



Kentucky Education & Workforce Collaborative Board

Meeting Briefing Book

January 22, 2026

1:30 – 3:30 pm EST

Location: 412 NC, Fourth Floor Conference Room

500 Mero St. Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

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Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative Meeting

January 22, 2026, 1:30-3:30 pm EST

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Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative Meeting

AGENDA

Thursday, January 22nd, 2026

Meeting 1:30pm-3:30pm EST (1pm Networking)

IN-PERSON - 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY: 4th floor Conference Room

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81061193693?pwd=ay4aSZ2uxtt9aHBbOr0foybHvnodP6.1>

Meeting ID: 810 6119 3693 Passcode: 842257

1:30 pm CALL MEETING TO ORDER

1:35 pm Welcome and Overview *Mike Yoder, PhD., Commissioner
Department of Workforce Development
Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet (ELC)*

1:40 pm State of the Workforce Funding Report (Voting Required) *Mike Yoder, PhD., Commissioner
Alisher Burikhanov
Executive Director, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board*

1:50 pm Introduction to Serve Kentucky and Service to Career Opportunities *Mike Yoder, PhD., Commissioner
Taban Herrington, MA
Chief of Staff
Cabinet for Health and Family Services*

1:55 pm Presentation: Serve Kentucky *Joe Bringardner
Executive Director, Serve Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services*

*Ben Reno-Webber
CEO
Essential Innovations*

2:30 pm Highlight: Kentucky Environmental Education Council *Ashley Mike
Program Director
Environmental Education Leadership Corps*

3:00 pm Service as a Pathway to Economic Opportunity: National Governors Association Brief *Alisher Burikhanov*

3:10 pm Collaborative Discussion and Workforce Development Opportunities *Mike Yoder, PhD., Commissioner*

3:25 PM CLOSING COMMENTS – UPCOMING DATES

NEXT MEETING: APRIL 16th, 2026 @ 500 MERO STREET, FRANKFORT, KY 40601

3:30 PM ADJOURNMENT

Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative Meeting
Minutes
Thursday, October 16, 2025
Meeting 1:30 pm-3:30 pm EDT

IN-PERSON - 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY: 4th floor Conference Room
Via Zoom Meeting

ATTENDEES:

Governor Andy Beshear	Governor of Kentucky	
Secretary Jeff Noel (Proxy: Brandon Combs)	Cabinet for Economic Development	X
Secretary Jamie Link	Education and Labor Cabinet	X
Secretary Steven Stack, MD (Proxy: Taban Herrington)	Cabinet for Health and Family Services	X
Secretary Keith Jackson (Proxy: Natalie Burikhanov)	Justice and Public Safety Cabinet	X
Judge Orbrey Gritton	Anderson County Judge/Executive	
Myra Wilson	Local Workforce Development Director	X
Beth Potter	Human Development Institute	
Dr. Ryan Quarles (Proxy: Jessie Schook)	Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS)	X
Lori Ulrich, Chair	Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board	X
Amanda Curry	Job Corps	X
Chris Wooldridge	CPE Conference of Presidents, Murray State University	X
Commissioner Robbie Fletcher	Kentucky Department of Education	X
Brigadier General Steven Bullard (Proxy: Stacey Shane)	Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs	X
Ashli Watts (Proxy: LaKisha Miller)	Kentucky Chamber of Commerce	X
Winston Miller (Proxy: Eleri Gesler)	Kentucky Housing Corporation	X
Dr. Aaron Thompson	Council on Postsecondary Education	
Tom Underwood	Kentucky National Federation of Independent Business	

GUESTS: Peter Mattingly, Susie Edwards, Betty Whittaker, Mandela Gapala, Charlee McMain, Alyssa VanMeter, Billie Hardin, Cora McNabb, Jermaine Watkins, Judge/Executive Luke King, Sam Keathley, Commissioner Whitney Allen, Lauren Goldener, Reneau Waggoner, Sharon Poff, Sheila Clark, Tiffany Reeves, Jon Sowards, BJ Wilkerson, Anthony Hellmueller, Tammy Hyde, Deputy Commissioner Michelle DeJohn, Tom Thompson, Dr. Beth Hargis, Dallas Kratzer, Meeting Captioner

STAFF: Commissioner Mike Yoder, Alisher Burikhanov, Debbie Dennison, Sara Jaggers, LaChrista Ellis, Elishah Taylor

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Mike Yoder, PhD., Commissioner (Department of Workforce Development, Education and Labor Cabinet) called the meeting to order, and roll call was completed and quorum met.

WELCOME AND OVERVIEW

Commissioner Mike Yoder welcomed attendees and let everyone know that a copy of the State of the Workforce Funding Report would be available in the coming weeks. He then introduced the meeting's focus on talent pools, highlighting previous discussions on refugees, immigrants, formerly incarcerated individuals, and youth, and announced that this meeting's focus would be on Kentuckians with disabilities.

PRESENTATION: KENTUCKY'S OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Susie Edwards, Deputy Executive Director, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) began by noting her excitement that students would be sharing their experiences. She outlined OVR's mission to empower Kentuckians with disabilities to achieve independence and economic security through competitive, integrated employment. Ms. Edwards explained that vocational rehabilitation helps individuals with disabilities prepare for, obtain, and advance in employment, while also assisting businesses in recruiting and accommodating employees with disabilities. She emphasized that "competitive integrated employment," as defined by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), involves work performed full- or part-time at or above minimum wage, comparable to that of employees without disabilities in similar roles.

Ms. Edwards outlined OVR's mission to help Kentuckians with disabilities achieve independence and economic security through competitive, integrated employment and emphasized the need for collaboration across agencies and partners.

Ms. Edwards outlined OVR's key strategies for improving employment outcomes for Kentuckians with disabilities. These include expanding early intervention and workforce readiness programs for youth, strengthening education and training opportunities to close skill and attainment gaps, increasing access to jobs in rural areas through employer incentives, and investing in supportive services such as accessible transportation, housing, and mental health resources. She also addressed employer myths, noting that individuals with disabilities perform comparably to other workers. Employment, she emphasized, promotes economic contribution, reduced dependency, and improved quality of life.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

Ms. Susie Edwards introduced Charlee McMain and Alyssa VanMeter, students from Henderson County High School who participated in the Pre-employment Transition Services (PreETS) program, offered through OVR. Among other services, OVR helps students with disabilities prepare for employment by providing services like career exploration, workplace readiness, self-advocacy, postsecondary training, and work-based learning.

Through OVR's PreETS program, Charlee and Alyssa spent the summer working at North Middle School's East Service Center, assisting families, organizing school supplies and uniforms, supporting community events, and helping students new to middle school transition smoothly. This experience allowed them to build workplace, customer service, life, and social skills, gain confidence and independence, and develop responsibility and teamwork. They emphasized that OVR's programs provide opportunities for students with disabilities to prove their abilities and prepare for future jobs and education.

They concluded by thanking OVR, North Middle School, and their mentors for supporting their growth and summer work experience. More information can be found in the post-meeting packet materials.

PROJECT SEARCH

Project SEARCH, highlighted by **Betty Whittaker, Staff Assistant, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation**, is a high school transition program offering year-long, site-based internships that prepare students for competitive, integrated employment. The program emphasizes hands-on training, career exploration, and classroom instruction within host businesses. Since its 1996 start, Project SEARCH has grown globally to over 750 sites, serving thousands of interns annually, with 75% of graduates achieving employment. Local partnerships include multiple schools and healthcare institutions, with ongoing expansion efforts.

Students undergo assessments across various areas—food service, housekeeping, lab, pharmacy, and sterilization—to identify skills and interests. Counselors support students through employment planning meetings, rotations, and throughout the year. The ultimate goal of Project SEARCH is competitive, integrated employment. Local success examples

include students being hired by ABB Optical and Baptist Health Hardin, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in transitioning interns to paid employment.

She discussed the importance of educating employers about hiring individuals with disabilities. OVR has a dedicated branch for employer services that assists with recruiting, training, retaining, and developing employees. Staff provide guidance on accessibility, personnel support, staff development, financial incentives, on-the-job training, internships, and disability awareness. They also offer training on the Americans with Disabilities Act and technical assistance to address employer concerns and reduce stigma. Additionally, employers are informed about job retention, IRS accessibility credits, and business expense deductions related to accommodating employees with disabilities. Resources, including articles and outreach materials, are available on the OVR website for further guidance.

DISCUSSION

The presentations ended with recognition of PreETS achievements and discussion on strategies for equipping staff to advocate for this talent pool. Commissioner Yoder asked meeting participants to share how their agencies currently interact with individuals with disabilities and OVR, as well as potential future opportunities for engagement. Workforce boards highlighted the certification process, noting it is lengthy and requires dedicated staff and funding, but ultimately rewarding and scalable to support schools and individual placement services (IPS).

Questions were asked about OVR's clients, particularly the number of students served (ages 14–21) versus adults, with clarification that programs like PreETS and Project SEARCH support students, including high school seniors preparing for employment. Participants also discussed career and technical education participation and the need for data tracking and metrics.

Funding considerations were lifted, with clarification that federal dollars do not restrict the populations OVR can serve; however, employer willingness can impact opportunities, including those for individuals with criminal justice involvement. The discussion emphasized integrating services with re-entry programs for youth and adults and coordinating social supports for youth and families.

Finally, the conversation turned to outreach and workforce development, including promoting untapped talent pools, tracking skill sets and credentials, and providing relevant demographic and credentialing data to employers to support hiring decisions. Case management systems were noted as a key tool for monitoring participant outcomes and credential attainment.

FOCUS POPULATION UPDATES: JOBS ON DAY ONE

Natalie Burikhanov, Executive Director, Team Kentucky Office of Reentry Services, shared that in 2025, Governor Beshear announced major growth in correctional vocational training. Twenty-six programs now operate statewide, including new courses in plumbing, construction, CDL, and Kentucky's first prison-based cosmetology school. These expansions were achieved through collaboration rather than new funding.

The Jobs on Day One initiative, launched with the Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council, trains inmates as ironworkers through a two-year apprenticeship. Forty-five have completed training, with several now employed and making upwards of \$50/hr. in wages and benefits in these apprenticeship programs. Also, a successful painters' union program for women is expanding. DOC continues to address instructor shortages and promotes openings through secondchance.ky.gov. Reentry centers now operate in all 14 state prisons, offering life-skills and job-readiness training.

IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Mandela Gapala, State Employment Services Coordinator, Kentucky Office for Refugees, Catholic Charities of Louisville, stated that in 2025, Kentucky's refugee employment programs served 5,317 participants, with 3,767 securing jobs and over 2,000 entering full-time positions with benefits. The average starting wage was \$16.80 per hour, slightly lower than in 2024 due to more entry-level placements.

Major employer partners included UPS, Walmart, Perdue, and local staffing agencies. The Catholic Charities of Louisville funds approximately a dozen agencies and community organizations that provide employment, training, and integration

support, alongside schools and health clinics. Kentucky spent \$4.8 million on refugee services in FY2025 and has welcomed more than 48,000 refugees since FY2021. As FY2026 began, funding continued for agencies, schools, colleges, clinics, and nonprofits statewide.

Mr. Mandela concluded that secondary arrivals are increasing, particularly in Bowling Green and Nicholasville, as refugees move from other states seeking better opportunities. Kentucky remains a welcoming destination due to strong job availability, affordable living, and community support

PUTTING YOUNG KENTUCKIANS TO WORK

Myra Wilson, Executive Director, Cumberlands Workforce Development Board, outlined the *Putting Young Kentuckians to Work* initiative, which supports youth ages 16–24 without clearly identified career paths. Launched in August 2024 with \$20 million in biennial funding, the program offers training, career guidance, and job placement, aiming to help 4,000 young adults enter sustainable careers. By September 2025, 751 participants had secured jobs.

Programs across regions partner with employers, schools, and colleges to provide hands-on training in fields like welding, fiber optics, CDL, and healthcare. Employers report strong satisfaction, and several participants have achieved financial independence through skilled trades.

Transportation remains a barrier, but local partners assist with short-term solutions such as rideshare options and training-based stipends. The program plans to seek reauthorization next session, continue data sharing, and expand partnerships to strengthen Kentucky's youth workforce pipeline.

STATEWIDE JOB FAIR FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL AND OTHERS

Whitney Allen, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs (KDVA), provided an update on Team Kentucky's Virtual Job Fairs. These monthly events are held on the third Wednesday of the month and include a first-hour focus on veterans and their families, followed by two hours open to all job seekers.

Commissioner Whittney Allen continued with details on the virtual job fairs. He explained that participation extends beyond veterans to include their families and other Kentuckians seeking employment. The platform is user-friendly, fully virtual, and has received support from Governor Beshear, Lt. Governor Coleman, and KET, who have promoted Kentucky jobs and encouraged job seekers to make Kentucky their home.

Efforts are underway to expand the program to include formerly incarcerated veterans and other individuals reentering the community, connecting them with employers and improving their employment prospects. Commissioner Allen emphasized that the initiative is collaborative, free for participants and employers, and open to all partners.

A board member highlighted the upcoming Veteran Employment Training Symposium, included in the briefing appendix, as another avenue for businesses to learn how to attract and retain veteran talent, moving from "veteran-friendly" to "veteran-ready." The symposium, hosted by KCTCS, draws over 100 participants, including many businesses, and serves as an important resource for connecting with this workforce.

CLOSING COMMENTS

The session concluded with thanks to all attendees and partners for their updates and continued engagement.

3:01 PM ADJOURNMENT

State of the Workforce Funding Report

Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative – DRAFT

State of the Workforce Funding Report 2025

Background

In July 2020, Governor Andy Beshear issued [Executive Order 2020-551](#) that established the Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative. The collaborative includes 19 members from across the commonwealth's executive branch agencies, as well as stakeholder partners who work together on critical workforce priorities. This group takes an intragovernmental approach to the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board's (KWIB) workforce development strategy by supporting individuals, businesses and partner customers while moving Kentucky forward as a leader in workforce innovation.

One of the key efforts of the collaborative is the annual compilation of the State of the Workforce Funding Report. This report seeks to identify all federal and state-funded workforce-related education, training, career services and support service activities in the past three programmatic years provided by the collaborative's respective agencies or entities.

Additionally, this funding report highlights return on investment (ROI) as identified by the KWIB through three foundational metrics: (1) number of individuals served through partner programs, (2) number of individuals who are placed in jobs, and (3) participants' average wages. It is important to note that many of the workforce programs are designed to serve different populations and segments in the workforce system, so these foundational metrics should be viewed as a point of reference versus a definitive ROI per program. Moreover, the service populations have varying level of needs (e.g. individual requesting resume assistance versus someone with disabilities needs vocational training) and unique outcomes metrics.

In line with the executive order, this completed compilated funding report is presented to the KWIB for review and understanding of the larger workforce system. This report is meant to provide the collected information for reference and a high-level review, it is not meant to serve as a comprehensive analysis of the workforce system.

Report Contents

This report encompasses workforce development funding information from state agencies and partner organizations represented on the collaborative as well as other entities for:

- Program Year 2022 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)
- Program Year 2023 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)
- Program Year 2024 (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025)

Key information includes:

- Whether the source of funding is federal or state dollars
- If funds are used for education, training, support services, career services, or a combination of these services
- Outcomes to demonstrate ROI per number of individuals served, number of job placements, and participants' average wages

Categories of services are defined as:

- **Education:** Investment used for long-term career preparation. Examples include higher education degrees, certificates, certifications, credentials, digital badging, and integrated education programs,
- **Training:** Investment in programs that are occupation specific. Examples include on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, internships, pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships and career pathways exposure.

- **Supportive Services:** Investment in services such as transportation, childcare, dependent care, housing and needs-related payments, linkage to community services, assistance with educational training, reasonable accommodations for youth with disabilities, referral to medical services, and assistance with appropriate work attire and work-related tools.
- **Career Services:** Provision of services related to employment and career assistance, such as career coaching, career awareness, career exploration, labor market information sharing, resume building, interview skills, and job placement services.

The below snapshot shows contributing agencies and the three-year totals for each of the required elements (full agency names are provided on the last page to accompany acronyms used)

Collaborative Member Workforce Stakeholders	PY22 - PY24 Funding Dollars	Total # of Individuals Served	Total # of Individuals Placed	Average Wages of Individuals in a Job	PY22- PY24 Programs (Funding Streams)	Sum of Businesses Served
CED	\$20,400,000.00	153,624	-	\$30.81	6	318
CHFS – DBHDID	\$17,369,140.03	44,085	7,858	-	124	-
CHFS – DCBS	\$1,264,384,946.65	1,934,998	63,024	-	49	-
CPE	\$8,359,893.82	-	-	-	11	174
DWD - CDO	\$40,965,673.40	90,496	31,053	\$21.67	18	6,353
DWD - KYAE	\$103,317,772.00	65,665	-	\$9.68	6	-
DWD – Everybody Counts	\$15,416,000.00	5,865	5,482	-	8	23
DWD - OIAS	\$3,947,066.42	536,920	7,852	\$30.70	8	6,996
DWD - OVR	\$276,612,557.00	602,399	38,789	\$28.72	36	-
Job Corps	\$269,177,062.00	4,879	1,571	\$20.00	21	-
JPSC	\$58,663,517.19	283,141	2,547	-	15	-
KCTCS	\$21,881,142.00	129,178	-	-	12	928
KY Chamber Foundation	\$3,105,000.00	417	3,548	-	12	1,596
KCMA	\$1,373,085.00	-	218	-	6	80
KDE	\$445,445,646.00	437,796	-	-	6	-
KDLA	\$1,044,552.00	-	-	-	7	-
KDVA	\$15,712.56	600	-	\$20.00	1	80
LWDB Bluegrass	\$10,854,989.35	1,602	894	\$22.89	11	5,515
LWDB Cumberlands	\$7,025,485.41	981	707	\$21.20	10	-
LWDB EKCEP	\$80,808,939.36	25,908	12,370	\$20.53	22	14,805

LWDB Green River	\$7,547,956.20	691	514	\$27.88	13	-
LWDB KentuckianaWorks	\$20,497,153.44	4,099	1,031	\$26.51	19	-
LWDB Lincoln Trail	\$5,870,531.38	443	210	\$25.49	10	1,397
LWDB Northern Kentucky	\$9,054,276.06	7,924	1,998	\$24.40	23	3,334
LWDB South Central	\$7,807,349.61	5,746	2,612	\$28.07	31	2,963
LWDB TENCO	\$11,000,148.05	1,720	625	\$31.95	10	4,251
LWDB West Kentucky	\$6,367,351.24	727	517	\$21.57	13	107
UK / HDI	\$27,079,865.14	23,188	2,917	\$12.18	24	-
Non-Collaborative Members w/ Workforce Programming	PY22 - PY24 Funding Dollars	Total # of Individuals Served	Total # of Individuals Placed	Max Average Wages of Individuals in a Job	PY22-PY24 Programs (Funding Streams)	Sum of Businesses Served
KHEAA	\$84,829,446.00	45,902	-	-	27	-
KYTC	\$2,440,150.00	216	45	\$24.29	7	-
Grand Total	\$2,832,662,407	4,409,210	186,382	\$21.31	566	48,920

It is important to note that workforce development funding has become much more distributive across federal and state agencies as well as public and private partners. Therefore, the information in this report may not encompass every program or service offered in the commonwealth.

The report may include duplicative information as both state and local-level programs are represented. Often, both state and federal funding flows through state government agencies and is distributed to other partners represented in this report. Additionally, most federal funding awards allow for state agencies and local programs to expend the funds over multiple years. Therefore, the report highlights dollars appropriated versus dollars spent each year.

Based on the submissions, it is notable that there are over 565 funding streams that support one or more of the categories of workforce development services across the last three program years. Each of the funding streams are provided in the Appendix. Collectively, the total funding stream funds are more than \$2.8 billion across the three program years.

With the understanding that some duplication may be occurring, it is estimated that over the three programmatic years a total of 186,382 people were placed in jobs with an average wage of \$21.31/hr. It is again of great importance to note the breadth of agencies captured in the report and the variety of workforce services provided. Each agency has their own requirements that may not completely align to the KWIB foundational ROI metrics; these metrics are intended to give a point of reference for the programs that are intended to capture these specific data points.

To view the full comprehensive compilation of data for each agency per funding stream, please refer to Appendix A. To view the combined data per program year for each agency, please refer to Appendix B.

Collaborative Member & Workforce Stakeholders
CED - Cabinet for Economic Development
CHFS/DBH DID - Cabinet for Health and Family Services – Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities
CHFS/DCBS - Cabinet for Health and Family Services – Department of Community Based Services
CPE - Council on Postsecondary Education
DWD/CDO - Department of Workforce Development – Career Development Office
DWD/Adult Education - Department of Workforce Development – Adult Education
DWD – Everybody Counts
DWD/OIAS - Department of Workforce Development – Office of Industry and Apprenticeship Services
DWD/OVR - Department of Workforce Development – Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
Job Corps
JPSC - Justice and Public Safety Cabinet
KCTCS - Kentucky Community and Technical College System
KY Chamber Foundation
KCMA - Kentucky Council on Military Affairs
KDE - Kentucky Department of Education
KDLA - Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives
KDVA - Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs
LWDB Bluegrass - Local Workforce Development Board - Bluegrass
LWDB Cumberlands - Local Workforce Development Board - Cumberlands
LWDB EKCEP - Local Workforce Development Board - EKCEP
LWDB Green River - Local Workforce Development Board - Green River
LWDB KentuckianaWorks - Local Workforce Development Board - KentuckianaWorks
LWDB Lincoln Trail - Local Workforce Development Board - Lincoln Trail
LWDB Northern Kentucky - Local Workforce Development Board - Northern Kentucky
LWDB South Central - Local Workforce Development Board - South Central
LWDB TENCO - Local Workforce Development Board - TENCO
LWDB WKY - Local Workforce Development Board - West Kentucky
UK/HDI - University of Kentucky/Human Development Institute
Non-Collaborative Members w/ Workforce Programming
KHEAA - Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority
KYTC - Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

Serve Kentucky



AmeriCorps
Members
Served More Than
761,331
Hours



AmeriCorps Members
Recruited and Managed
8,706
Volunteers Who Served
286,178 Hours,
Valued at **\$8.2 Million**

764

AmeriCorps Members
Completed Service and
Earned **\$3.09 Million**
in Education Awards



55 organizations
received capacity building
services, including local
health departments.

1,103

Veterans or Active
Duty Military and **837**
Family Members Served



2,522
Students
Received
Drug
Prevention
Education



4,911
Students
Improved
Academic
Performance
in Literacy
and/or Math



816
Students
With Improved
Academic
Engagement
and/or Increased
Attendance



411
Students
Enrolled in
Post-Secondary
Education
and/or Training



1,944
Economically
Disadvantaged
Individuals and/or
Families Received
Housing Services



386,000
Pounds of Food Collected,
Sorted, and Distributed

2,682

Individuals Reporting
Increased Food Security



425

Individuals
Transitioned Into
Safe, Healthy, and
Affordable Housing



69,244

Children and
Youth Served

2,248

Transition age Foster
Youth connected to resources

1,727
Acres of public land
supported with **52** miles of
trails or rivers improved and
7 acres of parks or public
land improved.

172

Individuals received job
training or placement.

4,078

Individuals received
environmental education
or training.

Serve Kentucky: Strengthening Communities Through Service

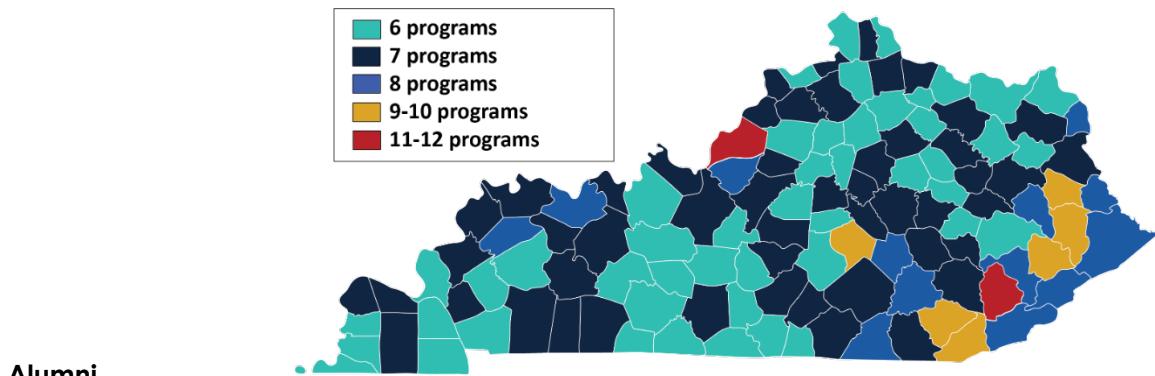
Team Kentucky in Action

AmeriCorps reflects the spirit of Team Kentucky – supporting disaster response, recovery, and long-term community needs across the Commonwealth.

Serving Across the Commonwealth

AmeriCorps members serve in nearly every Kentucky county through 19 programs (expanding to 25+) and more than 1,100 member positions statewide, supporting:

- **Education:** literacy, mentoring, and college readiness
- **Economic Opportunity:** workforce and career pathways
- **Healthy Futures:** mental and physical health support
- **Environment:** conservation and sustainability
- **Disaster Services:** response and recovery
- **Capacity Building:** strengthening nonprofit organizations



There are more than 17,000 AmeriCorps alumni from Kentucky programs.

Innovation to Meet Kentucky's Needs

In response to the mental health crisis devastating Kentucky's young people, Serve Kentucky is launching the Youth Mental Health Corps to build the workforce the commonwealth needs. After a \$100,000 planning grant in 2025, the program will launch in 2026 with a \$500,000 implementation grant.

Sustainability

In the last 10 years, Serve Kentucky has grown from 12 programs with 306 members to 19 programs with 1,147 members. Despite a temporary nationwide AmeriCorps funding disruption in 2025, Kentucky programs continued serving thanks to the leadership of Governor Andy Beshear and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

Investment in Kentucky

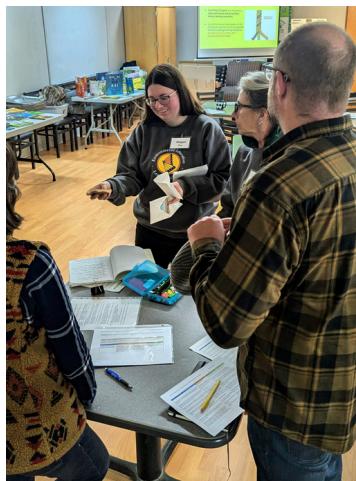
Federal Funding for Kentucky AmeriCorps Programs	\$8.80 million
AmeriCorps Education Awards (\$7,395 each FTE)	\$3.85 million
<u>Local Match for Grants (Cash and In-Kind)</u>	<u>\$4.48 million</u>
Total Investment	\$17.13 million

Kentucky Environmental Education Council

EELCORPS: BUILDING KENTUCKY'S ENVIRONMENTAL WORKFORCE

TRANSFORMING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION THROUGH SERVICE AND TRAINING

The Environmental Education Leadership Corps (EELCorps) is an AmeriCorps program that transforms a year of service into a year of workforce development. Members serve at environmental education sites across Kentucky while receiving nationally recognized training that prepares them to educate communities and solve environmental problems- during service and beyond.



IMPACT

EELCorps has reached over 87,000 Kentuckians, increasing environmental knowledge and awareness.



TRAINING

Members receive nationally recognized certifications to empower their teaching and community engagement.



CAREERS

Graduates are prepared for diverse roles in environmental education and related fields.



JOIN US IN BUILDING A STRONGER WORKFORCE AT KEEC.KY.GOV

National Governors Association



Service as a Pathway to Economic Opportunity: A Roadmap for Governors

Governors across the country are navigating rapidly evolving labor force trends—worker shortages in nearly every sector of the economy, skills gaps created by new technologies, and increased cost of higher education. While labor shortages can provide opportunities for individuals to enter the workforce or transition to new careers, those who face barriers to workforce participation may not benefit if their skills do not align with employers' needs. A lack of skilled workers can also present obstacles to progress on Governors' wide-ranging policy priorities, such as completing infrastructure projects, bolstering the teacher talent pipeline, and expanding the capacity of public health systems. As Governors explore all the tools at their disposal to address these challenges, state and national service programs offer a promising strategy for states to address workforce shortages and barriers to workforce participation while addressing Governors' policy priorities through "service-to-career pathways."

Through national service, individuals commit their time and labor to activities that address pressing challenges impacting their communities, such as housing insecurity, public health, and disaster relief. National service offers participants the ability to earn a living allowance as well as gain experiences and skills that can advance their personal growth, career development, and civic engagement and qualify for an education award at the completion of their service term. The federal AmeriCorps agency is the largest funder of national service in the country, with the majority of these federal funds passing through state service commissions¹ that oversee state and local funding decisions.

Intentionally designed service-to-career pathways embed career development opportunities into a term of service, building in career exploration, coaching, work-based learning, skills training, and credential attainment as part of the service experience. Service-to-career pathways can create diverse talent pipelines into public and private sectors with worker shortages; increase the capacity of nonprofit and public agencies that host state and national service members; address pressing community and state challenges; and create impact on the members themselves.

¹ According to America's Service Commissions, state service commissions are "Governor-appointed public agencies or nonprofit organizations... [that] operate at the state and local level granting more than \$400 million from federal national service funds while matching these federal dollars with over \$30 million from state and local sources to support citizen service and volunteerism in America. These funds support more than 40,000 AmeriCorps members."

State and federal service programs have a decades-long history of engaging diverse groups of state and national service members in work that benefits their communities while providing resources and incentives that help participants transition into educational and professional pathways. Governors and state workforce development policymakers can build on these programs by establishing and expanding service-to-career models that will benefit more individuals, communities, and employers. Policy that supports on- and off-ramps between service programs, training and education programs, and employment can open new opportunities to upskill and reskill the workforce to adapt to the changing economy and increase access to family-sustaining careers.

This roadmap highlights actionable strategies for Governors and state policymakers to meet critical state needs while expanding access to economic opportunity by leveraging service programs as career development opportunities, especially for youth from underserved communities. The roadmap lays out five key elements with related policy options for Governors to consider as they develop and execute a vision for service-to-career pathways in their states:

- ❖ **Survey the landscape and set a statewide vision**
- ❖ **Champion service-to-career pathways**
- ❖ **Align service, workforce development, and other state partners**
- ❖ **Develop a governance and funding strategy**
- ❖ **Engage public, private, and philanthropic stakeholders**

This menu of policy options is intended to provide adaptable solutions that meet states' unique conditions and needs. Underlying these policy options is an emphasis on interagency coordination and public-private partnership to provide a seamless, flexible transition between service and careers. The roadmap also features case studies on innovative state models and emerging best practices for aligning state and national service programs with career pathways. These examples illustrate the opportunities and successes that are possible when public, private, and philanthropic partners are aligned with the Governor's vision for service-to-career pathways.

Survey the Landscape and Set a Statewide Vision

By setting a clear vision for the role of service-to-career pathways in helping to meet critical state needs, Governors can drive coordination among partners in meeting their highest policy priorities. This vision can create a solid foundation to engage stakeholders, grow partnerships, and guide strategy.

- **Survey the landscape:** Defining the scope of service and workforce development is an important first step in developing a statewide vision for service-to-career pathways. Collaborating with state partners – including the state workforce development agency, the state workforce development board, and the state service commission – to understand the landscape of service and workforce development programs and partners can help to assess the state's assets and capacity for service-to-career models. This process can also help to define the state's unique challenges that service-to-career models can help to address: state and community needs, workforce shortages, and equitable career pathways, especially for young people from diverse backgrounds.
- **Set key priorities:** Governors' priorities span a wide range of policy areas, including workforce development, economic development, public health, infrastructure, energy, education, public safety, and much more. A lack of available, skilled workers can pose a major barrier to progress on almost all of the Governor's highest priorities. Identifying areas where expanding the talent pool is necessary to implement the Governor's policy agenda can surface opportunities for service-to-career models to play a role in addressing critical state needs.
- **Develop a vision and goals:** Based on the analysis of the landscape and opportunities for service-to-career pathways in meeting the Governor's top priorities, Governors can develop a vision for service-to-career pathways that meets the unique needs of their state and its residents and provides a north star to align partners across the public and private sector. The vision can be supported by measurable goals related to participation in service programs (including demographic disaggregation of participants), service programs tied to priority industries in the state, skills gained or credentials earned by participants in service-to-career pathways, successful transitions from service programs into education and training programs or employment, and more.

North Carolina Climate Action Corps

In September 2023, Governor Roy Cooper announced the creation of the [North Carolina Climate Action Corps](#), an opportunity for AmeriCorps members to explore career pathways in the energy industry while supporting communities most affected by climate change. Governor Cooper has made transitioning to clean energy a top priority for his administration, issuing an [executive order](#) in January 2022 that sets out clear goals to reduce the state's carbon emissions while increasing equitable, quality employment opportunities in the clean energy economy. The order directs the state partners to identify strategies to increase workforce diversity in clean energy occupations, including strategies such as work-based learning opportunities targeted to underrepresented communities. Leveraging VolunteerNC (the state service commission) and its partners to create the Climate Action Corps creates an additional capacity to meet Governor Cooper's clean energy goals while expanding the talent pool in a priority sector of the state's economy.

Champion Service-to-Career Pathways

Governors are uniquely positioned to drive increased participation in state and national service programs by communicating their value as opportunities for career development and economic mobility. By developing and communicating a value proposition for both participants and employers, Governors can carry out their vision for service-to-careers and demonstrate their commitment to service-to-career pathways as a career development strategy.

- **Develop a value proposition:** Governors, state workforce development policymakers and state service commissions can collaborate to develop effective messaging that clearly communicates the value of state and national service programs as career development opportunities for key audiences, including young people from diverse and underserved communities, workers seeking reskilling or upskilling opportunities, and employers. For young people and workers, this message may relate to the range of career opportunities and increased wages that are possible by enrolling in service-to-career programs, as well as the positive impact their service can have on their communities. For employers, messaging can include the value of state and national service programs in supporting a sustainable talent pipeline that fills critical job openings and diversifies their workforce.
- **Communicate the value of service-to-careers pathways:** Governors have the power to leverage their wide-ranging communications tools to raise awareness of service programs as career development opportunities as well as the value of these models for public and private employers. Opportunities for Governors to highlight their service-to-careers vision may include executive orders, proclamations, events, and strategic communications such as press releases or social media posts.

Maryland SERVE Act

In April 2023, Maryland Governor Wes Moore signed into law the [SERVE Act](#), enacting his signature Service Year Option initiative for recent high school graduates and GED recipients. This state-sponsored opportunity allows participants to spend nine months supporting an organization with a focus on community building while they receive skills and professional experience to help them successfully transition into employment, an apprenticeship, or a postsecondary degree program upon completion of the service program. The legislation also provides funding for Maryland Corps, a similar service-to-careers program open to adults of all ages. Both the Service Year Option program and Maryland Corps engage a range of “host partners,” nonprofits, government agencies, and businesses that provide job training, mentorship, and other resources to participants. Participants in both programs also earn \$15 per hour as well as \$6,000 in tuition assistance. Governor Moore established the cabinet-level [Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation](#) via executive order to promote service and volunteerism in the state, including implementation of the Service Year Option program and Maryland Corps.

Align Service, Workforce Development and Other State Partners

Leveraging state and national service programs as career development opportunities requires coordination of state partners in service and workforce development systems. Strategic and operational alignment between these partners and systems can increase efficiency and capacity to implement the Governor’s service-to-careers vision and expand the reach of these programs to serve more participants, especially those from diverse and underserved communities.

- **Convene state partners:** Assembling the relevant state partners to develop and implement successful service-to-career models can help to ensure collective understanding of and action to achieve the Governor’s vision for service-to-career pathways. Partners may include the state service commission, the state workforce agency, the state workforce development board, and the state education agency. Additional state agencies that may be brought to the table include the state economic development agency; agencies with sector-specific workforce development insights such as the state health department or state energy department; and other state agencies interacting with residents from underserved communities such as the state human services agencies and the state vocational rehabilitation agency.
- **Align existing service and workforce development efforts:** Identifying and leveraging existing efforts on workforce development and service can ensure optimal alignment of partners to achieve the Governor’s vision for service-to-career pathways. Many states have existing boards, commissions,

taskforces, or workgroups that serve as forums for convening partners, leading strategic planning, and coordinating implementation. Workforce development and service partners are also likely aligning their work with a variety of existing state and federal plans related to workforce development, state and national service programs, education, economic development, public health, energy, infrastructure, and more. These plans may have existing goals that can be achieved by incorporating a service-to-careers model.

- **Set common goals and identify target populations:** State service commissions and state workforce systems often have overlapping goals for the number and type of populations that are served through their programs. Identifying common goals can surface areas for collaboration between service and workforce development partners. For example, the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the prioritization of services for “individuals with barriers to employment”² and the federal Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) requires specific career-technical education supports for “special populations.”³ Additionally, a key objective of the [AmeriCorps federal agency’s 2022-2026 Strategic Plan](#) is to “recruit a diverse corps of members and volunteers who reflect those [AmeriCorps is] serving” as well as to “strengthen pathways to education, employment, and other opportunities” for AmeriCorps members.
- **Explore on- and off-ramps between service programs and career pathways:** Providing smooth transitions between state and national service programs and career pathways is critical to improving participant outcomes. Partners can consider points during a service term where coursework, work-based learning opportunities, skills-specific training, or other career development opportunities can be added that will set participants up for success as they transition from service to employment, including opportunities to earn industry-recognized credentials. Likewise, partners can also consider opportunities for workforce development system clients in need of upskilling or reskilling to enroll in service programs that provide training and work-based learning.

² WIOA Sec. 3(24) defines “individual with a barrier to employment” as a member of one or more of the following populations: displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers; individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under part a of Title IV of the Social Security Act; single parents (including single pregnant women); long-term unemployed individuals; such other groups as the Governor involved determines to have barriers to employment.

³ Perkins V Sec. 3(48) defines “special populations” as individuals with disabilities; individuals from economically disadvantaged families, including low-income youth and adults; individuals preparing for non-traditional fields; single parents, including single pregnant women; out-of-workforce individuals; English learners; homeless individuals; youth who are in, or have aged out of, the foster care system; and youth with a parent who is a member of the armed forces and is on active duty.

- **Collect data and track performance:** Building an evidence base for the efficacy of service-to-careers programs can be an effective tool to communicate their value to prospective participants and new employer partners, as well as support continuous improvement. To track effectiveness in serving participants and employers, states can adopt metrics related to their Governor's service-to-career goals and consider what new or existing data can be used to evaluate progress.

Colorado Public Health Works Apprenticeship Model

To support a growing demand for workers in Colorado's healthcare sector in alignment with Governor Jared Polis' 2022 [executive order](#) on the expansion on apprenticeship, Serve Colorado (the state service commission) and the Trailhead Institute (a public health nonprofit organization) have partnered with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) to establish the [Colorado Public Health Works](#) Registered Apprenticeship program. The one-year program provides participants with paid on-the-job training and classroom instruction to prepare them for careers as public- or private-sector community health workers. Apprentices serve at local public health agencies while they complete the competencies and hours required to earn their U.S. Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship certificate. The Trailhead Institute serves as the apprenticeship sponsor as well as an AmeriCorps grantee, allowing it to act as an administrator of funds and technical assistance provider to the local public health agencies who host apprentices. CDLE's Office of the Future of Work (which houses the State Apprenticeship Agency) and Serve Colorado provided technical assistance to the Trailhead Institute in developing the [apprenticeship standards](#) in alignment with AmeriCorps and DOL-registered apprenticeship requirements. In 2023, Governor Polis issued an [executive order](#) that directs Serve Colorado to partner with community-based organizations and postsecondary education institutions to develop three new AmeriCorps work-based learning programs or Registered Apprenticeship programs.

➤ Develop a Governance and Funding Strategy

To avoid duplication of efforts and ensure sustainable resources to support service-to-career models, Governors may consider calling on state service and workforce development partners to develop a governance and funding strategy. This alignment can help to operationalize partnerships and support the development of flexible programs.

- **Designate a point partner:** Governors may consider designating a point agency (or group of partners) who are tasked with coordinating the implementation of the Governor's service-to-career vision. This point agency can also track progress toward identified goals and take responsibility for continuous improvement of partnerships and programs.
- **Engage state and national service partners in workforce development system governance:** The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) gives Governors significant authority over the federally funded workforce development system. Governors can support service-to-career partnerships

by ensuring that state service commission leaders are represented on the State Workforce Development Board and named as official WIOA partners.

- **Explore opportunities to braid and blend funding:** Service systems and state workforce development systems oversee complex funding landscapes, navigating multiple funding streams with unique (and sometimes conflicting) requirements. State and national service and workforce development partners can explore opportunities to braid and blend funding to develop innovative, flexible programs that can serve a wider range of participants. Relevant funding streams may include: AmeriCorps grants; Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) allocations; Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) allocations; other U.S. Department of Labor programs such as apprenticeship grants, YouthBuild, Job Corps, and the Senior Community Service Employment Program; and state general fund allocations to state-based service and workforce development programs.
- **Provide sustainable state funding to service-to-career pathways:** Governors may consider including dedicated state funding for service-to-career pathways in their budget proposals to help sustain or expand these programs to support their highest policy priorities. For example, Washington Governor Jay Inslee's 2023-2025 budget proposal included several lines of funding to support service-to-career pathways, including a Climate Service Corps and a law enforcement career pathway.
- **Leverage recent federal investments to create and scale programs:** The federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) have made significant investments in state economies that will create good-paying jobs in key sectors, requiring workforce development activities to take advantage of the programs and funding made available by these bills. While these bills lack a dedicated mandate or funding for the workforce development system, there are opportunities for workforce development partners to play a proactive role in preparing the talent pipelines required to take advantage of these investments. Service and workforce development partners may consider leveraging new and existing service-to-career pathways in sectors such as clean energy and transportation to support their state's efforts to implement these federal programs.

Iowa Refugee & Immigrant Voices in Action (RIVA) AmeriCorps

Under the leadership of Governor Kim Reynolds, Iowa has invested state funds in several innovative service programs that provide career development opportunities to historically underserved populations, including the [Iowa Refugee & Immigrant Voices in Action \(RIVA\) AmeriCorps program](#). The RIVA AmeriCorps program was launched to “increase economic self-sufficiency, job readiness, and community engagement” of refugees living in Iowa. The unique model pairs one AmeriCorps member from the “receiving community” with two AmeriCorps member from the refugee community to train leaders in the refugee community to become work-readiness trainers. These work-readiness trainers then connect fellow refugees with services that help to reduce barriers to employment and then support them in obtaining training and employment that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Engage Public, Private and Philanthropic Stakeholders

Developing service-to-careers pathways that are responsive to employer needs can help to provide a smooth transition between service programs and employment. Engaging employers as well as other private and public stakeholders can also ensure that service-to-career models offer holistic support to participants and connections to established employment opportunities as they prepare for these transitions.

- **Identify employer priorities:** Employers in public and private sectors are critical partners in developing service-to-career pathways. Service and workforce development partners can consult existing quantitative and qualitative data to identify occupations that comprise quality career paths and work with employer partners in their states to identify the skills they are prioritizing to tailor service-to-career models to in-demand industries and occupations. Employers can also provide reflections on past successes and challenges they have experienced in integrating service members into their workplaces to help inform the design of off-ramps into employment as part of service-to-career pathways. Establishing regular feedback loops with employers can also serve to gauge their evolving needs and skill demands as well as sustain trusted partnerships for long-term growth.
- **Leverage employers as champions:** Employers who have successfully hosted service members for work-based learning opportunities and hired members transitioning out of service programs can be powerful messengers of the value of service-to-careers models. States can explore opportunities to leverage these employer champions to grow networks of public and nonprofit sector employers who are committed to training service members and public, nonprofit, and private sector employers who are committed to hiring service members.
- **Solicit philanthropies and funders as supporters:** Philanthropies can play a key role in the development of service-to-career models, providing funding to launch individual service-to-career pathways, test new models for

member recruitment, invest in wraparound services to address basic needs or financial emergencies, and more. Philanthropic investments can act as seed capital to launch service-to-career pathways, and when their funding is braided with federal and state investments, the impact of their private dollars is amplified, especially for local philanthropies and funders who are dedicated to systems change in their communities.

- **Consider additional stakeholders:** State partners may consider engaging additional stakeholders who can amplify outreach and support to both participants and employers. These stakeholders could include community-based organizations or other state agencies who are providing services to groups that could benefit from access to service as a career pathway. Partnerships with secondary and post-secondary educational institutions can provide additional on- and off- ramps between service and careers. Engaging with business groups such as industry associations or chambers of commerce can provide access to a wider range of employer partners.

The Path Forward

Governors are navigating historic workforce shortages as well as unprecedented opportunities to improve quality of life for their states' residents through new investments in economic development, public health, infrastructure, energy, and more. As state workforce development systems adapt to the changing economic landscape and the future of work, strategic partnerships with state service commissions can expand the range of available training and employment opportunities to meet the needs and preferences of students and workers. Likewise, as state service commissions work to expand and diversify their members, coordinating with state workforce development partners can provide a meaningful path forward from members' service to family-sustaining jobs. This roadmap offers a starting point for Governors and state policymakers to plan strategically to leverage service programs as career development opportunities that set their residents up for success in high-quality careers, ultimately unlocking greater economic opportunity.

Additional Resources

- AmeriCorps: [Leveraging AmeriCorps Programs as a Workforce Development Strategy in Your Community](#) (June 2023)
- Schultz Family Foundation: [Increasing Access and Opportunity through State-led National Service Programs: Insights and Recommendations from the National Service Challenge](#) (July 2023)
- America's Service Commissions: [The Value of State Service Commissions: Evaluation Report](#) (January 2021)
- Jobs for the Future, Next100, and Service Year Alliance: [Advancing Pre-Apprenticeship Programming Through National Service](#) (September 2023)
- Next100: [How State Service Commissions Can Advance Equity in AmeriCorps](#) (March 2023)
- Next 100: [How Embracing Workforce Development Can Set Up AmeriCorps Members for Post-Service Success](#) (August 2022)
- Brookings Institution: [Service and conservation programs can lead to infrastructure careers](#) (July 2022)
- Service Year Alliance: [Expanding Service Years in States and Local Communities](#) (June 2021)

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Appendix

REGISTER NOW

Team Kentucky

Virtual Job Fair

Date: Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Time: 10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. EST

Focus: Healthcare

All employers are welcome to participate, including those from the targeted industry.

Schedule:

- 10:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M. - Veterans & Military Families
- 11:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. - Open to All Job Candidates

Future virtual job fairs will take place on the third Wednesday of each month.

Here's a preview of the upcoming dates:

- **March 18, 2026**
Coming Soon
- **April 15, 2026**
Coming Soon
- **May 20, 2026**
Coming Soon



EMPLOYERS
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REGISTER.



JOB-SEEKERS
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REGISTER.

Questions? Contact James Hensley at 502-782-5740 or by email at jamesh@ky.gov



TEAM
KENTUCKY
KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

2026 Education and Workforce Collaborative Board Meetings

April 16

July 16

October 15

All meetings are scheduled for 1:30-3:30 pm ET/ 12:30-2:30 pm CT and will be conducted in-person at the Mayo-Underwood Building (500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY 40601) with a virtual option.

