apprenticeship supported 125 apprentices across 41 employers in PY2024, part of an effort that has served more than 300 participants statewide. These programs expand credential attainment while helping address childcare workforce shortages. Likewise, the Grow Your Own Registered Teacher Apprenticeship, promoted through Kentucky Department of Education's GoTeachKY, helps school districts build teacher pipelines by pairing classroom experience with mentorship and academic training.

Through these efforts, Kentucky continues to expand registered apprenticeships, foster employer-education partnerships, and develop a skilled workforce.

Employer Incentive Programs

The Office of Industry and Apprenticeship Services also manages employer incentive programs that reduce hiring barriers and encourage inclusive practices.

- **Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC):** Offers federal tax incentives for hiring individuals from target groups such as veterans, individuals with disabilities, formerly incarcerated, youth, and recipients of public assistance. In PY2024, Kentucky processed 103,019 certification requests.

Fair Chance Bond (Federal Bonding Program): Provides free fidelity bonding and limited liability insurance to reduce hiring risks for individuals with barriers to employment, creating a safer and more inclusive hiring process.

These initiatives lower hiring costs, broaden access to employment, and support long-term workforce stability.

Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion

Kentucky's Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion services provide proactive support to businesses and workers facing transition. KCC partners with local workforce development boards and economic development agencies to offer confidential guidance on workforce changes, Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) requirements, unemployment insurance, transition planning, and connections to training and reemployment resources.

In PY2024, 35 WARN notices affected 2,363 workers. Rapid Response staff linked dislocated workers to KCC services and training opportunities while helping businesses explore layoff alternatives informed by labor market data.

Local Spotlight: Rapid Response in Northern Kentucky

When Hammer Strength/Life Fitness closed its Falmouth facility in early 2025, about 100 local jobs were affected, ending a 35-year community legacy. In response, Pendleton County leaders, state officials, and local organizations joined forces to support impacted workers.

A rapid response team offered resources such as job fairs, skills training, resume help, and career counseling. Educational partners, like KCTCS and the Northern Kentucky Career Center, connected employees with new opportunities, while the economic development office worked to attract new businesses to the 15-acre property.

National Dislocated Worker Grants

The National Dislocated Worker Grant program provides discretionary federal resources to states and eligible applicants to respond to natural disasters, layoffs, and extraordinary events that cause significant job losses. These grants temporarily expand the state's capacity to serve dislocated workers, ensuring timely access to employment and training services. The grants aim to support rapid reemployment, enhance employability, and improve long-term earnings for affected workers.

In PY2024, Kentucky utilized National Dislocated Worker Grant funding to respond to workforce disruptions. These resources enabled the state to provide targeted support to 1,248 Kentuckians, helping them access individualized career counseling, skills assessments, work-based learning opportunities, and connections to in-demand industries

Coordination with local workforce development areas, Kentucky Career Centers, education partners, and community organizations ensured that National Dislocated Worker Grant programs complemented existing WIOA services. By leveraging local partnerships, real-time labor market data, and employer feedback, the grants maximized participant outcomes while supporting business competitiveness and contributing to a more resilient statewide workforce.

Through these efforts, the National Dislocated Worker Grant program facilitated the rapid reemployment of displaced workers, expanded access to meaningful career opportunities, and strengthened Kentucky's workforce system – supporting the commonwealth's broader goal of a New Kentucky Home where opportunity, stability, and growth are accessible to all residents.

Local Spotlight: National Dislocated Worker Relief

A worker had been employed at a local business for almost four years when the company abruptly announced it was closing. With no advanced notice, he needed to act quickly and began exploring ways to gain new skills. Meeting with a WIOA career coach, he learned that as a dislocated worker, he qualified for the National Dislocated Worker Tornado Relief Grant. The grant provided tuition assistance to pursue Commercial Driver's License training at a local community college.

Excited by the opportunity, he completed pre-training requirements, began coursework, and quickly passed his CDL permit test, earning his license shortly after. With his new CDL, he secured employment with a logistics company.

A Collaborative Approach to Workforce Development – SWATT

The Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT) is an initiative uniting business, education, workforce, and government leaders across Kentucky. SWATT was created to reduce confusion and improve coordination within the state's workforce system. At its core, SWATT is an employer-centered effort designed to streamline how businesses access talent and workforce services, making it easier for employers to find, train, and retain the skilled workers they need.

SWATT Partners

- Education and Labor Cabinet
- Cabinet for Economic Development
- Kentucky Department of Education
- Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- Kentucky Community and Technical College System
- Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board
- Local Workforce Development Boards
- Regional partners



Employer-Centered Services

SWATT helps employers navigate workforce resources, develop customized strategies for talent attraction and retention, and connect with a network of providers. Central to this effort is the Workforce Talent Project Management Team operating within the Office of Industry and Apprenticeship Services, alongside Project Managers from the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. Acting as an “easy button” for employers, the team connects businesses with the right people, programs, and partnerships to deliver tailored workforce solutions. Services include recruitment support, work-based learning and training programs, guidance on financial incentives, and rapid response assistance during workforce transitions.

Alignment and Collaboration

SWATT strengthens the broader workforce environment by increasing alignment across business service partners and streamlining service delivery. Leadership from the Education and Labor Cabinet, Cabinet for Economic Development, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Kentucky Community and Technical College System, Kentucky Department of Education, Council on Postsecondary Education, and other key industry partners working together to ensure clear pathways to workforce solutions statewide.

Employer Engagement and Business Services

Kentucky evaluates the effectiveness of its workforce system in serving employers through both data and engagement. Business penetration measures how many businesses across the commonwealth are connected to the workforce system, while repeat business reflects how often employers return for additional services. Together, these measures highlight both reach and value, showing that employers not only use the system, but also trust it enough to come back.

Each LWDB has a Business Service Team which connects employers to labor market information, training programs, work-based learning opportunities, registered apprenticeships, and recruitment support. These teams coordinate with state and local partners through a unified strategy, ensuring consistent, high-quality service across the commonwealth. Their ability to foster repeat business is a key indicator that employers see ongoing benefit in returning to the system for support.

During PY2024, more than 45,000 businesses engaged with Kentucky's workforce system. Many returned for additional services, underscoring the system's value as an ongoing partner in workforce and economic development. Through both in-person and digital collaboration, Kentucky's workforce network provides companies with innovative solutions and responsive support.

This approach positions Kentucky's workforce system to meet employer needs quickly, strengthen workforce readiness, and drive long-term economic growth in the commonwealth.

State Planned Evaluations

During PY2024, the commonwealth also continued planned evaluations of statewide workforce programs to ensure alignment with strategic goals. These assessments included reviewing program effectiveness, analyzing labor market and skills gap data, and evaluating service delivery models across local workforce development areas. Insights from these evaluations are being used to enhance program offerings, inform sector strategies, and guide future workforce initiatives.

This ongoing engagement and evaluation process underscores Kentucky's collaborative approach to workforce development, ensuring that both employer needs and individual customer outcomes are central to system improvements.

Customer Satisfaction – Continuous Improvements

Kentucky continues to prioritize customer satisfaction as a cornerstone of workforce development service delivery. In PY2024, the commonwealth strengthened efforts to gather and respond to feedback from both employers and job seekers. LWDBs, primarily through the Kentucky Career Centers, engaged in ongoing assessments to ensure programs were accessible, responsive, and effective in meeting the needs of all customers.

Business Service Teams, located in each Local Workforce Development Area, worked closely with employers to understand their workforce challenges and provide tailored solutions. Collected data demonstrated consistent employer engagement across the commonwealth, with repeat services

signaling strong satisfaction and trust. Local survey data reinforced these findings as employers praised staff accessibility, the quality of candidates, and the effectiveness of hiring events. Many noted that business services were “excellent,” highlighting clear communication, aligned goals, and ease of access to resources.

For individual customers, satisfaction remained high statewide, with all regions reporting positive experiences at career centers. Customers consistently highlighted staff professionalism, accessibility, and individualized support as key strengths. Across the commonwealth, participants praised the knowledge and responsiveness of career center staff, noting that services were tailored to meet their unique needs. Regions such as Green River, Northern Kentucky, South Central, and KentuckianaWorks all maintained strong levels of satisfaction, reflecting a workforce system committed to quality service delivery.

At the same time, feedback identified areas for improvement. Several regions noted customer concerns regarding limited Unemployment Insurance staff presence in career centers, highlighting an ongoing systemwide challenge. Some participants also reported difficulties with phone system navigation or delays in service follow-up. In response, local workforce development boards implemented targeted adjustments, such as Lincoln Trail’s creation of remote access to Unemployment Insurance support at affiliate sites and Bluegrass’s adoption of improved staff onboarding and communication processes. Several boards are also expanding digital tools, such as QR code surveys and kiosks, to make providing feedback easier and increase response rates.

By integrating survey findings from both employers and job seekers, Kentucky’s workforce system continues to refine its programs and services. The results underscore the system’s strengths in delivering professional, responsive, and community-connected services while also highlighting areas where continuous improvement is needed. This approach ensures that the commonwealth not only maintains high levels of satisfaction, but also adapts quickly to customer needs, advancing the goal of equitable, high-quality workforce development for all Kentuckians.

Sector Strategies

During PY2024, Kentucky’s workforce system continued to focus on aligning education and training with employer demand. In PY2024, the 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. The data gathering and analysis was provided by the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS).

Kentucky’s Top Five In-Demand Sectors

- Healthcare
- Manufacturing and Logistics
- Construction
- Education
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (PS&TS)

Background

The quantitative review process was initiated by the Sector Strategies Workgroup with membership consisting of KWIB members, business and industry representatives, education partners, government representatives, and workforce development practitioners. The workgroup chose 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:

- Entry Annual Wages or Median Wages (25%);
- Occupational Demand (50%); and
- Growth Rate (25%).

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.

Governor’s Statewide Reserve Funds

The Governor’s Discretionary Funds, known as WIOA Statewide Reserve Funds, supported initiatives that foster collaboration among individuals, employers, industry partners, and communities, reflecting the commonwealth’s commitment to building a New Kentucky Home.

New Investments

- Kentucky Chamber of Commerce – Operational and logistical support for the Statewide Workforce and Talent Team to achieve lasting statewide impact.
- Iron Workers Local 70 – Provides welding and construction training to inmates at Kentucky Luther Lockett Correctional Complex and Northpoint Training Center.
- Finishing Trades (Painters Union) Institute – Pilot Career Readiness Program offering trade training to women at the Kentucky Correctional Institution for Women.
- Secretariat Center with Bluegrass Community and Technical College – Equine training for active military members and their spouses, supporting employment transitions outside of the military.
- Kentucky Department of Corrections Career and Technical Education – Expanded skills training across eight correctional institutions in commercial driving, construction craft labor, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, line work, and plumbing.
- Work Ready Communities Next Generation – Redesigned program metrics and delivery to strengthen workforce readiness statewide.
- Kentucky Enterprise Engagement Suite – System enhancements and operational support for workforce initiatives.

Continuing Programs

- Code Kentucky – Expanded to 72 counties across Eastern and Appalachian, Northern, and Central Kentucky.
- Everybody Counts – Provides clear pathways to success for graduating seniors while benefiting local businesses and communities.
- Growing Regional Outcomes through Workforce – Northern Kentucky initiative leveraging community assets to attract, retain, and grow a sustainable workforce.
- Electric Vehicle Workforce Coordinator – Centralized coordinator supports advanced battery manufacturing positions along the Interstate 65 corridor.

These investments advanced outcomes in employer engagement, educational attainment, workforce participation, and resource alignment, strengthening Kentucky's workforce system and fostering a New Kentucky Home.

Promising Practices

Everybody Counts

Everybody Counts is a youth-focused initiative supporting successful transitions from high school to the workforce while ensuring that all 14 WIOA program elements are met and personalized for in-school students. The program emphasizes individualized career planning, academic support, and targeted work-based learning opportunities, guiding students to align their studies with career goals, access tutoring, and explore postsecondary education or training pathways. Specialized services are provided for at-risk students in alternative education programs, helping them achieve educational and career milestones.

Career coaches are embedded full-time in more than 15 high schools across seven school districts, including five alternative education programs, and provide mentorship, leadership development, and ongoing support during and after high school. Services include access to paid and unpaid work experiences, such as internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, and part-time employment. Additionally, career exposure events, workshops, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship training is provided. Coaches assist students in navigating postsecondary pathways, including college and trade school applications, scholarships, financial aid, and alignment with industry-recognized credentials.

In PY2024, more than 2,500 youth received direct career services and participated in more than 500 events and workshops designed to expand career exposure and employability skills. The program supported the creation of 1,800 postsecondary education plans and 500 career plans. Career coaches ensured that barrier-affected youth, including students with individualized education plans or Section 504 plans, foster youth, and first-generation college students, had equitable access to guidance and opportunities.

Thirty companies in logistics, manufacturing, automotive, government, and retail sectors participated. Employers contributed through career-exploration events, work-based learning experiences, facility tours, mentorship opportunities, and development of professional profile videos, expanding students' exposure to in-demand industries and pathways to apprenticeships, internships, and employment.

Everybody Counts integrates supports such as pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities, assistance for English Language Learners, and connections to services addressing transportation, housing, and food assistance. The program emphasizes long-term engagement, including summer bridge support and smooth transitions, to adult workforce programs after graduation. Success stories highlight graduates from alternative education programs and first-generation college students achieving employment, postsecondary enrollment, and career readiness.

Everybody Counts is a statewide program that connects education, career preparation, and employer engagement to help Kentucky's youth overcome barriers and succeed in the workforce.

Code: Kentucky

Code: Kentucky is a tuition-free program equipping residents with in-demand tech skills and opening pathways to meaningful careers. Originally launched as Code: Louisville, new funding allowed the program to expand into Northern Kentucky, Eastern Kentucky, and the Lexington/Bluegrass regions, unifying these efforts under the Code: Kentucky brand.

The program enrolled 485 participants, with 127 completing training and 45 getting hired for technology jobs, earning an average starting wage of \$25.11 per hour. Participants gained hands-on

experience with programming languages such as JavaScript, C#, and Python, while benefiting from mentorship, career coaching, and professional development resources. Courses are flexible, combining self-guided online learning with weekly virtual meetings.

By breaking down barriers to training and providing comprehensive support, Code: Kentucky empowers residents across the state to build confidence, technical expertise, and long-term careers in the growing technology industry.

Preparing for the Future

New Kentucky Home: Strengthening Kentucky's Workforce and Economy

Governor Andy Beshear's New Kentucky Home initiative is a statewide effort designed to enhance economic growth, attract and retain talent, and promote tourism. By aligning workforce development, economic development, and community investment the initiative makes Kentucky a competitive place for businesses and residents.

New Kentucky Home expands individuals access to career opportunities and creates pathways for long-term economic stability. The initiative highlights Kentucky's strengths - strong communities, affordable living, and quality education – helping residents and new arrivals secure meaningful employment and build sustainable careers. By connecting individuals to growing industries and training opportunities, the program reinforces the state's commitment to workforce readiness.

Businesses benefit from New Kentucky Home through a reliable, skilled workforce and a supportive environment for growth. The initiative emphasizes Kentucky's ability to attract and retain talent, ensuring employers can meet workforce needs efficiently. Coordination across state and local partners helps companies connect with programs and resources that support recruitment, training, and workforce development.

Through New Kentucky Home, Kentucky aligns economic development, workforce initiatives, and community engagement by fostering an environment where individuals can thrive and businesses can grow.

Work Ready Communities – Next Generation

Kentucky's Work Ready Communities – Next Generation initiative is designed to prepare communities and residents for the evolving demands of the workforce. Building on the original program, the Next Generation model focuses on creating strong partnerships between education, industry, and government to develop the skills, resources, and infrastructure needed for sustainable economic growth. The initiative addresses critical regional challenges and specifically focuses on two main goals of being strategic and getting workers ready for employers.

Strategic Objectives

- Strategic Objective 1: Supply and Demand of Regional Skills
- Strategic Objective 2: Growth in Participation of All Workforce Talent
- Strategic Objective 3: Work-Based Learning

Talent Ready Strategies and Addressing Barriers to Employment

- Talent Ready Objective 1: Expand Childcare Options
- Talent Ready Objective 2: Make Housing Affordable
- Talent Ready Objective 3: Improve Transportation Options

- Talent Ready Objective 4: Build Digital Skills and Expand Broadband Access
- Talent Ready Objective 5: Attract and Retain Talent

At the heart of the program is a focus on measurable progress. “In-Progress” and “Next Generation Certified” metrics track what communities have accomplished and what remains underway. These metrics account for differences across urban and rural areas, measure employer engagement and work-based learning placements, and evaluate the impact of local talent pipelines. The redesigned program, including an updated application and website, is set for a statewide relaunch in 2026, providing communities with the tools and guidance needed to achieve and maintain certification.

Pre-K for All

Kentucky’s Pre-K for All initiative is more than an early education program, it is an investment in the commonwealth’s future workforce and economy. By providing high-quality early childhood education, the program ensures children enter kindergarten ready to learn, building foundational skills in literacy, math, and social-emotional development that set the stage for lifelong academic and career success.

At the same time, Pre-K for All helps families participate more fully in the workforce. Parents, particularly mothers, can see their take-home pay increase by up to \$9,000 per year while saving roughly \$7,000 annually in childcare costs. These financial benefits reduce economic barriers, increase household stability, and support broader workforce participation, ultimately strengthening Kentucky’s economy.

The program also invests in the early childhood education workforce, attracting and retaining skilled educators who provide consistent, high-quality learning experiences for children while building professional pathways for Pre-K teachers and staff. By expanding access to early learning across urban and rural communities, the initiative addresses areas that do not have sufficient childcare options and supports families with the resources they need to succeed, including access to housing, transportation, and digital tools.

Through these combined efforts, Pre-K for All strengthens children, supports families, grows the workforce, and fosters resilient communities. By improving kindergarten readiness, expanding economic opportunity, and preparing the next generation for success, the program lays a foundation for a stronger, more prosperous commonwealth.

Activities Across Local Workforce Development Areas

Prosper Appalachia: Building Futures for Eastern Kentucky Youth

Prosper Appalachia is helping young adults in Eastern Kentucky take their first steps into the workforce. The program serves residents aged 16–24, offering paid work experiences, professional development, and hands-on skill-building that prepare participants for meaningful careers.

Through its flagship 10-week Summer Internship Program, Prosper Appalachia places youth with local employers, from nonprofits like Pine Mountain Settlement School and Red Bird Mission to businesses in construction, retail, and healthcare. Many participants are entering the workforce for the first time and gaining not only income, but also confidence, skills, and a deeper connection to their communities. In 2025 alone, the program funded 725 internships, investing \$3.2 million directly into the hands of interns.

With support from WIOA, the Appalachian Regional Commission, and state initiatives like Putting Young Kentuckians to Work, Prosper Appalachia demonstrates the power of collaboration. By providing youth with experience, mentorship, and guidance, the program is helping Eastern Kentucky

build a skilled, resilient workforce while giving young people a chance to envision and achieve a brighter future.

GRADD Youth Summit: Empowering the Next Generation

The GRADD Youth Summit, hosted by the Green River Area Development District (GRADD) and its workforce development board, provides youth in the region with a platform to explore innovative ideas, engage with peers, and participate in projects that often focus on local community and workforce development. The most recent EmpowerU Youth Summit took place at Owensboro Community and Technical College in March 2025.

The summit serves as a forum for youth to discuss and address issues that matter to them, offering opportunities for networking, collaboration, and problem-solving. Participants are encouraged to develop innovative solutions to community challenges while gaining valuable insights into career pathways and workforce opportunities.

Through events like the GRADD Youth Summit, the region empowers its youth to become active contributors to their communities and prepares them with the skills, confidence and connections needed for future success.

Empowering Louisville's Youth: The Spot's Transformative Impact

The Spot: Young Adult Opportunity Center, an initiative of KentuckianaWorks and Goodwill Industries of Kentucky is a beacon of hope for young adults aged 16–24 in the Louisville region. With locations in downtown Louisville, Shively, Shelbyville, and Eminence, The Spot offers a comprehensive suite of services designed to help youth overcome significant barriers such as homelessness, substance abuse, and involvement in the justice system.

In April 2025, The Spot celebrated the graduation of 230 young adults who completed its curriculum, which includes work-readiness and life-skills training, such as resume writing, communication skills, and mock interviewing. Graduates also received monetary stipends as they progressed through the program, underscoring The Spot's commitment to both education and financial empowerment.

The program's holistic approach encompasses not only career and educational resources, but also helps with housing, transportation, mental health support, and legal aid. This comprehensive support system ensures that participants are equipped to overcome obstacles and embark on successful career paths.

Building Careers, Transforming Lives: The Impact of Kentuckiana Builds

The Kentuckiana Builds program, a collaboration between KentuckianaWorks and the Louisville Urban League, is empowering individuals to embark on successful careers in the construction industry. Designed to provide participants with the foundational skills necessary for entry-level positions, the program also connects them with local employers seeking skilled workers.

Graduates of Kentuckiana Builds have found employment in various construction-related fields, including electrical work, heavy machinery operation, and fiber optic installation. The program's hands-on training approach ensures that participants are well-prepared to meet the demands of the industry. Additionally, Kentuckiana Builds fosters partnerships with local unions and educational institutions, offering pathways for further specialization and career advancement.

By focusing on inclusivity and diversity, Kentuckiana Builds is not only addressing the region's workforce needs, but also providing individuals with opportunities to build sustainable and rewarding careers.

Per Scholas: Opening Doors to Tech Careers in Northern Kentucky

Per Scholas is transforming the technology workforce by providing tuition-free training to individuals from underrepresented communities, preparing them for high-demand careers in IT, cybersecurity, and software engineering. In April 2025, the organization expanded its reach with a new satellite campus at the KCC in Covington, giving Northern Kentucky residents access to free, career-focused training that complements the existing Cincinnati CityLink Center location.

The program combines hands-on technical instruction with career coaching, job placement support, and connections to a broad network of employer partners. Courses are offered in flexible formats, remote, in-person or hybrid, so learners can engage in ways that fit their schedules. Graduates leave with industry-recognized certifications and the skills needed to succeed in technology roles without the burden of tuition.

By removing barriers and offering strong support, Per Scholas is opening doors for individuals to build meaningful, sustainable careers, while strengthening the region's technology workforce and creating opportunities for long-term professional growth.

Appendix

Kentucky Center for Statistics

Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS)

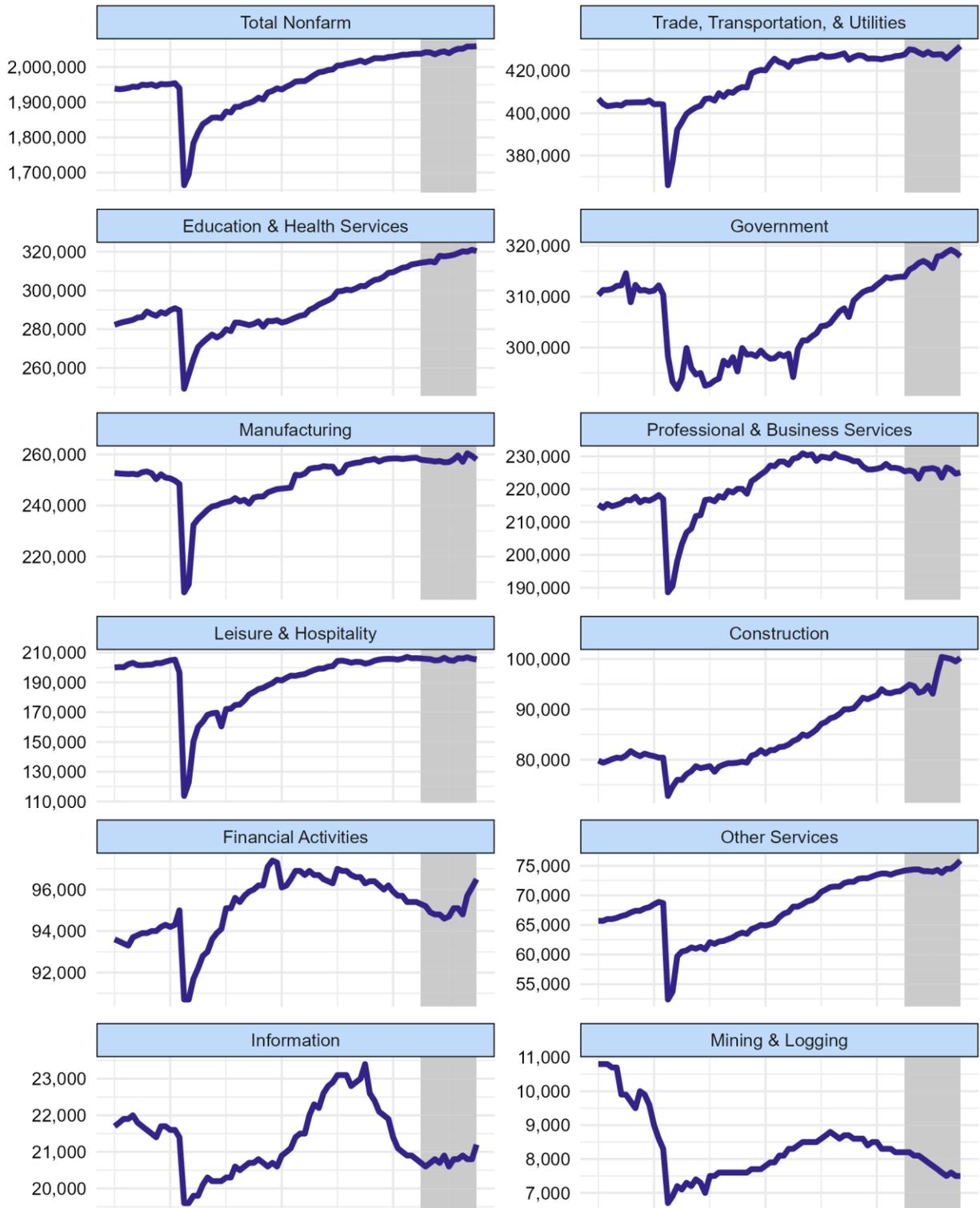
The Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS) provided a brief overview of the economy and workforce of the commonwealth and its 10 Local Workforce Areas (LWAs) for PY2024 (July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025). The labor market data appearing in this overview are produced by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and/or KYSTATS.

In PY2024, Kentucky's industry employment continued its post-COVID growth. According to seasonally adjusted estimates from the BLS Current Employment Statistics (CES) program, Total Nonfarm employment rose above 2,058,000 in late PY2025 (May and June) – surpassing pre-COVID (February 2020) levels by roughly 104,000 jobs, and surpassing employment levels at the height of the pandemic's labor market impact (April 2020) by roughly 394,000 jobs. Average over-the-month Total Nonfarm employment gains throughout PY2024 (1,700) exceeded those experienced in PY2023 (1,600), accounting for a total of 20,500 new jobs in the course of PY2024 (1.0% growth).

The continued employment growth described above has been uneven across private industries in Kentucky throughout PY2024. From June 2024 to June 2025, three super sectors exhibited overall job losses according to CES estimates: Professional and Business Services (-1,500), Mining and Logging (-700), and Leisure and Hospitality (-400). Conversely, seven super sectors exhibited overall job gains, with three growing by more than 4,000 jobs: Education and Health Services (7,200), Construction (5,900), and Government (4,800). Among these expanding super sectors, Construction exhibited the highest proportional growth in this one-year period (+6.3%). One super-sector (Information) remained stable at 20,800 jobs statewide.

Nonfarm Employment by Supersector, Kentucky January 2019 - July 2025 (PY 2024 Shaded in Grey)

Estimates are seasonally adjusted. Current as of 9/8/2025.

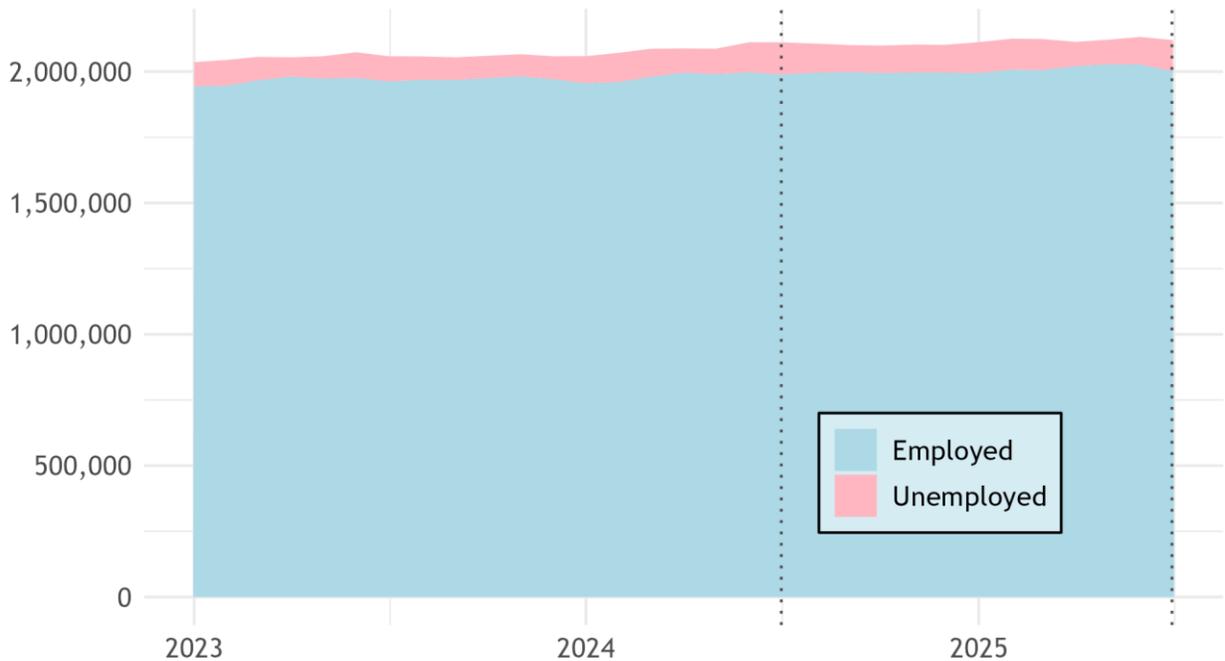


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (CES).
July 2025 estimates are preliminary.

Non-seasonally adjusted labor force statistics from the BLS Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) program suggest that from June 2024 to June 2025, Kentucky also experienced continued growth of its civilian labor force (+20,423, or +1.0%), continued growth in the overall number of employed individuals (+29,498, or +1.5%), and a decline in the number of unemployed individuals throughout PY2024 (-9,075, or -8.0%). As of June 2025, 2,131,982 individuals were estimated to be participating in Kentucky’s civilian labor force, representing 58.7% of its civilian noninstitutionalized population age 16 and an increase from June 2024, when the labor force participation rate was estimated to be 58.6%. Of the individuals participating in the labor force in June 2025, 104,528 were seeking employment (i.e. unemployed), accounting for an unemployment rate of 4.9%.

Employed and Unemployed Persons, Kentucky January 2023 to July 2025

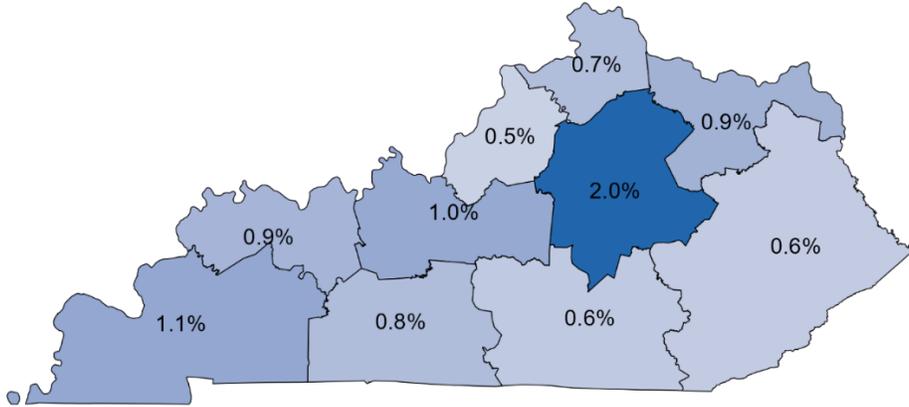
Estimates are not seasonally adjusted. Current as of 9/8/2025.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS).
July 2025 estimates are preliminary.

Each of Kentucky’s 10 LWAs exhibited unique labor force dynamics throughout PY2024. For example, although Kentucky’s statewide labor force grew by 1.0% in this time, the labor force within the Bluegrass LWA grew at twice that rate and accounted for over a third of the state’s gains (+8,561). Local civilian labor force growth also outpaced statewide growth in the West Kentucky LWA (+1.1%), and matched statewide growth in the Lincoln Trail LWA. The remaining LWAs experienced slower rates of growth, as shown in the map below.

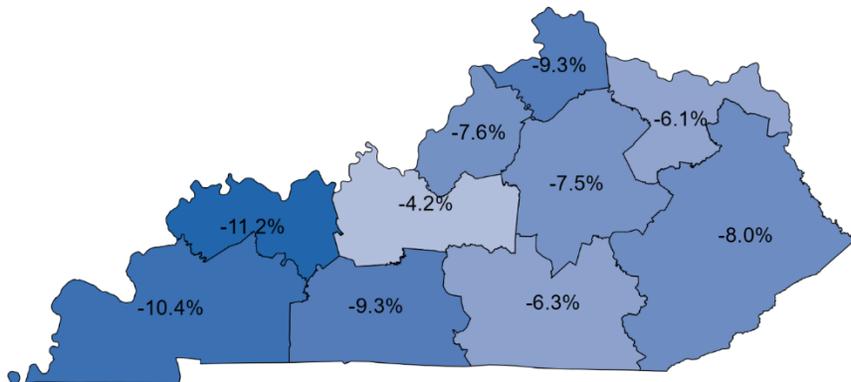
Percent Change in Civilian Labor Force by Local Workforce Area
 June 2024 – June 2025, Not Seasonally Adjusted, Current as of 9/12/25



Source: Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS).

Within each LWA's respective labor forces, the number of unemployed individuals declined from June 2024 to June 2025. By volume, the largest declines occurred in the state's more urban LWAs, with the Bluegrass, Kentuckiana Works, and Northern Kentucky areas collectively accounting for more than 4,500 fewer unemployed individuals at the end of this one-year period. However, it was the state's westernmost LWAs that experienced the largest declines in the number of unemployed individuals, with the West Kentucky and Green River LWAs exhibiting declines of 10% or greater.

Percent Change in Unemployed Persons by Local Workforce Area
 June 2024 – June 2025, Not Seasonally Adjusted, Current as of 9/12/25

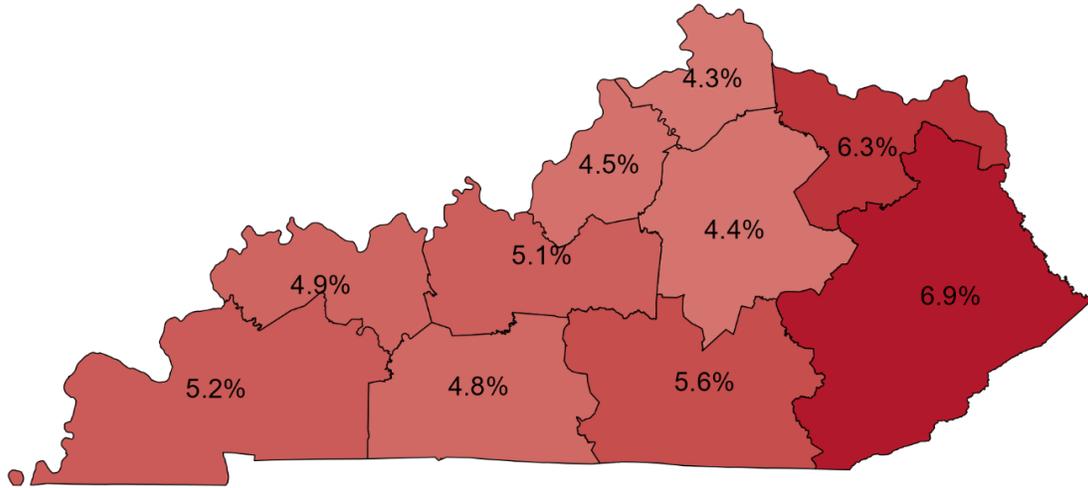


Source: Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS).

By the end of PY2024, Kentucky's highest levels of unemployment relative to the size of their labor force were the areas containing the majority of Kentucky's Appalachian counties. EKCEP (6.9%), TENCO (6.3%) and Cumberlands (5.6%) exceeded the statewide rate of 4.9%, despite each showing improvement from the previous year. Northern Kentucky (4.3%), Bluegrass (4.4%) and Kentuckiana Works (4.5%)—the states most urban LWAs—exhibited the lowest unemployment rates as of June 2025.

Unemployment Rates by Local Workforce Area

June 2025, Not Seasonally Adjusted, Current as of 9/12/25



Source: Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS).