

STATE OF ARKANSAS

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT ANNUAL REPORT

PROGRAM YEAR 2015 • JULY 1, 2015–JUNE 30, 2016



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REPORT PREPARED BY:

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*Indicates Committee Chair

VISION

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

MISSION

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

INTRODUCTION

THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) WAS SIGNED INTO LAW ON JULY 22, 2014. WIOA IS DESIGNED TO HELP JOB SEEKERS ACCESS EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND SUPPORT SERVICES TO SUCCEED IN THE LABOR MARKET AND TO MATCH EMPLOYERS WITH THE SKILLED WORKERS THEY NEED TO COMPETE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY. CONGRESS PASSED THE ACT BY A WIDE BIPARTISAN MAJORITY AND IS THE FIRST LEGISLATIVE REFORM IN 15 YEARS OF THE PUBLIC WORKFORCE SYSTEM. WIOA SUPERSEDES THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF 1998 AND AMENDS THE ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT, THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, AND THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973. IN GENERAL, THE ACT TOOK EFFECT ON JULY 1, 2015. THIS REPORT HIGHLIGHTS STATE AND LOCAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS TOWARD IMPLEMENTING WIOA AND COMPLETING ONE FINAL YEAR UNDER WIA SERVICES. THE REPORT CONCLUDES WITH WIA TITLE I-B (YOUTH, ADULT, AND DISLOCATED WORKER) AND TITLE III (WAGNER-PEYSER) PERFORMANCE RESULTS.



ARKANSAS'S TALENT DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM PHILOSOPHY

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



STATE WIOA IMPLEMENTATION

The focus for Workforce Investment Act (WIA)- funded activities during Program Year 2015 has been on continued economic recovery and preparation for the transition to the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). During Program Year 2015, the state continued its Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act implementation efforts. This implementation effort is being driven by a re-invigorated Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB). Led by Governor Asa Hutchinson, the strategic and functional design of the Arkansas Workforce System starts with coordination at the highest level through the Governor's Workforce Cabinet. The AWDB has taken on the critical assignment of developing and implementing this vision. The AWDB membership is WIOA compliant and has been fully briefed on its WIOA responsibilities. AWDB subcommittees were formed to assist in the important work of recommending state policy as well as the development of the WIOA Combined State Plan.

WIOA TRANSITION GRANT

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services was awarded \$145,015 for WIOA implementation activities through September

30, 2016. This funding enabled the State to convene board meetings, planning and partnership meetings, and staff and board member training.

WIOA PARTNER MEETINGS

Since the implementation of WIOA, leaders from core, mandatory partners, and several optional partners in the workforce development system have been working to better align programming to best serve the people of Arkansas. Through the forming of the WIOA Roundtable, an interagency team of core and non-core partner programs, opportunities for leveraging resources to better serve the needs of people utilizing the workforce system have been developed and the shared knowledge of programs have led to better coordination of services. This process is continuing to evolve and within the next four years, partners anticipate new systems, policies, and networks to seamlessly and efficiently align services for individuals. The assumption is all individuals who access the workforce system are eligible for all services provided by workforce partners, and it is the obligation of the system to serve these individuals to the highest level of satisfaction and outcome.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1:

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

STRATEGIC GOAL 2:

Enhance service delivery to employers and job seekers.

Core, mandatory, and optional partners are meeting on a monthly basis to discuss implementation and service delivery issues. Through this venue, program alignment, performance accountability, policy integration, data integration, infrastructure funding, and streamlined services are discussed. Committees have been established on each of these topics and the workgroups are meeting at least monthly, and oftentimes more frequently. The four core state agencies are jointly developing policy guidance for use across programs to ensure that coordination of services and activities is occurring.

In addition, a meeting is held twice per year with the coordinators, directors, and managers of the core and non-core programs included in the state workforce development plan. On average, each meeting is attended by approximately 250 individuals from throughout Arkansas from these programs. Each meeting focuses on learning more about the other partner programs, streamlining services, brainstorming opportunities for collaboration, and improving services to our citizens. During these two day meetings, attendees have an opportunity to also meet collectively with their community peers and to discuss local issues.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

In July 2015, a statewide WIOA training and strategy session was attended by 500 individuals representing state and local workforce board members, core and optional workforce partner programs, secondary and higher education, state and local economic development, community-based organizations, employers, and elected officials. This event, facilitated by Maher & Maher, provided an opportunity for attendees to obtain a clear understanding of WIOA, including the need for and benefits of both sector strategies and regional planning, the importance of aligning all talent development activities with economic development strategies, and State, regional and local roles in implementation. Attendees were broken up into the ten local workforce development areas and together developed a “plan to plan” that was specific to their communities.



STRATEGIC GOAL 3:

Increase awareness of the State's
Talent Development System

STRATEGIC GOAL 4:

Address the Skills Gaps

In November and December 2015, a strategic planning session was held by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board to frame out the goals and strategies to be used in the state plan. An invitation was extended to the Arkansas Career Education and Workforce Development Board, the oversight board for the agency that administers the Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation Services programs, to join in the planning process to ensure that both boards were moving in the same direction as it relates to workforce development in Arkansas. This session also facilitated by Maher & Maher, provided the framework for the vision and mission statements, a talent development system philosophy, and the four major goals to be accomplished over the next four years.

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

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Enhance service delivery to employers and job seekers.

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Increase awareness of the State's Talent Development

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: Address the Skills Gap Development System

LOCAL BOARD TRAINING

Local Workforce Development Boards have a tremendous responsibility under the new law for strategic planning, oversight, alignment of resources, and improving the structure and delivery of services. The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor, sponsored a one-day training for all local workforce development board members on April 27, 2016. This interactive training was attended by 176 local board members and provided vital information about their role as board members and workforce development leaders in their communities.

CASE MANAGEMENT TRAINING

A two-day case management training was offered in April 2016 and was attended by 214 case management staff from the core and non-core WIOA partner programs. The training covered the basics of good case management, assessing employability, building mutual employment plans, tapping into partner resources, and following up on customer progress.

ARKANSAS CONSUMER REPORT SYSTEM ENHANCEMENTS

The Arkansas Consumer Report System (ACRS) was enhanced in June 2016 to account for changes to the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) as a result of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The website, www.workforce.arkansas.gov/acrs, allows training providers to apply for initial or continued placement on the list of training providers who are eligible to deliver training to WIOA participants. The website also displays this list of eligible providers for use by case managers, students, parents, and job seekers.

The flow of the system provides an easy avenue for those who provide training to enter, update and submit information about their programs of study. Once their data is entered and an application is submitted, ACRS screens it for minimum state requirements and forwards it to a Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) for review. After LWDB review, the application is approved and placed on the list, or rejected and sent back to the training provider.

Also in June 2016, ACRS was expanded to contain a list of registered apprenticeship (RA) programs that are now required by WIOA to be included and maintained on the ETPL. These programs have already gone through a rigorous assessment as part of the registration process with the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship (DOLETA/OA). Inclusion of RA programs on the state ETPL enhances WIOA participants' awareness of the programs and provides local workforce systems with a mechanism to support this valuable training model.

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) partnered with the Arkansas Research Center (ARC) to develop an online tool to assist training providers with the WIOA performance reporting requirements for the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). ARC obtained program specific student data by social security number from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) and matched it against Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage record data to determine the employment status and wages of students in two- and four-year public institutions. These students were then matched against a WIOA participant file from the Arkansas Job Link (AJL) system to determine if they were WIOA participants.

Performance measure reports were then calculated for each provider by program and were posted on a web portal for evaluation by training providers. Providers were given accounts to access the portal and view their specific data. If a match was not found on the UI wage file for a student, the training provider saw a list of "missing exits". This provided them the opportunity to follow up with those individuals and try to obtain the missing data. If they were successful in their collection, they could enter the data into the system and the performance measure reports were re-calculated. The web portal was designed so that private training providers who did not fall under the ADHE reporting requirements could provide student data and have the same performance reports generated as publicly supported institutions.

The Arkansas Consumer Report System (ACRS) website was enhanced to allow training providers to take the performance data they retrieved from the web portal and submit it on an application for initial or continued eligibility on the ETPL. A webinar was conducted to inform training providers of this process along with

the new requirements under WIOA.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATIONS

ECONOMIC SECURITY REPORT PUBLISHED

On June 30, 2016, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) released an economic security report of employment and earnings outcomes for degrees and certificates at state-supported institutions of higher education. This report was produced as a result of Act 852 of 2015. The report uses data available to the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to provide earnings information for Arkansas degree and certificate programs, average student loan debt by degree or certificate program, and employment rates for graduates in the year after they complete their certificate or degree program.

Annually, beginning on July 1, 2016, all two- and four-year state-supported institutions of higher education shall provide enrolled students with electronic access to the economic security report prepared by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services before the student registers for classes. In addition to the report, two- and four-year state-supported institutions of higher education must also provide students with the top 25 percent of certifications and degree programs in terms of the highest full-time job placement and highest average annual earnings; and the bottom 10 percent of certificates and degree programs in terms of the lowest full-time job placement and lowest average annual earnings.

Annually, beginning August 1, 2016, all public school students in grades seven through twelve, or their parent/guardian,

shall receive a two-page summary and electronic access to the economic security report produced by the Department.

The report is available online at: <http://dws.arkansas.gov/News/Publications.htm>

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's workforce development system by simplifying program management and performance measurement.

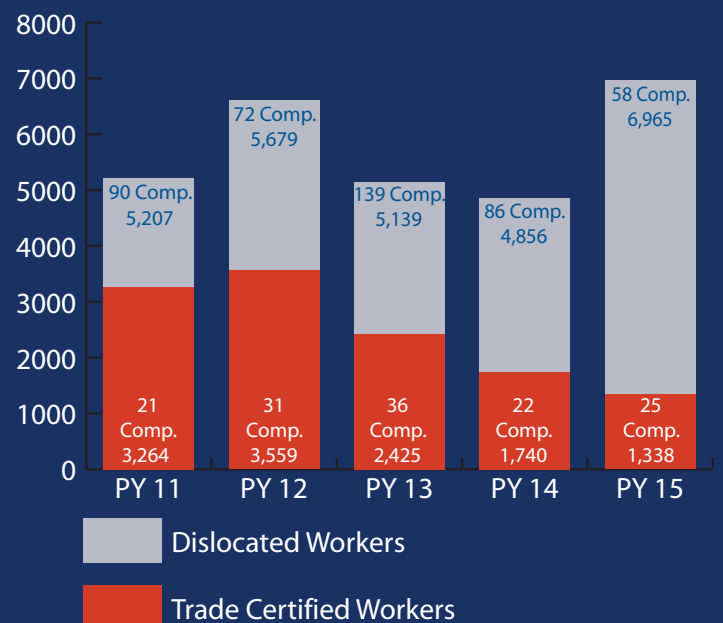
Note: Because WIOA performance reporting requirements did not take effect until PY 2016, the United States Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration continued to honor all currently approved WIA performance waivers, including waivers that permit states to replace the performance measures at WIA Section 136(b) with the common measures until PY 2016.

DISLOCATED WORKER SERVICES

The Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force administers

The Task Force served 58 companies experiencing closing or layoffs affecting 6,965 employees in PY 15, 30 Worker Assistance Workshops were conducted for 2,063 workers with 1,085 in attendance. The companies served by Rapid Response in PY 15 were centered in the following industrial sectors: Manufacturing (40%), Retail Trade (3%), Services (38%), Government (15%), Transportation (2%) and Mining(2%).

In PY 15, 25 companies were certified for Trade Adjustment Assistance, which provided additional training and job search assistance to 1,338 workers.



dislocated worker services through the Rapid Response program. These services are designed to help workers get back to work as quickly as possible and overcome difficult barriers to employment such as:

- Difficulty transferring specialized skills to other occupations or industries
- A decline in the market demand for certain skills
- Age or length of work experience
- Need for formal training or education
- Lack of jobs with earnings at a level comparable to their previous positions

The purpose of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title IB Dislocated Worker Program is to provide services to individuals who have been laid off, or have received notice of layoff, from employment generally due to plant closures or downsizing; and who meet the dislocated worker definition of a displaced homemaker.

Career and training services are available to assist dislocated workers transition from layoff to work in the least amount of time possible. If workers have skills that are in demand in the labor market, simply accessing the core services of job search and placement assistance and useful labor market information may be sufficient to help them get back into the workforce quickly. Other workers may be retrained with skills that are in demand by Arkansas's employers which help the state economy to grow.

RAPID RESPONSE TRANSITION AND ASSESSMENT

Rapid Response is a required activity designed to assist workers who are facing loss of employment through a permanent closure or mass layoff, or a natural or other disaster that results in mass job dislocation, to obtain reemployment as soon as possible. Rapid Response activities include: establishing on-site contact with employers and employee representatives upon notification of a current or projected permanent closure or mass layoff; or in the case of a disaster, immediately after the state is made aware of mass job dislocation as a result of such disaster; provision of information and access to available employment and training activities; provide assistance adapted to the particular closure, layoff, disaster; and the provision of assistance to the local community in developing a coordinated response

When businesses close or lay off workers, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, as the lead state agency for the Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force, can provide immediate on-site Rapid Response services to assist workers facing job losses. Rapid Response is a required activity designed to assist workers who are facing loss of employment through a permanent closure or layoff, a natural or other disaster that results in job dislocation. Rapid Response provides early intervention assistance designed to transition workers to their next employment opportunity as soon as possible. Activities begin with establishing on-site contact with employers and employee representatives upon

notification of a current or projected permanent closure or layoff; or immediately after the State is notified of job dislocation as a result of a disaster. Rapid Response services are tailored to each company, based on the needs of the affected employees and it includes the local community so a coordinated response can be developed. Activities include the provision of information and access to available employment and training activities.

The Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force administers all Rapid Response activities. The Task Force leverages the resources of the local workforce areas to provide services. It serves as the primary point of contact with companies experiencing a layoff and coordinates with designated representatives from the local area staff. This format strengthens the relationships between the state office and local workforce areas, as well as relationships between the local areas and their business communities. Rapid Response staff work closely with local One-Stop Center management and business service representatives, the local Workforce Boards, state and local business and economic development professionals, employer associations and organizations, unions, and local educational institutions. Rapid Response information-gathering begins the essential processes for submittal of numerous grant applications and identification of state and local resources to affect layoff aversion wherever possible. Additionally, when circumstances warrant, Rapid Response initiates and assists with the Trade Adjustment Assistance program certification process.

The Task Force participates in numerous community outreach initiatives and emphasizes layoff aversion strategies. The Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force has strengthened coordination and cemented relationships with business and industry representatives in an effort to bolster business services and has partnered with multiple local governments and business organizations to extend the branches of an early detection network. These initiatives have not only promoted the value of early intervention for the purpose of workforce dislocation and layoff aversion, but have also promoted the many, general workforce services available to the business community.

MOBILE WORKFORCE CENTERS

The Task Force operates five mobile Arkansas Workforce Center units. The units are used to assist with employment services at job fairs, community events, hiring initiatives, prison re-entry projects, career fairs, training activities and areas of worker dislocation. The units, which are in high demand around the state, are available to training providers, educational institutions, and other state and federal agencies. A lack of access to reliable transportation is often the critical factor in obtaining and maintaining employment. With the use of the mobile workforce centers, many more Arkansans will have access to workforce services. Each mobile workforce center contains 10 to 13 computer stations, three units also include an interview room, interactive smartboard, sound system, and three units are handicap accessible. These three units also are equipped with outside monitors that can display videos and presentations which can be directed to larger audiences.

TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is a federal program that offers benefits and services to workers whose employment has been adversely affected by foreign trade. Individuals who lost their jobs due to increased foreign imports or shifts in production to foreign markets may be eligible for federally funded Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) benefits. The TAA program provides opportunities to obtain skills, credentials, resources, and support to aid adversely affected workers to find suitable employment through specific benefits: training, employment and case management services, job search allowances, relocation allowances, and income support in the form of Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA). Eligible program participants may also be eligible for a Health Coverage Tax Credit. Reemployment TAA (RTAA) and Alternative TAA (ATAA) provide wage supplements for reemployed older workers whose reemployment resulted in lower wages than those earned in their trade-affected employment. 1,338 qualifying individuals were provided with TAA benefits in PY 15. Nearly 980 of those individuals participated in training programs to help them learn new skill-sets that would improve their ability to find new employment.

The Trade Adjustment Assistant Reauthorization Act which became effective on September 29, 2015, brought substantive changes to the TAA Program. Workers now have 26 weeks after layoff or certification whichever is later to file for TRA benefits. Also, TAA training providers must appear upon the WIOA Eligible Training Providers (ETP) list to be used for worker training. The U.S. Department of Labor presently defines Eligible Training Providers as “A public or private provider of a training program that has been determined by the state or local workforce investment board to meet specific requirements as to performance and costs and, thus, is eligible to receive Trade and/or WIA funds”.

REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES

WIOA places a greater focus on initiatives that combine Reemployment Eligibility Assessments (REA) with Reemployment Services and link the unemployed with the overall workforce system by bringing individuals receiving UI benefits into One-Stop Career Centers for personalized assessments and referrals to reemployment services. The goal of this program is to provide unemployed workers who receive UI benefits with early access to specific strategies that can help get them back into the workforce faster. The strategies include developing a reemployment plan, access to relevant labor market information and referrals to reemployment services and training, as well as assessing their on-going UI eligibility. By conducting personalized reemployment assessments for UI claimants, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services hopes to reduce the time a person stays on UI, assist this demographic in connecting to their next job more quickly, and increase savings for the State UI trust fund.

The Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to help

Unemployment Insurance claimants return to work faster. Beginning in PY 15, the RESEA Program replaced its predecessor Reemployment and Eligibility Assessment (REA) Program. The federal-state UI program provides important core services in the integrated workforce system established under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), which was revised by WIOA. This program allows the Arkansas Workforce Centers and its partners to ensure that claimants who comply with all UI eligibility requirements, and are active job seekers, reach their reemployment goals through this variety of reemployment services. The target groups selected for the RESEA program are Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants who are most likely to exhaust benefits before becoming employed and transitioning veterans receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service members (UCX); RESEA staff conduct Job Search Workshops which cover orientation of Workforce Center services; provision of labor market information; and career information that addresses claimants’ needs. In addition, RESEA staff aid in the creation of an individual’s reemployment plan that includes, but is not limited to, work search activities, accessing resources and services from the Workforce Centers, and working with additional agency and community partners who can provide approved training opportunities, if applicable. Some state-level partners available for these services include WIOA service providers, Arkansas Department of Human Services, Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Veterans Affairs, Dislocated Worker services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Experience Works and Job Corps. Individual RESEA staff members are encouraged to reach out to the local community to develop additional partnerships with local and/or regional agencies and non-profits that could aid claimants in their reemployment goals.

TRANSFERABLE OCCUPATIONAL RELATIONSHIP QUOTIENT (TORQ)

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services is using a computer program to assess occupational skills to help the unemployed find jobs. TORQ allows users, including labor market analysts, counselors, and others to analyze, understand, explore and respond to the differences between the knowledge, skills and abilities associated with each occupation as measured and published by the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) , which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration. This service was first utilized by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services in 2012, and since initiation of the arrangement, more than 156,000 job seekers have benefited from this resource.

RE-ENTRY PROGRAM FOR RETURNING CITIZENS

Beginning in 2015, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services Reemployment Services (RES) Unit has been working in partnership with various correctional facilities throughout the

state. Staff provides job search information, career readiness assessment and re-entry guidance to the inmate population. Agency Mobile Workforce Centers have regularly been utilized to support these activities.

In response to Act 1190 of 2013, and in furtherance of Governor Hutchinson's commitment to develop employment opportunities for those re-entering the workforce post-incarceration, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services Discretionary Grants Team was engaged to share resources and to support the design of a formal re-entry program for ex-felon populations discharged from the Arkansas Department of Corrections (ADC) and Arkansas Community Corrections (ACC) facilities. This proposed program was developed in collaboration with ACC and ADC, with both organizations expressing significant support, citing a drop in recidivism rates from 60% to about 20%, if the participant successfully finds a job within the first 30 days after release back into society.

This program involved the establishment of job search and soft skills workshops conducted by Reemployment Services staff in the 13 regional ACC probation and parole offices, as well as 13 ADC facilities and Tucker Maximum Security. Workshops are held on a monthly basis in the ACC offices to serve the relatively short window of time the targeted population can participate in program activities. The workshops occur quarterly at the 13 ADC facilities, and convene once a year at Tucker Maximum. ADC schedules their participants into these workshops starting 18-24 months ahead of their release dates.

This program serves those who are currently incarcerated, as well as those returning citizens who are transitioning into the

workforce and independent housing. Individuals who participate in the program are also referred to Local Workforce Development Boards, as well as the 28 training programs that are currently administered by the Discretionary Grants Team in collaboration with Arkansas Community Colleges and Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition.

VETERANS SERVICES

Arkansas is committed to serving its veteran population. The primary means of fulfilling the needs of Veteran job seekers 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) Specialists, to better serve our veteran customers.

Through this grant, the state employs 13 full-time, and 11 half-time DVOPs, and nine 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 veteran's



THE REEMPLOYMENT SERVICES (RES) UNIT HAS BEEN WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH VARIOUS CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE TO PROVIDE JOB SEARCH AND SOFT SKILLS WORKSHOPS TO PREPARE INMATES FOR RELEASE.

barriers to help develop employment plans.

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 employers and job seekers about the services available to veterans and ensure that workforce centers adhere to priority of service for veterans.

The LVER staff conduct outreach to employers and engage 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 workshops for veterans seeking employment.

They are included as active members of the business service team or similar 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 2,473 veterans registered in the Arkansas JobLink system (AJL) during PY 15. Of those registered, 2,403 received a direct service from staff members and 2,222 received intensive case management services by a DVOP.

Arkansas ranks well against the National Outcomes for Entered Employment Rate at 67 percent and Veterans’ Retention Rate at

84 percent, compared to the PY 2014 National Outcomes of 56.7 percent for Veterans’ Entered Employment Rate and 83.0 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 U.S. 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).

PARTNERSHIP WITH REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

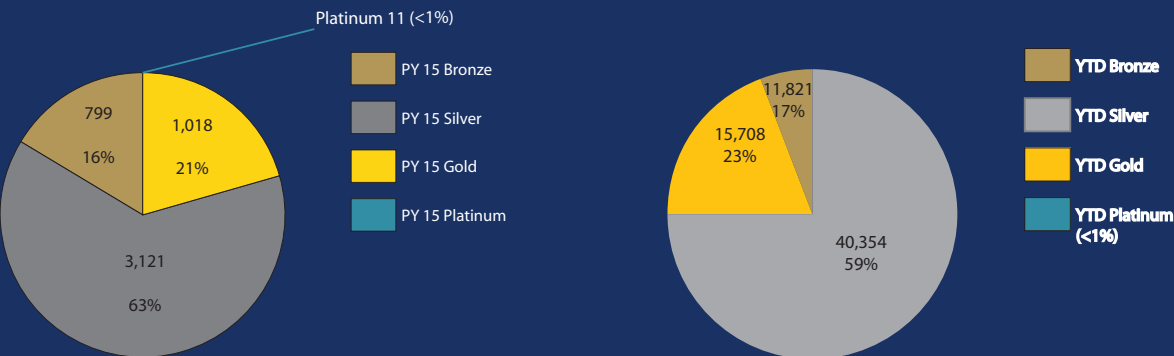
ARKANSAS APPRENTICESHIP COALITION

In June of 2012, the Governor approved an investment of up to \$1.2 million dollars from the Department of Workforce Services Training Trust Fund for an apprenticeship training initiative that was implemented by the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition. It provided a long-term employment and training opportunity to 97 previously unemployed and underemployed individuals in that the new apprentices could be funded for the full four to five years (depending on the discipline) that it takes to reach the Master or Journeyman level.

At the close of PY 15, all of the individuals who began the program remained employed, with 43 projected to have achieved the

CAREER READINESS CERTIFICATION

In program year 2015, 4,949 Career Readiness Certificates were awarded to Arkansas job seekers and high school students enrolled in the State’s Career and Technical Education program. Since the program’s inception in 2008, the total number of CRCs awarded is 68,005.



Master or Journeyman level during PY 2016. The participating coalition training providers were as follows:

- Arkansas Painters Apprenticeship Local 424
- Little Rock Electrical Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers [IBEW])
- National Apprenticeship Training Foundation, Inc. (NATF)
- Northwest Arkansas Plumbing
- Plumber and Pipefitter Local Union 155
- Sheet Metal Workers Local 36

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 can result in nearly 200 individuals receiving training that leads to certification and employability as an apprentice in the pipe fitting and pipe welding trades.

Twelve 18-week training sessions were conducted between August 19, 2013 and June 30, 2016, five at their Little Rock training facility, four at their El Dorado facility and three at their Fort Smith 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 145
Number Completed 108
% Completed 74%
Completed OSHA 10 Certification 100%
Number of Welding Certifications Awarded 167

All of the participants who completed this training were offered a place in UA Local 155's Apprenticeship Program, which operates as the Greater Little Rock Area Joint Apprentice Training Committee, and have become employed in the construction industry. 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.

ARKANSAS WORKFORCE CENTERS

The Arkansas Workforce Centers are at the forefront of the workforce activities, and are a part of the American Job Centers network. In program year 2015, Arkansas had a total of 46 Arkansas Workforce Centers spread across the state providing access to many Arkansans.

In addition to these locations, Arkansas has six mobile workforce center units that travel the state and provide service locations in rural parts of the State.

The Arkansas Workforce Center system is overseen at the state level by ADWS, and is managed locally by each of the local workforce development boards.

As part of the WIOA implementation efforts, ADWS continues to build upon the existing foundation of service integration. The Arkansas Workforce Center system operates under the "no wrong door" philosophy, while local areas have developed their own customer flow strategies unique to their areas.

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 \$2.1 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. This facility opened in January 2016. DWS occupies 5,829 square feet of the building through a prepaid 32.7 year lease. In March 2016, the grand opening was held. Governor Asa Hutchinson and other dignities were in attendance.

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, 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 of 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
- Job fairs, opportunity fairs, and career expos at no cost to employers and job seekers
- Open houses for community members to learn more about the workforce centers
- Coordination with employers and colleges to ensure training needs are met
- Provide of information and attend Rotary Club meetings
- Working with employers on a regular basis on how services can be improved
- Make mobile workforce center units available to employers who are having mass hiring or training
- Allow employers to recruit and conduct interviews on-site at workforce centers
- Work closely with chambers of commerce, economic 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)
- Identify 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

OUTREACH TO COMMUNITIES

In PY 15, 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. Examples of these

opportunity fairs or other community outreach initiatives follow:

Central Arkansas Workforce Development Area

Benton-Outlets of Little Rock Job Fair
Benton-Saline County Business EXPO
Benton-AR Dept. of Education "Become an Arkansas Teacher"
Benton-Benton Junior High School ADWS Day
Benton-Saline County Business Expo
Conway-Southwestern Energy Job Fair
Conway-Baptist Health-Conway Job Fair
Enola-Mt. Vernon Enola Elementary Career Day
Jacksonville-Pulaski County School District
Malvern-Meeting with the Mayor of Malvern
Mt. Vernon-Mt. Vernon Enola High School Senior Enrichment
North Little Rock-Fire and Emergency Services Recruitment
North Little Rock-Homeless Services Day
North Little Rock-CAVHS Veteran Career Fair
North Little Rock-Police Department Job Fair
North Little Rock-Central AR Planning and Development District Information, Resource and Job Fair
North Little Rock-6th Annual Linking the Community to Health Services
Sherwood-TeleTech Hiring Event
Vilonia-Vilonia Career Expo & Hiring Event

Eastern Arkansas Workforce Development Area

Forrest City-Federal Corrections Employment and Information Fair
Forrest City-Eastern Arkansas Regional Career/Job Expo 2015
Forrest City-Core-Mark Hiring Event
Forrest City-Project HOPE Job Readiness Training
Forrest City-Operation Stand Down Mid-South
Forrest City-Fellowship Community Church Community Job Fair
Forrest City-Project HOPE Job Readiness Training
Helena-Project HOPE Job Readiness Training
West Memphis-Managers Meeting
West Memphis-Project HOPE Job Readiness Training

Little Rock Arkansas Workforce Development Area

Little Rock-AR Career Development Association Conference
Little Rock-Promoting Healthier Kids and Families
Little Rock-Multiple Newk's Hiring Events
Little Rock-Hiring Our Hero's / U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Little Rock-Putting AR Back to Work-Cumulus Media Job Fair
Little Rock-Bass Pro Shops Hiring Event
Little Rock-Little Rock Regional Economic Briefing
Little Rock-Saint Mark Baptist Church Feast of Hope
Little Rock-Our House Open House
Little Rock-J.A. Fair High School Transition Fair
Little Rock-Pulaski Heights Career Week
Little Rock-2016 King Holiday Commemoration
Little Rock-Community Correction CRC Testing
Little Rock-Tech Junction
Little Rock-McDermott Career Day

Little Rock-Midsouth Black Expo
 Little Rock-New Birth Missionary Baptist Career Development
 Little Rock-Mabelvale Middle School Career Day
 Little Rock-AR Career Readiness Certificate- Dept. of Corrections
 Little Rock-Partners Appreciation Day, Our House
 Little Rock-Pulaski County Special School District Career Fair
 Little Rock-AR Career Readiness Certificate- Dept. of Corrections
 Little Rock-Beat the Heat
 Little Rock-Pulaski County School District
 Little Rock-MacArthur Museum Veterans Career Fair
 Little Rock-Municipal League Conference

North Central Arkansas Workforce Development Area

Batesville-UACCB Career Fair
 Searcy-Meeting with the Searcy Chamber of Commerce
 Searcy-Unity Health Hiring Event
 Searcy-ElectroCraft Arkansas

Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Area

Blytheville-CRC W.O.R.K. Program
 Jonesboro-TANF Outreach Fair
 Jonesboro-Jonesboro Goodwill 2nd Annual Community Job Fair
 Marked Tree-ASU Newport Marked Tree Community Resource Fair
 Osceola-Career Ready 101 Testing for NEACC Residents
 Paragould-2015 Goodwill Community Job Fair
 Paragould-Meeting with the Paragould Chamber of Commerce Director
 Paragould-Paragould Regional Career Expo
 Pocahontas-Randolph County Chamber of Commerce Business Expo/Job Fair
 Trumann-Community Job Fair

Northwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area

Bentonville-2016 Citizen Soldier Expo
 Fayetteville-Mental Health Summit
 Gentry-McKee Foods Job Fair
 Mountain Home-Community Career Expo 2016
 Rogers-Bryan University Cognasante Job Fair
 Rogers-Arvest Resume Writing and Interviewing Event
 Rogers-Society of Human Resources Conference
 Siloam Springs-Siloam Springs Job Fair
 Siloam Springs-Two La-Z-Boy Hiring Events

Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Area

Monticello-2016 Bradley County Job Fair
 Star City-ADC- Varner Unit Job Fair
 Warren-OMP Job Fair

Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area

East Camden-Summer 2015 Southern AR PROMISE Regional Transition Education
 Texarkana-The Healing Place Back to School Empowerment Bash
 Texarkana-Texarkana College Fall Fest

Texarkana-Hiring Red, White and You! Statewide Hiring Fair
 Texarkana-Career Day
 Texarkana-Career and Community Resource Expo
 Texarkana-Meeting with the Texarkana Chamber, Business and Work
 Texarkana-Red River Army Depot, Transition Center

West Central Arkansas Workforce Development Area

Hot Springs-Hot Springs Community Resource Fair
 Hot Springs-West Central Arkansas Society of Human Resources Manager's Meeting
 Hot Springs-Greater Hot Springs Manufacturing Alliance Meeting
 Hot Springs-Evraz Stractor Opportunity Fair
 Hot Springs-Industrial Technology Open House and Ribbon Cutting
 Morrilton-UACCM 2015 Manufacturing Day
 Morrilton-Sykes Enterprises Inc. - Morrilton Job Fair
 Morrilton-UACCM Job Fair

Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area

Fort Smith-Northside High School's Student Conference- Grit, Goals, and Graduation
 Fort Smith-WorkSource Job Fair at Ben Geren Park
 Ft. Smith-Gateway Employment and Training Job Search
 Mena-Rich Mountain Community College Job Fair
 Van Buren-Fall Career Fair
 Van Buren-Crawford County Adult Education Center Spring Career Fair

NEW LABOR MARKET INFORMATION TOOLS

REAL-LIFE ARKANSAS LIFESTYLE BUDGET CALCULATOR

The new version of Real-Life Arkansas, which debuted on August 11, 2015, is a Lifestyle Budget Calculator that serves as a learning tool for students, job seekers, and other Arkansas individuals. It shows how education impacts earnings, how living expenses add up, and which careers can support a preferred type of lifestyle.

This website (www.real-life.arkansas.gov) is designed to help Arkansas users learn the amount of money they will need to earn in order to have the kind of lifestyle they may want in the near future. Whether an individual wishes to live a simple non-materialistic life or one whereby the individual has a house, two automobiles and the latest high-tech gadgets.

The exercise is meant to be done in a linear fashion. Individuals will first select a city, then their preferred housing type, then utilities, etc. Once the individual completes the entire exercise,

he or she can then easily find the careers that will pay enough money, after taxes are included, to sustain the chosen lifestyle with a click of a button.

The site uses data from the Occupational Wage Survey and the Industry and Occupational Projections data produced by the Labor Market Information (LMI) Section of the Department of Workforce Services. The LMI data is updated each summer after the LMI Department has officially released the projection and wage data for that year.

The LMI Staff utilizes multiple lifestyle cost information sources to determine the “Cost of Living Indexes” used within the Real-Life Arkansas system. This information is also updated yearly every summer after the latest information is available.

DISCRETIONARY GRANTS

Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration, is an integral partner in recruiting and providing funds for dislocated workers and individuals from underserved populations. Since 2010, ADWS Discretionary Grants Team had \$37,135,242 in federal grant funds to administer for the training and employment of workers in Arkansas. The team is continuously looking for employers in need of training for workers.

JOB-DRIVEN NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANT (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 Dislocated Worker Grants (JD NDWG’s). The JD NDWG 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 NDWG funding to implement new or expanded local and regional job-driven partnerships that will serve more dislocated workers and long-term unemployed individuals to achieve better employment-related outcomes for this group of workers.

Arkansas was awarded \$2,472,124 (on July 1, 2014) in JD NDWG funds to train dislocated workers and long-term unemployed, individuals in employer identified demand-driven occupational areas. Successful completion of training by participants would lead to viable employment opportunities. Additionally, the JD NDWG 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. The grant has received a no cost period of performance extension to September

30, 2017. As of the June 30, 2016 quarterly reporting period, the JD NDWG has served 423 participants (105.8 percent 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 a choice 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.

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

SECTOR PARTNERSHIP NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANT (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 Dislocated Worker Grants (SP NDWG’s). SP NDWG 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. The overall goal of funding is the expedited reemployment and the enhancement of employability and wage earnings.

On July 1, 2015, Arkansas was awarded \$6,362,485 in Sector Partnership NDWG funds to train dislocated workers and long-term unemployed individuals in pre-employment activities and occupational-based programs. Workforce training programs are employer-driven and encompass the high-growth industry sectors of Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, 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), a goal of serving 1,700 participants was established.

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services is partnering with 10 participating community colleges, the Arkansas Community Colleges, the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, Winrock International, and five participating Local Workforce Development Boards (North Central, Northeast, Southwest,

Eastern, and Central). With this partnership, participants are offered referrals, eligibility determination, training activities, wrap-around case management assistance, and support services. 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.

The original goal of participation was 1,500 trained participants. At the end of PY 2015, there were 300 participants trained (20 percent of goal) and 99 participants gainfully employed (6.6 percent of goal).

This grant also brought about the partnership of Arkansas Department of Workforce Services with the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) and Metova Inc., Axiom, Rock Pond, and Black Oak Analytics to establish the Arkansas Coding Academy (ACA). The mission of ACA is to provide students with education and real-world skills training to obtain gainful employment in information technology careers. As a sub-award to Arkansas Community Colleges, ADWS contributed one-third of the funding for this partnership, with a goal to provide training and employment for 20 students. Other partners include, but are not limited to, Axiom, JB Hunt, First Orion and Rock Fish.


At a press conference on July 19, 2016, Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson stated, “The Arkansas Coding Academy will open a wide variety of opportunities for Arkansans to learn the skills necessary to compete in the fast growing and exciting tech sector. Metova and UCA’s coding academy, combined with our state’s efforts to provide computer science classes for all students, will

continue to raise Arkansas’s stature as a state ripe for tech sector investment.”

DISASTER NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANT (AR-27) SEVERE SPRING/SUMMER STORMS

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declared a disaster for Arkansas on June 26, 2015, due to severe storms, including tornadoes and flooding, which took place during the period of May 7-June 15, 2016. Arkansas applied for and received National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) 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 NDWG funding was approved for \$2,072,622 (later modified to \$2.2 million) to serve 111 planned participants in temporary employment clean-up efforts during the grant period of August 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016. This grant has received a no cost period of performance extension to March 31, 2017.

There were 29 counties affected by the storms that encompassed funding for four Local Workforce Development Areas that include the following: the Northwest Workforce Development Board, North Central Development Board, Southwest Workforce Development Board, and Western Workforce Development Board. The participating local workforce development boards were able to exceed their planned participant goal by cumulatively employing 129 participants (116 percent of goal) in clean-up and recovery efforts by the end of the grant period.



**MORE THAN \$4.2
MILLION WAS
AWARDED TO
ARKANSAS IN PY 15
FOR STORM DAMAGE
CLEAN UP.**

DISASTER NATIONAL DISLOCATED WORKER GRANT (AR-28) SEVERE WINTER STORMS

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declared a disaster for Arkansas on February 5, 2016 due to severe storms, including tornadoes, straight-line winds, and flooding, which took place during the period of December 26, 2015-January 22, 2016. Arkansas applied for and received National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) funds to cover the costs of providing temporary employment linked to clean-up and recovery efforts for communities that were affected by the disaster. Disaster NDWG funding was approved for \$2,045,788 to serve 107 planned participants in temporary employment clean-up efforts during the grant period of March 1, 2016 through February 28, 2017. There were 11 counties affected by the storms that encompassed funding for two Local Workforce Development Areas that included the Northwest Workforce Development Board and the North Central Workforce Development Board. The participating local workforce development boards cumulatively have employed 97 participants (91 percent of goal) in clean-up and recovery efforts during the continued grant period.

ARKANSAS 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. The original total funding amount allocated to ADWS was \$7,744,057.

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 University of Arkansas, Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Career Education, Arkansas Department of Human Services, Arkansas Department of Health, the Clinton Foundation, and Sources for Community Independent Living Services, 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. As of June 30, 2016, ADWS had met its goal of having 1,000 youth participants trained through the program. In addition, 1,000 youth completing training have been employed. 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.

ARKANSAS PARTNERSHIP FOR NURSING’S FUTURE

Arkansas received a \$4.8 million grant to train healthcare professionals in the state from April 1, 2012 to April 2, 2016. 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 was 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) provided funding to enable Arkansas workers statewide to be trained for careers in the nursing profession, which included the following:

- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)
- Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)
- Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN)
- Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing (BSN)

The APNF partners providing training under this grant included Arkansas Community Colleges, 14 participating two-year colleges, UAMS, participating four-year colleges, Arkansas Health Care Association, Arkansas Hospital Association, the Arkansas State Board of Nursing, Arkansas Community Foundation, Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, and ten local workforce development boards. Over the four-year period, a total of 1,500 participants were to receive grant-funded services. Of those participants, APNF had a goal of 960 participants completing their education and a goal of placing at least 691 participants into employment in related healthcare fields.

ADWS 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 APNF grant intended to address that lack of capacity through the use of distance learning and increased clinical training opportunities.

The APNF grant exceeded the number of participants to be served under the grant. The grant called for 1,200 participants to enter training in one of the target fields. By the end of the

grant period, the ADWS Arkansas Partnership for Nursing's Future grant far exceeded its goals for training in the nursing profession. A total of 1,791 participants completed training and received a degree or certificate in health care fields. That number was 186.8 percent of the original goal. Of the participants who completed training, 1,190 gained employment through the program, which is 172.2 percent of the total grant goal of placement into related healthcare fields.

ARKANSAS APPRENTICESHIP PATHWAY INITIATIVE

On September 16, 2016, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services announced that it would receive \$4 million from the U.S. Department of Labor to fund the Arkansas Apprenticeship Pathway Initiative, to expand apprenticeship programs in high-growth and high-tech industries including Healthcare, Information Technology and Advanced Manufacturing.

Through this initiative, ADWS will connect 600 Arkansans over the next five years to high-quality apprenticeships, providing participants with the knowledge and skills needed to attain good-paying in-demand jobs. Participants also will earn college credit upon completion of an apprenticeship program. These earn-while-you-learn training opportunities will be targeted toward dislocated, underemployed, unemployed, and underrepresented individuals. ADWS was one of 46 grantees to receive an American Apprenticeship Initiative Grant from the U.S. DOL. To ensure AAPI would be employer-driven, ADWS has collaborated with businesses like Baxter Healthcare Corporation and TrinityRail Maintenance Services in the design and development of the apprenticeships. Already, 20 businesses have committed to hire and train participants of the program.

Other partners include Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, Arkansas Community Colleges (formerly Arkansas Association of Two-Year Colleges), National Park College, Arkansas State University-Newport, Arkansas State University-Mountain Home, South Arkansas Community College, Arkansas Department of Human Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and Winrock International. Additionally, the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce, Arkansas Aerospace Alliance, Arkansas STEM

Coalition, Goodwill, and the Workforce Training Consortium have pledged their support.

APPRENTICESHIPUSA STATE ACCELERATOR

On April 21, 2016, the U.S. Department of Labor announced steps to increase access to apprenticeship by investing \$90 million through ApprenticeshipUSA to expand apprenticeship in the United States, including:

- \$60 million to support state strategies to expand apprenticeship, including funding for regional industry partnerships and innovative strategies that diversify apprenticeship locally;
- \$30 million to catalyze industry partnerships in fast-growing and high-tech industries, to support organizations focused on increasing diversity, and to launch national efforts to make it easier for employers to start and for workers to find apprenticeship opportunities.

The U.S. Department of Labor announced a first step in investing in state apprenticeship strategies. Recognizing Governors' unique ability to create smart statewide strategies to expand apprenticeship, the Department made up to \$9.5 million available for ApprenticeshipUSA State Accelerator Grants, for states to develop strategic plans and build partnerships for apprenticeship expansion and diversification. States will also receive support to develop comprehensive game plans for encouraging businesses to launch apprenticeship programs in a variety of industries including Healthcare, Information Technology, Aerospace, and Environmental Municipal Water Specialists.

ADWS was awarded \$200,000 for a two-year performance period beginning June 1, 2016. Project partners for the federal grant include Arkansas Department of Career Education, Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, Arkansas Community Colleges, Winrock International, local workforce development areas, WIOA roundtable participants, the State Sector Strategies Committee, industry representatives, Arkansas Economic Development Commission, Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce, and other project stakeholders.

PERFORMANCE DATA

WAGNER-PEYSER

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’s customers may visit a workforce center electronically or in person for a variety of services.

During the 2015 program year, 201,495 individuals received employment related information services and registered with Arkansas JobLink, the state’s internet-based, job matching system. Of the 201,495, nearly half (99,531 or 49%) 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 job seekers and saves thousands of hours each year in reduced maintenance and updating of individual job orders posted in our system.

Arkansas increased its overall number of Job Orders in PY 15 as well as experienced an increase in the total number of employers with job orders entered into the AJL system. The total number of persons 55 and over who accessed employment services increased over the previous year. The PY 15 federal performance measurement indicators from Arkansas JobLink show that 69.3 percent of Arkansas job seekers gained employment, which represents a two percentage point increase over the previous program year. Addition-

Wagner-Peyser Program Results

Performance Items	Negotiated	Actual
Entered Employment Rate	64.0	69.3
Employment Retention Rate	82.0	84.0
Average Earnings*	\$12,300	\$12,828

ally, 84 percent were retained in employment for at least six months with six-month average earnings of \$12,828 dollars, which matched the results from the previous year.

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT TITLE I-B

The data tables included in this report represent Arkansas’s Title I-B performance measure results for Program Year 2015. Arkansas’s 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 15. Arkansas’s WIA annual performance outcomes for PY 15 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, exit our systems work-ready and obtain and retain self-sufficient wages. The entered employment rate for those adults with disabilities increased from 52.9 percent in 2014, to 73.3 percent in 2015. This represents an increase of more than 20 percentage points during the program year.

The average earnings for those in the Dislocated Worker program increased seven percent over the previous year, increasing from \$14,926 in 2014 to \$15,936 in 2015. Additionally, the average earnings of Veteran participants in the Dislocated Worker program increased from \$15,518 in 2014 to \$17,306 in 2015.

In the Youth program, the literacy and numeracy gains increased by 5.55 percentage points over the previous year.

Adult Program Results At-A-Glance

ETA-B

Performance Items	Negotiated	Actual	Numerator Denominator
Entered Employment Rate	84.0	87.3	315 361
Employment Retention Rate	88.0	93.6	524 560
Average Earnings*	\$13,080	\$14,750	\$6,740,815 457

Outcomes for Adult Special Populations

ETA-C

Performance Items	Public Assistance Services	Numerator Denominator	Veterans Denom	Numerator Denom	Individuals Disabilities	Numerator Denom	Older Individuals	Numerator Denom
Entered Employment Rate	86.9	212 244	100	10 10	73.3	11 15	75	6 8
Employment Retention Rate	90.6	280 309	95.8	23 24	91.7	11 12	100	11 11
Average Earnings*	\$12,892	\$3,094,199 240	\$14,810	\$266,586 18	\$14,784	\$118,269 8	\$10,290	\$10,290 10

Outcome Information by Service Level for the Adult Program

ETA-D

Performance Items	Individuals Core Only	Numerator Denominator	Individuals Core & Intensive	Numerator Denominator	Individuals Training	Numerator Denominator
Entered Employment Rate	0	0 0	82.5	33 40	88.1	281 319
Employment Retention Rate	0	0 0	88.6	31 35	93.9	492 524
Average Earnings*	\$0	0 0	\$9,871	\$236,901 24	\$15,034	\$6,494,699 432

*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	94.6	226 239
Employment Retention Rate	93.0	95.1	234 246
Average Earnings*	\$14,114	\$15,936	\$3,171,279 199

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	87.5	14 16	100.0	4 4	85.7	18 21	50.0	1 2
Employment Retention Rate	94.7	18 19	100.0	5 5	94.1	16 17	100.0	2 2
Average Earnings*	\$17,306	\$259,591 15	\$19,347	\$77,387 4	\$13,989	\$181,860 13	\$27,239	\$54,477 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	97.7	42 43	93.9	184 196
Employment Retention Rate	0	0 0	97.2	35 36	94.8	199 210
Average Earnings*	\$0	0 0	\$14,743	\$442,281 30	\$16,148	\$2,728,997 169

*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	81.5	485 595
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	81.5	78.4	469 598
Literacy and Numeracy Gains	72.0	79.1	126 158

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	81.8	314 384	0	0 0	75.0	69 92	85.8	133 155
Attainment of Degree or Certificate Rate	80.9	304 376	0	0 0	79.4	81 102	62.5	70 112
Literacy and Numeracy Gains	75.0	75 100	0	0 0	75.0	12 16	79.1	125 158

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	91.1	520 571	\$10,123	\$4,879,065 482	2.54	8 315	\$5,488	\$1,525,665 278	72.6	204 281
Dislocated Workers	90.4	217 240	\$137	\$3,253,102 \$2,381,341	1.77	4 226	\$6,261	\$1,289,709 206	63.6	117 184
Older Youth	86.5	115 133	\$6,277	\$702,996 112	8.75	7 80	\$3,385	\$226,821 67	0 0	0 0

Participation Levels

ETA-M

Program	Total Participants Served	Total Exiters
Total Adults	154,279	153,332
Total Adults (self)	152,613	152,457
WIA Adults	153,873	153,095
WIA Dislocated Workers	418	239
Total Youth (14 - 21)	1,103	695
Younger Youth (14 - 18)	804	534
Older Youth (19 - 21)	299	161
Out-of-School Youth	529	240
In-School Youth	574	455

Cost of Program Activities

ETA-N

Program Activity	Total Federal Spending
Local Adults PY 15	\$505,772
Local Dislocated Workers PY 15	\$709,289
Local Youth 2015	\$10,087,504
Local Adults FY15	\$7,437,762
Local Dislocated Workers FY15	\$4,237,114
Rapid Response	\$1,189,371
Statewide Allowed Activities	\$238,044
Description	
Statewide	GAE Administration
Allowed	Eligible Training Provider Cert ACRS
Activities	
	\$2,044,127
	\$91,067

Total of All Federal Spending Above

\$26,540,050

Figure 1 - Cost Analysis

ETA-Figure 1

Target Populations	PY 15 Expenditures*	PY 15 Participants Receiving Services	Cost Per Service Provided
Adults			
Core	\$1,220,450.96	2,518	\$484.69
Intensive	\$490,087.34	3,513	\$139.50
Training	\$1,783,186.83	1,199	\$1,487.22
Dislocated Adults			
Core	\$642,973.75	758	\$848.25
Intensive	\$182,032.75	1,277	\$142.54
Training	\$362,506.99	368	\$985.07
Youth	\$2,852,933.09	1,240	\$2,300.75

*Expenditures were from all available funding periods and sources, i.e., PY 2014 and PY 15 allotments. Expenditure period covers July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016. Please note that the participant 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 2015, Arkansas provided a cost efficient program that provided a wide variety of services meeting the needs of all stakeholders. Data for PY 15 are shown above in Figure 1.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

For PY 15, 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 obtain the most accurate, honest feedback from employers and job seekers, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services contracted with the Survey Research Center (SRC) 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 561 employers participated in the survey, and the response rate for the survey was 66 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 one in three (33 percent) employers gave the services a “10,” the highest satisfaction score possible. When asked the extent to which the services they received met their expectations, ratings given by the employers averaged 7.0 on the satisfaction scale. More than half (53 percent) of employers gave a score of “8” or above.

The 2015 CSI of 68.2 is 1.1 point lower than the 2014 CSI of 69.3.

Veterans' Outcomes by Special Populations

Customer Satisfaction Index for Employers

Mean Overall Satisfaction = 7.6 0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((7.6 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 73.3$

Mean Service Expectancy = 7.0 0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((7.0 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 66.6$

Mean Comparison to Ideal = 7.1 0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((7.0 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 66.6$

CSI = $(.33 \times 73.3) + (.33 \times 66.6) + (.33 \times 66.6)$

Customer Satisfaction Index = 68.2

JOB SEEKER SURVEY RESULTS

A total of 578 job seekers participated in the survey, and the response rate for the survey was 48 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, ratings given by the job seekers averaged 7.7 on the satisfaction scale. Forty-one percent of the job seekers gave a score of "10" on the scale. This represents an increase of five percentage points compared to 2014.

About one-third (30 percent) of job seekers reported that they have their Career Readiness Certification. This represents a five-point increase compared to the 2014 percentage reporting having the certification.

More than half (56 percent) of the job seekers rated the helpfulness of the certification an eight or higher. This represents a significant increase compared to 2014 when only 41 percent of the job seekers gave a similar rating.

The 2015 Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) score rose 2.3 points over the previous year.

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 = 7.7 0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((7.7 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 74.4$

Mean Service Expectancy = 7.2 0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((7.2 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 68.9$

Mean Comparison to Ideal = 7.1 0 -100 Overall Satisfaction = $((7.1 - 1)/9) \times 100 = 67.8$

CSI = $(.33 \times 74.4) + (.33 \times 68.9) + (.33 \times 67.8)$

Customer Satisfaction Index = 69.7

CENTRAL ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The Central Arkansas Workforce Development Area has developed partnerships with a wide variety of organizations. These partnerships enhance services as well as the overall experience a client receives when they enter one of our five Workforce Centers. Each Workforce Center conducts partner meetings regularly.

These meetings serve as a forum for collaboration as we work together during this time of transition with WIOA. Upon reading the purposes set forth in section two of WIOA; it is clear the emphasis the U.S. Department of Labor has placed on the coordination and collaboration of job training activities with Economic Development

Organizations (EDOs). The Central Arkansas region began building these relationships in January 2016, and continues to fortify them to this day.

Furthermore, the Central Arkansas Workforce Development Area recognizes the integration of Workforce and Economic Development job creation must be coordinated with job placement activities, the need for the business sector to be involved in the decision-making process, and labor market and economic data must be used to make data driven decisions.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Training Program Realignment

The Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board requested an evaluation and realignment of training programs for the Central Arkansas region in early 2016. The reasoning for the request stemmed from the Sector Strategies Board Training held by ADWS. As a result the Central Arkansas Workforce Development Area conducted an in-depth, multi-faceted analysis of the economic base of the region, the region's workforce, and eligible training providers. The analysis uncovered gaps in the labor force and over saturation of certain fields.

The Board is striving to ensure clients who enter the workforce centers and receive training have the best possible chance of entering a field with good wages and one for which jobs exist in the region. The document will be available to the public following the Board's adoption on September 15, 2016. To view the document, visit www.WorkforceAR.com and click the button titled "LEVERAGE" on the home page.

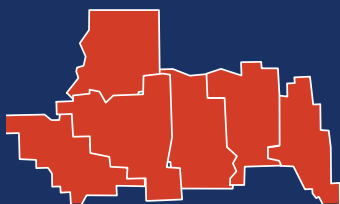
PROMISE Grant

Our second Summer Work Experience has been a huge success. The Arkansas PROMISE youth program began June 6, 2016 and ended on August 10, 2016. A total of 109 youth referrals were received from the Arkansas PROMISE team, and 80 youth gained work experience during the program. For many youth, it was their first time gaining work experience. The youth worked at a variety of worksites, matched according to with based on their skills, knowledge and abilities.

Arkansas PROMISE is a research project open to youth, ages 14 to 16, who currently receive SSI benefits. Arkansas PROMISE will provide additional services to youth and their families to support their education and career goals. Services include: intensive case management, two paid, competitive work experiences, education and employment training and support for youth and families, health and wellness training, and benefits counseling.

Central Arkansas Planning and Development District, Incorporated received \$384,850.71 to operate the PROMISE program for the second year. The Arkansas PROMISE Model Demonstration Project is a \$32 million, five-year grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to the University Of Arkansas College of Education and Health Professions and the Arkansas Department of Education.

CENTRAL PERFORMANCE ETA-O



	Total Participants	Total Exiters
Adults	21,446	21,107
Dislocated Workers	31	22
Older Youth	34	17
Younger Youth	78	40

		Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	85.0
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	100.0
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	85.0
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	95.4
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$13,464
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$18,440
Placement in Employment or Education	Youth (14- 21)	81.7	89.2
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14- 21)	81.5	85.7
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14- 21)	72.0	76.5
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
	1		8

LEVERAGING RESOURCES

The Central Arkansas Workforce Development Area continuously researches grant and funding opportunities throughout the program year. The Executive Director of Central Arkansas Planning and Development District challenged the Workforce Development Area to go beyond the program of WIOA, and have a greater impact in the region by obtaining grants and implementing new programs. The Central Arkansas Workforce Development Area has begun efforts to create new partnerships with many corporate and philanthropic foundations to

strengthen its capabilities to leverage additional resources to better serve the Central Arkansas Workforce Development Area.

Additional resources leveraged during the program year included AR PROMISE and the Arkansas Sector Partnership Grant. For more information on the Central Arkansas Workforce Development Area's involvement in these two programs, refer to the Innovative Service Delivery section of this report.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board Area Director monitors feedback of clients through satisfaction surveys available in all five Arkansas Workforce Centers. Issues and barriers to success which are discovered are brought to the Executive Director of Central Arkansas Planning and Development District. Those issues and solutions are presented to the board during quarterly meetings throughout the year. Time sensitive issues which cannot wait until the regular board meeting are brought before the Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board (CAWDB) Executive Committee through "Go to Meeting" software. The decisions made by the Executive Committee are then brought before the Chief Elected Officials and the Workforce Development Board at their respective quarterly meetings.

The Chief Elected Officials and the Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board receive progress reports for all of the Workforce Center activities at their quarterly meetings, including job placement reports, business services, special programs such as PROMISE, and the operations budget. The aforementioned reports serve as a "checks and balances" to generate any issues or successes for discussion during the respective board meetings.

The recent decision to realign training programs throughout

the region stemmed from a discussion at the first Workforce Development Board meeting held in 2016. Other improvement measures which have resulted from the Board's commitment to continuously improve program delivery are listed below:

- www.WorkforceAR.com
- Social Media and Targeted Outreach Campaigns
- Success Story Film Project with Pulaski Technical College
- Go to Meeting Integration
- Addition of Business Service team member
- Data-driven decision making
- Report: "Leverage: Utilizing WIOA in Central Arkansas"

The Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board, within WIOA parameters, may and will adjust any current policies, procedures and local one-stop operations to help ensure that the area is meeting the goals and objectives set forth by the Regional and Local Plan. The Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board has also requested that Board and Committee private sector membership be reflective of the in-demand industries within the region.

CITY OF LITTLE ROCK HIGHLIGHTS

The Little Rock Workforce Development Board (LRWDB) was certified by the Governor of Arkansas and formally came into existence on July 1, 2015 with 19 original members. The first meeting of the new LRWDB took place on July 23, 2015. The LRWDB participated in numerous internal trainings and discussions in anticipation of the changes that would come when the final regulations of the WIOA were published.

At its September 2015 meeting, the board adopted bylaws in conformity with WIOA, accepted new committee assignments and directed its staff to steadily prepare for and implement changes as the WIOA would continue to emerge in PY 15.

In April 2016, the eagerly anticipated Local Board Member Training was attended by eleven members, the CEO, the executive director, and the transition consultant engaged by the LRWDB to facilitate the board's strategic planning process that would eventually result in the production of the local four-year plan.

As PY 15 came to close, the LRWDB was continuing to be active in developing its vision/mission philosophy under WIOA, conducting stakeholder interviews and visiting significant projects and programs that will drive employment and training requirements into the first several years of the WIOA era.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Program Year 2015 was witness to several new and continuing efforts to deliver workforce services to the residents of Little Rock in innovative ways. For the second year, the LRWDB implemented a DOL-funded YouthBuild Grant in a continuing effort to meet 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 LRWDB joined forces for a second year with ADWS and other state agencies under the PROMISE Grant to provide summer work experience to younger youth receiving SSI benefits

YouthBuild Little Rock Grant

The Little Rock Workforce Development Board (LRWDB) received a YouthBuild Grant in 2010 for \$1.1 million. This program received another round of funding, \$720,000, to continue in 2014. In PY 15, the second year of this grant, the goal was to serve at least 20 additional older out-of-school youth and assist them in acquiring a GED and industry-recognized certifications in highway construction, weatherization technology, certified nursing assistantships, commercial truck driving, and construction apprenticeships.

PROMISE Grant

PROMISE—Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income—is a joint initiative of the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the U.S. Departments of Education (ED), Health and Human Services, and Labor. Arkansas was selected as one of six states nationally to promote positive changes in education and employment outcomes for the target population. To achieve these outcomes, AR PROMISE provides innovative educational, vocational, and other services to youth and their families. AR PROMISE also makes better use of existing resources by improving service coordination among state and local agencies. Youth SSI recipients age 14 to 16 are eligible to enroll in the PROMISE study. The services will be provided over a five-year period which started in October 2013. The LRWDB began its partnership with the Arkansas PROMISE Grant consortium in January 2015 to construct and operate a summer youth work experience program to run simultaneously and in concert with the regular WIOA-funded Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP.)

CITY OF LITTLE ROCK PERFORMANCE ETA-O



	Total Participants	Total Exiters
Adults	16,320	16,554
Dislocated Workers	50	34
Older Youth	41	28
Younger Youth	60	32

		Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	96.0
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	100.0
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	97.0
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	100.0
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$16,087
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$17,159
Placement in Employment or Education	Youth (14- 21)	81.7	92.7
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14- 21)	81.5	82.0
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14- 21)	72.0	72.7
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded

CITY OF LITTLE ROCK HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

LEVERAGING RESOURCES

The Little Rock Workforce Development Board (LRWDB) will continue to leverage its position as a non-profit entity, a recognized local workforce development board and required grant partner, and a convener/coordinator of a comprehensive workforce delivery system to the local community. Additional resources through new and existing innovative programs, such as many of those described in the paragraphs above, will continue, such as the YouthBuild and PROMISE Grants.

Continuing its efforts to work with and reach out to the Hispanic and ESL community, the LRWDB has particularly tried in PY 15

to publicize the USDOL guidance stating that Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Initiative participants are eligible to receive WIA services (TEGL 02-14). The LRWDB and its partners at the Arkansas Workforce Center at Little Rock hosted conferences and workshops on the topics of grassroots advocacy for rights as immigrants (see above.) The partnership includes direct coordination with Arkansas United Communities Coalition and the Arkansas Coalition for DREAM, with the financial and organizational support of The Walmart Foundation, Catholic Charities of Arkansas, LULAC, Arkansas Interfaith Alliance, and the Consulate of Mexico.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

For the third time in three consecutive years, the local area achieved all of the performance goals for each of the nine common measures and the additional four local measures set by the Little Rock Workforce Development 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 LRWDB strives for continuous improvement of the services offered in the Arkansas Workforce Centers through customer feedback.

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. This information

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. In 2015, there were 55,000 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. In PY 15 there were no customer complaints as to quality or sufficiency of services provided. As needed, the center partners, both individually and/or collectively, will employ customer satisfaction surveys resulting in the kinds of changes outlined in the Employer Services section of this report.

EASTERN ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The local board and Chief Elected Officials began discussing the WIOA requirements and responsibilities during meetings that began in April 2015. Ongoing quarterly meetings are being held with the local board, committees, partners, colleges, economic development, business and industry, taskforce groups, the Planning and Development District, and others.

The WIOA partners meet monthly along with a WIOA partners subgroup. Both groups work on specific activities such as: defining a deliverable business services process, developing a county-wide

rapid response team for businesses, identifying and maintaining a current employers contact list, a system for communicating with partners on business visits and needs, and developing a resources list for adults, children and families.

The local board also defined and approved several sectors (Advanced Manufacturing, Transportation, Logistics and Distribution) to concentrate on for the delivery of services. In addition, the WDBEA executive director participates on the state level WIOA partner's roundtable policy committee that works on state and local policies.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

ACT Work Ready Communities

The Workforce Development Board of Eastern Arkansas (WDBEA) staff participates in ACT's Certified Work Ready Communities initiative, which analyzes common county level data for a community to be certified as "work ready." During this process, the board is building a sustainable infrastructure to close skills gaps and attain a competitive advantage.

By achieving ACT Work Ready Communities status, communities use a data-driven approach to demonstrate they have a skilled workforce that is valued by their local industry and a workforce development system in place that links education and workforce development together, aligns to economic development, and matches people to jobs.

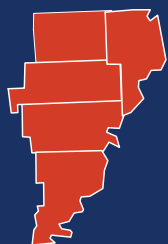
PROMISE Grant

Summer Work Experience: Our first summer has been a success working with PROMISE participants in Crittenden, Lee and St. Francis Counties. Twenty-seven youth participated in the summer work experience activity June 16 through August 14. Most of the youth completed the 200 hours of work experience allowed by the grant and received a total of \$1,600 in earnings for the summer. Arkansas PROMISE is a research project open to youth, ages 14 to 16, who currently receive SSI benefits. For 1,000 youth, PROMISE will provide additional services to youth and their families to support their education and career goals. Services include: intensive case management, two paid, competitive work experiences, education and employment training and support for youth and families, health and wellness training, and benefits counseling. The Arkansas PROMISE Model Demonstration Project is a \$32 million, five-year grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to the University of Arkansas College Of Education and Health Professions and the Arkansas Department of Education.

Enhanced Business Services

The Workforce Development Board of Eastern Arkansas received funding in the amount of \$206,748.00 to hire an individual to concentrate on business services activities through a Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) Round 4 grant awarded to ASU Mid-South entitled Greater Memphis Alliance for a Competitive Workforce (GMACW). The

EASTERN PERFORMANCE ETA-O



	Total Participants	Total Exiters
Adults	10,491	10,533
Dislocated Workers	10	6
Older Youth	16	1
Younger Youth	55	25

		Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	100.0
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	100.0
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	88.2
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	100.0
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$14,566
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$10,547
Placement in Employment or Education	Youth (14- 21)	81.7	92.9
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14- 21)	81.5	96.3
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14- 21)	72.0	0.0
Overall Status of Performance		Not Met	Met
		2	0
			7

EASTERN ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

business services representative markets the Arkansas Workforce Centers and Workforce Investment Network (WIN), in Memphis, to the business community in the Eastern Workforce Development Area and region.

This individual also acts as a primary liaison between GMACW and WDBEA for all services and activities; refers all key sector companies (manufacturing and transportation, distribution, and logistics) to GMACW as WDBEA's strategic partner and "go-to" broker for solving workforce training needs in key sectors and for large-scale hiring needs; and provides job development and career services that lead program participants to employment. This grant is in effect from August 2015 - September 30, 2018.

SNAP Employment & Training

The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) awarded the Workforce Development Board of Eastern Arkansas (WDBEA) a third year Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training grant for \$88,063.35 to serve Crittenden County residents. The goal of the grant is to assist adults referred by the DHS office with the tools they need to gain meaningful employment and/or get their GED or training to become self-sufficient. The Workforce Development Board of Eastern Arkansas is the only WDB in the state to have a SNAP grant.

This is the second round of funding for the SNAP grant. The grant period is July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017. At the end of the initial 12 month contract, the professional services contract may be extended for up to six additional years, in one year increments, contingent upon approval by the Division of County Operations, review by the legislature, approval by the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration, appropriation of necessary funding, and all necessary state and federal reviews and approvals.

Arkansas Sector Partnership

The Arkansas Sector Partnership (ASP) grant targets dislocated workers and long-term unemployed individuals. It is the responsibility of the staff to determine program eligibility before individuals are referred to the pre-employment (W.O.R.K) training offered by East Arkansas Community College. The ultimate goal is to provide eligible individuals with the tools, skills and training to become self-sufficient. This grant is effective from October 2015 - June 2017.

LEVERAGING RESOURCES

The WDBEA continuously researches grant and funding opportunities for the Eastern Workforce Development Area and our region. The board has secured additional funding through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment & Training (E&T) Grant, PROMISE Grant and Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT)/ Greater Memphis Alliance for a Competitive Workforce (GMACW)

Grant, and Arkansas Sector Partnership (ASP) grant, as mentioned above. In addition, meetings are scheduled with the Delta Regional Authority, Foundation for the Mid-South, Southern Bancorp Community Partners, local community colleges (ADTEC), economic development groups, etc. about potential grants that would assist our residents and improve our region.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Workforce Development Board of Eastern Arkansas' (WDBEA) director of programs and Department of Workforce Services (DWS) manager reviews the Arkansas Workforce Center customer satisfaction surveys which are acted upon if a problem is identified. The results -- for both problem resolution and positive feedback -- are discussed during center partner meetings and then shared with the WDBEA Executive Committee and board staff for solutions or changes to the operations or workforce system. Also, the center partners, executive committee, youth council, board, and CEOs review a center activity report that indicates the number of individuals served by an Arkansas Workforce Center and the partner agency, the youth elements and activities they are participating in, and program exits. The reports are used to track participant activity, for continuous improvement efforts, and monitoring purposes. If deemed necessary, and within the law and

regulations, the board will adjust current policies, procedures, and any local center operations to help ensure that the area is meeting the goals and objections set forth. The board, the executive committee, and youth committee meet quarterly to assess the efficacy of the current workforce efforts and suggest activities to improve services. Also, quarterly meetings are held with the WDBEA executive director, WDBEA director of programs, DWS managers, and DWS area operations chief.

We also work diligently with the local DWS managers to improve services to Business and Industry by promoting the Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) and Microsoft IT Academy and encouraging job seekers to take advantage of these credentials so that we can offer better referrals for the job orders we take.

NORTH CENTRAL ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

One of the initial WIOA implementation activities was the appointment of a new North Central Workforce Development Board (NCWDB) by the Chief Elected Officials (CEO's) in the ten-county area. Following the federal and state WIOA guidelines, the board is composed of at least 51% business representatives, at least 20% workforce representatives, all core partners and others as indicated in the policies.

The newly formed NCWDB has met on a quarterly basis since its first meeting on September 2, 2015. At the initial meeting, the board formed four committees including Executive, Youth, One-Stop, and Disability Services. An agreement between the CEO's and Local Board was established in September 2015. The agreement specifies the roles of the CEO's and the local board and how each carries out their partnership responsibilities under WIOA.

The local board has engaged all the key partner programs and other relevant partners through the board structure to develop a local plan for the North Central region by December 31, 2016.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

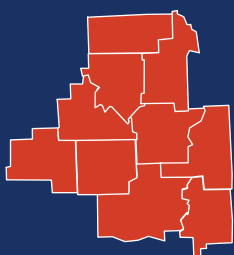
North Central formed partnerships with ASU-Beebe at Searcy, UACCB in Batesville, and ASU-Newport through the two-year Arkansas Sector Partnership (ASP) grant. The grant provides employer-driven workforce training in high growth industry sectors of Advanced Manufacturing, Health Care, Information Technology and skilled construction trades. It serves dislocated workers and long-term unemployed individuals. ASU-Newport is working with Trinity Rail Maintenance Services and Unity Health to train persons in welding and nursing, respectively. UACCB has a short-term training for Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) through the grant, and they are working with White River Health System. ASU-Beebe at Searcy has a multi-skills training program (General Technical Skills for the advanced manufacturing industry sector) and is working with St. Jeans Industries, Defiance Metal Products, Remington Arms and Bryce Industries. Our role has been to determine if an individual is eligible to receive the training.

North Central applied for and/or completed three National Dislocated Worker Grants during all or part of PY 15 due to various natural disasters in the region. These grants brought in a total of over \$1.3 million to the North Central area. To date, the grants have provided temporary employment to more than 80 workers at \$11.50 per hour. They have been placed mainly with road and street departments in various counties to help clean-up the devastated areas that were hit hard by tornadoes and flooding. In many cases we have also been able to provide supportive services such as providing transportation assistance and purchasing work boots. Several of the workers have done a great job working for the counties or cities and have been hired on a permanent basis.

North Central participated with other workforce areas and DWS throughout the state in monthly meetings during PY 15 to coordinate WIOA implementation efforts. The local board also participated in semi-annual partner meetings at the state level as well as collaborated on services and connected with core and other relevant partners at local meetings, community events, and job fairs. In order to implement the WIOA requirement that a minimum of 75% of youth funding must be used for out-of-school youth, the local board has coordinated its efforts with Adult Education throughout the region to recruit GED students as out-of-school youth participants. WIOA had a booth at the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Community Connection Event on April 5, 2016, to share information about its services.

Through coordination and collaboration with the partners in the workforce system, an integrated array of services is provided to employers and job seekers. On-the-job training and work experience have been two of the work-readiness programs that have benefited both the employer and job seeker in our area.

NORTH CENTRAL PERFORMANCE ETA-O



	Total Participants	Total Exiters
Adults	11,692	11,207
Dislocated Workers	65	36
Older Youth	12	8
Younger Youth	73	131

		Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	70.5
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	82.1
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	94.9
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	78.3
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$13,245
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$15,852
Placement in Employment or Education	Youth (14- 21)	81.7	60.5
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14- 21)	81.5	66.4
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14- 21)	72.0	83.3
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
	5		4

NORTH CENTRAL ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

LEVERAGING RESOURCES

During PY 15, the local board utilized a variety of efforts to leverage additional resources. North Central leveraged funds awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor for two additional National Dislocated Worker (NDW) grants in PY 15 and the completion of a third NDW grant in December 2015. It also worked with three of its community colleges on the two-year Arkansas Sector Partnership grant. The grant is targeted to work with dislocated workers and long-term unemployed persons to provide training and improve skills to enable them to find employment in an in-demand industry.

After the affiliate workforce center at the old Izard County building was closed, Ozarka College in Melbourne offered space on its campus for the WIOA office. The college provides free office space

and a phone line for our use. It is a highly visible location with easy public access to services provided by WIOA, Adult Education, and the college.

A Resource Sharing Agreement is in place for the Searcy, Batesville, and Newport Workforce Centers. The partners housed at these centers share expenses for rent, janitorial services and utilities as well as other services depending on the location.

Supportive services such as child care, transportation or housing provided by WIOA to its participants are a means of leveraging funds when other sources besides WIOA fund the cost of tuition.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Vital to the success of the workforce system, continuous improvement must be an ongoing process. One of the continuous improvement efforts during PY 15 was to ensure appropriate training be provided to the local board and WIOA staff since White River Planning and Development District was designated as the new Title I Service Provider and One-Stop Operator for the North Central area the latter part of 2015.

The North Central Workforce Development Board of Directors attended and participated in a one-day training on April 27, 2016 sponsored by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) and U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). The main topics for the training were local plan development, strategic versus tactical action and high impact local boards. The trainer talked about the

need for the board to measure its effectiveness and that of the workforce system and focus on continuous improvement based on federal, state, and local measurements. It provided valuable training in defining the role of the local board as it takes action to implement WIOA.

Workforce and local board staff attended program and financial monitoring training on March 8 and 9, 2016 in Little Rock. The event, sponsored by ADWS and DOL, provided staff an opportunity to learn about effective monitoring procedures and receive technical assistance. On the morning of March 8th, North Central and other local board staff throughout the state met with representatives from DOL for an assessment of WIOA implementation in their individual areas.

NORTHEAST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

In order to implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Northeast Arkansas has regular Regional Partner Meetings with the following partners: WIOA Title I Services (Adult, DLW, and Youth), Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, Adult Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Arkansas Human Development Corporation, Arkansas State University, Arkansas State University Newport, Arkansas Northeastern College, Black River Technical College, Goodwill Industries, Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce, Paragould Regional Chamber of Commerce, Great River Economic Development – Mississippi County, and other agencies.

During the program year, a series of Regional Partner meetings were conducted with the express purpose of providing opportunities to:

1. Share information regarding services provided by each partner.
2. Explain the online application available on www.neawia.com and develop an associated applicant referral process.
3. Create a community calendar in which all agencies can have events posted on www.neawia.com so agencies can successfully notify every agency of events.
4. Explain the priority of services for veterans.
5. Provide an overview of the State and Local Workforce Development Boards so members would be properly informed.
6. Disseminate information from the Federal and State government regarding WIOA and the new policies/procedures being instated.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

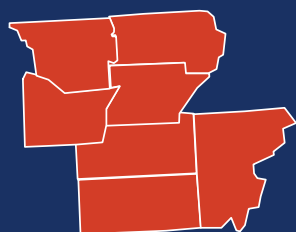
Northeast utilizes occupational skills training in-demand occupations at local two and four year state colleges/institutions. The top demand occupations utilized are (but not limited to) healthcare, business, computer technology, education, and industrial maintenance. Success in these programs provides the client with a meaningful credential and the skill set with which they can obtain a job. Staff assist clients in finding a job that will provide financially for their families and no longer be dependent on public assistance. Occupational skills training provides the community with a more skilled workforce which will help keep current employers and attract new employers to the area. Northeast has served more than 328 participants (216 adults, 75 dislocated workers and 37 youth) in occupational skills training (ITAs) for the 2015-2016 year. Of the 328 participants, 267 (81%) served in occupational skills were low-income individuals.

Northeast utilizes work experience to assist adults, dislocated workers, and youth. Northeast has been successful in taking an individual with no work skills and utilizing businesses/organizations in the community to instill a work ethic/pride. Clients are given the opportunity to improve their lives/situation by providing them with a better skill set, possible job references, and income which they can use to provide for their families' basic needs. The Youth work experience also includes an academic component in which staff focus on math/reading/finance areas based on the individual client's needs. During 2015-2016 year, 113 participants (5 adults, 12 dislocated workers, 96 youth) were served in work experience. Of the 113 participants, 102(90%) served in work experience were low-income individuals.

LEVERAGING RESOURCES

By leveraging resources, WIOA is able to partner with other agencies to minimize duplication of funds/services. At this time, only services have been leveraged from partners.

NORTHEAST PERFORMANCE ETA-O



	Total Participants	Total Exiters
Adults	20,904	20,884
Dislocated Workers	83	44
Older Youth	56	46
Younger Youth	100	82

		Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	94.7
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	96.3
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	96.6
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	98.3
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$15,250
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$13,693
Placement in Employment or Education	Youth (14- 21)	81.7	87.5
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14- 21)	81.5	85.6
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14- 21)	72.0	83.0
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
	1		8

NORTHEAST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

For example, the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) maintains all the job bank information so funds from partner programs may be used for other purposes. Funds are leveraged by utilizing local organizations to secure free meeting room space for NEAWDB, NEACEOs, and other committees, when possible.

Regional Partner meetings encourage non-mandatory programs to attend. The non-mandatory partners will include agencies that serve customer groups with barriers to employment. Non-mandatory partners will also include private, for-profit enterprises in the employment and training field. This networking is intended to bring a broader array of needed services to the area. Over time, these partners may co-locate with WIOA/DWS and share in the costs of the Workforce Centers.

The PROMISE grant is a new funding source that provided \$428,091.85 to the Northeast Arkansas region. The grant allowed NEAWCs to provide work experience services to clients receiving SSI. These funds allowed the NEAWCs to serve 34 additional youth with barriers in 2015 and 42 additional youth with barriers in 2016.

The Arkansas Sector Partnership grant is a new funding source that provided \$17,794 to the Northeast Arkansas region. The NEAWCs were responsible for determining eligibility on clients. Once determined eligible, the local two-year colleges were responsible for providing training, and Winrock was responsible for providing any necessary supportive services.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Based on clients' responses to questionnaire forms and online surveys, information obtained through monitoring/technical assistance, and partner feedback, the NEAWDB developed and implemented plans for continuous improvement for the NEAWDA.

One tool utilized by the NEAWDA is monitoring. ETS, Inc., performs an internal monitoring of financial and program activities utilizing the DWS monitoring tool. This type of monitoring allows ETS, Inc., to correct/review areas needing improvement more efficiently. This tool is utilized to ensure due diligence, and funds are utilized in an effective manner. These monitoring reports are provided to the NEAWDB and NEACEOs for their review.

Another tool utilized by the NEAWDA is the expenditure and performance report. The NEAWDB and NEACEOs are provided year-to-date expenditures by funding stream and that reflect administrative and programmatic costs. They also receive the current actual performance measures. This information allows the NEAWDB and NEACEOs to make informed decisions regarding service to the community.

Regional partner meetings allow for collaboration and networking among the agencies which leads to better understanding of each agencies' services. These meetings allow Northeast Arkansas to maximize usage of available services so funds can be utilized in a more effective manner to minimize duplication of services.

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The Northwest Workforce Board and partner staff have worked vigorously to transition the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Staffs of the Northwest WIOA Transition Team (Core Four and Core Four Plus) partners have been meeting monthly since March 2015 to ensure that the partners are coordinating activities within the Workforce System of Northwest Arkansas. These regular meetings have deepened the relationships and understanding of the law and guidance around the WIOA as well as the programs' benefits and needs.

With partners as Board members, the opportunity to educate and interact with the Board is ensured at least quarterly; however, Board members are continually involved with several of the partners throughout their communities.

Northwest has supported secondary Career and Tech Education (CTE) through the Educational Cooperatives with their regional employer partnership councils. Having CTE sitting on the Youth

Committee and Workforce Board has provided the opportunity for better understanding and coordination. Board members and staff have helped in the organization and participation in Education Cooperative Summits which bring students, educators and employers together to build the talent pipeline we need for the future.

The Board has supported the Regional Workforce Grants funded by the Office of Skills Development at Arkansas Career Education. Exciting and innovative opportunities are being developed through partnerships of all levels of education at Arkansas State University at Mountain Home, North Arkansas College, Northwest Arkansas Community College, and the University of Arkansas Global Campus.

Integration of services to employers and job seekers is being addressed with the Core 4 partners monthly and is happening through referrals to our partners, working with apprenticeship partners, Chambers of Commerce, and other venues.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Partnership with Adult Education

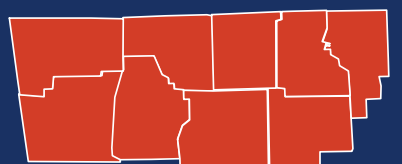
Northwest's strategy for serving the out-of-school youth who are dropouts is to partner with the Adult Education programs providing GED training and mandate a work component. Typically, an individual will attend GED classes for a half day and be in a work experience for the other half. Participants are paid a stipend for attending class and a wage for the work experience. Staff secures an employer for the work experience and closely monitors both the training and work activities. If either is being neglected or there are issues, then the Employment/Training Advisor works to resolve the issue. This has been extremely successful because of close oversight, and the young person has financial resources to stay focused on completing the GED while gaining valuable experience in the world of work. This has shown greater performance success for both the Adult Education and Youth programs.

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.

PROMISE Grant

The PROMISE Grant continues to offer an opportunity for Northwest to further develop its services to youth with disabilities.

NORTHWEST PERFORMANCE ETA-O



	Total Participants	Total Exiters
Adults	21,603	21,577
Dislocated Workers	69	39
Older Youth	25	19
Younger Youth	133	81

		Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	86.2
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	91.4
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	93.4
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	93.3
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$15,601
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$15,884
Placement in Employment or Education	Youth (14- 21)	81.7	83.9
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14- 21)	81.5	75.5
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14- 21)	72.0	66.7
Overall Status of Performance		Not Met	Met
		2	7

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

LEVERAGING RESOURCES

Northwest was the recipient of two National Emergency Disaster Grants totaling \$2,835,526 during PY 15; AR 27 for \$1,405,526, AR 28 for \$1,430,000. These grants help with the cleanup and recovery from severe storms and flooding. As of June 30, 2016, we have had 116 people assisting with projects across seven counties repairing and replacing bridges, culverts and roads, debris cleanup, moving dirt and gravel, and more. Without this help our counties and cities would be hard pressed to get the much needed work done in a timely manner.

Through the PROMISE Grant, Northwest is providing Summer Youth Work Experience to youth with disabilities. Additional funding of \$242,727 this year has provided 200 hours work experiences in Benton and Washington counties. This grant is a partnership between the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Department of Workforce Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and others, and will continue each year until September 2018.

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. For example, Microsoft Office 2010 Pro costs about \$150 on the market and we pay only \$25 per license. Depending on the needs each year we have been able to keep the Resource Room and staff computers updated with current software.

Arkansas Department of Workforce Services provides additional sources of services to customers including Microsoft IT Academy and TORQ. At no cost to the local areas we can help customers train for and receive Microsoft Office programs certification. The TORQ program allows customers to easily prepare and search for employment efficiently and quickly.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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

Seven of nine Program Performance Measures exceeded the Negotiated Goals during Program Year 2015 as shown on the following chart. The two measures not met were within the 90th percentile of goal and reflect the change to out-of-school youth population. With the effort to transition the focus of the youth program to an out of school youth program, it has become increasingly difficult to obtain the Attainment of Degree or Certification and Literacy and Numeracy Gains measures.

SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The Southeast LWDB has worked tirelessly to implement and promote WIOA activities in the local area. Among many of the efforts, various board trainings including the statewide board training provided by DOL and ADWS in Little Rock, Arkansas was attended by several member of the local board. In addition, a board orientation and training was provided at the local level at the SEAEDD offices in Pine Bluff, AR.

Local staff attended various meetings on the local and state level that focused upon WIOA implementation and partnerships. Management and staff attend and frequently present information at local chamber meetings, advisory panels, and public meetings to bring WIOA awareness to each community.

WIOA staff also facilitated several partner meetings during PY 15 with partners, including: Vocational Rehab, Adult Education, Community Colleges, DHS, and DWS. Plans were discussed to collaborate on efforts to serve citizens of Southeast Arkansas in a more streamlined, seamless method. One of the major outcomes of these meetings was the development of a common enrollment intake form to be used by all partners to share resources as well as recruit and screen participants who were in need of all services. Finally, efforts were discussed to focus on a unified approach to better address employer services and serve job seekers.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Customer Service

The Southeast LWDA has always attempted to implement innovative service strategies to better serve its citizens. All clients are served with a “meet you where you are” approach and staff are encouraged and trained to create an atmosphere of respect and relatability with each customer. This strategy is designed to make customers feel as comfortable as possible with sharing information about their background, barriers to employment and connections, all in an effort to ensure that the best individualized career pathway is mapped out and developed specifically for that customer.

The Southeast LWDA has adopted the philosophy that “cookie-cutter” methods do not work for diverse people. The outcomes of this approach have led to higher performance, stronger relationships with clients that lead to more contacts and cooperation while the participant is active and during the follow-up period.

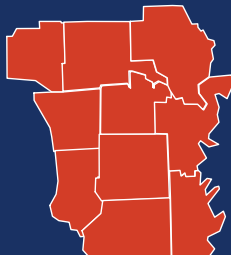
Outreach and Recruitment

Social Media has played a huge role in the success of our programs as well. Adults, Dislocated Workers and Youth are often highlighted for their accomplishments on outlets such as Facebook. This has led to a bigger “buy-in” into our programs from participants and has also increased recruiting efforts.

While every area is different and thinks it has an innovative approach to providing services, the Southeast Area is no different. From the efforts of the Business Services Team to the outreach and recruitment efforts, the Southeast Area has been successful in establishing collaborative and cooperative working relationships with employers throughout the region. These relationships were instrumental in the provisions of services to area youth with disabilities under the AR Promise Grant, giving 50 youth an opportunity to experience a job.

SOUTHEAST PERFORMANCE

ETA-O



	Total Participants	Total Exiters
Adults	10,346	10,223
Dislocated Workers	14	3
Older Youth	31	2
Younger Youth	156	67

Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	88.3
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	100.0
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	90.9
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	100.0
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$15,313
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$20,649
Placement in Employment or Education	Youth (14- 21)	81.7	86.0
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14- 21)	81.5	87.3
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14- 21)	72.0	0.0
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
	1		8

SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

LEVERAGING RESOURCES

SEAEDD works with partner agencies such as Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers, Rehab Services, TAA, DHS, and other agencies to share costs of participants' enrollment/tuition at training sites. We share the cost of books, tuitions and fees, and testing. This enables all agencies to stretch dollars and afford to assist more participants.

Some centers in the SE region are co-located with partner agencies and share operation costs. Also, as a part of an Economic Development District, SEAEDD actively seeks out other funding and grant opportunities from related sources to help improve and enhance services to our clients.

The Southeast LWDA received funding under the AR Promise Grant, in the amount of \$89,244 during PY 15 and is looking to leverage more resources during Program Year 2016. The staff and board are partnering with area two-year colleges on numerous planning grants.

The Southeast Workforce Area will be fortunate enough to benefit from the workforce grant awarded to the University of Arkansas at Monticello to promote the NCRC and work-ready communities in numerous counties in the area. A grant for \$988,570 from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to fund technical training and career readiness has been presented to the University of Arkansas at Monticello's Workforce Alliance of Southeast Arkansas.

The grant will be used to coordinate secondary and postsecondary education to "create a successful economic climate in Arkansas by preparing and encouraging Arkansans to pursue high-demand jobs, including, but not limited to, those stemming from industry-recognized credentials, career and technical certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees," according to the memorandum of understanding between UAM and the ADHE.

The Workforce Alliance of Southeast Arkansas is a partnership of industry, business, higher education, public education, and economic development managers covering seven counties – Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Cleveland, Desha, Drew, and Lincoln. Business and industry partners currently involved in the alliance include Clearwater Pulp and Paper Corporation of Arkansas City, Georgia-Pacific Pulp and Paper Corporation of Crossett, Potlatch Corporation of Warren, JB's Diesel Doctor and Monticello Diesel Repair, both of Monticello, and Summit Trucking of Pine Bluff.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The Southeast LWDA strives to provide quality services to employers and job seekers. During previous Program Years, all performance measures were not met. As a direct result, the Workforce Center front-line staff received intensive and on-going training. The final performance for PY 15 indicated that all measures, excluding one, were met or exceeded.

SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area began having regional partner meetings to strengthen partnerships and to discuss the process of implementation of WIOA. These meetings are designed to share information on what each agency is doing to ensure implementation and the services that are provided to job seekers and employers. The referral process is

also discussed. WIOA partners regularly attend industry meetings in the local area as well as attending industry meetings with the Education Cooperatives to identify business/industry needs. Hiring trends, staffing needs, training, and skills assessments to promote increased employment in high growth, high paying industries are discussed at these meetings.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

Career Fair

On February 5, 2016, WIOA Title I staff teamed up with Arkansas Department of Workforce Services Re-Employment Specialists to coordinate a career fair at Arkansas High School in Texarkana, Arkansas. The focus of this event was to prepare youth for the world of work. Topics discussed included dressing for success, attitude, and employer expectations. Career Planners offered information on WIOA Title I Youth services and the benefits of using these services, in order to motivate youth in pursuing career goals.

Smarter Sentencing Program

Five counties in Southwest Arkansas are participating in the Smarter Sentencing Program (SSP), which provides offenders of lesser crimes with an opportunity to enter a program designed to deter them from repeating offenses and lower recidivism rates. They are required to increase their employability by attending Adult Education to obtain their GED or WAGE certification, and find gainful employment. In return, these individuals may have their pleas withdrawn or records expunged.

Partnership to Serve Out-of-School Youth

WIOA Title I has partnered with the 13th Judicial District, Adult Education, and Arkansas Community Corrections (ACC) to provide a work experience in conjunction with GED. Customers are required to be an out-of-school youth, attending 20 hours of GED a week, and participating in a 20 hour a week work experience. WIOA Title I will pay an hourly wage for time attended in the classroom, as well as the hourly wage for the work experience. Therefore, clients are paid as if they were working a full-time, 40 hour week job while working toward furthering their education. This partnership has allowed both WIOA Title I and Adult Education to see an increase in enrollments of hard to serve individuals such as offenders, single parents, low-income/low-skilled persons, and disadvantaged youth.

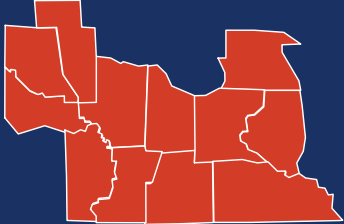
Business Partnership

A partnership was developed with Southern Refrigeration Transport (SRT), a local trucking company in Texarkana, Arkansas. On June 6, 2016, WIOA Title I met with recruiting staff at SRT to discuss the need for skilled drivers for the company's local and over-the-road driver vacancies. SRT expressed a significant interest in hiring veterans for driver positions, but eventually the company goal is to transition these veterans into instructors for the driving orientation.

LEVERAGING RESOURCES

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development area has partnered with Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (DWS) and SouthArk Community College (SACC) in the Sector Partnership NEG. Funds from this grant initiative will be used to provide dislocated

SOUTHWEST PERFORMANCE ETA-O



	Total Participants	Total Exiters
Adults	13,699	13,538
Dislocated Workers	17	5
Older Youth	23	8
Younger Youth	39	22

		Negotiated Level	Actual Level	
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	90.0	
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	90.0	
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	88.0	
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	95.2	
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$12,182	
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$18,820	
Placement in Employment or Education	Youth (14- 21)	81.7	82.6	
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14- 21)	81.5	88.5	
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14- 21)	72.0	71.4	
Overall Status of Performance		Not Met	Met	Exceeded
		2	1	6

SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

workers with pre-employment skills training and occupation-specific training that lead to viable employment opportunities within the high-growth industry sectors of advanced manufacturing. SouthArk Community College is 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.

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development area received \$285,905 in PY 15 to partner with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the University of Arkansas for the Arkansas PROMISE, a research project for youth ages 14 – 16 who currently receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. PROMISE is a joint initiative of the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Social Security Administration, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Labor. Fifty-four Promise Youth were offered work experience opportunities.

The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area leveraged \$14,109 in the National Dislocated Worker Grant (AR27) to provide dislocated workers with temporary jobs to assist counties with cleanup and removal of debris as a result of a federally declared national disaster.

The Arkansas Department of Higher Education has confirmed approval of grant funding for the following:

- The University of Arkansas Workforce Alliance Workforce Planning Grant submitted on behalf of UA Community College at Morrilton (lead institution), UA Cossatot, UA Community College at Batesville, UA Hope-Texarkana, and Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas. This grant will provide \$905,891.00 that will be used to implement an industry-driven training program in welding. Communities and industries will greatly benefit from a strengthened elementary to high school to post-secondary to industry connection in educating current and future workforce pools.
- The Regional Advanced Manufacturing Partnership: Building the Pipeline Workforce Planning Grant submitted on behalf of UA Cossatot (lead institution), SouthArk Community College, SAU Tech, and UA Hope-Texarkana. These Southwest Arkansas Community College Consortium (SWACCC) members will receive \$800,000.00 that will be used to provide professional development for secondary faculties, establish education programs in industrial technology, allow the purchase of equipment to supplement these education programs, and to host activities that will expose young students to careers in advanced manufacturing in Southwest Arkansas --- all geared toward meeting local workforce needs.
- The Aerospace Defense Sector Certification Pathways Implementation Grant. Southern Arkansas University Tech received \$874,924 which will be used to establish new education programs for high schools, incumbent workers, adult workers, and industry workers. Southern Arkansas University will also be able to purchase equipment to help supplement the new programs and host special events for young students to help expose them to careers in advanced manufacturing. All partners will work together as a PATHWAY team to make this possible for not only the schools, but also gearing it toward meeting the needs of our industry partners.
- South Arkansas Community College (SACC) Futures in Information Technology (FIT) Implementation Grant. SACC will receive \$387,139 that will be used to implement an industry-driven training program in Computer Information Technology. The FIT project proposal aligns with Arkansas economic and workforce goals through development of partnerships with employers and K-12 districts, enhancement of service delivery to employers, showcasing local talent, and addressing the IT skills gap. The proposed IT career pathways will offer the opportunity for high school students to earn a Certificate of Proficiency in one of three areas after one year, and a Technical Certificate in Computer Information Technology after two years. High school graduates could then complete an AAS degree in Computer Information Technology by the end of their first year of college. The college credit transfer articulation agreement with SAU Magnolia will offer students an opportunity to complete a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science, with a concentration in Computer Information Technology.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In efforts to improve service delivery, the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Centers place a high priority on excellent customer service. This includes shortening the wait time for services, answering incoming phone calls promptly, returning phone calls in a timely manner, and being friendly, courteous, and knowledgeable. The centers have randomly utilized Customer Satisfaction Surveys to gauge the public perception of the services provided and the effectiveness of the services. During each round of the surveying, the results are reviewed and discussed with the partners. If a negative response is received, it is generally related to a denial of benefit rather than an experience of poor customer service. Verbal feedback from participants and employers is also requested on staff interactions and availability of services. This information is relayed

to the partners, and when necessary, corrections are made to ensure optimal service delivery. Workforce Center staff receives continued coaching on the importance of excellent customer service.

Another area of improvement is the emphasis on participant career interests and goals when determining job placements for WIOA Title I participants. Individuals participating in the work experience program have been placed in jobs that directly reflected career interests and aptitudes. This allows participants to reinforce their desire to work in specific career fields or assists them in deciding a different career path.

WEST CENTRAL ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

The local board has begun having regional partner meetings in order to get everybody on board for WIOA implementation. All core partners, local board members, and other entities are invited to attend these meetings. We are in the process of setting up meetings for the next six months. During these meetings, each of

the core partners will give a presentation as to what their role is in WIOA and the services provided to job seekers and employers. We will also be discussing the West Central Regional Plan that is due by December 31, 2016.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

PROMISE Grant

The West Central area joined with the Arkansas PROMISE Grant in Garland County and provided work experience to nine disabled youth. Arkansas PROMISE is a research project open to youth ages 14 to 16 who currently receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. This program provided work experience to youth that had little or no previous work experience and enabled them to earn their own money to purchase school clothing, etc.

The West Central area became an active participant in the PIVOT Program (Provider/Inter/Volunteer/ Other/Teachers) for inmates at the Garland County Detention Center (GCDC) WIOA staff provides class instruction in a lecture format that encompasses the skills needed to be competitive in their job search once they exit the prison system.

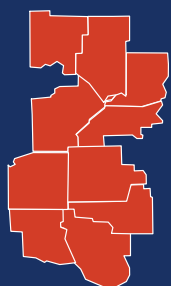
The comments below were received from the Director of Inmate Training at the GCDC:

“The Career Readiness training that [your staff] provides is instrumental in our inmates successfully transitioning back to our community. Most of the inmates have been out of the workforce for an extended period of time, and the training prepares them for interviews and brings them to a level that will greatly improve their chances of getting a job. Some of the skills they learn are how to complete an application, dressing for success, and getting hired. Upon returning to the community, [your staff] assists them with updating their resumes and assisting them in finding a job they are qualified to do and preparing them for the interview. Many of our inmates have been successful in becoming productive citizens in our community due to [your staff’s] Career Readiness training.”

LEVERAGING RESOURCES

- The One-stop Operator utilized the free website Weebly to create a webpage on the services available through the Workforce Centers, WIOA and other employment related information.
- Business and client media outreach was provided at no cost by utilizing public service announcements on radio, cable tv, and library video displays.

WEST CENTRAL PERFORMANCE ETA-O



	Total Participants	Total Exiters
Adults	16,713	16,762
Dislocated Workers	30	22
Older Youth	36	13
Younger Youth	83	38

		Negotiated Level	Actual Level
Entered Employment Rate	Adults	84.0	84.6
	Dislocated Workers	88.0	100.0
Retention Rate	Adults	88.0	95.3
	Dislocated Workers	93.0	100.0
Average Earnings	Adults	\$13,080	\$15,543
	Dislocated Workers	\$14,114	\$12,184
Placement in Employment or Education	Youth (14- 21)	81.7	91.1
Attainment of Degree or Certificate	Youth (14- 21)	81.5	71.1
Literacy or Numeracy Gains	Youth (14- 21)	72.0	94.4
Overall Status of Performance	Not Met	Met	Exceeded
	2		7

WEST CENTRAL ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

- TechSoup, a non-profit company allows eligible non-profit agencies to purchase donated software and technology items from companies such as Microsoft, Adobe, and Nortons. Software was purchased at a significant savings to update staff and resource-room computers.
- Workforce Center clients are also provided free training in Microsoft IT Academy to obtain a Microsoft Office program certification and can utilize the TORQ program to match their skills and work history to current job openings. The Career Readiness Certificate is also available to clients to test and document a range of essential skills that are broadly relevant across industries and occupations. These three programs are provided through the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services at no charge to the client.
- Clients are provided on-site access in the Malvern and Russellville Workforce Centers to the Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™) Program. WAGE is a job readiness training program conducted through the Adult Education Division of the Arkansas Department of Career Education and offers at no charge six state-issued certificates: Employability, Industrial, Customer Service Level I, Customer Service Level II, Bank Teller, and Office Technology.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

A customer feedback system is vital to continuous improvement provided by the Workforce Centers. Customers are provided a Customer Service Survey card at each center designed to determine their level of satisfaction with the services they received.

The completed surveys are reviewed at the local partner meetings, and discussions are held on how to improve customer and/or

program services. The WIOA Monitor also reviews the surveys when conducting monitoring of the workforce center activities.

The Business Service Representative also receives feedback from employers and presents it to the Business Service Teams. Employers receive a prompt response to inquiries or concerns by the Business Service Representative and Team.

WESTERN ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS

In May 2015, the local Workforce Partners began preliminary planning meetings for the implementation of WIOA, and with the September 17, 2015, Statewide Partner Meeting, a true initiative was launched in Western Arkansas. The release of the state's Vision Arkansas-Workforce Development Delivery System

document served as a spring-board for communication and focus for the local partners. Quarterly meetings of the Core-Four Partners began with the goal of building and deepening partnerships, while aligning visions across organizations and openly discussing the implementation of WIOA as a team.

INNOVATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

During PY 15, the local area implemented the first Summer Work Experience component of the PROMISE grant in Crawford and Sebastian Counties. This grant presented challenges and rewards on multiple levels, and continues to be a successful program in Western Arkansas.

Early in PY 15, strong partnerships had been developed among key agencies and the planning process was complete. By July 2015, 16 worksites had been secured and all 18 PROMISE youth had completed their orientations. A concerted effort had been made to match each youth with a work experience that complemented his or her skills and interests. This effort was a product of a one-on-one bonding process with each youth and their guardian(s) over several months prior to the start-up of the program. Establishing trusting relationships between the PROMISE youth, their families, and their Job Coaches was rewarding for all, and a necessity for the success of the program.

The dedication and passion of the staff assigned to this project was paramount to its success, and without the support from local businesses, the community and its leaders, these PROMISE youth would not have had the opportunities that this experience provided.

On August 6, 2015, the first Work Experience component of the grant came to a close. Of the 18 youth who participated, 13 reached or exceeded their goal of 200 work hours. A year-end ceremony was held where each youth was awarded a certificate and recognition for a job well done.

LEVERAGING RESOURCES

During PY 15, Western expended \$244,252.06 from the Dislocated Workers National Emergency "disaster" grant to fund temporary jobs for dislocated workers in aiding our counties and cities in the 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 35 dislocated workers and long-term unemployed citizens of Western Arkansas.

Western expended \$67,440.54 from the Arkansas PROMISE grant by providing case management/job-coaching and 220 hours of employment for 16 youth receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in Crawford and Sebastian counties during the second work-experience component of this grant.

During PY 15, Western partnered with local Adult Education Centers for assessment testing/TABE testing/WAGE training/Refresher

WESTERN PERFORMANCE_{ETA-O}

			Negotiated Level		Actual Level	
 Adults Dislocated Workers Older Youth Younger Youth	Total Participants	Total Exiters	Entered Employment Rate		Adults	
	11,000	10,947			84.0	
	49	28	Dislocated Workers		88.0	
	25	19	Retention Rate		Adults	
	27	16			88.0	
			Dislocated Workers		93.0	
			Average Earnings		Adults	
					\$13,080	
			Dislocated Workers		\$14,114	
			Placement in Employment or Education		Youth (14- 21)	
			Attainment of Degree or Certificate		Youth (14- 21)	
			Literacy or Numeracy Gains		Youth (14- 21)	
			Overall Status of Performance		Not Met	Met
					2	7

WESTERN ARKANSAS HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

courses in math and reading/GED classes.

Clients are referred to local Abilities Unlimited and United Way agencies for emergency clothing, and to local food banks and churches for emergency food.

Free space at area colleges and court houses is utilized in four out of six counties in Western Arkansas.

Western leverages resources with local universities and training institutions by utilizing individual Pell Grants in the financial needs assessment process for clients.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

In striving for continuous improvement of services in Western Arkansas, the local Workforce Center Partners are initiating measures to improve job and career options for job seekers and workers through an integrated and job-driven system. This system provides an array of employment services and connects customers to work-related training and education, as well as supportive services they may need in order to be successful in a training program or new career.

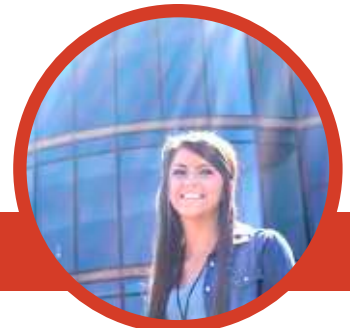
In addition, there is an increased emphasis on services to employers, aimed at assisting them in connecting with skilled employees and access to other supports, including education and training for their current workforce.

SUCCESS STORIES

ALEXIS DAMMANN

Life is pretty good now for recent college graduate Alexis Dammann. She's working as a computer programmer for one of Arkansas' biggest companies, J.B. Hunt, and is mostly debt free with no student loans hanging over her head. She graduated from Arkansas Tech University in the tough Computer Science curriculum with an impressive 3.85 grade-point average. But things weren't always so rosy. Not long ago, Alexis was struggling to keep up with the cost of tuition and living expenses, working as much as she could at her \$7.50-an-hour job at a tanning salon while taking classes. "Just trying to make it on my own without any assistance from my parents," Alexis said. "We just had an understanding I would take care of it through whatever scholarships and loans I could get to go along with any money I earned." After she was accepted as an

Adult client in the WIOA program, the financial stress melted away, she was able to reduce her work hours and her GPA reflected that. She had lucrative offers from two major companies more than six months before graduation. "I could get a job so easily because I had higher grades and was able to take time to come interview," Alexis said. "(WIOA) allowed me to get better grades the last two semesters because I was in tough classes." Now, her classmates are looking at student-loan debt of \$25,000 or more. "I don't have that burden," Alexis said. "I can start saving for whatever I want in life right now."



ALYSSA BURNS

All the pieces were in place for Alyssa Burns to accomplish her goal of becoming a nurse. Except one. She had long set her sights on becoming an LPN; she had the intellect, earning good marks in her first semester in the associate's degree nursing program at the UA Community College at Morrilton; and she had the background, having earlier worked as a nurses' aide. The one thing she lacked was the money to continue. "Things got tough that first semester," said Burns, whose Pell Grant didn't even cover the cost of her textbooks. She was working as much as she could but earning only \$8.25-an-hour at the drug store. Her husband worked fulltime, but staying in school was a losing battle financially. Then a woman in the school's financial aid office handed her the business card of WIOA Specialist Martha Boyer. Burns told Boyer about her

predicament, and Boyer got her approved to receive training funding under the WIOA Adult program. That was the missing piece for Alyssa. She cut her work back to weekends, and without the financial strain, her grades climbed even higher. By the time she graduated, she had a nursing job waiting on her where she had worked as a nurses' aide years earlier, and now earns an hourly wage of \$20.50. "I love nursing," she said, just as she always expected she would. "Just the financial [assistance] is all we can do [be]cause we can't study for them," Boyer said. "But just taking that burden away is a big help."



CHRIS DeFRIES

A pay increase of 572 percent is not exactly promised upon certification into the TAA program, but that's exactly the windfall that came Chris DeFries' way from the time of certification to the time he completed training and began working in his new field. "I went from bringing home \$700 every two weeks to bringing home \$2,000 a week," said DeFries, who began employment as a TIG welder after completing the Pipe and Structural Welding program at Black River Technical College. DeFries was earning \$9.27 an hour handling incoming calls for a national cell phone manufacturer. He had only a high school diploma and little hope for further

education. Then the cell phone company broke the contract, sent the jobs overseas, and suddenly the door opened for TAA benefits. He didn't take advantage right away, instead taking a job where he earned experience and a basic certificate as a welder. An instructor at the Black River program told him about the difference in pay with the more advanced type of welding. So, when he got laid off again, triggering the activation of his TAA benefits again, he knew exactly what he wanted to do. "It was amazing," said DeFries, one of the few from StarTek to take advantage of the TAA program. "I don't understand that 'cause it turned my life around."

SUCCESS STORIES

DALLAS CAUSEY

Former Bosch Industries plant engineer Dallas Causey twice resisted the offer of help from the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program when his first two jobs with the company were swept out from under him and shipped overseas. When it happened a third time, he listened more closely at the Rapid Response meeting of the Governor's Dislocated Worker Taskforce. Causey decided to take advantage of TAA funds to retrain in a completely new field. He's now an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) for the Arkansas Therapy Services affiliate in Russellville, something he never would have dreamed of a few years ago. "My only regret is that I didn't do it sooner, because I love this job," Causey said. But why the medical field after a 30-year career

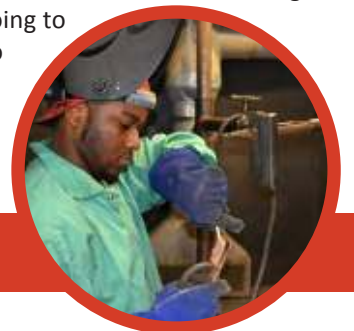
as a manufacturing engineer? "To be honest, it was the only degree I researched where I could start out making close to what I was making as an engineer." Causey said when Bosch left the state for Mexico and China—not once, but thrice—closing three plants where he worked, he thought he would have a hard time getting another job as a plant engineer outside of that company because he doesn't have a degree. In deliberating the new course of his life at age 53, he chose wisely—he says he makes as much in 35-40 hours a week as he made in 55-60 hours with a lot less stress.



BILL DOTOLA

Bill Dotola says he caught some "strange looks" from his classmates in the Commercial Driver's License training course at North Arkansas College. At 62, after an accomplished manufacturing career of more than 40 years, he must have made an odd sight taking classes with people a third his age. But he knew what he wanted, and he "put the pedal to the metal," as the truckers say. "I've always had a desire to travel and maintain an over-the-road kind of career," said Bill, who reckons he got the itch as a kid, when his father drove a big rig for Mayflower Moving Company. Bill had done well in dye casting and made as much as \$38 an hour, but he tired of the rapidly changing manufacturing landscape, which often

involved downsizing. His last job, which he held for only 19 months, was eliminated when the company fully automated. "I said, 'Let's see if I could go ahead and change careers.'" Bill said. Qualifying as a Dislocated Worker, he got WIOA tuition assistance to attend the eight-week CDL course at NAC. Bill drives for Distribution Solutions, Incorporated, based in Harrison, logging as much as 3,000 miles a week and loving every mile. "The independence of over-the-road driving is so appealing," he said. "If I'm going to be a gypsy, I'd just as soon do it in a truck."



DOMINICK SMITH

One short conversation proved to be a turning point for Dominick Smith. The Crossett High School graduate had found some direction and discipline in his life after three summers in the WIOA Youth program. One of three children of a single mother whose fast-food income and SNAP benefits barely kept the family at subsistence level, Dominick had already come a long way, raising his grades to qualify for the A-B Honor Roll and the leadership organization DECA. Still, he had no definite plans other than finding what would inevitably be a low-paying job. "But, we had a talk," said Dominick's case manager, Laura Norrell, who emphasized to Dominick the urgency of continuing his schooling right then, before

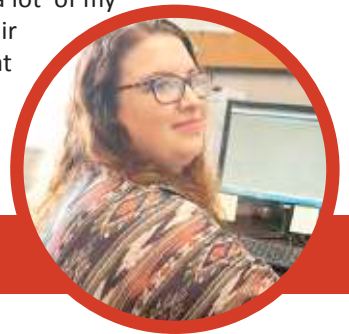
the weight of children and adult responsibilities interfered. Dominick also had a talk with other close family friends who are welders. "It's like a family tradition," said Dominick. He decided to apply for the program at UAMC and was accepted. Dominick did find a job and works a full schedule at KFC while attending school. But he also found a future, thanks to a persistent and conscientious case manager. "I'm glad we had that talk," Norrell said. So is Dominick. "I always said I wanted to go (for post-secondary training), but the only influence I had to go was that program (summer youth WIOA program). I'm glad—just to know the feeling that somebody cared."

SUCCESS STORIES

HAYLEY EDWARDS

The financial noose was tightening for Haley Edwards, her husband and two children when her temporary job at the Arkansas Department of Health ended. She had quit a job as a mastectomy fitter at an orthotic lab to sign up as a “navigator” for the new Affordable Care Act, hoping it would turn into a fulltime job at the Health Department. Instead, it ended abruptly. “All our bills were based on having two incomes—from me and my husband,” she said. Not finding another job right away, Haley realized going back to school was her best option to continue in the medical field in some aspect. She set her sights on the Physical Therapy Assistant program at Arkansas Tech University-Ozark. Haley’s Pell Grant wouldn’t begin to cover the costs, and she says her family

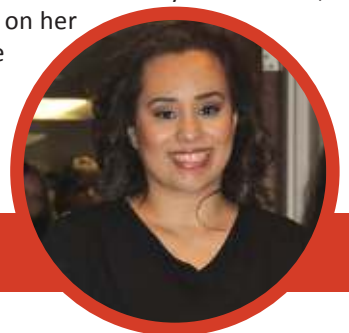
was struggling to survive. But, her sister-in-law knew the PTA program was on the list of those for which the WIOA office in Morrilton could provide training funds and recommended Haley look into it. Haley survived the rigorous three-semester program to graduate as a Physical Therapist Assistant and now juggles PRN jobs as a at three different hospitals earning around \$25-an-hour, primarily due to the recommendation of a family member. “I saw a lot of my classmates stressing over their financing, and I never felt that pressure,” Haley said.



HOLLY BRECKENRIDGE

Former WIOA Youth program participant Holly Breckenridge is considered a whiz kid at her job as a drafter for GW Communications. The Paragould company plots out computer maps of telecommunications transmission lines and infrastructure for AT&T engineers. “She is amazing,” Holly’s supervisor, Danyell McMeans exclaimed. “She went into a job she had no experience in that is very difficult to learn, and she picked it right up. I would say right now she is the best drafter on our (2nd shift) team.” Less than three months on the job, Holly was singled out, along with a drafter on the day crew, for additional training at the company’s headquarters in Texas. Conceivably, that could lead to a leadership role in the company down the road. It’s been a rapid ascension for a 22-year-old without a college degree. Holly’s above-average

competency on computers and an intuitive understanding of digital applications and software became abundantly clear during her WIOA work experience assignment at the Paragould Workforce Center. That is what led a member of the Employment Assistance staff to recommend she apply for the job—that, along with her out-sized work ethic and positive disposition. “I just want to show people that I can be better than what I came from,” said Holly. “I want people to think of me as being independent and motivated.” By all accounts, she has done that, and she’s well on her way to becoming a star in the field of drafting.



JOHANNA VALLE

Raising two teenagers alone, working and taking classes in a tough nursing program is enough for one person. Add to it that one of the teenagers is wheelchair bound and drawing disability benefits and you have the story of Johanna Valle. Then, the story got more challenging. Her medical receptionist job ended when the doctor she was working for closed his practice. Fortunately for Johanna, she found the WIOA Adult program and case manager Melba Miller. “She was searching out other funding so she wouldn’t have a lot of debt when she got out of school,” Miller remembered. Johanna qualified for the WIOA program based on her son’s disability status. Her Pell grant and other scholarships covered most of her tuition,

but WIOA helped cover supportive services like gas money and the fee for the nursing license exam. Even when an academic hiccup set her back a semester, Johanna never gave up. “She was devastated, but she picked right back up and said, ‘We’re going to do it.’” After graduation Johanna took a nursing job in the emergency room at Northwest Medical Center working 3:00 p.m.-3:00 a.m. so that her 16-year-old daughter could be with her son when she’s at work. The shift differential puts her hourly wage at close to \$30. Johanna expects to soon gain her Medical Translator certification, which will bump her salary even higher.

SUCCESS STORIES

KENDRICK LEE



When Eddie Lemm first met a strapping, outdoorsy kid from Hughes who was more interested in hunting and tinkering with tractor engines than school, he probably wouldn't have predicted a \$29,000-a-year job by the time he was 19. But that's what he's making as a Maintenance Aide II with the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department after two years in the WIOA Youth program with Lemm as his case manager. Tests showed Kendrick Lee was deficient in basic skills, and he always said he wouldn't go to college after high school. But Lemm saw some qualities to believe in. "He was a very respectful, young man, very outgoing, liked the outdoors,

liked his community," Lemm said. The work-experience jobs Lemm placed Kendrick in laid a foundation for his future. He spent one summer on the grounds crew at Hughes High School and the next summer at a used car lot, where he got some experience as a mechanic. Both jobs serve him well now in his current position. ATHD paid for his training for a Commercial Driver's License, which brought a bump in pay.

KEYLEIGH FRESNEDA



Morrilton Housing Authority employee Keyleigh Fresneda had plans that far exceeded her \$8.50-an-hour job. Her 3.23 grade-point-average in Mechanical Engineering at Arkansas Tech University showed she had the capability. Having the financial means to reach her goal, on the other hand, was a different story. "My family would have helped me in any way, but they wouldn't have been able to pay for school" Keyleigh said. She faced the prospect of piling up tens of thousands of dollars in student-loan debt. Then, a co-worker told her the WIOA program could pay for classes in majors on a list of high-demand fields for applicants who qualify. That led to a conversation with WIOA case manager Martha Boyer.

"It sounded way too good to be true after Martha told me Mechanical Engineering was on the list," Keyleigh said. The WIOA assistance lifted a huge weight off Keyleigh's back. Her GPA improved when she cut back her work hours. And, after graduating with a 3.47, she took a job with Arkansas Nuclear One to work on a heating and cooling engineering team. Starting salary: \$67,000.

LAUREN PARKER



When workers find out their jobs are relocating overseas, their typical reaction is not, "Great, this is a perfect opportunity!" But that's exactly what Lauren Parker says popped into her mind when her job as Master Production Scheduler at a manufacturing plant in northeast Arkansas moved to Germany. At least that was her reaction after she heard about the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) benefits available to her. By that point, Lauren had several years in manufacturing management and says she loved that job, but "it had gotten a little stagnant." She had already looked into going back to school to get a degree in education but didn't

like her options until TAA gave her a chance to get a Master's in the Art of Teaching (MAT) with license certification. "I thought, 'Oh, this is going to be good. I'm going to be able to make this fun and re-energize learning for the kids—and for me, too,'" she said. To top it off, she got a job in her hometown, at Harrisburg Middle School. Lauren has not replaced her executive salary but that doesn't dampen her enthusiasm for her new career. Her TAA case manager, Courtney Moore, completely understands. "That was her dream—you can't put a price on that," Moore said.

SUCCESS STORIES

MEGAN REICHARD



Life changed suddenly and dramatically in the 10th grade for Megan Reichard. When she learned quite unexpectedly she was pregnant with twins—and especially when she was ordered on strict bed rest and had to quit school—she went from a popular high school sophomore to completely isolated. It didn't get better after her sons were born. "I was just home alone with the twins, doing nothing," Megan said. "No one would talk to me or come see me. I was completely alone." She started drawing Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA), and learned the WIOA Youth program would pay her \$8.00 an hour to take GED classes in the mornings and participate in work experience in the afternoons. Even as things got even

tougher in her personal life when her parents forced her to move out on her own with two-year-old twins at the age of 18, Megan stuck with her studies and made up 2 ½ years of missed classes in a month. She earned her GED just a few weeks after her classmates graduated. "She's a very spirited, determined woman," said WIOA Youth program case manager April Plunk. Megan went through the Career Pathways program to pay for her basic education courses in preparation for the Radiation Technology program at North Arkansas College.



MELISSA BILLIPS

After absorbing a double hit of devastating personal loss in a nine-month period, Melissa Billips needed the compassion and personal care she found from her WIOA case manager, Kathy Halley. During Melissa's sophomore year in college, her sister Elizabeth, a nursing student, died from a complication of pregnancy, a shocking and unexpected tragedy. At the urging of her family, Melissa switched her major to nursing "to sort of honor (Elizabeth)". Before a year had passed, Melissa's mother suffered her second heart attack and died at age 52. About the same time, Melissa realized nursing was not her dream, though it had been her sister's. She enrolled in Dental Hygiene school at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, a program eligible for tuition assistance for WIOA participants. "And I really needed it because medical schools don't give as many scholarships as four-year schools

do," Melissa said. "My story kind of came out when we met, and she seemed genuine and sincere and made me feel she wanted to help me," she said. "There is an extra drive to help someone who is distressed but has that motivation to overcome that," Halley said. "She was definitely determined she was not going to give up. That inspired me. That pushed me to work a little harder as a case manager." Healing from her personal losses and eased of her financial strain, Melissa sailed through Dental Hygiene school and took a job as one of the two Registered Dental Hygienists in the Sheridan office of Arkansas Dentistry and Braces.



NATALIE ELLINGTON

The words of a sympathetic counselor at a vulnerable time can turn a life around. That's what happened to Natalie Ellington, whose home-based medical transcriptionist job was suddenly outsourced. "I was traumatized, you know," Natalie remembered. "I was going from working at home in my pajamas every day to not having a job at all. And, where do you go next?" The soothing voice of a human resources specialist at the phone's other end from the company's home office in Tennessee reassured her that this didn't have to be total devastation. Since Natalie was the only one in her home area affected by the outsourcing, TAA Specialist Sherry Faulkner was not aware. She just happened to hear Natalie's

story when she was in the Workforce Center in Walnut Ridge filing for Unemployment benefits, looked the company up and found the layoffs were eligible for TAA assistance. "It was just like it was supposed to happen," Natalie said. When Natalie saw human resources was one of the fields indicated by her interest assessment, the nice woman from the home office came to mind. The TAA program paid for her to obtain a Bachelor's of Science in Business degree with an HR emphasis. She took a job with Medic One Ambulance, a fast growing startup. As the company's first HR specialist, Natalie wears many hats and performs varied functions.

SUCCESS STORIES

NENITA YANG

Nenita Yang just wanted to be in pediatric medicine and work with children. That's why she put up with a low-paying job at a Thai restaurant in Fayetteville waiting for a spot to open up in the University of Arkansas Nursing program. But only about 40 or so new students are accepted into that very competitive program each year. So, a year went by, then two. Nenita quit waiting and applied instead to the RN program at UA-Fort Smith, about 60 miles to the south. She was thrilled to be accepted there right away, but the commute presented a whole new set of problems, especially since she had to keep the job in Fayetteville to be able to go to school. The problems got larger when the restaurant closed. "It was just my husband working, and at that time we were struggling to keep up with our bills with me commuting back and forth four

days a week," Nenita said. The daughter of Thailand natives—who knew no English and each lacked a high school education when they immigrated—knew the meaning of perseverance. "She didn't seem to be deterred by anything," said WIOA case manager Melba Miller. Nenita heard about WIOA from fellow students. The WIOA assistance was indispensable, especially the gas card that filled her tank every week for the long commute. She earned her degree, got her license, went to work at Washington Regional Hospital earning more than \$20 an hour. She was recently transferred to the Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit and is living her life-long dream.



NYOSHA MOORE

The WIOA Youth program helps even highly driven young people find their compass for the future. Such was the case for Nyosha Moore, who is by any measure a highly driven young lady. After two years as a WIOA Youth participant, Nyosha graduated from Camden High School Magna Cum Laude with a 3.92 grade-point average. She received nine scholarships and awards, and is studying Pre-Med to become an OB-GYN physician. She was selected as one of only 80 of the top just-graduated seniors from all around Arkansas for the prestigious STEM Academy, a six-week summer pre-college camp. She was voted leader of her six-person team, wrote the team's project paper, gave the oral presentation to the

full Academy and got a standing ovation. That would have been unthinkable just a couple of years before, when WIOA Youth Specialist Kimberly Frazier could barely elicit two-word responses from naturally shy Nyosha. But Work-Experience activities, especially an eye-opening, hands-on assignment at Ouachita County Medical Center, drew her out. "Interacting with other people, you realize you can't always just be the quiet one," Nyosha says. "Sometimes you have to step up and talk."



PARK WALDROUP

Springdale's Park Waldroup has progressed so far since enrolling in the Arkansas PROMISE grant program, it seems it was made for him. A high-functioning Autistic, he always had difficulty interacting socially. A radio job is not the first thing that comes to mind for such a youth. But Park took to it like he was always meant to be there. "It was the best fit for him," said Patricia Waldroup, Park's mother. "I think it's really boosted his confidence getting to do a job he loves to do." His assignment at Hog Radio, Inc., included shadowing the production director in the morning and working on a call-in sports show in the afternoon. He averaged working 30 hours a week. By the end of the summer, he wrote, voiced and edited

a couple of public service announcements and answered the phone and put callers on the air on the sports show. Patricia finds it hard to fathom the distance he's come. "Growing up, he had a lot of social issues," she said. "It wasn't until first grade he could really start talking well. Since he's been in the program, he's blossomed. He wants to have his own radio station one day. He's already inquired about getting a license." Park was one of four nominated for the 2016 Outstanding PROMISE Youth of Northwest Arkansas. Patricia said the radio staff "fell in love with him" from the first day and has invited him back to work there again next summer.



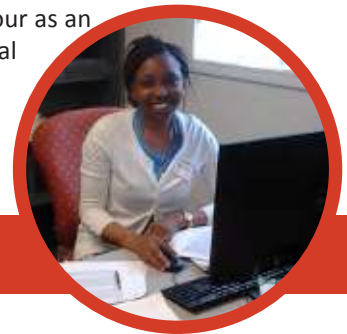
SUCCESS STORIES

TYLER SOMERS



Having a mother who was a longtime nurse helped nudge Tyler Somers in that direction, but it didn't help him overcome the financial challenges of making it his own occupation. The WIOA Youth program did that. He had already been accepted into the RN associates degree program at North Arkansas Community College when he realized he wouldn't be able to fully cover the cost. And working at the same time was not recommended because of the rigors of the program. "I was trying to figure out what to do," Tyler said, "and that's when somebody pointed me in the direction of Karen Henry." Henry is a WIOA Youth case manager in the Harrison office. The tuition assistance she helped arrange was nice, but it caused a cash crunch because it meant the Arkansas Academic

Challenge Scholarship money Tyler wanted to use elsewhere had to go to the school for tuition before the WIOA funding could be applied. "I said, 'I don't know if there's anything you can do, but I'm basically running out of money, and I won't have a car in a month,'" Tyler recounts. Henry was able to get a special-case exemption to assist with a car payment and insurance to help him over the hump. Thanks to the WIOA assistance, Tyler was able to complete his associate's degree and is now earning \$22 an hour as an RN at North Arkansas Regional Medical Center.



MARTINE BOWOMBE TOKO

Cameroon native Martine Bowombe Toko was already accomplished when she left her homeland as one of the few recipients of the U.S. State Department's Diversity Visa Lottery. She had a master's degree in Animal Biology and was hopeful of advancing her academic career in the states, but the language barrier and a lack of funds stood in her way. She took a job in Jonesboro completely outside her field of study, but it only lasted five months before the company shuttered the plant and laid off all the workers. That's when Martine heard about the Trade Adjustment Act program. "When I receive my letter (of approval), I was so relieved, since my graduate

studies would be paid in full for two years. I shared the good news with the pastor's wife," Ms. Toko said. "She also knew about the program and advised me not to let this lifetime opportunity slip away." She didn't. TAA Specialist Stephanie Lewis introduced her to the right people at Arkansas State University. Toto earned a second Master of Science degree, this one with an emphasis in Entomology. She accepted a research position at the University of Idaho. Martine credits her Lewis with keeping her on track and helping her overcome the language barrier.

ALEX BARCENAS

Alex Barcenas was a 22-year-old mechanical engineer and was miserable in his career. However, after a series of unexpected events and a job loss, he found the Medical Billing and Coding certificate program with the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith—and the Job-Driven National Dislocated Worker Grant that paid for it. "It essentially provided a crash course and a new door to where I didn't feel hopeless," Alex said. The change in Alex's career pathway started when he lost his job—a relief to Alex, who knew in his last year of college that he did not enjoy that field. Alex went to the Arkansas Workforce Center in Fort Smith to learn about his options. Upon leaving the workforce center, he stepped on

a pamphlet about the coding course. He was told about the JD-NDW grant and directed to case manager Wendy Daggs. The serendipities continued when he got the last spot in the class. The strenuous course demanded all his time, and while his education expense was paid, he was eating through his savings to pay living expenses. He passed—one of only four in the class of 30 to do so on the first try. He has added seven additional billing and coding certifications and works from home for two hospital chains and a large health insurance provider. Alex takes as much work as he wants and says he is on pace at the age of 24 to earn \$120,000 this year.



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