Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative Meeting
Minutes
Thursday, July 17, 2025
Meeting 1:30 pm-3:30 pm EDT

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

ATTENDEES: Brandon Combs proxy for Secretary Jeff Noel (Cabinet for Economic Development), Secretary Jamie Link (Education and Labor Cabinet), Taban Herrington proxy for Secretary Steven Stack, MD (Cabinet for Health and Family Services), Natalie Burikhanov proxy for Secretary Keith Jackson (Justice and Public Safety Cabinet), Judge Orbrey Gritton (Anderson County Judge/Executive and KACO Representative), Myra Wilson (Local Workforce Director) Johnny Collett proxy for Beth Potter (University of Kentucky Human Development Institute), Jessie Schook proxy for Dr. Ryan Quarles (Kentucky Community and Technical College System), Lori Ulrich (Chair of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board), Dr. Leslie Sizemore proxy for Dr. Aaron Thompson (Council on Postsecondary Education), Nick Haw proxy for Amanda Curry (Job Corps), Chris Wooldridge proxy for former Murray State President Jackson (CPE Conference of Presidents), Tom Thompson proxy for Commissioner Robbie Fletcher (Kentucky Department of Education), Stacey Shane proxy for Brigadier-General Steven Bullard (Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs), LaKisha Miller proxy for Ashli Watts (Kentucky Chamber of Commerce), Eleri Gesler proxy for Winston Miller (Kentucky Housing Corporation), , Mike Yoder, PhD., Commissioner (Department of Workforce Development, Education and Labor Cabinet)

GUESTS: Ashley Kelley, Becky Miller, Brigette Green, Chelsea Conn, Correy Eimer, Erin White, Karl Fratzke, Everette Bracken, Jackie Masterson, Mary Anne Medlock, Michelle De John, Michelle Drake, Miguel A. Santiago, Peter Mattingly, Sam Keathley, Sheila Clark, Tad Long, Tiffanie Reeves, Billie Hardin, Tom Sholar

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

1:30 pm MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Mike Yoder, PhD., Commissioner (Department of Workforce Development, Education and Labor Cabinet) called the meeting to order. Attendees were pointed to meeting materials in the briefing book, and roll call was completed.

Welcome and Overview

Commissioner Mike Yoder welcomed attendees and emphasized the importance of collaboration across agencies involved in workforce and education services. He introduced the meeting's focus: Understanding the Role of the Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT) and unifying efforts and exploring how all partners can integrate more effectively into the system.

Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT) Overview

Commissioner Mike Yoder provided background on the Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT). He introduced featured speakers: **LaKisha Miller**, **Executive Director of the Kentucky Chamber Workforce Center,** and **Jessie Schook**, **Vice President of Workforce and Economic Development at KCTCS.**

LaKisha Miller provided an overview of the Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT), a project in development for more than two years, dedicated to building a more collaborative, coordinated, and efficient workforce system centered on meeting employer needs.

She noted that Kentucky invests about $1.2 billion annually in workforce efforts, yet only 15% of employers engage with the system, highlighting the need for simplification. SWATT aims to increase employer participation by aligning partners, reducing complexity, and improving service delivery.

LaKisha outlined priorities identified during a December 2024 statewide convening: increasing employer engagement, providing staff training, and integrating strategies across state, regional, and local levels. She stressed the importance of including all partner agencies in building a unified system.

Jessie Schook emphasized that the SWATT model must be built collaboratively across local, regional, and state levels—not in isolation from Frankfort. She cited the Blue Oval SK project as an example of the coordination challenges across these layers. Although initial practitioner feedback suggested the system was effective, a December employer panel revealed major gaps, especially in cross-regional coordination. This shift in perspective underscored the need to center the employer voice in system design.

Jessie also discussed recent SWATT prototype efforts, where regional teams have tested and are testing collaborative models. Key lessons include the need to involve both C-suite and front-line staff, avoid overwhelming employers with information, prioritize needs effectively, and use feedback tools to guide improvement. The goal is to launch 12–20 prototypes statewide by year's end.

Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), emphasized the need to move from high-level collaboration to embedded practices at the local and regional level, where services are delivered. He is leading the State and Local Integration Committee and highlighted efforts to strengthen local business service teams with support from agency partners.

Alisher stressed the importance of quality service delivery, accountability through the Department of Workforce Development's Workforce Talent Project Managers and aligning business needs with talent pipelines. He also noted the need for professional development, stronger networking among regions, and onboarding for new workforce practitioners to support consistency and shared learning across the state.

Chris Wooldridge, Director, Center for Economic and Entrepreneurial Development, Murray State University supported Alisher's remarks, emphasizing the need for improved communication, partner alignment, and a "no wrong door" approach to serving businesses. He noted positive cooperation and innovative ideas emerging from ongoing collaboration.

SWATT: State and Local Integration

Alisher Burikhanov shared ongoing efforts to strengthen collaboration across education, workforce, and economic development systems. There was support for moving toward a more coordinated, long-term approach to workforce development.

The SWATT model was highlighted as a key strategy for aligning regional partners and streamlining services to better meet business and talent needs. Its emphasis on coordination, early engagement, and regional flexibility was seen as essential to building a more effective workforce system.

Other efforts and tools to support talent development were mentioned, along with the need for improved connectivity across agencies. Continued integration of services and alignment at both the state and local levels will remain a focus.

Group Discussion: Collaborative Member Involvement

Commissioner Yoder and Alisher spoke about coordination between state agencies and local partners, to better align resources. They emphasized engaging local leaders, mayors, judges, and organizations like the Kentucky League of Cities and the Kentucky Association of Counties (KACo) to share workforce tools and address local challenges.

Judge Orbrey Gritton, Executive Judge, Anderson County, stressed the importance of growing the local workforce by attracting or expanding businesses, understanding worker pipelines, and collaborating with regional groups. He highlighted the value of being recognized as a "Work Ready Community."

Alisher added that the Work Ready Communities – Next Generation initiative is being updated to reflect current skill gaps, among other important metrics to our state. Members will soon be asked to identify local assets and how they align with the SWATT model.

State of the Workforce Funding Report

Alisher shared the upcoming request for updated workforce investment data, focused on education, training and support services and the return on those investments.

Members will receive a template spreadsheet and is requesting Collaborative members to update with PY23 and PY24 data. Metrics such as participants served, job placements, and average wages are of focus.

Information is being collected from non-members like Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority, (KHEAA), which administers various workforce-related scholarships. Requests for a reply will be in August with support available an overview of the final information will be shared on October 16, then submitted to the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board.

Team Kentucky Virtual Job Fair Launch

Everett Bracken (U.S. Army | Gulf War Veteran), Program Administrator KY Veterans Employment & Training Services Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs introduced Kentucky's monthly Team Kentucky Virtual Job Fair, launched by the Department of Veterans Affairs to help recruit veterans and connect job seekers with employers. The event is free, with the first hour reserved for veterans and their families. Nearly 500 job seekers and 80 employers have participated so far.

The platform has statewide promotion through partnerships and support from state leaders, whose promotional videos helped boost visibility. Mr. Bracken shared a video clip of the Governor highlighting the platform during a Team Kentucky update. Each fair focuses on a different Kentucky industry, and the platform was recently extended at no additional cost. A work group launch is set for August 12, with volunteers encouraged to join.

Closing comments

Commissioner Yoder encouraged members to continue thinking about ways to integrate, unify, and collaborate, emphasizing that this is the purpose of the Education and Workforce Collaborative. He noted that Alisher would be reaching out with some upcoming requests and encouraged engagement and responsiveness.

3:01 PM Adjournment

Members were reminded to check the briefing book for upcoming meeting dates, including the next scheduled meeting on **October 16. 2025, at 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY**. *LaKisha Miller made a motion to adjourn. Johnny Collett seconded the motion*, and the meeting was adjourned.

Kentucky Education & Workforce Collaborative Board

Meeting Briefing Book

July 17, 2025

1:30 – 3:30 pm EDT

Location: 412 NC, Fourth Floor Conference Room

500 Mero Street

Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Andy Beshear
Governor

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Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative Meeting

July 17, 2025, 1:30-3:30 pm EDT

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- **2026 Education and Workforce Collaborative Board Meetings**

Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative Meeting

AGENDA

Thursday, July 17, 2025

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

IN-PERSON - 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY: 4th floor Conference Room
Join Zoom Meeting
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89791354232?pwd=u4b4s19U6WMrnImGPeRPDa9VFKoGZj.1

Meeting ID: 897 9135 4232 Passcode: 118747

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)

1:45 pm **Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT) Overview**……*Mike Yoder, PhD., Commissioner*

Jessie Schook, Vice President
Workforce and Economic Development
Kentucky Community and Technical College System

LaKisha Miller, Executive Director
Kentucky Chamber Workforce Center
Kentucky Chamber of Commerce

2:15 pm **SWATT – State and Local Integration** ……*Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director*
- Unified Business Service Teams *Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board*

2:40 pm **Group Discussion on Collaborative Member Involvement** ……*Mike Yoder, PhD., Commissioner & Alisher Burikhanov*

3:00 pm **State of the Workforce Funding Report** …… *Alisher Burikhanov*

3:15 pm **Team Kentucky Virtual Job Fair Launch**……*Everett Bracken (U.S. Army | Gulf War Veteran)*
Program Administrator
KY Veterans Employment & Training Services
Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs

3:25 PM **CLOSING COMMENTS – UPCOMING DATES**
NEXT MEETING: OCTOBER 16TH, 2025 @ 500 MERO STREET, FRANKFORT, KY 40601

3:30 PM **ADJOURNMENT**

Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative Meeting
Minutes
Thursday, April 24, 2025
Meeting 1:30pm-3:30pm EDT

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

ATTENDEES: Dr. Michael Yoder, Interim Chair (Department of Workforce Development, Education and Labor Cabinet), Secretary Jamie Link (Education and Labor Cabinet), Lori Ulrich (Chair of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board), Dr. Beth Hargis proxy for Commissioner Robbie Fletcher (Kentucky Department of Education), Chris Wooldridge proxy for former Murray State President Jackson (CPE Conference of Presidents), Correy Eimer (Northern Kentucky Area Development District), Dallas Kratzer proxy for Brigadier-General Steven Bullard (Kentucky Commission on Military Affairs), Eleri Gesler proxy for Winston Miller (Kentucky Housing Corporation), Johnny Collett proxy for Beth Potter (University of Kentucky Human Development Institute), LaKisha Miller proxy for Ashli Watts (Kentucky Chamber of Commerce), Dr. Leslie Sizemore proxy for Dr. Aaron Thompson (Council on Postsecondary Education), Natalie Burikhanov proxy for Secretary Keith Jackson (Justice and Public Safety Cabinet), Nick Haw proxy for Amanda Curry (Job Corps).

GUESTS: Ashley Kelley, Becky Miller, Beth Roberts, Billie Hardin, Bridget Back, Chelsea Conn, Chris Sanders, Everett Bracken, Jacob McAndrews, Jason Schultz, Jim Flynn, Kim Menke, Mary Anne Medlock, Matt Berry, Michelle DeJohn, Mike Buckentin, Sheila Clark, Stacey Shane, Tammy Hyde, Tiffanie Reeves

STAFF: Alisher Burikhanov, Debbie Dennison, Sara jaggers, LaChrista Ellis, Elishah Taylor

1:31 pm MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Dr. Mike Yoder, Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Workforce Development (DWD), opened the meeting by introducing himself and thanking Lori Ulrich for leading the previous meeting and the attendees for their participation. He lifted the Governor's workforce-focused investments in Kentucky and highlighted the Collaborative Board's role in supporting KWIB's strategy through the ten local boards. He introduced Dr. Matt Berry and Sam Keathley, Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), commending their contributions to shaping workforce strategy for cross-sector collaborations to identify future high-demand, living-wage jobs.

Overview: Kentucky's Top Sectors & Good Jobs

Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), welcomed and introduced sector leaders to discuss workforce challenges and solutions across key industries in Kentucky. He reminded the board of Kentucky's top five sectors: Healthcare, Manufacturing & Logistics, Education, Construction, and Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services. **Jacob McAndrews, Kentucky Chamber Foundation,** represented the Healthcare sector; **Mike Buckentin, Metals Innovation Initiative (MI2),** represented the Manufacturing & Logistics sector; **Dr. Jim Flynn, Kentucky Association of School Superintendents,** represented the Education sector**;** and **Jason Shultz, Greater Louisville Building and Construction Trades Council,** represented the Construction sector.

Kentucky's Top Sectors Overview

The healthcare discussion focused on addressing workforce shortages by involving retired nurses as instructors, proactively preparing staff nearing retirement for teaching roles, and emphasizing the need for soft skills like

communication. It also highlighted the need for broader youth recruitment strategies, moving beyond family connections, and targeting underrepresented groups, including immigrants and formerly incarcerated individuals, to fill gaps in the workforce.

The manufacturing discussion focused on strengthening partnerships between businesses and schools to provide hands-on learning and workforce training. It highlighted examples like companies funding labs or relocating classrooms into manufacturing plants to offer real-world experience. Emphasis was made on the importance of industry involvement in education to build talent pipelines and align curricula with the needs of high-demand sectors like manufacturing.

The construction conversation focused on promoting construction as a legitimate, high-paying career, not just a fallback option. It emphasized the need to shift societal views, introduce students to trades early, and align education systems with workforce needs. Discussion advocating for more focus on skilled trades and creating demand-driven models to address workforce shortages.

The education discussion centered on addressing continued misalignment between education and workforce needs. It highlighted the importance of creating demand-driven education systems, where local communities and employers help shape priorities. Emphasized was the need for streamlining teacher certification and promoting industry-education partnerships to better align curricula with real-world job market demands.

Group Discussion – Opportunities for Collaboration & Innovation

Discussion focused on aligning Kentucky's education system with workforce needs through collaboration and reform. Strategies to address teacher shortages in high-demand fields included engaging retired professionals, increasing certifications, and exploring alternative compensation models. The group also emphasized expanding career exposure for students, increasing employer involvement in schools, and ensuring workforce pipelines are inclusive of underserved groups.

Initiatives like the "United We Learn" accountability framework were cited as potential tools for achieving the goal. The group called for stronger cross-sector partnerships and actionable steps to modernize both education and workforce development systems across Kentucky. To further these efforts, the board recommended incorporating more industry experts into Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and scaling successful regional initiatives, such as SCK Launch in Bowling Green. This program, a collaboration between the local chamber, local school districts and businesses, provides middle school students with valuable career exposure and could be expanded statewide.

The discussion also highlighted several resources, including "Futuriti", which focuses on top sectors for students; "Ready for Industry", a career exposure initiative by the Department of Workforce Development; and "Pathful", a system designed to engage students in career development. **Chris Sanders, Deputy Executive Director – Office of Educational Programs**, introduced "Pathful", a workforce-ready platform used in over 500 K-12 sites across Kentucky, which helps students explore careers through video content and a school-based social media-style system. The platform supports career awareness and skill-building from kindergarten through 12th grade, connecting education with industry. Businesses can participate by emailing everybodycounts@ky.gov to create custom content or take part in virtual tours, such as those with Amtech, Spy Coast Farms, and the Operating Engineers Local 181.

Updates on Collaborative Activities

Alisher thanked participants for their engagement and emphasized the importance of collaboration in workforce development efforts. He provided updates on several key initiatives, including the Jobs on Day One program—a training partnership, funded in part by the Governor's the Statewide Reserve Fund. This program has helped formerly incarcerated individuals transition into skilled trades.

He also highlighted the launch of the Governor's Council of Second Chance Employers, a business-led group promoting fair hiring practices for those with criminal records. Council members include representatives from various sectors such as manufacturing and food service. In support, the Governor's office released videos this initiative. Additionally, the Team Kentucky Office of Reentry Services has been established to provide a statewide strategy for helping individuals

exiting incarceration successfully reintegrate into the workforce. **Natalie Burikhanov, Legislative Director for the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet** will serve as Executive Director of this office.

He acknowledged the significant contributions of **Everett Bracken, Program Administrator, Kentucky Department for Veteran Affairs (KDVA)**, especially in veteran workforce initiatives like the Commonwealth Job Fair, which connects veterans and job seekers across Kentucky with employers. Employers had early access to resumes and conducted live interviews, with some pre-screening candidates in advance. The initiative also received high-level support, with promotional videos from the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Secretary of State. The program, which runs through December, is designed to make hiring easy for businesses and to help retain military talent in Kentucky. Everett has proposed continued funding for the next fiscal year.

CLOSING COMMENTS – UPCOMING DATES

The next meeting is scheduled for **July 17, 2025**. Alisher thanked everyone for their participation. Commissioner Mike Yoder thanked everyone for their involvement.

3:26 PM ADJOURNMENT

Meeting Focus: Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT)

SWATT

STATEWIDE WORKFORCE AND TALENT TEAM

TEAM KENTUCKY | Your New Kentucky Home

The Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT) is a group of statewide organizations committed to improved measurement, coordination and delivery of workforce development solutions and services to Kentucky employers.

THE CHALLENGE

In 2024, Kentucky saw $6.9 billion in new investment announcements and 9,425 new jobs—a 50% increase from 2023. Meanwhile, unemployment rose to 5.1% with 106,000 employed persons and approximately 100,000 job openings. This shift from worker shortage to balanced labor supply creates strategic opportunities for workforce development and positions Kentucky for continued economic growth.

THE SOLUTION

SWATT uses a unified, data-informed approach to workforce solutions based on employer feedback. We gather shared metrics to pilot programs in manufacturing and healthcare, then scaled statewide. Every partner organization is committed to measuring results and driving workforce participation.

Our collective approach creates employer solutions, career opportunities, and economic growth for all Kentuckians.

WHO WE ARE

- Secretary, Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development
- Secretary, Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet
- President and CEO, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- President, Kentucky Community and Technical College System
- Associate Commissioner, Career and Technical Education, Kentucky Department of Education
- Executive Director, Kentucky Center for Statistics
- Associate Vice President for Workforce Initiatives
- Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- President & CEO, Kentucky Association of Manufacturers
- Chair, Kentucky State Workforce Development Board
- Associate Vice President, Workforce Development, Kentucky Hospital Association

Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board

TEAM KENTUCKY Education and Labor Cabinet

Kentucky Chamber Foundation

TEAM KENTUCKY Cabinet for Economic Development

KYSTATS

CPE

Kentucky Hospital Association

Kentucky Association of Manufacturers

Kentucky Community & Technical College System

Kentucky Department of Education

Education & Workforce Collaborative - State of the Workforce Funding Report

Per the Executive Order 2020-551, the Education and Workforce Collaborative will be compiling 2022-2025 funding report identifying all federal and state funded workforce-related activities. Including funding streams for education, training, support services, and career service activities in the past three programmatic years provided by the Collaborative's respective agencies or entities.

The funding report shall indicate, to the extent feasible, the return on investment (ROI) for each stream. To determine ROI, the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) has identified three ROI elements: (1) number participants, (2) number of placements, and (3) average wages.

Timeline: Request will be sent 7/21 to Collaborative members with the due date of 8/22.

Necessary Funding Data & Steps

1. **Identify allocated funding for:**
    - PY22 (July 1st, 2022 – June 30th, 2023)
    - PY23 (July 1st, 2023 – June 30th, 2024)
    - PY24 (July 1st, 2024 – June 30th, 2025)

2. **Specify if funding is federal, state, or combined** (if combined, what percentage is federal and what percentage is state?)

3. **Identify the type of activity per stream:**
    - Education
    - Training
    - Support Services
    - Career Services

4. **Provide the eligibility requirements for each funding stream**

5. **Identify per funding source:**
    - Number of individuals served
    - Number of individuals placed
    - Average wages of individuals placed

If funding is meant to serve businesses, identify the number of companies served.

Funding Streams Definitions

Education: investment used to for long term career preparation, examples include higher education degrees, certificates, certifications, credentials, digital badging, integrated education programs, etc.

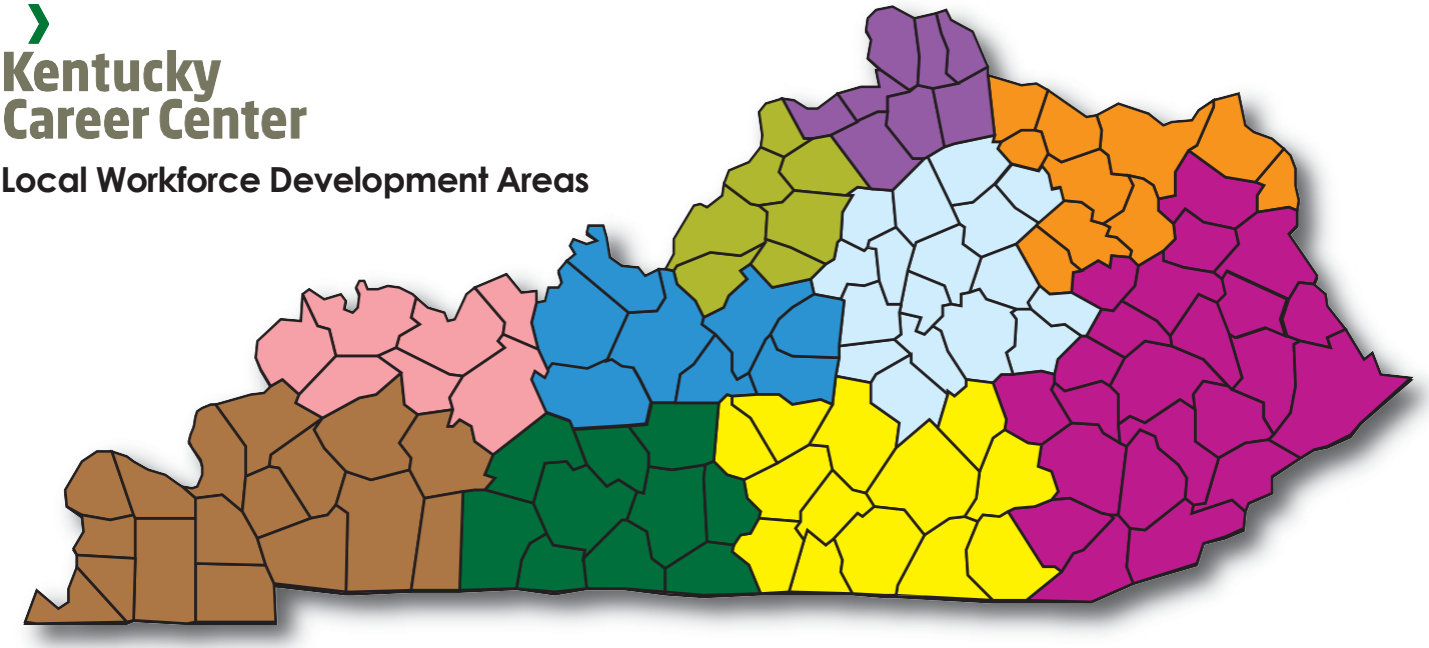
Training: investment in programs that are occupation specific, examples: on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, internships, pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, and career pathways exposure.

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 uniforms and other 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.

Kentucky Career Center

Local Workforce Development Areas



Bluegrass
Anderson, Bourbon, Boyle, Clark, Estill, Fayette, Franklin, Garrard, Harrison, Jessamine, Lincoln, Madison, Mercer, Nicholas, Powell, Scott, Woodford,
Tiffanie Reeves, **Director**
699 Perimeter Drive
Lexington, Kentucky 40517
859-810-2536
ckycareers.com
treeves@bgadd.org

Cumberlands
Adair, Casey, Clinton, Cumberland, Green, Laurel, McCreary, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Russell, Taylor, Wayne, Whitley
Myra Wilson, **Director**
PO Box 1570
Russell Springs, Kentucky 42642
270-866-4200
cumberlandsworkforce.com
myra@lcadd.org

EKCEP
Bell, Breathitt, Carter, Clay, Elliott, Floyd, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Magoffin, Martin, Menifee, Morgan, Owsley, Perry, Pike, Wolfe
Becky Carnes-Miller, **Director**
100 Airport Gardens Road, Suite 300
Hazard, Kentucky 41701
606-436-5751
jobsight.org
bmiller@ekcep.org

Green River
Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, Webster
Michelle Drake, **Director**
3108 Fairview Drive
Owensboro, Kentucky 42303
270-852-1312
gradd.com
michelle.drake@ky.gov

KentuckianaWorks
Bullitt, Henry, Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, Trimble
Michael Gritton, **Director**
410 West Chestnut Street, Suite 200
Louisville, Kentucky 40202
502-574-2500
kentuckianaworks.org
michael.gritton@kentuckianaworks.org

Lincoln Trail
Breckinridge, Grayson, Hardin, LaRue, Marion, Meade, Nelson, Washington
Jackie Masterson, **Interim Director**
PO Box 604
Elizabethtown, Kentucky 42702
270-769-2393
ltcareercenter.org
jackie@ltadd.org

Northern Kentucky
Boone, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, Owen, Pendleton
Correy Eimer, **Director**
22 Spiral Drive
Florence, Kentucky 41042
859-488-1854
nkcareercenter.org
correy.eimer@nkadd.org

South Central
Allen, Barren, Butler, Edmonson, Hart, Logan, Metcalfe, Monroe, Simpson, Warren
Jon Sowards, **President/CEO**
2355 Nashville Road, Suite C101
Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101
270-846-6707
southcentralworkforce.com
jon@southcentralworkforce.com

TENCO
Bath, Boyd, Bracken, Fleming, Greenup, Lewis, Mason, Montgomery, Robertson, Rowan
Justin Suttles, **Director**
201 Government Street, Suite 300
Maysville, Kentucky 41056
606-956-2634
tencocareercenter.com
justin.suttles@ky.gov

West Kentucky
Ballard, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Fulton, Graves, Hickman, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, McCracken, Muhlenberg, Todd, Trigg
Sheila Clark, **Director**
300 Hammond Drive
Hopkinsville, Kentucky 42240
270-886-9484
wkworkforce.work
sheila.clark@ky.gov

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REGISTER NOW

Virtual Job Fair

Join us for the Commonwealth of Kentucky's Virtual Job Fair, featuring an exclusive opportunity to connect with multi-sector employers – such as Humana, Nucor Tubular Products, Starbucks, the University of Kentucky, and others—as well as job seekers from across the commonwealth. This is your chance to explore exciting job openings and take the next step in your career. Don't miss out—register today and start your journey with the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Date: Wednesday, August 20, 2025
Time: 10:00 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. EDT

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

This event is completely free for both employers and job seekers, providing an excellent opportunity to connect and explore career opportunities.

Future virtual job fairs will take place on the third Wednesday of each month in 2025. Here's a preview of the upcoming dates:

- September 17, 2025
- October 15, 2025
- November 19, 2025
- December 2025 – no virtual job fair
- January 21, 2026
- February 18, 2026

EMPLOYERS SCAN THE QR CODE TO REGISTER.

JOB-SEEKERS SCAN THE QR CODE TO REGISTER.

TEAM KENTUCKY

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Questions? Contact Everett Bracken at 502-650-5283 or by email at everett.bracken@ky.gov

Appendix

Education and Workforce Collaborative Board Meetings

October 16, 2025

January 22, 2026

April 16, 2026

July 16, 2026

October 15, 2026

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.

TEAM KENTUCKY
EDUCATION AND LABOR CABINET