TEAM KENTUCKY®

EDUCATION AND LABOR CABINET

Workforce Participation Committee Meeting

Briefing Packet

October 29, 2026

10:00 – 11:30 am ET / 9:00 - 10:30 am CT

Committee Chair

Dr. JC Gregory

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Workforce Participation Briefing Packet

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Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB)
Workforce Participation Committee Meeting

AGENDA
October 29, 2026
10:00 am – 11:30 am ET / 9:00 am – 10:30 am CT

Zoom Meeting
https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86086291899?pwd=m5J2ruUwy4dOM6Kxh6OX2m4T8brwME.1

Meeting ID: 860 8629 1899 Passcode: 631389

10:00 am	**Welcome and Committee Introduction**	*Dr. J.C. Gregory, Committee Chair* *Executive Director* *Kentucky Office for Adult Education*
10:15 am	**Overview of Workforce Participation Priorities**	*Alisher Burikhanov* *Executive Director* *Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB)*
10:30 am	**Presentation: Benefit Cliffs Impact on In-Demand Occupations**	*Alexander Ruder* *Assistant Vice President, Community and Economic Development* *Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta*
11:00 am	**Committee Discussion**	*Dr. JC Gregory, Committee Chair*
11:30 am	**Adjournment**	*Dr. JC Gregory, Committee Chair*

Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) Workforce Participation Committee Meeting

Minutes
July 23, 2026
10:00 am - 11:30 am ET

Via Zoom

Attendees: Dr. J.C. Gregory (Committee Chair), Heidi Margulis, Brittney Allen, Annissa Franklin, Cassie Bertram, Chris Wooldridge, Eleri Gesler, Lindsey Trent, Hilary Writt, Johnny Pittman, Jon Sowards, Kristen Kaelin, Laurie Mays, Lydon Pryor, Matt Berry, Myra Wilson, Stephanie Collins, Tiffanie Reeves, Vestena Robbins, Betty Whittaker, Leslie Sizemore

Staff: Alisher Burikhanov, Debbie Dennison, LaChrista Ellis, Elishah Taylor

Welcome and Call to Order

J.C. Gregory, Ph.D., Executive Director, Kentucky Adult Education, welcomed attendees and offered well wishes to anyone affected by recent severe weather in the Commonwealth.

Overview and Strategic Priorities

Dr. Gregory shared three approved strategic priority areas of focus within this committee. Priorities include identifying and reducing barriers to employment such as childcare, transportation, and housing; focusing on improving access to supportive services and career advancement opportunities by incorporating input from workers and service providers; and addressing the hiring challenges faced by employers. Focus groups will be formed to further analyze each priority area and will involve ongoing engagement, the collection of sector-level data, and the development of data-informed solutions.

Discussion was had around data points that will be analyzed. Data examples to be analyzed were discussed and would include education attainment by industry sector, among others. **Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board,** emphasized the importance of understanding available data to review such as benefit cliffs, as illustrated by the Atlanta Federal Reserve's "Cliff Tool," in assessing career growth. As wages rise and public assistance benefits phase out, families can experience a wage plateau (e.g., little net change in resources between $38,000 and $78,000 in wages). He recommended incorporating this dynamic into both quantitative analysis and qualitative case studies. The committee agreed this is a key factor to ensure that workforce participation is a net gain for individuals and families. Alisher further referenced the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) report, sponsored by United Way of Kentucky, which identifies basic-needs challenges (including childcare, transportation, and housing) faced even by employed individuals.

Labor Force Participation Rate Update

Dr. Gregory reviewed the labor force participation rate, a measure compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics that reflects the share of the non-institutionalized civilian population aged 16 and older (excluding active-duty military) in the labor force.

- National rate (June 2026, most current): 61.5%
- Kentucky rate (per KYSTATS): 58.1%

Dr. Gregory noted this represents an opportunity for Kentucky to grow relative to both the national rate and other states within its region.

He highlighted several resources to support the group's work, including the Employer Job Posting Guide**,** Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Barrier Table**,** and JobsEQ Economic Overview included in the briefing packet. He also discussed the new Workforce Pell Grant**,** effective July 1, 2026, which expands federal financial aid to eligible short-term training programs, and the Futuriti **,** which helps individuals explore careers in Kentucky's high-demand industry sectors.

Myra Wilson, Director, Cumberlands Workforce Development Board, shared her appreciation for the work of this committee and support of individuals who are incarcerated or exiting rehabilitation centers, particularly efforts to help them obtain identification, which is often a critical early barrier to reentering the workforce. Dr. Gregory acknowledged Aaron Poynter and his team for their work. Their approach aims to ensure that postsecondary education and training start before individuals transition out of institutional settings. This approach prepares individuals to be work-ready upon reentry.

Next Steps and Self-Sufficiency Data

Alisher Burikhanov noted that the three priorities were adopted in May and the group is now moving into implementation, beginning with the first round of analysis and measurement. KWIB staff will be building focus groups for this work and will provide quarterly updates. Members interested in contributing, drafting questions or identifying participants should contact him directly.

He also pointed members to the Self-Sufficiency Report in the briefing book appendix, which incorporates a compilation of data from the ALICE report, the Living Wage Institute, occupational median wages, and Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS). Wage information is broken down by county, workforce board region, metropolitan, and micropolitan area.

11:14 am Adjournment

Dr. Gregory invited some final comments from committee members and encouraged continued communication outside of the meeting. With no additional business, he thanked members for their time and participation and concluded the meeting.

Overview of Workforce Participation Priorities

Strategic Committee: Workforce Participation

Chair: Dr. J.C. Gregory

Strategic Goal: Workforce Participation

In order to meet the demands of the economy and businesses, workforce development must align the right person with the right knowledge, skills, and abilities and employment options. Workforce participation is a leading indicator that impacts the future Labor Force Participation Rate. Workforce participation represents the talent acquisition, development, and management processes which support the depth, skill, acumen, and flexibility of the workforce to meet the demands of emerging employment trends and priorities across the Commonwealth including, but not limited to, barrier mitigation and deployment of support services to promote employment sustainability and career advancement.

Priority #1: Addressing Barriers to Employment & Finding Solutions

Strategic Action: Workforce participation is critically connected to experience of job seekers and workers. Emphasis is placed on the individual as the "center-of-gravity" through the approach of understanding barriers for those unemployed, under-employed, and seeking employment opportunities.

Quantitative and Qualitative Metrics:

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Conducting focus groups of individuals that are unemployed, underemployed, and seeking employment. Written analysis will lead to the overarching themes in the barriers to employment from the individuals' perspective.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Analyze baseline data in the barriers to employment that are impacting all Kentuckians, such as: access to childcare, reliable transportation, and affordable housing. Data will reflect statewide and regional perspectives, with best practices gathered from successful approaches.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Measure the growth of public-private partnerships that address the barriers of employment and the growth in the number of programs and individuals that have successfully increased access and opportunity to employment, while reducing barriers to employment.

Priority #2: Employment Best Practices, a Worker Perspective

Strategic Action: Leveraging information gathered in overcoming unemployment, under-employment, and career growth. Best practices will be used to grow career access and opportunities through the partnership between organizations that serve Kentuckians with barriers to employment and employers that have strategically embraced growth talent pipelines.

Quantitative and Qualitative Metrics:

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Development of case studies on overcoming unemployment, underemployment, and career growth, at least three per category.

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Development of case studies from organizations that serve individuals with barriers to employment. This includes gathering of participants, placements, wages, and retention data points to demonstrate value to potential employers.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Available statewide and regional supportive services established that address barriers to employment.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Growth in individuals attaining employment by the utilization of services, best practices, and stronger employer involvement. The baseline quantitative data will be measured against annual updates on labor force participation rate, in addition to, wages, placements, and retention.

Priority #3: Addressing Barriers to Hiring, a Business Perspective

Strategic Action: Critical to the workforce development formula is employer willingness to hire, train, and develop all potential talent. Having a constant pulse check on employer perspective in hiring, development, training, and skills required will be conducted.

Qualitative Metrics (with industry pulse check):

Immediate Measurement (within one year): Creation of a simple survey of industry associations (starting with Kentucky's top industries) to keep track of challenges and barriers to employment, training, and development, as well as gathering data on benefits and quality of job indicators.

Mid-term Measurement (within two years): Ongoing analysis of data points gathered that can be shared regularly with stakeholders.

Long-term Measurement (within four years): Ensuring a proper response to the information gathered from the regular pulse check is addressed among government and nongovernmental stakeholders that serve individuals with employment barriers.

Full Strategic Plan can be viewed and downloaded here:
https://kwib.ky.gov/Documents/KWIB%20Strategic%20Plan_2026-2029%20%28002%29.pdf

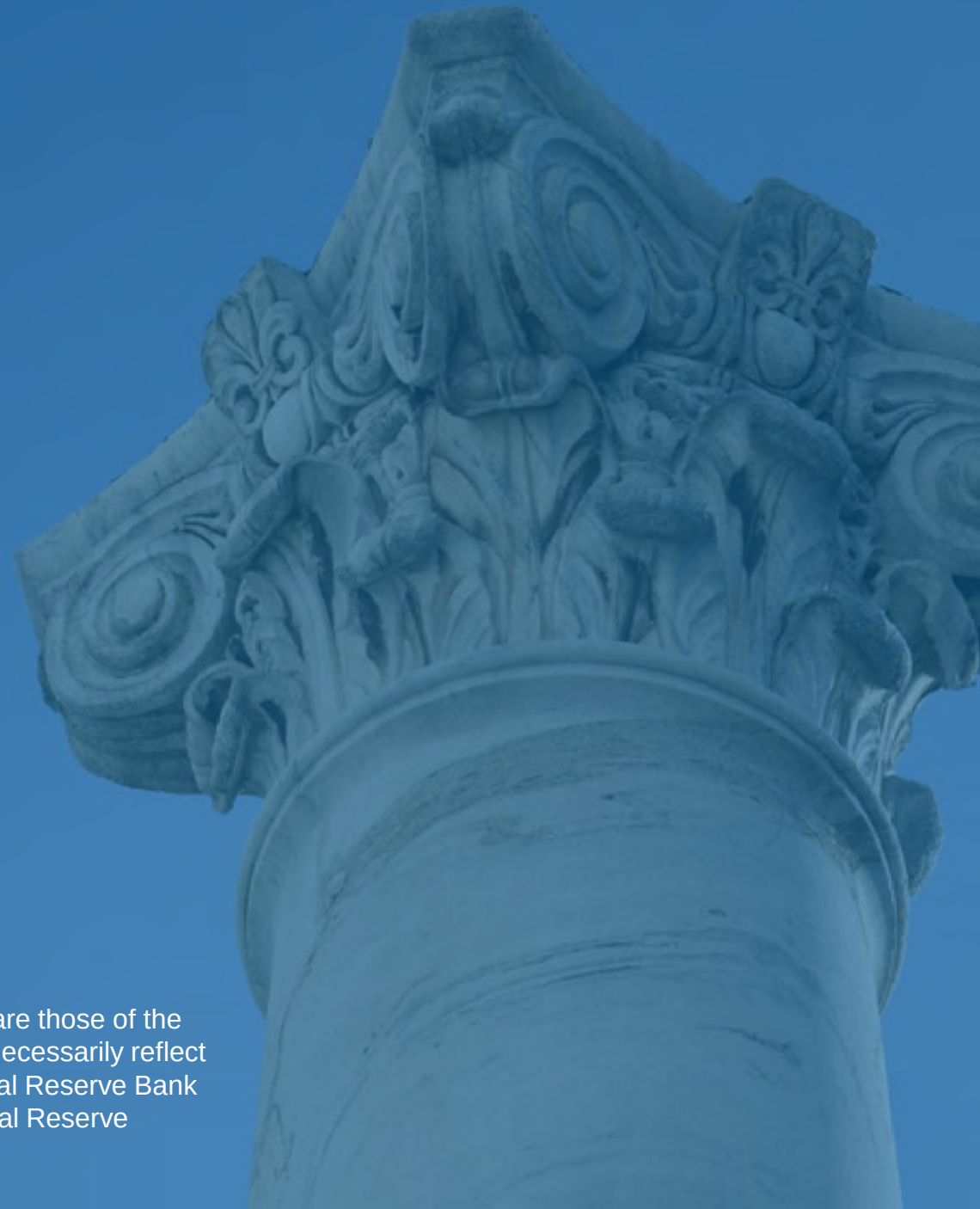
Benefit Cliffs Impact on In-Demand Occupation

Benefits Cliffs along In-Demand Occupations in Kentucky

Alex Ruder

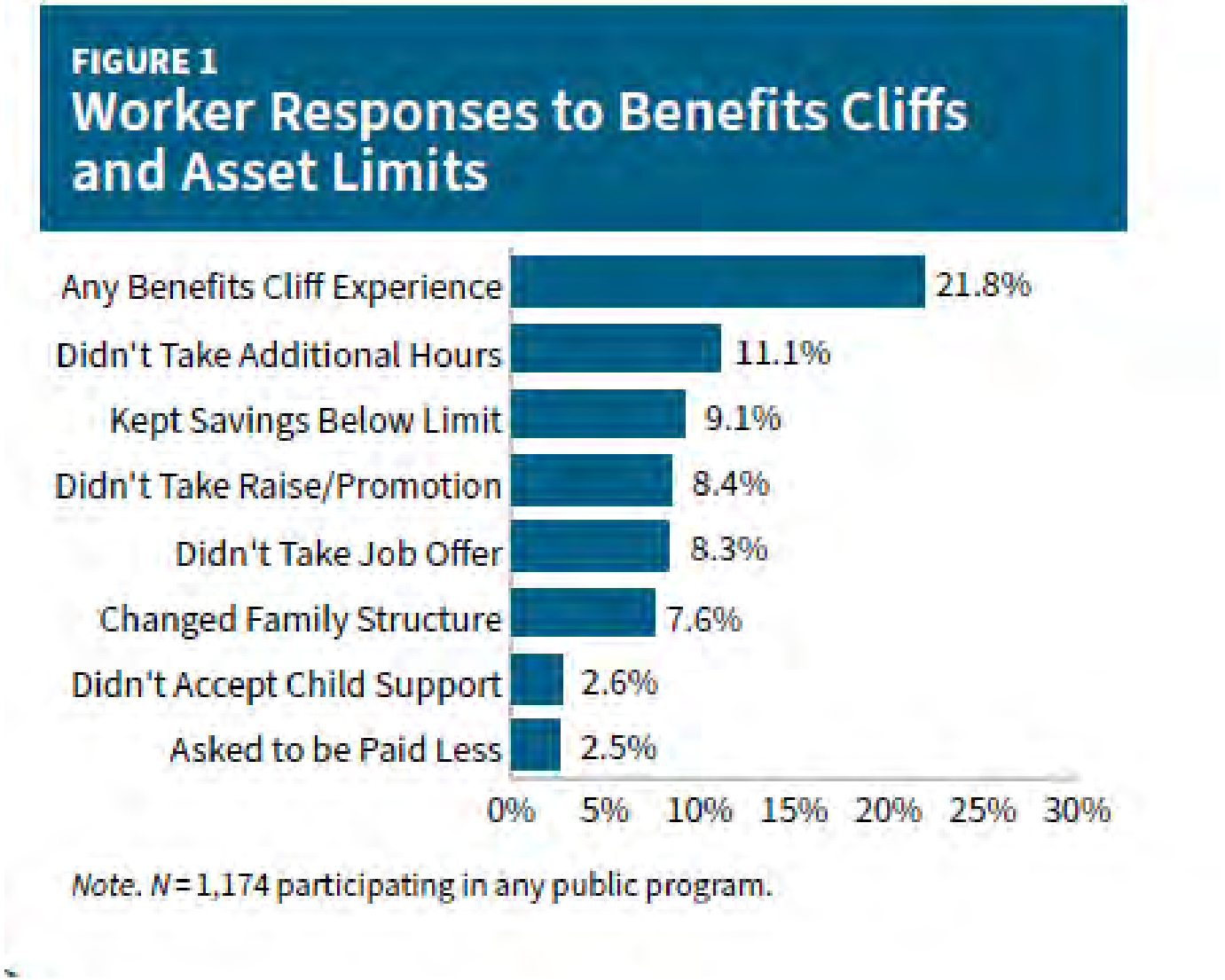
Presentation to Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board

October 2026



The views expressed are those of the presenter and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta or the Federal Reserve System.

Why do benefits cliffs matter in a workforce context?



Source: Roll, Miller, and Despard (2025): Available at https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/csd_research/963/

Why do benefits cliffs matter in a workforce context?

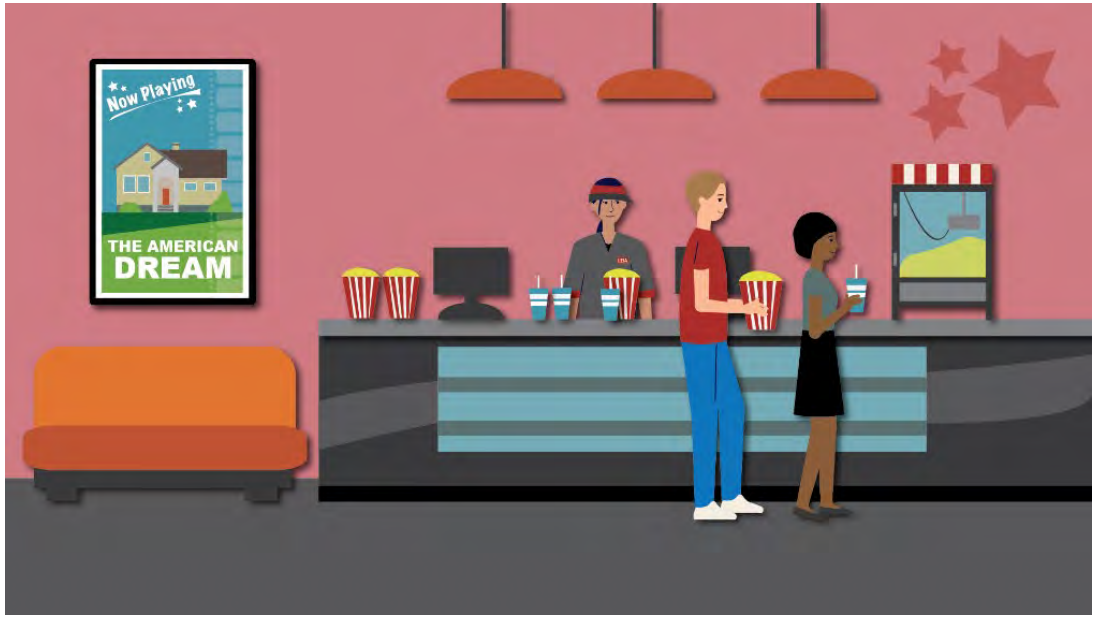
- "When deciding how much to work, people consider not only the higher earnings from working more hours but also the resulting difference in after-tax income." *Congressional Budget Office (2015, p. 2)*
- Benefits cliffs can reduce the ROI to career advancement for a worker (Altig et al. 2021).

An Application: Meet Leia

Leia is a 25-year-old single mother. She has two young children ages 3 and 5.

Leia receives several public assistance programs to help make ends meet: tax credits, food assistance, children's healthcare, and subsidized childcare.

She is working full-time in a near-minimum wage job and wants to enter an in-demand occupation in Jefferson County, Kentucky.



Which occupations should she consider? Select Examples from KY





Healthcare

- Registered Nurse
- Medical and Health Services Manager

Professional Services

- Computer User Support Specialist
- Paralegal and legal assistant

Manufacturing/Logistics

- Machinist
- Truck Driver

Construction

- Laborer
- Carpenter

Education

- Elementary teacher
- Secondary teacher

Key Question for Today

Accounting for benefits cliffs, what is the short-, medium-, and long-term payoff for Leia if she enters an in-demand occupation?

Key Question for Today

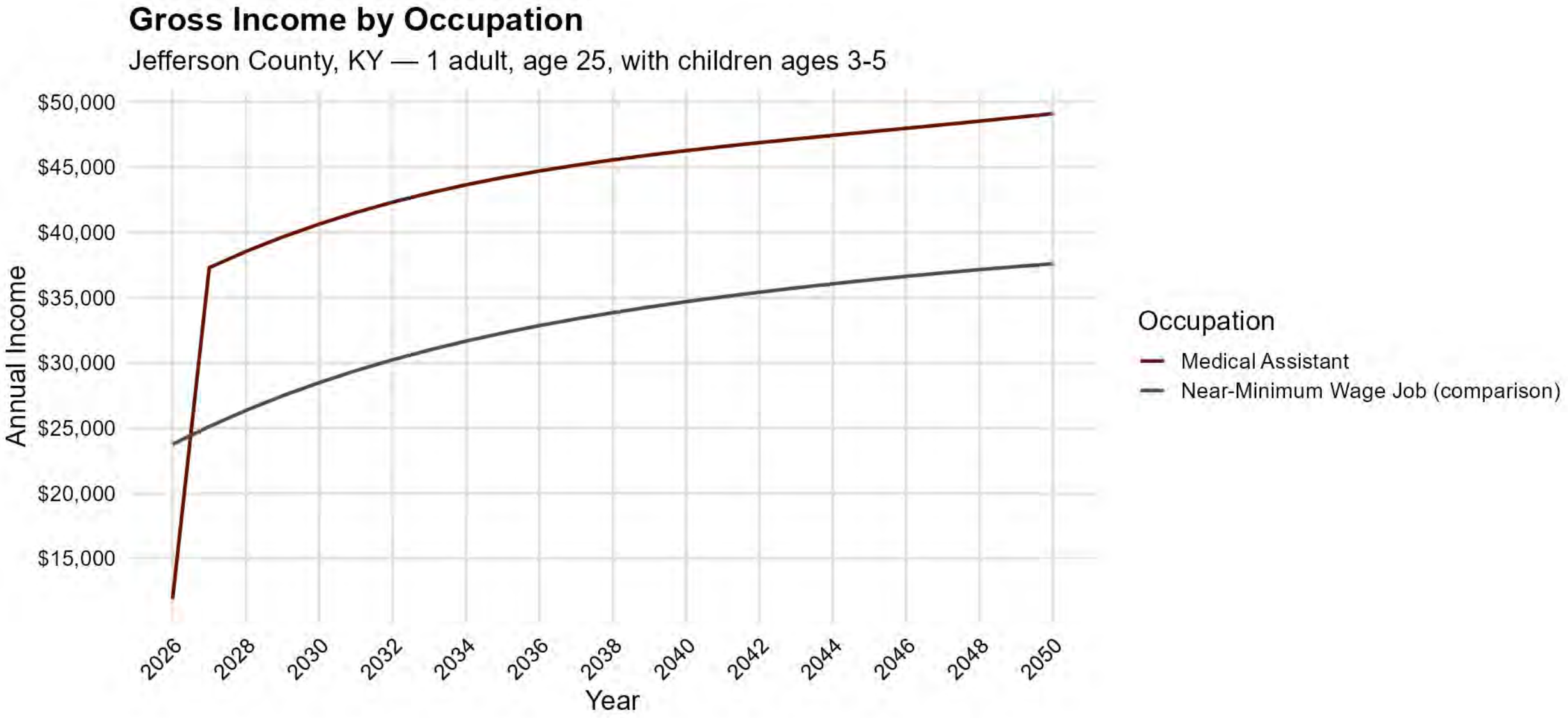
Two Measures:

Annual Income: Annual Salary from Occupation

Net Resources: After-tax income + public assistance - expenses

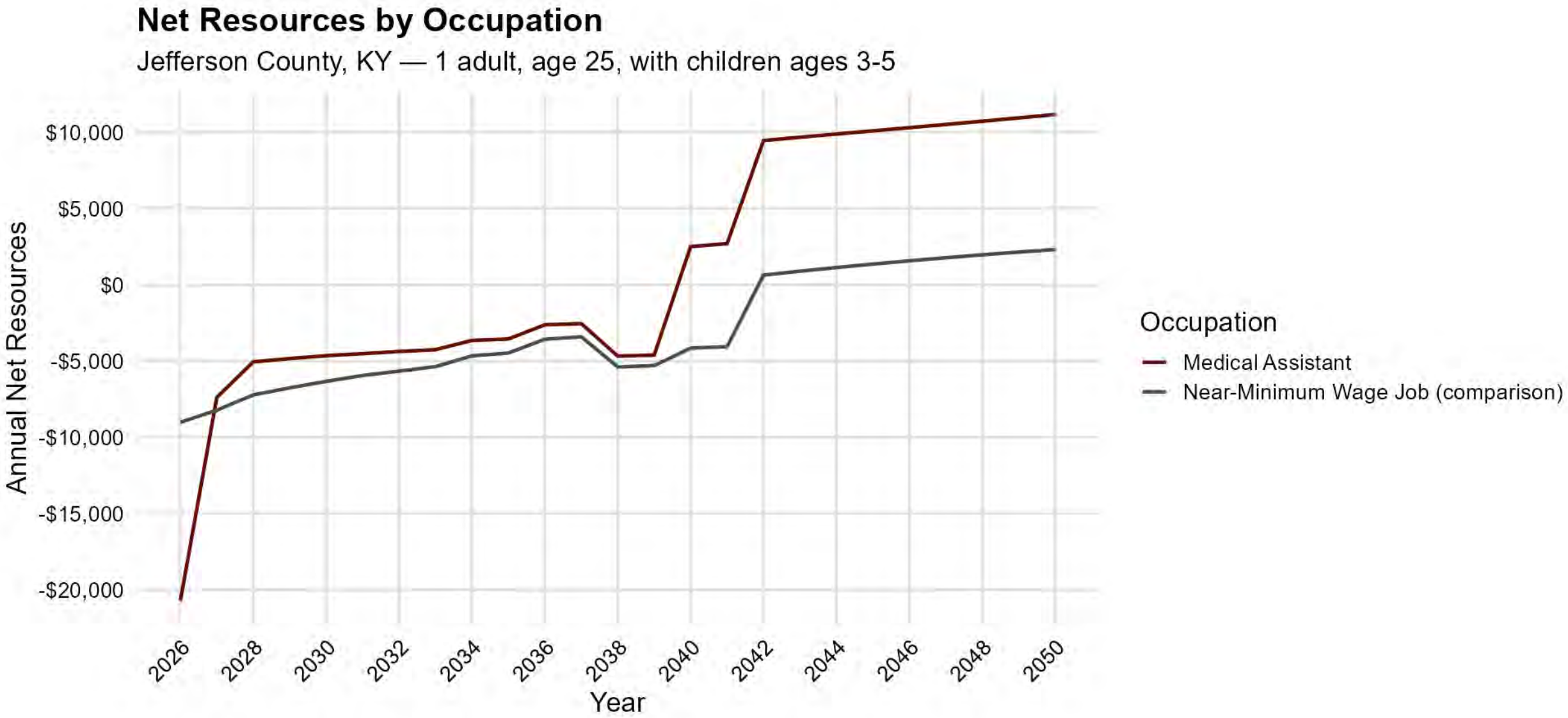
Expense estimates based on the
United for ALICE Survival Budget

Example Chart: Annual Income for the Medical Assistant and Near-Minimum Wage Occupation



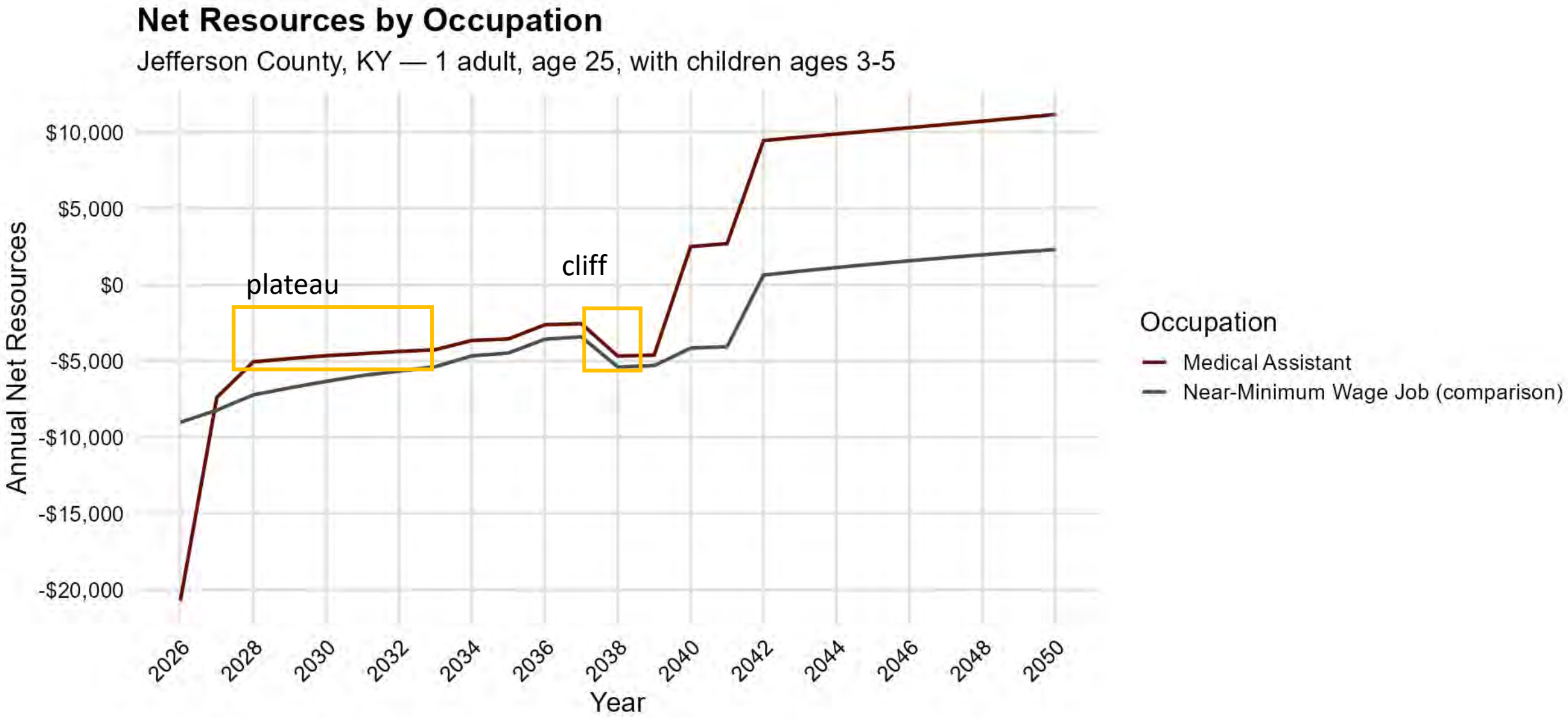
Source: authors

The Net Resources View Shows a Lengthy Benefits Plateau



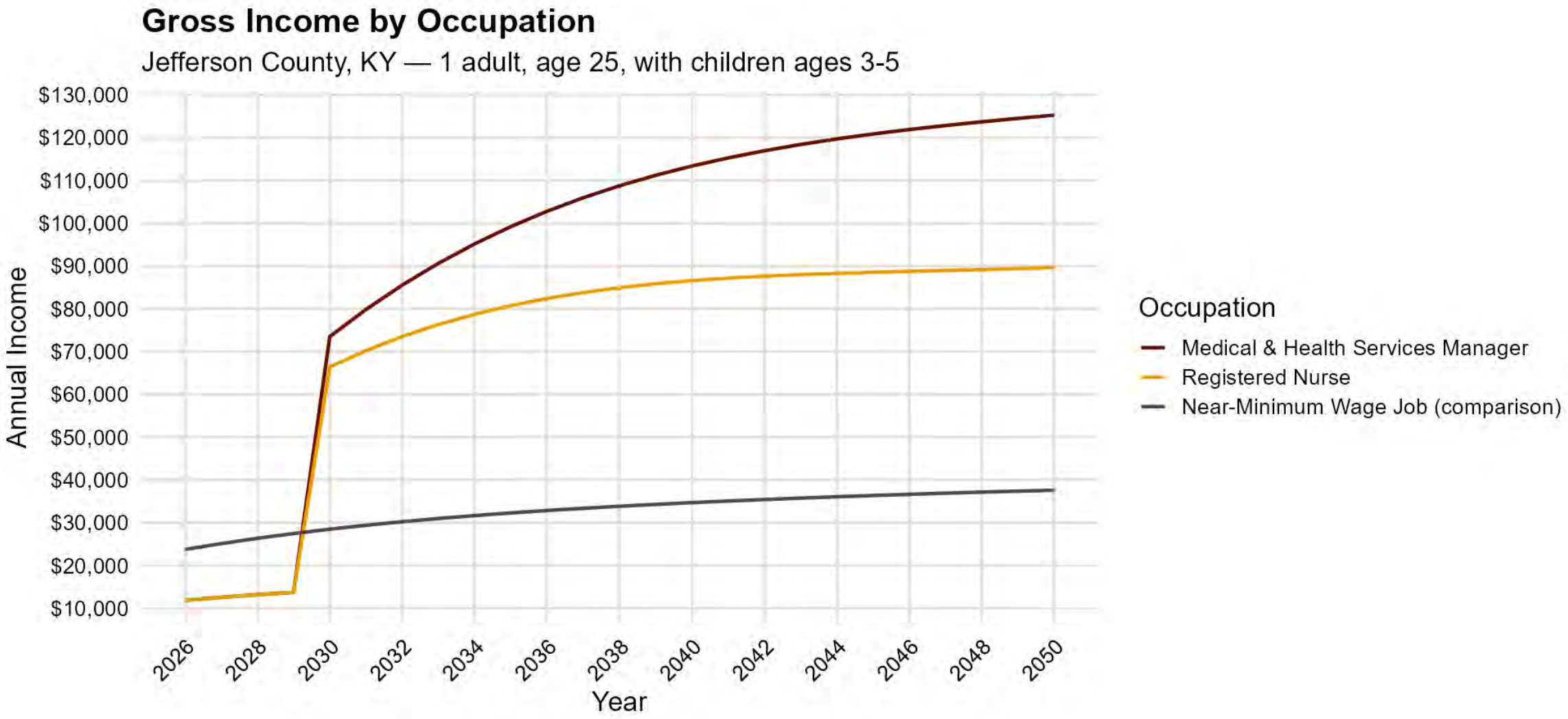
Source: authors

The Net Resources View Shows a Lengthy Benefits Plateau



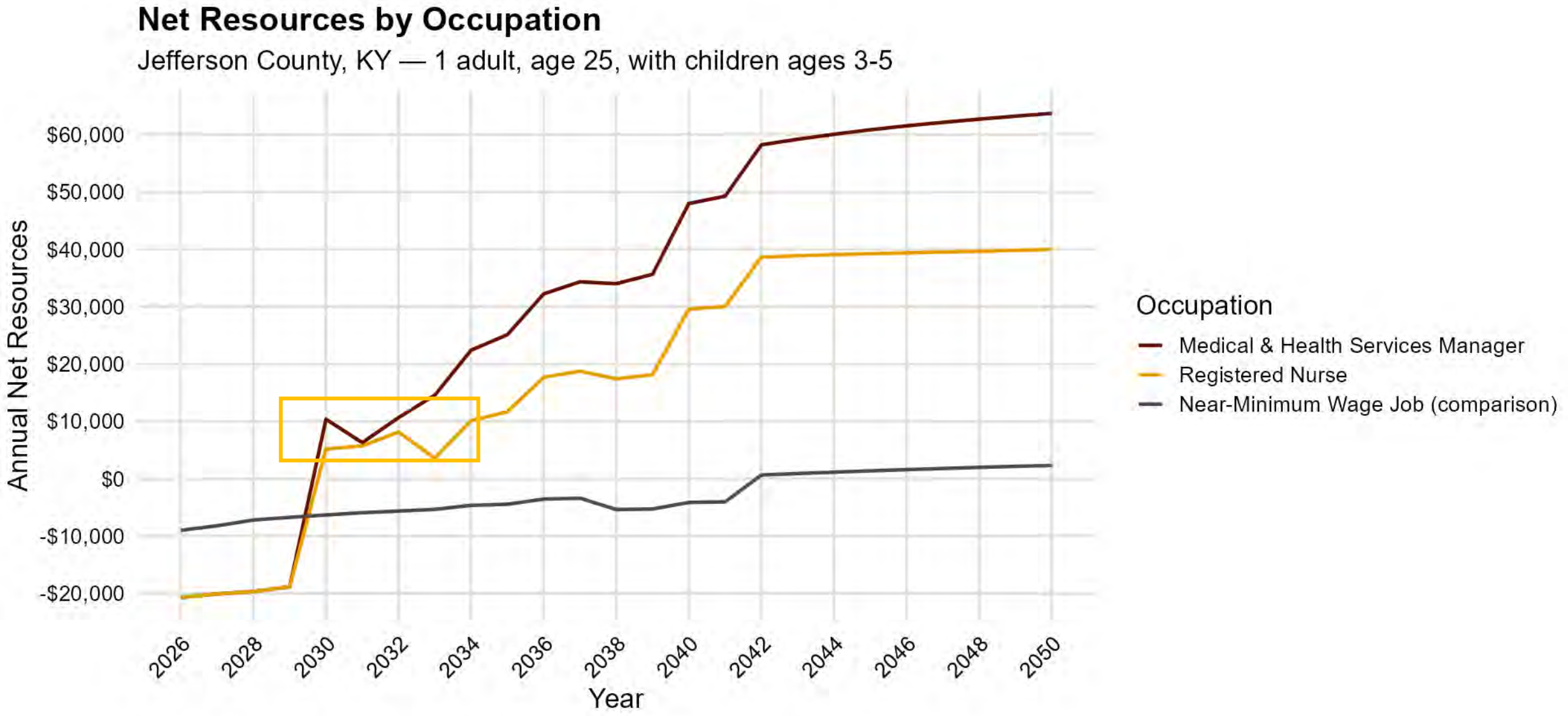
Source: authors

Healthcare Sector: Annual Income for the RN and Medical Services Manager



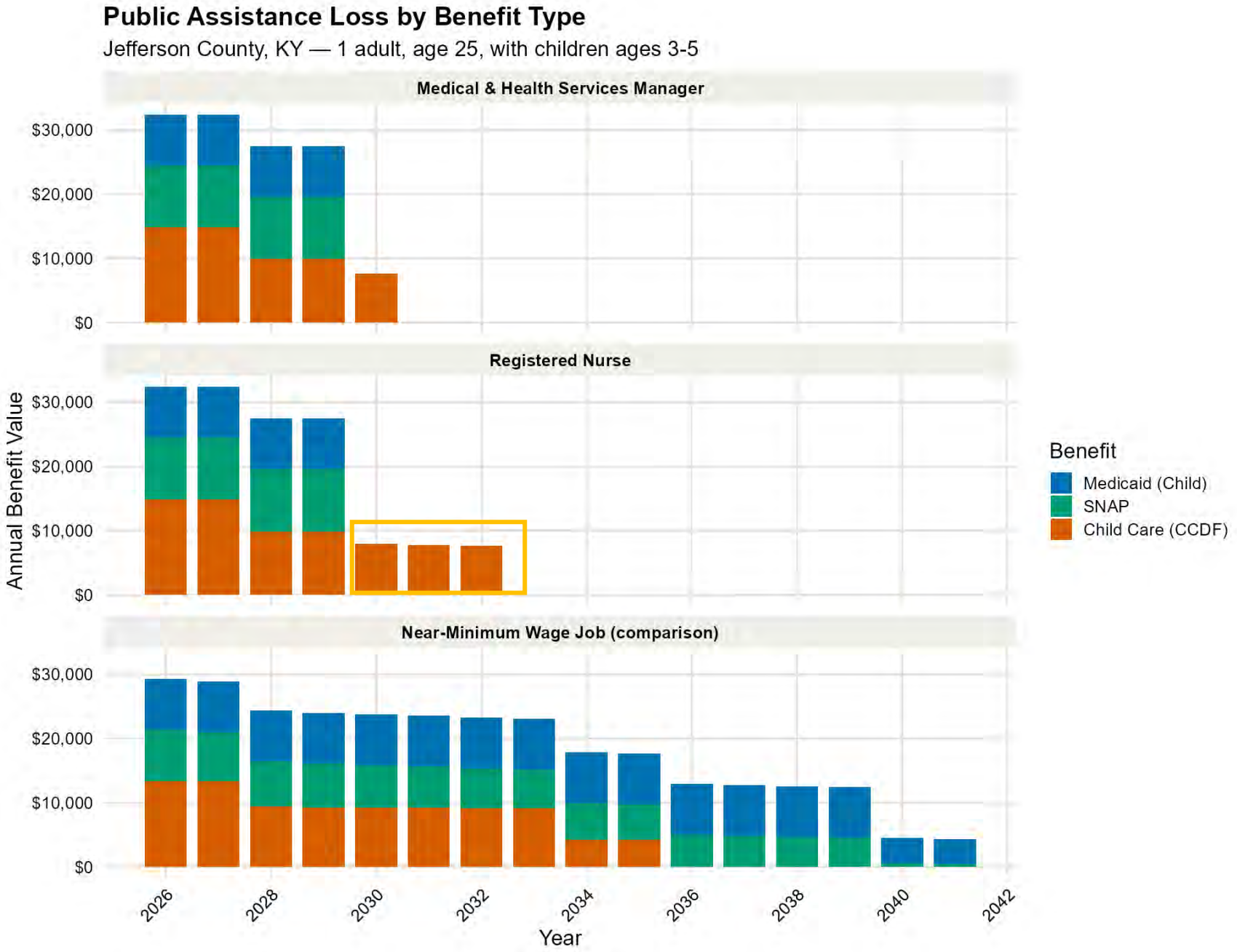
Source: authors

The Net Resources View Shows a Challenging Period Starting in 2030.



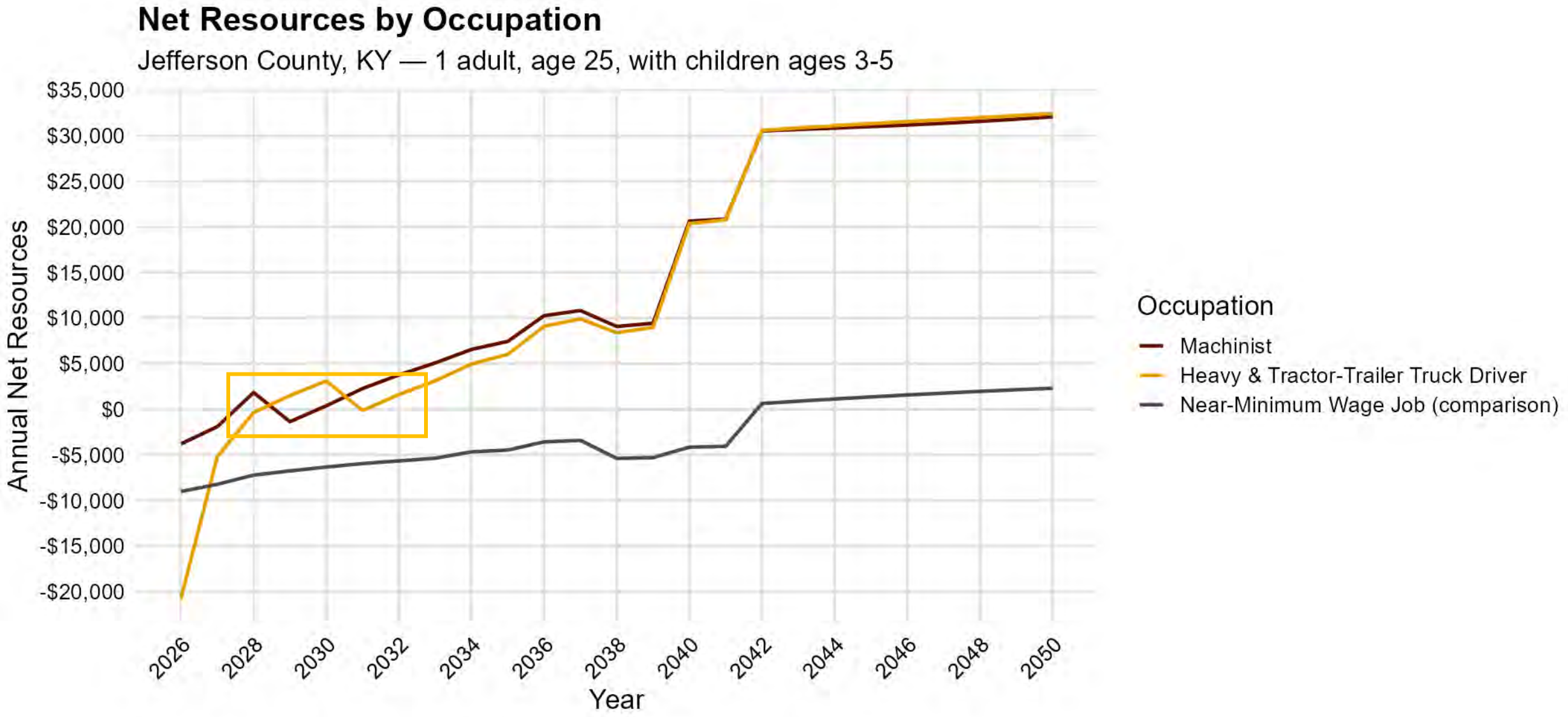
Source: authors

The Public Assistance View: Medicaid/CHIP loss affects Medical Manager



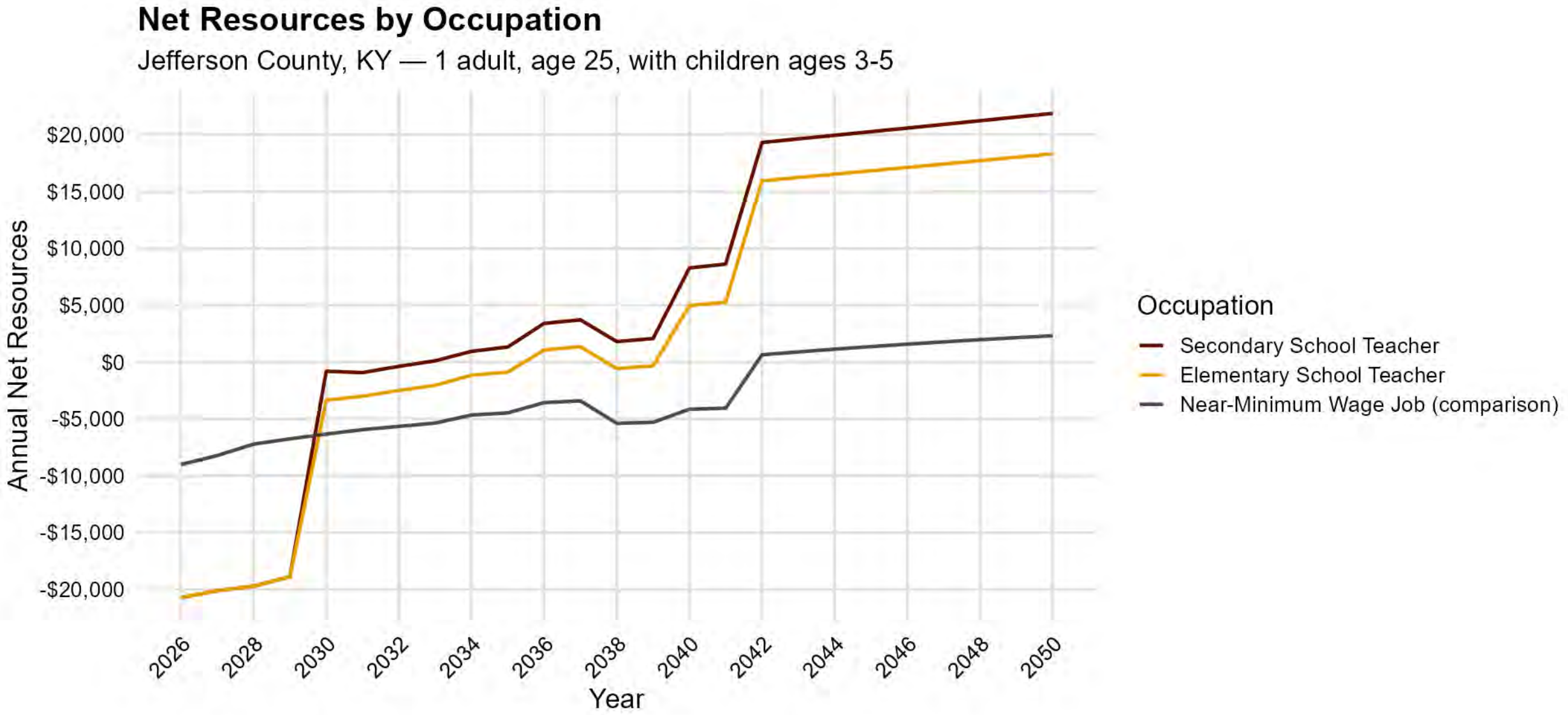
Source: authors

The Net Resources View: Manufacturing and Logistics Sector



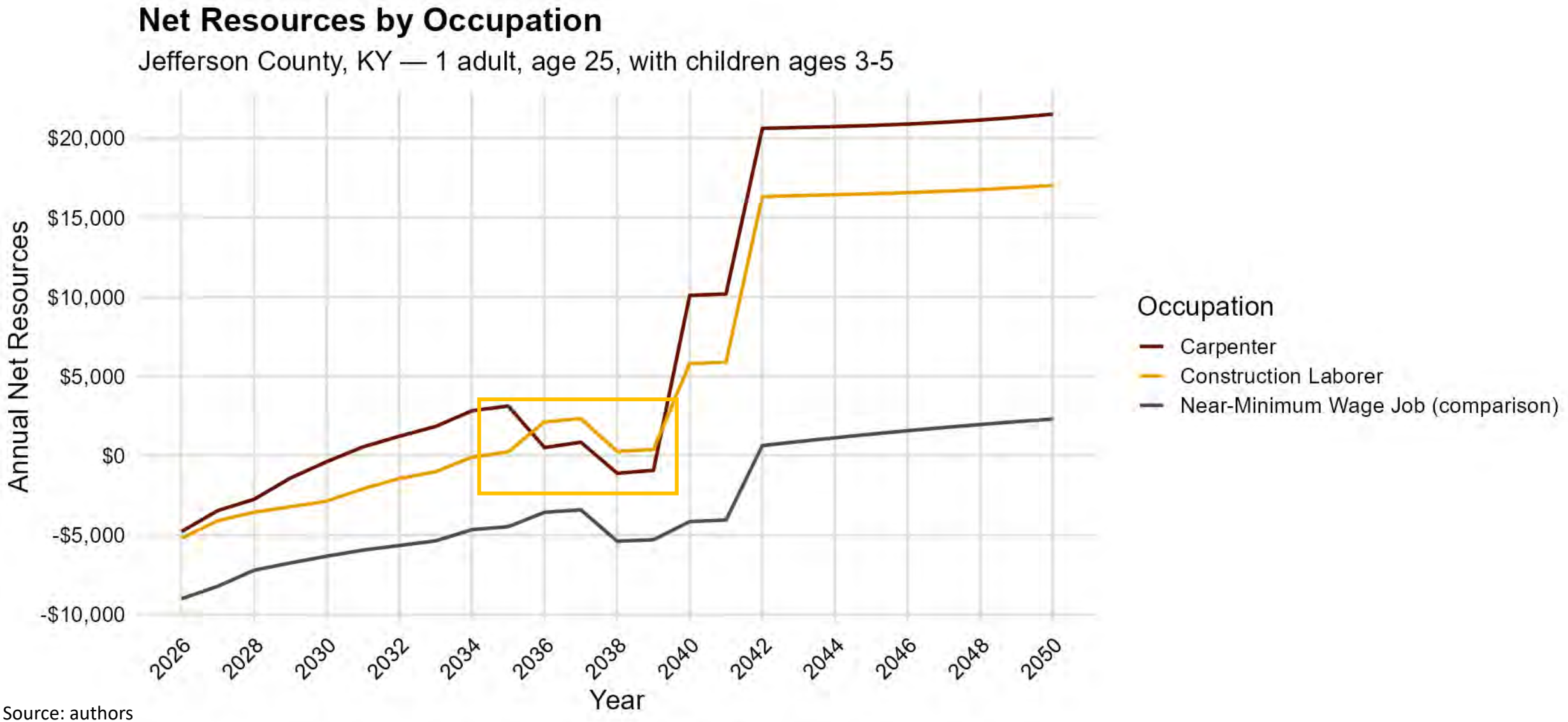
Source: authors

The Net Resources View: Education Sector



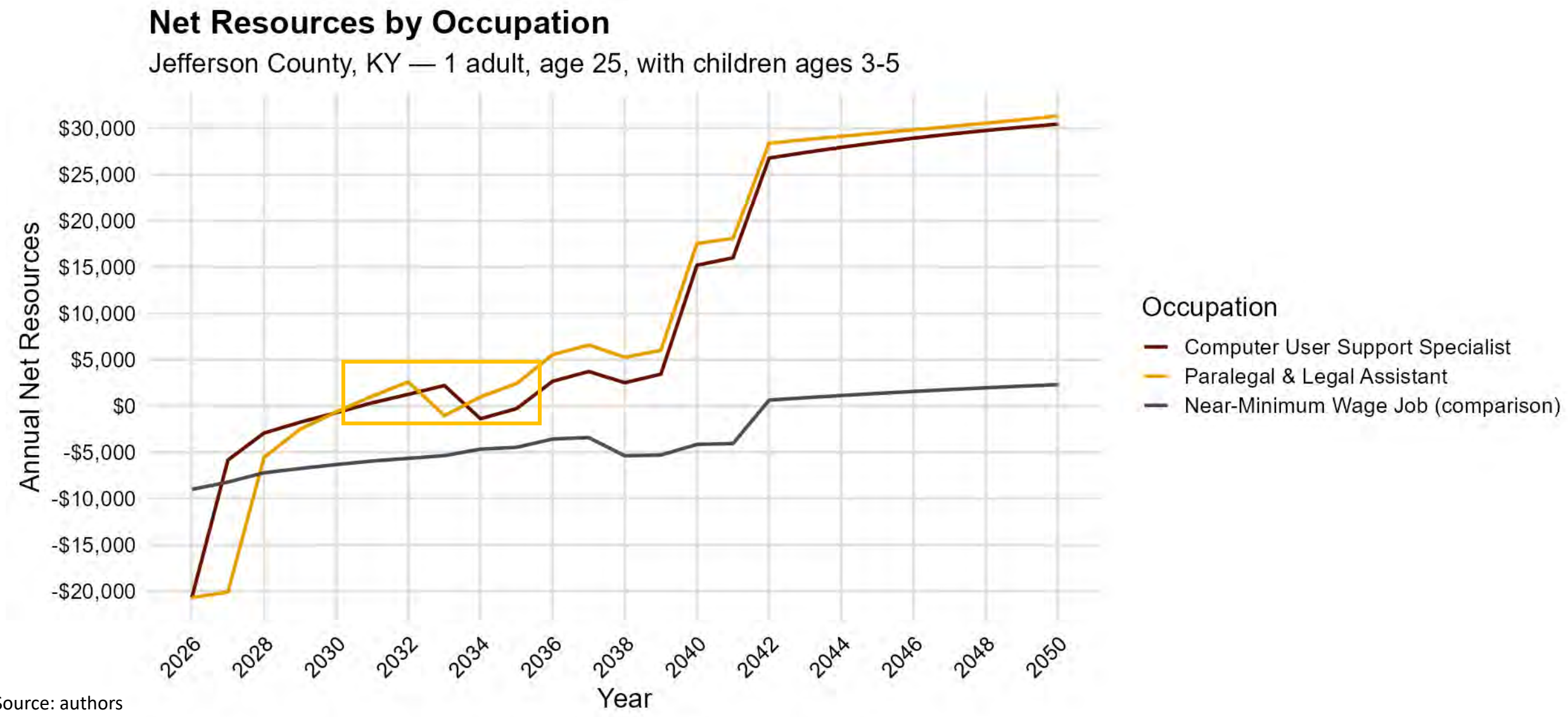
Source: authors

The Net Resources View: Construction Sector



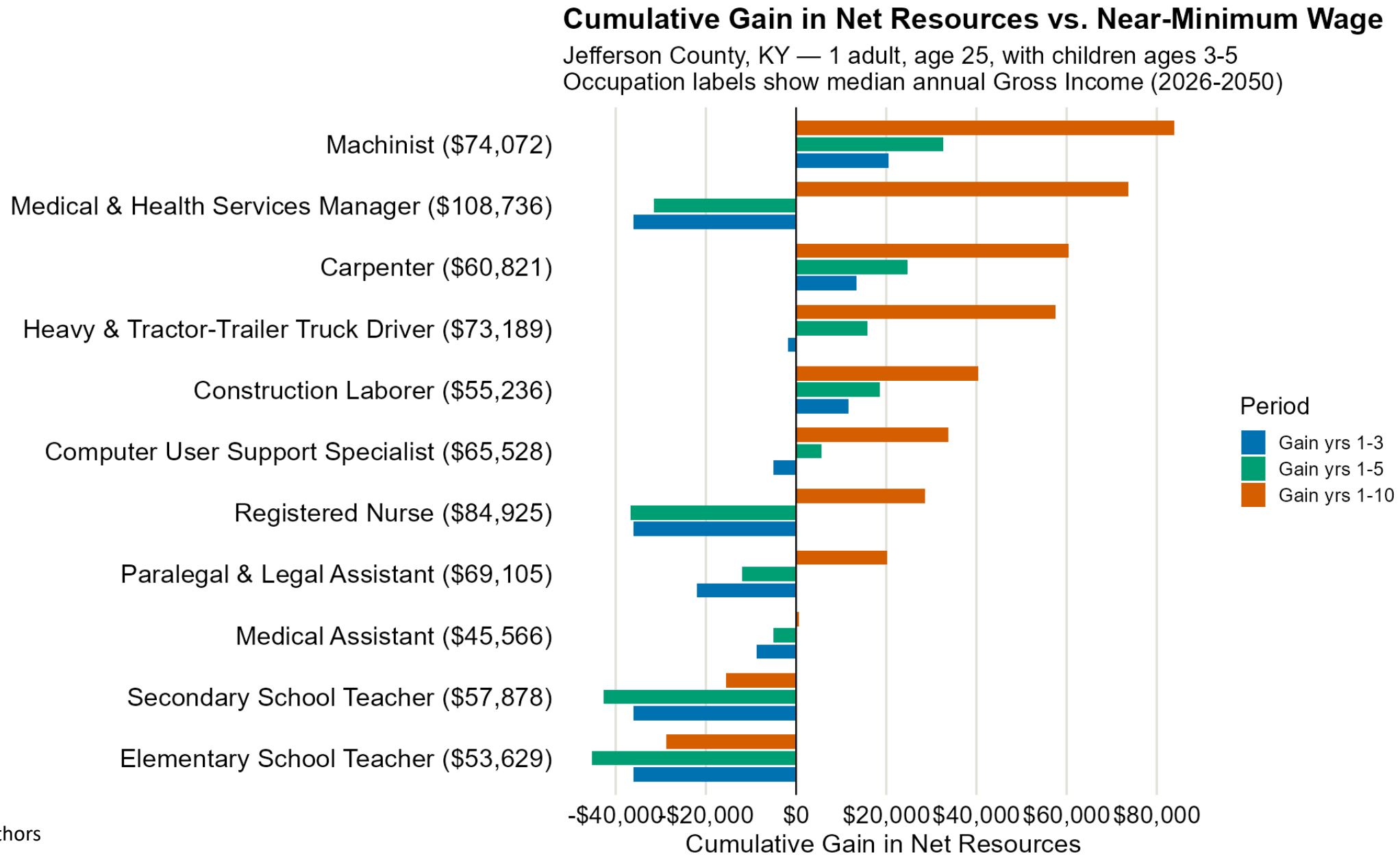
Source: authors

The Net Resources View: Professional Services Sector



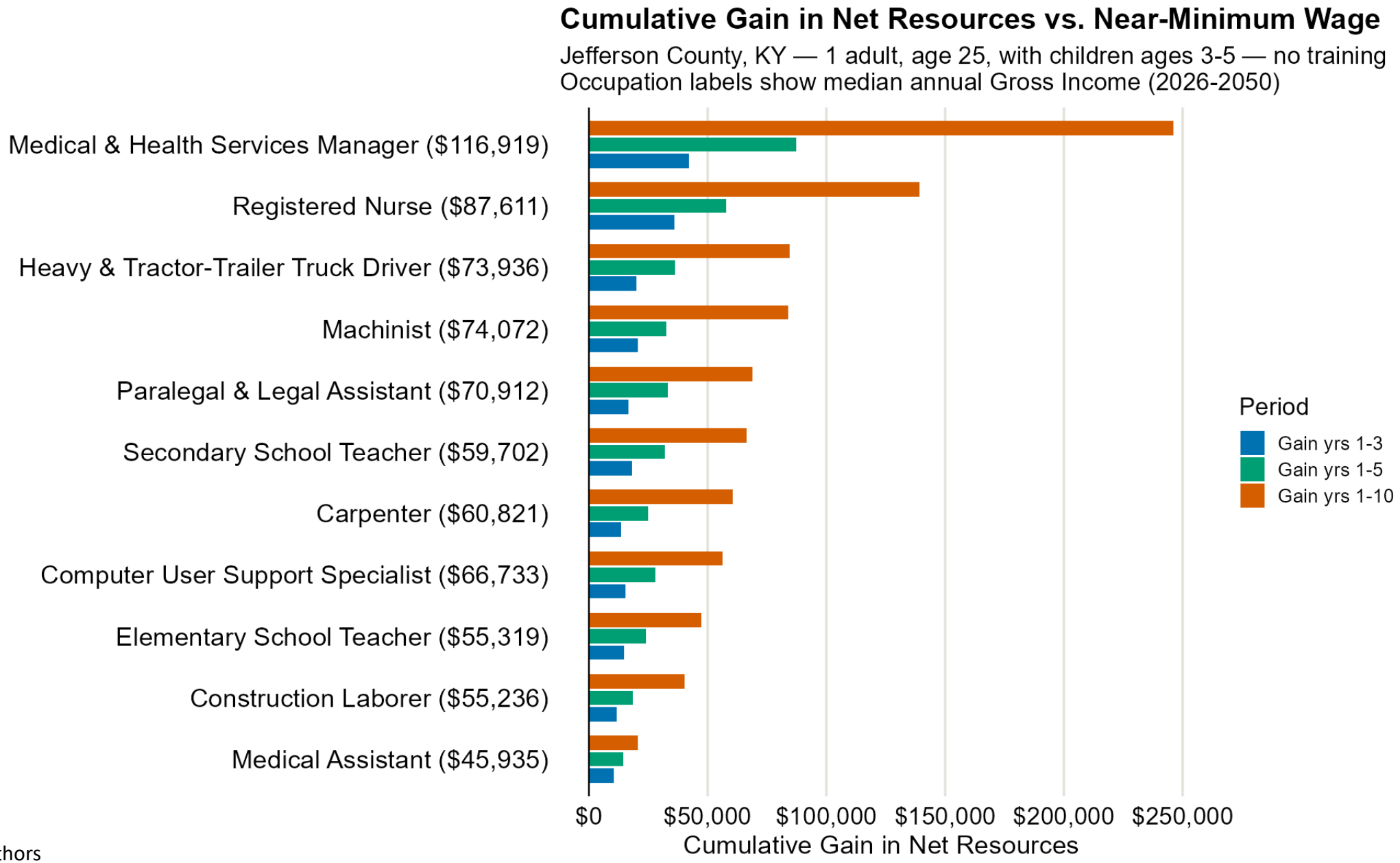
Source: authors

Worker ROI by Occupation and Time: Programs with more training years take longer to experience positive ROI.



Source: authors

Worker ROI by Occupation and Time – No Training Period Opportunity Cost



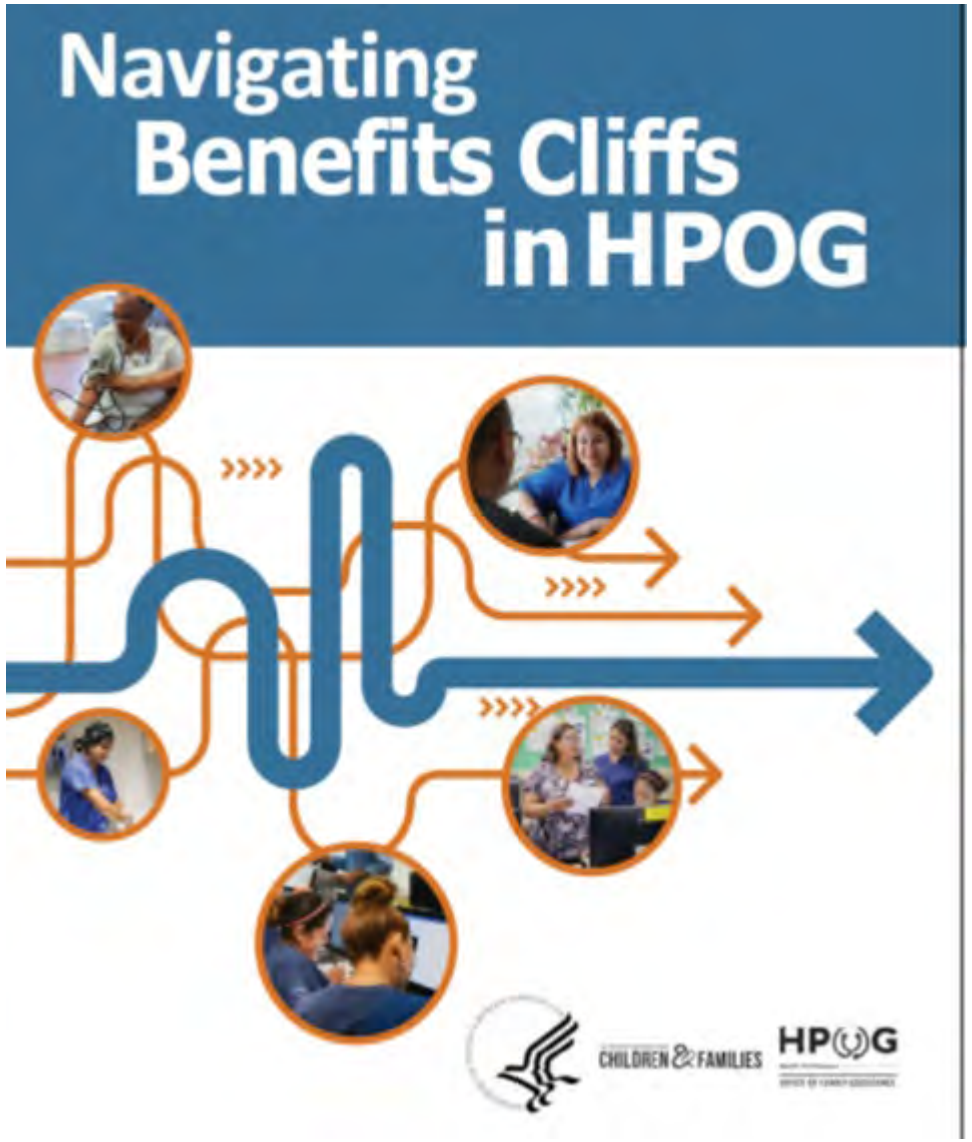
Source: authors

Next Steps

Two general approaches to help workers:

- Coaching and workforce-based strategies
- Policy and programmatic changes that mitigate the cliffs

Recommendations from HPOG Workforce Pilot



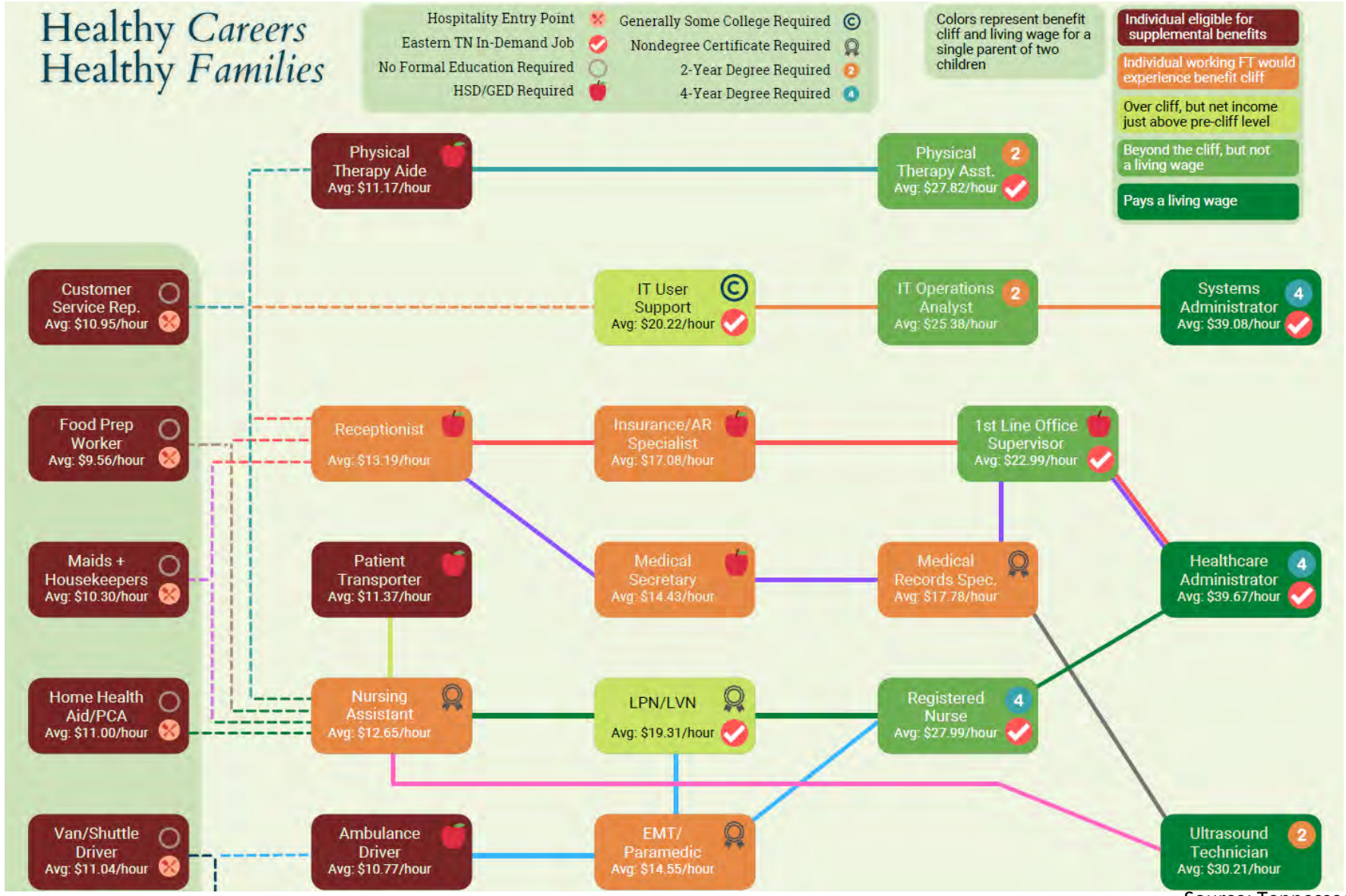
1. Help navigate the benefits system
2. Find other resources to make up for loss
3. Reframing loss as a positive step forward
4. Emphasize long-term goals
5. Be realistic about circumstances

Figure 12: Questions to Discuss with Individuals Facing a Benefits Cliff



Source:
www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ofa/hpog_8_state_benefit_cliff_report_20201006_508.pdf

Example: Mapping Benefits Cliffs for Priority Career Pathways



Source: Tennessee ETHRA Workforce Board

Policy and Practice Examples

NCSL
NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES

Foundation Careers Login

Resources News Events About Us

Report

Introduction to Benefits Cliffs and Public Assistance Programs



Updated December 27, 2024

From Barrier to Bridge: Approaches to Address Benefits Cliffs

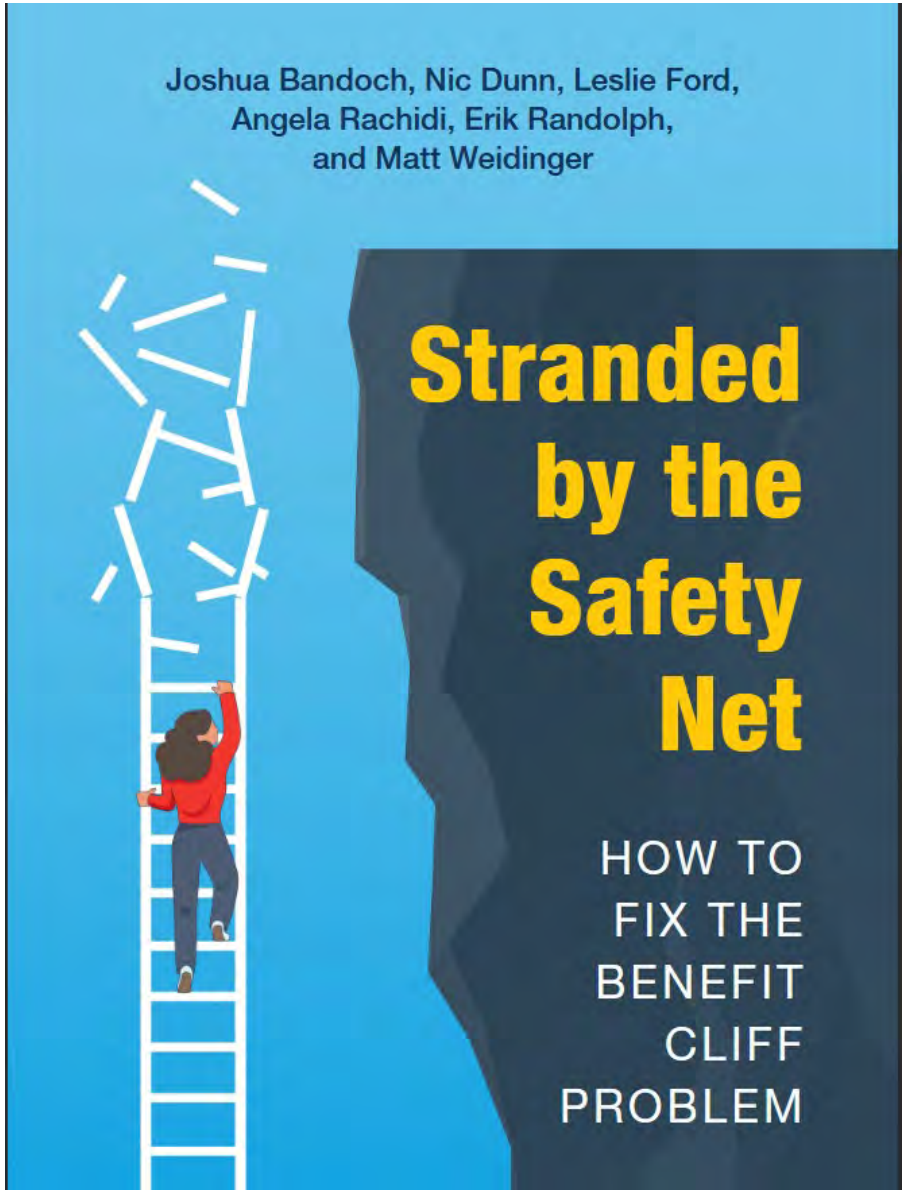
August 04, 2026

John Rees
Senior Adviser

Keith Barnes
Senior Director of Beyond the Cliff

Brittany Birken
Assistant Vice President

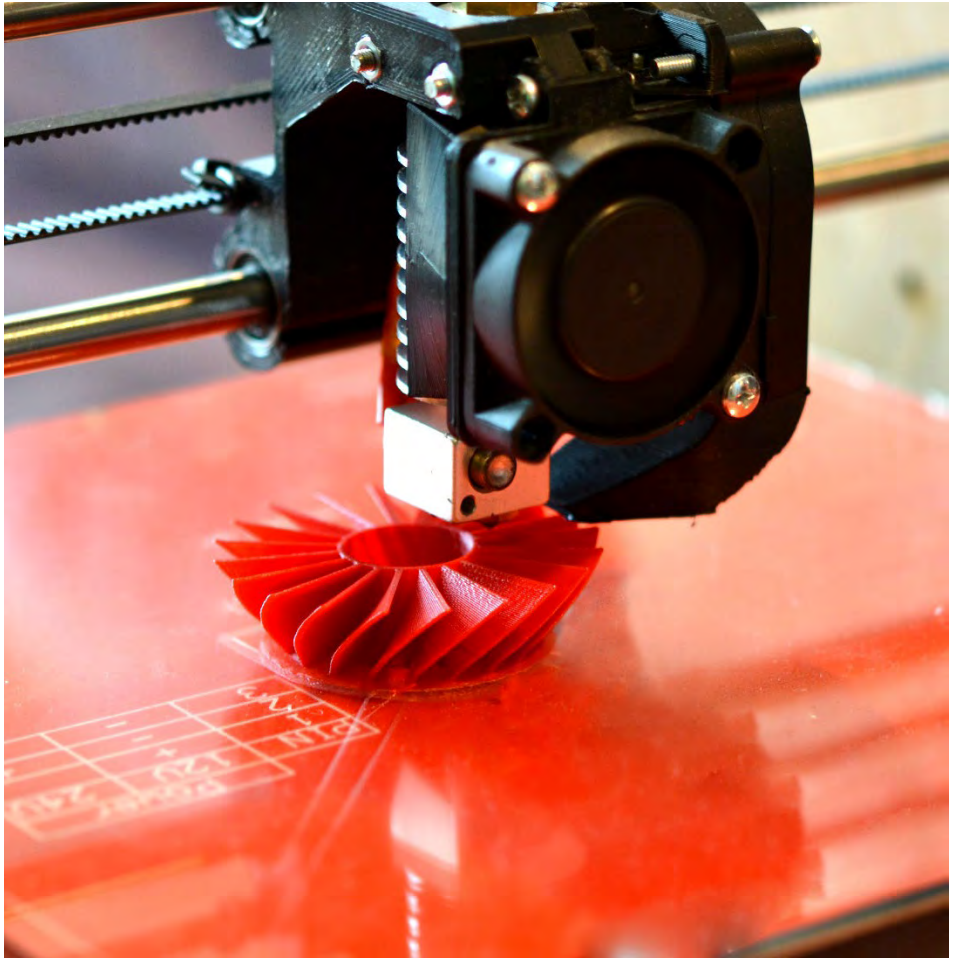
Workforce Currents | Publication | Employment | Community and Economic Development | Workforce Development



For additional background on research and tools, please visit: www.atlantafed.org/economic-mobility-and-resilience/advancing-careers-for-low-income-families

alexander.ruder@atl.frb.org

Appendix



Partner Spotlight

Partner Spotlight highlights partner initiatives by sharing best practices and innovative approaches in Kentucky's workforce development system.

November 4, 2026 • 12:00 p.m. (ET)

Discussion Topic:
The 3D Printing Workforce

Presenter(s):

Myra Wilson, Executive Director
Cumberlands Workforce Development Board

Eric Wooldridge, Professor/Director
Additive Manufacturing Center of Excellence, KCTCS

Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board | TEAM KENTUCKY Education and Labor Cabinet | Your New Kentucky Home

Passcode: 431173

KENTUCKY WORKFORCE PELL GRANT

About the Workforce Pell Grant

Kentucky's Workforce Pell Grant Program outlines the approach to identifying, evaluating, and recommending short-term workforce training programs for state approval under 787 KAR 2:050E.

Program Eligibility Standards

- Be offered at a Higher Education Act Title IV eligible postsecondary institution
- Have 8 -14 weeks of instruction
- Have 150 - 599 clock hours
- Lead to a recognized stackable and portable credential (or sole recognized credential)
- Train for a Kentucky high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand occupation
- Align with employer hiring needs
- 70% completion and 70% job placement
- Provide academic credit toward a related certificate/degree
- Meet value-added earnings requirement (beginning 2030–2031)
- Meet requirements for at least one year



Learn More and Apply

Visit the Office of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board website to learn more and access resources including:

- "Workforce Pell Application" July 2026
- "Workforce Pell Report", July 2026 & Data Dictionary
- Kentucky Workforce Pell Regulation: 787 KAR 2:050E
- US Department of Education Workforce Pell Final Rule

For any questions or more information, please contact kwib.projects@ky.gov

Kentucky Career Center
Career Training Employer

TEAM KENTUCKY
EDUCATION AND LABOR CABINET

A proud partner of the AmericanJobCenter network

What Is the Public Workforce System?

Kentucky's public workforce system connects talent with opportunity by linking employers, employees and job seekers across the state to build skills, careers and a stronger economy.



Who We Are

We're a partnership of state agencies, local workforce boards and community organizations offering free services to employers and job seekers. Whether you're searching for a job, advancing your career, or growing your business, we're here to help.

What We Do

Recruitment Support
We connect employers with qualified candidates.

Training & Career Pathways
We assist with building skills to meet Kentucky's workforce needs.

Retention Services
We assist in employee growth through training and apprenticeships.

Barrier Reduction
We help people overcome challenges like transportation, child care and accessibility.

How It Works

Kentucky Career Center

The Kentucky Career Center (KCC) is the gateway to the state's public workforce system. With 80+ certified locations statewide, KCC connects employers and job seekers to a network of partner agencies that offer specialized programs, services and support.

Partner Agencies

- Career Development Office
- Office of Adult Education
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Office of Industry & Apprenticeship Services
- Local Workforce Innovation Boards
- Everybody Counts
- Other community partners and agencies

Kentucky Career Center
Career Training Employer

TEAM KENTUCKY
EDUCATION AND LABOR CABINET

New Kentucky Home

Kentucky Career Center
Career Training Employer

Career Development Office



Comprehensive Career Centers Statewide

We operate 13 comprehensive career centers statewide that help job seekers find lasting employment, connect individuals to education and training opportunities and support employers in finding skilled, qualified workers.

Our Programs

Job Matching Services

- Connect job seekers with employers looking to hire
- Job seekers receive career services, job search help, referrals and placement assistance
- Employers can post jobs and find qualified applicants

Unemployment Support

- Supports individuals receiving unemployment benefits
- Helps with reemployment plans, career information and enrollment in services to get back to work

Veterans Services

- Provides dedicated staff to help veterans and eligible individuals with significant barriers find careers and training
- Connects employers with job seeking veterans

Seasonal Farm Work

- Authorizes temporary workers (H-2A) to enter the U.S. when not enough local workers are available for seasonal agricultural jobs

Support for Job Seekers and Employers

Whether you're a job seeker or an employer, the CDO team is ready to assist you—visit kcc.ky.gov to find the location nearest you.

Kentucky Career Center
Vocational Rehabilitation

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Benefits for Kentucky Employers



Workforce Facts

Kentucky has among the highest rate of people with disabilities in the nation and among the lowest rate of people with disabilities who are employed.

Workers with disabilities who receive accommodations match non-disabled workers in:

- Productivity
- Attendance
- Reliability
- Overall effectiveness

Benefits of Hiring People with Disabilities

- Reduces reliance on governmental supports and contributes to the economy.
- Lessens utilization of healthcare and promotes better overall health.
- Provides financial support for the individual and their families.
- Improves quality of life by building self-confidence, self-reliance and social support.
- Provides opportunities for re-training, advancement, retirement contributions and travel.

Employer Services Branch

We assist businesses in hiring, developing and keeping valued employees and support businesses with placement and retention of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

These services include:

Recruitment & Hiring

- Pre-screening applicants based on essential job functions
- On-the-job training and internships

Workplace Support

- Onsite job trainer and support services
- Job restructuring and worksite adjustments
- Assistive technology and specialized equipment

Accessibility:

- Accessibility checklists
- Worksite accessibility surveys

Additional Resources

- Staff development
- Financial incentives information
- Follow-up services

To learn more, visit KCC.KY.GOV

TEAM KENTUCKY
ADULT EDUCATION



Adult Ed Solutions for

Kentucky Employers

About Us

We are committed to empowering Kentucky businesses to reach their maximum potential. With a team of experienced professionals, we provide **customized education** and **training services** designed to help employers navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

Our Mission

Our mission is to work with Kentuckians to improve their quality of life through education, training and employment so they can take care of themselves and their families and help their communities and the state's economies expand and thrive.

Employer Benefits

- Enhanced productivity & efficiency
- Increased employee retention
- Improved safety and workplace communication
- Higher employee engagement and morale

Services

Workplace Readiness

We assist in developing skills in communication, teamwork and critical thinking.

Digital Literacy Training

We assist in optimizing and enhancing technology skills.

English Language Learning

We offer English language and civics education for non-native speakers.

GED Preparation and Testing

We offer in-depth GED test preparation and free GED test fees for eligible Kentuckians.

Customized Training Solutions

We offer job-specific literacy and skills training.

Soft Skills Development

We assist in improving delivery of customer service, conflict resolution and more.

Check out our services. **KYAE.KY.GOV**

Kentucky Career Center
Industry and Apprenticeship Services

Workforce Talent Project Team

You aren't doing this work alone.

We're here to help employers hire, develop and retain top talent – connecting the right people, programs, and partnerships to unlock tailored workforce strategies for your business.



Services

- **Free, full-service** business support for employer's workforce needs
- Provide **easy access** to workforce analysis and strategy for Kentucky's businesses
- Address **attraction and recruitment** challenges with an industry-focused, data-informed approach
- Support with **workforce selection and onboarding** solutions
- **Create a business structure** that delivers results for employers and career seekers

Benefits

- **Customize workforce strategies** aligned to industry demands at no cost
- **Foster employer relationships** and maintain strong ties to address workforce needs
- Create a **business structure** that delivers results for employers and career seekers
- Improve **communication and confidence** among workforce partners
- Access to Kentucky's proven **speed-to-market advantage** that gets you operational faster

Scan the QR code and connect with us today.

KYWORKS.KY.GOV

502-564-5920 or workforce@ky.gov

Your personalized workforce service is just one call away!

Kentucky
Career Center
Industry and Apprenticeship Services



Office of Industry and Apprenticeship Services

Services

- **Registered Apprenticeships (RA)** and on-the-job training opportunities are available.
- Companies can get up to $9,600 in **valuable financial incentives** including work opportunity tax credits (WOTC), deep training discounts and grants.
- Receive **rapid response and layoff support** to assist employees during transitions and to minimize business disruptions for workers and the community
- Kentucky Fair Chance Bonding is available to employers and applicants **at no cost to protect your business.**

Benefits

- **Apprenticeship Workforce Consultants** provide no-cost guidance, program development, recruitment, training and workforce solutions for over 1500 occupations.
- **91% of apprentices** remain employed after completing their programs and 87% of Kentucky apprentices are employed and in the same industry.
- Registered apprenticeships show a $1.44 return on every dollar invested.

Scan the QR code to connect with us today.

Let's make hiring easier.

KYWORKS.KY.GOV or APPRENTICESHIP@KY.GOV

502-564-5920

Your personalized workforce service is just one call away!

EVERYBODY COUNTS

Kentucky Employers



What We Do

- **Free promotion** of your business to over 12,000 students graduating high school each year
- **Save you time on recruiting** entry-level talent from local high schools
- Provide **direct access to entry-level talent** during the school year and upon graduation
- Ensure new hires enter the workplace **equipped for long-term success**
- Improve employee **retention** and **productivity**

Why Partner with Everybody Counts?

Our **services are free** with no direct cost to employers.

Everybody Counts equips high school juniors and seniors with career pathways and skills to thrive when they enter Kentucky's workforce.

Employers can have confidence that new hires have developed essential skills outside of their academic courses.

Everybody Counts enhances workplace readiness, work-based learning, money management and time management.

Visit everybodycounts.ky.gov or email us at everybodycounts@ky.gov to learn more.