

WORKFORCE ATTRACTION AND RETENTION TASK FORCE

Minutes of the 6th Meeting of the 2024 Interim

November 14, 2024

Call to Order and Roll Call

The sixth meeting of the Workforce Attraction and Retention Task Force was held on November 14, 2024, at 9:00 AM in Room 131 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Robert Duvall, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Robert Duvall, Co-Chair; Senator Max Wise, Co-Chair; Senators Greg Elkins and Shelley Funke Frommeyer; Representatives Matthew Koch, Michael Sarge Pollock, and Ashley Tackett Laferty.

Guests: Colby Hall, Executive Director, Shaping Our Appalachian Region; Steven Clarke, President/CEO, Logan Aluminum; Teresa Hayes, Human Resources Manager, Logan Aluminum; Rebecca Barnes, Executive Director, IEC of the Bluegrass; Nathan Nelson, Board of Directors President, IEC of the Bluegrass; Representative Shawn McPherson; Jon Sowards, President and CEO, South Central Kentucky Workforce Board; Carter Hendricks, Executive Director, Southwest Kentucky EDC; Taylor Hayes, President and CEO, Christian County Chamber of Commerce

LRC Staff: Janine Coy, Jasmine Williams, Wendy Craig, Matissa Robinson, and Sasche Allen.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from the October 16, 2024, meeting was made by Senator Funke Frommeyer, seconded by Senator Elkins, and approved by voice vote.

Solutions to Population Challenges in Eastern Kentucky

Colby Hall, Executive Director of Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR), presented strategies and insights on addressing workforce challenges in the state. The presentation focused on key issues such as labor shortages, barriers to employment, and the need for regional development to enhance job opportunities and overall economic development. Initiatives emphasized that could improve workforce participation rates in Eastern Kentucky, included programs to retain skilled workers, support for addiction recovery efforts as a pathway back to employment, and investment in education and technical training. Additionally, Mr. Hall highlighted the importance of regional marketing campaigns to attract talent by showcasing the Commonwealth's quality of life and opportunities for growth.

Responding to Chair Duvall, Mr. Hall discussed the regional benefits of new healthcare facilities in Pikeville, with healthcare being the leading sector in the area.

Addressing concerns expressed by Senator Funke Frommeyer, Mr. Hall discussed the number of employers with vacant positions compared to the number of prime age individuals not participating in the workforce and barriers to employment, including child care, transportation, and housing. He clarified that although SOAR was awarded a \$41 million grant to close the prime age employment gap in 12 Eastern Kentucky counties, the launch date for the five-year initiative was October 1, 2024. SOAR plans to utilize the grant funding through collaboration with workforce partners to implement new outreach initiatives.

Replying to Representative Tackett Laferty, Mr. Hall detailed SOAR's collaborative partnership with Career Centers and other regional workforce partners.

Answering Representative Pollock, Mr. Hall discussed the infrastructure necessary to support a thriving workforce, including adequate broadband. Improving broadband access in the region could bring additional job opportunities, especially as it pertains to remote employment.

Responding to Chair Wise, Mr. Hall spoke about the role tourism plays in regional workforce development.

Senator Elkins discussed further analysis of data presented on the number of prime age individuals not participating in the workforce.

Representative Koch expressed a desire to have the Cabinet for Economic Development (CED) present and Mr. Hall highlighted SOAR's collaboration with CED.

Representative Tackett Laferty made additional remarks about the Mountain Parkway expansion and how the project could impact workforce efforts in the region.

Logan Aluminum Workforce Successes

Steven Clarke, President and CEO of Logan Aluminum, and Teresa Hayes, Human Resources Manager at Logan Aluminum, focused on the company's strategies and successes in workforce development, including workforce initiatives, community engagement, commitment to sustainability, and workplace culture. Logan Aluminum serves various markets, including beverage packaging, industrial, and automotive products. A focus on career and technical education to cultivate skilled labor locally was emphasized along with company programs that aim to attract young talent while addressing workforce challenges

specific to manufacturing. Speakers discussed the company's active involvement in local, regional, and state initiatives to support economic and workforce development. As a leading aluminum producer, the use of environmentally friendly practices plays a key role in enhancing Logan Aluminum's appeal to workers that prioritize environmentally friendly employers. Additionally, the company's efforts to create a supportive and innovative workplace culture were highlighted.

Answering Chair Duvall, Ms. Hayes said Logan Aluminum requires skilled employees with career and technical education, especially those with electrical and mechanical backgrounds. Mr. Clarke discussed automation and digitization.

Responding to Representative Koch, Ms. Hayes spoke about mentorship to high school students, Logan Aluminum's talent development program, education externships, and regional training and education collaboration.

Addressing Senator Funke Frommeyer, Ms. Hayes stated Logan Aluminum would like to increase its female workforce and discussed the company's talent attraction strategies and employee relocation assistance program.

Replying to Chair Wise, Mr. Clarke discussed the European education model, which includes an emphasis on career pathway exploration for children before they reach high school.

Answering Representative Pollock, Ms. Hayes and Mr. Clarke spoke about Logan Aluminum's retention tactics and explained how the company's internal development programs aid in those efforts.

In response to Representative Tackett Laferty, Mr. Clarke confirmed Logan Aluminum utilizes railway and vehicular transportation methods but has a long-term plan to further increase the use of railway for efficiency purposes.

Apprenticeship Programming for Kentucky's Electrical Industry

Rebecca Barnes, Executive Director of IEC of the Bluegrass, and Nathan Nelson, Board President of IEC of the Bluegrass, presented on apprenticeship programming for the electrical industry and highlighted the critical role of apprenticeships in addressing workforce shortages and attracting new talent to the trade. They emphasized the value of structured training programs, which blend on-the-job experience with classroom instruction, as a key solution to developing a skilled labor force. The presenters outlined initiatives to improve accessibility to apprenticeship opportunities, including partnerships with local businesses and outreach efforts to underrepresented groups. They discussed how these programs not only provide technical skills but support long-term career pathways in the electrical sector.

Answering Chair Duvall, Ms. Barnes spoke about the importance of face-to-face engagement and interaction with students to spread awareness of the electrical industry as a viable career pathway.

Responding to Chair Wise, Ms. Barnes confirmed IEC of the Bluegrass has 202 apprentices enrolled for the 2024-2025 school year and a 95 percent retention rate.

Addressing Senator Funke Frommeyer, Ms. Barnes said the organization collaborates with local area technology centers and career and technical centers along with the Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky (TRACK) program.

Replying to Senator Elkins, Ms. Barnes stated an organizational barrier is a lack of resources and staff. IEC recently received a grant that will allow the organization to hire a part-time field recruiter.

Answering Representative Koch, Ms. Barnes confirmed there are IEC students utilizing the Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES).

Attracting Military Workforce

Representative Shawn McPherson emphasized the unique value veterans and military personnel bring to Kentucky's workforce. He highlighted the state's commitment to becoming a veteran-friendly state by leveraging policies and partnerships that attract military talent to fill critical workforce gaps. He stressed the need to become a state that does not tax veteran pensions. Jon Sowards, President and CEO of the South Central Kentucky Workforce Board; Carter Hendricks, Executive Director of Southwest Kentucky EDC; and Taylor Hayes, President and CEO of Christian County Chamber of Commerce, discussed strategies to promote the state with competitive job opportunities and quality of life enhancements; the importance of collaboration between local chambers of commerce, workforce boards, and economic development organizations to create robust support systems for military families; development of tailored programs to address barriers veterans may face such as credentialing and skills translation to civilian roles; and the efforts to retain military personnel post-transition by investing in housing, education, and community-based initiatives, to make the state attractive for military veterans and retirees.

Responding to Representative Pollock, Mr. Hayes stressed the need to invest in the veteran population to strengthen the Commonwealth's economy and workforce. Representative McPherson noted lowering the state income tax has been successful and encouraged members to support legislation eliminating an income tax on veteran pensions.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 11:06 AM.