



Jeff Whitehead is the Executive Director of the Eastern Kentucky Concentrated Employment Program, Inc. (EKCEP) and its Local Workforce Investment Board (WIB), which provide workforce and employer services to 23 rural Appalachian counties in Eastern Kentucky. Whitehead has led various aspects of operations at EKCEP for more than 24 years, including the last seven as Executive Director. In times of surging unemployment rates and shrinking budgets, Whitehead is working to ensure his agency becomes more relevant than ever to jobseekers and employers across its service area by being nimble, creative, and responsive in its approach to delivering its array of services—which operate with the mission to prepare, advance, and expand the workforce of Eastern Kentucky. To build this relevance, Whitehead is embracing new partnerships and service strategies that better align workforce development with the needs of the region’s employers by addressing recognized skills gaps with targeted, customized training. By doing so, Whitehead believes workforce development can prove itself an invaluable catalyst toward local and regional economic development. The need for innovative workforce strategies in Eastern Kentucky has scarcely been greater than the present given the loss of more than 9,000 jobs in the region’s coal industry since January 2012. Jeff is a member of the Advisory Council for Shaping Our Appalachian Region (SOAR) and serves as chairman of the Education and Retraining Roundtable. He provides leadership to the National Economic Council’s TechHire initiative in Eastern Kentucky and serves on a number of economic development and coordinating boards locally and statewide.