

Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, January 16, 2025

1:00 pm ET In-Person Networking; Meeting 1:30 pm-3:30 pm ET

Via Zoom Meeting

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

ATTENDEES: Lori Ulrich (Interim Chair), Allison Boyd, Amaya Alvarez, Becky Burnside, Becky Jordan, Bill Hardin, Brian Becker, Brandon Combs, Chris Wooldridge, Donietta Hawkey, Eleri Gesler, Gabriela Salazar, Secretary Jamie Link, Dr. JC Gregory, Johnny Collett, Leslie Sizemore, Mandela Gapala, Commissioner Mike Yoder, Nick Haw, Sheila Clark, Stevee Hilaire, Suhas Kulkarni, Tom Thompson, Vivian Marin, Secretary John Hicks, Jessie Schook, Mayte, Michelle DeEsch

STAFF: Alisher Burikhanov, Debbie Dennison, Elishah Taylor, LaChrista Ellis, Sarah Jagers

1:30 PM CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Welcome and Overview

Lori Ulrich, Chair, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), called the meeting to order. She introduced herself as the KWIB Chair and shared her interim chair for Education and Workforce Collaborative with the recent retirement of Beth Brinly as Deputy Secretary. She asked board members to introduce themselves and thanked everyone for attending.

Introduction to Talent Focus: Immigrants and Refugees

Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director of the KWIB, introduced Dr. Mike Yoder as the new Commissioner of the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), and thanked him for joining the meeting. He then introduced the topic of the meeting being Talent Focus: Immigrants and Refugees. Alisher shared his enthusiasm for addressing this issue, highlighting his personal experience as an immigrant and his work with the population in his previous work). Alisher emphasized that diversifying talent pools is a top priority for the business community. He highlighted the need to build talent pipelines, particularly for underserved groups, including veterans, immigrants, and refugees, among others. There are many programs to assimilate immigrants into the workforce system. He indicated the presentations today would offer three perspectives in the space of immigrants and refugees.

Refugee Resettlement in Kentucky

Becky Jordan, Kentucky State Refugee Coordinator at the Kentucky Office for (KOR), introduced herself and provided an overview of the program's structure within Kentucky and how it varies across other states. In Kentucky, there are 6 settlement agencies. She then turned it over to **Mandela Gapala State Employment Services Coordinator, Kentucky Office for Refugees (KOR)**, who introduced himself and spoke about his role in providing employment services to immigrants and refugees.

Becky discussed the services offered by KOR, including support for Cubans and Haitians population. She explained that approximately 30,000 Cubans have resettled in Kentucky in the last three years, with 90% of them arriving in Louisville, making Kentucky the fourth-largest state for Cuban resettlement.

Resettlement agencies across Kentucky offer employment services, career planning, and vocational training, with specialized support for younger refugees to help plan for their careers and provide a connection to postsecondary opportunities. Due to growing demand,

the office has expanded its staff to serve a growing diversity of refugees, many of whom have varying levels of English proficiency. They typically work with refugees for up to five years, helping them integrate into society and eventually apply for citizenship.

Becky also shared that the starting wage for most refugees is \$17 per hour, which helps them provide for their families. Mandela then spoke about efforts to improve employment and job placement opportunities, noting a goal to increase wages to \$20 per hour. He also discussed the barriers refugees face, including language requirements from employers, as well as challenges related to childcare, transportation, and the time it takes to receive Employment Authorization Documents (EADs). He emphasized that the application process can be time-consuming. In 2024, they provided 4,051 job placements and had 7,694 clients that are employable.

Local Workforce Board Perspective: South Central Workforce Board

Brian Becker, Vice President of the South Central Workforce Development Board, spoke about the immigrant and refugee experiences in the South Central workforce development area. Brian shared the importance of serving this population pool in light of current decreasing talent pool demographics; he referenced a [recent report from Lightcast](#) addressing the looming labor shortages. The South Central area is looking at the immigrant and refugee talent pool as one of the answers to address future labor shortages.

Further, he discussed the challenges that employers face when working with immigrants and refugees, particularly those with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). He highlighted that language barriers and a lack of digital skills make it difficult for immigrants and refugees to meet employers' expectations. One of the main areas that requires coaching is understanding workplace expectations, along with support for writing resumes.

Brian noted that as service providers, they cannot verify the legal status of individuals, but they offer workshops in multiple languages to ensure refugees and immigrants receive accurate information. He also mentioned the importance of clearly communicating the roles and responsibilities in the process. He encouraged the use of resources like [JobSeekerMap.com](#) and expressed a desire for more individuals to pursue adult education.

A question was raised about the difficulty refugees and immigrants face when obtaining an ID or driver's license due to language barriers, especially since interpretation is not allowed during road tests, and the written test has limited translation options. Brian responded that there are credentials that can be earned, such as medical or court-certified interpretation. He also suggested creating an interpreter fund for workforce development to help with these challenges.

Discussion around the opportunities for getting immigrants and refugees into healthcare, where they can be upskilled at medical facilities. Brian shared Kentucky's background check requirements, which require a social security number instead of an alien number, which poses barriers. It was noted that Jewish Family Career Services can assist with comparing medical credentials to U.S. standards to help individuals get the appropriate qualifications. Discussion was had around setting up a consistent path that allows credit for prior learning. Additional discussion included incentivization to employers hiring of this population. For more information on those incentives, please visit the Education and Labor Cabinet site [here](#).

Business Perspective: GE Appliances – “Every Voice” Initiative

Gabriela Salazar, Program Manager of “Every Voice” at General Electric (GE) Appliances, a Haier Company, introduced herself and shared her journey in the U.S. She spoke about the motivation behind learning a new language, the importance of innovative thinking within human resources, and background on how she began her employment with GE.

In 2021, GE began efforts to engage more effectively with the Spanish-speaking community. She highlighted the critical role of English proficiency for safety within their facilities, prompting them to collaborate with Jefferson County Public Schools to assess the required level of English for employees to qualify for positions at GE. To support committed employees, the company launched a tuition reimbursement program, viewing it as a long-term investment that also serves as free public relations. Gabriela shared that their goal last year was to double the number of immigrant and refugee hires. They continue to encourage English learning, especially for those seeking upward mobility and long-term employment. The company offers around 500 hours of English language classes per year and provides resources for individuals with little to no English proficiency.

As the company looks to expand, they are exploring new and innovative ways to improve the process. Gabriela also mentioned their global network and answered questions about interpreter support. Some interpreter services were provided free of charge, while others were eventually hired.

A question was raised about the role of ambassadors within the company, and Gabriela explained that ambassadors typically come from the floor or from within the company. Job postings are also shared within the community.

Gabriela explained that there is not a formal incentive program for employees, though some employees have participated in “earn to learn” models, which are still a work in progress. One indirect incentive is that English as a Second Language (ESL) classes incorporate job-specific vocabulary to help employees perform their roles more effectively. When asked about retention rates, Gabriela confirmed that they had increased.

Discussion was had around expanding online library training and other resources, as well as recognizing employees for reaching certain language proficiency milestones. Gabriela acknowledged the importance of these initiatives and expressed interest in further developing them.

Group Discussion – Opportunities for Collaboration & Innovation

- Where can we strengthen recruitment and training?
 - o Collaboration and relationship-building are essential for troubleshooting and sharing knowledge, simplifying the hiring process.
 - o Rethink credentialing to better align how we hire and educate, particularly with the shift to competency-based education. A model needs to be developed, potentially through pilot training programs in partnership with employers. This requires significant investment and involvement from all stakeholders.
 - o Leverage best practices, such as those from GE, to share successful stories and demonstrate the benefits of such initiatives.
 - o Create a list of top employers and develop a toolkit to help guide populations, especially refugees, through their first year of adjustment. This would integrate education and employment pathways into the community.
 - o Suggest organizing a meeting through the Kentucky Office for Refugees (KOR) to bring together employers, understand their challenges, and share this feedback. This could be incorporated into the Kentucky Chamber’s academies to ensure all voices are heard during the three-day events.

- What are the first steps to move forward?
 - o Broker relations with local boards - Connect local boards with employers, training providers, and resources to strengthen the support network.
 - o Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) - Leverage WOTC as a financial incentive for employers to hire individuals from targeted populations, making recruitment more attractive.

The discussion emphasized the need to rethink how education and hiring address credentialing, particularly considering the shift toward competency-based models. Traditional credentialing was seen as costly, whereas competency-based education allowed individuals to progress at their own pace. However, the wide variety of credentials and training backgrounds pose challenges, with institutions struggling to customize education to meet diverse needs.

To address this, the group suggested exploring competency-based training programs that align with employers' job requirements. This approach involves mapping job descriptions to existing skills and offering targeted training to fill any gaps. Successful implementation could scale up, creating more efficient workforce pathways. The approach requires investment, collaboration, and input from both employers and workers to ensure it meets real-world needs. The conversation concluded with a commitment to finding solutions to better align education and employment pathways. The importance of individuals who think outside the box, such as those at GE, was also emphasized. Sharing success stories was seen to help businesses understand that success is achievable and worth the investment.

Updates on Collaborative Activities

Alisher Burikhanov provided an update on the collaborative activities, emphasizing the focus on work-based learning and targeted initiatives designed to support specific populations. He mentioned that these activities are outlined in the briefing book, which highlights the key focus areas from the past two years. Alisher noted that an updated version of this information will be available at the end of the year, with a specific focus on 2025 initiatives and goals. This updated document will continue to focus on improving the integration between education, employment, and the needs of diverse populations, including refugees, veterans, and other underserved groups.

Alisher also underscored the importance of collaboration between employers, local boards, resettlement agencies, and other stakeholders in supporting these populations. He suggested organizing targeted workshops, like the Kentucky Chamber's Academy for New Kentuckians, to extend these efforts beyond major cities like Louisville and Lexington, ensuring smaller regions in the state also benefit from these initiatives.

Through these collaborative activities, Alisher highlighted the goal of creating clear pathways for populations facing barriers to employment and education, by fostering partnerships, sharing resources, and developing toolkits that will guide individuals through the workforce system.

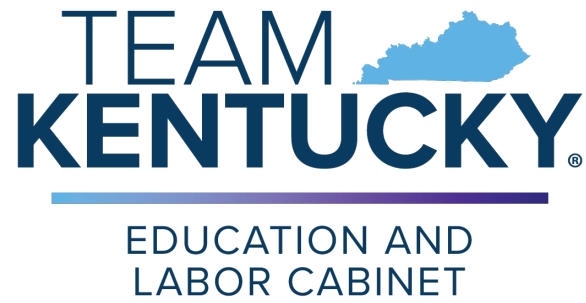
CLOSING COMMENTS

In closing, KWIB commits to following up, building relationships with local boards, working with the Kentucky Chamber, and exploring opportunities to develop toolkits and case studies that can help refugees navigate the workforce. Also of note was the importance of incorporating work-based learning, particularly for language acquisition, into these initiatives.

Upcoming Dates

Next Meeting: April 24th, 2025

3:30 PM ADJOURNMENT



Kentucky Education & Workforce Collaborative Board
Meeting Briefing Book

January 16, 2025

1:30 – 3:30 pm EST

Location: 412 NC, Fourth Floor Conference Room
500 Mero St. Frankfort, KY 40601

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Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative Meeting

January 16, 2025, 1:30-3:30 pm EST

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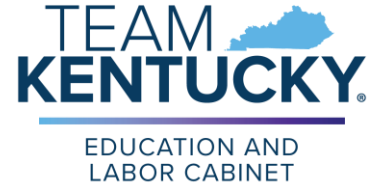
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Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative Meeting AGENDA

Thursday, January 16, 2025

1:00 pm EST In-Person Networking; Meeting 1:30pm-3:30pm EST

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

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81817544503?pwd=kAaRFjK0EhPROyXEI87388MSVMVLA3.1>

Meeting ID: 818 1754 4503 / Passcode: 746403

1:30 PM CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Welcome and Overview.....Lori Ulrich, KWIB Chair
Fleming-Mason Energy

1:40 pm Introduction to Talent Focus: Immigrants and Refugees.....Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director
Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board

1:50 pm Refugee Resettlement & Employment in KentuckyBecky Jordan, Kentucky State Refugee Coordinator
Kentucky Office For Refugees

Mandela Gapala, State Employment Services Coordinator
Kentucky Office for Refugees

2:20 pm Local Workforce Board Perspective: South Central Workforce BoardBrian Becker, Vice President
South Central Workforce Development Board

2:40 pm Business Perspective: GE Appliances – Every Voice InitiativeGabriela Salazar, Program Manager – Every Voice
GE Appliances, a Haier Company

3:00 pm Group Discussion – Opportunities for Collaboration & Innovation..... Lori Ulrich

Questions:

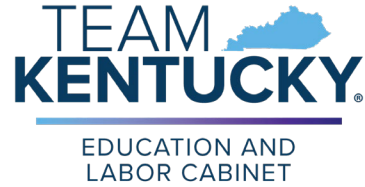
- How can we strengthen recruitment and training for the immigrant and refugee population?
- What are the first steps to move forward in making it easier for businesses to hire and promote?
- What kind of statewide best practices, roadmaps, toolkits, etc. would help guide the process?

3:20 pm Updates on Collaborative ActivitiesAlisher Burikhanov

3:25 PM CLOSING COMMENTS – UPCOMING DATES

NEXT MEETING: APRIL 24TH, 2025

3:30 PM ADJOURNMENT



Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, October 17, 2024; Meeting 1:30-3:30 pm EDT

IN-PERSON or hybrid

ATTENDEES:

Entity Name	Contact in Attendance
Governor Andy Beshear	
Secretary John Hicks, Executive Cabinet	
Designated Chair Deputy Secretary Beth Brinly, Education and Labor Cabinet	X
Secretary Jeff Noel, proxy Mike Yoder, Cabinet for Economic Development	
Secretary Jamie Link, proxy, Beth Brinly, Education and Labor Cabinet	X
Secretary Friedlander, proxy Deputy Secretary Carrie Banahan, Cabinet for Health and Family Services	X
Secretary Keith Jackson, Justice and Public Safety Cabinet	
Judge Orbrey Gritton, Anderson County Judge/Executive	
Michael Gritton, Local Workforce Director	X
Dr. Kathy Sheppard-Jones, proxy Johnny Collett, Human Development Institute	
Dr. Ryan Quarles, proxy Jessie Schook, Kentucky Community and Technical College System	X
Chair, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board	
Dr. Aaron Thompson, proxy Dr. Leslie Sizemore, Council on Postsecondary Education	
Amanda Curry, proxy Jana Wright, Job Corps	
Dr. Bob Jackson, proxy Chris Wooldridge, CPE Conference of Presidents	X
Commissioner Robert Fletcher, proxy Dr. Beth Hargis, Kentucky Department of Education	X
BG Steven Bullard, proxy Dallas Kratzer, Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs	
Ashli Watts, proxy Callie Miracle, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce	X
Winston Miller, proxy Eleri Gesler, Kentucky Housing Corporation	X
Tom Underwood, Kentucky National Federation of Independent Business	

Others in Attendance: Commissioner Whitney Allen Jr., , Jason Hutcherson, , Ramona Brock, Brittany Lenertz, Erin Mitchell, Maeghan Disponety, Althea Duff, Brandon Sharkey, Alexah Aljumaili, Lek Daughtery, Aleece Smith, Jennifer Hart, Megan West, Trista Adwell, Terrica Dennis, Dylan Baker, Amy Glasscock, Captioner Laura Kogut

Staff: Alisher Burikhanov, Debbie Dennison, LaChrista Ellis, Jennifer King, Sara Jagers

1:30 pm Meeting Called to Order

Welcome and Overview

Beth Brinly, Chair, Deputy Secretary of the Education and Labor Cabinet (ELC), welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. She provided an overview of the agenda and the work of the Education and Workforce Collaborative and in the spirit of continuous advancement asked Commissioner Whitney Allen to share next steps in the workgroup he is leading.

Veterans Interagency Strategy

Commissioner Whitney Allen, Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs (KDVA), shared the idea of the Kentucky Veterans Recruitment Strategic initiative. This strategic approach includes a campaign to recruit and provide comprehensive wrap-around services to Kentucky's veterans, transitioning service members, and family members that are attracted to work and live in Kentucky. Several entities are working towards the same goal of getting Kentucky to be veteran ready, but collaboration is necessary to be successful. **Jason Hutchinson, Staff Advisor for the Education and Labor Cabinet**, added that having the same branding is essential to wrap around services. The goal is to have a "no wrong door" policy in order to serve everyone with the same process across the veterans pipeline.

Anyone that is interested in joining the taskforce in support for Veterans, please email [Debbie Dennison](#) or [Jason Hutchinson](#). For more information on the Veterans Recruitment Strategic vision, please review the post-meeting packet available on [KWIB's website](#).

Deputy Secretary Brinly added that the [3rd Annual Veterans Employment & Training Symposium \(VETS\)](#) will be held on **Thursday, November 14, 2024**, at the Kentucky Community & Technical College System (KCTCS) in Versailles, Kentucky.

Sector Strategies

Deputy Secretary Brinly, provided a brief overview of the sector strategies work that has taken place. Since 2011, the top five sectors have remained the same. The identification of top sectors is to enhance and support workforce initiatives for the largest number of occupations, with sustainable wages, across Kentucky. After nearly eighteen (18) months review, top five sector recommendations will be made during the next Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) meeting, with a recommendation to review the sectors every five years in order to assess local and regional workforce needs.

The importance of prioritizing top sectors includes providing clear funding opportunities for scholarships, funding for education and training entities with priority pathways and other supportive workforce development initiatives. The sector work has been a collaboration of several entities that reviewed data and also offered qualitative perspectives on needs in Kentucky such as housing, transportation, and child care.

Deputy Secretary Brinly shared that engagement with employers in the top sectors is critical to prepare Kentucky's workforce and in collaboration, the [Statewide Workforce and Talent Team \(SWATT\)](#) was created. The purpose is to improve the coordination and delivery of workforce development solutions and services to Kentucky employers. Participants of SWATT include both public and private partners, including, but not limited to the Kentucky Department of Education, the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Kentucky Chamber Foundation, the Kentucky Association of Manufacturers and the Kentucky Hospital Association.

She shared of an upcoming invitation-only, in-person event that will be hosted by the members of SWATT to engage employers in unity with workforce development partners. She lifted up that there have been pockets of employer

engagement success in the local workforce development areas and asked Aleece Smith to share some of those successes.

Local Example: KentuckianaWorks

Aleece Smith, Director of Inclusion and Sector Strategies, KentuckianaWorks, explained several different centers that have been created based on employer and Kentucky's workforce industry needs. The Kentucky Manufacturing Career Center is the oldest venue in this particular industry, which falls under the direction of the KentuckianaWorks Workforce Development Board. This center was more than just a training facility, it also provided a place where employers can meet, interview, and mentor students who were looking for a career in manufacturing. This center was located on the south side of Louisville and was successful for over a decade, but was closed due to Covid. As a result of the success of this manufacturing center, healthcare and construction employers also showed interest for centers. The Kentucky Health Career Collaborative provides a place for job readiness training, career fairs, and opportunities for growth in the healthcare-related opportunities. It is all a work in progress and continued changes are coming with each year to adapt to the needs of employers and job seekers.

For more information, please see the presentation slides within the post-meeting packet available on [KWIB's website](#).

Deputy Secretart Beth Brinly thanked Aleece Smith for the local example of sector strategies and then transitioned into recent updates by the Department of Labor who have modernized the sector strategies framework.

Advancing Sector Strategies: Insights and Innovations

Brittany Lenertz, Senior Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institute for Research (AIR), gave an overview of the new sector strategies framework that AIR is working on with the Department of Labor. The new framework is a cohesive representation of local, regional, and state based on the feedback that was collected across the country. As a result of the process review, there were key points that need to be included within the new framework:

- Clarify Partnerships and Strategies
- Leadership and Vision
- Clarify Definitions
- Enhanced connection
- Continuous Data Review
- Include Worker Voice and Equity
- Address Funding and Support Needs
- Additional Focus on Desired Industry

The new framework's foundation is industry-driven with three core elements sprinkled throughout : engaged partnerships, data-informed decision making, and worker voice and job quality. The goal is to understand the needs of the employer, then offer the services that assist job seekers upscale to be able to fill those needs. Service delivery is a result of sector strategies, which is emparative to sustainability. Brittany explained the steps to implement into the real world, which can be reviewed along with examples in the [Implementation Guide](#).

Discussion was had around the evolution of the framework, the importance of keeping the pulse on employers' needs and being able to be flexible to make changes to continue to promote, attract and retain employers and a workforce that will support them. Discussion was also had around who leads these continued efforts and what role the local area

boards should have. A comment was made around the more robust framework requiring additional resources, albeit, with declining Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds. Responses of braided funding and alignment of programs and initiatives were offered. Additional discussion was around the importance of encouraging small and medium size businesses in this work.

For more information on the federal framework, please see the presentation slides within the post-meeting packet available on KWIB's website.

Updates on Collaborative Activities

Updates were shared around previous meeting initiatives including:

- State of the Workforce Funding Report is being reviewed within the committee structure of the KWIB and will be shared once completed
- Credentials of Value is anchored within the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) and includes work groups looking at definitions, work-based learning, stackable credentials and other initiatives. More will continue to be shared through the process. Any changes could inform Work Ready scholarships and other programs.
- Youth Employment work continues. Ohio's mentorship programs were explored and next steps are for sector entities to unite and partner with the state offices and legislature on what might be explored.

Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), invited the Education and Workforce Collaborative members along with local area workforce board chairs, and the state workforce development board members to an upcoming opportunity to attend the Strategic Advance scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday, November 20 and 21, 2024. For any interested in attending, please email the KWIB team at kwib.projects@ky.gov.

The next meeting will be on January 16, 2025 and will focus on resources around Refugees and Immigrants and what is missing.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Deputy Secretary Brinly thanked everyone for their participation. She thanked Commissioner Allen, Aleece, Brittany, and the Education and Labor Cabinet's Emerging Leadership participants for joining the meeting. She closed the meeting and wished everyone a wonderful rest of the day.

3:18 PM ADJOURNMENT

Kentucky Office for Refugees

Kentucky Office for Refugees Employment Outcomes FY2024 October 2023-September 2024

City	Arrivals	Job Placements
Louisville	12,461	3,373
Lexington	1,298	142
Bowling Green	923	372
Covington	363	118
Owensboro	232	46
Total	15,277	4,051

FY2024 Arrivals by Immigration Status

Immigration Status	Arrivals
Cuban/Haitian Entrant	11,371
Refugee	3,284
Special Immigrant Visa (SIV)	103
Other	519

FY2024 Arrivals by Age Group

Age Group at Arrival	Arrivals
0-4	1,194
5-18	2,556
19-65	11,280
65+	247

FY2024 Statewide Employment Outcomes

Total Employment Enrollments: 7,694

Job Placements: 4,051

Full Time Jobs w/ Benefits: 3,118

Avg. Starting Wage: \$17.70

90-Day Retention Rate: 85%

Top Kentucky Employers

Louisville

- GE Appliances
- UPS
- Walmart
- Amazon
- Ceva Logistics

Lexington

- Walmart
- Amazon
- University of Kentucky Hospital
- Vestis

Bowling Green

- Shift Fillers
- Tyson Foods
- Trace Die Cast
- Perdue Farm
- Tractor Supply

Covington

- ABB Optical
- ABM Industry Group
- FedEx
- Taylor Farms
- CVG Airport

Owensboro

- Berry Global
- Speciality Food Groups
- Tyson
- United Methodist Homes for Children

Employment Services

Upcoming Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO):

Estimated Funding Available: \$2,500,00 Statewide

- **Goal:**
 - Connect ORR-eligible clients to sustained employment that meets cost-of-living needs and promotes long-term economic self-sufficiency.
 - Aim to connect 3,500 eligible participants to employment across Kentucky within 18 months.
- **Program Focus:**
 - Job placement and retention, addressing barriers such as childcare, transportation, English training, etc., employer engagement, and to ensure access for underserved populations such as Cuban/Haitian entrants, women, and people with low English fluency
- **Performance Targets:**
 - Increased job placements and retention rates
 - Higher starting wages
 - Increased # of employed clients receiving health benefits
 - Increased career advancement opportunities
 - Stronger employer partnerships

The **Kentucky Office for Refugees (KOR)** is the federal pass through entity of the Office of Refugee Resettlement. ORR funding eligibility extends to five years post arrival for refugees. In the last five years (FY2020-2024) Kentucky has resettled **44,278** eligible refugees.

In Kentucky, the Office for Refugee Resettlement funds...

8	7	4	12	16
Resettlement Agencies	School Districts	Higher Education Institutions	Health Clinics	Community Based Organizations

Catholic Charities

Migration and Refugee Services

Migration and Refugee Services

Employment Services department works with hundreds of newly arrived refugees and other eligible immigrant populations to connect them with job opportunities in the greater Louisville area. The Employment Team provides work orientation classes to new arrivals on topics such as interviews, employer expectations, workplace culture, and employee rights. We partner with hundreds of employers in the area to aid in every part of the hiring process. We have helped to stabilize the workforce of many companies throughout the area by connecting them with a hardworking and dedicated talent pipeline.

Case Management services start in the client's first 90 days in the United States and can extend to 5 years past their arrival date. Upon arrival, clients enroll in services/learn about programs such as: Employment, Cash & Public Benefits, English Language Training, Medical, Youth, and Immigration/Legal.

English Language Training

offers English classes to adults 18+ during their first year in the US. Student learning is focused on life skills such as job readiness, paying bills, and navigating the transportation system all while learning English at all levels.

Cash & Public Benefits

assists clients with applying/enrolling in whatever benefits program for which they are eligible. Caseworkers assist clients with the application and necessary requirements to continue receiving benefits while eligible.

Medical

assists new arrivals by making medical appointments for them and providing transportation. Additional case management services are provided to special medical cases including mental health case management and referrals.

Youth Services assists refugees and Immigrants ages 0-24 through a holistic approach designed to provide support to the whole child and their individual needs. There are 5 programs found within the Youth Services Team: School Registration & Orientations, Summer Program, Youth Mentoring, College & Career Support & Workshops, and Early Childhood Education.

Immigration Legal Services

assists clients with their Green Card application and walks them through the process of becoming a citizen when they become eligible.

Contact Us



www.cclou.org/migration-and-refugee-services



MRSEmployment@archlou.org



502-637-9786



South Central Workforce Development Board

MAJOR INITIATIVES



Community Engagement



Employment Services



Job & Education Fairs



Employer Engagement

2023 NET WORK JOB & EDUCATION FAIR



SUCSESSES, CHALLENGES & SUGGESTIONS

Initiating Systems Change to Improve Accessibility & Outcomes

The SCWDB capitalized upon limited grant funding to launch a previously identified New American workforce liaison position. This position has primarily offered many Wagner-Peyser-style services while also delivering business services. The SCWDB has had a full-time Navigator position and has achieved tremendous results since launching nearly 3 years ago. However, there remain substantial challenges and opportunities for system-wide improvements in delivery of services.

Successes

- ✔ **SCWDB was positioned for success.** Our organization was involved for many years in partnership development with refugee and immigrant-serving agencies and shared strategies. We established other successful Navigator programs that served other populations and researched ELL Navigator models from other states.
- ✔ **If you build it, they will come.** The vast majority of individuals seen and served were referred by other friends, family, and their community leaders.
- ✔ **In-person 1st Language Support is critical.** Resume assistance, group orientations, assistance completing online applications, group tours and communicating employer expectations were all conducted in clients' 1st language and in-person when possible.

Challenges

- ⚠ **Capacity in the KCC / One Stop.** There is a tremendous need to serve LEPs. Their language literacy, digital literacy and overall navigation needs are bigger than what one person alone can handle. Additionally, many Employers are requiring online applications and login credentials to progress through the application process-- assisting with these needs is very time-consuming yet important work. Louisville, Lexington and Bowling Green areas have more working age Limited English Proficient (LEP) adults than they do working age Veterans in their respective areas.
- ⚠ **Federal Funding can provide workforce support for the newest Refugees, but there does not exist special workforce funding for Immigrants or LEPs.**
- ⚠ **Relationships With & Candidate Pipelines to Employers Are Fickle.** While we've established great employer relationships, too many employers still view language proficiency as a requirement for job success and aren't realizing many roles can still be filled by those in the process of learning the language. Among those that are agreeable, turnover in HR positions can completely reset progress.

Suggestions

- 💡 **In-person Interpreter Support is Vital.** Language lines are insufficient methods to deliver critical basic and individualized career services. Dedicated, full-time "Navigator" positions and a designated "Interpreter Fund" could allow large numbers of individuals to receive workforce services.
- 💡 **Replicate Established, Embedded Service Provision Models.** Designated New American programming and advocacy should be supported and embedded into One Stop Services similar to other WIOA priority of service outreach (such as the Veteran Employment Services and Vocational Rehabilitation programs).

GE Appliances Case Study

Untapped Talent: Creating Career Pathways for Non-Native English Speakers and Refugees

KWIB Case Study: GE Appliances' Every Voice Program

Executive Summary: GE Appliances, located in Louisville, KY, launched the Every Voice program in 2022, during a time of critical talent need. The program is focused on providing non-native English speakers and refugees a career path at GE Appliances. After nearly two years of the program, GE Appliances has hired more than 400 individuals in the program and achieved a 72% retention rate. The success of the program can be traced to the intentional support systems that the company has put into place from new hire orientations and document translations to hiring dedicated ambassadors that help employees navigate their first few weeks on the job. Beyond that, the company also offers English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in partnership with Jefferson County Public Schools Office of Adult Education.

Company Background: In 1953, GE Appliances shipped its first appliance – a dryer – from its Appliance Park headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky. Over the past 70 years, Louisville has been the headquarters for the company. Appliance Park is the company's largest manufacturing site with five factories, research and development center and the hub for innovations that shape how American families live. Today, the company employs more than 8,000 people in Louisville.

Workforce Challenge: During the pandemic and in the years following, millions of workers were on the sidelines, and recent studies predict that 2 million manufacturing jobs could go unfilled over the next decade. GE Appliances realized the need for new recruitment channels to bring a wider talent pool to fill necessary production roles.

Initial Steps: The workforce challenges GE Appliances faced occurred at the same time its HR team was revamping the hiring page on the website. The company saw an opportunity to build on its relationship with Kentucky Refugee Ministries (KRM), a Louisville refugee resettlement agency, to reach out to the city's growing Spanish-speaking population. By updating the website to add a Spanish-language option, the company was able to more easily attract some of the 14,000 Cubans that have arrived in the last two years.

As evidence of the success of such outreach efforts, a recent plantwide survey showed that 40 different languages are spoken on the GE Appliances manufacturing floor and 20 different languages by the salaried workforce.

Proposed Solution: Develop a process to attract, onboard, retain, and create career pathways for non-native English speakers.

In March 2022, the first 40 individuals from Afghanistan were brought in with help from KRM and Catholic Charities. GE Appliances describes this approach as taking a chance during a time of a great need for talent.

In April 2022 Spanish-language hiring began and KRM sent a group of Spanish-speaking individuals.

In September the program was coined as Every Voice.

Immediate Challenge: Within the first cohort of employees, GE Appliances saw that the new employees needed ongoing language support. The company had been using independent contractors as interpreters, but soon noticed that new employees had found a different bridge over language barriers in a fellow employee who spoke Dari and Pashto, two of the primary languages of Afghanistan and also spoke English.

KWIB Case Study: GE Appliances' Every Voice Program

This led the company to see the importance of having cultural intermediaries on staff that can help meet the needs of the new arrivals and work to identify their skills and talents to help them be successful.

Development of the Ambassador Role: The ambassador role was officially created in July 2023 to support all new production team hires regardless of language skills. Four of the ten ambassadors are bilingual and dedicated to supporting Every Voice program participants across all shifts; three speak Spanish and one speaks Swahili/Kinyarwanda. Each Every Voice Ambassador is a full-time position and all of them were promoted from the existing workforce,

Addressing Language Barriers: GE Appliances quickly understood that employees must possess at least an intermediate-low level of English to be able to understand basic work requirements and implemented the [CASAS assessment](#) to evaluate Every Voice participants language skills.

Once the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) Office of Adult Education completes the assessment of the potential applicant, the individual is invited to a 2.5 hour pre-orientation session where basic company information is delivered in their native language by the Every Voice Ambassadors. This includes information on the layout of GE Appliance Park, parking, gate entry process, and other basic information so that employees are prepared for the official orientation.

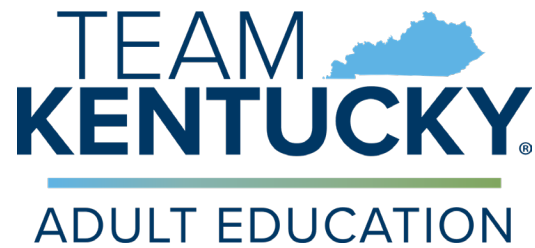
Developing English-language Learner Talent: GE Appliances has chosen to provide further support to its workforce of English language learners by integrating onsite English courses provided by JCPS Adult Education. Courses are offered in the morning and afternoon with a focus on vocabulary most pertinent to the jobs in the manufacturing plant as determined by the HR team including relevant safety, medical, and manufacturing terms, words for various parts, and work-related action words. Employees who complete the onsite English program are celebrated at a recognition ceremony attended by their family members and GE Appliances' leaders.

Employees who demonstrate high proficiency in English are encouraged to use the full tuition reimbursement benefit and take additional English and other courses at the Jefferson Community and Technical College.

Retention Results: Since program's inception in February 2022, more than 400 individuals have been hired by Every Voice program with a retention rate of 72%.

Innovative Practices: Seeing the success in utilizing community partners to teach English, the GE Appliances HR team surveyed the native English-speaking workforce and found that many were interested in learning Spanish. A one-day pilot program was launched that used the same process of identifying critical vocabulary that can be learned in Spanish. Participants went through a three- hour Spanish class that not only better connected them to their Spanish-speaking team members, but also opened their eyes to the difficulty the new arrivals likely had in learning English, creating a more empathetic team. All who took the class were provided with resources and class content to continue their learning.

Kentucky Adult Education



Each county in Kentucky has a conveniently located center and classrooms for adult education. Instruction is provided to all adults who want to become more fluent in English, pass U.S. citizenship tests and work on job-seeking skills.

English speaking, reading and writing are very important for all Kentuckians. Better English skills positively affect daily life, work opportunities and learning. Our experienced adult educators enjoy working with adult students of all nationalities and backgrounds.

Kentucky Adult Education centers provide comfortable learning methods and environments in which students get the skills and tools necessary to help them adapt successfully to life in Kentucky.

Contact your [local Kentucky Adult Education center](#) to learn more about our English as a Second Language Services.



KY Adult Education Can Help You Get There!

Our FREE services can help you reach your educational and employment goals.

- **Earn GED® Diploma for FREE**
 - Free GED® preparation is available in all 120 Kentucky counties.
 - Ask about FREE GED® testing fees!
- **English as a Second Language (ESL)**
- **Improve Math and Reading Skills**
 - Remove barriers that would otherwise block financial stability.
 - Improve skills to assist children with their own learning.
- **Prepare for College**
 - Adult Education centers can assist adults in transitioning to postsecondary education and training.
- **Earn Job-Related Certifications & Increase Employability Skills**
 - Integrated Education and Training Programs
 - Kentucky Employability Standards
- **Family Literacy Programs**
 - National Center for Families Learning

TEAM
KENTUCKY
ADULT EDUCATION

Find your local adult
education center at
www.kyae.ky.gov



Cabinet for Economic Development Foreign Direct Investment Information

Foreign Direct Investment



Kentucky Facts:

- Kentucky has over 530 internationally owned facilities that employ more than 115,000 people.
- That includes 238 European-owned companies in Kentucky that employ over 40,000 people. Seventeen European countries are represented in Kentucky.
- Kentucky ranks **5th nationally for foreign direct investment (FDI) employment** as a percentage of total private employment.
- Our international companies include a variety of manufacturers, such as automotive parts suppliers, makers of food and drinks, aerospace companies, shipping and logistics operations, machinery producers and many others.
- 228 announced FDI projects since 2020, representing \$18.5 billion in capital investment and over 21,500 jobs.

Country Ranking by Employment at Kentucky Facilities

1. Japan: 46,449 (197 Facilities)
2. Germany: 15,078 (82 Facilities)
3. China: 9,375 (8 Facilities)
4. Canada: 7,339 (35 Facilities)
5. France: 5,962 (40 Facilities)
6. Mexico: 3,557 (9 facilities)
7. United Kingdom: 3,214 (28 Facilities)
8. Brazil: 3,019 (7 Facilities)
9. Italy: 2,757 (15 Facilities)
10. Switzerland: 2,546 (15 Facilities)

EUROPE

- Kentucky is home to over 80 German-owned facilities which in total employ over 15,000.
- **Germany represents the second largest FDI-based employment in Kentucky**, behind only Japan. Over 10 German companies have their USA headquarters based in Kentucky.
- Since 2020, European facilities have announced \$2.8 billion investment and 3,600 new jobs across 106 projects in Kentucky. German-owned facilities lead the way in total investment with \$931 million and 1,690 new jobs from 39 projects, followed by France and Sweden.

ASIA

- Asian companies employ over 60,000 at their Kentucky based locations.
- 8 distinct Asian countries operate 227 total facilities across Kentucky.
- With 197 Japanese-owned facilities in Kentucky that employ over 46,000 people, **Japan is the top Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) country in Kentucky**.
- Kentucky ranks **2nd nationally for Japanese-related employment** as a percentage of total private employment.
- 6 Korean-owned facilities in Kentucky that currently employ 1,000 people. Once the additional 6 announced Korean-owned facilities, such as BlueOval SK, are fully operational, the total Korean-owned facility employment is expected to be 6,700.
- Since 2020, Asian-owned facilities have announced \$14.3 billion in investment and 13,500 new jobs across 89 projects in Kentucky. Japanese-owned facilities represent the largest investment from Asia with \$6.6 billion and 5,261 new jobs announced across 65 projects, followed by South Korea and India.

Education and Workforce Collaborative Status Report

October 2022– October 2024

The leadership of the Education and Workforce Collaborative is appointed by the Governor to carry out the charge outlined in [Executive Order 2020-551](#) and the strategic vision set forth by the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB). 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 KWIB’s workforce development strategy by supporting individuals, businesses, and partner customers while moving Kentucky forward as a leader in workforce innovation. This report captures the interagency work performed to take a functional and systemic approach to service delivery, preparing Kentuckians for family-sustaining careers and developing a strong talent pipeline to meet Kentucky employer needs and support vibrant communities across the Commonwealth.

Background:

The Collaborative is comprised of executive branch cabinet leaders, education partners across the continuum of K-12 through postsecondary, federal workforce training partners, statewide business associations, local elected officials, and representatives from the local and state workforce development boards. Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet Deputy Secretary Beth Brinly began serving as the chair of the collaborative in October 2022. The group’s initial meeting with Deputy Secretary Brinly as chair was held in January 2023. In alignment with the Executive Order’s direction to focus on functions as opposed to agencies, the Collaborative has alternated its meeting agendas to address targeted populations and services strategies; for example, the justice-involved population and the work-based learning ecosystem.

The executive branch agencies and its stakeholder partners provide a wide array of workforce development services in support of the KWIB’s strategic plan. The Collaborative utilizes this depth of expertise to provide a platform for improving workforce services, deepening partnerships, aligning programs and visions, and ultimately enhancing programing through mutually reinforcing activities. This approach allows federally funded programs, such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), to be leveraged, complemented, and supplemented by other federal funds, state appropriations, and philanthropic or private investments throughout the workforce development system. Furthermore, the collaboration among members provides avenues to take a systemic approach to targeted populations and

critical service strategies through the braiding of resources, as well as, enhancing programs and initiatives that are mutually beneficial across Kentucky’s workforce development system.

The Collaborative meets on a quarterly basis with two rotating focus areas: services to targeted talent pools and workforce ecosystem service strategies. This cadence was established when the Collaborative was reinvigorated in 2023. The following recaps provide an overview of topics covered since that time and resulting steps that have been taken.

Collaborative Meeting Topics and Outcomes

Targeted Population Focus: Jobs on Day One, Investing in Justice-Involved Talent – January 2023

The first meeting that took place under the newly implemented structure focused on existing statewide resources, programming, and initiatives around the justice-involved population. At that time, there were more than 63,000 justice-involved Kentuckians and over 13,000 individuals return home from incarceration annually in the commonwealth. Investment in workforce training and development for this population is critical not only for the economy and public safety, but also to reduce recidivism. These efforts open opportunities for employers to engage this talent pool while also allowing justice-involved individuals to gain the skills and employment that greatly improve their chances for successful reentry.

During this meeting, Collaborative members discussed current opportunities to serve the justice-involved workforce and meet the needs of employers across executive branch agencies, education providers, and community-based organizations, as well as a strong and enthusiastic interest from the statewide business-serving entities. The Collaborative created a workgroup to develop the reentry workforce development framework entitled “Jobs on Day One.” This workgroup was comprised of various government and inclusive of stakeholders in the reentry field. This group developed a three-phase framework, including: pre-employment training during incarceration; employment immediately upon release (or a job on day one); and post-release employment retention strategies.

Jobs on Day One moved beyond vision to action when several members of the Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council joined Governor Andy Beshear to adopt the initiative. These members committed to work with the Department of Corrections to provide pre-release trades training and build out the talent pipeline into their respective registered apprenticeship programs. The Iron Workers Local 70 and the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades will launch their pre-apprenticeship trade programs in early 2025 in targeted state facilities.

The all-government approach to serving the justice-involved talent pool can also be seen through the resources available on [Team Kentucky’s Second Chance website](#).

Systemic Service Focus: Work-Based Learning Ecosystem in Kentucky – April 2023

Understanding that the work-based learning ecosystem is a critical component to training individuals and providing exposure to opportunities within a career pathway, the Collaborative explored the current efforts across partners to highlight progress and innovation. The Collaborative then explored opportunities for improvement in the work-based learning ecosystem. A key component of this ecosystem must be designed with the employer at the center of the experience, as the employer is the one providing the continuum of opportunities ranging from mentorship to paid internships to registered apprenticeships for current and potential employees. The Collaborative and its member organizations understand that meeting employers where they are on the spectrum of work-based learning is crucial to expanding this service strategy.

The work-based learning continuum starts with the availability of career exploration opportunities, which can be done through career fairs and engagement by businesses with a school or a training center. Next, should be a focus on career exposure and career engagement for prospective and current employees, which can involve job shadowing, internships and pre-apprenticeships. Finally, work-based learning prioritizes career experience through registered apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and/or industry-run apprenticeships. With the wide array of opportunities, the key to successful execution of work-based learning is making partnership with education and training institutions easy for employers at the level of engagement most pertinent to them.

Given the resources identified across the partners, the Collaborative focused on the various initiatives and resources available across the continuum, including: the Kentucky Department of Education's Office of Career and Technical Education (CTE) [Work-Based Learning Manual](#); career exposure via Kentucky Chamber Foundation's [Bus to Business initiative](#); summer internship opportunities through local workforce development boards; industry-run manufacturing apprenticeships via the [Kentucky Federation of Advanced Manufacturing Education \(KY-FAME\)](#) model; [Kentucky's Registered Apprenticeship](#) services; and highlights of companies engaging in the various forms of work-based learning.

The Collaborative then extended an invitation for members to join a workgroup addressing two priorities key to expansion: (1) provide consistent definitions for work-based learning opportunities across partners; and (2) streamline the processes for business engagement, such as recruitment of businesses to provide these opportunities. Both issues were identified as essential for the expansion of work-based learning opportunities. The Collaborative's goals and objectives in this area are being addressed through the [Launch Initiative's WBL workgroup](#), whose members include representatives from education and training from secondary to postsecondary, local workforce boards, and Kentucky businesses. The work group will finalize its strategic plan in Fall 2024 and present it to the Collaborative.

Targeted Population Focus: Resources for Veterans, Transitioning Military, and Military Families in Kentucky – June 2023

Kentucky is home to two major US Army installations, Ft. Campbell, and Ft. Knox, and has a multitude of resources available to veterans that span government agencies, nonprofit community-based organizations, and postsecondary institutions that provide training and education. The veteran talent pool, as well as transitioning military and military families, have a wide array of experiences, education, and skillsets that can be valuable to businesses throughout the commonwealth. Business engagement with the veteran population includes companies that are military-friendly, such as those employers who attend military job fairs; military-ready, such as those employers who provide a culture that fosters acceptance and affirmation of skills that military talent bring; and military-engaged, such as those employers that intentionally focus on recruitment and retention efforts with policies and initiatives to encourage growth and support for the veteran population.

The Collaborative discussed all various services and resources available that support veterans, transitioning military, and military families, with an emphasis on attracting and retaining veteran talent in the Commonwealth. This conversation demonstrated the critical need for a listing of all the employment resources that can be utilized by both the veteran jobseekers and businesses with goals to attract and retain this talent pipeline.

The Collaborative formed a workgroup consisting of the various veteran-focused organizations tasked with compiling a resource guide to include various employment services for veterans; business resources to hire veterans; family support resources; education resources; military transition assistance; and support services, including housing and equal opportunity resources. [The Veterans, Transitioning Military, and Military Family Resource Guide](#) was completed and shared among organizations for further utilization. After the completion of the resource guide, it was suggested that the next step would be to develop an interagency strategic plan to create a collective impact approach to these services. The Collaborative concurred and the Education and Labor Cabinet committed to provide a point person to move forward on its development.

Systemic Service Focus: Kentucky’s Workforce Development State Plan – October 2023

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that every state in the nation submit a four-year workforce development plan to the US Department of Labor and US Department of Education. The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) within Education and Labor Cabinet and the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) analyzed local input and developed the 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan, and the Collaborative played an important role in infusing critical needs of the workforce ecosystem into the resulting document.

Through breakout sessions, members of the Collaborative focused on ways to jointly collaborate to better support Kentucky's talent pipeline needs through mutually reinforcing activities in the categories of practice, data collection, and policy improvements. The Collaborative voted on priorities to advance the system through all three categories. In the practice category, the need to track and market return on investment through stakeholder communication and education was the top priority. In the data category, the importance of data sharing and standardization of measurements and definition across partners was chosen. In the policy category, the critical need to increase public-private partnership policies was selected.

Through dialogue and final assessments, the Collaborative strongly emphasized the importance of collaboration, partnership, and mutually reinforcing activities that span across the executive branch, community-based organizations, education and businesses. The final outcome of the input from the Collaborative was incorporated into the [WIOA 2024-2027 State Plan](#), which was submitted to and approved by the federal government; the executive summary and highlights from the plan can be found in the [Kentucky's 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan Briefer](#).

Targeted Population Focus: Individuals Facing Benefit Cliffs – January 2024

The KWIB's Workforce Participation Committee began an analysis of benefit cliffs as an initiative to understand the impact on Kentucky families. A benefit cliff occurs when increased wages lead to a reduction in governmental social benefits, resulting in a net loss or "benefits cliff" for families. The work of the KWIB built upon the [Family Resource Simulator](#) created by the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS). Furthermore, the analysis of Kentucky's benefits cliff was conducted by a third party, the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), who worked closely with KYSTATS and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) to provide the report.

The Collaborative reviewed the report's findings to understand the biggest cliffs and ways to smooth the transition for Kentuckians and move from "benefits cliffs" to "ramps," allowing individuals to seek employment, higher wages, and/or promotional opportunities without instantly losing all benefits. The biggest impact was seen in the childcare cliffs, with the heavy impact of Kentucky Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), as well as with Medicaid cliffs and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) cliffs.

Understanding the background, the Collaborative's focus revolved around the role of education and support systems through the work of career coaching and advisory services that provide the bridge between employment/education and the employee/student. Furthermore, the importance of public-private partnerships was emphasized to increase access to childcare, healthcare, and resources to help Kentuckians succeed in employment when faced with barriers. The Collaborative agreed that a holistic approach to reducing the impacts of benefits cliffs provides a true opportunity to assist individuals and employers in the Commonwealth.³¹

Leadership from the KWIB, the Collaborative, and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services reviewed the recommendations, assessed where the state is on addressing the benefits cliffs within the executive branch, and determined what may require legislative action.

Systemic Strategy Focus: The Launch Initiative – April 2024

Kentucky is one of 13 states selected to participate in the Launch Initiative, which is designed around a principle that every young person deserves a high school diploma with a postsecondary credential that has labor market value. Furthermore, the initiative's goal is for every person to be engaged in full-time employment or continued training that leads to family-sustaining career in an economically strong community. The four pillars of the Launch Initiative include: alignment of credentials of value; seamless transitions between secondary and postsecondary education; work-based learning; and student advising and support. A strategic plan for credentials of values was finalized in February 2024, which recommended that the Collaborative be the driver of the strategic plan. An overview of that plan, as well as an update on the work-based learning pillar, was presented to the Collaborative.

The Collaborative established a workgroup to undertake the first element of the credentials of value strategic plan focused on ensuring that common definitions are identified across partners for credentials of value. The workgroup will craft the definition of credentials of value, which can later be codified and accepted by all stakeholder partners. The workgroup has initiated national and state best practices to develop the framework most suitable for Kentucky. The work will be presented in Program Year 24 Collaborative meetings.

Targeted Population: Youth Employment and Services – July 2024

During the statewide listening sessions conducted to inform the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) 2024-2027 State Plan, the overwhelming topic that was cited across every region in the commonwealth was youth employment. The Collaborative addressed the importance of youth employment with the understanding that services are widely provided across the commonwealth by federal, state, and local providers with various focus areas – from summer employment opportunities, pre-apprenticeships, exposure to industry, to support services that allow successful employment.

In preparation, the Collaborative collected all the services that are provided across the Commonwealth ([Youth Partner Services packet can be found here](#)). Part of the discussion focused on the opportunities available to leverage recent state investments in the 10 Local Workforce Development Boards, including \$10 million annually across the biennium to provide youth employment services. Further, the Collaborative explored the importance of support services that provide a safety net in both the pre-employment phase and during employment; specific attention was raised to trauma-informed services, as many young individuals face challenges that require additional intensive case management.

Finally, understanding that Kentucky is a manufacturing powerhouse, the Collaborative explored ways to engage 16- and 17-year-old youth in manufacturing opportunities using an example provided by Ohio's program that focuses on collaborative marketing efforts with manufacturing employer partners. This resulted in interest to form a workgroup to better understand Ohio's approach and utilize best practices to inform executive and potential legislative strategies.

Systemic Strategy Focus: Sector Strategies – October 2024

In September 2024, US Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (ETA) released an updated Sector Strategies Framework to guide national, state, and local practitioners in their efforts to launch and implement effective sector strategies. Harnessing lessons learned from the field, the framework is intended to advance knowledge and support the development, scaling, and sustainability of sector strategies. It provides workforce system practitioners with a clear picture of the concepts and elements essential to the successful implementation of sector partnerships and sector strategies.

The federal release of sector strategies framework aligns with the commonwealth's public-private partnership known as the [Statewide Workforce and Talent Team \(SWATT\)](#). The purpose of SWATT is to collectively serve employers of all sizes through a customized and collaborative approach. The outcome of the meeting was to use the national framework provided as a tool for SWATT, especially as the new top five in-demand sectors are being identified by the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB).

Appendix

2022-2023 Top 5 Language Counts by Regional Co-op and State

Below is an analysis of the linguistic diversity within several key cooperatives in Kentucky, highlighting the distribution of non-English speakers across different areas.

Source: Kentucky Department of Education's Office of Continuous Improvement & Support

1. CKEC (Central Kentucky Educational Cooperative)

Provides collaboration, strategic planning, and professional development opportunities for superintendents and school staff.

- **Spanish:** 6,583
- **Swahili:** 643
- **Arabic:** 341
- **Kinyarwanda:** 196
- **Nepali:** 251

Analysis: CKEC serves a highly diverse population with a substantial Spanish-speaking community, alongside significant numbers of Swahili, Arabic, Kinyarwanda, and Nepali speakers. The presence of multiple African languages (Swahili, Kinyarwanda) and Nepali suggests a growing immigrant population, potentially from regions like East Africa and South Asia.

2. GRREC (Green River Regional Educational Cooperative)

Provides collaboration, strategic planning, and professional development opportunities for superintendents and school staff.

- **Spanish:** 4,117
- **Swahili:** 847
- **Arabic:** 152
- **Kinyarwanda:** 62
- **Nepali:** 23

Analysis: GRREC also has a significant Spanish-speaking population, with a noteworthy presence of Swahili speakers, likely reflecting African immigrant communities, particularly from East Africa. The lower numbers of Arabic, Kinyarwanda, and Nepali speakers indicate a more concentrated but diverse group.

3. KEDC (Kentucky Educational Development Corporation)

Offers services like technology wiring, collective bidding, special education support, professional development, and leadership programs for school districts.

- **Spanish:** 125
- **Swahili:** 0
- **Arabic:** 0
- **Kinyarwanda:** 0
- **Nepali:** 0

Analysis: KEDC serves a relatively homogeneous population with only 125 Spanish speakers and no recorded speakers of other languages. This suggests that the region served by KEDC likely has fewer immigrant populations or a more monolingual, English-speaking demographic.

4. [KVEC \(Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative\)](#)

Serves 161 schools with over 53,000 students, offering special education services, a large reading recovery program, and other content-specific initiatives.

- **Spanish:** 28
- **Swahili:** 0
- **Arabic:** 0
- **Kinyarwanda:** 0
- **Nepali:** 0

Analysis:

KVEC has a very small population of Spanish speakers, with no representation from other listed language groups. This could indicate a largely rural or less diverse region with fewer non-English speaking students.

5. [NKCES \(Northern Kentucky Cooperative for Educational Services\)](#) Provides educational services and support to school districts in Northern Kentucky (specific details not listed).

- **Spanish:** 2,483
- **Swahili:** 17
- **Arabic:** 149
- **Kinyarwanda:** 0
- **Nepali:** 9

Analysis: NKCES shows a substantial Spanish-speaking population, with smaller numbers of Arabic, Swahili, and Nepali speakers. The Arabic speakers here likely come from immigrant communities from the Middle East or North Africa. While the number of Swahili and Nepali speakers is smaller, the region is still relatively linguistically diverse.

6. [OVEC \(Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative\)](#)

Serves 14 school districts in north-central Kentucky, focusing on professional learning, advocacy, and leadership development.

- **Spanish:** 2,224
- **Swahili:** 8
- **Arabic:** 22
- **Kinyarwanda:** 47
- **Nepali:** 8

Analysis: OVEC has a primarily Spanish-speaking population, with some representation from Arabic, Kinyarwanda, and Swahili speakers. The presence of Kinyarwanda and Arabic suggests pockets of East African and Middle Eastern communities in the region.

7. [SESC \(Southeast South-Central Educational Cooperative\)](#)

A nonprofit service agency that provides professional learning and support services to 26 school districts in southeast/south-central Kentucky.

- **Spanish:** 864
- **Swahili:** 0

- **Arabic:** 12
- **Kinyarwanda:** 0
- **Nepali:** 4

Analysis: SESC has a smaller Spanish-speaking population and a handful of Arabic and Nepali speakers. This suggests that the region has a modest immigrant population, with fewer linguistic diversity challenges compared to more urban areas.

8. WKEC (West Kentucky Educational Cooperative)

Optimizes district expenditures for goods and services, formed by the Kentucky General Assembly in 1976 to support school districts.

- **Spanish:** 1,487
- **Swahili:** 0
- **Arabic:** 12
- **Kinyarwanda:** 0
- **Nepali:** 0

Analysis: WKEC's population consists predominantly of Spanish speakers, with a small group of Arabic speakers. This is similar to the trends seen in other cooperatives, where Spanish remains the primary language group. The presence of Arabic speakers could suggest some Middle Eastern immigrant populations, though their numbers are quite small.

9. Jefferson County (JCPS)

Founded in 1978, the Language Services (LS) Office provides interpretation and translation support to meet the needs of JCPS's growing international community.

- **Spanish:** 9,581
- **Swahili:** 1,032
- **Arabic:** 1,089
- **Kinyarwanda:** 1,018
- **Nepali:** 629

Analysis: Jefferson County is the most linguistically diverse of all the cooperatives. It serves a large Spanish-speaking population and a significant number of Swahili, Arabic, Kinyarwanda, and Nepali speakers. This is indicative of a high degree of immigration and refugee resettlement, particularly from Latin America, East Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

State Total

- **Spanish:** 27,492
- **Swahili:** 2,547
- **Arabic:** 1,777
- **Kinyarwanda:** 1,323
- **Nepali:** 924

Summary: Overall, Kentucky has a significant number of Spanish speakers, followed by speakers of Swahili, Arabic, Kinyarwanda, and Nepali, reflecting its multicultural and multilingual demographic.

Overall Analysis:

- **Spanish** is the most widely spoken language across all CO-OPs, with the highest numbers in CKEC and Jefferson County.
- **Swahili** speakers are notably present in GRREC, Jefferson County, and a few other CO-OPs, particularly indicating populations from East Africa.
- **Arabic** speakers are relatively more prominent in GRREC and Jefferson County.
- **Kinyarwanda** speakers are mostly found in Jefferson County and a few other CO-OPs.
- **Nepali** speakers are present but in smaller numbers, with Jefferson County again showing the largest population.

Conclusion:

Kentucky's educational cooperatives vary widely in terms of linguistic diversity. Larger, urban cooperatives like Jefferson County, CKEC, and GRREC serve more diverse populations, requiring specialized language programs and resources. In contrast, smaller or more rural cooperatives like KVEC and KEDC serve less diverse communities, focusing primarily on English-language education. Statewide, Spanish is the most common non-English language, followed by significant numbers of Swahili, Arabic, Kinyarwanda, and Nepali speakers in certain regions, reflecting Kentucky's growing immigrant and refugee populations.

Analysis of data (2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024)

This dataset shows the number of people who speak various languages in Kentucky.

Top Languages in Each Year:

2021-2022:

- **Spanish (23,629 speakers)**
- **Swahili (2,208 speakers)**
- **Kinyarwanda (1,052 speakers)**
- **Arabic (1,703 speakers)**
- **Somali (952 speakers)**

2022-2023:

- **Spanish (27,722 speakers)** (increase of 4,093)
- **Swahili (2,552 speakers)** (increase of 344)
- **Kinyarwanda (1,324 speakers)** (increase of 272)
- **Arabic (1,795 speakers)** (increase of 92)
- **Somali (930 speakers)** (slight decrease of 22)

2023-2024:

- **Spanish (33,288 speakers)** (increase of 5,566)
- **Swahili (2,933 speakers)** (increase of 381)
- **Kinyarwanda (1,650 speakers)** (increase of 326)
- **Arabic (1,854 speakers)** (increase of 59)
- **Somali (853 speakers)** (decrease of 77)

Key Trends & Changes

Overall Growth in Key Languages:

- **Spanish** has seen consistent growth over the years:
 - From **23,629 speakers** in **2021-2022** to **33,288 speakers** in **2023-2024** (a **9,659 increase** over three years).
- **Swahili** has also shown steady growth:
 - From **2,208 speakers** in **2021-2022** to **2,933 speakers** in **2023-2024** (an increase of **725 speakers**).
- **Kinyarwanda** has seen consistent growth:
 - From **1,052 speakers** in **2021-2022** to **1,650 speakers** in **2023-2024** (an increase of **598 speakers**).



2025 Employer Training Academies

The Kentucky Chamber Foundation's academy programs equip employers with the knowledge and strategies needed to effectively find, hire, and retain diverse talent across the Commonwealth, fostering an inclusive workforce that leverages the strengths of all individuals.

NEW! Disability Hiring Academy **January 28th-29th & February 5th**

Trains employers to hire and retain skilled individuals with diverse abilities

NEW! New Kentuckian Hiring Academy **May 6th, 7th, & 13th**

Trains employers to hire and integrate immigrants and refugees into their workforce

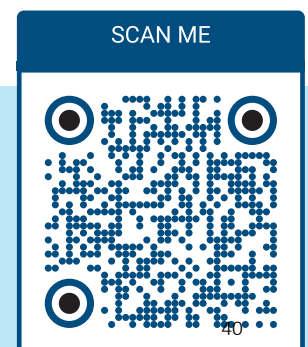
Military Hiring Academy **August 5th, 6th, & 13th**

Trains employers to recruit and retain veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses

Learn More!

Fair Chance Academy **June 2025**

Trains employers to hire and support individuals in recovery and those who are justice-involved



2025 Partner for Success Series



ABC'S OF HIRING IMMIGRANTS

Topics:

- Immigration demographics and trends in Greater Cincinnati
- Economic impact of immigrants
- Detailed discussion of work authorization from statuses to required documents
- Working with immigrant and refugee communities here in Greater Cincinnati

[REGISTER](#)



Presenters:

BRYAN WRIGHT
Cincinnati Compass

MAYRA JACKSON
Immigrant & Refugee
Law Center



1:30-3:00 PM



February 13, 2025



KY Career Center
1324 Madison Ave.,
Covington, KY 41011

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