



**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](mailto:Nanci.Howard@ky.gov)

**Andy Beshear**  
Governor

**Jamie Link**  
Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

---

## Employer Education and Engagement Committee

September 11, 2025

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**

---

KYOVVR 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