



ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Special Called Meeting



Thursday, March 26, 2026
11:00 am- 2:00 pm



Arkansas Department of Commerce
1 Commerce Way, Little Rock, AR 72202





AGENDA



FULL BOARD- SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

March 26, 2026
11:00am

Call to OrderThomas Anderson Jr., Chairman
Roll Call.....Board Staff

Agenda Item 1: Approval of Minutes- Action

Minutes of January 7, 2026 Full Board MeetingThomas Anderson Jr., Chairman

Agenda Item 2: Administrative Reports- Informational

Report of Chairperson..... Thomas Anderson Jr., Chairman
State Plan Development & Submission

[USDOL TEGL 07-25 Modification Requirements for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) State Plans for Program
Years \(PYs\) 2026 and 2027](#)

Report of State Board Director.....Dr. Charisse Childers, Executive Director
Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Agenda Item 3: WIOA State Plan PY' 26-27 Modifications- Informational

Workforce System Vision 2026-2027.....Cody Waits, Executive Director
Arkansas Workforce Connections

Eddie Thomas, Director
Arkansas Workforce Connections-Office of Employment & Training

Combined Plan Highlights..... State Program Directors

(working lunch)

<u>Program</u>	<u>Director</u>
• WIOA Title II- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act programs	Dr. Trenia Miles
• WIOA Title IV (ARS)- Vocational Rehabilitation programs	Commissioner Joseph Baxter
• WIOA Title IV (DSB)- Vocational Rehabilitation programs	Executive Director Cody Waits
• Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP E&T)	Director Lorie Williams
• Unemployment Insurance programs	Director Kristen Rhodes
• Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs (Perkins V)	Director Ross White (ADE)
• Trade Adjustment Assistance program	Director Eddie Thomas
• Jobs for Veterans State Grant program	Director Eddie Thomas
• WIOA Title III- Wagner Peyser/Employment Services program	Director Eddie Thomas
• WIOA Title I- Youth, Adult & Dislocated Worker programs	Director Eddie Thomas

USDOL Waiver Requests..... Eddie Thomas, Director
[USDOL TEGL 05-25- Maximizing Innovation in WIOA Programs](#) Angela Cook, Assistant Director
Arkansas Workforce Connections- Office of Employment and Training

Board Open Discussion

Public Opportunity to Address the Board

Agenda Item 4: Waiver Requests – Action

Board Vote.....Thomas Anderson Jr., Chairman

Agenda Item 5: WIOA Combined State Plan PY’ 26-27 Modification Vote – Action

Board Vote.....Thomas Anderson Jr., Chairman

Agenda Item 6: WIOA Regional and Local Plan Modifications PY ’26-27- Action

Issuance/Templates.....Stephanie Blair, WIOA Policy Program Manager
Arkansas Workforce Connections- Office of Employment and Training

Agenda Item 7: USDOE Connecting Talent to Opportunity (CTO Challenge) - Action

[U.S. Department of Education Launches \\$15 Million Challenge to Create the Next Generation of Talent Marketplaces](#)

Overview/State Board Support.....Dr. Tina Moore, Education Professional Supervisor/Expert
Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE)

Erin McCarley, SAS Program Supervisor/Expert
Office of State Technology | Shared Administrative Services

Agenda Item 8: USDOL Reentry Employment in Skilled Trades, Advanced Manufacturing, Registered Apprenticeships, and Training (RESTART) Grant- Action

[US Department of Labor announces \\$81M to support training, employment for formerly incarcerated individuals \(RESTART grants to prioritize skilled trades, high-demand industries\)](#)

Overview/State Board Support.....Cody Waits, Executive Director
Arkansas Workforce Connections

Board Open Discussion

Public Opportunity to Address the Board

Announcements

Adjournment

Resources:

- [First Class Graduates from Governor Sanders’ Recidivism Reduction Pilot Program](#)
- [Governor Sanders Receives AI Center of Excellence Effectiveness and Safety Report](#)
- [TEN 07-25- The U.S. Department of Labor’s Artificial Intelligence Literacy Framework](#)
- [USDOL TEGL 10-23, Change 3- Rescission of Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 10-23, Change 2: Work Authorization Verification in Grant Programs Administered by the Employment and Training Administration](#)
- [Coordination of Workforce Development and Social Services Program in Arkansas- Final Report-ALC Subcommittee](#)
- [America’s Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age](#)
- [Arkansas Selected to Lead National Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship Expansion](#)

Policies/Issuances for Review

N/A



Agenda Item 1: ACTION
MINUTES from January 7, 2026 Meeting



Arkansas Workforce Development Board
Minutes

January 7, 2026
SEARK College

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board convened in person at the Southeast Arkansas College in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, beginning at 12:50 pm. Chairman Thomas Anderson Jr. presided with the following members voicing their presence: Mr. Mike Rogers, proxy for Governor Sarah Sanders, Commissioner Joseph Baxter, Mr. Aaron Chastain, Dr. Teri Cox-Meadows, Mr. Miles Crawford, Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Randy Henderson, Ms. Rebecca Ives, Mr. Randy Zook, proxy for Ms. Candice Lawrence, Mr. Brian Marsh, Dr. Trenia Miles, Mr. Clint O’Neal, Mr. George Nunnally, Ms. Latanyua Robinson, Mr. Barry Sellers, Mr. Kelley Sharp, Mr. Timothy Thorne, Director Cody Waits, Dr. Ken Warden, and Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes.

Mr. Len Blaylock, Ms. Karen Breashears, and Mayor Ray Bowman were unable to attend. Board staff confirmed that a quorum was present.

Action Item 1-ACTION-Approval of Minutes from November 12, 2025: Chairman Anderson asked whether any corrections/revisions needed to be made to the November 12, 2025, minutes.

Hearing none, a motion was made by Mr. Kelley Sharp and seconded by Mr. Brian Marsh. The motion carried unanimously, with none opposed.

Agenda Item 2-INFORMATIONAL-Administrative Reports:

Report of Chairperson: Chairman Anderson reported on the addition of board members to the Executive, Strategic Planning, and Program and Performance Evaluation Committees. Dr. Ken Warden has been added to the Executive Committee. Dr. Teri Cox-Meadows, Mayor Ray Bowman, and Mr. Aaron Chastain have been added to the Strategic Planning Committee. Mr. Barry Sellers has been added to the Program and Performance Evaluation Committee.

Report of AWDB Director: Dr. Charisse Childers instructed board members to review supporting resources listed in their agenda packet, including TEGL guidance that outlines what was covered in committee meetings. Executive Order 14278, issued April 23, 2025, establishes five strategic pillars for Arkansas’s workforce system, creating a comprehensive plan to meet employer workforce needs. The main points include an emphasis on flexibility through waivers to better utilize funding and services, addressing a tight labor market with more targeted guidance for job seekers, especially concerning employment pathways and registered apprenticeships. There is also encouragement to fully leverage available resources and funding mechanisms. Furthermore, initiatives like Arkansas GROW with Google support workforce development and skill-building

efforts. Overall, the focus remains on strategic alignment, flexibility, and improving workforce outcomes through better resource use and guidance.

Report of Agency Director: Director Cody Waits provided key updates on program implementation, funding, and strategic direction. A major focus is the \$35.8 million U.S. Department of Labor cooperative agreement supporting Registered Apprenticeships. Less than 10% of funds are allocated to administration, while approximately 90% is reserved for employer incentives. 120 occupations are approved, and employers may apply through OSD, hire staff, and begin outreach efforts. Incentive distribution will follow a first-come, first-served model, with rollout tied to achieving 90% enrollment.

The state plan is undergoing revisions to improve alignment and efficiency, including efforts to consolidate regions across the Offices of Employment and Training, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, the Division of Services for the Blind, and Adult Education. Mr. Waits emphasized the importance of competition as a driver of performance, alongside the development of state-specific metrics that complement federal requirements, such as efficiency ratings and weighted measures.

To enhance transparency and accountability, a dashboard/scoreboard is being developed to track performance and highlight areas of excellence across programs and regions. Additional stakeholder input will be gathered through an upcoming meeting with local workforce boards to refine outcomes and inform revisions.

Finally, an “investment by industry” report is in development to better understand sector performance and identify factors contributing to higher success rates, supporting more strategic allocation of resources moving forward.

Report of Staff: Director Eddie Thomas stated that the Annual Report for PY24 highlights key accomplishments and activities and is available on the agency’s website. He reported that the ALC- Hospital, Medicaid and Developmental Disabilities Study subcommittee held meetings to review findings from a workforce and social services evaluation conducted by the Alliance for Opportunity. It was stated that the study focused on WIOA programs and DHS programs and their effectiveness in Arkansas; and a link to the study will be shared with interested board members. For Arkansas Work Ready Communities, Mr. Thomas invited Cheri Hughes from ACT to co-present. Ms. Hughes reported that Arkansas’ progress includes 26 counties engaged between 2020 and 2026. In 2022, the southeast region became the first in the state to be fully certified. Boot camps were held in Hot Springs in 2023 and Conway in 2024. Arkansas currently ranks 4th in the nation for this initiative.

Agenda Item 3-ACTION-Administrative Requirement, Annual Stipend Assessment, and Required Paperwork: Ms. Victoria Hall reminded the board of annual documentation due to the state and offered her assistance when needed. Dr. Charisse Childers provided a proposal with reasoning to reduce the stipend amount for board members, citing comparisons with similar

boards and budget constraints within the agency. After discussion, Chairman Anderson asked if there was a motion to lower the stipend amount from \$110.00 to \$85.00.

A motion was made by Mr. Miles Crawford and seconded by Mr. Randy Henderson. The motion carried unanimously, with none opposed.

After additional discussion and clarifying remarks from ADWS general counsel, Chairman Anderson asked for a motion to approve travel reimbursement at the state rate for board members.

A motion was made by Mr. Kelley Sharp and seconded by Mr. Timothy Thorne. The motion carried unanimously, with none opposed.

Agenda Item 4-INFORMATIONAL- Governor’s Workforce Strategy and Updates: Chief Workforce Officer Mike Rogers discussed the Arkansas Next Deployment Magazine. This magazine highlights efforts to help transitioning military members and current National Guard personnel move into the private sector. Chief Rogers shared that Governor Sanders has initiated a reducing recidivism pilot program (including incarcerated populations) that has gained traction, with grant funding secured, alignment at the state level, and national attention. Mr. Rogers concluded with a reference to the Governor’s Workforce Strategy and its focus and priorities.

Agenda Item 5-INFORMATIONAL & ACTION-Committee Reports:

A timeline was presented that projected the activities and submission date of the WIOA combined state plan for program years 2026-2027. Chairman Anderson asked for a motion to approve the state plan timeline.

A motion was made by Judge Brandon Ellison and seconded by Mr. Brian Marsh. The motion carried unanimously, with none opposed.

Executive Committee: Chairman Anderson and Executive Director Cody Waits led the Executive Committee in a discussion regarding Pilar IV, Flexibility & Innovation. There was also a discussion on waiver flexibility, and Arkansas applying for waivers in the upcoming state plan modification cycle. Staff shared that a recent emphasized the utilization of the waivers by federal agencies. The committee discussed several waiver options including the desire to operate in a single workforce planning area state model. Dr. Ken Warden was appointed to the Executive Committee by Chairman Anderson.

Strategic Planning Committee: The Strategic Planning Committee discussed Pillars I–V of the America’s Talent Strategy and focused on the progress on the Strategic Plan. 80% of the items that are due by December 31, 2026, are completed or on track. Items scheduled for completion by March 31, 2026, will be transitioned to the appropriate committees. By June 30, 2026, all

items should either be completed or have status reports. Barry Seller and Aaron Chastain were appointed to the Strategic Planning Committee by Chairman Anderson.

Program & Performance Evaluation Committee: Chairman Gan Nunnally and the Program & Performance Evaluation Committee discussed Pillar III, focusing on integrating programs into a single system, building innovative partnerships, addressing gaps between digital access and in-person support, and creating a standardized schedule to reduce registration fatigue. For Pillar IV, the focus was on prioritizing KPIs by evaluating effectiveness and ROI, conducting a survey to rank existing KPIs, setting thresholds, assessing initial investment, and defining success through measurable outcomes and success rate factors. There was also an emphasis on increasing workforce enrollment in rural areas. Dr. Teri Cox Meadows and Mayor Ray Bowman were appointed to the committee by Chairman Anderson

Agenda Item 6-INFORMATIONAL-State Plan Modification Summaries:

Title IV: Title IV updates were made by Commissioner Joseph Baxter who discussed the completion of the ARS Statewide needs assessment and the merger of ARS and DSB. Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes reported that DSB goals have been approved by the DSB board and shared that software programs have been updated to better support visually impaired individuals.

Title II: Dr. Trena Miles reported that enrollment is still increasing, as well as credentials and certifications by participants. TANF programs have been removed from Title II; Title II is still the largest provider of DHS SNAP E&T Services. Distance learning has been an asset to the Adult Education Program. An individual can earn their GED without walking into a brick-and-mortar Adult Education building.

Titles I & III- Director Eddie Thomas spoke on the waivers that were included in the agenda packet and, as a part of the Committees' discussion, would be included under Title I. Pillars I-IV would also be included. He is working with the Office of State Technology to make sure all the systems we have in place (Launch, Civiform, AJL) are able to communicate with one another. Mr. Thomas mentioned that within the plan there will be a focus on the integration of AI in state government and on the connection between workforce and economic development. For Title III, the focus will be on the integration of Initiative 10:33 and the Hope Hub system to give individuals access to all services through a No Wrong Door model.

Board Open Discussion: None

Public Opportunity to Address the Board: None

Announcements:

Adjournment: Chairman Anderson asked for a motion to adjourn.

A Motion was made by Mr. Kelley Sharp and seconded by Mr. Timothy Thorne. The meeting adjourned at 2:47 pm.



Agenda Item 2: Informational Administrative Reports





Agenda Item 3: Informational
WIOA Combined State Plan PY' 26-27
Modifications



EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY SYSTEM U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR Washington, D.C. 20210	CLASSIFICATION WIOA
	CORRESPONDENCE SYMBOL OWI - DASG
	DATE November 25, 2025

ADVISORY: TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE LETTER NO. 05-25

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATORS
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARD CHAIRS AND DIRECTORS
LABOR COMMISSIONERS
AMERICAN JOB CENTERS
RAPID RESPONSE COORDINATORS

FROM: LORI FRAZIER BEARDEN /s/
Acting Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Maximizing Innovation in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs

1. **Purpose.** To maximize innovation in the public workforce system and better serve job seekers and employers by providing state and local workforce development systems waiver opportunities, to promote flexibility within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) formula funded programs, and to achieve the Administration’s vision for America’s workforce under Executive Order 14278 on Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future.

2. **Action Requested.** State and local workforce development boards should review current policies and practices to maximize opportunities provided by WIOA to modernize and innovate operations and optimize service delivery of workforce development programs. ETA encourages states to work with ETA to mitigate or remove barriers where they exist, which includes the use of waivers of statutory requirements to support innovative solutions for building a skilled workforce in alignment with the Administration’s strategic pillars for workforce investment.

3. **Summary and Background.**
 - a. Summary – This TEGl offers options that the public workforce system can use to innovate and modernize operations and program services by using existing WIOA flexibilities, and encourages increased waiver use to scale industry-driven strategies, enhance worker mobility, create opportunities to integrate systems and realign resources, optimize service delivery, improve accountability for participant outcomes, and remove barriers to innovation.

	EXPIRATION DATE Continuing
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- b. Background – On April 23, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14278 on Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future. In the *Comprehensive Worker Investment and Development Strategy* developed under this EO, the Administration set forth five strategic pillars for America’s workforce system:
- i. **Industry-Driven Strategies:** The skill demands and hiring needs of industry must drive how workforce development programs train and prepare the participants they serve. Local employers should play a central role in defining in-demand skills, validating training models, and steering investments toward the roles and credentials that propel workers into secure, well-paying, and high-need American jobs. The public workforce system can support this pillar by prioritizing Registered Apprenticeships and other high-quality work-based learning models, aligning eligible training programs to career pathways within the state or regional economy, and targeting investments towards employer-led upskilling initiatives designed to fill talent shortages in priority industries
 - ii. **Worker Mobility:** Individuals returning to the workforce or seeking better career opportunities should be able to take tangible steps that lead to upward mobility and long-term economic independence. Next-generation workforce and labor market intelligence tools should help participants see their skills, understand career options, and take clear steps toward better-paying jobs. The public workforce system can support this pillar by clearly identifying credentials that are valued in the labor market to support informed decision making, advancing innovative use of technology and labor market data, integrating AI-powered tools and competency-based assessments that allow workers to advance based on demonstrated skills and abilities, and getting the disconnected workforce into training opportunities that lead to self-sufficiency.
 - iii. **Integrated Systems:** The workforce system must be unified, navigable, and built around the needs of its users. Job seekers should be able to access training and employment opportunities without getting lost in a maze of government agencies, and employers should be able to engage with the system just as easily to find talent and grow their workforce. The public workforce system can support this pillar by working to integrate disparate funding streams; improve service delivery through shared eligibility standards across programs; and advance education and workforce alignment, streamlined intake processes, and digital tools that help frontline staff guide individuals to the right services.
 - iv. **Accountability:** Taxpayer funded workforce development programs must deliver measurable and transparent results for job seekers and employers. Ineffective training providers will be removed from public funding lists and new funding models will tie resources to outcomes, including through the expanded use of pay-for-performance contracts to ensure public investments generate measurable returns in employment, earnings, and credential attainment. The public workforce system can support this pillar by identifying and eliminating ineffective spending, redirecting funding to programs that demonstrate success in connecting Americans

with high-wage jobs, and by enhancing data linkages to produce valid and transparent data that assesses the return on investment and the impact on closing talent gaps.

- v. **Flexibility and Innovation:** The federal workforce system must be adaptable and designed for continuous iteration, with exponentially faster feedback loops between employers, educators, and training providers to ensure that programs can evolve in step with economic shifts, particularly those driven by AI. States and local communities need more control to tailor solutions to their regional economies without being constrained by outdated program rules or processes. The public workforce system can support this pillar by leveraging existing statutory authorities to promote flexibility and innovation within the system, creating new models of workforce innovation built to match the speed and scale of AI-driven economic transformation, prioritizing AI literacy and skills development across the workforce system, and developing pilot projects to drive rapid reskilling and fuel other AI-era innovations.

This TEGE encourages states and local boards to assess their existing state and local policies, evaluate state legislative flexibilities, and identify opportunities to modernize operations and service delivery in alignment with the five strategic pillars. It promotes the maximum use of WIOA waiver authority to achieve this purpose and provides clarification on allowable uses of funds and other WIOA flexibilities. ETA recognizes that certain statutory requirements and federal mandates may have previously prevented state and local leaders from instituting the reforms necessary to better serve America's workers and businesses. This TEGE is intended to encourage state and local leaders to reconsider what is possible and partner with ETA to achieve the bold vision for reform set forth by this Administration.

4. **Maximize use of WIOA Waiver Authority.**

- a. States are encouraged to request waivers of existing WIOA statutory or regulatory requirements that can help overcome specific barriers to innovation and align with the five strategic pillars for workforce investment. Under the Secretary of Labor's (Secretary) waiver authority outlined in WIOA sec. 189(i)(3)(A), the Secretary may waive certain provisions of WIOA Title I subtitles A, B, and E and provisions found in Sections 8 – 10 of the Wagner-Peyser Act.

States are empowered to identify where current policies impede system modernization and to adopt existing waivers or propose new waivers that support the key priorities of industry-driven strategies, worker mobility, integrated systems, accountability, and flexibility and innovation. ETA is interested in receiving waiver requests that include strategic goals and projected programmatic outcomes directly aligned to the administration's five pillars. For example, a state waiver request proposing to advance the strategic goal of industry-led strategies could propose the projected programmatic outcome of co-enrolling at least 10 percent of adult and dislocated worker participants in Registered Apprenticeship programs. In exchange for expanded and bold waivers, ETA

expects the state to propose and demonstrate measurable improvements and to report its results in the WIOA Annual Report. ETA will not support waiver requests that do not advance the administration's key priorities, such as waivers of performance outcomes of participants and training providers.

While waivers can be a helpful innovation tool, there are some limitations to waiver authority, as outlined in WIOA secs. 189(i)(3)(A)(i) and 189(i)(3)(A)(ii). Limitations to WIOA Title I waiver authority can be found in TEGL 8-18, Attachment I at [TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE LETTER No. 08-18 | U.S. Department of Labor](#). The process and requirements for states to request a waiver can be found in this TEGL. Notwithstanding the examples of approved and suggested waivers described in this TEGL, the Secretary will consider each waiver request on its own merits in accordance with the applicable legal authorities.

Several states have already used waiver authority to take advantage of the flexibility in WIOA. While not a complete list, the examples below describe previously approved waivers that support innovative service delivery. For a full list of approved waivers, see [WIOA Waiver Information](#).

b. Currently Approved Waivers.

i. WIOA Governance Waivers.

Waiver of the state workforce development board membership requirements at WIOA Section 101(b)(1) and (c) and the corresponding regulations at 20 CFR 679.110(b)-(c), which specify board membership and category/subcategory representations requirements. This waiver allows states to change the structure and operation of the state board to streamline overall board membership and better address the employment and skills needs of the state. This serves to create a more agile board that is poised to innovate, while allowing for a tailor-made leadership team of workforce champions to create stronger alignment between workforce programs, education partners driving career and technical education (CTE) growth, Registered Apprenticeships, and business. Reducing board size while elevating critical partnerships has the potential to position the board to better facilitate continuous improvement of traditional workforce development programs, while more rapidly identifying and creating new opportunities for economic, education, and workforce collaboration. While this waiver permits flexibility in overall board membership, including the organizational representation of the board chair, ETA requires significant business representation and leadership.

Waiver of the requirements outlined in WIOA sec. 107(b) to allow the State Board to act as the Local Board. This waiver allows the Governor to designate the state board to carry out the roles and responsibilities of the local boards in the state. In implementing this waiver, the state board must continue to include local input into its activities and allocate funding to each local area in the state. This waiver is often helpful for states that want to streamline state and local board functions and grant

administration activities for low-funded local areas that benefit from centralized WIOA governance, which would maximize the amount of funds made available for direct services to businesses and individuals rather than administrative oversight.

This waiver may be helpful in several scenarios and allow states that are not currently designated as a single state local area to achieve integrated systems through uniform state governance of the workforce system. A state may seek to better integrate safety net and workforce systems to increase labor force participation and help more individuals move out of poverty. A rural state or one with many small local areas may find that distributing funds via a local board stretches administrative oversight costs and makes it difficult to provide high quality services in all local areas. This waiver may also be useful as an alternative solution when merging local areas is not a viable option. For example, at times chief elected officials (CEOs) may want to dissolve a local area but adjacent local area CEOs may not desire to merge. To ensure continuity of services, the state board can serve in the role as the local board.

Waiver of the requirement to establish and maintain a comprehensive American Job Center (AJC) in each of the State’s local workforce development areas.

In some states, particularly those with remote and rural local workforce development areas, cost factors associated with the infrastructure maintenance and co-location requirements for a comprehensive AJC may create barriers to effective service delivery. A state may determine that virtual AJCs or a network of affiliated sites, such as public libraries or community colleges, can more effectively reach job seekers and employers in the state. ETA can waive the requirement in Section 121(e)(1) and 20 CFR 678.300(c) to establish and maintain a comprehensive AJC in each of a state’s local workforce areas in circumstances where alternative delivery approaches can similarly address the full spectrum of community workforce needs that would be expected of a physical comprehensive AJC.

Waiver of the requirements in WIOA sec. 106(a)(2) to allow the state to assign a single local workforce development area to multiple planning regions.

This waiver allows the state to waive the requirement that a planning region consist of one local workforce development area, two or more intrastate local areas, or two or more interstate local areas. This waiver allows states to better provide services in the context of their identified planning regions. For example, in some states, geographic regions do not align with defined local workforce areas. Sometimes, those local workforce areas span multiple regions. While this can help local areas provide coordinated services to multiple regions, it is vital they ensure the planning burden does not fall unfairly on local areas assigned to more than one region.

ii. Title I Youth Program Waivers.

Waiver of the restriction in 20 CFR 681.550 to allow local areas to provide in-school youth (ISY) with individual training accounts (ITAs). This waiver allows local workforce investment areas to offer ITAs to ISY, in addition to out-of-school youth (OSY). This provides ISY access to training from providers on the state’s list

of eligible training providers. This waiver allows local areas to offer ITAs to in-school youth to expand occupational training options in coordination with their K-12 school district to students prior to high school graduation or to fund Registered Apprenticeship opportunities for in-school youth. In utilizing this waiver, states and local areas should coordinate with local CTE programs funded by the Department of Education's Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) funds, particularly at the secondary school level, to ensure integration and alignment of training opportunities for ISY in secondary school.

This waiver may be an effective response to challenges states and local areas face providing ISY with a variety of career pathway development options, enhancing students' educational freedom. States have used this waiver to increase training options available to ISY upon high school graduation. They have also leveraged this waiver to fund Registered Apprenticeship opportunities for youth that respond to local business needs, including pre-apprenticeship. In utilizing this waiver for ISY graduating high school, states and local areas should coordinate with CTE programs to align opportunities for pre- and Registered Apprenticeships as well as with other CTE postsecondary programs.

The ISY ITA waiver also gives responsibility back to the local workforce investment areas, providing them with flexibility in spending limited resources for training services. The local areas can use their demographic and labor market data to determine how to invest in career pathways for their ISY population.

Waiver of the requirement that states and local areas expend 75 percent of all Governor's reserve and/or local formula youth funds on OSY. The waiver allows states to lower the 75 percent minimum expenditure requirement to 50 percent under WIOA sec. 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR 681.410 for either, or both local area WIOA youth funds and statewide Governor's reserve funds. Some states also ask to waive the requirement that each local area is held to the OSY expenditure requirement and instead request a waiver to allow the OSY expenditure requirement for local area funds apply only to the state as a whole, rather than to individual local areas, which allows local areas to dedicate additional resources to ISY and provide needed services to help youth stay in school and focus on career pathways beyond high school. Some states may also request to include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds spent on co-enrolled youth in the OSY expenditure calculation.

The OSY waiver complements the ISY ITA waiver, as it allows states and local areas to allocate more funding to ISY services, including for work experience and training. Local areas without large OSY populations can use the additional ISY funding to fund additional work experience opportunities, including Registered Apprenticeship opportunities for ISY. This additional funding also allows for local areas with fewer OSY to dedicate additional resources to ISY and provide needed services to help youth stay in school and focus on career pathways beyond high school. This waiver also provides greater opportunities for states and local areas to coordinate ISY services with Perkins V funded CTE programs.

Waiver to allow local workforce development areas to count both WIOA local youth formula funds and TANF funds toward the minimum 20 percent expenditure requirement for paid or unpaid work experience. This waiver allows states to include TANF funds spent on co-enrolled youth in the work experience expenditure calculation under WIOA sec. 129(c)(4) and 20 CFR 681.590(b). The waiver creates opportunities for partnerships across youth-serving agencies as well as efficiencies with federal funds; states can leverage multiple funding sources to serve youth effectively, which may free up Title I Youth funds for other programmatic priorities.

iii. Funds Flexibility Waivers.

Waiver of the requirements at WIOA secs. 133(a)(2) and 134(a)(2)(A) to allow flexibility to use up to 50 percent of funds reserved by the Governor to provide statewide rapid response activities to also provide statewide employment and training activities in the first year of funding availability. In general, states may use unspent Rapid Response funds at the end of the first year of availability for the same uses allowed for Governor’s Reserve funds. With this waiver, states can use up to 50 percent of the Rapid Response funds they reserved before the end of the first year as long as their proposed use advances innovation and modernization of the workforce development system or otherwise benefits job seeker and employer customers.

On May 6, 2025, ETA published [Training and Employment Notice \(TEN\) 25-24, Leveraging Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Waivers to Increase Labor Force Participation and Worker Productivity](#). This TEN describes additional funds flexibility waivers states can consider. A few examples of ways in which states can leverage the waiver authority to increase labor force participation and employment opportunities for American workers include:

- Increasing On-the-Job Training (OJT) reimbursement for Local Workforce Boards;
- Increasing Transitional Jobs;
- Increasing Funds available for Incumbent Worker Training (IWT); and
- Increasing work experience opportunities for In-School Youth.

iv. Potential New Waivers. In addition to the above waivers, ETA is empowering states to broaden their use of waiver authority to promote flexibility and innovation, prioritizing skills development across the workforce system, successfully connecting Americans with high-wage jobs and advancing the Administration’s strategic priorities. While not an exhaustive list of all the new waivers states could request, the examples below describe some potential waivers that support innovative service delivery.

Waive requirement for local areas to provide all 14 youth program elements. WIOA sec. 129(c)(2) requires each local area to make all 14 youth program elements

available to eligible youth. To increase flexibility in providing the services most in need in a given local workforce area, DOL will consider waiving the requirement to make all 14 youth program elements available. This waiver is useful if the state is seeking to focus greater funding on work experiences, including pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeships, beyond the minimum 20 percent work experience expenditure requirement. Additionally, this waiver is useful if the state plans to increase occupational skills training opportunities training through ITAs. Increasing opportunities for both work experience and training advance educational freedom for youth beyond traditional secondary school education.

Raise pay-for-performance funding cap to allow for more flexibility. Pay for Performance (PFP) contract strategies as defined in WIOA Section 3(47) and 20 CFR part 683, subpart E seek to maximize the likelihood that the federal government pays only for demonstrably effective services and secure performance outcomes at a lower cost than might otherwise occur. WIOA authorizes local WDBs to reserve not more than 10 percent of the local allocation for WIOA title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula funds for PFP contract strategies. States could request waivers allowing local WDBs to reserve up to 50% of the local allocation of WIOA title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth formula funds for PFP contract strategies.

Waiver of WIOA Section 134(d)(2) and 20 CFR 680.910 to allow use of supportive services for participants within 12 months of exit for employment retention. WIOA allows provision of supportive services to enable participants to successfully participate in career or training services; however for Adult and Dislocated Worker program participants, it does not authorize their use during the 12-month period post exit. This waiver can assist Adult and Dislocated Worker program participants who successfully obtain employment to have access to short-term supportive services that can ease the transition period to a new job. DOL will consider waiving this requirement to allow states to provide targeted supportive services to participants who have exited and are recipients of public assistance if such services are designed to address benefit cliffs and temporarily replace lost benefits as the exited participant secures higher earnings through employment. Such supportive services may include transportation, temporary living costs, or childcare expenses while the individual adjusts to his or her employment situation and earnings cadence.

Waiver of WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(F)(i) and (G) and 20 CFR 680.320(a) and 680.340(a) to allow for all training services to be provided through training contracts. While ETA is supportive of the consumer choice requirements established in WIOA and understands the value of delivering training services through individual training accounts, ETA recognizes that the quality of training programs on state eligible training provider lists may vary across states and regions. In response to the Administration's strategic pillar supporting industry-driven strategies, DOL will consider state waiver requests to the consumer choice and use of individual training account requirements to allow states and local areas to deliver all training services through training contracts for services directly aligned to local employer needs. In considering these waiver requests, DOL will evaluate the expected programmatic

outcomes included in the waiver plans. DOL is most interested in outcomes that demonstrate significant increases in the use of the allowable work-based training strategies, including on-the-job training, customized training, and incumbent worker training, enrollment of participants in pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs, and contracted training with training providers for programs that feature explicit employer validation and offer job guarantees, interview guarantees, or other mechanisms that ensure training leads directly to employment opportunities.

- v. Workforce Flexibility (Workflex) Plans. Under WIOA Section 190, a state may submit a Workflex plan to the Secretary, under which the state has the authority to waive statutory or regulatory requirements applicable to local areas; sections 8-10 of the Wagner-Peyser Act (W-P); and Older Americans Act of 1965 (OAA) activities. With an approved Workflex plan, the state may approve local area waivers directly, rather than submitting waivers to the Secretary for approval. With this authority, the state can review and approve waivers to local areas, allowing them to develop responsive strategies to address local workforce needs. The provisions that can and cannot be waived under Workflex are described at [20 CFR 679.630\(a\)\(1-2\)](#) for WIOA and Wagner-Peyser and at [20 CFR 679.630\(a\)\(3\)](#) for OAA. Notably, provisions relating to the eligibility of training providers, the funding of infrastructure costs for one-stop centers, and the OAA that cannot be waived through the Secretary's waiver authority, may be waived for a local area through an approved Workflex plan. The examples below illustrate how an approved Workflex plan could allow for additional flexibility.

Waiver to use the state infrastructure funding mechanism as the sole mechanism for funding one-stop infrastructure. Section 121(h)(1)(A) sets forth two options for funding the costs of infrastructure in a local area, while only permitting the use of the state infrastructure funding mechanism if the local board, chief elected officials, and one-stop partners fail to reach consensus agreement on a local option for infrastructure funding. Under an approved Workflex plan, States could grant a local area's request for a waiver from this requirement, which would enable the State to use the state infrastructure mechanism as the primary method of funding one-stop infrastructure in that local area. This waiver could promote flexibility and innovation, reduce administrative costs and compliance burdens for local areas, reduce friction between one-stop partners, streamline data, strengthen intake assessment and enrollment, and improve system alignment and efficiency.

A state may submit a Workflex plan at any time as a stand-alone request; as a part of its Unified or Combined State Plan; or as a component of the 2-year modification of the State Plan. To receive Workflex approval, the state must submit a plan including all required information outlined in 20 CFR 679.630(b) and also submit quarterly reports to ETA. If approved, the Workflex plan may be approved for no more than five years. A state may choose to align its plan with its WIOA State Plan period of performance. During this period, the state will be able to review and approve waivers to local areas, allowing them more opportunity to innovatively respond to local needs. While some

states used WorkFlex under the Workforce Investment Act, as of February 2025, no states have applied for a Workflex plan under WIOA, so this authority presents untapped potential and opportunity for states. See Attachment II for requirements states must address in a Workflex plan submission and, if approved, the requirements for quarterly reports.

Once approved, the Workflex plan is generally approved for the length of a state's approved State Plan, and no more than five years; states can also reapply after the conclusion of their original WorkFlex plan.

5. Leveraging Flexibilities under WIOA.

All states and local boards are encouraged to explore new models of workforce innovation under existing WIOA authority to improve services for job seekers and employers and align with the Administration's five strategic pillars. For example, states may use their WIOA Governor's Reserve for statewide activities to pilot innovations such as integrating AJCs and partner services and activities; piloting Registered Apprenticeship programs in partnership with career and technical education programs; unifying access points, assessing service efficacy; driving rapid reskilling, and creating administrative efficiencies. Additionally, ETA encourages states and local areas to review state laws, regulations, and policies that unnecessarily or inadvertently restrict flexibility and innovation of WIOA or that impose additional requirements on the workforce system beyond what is required under WIOA and consider removing these state-level barriers to maximize impact.

- a. Flexible uses of funds – Below highlights several examples of flexible uses of WIOA title I-B funds that states and local boards can use to spur innovation.
 - i. Transfer of Adult and Dislocated Worker (DW) Funds. WIOA allows, with the Governor's written approval, local areas to transfer up to 100 percent of WIOA Adult funds to the DW program and vice versa. Such flexibility allows local areas to respond to specific needs more nimbly, like a sudden increase in dislocated workers that cannot be fully served with available DW funds or to increase training investments for adult program priority populations during periods of lower unemployment. WIOA also permits, with the Governor's approval, up to 75 percent reimbursement of wages to employers hosting participants in on-the-job training, and it allows even higher reimbursement levels with an approved waiver. Another flexibility includes using up to 20 percent of WIOA Adult and DW funds for IWT.
 - ii. Braid Multiple Funding Streams. WIOA permits grantees to braid funds. Braiding occurs when states and local boards deploy multiple funding streams separately and simultaneously to provide specific services. Braiding funds helps states and local areas more efficiently and effectively use federal funds, by aligning goal setting, eliminating duplication, thereby increasing the number of participants served, improving the quality of program services offered, and enabling more timely responses to economic shifts.

Local boards have used braiding to expand services for their participants. For example, the WIOA Youth programs often partner with WIOA Title II Adult Education-funded programs to serve out-of-school youth, where the Title I Youth program provides work experience and supportive services, while the Title II program provides basic literacy skills education. Because both programs report against the WIOA core performance indicators, it is a natural fit to co-enroll participants and share in performance outcomes. The result is often stretching each program's respective funds further, each providing the priority service of their program, and both helping the youth attain positive outcomes.

Another example includes states or local areas braiding TANF program funds with WIOA Youth program funds to increase the number of low-income youth served with a more cost-effective service delivery approach. By co-enrolling and braiding WIOA Youth and TANF funds, states and local areas have more flexibility in serving shared youth populations, such as single parents and foster youth.

An additional opportunity for increasing alignment across workforce programs is braiding WIOA Youth funds, both local areas funds and Governor's Reserve funds, with Perkins V CTE funds. Braiding of these funds could include funding pre-apprenticeships where WIOA youth programs provide work experience, while Perkins funds support education and training through CTE programs of study. In addition, such braiding could fund Registered Apprenticeship programs where Perkins funds support related instruction training while WIOA Youth funds support the on the job learning of a RAP.

It is important to note that braided funds retain their unique programmatic identities and must be monitored individually to ensure each funding stream meets accounting, reporting, and auditing requirements. For reporting purposes, braided funds must be tracked and reported on the corresponding ETA-9130. States should look to statewide grants, including those funded by WIOA-mandated partners, local community grants, and the private sector as potential braiding partners. States may choose to develop interagency agreements that outline the specific resources and service role for which each funder is responsible and include a procedure for resolving disputes regarding payment or reimbursement for specific services.

- iii. Use of Statewide Reserve Funds. States may reserve up to 15 percent of their annual Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth program allotments to carry out both required and allowable statewide activities. These funds are often referred to as Governor's Reserve funds. Creative use of these funds can transform state workforce investments into customized action to meet the unique needs of state employers, advance critical credentials of need, and accelerate growth of state specific industry clusters. While this reserve may be minimal for some states, all States have wide latitude to use statewide reserve funds to pilot new, innovative projects, such as developing IWT with employers or partnering with community colleges and economic development organizations to develop coursework responsive to skill needs for industry sector needs.

Allowable statewide youth activities provide states with several different ways to pursue innovative youth programming and advance educational freedom. For example, one of the allowable statewide youth activities is supporting the development of alternative, evidence-based programs and other activities that enhance the choices available to eligible youth. Increasing available options presented to youth encourages such youth to reenter and complete secondary education, enroll in postsecondary education and advanced training, progress through a career pathway, and enter unsubsidized employment that leads to economic self-sufficiency. States may use these flexible dollars for innovative youth education, training, and work-based learning programs to expand pathways and educational choices for youth, including pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeships.

States may also use unobligated Rapid Response funds at the end of the program year in which they were allocated for statewide activities. For the most part, WIOA does not restrict the uses of statewide Governor's reserve funds if the following conditions are met:

- Funded activities conform with the Uniform Guidance;
- If serving youth with the funds, states must observe WIOA Youth eligibility and adhere to the out-of-school youth expenditure requirement; and,
- Individuals who receive participant services with statewide reserve funds must be included in all required WIOA performance reporting.

States may also reserve up to 25 percent of their annual Dislocated Worker allotment for statewide rapid response activities to address events that lead to substantial increases in unemployment and to quickly assist affected workers. Rapid Response funds allow states to implement innovative solutions beyond direct reemployment services and provide ongoing, comprehensive approaches to identifying, planning for, or responding to layoffs and dislocations to prevent or minimize their impacts on workers, businesses, and communities. These funds can help businesses respond to and minimize potential layoffs by funding IWT, as a supplement to or instead of using local Adult and Dislocated Worker funds. Note that WIOA requires employers to contribute a portion of the cost of IWT and to meet certain conditions.

- iv. Coordinate resources across local areas and regions to maximize alignment and effectiveness.

Regional Planning and Coordination. WIOA encourages partnership development to achieve successful service delivery, including among local boards. While WIOA requires formal regional planning and coordination among local workforce areas assigned to identified regions (WIOA Section 106(c)), local boards may choose to coordinate with other boards without formal regional designations. Boards in areas

with similar workforce needs may find this coordination beneficial; opportunities to do so may include:

- cooperative service delivery agreements;
- industry-specific initiatives;
- collection and analysis of labor market information;
- administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs or sharing the responsibility to conduct local annual monitoring;
- coordination of supportive services, such as transportation; and
- coordination with other partners in the shared area.

Local boards have several fixed costs, such as case management and software systems, procurement operations, and other standard operational costs where collaboration and pooling resources with other boards can help reduce costs for any single board or allow the purchase of better systems. Regions may also choose to partner with state universities to provide evaluation services for local and regional WIOA programs. Evaluations are a WIOA requirement at the state level (20 CFR 682.220) and are useful at the local and regional levels as well. As local economies and regional assets evolve over time, chief elected officials (CEO) and local boards may find it beneficial to merge with an adjacent local area(s) and establish a newly designated local area to better align the regional labor and economic market and maximize available resources. If local CEOs and boards decide on such a merger, WIOA requires the State to provide funding to those local boards to facilitate the redesignation process (WIOA Section 106(b)(6)). Voluntary local area redesignation that consolidates multiple local areas can lead to cost efficiencies, allowing the local board to direct more resources to modernize systems.

- v. Provide innovative participant and business services through integrated service delivery via the AJC and other service providers.

AJCs as Hubs for Innovation. AJCs and other WIOA service providers -are a hub for innovative service delivery. AJCs are where many program participants first learn about employment services, the workforce system, and discover in-demand occupations. States and local areas are encouraged to modernize frontline services that respond to worker needs by investing in virtual and mobile services, allowable under WIOA sec. 121(e)(2)(B). States are encouraged to consider investment in mobile AJCs, which enable service providers to meet customers where they are, especially in rural areas. Some states have launched these mobile workforce centers that are equipped to provide career services directly to rural populations, as well as to provide rapid response services in the case of large layoffs. In addition to mobile AJCs, virtual online job services are critical to providing access to AJC services. Local areas should ensure that self-service and information only services are readily available, including via mobile phones.

Funding technology. States and local areas may also choose to invest in new technologies to better support job seekers and businesses. AJCs may choose to use digital tools to enhance career navigation and mobility for customers, including tools that provide personalized career guidance, identify skills-based recommendations, allow for event registration, streamline intake and eligibility determination, or make virtual connections with AJC staff. Digital tools can also facilitate enhanced business services, including tools that provide recruiting resources, job posting services, skills-based candidate recommendations, event participation opportunities, or shared case management systems, which can ease state agency reporting challenges and ensure seamless, non-duplicative service delivery to businesses. For example, digital platforms can facilitate the provision of virtual Rapid Response sessions and job fairs, which can broaden business and job seeker participation.

AJCs and other partner programs may also invest in technology to increase virtual training options for participants, such as through virtual reality, generative AI, and adaptive learning platforms, which can be particularly valuable for customers in rural areas, who may not have access to ample training opportunities. This may include virtual reality experiences that enable occupational skills training or upskilling, which are considered career services in the WIOA Title I program, or that enhance provision of career information, which is a labor exchange service provided under WIOA Title I or under the Wagner-Peyser program.

Local boards may use one-stop infrastructure funds to purchase technology, per 20 CFR 678.700, if it aligns with state procurement policy and the Uniform Guidance. States have also leveraged other funding sources, including Dislocated Worker Grant, Workforce Information Grant, and Workforce Data Quality Initiative funds, to support the adoption of new digital technologies.

Staffing and Staff Training. In addition to new technologies, AJCs invest in staffing and staff training to improve services for both participants and businesses. Investing in apprenticeship navigators in AJCs, for example, can assist in moving more participants into Registered Apprenticeships, as well as help grow the number of employers providing Registered Apprenticeship opportunities. Local Boards should work with AJCs to cross-train frontline staff, particularly career counselors, to provide customers with access to a full suite of services. At a minimum, career counselors should understand the full array of work-based learning options available to program participants, including Registered Apprenticeship programs, in their local areas and work closely with Business Services Representatives, Registered Apprenticeship navigators and intermediaries, and industry partners to connect job seekers to Registered Apprenticeship programs.

6. Inquiries. For further information, please contact the appropriate ETA [Regional Office](#).

7. References.

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Pub. L. 113-128);
- [Executive Order 14191 on Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families](#);
- Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.);
- TEGL No. 8-18, *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Wagner-Peyser Act Waiver Requirements and Request Process*; published December 19, 2018 [TEGL 08-18 | U.S. Department of Labor](#)
- WIOA Waiver Information Page [WIOA Waiver Information | U.S. Department of Labor](#)
- TEGL No. 3-23, *Allowable Uses of Funds for Outreach Activities for Federal Formula and Competitive Grant Awards*; published September 6, 2023 [TEGL 03-23 | U.S. Department of Labor](#)
- TEN No. 25-24, *Leveraging Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Waivers to Increase Labor Force Participation and Worker Productivity*; published May 6, 2025 [TEN 25-24 | U.S. Department of Labor](#)

8. Attachment(s).

- Attachment I: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Workforce Flexibility (Workflex) Plan Collection Form



Agenda Item 4: Action

Waiver Requests-State Plan



EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY SYSTEM U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR Washington, D.C. 20210	CLASSIFICATION WIOA State Plans
	CORRESPONDENCE SYMBOL OWI
	DATE January 26, 2026

ADVISORY: TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE LETTER NO. 07-25

TO: STATE WORKFORCE AGENCIES
STATE WORKFORCE ADMINISTRATORS
STATE WORKFORCE LIAISONS
STATE LABOR COMMISSIONERS
STATE AND LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARD CHAIRS AND DIRECTORS
AMERICAN JOB CENTER DIRECTORS
STATE LABOR MARKET INFORMATION DIRECTORS
STATE APPRENTICESHIP AGENCIES
STATE DIRECTORS OF THE OFFICE OF APPRENTICESHIP
STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES
STATE CTE DIRECTORS
STATE EDUCATION COMMISSIONERS
STATE AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE WORKFORCE
INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

FROM: HENRY MACK /s/
Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Modification Requirements for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) State Plans for Program Years (PYs) 2026 and 2027

- Purpose.** This Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) outlines the priorities, modification requirements, submission process, and deadline for the required modification of the WIOA Unified and Combined State Plans (State Plans) for PY 2026 and PY 2027, in accordance with Sections 102 and 103 of WIOA.
- Action Requested.** In accordance with WIOA, its implementing regulations, and the information collection request (ICR) *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements*, approved under Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number 1205-0522, states must submit a two-year modification of their WIOA Unified or Combined State Plans (a four-year plan) to the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education (the Departments). While states should generally submit plan modifications by March 3, 2026, using the online portal described in Section 4.d. of this guidance, the Departments are offering additional flexibility to empower states to align the planning submission timeline with Perkins V and submit plan modifications until April 30, 2026. If States want to avail themselves of this additional flexibility, States must notify their relevant Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Regional Administrator in writing

	EXPIRATION DATE Continuing
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by March 3, 2026, and provide an explanation of the state’s need for additional time as well as an estimated date of submission (which cannot be later than April 30, 2026). Once submitted, the Departments will review and provide a decision within 90 days for the core programs, as required by section 102(c)(2)(B) and (3)(B) of WIOA.

3. Summary and Background.

- a. Summary – This joint guidance outlines the WIOA planning requirements for the required two-year modification of the four-year State Plan and provides submission deadlines and procedures.
- b. Background – WIOA requires the Governor of each state to submit a Unified or Combined State Plan that includes a four-year strategy and operational plan for the continuing implementation of the state’s workforce development system, with an update after two years. States must have federally approved State Plans to receive funding under the six core programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA), Wagner-Peyser, and the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs). All states have approved four-year WIOA State Plans for PYs 2024-2027.

WIOA requires that states review their plan every two years and update State Plan strategies to account for changes in the labor market and economic conditions or other factors affecting the implementation of the State Plan. Such factors may include: reorganization of State agencies administering WIOA programs, redesignation of local areas or establishment of new planning regions, the addition of new partner programs such as Perkins V¹ into a Combined State Plan, changes to methodology used to determine local allocation of funds, and other significant strategic or operational changes within states. States may also elect to change from a Unified to a Combined State Plan to include additional partners, such as Perkins V, during the modification process to maximize alignment between programs.

Under WIOA, the Unified and Combined State Plans communicate the State’s vision for its public workforce system and broader talent development system. WIOA planning requirements seek to align federal investments in job training and education programs, improve service delivery efficiency, and match individuals’ skills with high-paying job opportunities and employers. Cross-program planning promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs and enables the public workforce system to provide a wider range of services that require coordination to meet the needs of employers, youth and adult learners, and workers, including individuals with disabilities and individuals facing barriers to entering and persisting in paid employment.

¹ Perkins V is the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act.

4. Content.

a. **WIOA Planning Strategic Priorities.**

On April 23, 2025, President Trump issued [Executive Order 14278](#) titled “*Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future*” that directed the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, and Commerce to articulate a comprehensive worker investment and development strategy. Subsequently, the Departments published “[America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age](#)” that articulates a shared vision for America’s workforce development efforts, including the public workforce system, with five strategic pillars. States are encouraged to review their currently approved State Plans and align their strategies and investments to these pillars, which are summarized below.

PILLAR I: Industry-Driven Strategies: The skill demands and hiring needs of industry must drive how workforce development programs train and prepare the participants they serve. Local employers should play a central role in defining in-demand skills, validating training models, and steering investments toward the roles and credentials that propel workers into secure, well-paying, and high-need American jobs. The public workforce system can support this pillar by prioritizing Registered Apprenticeships, Integrated Education and Training programs, and other high-quality work-based learning models; organizing employers into industry sector partnerships to identify high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand industry sectors and occupations and design workforce strategies to address their needs; aligning eligible training programs to career pathways within the State or regional economy; and targeting investments towards employer-led upskilling initiatives designed to fill talent shortages in priority industries.

PILLAR II: Worker Mobility: Individuals returning to the workforce or seeking better career opportunities should be able to take tangible steps that lead to upward mobility and long-term economic independence. Next-generation workforce and labor market intelligence tools should help participants identify their skills, understand skills-aligned career options, and take intentional steps toward better-paying jobs. The public workforce system can support this pillar through several targeted strategies such as: clearly identifying credentials that are valued in the labor market to support informed decision making and support jobseekers to earn such credentials; developing informed customer choice policies designed to mitigate benefits cliffs; advancing innovative use of technology and labor market data, including employing competency-based assessments and benefits cliff navigation tools during intake into the public workforce system; and integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered tools including comprehensive talent marketplaces composed of comprehensive learner records or learning and employment records solutions, credential registries, and skills-based job description generators, that allow workers to advance based on demonstrated competencies. The public workforce system can also help connect disconnected workers to training opportunities that lead to self-sufficiency.

PILLAR III: Integrated Systems: The public workforce system must be unified, navigable, and built around the needs of its users. Job seekers should be able to access training and employment opportunities without getting lost in a maze of government agencies, and employers should be able to engage with the system just as easily to find talent and grow their workforce. The public workforce system can support this pillar by integrating disparate funding streams and improving service delivery through adopting shared eligibility standards across programs; implementing and scaling virtual service delivery practices to reduce overhead expenses; and advancing education and workforce alignment, streamlining intake processes, and implementing digital tools that help frontline staff guide individuals to the right services.

PILLAR IV: Accountability: Taxpayer funded workforce development programs must deliver measurable and transparent results for job seekers and employers. Ineffective training providers should be removed from public funding lists. Grantees' funding models should tie resources to outcomes, including through the expanded use of pay-for-performance contracts to ensure public investments generate measurable returns in employment, earnings, and credential attainment. The public workforce system can support this pillar by identifying and eliminating ineffective activities, adopting state-driven measures of program performance, establishing state and local area postsecondary attainment and labor force participation goals, redirecting funding to programs and providers that demonstrate success in connecting Americans with high-wage jobs, and enhancing data linkages, including by exploring enhanced wage records, and publishing education and training programs in structured, open, linked, and interoperable data formats, to produce valid and transparent data that assesses the return on investment and the impact on closing talent gaps.

PILLAR V: Flexibility and Innovation: The public workforce system must be adaptable and designed for continuous iteration, with exponentially faster feedback loops between employers, educators, and training providers to ensure that programs can evolve in step with economic shifts, particularly those driven by AI. States and local communities need more control to tailor solutions to their regional economies without being constrained by outdated program rules or processes. The public workforce system can support this pillar by leveraging existing statutory authorities to promote flexibility and innovation within the system, braiding federal and state funding streams from multiple sources to support integrated career pathways, creating new models of workforce innovation built to match the speed and scale of AI-driven economic transformation, prioritizing AI literacy and skills development across the public workforce system, and developing pilot projects to drive rapid reskilling and fuel other AI-era innovations.

Additional Planning Priorities: It is particularly critical, for purposes of developing and submitting the State Plan modification for PYs 2026 and 2027, that states reassess economic and labor market information (LMI) and adjust strategies for what may now be a different set of growing and declining industries, occupations, and skills, thereby ensuring the State Plan modification reflects changes in the labor market and economic conditions and other factors affecting implementation of the State Plan as required by section 102(c)(3)(A) of WIOA. Additionally, state plans must not only include the in-

demand sectors and occupations, but also the employment needs of employers and the associated competencies required in those industries and occupations, and align training provided through the workforce system with the hiring needs. LMI informs the public workforce system by offering data insights to keep up with a rapidly changing economic environment driven by AI, advanced industries, and new national priorities. State planners must work closely with the LMI directors within their states to understand the current and growing needs of their economy. The State Plan modification must reflect any such strategic re-focusing. The Departments encourage states to widely share State LMI, including the State LMI used in State plans across State agencies, regardless of inclusion in the WIOA State Plan, to support data-informed decisions. For example, such data analysis could support Perkins V subrecipients in carrying out comprehensive local needs assessments in tandem with public workforce system stakeholder engagement at the state and local area levels.²

Moreover, states are encouraged to reassess how their public education and workforce systems capture, verify, and communicate the competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) individuals acquire. Talent marketplaces solutions *enable* student and worker employment and mobility more effectively—mapping skills to occupational and employer needs in real time. Talent marketplaces also allow for individuals to own and make portable their skills and learning assertions—controlling what, where, when, and with whom verified skills and credentials are shared.

States are particularly encouraged to prepare for implementation of Workforce Pell Grants connecting jobseekers and students with high-quality short-term training authorized under Section 83002 of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (Public Law 119-21). Workforce Pell Grants will provide access to federal financial aid for students enrolled in high-quality, short-term workforce programs that are defined as at least 150 clock hours of instruction and less than 600 clock hours (or the equivalent in credit hours) and at least 8 weeks, but less than 15 weeks, in duration, among other criteria. Steps to prepare for Workforce Pell might include using the latest labor market information to refresh the state’s identification of in-demand industry sectors and occupations, deepening system integration across education and workforce systems, and enhancing data collection, i.e., by enhancing unemployment insurance wage records that allow states to establish program-to-occupational linkages and to crosswalk education and training programs to competency-based, industry-recognized qualifications frameworks, and data sharing.

As states develop their plan modifications for PYs 2026 and 2027, grantees must not use federal funds in any manner that violates the United States Constitution, Title VI or Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq. or 42 U.S.C. § 2000e et seq.), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq.), section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. 6101 et seq.), Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. § 12131 et seq.), the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act of 2001 (20 U.S.C. § 7905),

² Section 135(c) of Perkins V requires comprehensive local needs assessments.

section 117 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. § 1011f), or other applicable federal law.

It is important to note the provisions of Executive Orders 14151, 14168, 14173, and 14190 as well as the U.S. Department of Justice’s July 29, 2025, non-regulatory “Guidance for Recipients of Federal Funding Regarding Unlawful Discrimination.” States and subgrantees that have implemented diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) activities, and any other initiatives that discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin may risk violating federal civil rights laws referenced above and jeopardizing federal funding. This includes any discriminatory equity ideology in violation of a Federal anti-discrimination law. The definition of “discriminatory equity ideology” is in Section 2(b) of Executive Order 14190. To the extent that a U.S. Department of Education (the Department) grantee uses grant funds for unallowable activities, the Department reserves the right to take appropriate enforcement action including under section 451 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), which may include the recovery of funds under section 452 of GEPA.

- b. **Planning Requirements.** States must use the ICR *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements* (OMB control # 1205-0522) to develop and submit both the WIOA Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification. A copy of the ICR, which complies with statutory requirements set forth in, as appropriate, sections 102 and 103 of WIOA, is available at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa/resources>. A copy of these requirements is also available through the State Plan portal (<https://wioaplans.dol.gov>), developed specifically for the required electronic submission.

Note that the ICR includes a requirement for states to describe how they will use State merit staff for the provision of Wagner-Peyser Employment Services. The Department of Labor will notify states of any changes to this planning requirement because of ongoing rulemaking related to proposed flexibility in Employment Service staffing, as described in the notice of proposed rulemaking entitled “Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Staffing,” published on July 1, 2025 (90 FR 28239).

- c. **Stakeholder Collaboration and Comment.** The State Workforce Development Board (State Board) assists the Governor in the development, implementation, and modification of the State Plan and convenes all relevant programs, required partners, and stakeholders. The Departments encourage inclusion of the state LMI, chief information officers, state higher education executive officers, education and articulation offices, Career and Technical Education agencies, and workforce and education evaluation offices (or their equivalent) during plan development and modification to obtain labor market data and related evidence and analysis.

States are also encouraged to engage the Perkins V eligible agency and stakeholders in the modification processes, even if the Perkins V program is not already included in the State Plan. The Departments have received feedback from states and recognize that some states may need additional time to conduct planning activities as they align WIOA and Perkins V programs prior to the submission of their plan modifications. As such, as noted

above, the Departments will accept plan modifications through April 30, 2026, to accommodate cross-program planning for this cycle (see Section 2 of this guidance). States are encouraged to hold concurrent public engagement sessions with Perkins V stakeholders from other core and partner programs to the public workforce system. These stakeholders may include state and local educational agencies, community and technical colleges, state workforce agencies, business and industry partners, and others. A combination of virtual and in-person stakeholder engagement sessions are encouraged at both the state and local area levels. The State Plan must be developed with the assistance of the State Board, as required by Section 101(d) of WIOA, and in coordination with administrators that have optimal policymaking authority for the core programs and required one-stop partner programs. For Combined State Plans, the portions of the plan that cover partner programs other than the core programs are subject to any public comment requirements applicable to those partner programs.³ States must provide the opportunity for public comment and input which allows interested stakeholders to participate actively, effectively, and transparently in the development of the plan and the modification, including via accessible means for individuals with disabilities. The Governor must ensure that the State Plan modification is developed with an opportunity for public comment from representatives of:

- Local Workforce Development Boards and chief elected officials;
- businesses;
- labor organizations;
- community-based organizations;
- state educational agencies;
- adult education providers;
- faith-based organizations;
- institutions of higher education;
- other stakeholders with an interest in the services provided by the six core programs;
- and
- the general public, including individuals with disabilities.

The State Board also must make information regarding the modification of the State Plan and planning process available to the public through electronic and accessible means and by holding regularly occurring open meetings in accordance with state law prior to the submission of the State Plan.⁴

- d. **Instructions for State Plan Modification Submission.** States must submit their modification of their State Plan via the State Plan Portal which has been developed for the purpose of cross-program collaboration in states and to facilitate the simultaneous receipt and review of plans across multiple federal agencies. While multiple individuals in states may enter content into the portal, only one individual from each state may submit to the Departments the entire plan on behalf of the Governor for all included programs. The Office of the Governor for each state must notify the Departments of the

³ See 20 CFR § 676.143(c)(3) and 34 CFR §§ 361.143(c)(3) and 463.143(c)(3).

⁴ See WIOA Section 101(g) and 20 CFR § 676.130(d) and 34 CFR §§ 361.130(d) and 463.130(d).

individual designated to submit the plan modification on behalf of the Governor for all programs included in the State Plan, even if that designee has not changed since the PY 2024 submission. By February 02, 2026, the Governor's office must submit a letter or email with the name of the designee to WIOA.Plan@dol.gov with a copy to the appropriate ETA Regional Office.

To request a State Plan portal user account or to update existing account login information, visit <https://wioaplans.dol.gov>. Previously approved WIOA State Plans are available within the portal; content from currently approved four-year plans will be available in the data entry fields for editing or updating, so State editors can either delete entire sections or update specific portions of the plan.

- e. **Performance Negotiations for Core Programs.** To outline the requirements for reaching agreement on the negotiated levels of performance for the states outlined in WIOA section 116, the Departments issued joint guidance titled, *Negotiations and Sanctions Guidance for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Core Programs*, [ETA TEGL 11-19 \(Change 2\)](#), [OCTAE Program Memorandum 20-2](#) (revised January 2025), and [RSA TAC-20-02](#) (revised January 2025). The Departments will continue to negotiate program specific levels of performance. The Unified and Combined State Plan ICR Appendix 1, also discussed in Attachment I of this guidance, reflect which indicators the Departments will negotiate for which programs for PYs 2026 and 2027. See Attachment I of this guidance for more instructions on submitting expected levels of performance and establishing negotiated levels of performance.
- f. **Waivers.** As articulated in ETA [TEGL 05-25: Maximizing Innovation in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs](#), states are encouraged to request waivers of existing WIOA statutory or regulatory requirements that can help overcome specific barriers to innovation and align with the [Five Strategic Pillars](#) for workforce investment. Waivers are a tool for reducing barriers to WIOA implementation and spurring innovative programming options. The Secretary of Labor's waiver authority is outlined in WIOA sec. 189(i)(3)(A); the Secretary may waive certain provisions of WIOA Title I subtitles A, B, and E and provisions found in Sections 8 – 10 of the Wagner-Peyser Act. States may submit WIOA Title I and III waiver requests as part of their State Plan or as a separate waiver plan. For more information on the process for states to request waivers, see ETA [TEGL 08-18: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) Title I and Wagner-Peyser Act Waiver Requirements and Request Process](#). States are encouraged to involve the Perkins eligible agency and stakeholders in the development of innovation and flexibility waivers.

States are encouraged to review all currently approved waivers, along with their respective expiration dates, to consider renewing or resubmitting new waivers.⁵ Therefore, states should submit new waiver requests as part of the State Plan modification submission for re-consideration if they wish to continue implementing particular waivers that had been approved previously but are expiring. As articulated in

⁵ For waivers related to the 75% out-of-school youth expenditure requirement, waivers are in effect for the full amount of time that states have to spend program year funds.

waiver approval letters, states agreed to meet certain performance or other program measures resulting from the waiver. States requesting a waiver must provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the waiver in the renewal request.⁶ The Department of Labor will consider this information as part of its thorough consideration on whether to approve the requested waiver. Find waiver-related resources at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa/waivers>.

5. **Inquiries.** Please direct inquiries to the appropriate Regional Office.

6. **References.**

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) ([Pub. L. 113-128](#)) (July 22, 2014);
- Joint Rule for Unified and Combined State Plans, Performance Accountability, and the One-Stop System Joint Provisions; Final Rule (WIOA Joint Final Rule) published at [81 FR 55792](#) (Aug. 19, 2016);
- Employment and Training Administration, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act; Final Rule (WIOA DOL Final Rule) published at [81 FR 56072](#) (Aug. 19, 2016);
- State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program; State Supported Employment Services Program; Limitations on Use of Subminimum Wage—Final Rule (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) Final Rule) published at [81 FR 55630](#) (August 19, 2016);
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: Miscellaneous Program Changes—Final Rule (WIOA OSERS Final Rule) published at [81 FR 55562](#) (August 19, 2016);
- Programs and Activities Authorized by the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Title II of WIOA)—Final Rule (WIOA OCTAE Final Rule) published at [81 FR 55526](#) (August 19, 2016);
- Information Collection Request, [*Required Elements for Submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Plan Modifications Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*](#), approved under Office of Management and Budget (OMB) control number 1205-0522; and
- ETA [TEGL 08-18](#): *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Wagner-Peyser Act Waiver Requirements and Request Process*, dated December 19, 2018.

7. **Attachment.**

- Attachment I: Performance Goals and Instructions for the Core Programs

⁶ See 20 CFR § 679.620(d)(7).

Arkansas PY 2026-PY 2027 Waiver Requests

Under the Secretary of Labor's waiver authority outlined in Section 189(i)(3)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and 20 CFR and 679.600, the Secretary may waive certain provisions of WIOA Title I Subtitle A, B, and E and provisions found in Sections 8-10 of the Wagner-Peyser Act. WIOA Section 189(i)(3)(B) and 20 CFR 679.620 identify elements that must be included in a waiver request. A state may request a waiver in its Unified or Combined State Plan submission or modification.

Required Elements - Waiver #1

Title: State Board Acts as Local Board

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive:

As outlined in Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 05-25, the State of Arkansas is seeking a waiver of the requirements outlined in WIOA sec. 107(b) to allow the state board to act as the local board. This waiver would allow the Governor to designate the Arkansas Workforce Development Board to carry out the roles and responsibilities of the local boards for the purpose of operating as a single statewide planning area in accordance with 20 CFR 679.310(f).

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local barriers:

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory policies in Arkansas that limit the Governor's authority to allow the state to operate as a single statewide planning area with the state board fulfilling the roles of the local boards. The state board will continue to include local input into its activities through the establishing of regional business councils comprised of employers who reside and/or work in local workforce areas; maintaining the integrity of the local board structure inclusive of representatives from industry. Appointments for state board members from the business category will be reflective of Arkansas' unique geographic footprint. The state board will allocate funding to each local area in the state using current formula funding methodologies.

A description of the state's strategic goal(s):

The Arkansas Workforce Strategy is a collaborative, competency-based, customer-centric, and responsive workforce system that meets current and future needs of employers, incumbent workers, and job seekers. The strategy fosters partnerships across sectors to align workforce development with industry needs; aligns training and career pathways with real-world skills and competencies; tailors services to meet the unique needs and goals of job seekers, incumbent workers, and employers; and adapts quickly to economic changes and labor market trends for timely alignment of workforce efforts. These themes collectively aim to create a more dynamic and effective workforce ecosystem in Arkansas.

Arkansas's primary goal for this waiver is to limit annual overhead and streamline operational expenses to maximize the limited funding available for direct services, especially training and work-based learning. It is the state's intent to serve the largest number of customers possible

with the available funding. Based on preliminary projections, the state anticipates more than \$6 million of current funding to be redirected from operational and overhead expenses to direct participant costs (i.e., training, supportive services, etc.). The statewide structure will enhance Arkansas's ability to transform operations into a demand driven system that directly supports local community partnerships without the need for additional overhead.

This structure will also enable further integration of titles I and III operations strengthening the "no wrong door" customer-centric service delivery model outlined in the Arkansas Workforce Strategy. Uniform statewide governance and integration will help Arkansas increase labor force participation and provide consistent high-quality services in all areas.

A discussion of how the waiver complements Department of Labor priorities (i.e. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.):

Approval of this waiver aligns with the following DOL strategic pillars from America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age:

- *Industry-Driven Strategies:* This waiver will allow Arkansas to ensure the workforce system is aligned with economic priorities and further scale high-quality apprenticeship and work-based learning models. The Arkansas Workforce Strategy emphasizes sector strategies through employer collaboratives using the Talent Pipeline Management approach driven by industry. By maximizing the funding available for direct support activities, Arkansas will be well positioned to target investments toward initiatives designed to fill talent shortages in priority industries. Arkansas has begun establishing a state-led business services model that is aligned with the state's economic development agency and affiliates. In this model, Arkansas Industry Connect, along with regional outreach coordinators will serve as the public-facing employer experts equipped to engage businesses throughout the state and provide a myriad of services and resources in a fashion that is centralized and preferred by business leaders.
- *Worker Mobility:* This pillar calls for bringing more individuals into the labor force and supporting their advancement through career pathways by using innovative technology, labor market data, and valued credentials. Arkansas is leading the way in emphasizing skills-based practices to support worker mobility including the establishment of a statewide credential registry as well as digital learning and employment records (LERs). This waiver will enable Arkansas to continue connecting more individuals to the workforce and opportunities that lead to self-sufficiency.
- *Integrated Systems:* This waiver will allow Arkansas to fully integrate outreach, intake, eligibility determination, and case management processes across WIOA Titles I and III as well as possible future integrated expansion with other programs. This waiver transforms the fragmented system of workforce programs into a cohesive streamlined workforce ecosystem, reducing duplication of effort and unnecessary overhead expenses. As previously stated, Arkansas anticipates an estimated \$6M of current overhead and operating expenses that can be redirected into direct support of job seekers and employers.

- *Accountability*: This waiver will allow Arkansas to ensure workforce programs deliver results that link investments to outcomes and program performance. Programs and strategic initiatives will be monitored for continuous improvement to ensure consistent delivery of strong results and measurable impact. The performance information will be publicly available for enhanced transparency across the workforce development system.
- *Flexibility and Innovation*: This waiver will allow Arkansas to maintain an agile and adaptable workforce system, capable of evolving in step with economic shifts. As state economic priorities change, so will the prioritization of industry investments. Streamlined operations and effective governance structure statewide allow these shifts to occur more quickly and efficiently.

Quantifiable projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver:

Based on the \$6M savings projected as detailed above, Arkansas anticipates increasing Title I program enrollments significantly. Also, in the spirit of WIOA’s intent, Arkansas will be able to emphasize spending program funds towards those individuals most in need who can benefit from intensive intervention and direct training and support, all of which positively impacts the achievement of performance goals.

Individuals, groups, or populations benefitting, or otherwise impacted by the waiver from the waiver:

Streamlined operations and reduced operating/overhead costs will provide the opportunity for additional resources to meet the needs of employers, job seekers, and incumbent workers. Additionally, the waiver will allow Arkansas to continue to promote the cost benefits of improved administrative efficiencies, encouraging the increased leveraging of resources within the workforce ecosystem. As a result, Arkansas will increase services such as enhanced education, employment, and training opportunities for disadvantaged populations and individuals with multiple barriers to employment.

How the state plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of measurable waiver outcome information:

Upon DOL’s approval of this waiver request, Arkansas will communicate the waiver allowance to stakeholders within the workforce ecosystem. Arkansas will monitor progress under this waiver by reviewing monthly performance and expenditure reports compared to historical performance and expenditure levels. Arkansas will also monitor the quality of services provided statewide to ensure continuous improvement. Arkansas will report waiver outcomes in the state’s WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, then Arkansas will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

FUNCTIONS OF STATE BOARD & LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARD

20 CFR § 679.130 What are the **functions of the State Workforce Development Board?**

Under WIOA sec. 101(d), the State WDB must assist the Governor in the:

- (a) Development, implementation, and modification of the 4-year State Plan;
- (b) Review of statewide policies, programs, and recommendations on actions that must be taken by the State to align workforce development programs to support a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system. Such review of policies, programs, and recommendations must include a review and provision of comments on the State Plans, if any, for programs and activities of one-stop partners that are not core programs;
- (c) Development and continuous improvement of the workforce development system, including—
 - (1) Identification of barriers and means for removing barriers to better coordinate, align, and avoid duplication among programs and activities;
 - (2) Development of strategies to support career pathways for the purpose of providing individuals, including low-skilled adults, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment, including individuals with disabilities, with workforce investment activities, education, and supportive services to enter or retain employment;
 - (3) Development of strategies to provide effective outreach to and improved access for individuals and employers who could benefit from workforce development system;
 - (4) Development and expansion of strategies to meet the needs of employers, workers, and job seekers particularly through industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations;
 - (5) Identification of regions, including planning regions for the purposes of WIOA sec. 106(a), and the designation of local areas under WIOA sec. 106, after consultation with Local WDBs and chief elected officials;
 - (6) Development and continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system in local areas, including providing assistance to Local WDBs, one-stop operators, one-stop partners, and providers. Such assistance includes assistance with planning and delivering services, including training and supportive services, to support effective delivery of services to workers, job seekers, and employers; and
 - (7) Development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across the workforce development system and its programs;
- (d) Development and updating of comprehensive State performance and accountability measures to assess core program effectiveness under WIOA sec. 116(b);
- (e) Identification and dissemination of information on best practices, including best practices for—
 - (1) The effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment;
 - (2) The development of effective Local WDBs, which may include information on factors that contribute to enabling Local WDBs to exceed negotiated local levels of performance, sustain fiscal integrity, and achieve other measures of effectiveness; and

- (3) Effective training programs that respond to real-time labor market analysis, that effectively use direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences for adaptability, to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways;
- (f) Development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the State's one-stop delivery system described in WIOA sec. 121(e), including the development of—
- (1) Objective criteria and procedures for use by Local WDBs in assessing the effectiveness, physical and programmatic accessibility and continuous improvement of one-stop centers. Where a Local WDB serves as the one-stop operator, the State WDB must use such criteria to assess and certify the one-stop center;
 - (2) Guidance for the allocation of one-stop center infrastructure funds under WIOA sec. 121(h); and
 - (3) Policies relating to the appropriate roles and contributions of entities carrying out one-stop partner programs within the one-stop delivery system, including approaches to facilitating equitable and efficient cost allocation in the system;
- (g) Development of strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access to, and improve the quality of services and activities provided through the one-stop delivery system, including such improvements to—
- (1) Enhance digital literacy skills (as defined in sec. 202 of the Museum and Library Service Act, 20 U.S.C. 9101);
 - (2) Accelerate acquisition of skills and recognized postsecondary credentials by participants;
 - (3) Strengthen professional development of providers and workforce professionals; and
 - (4) Ensure technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals residing in remote areas;
- (h) Development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures, including design implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information, and performance accountability measurement and reporting processes and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation to improve coordination of services across one-stop partner programs;
- (i) Development of allocation formulas for the distribution of funds for employment and training activities for adults and youth workforce investment activities, to local areas as permitted under WIOA secs. 128(b)(3) and 133(b)(3);
- (j) Preparation of the annual reports described in paragraphs (1) and (2) of WIOA sec. 116(d);
- (k) Development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system described in sec. 15(e) of the Wagner-Peyser Act; and
- (l) Development of other policies as may promote statewide objectives for and enhance the performance of the workforce development system in the State.

20 CFR § 679.370 What are the **functions of the Local Workforce Development Board?**

As provided in [WIOA](#) sec. 107(d), the [Local WDB](#) must:

- (a) Develop and submit a 4-year local plan for the local area, in partnership with the chief elected official and consistent with [WIOA](#) sec. 108;
- (b) If the local area is part of a planning region that includes other local areas, develop and submit a regional plan in collaboration with other local areas. If the local area is part of a planning region, the local plan must be submitted as a part of the regional plan;
- (c) Conduct workforce research and regional labor market analysis to include:
 - (1) Analyses and regular updates of economic conditions, needed knowledge and skills, workforce, and workforce development (including education and training) activities to include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses (including the capacity to provide) of such services to address the identified education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers;
 - (2) Assistance to the [Governor](#) in developing the statewide [workforce and labor market information system](#) under the [Wagner-Peyser Act](#) for the region; and
 - (3) Other research, data collection, and analysis related to the workforce needs of the regional economy as the WDB, after receiving input from a wide array of stakeholders, determines to be necessary to carry out its functions;
- (d) Convene local workforce development system stakeholders to assist in the development of the local plan under [§ 679.550](#) and in identifying non-Federal expertise and resources to leverage support for workforce development activities. Such stakeholders may assist the [Local WDB](#) and standing committees in carrying out convening, brokering, and leveraging functions at the direction of the [Local WDB](#);
- (e) Lead efforts to engage with a diverse range of [employers](#) and other entities in the region in order to:
 - (1) Promote business representation (particularly representatives with optimum policy-making or hiring authority from [employers](#) whose employment opportunities reflect existing and emerging employment opportunities in the region) on the [Local WDB](#);
 - (2) Develop effective linkages (including the use of intermediaries) with [employers](#) in the region to support [employer](#) utilization of the local workforce development system and to support local [workforce investment activities](#);
 - (3) Ensure that [workforce investment activities](#) meet the needs of [employers](#) and support economic growth in the region by enhancing communication, coordination, and collaboration among [employers](#), economic development entities, and service providers; and
 - (4) Develop and implement proven or promising strategies for meeting the employment and skill needs of workers and [employers](#) (such as the [establishment](#) of industry and sector partnerships), that provide the skilled workforce needed by [employers](#) in the region, and that expand employment and career advancement opportunities for workforce development system [participants](#) in in-demand industry sectors or occupations;
- (f) With representatives of secondary and postsecondary education programs, lead efforts to develop and implement career pathways within the local area by aligning the employment, training, education, and [supportive services](#) that are needed by adults and youth, particularly individuals with barriers to employment;

(g) Lead efforts in the local area to identify and promote proven and promising strategies and initiatives for meeting the needs of employers, workers and job seekers, and identify and disseminate information on proven and promising practices carried out in other local areas for meeting such needs;

(h) Develop strategies for using technology to maximize the accessibility and effectiveness of the local workforce development system for employers, and workers and job seekers, by:

(1) Facilitating connections among the intake and case management information systems of the [one-stop partner](#) programs to support a comprehensive workforce development system in the local area;

(2) Facilitating access to services provided through the [one-stop delivery system](#) involved, including access in remote areas;

(3) Identifying strategies for better meeting the needs of individuals with barriers to employment, including strategies that augment traditional service delivery, and increase access to services and programs of the [one-stop delivery system](#), such as improving digital [literacy](#) skills; and

(4) Leveraging resources and capacity within the local workforce development system, including resources and capacity for services for individuals with barriers to employment;

(i) In partnership with the chief elected official for the local area:

(1) Conduct oversight of youth [workforce investment activities](#) authorized under [WIOA](#) sec. 129(c), adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities under [WIOA](#) secs. 134(c) and (d), and the entire [one-stop delivery system](#) in the local area;

(2) Ensure the appropriate use and management of the funds provided under [WIOA](#) subtitle B for the youth, adult, and dislocated worker activities and [one-stop delivery system](#) in the local area; and

(3) Ensure the appropriate use management, and investment of funds to maximize performance outcomes under [WIOA](#) sec. 116;

(j) Negotiate and reach agreement on local performance indicators with the chief elected official and the [Governor](#);

(k) Negotiate with CEO and required partners on the methods for funding the infrastructure costs of [one-stop centers](#) in the local area in accordance with [§ 678.715](#) of this chapter or must notify the [Governor](#) if they fail to reach agreement at the local level and will use a [State](#) infrastructure funding mechanism;

(l) Select the following providers in the local area, and where appropriate terminate such providers in accordance with [2 CFR part 200](#):

(1) Providers of youth [workforce investment activities](#) through competitive [grants](#) or [contracts](#) based on the recommendations of the youth standing committee (if such a committee is established); however, if the [Local WDB](#) determines there is an insufficient number of eligible training providers in a local area, the [Local WDB](#) may award [contracts](#) on a sole-source basis as per the provisions at [WIOA](#) sec. 123(b);

(2) Providers of [training services](#) consistent with the criteria and information requirements established by the [Governor](#) and [WIOA](#) sec. 122;

(3) Providers of [career services](#) through the award of contracts, if the one-stop operator does not provide such services; and

(4) One-stop operators in accordance with §§ [678.600](#) through [678.635](#) of this chapter;

(m) In accordance with [WIOA](#) sec. 107(d)(10)(E) work with the [State](#) to ensure there are sufficient numbers and types of providers of [career services](#) and [training services](#) serving the local area and

providing the services in a manner that maximizes consumer choice, as well as providing opportunities that lead to competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities;

(n) Coordinate activities with education and training providers in the local area, including:

(1) Reviewing applications to provide adult education and [literacy](#) activities under [WIOA](#) title II for the local area to determine whether such applications are consistent with the local plan;

(2) Making recommendations to the eligible agency to promote alignment with such plan; and

(3) Replicating and implementing [cooperative agreements](#) to enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination;

(o) Develop a budget for the activities of the [Local WDB](#), with approval of the chief elected official and consistent with the local plan and the duties of the [Local WDB](#);

(p) Assess, on an annual basis, the physical and programmatic accessibility of all [one-stop centers](#) in the local area, in accordance with [WIOA](#) sec. 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 \(42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.\)](#); and

(q) Certification of [one-stop centers](#) in accordance with [§ 678.800](#) of this chapter.

Arkansas PY 2026-PY 2027 Waiver Requests

Under the Secretary of Labor's waiver authority outlined in Section 189(i)(3)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and 20 CFR and 679.600, the Secretary may waive certain provisions of WIOA Title I Subtitle A, B, and E and provisions found in Sections 8-10 of the Wagner-Peyser Act. WIOA Section 189(i)(3)(B) and 20 CFR 679.620 identify elements that must be included in a waiver request. A state may request a waiver in its Unified or Combined State Plan submission or modification.

Required Elements - Waiver #2

Title: Flexibility to Reallocate Funds Across Local Workforce Areas

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive:

The State of Arkansas is seeking a waiver from the provisions of WIOA 128(c)(3) and 133(c)(3), regarding reallocation among local areas. This waiver would provide flexibility to Arkansas in redistributing funds among workforce areas.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local barriers:

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver

A description of the state's strategic goal(s):

Approval of this waiver request would allow Arkansas to meet the following strategic goals:

- Redistribution of recaptured funds to workforce areas based on factors established to ensure that funds are redistributed to workforce areas with the greatest need. These factors may include the following:
 - Requested amount.
 - Demonstrated need for and ability to use additional funds to serve low-income individuals, public assistance recipients, dislocated workers, and unemployment insurance claimants;
 - Demonstrated capacity to expend the formula funds;
 - Alignment with the state's economic priorities through investment by industry (i.e., advanced manufacturing, construction, healthcare, energy, information technology etc.); and
 - Performance in the current and previous program years.
- Maximize the impact of recaptured federal funds. Arkansas seeks to redistribute workforce funds to workforce areas that have achieved not only targeted expenditure levels but also established performance targets. Redistributing funds based solely on whether a workforce area achieves its expenditure target does not address performance issues, such as whether the workforce area met employer needs for a highly skilled and job-ready workforce.

- *Improvement of Administrative Efficiencies.* Approval of this waiver will serve to minimize administrative processes and costs of contracting by using similar redistribution procedures that support workforce system integration.

A discussion of how the waiver complements Department of Labor priorities (i.e. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.):

Approval of this waiver aligns with the following DOL strategic pillars from America’s Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age:

- *Industry-Driven Strategies.* This waiver will allow Arkansas to ensure the workforce system is aligned with economic priorities. Reallocation consideration factors will provide incentives to ensure training investments are aligned with the needs of employers, especially manufacturing and other industries that serve as the foundation for the state and national economy.
- *Accountability.* This waiver will allow Arkansas to ensure workforce programs deliver results that link investments to outcomes and program performance. Programs that consistently deliver strong results would be expanded with reallocated funds, while those that fail to show measurable impact would not be awarded with reallocated funds. The performance information will be publicly available for enhanced transparency across the workforce development system.
- *Flexibility and Innovation.* This waiver will allow Arkansas to maintain an agile and adaptable workforce system, capable of evolving in step with economic shifts. As state economic priorities change, so too would the prioritization of industry investments for fund reallocation consideration. An example of this flexibility would include a scenario where expiring grant funds in one area were recaptured and reallocated to address a mass layoff in another area. This flexibility would allow Arkansas with the provisions to shift funds to where they are most needed driven by market demand.

Quantifiable projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver:

The statutory reallocation requirements can be fulfilled; however, the amount of funds available for reallocation may also be so small that it is cost prohibitive. By using this waiver for the redistribution of funds, Arkansas can ensure that federal funds will be more effectively and efficiently managed for maximum service provision and program performance. Approval of this waiver will provide the opportunity for recaptured funds to be redistributed to workforce areas where the greatest potential impact may be realized. This waiver will streamline administrative practices, allowing for greater efficiency in meeting the workforce development needs of employers and job seekers. Furthermore, it will enhance the quality of services in those workforce areas that have demonstrated consistent performance outcomes. Approval of this waiver will result in a reduction of unnecessary administrative processes.

Individuals, groups, or populations benefitting, or otherwise impacted by the waiver:

Workforce areas that provide quality services will have access to additional resources to meet the employer's needs, job seekers, and incumbent workers. Additionally, the waiver will allow Arkansas to continue to promote the cost benefits of improved administrative efficiencies, encouraging the increased leveraging of resources within the workforce areas. As a result, Arkansas will increase services such as enhanced education, employment, and training opportunities for disadvantaged populations and individuals with multiple barriers to employment.

How the state plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of measurable waiver outcome information:

Upon DOL's approval of this waiver request, Arkansas will communicate the waiver allowance to local boards and workforce system partner programs. Arkansas will monitor progress under this waiver by reviewing monthly performance and expenditure reports submitted by the boards, through regularly scheduled conference calls with board directors, and through its monitoring and performance accountability system. Arkansas will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, then Arkansas will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

Arkansas PY 2026-PY 2027 Waiver Requests

Under the Secretary of Labor's waiver authority outlined in Section 189(i)(3)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and 20 CFR and 679.600, the Secretary may waive certain provisions of WIOA Title I Subtitle A, B, and E and provisions found in Sections 8-10 of the Wagner-Peyser Act. WIOA Section 189(i)(3)(B) and 20 CFR 679.620 identify elements that must be included in a waiver request. A state may request a waiver in its Unified or Combined State Plan submission or modification.

Required Elements - Waiver #3

Title: Network of Affiliate Sites in lieu of Comprehensive Centers

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive:

As outlined in Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 05-25, the State of Arkansas is seeking a waiver of the requirement to establish and maintain at least one physical comprehensive center in each of the state's local workforce development areas (20 CFR 678.300(c)). This waiver would allow Arkansas to leverage virtual and remote services as well as utilize a robust network of affiliated sites that leverage strategic co-location with partners to minimize infrastructure costs while maximizing reach.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local barriers:

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory policies in Arkansas that would create a barrier for implementation of this waiver. The state board will continue to include local input into its activities and allocate funding to each local area in the state to ensure quality and balanced service delivery statewide.

A description of the state's strategic goal(s):

The Arkansas Workforce Strategy is a collaborative, competency-based, customer-centric, and responsive workforce system that meets current and future needs of employers, incumbent workers, and job seekers. The strategy fosters partnerships across sectors to align workforce development with industry needs; aligns training and career pathways with real-world skills and competencies; tailors services to meet the unique needs and goals of job seekers, incumbent workers, and employers; and adapts quickly to economic changes and labor market trends for timely alignment of workforce efforts. These themes collectively aim to create a more dynamic and effective workforce ecosystem in Arkansas.

Arkansas's primary goal for this waiver is to reduce the financial and administrative burden on the partners required to support the infrastructure costs of a comprehensive center. This waiver does not eliminate access to comprehensive services; it allows the state to:

- Deliver comprehensive services through mobile units, partner-embedded sites, and virtual platforms.
- Maintain comprehensive functionality without requiring a fixed physical location in

every local area.

- Allocate resources based on customer need and geography, not building and overhead requirements.
- Shift inflated infrastructure costs to direct participant activities, state initiatives, tools, and personnel necessary to deliver services in a hybrid customer-centric model.
- Eliminate the barrier of identifying available real estate and staffing requirements to accommodate a comprehensive center in rural areas of Arkansas.

The flexibility provided under this waiver will allow Arkansas to transform the workforce ecosystem in a manner that aligns directly with both State and Federal priorities. Requiring a fixed comprehensive center in every local area reflects an earlier service model based on geographic presence rather than customer need. This waiver enables Arkansas to modernize service delivery to better reflect how individuals access services today. By shifting from a facility-based requirement to a function-based model, Arkansas can ensure that comprehensive services are delivered wherever customers are – at community partner sites, through mobile units, and via digital platforms – thereby advancing priorities for access while maintaining efficiency. Established partner sites across the state including adult education centers, AR Department of Human Services (DHS) county offices, and vocational rehabilitation offices will be utilized as access points for workforce services, specifically in rural areas.

A discussion of how the waiver complements Department of Labor priorities (i.e. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.):

Approval of this waiver aligns with the following DOL strategic pillars from America’s Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age:

- Industry-Driven Strategies. Requiring fixed comprehensive centers can limit the system’s ability to meet employers where they operate. This waiver enables Arkansas to deploy workforce services directly into employer settings through on-site hiring events, sector-based pop-up service delivery, mobile recruitment and screening units, and rapid response to employer expansion needs. By allowing services to move to employers rather than requiring employers to engage with fixed centers, the waiver strengthens demand-driven strategies and improves the speed and effectiveness of matching talent.

Studies show that up to 80 percent of all new jobs are created by existing companies. A successful business retention and expansion strategy serves the key purposes of demonstrating to existing firms that the community appreciates their contribution to the local economy, encourages expansion that leads to sustainable job growth, helps businesses solve their problems and challenges and assists local businesses in gaining awareness of available resources.

Regional Outreach Coordinators will be positioned to help implement effective business retention and expansion tools and strategies and ensure communities are familiar with the variety of resources available to help existing companies stay strong and grow.

- Worker Mobility. Worker mobility is hindered when access to services is tied to transportation, geography, or office hours. This waiver improves mobility by delivery services in trusted community locations, providing virtual access options, reducing travel barriers for rural and low-income individuals, and enabling services to reach individuals during key life transitions. Data from program operations (number of office visits) reflect a greater need and preference by customers, to access services virtually in lieu of visiting a physical center. By removing geographic constraints, the waiver ensures that workers can engage with the workforce ecosystem regardless of location, thereby improving participation and advancement opportunities.
- Integrated Systems. A facility-based requirement reinforces program silos by tying services to specific locations. This waiver supports a “no wrong door” integrated service delivery model by enabling partner-embedded access points, co-location with human services and education providers, unified intake and shared customer profiles, and coordinated service delivery without requiring multiple office visits. Customers will experience a seamless system where comprehensive services are delivered through a network of access points rather than a single building, directly advancing DOL’s vision of an integrated workforce ecosystem.
- Accountability. This waiver strengthens accountability by shifting resources from facility maintenance to direct services and measurable outcomes. Arkansas will maintain full compliance with federal performance requirements while improving time to service, engagement rates, rural access metrics, and employment and retention outcomes. Data from mobile, partner-embedded, and virtual services will be integrated into the statewide system, ensuring transparency and enabling continuous improvement.
- Flexibility and Innovation. This waiver directly supports flexibility and innovation by allowing Arkansas to pilot and scale modern service delivery models, including expanded utilization of the existing mobile workforce units, virtual career navigation, behavioral design strategies, and comprehensive services delivered through a network of affiliate partner sites. By removing structural barriers tied to fixed facilities, Arkansas can test and implement innovative approaches that better serve customers and employers, positioning the state as a national leader in workforce modernization.

Quantifiable projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver:

Arkansas anticipates increased customer reach statewide through this service delivery model resulting in increased program enrollments and improved engagement with rural communities. Arkansas also projects a reduced “time to first service” for customers with transportation barriers. Improved access to services will result in improved employment and retention outcomes for job seekers and employers. Reduced facility-related tasks may also result in a reduction of administrative burden for staff. Over a series of years, Wagner Peyser funds have been stretched thin due to rising infrastructure costs resulting in a reduction of qualified workforce specialists available to provide direct services to residents. This jeopardizes the standard of a high-performing and quality job center by compromising staff availability in ratio

to customers need. Arkansas anticipates an overall increase in customer satisfaction and additional cost savings statewide.

Individuals, groups, or populations benefitting, or otherwise impacted by the waiver:

Arkansas will increase services such as enhanced education, employment, and training opportunities for disadvantaged populations and individuals with multiple barriers to employment, especially those with barriers that prevent them from accessing the current physical workforce centers (i.e., transportation, childcare, etc.).

How the state plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of measurable waiver outcome information:

Upon DOL's approval of this waiver request, Arkansas will communicate the waiver allowance to stakeholders within the workforce ecosystem. Arkansas will monitor the quality of services provided statewide in order to ensure continuous improvement. Arkansas will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, then Arkansas will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

Arkansas PY 2026-PY 2027 Waiver Requests

Under the Secretary of Labor's waiver authority outlined in Section 189(i)(3)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and 20 CFR and 679.600, the Secretary may waive certain provisions of WIOA Title I Subtitle A, B, and E and provisions found in Sections 8-10 of the Wagner-Peyser Act. WIOA Section 189(i)(3)(B) and 20 CFR 679.620 identify elements that must be included in a waiver request. A state may request a waiver in its Unified or Combined State Plan submission or modification.

Required Elements - Waiver #4

Title: WIOA Training Dollars & Supportive Services- Funding Flexibility

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive:

As outlined in Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 05-25, the State of Arkansas is requesting flexibility in the implementation of WIOA sec. 134 (c)(3)(B) as well as 20 CFR 680.210 (c), 20 CFR 680.230, 20 CFR 680.900, and WIOA sec. 129 (c)(3)(A). Specifically, Arkansas is seeking a waiver of the requirement to determine inability to obtain other grant assistance prior to funding training and supportive services for adult, dislocated workers, and youth. Arkansas also seeks the allowance of self-attestation for lack of other available funding options.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local barriers:

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory policies in Arkansas that would create a barrier for implementation of this waiver. Arkansas will still encourage participants to apply for other funding sources including Pell grants and will coordinate the braiding of funding when feasible. Arkansas will ensure that there is no duplication of payment among multiple programs providing funding and will document the reasonableness of all costs allocated to WIOA funds.

A description of the state's strategic goal(s):

The Arkansas Workforce Strategy is a collaborative, competency-based, customer-centric, and responsive workforce system that meets current and future needs of employers, incumbent workers, and job seekers. The strategy fosters partnerships across sectors to align workforce development with industry needs; aligns training and career pathways with real-world skills and competencies; tailors services to meet the unique needs and goals of job seekers, incumbent workers, and employers; and adapts quickly to economic changes and labor market trends for timely alignment of workforce efforts. These themes collectively aim to create a more dynamic, inclusive, and effective workforce ecosystem in Arkansas.

Arkansas's primary goal for this waiver is to eliminate delays of training enrollment, reduce administrative burden for workforce boards and title I-B service providers, remove barriers for

low-income participants, and reduce complexity of funding provisions.

A discussion of how the waiver complements Department of Labor priorities (i.e. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.):

Approval of this waiver aligns with the following DOL strategic pillars from America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age:

- *Industry-Driven Strategies.* The requested flexibility advances this pillar by enabling timely access to training aligned with in-demand occupations, ensuring workers can obtain skills when opportunities arise rather than after administrative delays. The reduced time to training will enable rapid enrollment and eliminate delays caused by Pell verification and other aid coordination. When training start dates are missed due to aid verification delays, employer-driven cohorts may lose candidates. A streamlined approach lets the system respond more timely to employer demand. This waiver also strengthens sector strategies by reducing administrative friction, which helps to build reliable pipelines for employers.
- *Worker Mobility.* This waiver removes procedural barriers that prevent individuals from advancing through rapid upskilling/reskilling. This flexibility also expands practical access for low-income and rural participants. Streamlining recognizes real-world barriers such as FAFSA processing delays, documentation hurdles, and program start timing which can impede an individual's access to other funding sources. Data from customer service surveys and feedback from service providers reflect a dissatisfaction with the current "last dollar" rule; with workforce boards attributing the decrease in enrollments is due to the complexities of funding eligibility and the processes connected to receiving grant assistance. “
- *Integrated Systems.* This waiver allows for standardization of a single, cross-program resource coordination workflow that improves co-enrollment operations and simplifies the customer's experience. The no wrong door approach is supported by reducing the number of handoffs for referrals and verification loops.
- *Accountability.* The requested flexibility shifts the system from process compliance to results accountability. Instead of measuring success by how thoroughly staff document a funding sequencing rule, the waiver emphasizes measurable outcomes, completion, credential attainment, employment, and wage gains. This enables cleaner cost/outcome analysis and preserves fiscal integrity through targeted safeguards.
- *Flexibility and Innovation.* This waiver allows rapid reskilling pilots when layoffs happen or when new tech adoption accelerates. As the system needs to enroll people quickly, the front-end paperwork reduction supports more timely access to training and supportive services for affected individuals. This waiver also supports innovative funding models and short-cycle credentials. Many high-value credentials are short, modular, and cohort-based; strict sequencing can be disproportionate to the training duration. Streamlining enables more experimentation with accelerated pathways.

Quantifiable projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver:

Arkansas anticipates this waiver will accelerate enrollment into training, reduce administrative burden, improve access for underserved populations, increase credential attainment, and support employer demand.

Individuals, groups, or populations benefitting, or otherwise impacted by the waiver:

Arkansas will increase services such as enhanced education, employment, and training opportunities for disadvantaged populations and individuals with multiple barriers to employment, including those with lower educational levels and those who are underskilled and underemployed.

How the state plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of measurable waiver outcome information:

Upon DOL's approval of this waiver request, Arkansas will communicate the waiver allowance to stakeholders within the workforce ecosystem. Arkansas will monitor the quality of services provided statewide in order to ensure continuous improvement. Arkansas will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, then Arkansas will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

Arkansas PY 2026-PY 2027 Waiver Requests

Under the Secretary of Labor's waiver authority outlined in Section 189(i)(3)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and 20 CFR and 679.600, the Secretary may waive certain provisions of WIOA Title I Subtitle A, B, and E and provisions found in Sections 8-10 of the Wagner-Peyser Act. WIOA Section 189(i)(3)(B) and 20 CFR 679.620 identify elements that must be included in a waiver request. A state may request a waiver in its Unified or Combined State Plan submission or modification.

Required Elements - Waiver #5

Title: State Plan Acts as Regional Plan

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive:

The State of Arkansas is seeking a waiver of the requirements outlined in 20 CFR 679.510 through 20 CFR 679.540 to allow the state plan to act as the regional plan in accordance with the overall vision of operating as a single-area state.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local barriers:

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory policies in Arkansas that would create a barrier for implementation of this waiver.

A description of the state's strategic goal(s):

The Arkansas Workforce Strategy is a collaborative, competency-based, customer-centric, and responsive workforce system that meets current and future needs of employers, incumbent workers, and job seekers. The strategy fosters partnerships across sectors to align workforce development with industry needs; aligns training and career pathways with real-world skills and competencies; tailors services to meet the unique needs and goals of job seekers, incumbent workers, and employers; and adapts quickly to economic changes and labor market trends for timely alignment of workforce efforts. These themes collectively aim to create a more dynamic, inclusive, and effective workforce ecosystem in Arkansas.

Arkansas's primary goal for this waiver is to support the state's strategic vision of operating the workforce system with the efficiency and coordination of a single statewide service delivery network. Specifically, the waiver will enable Arkansas to streamline planning processes, align sector strategies across the entire state economy, reduce administrative burden, accelerate implementation of statewide workforce initiatives, and improve statewide employer engagement and sector partnership development.

A discussion of how the waiver complements Department of Labor priorities (i.e. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.):

Approval of this waiver aligns with the following DOL strategic pillars from America's Talent

Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age:

- Industry-Driven Strategies. This waiver will allow Arkansas to ensure the workforce system is aligned with economic priorities. This structure allows the state to coordinate programs across the entire labor market rather than fragmented regional planning structures. Consistent sector strategies across the state will allow employers operating in multiple areas to engage with a unified workforce system.
- Worker Mobility. This pillar calls for bringing more individuals into the labor force and supporting their advancement through career pathways by using innovative technology, labor market data, and valued credentials. Through statewide coordination of workforce strategies, the ability of participants to access training and employment opportunities across local workforce development areas will be improved. This will enhance career pathway alignment, portability of services, and access to high-quality training providers statewide.
- Integrated Systems. This waiver will strengthen Arkansas's use of integrated data systems to evaluate workforce outcomes and ensure continuous improvement across the system.
- Flexibility and Innovation. This waiver will allow Arkansas to maintain an agile and adaptable workforce system, capable of evolving in step with economic shifts. As state economic priorities change, so too would the prioritization of industry investments. Streamlined operations and effective planning strategies statewide allow these shifts to occur more quickly and efficiently.

Quantifiable projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver:

Expected outcomes include improved alignment of workforce strategies statewide and increased administrative efficiency through reduced duplicative planning processes as well as improved employer engagement and service delivery consistency. This waiver will enable employers to interact with a coordinated statewide system rather than fragmented regional strategies.

Individuals, groups, or populations benefitting, or otherwise impacted by the waiver from the waiver:

This waiver will benefit multiple stakeholders within the workforce system including job seekers and program participants, employers and industry partners, and education and training providers. Participants will benefit from more consistent service delivery and expanded access to statewide initiatives. Employers will benefit from improved coordination of workforce services and sector partnerships. As a result, Arkansas will increase services such as enhanced education, employment, and training opportunities for disadvantaged populations and individuals with multiple barriers to employment.

How the state plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of measurable waiver outcome information:

Upon DOL's approval of this waiver request, Arkansas will communicate the waiver allowance to stakeholders within the workforce ecosystem. Arkansas will monitor progress under this waiver by reviewing implementation of statewide strategies, performance outcomes, and employer engagement analysis. Arkansas will also monitor the quality of services provided statewide in order to ensure continuous improvement. Arkansas will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, then Arkansas will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

Arkansas PY 2026-PY 2027 Waiver Requests

Under the Secretary of Labor's waiver authority outlined in Section 189(i)(3)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and 20 CFR and 679.600, the Secretary may waive certain provisions of WIOA Title I Subtitle A, B, and E and provisions found in Sections 8-10 of the Wagner-Peyser Act. WIOA Section 189(i)(3)(B) and 20 CFR 679.620 identify elements that must be included in a waiver request. A state may request a waiver in its Unified or Combined State Plan submission or modification.

Required Elements - Waiver #6

Title: State Board Composition Flexibility

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive:

As outlined in Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 05-25, the State of Arkansas is seeking a waiver of the requirements outlined in WIOA Section 101(b)(1), (b)(3) and (c) as well as the corresponding regulations at 20 CFR 679.110(b)-(c), which specify board membership and category/subcategory representation requirements. This would allow the state to change the structure and operation of the state board to streamline overall state board membership and better address the employment and skills needs of the state. This would also allow the state to document dual representation for members who fall under multiple categories.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local barriers:

The Arkansas Workforce Cabinet was created via Governor's Executive Order in February 2023, to enable a single entity to coordinate workforce development and career education services statewide. This same order created the position of Chief Workforce Officer to coordinate, manage, and direct the workforce policies and career education strategy for the State of Arkansas. As a result, Arkansas's Workforce Strategy was released in February 2024, detailing ways to grow and develop Arkansas's workforce.

A description of the state's strategic goal(s):

The Arkansas Workforce Strategy is a collaborative, competency-based, customer-centric, and responsive workforce system that meets current and future needs of employers, incumbent workers, and job seekers. The strategy fosters partnerships across sectors to align workforce development with industry needs; aligns training and career pathways with real-world skills and competencies; tailors services to meet the unique needs and goals of job seekers, incumbent workers, and employers; and adapts quickly to economic changes and labor market trends for timely alignment of workforce efforts. These themes collectively aim to create a more dynamic, inclusive, and effective workforce ecosystem in Arkansas.

Arkansas's primary goal for this waiver is to create a more agile board poised to innovate and strengthen alignment among programs. By incorporating the Arkansas Workforce Cabinet and the Arkansas Career Education Workforce Development Board into a single statewide board,

the result will eliminate the administrative maze and inefficiency of multiple entities working independently. Local representation will remain through fewer newly created regional workforce business councils designed to improve service delivery for regional employer talent needs. Consolidation of workforce governance structures will enable the state to streamline decision-making, improve cross-system coordination, and align workforce strategies across programs.

A discussion of how the waiver complements Department of Labor priorities (i.e. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.):

Approval of this waiver aligns with the following DOL strategic pillars from America's Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age:

- *Industry-Driven Strategies.* This waiver will allow the State Board to more effectively integrate expertise from key economic sectors, workforce partners, and education systems. The current structure of multiple workforce-related entities may result in fragmented strategic planning, duplicative governance processes, and inconsistent policy direction. By consolidating these structures, the state will be better positioned to coordinate workforce policies across workforce programs, economic development initiatives, education and training systems, and industry sector partnerships. This integrated governance model will enable the state to more effectively align workforce investments with high-growth industries and emerging economic opportunities, ensuring that workforce strategies support the broader economic competitiveness of the state.
- *Worker Mobility.* This waiver will improve coordination among workforce programs that serve job seekers, including programs that support individuals facing barriers to employment. Consolidation of workforce-related boards will allow the state to implement more integrated strategies that address workforce participation, training access, and employment outcomes. Improved governance alignment will also support stronger coordination among partners, ensuring that workforce investments support labor market mobility and access to opportunities statewide.
- *Integrated Systems.* This waiver will strengthen Arkansas's use of integrated data systems to evaluate workforce outcomes and ensure continuous improvement across the system. An integrated governance structure will enable a stronger, more unified emphasis on the importance of using data to drive performance across programs.
- *Accountability.* Consolidating workforce governance bodies will allow Arkansas to establish clearer accountability structures for workforce system performance. A unified governance framework will facilitate improved oversight of workforce programs, better coordination of performance measurement strategies, and more effective use of workforce data to inform policy decisions. This approach will support the state's ability to evaluate outcomes, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that workforce investments deliver measurable results for job seekers, employers, and communities.
- *Flexibility and Innovation.* This waiver will allow Arkansas to maintain an agile and adaptable workforce system, capable of evolving in step with economic shifts. As state

economic priorities change, so too would the prioritization of industry investments. Streamlined operations and unified planning strategies statewide allow these shifts to occur more quickly and efficiently.

Quantifiable projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver:

This waiver will allow greater flexibility, speed, and focus on the customer. A unified governance structure will facilitate stronger collaboration among programs responsible for career pathways, credential attainment, work-based learning, and skills-based learning. This alignment will improve the ability of the workforce system to scale training strategies that lead to high-quality employment opportunities. Expected outcomes include improved alignment of workforce strategies statewide and increased administrative efficiency through reduced duplicative planning processes as well as improved service delivery consistency.

Individuals, groups, or populations benefitting, or otherwise impacted by the waiver from the waiver:

This waiver will benefit multiple stakeholders within the workforce system including job seekers and program participants, employers and industry partners, and education and training providers. Participants will benefit from more consistent service delivery and expanded access to statewide initiatives. Employers will benefit from improved coordination of workforce services and sector partnerships. As a result, Arkansas will increase services such as enhanced education, employment, and training opportunities for disadvantaged populations and individuals with multiple barriers to employment.

How the state plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of measurable waiver outcome information:

Upon DOL's approval of this waiver request, Arkansas will communicate the waiver allowance to stakeholders within the workforce ecosystem. Arkansas will monitor progress under this waiver by reviewing implementation of statewide strategies, performance outcomes, and employer engagement analysis. Arkansas will also monitor the quality of services provided statewide in order to ensure continuous improvement. Arkansas will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, then Arkansas will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

Arkansas PY 2026-PY 2027 Waiver Requests

Under the Secretary of Labor's waiver authority outlined in Section 189(i)(3)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and 20 CFR and 679.600, the Secretary may waive certain provisions of WIOA Title I Subtitle A, B, and E and provisions found in Sections 8-10 of the Wagner-Peyser Act. WIOA Section 189(i)(3)(B) and 20 CFR 679.620 identify elements that must be included in a waiver request. A state may request a waiver in its Unified or Combined State Plan submission or modification.

Required Elements - Waiver #7

Title: Youth Program Elements Flexibility

The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the state would like to waive:

As outlined in Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 05-25, the State of Arkansas is seeking a waiver of the requirements outlined in WIOA Section 129 (c)(2) regarding the 14 youth program elements. This waiver would enable increased flexibility in providing the services most needed. This will allow Arkansas to focus on work-based learning and occupational skills training opportunities in demand statewide while remaining agile and responsive to emerging needs.

Actions the state has undertaken to remove state or local barriers:

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory policies in Arkansas that would create a barrier for implementation of this waiver. The current four-year plan includes two approved youth waivers designed to address previously identified barriers. The two-year modification includes evidenced collaboration from CTE programs by embedding the Perkins V plan. This action strengthens support for youth as well as clearly defines the state's plan to deliver services to ISY and OSY.

A description of the state's strategic goal(s):

The Arkansas Workforce Strategy is a collaborative, competency-based, customer-centric, and responsive workforce system that meets current and future needs of employers, incumbent workers, and job seekers. The strategy fosters partnerships across sectors to align workforce development with industry needs; aligns training and career pathways with real-world skills and competencies; tailors services to meet the unique needs and goals of job seekers, incumbent workers, and employers; and adapts quickly to economic changes and labor market trends for timely alignment of workforce efforts. These themes collectively aim to create a more dynamic, inclusive, and effective workforce ecosystem in Arkansas.

Arkansas's primary goal for this waiver is to prioritize the youth program elements most responsive to labor market needs in order to enable the workforce system to deploy resources more strategically. The state's workforce network is robust and inclusive of multiple required

and additional partners who collaborate to provide an array of services through the use of technology on shared platforms and referral systems; this ensures that necessary and suitable services to youth will not lack because of this waiver.

A discussion of how the waiver complements Department of Labor priorities (i.e. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.):

Approval of this waiver aligns with the following DOL strategic pillars from America’s Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age:

- *Industry-Driven Strategies.* This waiver will allow the state to prioritize services that most directly connect youth to in-demand occupations. Waiving this requirement will allow Arkansas to strategically emphasize program elements that support industry-driven strategies such as work-based learning opportunities, occupational skills training aligned with high-demand sectors, internships and apprenticeships, and career exploration linked to sector partnerships. This flexibility will allow the state to focus resources on services that lead directly to employment in industries critical to Arkansas’s economic growth.
- *Worker Mobility.* This waiver will enable the state to design service delivery strategies that more effectively support youth in achieving long-term economic mobility. The state will be able to emphasize services that support career pathway development, including occupational skills training, industry-recognized credential attainment, career coaching and navigation, and paid work experiences that connect youth to long-term employment opportunities. This approach strengthens the system’s ability to help youth transition into high-quality employment and build sustainable careers.
- *Integrated Systems.* This waiver will ensure that existing community and partner resources are leveraged to support a broad range of services without requiring the state to independently administer or secure every program element. This approach supports coordinated service delivery across agencies rather than duplicated across programs.
- *Accountability.* This waiver will not hamper the state’s responsibility to meet expected performance measures for the youth program. The state will remain fully accountable for achieving performance outcomes under WIOA and will continue to monitor service delivery to ensure youth participants receive the services necessary to achieve successful employment and education outcomes. This waiver will allow the state to focus resources on services that most directly contribute to measurable performance outcomes while maintaining oversight through the existing monitoring framework.
- *Flexibility and Innovation.* This waiver will enable the state to design innovative service strategies tailored to the needs of youth participants and employers. This flexibility will support the development of new program models that incorporate employer-led training programs, sector-based youth initiatives, innovative work-based learning models, and partnerships with community organizations. By removing rigid program design requirements, this waiver will enable the workforce system to pilot new approaches that improve youth engagement and employment outcomes.

Quantifiable projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver:

Expected outcomes include increased youth participation in work-based learning experiences, improved employment and education outcomes, and increased attainment of industry-recognized credentials, as well as reduced administrative burden, improved cross-program partnerships, and greater program innovation.

Individuals, groups, or populations benefitting, or otherwise impacted by the waiver from the waiver:

This waiver will primarily benefit youth program participants. However, employers and industry partners will also benefit from increased alignment with economic priorities and workforce development needs.

How the state plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of measurable waiver outcome information:

Upon DOL's approval of this waiver request, Arkansas will communicate the waiver allowance to stakeholders within the workforce ecosystem. Arkansas will monitor progress under this waiver through the existing monitoring framework including analysis of WIOA performance measures and program enrollments. Arkansas will also monitor the quality of services provided statewide in order to ensure continuous improvement. Arkansas will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, then Arkansas will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

1) Statutory or Regulatory Requirement for which Waiver is Requested and Intended Goals.

Title I Response:

Waiver #1: The State of Arkansas is seeking a waiver renewal from the WIOA Section 129(a)(4)(A) and 20 CFR Part 681.410, which require not less than 75 percent of funds allotted to states under Section 127(b)(1)(C), reserved under Section 128(a), and available for statewide activities under subsection (b), and not less than 75 percent of funds available to local areas under subsection (c), shall be used to provide youth workforce investment activities for Out-of-School Youth (OSY).

Arkansas is requesting to:

- Lower the minimum OSY expenditure requirement to 50 percent for formula funding at both the state and local levels; and
- Eliminate the minimum OSY expenditure requirement for WIOA Statewide Activities funding when providing direct services to youth.

Arkansas has continuously met the 75% OSY requirement, and although Arkansas recognizes the importance of serving the OSY population, we have also determined that a shift in being able engage more in-school youth (ISY) earlier on may help yield better results in Arkansas' overall workforce strategies. We believe that early intervention will reduce the likelihood of youth becoming disconnected or disengaged from the labor force.

Currently, the 75% OSY requirement limits the ability of the State and local areas to:

- Effectively support Governor Sanders work-based learning initiatives
- Partner with state programs such as Arkansas' Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) and several CTE programs, including those who offer pre-apprenticeships that lead to registered apprenticeship programs directly after the completion of a secondary education program.
- Provide valuable services to Arkansas' young adults who are at risk of becoming opportunity youth

Creating a system where unified services are available to at-risk young adults through State initiatives and programs are projected to strengthen long-term positive outcomes for this population.

Waiver #2: The State of Arkansas is seeking a waiver renewal from the WIOA Section 20 CFR 681.550 to allow WIOA individual training accounts (ITAs) for in-school youth (ISY). This requirement impedes the ability of Arkansas to implement its plan to improve the workforce development system. The approval of this waiver will not impede the State's efforts to prioritize OSY, including outreach to the OSY population.

Arkansas is requesting to:

- waive the requirement limiting ITAs to only out-of-school youth (OSY), ages 16–24. In addition to these OSY, the State requests to use ITAs for ISY, ages 16–21.

This waiver request is in response to Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders’ Executive Order (EO) 23-16, which created the Governor’s Workforce Cabinet and the position of the Chief Workforce Officer (CWO) to advise the Governor on issues regarding workforce development and career education in Arkansas and to undertake the following duties:

- Coordinate, integrate, and optimize services, funding, and resources to maximize desired outcomes and improve operational efficiencies.
- Ensure a talent-driven education and workforce system that addresses the current and future needs of Arkansas employers and individuals.
- Prepare and implement a data-driven workforce strategic plan using high-quality data and subject matter expertise.

Skill Gaps and Labor Force Participation: Arkansas is challenged by a noticeable skills gap, where employers struggle to find candidates with the necessary skills, especially in fast-growing industries. Additionally, labor force participation rates lagged behind national averages, pointing to untapped potential in the state’s workforce.

Educational Alignment with Industry Needs: There is a growing recognition that educational pathways need better alignment with industry requirements to ensure that students and job seekers are prepared for successful careers.

(2) Actions Undertaken to Remove State or Local Statutory or Regulatory Barriers.

Title I Response:

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing the requested waiver. Current State of Arkansas laws, regulations, and policies follow federal law, regulations, and guidance.

(3) Goals of Waiver and Expected Programmatic Outcomes if Granted.

Title I Response:

These waiver requests aligns with Arkansas’ goals outlined in the State Plan.

Specifically, strategic goals:

Strategic Goal 1: *Develop an efficient partnership with employers, the educational system, workforce development partners, and community -based organizations to deliver a platform that will prepare a skilled workforce for existing and new employers.*

Strategic Goal 2: Enhance service delivery to employers and jobseekers.

Strategic Goal 3: Increase awareness of the State's Talent Development System.

Strategic Goal 4: Address Skills Gaps

(4) Waiver Alignment with Policy Priorities.

- (A) supporting employer engagement;**
- (B) connecting education and training strategies;**
- (C) supporting work-based learning;**
- (D) improving job and career results, and**
- (E) other guidance issued by the Department.**

Title I Response:

WIOA places an emphasis on pre-employment education and training as well as access to a continuum of work-based learning opportunities. Further, as stated in TEN 31-16, Registered Apprentices is a valuable work-based training opportunity and a proven model of job preparation that combines paid on-the-job training and related instruction to progressively increase workers' skill level and wages. The approval of these waivers will provide local boards more flexibility to utilize funding to support these strategies in their schools, connecting students to the training and education they need and providing employers with an expanded talent pipeline of available workforce. Additionally, while students who are defined as "in-school" theoretically already have supports available, many students are close to disengaging from the education system and the utilization of this waiver will allow local boards to connect with those students prior to dropping out, connecting them to different education and training strategies that will increase their likelihood of success and improving job and career results.

(5) Individuals affected by the waiver and Impact of Waiver on Services for Disadvantaged Populations or Individuals with Multiple Barriers to Employment.

Title I Response:

These waivers will provide local workforce development boards the flexibility to serve more youth and young adults in work-based learning, including apprenticeship, regardless of school status. It will facilitate the provision of the necessary funding and the ease of current regulations essential to designing programs that will aid youth and young adults in the preparation for long-term participation in Arkansas' labor force. Economic growth in Arkansas and its high-growth industries will be sustained with the infusion of skilled workers ready to fill current job openings and adequately trained for future openings. Additionally, this waiver supports Governor Sanders overall workforce vision and ensures all Arkansas students have opportunities for meaningful work-based learning experiences. Arkansas' students and eligible youth population, as well as Arkansas'

employers who need immediate assistance to fill open positions and train their future workforce, will benefit from these waivers.

(6) Processes to be Used.

- (A)** Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;
- (B)** Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;
- (C)** Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;
- (D)** Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.
- (E)** Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.

Title I Response:

State staff will monitor the implementation and outcomes of this waiver through monthly tracking of youth expenditures, utilization of reporting from the statewide data management system, and through programmatic and fiscal monitoring. The 10 local workforce development boards (LWDBs) in Arkansas will be engaged in monthly technical assistance meetings. All LWDBs, business, and organized labor will be provided the opportunity to comment on the waiver request through the public comment period of the PY24-27 WIOA Combined State Plan. ADWS assures all data collected and reported, including waiver outcomes, will be included in the WIOA Annual Report as required.

(7) The most recent data available regarding the results and outcomes observed through implementation of the existing waiver, in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver.

Title I Response:

The State is requesting renewal of the two previously approved waivers detailed above to enhance access, flexibility, service alignment, and effectiveness in serving youth participants.

While only three local workforce development boards have leveraged the approved waivers so far, at least seven others have expressed interest in utilizing the waivers if approved for renewal. The outcomes for initial usage indicate that more ISY participants were able to be served and provided with work experience in those three areas. Local workforce development board directors reported that establishing the foundations needed to broaden the youth focus (i.e., shift partially from OSY to ISY) requires time and dedicated effort to actively target ISY.



Agenda Item 5: Action
WIOA Combined State Plan PY '26-27
Modification





Agenda Item 6: Action
WIOA Regional & Local Plan PY '26-27
Modifications





Hugh McDonald
SECRETARY OF
COMMERCE

Cody Waits
DIRECTOR OF
WORKFORCE
CONNECTIONS

Modification Requirements for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Regional & Local Plans for Program Years (PYs) 2026 and 2027 Issuance NUMBER PY 26-XX

March 26, 2026

FROM: Eddie Thomas, Director- Office of Employment & Training

TO: Local Workforce Development
Board Chief Elected Officials
Local Workforce Development Board Administrators

SUBJECT: Regional and Local Plan Modification

Purpose: The purpose of this workforce system guidance is to provide modification requirements, submission process, and deadline for the required modification of the WIOA Regional and Local Plans for (PYs) 2026-2027. Local workforce development boards are expected to share this guidance with their respective board chairs and chief elected officials (CEOs).

References:

WIOA §102 and §103

Training and Guidance Letter (TEGL) 4-21

Training and Guidance Letter 07-25

[American's Talent Strategy: The Workforce for the Golden Age Arkansas Workforce Strategy](#)

Background: The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires each local workforce development board to submit a four-year plan to the Governor's administrative entity. Each plan must be modified at the end of the first two years to reflect changes in labor market and economic conditions or other factors affecting the implementation of the local plan, including but not limited to:

- Significant changes in local economic conditions;
- Changes in the financing available to support WIOA title I and partner-provided services;
- Changes in the LWDB structure, and
- The need to revise strategies to meet local area performance goals

For the purposes of developing and submitting Regional and Local Plan modifications for (PYs) 2026-2027, it is critical that local boards reevaluate economic and labor market information (LMI) and adjust strategies for what may currently be a different set of growing and declining industries, occupations, skills, and thereby ensuring Regional and Local Plan modifications reflect changes in the labor market and economic conditions and other factors affecting the implementation of Local Plans as required by WIOA §102(c)(3)(A).

Action Required: Local board members, in partnership with the chief elected official(s) must review and modify their regional and local plans. Modifications to the plan must be highlighted within the plan so that they are easily recognizable. Additionally, plan modifications must include and demonstrate how their plan aligns with the Arkansas Workforce Strategy and the United States Departments of Labor, Commerce, and Education's - America's Talent Strategy described below:

PILLAR I: Industry-Driven Strategies: The skill demands and hiring needs of industry must drive how workforce development programs train and prepare the participants they serve. Local employers should play a central role in defining in-demand skills, validating training models, and steering investments toward the roles and credentials that propel workers into secure, well-paying, and high-need American jobs. The public workforce system can support this pillar by prioritizing Registered Apprenticeships, Integrated Education and Training programs, and other high-quality work-based learning models; organizing employers into industry sector partnerships to identify high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand industry sectors and occupations and design workforce strategies to address their needs; aligning eligible training programs to career pathways within the State or regional economy; and targeting investments towards employer-led upskilling initiatives designed to fill talent shortages in priority industries.

PILLAR II: Worker Mobility: Individuals returning to the workforce or seeking better career opportunities should be able to take tangible steps that lead to upward mobility and long-term economic independence. Next-generation workforce and labor market intelligence tools should help participants identify their skills, understand skills-aligned career options and take intentional steps toward better-paying jobs. The public workforce system can support this pillar through several targeted strategies such as: clearly identifying credentials that are valued in the labor market to support informed decision making and support jobseekers to earn such credentials; developing informed customer choice policies designed to mitigate benefits cliffs; advancing innovative use of technology and labor market data, including employing competency-based assessments and benefits cliff navigation tools during intake into the public workforce system; and integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered tools including comprehensive talent marketplaces composed of comprehensive learner records or learning and employment records solutions, credential registries, and skills-based job description generators, that allow workers to advance based on demonstrated competencies. The public workforce system can also help connect disconnected workers to training opportunities that lead to self-sufficiency.

PILLAR III: Integrated Systems: The public workforce system must be unified, navigable, and built around the needs of its users. Job seekers should be able to access training and employment opportunities without getting lost in a maze of government agencies, and employers should be able to engage with the system just as easily to find talent and grow their workforce. The public workforce system can support this pillar by integrating disparate funding streams and improving service delivery through adopting shared eligibility standards across programs; implementing and scaling virtual service delivery practices to reduce overhead expenses; and advancing education and workforce alignment, streamlining intake processes, and implementing digital tools that help frontline staff guide individuals to the right services.

PILLAR IV: Accountability: Taxpayer funded workforce development programs must deliver measurable and transparent results for job seekers and employers. Ineffective training providers should be removed from public funding lists. Grantees' funding models should tie resources to outcomes, including through the expanded use of pay-for-performance contracts to ensure public investments generate measurable returns in employment, earnings, and credential attainment. The public workforce system can support this pillar by identifying and eliminating ineffective activities, adopting state-driven measures of program performance, establishing state and local area postsecondary attainment and labor force participation goals, redirecting funding to programs and

providers that demonstrate success in connecting Americans with high-wage jobs, and enhancing data linkages, including by exploring enhanced wage records, and publishing education and training programs in structured, open, linked, and interoperable data formats, to produce valid and transparent data that assesses the return on investment and the impact on closing talent gaps.

PILLAR V: Flexibility and Innovation: The public workforce system must be adaptable and designed for continuous iteration, with exponentially faster feedback loops between employers, educators, and training providers to ensure that programs can evolve in step with economic shifts, particularly those driven by AI. States and local communities need more control to tailor solutions to their regional economies without being constrained by outdated program rules or processes. The public workforce system can support this pillar by leveraging existing statutory authorities to promote flexibility and innovation within the system, braiding federal and state funding streams from multiple sources to support integrated career pathways, creating new models of workforce innovation built to match the speed and scale of AI-driven economic transformation, prioritizing AI literacy and skills development across the public workforce system, and developing pilot projects to drive rapid reskilling and fuel other AI-era innovations.

Regional Plan Modification Requirement [20 CFR§ 679.530]:

At the end of the first 2-year period of the 4-year local plan, the local workforce development boards within a planning region, in partnership with the appropriate chief elected officials, must review the regional plan, and prepare and submit modifications to reflect changes in:

- Regional labor market and economic conditions; and
- Other factors affecting the implementation of the local plan, including but not limited to changes in financing available to support WIOA title I and partner provided WIOA services.

Local Plan Modification Requirement [20 CFR§ 679.580]: At the end of the first 2-year period of the 4-year local plan, each local workforce development board, in partnership with the appropriate chief elected official, must review the local plan, and prepare and submit modifications to the local plan to reflect changes in:

- Labor market and economic conditions; and
- Other factors affecting the implementation of the local plan, including but not limited to:
 - Significant changes in local economic conditions,
 - Changes in the financing available to support WIOA title I and partner-provided services,
 - Changes to the Local WDB structure, and
 - The need to revise strategies to meet local area performance goals.

Note: Only regions specified by the State as described in WIOA §106(a) must submit regional plans.

Public Comment Period. Plan modifications must be posted for a 30-day period of public comment as described in WIOA §106(d). Notification of the posting of the regional/local plan(s) must be made simultaneously to all relevant regional/local stakeholders, as well as to AWC. The 30-day comment period must begin and be completed in time to meet the May 29, 2026, submission date.

Any comments received concerning the contents of the regional or local plan modifications must be addressed within that plan prior to the submission of the plan to AWC **[20 CFR §679.510(b); §679.550(b)].**

Submission. All modified regional/local plan packages must be submitted electronically to the following email address by close of business on May 29, 2026. Please submit electronically to: wioa@arkansas.gov.

Approval. Modifications to regional/local plans submitted to AWC are considered approved if AWC provides the point of contact with notification of approval; or at least 90 days has passed since the receipt of the modified plan by AWC and the plan point of contact has not received communication from AWC, whichever

comes first [WIOA § 108(e)].

Non-Approval. A regional or local plan submitted to AWC will not be approved for any of the following reasons [20 CFR 679.520; 679.570]:

1. There are deficiencies in workforce investment activities that have been identified through audits and the local area has not made acceptable progress in implementing plans to address deficiencies;
2. The plan does not comply with applicable provisions of WIOA and the WIOA regulations, including the required consultations and public comment provisions, and the nondiscrimination requirements of 29 CFR part 38; or
3. The plan does not align with the State Plan, including with regard to the alignment of the core programs to support the strategy identified in the State Plan in accordance with WIOA sec. 102(b)(1)(E) and § 676.105.

Inquiries: All questions or concerns may be submitted to the AWC WIOA Policy Team at wioata@arkansas.gov.

Appendix A: PY 2024 – 2027 Regional Plan Template

WIOA requires regional planning – a broad strategic approach to planning focused on the overarching vision, goals, alignment, and shared responsibilities within the region that meets the definition of a planning region, as defined in WIOA §3(48) and ADWS Policy No. WIOA I – 6.6.

The planning region must provide a complete response to the specified elements at the time of submission.

The following elements must be addressed in a narrative of 15 pages or less.

1.1. Provide the following:

- A. A reference name for the planning region;
- B. Identification of the local workforce development areas that comprise the planning region;
- C. Identification of the county/counties each local workforce development area serves;
- D. Identification of the key planning region committee members charged with drafting the regional plan;
- E. Indication of the local workforce development area each committee member is associated with; and
- F. A list of key planning region committee meeting dates *[WIOA §106(a) and (c)]*.

1.2. Provide a labor market and economic analysis of the workforce development planning region. This regional analysis must include:

- A. The economic conditions;
- B. Labor force employment and unemployment data;
- C. Information on labor market trends;
- D. Workforce development activities;
- E. The educational and skill levels of the workforce, including individuals with barriers; and
- F. The development and implementation of sector initiatives for existing and emerging in- demand industry sectors or occupations for the region.

Indicate the sources of regional labor market and economic data.

1.3. Based upon the regional labor market and economic conditions analysis and *Arkansas' Workforce Development Plan (PY24-27)* describe the planning region's economic and workforce development-oriented vision and strategic goals. *[WIOA §106(c) and §107(d)]*

1.4. Describe regional strategies used to facilitate engagement of businesses and other employers, including small employers and in-demand industry sector occupations. Describe methods and services to support the regional workforce system in meeting employer needs. *[WIOA §106(c)(1)(C)]*

1.5. Describe how the planning region will define and establish regional workforce development service strategies. Describe how the planning region will develop and use cooperative workforce development service delivery agreements. *[WIOA §106(c)(B)]*

1.6. Describe how the planning region will define and establish administrative cost arrangements, including the pooling of funds for administrative costs, as appropriate, for the region. *[WIOA*

§106(c)(E)]

- 1.7. Describe how the planning region will determine and coordinate transportation and other supportive services for the region. *[WIOA §106(c)(1)(F)]*
- 1.8. Describe strategies and services the planning region will employ to coordinate workforce development programs/services with regional economic development services and providers. *[WIOA §106(c)(G)]*
- 1.9. Describe how the planning region will establish an agreement concerning how the planning region will collectively negotiate and reach agreement with the Governor on local levels of performance for, and report on, the performance accountability measures described in WIOA § 116(c), for local areas and the planning region. *[WIOA §106(c)(H); 20 CFR 677.210(b) & (c); and 20 CFR 679.510(a)(2)]*

Regional Plan Modification

At the end of the first 2-year period of the 4-year plan, the local workforce development boards within the planning region, in partnership with the appropriate chief elected officials, must review the regional plan, prepare and submit modifications to reflect changes. Please provide detailed narrative responses to each of the following.

- Describe changes in regional labor market and economic conditions
- Describe other factors affecting the implementation of the local plan, including but not limited to changes in financing available to support WIOA title I and partner provided WIOA services

PILLAR I: Industry-Driven Strategies: The skill demands and hiring needs of industry must drive how workforce development programs train and prepare the participants they serve. Local employers should play a central role in defining in-demand skills, validating training models, and steering investments toward the roles and credentials that propel workers into secure, well-paying, and high-need American jobs. The public workforce system can support this pillar by prioritizing Registered Apprenticeships, Integrated Education and Training programs, and other high-quality work-based learning models; organizing employers into industry sector partnerships to identify high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand industry sectors and occupations and design workforce strategies to address their needs; aligning eligible training programs to career pathways within the State or regional economy; and targeting investments towards employer-led upskilling initiatives designed to fill talent shortages in priority industries.

PILLAR II: Worker Mobility: Individuals returning to the workforce or seeking better career opportunities should be able to take tangible steps that lead to upward mobility and long-term economic independence. Next-generation workforce and labor market intelligence tools should help participants identify their skills, understand skills-aligned career options and take intentional steps toward better-paying jobs. The public workforce system can support this pillar through several targeted strategies such as: clearly identifying credentials that are valued in the labor market to support informed decision making and support jobseekers to earn such credentials; developing informed customer choice policies designed to mitigate benefits cliffs;

advancing innovative use of technology and labor market data, including employing competency-based assessments and benefits cliff navigation tools during intake into the public workforce system; and integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered tools including comprehensive talent marketplaces composed of comprehensive learner records or learning and employment records solutions, credential registries, and skills-based job description generators, that allow workers to advance based on demonstrated competencies. The public workforce system can also help connect disconnected workers to training opportunities that lead to self-sufficiency.

PILLAR III: Integrated Systems: The public workforce system must be unified, navigable, and built around the needs of its users. Job seekers should be able to access training and employment opportunities without getting lost in a maze of government agencies, and employers should be able to engage with the system just as easily to find talent and grow their workforce. The public workforce system can support this pillar by integrating disparate funding streams and improving service delivery through adopting shared eligibility standards across programs; implementing and scaling virtual service delivery practices to reduce overhead expenses; and advancing education and workforce alignment, streamlining intake processes, and implementing digital tools that help frontline staff guide individuals to the right services.

PILLAR IV: Accountability: Taxpayer funded workforce development programs must deliver measurable and transparent results for job seekers and employers. Ineffective training providers should be removed from public funding lists. Grantees' funding models should tie resources to outcomes, including through the expanded use of pay-for-performance contracts to ensure public investments generate measurable returns in employment, earnings, and credential attainment. The public workforce system can support this pillar by identifying and eliminating ineffective activities, adopting state-driven measures of program performance, establishing state and local area postsecondary attainment and labor force participation goals, redirecting funding to programs and providers that demonstrate success in connecting Americans with high-wage jobs, and enhancing data linkages, including by exploring enhanced wage records, and publishing education and training programs in structured, open, linked, and interoperable data formats, to produce valid and transparent data that assesses the return on investment and the impact on closing talent gaps.

PILLAR V: Flexibility and Innovation: The public workforce system must be adaptable and designed for continuous iteration, with exponentially faster feedback loops between employers, educators, and training providers to ensure that programs can evolve in step with economic shifts, particularly those driven by AI. States and local communities need more control to tailor solutions to their regional economies without being constrained by outdated program rules or processes. The public workforce system can support this pillar by leveraging existing statutory authorities to promote flexibility and innovation within the system, braiding federal and state funding streams from multiple sources to support integrated career pathways, creating new models of workforce innovation built to match the speed and scale of AI-driven economic transformation, prioritizing AI literacy and skills development across the public workforce system, and developing pilot projects to drive rapid reskilling and fuel other AI-era innovations.

Appendix B: PY 2024 - 2027 Local Plan Template

WIOA requires each local workforce area to develop a local plan. If the local area is part of a planning region, as defined in WIOA §3(48) or ADWS Policy No. WIOA I – 6.6, the local plan must support and be submitted as a component of the associated regional plan. The narratives framed in the local plan will include more detailed, actionable plans and objectives, consistent with the local plan’s respective regional plan strategic visions and goals, if the local area is part of a planning region. The local plan must also support the strategic vision and goals of the Arkansas State Plan.

In addressing the elements outlined below, if the local board is not prepared to provide a complete response to a specific element at the time of plan submission, a response must be provided that indicates how the local board plans to fully address that element in the multi-year plan.

Local plans are not expected to exceed 75 pages.

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Section 1: Workforce and Economic Analysis

Please provide a separate response for each of the elements listed below.

- 1.1. Provide an analysis of the regional economic conditions, including existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations, and the employment needs of employers in those industry sectors and occupations. *[WIOA § 108(b)(1)(A); 20 CFR 679.560(a)]*

Note: Per WIOA §108(c), existing economic regional and/or local area analyses may be used if sourced data and/or derived analyses are economically relevant and current (i.e., within two years of this issuance guidance).

- 1.2. Provide an analysis of the knowledge and skills required to meet the employment needs of the employers in the local area, including employment needs for in-demand industry sectors and occupations. *[WIOA §108(b)(1)(B); 20 CFR 679.560(a)]*
- 1.3. Provide an analysis of the local workforce, including current labor force employment (and unemployment) data, and information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the local area, including individuals with barriers to employment. *[WIOA §108(b)(1)(C); 20 CFR 679.560(a)]*
- 1.4. Provide an analysis and description of workforce development activities, including type and availability of education, training, and employment activities. Include analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of such services, and the capacity to provide such services, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers in the local area. *[WIOA §108(b)(1)(D); 20 CFR 679.560(a)]*

Section 2: Strategic Vision and Goals

Section 2 responses will require input from members of the local workforce development board and other local stakeholders. Please provide a separate response for each of the elements listed below.

- 2.1 Describe the local board's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment). Include goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in WIOA §116(b)(2)(A) to support local economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. *[WIOA § 108(b)(1)(E)]*
- 2.2 Describe how the local board's vision and goals align with and/or supports the vision and goals for the State's workforce development system as established by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board. *[WIOA §108(b)(1)(E)]* (See Appendix D: Planning References and Resources)
- 2.3 Describe how the local board's vision and goals contributes to each of the governor's goals. *[WIOA §108(b)(1)(E)]* (See Appendix D: Planning References and Resources) **Note: The State Plan includes several objectives under each goal.**
- 2.4 Describe how the local board's goals relate to the achievement of federal performance accountability measures. *[WIOA §108(b)(1)(E)]*

Section 3: Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies

Many of the responses in this section, such as targeted sector strategies, should be based on strategic discussions with the local board and partners. Please provide a separate response for each of the elements listed below.

- 3.1 Considering the analysis described in Appendix B - Section 1, describe the local board's strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area, to achieve the strategic vision and goals described in element 2.1. This analysis must include:
 - A. A description of the local workforce development system; include key stakeholders and entities associated with administrative and programmatic/service delivery functions. Examples include elected officials, advocacy groups, local workforce development board and committee structure, fiscal agent, operator(s), required program partners, and major contractors providing Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth program elements. Describe respective roles and functional relationships to one another.
 - B. A list of all Arkansas Workforce Centers in the local area; include address, phone numbers, and hours of operation; and
 - C. An attached organization chart that depicts the local board, administrative and fiscal entities, and service providers. *[WIOA §108(b)(1)(F)]*
- 3.2 Describe the workforce development system in the local area that identifies the programs that are included in that system and how the local board will work with the entities carrying out core and other workforce development programs to support alignment to provide services, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et. seq), that support the strategy identified in the State Plan under WIOA section 102(b)(1)(E). *[WIOA §108(b)(2)]*

Note: The six (6) core programs identified by WIOA are: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Education and Literacy, Wagner-Peyser Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation.
- 3.3 Describe how the local board, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment, including how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable). *[WIOA §108(b)(3)]*
- 3.4 Identify and describe (for each category below) the strategies and services that are and/or will be used to:
 - A. Facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs in addition to targeted sector strategies.
 - B. Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses.

- C. Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development; and
- D. Strengthen linkages between the one-stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

This may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, work-based learning programs, apprenticeship models, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies that support the local board's strategy in element 3.1. *[WIOA §108(b)(4)(A) & (B)]*

- 3.5 Describe local and regional efforts to support and/or promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services, in coordination with economic development and other partners. *[WIOA §108(b)(5)]*
- 3.6 Describe how the local board coordinates education and workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. *[WIOA §108(b)(10)]*
- 3.7 Describe efforts to coordinate supportive services provided through workforce investment activities in the local area, including facilitating transportation for customers. *[WIOA § 108(b)(11)]*
- 3.8 Describe strategies to implement the operational goals of the local one-stop system, maximizing coordination of services provided by the State's employment services under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.), and the local board's service providers to improve services and avoid duplication. *[WIOA §108(b)(12)]*
- 3.9 Describe how the local board will carry out a review of local applications submitted under WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy, consistent with the local plan (as described in WIOA §107(d)(11) and WIOA §232). *[WIOA §108(b)(13)]*
- 3.10 Based on the analysis described in Appendix B - Section 1, identify the industries where a sector partnership is currently being convened in the local area or where there will be an attempt to convene a sector partnership and the timeframe. Categorize the sector partnerships as active, emerging, or exploring as defined below.
 - Active
 - Has a clear coordinator, convener, or convening team;
 - Is led by industry as demonstrated by private sector members playing leadership roles;
 - Has broad industry engagement as demonstrated by industry members attending meetings, partnering on activities, providing in-kind or financial resources, or similar;
 - Includes critical and engaged partners across programs from workforce development;
 - Can demonstrate that the partnership is not "just a workforce thing," "just an economic development thing," or "just an education thing."
 - Operates in a true labor market region, not within the confines of a workforce area or other geopolitical boundaries;
 - Operates under shared strategic plan, road map, etc.;

- Can demonstrate clearly identified priorities and an action plan, be able to demonstrate recent or current activities, services or products that are a direct outcome of the partnership.
- Emerging
 - Has at least an interim coordinator, convener, or convening team;
 - Has engaged at least one private sector champion to help drive the launch and implementation of a sector partnership;
 - Includes individuals from workforce development, education, economic development and other programs or organizations in strategic partner roles;
 - Actively working to implement strategic priorities outlined in a launch meeting.
- Exploring
 - Is in the infancy stage, but actively considering or planning the preparation needed to launch a partnership;
 - Working to identify partners who would be involved;
 - Determining if the partnership really makes sense for the community.

3.11 Does the local board currently leverage or have oversight of funding outside of WIOA Title I funding to support the local workforce development system? If so, briefly describe the additional funding and how it will impact the local system. If the local board does not currently have oversight of additional funding, describe any plans to pursue them.

Section 4: Program Design and Evaluation

Many of the responses below should be based on strategic discussions between the local board and one-stop partners. Please provide a separate response for each of the elements listed below.

- 4.1 Describe the one-stop delivery system in the local area including:
- A. The local board's efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services, including contracted service providers and providers on the eligible training provider list, and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and jobseekers. *[WIOA §108(b)(6)(A)]*
 - B. How the local board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system in remote areas, using technology, and through other means. *[WIOA §108(b)(6)(B)]*
 - C. How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one stop partners, will comply with WIOA section 188, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. *[WIOA §108(b)(6)(C)]* (See Appendix D: *Planning References and Resources*)
 - D. List all required and optional program partners; indicate the program(s) each partner provides and the physical location where the program(s) can be accessed. Describe the roles and resource contributions of the partners. *[WIOA §108(b)(6)(D)]*
 - E. Describe how the workforce centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated technology- enabled intake and case management information system for core programs. *[WIOA §108(b)(21)]*
- 4.2 Describe the local board's assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area. *[WIOA §108(b)(7)]*
- 4.3 Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities. *[WIOA §108(b)(8)]*
- 4.4 Describe the local board's assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce activities, including activities for youth with disabilities. Identify successful models and best practices for youth workforce activities relevant to the local area. *[WIOA §108(b)(9)]*
- Note:** This section must include a description of the program design elements as well as how the local area will implement the 14 program elements.
- 4.5 Describe how training services will be provided in accordance with WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(G), the process and criteria for issuing individual training accounts. *[WIOA §108(b)(19)]*

- 4.6 If contracts for training services are used, describe processes utilized by the local board to ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided. *[WIOA §(b)(19)]*
- 4.7 Describe the process utilized by the local board to ensure that training provided is linked to in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area, or in another area to which a participant is willing to relocate. *[WIOA §108(b)(22); WIOA §134(c)(3)(G)(iii)]*

Section 5: Compliance

Responses are focused on the local area's compliance with federal or state requirements. Please provide a separate response for each of the elements listed below.

- 5.1 Describe the replicated cooperative agreements, as defined by WIOA 107(d)(11), in place between the local board and the Vocational Rehabilitation programs operated in the area with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. *[WIOA §108(b)(14)]*
- 5.2 Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds as determined by the Chief Elected Official(s). *[WIOA §108(b)(15)]*
- 5.3 Describe the competitive processes to award the subgrants and contracts for activities funded by WIOA Title I programs within the local area. This includes, but is not limited to, the process used to award funds to a one-stop operator and other sub-recipients/contractors of WIOA Title I adult, dislocated worker, and youth services. *[WIOA §108(b)(16)]*
- 5.4 Describe the local area's negotiated local levels of performance for the federal measures and their implications upon the local workforce system; attach the completed Performance Targets Template. *[WIOA §108(b)(17)]*

Note: See Appendix C: Planning References and Resources "Performance Targets Template".

- 5.5 Describe the indicators used by the local board to measure performance and effectiveness of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers and the one-stop delivery system, in the local area. *[WIOA §108(b)(17)]*
- 5.6 Describe the process used by the local board for the receipt and consideration of input into the development of the local plan in compliance with WIOA section 108(d). Describe the process to provide an opportunity for public comment prior to submission of the local plan. Be sure to address how members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education were given an opportunity to provide comments on the local plan. *[WIOA §108 (b)(20)]*
- 5.7 Prior to the date on which the local board submits a proposed local plan, the proposed local plan must be made available to members of the public through electronic and other means.
 - A. Describe how the local board made the proposed local plan available for public comment. *[WIOA §108(d)(1)];*
 - B. Describe how the local board collected and considered public comments for inclusion in the proposed local plan. *[WIOA §108(d)(2)];* and
 - C. If any comments were received that represent disagreement with the proposed local plan, include such comments within the local plan's attachments. *[WIOA §108(d)(3)]*
- 5.8 List the name, organization, and contact information of the designated equal opportunity officer for each workforce center within the local area.

Section 6: Plan Assurances

Planning Process and Public Comment		References
6.1 <input type="checkbox"/>	The local board has processes and timelines, consistent with WIOA Section 108(d), to obtain input into the development of the local plan and provide the opportunity for comment by representatives of business, labor organizations, education, other key stakeholders, and the public for a period that is no less than 30 days.	WIOA Sections 108(d); 20 CFR 679.550(b)
6.2 <input type="checkbox"/>	The final local plan is available and accessible to the public.	20 CFR 679.550(b)(5)
6.3 <input type="checkbox"/>	The local board has established procedures to ensure public access (including people with disabilities) to board meetings and information regarding board activities, such as board membership and minutes.	WIOA Section 107(e); 20 CFR 679.390 and 679.550
Required Policies and Procedures		References
6.4 <input type="checkbox"/>	The local board makes publicly available any local requirements for the public workforce system, such as policies, including policies for the use of WIOA Title I funds.	20 CFR 679.390
6.5 <input type="checkbox"/>	The local board has established a written policy or procedure that identifies circumstances that might present conflict of interest for any local workforce development board or entity that they represent and provides for the resolution of conflicts.	WIOA Section 107(h); 20 CFR 679.410(a)-(c)
6.6 <input type="checkbox"/>	The local board has copies of memoranda of understanding between the local board and each one-stop partner concerning the operation of the one-stop delivery system in the local area and has provided the State with the latest versions of its memoranda of understanding.	WIOA Section 121(c); 20 CFR 678.500-510
6.7 <input type="checkbox"/>	The local board has written policy or procedures that ensure one-stop operator agreements are reviewed and updated no less than once every three years.	WIOA Section 121(c)(v)
6.8 <input type="checkbox"/>	The local board has negotiated and reached agreement on local performance measures with the local chief elected official(s) and the Governor.	WIOA Sections 107(d)(9) and 116(c); 20 CFR 679.390(k) and 677.210(b)
6.9 <input type="checkbox"/>	The local board has procurement policies and procedures for selecting one-stop operators, awarding contracts under WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funding provisions, and awarding contracts for Youth service provision under WIOA Title I in accordance with applicable state and local laws, rules, and regulations, provided no conflict exists with WIOA.	WIOA Sections 121(d) and 123; 20 CFR 678.600-615 and 681.400
6.10 <input type="checkbox"/>	The local board has procedures for identifying and determining the eligibility of training providers and their programs to receive WIOA Title I individual training accounts	WIOA Sections 107(d)(10), 122(b)(3), and 123; 20 CFR 679.370(l)-(m) 680.410-430

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6.11 The local board has written procedures for resolving grievances and complaints alleging violations of WIOA Title I regulations, grants, or other agreements under WIOA and written policies or procedures for assisting customers who express interest in filing complaints at any point of service, including, at a minimum, a requirement that all partners can identify appropriate staff contacts and refer customers to those contacts.</p>	<p>WIOA Section 181(c); 20 CFR 683.600</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6.12 The local board has established at least one comprehensive, full-service one-stop center and has a written process for the local Chief Elected Official and local board to determine that the center conforms to the definition therein.</p>	<p>WIOA Section 121(e)(2)(A); 20 CFR 678.305</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6.13 All partners in the local workforce and education system described in this plan ensure the physical, programmatic and communications accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials in one-stop centers for individuals with disabilities.</p>	<p>WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR parts 37.7-37.9; 20 CFR 652.8(j)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6.14 The local board ensures that outreach is provided to populations and sub-populations who can benefit from one-stop services.</p>	<p>WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR 37.42</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6.15 The local board implements universal access to programs and activities to individuals through reasonable recruitment targeting, outreach efforts, assessments, service delivery, partner development, and numeric goals.</p>	<p>WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR 37.42</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6.16 The local board complies with the nondiscrimination provisions of Section 188 and assures that Methods of Administration were developed and implemented.</p>	<p>WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR 37.54(a)(1)</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6.17 The local board collects and maintains data necessary to show compliance with nondiscrimination provisions of Section 188.</p>	<p>WIOA Section 185; 29 CFR 37.37</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6.18 The local board complies with restrictions governing the use of federal funds for political activities, the use of the one-stop environment for political activities, and the local board complies with the applicable certification and disclosure requirements.</p>	<p>2 CFR Part 225 Appendix B; 2 CFR Part 230 Appendix B; 48 CFR 31.205-22; RCW</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6.19 The local board ensures that one-stop Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) and business services staff, along with the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker program partner agency, will continue to provide services to agricultural employers and MSFWs that are demand-driven.</p>	<p>WIOA Section 167</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6.20 The local board follows confidentiality requirements for wage and education records as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended, WIOA, and applicable Departmental regulations.</p>	<p>WIOA Sections 16(i)(3) and 185(a)(4); 20 USC 1232g; 20 CFR 677.175 and 20 CFR part 603</p>
Administration of Funds		References
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>6.21 The local board has a written policy and procedures to competitively award grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities (or applicable</p>	<p>WIOA Section 108(b)(16); 20 CFR</p>

	federal waiver), including a process to be used to procure training services made as exceptions to the Individual Training Account process.	679.560(a)(15); WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(G); 20 CFR
6.22	<input type="checkbox"/> The local board has accounting systems that follow current Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and written fiscal-controls and fund-accounting procedures and ensures such procedures are followed to insure proper disbursement and accounting of WIOA adult, dislocated worker, and youth program funds.	WIOA Section 108(b)(15)
6.23	<input type="checkbox"/> The local board ensures compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA through annual, on-site monitoring of each local sub-recipient.	WIOA Section 184(a)(3); 20 CFR 683.200, 683.300, and 683.400-410
6.24	<input type="checkbox"/> The local board has a written debt collection policy and procedures that conforms with state and federal requirements and a process for maintaining a permanent record of all debt collection cases that supports the decisions made and documents the actions taken with respect to debt collection, restoration, or other debt resolution activities.	WIOA Section 184(c); 20 CFR Part 652; 20 CFR 683.410(a), 683.420(a), 683.750
6.25	<input type="checkbox"/> The local board will not use funds received under WIOA to assist, promote, or deter union organizing.	WIOA Section 181(b)(7); 20 CFR 680.850
Eligibility		References
6.26	<input type="checkbox"/> The local board has a written policy and procedures that ensure adequate and correct determinations of eligibility for WIOA-funded basic career services and qualifications for enrollment of adults, dislocated workers, and youth in WIOA-funded individualized career services and training services, consistent with state policy on eligibility and priority of service.	20 CFR Part 680 Subparts A and B; 20 CFR Part 681 Subpart A
6.27	<input type="checkbox"/> The local board has a written policy and procedures for awarding Individual Training Accounts to eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth receiving WIOA Title I training services, including dollar and/or duration limit(s), limits on the number of times an individual may modify an ITA, and how ITAs will be obligated and authorized.	WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(G); 20 CFR 680.300-320
6.28	<input type="checkbox"/> The local board has a written policy and procedures that establish internal controls, documentation requirements, and leveraging and coordination of other community resources when providing supportive services and, as applicable, needs-related payments to eligible adult, dislocated workers, and youth enrolled in WIOA Title I programs.	WIOA Sections 129(c)(2)(G) and 134(d)(2); 20 CFR 680.900-970; 20 CFR 681.570

<p>6.29 <input type="checkbox"/> The local board has a written policy for priority of service at its workforce centers for local workforce providers that ensures veterans and eligible spouses are identified at the point of entry, made aware of their entitlement to priority of service, and provided information on the array of employment, training and placement services and eligibility requirements for those programs or services.</p>	<p>Jobs for Veterans Act; Veterans' Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act; 20 CFR 1010; TEGL 10-09</p>
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Local Plan Modification

At the end of the first 2-year period of the 4-year local plan, each local workforce development board, in partnership with the appropriate chief elected official, must review the local plan, and prepare and submit modifications to the local plan to reflect changes. Please provide detailed responses to each of the following elements:

Describe changes in labor market and economic conditions; and other factors affecting the implementation of the local plan, including but not limited to:

- Significant changes in local economic conditions,
- Changes in the financing available to support WIOA title I and partner-provided services,
- Changes to the Local WDB structure, and
- The need to revise strategies to meet local area performance goals.

PILLAR I: Industry-Driven Strategies: The skill demands and hiring needs of industry must drive how workforce development programs train and prepare the participants they serve. Local employers should play a central role in defining in-demand skills, validating training models, and steering investments toward the roles and credentials that propel workers into secure, well-paying, and high-need American jobs. The public workforce system can support this pillar by prioritizing Registered Apprenticeships, Integrated Education and Training programs, and other high-quality work-based learning models; organizing employers into industry sector partnerships to identify high-wage, high-skill, or in-demand industry sectors and occupations and design workforce strategies to address their needs; aligning eligible training programs to career pathways within the State or regional economy; and targeting investments towards employer-led upskilling initiatives designed to fill talent shortages in priority industries.

PILLAR II: Worker Mobility: Individuals returning to the workforce or seeking better career opportunities should be able to take tangible steps that lead to upward mobility and long-term economic independence. Next-generation workforce and labor market intelligence tools should help participants identify their skills, understand skills-aligned career options and take intentional steps toward better-paying jobs. The public workforce system can support this pillar through several targeted strategies such as: clearly identifying credentials that are valued in the labor market to support informed decision making and support jobseekers to earn such credentials; developing informed customer choice policies designed to mitigate benefits cliffs; advancing innovative use of technology and labor market data, including employing competency-based assessments and benefits cliff navigation tools during intake into the public workforce system; and integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered tools including

comprehensive talent marketplaces composed of comprehensive learner records or learning and employment records solutions, credential registries, and skills-based job description generators, that allow workers to advance based on demonstrated competencies. The public workforce system can also help connect disconnected workers to training opportunities that lead to self-sufficiency.

PILLAR III: Integrated Systems: The public workforce system must be unified, navigable, and built around the needs of its users. Job seekers should be able to access training and employment opportunities without getting lost in a maze of government agencies, and employers should be able to engage with the system just as easily to find talent and grow their workforce. The public workforce system can support this pillar by integrating disparate funding streams and improving service delivery through adopting shared eligibility standards across programs; implementing and scaling virtual service delivery practices to reduce overhead expenses; and advancing education and workforce alignment, streamlining intake processes, and implementing digital tools that help frontline staff guide individuals to the right services.

PILLAR IV: Accountability: Taxpayer funded workforce development programs must deliver measurable and transparent results for job seekers and employers. Ineffective training providers should be removed from public funding lists. Grantees' funding models should tie resources to outcomes, including through the expanded use of pay-for-performance contracts to ensure public investments generate measurable returns in employment, earnings, and credential attainment. The public workforce system can support this pillar by identifying and eliminating ineffective activities, adopting state-driven measures of program performance, establishing state and local area postsecondary attainment and labor force participation goals, redirecting funding to programs and providers that demonstrate success in connecting Americans with high-wage jobs, and enhancing data linkages, including by exploring enhanced wage records, and publishing education and training programs in structured, open, linked, and interoperable data formats, to produce valid and transparent data that assesses the return on investment and the impact on closing talent gaps.

PILLAR V: Flexibility and Innovation: The public workforce system must be adaptable and designed for continuous iteration, with exponentially faster feedback loops between employers, educators, and training providers to ensure that programs can evolve in step with economic shifts, particularly those driven by AI. States and local communities need more control to tailor solutions to their regional economies without being constrained by outdated program rules or processes. The public workforce system can support this pillar by leveraging existing statutory authorities to promote flexibility and innovation within the system, braiding federal and state funding streams from multiple sources to support integrated career pathways, creating new models of workforce innovation built to match the speed and scale of AI-driven economic transformation, prioritizing AI literacy and skills development across the public workforce system, and developing pilot projects to drive rapid reskilling and fuel other AI-era innovations.



Agenda Item 7: Action
USDOE Connecting Talent to Opportunity
(CTO Challenge)





Scaling the Talent Marketplace through Collaborative, High-Impact Focus

The **Connecting Talent to Opportunity (CTO) Challenge** is a \$15 million national initiative led by the U.S. Department of Education to help states build or scale integrated **Talent Marketplaces**—digital systems that connect individuals’ skills, credentials, and experiences to education and employment opportunities. <https://www.cto-challenge.com/>

The challenge addresses a major national issue: declining labor force participation and persistent skills gaps, especially in key sectors like manufacturing and skilled trades. By improving how skills are recognized and communicated, the initiative aims to expand workforce participation and strengthen economic competitiveness.

A Talent Marketplace is a public, interoperable platform that brings together several key components:

- **Learning and Employment Records (LERs)** to provide verified, portable records of skills and experience
- **Credential registries** that make degrees and non-degree credentials transparent and comparable
- **Skills-based job tools** that help employers define roles based on skills and competencies rather than credentials alone
- **AI-powered matching systems** that connect learners, workers, educators, and employers

The CTO Challenge is state-led, with governors serving as the primary applicants and coordinating cross-sector teams that include workforce agencies, education providers, and employers. The State Perkins Agency, AEFLA Agency, State Workforce Agencies, and State Workforce Board are required team members. States may participate as either “builders” creating new systems or “scalers” enhancing existing ones. A multi-phase competition running from 2026 to 2028, the challenge provides funding, technical assistance, collaboration opportunities, and a national community of practice.

Arkansas LAUNCH is poised as a national model for open, public talent marketplaces. Over the next year, LAUNCH will release LER functionality that will utilize skills data in the Arkansas Credential Registry to enrich verified credentials. In turn, these skills data will connect learners and workers to employment opportunities through LAUNCH’s skills-based job description generator. The State of Arkansas proposes entering the CTO Challenge as a Scaler, leveraging the technical assistance and funding provided by this award to enhance LAUNCH by strengthening verified skills data in high-impact education and workforce training programs and demonstrating interstate interoperability with the Alabama Talent Triad.

Arkansas will prioritize education and workforce training efforts in the Southwest region, focusing on high-impact sectors of advanced manufacturing, aerospace, and skilled trades that support the energy industry. These efforts will primarily center on community college programs funded through Perkins Career and Technical Education—serving both secondary and postsecondary students—as well as programs included on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Eligible Training Provider List.



Agenda Item 8: Action
USDOL Reentry Employment in Skilled
Trades, Advanced Manufacturing,
Registered Apprenticeships, and Training
(RESTART) grant





News Release

US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR ANNOUNCES \$81M TO SUPPORT TRAINING, EMPLOYMENT FOR FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

RESTART grants to prioritize skilled trades, high-demand industries

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Labor announced the availability of approximately \$81 million in [grant funding to assist people reentering their communities after being incarcerated](#) by helping them gain experience and secure employment in skilled trades and high-demand industries.

The Reentry Employment in Skilled Trades, Advanced Manufacturing, Registered Apprenticeships, and Training initiative grants will enable organizations to provide training programs to formerly incarcerated individuals in skilled trades and high-demand industries. The department will give priority consideration to applicants focused on shipbuilding as well as those partnering with Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors.

“Through our RESTART Program, the Labor Department is offering Americans with a criminal background an opportunity to learn in-demand skills and find mortgage-paying jobs,” said U.S. Secretary of Labor Lori Chavez-DeRemer. “The Trump Administration remains committed to building a skilled workforce that will drive our economy into the future and help every American worker become self-sufficient.”

Administered by the department’s [Employment and Training Administration](#), the RESTART grants will provide individuals with criminal records or those once involved in the criminal justice system the training necessary for employment in targeted industries. Such training and employment services include pre-apprenticeships; work-based learning; AI and digital literacy training; credential attainment; and paid work experiences, with a specific focus on placing participants into the proven model of Registered Apprenticeships.

The department intends to fund up to 20 RESTART projects nationwide, with approximately \$30 million allotted for national or regional intermediary organizations serving youth and young adults and up to \$5.1 million for individual awards. The remaining funds will be awarded to states, territories, and tribes to support state-led projects that integrate RESTART grant activities with the public workforce system under the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#). These grants will leverage existing workforce infrastructure and ensure effective strategies can be sustained after the grant period.

[Read more about grant funding opportunities, including technical assistance and grant guidance webinars.](#)

[Learn more about RESTART grant eligibility and how to apply.](#)

Agency: Employment and Training Administration

Date: February 25, 2026

Release Number: 26-208-NAT

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