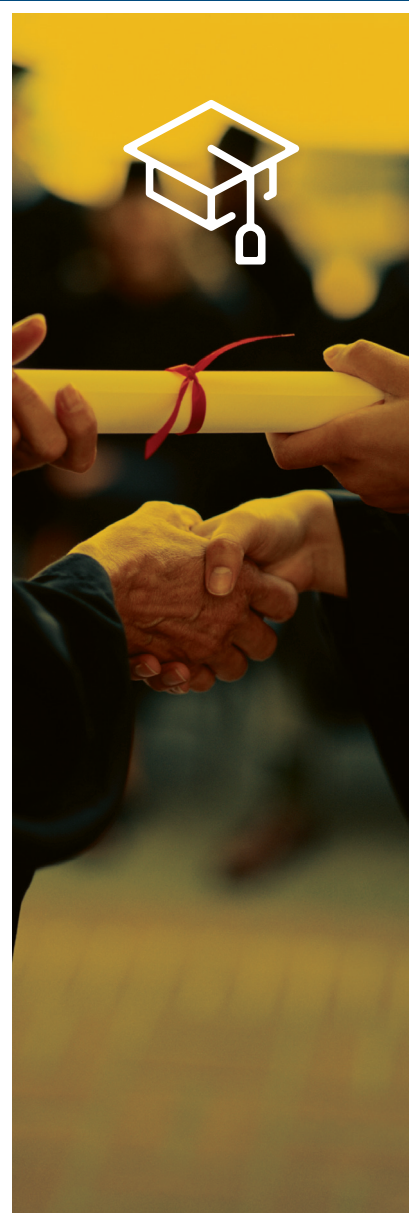


Striving to be **TOPTIER** for **TALENT**

Average Isn't Good Enough

A Report of the Kentucky Business-Education Roundtable



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Preface

The Kentucky Business-Education Roundtable's work has focused on developing an ambitious agenda to improve the education attainment of citizens and the quality of the Kentucky workforce. The Roundtable has framed this work around the four key goals of:

1. Investing in early childhood and preschool
2. Reinventing high school
3. Ensuring every adult obtains a marketable degree or credential
4. Engaging employers to define needed skills and develop talent supply chains

The deliberations have generated numerous recommendations, detailed in this report, across the continuum of education and workforce development. Some of these will be disruptive to current policies and practices, others will require significant resources, and many will require the additional input of policymakers and practitioners.

To help ensure the long-term success of its effort, the Roundtable will continue the work in the months ahead – setting priorities for policy and programmatic changes, determining the resources that will be needed to support the work, and engaging other stakeholders in defining considerations and specific needs.

This longer report, as a result, should be viewed as a work in progress. As such, the draft recommendations it includes do not all have unanimous support from all Roundtable members, but they do reflect the group's discussions and deliberations. This report will continue to evolve as the Roundtable develops an agenda to move Kentucky forward in areas that are critical to ensuring a successful future for individuals and the state as a whole.

Introduction

Kentucky must up its game if we are going to compete.

Workforce is the No. 1 factor in businesses' success and economic development decisions. But we are failing to educate and train enough people to be productive and responsible employees and contributors to their own well-being and that of the state. Kentucky also struggles to retain and attract talent to create the jobs of the future that will fuel prosperity and encourage younger entrepreneurs, emerging leaders and business owners to live and work here.

If the business community, elected officials, educators, families, public policymakers and advocates don't join forces immediately to make significant changes, Kentucky will become trapped in a downward spiral where economic competitiveness and growth will be almost impossible to achieve – for individuals and the state as a whole.

Here is a snapshot of Kentucky as it is today – evidence of the need for action fueled by a sense of urgency:

- A 2018 business survey showing more than half of Kentucky employers struggling to find workers with the skills they need.

- With a 42nd-place national ranking in workforce participation (as of September 2018), at 59.3% vs. a 62.7% national average, workforce challenges that discourage economic investments.
- Recent scores on key academic measurements showing Kentucky in decline relative to other states; 4th grade reading and math scores and the state's national ranking on both, although still respectable, declining after years of improvement on the National Assessment of Educational Progress; too many students failing to perform well on Kentucky-only tests.
- An education attainment level that trails much of the nation; 22.7% of Kentuckians age 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 30.3% nationally.
- Barely more than half of our children (51.4%) prepared for kindergarten by the time they enroll in school.
- Just over 55% of third graders with reading skills that are proficient or better and less than 51% with math skills at that level.
- Persistent achievement gaps among groups of students, undermining academic progress and prospects for life success.
- More than 765,000 adults with no postsecondary education and more than 500,000 with some postsecondary credit but no credential.
- Work-based learning programs engaging only 3,187 of the more than 56,000 high school students eligible in 2016-2017.
- Thousands of available jobs unfilled due to the lack of skilled workers.
- A per capita income of \$39,393, ranking 47th in the nation.
- Only 48% of workers being trained to the middle-skill level – jobs that require more than high school but less than a four-year-degree – while 58% of the state's jobs are at this level.
- 347,000 working-age adults (18-64) without a high school or GED diploma, 52% of them in their prime working years (ages 18-44).

Underpinning these disappointing realities are others that reflect the challenges Kentucky faces in moving many of its residents along an educational or workforce pathway that will lead to a better quality of life:

- A Social Security disability rate of 7.9%, compared to the national average of 4.6%.
- An overdose death rate of 33.5 per 100,000 residents; the national average is 19.8.
- A national health ranking of 42nd among the states.
- An incarceration rate of 869 per 100,000 residents; the national average is 698.

If we are to change the direction of our state, it is imperative that we change our thinking, our focus and our work. It is not enough to strive for average. We must set an ambitious goal of moving Kentucky into the Top Tier of states, to be first in the nation in improving the alignment of our talent development systems with employment opportunities and among the Top 10 states on key indicators reflecting education and workforce quality.

The challenges of doing this cannot be overstated, but Kentucky is up to the task. With hard work and a sustained commitment, we moved Kentucky from the bottom of national education rankings to a mid-level position in many categories – and even higher in some. But the fact that our progress has now slowed – and in some cases our gains have been reversed – requires a renewed commitment.

We must recognize that this is not the sole responsibility of educators. Employers, elected officials, advocates, families and policymakers in every part of the Commonwealth have a significant stake in this work and must be accountable for its results.

We must act now, but we will need a sustained effort over the next decade, and maybe longer. This is generational work that will require a long-term commitment and targeted investments. To set Kentucky on this path to progress, the Kentucky Business-Education Roundtable believes an aggressive course of action is needed. After researching the issues for more than a year, we offer this agenda for action that focuses on meeting today's workforce needs while establishing a long-term plan. Its four primary goals address:

1. **Investing in early childhood and preschool** – to give kids a solid start
2. **Reinventing high school** – to make it more relevant
3. **Ensuring every adult obtains a marketable degree or credential**
4. **Engaging employers to define needed skills and develop talent supply chains**

This work addresses the challenge of striving for progress in a state with limited public resources. A smaller state government and strains on public funds caused by the pension crisis, rising Medicaid costs and limited revenue growth will make progress even tougher. Increased revenue resulting from economic growth and additional resources, wisely invested, will be necessary for Kentucky to build a higher quality public education system, to enlist all employable adults in meaningful work, to avoid such downstream costs as prisons, welfare and drug addiction, and to produce more and better talent for our economy and our society.

The Kentucky Business-Education Roundtable

The Roundtable is a group of public-and private-sector leaders who have come together to develop a long-term plan of action to fuel Kentucky's improvements in education attainment and workforce quality. The education, business and advocacy leaders comprising the Roundtable have a shared vision:

Kentucky's education and workforce systems will ensure individual, community and statewide prosperity by preparing students to become successful, productive and responsible citizens. All Kentuckians, regardless of age, location or situation, transition seamlessly to meaningful work.

Members of the Roundtable include:

- **Dave Adkisson**, President & CEO, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce
- **Dr. Jay Box**, President, Kentucky Community & Technical College System
- **Garren Colvin**, CEO, St. Elizabeth Healthcare
- **Paul Costel**, Kentucky President, JPMorgan Chase Kentucky
- **Nick D'Andrea**, Vice President, Public Affairs, UPS
- **Terry Gill**, Secretary, Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development
- **Hugh Haydon**, President, Kentucky Bioprocessing Inc.; Chair, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board
- **Dr. Wayne Lewis**, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education
- **John Megibben**, Vice President, Messer Construction Company
- **Brigitte Blom Ramsey**, Executive Director, Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence
- **Derrick Ramsey**, Secretary, Kentucky Education and Workforce Cabinet
- **Kevin Smith**, Vice President Kentucky Beam Bourbon Affairs, Beam Suntory
- **Dr. Aaron Thompson**, President, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- **Mary Gwen Wheeler**, Executive Director, 55,000 Degrees

The following served as Roundtable members while holding the positions indicated:

- **Hal Heiner**, Secretary, Kentucky Education and Workforce Cabinet
- **Wil James**, President, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky, Inc.
- **Robert King**, President, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- **Dr. Stephen Pruitt**, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Education

The Short-Term Imperative: **Act Now to Meet Today's Needs**

Significantly accelerating our progress in education and workforce development is a make-or-break issue, one that will determine whether Kentucky thrives or remains mired among the worst performing states with citizens unprepared to compete for good jobs that can support their families in the decades ahead. Policy, program and financing changes designed to make a difference can be glacial in their development – and even slower to have a meaningful effect. But Kentucky cannot afford to wait.

The Kentucky Business-Education Roundtable's agenda calls for action at all levels of the education and workforce development continuum. There is no single solution, no silver bullet. We must attack the challenge at every point to have the maximum impact as quickly as possible. To address the current crisis facing employers and workers, steps must be taken now to ensure:

Kentuckians, regardless of age, location or situation, transition seamlessly to meaningful work and careers.

More Kentuckians must improve their skills and education to participate successfully in the workplace and their communities. We must address the root causes such as drug addiction, disability, poverty and others that result in low workforce participation and low quality of life for too many of our citizens.

We must engage more employable adults not currently in the workforce through re-entry strategies for ex-offenders, immigrants, elder workers and the developmentally challenged. We also must move more of our so-called nontraditional population (beyond the 18-24 age group) into the workforce with special attention to adults who have no credential other than a high school diploma and possibly some college.

Target:

To move Kentucky's workforce participation rate to the top tier of states. As of September 2018, Kentucky's rate was 42nd in the nation at 59.3%. Achieving the Top Ten will mean improving to 67.8%. Education and training programs must attract unemployed adult learners, veterans and other individuals whose circumstances limit opportunities for continuing education and employment.

Immediate steps to begin meeting today's needs:

- Create programs to encourage more adults to enroll in and complete academic/technical training programs.
 - o Provide flexible programming/scheduling and academic programs (including stackable credentials and prior learning credit) for prospective adult students.
 - o Train faculty and staff to understand different needs of adult students.
 - o Provide clear communication, including targeted media campaigns, about the pathways to a credential and career as well as short-term skills training and credentials and media strategies that align with research on the interests of target audiences.
 - o Design delivery systems that are unique to specific groups of adult learners such as veterans, the formerly incarcerated and others.
- Develop credentials valued and endorsed by business and industry to support lifelong learning for employees and accelerate the development of the talent pipeline.
- Provide support services for students to meet their emotional and life needs; this will require linking disparate services and agencies.

- Establish joint marketing with Kentucky Skills U to attract the 354,000 Kentucky adults without a high school or GED diploma into Accelerating Opportunity Kentucky, a joint initiative of KCTCS and Kentucky Skills U, where they can earn a GED diploma and technical certificate at the same time.
- Improve state data collection and analysis to provide a deeper understanding of the non-traditional learner.
- Promote a requirement for unemployed Kentuckians to obtain retraining/education (aligned with the Medicaid waiver that requires volunteering but enhances focus on education).
- Advocate for the expansion of and additional funding for Work Ready Kentucky Scholarships.
- Embrace Talent Pipeline Management as a methodology for talent development in key industry clusters.
- Create a loan-forgiveness pool or other ways to relieve the burden of student debt.
- Develop a common prior learning assessment to mitigate students' challenges of transferring credits or getting credits approved for new major pathways.
- Align career centers, the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board, Kentucky Adult Education, KCTCS and area technology centers in an integrated effort to get adults into higher paying, stable occupations.

Implementation of the recommendations found throughout this report will require a careful review of existing laws and, when necessary, legislative action as well as the amendment, repeal or promulgation of administrative regulations. Legislative authority should enable the involved agencies to develop recommendations from the affected parties while maintaining legislative oversight and review.

Statutory, Regulatory and Administrative Changes That May Be Needed:

- Administrative or regulatory changes to allow new program development, alignment of services
- Budgetary support for Work Ready Scholarships, creation of loan-forgiveness pool, marketing and media, credential development, student support services, faculty training, data collection

Leadership and Responsibility for Action Will Include:

- Kentucky Community & Technical College System
- Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- Kentucky Business Community
- Kentucky Cabinet for Education & Workforce Development
 - o Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board
- Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- Kentucky Department of Education

Measuring Progress Will Include:

- Monitoring and reporting changes in Kentucky's workforce participation rate relative to the nation
- Monitoring and reporting on the number of adult learners enrolling in education and training programs with particular attention to those currently not working

Aligning Efforts

The work of the Business-Education Roundtable is aligning with that of other organizations – evidence of the urgent need to improve education attainment and workforce quality. Two of these aligned initiatives have been developed by the **Kentucky Chamber of Commerce** and the **Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board**.

The **Kentucky Chamber** has had a long-standing emphasis on enhancing the quality of the state's workforce and is advancing the effort through its Workforce Center and other means. In the Chamber's most recent workforce report, "Kentucky's Workforce: Progress & Challenges," (January 2018) a number of recommendations reflect clear alignment with the agenda being developed by the Business-Education Roundtable. These include:

- Working with public partners on work-based learning initiatives.
- Actively engaging employers to raise awareness about available jobs and workplace requirements.
- Developing business-led collaboratives through the Talent Pipeline Management program to define employment and training needs.
- Improving alignment of programs to enhance collaboration and limit duplication of efforts.
- Emphasizing essential skills development through schools and workplace initiatives, incorporating a drug-free element into programs.

The **Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board's** strategic plan, "Kentucky Work Ready, An Urgent Call to Action," (February 2018) reflects four strategic goals:

1. Actively engage employers to drive Kentucky's workforce development system.
2. Align and integrate P-12, adult education and postsecondary education to provide lifelong opportunities for Kentuckians that prepare them for the rapidly shifting realities of work in the future.
3. Increase Kentucky's workforce participation by creating opportunities, incenting workforce participation, and removing employment barriers for Kentuckians.
4. Focus resources on the most effective initiatives and improve the return on our workforce investment, utilizing data to constantly improve workforce development in Kentucky.

A Long-Term Transformation

As noted earlier, transforming Kentucky's education and workforce systems will require a focused, ongoing commitment from the public and private sectors. The Roundtable's agenda is built around a strategy that will require at least 10 years and sufficient resources to fulfill. This is transformational work that will require dramatic improvements in some cases and incremental changes in others. However these changes are defined, they must result in new, more positive realities for Kentuckians, their communities and state.

While addressing immediate needs, work must continue to create and sustain the best public-private system for providing a high-quality education for Kentuckians and producing a competitive workforce by focusing on four primary goals:

1. Investing in early childhood and preschool
2. Reinventing high school – to make it more relevant
3. Ensuring every adult obtains a marketable degree or credential
4. Engaging employers to define needed skills and develop supply chains

Goal 1.

INVEST IN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRESCHOOL

We must start early. Basic habits and skills are created in the earliest years of brain development and socialization, but too many Kentucky children are not receiving the quality early care and education that will equip them to reach their full potential as adults. We must invest in high-quality early childhood programs to better prepare our children for success in life.

Targets:

Increase the percentage of children prepared for kindergarten, currently at 51.4% based on Kentucky's screening assessment, with annual incremental improvements of 5%.

Move into the Top Tier of states in preschool enrollment of 3- and 4-year-olds. To reach the Top 10, we must move from 41.9% to 51.1%.

To do this, we must:

- Expand access for at-risk children to high-quality preschool services, moving toward universal pre-k.
- Provide access for early childhood providers to high-quality professional learning, technical assistance, services and support and include early childhood coursework in principal licensing and professional development requirements.
- Coordinate resources and practices among all early childhood providers and school districts.
- Ensure quality evaluation of early childhood programs.
- Expand support for Kentucky's quality rating and improvement system for early care and education programs, Kentucky All STARS .
- Provide greater access to state child-care assistance for parents with primary care of dependent children who are pursuing full-time education and training.

- Broaden support for the HANDS home visiting program as a successful strategy to decrease Medicaid costs and provide interventions that lead to better early childhood development and lower rates of child abuse and neglect.
- Train effective elementary educators with demonstrated capacity to teach basic numeracy and literacy skills.

Statutory, Regulatory and Administrative Changes That May Be Needed:

- Executive and legislative support and appropriations to expand preschool eligibility
- Statutory and regulatory amendments

Leadership and Responsibility for Action Will Include:

- Kentucky Department of Education
- Kentucky Cabinet for Education & Workforce Development
- Governor’s Office of Early Childhood
- Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- Early Care and Education Advocates
- Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- Kentucky Educator Preparation Programs

Measuring Progress Will Include:

- Monitoring and reporting changes in kindergarten preparation as reflected in scores on the Brigance Screen administered statewide
- Monitoring and reporting changes in preschool enrollment and Kentucky’s national ranking as reflected in Census Bureau data

Reading and math are the basic skills required for academic success. We must unite behind enhanced math instruction and a third grade reading guarantee or similar goal that can be conveyed to schools, parents and employers. Students are clearly falling short of learning reading and math at the levels needed to achieve successful outcomes in higher grades and to ensure they acquire the skills and knowledge needed to transition to college and career.

Kentucky State Test Scores, Third Grade, 2017

Subject	Novice	Apprentice	Proficient	Distinguished	Proficient / Distinguished
Reading	23.2%	21.0%	39.6%	16.2%	55.8%
Math	17.2%	31.8%	40.2%	10.8%	50.9%

Targets:

Increase the percentage of children achieving at least proficiency on state assessments of reading and math by the end of third grade by 5% annually.

Sustain or improve Kentucky’s position among the top tier of states on National Assessment of Educational Excellence (NAEP) 4th grade reading and math scores. Based on 2017 NAEP scores, Kentucky ranks 17th among the states in 4th grade reading proficiency with a score of 224. To reach the Top Ten, the score must increase to 225.

Kentucky ranks 29th among the states in 2017 NAEP 4th grade math scores. To reach the Top Ten would require an increase in Kentucky’s score from 239 to 244. (NAEP is administered every two years.)

This Will Require, for Math:

- Supporting high-quality standards that guide a focused, coherent progression of mathematics learning with an emphasis on proficiency in key topics or big ideas.
- Supporting elevated admission standards for prospective elementary educators and improved training, curriculum and induction practices, as well as expanded professional learning to ensure effective teaching practices in mathematics and the alignment of formative assessments to high-quality standards to guide day-to-day decisions on best steps for instruction.

This Will Require, for Reading:

- A comprehensive early literacy policy that provides targeted early literacy intervention for students in grades K-3 and more intensive intervention for students in grade 3 who do not meet the retention threshold set by the policy.
- Expanding partnerships among early care and education providers, including Head Start, preschools, child care programs and others, to ensure adequate pre-kindergarten preparation for students.
- Supporting professional learning on effective literacy strategies that are built on solid research and evidence to guide educators in changing their practices.
- Ensuring educator preparation programs integrate highly effective instructional strategies for teachers and leaders.
- A two-generation approach that views and supports families as children's first teachers and includes them as partners in early learning.

Statutory, Regulatory and Administrative Changes That May Be Needed:

- Administrative and regulatory development and implementation of literacy policy
- Administrative and regulatory development and implementation of higher admission standards for educators
- Budgetary support for professional learning

Leadership and Responsibility for Action Will Include:

- Kentucky Department of Education
- Kentucky Cabinet for Education & Workforce Development
- Governor's Office of Early Childhood
- Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- Early Care and Education Advocates
- Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- Kentucky Educator Preparation Programs

Measuring Progress Will Include:

- Monitoring and reporting on third grade students' performance on state reading and mathematics assessments
- Monitoring and reporting on Kentucky students' 4th grade reading and mathematics scores on NAEP
- Monitoring and reporting on instructional effectiveness of graduates from Kentucky Educator Preparation Programs

Goal 2.

REINVENT HIGH SCHOOL

Although progress has been made in the college and career preparation of students, far too many are being left behind. Leaders must provide a well-defined plan for making the dramatic gains in student learning and educational attainment needed if Kentucky is to realize its potential. K-12 education must be more intentional in preparing students to become successful citizens. High school education should blend seamlessly into postsecondary education or a career that pays a self-sustaining wage.

Targets:

- Increase the number of high school graduates who are college and career ready. If the proposed high school graduation requirements are adopted, college and career readiness will increase to 100% for the class of 2023. Percentages should approach 100% every year until then, but 2019-2020 will provide a baseline that must be established before goals are set for 2021 and 2022.
- Increase the number of Kentucky high school graduates who meet college-readiness benchmarks in English, reading, math and science. Although Kentucky has set different college-ready ACT benchmarks than the national ACT measures, the national measures would be used to determine Kentucky's efforts to achieve Top Tier status. (It should be noted that some states do not mandate that all students take the ACT, but all Kentucky juniors are required to do so. Kentucky students may voluntarily take the test again during their senior year.)

Percent of 2018 ACT Tested High School Graduates Meeting ACT College Readiness Benchmarks by Subject

	English	Reading	Math	Science
Kentucky	56% (31st)	43% (30th)	33% (34th)	32% (34th)
Nation	60%	46%	40%	36%

Percentage Required to Reach Top 10

	English	Reading	Math	Science
Top 10	82%	65%	61%	56%

- Increase the percentage of GED graduates transitioning to postsecondary education within two years by 5% annually.

To do this, we must:

- Eliminate the state's achievement gaps between groups of students by:
 - o Insisting the state's assessment and accountability system truly holds schools accountable for performance, providing greater choice for families, especially low-income families and children who attend low-achieving schools.
 - o Identifying school- and district-level needs for sustainable change.
 - o Accelerating efforts to increase the number of students scoring proficient on state assessments.

- o Making it possible for superintendents to place and incentivize the best teachers in the most challenging schools.
- o Modifying work rules to give teachers and students more control over schedules.
- o Personalizing learning with technology and professional training and cultural-competence training.
- o Recognizing different approaches in urban and rural areas.
- Revamp high school graduation requirements to ensure a diploma has value for students and employers as an accurate reflection of levels of achievement and not just time in class. This will include:
 - o Giving students the opportunity to blend academic and career exploration to receive real-world experiences through cooperative education, internships, work-based learning and other avenues.
 - o Engaging the employer community in identifying graduation requirements needed for the workplace and providing feedback on developing pathways to achieve those requirements; enlisting employers to provide internships, summer jobs and other work-and-learn experiences.
 - o Ensuring a strong correlation between a diploma and transition readiness.
- Expand school and career counseling to provide meaningful academic, career and social, emotional and behavioral guidance for students and parents. This will be supported by collaborative efforts among Family Resource Youth Service Coordinators, K-12 career development specialists, Kentucky Skills U (adult education career navigators), KCTCS career counselors, Career Center counselors and Office of Vocational Rehabilitation staff.
- Provide all high school students with the opportunity to achieve postsecondary credits or credentials. This will include:
 - o Improving collaboration and alignment along the education continuum, beginning with early childhood and continuing through postsecondary, with emphasis on both academic and career pathways and possibilities.
 - o The joint development and implementation by the business and education communities of a strategy to prepare students to earn business-valued credentials.
 - o Accelerating the push for dual credit coursework in career and technical education fields and insist these credentials are appropriately weighted in the assessment and accountability system; seamless programs of study, K-12 through postsecondary, to ensure students identify career pathway requirements.
 - o Creating more work-based learning opportunities by providing regional career development specialists to connect students to business and industry and by identifying barriers and eliminating those through legislation and incentives.
 - o Ensuring (through secondary-postsecondary collaboration) that college readiness benchmarks set for high school graduates mean students can take credit-bearing courses in Kentucky postsecondary institutions without remediation.
 - o Engaging postsecondary institutions and employers in ensuring the availability of high-quality dual credit and rigorous work-based learning opportunities in urban and rural areas.

- Accelerate efforts to attract, retain and adequately compensate high-quality teachers. This will include:
 - o Elevating admissions requirements, aligning content and pedagogical training, increasing clinical experience, enhancing induction and highly effective professional development.
 - o Developing a career ladder that allows and encourages continuous improvement and options for the best teachers to earn higher salaries without having to go into administration.
 - o A world-class, highly aligned instructional system with authentic assessments to measure actual student learning.
 - o Redeploying classroom teachers, expanding class sizes beyond Grade 3, and using the savings to fund compensation increases for teachers.
 - o Allowing differentiated pay (by subject area, geographic area or student mix).
- Create a culture of continuous improvement.

Statutory, Regulatory and Administrative Changes That May Be Needed:

- Administrative and regulatory development and implementation of higher admission standards for teacher preparation programs
- Administrative and regulatory development and implementation of an educator career ladder
- Administrative and regulatory development and implementation of authentic assessments
- Administrative, regulatory and statutory changes to allow differentiated pay for teachers
- Budgetary support for expanded school counseling
- Budgetary support for expanded dual credit programming
- Budgetary support for professional development for educators
- Statutory, regulatory and administrative changes to allow superintendents flexibility in teacher placement

Leadership and Responsibility for Action Will Include:

- Kentucky Department of Education
 - o Career & Technical Education
- Kentucky Cabinet for Education & Workforce Development
- Kentucky Community & Technical College System
- Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board
- Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- Kentucky Chamber of Commerce/Business Community
- Kentucky Skills U
- Kentucky Educator Preparation Programs

Measuring Progress Will Include:

- Monitoring and reporting on achievement gaps based on results of state assessments
- Monitoring and reporting on students' academic performance based on results of state

assessments

- Monitoring and reporting on students' ACT and SAT scores and Kentucky's performance relative to other states
- Monitoring and reporting on percentage of students achieving college and career readiness based on state assessments and graduation requirements
- Monitoring and reporting on number of employers providing apprenticeships, meaningful summer jobs and other work-based learning experiences
- Monitoring and reporting on the number of GED graduates who transition to postsecondary education

Goal 3.

ENSURE EVERY ADULT OBTAINS A MARKETABLE DEGREE OR CREDENTIAL

Kentucky's colleges and universities continue to confer a growing number of degrees and credentials, but the time and expense create a significant burden for students in many cases. Revenue challenges persist for postsecondary institutions as tuition costs, generally, continue to rise.

Meanwhile, an attitudinal bias against certain types of education can lead students into inappropriate postsecondary pathways. Greater awareness is needed of what postsecondary education actually includes – from technical skills training to academic degrees to postgraduate work – and the role it plays as a signature industry, one that produces talent and creates primary jobs. Higher education can provide higher incomes, more career options and greater ability to navigate the ever-changing global economy.

Targets:

- Increase the percentage of adults with a postsecondary degree or high value certificate and move Kentucky into the Top Tier of states in attainment of associate and bachelor's degrees.

Percentage of Adults Aged 25 and Older with Associate Degrees and Bachelor Degrees or Higher

	Associate Degree	Bachelor's or Higher
Kentucky	7.8% (36th)	22.7% (47th)
United States	8.2%	30.3%
Top 10	9.8%	34.2%

- Establish Kentucky as a hub for research, talent development and entrepreneurship in key disciplines critical to Kentucky employers, regions and communities.

To do this, we must:

- Ensure greater levels of postsecondary completion and accelerate time to degree (the time it takes a student to complete a course of study after initial enrollment) to improve retention and reduce student costs. This will include:

- o Adding a premium to KEES that rewards students who earn 30 hours in an academic year or incentivizing institutions to structure their financial aid programs this way, perhaps through the performance funding formula.
- o Revisiting the original purpose of KEES to assess value of a merit-based scholarship in relation to need-based.
- o Changing registration policies to make 15 hours, instead of 12, the standard course load and incentivize students who enroll in 15 hours.
- o Revisiting course scheduling to ensure high demand courses are available when needed.
- o Phasing out remedial, non-credit courses in favor of co-requisite models.
- o Expanding campaigns like “15 to Finish” to encourage greater credit accumulation faster.
- o Providing child care and transportation and enlisting employers in work-and-learn or apprenticeship programs to enable students to afford a full-time course load.
- Advance online competency-based academic programming through a state mandate or by partnering with outside organizations.
- Align career pathways with high demand workforce areas to help students navigate easily to completion.
 - o This work is underway, particularly at KCTCS institutions.
- Build on the Accelerating Opportunity Kentucky (AOKY) partnership of KCTCS and Kentucky Skills U to increase participation of GED-seeking students enrolled concurrently in career pathways programs at KCTCS.
- Create community level one-stop-shop access points for college/career planning and navigation support, education/workforce development strategic planning, outreach campaigns to encourage higher levels of education and training, and local workforce/education partnerships.
 - o Existing organizations and infrastructure could be used, including agricultural extension offices, adult education centers or career centers.
- Develop a coordinated, state-level initiative to improve access to high quality work-and-learn programs, including apprenticeships, industry-driven programs (like KY FAME), business/education partnerships (like UPS Metro University), co-ops or more traditional internship programs.
 - o Campuses should be urged or incentivized to ramp up career services and business partnerships to expand work and learn opportunities.
- Develop an annual communications initiative for middle and high school counselors that includes information on what jobs are available, what ones are not and what jobs do not require a four-year postsecondary degree.
- Create greater transparency around college costs, student loans, savings plans and financial aid. Strategies would include:
 - o Advocating for policies that recognize shared state government-institutional responsibility for keeping college affordable.
 - o Requiring “loan letters” to all students who borrow, detailing loan amounts, repayment schedules and estimated monthly payments (being piloted by Kentucky’s two research institutions).

- o Providing well-trained college coaches/navigators to serve high school and adult populations in transition to postsecondary education.
 - o Requiring financial literacy programs and ongoing mentoring for students receiving state grants/scholarships.
 - o Reversing disinvestments in postsecondary education to shift the cost burden away from students and families.
 - o Exploring the possibility of providing free college (the Tennessee model) and paying for it by eliminating KEES or at least study KEES, which was created in a different era with a different context.
- Better integrate postsecondary institutions in state economic development efforts.
 - Produce graduates with industry-recognized credentials and degrees (associate, bachelor's and higher) at a rate that puts Kentucky in the Top 10 among states.

Statutory, Regulatory and Administrative Changes That May Be Needed:

- Legislation addressing changes to KEES, starting with a review of KEES (intent, effectiveness, alternative uses of the priority lottery funding to achieve state goals)
- Administrative and regulatory changes regarding postsecondary registration policies
- Administrative changes regarding collaborative one-stop efforts, access to work and learn programs
- Statutory, administrative and regulatory changes addressing competency-based programming
- Statutory changes and budgetary support for expanded online, competency-based academic programming

Leadership and Responsibility for Action Will Include:

- Kentucky General Assembly
- Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
- Kentucky Community & Technical College System
- Kentucky Department of Education
 - o Career and Technical Education
- Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development
- Kentucky Business Community

Measuring Progress Will Include:

- Monitoring and reporting on number of postsecondary degrees and certificates awarded and changes in Kentucky's education attainment rank relative to the nation
- Monitoring and reporting on KEES use and student outcomes
- Monitoring and reporting on use and outcomes of online academic programming

Goal 4.

ENGAGE EMPLOYERS TO DEFINE NEEDED SKILLS AND DEVELOP TALENT SUPPLY CHAINS

Structured and consistent employer engagement is a critical part of the workforce equation. The success of any business depends on the quality and skills of its workforce – and employers must take on a more active role to clearly define the skills they need and contribute directly to building a productive talent pipeline that meets businesses' needs while creating economic opportunities for Kentuckians.

Targets

- Actively engage an increasing number of high-impact employers, trade unions and business associations in the development of credentials valued and endorsed by business and industry. Increase participation by 5 percent a year per employment sector.
- Enlist employers to provide internships, summer jobs, apprenticeships and other work-and-learn experiences for students at a rate that puts Kentucky in the Top 10 among states.
- Expand the Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) model of employer-led identification of workforce needs and training and quality issues statewide to engage 25 employer groups in building talent pipelines for 75 high-demand positions.

To do this, we must:

- Communicate the urgent need for greater engagement to employers via business and trade associations.
- Develop partnerships among employers and educators to identify needs and quantify progress in expanded employer engagement.
- Encourage employer involvement in TPM collaboratives in all regions and sectors; monitor and report on activities and outcomes.

Challenges to Progress

As noted throughout this report, making progress in education attainment and workforce quality will require innovative thinking, hard work and a sustained commitment on the part of public- and private-sector partners.

But we also must recognize the need to address the fundamental challenges created by societal circumstances that diminish the capacity, and sometimes the willingness, of individuals to improve their skills or seek meaningful employment.

Kentucky's opioid epidemic frames a reality of drug dependency that is destroying too many lives and damaging too many families in all parts of the state. Drug-related offenses are swelling our prisons with inmates arguably more in need of treatment than incarceration.

A Social Security disability rate that is significantly greater than the national average reflects physical or mental conditions that keep Kentuckians out of the workplace.

Similarly, one of the nation's lowest health status rankings means it can be particularly difficult to find work-capable employees. And our poverty rate of 17.2% significantly exceeds the national average of 12.3%.

As Kentucky's business community, elected officials, educators, families, public policymakers and advocates come together to accelerate the state's advancement, it is critical that their efforts include initiatives to address these challenges to progress.

Conclusion

The need could not be more urgent.

If we do not act now we are condemning our state and our children to a future where struggles will be more common than success and where opportunities will be outnumbered by obstacles. That future cannot be acceptable to anyone who loves Kentucky.

We cannot afford to let complacency continue as the state's default position. We must address our immediate challenges and set our state on a path that will reverse the downward slide that is being fueled by a willingness to equate average with excellence. We can make meaningful, sustainable progress. We must come together and recommit ourselves to strive for a Top Tier performance in producing talent for Kentucky.

It is not enough to say we want to do this, or even to recommend specific actions to achieve our goals. We must hold ourselves accountable, whether we work for a private business or a public agency.

Employers must actively engage in defining their employment needs, identifying ways to meet those needs and publicly report on their activities and outcomes.

Education and training institutions must strengthen their efforts and work in productive partnership with employers to produce the talent the Commonwealth must have to succeed and publicly report on their activities and outcomes.

To ensure ongoing accountability for progress, the Kentucky Business-Education Roundtable will regularly measure and report on critical indicators that show whether Kentucky is, indeed, moving into the Top Tier of states.

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*Let's strengthen
our efforts to
produce the talent
we must have in
the Commonwealth.*

*A Report of the Kentucky Business-Education Roundtable
Convened by:*



Kentucky Chamber
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