



**INNOVATE**

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

# Arkansas Workforce Development Board

BOARD ORIENTATION / TRAINING

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Crowne Plaza  
Little Rock, Arkansas





# Introduction

## The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014

Between 1998 and 2014, the public workforce system, authorized under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), made important achievements in helping job seekers acquire the skills and credentials needed for good jobs and matching employers to qualified workers.

During this period, the nation has experienced strong economic times, the Great Recession, and continuing budget uncertainty. The work of the committed partners in the system – including states, State and Local Workforce Investment Boards, American Job Centers (Arkansas Workforce Centers), federally-funded partner programs, training providers, non- and for-profit organizations, and other service intermediaries – has been extraordinary.

On July 22, 2014, President Barack Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) into law. Both the Senate and House passed WIOA with wide, bipartisan support. The passage of WIOA provides new authorizing legislation for programs that had been authorized under WIA.

WIOA is landmark legislation designed to improve our nation's public workforce system and help put Americans back to work. WIOA makes it easier for the public workforce system to help workers acquire the skills employers need and help employers access the talent pool they need to compete and win in a global economy.

WIOA establishes an integrated, job-driven public workforce system that links diverse talents to businesses. The needs of businesses and the available workforce drive workforce solutions.

WIOA strengthens the alignment of workforce development system's six core programs by imposing unified strategic planning requirements, common performance accountability measures, and requirements governing the one-stop delivery system.

## The Arkansas Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2015

In the State of Arkansas, the 90<sup>th</sup> General Assembly passed the Arkansas Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Arkansas Act 907 of 2015). This important piece of legislation, a companion to the federal WIOA, outlined a workforce development plan for Arkansas. This

plan seeks to increase access for Arkansans, particularly those individuals with barriers to employment, to opportunities for employment, education, training, and support services. Arkansas Act 907 of 2015 provides the necessary framework whereby the alignment of the state's workforce development, education, and economic development systems can be achieved. This fully alignment will result in a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system that will address the employment and skill needs of workers, jobseekers, and employers. As a result, family-sustaining wages for individuals and economic growth for communities, regions, and the global competitiveness of the state will be achieved.

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# Chapter 1

## The Arkansas Workforce System

*The Arkansas Workforce System is a statewide network of various partners located within workforce centers which provide an array of employment services and connect customers to work-related training and education.*

*Under the WIOA, Arkansas seeks to enhance its high quality workforce center system by continuing to align investments in workforce, education, and economic development to regional in-demand jobs. The new state and federal laws place greater emphasis on workforce centers achieving results for jobseekers, workers, and businesses.*

*WIOA reinforces the partnerships and strategies necessary for one-stops to provide high-quality career services, education and training, and supportive services needed by job seekers and workers while also assisting businesses in finding skill workers.*

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### **THE ARKANSAS WORKFORCE SYSTEM PURPOSE**

The purpose of the Arkansas Workforce System is to provide career options for our state's workers and jobseekers while simultaneously meeting the needs of the state's employers. Job seekers receive services that upgrade their occupational skills and improve their job retention capabilities in order to fit the workforce needs of area employers. The Arkansas Workforce System focuses on providing skilled workers for employers and integrating people into the workforce.

Overall, the system contributes to the quality of the workforce, reduces dependency on public assistance, and enhances the productivity and competitiveness of the state and local economy.

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**GUIDING  
PRINCIPLES  
OF THE  
WORKFORCE  
SYSTEM**

Guiding principles of the workforce system include:

- **Economic Development:** recognizing the critical link between workforce development activities and the growth of the economy.
  - **Employer Driven:** the system is driven to meet the demands of business and industry and based on the ever changing requirements of the workplace. Focusing on business needs creates a stronger, interactive role for employers and Boards.
  - **Streamline Services:** integrated intake and case management that streamlines services and information to the community through a One-Stop system (the Arkansas Workforce Centers). The keystone of the system is the workforce center – physical and virtual locations where all available federal, state, and local workforce services can be integrated.
  - **Flexibility:** providing increased state and local flexibility to implement innovative and comprehensive workforce systems. Changes are made regularly to respond quickly in a rapidly changing economic environment.
  - **Universal Access:** ensuring universal access to basic workforce services.
  - **Customer Choice:** working with employers to identify their workforce needs and empowering job seekers to move rapidly into employment by choosing services that best suit their needs. Customer satisfaction is a specific indicator of success, as measured by the quality, relevance, and responsiveness of services.
  - **Accountability:** increasing the accountability of the state, local boards, and contractors for appropriate use of tax dollars toward achieving successful performance outcomes. The system is based on clear, measurable indicators of success. Training providers must meet or exceed state and local board performance standards and the results are made public.
  - **Customized Training:** training strategies tailored to meet the individual customer's needs. Workforce solutions tailored to meet a community's unique needs.
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## ***AN EMPLOYER-DRIVEN SYSTEM***

The Arkansas Workforce System provides a strong role for Boards and the private sector, and increases state and local flexibility in designing workforce services that foster and support employers' emergent needs, as well as local economic development efforts. The system emphasizes a demand-centered model for service delivery, based on the skill demands of employers.

An employer-driven system places employers in the preferred customer group – meeting employer needs first is essential to meeting the needs of job seekers. Services that address the ever changing needs of business and industry, such as directing funds toward retraining current workers, help increase company productivity and profitability. This promotes increased stability and sustainability within the local economy.

This approach encourages employers to engage with the workforce system in leadership roles by serving on Boards. It also emphasizes the fact that regardless of where or how preparation takes place, all job seekers compete within a local labor market unless they move or commute.

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## ***THE BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP***

Achieving an employer-driven workforce system depends on the system's ability to establish ongoing relationships with area businesses and training institutions that foster and champion employers' needs for skilled workers and job seekers with access to quality education, skills training and jobs.

To build these "quality supplier/purchasing-agent" relationships, the workforce system must understand the needs of business, work with employers to solve workforce problems, and design solutions that positively affect the employer's "bottom line." The suitability and quality of these solutions will determine whether the relationships flourish.

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**WORKFORCE  
SERVICES TO  
EMPLOYERS**

The board can be a creative and supportive partner with business and industry by implementing a flexible workforce system that offers services to employers that cover a broad spectrum of needs including:

- matching employers' job openings with qualified applicants
- providing customized services to employers, such as outreach, intake, and screening
- working with state and local economic development entities to attract new employers
- providing economic and labor market information for a specific area, including wage and salary information that helps existing employers sustain and expand their business
- enabling rapid response to aid companies who are facing or trying to avert layoffs
- recruiting job candidates
- conducting pre-employment assessments for businesses, including new companies moving into the local workforce area
- matching local companies with educational institutions that provide specific employment certificate programs for jobs projected to be in demand in the local area's labor market
- arranging education and skills training for new and current workers, including customized training for individual employers or industries
- assisting in developing or obtaining customized training and associated labor market data
- sponsoring business-focused seminars on topics such as tax credits and local labor market conditions
- providing information and technical assistance on federal and state rules and regulations affecting employment
- providing assistance to employers who are restructuring.



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**WORKFORCE  
SERVICES TO JOB  
SEEKERS**

Services to job seekers must complement the employers' needs by:

- matching qualified job seekers with the right employer
  - providing timely outreach and registration
  - offering job search, job referral and placement assistance
  - conducting career counseling
  - maintaining and providing up-to-date labor market information, including:
    - local, regional and national employment trends
    - job vacancies
    - skills needed for Board-targeted demand occupations
  - assessing skills and needs promptly
  - assuring the availability of resource rooms (e.g. Internet access, resume writing, job search assistance, etc.)
  - disseminating information on available services
  - conducting individual job development
  - creating individual employment plans
  - providing short-term prevocational services
  - offering relevant occupational skills training
  - combining workplace training with related instruction to foster a cooperative education
  - providing skills upgrading and retraining
  - offering job readiness training
  - providing entrepreneurial training
  - offering adult education and literacy
  - providing on-the-job training (OJT)
  - offering customized training.
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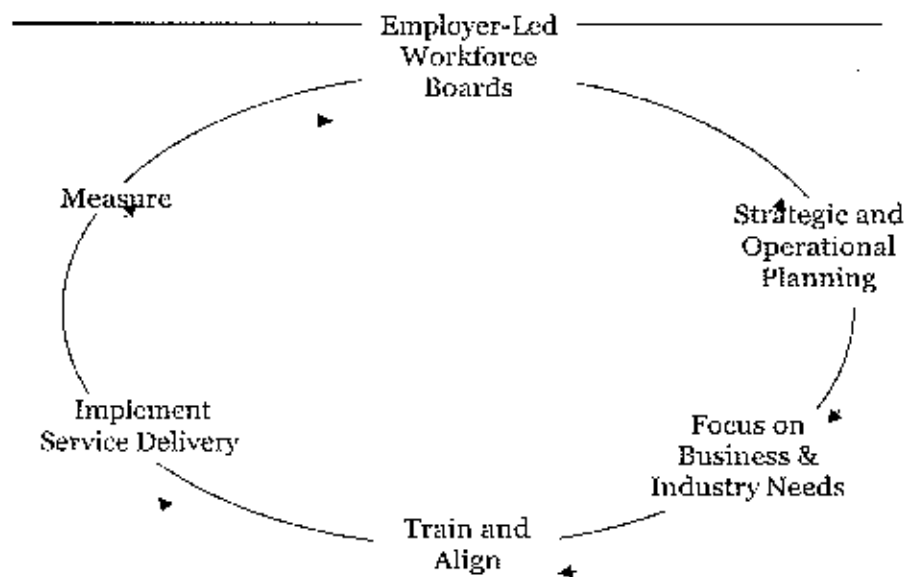
## Chapter 2

### Arkansas Workforce Centers

*Local Workforce Development Boards are responsible for establishing Arkansas Workforce Centers for the delivery of services to employers and jobseekers. These centers serve the community by providing a broad array of services and are accountable for establishing links to all segments of the local community in order to develop innovative employment and training partnerships. As a new board member, you should visit a local workforce center to observe workforce service delivery in action.*

*The State Workforce Development Board has the critical role of leading and guiding the State's implementation of WIOA, which requires aligning Federal investments in job training, integrating service delivery across programs, and ensuring that workforce investments are job-driven and match employers with skilled workers. The State Workforce Development Board serves as a convener of State, regional, and local workforce system partners to enhance the capacity and performance of the workforce development system and align and improve employment, training, and education programs, and through these efforts, promote economic growth.*

*The Arkansas Workforce Development Board's (AWDB) role as a strategic convening place where key stakeholders and partnerships come together can be accomplished only if each AWDB member is an active participant in the business of the Board. AWDB members must establish a platform in which all members actively participate and collaborate closely with the required partners of the workforce development system, and other stakeholders, including public and private organizations. This engagement is crucial in the AWDB's role to help integrate and align a more effective job-driven workforce development system that invests in the connection between education and career preparation.*



**FOUNDATION  
FOR SUCCESS**

The revitalized workforce center concept is characterized by three critical hallmarks of excellence:

- The needs of businesses and workers drive workforce solutions;
- Workforce centers provide excellent customer service to jobseekers and employers and focus on continuous improvement; and
- The workforce system supports strong regional economies and plays an active role in community and workforce development.

This approach aims to facilitate an employer-driven, customer-friendly, efficient, and effective system that achieves results.

## **GOAL OF ARKANSAS WORKFORCE CENTERS**

The goal of Arkansas Workforce Centers is to establish a local system that serves employers and job seekers in all aspects of employment and training.

The system has two major features:

- an **employer services** feature that provides labor market information, job matching, and workforce development services, including customized services for specific employers
- a network of **career development centers** featuring career counseling, job placement assistance, and other career services, supported by electronic access to comprehensive labor market information.

The centers are among the most important parts of the Arkansas Workforce System. The centers should have current and complete information on the local employment and training environment to enable customers to obtain the necessary workforce development services. Arkansas Workforce Centers should be a high profile and integral part of the community.

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## **WHY A WORKFORCE CENTER?**

Through the workforce center system, you have the ability to serve the community and provide a broad array of services and job information in one location. To ensure full access to services throughout a local workforce development area, a comprehensive system could include:

- Comprehensive, or full-service centers, that provide a full array of workforce development programs and access to certain other specified programs.
- Satellite locations for targeted populations such as employers, dislocated workers, and youth, that may not include all programs and services, but are connected to a full-service center.
- Affiliate sites such as stand-alone partner program facilities and virtual sites, but are connected to a full-service center.

**WHY A  
WORKFORCE  
CENTER?  
--continued--**

Based on customer needs, the Board determines the best use of their resources. They can choose to provide a workforce system that includes a combination of full-service centers, satellite locations, and affiliate sites.

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**ACCESSING  
SERVICES**

How do employers and job seekers access the system? This system gives employers and job seekers a number of different avenues for accessing the information and labor market services they need.

Employers and job seekers may contact an Arkansas Workforce Center in person, by telephone, or by computer. The importance of an integrated approach to providing workforce services is the ability of the employer to connect with the same workforce system, regardless of how or where the employer or job seeker makes contact, rather than having to visit one of several unrelated programs.

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**OPERATIONAL AND  
FUNCTIONAL  
REQUIREMENTS  
FOR A WORKFORCE  
CENTER**

The Arkansas Workforce Center Certification Criteria identify several operational requirements for a workforce center. The goal of the certification process is to develop a world-class workforce center network that goes well beyond the minimal requirements established by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. It is critical to make the centers user friendly and attractive, creating a public image that is inviting to job seekers, education seekers, and employers seeking skills and talent in the local labor markets.

A significant key to implementing the Arkansas Workforce Center system was the “no wrong door” approach to providing services that encompasses the principles of universal access, integration, co-location, collaboration, and performance as the building blocks of the system. With the “no wrong door” philosophy, when a customer approaches any Arkansas Workforce Center partner requesting assistance with employment and training needs or services in support of the customer’s job search or skill development, the customer is able to access the best mix of services from the combined menu of all partners’ resources, and gain immediate access to the appropriate next step.

**OPERATIONAL AND  
FUNCTIONAL  
REQUIREMENTS  
FOR A WORKFORCE  
CENTER**  
*—continued—*

The system was designed to be an open marketplace where:

- Employers define the skills and workforce levels they need.
- Job seekers are armed with information and resources to acquire and document skills they can use in the marketplace.
- Employers, through participation on workforce development boards, are able to hold the system accountable through performance standards, strategic information, and system oversight.
- The Arkansas Workforce Center brand name is widely recognized and valued.
- Public resources are targeted and coordinated toward clearly identified customer needs.

As a Statewide system, Arkansas Workforce Centers cover metropolitan areas as well as rural areas. Therefore, different types of centers are required in order to meet our customers' needs, ensure statewide coverage, and provide easy access to services. The overall Arkansas workforce development system is a combination of a wide array of public and private resources and programs. Comprehensive Arkansas Workforce Centers are the cornerstones of information and access to these resources. The comprehensive centers are complemented by satellite and affiliate centers that provide broader access but more limited on-site service offering connections back to the comprehensive sites. Centers must:

1. Be strategically located to maximize service to employers and employees.
2. Have enough traffic to warrant operations.
3. Provide on-site services (interpreter, documents, etc.) based on demographic need.
4. Have hours of operation that are based on customer needs and are customer driven.
5. Ensure that uniform procedures are in place to implement Veterans Preference for job placement within the WIA staff.
6. Ensure that priority of service for job training opportunities for veterans is clearly implemented for all

**OPERATIONAL AND  
FUNCTIONAL  
REQUIREMENTS  
FOR A WORKFORCE  
CENTER  
--continued--**

U.S. DOL programs such as employment, training, and placement services.

For an Arkansas Workforce Center to be considered for certification, the One-Stop operator, with the mandated and optional partners, will be required to jointly prepare an Arkansas Workforce Center site business plan. The business plan will identify the available products and services, the organizational structure, an operational and financial plan including cost allocations based on square footage, staff development training, marketing strategies, and other related information necessary to operate an Arkansas Workforce Center.

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**PROGRAMS  
THAT MUST BE  
AVAILABLE  
THROUGH  
WORKFORCE  
CENTERS**

Per federal law, the following programs and services must be made available at the Workforce Centers.

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Programs
  - Trade Act Programs
  - Veterans Programs
  - Unemployment Insurance
  - Employment Services
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
  - Career and Technical Education
  - Vocational Rehabilitation Services
  - Community Service Block Grant Programs
  - Senior Community Service Employment Program
  - National Farmworker Jobs Program
  - Job Corps
  - Native American Employment and Training Program
  - Youth Build
  - HUD
  - Second Chance Act of 2007
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**THE EMPLOYER  
SERVICES  
COMPONENT**

There are multiple services available at the Arkansas Workforce Centers for employers. A list of some of the services that may be available is below:

- Screening and referral of qualified jobseekers.
  - Training programs, providers, and consumer reports on effectiveness of specific providers.
  - Labor market information to bridge economic and workforce development.
  - Human resource information, i.e., tax credits, unemployment insurance, and access to labor law and compliance information.
  - Initial skills assessment and/or occupational profile of positions.
  - Access to computerized training to upgrade incumbent basic skills.
  - Rapid response, initial contacts.
  - Coordinated outreach to employers with particular attention being paid to federal contractors.
  - Availability of the Career Readiness Certificate program.
  - Labor exchange activities and labor market information.
  - Customized business services, including but not limited to:
    - Customized screening and referrals of qualified participants.
    - Customized recruitment events, including job fairs.
    - Human resources consultation services.
    - Writing/reviewing job descriptions and employee handbooks.
    - Creating orientation sessions for new workers.
    - Honing job interview techniques for efficiency and compliance.
    - Analyzing employee turnover.
    - Explaining labor laws to help employers comply with wage/hour and safety/health regulations.
    - Customized labor market information for specific sectors, industries or sectors.
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## **JOB SEEKER SERVICES**

### ***Career Services***

- Eligibility determination
- Outreach, intake, and orientation
- Initial assessment of skill levels, aptitude, abilities, and supportive services needs
- Development of individual employment plans, to identify employment goals and objectives
- Labor exchange services
- Job search and placement assistance
- Provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations
- Provision of information on non-traditional employment
- Recruitment and other business services on behalf of employers
- Provision of referrals to and coordination with other programs and services within the one-stop system
- Provision of assistance in establishing eligibility for financial aid for training and education programs not provided under WIOA
- Provision of workforce and labor market employment information, including local, regional, and national labor market
- Provision of job vacancy listings in labor market
- Provision of program performance and program cost information on eligible providers of training services.
- Follow-up services, as appropriate.

### ***Training Services***

- Training that leads Incumbent worker training.
  - On-the-job training.
  - Customized job training funded under WIOA.
  - Advanced skills training.
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**DELIVERY  
OF EMPLOYER  
SERVICES**

How are these services delivered? Depending on local design, the board, the Arkansas Workforce Center or a special employer services unit develops, communicates, and provides labor market services to employers. These services may be provided in person or electronically in different settings across the local area.

Employer services staff work directly with businesses to develop and communicate information about specialized services for key employers in industries and occupations targeted for special attention. As leaders in the community, board members can make personal contact with business executives as an effective strategy for building high level relationships with employers.

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**EMPLOYMENT  
RESOURCES  
AND SERVICES**

Workforce Centers have a variety of resources focused toward assisting customers. These include occupational and job search databases. Customers can choose to use self-help tools or request assistance from workforce specialists with various computer products.

Services may include:

- a Job Search Resource Center — PCs with resume and cover letter software along with all the needed instruments for a successful job search, including telephones, copiers, and fax machines
  - printed material on new jobs and new companies
  - a job search library with printed material on topics such as interviewing skills, salary negotiations, current jobs, and employers in the area
  - videos on various occupations
  - job search workshops to include such topics as:
    - personal job search and job development strategies
    - interviewing techniques
    - networking skills
    - transferable job skills
    - other employment-related topics.
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These populations may have barriers that inhibit immediate employment. Workforce Center staff assist these job seekers in addressing obstacles that may impede productive employment. They also ensure that local employment resources are made available to assist these members of the community to become active members of the workforce. A detailed list of job seeker services can be found on page 1.5 of the Board Member Orientation Guide.

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**BUILDING  
TOWARD  
EXCELLENCE**

Certification of the Arkansas Workforce Centers is not just about a one-time designation. It is an ongoing process that keeps all parties involved and achieving at high performance levels. As such, the certification process also allows for achieving excellence standards as continuous improvement planning occurs. This certification process serves as an opportunity to continually re-examine, improve, and revise procedures to ensure that the Arkansas workforce development system is a primary asset in Arkansas' economic growth and subsequent high quality of life.

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# Chapter 3

## The Workforce Board

*Central to the Arkansas Workforce System are the state and local workforce development boards. The Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) provides state policy guidance and strategic direction for workforce development and the Arkansas Workforce Centers. A major role of the state board is strategic planning to meet the employment and training needs of businesses and industries. The wide variety of organizations represented on the board ensures input from experts throughout the state. Through oversight and evaluation, the board ensures that its strategic plans are implemented.*

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### **ABOUT THE STATE BOARD**

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board, an advisory board to the governor, coordinates and establishes policy for conducting employment and training activities in the state, including all activities within the Arkansas Workforce Centers. The AWDB was created by Arkansas Act 907 of 2015, which implements the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in Arkansas. The board is comprised of a majority of business and industry leaders from throughout Arkansas. Additionally, the board includes representatives from local chief elected officials, organized labor, community-based organizations, and the state agency directors of workforce services, career education, economic development, higher education, education, rehabilitation services, and services for the blind.

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### **BOARD VISION**

Arkansas will have a world-class workforce that is well educated, skilled, and working in order to keep Arkansas's economy competitive in the global marketplace.

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## **BOARD MISSION**

To promote and support a talent development system in Arkansas that offers employers, individuals, and communities the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.

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## **ROLE OF THE BOARD**

The federal and state statutory responsibilities of the board include advising and assisting the Governor and the General Assembly in the following areas.

### **Strategic Planning**

- Development of a state workforce development plan
- Development of workforce training standards

### **Oversight**

- Oversight of the local workforce development boards' planning and implementation of direct services

### **Evaluation**

- Development and continuous improvement of a statewide system of activities
- Development and continuous improvement of comprehensive state performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the workforce system in Arkansas
- Recommendations on more effective delivery of services by partner programs
- Evaluation of the Arkansas workforce development system to determine if it is meeting its goals

### **Innovation**

- Recommendations to the Governor for appropriate statutory changes which may enhance the delivery of workforce development

**ROLE OF  
THE BOARD**  
**--continued--**

**Collaboration**

- Development of linkages in order to assure coordination and non-duplication among programs and activities

**Report Progress**

- Report progress of the workforce development system
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**STRATEGIC  
PLANNING**

Planning is a *key responsibility* of the board. The Board orchestrates the design of a state workforce development plan, which is submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor for approval. The plan must demonstrate that operations are designed to meet the skill needs of business and industry for competitiveness in the marketplace.

Strategic planning is the board's essential foundation for workforce development. It is the culmination of long-term goal setting, future-oriented thinking, and sound decision making. The strategic plan establishes a path between the present and a vision for the future.

The goal of strategic planning is to develop a vision and a mission for the board, determine performance indicators for fulfilling that vision and mission, and outline the steps necessary for meeting those performance outcomes.

**Key steps in the strategic planning process**

The following are key steps in the strategic planning process for workforce development:

- setting the vision, mission, goals, and objectives
- assessing the skill needs and expectations of employers
- assessing the past, present, and future development of job seekers and the workforce
- analyzing regional and local labor markets and influences of state, national, and international economic factors and trends
- analyzing the influences of state and federal law as factors that affect the needs of employers and residents

**STRATEGIC  
PLANNING**  
*--continued--*

- identifying the gaps between the skill needs and the workforce development capacity to address those needs
- developing service strategies, identifying and aligning resources
- identifying the performance indicators and measurements to gauge progress and judge success.

These steps serve to implement an employer-driven workforce system that encourages local innovation and community partnerships and supports Arkansans in their efforts to improve their lives.

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**USING LABOR  
MARKET  
INFORMATION**

A critical component for all workforce planning is the availability and application of labor market information. Labor market information should be used during the planning process and used regularly to reassess and evaluate current labor market conditions when:

- analyzing economic factors and trends
- conducting needs analyses
- designing service delivery strategies.

Arkansas labor market information can be found at the Discover Arkansas website operated by the Department of Workforce Services. <http://www.discoverarkansas.net/>

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## **OVERSIGHT**

Another *key responsibility* of the board is oversight. Once the state plan is approved, it is time for the board to move into the oversight role. To ensure efficient management of the system, board members must clearly communicate expectations to board staff, who are there to implement the plan as the board exercises its oversight responsibility.

Oversight begins with asking critical questions that determine whether the board is an effective steward of the system on behalf of its constituents.

Board members must regularly evaluate progress toward meeting performance goals. The board directs board staff to develop a process to ensure performance goals are achieved. Oversight must be an ongoing, continuous process.

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## **EVALUATION**

Another *key responsibility* for the state board is evaluation. Evaluation is critical to ensuring positive outcomes. The board must conduct periodic performance reviews of the local workforce boards and all workforce services delivered in the state, to ensure that proactive steps are taken to identify what is working well and what needs improvement. Federal and state law directs the Arkansas Workforce Development Board to evaluate the entire workforce system in Arkansas. This ensures that the workforce development system has the ability to meet the needs of local employers.

Effective evaluation should include questions such as:

- Are we meeting the needs of our customers, both employers and job seekers?
- Is the plan, as implemented, accomplishing what is intended?
- Are we making progress toward the goals set in our plan?
- What improvements need to be made, and what steps are required?

## **EVALUATION**

**--continued--**

- Are there continuous improvements in streamlining processes?
- Are there provisions that provide a systematic way to eliminate unnecessary parts?
- Are there tools used to analyze and understand processes and problems?
- Do we gather experts who actually work within the process?

Based on evaluation and quality assurance reviews, the board's workforce plan should be revised and refined to improve services if:

- the objectives are not being met, or
- the value of services provided is not satisfactory

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## **INNOVATION**

As the AWDB evaluates the workforce system in Arkansas, continuous improvement and innovation should be considered. The board plays an important role in the continuous improvement of the workforce system and is statutorily required to make recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly on innovative methods to improve the delivery of workforce services to employers and job seekers.

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## **COLLABORATION**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act calls for a complete system overhaul, and in many communities, this transformation of the system are a work in progress, which will continue to evolve over the coming years.

No individual organization can accomplish these objectives alone. Coordination among economic development authorities, the private sector, community-based organizations, and the educational and labor communities is critical to the effectiveness of the workforce system.

AWDB members can be pivotal in developing a collaborative system which draws from and builds on local strengths, and the Arkansas Workforce Centers provide a centralized point where the needs of local service providers, businesses, and prospective employees can be met. To the extent that this system can marshal its federal resources and partnerships to find the common ground among these populations, it can fill critical labor gaps and enhance the likelihood that unemployed individuals will make a meaningful contribution to their communities and the economy.

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## **ATTRACTING AND INVOLVING EMPLOYERS**

Both the U.S. Congress and the Arkansas Legislature have mandated that employers drive the board's policy direction. It is imperative that the board includes in its planning a process for ensuring that local business and industry are an integral part of the workforce system. Arkansas' workforce system will be successful only to the extent that it meets the workforce needs of employers. To serve job seekers successfully, the whole system must be fully responsive to our employers' need for skilled workers.

By law, all workforce development boards (state and local) must be comprised of a majority (51 percent) of private sector employers, and the board chair must also represent the private sector. These employer-driven boards are one way to ensure input from the business community. What are some other ways to encourage employer participation, both in planning and accessing workforce services?

**ATTRACTING  
AND INVOLVING  
EMPLOYERS  
--continued--**

- Build ongoing, personal relationships (created with an entrepreneurial spirit) with employers across the state economy in order to develop the capacity and legitimacy to help businesses achieve their goals.
- Connect workforce with economic development efforts, and develop an efficient and effective process for employers to communicate their labor market needs and how those needs are changing.
- Encourage employers to take a proactive role in defining training standards and shaping training curriculum and program design so program graduates will be more likely to succeed in the employer's workplace.
- Ensure all employers are made aware of and have access to the many workforce-related services that are available.
- Use the language of business, not the language of bureaucracy.
- Focus on solutions and results, not process and programs.

Build a positive reputation in the state by operating strategically and making a commitment to ensuring quality services, building a good public image, asking employers who have had a positive experience with the workforce system to spread the word, and using a continuous improvement and evaluation system.

A quality system that reliably provides employers with trained and job-ready individuals in a timely manner will generate an ever-widening circle of employers who use the system and provide better job opportunities and careers for job seekers.

The more employers use the system, the better the system becomes. This includes board members who set an example by taking advantage of the services available in the workforce system. Board members who use the system increase their insight into the system, which allows them to make more significant suggestions for improvement and contribute more meaningfully to planning, oversight, and evaluation.

## **TARGETED INDUSTRIES**

Understanding the skills needed by industries that pay competitive wages enables the workforce system to offer relevant assessment and training to prepare workers for high-paying jobs that exist, thus making the model a win/win for both employers and workers.

To maximize workforce system resources, the board should identify and focus attention on business and industry clusters that offer the best current and future employment opportunities. The key is creating a pipeline of qualified workers for existing needs that is able to adapt to the employer's future needs. Targeting and outreach to employers by industry cluster is an approach that engages employers not just on a one-on-one basis, but also by leveraging the combined resources of related businesses.

To strengthen the competitiveness of key industries, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC) has identified the following targeted sector industries:

- Aerospace
- Automotive
- Electronic and Computer Equipment
- Food and Food Processing
- Industrial Manufacturing
- Paper and Paper Products
- Transportation and Logistics
- Wood and Solid Wood Products

The objective is to stimulate long-term sustained growth and focus the allocation of state resources on the key industries that economists say will be the engine of job creation and economic development for Arkansas in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Board planning, oversight, and evaluation can shape methods of targeting and conduction outreach to employers by industry cluster in order to link employment and training services to the clusters and sectors that drive economic growth.



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## Chapter 4

### The Arkansas Workforce Board Member

*AWDB members play a critical role in ensuring the success of workforce development in the state. Board members are carefully selected based on their willingness to commit time and energy to the board. You can have an immediate impact on workforce issues in the state by making every effort to use the services offered through the workforce system, attending meetings regularly, and serving on committees as needed. One of the most important goals of a board member is reaching out to the business community, inviting them to participate in the workforce development process and taking their workforce issues back to the board. You are an advocate for the employers and job seekers in the state.*

*Various entities work together to successfully plan, implement, oversee, and evaluate the Arkansas Workforce System within the state. You must be engaged in the vision and strategic planning of the board. The board staff will see that your strategic plan is implemented, and they will oversee the day-to-day activities of board operations. Board members must review performance regularly.*

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#### **AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

Areas of responsibility for Board members include, but are not limited to:

- understanding and communicating employer needs
- maintaining a strategic focus on workforce issues in the state
- building a plan based on the Governor's goals and objectives to meet the skill needs of employers
- taking a leadership role in setting workforce policy
- assisting in the design the state's workforce system
- utilizing the services of the workforce system
- developing expectations of performance outcomes

**AREAS OF  
RESPONSIBILITY**  
**--continued--**

- setting performance measures for the state's workforce system that incorporate the Governor's goals and objectives
  - monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the workforce system
  - directing Board staff to make adjustments, as appropriate, to ensure quality of services and attainment of goals
  - designing solutions to assist job seekers in meeting the hiring needs of employers.
  - making recommendations on more effective delivery of services by partner agencies.
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**THE APPOINTMENT  
PROCESS**

The Governor appoints the non-governmental members of the state workforce development board, subject to confirmation by the Senate. These appointments are representatives of businesses and business organizations and are nominated by Arkansas business organizations and business trade associations.

Several positions are dictated by Arkansas Act 507 of 907 of 2015:

- Director of the Department of Career Education
- Director of the Department of Workforce Services
- Director of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services of the Department of Career Education
- Director of the Division of State Services for the Blind of the Department of Human Services
- Director of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission

A CEO is nominated by the Arkansas Municipal League.

A CEO is nominated by the Association of Arkansas Counties.

Others may be added as determined by the Governor, up to a total of 38 members.



Board members should possess the following qualifications:

- possess substantial policy-making authority within the entities they represent
- represent the highest standards of leadership and expertise in their respective categories
- are actively engaged in the organization, enterprise, or field in which they are nominated to represent
- reflect the gender, ethnic, and geographic diversity of the workforce area
- meet the composition requirements of the Board.

### **Private Sector Representatives**

Private sector representatives lead the state and local boards. They must advocate the needs and interests of employers.

- Private sector representatives must constitute a majority of the board.
- The Chair of the board must be a private sector representative.
- Private sector representatives must be owners of business concerns, chief executives, or chief operating officers of nongovernmental employers, or other private executives who have substantial management or policy responsibility.

The nomination of board members is a significant responsibility and must be undertaken with great thought and care. These appointments determine the success of the workforce system. The strength of a board lies in the quality of its membership.

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**KEY  
CHARACTERISTICS  
OF A SUCCESSFUL  
WORKFORCE  
BOARD MEMBER**

Successful workforce board members:

- bring their expertise, knowledge and goals to the table
  - communicate the board's purpose to the community at large and advocate the use of the workforce system
  - focus on strategic planning and setting goals and direction; insist on positive outcomes
  - stay abreast of labor market and economic conditions; know emerging employer trends and important skill development needs
  - share expectations with other board members and staff
  - work toward consensus to ensure support and advocacy from all members
  - make informed decisions
  - actively participate and serve on committees
  - avoid involvement in administrative and day-to-day operational details
  - attend meetings regularly.
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## **NETWORKING**

Individual members bring their experience and existing networks to the board. Many board members serve on other important business or community councils, committees, and boards. These entities may have discussions about employment and training issues that you can take back to your workforce board. These contacts can also be used to share positive information about your workforce board.

Facilitating collaboration among these entities encourages total community commitment and involvement, while enabling your board to better address and meet the needs of the state. Further, it contributes to creating the alignment of strategies and resources to accomplish common goals.

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## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Because boards must maintain the public trust, individual members are directly accountable to the public. It is the intent of Congress, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Governor, and the Arkansas Legislature to strengthen the public's confidence in the workforce system.

According to the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, a state workforce development board member may not vote on the following:

- a matter under consideration by the State board regarding the provision of services by such member (or by an entity that such member represents); or that would provide direct financial benefit to such member or the immediate family of such member; or engage in any other activity determined by the Governor to constitute a conflict of interest as specified in the State plan.

Board members will be required to file a *Statement of Financial Interest* with the Secretary of State's office by **January 31** of each year for the previous calendar year. Staff will notify board members and provide the necessary forms for completion.

The Statement of Financial Interest includes the reporting of the following information for the board member and their spouse:

**CONFLICT OF  
INTEREST  
--continued--**

- Sources of Income over \$1,000
- Business Holdings
- Office or Directorship in any business, corporation, firm or enterprise subject to jurisdiction of a regulatory agency of this State, or of any of its political subdivisions
- Creditors to whom the value of \$5,000 or more was personally owed or obligated and it still outstanding (this does not include debts owed to member of your family or loans made in the ordinary course of business by either a financial institution or a person who regularly and customarily extends credit.)
- Guarantor or Co-Maker of outstanding debt (does not include members of your family).
- Gifts in excess of \$100 received by the board member or spouse and in excess of \$250 received by a dependent child (exceptions apply).
- List of any business which employs you and is under direct regulation or subject to direct control by the governmental body which you serve.
- Sales to Governmental Bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> Immediate family is defined as any person related within the first degree of affinity (marriage) or consanguinity (blood) to the person involved.

<sup>2</sup> *A conflict of interest may arise whenever there is a substantial interest in, or relationship to, a business or entity that would be affected by the board decision, or whenever board members believe that a conflict may exist (real or perceived).*

Board members may not participate in any decision in which the member has a direct or indirect interest that is in substantial conflict with the member's duties on the board.

When a matter comes before the board in which the member or the member's immediate family has a real or apparent conflict of interest, he or she *must*:

- disclose the conflict and remove himself or herself from discussions
- refrain from influencing the decisions of others, and
- abstain from voting on the matter.

**ARKANSAS  
FREEDOM OF  
INFORMATION ACT**

**Open Meetings**

The Arkansas Freedom of Information (FOI) Act provides that meetings of governmental bodies must be open to the public, except in limited circumstances for expressly authorized closed sessions. Workforce development boards are covered under the Open Meetings Act and must comply with its provisions.

Boards must give public notice of the date, time, place and subject matter of meetings to anyone who requests the information.

In the event of emergency or special meetings, the person calling the meeting shall notify the representatives of the newspapers, radio stations, and television stations and any news media located elsewhere which cover regular meetings of the governing body and which have requested to be notified of emergency or special meetings. Notification shall be made at least two hours before the meeting takes place in order that the public shall have representatives at the meeting.

**Executive Session**

- The board may gather in a closed session only in extremely limited circumstances specifically enumerated in the statute. Executive sessions will be permitted only for the purpose of considering employment, appointing, promotion, demotion, disciplining, or resignation of any public officer or employee. The specific purpose of the executive session shall be announced in public before going into executive session.

The Department of Workforce Services Communications Director publishes a notification as required by the Arkansas FOI Act for each meeting of the state board.

**Public Information**

The Arkansas Public Information Act provides that all information collected, assembled or maintained under law by or for a governmental body is public information. Public information must be promptly released upon request.

**ARKANSAS  
FREEDOM OF  
INFORMATION ACT  
--continued--**

Information may be withheld only when a specific exception to disclosure applies to the information, and the governmental body has sought a decision and received permission from the Attorney General to withhold it. Consequently, any information created by a board member related to board business may be subject to disclosure under the Public Information Act.

The Department of Workforce Services General Counsel serves as the point of contact for all requests for information under the Arkansas FOI Act for state board business.

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**BOARD STAFF**

Arkansas Act 907 of 2015 designates the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services as the provider of staff support to the Arkansas Workforce Development Board. Through the board's guidance and direction, board staff responsibilities include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- carrying out the board's decisions and ensuring implementation of plans
- devising methods for reaching out to various industry sectors and business organizations
- informing the board about labor market trends and current job skills requirements of employers and the skills of the labor force
- developing plans and budgets
- negotiating, processing, and managing contracts and agreements
- examining, scoring, and awarding, contracts for workforce services
- measuring performance and analyzing outcomes
- reporting information to the board, such as status of services, programs, agreements, expenditures and performance measures
- managing the grants received by the state as the Governor's Administrative Entity

**BOARD STAFF**  
**--continued--**

- monitoring all subrecipients to ensure funds are expended and services delivered in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations
- recommending service improvement options.

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**IN CONCLUSION**

Board members are customers, visionaries, catalysts for change, and guardians of the workforce development system.

By maintaining a strategic focus on the overall system instead of the operational details, boards can concentrate on workforce issues that will have long-term impact on the economic development and the well-being of the state. Decide what you want to do and direct staff to implement the plan, examines the return on investment, and adjust accordingly.

By ensuring that you and the organization you represent on the board continue to utilize workforce services, you effectively keep your fingers on the pulse of the system.

Every board member should be an articulate voice and advocate for employers and job seekers. You have the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives.

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