



Kentucky Employment First Council
500 Mero Street, 4th Floor NE
Frankfort, KY 40601
Toll Free: (800) 372-7172
Direct: (502) 782-3421
Email: Nanci.Howard@ky.gov

Andy Beshear
Governor

Jamie Link
Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employer Education and Engagement Committee Minutes

January 10th, 2024
1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom
Meeting ID: 863 9806 2295

Members Present

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer and Rebecca Wilson

Members Absent

Jessica Beaven, Todd Coffey, Zach Morgan and Dawn Gardner

Staff Present

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Administrator, Nanci Howard, KYOVR Administrative Specialist, Pepper Caudill, KYOVR Assistant Director, Kristen Beach and KYOVR Staff Assistant, Betty Whittaker

Staff Absent

KYOVR Branch Manager, Deana Wilson Kimbler

Guest(s) Present

RETAIN Kentucky, Kimberly Wickert

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review:

Administrator, Nanci Howard began the meeting and introduced Kimberly Wickert from RETAIN Kentucky.

Chair Report

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer explained that she had provided details to the Executive Committee when they last met in December 2023, of this committee's intent to partner with RETAIN Kentucky for the Lunch & Learn Series. She then turned the meeting over to Kim Wickert to give further details of the webinar series that RETAIN Kentucky is currently hosting.

RETAIN Kentucky January and February 2024 Webinar Series

RETAIN Kentucky's Kimberly Wickert provided details of the lineup for the January & February 2024 webinar series. There was discussion amongst the group of which topics could be added to the RETAIN Kentucky's webinar series. It was discussed that this committee would attend the January & February 2024 RETAIN Kentucky's webinars to gain a better understanding of the process. It was also discussed that Kimberly Wickert would review the Employer Education & Engagement Committee's proposed Lunch & Learn Series topics and make recommendations of the top three topics that would be best to collaborate with RETAIN Kentucky.

Additional Discussion

Prior to the meeting adjourning, Merry asked other members to consider what other projects the committee may want to undertake during the 2024 year and there would be discussion of this at the next committee meeting in February. Administrator, Nanci Howard reminded the group of the Strategic Plan and asked members to keep that in mind when considering the 2024 year's projects.

Member, Rebecca Wilson provided brief information regarding an email regarding an Amazon webinar due to take place in early 2024. She stated that she would forward the email to the entire group for review. Merry stated she would email a list of important points to Nanci or Pepper and requested that they disseminate this information, including a copy of the Strategic Plan, to the whole group. Nanci reminded the group of

the Dropbox account, where they could access the Strategic Plan or other information pertinent to the Employment First Council.

Future Areas of Focus

It was discussed that this committee would attend the January & February 2024 RETAIN Kentucky's webinars to gain a better understanding of the process.

It was also discussed that Kimberly Wickert would review the Employer Education & Engagement Committee's proposed Lunch & Learn Series topics and make recommendations of the top three topics that would be best to collaborate with RETAIN Kentucky.

Merry stated she would email a list of important points to Nanci or Pepper and requested that they disseminate this information, including a copy of the Strategic Plan, to the whole group.

Next Quarterly Meeting Date

Friday, January 12, 2024

1:00pm – 3:00pm

Hybrid Format

Location: Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

200 Mero Street

Frankfort, KY 40601



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500 Mero Street, 4th Floor NE
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Jamie Link
Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employer Education and Engagement Committee Minutes

February 14, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom

Meeting ID: 863 9806 2295

Members Present

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, Todd Coffey, Rebecca Wilson, and Employment First Council
Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley

Members Absent

Jessica Beaven, Zach Morgan and Dawn Gardner

Staff Present

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Administrator, Nanci Howard,
KYOVR Administrative Specialist, Pepper Caudill, KYOVR Manager, Deana Wilson-
Kimble and KYOVR Assistant Director, Kristen Beach

Staff Absent

N/A

Guest(s) Present

KYOVR Staff, Betty Whittaker, RETAIN Kentucky, Kimberly Wickert, and Lexington VA
Medical Center, Sharelle Williams

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review:

Administrator, Nanci Howard welcomed everyone to the meeting and screen shared the agenda with the group before turning the meeting over to Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer. Introductions were held for all attended. Nanci also provided an update of Project NEON for the group.

RETAIN Kentucky Partnership

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer gave a recap of the three topics of interest for the Lunch N' Learn Series that the committee had previously committed to launch through partnering with RETAIN Kentucky. RETAIN Kentucky, Kimberly Wickert gave a recap of her recommendations pertaining to the three topics. The Employer Seminar Series 2024 Recharge Recommendations pdf that Kimberly had sent in a prior email was shared with the group in the chat. KYOVR Manager, Deana Wilson-Kimble gave a recap of her plans for the topic that she will be spearheading for the series. It was decided that Merry, Deana and Kimberly would meet at a separate time to further discuss this matter. There was discussion held regarding the topic "Employment First and Competitive Integrated Employment", which is one of the three topics of interest in the partnership with RETAIN Kentucky. Guest, Katie Wolf Whaley stated she would send to Merry an HDI video depicting people with disabilities speaking, which Merry could use as part of the Lunch N' Learn Series partnership with RETAIN Kentucky. There was discussion held regarding the definition of competitive integrated employment and how it pertains to employers and the Council. It was decided that the target date of launching the first topic of the lunch N' Learn Series, through partnering with RETAIN Kentucky, would be April 2024. It was further decided that the committee would finalize any further details of this launch at their next meeting date in March 2024. Merry requested that committee members who are able, to attend the RETAIN Kentucky webinar in March 2024 in preparation for the Lunch N' Learn Series launch in April 2024. She indicated that an emailed invitation for this event would come directly from Kimberly Wickert.

New Ideas and the Strategic Plan

RETAIN Kentucky's Kimberly Wickert provided details of the lineup for the January & February 2024 webinar series. There was discussion amongst the group of which topics could be added to the RETAIN Kentucky's webinar series. It was discussed that this committee would attend the January & February 2024 RETAIN Kentucky's webinars to gain a better understanding of the process. It was also discussed that Kimberly Wickert

would review the Employer Education & Engagement Committee’s proposed Lunch & Learn Series topics and make recommendations of the top three topics that would be best to collaborate with RETAIN Kentucky.

Future Areas of Focus

It was decided that Merry, Deana and Kimberly would meet at a separate time to further discuss the topic of the Lunch N’ Learn Series matter.

Guest, Katie Wolf Whaley stated she would send to Merry an HDI video depicting people with disabilities speaking, which Merry could use as part of the Lunch N’ Learn Series partnership with RETAIN Kentucky.

It was decided that the target date of launching the first topic of the lunch N’ Learn Series, through partnering with RETAIN Kentucky, would be April 2024. It was further decided that the committee would finalize any further details of this launch at their next meeting date in March 2024.

Merry requested that committee members who are able, to attend the RETAIN Kentucky webinar in March 2024 in preparation for the Lunch N’ Learn Series launch in April 2024. She indicated that an emailed invitation for this event would come directly from Kimberly Wickert.

Next Committee Meeting Date

Wednesday, March 13, 2024
1:00pm – 2:00pm
Zoom

Next Quarterly Meeting Date

Friday, April 12, 2024
1:00pm – 3:00pm
Hybrid Format
Location: Kentucky Transportation Cabinet
200 Mero Street
Frankfort, KY 40601



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Andy Beshear
Governor

Jamie Link
Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employer Education and Engagement Committee Minutes

March 13, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom

Meeting ID: 863 9806 2295

Members Present

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer and Employment First Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley

Members Absent

Jessica Beaven, Zach Morgan, Todd Coffey, Rebecca Wilson, and Dawn Gardner

Staff Present

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Administrator, Nanci Howard, KYOVR Administrative Specialist, Pepper Caudill and KYOVR Assistant Director, Kristen Beach

Staff Absent

KYOVR Manager, Deana Wilson-Kimble

Guest(s) Present

RETAIN Kentucky, Kimberly Wickert

Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review and Project NEON Update

Administrator, Nanci Howard welcomed everyone to the meeting and screen shared the agenda with the group before turning the meeting over to Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer. Introductions were held for all attended. Nanci also provided an update of Project NEON for the group.

Update on South ADA Meeting and Partnership with RETAIN Kentucky

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer explained that she had met with South ADA Center, Barry Whaley and RETAIN Kentucky, Kimberly Wickert regarding a partnership and collaboration of a webinar series that is due to launch in April 2024. Merry stated that the committee's plan to create an entire webinar series was now evolving. She explained that the committee should shift its focus towards facilitating the connection of affiliates with RETAIN Kentucky so that they could create specific webinar series which will target relevant issues. Kimberly Wickert provided information of the upcoming RETAIN webinar series and preparations she has been working on to collaborate with other groups to create additional webinar content. There was discussion of what could be done to interest employers in participating or engaging in the series. There was discussion of reaching out to KYOVR Manager, Deana Wilson-Kimbler as her staff may have employers that are interested in participating in the webinar series. There was discussion of the RETAIN Kentucky April webinar information being disseminated to the entire Council. Kimberly stated that any contact wishing to be added to RETAIN Kentucky's distribution list should reach out to Campaign Monitor or Betty Whittaker as she is the KYOVR RETAIN Kentucky liaison.

Final Thoughts

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, stated that she would continue the meeting via email and the meeting was informally ended.

Future Areas of Focus

RETAIN Kentucky April Employer Seminar Series - RETAIN Kentucky and Employment First Kentucky Presents: Navigating Employer Responsibilities under ADA Title 1.

April 23, 2024, 12:00-12:45 EST
Participant registration: Via link

Barry Whaley and Pam Williamson from Southeast ADA will share their expertise and field questions about trending topics like ADA protections for individuals with substance use disorder and how ADA impacts collective bargaining agreements.

Merry stated that the committee's plan to create an entire webinar series was now evolving. She explained that the committee should shift its focus towards facilitating the connection of affiliates with RETAIN Kentucky so that they could create specific webinar series which will target relevant issues.

There was discussion of reaching out to KYOVR Manager, Deana Wilson-Kimbler as her staff may have employers that are interested in participating in the webinar series.

Next Committee Meeting Date

Wednesday, April 10, 2024
1:00pm – 2:00pm
Zoom

Next Quarterly Meeting Date

Friday, April 12, 2024
1:00pm – 3:00pm
Hybrid Format
Location: Kentucky Transportation Cabinet
200 Mero Street
Frankfort, KY 40601



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Employer Education and Engagement Committee Minutes

April 10, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom

Meeting ID: 819 3105 9171

Members Present

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, Todd Coffey, Rebecca Wilson, and Employment First Council
Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley

Members Absent

Jessica Beaven and Dawn Gardner

Staff Present

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Administrator, Nanci Howard,
KYOVR Staff Assistant, Betty Whitaker, KYOVR Branch Manager, Deana Wilson- Kimbler,
and KYOVR Assistant Director

Staff Absent

N/A

Guest(s) Present

RETAIN Kentucky, Kimberly Wickert

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, welcomed committee members and guests. She reviewed the agenda with the group. She directed the committee to review the Council's Strategic Plan.

Project NEON Update

KYOVR Administrator, Nanci Howard, provide a brief report on Project NEON (National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network). She explained the Lead Subject Matter Expert, Karen Lee, would meet with each Chair of the committees from the Employment First Council. She further explained the purpose of the meeting is to provide support to the Chairs and guidance. Ms. Howard also stated work is done behind the scenes with the partnership between Project NEON and the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in terms of customized employment and rate settings. She concluded her report by reiterating the date, time, and location of the next quarterly Employment First Council meeting.

Update on KYRETAIN and Employment First Council Employer Webinar Series

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, provided an updated on the KYRETAIN Lunch N' Learn Series. She stated Barry Whaley, from the Southeast ADA Center, and Pam Williamson will be conducting an upcoming webinar focusing on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on April 23, 2024. She said the presenters will address commonly asked questions surrounding the ADA and that part of the presentation would include questions. Ms. Sheffer announced the next webinar will be held on May 21 at noon. She said KYOVR Employer Services Branch Manager, Deana Wilson-Kimble will be conducting a presentation surrounding myths and facts regarding disability, specifically to attract and retain workers so that it is more appealing to employers. Guest, Kimberly Wickert, confirmed Pam Williamson would be presenting alongside Barry Whaley as well. She stated she would be sending Deana the template that includes the Employment First logo as well. She also shared she is in process of obtaining CEU's from SHRM to attract those employers who work in human resources roles. She said she would provide more information regarding CEU's at the next meeting. Ms. Wickert also encouraged committee members to share the invitations to their respective networks.

Merry Reid Sheffer announced that herself and an employee from Brown Foreman were asked to present at the Coalition for Workforce Diversity's Employer Luncheon in May. She stated she hopes to conduct the presentation in multiple places. She said if the committee is interested, this topic might be a June session. She also encouraged committee members to share to their networks and social media platforms. The Chair stated Edge Employment is on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn and have been posting on these social media sites. She encouraged members to view those for ideas on what to post regarding the webinar series.

Strategic Plan and Future Committee Projects

Ms. Reid asked KYOVR Nanci Howard to display the Council's Strategic Plan for all committees to view on screen. She stated she would like to review the main goals and think about initial ideas on how the committee could help the council to reach the goals of the plan. The Chair of the Council, Katie Wolf Whaley, provided additional insight on the plan. She stated she would be meeting with Karen Lee and Merry Reid Sheffer to see how these goals and objectives align with the legislative charge of the Council. The committee agreed to focus on goal one of the Strategic Plan. The goal is for the Council to investigate how successful coalitions are functioning how the Council can assist other places to replicate and support other coalitions across the state. Chair of the Council, Katie Wolf Whaley, provided some thoughts regarding the Employer Lunch N' Learn series and how the committee has formed a partnership with KYRETAIN. She encouraged members to think broader in terms of reaching employers.

Committee member, Todd Coffey, announced he serves on the Board of Directors at the Coalition for Workforce Diversity. He discussed ways to enhance the presentation with Merry during their meeting in May. He stated at the end of the presentation would be a good time for questions, to mention the Council and to ask them what barriers they face. He stated feedback would be vital for to committee to develop different game plans. He announced the finalized agenda would be available in the coming week and there would be tables set up for different agencies such as social security, etc. Mr. Coffey said he could send the final list of those agencies that will be at the tables to the Chair once available. Kimberly Wickert stated KYRETAIN does have a table at the Coalition for Workforce Diversity's meeting. Merry Reid Sheffer proposed the idea of inviting another council member to the event to share information. Todd Coffey said he would reach out to Willie Byrd of Options Unlimited because they do have a table as well at the event. KYOVR Assistant Director, Kristen Beach, asked if there were opportunities for employers to sign up on list serves for Employment First or for the

Lunch and Learn series or potential Coalition interest. Kimberly Wickert said she would have a sign in sheet and that Employment First are welcome to share the table. Katie Wolf Whaley stated that Employment First does not have items to table, no signage, etc. nor does the Council provide a direct service. She explained to the members the Council has approved a one-page document and partners, and she would send it to Kimberly for distribution at the Coalition meeting. She also suggested that the presentation would be a prime time to mention Employment First and how it supports customized employment. Merry Reid Sheffer agreed that it would be a good idea to bring the one-page document approved by the council to the Coalition meeting. Merry Reid asked if they could invite employers to join the Employment First Council. Katie Wolf Whaley stated there will be an opening on the Council for an employer but that individuals could always sign up on Boards and Commissions to serve a 3-year term. Katie stated you do not have to be Governor appointed to serve on the committee and anyone can join. Merry Reid Sheffer said she would stick to the one-page document approved by the Council to inform employers about Employment First and share regular meeting times of this group and invite people to join the committee to make a connection with employers. Merry Reid Sheffer discussed creating a Google form that states email, company, and basic questions to help employers. It was decided to send the completed form to Administrator, Nanci Howard to contact those individuals on the list who wish to know more about Employment First. Todd Coffey suggested reaching out to Kitty Zachery because she will be the facilitator of the Coalition meeting. The Coalition for Workforce Diversity meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 8 from noon – 1:30pm, located at the McDowell Center in Louisville, KY. Merry Reid asked for other committee volunteers to assist with the table. Todd Coffey said information sharing will begin at the beginning of the meeting. Committee member and KYOVR staff assistant, Betty Whittaker, announced KYOVR will be holding its mandatory statewide training event during the Coalition meeting, and she will not be able to assist. Discussion was held between Merry and Council member, Becky Wilson regarding networking with Goodwill and information sharing. Chair of the Council, Katie Wolf Whaley, supported the idea of tracking how many times the Council is reaching other audiences and the significance it could bring to the Annual Report at the end of the year. Kristen Beach asked if there were any guidance for the committee to track the ways information is reaching audiences, i.e. phone call, personal phone call, presentation, resource sharing, etc. There is not a mechanism for data tracking on Employment First currently. It was suggested to reach out to Karen Lee to see if there are any ways to track outreach. Extensive discussion was held on how outreach efforts are being made by other entities such as the Chamber of Commerce.

Action Items

Kimberly Wickert will provide the committee with an update on SHRM CEUs.

Katie Wolf Whaley will send the Council one-page Employment First document to Kimberly Wickert to take to the Coalition for Workforce Diversity meeting.

Merry Reid Sheffer will create a Google form for Employers and send that information to Administrator, Nanci Howard, to use as a tool to invite employers to join the committee/Council.

Merry Reid Sheffer will contact Kitty Zachery.

Nanci Howard will reach out to Karen Lee to see if there is an outreach template for the committee to use to track information sharing.

Next Committee Meeting Date

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom

Next Quarterly Meeting Date

Friday, April 12, 2024

1:00pm – 3:00pm

Hybrid Format

Location: Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Rm. C107

200 Mero Street

Frankfort, KY 40601



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Andy Beshear

Governor

Jamie Link

Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

May 22, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom

Meeting ID: 819 3105 9171

Members Present

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer and Rebecca Wilson

Members Absent

Dawn Gardner, Jessica Beaven, and Todd Coffey

Staff Present

Nanci Howard an, Deana Wilson-Kimble, and Kristen Beach

Staff Absent

Betty Whittaker

Guest(s) Present

Project NEON Subject Matter Expert, Steve Blanks, KYRETAIN, Kimberly Wickert, and Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review:

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, welcomed committee members and guests. Steve Blanks introduced himself to the team. Merry Reid Sheffer elaborated and reminded the

committee that on Best Practice Day, Steve, was the Subject Matter Expert assigned to the Employer Education and Engagement Committee. Merry stated Steve and Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, will be discussing in detail the upcoming webinar series hosted by Project NEON and the Employment First Council.

Update on KYRETAIN and Employment First Council Employer Seminar Series

Committee Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, provided an update on the Employment First Lunch N/ Learn Series. She thanked Deana Wilson-Kimbler for presenting at the Lunch N' Learn Series a day prior. Kimberly Wickert from KYRETAIN praised the event and said there was 79 people register and 59 in attendance. She stated she received positive feedback. Deana Wilson-Kimbler thanked Kimberly for her information and said the audience had good questions. Merry reminded committee members to look for presenters, think of topics, or make suggestions for future presentations. Kimberly Wickert stated on June 14, 2024 at the Norton Healthcare Goodwill Opportunities Center, Dr. Dennis McClain will provide a presentation entitled, "Return to Work and Stay at Work is Good Business: Keeping Your Bottom Line Healthy". She stated she would send this information to KYOVR Administrator of the Council, Nanci Howard, and to committee members. The in-person event will be the first and will be from noon to 12:45pm. She stated it may be recorded and uploaded. She encouraged committee members to provide employers with the information. Kimberly continued to announce that on July 11, 2024, the Lunch N' Learn series will be virtual once again and Bev Harp will be discussing innovative strategies to hire and retain individuals with autism. She then said she would reach out to Merry's colleague to present at the series. Merry stated she will send connecting email to the two. Emails with suggestions from committee members can be sent to Kimberly.

Update on Collaboration with Project NEON

Project NEON (National Expansion on Employment Opportunities) Subject Matter Expert, Steve Blanks provided background information about the upcoming webinar series and explained the series is getting back to the basics surrounding employer engagement. He provided a presentation to the committee explaining the details of the webinar. The dates of the webinar series are June 20th, July 18th, and August 15th from 10:00am – 12:00pm. The series will be interactive with videos and polls, etc. KYOVR, Employer Services Branch Manager, Deana Wilson-Kimbler suggested developing a 'fact sheet' to leave with employers after a meeting as she has been asked for this before

during her interactions with employers. Steve agreed this would be a good resource for employers. Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, explained this event meets the charge of Council and UKHDI will be the host of the series. Brandon Cannada will be the host of the event for June and August. An alternative host will be asked to conduct the July webinar. She explained how people should register and asked Steve if the webinar series could be recorded and posted. He agreed. She explained there will be a certificate of completion for the series given to all attendees. Katie said she sent a save the date to over 800+ emails and posted on social. She said the focus is to have Kentucky Providers to attend and how they can talk to employers. Merry Reid agreed to welcome attendees during the series. Katie asked if there was a logo for Project NEON. Steve Blanks is unsure if there is a logo for Project NEON but will check with Karen Lee. Katie forwarded the description of the sessions to the committee members via email.

One Page Discussion

Discussion was held regarding the development of a one-page informational flyer to employers. Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley asked if the committee's one page idea was different than the one-page Employment First flyer that has already been approved by the Council in 2022. She sent the document in the chat. Steve Blanks agreed the approved flyer looked well. Discussion was held on how to get the flyer in the hands of others since it had been shared multiple times with the Council. Extensive discussion was held regarding the approved document. Nanci will send the Employment First one-page document to the Chairs of the Council to distribute to their committees. Steve Blanks suggested giving the resource out during the webinar series.

Next Meeting Dates

Employer Education & Engagement
Committee Meeting
Wednesday, June 12, 2024
1:00pm – 2:00pm EST

Transportation Cabinet
200 Mero Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
Conference Room C107

Employment First Council Quarterly
Meeting
Friday, July 12, 2024
1:00pm – 3:00pm EST
Hybrid Format

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

June 12, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom

Meeting ID: 819 3105 9171

Members Present

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Wilson, and Todd Coffey

Members Absent

Dawn Gardner and Jessica Beaven

Staff Present

Nanci Howard and Betty Whittaker

Staff Absent

Deana Wilson-Kimble and Kristen Beach

Guest(s) Present

Project NEON Subject Matter Expert, Steve Blanks, KYRETAIN, Kimberly Wickert, and Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, welcome committee members and reviewed the agenda.

Update on Employer Seminar Series

Merry Reid Sheffer provided an update on the Employer Seminar Series in collaboration with the Kentucky Employment Council. She stated there will be another webinar hosted on Friday, June 14th, 2024. Kimberly Wickert put details of the next Lunch N' Learn series in the chat.

- Return to Work and Stay at Work is Good Business: Keeping your Bottom Line Healthy (In-person Event) Presenter: Dennis McClain, MD, FACEP, ABEM, MROCC June 14, 2024, | 12pm – 12:45pm | EST The Norton Healthcare Goodwill Opportunity Campus—Goodwill Opportunity Center 2820 West Broadway, Louisville, KY 40211 Lunch will be provided. Register at: qrco.de/beybvT

Kimberly Wickert continued to state there are openings for the event. She stated she ordered lunch for 50 people while thirty people are registered. She welcomed the committee to join and encouraged reaching out to employers to attend. There will be employers attending who will share their experience of inclusivity. Kimberly then stated the Lunch N' Learn series would be virtual in July. She stated Bev Harp will be discussing innovative ways to support employers who have Autism. She provided details in the chat.

- Kentucky's Employment First Council and RETAIN Kentucky present the July Employer Seminar Series: Innovative Supports for Autistic Workers Join Bev Harp from University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute to learn innovative ways to support the employment of people with Autism. July 11, 12:00-12:45 Register: <https://bit.ly/4blGQNw>

She stated there is a recording of the presentation available on the UKHDI website. She encouraged the committee to attend and stated Merry Reid Sheffer introduced her to Sherry Glen from Brown Foreman. Sherry will be presenting at the virtual Lunch N' Learn Series on August 13th, 2024. Kimberly announced there will be more details to come regarding this presentation. She stated the title of the presentation will be, "Employers as a Change Agent" and she said the hope is to recruit more employers to attend the webinar series. Merry Reid Sheffer thanked her for her synopsis and encouraged the committee to reach out to employers.

Project NEON Webinar Series Update

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, stated that UKHDI, on behalf of the committee and Council, will be hosting a three-part webinar series from Director of Partnerships at SEEC, Steve

Blanks. Merry stated the first part in the series will be held on Thursday, June 20th, 2024. She further announced the series will focus on three strategies for attendees to use to engage employers. She encouraged anyone who connects with employers to attend the series. Steve Blanks asked for a registration update, and it was stated by Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley that she will send to Mr. Blanks as soon as possible. Mr. Blanks stated he has been in touch with Chelsea Bocard from UKHDI regarding the logistics of the webinar. Becky Wilson stated she had sent the information to Goodwill directors and that her staff will be in attendance. Merry Reid Sheffer stated the webinars will be recorded as well. Discussion was held regarding obtaining certifications for CEU's. It was decided that a certificate of completion would be sent out to attendees after they complete the survey at the end of each session. Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, will send language to Merry Reid Sheffer to assist with her introduction of Mr. Blanks. Mr. Blanks will reach out to Chelsea Bocard of UKHDI to discuss the addition of a question on the survey. Discussion was held regarding those individuals who wish to view the recording and receive certificates of completion. Katie Wolf Whaley stated a link would be sent out with the recording for those individuals to receive credit. Merry Reid Sheffer announced that part-two and part-three of the series will be July 18th and August 15th.

Next Meeting Dates

Employer Education & Engagement Committee Meeting
Wednesday, July 10, 2024
1:00pm – 2:00pm EST

Employment First Council Quarterly Meeting
Friday, July 12, 2024
1:00pm – 3:00pm EST
Hybrid Format
Transportation Cabinet
200 Mero Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
Conference Room C107



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Andy Beshear
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Jamie Link
Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

July 10, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom

Meeting ID: 819 3105 9171

Members Present

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, Rebecca Wilson, and Todd Coffey

Members Absent

Dawn Gardner and Jessica Beaven

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Betty Whittaker, and Kristen Beach

Staff Absent

Deana Wilson-Kimble

Guest(s) Present

KYRETAIN, Kimberly Wickert and Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, welcome committee members and reviewed the agenda.

Update on Employer Seminar Series

Merry Reid Sheffer provided an update on the Employer Seminar Series in collaboration with the Kentucky Employment Council. She stated there will be another webinar hosted on **Thursday, July 11th, 2024**. She stated, KYOVR Administrator, Nanci Howard, sent out the information via email. Below are the details.

Title: Innovative Supports for Autistic Workers

Presenter: Bev Harp

Date: July 11th, 2024

Time: 12:00pm – 12:45pm

Register: <https://bit.ly/4blGQNw>

Merry-Reid encouraged committee members to share with their networks and their employer partners. She also directed committee members to utilize social media posts and share them with their connections. She continued to speak on the August session that will be conducted by Sherry Glenn, who is a Diversity and Inclusion Specialist with Brown-Foreman. Merry-Reid explained Sherry had collaborated with Edge Employment in the past and provided some background information about her to the members.

Merry-Reid then challenged committee members to bring one topic or one presenter name to the next meeting so that KYRETAIN can have a running list of topics/presenters for the series. Merry-Reid suggested the topics and presenters be preferably employers.

KYRETAIN staff, Kimberly Wickert, shared information from surveys received from the in-person employer seminar series that was held in June and Norton Healthcare in Louisville. Feedback from the survey indicated the in-person event was well received. She stated she would like to see an in-person series held quarterly. She said she hopes to see one schedule by the end of the year but is unsure. She announced the September seminar series information.

Title: Employment for People with Disabilities with Justice Involved Backgrounds.

Presenter: Dr. Chelsea Braymer

Date: TBD (week of September 25th, three potential dates)

Time: 12:00pm – 12:45pm

Kimberly Wickert continued by stating this presentation is presented nationally. She stated she welcomes input from the committee members on topics and presenters. She concluded by informing committee members of [KYRETAIN's media website](#). She stated members could inform employers the webinar would be feature on the media site so they could refer others. Chair, Merry-Reid said she enjoyed the in-person event and

encouraged members to think about asking employers if they would be interested in an in-person event or virtual.

“Enhancing Employer Engagement” Webinar Series Update

Chair, Merry-Reid Sheffer, provided the update regarding the “Enhancing Employer Engagement” webinar series with Subject Matter Expert, Steve Blanks. She said the first part of series was completed in June. She provided her positive feedback and explained there seemed to be plenty of engagement from the participants. She announced part two would be held on July 18th from 10:00am to Noon. She said this information has been shared on the Edge Employment Facebook page. The recording and PowerPoint for part one of the series is posted on the Employment First [webpage](#). Chair of the full Council, Katie Wolf Whaley, stated there were 150+ people to register for the series and about 85+ were live and the evaluations were positive. Part three will be held on August 15th.

Lastly, Merry-Reid announced there would be an Employment First Council meeting held on Friday, July 12th, 2024 from 1:00pm – 3:00pm. She asked the committee if they had questions or thoughts to assist with her report to the full council.

KYOVR/KYRETAIN staff, Betty Whittaker announced there are [blogs](#) posted on the KYRETAIN website regarding employment. Administrator, Nanci Howard, will ask staff to post the link to the blog page on the Employment First website.

Katie Wolf Whaley announced the Kentucky APSE Conference will be held in Lexington, KY on September 9th – 10th, 2024. She stated an agenda is being finalized but that if the committee members knew of employers who would like to present to let her know. She stated the conference is geared towards, providers, employment specialists and vocational rehabilitation counselors. Various topics were discussed regarding the Coalition for Workforce Diversity and Pre-ETS.

Committee member, Todd Coffey, announced there has been a new staff member come aboard at the Coalition for Workforce Diversity. Her information was shared by Kimberly Wickert, via chat through the Coalition’s July Newsletter. It stated, »I.would.like.to.introduce.you.to.Susan.Brown?the.Coalition's.new.Outreach.Coordinator;.Susan.has.worked.with.people.with.disabilities.for.many.years.in.a.variety.of.roles?directly.and.administratively;.She.enjoys.connecting.people.to.resources.and.solving.problems;.She.understands.how.transformative.the.right.connections.can.be?both.for.the.individual.and.the.company;.Susan.will.be.assisting.us.as.we.bring.four.new.Coalitions.on.board.throughout.the.state.this.year;.Please.give.Susan.a.warm.welcome.when.you.see.her.as.she.will.be.spending.most.of.her.time.in.our.office.the.first.few.months;»

Merry-Reid asked for an update on the Chamber of Commerce position at the Governor's Office for appointment. Administrator, Nanci Howard said there has been no movement as of today and we are still waiting awaiting word from the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions.

Next Meeting Dates

Employer Education & Engagement Committee Meeting

Wednesday, August 14, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm EST

Employment First Council Quarterly Meeting

Friday, July 12, 2024

1:00pm – 3:00pm EST

Hybrid Format

Transportation Cabinet

200 Mero Street

Frankfort, KY 40601

Conference Room C107



Kentucky Employment First Council
500 Mero Street, 4th Floor NE
Frankfort, KY 40601
Toll Free: (800) 372-7172
Direct: (502) 782-3421
Email: Nanci.Howard@ky.gov

Andy Beshear
Governor

Jamie Link
Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

August 14, 2024
1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom
Meeting ID: 863 9806 2295

Members Present

Committee Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, Todd Coffey, and Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley

Members Absent

Dawn Gardner, Rebecca Wilson, and Jessica Beaven

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Betty Whittaker, and Deana Wilson-Kimble

Staff Absent

Kristen Beach

Guest(s) Present

Kimberly Wickert, Susan Brown, Melissa Marvel, and Steve Blanks

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Administrator, Nanci Howard, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Introduction and Announcements

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer welcomed everyone. Introductions were held. The agenda was reviewed by all participants. Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer announced that Becky Wilson had left her position, but she would continue to serve on the council until her successor was appointed.

Employer Seminar Series Update

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer Stated that she not able to be attained 08-13-2024 The Retain Employer Seminar Series Webinar. Council member, Kimberly Wickert provided an update on Retain Employer Seminar Series; she mentioned that Sherry Glen from Brown Forman gave a presentation and received positive feedback.

which had a good turnout with 65 attendees out of 105 registered. The next webinar is scheduled for September 25th, and the topic will be individuals with disabilities and criminal justice involvement. In October, Katie Wolf Whaley will be the subject matter expert and discuss employment first webinar. Council Member, Kimberly Wickert stated there upcoming lunch and learn sessions will cover topics such as employment for individuals with criminal justice involvement and employment first. she is working on becoming a SHRM recertification provider to attract more HR professionals and CEOs to the sessions.

Staff Assistance, Betty Whittaker also provide update on RETAIN Employer Seminar Series and she provided an update on recent webinar, and she mentioned that Sherry Glen is doing unremarkable work and hot point was benefits, benefits related videos presentation and related question and answer.

Chair Merry Reid Sheffer Explained RETAIN works for Employment Talent after Injuries and illnesses network. She mentioned that Employer Education and engagement partnership with RETAIN.

Suggestions for Future Employer Seminar Series

KYOVR Employer Services Branch Manager Deana Wilson Kimbler were discussed with Committee members potential speakers and topics for future webinars. Ideas included a benefits analyst to discussed how employment impacts social security benefits, an employer who promotes mental health and well-being in the workplace, KYOVR Staff Assistance, Betty Whittaker mention that on Kentucky's new marijuana laws and their impact on employers. The committee also mentioned the possibility of inviting speakers from the committee will explore connections with organizations such as the Southeast ADA Center and Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer said that the Kentucky Re- entry Program and

the Greater Louisville Inc. mental health resources list and mental health provider Grants Humana Foundation. Council Member, Kimberly Wickert Said she will check, if she has connection with them. Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer encouraged participants to share the registration link for future Lunch and Learn sessions.

Kentucky Inclusive Workforce Summit

Council Member, Kimberly Wickert stated that RETAIN has limited scholarships available for employers to attend the Kentucky Inclusive Workforce Summit on September 30th will be held at Lexington Kentucky.

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer was encouraged to share the information with employers who may benefit from attending.

Project NEON Update

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer provided update on the NEON project and mentioned that the Employment First Council's third part of the webinar series, "Enhancing Employer Engagement", presented by Subject Matter expert (SME), Steve Blanks will occur the August 15th, 2024, from the Seeking Employment, Equality and Community (SEEC) organization.

Chair Merry Reid Sheffer apricated Katie Wolf Whaley, Deana Wilson Kimbler and Nanci Howard, Breakout room leaders were identified, and additional volunteers were sought. She provided instructions for breakout room discussions were discussed, focusing on negotiating with employers based on interests. The topic of engaging with employees with criminal justice involvement was mentioned as a potential future of Lunch and Learn topic.

Other Announcements

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer discussed her recent visit of Representative Morgan and Assistant Secretary Taryn Williams, who met with various organizations to discussed employment barriers and the value of hiring individuals with disabilities brings to workforce.

Council Chair member, Katie Wolf Whaley highlighted the upcoming Kentucky Conference on September 9th and 10th, 2024 at Lexington, KY featuring a variety of topics. Katie Wolf Whaley provided a link for registration and more information. Katie Stated Project NEON will sponsor the opening Keynote Speaker at the Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) as well as provide a session during the conference. The SME who will present is Tricia Jones Parkins.

Action Items

Council Member, Kimberly Wickert to gather information on becoming a SHRM recertification provider and reach out to the Kentucky Chamber for assistance if needed.

KYOVR Employer Services Branch Manager, Deana Wilson Kimbler to inquire about potential speakers from the targeted services branch and share recommendations with the group.

Council Chair Member, Katie Wolf Whaley reach out to the woman at the Southeast ADA Center who focuses on mental health and employment for potential employer recommendations.

Administrator, Nanci Howard to follow up with Becky Wilson regarding her continued membership on the council.

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer send an email to breakout room leaders with instructions for tomorrow's webinar.

Katie Wolf Whaley to share the registration link for the Kentucky Conference and remind attendees about the event.

Adjournment

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer thanked everyone for their contributions and adjourned the meeting with a reminder of the next meeting date.

Next Meeting Dates

Employer Education & Engagement Committee Meeting
September 11, 2024
1:00pm – 2:00pm EST

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

September 11, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom

Meeting ID: 863 9806 2295

Members Present

Committee Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, and Rebecca Wilson

Members Absent

Dawn Gardner, Todd Coffey, and Jessica Beaven

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Betty Whittaker, Anu Kumari, Deana Wilson-Kimble, and Kristen Beach

Staff Absent

N/A

Guest(s) Present

Kimberly Wickert and Melissa Marvel

Welcome, Introductions and Agenda Review

Administrator, Nanci Howard, welcomed everyone to the meeting. She shared the good news with the committee members that outreach materials, including banners and

tablecloths, have been delivered to the Employment First Council. She expressed her gratitude toward the committee members and thanked them for their input in the design process. She expressed her excitement about the materials and discussed their potential impact at the upcoming Inclusive Workforce Summit. Administrator Nanci Howard also expressed her gratitude for Merry Reid Sheffer's presentations at the recent APSE Conference and Katie Wolf Whaley's hard work in organizing the conference, praising their accomplishments.

Introductions

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer welcomed everyone. The agenda was reviewed by all participants. Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer discussed with the Committees member their experiences at the recent 2024, APSE Annual Training Conference, which is held on September 9, 2024 to September 10, 2024, in Campbell House, 1375 S Broadway, Lexington, KY and expressed their enthusiasm for the webinar.

2024 Accomplishments, Reflections, and Recommendations

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer asked for updates on the upcoming Employment First Council/KY RETAIN Employer Seminar Series from KYOVR Staff Assistant, Betty Whittaker. Betty explained the next webinar for the series would be held on September 25th at 12:00 PM (EST) and will discuss issues surrounding workers with a disability who are involved in the criminal justice system. She provided the registration link to the committee members. KYOVR Staff Assistant Betty Whittaker provided updates to the committee members about the Kentucky Transition Summit event that will be held from September 25th, 2024, to September 26th, 2024, at the Hilton Garden Inn, 110 Grandstand Dr., Georgetown, KY.

Annual Report Preparation

Administrator Nanci Howard requested input from the committee members regarding the content of the Annual Report. Chair Merry Reid Sheffer suggested including the number of registrants, the turnout for the webinars, and the feedback received from participants. Merry Reid Sheffer also mentioned the importance of including the number of attendees for the Employer Seminar Series, as well as for the three-part webinar Series, "Enhancing Employer Engagement". It was agreed there should be feedback from the evaluations included in the Annual Report. Administrator Nanci Howard mentioned that the Annual Report is due on December 1, 2024. She requested the committee members provide the necessary registrant data by October 1, 2024. She provided updates to the committee members about her plan to draft the report for the

Full Council meeting before October 1, 2024, and to display it on-screen during the meeting for input. She will send the final draft to the cabinet by November 1, 2024, for accessibility and approval. She requested the committee members reach out to her for any input. Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley shared her experience with Elizabeth Kries. She mentioned to her that the Commissioner of BHDDID would be a welcome speaker for Employment First and IPS Behavioral Health, noting their powerful impact on Employment First priorities, policies, and mission. She suggested capturing this in the Annual Report for 2024

Future Plans

Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley, discussed with the committee members' plans to continue the partnership with KY RETAIN and explore the possibility of hosting more webinars. She also discussed the idea of partnering with the Coalition for Workforce Diversity to amplify efforts and avoid overlap. Additionally, she emphasized the importance of collaboration and avoiding duplication of efforts, suggesting that a representative from the Coalition be invited to the next meeting to explore potential partnerships. Chair Merry Reid Sheffer expressed interest in expanding their efforts to engage employers in supporting high school students. They discussed the possibility of partnering with programs like Summer Works to create more opportunities for students. Katie Wolf Whaley mentioned the Transition Committee, which focuses on this topic, and suggested involving the Transition Chair, Jessica Beaven and Co-Chair, Frank Huffman. The committee members will provide a list of additional activities and initiatives that align with the mission of Employment First for inclusion in the report. They also discussed the importance of spreading the message of Employment First and the positive impact it has had on various sessions and presentations at the conference.

Action Items

KYOVR Staff Assistant, Betty Whittaker, will contact Kimberly Wickert by October 1 to obtain registrant data for the KY RETAIN Employer Seminar Series.

Administrator, Nanci Howard will gather registrant data for the "Enhancing Employer Engagement" and comments to use in the Annual Report.

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, mentioned that she will compile a list of additional activities outside of the council that further the mission of employment first and share it with Administrator, Nanci Howard, and Administrative Specialist Senior Anu Kumari for consideration in the annual report.

Adjournment

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer thanked everyone for their contributions and adjourned the meeting with a reminder of the next meeting date.

Next Meeting Date

Employer Education & Engagement Committee Meeting

October 9, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm EST



Kentucky Employment First Council
500 Mero Street, 4th Floor NE
Frankfort, KY 40601
Toll Free: (800) 372-7172
Direct: (502) 782-3421
Email: Nanci.Howard@ky.gov

Andy Beshear
Governor

Jamie Link
Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

October 9, 2024
1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom
Meeting ID: 863 9806 2295

Members Present

Committee Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Todd Coffey, and Rebecca Wilson

Members Absent

Dawn Gardner and Jessica Beaven

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Betty Whittaker, Anu Kumari, and Kristen Beach

Staff Absent

Dena Wilson-Kimble

Guest(s) Present

Kimberly Wickert

Welcome

Chair Merry Reid Sheffer, welcomed everyone to the meeting. The agenda was reviewed by all participants. No additional announcements.

Update on KYRETAIN/Employment First Council Employer Seminar Series and Upcoming Events

KYRETAIN, Kimberly Wickert provided an update on the upcoming KY RETAIN/Employment First Council Employer Seminar Series. She stated for the National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Employment First Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, would be providing a presentation entitled, “Ways Employers Can Engage, Include and Amplify Workers in the Recruitment and Retention Process.” Kimberly said Katie will be share how to elevate the workforce through the contributions of people with disabilities. The webinar will take place, October 16, 2024, from 12:00pm to 12:45pm and will address questions about language use in the workplace. Kimberly continued to announce the November topic for the forum, which will focus on respectful language regarding people with disabilities. This presentation will be provided by Bev Harp and Laura Butler and scheduled for November 12, 2024, from 12:00pm to 12:45pm. The duo will share insights on how to use disability language respectfully in the session entitled, “To “With” or Not to “With”: Answering all your questions about respectful language and disability. Kimberly shared she attended a similar session at the recent APSE Annual Conference, which was held on September 9, 2024, to September 10, 2024, in Lexington, KY, which was well-received, indicating strong interest among employers.

Registration and Attendance

Kimberly Wickert shared with the committee there were 107 registrations with approximately 60 attendees at the September Employer Seminars Series and informed them that there are reminders are sent out the day before the webinar begins to encourage attendance. Kimberly then stated she reviews comments and questions from attendees to prepare presenters ahead of time as well.

SHRM CEUs

Kimberly Wickert discussed the process for obtaining SHRM CEUs for events, which could enhance participation from HR professionals. She explained the process of obtaining SHRM certification, which involved an online application demonstrating a year of experience in specific skill and knowledge areas.

Kimberly Wickert reminded committee members, she working to the potentially pursue of CRC CEUs, with Susie Edwards’ OVR team, noting that it may require more effort due to recent changes in the CRCC process.

Kristen Beach clarified that approval for CRCs is granted per individual seminar rather than by the presentation provided and this process requires submitting presentation

topics and supporting materials for approval based on those specific topics, particularly for ethics-related sessions.

Future Ideas and Referrals

The committee discussed potential speakers and topics for the Employer Seminar Series:

Merry Reid Sheffer suggested Bill Tanini, Christian bookstore owner about participating in a future webinar as well as mentioning the Educational Director for visually impaired preschool services as potential speakers for future discussions.

A suggestion was made for a session focused on how parents of elementary-age children with disabilities can access services, addressing a gap in knowledge among this demographic.

Becky Wilson highlighted an email about volunteers for an upcoming event in November is referenced, indicating a potential opportunity for information dissemination.

The committee members expressed interest in exploring more referrals and ideas for speakers to enrich the series.

Annual Report Update

Chair Merry Reid Sheffer asked to Administrator, Nanci Howard if has everything needed for the annual report. Ms. Howard replied that she has received the necessary data and is working on incorporating SHRM credits and thanked everyone who provided data for the annual report.

Employer needs and feedback

Chair Merry Reid Sheffer emphasized the importance of understanding employer needs and trends and addressed noted a growing curiosity among employers regarding invisible disabilities and how to support affected employees.

Todd Coffee suggested need for feedback from employers regarding their roadblocks and needs is emphasized, suggesting that surveys could be beneficial.

The committee discussed the importance of reframing employer perspectives, especially when they are in crisis and focused solely on filling positions.

Coalition and Resource Sharing

Kimberly Wickert proposed inviting Kitty Zachary and Susan Brown to present about the Northern Kentucky coalition and its expansion efforts as resource of employer.

The committee members discussed the potential to leverage partnerships with local chambers of commerce to enhance recruitment efforts and share resources.

Resource Spotlight

The mention of an initiative regarding a disability hiring academy is said to be planned for 2025. Fellow Council member and Advocacy and Education Chair, Amanda Owen is involved in the planning committee.

The committee discussed the importance of highlighting resources and initiatives during presentations to provide valuable information to employers.

Action Items

Kimberly Wickert will follow up on the feasibility of pursuing CRC CEUs for upcoming events.

Committee members are encouraged to brainstorm additional topics and speakers for future meetings.

A survey will be prepared for the next meeting to prioritize employer needs and gather insights.

Adjournment

Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer and Administrator, Nanci Howard thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting with a reminder of the next meeting date.

Next Meeting Date

Employer Education & Engagement Committee Meeting
November 13, 2024
1:00pm – 2:00pm EST



Kentucky Employment First Council

500 Mero Street, 4th Floor NE

Frankfort, KY 40601

Toll Free: (800) 372-7172

Direct: (502) 782-3421

Email: Nanci.Howard@ky.gov

Andy Beshear

Governor

Jamie Link

Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employer Education and Engagement Committee

November 13, 2025

1:00pm – 2:00pm

Zoom

Meeting ID: 863 9806 2295

Members Present

Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Todd Coffey, and Rebecca Wilson

Members Absent

Committee Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer, Dawn Gardner and Jessica Beaven

Staff Present

Nanci Howard, Betty Whittaker, and Anu Kumari

Staff Absent

Dena Wilson-Kimbler and Kristen Beach

Guest(s) Present

Kimberly Wickert, Melanie Lybarger, Kitty Zachery, and Susan Brown

Welcome/Announcements

Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, conducted the meeting as proxy to Committee Chair, Merry Reid Sheffer. Katie welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced a new

employee with the Supported Employment Training Project (SETP), Melanie Lybarger. The agenda was then reviewed by all participants.

Project NEON Update

Administrator, Nanci Howard, provided an update on Project NEON (National Expansion on Employment Opportunities Network).

She announced that the Project NEON application was submitted on November 6th, 2024, and the agency has requested the maximum 300 hours of technical assistance. She announced this would be the third consecutive year the agency has applied for the grant and the chosen Core States will be announced on November 27th, 2024. She stated the application included language to continue existing projects as well as the development and implementation of new projects involving benefits counseling.

Annual Report Update

Administrator, Nanci Howard mentioned that the 2024 Employment First Council's Annual Report is progressing through the necessary channels and reported only minor changes from the Education and Labor Cabinet.

Kentucky RETAIN Update

Kimberly Wickert provided an update on Kentucky RETAIN. She reported on the November 12th, 2024 series, which featured Bev Harp and Laura Butler discussed respectful language specific to disability. Kimberly reported the event had a strong turnout, with 114 registrations and 78 attendees. She announced the upcoming December presentations, including one presentation provided by Kitty Zachary and Susan Brown on how employers can use the coalition to recruit workers. She continued to announce, in January, Kelly Burke from Humana will discuss trauma-informed care leadership in the workplace. Kimberly also mentioned a discussion with Rachel Prestenbach regarding CRC credentials, noting that a minimum of one hour is required for CRC credit, and suggested they may not pursue this at the moment due to the current momentum with 45-minute sessions.

Kentucky RETAIN Coalition Expansion Update

Kitty Zachery and Susan Brown were invited to provide updates on the Coalition's expansion. Kitty shared a map of Kentucky that highlighted the four, new Coalition sites for the year. Kitty explained the expansion goals include providing consistent access to

resources and employment across all regions of Kentucky, ensuring balanced participation from employers, service providers, and vocational rehabilitation, and allowing local autonomy for each coalition. Kitty reported on each region below and provided specifics of each Coalition's progression and goals.

Northern Kentucky

Northern Kentucky's Coalition last meeting had 30 attendees, including eight employers. The meetings are held in person at the Florence Government Center, RM. C 8100 Ewing Blvd, which has been well-received. The meetings in Northern Kentucky began September 11, 2024 are scheduled for the second Wednesday of each month from 9:00am to 10:00 a.m. The local advisory board has been established, consisting of interested parties who are eager to participate. Louisville Kentucky meeting following hybrid format after Covid. They have people In-Person option and zoom also, currently they have 20 to 30 people in person and online 50 to 70 people.

Council Member, Todd Coffey inquired about job placements resulting from the coalition's efforts, noting that there had been one placement so far. Kitty Zachary indicated that they are still in the early stages and expect more placements as the coalition gains traction.

Eastern Kentucky

Morehead is preparing to kick off its coalition with the Chamber of Commerce in January 2025, with plans to hold regular in-person meetings starting in February 2025 from 9:00am – 10:00am. Kitty reported that no location has been discussed at this time. She announced she will be meeting with the Chamber of Commerce in November to discuss possible locations. She stated the local board for Morehead includes Ron O'Hair KYOVR CRP/SE Branch Manager, Mark Poston, CRP Consultant, Kaitlyn Paschall, and LeeAnn Creech of Amazing Opportunities Kentucky, potentially along with others, to ensure broad community representation.

Southern Kentucky

In the South region, the Somerset Coalition OVR district office is set to hold its meetings on the second Thursday of each month, starting February 13th. These meetings will be hybrid, allowing for both in-person and virtual attendance, and are scheduled during lunchtime from 12:00 to 1:00 PM or 12:00 to 1:30 PM. The location is still being finalized, with the Center for Rural Development in Somerset being a

potential venue. The advisory committee for Somerset currently includes several service providers. Notable members include Angela Hutchinson from Adanta, Brandy Eads from Adanta, Jamie Bell from Adanta, Melinda Worth from Schulz Consulting, Dorraine Hacker from Horizon Health, and James Graves from ABA. Melinda Worth also participates in Louisville meetings due to her work in both areas. The OVR representation includes Kelly Osborne Branch Manager in Somerset office, Alice McClard in south region, Alisha Bolin employment specialist for Somerset, and Gloria Gibson is CRP consultant for the South region, who are all actively involved in the Somerset coalition.

Western Kentucky

The final coalition for the year is located in Henderson OVR office, with its first meeting scheduled for January 17th. These meetings will occur on the third Friday of each month from 9 AM to 10 AM and will be held in person. The Henderson Community and Technical College is being considered as a meeting space, as the VR office is located there.

What Can Employment First Committee Members Do to Help?

Kitty Zachery and Susan Brown encouraged the Employment First Committee members to support the committee's initiatives in various ways, including sharing information on social media platforms like LinkedIn, and Facebook. Kitty mentioned that Susan Brown has been updating the coalition's online presence, and support in spreading the word would be beneficial and requested committee members to provide three employment leads from their networks to help identify potential employers in the regions.

Monthly events include workshops for service providers and employers. The "JustUS League" meetings for service providers focus on practical employment information, offer a space for informal problem-solving and sharing success stories. These meetings occur on the first Friday of each month from 12 PM to 1 PM.

The Employer info sessions, moderated by Susan Brown, are typically held on the last Friday of the month, with adjustments made for the holiday schedule in November and December. The November employer info session will focus on resources for deaf consumers, responding to inquiries from employers about available services. These sessions aim to foster connections between existing and new employers, encouraging mentorship and sharing of best practices regarding hiring individuals with disabilities. The coalition's promotional materials, including a brochure and a map detailing the

statewide expansion, will be shared with committee members at a later time. They are encouraged to sign up for the monthly newsletter, which will include regional updates starting January 1. Applications for new coalitions will open on July 1 for the 2025-2026 period, with the goal of establishing the current four coalitions by the end of June.

Committee Response

Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley suggested reaching out to Jessica Beaven a member of the Employment First Council who is an employer in Henderson, KY. She has shown interest in sharing information and could be a valuable contact for networking with other business owners in the area. KYOVR Staff Support, Betty Whittaker raised the possibility of using Morehead State University as a meeting location, particularly their library, which has hosted events in the past. There is a need for additional providers in the Morehead area, and the local VR office may have a list of potential contacts. Committee Members also included a discussion about the regional workforce development conference held in Morehead, there was at least one session specifically on disability and employment. It was said that the Northeast Kentucky Regional Workforce Conference was in Morehead of last spring. Jason Sloan, the director of the Rowan County Chamber, was identified as a potential contact for further collaboration.

Katie Wolf Whaley stated there would be a standing agenda item for 2025 Annual Report recommendations and all committee agendas moving forward.

Adjournment

Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley and Administrator, Nanci Howard thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting

Next Meeting Date

Employer Education & Engagement Committee Meeting
December 11, 2024
1:00pm – 2:00pm EST