

EASTERN KENTUCKY



CONCENTRATED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM, INC.

Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act

Local Plan

July 1, 2025 -
June 30, 2028



WIOA Local Comprehensive Plan

Local Workforce Development Area Name: Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc.

Local Workforce Board: Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB)

Chapter 1: Workforce and Economic Analysis

A. (L) Provide an analysis of the knowledge and skills required to meet the employment needs of the employers in the local area, including employment requirements for in-demand industry sectors and occupations. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(B)] and [20 CFR 679.560(a)]

The job skills necessary to obtain the current and emerging employment opportunities in Eastern Kentucky vary widely by occupation. However, all occupations require basic skills in math, reading and comprehension, written and oral communication, problem-solving, reasoning, and human relations.

Employers also continue to ask the workforce system to help train job candidates in basic work ethics and essential skills such as attendance, punctuality, and teamwork.

Basic computer literacy remains a requirement for what continues to be an increasing percentage of jobs in today's digital economy. In this borderless economy, access to remote-work job opportunities grew exponentially with an expansion of remote work/telework opportunities related in part to the closure of "brick-and-mortar" offices resulting from 2020's COVID-19 pandemic. While restrictions on sharing workspace were largely lifted by 2022, teleworking still plays a significant role in the workforce. Knowledge-based employers are seeing increased productivity of employees and reduced physical-plant overhead costs thanks to the increasing emphasis and acceptance of teleworking. EKCEP's experience and growing employer partnerships reveal that this teleworking boom includes not only increased demand for entry-level customer service and technical support employees through EKCEP's Teleworks USA initiative, but also new, higher-skilled opportunities in other sectors, including cybersecurity, insurance claims adjusting, and others. These sectors are now more accepting of teleworking than ever before.

In some sectors, the paths to the necessary skills are clearly defined. For example, almost every job in the healthcare sector has a defined academic training program and certification that provides job seekers with the skills that qualify them for work. In other sectors, there are multiple paths that can lead to a successful career. For example, in the still-growing IT sector, defined two-year and four-year academic training programs are becoming increasingly less important to some tech-centric employers than specific skills-based certifications, internships, and other work-based learning situations that allow workers to produce actual products while demonstrating their abilities, capacity to learn, and creativity to potential employers and/or customers. Some of these high-tech internships may last nearly a year—such as programs that train computer programming/coding interns—while at the lower end of tech-based careers, unskilled job seekers still can learn enough basic computer skills and customer service skills in a four-week training to land home-based telework jobs working for remote employers.

For many Eastern Kentuckians, the best path to acquire the skills they need for a new career may be a work-based learning placement (i.e., work experience, internship, on-the-job training) in which they can earn while learning and proving their value and work ethics to their employer. EKCEP prioritizes connecting clients with diverse work-based learning opportunities, particularly work experiences and apprenticeships, recognizing their transformative potential. Work experiences offer a short-term, immersive taste of a specific industry, allowing individuals to explore career paths and develop foundational skills. Apprenticeships, on the other hand, provide structured, long-term training that combines classroom learning with on-the-job experience, leading to nationally recognized credentials. Both models offer the invaluable benefit of earning while learning, reducing financial barriers, and fostering a sense of accomplishment. EKCEP's investment in these pathways empowers individuals to build sustainable careers and contribute to the economic revitalization of Eastern Kentucky.

Recognizing the need to boost Eastern Kentucky's labor force participation rate, which has long lagged behind the national average, EKCEP recently launched its Prosper Appalachia, an innovative in-school youth program. This initiative places Career Development Specialists directly in high schools to engage with students early, providing career exploration opportunities and connecting them with local employment options—including internships and work experience placements—all before graduation. EKCEP aims to ensure that every senior in participating schools develops a comprehensive career plan, completes interest assessments to identify potential paths, and learns about the diverse range of career opportunities available within Eastern Kentucky, empowering them to build their futures without having to leave the region. This program is a key component in

achieving the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board's (EKWIB) strategic goal of increasing workforce participation in the EKCEP Local Workforce Development Area.

The strategic initiatives detailed throughout this plan are a direct and intentional response to the workforce and economic data analysis. For instance, the data clearly show a lagging rate of workforce participation compared to other regions within the state. As a response, EKCEP has strategically designed and deployed programs like Prosper Appalachia and its Recovery and Reentry Services initiatives, which are specifically aimed at engaging untapped talent pools—such as in-school youth and individuals in recovery—to methodically address this challenge. Similarly, the analysis of employer needs reveals a demand for higher and more specific skill sets than what is often available through traditional training. Therefore, EKCEP has intensified its focus on industry-driven, work-based learning models like apprenticeships and customized on-the-job training to ensure that the skills being taught are precisely the skills local employers require. This data-driven approach allows the EKWIB to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of its strategies against the region's key economic indicators, providing a form of "self-grading" that ensures resources are targeted toward the area's most critical challenges.

Chapter 2: Strategic Vision and Goals

- A. (L) Describe the local board's strategic vision and goals aimed at fostering regional economic growth and self-sufficiency. Explain plans to prepare an educated and skilled workforce, especially for youth and individuals facing barriers to employment. As applicable, include a description of any plans to generate a new strategic vision and goals in the coming year and indicate the timeframe for such activities to occur. To the extent possible, strengthen goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E)]**

The strategic vision and goals of the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) are stated in its Strategic Plan, as follows:

MISSION — The Eastern Kentucky WIB's mission is to "Prepare, advance, and expand the workforce of eastern Kentucky."

GOALS — The Eastern Kentucky WIB's goals are:

More—and better—job opportunities for the citizens of our region.

EKCEP aims to significantly increase the percentage of program participants who secure quality, unsubsidized employment soon after completing their training. The focus is not just on job placement, but seeing those jobs translate into improved earnings and financial stability for Eastern Kentuckians.

A better-educated and better-prepared workforce in our region.

Education and credential attainment are also key priorities. EKCEP is committed to increasing the number of individuals who earn recognized postsecondary credentials or high school equivalencies, opening doors to better opportunities. To ensure programs are truly effective, a strong emphasis is placed on measurable skill gains to see clear progress in skill development, setting individuals up for success in their chosen fields.

A more diverse economy in our region.

EKCEP envisions a region where employers have access to a skilled and prepared workforce, where businesses thrive, and where residents have the tools they need to build fulfilling careers. To achieve this, we are actively engaging with employers, ensuring our programs align with their needs and that our participants are well-prepared to meet the demands of the local labor market.

VISION — The Eastern Kentucky WIB's Strategic Plan includes its visions for the region of Eastern Kentucky, the workforce system in Eastern Kentucky, and the role of the WIB:

Vision for the Region of Eastern Kentucky: The WIB's vision for the region of Eastern Kentucky includes the goals below that expand its influence with other key components of the workforce system like economic development, secondary and post-secondary education, and others—with the outcome being that the WIB will have a more tangible effect on job creation, educational and skills attainment, graduation rates, economic development and diversity, and job placement and retention. The goals associated with this vision are:

- Employers—new, existing, and emerging—have an adequate supply of well-educated and well-trained workers.
- Residents have the knowledge, skills, and aptitudes to work and earn incomes that make them self-sufficient.
- The region exhibits improved college and career readiness among high school graduates

Vision for the Region's Workforce System: The WIB's vision for the region's Workforce System includes the goals below for services and programs driven by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the current federal law that guides service delivery

for adults, dislocated workers, and youth. These goals also include those shared by the Workforce Innovation Board and various partner agencies in the overall, integrated workforce system, including: postsecondary education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Kentucky Adult Education, Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs, Kentucky Office of Employment and Training, Experience Works, Job Corps, YouthBuild, Kentucky Office for the Blind, and Kentucky Department for Community Based Services, as well as programs authorized under the federal Wagner-Peyser Act. The goals associated with this vision are:

- Lifelong learning and skills development are integral parts of the workforce system. Long- standing relationships between employers and educators keep education and training opportunities one step ahead of the needs of the market.
- The system partners with those industries and businesses that drive the regional economy. It also works with chambers of commerce and economic development entities throughout the region to identify and support emerging industries vital to the region's continued growth and diversification.
- Strong commitments to innovation, productivity, accountability, and results keep the system flexible and responsive to employers' and residents' ever-changing workforce needs.

Vision for the EKCEP Workforce Innovation Board: The WIB's vision for the role of the WIB includes the goals below that set the course for continued innovation in service delivery and the leveraging of additional funding to create new revenue streams that shape and guide organized activity outside the scope of WIOA. The goals associated with this vision are:

- The EKCEP WIB will continue to explore ways to influence economic development and provide citizens' access to more and better jobs through the use of innovation and telework programs.
- EKCEP will continue to identify and pursue new revenue streams and leverage funding to diversify the employment base and expand activity outside the scope of WIA.
- The EKCEP WIB will set the regional workforce agenda. It will be widely recognized for its excellence as a leader and governing board, and for its commitment to making a difference.

CORE VALUES — In addition to defining its mission, goals, and visions, the Eastern Kentucky WIB's Strategic Plan also identifies five core values that the WIB believes must be embraced and practiced in order for it to succeed in its mission and attain its visions and goals. These core values are:

- Innovation — We believe we must remain creative and embrace emerging technologies and opportunities in order to not only strengthen economic development now, but also anticipate and plan for future growth and expansion.
- Diversity — We believe that if Eastern Kentucky is to grow to new levels, sustain our citizens, and support both new and existing business, we must pursue economic diversification.
- Collaboration — We believe we must seek, build, and nurture collaborative partnerships that will leverage the workforce system with other service providers to bring about more success for jobseekers and employers than we can accomplish alone.
- Vision — We believe that to positively change the economic landscape of our region, it will take a unified strategic effort and focused planning powered by a strong vision that guides the collective actions of education, economic development, and workforce partners.
- Adaptability — We believe that we must remain nimble and flexible in creating and delivering relevant workforce and employer services that have the most impact on jobseekers and employers and economic development throughout the region.

EKCEP is committed to evolving its strategic direction and will initiate a comprehensive review and revitalization of its strategic plan, including vision and goals, within the coming year. This process will ensure our programs and initiatives remain aligned with the dynamic needs of our community.

B. (L) Describe how the local board's vision and goals are intricately aligned with the Commonwealth's goals, initiatives, and priorities as outlined in the WIOA State Plan. This alignment is crucial in ensuring the success of the collective efforts.

The Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board's (EKWIB) vision and goals are intricately aligned with the Commonwealth's goals, initiatives, and priorities as outlined in the WIOA State Plan. The state's workforce development vision is rooted in Kentucky's Workforce Strategic Plan, which aims 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.

The EKWIB's mission to "prepare, advance, and expand the workforce of Eastern Kentucky" directly supports the state's vision. The board's goals of creating more and better job opportunities, improving the education and preparedness of the workforce, and diversifying the economy are also in direct alignment with the state's Strategic Goal #1 for employers (Actively engage employers to drive Kentucky's workforce development system), Strategic Goal #2 for education attainment (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), and Strategic Goal #3 for workforce participation (Increase Kentucky's workforce participation by creating opportunities, incenting workforce participation, and removing employment barriers for Kentuckians), and Strategic Goal #4 for resource alignment (Optimize and align all resources to support economic growth and individual prosperity).

STRATEGIC GOAL #1: Employers — Several EKCEP initiatives and projects are designed to encourage “employers (large and small) to assume leadership roles in workforce development programming.” EKCEP concurs with the KWIB that employer engagement “is a key component to connecting dislocated workers, adult customers, and youth to the workforce.” A few of the EKCEP activities that reflect this vision include:

- **Registered Apprenticeships** — EKCEP is focusing on collaborating with employers to develop apprenticeship opportunities that offer a dual benefit: reducing costs associated with employee preparedness and training, while simultaneously satisfying their hiring needs. This focus aligns with the state's goal of promoting apprenticeships as pathways to high-paying careers and assisting employers in attracting and retaining skilled workers. The development of a pipeline of skilled workers through apprenticeships is helping to ensure that Eastern Kentucky has a trained and capable workforce ready to meet the demands of the local economy. As of the first quarter of 2025, EKCEP has 25 registered apprenticeship projects either ongoing or in the planning stages, and will continue to prioritize these initiatives moving forward.
- **Employer Retention Services** — EKCEP's Employer Retention Services (ERS) is another way the agency is helping to meet the strategic goal of employer engagement. The ERS program began in 2024 and provides a trained staff person to work directly with a company's existing workforce to help them overcome barriers that might prevent them from maintaining employment. By addressing these barriers, EKCEP is helping to ensure that employees have the support they need to stay in their jobs. This program is designed to directly assist employers in retaining a skilled workforce and reducing attrition and staff turnover.
- **Teleworks USA** — EKCEP's Teleworks USA initiative is wholly driven by the concept of assisting job seekers with connecting with remote-work employers to meet their hiring needs. As a result, Teleworks USA is able to recruit, prepare, and place Eastern Kentucky workers in home-based online jobs that include benefits, vacations, opportunities for advancement, etc. Teleworks USA has obviously not only established but sustained a clear channel for employer engagement in workforce development services.

Additionally, over the past two years, EKCEP has also significantly enhanced its business services model to strengthen its responsiveness to the Eastern Kentucky business community. This has been achieved by employing two dedicated business services coordinators within EKCEP staff to provide technical expertise and support and placing a business services consultant within each of its nine direct service delivery contractors. This structure ensures consistent and accessible services across all 23 counties within its service area. The increased on-the-ground presence of business services professionals allows for a deeper understanding of local business needs, enabling the workforce system to provide more tailored and effective support. This localized approach fosters stronger relationships with employers, resulting in a more agile and attentive workforce system that directly addresses the unique challenges and opportunities present in Eastern Kentucky.

STRATEGIC GOAL #2: Education Attainment — EKCEP’s Prosper Appalachia In-School Youth initiative aligns strongly with the KWIB’s Objective 2a and 2c to “Increase career exploration opportunities while students are in P-12” and “Increase awareness of all market-relevant career pathways among students, educators, guidance counselors, career counselors and parents,” respectively.

EKCEP launched Prosper Appalachia’s In-School Youth component in the summer of 2024. This initiative places Career Development Specialists directly in high schools to engage with students early, providing career exploration opportunities and connecting them with local employment options—including internships and work experience placements—all before graduation. EKCEP aims to ensure that every senior in participating schools develops a comprehensive career plan, completes interest assessments to identify potential paths, and learns about the diverse range of career opportunities available within in Eastern Kentucky, empowering them to build their futures without having to leave the region.

STRATEGIC GOAL #3: Workforce Participation — Several EKCEP initiatives and programs are closely aligned with the KWIB’s Strategic Goal 3 — Workforce Participation: “Increase Kentucky’s workforce participation by creating opportunities, incenting workforce participation, and removing employment barriers for Kentuckians.” As the local workforce area with the lowest workforce participation rate in the state, EKCEP has long been focused on efforts to increase workforce participation. A few of the EKCEP initiatives and programs that align with this KWIB goal are:

- **SITE (Strategic Initiative for Transformational Employment)** — EKCEP administers and delivers the SITE (Strategic Initiative for Transformational Employment) program, which helps bridge the gulf between recovery and productive participation in the workforce for individuals in recovery by providing them with valuable career

and supportive services, and by cultivating and supporting second-chance employment opportunities. SITE helps Kentucky businesses learn to provide a supportive environment for newly employed individuals in recovery, thus increasing the opportunities for work-based training and apprenticeships, while simultaneously partnering with addiction treatment providers to identify and recruit recovering individuals who are appropriate for those opportunities. Those targeted to be served and placed in employment by SITE have completed or are in the latter stages of a reputable treatment program which provides aftercare that includes ongoing counseling, accountability, and support. This work aligns with the KWIB's Objective 3e, "Develop and Pursue strategies that increase the number of Kentuckians, work-ready and free from the influence of substance abuse," Objective 3d, "Develop and promote strategies for employers to address employment barriers," and Objective 3a, "Strengthen collaboration across workforce development, social services, employers and non-profits to address barriers to employment for individuals." SITE is funded by the Kentucky Overdose Response Effort (KORE) through the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services and with funding from the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet's Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP). This funding from two cabinets, along with EKCEP's administrative involvement, align with the KWIB's Objective 3c, "Embed programs serving specific populations across cabinets to promote workforce participation."

- Prosper Appalachia — EKCEP's Prosper Appalachia In-School Youth Program is funded by a first-time allocation of funds directly approved by the Kentucky General Assembly to improve workforce programming for youth in the Commonwealth. EKCEP developed Prosper Appalachia's In-School Youth component to directly address labor force participation within its 23-county service area. This initiative places Career Development Specialists directly in high schools to engage with students early, providing career exploration opportunities and connecting them with local employment options—including internships and work experience placements—all before graduation. EKCEP aims to ensure that every senior in participating schools develops a comprehensive career plan, completes interest assessments to identify potential paths, and learns about the diverse range of career opportunities available within Eastern Kentucky, empowering them to build their futures without having to leave the region.

This program is a key component in achieving the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board's (EKWIB) strategic goal of increasing workforce participation in the EKCEP Local Workforce Development Area. It also aligns with the KWIB's

Objective 3c, “Embed programs serving specific populations across cabinets to promote workforce participation.”

STRATEGIC GOAL #4: Resource Alignment — EKCEP is committed to the strategic alignment of all available resources to maximize the impact of every dollar invested in the region's workforce and to ensure the sustainability of its programs. A cornerstone of this strategy is the aggressive pursuit and administration of diverse funding streams beyond traditional WIOA formula funds. Securing significant grant funding—such as the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) POWER grant, Kentucky Opioid Abatement and KORE funds, and direct state appropriations for youth programs—effectively braids multiple resources to expand services to populations with significant barriers to employment, including youth and individuals in recovery.

Furthermore, by convening multi-agency teams, such as the Business and Employer Services Team, EKCEP aligns the human resources and expertise of its partners, ensuring a coordinated, non-duplicative approach to serving the region's employers. This multi-faceted approach to resource alignment ensures that services are delivered efficiently and that the workforce system can respond flexibly to the complex needs of Eastern Kentucky.

C. (L) Describe how the local board’s vision and goals are considered and provide an analysis of the strategies for working with the required partners and other entities to carry out the core programs and align resources.

The vision and goals of the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) were established through an inclusive strategic planning process that involved a wide array of stakeholders within the EKCEP region. EKCEP’s process was designed to create a strategic plan that defined not only the ways EKCEP spends the dollars it controls in the region but also the ways its actions and programs reflect priorities shared with its partner organizations and, therefore, influence the ways they spend their allocations within the region.

To develop a consensus on regional vision and plan, EKCEP polled its partners and regional stakeholders in workforce development, secondary education, postsecondary education, government, community action, and business to determine their priorities and strategic objectives, and to quiz them on their vision for the role and most important functions of the workforce system and the WIB.

The resulting strategic plan is simple and very focused, clearly stating four primary results-based goals, as well as defining EKCEP’s core values, mission, and vision for that region, the workforce system, and the WIB. Because it is a strategic document, the plan does not include tactics to accomplish goals or specific methods of measurement. However, the

plan does reference these details as they appear in separate background support documents that clearly illustrate how the highlighted goals will be tracked and measured. It also includes a version of a “report card” showing how the region and work of the workforce system rate when compared to other comparable regions and sectors (for example, areas such as the Lake Cumberland LWIA and other states like West Virginia) in order to come up with a baseline against which to compare EKCEP’s regional success.

The completed plan was shared with EKCEP’s partners, and further comments were allowed. The plan was then adopted by the WIB.

EKCEP is committed to evolving its strategic direction and will initiate a comprehensive review and revitalization of its strategic plan, including vision and goals, within the coming year. This process will ensure our programs and initiatives remain aligned with the dynamic needs of our community.

Furthermore, EKCEP’s deep involvement with the Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR) initiative and its strengthened relationships with other economic development entities like Kentucky Highlands Investment Corp. and One East Kentucky underscore its commitment to a unified regional vision for economic transition. By using this strategic plan as a guiding document, the EKWIB ensures that the collective input and shared vision of its diverse partners, including those in economic development, are incorporated into the expenditures and guidance of the workforce development system, ultimately contributing to the building of a new economy for Eastern Kentucky.

EKCEP is committed to strengthening its regional collaboration with the TENCO Workforce Development Board and will also collaborate with other local workforce areas in the spirit of continuous improvement. EKCEP may initiate or participate in discussions with TENCO leadership to share best practices, compare locally developed performance indicators, and analyze regional data trends. The goal of these collaborative efforts is not to establish uniform metrics, but to learn from each area’s successes and challenges, identify opportunities for joint strategies—such as coordinated rapid response or shared professional development—and leverage collective knowledge to better serve the residents and employers of the entire East Region. This approach ensures that while each local area maintains the autonomy to address its unique needs, the region as a whole benefits from enhanced communication and strategic alignment.

Chapter 3: Alignment of Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies

- A. (L) Describe the local board’s strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs and other workforce development programs to support alignment and provide services, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins**

Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.), that support the strategy identified in the State plan under section 102(b)(1)(E); H. R. 803—442.1. This discussion should include a descriptive overview of the local workforce development system, including key stakeholders and entities associated with administrative and programmatic/service delivery functions. Examples include elected officials, advocacy groups, local workforce development board and committee structure, fiscal agent, operator(s), required program partners, and major contractors providing Adult/Dislocated Worker and Youth program elements. Describe respective roles and functional relationships to one another.

***Note:** WIOA identified six core programs: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Education and Literacy, Wagner-Peyser Programs, and Vocational Rehabilitation. The elected partner plan programs are Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers, Jobs for Veterans State Grants, and Unemployment Insurance.*

The strategic vision for the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) to achieve its mission (outlined in 2.A, above) emphasizes working closely with the required and optional partner agencies to align resources in order to carry out the core programs and meet the regional goals as efficiently as possible.

- In Eastern Kentucky, the workforce system partners include:
- WIOA Title I programs for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth — Operated by EKCEP’s nine contractor service providers (Bell-Whitley CAA, Big Sandy Area CAP, Daniel Boone CAA, Gateway CAA, Harlan County CAA, Knox County EOC CAP, LKLP CAC, Middle Kentucky CAP, Northeast Kentucky CAA).
- Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act - Career and Technical Education and Postsecondary Vocational Education — Provided through KCTCS and other postsecondary education institutions.
- Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Title II Adult Education — Kentucky Office of Adult Education.
- Veteran’s Workforce Programs — Kentucky Career Development Office.
- Unemployment Insurance — Kentucky Labor Cabinet.
- Wagner-Peyser Act — Kentucky Career Development Office.
- Title V - Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP).
- Job Corps.
- KTAP, TANF and SNAP — Kentucky Department for Community Based Services.
- CSBG Employment and Training — LKLP CAC.

In its solicitation for entities to perform the services of One-Stop Operator throughout Eastern Kentucky's workforce development network, the EKWIB tasked the selected operators with:

- Coordinating the delivery of services of participating one-stop partners and service providers in the county or counties that the One-Stop Operator serves.
- Fostering a culture of collaboration and excellent customer service among one-stop partners that promotes delivery of the innovative, high quality workforce development services to all customers of the workforce development system.
- Convening and leading regularly scheduled meetings of the one-stop partners to build the collaborative culture, improve service delivery, and evaluate progress toward shared goals.
- Serving as a resource for staff of all partner agencies in regard to the objectives, processes, requirements, and regulations of WIOA and the workforce services delivery system.

The administrative structure for the key stakeholders associated with the partners in Eastern Kentucky's workforce development system are listed below:

Administrative Structure

State Workforce Agency

Entity Name: Kentucky Education & Labor Cabinet, Department for Workforce Development

Address: 500 Mero Street, Frankfort, KY 40621

Contact Person: Michael Yoder, Interim Commissioner, michael.yoder@ky.gov

Administrative Entity

Entity Name: Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program (EKCEP) LWDB & LWIA

Address: 100 Airport Gardens Road, Suite 300, Hazard, KY 41701

Contact Persons:

Rebecca Carnes-Miller, Executive Director, bmiller@ekcep.org

Bridget Back, Deputy Director, bback@ekcep.org

Fiscal Agent

Entity Name: Eastern Kentucky CEP (EKCEP) LWDB & LWIA

Address: 100 Airport Gardens Road, Suite 300, Hazard, KY 41701

Contact Persons:

Rebecca Carnes-Miller, Executive Director, bmiller@ekcep.org

Tonya Collins, Director of Accounting, tcollins@ekcep.org

Chief Elected Official

Eastern Kentucky C.E.P., Inc. Board of Directors

Contact Person:

Gilbert Holland, Chairperson, gilbertholland@gmail.com

Address: 411 Knox St. Barbourville, KY 40906

Workforce Development Board

Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB)

Contact Person:

Keith Gabbard, Chairperson, keith.gabbard@prtc.org

One-Stop Operator, Comprehensive Kentucky Career Center, Hazard (as procured by the EKWIB)

Entity Name: LKLP Community Action Council

Address: 398 Roy Campbell Drive, Hazard, KY 41701

Contact Persons:

Tawny Acker, Executive Director, t.acker@lklp.net

Abbie Little, KCC Manager, a.little@lklp.net

Allison Brown, WIOA Director, a.brown@lklp.net

Counties Served: Leslie, Knott, Letcher, Perry

One-Stop Operators, KCC Network (as procured by the EKWIB)

Entity Name and Address:

Bell-Whitley Community Action Agency

P.O. Box 159, Pineville, KY 40977

Phone: 606-337-3044

Contact Person:

Craig Brock, Executive Director, craigbrock@bell-whitley.org

Counties Served: Bell

Entity Name and Address:

Big Sandy Area Community Action Program

230 Court Street

Paintsville, KY 41240

Phone: 606-789-3641

Contact Person: Wanda Thacker, Executive Director, wthacker@bsacap.org

Counties Served: Floyd, Johnson, Magoffin, Martin, Pike

Entity Name and Address:

Daniel Boone Community Action Agency

1535 Shamrock Road

Manchester, KY 40962

Phone: 606-598-4330

Contact Person:

Robin Whitaker, Executive Director, robin.whitaker@danielboonecaa.org

Counties Served: Clay, Jackson

Entity Name and Address:

Gateway Community Action Agency

151 University Dr.

P.O. Box 367

West Liberty, KY 41472

Phone: 606-743-3133

Contact Person: Martina Roe, Executive Director, martina.roe@gatewaycaa.org

Counties Served: Menifee, Morgan

Entity Name and Address:

Harlan County Community Action Agency

319 Camden St.

P.O. Box 1556,

Harlan, KY 40831

Phone: 606-573-5335

Contact Person: Donna Pace, Executive Director, dpac@harlancountycaa.com

Counties Served: Harlan

Entity Name and Address:

KCEOC Community Action Partnership

P.O. Box 490

Barbourville, KY 40906

Phone: 606-546-3152

Contact Person: Paul Dole, President and CEO, pdole@kceoc.com

Counties Served: Knox

Entity Name and Address:

Middle Kentucky Community Action Partnership

1137 Main St.

Suite 107

Jackson, KY 41339

Phone: 606-666-5902

Contact Person: Beth Spencer, Executive Director, middlekyed@mkcap.org

Counties Served: Breathitt, Lee, Owsley, Wolfe

Entity Name and Address:

Northeast Kentucky Community Action Agency

21039 West US 60

Olive Hill, KY 41164

Phone: 606-286-4443

Contact Person: Victoria Greene, Executive Director, victoria.greene@nkcaa.net

Counties Served: Carter, Elliott, Lawrence

- B. (L) Describe how the LWDB, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment. Include how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and improve access to activities that lead to a recognized postsecondary credential. This includes a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification and is portable and stackable. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(3)]**

The Eastern Kentucky WIB has worked to expand access to employment, training, and supportive services to eligible Eastern Kentuckians by expanding the amounts and types of workforce funding it brings into the region.

In alignment with the state plan, the EKWIB recognizes that significant barriers to employment in Eastern Kentucky extend beyond transportation to include the critical challenges of accessing affordable, reliable childcare and stable housing. While EKCEP does not directly provide these services, its core strategy is to leverage its strong partnerships with entities that do, particularly the Community Action partners that serve every county in the region, along with other community-based organizations including low-income housing providers, like Housing Development Alliance, and local childcare organizations.

When a career advisor identifies childcare or housing insecurity as a barrier during a participant's intake and assessment, they initiate a direct referral to the appropriate organization. This collaborative approach creates a safety net for participants, ensuring they are connected with the supportive services necessary to stabilize their home life, which is a crucial prerequisite for successfully engaging in training and sustained employment. Addressing these fundamental needs is integral to EKCEP's goal of removing employment barriers and increasing overall workforce participation.

Over the past few years the EKWIB has risen to the challenge presented by the rising numbers of dislocated and underemployed workers in the region who need workforce services by pursuing and administering resources beyond WIOA formula funds with which to serve them.

The additional funds that the EKWIB has brought into the region include:

- **Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization) Grant** – This \$2,000,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission supports EKCEP's "Career Pathfinder Network," an In-School Youth workforce program that exists as part of EKCEP's Prosper Appalachia initiative. The Career Pathfinder Network places in-school career specialists directly within five high schools in Clay, Knox, Letcher, and Owsley counties to deliver career exploration services and prepare high school seniors for career paths within their native Eastern Kentucky.
- **Putting Young Kentuckians First** – EKCEP was one of several LWDAs in Kentucky to receive a special allocation of funding from the Kentucky General Assembly to provide workforce services to Kentucky's youth as part of the Putting Young Kentuckians First program. EKCEP's allocation of \$7,266,666 is funding its Prosper

Appalachia In-School Youth initiative. This initiative places Career Development Specialists directly in high schools to engage with students early, providing career exploration opportunities and connecting them with local employment options—including internships and work experience placements—all before graduation. EKCEP aims to ensure that every senior in participating schools develops a comprehensive career plan, completes interest assessments to identify potential paths, and learns about the diverse range of career opportunities available within Eastern Kentucky, empowering them to build their futures without having to leave the region.

- **Kentucky Opioid Abatement Grant** – This grant totaling \$450,000 from the Kentucky Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission funds EKCEP’s Project REACH (Recovery Employment and Career Help), which provides career and supportive services for people in recovery from Opioid Use Disorder in Breathitt, Knott, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Owsley, Perry, and Wolfe counties.
- **Kentucky Overdose Response Effort (KORE) Funding** – This fund stream of \$3,881,262 (to date, with possible renewals) has been provided by the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services to support EKCEP’s administration and delivery of the statewide SITE (Strategic Initiative for Transformational Employment) program, which helps bridge the gulf between recovery and productive participation in the workforce for individuals in recovery by providing them with valuable career and supportive services, and by cultivating and supporting second-chance employment opportunities. SITE helps Kentucky businesses learn to provide a supportive environment for newly employed individuals in recovery, thus increasing the opportunities for work-based training and apprenticeships, while simultaneously partnering with addiction treatment providers to identify and recruit recovering individuals who are appropriate for those opportunities. Those targeted to be served and placed in employment by SITE have completed or are in the latter stages of a reputable treatment program which provides aftercare that includes ongoing counseling, accountability, and support.
- **Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet Funding** – This fund stream of \$6,630,942 (to date, with possible renewals) has been provided by the Kentucky Justice and Public Safety Cabinet’s Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP) to support EKCEP’s administration and delivery of the statewide SITE (Strategic Initiative for Transformational Employment) program, which helps bridge the gulf between recovery and productive participation in the workforce for individuals in recovery by providing them with valuable career and supportive services, and by cultivating and supporting second-chance employment opportunities. SITE helps Kentucky businesses learn to provide a supportive environment for newly employed

individuals in recovery, thus increasing the opportunities for work- based training and apprenticeships, while simultaneously partnering with addiction treatment providers to identify and recruit recovering individuals who are appropriate for those opportunities. Those targeted to be served and placed in employment by SITE have completed or are in the latter stages of a reputable treatment program which provides aftercare that includes ongoing counseling, accountability, and support.

NOTE: The fund totals listed here are for the entire terms of these grants; the total funds listed may not be available for the 2025-26 Program Year. (In some cases, the totals listed above include money already spent during previous years of those grants.)

These additional funds make workforce services accessible to hundreds more individuals than could be served by formula funds alone. The EKWIB will continue to pursue additional funding sources to expand access to employment, training, and supportive services to eligible Eastern Kentuckians.

C. (L) Identify and describe (for each category below) the strategies and services that will be used to:

1. Meet the needs and facilitate the engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs and targeted sector strategies.

Per WIOA mandate, one role of the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) is to engage the area's business community in order to learn its needs and develop innovative partnerships and strategies to meet those needs. To carry out that responsibility, EKCEP's staff Business Services Coordinators, along with EKCEP's contractor partners' staff Business Services Consultants, consistently reach out and market the services of the workforce development system to the region's businesses directly. Staff also attend meetings of chambers of commerce, trade and industry associations, and other business-oriented activities, where they engage business owners and managers in conversations about business needs and how the workforce development system might address those needs. Job fairs provide additional opportunities for EKCEP's representatives to network with businesses. EKCEP and contractors are in constant communication with businesses inside and outside of the EKCEP region. These business engagements lead to the development of strategies to meet identified business needs. These resulting strategies are communicated to training providers to ensure that training programs are employer-driven.

Additionally, EKCEP completes assessments with individual employers that describe the employer's workforce needs and outlines the services available to help satisfy staffing

requirements. This targeted approach allows EKCEP to proactively address specific skill gaps within the local workforce, ensuring businesses have access to the talent they need to thrive. For employers, these assessments provide a clear roadmap to navigate available resources, streamlining the hiring process and fostering long-term growth.

This business- and industry-focused program structure also requires EKCEP's front-line staff to work with the region's community colleges and other training providers to ensure that their curricula and the number and competency of their graduates satisfy the employer's requirements as identified in the agreement. As a component of this strategy, EKCEP's front-line and contracted workforce staff across the region work with the community colleges and other training providers to identify the barriers that keep students from completing training and work with community and workforce system partners in a "collaborative impact case management" approach to remove those barriers. The agreements spell out as specifically as possible the roles of community and workforce system partners in achieving business and industry objectives.

2. Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses in the local area.

Complying with the WIOA mandate for local workforce development boards to lead efforts to engage a diverse array of employers, EKCEP and contracted staff will continue to meet business leaders and owners face-to-face to discover and discuss their current and future workforce needs and develop and deliver timely solutions. EKCEP's Business Engagement and Services Team will also continue to serve as the convener and coordinator for quarterly, collaborative meetings with a larger group of partners and professionals consisting of business-services-targeted state staff, employers, workforce staff from system partners, education and training providers, and other stakeholders — all of whom are in constant communication with businesses inside and outside of the EKCEP region. Information from these business communications is discussed at the group's meetings, where joint strategies are developed to meet identified business needs.

Businesses will be invited to these group meetings periodically to allow them to provide feedback and suggestions for improving our services. EKCEP will use this information to develop workshops around the needs of businesses and to improve service delivery.

3. Better coordinate workforce development programs with economic development partners and programs.

Relationships between EKCEP and economic development entities (e.g., Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR), Kentucky Highlands Investment Corp., Mountain Association, One East Kentucky, Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky, and others) have been

deepened and expanded as they have worked in partnership to identify and address the area's needs and opportunities. EKCEP leadership will continue to be available to work with any economic development entity that serves Eastern Kentucky to help build the new economy that will begin to fill the gap left by the decline of the coal industry.

4. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

In recent years, Kentucky's approach to unemployment insurance (UI) claim management saw a move towards online applications and centralized, marginally staffed call centers. While intended to streamline processes, this shift created challenges for frontline staff within WIOA and other Kentucky Career Center partner programs in effectively interacting with the UI system and personnel. The surge in UI applications during the COVID-19 pandemic further strained this automated system, underscoring the critical need for accessible, in-person UI assistance. Recognizing this, a subsequent decision was made to reintegrate face-to-face UI services within the Kentucky Career Centers statewide, a move that has helped to physically reconnect UI and partner programs within the one-stop delivery system.

However, while the co-location of services offers opportunities for better customer orientation and program awareness, a key area for further strengthening the linkage between the one-stop system and UI programs remains the need for enhanced data access. As experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic when temporary access was granted, providing WIOA and partner staff with appropriate access to the UI database system would be crucial for effective service delivery, case management, and a truly integrated approach to assisting job seekers. Addressing this limitation would significantly improve the ability of the one-stop partners to provide comprehensive and coordinated support to individuals navigating both unemployment and re-employment services.

5. Increase competitive, integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Include the implementation of incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, work-based learning programs, apprenticeship models, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathway initiatives, or use of effective business intermediaries and other business services and strategies that support the local board's strategy. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(4)(A) and (B)].

In addition to the routine collaborations on client services that WIOA staff and other one-stop partner staff have with the staff of Office for Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) in Eastern Kentucky's career centers, EKCEP is currently considering ways in which EKCEP's Teleworks USA initiative can be used to increase the job opportunities available for

individuals with disabilities throughout Kentucky. Teleworks USA links job seekers to employers worldwide who hire home-based workers. These Internet-based work-from-home jobs—primarily in customer service but now expanding into other fields such as cybersecurity—bring outside wages into the region, boosting local economies and broadening employment opportunities for the region’s workforce. During the past six years, ongoing improvements in both the Teleworks USA workshops and the staff’s relationships with employers have brought significant success to the initiative. EKCEP believes that home-based jobs transacted over the internet could be a great benefit to disabled individuals with mobility issues or other challenges that would make performing in-person jobs in an office or retail location difficult.

D. (L) Describe local and regional efforts to support and/or promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services in coordination with economic development and other partners. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(5)]

In support of emerging and existing entrepreneurs, EKCEP actively engages in collaborative activities with a range of economic development entities across the region. This includes EKCEP’s continued partnership with Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR). EKCEP also works closely with organizations such as One East Kentucky, Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation, Harlan County Economic Development Authority, Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation, and others dedicated to fostering economic growth in Appalachian Kentucky. These collaborations facilitate a comprehensive approach to supporting entrepreneurship.

These diverse partnerships are essential for fostering a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem within the region because each entity contributes unique and complementary strengths. Economic development organizations like One East Kentucky and the Southeast Kentucky Economic Development Corporation possess a deep understanding of the local market landscape, key industry sectors, and available resources, ensuring that entrepreneurial support is strategically aligned with regional growth priorities. SOAR’s focus on innovation and regional collaboration helps to cultivate a culture of forward-thinking business development. Organizations such as the Harlan County Economic Development Authority provide crucial local-level expertise and connections within specific communities. Furthermore, the Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation offers vital access to capital and financial guidance, often a critical need for emerging and expanding businesses in our area. By working together, EKCEP and these partners create a comprehensive and interconnected network of support, providing entrepreneurs within the local area with the knowledge, resources, mentorship, and financial tools necessary to launch, sustain, and

grow successful ventures, ultimately contributing to job creation and economic diversification within the local Appalachian communities.

E. (L) Describe the type and availability of youth workforce activities, including activities for youth with disabilities. Identify successful models and best practices for youth workforce activities relevant to the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(9)]

EKCEP's WIOA Youth Program—called “Prosper Appalachia”—is designed as a robustly structured community-based program that addresses essential life skills and work skills, training, career coaching, and support services for youth between the ages of 16-24. The program delivers services that are relevant to the employment and training needs of these youth, using structured curricula in a progression that leads each youth to obtain an industry-recognized credential and/or unsubsidized employment as a part of a career path that leads toward a high-wage, high-demand occupation.

EKCEP's youth service model focuses on Eastern Kentuckians who are at risk of long-term unemployment or under-employment, emphasizing career advising and transition into employment. Although EKCEP's youth programs ensure that eligible youth have opportunities to develop and achieve career goals through education and workforce training, they also emphasize shorter-term training assistance and more direct paths to employment, especially for out-of-school youth.

Providing Youth Services — EKCEP provides youth services through contractors who hire youth staff and deliver services in their local areas. Staff work closely with community partners and employers to implement EKCEP's policies and develop strategies for youth services that:

- Effectively connect eligible youth to available services, either in person or virtually.
- Provide a thorough review of the occupational and workforce service needs of each youth.
- Provide an individualized service strategy for each youth that includes appropriate career goals and plans for overcoming barriers.
- Integrate WIOA services with other appropriate community services provided by partners, including social service agencies, adult education, vocational rehabilitation services, residential treatment providers, medical and behavioral health care agencies, the criminal justice system, and other entities that provide the program elements and services to assist clients to lead happy, healthy, and successful lives.
- Prepare youth to meet employers' needs.

EKCEP's youth WIOA program is based upon developing a collaborative partnership with each youth being served that respects and values that youth's potential. These collaborative partnerships are based on recognizing that the youth and program staff are jointly responsible for working together to solve problems and act courageously to create a pathway to self-sustainability and meaning. Based upon individual needs, these 14 service elements are available to EKCEP's youth clients:

- Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including dropout prevention strategies;
- Alternative secondary school offerings or dropout recovery services, as appropriate;
- Paid and unpaid work experiences that include a component of academic and occupational education, including:
 - Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities throughout the year;
 - Pre-apprenticeship programs;
 - Internships and job shadowing;
 - On-the-job training.
- Occupational skill training, which may include training programs that lead to postsecondary credentials or are linked to in-demand sectors;
- Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster;
- Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social behaviors;
- Supportive services;
- Adult mentoring for the period of participation and subsequently, for a total a duration of at least 12 months;
- Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after completion, as appropriate;
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth;
- Financial literacy education;
- Entrepreneurial skills training;
- Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
- Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

Out-of-School Youth Services — Because of limited funding and the requirement under WIOA that 75% of Youth funds be spent on Out-of-School Youth, for WIOA services specifically, EKCEP primarily targets Out-of-School Youth ages 18 to 24—the portion of the eligible population that is most critically in need of rapid assistance to enter employment. The program is expected to spend 75% of its budget on serving Out-of-School Youth.

Youth services focus on the uniqueness of individualized youths' needs to overcome their barriers to entering and succeeding in the workforce. It is not uncommon for a participating youth to be eligible for services based on more than one barrier; some are even eligible based on all the barriers. The program is designed to identify the complex challenges to entering and succeeding in the workforce or education faced by these youth, provide assistance and guidance to overcome these barriers, and make it possible for these youth to re-engage and succeed.

Work experience opportunities are featured prominently for Out-of-School Youth. Work experience placements introduce and acclimate participants to the world of work and the out-of-school component of Prosper Appalachia is designed to give multiple opportunities in more than one specific career field if necessary in order to find a good fit with the right employer, who may be hiring soon. Although it does not exclude other options, EKCEP's Out-of-School Youth program emphasizes real local employment opportunities and the short-term skills development that will qualify clients to take advantage of those opportunities.

In-School Youth Services —EKCEP's in-school youth services are funded by a blend of WIOA funding and a dedicated allocation from the Kentucky General Assembly outside of WIOA. They are designed to provide high school students with career exploration opportunities and connect them with local employment options. This initiative places Career Development Specialists directly in high schools to engage with students early, helping them develop comprehensive career plans, explore potential career paths through interest assessments, and learn about the diverse range of opportunities available in Eastern Kentucky. The goal is to empower students to build their futures in the region without having to relocate, ensuring that every high school senior is prepared for the workforce or post-secondary education.

- F. (L) Describe how the LWDB coordinates education and workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(10)]**

The staff of the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) coordinates education and workforce activities with Area Technology Centers, Kentucky Community & Technical College System (KCTCS) institutions, and other postsecondary education providers in the region. Coordination with educational agencies may include: regular meetings for improved communication and development of strategies and goals; joint planning and implementation of professional development/training; collaborative work on important initiatives such as Work Ready Communities; joint planning of and participation in career fairs and job fairs; sharing labor market information and employer feedback about high demand training leading directly to jobs in order to improve training offerings in the region; and partnering on customized training projects to meet the needs of key employers in the region.

EKCEP has also included the employer services representatives of area postsecondary institutions on the Business and Employer Services Team that EKCEP convened and facilitates to serve the region. In addition to the business services representatives of EKCEP and area postsecondary institutions, these teams consist of employer and business services representatives from other workforce system partners, training providers, and other stakeholders. These representatives are in constant communication with businesses inside and outside of the EKCEP region to determine employers' needs. The sharing of information through these teams' bi-monthly meetings reduces redundant efforts to serve employers, and the joint strategies developed by these teams ensure that the resources of all members are brought to bear to meet identified business needs.

As the number of successfully completed projects have increased and important outcomes have been achieved in Eastern Kentucky as the result of these partnerships, staff and leadership with education and workforce agencies have become more and more committed to working together to achieve common goals and shared visions. This continuous collaboration enhances service delivery for customers and clients and avoids duplication of services through enhanced communication and partnership.

G. (L) Describe strategies to implement the operational goals of the local one-stop system, maximizing the coordination of services provided by DWD merit staff and the LWDB's contract providers to improve services and avoid duplication. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(12)]

The staff of the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) works closely with DWD's merit staff in the local area and with EKCEP's contracted direct service providers to implement the operational goals of Eastern Kentucky's one-stop system. The MOU (including the Resource Sharing Agreements for full-time partners co-located in a Full Service or Affiliate Center) that provides the framework for all partners to share in the

collaborative operation of the Kentucky Career Center EKCEP one-stop operation and the jointly planned and implemented professional development training for partner staff all ensure that the workforce system partners work fluidly together and avoid duplication and repetition.

The primary strategy for avoiding duplication is the active, hands-on coordination facilitated during regularly scheduled partner meetings. These meetings function as practical, collaborative case-management sessions and ensures that a client's needs are addressed holistically and prevents them from receiving redundant assessments or conflicting advice from different agencies. For example, a WIOA career advisor, a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, and a DWD merit staff member can co-plan a single, comprehensive path to employment for a client, assigning specific roles and responsibilities to each partner within one meeting. This process guarantees a "warm handoff" between programs rather than a cold referral, ensuring seamless service transitions and eliminating the risk of duplicative efforts.

Ongoing partner meetings at the county and regional level also ensure that detailed communication takes place on a regular basis to improve coordination and implement the best strategies for operational goals within the EKCEP local one-stop system. The One-Stop Operators for EKCEP's Kentucky Career Center workforce development network in Eastern Kentucky have been tasked with:

- Coordinating the delivery of services of participating one-stop partners and service providers in the county or counties that the One-Stop Operator serves.
- Fostering a culture of collaboration and excellent customer service among one-stop partners that promotes delivery of the innovative, high quality workforce development services to all customers of the workforce development system.
- Convening and leading regularly scheduled partner meetings that function as collaborative case management forums, allowing staff to co-plan service strategies, track progress on shared clients, and resolve service overlaps in real-time.

Additionally, the vision and goals of the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) were established through an inclusive strategic planning process that involved a wide array of stakeholders within the EKCEP region. EKCEP's process was designed to create a strategic plan that defined not only the ways EKCEP spends the dollars it controls in the region, but also the ways its actions and programs reflect priorities shared with its partner organizations and therefore influence the ways they spend their allocations within the region. To develop a consensus on regional vision and plan, EKCEP polled its partners and regional stakeholders in workforce development, secondary education, postsecondary education, government, community action, and business to determine their priorities and

strategic objectives, and to quiz them on their vision for the role and most important functions of the workforce system and the WIB.

The resulting strategic plan is simple and very focused, clearly stating four primary results-based goals, as well as defining EKCEP's core values, mission, and vision for that region, the workforce system, and the WIB. By using this strategic plan to guide its decisions and operational strategies, the EKWIB is incorporating the input and vision of its partners and other interested stakeholders, creating a higher level of "buy-in" and unified spirit.

- H. (L) Describe how the local board will collaborate with WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy consistent with the local plan (as described in WIOA Sec. 107(d)(11) and WIOA Sec. 232. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(13)]. This will include a discussion of how the local WDB will consistently review local applications submitted under Title II with WIOA sec. 107(d) (11) (A) and (B) (i) and WIOA sec. 232.**

The EKCEP local board will collaborate with WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy providers at both the local level and state level. The Kentucky Office of Adult Education contracts with a service provider for each of the 23 counties within the EKCEP local area. Both EKCEP's staff and direct services contractors work with these service providers to coordinate the referrals of clients for assessments, testing and diagnostics, GED instruction, and remediation services to bring basic skills up in order to enable clients to continue to postsecondary education.

Adult Education providers are located on-site and provide services at the Kentucky Career Center (KCC), Full Service Center, in Hazard and the KCC, Affiliate Center, in Pikeville.

In counties where the local Adult Education provider is not co-located with the other workforce partners, all partners work together to plan and execute regular meetings to improve communication and referrals among partner staff for greater customer service and satisfaction in the local workforce development system. EKCEP local board staff also work with KY Adult Education staff to improve coordination and planning, and to discuss appropriate training and/or professional development for one-stop staff in the region.

- I. (L) Please describe any plans to follow the strategies of the state and the local WDB to the one-stop operator to ensure priority for adult career and training services will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient consistent with WIOA sec—134 (c) (3) (E).**

Client Selection Procedures for ITAs: WIOA Adults — The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that local workforce areas give priority to recipients of

public assistance and low-income individuals when selecting qualified adults into training. Veterans must also be given priority.

Program operators and career advisors must provide documentation that their client-selection process for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) gives priority to these groups in the following order of priority:

Adult Program Order of Priority for ITAs

1st Priority: Veterans and/or eligible spouses who are public assistance recipients or low-income individuals who also meet the existing ITA eligibility requirements.

2nd Priority: Nonveterans who are public assistance recipients or low-income individuals who also meet existing ITA eligibility requirements.

3rd Priority: Veterans and/or eligible spouses who meet the existing ITA eligibility requirements.

4th Priority: Non-veterans who meet the existing ITA eligibility requirements. In order to adhere to this policy, career advisors will be required to keep a complete record of the qualified Adult clients who were being considered for ITAs at the time of each selection process.

NOTE: Regulations state, in accordance with 38 U.S. Code Part 4213, that “any amounts received as military pay or allowance by any person who served on active duty, and certain other specified benefits, must be disregarded when determining if a person is a ‘low-income individual’ for eligibility purposes.”

Client Selection Procedures for ITAs: WIOA Dislocated Workers —WIOA requires that local workforce areas give priority to veterans when selecting qualified dislocated workers into training. Program operators and career advisors must provide documentation that their client selection process for ITAs gives priority to these groups in the following order of priority:

Dislocated Worker Program Order of Priority for ITAs

1st Priority: Veterans and/or eligible spouses who meet the existing ITA eligibility requirements.

2nd Priority: Nonveterans who meet the existing ITA eligibility requirements.

In order to adhere to this policy, career advisors are required to keep a complete record of the qualified Dislocated Worker clients who were being considered for ITAs at the time of each selection process.

Client Selection Procedures for ITAs: WIOA Out-of-School Youth — WIOA requires that local workforce areas give priority to veterans when selecting qualified out-of-school youth into training.

Program operators and career advisors must provide documentation that their client selection process for ITAs gives priority to these groups in the following order of priority:

Out-of-School Youth Order of Priority for ITAs

1st Priority: Veterans and/or eligible spouses who meet existing ITA eligibility requirements.

2nd Priority: Nonveterans who meet existing ITA eligibility requirements.

In order to adhere to this policy, career advisors are required to keep a complete record of the qualified Out-of-School Youth clients who were being considered for ITAs at the time of each selection process.

J. (L) Please describe how the Kentucky Career Centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA and by one-stop partners.

The Commonwealth of Kentucky supplies and requires the use of its case management information systems for the WIOA and Wagner-Peyser programs. The use of KEE-Suite—the primary existing system—is mandated because it allows the Commonwealth to track and tabulate participant performance information. As long as it retains this prerogative to mandate usage, the Commonwealth will be responsible for implementing and transitioning any technology-enabled intake and case management system.

EKCEP offers a convenient virtual intake process utilizing a secure Google platform, enabling potential clients to complete and submit all necessary eligibility information online. This enhancement provides a valuable avenue for individuals to access WIOA services remotely, eliminating the need for an initial in-person appointment. This virtual option increases accessibility and flexibility for clients, allowing them to begin their journey towards employment and training from the comfort of their own homes or any location with internet access.

Chapter 4: Program Design and Evaluation

A. (L) Describe the one-stop delivery system in the local area, including:

- 1. The local board's efforts to collaborate with employers, to provide continuous improvement of business services, and to operate a "job-driven" delivery system.**

EKCEP's business solutions team and contracted business services providers work closely with the region's employers to stay abreast of their workforce needs and to collaborate with employers to craft training solutions that meet those needs.

EKCEP also convene quarterly a larger group of partners and professionals from throughout the area comprised of partners such as: state business-services-focused staff, chambers of commerce, Career Development Office, Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) institutions, Cabinet for Economic Development, Vocational Rehabilitation, Job Corps, and others. The team members make a collaborative effort to be in the field regularly, talking with employers to identify emerging industries, hiring needs, and training needs, and to detect declining businesses and industries as early as possible. The team approach ensures that all the represented partners are aware of the services provided by each partner, therefore enabling them to collaborate or make appropriate referrals as needed. EKCEP will employ the use of tools such as Survey Monkey to periodically poll businesses about their needs, our responsiveness to their needs, and to ask for suggestions and other feedback.

Businesses will be invited to these group meetings periodically to allow them to provide feedback and suggestions for improving our services. EKCEP will use this information to develop workshops around the needs of businesses and to improve service delivery.

2. The local board's efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services, including contracted services providers and providers on the eligible training provider list, through the system and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and job seekers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(A)]

The Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) staff works with the state Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) Coordinator, meeting on a regular basis and obtaining training updates within the KEE-Suite system and the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS) state systems that capture and report eligible training provider registration and performance.

ETPL information must be reported by each institution and is stored in KYSTATS. The data may be used for research by EKCEP management to determine if local and state-eligible training providers are meeting the required performance benchmarks to maintain their high-demand status for each ETPL program offered within their institution. The EKWIB uses this performance data as the basis for decisions on whether to continue or discontinue using training providers. These decisions ensure that training that is offered to job seekers

in the region is in high demand by employers in the local workforce system and will result in good jobs that pay sustainable wages upon completion of the training.

3. How the local board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system in remote areas with technology and other means. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(B)]

The Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) will work with its partners in the workforce system to facilitate access to the services provided through the one-stop delivery system and related Kentucky Career Center network locations. The technology used will include video conferencing and webinars for partner staff meetings and professional development and training, as well as for customer services, when needed and as appropriate.

In addition, EKCEP has created a virtual intake process utilizing a Google platform that allows potential clients to fill out any and all eligibility information online and transmit through a secure Google connection. This enhancement enables clients to access services through WIOA via virtual entry without the need for a physical appointment.

The use of these technologies offers expanded opportunities for the services of all partners to be provided to staff and customers in remote areas. The use of technologies makes it possible to deliver services and collaborate more economically, conserving closely budgeted funds for service provision rather than expending them on travel, redundant staffing, and other costs of geographically distributing services. The use of communications technologies and web-based data collection will allow more of the workforce partners' funds to be used to accomplish their specific goals and attain their outcomes while allowing customers to access services without having to physically travel to a one-stop center.

4. How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA section 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(C)]

In the Eastern Kentucky local workforce area, the One-Stop Operators and all one-stop partners work together to ensure the physical and programmatic accessibility of all facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials to individuals with disabilities. All partners within the EKCEP's KCC network may serve individuals with disabilities.

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation [OVR] partners in EKCEP's KCC network to lend their expertise and specialized resources to Eastern Kentucky's full-service and affiliate KCC facilities and other KCC network locations, providing annual ADA Compliance inspections and certifications, as well as technology and materials for disabled job seeker customers to utilize in the resource rooms at KCC locations, as needed in the EKCEP region. The ADA evaluations of existing facilities focus largely on four priorities for accessibility: (1) approach and entrance to the building; (2) access to goods and services; (3) access to toilet rooms; (4) additional access (e.g., water fountains, public phones, etc.).

The Vocational Rehabilitation partners provide OVR staff presence at KCC locations for on-site referrals of eligible customers and clients. The expertise of OVR staff is also utilized in Eastern Kentucky's one-stop delivery system to provide staff training and support throughout the locations in the KCC network.

5. Describe the process used by the local board to provide an opportunity for public comment, including comments by representatives of businesses and representatives of labor organizations, and input into the development of the Local Plan, prior to submission of this plan.

In developing the Regional and Local Comprehensive Plans, the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) provided an opportunity for public comment and stakeholder input. The draft plan was posted on the EKCEP website (www.ekcep.org), and notifications inviting comment were distributed through social media and key newspapers to ensure broad public awareness. A thirty (30) day public comment period was established to allow all interested parties, including representatives of businesses, labor organizations, and education partners, sufficient time for review. In addition to accepting written feedback, EKCEP hosted a virtual public forum to accept oral comments and engage directly with community members and partners.

The timeline for the development and public review of the plan occurred in March and April of 2025, providing multiple opportunities for engagement. Following the 30-day comment period, it was determined that no comments were received from the public. The plan was then finalized for submission to the Kentucky Department of Workforce Development. The specific timeline for these activities was as follows:

- Draft Plan Released & Public Comment Period Started: March 25, 2025
- Virtual Public Comment Forum Held: April 9, 2025
- Public Comment Period Ended: April 23, 2025

B. (L) Describe the local board's assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(7)]

The Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) has determined that its local area needs more industry-driven and workplace-based training in order to adequately prepare the area's workforce to compete for jobs and provide the capacity for expansion for the region's growing and/or emerging industries and businesses. For example, the EKWIB finds that the "off-the-shelf" trainings available in information technology, computer coding, computer programming, and application development trainings are often inadequate to position job seekers for success in these rapidly evolving occupations. Therefore, the EKWIB is using the on-the-job training model, internships, and other innovative methodologies in partnerships with employers to prepare the region's workforce to precisely meet those employers' needs.

To address these needs, EKCEP has significantly bolstered its work-based learning focus, emphasizing work experiences, internships, and apprenticeships. These programs offer a dynamic approach to skill development, allowing participants to gain practical experience in real-world work settings. Partnering directly with employers in in-demand industries, such as the construction trades and technology fields, allows EKCEP to tailor these on-the-job learning opportunities to meet specific employer requirements. This targeted approach enables individuals to rapidly acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in these fields, leading to quicker employment and a more responsive workforce that directly supports the region's economic growth. Furthermore, these programs provide a pathway for individuals to not only gain immediate employment but also build long-term, sustainable careers within these growing sectors.

The EKWIB also believes the local area could use more micro-enterprise training and entrepreneurial trainings. The EKWIB believes that entrepreneurship and small business growth will play a major role in driving the economic recovery of the Eastern Kentucky region and the entire Commonwealth.

Recognizing the critical role of entrepreneurship and small business development in the region's economic revitalization, EKCEP has forged a strategic partnership with the University of the Cumberlands to provide accessible and flexible training opportunities. This collaboration has resulted in the creation of comprehensive online training courses focused on essential skills for aspiring entrepreneurs, including essential skills, customer service, and financial literacy. By delivering these resources through an online platform, EKCEP ensures greater flexibility for participants, allowing them to balance their training with other commitments and access learning materials at their own pace.

The EKWIB also believes that the number of unfilled registered nursing jobs in the local area indicates that the registered nurse training in the local area has not been adequate to meet the demand of the area's healthcare industry.

Additionally, the EKWIB recognizes the need to continue to emphasize and expand the available trainings that can ensure high school students are able to graduate with a certification or other recognized workplace credential that will allow them to more directly move into a job.

C. (L) Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(8)]

Rapid Response activities in the EKWIB area are led by the State Rapid Response Coordinator. When the state receives a WARN notice or becomes aware of a pending mass layoff or closure, the State Rapid Response Coordinator takes the lead in initial contact and coordination. EKCEP staff collaborates closely with the State Rapid Response Coordinator to provide timely and effective services to affected employers and employees in our region.

Upon notification from the state regarding a potential layoff, EKCEP staff stands ready to assist in the delivery of Rapid Response services. The agency's role involves working in partnership with the State Rapid Response Coordinator and the impacted company to understand the specific needs of the dislocated workers. This helps to organize and deliver informational meetings and resource events, ensuring that affected employees are aware of available employment and training services through the Kentucky Career Center system, including WIOA programs, unemployment insurance information, and other community resources. While the state coordinates the initial notification and overall strategy, EKCEP plays a vital role in the local delivery of these crucial support services, ensuring a smooth transition for individuals facing job loss.

D. (L) Provide an analysis and description of youth workforce activities, including activities for youth with disabilities. Identify successful models and best practices for youth workforce activities relevant to the local area. Describe strategies the LWDA will use to increase the minimum WIOA out-of-school youth expenditure rate to 75 percent. Provide information on types of work-based learning activities planned for youth. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(9)]

EKCEP's WIOA Youth Program—called Prosper Appalachia—is designed as a robustly structured community-based program that addresses essential life skills and work skills, training, career coaching, and support services for youth who are disengaged from the workforce and education. The program delivers services that are relevant to the

employment and training needs of these youth, using structured curricula in a progression that leads each youth to obtain an industry-recognized credential and/or unsubsidized employment as a part of a career path that leads toward a high-wage, high-demand occupation.

EKCEP's Prosper Appalachia service model focuses on Eastern Kentuckians ages 18-24 who are not attending school of any kind and are at risk of long-term unemployment or under-employment, emphasizing career advising and transition into employment. Although EKCEP's youth programs ensure that eligible youth have opportunities to develop and achieve career goals through education and workforce training, they also emphasize shorter-term training assistance and more direct paths to employment, especially for out-of-school youth.

Providing Youth Services — EKCEP provides youth services directly or through contractors who hire youth staff and deliver services in their local areas. Registration and services have been and will continue to be available either in person or virtually, depending on the client's barriers, location, and ability to utilize such services.

Prosper Appalachia staff work closely with community partners and employers to implement EKCEP's policies and develop strategies for youth services that:

- Effectively connect eligible youth to available services, either in person or virtually.
- Provide a thorough review of the occupational and workforce service needs of each youth.
- Provide an individualized service strategy for each youth that includes appropriate career goals and plans for overcoming barriers.
- Integrate WIOA services with other appropriate community services provided by partners, including: social service agencies, adult education, vocational rehabilitation services, residential treatment providers, medical and behavioral health care agencies, the criminal justice system, and other entities that provide the program elements and services to assist out-of-school youth ages 18-24 to lead happy, healthy and successful lives.
- Prepare youth to meet employers' needs.

EKCEP's Prosper Appalachia WIOA program is based upon developing a collaborative partnership with each youth being served that respects and values that youth's potential. These collaborative partnerships are based on recognizing that the youth and program staff are jointly responsible for working together to solve problems and act courageously to create a pathway to self-sustainability and meaning. Based upon individual needs, these 14 service elements are available to Prosper Appalachia clients:

- Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including dropout prevention strategies;
- Alternative secondary school offerings or dropout recovery services, as appropriate;

Paid and unpaid work experiences that include a component of academic and occupational education, including:

- Summer employment opportunities and other employment opportunities throughout the year;
- Pre-apprenticeship programs;
- Internships and job shadowing;
- On-the-job training.
- Occupational skill training, which may include training programs that lead to postsecondary credentials or are linked to in-demand sectors.
- Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster.
- Leadership development opportunities, which may include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social behaviors;
- Supportive services;
- Adult mentoring for the period of participation and subsequently, for a total a duration of at least 12 months;
- Follow-up services for not less than 12 months after completion, as appropriate;
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth;
- Financial literacy education;
- Entrepreneurial skills training;
- Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services; and
- Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.

Out-of-School Youth Services — Because of limited funding and the requirement under WIOA that 75% of Youth funds be spent on Out-of-School Youth, EKCEP designed its WIOA youth services program to primarily target Out-of-School Youth ages 18 to 24—the portion of the eligible population that is most critically in need of rapid assistance to enter

employment. EKCEP expects to spend 75% of its WIOA services budget on serving Out-of-School Youth.

Prosper Appalachia services focus on the uniqueness of individualized youths' needs to overcome their barriers to entering and succeeding in the workforce. It is not uncommon for a participating youth to be eligible for services based on more than one barrier; some are even eligible based on all the barriers. Prosper Appalachia is designed to identify the complex challenges to entering and succeeding in the workforce or education faced by these youth, provide assistance and guidance to overcome these barriers, and make it possible for these youth to re-engage and succeed.

Work experience opportunities are featured prominently for Out-of-School Youth. Work experience placements introduce and acclimate participants to the world of work and are designed to give multiple opportunities in more than one specific career field if necessary in order to find a good fit with the right employer, who may be hiring soon. Although it does not exclude other options, EKCEP's Out-of-School Youth program emphasizes real local employment opportunities and the short-term skills development that will qualify clients to take advantage of those opportunities.

In-School Youth Services — In-school youth can receive a variety of services to help them overcome barriers to career or academic success, through a service model that focuses on the uniqueness of each youth's barriers and needs. The program emphasizes work experience placements, the skills necessary to acquire a job, and career advising to help the youth make informed career and educational choices and define the steps needed to pursue their career or educational goals. Work experience placements introduce and acclimate participants to the world of work and the youth program is designed to give multiple opportunities in more than one specific career field if necessary in order to find a good fit with the right employer who may be hiring soon.

The 75%/25% Fund Expenditure Requirement — EKCEP has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to serving Out-of-School Youth, exceeding the WIOA requirement of allocating at least 75% of Youth funds to this important population for several years. This sustained success indicates that our current approaches are effectively meeting the needs of Out-of-School Youth, and therefore, specific new strategies focused solely on increasing the minimum expenditure rate are not currently necessary.

- E. (L) Describe how training services will be provided in accordance with WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(G), as well as the process and criteria for issuing individual training accounts. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(19)]. This should include how contracts will be coordinated with the**

use of Individual Training Accounts and how the LWDB will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs.

In cases where training is not provided through a work-based training placement (e.g., on-the-job training work experience) or other contract for non-ITA training services, EKCEP funds training services for eligible individuals through the use of individual training accounts (ITAs). In Eastern Kentucky, the workforce system funds trainings only in the industry sectors or occupations that the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) has identified as in-demand because they are either growing or emerging and have a high potential for sustained demand in the local area.

Client Selection Procedures for ITAs: WIOA Adults — The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires that local workforce areas give priority to recipients of public assistance and low-income individuals when selecting qualified adults into training. Veterans must also be given priority.

Program operators and career advisors must provide documentation that their client-selection process for Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) gives priority to these groups in the following order of priority:

Adult Program Order of Priority for ITAs

1st Priority: Veterans and/or eligible spouses who are public assistance recipients or low-income individuals who also meet existing ITA eligibility requirements.

2nd Priority: Nonveterans who are public assistance recipients or low-income individuals who also meet existing ITA eligibility requirements.

3rd Priority: Veterans and/or eligible spouses who meet existing ITA eligibility requirements.

4th Priority: Non-veterans who meet existing ITA eligibility requirements.

In order to adhere to this policy, career advisors will be required to keep a complete record of the qualified Adult clients who were being considered for ITAs at the time of each selection process.

NOTE: Regulations state, in accordance with 38 U.S. Code Part 4213, that “any amounts received as military pay or allowance by any person who served on active duty, and certain other specified benefits, must be disregarded when determining if a person is a ‘low-income individual’ for eligibility purposes.”

Client Selection Procedures for ITAs: WIOA Dislocated Workers —WIOA requires that local workforce areas give priority to veterans when selecting qualified dislocated workers into training. Program operators and career advisors must provide documentation that their

client selection process for ITAs gives priority to these groups in the following order of priority:

Dislocated Worker Program Order of Priority for ITAs

1st Priority: Veterans and/or eligible spouses who meet existing ITA eligibility requirements.

2nd Priority: Nonveterans who meet existing ITA eligibility requirements.

In order to adhere to this policy, career advisors are required to keep a complete record of the qualified Dislocated Worker clients who were being considered for ITAs at the time of each selection process.

Client Selection Procedures for ITAs: WIOA Out-of-School Youth — WIOA requires that local workforce areas give priority to veterans when selecting qualified out-of-school youth into training. Program operators and career advisors must provide documentation that their client selection process for ITAs gives priority to these groups in the following order of priority:

Out-of-School Youth Order of Priority for ITAs

1st Priority: Veterans and/or eligible spouses who meet existing ITA eligibility requirements.

2nd Priority: Nonveterans who meet existing ITA eligibility requirements.

In order to adhere to this policy, career advisors are required to keep a complete record of the qualified Out-of-School Youth clients who were being considered for ITAs at the time of each selection process.

Chapter 5: Compliance/Performance/Administrative Cost

Responses should be focused on the local area's compliance with federal or state requirements.

A. (L) Identify the local grant recipient of Title 1 responsible for the disbursement of grant funds. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(15)]

The Eastern Kentucky C.E.P., Inc. Board of Directors serves as the Chief Local Elected Official for the Eastern Kentucky C.E.P. local area, in accordance with the Section 107(c)(1)(C) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

As Chief Elected Official, this board receives the funds. Because this board has chosen to act as its own fiscal agent, rather than procuring an outside entity to act as fiscal agent, it is responsible for disbursement of the local area's funds.

B. (L) Describe the competitive and non-competitive processes, as well as the method for sole sourcing, used for procuring goods and services within the local area. This includes but is not limited to the method used to award funds to a one-stop operator and other sub-recipients/contractors of WIOA Title I adult, dislocated worker, and youth services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(16)]

To ensure consistency and compliance across the state, all Kentucky local areas, as directed by the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet, operate under the Commonwealth's procurement policies and procedures. These established guidelines are detailed in Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) 45.A and are referenced as the standard for all procurement activities.

The current One-Stop Operators for the Eastern Kentucky CEP local workforce area were chosen through an open procurement process in April through June 2021. On April 16, 2021, EKCEP published solicitations for proposals to:

- Deliver Direct Workforce Services to Adults and Dislocated Workers
- Deliver Direct Workforce Services to Youth
- Provide Business Services to Employers
- Serve as a One-Stop Operator in Eastern Kentucky's Kentucky Career Center Network

EKCEP chose to bid the One-Stop Operator function in combination with the Workforce Services functions because the two are closely interrelated. Bidders were invited to designate the area in which they proposed to deliver services and serve as One-Stop Operator — allowing them to propose to serve anything from a single county up to EKCEP's entire 23-county area. Once the proposals were received, staff reviewed them and presented recommendations for contract awards to both the Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) and the Eastern Kentucky C.E.P., Inc. Board of Directors (serving as the CLEO as prescribed by WIOA), which awarded the contracts in June 2021.

EKCEP is currently in the process of re-procuring contractors that will:

- Deliver Direct Workforce Services to Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth.
- Serve as a One-Stop Operator in either or both of Eastern Kentucky's two comprehensive Kentucky Career Centers.

Contracts awarded under these procurements will go into effect July 1, 2025.

C. (L) Describe the indicators currently used or intended by the local board to measure the performance and effectiveness of the regional fiscal agent (where appropriate),

eligible providers, and the one-stop delivery system in the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17)]

***Note:** This description may include when, how, and by whom the indicators are being employed and if the measured performance and effectiveness are used in a continuous improvement process.*

Measuring the performance of the Fiscal Agent for the EKCEP local area is not appropriate, because the grant recipient is the fiscal agent in the EKCEP local area. The integrity and accuracy of EKCEP's fiscal processes and procedures are established by the agency's annual fiscal audit.

Performance information must be reported by each institution or provider that is on the Commonwealth of Kentucky's Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). This information is stored in the Kentucky Center for Statistics system, where it may be accessed and used by EKCEP management to determine if these eligible training providers are meeting the required performance benchmarks to maintain their high-demand status for each ETPL program. The Eastern Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board (EKWIB) can use this performance data as the basis for decisions on whether to continue or discontinue using training providers. The EKWIB's criteria are that training that is offered to Eastern Kentucky job seekers must be in high demand by employers in the local workforce system, be in the sectors of emphasis selected by the EKWIB, and result in good jobs that pay sustainable wages upon completion of the training.

The performance of the one-stop workforce delivery system in Eastern Kentucky is measured mostly by its performance against the WIOA performance indicators. WIOA includes the following performance measures for all programs within the one-stop delivery system in the EKCEP local area for services to Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth:

WIOA Adult program performance indicators include:

Employment Rate (Q2 post-exit),

Employment Rate (Q4 post-exit),

Median Earning,

Credential Rate,

Measurable Skills Gain.

WIOA Dislocated Worker program performance indicators include:

Employment Rate (Q2 post-exit)

Employment Rate (Q4 post-exit)

Median Earnings

Credential Rate

Measurable Skills Gain.

WIOA Youth program performance indicators include:

Placement in Employment/Training/Education (Q2 post-exit)

Placement in Employment/Training/Education (Q4 post-exit)

Median Earnings

Credential Rate

Measurable Skills Gain.