

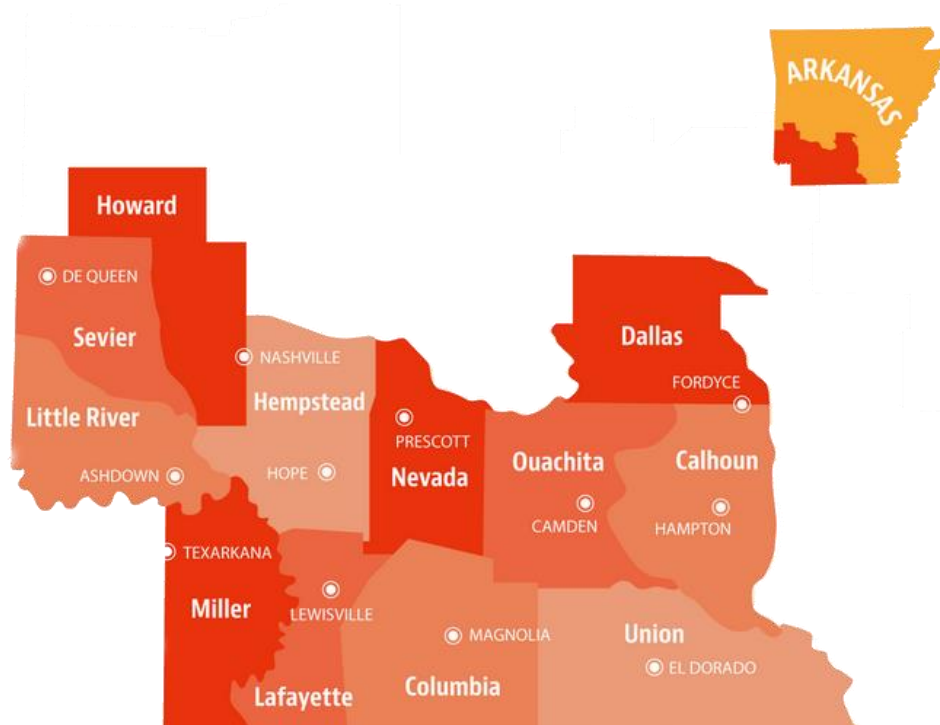
The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board Executive Committee made a motion to approve the draft changes of the Regional/Local Plan to be published for a 30-day period to allow public comments and to submit the Local Plan's final modifications, to the state, at the conclusion of the public comment period.

The modifications are highlighted in yellow.



Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area

Regional & Local Plans
PY 2020 - PY 2023
Updated March 2023



Section 1: Workforce and Economic Analysis

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

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

Economic Conditions:

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area has a strong manufacturing sector. It is home to a diverse inventory of companies that thrive in Arkansas's business-friendly ecosystem. The Southwest region manufactures everything from cement to solid rocket motors, representing the sectors of building supplies, rubber, plastics, paper, chemical, petroleum, and aerospace and defense. The Highland Industrial Park, located in Calhoun County hosts some of America's finest Defense Department contractors in the defense industry cluster including, Lockheed Martin, Aerojet, General Dynamics and many more. Southwest Arkansas is also home to other globally known leaders such as Husqvarna, Albemarle Corporation, JM Manufacturing, Cooper Tire and Rubber Company, and many more. We range from small manufacturers to global giants. According to the 2019-2024 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Southwest Arkansas, employment in manufacturing accounts for 21.3% of all employment in the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area.

Timber and lumber production are important to the economy of the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Region. According to the 2019-2024 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for Southwest Arkansas, the agriculture/forestry sector accounted for 3.4% of all employment in the State of Arkansas and accounted for 11.0% of employment in Lafayette County, 8.0% of employment in Howard County, and 6.0% of employment in Sevier County. Lumber production is closely tied to the construction industry, and a decline in housing production nationwide over the past 5 years has led directly to a decrease in employment in these counties, and decreased employment opportunities inevitably lead to loss of population.

Although the oil boom passed many years ago, Southwest Arkansas still has oil and gas resources. Natural gas occurs in conventional reservoirs and unconventional reservoirs. Arkansas has both types. Conventional natural gas is obtained by drilling a well into a rock formation that allows the gas to flow into the well bore. Wet gas, which also contains heavier fluid hydrocarbons, is recovered from the oil and gas fields of Calhoun, Columbia, Hempstead, Lafayette, Miller, Nevada, Ouachita, and Union Counties.

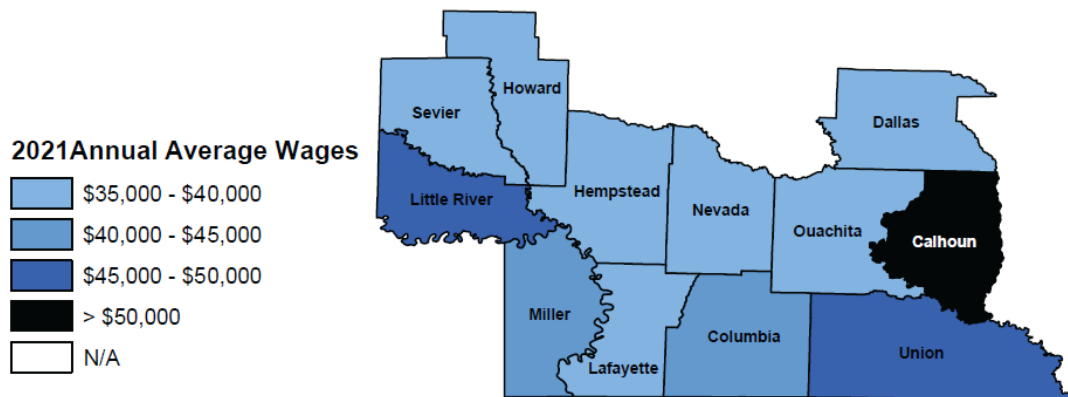
According to the Arkansas Oil and Gas Commission's Annual Report of Production, 4.4 million barrels of oil and 4 million cubic feet of natural gas were pumped from wells in South Arkansas in 2022.¹

Unconventional natural gas resources in Arkansas include shale gas and coalbed methane (CBM). Shale gas is primarily found in NW Arkansas, but coalbed methane is present in Southwest Arkansas.

Southwest Arkansas sits on many saltwater brine wells that contain substantial amounts of Lithium that is being currently studied. Extraction processes for battery grade lithium could very well bring the next major industrial boom to Southwest Arkansas communities.

¹ These figures also contain relatively small contributions from production wells in Ashley and Bradley counties.

2021 Average Annual Wages (Private Sector)



**Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services*

County Average Annual Wages 2021

1) Calhoun County=	\$64,740	7) Hempstead County=	\$42,367
2) Little River County=	\$58,892	8) Ouachita County=	\$42,120
3) **Union County =	\$48,905	9) Lafayette County=	\$36,709
4) Columbia County=	\$44,257	10) Dallas County=	\$39,628
5) Miller County=	\$44,413	11) Howard County=	\$39,602
6) Nevada County=	\$44,340	12) Sevier County=	\$38,525

Southwest LWDA Annual Average Wage= \$45,374

Based on data obtained from the United States Census Bureau, the average annual wage in the State of Arkansas is **\$51,532**. As compared to the average wage of the Southwest Region of **\$45,374**, we are **\$6,158** below the State average. Little River County is where Domtar Paper Mill is located and Calhoun County is where Highland Industrial Park (Houses Lockheed Martin, Aerojet, NTS, etc.) is located, which explains why they are the two highest in wages.

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), Labor Market Information

Source: Unites States Census Bureau

****Union County data was missing at the time of publication, so older amount was used**

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), Labor Market Information

Source: Unites States Census Bureau

Southwest Arkansas LWDA Wages of 10 Largest Occupations

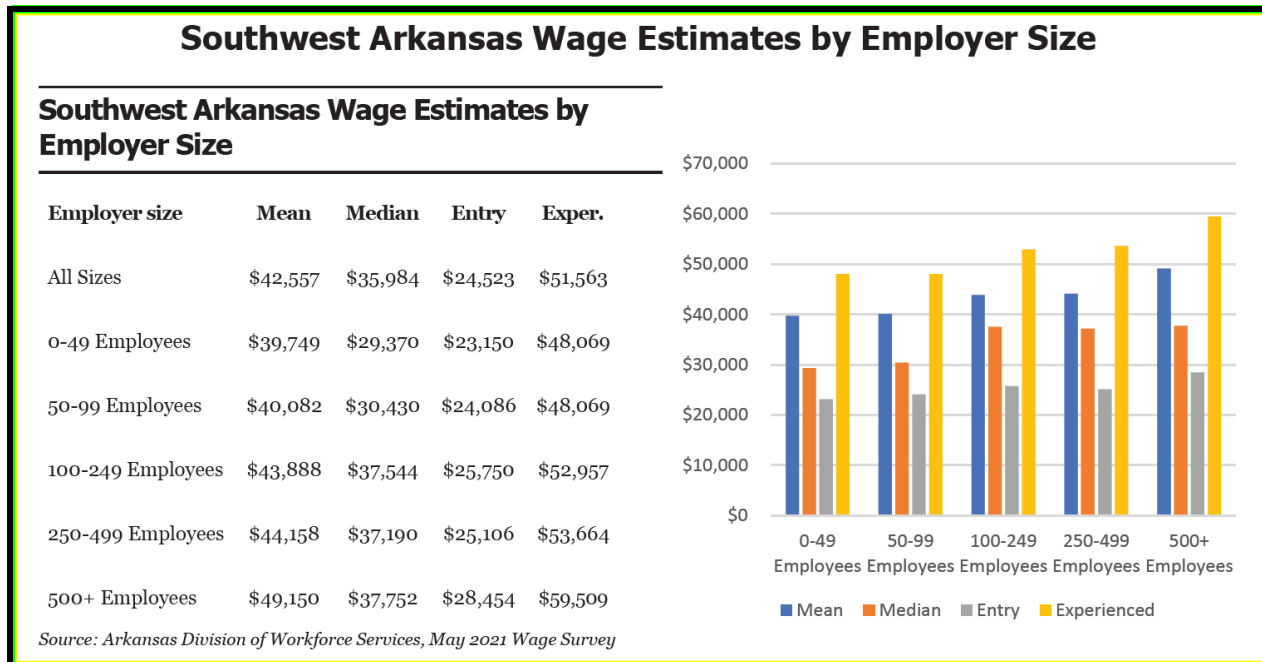
Occupation	Estimated Employment	Average Wage	Entry Wage	Experienced Wage
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	3,170	\$30,279	\$25,390	\$32,724
Cashiers	2,240	\$24,012	\$22,880	\$24,578
Fast Food and Counter Workers	2,200	\$23,864	\$23,060	\$24,265
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	2,170	\$42,715	\$30,355	\$48,896
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	1,540	\$35,704	\$26,742	\$40,185
Office Clerks, General	1,500	\$32,210	\$23,608	\$36,512
Retail Salespersons	1,490	\$28,330	\$22,966	\$31,012
General and Operations Managers	1,450	\$79,163	\$33,547	\$101,971
Nursing Assistants	1,120	\$27,178	\$23,044	\$29,244
Stockers and Order Fillers	1,110	\$28,419	\$23,270	\$30,993

Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, May 2021 Wage Survey

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Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand was estimated to have the most employees in Southwest Arkansas with 3,170 employed in 2021 with an average wage of \$30,279. Cashiers was the second largest occupation with 2,240 employed, earning an average wage of \$24,012. General and Operations Managers had the highest average wage of the 10 largest occupations at \$32,210 annually.

Family Medicine Physicians topped the Occupations Paying the Most list with an annual salary of \$230,245. Physicians, All Other, with an average annual salary of \$215,023, ranked second on the Occupations Paying the Most list.



The entry wage estimate for employers of all sizes was \$24,523 for 2021. The median wage estimate for employers with 250-499 employees was \$37,190, while wages for experienced workers averaged \$51,563 for employers in all size categories. Of the 65,700 estimated employees in the area with hourly wage data, 8,520 made less than \$12 an hour while 12,830 made more than \$27 an hour. Employees making between \$17 and \$21.99 totaled 15,750.

Existing and emerging in-demand industry sectors and occupations:

Top Growing Industry Supersectors

NAICS Code	NAICS Title	2021 Estimated Employment	2023 Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
101300	Manufacturing	18,902	19,130	228	1.21%
102100	Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	13,830	13,942	112	0.81%
102600	Leisure and Hospitality	5,456	5,540	84	1.54%
102400	Professional and Business Services	4,550	4,620	70	1.54%
102800	Government	5,786	5,800	14	0.24%

Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing is estimated to be the top growing industry in Southwest Arkansas, adding 191 jobs, for an employment level of 2,814. Warehousing and Storage

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could raise employment levels by 18.37 percent, moving from 98 jobs in 2021 to 116 in 2023. On the negative side of the labor market, Educational Services is slated to lose 324 jobs, dropping employment to 7,614. Private Households is forecast to cut 146 jobs, or 34.19 percent of its workforce, dropping from 427 jobs in 2021 to 281 in 2023, becoming the fastest declining industry in the area. Manufacturing is estimated to be the top growing supersector, with a projected gain of 228 new jobs between 2021 and 2023, a 1.21 percent rise in employment to a level of 19,130.

Top Industries - Top 10 Growth

NAICS Code	NAICS Title	2021 Estimated Employment	2023 Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
332000	Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	2,623	2,814	191	7.28%
336000	Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	1,516	1,661	145	9.56%
561000	Administrative and Support Services	1,942	2,040	98	5.05%
621000	Ambulatory Health Care Services	2,826	2,915	89	3.15%
813000	Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, Professional, and Similar Organizations	4,166	4,254	88	2.11%
321000	Wood Product Manufacturing	2,458	2,538	80	3.25%
445000	Food and Beverage Stores	1,273	1,350	77	6.05%
447000	Gasoline Stations	1,370	1,433	63	4.60%
326000	Plastics and Rubber Products Manufacturing	2,716	2,776	60	2.21%
999300	Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	3,364	3,420	56	1.66%

Southwest Arkansas Projected Industry Growth 2018-2028

Industry	2018 Estimated Employment	2028 Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Total Employment, All Jobs	90,916	94,082	3,166	3.48%
Natural Resources and Mining	3,022	2,928	-94	-3.11%
Construction	3,379	3,640	261	7.72%
Manufacturing	19,207	19,624	417	2.17%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	14,868	14,892	24	0.16%
Information	435	335	-100	-22.99%
Financial Activities	2,540	2,487	-53	-2.09%
Professional and Business Services	4,656	5,141	485	10.42%

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Education and Health Services	17,892	19,125	1,233	6.89%
Leisure and Hospitality	5,780	6,130	350	6.06%
Other Services (Except Government)	3,602	3,809	207	5.75%
Government (Excluding State/Local Education & Hospitals)	6,165	6,591	426	6.91%

*Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW), Labor Market Information
Long-Term Industry Employment Projections 2018-2028*

Top 10 Projected NET Growth Industries

NAICS CODE	Industry	Net Growth	Percent Change
621000	Ambulatory Health Care Services	748	24.83%
332000	Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	390	17.62%
999300	Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	346	9.72%
551000	Management of Companies and Enterprises	330	30.93%
623000	Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	328	10.35%
722000	Food Services and Drinking Places	307	6.66%
624000	Social Assistance	225	10.63%
238000	Specialty Trade Contractors	220	9.86%
813000	Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, Professional, and Similar Org.	190	8.92%
311000	Food Manufacturing	187	3.99%

Source: Discover Arkansas Labor Market Information, Local Area Statistics 2018-2028

Employment Needs of Employers:

Projected Occupational Growth 2018-2028

Occupation	Estimated Employment	Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Total Annual Openings
Total, All Occupations	90,916	94,082	3,166	3.48%	10,904
Management	9,576	9,735	159	1.66%	895
Business and Financial Operations	1,889	2,025	136	7.20%	199
Computer and Mathematical	739	869	130	17.59%	72
Architecture and Engineering	1,071	1,222	151	14.10%	104
Life, Physical, and Social Science	347	521	29	5.89%	50
Community and Social Service	1,853	2,094	241	13.01%	237
Legal	229	251	22	9.61%	18
Education, Training, and Library	5,212	5,303	91	1.75%	453
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	567	575	8	1.41%	66
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	3,930	4,296	366	9.31%	290

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Healthcare Support Occupations	2,244	2,566	322	14.35%	306
Protective Service Occupations	1,507	1,626	119	7.90%	150
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occ.	5,651	6,021	370	6.55%	1,027
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maint	2,858	3,009	151	5.28%	399
Personal Care and Service Occupations	2,632	2,993	361	13.72%	448
Sales and Related Occupations	7,624	7,582	-42	-0.55%	1,089
Office and Administrative Support	10,699	10,493	-206	-1.93%	1,208
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	2,081	1,959	-122	-5.86%	310
Construction and Extraction Occupations	4,902	5,235	333	6.79%	608
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	4,730	4,973	243	5.14%	491
Production Occupations	11,830	11,805	-25	-0.21%	1,359
Transportation and Material Moving Occ.	8,745	9,084	339	3.88%	1,139

Source: Discover Arkansas Labor Market Information, Local Area Statistics 2018-2028

Top Ten Projected Growth Occupations 2018-2028

Occupation	Net Growth	Percent Change
Personal Care Aids	299	26.41%
Combined Food Prep & Serving, Including Fast Food	205	9.57%
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	138	4.40%
Nursing Assistants	131	9.08%
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	120	11.62%
Clergy	111	14.59%
Registered Nurses	110	9.70%
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	88	5.19%
Cooks, Restaurant	84	14.71%
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	75	8.37%

Source: Discover Arkansas Labor Market Information, Local Area Statistics 2018-2028

Top Growing Major Occupational Groups

SOC Code	SOC Title	Employment		Change		Annual Openings			
		2021 Est.	2023 Proj.	Numeric	Percent	Exits	Transfers	Change	Total
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	10,326	10,410	84	0.81%	468	806	42	1,316
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	5,455	5,503	48	0.88%	411	552	24	987
21-0000	Community and Social Service Occupations	2,550	2,597	47	1.84%	100	162	24	286
17-0000	Architecture and Engineering Occupations	1,111	1,148	37	3.33%	26	53	18	97
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	2,311	2,337	26	1.13%	64	133	13	210

Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand is projected to be the top growing occupation in Southwest Arkansas between 2021 and 2023, adding 66 jobs, and increasing its workforce to 2,935 jobs. Nurse Practitioners could be the fastest-growing occupation, gaining 10.07 percent, moving from 139 jobs in 2021 to 153 in 2023. Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers could see a decline in employment during the projection period, with 196 being cut, an amount equivalent to 4.21 percent of its workforce. Childcare Workers are slated to lose 11.78 percent of their workforce during the projection period, becoming the fastest-declining occupation in the area. Transportation and Material Moving Occupations are forecast to be the top growing major group for the 2021-2023 projection period, with 84 new jobs, or 0.81 percent gain, moving employment to 10,410.

Top Occupations - Top 10 Growth

SOC Code	SOC Title	Employment		Change		Annual Openings			
		2021 Est.	2023 Proj.	Numeric	Percent	Exits	Transfers	Change	Total
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	2,869	2,935	66	2.30%	127	252	33	412
21-2011	Clergy	1,035	1,082	47	4.54%	44	61	24	129
41-2011	Cashiers	2,113	2,152	39	1.85%	182	204	20	406
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	621	656	35	5.64%	38	54	18	110
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	1,025	1,059	34	3.32%	60	102	17	179
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	1,537	1,568	31	2.02%	97	109	16	222
51-4041	Machinists	392	419	27	6.89%	14	28	14	56
51-2090	Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	1,436	1,459	23	1.60%	55	104	12	171
17-2112	Industrial Engineers	377	398	21	5.57%	8	16	10	34
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	139	153	14	10.07%	3	4	7	14

Top 10 Fastest Growth

SOC Code	SOC Title	Employment		Change		Annual Openings			
		2021 Est.	2023 Proj.	Numeric	Percent	Exits	Transfers	Change	Total
29-1171	Nurse Practitioners	139	153	14	10.07%	3	4	7	14
51-9021	Crushing, Grinding, and Polishing Machine Setters, Operators, and Tenders	84	91	7	8.33%	3	6	4	13
17-2141	Mechanical Engineers	96	103	7	7.29%	2	4	4	10
33-9092	Lifeguards, Ski Patrol, and Other Recreational Protective Service Workers	29	31	2	6.90%	4	4	1	9
51-4041	Machinists	392	419	27	6.89%	14	28	14	56
31-2021	Physical Therapist Assistants	70	74	4	5.71%	3	6	2	11
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	621	656	35	5.64%	38	54	18	110
15-1256	Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	107	113	6	5.61%	2	6	3	11
17-2112	Industrial Engineers	377	398	21	5.57%	8	16	10	34
41-4011	Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	92	97	5	5.43%	3	6	2	11

Top 10 Decline

11-9013	Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers	4,659	4,463	-196	-4.21%	282	158	-98	342
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	968	916	-52	-5.37%	29	38	-26	41
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	793	745	-48	-6.05%	52	50	-24	78
25-2031	Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education	890	843	-47	-5.28%	23	35	-24	34
39-9011	Childcare Workers	382	337	-45	-11.78%	24	25	-22	27
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	816	772	-44	-5.39%	36	37	-22	51
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	1,859	1,817	-42	-2.26%	100	109	-21	188
47-2061	Construction Laborers	494	466	-28	-5.67%	14	32	-14	32
31-1120	Home Health and Personal Care Aides	1,266	1,239	-27	-2.13%	80	71	-14	137
43-3071	Tellers	452	425	-27	-5.97%	18	28	-14	32

Top 10 Fastest Decline

39-9011	Childcare Workers	382	337	-45	-11.78%	24	25	-22	27
47-5013	Service Unit Operators, Oil, Gas, and Mining	201	180	-21	-10.45%	4	18	-10	12
47-5071	Roustabouts, Oil and Gas	175	159	-16	-9.14%	4	16	-8	12
41-3021	Insurance Sales Agents	262	239	-23	-8.78%	8	14	-12	10
25-1194	Vocational Education Teachers, Postsecondary	218	204	-14	-6.42%	10	10	-7	13
37-2012	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	793	745	-48	-6.05%	52	50	-24	78
43-3071	Tellers	452	425	-27	-5.97%	18	28	-14	32
47-2061	Construction Laborers	494	466	-28	-5.67%	14	32	-14	32
11-9032	Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School	185	175	-10	-5.41%	4	8	-5	7
25-9045	Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	816	772	-44	-5.39%	36	37	-22	51

Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Projections Suite Software

NAICS Industry	2020 Annual Average Covered Employment	2021 Annual Average Covered Employment	2020-2021 Numeric Change	2020-2021 Percent Change	2021 Average Weekly Earnings
Total	73,124	73,501	377	0.5%	\$882.36
Natural Resources and Mining	2,133	2,061	-72	-3.4%	\$1,022.32
Construction	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Manufacturing	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	14,106	13,777	-329	-2.3%	\$768.68
Information	326	310	-16	-4.9%	\$1,192.18
Financial Activities	2,432	2,422	-10	-0.4%	\$963.24
Professional and Business Services	4,414	4,405	-9	-0.2%	\$1,101.26
Education and Health Services	9,114	8,931	-183	-2.0%	\$761.18
Leisure and Hospitality	5,419	5,765	346	6.4%	\$340.26
Other Services	1,321	1,326	5	0.4%	\$632.70
Local Government	9,031	8,823	-208	-2.3%	\$747.25
State Government	3,367	3,330	-37	-1.1%	\$814.47
Other	21,461	22,351	890	4.1%	\$1,149.82

Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages

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

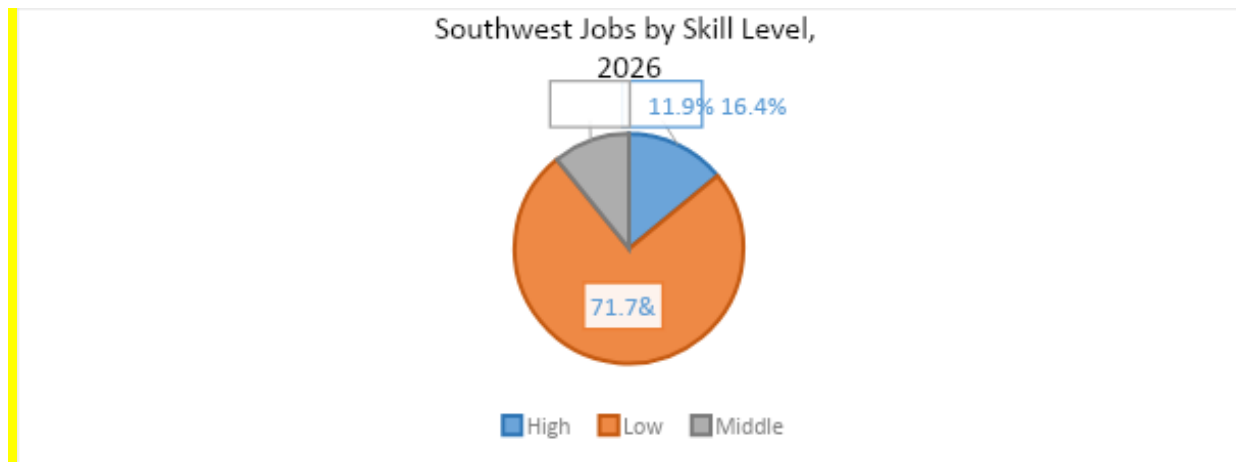
1.2 Provide an analysis of the knowledge and skills required to meet the employment needs of the employers in the local area, including employment needs for in-demand industry sectors and occupations. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(B)] and [20 CFR 679.560(a)]

Basic knowledge and skills that employers need include literacy and math, problem solving, computing, communication, work readiness and other skills. These are things that almost every employer requires and are particularly needed as employees work more with technology improvements, organizing data, and in the region's manufacturing industry. In addition, skills that are particular to each job are varied. Advanced manufacturing employers in the region are seeking individuals with more technical skills and careers in the transportation, distribution and logistics industries, in Southwest Arkansas, are some of the most sought-after careers in the local region.

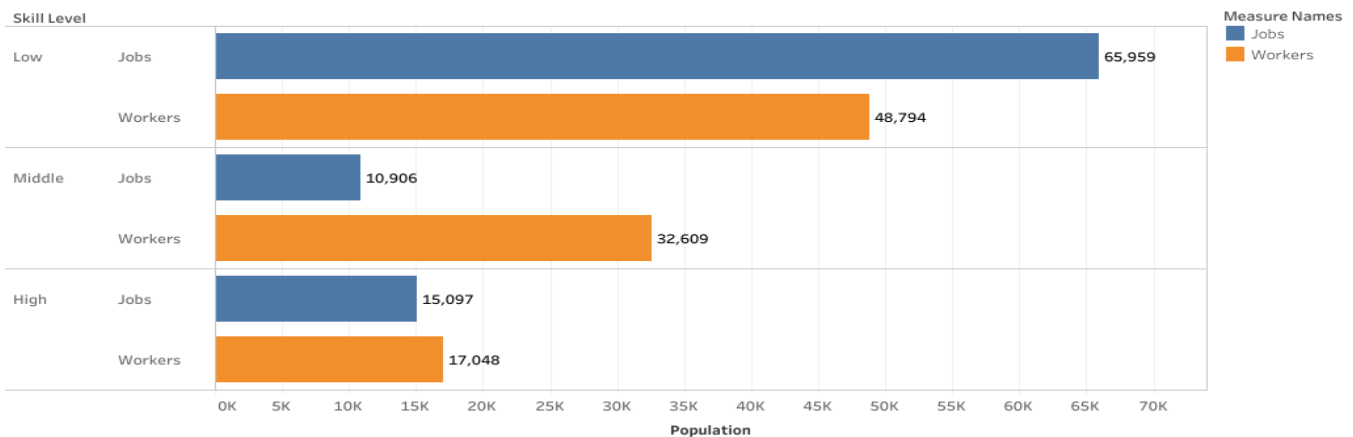
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The Region's SWOT Analysis revealed the following:

- Strengths - Natural Resources, Manufacturing, and Small Business
- Weaknesses - Workforce Soft Skills, Lack of Preparedness, and Transportation Expansion
- Opportunities - Tourism, Health & Wellness, and Planned Neighborhoods
- Threats - Population Decline, Housing, and potentially large-scaled emergencies



Skills Gap



Education Title	2016 Estimated Employment	2026 Projected Employment	Net Growth	Percent Growth	Annual Openings- Growth	Annual Openings- Replacement	Annual Openings -Total
Doctoral/Professional degree	1,316	1,467	151	11.47%	14	61	75
Master's degree	1,213	1,349	136	11.21%	12	102	114
Bachelor's degree	11,736	12,409	673	5.73%	61	924	985
Associate's degree	1,295	1,394	99	7.64%	7	109	117
Postsecondary non-degree award	6,005	6,534	529	8.81%	51	587	638
Some college, no degree	1,815	1,820	5	0.28%	0	185	185
High school diploma or equivalent	41,035	42,010	975	2.38%	101	4329	4,431
Less than high school	18,009	18,949	940	5.22%	94	2,701	2,795

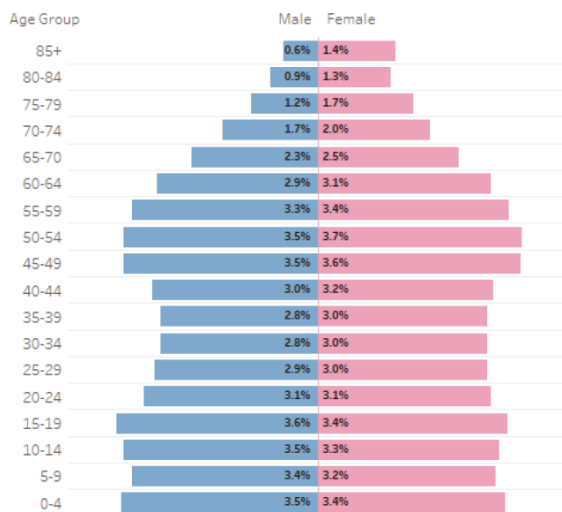
1.3 Provide an analysis of the local workforce, including current labor force employment (and unemployment) data, and information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment.

Analysis:

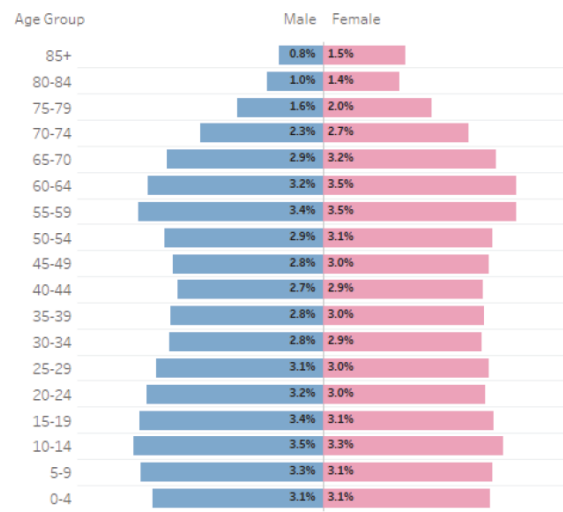
The Southwest Arkansas LWDA labor force decreased from 2020 to 2021 by 2,484 to 88,656, while employment decreased by 627 to 84,557. Over the five-year period from 2017 to 2021, the area has seen a decrease of 4,106 in the labor force and decrease of 4,069 in employment. Unemployment decreased by 1,857 from 2020 to 2021, and decreased by 36 over the five-year period. The unemployment rate dropped by 1.9 percent from 2020 to 2021 to 4.6 percent. After various fluctuations in the unemployment rate during 2022, the rate settled at 5.1 percent in July 2022.

Population Pyramids for Southwest Arkansas

2010 Pop: 232,655



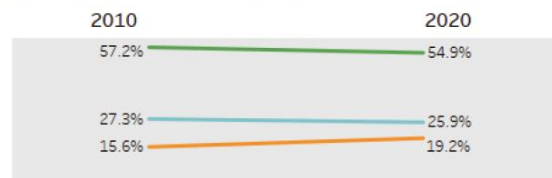
2020 Pop: 217,748



Age Group Population Distribution

	2010	2020
Adults 65+	36,270	41,901
Adults 20-64	132,977	119,489
Under 20	63,408	56,358
Total	232,655	217,748

Percentage of Population for Children (Under 20), Adults (24-64), and Older Adults (65+)



Prepared by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information using data from U.S. Census Bureau, County Population by Characteristics: 2010-2020. Annual County Resident Population Estimates by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin. Vintage 2020. Release date, June 2021.

Note: Figures in the population pyramid graphics may differ from the 2017-2021 population statistics due to the timeline of data release schedules.

Southwest Arkansas LWDA Population 2017-2021

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
225,836	221,875	219,852	213,659	211,485

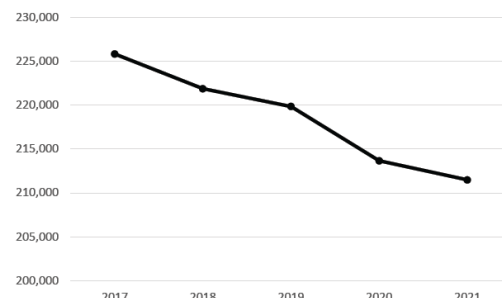
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

State of Arkansas Population 2017-2021

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
325,147,121	327,167,434	328,239,523	331,449,281	331,893,745

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Southwest Arkansas Population Progression



Southwest Arkansas Local Plan PY 2020- PY 2023

Southwest Arkansas LWDA 2017-2021 Labor Force/Employment

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Labor Force	92,762	92,615	92,687	91,140	88,656
Employment	88,627	88,314	88,562	85,184	84,557
Unemployment	4,135	4,301	4,125	5,956	4,099
Unemployment Rate	4.5%	4.6%	4.5%	6.5%	4.6%

Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services



Southwest Arkansas and State Unemployment Rate*

Year	Month	Southwest Arkansas Unemployment Rate	AR Unemployment Rate
2022	January	4.5%	3.2%
2022	February	4.5%	3.1%
2022	March	3.9%	3.1%
2022	April	3.8%	3.2%
2022	May	3.8%	3.2%
2022	June	4.5%	3.2%
2022	July	5.1%†	3.3%**

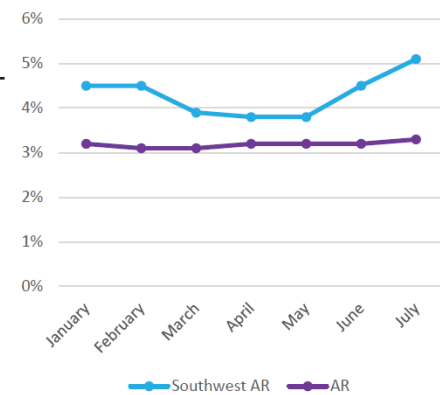
Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Local Area Unemployment Statistics

*Not Seasonally Adjusted, Not Preliminary

**Seasonally Adjusted, Preliminary

†Not Seasonally Adjusted, Preliminary

Monthly Unemployment Rate, 2022



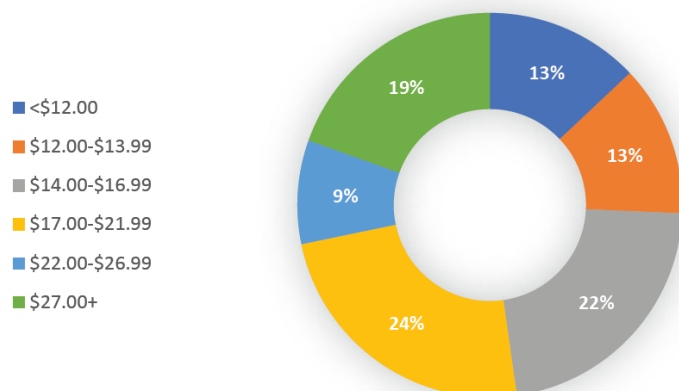
Employment Breakdown 2021

Area/County	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemploy. Rate
Southwest Area	89,594	85,518	4,076	4.5%
Calhoun	2,392	2,312	80	3.3%
Columbia	8,814	8,345	469	5.3%
Dallas	2,770	2,657	113	4.0%
Hempstead	9,182	8,862	320	3.4%
Howard	5,455	5,278	177	3.2%
Lafayette	2,327	2,192	135	5.8%
Little River	5,250	5,015	235	4.4%
Miller	18,987	18,074	913	4.8%
Nevada	3,373	3,237	136	4.0%
Ouachita	9,716	9,340	376	3.8%
Sevier	5,368	5,132	236	4.4%
Union**	15,960	15,074	886	5.6%

Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (Discover Arkansas)

**Union County data was missing at the time of publication, so older amount was used

Southwest Arkansas Number of Employees by Hourly Wage Rate



Southwest Arkansas Number of Employees by Hourly Wage Rate

Total	65,700
<\$12.00	8,520
\$12.00-\$13.99	8,360
\$14.00-\$16.99	14,500
\$17.00-\$21.99	15,750
\$22.00-\$26.99	5,740
\$27.00+	12,830

Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services,
May 2021 Wage Survey

Total Population= 206,732 (6.7% of Arkansas' Population)

Population by Age

- 73.7% over the Age of 19
- 19.5% over the Age of 65
- 54.2% Aged 20-64

Population by Race

- 60.29% White
- 27.88% Black
- 0.77% Native American/Alaskan Native
- 0.72% Asian
- 0.16% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 2.8% Other
- 2.05% Two or More Races
- 8.14% Hispanic (Of Any Race)

Population by Gender:

- Female: 50.91%
- Male: 49.09%

Civilian Labor Force

2021 Annual Average Civilian Labor Force Estimates

- Civilian Labor Force= 88,656
- Employment= 84,557

- Unemployment= 4,099
- Unemployment Rate= 4.6%

**Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services*

[WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(C)] and [20 CFR 679.560(a)]

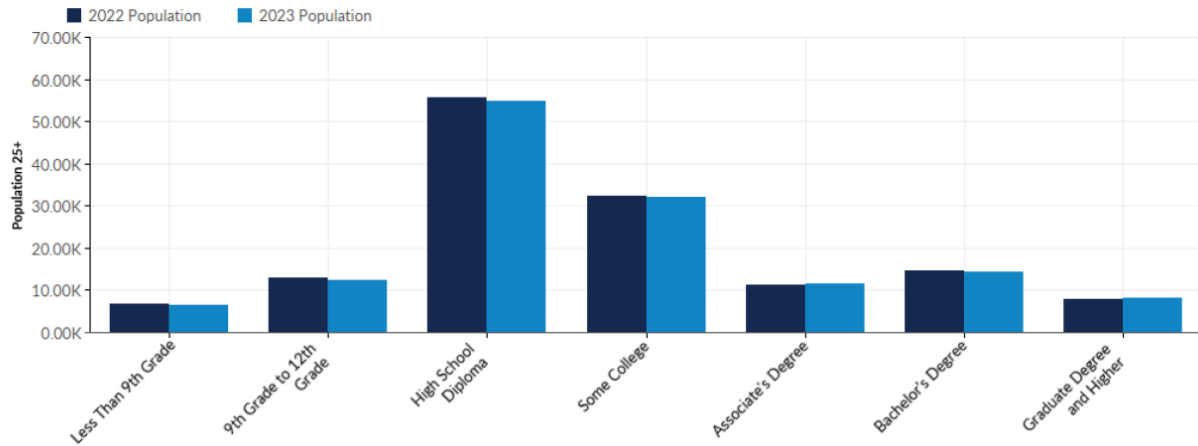
Educational Skill Levels of the Workforce, including individuals with barriers:

The following charts show data collected from the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates on educational attainment in the Southwest region. The regional percentage of individuals with less than a 9th grade education is 5%, which is equal to the State and National averages. The percentage of individuals with less than a high school diploma (9-12 grade) is 9%, compared with 7% State and 6% Nationally.

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Region recognizes individuals with barriers to employment. These individuals include those in one or more of the following categories as stated by WIOA Section 3(24): §680.320(b)(1-14):

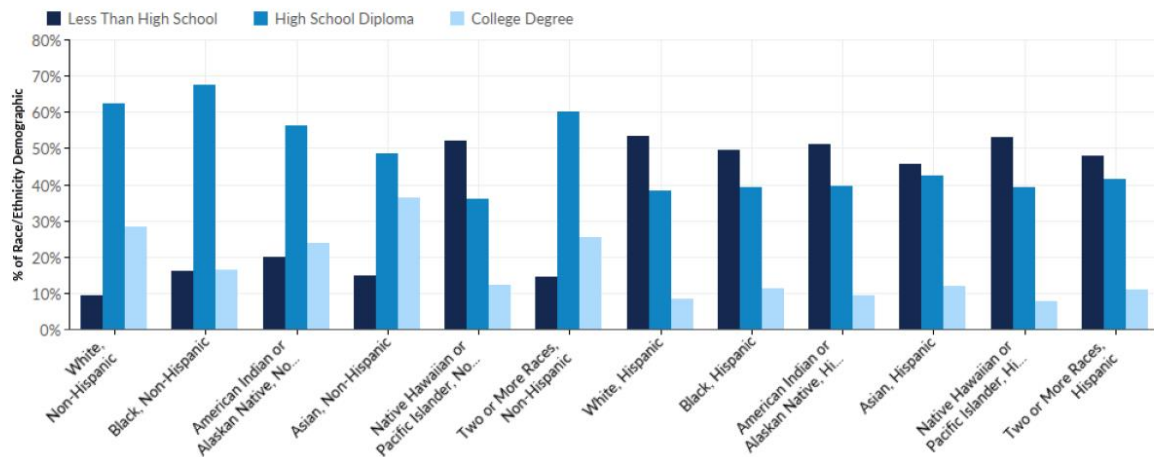
- Displaced homemakers
- Low-income individuals
- Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians
- Persons with disabilities
- Older individuals, i.e., those 55 or older
- Ex-offenders
- Homeless individuals
- Youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system
- Individuals who are English language learners; individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers
- Eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers, defined in WIOA Section 167(i)
- Individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under TANF (part A of Title IV of the Social Security Act)
- Single parents (including single pregnant women)
- Long-term unemployed individuals
- Other groups determined by the Governor to have barriers to employment

Educational Attainment by Level



Education Level	2022 Population	2023 Population	2022 % of Population	2022 State % Population	2022 National % Population
Less Than 9th Grade	6,821	6,571	5%	5%	5%
9th Grade to 12th Grade	12,989	12,425	9%	7%	6%
High School Diploma	55,552	54,835	39%	34%	26%
Some College	32,347	32,086	23%	21%	20%
Associate's Degree	11,292	11,473	8%	8%	9%
Bachelor's Degree	14,523	14,344	10%	16%	21%
Graduate Degree and Higher	7,952	8,065	6%	9%	13%
	141,474	139,799	100%	100%	100%

Educational Attainment by Race/Ethnicity



Race/Ethnicity	2022 Population	2023 Population	2022 Less Than High School	2022 High School Diploma	2022 College Degree
White, Non-Hispanic	91,604	89,993	8,673	57,074	25,856
Black, Non-Hispanic	37,954	37,371	6,134	25,624	6,196
American Indian or Alaskan Native, Non-Hispanic	1,039	1,089	208	584	247
Asian, Non-Hispanic	900	974	134	438	327
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic	181	200	94	65	22
Two or More Races, Non-Hispanic	1,586	1,671	228	954	404
White, Hispanic	6,967	7,115	3,720	2,663	584
Black, Hispanic	500	553	247	196	57
American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic	398	438	204	157	37
Asian, Hispanic	59	69	27	25	7
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic	51	60	27	20	4
Two or More Races, Hispanic	237	265	113	98	26
	141,474	139,799	19,809	87,898	33,767

Top 10 Occupations by Education Level

High school diploma or less

1. Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food
2. Retail Salespersons
3. Farmers, Ranchers, and Other Agricultural Managers
4. Cashiers
5. Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand

6. Personal Care Aides
7. Waiters and Waitresses
8. Offices Clerks, General
9. Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners
10. Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive

Associates Degree/Post Secondary Training

1. Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers
2. Nursing Assistants
3. Teacher Assistants
4. Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses
5. Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics
6. Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers
7. Medical Assistants
8. Computer User Support Specialists
9. Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics
10. Hairdressers, Hairstylists, and Cosmetologists

Bachelor's Degree or Higher

1. Registered Nurses
2. General and Operations Managers
3. Clergy
4. Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education
5. Secondary School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
6. Accountants and Auditors
7. Middle School Teachers, Except Special and Career/Technical Education
8. Computer Systems Analysts
9. Management Analysts
10. Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists

1.4. Provide an analysis and description of workforce development activities, including type and availability of education, training, and employment activities. Include analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of such services, and the capacity to provide such services, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce and the employment needs of employers in the region. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(D)] and [20 CFR 679.560(a)]

Southwest Arkansas's workforce development activities are coordinated through the following agencies: These agencies are responsible for all the core and non-core programs included in the combined Regional and Local Plan.

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Core Program</u>
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ADWS	Adult (Title I)
	Dislocated Worker (Title I)
	Youth (Title I)
	Wagner-Peyser (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title III)
	Adult Education and Family Literacy (WIOA Title II)
	Vocational Rehabilitation (Title I Rehabilitation, as amended by Title IV) as of July 1, 2016
	Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (Title I Rehabilitation, as amended by Title IV) as of July 1, 2016
ADHS	Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Non-Core Program

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Worker Program (Chapter 2, Title II Tract Act)
 Jobs for Veterans State Grants (Title 38, Chapter 41)
 Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program (Title I)
 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program (42 U.S.C.)
 SNAP Employment & Training

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area consists of twelve counties and is the largest region in the state. Workforce activities and initiatives are driven by the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board (SWAWDB). The SWAWDB is composed of local businesses, educational institutions, partner agencies, and other key stakeholders to create a diverse and functional group. The board, in alignment with the States' vision, provides front-line strategic implementation for state-wide initiatives in addition to locally-determined priorities. State initiatives include sector strategies, career pathway development, and delivery of standardized business services. Local priorities include layoff aversion, specific career pathway development, youth programs, targeted sector partnerships, and work-based learning.

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board, in conjunction with the Chief Elected Officials, is responsible for procuring a One-Stop Operator and Title IB Service Provider. This entity will be responsible for the daily operation of the Workforce Centers in Southwest Arkansas in accordance with WIOA 121(d). Workforce activities are carried out by partnering locally through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to implement core, non-core, and other partner programs. With a foundation for service integration, the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development System operates under the "no wrong door" philosophy. Customers entering the center are engaged by an intake process that is designed to identify the needs of the individual by gathering information and then utilizing the appropriate resources for those needs. In some cases, the resources are initiated by a referral to a partner program. Customers are given solutions and next steps to their questions, barriers, and issues by connecting directly with the appropriate workforce system partner as part of this philosophy.

The Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division (ACE/AED) funds four local adult education programs and three literacy councils. The local service delivery systems are diverse. Programs are funded through public school systems and community colleges. Local programs provide adult education services such as teaching academic skills to people who function from beginning reading through a 12.9 functioning grade level and English as a Second Language (ESL). These services are free and provided in classes held in locations throughout each county. Additional programs such as family literacy, Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™), and Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) are also offered in some counties.

Workforce System Services – Unemployed and Underemployed

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Centers offer the full array of career services outlined in WIOA 134(c)(2) for unemployed and underemployed jobseekers. Basic career services are available at all service locations throughout Southwest Arkansas. All workforce centers in Southwest Arkansas have computers, printers, copiers, printed resources, and staff to assist jobseekers. Many of the services, including Arkansas JobLink and the Discover Arkansas Labor Market Information (LMI) Portal, can be accessed virtually through the internet via computer, smart phone, or tablet. Arkansas JobLink is the state job matching system and the virtual one-stop-shop where Arkansans can centralize all their career search activities. It allows job seekers to self-enter his/her resume(s) and job search 24/7. Arkansas JobLink also provides access to a toolbox of job search assistance links, including career exploration, training resources, self-marketing tools, Unemployment Insurance information, and additional job banks. The built-in event calendar communicates upcoming hiring events, job fairs, and other workforce activities. The Labor Market Information Portal is beneficial to employers and jobseekers. This labor market system provides a wide variety of local and regional labor market services, such as labor trends, statistics, economics, demographics, salaries, and employer data. It allows jobseekers to set up a personal page for their career exploration data to be readily accessible. Basic career services also extend beyond the virtual world. After the initial assessment, customers, as appropriate, may be provided with direct linkages to additional workforce activities, including multiple education and training opportunities across the workforce system through partner referrals. Many of these partners are housed within the workforce center.

Jobseeker Services

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Centers offer a full line of activities to prepare jobseekers for the modern workforce. They address many of the soft skills and technical skills Arkansas employers require.

Labor exchange services provide Labor Market Information (LMI) to individuals seeking LMI services. Updated information is located on the Discover Arkansas website and includes data on local, regional and national labor markets, such as job vacancies, skills necessary to obtain the jobs, in-demand occupations, related earning potential and opportunities for advancement in those occupations.

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Centers provide the following career services:

- Outreach
- Intake and orientation
- Initial assessment
- Labor exchange services
- Eligibility determination
- Referrals to programs
- Performance and cost information
- Information on unemployment insurance
- Financial aid information
- Follow-up services

Additionally, Workforce Centers and partners must provide appropriate services for individuals to obtain or retain employment. These services include, but are not limited to:

- Individual Employment Plan (IEP)
- Career planning and counseling
- Comprehensive assessment
- Occupational Skills Assessment
- Short-term prevocational services
- Internship and work experience, including transitional jobs and industry partnerships
- Workforce preparation

- Out-of-Area job search
- English language acquisition
- Financial literacy

The State is a member of the America's Job Link Alliance for job matching. Jobseekers, as well as employers, utilize this database for employment purposes. Arkansas JobLink provides self-service case management, fiscal management, reporting, and more.

Training Services

Career services are not always enough to enable job seekers to obtain self-sufficient employment. In some instances, formal training is required. Southwest Arkansas Workforce Centers offer multiple training services such as: Occupational Skills Training, On-the-Job Training (OJT), Registered Apprenticeships, Incumbent Worker training, skill upgrading and retraining, entrepreneurial training, and Adult Education and family literacy activities.

Training services are funded through WIOA Title I programs, Pell Grants, partner programs, and state and local grants. Local areas are responsible for establishing and implementing local policies for eligibility, Individual Training Account (ITA) limits, and the identification of in-demand sectors or occupations. Through multiple initiatives and projects, Arkansas has focused training and career development activities on sector strategies/partnerships and career pathway development. At the state level, the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) has been updated pursuant to WIOA Sections 122 and 134. This list ensures that Arkansans can make informed decisions on training providers and programs based on accurate data including completion and placement rates, labor market information, and wage expectations.

Apprenticeship

Registered Apprenticeship is a viable career option for WIOA participants. It is an employer-driven model that combines on-the-job training with related classroom instruction that increases an apprentice's skill level and wages. With an increase in interest among Southwest Arkansas employers in the tried-and-true approach for preparing individuals for jobs and meeting the business needs for a highly-skilled workforce, Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area is partnering with other entities to secure apprenticeship programs.

In May 2023, the State of Arkansas Office of Skills Development is sponsoring the *"Southwest Arkansas Employers Growing Talent Through Apprenticeship Employer Forum"* in Union County. The focus of this forum is to *"hear from industry leaders using apprenticeship as a talent development solution"*, to allow employers to *"ask questions and network with subject matter experts"*, receive information about *"financial assistance and other resources available to assist companies"* in our area, and to help companies interested *"in starting an apprenticeship program"*. Employers will be able to request follow-up from the Office of Skills Development after attending this event.

Career Pathways Initiative

The Career Pathways Initiative programs are housed in each of the two-year colleges in Southwest Arkansas. Career Pathways Initiative staff aligns services with the Arkansas **Division** of Workforce Services, Department of Human Services, Adult Education, community and faith-based organizations, and other programs to ensure that barriers are overcome, and that employment and educational needs are met without duplication of services. The program has enjoyed much success and is touted as a model program nationally. The career pathway approach is a paradigm shift in how we prepare individuals for work and lifelong learning. It reorients existing education and workforce services from myriad disconnected programs to a structure that syncs employers' workforce needs with individuals' education and training needs.

Supportive Services

To assist job seekers in obtaining or retaining employment through career or training services, Southwest Arkansas Workforce Centers offer a variety of supportive services. The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board has established a Supportive Services policy that outlines the types of services needed, eligibility, limits, etc. Examples of supportive services include childcare, transportation, needs-related payments, tools and equipment, uniforms, and other clothing.

WIOA Title IB, Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services provide supportive services such as transportation assistance, childcare assistance, needs-related payments, and other supportive services (tools and equipment, uniforms, and other clothing), to job seekers to assist in obtaining and retaining employment. Through assessments and evaluations, Career Planners determine the needs of each participant and create an Individual Employment Plan or Individual Service Strategy to address the identified barriers. Transportation assistance is provided in the form of a reimbursement. Child Care assistance is provided through vouchers to State approved childcare agencies. Needs Related Payments may be provided based on individual needs, according to federal guidelines. Referrals to partner agencies are made to ensure participants are receiving the optimal services to meet the individual's needs and to avoid duplication of services.

Adult Education provides referrals to Career Pathways at local community colleges, career assessments, Career Coach assistance, job readiness /soft skills training, and educational and career goal planning. Career Pathways provides assistance with childcare, transportation, tuition, and materials. Supportive services such as transportation, childcare, etc. are coordinated with partner agencies through participant referrals. Adult Education partners with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to help provide individuals with disabilities access to services, diagnosis and evaluations of capabilities and limitations, guidance and counseling, assistive technologies, and job placement.

- Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Services for the Blind are mandated to research and apply all comparable benefits for services from other resources prior to applying vocational rehabilitation funds. The most frequently applied resources come from sources outside of the core partner agencies. For example, tuition assistance in the form of grant funding, housing assistance from Housing and Urban Development, the individual's own medical insurance, etc. must first be applied to physical and mental restoration services. The supportive services provided by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Services for the Blind are arranged and coordinated according to an individual plan for employment which specifies a career goal and the areas that the individual may need support in order to reach that goal. The supports needed are determined through assessments and evaluations, as well as the analysis and application of state and federal regulations and policies. The following supports services are assessed, evaluated, and analyzed for applicability and comparable services/similar benefits to each individual case:
- maintenance assistance to participate in employment or training that leads to employment
- personal care attendant services
- physical and mental restoration services
- rehabilitation engineering, rehabilitation technology, and transportation to participate in employment or training activities.

These support services are time limited and must accompany a substantial service that is directly related to obtaining or maintaining employment.

Business Services

The focal point of all workforce system activities is business and industry. These activities are taking place statewide and may include:

- Access to facilities – Use of Workforce Center facilities by a business for a variety of purposes such as meetings, trainings, orientations, interviews, etc.;
- Assessments – Any test or assortment of tests used to measure the skills, interests and/or personality traits of a jobseeker, potential employee, or current employee;
- Business education – Seminars, round tables, workshops, focus groups, etc.;
- Business information – Information given to a business pertaining to a variety of incentive programs or other information requested that provides a benefit to that business;
- Hiring event – A customized event for a single employer that assists with recruiting, interviewing, and hiring of one or more positions;
- Job fair – Event for multiple employers that assists with the recruiting, interviewing, and hiring of one or more positions
- Job postings – Staff-entered or web-entered job orders approved by staff;
- Labor Market Information – Information on state and local labor market conditions, industries, occupations, and characteristics of the workforce. This information can include:
 - area business identified skills needs
 - employer wage and benefit trends
 - short and long-term industry and occupational projections
 - worker supply and demand
 - job vacancies survey results
- Rapid Response – A variety of services to businesses that are facing restructuring and downsizing including onsite workshops for employees in transition, job placement assistance; and information on unemployment benefits;
- Screening – Any service that involves the initial evaluation of applications or resumes that assists the employer in the recruiting process;
- Training and retraining - Any service provided to a business that involves the training or retraining of current or future employees including OJTs, Work Experiences, Incumbent Worker Training, etc.

Business Services provided by Title 1B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services include:

- Labor Market Information and growth trends for industry clusters
- Occupational wage and benefit trends
- Job placement assistance
- Identification of skills gaps
- Rapid Response and layoff prevention
- Information on training and retraining in demand industries.

The Business Services Coordinator assists employers and in-demand industry sectors with overcoming the challenges of recruitment, retention, and development of qualified candidates.

The Business Services Coordinator is the primary point of contact and support for targeted businesses while connecting public resources, job seekers, and business sectors to achieve a shared understanding of industry needs and opportunities.

Employers are served through Arkansas Workforce Centers and have access to customized recruitment and hiring, human resource consultation, workforce development training, free job listings, labor market information, small business resources and referrals for aspiring entrepreneurs, layoff aversion strategies, tax credit information, and work-based learning opportunities such as On-The-Job Training, Registered Apprenticeship, and Work Experience.

The Southwest Arkansas Business Services Team was conceived with the intent to enhance employer engagement and meet employer demands. The team is comprised of professionals from workforce development, education, human services, business and industry. To support area employers most effectively, in-demand occupations were identified, a needs assessment was conducted, innovative and flexible delivery methods have been utilized, and labor market information and evidence-based practices applied to enhance strategy and coordination of services.

The Business Services Coordinator will continue to have an active presence in the community engaging employers through one-on-one and group meetings, employer forums, job fairs, roundtables, conferences, and other meaningful events. The requests for business services continue to increase, meaning we are seeing a significant return on our investment in varied outreach approaches.

Adult Education views employers as primary customers, alongside the student --- engaging employers as strategic partners instead of advisors. Employers are not limited to providing feedback on what Adult Education has chosen to do. Instead, Adult Education engages employers about the strengths and weaknesses of Adult Education services, hours of service needed to enhance access, priority skill sets that need to be taught, etc. Both problems solve together, enabling employers to utilize Adult Education to:

- Improve the educational training opportunities for their employees (Adult Education often collaborates with local employers to ensure that their curriculum aligns with industry needs and demands. This collaboration may involve employer input on Adult Education program design, job fairs, occupational skills training, and employer-led workshops. By fostering strong partnerships with employers, Adult Education can better prepare individuals for the specific requirements of the local job market through their programs)
- Access additional, needed support services for their employees (Adult Education offers support services to address barriers that may hinder individuals' participation and success in workforce development activities. These services may include childcare assistance, transportation assistance, financial literacy education, and referrals to community resources)
- Increase the skill levels of their employees (Adult Education provides basic skills instruction to help individuals improve their literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency)
- Increase the retention of their employees when given access to training (Adult Education offers occupational skills training to equip individuals with specific job-related skills such as technical skills, communication skills, leadership/management skills, customer service skills, and problem-solving skills. By acquiring industry-specific skills, participants can enhance their employability and qualify for higher-paying jobs)
- Improve job performance and career advancement opportunities for employees with additional training, i.e., credential attainment (Adult Education focuses on helping individuals identify and pursue career pathways that align with their interests, skills, and goals which helps adult learners make informed decisions about their career paths and develop strategies to achieve their professional objectives on the job or in their careers)
- Recruit qualified candidates (Adult Education assists employers with access to a diverse talent pool of potential candidates who have developed relevant skills through customized and specialized training)

The Adult Education Directors, instructors, and WAGE Coordinators meet with their local Advisory Boards, composed of business/industry partners and partner agencies. Through meetings and correspondence, local training needs are expressed to Adult Education staff and agencies in attendance, which helps develop training programs geared toward the needs of local businesses and industries. One of the key strengths of adult education's workforce development activity is its ability to address the specific needs and goals of adult learners. Unlike traditional educational settings, adult education programs are often flexible and tailored to meet the unique needs of adult learners.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Services for the Blind, and the local regional economic development organizations have implemented a business team to identify the needs of the business community and to offer programs that fund and support the training and supportive needs of existing or potential employees. The team meets with the regional Chambers of Commerce to discuss questions presented by businesses interested in expanding and locating in the area and to educate the chamber members on the direct and supportive services available to build a labor force. Following the model of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC) and comparing it to the current employment statistics data, businesses in the following industries have been contacted regarding the opportunities for on-the-job training, educational enhancement, apprenticeship opportunities, and support services.

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Region is in the process of developing functional Business Service Teams to streamline the efforts of each program. The role of the Business Service Team will be to provide workforce development, education, and employment services for businesses in Southwest Arkansas. The goal will be maintaining regular contact with area businesses, seeking out new employer contacts, and providing services to these contacts. Off-site visits will be made to employers to gather job orders and disseminate information on services such as the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, CRC, etc. At the initial meeting, the business service team will listen to the employers' concerns and needs. Based upon what is learned from the employer, information to meet the employer's needs will be provided.

Services to Persons with Disabilities

According to the latest Disability Employment Statistics on individuals ages 16 and over from the Department of Labor Statistics, (<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/research-evaluation/statistics>) nationwide there is a 40.2% labor force participation for persons with disabilities and a 77.3% participation rate of persons without disabilities. The unemployment rate of persons with disabilities is 8.1%, while the unemployment rate of people without disabilities is 3.8%. Historically, there are significant barriers to the inclusion of people with disabilities into the overall strategy for economic development in Arkansas. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and ARS in partnership with the Arkansas Department of Human Services, and Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) are leading the charge for providing targeted training and education for people with disabilities in order for them to develop the skills and abilities needed to obtain competitive integrated employment in Arkansas.

The Department of Human Services, Division of Services for the Blind coordinates services for a comprehensive program to assess needs and to plan, develop, and provide job-related services to blind or severely visually impaired individuals. Such services are designed to assist individuals for employment that is commensurate with abilities, interests, and informed choice, and consistent with aligned strengths, resources, concerns and capabilities.

ARS vocational services are available for individuals who have disabilities and are not currently employed or if seeking to advance in their present career. Services are provided to help persons who have disabilities obtain and /or maintain employment that leads to independence, self-sufficiency and full inclusion in society.

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development has developed a Disability Committee to assess and provide recommendations to the workforce centers for accommodations and facility improvements to reduce access issues for individuals who have disabilities. To develop further resources, the Board will explore adding a board member whose business provides jobs specifically to individuals with disabilities as well as adding that member to the Disability Committee.

Persons with a Disability

Labor Force Statistic	Feb. 2023		2022		12m MA		12m MA	
	16-64	16+	16-64	16+	16-64	16+	M 16-64	F 16-64
Labor Force Participation Rate	40.2%	23.9%	37.8%	23.1%	38.3%	23.3%	39.1%	37.6%
Employment-Population Ratio	36.9%	22.1%	34.8%	21.3%	35.3%	21.6%	35.9%	34.7%
Unemployment Rate	8.1%	7.3%	8.2%	7.6%	7.9%	7.3%	8.0%	7.7%

Persons without a Disability

Labor Force Statistic	Feb. 2023		2022		12m MA		12m MA	
	16-64	16+	16-64	16+	16-64	16+	M 16-64	F 16-64
Labor Force Participation Rate	77.3%	67.8%	77.1%	67.8%	77.2%	67.8%	82.6%	71.9%
Employment-Population Ratio	74.4%	65.3%	74.4%	65.5%	74.5%	65.4%	79.7%	69.5%
Unemployment Rate	3.8%	3.7%	3.5%	3.4%	3.5%	3.4%	3.5%	3.4%

Source: Current Population Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Section 2: Strategic Vision and Goals

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

2.1 Describe the local board's strategic vision and goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce (including youth and individuals with barriers to employment). Include goals relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) to support regional economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E)]

The State's Vision and Goals have been adopted by Southwest. Based upon this action, the local board will strive to prepare an educated and skilled workforce through partnerships with all core partners through various means including adult education, apprenticeship, institutional training, literacy training, on-the-job training and work experience.

Vision

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

Mission

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

Southwest Arkansas's Talent Development System Philosophy

- We believe that there must be a pipeline of skilled workers for employers and a job for everyone in Southwest Arkansas who wants one.
- We believe that the talent development system of Southwest Arkansas must be relevant to the labor market to meet the needs of employers and jobseekers, and for the local area to compete globally.
- We believe that everyone in Southwest Arkansas should have the opportunity and access to training and education that leads to a career with gainful employment.
- We believe Southwest Arkansas's workforce system must be a viable resource for business and industry.

Southwest aims to improve its performance goals, through accountability measures, in order to support regional economic growth and self-sufficiency. These goals include:

- Employment Outcomes (Increase the number of individuals who obtain employment after participating in the WIOA program);
- Education and Training Completion (Increase the number of individuals who complete education or training programs and improve the retention rates of participants in the education and training programs);
- Customer Satisfaction (Improve participant satisfaction with the services received through our program and enhance access to information about available services and resources for our participants).

Southwest also aims to improve its strategies for preparing an educated and skilled workforce.

Goals

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

Goal 1 Objectives:

1. Continue the expansion of employer partnerships through the support of industry engagement.
2. Improve communication/participation between education entities, local and state boards, government agencies, community-based organizations, and employers, and increase the usage of work-based learning programs.
3. Continue to partner with K-12 education, higher education, career and technical education, community based organizations, and adult education to provide consistent rules and eliminate barriers to implementing training programs around the State.
4. Continue to develop youth programs, by utilizing the Memorandum of Understanding for the local workforce region (14 Required Youth Elements), to analyze and address barriers to employment, and leverage resources available to youth served in the region.
5. Increase the SWAWDA's capacity by continuing to partner with Economic Development organizations, as appropriate.

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

Goal 2 Objectives:

1. Continue to utilize 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.
2. Promote training that leads to industry recognized credentials and certification.

3. Develop a common business outreach strategy with a common message that will be utilized by all workforce system partners.
4. **Work to** improve data-sharing among WIOA required partners, community organizations outside the established workforce system, and sector partners that can provide a greater outreach for client intake, referrals, and case management.
5. **Offer virtual service delivery for job seekers, workers, and employers in rural and remote areas.**

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

Goal 3 Objectives:

1. Work to change employer and jobseeker perceptions of the workforce system.
2. **Continue to participate in** an image-building outreach campaign that educates Southwest Arkansans about the services and the career development opportunities available in Southwest Arkansas.
3. Utilize technology, including social media and search engine optimization, to better connect jobseekers and employers with the talent development system in Southwest Arkansas.
4. Develop a user-friendly website that provides a common repository of information about career development opportunities that are relevant to K-12 education, parents, educators, adults, employers, government agencies, and the public.

Strategic Goal 4: Address Skills Gaps

Goal 4 Objectives:

1. Help to implement an action plan to close the basic core, technical, and soft skills gaps in Arkansas.
2. Analyze the effectiveness of currently used job readiness standards and ensure coordination between the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) program and the Work Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE) program.
3. **Work with each county of the SW Workforce Development Area to become certified as ACT Work Ready communities.**
4. **Provide more reskilling and upskilling programs that issue an industry recognized certification or credential for career advancement to help build the employee and the company.**

2.2 Describe how the local board's vision and goals align with and/or supports the vision and goals for the State's workforce development system as established by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E)] (See Appendix D: Planning References and Resources)

The SWAWDB's vision and goals align with the State's and will strive to have a workforce that is well educated, skilled and working in order to keep Southwest Arkansas competitive in the global marketplace.

2.3 Describe how the local board's vision and goals contributes to each of the governor's goals. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E)] (See Appendix D: Planning References and Resources) Note: The State Plan includes several objectives under each goal.

The SWAWDA shares the Governor's vision for Economic Development and the State's Strategic Plan that defines a stronger partnership between education, economic development and the State Workforce system to attract, retain and grow Arkansas' high growth industries.

2.4 Describe how the local board's goals relate to the achievement of federal performance accountability measures. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(E)]

For participants enrolled in educational and/or skills training, the goal is to have them complete training, obtain their credential and accomplish measurable skills gains. These participants will be directed toward higher paying jobs which

have a livable wage to help ensure a higher retention rate well beyond program exit. For participants receiving basic and individualized career services the same goal applies.

For Business Services, the goal is to improve the Business Services Team's ability to engage and serve employers as a unified group between all partners. The Southwest Area's Business Services Coordinator will develop, implement, and sustain Business Services activities throughout the service region. The incorporation of an integrated and aligned Business Services strategy among partners presents a unified voice for Southwest Arkansas Workforce Centers and compliments communication with employers. The end goal is to lead Southwest Arkansans to improved skills, credentials, and employment attainment in areas driven by business demand. To strengthen existing partnerships, local workforce needs will be addressed, relationships with local businesses, industry representatives, and training providers will remain high priority.

Section 3: Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies

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

3.1 Considering the analysis described in Appendix B - Section 1, describe the local board's strategy to work with the entities that carry out the core programs to align resources available to the local area, to achieve the strategic vision and goals described in element 2.1. This analysis should include:

- A. A description of the local workforce development system; include key stakeholders and entities associated with administrative and programmatic/service delivery functions. Examples include elected officials, advocacy groups, local workforce development board and committee structure, fiscal agent, operator(s), required program partners, and major contractors providing Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth program elements. Describe respective roles and functional relationships to one another;**

The Chief Elected Officials (CEO) of the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development area designated the Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District as their Grant Recipient/Administrative Entity and Fiscal Agent for the Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act. The CEO's also voted to appoint a representative among themselves to act on their behalf. Magnolia Mayor Parnell Vann was elected Chairman of the CEO's. The CEO's appointed the required members for the Workforce Development Board for their respective areas. The newly appointed Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board (SWAWDB) has entered into a CEO/Local Board Agreement. The SWAWDB has three committees appointed by the board chair. They are: One Stop Committee, Disability Committee and Youth Standing Committee.

Within the past year, there has been a significant change to the Local Workforce Development Board structure. Thirty-eight percent of the board's business representation was replaced with new members due to dismissals and resignations of members. Sixty percent of the board's representatives of the workforce was also replaced with new members due to resignations.

All required partners have been appointed by their various state agencies with a representative sitting on the SWAWDB. Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District currently has the contract for One-Stop Operator and Adult, DLW, Youth service provider. The SWAWDB issued a new Request for Proposals for One-Stop Operator on December 09, 2019.

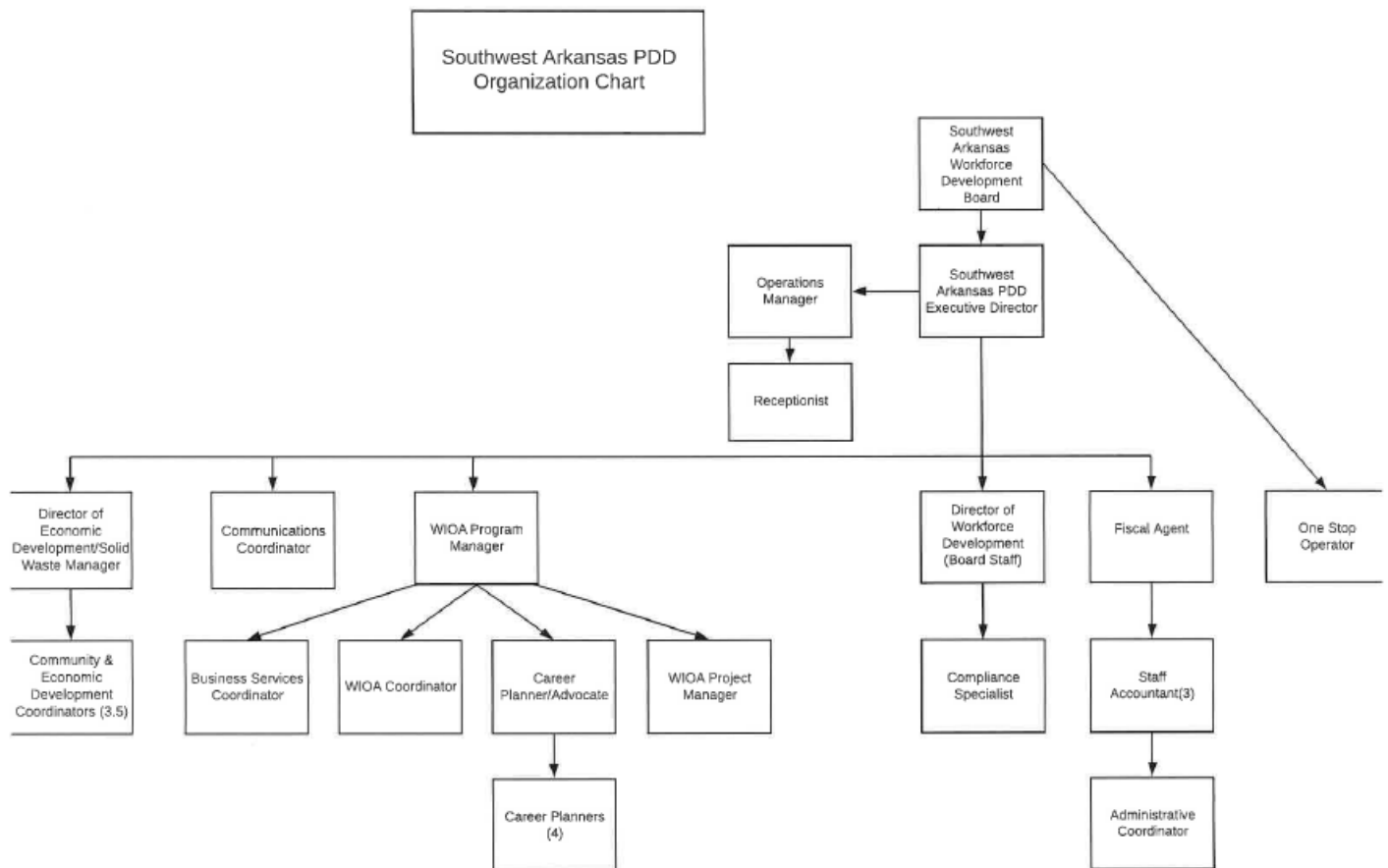
B. A list of all Arkansas Workforce Centers in the local area; include address, phone numbers, and hours of operation;

The following Southwest Arkansas Workforce Centers are:

- Comprehensive
 - Camden, 237 Jackson SW, Camden, AR 71701, 870-836-5024 (8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. M-F)
 - Hope, 205 Smith Road, Hope, AR 71801, 870-777-3421 (8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. M-F)
- Affiliate
 - El Dorado - 708 West Faulkner Street, El Dorado, AR 71730, 870-863-0218 (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. M-F)
 - Magnolia, 104 Harvey Couch Blvd., Magnolia, AR 71753, 870-234-3440 (8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. M-F)

An attached organization chart that depicts the local board, administrative and fiscal entities, and service providers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(F)]

C. An attached organization chart that depicts the chief elected official (s), local board, administrative and fiscal entities, and service providers. [WIOA §108(a), §108(b)(1)(F)]



3.2 Describe the workforce development system in the local area that identifies the programs that are included in that system and how the local board will work with the entities carrying out core and other workforce development programs to support alignment to provide services, including programs of study authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et. seq), that support the strategy identified in the State plan under section 102(b)(1)(E). [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(2)]

Note: The six (6) core programs identified by WIOA are: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Adult Education and Literacy, Wagner-Peyser Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation.

A referral process will be in place between the local board and the core programs to coordinate work ensuring individuals seeking services are made aware of all core program services.

3.3 Describe how the local board, working with the entities carrying out core programs, will expand access to employment, training, education, and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment, including how the local board will facilitate the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs, and improve access to activities leading to a recognized postsecondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable). [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(3)]

Workforce center staff will review the individuals' needs to determine which programs may be able to provide the appropriate services and then refer that individual to the corresponding program. Providing services to individuals with barriers to employment is a priority under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Southwest Arkansas

Workforce Development Board will ensure that access to curriculum-aligned industry-recognized certificates verifying attainment of the critical skills that employers are looking. This can accelerate matching job seekers to employment and always career pathways to be obtained. Any individual who falls into the individuals with barriers to employment priority will receive services as deemed appropriate for the individual. The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board chose to allow an additional assistance barrier for eligibility determination for youth participants.

Additional Assistance Barrier for In-School Youth – An individual who requires additional assistance to complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment. Documentation will be placed in the files concerning the barrier details. No more than 5% of ISY assisted may be eligible based solely on the Additional Assistance Barrier for ISY.

At Risk of Dropping Out

* Has a core GPA of less than 1.5 (on a 4.0 scale) or is a postsecondary student deemed by a school official to be on academic probation

Is deemed at risk of dropping out of school

Poor Work History, Lack of Prospects

A youth 16 years of age or older who is currently unemployed AND either has not held a job for longer than three months or was fired from a job within six months of application.

A youth 18 – 21 years of age who has been unemployed for the last six months.

Dysfunctional Domestic Situations

- Has a family history of chronic unemployment (during the two years prior to application, family members were unemployed longer than employed)
- Is a member of a single-parent household
- Lives with grandparent(s) or caretaker(s) other than natural or adoptive parents
- Is an emancipated youth
- Victim of Abuse
 - Has experienced a recent traumatic event (within two years of application), is a victim of abuse, or resides in an abusive environment. Documentation must be supplied by a school official, case manager of another government agency, or professional doctor or counselor
- Substance Dependency or Abuse, Self or Immediate Family
 - Has been referred to or is being treated by an agency for a substance-abuse related problem
- Behavior Problems
 - Has been suspended two or more times from school or has been expelled
 - Is participating in alternative education because of behavior problems in the normal classroom

Additional Assistance Barrier for Out-of-School Youth – A low-income individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment. Documentation must be placed in the files concerning the barrier details.

- Poor Work History, Lack of Prospects
 - A youth 16 years of age or older who is currently unemployed AND either has not held a job for longer than three months or was fired from a job within six months of application.
 - A youth 18 – 24 years of age who has been unemployed for the last six months.
 - a) Self-attestation of individual work history
 - b) IWAGE printout
- Entitlement Program Recipient

- Receives, or is a member of a family who receives, cash payments under a federal or state income-based public assistance program
- Receives or has been determined eligible to receive, or is a member of a family who receives or is eligible to receive, Food Stamps with the six months prior to application
- Has been determined eligible for free or reduced meals at school during the six months prior to application
- Dysfunctional Domestic Situations
 - Has a family history of chronic unemployment (during the two years prior to application, family members were unemployed longer than employed)
 - Is a member of a single-parent household
 - Lives with grandparent(s) or caretaker(s) other than natural or adoptive parents
 - Is an emancipated youth
- Victim of Abuse
 - Has experienced a recent traumatic event (within two years of application), is a victim of abuse, or resides in an abusive environment. Documentation must be supplied by a school official, case manager of another government agency, or professional doctor or counselor
- Substance Dependency or Abuse, Self or Immediate Family
 - Has been referred to or is being treated by an agency for a substance-abuse related problem

3.4 Describe local and regional efforts to support and/or promote entrepreneurial skills training and microenterprise services, in coordination with economic development and other partners. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(5)]

The SWAWDA will engage partners such as the Small Business Administration, Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center, etc. These relationships will be used to connect clients who may wish to open their own business with partners who provide those specific services. Other entities that work with the local area in economic and workforce endeavors include, but are not limited to, Ouachita Partnership for Economic Development, Golden Triangle Economic Development Commission, Central Arkansas Development Council, Prescott/Nevada County Economic Development, Arkansas Economic Development Commission, Magnolia Economic Development Corporation, El Dorado-Union County Chamber of Commerce, and Texarkana/Miller County's Economic Development organization. Other qualified organizations or entities will be considered for partnerships as appropriate.

3.5 Describe how the local board coordinates education and workforce investment activities with relevant secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities to coordinate strategies, enhance services, and avoid duplication of services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(10)]

Coordination in the Southwest area is achieved through the referral process. Customers entering a local workforce center, requesting services, are assessed based upon their needs and referred to the appropriate partner(s) providing those services.

The SWAWDB will coordinate education and workforce investment activities with secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities through input gathered during partner meetings, local board meetings, and during conversations where local service delivery options are discussed. There is also collaboration between the board and secondary and postsecondary education programs providing services to youth. The youth MOU, that consists of linkages to services listed in the 14 Required Elements, gives the local area and its partners greater insight into services available for youth customers and participants throughout the region.

3.6 Describe efforts to coordinate supportive services provided through workforce investment activities in the local area, including facilitating transportation for customers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(11)]

All supportive services will be coordinated through the core programs as well as other resources available. Supportive services are coordinated based on program eligibility, the economic need thresholds of the partner agencies, and the availability of program funds.

In order to assist jobseekers in obtaining or retaining employment through career or training services, Arkansas Workforce Centers offer a variety of supportive services. Southwest has a Supportive Service policy that outlines types, eligibility, limits, etc. The Title IB Supportive Services Policy adopted by the Workforce Development Board may be found in the Board Policy Manual. Examples of supportive services include childcare, transportation, needs-related payments, tools and equipment, uniforms, and work related clothing. In addition to WIOA-funded supportive services, Southwest has developed relationships with community partners that assist with utility payments, food, shelter, and other basic needs.

Adult Education partners with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to help provide individuals with disabilities access to services, diagnosis and evaluations of capabilities and limitations; guidance and counseling; assistive technologies; and job placement.

Partnerships with Adult Education and Literacy Division of Workforce Services and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and Services for the Blind provides further assistance that helps leverage resources for maximum effectiveness.

3.7 Describe strategies to implement the operational goals of the local one-stop system, maximizing coordination of services provided by the State's employment services under the Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.), and the local board's service providers to improve services and avoid duplication. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(12)]

Southwest American Job Centers are the reflection of service delivery integration amongst multiple workforce and talent development programs. Southwest has strong partnerships among state agencies, two and four year educational institutions, economic development, Registered Apprenticeship, and community based organizations. A priority of the SWAWDB is to eliminate duplication across programs and align core programs. Alignment of core and optional programs will be made possible by the following strategies:

Reflect Robust Partnerships

Reflect the establishment of robust partnerships among partners. The one stop operator facilitates an integrated, co-located partnership that seamlessly incorporates services of the core partners and other workforce center partners.

Organize Service by Function

Organize and integrate services by function (rather than by program) when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating staff communication, capacity building, and training efforts. Functional alignment includes having Center staff who are cross-trained to serve all customers seamlessly (including targeted populations) by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with the purpose, scope, and requirements of each program.

Wagner-Peyser staff and the Title IB Adult, DLW, and Youth provider staff are co-located in all Comprehensive Workforce Centers.

3.8 Describe how the local board will carry out a review of local applications submitted under WIOA Title II Adult Education and Literacy, consistent with the local plan (as described in WIOA Sec. 107(d)(11) and WIOA Sec. 232). [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(13)]

- The Arkansas Department of Career Education will forward to the local areas the proposals that have met requirements to the RFP's for review and approval by the local board. The local boards should consider the extent to which the eligible applicant:
 - Demonstrates its participation in carrying out activities related to the development and implementation of career pathways in the local area;
 - Describes a plan for fulfilling its education and training and administrative responsibilities as a one-stop partner and for participating on the local workforce board;
 - Aligns adult education and literacy activities with the education and training objectives and activities of the local workforce plan and the One Stop Delivery System, including concurrent enrollment in Title I and Title II programs under WIOA, as appropriate;
 - Demonstrates a plan and strategies for effectively working with workforce partners identified by the local plan to share resources;
 - Contributes to regional education and training efforts, including career pathways programs.
- Request for Proposals were received and reviewed by a committee appointed by the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board chairman. The committee had a teleconference to discuss the individual scores of each proposal. The Southwest Area received five proposals from Arkansas Department of Career Education. The committee's recommendation along with score sheets were sent to the Arkansas Department of Career Education.

3.9 Based on the analysis described in Appendix B - Section 1, identify the industries where a sector partnership is currently being convened in the local area or where there will be an attempt to convene a sector partnership and the timeframe. Categorize the sector partnerships as active, emerging, or exploring as defined below.

Active

- Has a clear coordinator, convener, or convening team;
- Is led by industry as demonstrated by private sector members playing leadership roles;
- Has broad industry engagement as demonstrated by industry members attending meetings, partnering on activities, providing in-kind or financial resources, or similar;
- Includes critical and engaged partners across programs from workforce development;
- Can demonstrate that the partnership is not "just a workforce thing," "just an economic development thing," or "just an education thing."
- Operates in a true labor market region, not within the confines of a workforce area or other geopolitical boundaries;
- Operates under shared strategic plan, road map, etc.;
- Can demonstrate clearly identified priorities and an action plan, be able to demonstrate recent or current activities, services or products that are a direct outcome of the partnership.

Emerging

- Has at least an interim coordinator, convener, or convening team;
- Has engaged at least one private sector champion to help drive the launch and implementation of a sector partnership;
- Includes individuals from workforce development, education, economic development and other programs or organizations in strategic partner roles;
- Actively working to implement strategic priorities outlined in a launch meeting.

Exploring

- Is in the infancy stage, but actively considering or planning the preparation needed to launch a partnership;
- Working to identify partners who would be involved;
- Determining if the partnership really makes sense for the community.

Advanced Manufacturing – Emerging, Ongoing

Aerospace Technology – Emerging

Healthcare – Emerging

Meetings are already taking place in the Southwest Workforce Area. Through joint efforts of the One Stop Operator, partners, employers, Board members, Title 1B staff, and economic development organizations, meetings are held to discuss targeted training opportunities that will provide participants with an increased probability of obtaining high-income occupations. A highly skilled, motivated, and career-ready workforce will provide businesses with the opportunity to grow their companies throughout the region. This has been a priority of the SWAWDB to close the gap between workforce and economic development and move toward the tailoring of training programs to explicitly meet the needs of industry throughout the twelve counties in Southwest Arkansas.

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

The local board currently does not have oversight of funding outside of WIOA. The State of Arkansas normally applies for additional funding. When, and if approved, the State offers local areas the opportunity to request additional funds. Currently, additional funding is not being requested in this local area because of the difficulties associated with spending formula funds in the required two-year timeframe.

Section 4: Program Design and Evaluation

4.1 Describe the one-stop delivery system in the local area including:

The Southwest area is comprised of twelve counties: Calhoun, Columbia, Dallas, Hempstead, Howard, Lafayette, Little River, Miller, Nevada, Ouachita, Sevier, and Union Counties. The Southwest area is mostly rural in nature.

There are two certified, comprehensive workforce centers located in Hope (Hempstead Co.) and Camden (Ouachita Co.). Two affiliate centers are located in El Dorado (Union Co.) and Magnolia (Columbia Co.).

All of the required WIOA partners are included in the Southwest certified one-stop delivery system. Workforce Centers directly provide the full array of employment services and connect customers to work-related training and education. The Workforce Centers provide career services, education and training, and supportive services that customers need to get good jobs and stay employed, and help businesses find skilled workers and other services to support employer's needs. The Southwest One-Stop system has established strong, robust, and sustained partnerships with core programs. All partners in the Southwest area are committed to the local vision of offering a fully integrated and accessible employer driven local workforce system that maximizes the resources of our education, workforce, and economic development partners to develop the abilities and skills of job seekers and workers which will enable them to work and our businesses to remain in our area and grow.

- A. The local board's efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services, including contracted service providers and providers on the eligible training provider list, and ensure that such**

providers meet the employment needs of local employers, workers, and jobseekers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(A)]

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development area meets annually with Arkansas Division of Workforce Services' Labor Market Information team to determine the occupations that should be included on the Projected Employment Opportunities List. The Southwest area has the authority to add up to five additional emerging training programs that are not included on the statewide list. The Eligible Training Provider's List will support employers' needs for training.

B. How the local board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system in remote areas, using technology, and through other means. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(B)]

The SWAWDB has two comprehensive workforce centers and two affiliate centers. The comprehensive centers are located in Camden and Hope and the Affiliate Centers are located in El Dorado and Magnolia. Each Career Planner covers three counties in the region. Each Career Planner can travel to cities/towns, as needed, that do not have a physical Workforce Center in that area. In order to serve those residents who are unable to travel to the centers, the Southwest area will coordinate with local officials to obtain a meeting space for clients to gather information and receive services. SWAWDB will coordinate with ADWS to dispatch a mobile unit to outlying areas that are in high demand of services on an as-needed basis.

C. How entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA section 188, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(C)] (See Appendix D: *Planning References and Resources*)

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development system will comply with WIOA section 188 by ensuring accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities by providing staff training and support by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services, and Division of Services for the Blind.

Qualified applicants with disabilities, as defined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), are invited to request any needed accommodations to participate in the application process covered by area offices. This process includes information related to completing the application, intake/eligibility determination, assessment, and testing. All Workforce Centers will be ADA compliant in Southwest Arkansas. In addition, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Department of Human Services, and Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) are available in the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Centers to serve the needs of workers with disabilities. The Southwest area will:

- Provide training to staff on applicable provisions of the ADA and Disability Etiquette using material jointly developed by the partners and State entities.
- Bring together core program partners to integrate services and supportive services, and leverage resources to improve services to individuals with disabilities and other protected groups.
- Explore changes in service delivery design and programs by establishing partnerships, alternate assessments, and programs that better connect education, training, workforce, and supportive services to improve employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities.
- Encourage active engagement with the business sector to identify the skills and support that workers with disabilities need and communicate these needs to the partners, education, and training providers, as well as job seekers with disabilities.
- Continue to provide physical and programmatic accessibility to employment and training services for individuals with disabilities.
- Assess the physical and programmatic accessibility of all our centers and training facilities.

- Work with Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Human Services, Division of services for the Blind (DSB) to provide clients with disabilities extensive pre-employment transition services so they can successfully obtain employment.
- Strive to improve the employment outcomes of individuals with disabilities and other protected groups who are unemployed, underemployed, or receiving Social Security disability benefits, by utilizing services available through our local centers to connect them to existing successful career pathways programs.

D. List all required and optional program partners; indicate the program(s) each partner provides and the physical location where the program(s) can be accessed. Describe the roles and resource contributions of the partners. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(D)]

The required partners for the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Delivery Area are Adult Education, Title IB (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services), DWS – Employment Services, and Arkansas Rehabilitation. Arkansas Community Corrections has been a significant partner in the southwest area by providing referrals through the Alternative Sentencing Program.

Adult Education provides several services to assist individuals in preparation for employment, such as: GED, TABE, WAGE certification, CRC certification, pre-employability skills training, and ESL classes.

Title IB Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth **program** provides services to individuals through basic career services, individualized career services, and training services. Title I assists clients in paying for training costs, as well as supportive services to alleviate barriers to employment.

Division of Workforce Services (DWS) provides employment services through Unemployment Insurance and Job Services for those individuals working towards re-entry into the workforce. DWS also provides Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) to help decrease the burden of living expenses.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Services, and Division of Services for the Blind offer services to people with disabilities and provide them with the appropriate accommodations to be successful in the workforce. They also provide training assistance to those who are seeking **an education** and qualify for their services.

Examples of Non-core partners include Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program (Title I), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program, Boys and Girls Clubs, Chambers of Commerce, Public Schools, Two Year Colleges, Southwest Arkansas Development Council, etc.

Roles and contributions will be described in the Memorandum of Understanding and Infrastructure Funding Agreements.

Physically Co-Located at an Arkansas Workforce Center –LOCATION)

Partner Program	Partner Organization	Authorization/Category	Contact Information
*Adult Education and Family Literacy (WIOA Title II)	Arkansas Department of Career Education	WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) program	237 Jackson St. SW Camden, AR 71701 870-837-4001 bhamilto@sautech.edu
*Adult Education and Family Literacy (WIOA Title II)	Arkansas Department of Career Education	WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) program	104 Harvey Couch Blvd Magnolia, AR 71753 870-234-6064 bhamilto@sautech.edu
*Job Corps	Job Corps Serrato Corporation	Job Corps, WIOA Title I, Subtitle C	3443 E Fort Lowell Rd. Tucson, AZ 85716 520-326-1682 contact@serratocorp.com
*Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO)	Seedco (Structured Employment Economic Development Corporation)	Section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 and WIOA Sec. 169)	National Headquarters 513 W 207 th St New York, NY 10034 212-473-0255 info@seedco.org
*Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment & Training	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services	Section 4022 of the Agricultural Act of 2014	2 Capitol Mall Little Rock, AR 72201 501-682-2121 adws.info@arkansas.gov charisse.childrens@arkansas.gov

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*WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Program	Workforce Development Board of Southwest Arkansas	WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs	P.O. Box 767 Magnolia, AR 71754-0767 870-234-4030 Renee.dycus@arkansas.gov
*Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), authorized under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)	2 Capitol Mall Little Rock, AR 72201 501-682-2121 adws.info@arkansas.gov charisse.childers@arkansas.gov
*Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services	Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) auth. under Ch.2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C.2271 et seq.)	2 Capitol Mall Little Rock, AR 72201 501-682-2121 adws.info@arkansas.gov charisse.childers@arkansas.gov
*Unemployment Insurance	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services	Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs under state unemployment compensation laws	2 Capitol Mall Little Rock, AR 72201 501-682-2121 adws.info@arkansas.gov charisse.childers@arkansas.gov
*Vocational Rehabilitation (WIOA Title IV)	Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Services for the Blind	State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C.720 et seq.), as amended by title IV of WIOA	700 Main St Little Rock, AR 72203 501-682-5463 cassandra.williams@arkansas.gov

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*Vocational Rehabilitation (WIOA Title IV)	Arkansas Department of Career Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services	State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C.720 et seq.), as amended by title IV of WIOA	2807 E. Broad Texarkana, AR 71854 870-733-2807 lavennier.brown@arkansas.gov joseph.baxter@arkansas.gov
*Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services	Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program, WIOA Title I	205 Smith Rd Hope, AR 71801 501-682-2121 adws.info@arkansas.gov charisse.childers@arkansas.gov
*National Farmworker Jobs Program	Arkansas Human Development Corporation	National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP)2, WIOA Sec. 167	205 Smith Rd Hope, AR 71801 501-374-1103 ghudson@arhdc.org cyoung@arhdc.org

*Indicates a Required Program

Not Physically Co-Located at an Arkansas Workforce Center – (Location)

Partner Program	Partner Organization	Authorization/Category	Contact Information
*Community Service Block Grant E&T		Community Services Block Grant Act	adws.info@arkansas.gov
*Senior Community Service Employment Program	National Caucus and Center on Black Aging, Inc. (NCBA-SCSEP)	Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965	534 West Faulkner El Dorado, AR 71730 870-639-4759 stthomas@myncba.com

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*Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services	Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG), authorized under chapter 41 of title 38, U.S.C. N	2 Capitol Mall Little Rock, AR 72201 501-320-5629 stephanie.v.robinson@arkansas.gov
*Career and Technical Education	ASU Mid-South	Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)	2000 West Broadway West Memphis, AR 72301 870-733-6759 mjhalford@asumidsouth.edu
*HUD Employment & Training Program	US Department of Housing and Urban Development	Housing & Employment Works, WIOA sec. 129	425 West Capitol Ave Little Rock, AR 72201 501.918.5700 ar-webmanager@hud.gov
*Indian and Native American Programs	American Indian Center of Arkansas	Indian and Native American Programs (INA), WIOA sec. 166, 29 USC 3221	400 W Capitol Ave Little Rock, AR 72201 501.666.9032 star@aicago.org
*Department of Energy and Environment	Division of Environmental Quality	Energy and Environment	5301 Northshore Drive North Little Rock, AR 72118 eecomms@adeq.state.ar.us
Youth Build	Youth Build Contractor Name	Youth Build WIOA sec.171 (29 USC 3226)	183 College Drive De Queen, AR 71832 870.584.4471 ldaniels@cccua.edu

*Indicates a Required Program

E. Describe how the workforce centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated technology-enabled intake and case management information system for core programs. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(21)]

The State of Arkansas is in the process of implementing a common intake and a case management system for the core partners.

4.2 Describe the local board's assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities in the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(7)]

Adult and DLW employment and training activities will consist primarily of those available through the eligible training provider list. This list will contain certified providers offering training programs relevant to current labor market demands and will be customized for the local area. Dissemination of the provider list through area one-stops and their partners will ensure that providers meet the employment needs of local employers and job seekers. Once sector initiatives are fully implemented, the Eligible Training Provider's List will support the Employers need for training.

Upon eligibility determination of customers needing to receive training services, ITAs will be used in all available training programs. Participants will receive an ITA for the training program they have selected through the eligible training provider list to be presented to the individual school.

4.3 Describe how the local board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(8)]

The Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force may conduct a worker assistance workshop, attended by representatives of local and state agencies and affected workers to review available resources. Services and needs discussed at the workshop may include retraining and educational opportunities, unemployment insurance, social service programs, credit counseling, insurance options and resources to find a new job.

The Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force Coordinator also serves as the liaison to the local chambers of commerce throughout the area. Information is provided to them about the affected workers, including their occupations and their educational and skill levels. The local Workforce Center staff builds on the services provided through the Governors Dislocated Workers Taskforce by providing information and services to the affected employees. Dislocated workers are given a full array of services available to them through the Arkansas Workforce Center partnership and community organizations.

State and local WIOA partners will continue to build and maintain relationships with the business community to help with early warning of potential layoffs and promote early intervention. Together, the following services will be provided:

- Layoff aversion activities
- Immediate and on-site contact with employers and local community representatives
- Assessment and planning to address the layoff schedule, assistance needs of impacted workers, re-employment prospects, and available resources
- Information and access to unemployment compensation benefits and programs, AWC services, and employment and training activities, including Trade Act, Pell Grants, GI Bill, WIOA DLW Program, and other resources
- Necessary services and resources, such as workshops, resource and job fairs to support re-employment assistance
- Trade Act petition services through the Governors Dislocated Workers Taskforce

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit is a Federal tax credit available to employers for hiring individuals from certain target groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment. Work Opportunity Tax Credit joins other workforce programs that incentivize workplace diversity and facilitate access to good jobs for American workers. For more information please visit: <https://doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/>

The Shared Work Unemployment Compensation Program provides an alternative for employers faced with a reduction in work force. It allows an employer to divide available work or hours of work among a specific group(s) of employees in lieu of a layoff, and it allows the employees to receive a portion of their unemployment benefits while working reduced hours.

4.4 Describe the local board's assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce activities, including activities for youth with disabilities. Identify successful models and best practices for youth workforce activities relevant to the local area. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(9)]

Note: This section must include a description of the program design elements as well as how the local area will implement the 14 program elements.

The Southwest Workforce Development Area partners will provide or make an appropriate referral to provide the fourteen required program elements to eligible youth participants in Southwest Arkansas, as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding for the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area. These services include:

Tutoring, study skills training and instruction leading to secondary school completion, including dropout prevention strategies.

Adult Education and Family Literacy

Dropout prevention strategies can include, but are not limited to, placement in an alternative secondary school services setting, facilitating involvement of families and community, taking an individualized approach based on youth's individual needs.

- Clients in need of tutoring will be referred to **Adult Education**
 - The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board authorizes incentives for the participants that achieve goals that contribute to their success. **Title 1-B Youth Services**
 - Tutoring services can be used in conjunction with apprenticeship programs to help youth succeed, particularly during pre-apprenticeship or related classroom instruction.
- *Alternative secondary school offering specialized, structured curriculum inside or outside of the public-school system which may provide work, study and/or academic intervention for students with behavior problems, physical/mental disabilities, who are at risk of dropping out, and/or who are institutionalized or adjudicated youth*
 - Clients who require an alternative to traditional education establishments, will be referred to **Adult Education** to acquire a GED.
 - **Adult Education Centers** enroll 16 & 17-year-old students into the GED Program once eligibility requirements have been met. For 16 & 17-year-olds to participate in educational services provided by Adult Education, they must provide a signed waiver with official seal from their high school along with guardian permission. The process for enrolling 16-17 year-old students is the following: 1.) Intake Application and Identification. 2.) Orientation. 3.) TABE 11/12 test 4.) Guardian permission and signature. 5.) High School waiver form with signature and official seal.

- *Paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component academic and occupational education. May include summer employment opportunities or throughout the school year, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing, and on-the-job training.*
 - **Title 1-B Youth Services** will provide work experiences and on-the-job training for clients who are interested in a specific career field, in order to improve their chances at earning a self-sufficient wage in a career of their interest.
 - **Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) and the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB)** have youth programs for youth with disabilities that focus on employment. ARS and DSB have Supported Employment program models that are appropriate for youth with disabilities and the Pre-Employment Transition Program, which serves youth that are also students in an educational program from ages 16 to 21 in the State of Arkansas.

The Supported Employment model provides job placement assistance, on-the-job supports and job coaching through a third party vendor that is qualified and monitored through ARS or DSB. Regular meetings and updates are built into this program model. With the Pre-Employment Transition model ARS and DSB provide 5 core services to youth that are students. These services include: self-advocacy, work readiness, work-based learning, counseling on opportunities in post-secondary training, and job exploration. These services can be arranged through 3rd party vendors, schools, or directly through ARS counselors. This program is qualified and monitored by ARS or DSB staff. Additionally, ARS offers a summer work program on the campus of the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) that will train students in work readiness skills and assist them work based learning while on the campus.
- *Occupational skills training*
 - **Title 1-B Youth Services** will assist eligible clients with obtaining financial resources, enrollment, and supportive services for training that provide recognized degrees, certifications, or marketable skills that are directly related to in demand and emerging occupations in the state.
 - **ARS and DSB** provide occupational skills training to youth with disabilities by arranging for or directly providing financial resources and assistance with entering a training program. Additionally, the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) offers a variety of occupational skills trainings that can be provided on campus to eligible applicants.
 - Registered Apprenticeship is also a viable career option. Registered Apprenticeship is an employer-driven model that combines on-the-job training with related classroom instruction that increases an apprentice's skill level and wages. WIOA funds can be used to pay for the cost of the related classroom instruction component of apprenticeship programs.
- *Education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster. **Adult Education and Family Literacy***
 - SWAWDB will establish Career Pathways thru partnerships, which will outline individualized steps that progress clients from current academic level, to an employability status that will result in earning a self-sufficient wage.
 - Registered Apprenticeship is also a viable career option. Registered Apprenticeship is an employer-driven model that combines on-the-job training with related classroom instruction that increases an apprentice's skill level and wages. It is a tried and true approach for preparing youth for jobs – and meeting the business needs for a highly-skilled workforce.
- *Leadership development opportunities, which include community service and peer-centered activities encouraging responsibility and other positive social behaviors* **Title 1-B Youth Services, Adult Education and Family Literacy, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Services for the Blind**

- SWAWDB will use partnerships and Career Ready 101 to provide leadership development and other pre-employability classes. Clients will participate in peer-centered activities throughout their enrollment, to promote positive social behaviors
- The Pre-Employment Transition Program offered through ARS and DSB provide soft skills training which includes a focus on social behaviors intended to enhance the development of employment skills for transition age youth by fostering the knowledge and growth of independent living skills, communication, and interpersonal skills to gain understanding of employer expectations related to timeliness and performance on the job.
- ARS offers the Youth Leadership Forum at on the campus of the University of Central Arkansas which is open to youth with disabilities and designed to foster leadership skills. This is part of a nationwide effort to join youth with disabilities and promote empowerment.
- *Supportive services* **Title 1-B Youth Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Services for the Blind**
 - After assessments, SWAWDB will provide supportive services to eligible clients to alleviate barriers. Referrals to other agencies will be made to better serve clients.
 - ARS and DSB can arrange for supportive services as related to the employment goal of the individual. This process and the types of supports available are detailed in section 3.7.
- *Adult mentoring*
 - Southwest will make referrals to community and faith-based organizations to provide one-on-one encouragement and direction.
 - Employers sponsoring Registered Apprenticeship programs can mentor WIOA eligible youth hired as apprentices.
- *Follow-up services* **Title 1-B Youth Services**
 - Southwest will provide Youth clients with 12 months of Follow-Up Services after exiting the program. Staff will maintain contact with clients and provide services, such as support and guidance, to assist in a successful transition in to the workforce.
- *Comprehensive guidance and counseling, including drug and alcohol abuse counseling, as well as referrals to counseling, as appropriate for the needs of the individual youth*
 - After thorough assessments, Staff will provide individualized counseling referrals to partnering agencies for Youth clients in need of formal counseling and additional supports.
- *Financial Literacy* **Adult Education and Family Literacy**
 - Staff will provide financial literacy training through the Career Ready 101 platform. Additional training will be provided in person for those clients who require additional assistance.
- *Entrepreneurial skills training* **Adult Education and Family Literacy, Community Colleges**
 - Clients who are interested in entrepreneurial skills training will be referred to local education facilities that offer such training. Career Planners will assess individual's needs and barriers to ensure the client is properly prepared for training.
- *Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area. (Career Awareness, Career Counseling, Career Exploration).* **Title 1-B Youth Services and Adult Education and Family Literacy**
 - Title 1-B and Adult Education staff will assist individuals in career exploration and counseling to map out career pathways that best suit the client.
- *Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to postsecondary education and training.* **Title 1-B Youth Services, Adult Education and Family Literacy, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Services for the Blind**

- Clients interested in post-secondary education will be referred to Adult Education for college preparatory classes. Career Planners will counsel on what to expect when transitioning in post-secondary education, and provide advice such as: time management, study habits, and educational resources.
- Youth with disabilities that are receiving educational training can receive Pre-Employment Transition Services through ARS or DSB. One of the core component areas is counseling and guidance on post-secondary opportunities. This service can include exploration of available options, applying to schools, arranging for financial aid and supports to participate in the training. See section 3.7 for a description of the types of supports available for youth with disabilities.
- Youth are better equipped to compete for jobs with an educational credential. The area Adult Education Centers are available to assist youth aged 16 and 17 that are waived out of high school with earning the General Equivalency Diploma (GED).
- Pre-Apprenticeship programs can include basic skills, integrated instructional models, other activities designed to prepare youth to enter and succeed in apprenticeship programs.

4.5 Describe local board actions to become and/or remain a high-performing local board, consistent with the factors developed by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board. These factors have not been determined but will include effectiveness and continuous improvement criteria for local boards. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(18)] (See Appendix D: *Planning References and Resources*)

The Board will require continuous monitoring of programs to ensure compliance with the law and that performance measures are met. Board staff will disseminate information to board members to make certain they have a solid understanding of the board role. The board will work to maintain members with diverse expertise to meet the needs of the region's communities. They will maintain policies and procedures current and reactive to WIOA requirements. The board will regularly review labor market data and analysis to be aware of emerging trends. The board will work with community colleges to determine the needs of employers.

4.6 Describe how training services will be provided in accordance with WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(G), the process and criteria for issuing individual training accounts. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(19)]

The Individual Training Accounts (ITA) system is used by participants who are eligible for training services and choose to attend training. **Per local policy,** a process is used to determine a participant's financial need. The individual selects the course of study from the eligible training provider list. The individual must have **completed an application, received determination from other funding sources, and then present the award letter** to the Career Planner to show the monetary amounts of unmet financial need. Consideration of all available funds, excluding loans, will determine the person's overall need for WIOA funding. The ITA may be used to cover any education related expenses. Career Planners will make sure that there is no duplication of services.

4.7 If contracts for training services are used, describe processes utilized by the local board to ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs, regardless of how the training services are to be provided. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(19)]

The Eligible Training Providers List is available online in all workforce centers. Participants approved for training through the ITA system must choose one of the approved programs in order to receive an ITA. Contracts may be used if

it reflects a training program that is in demand. On-the-job training, customized training are other options available to serve a single employer with its training needs.

4.8 Describe the process utilized by the local board to ensure that training provided is linked to in-demand industry sectors or occupations in the local area, or in another area to which a participant is willing to relocate. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(22)] and [WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(G)(iii)]

The SWAWDB uses the Projected Employment Opportunities List as the basic guide for determining in-demand occupations. Additionally, demand occupations and targeted industry sectors specific to the Southwest Area are focused. Employer feedback regarding employment success may also be a considering factor. Demand occupations from neighboring Workforce areas may be used as well. Any training for a participant that is paid for by WIOA funds must be on the Eligible Training Provider List for the state or local area.

Section 5: Compliance

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

5.1 Describe the replicated cooperative agreements, as defined by WIOA 107(d)(11), in place between the local board and the Vocational Rehabilitation programs operated in the area with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(14)]

Local ARS Field offices or other ARS organizational units will replicate cooperative agreements in part or in whole with local divisions of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act core programs. These may include the following:

- provision of staff training and technical assistance with regard to the availability and benefits of, and information on eligibility standards for, vocational rehabilitation services;
- the promotion of equal, effective, and meaningful participation by individuals with disabilities in workforce investment activities in the State through the promotion of program accessibility, the use of nondiscriminatory policies and procedures, and the provision of reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and services, and rehabilitation technology, for individuals with disabilities;
- use of information and financial management systems that link all components of the statewide workforce development system to other electronic networks, including nonvisual electronic networks, and that relate to such subjects as employment statistics, and information on job vacancies, career planning, and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act activities, use of customer service features such as common intake and referral procedures, customer databases, resource information, and human services hotlines;
- establishment of cooperative efforts with employers to facilitate job placement;
- carry out any other activities that the designated State unit and the employers determine to be appropriate, identify staff roles, responsibilities, and available resources, and specification of the financial responsibility of each component of the statewide workforce investment system regarding paying for necessary services (consistent with State law and Federal requirements); and
- specification of procedures for resolving disputes among such components.

Development of these agreements at the local level must include the local manager, field office district manager or the top executive at the organizational units of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. The agreement must be signed by the local manager, the supervising Senior Leader from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and the Commissioner of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services or his/her designee. Copies of the agreement will be maintained by the local manager and Chief Fiscal Officer of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

5.2 Identify the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds as determined by the Chief Elected Official(s). [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(15)]

The Southwest CEO's have appointed the Southwest Arkansas Planning & Development District, Inc. as the fiscal agent for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District, Inc. is located at 101 Harvey Couch Boulevard, Magnolia, AR 71753. Renee Dycus is the Executive Director.

5.3 Describe the competitive processes to award the subgrants and contracts for activities funded by WIOA Title I programs within the local area. This includes, but is not limited to, the process used to award funds to a one-stop operator and other sub-recipients/contractors of WIOA Title I adult, dislocated worker, and youth services. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(16)]

The local board uses an RFP or RFQ process to award subgrants and contracts as outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I-B Financial, Procurement, Monitoring Policies & Procedures adopted by the Board and approved by Southwest Arkansas Workforce Area's Chief Elected Officials. The notice advertising the RFP or RFQ is placed in a statewide newspaper and on the Administrative Entity's website. Additional media sources may be used. Each proposal submitted is scored based on specific criteria. After the evaluation, the score of each proposal is presented to the full board. The Board selects the provider based upon the specified criteria and presented to the chief elected officials for final approval.

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board has adopted a One-Stop Operator and Service Provider Procurement Policy. This policy also contains a Confidentiality Agreement. The Confidentiality Agreement is required by committee members appointed by the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board for selecting a One-Stop Operator and Title I Service Provider for the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area. An independent consultant, if applicable, and staff to the board are required to sign the confidentiality statement as they assist with the process.

5.4 Describe the local area's negotiated local levels of performance for the federal measures and their implications upon the local workforce system; attach the completed Performance Targets Template. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17)] *Note:* See Appendix D: Planning References and Resources "Performance Targets Template".

WIOA Performance Measures	Performance Goals	
	PY22	PY3
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals	
Adult		85%
Dislocated Worker		83%
Youth (Employment or Education/Training Activities)		75%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals	
Adult		84%
Dislocated Worker		83%
Youth (Employment or Education/Training Activities)		78%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals	
Adult		\$6,849
Dislocated Worker		\$7,027
Youth		\$3,825
Credential Attainment Rate	Negotiated Goals	
Adult		83%
Dislocated Worker		77%
Youth		64%
Measurable Skill Gains	Negotiated Goals	
Adult		73%
Dislocated Worker		66.5%
Youth		61.0%

5.5 Describe the indicators used by the local board to measure performance and effectiveness of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers and the one-stop delivery system, in the local area.[WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17)]

Local and state monitoring of the fiscal agent, Title I Service Provider and One-Stop Operator will be conducted at least annually. The local board will be made aware of any issues or concerns that may arise from the monitoring. Performance reports will be presented to the board at the end of each program year for the board to approve/disapprove. The fiscal agent, Tile Service Provider and One-Stop Operator shall be audited on an annual basis. The board will be presented the Eligible Training Provider List and programs annually for its review and approval. Financial reports will be provided to the SWAWDB quarterly for the Board to remain informed of all activities throughout the Title 1 funding period.

5.6 Describe the process used by the local board for the receipt and consideration of input into the development of the local plan in compliance with WIOA section 108(d). Describe the process to provide an opportunity for public comment prior to submission of the local plan. Be sure to address how members of the public, including representatives of business, labor organizations, and education were given an opportunity to provide comments on the local plan. [WIOA Sec. 108 (b)(20)]

In accordance with the provisions of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board Regional and Local Plan for the Southwest Arkansas Service Delivery Area was made available for review and comment. The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board advertised the Regional and Local Plan in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette on **Sunday, March 12th, 2023**, giving the public 30 days to review and submit any comments back to SWAWDB. The plans remained on display for that 30-day period and anyone wishing to review the plans **can do so by coming** to the local office of SWAWDB between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m or visiting <https://swawdb.com> .

5.7 Prior to the date on which the local board submits a local plan, the local plan must be made available to members of the public through electronic and other means.

A. Describe how the local board made the local plan available for public comment. [WIOA Sec. 108(d)(1)];

The SWAWDB Regional and Local Plan was made available through email, or if requested, a hard copy could be mailed. **A copy was posted on the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board website <https://swawdb.com/>**

B. Describe how the local board collected and considered public comments for inclusion in the local plan. [WIOA Sec. 108(d)(2)]; and

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board advertised the Regional and Local Plan in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette on **Sunday, March 12th, 2023**, giving the public 30 days to review and submit any comments back to SWAWDB. The plans remained on display for that 30-day period and anyone wishing to review the plans could request either an electronic copy or a hard copy. Comments are due no later than 3:00 p.m. Wednesday, **April 12th, 2023** to be considered. Comments were also solicited by email from the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board website (<https://swawdb.com>) No public comments were received.

C. If any comments were received that represent disagreement with the local plan, include such comments within the local plan's attachments. [WIOA Sec. 108(d)(3)]

Comments were due no later than 3:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 12th, 2023 to be considered.
No comments were received.

5.8 List the name, organization, and contact information of the designated equal opportunity officer for each workforce center within the local area.

Annette Hughey
WIOA Equal Opportunity Officer
SWAPDD, Inc.
101 Harvey Couch Blvd.
Magnolia, Arkansas 71753
Telephone: (870) 235-7522

Section 6: COVID Recovery, Readiness, Diversity, and Inclusion

Responses are focused on the local area's readiness to continue full operations in the post-COVID era as well as adherence to the Administration's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of Workforce Services Initiative.

6.1 What is the Local Area's vision for equitable and inclusive recovery and reemployment? What are community partners' roles in this vision? How much of this vision is accomplishable with current WIOA funding?

The local area will focus more on equity, education, and training as it is crucial to creating more skilled workers, deeper talent pools, and a more resilient workforce. As the skill requirements of jobs increase and change rapidly, businesses need a diverse, highly skilled pipeline of workers ready for the jobs they create, and Arkansans need access to training so they can be equipped for those jobs. This vision will be accomplished, in part, by utilizing resources provided by partner organizations to support the upskilling efforts of participants; this will allow the local area to accomplish this vision with our current level of funding.

Community partners play a crucial role in this vision for equitable and inclusive recovery and reemployment. They serve as intermediaries between the local workforce system and the communities they represent. Community partners can help identify barriers to employment faced by their participants and connect individuals to training programs or job opportunities.

6.2 How has the Local Area modified their service delivery strategies and services as the Arkansas Workforce Centers have safely reopened? Is there a thoughtful strategy to deliver services safely and effectively to all individuals, reflective of the President's emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion of workforce services, and this strategy has been put into action across the Local Area?

The local area has resumed pre-pandemic levels of service. We are utilizing a flexible, accommodating approach to deliver workforce services safely and effectively to all individuals. More online presence has been implemented and information is more streamlined. The local area continues to try to improve on this.

During our soft opening post-Covid, we implemented social distancing measures such as limiting the number of customers in the centers at any given time; increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting high-touch areas and surfaces to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission; placing Personal Protective Equipment in our centers; and offering virtual services such as virtual job fairs and remote intake processes to minimize the need for in-person visits. Career Planners offered phone assessments, and an online application process was implemented.

6.3 What are the local strategies to identify, engage and enroll participants who may be unaware of the services available through the public workforce system? How have you ensured these strategies reach all populations, including marginalized and underserved populations?

Local strategies to identify, engage and enroll customers who may be unaware of the services available through the public workforce system include, at a minimum, developing partnerships with community-based organizations to generate referrals, hosting informational exchange events, and targeting outreach efforts to increase our recognition for all populations, including marginalized individuals. Southwest aims to take a comprehensive approach that addresses the unique needs and barriers faced by these groups. Through a collaborative effort with local stakeholders, outreach events are tailored to the specific needs and concerns of each population group and provide an opportunity for potential participants to learn about the various training programs and resources available to them through our program.

6.4 Has the Local Area created an outreach and engagement plan to make the public more aware of the available services of the public workforce system? If no, does the Local Area plan to create such a plan?

Southwest plans to develop an outreach and engagement plan to make the public more aware of the available services of the public workforce system. Currently, the local area is utilizing face-to-face outreach, printed outreach materials for distribution to partners and community-based organizations, social media platforms and upgrading the local area provider website. WIOA staff have met with Chambers of Commerce throughout our area, been highlighted in Chamber newsletters, and participated in social media presentations. Southwest also utilizes a Targeted Populations report to locate underserved areas, so we reach specific populations, especially Out of School Youth, within the community.

6.5 How are partners, including non-traditional and community organizations, being engaged to improve access to services for all populations, including marginalized populations? Is this different for in-person vs. online services? What decisions were made regarding the capacity of the Local Area to provide remote and in-person services to marginalized populations?

Developing strong partnerships and collaboration with non-traditional and community organizations ensure that measures are in place to promote a seamless workforce delivery system. These relationships with both traditional partners such as government agencies, educational institutions, and employers, as well as non-traditional partners like community-based organizations and faith-based organizations help to create access to expertise, networks, and resources to reach targeted and marginalized populations effectively. This, in turn, improves access to services for all populations. Service delivery in-person allows direct engagement with participants, whereas online services involve leveraging technology and digital platforms to reach all populations. By offering in-person services alongside remote options, Southwest partners have been able to cater to the diverse needs and preferences of providing services such as in-person/virtual job fairs, mobile applications, training programs, and career counseling for all populations, including marginalized populations.

6.6 What is the Local Area’s plan for increasing the volume of paid and unpaid work experiences, which may include summer and other employment, youth apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship programs, internships and job shadowing, and on-the-job training? How does this strategy engage and meet the needs of all eligible youth, including those with disabilities or language barriers, and other marginalized or underserved populations?

Southwest area is working to increase the volume of work experiences by encouraging more out-of-school youth to participate in Work Experience (WE) activities to help them determine if an identified career path is suitable for their needs and abilities. WE activities will take into account, at a minimum, the skills, abilities, desired career path, and barriers to self-sufficient employment opportunities of all eligible youth, regardless of disabilities, language barriers or cultural marginalization. Accommodations and support will be provided, as needed and allowable, to overcome any barriers to success.

Southwest continues to establish future partnerships with local businesses and organizations to create and provide a wide range of work experiences for youth including apprenticeships, internships, and job shadowing. By leveraging these partnerships, Southwest plans to provide a diverse range of work experiences that cater to the unique needs and interests of each individual youth.

Section 7: Plan Assurances

Planning Process and Public Comment		References
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.1 The local board has processes and timelines, consistent with WIOA Section 108(d), to obtain input into the development of the local plan and provide the opportunity for comment by representatives of business, labor organizations, education, other key stakeholders, and the public for a period that is no less than 30 days.	WIOA Sections 108(d); proposed 20 CFR 679.550(b)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.2 The final local plan is available and accessible to the public.	Proposed 20 CFR 679.550(b)(5)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.3 The local board has established procedures to ensure public access (including people with disabilities) to board meetings and information regarding board activities, such as board membership and minutes.	WIOA Section 107(e); proposed 20 CFR 679.390 and 679.550
Planning Process and Public Comment		References

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.4 The local board makes publicly-available any local requirements for the public workforce system, such as policies, including policies for the use of WIOA Title I funds.	Proposed 20 CFR 679.390
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.5 The local board has established a written policy or procedure that identifies circumstances that might present conflict of interest for any local workforce investment board or entity that they represent, and provides for the resolution of conflicts.	WIOA Section 107(h); proposed 20 CFR 679.410(a)-(c)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.6 The local board has copies of memoranda of understanding between the local board and each one-stop partner concerning the operation of the one-stop delivery system in the local area, and has provided the State with the latest versions of its memoranda of understanding.	WIOA Section 121(c); proposed 20 CFR 678.500-510
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.7 The local board has written policy or procedures that ensure one-stop operator agreements are reviewed and updated no less than once every three years.	WIOA Section 121(c)(v)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.8 The local board has negotiated and reached agreement on local performance measures with the local chief elected official(s) and the Governor.	WIOA Sections 107(d)(9) and 116(c); proposed 20 CFR 679.390(k) and 677.210(b)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.9 The local board has procurement policies and procedures for selecting one-stop operators, awarding contracts under WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funding provisions, and awarding contracts for Youth service provision under WIOA Title I in accordance with applicable state and local laws, rules, and regulations, provided no conflict exists with WIOA.	WIOA Sections 121(d) and 123; proposed 20 CFR 678.600-615 and 681.400
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.10 The local board has procedures for identifying and determining the eligibility of training providers and their programs to receive WIOA Title I individual training accounts.	WIOA Sections 107(d)(10), 122(b)(3), and 123; Proposed 20 CFR 679.370(l)-(m) and 680.410-430
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.11 The local board has written procedures for resolving grievances and complaints alleging violations of WIOA Title I regulations, grants, or other agreements under WIOA and written policies or procedures for assisting customers who express interest in filing complaints at any point of service, including, at a minimum, a requirement that all partners can identify appropriate staff contacts and refer customers to those contacts.	WIOA Section 181(c); proposed 20 CFR 683.600
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.12 The local board has established at least one comprehensive, full-service one-stop center and has a written process for the local Chief Elected Official and local board to determine that the center conforms to the definition therein.	WIOA Section 121(e)(2)(A); proposed 20 CFR 678.305
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.13 All partners in the local workforce and education system described in this plan ensure the physical, programmatic and communications	WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR parts 37.7-37.9; 20 CFR 652.8(j)

	accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology and materials in one-stop centers for individuals with disabilities.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.14 The local board ensures that outreach is provided to populations and sub-populations who can benefit from one-stop services.	WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR 37.42
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.15 The local board implements universal access to programs and activities to individuals through reasonable recruitment targeting, outreach efforts, assessments, service delivery, partner development, and numeric goals.	WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR 37.42
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.16 The local board complies with the nondiscrimination provisions of Section 188 and assures that Methods of Administration were developed and implemented.	WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR 37.54(a)(1)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.17 The local board collects and maintains data necessary to show compliance with nondiscrimination provisions of Section 188.	WIOA Section 185; 29 CFR 37.37
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.18 The local board complies with restrictions governing the use of federal funds for political activities, the use of the one-stop environment for political activities, and the local board complies with the applicable certification and disclosure requirements.	2 CFR Part 225 Appendix B; 2 CFR Part 230 Appendix B; 48 CFR 31.205-22; RCW 42.52.180; TEGL 2-12; 29 CFR Part 93.100
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.19 The local board ensures that one-stop Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) and business services staff, along with the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker program partner agency, will continue to provide services to agricultural employers and MSFWs that are demand-driven.	WIOA Section 167
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.20 The local board follows confidentiality requirements for wage and education records as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended, WIOA, and applicable Departmental regulations.	WIOA Sections 116(i)(3) and 185(a)(4); 20 USC 1232g; 20 CFR 677.175 and 20 CFR part 603

Administration of Funds	References
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.21 The local board has a written policy and procedures to competitively award grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities (or applicable federal waiver), including a process to be used to procure training services made as exceptions to the Individual Training Account process.	WIOA Section 108 (b)(16) 20 CFR 679.561(a)(15);
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.22 The local board has accounting systems that follow current Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and written fiscal-controls and fund-accounting procedures and ensures such procedures are followed to insure proper disbursement and accounting of WIOA adult, dislocated worker, and youth program funds.	WIOA Section 108(b)(15)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.23 The local board ensures compliance with the uniform administrative Requirements under WIOA through annual, on-site monitoring of each local sub-recipient.	WIOA Section 184(c); 20 CFR Part 652, 20 CFR 683.410(a), 683.420(a), 683.750
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.24 The local board has a written debt collection policy and procedures that conforms with state and federal requirements and a process for maintaining a permanent record of all debt collection cases that supports the decisions made and documents the actions taken with respect to debt collection, restoration, or other debt resolution activities.	WIOA Section 184(c); 20 CFR Part 652; 20 CFR 683.410(a), 683.420(a), 683.750
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.25 The local board will not use funds received under WIOA to assist, promote, or deter union organizing.	
Eligibility		References

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.26 The local board has a written policy and procedures that ensure adequate and correct determinations of eligibility for WIOA-funded basic career services and qualifications for enrollment of adults, dislocated workers, and youth in WIOA funded individualized career services and training services, consistent with state policy on eligibility and priority of service.	20 CFP Part 680 Subparts A and B; 20 CFR Part 681 Subpart A
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.27 The local board has a written policy and procedures for awarding Individual Training Accounts to eligible adults, dislocated workers, and youth receiving WIOA Title I training services, including dollar and/or duration limit(s), on the number of times an individual may modify an ITA, and how ITAs will be obligated and authorized.	WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(G); 20 CFR 680.300-320
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7.28 The local board has a written policy and procedures that establish internal controls, documentation requirements, and leveraging and coordination of other community resources when providing supportive services and, as applicable, needs-related payments to eligible adult, dislocated workers, and youth enrolled in WIOA Title I programs.	WIOA Sections 129(c)(2)(G) and 134(d)(2); 20 CFR 680.900-970; 20 CFR 681.570

☒	7.29 The local board has a written policy for priority of service at its workforce centers for local workforce providers that ensures veterans and eligible spouses are identified at the point of entry, made aware of their entitlement to priority of service, and provided information on the array of employment, training and placement services and eligibility requirements for those programs or services.	Jobs for Veterans Act; Veterans' Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act; 20 CFR 1010; TEGL 10-09
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Appendix C: Performance Goals

Plan modifications must identify expected levels of performance for each indicator of performance for the two years covered by the plan modification. The local boards must reach an agreement with the ADWS, on the negotiated levels of performance for each of the two years of the plan modification.

The Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following levels of performance for the following indicators for Program Years 22-23:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit),
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit),
- Credential Attainment Rate, and
- Measurable Skills Gains.

Local Area WIOA Negotiated Performance Goals

Name of local workforce development area: Southwest

WIOA Performance Measures	Local Area PY22-23 Performance Goals
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals
Adult	85%
Dislocated Worker	83%
Youth (Education or Training Activities or Employment)	75%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals
Adult	84%
Dislocated Worker	83%
Youth (Education or Training Activities or Employment)	78%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	Negotiated Goals

Adult	\$6,849
Dislocated Worker	\$7,027
Youth	\$3,825
Credential Attainment Rate	Negotiated Goals
Adult	83%
Dislocated Worker	77%
Youth	64%
Measurable Skill Gains	Negotiated Goals
Adult	73%
Dislocated Worker	66.5%
Youth	61.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	
Adult	Baseline
Dislocated Worker	Baseline
Youth	Baseline

Appendix D: Planning References and Resources

Local Areas must list each of the state's strategic goals in their plans and develop their own objectives for inclusion in the local plan.

State of Arkansas's Combined Workforce Development Strategic Plan (*State Plan*)

On July 22, 2014, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) providing a framework for Governors and states to make changes to their workforce systems. The federal law sets the parameters for the workforce system, which is an integral part of the state's ability to serve jobseekers and employers. WIOA will enable the state to align workforce priorities across multiple partners, training providers, employers and others to ensure we are creating a skilled workforce for today and the future.

An effective workforce development system will be built on a foundation of alignment, innovation, employer engagement, accountability structures and improved data. Arkansas will look beyond WIOA to set broad goals for a comprehensive workforce development system. We will do this by providing the highest quality of service to jobseekers and employers through well-coordinated approaches at the state and local levels. System access will be enhanced using technology and creative partnerships with community organizations and other service providers. While access will be improved for all jobseekers, the provision of services and

training will be focused on those most in need and hardest to serve.

The four main goals in the state's Combined WIOA Plan are as follows:

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

Goal 1 Objectives:

1. Expand employer partnerships through the support of industry engagement.
2. Identify and promote best practices (private and public) for developing and sustaining partnerships.
3. Expand partnership with economic development to refine sector strategies.
4. Improve communication/participation between education entities, local and state boards, government agencies, community-based organizations, and employers.
5. Increase accountability and clarity of action between all workforce related boards.
6. Increase the utilization of Registered Apprenticeship programs as viable talent development opportunities.
7. Increase connections with employers and Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to provide support and employment for youth and adults with disabilities.
8. Partner with K-12 education, higher education, career and technical education, and adult education to provide consistent rules and eliminate barriers to implementing training programs around the state.
9. Explore 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).
10. Expand small business participation.

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

Goal 2 Objectives:

1. Develop 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.
2. Develop an integrated data system that will enable the sharing of information between partner agencies to more efficiently service both employers and jobseekers.
3. Promote training that leads to industry recognized credentials and certification.
4. Support transportable skill sets for transportable careers.
5. Support career pathways development and sector strategy initiatives as a way to meet business and industry needs.
6. Expand service delivery access points by the use of virtual services.
7. Develop a common business outreach strategy with a common message that will be utilized by all workforce system partners.
8. Develop a menu of services available at each service delivery access point that provides a list of the services and training opportunities available through Arkansas's talent development system.
9. Utilize customer satisfaction surveys to ensure continuous improvement of the state's talent development system.
10. Explore 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).

Strategic Goal 3: Increase awareness of the state’s Talent Development System

Goal 3 Objectives:

1. Increase access to the workforce development system through a “No Wrong Door” approach to services.
2. Change employer and jobseeker perceptions of the workforce system.
3. Develop an image-building outreach campaign that educates Arkansans about the services and the career development opportunities available in the state.
4. Utilize technology, including social media and search engine optimization, to better connect jobseekers and employers with the talent development system in Arkansas.
5. Develop a user-friendly website that provides a common repository of information about career development opportunities that are relevant to K-12 education, parents, educators, adults, employers, government agencies, and the public.

Strategic Goal 4: Address Skills Gaps

Goal 4 Objectives:

1. Conduct a statewide skills and asset analysis to determine the skills gap present and resources available to solve the skills issue.
2. Develop and implement an action plan to close the basic core, technical, and soft skills gaps in Arkansas.

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3. Analyze the effectiveness of currently used job readiness standards and ensure coordination between the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate program and the Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE) program.

PY 2016 – PY 2019 Combined State Plan can be found at <http://dws.arkansas.gov/wioa.htm>

II. State Policy and Guidance.

State policy can be found at <http://dws.arkansas.gov/wioa.htm>

III. Labor Market and Workforce Information.

A. Discover Arkansas

Labor Market Information Portal Arkansas Labor Market Information (LMI) is posted online using the Discover Arkansas web portal located at www.discoverarkansas.net and is available to the public.

B. Arkansas State Plan Economic and Workforce Analysis

The Arkansas Combined State Plan includes an analysis of the current workforce. The data provided in Section II of the state plan under strategic elements may be very helpful to local boards in conducting a local area and regional economic and workforce analysis. To provide local workforce boards in the state with tools for development planning in their own areas, data were downloaded and prepared from the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Labor Market Information (LMI) website, <http://www.discoverarkansas.net>. These data were then turned into interactive visualizations, which are available at the following websites. These visualizations can be downloaded as an image or in PDF format. The goal is to help stakeholders at the state and local level better understand future industry and occupational needs and to provide workforce development boards with the tools needed to better serve their areas. The data available at <http://arkansasresearchcenter.org/arc/index.php?cID=153> includes:

- Industries in 2012
- Job Growth in 2022

- Projected Job Growth by Workforce Development Area
- Projected Job Growth by Industry
- Percent Workforce in 2022

These data demonstrate the current makeup of the workforce by major industry, as well as projections of the number of jobs these industries will need in 2022. To the right of the visualizations are "filters" to help explore the data choosing multiple regions to compare, such as United States vs Arkansas, Arkansas vs. workforce region, or directly compare regions. The data available at <http://arkansasresearchcenter.org/arc/index.php?cid=154> includes:

- Arkansas Occupations, Current and 2022 Projections, which includes data visualizations concerning occupations in Arkansas, both currently and projections for 2022. Occupations are listed by their Standard Occupation Code (SOC) title. The SOC system is hierarchical. SOC Major codes are the top-level occupational areas, Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23
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such as "Construction and Extraction Occupations." At the next level would be SOC Minor, one of which for the above would be "Construction Trades Workers." Finally, there is SOC Detail, such as "Stonemasons" or "Carpenters." This web tool allows users to manipulate the data by indicating the level of detail desired.

IV. PY 2016 Performance Targets Template. (state negotiated)

V. Other Resources.

- TEN 1-15; Promising Practices in Achieving Universal Access and Equal Opportunity: A Section 188 Disability Reference Guide; July 6, 2015
- TEGL 37-14; Update on Complying with Nondiscrimination Requirements: Discrimination Based on Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Stereotyping are Prohibited Forms of Sex Discrimination in the Workforce Development System; May 29, 2015
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)