

## **D. Needs Assessment**

### **1. Educational and Job-Training Needs of Individuals**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Describe the educational and job-training needs of individuals in the overall State population and of relevant subgroups of all the programs included in the unified plan.*

*Many of the programs that may be included in a unified plan require a needs assessment. State agencies should fulfill these assessment responsibilities collaboratively or, at a minimum, create a planning process that promotes the sharing of needs assessment information among all agencies involved in preparing the unified plan. Sharing of assessment data can create a framework for the coordinated and integrated services that are to be provided through the One-Stop delivery system. The State may organize the presentation of assessment data in its unified plan in a manner it deems most appropriate and useful for planning, such as on a program-by-program basis, by geographic region, or by special population.]*

In order to have a globally recognized workforce in Arkansas, there is need for a better-educated workforce. Within this broad category, the greatest need is for a strong basic education. An indication of this is the fact that over twenty percent of Arkansans have difficulty with reading, writing, and computational skills considered necessary for functioning in everyday life. In addition, a significant number of Arkansas' high school graduates still require extensive remediation upon entering post-secondary education. In addition, research done by the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce has concluded that products of Grades K through 12 generally do not have basic skills to make them trainable by industry. Low educational skills levels are directly tied to low incomes.

Because of a change in the economy to a technology/information/service base, there is a need for more individuals who have education beyond high school and who have increased occupational skills. Many individuals also need increased employability skills, including an increased work ethic.

The subgroup that especially needs increased educational and occupational skill levels and increased work ethic is the group that includes low-income, educationally disadvantaged adults including single parents, displaced homemakers, and food-stamp recipients. They also need job placement assistance, role models, mentoring, and supportive services that assist with obtaining employment and education and training.

A number of the state's citizens may be classified as the "working poor." They struggle to survive on an income at or below poverty level. Case management and needs assessment of individuals who received federal funding through the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) indicate a number of those applicants tested at or below the eighth grade level in reading and math skills. Recent Welfare-to-Work legislation introduced another client into the mix. Harder to serve welfare recipients are, for the most part, less educated, less skilled, and less trained, and

therefore less capable of competing for jobs in the work place which will ultimately lead to economic self-sufficiency and personal responsibility.

Individuals with disabilities often need assistance in moving through the One-Stop process. They need counseling, including diagnosis, evaluation, and follow-up. They need education and training that will lead to appropriate employment, job placement and referral to appropriate positions, and supportive services that assist with obtaining employment and education/training.

Individuals with multiple barriers to educational enhancement, including individuals with limited English proficiency, also often need assistance in moving through the One-Stop process. A need of this subgroup is adult education and literacy programs, including citizenship classes as appropriate. Many need occupational skill training, especially short-term training that leads to immediate jobs.

Criminal offenders in correctional institutions and other institutionalized individuals need counseling, including diagnosis, evaluation, and follow-up. They also need education and training that will lead to appropriate employment, including on-the-job training while institutionalized.

The latest available data (1998) reports a population of 2,538,303 for the state of Arkansas according to 1997 U.S. Census current reports. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, pages 20-505, No. 265, Educational Attainment for Smaller States: 1997, indicates that fewer than 15 percent of Arkansas citizens acquired a bachelor's degree or more, and 76.9 percent attained a high school diploma or more.

### **PERKINS III (SECONDARY AND POSTSECONDARY) AND TECH PREP**

Both the Department of Workforce Education and the Department of Higher Education encourage the local recipients to make full use of labor market information, reports and surveys conducted by and on behalf of the state's employers, and other such data that is available as well as to take steps to be aware of their local education and job-training needs.

### **WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT TITLE I (YOUTH, ADULT, AND DISLOCATED WORKER)**

Individual needs assessments are done for the people who are eligible for intensive or training services. These are shared in relevant part by whichever agency first does the assessment with other agencies that may provide services to the individuals. The objective is that agencies will supplement employability plans made by partner entities. In addition, some forms of needs assessment, such as interest inventories and labor market information, that are available via computer and/or hard copy for self-service use in career planning. One such resource is the

Arkansas Career Watch, published by the Arkansas Employment Security Department (AESD) and the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (ADWE) in partnership and with information from many of the other partner agencies.

### **ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY**

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Education–Adult Education Section will assess the educational and job-training needs of subgroups served by using standardized instruments such as Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), WorkKeys, learning disability screenings, and ESL assessments. The assessment information is shared with partnering agencies such as, Employment Security Division, Division of Human Services, Department of Education, and the Department of Higher Education, as appropriate. Sharing of the needs assessment information between agencies will allow the One-Stop delivery system to be viable and functional.

An assessment of adult education and literacy needs of Arkansas and relevant subgroups is given in 1(b) below.

### **FOOD STAMP EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAM**

The program has an assessment component. Participants are referred to other agencies or entities that provide services to meet the participant needs. Additional information concerning the expected participants is given in 1(c) below.

### **TRADE ACT PROGRAMS**

Generally, individuals eligible to be served by TAA or NAFTA/TAA first are eligible for the dislocated worker program under Title I of WIA. They will be encouraged to take advantage of occupational assessment provided by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (ADWE), a partner in the Governor’s Dislocated Worker Task Force. Individual assessments are used in developing employment plans. These plans may be prepared through the dislocated worker program or through another One-Stop partner program, and they are used by any program that provides services to the individual. All programs will use demand training data prepared by AESD and supplemented by local WIBs in accordance with approved processes to determine the types of training for which assistance will be provided.

### **WAGNER-PEYSER ACT**

Labor market information compiled and published by AESD is used to assist with local planning, including career planning. Two products that are especially user-friendly for individuals who are assessing their career options and for organizations that are assessing training options for

inclusion on the eligible training providers' list are Discover Arkansas and the Arkansas Occupational Training Information System. Both are available on CDs, and both are planned to be accessible through the Internet before the end of 2000.

**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM:**

- **ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES**

The Guidance specifically requires ARS to respond regarding this question. The Rehabilitation Act calls for a Needs Assessment completed jointly by ARS and the Rehabilitation Council of Arkansas. The assessment estimates services needed in order for people with disabilities within the state, particularly those with the most significant disabilities, to go to work. The data indicates increasing needs for vocational rehabilitation services to assist Arkansas citizens with disabilities to become employed. The Rehabilitation Act requires extensive data collection of ARS. As the workforce information system develops, data will be made available to other partners on an ongoing basis to enhance coordination and services to people with disabilities. A challenge will be to accomplish this goal according to the confidentiality protections ensured in the Rehabilitation Act.

Additional information is given in 1(d) below.

- **DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND**

Once an individual has been determined eligible for services from the Division of Services for the Blind a thorough diagnostic assessment will be conducted. The assessment will be used to determine the vocational goal of the individual and the nature and scope of services needed by the individual to achieve the desired goal. This assessment will provide valuable information regarding the consumer's vocational interest and aptitudes, the marketability of the consumer's present and potential skill level and the amount's of services that the consumer will need to achieve the desired goal.

The thorough diagnostic evaluation may include a comprehensive evaluation of the consumer's medical, psychological, vocational, and educational history as well as other factors which bear upon the consumer's obstacle to employment. This assessment may also include the placement of the consumer in a rehabilitation facility in order to evaluate work tolerance, the ability to acquire specific job skills, and the consumer's patterns of work behavior.

In the Memoranda of Understanding which DSB is developing with the Local WIA Boards, a process will be developed by which DSB can share assessment information with other agencies

involved in the unified plan in a manner which will not conflict with state and federal confidentiality laws.

By developing a cohesive and coordinated method of sharing assessment (and other) information between the agencies involved in the local One-Stops, duplication of services should be eliminated.

Additional information is given in 1(d) below.

### **VETERANS PROGRAMS**

Job-related needs of veterans are assessed by Local Veterans Employment Representatives and Representatives of the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program, as well as by Arkansas Employment Security Department interviewers and staff of partner agencies. This information is used to develop employment plans for the individual veterans. These employment plans can be created by any partner agency and are shared among the agencies providing service to the individual.

### **UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

UI claimants are "profiled" to determine if they have characteristics that indicate they may exhaust their UI benefits before they return to work. If so, they are required to attend job search workshops to assist them in finding employment. Although UI claimants are profiled, they will also be tracked through the One Stop system to determine if additional training is needed to assist them in becoming employed and/or self-sufficient.

### **TANF**

The TEA program utilizes various assessment tools to assess the employability of TEA recipients. The primary educational and training needs assessments are conducted by the Department of Workforce Education on behalf of the TEA program. Assessment information on individual recipients is shared on an "as needed" basis with other agencies who are providing services to the recipient.

### **WELFARE-TO-WORK**

Needs assessment is done initially by the Department of Human Services (DHS). If one has been prepared, an employability plan is sent by DHS with the referral. The WtW program operator may supplement the plan after more assessment is completed for the individual. Input

gathered from employers—directly or through the state and local workforce investment boards—is used to help determine what type of training will be offered to program participants.

### **SCSEP**

The SCSEP serves a very narrow segment of the population. Needs are assessed primarily by participant income and need for part-time employment. Specific job orders from host agencies are filled by applicants with those skills.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICES BLOCK GRANT**

In order to receive funding, eligible entities are required to conduct an assessment of the needs of low-income persons in their service area (counties). These assessments may include education or job training needs. The results of the needs assessments are shared when agencies hold public hearings to provide opportunity for public comment on the proposed use and distribution of funds. Agencies involved in preparing the unified plan may attend local public hearings and provide comments regarding coordination and integration of services as it relates to the One-Stop Delivery System.

#### **(a) WIA Title I and Wagner-Peyser Act, and Veterans Programs**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Identify the types and availability of workforce investment activities currently in the State. (WIA Sec. 112(b)(4)(D))]*

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will coordinate and establish policy for conducting all employment and training activities within the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and Arkansas Act 1125 of 1999, including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas' One-Stop career centers. Many partners currently administer workforce investment activities. These activities are described in the other programs of this plan. Additional workforce investment activities are provided to specially-targeted customers by the Arkansas Department of Economic Development, School-to-Work programs, Job Corps, and grantees of federal programs such as the Older Workers Act of 1965. In addition, the staff of many Job Training Partnership Act providers of services will continue some of these same types of services with WIA-eligible participants. Several One-Stops currently exist, and many are transforming to meet the requirements of being a workforce investment system One-Stop.

It is the function of a Arkansas Employment Security Department to assist both job-seekers and employers is finding appropriate jobs/employees. Local offices specialize in this operation, and will be viable partners in all One-Stops.

The Arkansas Employment Security Department prepares and publishes a Guide to Educational Training Programs for Demand Occupations. Data for this publication is gathered from public post-secondary schools, private post-secondary schools, public and private state colleges and universities, the Arkansas Vocational Rehabilitation Center, Job Corps, and military personnel separating from active duty. The demand occupation list will be used when assessment of an applicant's skills indicates training is needed.

Through the process for certification of Eligible Training Providers, there will be provided a list of training programs relevant to current labor market demands and customized to geographic areas. Dissemination of the provider list through the One-Stops and their partners will ensure that providers meet the employment needs of local employers and participants.

*Discover Arkansas* is an interactive Windows-based computer software product that provides labor market information in a user-friendly format. It will be available through the One-Stop system and data may be accessed by area and/or county. Discover Arkansas also contains economic indicators, census data, and area profiles for assistance in decision-making and career choices.

### **(b) Adult Education and Family Literacy**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Objectively assess the adult education and literacy needs of individuals including an assessment of those most in need and hardest to serve including low income students, individuals with disabilities, single parents, displaced homemakers, and individuals with multiple barriers to educational enhancement (including individuals with limited English proficiency, criminal offenders in correctional institutions and other institutionalized individuals.) (Sec. 224(b)(10), Sec. 225)]*

#### **Individuals Most in Need:**

According to information from the U.S. Census in 1990, Arkansas had a population of 2,351,000, which ranked thirty-third in the country. The Arkansas population is projected to grow to 2,631,000 by 2000, maintaining its rank of thirty-third in the nation. The per capita income was \$15,103, which ranked forty-ninth, with 73.5 percent of the population 18 years old or older. (The compulsory school attendance is through age 17 in Arkansas). Over half a million of Arkansas' adults 18 years of age or older (549,931) do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Of those without a high school credential, 233,971 have less than a ninth grade education. Those numbers indicate that there are many adults in Arkansas who could benefit from the services of adult education and literacy programs.

New census statistics show that Arkansas currently ranks fiftieth in the nation in attainment of bachelors' degrees. Statistics from the Arkansas Department of Education in 1997 show an average of 81.5 percent of Arkansans who start the ninth grade finish high school. Those figures would seem to indicate that many high school graduates do not complete four years of college. Perhaps a significant number of those who drop out of college for academic reasons would benefit from adult education and literacy services to improve their basic academic skills. According to the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) report, *The State of Literacy in America: Estimates at the Local, State, and National Levels* (1998), twenty-two percent of the Arkansas adult population is functioning at the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) Level 1 in the assessment areas of prose, document, and quantitative. The NALS was conducted by the Educational Testing Service under contract from the U.S. Department of Education, and the results were published in 1993 using a new, outcomes-based definition of literacy. In the NALS, Level 1 literacy is defined as the lowest functioning level of literacy. According to the NIFL report, "Although many Level 1 adults could perform many tasks involving simple texts and documents, all adults scoring at Level 1 displayed difficulty using certain reading, writing, and computational skills considered necessary for functioning in everyday life."

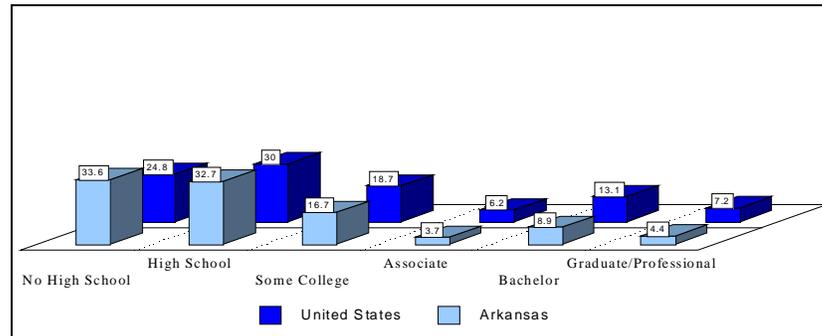
The fact that over twenty percent of Arkansans are functioning at Level 1 is directly tied to low per capita income. Not only are individuals unable to get jobs requiring higher academic skills, post-secondary education, and training (*i.e.* higher-paying jobs), but many lack basic academic skills needed to find even entry-level, minimum-wage positions. These individuals may also lack the basic employability skills to keep jobs once hired. Adult education and literacy programs provide both basic academic skills education and employability skills training, thus lowering the percentage of Level 1 Arkansas adults.

From 1983 to 1993, jobs requiring more education grew faster than jobs requiring less education. Of all jobs created between 1983 and 1993, forty-five percent required some education beyond high school; such jobs represented only thirty percent of the total in 1983. Nearly half of all jobs to be created by 2005 will require education beyond high school, with fifty-eight percent requiring some college" (National Alliance of Business, 1996, p. 645).

In its 1992 publication, *A Plan for the Future*, the Arkansas Workforce Development Commission responded to the data in the NAB report: "Arkansas is not in a good position to take advantage of these findings. . . Although [Arkansas is] very near the national average of the percentage of high school graduates, Arkansas exceeds the nation in the percentage of those who have not completed high school and is below the national average in every educational attainment category beyond high school. No longer can the state rely on a poorly-educated workforce with a strong work ethic that is willing to work for low wages in unskilled jobs. Industries seeking low or unskilled workers that were once recruited to Arkansas to provide jobs

are now finding that even lower labor costs are available in countries outside the United States, and they are moving their manufacturing plants to those locations.”

Percentage of Persons 25 Years and Over by Levels of Educational Attainment; United States and Arkansas, 1990 Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census



Industries that choose to remain in Arkansas may be doing so because of the rise in the immigrant population in certain industrial areas of the state—primarily the western half of the state—as much of the east and southeast is still mostly agrarian. Although the majority of the immigrants to Arkansas are Hispanic, the immigrant population is not exclusively Hispanic.

#### Populations:

The Adult Education Section of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education (DWE) is aware that the following populations share many of the same characteristics and barriers. Although this plan allows the state to address the needs of individuals with multiple barriers, it should be noted that no one population could be considered as if the individuals were impacted only by the factors under which heading they are addressed. For this reason, DWE will sometimes include information regarding needs that cross categories to provide a more comprehensive needs awareness.

- Low income adult learners who are educationally disadvantaged:

In 1990 19.6 percent of the population of Arkansas was below the poverty level, giving the state a ranking of fourth in the nation. The percentage of the civilian population employed was 58.9 percent, for a ranking of forty-sixth. The average annual pay was \$18,204, for a ranking of forty-sixth.

According to a report released in 1996 by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Educational Statistics, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1996*, “Young adults living in

families with incomes in the lowest twenty percent of all family incomes were five times as likely as their peers from families in the top twenty percent of the income distribution, to drop out of high school. Two-thirds of this gap was due to differences between students in the lowest and middle income groups.” The report also stated, “The South is the only region in which the dropout rate for white youths exceeds the national dropout rate for white youths ten percent versus 7.3 percent.” To provide an indication of how Arkansas stands relative to other states in the analysis of the effects of poverty, Arkansas is below the median of the 10 lowest states in both household income and those educated beyond high school.

Median Household Income and the percentage of Population with Education Beyond High School; The 10 Highest States, 10 Lowest States, and Arkansas, 1990

Category Income	Median Household	Median Percentage with Education Beyond High School
10 Highest States	\$40,831	50.3
10 Lowest States	\$27,148	38.1
Arkansas	\$25,814	33.6

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

These figures indicate that with higher levels of education, people have higher earnings and they are also less likely to be unemployed. Arkansas has already made the change from a rural/agriculture-based economy to an urban/manufacturing-based economy. If Arkansas is to grow economically and culturally, it must change to a technology /information /service-based economy. That change will be impossible unless the workforce has the education and skills to meet both current and future needs. Arkansas adult education and literacy programs must provide the first step in remediating and educating the workforce. Without a solid foundation of basic academic skills and employability skills, the workforce will not be able to pursue the levels of education they must, to meet the challenges of the future.

In an effort to address the problem of low-income, educationally disadvantaged adults, Arkansas adult education programs provide educational assessment for each Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participant. The Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) are used for these assessments. The initial statewide testing (July 1997) of this population resulted in average scores of 7.9 grade level in reading and 7.1 grade level in math. According to the policies set forth in the Arkansas Welfare Reform initiatives, each Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) client from the TANF program who scores below the tenth grade reading and math levels will be referred to a local adult education or literacy program for remediation. There are approximately 12,000 TEA clients in Arkansas; assessments continue to be made as new people apply for TANF benefits. The process of collaboration and referrals is only now beginning to

develop. As those collaborative partnerships develop, the referrals will increase in both number and frequency. Adult education and literacy programs must be ready to meet the challenge of providing appropriate services for this hard-to-serve population.

- Individuals with disabilities:

Adult education and literacy programs are required by federal law to provide equal and appropriate services to individuals with disabilities. Those individuals with disabilities under the age of 22 are protected by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); those 22 or older are protected by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.

The term “individual with a disability” in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is aimed at global societal and employment-related outcomes. This law applies only to entities receiving any type of federal funding. In Section 504, an individual with a disability is defined as “any person who has a physical or mental impairment which constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment and who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of major life activities.”

That definition is almost identical to the definition in the ADA. The primary difference is that the aim of the ADA is broader and more far-reaching because it extends non-discrimination and accommodations mandates to private institutions. In Arkansas, all adult education programs have specific responsibilities based on Title II of the ADA, which applies to programs receiving federal funding. Some Arkansas literacy programs are private, non-profit programs; they fall under Title III of the ADA.

Under the ADA, a person is considered disabled who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of the individual.

- Has a record of such impairment
- Is regarded as having an impairment (28 CFR §35.104)

Adults with disabilities include persons with conditions, diseases, and infections, such as orthopedic, visual, speech, and hearing impairments; epilepsy; muscular dystrophy; multiple sclerosis; cancer; heart disease; diabetes; and infection with the Human Immuno-deficiency Virus (HIV). Major life activities include the following: personal care, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.

All individuals with disabilities are entitled to program accessibility, non-discrimination/equal opportunity, use of auxiliary aids and services, and academic accommodations.

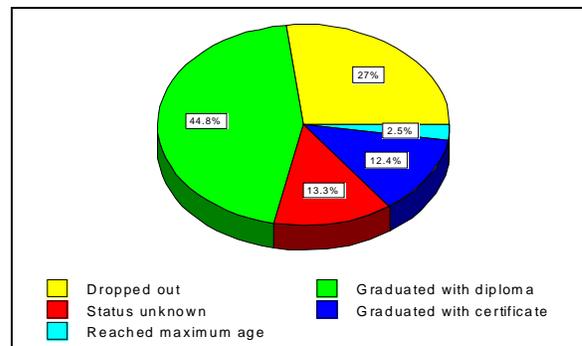
All adult education and literacy programs are legally responsible for five specific administrative requirements in the ADA:

- Designate a responsible employee (ADA coordinator).
- Provide public notice.
- Establish grievance procedure.
- Conduct self-evaluation.
- Develop transition plan.

It is imperative that all adult education and literacy programs in Arkansas be aware of program responsibilities and individual rights under IDEA, Section 504, and the ADA, and also be in compliance with those laws.

According to the *Fourteenth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1992)*, more than one-fourth of the students with disabilities, age 14 or older, dropped out of high school before completion. Students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) represented the largest number (129,000) of that population. Fifty-two percent of those students with SLD were reported to have earned diplomas. Forty-eight percent did not earn diplomas. Groups in which more than half the students leaving high school obtained diplomas were those with visual impairments--sixty-one percent, deaf-blindness--sixty-one percent, hearing impairments--fifty-nine percent, and orthopedic impairments--fifty-eight percent.

The following figure provides a graphic representation of the basis of exit for high school students from special education programs.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System (DANS)

Since only 57.2 percent of special education students exited high school with a diploma or certificate and twenty-seven percent were documented as dropouts, it is reasonable to assume perhaps fifty to eighty percent of students in adult basic education programs have disabilities. It

can be concluded, then, that adult education and literacy programs should be providing appropriate services and accommodations for fifty to eighty percent of their total student population. A greater percentage of students should be receiving accommodations on the GED tests than is currently the case. Several factors must be addressed before this can be done, including:

- A limited disabilities awareness level of practitioners and administrators regarding the range of educational adjustments, modified instructional strategies, and employment opportunities for students with disabilities
- A limited experience in teaching specifically to the diverse learning styles and mandatory modalities presented by adults with disabilities
- A lack of awareness regarding the opportunities available at the post-secondary level
- A lack of knowledge about assistive technology, its educational applications, and employment adaptability
- A lack of comprehensive, coordinated services for this population.

There is a need to continue and expand existing training and collaboration efforts in order to promote the necessary systemic changes in addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. As adult education and literacy programs in Arkansas develop and implement measures of accountability, there is also the need to encourage other service providers to adopt the same types of changes in their own policies and systems. This will ensure that adults with disabilities receive appropriate services in all collaborating agencies and organizations. The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) has already implemented policy requiring every TEA client to complete a learning disabilities screening during the intake process, before the client is referred to adult education for academic assessment. This policy change was a direct result of new partnerships in the Learning Disabilities Training and Dissemination project, funded by NIFL and directed by the DWE and the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC).

- Single parents and displaced homemakers:

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, there were 148,000 single parents in Arkansas with children under 18 years of age; twenty-eight percent were not in the labor force. Displaced homemakers are individuals who have been providing unpaid services to family members and now are unemployed or under-employed and are experiencing difficulty in obtaining or upgrading employment.

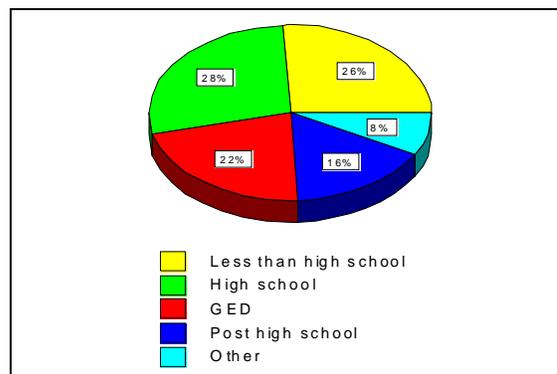
According to the *Arkansas Sex Equity Status Report for 1996-97*, published by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Education, seventy-five percent of participants enrolled in single parent/displaced homemaker programs were unemployed, underemployed, or working seasonal, part-time jobs. (See Figure 3.)

### Employment Status—Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs



Source: Arkansas Department of Workforce Education, Arkansas Sex Equity Report, 1996-97  
According to the same report, although half of the single-parent/displaced homemaker program participants had high school or GED diplomas, twenty-six percent had less than a high school education. (See the following figure:)

### Education Level—Single Parent/Displaced Homemaker Programs



Source: Arkansas Department of Workforce Education, Arkansas Sex Equity Report, 1996-97

Many adult education students are single parents—some of whom are displaced homemakers unprepared for their new role in the workforce. During the initial academic assessment that adult education conducted for TEA clients in July 1997, the average reading grade level was 7.9 and the average math level was 7.1. Those 3,336 clients had volunteered for the testing prior to the mandatory phase of welfare reform. The TEA clients who are still in the system—about one-fourth of the initial caseload before the implementation of welfare reform—are representative of the “hardest-to-serve” clients. A majority of those TEA clients are single parents and/or displaced homemakers and will be referred to adult education for assessment. These clients are

on a two-year time limit for continued cash assistance, and will require immediate effective and appropriate remediation in the areas of basic academic skills and employability skills.

There are other relevant issues that further compound the need for providing effective and appropriate services for the TEA population. For example, in a 1992 report, *Impairments of AFDC Clients*, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services stated, “Many AFDC (welfare) clients do not have a high school diploma and equivalent which . . . is due in large part to the widespread existence of learning disabilities. Many clients were . . . never identified as learning disabled and . . . never received special education. Most were not even aware of their problems.” The U.S. Department of Labor reported in their publication, *The Learning Disabled in Employment and Training Programs*, that “ fifty to eighty percent of adults with low reading skills (below fifth- to seventh-grade level) are probably learning disabled.”

The initial Arkansas assessment revealed the average grade equivalent of TEA clients is around the seventh grade level. It may be concluded that many of these clients have one or more specific learning disabilities. Many of the populations served by adult education and literacy programs have characteristics that cross boundaries by definition, compounding both the need to serve and the difficulty of providing effective and appropriate services.

- Individuals with multiple barriers to educational enhancement, including individuals with limited English proficiency:

While the 1990 U.S. Census reported less than one percent Hispanics in Arkansas, there has been a tremendous growth in the Hispanic population during the 1990s, with projections that it will continue. In 1990, there were 19,876 Hispanics in Arkansas; by 1997, this had grown to 45,134—the fastest Hispanic population growth rate in the country. The *Language Minority Student Data Report*, compiled annually by the Arkansas Department of Education, shows that in the 1997-98 school year, there were 10,807 language minority students speaking 98 languages, out of a total student population of 455,761. These statistics indicate a thirty-eight percent increase in the number of language minority students since 1993-94, and seventy-three percent of those students are Hispanic.

In fiscal year (FY) 1997, the Department of Workforce Education (DWE) provided adult education and literacy services for 4,125 adults in ESL programs. This number includes students who were provided educational services through local adult education programs and literacy councils who received adult education funds. Classes were provided to adults who were employed in industry, as well as to those in the community who requested services. Citizenship classes were also provided.

From July 1, 1997, through June 30, 1998, the DWE provided adult education and literacy services for 3,711 enrolled adults in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. It is expected that the numbers of ESL students enrolled will increase continuously in line with current projected growth in the ESL population in Arkansas, especially the Hispanic population.

DWE has recognized the need to more effectively address the needs of the individuals with limited English proficiency through the ESL programs in adult education and literacy programs throughout the state. There has been some difficulty documenting accurate progress with this student population. This will be addressed with changes recommended by the DWE/ESL Task Force. The most significant change may be the statewide adoption of assessment tools, which will result in more accurate assessment of student academic skill and knowledge levels.

- Criminal offenders in correctional institutions and other institutionalized individuals:

DWE records indicate that from July 1, 1997, through June 30, 1998, DWE funded services were provided to a total of 5,829 inmates in Arkansas. The average composite score from the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) administered to each incoming inmate was 7.4 grade equivalent in 1996-1997 and 7.5 grade equivalent in 1997-1998.

### **(c) Food Stamp Employment & Training**

#### **(i) Number and Characteristics of Expected Pool of Work Registrants**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Estimate the number and characteristics of the expected pool of work registrants during the fiscal year.]*

As of October 31, 1999, the estimated number of work registrants in the State is 20,640 (for Pulaski No. 60-2/5427). The estimated number of new work registrants (November 1, 1999 and September 30, 2000) is 620. This means the total number of work registrants in the State between October 1, 1999 and September 30, 2000 is estimated to be 21,260.

The analysis on characteristics of work registrants is not available at this time.

#### **(ii) Number of Work Registrants Exempt From E&T**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Estimate the number of work registrants the State agency intends to exempt from E&T, along with a discussion of the proposed exemption criteria.]*

The total number of work registrants exempt from E&T is 15,213.

Arkansas has chosen to operate the E&T program in only one county in the state. The program design of the E&T program at the national level has restrictions that limit how states can use E&T funds in the program. All other counties in the state are exempt from the E&T program. The agency proposes to use the non-geographic exemption to excuse all certified Food Stamp work registrants who have received benefits for three (3) months or less. The justification for this exemption is as follows: Based on past E&T program history, the majority of food stamp recipients who are given short certifications are normally displaced from a job and only need benefits for a short time. Given the time periods associated with the referral process, assessment, and assignment to a component, very little time is left (after the worker completes these tasks) to constructively work with E&T participants before the certification expires and recertification does not occur. Based on the most recent data obtained from the FACTS system, there are approximately 425 food stamp work registrants certified for three (3) months or less in Pulaski Co. 60-2”.

### **(iii) Number of Placements Into E&T Components**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Estimate the number of placements into E&T components during the fiscal year.]*

All five of the employment and training components will be operational in Pulaski County 60-2 with no variations in these areas. The anticipated number of placements in the five components is as follows:

#### Independent Job Search:

The anticipated number of able-body adults without dependents (ABAWDS) in this component is 0.

The anticipated number of mandatory customers is 265.

The anticipated number of volunteer customers is 0.

The anticipated number of participants eligible for transportation/other reimbursements is 265.

The anticipated number of customers eligible for childcare is 7.

#### Job Club:

The anticipated number of mandatory participants is 93.

The anticipated number of volunteer customers is 0.

The anticipated number of ABAWDS is 0.

The anticipated number of participants eligible for transportation/other reimbursements is 93.

The anticipated number of customers eligible for childcare is 7.

#### GED/High School Completion:

The anticipated number of ABAWDS is 0.

The anticipated number of mandatory customers is 183.

The anticipated number of customers eligible for transportation/other reimbursements is 183.  
The anticipated number of customers eligible for childcare is 9.

English as a Second Language (ESL):

The anticipated number of ABAWDS is 0.  
The anticipated number of mandatory customers is 17.  
The anticipated number of volunteer customers is 0.  
The anticipated number of customers eligible for transportation/other reimbursements is 17.  
The anticipated number of customers eligible for childcare is 7.

JTPA Referral:

The anticipated number of ABAWDS is 0.  
The anticipated number of mandatory participants is 62.  
The anticipated number of volunteers is 0.  
The anticipated number of customers eligible for transportation/other reimbursements is 62.  
The anticipated number of customers eligible for childcare is 4.

**(iv) Number of ABAWDS**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Estimate the number of ABAWDS (able-bodied adult without dependents) in the State during the fiscal year.]*

During the planned Federal fiscal year, 3,804 is the estimated number of ABAWDS in the State.

**(v) Number of ABAWDS in Waived and Un-waived Areas**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Estimate the number of ABAWDS in both waived and un-waived area of the State during the fiscal year.]*

During the planned Federal fiscal year, 3,804 is the estimated number of ABAWDS in un-waived areas of the State. The estimated number of ABAWDS in waived areas is unavailable at this time.

**(vi) Average Monthly ABAWDS Included in 15 Percent Exemption Allowance**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Estimate the average monthly number of ABAWDS included in the State's 15 percent exemption allowance, along with a discussion of how the State intends to apply the exemption.]*

The average monthly number of ABAWDS exempt under the States 15 percent ABAWD exemption allowance is 212.

In an effort to design and implement strategies to create qualifying work opportunities for ABAWDs and meet program spending requirements, the State of Arkansas has chosen to use all of its 15% RTW exemptions, which exempts an ABAWD from the Food Stamp Work Requirements of Section 6 (0) of the Act. As of 10/1/98, the State of Arkansas began using its exemption in conjunction with the planned implementation of the 15% ABAWDS exception.

### **(vii) Education/Training and Workfare Opportunities for ABAWDS**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Estimate the number of qualifying education/training and workfare opportunities for ABAWDS the State will create during the fiscal year.]*

It is estimated that there will be no qualifying education/training and workfare opportunities for ABAWDS created in Arkansas during the fiscal year.

### **(d) Vocational Rehabilitation**

#### **(i) Needs of Individuals with Disabilities**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Assess the needs of individuals with disabilities in the State, particularly the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities (including their need for supported employment services), individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or under-served by the vocational rehabilitation program, and individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system. (Sec. 101(a)(15)(A)(i)(I-III) and Sec. 625(b)(2))]*

### **ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES (ARS)**

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) is the state program that provides vocational rehabilitation services to assist individuals with significant disabilities in becoming employed and living independently (with the exception of DHS-Division of Services for the Blind).

The Vocational Rehabilitation program is essentially an eligibility program rather than an entitlement program. An applicant's receipt of vocational rehabilitation services is contingent on eligibility criteria set forth in the Rehabilitation Act (Section 102). While the presence of a significant disability and financial eligibility are necessary, vocational goals guide the identification of need for specific services. Given these criteria, the identification of the Vocational Rehabilitation program constituencies at the national and state levels has been filled with challenges. The lack of valid and current statistical information on individuals with significant disabilities and their socio-demographic characteristics, as well as the proportion among them that would pursue employment and careers, defy attempts to accurately measure their needs.

Needs assessment is further complicated by the fact that, with regard to vocational rehabilitation services, need for specific services is contingent on the consumer's vocational goal; i.e., the concept of "need" becomes a relational concept. As such, the assessment of specific vocational rehabilitation services needs requires information that transcends consumers' socio-demographic attributes.

In this context, another caveat to note is the nature of the services the vocational rehabilitation program offers. These are specified in the Rehabilitation Act (Section 103) and may not include all the services sought by eligible consumers with significant disabilities. Moreover, the needs of consumers who apply for services and are deemed ineligible—the "unserved" fall outside the legislated mandate of the program. In sum, the needs assessment of under-served consumers assumes a primary importance. Traditionally, under-served groups have been defined as minorities, women, and the poor.

Needs of consumers with significant disabilities who are accepted in the program are jointly identified, discussed, agreed upon, and formalized in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) which is signed by both the consumer and the counselor. Therefore, tallies of services delivered to eligible consumers who exited the program represent valid estimates of needs as perceived by the consumers as well as the rehabilitation professionals who serve them. The comparisons of services needed by under-served groups and other rehabilitation constituencies would provide insights as to potential shortcomings in service delivery to these populations.

Attachment D-1 contains tables assessing the needs for Vocational Rehabilitation Services for eligible consumers.

#### NEEDS ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The aforementioned discussion calls for truly innovative strategies to collect reliable needs assessment estimates of services, particularly with regard to unserved and under-served populations. ARS proposes to combine traditional, qualitative methodologies such as input from focus groups, town meetings, comments on published/disseminated materials with quantitative estimates derived from surveys, and secondary analyses of existing data. Triangulation of findings would ensure a significant level of validity necessary for these results to become the basis for an action plan.

#### INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT SYSTEM

The information system necessary to link all the partners and components in the workforce investment system is in development at this time. Therefore the data necessary to assess the needs of individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system is not readily available. In an attempt to gather information on the needs of these individuals, ARS developed a simple survey and questioned partner agencies about services provided to individuals with disabilities through their programs. The survey questions are listed below:

**NEEDS SURVEY FOR ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICE**

1. In your agency's service delivery program, do you provide any types of services to individuals with disabilities?  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
  
2. How does your agency determine if a person has a disability?  
Formal assessment\_\_\_\_\_ Individual disclosure\_\_\_\_\_ Referral information\_\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How many individuals with disabilities did you serve in the past fiscal year?
  
4. For those individuals with disabilities that you served, what types of services were provided?
  
5. If your agency was unable to provide all services requested, to what other agencies was the applicant was referred?

The agencies contacted included the following partner agencies in Arkansas: Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Workforce Education (DWE), Employment Security Department (ESD), Higher Education and Housing, Developmental Disabilities Services, and Urban Development (HUD). Responses were received during the time frame available from DHS and DWE. DHS-Division of Services for the Blind, the Designated State Unit in Arkansas for VR services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, reported that 2,563 individuals had been served during the past year, receiving all VR services in compliance with the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. The other agencies reported that data was not available on the number of individuals with disabilities that had requested services or received services. Agencies to which individuals were referred included ARS, Social Security Administration, Centers for Independent Living, Community Rehabilitation Programs, and DHS programs such as Food Stamps, Medicaid and Medicare. The developing Workforce Investment System will be initiating an information system in Arkansas that will collect data on individuals with disabilities. ARS is piloting a new client tracking system that will collect new data required

under the Workforce Investment Act, such as referrals to other partners for individuals who did not meet the order of selection.

### **DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND (DSB)**

The consumer controlled DSB Board and agency staff will jointly conduct a comprehensive, statewide assessment every three years. The comprehensive assessment will be submitted to consumer groups and individuals served by DSB during program years 2001, and every three years thereafter. The needs assessment instrument will also be published on the DSB web site. The assessment results will describe the rehabilitation needs of individuals with visual disabilities residing in Arkansas. The comprehensive needs assessment will identify the vocational rehabilitation needs of blind and severely visually impaired individuals with the most significant disabilities, including:

- (1) Their need for supported employment services;
- (2) The number of individuals with visual disabilities responding who are minorities and individuals with visual disabilities who have been unserved and underserved by the DSB vocational rehabilitation program; and
- (3) Individuals with visual disabilities served through other components of the workforce investment system (other than the vocational rehabilitation programs).

The comprehensive needs assessment will include an assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs in Arkansas. A report will be submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner by DSB of revisions to the assessment as the report is updated. The comprehensive statewide assessment instrument and its resulting report will be made available in an accessible format to all consumers served by DSB in the fiscal program year.

The consumer controlled DSB Board will analyze the vocational rehabilitation and supported employment needs identified in the comprehensive assessment. DSB goals and priorities will be modified based on the needs identified in the comprehensive assessment, the performance of the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind compared to the standards and indicators established under Section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act, and other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the DSB vocational rehabilitation program, and any findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act.

The DSB will submit annually a report to the Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner containing information regarding yearly revisions of any goals and priorities. The annual report to the RSA Commissioner will include estimates of:

- The number of individuals in Arkansas who are eligible for Title I services under the

Rehabilitation Act, as amended;

- The number of individuals who will receive services provided with funds under Part B of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and under Part B of Title VI-Supported Employment Services for Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities;
- The number of individuals to be served under each category within the Division of Services for the Blind Order of Selection;
- The costs of services, including the service cost for each priority within the Division of Services for the Blind Order of Selection;
- Age, gender, race, ethnicity, education, category of impairment, severity of disability, and whether the individuals are students with disabilities;
- Dates of application, determination of eligibility or ineligibility, initiation of the individualized plan for employment, and termination of participation in the vocational rehabilitation program;
- Earnings at the time of application and termination of the program;
- Work status and occupation;
- Types of services, including assistive technology services and assistive technology devices, provided under the vocational rehabilitation program;
- Types of public or private programs or agencies that furnished services under the vocational rehabilitation program; and
- The reasons for individuals terminating participation in the program without achieving an employment outcome.

The Division of Services for the Blind estimates that during the five-year program period its resources may not be sufficient to serve all eligible individuals who apply for vocational rehabilitation services. This estimate is based on previous service delivery history, increasing costs, an increase in the number of blind or visually impaired students entering highly technical fields of study, and increases in high technology costs. For these reasons DSB has implemented an Order of Selection. Individuals currently receiving services will continue to be provided a full range of services. Assessments and information and referral services will be provided to all individuals making application for services and who are determined to meet DSB eligibility criteria.

Eligible individuals who meet the criteria of the Order of selection will receive a full range of vocational rehabilitation services. The Division of Services for the Blind ensures that blind and visually impaired individuals with the most significant disabilities will be served as a priority.

### **Collaboration With Other State Agencies And Other Entities Regarding The Provision Of Supported Employment Services And Extended Services For Individuals With The Most Significant Disabilities**

The Division of Services for the Blind is the designated state agency to administer the supported employment services and program in Arkansas for individuals who are blind.

The Division of Services for the Blind has issued policies and procedures for the provision of supported employment services. Supported employment is defined as a specific program of services to provide competitive employment in the community for consumers who have the most significant disabilities. Supported employment services may be provided for a period of time not to exceed 18 months unless there are special circumstances for which the eligible individual and rehabilitation counselor jointly agree to extend the time in order to achieve the rehabilitation goals identified in the individualized plan for employment.

Supported employment is a specific program of services designed to provide employment in an integrated work setting for individuals with the most significant disabilities. A basic premise of supported employment is that individuals with the most significant disabilities can, with the availability of extended ongoing support services, maintain competitive employment in the community where these individuals interact with employees who are not disabled and the general public. Wages are paid consistent with the Fair Labor Standards Act and must be consistent with the wages paid to other workers in a similar job function.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors follow supported employment policies and procedures stated in the DSB Policy Manual when accepting an individual into the supported employment program of services, planning and developing the individualized plan for employment with the individual, purchasing supported employment services, and completing case documentation. Vocational rehabilitation staff provides a copy of the DSB supported employment guidelines to and review the guidelines with vendors before services are initiated.

An individual whose case has been closed successfully rehabilitated in the supported employment program of services may reapply for vocational rehabilitation services if there is a loss of employment and/or when a new comprehensive program of services is identified as needed.

An individual shall be eligible to receive supported employment services if:

- The individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services,
- The individual is determined to be an individual with the most significant disability, and
- A comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs of the individual is conducted including an evaluation of rehabilitation, career, and job needs and identifies supported employment as the appropriate rehabilitation outcome for the individual.

Supported employment services begin while the individual's case is an active vocational rehabilitation case and continues after successful vocational rehabilitation case closure with funding from sources other than vocational rehabilitation.

Post employment services may be provided in a discrete manner to an eligible individual. If a supported employment case has been transitioned to the vendor or closed successfully rehabilitated, then only discrete post-employment services may be purchased for job retention. Discrete post-employment services are provided only if the needed services are not available through the vendor. The following are examples of such services: job station redesign, repair and maintenance of assistive technology, replacement of prosthetic and orthodontic devices, and orientation and mobility services. The purchase of additional job coach services is not allowable. The vendor has made the commitment to provide or arrange available services after case transition and after the vocational rehabilitation case is closed.

Individuals are placed on jobs in the community and needed training and supports are developed during employment.

All supported employment plans must include placement in an integrated work setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, interests, concerns, abilities, capabilities, and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Cooperative arrangements have been entered into with organizations such as HIRE, Abilities Unlimited, United Cerebral Palsy, Easter Seals, and Goodwill Industries to provide supported employment services. An initial agreement was entered into this program year with a center for independent living for supported employment services. Arrangements may also be entered into with other public or nonprofit agencies or organizations within Arkansas, employers, natural supports, and other entities with respect to provision of extended services.

Extended services are defined as support services and other appropriate services, needed to support and maintain an individual with a most significant disability in supported employment. Extended services are provided singly or in combination and are organized and made available in such a way as to assist an eligible individual in maintaining supported employment. Extended services are based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual as specified in an individualized plan for employment. Extended services are provided by the Division of Services for the Blind, a nonprofit organization, employer, or any other appropriate resource, after an individual has made the transition from support provided by the Division of Services for the Blind.

The individualized plan for employment will be developed and updated in order to

- Specify the supported employment services to be provided;

- Specify the expected extended services needed;
- Identify the source of the extended services, which may include natural supports, or to the extent that it is not possible to identify the source of extended services at the time the individualized plan for employment is developed, a statement describing the basis for concluding that there is a reasonable expectation that such sources will become available; and,
- Conduct comprehensive assessments of individuals with significant disabilities and will consider supported employment as an appropriate employment.

The Division of Services for the Blind assures that the use of supported employment funds will only be used to supplement, and not supplant, the funds provided under Title I to provide supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment.

The Division of Services for the Blind assures that supported employment services provided under an individualized plan for employment will be coordinated with services provided under other individualized plans established under other Federal or State programs.

The Division of Services for the Blind assures that, to the extent job skills training is provided, the training will be provided on the job site.

The Division of Services for the Blind assures that supported employment services will include placement services in an integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual with the most significant disability.

The Division of Services for the Blind assures that it will not expend more than 5 percent of its Title I allotment for administrative costs to carry out the provision of supported employment services.

The Division of Services for the Blind assures that it will compile and submit other such information the manner required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner.

### **Description Of The Order Of Selection, Its Justification, And Outcomes And Service Goals, Time Frames, And Service Costs**

The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind, due to limited funding, is unable to purchase services for all individuals who make application and are determined eligible for services. Therefore, a statewide Order of Selection has been developed to assure that the most severely disabled individuals receive services, during periods where the Division cannot adequately fund all eligible individuals.

All applicants for VR services receive a preliminary diagnostic evaluation to determine eligibility or ineligibility for services. The Order of Selection will not preclude or restrict the provision of diagnostic and evaluation services which assist in the determination of eligibility. During periods of limited funding an individual determined to meet the eligibility requirements must also meet the requirements of an open Order of Selection category. **ELIGIBILITY MUST BE DETERMINED BEFORE ADMINISTERING THE ORDER OF SELECTION.**

The Division will assure that the implementation of an Order of Selection will not discriminate against any eligible individual. However, restrictions in financial support may prevent immediate services to all eligible individuals with visual impairments. Any time that it is determined that services cannot be provided to all individuals expected to be determined eligible, the Director of the Division of Services for the Blind may declare the implementation of an Order of Selection. The Director will notify staff by written memorandum when the Order of Selection is to be implemented, amended or withdrawn.

The Order of Selection has a design that will preclude serving individuals with less severe disabilities, who are not already being served under an IPE at the time of implementation, in favor of individuals who are more severely disabled. The Division will continue to serve individuals who are currently being served under an existing IPE, including post employment services. The Order of Selection does not provide for service (either direct or purchased) to individuals who do not meet the criteria of service category in effect, however, all eligible individuals who do not meet the Order of Selection criteria in effect, shall have access to services provided through the information and referral system implemented by the Division.

Policy: The order of selection shall be administered on a statewide basis.

The order of selection shall be implemented to assure that eligible individuals with the most severe disabilities are provided services before other eligible individuals.

Eligible individuals who are public safety officers shall receive priority for services within each category.

The division shall conduct an assessment to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and to determine the individual's priority under the order of selection.

The order of selection shall not apply to the following:

- The acceptance of referrals

- The provision of assessment services to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.
- Services needed by an eligible individual who has begun to receive services prior to the effective date of this order of selection, irrespective of the eligible individual's disability.

The Director of the Division of Services for the Blind shall direct the order of selection by designating in written memorandum the priority categories to be served.

An eligible individual shall be immediately reclassified into a higher priority category whenever appropriate justification exists in the case record of the individual.

In the order of selection each eligible individual within a closed priority category shall be placed on a waiting list until such time as the priority is opened.

When a priority category is to be opened for services, the Director of the Division of Services for the Blind shall issue an implementing memorandum to staff with instructions that appropriate services delayed under the order of selection may be provided.

#### Notification of Appeal:

When a request for services by an eligible individual is affected by the order of selection, the individual shall be immediately notified of such in writing and provided with information on the procedures for individual rights for appeal and how the client assistance program may provide help in the process.

#### Justification for the Order of Selection:

The order of selection has been developed with the active participation and approval of the Division of Services for the Blind Board, and is consistent with the February 11, 1997 CFR 361.36 requirements. The order of selection gives first priority to those individuals with the most significant disabilities as defined by the division. The criteria to determine individuals with the most significant disabilities and subsequent order of categories to be followed in the selection of individuals to be provided services is based on a refinement of the criteria set forth in the definition of individuals with a significant disability, specifically, the degree by which an individual's impairment seriously limits his or her functional capacities.

#### Definitions:

**ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUAL WHO IS A PUBLIC SAFETY Officer** means an individual who meets the definition of Public Safety Officer under Section 7(12) of the Rehabilitation Act, as

amended in 1992, and whose disability was sustained in the line of duty. In the line of duty is applicable when the cause of the disability is related to a criminal act, apparent criminal act, or, a hazardous condition resulting directly from the officer's duties in direct connection with the enforcement, execution, and administration of law, fire prevention, fire fighting, or related public safety activities. A public safety officer may be an individual serving in the United States, state or any local unit of government, with or without compensation.

Examples:

- The enforcement of the criminal laws, including a highway patrol, or the maintenance of civil peace by the National Guard of the Armed Forces;
- A correctional program, facility, or institution where the activity is potentially dangerous because of contact with criminal suspects, defendants, prisoners, probationers, or parolees;
- The court having criminal or juvenile delinquent jurisdiction where the activity is potentially dangerous because of contact with criminal suspects, defendants, prisoners, probationers, or parolees;
- Fire fighting, fire prevention or emergency rescue missions.

Special consideration will be given in all priority groups to those individuals whose disability arises from a disability sustained in the line of duty

FUNCTIONAL CAPACITIES mean the following:

**ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY:** The ability to travel independently to and from destinations in the community.

**SELF CARE:** The ability to manage one's own situation, including meal preparation, house cleaning, and health and safety needs.

**COMMUNICATION:** The ability to effectively exchange information through spoken or written words, sign language, Braille, concepts, gestures, or other means.

**WORK SKILLS:** The ability to do specific tasks required for a particular job.

**WORK TOLERANCE:** The ability to sustain required levels of functioning in work related activities with or without accommodations.

**INTERPERSONAL SKILLS:** The ability to make and maintain personal, family, and community relationships.

**SELF DIRECTION:** The ability to independently plan, initiate, problem solve, organize, and carry out goal directed activities.

**INDIVIDUAL WITH A SIGNIFICANT DISABILITY** means an eligible person with a disability:

- Who has severe physical or mental impairment which seriously limits one or more functional capacities, such as, mobility, communication, self care, self direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills, in terms of an employment outcome; and,
- Whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require two or more substantial vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time;

**INDIVIDUAL WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITY** means an eligible individual with a significant disability:

- Whose impairment seriously limits four or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome, and,
- Whose vocational rehabilitation requires three or more substantial VR services over an extended period of time

### **ARKANSAS DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND ORDER OF SELECTION**

Priority One -- Eligible individuals with the most significant disability whose impairment limits four or more functional capacities in terms of employment outcomes and whose rehabilitation requires three or more substantial vocational rehabilitation services an extended period of time.

Priority Two -- Eligible individuals with a significant disability whose impairment limits three functional capacities in terms of employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires three or more substantial vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

Priority Three -- Eligible individuals with a significant disability whose impairment seriously limits two functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires two or more substantial vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time.

Priority Four -- All other eligible individuals.

**Statistics Reported for Program Year October 1997-September 1998**

<b>Priority</b>		<b># Served</b>	<b># Rehabilitated Costs</b>
Category I	572	24.8%/142	\$870,236.00
Category II	607	50.8%/150	\$822,792.00
Category III	6	-0-	\$4,029.00
Category IV	9	-0-	\$935.00
All Categories	1,194	75.6%/292	\$1,697,922.00
Average Cost Per Client:			\$1,422.10

Minorities Served: 324

**(ii) Number of Individuals Eligible for Services**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Include State estimates of the number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services under title I of the Rehabilitation Act, the number of such individuals who will receive services provided with funds provided under part B of title I and under part B of title VI (including, if the designated State agency uses an order of selection, estimates of the number of individuals to be served under each priority category within the order), and the costs of the services provided (including, if the designated State agency uses an order of selection, the service costs for each priority category within the order.) (Sec. 101(a)(15)(B))]*

**ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES**

Estimates Of The Number Of Individuals In The State To Be Served  
 Under Part B Of Title I

	Eligible individuals who are most significantly disabled.	<u>COST</u>
<b><u>Priority Category I:</u></b>		
Number to be Served - 901	Number to be Rehabilitated - 200	\$423,049.70
<b><u>Priority Category II:</u></b>		
Number to be Served - 13,379	Number to be Rehabilitated - 2,163	\$8,796,886.50
<b><u>Priority Category III:</u></b>		
Number to be Served - 3,069	Number to be Rehabilitated - 412	\$1,781,715.20
<b><u>Priority Category IV:</u></b>		
Number to be Served - 1035	Number to be Rehabilitated - 170	\$434,211.54
<b>TOTAL TO BE SERVED</b>	<b>TOTAL TO BE REHABILITATED</b>	<b>TOTAL COST</b>
<u>18,384</u>	<u>2,945</u>	<u>\$11,435,862</u>

Estimates Of The Number Of Individuals In The State To Be Served  
Under Of Part B Of Title VI

Type of individual to be served	Number Served	Rehabilitated	Supported Employment Model
Mental Illness	25	17	Job Coach/Mobile Crew Transition Employment
Mild Mental Retardation	27	15	Job Coach/Mobile Crew
Moderate Mental Retardation	18	9	Job Coach/Mobile Crew
Severe Mental Retardation	2	1	Job Coach/Mobile Crew
Traumatic Head Injury	5	3	Job Coach/Mobile Crew
Other	38	25	Job Coach/Mobile Crew
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>70</b>	

**DIVISION OF HUMAN SERVICES (DSB)**

The 1990 U. S. Census Disability Table 3 identifies 156, 514 Arkansans with visual impairments. The 1990 U. S. Census identifies 159,337 Arkansans with a work disability. This figure includes all disability groups.

Prevent Blindness America estimates the combined national percentage of people who are legally blind or visually impaired to 3.40 percent. Twenty states are above the national average, including Arkansas. Among people 40 years of age and over African-Americans have a higher rate of blindness than Caucasians.

DSB has determined that it cannot meet the needs of all Arkansans with a visual disability who may be eligible to receive vocational rehabilitation services. An Order of Selection has been implemented for individuals eligible for vocational rehabilitation services provided by DSB. The DSB Order of Selection procedures are discussed in Section D 1(d)(i) of this document.

The tables below identify individuals served and projections of individuals to receive services during FY 2001.

Statistics Reported for Program Year October 1998-September 1999

Priority	#Served	#Rehabilitated	Costs
Category one	572	24.8%/142	\$870,236.00
Category II	607	50.8%/150	\$822,792.00
Category III	6	0	\$4,029.00
Category IV	9	0	\$935.00
All Categories	1,194	75.6%/292	\$1,697,992.00

Average Cost Per Client: \$1,422.10

MINORITIES SERVED FY 1999: 324

PROJECTIONS FY 2001:

TOTAL VR CONSUMERS: 1274

MINORITIES SERVED: 356

**(iii) Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs**

*[Federal Planning Guidance: Provide an assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State. (Sec. 101(a)(15)(A)(ii)]*

**ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES (ARS)**

Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP's) in Arkansas provide an important array of services to persons with disabilities, and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) employs a variety of methods and strategies to accomplish appropriate partnering with these statewide Community Programs. ARS is actively involved in planning for the establishment and development of emerging programs and continuously strives to maximize consumer utilization at the community level.

ARS maintains a Community Program Development Section (CPDS) to provide certification and consultation to the CRP's in Arkansas. In order to be reimbursed for services provided, the CRP must be certified by ARS annually, and must maintain compliance with that certification throughout the contract year. The "1999 Arkansas Standards for Community Rehabilitation

Program Certification" is the official guide used to complete CRP certification. This guide is periodically reviewed and amended as needed.

ARS conducts periodic statewide consumer and provider needs studies and obtains public input to help guide the types and levels of services provided in the Community Rehabilitation Programs. Input solicited from CRP's, consumers, providers, and vendors will be incorporated into the standards when deemed appropriate. This 1999 Arkansas Standards for Community Rehabilitation Program Certification emphasizes reduced consumer processing type activities, and encourages timely transition to competitive employment in integrated settings consistent with the consumers informed choice.

As part of the ongoing certification process, the CPDS conducts frequent on-site reviews to monitor certification compliance, including: comprehensive case reviews, consumer satisfaction interviews, Service to Billing Audits, and to assess overall CRP progress in attaining short/long range goals.

In addition to providing programmatic and technical assistance as needed, CPDS coordinates training for CRP staff through affiliations with colleges/universities in Region VI who offer training to enhance skill levels of CRP Directors and support personnel. CPDS personnel serve on the advisory committee for the University of Arkansas sponsored Continuing Education for Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP RCEP) providing topic specific training for CRP's in the region. Currently several statewide CRP Directors and support staff along with CPDS personnel are enrolled in the CRP RCEP "Certificate in Management Program". ARS provides CRP's with information on (and encourages participation in) the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) Program. Six CRP's (under contract with ARS) are current participating JWOD contractors. Participation in this program fluctuates annually.

ARS also encourages CRP's to participate in the provisions of ACT 853, which was adopted during the 1991 regular session of the 78<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. Act 853 serves as Arkansas' state use law, and is designed to promote the purchase of products and services from CRP's by local municipalities and agencies of state government. The ARS CPDS provides technical assistance to statewide CRP's relating to act 853 activities, and the administrator of the CPDS serves as the legislated chair of the "Committee for the Purchase for Workshop-made Products and Services". This committee provides programmatic and fiscal oversight for Act 853 legislation. The ARS CPDS works closely with the Administrative Boards of Directors of statewide CRP's to encourage program development which provides a realistic work atmosphere, conducive to acquiring meaningful work related skills for referred consumers.

### **DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND (DSB)**

The Arkansas Legislature appropriates special funding to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) for programs approved under the Community Rehabilitation Program State Plan. The Plan covers activities for consumers of both ARS and the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB). Private non-profit programs are compensated for their services according to Performance Based Funding, based on the clients served and positive outcomes with the ultimate goal being the competitive labor market.

Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) in Arkansas provide a comprehensive array of services to individuals with disabilities within the state. It is important that planning for the establishment, utilization, development and improvement of these rehabilitation programs be provided on a continuing basis.

Information regarding Community Rehabilitation Programs is made available to consumers of DSB services upon application to enable individuals to make informed choices regarding services and programs. The goal of CRP planning is to identify individuals with service needs which can most appropriately be met through the purchase of services from a CRP. These CRP objectives are developed jointly and agreed on by the individual with a disability and the counselor. Particular care is taken to ensure identified objectives focus on achievement of employment outcomes in the most integrated setting possible in accordance with the choice and capability of the individual. The objectives are included in the development of the IPE. Counselors evaluate each individual to determine that CRP placements meet the specific need of the individual. Services and opportunities available to DSB consumers include: sheltered workshop, assessment, work adjustment, extended services, work activity, competitive employment, sheltered employment and supported employment.

To be eligible to provide services to DSB clients and be reimbursed, CRP's must be certified annually by the ARS and DSB Community Program Development Sections (CPDS) and they must maintain that certification throughout the contract period. CRP's are evaluated using the Arkansas Standards for Community Rehabilitation Program Certification (1993 Revision) and must adhere to the Arkansas State Plan for Community Rehabilitation Programs (1993 Revision). As a part of the ongoing certification process the CPDS conduct the annual certification review, which is a comprehensive assessment of the CRP's ability to provide quality rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities including specifically blind and visually impaired persons. This assessment includes programmatic issues, fiscal oversight and physical plant inspection to assure compliance with applicable state and federal regulations. The DSB case reviewer is member of the CPDS.

The CRP is monitored by CPDS staff who maintain telephonic and written communication, conduct periodic on-site reviews, and monitor monthly CRP billings for accuracy and thoroughness. The CPDS also coordinates training for CRP staff through affiliations with three (3) major universities located in Region VI which regularly offer grant sponsored training to enhance/expand the skill levels of CRP Directors and support personnel. Representatives of DSB participate on the Region VI Advisory Committee for Community Rehabilitation Programs and on the Advisory Committee for the Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program.

DSB encourages CRPs to participate in state and federal programs designed to promote the purchase of CRP products and services by agencies of local, state, and federal government.

CPDS conducts periodic statewide consumer and provider needs studies and "town meeting" type events to solicit input and collect information that is used to help guide/focus the types and levels of services provided by the Community Rehabilitation Programs. Current studies indicate major needs in the areas of housing, transportation, vocational training, special medical accommodations and recreational opportunities.

Arkansas Act 853 of 1991 expanded previous enabling legislation approved in 1973 which established the Arkansas Committee for the Purchase of Workshop-Made Products, (Arkansas' State Use Law). This Act outlines the process for CRPs to sell prime manufactured products to agencies of local municipalities and state government. The 1991 revision of this legislation expanded the committee membership and added services to the approved commodity listing. A 5% bidding preference is allowed to CRPs under this Act, and the ARS and DSB CPDS provides technical assistance and administrative support, with the administrator of the ARS CPDS serving as the legislated committee chair.

DSB also provides CRPs with information on and encourages participation in the Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD), National Industries for the Blind (NIB), and National Industries for the Severely Handicapped (NISH) programs. The JWOD Program is expressly covered within the current Rehabilitation Act and is designed to promote the purchase of products and services from CRPs by agencies of the Federal Government.

Policies and procedures require that vocational rehabilitation counselors coordinate the use of CRPs in the IPE development. Services provided in CRPs are coordinated to meet the identified goals of individuals with disabilities to enable those individuals to maximize their employment opportunities, including career advancement. Each individual is evaluated by the counselor to ensure that CRP services meet the specific need of the individual. The goals and objectives are jointly developed and agreed on by the individual with disabilities and the vocational rehabilitation counselor. The goals and services are stated in the IPE.

Under the agreement between ARS and DSB the following is applicable:

**Assessment** - an investigative process designed to identify and measure the individual's work-related experience and behavior. The assessment results in the identification of rehabilitation services or programs needed to achieve an employment outcome and placement needs.

**Work Adjustment** - goal directed activities and services to enhance the individuals job-seeking and job-keeping skills to facilitate the achievement of a successful vocational placement.

**Extended Services** - training and services provided to an individual with a disability over an extended period of time for individuals who are employable and demonstrate the need for continued adjustment services. The IPE must identify casework, counseling and guidance and adjustment services that are goal directed to maximize the individuals vocational, educational, personal and social functioning. Training provided to individuals utilizing extended services must be in agreement with the CRPs Evaluation and Training Certificate in accordance with Fair Labor Standards Act.

**Work Activity** - services and training provided over an extended period to provide long-term personal and social development in a work environment. Individuals eligible must be unemployable in the competitive labor market at the time of referral. Services and training must be planned to assist the individual to develop social, educational, personal vocational and personal skills to: 1) achieve their best level of functioning in the community and 2) to progress to a more advanced rehabilitation program.

Services provided in CRPs may be one or more of the following:

- (A) Medical, psychiatric, psychological, social, and vocational services that are provided under one management.
- (B) Testing, fitting, or training in the use of prosthetic and orthotic devices.
- (C) Recreational therapy.
- (D) Physical and occupational therapy.
- (E) Speech, language, and hearing therapy.
- (F) Psychiatric, psychological, and social services, including positive behavior management.
- (G) Assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs.
- (H) Rehabilitation technology.
- (I) Job development, placement, and retention services.
- (J) Evaluation or control of specific disabilities.
- (K) Orientation and mobility services for individuals who are blind.
- (L) Extended employment.

- (M) Psychosocial rehabilitation services.
- (N) Supported employment services and extended services.
- (O) Services to family members if necessary to enable the applicant or eligible individual to achieve an employment outcome.
- (P) Personal assistance services.
- (Q) Services similar to the services described in paragraphs (A) through (P) of this definition.

The following services were provided to DSB consumers via community rehabilitation programs during FY 99: a ten-day work evaluation, an 80-day work adjustment, and a 15-month period of extended evaluation. In FY 99, ninety-five DSB consumers were served in certified CRPs at a cost of \$63,109.00.

## 2. Key Economic Trends

*[Federal Planning Document: Describe the key trends that are expected to shape the economic environment of the State during the next five years. Which industries are expected to grow? Which will contract? What are the workforce and economic development needs of the State? Identify the implications of these trends in terms of overall availability of current and projected employment opportunities by occupation, and for each of your customer segments, the job skills necessary in key occupations. Also describe how the program services provided relate to State and regional occupational opportunities. (WIA Sec. 112(b)(4) and Perkins Sec. 122(c)(15))]*

Based on data from the University of Little Rock Institute for Economic Advancement, Woods and Poole Economics, US Market Trends and Forecasts, the Employment Security Department and the US Industry and Trade Outlook, the following trends affecting the economic environment of Arkansas for the next five years have been identified:

- Economic growth, albeit slightly slower, will continue as the nation's record postwar economic boom will continue for the foreseeable future. Unemployment rates will hold steady around 4.5 percent, as labor force rates and population growth will be in the 1.5 – 2 percent range over the next few years. State economic growth will depend upon continued national growth and exports, especially to Asia.
- Manufacturing jobs as a percentage of total employment will continue to decline slightly as services, particularly business and health, will grow.
- During the past five years, manufacturing industries experiencing the largest decline in Arkansas include: apparel, leather, electronics, and industrial machinery (e.g., automotive parts). Global competition and advanced technological processes will continue to result in job declines.

- Textiles, furniture and transportation equipment have experienced growth. Other industries such as food and kindred products, lumber, paper, metals, and the aviation and aeronautics/commercial aircraft industry have solidified into mature, slow-growth industries.
- Technology will shape the future of employment:
  - Biotechnology will affect food and forest products, especially seed, rice, poultry, and timber. Growth in other industries such as food and kindred products will most likely occur if niche products such as nutraceuticals are developed. Science will also affect chemicals and allied products as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and diagnostic substances are developed.
  - Technology will affect production methods in textiles, electronics (communications devices, energy sources), printing (holography, desk top publishing), glass, stone and clay (ceramics, fiber optics), metals, and instruments (especially health care).
  - Growth in business and health services will spur demand for professionals in these fields and in industries servicing them such as health care products, pharmaceuticals, electronics and furniture.
  - Information technology will continue to grow as computers and the Internet flourish. Job growth will particularly be heavy for programmers, analysts, and technicians.
  - The transportation sector will grow considerably as evidenced by the increase in truck drivers.
  - Sixty-one percent of jobs created in projects with the Arkansas Department of Economic Development were in the knowledge-based areas.

In addition to these trends, the National Alliance of Business (1966) expects the workforce of 2005 to be older, more balanced by gender, and having more minority representation. Arkansas can be expected to follow this trend.

According to statistics collected by the Arkansas Employment Security Department, The Arkansas economy is projected to increase by almost 215,000 during the 1996-2006 period. The projected annual growth rate is 1.8% as compared with 1.3% for the United States. While agriculture and mining will continue to trend downward, manufacturing will add over 27,000 additional jobs by 2006. The construction sector is expected to increase 22% during the period, and health services employment will account for 20% of the total employment growth. Service industries are projected to add more than 121,000 jobs over the period, with health and social services leading the way. Trade, transportation, finance, insurance and real estate will add over 80,000 jobs to the economy. Government employment and communications and utilities will reflect slight employment increases through 2006.

Nearly 44 percent of the new jobs created through 2006 will be in two major occupational divisions: professional/technical and services. Employment in professional/technical occupations will produce the most new jobs of all sectors followed by new service jobs. Sizable growth is anticipated in health assessment and treatment with registered nurses and licensed practical nurses adding significant growth. Teachers and instructors will also experience large gains, particularly elementary school, secondary school and special education teachers.

Arkansas' job growth in various occupations will range from 7 to 27%, and employment will grow in occupations requiring all levels of education and training.

Source: Arkansas Employment Security Department, Employment and Training Services, Occupational-Career Information Section

Arkansas has long emphasized the importance of education to all school groups and young adults. An educated workforce is imperative as we advance the state into the technology world of the millennium. The state is educating and recruiting for professional and technical occupations while stressing the importance of furthering one's education in these fields. Employment projections for Arkansas indicate a need for more than 9,000 professional and technical workers through year 2006. The current supply of trained applicants falls short of meeting these demands. Arkansas' post-secondary institutions are gearing their curriculum toward professional and technical occupations through higher education and technical colleges.

The task of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) is to provide employment and training activities through core, intensive or training services that increase the employment, retention, and earnings of participants, and increase occupational skill attainment by participants, and improve the quality of the workforce, reduce long-term welfare dependency, and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the state's available labor force. Dislocated workers, low-income individuals, individuals training for nontraditional employment, and other individuals with multiple barriers to employment will have the opportunity to obtain, update or improve their job readiness skills by preparing to meet the ongoing technological demands of employers in the twenty-first century.

Arkansas, through its Labor Market Information Sources, delivers employment statistics to customers such as employers and job seekers using both publications and the Internet. Some of those publications and websites include *Labor Market Information for Arkansas Counties*, *Arkansas Labor Market Trends*, *Directory of Licensed Occupations in Arkansas*, *Industrial and Occupational Trends*, *Guide to Educational Training Programs for Demand Occupations*, *ArkOTIS*, *Arkansas Career Watch*, *Employment Outlook*, *Guide to Educational Training Programs for Demand Occupations*, and *Discover Arkansas*.

