

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the 2025 Interim

November 20, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The sixth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and Workforce Investment was held on November 20, 2025, at 9:00 AM in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Josh Branscum, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Josh Branscum, Co-Chair; Senator Phillip Wheeler, Co-Chair; Senators Rick Girdler, Jason Howell, Scott Madon, Matt Nunn, Mike Wilson, and Max Wise; and Representatives Josh Calloway, Robert Duvall, Daniel Elliott, Al Gentry, Vanessa Grossl, Kevin Jackson, Matthew Lehman, Matt Lockett, J.T. Payne, Scott Sharp, and Ashley Tackett Laferty.

Guests: Michael Gritton, Executive Director, KentuckianaWorks; Myra Wilson, Executive Director, Cumberland Workforce Development Board; Robyn Domber, Senior Vice President of Research, Development Counsellors International (DCI); Patience Fairbrother, Senior Vice President of Talent Attraction, DCI; Andi Johnson, Chief Policy Officer, Commerce Lexington; Shelby Somervell, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs and External Relations, Greater Louisville Inc.; Will Metcalf, Associate Vice President of Research and Innovation, University of Louisville (UofL); Scott Broughton, Executive Director of Kentucky Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), UofL; Josh Anderson, Operations Manager, Anderson Forest Products, Inc. (Anderson Forest); and Sarah King, Quality Manager, Anderson Forest.

LRC Staff: Janine Coy, Christian Deeter, Austin Johnson, and Samantha Gerhart.

Approval of October Minutes

A motion was made by Representative Jackson and seconded by Representative Lockett to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2025, meeting. Minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

Putting Young Kentuckians to Work: First Year Update

Michael Gritton, Executive Director, KentuckianaWorks, and Myra Wilson, Executive

Director, Cumberland Workforce Development Board, provided a first-year update on the Putting Young Kentuckians to Work program. Mr. Gritton explained how federal investment is slowly decreasing the amount of money available to the Commonwealth to solve workforce challenges. Ms. Wilson discussed how the program has been growing and reviewed the youth employment initiatives over the past year, highlighting the successes, challenges, and strategies for expanding work-based learning opportunities.

In response to Chair Branscum, Mr. Gritton explained how building relationships within schools in multiple counties was the biggest barrier when implementing this program.

In response to Representative Payne, Ms. Wilson discussed how developing relationships with locally operated centers and the Area Technology Centers have been critical to get trainings into schools.

In response to Senator Nunn, Mr. Gritton explained how the federal money received is designated for disconnected young adults who are not currently in school or working. However, they want to work with high school seniors as well.

In response to Representative Gentry, Ms. Wilson explained how they work with different cabinets and have an initiative for the entire state to work together.

In response to Representative Gentry, Mr. Gritton explained how providing skilled training to students will improve wage rates across the state over time.

Kentucky Talent Attraction Initiative

Robyn Domber, Senior Vice President of Research, DCI; Patience Fairbrother, Senior Vice President of Talent Attraction, DCI; Andi Johnson, Chief Policy Officer, Commerce Lexington; and Shelby Somervell, Senior Vice President of Government Affairs and External Relations, Greater Louisville Inc, explained how DCI was hired to develop a marketing strategy to attract and retain talent in Kentucky. Ms. Domber detailed the specific problems and opportunities that will affect Kentucky's talent attraction. Ms. Fairbrother detailed the six preliminary recommendations for the state and recommended an investment of \$5 million over three years to develop an attraction and retention program for Kentucky.

In response to Representative Lehman, Ms. Domber explained that 47 percent of Kentuckians would consider leaving the state.

In response to Co-Chair Wheeler, Ms. Fairbrother responded to the study that Americans are less mobile in the US currently. She proposed that people are looking for a better quality of life rather than new job opportunities.

In response to Chair Branscum, Ms. Domber explained the DCI surveys of external respondents and internal respondents for their study.

In response to Senator Wilson, Ms. Johnson stated she did not have the number of open jobs in Kentucky but would obtain those numbers for the members.

In response to Representative Duvall, Ms. Fairbrother explained how they are currently working on creating a campaign and logo for Kentucky's initiative.

In response to Representative Gentry, Ms. Domber detailed how Kentucky has certain advantages compared to other states, such as affordability and cost of living.

In response to Representative Sharp, Ms. Domber explained how they would like to expand their initiative into other markets.

In response to Representative Lockett, Ms. Domber explained how their talent focus is specific to metro areas within those states.

Kentucky Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Will Metcalf, Associate Vice President of Research and Innovation, UofL; Scott Broughton, Executive Director of MEP, UofL; and Sarah King, Quality Manager, Anderson Forest, discussed solving manufacturing across Kentucky. Mr. Metcalf explained how MEP is dedicated to solving problems of small and medium-sized manufacturers. Mr. Broughton explained how focusing on the employer allows manufacturers to strengthen local economies, support job growth, and retain talent. Mr. Broughton detailed statistics surrounding MEP's total impact of \$700 million for manufacturers over the past 5 years. Mr. Broughton explained that the Catalyst Equipment Match (CEM) program had a return investment of \$12.5 million in the first year. Ms. King explained how the CEM program has increased Anderson Forest's business by producing more product, creating four new jobs, and allowing greater efficiency.

In response to Senator Madon, Mr. Metcalf explained the CEM program has received an initial state appropriation of \$1.3 million and another \$4 million, with one employee to administering the program.

In response to Representative Sharp, Mr. Metcalf explained how they work with partners to facilitate manufacturers financing capital investments.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:24 AM.