



# Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) Employer Engagement Committee Meeting

## AGENDA

January 15, 2025

10:00 am – 11:30 am EST

## Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84892292526?pwd=MybdLYs8SNXdDTb6WXeajKzFrpNTt5.1>

Meeting ID: 848 9229 2526 Passcode: 196060

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10:00 am	Welcome and Introduction	<i>Beth Davisson, Chair Vice-President Kentucky Chamber Foundation</i>
10:05 am	Update on the KWIB Strategic Advance	<i>LaKisha Miller Executive Director, Workforce Center Kentucky Chamber Foundation</i>
10:15 am	Review of Past Committee Objectives	<i>Alisher Burikhanov Executive Director Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB)</i>
10:25 am	Review of KWIB Strategic Advance Committee Priorities	<i>LaKisha Miller &amp; Alisher Burikhanov</i>
10:45 am	Discussion: Committee Feedback	
11:00 am	Review of the “Easy Button” Toolkit	<i>Alisher Burikhanov</i>
11:15 am	Update on Kentucky’s Top 5 In-Demand Sectors	<i>Beth Davisson &amp; Alisher Burikhanov</i>
11:30 am	Adjournment	<i>Beth Davisson</i>



**Employer Engagement Committee Meeting**  
**January 15, 2025, 10 am -11:30 am EST**

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## Goal #1: Actively engage employers to drive Kentucky's workforce development system

-  Increase employer engagement in education and workforce development scaling to 3x current levels and mirroring that of neighboring states
-  Streamlined business service teams by region, with focus on business retention and expansion (BRE) via quality delivery of workforce services
-  Increase the number of Registered Apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities sponsored by employers by 5x
-  At least 40% of Kentucky Youth are participating in work-based learning during their P-12 years (exposure to workplace skills early in life)
-  Increased demand from employers to hire from priority populations and those with barriers to employment
-  Establish 50 localized statewide talent pipeline management system consortia which assist in delivery of real-time data, allowing for better alignment of supply and demand in the workforce
-  Provide direction to regional/local business service teams led by CED to streamline the level of effort required for employers to access and acquire workforce services
-  Form an outreach campaign that involves employers in educating parents, teachers, and counselors on industry opportunities in high-demand fields

## Goal #1: Actively engage employers to drive Kentucky's workforce development system.

Employer engagement in the design and delivery of workforce development programs is a critical catalyst for systemic change, essential for creating a future where the Commonwealth workforce system consistently produces highly trained and adaptable workers who add value to employers. This engagement ensures that employers' contributions to program design translate into a skilled workforce that meets their needs, ensuring positive outcomes for employers and workers.

### Common National Challenges

#### Existing Scorecard Highlights\*

- Increase employer engagement in education and workforce development
- Streamlined business service teams by region
- Increase the number of Registered Apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities
- At least 40% of Kentucky Youth are participating in work-based learning
- Increased demand from employers to hire from priority populations
- Establish 50 localized statewide TPM system consortia
- Provide direction to regional/local business service teams led by CED
- Form an outreach campaign that involves employers in educating parents, teachers, and counselors on industry opportunities

\* For full descriptions see Scorecard Overview

Workforce ecosystems encounter common challenges when working to engage employers to drive their system.

- **Employer commitment and sustained engagement.** The first often-cited problem is simply getting employers to the table, closely followed by challenges with keeping them at the table. There are competing demands on employers' time and resources, and if the value isn't clear or there aren't measurable outcomes readily available, employers have a difficult time committing. This reticence to commit may also be related to the following challenges.
- **Lack of awareness.** Many employers are simply unaware of the services and benefits offered by the workforce ecosystem or lack confidence in the system's ability to deliver quality talent. If employers have not experienced benefit from the workforce system, they are unlikely to engage in any meaningful way.
- **Complexity of the system.** The workforce system was not necessarily designed with businesses in mind, and it can be perceived as overly complex, with multiple funding streams, programs, and eligibility criteria. This complexity can confuse

employers who might be interested in engaging but are unsure where to begin or make them reticent to participate with a system they perceive as slow or out of touch. Added to the complexity is the fact that when organizations are not coordinating with one another, employers receive multiple asks of their time and participation, resulting in engagement fatigue for employers.

- **Limited capacity.** Workforce ecosystems may not always have the resources or expertise to effectively engage employers or provide services that align with their needs at the speed required to benefit employers. This often results in missed opportunities for collaboration or a perception that workforce programs are slow or disconnected from real-time business needs.

## Thought Leadership & Promising Approaches

Ensuring employer value is critical to fostering long-term, meaningful partnerships in the workforce ecosystem system. Employers need to see tangible benefits, such as access to a skilled workforce, improved retention rates, and a reduction in hiring costs. By working to understand exactly what employers need in both the short- and long-term and being responsive to those needs, state and local workforce boards are able to show value to employer partners and receive greater participation and engagement in driving service delivery. Some of the strategies that lead to this kind of engagement include:

- **Dedicated business engagement teams** that serve across partners and programs, ensuring single points of contact for employers. These engagement teams are made up of liaisons that understand industry, employer needs, and how to deliver services in a way that are both meaningful and effective for employers. They can assist with “translating” unfamiliar language, streamlining services, and system navigation, making it more likely for employers to both participate in services and engage in designing those services.
- **Data and outcome measurement** that shows the system’s value to employers. This can be disseminated through annual reports and/or meetings, social media, one-on-one meetings, or through a variety of ways, but the important thing is that the information provided speaks to employers’ needs and what they value, rather than simply reporting on program performance. Examples may include information about the number of job seekers and trainees in relevant industries, time-to-hire metrics, return on investment data, or diversity and inclusion metrics.
- **Work-Based Learning** offers employers a direct role in training and developing their future workforce by providing students and workers with hands-on, practical experience that aligns with the specific skills businesses need. Through models like on-the-job training and apprenticeships, internships, and co-ops, employers can customize training to meet their immediate and long-term workforce demands. This tailored approach benefits employers by helping to build a talent pipeline with relevant skills while offering workers real-world understanding of their fields, increasing their employability and career readiness. WBL also fosters stronger industry-education partnerships, ensuring that educational programs stay aligned with current industry trends and needs.
- **Sector Partnerships and Industry-Led Collaboratives** focus on engaging employers from a specific industry to collaboratively identify skill gaps, training needs, and workforce solutions. They rely on employer leadership to both help identify the needs and co-create the solutions and strategies to meet those needs. Some K-12 and college systems use sector partnerships to serve as their required advisory board, maximizing employer input and time.

While building a successful employer engagement strategy requires time, intention, and resources, there are areas that are doing this exceptionally well. For some examples of this, explore the links below.

- [West Michigan Works!](#)
- [Hampton Roads Workforce Council](#)
- [Workforce Solutions Capital Area](#)

## KWIB Strategic Advance - Employer Engagement Summary

### Priority

#### **1. Expand, scale, and improve WBL, including apprenticeship**

There was considerable discussion across all Committee members and attendees around this priority, which was split into two separate categories to manage conversation. Priority 12, focused on better defining and promoting a full work-based learning continuum, could tuck under this one, as they are interrelated. Discussion focused largely on:

- Continued expansion and use of apprenticeship – both scaling and utilization in new industries
- Addressing various barriers to using the model, including age and liability perceptions and constraints, administrative burdens for employers
- Increasing student and employer interest and involvement, largely through promotion of the ROI and benefits
- Expansion of the KY FAME model (and other promising models) and, perhaps, replicating it for new industries
- Providing education on the structures, resources, and supports available for WBL and apprenticeship to address capacity constraints and determine when each WBL approach is the best fit

#### **2. Focus on diversifying talent pipelines and engaging/serving underrepresented populations**

Discussions focused on building upon the current efforts of the Kentucky Education and Workforce Collaborative, Kentucky Chamber Foundation “academies,” and other efforts to intentionally engage and support a diverse talent pool. Attendees discussed leading with skills, not barriers, in their conversations with businesses and educating employers on recruitment and engagement tactics for various populations, as well as educating these priority populations how to advocate for themselves. The populations discussed included:

- Second chance talent
- Youth
- Seniors
- Individuals with disabilities
- Under- and unemployed
- Other marginalized/underserved populations

## Priority

### **3. Use of a common CRM platform to support a unified approach to serving business (via SWATT)**

Participants in several breakout groups discussed how a lack of a common CRM system creates challenges and knowledge gaps across multiple partners working with the same businesses. A common CRM, they discussed, would help to standardize information collection and share approaches, improve coordination, enhance the knowledge of teams, minimize duplicative outreach, and streamline service delivery.

### **4. Expand and enhance the Statewide Workforce and Talent Teams unified business services approach**

Participants were passionate about utilizing the momentum of the SWATT teams and processes to streamline systems, processes, and services and manage state, regional, and local relationships across the workforce and education ecosystems for better, more coordinated service delivery. This discussion also included references to the importance of:

- Single points of contact for business, when possible
- Making sure that both state and local entities are represented
- Leveraging a common CRM tool (see Priority 3)
- Streamlining employer interactions with schools

### **5. Strengthen employment readiness and soft/durable skills approaches**

Participants discussed the importance of gaining industry perspective and context around work readiness and durable skills, understanding current employer challenges and needs for improvement, and devising ways to include them in training/instruction (including opportunities for practical application and demonstration).

### **6. Expand and leverage employer leadership in advocating for existing/new funding and policy to support industry needs and workforce barriers (including childcare)**

This priority did not get a lot of discussion. However, participants recognized the key role that employer voice can play in advocating for both current and potential policy, programming, and funding to support their talent needs.

### **7. Better support employer engagement efforts through strengthened partnerships with employer-serving organizations (e.g., the Society for Human Resource Management, industry associations) to capture and disseminate best practices, toolkits, etc.**

Participants were interested in building intentional partnerships with various associations and human resource, talent development, and talent recruitment organizations to curate and disseminate promising practices to address challenges discussed in the SWOT analysis and support the other priorities identified.

## Priority

### 8. Focus on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and technology on the workforce and devise proactive responses

This priority is focused on better understanding the current and future impact of AI and technology on jobs, job environments, skill needs, where and when work happens, and jobs that will significantly change or be impacted by AI, automation, and other technological advances. Participants noted that better understanding the nuances would result in a more proactive approach to adjusting strategies.

### 9. Leverage data in more proactive and predictive ways

While the strength of KYSTATS and other data sources in KY were frequently lauded, participants discussed a need for continued improvement of data sources and quality and accessing new data sets (including LMI-focused data) to be more proactive and predictive, as opposed to reactive.

### 10. Focused engagement of career centers to communicate employer needs to youth

Participants discussed an overall need to increase employer-driven career awareness and exposure to all audiences, with a particular focus on leveraging Kentucky career centers to amplify employer needs, occupation and skill trends, and other industry information to youth/students. Discussion of enhanced career awareness and exposure included priorities like:

- Changing industry perceptions, where necessary
- More intentional involvement from employers in the K-12 system
- An outreach campaign to various audiences (e.g., students, adult workers, parents, counselors, teachers)
- Statewide coordination, but regional execution, of career exploration activities, events, etc.

***Note:** While career awareness and exploration were frequent topics that impacted many of the priorities on this list, they were not identified as most-critical priorities. Additional nuance was added to this priority to capture conversation trends.*

### 11. Focus on workplace innovation and flexibility

Discussion around this priority was focused on keeping up with trends in where, when, and how work happens and worker desires for workplace and work schedule flexibility.

Participants elevated:

- Encouraging and challenging employers to innovate
- Communicating expectations clearly (by industry and occupation) about when and where flexibilities could *not* occur due to business needs or requirements



## Priority

### **12. Defining a full continuum of work-based learning**

While much of the participants' discussion revolved around Registered Apprenticeship (and other apprenticeship models) as a premier WBL solution, they also discussed the value of exploring with employers a full WBL continuum. Discussion focused largely on:

- Clearly communicating the value proposition(s) of WBL models to various audiences
- Clarity around various definitions and models (e.g., hands-on career exposure, employer project-based learning, internships, mentorship, pre-apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship)
- Definitions of what constitutes a quality experience for each WBL type

# The Easy Button

There is no magic button to press to make the world work for you, but here is a concise list of resources to set you down an easier path.



## Family & Childcare Resources

Resources to aid Kentucky families from childcare to nutrition.

- [Employee Child Care Assistance Partnership Program \(ECCAP\)](#) – Program designed to assist employees and employers with the cost of childcare through Kentucky’s Cabinet for Health and Family Services.
- [Family Resource Simulator](#) – An interactive tool for illustrating public assistance benefits and cliff effects for workforce families.
- [Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services](#) – Home base for accessing various family-based programs and initiatives available to employers and employees.
- [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment and Training \(SNAP E&T\)](#) – Nutritional support and workforce training to eligible participants.
- [Women, Infants and Children's Program \(WIC\)](#) – Nutritional, as well as Pre-and Post-natal support for eligible parents of children up to six years old.



## Housing Resources

Resources to aid Kentuckians in finding and retaining housing.

- [Kentucky Housing Corporation](#) – Affordable housing solution programs and services designed to develop, preserve, and sustain housing statewide.
  - [Housing Supply Gap Website](#) – Addressing housing gaps and their impact on individuals within the workforce.
- [Housing for Urban Development \(HUD\)](#) – Grants and programs to assist Kentuckians to find affordable and sustainable housing statewide.
- [Special Committee Kentucky Housing Task Force](#) – Taskforce designed to study and review the current and future policy needs of the state to address access and availability of housing to the citizens of the Commonwealth.
- [Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\)](#) – Federally-funded program to help eligible low-income households meet their home heating and/or cooling needs.



## Transportation Resources

Resources to aid Kentuckians in finding transportation statewide.

- [Public Transportation Providers](#) – A list of all available public transportation providers across the Commonwealth to combat transportation barriers.
- [Transportation Initiative](#) – A project of UK’s Human Development Institute that seeks to provide comprehensive information and education on transportation options in Kentucky.



## Work-Based Learning & Apprenticeships

Resources to aid work-ready individuals to enter the workforce development system.

- [Kentucky’s Registered Apprenticeship](#) – Program that helps businesses develop their workforce, serving the critical need of increasing employee retention and finding qualified candidates for hard-to-fill jobs.
- [Work-Based Learning Manual](#) – A manual for the Work-Based Learning program with the purpose of providing guidance and direction for schools when developing and implementing the components of work-based learning experiences.
- [Bus to Business Initiative](#) – A statewide KY Chamber initiative focused on connecting students with employers and bringing classrooms to careers by showing students what career pathways are in their own communities.
- [Kentucky Federation of Advanced Manufacturing Education \(KY-FAME\)](#) – A partnership of regional manufacturers whose purpose is to implement career pathway, apprenticeship-style educational programs that will create a pipeline of highly skilled workers.



## Re-Entry Resources

Resources to aid justice-involved individuals re-enter society and the workforce.

- [Team Kentucky’s Second Chance Website](#) – Programs and Initiatives to aid those re-entering society or the workforce, as well as employers seeking to aid in such programs.
- [Re-integration of Ex-Offenders Programs](#) – Programs with the aim of improving involvement within the criminal justice system by creating individualized reentry plans, empowering individuals with resources, support, and programing, to promote successful reintegration into the community.



## Veteran Resources

Resources to aid veterans, transitioning military, and military families.

- [Jobs for Veterans State Grants \(JVSG\)](#) – Provides federal funding to hire dedicated staff to provide individualized career and training-related services to veterans and eligible persons with significant barriers to employment, as well as assist employers to fill their workforce needs with job-seeking veterans.
  - [Veteran Resources](#) – A list of resources to aid veteran job-seekers.
- [Veterans, Transitioning Military and Military Family Resource Guide](#) – a composite document with information and links to various resources aimed at assisting military-involved individuals.



## Vocational Rehabilitation

Resources to aid individuals with disabilities to enter the workforce.

- [Statewide Needs Assessment](#) – An assessment addressing the vocational rehabilitation needs of Kentuckians with disabilities to develop and update the state plan for vocational rehabilitation services and to help determine objectives and priorities.
- [Internship Opportunities](#) – A professional learning experience that offers meaningful, practical work related to a student’s field of study or career interest, giving a student the opportunity for career exploration and development, and to learn new skills.



## Refugee Resources

Resources to aid new Kentuckians.

- [Kentucky Office for Refugees](#) – The refugee resettlement agencies in Kentucky operate the Reception & Placement (R&P) program, meeting refugee needs upon first arrival. These agencies also provide comprehensive post-arrival services including case management, employment services, and English language training programs. Kentucky is home to 8 resettlement agencies located in Louisville, Lexington, Bowling Green, Covington, and Owensboro.
- [Kentucky Adult Education](#) - If English is not the primary language of an individual, and they’d like to become more fluent while improving job-seeking skills, Kentucky Adult Education offers complete English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in every Kentucky county.

## **Kentucky's Top Five In-Demand Sectors**

On November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024, the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) voted to adopt the Kentucky's top five in-demand sectors. The two-phase, data-informed identification and verification process is described below with sample occupations provided. Additionally, the KWIB voted to incorporate a five-year review process utilizing the two-phase approach of quantitative and qualitative analysis.

### **Kentucky's Top Five In-Demand Sectors:**

1. Healthcare
2. Manufacturing and Logistics
3. Construction
4. Education
5. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (PS&TS)

### **Background**

The process of identifying the top five in-demand sectors in Kentucky took place through a two-phase approach, through a quantitative and qualitative review process. The data gathering and analysis was provided by the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS).

The quantitative review process initiated in the Sector Strategies Workgroup with membership consisting of Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) members, business and industry representatives, education partners, government representatives, and workforce development practitioners. The workgroup settled on the key quantitative data approach of reviewing occupations that are in-demand, experience growth, and have living wages. Specifically, the formula set by the quantitative group:

- 1) Entry Annual Wages OR Median Wages (25%)
- 2) Occupational Demand (50%)
- 3) Growth Rate (25%)

Importantly, the business members of the workgroup emphasized the importance of occupational demand and giving it more percentage weight above the other elements. The list of key occupations was then connected to their respective industry sectors. The quantitative workgroup reviewed various ranking methods in the review process (i.e. incorporating location quotient) and ultimately settled on the fact that all methods lead to similar sector output.

Once the quantitative workgroup agreed on the formula and the data derived, the work of the qualitative workgroup began. The qualitative workgroup consisted of statewide education and training organizations that not only administer various training dollars, but also understand industries that may be experiencing growth in the future not yet reflected in data.

### **Example Occupations**

1. Healthcare
  - a. Registered Nurse

- b. Medical and Health Services Managers
- c. Nurse Practitioner
- d. Substance Abuse, Behavioral Disorder, and Mental Health Counselors
- e. Clinical Laboratory Techs

## **2. Manufacturing and Logistics**

- a. Assemblers and Fabricators
- b. Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers
- c. Machinist
- d. Industrial Production Managers
- e. Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers

## **3. Construction**

- a. Construction Laborers
- b. Carpenters
- c. Electricians
- d. Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters
- e. Project Management Specialists

## **4. Education**

- a. Elementary School Teachers
- b. Secondary School Teachers
- c. Middle School Teachers
- d. Educational, Guidance, and Career Counselors and Advisors
- e. Postsecondary Teachers

## **5. Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services**

- a. Software Developers
- b. Management Analysts
- c. Paralegals and Legal Assistants
- d. Computer User Support Specialists
- e. Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists

### **Impact and Future Review**

Identifying these sectors allows Kentucky to focus time and investment into growing the opportunities in industries and occupations that are in high demand, are experiencing growth, and pay living wages. Investment in these sectors and occupations go beyond Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) as the Kentucky workforce development ecosystem operates in a collaborative and strategic direction.

The five in-demand sectors provide a statewide lens, while local workforce development boards can incorporate additional two sectors that are reflective of their local economies.

In addition to adopting the top five in-demand sectors, the KWIB voted to incorporate a review process every five years utilizing the two-phase approach of quantitative and qualitative review.