

Meeting held via Zoom

Attendees: Lori Ulrich, Taskforce Chair, Jessica Fortner, Sara Tracey, Rolando Thacker, Mark Hohmann, Bill Sandell, Aaron Poynter, Correy Eimer, Melanie Tapp, Brandon Combs, Myra Wilson, Lorraine O'Moore, Annissa M. Franklin, LeeSa Page, Erin White, Mary Jackson, and Sam Keathley

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

9:31am Welcome/Recap

Lori Ulrich, Chair, welcomed the taskforce members and **Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB)**, provided a recap of the Work Ready Communities program.

The Work Ready Communities program, a long-standing initiative of the Commonwealth, is being refreshed to better reflect today's measures of work-readiness and regional workforce strength. Guided by the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board and supported by TPMA as a third-party consultant, the program's updated goals and metrics were developed with input from community stakeholders, subject matter experts, and local workforce development boards. These updates focus on strengthening regional collaboration, connecting talent with employer needs, and helping position Kentucky as a leader in workforce readiness and economic growth. The taskforce is continuing work to finalize the new metrics.

Work Ready Communities – Next Generation Metrics Review/Application Review

Sara Tracey, Vice President of National Workforce and Education, TPMA, and **Jessica Fortner, Senior Consultant, TPMA**, delivered an update on the Work Ready Communities recommended metrics and asked for feedback on the application process. The presentation outlined key adjustments reflected in the shared document and reviewed the three primary strategic objectives: regional skills supply and demand, growing talent pools, and expanding work-based learning opportunities.

Recent updates include optional metrics to the quantitative section to account for differences in data availability across regions. The optional metrics provide flexibility, allowing regions to include additional data when available but without making it mandatory.

Updates to the Strategic Objectives include:

- **Supply and demand of regional skills** – added language emphasizing evidence that regional skills are identified based on employer input and that credentials earned align with employer needs. The importance of formal public-private partnerships and educator involvement in addressing industry needs was highlighted. When quantitative measures are not available, corresponding qualitative measures are added to allow regions to provide narrative descriptions.
- **Growing talent pools** – revisions emphasize employer education and engagement around untapped talent pools, along with the need for community support and prioritization of these groups.
- **Work-based learning** – updates address support for employers developing work-based learning partnerships and that data tracking processes are still being developed at the state level. Regions may describe their outcome tracking methods within the qualitative component, even if formal evidence is not yet available.

Updates to the Talent-Ready Objectives include:

- **Childcare** – metrics were updated to emphasize strategies for growing, developing, and retaining the childcare workforce. Additional focus was placed on registered apprenticeships and credential pathways, identified as key components for strengthening the childcare sector.
- **Housing** – feedback was gathered from former Kentucky Housing Corporation Executive Director, who reviewed and supported the existing metrics with minor adjustments. The task force emphasized the importance of quantifying community assistance programs and evaluating housing stock and affordability. Efforts are ongoing to improve the clarity and accessibility of housing data to support these evaluations.
- **Transportation** – updates acknowledge regional differences between urban and rural areas in terms of available infrastructure and systems. The objectives allow each region to describe existing resources, current barriers, and strategies to address transportation challenges, ensuring a community-specific approach.
- **Digital access and broadband** – The revisions emphasize the value of in-person instruction, recognizing that many individuals developing digital literacy skills may have limited access to technology and benefit most from face-to-face learning opportunities.
- **Talent attraction and retention** – the metrics and scoring components were designed to allow regions to describe their current strategies, highlight local initiatives, and demonstrate how these efforts impact labor force participation, rather than focusing solely on quantitative data.

The taskforce reviewed the application process, noting effective elements such as alignment with Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), in-person support, community presentations to KWIB, and clear online resources. Challenges included a cumbersome and manual process, technological and staffing limitations, outdated materials, and loss of institutional knowledge due to staff changes. Efforts are underway to streamline and update the process and related tools.

Following the presentation and discussion, attendees were invited to share feedback on the metrics or application process by emailing [Sara Tracey](#) or [Jessica Fortner](#).

Closing Comments

Lori Ulrich thanked attendees for their participation and encouraged everyone to provide any feedback and ideas to TPMA colleagues.

10:49 am ET - Adjournment

The Work Ready Communities Taskforce meetings will take place on the first Wednesday of each month, with the next meeting scheduled for November 5, 2025, at 9:30 a.m. EDT.

AGENDA
9:30 – 11:00 am EDT

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84968947815?pwd=iLD4vOD2N5PgaKeODaCONuCMlGqdbc.1>

Meeting ID: 849 6894 7815 / Passcode: 674548

Dial via phone: 1 646 558 8656

9:30 CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Welcome *Lori Ulrich, Chair*
Fleming-Mason Energy

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

9:45 Work Ready Communities – Next Generation Metrics/ Application Review *Sara Tracey, Vice President*
National Workforce & Education
• *Review & Validate Metric Revisions* *TPMA*
• *Feedback on Application Process Experience*

Jessica Fortner, Senior Consultant
TPMA

10:45 Closing Comments & Next Steps *Lori Ulrich, Chair*

11:00 ADJOURNMENT

Meeting Schedule:

- First Wednesday of the Month at 9:30 ET
- Next Meeting: November 5, 2025

Work Ready Communities: Next Generation Metrics and Scoring

The Work Ready Communities: Next Generation Metrics use a scoring system to assess regional workforce readiness. Each category is worth up to three points: **1 = Not Work Ready, 2 = In Progress, 3 = Work Ready.**

General Considerations

- Regions must score 8–15 to be rated In Progress and 16–24 to be rated Work Ready.
- Regions scoring 21 and below receive technical assistance and coaching.
- In Progress: Requires at least one letter of partnership, MOU, or other agreement showing collaboration.
- Work Ready: Requires multiple agreements across sectors (employer, education, nonprofit).
- To maintain certification, regions must show progress on at least one quantitative metric such as participation, completions, or housing units added.

Objectives	Description	Quantitative Metrics	Qualitative /Narrative Questions	Scoring Recommendations + Notes
Strategic Objective 1: Supply and Demand of Regional Skills	How are communities addressing local talent supply and employment demands? What strategic efforts are being made to meet the needs/goals of the industry through an aligned education vision? What are the strategies to meet the local in-demand industries as defined by Local Workforce Development Boards?	Core Demand • Top 5 industries (by # of jobs) • Top 5 occupations (by # of jobs) • Top 5 skills based on employer input Supply • # of residents earning CTE Pathways or Credentials in key industries • # of relevant training/ education programs + # of graduates annually	Core How does your LWDB work with employers, job seekers, and partners to meet the needs of local in-demand industries? Is there a formalized public-private partnership to address industry-specific workforce needs? How does your region ensure educators are responsive to industry needs? Explain strategies in place to address mismatches where supply does not meet demand?	Not Work Ready: No evidence of strategic alignment between workforce, education, and industry. Residents are not earning relevant credentials or enrolling in relevant pathways. In Progress: Workforce Board and education providers have engaged industry, and relevant training programs are in place or under development. Credentialed talent is growing yet supply lags employer demand. Work Ready: One or more sector partnerships (or similar public-private collaboratives) exist in top industries. Region has strategies addressing industry alignment and demand for skilled talent. Metrics indicate residents are upskilling/reskilling as industry demands.
Evidence: MOU, Advisory Council Minutes, Strategic Plan, Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment, Local WIOA plan Data Source: KYSTATS				

Work Ready Communities: Next Generation Metrics and Scoring

Strategic Objective 2: Growing Talent Pools	Does the community have awareness and engagement of all the non-profit organizations targeting untapped talent pools (individuals with disabilities, veterans, immigrants/refugees, formerly incarcerated, recovery, foster youth, those with food insecurities, etc.)? What are the strategic coordination efforts being made to create pipelines into employment? Kentucky's Workforce Pipeline can be used as a guide to potential talent.	Core - Overall labor force participation rate Optional # of non-profit organizations serving [untapped population] and providing training/employment related services (e.g., KY Valor)	Describe your region's collaborative efforts to grow the talent pool by engaging untapped populations and the organizations that serve them. What measurable outcomes are your region tracking and what are the results? Describe how local employers are being engaged/educated to expand willingness to hire untapped populations. Describe which untapped populations are being prioritized and qualitatively assess progress in employment outcomes, barriers addressed, and partnerships developed.	Not Work Ready: Region does not have a strategy to create pipelines into employment. Non-profit organizations serving untapped talent populations are not active in the region. In Progress: Region is able to describe collaborative efforts or strategies in place to increase labor force participation in at least one key population, but results are not available or measured to date. Work Ready: Overall labor force participation is at or above 60%. Region has clear, collaborative strategy for increasing labor force participation in at least two key populations and measurable results of pipeline development are available.
Evidence: MOU, hiring policy updates, public investments, grant reporting documents Data Source: KYSTATS, Training Program enrollment and completion data, LWDB, KCTCS				
Strategic Objective 3: Work-Based Learning	What strategies are used to grow skills and fill employment needs through the various work-based learning opportunities, such as career exploration, internships, co-ops, registered apprenticeships, on-the-job training, etc.?	Core # of WBL programs available (including paid internships, co-ops, registered apprenticeships) # of employers participating in WBL programs # of registered apprentices + # of registered	What is your region's approach to work-based learning at the high school, post-secondary, and adult/workforce development levels? What partners are involved in promoting, coordinating, and/or delivering WBL? What support is available to employers that are interested in creating or	Not Work Ready: Region does not have a WBL strategy in place; WBL that is available is not coordinated or measured reliably. In Progress: Region has at least one coordinated WBL initiative (e.g., expanding registered apprenticeship, required High School internships, etc.). Work Ready: Region has WBL options available for adults and students at all levels; significant coordination between workforce system and

Work Ready Communities: Next Generation Metrics and Scoring

		apprenticeships completed annually Optional: - Average # of WBL hours HS graduates or CTE students complete annually % of WBL participants earning an industry-recognized credential or certificate	expanding WBL programs? Does the region have a system to track WBL opportunities, participation, and outcomes?	employers is evident. 80% or more WBL participants earn an industry-recognized credential or certificate.
Evidence: MOU, Employer participation list, TRAIN dollars invested and impact partnerships Data Source: KYSTATS, KCTCS				
Talent Ready Objective 1: Childcare	What is the existing landscape of access and affordability, and what strategies are being taken to address the needs of the community? Data and strategy can include utilizing KYSTATs (https://kystats.ky.gov/Reports/Reports) capacity data and services offered by the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Education.	Core # of licensed childcare settings within a 10 and 20 minute drive # of Early Childhood workers in the region - Average cost of childcare (as compared to average income in the region) Optional: % of workers who remain in the field year-over-year, to capture sustainability of workforce supply # of early childhood registered apprentices	How does your region ensure the availability and affordability of childcare for working parents? Are there strategies in place (such as apprenticeships and credential pathways) to grow and retain the early childhood workforce? What strategies are in place or in development to address the barriers to affordable childcare? How do local employers contribute to the solution? Describe the transportation services available for childcare, including morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up (e.g., buses, vans, car riders).	Not Work Ready: Metrics indicate insufficient childcare providers (business and/or individual workers) and unclear plans to address the shortage. In Progress: Metrics indicate gaps in childcare availability or affordability, but one or more collaborative strategies are in place/in development to address the gap. Work Ready: Metrics indicate adequate availability of providers/workers, or the region has a coordinated strategy to recruit and retain providers. At least 60% of childcare workers remain in the field year-over-year. Region shows evidence of employer support (e.g., on-site childcare, financial support).

Work Ready Communities: Next Generation Metrics and Scoring

Evidence: ECCAP agreements, Retention and recruitment strategy, Collaborative Agreements, Apprenticeship enrollment and completion data,

Data Source: KYSTATS, KYNECT

Talent Ready Objective 2: Affordable Housing	What kind of housing trends are seen in the community (for example, the number of units being added annually) and what strategies are utilized to meet the demand? How are communities addressing affordable housing? Data gathering could incorporate the local energy companies to gauge growth by understanding new meters added.	Core • % change in housing stock year-over-year [% change=Previous Year Units - Current Year Units /Previous Year Units) ×100] • Median housing costs for renters/owners • % of residents who are cost burdened (>30% of gross income; significant cost burden defined as >50% of gross income) • Housing vacancy rates (goal: 4-8%) • Evaluation of housing quality (e.g., age of stock, code compliance, rehabilitation needs)	Describe your region's efforts to ensure affordable housing is available for all residents. What strategies are in place or in development to encourage home ownership (e.g., home repair or preservation funds, home maintenance courses)? Does the community offer rental assistance or other transitional/ supportive services for low-income residents, through a housing authority or other partners? If housing availability is a concern, are there incentives available for developers? Are zoning laws/planning rules friendly to new unit development (e.g., reduced parking requirements, flexible lot sizes)? How is the community addressing the quality of available housing stock (rehabilitation programs, inspections, code enforcement)?	Not Work Ready: Metrics indicate insufficient housing availability or a majority of residents experience significant cost burdens (≥50% of gross income). Housing quality concerns are widespread or unaddressed. In Progress: Metrics indicate gaps in housing availability, affordability (30–50% cost burden), or quality, but programs are in development to address those gaps. Work Ready: Metrics indicate housing is widely available, affordable (majority of residents spend <30% of gross income on housing), and of acceptable quality. The region has a strategic plan to maintain adequate stock for population and employer growth.
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Evidence: Developer agreements, nonprofit or community development reports,

Work Ready Communities: Next Generation Metrics and Scoring

Data Source: KYSTATS				
Talent Ready Objective 3: Transportation	What are the strategies used to grow transportation access and infrastructure to meet community and business needs? Can communities quantify the demand for transportation?	Core • Average cost of commuting relative to household income • Average commuting distance/time • # of residents commuting in/out of region for work daily • # of individuals using public transportation daily/weekly Optional: • # of registered vehicle owners (as compared to # of working age population) • # of bus stops/transit stops • # of micro-transit or community-based transportation programs available	Describe how your region is addressing/planning to address transportation demand and barriers? How do key employers in your region support workers' transportation needs? If public transportation is available, how does coverage compare to workers' needs (e.g., do buses run for 3rd shift workers? How far do individuals have to travel to reach a bus stop?)? Are there non-profit or private companies offering micro-transit options?	Not Work Ready: Metrics indicate that residents are spending significant time and/or money on their daily commute (as compared to household income), and no plans are in place to address the disparity. In Progress: Metrics indicate gaps in transportation availability or affordability, but the region has plans in place or in development to improve infrastructure, availability, or assistance. Work Ready: Metrics indicate transportation is adequate and affordable in the region and/or strategies and initiatives are in place to improve infrastructure, availability, or assistance. Public-private partnerships and employer assistance are evident. Average cost of community is less than 20% of household income.
Evidence: Employer and Transportation MOU, Survey data				
Data Source: https://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd , KY TRAK, Public Transportation Providers KYTC, KYSTATS				
Talent Ready Objective 4: Digital Access & Broadband Infrastructure	What is the internet availability across their rural and urban centers? Does a community have a digital access plan or strategy to ensure access for all?	Core • % of residents with access to broadband at home • % of region covered by broadband access • Speed of broadband access (% of residents	• Describe your region's digital access plan or strategy to ensure broadband access for all. Describe opportunities available to learn digital literacy skills (in person,	Not Work Ready: Significant portion of region does not have broadband access or public wifi available. No digital equity plan in place. No structured digital literacy programs in place. In Progress: Coverage is available in most areas but gaps remain in speed, affordability, or rural access. Public Wi-Fi is accessible for residents

Work Ready Communities: Next Generation Metrics and Scoring

		who can access top speed) # of resident completing digital literacy programs annually Optional # of public facilities with free wifi available to residents	virtual, hybrid, instructor led or student led)	without reliable home service. A digital access plan is in development or has only recently been adopted. Digital literacy programs are available but not yet widely accessible. Work Ready: Broadband access and high-speed coverage are widely available across the region (90% of households or more have broadband access, 50% or more at top speeds), with affordability and rural access barriers being actively addressed. A comprehensive digital access plan is in place and being implemented. Residents of all working ages have access to coordinated in-person digital literacy programs.
Evidence: Digital Access Plan, Provider service map, Broadband coverage maps, MOU or partnership agreements, Digital Literacy program completion Data Source: Location Summary Broadband Funding Map, KYSTATS				
Talent Ready Objective 5: Talent Attraction	What strategies are being used to actively attract talent locally or regionally? Are these strategies aligning with business demand?	Core % population growth (working age) - Cost of living (as compared to nearest MSA) - Web and social media traffic related to talent attraction campaigns - Labor force participation by age. Optional # of inquiries, relocations, or event participation linked to campaigns.	Describe your region's efforts to attract new residents. Is there an individual or organization dedicated to talent attraction and community development? Does the region have a marketing or social media strategy, and if so, how is it measured? Do strategies align with business needs? How do local business needs inform strategies?	Not Work Ready: Region does not have a strategy for attracting new talent. Population growth is stagnant or decreasing. In Progress: Region is developing a strategy for attracting new talent or has recently launched a strategy, but results are not evident to date. Population growth is stagnant or decreasing. Work Ready: Region has coordinated talent attraction strategy with demonstrated results such as increase in working-age labor force participation and tax revenue.
Evidence: Cost of living index, website analytics (heat map), marketing and branding materials, surveys Data Source: KYSTATS, C2ER				



Work Ready Communities: Next Generation Metrics and Scoring

Input was provided from the following stakeholders: KWIB Taskforce, Workforce Boards, Economic Developers, Industry – Employers, KY Chamber of Commerce, KDE/CTE, KY Association of School Superintendents, KY Community and Technical Colleges, KY Council of Economic Developers, KY League of Cities, KY Transportation Cabinet, KY Housing Corporation, former Executive Director of the KY Housing Corporation, KY Office of Early Childhood, and KY Office of Broadband Development



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Work Ready Communities: Next Generation

Application Process: What Worked

- Work Ready Dashboard (KYSTATS) helped counties see where they met or fell short of requirements.
- Data/statistics section was straightforward, based on existing reports.
- In-person support and presentations made the process accessible.
- FAQ and Q&A resources on the website provided clarity.

Application Process: Challenges

- Application was cumbersome, especially for recertification; duplication of original application
- Smaller and rural counties struggled with the process
- PDF submissions caused inefficiencies
- Review process was slow and manual
- Loss of institutional memory with staff changes
- Website had outdated or redundant content

Suggested Improvements

- Replace PDFs with an online form and sign-in accounts for applicants and reviewers.
- Add progress tracking, character limits, and upload options for supporting documents.
- Provide preview or downloadable list of questions for preparation.
- Streamline review with shared commenting tools (Google Docs, OneDrive, or integrated system).
- Ensure privacy and security with central application storage and controlled access.

Next Steps

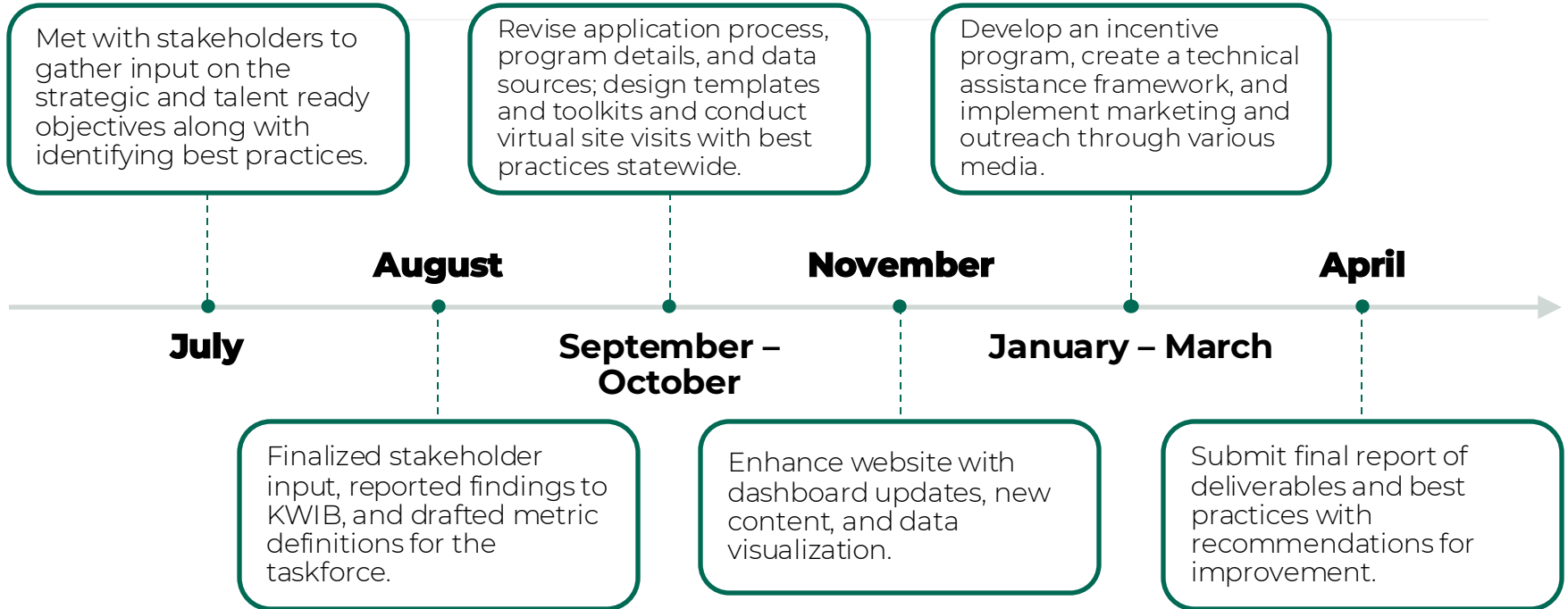
- Update application process based on feedback shared.
 - Develop resource guide, toolkit and templates.
 - Begin work to update the website.
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Have comments, questions, or suggestions? Send feedback to Sara Tracey and Jess Fortner.

stracey@tpma-inc.com

jfortner@tpma-inc.com

Timeline



Next Steps

- Define thresholds/targets for quantitative metrics
- Review the application process as a taskforce on October 1st

Have comments, questions, or suggestions? Send feedback to Sara Tracey and Jess Fortner.

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