



Program Year

2023

Workforce Innovation &
Opportunity Act Statewide
Annual Narrative

July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

Table of Contents

Deputy Secretary’s Note.....	3
Introduction – Kentucky’s Department of Workforce Development	4
Statewide Performance Summary	4
The Commonwealth’s Plan and Goals.....	5
Department of Workforce Development: Core Partners Overview	5
A Collaborative Approach to Workforce Development	6
State Waivers with the US Department of Labor.....	8
Effectiveness in Serving Employers- Performance Indicator Pilot.....	8
State Plan Listening Sessions & Planned Evaluations.....	8
Customer Satisfaction - Continuous Improvements	10
Sector Strategies and Career Pathways	11
Registered Apprenticeship & Incumbent Worker Training.....	12
Job Quality	14
Performance Accountability System	15
Data Validation	16
Governor’s Discretionary Funds	17
Rapid Response & Layoff Aversion	17
Wagner-Peyser Act	18
National Dislocated Worker Grants.....	19
Promising Practices.....	20
Appendix	24

Deputy Secretary's Note

In the program year 2023, the Commonwealth of Kentucky's workforce development system submitted the Kentucky Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) 2024-2027 State Plan outlining the opportunities and statewide strategies to move Kentucky forward. The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act State Plan came at the perfect time as the Commonwealth secured the best four-year period of economic growth in the state's history. Team Kentucky jumped into action by embracing the "Forward, Together" vision, a strategic approach that emphasizes collaboration and collective effort. Governor Andy Beshear's charge is to work collaboratively to provide the highest level of support to Kentucky jobseekers, workers, and businesses through an all-hands team approach to create Our New Kentucky Home. This idea is brought to life with the four goals of Kentucky's Workforce Strategic Plan: employer engagement, education attainment, workforce participation, and resource alignment.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky's workforce development system's primary focus is for 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 ten Local Workforce Development Areas to showcasing how the Department of Workforce Development is innovating to meet business and individual customer needs, all are accomplished through Kentucky Career Centers system.

In preparation for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Plan, the program year 2023 served as an opportunity to gather statewide and local input through dedicated listening sessions, including input from businesses, elected officials, community-based organizations, and individual consumers. The Commonwealth was able to gain valuable information to drive the growth and enhancement of the workforce in a time of major investment and economic growth for Kentucky.

The Education and Labor Cabinet encompasses the Department of Workforce Development in the administration of the core workforce programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Department of Workforce Development works regionally with employers and individuals to develop Kentucky's workforce. By strengthening the relationship between workforce development services, employers and job seekers, the workforce system can adapt and thrive. The future of Kentucky's workforce is a shared journey that involves innovation, collaboration, and communication in order to operate together towards providing equitable and sustainable work for all.

Sincerely,

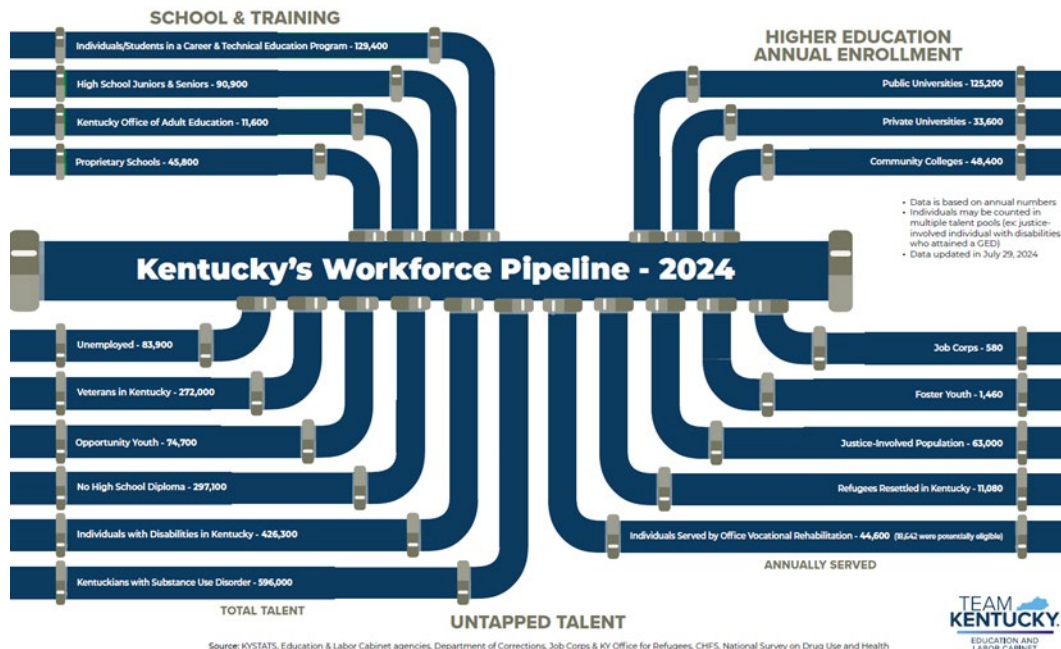
Beth A. Brinly
Deputy Secretary

Introduction – Kentucky’s Department of Workforce Development

In Kentucky, all four core Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs are administered by the Department of Workforce Development. The Department of Workforce Development ensures that services are maximized for all individuals, businesses, and workforce development practitioners. The elements of the program year 2023 annual narrative reflect many of the strategies in the WIOA State Plan that highlight the structure in the Commonwealth. A key component for the alignment of workforce priorities is the Education and Workforce Collaborative Board. This Board brings education and workforce development system partners together in one group to coordinate and align resources, policies, and practices, thereby enhancing and improving the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet’s Department of Workforce Development. In addition, the Department encompasses the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board – a business led board designed to be an advisory entity to the Governor in setting the strategic direction of workforce development for the Commonwealth.

Statewide Performance Summary

- Title I – Adult: 2,792 participants served; 1,496 trainings provided; quarter median earnings \$8,571.
- Title I – Youth: 1,523 participants served; 522 trainings provided; quarter median earnings \$4,789.
- Title I – Dislocated Worker: 238 participants served; 164 trainings provided; quarter median earnings \$11,250.
- Title II – Adult Education & Family Literacy Act: 13,221 participants served; 55.89% measurable skills gain rate; quarter median earnings \$5,066.
- Title III – Wagner-Peyser: 27,021 participants served; quarter median earnings \$8,117.
- Title IV– Vocational Rehabilitation: 45,812 participants served; 4557 trainings provided; \$23.30 average earnings per hour; 33.71 weekly average hours worked.
- In program year 2023, Kentucky engaged with 43,056 employers (27.6%); additionally, the Kentucky workforce system also saw 35.6% in repeat business customers.



Kentucky’s Workforce Pipeline Depicting Targeted Talent Pools

The Commonwealth's Plan and Goals

Kentucky's workforce development plan is 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 vision is actualized through the four pillars:

- Actively engaging employers to drive Kentucky's workforce development system.
- Aligning and integrating primary, secondary, adult, and post-secondary education to provide lifelong opportunities for Kentuckians and prepare them for the rapidly evolving future of work.
- Increasing Kentucky's workforce participation by creating opportunities, incentivizing workforce participation, and removing employment barriers.
- Focusing resources on the most effective initiatives and improving the return on work investment, then continually utilizing that data.

Department of Workforce Development: Core Partners Overview

Kentucky Adult Education: "The bridge to college and career readiness."

The Kentucky Office of Adult Education is the Title II program that provides work-ready Kentuckians with the proper tools for achieving workforce knowledge and a strong foundation for career progression and self-sufficiency. It maintains an education perspective and has four central purposes:

1. Helping work-ready Kentuckians acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for economic advancement.
2. Providing those individuals with family literacy skills.
3. Assisting individuals to obtain a secondary diploma; such as a High School diploma or GED diploma, with the inclusion of paths for occupation.
4. Providing tools for English Language Learning that are free and accessible to Kentucky's citizens.

The Kentucky Office of Adult Education has many programs and initiatives designed to help Kentuckians achieve job success. One of the greatest achievements for the Office of Adult Education has been the development of eight statewide templates for Integrated Education and Training and Workplace Literacy programs. There are 41 programs based on the templates, and the initiative continues to grow. These programs have been impactful for an increase in measurable skill gains rates statewide. In the program year 2023, these measures equated to 515 Individual Education and Training opportunities, which is more than double from program year 2021.

Career Development Office: "Partnership Matters."

The Kentucky Career Development Office is the agency responsible for completing the Title III Wagner-Peyser program and operates as a partner with the thirteen comprehensive Kentucky Career Centers. The agency administers five workforce services: Wagner-Peyser, Foreign Labor Certification, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments, Trade Adjustment Act, and Jobs for Veterans State Grant.

The Career Development Office connects jobseekers and eligible employers to build suitable and sustainable employment. The Career Development Office provides job search assistance, job order postings, resources, and a referral pipeline for job seekers. It also offers services for employers including methods for screening applicants, support for interviews, job fairs, and other requested services for the attainment and retention of valuable and employable talent.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation: "Everybody Can Work."

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation empowers Kentuckians with disabilities to maximize independence and economic security through competitive integrated employment. It is the Title IV program administered by the US Department of Education-Rehabilitation Services Administration and is 80 percent

federally funded, with the remaining 20 percent from the state general fund. It assists over 48,000 individuals, and employs 464 staff statewide, at 46 offices across the state. It is composed of four primary divisions: Field Services, Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center, Blind Services/McDowell Center, and Kentucky Business Enterprise.

The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center and the Charles W. McDowell Center for the Blind are two institutions that provide residential and non-residential services to individuals with disabilities. The Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center operates occupational skill training programs that assist disabled citizens achieve their vocational rehabilitation goals. The Charles W. McDowell Center for the Blind provides high-quality services and resources to Kentuckians who are blind or visually impaired to prepare them for employment, economic self-sufficiency, and independence. Programs at the center include the provision of and training on assistive technology, basic academic skill remediation, Braille education, career exploration and progressive employment, and financial management.

The agency also helps businesses and employers recruit, retain, and accommodate employees with disabilities. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation also assists youth with disabilities through its Pre-Employment Transition Services, and it works closely with the Kentucky Department of Education to help eligible students identify, plan for, and achieve vocational goals. Such efforts provide support to individuals with disabilities so that they can acquire skills and maintain employment and self-sufficiency.

Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services: “Find, Train, and Retain.”

The Kentucky Career Center’s Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services is the approving agency for the Registered Apprenticeship Program. Its mission is to coordinate, promote, market, and provide businesses with access to workforce partners through resources and services. The program helps businesses develop their workforce, increase employee retention, and find qualified candidates for hard-to-fill jobs. It grows talent through work-based training initiatives and provides first-hand experience. In program year 2023, 3,000 new apprentices entered the workforce in various occupations and programs across the Commonwealth.

Over 1,500 occupations are recognized for apprenticeship programs including educator, physical therapy aide, principal, even whiskey specialist, in addition to traditional apprentice services in construction and trades. Some Registered Apprenticeships align with community college courses, offering a complementary path to postsecondary education that drives Kentucky’s growth and competitiveness.

The Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services also offers education and informational services to help employers discover innovative approaches to hiring, retaining, and developing their workforce. It works with employers to track engagement through tools like the Kentucky Integrated Business Engagement System and connects business owners with partners who can help find, train, and retain existing talent. Those employer services include financial incentives like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program and assistance programs such as layoff aversion, rapid response, and work-based learning offered through the Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services.

A Collaborative Approach to Workforce Development

Collaboration and partnerships are key themes in Kentucky’s Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Plan, and the Education and Workforce Collaborative (“Collaborative”) is the platform for aligning workforce priorities.

Initiated in 2020 through the [Governor’s Executive Order 2020-551](#), the Collaborative brings education and workforce development system partners together in one group, allowing resources to be efficiently and effectively aligned for the improvement of the workforce development system. The 19-member Collaborative is made up of executive Cabinet leadership, education leaders from the primary and post-secondary levels, the state chamber of commerce, federal workforce training providers, local workforce boards, elected officials, and the state workforce board chair.

The Deputy Secretary of the Education and Labor Cabinet chairs the Collaborative, and during program year 2023, addressed workforce components from the Strategic Plan.

The quarterly Collaborative meetings in program year 2023 researched resources for veterans, transitioning military and military families, Kentucky's Workforce Development State Plan, individuals facing benefit cliffs, and the LAUNCH Initiative.

Resources for Veterans, Transitioning Military, and Military Families in Kentucky

In June 2023, the Collaborative discussed services and resources that support veterans, transitioning military, and their families, with an emphasis on attracting and retaining veteran talent in the Commonwealth. This conversation demonstrated the need for a listing of all the resources businesses can use with goals to attract and retain veteran employees.

The Collaborative formed a workgroup of veteran-focused organizations to compile a resource guide including employment services for veterans, resources to hire veterans, family support resources, education resources, military transition assistance, and support services.

Kentucky's Workforce Development State Plan

In October 2023, the Collaborative met to contribute to Kentucky's Workforce Development State Plan. The Collaborative played an important role in infusing critical needs of the workforce ecosystem into the resulting document by emphasizing the importance of collaboration across the executive branch, community-based organizations, education, and businesses. Members of the Collaborative also focused on ways to support Kentucky's talent pipeline needs through mutually reinforcing activities in the categories of agency practices, data collection, and policy improvements.

Individuals Facing Benefit Cliffs

The Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board's Workforce Participation Committee began an analysis of benefit cliffs as an initiative to understand the impact on Kentucky families. A benefit cliff is when increased wages lead to a reduction in government social services assistance, resulting in a net loss for families. The work of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board was built on the Family Resource Simulator created by the Kentucky Center for Statistics. The National Center for Children in Poverty conducted further analysis on the benefit cliffs and worked closely with the Kentucky Center for Statistics and the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services to provide a report on the impact of benefit cliffs on Kentuckians. This report was shared and reviewed with the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board's Workforce Participation Committee and with the Education and Workforce Collaborative Board. The purpose was to depict the impact benefit cliffs have on hiring, promotion, and growth of individuals in the workplace.

In January 2023, the Collaborative reviewed the report's findings to understand the biggest cliffs and explore ways to smooth the transition for Kentuckians to move from "benefit cliffs" to "benefit ramps." This would allow for more individuals to seek employment, higher wages, and promotion opportunities. Families with children endure the biggest impact from benefit cliffs compared to others, as families with marginal increase in wages face a reduction or loss of benefits in the Kentucky Childcare Assistance Program, Medicaid, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

The LAUNCH Initiative

Kentucky is one of thirteen states selected to participate in the LAUNCH Initiative. The underlying goal of this initiative is designed on the principle that every young person deserves a high school diploma with a postsecondary credential that has labor market value. With further understanding that every person should be engaged in full-time employment or continued training that leads to a family-sustaining career in an economically strong community. The pillars of the LAUNCH Initiative include alignment of credentials of value, seamless transitions between secondary and postsecondary education, Work-Based Learning, and student advising and support.

The Collaborative's previous work in ensuring that common definitions are identified across partners led to the emphasis of credentials of value. To settle on a common definition, the Collaborative met in April 2024 and created a workgroup to focus on meaningful credentials which could later be used by all partners.

Furthermore, this work is built on the understanding the Work-Based Learning (WBL) is a critical component to training individuals and exposing them to opportunities within a career. The Collaborative explored the current

WBL system to highlight progress and innovation and to determine opportunities for improvement. Employer involvement is the essential component of WBL, and the design of the workforce development system needs to be efficient for their engagement. Employers prefer to hire individuals with relevant credentials and experience; therefore, providing learning opportunities for current and potential employees is vital.

Update on Jobs on Day One

There are more than 63,000 Kentuckians in the correctional system, and of those, over 13,000 individuals return home from incarceration annually. Jobs on Day One was initiated when several members of the Kentucky State Building and Construction Trades Council joined Governor Beshear to adopt the initiative to work with the Department of Corrections to provide pre-release trades training. These efforts provide opportunities for employers to reach untapped talent and help individuals gain skills and employment that improve their chances for successful reentry.

State Waivers with the US Department of Labor

The Commonwealth of Kentucky did not submit any waivers to the US Department of Labor’s Employment Training Administration for the program year 2023.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers- Performance Indicator Pilot

Kentucky used the business penetration rate and the percentage of repeat business to evaluate its effectiveness. Methods like this meet businesses’ demands for trained employees by fostering strong connections between employers and prospective employees. The business penetration rate indicates how many Kentucky businesses are engaged with the workforce system as a share of all businesses in the state. Kentucky keeps a record of the share of the total business population that is using the programs’ services. Further, measuring the percentage of businesses that have used the same service keeps track of how often the recipients return for services from the system’s offerings.

Data indicates that for the program year 2023, 35.6 percent of businesses in the Commonwealth were returning customers. Over 200 business services experts with a wide range of experience and resources are available through the Kentucky business services network. Business services professionals have access to a statewide customer relationship management tool called the Kentucky Integrated Business Engagement System, which operates on the Salesforce platform. Through this system, business service team members and workforce partners across the Commonwealth, can communicate and track the progress of company contacts, ongoing relationships, training and education programs, activities utilized, and the overall status of company engagement.

Having the Business Service Team members on one platform makes collaboration possible for existing company record owners to introduce their colleagues to a unique program or opportunity. Both digital and in-person collaboration among Kentucky’s business services has allowed the system to be proactive in helping companies recruit, develop, and retain talent while also helping them access labor market information, innovative workforce development practices, and resources from partners, which lowers costs and increases opportunities for all Kentuckians.

As state partners to the local business service teams, the Workforce Development Consultants of the Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services provide an opportunity to enhance the connectivity between state and local resources for the benefit of the business.

The unified business services strategy was also elevated in the program year 2023 as the Statewide Workforce and Talent Team was formed to provide the framework for collaboration. It will serve as the foundation to ensure the wide scope of workforce development services are delivered in a collective and customized approach to businesses of the Commonwealth.

State Plan Listening Sessions & Planned Evaluations

Listening Sessions

In preparation for drafting the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act 2024-2027 Combined State Plan, statewide listening tours were conducted, including focus group sessions with all ten Local Workforce

Development Areas. The framework for the tour involved working with the local Workforce Development Area Board directors and their teams to invite workforce stakeholders for a brief overview of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act State Plan and to receive feedback on local employer and job seeker needs. In total, 33 groups of 348 individuals participated, with a breakdown of 198 workforce partners, 82 employers, 51 elected officials, and 17 individual customers contributing their perspectives.

The recurring theme was “exposure to careers” starting in middle school and highlighting more work-based learning opportunities. Participants indicated that guardians and educators need to be more involved in workforce exposure through the dissemination of career and training options available and help provide an understanding that “good jobs” are available in all sectors. The goal is to reach youth before they become disconnected from workforce and education and ensure that all untapped talent is introduced to Kentucky’s workforce development pipeline.

Attendees emphasized the importance of businesses being engaged partners and having an active “voice at the table.” They requested more investment in work-based learning (especially as a succession strategy), more sector strategy opportunities, more support to small and medium-sized businesses, and more support for county and municipal needs. Participants expressed that the lines of partnership between education and workforce needed to be better connected and called for stronger communication and outreach.

One of the concerns raised during the listening sessions is that the Kentucky Career Center is viewed as an “unemployment office,” a stigma that decreases the incentive to seek assistance. There was a call for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding to be leveraged for combined resources and collaboration, citing that doing so could also negate duplication of services. Co-location of workforce programs was also addressed, expressing that one physical space provides better service as it limits customer waiting times and increases the likelihood of continued engagement. Finally, there was an interest in ongoing staff training and exposure to the greater Kentucky workforce development system.

Participants shared the common barriers to those entering the workforce:

- Lack of accessible and affordable childcare with an interest in support for Universal Pre-K and Employee Assistance programs.
- Lack of reliable transportation access for those in urban and rural areas.
- Lack of access to new and affordable housing with a higher demand for multi-unit housing.

These sessions provided the Kentucky workforce system with invaluable data that will be applied to present and future programs and initiatives. Addressing workforce barriers is an integral part of achieving the goals set forth by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Combined State Plan and sustaining the workforce pipeline.

Separately, the Commonwealth conducted an evaluation of the longstanding Kentucky’s Work Ready Communities initiative. The feedback received allowed the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board to adopt a new framework under the title of Work Ready Communities—Next Generation.

The evaluation highlighted the importance of the program to Kentucky communities and economic development strategies with the update that includes a new statewide framework designed to elevate the existing strategic objectives, tie in talent-ready community objectives, and encourage the ability to strategize on a regional basis. The strategic local and regional objectives include: (1) supply and demand of regional skills, (2) awareness and engagement with untapped talent pools, and (3) work-based learning opportunities. The talent ready local and regional strategies include: (1) addressing childcare barriers to employment, (2) affordable housing, (3) transportation, (4) digital equity and broadband infrastructure, and (5) talent attraction.

Workforce Study

The Education and Labor Cabinet partnered with the University of Kentucky's Center for Business and Economic Research conduct a study to evaluate the effectiveness of Kentucky's state-sponsored workforce development programs, primarily focused on Kentucky Adult Education, the Kentucky Community Technical College System TRAINS program, and the Bluegrass State Skills Corporation.

The study indicated that career outcomes improved with Kentucky Adult Education involvement. Participants had higher employment rates than non-participants after enrollment. Wages for females rose gradually and significantly following enrollment. Compared to females, the wages of males enrolled were slightly higher (2-3 percent). However, employment impact gains declined after four years. Male employment rate gains declined more quickly than female, reduced by nearly half the initial difference of 14.6 percent. Furthermore, for both females and males, enrollment in Kentucky Adult Education experienced net gains overall due to more employment opportunities and overall higher wages long-term. ESL learners took longer to catch up on wages than those with uninterrupted attendance.

Customer Satisfaction - Continuous Improvements

Kentucky continues to explore potential avenues for the workforce assessment process that combines independent reviews and common performance measures. The goal is to create a program that both encourages customer engagement and provides a guide for further workforce innovations. This can encompass:

- Basic service delivery performance standards.
- New comprehensive Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act service delivery ideas and standards.
- Evaluation of statewide cross-program common data elements.

Kentucky will also continue to assess the effectiveness, as well as the physical and programmatic accessibility of the Career Centers. The Kentucky Career Center certification process is in place to ensure that its offices are ready to serve all Kentuckians in regional and local areas as expected. The certification process ensures the workforce system's alignment of programs, policies, and activities. Workforce agencies and partners are engaged in these assessments and make any needed improvements to ensure that all related activities are coordinated, allowing partners to review relevant information and take action to improve the system.

The Career Development Office and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation provide reciprocal referral services that further customer satisfaction by providing efficient services for individuals with disabilities. Co-enrollment also occurs with Adult Education (WIOA Title II) and services offered by WIOA Title I and Title III programs. Such collaboration is worth studying to understand customer satisfaction and approval levels when services are braided to increase opportunities for better outcomes. Two examples from local areas are provided in the below local spotlight through their respective methodologies.

Furthermore, the Commonwealth can gauge statewide business customer satisfaction from the data collected through the Kentucky Integrated Business Engagement System noting an engagement with 43,056 employers (27.6% of all businesses in the state) with 35.6% in repeat business customers. The repeat business customer rate is the direct result of satisfied employers that return for additional services from the workforce system.

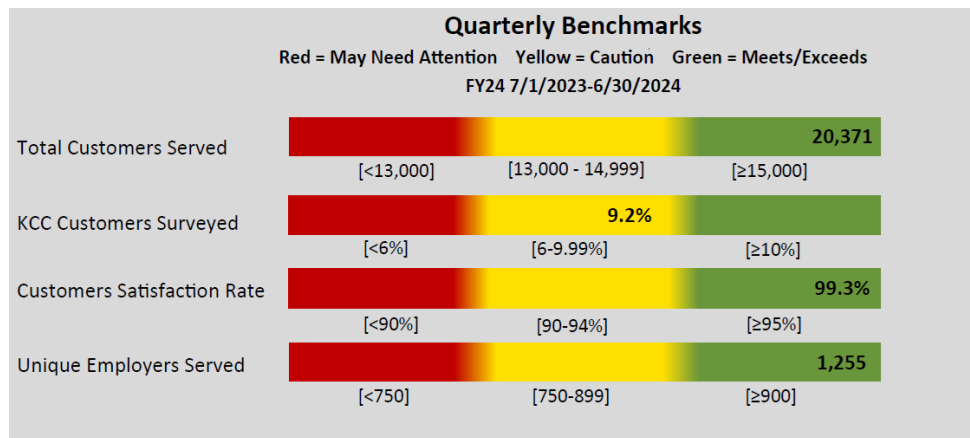
Local Spotlight: Legacy in Action in Green River

In program year 2023, The Green River Workforce Development Board conducted surveys to determine the level of customer satisfaction. This Legacy in Action Survey was applied to the Kentucky Career Center in Green River. From July to September 2023, the center experienced 99.3 percent satisfaction from customers. From October to December, it was 98.82 percent. Moving into 2024, the number rose to 99.18 percent average. From April to the end of the program year, the number increased once more to 98.85 percent. These numbers reflect not just that customers are satisfied with Green River's Kentucky Career Center but also that customers are willing to engage with the centers they are satisfied with on an ongoing basis.

Local Spotlight: Northern Kentucky Job Placements and Employer Services

In program year 2023, over 1,700 Northern Kentucky job seekers gained employment with local employers through a network of 18 Career Center partners. This was accomplished through a multitude of services, including individualized career coaching, coordination and facilitation of employer hiring events and job fairs, and an array of additional services provided by Brighton Center, the North Kentucky Workforce Investment Board's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act subcontractor, such as skill-building workshops, reverse job fairs and job matching activities.

Over 20,000 individuals were served through the Kentucky Career Centers in Northern Kentucky, and over 1,200 unique employers were served. Satisfaction survey data was captured from 9 percent of Kentucky Career Center visitors, revealing a customer/client satisfaction rate of 99 percent.



FY24 | July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024 | Updated August 9, 2024 | Sources: KIBES, KY Stats, US Census Bureau, BLS, KCC Records

Sector Strategies and Career Pathways

In-Demand Sectors

The five in-demand sectors are manufacturing, construction, transportation, healthcare, and business/IT. Kentucky has statewide strategic objectives that are not unique to one agency, program, or initiative. Instead, these objectives rely on the workforce ecosystem to leverage resources to meet the strategic outcomes. Across the commonwealth, several sector strategies are executed in the local workforce development area. In program year 2023, the review of the in-demand sectors began with a quantitative analysis of occupations that met factors identified to be critical, such as occupation demand, growth, and wages. Further, these occupations were cross-walked to the appropriate industries to provide insight into the in-demand sectors. The work continued with expected completion in program year 2024, which would identify the next iteration of in-demand sectors based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Statewide Workforce and Talent Team

The Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT) is a group of statewide organizations committed to improving the measurement, coordination, and delivery of workforce development solutions and services to Kentucky employers. In the program year 2023, Kentucky had approximately 126,000 unfilled positions and 88,000 unemployed persons, creating an excess gap of 38,000 unfilled jobs despite seeing nearly \$4 billion in new investment announcements, representing almost 7,000 new jobs. Workforce and economic drivers have led to a significant talent gap.

SWATT is a practical way to work more efficiently and effectively to serve employers. It designs and pilots a unified approach to provide workforce solutions to employers. SWATT's data-informed strategy improves coordination, responsiveness, and results among partners and drives workforce participation and business growth.

Local Spotlight: Estill County Special Initiative

In program year 2023, the staff from the County Judge Executive's Office discussed the lack of training opportunities and limited transportation options for jobseekers in the community.

Estill County's needs were specific; they needed CDL drivers for their sanitation department and road crew. Estill County worked with the Kentucky Career Center – Bluegrass staff to identify a solution, a partnership with Bluegrass Community and Technical College's Workforce Solutions, to provide a CDL training cohort. The goal was to identify qualified individuals to receive CDL training while upskilling current staff. This small project will create a multi-level benefit by providing staff to fill needed vacancies, providing good-paying jobs to residents, and adding a small but noticeable influx of tax dollars to the community.

When the project was announced, 23 people expressed interest for the limited number of training seats. Those not selected to participate in this special project received follow-up assistance from the Kentucky Career Center – Bluegrass to assist with other employment or training opportunities.

The information meeting was held on June 27, and training for those selected began in August. By the end of September, three individuals had completed their training funded through WIOA; two had received their CDL, and one would be tested in early October.

Local Spotlight: Russell County Sector Tours

Teachers in the Russell County School District have a unique opportunity to bridge the gap between education and industry. As part of the program, teachers will embark on a tour of the region's four largest companies. This exclusive event, hosted by the Lake Cumberland Area Development District, will offer teachers a firsthand look at the manufacturing processes and innovations driving the local economy.

Participating companies include Stephens Pipe & Steel, Superior Battery Manufacturing Company, Motherson, and Bruss North America. This immersive experience will help teachers better connect STEM subjects to real-world careers and inspire students to explore opportunities in their backyard.

In response to Kentucky's critical nursing shortage, which was projected to exceed 16,000 by 2024, the Cumberlands Workforce Development Board played a vital role in training the next generation of healthcare professionals. Through outreach and targeted training assistance, over 32 percent of total enrollments in program year 2023 were concentrated in healthcare sector programs. This figure includes a substantial 56 percent of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adults, 23 percent of Dislocated Workers, and 18 percent of Youth actively participating in these programs.

Local Spotlight: Kentuckiana Builds

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds the pre-apprenticeship construction training program called Kentuckiana Builds. A partnership with the Louisville Urban League, Kentuckiana Builds was created in 2016 to respond to the need for a pipeline of trained construction employees and to increase the number of minorities and women going into the sector regionally. This 6-week technical education and hands-on training program introduces job seekers to the skilled construction trades, including electrical, plumbing, carpentry, HVAC, and more.

In program year 2023, more than one hundred people enrolled in Kentuckiana Builds. This statewide relief-funded program placed 79 training graduates in construction jobs at an average wage of nearly \$20 per hour.

Registered Apprenticeship & Incumbent Worker Training

The US Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship Program in Kentucky fulfills a strategic, data-driven solution for employers' needs. Registered Apprenticeships are part of achieving Kentucky's vision of becoming a national leader in workforce development.

A Registered Apprenticeship combines on-the-job training, related instructions, and mentorship in a paid experience, leading to an industry-recognized credential. Through this joint approach, the apprentice becomes a subject matter expert and can fill the most in-demand and hard-to-fill positions today. Incumbent Worker training is designed to meet the needs of an employer or group of employers to retain a skilled workforce and

avert layoffs. Incumbent Worker training can be used to avert potential layoffs of employees or help them obtain the skills necessary to retain employment.

With the assistance of the US Department of Labor, the commonwealth's businesses can establish apprenticeship programs that provide a credential from their program that will aid in the retaining and sustainment of careers both in and out of Kentucky. This is achieved through On-the-Job-Training and Related Technical Instruction. On-the-Job-Training provides reimbursements to employers to compensate for the costs associated with skills upgrade training for newly hired employees and the lost production of current employees providing the training (including management staff). It assists employers looking to expand their business and who need additional staff trained with specialized skills. Related Technical Instruction involves skills gained off the work site, also known as classroom training. The goal of such apprenticeships is to help retain employment by increasing training. Such programs also have the added benefit of being paid with the requirement of at least one wage increase over the term of the training. This training benefits not just apprentices but also incumbent workers in need of training.

Kentucky has 297 registered apprenticeship programs of the 1,500 plus occupations standards from the Department of Labor. These programs go beyond traditional construction and skilled trade positions, encompassing advancing fields like aerospace engineering, physical therapy aide, office management and even whiskey specialist. This program offers an alternative path to postsecondary education and drives Kentucky's growth and competitiveness. Kentucky's Registered Apprenticeship programs produce a retention rate of 87 percent.

In program year 2023, 3,000 apprentices were in the Kentucky's Apprenticeship program. This is a nine percent increase from program year 2022. Of the apprentices served, 1,914 of them found apprenticeships in construction, 147 in manufacturing, 102 in healthcare and social assistance, and 142 in Public Administration.

Early Childhood Registered Apprenticeships

Kentucky's Early Childhood Education Registered Apprenticeship allows new and current employees to receive high-quality training that is aligned with industry standards. Apprenticeship occupation options are Childcare Development Specialist, Early Childhood Educator, and Early Childhood Administrator. Apprenticeships are available to those at least sixteen years old, and they are paid apprenticeship programs with wage increases and milestone achievements. Working alongside employers, partners, and mentors, the apprentice learns the skills needed to work in an Early Childhood career. There are currently 130 active apprentices and 36 registered apprenticeship employer partners.

In March 2024, an Employer-Partner and Mentor Summit was hosted for new, current, and prospective employers and mentors. Mentorship is an essential part of the registered apprenticeship program, and the summit highlighted that significance. Breakout sessions covered apprenticeship basics and offered in-depth insights. Specific sessions covered effective mentoring techniques and tips for leveraging apprenticeships as a recruiting tool.

In June, an Apprenticeship Summit was held for new, current, and past apprentices. This summit provided essential contextual information about apprenticeships and allowed participants to earn continuing education credits, which are mandatory for childcare workers in Kentucky. The summit emphasized integrating the apprenticeship model into daily work, effective apprenticeship practices, and professional development.

On June 21, 2024, the Early Childhood Education Registered Apprenticeship celebrated its first graduation ceremony, honoring over 60 apprentices who received their Journey Worker Credential. This included the milestone achievement of the first individual in the nation to earn a Journey Worker Credential as an Early Childhood Administrator/Director. The apprenticeship opportunity is meant to address the current talent needs for childcare facilities in improving the administrator/director training programs.

The Governor's Office of Early Childhood's Apprenticeship Portfolio offers a strategic solution to tackle childcare challenges across the Commonwealth of Kentucky. It provides benefits for both employers and employees to address key issues within the childcare workforce, including:

- **Low Compensation and High Staff Turnover:** Through the *Wage Increase and Milestone Achievements Program*, the portfolio incentivizes participants. Employers, mentors, and apprentices receive wage increases and milestone achievements that encourage retention and staff development, reducing turnover.
- **Limited Access to Education and Training:** The portfolio ensures that both mentors and apprentices gain access to state-required, no-cost training. This training meets industry standards and continuing education requirements for childcare workers, ensuring employers have a qualified workforce at no extra cost to them.
- **Lack of Recognition:** Apprenticeship success is celebrated annually through a graduation ceremony for early childhood education professionals. Apprentices who complete the program receive a nationally recognized journey worker credential, signifying their expertise and elevating their professional status in the field.
- **Increased Opportunities for Staff:** The portfolio helps diversify the talent pool by enabling parents to become apprentices at the childcare centers where their children are enrolled. These apprentices also benefit from no-cost childcare, which further reduces financial barriers and supports both career development and family stability.
- **Talent Pipeline Management Initiative:** In collaboration with the Kentucky Chamber's Talent Pipeline Management initiative, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Apprenticeship addresses the childcare staffing crisis through regular quarterly meetings. Employers from preschools, Head Start, and childcare centers come together to discuss workforce challenges and identify solutions for improving staffing in the childcare sector.

Local Spotlight: KentuckianaWorks Incumbent Worker Training

KentuckianaWorks was awarded \$117,000 in Office of Refugee Resettlement funding to support refugee incumbent worker advancement by working with employers to provide training for skills leading to increased wages, promotion, and/or increased responsibility.

Employer Incentives

Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program is an incentive program that enables new employees to gradually move from economic dependency into self-sufficiency as they earn steady incomes and become participating taxpayers. Participating employers are compensated by reducing their federal income tax liability. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program does this by reducing eligible employers' cost of doing business and reducing their federal income tax liability. The Work Opportunity Tax Credits are beneficial to its target groups of Veterans, Individuals with disabilities, Food stamp Recipients, justice-involved individuals, and youth. In the program year 2023, 152,172 were served.

Federal Bonding Program

The Federal Bonding Program provides a fidelity bond and a limited liability insurance policy at no cost to the job applicant or employer. The bond from Traveler's Insurance insures employers against theft, forgery, larceny, or embezzlement by the bonded employee for the first six months of employment. In Kentucky, the Federal Bonding Program is called the Fair Chance Bond. Through the end of program year 2023, 162 bonds were issued.

Job Quality

In program year 2023, the Commonwealth of Kentucky was selected by the US Department of Labor to participate in the Job Quality Academy initiative to take the Good Job Principles and apply them to workforce development in the Commonwealth. The team, consisting of the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board, KentuckianaWorks, BlueOval SK, Metals Innovation Initiative, United Auto Workers, and the Kentucky Building and Construction Trades Council, embarked on an opportunity to bring national best practices and apply them to Kentucky. The goal of Kentucky's team was to focus on how good jobs provide better recruitment and retention for Kentucky businesses, especially employers in the manufacturing sector. The Department of Workforce Development also brought together "Job Quality Champions" to share the opportunity and framework, which included manufacturing sector associations, state chamber of commerce, local workforce

development boards, post-secondary education, and others with interest in improving outcomes for Kentuckians and providing better recruitment and retention for Kentucky businesses.

Local Spotlight: Northern Kentucky

The North Kentucky Workforce Investment Board has worked diligently in program year 2023 to advance “Job Quality” in its region. It is partnering with the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet by promoting the US Department of Labor’s and US Department of Commerce’s “Good Jobs Principles.” It began using these principles to guide conversations with regional businesses that demonstrate an interest in and commitment to advancing job quality. The North Kentucky Workforce Investment Board has also initiated a process to recognize local businesses that exemplify Good Jobs Principles formally and recognized a northern Kentucky manufacturer, Perfetti Van Melle, to acknowledge and celebrate the ways they are operationalizing Good Jobs Principles in business.

Additionally, the North Kentucky Workforce Investment Board is a lead partner in the Talent Collaborative of Greater Cincinnati, which has been designated as the 34th National Fund for Workforce Solutions site in the country. In collaboration with other organizations affiliated with the National Fund, it has been concentrating on the issue of Job Quality. It has convened partners to examine how to most effectively advance Job Quality in the Northern Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati region. As part of this effort, we are evaluating national best practices to see how we may leverage those practices to advance this issue regionally.

Lastly, the North Kentucky Workforce Investment Board Director led a session at the 2024 SHIFT conference (National Fund conference) in partnership with leaders from KentuckianaWorks and Employ Indy. The topic of the session was how to effectively recognize and celebrate employers who have taken meaningful steps to introduce and advance Good Jobs Principles within their company.

Local Spotlight: KentuckianaWorks

Through work funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, KentuckianaWorks has been convening young adults, employers, and youth development experts to improve the work experience for young adult workers. This allows for improvement in regional messaging and outcomes around incorporating racial equity, positive youth development, and worker's voice. With the help of the Redesigned Jobs, Resilient Worker grant funded by the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, KentuckianaWorks was able to provide higher job quality for hundreds of Louisville-area workers. It also developed the Workforce Investor Badge, which will soon be awarded to Louisville region employers who have shown an outstanding commitment to their frontline workers.

Performance Accountability System

In program year 2023, the Education and Labor Cabinet made significant investments to improve reporting and performance for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I programs. Not only did the Education and Labor Cabinet deploy several enhancements in KEE Suite, the statewide case management system, but it also continued to integrate Enterprise Business Intelligence into its reporting process. Now, local areas can assess the effectiveness of their services and activities using more timely data. As a result, Kentucky met all its federal performance measures for the second year in a row. The commonwealth has streamlined its reporting processes, created more training opportunities for local administrators, and provided the Performance and Reporting Team with additional resources. The program year 2024 and program year 2025 performance goals for Kentucky are as follows:

	PY24	PY25
WIOA Title I Adult		
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	76%	77%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	77%	78%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter After Exit	\$8,722	\$8,722
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	73%	74%
Measurable Skills Gains	55%	60%
WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker		
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	79%	80%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	79%	80%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter After Exit	\$9,951	\$9,951
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	73%	74%
Measurable Skills Gains	74.30%	74.30%
WIOA Title I Youth		
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	70%	71%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	73%	74%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter After Exit	\$5,035	\$5,035
Credential Attainment within 4 Quarters After Exit	63%	64%
Measurable Skills Gains	50%	50%
WIOA Title III Wagner-Peyser Employment Services		
Employment Rate 2 nd Quarter After Exit	66%	68%
Employment Rate 4 th Quarter After Exit	73%	74%
Median Earnings 2 nd Quarter After Exit	\$6,994	\$7,000

Data Validation

Data validation is a series of quality assurance techniques used to verify the accuracy, validity, and reliability of data. A data validation framework requires consistency across programs to ensure that all data effectively and accurately reflects the performance of each grant recipient. Along with the US Department of Labor programs mandatory annual validation, the Department of Workforce Development acquires additional validation from its Title I, Title II, and Title III programs, Trade Adjustment Act, Jobs for Veterans State Grant, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments, as well as Apprenticeship Program Grants and National Dislocated Worker Grant programs.

At the end of each program year, after the submission of the certified annual report, annual data validation training classes are conducted. Members from each Local Workforce Development Area must attend these training sessions. These sessions serve as a method to train Local Workforce Development Area staff and their contractors on data validation, as well as how to conduct data validation exercises. Before annual data validation takes place, each staff member will have the chance to receive training on required performance reporting, as well as review applicable documentation for data validation along with a validation tool.

In program year 2023, the Education and Labor Cabinet conducted data validation on all required programs and their applicable elements according to TEGL 23-19, Change 2. It continued working with its local workforce areas on data collection and trained local administrators on validating data in compliance with Policy No. 23-011. The Cabinet held many follow-up Q&A sessions with local administrators to promote continuous improvement and integrity of the process. The results of the data validation process, a task led by the Department of Workforce Development staff, were gathered, and reconciled against system data before submitting the annual report.

Governor's Discretionary Funds

The Governor's Discretionary Funds were invested in several promising programs and initiatives, each making a significant impact. Funded programs included Code Kentucky, a technology-focused program designed to introduce youth to the IT and technological workforce. Funds were also used to fund Everybody Counts, a program providing knowledge, resources, and career coaching to high school seniors concerning their college and career paths. Other programs and initiatives supported by the Governor's Discretionary Funds include:

- Establishment of an Electric Vehicle Workforce Coordinator, a position needed as a direct result of Electric Vehicle investments.
- Growing Regional Outcomes through the Workforce, an initiative that uses a comprehensive and holistic approach to workforce development and talent strategy, focused on leveraging the community's assets to grow, attract, and retain workers for a sustainable workforce.
- Jefferson Community & Technical College Line Technician Program, which aids those seeking work as line technicians. The program has some of the best-paid registered apprenticeships in Kentucky.
- TEK Center which is removing barriers to employment by providing critical trade field training, including heavy equipment operators, industrial maintenance technicians, plumbers, and electricians in Eastern Kentucky.
- Eastern Kentucky Advanced Manufacturing Institute provides training and programs for dislocated mining industry workers and other career seekers opportunities in high-tech advanced manufacturing, including automation and robotics.

Rapid Response & Layoff Aversion

Kentucky's Rapid Response efforts are coordinated through the Education and Labor Cabinet's team at the Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services, which partners with local providers in each Local Workforce Development Area.

Rapid Response collaborates with state agencies, local workforce development boards, education stakeholders, and local non-profit groups to assist employers in finding, training, and keeping the best talent. Additionally, it helps Kentuckians to find, obtain, and maintain the best jobs. As a confidential outplacement service that assists employers and employees in transition, the Rapid Response team works closely with the local workforce development teams to customize services to each layoff and each company's needs and expectations at no cost. Reaching out to the Rapid Response team can reduce the cost of layoffs for a business and its employees. The team provides the following services:

- Assistance with transition planning.
- Information about alternatives that could lessen the impact of a layoff.
- Pre-layoff services to help workers shorten their transition time.
- Information on Kentucky Career Center and unemployment insurance.
- Assistance in maintaining worker morale and productivity during the transition.
- Help in preparing affected workers to find new employment.
- Information about the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act and plant closing laws.

In program year 2023, 35 WARNs were filed with the Commonwealth, affecting 2,363 workers.

To anticipate potential layoffs and rapid response activity, the Commonwealth utilizes the Dunn and Bradstreet Market Insight System to align business needs with core partner services. This allows the team to anticipate potential layoffs and rapid response activity. Real-time data and the future financial outlook of a company are used to identify those businesses that are in a growth pattern, in a stable state, or experiencing a potential downturn and need early intervention for layoff aversion strategies.

Local Spotlight: Bluegrass Army Depot Closure

The Bluegrass Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) has been heavily involved with assisting the staff of the Bluegrass Army Depot as they continue with their gradual closure. The Bluegrass LWDA staff were actively involved in the Economic Resiliency Plan development committee. To provide immediate assistance, Bluegrass LWDA staff created a dedicated page on the ckycareers.com website that provides employment and training resources to staff affected. The Kentucky Career Center – Bluegrass staff also provides dedicated

hours at the Richmond location to provide one-on-one assistance to individuals who have been laid off. This includes resume and job search assistance, job training information, and other career services.

The newest targeted service to assist those affected by this layoff is specialized information sessions. The Kentucky Career Center—Bluegrass staff coordinates with local businesses that have current or expected positions and offers them up to an hour to provide recruitment sessions regarding their company, positions available, and qualifications needed. This allows the Bluegrass Army Depot staff to begin the process of researching potential new employer matches when their employment with the Depot has been completed. For example, BlueOval SK have held job fairs and strategic recruitment efforts to hire Bluegrass Army Depot works upon release through this dedicated career center.

The Bluegrass LWDA has a growing list of companies partnering on this opportunity, including Cyndelos, Prudent Holdings USA, LLC, KIUSA, Hyster, Hitachi Automotive, and Brandywine Explosives.

Wagner-Peyser Act

The Wagner-Peyser Act, established in 1933 and amended by WIOA, created a nationwide system of public employment offices known as the Employment Service (ES). In Kentucky, the Wagner-Peyser Act is implemented through the Kentucky Career Center System and includes:

1. **Job Search Assistance:** The Kentucky Career Center provides job seekers with resources and support to help them find employment. This includes job search assistance, resume building, and interview preparation.
2. **Job Referrals and Placement:** The Kentucky Career Center provides job referrals and placement services to help match job seekers with available openings.
3. **Re-employment Services:** The Kentucky Career Center offers re-employment services to help those receiving unemployment insurance return to work quickly.
4. **Employer Services:** The Kentucky Career Center also assists employers by providing recruitment services to fill job openings with qualified workers.
5. **Local Services:** Services may vary by location, so individuals should check with their local Kentucky Career Center for specific offerings and eligibility requirements.

Wagner-Peyser's overarching goal is to ensure that both job seekers and employers have access to basic labor exchange services. By doing so, it aims to significantly improve employment opportunities and meet the needs of businesses, inspiring a positive change in the job market.

Ready for Industry

Ready for Industry serves as a vital training resource linking traditional education with industry-specific knowledge. The multi-function self-paced virtual training is aimed at late high school students, early post-secondary learners, and those entering the workforce; it offers five targeted courses that cover high-demand fields: construction, healthcare, information technology, logistics, and manufacturing.

The program significantly boosts the chances of workforce entry by familiarizing individuals with these industries early on. Knowledgeable workers are more likely to find employment, stay in their jobs longer, and be reemployed if necessary. Ready for Industry effectively increases employability and job stability from the outset of a person's career.

WIN Career Readiness System

The Work Ready Courseware and Credential, provided by WIN Learning, teaches foundational academic skills that are key to success in the workplace. WIN Learning uses real-world situations individuals could face at work to build relevant job skills. It can give them the boost needed to update their skills and stay competitive in the job market.

The career readiness resources available through the WIN Career Readiness System include:

1. The Kentucky Essential Skills Courseware and the Kentucky Essential Skills Certificate which center on attitudes and behaviors in the workplace.
2. Digital Literacy Courseware and the Digital Literacy Credential, which focus on building the technology skills needed for success across careers.
3. The Work Ready Courseware and Credential which teach foundational academic skills such as Math, Reading, and Data.
4. Supplemental Skills Courseware, which teaches workplace observation, applied technology, and business writing.
5. College Readiness Courseware, which helps students prepare for college placement exams.

This training is provided at no cost to the individual and is online, allowing easy 24-hour access.

Co-Enrollment

The Commonwealth of Kentucky is a co-enrollment state. Adults and dislocated workers who receive Kentucky Career Center services other than self-service and informational activities are required to be co-enrolled in Wagner-Peyser, WIOA Programs, and, if eligible, Trade Adjustment Assistance through an automated process in the Commonwealth's official system of record. Staff ensure that the correct activities are recorded for the respective programs and that information is verified in the system of record. Once registered in the system, the customer's information is electronically shared and integrated into the system of record.

Military Assistance

The Career Development Office placed a staff member at Fort Campbell, an Army military base, to provide employment services to transitioning service members, spouses, and other family members.

Local Spotlight: KentuckianaWorks JVSG success story

The Jobs for Veterans State Grant staff in KentuckianaWorks partnered with USA Cares to connect a veteran experiencing homelessness with employment. The veteran will be starting a new career at a large manufacturer in Louisville in January. The combined efforts were able to find temporary housing for the next month in an extended-stay hotel paid for by USA Cares. The veteran is being connected with Supportive Services for Veteran Families, Housing and Urban Development, and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing to help aid in finding permanent housing.

National Dislocated Worker Grants

The National Dislocated Worker Grants are discretionary grants awarded by the Secretary of Labor under Section 170 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. National Dislocated Worker Grants provide resources to states and other eligible applicants to respond to large, unexpected layoff events that cause significant job losses. This funding temporarily expands the capacity to serve dislocated workers, including military service members, to meet the increased demand for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act employment and training services. Their purpose is to reemploy laid-off workers and enhance their employability and earnings.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky received the National Dislocated Worker Grant totaling \$15,000,000 to respond to the natural disasters impacting the state. These funds have served 3,308 Kentuckians, 2,472 of whom were impacted by tornados and floods and 836 by severe storms.

Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy and Training Grant

In program year 2023, the Kentucky Department of Workforce Development was approved to receive \$5 million in federal funds under the Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, and Training Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant. These funds were used to assist under-served populations across Kentucky. Priority went to those who had never worked, had legal issues, or had been unemployed for an extended time. This also includes juniors and seniors in high school, dropouts, justice-involved individuals, and groups facing employment barriers to higher-skilled occupations. Small rural communities with a history of disenfranchisement were also targeted through worker-centered sector plan projects.

Local Spotlight: West KY- Tornado Relief Funding

In December 2021, an EF4 tornado moved across Western Kentucky, causing catastrophic damage across the region, including in Mayfield, Princeton, Dawson Springs, and Bremen. The immense damage resulted in the loss of homes and jobs across several counties. The National Dislocated Worker Grants were used to serve the affected Kentuckians through the West Kentucky Workforce Board's temporary career center to serve individuals needing tornado recovery employment services in Mayfield, Kentucky.

A tornado survivor sought assistance from the temporary career center. They learned how the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program offered paid work experiences. The individual was assigned to Mayfield-Graves Co. Animal Shelter as a shelter assistant on February 15, 2023, providing dedicated and extra one-on-one social time with animals. Once they completed their work experience, they were hired by a local food manufacturer where they now earn \$17.25 an hour plus benefits plus benefits.

A small business suffered extensive damage during the 2021 tornado, creating difficulties that resulted in the closing of the business. The West Kentucky Workforce Board offered Rapid Response Services to employees impacted by the tornado. The company owner learned about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act services, including On-the-Job Training. They expressed interest in working in the insurance industry, and started their On-the-Job training program in February 2023, as an Insurance Agents. One individual completed their training in July 2023, and remains employed as a Crop Insurance Agent.

Local Spotlight: Skills to Succeed (S2S)

Citing an unprecedented rise in global energy costs, Century Aluminum Co. – the nation's largest producer of primary aluminum – announced plans in June 2022 to curtail operations and begin the idling process at its Hawesville, Kentucky, smelter until energy prices return to more normalized levels. By August, all operations had ceased at the aluminum smelter, with layoffs affecting more than six hundred workers.

To address the economic hardship caused by the temporary closure, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded the Green River Workforce Development Board a \$1,798,844 National Dislocated Worker Employment Recovery Grant to provide employment and workforce training services for dislocated workers in Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, and Webster counties from July 2022 through July 2024.

Administered by the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration and supported by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Skills 2 Succeed will allow the Green River Board to provide individualized employment recovery activities to include recruitment and enrollment of eligible individuals in the following programs: occupational skills training, including work-based training, supportive services, and individualized career services.

Promising Practices

Second/Fair Chance

Kentucky hosts many Second/Fair Chance programs designed to assist individuals in the correctional system, as well as those going through rehabilitation or dealing with substance abuse problems, in finding skills and employment across the commonwealth. Such programs work alongside eligible employers and provide incentives in the form of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, a general business credit jointly administered by the IRS and the U.S. Department of Labor. Eligible employers who are certified by the Kentucky Career Center may claim the credit if they hire, pay, or incur wages to certain individuals. Second/Fair Chance programs include Registered Apprenticeship Programs, Fair Chance Employer programs, such as The Fair Chance Academy and the Kentucky Transformational Employment Program, the Prison-to-Work Pipeline Program, and Jobs on Day One.

Everybody Counts

The Everybody Counts initiative provides a clear pathway to success for qualifying high school seniors graduating from participating Kentucky school districts by helping students transition to postsecondary education, the workforce or both. Using a combination of assistance from partnerships, educators, guardians, and Everybody Counts' own career counselors, the initiative benefits high school seniors, businesses, local communities, and Kentucky's economy.

The key is to meet the students where they are. Everybody Counts achieves this by holding a physical, consistent presence within the school for two to four days per week. This is a more effective means of assisting young people as it allows coaches to build strong relationships with students, educators, and administrators to create a personalized plan of support. Additionally, Everybody Counts aims to connect with guardians and mentors in the student's personal lives, allowing them access to the options students have for college, careers, and beyond.

In program year 2023, the Everybody Counts initiative experienced substantial growth, doubling its number of locations and coaches from 13 coaches in 12 high schools to an impressive 26 coaches within 25 high schools. These programs span across several counties and have impacted the lives of students by providing them access to various opportunities in education, training, and scholarships. Such successes include investing in scholarship funding into the Scott and Fayette County areas. Looking towards the future, Everybody Counts intends to add an eSports center inside of the Success Academy. This center will not only teach students how to take part in the career of eSports but will also provide the skills necessary to develop such games, helping them to take their first steps into the STEM industry.

This past year, the metrics have shown that for every 11 coaches present in schools, 200 students are positively impacted. These numbers are anticipated to increase, and this is a metric worth highlighting.

Digital Equity

Kentucky received \$1.1 billion of federal funds for broadband expansion from the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment Program. The Broadband, Equity, Access, and Development program is administered under the guidance of the Kentucky Office of Broadband Development. The Education and Labor Cabinet has collaborated with the Office of Broadband Development while developing the Kentucky Digital Equity Plan. The Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment program and Digital Equity funds are used to implement broadband infrastructure expansion and digital equity/digital inclusion programs as part of the "Better Internet Plan" across the Commonwealth. The Digital Equity Plan aims to increase digital literacy for users to ensure safe and effective navigation of the internet. Targeted populations for this plan include:

- Individuals in low-income housing;
- Aging individuals;
- Individuals in the correctional system;
- Veterans;
- Individuals with disabilities;
- Individuals with language barriers;
- Individuals who are members of racial or ethnic minorities;
- Individuals who primarily reside in rural areas.

The Education and Labor Cabinet ensures a holistic approach to administering the Digital Equity Plan that addresses the many dimensions of digital equity and coordinates efforts across the spectrum of workforce development, education, libraries, vocational rehabilitation, and apprenticeships coupled with existing relationships with nonprofits, local workforce development entities, labor organizations, employers, colleges and universities, and other organizations that support covered populations.

Kentucky conducted a 14-Stop Better Internet Initiative Listening Tour to gain valuable insight into the challenges faced by individuals from covered populations. It was found that over 137 institutions provided digital inclusion services across Kentucky. Of those, 42 percent offered general digital literacy training, and 22 percent offered cyber security training. According to the Education and Labor Cabinet Department of Workforce Development 2023 Residential Technology Survey, 80 percent of Kentuckians subscribed to fixed home internet. Broadband affordability served as a significant barrier to home internet adoption. Despite access to broadband, many are not able to afford it.

Moving forward, The Kentucky Digital Plan outlines six objectives for achieving digital equity for all Kentuckians.

1. Enhance broadband availability and affordability for covered populations.
2. Ensure access to affordable devices for all Kentuckians.
3. Increase application accessibility and inclusivity to state and local government programs.
4. Ensure that all Kentuckians are equipped to navigate the internet safely.
5. Improve digital literacy for all covered populations in Kentucky.
6. Empower all Kentuckians to develop the digital skills necessary for work and life.

The Digital Equity Plan's goal is to empower communities, businesses, local governments, and state agencies to sustain the commonwealth's digital equity efforts beyond the initial five-year period. Steps towards this are being made with the Kentucky Digital Capacity Grant Program. The Kentucky Digital Capacity Grant Program makes funds available to begin implementation of State Digital Equity Plans developed pursuant to the State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program. Kentucky has applied for federal digital equity funds and anticipates \$12.1 million to execute the state Digital Equity Plan.

In addition, the Notice of Funding Opportunity establishes a competitive process to make both State Digital Equity Planning Grant Program funds and State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program funds available to entities to carry out digital equity and inclusion activities with the Digital Equity Act. These proposed projects must include measurable objectives and evaluation criteria as part of their program design and will likewise address barriers to digital equity; promote the availability and affordability of access to broadband technology; increase online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services; promote digital literacy, such as awareness of online privacy and cybersecurity; and increase the availability and affordability of consumer devices and technical support.

RETAIN Kentucky

A significant and largely untapped talent pool in the commonwealth are individuals with disabilities. One means of reaching these individuals is the Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network (RETAIN) program, a federally funded initiative exploring stay-at-work/return-to-work strategies. The Kentucky extension of RETAIN, RETAIN Kentucky, is led by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation together with the University of Kentucky Human Development Institute and committed project partners, including The Council of State Governments. The program aims to help injured or ill workers remain in or return to their jobs by implementing and evaluating early intervention strategies.

The Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network program works with employees, employers, and healthcare providers to address strategies for successful return to work. Building on state efforts, including Kentucky Work Matters, Employment First, and the Call to Action to Meet Commonwealth Workforce Needs, RETAIN Kentucky is using peer support, assistive technology, and universal design to promote quality, coordinated health, and employment-related stay-at-work/return-to-work services.

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH, an international initiative based at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, helps prepare young people with significant disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment. It is a work-based learning experience model for transition-aged students in cooperation with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, a host employer, a local high school, and the Community Rehabilitation Program. The program takes place in the student's final year of high school and follows the local school schedule for the year. Students in Project Search participate in three internships within the host site and gain valuable transferrable work skills to carry over into the local workforce area for employment. Currently, there are four Project Search programs in Kentucky:

1. Norse/Northern Kentucky University Project Search - Campbell County Schools - Highland Heights, KY
2. ABB Optical Project Search - Boone County Schools - Florence, KY
3. Baptist Health Project Search - Elizabethtown Independent Schools - Elizabethtown, KY
4. UK Healthcare Project Search - Fayette County Schools - Lexington, KY

Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of classroom instruction, career exploration, and hands-on training through worksite rotations. The goal for each program participant is competitive integrated employment. To reach that goal, the program provides real-life work experience combined with training in employability and independent-living skills to help young people with significant disabilities make successful transitions to productive adult life. It involves an extensive period of skills training and career exploration, innovative adaptations, long-term job coaching, and continuous feedback from teachers, skills trainers, and employers. This individualized approach results in students with significant intellectual disabilities finding employment in nontraditional, complex, and rewarding jobs.

SARA

The Semi-autonomous Rehabilitation Assistant, or SARA, is a communication system provided by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation to assist those seeking the agency's services. The system allows users to keep in contact with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. It acts as a virtual assistant that keeps contact at regular intervals to monitor progress and provide better assistance.

Local Spotlight: Using Virtual Reality for Career Exploration

In 2022, the Bluegrass Workforce Innovation Board applied for state reserve funding for an innovative idea: utilizing virtual reality as a means for career exploration and training for youth and job seekers in the Bluegrass Area. By the fall of the same year, the Kentucky Career Center—Bluegrass began offering career exploration and training through Oculus virtual reality headsets. This innovative new service allows jobseekers to explore on-the-job scenarios and gain skills through simulated activities using virtual reality headsets.

Jobseekers in the Bluegrass Area use the devices to explore various career options, improve their skills, and demonstrate their competencies in several sectors. The six primary sectors in the Bluegrass region are manufacturing, healthcare, skilled trades, such as welding, construction, electrical, warehousing and storage, public safety, hospitality, and tourism, and automotive. Each sector provides a variety of modules that allow job seekers to explore, expand, or demonstrate their skills.

The devices have been invaluable in serving as a key to opening doors to employers, community organizations, and youth. The devices also serve as a draw at job fairs and community events to open the door to other services provided through the public workforce system. In the program year 2023, the Oculus headsets engaged 5,859 Bluegrass residents through virtual reality training and career exploration services who may not otherwise have been aware of Kentucky Career Center/American Job Center services.

Appendix

Kentucky Center for Statistics

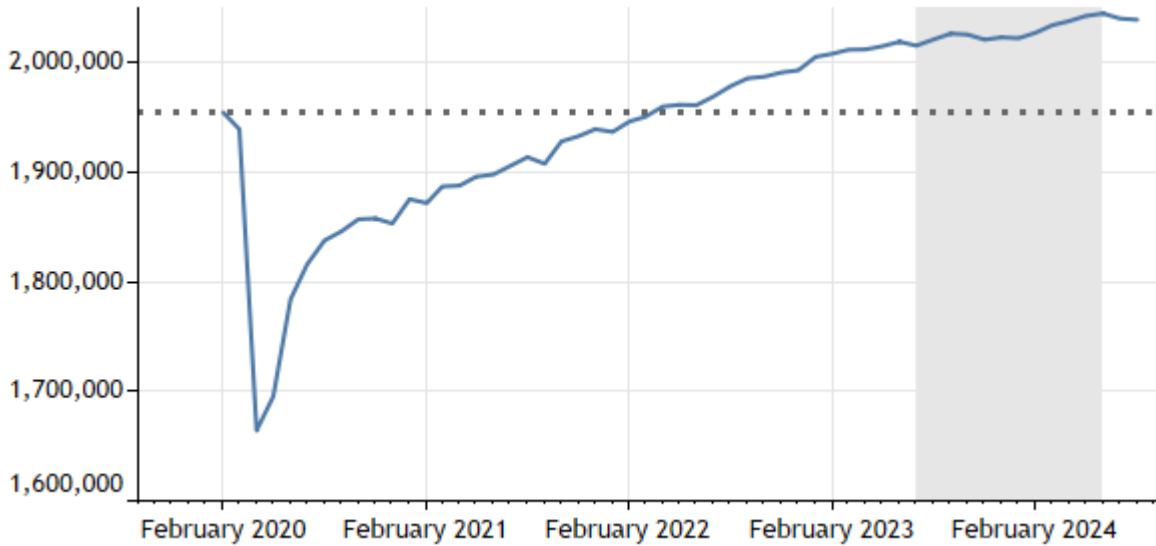
Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS)

The Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), a trusted source, was tasked with presenting a comprehensive overview of the Commonwealth's economy and workforce, including its 10 Local Workforce Areas, for program year 2023 (July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024). The labor market data featured in this overview are sourced from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and/or the Kentucky Center for Statistics.

In program year 2023, Kentucky's industry employment demonstrated a remarkable recovery from the enduring effects of COVID-19. According to seasonally adjusted estimates from the BLS Current Employment Statistics program, Total nonfarm employment reached approximately 1,954,600 jobs in February 2020, marking an all-time high. However, the onset of widespread COVID lockdowns in March 2020 led to a 15% decline in Total Nonfarm employment (or approximately 290,300 jobs) by April 2020.

Following the initial decline, total Nonfarm job numbers swiftly rebounded, adding approximately 173,400 jobs between April and August 2020. Although the pace of recovery slowed after the Summer of 2020, Kentucky's economy has consistently grown, adding an average of more than 4,200 jobs each month. This growth culminated in the surpassing of the pre-COVID high of approximately 1,954,600 jobs in April 2022. Total Nonfarm employment continued to grow throughout program year 2023, reaching approximately 2,045,000 in June 2024.

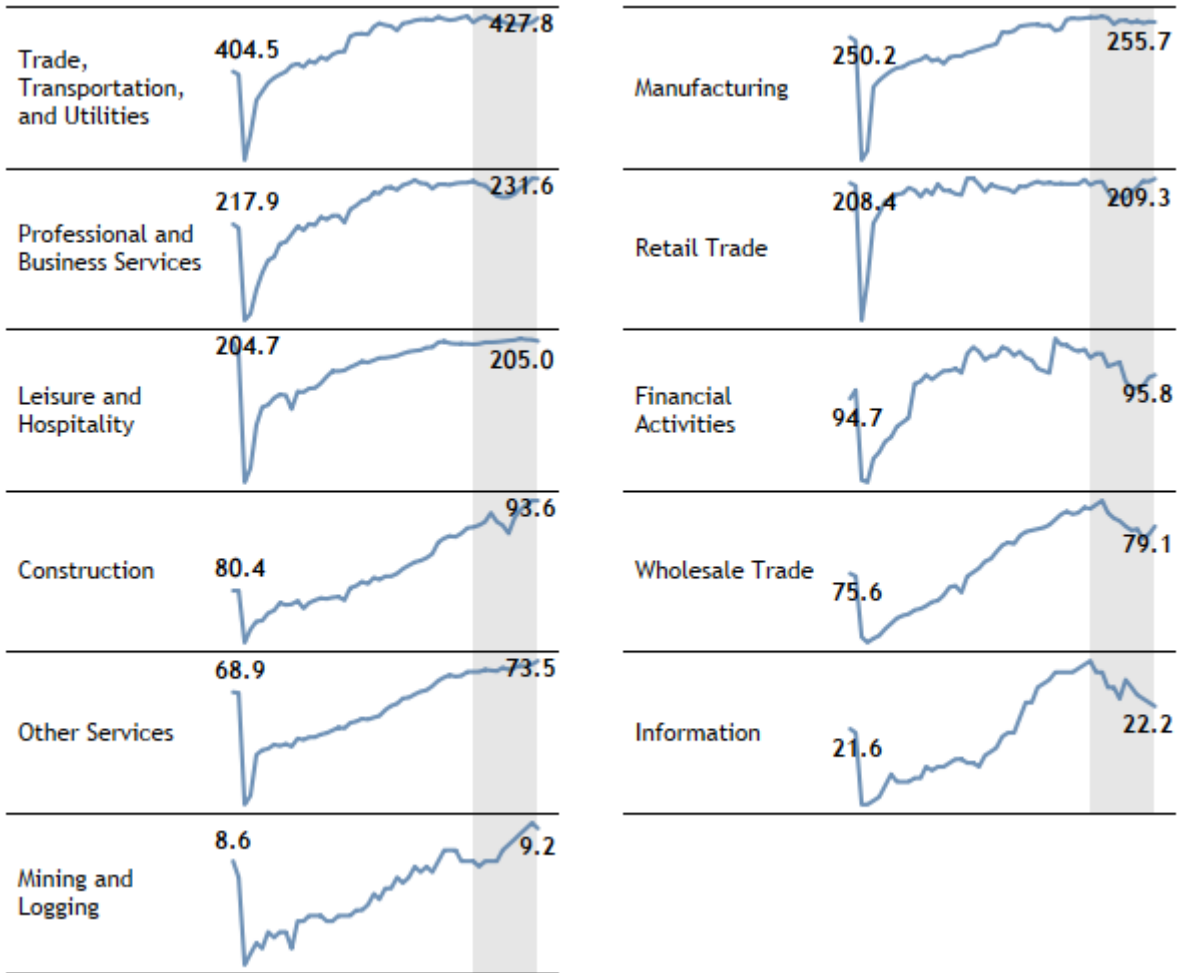
**Total Nonfarm Employment in Kentucky, Seasonally Adjusted,
February 2020 – August 2024 (Shaded area represents PY 2023)**



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (CES). Data accessed 10/8/2024.
Note that August 2024 estimates are preliminary and are subject to revision.

The continued employment growth described above has been uneven across private industries in Kentucky throughout the program year 2023. While all private industries (i.e., super sectors) have exceeded their pre-COVID employment highs in at least one month in the past four years, some (e.g., Professional and Business Services and Retail Trade) experienced additional growth across the program year 2023, while others exhibited employment declines (e.g., Manufacturing).

**Industry Employment in Kentucky (in Thousands), Seasonally Adjusted,
February 2020 – June 2024 (Shaded area represents PY 2023)**



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Employment Statistics (CES). Data accessed 10/8/2024.

Among private industries that experienced employment declines in program year 2023, Manufacturing accounts for the largest decline by volume, having shed approximately 1,700 jobs, followed by Wholesale Trade (-1,300 jobs) and Information (-1,200 jobs). The loss of employment in Information represents the largest proportional job loss among industries, amounting to a 5.1% decrease in program year 2023.

Conversely, five super sectors gained more than 1,000 jobs each in program year 2023, showcasing the success stories in workforce development: Construction (+3,900); Leisure and Hospitality (+2,100); Trade, Transportation, and Utilities (+1,900); Other Services (+1,600); and Retail Trade (+1,300). Mining and Logging exhibited the largest proportional job gain among all industries in PY 2023 (+600 jobs, or 7% of its overall employment), followed by Construction (+4.3%).

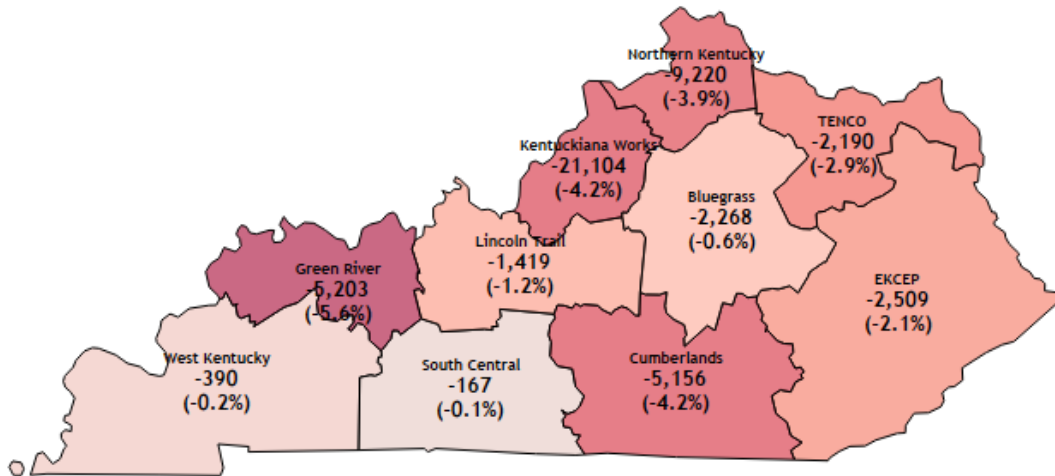
Post-COVID labor force dynamics through program year 2023 have also been geographically uneven in Kentucky. This phenomenon can be explored using estimates from the Kentucky Center for Statistics' Local Area Unemployment Statistics program, which publishes employment, unemployment, and labor force statistics for Kentucky's Local Workforce Areas. Note that these estimates are not seasonally adjusted, so comparisons over time are generally made in one-year increments where applicable in this overview.

According to non-seasonally adjusted estimates from the Local Area Unemployment Statistics program, in the four years from February 2020 to February 2024, the number of employed persons has yet to exceed pre-COVID levels in any of Kentucky's ten Local Workforce Areas. Note that the perceived discontinuity between this decline and the increase in Kentucky's Total Nonfarm employment can be attributed to several factors, including the fact that the

Local Area Unemployment Statistics program measures employed persons, whereas the CES program measures jobs.

The Green River Local Workforce Area experienced the largest proportional decline in employed persons in this period (-5.6%), while its adjacent Local Workforce Areas to the South experienced the mildest declines. The largest post-COVID decline of employed persons by volume has occurred in the Kentuckiana Works Local Workforce Area, where there were 21,104 fewer persons employed by February 2024.

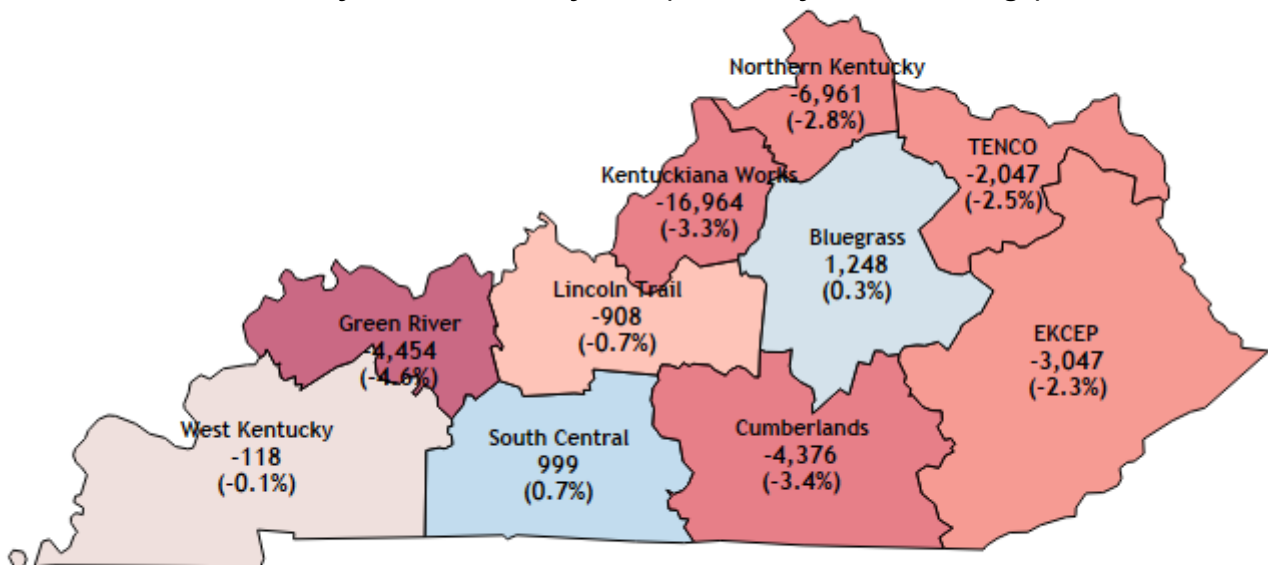
**Change in Number of Employed Persons by Kentucky Local Workforce Area
February 2020 to February 2024 (Shaded by Percent Change)**



Source: Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) Program. Data accessed 10/7/2024. Data are not seasonally adjusted.

In the same period, the civilian labor force (or the sum of employed and unemployed persons) decreased in eight of Kentucky’s ten Local Workforce Areas, increasing in only the Bluegrass and South-Central Local Workforce Areas. As is the case with employed persons, the largest proportional decline in the civilian labor force occurred in Green River, and the largest decline in volume occurred in Kentuckiana Works.

**Change in Civilian Labor Force by Kentucky Local Workforce Area
February 2020 to February 2024 (Shaded by Percent Change)**



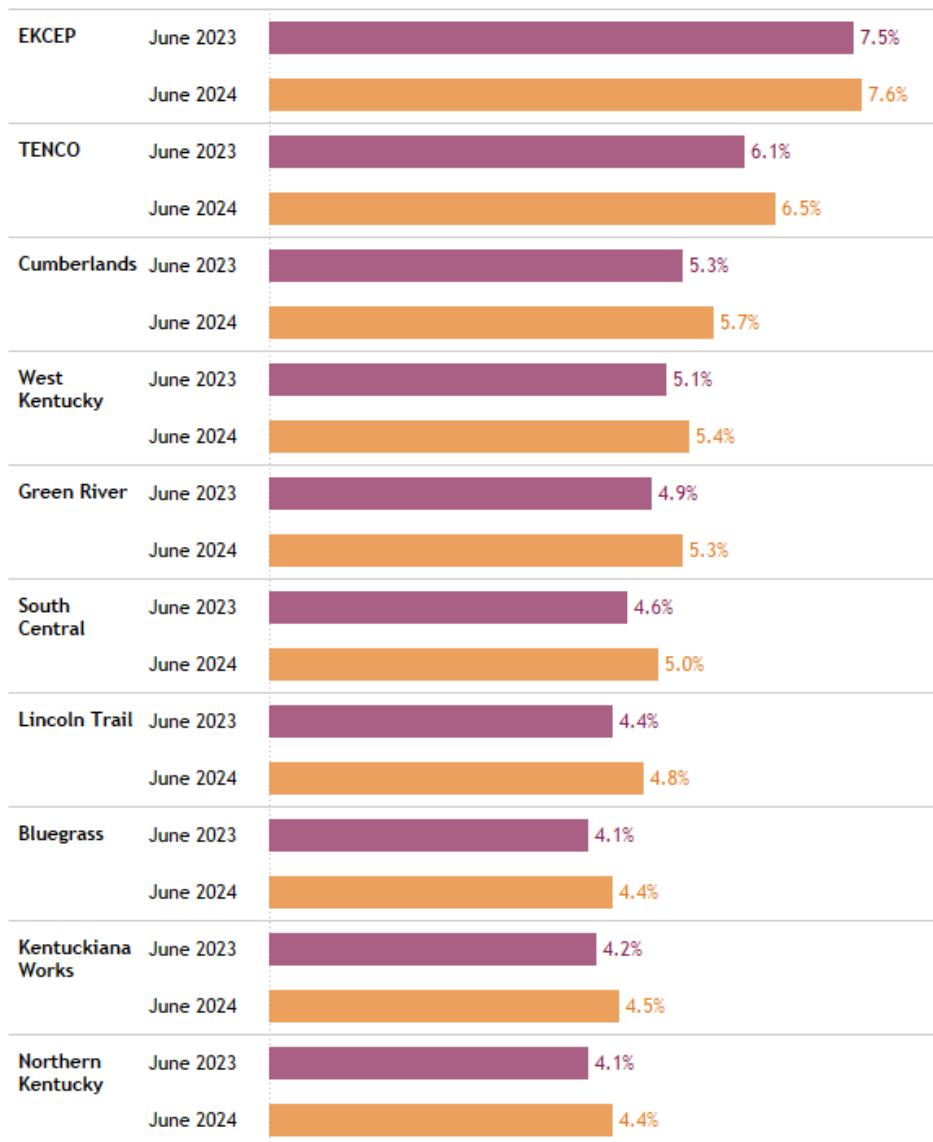
Source: Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) Program. Data accessed 10/7/2024. Data are not seasonally adjusted.

Changes in civilian labor force totals that are not commensurate with changes in the volume of employed persons can be accounted for by the volume of individuals who are *not* employed but who are actively seeking work (i.e., *unemployed persons*). *The proportion of the civilian labor force that is unemployed is referred to as the unemployment rate*—an important measure of unutilized labor.

By the end of program year 2023, in Kentucky, the local workforce areas with the proportionally highest unemployment rate were generally the local workforce areas containing most of Kentucky’s Appalachian counties. These include EKCEP (7.6%), TENCO (6.5%), and Cumberlands (5.7%). Conversely, the Local Workforce Areas with the proportionally lowest levels of unemployment are Kentucky’s major metropolitan areas, including Northern Kentucky (4.4%), Kentuckiana Works (4.5%), and Bluegrass (4.4%).

Comparing the unemployment rates of Kentucky Local Workforce Areas at the end of program year 2023 to the estimates one year prior (or June 2024 to June 2023) reveals that unemployment rates (a measure of the percentage of an area’s labor force that does not hold a job but is actively seeking work) have increased in all Kentucky Local Workforce Areas.

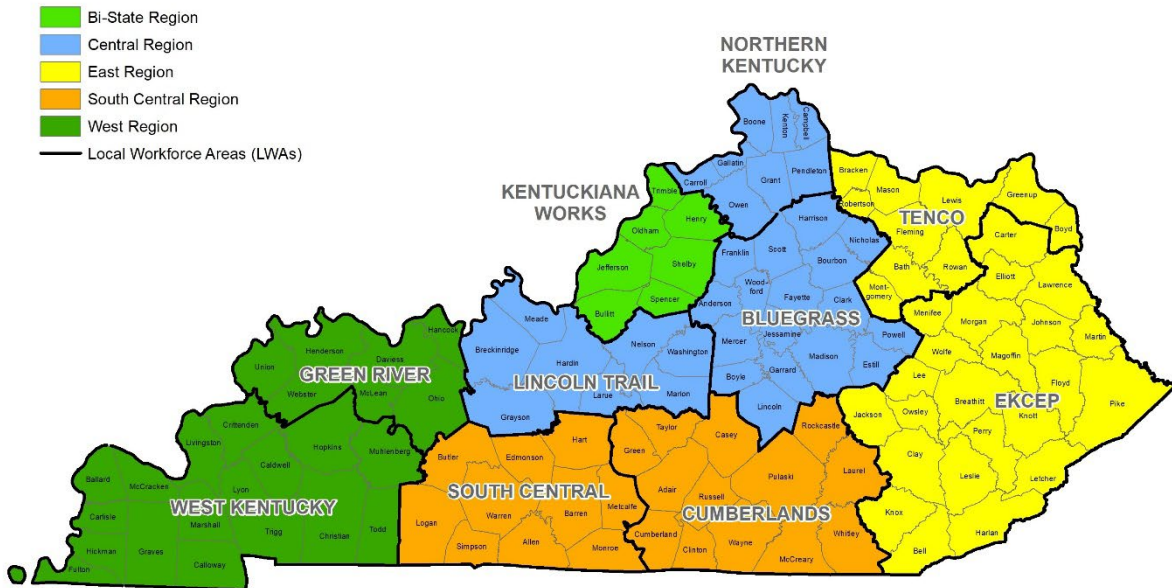
Kentucky Local Workforce Area Unemployment Rates
June 2023 vs. June 2024, Not Seasonally Adjusted



Source: Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) Program. Data accessed 10/7/2024. Data are not seasonally adjusted.

Local Workforce Development Board Success Stories

Kentucky's Five Workforce Regions



Cumberlands Workforce Development Board

The Cumberlands Workforce Development Board is a 29-member advisory board that includes representatives from 13 counties, which include Adair, Casey, Clinton, Cumberland, Green, Laurel, McCreary, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Russell, Taylor, Wayne, and Whitley. It oversees the Kentucky Career Centers in the Cumberlands region, providing youth, adult, and dislocated workers and trade services that lead to employment through training or other related activities.

Cumberlands Workforce Development Board Youth

An individual juggled a 25-hour-a-week job at Walmart with his studies at Whitley County High School and graduated in 2023. While in high school, he took online courses at the University of the Cumberland, aiming toward an associate degree in business. After completing a two-month lineman course, this individual landed a full-time position as a lineman at APEX. He continued to study at Cumberlands and earned his degree in May 2024.

Cumberlands Workforce Development Board Dislocated Worker

An individual's wife's illness forced him to put his career on hold. After her passing, he sought support from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and found a new path. Through CDL training, he gained valuable skills and discovered a renewed sense of purpose. He completed his program in March 2023 and is now a successful heavy equipment mover. He is grateful for the program that helped him rebuild his life.

Cumberlands Workforce Development Board Adult

An individual was diagnosed with thyroid cancer on January 23, 2024. With only one semester left in her nursing program, she worried about how she'd finish what she'd started. Despite her health challenges, she remained dedicated to her studies and the Workplace Innovation and Opportunity Act program. She not only completed her ADN with honors but was also named Somerset Community College's Health Sciences Student of the Year. The individual's courage and determination paid off, and she's now a registered nurse in the Emergency Room at Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital.

Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program

The Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. administers Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs in 23 mountain counties. It also manages the Kentucky Career Center JobSight network of workforce centers, which provides access to more than a dozen programs and services for job seekers and employers under one roof.

David Boone JobSight

A partner in the Kentucky Career Center JobSight network of workforce centers, Daniel Boone, Community Action Agency, provides Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act services in Clay and Jackson counties under contract with the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program. Those services include programs for adults, dislocated workers, and youth between the ages of 18 and 24 who may need assistance honing skills such as résumé building or networking with local employers or who need assistance being retrained or going to school.

Services at Daniel Boone JobSight Help One Individual Take First Step in Healthcare Career

An individual learned about the employment services at JobSight, located in Clay County at the Daniel Boone Community Action Agency, and started working with a Career Advisor. The advisor evaluated the individual and determined what services would be available to help achieve her career goals.

Because she had no prior experience, the Individual felt fortunate to have had assistance and the services available through JobSight. She wanted to go into phlebotomy while continuing her education to gain experience on the job, get used to a hospital setting, and become more knowledgeable of the terminology used on a day-to-day basis in the medical field. The individual was able to shadow a phlebotomist and assist at a local lab. She added that in addition to helping her find a job, her advisor also helped cover extra expenses she had, allowing her to complete her work experience and then transition to employment.

This individual is currently working as a PRN Phlebotomist while carrying a full schedule as a nursing student and plans to begin working full-time in the nursing field. She recommends a Kentucky Career Center JobSight location in Eastern Kentucky to anyone who is looking for work or wants to get started in their job search.

Decision to Enroll for Services through LKLP JobSight Leads to a Career in Healthcare Leadership

As a graduate of Buckhorn High School in Perry County hadn't yet mapped out his career path. He decided to enroll in a paid internship within Appalachian Regional Health (ARH)'s human resources department. Needing a summer job, he signed up at LKLP and began the 480-hour internship just seven days after turning 18. Recruiters with ARH are responsible for coordinating interviews and filling job vacancies in the company, and the position includes a lot of community involvement, outreach, and engagement.

During his enrollment for services at the LKLP JobSight, the individual became interested in pursuing a full-time job as an ARH recruiter. By August 2018, he had transitioned from an intern to a full-time recruiter, and by the next year, he had earned his first promotion and accepted the position of System HR and Talent Manager. In just under a year, he was promoted again and became the System Director of Talent Acquisition at just twenty years old.

This individual became a system director for Appalachian Regional Healthcare (ARH). And just three short years later, in 2023, he was named Assistant Vice President of Workforce Initiatives for ARH, which operates 12 hospitals in Eastern Kentucky and two in southern West Virginia.

By November 2023, he was appointed Assistant Vice President for Workforce Initiatives. At just 23 years old, the individual is building a career that is not only self-sustaining but one that can help support his family. And that was a journey that began with a decision to accept an opportunity for a summer internship.

Internship to Good Job Full-time Employment

An individual was juggling the demands of full-time nursing studies at Somerset Community College when she enrolled in employment services through her local Kentucky Career Center JobSight in Clay County, hoping to find a job while continuing her studies. That decision paid off, first with a paid internship and eventually a full-time job that allowed her to gain real-world experience in healthcare while embarking on a fulfilling career path.

She learned about the career center services in Manchester through a friend whose enrollment there led to a job. Driven by her passion for caring for others, she decided to enroll. She was paired with an experienced career advisor with Daniel Boone Community Action Agency (DBCAA), who connected her with an internship opportunity at AdventHealth Manchester.

Recognizing her potential and dedication, the advisor quickly connected the individual with the clinic manager at AdventHealth. An interview was arranged, and an internship was offered.

Upon completing her internship, AdventHealth Manchester offered the individual a full-time position. She continues to work there while pursuing her nursing degree.

Green River Area Development District

The Green River Area Development District is a regional planning agency serving the communities of Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, and Webster Counties. It helps in the fields of aging and social services, community and economic development, transportation planning, and workforce development.

Dislocated Worker Upskilled to Find New Employment After a Layoff

An individual found himself among hundreds of workers laid off from Century Aluminum, facing stiff competition for new jobs. Aware of his lack of qualifications and credentials, he feared the challenge of securing employment. Attending a Rapid Response meeting, he learned of training opportunities and decided to explore them further. He sought assistance at the Kentucky Career Center in Owensboro, where he met with someone from Equus Workforce Solutions.

Expressing his desire to work in maintenance at a manufacturing facility despite lacking the necessary skills, he was introduced to the ITEC program offered by Owensboro Community and Technical College. This program promised to equip him with the required expertise through a two-semester curriculum. Encouraged by the prospect of quickly reentering the workforce, the individual enrolled.

The individual Johnny excelled in his training, achieving an impressive GPA of 3.893. He earned multiple certificates, including Industrial Electrician Levels I and II, Industrial Automation and Robotics Technician Level I, Automation Technician, Industrial Maintenance Robotics Technician, Industrial Maintenance Mechanic Level I, Industrial Maintenance Electronic Mechanic, and Integrated Manufacturing Technology. Following his training, the individual sought guidance from someone at Equus Workforce Solutions, who helped him refine his resume, hone his interview skills, and navigate the job market. With their support, the individual secured a position in the maintenance department at Waupaca, earning a respectable wage of \$25.56 per hour.

Dislocated Worker – Skills 2 Succeed

An individual was laid off from his long-time job and sought assistance at a Kentucky Career Center in the Green River Area. His unemployment insurance was running out, and the arrival of a new baby was near. He decided to pivot his career.

In September 2023, the individual sought assistance at the Kentucky Career Center. Fueled by the impending end of his unemployment insurance and the imminent arrival of a new baby, He decided to pivot into the high-demand field of Transportation and Logistics, an industry familiar to him due to family ties.

The individual enrolled in 160 Driving Academy in Evansville, Indiana. Through rigorous classroom courses and hands-on training, he successfully obtained his CDL permit, marking a crucial milestone in his pursuit of a new career.

The individual secured a position with Happy Trails Trucking in Henderson, KY, as a local driver. With a wage of \$23.50 per hour and the advantage of being home every evening, he not only found stable employment but also carved a path for a prosperous future. His success story stands as a testament to the effectiveness of career support and training programs in empowering individuals to overcome challenges and achieve meaningful professional milestones.

KentuckianaWorks Workforce Development Board

KentuckianaWorks is the workforce development board for the Louisville region, which includes Bullitt, Henry, Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, and Trimble counties. It is funded primarily by the U.S. Department of Labor, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, and the Louisville Metro Government. The board operates a regional network of Kentucky Career Center services that include job and career counseling, training, resume-building, and direct referrals to employers.

Kentucky Career Center

In March, the Kentucky Career Center on Broadway opened its doors to the public as an anchor tenant at Goodwill's West Louisville Opportunity Center. Located in a historically underserved area of town with mostly Black residents, our new flagship adult career center is well-positioned to make a lasting difference in the careers and lives of thousands of customers. [Learn more and see photos of the center here >](#)

Over the past program year, the Kentucky Career Centers in the Louisville region helped place 398 customers in jobs at an average wage of \$18 per hour. The Kentucky Career Center team also hosted more than 50 hiring events and ran career workshops for more than 1,900 job seekers.

Program Year 2023 testimonial:

- A client of the Kentucky Career Center visited the KCC on Broadway shortly after being released from prison. The KCC team helped him create a resume, prepare for interviews, and land a job he loves.

The Spot

The Spot: Young Adult Opportunity Center, a partnership with Goodwill Industries of Kentucky, connected young adults ages 16-21 throughout the Louisville region with career resources and wraparound support services, including reliable transportation, housing, mental health counseling, paid internships, career training, and jobs. Demand for this program continues to be high: The Spot served more than 1,000 young adults in the program year 2023. One hundred seventy-two participants were placed in jobs with an average wage of \$16 per hour.

Program Year 2023 testimonials:

- A young father was homeless before he found The Spot. The team at The Spot connected him to mental health counseling, life skills classes, career training, and a paid internship.
- A single mother who was struggling financially, completed the curriculum at The Spot, and the team helped her land a full-time job at KORT Physical Therapy.

Bullitt County School System Teacher Registered Apprenticeship

When an individual attended the West Kentucky University Teacher Apprenticeship Summit in the early Fall of 2023, he wasted no time in choosing a direction. By mid-fall, he had pulled together a team from Jefferson Community & Technical College and UofL to help craft the Bullitt County Public School Systems Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program. His program was fully registered in January 2024, and the selection process for apprentices began in March. Since registering for the program, Bullitt County has:

- Selected 5 Youth Apprentices (co-rolled in TRACK as well as Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeship).
- Give their curriculum away to the Ohio Valley Educational Consortium for use by any school that can benefit from it.
- Presented their path and model to the Annual Kentucky Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Conference in Louisville in July.

Their generosity is already bearing fruit. The Ohio Valley Educational Consortium announced in July that six other school districts in the Commonwealth of Kentucky have committed to having a functioning Teacher RA in the Fall of 2025.

Lincoln Trail Workforce Development Board

The Lincoln Trail Workforce Development Board provides oversight of the career centers, youth services, and employment and training activities funded by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. It consists of 23 business and community leaders across Central Kentucky who promote a thriving, responsive workforce system that supports business success, growth, and job creation.

Custom Training Provides Pathway to New Hires

The Lincoln Trail Workforce Development Board, in partnership with Elizabethtown Community and Technical College Workforce Solutions, Kentucky Career Center-Lincoln Trail, and professional services company YRCI, celebrated eight students beginning a new career in human resources this year.

The students completed a 75-hour training program through Elizabethtown Community and Technical College to prepare for full-time remote positions with YRCI, supporting the company's Federal Human Resources Remote Operations Center. All students began employment with YRCI in March and then completed 14 weeks of on-the-job training with the employer.

The YRCI training program, funded by the Lincoln Trail Workforce Development Board, included an introduction to federal HR laws, policies, and agency-specific operating procedures. Participants completed the on-the-job training component in July 2024.

Of the eight new employees, four were out-of-school youth, and the other four were dislocated workers. Several of the participants had been laid off from previous employment and were ready to learn something new.

The partnership with YRCI was a great example of how the Lincoln Trail workforce system helps employers build a competitive workforce. Elizabethtown Community and Technical College and the workforce board worked together with the company to deliver the program, putting the participants on a pathway to a long-term rewarding career with good pay and benefits.

This partnership was the first of its kind in the Lincoln Trail region and provided a new way to meet the needs of both job seekers and employers. The initiative marks a significant step towards empowering individuals with new career opportunities and supporting the community through innovation.

Virtual Reality Equipment as a Workplace Training Tool

The executive director for Career TEAM in the Lincoln Trail region collaborates closely with the Kentucky Career Center-Lincoln Trail to deliver comprehensive services to both regional employers and job seekers. The team includes the executive director and five career advisors stationed across the five Kentucky Career Center locations within the region. Recognizing the importance of efficiently connecting job seekers with local employers, they have recently found VR technology to be an invaluable tool in their efforts.

Working with Kentucky Career Center in Lincoln Trail, they are utilizing technology from Transfr VR, a company that is building classroom-to-career pathways for millions of workers via hands-on training using immersive technologies in partnership with schools, businesses, and government entities. The Lincoln Trail Workforce Development Board purchased the VR headsets.

Transfr VR provides users with immersive, hands-on experiences across a diverse range of career fields, such as health sciences, construction, IT, law/public safety, manufacturing, skilled trades, warehousing, hospitality, and automotive sectors. What sets this VR technology apart is its continual software updates, reflecting emerging trends and high-demand career paths.

Please visit [here](https://transfrinc.com) to find Kristin Howard's complete article. To learn more about Transfr VR, visit transfrinc.com.

Rapid Response Activities

Montebello Packaging

Montebello Packaging in Lebanon announced a company downsizing of 14 employees on April 30, 2024. The Rapid Response Team met with the employer and arranged Rapid Response services. Employee information sessions were held on May 1, 2024, at the Kentucky Career Center-Lincoln Trail in Lebanon. Rapid Response Team members included the Career Development Office, Career Team, Adult Education, Elizabethtown Community and Technical College, and the Director of the Kentucky Career Center in Lebanon. Topics covered included unemployment insurance benefits, reemployment assistance, training opportunities, and health benefit options. All were offered the option to file for unemployment insurance benefits upon completing the information sessions.

American Fuji Seal

American Fuji Seal in Bardstown announced a layoff at the end of October 2023, impacting 44 employees. The Rapid Response Team met with the company to arrange Rapid Response services and employee information sessions, which were held on October 31, 2023, at the company.

Individuals attending the Rapid Response information session had good questions and concerns about changes in the UI requirements and their ability to find employment with comparable wages. The Rapid Response Team was able to share information about employment opportunities in the region and encouraged attendees throughout the session to come to any of the Kentucky Career Center-Lincoln Trail (KCC-LT) locations. Several of the employees had already visited the Bardstown and Lebanon centers for help with resumes, job searches, training opportunities, etc.

The State Office of Unemployment Insurance also arranged a team to aid with filing unemployment claims on October 30, 2023, at My Old Kentucky Home Visitor's Center in Bardstown.

The Lincoln Trail Workforce Development Board, in conjunction with the Kentucky Career Center-Lincoln Trail (KCC-LT), held a targeted job fair for American Fuji Seal employees on December 14, 2023, in Bardstown. Employers from the manufacturing and bourbon industries participated, with a variety of job openings. Resume assistance was also provided on December 11, 2023, at the KCC-LT in Bardstown in preparation for the job fair.

Akebono

Akebono in Elizabethtown announced in October 2023 that the plant would close in late 2025, affecting over 600 employees.

As a result of the company's proactive approach, the Rapid Response Team held an initial meeting with the company in February 2024 to discuss Rapid Response services and determine needs regarding the closure and the impacted employees. A second meeting was held in September 2024 to continue the discussion and planning for the closure. Additional meetings will be held with the company in the coming months to finalize details and schedule employee information sessions and other activities to help prepare employees for a smooth transition back into the workforce.

Elizabethtown Community and Technical College's Custom Training Provides Pathway to New HR Careers

Elizabethtown Community and Technical College Workforce Solutions, in partnership with the Lincoln Trail Workforce Development Board, Kentucky Career Center-Lincoln Trail, and professional services company YRCI, recently celebrated eight students beginning new careers in human resources.

The students, who were Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act eligible out-of-school youth and dislocated workers, completed a 75-hour training program through Elizabethtown Community and Technical College to prepare for full-time remote positions with YRCI, supporting the company's Federal Human Resources Remote Operations. Once participants completed classroom training, they started Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act-funded on-the-job training. One of the students who is a military spouse, had been laid off from her previous job and was drawn to the class because she was ready to learn something new.

Along with other program graduates, they is earning \$45,000 per year, receiving competitive medical, dental, vision, and life insurance benefits and a generous PTO package. The collaboration is a win for the training participants, who are now on a pathway to a long-term rewarding career with good pay and benefits.

Northern Kentucky Workforce Investment Board

Kentucky Career Center is the area's leading workforce development network, specializing in connecting employers with qualified workforce talent and job seekers with career opportunities. Kentucky Career Center – the Northern Kentucky Workforce Investment Board funds its operations in the eight-county region through the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act.

The Northern Kentucky Workforce Investment Board directs policy, direction, and funding oversight for the local workforce investment system. It also promotes innovative workforce development that meets the changing needs of employers and the labor force, enhancing economic development for our region.

Kentucky Career Center Success

After attending the Kentucky Career Center Orientation, an individual brought in his Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act paperwork for the first meeting with a Brighton Talent Development Specialist. At this time, he was receiving public assistance benefits and had not worked for nearly two years. The individual indicated to the Talent Development Specialist how important obtaining a CDL was to him and that he looked forward to starting training.

After all paperwork was reviewed, the individual was determined eligible for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Adult Intensive Services in May 2023. Career coaching began immediately, and the customer was referred to Brighton Center Family Center after indicating that financial barriers were part of his stressors and challenges. Further assessments revealed that an appropriate industry for him would be Transportation and Logistics, and he completed some research about the CDL program at Gateway Community and Technical College. He was approved to receive training funds for the CDL program at Gateway and began class in August 2023. By September, the individual had completed the training and passed the required exam to receive his Commercial Driver's License.

With assistance from Brighton Center's Business Services Representatives, he was connected to employers with available driver positions at the Fall Career Fair, where he was hired on the spot. Ultimately, he obtained a driving role with UPS, where he started to work in November, making approximately \$67,000 in annual wages. The Talent Development Specialist is continuing to provide career coaching to the individual as he is seeking additional hours beyond what is currently being offered at UPS.

Due to the nationally recognized credential of CDL obtained from the Gateway Community and Technical College using funding from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the individual will have several options for employment in the Northern Kentucky area that provide him with the desired additional hours. Brighton Center is excited to be a part of this individual's journey in moving from public assistance recipient with gaps in his work history to full-time employment in a high-demand industry making a self-sufficient wage.

Veteran Services in Northern Kentucky Success in Matching and Building Veteran Employer Champions

In the first week of September, a Veteran Business Consultant, a key figure in Kentucky's Career Development Office, met a veteran jobseeker, at the Kenton County Public Library weekly meeting. The Consultant learned that this individual, a Marine Veteran, had been let go from his previous employment.

The individual expressed interest in going back into federal work, having felt defeated in the private sector. He was told there were opportunities with the Internal Revenue Services (IRS) that he may be interested in. He connected the IRS and submitted his application. He was hired within the next week.

Additionally, this Veteran Business Consultant continues to work with employers to promote veteran hiring practices. He reached out to Ryder Systems Inc. at their airport warehouse located in Hebron. Ryder Systems expressed a high level of interest in hiring veterans. After the tour and further communication, she extended the opportunity to send any veterans looking for specific roles from auditor to shipping and receiving directly to her for an interview. An HR manager has direct hire authority at the Ryder warehouse in Hebron and basically created a fast lane for veterans to be hired, with her recommending a single vetting interview. This kind of collaboration allows for veterans to continue to be of service in new careers and new ways.

Adult and Wrap-Around Services – Overcoming Addiction

An individual's addiction led her to Brighton Recovery Center. They helped her on her path to recovery, supported her in her journey, and showed her hope for the future.

The individual was introduced to the Kentucky Career Center after attending a Brighton Recovery Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act orientation at the Florence office. This Act, a federal program that aims to increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants, was a crucial part of the individual's journey. At a pivotal phase in her recovery, she was preparing to reenter employment, which left her feeling uncertain of opportunities that might be available to her. Sobriety was her number one focus, so she knew she would need additional support throughout the employment journey. The individual attended orientation and listened to the different programs that the KY Career Center had to offer. She decided that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program seemed like a great opportunity for her.

The individual began working with her Talent Development Specialist for several weeks to work out an Individual Career Plan. While completing this career plan, they explored many different career options using an interest profiler. Her Talent Development Specialist went over the in-demand sectors in the Northern Kentucky region and explained different positions that fall under those career pathways. The individual wanted to work with others who were on a path like her own. A resume was completed, interview skills were offered, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act paperwork was completed, and the individual's employment search began with assistance from the Talent Development Specialist and the business services team.

The individual has not only gained employment but is now helping others on their path to recovery at Brighton Recovery Center. Her journey is a testament to the transformative power of these programs.

Providing Access to Nontraditional Talent Pipelines – Perfetti Van Melle

The Northern Kentucky Area Development District has had several opportunities to work with local businesses to develop and provide direct access to specific communities of job seekers in Northern Kentucky. Most recently, they have been providing high-quality job candidates to Perfetti Van Melle to assist in hiring for difficult-to-fill third-shift roles. This initiative has placed six individuals with the company since June 2024 and is moving toward filling 25 open positions for the company.

This partnership with Perfetti Van Melle meets the company's workforce needs. It focuses on providing job opportunities to individuals in substance use disorder recovery in Northern Kentucky's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act-based Work for Success program. This program not only provides access to employment opportunities but also supports individuals through the hiring process and continues to support them through the first year of employment to maximize job retention. The retention rate for individuals employed at Perfetti Van Melle through this program has been 83%.

Perfetti Van Melle is just one of several businesses in Northern Kentucky that are benefitting from this program through direct hire or temp-to-hire models. This program, with its proven success, is a great example of Northern Kentucky's ability to provide workforce solutions that benefit not only businesses but also the community.

Supporting Training & Upskilling of Existing Employees – Aristech Surfaces

To enable its businesses to retain and upskill their existing workforce, the Northern Kentucky Area Development District provides consultation services and financial support for qualified businesses that would like to enhance the abilities of their workforce through training and education through our Incumbent Worker Training program.

Aristech Surfaces is a local business that has benefited immensely from the Incumbent Worker Training program and utilized its support to conduct a series of six training courses in the financial year 2024. These training courses enabled their front-line managers to strengthen their leadership and communication skills, reducing employee turnover and increasing productivity for those teams that work under the managers participating in the training.

The Incumbent Worker Training program continues to be a valuable resource for local businesses, enabling them to retain talent and enhance job quality for their employees. By providing consultation services and financial support for qualified businesses that would like to enhance the abilities of their workforce through training and education, the program has significantly improved the skills and job satisfaction of many employees in the Northern Kentucky area.

Northern Kentucky “Work for Success” Prepares People in Recovery for Jobs

Through Work for Success, 298 individuals recovering from substance use disorder were supported in their job-search process; 37 received intensive career services and completed a four-week supervised full-time work-based training program with one of its business partners. The fact that 93 percent of those placed in the work-based training program are still employed is a clear indication of the program's success and the potential it holds for the future of workforce development.

Clients filled jobs in Advanced Manufacturing, Life Sciences, Information Technology, and Supply Chain Management with wages ranging from \$18 to \$22 an hour. Participating employers included Hood Container, Crown Staffing, Best Sanitizers, Cengage Group, Jabil, United States Playing Card Company, Nexigen, Perfetti Van Melle, KOI Precast Concrete, HS Solutions, and the Council of Christian Re-Entry Ministry.

The program was supported by funding from the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet through a Kentucky Statewide Reserve Grant. The funds were used to hire a program manager to work with the clients and to pay for client training.

Filling Job Vacancies in Large Numbers and Employee Onboarding – Prospect Airport Services

In the bustling environment of Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport, Prospect Airport Services has become a cornerstone of support for travelers requiring assistance. Specializing in providing exceptional curb-to-gate service for individuals needing wheelchair assistance, Prospect recognizes that its success hinges on having a dedicated and skilled workforce. To meet this demand, it has partnered with the Kentucky Career Center at CVG Airport, creating a robust support system for both the business and its employees.

To fulfill the demand for Passenger Service Assistants, Prospect Airport Services has collaborated with the KCC to host job fairs, hiring events, and regular open interview sessions. Open interviews are conveniently scheduled from Monday to Thursday, between 2:00 PM and 4:00 PM, making it easier for job seekers to attend. Since July 1, 2024, this proactive approach has allowed Prospect to make 189 job offers to fill their vacant positions efficiently, ensuring that they are well-staffed and able to provide exceptional service to their clients.

The Kentucky Career Center also plays a pivotal role in onboarding new hires. Newly employed individuals can access answers to their questions regarding SIDA badges and other onboarding issues directly through the Kentucky Career Center. Additionally, it serves as a central meeting point for weekly new hire training sessions. Here, attendees gather and receive briefings from prospective supervisors before navigating TSA Security on their first day of work. This coordinated effort eases the onboarding process for new employees and sets them up for success from day one.

TANK Plus Pilot is UP and Running in Campbell County

A new transportation option is now available to help Campbell County residents get to work, appointments, and other destinations. TANK Plus is a flexible, on-demand option that picks riders up at their homes and transports them within a designated zone. The service can also connect passengers to transfer points for travel outside of the zone.

The designated zone covers most of Fort Thomas and Cold Spring, as well as parts of Newport, Highland Heights, and Alexandria. “The purpose of the service is to provide access for areas of Campbell County that are not serviced by our traditional bus routes,” TANK Manager of Marketing said.

There are two TANK Plus vehicles. They are smaller than full-size buses, and riders must schedule their pick-up. Scheduling is available through a special application or by calling TANK at 859.331.8265. The link to the application is [here](#).

Youth First Program Will Prepare and Connect Young Workers to Jobs

Using funding available through Northern Kentucky’s share of \$20 million over two years appropriated by the state legislature, the NKADD Workforce Development Division has hired an individual as the Youth Navigator for the Youth First Program. The goal of the program is to prepare youth aged 16 to 24 who are not working and not in school for jobs. NKY has about 5,600 young people in that category.

The Youth Navigator will work directly with schools and institutions to help identify and connect youth to training and employment opportunities. Several new initiatives are already in progress, including an innovative in-school apprenticeship that will prepare Carroll County youth for jobs with Carrollton Utilities.

NKY Works Helps meetNKY Promote Boone, Campbell & Kenton Counties

More than a dozen NKY Works volunteers helped meetNKY promote Boone, Campbell, and Kenton counties at the 120th KY State Fair in Louisville, Aug. 15-25. Thousands of pieces of NKY swag and hundreds of visitor guides were distributed to encourage guests to explore the great attractions, events, amenities, and career opportunities available in NKY.

South Central Workforce Development Board

The South Central Workforce Development Board oversees the workforce in the South Central area under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Its board members include individuals representing economic development agencies, education, labor, public assistance agencies, and community-based organizations from the 10-county region of South Central Kentucky.

New Americans and Employers Together (NETWORK)

The NET Work Job & Education Fair took place in November 2022 and August 2023. NET Work targets New Americans who are unemployed or are employed outside the South-Central region to showcase opportunities for education, training, and employment.

2022	RESULTS	2023
250+	Attendees	300+
12	Employers	14
12	Resource Providers	15
139	Referrals to Companies	350+
15	Positive Employment Outcomes	20+

TENCO Workforce Development Board

The TENCO Workforce Development Board serves the ten counties of Bath, Boyd, Bracken, Fleming, Greenup, Lewis, Mason, Montgomery, Robertson, and Rowan. It provides both employers and job seekers with broad and direct access to information about everything from job openings to specialized assistance and training programs. Operating under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, it also provides oversight for all services provided through Kentucky Career Centers-TENCO.

RESEA Success Story / Morehead Kentucky Career Center

An individual's journey from a setback to soaring success is a testament to resilience and the power of effective collaboration. After facing a layoff from his assistant manager position at Pizza Hut due to a change in ownership, the individual wanted to remain in food service but was struggling to find something new.

Recognizing the need for a strategic approach to his job search, he sought assistance and guidance and was connected to a supportive advisor committed to helping him succeed. Together, they embarked on a journey to revamp the individual's resume, leveraging various tools and techniques to highlight his skills and accomplishments effectively.

He landed a managerial role, surpassing his previous position and doubling his salary in the process. He then attended the Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment Orientation in October 2023 and secured employment in January 2024.

Success Story

When an individual met with a career counselor in October 2023, he was living in a camper on a family member's property. After some family emergencies, he realized he needed to get a regular job to support himself. He wanted a job where he could work independently and welcomed the opportunity to travel.

The individual was 59 years old, had some legal issues, and struggled with basic reading and math skills. It took a lot of work, but he persisted and convinced his career counselor that he was committed to getting his CDL.

With Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I training funds and supportive services, the individual started his training in December 2023. He had excellent progress reports each week and completed his training in four weeks. He obtained his Class A CDL license on Jan. 8, 2024.

In March 2024, the individual accepted a position with Western Express in Nashville, TN. He now travels across the country and continues to update his counselor periodically, sending photos of his adventures around the U.S.

Success Story

An individual came in for an appointment after being referred by his caseworker at the homeless shelter. He disclosed during the initial appointment that he had felony charges relating to drugs, no driver's license, and little family support. Several support services through different agencies were discussed, and the individual mentioned that he had to seek work within 30 days to be able to stay at the homeless shelter. His primary choice of employment was with St. Claire Regional Medical Center. He said he and his family had good experiences at the hospital, and he stated that he would consider it an honor to work there. By using the established relationship between the Career Center and St. Claire, the staff was able to refer the individual directly for an open position.

He was offered a full-time position in Environmental Services with St. Claire Regional Medical Center, earning \$14.00 per hour. He contacted the center to share his good news, but concerns came with the job offer. He didn't have appropriate shoes, a driver's license, or reliable transportation, so he made referrals to partner agencies for assistance. The SITE program was able to provide him with new shoes and a gas card. With the gas card, he could pay a friend to drive him to work until he could get his license back. He also had more good news - he was approved for an apartment and could move from the homeless shelter.

Business Services – Live Wire Printing

The owner of Live Wire Printing, has seen his small printing business soar to new heights thanks to a successful networking encounter at the Kentucky Career Centers – TENCO Hiring Event. Hosted in partnership with Lewis County Judge Executive and Lewis County High School on April 4th, 2024, the event proved to be a pivotal moment for Live Wire Printing.

The connections made during the event were transformative. The business owner seized the opportunity to network with various employers, a decision that led to significant business opportunities. Notably, Live Wire Printing secured contracts with two prominent local entities: Lewis County EMS and Fresh Start Health in Vanceburg, KY.

The success story of Live Wire Printing illustrates the power of local initiatives and community support in propelling small businesses forward. Through proactive networking and a commitment to delivering quality service, the owner and his team have not only expanded their client base but also solidified their presence within the Lewis County business community.

TENCO Workforce Development Board Customer Tracking System Impacts Services

Capturing accurate data on customer traffic is important for long-term planning and delivery of services. Three years ago, the TENCO Workforce Development Board began to use Greetly as its visitor management system due to its user-friendly interface and streamlined check-in process. This allows the center not only to make a positive first impression but also frees staff to focus on impactful interactions, including advising and connecting clients with resources. Information collected at check-in includes customer name, contact information, and services they are seeking, such as help applying for jobs, resume development, mock interviewing, filing an unemployment insurance claim, meeting with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, and seeking information on training options available.



Greetly offers robust data collection and reporting features that can help Center Management track customer trends and preferences. This valuable information enables staff to analyze which programs are most popular, identify peak visitation times, and tailor services better to meet the needs of job seekers and employers. Utilizing this data has allowed us to improve operational efficiency while also fostering a welcoming atmosphere that promotes engagement and collaboration.

West Kentucky Workforce Board

The West Kentucky Workforce Board serves the seventeen counties of the Pennyridge/Purchase in providing policy development and coordination for workforce development in support of economic development for the region.

Wagner-Peyser Success Story

An individual came into the Paducah Career Center to seek assistance finding employment after being laid off from his job at Westlake Chemical. From the time he walked in, he was extremely focused on finding a career that would help him provide for his family.

He signed up for job services and requested all the assistance that could be offered to him in finding a job that could provide financial stability and peace of mind for his family. His skills, barriers, and goals as a job seeker were discussed to better match him to potential employers. Then, his resume was reviewed to assess his skills. He was encouraged to attend the job fair.

He showed up to the job fair the following Tuesday and spoke with all the participating employers. He was on each one's "possible hire" list and even received an offer from the Kentucky State Penitentiary. He accepted an offer with Premier Fire & Security, earning a comfortable wage and benefits package that suited his family's needs.

Graduation to Career! Austin– In-School Youth

An individual entered the program as a rising senior at Christian County High School. He was deficient in basic skills and unemployed, but he had a goal to become a Lineman. He needed tutoring to keep up with his assignments and earn above a C average. He was advised to seek assistance from the Christian County Public School's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act In-School Youth program, which the West Kentucky Workforce Board funds.

The individual attended tutoring on a regular basis, which improved his test-taking skills and confidence in his test-taking strategies. This allowed him to achieve a Measurable Skill Gain. Then, he began working in a paid environment at Cayce Mill Supply. He worked in the electrical parts warehouse and lighting department there. After graduation, he was able to keep his job. He still aspires to be a lineman, but for now, he enjoys working and earning money.

Dislocated Worker / Rapid Response Success

An individual was working at MSSC when the plant consolidated and began phasing elimination of their workforce. The layoffs at the Hopkinsville, Kentucky facility were certified as Trade impacted by the US Department of Labor. She was dislocated in March 2022. She attended Rapid Response activities offered by the West Kentucky Workforce Board and learned that the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act could help her earn a degree. She met with a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Career Coach and enrolled at Hopkinsville Community College, majoring in Business. She gained full-time employment on May 20, 2024, with Pennyroyal Farm Analysis Group, Inc., working as a Bookkeeper/Payroll Clerk.

West Kentucky Workforce Board Assisting Transitioning Military & Veterans

West Kentucky Workforce Board assists veterans and eligible spouses in gaining access to high-quality jobs and careers. Staff help businesses hire and retain skilled workers. When veterans or transitioning service members and eligible spouses seek services at local career centers, they receive priority of service. The West Kentucky Workforce Board's Veterans Transition Liaison, Derek Poor, is located at Fort Campbell to assist veterans and spouses in connecting with resources, receiving resume assistance, career center information, and/or direct employment. Mr. Poor has also been assisting the Kentucky Chamber with their Military Hiring Academy.

Each month, the South Western Kentucky Economic Development Corporation and the West Kentucky Workforce Board sponsor a Manufacturing Seminar at the Fort Campbell Transitions Assistance Program office. This allows manufacturers in the area to meet with transitioning service members interested in manufacturing employment. At the February 2024 seminar, JTEKT Japan, Toyota Boshoku America, and White Drive Products participated. These connections will lead to more significant employment and mentorship opportunities.

Right Choice Program

West Kentucky Workforce Board's Right Choice Program provides court-sanctioned guidance and employment strategies to non-custodial parents so that they can obtain employment that will financially support their child/children. These services are offered through the Christian, Crittenden, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Muhlenberg & Trigg County Family Courts.

WKWB NDWG "Project Twister"

The West Kentucky Workforce Board's Project Twister has served 75 individuals with 33 years of work experience. Some of the individuals were hired permanently at the end of their work experience. Thirty-one individuals in the program have either been in On-the-Job Training or training. One of these individuals graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from Georgetown University in May 2023. After graduation, the individual moved back to his hometown of Mayfield, Kentucky, in Graves County. Graves County was deeply impacted by the December 10, 2021, tornado, and employment was difficult to obtain.

In July 2023, Isaac contacted a Project Twister Career Coach to inquire about a job at the Long-Term Recovery Group. He was having trouble getting an interview, so the Career Coach reached out to Camp Graves regarding a position they had for an Administrative Assistant. He interviewed for and accepted the offer for the position in August 2023. He started his position at Camp Graves as an Administrative Assistant on August 28, 2023. He requested supportive assistance for clothing and transportation as he had been unemployed for a long time and needed office attire.

After completing his approved hours/dollars with Project Twister, he was hired permanently at Camp Graves. He continues to do well, is very satisfied with his job, and earns a sustainable wage.