



**Andy Beshear**  
Governor

**Jamie Link**  
Education and Labor Cabinet Secretary

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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, and Rebecca Wilson

**Members Absent:** Dawn Gardner, and Jessica Beaven

**Staff Present:** Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Administrator, Nanci Howard, KYOVR Manager, Deana Wilson-Kimble, KYOVR Assistant Director, Kristen Beach

**Guest(s) Present:** Kimberly Wickert, Katie Wolf Whaley and Betty Whittaker

### **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 Lunch N' Learn 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-Kimbler 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 servs 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 Meeting Date:**

Employer Education & Engagement Committee:

Wednesday, May 22, 2024

1:00pm – 2:00pm EST

[Zoom Link](#)

Employment First Council:

Friday, April 12, 2024

1:00pm – 3:00pm EST

[Zoom Link](#)

Hybrid Format

Location: Transportation Cabinet  
200 Mero Street  
Conference Room C107

Frankfort, KY 40622

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