

Meeting held via Zoom

Attendees: Brittany Cox, Jess Fortner, Annissa Franklin, Tom West, Corry Eimer, Erin White, Mary Jackson, Mark Hohmann, Bill Sandell, Sara Tracey, Donna Taylor, Michaela Steversen, Rolando Thacker, Sam Keathley, Lynn Baker, Jessica Fletcher, Trey Pippin, Jon Sowards

KWIB Staff: Alisher Burikhanov, Debbie Dennison, LaChrista Ellis, Sara Jagers, Elishah Taylor

9:30am Welcome

Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB), welcomed and thanked the taskforce members for joining the meeting.

Work Ready Communities – Next Generation Update

Sara Tracey, Vice President of National Workforce and Education, TPMA, introduced herself and **Jessica Fortner, Senior Consultant, TPMA,** reviewed the timeline and survey findings and stakeholder feedback related to incentives for Work Ready Communities. Survey results showed that public recognition—including executive branch promotion, state-hosted ceremonies, and visibility across multiple outlets—was viewed as powerful incentive. If financial incentives are available, respondents overwhelmingly prioritized funding for barrier removal, followed by support for work-based learning initiatives and grants for economic development and workforce projects.

Feedback, collected through an open-ended survey question, was analyzed and consolidated into key considerations, aligning with prior stakeholder engagement. Respondents emphasized the importance of community and employer engagement, visible promotion and marketing, and ensuring the process remains community-driven and customizable, recognizing that each community's needs and accomplishments are unique. Flexibility and equity across communities were highlighted, along with continued support for both Work Ready designated and in-progress communities, particularly around barrier removal. Participants also stressed the need to align with existing efforts, avoid duplication, and provide technical assistance to help communities move from planning to action.

The key principles identified were collaboration, recognition, coordination among communities and state partners, and leveraging existing resources. Based on this feedback, a draft incentive framework was presented. All communities would receive baseline incentives focused on public recognition, such as website spotlights, signage, executive acknowledgment, and a customizable marketing toolkit. Additional incentive opportunities would be tailored by community status:

- Work Ready communities would have access to customized implementation support, booster opportunities, and barrier removal assistance.
- In-progress communities would have access to convening and planning support, connections to subject-matter expertise and peer communities, and barrier removal options.

Breakout Rooms – Incentives Discussion

The taskforce was separated into two breakout discussions aimed at gathering more detailed feedback on what barrier removal looks like at the community level and what types of funding incentives would be most meaningful and equitably allocated across community types and readiness levels.

The first breakout discussion, facilitate by Sara Tracey, centered on childcare as a critical workforce barrier, emphasizing challenges related to affordability, capacity, workforce shortages, and infrastructure, with solutions needing to reflect

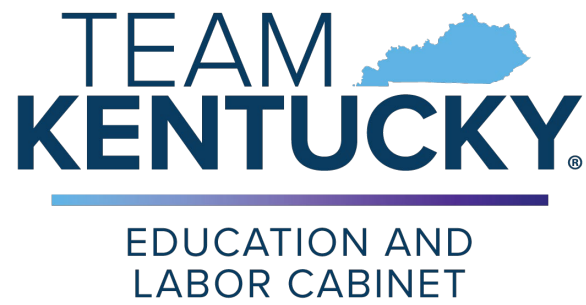
local conditions. Participants highlighted the need for flexible, community-driven funding paired with strong technical assistance to help communities leverage existing resources. They also stressed avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches, ensuring the “Work Ready” designation is clearly defined and meaningful, and promoting community pride through recognition and storytelling. Leveraging local workforce and economic development partners was identified as essential to advancing barrier removal efforts.

The second breakout discussion, moderated by Jessica Fortner, focused on key workforce barriers, including transportation, housing, childcare, and soft skills, and explored how incentives could help communities pursue Work Ready designation. Transportation and housing were highlighted as high-cost barriers that could be addressed through employer partnerships, pooled funding, or programs providing reliable vehicles and affordable housing. Childcare and meeting basic needs were also identified as critical for workforce participation, though limited funding remains a challenge. Participants noted that effective Work Ready incentives should be meaningful, target lagging indicators, and include public recognition tied to economic development, giving communities a clear reason to participate. Overall, funding is important, but collaboration, alignment, and visible benefits are central to driving community engagement.

10:27am – Closing Comments and Adjournment

Following the presentation and discussion, attendees were invited to share feedback or ideas for incentives by emailing [Sara Tracey](#) or [Jessica Fortner](#).

Alisher Burikhanov thanked attendees for their participation and provided the date for the next Work Ready Communities Taskforce meeting, which is scheduled for Wednesday, February 4, 2026.



Work Ready Communities Taskforce
Meeting Briefing Packet

January 7, 2026

9:30 – 11:00 am EST

AGENDA
9:30 – 11:00 am EST

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87476189373?pwd=wjFEfpzJ1j9kqbUAQkb2wRNYJrgFbQ.1>

Meeting ID: 874 7618 9373/ Passcode: 811064

Dial via phone: 1 646 558 8656

9:30 CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Welcome *Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director*
Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board

9:45 Work Ready Communities – Next Generation Updates *Sara Tracey, Vice President*
National Workforce & Education
TPMA

- *Purpose: WRC is Designed for Collaboration*
- *Survey Themes*
- *Incentives Principles*
- *Draft Incentives Framework*
- *Breakout Discussions*
- *Next Steps*

Jessica Fortner, Senior Consultant
TPMA

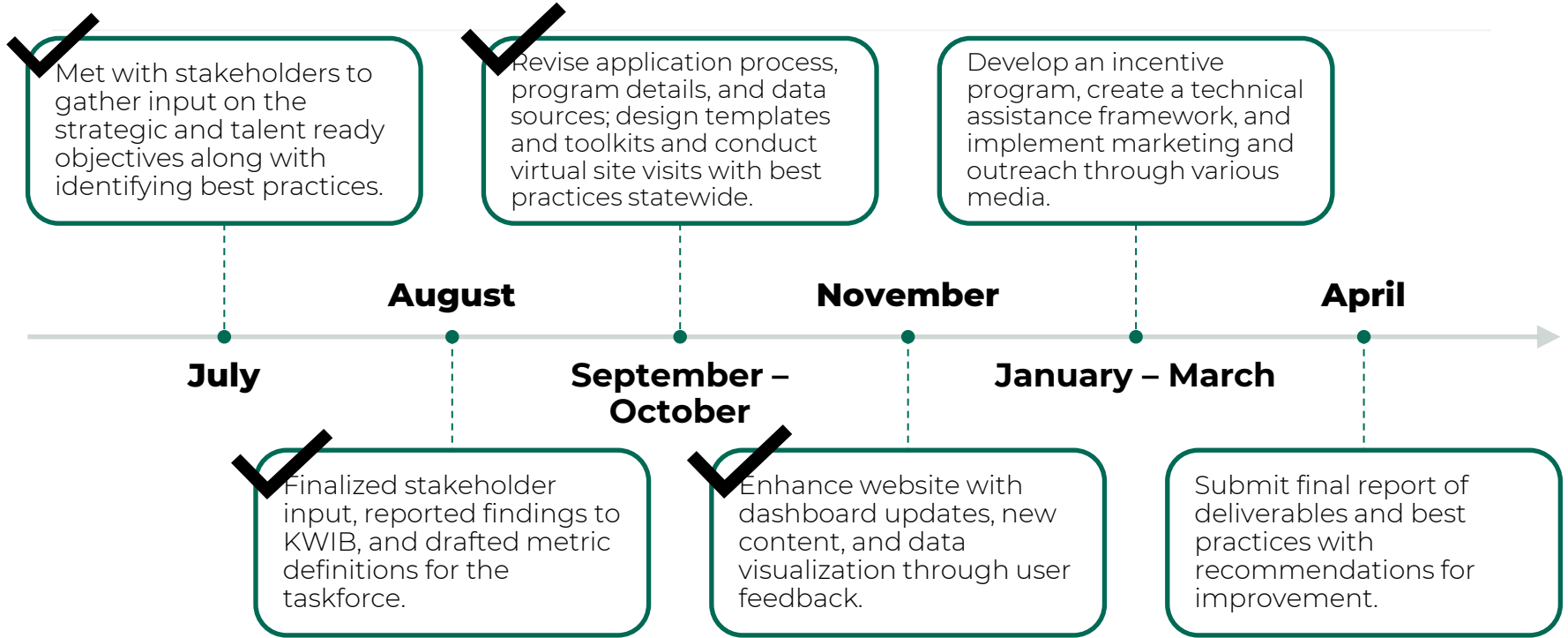
10:45 Closing Comments & Next Steps *Alisher Burikhanov*

11:00 ADJOURNMENT

Meeting Schedule:

- First Wednesday of the Month at 9:30 ET
- Next Meeting: February 4, 2026

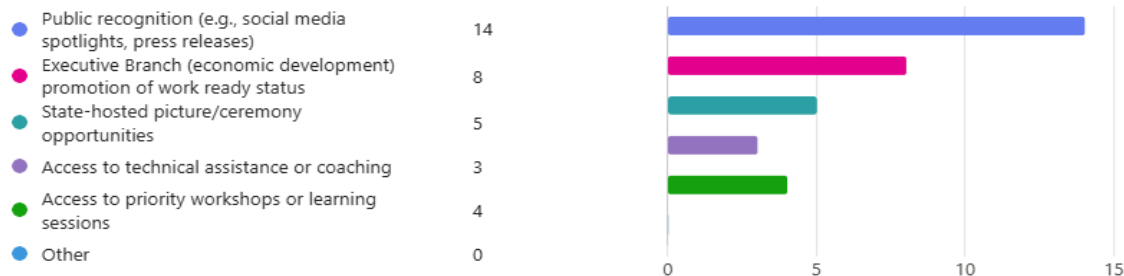
Timeline



Survey Themes

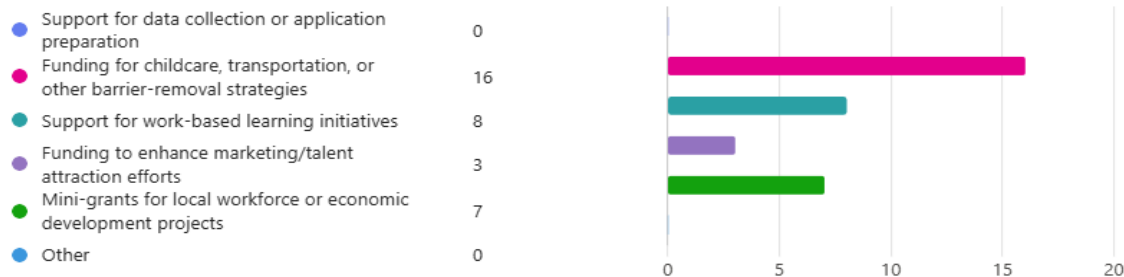
1. What types of no-cost or low-cost incentives would be most meaningful to communities participating in the Work Ready Communities program?

[More details](#)



2. If financial incentives become available, which allowable uses do you feel would provide the greatest value for communities?

[More details](#)



Considerations for the Incentive Program

Build Community & Employer Engagement	Flexible and Equitable	Aligned and Action-orientation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotion, marketing materials and visibility allow communities to use their status to attract employers and industry.• Community driven	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customization by community make up• Support in progress and work ready statuses• Include options for barrier reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Align with other state initiatives• Real-time technical assistance• Help communities move from planning to action

Key Incentive Principles



Collaboration



Recognition



Coordination



Leverage Existing Resources

Incentive Framework Draft

Baseline Incentives (For All Communities)

- Public recognition (website spotlight, signage)
- Executive branch acknowledgment
- Promotion & marketing toolkit

Customizable Options (Based on Status)

Work Ready

Implementation Support

TA Booster Package – Barrier Buster

In Progress

Convening / Planning Support

TA Booster Package – Barrier Buster

Break Out

- When communities talk about “barrier removal,” what is the most significant gap they are trying to address?
- If funding were used as a strategic incentive, what would make it meaningful, and how should it be allocated across readiness levels and community types to ensure equity and impact?



Next Steps

- .Using today's feedback we will update the framework.
- .If you would like to share further input or insight with us, please email Jess or Sara to schedule a 30-minute meeting.

stracey@tpma-inc.com

jfortner@tpma-inc.com