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Kentucky

Employer Alignment in Action

State leaders work to bridge the gap between education and employment through evidence-based policymaking and practical strategies that improve alignment with employers.

Kentucky has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing workforce challenges through strategic initiatives that foster collaboration among education, industry, and government.

The development of KYStats, the implementation of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce's Workforce Center and Talent Pipeline Management, and the strategic direction provided by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education have all contributed to the state's efforts. These initiatives collectively support the development of a responsive and dynamic workforce that meets the demands of Kentucky's evolving economy and workforce.



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- ➔ More than 70 students participated in a hands-on health care simulation during a career expo designed to provide insight into medical careers.

I Kentucky's approach

Data-driven decision-making

KYStats is a data system that tracks a variety of education-to-employment outcomes and statistics. By providing user-friendly labor market information, KYStats supports policymakers and educators in their efforts to make informed decisions that align training programs with basic industry demands.

Employer engagement

The Kentucky Chamber's Workforce Center and Talent Pipeline Management foster strong partnerships among employers and educational institutions. Talent Pipeline Management' addresses the need for employers to take a leading role in defining their talent needs and working with educators to meet those needs, ultimately producing a more prepared workforce. Additionally, the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce runs three different hiring academies that aim to train the business community on alternative recruitment practices to engage a broader spectrum of the potential workforce. These three hiring academies (Military Hiring Academy,² Fair Chance Academy,³ and New Kentuckian Hiring Academy⁴) currently focus on the military community (and spouses), those in active recovery, and documented immigrants. The Kentucky Chamber has found success with these programs and, with the backing of the business community, will launch a Disability Hiring Program⁵ in spring 2026.

Postsecondary alignment

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education has made aligning postsecondary education with workforce demands a priority. The state also plans to continue leveraging data and analysis to help better inform education inputs.

Skills-first approach

Kentucky is working toward creating systems that focus on skills first and removing barriers that degree requirements create. One example is the Kentucky Essential Skills Certificate, which was created in partnership with businesses and is offered through the Department of Workforce Investment, Kentucky Department of Corrections, and Kentucky Community and Technical College System. This program teaches essential higher-order skills that are in high demand across various employment sectors.⁶

Alignment with goals of state leadership and key partners

Workforce development is a central priority for state leadership, and Kentucky's collaborative approach emphasizes building strong partnerships among education, industry, and government.

- Gov. Andy Beshear and state economic development agencies have emphasized the importance of building a skilled workforce to attract and retain businesses.⁷ Initiatives such as KYStats and the Kentucky Chamber Workforce Center are aligned directly with the state's economic development goals.
- The inaugural Statewide Workforce and Talent Team Convening in 2024 brought together more than 250 leaders from various organizations to develop a unified and collaborative approach to workforce development.⁸ This event aimed to simplify workforce systems and address the Commonwealth's diverse industry needs. The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education plays a crucial role in aligning postsecondary education with these goals, ensuring that institutions are responsive to the needs of the workforce. Participating organizations included:
 - ▶ Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
 - ▶ Kentucky's Department of Workforce Development
 - ▶ Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board
 - ▶ Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet
 - ▶ Kentucky Community and Technical College System

Strategy, implementation, and measuring success

Kentucky aligns education with employer needs by focusing on data-driven decision-making (through KYStats), employer engagement (through the Kentucky Chamber), and strategic postsecondary alignment (through the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education).

Kentucky Center for Statistics

- **Strategy:** KYStats is a data platform that provides timely labor market information, educational outcomes, and workforce trends. It aims to improve transparency and accountability in workforce development.
- **Implementation:** The platform aggregates data from various sources, including state agencies, educational institutions, and employers. It provides interactive dashboards and reports that allow users to explore workforce data.

- **Measuring success:** Ongoing evaluation of KYStats is important to understand its ultimate impact. Initial feedback garnered through direct conversations with the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, and insights gleaned through research, indicate that the platform is valuable for policymakers and educators.

Kentucky Chamber Workforce Center and Talent Pipeline Management

- **Strategy:** The Kentucky Chamber Workforce Center works to bridge the gap between employers and educators by providing resources, training, and networking opportunities. Talent Pipeline Management is a framework that empowers employers to take a leading role in defining their talent needs and working with educators to develop relevant training programs.
- **Implementation:** The Kentucky Chamber facilitates employer-led collaboratives, provides training on Talent Pipeline Management principles,⁹ and works with educational institutions to align their programs with employer needs.
- **Measuring success:** The Kentucky Chamber tracks the number of employers engaged in Talent Pipeline Management initiatives, and evidence shows increased employer involvement in curriculum development.

Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education

- **Strategy:** The Council on Postsecondary Education works to align postsecondary education with the needs of the workforce by providing strategic direction, funding, and oversight.
- **Implementation:** The Council on Postsecondary Education collaborates with educational institutions, employers, and state agencies to develop and implement workforce development initiatives. It provides data and support to ensure that educational programs are aligned with industry demands.
- **Measuring success:** The Council on Postsecondary Education tracks key performance indicators, such as graduation rates and job placement rates. It uses this data to inform policy decisions and improve program effectiveness. The council also works to create better articulation agreements between the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and the four-year universities to ensure a smoother transition for students.

- Educators, employers, and other partners tour Cincinnati–Northern Kentucky International Airport through the Kentucky Chamber Foundation’s Educator’s Guide to Industry, which gives educators firsthand insight into workforce needs.



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I Broader efforts

Kentucky also is focused on expanding apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities. The Kentucky Career Center's Office of Employer and Apprenticeship Services oversees the state's Registered Apprenticeship Program and currently has vetted more than 1,500 occupations for apprenticeship programs.¹⁰

Kentucky's Office of Broadband Development is working to increase access to broadband internet in rural communities, which in turn will increase access to online education and training.

The state also is working to increase the number of people who have access to child care so that parents more easily can participate in workforce training programs. In 2022, the state expanded eligibility for state-sponsored child care benefits, allowing more families to access funds to help reduce the burden of child care expenses.¹¹

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Kentucky has developed several tools and resources to support its efforts:

- [KYStats](#) and related resources are available on the Kentucky Center for Statistics website.
- [Kentucky Chamber Talent Pipeline Management resources](#), including training materials, support talent pipeline enhancements for a number of industries throughout the state and are available through the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce.
- The Kentucky [Council on Postsecondary Education](#) publishes strategic plans and reports that outline its approach to aligning postsecondary education with workforce needs. These documents can provide valuable insights for other states seeking to improve their postsecondary education systems.

Endnotes

- 1 Talent Pipeline Management. (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, 2025). <https://www.kychamber.com/workforce>.
- 2 Military Hiring Academy. (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, 2024). <https://www.kychamber.com/military-hiring-academy>.
- 3 Fair Chance Academy. (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Chamber of Commerce/Kentucky Comeback, 2022). <https://kentuckycomeback.com/fairchanceacademy/>.
- 4 New Kentuckian Hiring Academy. (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, 2025). <https://www.kychamber.com/new-kentuckian-hiring-academy>.
- 5 Disability Hiring Academy. (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, 2025). <https://www.kychamber.com/disabilityhiringacademy>.
- 6 Kentucky Essential Skills. (Kingston, TN: WIN Learning, 2025). <https://www.winlearning.com/About/State-Partnerships/KY/kentucky-essential-skills-credential>.
- 7 “Gov. Beshear: State Programs Provide Workforce Training and Development for Over 11,700 Kentuckians.” (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development, May 15, 2025). https://newkentuckyhome.ky.gov/Newsroom/NewsPage/20250515_BSSC.
- 8 “Inaugural Statewide Workforce and Talent Team Convening Presents a Unified Approach to Economic Growth.” (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, September 19, 2025). <https://kychamberbottomline.com/2024/12/05/inaugural-statewide-workforce-talent-team-convening-presents-a-unified-approach-to-economic-growth/>.
- 9 Talent Pipeline Management. (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, 2025). <https://www.kychamber.com/workforce>.
- 10 Registered Apprenticeships – Kentucky Works. (Frankfort, KY: Kentucky Career Center, 2019). <https://kyworks.ky.gov/Services/Pages/Registered-Apprenticeships.aspx>.
- 11 Sylvia Goodman. “Kentucky groups push solutions to make more child care accessible.” (Louisville, KY: Louisville Public Media, May 8, 2025). <https://www.lpm.org/news/2025-05-08/kentucky-groups-push-solutions-to-make-more-child-care-accessible>.

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