

KY COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AERO Advisory Committee



March 18, 2026 – 10:00 a.m. ET

Location: CPE Office, Boardroom, 100 Airport Rd., Frankfort, KY 40601;

Livestream: <https://cpe.ky.gov/aboutus/meetings.html>

- 10:00** **Welcome**
Miles Feroli, PhD
CPE Senior Associate, Workforce and Economic Development
- Introductory Remarks**
Aaron Thompson, PhD
President, CPE
- 10:05** **AERO Advisory Committee Introductions**
- 10:20** **Purpose of AERO Act**
Miles Feroli, PhD
- 10:30** **Overview of Regulations**
Travis Powell
Executive Vice President and General Counsel
- 10:40** **Review of AERO Implementation Plan**
Miles Feroli, PhD
- 10:50** **Implementation Plan Q&A**
- 11:10** **Introduction to the AERO Dashboard**
Maddie White
CPE Senior Associate, Data, Research and Advanced Analytics
- 11:20** **Discussion – AERO Scoring Criteria**
Miles Feroli, PhD
- 11:40** **Legislative Updates**
Leslie Sizemore, PhD, EdS, OTR/L
CPE Vice President, Economic and Workforce Unit
- 11:50** **Future Meetings, Questions, & Closing Remarks**
Miles Feroli, PhD
- 12:00** **Adjournment**
Lindsey Case
Secondary Education Teacher, Lousia High School
CPE Board Member



AERO Act Advisory Committee

March 18, 2026 | 10 am
Council on Postsecondary Education
Frankfort, KY

Welcome Aboard: Introductions

Please share

- Who you are
- What your role is
- How you're involved in the aviation, aerospace, and defense education ecosystem

Purpose of AERO Act



Tackling the Shortage

Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE)

- Sets the strategic agenda for KY's public 2 + 4 year postsecondary institutions and license private institutions → produce adaptive, highly skilled workers to fuel the economy

Public – Private Partnerships (PPPs)

- States are applying this model to strengthen talent pipelines in response to critical workforce
- Many states are looking to Kentucky as a model for innovative, public-private solutions: Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund
- Kentucky's HWIF inspired the federal legislation - H.R. 9812 - the "Health Care Workforce Investment Act"

AERO Act

- Drawing from HWIF success
- Aerospace is KY's #1 export; growing overlapping sectors
- Urgent need for qualified pilots, mechanics, engineers, air traffic controllers
 - SB 87 - Air Traffic Control feasibility
- Industry partners and postsecondary institutions excited about this opportunity

Holistic Approach

Key Targets of AERO Act

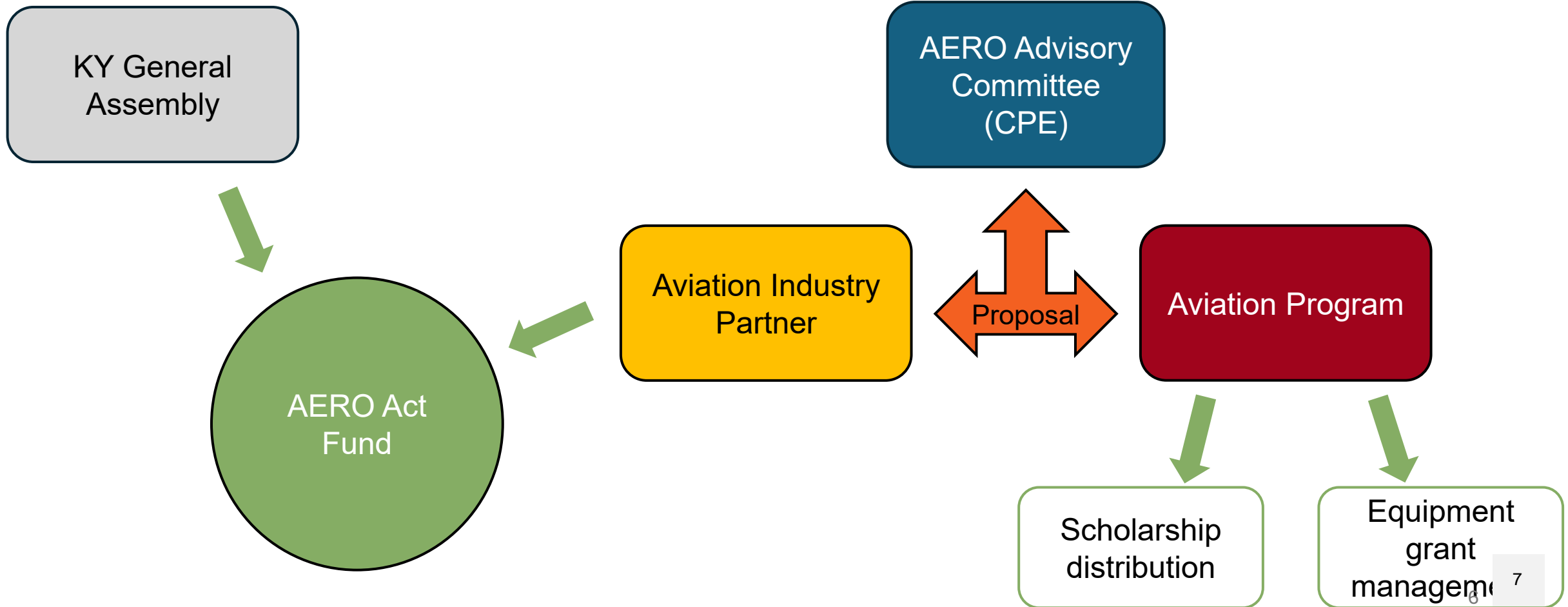
- Improve aviation programs to meet the **workforce demands and capacity** of the Commonwealth
- Raise awareness of and **interest in aviation occupations**
- Reduce **barriers of access**, including financial barriers
- Improve **pathways** between high school career and technical programs and aviation programs
- Develop strategies for aviation industry partners to **support career growth and development for employees**

CPE Responsibilities

1. Formation of the AERO Advisory Committee
2. Setting AERO Act Priorities
3. Announcements of Funding Opportunities
4. Partnership Proposals
 - a. Aviation Training Scholarships
 - b. Aviation Equipment Grants
5. Awardees Progress Reports
6. AERO Act Annual Report

Public Private Partnership Model

*A partnership must be between an **aviation industry partner** and an **aviation program** → submit a proposal*



Advisory Committee

Member	Name
Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education President, Chair	Aaron Thompson, PhD
Commissioner of Aviation, Kentucky Department of Transportation	Brad Schwandt
Kentucky Association of Manufacturers (Aviation Manufacturing)	Luke McCowan
Experience and expertise as an aviation engineer	Dave Springer
Experience and expertise with Department of Defense contracts related to aviation	Curt Wilson
Experience and expertise with Department of Defense contracts related to aerospace	Brad Simms
Expertise with airport management or Federal Aviation Administration airport compliance and classifications	Jim Smith
Licensed air transport pilot	Laura Jones
Kentucky Aviation Association	Tristan Durbin
Licensed airframe and powerplant mechanic	Marty Fryer
Employee of a public aviation program [Member 1]	Lindsey Case
Employee of a public aviation program [Member 2]	Todd Smith

AERO Advisory Committee Duties

- Serve a two-year term and attend meetings starting March 2026
- Design criteria for partnership proposals
- Evaluate partnership proposals
- Serve as aviation and aerospace expert



Bylaws Vote

Sections

- I. Statement of Purpose**
- II. Statutory Authority**
- III. General Rules**
- IV. Officers**
- V. Meetings of the Committee Members**
- VI. Compensation and Expenses of Members**



KY 24 SB 127 Statues and Regulations

Travis Powell
Executive Vice President
and General Counsel



Review Implementation of AERO Act

Responsibilities

CPE Responsibilities

1. Formation of the AERO Advisory Committee
2. Setting AERO Act Priorities
3. Announcements of Funding Opportunities
4. Partnership Proposals
 - a. Aviation Training Scholarships
 - b. Aviation Equipment Grants
5. Awardees Progress Reports
6. AERO Act Annual Report

AERO Committee Responsibilities

1. Formation of the AERO Advisory Committee
2. **Setting AERO Act Priorities**
3. Announcements of Funding Opportunities
4. **Partnership Proposals**
 - a. Aviation Training Scholarships
 - b. Aviation Equipment Grants
5. Awardees Progress Reports
6. AERO Act Annual Report

Timeline Details

Date	Milestone
May 28, 2025	AERO Act Informational Webinar
June 1, 2025 – October 20, 2025	AERO Advisory Committee Member Solicitations
December 1, 2025	CPE Annual Report #1
March 1, 2026	AERO Advisory Committee Appointment Begins
March 18, 2026	AERO Advisory Committee Meeting #1
May 20, 2026	AERO Advisory Committee Meeting #2
June 1, 2026	AERO Act funding opportunities, priorities, submission form templates, and scoring rubrics are published on CPE website
June 1, 2026 – July 13, 2026	Submission period for AERO Act fund
July 15, 2026	AERO Advisory Committee Meeting #3
July 15, 2026 – August 18, 2026	Evaluation period for AERO Act partnership proposals
August 19, 2026	AERO Advisory Committee Meeting #4 (special meeting)
August 25, 2026	Award notices go out
December 1, 2026	CPE Annual Report #2

Setting Priorities: Eligible Programs

Primary Goal: collaboration between aviation programs, aviation industry partners, and the Commonwealth to grow and strengthen the education and training pipeline of aviation professionals within KY by **reducing financial barriers**

1. Aviation Training Scholarships: address workforce demands for high-demand aviation credentials in Kentucky through offsetting financial costs to students

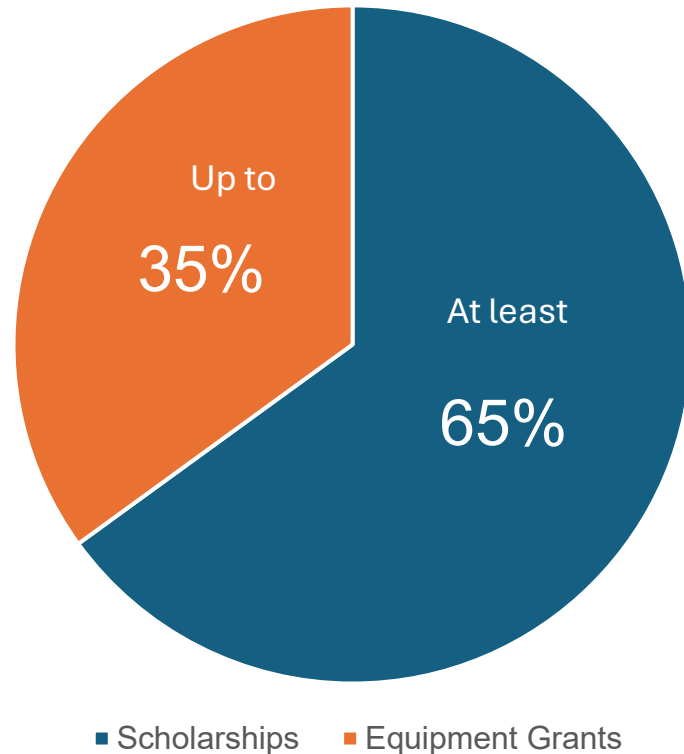
- Any license or certification issued by the Federal Aviation Administration;
- Bachelor of Science in Aviation;
- Any Engineering degree;
- Career and technical education license or certification determined to be in high demand

2. Aviation Equipment Grants: contracts between public aviation programs and aviation industry partners to maintain, acquire, or lease aviation or aerospace equipment

- high school vocational programs;
- public postsecondary education institutions

Setting Priorities: Fund Distribution

AERO Act Funding Pool



AERO Act Funding Pool will match dollar for dollar*

Example of Funding Pool:

- If \$10 million appropriated by Kentucky General Assembly, it would mean:
 - At least \$6.5 million set aside for **scholarship matches**
 - At most \$3.5 million set aside for **grant matches**

And with the submission and acceptance of \$10 million worth of partnership proposals...

- At least \$13 million total could be dispersed for **aviation training scholarships**
- At most \$7 million total could be dispersed for **equipment grants**

* Contingent on 2026 Legislative session appropriation

Setting Priorities: Partnership Proposal Evaluation

Aviation Training Scholarship

Guidelines	Description	Points
Workforce Demand or Industry Need	Assesses alignment with high demand in aviation workforce or critical aviation industry needs to address skills shortages.	30
Student Recruitment	Students recruited represent a broad spectrum of backgrounds that addresses financial need	25
Geographic Impact	Measures the breadth of impact across different regions, particularly high-priority areas for workforce development	20
Organizational Scale	Considers the size, reach, and capacity of the Aviation program to implement and sustain the proposed initiatives	10
Student Success Initiatives	Rewards programs or efforts aimed at enhancing student outcomes, such as graduation rates and/or workforce placement	10
Additional Criteria (as determined)	Allows for customized evaluation based on specific needs or unique aspects of the proposal.	5
Total Points		100

Aviation Equipment Grant

Guidelines	Description	Points
Partnership Alignment	Demonstrates a clear collaboration between aviation programs and industry partners	25
Targeted Workforce Demand	Focuses on addressing workforce needs for high-demand credentials	25
Equipment Utilization	Outlines how aviation equipment will be maintained, acquired, or leased to benefit students	20
Student Access	Measures the number of students gaining access to aviation training and resources	20
Additional Criteria (as determined)	Allows for customized evaluation based on specific needs or unique aspects of the proposal.	10
Total Points		100

Notice of Funding Opportunities

CPE shall publish a notice of funding availability

- Funding period
- Date by which to submit a partnership proposal
- Dollar amount of available matching funds
- **A list of priority eligible aviation credentials with high workforce demand as determined by the advisory committee****
- Proposal evaluation criteria and relative weighting
- How to submit partnership proposal
- Targeted date for making awards

Important Dates:

June 1, 2026: Detailed guidelines and application procedures will be published on the CPE website*

June 1, 2026 - July 13, 2026: Application period

Partnership Proposal Applications

A proposal must be between an aviation industry partner and an aviation program

To be eligible for funding:

- Aviation industry partner and aviation program partnership must be certified by the signature of their respective chief executive officers and a designated point of contact with information for each partner
- Certification that the aviation program meets the definition in KRS 164.7011(4)
- Total proposed budget, which includes the industry partner contribution amount to be requested
- A narrative explaining how the program plans to use the industry partner contribution
- Description of programs' plan for student recruitment, scholarship award criteria, and selection process
- Explanation of how the program shall increase student enrollment, program completion, and meet local, regional or state workforce demands
- If using dedicated moneys, an explanation of how the industry partner shall onboard and retain graduates
- Explanation of how graduates shall be supported through their service obligations
- Description of how the partnership shall meet priorities in KRS 164.7015(2)
- A response to any other partnership proposal criteria determined by the advisory committee
- Assurance that all parties will sign a contract
- Industry partner contribution certified by its chief financial officer and supported by appropriate documentation

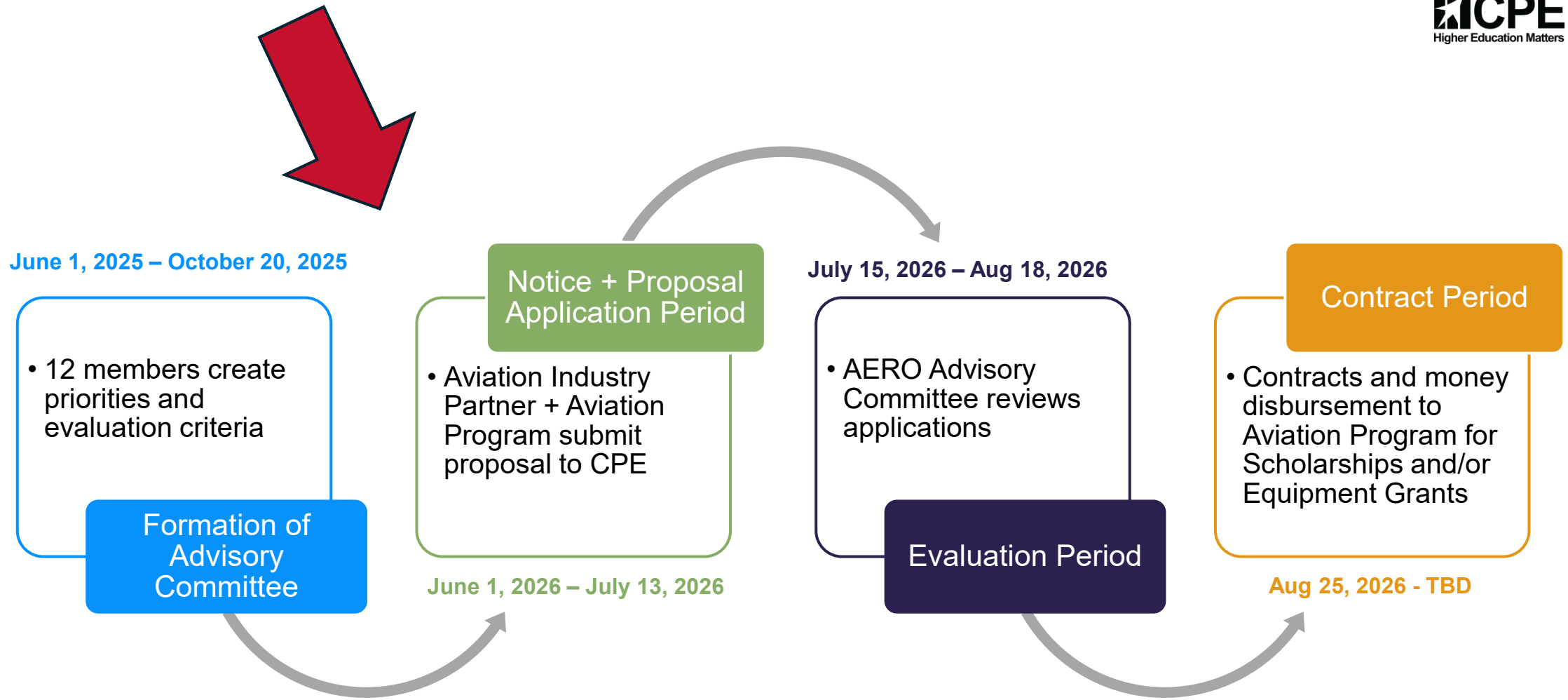
Aviation industry partner: a grantor to the fund ... that customarily employs individuals with an eligible aviation or aerospace credential in a relevant aviation role

Aviation programs: education or training program located in KY that issues eligible aviation or aerospace credential; ... including but not limited public high school vocational programs

* Contingent on 2026 Legislative session appropriation

Award Notices + Progress Reports

- Accepted proposals will be notified by **August 25, 2026**. Contracts between CPE, aviation program, and aviation industry partner must be signed before funds are dispersed.
- Each entity that receives funding from the AERO Act must submit a **progress report by November 13, 2026 and June 1, 2027**.



Timeline of AERO Act

A man is sitting in a row of airport-style chairs, leaning back with his feet propped up on a black suitcase. He is looking out a large window at an airplane taking off. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The word "Break" is written in large white letters across the center of the image.

Break

AERO Dashboard

Maddie White
CPE Senior Associate, Data, Research and
Advanced Analytics



Partnership Proposal Evaluation

Aviation Training Scholarship

Guidelines	Description	Points
Workforce Demand or Industry Need	Assesses alignment with high demand in aviation workforce or critical aviation industry needs to address skills shortages.	30
Student Recruitment	Students recruited represent a broad spectrum of backgrounds that addresses financial need	25
Geographic Impact	Measures the breadth of impact across different regions, particularly high-priority areas for workforce development	20
Organizational Scale	Considers the size, reach, and capacity of the Aviation program to implement and sustain the proposed initiatives	10
Student Success Initiatives	Rewards programs or efforts aimed at enhancing student outcomes, such as graduation rates and/or workforce placement	10
Additional Criteria (as determined)	Allows for customized evaluation based on specific needs or unique aspects of the proposal.	5
Total Points		100

Aviation Equipment Grant

Guidelines	Description	Points
Partnership Alignment	Demonstrates a clear collaboration between aviation programs and industry partners	25
Targeted Workforce Demand	Focuses on addressing workforce needs for high-demand credentials	25
Equipment Utilization	Outlines how aviation equipment will be maintained, acquired, or leased to benefit students	20
Student Access	Measures the number of students gaining access to aviation training and resources	20
Additional Criteria (as determined)	Allows for customized evaluation based on specific needs or unique aspects of the proposal.	10
Total Points		100

Partnership Proposal Evaluation

Guidelines	Description	Points
Workforce Demand or Industry Need	Assesses alignment with high demand in aviation workforce or critical aviation industry needs to address skills shortages.	30
Student Recruitment	Students recruited represent a broad spectrum of backgrounds that addresses financial need	25
Geographic Impact	Measures the breadth of impact across different regions, particularly high-priority areas for workforce development	20
Organizational Scale	Considers the size, reach, and capacity of the Aviation program to implement and sustain the proposed initiatives	10
Student Success Initiatives	Rewards programs or efforts aimed at enhancing student outcomes, such as graduation rates and/or workforce placement	10
Additional Criteria (as determined)	Allows for customized evaluation based on specific needs or unique aspects of the proposal.	5
Total Points		100

Partnership Proposal Evaluation

Guidelines	Description	Points
Partnership Alignment	Demonstrates a clear collaboration between aviation programs and industry partners	25
Targeted Workforce Demand	Focuses on addressing workforce needs for high-demand credentials	25
Equipment Utilization	Outlines how aviation equipment will be maintained, acquired, or leased to benefit students	20
Student Access	Measures the number of students gaining access to aviation training and resources	20
Additional Criteria (as determined)	Allows for customized evaluation based on specific needs or unique aspects of the proposal.	10
Total Points		100

Legislative Updates

Leslie Sizemore, PhD, EdS, OTR/L
Vice President
Workforce and Economic Development
Council on Postsecondary Education

Future Meetings, Questions, & Closing Remarks

Next Meeting → May 20, 2026

- Review scoring criteria and be prepared to vote on final criteria
- Think about data dashboard inputs and outputs
- Virtual or in-person?

Thank you!!

Adjournment

Questions and Comments email:
Miles Feroli at miles.feroli@ky.gov



I. Statement of Purpose

The bylaws provide a framework for the deliberations and actions of the Kentucky Aerospace, Aviation, and Defense Investment Fund Advisory Committee in carrying out statutory duties and responsibilities. The bylaws establish rules for notification and conduct of meetings and the selection of officers.

II. Statutory Authority

The Kentucky Aerospace, Aviation, and Defense Investment Fund Advisory Committee (hereinafter the "Committee"), created in KRS 164.7013(2), shall be responsible for advising the Council on Postsecondary Education (hereinafter the "Council") on the implementation of KRS 164.7011 to 164.7021. The bylaws also conform to the requirements of KRS Chapter 61, the Kentucky Open Meetings Law.

III. General Rules

A. Amendment of Bylaws

1. The Committee may amend, revoke, or adopt additional bylaws by action of a majority of the voting members.
2. Notice shall be given to the members of any proposed changes or additions to the bylaws in the agenda of a regularly scheduled or special meeting of the Committee. All changes shall be consistent with state law and administrative regulations.

B. Conduct of Meetings

1. The Committee shall follow Robert's Rules of Order concerning motions, recognition of speakers, and order of business.
2. The chair may recognize a non-Committee speaker.
3. The Committee may designate a parliamentarian from the membership of the committee or staff to assist the chair in interpreting the rules of order.

C. Attendance at Meetings

1. Committee members shall make the best effort to attend and participate at all scheduled committee meetings.
2. If a committee member is unable to attend and participate at a regularly scheduled or special meeting of the Committee, the member shall notify the chair, vice-chair, and committee liaison at least seven (7) days in advance of the meeting, or as soon as possible after learning of his or her unavailability. If the member cannot physically attend an in-person meeting, the member may be allowed to attend virtually as determined by the chair.
3. If a committee member fails to regularly attend meetings of the Committee, the chair of the Committee shall discuss the absences with the member to determine a plan for future service. The chair of the Committee shall notify the chair of the Council of the committee member's absences and the discussion with the committee member.
4. If a committee member is absent for more than half of the regular meetings in a calendar year without notice to the chair, vice chair, or staff, the chair of the Committee shall notify the chair of the Council who may take steps to replace the member.

IV. Officers

A. Selection of Officers

1. Per KRS 164.7013(2)(b)1., the president of the Council shall serve as chair of the Committee.
2. The president of the Council shall annually select a vice-chair from one of the ten (10) members appointed by the chair of the Council. The vice-chair shall serve a one (1) year term and may be reappointed at the discretion of the chair of the Committee.
3. In the absence of the chair, or in the event the chair is unable to perform, the vice chair shall perform the duties of the chair. In the absence of both the chair and vice chair or in the event the vice chair is unable to perform the duties of the chair, the Committee shall appoint a temporary chair.

V. Meetings of the Committee Members

A. Regular Meetings

1. After approval of the initial meeting schedule, the Committee shall approve the regular meeting schedule for the next year prior to the last regularly scheduled meeting of the calendar year.
2. The regular meeting schedule shall provide that the Committee meet no less than bi-annually but may provide for more than bi-annual meetings.
3. The schedule of regular meetings shall be made available to the public through release to the press by written or electronic means. KRS 61.820.
4. Notice of all regularly scheduled meetings and the agenda and supporting materials for the meeting shall be provided to the committee members by email prior to the meeting.

B. Special Meetings

1. A special meeting is a meeting that is not part of the regular schedule of meetings established by the Committee pursuant to Section V.A.1. above.
2. The chair may call a special meeting of the Committee when, in the view of the chair, such a meeting is necessary. KRS 61.823.
3. The chair shall call a special meeting upon receipt of a written request from a majority of the Committee members stating the reason for the meeting. KRS 61.823.
4. The following items are required in calling a special meeting and in the conduct of the special meeting:
 - (a) The agenda of a special meeting shall be stated in the notification of the meeting.
 - (b) Discussions and action at a special meeting shall be limited to items listed on the agenda in the notice. KRS 61.823(3).
 - (c) Notice shall be provided to every member of the Committee and to each media organization filing a written request to be notified. The notice shall be provided as soon as possible but shall be calculated to be received at least twenty-four hours before the special meeting. KRS 61.823(4).
5. Notice of all special meetings and the agenda and supporting materials for the meeting shall be provided to the committee members by email prior to the meeting.

C. Place of the Meeting

1. In-person meetings shall be held at the Council's Frankfort office unless an alternative location is announced by the chair of the Committee.
2. The Committee may hold meetings, regularly scheduled or special, by video teleconference. Meetings held by video teleconference shall conform to the notice requirements of the Open Meetings Law and of these bylaws.
3. Meetings held by video teleconference shall also conform to the following:
 - (a) The notice of the meeting shall clearly state that the meeting is a video teleconference. KRS 61.826(2)(b).
 - (b) All members must be able to both see and hear each other. KRS 61.805(5).
 - (c) The meeting notice shall provide specific information on how any member of the public or media organization may view the meeting electronically. KRS 61.826(2)(c).
 - (d) The same procedures concerning participation, distribution of materials, and other matters shall apply to all video teleconference locations. KRS 61.826(3).
 - (e) If the video or audio broadcast is interrupted, the meeting shall be suspended until the broadcast is restored. KRS 61.826(4).

D. Meeting Minutes

1. The minutes of all meetings, regular and special, shall accurately record the deliberations of the Committee and all actions taken.
2. The approved minutes shall be open to public inspection immediately following the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee. KRS 61.835

E. Quorum and Council Action

1. Per KRS 164.7013(2)(d), a majority of the voting members shall constitute a quorum.
2. A quorum shall be required to organize and conduct business.
3. An affirmative vote of the majority of Committee members present shall be required to carry all propositions.
4. The Committee may, at regularly scheduled meetings, act on any subject within the powers of the Committee. The Committee may, by an affirmative vote of a majority of members present, add items to the agenda of a regularly scheduled meeting.
5. A member of the Committee shall recuse from any vote related to any aviation program or industry partner:
 - (a) Owned by the member or an immediate family of a member;
 - (b) That employs the member or immediate family member of the member; or
 - (c) That would otherwise result in a direct benefit, financial or otherwise, to that member or an immediate family member of that member.

F. Closed Session

1. All meetings of the Committee, regularly scheduled or special, shall be open to the public unless the matter under discussion meets the exceptions contained in KRS 61.810.
2. The following requirements, consistent with KRS 61.815, shall be met as a condition for conducting closed sessions:

- (a) The chair shall give notice in the open meeting of the general nature of the business to be discussed in a closed session.
 - (b) The chair shall state the reason for the closed session citing a specific KRS 61.810 provision authorizing a closed session.
 - (c) The session may be closed only upon a motion made and approved by a majority of the committee members present at the meeting.
 - (d) No formal action may be taken at a closed session.
 - (e) No matters may be discussed at a closed session other than those publicly announced prior to convening a closed session.
3. The requirement for the Committee for the conduct of closed sessions shall at all times meet the requirements of KRS 61.815.

VI. Compensation and Expenses of Members

A. Compensation of Members

1. Per KRS 164.7013(2)(e), members of the Committee shall not receive compensation or benefits for the member's service on the committee.

B. Expenses of Members

1. Committee members appointed by the Council shall receive per diem and travel expenses consistent with the reimbursement policy for state employees for expenses incurred traveling to and attending meetings of the Committee.
2. Meetings eligible for reimbursement shall include all regularly scheduled and special meetings of the Committee and special events where a member represents the Committee at the request of the chair.
3. The commissioner of the department of aviation shall receive reimbursement of expenses in the same manner as other expenses reimbursed through the Department of Transportation.



Senate Bill 127
Kentucky Aerospace, Aviation, and
Defense Investment Fund Act
Implementation Plan
(AERO Act)

May 2025

Purpose

The Kentucky Aerospace, Aviation, and Defense Investment Fund, also known as the AERO Act, was established through Kentucky's 2024 General Assembly Regular Session. This legislation, Senate Bill 127, aims to establish a sustainable framework to address workforce development challenges in the aerospace, aviation, and defense sectors while positioning the state as a national leader in aerospace, aviation, and defense education and training. The AERO Act focuses on fostering collaboration between education institutions, industry stakeholders, and government entities through targeted investments in scholarships and aviation-related equipment. The implementation of the AERO Act will ensure that Kentucky has a robust pipeline of skilled professionals ready to meet the growing demands of the aerospace, aviation and defense industries.

The AERO Act's primary goals align with broader state and federal objectives of enhancing STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, improving workforce readiness, and increasing economic competitiveness for the region. Moreover, it underscores the need to address existing barriers in aviation education, particularly in affordability and access. Importantly, the AERO Act emphasizes building long-term partnerships with industry leaders to sustain growth and innovation.

This implementation plan outlines the strategies, processes, and frameworks necessary to execute the provisions of the AERO Act effectively. It provides a roadmap to guide stakeholders in achieving the Act's intended outcomes. The following sections detail the establishment of funds, governance structures, partnerships, and evaluation mechanisms to ensure the Act's success.

The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) is responsible for administering the funds and general oversight. Dr. Leslie Sizemore, CPE Associate Vice President of Workforce and Economic Initiatives, and Dr. Miles Feroli, CPE Senior Associate of Workforce and Economic Initiatives, are the points of contact for the implementation of the AERO Act.

Statutes and Regulations

Statutes:

- [KY 24 SB 127](#) - Kentucky Aerospace, Aviation, and Defense Investment Fund Act
- [KRS 164.7011](#) - Definitions for KRS 164.7011 to 164.7021
- [KRS 164.7013](#) - Declaration of intent
- [KRS 164.7019](#) - Annual report

Regulations:

- [13 KAR 6:010](#) -- Aviation Training Scholarship
- [13 KAR 6:0202](#) -- Aviation Equipment Grants

Major Components

The successful execution of the AERO Act encompasses the following components:

1. Formation of the Kentucky Aerospace, Aviation, and Defense Investment Fund Advisory Committee (AERO Advisory Committee)
2. Setting AERO Act Priorities
3. Announcements of Funding Opportunities
4. Partnership Proposals
 - a. Aviation Training Scholarships
 - i. Evaluation process
 - ii. Partnership awards
 - iii. Responsibilities of Aviation programs
 - b. Aviation Equipment Grants
 - i. Evaluation process
 - ii. Partnership awards
 - iii. Responsibilities of Aviation programs
5. Awardees Progress Reports
6. AERO Act Annual Report

Each of major component is outlined in greater detail below:

1. Formation of the Kentucky Aerospace, Aviation, and Defense Investment Fund Advisory Committee (AERO Advisory Committee)

The enabling statues mandate that CPE assemble an advisory committee to provide guidance on training scholarships, funding allocations, proposal criteria, and awards. The committee consists of at least twelve members, including representatives from workforce sectors, state government, and professional training programs, as well as one member from the CPE.

Member	Name
Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education President, Chair	Aaron Thompson, PhD
Commissioner of Aviation, Kentucky Department of Transportation	Mark Carter
Kentucky Association of Manufacturers (Aviation Manufacturing)	
Experience and expertise as an aviation engineer	
Experience and expertise with Department of Defense contracts related to aviation	
Experience and expertise with Department of Defense contracts related to aerospace	
Expertise with airport management or Federal Aviation Administration airport compliance and classifications	
Licensed air transport pilot	
Kentucky Aviation Association	
Licensed airframe and powerplant mechanic	
Employees of a public aviation program [Member 1]	
Employees of a public aviation program [Member 2]	

Nominations for the advisory board will be gathered between June 1, 2025, and October 20, 2025. Invitations will be emailed to selected nominees by October 27, 2025. By November 3, 2025, all nominees will be asked to accept or decline their invitation.

During the CPE Council meeting on November 13-14, 2025, we anticipate Madison Silvert, CPE Chair, to confirm the nominees. Members are appointed for two-year terms starting March 2, 2026.

Meetings will be held bimonthly in-person at CPE's Frankfort office with a virtual option via Zoom starting March 18, 2026. Invitations will be extended one-month prior to the meeting. Stakeholders may be invited to testify at meetings to share their perspectives on workforce needs.

2. Setting AERO Act Priorities

Aviation Training Scholarships (KRS 164.7015)

CPE is directed to evaluate and prioritize awarding scholarship funds that establish partnerships between aviation programs and industry partners. The aim is to address workforce demands for high-demand aviation credentials in Kentucky determined by data derived from the Kentucky Center for Statistics and aviation related workforce organizations.

According to statute, at least 65% of net funds must be reserved to provide aviation training scholarships for Kentucky residents enrolled in aviation programs, with an emphasis on Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) participation and detailed contract requirements for fund utilization and reporting.

Recipients must agree to work in Kentucky's aviation industry for a contract period of one year for each academic year funded by the scholarship, up to a maximum of two years or repay the scholarship. Restrictions on fund use, recoupment for contract breaches, and employment criteria tied to specific contributions are also stipulated.

Aviation Equipment Grants (KRS 164.7017)

CPE is directed to evaluate and prioritize awarding funds for aviation equipment partnership contracts between public aviation programs and aviation industry partners that facilitate high school vocational programs or public postsecondary education institutions to maintain, acquire, or lease aviation or aerospace equipment. The fund must reserve up to 35% of net monies for the aviation equipment grants. Contract proposals that target equipment for high-demand eligible aviation credentials or financial advantages afforded to a public aviation program or the number of students that would have access to the aviation equipment may be prioritized.

Data Sources

Relevant data to guide priority setting via the AERO Advisory Committee will be sourced from the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS), Bureau of Labor Statistics, and other appropriate aviation and aerospace workforce data sources. From this data set, priorities will be discussed and finalized during the advisory committee's first meeting on March 18, 2026. The second AERO Advisory Committee meeting on May 20, 2026, will consist of reviewing proposal submission forms and developing the scoring scale for the proposal submissions' rubric. Funding appropriated to the AERO Act will be known by the May 2026 meeting and will be considered in determining proposal solicitations. Additional detailed information about the evaluation criteria is in Section 4.

3. Announcements of Funding Opportunities

On June 1, 2026, detailed guidelines and application procedures will be published on the CPE website. Applications open on June 1, 2026, and close on July 13, 2026. Awards will be announced by August 25, 2026. The dollar amount of available matching funds will be made known along with a list of priority eligible aviation credentials with high workforce demand as determined by the Advisory Committee. Partnership proposal evaluation criteria and relative weighting of each criterion will also be published.

4. Partnership Proposals

Aviation Training Scholarships

Evaluation process: The following rubric will be used to guide the evaluation process. During their second meeting, the AERO Advisory Committee shall use the data provided to develop the scoring scale for each of the rubric's criteria. The AERO Advisory Committee can modify sourcing criterion in the rubric. The final rubric will be published on June 1, 2026.

Guidelines	Description	Points
Workforce Demand or Industry Need	Assesses alignment with high demand in aviation workforce or critical aviation industry needs to address skills shortages.	30
Student Recruitment	Students recruited represent a broad spectrum of backgrounds that addresses financial need	25
Geographic Impact	Measures the breadth of impact across different regions, particularly high-priority areas for workforce development	20
Organizational Scale	Considers the size, reach, and capacity of the Aviation program to implement and sustain the proposed initiatives	10
Student Success Initiatives	Rewards programs or efforts aimed at enhancing student outcomes, such as graduation rates and/or workforce placement	10
Additional Criteria (as determined)	Allows for customized evaluation based on specific needs or unique aspects of the proposal.	5
Total Points		100

Proposal solicitation closes on July 13, 2026. Using the final rubric, CPE staff and the AERO Advisory Committee are to review and score each of the proposals by Aug 18, 2026.

Partnership awards: Proposals will be reviewed by the committee upon the closing of the proposal submission period, with final decisions made known to awardees by August 25, 2026. The council, the aviation industry partner, and aviation program will enter into a partnership contract. Disbursement of funds deposited by the aviation industry partner and the matching funds by the General Assembly depends on the completion of the contracts.

Responsibilities of Aviation Programs: Upon finalizing the partnership contract, the aviation program must establish and enforce an aviation training scholarship application and process for solicitation, acceptance, and review of scholarship applications from students who are Kentucky residents in collaboration with the aviation industry partner. The scholarship applicants are also required to complete the FAFSA. Moreover, appropriate scholarship deadlines are to be created along with a contract between the recipient and aviation program. Partnership contracts will require scholarship recipients to commit to working within Kentucky's aviation industry for a contract period of one year for each academic year funded by the scholarship, up to a maximum of two total years; and sign a promissory note as evidence of the scholarship and the obligation to repay the scholarship amount upon failure to complete terms of the contract.

Aviation Equipment Grants

Evaluation process: The following rubric will be used to guide the evaluation process. During their second meeting, the AERO Advisory Committee shall use the data provided to develop the scoring scale for each of the rubric's criteria. The AERO Advisory Committee can modify sourcing criterion in the rubric. The final rubric will be published on June 1, 2026.

Guidelines	Description	Points
Partnership Alignment	Demonstrates a clear collaboration between aviation programs and industry partners	25
Targeted Workforce Demand	Focuses on addressing workforce needs for high-demand credentials	25
Equipment Utilization	Outlines how aviation equipment will be maintained, acquired, or leased to benefit students	20
Student Access	Measures the number of students gaining access to aviation training and resources	20
Additional Criteria (as determined)	Allows for customized evaluation based on specific needs or unique aspects of the proposal.	10
Total Points		100

Proposal solicitation closes on July 13, 2026. Using the final rubric, CPE staff and the AERO Advisory Committee are to review and score each of the proposals by Aug 18, 2026.

Partnership awards: Proposals will be reviewed by the committee upon the closing of the proposal submission period, with final decisions made known to awardees by August 25, 2026. The council, the aviation industry partner, and aviation program will enter into a partnership contract. Disbursement of funds deposited by the aviation industry partner and the matching funds by the General Assembly depends on the completion of the contracts.

Responsibilities of Aviation Programs: The aviation program must submit proof that the entire amount of the aviation equipment grant is invested in the maintenance, acquisition, or lease of aviation or aviation training equipment utilized by students enrolled in a public aviation program. Failure to submit proof will result in the aviation program returning the entire amount of grant to the fund.

5. Awardees Progress Reports

Each entity that receives funding from the AERO Act Fund must submit a progress report by November 13, 2026 and another by June 1, 2027.

Entities that receive aviation scholarship funds must include a summary of the criteria used to award the scholarship, number of scholarships awarded and the amount of each scholarship, an overview of demographic information of scholarship recipients including the county of residence, and to the extent available, student and program outcomes, including but not limited to: (1) graduation rates of the aviation program overall and of scholarship recipients as compared to an established baseline within any such program, (2) employment and employment retention rates of the aviation program overall and scholarship recipients, and (3) the workforce participation of program graduates practicing in Kentucky under and eligible aviation credential in relation to the workforce demand and capacity for that specific eligible aviation credential.

Entities that receive aviation equipment grant monies must include a summary of: (1) the amount of the equipment grant and a detailed summary of the aviation equipment maintained, acquired, or leased by the public aviation program with moneys from the aviation equipment grant, (2) appropriate financial documentation of all transactions utilizing moneys from the aviation equipment grant, and (3) a detailed summary of how the aviation equipment grant will impact opportunities and outcomes for students enrolled in the public aviation program.

6. Annual Report

By December 1 of each year, the council shall collaborate with the AERO Advisory Committee to submit a written report to the Legislative Research Commission for referral to the Interim Joint Committee on Education, the Interim Joint Committee on Transportation, and the Interim Joint Committee on Appropriations and Revenue Budget Review Subcommittee on Education.

Implementation Timeline

Date	Milestone
May 28, 2025	AERO Act Informational Webinar
June 1, 2025 – October 20, 2025	AERO Advisory Committee Member Solicitations
December 1, 2025	CPE Annual Report #1
March 1, 2026	AERO Advisory Committee Appointment Begins
March 18, 2026	AERO Advisory Committee Meeting #1
May 20, 2026	AERO Advisory Committee Meeting #2
June 1, 2026	AERO Act funding opportunities, priorities, submission form templates, and scoring rubrics are published on CPE website
June 1, 2026 – July 13, 2026	Submission period for AERO Act fund
July 15, 2026	AERO Advisory Committee Meeting #3
July 15, 2026 – August 18, 2026	Evaluation period for AERO Act partnership proposals
August 19, 2026	AERO Advisory Committee Meeting #4 (special meeting)
August 25, 2026	Award notices go out
December 1, 2026	CPE Annual Report #2