

Kentucky Talent Recruitment Grant Program

Application Framework

Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development
September 2026

This Application Framework provides the recommended structure and guidance for the Kentucky Talent Recruitment Grant Program. It is designed to enable eligible applicants, which could include county governments, municipalities, regional economic development organizations, and nonprofit organizations, to navigate the application process clearly and efficiently.

Applications will be accepted during a defined open window announced by the Cabinet. All submissions received during the open period will be reviewed collectively. Awards are competitive and are not guaranteed by meeting minimum eligibility criteria alone.

Section 1: Program Overview

The Kentucky Talent Recruitment Grant Program was established by HB 576 (2026 Regular Session) and is administered by the Cabinet for Economic Development (CED). The Program provides competitive grant funding to eligible local and regional entities to support talent attraction and retention initiatives across the Commonwealth.

1.1 Eligible Applicants

To be eligible, an applicant must be one of the following:

- A county or city governing body
- Entities organized under Kentucky law engaged in economic development, workforce investment, talent development, or community development
- A nonprofit organization organized under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3) or (6) engaged in economic development, workforce investment, talent development, or community development

Regional applications are strongly encouraged. A Regional Project is an eligible project proposed by eligible grant applicants from different counties in Kentucky who submit a single joint application. Regional applications receive preferential consideration in the scoring process.

1.2 Eligible Project Categories

HB 576 establishes three categories of eligible projects. Each application must designate which category or categories it is applying under. Fund allocation across the program is as follows:

Category	Program Fund Allocation	Description
Relocation (Category A)	50%	Programs to attract households from outside

		Kentucky to relocate to a Kentucky locality
Student Retention (Category B)	25%	Programs to retain Kentucky students in-state after graduation
Targeted Marketing (Category C)	25%	Targeted marketing campaigns to engage potential new residents

1.3 Funding Parameters

Maximum Award	\$500,000 per eligible grant applicant
Required Local Match	20% of total project cost; may be cash, local investment, or in-kind contributions (including staff time, memberships, and services)
Disbursement First Tranche	50% upon execution of the grant agreement
Disbursement Second Tranche	50% upon submission and CED approval of at least one satisfactory semiannual performance report demonstrating meaningful progress toward stated program goals
Program Duration	Up to 18 months; all grant-funded activities must be completed within this period

Section 2: Application Form

Applications must be submitted via the Cabinet's designated application portal during the open application window. All sections must be completed. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

Part A: Applicant Information

Purpose	<i>Identifies the lead applicant and, for regional applications, all participating organizations and counties. The organization named as applicant will be the signatory to the grant agreement.</i>
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A1. Lead Applicant

Organization Name	<i>Full legal name of the applicant organization</i>
Organization Type	<i>County government / City government / Regional EDO / 501(c)(3) or (6) nonprofit / Other (describe)</i>
Primary Contact Name	
Title	
Mailing Address	
County	
Phone	

Email	
A2. Regional Application	
Is this a Regional Project?	Yes / No
Total Counties Participating	Enter number; list each county below
Partner County 1	Organization name, county, and primary contact
Partner County 2	(Add rows as needed)
Partner County 3	(Add rows as needed)

Part B: Project Description

Purpose	Describes what the applicant plans to do, which funding category or categories they are applying under, and the geography or target audience the program will serve. Strong applications demonstrate a clear, specific strategy.
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B1. Project Overview	
Project Title	A clear, descriptive name for this initiative
Funding Category	Check all that apply: ☐ Category A – Relocation ☐ Category B – Student Retention ☐ Category C – Targeted Marketing
Target Geography	The specific localities, counties, or region the program will serve
Target Audience	Describe the specific audience(s) this program will reach (e.g., remote workers in mid-career, recent graduates of KY universities, healthcare workers in target external metros)
Program Duration	Anticipated start and end date (programs may extend up to 18 months)
B2. Program Narrative	
Program Description	Describe the program in detail. What will you do? How will you do it? What makes this approach well-suited to your region's needs? (500 words max per category)
Regional Need	What workforce or population challenges is this program designed to address? Cite relevant data where available.
Strategic Rationale	Why is this the right approach for your region? How does it build on existing assets, partnerships, or infrastructure?
Prior Experience	Describe any previous talent attraction, retention, or marketing programs your organization or region has implemented, and key outcomes.

Part C: Program Design

Purpose	<i>Outlines the specific activities, timeline, and partnerships that will deliver the program. CED uses this section to assess whether the applicant has a concrete, feasible plan for administration of the grant funding.</i>
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C1. Activities & Timeline

Key Activities	<i>List the primary program activities and the quarter in which each will occur (Year 1, Q1 through program end)</i>
Implementation Partners	<i>List any partner organizations, vendors, or employers involved in program delivery and their roles</i>
Employer Engagement	<i>Describe how employers will be engaged as part of the program</i>

C2. Relocation Incentive Design (Category A Only)

Incentive Structure	<i>Describe the type and amount of any direct relocation incentives offered to households (cash, in-kind benefits, or both). Note: cash incentives may not exceed 60% of total grant award.</i>
Community Integration	<i>Describe the community experience, networking, or onboarding programming that will accompany any financial incentive</i>
Household Eligibility	<i>Confirm the applicable minimum household income threshold for your program: Heritage county programs: \$70,000 minimum. Non-Heritage county programs: \$90,000 minimum.</i> <i>Will your program meet or exceed this threshold? [] Yes [] No</i> <i>If no, explain justification.</i>
Retention Commitment	<i>Describe any required commitment period or retention mechanism for households receiving direct incentives</i>

Part D: Budget & Local Match

Purpose	<i>Demonstrates that the applicant has a realistic, itemized budget and has secured or identified the 20% local match required by HB 576. Matching funds may be cash, local investment, or in-kind contributions (including staff time, memberships, or services).</i>
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D1. Budget Summary

Total Project Cost	\$
Grant Funds Requested	<i>\$(maximum \$500,000)</i>
Local Match Amount	<i>\$(minimum 20% of total project cost)</i>

D2. Budget Detail

Program Design & Strategy	<i>\$ — Describe (e.g., research, strategy development, vendor selection)</i>
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Program Administration	\$ — Describe (e.g., staff time, reporting, coordination)
Marketing & Outreach	\$ — Describe (e.g., digital advertising, content production, events)
Relocation Incentives	\$ — Direct financial incentives to households (max 60% of grant award for Category A)
Other Costs	\$ — Describe
Total	\$

D3. Local Match Detail

Match Source(s)	List each source, amount, and form (cash / local investment / in-kind)
Match Status	Are matching funds fully secured? ☐ Yes ☐ Partially secured (explain) ☐ Identified but not yet committed (explain)
For Regional Projects	Describe how each participating county or organization is contributing to the local match

Part E: Goals & Metrics

Purpose	Establishes measurable, realistic targets that CED will use to evaluate program performance and determine second-tranche disbursement. Applicants are expected to select KPI frameworks appropriate to their category and maturity level. Ambitious but realistic goals are preferred over inflated numbers.
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E1. Primary Goals

Household Goal (Cat. A)	Total number of households this program seeks to successfully incentivize to relocate from outside Kentucky to your locality
Retention Goal (Cat. B)	Primary measurable goal for student engagement and retention (e.g., number of students reached, employer connections facilitated, perception shift targets, and/or in-state employment commitments where trackable)
Marketing Goal (Cat. C)	Primary measurable outcome (e.g., number of qualified talent leads generated, documented perception shift, engagement rate vs. benchmark)
Anticipated Program Impact (All)	Briefly describe the workforce or population challenge this program is designed to address and the change you expect to see by program end
Grant Amount per Household	For Category A: estimated total grant cost divided by household goal

E2. Reporting Metrics

Specific Metrics	Based on the funding category or categories selected in Part B, list the specific metrics you will track and report semiannually. Refer to the Program Guidelines for the full menu of required and recommended metrics by category.
Tracking Methodology	How will you verify and document outcomes? (e.g., lease or utility agreements, employer confirmation, survey data, web analytics)

Part F: Required Attachments

Purpose	<i>Supporting documents that validate applicant eligibility and demonstrate organizational capacity and community support.</i>
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Required Document	Who Must Submit	Submitted
Governing body resolution authorizing submission and execution of grant agreement	<i>All applicants</i>	☐
IRS determination letter (501(c)(3) or (6))	<i>Nonprofit applicants only</i>	☐
Signed letters of support from each participating county or municipality	<i>Regional applicants</i>	☐
Evidence of local match availability (e.g., letter from funding source, budget documentation)	<i>All applicants</i>	☐
Organizational chart or staff plan demonstrating capacity to administer the program	<i>All applicants</i>	☐
Any existing talent attraction materials, campaign assets, or program descriptions (if applicable)	<i>Optional — all applicants</i>	☐

Section 3: Scoring Criteria

Applications will be scored on a 100-point scale. Applications must achieve a minimum score of 60 points to be considered for funding. Points are awarded as described below. Heritage County designation and regional collaboration provide additional points that can raise a project's score above 100 (these bonus points are additive).

Base Scoring (100 Points)		
Criterion	Points Available	How Scored
Strategic clarity and quality of program design	25	<i>Specificity of strategy, target audience definition, clarity of activities</i>
Measurability of goals and quality of KPI framework	20	<i>Realistic, data-supported targets; appropriate metrics for category; tracking methodology</i>
Demonstrated organizational capacity and prior experience	15	<i>Evidence of successful prior programs; staff/vendor capacity; partnerships</i>

Local match strength and financial commitment	15	% match meeting or exceeding minimum; secured vs. identified funds; diversity of match sources
Cost-effectiveness and value of investment	15	Reasonable, appropriately allocated budget designed to drive meaningful outcomes
Community support and stakeholder engagement	10	Letters of support; employer partnerships; breadth of stakeholder involvement

Bonus Points — Regional Collaboration & Heritage County Priority		
Criterion	Bonus Points	Notes
Multi-county regional application (2–3 counties)	+5	Applicants from 2+ counties in different counties submitting jointly
Multi-county regional application (4+ counties)	+10	Supersedes the 2–3 county bonus; not additive
At least one participating county is Heritage Tier 1 or Tier 2	+5	Per HB 869 Heritage County tier designations
At least one participating county is Heritage (any tier)	+2	Mutually exclusive with the Tier 1/2 bonus above; does not stack with it
Majority of participating counties are Heritage (any tier)	+5	More than half of participating counties carry Heritage designation

Maximum possible score with all bonuses: 122 points. The Tier 1/2 Heritage bonus and the any-tier Heritage bonus are mutually exclusive. The majority Heritage bonus is stackable with either Heritage bonus.

Section 4: Application Process & Timeline

Dates	Stage	Description
Oct. 14, 2026	Application Window Closes	Applications accepted during the defined open window. Applications submitted after the deadline will not be reviewed. All applications received during the open period are reviewed collectively.
October 15–Nov. 13, 2026	Review & Scoring	CED staff complete eligibility review, scoring, and ranking. Applications scoring below 60 points are eliminated from consideration. Awards are determined by score, ranking, and available funds.

November 16, 2026	Award Notification	Applicants are notified of award decisions. Awarded applicants have 30 days to accept and execute the grant agreement.
December 1, 2026	First Disbursement	50% of award disbursed upon execution of the grant agreement.
Dec. 2026 – May 2028	Program Implementation	Awardees implement their programs and submit semiannual performance reports to CED.
August 2027	Second Disbursement	Remaining 50% disbursed upon submission and CED approval of at least one satisfactory semiannual performance report demonstrating meaningful progress toward stated program goals.
June 30, 2028	Final Reporting	Awardees submit a final comprehensive report documenting outcomes, economic impact, and learnings.

Compliance & Forfeiture

Grant recipients that fail to comply with reporting requirements, or use awarded funds for purposes other than an eligible project, shall forfeit and be liable to the Cabinet for the full award amount. Records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the final performance report is due.

Section 5: Semiannual Reporting Requirements

All grant recipients must submit semiannual performance reports to CED. Reports are due within 30 days of the end of each six-month program period. Reports must include the following, as applicable to the program category and KPI framework selected in the application:

Category A: Relocation Programs

- Total household applications received
- Total approved/eligible households
- Total verified household relocations to date
- Annual income and occupations of relocated households
- Country of origin of relocated households (state or country of prior residence)
- Relocation grant amount per household
- Retention status of previously relocated households (tracked for program duration where applicable)
- Estimated state and local tax revenue generated
- Estimated total economic impact

Category B: Student Retention Programs

- Number of students engaged through program activities
- Number of employer connections made through the program
- Number of graduating students retained in-state (employed or committed to in-state employment)

• Number of alumni returning to the region
• Graduate income and occupation data (where available)
• Estimated economic impact of retained graduates

Category C: Targeted Marketing Programs

• Reach and engagement metrics for campaign activities (vs. established benchmarks)
• Conversion metrics: high-intent actions (e.g., job clicks, form fills, direct outreach)
• Number of qualified talent leads generated
• Target audience engagement metrics (e.g., top markets, most engaged job titles, top keywords)
• Media coverage and earned impressions (where applicable)
• Documented perception shifts (brand lift and/or pre/post survey data where applicable)

All Recipients

• Financial summary: expenditures by budget category to date
• Progress against stated goals
• Key learnings, challenges, and adjustments to program approach
• Qualitative impact: employer feedback, success stories, documented relocations or placements
• Recommendations for program improvement or policy actions

CED may require additional reporting to evaluate project performance and ensure compliance with grant agreement deliverables.

Semiannual Learning Sessions

As a condition of the grant agreement, all awardees are required to participate in CED-convened semiannual learning sessions during the program period. Sessions are timed to coincide with semiannual report submissions. Attendance by a designated organizational representative is mandatory.

Contact & Technical Assistance

Contact CED before submitting if you have questions about eligibility, program design, or the application process.

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