

WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT

(WIOA)

ARKANSAS
WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS

A DIVISION OF ARKANSAS WORKFORCE SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

PY 2023



ARKANSAS **WORKFORCE** CENTERS
Bringing People and Jobs Together.

PY 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

A realignment structure of the Arkansas Department of Commerce was announced, by Secretary Hugh McDonald in program year 2023. The realignment consisted of strategically reorganizing the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) into three new divisions: Re-employment (formerly unemployment insurance), Workforce Policy & Innovation, and Arkansas Workforce Connections; in an employer-centric workforce development model.

Arkansas Workforce Connections, parent organization of Arkansas' Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs, sits at the center of the state's workforce development efforts. The division provides support and guidance to help individuals succeed in their careers while offering companies incentives to maintain a skilled and technically trained workforce, meeting industry demands now and in the future.

Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders unveiled the Governor's workforce strategy in quarter three of PY '23. The strategy is a collaborative, competency-based, customer-centric, employer-led, demand-informed, data-driven responsive workforce system that meets current and future needs of employers, incumbent workers, and job seekers. The strategy was developed leveraging established best practices, broad stakeholder engagement, user-centered design, a national network of experts, emerging technological advances, and Arkansas' mature foundation for data-driven transformation and shared services.

"Arkansas' economy is booming, but if we don't get workers off the sidelines and prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow, we won't reap the full rewards of that growth," Sanders said in the news release. "I tasked Mike Rogers and the Workforce Cabinet with making Arkansas a national leader in workforce development. This workforce strategy will guide us toward that goal and help put every Arkansan on the path to a good-paying, valuable career."



Arkansas Governor
Sarah Huckabee Sanders



Secretary of Commerce
Hugh McDonald



Arkansas Workforce Connections, Director
Cody Waits

Introduction

On Tuesday, November 8, 2022, Sarah Huckabee Sanders was elected governor by the people of Arkansas. She became the 47th governor and the first woman elected to lead the state of Arkansas. Standing firm on her commitment to strengthening Arkansas' economy and workforce, within her first 40 days in office, she signed an executive order to create the Governor's Workforce Cabinet and the state's Chief Workforce Officer, who leads efforts to align programs within the state including WIOA.

The executive order: EO-23-16 highlighted the following disparities and goals for the state of Arkansas.

WHEREAS: Arkansans must have the skills to compete for employment in the current job market;

WHEREAS: In Arkansas, approximately six out of ten jobs require credentials beyond a high school diploma, however, less than half of the workforce in Arkansas is credentialed beyond a high school diploma;

WHEREAS: In Arkansas, fewer than fifty percent (50%) of high school graduates attend college or postsecondary training;

WHEREAS: Currently, there are six state agencies in Arkansas state government that provide or coordinate career and technical education and workforce development;

WHEREAS: It is the policy of this Administration to create a single entity to coordinate and to assist in career and technical education, which in turn, will ensure that young adults who are entering the workforce are prepared for high-wage, high-growth careers; and

WHEREAS: The Governor seeks to establish the Governor's Workforce Cabinet and the Chief Workforce Officer.

In quarter three of PY '23, Governor Sanders unveiled the [Arkansas Workforce Strategy](#) which guides WIOA activities within the state.

The Arkansas Workforce Strategy's theory of change focuses on transforming the state's workforce system into one that is skills-based, customer-centric, responsive, and collaborative. This transformation is guided by four strategic themes:

1. Collaborative: Fostering partnerships across sectors to align workforce development with industry needs.
2. Skills-Based: Aligning training and career pathways with real-world skills and competencies.
3. Customer-Centric: Tailoring services to meet the unique needs and goals of job seekers, incumbent workers, and employers.
4. Responsive: Adapting quickly to economic changes and labor market trends for timely alignment of workforce efforts. These themes collectively aim to create a more dynamic, inclusive, and effective workforce ecosystem in Arkansas. Each of these themes is implemented through multiple strategic initiatives which are detailed in the following graph:



The Arkansas Department of Commerce has established high-level aspirations that are aligned with the Governor’s vision. Division-specific key performance indicators will help Commerce reach those goals.

Three key performance indicators include:

- Increase Labor Force Participation Rate from 57.7% to 59.4%
- Increase Per Capita Income from \$52,600 to \$66,500
- Increase Real GDP per Capita from \$45,000 to \$51,000

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board serves as key leaders who will drive strategy and implementation. Members of the business community along with other required members will play pivotal role in the planning, tracking, and evaluating of state systems; in conjunction with the Governor’s workforce cabinet.

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.

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.

Arkansas’s Talent Development System Philosophy

- *We believe that there must be a pipeline of skilled workers for employers and a job for every Arkansan that wants one.*
- *We believe that the talent development system of Arkansas must be relevant to the labor market in order to meet the needs of employers and jobseekers, and for Arkansas to compete globally.*
- *We believe that every Arkansan should have opportunity and access to training and education that leads to a career with gainful employment.*
- *We believe innovation and partnerships centered on local economic priorities maximizes effectiveness and puts the State in the best position to address local and regional workforce needs.*
- *We believe Arkansas’s workforce system should be a viable resource for business and industry.*
- *We believe that in order for the talent development system to be the preferred system, the system must be accountable, flexible, and align education and training with business and industry needs.*
- *We believe that in order for the talent development system to be effective, we must eliminate overlap and duplication of resources and services and streamline investment of funds.*



OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING

26 ARKANSAS WORKFORCE CENTERS



A proud partner of the American Job Center network

JOB-SEEKER SERVICES

78,540 JOB SEEKERS SERVED
134,212 ARKANSAS JOBLINK (AJL) REGISTRATIONS
64,720 STAFF-ASSISTED AJL REGISTRATIONS



WIOA TITLE I PARTICIPANTS

Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act

985 ADULTS
150 DISLOCATED WORKERS
581 YOUTH
1,716 TOTAL

EMPLOYER SERVICES

134,468 EMPLOYER SERVICES PROVIDED
108,122 JOB ORDERS
7,851 EMPLOYER CONTACTS

VETERANS SERVICES

3,480 VETERANS SERVED
2,605 AJL REGISTRATIONS
2,547 STAFF-ASSISTED AJL REGISTRATIONS

MOBILE ARKANSAS WORKFORCE CENTERS

135 EVENTS SUPPORTED BY THE MOBILE WORKFORCE CENTERS & STAFF

ADULT EDUCATION

SFY 2023

STUDENTS EARNED
2,976 CREDENTIALS & CERTIFICATES

575

INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

509

GENERAL SKILL CERTIFICATES (FORKLIFT, CPR/FIRST AID, OSHA, SERVSAFE, ETC.)

1,892

WAGE™ CERTIFICATES

3,222 COMPLETED GED TESTS

2,775 EARNED HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS

ARKANSAS RANKS **4TH**

IN THE NATION WITH A GED TEST PASS RATE OF 86% COMPARED TO THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 75%.

Adult Education provides state and federal grant funding to 37 adult education providers statewide. Adult Education offers services in all 75 counties, including adult basic skills instruction, GED® test preparation, English Language Acquisition, workforce preparation, training programs, family literacy, college and career transition, and workplace classes.

ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES

PY 2023

ASSISTED **1,200** INDIVIDUALS OBTAIN COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

THE ARS BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT UNIT PROVIDED **2,242** SERVICES TO ARKANSAS EMPLOYERS

THE ARKANSAS CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER SERVED **966** PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

IN CAREER & TECHNICAL TRAINING, APPRENTICESHIPS, & PRE-APPRENTICESHIPS, PROVIDING CAREER COUNSELING & PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES.



FOR MORE STATISTICS ON ARKANSAS REHABILITATION SERVICES, PLEASE VIEW THE PY 2023 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT BY SCANNING THE QR CODE.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services' mission is to prepare Arkansans with disabilities to work and lead productive and independent lives. To achieve its mission, ARS provides various 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.

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

CY 2023

The Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) is dedicated to the independence of Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired and is committed to the principle that these individuals have the right to make informed choices regarding where they live, where they work, how they participate in the community, and how they interact with others. DSB has staff in 14 field offices serving all 75 counties.

DSB CONSUMERS GAINED EMPLOYMENT AS COMPUTER NETWORK SUPPORT SPECIALISTS, CLERGY, INTERPRETERS AND TRANSLATORS, JUDICIAL LAW CLERKS, AND SALESPERSONS.

COMPLETED **391** VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION APPLICATIONS CLOSING **114** CASES AS REHABILITATED

COMPLETED **306** APPLICATIONS FOR THE OLDER INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND PROGRAM CLOSING **101** CASES AS GOALS MET

THE MIGRANT SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) PROGRAM & FOREIGN LABOR CERTIFICATION

IN OCTOBER 2023, THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR DESIGNATED ARKANSAS AS A "SIGNIFICANT MSFW STATE" FOR BEING IN THE TOP 20 STATES WITH THE MOST MSFW ACTIVITY. THE DEPARTMENT ALSO DESIGNATED THE FORREST CITY & WEST MEMPHIS OFFICES "SIGNIFICANT ONE-STOP CENTERS."

PROCESSED **1,012** H-2A AGRICULTURAL WORKER APPLICATIONS FROM ARKANSAS FARMERS
18% increase from 2022

735 HOUSING INSPECTIONS CERTIFIED BETWEEN OCTOBER & DECEMBER WITH A TOTAL CAPACITY FOR **3,900 H-2A WORKERS**

1,280 MSFWs IN ARKANSAS FROM H2-A APPLICATIONS
Estimate as of December 31, 2023



CAREER READINESS CERTIFICATES



Note: Totals do not include high school CTEs

134 PLATINUM
200 GOLD
305 SILVER
246 BRONZE
885 TOTAL

The “I” in WIOA: Innovation

Arkansas is committed to displaying innovation by commitment to modernizing workforce strategies, embracing creative solutions, and leveraging technology to better meet the evolving needs of job seekers, employers and communities. Below are just a few examples of this:

The WIOA Roundtable meets regularly and hosts an annual statewide [WIOA Partners Conference](#). The 2023 event gathered over 350 attendees comprised of core, noncore, and ancillary workforce system partners. The agendas are developed jointly and provide an opportunity to share specific program information via plenary sessions as well as break-out sessions that provided opportunities to share ideas, best practices, and service delivery strategies.

The WIOA Roundtable Partners are committed to:

- Meeting regularly to discuss and develop ideas and strategies designed to improve the state’s workforce development system
- Sharing and integrating learning and common messaging across programs
- Identifying opportunities to share and leverage resources to maximize efficiency and effectiveness (co-location, shared case management information, coordinated business outreach)
- Working through partnerships to balance the needs and the assets of job seekers and employers in the public and private sectors
- Creating a data-driven environment resulting in integrated strategies that are higher quality and strengthen life-long education, training, and work-based learning experiences

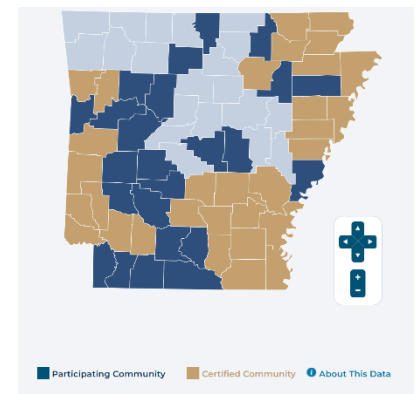
[Be Pro Be Proud’s Draft Day](#) is a career event designed to highlight Arkansas companies and strategically pair them with talented high school students by showcasing the student’s technical interests and qualifications. The Draft Day Series works to address two clear needs: 1) constructively connecting graduating high school students with high-value technical career opportunities provided by regional and statewide employers; and 2) building long-term awareness and interest around the availability of technical career opportunities and the benefits they offer. WIOA and local workforce development boards are highly engaged in these events.

Local Workforce Development Board Highlights:

[ACT Work Ready Communities](#)- Several LWDBs participating in this economic development and workforce development initiative.

LWDBs updated policies and procedures to include more provisions to provide **supportive services**: housing, childcare, internet & utilities, court fines, driver’s license, work attire, etc.

- Conducting outreach at local retail stores and in the community
- Hosting youth summits and events targeting OSY
- Partnering with banks to provide financial literacy training to participants
- Hosting expungement clinics and regularly meeting with Corrections and other justice-related partners.
- Creating business advisory councils, in addition to employers appointed to the local boards
- Hiring certified teachers to work with WIOA participants to improve basic skills and work readiness skills.



ARKANSAS LABOR MARKET

The most recent [Arkansas Labor Market and Economic Report](#) is produced by the Occupational/Career Information unit of the Labor Market Information section to provide relevant information about the economy and workforce in Arkansas and the 10 Workforce Development Areas. The primary focus of this report includes the years 2019 to 2023, with some information covering shorter periods due to accessibility of data. Projection information for industry and occupational trends covers the years 2023 to 2025.

Arkansas grew in population in 2023 by 22,095 from 2022 and added a total of 49,928 new residents from 2019 to 2023. Of Arkansas's 10 Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs), Northwest Arkansas saw the largest increase in population, adding 14,833 in 2023. The Eastern, Southeast, and Southwest Arkansas LWDAs saw decreasing populations in 2023.

Between 2022 and 2023 the state's labor force increased by 18,117, and employment increased by 16,990. Labor force and employment varied across the LWDAs. The state's unemployment rate ended at 3.3 percent in 2023, a decrease of 0.2% since 2019. The unemployment remained relatively steady in 2024, ending the month of July at 3.3 percent. The unemployment rate fluctuated across all LWDAs in 2024 and through July 2024. Short-term employment projections for 2023 to 2025 showed an increase in the Arkansas job market with a gain of 30,168 jobs, equivalent to a 2.05 percent growth in employment.

Goods-Producing industries are estimated to see a net gain of 1,111 jobs, while the Services-Providing industries are forecast to increase employment by 27,441. Arkansas' self-employed ranks are estimated to experience a net gain of 1,616, an increase of 1.50 percent. Jobs requiring a bachelor's degree are estimated to add more jobs than any other education level with 9,769 jobs between 2023 and 2025.

Occupations requiring a high school diploma or equivalent are expected to grow by 8,924. Arkansas' per capita personal income increased over the 2109-2023 period to \$54,347; however, the state's per capita personal income in 2023 remained below the United States' per capita personal income of \$68,531.

WAIVERS

Arkansas did not operate under waivers during PY'23. Youth waivers were approved in the PY 24-27 Combined WIOA State Plan.

WIOA SYSTEM-WIDE EVALUATIONS

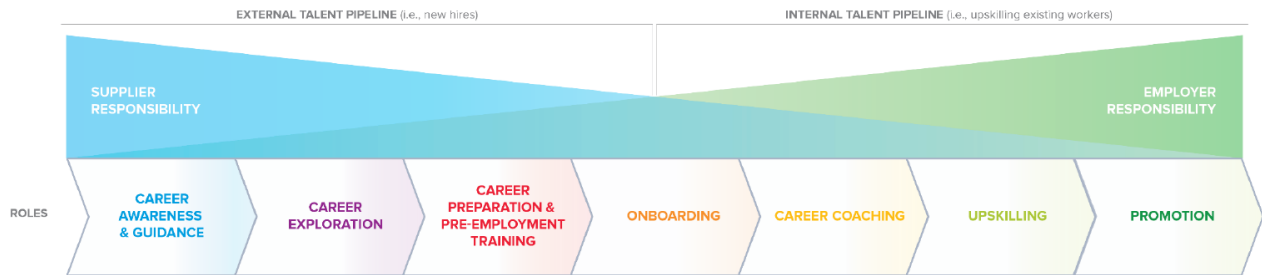
In PY '2023, the leadership of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS), engaged the University of Arkansas Counselor Education Program to complete a comprehensive WIOA Systems Evaluation, Skills Gap Analysis, and a series of Customer Service Surveys. For this study, ADWS assigned to assess the following Workforce areas: Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board; Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District; Central Arkansas Local Workforce Development Board; Little Rock Workforce Development Board; Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board; Southwest Arkansas Local Workforce Development Board.

Results of the evaluation, including customer satisfaction findings can be found [here](#). The Arkansas Workforce Development Board, in conjunction with state staff are collaboratively reviewing the report and addressing deficiencies and gaps while also improving areas that were noted as promising practices.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

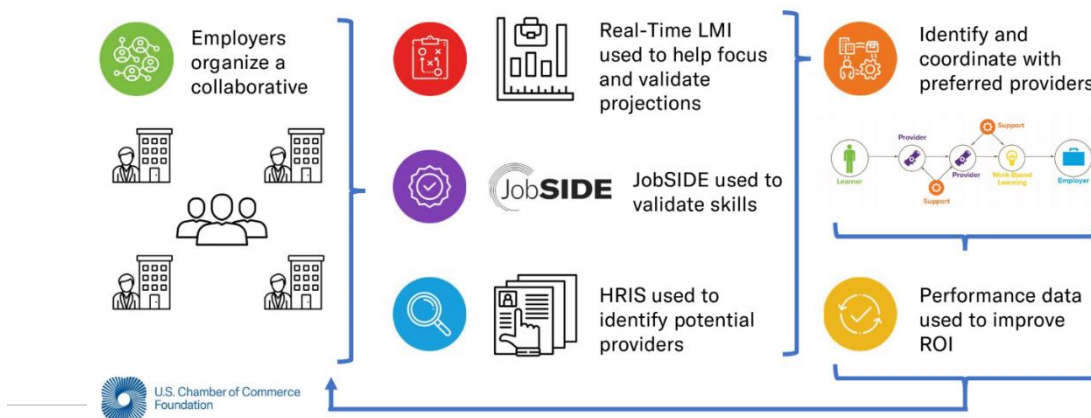
Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) is a dynamic, employer-led approach developed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation that aligns workforce development efforts with the specific needs of industries. By leveraging a data-driven framework, TPM facilitates collaboration among businesses, educational institutions, and workforce programs to create efficient and targeted talent pipelines.

As a key strategic initiative of the **Arkansas Workforce Strategy**, adoption of TPM is intended to help close skills gaps, ensure training programs meet employer demands, and enhance workforce data analysis to inform strategic planning.



To build state capacity for establishing and supporting TPM collaboratives, Arkansas held a TPM Champion’s Workshop to provide a concise executive-level overview to state leaders, employers, training providers, chambers of commerce, legislators, and other key workforce and economic development stakeholders. Staff from Arkansas Workforce Connections, the Arkansas Division of Higher Education, and a key apprenticeship intermediary also attended the full TPM Academy.

Arkansas was very involved with several of the [T3 Innovation Network’s](#) efforts to support digital transformation of talent pipeline management and workforce development such as being Beta testers and early adopters of the [Job Skills for In-Demand Employment \(JobSIDE\)](#) tools that publish and make use of employer validated profiles for in-demand jobs and skills.



LAUNCH - SKILLS-BASED LEARNING, EMPLOYMENT, AND ADVANCEMENT PLATFORM

A key strategic initiative under the Arkansas Workforce Strategy is the development of

LAUNCH, a user-centered platform tailored to Arkansas's specific workforce needs. LAUNCH became available to Unemployment Insurance claimants in PY23 and facilitates development of personalized skills and experience profiles, career recommendation with locally filmed videos, training recommendations including the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), and job postings matched on candidate skills.

LAUNCH also streamlines work search activity reporting by automatically logging work search activities, providing a dashboard and reminders of outstanding requirements, and allowing for easy reporting of additional work search activities.

An employer experience was also developed in PY23 based on direct design input from Arkansas employers. LAUNCH for Employers will allow employers to easily build skills-based job descriptions and search the talent marketplace based on self-attested and verified skills, credentials, and experience.

The screenshot displays the LAUNCH platform interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the LAUNCH logo and a language selector set to "Español". Below the navigation bar, there are search filters for "Search by Keyword" and "Filter Careers". The main content area is titled "Discover Careers That Leverage Your Skills" and features four job recommendations, each with a video thumbnail, a match percentage, and a "SAVE THIS" button.

Job Title	Match Percentage	Common Skills	Average Salary	Projected Job Growth	Discover Jobs	Explore Training
Entertainment and Recreation Manager	88%	Event Management, Event Planning, Restaurant Management, Catering, Coordination	\$94k/year	+25%	3	57
Chef or Head Cook	88%	Restaurant Management, Food Production, Catering, Sanitation, Menu Development	\$50k/year	+25%	14	57
Elementary School Teacher	88%					
Compliance Officer	88%					









CREDENTIAL TRANSPARENCY

Credential Transparency is a cornerstone of the **Arkansas Workforce Strategy**, enabling greater clarity, consumer information, and data quality across the workforce ecosystem. By creating a comprehensive, accessible registry of credentials detailing associated skills, competencies, and career pathways, Arkansas empowers job seekers, employers, and education providers to make informed decisions. This transparency aligns credentials with workforce needs, ensuring relevance and value. It also enhances data quality and interoperability, enabling seamless integration across systems to support efficient analysis, better policy decisions, and a more responsive, skills-based workforce system.

In PY23, Arkansas published over 3,700 credentials to the [Arkansas Credential Registry](#) including the entire Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), all state-supported postsecondary credentials, apprenticeships, career and technical education (CTE) pathways, occupational licensure, high school diploma and equivalent (GED), and nondegree and noncredit credentials from [83 organizations](#) at 140 locations.

Besides programs and credentials, the registry supports additional linked open data on learning opportunities, skills and competencies, occupations, financial assistance, transfer value, outcomes, and supportive services.

Data in the Arkansas Credential Registry

 Organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organization Type• Location(s), including all addresses and satellite campuses.	 Support Services <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic or Career Guidance• Physical features or modifications of facilities• Adaptive technologies or offerings• Provision of housing, clothing, or learning resources
 Credentials Offered <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Degrees• Licenses• Certifications• Stackable Credentials• Badges• Micro-credentials	 Financial Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial assistance available to assist in the pursuit or completion of a credential
 Learning Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Programs• Courses• Related information, including time to complete	 Transfer Value <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How value can be transferred from one form of learning in another context, typically credit transfer values
 Competencies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning Objectives• Skills• What is learned or gained from the Learning Opportunity or upon earning the credential	 Outcomes Data <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Number of credential awardees• Number of awardees employed• Related earnings over one or more time periods
 Assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessments required for a Credential or Learning Opportunity	 Jobs, Occupations, and Pathways <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Occupations and Jobs can link to Competencies or Credentials, or be combined with other data to create Pathways

The training and education programs available in LAUNCH are sourced from the Arkansas Credential Registry, the Arkansas issued Learning and Employment Records (LERs) contain credential registry

identifiers to provide context on the skills and competencies for use in verified skills-based hiring and advancement.

LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT RECORDS

To support Learning and Employment Records (LERs) and other digital credentials as part of the Arkansas Workforce Strategy, Arkansas hosted a two-day [Digital Credential Ecosystem Workshop](#) to foster collaborative analysis and design of an Arkansas Digital Credential Ecosystem. Arkansas also became the first state to join the [Velocity Network](#), a blockchain-based "Internet of Careers" platform that enables individuals to securely store and share verifiable career credentials while allowing organizations to issue and verify these credentials, streamlining workforce development and supporting state-issued Learning and Employment Records (LER) and other digital credentials.

NATIONAL LABOR EXCHANGE RESEARCH HUB

In PY23, Arkansas began using the [National Labor Exchange \(NLx\) Research Hub](#) to provide workforce development professionals, academic researchers, and other organizations that rely on labor market information with high-quality, transparent, real-time and historical data that represents the diversity of jobs available in the Arkansas labor market. Arkansas is also making focused efforts to increase coverage of job postings available in the [National Labor Exchange \(NLx\)](#).

EDUCATION QUALITY OUTCOME STANDARDS FOR NON-DEGREE CREDENTIALS

In PY23, Arkansas partnered with the Burning Glass Institute (BGI) and Jobs for the Future (JFF) in an initiative to be the first state to adopt the Education Quality Outcomes Standards to expand the coverage of consumer information on credential quality, with a particular focus on non-degree credentials. The project seeks to:

- Analyze the role of non-degree credentials for specific populations, including veterans, justice-involved individuals, and key Arkansas sectors, to identify the credentials most critical for each group within Arkansas and nationally
- Evaluate the outcomes of identified non-degree credentials to help estimate return on investment (ROI) for learners including such metrics as lifetime earnings, rates of job placement, mobility, promotion rates, and skill alignment
- Apply the Education Quality Outcome Standard (EQOS) signal of quality to benchmark quality outcomes of non-degree credentials
- Integrate outcomes research into state data collection architecture to create a fuller picture of credential quality that allows workers to make more informed choices

A multistate learning academy, led by the National Governors Association and key partners, will extend the insights and tools developed through Arkansas's credential quality initiative to other states. Engaging up to five states in a dedicated learning cohort and sharing best practices with a broader network of 30+ states, the academy will foster collaboration and support the adoption of objective, outcomes-driven standards for non-degree credentials. This effort aims to build a scalable, national framework for improving the transparency, quality, and labor market alignment of non-traditional training opportunities.

INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY

In alignment with the [WIOA Integrated Service Delivery Vision](#), Strategic Goal 2 of the Arkansas WIOA State Plan seeks to enhance service delivery to employers and jobseekers through:

- Development of a common intake process for jobseekers and businesses that will efficiently connect them with services available from all workforce development partner programs and identify any barriers to employment that need to be addressed.
- Development of an integrated data system that will enable the sharing of information between partner agencies to more efficiently serve both employers and jobseekers.
- Exploration of data sharing opportunities with non-governmental organizations that are committed partners to the state's workforce center system that will lead to improved intake, referral, and case management for customers served by multiple agencies (both public and private).

In support of this goal, Arkansas launched the [CiviForm](#) service discovery and eligibility screening platform in American Job Centers. CiviForm consolidates screening and intake questions across WIOA and other programs into an accessible digital experience available to residents on any device.

CiviForm includes a community navigator role that facilitates resident assistance from trusted intermediaries at government, community-based, or healthcare organizations. Arkansas Community Colleges received a grant to support the use of CiviForm to connect students with service on 22 campuses across the state, and Arkansas Workforce Connection has trained call center staff on assisting clients through CiviForm.

The image displays two screenshots of the Arkansas CiviForm web application. The left screenshot shows the 'Start Here' landing page with a blue header and a white box containing the text 'Enter your basic information here.' and a 'Start here' button. The right screenshot shows the 'Benefits pre-screener summary' page, which lists 12 screening questions with 'Yes/No' radio buttons and 'Edit' links. A large green arrow points from the 'Start Here' page to the 'Benefits pre-screener summary' page, with the text 'Start with 12 quick questions' written inside the arrow.

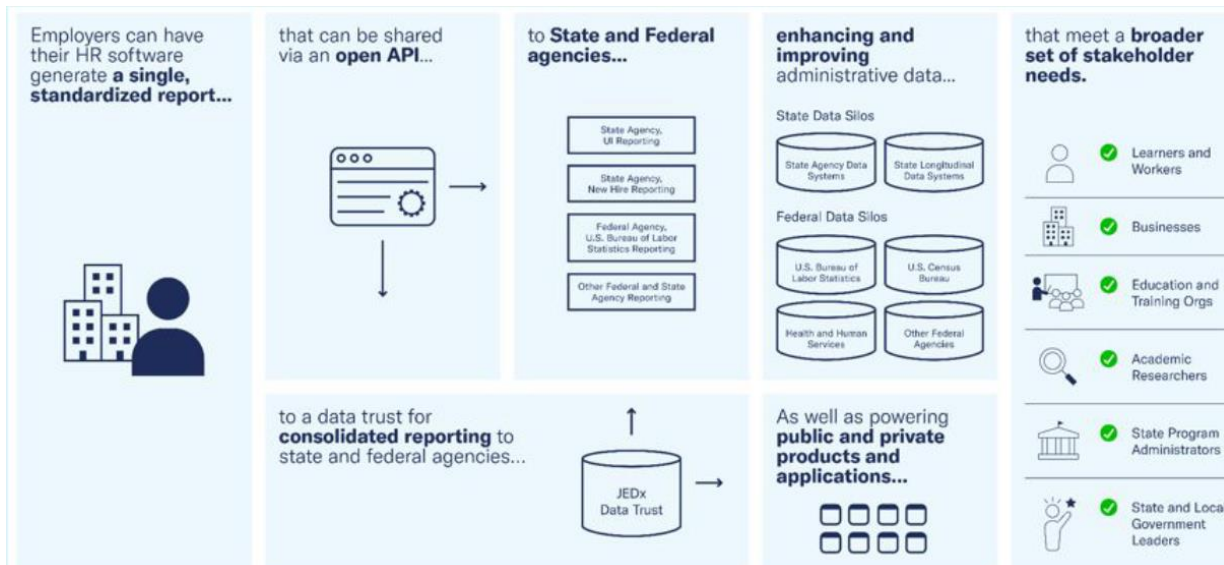
JOBS AND EMPLOYMENT DATA EXCHANGE (JEDX)

Arkansas continued active collaboration towards development and testing of the [Jobs and Employment Data Exchange \(JEDx\)](#), an initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the [T3 Innovation Network](#) to develop a public-private approach for collecting and using standards-based jobs and employment data.

JEDx promotes the development and use of data and technology standards to

- Improve how employers report data to government agencies
- Improve how data are shared and used in managing career pathways through education and training partnerships
- Improve how data are shared and used to enable better job searches
- Empower workers and learners to use their own learning and employment records (LERs) to apply for jobs and government programs

Arkansas and South Carolina are the JEDx pilot states, and PY23 was spent working with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the Bureau of Labor Statistics to map reporting processes, further refine data standards, and prepare for live demonstration testing if PY24.



ELIGIBLE TRAINING PROVIDER REPORTING

In the third year of “all participants” eligible training provider reporting (ETA 9171), Arkansas continued to deliver training and support to providers on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) in using the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) to support high quality reporting with lower provider

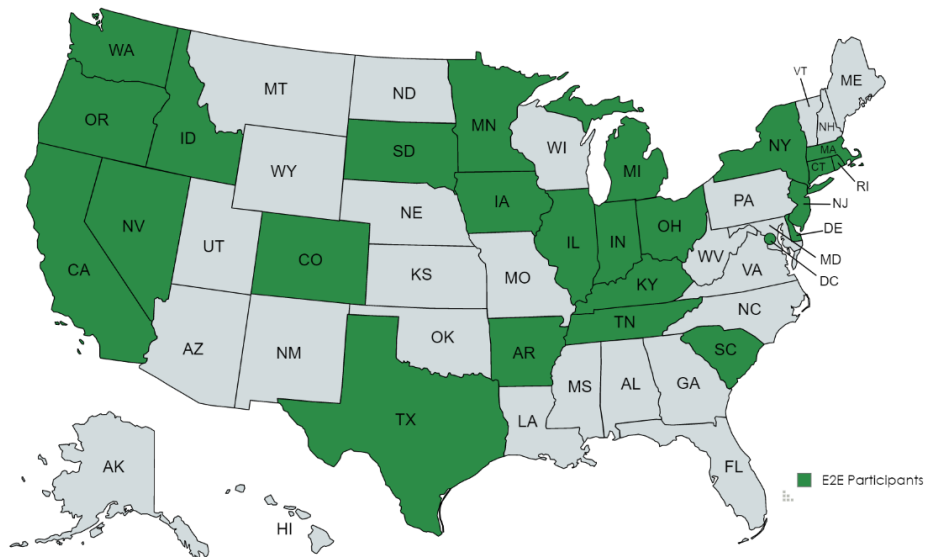
reporting burden. Arkansas presented our ETA-9171 process at the WIOA Re-convening as a best practice for other states to make use of. These data collection changes resulted in Arkansas being able to report the ETA-9171 All Participants Measures for 83.37% of our programs placing us 3rd out of the 50 states for PY23 reporting.

EVALUATION AND RESEARCH – ENROLLMENT TO EMPLOYMENT

In PY23, [Arkansas Workforce Connections](#) (AWC) and the Arkansas CDO Office worked with the [Coleridge Initiative](#) to develop a new [Applied Data Analytics training program](#) curriculum, titled “[Evaluating Enrollment to Employment Pathways](#)”. This program leverages the Arkansas workforce longitudinal data developed under the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) to train participants on applied use of data analytics on integrated WIOA, SNAP, TANF, and work-based learning data to design and develop scalable research and products for supporting data-driven policy and practice, with a particular focus on co-enrollment and integrated service delivery.

Two cohorts of 30 students each were funded under WDQI, but additional braided funding from the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), the National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA), and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) were able to support three additional cohorts for which there was incredible national interest in participating.

Over the course of five cohorts in PY23, 168 participants representing 25 states (2-4 agencies per state) conducted 23 high quality research projects and data product development efforts jointly contributing to a substantial body of knowledge on a wide variety of topics that can directly benefit workforce development in policy and practice.



Evaluating Enrollment to Employment Pathways (E2E) Applied Data Analytics Projects

State(s)	Project
Arkansas	Your Arkansas Pathway
Arkansas	Stayers, Stutterers, and Leavers, Oh My! Analyzing Arkansas SNAP spells
Arkansas	Effectiveness of Adult Educational Programs on Workforce Outcomes
Tennessee	Registered Apprenticeships: Measuring Outcomes – a Causal Analysis
New York + Rhode Island	Unemployment Insurance (UI) to Workforce Training and Education: A Study in Engagement
Arkansas + Wisconsin	Unlocking Potential: The Role of WIOA Trainings & Credentials in Employment Outcomes
Missouri	Incarceration and WIOA Participation
Delaware + Massachusetts	Enrollment in Quality Jobs Post-WIOA
Missouri	UI and WIOA: Retention and Wages Over Time
Connecticut	Factors Influencing Apprenticeship Completion and Subsequent Earnings in Arkansas
Washington, DC	Role of Demographics on Apprenticeship Completion Status
Ohio	SNAP and WIOA? The Effect of WIOA Title I Services in the SNAP Population of Able-Bodied Adults
New Jersey	Employment Outcomes of SNAP Recipients in 2017
Iowa + South Dakota	Is it the People or the Programs?: Employment and Earnings among AR TANF Participants by WIOA Co-enrollment Status
Washington, DC, South Carolina, Indiana	The Trio: Successful journey from enrollment to employment
Minnesota	Investigating Wagner-Peyser Uptake in Areas of Little Broadband Connectivity
Council of State Governments Justice Center + Kentucky	Examining Enrollment Benefits for the Individuals with Dependents
Nevada	Unlocking Potential: The Impact of Adult Education for the SNAP Population
Oregon	Impact and Reach of WIOA Engagement Level
Colorado	Evaluating the Efficacy of SNAP Co-Enrollment
Texas	The Impact of Educational Attainment on Individual Economic Outcomes
Idaho	Arkansas GED Participants and Workforce Outcomes
California	A Case Study of 2018 Arkansas TANF Entrants

Key Findings and Contributions

The program's findings illustrate how Arkansas's efforts contribute to the state's leadership in integrated service delivery and provide practical applications for enhancing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) implementation.

Advancing Co-Enrollment Strategies: Research demonstrated that co-enrollment in programs such as WIOA, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) leads to significantly better employment and wage outcomes:

- Co-enrollment in WIOA Title I services and SNAP improved employment rates and wage trajectories, particularly for ABAWDs, a key population served under WIOA.
- Participants with dependents who were co-enrolled in multiple programs achieved greater economic stability and improved long-term employment retention.

The Power of Education and Credentialing: The research underscored the transformative impact of education and credential attainment:

- Adult education programs integrated with SNAP boosted employment prospects and earning potential.
- Credentialing aligned with high-demand industries, supported by WIOA Title I services, enhanced workforce participation and access to higher-paying jobs.
- GED and vocational training provided in correctional settings significantly reduced recidivism, supporting the transition of justice-involved individuals into the workforce.

Bridging Digital and Geographic Barriers: Addressing barriers to workforce participation was a central theme:

- Research highlighted how limited broadband access restricts uptake of services like Wagner-Peyser in rural areas. Arkansas's focus on digital inclusion initiatives could expand workforce service access and improve engagement statewide.
- Digital literacy programs emerged as critical tools for equipping participants to succeed in an increasingly digital economy.

Evidence-Based Policy and Practice: Arkansas's work emphasized the importance of using data to inform decisions:

- Longitudinal data analysis demonstrated how integrated services foster better outcomes compared to siloed approaches.
- Research findings provide actionable insights for tailoring services to participant needs, such as early referral of Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants to Wagner-Peyser services for faster re-employment.
- Cross-program collaboration enhances administrative efficiency and reduces duplication, aligning with WIOA's focus on integrated service delivery.

Arkansas’s leadership through the E2E program highlights the state’s commitment to using data and evidence to transform workforce systems and improve economic outcomes. These findings provide a blueprint for practical, scalable innovations that align with WIOA’s vision of integrated, customer-centric service delivery. By continuing to build on this foundation, Arkansas can further its role as a national leader in workforce innovation while delivering meaningful results for its residents and communities.

Performance Accountability

A. PY 23 Results

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) and state agency partners continuously assess the performance outcomes of the workforce system in annual performance and benchmark reports. The state agency responsible for each of the core programs outlined in program-specific areas regularly assesses performance accountability measures at the state, regional and local levels as required by each core program. At the completion of each program year, each core WIOA partner presents its annual performance to the State Workforce Board.

To support the effort of ensuring that one-stop program partners are well-positioned to meet the performance accountability requirements of WIOA, the WIOA Roundtable's Program Performance Committee focuses on coordinating core partners to ensure systems have the capacity to collect and report required new and updated data elements under WIOA, as well as capacity to track aggregate data for performance indicators applicable to all four core partners was established.

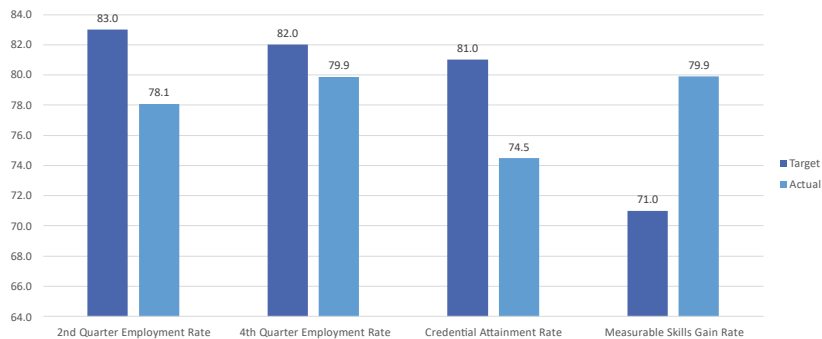
The state and local areas are assessed based on a comparison of the actual performance level with the adjusted level of performance each quarter and annually. Universal definitions will be utilized to determine if a core program exceeded, met, or failed to meet the negotiated levels of performance.

Performance outcomes for WIOA Titles I & III programs are included in the following charts:

(as presented to the state board on November 6, 2024)



PY 2023 Performance Title I – Adult



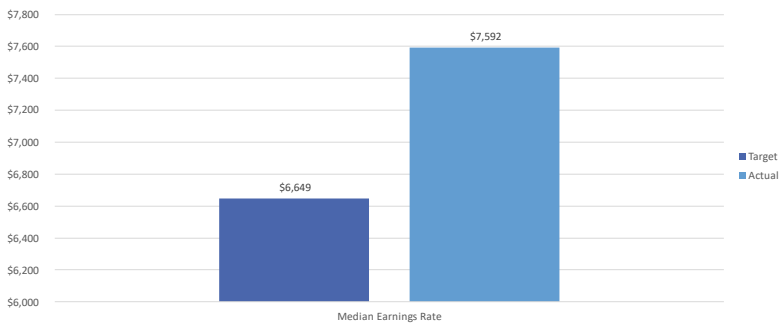
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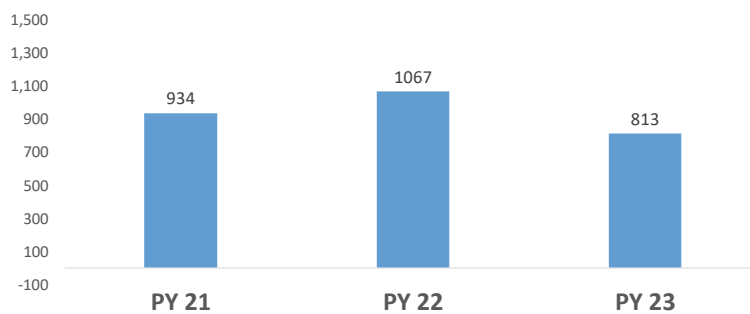
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PY 2023 Performance Title I – Adult

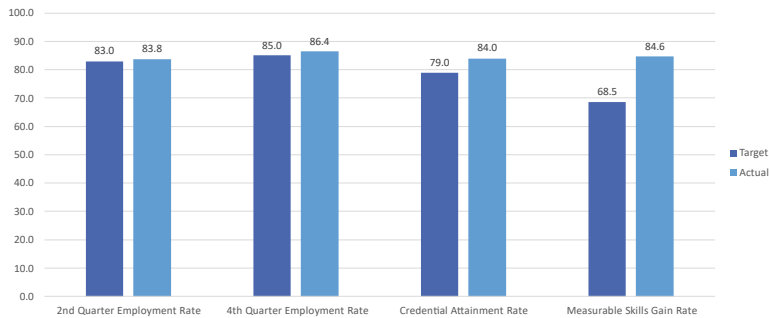


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Total Participants Served WIOA Title I: Adult

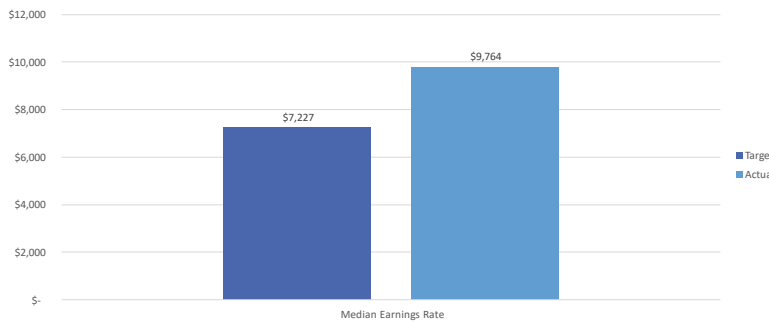


PY 2023 Performance Title I – Dislocated Worker



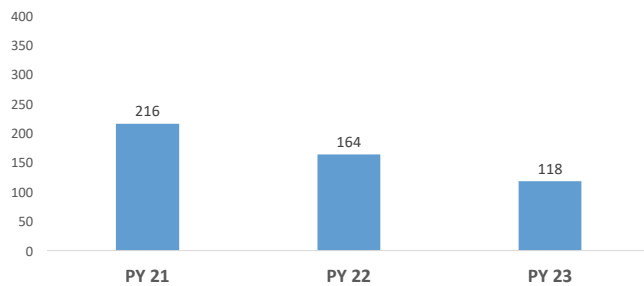
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PY 2023 Performance Title I – Dislocated Worker

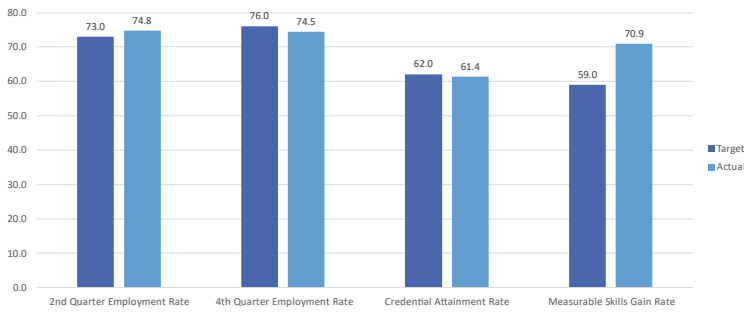


EXCEEDED

Total Participants Served WIOA Title I: Dislocated Worker



PY 2023 Performance Title I – Youth



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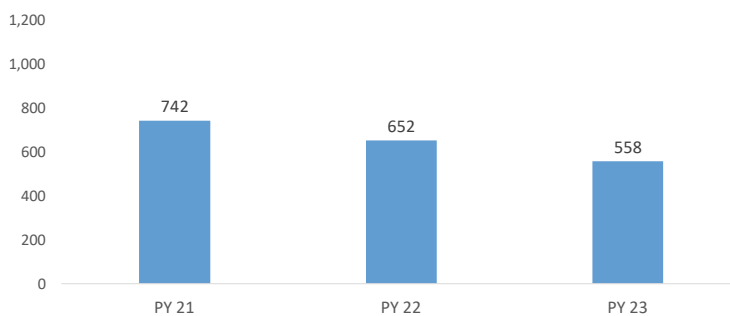
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PY 2023 Performance Title I – Youth

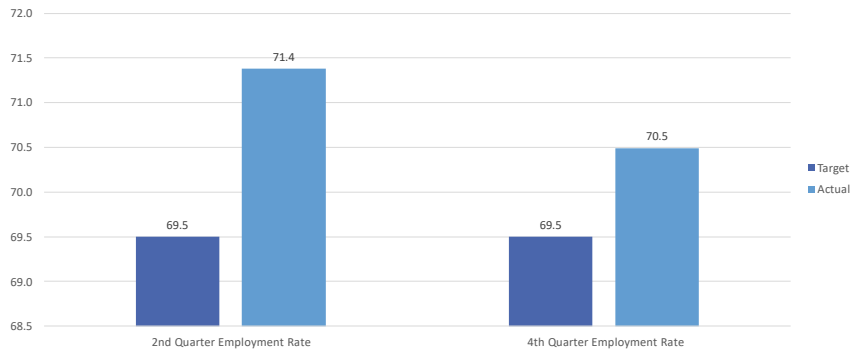


EXCEEDED

Total Participants Served WIOA Title I: Youth



PY 2023 Performance Title III – Wagner-Peyser



EXCEEDED

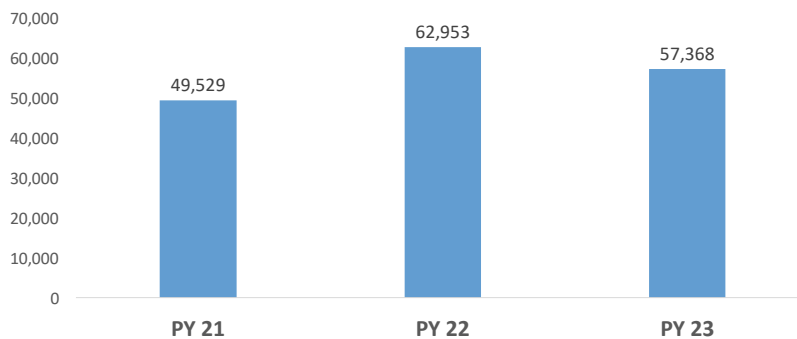
EXCEEDED

PY 2023 Performance Title III – Wagner-Peyser



EXCEEDED

Total Participants Served Wagner-Peyser



Common Exit

Arkansas has a Common Exit policy mandating common date of exit for participants across the WIOA Title I, WIOA Title III, and Trade Adjustment Assistance programs. Consistent with ETA guidance, participants enrolled or co-enrolled in one or more of the foregoing ETA programs remain as participants in all programs in which there is a common period of participation until the participant has not received a service in any Common Exit program for ninety days. After ninety days elapse without receipt of a service in any of the Common Exit programs, the participant will exit all programs, retroactive to the date of the last service received in any enrolled or co-enrolled program.

Data Validation Policy

Per ADWS [WIOA Title I-B Policy 4.6](#), at a minimum, state staff will conduct data validation training for both state and local staff on an annual basis. Local Workforce Development Boards are also required to conduct training annually. The training will cover all related topics, common trends, and other issues detected during the data validation review process. During annual monitoring, data validation requirements will be reviewed to ensure that the data validation policy has been implemented by local staff.

Effectiveness in Serving Employers

WIOA implemented a pilot performance measure to determine the effectiveness in serving employers. States were requested to select two of the three DOL pilot measures and could include additional state-defined employer measures. The state of Arkansas has chosen for the pilot period to report on the following for the *Effectiveness in Serving Employer* performance indicator:

- Retention with the Same Employer
- Employer Penetration.

Governor's State Set-Aside Activities

Arkansas carried out all required statewide employment and training activities as described of § 682.200.

WIOA Outreach Activities Awards

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services allotted an additional \$150K for outreach activity awards to local workforce development boards. The public workforce system plays a critical role in connecting talent with opportunity, connects diverse customers to employment and training opportunities, and helps employers recruit skilled employees that match their employment opportunities. To fully communicate the workforce system's value and expand awareness of its services to job seekers and employers, the system must conduct effective and targeted outreach. WIOA requires grantees to inform the public about services, conduct proactive outreach to underserved populations, and make individuals aware of services that can support their employment needs. ADWS funded up to \$15,000 per local workforce development board with the goal of increased WIOA enrollments across the state. Funds awarded for WIOA allowable outreach activities must be utilized for additional outreach activities and not to supplant WIOA formula funds awarded for youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs.

Sector Strategies & Regional Planning Activities

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services allotted an additional \$250K for awards to LWDBs to assist with Regional Planning and services delivery efforts and to provide support for the effective development, convening, and implementation of industry and sector partnerships.

Rapid Response

Rapid Response is a pro-active, business-focused, and flexible strategy designed to respond to layoffs and plant closings by quickly coordinating services and providing immediate aid to companies and their affected workers. Our Rapid Response team works with employers and any employees to quickly maximize public and private resources to minimize disruptions associated with job loss. Rapid Response can provide customized services on-site at an affected company, accommodate any work schedules, and assist companies and workers through the painful transitions associated with job loss.

Rapid Response is conducted in partnership with the Arkansas Workforce Centers (AWCs). Rapid Response for Laid-Off Workers provides access to a comprehensive range of direct services, benefits, training opportunities, and income support. Assistance may include drafting résumés and letters of application, interview skills workshops, career counseling, job search assistance, skills upgrading, and job training. Rapid Response also provides multiple benefits to Employers including information about a variety of layoff aversion options which may be available. Rapid Response may also facilitate access to incumbent worker training programs and to skilled job seekers.

Our Dislocated Worker program manages a fleet of Mobile Workforce Centers. Each Mobile Workforce Center has full internet connectivity and is equipped with computers, printers, copiers, and fax machines. All of the Mobile Workforce Centers include a computer with access to Jobs Application with Speech (JAWS) software and are handicapped accessible. Mobile Workforce Centers may be transported to supplement local resources, as needed.

In PY '23 the team provided Rapid Response Services to over 40 companies who reported actual or anticipated layoffs or closures impacting over 3000 workers.

High Concentration of Eligible Youth Awards

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services provided an additional \$200K of funding to Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDB) who are serving a high concentration of WIOA eligible youth, in accordance with the definition of “Eligible Youth” found in the WIOA law, Title 1, section 129. Eligible Youth are defined as individuals 16-24 years of age, who are considered low-income persons, and who have one or more risk factors.

Arkansas JobLink (AJL)

AJL is the state’s integrated web-based workforce development management information system (MIS) used by the state and local areas to share and manage participant data between the Wagner-Peyser

program, the Trade Adjustment Assistance program and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program. AJL provides jobseekers, employers, and workforce development professionals with tremendous flexibility and capacity for accessing, tracking, and reporting services: self-directed, staff-facilitated, staff-assisted, and case management.

All staff has access to and can view all services provided to clients regardless of individual program funding. This approach allows funding streams (regardless of specific target group) to consider the “complete package” of services provided or made available to the client reducing duplication of effort and maximizing outcomes. It also facilitates a single process to extract required data for the generation and submission of performance or demographic client details as required by current mandates. In short AJL provides all workforce partners with a “whole person view” of the services available, or provided to, each client or group.

Arkansas has taken a lead in the development of a direct electronic interface between our AJL and Unemployment Insurance (UI) systems. Through this interface we ensure that all UI claimants are registered for work and eliminates repetitive information gathering from UI claimants. We have also implemented a proactive approach to Reemployment Services (RES) and Reemployment and Eligibility Assessments (REA) to claimants with the goal of reducing the average length of time a client is out of work. This effort would have been exponentially more difficult if we were not dealing with an integrated service delivery system. Through the use of electronic wage matching, records are regularly updated with information received from the State and other sources to identify those who have obtained employment and calculate average earnings.

Each quarter, quarterly wage record information is loaded into AJL to measure the progress on State and local common performance measures. The quarterly wage information includes wages paid to an individual, the social security account number, the name of the individual, and the Federal employer identification number of the employer paying the wages to the individual. State wage records are available to other member states through the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) on a quarterly basis. Likewise, Arkansas is able to track participants that work or move outside of Arkansas for performance measurement purposes through WRIS wage records from member states.

All local WIOA Title I service providers have access to the state wage record information for the purpose of measuring local common performance measures. AJL can be found at <https://www.arjoblink.arkansas.gov>

National Dislocated Worker Grants

During program year 2023, no DWGs were administered by the state of Arkansas.

End Report

APPENDIX

APPENDICE I: SUCCESS STORIES



Lindsey Holden, a Dislocated Worker participant in Eastern Arkansas, walked into the Workforce Center seeking information on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program. As a long-term unemployed single parent receiving SNAP benefits, Lindsey needed support to get back into the workforce. Her last employment was on May 12, 2020, when she was laid off from the Pillow Clinic in Helena, AR.

Lindsey promptly registered in the Arkansas JobLink (AJL) system and completed a WIOA Dislocated Worker (DLW)/Adult application. Upon review, her Career Advisor confirmed her status as a Dislocated Worker due to her layoff. Recognizing her lack of skills in a high-demand occupation, Lindsey worked with her career advisor to develop an individualized employment plan and explore career pathways that matched her interests. She ultimately decided to pursue a career in nursing and applied to the Nursing program at Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas (PCCUA).

During her training period, Lindsey began the adult work experience program at the Helena Workforce Center, gaining practical experience as an Office Clerk. On August 22, 2022, she started occupational skills training in the Nursing program at PCCUA, focusing on acquiring the skills necessary to succeed in the healthcare field.

On May 10, 2024, Lindsey's hard work and dedication paid off as she was awarded an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Nursing from Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas.

Lindsey Holden's journey through the WIOA program is a testament to her resilience and determination. By leveraging the resources and support provided by the WIOA program, she successfully transitioned from being a long-term unemployed individual to a highly skilled and credentialed Registered Nurse. Lindsey's story highlights the impact of the WIOA program in empowering individuals to achieve their career goals and improve their lives.

On June 10, 2024, Ms. Holden was hired full-time as Emergency Room Registered Nurse at Forrest City Medical Center in Forrest City Arkansas.



Edward Sherrill, a Dislocated Worker participant in Western AR, was laid off from Tyson Foods after working for the company for several years. He worked full-time as a maintenance technician but felt he didn't have many other skills outside of that. Edward heard about the WIOA program and visited the Ft. Smith Workforce Center in May 2023 seeking assistance to attend Arkansas Tech University Ozark in the Air and Refrigeration program. With assistance from his career advisor, Edward was provided the guidance and tools needed to apply for and enroll in college.

He quickly completed all coursework in the Air Conditioning Refrigeration Certificate Program at ATU Ozark and received his certificate just a few months of after being in the WIOA program. Coincidentally, Mr. Sherrill was hired by the college he attended, as an instructor in AC/refrigeration program. Edward is a perfect

example of how WIOA can assist anyone transition back into employment after a difficult season of uncertainty.



Kristina Gann, an Adult participant in Northwest Arkansas, found herself at a crossroads with her educational and career journey. Kristina, a single mother of 3 with her oldest child being disabled, attended college before but was never successful due to challenges of life and not identifying a career that she loved. She attended college classes first for business, and then nursing. After losing interest, she realized that neither one of them suited her career choices. She was connected with the WIOA program as well as Arkansas Career Pathways programs for guidance and assistance. After consulting with

program advisors and taking a series of assessments, she discovered that Radiology might be a good career choice for her.

Kristina's case managers assisted with completing paperwork for her college application and financial aid. It was determined that she did not have adequate funding for a Pell grant, which presented another barrier for Ms. Gann to reach her goals. WIOA was able to assist with this barrier and fund tuition and supportive services to ensure she could complete training. till she found Radiology. Her Pell was maxed out after her 1st semester in the program. After a lot of studying, hard work and diligence, Kristina graduated and received her radio technology license. Kristina is working at 1st Choice Healthcare in Salem, AR as a Xray / Lab Tech with a starting salary of \$22.00/ hr. She is pictured with her children, whom she says inspired her to never give up.

WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT

(WIOA)

ARKANSAS
WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS

A DIVISION OF ARKANSAS WORKFORCE SERVICES

ANNUAL REPORT

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