KWIB Workforce Pell Workgroup Meeting

AGENDA
February 19, 2026
10:00 am – 11:30 am EST

Education and Labor Cabinet
4th Floor Main Conference Room
500 Mero Street
Frankfort, KY 40601

10:00 am **Welcome**……*Alisher Burikhanov*
Executive Director
Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB)

David Potter, Ph.D.
Senior Coordinator, Education Transition Strategist
Kentucky Adult Education

10:10 am **Key Outcomes**…… *Alisher Burikhanov*
- *Update on the Workforce Pell Governance*
- *Supporting Students (discussion on adult education enrollment)*
- *Identifying High-Wage, High-Skill, and In-Demand Definitions*

10:20 am **Workforce Pell Update**……*Rajeev Darolia, Ph.D.*
Wendell H. Ford Professor of Public Policy & Economics
University Research Professor
University of Kentucky

10:30 am **Piloting Dual Enrollment in Adult Education** ……*David Potter, PhD.*

10:45 am **KYSTATS Data Review**……*Matt Berry, Ph.D.*
Executive Director
Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS)

Sam Keathley
Senior Workforce Analyst
Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS)

11:00 am **Group Discussion**……*Workgroup Members*

11:30 am **Adjournment**……*Alisher Burikhanov*

Summary of Key Sector Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis that supported key sector selection discussions in 2024 generally followed this premise:

1.) Which occupations, at a statewide level, exhibit some favorable combination of wages, projected job openings (demand), and projected growth?

2.) Among those occupations, are there any that should be excluded? For example, maybe they don't pay a living wage, or maybe they require extremely high (or low) levels of educational attainment.

3.) For the remaining occupations, which industries account for the highest volumes of jobs in those occupations?

The final result of this analysis was a series of ranked lists of industries (one list for each ruleset considered in Step 2, shown on the sector_outputs tab of Attachment 1). Note that the lists of occupations that are produced in order to arrive at those industries (shown on the occupation_inputs tab of Attachment 1) were not formalized as a set of 'priority occupations', and existed only as a by-product of the industry identification process.

Key Sectors vs. Workforce Pell - Labor Market Data Alignment

	Key Sectors	**Workforce Pell**
What units of analysis are important?	Industries (with occupations as a foundation).	Instructional programs (with occupations *and/or* industries as a foundation).
To the extent that occupational data are important, what specific metrics matter?	Demand, Wages, and Growth Rate.	Demand, Wages, and Skill.
Are those metrics considered independently or in conjunction with one another?	In conjunction with one another. Occupations received a 'composite' score in the underlying calculations for key sector quantitative work.	Either. States are free to make independent lists (e.g. occupations can be considered High Wage but not High Demand, or vice versa).
How might regionality play a role?	Local WIBs were able to supplement key sectors with their own regional priority industries, so regionality wasn't a feature of the quantitative analysis.	LWA-level labor market data could potentially be used to generate region-specific frameworks for High-Wage, High-Demand lists.

Option #1: Repurposing Portions of Key Sector Methodology for Workforce Pell

To repurpose portions of the Key Sector methodology, there are several aspects of that approach that workgroup members would need to be comfortable with in the context of Workforce Pell. For example:

- The occupations that'd ultimately be crosswalked to instructional programs would take the form of a *single* list (as opposed to separate High-Wage, High-Demand, High-Skill lists).
- Key Sectors methodology does *not* include a "High Skill" dimension, but *does* include a "High-Growth" dimension that isn't explicitly required for Workforce Pell determinations.
- Key sectors methodology does *not* account for regional labor market characteristics (and instead only accounts for the statewide labor market).

If those conditions are accepted, then, in practice, this process would look like: choosing one of 'Methods' outlined in Attachment 1, deciding whether the data should be refreshed (as opposed to using the slightly older data that drove Key Sector selection), and then crosswalking the occupations to instructional programs.

Option #2: Developing a new approach

In the event that workgroup members would prefer *not* to repurpose the Key Sector methodology, and would instead prefer a methodology that accounts for regionality and which would result in independent lists for High-Wage, High-Demand, and High-Skill occupations (as opposed to composite scores), then there are other viable approaches.

Specifically, High-Wage and High-Demand occupation lists could be generated by identifying a specific threshold such that occupations exhibiting values *above* that threshold are included in the list(s).

Potential Wage thresholds:

- Living wage (likely from MIT LW Calculator… would require identifying household structure, and geographies to be used for comparison).
- Other publicly-available poverty/ self-sufficiency measures (Statewide or LWA)
- Entry-level wage for Total, All Occupations (Statewide or LWA)
- Median wage for Total, All Occupations (Statewide or LWA)
- Some % of any of the wage levels mentioned above

Potential Demand thresholds:

- *X*% of an area's total expected ten-year job openings accounted for by an occupation
- A predetermined volume (e.g. 500 or more job openings)
- Growth rates above or below the state or LWA Total, All Occupations growth rate (note: this isn't synonymous with demand or job openings in the *strictest* sense, but is likely still defensible)
- Occupations in the *X*th percentile along Demand (State or LWA)
- Occupations with the top *X* highest-demand within the state or an LWA (e.g. Top 100)

"High Skill" is a categorization that probably isn't well-served by quantitative analysis alone. Typically, in labor market analyses, high-skill vs. middle-skill vs. low-skill occupations are delineated as such based on the level of educational attainment required to perform them (which isn't necessarily aligned to the

spirit of Workforce Pell). To the extent that any KYSTATS data can be brought to bear on High Skill determinations, the workgroup might consider an approach that begins with the kind of educational-attainment-based categorization described above, but wherein occupations can be 'elevated' to High-Skill status based on whether the workforce supply of that occupation is supported by Apprenticeship programs, CTE programs, etc.

Miscellaneous notes

- Note that not all occupations that exist in Kentucky have publishable wage and/or demand estimates, as occupations' estimates can be suppressed for a variety of reasons (e.g. insufficient sample coverage). In many of these cases, it is reasonable to assume that a suppressed occupation accounts for very a relatively small volume of employment. However, in other cases, a suppressed occupation could potentially account for a non-trivial volume of employment, especially in instances where the occupation's employment overwhelmingly belongs to a small number of employers. Substitution of statewide estimates may or may not be appropriate in these instances, depending on the use case.

- In KYSTATS' data products, you'll see Demand and Total Job Openings published separately (with Demand universally being the smaller of the two data points for a given occupation). This reflects the fact that there are three underlying economic phenomena that produce job openings:

    - *Economic growth*. The economy grows over time, so additional job openings are produced to account for the new occupational employment that is needed as a result.
    - *Exits*. Individuals who are performing an occupation exit the labor force (e.g. retirements), and so job openings are produced to account for the replacement occupational employment that is needed as a result.
    - *Transfers*. Individuals who are performing an occupation stop performing that occupation to begin performing another occupation, and so job openings are produced to account for the replacement occupational employment that is needed as a result.

  Arguably, job openings from transfers entail a sort of 'musical chairs' aspect. For example, if a Human Resources Manager and an Accountant were to swap jobs, then there'd be two job openings produced – one in each of those occupations. However, in this instance, do education and workforce planners need to *do* anything in terms of producing an additional Human Resources Manager or an additional Accountant? Probably not. So, for some use cases, it is useful to *only* consider job openings produced from economic growth and exits, which is the metric that we refer to as Demand. There are many other use cases where Total Job Openings is the more useful metric.