

Kentucky Board of Education
April 12, 2017
Report from the Secretary
Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Education and Workforce Alignment through the Work Ready Skills Initiative

The last fifteen months have seen much positive change for Kentucky education. From the passage of charter school legislation and education reform, the success of dual credit scholarships and the launch of the Kentucky Future Skills Report, we have many new tools to elevate student's opportunities across the Commonwealth. One initiative that has already made a significant impact on Kentucky education is the Work Ready Skills Initiative – the \$100 million bond fund created by the 2016 General Assembly to provide accelerated pathways for students and adults to enter the workforce.

The Kentucky Work Ready Skills Initiative completed its first round of awards in January, and the application deadline for round two has just passed. In the first round, a committee of ten individuals considered 117 applications totaling over \$540 million in requests. The applicants were required to create partnerships of secondary and postsecondary institutions with local employers to align available training with the specific employer needs for the high-demand jobs in Kentucky's economy.

Over several months, the committee analyzed the following:

- Applicants leverage of public funds;
- Local efforts to match the state's investment;
- The number of expanded opportunities that would result from the investment;
- And local economic needs along with several other factors.

Ultimately, 26 final awards were granted, totaling \$65.5 million. That \$65.5 million leveraged \$85 million in matching funds and will provide training for 16,500 students and 13,500 adults in Kentucky's priority sectors.

These projects will be regional centerpieces of technical education. Successful applicants were encouraged to involve multiple school districts and counties. A regional approach, creating hubs of technical education, will allow students more choices of specialized opportunities. Some examples are:

- Paducah Schools will build a state-of-the-art technology center to be a regional innovation hub for Western Kentucky students. It will specialize in logistics, health science, cybersecurity and engineering. It will train 140 adults and 1,300 students annually.
- The Barren County Board of Education will construct a state-of-the-art "Barren Regional Technical Campus" to address community workforce needs in high-demand STEM and services industries. It will train 1,960 adults and 2,282 students annually.
- The Warren County Area Technology Center proposed three pilot programs as an Early-College Career Academy. The robotics and automation engineering, and computerized manufacturing and machining will be the new programs while the welding program will

be expanded to include robotics to meet the needs of local industries. It will train 500 adults and 600 students annually.

- The Jefferson Career and Technical Center will construct an advanced manufacturing center with multiple flexible labs, classrooms, and support areas. The renovation of existing space, vacated by the programs that will move to the Center, will provide for the in-demand expansion of the automotive technology programs. It will train 2,752 adults and 750 students annually.
- Boone County Schools will repurpose the former Toyota campus in Erlanger to Ignite Academy, a STEAM school, focused on advanced manufacturing, trades, IT and health science. It will train 300 adults and 1,000 students annually.
- Jessamine County Schools will renovate and purchase equipment to support a new hybrid Project Lead the Way/Career Technical Education Pathways in manufacturing beginning with computerized manufacturing and machine engineering and eventually adding welding engineering and electrical engineering.
- Somerset Community College and Pulaski Area Technology Center will renovate and fund new equipment to support welding, advanced manufacturing, computerized manufacturing, engineering and electronics, UAV (drone) technology, 3D printing and IT as well as the first injection molding program in Kentucky. It will train 640 adults and 280 students annually.
- KCEOC Community Action Partnership will convert an existing Knox County building to create a new workforce training center in advanced manufacturing, health sciences, information technology and construction trades. The new location will serve 2,500 adults and 1,700 students annually.

These are exciting opportunities that will be created for Kentucky students and adults. The discussions that began in order to assemble the 117 applications are equally exciting. These conversations between employers, secondary and postsecondary educators, developing pathway alignment from high school through postsecondary into the workforce, may be the most important impact of the Work Ready Skills Initiative.

Continued alignment, through dual credit opportunities and better, industry-led career and technical education are necessary to ensure that every high school student graduates ready to enter postsecondary education and the workforce. We have made substantial progress toward this goal during the past year, and we look forward to working with the Kentucky Board of Education as we continue to make progress in the future.