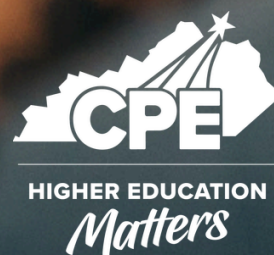


KENTUCKY COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

WORK-BASED LEARNING IN KENTUCKY

POLICY AND PRACTICE
BLUEPRINT

AUGUST 2026



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About the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE)

CPE's Strategic Agenda is focused on five priority areas:

- **Affordability:** Making postsecondary education accessible and affordable for all Kentuckians.
- **Transitions:** Helping more students enter college prepared to succeed.
- **Success:** Enabling more students to earn high-quality degrees and credentials.
- **Talent:** Growing talent and innovation to support our communities, employers, and economy.
- **Value:** Strengthening public understanding that postsecondary education is key to opportunity and economic growth.

The Council on Postsecondary Education is a coordinating board overseeing Kentucky's state universities and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System. The Council also licenses non-profit and for-profit higher education institutions to operate in Kentucky.

As higher education coordinating board, the Council facilitates a positive return on investment of public funds supporting higher education by monitoring academic quality, affordability and student success through policy and accountability measures. CPE's board and attached agency are not involved in a public college's day-to-day operations, board appointments, personnel matters, budget-setting or extracurricular activities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
Purpose of Report	7
What is Work-Based Learning?	9
Why Now?	12
CPE WBL Guiding Survey	13
Who's Engaging?	15
How CPE is Bridging the Gap	17
Work-Based Learning Bright Spots	18
Recommendations	22
Proposed Timeline	26
WBL Policy Incentive Models	27
References	28

A WORD FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT OF WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

At the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), the coordinating board overseeing Kentucky's state universities and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System, we fundamentally believe that higher education matters. Therefore, establishing a strategic agenda that aligns state and postsecondary institutional goals and setting the strategies, by which these goals will be supported and achieved is a primary responsibility we take seriously.

Our most recent strategic agenda focuses on five priority areas: affordability, transitions, success, talent, and value. Out of all the jobs in Kentucky, 63% (1,302,000 jobs) will require some postsecondary training beyond high school by 2031. However, slightly more than half of the state's population have a certificate or degree. For this reason, we set the ambitious goal of 60% of the population attaining a postsecondary credential by 2030.

This policy blueprint considers Work-Based Learning (WBL) as one such strategy that not only underscores the value of higher education, but it also provides learners with high-quality academic experiences and employers with deeply talented graduates. WBL, as a concept and a practice, fosters opportunities for learners, educators, and employers to work together, ensuring that the demands of current and future academic and workforce skill trends are met. Ultimately, this blueprint demonstrates why and how the development and preservation of high-quality postsecondary WBL opportunities are essential for a prosperous and thriving Kentucky workforce and economy.

A portrait of Leslie M. Sizemore, a woman with long brown hair, smiling, wearing a dark blue collared shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with brick buildings and greenery.A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leslie M. Sizemore".

Leslie Sizemore, PhD, EdS, OT/L

Vice President, Workforce and
Economic Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kentucky's postsecondary education ecosystem has historically imparted the skills and knowledge necessary for citizens to thrive in their personal, professional, and civic lives. Yet, as economic and societal shifts compel new forms of skill application, it is key that Kentucky's postsecondary system stays nimble to meet changing demands for students and the economy.

This is not to suggest that the core of education should change – imparting foundational life skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and communication must remain. However, Kentucky needs clearer pathways that connect education to work experiences, creating a stronger intersection of postsecondary education and workforce development.

“Kentucky needs clearer pathways that connect education to work experiences, creating a stronger intersection of postsecondary education and workforce development.”

Work-Based Learning (WBL) is an increasingly recognized method that purposefully weaves work and learning. In this blueprint, WBL, as a concept and a practice, is broadly defined as intentionally designed activities that allow students to gain and apply the knowledge, skills, and experiences needed for an adaptable workforce embedded in an academic program pathway. Therefore, data collected for this report are to inform CPE's planning and implementation of statewide WBL initiatives.

This blueprint recommends building a coordinated postsecondary WBL infrastructure focused on three primary areas:

- developing a statewide definition of quality WBL;
- creating a data system to standardize, measure, and incentivize WBL at state and institutional levels; and
- convening employers, postsecondary institutions, and other key stakeholders for the implementation and continuous improvement of WBL.

Implementing a high-quality WBL infrastructure across the postsecondary system will require collaboration among state, local, K-12 and adult education leaders, in concert with businesses to create accessible career pathways that lead to good, well-paying jobs for more people throughout the Commonwealth. This will ensure Kentucky's public postsecondary system fulfills its mission to drive innovation, enhance public health and well-being, break cycles of generational poverty and improve quality of life by preparing students to become lifelong learners.

Action Blueprint at a Glance

- Survey postsecondary institutions across the state.
- Create a WBL taskforce.
- Build employer asset map with needs assessment.
- Develop a shared definition of quality WBL across key stakeholders.
- Standardize tracking of WBL across institutions.
- Create a WBL data dashboard to set, measure, and track goals.
- Organize collaborative engagement among employers, postsecondary institutions, and other key stakeholders.
- Champion a policy that incentivizes action from employers, postsecondary institutions, and the state.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This action blueprint, prepared by the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE), establishes a foundational understanding of WBL at the postsecondary level in Kentucky in order to create a road map for the expansion of WBL at state and institutional levels. This document provides historical context and data-driven approaches to strategic implementation alongside case studies of WBL for state agencies, institutions of higher education, and employers. This will ensure CPE and other key stakeholders move with intention and streamline resources.

This action blueprint was formed by examining federal, state, and institutional policies, evaluating past and current WBL practices, surveying Kentucky's two- and four- year public and private postsecondary institutions' WBL practices, and reviewing federal and state laws. CPE also conducted interviews with various stakeholders at educational institutions at all levels, as well as with leaders of organizations invested in streamlining WBL opportunities throughout Kentucky. The findings of this report speak to the urgent need for a statewide approach to implement, sustain, and improve quality WBL opportunities and programs.

In establishing a clearer understanding of WBL in Kentucky at the postsecondary level, K-12 educators, policy makers, employers and other interested parties can identify opportunity gaps and the impactful work that is already underway to bridge them.

Pinpointing knowledge gaps, such as nonexistent or underfunded opportunities for students and institutions, unclear policies, or limited incentives, provides crucial insight to direct resources that are often cited as obstacles for WBL opportunities, such as time, funding, and personnel. Similarly, drawing awareness to existing WBL programs in Kentucky demonstrates proven strategies to sustain and grow programs that help citizens of the Commonwealth reach their academic and career goals.

Whether through an apprenticeship, an employer-engaged assignment, a service learning event, or other experience, CPE wants all students to engage in quality WBL. These learning opportunities facilitate students' integration of knowledge and skills from the classroom by applying learning experiences in workplace settings, simultaneously ensuring employers are collaborative partners. In effect, it blurs the boundary of where the student learns and how the student applies their knowledge to foster the practice of lifelong learning necessary for today's competitive workforce.

“

“Work-based learning is so critical. Having a dedicated person to oversee this process, visit classrooms and employers and connect the students to employers would help. Having a consistent process. It's not consistent currently.” – WBL CPE Guiding Survey Respondent

A man and a woman are walking down a hallway. The man is on the left, wearing a red and white striped shirt and light-colored pants, holding a tablet. The woman is on the right, wearing a tan blazer and light-colored pants, holding a clipboard. They are both looking at the tablet. The hallway has a striped carpet and wooden walls.

80%

of students feel their
work-based learning
experiences make them a
stronger job candidate
(SHEEO, 2025)

72%

of employers agree that a
degree is not a reliable
signal of assessing the
quality of a candidate
(Jobs for the Future,
2024)

WHAT IS WORK-BASED LEARNING?

Work-Based Learning (WBL): When a student participates in an experience that intentionally integrates learning and work.

The push and pull of when and where WBL occurs and who counts as a participant depends on historical, geographical, political, and theoretical lineages. Some practitioners consider WBL to only occur outside the traditional classroom space by learning through work in a work environment (Helyer et al, 2022). Others view WBL as an integration of academic instruction and technical training with little discernment for where and when this blended approach occurs (Hoffman et al, 2021).

For most, however, the core of WBL is the same. This method aims to provide students with structured, intentionally designed activities that allow them to apply what they have learned in a workplace scenario or setting (Kentucky Department of Education, 2023; Cahill, 2016; Strada 2025; Helyer, 2015; Wagner et al, 2015). WBL, and similar approaches, such as experiential learning, work-integrated learning, work-learning programs, and career-ready education, allows students to build crucial skills that support them in their academic and professional careers.

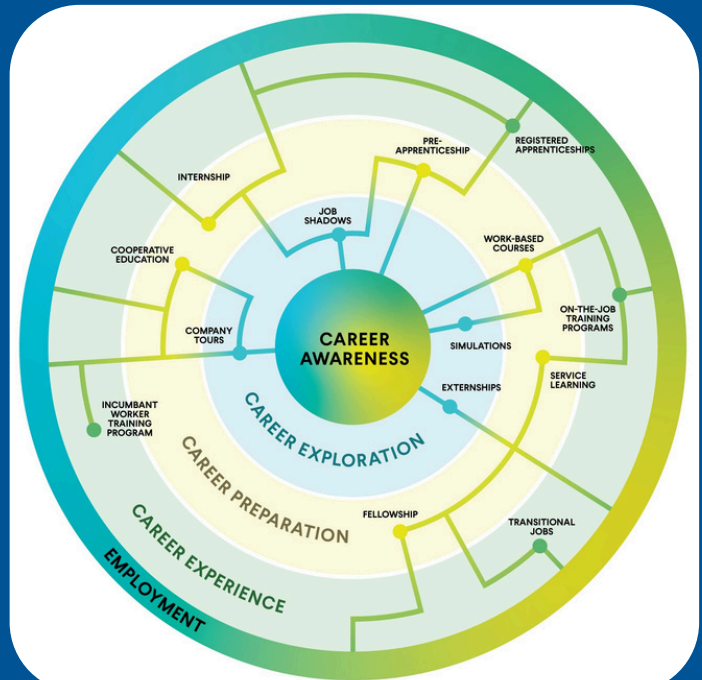


Figure 1: Jobs for the Future, "The Work-Based Learning Journey"

At present there is no statewide definition for WBL at the postsecondary level in Kentucky, leading to variation in ways WBL functions across institutions, academic programs, and employers. For this reason, CPE finds it critical to establish a statewide postsecondary definition for WBL that works in tandem with current uses of the practice, while providing postsecondary institutions and industry professionals boundaries to work within for structure and consistency. Defining WBL broadly while underscoring the intentionality between learning and work as a primary driver for what boundaries WBL opportunities, leaves space for future innovative models on how workforce development and postsecondary ecosystems can support one another. This space is critical, as research indicates effective models of WBL illuminate for students at all levels the ways in which classroom based learning supports their future lives (Cahill, 2016; Kristiawan et al, 2025). That is, the perpetual complaint of “why do I have to learn this? I’m never going to use X concept once I’m out of school” is often answered once students participate in quality learning experiences that translate knowledge and skills throughout education and work instances.

“

Defining WBL broadly, while simultaneously underscoring intentionality between learning and work as a primary driver for what boundaries WBL opportunities, leaves space for future innovative models for how workforce development and postsecondary ecosystems can support one another.

The most common types of WBL are internships, on-the-job-training, cooperative education (co-ops), and apprenticeships. These models have repeatedly proven their effectiveness in improving academic and career outcomes of participants across a wide range of demographics and abilities (Little and Brennan, 1996; Raelin, 2010; Perusso and Wagenaar, 2021; Kristiawan et al, 2025). Quality WBL experiences for students lead to higher incomes, greater career satisfaction, a stronger belief that their education was worth the cost and helped them achieve their goals (Torpey-Saboe, 2022). Influenced by rapidly changing economic, societal, and labor market trends, opportunities like job shadowing, externships, company tours, work-based courses, service learning, practicums, and clinicals are making their way into academic and career pathways as WBL opportunities (Specht et al, 2025).



This blueprint acknowledges that the gold standard for WBL is a paid program. Many studies indicate that those who participate in paid WBL experiences have stronger academic and career outcomes. Paid experiences also help students, especially non-traditional students who have been historically underserved by higher education, access to engage in WBL opportunities (Strada, 2025; Garcia, 2020). While this gold standard is a crucial goal to strive towards, CPE also views WBL opportunities expansively.

In 2025, Jobs for the Future (JFF) released their Work-Based Learning Framework that categorizes WBL into four areas: Career Awareness, Career Exploration, Career Preparation, and Career Experience. In doing so, JFF emphasizes that WBL is not a linear process (Figure 1 on page 9). This is crucial because Kentucky's potential and current student populations often do not have linear academic pathways. Despite Kentucky's relative affordability compared to other states, a student would have to work between 20 to 30 hours a week to afford attendance at a four-year institution, resulting in a 35% to 50% chance in on-time completion (Strada, 2025). Therefore, JFF's flexible model reflects CPE's desire to ingrain a combined sense of lifelong learning and career development for every student in order to empower individuals, cultivate strong communities, and develop a sustainable thriving economy for Kentucky.

WBL Pathways to Master Applied Learning

- **Internship**
- **Co-op**
- **Apprenticeship**
- **Practicum**
- **Clinical**
- **Institutional/Federal Work Study with Student Learning Outcomes**
- **Capstone course**
- **Service Learning**
- **Undergraduate Research**



WHY NOW?

Over the last 75 years, higher education has grappled with a shift in enrollment demographics and changes in workforce demands. Some institutions have met these challenges by integrating a “career readiness” mindset, while others have remained steadfast in their approach that higher education only be about the pursuit of knowledge. Yet, the increasing costs of tuition and fees, economic turbulence triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the launching of artificial intelligence, and condemnations of higher education by federal and state administrations have left many questioning if postsecondary education is worth it. According to a 2025 Gallup Poll, American trust in higher education rebounded slightly in 2025, but remains 15 percentage points lower than it was a decade ago.

At the same time, three-quarters of adults say a college degree is at least as important to a successful career as it was 20 years ago (Lumina-Gallup, 2025). Similarly, research is clear that higher education strengthens the economy, creating wealth, reducing inequality, breaking cycles of generational poverty, improving health and well-being and preserving democracy (Hill et al, 2005; Baum et al, 2010; Brewis and Marginson, 2025). However, graduate underemployment – paired with rising economic inequality and an ever-changing job market – is influencing opinions as to the return on investment of higher education (Weissman, 2025).

In 2014, a Gallup poll noted that 96% of chief academic officers at higher education institutions across the United States indicated that their institution was “very or somewhat” effective at preparing students for the world of work whereas only 10% of CEOs and 15% of Americans agreed with them (Delaski, 2025). This perception gap is striking and illustrates an urgent need to more accurately map how postsecondary programs track and measure skills development along with knowledge acquisition. Faculty and staff often know that they are providing career readiness skills through assignments like problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and time management even if they are not explicitly saying so. However, this is part of the three-fold problem: (1) students need explicit connections between what they are learning and its translation to workplace skills, (2) faculty need time and resources to keep up with current workforce trends in their subject matter area to stay relevant, and (3) institutions need to track and measure student engagement with WBL. Results from the 2026 February CPE WBL Guiding Survey indicate 48% of administrators know that their institutions track WBL at some level of the institution whether it be student, course, or institutional.



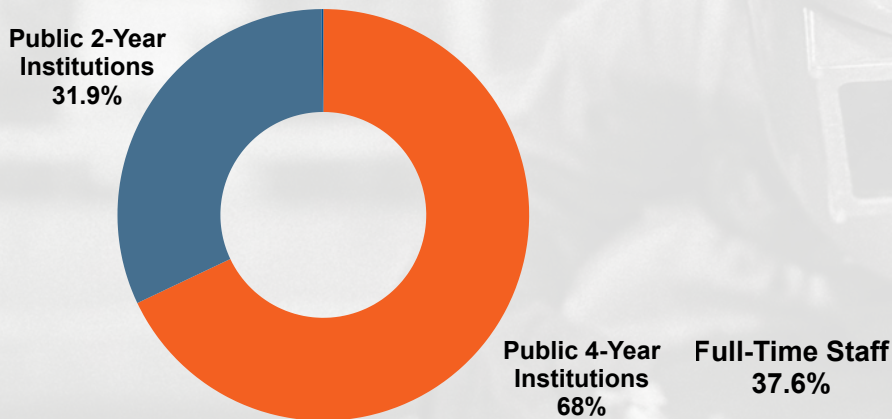
WBL, as an intentional practice embedded into a postsecondary pathway, is critical to bridging the perceived and real skills gap. Bridging this gap to get highly skilled workers connected with appropriate jobs is not only good for the individual, it is critical for long-term societal economic prosperity.

WBL GUIDING SURVEY RESULTS

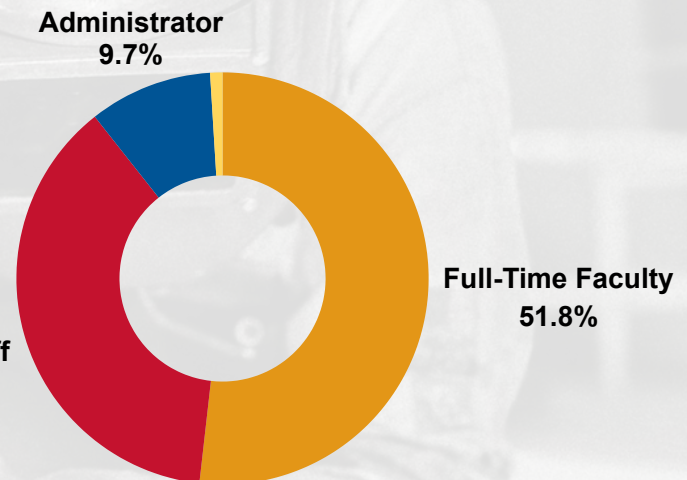
In February 2026, CPE distributed a WBL survey to public and private institution faculty, staff, and administrators across the state. The purpose of the survey aimed to establish a general baseline of their understanding and utilization of WBL at their institutions. 724 people submitted responses. This is a snapshot of different data points.

Respondent Demographics

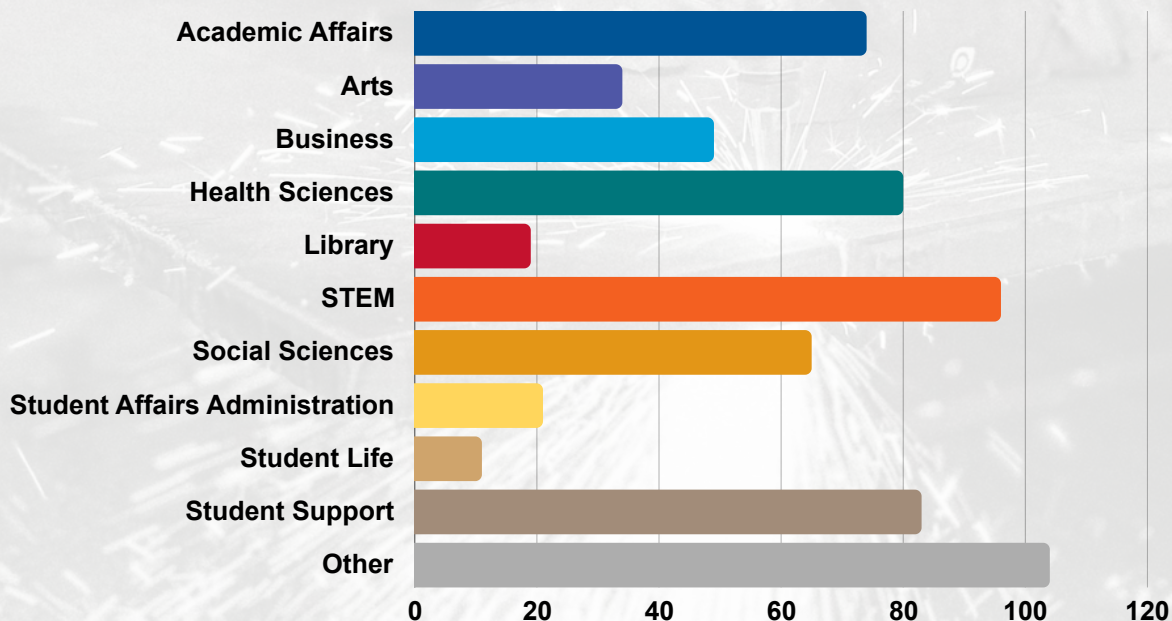
Institution Type



Respondent Role

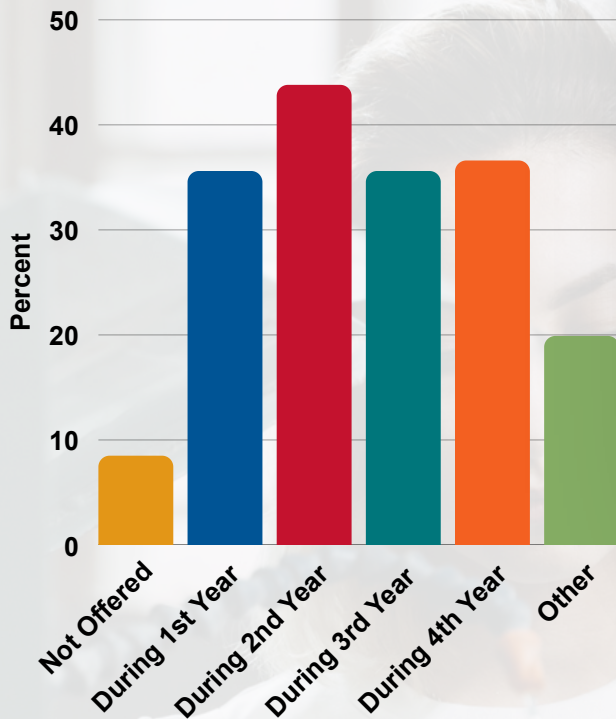


Respondent Primary Area at Institution



"Other" responses include: Humanities, Alumni Relations, college level administrators, combination of multiple roles

"At what point in their academic pathway are students offered a work-based learning experience? Select all that apply."



"Other" responses include: graduate programs, varies by student and programs, and I'm unsure.

Top Three WBL Experiences Offered for Students:

- Internship
- Service learning
- Career fair

What administrators report they need to implement WBL opportunities at their institution:

- Connections with employers
- Grants and financial resources
- Standardized WBL definition
- Tracking, measurement, and assessment tools

What Staff report they need to implement WBL opportunities into a co-curricular area:

- More support staff
- Administrators buy-in
- Employer participation and connections



What faculty report they need to implement WBL opportunities into an academic program:

- Financial incentives, course releases, more faculty or a staff touchpoint
- Benchmark and assessment resources
- Employer connections
- Opportunities to learn from one another

WHO'S ENGAGING?

Accurately knowing who engages with WBL at the postsecondary level in Kentucky is complicated because institutions, faculty, and staff all employ WBL differently. This makes it difficult to compare quality and effectiveness of WBL initiatives throughout the state. Moreover, there is no coordinated and comprehensive tracking system for WBL at state or institutional levels.

In October 2025, CPE solicited WBL data from all public postsecondary institutions and the Association of Independent Kentucky Colleges and Universities institutional research teams. Most institutions indicated they did not formally track WBL opportunities at the institutional level. Some noted that WBL data might be tracked at the individual, program, department, or college level, but it is not funneled up through the institution. If data flow was improved, CPE and other key stakeholders invested in establishing and sustaining WBL initiatives that are proven to bolster success for all parties involved (e.g., students, secondary, postsecondary, businesses, and states) can more efficiently mobilize resources, target supports, and collaborate.

Institutions that reported tracking and measuring WBL at the institutional level captured only course-based internships or co-ops. This left WBL opportunities occurring in classrooms and elsewhere on campus unaccounted for. Similarly, while all institutions tracked students who received federal or state work-study awards, the information collected was limited to the amount of funding received and where students worked on campus, providing little insight into the nature or extent of those work experiences.

Again, this speaks to the need for adopting an inclusive definition of WBL and implementing key performance indicators to track student and institutional outcomes. Programs that embed WBL pathways or offer an abundance of WBL opportunities are concentrated in areas such as manufacturing, engineering, business, health sciences, and education. The Med Center Health Career Academy, a public-private partnership between Med Center Health and Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College, is one such example. As a leader in many areas, Kentucky's postsecondary institutions need to expand beyond these traditional areas and coordinate WBL opportunities for all programs in the state to maintain a competitive postsecondary system that drives economic prosperity for students and the Commonwealth.

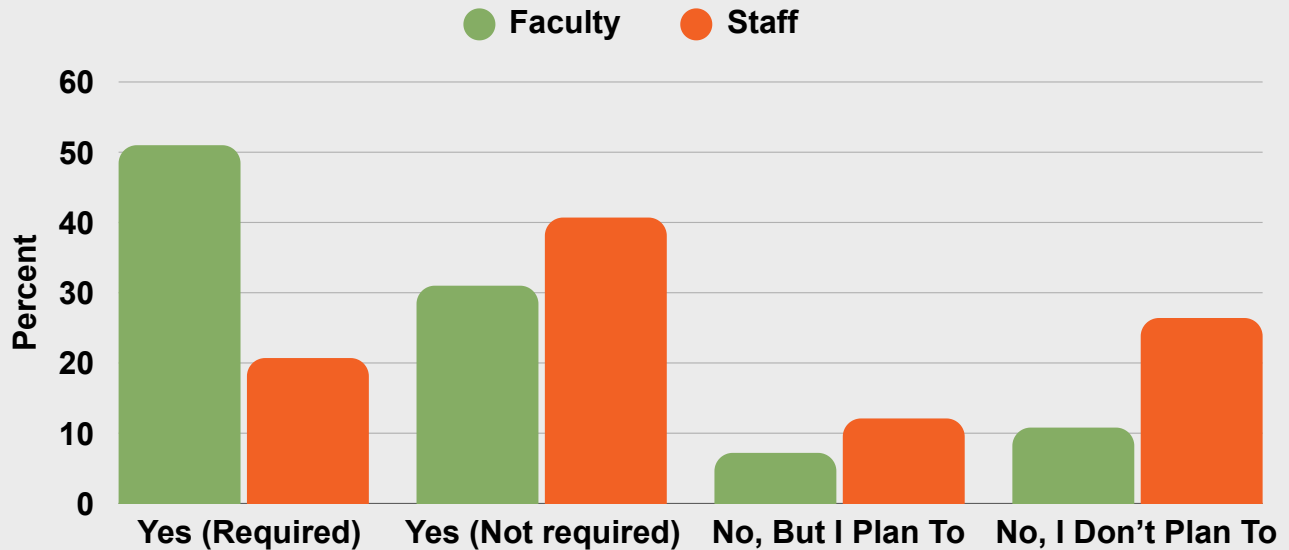
Recently, CPE instituted a policy that any academic programs must indicate if they embed any "high-impact practices," as defined by American Association of Colleges and Universities. This expansion is important because, although, though the proven benefits of WBL are abundant, access to WBL is uneven. As of 2025, 42% percent of graduating seniors at four-year institutions in Kentucky indicated they engaged with at least one paid internship, co-op, practicum/clinical/student teaching, undergraduate research opportunity, or apprenticeship (Strada, 2025). When looking at two-year programs nationally, this number shrinks to around 17% (Strada, 2025).

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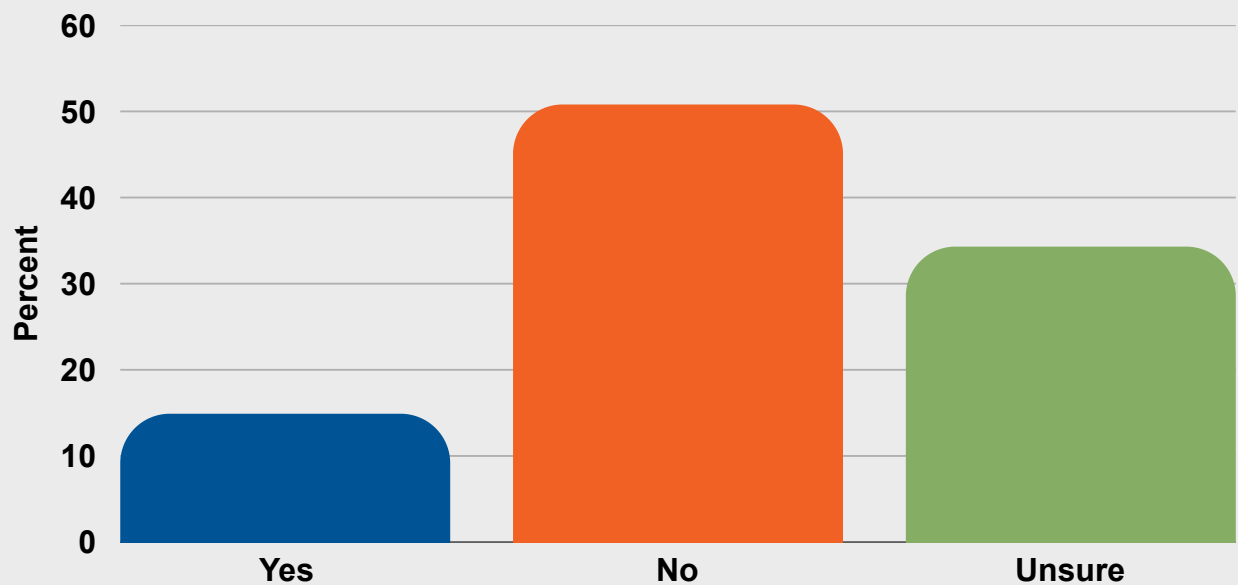
The programs that embed WBL pathways or offer an abundance of WBL opportunities are concentrated to areas such as manufacturing, engineering, business, health sciences, and education.

Results from the 2026 CPE WBL Guiding Survey, further solidify the urgent need to establish a statewide comprehensive, yet flexible definition of WBL to better track who and what type of WBL opportunities students are engaging with.

“Do you have your students engage in an intentionally designed experience that allows students to gain and apply knowledge, skills, and experiences that connect academic learning and workforce development?”



“Does your institution track work-based learning experiences students engage with?”



This question was for those who indicated they were an administrator.

HOW CPE IS BRIDGING THE GAP



Futuriti.org is where Kentuckians find their future. This website connects people to career opportunities, education, and training programs and state data sources. CPE is proud to say this tool helps guide Kentuckians to essential information that aligns their skills and interests with education and training opportunities, wage data, and other information critical for making career decisions. CPE is committed to communicating about workforce demand and educational opportunities.

Kentucky Graduate Profile

The Kentucky Graduate Profile is the state's postsecondary learning framework. It is an effort to align the knowledge, skills and abilities that students gain in college by creating statewide definitions as well as three levels of mastery for each of the 10 Essential Skills.

Identifying the skills gained through the college experience gives faculty, staff, students and employers a way to talk about the value of higher education. Students gain these 10 Essential Skills that help them be successful in their first job, throughout their career, and in their personal, social and civic lives.



Communication



Critical and Creative Thinking



Quantitative Reasoning



Interpersonal Relations



Adaptability and Leadership



Professionalism



Civic Engagement



Collaboration and Teamwork



Knowledge Application



Information Literacy

WBL BRIGHT SPOTS

The following examples are intended to provide possible models for integrating WBL into programs and on campuses.

ENG 201: Career Development in English

Richmond, Kentucky

**Program developed by
Eastern Kentucky University
faculty**



Innovative approach:

In their first year, students take a course in which they focus on career awareness, exploration, and experience. They are matched with an office on ECU's campus to shadow staff or faculty and take on a project to practice skills in their chosen field. At the end of the course students reflect on their experiences and present to their peers what they have learned through the semester.

KYFAME

Kentucky, USA

**Partnership with regional
manufacturers and KCTCS
programs**



Innovative approach:

KYFAME provides global-best workforce development through strong technical training, integration of manufacturing core competencies, intensive professional practices and intentional hands-on experience to build the future of the modern manufacturing industry. Students work at a regional manufacturer for three days a week and attend classes two days a week. Upon completion of the program, students receive an associate degree in applied sciences, with the practical skills gained during their paid work experience. Many students begin full-time employment with the employer. Students can further their technical education to obtain a bachelor's degree in engineering.

Work College Model

Berea, Kentucky

Berea College was established as a work college according to federal regulation 34 CFR 675.43



Innovative approach:

Every student works a minimum of 10 hours per week at a campus job in one of more than 130 departments. In working on campus, students support the operations and mission of the college and gain important workplace experience even before graduation. Berea is one of only ten federally recognized work colleges in the United States and the only one that provides its students with a paycheck to help cover personal and educational expenses. This approach is supported via federal funding and their endowment.

Career Peer Mentor

Hazard, Kentucky

Partnership between Hazard Community and Technical College and Peer Forward



Innovative approach:

Hazard Community and Technical College (HCTC) partnered with PeerForward, a national student mentoring program, alongside the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky, Big Sandy Community and Technical College, and Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College to offer students access to Peer Leaders. These Peer Leaders are HCTC students who are also AmeriCorps Volunteers trained and supported by PeerForward to mentor first-time students who may struggle with "how to do college." Mentors support students with course navigation, tutoring, and career services.

BlueSky Institute

Chattanooga, Tennessee

Partnership between Blue Cross Blue Shield of Tennessee and East Tennessee State University



Innovative approach:

Twenty-seven-month Bachelor of Science in computer science, where students attend major classes in person on BCBS TN campus and complete General Education courses via distance learning. The last 12 months of the program, students are enrolled in a paid internship and upon successful completion are awarded conditional employment with BCBS TN. Program is fully funded by BCBS TN and funds appropriated by Tennessee's governor.

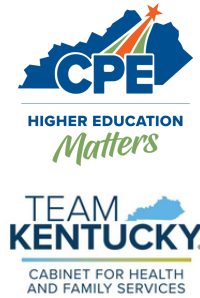
CLIMB 2.0

Kentucky, USA

Partnership between CPE, Cabinet for Health and Family Services, and Hazard Community and Technical College and Big Sandy Community and Technical College

Innovative approach:

Career Ladders in Mental and Behavioral Health (CLIMB) provides career pathways to high school students in select schools who are interested in behavioral health careers. Students earn certifications that enable them to work in the behavioral health field upon graduation and/or pursue additional postsecondary credentials. Training components for CLIMB 2.0 are administered by the University of Kentucky Center of Excellence in Rural Health (UK CERH), which includes faculty support and the state-approved Kentucky Homeplace Foundational Community Health Worker Training curriculum. This initiative is dual credit and Career Technical Education (CTE) aligned with postsecondary credentials in human services and health sciences.



Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky

Kentucky, USA

Partnership between Kentucky Department of Education and the Office of Industry and Apprenticeships

Innovative approach:

The Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky (TRACK) is a business and industry driven program designed to create a pipeline for students to enter postsecondary apprenticeship training. Students receive a nationally recognized credential at little or no cost. Employers tailor the program for their specific needs and select the career and technical education (CTE) courses for the apprenticeship pathway. This creates a competitive recruiting environment of future employees grounded in strong technical and professional skills.



Kentucky TRAINS

Kentucky, USA

Program supported by the Kentucky General Assembly and executed by Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS)

Innovative approach:

TRAINS is an initiative that helps employers upskill their teams, improve productivity, and strengthen regional competitiveness. Through significant cost offsets for eligible employers seeking workforce training, employer training initiatives may be subsidized by up to 75%. This model not only saves industry money, it also connects employees to the KCTCS system and drives new employers to the state.



Med Center Health Career Academy

Bowling Green, Kentucky

Partnership between Med Center Health (MCH) and Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC)



Innovative approach:

Students accepted into both the SKYCTC nursing program and the Med Center Health (MCH) Career Academy receive comprehensive financial support from MCH, which covers tuition, books, uniforms, and necessary supplies throughout their enrollment. Students accepted into the Career Academy are current MCH employees who work part-time hours but receive full-time pay and benefits. This structure provides financial stability while immersing students in the hospital environment, where they can apply classroom learning directly to patient care and develop essential professional competencies. Upon graduation, participants commit to working at MCH for two years.

Coalfield Development

Huntington, West Virginia

Non-Profit organization partnered with two- and four-year postsecondary institutions



Innovative approach:

The organization offers three flexible training pathways: Community Training (shorter-term, industry-specific certifications), Professional Accelerated Training and Hiring (two- to six-week courses supported by daily stipends), and Workforce Readiness and Professional Success (six-month to three-year training that leads to associate degrees or trade certifications). The WRAPS program also provides comprehensive wraparound services that support substance use recovery, reentry to the community following incarceration, and entrepreneurship.

CPE ACTION BLUEPRINT

The following action items were developed as a result of data gathered for this report. They are designed to support the work of the Council as a whole. Action items are not expected nor required to be implemented all at once. Rather, they are designed to build off and with one another to ensure sustainable and holistic implementation.

Survey postsecondary institutions across the state

Why it's important:

- Providing postsecondary institutions the opportunity to share qualitative and quantitative feedback allows CPE to more accurately mobilize resources and target support as each institution has their own relationship to WBL.

What this can look like:

- Distribute an anonymous, confidential survey developed by CPE's Workforce and Economic Development Unit and the Data and Advanced Analytics Unit to chief academic officers and career development officers at Kentucky's postsecondary institutions for distribution through their networks.

Action Snapshot:

- Florida - Department of Education - Postsecondary Work-Based Learning Data Practices, utilized to drive practices around WBL.

Create WBL Taskforce

Why it's important:

- Forming a team of experts who research, coordinate, and advocate for WBL at state and institutional levels maximizes the chances that high quality WBL is adopted across key stakeholders throughout the state.

What this can look like:

- Research best practices, liaise with secondary, industry, and postsecondary partners, and source financial support for initiatives.
- Track and record results and feedback from WBL programs.
- Advocate for infrastructure and resources across government and industry.

Action Snapshot:

- James Madison University - Virginia - Work-based Learning Experience Task Force.

Develop a shared definition of quality work-based learning across key stakeholders

Why it's important:

- Having a shared definition of quality WBL makes sure there is a common framework of what a quality work-based experience is for students, faculty, institutions, and employers so that all participants gain valuable skills and have meaningful experiences.

What this can look like:

- Creating new definitions derived from data gathered from surveys and workforce groups.
- Utilizing codified definitions of WBL at the K-12 level, creating synergy across different levels of education.
- Marketing campaign for students demonstrating value of WBL

Action Snapshot:

- West Virginia - Students Right Know Act and Classroom2Careers, legislation that operationalizes cross sector use of WBL.

Standardize tracking of WBL across institutions

Why it's important:

- Standardized tracking across postsecondary institutions provides a more comprehensive view of how WBL is or is not working in regional areas.

What this can look like:

- Common Code for a zero-credit, transcriptable internship course with attributes for employer type, paid, unpaid, and other dimensions.
- Add a common attribute to courses that contain work-based learning to track them consistently.
- Include WBL participation as part of institutional reporting requirements.
- Add worker type to unemployment data such as intern or apprentice.

Action Snapshot:

- Louisiana - "Grow, Achieve, Thrive" Initiative embeds WBL reporting requirements as part of school accountability.





Create WBL data dashboard to set, measure, and track goals

Why it's important:

- Setting, measuring, and tracking goals visualized through a public facing data dashboard provides stakeholders necessary information to focus the resources required to develop and make progress towards quality WBL programs.

What this can look like:

- Working with Kentucky Center for Statistics, Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board, and other business and workforce leaders to benchmark progress.

Action Snapshot:

- New York - State University of New York - [SUNY High Impact Practice Dashboard](#).

Organize collaborative engagement among employers, institutions, and other key stakeholders

Why it's important:

- Organizing state-level, collaborative engagement among employers, institutions, and other key stakeholders activates members to implement high quality WBL opportunities for students.

What this can look like:

- Engage, support, and train faculty and staff to successfully integrate WBL in all departments.
- Encourage and support institutions to provide professional development for updated curricula and experience gaps.
- Host convenings to bring WBL beginners and experts together to start and maintain momentum.

Action Snapshot:

- Illinois - Illinois Work-Based Learning Innovation Network (I-WIN) to surface and share innovative approaches to work-based learning.

Build Employer Asset Map with Needs Assessment

Why it's important:

- Building an employer asset map with a needs assessment ensures CPE creates useful infrastructure to facilitate strong partnerships between institutions and employers, resulting in robust student skill development and targeted employer technical assistance.

What this can look like:

- Connecting with Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development, postsecondary institutions' workforce and economic development offices, and Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board to share out employer needs assessment.

Action Snapshot:

- Massachusetts - Cape Cod Community College Employer Needs Assessment Survey.

Champion policy that incentivizes action from employers, postsecondary institutions, and the State

Why it's important:

- Incentivizing action at the state-level with employers, institutions, and other key stakeholders encourages members to implement high quality WBL opportunities for students.

What this can look like:

- Allocate dedicated state funding for innovative WBL models.
- Adapt performance funding models for institutions who graduate more learners with quality WBL.
- Institute public-private initiatives that offer tax credits or subsidies for employers.
- Encourage integration of quality mentorship and coaching into tenure requirements.

Action Snapshot:

- Kansas – Kansas Apprenticeship Act, establishing a tax credit and grant incentive program for apprenticeships.



PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Phase	CPE	Postsecondary Institutions	Employers
Exploratory 2025 - 2026	- Does CPE need to do this? - How to do this well? - Research current models in KY and beyond. - Create blueprint strategy.	Nominate campus champions to be on WBL taskforce.	Identify interested employees to champion and guide work.
Laying Groundwork 2026 - 2027	- Generate engagement and buy in from institutions and industry. - Source financial resources for current and upcoming work to be done.	- Build teams dedicated to the work. - Explore strengths and opportunities. - Plan and implement pilot projects.	- Build teams dedicated to the work. - Explore strengths and opportunities. - Plan and implement pilot projects.
Building Infrastructure 2028 - 2030	- Develop data dashboard. - Host workshops and events. - Provide technical assistance. - Introduce incentive legislation.	- Evaluate academic programs. - Address capacity needs. - Develop policies and procedures. - Set target goal and track progress.	- Assess workflow. - Develop policies and procedures. - Set target goal and track progress.
Grow and Sustain 2031 +	- Host workshops and events. - Evaluate and publish data.	- Evaluate progress. - Reassess process. - Establish new goals.	- Evaluate progress. - Reassess process. - Establish new goals.

WBL Policy Incentive Models

The models below are examples of policy that can be introduced to incentivize creating and sustaining quality WBL opportunities.

	Student	Postsecondary Institution	Employer
Tax Credit / Incentive			- WBL Learning Tax Credit (e.g., \$X for each hour of student / employee worked up to \$X amount). - Start up costs for new apprentice/intern program for salary, non recurring costs up to \$X amount.
Direct Aid	- Stipends (WIOA, state matched P3 funds). - Waived/reimbursed tuition costs for completed WBL opportunity.	- Stipend for faculty and staff development. - Grants for starting new programs. - Institutional and/or state matched federal work study program.	\$X for each hour of student/employee worked up to \$X amount.
State Financial Aid Program	State matched 529 investments (lifetime max of \$X amount).		
Other Incentive Possibilities		- Include WBL / Quality Coaching into Tenure and Promotion requirements. - Add quality WBL student outcomes to performance funding model.	

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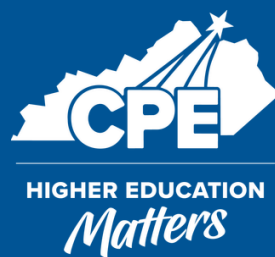
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