



THE EASTERN KENTUCKY HEALTHCARE ACTION PLAN

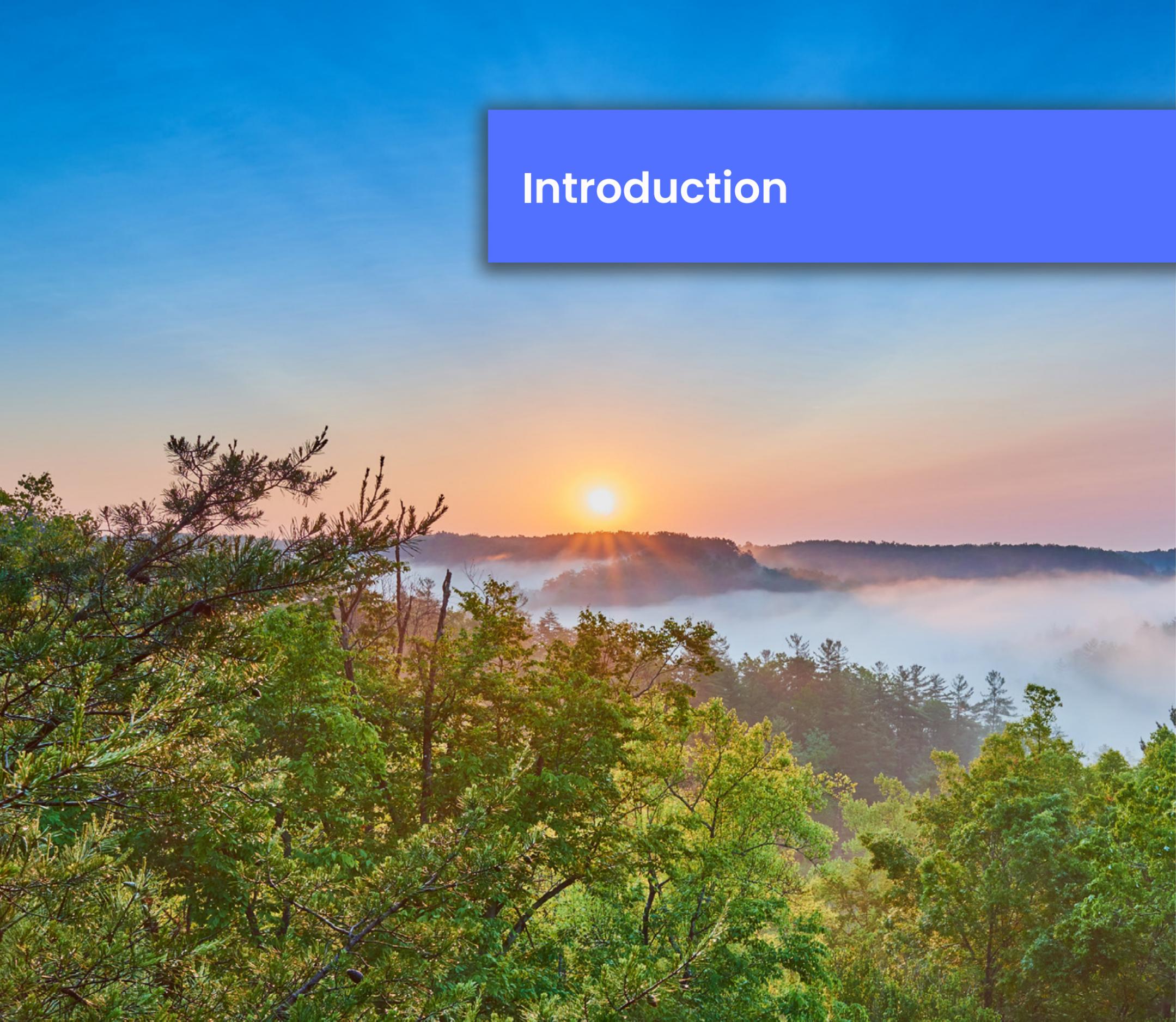
**Investing in Our Healthcare Workforce to
Revitalize Our Economy and Restore Population**

SOAR



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Introduction

The coal industry began its collapse over two decades ago. The resulting impacts to Eastern Kentucky continue to compromise the health and stability of our regional economy.

Losing Appalachia's top job-creating industry remains the leading culprit behind unemployment and population loss — and reaches far beyond those formerly employed by coal. Under these conditions, Eastern Kentucky is experiencing a major workforce development problem — one unlike almost anywhere else in the nation.

Our residents have been faced with difficult choices: leave home in search of alternative opportunities, or face profound struggle for the sake of remaining in their lifelong homes. Adverse health and substance abuse outcomes in Eastern Kentucky tell a story of hopelessness for many.

But amid these challenging realities, there is a highly-anticipated solution that promises renewed stability to our communities.



Healthcare: Creating Jobs and Opportunity for Eastern Kentucky

Today, healthcare is Eastern Kentucky's top job-creating industry.

Our regional hospital systems have thousands of well-paying career opportunities ready for hire today. These positions provide stable income and excellent benefits.

But most of these available positions in Eastern Kentucky hospital systems are remaining unfilled after weeks, months — even years. To compound the issue, hospitals are seeing record turnover rates, thus creating even more demand for trained medical professionals. This is due to many factors: Burnout from understaffing during the pandemic, staff retiring or quitting at record rates, and staff such as RN's choosing to leave and travel for more competitive pay.

Rural areas such as Eastern Kentucky are being hit the hardest. There's a lack of educational infrastructure in place to train a healthcare workforce.

As a result, our region's turnover rates in vital healthcare roles are statistically at or above the national turnover rate of 19.5%. In fact, it was at 24.6% in 2021.



Thousands of healthcare roles are in dire need of applicants right now in our region:

- Certified Nursing Assistant
- Licensed Practical Nurse
- Registered Nurse
- Patient Care Technician
- Medical Laboratory Technician
- Medical Technologist/Medical Lab Scientist
- Pharmacy Technician
- Special Procedure Technologist
- Radiologic Technologist
- Emergency Department Technician
- Respiratory Therapist
- Medical Assistant
- Certified Phlebotomist



Hospitals Are at the Core of the Eastern Kentucky Economy

The performance of our hospitals reaches far beyond their walls — and deep within our communities.

Healthcare powers 17.6% of the Eastern Kentucky economy. This represents a greater share than any other industry in our region. Uncounted in that percentage are the positive downstream economic impacts healthcare delivers to other local industries, including hospitality and tourism.

With hospitals contributing so significantly to our regional economy, it only makes sense that they're one of our region's largest employers. Their continued presence funds a significant portion of local taxes — which keeps our schools open, provides essential social services, and enables economic opportunity investments.



Strong Healthcare Systems Support Economic Development

As our region works to attract other job-creating industries, such as manufacturing, those organizations will evaluate the stability of our healthcare infrastructure as part of their criteria. If our systems are strong, they're more likely to locate their plants in Eastern Kentucky.



Economic Impact of Eastern Kentucky Hospital Systems in 2020

King's Daughters:

- \$66.5M in local employee spending
- \$74.1M local hospital spending
- **Total economic benefit to the local economy: \$140.6M**

UK HealthCare:

- \$310.2M in local employee spending
- \$450.8M in local hospital spending
- **Total economic benefit to the local economy: \$760.1M**

Pikeville Medical Center:

- 49.8% of the City of Pikeville's occupational taxes
- 27% of Pikeville County's total wages
- Spent \$34.1M on capital projects that created additional local jobs
- Local employee spending: \$96.9M
- Local hospital spending \$74.5M
- **Total economic benefit to the local economy: \$205.5M**

St. Joseph (Berea, London, and Mt. Sterling):

- \$27.7M in local employee spending
- \$50.6M local hospital spending
- **Total economic benefit to the local economy: \$81.2M**

AdventHealth Manchester:

- \$11.7M in local employee spending
- \$11.5M local hospital spending
- **Total economic benefit to the local economy: \$80.1M**

Baptist Health (Corbin and Richmond):

- \$42.4M in local employee spending
- \$70.6M local hospital spending
- **Total economic benefit to the local economy: \$128.2M**

Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital:

- \$8M in capital improvements
- \$14M in donated services/charity to the local community
- Paid taxes totaling \$11.3M
- **Total economic benefit to the local economy: \$26.5M**

Appalachian Regional Healthcare:

- \$34.3M in capital projects
- \$90.2M in local employee spending
- \$154.9M in local hospital spending
- \$19M in donated services/charity to the local community
- **Total economic benefit to the local community: \$279.4M**



What's at Stake for Eastern Kentucky?

If we can't fill these open healthcare roles, our Eastern Kentucky hospital systems are at immediate risk of reducing, downgrading, or eliminating critical services.

The impacts would be devastating — and cannot be understated.

To illustrate the possible downstream impacts, if a healthcare facility needs to downgrade as a result of talent shortages, other layoffs will inevitably occur. Other direct and overhead staff positions will be at risk.

Rationing is another issue that will only intensify as the staffing shortage grows worse. As hospitals lose staff, they can't attend to every case in a timely manner. For example, if a radiation technologist isn't available, the patient will have to wait until one is in order to get his or her CT or MRI scan.

This forced waiting causes patients to travel to another facility in search of faster care, which usually ends up being less cost effective. In worse case scenarios, rationing exacerbates a patient's symptoms or — when they don't get care fast enough or are past the point of treatment — can lead to death.

Continuing on our current path will amplify the existing issues that Eastern Kentuckians are already up against — population loss and unemployment.



Consequences of Downgraded or Collapsed Hospital Systems

- Our residents will lose access to vital healthcare services.
- Hospital workers will lose their jobs — an impact that could resonate like the loss of coal.
- Adjacent businesses and entrepreneurs will lose a significant source of customers.
- Population loss in Eastern Kentucky will continue or get worse.



Coming Together to Stabilize Our Hospital Networks

Thriving hospital networks create stable communities that attract and retain residents, workers, and businesses. This is why it's so essential we come together to fill these open roles.

Healthcare is foundational to regional economic performance. Strong hospital networks attract and retain residents, workers, and businesses — and enable thriving, stable communities.

That's why it's so essential that we come together to protect our region and fill these open roles within our hospitals. If we do, there will be a domino effect across the Eastern Kentucky economy extending far beyond the healthcare industry.

Hospitals across the region are working together because they're all experiencing the same problems. **They know their success relies on each other — and it relies on you, too.**

Solutions are possible if our community organizations, government leaders, and institutions of education work together. If we all pull our part of the rope, we can keep our largest employers stable — and help our region thrive.

This isn't just about self-preservation for the hospitals; it's about self-preservation for Eastern Kentucky.

This guide is our roadmap to the solution. It includes action plans and checklists for every stakeholder who needs to be a part of the process.

Read the whole thing. Pass it along to as many people as you can. This is a top priority for Eastern Kentucky and the people who live, work, govern, and teach here.



What's Threatening Our Eastern Kentucky Hospital Systems?

Eastern Kentucky is still determining its future in the post-coal economy.

As you well know, the ripple effect of losing our #1 job-creating industry reached more than just the families directly employed by coal. The abrupt transition severely impacted — in some cases decimated — entire communities. And we're still feeling the long-term repercussions today.

Our region is relying on Eastern Kentucky's top job-creating industries to provide gainful employment — and curb the rate of the population loss that persists decades later.

Healthcare jobs could deliver all this and more for our residents. But our hospitals are currently under threat — and need our help.



The State of Healthcare Jobs in Eastern Kentucky

The last few years have been some of the most difficult on record for the Eastern Kentucky healthcare system. The COVID-19 pandemic amplified existing issues in our region — primarily, staffing shortages and a local talent pool that couldn't keep pace with hiring needs.

For example, [25% of Kentucky RNs](#) reported they're likely to leave their jobs in the next 3 months — due to burnout, retirement, and other reasons.

Between high attrition rates and an aging population increasing the demand for nurses, the Commonwealth will need an additional 16,000 RNs by 2024.

In December of 2021, Governor Andy Beshear declared a state of emergency due to the nursing shortage.

There's a dire need for additional roles that power our healthcare system — from medical and nursing assistants to phlebotomists and laboratory technicians. **Many of these local positions are experiencing attrition at or over the national turnover rate of 19.5%.**



SNAPSHOT

Staffing Needs in One of Eastern Kentucky's Hospital Networks

Appalachian Regional Healthcare is projecting the following staffing needs for 2021-2023:

- 503 Registered Nurses
- 146 Licensed Practical Nurses
- 289 Certified Nursing Assistants
- 29 Respiratory Therapists
- 17 Medical Laboratory Technicians
- 9 Clinical Laboratory Technicians

Our hospitals are desperate to fill these roles. While travel agencies can temporarily backfill a portion of them, they're charging unsustainable rates that hospitals can't support for much longer.

Without an immediate plan to address these staffing shortfalls, the rural healthcare industry faces a possible collapse or substantial downgrade in services.

This would initiate significant job losses in the healthcare industry and the many businesses that rely on the contracts, spending power, and salaries of hospital workers.

Losing one or more of our hospital systems would also forfeit millions of tax dollars and create a need for costly social services to backfill what we lost.

We already know job losses contribute to mental health and drug abuse issues, which would exacerbate our region's existing overtaxed support and recovery systems.

Finally, since our residents experience the highest rates of cancer, heart disease, and pulmonary disease in the nation, losing access to quality care isn't an option.

It's incumbent on us to save our hospital systems to protect and preserve the physical, mental, and economic well-being of our communities.



What — and Who — Can Help?

There's a perception that the healthcare industry needs to solve this issue independently. But the reality is that Eastern Kentucky's stability is inherently linked to the solvency of our hospital systems.

Pursuing the solutions starts with identifying the stakeholders who have the power and influence to reverse our current trajectory.

What We Need

Our region can't seem to fill these open healthcare roles despite high local unemployment rates. It doesn't add up.

This list covers the action steps needed to stabilize Eastern Kentucky's hospital systems:

- 1. Eastern Kentucky's higher education institutions should start offering certifications and 1 to 4-year programs to support the jobs available right now.** And the federal government needs to expedite credentialing these programs. Our communities need access to local training programs that align with our region's top employment opportunities.
- 2. Our local higher education institutions can also work on boosting enrollment within existing healthcare training programs.** Building strong education to healthcare pipelines can start with filling up the programs we do have.
- 3. K-12 educators can encourage students to pursue healthcare careers.** This effort can start as early as elementary or middle school. We have to combat the stereotype that "there are no jobs here" by reaching students with this message. High schools should explore offering healthcare certifications and career tracks, including LPN training and dual-credit programs.

4. Government leaders can support the needs of education providers. The state government can offer more scholarships to entice traditional and nontraditional students to receive a debt-free healthcare education. Local governments should consider how grants, scholarships, and other incentives can stimulate local participation in healthcare education. And it will be easier to draw in relocating workers by beautifying our towns and improving local infrastructure.

5. Students and those in the workforce considering a career change should consider healthcare as a viable option. People shouldn't feel forced to leave due to a lack of economic opportunities, especially when all these jobs are available today. With increased local training and the opportunity to graduate debt-free, residents can enjoy a [rewarding career in healthcare](#) right here in Eastern Kentucky.

Thousands of open positions in regional healthcare can make all the difference in reversing population loss, attracting new residents, and helping local businesses thrive.

The next step is for all stakeholders to prioritize their role in the solution.



The Action Plan to Stabilize Eastern Kentucky Healthcare

The healthcare industry already offers thousands of well-paying jobs to our region. But many of our residents lack the training, resources, and awareness to access them.

If we don't reverse our current trajectory, we might lose our hospital systems that power our region's economy and provide gainful employment.

Eastern Kentuckians have the energy, intelligence, and determination to pursue the solution. But we have to work together.

Every stakeholder must take action in pursuit of a shared goal, including:

- Deans, program directors, and providers of higher education
- Economic development agencies and state, county, and local government leaders
- High school administrators, educators, and career counselors
- Healthcare industry leaders
- Eastern Kentucky residents and families

Review and complete these step-by-step checklists to take action today.



CALL TO ACTION

Deans, Program Directors, and Providers of Higher Education

Eastern Kentucky's education system must reflect the future of our region.

Coal, gas, and mining no longer provide gainful employment to our residents on the same scale as they once did.

Our local training programs need to adapt to this new reality.

We must strive for better alignment between our local training programs, certifications, 2-4-year degrees, and the top job-creating industry available to graduating students.

Training students for the thousands of open healthcare roles can help stabilize the Eastern Kentucky economy — and even support new areas of growth.

More residents will increase demand for local higher education and attract a more competitive talent pool. This would bring major improvement to the main issues initiated by population loss.

Take action today by following these three steps.



STEP 1

Audit the healthcare programs you currently offer

The first step is taking stock of what your institution offers and how it currently compares to the urgent need for specialized healthcare careers.

Review this list of roles that local hospital systems need to hire for right now – and well into the future.

Does your program offer certifications and degrees that align with these careers?

- Registered Nurse (2-year degree)
- Licensed Practical Nurse (1-year program)
- Certified Nursing Assistant (Certification)
- Patient Care Technologist (Certification)
- Medical Laboratory Technicians (2-year degree)
- Medical Technologist/Medical Lab Scientist (4-year degree)
- Pharmacy Technicians (Certification)
- Special Procedure Technologist (2-year degree)
- Radiologic Technologist (2-year degree)
- Emergency Department Technician (Certification)
- Respiratory Therapist (2-year degree)
- Medical Assistant (Certification)
- Certified Phlebotomist (Certification)

By identifying the best career opportunities available today for your students, you can build programs and curricula that support post-graduation placement rates.



STEP 2

Enhance existing healthcare training programs

Before embarking on the effort to develop new training programs, we can strengthen what's already available in our region.

In many cases, healthcare training programs aren't even reaching 50% of their potential capacity.

What resources do you need to improve enrollment rates?

Your shortlist might include:

- Partnerships with local high schools
- Funding from local and state government
- Increased scholarship and financial aid resources

Identify the resources and partnerships you'd need to increase your institution's capacity. Other stakeholders will play a role in bolstering healthcare training participation – which includes supporting the success of our local higher education institutions.



STEP 3

Create new training programs to meet demand

Once you've identified what new healthcare training your institution can offer, it's time to bring those programs to Eastern Kentucky students.

Significant resources are available through the Governor's office to start a nursing program if you don't already offer one.

Not all of your new programs need to be 4-year degrees. Many healthcare roles available today require 1 or 2 years of training.

Once you make new programs available, don't forget to invest in student recruiting efforts to build awareness and maximize enrollment rates.

Establishing a dual-enrollment program with a local high school can help.



CALL TO ACTION

Economic Development Agencies and State, County, and Local Government Leaders

Workforce participation is 47% across SOAR's 54 counties in Eastern Kentucky — compared to 63% for the rest of the nation.

Imagine if our percentage came in line with the national average. Even if our workforce participation increased by a few percentage points, it'd be a remarkable turnaround that would spark additional momentum for our region.

We need your help to rescue Eastern Kentucky's #1 job-creating industry — otherwise, our workforce participation will continue to decline.

Take action today by following these four steps.



STEP 1

Invest money in regional higher education programs

Eastern Kentucky's higher education programs have a major role to play in resolving this crisis.

But they can't tackle this problem on their own.

Our local community colleges, technical schools, and other education providers will be working on launching programs that reflect the future of our region's workforce. They will need help by way of funds — for infrastructure, teaching staff, administrative capacity, student recruiting, and financial aid programs.

The state government can offer scholarships to traditional and nontraditional students to enroll in healthcare training. Providing a debt-free college education is an attractive option for those looking to launch — or re-launch — a successful career.

Funding their efforts will help our region build a sustainable pipeline of healthcare industry workers.



STEP 2

Invest in EKY hospitals so they can attract and compete for healthcare workers

Most of Eastern Kentucky's hospital patients are covered by Medicare or Medicaid. As a result, our regional hospital systems are on a fixed income and can't keep up with rising national wages or short-term agency wages.

Investing in Eastern Kentucky hospitals will support their long-term solvency by allowing them to compete for talent and retain them over the long term.

Bringing in new residents to work for our hospitals will also breathe fresh air and bring new spending power into our communities. It's a win-win.



STEP 3

Invest in towns and counties near healthcare facilities

The towns and counties surrounding healthcare facilities impact the available talent pool.

By investing in economic development and revitalization projects, workers will have more reasons to stay. And it will help with attracting new people to relocate here, too.

Prioritize investments in public infrastructure, high-speed broadband access, small businesses and entrepreneurs, recreation facilities, tourism, beautification, and other amenities.



STEP 4

Recruit healthcare workers to move to our region

You can help the Eastern Kentucky healthcare industry and the surrounding region by getting directly involved with recruiting efforts.

Local or county governments can contribute tangible benefits to incentivize relocation, such as tax subsidies or stipends for healthcare workers.

Partner with the hospital systems directly to maximize each other's recruiting efforts and stay in sync.



CALL TO ACTION

High School Administrators, Educators, and Career Counselors

High school education providers will play a vital role in the rescue plan for our healthcare industry.

You have the ability to inspire and motivate young adults to transform their education into meaningful careers. As nurses and specialized medical technicians, they can make a difference in their communities and help ensure Eastern Kentucky can thrive once again.

Take action today by following these three steps.



STEP 1

Partner with local hospitals

If your school brings in local speakers to inspire students about career opportunities, consider reaching out to your local hospital system to give a talk.

For example, students considering a healthcare career might be interested in learning about the Pikeville Medical Center's [Rural Health Nursing Fellowship](#).

This program offers a two-year associate degree from UPIKE and helps qualified graduates secure positions at Pikeville Medical Center after becoming an RN.

The [Appalachian Nursing Academy](#) is another opportunity for rising juniors and seniors to explore the possibility of a nursing career in Eastern Kentucky. This is the program's pilot year in partnership with the Kentucky Department for Public Health's Office of Health Equity and organizers intend to expand their reach with each new cohort.

It's also important to partner with local healthcare organizations to offer high school students virtual training for a healthcare track. High school students can be certified in positions such as medical assistant, CNA, phlebotomist, EKG tech, pharmacy tech, and patient care tech. Many of these credits can also transfer to colleges and universities.



STEP 2
Offer dual-enrollment programs

Offering dual-enrollment programs is another way to set up students for successful lives after graduation.

Establish a partnership with a local community college that provides certifications and degrees in the medical field. By helping qualified students access a healthcare-oriented curriculum as juniors and seniors, they can graduate and have goals to continue working towards.

Certification programs for rising junior or seniors would save students time and tuition by allowing them to enter the workforce sooner. Licensed Practical Nurses, phlebotomists, and patient care technicians are just a few tracks that are worth considering – and align closely with local hiring needs.



STEP 3
Incorporate healthcare into your career and college counseling programs

Your career and college counseling programs educate students about the importance of preparing for gainful careers. You should be highlighting healthcare as a significant career opportunity, especially when your students don't want to leave Eastern Kentucky.

Identify the best local programs that offer healthcare certifications and degrees.

Feature them in job and college fairs. And help students prepare from day 1 of high school by encouraging their participation in math and science subjects.



CALL TO ACTION

State and Federal Legislatures

This action plan will count on the support of our nation's and Commonwealth's leadership.

We can't leave Eastern Kentucky behind — your help can extract this region from the economic decline initiated by the loss of coal.

Take action today by following these three steps.



STEP 1

Expedite higher ed credentialing

Eastern Kentucky needs the federal government to streamline and speed up the credentialing process for healthcare programs at our colleges and universities. For example, in the spring of 2022, Big Sandy Community College in Pikeville, KY is still waiting to receive its credentials from the federal government to offer a radiology technician track.

This is an important program that would attract students to desperately-needed healthcare roles and create a pipeline of talent for our local healthcare system. There are others like it. However, we need the federal government's help to make them a reality.



STEP 2

Fund educational assistance programs

Currently, Eastern Kentucky’s secondary and postsecondary institutions lack the resources to develop a healthy workforce pipeline into nearby hospital systems.

Our region’s education providers need an infusion of funding, resources, and support to expand relevant programming and infrastructure. This includes financial assistance for students, capital investments for schools and colleges, and grants to attract and retain qualified teachers and staff – until our ecosystem can return to self-sufficiency.

The [Kentucky Community and Technical College System](#) (KCTCS) is particularly relevant to Eastern Kentucky. In the absence of a major university presence, KCTCS is where many rural residents turn for education and career training opportunities. Expanding their Allied Health program could have a significant impact on local hospital system hiring outcomes.



STEP 3

Assist high schools with developing dual credit and certification programs related to healthcare

The Eastern Kentucky education system has an opportunity to prepare students for careers in healthcare starting at an earlier age.

Amid rising costs of postsecondary education, offering dual credit and certification programs within public schools increases career training accessibility and should lead to increased workforce participation.

CALL TO ACTION

Healthcare Industry Leaders

Stakeholders across Eastern Kentucky are rallying behind our hospital systems to help rescue them from collapse.

In the meantime, take these steps to continue supporting local workers, training programs, and adjacent communities.



STEP 1

Form strong partnerships with K-12 and higher education institutions

Eastern Kentucky's education system is navigating a transition period.

Since the coal industry is no longer a reliable career choice for local students and workers, higher education institutions are developing new programs to help funnel qualified people into healthcare.

Strengthen your partnerships with the institutions that prioritize healthcare for students.

Don't be afraid to reach out to high schools, technical schools, and community colleges. Pitch them a speaker series idea, attend career fairs, and create hiring events for their student bodies.



STEP 2

Partner with local, county, and state governments to incentivize worker relocation

If your recruitment efforts need a boost, reach out to government officials who can help.

Eastern Kentucky offers an affordable way of life to workers who want to relocate. There might be opportunities to align your recruiting efforts with public initiatives to boost the population and increase the available talent pool.



STEP 3

Build a great workplace culture to attract and retain nurses, technicians, and assistant staff

Offering competitive salaries and benefits is a great start. But there are other efforts you can make to improve retention.

- Creating a respectful workplace culture goes a long way toward increasing morale. [A recent study demonstrated](#) that implementing systems to protect nurses from bullying and harassment — such as promoting accountability at all levels and offering communication and conflict management training — can help. Organization-wide approaches are more effective than individual interventions.
- Providing wage and career growth transparency helps workers plan their future and often increases average tenure.

CALL TO ACTION

Eastern Kentucky Residents

There is hope if the coal industry formerly employed you — or impacted your livelihood when mining activities ceased.

Healthcare is the new frontier for Eastern Kentucky.

Our hospital systems are recruiting for thousands of career opportunities today. Many come with great wages, benefits, and signing bonuses. And, it's becoming even more accessible to receive the appropriate training, certification, or degree to qualify for these positions.

If you want to be a part of the solution to rescue our local hospital systems, follow these three steps.



STEP 1

Switch careers and join the healthcare industry

If you're still unsure about your financial future after the retreat of coal, consider a healthcare career.

The signing bonuses available right now are significant.

And when you consider the long-term benefits — health insurance coverage, paid time off, and a reliable salary — healthcare roles offer the financial and job security families need to thrive.



STEP 2

Encourage your children to prepare for a healthcare career

If you're raising children in Eastern Kentucky and hope they'll find a career that keeps them close to home — look to healthcare.

Reach out to your children's school career center to learn about the nearby institutions that offer training for healthcare careers. Your children can receive affordable — possibly even debt-free — degrees or certifications to become a nurse, technician, or specialized assistant.



STEP 3

Write to your lawmakers and ask them to prioritize our hospitals

Our leaders need to hear from the communities that would feel the impacts of downgraded or closed hospital systems. They have the power to support our hospitals and education systems with funds, scholarships, and recruitment incentives.

People who should reach out include:

- Patients who rely on local medical services
- Business owners whose customers are hospital workers
- Employees of businesses that rely on business from local hospitals
- Homeowners who intentionally settled near a hospital



CONCLUSION

Together, We Can Secure a Bright Future for Eastern Kentucky

We can trigger a positive domino effect if we all come together across healthcare, government, education, and Eastern Kentucky communities.

Keeping the healthcare industry alive — and helping it thrive — will enable positive outcomes for our region.

People can continue to receive the vital healthcare they need. We'll have a shot at reversing population loss. Our children can grow up to have long-term, gainful careers close to home. New residents will be more likely to settle here.

Local higher education institutions can enjoy higher rates of enrollment. And high school students will feel inspired by the opportunities available to them within their communities.

Thanks to the thousands of healthcare workers buying homes and shopping with local businesses, our local economy will enjoy a boost.

Eastern Kentucky can become an example for other rural areas across the nation. And we can receive the funding we need to continue strengthening our economy and communities.

We must follow through on this action plan. We have to start now. As a stakeholder in Eastern Kentucky's future, your path forward should now be clear.

There's a lot of work ahead. But stabilizing our region's economic future is more than worth the effort.

[Contact SOAR](#) if you need help getting started. We can put you in touch with your partners in this process. We'll share any resources we have that can help.

We firmly believe that our solutions are within reach. If we get started today, we have a fighting chance to secure a bright future for Eastern Kentucky.