Kentucky Talent Recruitment Grant Program

Application Framework

Kentucky Cabinet for Economic Development
October 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	The remaining 50% will be disbursed upon approval of a satisfactory performance report demonstrating: • **Category A:** Achievement of at least 50% of the approved household relocation goal, as required by statute. • **Category B:** Achievement of at least 50% of the approved retention goal, measured through the KPIs established in the application and grant agreement. • **Category C:** Satisfactory progress against the KPIs and implementation milestones established in the application and grant agreement. Progress may include completion of foundational research, strategy, audience definition, creative development, or other approved milestones when campaign performance data is not yet available.
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	*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.*

A1. Lead Applicant	
Organization Name	*Full legal name of the applicant organization*
Organization Type	*County government / City government / Regional EDO / 501(c)(3) or (6) nonprofit / Other (describe)*

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.*

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	*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.*

C1. Activities & Timeline	
Key Activities	*List the primary program activities and the quarter in which each will occur (Year 1, Q1 through program end)*
Implementation Partners	*List any partner organizations, vendors, or employers involved in program delivery and their roles*
Employer Engagement	*Describe how employers will be engaged as part of the program*
C2. Relocation Incentive Design (Category A Only)	
Incentive Structure	*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.*
Community Integration	*Describe the community experience, networking, or onboarding programming that will accompany any financial incentive*
Household Income Eligibility	*Indicate the income guideline the program will apply (select all that apply):* *[ ] $70,000 minimum for households relocating to a Heritage County* *[ ] $90,000 minimum for households relocating to a Non-Heritage County* *[ ] Alternative income target requested* *If requesting an alternative, describe the proposed target, the workforce or economic-development opportunity it addresses, the proposed use of grant and local matching funds, and the anticipated benefit to the community and Commonwealth. Alternative income targets are subject to state approval.*
Retention Commitment	*Describe any required commitment period or retention mechanism for households receiving direct incentives*

Part D: Budget & Local Match

Purpose	*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).*

D1. Budget Summary	
Total Project Cost	*$*
Grant Funds Requested	*$ (maximum $500,000)*
Local Match Amount	*$ (minimum 20% of total project cost)*
D2. Budget Detail	
Program Design & Strategy	*$ — Describe (e.g., research, strategy development, vendor selection)*
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.*

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)	*Define the measurable retention goal and KPIs that will be used to evaluate program performance. KPIs may include students reached, employer connections, awareness or intent to remain in Kentucky, and verified in-state placements where trackable.*
Marketing Goal (Cat. C)	*Define the measurable marketing goal, KPIs, and implementation milestones that will be used to evaluate progress. These may include completion of*

	approved research and strategy deliverables, campaign launch, reach and engagement, qualified leads, high-intent actions, or documented perception shifts, as appropriate to the program stage.
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	*List the KPIs and implementation milestones that will be tracked and reported semiannually. These will be reviewed and finalized as part of the grant agreement and used to evaluate second-tranche eligibility.*
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	*Supporting documents that validate applicant eligibility and demonstrate organizational capacity and community support.*

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

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**	*Specificity of strategy, target audience definition, clarity of activities*
Measurability of goals and quality of KPI framework	**20**	*Realistic, data-supported targets; appropriate metrics for category; tracking methodology*
Demonstrated organizational capacity and prior experience	**15**	*Evidence of successful prior programs; staff/vendor capacity; partnerships*
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
Nov. 6, 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.
November-December 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.
January 2027	**Award Notification**	Applicants are notified of award decisions. Awarded applicants have 30 days to accept and execute the grant agreement.
February 2027	**First Disbursement**	50% of award disbursed upon execution of the grant agreement.
February 2027 – July 2028	**Program Implementation**	Awardees implement their programs and submit semiannual performance reports to CED.
October 2027	**Second Disbursement**	Remaining 50% disbursed upon approval of a satisfactory performance report. Category A and B recipients must meet the applicable statutory performance threshold. Category C recipients must demonstrate satisfactory progress against the KPIs and implementation milestones approved in the grant agreement.
August 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.

Performance will be evaluated against the goals, KPIs, and implementation milestones approved in each recipient's grant agreement. When final outcome data is not yet available, recipients may document progress through completed research, strategy, program development, campaign

launch, or other approved milestones appropriate to the program stage. Examples of acceptable KPIs for each category are included below.

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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