

Kentucky's 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan Briefer

Every four years, each state is required to submit a Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plan that outlines the strategic and operational direction for workforce development. This plan must be created in coordination with the governor's state workforce board, in the commonwealth, the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) serves in this capacity.

Kentucky is submitting a Combined State Plan, which include the core WIOA programs encompassing:

- Title I: Workforce Development Activities targeting Dislocated Workers, Adult, & Youth;
- Title II: Adult Education & Literacy;
- Title III: Wagner-Peyser, general employment services; and
- Title IV: Vocational Rehabilitation.

Additional workforce programs are also included in the plan:

- Unemployment Insurance (UI);
- Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG); and
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA).

The plan opens to a discussion about Kentucky's economic and workforce analysis (such as the growing manufacturing and healthcare sectors), and then the strategic and operational components are addressed. The underlying theme of this plan has the Kentucky Strategic Plan as the north star and the four goals of employer engagement, education attainment, workforce participation, and resource alignment as the driving forces. The spirit of collaboration, partnership, alignment, and collective impact is seen in the activities discussed throughout the WIOA State Plan.

Executive Summary

The Commonwealth of Kentucky is entering the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) 2024-2027 State Planning period after securing the best four-year period of economic growth in the state's history. Over the last four years, more than \$28.7 billion dollars in private investments have flowed into the state, creating more than 51,200 new jobs for Kentuckians. Most importantly, these are high-quality, good-paying jobs that sustain families and communities. In 2023, Kentucky reached the highest average incentivized wage of \$26.67/hour, plus benefits. These historic investments include building two of the world's largest electric vehicle battery plants, securing Kentucky's position as the global EV battery capital. A wide and diverse set of additional economic investments complemented this growth, as private businesses continued to trust and believe in Kentucky's ability to provide a skilled and ready workforce to fill these jobs of the future.

To ensure the Commonwealth continues to be successful in meeting these new demands, as well supporting the needs of existing businesses in the commonwealth, the workforce development system must serve as an ecosystem with strategic direction from the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (KWIB) in collaboration with the Department of Workforce Development (administrators of WIOA). The opportunity to build equitable pathways to good quality jobs in a

wide array of industries is better now than at any time in Kentucky's history. The established partnerships across the workforce development system are well-positioned to serve all Kentuckians – including untapped talent pools WIOA was designed to serve, such as disconnected youth, justice-involved individuals, citizens with disabilities, veterans and their families, adults of limited literacy or those for whom English is not their primary language, and many others.

To accomplish these tasks, Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear's charge for all of Team Kentucky to embrace a "Forward, Together" model, working collaboratively to provide the highest level of support to Kentucky job-seekers, workers, and businesses through a collective team approach. This call to action directly aligns with KWIB's vision to "create a workforce development system that is value driven for employers, aligns education with industry demands, prepares Kentuckians for the future of work, and drives economic development." This North Star is supported by the four goals of Kentucky's Workforce Strategic Plan: employer engagement, education attainment, workforce participation, and resource alignment.

In this 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan, Kentucky's strategic and operational activities are outlined with the overarching theme of continuous improvement to enhance alignment, collaboration, and partnerships to better serve the needs of individual customers, businesses, and workforce system staff in a rapidly evolving economy. From highlighting successful local programs executed by the 10 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDA), to showing how the Department of Workforce Development is innovating to meet business and individual customer needs; all are accomplished through the enterprise-wide branding of the Kentucky Career Centers (KCC).

Furthermore, this WIOA State Plan is informed by various stakeholders essential to the execution of the Commonwealth's strategic and operational direction. This was accomplished through localized and statewide listening sessions, as well as input from individuals representing businesses, elected officials, community-based organizations, government, and individual consumers, all of whom contributed their unique perspectives on a reimagined workforce development system. This state plan is meant to be a living document that encourages the workforce development ecosystem to continue to work collaboratively to best meet the needs shared by the stakeholders.

This plan also takes into consideration the historic investments that will be powering up the national economy via the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and CHIPS and Science Act, which present opportunities for workforce development partnerships that support physical infrastructure construction, and also provide innovative vehicles to address equitable access to good jobs, such as rural connectivity via broadband expansion and improved digital equity across the Commonwealth. The key is to align and leverage new resources to expand, grow, and innovate existing programs, such as career pathways and sector strategies.

To create a workforce development system that is value driven for employers, we must align educational opportunities and training with industry demands to prepare Kentuckians for the future of work while also driving economic development. The 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan embraces the collaborative spirit of Team Kentucky to move the Commonwealth Forward, Together.

Highlights

- The Kentucky Strategic Plan is the north star of the plan with the four goals serving as pillars: employer engagement, education attainment, workforce participation, and resource alignment.
- Contribution from local listening sessions is included throughout the plan; contributors included: local businesses, local elected officials, community-based organizations, system partners, and individual customers.
- Strengths focus on the collaborative spirit of the workforce development ecosystem and connect various activities under the four goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan.
- Weaknesses are focused on the barriers to employment consisting of access to childcare, transportation (urban and rural), and affordable housing. The solution to these barrier hinges on partnership across state and local entities.
- The flow of action is shared: KWIB providing strategy, Education and Workforce Collaborative providing direction, and the Department of Workforce Development providing execution.
- Discussion on leveraging Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and CHIPS and Science Act and Science Act (totaling over a trillion dollars) provides opportunity to continue growing the share of Kentucky's involvement. The important of leveraging these resources to grow existing workforce programming is crucial.
- Partnership opportunities with employers and educational institutions discussed; Work-Based Learning (WBL) serving as an effective tool for both learners and businesses.
- Coordination with economic development is discussed as it relates to Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT), Work Ready Communities – Next Generation, and overall collaboration to serve current Kentucky employers and new and expanding businesses.
- Good job principles are reviewed as an avenue to increase outcomes for individual customers and increase recruitment and retention for businesses.
- Procurement of assessment and evaluation by a third party is reviewed, specifically, procurement of an integrated case management system.
- Operationally, information is provided from Kentucky Office of Adult Education (highlighting Title II), Career Development Office (highlighting Title III and JVSG, TAA programs), Unemployment Insurance, and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (highlighting Title IV).