



Kentucky Employment First Council

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Secretary, Education and Labor Cabinet

Employment First Council Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

August 24, 2026

2:00pm – 3:00pm (EST)

Zoom

Meeting ID: 822 0989 0945

Members' Present

Employment First Council Chair, Katie Wolf Whaley, Vice-Chair, Jeff White, Legislative Liaison, Andrew Johnson, Amanda Owen, Merry Reid Sheffer, Shelly Durbin and Tal Curry

Staff Present

Anu Kumari and Brooke McDaniel

Welcome | Introduction

Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley welcomed attendees. Introductions were held, and the agenda was reviewed and acknowledged by all.

Annual Report Updates

The committee reviewed the status of the 2026 Employment First Council Annual Report and previous action items to identify completed work and remaining follow-up.

KYOVR Staff Support shared updates to the draft, including updated content and the eighth Autism Informed Employer (AIE) video. A ninth video is expected to be available for inclusion, while the tenth video, scheduled for October, will likely fall outside the reporting timeline.

Members also discussed including Employment First-related presentations, trainings, outreach, partnerships, and other Council member activities that support Employment First principles.

The committee confirmed September 30, 2026, as the deadline for distributing the draft Annual Report with the Full Council meeting materials. Chair Katie Wolf Whaley requested clarification on whether Susie Edwards and Brooke McDaniel should review the draft before distribution. Brooke agreed to confirm the process with Susie.

Katie Wolf Whaley requested the most recent Annual Report draft, committee recommendation notes, and updated Excel document containing accomplishments, presentations, partnerships, activities, and recommendations.

Key Deadlines:

- September 30 – Distribute the draft Annual Report to the full Council with meeting materials.
- October 9 – Present the draft Annual Report to the full Council for review and potential approval.
- October 12 – Submit the draft through the appropriate Cabinet review process.
- December 1 – Submit the final Annual Report to the Governor's desk.

Annual Report Template Review and Discussion

The committee reviewed the Annual Report template and discussed organizing accomplishments, activities, and potential recommendations under the Council's statutory charges. KYOVR Staff Support Anu Kumari shared committee information already compiled and noted that review of the Public Policy and Transition Committees was ongoing.

The committee discussed Project NEON-related activities, recommendations, accomplishments, presentations, partnerships, and other items being considered for the Annual Report. Members emphasized the need for specific information that accurately reflects the Council's work and identified items requiring additional detail or further discussion through the appropriate Council committees.

- **Public Policy Committee:** The committee discussed Project NEON Impact of Wages on Benefits, including a potential Medicaid Buy-In proposal that remains under consideration.

- **Provider Capacity Committee:** The committee discussed Employment Network/Ticket to Work and Project NEON data-related activities. It was shared that Michael Dalto is expected to provide additional information at an upcoming committee meeting.
- **Employer Education and Engagement Committee / Advocacy and Education Committee:** The committee discussed whether certain Project NEON-related activities may align with either committee. No final placement was determined.

The committee noted that potential recommendations and proposals should be reviewed through the appropriate Council committees before being considered for inclusion in the Annual Report as formal recommendations.

Additional Discussion

The committee discussed whether another formal Strategic Plan is required as the current three-year plan nears completion. It was noted that the previous Administrator had been expected to review the Council's bylaws for additional clarification.

It was also discussed that Employment First will participate in a Kentucky Autism Training Center caregiver/family resource roundtable in Richmond, Kentucky. Staff Support will assist with preparing Employment First and committee-related materials for the September 11, 2026, event.

Action Item

- KYOVR Staff Support Anu Kumari will provide the requested Annual Report materials and complete the review of Public Policy and Transition Committee information.
- Katie Wolf Whaley will review the compiled information, place accomplishments, activities, and appropriate recommendations under the relevant Council charges, and identify any remaining gaps or areas requiring additional detail.
- Committee members will submit additional Employment First-related accomplishments, presentations, trainings, outreach activities, partnerships, and potential recommendations for consideration in the Annual Report.

- Brooke McDaniel will confirm whether administrative review is required before September 30, 2026, distribution deadline.
- KYOVR Staff Support will assist Katie Wolf Whaley with materials for September 11, 2026, caregiver/family resource roundtable.

Adjournment

Employment First Council Chair Katie Wolf Whaley thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting Date

Date: September 17, 2026

Time: 3:00 p.m.- 4:00 pm EST