



KWIB Work Ready Communities

Strategic Planning Agenda

October 19, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. EST

Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87603116328?pwd=fOpwOobhAwM38wOwK9lhRwlqDu071R.1>

Meeting ID: 876 0311 6328 / Passcode: 208499

Call to Order

Lori Ulrich, Chair called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. ET.

Committee Members Present:

Lori Ulrich - CHAIR	X	Kristina Slattery	
Jeremy Faulkner		Amy Neal	
Cody Davidson		Jon Sowards	x
Moochie Hart		Myra Wilson	
Rolando Thacker	X	Mark Hohmann	x
Robert Boone		Correy Eimer	
Jacob McAndrews		Tonika East	

Others in attendance: Leslie Sizemore, Amy Luttrell, Sam Keathley

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

Welcome and Overview

Lori Ulrich, Chair of Work Ready Communities Taskforce, and Manager at Fleming-Mason Energy welcomed and thanked the committee for attending the meeting today and for being available. She provided an overview of the agenda bringing attention to the application process.

Work Ready Communities – Next Generation Discussion of Suggestions

Alisher Burikhanov, Executive Director of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board, thanked everyone for being a part of the discussions and shared that the consensus from the various listening sessions is that no one wants to stop the program, but there are suggestions for its improvement. Based on conversations, the first suggestion is to give counties available data and allow them to evaluate the information strategically. Furthermore, the first iteration of Work Ready Communities included narratives on understanding the untapped talent of a community, their occupational supply and demand, essential skills, and work-based learning initiatives, which proved to be still relevant.

The listening sessions included hearing from **Kentucky Economic Developers at the Kentucky Association of Economic Development (KAED)**, the **Southern Economic Development Council (SEDC)** which comprised of the southern US states, the virtual townhall with current WRC stakeholders, and community members during the WIOA State Plan tours. Based on these listening sessions, the original iteration must incorporate a strategic component. Further, there were reoccurring employment barriers needing to be addressed, such as affordable housing, childcare, and transportation.

The final suggestion for consideration is to approach WRC through a regional lens and address digital equity and talent attraction strategies. It was also mentioned that the local workforce development boards can be a great resource for convening and as a strategic partner.

Lori stated how this would be a change due to it being more of a narrative-based application versus a strictly metrics-based approach. This would be shifting from some metrics like broadband to accountability programs. Communities will need to think strategically and long-term, and the applications would be more of a case-by-case basis and giving ownership to the communities.

Amy Luttrell, President/CEO of Goodwill Industries of Kentucky, agreed with the nuanced approach. She gave an example that if jobseekers do not meet the educational requirements set by companies, then they can provide a more reasonable common-sense approach to the task. In doing so, they will be able to meet the task. **Mark Hohmann, Goodwill Industries**, added that all counties are different. He posed the question that the needs of employers in each county are different, so therefore how are they quantified?

Lori explained from the employer perspective that some employers had standards of GED before and have eased this requirement. Further, WRC asking communities how they can meet the needs of employers now, and seeing if strategies like on-the-job training are being utilized to meet the demands is worthwhile to understand for communities. She emphasized the original purpose of WRC was to have communities discuss how to solve problems, and so changing the approach of the application to a more strategy-based allows for greater problem-solving. **Jon Sowards, South Central Workforce Director**, showed his support for the change of going into the narrative and suggested that a soft skills training component can also review the STEM offerings and give ideas and touchpoints to figure out what is missing in workforce participation and how to tackle getting people to work. Further, how to engage the whole community to attach such attributes as social value, as well as health value and self-worth to employment. He suggested getting even coaches, teachers, and parents to tackle the issue as a community. **Rolando Thacker, Business Services for Bluegrass**, response to workforce participation, was that there is a gap between education and employment. The talent pool is not being used to its full potential and there is not enough communication with schools and employers. Working with students to introduce them to what is available while reaching the youth at a younger age level is necessary. He commended working closely with education and the “Everybody Counts” program. The group came to the consensus that workforce participation is as important an aspect as knowing where the individuals are, who serves them, and how to get them engaged is critical. A discussion was had on accessing labor force participation numbers from KYSTATS, with one tool in existence for seeing county-level data:

E.g., to <https://kystats.ky.gov/Latest/WORKR>

The conversation on workforce participation also incited the component of soft skills. **Leslie Sizemore, Associate Vice President of, the Council of Postsecondary Education (CPE)**, brought up the Kentucky Graduate Profile that includes the 10 essential skills (graphic provided at the end of the minutes). All agreed on the continuous importance for students and adults to have these skills to grow professionally.

On the topic of digital literacy, a discussion was had on the importance of digital literacy to attain good jobs and a better quality of life. This is especially important with the growth of remote jobs and people needing the tools to be successful in the digital space. There is also a basic disconnect between those who lack digital skills and jobs that require a digital application. Then the jobs that do require digital skills incorporate the use of Microsoft Office tools, which can be a barrier, especially as some are accustomed to using phones but not computers. Based on the various degrees of digital access needed, the group

agreed this topic is important for communities to understand and use the WRC as a tool for these discussions. **Alisher** stated that these recommendations can be made to the KWIB, and afterwards, work on implementing them in an application format can start.

Lori confirmed that everyone agreed.

Application Review Henry County Work Ready in Progress Application

During the meeting, **Lori Ulrich** presented the applications that were submitted under the original standard for Henry County. She mentioned that the county had not resubmitted the traditional renewal yet. The attendees were asked if they had a chance to review the applications and if they met the required criteria. They discussed the items that were requested for work readiness and whether anyone saw any areas where they would not qualify. **Jon** commented that they had put in the required effort. **Lori** then asked for a vote to continue, and **Jon** made the motion while **Mark** seconded it. After asking for any opposition, the motion passed unanimously.

Application Review Jackson County Work Ready Application

Lori Ulrich presented an application for Jackson County. She had applied two years ago and now requested full work readiness. **Lori** asked if there were any reasons to not consider the application, but no one opposed it. She then asked if anyone wanted to discuss any issues before moving forward. **Rolando** made the motion, which **Jon** seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 10:54 a.m. ET.

Kentucky Graduate Profile – 10 Essential Skills

The following 10 Essential Skills are identified by higher education organizations and workforce professionals as learning outcomes all graduates need for success in their chosen fields of study.

1. Communicate effectively
2. Think critically in order to solve problems and create new ideas and solutions
3. Apply quantitative reasoning skills to analyze and solve numerical problems
4. Interact effectively with people from diverse backgrounds
5. Adapt to changing circumstances while leading and supporting others
6. Perform professionally within their chosen field of study or occupation
7. Engage in civic life to improve society
8. Collaborate and work in teams
9. Demonstrate evidence of applied and integrated learning
10. Use information for decision-making

This list represents the most frequently identified qualities supported by research and advocated by AAC&U, QA Commons, and NACE, among others.

Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

