

ARKANSAS

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

ISSUE NO 6 | JUNE 2023



WIOA CORE PARTNER—REHAB SERVICES OVERVIEW

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services' (ARS) mission is to prepare Arkansans with disabilities to work and lead productive and independent lives. To achieve its mission, ARS provides a variety of training and career preparation programs. There are 19 field offices across the state serving all 75 counties where individuals can receive assistance with accessibility and training needs that can lead to successful employment. Earning a living is a basic right and is valuable for both the individual and the community. A person with a disability faces barriers in various life activities that include the opportunities to train for, locate, and/or keep a job. ARS helps individuals overcome these obstacles by focusing on ability rather than disability. It's good business for everyone. For every dollar spent in Arkansas on Vocational Rehabilitation, roughly seven dollars is returned to the state's economy. With 19 offices statewide, ARS has counselors who work out of regional offices and travel to specific locations in the counties they serve on a regular schedule to ensure better accessibility of our services.

<https://dws.arkansas.gov/ARS>

Board Chairman
Tom Anderson



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Broadband Information
You May Find Interesting

AWDB Social Media Links

Facebook— 84 followers
www.facebook.com/AWDBBoard

Twitter— 234 followers
[@AWDBBoard](https://twitter.com/AWDBBoard)



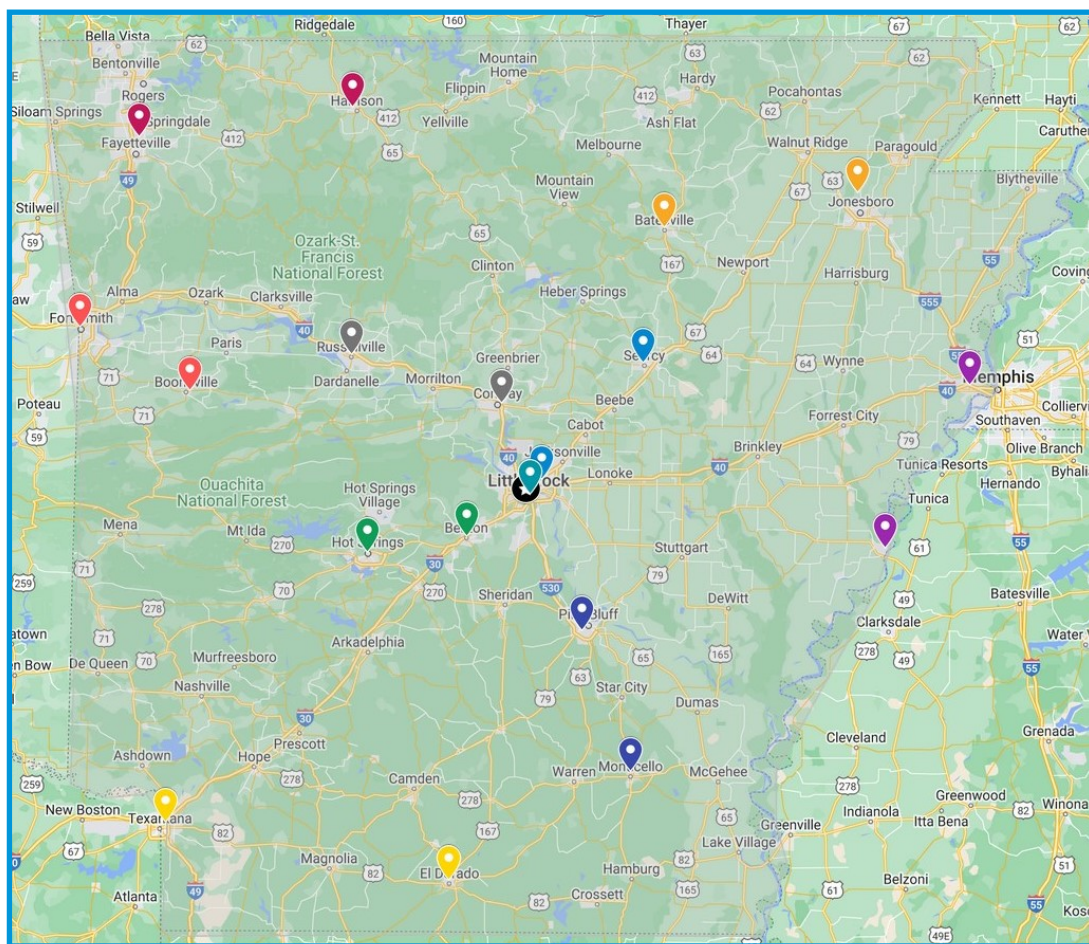
ARS Field Services

The Field Service program is the main program within ARS. It assists with career and technical education, various training programs, transition services, on-the-job training, supported employment, job placement/business engagement, and independent living services. In addition, Field Services provides services for the deaf and hard of hearing and a program for small business assistance. Anyone who is a legal Arkansas resident and determined eligible for services can qualify. Services are provided in each of our 19 field offices and can also be accessed statewide within the Arkansas Workforce Centers. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) Field Services offers various services to help individuals with disabilities obtain and/or maintain competitive employment in the community. The services offered by ARS are vast, and our vocational rehabilitation services team members are ready to help you get started. Services are currently being provided via phone, teleconference, and in person. Here is the Vocational Rehabilitation Process at a glance:

1. Meet with a counselor to complete the application for services.
2. Provide medical records and/or participate in assessments offered through ARS.
3. Receive eligibility determination from a counselor within **60** days of application.
4. Meet with a counselor to develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) within **90** days of eligibility determination. **I** – Individualized: Explore **individual** strengths to identify your work goal. **P** – Plan: Develop a **plan** to help you meet your work goal. **E** – Employment: **Engage** with your counselor and service providers to obtain skills needed to obtain and/or maintain your work goal.
5. Services will be implemented and continue until employment is obtained and maintained for 90 days.

ARS Office Locations

- ★ ARS Main Office
- Fayetteville
- Harrison
- Batesville
- West Memphis
- Helena
- Fort Smith
- Booneville
- Russellville
- Conway
- Hot Springs
- Benton
- North Little Rock
- Searcy
- Texarkana
- El Dorado
- Pine Bluff
- Monticello
- Little Rock
- Jonesboro



Business Services

As a workforce development partner, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) assists clients with finding the right job so they can lead productive and independent lives. Business Relations Services also assists businesses in achieving a competitive advantage by offering qualified job candidates who are trained in a wide variety of skills and have the good work habits that employers value. ARS-Business Services can help to keep an employee with a disability productive on the job, find qualified applicants, reduce hiring costs, or enhance an employer's workforce diversity programs. By combining disability expertise and community resources with a real understanding of today's global workforce challenges, ARS-Business Services delivers quality services that help employers sustain their operations. We can reduce your recruitment costs by pre-screening applicants and save you money with our on-the-job training and retention services. We can provide you with information on qualified tax breaks such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. Our business services are customized, and many are free.

<https://dws.arkansas.gov/ar-rehabilitation-services/business-services/>

Transition Special Projects

Transition Special Projects include two separate programs that serve youth with disabilities.

Project SEARCH® is a unique, business-led, nine-month employment readiness training program for young adults with developmental disabilities that takes place entirely at the workplace. Total workplace immersion facilitates a seamless combination of employability training, work, and life skills: money management, professionalism, technology, soft skills, and social skills. Interns complete 3 ten-week internship rotations at a partnering host business with the goal of gaining the necessary skills to obtain competitive integrated employment.

The Transition Employment Program (TEP) is a one-week comprehensive pre-employment transition service held on the campus of the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts (ASMSA) in Hot Springs. TEP was developed by the Arkansas Transition Project and the Arkansas Career Development Center. It was designed to assist high school students with disabilities that have completed the 11th grade in discovering their skills, abilities, interests, strengths, and career goals.

TEP provides career guidance and opportunities for participants to gain employability skills.

<https://dws.arkansas.gov/ar-rehabilitation-services/transition-special-projects/>

Complete the referral form here:



Kaitlyn Hawkins' journey to becoming a Registered Nurse is a testament to her determination. Despite her disabilities, she never let the conditions get in the way of her dreams. In 2014, she came to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to help her further her education after high school.

With the guidance of her counselor, Kaitlyn was able to overcome her limitations and achieve successful employment as an LPN in June 2019 after studying at Indian Capital Technology Center in Sallisaw, Oklahoma. Two years into her career, she decided to pursue her RN licensure. It was not an easy road, as she had developed an additional anxiety disorder, but with lots of studying, she completed RN training at North Arkansas Community College in December 2022.

On January 4, 2023, Kaitlyn passed her NCLEX examination on the first try and officially became a Registered Nurse. She now works at Mercy Hospital in Booneville, Arkansas. With this new credential, she has increased her knowledge and doubled her hourly wage.

Congratulations, Kaitlyn, on your incredible success. We are so proud to have supported you through all your accomplishments and can't wait to see what else the future holds for you!



Success Stories

Determined to pursue her dreams of becoming a professional counselor, Lia Childress came to ARS looking for tuition assistance. She applied to the University of Arkansas to complete her master's degree in counseling.

After some initial setbacks, Lia was finally granted the necessary financial aid to start her studies in February 2020. Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, Lia excelled in her studies, demonstrating her strong work ethic and unwavering dedication to her chosen profession. She never achieved less than a B in any of her classes and completed her degree with a 3.8 GPA.



Lia's hard work paid off, and upon graduation, she found employment at Eason Counseling and Associates, specializing in transracial adoption, depression, and ADHD, among other things.

When asked about working as an established professional counselor, Lia said, "As a new therapist, I am eager to embark on the fulfilling journey of helping others from all walks of life. My top priority as a therapist is the well-being of my clients, and I am dedicated to creating a safe and nurturing space for everyone who walks through my door. I want my clients to feel supported and understood, no matter their personal background, race, ethnicity, or cultural history."

Breakdown of State Workforce Board Functions

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board is responsible for assisting the Governor in twelve specific activities that are outlined in the legislation (A.C.A. §15-4-3706). Last month, we covered the first of the 12 roles. This month, we will tackle the second.

BOARD FUNCTION 4 OF 12

(4) The development and updating of comprehensive state performance accountability measures, including state adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the core programs in the state;

- Who is the responsible party for developing and updating state performance accountability measures? ADWS Employment Assistance Unit negotiates with USDOL.
- Where are these measures found? WIOA State Plan
- What are “state adjusted levels of performance”? These are determined by USDOL after the use of their Statistical Model.
- If the assessments prove that a program is not effective, then what happens? The Local Area’s program model would have to be modified, in some fashion. For example, if a Local Area is devoting too much of their funding toward career services and not meeting performance, then perhaps they need to adjust their strategy and devote more funding towards training to increase their Entered Employment, Earnings, and Credentials Performance Measures.
- What is the worst-case scenario if performance is not met? When local areas do not meet performance, there can be serious ramifications. The Governor may decertify a local board if a local area fails to meet the local performance accountability measures for 2 consecutive program years. This may mean fewer local areas, the termination of providers and other consequences. The board should be helping to assess and monitor this. When a local board is not performing, next steps could be ADWS suggesting to the State Board that they make the case to the Governor to decertify. Pretty harsh, but it is the law, and should only be recommended when its extreme and the local area is showing no evidence or willingness to improve.

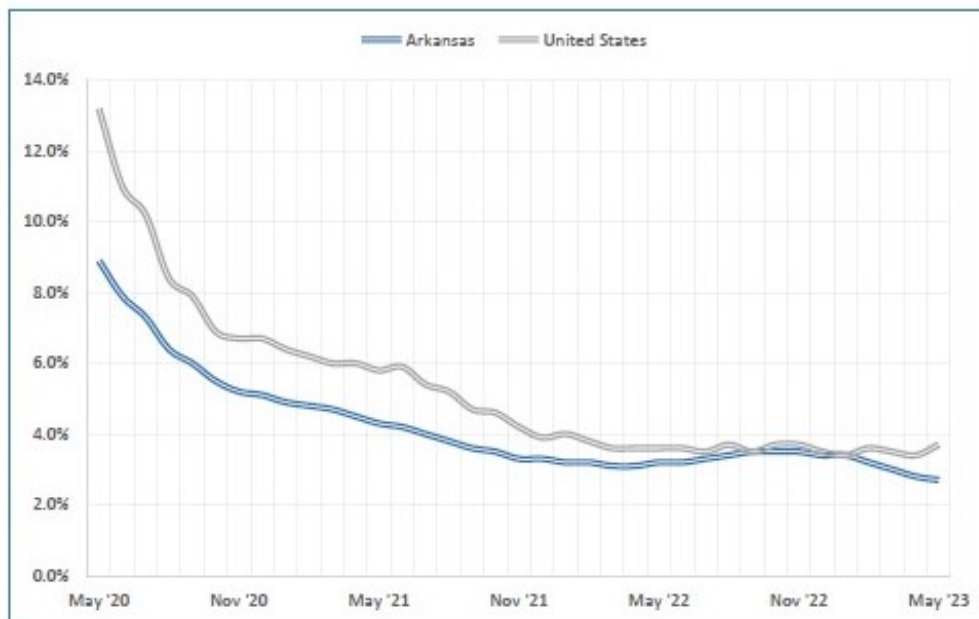
Labor Force

Arkansas Civilian Labor Force (Seasonally Adjusted)

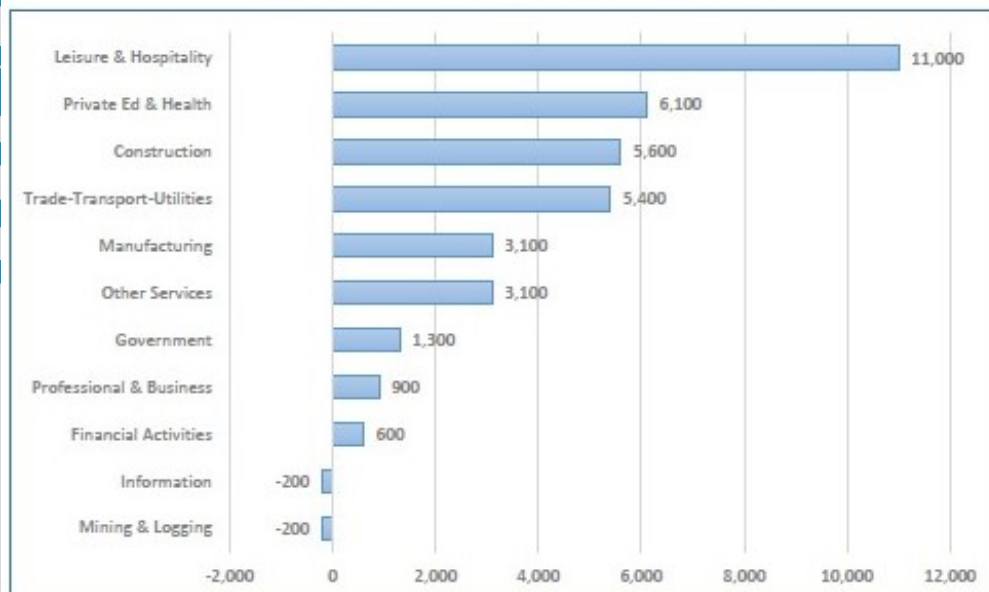
	May 2023	April 2023	May 2022	Change from April 2023	Change from May 2022
Civilian Labor Force	1,380,752	1,378,421	1,370,505	2,331	10,247
Employment	1,343,657	1,339,400	1,326,982	4,257	16,675
Unemployment	37,095	39,021	43,523	-1,926	-6,428
Unemployment Rate	2.7%	2.8%	3.2%	-0.1%	-0.5%
Labor Force Participation Rate	57.5%	57.5%	57.7 %	0.0%	-0.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. More information about the data is available at <https://www.bls.gov/cps/definitions.htm>

Seasonally Adjusted Unemployment Rates
Arkansas vs. United States (3-Year Comparison)



Job Gains/Losses by Major Industry Sectors
May 2022 to May 2023 (Not Seasonally Adjusted)



For more Labor Market Data, visit our website at www.discover.arkansas.gov

May 2023

Participation Rate

State official briefs Chamber on employment portal

MALLORY WYATT
TEXARKANA GAZETTE



Texarkana Chamber of Commerce CEO and President Denis R. Washington, left, and Arkansas' Chief Workforce Officer Mike Rogers speak before the beginning of the State of the Industry and Workforce talk at the Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday in Texarkana, Texas. (Staff photo by Mallory Wyatt)

TEXARKANA, Ark. — Texarkana's Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday hosted Arkansas' Chief Workforce Officer Mike Rogers for a talk regarding industry and workforce.

Rogers was appointed by Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders in February of this year and explained during the meeting that the Workforce Cabinet was developing an employment portal to make the job searching and hiring process easier.

"We're designing out a system in Arkansas to use that I call a cross between eHarmony meets Indeed," Rogers said. "I'm measuring and matching the

psychometric capabilities of a person and what they think are important, because generationally, situationally a lot of different things vary, but they need to be attractive to the employer."

Rogers said the system may sound like dating but that a long-term relationship between a company and a worker is what is typically wanted. He mentioned that the portal will be designed to hold records of employment data to show the experience of each worker, along with preventing "professional onboarders."

"They'll come to your onboarding, and then they'll quit because all they have to do is sit there and tolerate 40 hours of videos about safety and they're experts on that. And once they have to work, they quit. Then they will just professionally onboard everywhere they go and they're hiding in the system because we can't capture them," Rogers said.

Rogers said the system would assess and identify a person's IQ , EQ , aptitude, ability to demonstrate knowledge and situational existence measurement.

Rogers explained situational existence measuring as an employer being able to meet a potential employees' needs such as being cannabis-friendly, having daycare nearby or being able to work four 10 hour shifts rather than the traditional 8-to-5 day.

"Employers can seek out candidates, and job seekers can seek out cultures, and it comes together," Rogers said.

Rogers said he and Arkansas' Secretary of Corrections Joe Profiri are developing an intake form to assess each person sent to a prison facility.

"The member's assessment is also mapped with the seriousness of the crime, the sentence and what they're coming into us with," Rogers said.

"Imagine the scenario where the inmate is working 40 hours a week and half of their income is going towards their cost of living. That sheds the \$21,000 that the state of Arkansas is paying for each inmate times 30,000."

Rogers went on to say that 5% goes towards commissary, which will help with motivation to go to work, while the remaining 45% would get escrowed for when the person is released.

"How do we get them to a place where now they have verifiable work records, they have a attendance, they have certifications, they can demonstrate what they've done, and they have 45% of their wages saved for them so they can have a month's rent or their down payment on a house or they can buy transportation?" Rogers said.

Rogers shared how inmates in Arkansas are required to have housing within 24 hours of release in order to be able to begin their probation and paying their penalties and fines.

"We're shipping them in worse than we received them," Rogers said.

Rogers also shared plans to assist veterans with finding compatible jobs, saying they were usually ready to work and already know chain of command and how to follow a technical system.

"They're looking for a new place to serve, but we do a terrible job of matchmaking. We do a terrible job arranging these opportunities, even though every state gets a DD214 from the Department of the Defense before that transition military comes back," Rogers said.

Rogers shared ambitions to extend usage of the portal to high school students and increase the respect of a person that is ready for working, not just for college.

He said the Arkansas Employment portal should be ready by September of this year.

BOLD

BROADBAND OPPORTUNITIES AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

K-12 Career Awareness Toolkit



CREATING A SKILLED WORKFORCE

Increasing demand for broadband alongside historic initiatives to deploy state-of-the-art networks throughout the United States are highlighting the need to ensure a skilled workforce for the communications industry. Expert professionals will be needed to meet an array of demands including network design and engineering; construction; cybersecurity; operations, and repairs; and support for internal operations including marketing and in-house management. These demands will continue even after initial infrastructure deployment is completed as vital communications networks require ongoing maintenance and upgrades to meet evolving growth and market demands.

In response, Smart Rural CommunitySM and the National Rural Education Association (NREA) present BOLD: Broadband Opportunities and Leadership Development. BOLD is a toolkit to guide K-12 schools and rural broadband providers as they work together to cultivate broadband career awareness among high school and younger students. These efforts complement other initiatives of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association (NTCA) that promote learning and work opportunities for post-secondary learners.

BOLD aims to help locally operated communications providers and educational leadership facilitate skilled labor pipelines by aligning K-12 educational programming to industry needs. This toolkit recognizes that there is no “one-size-fits-all solution.” Accordingly, BOLD draws from the broad perspective of NTCA’s more than 850 members and combines it with the expertise of NREA to offer best practices that individual schools and companies can adapt to their unique community needs.



NTCA represents more than 850 independent, family-owned and community-based telecommunications companies providing voice and broadband services in rural areas. NTCA’s members build and deliver connectivity and operate essential services in rural and small-town communities across the United States. For more information, please visit www.ntca.org.



NREA is the voice of all rural schools and rural communities across the United States. In an increasingly confusing system, NREA helps educators navigate through the noise by finding and helping educators use the resources needed to educate today’s students. For more information, please visit www.nrea.net.



Smart Rural Community promotes collaboration among locally operated rural broadband providers and other leaders to identify and deploy broadband-enabled solutions to improve agriculture, economic development, education, healthcare, and other vital services in rural spaces. For more information, please visit www.smartruralcommunity.org.

About the Author

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For additional information, please contact smartrural@ntca.org.

BUILDING A CONNECTED FUTURE

Who drives these efforts?

The deployment and operation of advanced broadband networks requires specialized skills across several disciplines. Rural broadband leadership, working with local schools, can increase awareness of career opportunities in the industry and ultimately enable the cultivation of a skilled workforce. In contrast, a lack of awareness could result in a future shortage of skilled workers. This would not only affect the communications sector, but also have an impact on the ability of rural communities to engage vital benefits such as telehealth, education, telework, and other broadband-enabled services.

Career awareness will include cultivating not only technical proficiencies but also soft skills such as teamwork and collaboration; communications; and problem solving. Participants in this effort will include educators (state and local, including superintendents and principals); industry (locally operated rural broadband providers, engineers, and construction firms); and national and state telecom trade associations. The importance of these collaborative efforts cannot be underestimated: Schools are the primary point of contact for students and play an integral role in assisting students to identify and assess their skills, talents, and interests, while industry leaders are positioned to understand current and future market demands.

How can students be introduced to broadband?

Schools and industry can work together to cultivate, relate, and demonstrate. The primary goal is the cultivation of student awareness of careers in the rural broadband industry. Bridging the “relevance gap,” *i.e.*, the potential challenge students might face relating classroom instruction to life experiences, is critical. Studies find that interest in academic material declines when students do not relate what they learn in school to their lives and interests outside of school. Educators and the broadband industry can help students understand careers in broadband—and identify the relevance of related coursework—by illuminating for students the role that broadband and broadband-enabled applications play in their lives, starting with the devices they often hold in their hands or the computers they use at their desk. These include voice and text communications, connected devices (including smart home appliances), entertainment, gaming, agriculture, and streaming services. As educators highlight the connections between learning and life and the various academic offerings that serve as bridges between them, students can be exposed to the broad range of career opportunities that are available in the broadband sector and encouraged to explore how they connect to their individual interests. These can include network deployment

An infographic with a blue and red background featuring binary code (0s and 1s) and glowing light streaks. The text is in white and yellow.

Average U.S.
broadband speed
to **increase**

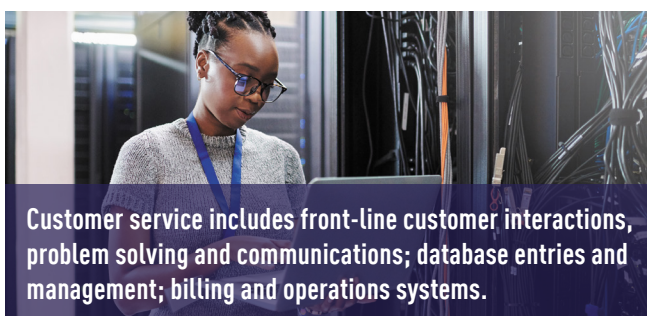
143%
2019–2023

An infographic with a blue background featuring binary code (0s and 1s) and glowing light streaks. The text is in white and yellow.

Video streaming
increased

35%
2021–2022

SAMPLE JOBS/CATEGORIES



Source: Brookings Institute

(engineering, construction), operations (coding, cybersecurity), and management (marketing, customer-facing engagements, leadership). As interests may change across the journey of a student's career, educators can incorporate exposure to the broadband industry through existing programs such as career fairs and counseling as students prepare for graduation. It is worth noting, as well, long-term career potential in the industry by highlighting that many current senior managers and executives in rural broadband companies started at entry-level positions, including such jobs as linemen or maintenance operators.

When do we begin?

A key question that often arises when schools and industry explore career awareness efforts is, "When should we begin?" While some programs focus on middle school years (grades 6-8), building career awareness can begin as early as elementary school (K-5). The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) identifies grade 3 as a stage when students can be introduced to recognize that individuals have unique interests; to help students identify their interests; to recognize different jobs that exist in their communities; and to understand that jobs and roles can evolve over time. The PDE approach progresses to milestones through middle school and beyond, addressing such topics as the relationships between personal interests and careers, as well as pathways to career training including two-and-four colleges; career and technical training; apprenticeships; and the military. The PDE model culminates with grade 11 instruction in job applications, interviewing skills, and resume writing.

Importantly, these or approaches like these should not intend to constrain a student's future choices, but rather serve as an opportunity to introduce students to various career pathways with the understanding that interests and aptitudes can change over time, and may lead students in different directions. The specific inquiries of students at each age level differ: Younger students

are often interested in the day-to-day activities of the job, while older students are often interested initially in salaries and compensation. High school can be an opportune time to explain the respective roles of wages and benefits, including health insurance and retirement investment plans, in overall compensation. Early high school is also an important time to engage introductory conversations that help students understand the transition to post-secondary options, which may include direct entry to the workforce, two- or four-year colleges (including trade colleges), apprenticeships, or careers with the military that can take advantage of GI Bill or ROTC opportunities.

WHAT CAREERS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE BROADBAND INDUSTRY?

“Guide to Careers in Rural Telecommunications,” published by the Foundation for Rural Service (www.frs.org), offers a comprehensive guide to career pathways. The resource offers an easy-to-follow organizational chart of a typical rural communications company, including executive, technical, customer-facing, and management/administrative roles and describes nearly 30 career paths in rural telecom that contemplate a wide range of disciplines and skills ranging from technical education to management and business training.

The guide offers a “behind the scenes” look at the many careers that power the devices and applications that students (and their parents and teachers) use on a daily basis. From cybersecurity to construction to engineering to customer service, rural telecom offers opportunities that are at once at the edge of technology and at home in rural spaces.

PROFILE **Norvado** (Cable, WI)

Leaders from a locally operated broadband provider in Wisconsin observed, “Rural high school students in northern Wisconsin think they have two options when they graduate: move away for work or attend college out of town.” To change those perspectives, Norvado hosted fifty students for a Youth Mentorship Event in the telecommunications field. Students, teachers, and area leaders received hands-on, real-world experience of what it takes to connect rural areas to cutting-edge communications technology. They also learned from industry experts what it’s like to drive innovation that builds opportunities in rural spaces.

Students from area high schools toured Norvado’s headquarters, learned about post-secondary education options, and worked through three interactive breakout sessions in Broadband and IT Network Overview, Fiber Optics and the Customer Network, and The Real World of Marketing.



What you see at home dictates what you do. Farmer, banker, doctor, teacher—exposure carries a tremendous impact affecting students' interest in careers. And broadband is exciting, how it contributes to our social and professional lives, how vital broadband is to economic energy. Imagine a day without broadband—and inspire students to be part of the industry that is a part of their daily lives.



WORKING TOGETHER

Education and awareness can be pursued in the classroom, career days, and in hands-on internships or similar student work experiences. Rural broadband providers and schools can work together to identify existing resources as well as new curricula that align with the dual goals of building career awareness and introducing students to skills necessary for work in the broadband industry. The growing use of online learning can encourage educators and industry to identify strategies for reaching dispersed students.

Locally operated broadband providers can play an important role in assisting schools to adapt and/or incorporate new educational initiatives. Industry may consider incentives to encourage schools' participation, including supplies and materials for hands-on training. Industry may also consider offering guest lecturers or instructors for industry-related topics. And, as noted by some providers, "A little swag never hurt" is a simple yet potentially effective consideration for creating attractive first impressions at school or community

PROGRESSIVE STEPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Aptitude-based Guidance



- **Identify** students' talents

Academic Advisement



- **Link** students with counselors who can match abilities and interests with career options

Advising and Recruiting



- **Connect** students with potential post-secondary employers

Certification



- **Earn** high school or post-secondary credits for classroom and/or work experience



\$60+
BILLION

Devoted by recent Federal legislation to expand broadband networks throughout the country

>8%



Growth in telecom installer and repairer jobs 2021–2031, per U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

career days. Flexibility is important, too, so that students have sufficient opportunity to sample experiences across a range of choices.

Additionally, it is important to find a champion who believes in the mission of educating students and expanding their perspectives of careers that they can achieve in their home communities. The local telecom industry, in regional coordination with state telecom associations, can help identify enthusiastic ambassadors who can convey the value of exploring opportunities “at home.” Local telecom staff and retired telecom leadership can serve as guest lecturers and explain how high-tech jobs can be found “here at home.” Schools and industry can review best-practices of early adopters and work with organizations outside of traditional state and local government offices. Public interest, philanthropic, and economic development organizations can be partners to support local opportunity-building programming.

Local broadband leadership, including state associations, can help form advisory boards to assist schools to identify and create educational and outreach offerings.

Experiences

Effective student experiences transcend the classroom. Locally operated broadband providers can support flexible, personalized experiences that are delivered within traditional CTE (career and technical education) courses or work/school experience for high-school or early college credit. Post-secondary Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) credits can create degree options for previously underserved populations. Broadband companies can work with schools to host on-campus career days; “job shadowing” opportunities and ride-alongs; internships; and special forums and seminars.

CORE COMPETENCIES

- Coding
- Computer Science
- Electrical Engineering
- Environmental Studies
- Mechanics
- Robotics
- Technology

ADMINISTRATION/MARKETING

- Accounting
- Management
- Marketing
- Web Design

SOFT SKILLS

- Communications
- Collaboration
- Problem Solving
- Public Speaking

PROFILE

Opportunities in Esports

Esports is projected to reach more than \$315 million in U.S. market value in 2023. For schools, esports offers an extracurricular activity that cultivates team building, problem solving, and collaboration while building core technology competencies demanded by the expanding rural broadband market. The virtual nature of esports transcends geographic barriers and brings together people from varied backgrounds. The Entertainment Software Association reports a nearly even split between men and women engaging video games (52%/48%), with an average age of 33 years old.

Paul Bunyan Communications (Bemidji, Minn.) collocates TechXpo with its gaming championship to demonstrate how gamers can leverage their technical skills and enthusiasm into successful careers. The company's Gigazone Gaming Championship is a regional tournament that showcases Paul Bunyan's IT and web development teams. NTCA members report successful recruiting for IT and other tech positions from the gaming community.




Photo: Joshua Seidemann

TOP OF MIND QUESTIONS

The following are representative introductory questions and issues for local educators and leaders to consider:

- Q** When does the school begin teaching students about careers?
- Q** Does the school have a career and technical education (CTE) program?
- Q** Does the school accommodate internship opportunities?
- Q** Does the school have a career fair or career day?
- Q** Can local industry employers speak at school?
- Q** Does the school offer career guidance?
- Q** Does the school offer aptitude and skills testing?
- Q** Does the school coordinate with other regional schools?
- Q** Typically, how many seniors enter the workforce; college; trade colleges; military?



- 
- Q** Can industry leaders join or form a curriculum advisory board?
 - Q** What types of resources would the school need to support CTE programs?
 - Q** Does the current curriculum offer courses that teach “soft skills”?
 - Q** Does the school have the resources it needs to help students prepare for careers? How can industry participate and assist?
 - Q** What type of public or private funding or grant opportunities might be available?

PROFILE

National Rural Education Association— Hardeman County Schools (TN)

The National Rural Education Association (NREA) developed Career Advising Specialist micro-credentialing to assist career guidance and identify “living wage” careers that do not require two- or four-year college degrees.

NREA also developed the K-12 Career Development Framework that focuses on grades K-5, 6–8, and 9–12. This approach is based on current research and aligned to Social Emotional Learning (SEL) standards.

NREA worked with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in rural Southwest Tennessee to create a talent pipeline for emerging tech careers. An initial focus on economically-disadvantaged students and minorities can help industry and communities identify local

talent. Hardeman County also developed a Future Ready course that is required for all 9th graders that includes time management, collaboration, creative problem solving, goal setting, digital literacy, self-awareness, and acting honestly as examples of the content.



PROFILE

Profile: HTC, Inc. (Horry, SC)

HTC, Inc. was a key organizer of a Pathways2Possibilities, career fair that attracted 2,000 eighth graders from several surrounding communities. The goal of this program was to introduce junior high school students to career paths in various industries. HTC used this event to explain career paths that include business, marketing, finance, IT, and tech engineering. HTC brought a bucket truck and fiber splicing equipment to the event. The expo included other career representatives, including ag, education, energy, health sciences, law and public safety, and transportation.



Photo: HTC, Inc.

There are all types of innovative steps that we can take to bring these opportunities to the kids. For example, a telecom camp where the students get a week's experience in the field and office to see how a telecom system and company work. Or work with local colleges to promote STEM camp with a focus on broadband. And commercial-type videos about the industry could go a long way toward getting good attention at career fairs—a short video with someone on hand to answer questions and explain more about the industry.

We can show students that they don't need to move to San Francisco to work for a tech company—we have one right here.

Photo: CassComm



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Academic Standards for Career Education and Work, Pennsylvania Department of Education (<https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Career%20and%20Technical%20Education/CEWStandards/Main/Career%20Education%20and%20Work%20Standards.pdf>).

Best Practices in Middle School Career and Technical Education Expansion, Hanover Research (Dec. 2020) (<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/CTE/Best-Practices-in-Middle-School-Career-and-Technical-Education-Expansion.pdf>).

Career Connected Learning, New York City Public Schools (<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/subjects/career-and-technical-education>).

Guide to Careers in Rural Telecommunications, Foundation for Rural Service (2022) (<https://www.ntca.org/sites/default/files/documents/2023-02/2023%20FRS%20Guide-Final-online.pdf>).

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