

Appendix A: PY 2024 – 2027 Regional Plan Template

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

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

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

1.1. Provide the following:

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

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

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

Indicate the sources of regional labor market and economic data.

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

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

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

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

§106(c)(E)]

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

Regional Plan Modification

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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