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State of Arkansas Workforce Investment Act Annual Report

Program Year 2014
July 1, 2014 - June 30, 2015

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Report Prepared by

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VISION

A highly trained and diversified workforce that meets the needs of high growth industry, which drives a statewide regionalized economy that is competitive in the global market.

MISSION

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board will strive to ensure an innovative and demand-driven workforce investment system, in collaboration with education, business, industry, labor and state agencies, that effectively leverages employment and training resources and collectively responds to the needs of local and regional economies.

INTRODUCTION

The federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was signed into law in August 1998 and became effective in Arkansas on July 1, 2000. This summary report focuses on fifteenth and final year accomplishments in Arkansas relative to the provision of WIA Title I-B services. For Program Year 2014 (July 2014 through June 2015), the United States Department of Labor (DOL) allotted approximately \$21.1 million in WIA Title I-B funds to Arkansas. This was \$1.7 million more than PY 2013 and enabled additional employment and training services to be provided to our youth, adults, and dislocated workers, as well as to our employers.

This report describes how WIA Title I-B is organized in Arkansas, highlights state and local accomplishments, and concludes with WIA Titles I-B and III performance results.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM VISION AND GOALS

Arkansas' strategic plan for workforce development was submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor in September 2012 and approved in December 2012 for the Workforce Investment Act and Wagner-Peyser Act programs through June 30, 2017. The plan communicates the state's vision, goals, objectives and strategies for the workforce development system. WIA Title I-B programs are a critical part of realizing this vision and accomplishing our state's workforce development goals. In addition, the state received approval of the following waivers.

The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board identified nine objectives to improve Arkansas' workforce and included those in the state's strategic plan. These goals were developed in agreement with the Governor's plan for economic development in the state. This report highlights the workforce activities conducted during program year 2014 to meet these five-year objectives. The nine objectives included:

Serve the range of job seekers

- Identify, provide and leverage services for adults, youth, dislocated workers, incumbent workers, people with disabilities, ex-offenders, mature workers, returning military, and other veterans

Serve the range of employers

- Develop and deliver services in support of small businesses, regional priority sectors, and existing companies
- Understand industry skill needs locally, statewide and regionally
- Track business impact

Serve the range of job economies

- Address local businesses' skills needs
- Support skill development infrastructure
- Create industry skills task forces in each workforce investment area
- Certify Arkansas communities as "career ready"

Ensure that the population is ready for work

Increase the effectiveness of local Workforce Investment Boards

Maintain collective accountability

Gain efficiencies across the system

- Create statewide workforce asset inventories
- Create joint diversified communication strategy
- Create joint tracking function across programs

Re-imagine learning

- Create mechanisms to integrate learning and work
- Improve remediation
- Provide new learning opportunities

Diversify funding

- Leverage new funding sources
- Explore cost sharing with job seekers, employers

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Waivers

Waiver of the prohibition at 20 CFR 664.510 on the use of Individual Training Accounts for older and out-of-school youth.

The ability to use Individual Training Accounts for this hard-to-serve population enhances the ability of local areas to expedite entry into the workforce through occupational skills training and eliminates the duplicative efforts inherent to dual-enrollment.

Waiver to replace the performance measures at WIA Section 136 (b) with the common measures.

The common measures provide a simplified and streamlined performance measurement system and have become the basis of the workforce system's performance accountability. This waiver positively impacts all customers of Arkansas' workforce investment system by simplifying program management and performance measurement.

Waiver of the provision at 20 CFR 663.530 that prescribes a time limit on the period of initial eligibility for training providers.

By alleviating provider concerns with the types and amount of information to be collected and reported, the state is able to retain approved providers and continues to increase their numbers. This facilitates quality customer choice for Arkansans in need of occupational skills training.

Waiver of WIA Section 133 (b) (4) to increase the allowable transfer amount between Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams allocated to a local area to fifty (50) percent.

This waiver provides greater flexibility in the design of local area adult and dislocated worker service delivery plans and enhances the ability of local boards to respond to changing workforce and economic dynamics. Local boards are able to provide targeted assistance in response to customer needs. The vast majority of requests are to transfer dislocated worker funds to the adult funding stream, because a large number of dislocated workers qualify for

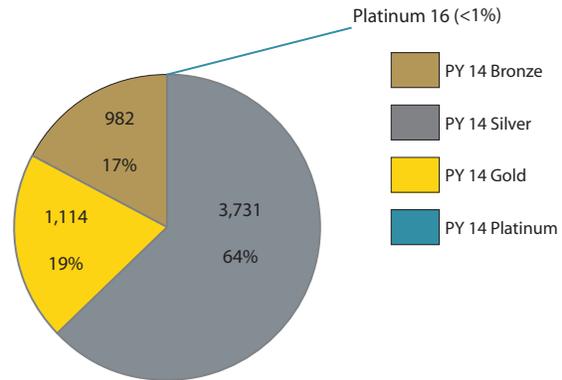
training under the Trade Adjustment Assistance program. The ability to transfer funds enables local areas to serve more adults that were not trade impacted.

CAREER READINESS CERTIFICATION

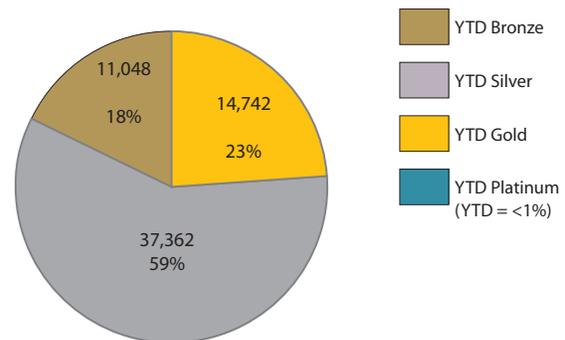
In program year 2014, 5,843 Career Readiness Certificates were awarded to Arkansas job seekers making the total number of CRC awards 63,264 since the inception of the program in 2008.

Eighty-six employers have signed commitment forms to use the Arkansas CRC program as part of their pre-employment process.

Program Year 2014 CRC Awards



All CRC Awards



DISLOCATED WORKER SERVICES

Arkansas continues to create economic growth through attracting new employers and by working to retain the businesses already located in the state. Unfortunately, some businesses must downsize or even close their doors, and their workers become displaced through no fault of their own. When this happens to our citizens, it is a terrible blow to the community and the families affected. The Governor’s Dislocated Worker Task Force provides rapid response services to workers affected by layoffs through worker assistance workshops that provide information and services dealing with many issues including:

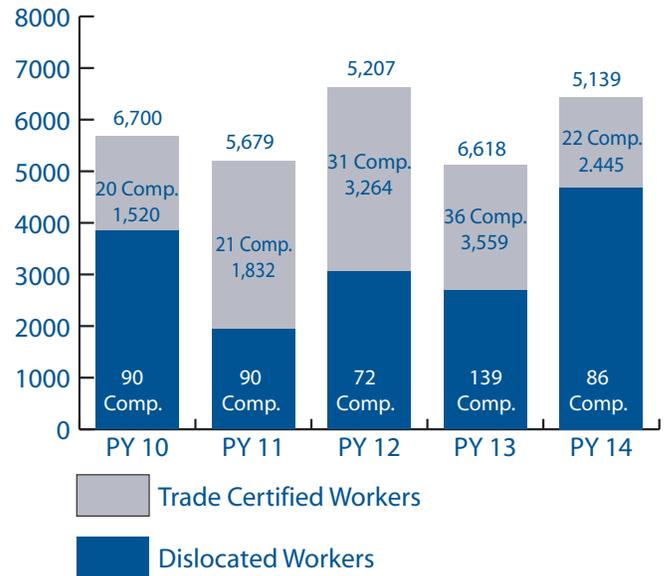
- Claiming Unemployment Insurance
- Retraining and Educational Opportunities
- Social Service Programs
- Stress Management
- Credit Counseling
- Insurance Needs
- Job Search Tips

Immediately upon receiving notice of a permanent closure or a substantial layoff, the Task Force contacts company officials. Whenever possible, a community meeting is scheduled with elected officials and business leaders to assist in creating action plans to aid both the community and the affected dislocated workers. During Program Year 2014, the Governor’s Dislocated Worker Task Force was informed of 82 actual or anticipated company closures or layoffs impacting 4,856 workers. Other PY 2014 dislocated worker facts, include:

- 30 companies were certified as trade-affected representing 1,740 workers--a decrease of almost 41 percent from PY 2013.
- 1,740 eligible workers enrolled in the Trade Program.
- 59 worker assistance workshops were held and attended by 2,029 workers. 671 additional dislocated workers from another 38 companies also received

services.

- The Task Force and Reemployment Services participated in or sponsored 80 job and opportunity fairs to connect dislocated workers with jobs and supportive services.



TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE SUCCESS STORY

Trade Adjustment Assistance staff worked with Aspen Transportation to establish On-the-Job (OJT) training programs for 30 workers who were dislocated from StarTek Industries. These OJT programs provided the workers an opportunity to begin training at Aspen the week after their Trade Certified jobs ended. This quick turnaround meant that many Trade clients went directly to full-time positions without having to draw any Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits. The Dislocated Worker Services Unit provided additional support by supplying one of their Mobile Arkansas Workforce Centers to Aspen Transportation for use in training during these OJT programs. A Principal with Aspen Transportation expressed his appreciation in an email; “ I just wanted to share my deepest gratitude for the support we have received from your division. Your assistance has been so critical to the training and growth of these new employees.”

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NATIONAL EMERGENCY GRANTS

Disaster NEG (AR-23) Severe Winter Storm

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declared a disaster for Arkansas on January 6, 2014 due to severe winter storms, which took place during the period of December 5-6, 2013. Arkansas applied for and received National Emergency Grant (NEG) funds to cover the costs of providing temporary employment linked to clean-up and recovery efforts caused by the disaster. Disaster NEG funding was approved for \$1,520,243 to serve 101 planned participants in temporary employment clean-up efforts during the grant period of January 6, 2014 through June 30, 2015.

There were 13 counties affected by the storms that encompassed funding for three Local Workforce Development Areas that included: the Northwest Local Workforce Development Board, North Central Local Workforce Development Board, and Western Local Workforce Development Board. The participating LWDB's were able to exceed their planned participant goal by cumulatively employing 196 participants (194% of goal) in clean-up and recovery efforts by the end of the grant period.

Disaster NEG (AR-24) April Tornadoes

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declared a disaster for Arkansas on April 29, 2014, due to an EF4 tornado that caused damage on April 27, 2014. Arkansas applied for and received National Emergency Grant (NEG) funds to cover the costs of providing temporary employment linked to clean-up efforts, restoration, and humanitarian assistance to communities that were affected by the disaster. Disaster NEG funding was approved for \$771,218 to serve 80 planned participants in temporary employment clean-up efforts during the grant period of April 29, 2014 through December 31, 2015.

There were seven counties affected by the tornadoes

that encompassed funding for two local workforce development areas that included: the Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board and the North Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board. As of the June 30, 2015 quarterly reporting period, the participating local boards have been able to exceed their planned participant goal with 6 months remaining in the grant, by cumulatively employing 84 participants (105% of goal) in clean-up and recovery efforts.

Job-Driven NEG (AR-25)

On April 28, 2014, the U.S. Department of Labor issued a Training and Employment Notice (TEN 29-13) announcing the availability of up to \$150 million for Job-Driven National Emergency Grants (JDNEG's). The JD NEG funds are intended to provide grants to states to drive strategies identified in the January 30, 2014 Presidential Memorandum on Job-Driven Training for workers at the local level. Awarded states are tasked with using JD NEG funding to implement new or expanded local and regional job-driven partnerships that will serve more dislocated workers and achieve better employment-related outcomes for this group of workers.

Arkansas was awarded \$2,472,124 (on July 1, 2014) in JD NEG funds to train dislocated workers, long-term unemployed, and under-employed individuals in employer identified demand driven occupational areas leading to viable employment opportunities for successful training program completers. Additionally, the JD NEG is focused on serving under-represented population groups that include low income individuals, minorities, and veterans that meet participant eligibility criteria. During the grant's period of performance (July 1, 2014 through September 30, 2016) an established goal of 400 participants will be served.

ADWS is partnering with training providers that include the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith (UAFS), Arkansas State University Mountain Home (ASUMH), Black River Technical College (BRTC), the University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton (UACCM), and the Arkansas

Apprenticeship Coalition to offer training in growth industries that include: Advanced Manufacturing (e.g., multi-craft technician, welding applications), Healthcare (e.g., medical billing and insurance), Transportation (e.g., commercial driving), and the Construction Trades (e.g., plumbing, electrician, etc.). Winrock International is participating as a collaborative partner to provide wrap-around case management assistance to participants as well as supportive services. Local Workforce Development Boards and Arkansas Workforce Centers are assisting with program awareness outreach and participant referrals.

As of the June 30, 2015 quarterly reporting period, the JD NEG has served 204 participants (51% of goal) with 14 months remaining in the grant period. By offering diverse job driven training programs that use differing skill sets, participants will have choices that may best suit their skills and needs. Other training programs may be provided if employer demand ensures that the training will result in job placement.

Sector Partnership NEG (AR-26)

On April 29, 2015, the U.S. Department of Labor issued a Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL 31-14) announcing the availability of up to \$150 million for Sector Partnership National Emergency Grants (SP NEG). SP NEG funds are intended to temporarily expand capacity to serve dislocated workers (and long-term unemployed individuals) and meet the increased demand for employment and training services, with the goal of quickly reemploying laid-off workers and enhancing their employability and earnings.

Arkansas was awarded \$6,362,485 (on July 1, 2015) in SP NEG funds to train dislocated workers and long-term unemployed individuals in pre-employment activities and occupational-based training in employer-driven workforce training in the high-growth industry sectors of Advanced Manufacturing, Health Care, Information Technology, and the skilled Construction Trades. Additionally, the Arkansas Sector Partnership (ASP) is focused on serving under-

represented population groups that include low income individuals, minorities, and veterans that meet participant eligibility criteria. During the grant's period of performance (July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2017) an established goal of 1,700 participants will be served.

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services is partnering with 12 participating Community Colleges, Arkansas Community Colleges (the statewide association) the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, Winrock International, and five participating local workforce development boards to offer participant referrals, participant eligibility determination, training activities, wrap-around case management assistance and supportive services to program participants. The participating LWDB's include: North Central, Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, and Central.

The ASP has an additional emphasis to engage project stakeholders in ongoing regional planning efforts across the state to assess workforce development needs and job demand.

OUTREACH TO COMMUNITIES

In PY 2014, the state coordinated or supported many events designed to assist dislocated workers, job seekers and the workforce development system. Several job and opportunity fairs were held for specific communities experiencing significant layoffs. An example of these opportunity fairs or other community outreach initiatives are as follows:

Career Fairs and Hiring Events

- Alexander - Alexander Youth Services Center Job Fair
- Alma - Crawford County Adult Education Center Career Fair
- Arkadelphia - Danfoss Scroll Job Fair
- Bald Knob - Bald Knob High School College and Career Fair
- Batesville - UA Community College Batesville (UACCB) Career Day
- Batesville - UACCB Career Fair
- Benton - 2014 Saline County Job Fair
- Benton - Benton Waffle House Hiring Event
- Bentonville - 2014 Hiring our Heroes Veterans Event, Bentonville Armed Forces Reserve Center
- Bentonville - Rogers-Lowell Chamber of Commerce Spring Job Fair

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- Bismarck - 2013 State Human Resources Management (SHRM) Conference and Expo
- Bryant - Goodwill & Fox 16 Job Fair
- Bryant - LOWE'S and Bryant Boys & Girls Club Job Fair
- Camden - Camden Job Fair at SAU Tech
- Clarksville - University of the Ozarks Spring Career Fair
- Conway - Conway Adult Education Center's 2014 Job Fair, Conway.
- Conway - Conway Adult Education Center's 2015 Job Fair
- Conway - Conway Home Depot Hiring Event
- Fayetteville - Fayetteville 5th Annual Job Fair / Expo
- Forrest City - Boar's Head Job Fair
- Forrest City - East Arkansas Job Fair, East Arkansas Community College
- Forrest City - Eastern Arkansas Regional Career/Job Expo
- Forrest City - Federal Bureau of Prisons/Federal Corrections Institution: Low Security Level – Employment & Information Fair
- Fort Smith - UA Fort Smith Veterans Job Fair
- Fouke - Miller County Fair
- Goodwill Hiring Event(s). Multiple locations statewide.
- Heber Springs - Heber Springs Business Expo, Sponsored by the Heber Springs Chamber of Commerce
- Hector - Hector School District Teacher Pre-Session Recruiting Event
- Helena - Helena Police Department and Arkansas Department of Corrections (ADC) Hiring Event
- Helena – West Helena Career Expo sponsored by WIB of Eastern Arkansas
- Hot Springs - Arkansas Aerospace & Defense Alliance "Hot Springs Aerospace Day 2015 and Job Fair"
- Hot Springs - Hot Springs Aerospace Day and Job Fair
- Jacksonville - Chamber of Commerce Business Expo
- Jonesboro - Aspen Transportation, LLC., Hiring / Training Initiative
- Jonesboro - Veteran's Benefit Fair/Boots on the Ground Job Fair
- Little Rock - Veterans Career Fair
- Little Rock - "Hiring Our Heroes" Veteran's & Active Duty Military Employment Event sponsored by the U. S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- Little Rock - "Putting Arkansas Back to Work" Job Fair
- Little Rock - "Putting Arkansas to Work" Job Fair sponsored by Cumulus Broadcasting
- Little Rock - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette / Central Arkansas Human Resource Association (CAHRA) Spring Job Fair
- Little Rock - Arkansas Department of Education Spring Teacher Recruitment Event
- Little Rock - Central Arkansas Human Resource Association (CAHRA) 2015 Spring Job Fair
- Little Rock - Double Tree by Hilton Hotel Job Fair
- Little Rock - Easter Seals 2014 Career and Resources Fair
- Little Rock - Easter Seals 2014 Career and Resources Fair
- Little Rock - Hola Arkansas' 7th Annual Career and Business Expo
- Little Rock - Honeybaked Ham Seasonal Hiring Initiative
- Little Rock - Lisa Academy Transition Fair
- Little Rock - MacArthur Museum of Military History Veteran's Job Fair
- Little Rock - Sears Hiring Event, Goodwill Career Services Center
- Little Rock - TeleTech Job Fair for their Healthcare Insurance Development Program
- Little Rock - UAMS Job Fair
- Lonoke County 2015 Job Fair sponsored by Goodwill Industries of Arkansas.
- Malvern - Sykes Job Fair
- Marianna - Marianna Job Fair. Sponsored by the Workforce Investment Board of Eastern Arkansas
- Maumelle - 12th Annual Maumelle Business Expo, Jess Odom Community Center
- Maumelle - Maumelle Job Fair hosted by the City of Maumelle and the Maumelle Area Chamber of Commerce
- Melbourne - Ozarka College Job Fair
- Mena - 2015 DWS / Rich Mountain Community College Job Fair
- Mena - DWS/Rich Mountain Community College Job Fair
- Mena - Queen Wilhelmina State Park Job Fair
- Monticello - Construction Career Day sponsored by ADBECA Resource Management, the AR Dept. of Highway and Transportation and U.S. DOT
- Monticello - Explore Southeast Arkansas Career Expo, Sadie Johnson Community Center
- Mountain Home - Arkansas State University Mountain Home Job Fair
- Mountain Home - ASU Mountain Home Career Expo and Job Fair
- North Little Rock - Camp Robinson Youth Challenge Career Fair Class 41, Camp Robinson
- North Little Rock - Chamber of Commerce "Back to Business" Market Arkansas Business Expo 2014
- North Little Rock - Goodwill Career Services North Little Rock Job Fair
- North Little Rock - Pulaski Technical College – Business and Technology 2015 Spring Job Fair
- North Little Rock - Shorter College Career Day
- Paragould - Paragould Regional Chamber of Commerce Career and Job Fair
- Pine Bluff - Riverside Vocational Technical School Ouachita River Unit in partnership with the Arkansas Department of Correction 2015 Reentry Resource and Job Fair
- Pocahontas - Randolph County Business Expo / Job Fair, Black River Technical College
- Rogers - Cognisante Hiring Event
- Rogers - SERCO Hiring Initiative
- Rogers - Superior Industries Job Fair
- Russellville - Arkansas Tech University Career Fair
- Searcy - White County / ASU-Searcy Job Fair
- Searcy - White County Business Expo
- Sherwood - ABC Financial Career Fair
- Shirley - Van Buren County School District Career Fair
- Springdale - "Putting Arkansas Back to Work" Job Fair sponsored by Cumulus Media
- Springdale - "Putting Arkansas to Work" Job Fair sponsored by Cumulus Broadcasting
- Springdale - Apex Opportunity Fair
- Springdale - Apex Tool Group Opportunity Fair
- Texarkana - Cooper Tire & Rubber Co. Recruiting Event
- Texarkana - Cooper Tire & Rubber Recruiting Event
- Texarkana - Day Reporting Center and Drug Annual Court Career Day and Job Fair. AR Community Corrections
- Texarkana - Federal Bureau of Prisons FCI-Texarkana, Texas Inmate Mock Job Fair
- Texarkana - Texas A&M-Texarkana Career Fair
- Texarkana, Texas - 2014 Career & Community Resource Expo, Texarkana Convention Center
- Texarkana, Texas - Housing Authority of Texarkana Texas (HATT) Education Fair
- Texarkana, Texas - Residence inn by Marriott Hourly Associate Job Fair
- Texarkana, Texas - Texas A&M University Career Fair
- Texarkana, Texas - Texas Workforce Commission and Workforce Solutions Northeast Texas Annual Red, White & You Job Fair
- Texarkana, Texas - Workforce Solutions of Northeast Texas 2015 Annual Career & Community Resources Expo
- Trumann - Goodwill Community Job Fair
- Van Buren - Crawford County Adult Education Center Career Fair
- Walnut Ridge - Lawrence County Business Expo/Job Fair
- Warren - Bradley County Job Fair
- Warren - Bradley County Job Fair sponsored by the AR Department of Human Services
- West Memphis - West Memphis Chamber of Commerce – 14th Annual Business Expo
- Wynne - Boys and Girls Club Career Fair / Job Expo

Conferences & Summits

- Annual DEI Leadership Training Summits. Various locations statewide.
- Arkadelphia - Southwest Arkansas Industry Conference, Henderson State University
- Arkansas Municipal League 2015 Winter Conference.
- Blytheville - Big River Steel Procurement for Minority and Women Business Growth
- Conway - Arkansas Community Development Society Annual Conference
- Fort Smith - Arkansas Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Human Resource Conference and Expo
- Fort Smith - Fort Smith Regional Chamber of

- Commerce 2015 Regional Business Expo
- Helena/West Helena - Delta Circles "A Glimpse into Getting Ahead in a Just Getting by World"
- Hot Springs - West Central Arkansas Society of Human Resource Management Annual Conference
- Hot Springs - West Central Arkansas Society of Human Resource Management Annual Conference
- Jacksonville - MLK Community Empowerment Summit
- Little Rock - 10th Annual Nursing Expo Celebration
- Little Rock - 2014 Low Income Advocates Leadership & Community Development Conference
- Little Rock - 2015 Arkansas Aerospace Alliance Summit
- Little Rock - 2015 Arkansas Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) Conference
- Little Rock - 2015 TechJunction IT Conference
- Little Rock - 6th Annual Arkansas Aerospace Alliance Summit
- Little Rock - Arkansas Career Development Association 4th Annual Conference, Holiday Inn Airport
- Little Rock - Arkansas Community Development Society Annual Conference, UALR Reynolds Building
- Little Rock - Arkansas Dept. of Human Services 39th Annual State Conference
- Little Rock - Arkansas Economic Development (AED) Annual Conference
- Little Rock - Arkansas Economic Development (AED) Annual Conference
- Little Rock - Arkansas Municipal League's 80th Annual Convention
- Little Rock - Arkansas State Employees' Association 46th Annual Convention
- Little Rock - Beyond Business Conference, Clinton School of Public Service
- Little Rock - Big River Steel Procurement for Minority and Women Business Growth
- Little Rock - JA Fair Transition Conference
- Little Rock - Jobs Now Arkansas Summit hosted by Arkansas Economic Development Corporation, Concentrating on the Manufacturing, Construction, Trucking and Agriculture Industries
- Little Rock - Local Equal Opportunity Conf.
- Little Rock - Local Equal Opportunity Conference
- Little Rock - Mid South Summit / Black Expo
- Little Rock - Workforce Development Seminar, Hosted by the UALR - Institute for Economic Advancement
- Mountain Home - Twin Rivers Human Resource Society Meeting
- North Little Rock - 1st Annual Arkansas Manufacturing Innovation Summit
- North Little Rock - Arkansas National Guard Youth Challenge Career & Resource Expo
- Pine Bluff - 2014 A Day of Service - A Day On, Not A Day Off. Sponsored by the MLK Jr. Commission
- Pine Bluff - Delta Regional Authority and

- the Arkansas State Chamber "Summit on Workforce Development". University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Extension Auditorium
- Pine Bluff - Delta Regional Authority and the Arkansas State Chamber "Summit on Workforce Development"
- Rogers - Arkansas Municipal League 2014 Winter Conference
- Sherwood - Women Veteran's Summit 2014. Service to Success: Urban Camouflage
- Texarkana, Texas - Four State Forestry on the Grow Conference
- Walnut Ridge - Randolph County Business Expo

Workshops

- Clarksville - "Single Mothers, What Employers Wish You Knew" presented by the Single Parent Scholarship Fund of Johnson County & Arkansas Single Parent Scholarship Fund, University of the Ozarks
- Fayetteville - Service Providers Event for Veterans
- Forrest City - Federal Bureau of Prisons/Federal Corrections Institution: Low Security Level - Employment & Information Fair
- Helena - BPS, Inc. CRC / Career Ready 101 Preparation
- Helena - Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas Industry Workshops
- Helena - Single Parent Scholarship Recipient Workshop
- Helena - Southern Bancorp Resume Workshop
- Hope - Arkansas Community Correction Outreach Job Search Workshop
- Hughes - Hughes High School Technology Workshop
- Jonesboro - Single Mothers Job Skills Workshop
- Little Rock - "Get Focused, Stay Focused, Reach Your Dream: Transition for the Career for a Lifetime" event
- Little Rock - Arkansas Department of Education Recruitment Initiative "Becoming an Arkansas Teacher"
- Little Rock - Forest Heights STEM Academy's "Common Core at the Next Level - Transition Fair"
- Little Rock - McClellan High School Career Readiness Activity
- Little Rock - McDermott Elementary School 5th Grade Mock Job Interviews and Job Search/ interviewing Etiquette Workshop
- Little Rock - Washington Magnet Elementary School 5th Grade Mock Job Interviews and Job Search/ interviewing Etiquette Workshop
- Mountain Home - Lowes Resume and Job Retention Workshops
- North Little Rock - "Stand Down" Job Search Assistance for Homeless Veterans
- North Little Rock - Lakewood Middle School "Career Preparation" Reemployment Services engagement with Students
- North Little Rock - Lakewood Middle School "Mock Job Interviews/Dress for Success"
- North Little Rock - Lakewood Middle School Mock Job Interviews and Career Exploration

- and "Dress for Success"
- Paragould - Greene County Workforce Readiness Training Program
- Texarkana - Texas A&M Resume and Interview Workshops
- Texarkana Texas - Federal Correctional Institution Prisoner Reentry Event, Reentry Begins on the Day of Incarceration", FCI-Texarkana, Texas Prison Camp

Community Events

- Ashdown - Little River Health Systems Health Fair
- Batesville - Arkansas Department of Career Education's Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Open House
- Benton - Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission's 2015 "A Day of Service - A Day On, Not a Day Off"
- Conway - Arkansas Department of Career Education "ACE Expo"
- El Dorado - Arkansas Department of Career Education "ACE Expo"
- Helena - Business Community Meet & Greet
- Helena - Phillips County Workforce Development Taskforce
- Jonesboro - Nordex Transition Center
- Jonesboro - St Bernard's Healthy Heart 2 Mile Run & Walk
- Jonesboro - StarTek Transition Center
- Little Rock - 2013 Christmas Caravan & Outreach Event for Homeless/Near Homeless Adults & Children, Clinton Presidential Center
- Little Rock - 2014 Christmas Caravan & Outreach Event for Homeless/Near Homeless Adults & Children
- Little Rock - 2014 Community Health & Wellness Expo, Presented by the Derek Lewis Foundation
- Little Rock - 2015 Health & Wellness Community Expo Presented by the Derek Lewis Foundation
- Little Rock - Arkansas Department of Career Education "ACE Expo"
- Little Rock - Back to School Event for Step by Step Cancer Foundation
- Little Rock - Back to School Event for Step by Step Cancer Foundation, Inc.
- Little Rock - Baring Cross Community Awareness Fest
- Little Rock - Canaan Missionary Baptist Church Community Event
- Little Rock - Fall Carnival & Health Fair sponsored by the Arkansas Health care Access Foundation
- Little Rock - Fed Ex Groundbreaking
- Little Rock - Mayor's Day of Recognition of National Service. Clinton School of Public Service
- Little Rock - Super Saturday 2015 "Free Tax Day"
- Marked Tree - ASU Marked Tree Community Health & Resource Fair
- McGehee - Diabetes Community Health Event "Know Your A1C" hosted by the Arkansas

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Minority Health Commission

- McGehee - Diabetes Community Health Event "Know Your A1C" hosted by the Arkansas Minority Health Commission
- North Little Rock - 2014 Linking the Community Health Event sponsored by the First Baptist Church & Arkansas Minority Health Commission
- North Little Rock - St. Mark's NLR Community Health Fair
- Texarkana - 2014 Rail Fest
- Texarkana - Back to School Empowerment Bash
- Texarkana Texas - Back to School Empowerment Bash, The Healing Place of Texarkana

MOBILE WORKFORCE CENTERS

During this reporting period, Task Force and Agency IT identified an alternative to the Mobile Resource Units' satellites for internet connectivity. Subsequent to extremely successful testing of a Wi-Fi wireless internet option across the State, the Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force initiated the upgrade to wireless connectivity in all of the mobile units, while also retaining satellite service in one Unit as a "backup". Prior to transporting a Unit to specific locations, Mobile Unit personnel research the coverage map for the wireless provider to verify that 3G/4G wireless connectivity is available in that area. If wireless service is not optimal, the Unit with Satellite service is deployed. The sampled Wi-Fi system consistently demonstrated very high connectivity and processing speeds. An approximate initial investment of \$2,100 for equipment (USB Network Adapters, wireless printers, and MiFi Devices) is estimated to result in an annual savings in excess of \$17,000.

DISABILITY PROGRAMS

PROMISE

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) is one of five state agencies that partnered with the University of Arkansas and the Arkansas Department of Education to receive a \$32 million, five-year Arkansas PROMISE grant in October 2014. PROMISE, an acronym for "Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income," is a joint initiative of four federal agencies: the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Labor and the Social Security Administration. A total of 2,000 adolescents between the ages of 14 and

16 who receive SSI (Supplemental Security Income) will be recruited for the project. Its underlying premise is that improved coordination between services can improve outcomes for youth and their families. Its goals also include decreasing reliance on SSI and reducing the cost to the federal government. The PROMISE grant is the first national study to investigate the strength of the possible correlation between initial paid work experiences and later competitive employment. The youth will be divided into two groups, with half receiving the intervention of job coaching and benefits counseling, and the other half serving as an undertakings group that does not receive the intervention.

In collaboration with its local workforce area partners, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services is charged with providing summer work experiences for PROMISE youth through the local workforce development boards. PROMISE youth are offered an opportunity to gain 200 hours of paid work experiences, over a two-year period, for a possible total of 400 hours. In this first summer of paid work experiences, 98 percent of the 350 recruited youth were placed in jobs. One hundred and fifty companies or businesses volunteered to participate in the first round of work experience. Nearly 50 percent of PROMISE students completed 200 hours. Notably, 20 youth completed over 200 hours of work experience, and following the work experience, several were hired in competitive employment settings. Nationally, fewer than one in ten adolescents with disabilities who receive SSI ever achieve competitive employment.

Over the grant's five-year life cycle, project researchers will develop a model program to assist adolescents with disabilities to become independent adults. The findings from this research could go a long way toward facilitating the independence and societal inclusion of adolescents with disabilities while reducing the financial encumbrance of the Social Security Administration.

Other major Disability Programs include:

The ADWS Employment Network (EN), in partnership with the Social Security Admin (SSA) Ticket to Work program. The EN is an employment support program to provide and coordinate the delivery of the necessary services to Social Security disability beneficiaries (including SSI recipients) who are interested in going to work or increasing their work. Adult family members of the PROMISE youth are slated to become involved with this activity.

The Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP).

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services is a partner with the State Core Team that is tasked with improving employment outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities by embracing integrated, competitive employment as the priority option for individuals with disabilities in Arkansas. Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (US DOL), the State Core team--a group of five state agencies, Arkansas PROMISE, University of Arkansas Center for Medical Sciences (UAMS), and others--has received technical assistance and training, and has developed a draft plan to align state policies and practices to maximize funding strategies through cooperative funding and leveraging of resources.

Project SEARCH, a national, business led, school-to-work program that takes place entirely at the workplace. It is evidence based and, in Arkansas, works primarily with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. ADWS provides technical and personnel assistance to this effort. Project SEARCH is a partner in the EFSLMP effort.

The Self-Guided Discovery Training: Customized Employment, which is a US Department of Labor best practice, is designed to personalize the employment relationship between a job candidate with a disability and an employer in a way that meets the needs of both. Arkansas was one of only four states chosen by the National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities (LEAD).

ADWS is the lead agency and this US DOL/ODEP funded effort also includes organizations involved in the EFSLMP team: Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and Division of Developmental Disabilities Services.

The Department of Workforce Services and its local workforce areas participated in the American Job Center Accessibility Study, which is designed to help policymakers and program administrators understand the level of accessibility of America's Workforce Centers for persons with disabilities. The study involved a web-based survey and site visits to four workforce centers.

All recent grant applications from the ADWS Discretionary Grants' unit have included extensive outreach to targeted populations, especially individuals with disabilities. Through these efforts, enhanced coordination and cooperation with Goodwill Industries, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, the Arkansas Career Training Institute, Division of Developmental Services, other state agencies, and community and faith-based organizations has been enhanced.

REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CLAIMANTS

The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 mandated four additional requirements for current Unemployment Insurance claimants to continue to qualify for Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) and assist them in returning to the workforce more quickly. Below are services that were provided by a combination of Unemployment Insurance, Employment Services, Veterans' Employment Representatives, and Reemployment Services staff members.

1. Orientation to the Workforce Center: a summary of the services provided by partners in the Arkansas Workforce Centers.
2. Dissemination of Labor Market information: An

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overview of the labor market in Arkansas and how data collected and created can be used to explore career options.

3. **Assessment of Skills:** An occupational skills assessment to determine an individual's current skill level. Since implementation of the reemployment eligibility assessment program in March 2012, 132,316 occupational skills assessments have been created utilizing the Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotient (TORQ) system. TORQ is a web-based assessment system that assists in identifying a client's key knowledge, skills and abilities, based on their highest education level attained and previous work experience, then utilizes that information to rank alternate occupations based on the ability to easily move into that occupation. The system combines labor market information (median wage in the area for the suggested occupations); O-Net knowledge, skills and abilities; current job posting information (from US Jobs, Simply Hired, Indeed and Arkansas Job Link) to provide the client relevant information to assist them in identifying a possible career change.
4. **Review of Eligibility:** Job search contacts for the initial claim must be reviewed for any potential issues.

The Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) program ended December 31, 2013. Despite the conclusion of the EUC program, the TORQ occupation skills assessment tool continues to be offered to any customer requesting assistance in our Arkansas Workforce Centers.

The Arkansas Reemployment Services (RES) program utilizes claimant demographic data to mathematically identify Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants that are most at risk of exhausting benefits before finding employment. The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, through the Arkansas Workforce Centers, provides additional assistance to these participants and requires completion of a job search workshop to maintain their UI benefits. The goal of the program is to keep these claimants from exhausting their benefits before they move

on to gainful employment. A job search workshop that lasts four to six hours is held once a month in each of the workforce centers that handle unemployment insurance claims. The workshop provides:

- An orientation to the Arkansas Workforce Center system
- Partner Program Information - Adult Education, Workforce Investment Act, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Veterans Services, etc.
- An overview of program requirements
- Labor market information
- Career Readiness Certification information
- Job search assistance
- Proper resume and application preparation
- Interviewing skills information

There were four Reemployment Service Coordinators that conducted over 300 Job Search Workshops throughout the state with over 4,200 individuals attending during PY 2014.

The Arkansas Reemployment Services (RES) Intensive Services program enhanced the current RES process by adding the Career Readiness Certificate program, the TORQ occupational skills assessment and additional services for selected claimants to maintain benefits. The goal of the intensive services program is not only to keep claimants from exhausting their benefits before moving on to employment, but also to reduce the total benefits paid to result in a savings for the Unemployment Insurance trust fund. Additional requirements for the intensive services program include:

- Initial assessment appointment with Reemployment Specialist staff
- Resume creation or modification
- TORQ occupational skills assessment
- Work search plan and/or enhanced employment plan
- Attempt the Career Ready 101 online curriculum as a first step to obtaining a Career Readiness Certificate
- Attend five counseling appointments with

- Reemployment Specialist staff every other week
- Evaluation of Career Ready 101 and WorkKeys progress
- Review of job contacts

There were four RES Intensive Service Program locations providing these services throughout the state. The Reemployment Services Specialist in these locations conducted over 48 Job Search Workshops with over 1,680 individuals receiving these services in PY 2014.

During PY 2014, there were 52,765 occupational skills assessments created for individuals in our workforce centers utilizing the TORQ system.

Due to the overwhelming success of the Arkansas RES program overall, it was determined the services provided by the entire RES Team would be beneficial to a wider audience. Beginning in November 2013, the RES Team began actively engaging in community outreach initiatives throughout Arkansas. The RES Team partnered with other agency programs to conduct specialized workshops to assist those individuals receiving assistance from Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Temporary Employment Assistance (TEA) and the Community Action Program for Central Arkansas (CAPCA). The RES Team also partnered with the following community and social organizations to provide targeted mini-workshops and assistance for audiences of:

- Local High Schools
- Local Community Colleges
- State Universities
- Local and State Non-Profit Organizations
 - Faith based community assistance and food pantries
 - Low income housing and utility assistance agencies
 - Homeless and domestic abuse shelters
- Local and State Community Correction Facilities
- Local Workforce Development Agencies

The RES Team actively participated and assisted job

seekers and students during job fairs/career expos in over 80 events throughout the state providing résumé review, information on proper application and interviewing skills and job search skills/tips to all that attended.

VETERANS SERVICES

Arkansas is committed to serving its veteran population. The primary means of fulfilling the needs of Veteran jobseekers remains the focus of, Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) and Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists fielded through funds provided by the Jobs for Veterans State Grant. One DVOP position is located at Fort Roots VA Hospital in North Little Rock as the Intensive Service Coordinator (ISC). In accordance with the intent of the Jobs for Veterans State Grant program, and federal guidance, the State has taken the opportunity to convert Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVER) to Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP), to better serve our veteran customers.

Through this grant, the state employs 15 full-time, and two half-time DVOPs, and 14 half-time LVERs for a total of 23 full-time equivalents.

The ISC acts as a liaison between the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services and Department of Veteran Affairs. The ISC accepts the referrals of Chapter 31 veterans, who are entering the job search phase of their rehabilitation. The ISC disperses the referrals to appropriate Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) staff and provides information about the veterans' barriers, to help develop an employment plan.

DVOP specialists provide intensive services to meet the employment needs of disabled veterans and other eligible persons, with maximum emphasis directed towards serving the economically or educationally disadvantaged, including homeless veterans, and veterans with barriers to employment. DVOPs are involved in outreach efforts to increase program participation. DVOPs have been placed in the major metropolitan areas across the state to educate

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employers and jobseekers of the services available to veterans and ensuring that workforce centers adhere to priority of service for veterans.

The LVER staff conducts outreach to employers and engages in advocacy efforts to increase employment opportunities for veterans, encourage hiring disabled veterans and generally assist veterans to gain and retain employment. LVERs facilitate seminars for employers and job search workshop for veterans seeking employment. They are included as active members of the business service team or like entities.

The effectiveness of these efforts are measured the same as they are for other clients, by determining the entered employment rate, employment retention rate of those served and intensive services provided by the DVOP specialists, which is a new measure. There were a total of 1,171 veterans registered in the Arkansas JobLink system (AJL) during PY 2014. Of those registered 1,122 received a direct service from staff members and 555 received Intensive Case management services by a DVOP. Arkansas ranks well against the National Outcomes for Entered Employment Rate at 69 percent and Veterans' Retention Rate at 79 percent. These are comparable to the PY 2012 National Outcomes of 50.23 percent for Veterans' Entered Employment Rate and 80.04 percent Employment Retention Rate.

The state assures that veterans will be afforded employment and training activities authorized in section 134 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and activities authorized in chapters 41 and 42 of Title 38 US code by educating the local office staff on the myriad of tools specifically directed at providing customized assistance to veterans (i.e. TORQ, My Next Move, Military Skills Translator, and VetCentral.)

ARKANSAS PARTNERSHIP FOR NURSING'S FUTURE

Arkansas received a \$4.8 million grant to train healthcare professionals in the state over the next four years. Arkansas was one of 43 grantees who received this funding under the H-1B Technical Skills Training Grants. The goal of the federal grant program is to reduce the number of H-1B visas for foreign workers by training and educating Americans to fill those jobs most in demand. The Arkansas Partnership for Nursing's Future (APNF) will provide funding to enable Arkansas workers statewide to be trained for careers in the nursing profession, which include :

- Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA),
- Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN),
- Associate Degree Nurses (ADN), and
- Bachelor of Science Degree Nurses (BSN).

The APNF partners in providing training under this grant are the two-year colleges and UAMS. A total of 1,500 participants will receive grant funded services. Of these participants, APNF has a goal of 960 participants completing their education and a goal of placing at least 691 participants into employment in related healthcare fields.

DWS Labor Market Information indicates that the number of RNs will increase more than 27 percent in Arkansas by 2018. According to the healthcare industry, more than 1,500 qualified nursing applicants are turned away each year in Arkansas because of limited capacity. The grant intends to address that lack of capacity through the use of distance learning and increased clinical training opportunities.

The APNF grant has exceeded the number of participants to be served under the grant with one year remaining in the program. The grant goals call for 1,200 participants to enter training in one of the target fields. By the end of 2014, the ADWS Arkansas Partnership for Nursing

grant has already far exceeded its goals for training in the nursing profession. More than 2,600 participants have enrolled in CNA, LPN, RN and BSN classes. This number is 216.7 percent of the original goal of training 1200 participants. Thus far, 1,165 have completed training and received a degree or certificate in health care fields—that is 121.4 percent of the original goal.

Over 550 participants have gained employment through the program, which is 78 percent of the total grant goal of placing at least 691 participants into employment in related health care fields. Since more than a year remains in the grant, APNF is on track to exceed the employment goals, as well.

PARTNERSHIP WITH REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

ADWS has forged a strong partnership with the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition leading to many job seekers entering Registered Apprenticeship training program.

Arkansas Veterans Education & Training Partnership (AVETP)

The AVETP utilized the \$1,250,000 in U.S. Department of Labor grant funding to focus on increasing the skills and credential attainment levels of Veterans for jobs in high demand industry sectors. ADWS partnered with Arkansas Community Colleges, 22 participating community colleges statewide, Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, Local Workforce Centers, and ARVets to identify, refer, train, and assist with job placement activities of participating Veterans.

Registered Apprenticeship training activities under the AVETP grant was implemented by the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition (AAC). Apprenticeship training for qualifying Veterans includes the skilled trades career pathway applicable to electricians, welding, plumbing and pipefitting, heating, AC and ventilation, painting, and sheet metal.

Over 100 veterans entered Registered Apprenticeships through the AVETP.

Arkansas Job-Driven National Emergency Grant

The Arkansas Job-Driven National Emergency Grant (AR JD NEG), referenced under National Emergency Grant section, is offering apprenticeship training in the employer-driven in-demand industry fields of the construction trades and advanced manufacturing. The Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition will train 200 participants during the grant's period of performance. Apprenticeship training programs are a proven method of supplying employers with a skilled workforce while allowing for an earn as you learn benefit.

Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition

In June of 2012, an investment of up to \$1.2 million dollars from the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services Training Trust Fund was made for an apprenticeship training initiative that was implemented by the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition. The grant provided a long-term employment and training opportunity for many previously unemployed and underemployed individuals, in that these new apprentices may be funded for the full four to five years, depending on the discipline, that it takes to reach the Master or Journeyman level. Of the individuals who began the program as new-hire apprentices in August of 2012, 12 have completed and 40 remain in the program and entered their seventh semester in August 2015 earning an average annual wage of \$28,397.00. The individual training providers and the number of apprentices, by trade, are as follows:

- Arkansas Painters Apprenticeship Local 424 – 9 Painters apprenticeships
- Little Rock Electrical Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)) – 6 Electrician apprenticeships
- National Apprenticeship Training Foundation, Inc. (NATF) – 24 Plumbing and Electrician apprenticeships
- Northwest Arkansas Plumbing – 7 Plumbing apprenticeships
- Plumber and Pipefitter Local Union 155 – 5 Plumbing –

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Pipefitting/Welding apprenticeships

- Sheet Metal Workers Local 36 – 1 Sheet Metal Worker Apprenticeship

Arkansas Pipe Trades Association

In May of 2013, the Arkansas Pipe Trades Association was approved for \$1.2 million dollars from the Department of Workforce Services Training Trust Fund to fund the implementation of an Accelerated Welder Training Program. This program will result in 192 individuals receiving training that leads to certification and employability as an apprentice in the pipe fitting and pipe welding trades. Three 18-week training sessions were conducted between August 19, 2013 and June 30, 2015, two at their Little Rock training facility and one at their El Dorado facility. The sessions followed the 720 hour curriculum of the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of the United States and Canada (“UA”). The primary goals of the training are to provide the participant with OSHA 10 safety training, basic pipefitting skills, pipe welding certification(s), and employment upon completion. The following is a brief illustration of outcomes for these sessions.

Number of Participants	114
Number Completed	84
% Completed	74%
Completed OSHA 10 Certification	89%
Number of Welding Certifications Completed	144

Of the 84 participants that completed this training, 80 have accepted a place in UA Local 155’s Apprenticeship Program, which operates as the Greater Little Rock Area Joint Apprentice Training Committee and 72 have become employed. The apprentices were granted two years credit in the five-year program, which means they will obtain Journeyman status with only three additional years of on-the-job and classroom training. This also means that their hourly rate of pay is set significantly higher than someone classified as a first year apprentice. Currently, the per hour pay rate for a third year apprentice of UA Local

155 is \$17.16 plus health insurance benefits and pension. All graduates are employed full-time in the construction industry.

MICROSOFT IT ACADEMY

The Microsoft IT Academy program that was launched in July 2012, announced by the Governor’s Workforce Cabinet, is currently allowing job seekers to take part in web-based instruction and opportunities to earn industry-recognized certifications in Microsoft Word, Excel, Power Point and Outlook. Topics in these programs range from computer basics to high-level programming, along with information and communications technology management.

The Microsoft IT Academy is currently in 26 Arkansas Workforce Centers around the state. Arkansas is the first state in the nation to offer the Microsoft IT Academy to all adult jobseekers, by way of the Arkansas Workforce Centers, and is offered free of charge to the jobseekers.

Arkansas’ Microsoft IT Academy is funded jointly by the Department of Career Education, the Department of Education and the Department of Workforce Services.

With the implementation of the Microsoft IT Academy, adult Arkansans are now able to participate and acquire skills to enhance their employability. Arkansas’ Microsoft IT Academy is customized to align with the state’s STEM Works program, also an initiative of the Governor’s Workforce Cabinet. STEM Works is aimed at educating more K-12 students in the STEM fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics and equipping Arkansas colleges with the tools needed to better educate future K-12 teachers in these core subjects.

A total of 2,450 participants have enrolled in the IT Academy coursework and 265 of the Workforce Center staff have also enrolled. A total of 59 certifications have been earned to date and is expected to increase during the PY 2015, due to the workforce centers gaining the ability to proctor both the practice and certification tests at the workforce

centers, instead of referring the participate to another location. The certifications include 24 certifications in Word, 10 in Power Point, 16 in Excel and nine in Outlook. The jobseekers are now able to register at a workforce center, enroll in the IT Academy, begin work in one of our centers at their own pace, or work from their own home. Once the coursework has been completed, the jobseeker will return to our center to practice and test. Upon satisfactory completion, the jobseeker will receive a Microsoft Certificate before leaving.

Since its inception, the Microsoft IT Academy has been promoted to adults through the Arkansas Workforce Centers, along with other skills training opportunities and programs. This partnership with Microsoft IT in offering training to adults not only produces more qualified applicants for Arkansas' workforce, but it can assist employers by incorporating this certification in their applicant selection process.

ARKANSAS WORKFORCE CENTERS

In program year 2014, Arkansas had a total of 46 Arkansas Workforce Centers, including 22 comprehensive, ten satellite and 14 affiliate centers.

In January 2014, ADWS, along with the Magnolia Economic Development Council, Southern Arkansas University (SAU) system and SAU Tech Camden, executed an agreement for the construction of a new Arkansas Workforce Center.

ADWS invested approximately \$1.7 million for the design and construction of a 14,661 square foot building sufficient to house a one-stop on the campus of Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia. Upon completion, ADWS will occupy 5,829 square feet of the building through a prepaid 26.5 year lease. Southern Arkansas University Tech shall make adult education available at the one-stop and support the Smarter Sentencing Program from Columbia County. The Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District will also be located in the building. The building is projected to be completed in October 2016.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Outreach to the employer community is critical for the Arkansas Workforce Centers in meeting the employment needs of the community. Each local workforce investment area conducts business engagement activities in a customized way in order to meet the needs of their employers. Below is a summary of some of the outreach activities and programs and strategies for serving the employer community in Arkansas.

- Statewide implementation of the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate program at no cost to employers or job seekers.
- Use the Career Readiness Certificate to inform employers of the abilities of prospective employees
- Coordinated outreach to employers among all partner programs through the use of Business Liaison Teams to prevent duplicate contact.
- Speaking with a common message for the center rather than program specific messages.
- Use of Business Service Coordinators to focus on services to the employer community.
- Communication, both verbal and written, with local community leaders. Community leaders and local businesses are provided with pamphlets, brochures, business cards, and other reading material that gives a brief description of services.
- Conduct job fairs, opportunity fairs, and career expos at no cost to employers and jobseekers.
- Conduct open houses for community members to learn more about the workforce centers.
- Coordinate with employers and colleges to ensure training needs are met.
- Provide information and attend Rotary Club meetings.
- Work with employers on a regular basis on how services can be improved.
- Make mobile workforce center units available to employers that are having mass hiring or training.
- Allow employers to recruit and conduct interviews onsite at workforce centers.
- Work closely with chambers of commerce, economic

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and community development organizations to establish strong working partnerships, attend and participate in after-hours business networking events.

- Educate employers about incentives for hiring targeted populations through the Work Opportunity Tax Credit program and Federal Bonding program.
- Follow up with employers about the quality, timeliness, and efficiency of services provided.
- Partners share information about job openings and use a common database to record job orders throughout the state.
- Join regional and state human resource associations.
- Provide occupational skills training such as the Microsoft IT Certification(s) to employers needing specific skills.
- Provide information on external partners (i.e Vocational Rehabilitation Services.)
- Identification of employers current and future hiring needs.
- Listening to the customer's needs, concerns, and expectations and finding solutions.
- Work with high school and post-secondary schools to help develop a career and technical education (CTE) honors program that will encourage and better prepare individuals for technical jobs for which employers are recruiting.

PERFORMANCE DATA

Wagner-Peyser Performance

Wagner-Peyser Labor Exchange Performance focuses on providing a variety of employment related services including, but not limited to, job search assistance, job referral, and placement assistance for job seekers, and recruitment services for employers with job openings. The services are delivered in two modes: self-service and staff assisted service. Arkansas’ customers may visit a workforce center, electronically or in person, for a variety of services. During the 2014 program year, over 258,362 individuals received employment related information services and registered with Arkansas JobLink, the state’s internet-based job matching system. Of the 258,362, 121,157 (47%) received staff assisted services.

Through our partnership with the National Labor Exchange and a proactive effort to include jobs from employers with established applicant tracking systems; many of the jobs in the AJL system are received and automatically included through a “no touch” electronic information transfer. This leveraging of information frees up staff to provide services directly to jobseekers and saves thousands of hours each year in reduced maintenance and updating of individual job orders posted in our system.

The PY 2014 federal performance measurement indicators from Arkansas JobLink show that 64.7 percent of Arkansas’ jobseekers gained employment and 82.1 percent were retained in employment for at least six months with six-month average earnings of \$12,818 dollars.

Wagner-Peyser Program Results

Performance Items	Negotiated	Actual
Entered Employment Rate	64.0	64.7
Employment Retention Rate	82.0	82.1
Average Earnings*	\$12,300	\$12,818

*Average Earnings measure represents two quarters of earnings.

Workforce Investment Act Title I-B Performance

The data tables included in this report represent Arkansas’ Title I-B performance measure results for Program Year 2014. Arkansas’ waiver from the Department of Labor allows the state to use the Common Measures for performance reporting. The common measures provide a simplified and streamlined performance measurement system and have become the basis of the workforce system’s performance accountability. Approval of this waiver positively impacted all customers of Arkansas’s workforce investment system by simplifying program management and performance measurement. The state continues to focus WIA programs on transitioning workers into high-wage, high-growth, and demand-driven jobs.

The state exceeded all of the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth performance measures for PY 2014. Arkansas’s WIA annual performance outcomes for PY 2014 reflect the department’s commitment to continuing improvement of its coordinated and comprehensive workforce development system, and the hard work and dedication of department leadership and program staff. Participants who are successful during the program and exit our systems are work ready and obtain and retain self-sufficient wages. New for PY 2014, 89 percent of those in the Adult program who were not employed on the date of WIA participation became employed as a result of their experience in the program. The employment rate for Dislocated Workers was 91 percent. Employment retention for at least six months was at a rate of 95 percent for Adults and 96 percent for Dislocated Workers. Youth experienced an employment or education placement rate and degree or certificate attainment rate of 85 percent. Youth basic skills in math and English were increased at a rate of 74 percent.

Adult Program Results At-A-Glance

ETA-B

Performance Items	Negotiated	Actual	Numerator Denominator
Entered Employment Rate	84.0	89.4	322 / 360
Employment Retention Rate	88.0	94.7	516 / 545
Average Earnings*	\$13,080	\$14,711	\$6,723,123 / 457

Outcomes for Adult Special Populations

ETA-C

Performance Items	Public Assistance	Numerator	Veterans	Numerator	Individuals	Numerator	Older	Numerator
	Services	Denominator		Denom	Disabilities	Denom	Individuals	Denom
Entered Employment Rate	88.4	182	89.7	26	52.9	9	100	6
		206		29		17		6
Employment Retention Rate	94.4	285	95.5	21	85.7	12	100	6
		302		22		14		6
Average Earnings*	\$13,490.10	\$3,359,029	\$14,424	\$274,047	\$15,154	\$121,229	\$10,445	\$52,224
		249		19		8		5

Outcome Information by Service Level for the Adult Program

ETA-D

Performance Items	Individuals	Numerator	Individuals	Numerator	Individuals	Numerator
	Core Only	Denominator	Core & Intensive	Denominator	Training	Denominator
Entered Employment Rate	100	1	100	22	88.7	299
		1		22		337
Employment Retention Rate	0	0	87.5	21	95.2	495
		1		24		520
Average Earnings*	\$0	0	\$13,207	\$224,527	\$14,770	\$6,498,596
		0		17		440

*Average Earnings measure represents two quarters of earnings.

Dislocated Worker Program Results At-A-Glance

ETA-E

Performance Items	Negotiated	Actual	Numerator Denominator
Entered Employment Rate	88.0	91.8	225 245
Employment Retention Rate	93.0	96.4	239 248
Average Earnings*	\$14,114	\$14,926	\$3,044,962 204

Outcomes for Dislocated Worker Special Populations

ETA-F

Performance Items	Veterans	Num Individuals Denom	Disabilities	Num Denom	Older Individuals	Num Denom	Displaced Homemakers	Num Denom
Entered Employment Rate	88.9	16 18	80.0	4 5	94.1	16 17	100.0	1 1
Employment Retention Rate	87.5	14 16	100.0	6 6	100.0	15 15	100.0	2 2
Average Earnings*	\$15,518	\$186,215 12	\$13,611	\$68,056 5	\$11,906	\$154,773 13	\$11,492	\$22,985 2

Outcome Information by Service Level for the Dislocated Worker Program

ETA-G

Performance Items	Individuals Core Only	Numerator Denominator	Individuals Core & Intensive	Numerator Denominator	Individuals Training	Numerator Denominator
Entered Employment Rate	0	0 0	100.0	21 21	91.1	204 224
Employment Retention Rate	0	0 0	100.0	24 24	96.0	215 224
Average Earnings*	\$0	0 0	\$13,153	\$263,069 20	\$15,119	\$2,781,892 184

*Average Earnings measure represents two quarters of earnings.

Youth (14 - 21) Program Results

ETA-H1

Performance Items	Negotiated	Actual	Numerator Denominator
Placement in Employment or Education	81.7	85.1	470 552
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	81.5	85.2	496 582
Literacy and Numeracy Gains	72.0	74.2	92 124

Outcomes for Youth Special Populations

ETA-H1A

Reported Information	Public Assistance	Num Denom	Veterans	Numr Denomr	Individuals. Disabilities	Num Denom	Out-of-School Youth	Num Denom
Placement in Employment or Educ Rate	86.4	330 382	0	0 0	78.7	70 89	88.5	115 130
Attainment of Degree or Certificate Rate	83.7	323 386	0	0 0	91.3	84 92	56.5	61 108
Literacy and Numeracy Gains	76.6	72 94	0	0 0	61.5	8 13	74.2	92 124

Other Reported Information

ETA-L

Program	12 Mo. Employ Retention	Num Denom	12 Mo. Earn Change	Numerator Denominator	Place. Nontrad	Num Denom	Wages Unsub	Num Denom	Unsub Trng	Num Denom
Adults	92.9	495 533	\$9,995	\$4,727,576 473	3.4	11 322	\$5,657	\$1,572,556 278	75.6	226 299
Dislocated Workers	93.2	231 248	\$155	\$3,068,767 \$1,983,797	5.8	13 225	\$6,985	\$1,341,090 192	69.1	141 204
Older Youth	84.3	91 108	\$5,318	\$478,617 90	2.4	2 83	\$3,504	\$248,816 71	0 0	0 0

Participation Levels

ETA-M

Program	Total Participants Served	Total Exitters
Total Adults	166,704	164,829
Total Adults (self)	165,105	163,924
WIA Adults	166,236	164,554
WIA Dislocated Workers	470	277
Total Youth (14 - 21)	1,442	659
Younger Youth (14 - 18)	1,151	496
Older Youth (19 - 21)	291	163
Out-of-School Youth	391	187
In-School Youth	1,051	472

Cost of Program Activities

ETA-N

Program Activity	Total Federal Spending	
Local Adults PY14	\$357,667.64	
Local Dislocated Workers PY14	\$559,810.94	
Local Youth 2014	\$5,232,216.26	
Local Adults FY14	\$5,049,264.63	
Local Dislocated Workers FY14	\$3,155,058.14	
Rapid Response		
	Description	
Statewide	GAE Administration	\$1,220,187.71
Allowed	Eligible Training Provider Cert ACRS	\$134,103.69
Activities		

Total of All Federal Spending Above

\$17,363,184.16

Figure 1 - Cost Analysis

ETA-Figure 1

Target Populations	PY 2014 Expenditures*	PY 2014 Participants Receiving Services	Cost Per Service Provided
Adults			
Core	\$933,057.59	2,278	\$409.60
Intensive	\$1,259,824.26	3,532	\$356.69
Training	\$1,631,284.06	1,111	\$1,468.30
Dislocated Adults			
Core	\$1,262,494.65	954	\$1,323.37
Intensive	\$1,277,303.41	1,434	\$890.73
Training	\$487,657.75	407	\$1,198.18
Youth	\$9,931,175.61	11,529	\$861.41

*Expenditures were from all available funding periods and sources, i.e., PY 2013, and PY 2014 allotments. Expenditure period covers July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015. Please note that the participants counts above may count one individual more than once, depending on the level and number of services received by the participant.

Arkansas has analyzed the cost of workforce activities for the program year using the “cost per participant” methodology used in previous years.

For Program Year 2014, Arkansas provided a cost efficient program that provided a wide variety of services meeting the needs of all stakeholders. Data for PY 2014 are shown in Figure 1.

CENTRAL ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The Central LWIA conducted several career readiness workshops and hiring events throughout the program year. Employer specific workshops were held for the Care Link, Tyson Foods, Ross, First Staff, Manpower, and Saint Gobain.

Innovative Service Delivery

The Central Arkansas Planning and Development District, Inc. (CAPDD) collaborated with the Arkansas PROMISE Grant across a five county region where 44 youth with disabilities were given the opportunity to gain work experience.

The youth worked with a variety of employers and were able to gain skills in areas such as hospitality, animal service industry, customer service, marketing, clerical, and retail. One of the Arkansas PROMISE youth from the Central area was featured in a local news story.

Target Population

The Arkansas Workforce Center at Brinkley formed a new partnership with the owner of several area businesses who conducted workshops for job seekers on topics such as resume preparation, interview techniques, and advertising.

The Arkansas Workforce Center at Conway also works closely with First Staff, Manpower, and Care link to assist the customers in securing skills that are required to gain employment.

The Arkansas Workforce Center at Benton assisted Saint-Gobain in finding applicants for open jobs by providing interviewing space for the employer. The Arkansas Workforce Center at North Little Rock Team met with Tyson Foods, Goodwill Industries and First Staff to schedule workshops to conduct job interviews.

A member of the Business service team from the Arkansas Workforce Center at Lonoke met with over 200 employers during the 2014 Program Year to connect them with the workforce center and job seekers.

Local Area Performance

Local Area	Total Participants	ETA-O		
	Adults	21,580		
	Dislocated Workers	31		
	Older Youth	19		
	Younger Youth	100		
	Total Exitters			
	Adults	22,062		
	Dislocated Workers	23		
	Older Youth	7		
	Younger Youth	40		
			Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	84.0	
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	95.0	
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	97.0	
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	94.0	
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$12,622	
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$15,593	
Placement in Employment or Educ.	Youth (14 - 21)	81.7	84.0	
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14 - 21)	81.5	83.0	
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14 - 21)	72.0	67.0	
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded	
	X			

Leveraging Resources

The Central Arkansas Workforce Investment Board received a National Emergency Grant sub-grant award in the amount of \$148,128. The NEG funds are primarily used to provide temporary employment for NEG-eligible applicants. The NEG provided opportunities not only for the areas affected, but the people as well. Over 75 percent of the participants, who were enrolled under the AR-24 NEG, were retained for permanent employment once the program ended.

Continuous Improvement

Central Arkansas Planning and Development District, Inc. created strategies implemented to achieve the Youth Literacy and Numeracy gains goal with the following efforts; increasing the number of youth served, placing continued emphasis on the importance of the objective assessment of academic service levels and service needs of each participant, and development of individual service strategies designed to meet basic skills, credential, education, and employment goals.

CITY OF LITTLE ROCK HIGHLIGHTS

The Little Rock LWIA participated in over 60 job fairs and employer hiring events throughout the program year. Over 5,000 job seekers and 547 employers participated in these events.

Innovative Service Delivery

The Program Year 2014, was witness to several new and continuing efforts to deliver workforce services to the residents of Little Rock in innovative ways. For the second time, the LRWIA received a DOL-funded YouthBuild Grant in response to the great need to serve disconnected older youth in Little Rock. In a greater effort to reach out to the population of persons with disabilities, the LRWIB joined forces with ADWS and other state agencies under the PROMISE Grant to provide a summer work experience to younger youth receiving SSI benefits. In addition to providing greater services to Target Populations identified by ADWS and the DOL-ETA Dallas Regional Office, the LRWIB adopted a 17-goal strategic plan to serve these targeted populations and additional populations considered to be “Harder-to-Serve” populations including the homeless, English as a Second Language, ex-offender, and older out-of-school youth, among others. The LRWIB achieved eleven of those goals and made positive advances in the process of achieving another four. Two goals targeting the dislocated homemaker and the older worker populations were not achieved, but will remain on the list of initiatives to address in PY2015.

Target Populations

- Adults (not a high school graduate): Increased new adult enrollments by 51 individuals in PY 2014 thereby exceeding the goal of 40 new enrollments.
- Veterans: The LRWIA fully adopted the Priority of Service to Veterans Policy. The staff worked closely with the local veteran services staff as members of the Business Advisory Team
- UI Exhaustee: Increased new Dislocated Worker enrollments by 40 individuals in PY 2014 thereby meeting the goal of 40 new DLW participants.
- Youth (Out of School): Increased new youth enrollments by 40 individuals in PY 2014 exceeding the goal of 25 new participants.
- Met the goal of increasing enrollment of homeless persons across all WIB programs from six to ten (300 percent).

Local Area Performance

Local Area	Total Participants	ETA-O	
	Adults	18,050	
	Dislocated Workers	69	
	Older Youth	37	
	Younger Youth	78	
	Total Exitors		
	Adults	18,266	
	Dislocated Workers	38	
	Older Youth	16	
	Younger Youth	29	
			Negotiated Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	96.0
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	100.0
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	92.0
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	97.0
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$14,697
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$14,486
Placement in Employment or Educ.	Youth (14 - 21)	81.7	92.0
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14 - 21)	81.5	85.0
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14 - 21)	72.0	100.0
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
			X

Continuous Improvement

For the second time in two years the LRWIA achieved all of the performance goals for each of the 9 common measures and the additional four local measures set by the Little Rock Workforce Investment Board. This was achieved by a steadfast commitment to continuous improvement over a period of many years and uncompromising expectations to become a superior staff.

The Arkansas Workforce Center at Little Rock strives to increase its efforts for continuous improvement through several means. Each partner in the center tracks and reports monthly on the number of customers it has offered its particular services. That is collected and totaled for the entire center on both a monthly and annual basis. In 2010 and 2011, there were more than 90,000 separate visits to the center each year. In 2012, there were 86,500. In 2013, there were 78,000 visits to the center. In 2014, there were 58,000 visits to the center. A log is kept of any customer complaints, and if they were resolved locally or referred to a higher authority, such as the state EEO office. As needed, the center partners, both individually and/or collectively will employ customer.

EASTERN ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The WIB of Eastern Area partnered with several agencies and employers to participate in major job fairs and employer hiring events throughout the program year. Over 500 jobseekers and 100 employers took part in these hiring events.

- The Arkansas Workforce Center hosted a job fair on March 26, 2015, on the Town Square in Marianna. Twenty-five vendors participated which consisted of employers, training providers, and agencies with services to help those who are unemployed. There were 68 determined jobseekers who participated and three applicants hired on site.
- A successful Fourth Annual Regional Career & Job Expo was held October 28, 2014, at the East Arkansas Community College (EACC) with over 300 jobseekers participating and 57 employers. The Department of Workforce Services mobile unit was available for jobseekers to register for job assistance through the Arkansas Job Link. The County Judge, Forrest City Mayor, and the employers were extremely happy with the caliber of jobseekers represented.

Innovative Service Delivery

Arkansas PROMISE is a research project open to youth ages 14 to 16 who currently receive SSI benefits. The Workforce Investment Board of Eastern Arkansas received \$151,573 to operate the PROMISE program for the first year. Twenty-seven youth from Crittenden, Lee, and St. Francis Counties participated in the summer work experience activity during June 16 and August 4. Most of the youth completed 200 hours of work experience allowed by the grant and received a total of \$1,600 in earnings for the summer.

Leveraging Resources

The WIBEA continuously research grants and funding opportunities for the Eastern Workforce Development Area and Eastern Region. The board recently secured additional funding through the following:

- The Workforce Investment Board of Eastern Arkansas received funding in the amount of \$206,748 to hire an individual concentrating

Local Area Performance

Local Area	Total Participants	ETA-O		
Eastern	Adults	11,129		
	Dislocated Workers	8		
	Older Youth	7		
	Younger Youth	93		
	Total Exitters			
	Adults	11,172		
	Dislocated Workers	2		
	Older Youth	6		
	Younger Youth	51		
			Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	97.0	
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	100.0	
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	100.0	
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	100.0	
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$18,159	
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$13,845	
Placement in Employment or Educ.	Youth (14 - 21)	81.7	95	
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14 - 21)	81.5	96	
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14 - 21)	72.0	100	
Overall Status of Performance		Not Met	Met	
		X		



on business services activities through a Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT). This grant is in effect from August 2015 – September 30, 2018.

- The Arkansas PROMISE Model Demonstration Project is a \$32 million, five-year grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to University of Arkansas College of Education, Health Professions, and Arkansas Department of Education
- A successful Fourth Annual Regional Career & Job Expo was held October 28, 2014, at the East Arkansas Community College (EACC) Fine Arts with over 300 jobseekers participating and 57 vendors. The Department of Workforce Services mobile unit was available for jobseekers to register for job assistance through the Arkansas Job Link. The County Judge, Forrest City Mayor, and the employers were extremely happy with the caliber of jobseekers represented.

In addition, meetings are scheduled with Delta Regional Authority, Foundation for Mid-South, Southern Bancorp, and Community Partners, about potential grants that would assist our residents and improve the Eastern Region.

NORTH CENTRAL ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The North Central WIB participated in three major job fairs. Over 2,100 job seekers and 167 employers participated in the events.

Innovative Service Delivery

North Central LWIA contracts with Jobs for Arkansas Graduates (JAG) Program to provide some of it's youth services. JAG is a nationwide program whose mission is to assist at-risk and disadvantaged youth in graduating from high school or receiving a GED and then finding and keeping quality jobs. Their 40 core competencies closely align with the youth services which WIA is required to provide. North Central also provides funding for work experience for those enrolled in JAG, who are WIA eligible.

The North Central area continues to operate its Youth Build (YB) grant received from DOL in November 2012. The three-year YB grant for \$1,043,130 is a comprehensive youth and community development program that addresses core issues facing low-income communities such as education, housing, employment, crime prevention and leadership development.

The second eighth month class of 26 participants graduated August 21, 2014. One of the YB participants and the YB Construction Supervisor, completed a three-day training in February 2015, in Little Rock to become certified as National Center for Construction Education and Research instructors, their hard work allowed the fastest construction schedule for the current Habitat for Humanity.

Leveraging Resources

The North Central area routinely applies for grants from other sources in an effort to leverage resources. North Central was awarded the following grants in PY 2014:

Local Area Performance

Local Area	Total Participants	ETA-O	
North Central			
	Adults	11,415	
	Dislocated Workers	60	
	Older Youth	15	
	Younger Youth	179	
	Total Exitters		
	Adults	10,984	
	Dislocated Workers	29	
	Older Youth	6	
	Younger Youth	105	
		Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	85.0
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	56.0
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	91.0
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	82.0
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$13,653
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$11,005
Placement in Employment or Educ.	Youth (14 - 21)	81.7	75
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14 - 21)	81.5	90
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14 - 21)	72.0	80
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
	X		

- YouthBuild grant in November 2012, from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) in the amount of \$1,043,130 for a three-year period
- National Emergency Grant in August 2014 from DOL for \$611,693 to employ 54 workers to assist with clean-up efforts from severe storms in the area
- At the end of PY 2014, North Central committed to partner with other workforce areas, community colleges and employers on the Arkansas Sector Partnership National Dislocated Worker Grant

Continuous Improvement

The North Central area did not met the Youth Placement in Employment or Education and DLW measures. In its efforts to continuously improve services, North Central will increase communication efforts with the youth and DLW as well as provide more frequent follow up contact.



NORTHEAST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The Northeast LWIA participated in five job fairs and hiring events in 2014 that expanded outreach to 35 employers and drew approximately 1,500 potential jobseekers at career events hosted by ASU-Jonesboro, Arkansas Northeastern College (ANC) Blytheville, Black River Technical College (BRTC) in Pocahtonas, and the Paragould Community Center.

Innovative Service Delivery

As business needs arise (new business/layoff/etc.), local workforce service teams provide handouts about the array of workforce services available in the area to minimize duplication or service disruptions. The primary focus is to use WIA funds to provide adults, dislocated workers, and youth opportunities to develop new occupational skills, which ultimately may lead to self-sufficiency, chiefly through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) awarded clients attending two- and four-year state colleges or other authorized training programs.

1. Northeast served over 296 participants (166 adults, 78 dislocated workers, and 52 youth) in occupational skills training for the Spring term
2. Over 80 percent of participants served were low-skilled, low income individuals.
3. Northeast was able to provide valuable summer work experience to 140 youth over a six week summer period. Also, the area received a new source of funding from the University of Arkansas, (PROMISE) grant. We were able to provide 34 youth aged 14 to 16 year olds with disabilities, an opportunity to help increase their awareness and job skills.

Continuous Improvement

Based on clients' responses to WIA questionnaire forms, online surveys, information provided by monitoring/technical training, plus partner feedback, NEAWIB develops and implement plans to improve services.

Local Area Performance

Local Area	Total Participants	ETA-O	
Northeast 	Adults	23,127	
	Dislocated Workers	99	
	Older Youth	88	
	Younger Youth	166	
	Total Exitters		
	Adults	22,548	
	Dislocated Workers	60	
	Older Youth	53	
	Younger Youth	65	
			Negotiated Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	92.0
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	98.0
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	96.0
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	98.0
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$15,185
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$14,896
Placement in Employment or Educ.	Youth (14 - 21)	81.7	90.0
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14 - 21)	81.5	73.0
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14 - 21)	72.0	77.0
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
	X		

With implementation of WIA, and in recognition of declining funding, the area began implementing changes related to DLW/ Adult funds transfer waivers. Also, the area requested a Youth ITA waiver in order to provide youth without direction, funding to become skilled in demand occupations.

The adult dislocated performance measures are currently meeting or exceeding goals. However, youth program enrollments, (decreased the number of in school to out of school youth) required by WIOA, were needed to redirect funding targeting 75 percent to out of school youth. The youth measures relating to completed certificates or degrees and literacy/numeracy gains made these goals more difficult to attain, and largely inconsistent with prior classes.

Additionally, our service teams have attempted to identify services for veterans, and adult/dislocated worker groups. We have attempted to identify and extend services to ever harder to serve populations, and co-enroll services with partners, if possible. We are a work in progress, committed to the process of continuous improvement.

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The Northwest LWIA participated in 37 job fairs and hiring events. Approximately 857 job seekers participated in these employment opportunities.

Innovative Service Delivery

The Northwest WIA Transition Team, which includes core partners Adult Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Services for the Blind, Wagner-Peyser, Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Workers programs; and the WIA Plus partners including Arkansas Career and Technical Education Cooperatives and Higher Education, have been meeting regularly since April to navigate the system changes with WIA.

Northwest continues the regional partnership started in 2006 with the Workforce Boards in Southwest Missouri, Northeast Oklahoma and Southeast Kansas by working together to coordinate job fairs and business services, share staff training and other opportunities to leverage resources.

The PROMISE Grant offered an opportunity for Northwest to further develop its services to youth with disabilities. Having successfully worked the Disability Employment Initiative allowed staff to use the contacts and resources gleaned from earlier efforts.

Northwest has supported secondary Career and Technical Education (CTE) through the Educational Cooperatives with their regional employer partnership councils. Having CTE sitting on the Youth Council and Workforce Board has provided the opportunity for better understanding and coordination.

Leveraging Resources

Northwest was the recipient of three National Emergency Disaster Grants totaling \$1,195,000 that continued during PY2014; AR 21 for \$150,000, AR 22 for \$893,200, and AR 23 for \$506,000. We have had 153 people assisting with projects across seven counties replacing bridges, culverts and roads, debris cleanup, moving dirt and gravel, and more. Without this help our

Local Area Performance

Local Area	Total Participants	ETA-O		
Northwest	Adults	24,067		
	Dislocated Workers	79		
	Older Youth	32		
	Younger Youth	163		
	Total Exitters			
	Adults	24,304		
	Dislocated Workers	53		
	Older Youth	18		
	Younger Youth	67		
			Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	86.0	
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	93.0	
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	94.0	
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	100.0	
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$15,633	
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$18,695	
Placement in Employment or Educ.	Youth (14 - 21)	81.7	86.0	
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14 - 21)	81.5	95.0	
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14 - 21)	72.0	100.0	
Overall Status of Performance		Not Met	Met	
			X	



counties and cities would be hard pressed to get the much needed work done in a timely manner. Of those, 74 had entered into permanent employment at their date of exit.

Through the PROMISE Grant, Northwest began to provide Summer Youth Work Experience to youth with disabilities. Initial funding of \$221,814 provide those work experiences in Benton and Washington counties.

Software purchases through TechSoup save non-profit organizations, such as ours, thousands of dollars thanks to donations from Microsoft, Adobe, and other vendors. TechSoup is a non-profit that receives donations of software, hardware, and other technology items and distributes to qualified non-profits for only an administration fee.

Continuous Improvement

Workforce Centers provide customer satisfaction surveys to job seekers. The results of these surveys are available online for managers and board to review. Managers address any issues as they arise and have personal interaction with customers on a regular basis.

SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

Innovative Service Delivery

Adult and dislocated worker clients were reached through the many unique working relationships between the WIA staff and local charitable organizations, state agencies and employers. Once clients have received core services, WIA staff work diligently to match them with additional services such as WIA Tuition Assistance, Microsoft IT Academy, Career Readiness Certificate, and more.

Youth were served in a “meet you where you are” manner and staff would set up events at schools, community centers, neighborhoods, and other local events to spread the word about WIA services. The Southeast area provides Youth with more layers of support and more frequent communication contact time. With the development of an Individual Service System drive point system youth are held accountable for their preparation for summer work experience. The Southeast Workforce Area received funding through the PROMISE grant in the amount of \$158,967 to give youth with disabilities a work experience. This grant made provision for 50 youth with disabilities to receive valuable work experience.

Leveraging Resources

The local board, through the one-stop operator, worked to identify other potential funding sources. The Southeast area partners with local two year colleges on numerous planning grants. The planning grants allow for more participants to be served in an attempt to meet pertinent performance goals. In addition, the local board partners with other service providers in the area to encourage leveraging these, and other, additional available resources in the area.

Local Area Performance

Local Area	Total Participants	ETA-O		
Southeast	Adults	10,082		
	Dislocated Workers	7		
	Older Youth	8		
	Younger Youth	201		
	Total Exitters			
	Adults	9,310		
	Dislocated Workers	4		
	Older Youth	6		
	Younger Youth	65		
			Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	92.0	
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	100.0	
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	97.0	
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	100.0	
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$13,931	
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$9,589	
Placement in Employment or Educ.	Youth (14 - 21)	81.7	85.0	
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14 - 21)	81.5	88.0	
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14 - 21)	72.0	80.0	
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded	
	X			

Continuous Improvement

Southeast Arkansas Workforce Centers continuously strives to offer high-quality services to citizens of Arkansas. Although performance goals are important and are a target for what we do, our main focus is bettering the lives of those in which we serve. We believe that by providing intensive, client-centered and personalized services to our clients and offering valuable resources and guidance, that goals, outcomes, and performance will all fall into place. WIA staff received intensive and on-going training to strive to meet all performance goals in the next program year.

SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

Employer Services

The Southwest LWIA is committed to providing quality services to employers and working to meet the needs of our local workforce. The Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) is promoted to employers to help identify qualified jobseekers. The CRC is also promoted to jobseekers for credentials. Southwest also provides occupational skills training to help meet employer needs for employees needing specific skills.

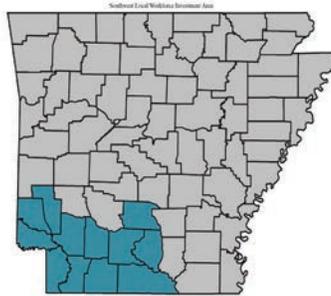
Innovative Service Delivery

WIA staff engaged youth participants in a Manufacturing Day 2014 event. The Manufacturing Day is designed to expose the next generation to diversity and industry opportunity. On October 3, 2014, local employers provided tours and informative presentations on career opportunities in the manufacturing industry. To ensure each youth gained valuable experience by participating, each wrote a report documenting what they learned and how the tour impacted their career decisions and interests.

To increase services to veterans, a veteran’s outreach plan was developed and implemented in Southwest Arkansas. This plan includes establishing a relationship with unit leaders and coordinators, as well as, informing soldiers of opportunities provided by Arkansas Workforce Centers. After receiving information that four local National Guard units would be disbanded by the end of the year due to a reorganization, a briefing was scheduled with the local Guard unit during their June drill weekend. This briefing served to inform individuals of WIA services available to veterans. There were eighteen applications given out to soldiers. WIA staff also made contact with the local VA representative and requested referrals for any veterans needing assistance.

Local Area Performance

Local Area	Total Participants	ETA-O		
Southwest	Adults	14,812		
	Dislocated Workers	16		
	Older Youth	14		
	Younger Youth	50		
	Total Exitters			
	Adults	14,401		
	Dislocated Workers	24		
	Older Youth	8		
	Younger Youth	15		
			Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	93.0	
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	88.0	
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	93.0	
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	100.0	
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$14,582	
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$10,552	
Placement in Employment or Educ.	Youth (14 - 21)	81.7	84.0	
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14 - 21)	81.5	75.0	
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14 - 21)	72.0	0.0	
Overall Status of Performance				
	Not Met	Met	Exceeded	
	X			



Leveraging Resources

Southwest Arkansas Planning & Development District has partnered with Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, SouthArk Community College and Southern Arkansas University Tech in the Sector Partnership National Emergency Grant. Funds from this grant initiative will be used to provide dislocated workers and long-term unemployed individuals, including eligible underserved and minority populations, pre-employment skills training and occupation specific training that lead to viable employment opportunities within the high-growth industry sectors of advanced manufacturing and the aerospace/defense sector. SouthArk Community College will be responsible for delivering workplace readiness and occupation-based training for displaced workers in the advanced manufacturing sector. A career counselor will offer specialized career counseling and will facilitate training programs that will lead to credentials in advanced manufacturing. SAU Tech will receive \$65,600 and will address the training needs in the Aerospace Defense Sector. This training program will create a career pathway from high school, to college, to work with supportive services available for students needing assistance.

WEST CENTRAL ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The West Central Workforce Centers offered many services for local businesses and industries to plan, prepare and sustain employment opportunities. Workforce Center partners joined the workforce center’s business service representative to create a business service team that provided employer contact to over 3,283 employers during the past program year. Team members provide employers with a packet containing brochures and contact information. Team members in their respective center meet and communicate via email and telephone.

Approximately 7,270 clients and 739 employers participated in job fairs and business expos supported by the Arkansas Workforce Centers of West Central Arkansas, local employers and colleges.

Innovative Service Delivery

The Workforce Centers assisted numerous new businesses in meeting their employment needs during the program year. Workforce center staff assisted employers by setting interviews, testing, and providing space at the centers to interview applicants. Employers such as Atwoods, Chilis, Steak and Shake, Pet Pro, Dollar General, Tysons, Conagra and others utilized the onsite services and facilities of the Workforce Centers. This was very helpful to new employers that did not have staff hired or a place to conduct interviews.

Reemployment workshops were held in the centers to provide employment and career information to clients receiving unemployment benefits. WIA funding for Adult and DLW was focused on institutional training. In PY 2014, we had 75 Adults and 19 DLW that went to school on an Individual Training Account (ITA). We also dual enrolled with Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) to help 36 participants with supportive services they were unable to obtain from TAA. Forty in school youth and 86 out-of-school youth participated during PY 2014.

Local Area Performance

Local Area	Total Participants	ETA-O	
West Central	Adults	18,837	
	Dislocated Workers	41	
	Older Youth	33	
	Younger Youth	93	
	Total Exitters		
	Adults	18,468	
	Dislocated Workers	12	
	Older Youth	15	
	Younger Youth	38	
			Negotiated Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	91.0
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	100.0
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	97.0
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	100.0
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$13,350
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$15,010
Placement in Employment or Educ.	Youth (14 - 21)	81.7	85.0
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14 - 21)	81.5	73.0
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14 - 21)	72.0	75.0
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
	X		



Leveraging Resources

The West Central Workforce Investment Board partnered with the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services and the University of Arkansas (U of A) to provide a summer work experience program for youth receiving SSI benefits within the West Central area. U of A received a five-year grant to establish and operate a model demonstration project designed to improve the education and employment outcomes of child Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients and their families. The name of the project is PROMISE. The total grant amount for the West Central area was \$48,059.

Continuous Improvement

The West Central Workforce Center partners continuously review how our services can be improved. Customer survey cards are throughout the centers and a survey web link appears on all resource room computers, soliciting feedback and comments from customers on the services they received. The business service team visits with employers requesting feedback on the services they received from the workforce center and how the services might be improved. The results of the survey cards and comments are shared with the partners during the quarterly partner meetings and suggestions are made on how to improve our services.

WESTERN ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The Western Arkansas LWIA participated in three job fairs throughout the program year. Over 800 jobseekers and 128 employers participated in the events.

Innovative Service Delivery/ Increased Services to Targeted Populations

Case managers expanded their use of a “group messaging” application to communicate with their clients via smart phone or tablet. The app is called “Remind 101”, and is a free one-way texting program commonly used by teachers/professors to communicate with mass groups of students. This has made sending reminders about workshops, orientation sessions, job fairs, or grade reports more streamlined and time effective.

The Western Workforce Center partnered with the career services department of the University of Arkansas – Fort Smith in hosting a Career Fair and Graduate School Expo, October 16, 2014. Over 300 students attended the event making it an excellent opportunity for employers to network with the UAFS graduates. As an added incentive to jobseekers, a \$200 gift card from Dillard’s was awarded to a winning student through drawing at the end of the career fair. Tickets were distributed at various booths to students whom the employer felt were well prepared.

On March 10, 2015, the Van Buren WIA program provider staff participated in a career fair which was held on the ATU-Ozark Campus. The goal of the career fair was to help students and community members successfully match their education, experience, and skills by providing information regarding career preparation, job skills, scholarships, and career opportunities with local employers and industries.

Services to Veterans

The local area has a dedicated veteran representative position at the Fort Smith workforce center. They are the outreach staff assigned to visit employers and also educate veterans on services available to them. Some of the partnerships in Western Arkansas that are designed to assist veterans with training are: WIA/ Adult & Dislocated Worker Programs; Local Adult Education Agencies; Arkansas Rehabilitation

Local Area Performance

Local Area	Total Participants	ETA-O	
Western	Adults	13,137	
	Dislocated Workers	60	
	Older Youth	38	
	Younger Youth	28	
	Total Exitters		
	Adults	13,039	
	Dislocated Workers	32	
	Older Youth	28	
	Younger Youth	21	
		Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	80.0
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	90.0
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	95.0
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	95.0
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$14,789
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$16,103
Placement in Employment or Educ.	Youth (14 - 21)	81.7	83.0
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14 - 21)	81.5	82.0
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14 - 21)	72.0	45.0
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
	X		

Services; Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks; Disabled Veterans Association; and Crawford & Sebastian County Veterans Office. The veteran representative is up-to-date on all programs for veterans such as AVETP, Ticket-to-Work, and ARVETS. Gabor House is also available to Veterans at a low month-to-month cost that includes all utilities in the price

Leveraging Resources

During PY 2014, Western expended \$584,064 from two separate National Emergency disaster grants to fund temporary jobs for dislocated workers in aiding our counties to clean up and repair of public infrastructure following severe weather events. The funds were used to provide wages and supportive services, such as clothing and safety gear, to 79 dislocated workers and long-term unemployed citizens of Western Arkansas.

Western expended \$20,481 in funds from the Arkansas PROMISE grant by providing case management/job-coaching and 200 hours of employment for 18 youth receiving Social Security benefits in Crawford and Sebastian counties during the first work experience component of this grant.

Veterans' Outcomes by Special Populations

ETA-Q

Performance Items	Post 9/11	Numerator	Post 9/11 Era	Numerator	TAP Workshop	Numerator
	Era Veterans	Denominator	Rec Intensive Serv	Denominator	Veterans	Denominator
Entered Employment Rate	81.0	17 21	81.0	17 21	0	0 0
Employment Retention Rate	85.7	12 14	85.7	12 14	0	0 0
Average Earnings*	\$15,847	\$174,322 11	\$15,847	\$174,322 11	\$0	\$0 0

Veteran Priority of Service

ETA-P

Performance Items	Total	Percent Served
Covered Entrants Who Reached the End of the Entry Period	7,792	
Covered Entrants Who Received a Service During the Entry Period	7,788	100.0
Covered Entrants Who Received a Staff-Assisted Service During the Entry Period	58	0.7

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

For PY 2014, the approach that was used to assess customer satisfaction paralleled the methodology used previously, which followed the American Customer Service Index (ACSI) protocol. In order to attain the most accurate, honest feedback from employers and job seekers, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services contracted with the Survey Research Center at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to conduct the surveys. ADWS collaborated with SRC on the design of the survey instrument, but the execution of the survey was done independently by SRC staff. SRC staff administered the survey, collected the data, analyzed the data and reported the results.

Employer Survey Results

A total of 683 employers participated in the survey, and the response rate for the survey was 68 percent (RR3, according to the AAPOR 2015 Standard Definitions). This rate represents the number of completed interviews expressed as a percentage of all eligible organizations. All employers who received staff-assisted services posting job openings with Arkansas Workforce Centers were included in the target population.

When asked to rate their overall satisfaction with workforce center services, approximately 1 in 3 (32 percent) employers gave the services a "10," the highest satisfaction score possible, and 83 percent rated the Workforce Center staff's willingness to help as either "Excellent" or "Good." Additionally, 79 percent of employers who used Arkansas JobLink to post job openings, rated the process as

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either “Excellent” or “Good.”

Customer Satisfaction Index for Employers

Mean Overall Satisfaction = 7.7	0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((7.7 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 74.4$
Mean Service Expectancy = 7.1	0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((6.9 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 67.8$
Mean Comparison to Ideal = 7.1	0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((7.0 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 67.8$

$$\text{CSI} = (.33 \times 74.4) + (.33 \times 67.8) + (.33 \times 67.8)$$

Customer Satisfaction Index = 69.3

Job Seeker Survey Results

A total of 821 job seekers participated in the survey, and the response rate for the survey was 57 percent (RR3, according to the AAPOR 2015 Standard Definitions). This rate represents the number of completed interviews expressed as a percentage of all eligible job seekers. All job seekers who received staff-assisted services associated with Employment Services, Unemployment Insurance (includes disqualified claimants) and Workforce Investment Act were included in the target population. The data received from job seekers were weighted for age and race in order to bring the sample representations in line with the actual population proportions.

When asked to rate their overall satisfaction with Workforce Center services, approximately 1 in 3 (36 percent) job seekers gave the services a “10,” the highest satisfaction score possible, and nearly three-fourths (73 percent) of job seekers rated the Workforce Center staff’s willingness to help as either “Excellent” or “Good.”

The CSI for job seekers was also computed using the three ACSI customer satisfaction questions. The CSI was calculated with a formula that used the arithmetic mean for each question transformed to a value on a 0 to 100 scale and then weighted using equal weights and summed to obtain an overall CSI score.

Customer Satisfaction Index for Job Seekers

Mean Overall Satisfaction = 7.5	0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((7.5 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 72.2$
Mean Service Expectancy = 7.0	0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((7.1 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 66.7$
Mean Comparison to Ideal = 6.9	0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((7.1 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 65.6$

$$\text{CSI} = (.33 \times 72.2) + (.33 \times 66.7) + (.33 \times 65.6)$$

Customer Satisfaction Index = 67.4

SUCCESS STORIES

CONNESHIA BRYANT

Conneshia is a single parent who struggled to attend school and work part time. With the part time job, she was unable to make ends meet or provide for her and her children. Conneshia's goal in life was to become a nurse so she could provide a better life for her family. She was accepted into the Practical Nursing Program at Arkansas Northeastern College but was concerned about being able to afford the program with limited funds. Until one day, a representative from WIA came to her class and discussed services available under the WIA program. After completing the eligibility process, WIA paid for her tuition. Conneshia successfully completed the LPN program and was able to obtain full time employment at a nursing home. With this opportunity, she was able to provide a better wage and better standard of living for her and her children.

TOMMIE ELLIS

Tommie was a middle-aged man in Southeast Arkansas without a job, a home or a plan for the future. He was living in a deer stand that burned down. The temporary roof he did have over his head was taken from him. Tommie was a frequent visitor to DWS offices within the region. He applied for jobs frequently and was provided with information on how to become a more effective job seeker. Tommie inquired about the services offered through the WIA program. After visiting the WIA office to receive core services and career guidance, Tommie decided that he wanted to pursue a truck driving career. He was approved to receive training funds through the WIA program after completing the eligibility process. Tommie completed his training and received his Commercial Driver's License in March 2015. He received further job search services and went to work April 2015 for US Express. With determination, Tommie is reminded wherever you are in life; you do not have to stay there.

RANDI MCBRIDE

Randi is a mother of five children who decided to take her first college course at the age of 31. Her family struggled to make ends meet but she knew a Registered Nursing (RN) degree would provide a stable financial future without government assistance. After being accepted into the RN program at Arkansas Northeastern College, she learned about WIA and how it could help her family. WIA provided tuition assistance and she graduated in May 2015 with an Associate Degree in Nursing. After taking her board exams, she was hired by St. Bernard's Medical Center in Jonesboro. Ms. McBride stated, "We went from struggling to pay the bills and putting food on the table to staying caught up, having no late payments, and enjoying life without the worry of how are we going to do it this month."

ABBIE TOLBERT

Abbie was employed at a manufacturing plant in Paragould, AR. After fifteen years of work, she was notified that the plant was going to layoff approximately 120 workers. Consequently, Abbie was laid off and unable to find work in a manufacturing facility, so she began looking for a new career. She visited the Arkansas Workforce Center in Paragould and was determined eligible for the WIA Dislocated Worker program.

WIA provided tuition assistance for an accounting degree at Black River Technical College in Pocahontas. Abbie successfully completed the occupational skill training and obtained an Associate of Applied Science degree in Accounting. Abbie had difficulty searching for employment because of her lack of experience in accounting. After discussing this concern with her WIA case manager, then both agreed she needed some "hands on" work experience. Based on this need, she was placed in work experience so that she could gain additional job skills. After completing her work experience, she was hired by an agency's financial department in Jonesboro

KERRY WILMOTH

Kerry worked as an Area Manager for Central Arkansas Planning and Development District for nine years. June 2011, the company downsized and she suddenly found herself unemployed. Fortunately, Kerry was able to draw unemployment benefits. However, as a single divorced mother she realized she could not provide for her teenage daughter or herself the way that she wanted. After job searching with no luck, Kerry enrolled in a Registered Nursing program as she always dreamed. In fall 2015, she struggled to provide for her daughter and herself while attempting to focus on her courses. She contacted her local office Case Manager and was given documents necessary to apply for WIA.

In May of 2015, with a 3.2 GPA, Kerry graduated with her associates degree as a Registered Nurse. In August of 2015, she began working at Jefferson Regional Medical Center in the intensive care unit. Kerry is now continuing her education and working towards her Bachelors of Science in Nursing. She is just one example of how the WIA program and Arkansas Workforce Center in Southeast Arkansas is helping to improve the lives of people every day.

KOSCHA MCCURTAIN

Koscha started her career at an early age to support her family. She worked for Whirlpool Corporation and stayed there for 20 years until they decided to close in 2012. At the age of 39, mother of two daughters, no degree, and a mortgage, Koscha decided to pursue a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. During Koscha's last two years, Western Arkansas Employment Development Agency (WAEDA) assisted her and supported her until she graduated. Because of the organization's assistance, she wanted to give back so she became an intern there during the last semester. Koscha was hired for a temporary summer position upon graduation so she would be able to provide for her family while looking for permanent employment.

After submitting several resumes and attending several interviews, Koscha was hired as an insurance agent for State Farm. Koscha passed her insurance exam after the first attempt and State Farm offered a moderate salary with unlimited growth.

Koscha stated "My family at WAEDA made sure my transition into society was pleasant. Standing on their word, I am now in a place that gives me the freedom to soar. With this career I can help others plan for their future. My future is very bright and I see myself using my degree within the next several years to maneuver throughout the State Farm family."

STACY JACKSON

Stacy was an out-of-school youth in pursuit of a degree as a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN). Stacy, age 20 and a young father, managed to support his family and focus on furthering his education. Soon Stacy was confronted with the challenge of paying for the remainder of his tuition that his Pell Grant did not cover. Stacy sought out the assistance of the WIA program.

January 2015, Stacy became an active, WIA out-of-school youth participant. With the encouragement and guidance of a WIA case manager, he was once again able to focus on his studies without the worries of his family's financial needs. Stacy was awarded an Individual Training Account by WIA to cover the remainder of his tuition expenses and state exams. Stacy completed his LPN training at the University of Arkansas Community College Hope in May 2015. He entered employment with Laurel Place Health and Rehab in June 2015. Stacy also decided to further his nursing career in the Registered Nurse Transition program. Although the road to success was not smooth and flawless, Stacy's determination and his will to prosper allowed him to continue following his dreams.

AMANDA HICKMAN

Amanda graduated in May 2015 with an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Arkansas in Fort Smith. Amanda's interest in early childhood development was based on her desire to learn more about taking better care of her special needs child and others like him. While pursuing her degree, Amanda faced many trials balancing school and taking care of her son who was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, general anxiety disorder, and ADHD. During her last semester, Amanda had to place her five year old son in the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Psychiatric Research Institute for 28 days. Amanda was allowed to stay with him but the institution was three hours away and one month from graduation she had to make the hardest decision as a parent. There was not an option to stay there and graduate on time. With the support from the Western Arkansas Employment Development Agency, Amanda was able to travel every weekend to visit her son and make daily phone calls. Amanda also managed to graduate in May on the Dean's List and was inducted into the National Society of Leadership. Since that day she is now a teacher at Early Head Start in Crawford County. She is currently continuing her education to receive a Bachelor's Degree in psychology to become a child counselor.

DEMARCUS PAXTON

Many felons return to criminal activities once they feel a sense of rejection from social order, but this was not the case with Demarcus. When he began his job search he was dejected with feelings of hopelessness and confusion. Believing he was limited with employment opportunities due to bad choices he made in life, Demarcus sought out guidance in finding a career where he would be accepted. Upon deciding to pursue a career as a commercial truck

driver, he was told that WIA might be able to assist him with his training desires. After speaking with his probation officer and granted permission to travel, Demarcus enrolled in CDL at C1 Trucking Driving School in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Demarcus required some additional assistance in passing his "backup" portion of training. With the support of the C1 training staff and the encouragement of his WIA case manager, Demarcus successfully completed his training on June 30, 2015. As a reward of his hard work and dedication, Demarcus gained employment on July 31, 2015 at Performance Food Group Little Rock, at their Texarkana, TX location.

WENDY ROMERO

When Wendy was young she started college full time and worked part time. However, her priorities changed after getting married and having a baby causing her to drop out of school to work full time. In April 2014, the insurance office where she was employed closed. Feeling anxiety without a clue on the next step in her life, Wendy visited her local Arkansas Workforce Center and learned about Western Arkansas Employment Development Agency (WAEDA) and WIA. She applied for their training program and was approved. When she met with a case manager, they helped Wendy re-enroll during summer 2014. WAEDA helped her with this transition by assisting with tuition and books. These services provided a future for Wendy and her family when she thought there was no hope. In May 2015, Wendy received her Bachelor's in Biology with a minor in Spanish. Currently WAEDA is helping Wendy look for her dream job.