

**KENTUCKY COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
HEALTHCARE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT FUND
STEERING COMMITTEE**



September 17, 2025, 1:00 p.m. ET

Virtual meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85703859676?pwd=uCDqcccl7MxGPPKamdyBydA8aUTFs6.1>

- I. Call to Order & Roll Call**
- II. Approval of the Minutes**
- III. HWIF Partnership Proposal Round 4 (Fall 2025) & HWIF Toolkit Overview**
- IV. Brainstorming - Sustaining HWIF Impact in Tight Budget Environments**
- V. Advisor Presentation - University of Kentucky Department of Dietetics and Human Nutrition**
Dr. Liz Combs - Director of our Accelerated Coordinated Program (ACP)
Lily Douthitt - M-G CAFE in the Government Relations Director
- VI. Other Business**
- VII. Adjournment**

MEETING MINUTES

Draft for approved by the Committee on September 17, 2025

Who: Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education
Type: Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund (HWIF) Steering Committee
Date: May 21, 2025
Time: 1 p.m. EST
Location: CPE Offices, 100 Airport Road, Frankfort - Boardroom

CALL TO ORDER

The Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund Steering Committee met May 21, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. ET. The meeting occurred at the CPE offices in Frankfort. Committee member Michael Muscarella presided.

ATTENDANCE

Members who attended: Mason Dyer, Tim Gaillard, JP Hamm, Donovan Layne, Cliff Maesaka, Michael Muscarella, Vestena Robbins, Ladonna Rogers, Beth Shafer, Michael Yoder

HWIF PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL AWARDS

Ms. Michaela Mineer, CPE Program Manager for Healthcare Workforce Initiatives, started the conversation with an overview of the tabulated scores, match requests, and funds available. In total there were 29 partnership proposals submitted. The committee discussed and unanimously agreed that each proposal aligned with the legislative intent and should be awarded funds. A motion was made by Michael Muscarella to recommend that CPE funds the 29 partnership proposals. The motion was seconded and was carried.

DISCUSSION: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Mr. Muscarella led a discussion in which the committee agreed that the proposal review period was more efficient and more manageable this time after implementing a small group review structure. Future HWIF partnership proposal rounds present an opportunity to strengthen both partner applicant preparation and program alignment. A training toolkit or applicant webinar could help address recurring proposal gaps, particularly in areas such as onboarding plans and clarity around student service terms upon graduation. Ms. Mineer will be working on this requested toolkit over the summer.

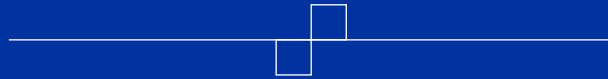
REMAINING HWIF FUNDS FOR YEAR 2

Ms. Mineer shared that CPE is going to meet with healthcare employers over the summer to gauge interest in donating to the HWIF incentive fund pool, activating the incentive fund dollar-to-dollar match awards. If an entity does not come forward, CPE will move forward with a fourth round of partnership proposal awards with the remaining \$700,000 in the fund.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned the meeting at 2:40 pm ET.

Strengthening Kentucky's Healthcare Workforce: The Need for Registered Dietitians



Liz Combs, EdD, MS, RD, LD
Department of Dietetics and Human Nutrition
University of Kentucky

Why Dietitians Matter

- Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDN) are the only food and nutrition professionals credentialed to provide medical nutrition therapy (MNT).
- MNT has been shown to be a cost-effective component of treatment for:
 - Obesity
 - Diabetes
 - Hypertension
 - Dyslipidemia
 - HIV infection
 - Unintended weight loss in older adults
 - Other chronic conditions

Why Dietitians Matter

- RDNs play a critical role in chronic disease prevention and management (diabetes, obesity, heart disease).
- Counseling provided by an RDN as part of a health care team can positively impact weight, blood pressure, blood lipids and blood sugar control.
- Nutrition interventions improve outcomes and reduce healthcare costs.

The Public Health Context in Kentucky

- 13.8% of adults diagnosed with diabetes, 34% have prediabetes
 - **Patients that work with RDNs experience up to 2% decrease in HbA1c levels**
 - Every 1%-point decrease correlates with a 40% decrease in the risk of complications
- 40% of KY adults diagnosed with hypertension
 - **Patients that work with RDNs experience up an average decrease of 10 mmHg in systolic BP and 6 mmHg drop in diastolic BP**
 - Each 5 mmHg reduction correlates with a 10% lower risk of cardiovascular events.
- 41% of adults have obesity, 35% are overweight
 - **Working with RDNs to lose weight is correlated with a 5% reduction in weight**
 - Experience decreased BMIs and decreased waist circumferences

American Diabetes Association and Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2025

Current Workforce Shortages

- Kentucky has 1,417 licensed dietitians
- Current ratio: **1 dietitian per 3,175 residents**
- Distribution problem
 - Most dietitians located in urban centers
 - Some rural counties have no dietitian at all
- **Impact: Reduced access to care where it's needed most**

Who are RDNs?

- Hold a graduate degree
- Graduated from an accredited dietetics program (ACEND)
- Completed extensive supervised practice
- Passed a national credentialing exam
- Stay current through required annual continuing education requirements

Educational Pathway to Become a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN)

STEPS TO BECOME A REGISTERED DIETITIAN NUTRITIONIST (RDN)



Barriers for Students

- Increased **tuition and time commitment**
- **Limited programs** in Kentucky
- Students from **rural areas and/or those looking to change career paths** may face relocation and financial strain



Healthcare Workforce Innovation Fund

- Scholarships and program support could
 - Reduce financial barriers
 - Expand the dietetics pipeline
 - Increase representation in rural and underserved areas

Investing in RDNs = investing in healthier communities
and lower long-term healthcare costs