Cumberlands Workforce Development Board
Meeting Minutes
8/18/2026 @ 10:00 am (CT)
LCADD, 2384 Lakeway Dr, Russell Springs, KY 42642

The Cumberlands Workforce Development Board's meeting was held on Tuesday, August 18, 2026 at 10:00 am Central Time in-person and via Zoom at the Lake Cumberland Area Development District office in Russell Springs. Mr. Sam Brown, Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order and opened in prayer.

Ms. Shannon Kelty, LCADD Administrative Assistant, called the roll. There were twenty-two (22) of the twenty-nine (29) board members present. There were eleven (11) members in-person and ten (11) via Zoom. There were seventeen (17) Business and Workforce representatives in attendance meeting the minimum requirement of 51% of those members being present, thus constituting a quorum.

All members received a copy of the minutes from the previous meeting. Questions and/or corrections were asked for; there being none, a motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Larry King. Seconded by Ms. Ayla Hargis. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Brown presented two members for appointment & ratification; Pam Murphy, Senior Rep. for Talent Acquisition at Tyson Foods, to the CWDB; Melissa Warner, Youth Services Director at Casey County Schools, to the Youth Committee. A motion to accept the appointments was made by Mr. Wendell Emerson. Seconded by Ms. Amanda Stafford. All in favor. Motion Carried.

Ms. Myra Wilson, CWDB Executive Director, gave the budget report stating the total budget for PY25 is $2,195,473.00. As of July 31, 2026, $1,782,287.41 has been expended, which is 81.18% of the budget. The leftover funds will be carried over to cover until this year's funds come in. A motion to accept the budget as presented was made by Mr. Wendell Emerson. Seconded by Mr. Tucker Adams. All in favor. Motion carried.

Ms. Wilson also presented the budget for PY26. The total budget for PY26 is $2,695,351.00. As of August 15, 2026, $178,873.87 has been expended, which is 6.64% of the budget. A motion to accept the budget as presented was made by Mr. Wendell Emerson. Seconded by Ms. Ayla Hargis. All in favor. Motion carried.

Ms. Wilson requested the approval of the Contract Amendment for Kinetic Strategic Design (KSD). All amounts would stay the same for the current year. A motion to approve the Amendment for KSD as presented was made by Mr. Willie Wilson. Seconded by Mr. Wendell Emerson. All in favor. Motion carried.

Ms. Wilson requested the approval of New CDL Limits for WIOA's Operational Guidelines. After doing some comparisons, it is requested that we increase our funding for CDL training from $3,800 to $4,500 to align with what other areas are paying. A motion to accept the New CDL Limits as presented was made by Mr. Tucker Adams. Seconded by Ms. Amanda Stafford. All in favor. Motion carried.

Ms. Karen Miller, One-Stop Operator, provided an update for the Kentucky Career Centers. She states that when comparing 24-25 Grant totals to 25-26 Grant totals, our numbers were down. This is partially due to employee turnover at the career centers and Vocational Rehab not being able to approve

services. For this quarter, our Customer Count numbers were up 7%.

Ms. Wilson gave an update on WIOA programs. There are 205 participants currently in WIOA programs with 79 in follow up. There are 526 participants currently in Putting Young Kentuckians to Work. In PY25, our top training sectors were Healthcare and CDL. PYKW had 277 employment outcomes for PY24-PY25. Our goal for the next 2 years is 225 employment outcomes for PYKW. Performance negotiations have been taking place and we are waiting to hear the final outcome. Ms. Wilson then shared several PYKW success stories.

Mr. Dennis Ritchie, Vice President of Reentry and Strategic Partnerships for Goodwill, shared an update. He discussed Goodwill's mission to eliminate poverty by shifting focus from simple job placement to long-term barrier removal and sustainable career paths. In 2025, the organization served over 26,000 Kentuckians across 103 counties, helping 1,562 individuals achieve self-sufficiency. Over 75% of Goodwill's 2,600 statewide employees meet "mission employee" criteria, including justice-impacted individuals, domestic violence survivors, and long-term unemployed workers. Goodwill supports these employees through transitional store roles and robust wraparound services like the Work & Learn initiative, where staff work 30 hours and receive 10 paid hours weekly for credentialing, as well as legal assistance, which has achieved over 20,000 record expungements to date.

To drive career advancement, Goodwill's Strategic Partnerships team is pivoting away from saturated fields like peer support toward employer-aligned pathways in logistics, CDL, fiber optics, pharmacy tech, construction trades, and hospitality. Partnering employers actively shape training, visit classrooms, and offer guaranteed post-graduation interviews at Opportunity Centers. Early metrics from this 2026 initiative reflect 122 graduates and a 67% job placement rate, with future planning focused on expanding pre-release jail programs and hiring dedicated retention specialists to ensure long-term career growth.

Mr. Alisher Burikhanov, KWIB Executive Director, outlined the state's strategy for the next three and a half years, structured across four primary pillars: education, employer engagement, workforce participation, and coordination and return on investment (ROI). A central emphasis of this strategy is expanding work-based learning opportunities to address employer concerns regarding candidate readiness and essential skills. The gold standard for these efforts remains registered apprenticeships, which provide national credentials, mentorship, structured wage progression, and classroom instruction, alongside internships, co-ops, and work experiences. Data indicates that registered apprenticeships in Kentucky have doubled over the past decade to more than 5,700, while high school internship and co-op participation grew from 21 students in the 2023–2024 school year to 4,400 in 2024–2025. Complementary educational strategies include requiring internships for all undergraduate students, as exemplified by the University of the Cumberlands, and expanding the statewide teacher pipeline by leveraging retired industry professionals and non-traditional instructors across correctional facilities and higher education institutions.

To drive employer engagement, KWIB is focused on educating businesses on how to implement work-based learning and tap into underutilized talent pools, particularly justice-impacted individuals, veterans, individuals with disabilities, youth, and immigrants. Key state initiatives supporting this focus include House Bill 5, which funds a new reentry facility in Boyle County designed to train 400 inmates annually through the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). KWIB is also promoting business engagement through its Unified Business Services team (SWAT) and encouraging local workforce investment boards to partner with community assets like public libraries. Furthermore, state strategic planning prioritizes aligning training programs with high-demand, non-saturated

occupations while monitoring emerging skill requirements related to artificial intelligence. For reference, registered apprenticeships achieved strong wage outcomes in program year 2025, yielding an average entry wage of $20.06 per hour and a completion wage of $26.31 per hour.

Mr. Burikhanov also briefed the board on the official July 1, 2026, launch of Workforce Pell in Kentucky, following its federal authorization under H.R. 1. The initiative expands Pell Grant eligibility to short-term, high-demand training programs lasting between 8 and 15 weeks. To qualify for state approval and subsequent student funding, programs must yield stackable, credit-bearing, and portable credentials, maintain at least a 70% completion rate and a 70% job placement rate, and prepare students for occupations paying above Kentucky's high-wage threshold of $23.00 per hour (benchmarked against the statewide median wage of $22.99 per hour and regional living wage standards). Once post-secondary institutions submit qualifying programs for state review and gubernatorial approval, eligible students can utilize Pell funding for these accelerated training pathways. In closing comments, regional academic leadership noted that KCTCS is accelerating its curriculum approval process for these short-term credentials, but emphasized that institutional approval relies heavily on local employers committing to interviews and job placements for program graduates.

Mr. Brett Traver Brett had a positive experience attending the SWATT meeting, describing it as a productive event where he enjoyed the conversations and met sincere professionals who were genuinely eager to help. He appreciated the balanced makeup of his team, which brought together economic developers, industry partners, training providers, and outreach representatives. Drawing on his perspective as an economic developer who views workforce development as a key part of his work, Traver observed that the workforce system often has "many cooks in the kitchen." However, he was encouraged to see various entities beginning to tear down traditional silos and openly communicate about their respective capabilities. Ultimately, he emphasized the importance of creating integrated networks with multiple "on-ramps" for businesses to recruit and train staff, while balancing the dual responsibility of supporting both job-seeking individuals and local employers.

Ms. Wilson gave a Director’s Update quickly reviewing the Strategic Goals. Under Goal 1, we are partnering with SCC and local teams to develop apprenticeships and align training with high-demand sectors to prevent market saturation. Goal 2 focuses on SWATT and will be discussed next. To fulfill Goal 3, we are expanding training programs within detention centers using NDWG grant funding and awaiting approval on an ARC grant to introduce virtual reality goggles to their career centers. Goal 4 focuses on leveraging external supportive services, an effort aligned with the SWATT initiative, to preserve core funding primarily for direct training. Finally, under Goal 5, the board has successfully secured a new grant from the Department of Labor to further support their ongoing initiatives.

Ms. Wilson also provided an update on the progress and outcome of the recent SWATT retreat. Designed to eliminate the chaotic, overlapping outreach employers currently face, the retreat brought together a diverse group of representatives from economic development, KCTCS, local development districts, and business service teams. Under Commissioner Yoder's direction, groups were intentionally structured without duplicate job roles to gather varied perspectives, culminating in a draft "playbook" and 33 pages of follow-up homework for attendees. Participants were divided into six working groups assigned specific questions and tight deadlines, leading up to an August 28 leadership meeting with Secretary Noel and Secretary Link, a September 25 deadline for playbook feedback, and an October 6 webinar to share the final results.

With no other business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Larry King. Meeting adjourned.

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Sam Brown, Vice-Chair