



UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS

Counselor education Program

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# WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT SYSTEMS EVALUATION, SKILLS GAP ANALYSIS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSESSMENT

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Prepared for:



Arkansas Division of  
Workforce Services

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## **Executive Summary**

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

### **Identification of Partner programs:**

The evaluators interviewed the leadership of WIOA workforce centers to identify partner programs and non-profits that collaborate with the Workforce Centers. For these partners, the evaluators documented and reported on the existence of the following:

Memoranda of understanding between the workforce centers and partners;

Written referral procedures;

Documentation of training for partners regarding the services provided;

Alternative print materials to assist in collaboration, or...

An alternative method to refer customers between the partners effectively.

### **Services Provided to Targeted Populations:**

The evaluators researched and identified entities in the assigned local areas that provide services to these specific targeted populations:

Displaced Homemaker

Low Income Individuals

Limited English Proficiency

Migrant Worker

Disabled

Veteran

Older Worker

Out of School Youth

Foster Youth

Basic Skill Deficient

Ex-Offender

Single Parent

TANF Recipient

SNAP Recipient

SSDI Recipient

UI Claimant

Long-Term Unemployed

Co-Enrolled Participants:

For all programs identified as (WIOA), Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service programs, and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) programs, the evaluators were asked to identify, from a sampled participant list, whether customers were referred or co-enrolled in other programs.

**Identifying and Closing Skills Gaps:**

For the assigned workforce areas, the evaluators were charged with developing case studies on effectiveness of identifying and closing Skills-Gaps. To develop these case studies, the evaluators

interviewed workforce center staff for examples of skills-gap identification on either the occupation level, the demand level, or the skill-level. Employer interviews were completed to gauge interaction between employers and workforce center staff and to determine the services that were provided to address the skills-gap.

**Compliance with Certification Policy:**

As part of the study, the evaluators were tasked with reviewing a sample of six Arkansas Workforce Centers against the State’s certification policy and applicable laws and regulations. The six centers, (four comprehensive and two affiliate centers) were located in different Local Workforce Development Areas.

**Business Partner Survey:**

The ADWS WIOA Business Survey explored how Arkansas businesses feel about their experiences with the WIOA program. Many email addresses provided by the local workforce areas included in the study were not accurate, and the returned or “bounced” email rate was significant. The response rate, even for those contacts that were accurate, was initially disappointing. After two follow up requests were made, the evaluators asked ADWS leadership to send a request to the businesses encouraging them to complete the survey. With this added push and ADWS support, an overall response rate of 8.5% of the 577 verified business contacts was achieved. The response rate of 8.5%, while not as robust as the evaluators had hoped, yielded 49 completed surveys. This rate of response is adequate to provide generalizable results for the study.

**Customer Survey:**

The ADWS WIOA Customer Service Survey explored how Arkansas job seekers feel about their experiences with the WIOA program. The Customer Survey was distributed to 31,293 individuals with

valid emails as of January 24, 2024. Of the total email contacts provided to the evaluators by ADWS, 5,660 were from the Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board, 9,927 from the 6,189 from the Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board, 4,345 from the Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District, 4,060 from the Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board, 4,229 from the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board. While the response rate was somewhat disappointing, the number of responses received was adequate to provide generalizable results for the study.

### **Summary of Findings and Recommendations:**

The findings and recommendations for this study are summarized below. The full text of the findings and recommendations are included on page 86 of this report.

### **Findings:**

#### **Levels of Co-Enrollment in partner programs:**

Results of customer reviews in the selected workforce areas confirmed a range of 2.3% co-enrollment to a high of 25% for these individual partner providers, with an overall average rate for all reporting providers of 9.45%. This is not an optimum rate of co-enrollment. The evaluators find that the rates of co-enrollment in partner programs during the most recent reporting period, while not terrible, could certainly be improved.

#### **Partner Programs and Agencies:**

The number of partners listed by the selected workforce areas were twenty-one in the Central Arkansas Planning and Development District, forty-two in the Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Center, thirty-three in the Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District, twenty-two in the Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board, thirty-three in the Southwest

Arkansas Workforce Development Board, and twenty-two in the Little Rock Workforce Development Board. While the accuracy of these lists are not in dispute, comparisons are difficult to ascertain. The organizations that are listed as “partners” varied significantly from one LWIB to another. The Northwest district, for example, listed eight separate Chambers of Commerce as partners. None of the other workforce areas specifically included Chambers of Commerce as partners, but it is logical to assume that each of the area Workforce Boards work closely with the chambers in their areas. It is the opinion of the evaluators that other partner programs are available and are, in fact, active participants in each of the assigned workforce areas. Because no guidelines exist to formalize the identification of “partner” organizations for workforce areas, comparisons are not possible.

**Referral Procedures:**

Referral procedures are in place for the assigned workforce areas. All managers reported that referrals are also received via email and telephone as an alternative when necessary. Referral procedures and customer support are well laid out and well documented at all selected workforce areas. The evaluators find that the selected workforce areas are in substantial compliance with this requirement.

**Training Services:**

The selected areas provide training concerning available services as necessary. The evaluators find that the training opportunities are, in most cases, sufficient to meet the needs of the workforce customer base. While the requirement to provide training is met at a minimal level in the selected workforce areas, the evaluators feel that ongoing efforts should be ongoing to ensure adequate understanding by all ADWS customers.

**Skills Gap Identification and Amelioration:**

While strategies for identifying skills gaps clearly demonstrated some differences among the centers, the evaluators find that there are significant similarities across the state. All Workforce areas recognize the need to identify and ameliorate skills gaps and have procedures in place to work with area industries to that end. The tools for identifying skills gaps are available in equal measure to all 27 workforce centers in Arkansas; while the quality of skills gap analysis does vary somewhat across the state, the evaluators noted marked improvement in both the quantity and quality of this service across all assigned areas since the 2021 assessment.

**Assessing the Effectiveness of Skills Gaps Interventions:**

All of the selected workforce centers reported using “repeat/continued business with employers” as one measure of the effectiveness of services provided. Other measures include “customers completion of training, rates of job placement, follow up conversations with employers, monitoring progress/grade reports, maintaining Individual Employment Plan updates, and meeting our performance objectives”. All of the assigned Workforce Centers employ measures to regularly assess the effectiveness of the skills gaps interventions they provide. It is the finding of the evaluators, however, that standard statewide protocols for measuring the effectiveness of identifying and ameliorating skills gaps should be developed and shared with all workforce areas.

**Compliance Review:**

The evaluators were asked to review six centers using the State’s certification policy for workforce centers. Four of those centers were comprehensive centers (Harrison, Little Rock, Jonesboro, and Pine Bluff. The remaining two assigned centers were affiliate centers in North Little Rock and El Dorado. All of the centers reviewed meet or exceed minimum requirements established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for physical accessibility and are in substantial

compliance with all regulations Additional information is provided in the expanded findings section of this report.

**Business Survey:**

The survey of business partners finds that WIOA recipients display a significant degree of satisfaction with the WIOA program and the ADWS. Eighty-nine percent of respondents reported that they “would” or “would possibly” recommend the WIOA programs that they used to colleagues. Some areas of concern were reported, however, and these findings are reported in the expanded findings section of the report.

**Customer Survey:**

This survey showed considerable levels of dissatisfaction with WIOA programs and with Workforce Center staff. The survey found that, “many” respondents reported “poor customer service”, “a rude attitude”, “inattentive staff”, or “uninformed staff”. These levels of dissatisfaction with ADWS and WIOA programs point to a critical need for additional training in customer service for all local workforce center staff. In addition, the evaluators find that current efforts to communicate with customers is lacking and that more online options for contact and reporting are needed.

**Recommendations:**

These full text of these recommendations are included in the Findings and Recommendations section on 68 of this report.

**Co-Enrollment:**

The evaluators recommend that Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board and area managers develop data collection methods to

effectively track and monitor rates of co-enrollment. Only by having accurate and up- to-date information concerning co-enrollment can ADWS begin to encourage and promote additional co-enrollment with WIOA partners.

**Partner Programs and Organizations:**

WIOA places a strong emphasis on planning across multiple partner programs to ensure alignment in service delivery. Many organizations reported that while they are willing, they do not have data available to adequately partner with Workforce Centers. These organizations are willing and even eager to partner with ADWS centers, but don't have processes in place to collect data and provide support and assistance. It is recommended by the evaluators that Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board work with all workforce areas to identify and engage additional community partners, and to provide training and assistance to those partners in data collection techniques.

**Business Survey:**

Sixty-eight percent of WIOA recipients reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with ADWS staff. Twenty-six percent of recipients reported that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with ADWS staff, while 5% of recipients reported that they were very dissatisfied with ADWS staff. Eighty-eight percent of WIOA recipients reported that they received some or all of the services needed to address their workforce needs. Approximately 29% of recipients reported that they received some of the services needed to address their workforce needs, and another 59% of recipients reported that they received all of the services they needed. Twelve percent of respondents reported that they received none of the services needed to address their workforce needs.

### **Customer Survey:**

The ADWS WIOA Customer Survey conducted a survey of 34,340 individuals with valid emails as of June 30, 2023. The survey focused on a distribution by local workforce development areas for a more balanced sample and produced an overall response rate of 9.3% (320 individual surveys).

It is troubling that fully 45% of the survey respondents report that they would not recommend the program. Thirty-six percent report that they either would recommend, would strongly recommend, or would very strongly recommend the program. Thirty-seven percent reported that they received all of the services they needed, or “most but not all” of the services they needed to reach their goals. A disappointing 63% reported receiving some or none of the services they needed to reach their goals. Another disappointing finding was that only 27% of customers reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the WIOA program

### **Counties With Higher Unemployment Rates:**

For this study, DWS leadership asked the evaluators to conduct additional research in Jefferson, Crittenden, Cross, Phillips, and St. Francis Counties in Arkansas. According to the American Community Survey (ACS), these counties reported unemployment rates in excess of 4.5% in 2022 compared to the statewide rate of 2.8%. As of January 2024, the unemployment rates in these counties ranged from 4.4% in Cross County, to a high of 7.0% in Phillips County. The January 2024 rate in Jefferson County was 5.2%, Crittenden County 4.7%, and St. Francis County 5.7%. These rates compared with the statewide rate in January of 3.4%.

To investigate this discrepancy, the evaluators first compiled information about current employment opportunities and labor force statistics in each of the counties. A qualitative analysis of this information is presented in the full report.

**Compliance Review:**

The evaluators make no recommendations for change in this area. As previously stated, it is the opinion of the evaluators that the centers reviewed for this study are in substantial compliance with all ADWS regulations, and that the managers take their regulatory responsibilities seriously.

**Other Recommendations:**

It is highly recommended that ADWS establish methods for high performing centers and workforce areas to provide training and support for other centers.

## WIOA Skills Gap Analysis and Customer Service Surveys

### History of Workforce Services in Arkansas

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) is the state agency responsible for providing job-related services to state residents, such as coordinating training and educational opportunities, processing unemployment insurance claims, and connecting job seekers with employment opportunities in the state. ADWS was originally called the Arkansas Employment Security Division of the Arkansas Department of Labor (ADL) which was created by Act 391 of 1941. The division was established as part of New Deal legislation such as the Social Security Act of 1935 and the Federal Unemployment Tax Act of 1939. These laws created a national system of unemployment benefits and encouraged states to pass similar legislation. In response, Arkansas passed Act 391 in 1941, establishing AESD. The act noted that “economic insecurity due to unemployment is a serious menace to the health, morals, and welfare of the people of this State.” This legislation created a network of public employment offices to operate “in affiliation with a national system of employment services” as well as a fund for the disbursement of benefits to be paid out during periods of unemployment. A board of review was created to hear claims and appeals for unemployment benefits. (Encyclopedia of Arkansas)

Since the 1940’s additional legislation modified the definitions of unemployment and who could receive benefits, as well as dealing with issues such as women in the workplace and work done on commission. Specific programs, especially those aimed at providing job training to youth, were developed. In 1973, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) was the first of several youth focused efforts to be established. This was followed in 1984 by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) which was subsequently repealed by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). There were no

major changes to Arkansas' workforce system, however, until Act 100 of 1991 raised it to a department-level agency, the Arkansas Employment Security Department (AESD). Act 551 of 2007 changed the name of the agency to the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services. In 2019, Act 910 changed the name of the agency to the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and moved Adult Education programs, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and the Division of Services for the Blind under the DWS umbrella. According to the Central Arkansas Library's Encyclopedia of Arkansas, "ADWS operates a number of programs, including various veterans' services, the Arkansas Career Readiness Certification Program, the Arkansas Mature Worker Initiative, the Arkansas Workforce Centers, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), as well as the Migrant Farm Labor Center in Hope, which provides services to seasonal farm workers" (encyclopediaofarkansas.net). Please note that since the publication of this entry in the CALS Encyclopedia, the Migrant Farm Labor Center in Hope has been closed. Act 910 of 2019 act placed ADWS under the auspices of the Department of Commerce.

In May 2023, ADWS announced the closure of nine Workforce Centers in the state, leaving seventeen centers open. The centers targeted for closure were located in Arkadelphia, Batesville, Benton, Blytheville, Camden, Helena, Magnolia, Mountain Home and Rogers. The restructuring, completed on June 30, 2023, leaves Workforce Centers open in Conway, El Dorado, Fayetteville, Forrest City, Fort Smith, Harrison, Hope, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Little Rock, Mena, Monticello, Paragould, Pine Bluff, Russellville, Searcy and West Memphis. ADWS services continue to be offered through mobile centers with the flexibility to reach citizens across the state according to Department of Commerce staff.

**Rationale for Systems Evaluation:**

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a state plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the State’s workforce development system. WIOA offers states two options for submitting this State Plan—they may submit a Unified State Plan or a Combined State Plan. A Unified State Plan includes the Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program. A Combined State Plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as one or more optional Combined State Plan partner programs. In Arkansas, the most recent WIOA state plan for FY 2020-2023, was a Combined State Plan, and included, in addition to the required components, the following Combined State Plan partner programs:

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of Title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (Programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et.

seq.)

- Unemployment Insurance Programs (Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (Programs authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Community Services Block Grant Program (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))\*
- Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program (Programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))

The Federal-State Unemployment Insurance Program provides unemployment benefits to eligible workers who are unemployed through no fault of their own (as determined under State law) and meet other eligibility requirements of State law.

The State Plan, whether Combined or Unified, must include a Strategic Planning section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The strategic planning requirements in the State Plan allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth.

In addition to submitting a State Plan under WIOA, states have a responsibility, as outlined in Title 20, § 682.200(d), to use funds reserved by the Governor for statewide activities to conduct evaluations of activities under the WIOA title I core programs. These evaluations are required in

order to, "...promote continuous improvement, research and test innovative services and strategies, and achieve high levels of performance and outcomes." (Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law). The State, in cooperation with local boards and State partner agencies has a responsibility to conduct these evaluations in order to, "...promote, establish, implement, and utilize methods for continuously improving core program activities in order to achieve high level performance within, and high-level outcomes from, the workforce development system." (WIOA [H.R. 803])

To honor this commitment and in fulfillment of the federal mandate to meet Arkansas' evaluative responsibilities, the leadership of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS), has engaged the Counselor Education Program at the University of Arkansas. The purposes of the project are to complete a comprehensive WIOA Systems Evaluation, Skills Gap Analysis, and a series of Customer Service Surveys. The evaluators worked in cooperation with ADWS in the design and implementation of all surveys, analysis, assessments, and evaluations in order to implement processes and procedures necessary to ensure that accurate and relevant data were collected and used for evaluation purposes.

The evaluation was completed under the leadership of the project's Principal Investigator, Dr. Brent Williams, Associate Professor, University of Arkansas Counselor Education and Supervision, and Dr. Julie Hill, Assistant Professor of Counselor Education. Dr. Keith Vire, Lecturer in the Counselor Education and Special Education programs at the University of Arkansas, served as the Project Director for the study. As Project Director, Dr. Vire provided daily direction and oversight for all aspects of the project in collaboration with the Principal Investigators and supported the Principal Investigators in provision of oversight for all budgetary expenses. Dr. Xinya Liang, Associate Professor, Educational Statistics and Research Methods provided statistical analysis of all data

related to the study.

**Project Objectives:**

To accomplish the purposes of the evaluation, the following project objectives were approved by ADWS and adopted by the evaluators:

Objective 1: Create evaluation tool to complete a local integration study encompassing a sample of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I or Title III participants for three separate Local Workforce Development Areas.

Objective 1 –a: Evaluate the level of Co-enrollment and Co-funding of required WIOA partners.

Objective 1 –b: Evaluate the leveraging of Local Resources available in the Local Workforce Development Area.

Objective 2: In the Comprehensive Centers for the Local Areas selected for sampling, the Contractor will report case studies on effectiveness of identifying and serving individuals from targeted populations.

Objective 3: In the Workforce Centers assigned for the study, evaluate the extent to which innovative tools as well as emerging and current technology are used to enhance service delivery.

Objective 4: Review a sample of Arkansas Workforce Centers against the State’s certification policy and applicable laws and regulations for four comprehensive centers and two affiliate centers. Each of the six centers selected will be located in different Local Workforce Development Areas.

Objective 5: Conduct a statewide customer service survey for business customers of WIOA

Title I and Title III receiving services over the most recent 12 months available.

Objective 6: Review existing policies and procedures in Arkansas and in other states and make recommendations for changes that will lead to optimal efficiency in the provision of services in the state in the following areas:

Objective 6 – a: Geographic alignment; do workforce center locations provide optimum access for customers, both businesses and individuals, related to public transportation, urban vs. rural communities and other considerations?

Objective 6 – b: Demographic alignment; do workforce center locations provide optimum outreach and access to priority and underrepresented populations as identified in the state’s data measures?

Objective 6 – c: Fiscal considerations; given rising costs associated with brick-and-mortar operations, what cost effective models can be implemented virtually to maintain the quality of services to our customers? How do we strike a balance between virtual and in-person services that ensures continued quality of services while lessening the financial impact of maintaining physical spaces?

Objective 7: Conduct additional research in Jefferson, Crittenden, Cross, Phillips, and St. Francis Counties in Arkansas. According to the American Community Survey (ACS), at the time of this evaluation, these counties had unemployment rates in excess of 4.5%, compared to the current statewide rate of 2.8%. The Contractors were tasked with documenting the factors responsible for this excessive unemployment rate and making recommendations for change.

**Study Methodology:**

The methods used in this study were designed to gather accurate and appropriate data for a comprehensive evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide information required for planning and implementation of needed interventions and/or corrective actions.

The evaluators used these tactics to gather the data required to meet the ADWS objectives:

- a) review of Local Workforce Development Center documents and materials;
- b) structured surveys and interviews with workforce center staff members; and
- c) a statewide customer service survey for business customers of WIOA Title I and Title III receiving services over the most recent 12 months.

These methods were utilized to ensure effective and accurate data gathering from appropriate agencies, organizations, individuals, and groups. In addition, the questions and study methods utilized were designed to be culturally sensitive and to accommodate responses by a variety of individuals. To effectively identify and assess the workforce needs of Arkansans, evaluators used creative approaches for reaching a variety of individuals and community members who have knowledge and experience with community workforce development.

Study methodology for the in-depth surveys conducted by the contractors is detailed in the Business and Customer Service survey section of this report.

**Collaborative Partners:**

For each assigned local area, evaluators interviewed leadership to identify partner programs and non-profits that worked in collaboration with the Local Workforce Centers. For these partners, the evaluators documented the existence of memoranda of understanding between the ADWS and partners, written referral procedures, documentation of training for partners regarding the services provided or alternative print materials to assist in collaboration or, an alternative method to refer

customers between the partners effectively.

The evaluators researched and identified entities in the assigned local areas providing services to the following specific targeted populations:

Displaced Homemaker

Low Income

Limited English Proficiency

Migrant Worker

Disabled

Veteran.....

Older Worker

Out of School Youth

Foster Youth

Basic Skill Deficient

Ex-Offender

Single Parent

TANF Recipient

SNAP Recipient

SSDI Recipient

UI Claimant

Long-Term Unemployed

A listing of these providers for each assigned area is included in the Statewide Community Resources Portal, a site sponsored and maintained by the Arkansas Department of Education's Data

Center. The portal can be accessed at <https://scr.ade.arkansas.gov/>. The site is user friendly and attractive with drop down menus for region, county, and resource category. The portal lists two contacts for updates and changes to the site. Contact information for these individuals, Dr. Missy Wally, the primary contact, and Susan Jobe, the secondary contact, is provided on the portal's page. This is a critically important part of the site. The value of the resource portal is to a large degree, dependent on the accuracy of the resources that are included on the site, and therefore on the quality of ongoing data maintenance. A well-maintained database will help keep the listing of WIOA community partners relevant, timely and valuable.

The evaluators recommend that community partners be contacted regularly and provided the opportunity to update their organizational contact details. One method might include the occasional distribution of a survey that includes an incentive for community resources to inspect and update their information. Keeping the database up to date is an ongoing process, but if a system is initiated that triggers regular updates, it can become part of the normal business processes.

### **Co-Enrolled Customers**

For all programs identified as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service programs, and Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) programs, the evaluators identified whether customers were referred or co-enrolled in other programs. To accomplish this objective, the evaluators made an initial contact with managers of the assigned workforce areas to obtain a list of partner programs meeting the stated criteria. The evaluators contacted partner programs from the list provided by the managers of the assigned workforce areas to determine the rate of co-enrollment in partner programs. Representatives of these partner programs were contacted and asked to provide information concerning their customer

list. Individual customers were not contacted, and no personally identifiable information was requested or provided. Partner program representatives from each of the workforce areas participated in the survey. Of the customer files reviewed by the WIOA partners contacted, results confirmed a range of 2.3% co-enrollment to a high of 25% for these individual partner providers, with an overall average rate for reporting providers of 9.45%.

It is important to note that the rates of co-enrollment for these workforce centers are adversely affected by the inclusion of individuals who receive Employment Services in the total numbers. Employment Services are universal and therefore, serve very high numbers of individuals, many of whom do not have recognized barriers to employment. Co-enrollment strategies are designed for targeted populations with significant barriers to employment which require more intensive interventions.

**Referral Procedures:**

To evaluate the processes employed by the assigned workforce areas to initiate and receive customer referrals, the evaluators conducted written surveys and telephone interviews with the managers and/or their Workforce Center staff members. Managers were initially contacted via email and were asked to provide written responses to these questions:

Please identify some of the partner programs and non-profits that collaborate with the Workforce Centers in your area. For these partners, are these items in place?

- Memoranda of understanding between the ADWS and partners
- Written referral procedures, for those partners
- Documentation of training for partners regarding the services provided, or,
- Print materials to assist in collaboration, or,

- An alternate method to refer claimants between the partners effectively.

Managers in the assigned areas provided a list of partner agencies and programs. The number of partners listed were twenty-one in the Central Arkansas Planning and Development District, forty-two in the Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Center, thirty in the Little Rock Workforce Development District, thirty-two in the Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District, seventeen in the Southeast Arkansas Workforce District, and thirty-three in the Southwest Arkansas Development District. A listing of these partner providers is included in Appendix I.

All managers of the local areas assigned for this study reported that memoranda of understanding are in place for WIOA partners, and all of these managers provided examples of these documents. An example of an existing MOU is included in Appendix II.

Referral procedures are in place for the assigned workforce areas. Examples of referral forms and procedures are included in Appendix III. All managers reported that referrals are also received via email and telephone as an alternative when necessary.

The assigned areas provide training concerning available services to partners as necessary. The most common method reported was through information provided on the workforce development center's website, with follow-up through Workforce Center staff face-to-face contact and the provision of print materials to claimants. An example of a web-based information page is shown here: <https://nwaedd.org/workforce-development/>.

For the assigned areas covered in this report, referral procedures and claimant support are well laid out and well documented. Procedures are in place and are available for review by potential

claimants. While the Local Workforce Development Boards have developed their own referral processes and referral forms, they all collect very similar information. The Little Rock Workforce Development Board, for example, uses a form provided by Equus Workforce Solutions, titled, “One-Stop Referrals to Partners via Equus Workforce Solutions Standard Operations Procedures,” which includes this statement: “Staff shall determine customer needs as part of the Talent Engagement process or at another point during the delivery of services. Based on the customer’s needs, and if the customer would benefit from partner services, the staff shall refer the customer to the partner using the method of referral per the Partner Service Matrix.”

**Skills Gap Analysis:**

The evaluators, with the assistance of the managers and Workforce Center staff in the assigned areas, developed case studies on effectiveness of identifying and closing Skills-Gaps. The Evaluators interviewed Workforce Center staff for examples of skills-gap identification using either the occupation, demand, or skill-level based on interaction with an employer and provided reports concerning the services that were provided to address the skills-gap. The evaluators also assessed and provided reports on the effectiveness of the services in achieving the objective using surveys (See Appendix IV) developed for the purpose, and on and interviews. A summary of the review and analysis of skills gap identification and amelioration follows:

**Introduction:**

In Arkansas, Comprehensive Workforce Centers have a clear mission: To provide employment related services that enhance the economic stability of Arkansas. To accomplish this mission, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) has 27 Arkansas Workforce Centers located strategically throughout the state. At these workforce centers, ADWS employees strive to help

employers and job seekers find the best resources and services to meet their needs. They work to provide universal access to an integrated array of services so that workers, job seekers, and businesses can access the services they need in one stop, and frequently under one roof. Although ADWS provides these services to employers and job seekers at all 27 local workforce centers, the full menu of services may vary from center to center, as each site can tailor the additional services it offers to meet the specific needs of employers and job seekers in their community.

**Background:**

A major component of each local workforce center involves identifying and closing skills gaps at the local level. A “skills gap” is defined as the difference between skills that employers want or need, and skills their workforce offer. Conducting this skills gap analysis helps identify the skills needed to meet business and industry goals. To accomplish the skills gap analysis, workforce center staff utilize the Labor Market Information (LMI) program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor through the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). ADWS and WIOA seek to provide needed employment and preparation services for adults, youth, and dislocated workers through programs operated by agencies in the local workforce development areas. Each area's Local Workforce Development Board selects entities through which these services are provided. WIOA program activities include basic career services (e.g., initial skills assessments, job placement assistance, labor market information); individualized career services (e.g., comprehensive assessments, career counseling); training services (e.g., occupational skills training, work-based learning, on-the-job training); and supportive services (e.g., transportation and childcare assistance). These services are designed to help determine skills gaps and match them with job openings. They provide job candidates with insights into the career paths that their experience, education, and talents can make

possible. The services are also designed to give employers an expanded talent pool to help them find a good match for the openings they have.

These tools are available in equal measure to all 27 local workforce centers in Arkansas; however the quality of skills gap analysis is not equivalent across all workforce centers. The ability of centers to conduct a viable and quality analysis of skills gaps in their local areas is largely dependent upon the training and ability of the Workforce Center staff in those centers.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the skills gap analysis is to provide an in-depth examination of the processes that are used to identify, analyze, and close skills gaps in economic regions served by selected local workforce centers. The findings of the study will be used to develop recommendations of “best practices” for identifying and closing skills gaps. These recommendations may be used to develop training courses or modules which can be provided to other local workforce centers. In doing so, ADWS hopes to increase the quality of skills gap identification and analysis across the state. The ADWS centers selected for the case study are described below:

**Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Area:**

The Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Area (NEAWDA) is made up of seven Northeast Arkansas counties: Clay, Craighead, Greene, Lawrence, Mississippi, Poinsett, and Randolph. Offices are located in Jonesboro, and Paragould. The fastest growing occupation in the NEA Workforce Area, according to the local plan created by the district, is Nurse Practitioner, with the need projected to increase 54.04% by 2030. The publication “Local Workforce Development Areas Short-Term Industry And Occupational Projections” published by ADWS in 2023, lists production operations as the top growing major employment group, with manufacturing

occupations projected to be the top growing subsector. The growth in these occupational areas in the Northeast region will lead to an increased need for skilled workers for these jobs. Among the top ten growing occupations listed in the report are Industrial Machinery Mechanics; Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers; Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators; and Electricians.

### **Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District:**

The Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District was established in 1967 and subsequently funded in part through the Public Works and Economic Development Act. NWAEDD is defined as a “public entity” that is a non-profit Planning and Development Organization serving Baxter, Benton, Boone, Carroll, Madison, Marion, Newton, Searcy and Washington Counties.

According to the publication titled “Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: 2024-2028” known as the “CEDS” (<https://nwaedd.org/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy/>), “Northwest Arkansas is one of the fastest-growing regions in the state and is projected to experience a 7.3% increase in population over the next few years, putting the projected increase at more than 752,000 residents by 2027. The urban counties of Benton and Washington contain approximately 78% of the population of Northwest Arkansas, with the remaining rural counties having 22% of the area’s population.”

According to the CEDS, manufacturing, healthcare and social assistance, and retail trade industries are the three dominant industries in the region, accounting for more than 113,000 jobs. It is predicted that over the next five years, the Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation industry is projected to experience a 2.6% increase, the largest of any industry in the area.

The region served by NWAEDD is home to Fortune 500 companies; Walmart, J.B. Hunt, Tyson and many other corporations including Simmons Food, America’s Car Mart and PAM Transportation

are among them. Crystal Bridges Museum, the Amp, University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Research Park, Arvest Ballpark (home of the Northwest Naturals Baseball Team), Buffalo National River, and the Ozark National Forest are just a few of the varied venues that bring tourists into the area. The Region includes the Metropolitan Statistical Area of Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers which includes Washington, Benton and Madison Counties in Arkansas. Also included in the NWAEDD region is the Micropolitan Statistical Areas of Harrison and Mountain Home as well as rural, low population poorer counties.

The district's regional and local plan for 2020-2023, (<https://dws.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/NW-PY2020-2023-Local-Plan.pdf>) projects labor needs through 2028. Education and Health Services is expected to be the top growing supersector for that period with 8,070 jobs anticipated to be added. Within this supersector, Personal Care and Service Occupations is estimated to be the fastest growing major group with a 22.95 percent growth. The fastest growing among the supersectors could be construction occupations, raising employment levels by 16.75 percent. Food Services and Drinking Places is estimated to lead the Northwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area as the top growing industry, adding 4,461 jobs.

#### **Central Arkansas Planning and Development District:**

The Central Arkansas LWDA, which includes a large portion of The City of Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway Metropolitan Statistical Area and six counties: Faulkner, Lonoke, Monroe, Prairie, Saline, and Pulaski County (excluding Little Rock) from its office in Lonoke. According to the 2023 Arkansas Labor Market and Economic Report, the district had an estimated population of 534,473 in 2020 [2023 Arkansas Labor Market and Economic Report].

In Central Arkansas, Transportation and Material Moving Occupations is predicted to be the

top growing major group, through 2028, increasing staffing by 884 jobs. Computer and Mathematical Occupations is slated to be the fastest growing major group, increasing its workforce by 6.83 percent. (<https://www.discover.arkansas.gov/docs/Publications/Projections/2021-2023/ST-WDA-2021-23.pdf>). Education and Health Services is estimated to be the top growing supersector in Central Arkansas, with a growth of 4,903, an increase of 13.71 percent. The Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations major group is projected to add the most jobs, with 3,065 new jobs anticipated, while Personal Care and Service Occupations is estimated to be the fastest growing major group, with an increase of 20.83 percent.

### **City of Little Rock Workforce Development Area**

According to Discover Arkansas' *Short Term Industry and Occupational Projections*, the City of Little Rock Workforce Development Area (WDA) is a center for government operations, serving as the county seat of Pulaski County as well as the state's capital. The WDA is recognized as part of the Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway Metropolitan Statistical Area.

The Little Rock WDA lost 14,611 jobs during the recent pandemic, amounting to 8.29 percent of its workforce, and has struggled to completely recover from this loss. By the first quarter of 2021, the area had recovered 5,172 of those jobs, or just 35.40 percent recovery. According to industry projections, the WDA is expected to gain 4,419 jobs between 2021 and 2023, an increase of 2.20 percent, bringing the area to 65.64 percent recovery.

Financial Activities is estimated to be the top and fastest growing supersector, adding 1,394 new jobs, a 6.12 percent gain. Insurance Carriers and Related Activities leads the district in numeric change, increasing its workforce by 1,410 new jobs. Warehousing and Storage is slated to experience significant growth, potentially increasing by 472.54 percent between first quarter 2021 and first

quarter 2023.

On the negative side of the equation, Financial Activities is estimated to be the top and fastest growing supersector, adding 1,394 new jobs, a 6.12 percent gain. Machinery Manufacturing is predicted to be the fastest declining occupation for the period, losing 49% of its workforce.

Discover Arkansas' *Short-Term Industry and Occupational Projections, 2021-2023* reported that "Sales and Related Occupations is estimated to be the top growing major group, increasing its workforce by 700 jobs. Transportation and Material Moving Occupations is slated to be the fastest growing major group, raising employment levels by 4.99 percent. Insurance Claims and Policy Processing Clerks is projected to be the top growing occupation in the City of Little Rock WDA, raising staffing levels by 419 jobs. Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators could increase significantly during the projection period, with a 61.89 percent increase, becoming the fastest growing occupation in the area. On the negative side of the local job market, Elementary School Teachers, except Special Education is predicted to be the top declining occupation, anticipated to lose 83 jobs between 2021 and 2023, or 5.15 percent of its workforce. Cabinetmakers and Bench Carpenters is forecast to be the fastest growing occupation..."

### **Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area**

The Southwest Arkansas WDA includes the following counties: Calhoun, Columbia, Dallas, Hempstead, Howard, Lafayette, Little River, Miller, Nevada, Ouachita, Sevier, and Union. The Southwest WDA is unusual in that it borders three states; Oklahoma is to the west, Texas is to the southwest, and Louisiana is to the south. Miller County is part of the Texarkana AR/TX Metropolitan Statistical Area. The unemployment rate dropped by 0.6 percent from 2021 to 2022 to 4.0 percent. After various fluctuations in the unemployment rate during 2023, the rate settled at 4.0 percent in

July 2023.

According to Discover Arkansas, Manufacturing is expected to become the top growing supersector in Southwest Arkansas in the near future. Professional and Business Services and Leisure and Hospitality supersectors are each predicted to gain 1.54 percent between 2021 and 2023. Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing is estimated to be the top growing industry, while Warehousing and Storage is estimated to increase its workforce by 18.37 percent, becoming the fastest growing industry in the region. As in other workforce regions in Arkansas, Nurse Practitioners is slated to be the fastest growing occupation, raising employment by 10.07 percent.

On the negative side, the Education and Health Services supersector could decline the most, with a loss of 410 jobs, while Information is forecast to cut 10.83 percent of its workforce, becoming the fastest declining supersector in the area.

An important development for the future of Southwest Arkansas' labor market is the recent announcement by Exxon Mobil Corporation that the company will soon drill the first Lithium well in Southwest Arkansas, about fifteen miles from Magnolia. According to Exxon Corporation, the first production in the area is expected in 2027.

Standard Lithium has also begun the process of Lithium mining in the Southwest Arkansas WDA. Standard, working in partnership with global energy leader Equinor, is planning a major investment in Lithium extraction. These projects have great potential for a major expansion in the economy of the region. Leadership of the Southwest Arkansas WDA are working diligently to ensure that these efforts are successful for the region.

### **Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Area**

The Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Area (WDA) consists of 10 counties: Arkansas, Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Cleveland, Desha, Drew, Grant, Jefferson, and Lincoln. Two states

border the Southeast Arkansas WDA, Louisiana to the south and Mississippi to the east; and the Pine Bluff Metropolitan Statistical Area is in this area.

Cashiers was estimated to have the most employees in Southeast Arkansas with 1,940 employed in 2022 with an average wage of \$25,113. Fast Food and Counter Workers was the second largest occupation with 1,800 employed, earning an average wage of \$24,974. General and Operations Managers, with an estimated employment of 1,460, had the highest average wage of the 10 largest occupations, earning \$77,119 annually.

According to Discover Arkansas, “Merchant Wholesalers, Nondurable Goods is projected to be the top and fastest growing industry in Southeast Arkansas, increasing its workforce by 175 new jobs, a 17.41 percent gain. On the negative side of the local economy, Paper Manufacturing could lose 266 employees, dropping 10.95 percent of its workforce. Waste Management and Remediation Service is set to be the fastest declining industry, cutting its workforce by 26.51 percent, moving from 83 jobs in 2022 to 61 jobs in 2024. Leisure and Hospitality is anticipated to be the top growing supersector, adding 228 jobs between 2022 and 2024, a 4.28 percent rise in employment.” (<https://www.discover.arkansas.gov/docs/Publications/Projections/2021-2023/ST-WDA-2021-23.pdf>)

Leisure and Hospitality is predicted to be the top and fastest growing supersector, with a gain by 2023, of 6.31 percent. Contributing to this growth is Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, Professional, and Similar Organizations, predicted to be the top growing industry in Southeast Arkansas, adding 269 jobs to its workforce. Transportation Equipment Manufacturing is slated to be the fastest growing industry, increasing its workforce by 9.84 percent. On the other side of the labor market, Educational Services is forecast to decline by 355 jobs, becoming the top declining industry, while

Primary Metal Manufacturing could lose 15.50 percent of its workforce to become the fastest declining industry.

Community and Social Service Occupations is projected to be the top growing major group, while overall, the Education, Training, and Library Occupations major group is estimated to lose 4.39 percent of its workforce.

**Case Study Process:**

As directed in the WIOA Systems Evaluation, Skills Gap Analysis, and Customer Service Assessment, an agreement between the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) and the evaluators from the Counselor Education program at the University of Arkansas, the case study consists of these metrics:

- Determination of appropriate skills gap Identification on at least one of these three levels for selected employers:
  - Occupational
  - Demand
  - Skill
- Identification of services that were developed or provided to address the identified skills gap(s) based on the skills gap identification.
- Completion of interviews with employers as well as Workforce Center staff, to evaluate the degree to which skills gaps were correctly identified.
- Completion of interviews with employers to determine the success and/or effectiveness of the services provided to address skills gaps.

The Evaluators initiated the development of this case study with an initial introductory email to

the managers at the selected ADWS Workforce Centers. In this email, managers were asked to provide written answers to answer these questions:

- 1) How do you, in your local area, identify skills gaps on either or both of the following levels?
- 2) The occupation level, based on demand;
- 3) The skill-level based, on interaction with an employer.
- 4) What services did you provide to address the skills-gap?
- 5) How would you assess the effectiveness of the services provided in closing the skills- gap?

The information received in the responses to these questions was compiled and served as a basis for the subsequent collection and analysis of data. Interviews with ADWS managers and selected Workforce Center staff were conducted to follow up on information received in the initial emailed information request. Results of these interviews were analyzed by the evaluators.

Additionally, interviews were conducted with selected employers to determine the degree to which the interventions initiated by workforce center staff were successful (See Appendix V).

**Results:**

For the assigned local workforce development areas, some common themes were clearly present in terms of identifying and addressing skills gaps. Reports from the reviewed centers also reveal some unique and regionally specific methods. In addition, some best practices began to emerge as procedures are catalogued and compared.

**Skills Gap Identification:**

While strategies for identifying skills gaps vary, there are some clearly demonstrated commonalities across the centers. On the occupational level, based on demand, one area manager cited, “...interview and academic assessments that are conducted with the participants” as a source

of information. Another stated that, “The skill level that is required to acquire and successfully maintain an occupation is lacking in Southeast Arkansas. Employment is available, but applicants don't have the skills needed to fulfill positions.” In one local area, the manager reported that, “On occupation level, those requests are based on interactions with employer, so it’s a mixed bag. “People on the ground” report back to us about what we need to do.” In another area, management sees this as a two-part process—they first, “...obtain the work requirements from the employer for each job position...” and second, “...determine the participant’s (potential employee’s) interests.” The Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District (NWAEDD) includes a five-part strategic plan for “Addressing Skills Gaps” in their 2023 ADWS/WIOA Systems Evaluation. This plan includes, “...participat[ing] in a skills and asset analysis to determine the skills gaps present and resources available to solve the skills issue in Northwest Arkansas.”

The local workforce areas assigned for this study all have adequate procedures in place to identify, on an ongoing basis, skills gaps in their regions of the state. While some are more formal than others, all of the local workforce areas are involved in identifying skills gaps in their areas.

**Services to Address Skills Gaps:**

Services provided to address these skills gaps, once identified, also varies somewhat across the state. The workforce centers in the assigned group report a significant roster of services to address identified gaps. Assessment include but are not limited to the Career Readiness Certificate Program, Test of Adult Basic Education, On-The- Job Training Programs, and Job Readiness Seminars. One local workforce center (Northeast Arkansas) created a web based Employer’s Information Page to provide outreach to employers and partners. This information page provides links to information that interests the employer and is a source of uniform and consistent information. The link is

here: <https://www.neaworks.com/employers.html>.

In Central Arkansas, additional services are offered online through their virtual career center. These services include interest profiling, career one-stop interviewing tips, and the Ready for Life Link, in addition to training opportunities provided through eligible training providers. Partners such as Adult Education programs are also utilized to improve needed skill levels. If an applicant is not currently meeting required skills level on available assessments such as the Career Readiness Certificate, they are referred to the local Adult Education facility to improve their skill sets and retest for the CRC.

In Northwest Arkansas, NWAEDD plan for 2023 provides for specific training including but not limited to the following in-demand programs: RN, LPN, CAN, Physical Therapy Assistant, business, Radiology Technician, Lab Technician, Information Technology, Commercial Driver's License (CDL), and Adult Education (GED).

The managers at the assigned workforce areas also reported that services such as On the Job Training (OJT) and Work Experience are offered to claimants to assist in their career search. Staff at the Workforce Centers reported using, "targeted recruiting to help employers build a pipeline..." to the training provided at the Workforce Center. Workforce Center staff also cooperate with partner agencies to locate additional funding to increase skill level training opportunities.

#### **Assessing the Effectiveness of Services:**

All of the selected local workforce centers reported using customers' completion of training, job placements, and follow-up conversations with employers to assess the effectiveness of their skills gap amelioration efforts. Staff also noted that monitoring of progress and grade reports as well as maintaining Individual Employment Plan updates are valuable tools in this effort. The Little Rock

Workforce Development Center uses a Business Services Survey ([Employer Satisfaction Survey \(office.com\)](#)) to solicit input from employers. Information on the survey includes, but is not limited to, "...timeliness and responsiveness of center contacts, knowledge of employer's industry, how well talent is matched with the required skills sets, and accuracy of job descriptions. Based on the survey response, skills gaps are readdressed using services such as On-the-Job Training to close any gaps." In addition to these assessment measures, NWAEDD cites the use of existing performance measures. According to NEAEDD staff those measures include, "...employee earnings and retention, credentials attained, and measurable skills gains."

Although the workforce areas assigned for this study have established some unique metrics for assessing the effectiveness of their skills gaps amelioration efforts based on the individual needs of their businesses and their workforce, it is clear that all of the workforce areas studied address the need for such ongoing assessment.

### **Compliance Review**

The evaluators reviewed a sample of Arkansas Workforce Centers approved by ADWS leadership, against the State's certification policy and applicable laws and regulations. According to the State's regulations governing ADWS services, the WIOA One-Stop delivery system includes two different types of physical centers, Comprehensive and Affiliate, from which services and activities are provided. The regulations specify that ADWS, "...at a minimum, shall make each of the programs, services, and activities described in paragraph one (1) accessible at not less than one physical center in each local area of the State; and...may also make programs, services, and activities described in paragraph one (1) available...through a network of affiliated sites that can provide one or more of the programs, services, and activities to individuals..." The Centers reviewed by the evaluators for

this study included four comprehensive centers located in Harrison, Little Rock, Jonesboro, and Pine Bluff, and two affiliate centers located in North Little Rock and El Dorado. Reviewed centers were assigned to the evaluators by ADWS, and are located in four different Local Workforce Development Areas.

All six centers reviewed meet or exceed minimum requirements established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for physical accessibility. External entrances into the facilities in which workforce services are housed are at least minimally accessible for individuals who have mobility impairments. Ramps and level entrances into the facilities are present at all locations reviewed. The evaluators were not tasked with making recommendations for accessibility measures beyond the minimum ADA requirements.

One of the system requirements for Workforce Center certification states that “Arkansas Workforce Center and American Job Center Brands [are] Used Appropriately”. This is generally interpreted as requiring adequate and appropriate signage to make services available and recognizable for potential claimants. Of the six centers reviewed for compliance by the evaluators, four meet or exceed the intent of this requirement. For maximum impact, signage should be visible at the street level as well as on the building itself. The centers in Little Rock, Jonesboro, and Harrison clearly meet this requirement. The center in Pine Bluff has excellent signage on the building itself but would benefit from improved signage at the street level. The North Little Rock affiliate center would benefit from improved signage on the front of the building. Signage in the El Dorado affiliate center is inadequate. While signage for all six centers meets minimum guidelines, it may not provide optimum guidance for claimants trying to find services.

**Affiliate Center Specific Reviews:**

The two Affiliate Centers reviewed (in North Little Rock and El Dorado) meet or exceed the one-stop guidelines listed under “Required Programs/Partners”. Note that according to the regulations, Affiliate sites, “...provide one or more of the programs, services, and activities to individuals...” These sites are not required to provide access to all WIOA programs/partners. The Affiliate Centers reviewed for this study exceed this requirement through a combination of on-site as well as off-site or electronic connections. Those potential partners that are listed in the regulations as “Additional Partners/Not Mandated” are not included as on-site services by the Affiliate Centers. The El Dorado center’s compliance self-study notes that, “All core partners are co-located in the El Dorado Workforce Center (EWC) either full-time or part-time. Partners collaborate to ensure customers receive the most appropriate services by assuring that the front desk staff are up to date on all changes in each program.” The center does a commendable job of documenting their staff’s work with partners.

The North Little Rock Center meets the requirements of this regulation but does so using different procedures. Title I Adult Services, Title I Dislocated Worker Services, and Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Services are provided on-site for between 32 and 40 hours per week. All other required partner services are provided through “off-Site Electronic Connection”.

Both Affiliate Centers reviewed by the evaluators provide all of the services listed in the “Basic Career Services” category on-site. The Affiliate Center Directors feel that their centers and staff are doing excellent work. They assign a 4 on a scale of 1-5 for their performance in the areas of Functional and Performance Integration, Performance Accountability, and overall Customer Service. These centers are very concerned about doing good work for the claimants that they serve. One comment from the North Little Rock manager makes this point well: “We treat people like we want to be

treated. We understand that this is usually a troubling time they are experiencing, and we strive to do the best for them no matter the person or case.”

The manager of the El Dorado center noted that center staff members work hard to meet the needs of all constituencies: “EWC meets the workforce development needs of participants, and the employment needs of their employers by communicating with them on a regular basis to ensure they are there to help them through all hiring events and community events. Employers are informed that they can correspond with the EWC via phone, email, fax, and in-person. These program services rendered are client and employer driven to improve the labor market relevance in the local area, thus improving prosperity for communities, regions, and statewide.”

It is the opinion of the evaluators, based on the current investigation, that these two Affiliate Workforce Centers have excellent management and do exceptional work for the Division and for the citizens of the state who need their services. Their self-evaluations were in-depth and forthright.

**Comprehensive Center Specific Reviews:**

The Comprehensive Centers reviewed were located in Harrison, Little Rock, Jonesboro, and Pine Bluff. Six compliance items are required for all centers, including the Affiliate Centers. The compliance regulations specify that “...all centers must:

- 1) be strategically located to maximize service to employers and employees;
- 2) have enough traffic to warrant operations;
- 3) provide on-site services (interpreter, documents, etc.) based on demographic need;
- 4) have hours of operation that are based on claimant needs and are claimant driven;
- 5) ensure that uniform procedures are in place to implement priority of service for veterans, individuals with disabilities, English-as-a-Second Language persons, and any other priority

populations identified at the federal, state or local level for job placement;

- 6) ensure that priority of service for job training opportunities for veterans, individuals with disabilities, English-as-a-Second Language persons, and any other priority populations identified at the federal level is clearly implemented for all U.S. DOL programs such as employment, training, and placement services.”

In addition to these rules which are required of all centers, the regulations specify that,

“Additionally, Comprehensive Centers must:

- 1) be accessible to the general public during regular business days, as well as physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities;
- 2) contain a portal site for electronic access;
- 3) be a provider of basic and individualized career services, and training services;
- 4) be a provider of business services;
- 5) demonstrate representation of core mandated partners (WIOA Titles I-IV);
- 6) provide additional related employment and training resources.”

All Comprehensive Centers evaluated for this study wholly and unquestionably meet all twelve of these required items. In the “Required WIOA Program/Partner” area, the regulations list a total of sixteen service partners with whom Comprehensive Centers must maintain cooperative working relationships. Centers are not required to have all of these partners housed on-site. Each Local workforce center has three partnership options—partners may be housed “on-site”, “off-site through electronic connection”, or “off-site basic career services made available in another manner”. The Local workforce comprehensive centers reviewed for this study generally maintained these required partnerships; in a self-assessment, neither the Pine Bluff center nor the Jonesboro Center

indicated that the Second Chance Act, a required partner, was included. Only one Center, the Little Rock Center, reported having the Second Chance Act located on-site. The Jonesboro Center self-reported that four of the sixteen required partners were not included. In addition to the Second Chance Act, the Center did not list WIOA Title I Youth Services, Community Services Block Grant, and Housing and the Urban Development Employment and Training program as partners. Each of the four comprehensive centers reported a minimum of three additional non mandated partners. WIOA services listed in ADWS regulations as “Additional Partners, Not Mandated” are a) Ticket to Work, b) Small Business Administration, and c) SNAP Employment and Training. Centers are invited to add partners to this list in a category titled, “Please Add Partners as Appropriate”. Of the centers included in this study, only the Pine Bluff center added a partner to the list. This partner, the Arkansas Human Development Center (ADHC) was listed as an on-site partner in the center for six hours per week. All other non-mandated partners were listed as off-site services available by referral.

In terms of Career Services provided for job seekers, ADWS regulations list two categories of services. In the “Basic Career Services” category, which includes fifteen separate services ranging from “Initial Assessment of Skill Levels” to “Translation Services” and “Orientation to Arkansas Workforce Center Services” all four reviewed Centers reported 100% compliance, with all services provided on-site. In the “Individualized Career Services” category, which includes twelve items such as the development of an Individualized Employment Plan (IEP), and individualized job counseling, the four reviewed centers provided all services on-site.

ADWS regulations also address services to business provided by Comprehensive Centers. The two specify that centers are to, “Establish and develop relationships and networks with large and small employers and their intermediaries” and to “Develop, convene, or implement industry or

sector partnerships.” All four centers evaluated for this study attest to providing these services on-site.

While the primary purpose of Workforce Centers in Arkansas is to support job seekers and to provide assistance in that effort, a second and perhaps equally important purpose is to provide support and assistance to employers. To this end, Centers are required to screen and refer participants to employers. The regulations for this requirement include eleven measures of services provided to business and industry. These measures include the provision of: “1) Customized services to employers, employer associations, or other such organizations, on employment-related issues; 2) Customized recruitment events and related services for employers including targeted job fairs; 3) Human resource consultation services, e.g., writing/reviewing job descriptions and employee handbooks; Developing performance evaluation and personnel policies; Creating orientation sessions for new workers; Honing job interview techniques for efficiency and compliance; Analyzing employee turnover; or Explaining labor laws to help employers comply with wage/hour and safety/health regulations; 4) Customized labor market information for specific employers, sectors, industries or clusters; 5) Customized assistance or referral for assistance in the development of a registered apprenticeship program; 6) Listing of Job Orders; 7) Applicant Referral; 8) Employer Needs Assessment; 9) Unemployment Insurance Access; 10) Access to Facilities; 11) Translation Services.” Three of the four Comprehensive Centers reviewed for this study reported providing 100% of these services. The Pine Bluff center does not provide Human Resource consultation (item #3 above) but provides all other services listed in this section.

The Comprehensive Centers, like the Affiliate Centers that were reviewed, were asked, as part of the review, to meet with workforce center staff and to complete a self-evaluation of each

category of WIOA/ADWS regulations. This is the same self-evaluation that is used as part of the regular re-certification process for Workforce Centers. The criteria for the Comprehensive Centers are identical to those used in the evaluation of Affiliate Centers:

- Rank on a scale of 1 to 5, where the site believes it is in its path toward meeting, or exceeding, the stated standard. The rankings are shown below:
  - 5 = achieved the standard and excelling
  - 4 = significantly meeting standard with some work yet to do
  - 3 = have some of the elements in place, some of the time
  - 2 = making progress but long way to go
  - 1 = no progress yet

The Comprehensive Centers reviewed rated their level of quality at the top of the scale, awarding their centers either a 5 or a 4 in almost every category rated. Only three items resulted in ratings of 3. Based on the evaluators' reviews of these centers, it is clear these center managers and workforce center staff take great pride in their work and that they do, indeed, provide an extremely high level of quality for the job seekers and the businesses they support.

It is the opinion of the evaluators that the six centers reviewed for this study are in substantial compliance with all ADWS regulations, and that the managers take their regulatory responsibilities seriously. The evaluators further believe that the review of these six centers provides a representative picture of ADWS centers across the state, and that ADWS and those who manage the Local Workforce Areas, as well as Arkansas' taxpaying citizens, should be confident in the work of the thirty-two workforce centers located throughout the state.

The evaluators are grateful to the managers and Workforce Center staff of the six reviewed

centers for their willingness to participate in the initial surveys and to provide follow up information when requested. Survey results and reviewer notes of the policy and regulation interviews are included in Appendix VI.

### **Unemployment Rate Discrepancy, Selected Counties**

For this study, DWS leadership asked the evaluators to conduct additional research in Jefferson, Crittenden, Cross, Phillips, and St. Francis Counties in Arkansas. According to the American Community Survey (ACS), these counties reported unemployment rates in excess of 4.5% in 2022 compared to the statewide rate of 2.8%. As of January 2024, the unemployment rates in these counties ranged from 4.4% in Cross County, to a high of 7.0% in Phillips County. The January 2024 rate in Jefferson County was 5.2%, Crittenden County 4.7%, and St. Francis County 5.7%. These rates compared with the statewide rate in January of 3.4%.

To investigate this discrepancy, the evaluators first compiled information about current employment opportunities and labor force statistics in each of the counties. This information is included below:

#### **Jefferson County:**

In 2021, the population of Jefferson County was 68,199. The unemployment rate in January 2024 was 5.2%. Of this number, 19,464 were employed. The median age was 39.6 years, and the poverty rate was 19.4%. The median household income was \$43,720, and the median property value was \$90,500. Jefferson County has lost 10,388 residents over the last decade.

There were 1,229 “Total Employer Establishments” reported in 2021, with an average of 52.3 employees per workplace. The most common job groups, by number of people living in Jefferson County, are Production Occupations (2,672 people), Office & Administrative Support Occupations

(2,601 people), and Material Moving Occupations (1,896 people). During this period, Manufacturing, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Retail Trades accounted for 11,092 jobs. The highest paying industries are Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (\$56,224), Finance and Insurance (\$51,250), and Real Estate, Rental and Leasing (\$50,655).

In Jefferson County 11,237 individuals or 30% of the population ages 20-64 are “inactive in the labor force”, which is defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) as, “persons who are neither employed nor unemployed. This includes retired persons, students, those taking care of children or other family members, and others who are neither working nor seeking work.”

Jefferson County has a number of significant employers. The largest of these are listed below. The county has four industries that employ between 1,000 and 2,499 employees, and an additional seven that employ between 500 and 999 individuals.

1. Tyson Foods, Inc. Poultry processing (H)
2. Arkansas Department of Correction: Product: State prison system (H)
3. Jefferson Regional Medical Center (JRMC): Product: Health care (H)
4. Evergreen Packaging, Inc. Product: Paper Manufacturing (H)
5. University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Product: Colleges/universities (G)
6. Pine Bluff School District Product: Public schools (G)
7. Pine Bluff Arsenal Department - Army Employee Code: Product: Ammunition (mfg) (G)
8. National Center for Toxicological Research (NCTR) Product: Toxicological research (G)
9. Union Pacific Railroad Product: Railroad (G)
10. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. Product: Retail department stores (G)
11. Central Moloney, Inc. Product: Electrical transformers (mfg) (G)

12. White Hall School District Product: Public schools (F)
13. Simmons First National Bank Product: Financial institutions (F)
14. Mondi Bags USA LLC Product: Paper (mfg) (F)
15. Watson Chapel School District Product: Public schools (F)
16. Stant Manufacturing Inc. Product: Automobile Parts (F)
17. Jenkins Memorial Children’s Center Product: Schools with special academic education (F)
18. Brookshire Grocery Company Product: Retail grocery stores (E)
19. Kiswire Pine Bluff, Inc. Product: Steel cord and hose wire (mfg) ( E)
20. Entergy Arkansas, Inc. Product: Electric companies (E)

Key: (Number of Employees) A=1-10 B=11-49 C=50-99 D=100-199 E=200-299 F=300-499 G=500-999  
H=1,000-2,499 I=2,500 plus

**Analysis, Jefferson County:** It is difficult to pinpoint reasons for the higher unemployment rate in Jefferson County. In addition to a documented unemployment rate of 5.2%, Jefferson County reports that 11,237 individuals or 30% of the population ages 20-64 are inactive in the labor force. As previously noted, these are individuals who are “retired persons, students, those taking care of children or other family members, and others who are neither working nor seeking work” and are therefore not included in the official unemployment rate. Because Jefferson County has a significant number of employer establishments, it would be logical to assume that job opportunities are plentiful. The county has a population of 68,199 and has 1,229 “total employer establishments” according to the census.gov website. This means that in Jefferson County, there are 55.5 total residents for every employer establishment. For comparison purposes, Washington County, with a reported unemployment rate of 2.6% in January 2024, has a population of 261,549 and reports 5,919

total employer establishments (census.gov). This computes to an average of 44.2 residents per employer establishment. While this is not a statistic that is recognized by the Bureau of Labor Statistics or the US Census, it serves to illustrate the availability of job opportunities in Jefferson County.

So, what are the reasons for the lack of engagement in the labor force in the Pine Bluff/Jefferson County area? Jobs are available, and employers are actively seeking employees, but this has not resulted in an amelioration of the rates of unemployment. It is important to reiterate that in addition to an unemployment rate of 5.2%, an additional 30% of the potential labor force, 11,237 individuals, are considered to be inactive in the labor force. Some theories for this lack of labor force engagement that have been posited by individuals interviewed for this study are listed here: a) people in Pine Bluff and Jefferson County are quite simply not interested in working. Some respondents took it to a higher level, opining that, over the past two or three generations, the work ethic of the area's population has eroded to the point that it was considered acceptable for people to eschew work, to opt out of the workforce altogether; b) A large number of individuals in Pine Bluff and Jefferson County are working "off the books" and are not declaring the income they earn. Some of this income is earned from unreported but otherwise legitimate jobs, while another portion is earned from illicit sources such as drug sales. Either way, these individuals avoid declaring the income, and may in fact, continue receiving any government benefits for which they had been approved.

While these are interesting theories, and while there may be a thread of truth in each of them for a small portion of the citizens of Jefferson County, there is no evidence that either of these situations are rampant in the region or are responsible for the significant lack of engagement in the

labor force. A third theory which seems to carry more weight was posed in an interview with a representative of the Pine Bluff Chamber of Commerce. According to this C of C executive, “We have lots of open jobs, and industries in the area hire a lot of people. Those new hires don’t last long, they don’t stay on.”

The main problem, according to this respondent, is the lack of quality in the K-12 education system in the area. “We have long had a declining population, and along with that, came declining quality in our public schools. For a long time, our schools were failing. Charter schools have moved in, and are doing well, but that’s a relatively new occurrence.”

The Pine Bluff school system failed so clearly that, at one point, it was placed under the control of the State of Arkansas. “Anecdotal reports from local employers indicate that our young people graduating from high school were not well educated, and in fact, were not prepared to succeed in the workforce. Employers would hire these recent graduates, and within a short time, would discover that they were not capable of completing those entry level jobs.”

This Chamber of Commerce executive was happy to report that things in Jefferson County and Pine Bluff are on the upswing. “It took a long time to get to this place, and it’ll take time to totally recover, but our schools are on the mend. We have now made improvements that allowed control of the public schools to be returned to Pine Bluff. The new Superintendent of Schools in Pine Bluff made it her goal to have certified teachers in all of our classrooms, and if we haven’t totally reached that goal by now, we’re very close. Our voters recently approved funding for a new school. We’ve built or are building a new library and a new courthouse. I believe we have a new outlook in the region, and we’re on the way back.”

While it will take some time for these reforms to result in higher employment numbers in the

region, Chamber and Workforce staff believe that changes are happening, and in time, employment rates will increase.

**Crittenden County:**

The population of Crittenden County in 2022 was 47,061. This represents a loss of 3,016 in population over the last decade. The county has a number of declining occupations, including, Arts and Spectator Sports, Warehouse and Storage, Administrative Support, Education, and Government (General). During this same period, these were listed as “growing occupations:” Gambling/Recreation, Food Services, Transportation Equipment Manufacturing, Truck Transport, and Government (Safety).

The county reported a total of 834 total “Employer Establishments” with an average of 56.5 employers per workplace. Approximately 19,580 individuals were employed in the county. An additional 6,105 individuals were designated as Inactive in the Labor Force. The largest employers in Crittenden County are listed below:

1. West Memphis School District --Product: Public schools (G)
2. Southland Park Gaming and Racing --Product: Race tracks (G)
3. Walmart Stores, Inc. --Product: Retail department stores (F)
4. Family Dollar Stores (multiple locations)--Product: Distribution center/retail stores (F)
5. Hino Motors Manufacturing USA --Product: Auto parts; axles (mfg) (F)
6. Marion School District --Product: Public schools (F)870)
7. Arkansas State University Mid-South --Product: Colleges/universities (F)
8. Support Solutions of Arkansas—ProOduct: Special academic schools (F)
9. FedEx Freight, Inc. --Product: Trucking ( E)

10. Flash Market, Inc. (multiple locations) Product: Convenience stores ( E)
11. Schneider--Product: Trucking ( E)
12. Warren Oil Company --Product: Lubricating oils and grease (mfg) ( E)
13. McDonalds Corporation (multiple locations) --Product: Restaurants (D)
14. Robert Bosch Tool Corporation --Product: Warehouse/distribution (D)
15. Langston Companies, Inc. --Product: Bags – paper (mfg) (D)
16. Petro Shopping Center (TA Operating LLC) --Product: Truck stops and plazas (D)
17. Gene Stimson’s Big Star, Inc. (multiple locations) --Product: Retail grocery stores (D)
18. Coca-Cola Enterprises, Inc. --Product: Soft drinks (mfg) (D)
19. Awesome Products, Inc. --Product: Laundry detergent (mfg) (D)
20. Earle School District -- Product: Public schools (D)

Key: (Number of Employees) A=1-10 B=11-49 C=50-99 D=100-199 E=200-299 F=300-499

G=500-999 H=1,000-2,499 I=2,500 plus

**Cross County:**

Cross County reported a population in 2022 of 16,601, which includes a loss of 1,102 individuals in the past decade. The top five industries in the county are Education, Food Service, Ambulatory Health Care, Social Assistance, and General Merchandise Retailer. Declining industries in the county are Government, Ambulatory Health Care; Social Assistance, Leather Products Manufacturing, and Durable Wholesalers.

Total Employer Establishments for Cross County numbered 365 in 2021, with an average of 46.5 employees per workplace. In this same period, 2,254 individuals or 24% of the population, were reported as being inactive in the labor force. The largest employers in the county are listed below:

1. Wynne School District Employee --Product: Public schools (F)
2. Mueller Copper Tube Products, Inc.--Product: Iron and steel mills (mfg) ( E) **Union: Chauffer's Teamsters & Helpers Union**
3. Walmart Stores, Inc.--Product: Retail department stores (D)
4. NMF, Inc. --Product: Footwear (mfg) (D)
5. CrossRidge Community Hospital --Product: Health care (D)
6. Hays Food Town (multiple locations) -- Product: Retail grocery stores (D)
7. Crestpark of Wynne --Product: Nursing care facilities (D)
8. Cross County School District --Product: Public schools (D)
9. First National Bank --Product: Financial institutions ( C)
10. Cross County Special Workshop --Product: Vocational rehabilitation services (C )
11. Erwin-Keith, Inc. --Product: Retail farm supplies ( C)
12. Lincare, Inc. (2 locations) --Product: Medical equipment – rental ( C)
13. Cross County Bank (multiple locations ) --Product: Financial institutions ( C)
14. Eakas Arkansas Corporation --Product: Automotive parts (mfg) ( C)
15. Delta Rehab --Product: Rehabilitation services ( C)

Key: (Number of Employees) A=1-10 B=11-49 C=50-99 D=100-199 E=200-299 F=300-499  
G=500-999 H=1,000-2,499 I=2,500 plus

**Phillips County:**

Phillips County reported a total population in 2022 of 15,304, a decline of 5,432 in the last decade. The top five industries in the county are Education, Social Assistance, Food Services, General Merchandise Retail, and Chemical Manufacturing. The county reported a total of 339 total employer

establishments in 2021 with an average of 48 employees per workplace. A total of 4,783 individuals were employed in 2022, with an additional 2,463 reported as being inactive in the labor force. The largest employers in Phillips County are listed below:

1. Helena-West Helena School District --Product: Public schools (F)
2. Walmart Stores, Inc. -- Product: Retail department stores ( E)
3. University of Arkansas - Phillips Community College --Product: Colleges/universities ( E)
4. KIPP Delta, Inc. --Product: Public schools ( E)
5. Helena Regional Medical Center --Product: Health care ( E)
6. Crestpark Helena LLC --Product: Retirement communities (D)
7. Barton-Lexa School District--Product: Public schools (D)
8. Hoffinger Industries, Inc. --Product: Swimming pools & accessories (mfg) (D)
9. Marvell School District --Product: Public schools (C)
10. Hay's Supermarkets, Inc. --Product: Retail grocery stores ( C)
11. Mid-Delta Community Service, Inc. --Product: Special needs transportation ( C)
12. BPS, Inc. --Product: Packaging and labeling services ( C)
13. Southern Bancorp Bank (multiple locations) --Product: Financial institutions ( C)
14. Sonic Drive-In --Product: Restaurants ( C)
15. Southern Hardware Company --Product: Hardware (wholesale) ( C)

Key: (Number of Employees) A=1-10 B=11-49 C=50-99 D=100-199 E=200-299 F=300-499  
G=500-999 H=1,000-2,499 I=2,500 plus

**St. Francis County:**

St. Francis County reported a total population on 22,451 in 2022. This represents a decline in

population of 5,541 over the past decade. This county has a higher than expected number of individuals listed as inactive in the labor force. The count is 6,023 individuals, which amounts to 44% of the potential workforce. A total of 6,981 individuals are employed.

St. Francis County has a total of 438 employer establishments, for an average of 51.3 employees per workplace. The five largest industries in the county are Government (Safety), Education, Food Manufacturing, Social Assistance, and Food Service. The largest employers in St. Francis County are listed below:

1. Forrest City Federal Correctional Complex (G)
2. Boar's Head--Product: Meat and meat products (mfg) (G)
3. Forrest City Medical Center - Product: Health care (F)
4. Forrest City School District Employee Code: Product: Public schools (F)
5. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc- Product: Retail department stores (E)
6. Core-Mark International, Inc. -- Product: Retail grocery stores ( E)
7. East Arkansas Community College --Product: Colleges/universities (D)
8. Truckstops of America (TA Operating) --Product: Truck stops and plazas (D)
9. Crestpark Retirement Inn --Product: Nursing and convalescent homes (D)
10. Amicare of Forrest City (Woodridge Behavioral Care) --Product: Home health services ( C)
11. Crowley's Ridge Technical Institute --Product: Colleges/Universities ( C)
12. Palestine-Wheatley School District --Product: Public schools ( C)
13. Mestek (Airtherm) --Product: Heat and air equipment (mfgs) ( C)
14. Jimmy Sanders, Inc. --Product: Wholesale farm supplies ( C)
15. Hughes School District --Product: Public schools ( C)

Key: (Number of Employees) A=1-10 B=11-49 C=50-99 D=100-199 E=200-299 F=300-499  
G=500-999 H=1,000-2,499 I=2,500 plus

**Analysis, Crittenden, Cross, St. Francis, and Phillips Counties:**

Because Crittenden, Cross, St. Francis, and Phillips Counties, along with Lee County, make up the Eastern Arkansas Workforce Development area, and because of the comparable labor force issues experienced in these areas, the four counties will be addressed as a group. According to Heather Pipkin, Executive Director of the Eastern Arkansas Workforce Development Board, the region's lower employment rates are the result of a number of factors that all work together to make decreasing unemployment difficult. "We do have a lot of jobs available. Employers are advertising all the time, but it seems that folks don't want to work. An employer recently related to me that he interviewed for a job that paid \$18 per hour. The person interviewing said that would need \$21 per hour to replace the benefits that they received. We're in It's a hard to serve community."

Relating the issue to her own situation, Ms. Pipkin said, "I have two children, and I have to pay \$1000 per month for childcare, so I totally understand. I think with housing, childcare, utilities, etc., you need about \$30 per hour to make employment worthwhile."

In addition, Ms. Pipkin continued, "Many employers in the region have a 'no rehire' policy, meaning that if you've worked for the company in the past, you won't be eligible for rehire. Young teen parents are also an issue. Grandparents are caring for the kids and are receiving the childcare benefits. When the kids reach the age where those benefits are lost (when the kids graduate from school) and the grandparents are left with no income and are ready to go to work, they find that they have no work background or experience and are not able to find good jobs."

The real problem, according to Ms. Pipkin, is that our system is not working for the benefit

of the citizens or industry. People can receive benefits for childcare for staying home, but not for going to work. If childcare is paid for being employed, those benefits are only temporary. Ms. Pipkin believes that a reorganization of our benefits system is needed. “We should be encouraging people to go to work or return to work. Our current system encourages people to NOT work.”

The misalignment of benefits, according to the Executive Director of the Eastern Arkansas Workforce Development Board is, if not the main reason for the higher than normal unemployment rates in these counties, certainly one of the main reasons.

One additional factor that may potentially impact employment rates in southern and southeastern Arkansas is limited access to broadband internet in those areas. According to broadbandnow.com, Arkansas ranks 49<sup>th</sup> among states in an annual ranking of internet coverage, speed, and availability. This same report indicates that 78.3% of people in Arkansas have access to 100 Mbps broadband, which ranks 48<sup>th</sup> among states in the nation. Why does this matter? Mbps stands for megabits per second. Megabits are used to measure download speed. The higher the number of megabits, the faster your internet traffic will be. At 100 Mbps, internet speed is classified as “fairly fast” and can effortlessly handle most online activities. A research article published on sciencedirect.com determined that individuals with access to internet have a job-finding advantage. The study established that having access to internet increased online job search activity, and although use of the internet reduced the use of traditional job search methods, this effect was outweighed by more online job search.

As stated previously, some of the counties cited as having higher rates of unemployment than the statewide rate also have limited access to broadband internet. It is possible that the lower ranking of internet access may have a deleterious effect on rates of employment in those areas. In

Jefferson County, for example, only 57.5% of the population have access to 100 Mbps internet compared to the statewide rate of 78.3%. In St. Francis County, the percentage of the population with 100 Mbps internet is 47%. Cross County reports 45.2%. This connection between internet access and unemployment rates does not hold true for Phillips County, which reports an internet access rate of 83.2%, and an unemployment rate of 7%, one of the highest in the state. Crittenden County, with an unemployment rate of 4.7%, reports that 91.2% of the population has access to 100 Mbps broadband internet. This internet access rate is one of the highest in the state. For comparison purposes, Fulton County reports a rate of 98% internet access, Washington County has a rate of 97.3%, and Crawford County's rate is 99.1%.

While the rate of 100 Mbps internet access as an indicator of higher employment rates is not clearly demonstrated, it is recommended that ADWS continue to advocate for increased broadband access throughout the state.

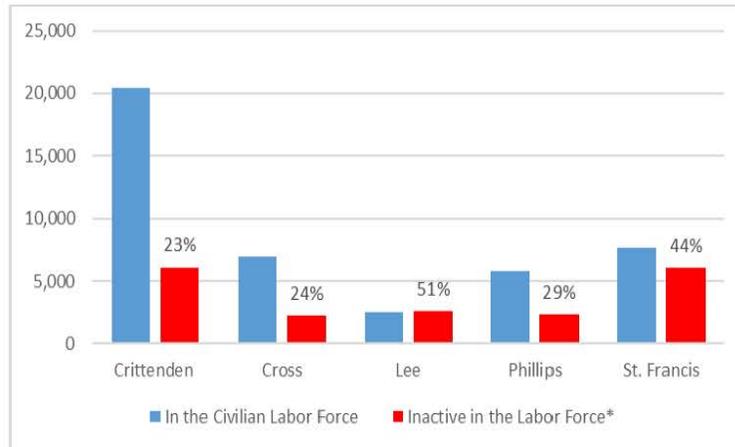
**Other Recommendations:**

A number of individuals interviewed for this analysis suggested that the awarding of benefits for low-income individuals in these areas are at least partly to blame for the discrepancy in unemployment rates. Some individuals actually lose money by taking a job. These individuals suggest that a realignment of benefits should be considered by the legislature. It should not be more beneficial for an individual to eschew work because of the cost of child care and other living costs.

It is further recommended that ADWS partner with the public school systems in Jefferson County to improve educational outcomes for residents, thereby helping create a more skilled workforce.

# Eastern LWDA

**Employment Status of Residents Aged 20-64  
Annual Average 2021**



The chart above shows the number of residents In the Civilian Labor force vs the residents that are Inactive in the Labor Force\*. The percentage of Inactive\* residents ranges from 23% in Crittenden County to as much as 51% in Lee County (2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the State). Note that 23% of Crittenden County residents is roughly 6,105 individuals while 51% of Lee County residents is only 2,620 individuals, based on differences in population levels. **Lee and St. Francis counties are both home to prison facilities, which brings up the rate of Inactive\* residents.**

## Business and Customer Service Surveys

WIOA Customer and Business Service surveys were conducted for this evaluation by the Counselor Education Program at the University of Arkansas. The survey summaries are included below. Listings of survey questions for each of these surveys are included in Appendix VII and Appendix VIII.

# ANALYSIS OF THE ADWS WIOA BUSINESS SURVEY

*Produced for Arkansas Division of Workforce Services*



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**March, 2024**

## **Executive Summary, Business Survey**

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) provides assistance to businesses in meeting their workforce needs. Two primary funding sources for these services come from the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Wagner-Peyser Title III programs.

In 2020-21, the University of Arkansas began working with ADWS to review services provided under the WIOA program with the goal of understanding how the program meets the needs of Arkansas' labor market.

The ADWS WIOA Business Survey explores how Arkansas businesses feel about their experiences with the WIOA program. The data collected in this study will be used in several ways: as a review of outcomes associated with the WIOA program in Arkansas; to help inform future planning about the manner in which the program is directed and operated; and as a benchmark for review in future years.

The ADWS WIOA Business Survey (see Appendix VIII) conducted a survey of individual businesses with valid emails as of June 30, 2023. The original data file provided to the evaluators by ADWS included 1,473 email addresses. When duplicates were removed and the data examined more closely, the evaluators were left with a list of 577 businesses and industries from across the state. While this was an encouraging number, the first mailing resulted in a rather large number of surveys being returned due to incorrect addresses and therefore, an overall poor rate of return. The evaluators worked with ADWS staff and local workforce centers to find and correct addresses, and sent a number of follow-up and reminder emails. This effort, combined with an emailed request from ADWS leadership asking businesses for their participation, resulted in a final respectable return rate

of 8.5%.

The survey captured information and perceptions that can be grouped into five key areas:

- Comprehension of Responsibilities in the WIOA Program;
- Recommendation of the WIOA program;
- Status of Services Received;
- Satisfaction with the WIOA Program;
- Satisfaction with ADWS Staff.

Overall, the report finds that WIOA recipients display a moderate degree of satisfaction with the WIOA program and ADWS. WIOA recipients reported a 53% satisfaction rate of the WIOA program(s) that they worked with. This is tempered somewhat by the 22% of respondents who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the programs.

Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported being “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the “...professionalism and accessibility of staff.” This rate of satisfaction with staff is excellent and speaks very well of WIOA programs in the state. Only 5% of respondents were “very dissatisfied” or “dissatisfied” with their interactions with staff. The final item on the business survey is an open ended question; “What changes would you suggest to improve the services in the WIOA program in which you participated?” elicited these comments: “Some terms of Customer Service requires additional skills etc. troubleshooting call centers are not the same as McDonald customer service.” and, “You need more business service reps in the field.” These are positive comments seemingly made in the spirit of providing assistance to WIOA and ADWS in their efforts to evaluate and improve services.

When asked whether they would recommend the WIOA program to others, 63% of business representatives reported that they would do so. In a surprising response, fully 88% of respondents reported that they received “some” or “all” of the “...services needed for you to address your workforce

needs”, with only 12% feeling that they received “...none of the services needed.” While this is clearly good, it is still important for ADWS and WIOA to work toward improving that service to those businesses that are not being fully served.

The statistical summaries combined with aggregate comments from respondents highlight areas which can be addressed to improve the experience within the WIOA program and subsequent outcomes. Comments pointed out that, while WIOA programs are working hard and meeting many needs voiced by businesses and industries in Arkansas, there is a desire on the part of those businesses to have more “feet on the ground” in their communities. It can only be considered a positive comment when a survey respondent says, “You need more business service reps in the field.” That says, “the work you’re doing is valuable to us, and we would like for it to be more accessible in our community.”

While it is true that the vast majority of survey respondents (68%) reported being happy with the “professionalism and accessibility” of ADWS and WIOA staff, this is an area in which ADWS leadership must not coast or become complacent. It is clear that additional and ongoing training to Workforce Center Staff about program offerings, stress management, and other aspects of customer service are of great importance.

Lastly, some comments noted a lack of interaction between workforce center staff and businesses. ADWS leadership should ensure that offices have a more proactive relationship with regional employers to have the most accurate information about job openings, employer workforce needs, and feedback relevant to the WIOA program.

In conclusion, this report utilizes high-quality data from a statewide evaluation survey to obtain an empirical assessment of past WIOA recipients’ sentiments and outcomes of participating in the

WIOA program. The data can serve as a baseline assessment of the WIOA program in Arkansas. In addition, the survey has provided detailed feedback and suggested areas of improvement. The aim of this report is to provide a critical assessment which can be utilized to improve the structure and operations of the WIOA program in Arkansas. The ultimate goal is to improve outcomes of WIOA recipients, strength the Arkansas workforce, and to better address workforce needs of businesses in Arkansas.

## **Survey Design and Methodology, Business Survey**

### **Survey Design**

The study used a survey of all WIOA business recipients forwarded by ADWS. The list was partitioned to just include the businesses with available emails and then effectively partitioned again as several businesses had email addresses which bounced during mailing.

### **Survey Instrument**

The ADWS WIOA survey was developed via a collaboration between the University of Arkansas and ADWS. The survey utilized questions forwarded by the ADWS to assess satisfaction and feedback concerning the WIOA programs, ADWS staff and operations, and the match of workforce needs. In addition, sections were added to discern the specific WIOA programs utilized along with voluntary disclosure of business characteristics.

The survey was designed as a self-administered, interactive, web-based survey which would take less than 10 minutes on average to complete. Descriptive statistics for the survey can be found in Appendix X. The survey structure was comprised of five sections:

### **Consent**

At the beginning of the survey, all respondents were provided with an information page. The

page served as an informed consent to participate.

The consent form included information about where participants could seek assistance if they had any questions or concerns.

### **Self-Identification of WIOA Services Received – Survey Part I**

The section outlined specific programs under the WIOA and asked respondents to indicate which ones had been utilized by them.

### **WIOA Satisfaction and Feedback – Survey Part II**

Questions were asked to capture sentiments about the comprehension of responsibilities of participation in the program; if a business would recommend the program; if a business' workforce needs were met; satisfaction with services in the WIOA program; and satisfaction with ADWS staff.

### **Demographics – Survey Part III**

Questions were asked about the demographics of each participant, including: primary industry of operation, total number of employees, number of years in operation.

Respondents were required to complete the survey sections concerning self-identification of WIOA services received in addition to satisfaction and feedback. If a respondent did not consent to self-identify WIOA services received, or if none of the services were applicable, then the survey would not include these respondents. In addition, the satisfaction and feedback section also had a mandatory component so the survey would not include individuals who declined to complete this section. The conditions allow for the two sections to be full samples across their respective questions, the number of respondents in data tables will be consistent for these questions. For the full questionnaire administered to respondents please see the customer service survey in Appendix VII .

### **Survey Methodology**

The ADWS WIOA Customer Survey was administered as an online web survey and the survey was formatted so that it could be completed on mobile devices and tablets in addition to desktop or laptop computers.

### **Population Sample Frame**

The eligible population for the survey included all ADWS WIOA recipients who were listed in a file provided on June 30, 2023. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services provided the sample frame (approximately 1,473 businesses).

Using the sample frame, the sample was filtered to individuals with listed emails (577 businesses). Afterwards, the emails were systematically filtered for dummy email addresses (ex. email@gmail.com) and duplicates to arrive at the final mailing list.

### **Data Collection**

The overall data collection design protocol for recipients was:

- An email sent from the evaluators using the ADWS provided email address, informing them of the survey and inviting them to participate upon their reception of a second email.
- A second email invitation, by ADWS local area, with the survey link was sent to participate in the web-based survey.
- A series of email reminders to participate in the web-based survey.

### **Response Rates**

Response rates were monitored during the data collection process. Overall, 8.5% of the survey sample completed the survey.

### **Survey Respondents**

The first results presented describe the characteristics of the respondents of our survey. The

report will provide population estimate of ADWS WIOA participants based on responses to the survey itself. Each section will display percentages of ADWS WIOA participants for each item in the survey and 95% confidence limits (CL). As our estimates for the entire population of ADWS WIOA recipients are based on a sample of the recipients, each statistic we report has some degree of sampling variation and the CL describes the degree of the sampling variation. The 95% Confidence Limits (CL) presented in the tables can be utilized to determine if two different estimates reflect a statistically significant difference. The method described is an informal and conservative manner to compare differences among subgroups. A more formal test may be needed to identify significant differences among subgroups.

**Characteristics of Respondent Businesses**

Overall, approximately 79% of ADWS WIOA respondents reported receiving employment services – job searches or resumes, 37% received local workforce services (focused on training programs such as work experience, on the job training, or incumbent worker programs), 16% received adult education, and 5% received services for the blind.

Table 1: Services Utilized By Business Customers

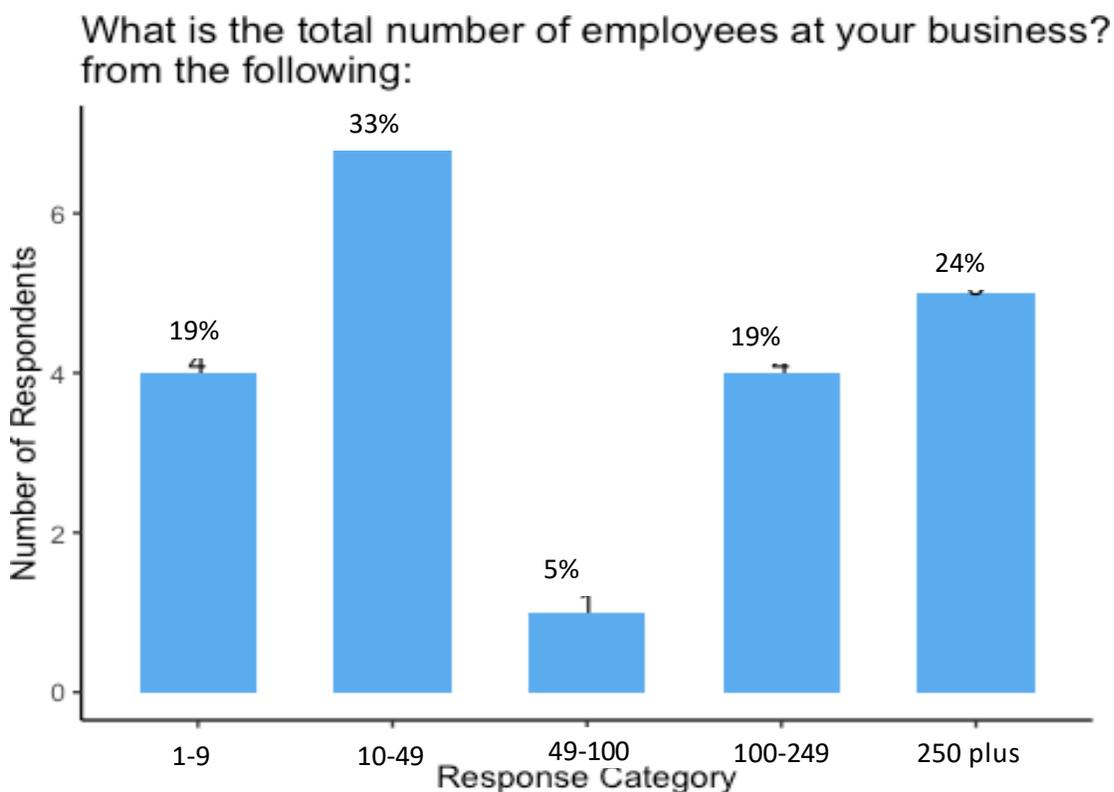
1 - What type of services did you receive from the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services? (Click all that apply)	Percentage	Count
Adult Education	2%	4
Adult (Training/Workforce) Services	11%	24
Dislocated Workers Services	7%	16

1 - What type of services did you receive from the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services? (Click all that apply)	Percentage	Count
Employment Services, Such as Job Search or Resumes	42%	96
Rehabilitation Services	1%	2
Services for the Blind	0%	1
Youth Services	0%	1
Other	37%	83

The industry distribution of respondents are as follows: 5% reported they were in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting; 5% were in Information Services; 24% were in Transportation and Warehousing; 19% were in Accommodation and Food Service; 5% were in Educational Services; 10% were in Other Services Except Public Administration; 5% were in Finance and Insurance; 10% were in Public Administration; and 5% were in Retail Trades.

Nineteen percent of ADWS WIOA respondents report having 1 to 9 employees, 33% reported having 10 to 49 employees, 5% reported having 50 to 99 employees, 19% reported having 100 to 249 employees, and 24% reported having more than 250 employees. Survey respondents reported being in operations for 11+ years, while only one responding business reported having been in business for five years or less.

Table 2: Number of Employees Reported



### Survey Responses

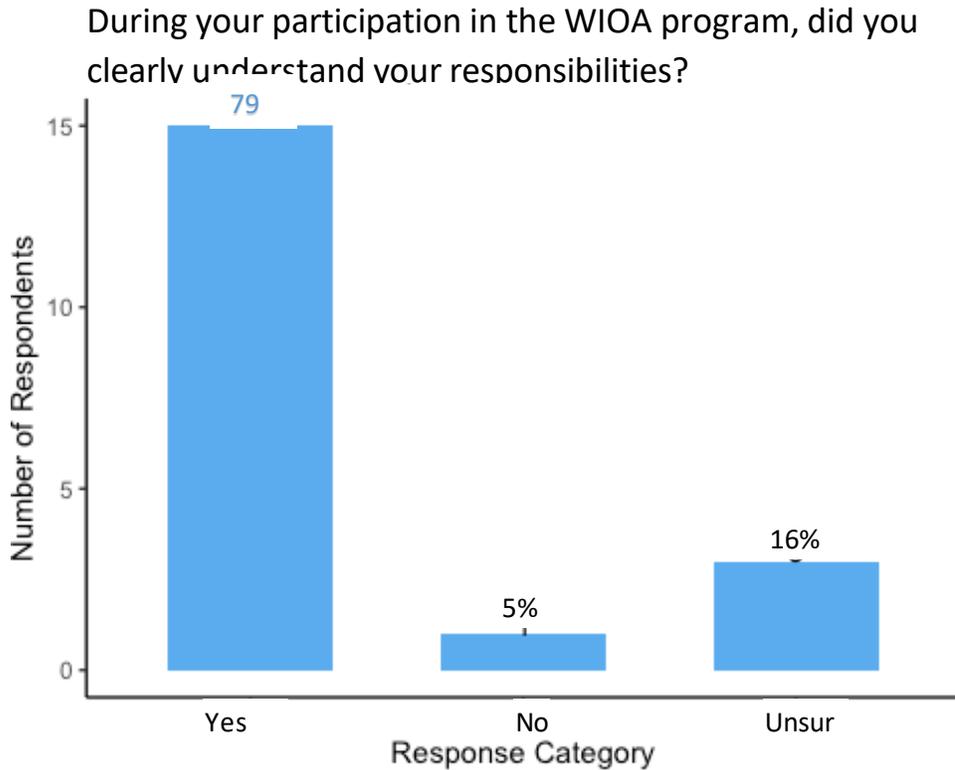
The tables below describe ADWS WIOA recipients' responses to the following survey questions on satisfaction:

- Did you clearly understand your responsibilities to participate in the program?

Yes; No; Unsure

Overall, 79% of WIOA recipients reported that they understood their responsibilities to participate in the WIOA program. Approximately 16% of recipients reported that they were unsure of the responsibilities in the WIOA program, and 5% reported that they did not understand their responsibilities.

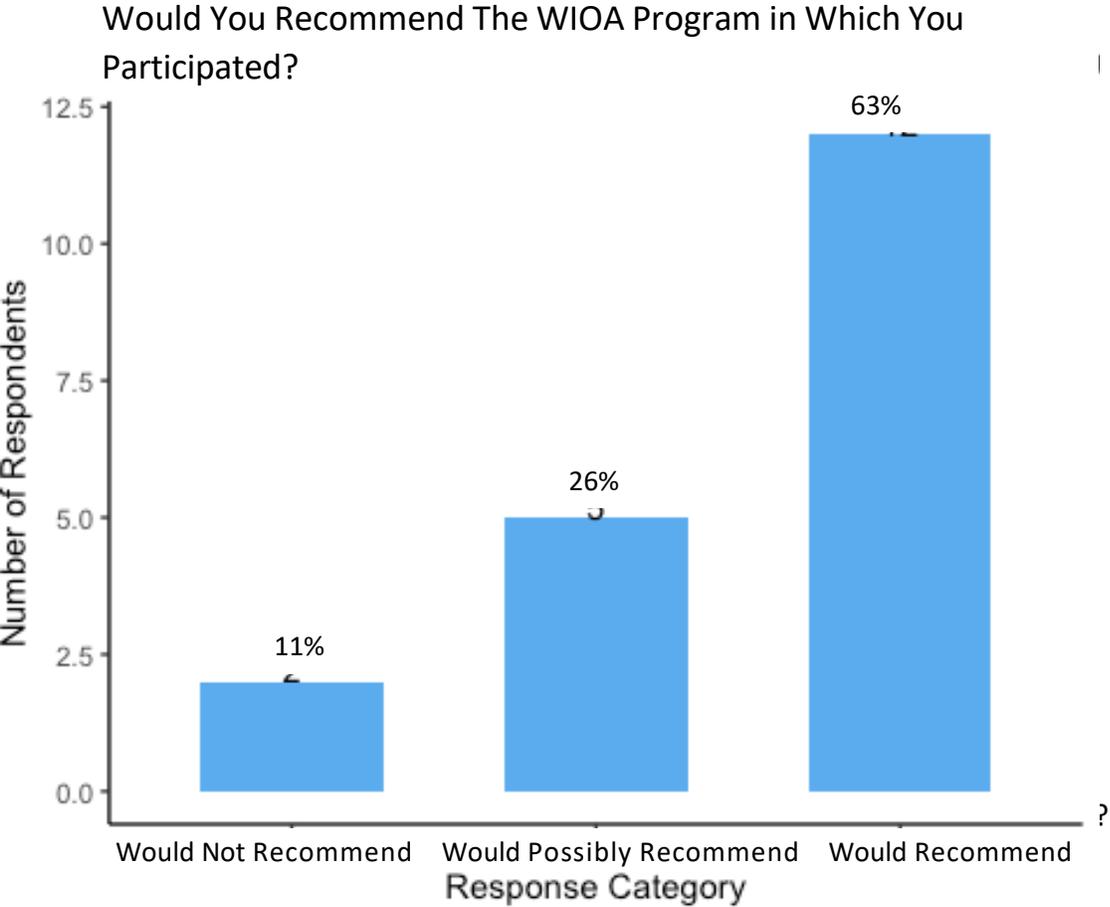
Table 3: Summary of Understanding WIOA Responsibilities



Would you recommend this program?

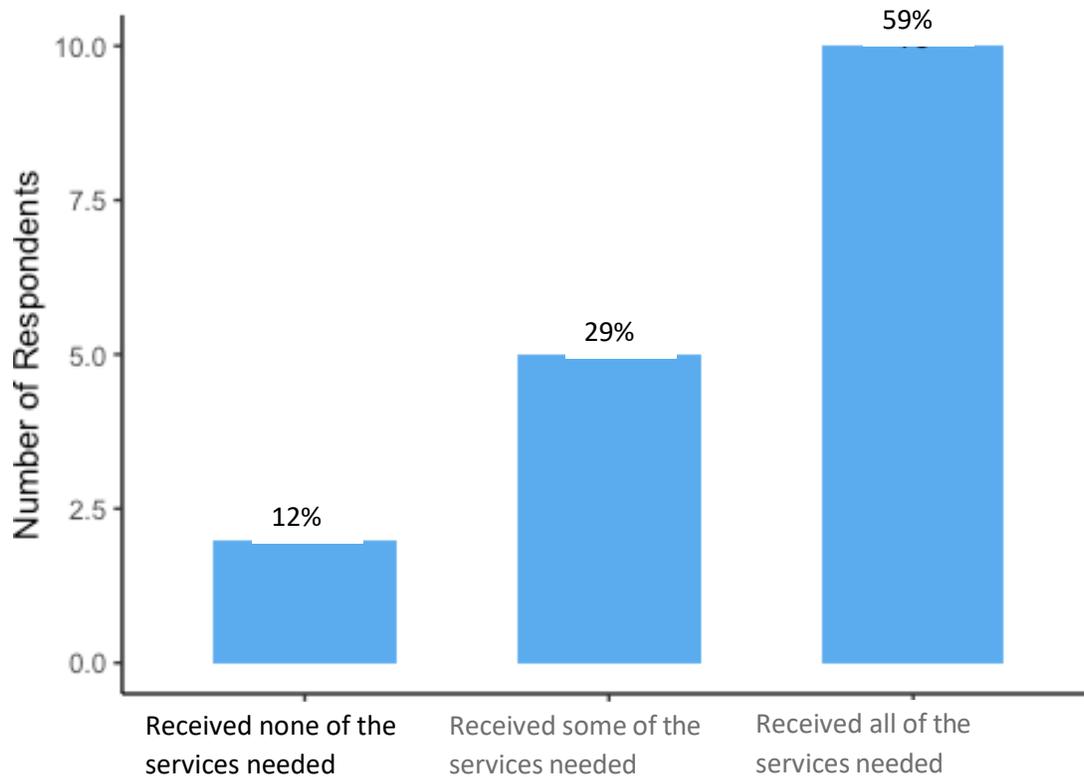
- Would not Recommend;
  - Would Possibly Recommend;
  - Would Recommend;
  - Would Strongly Recommend;
  - Would Very Strongly Recommend
- Eighty-nine percent of WIOA recipients reported that they would or would possibly recommend, or would recommend the program they had received. Approximately 30% of recipients reported that they would possibly recommend the WIOA program, and 13% of recipients reported that they would not recommend the WIOA program.

Table 4: Recommendation Rate of the WIOA Program



- b. Received None of the Services Needed;
- c. Received Some of the Services Needed;
- d. Received Most but Not All Services Needed;
- e. Received All Services Needed

Did you receive the services needed for you to address your workforce needs?  
Choose from the following:

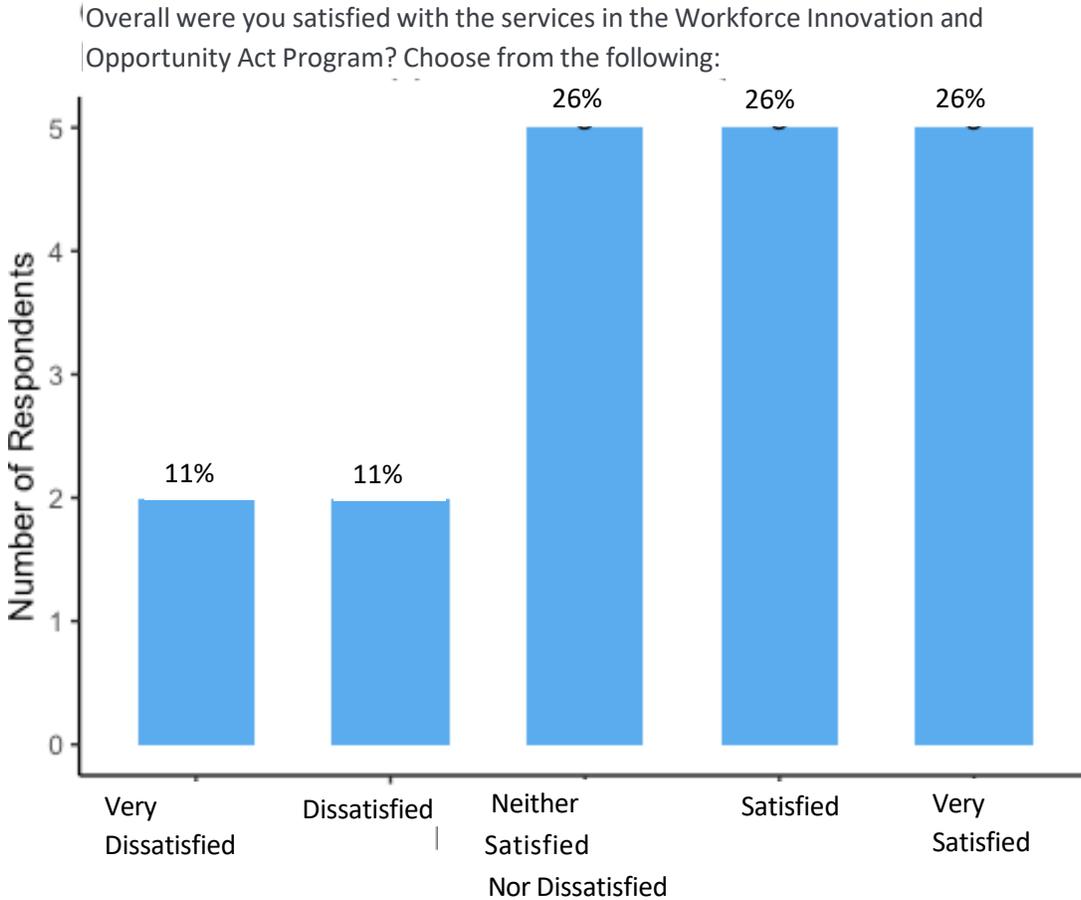


Eighty-eight percent of WIOA recipients reported that they received some or all of the services needed to address their workforce needs. Approximately 29% of recipients reported that they received some of the services needed to address their workforce needs, and another 59% of recipients reported that they received all of the services they needed. Twelve percent of respondents reported that they received none of the services needed to address their workforce needs.

- Overall were you satisfied with the services in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program?
  - a. Very Dissatisfied;

- b. Dissatisfied;
- c. Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied;
- d. Satisfied;
- e. Very Satisfied

Table 5: Overall Satisfaction With WIOA Programs



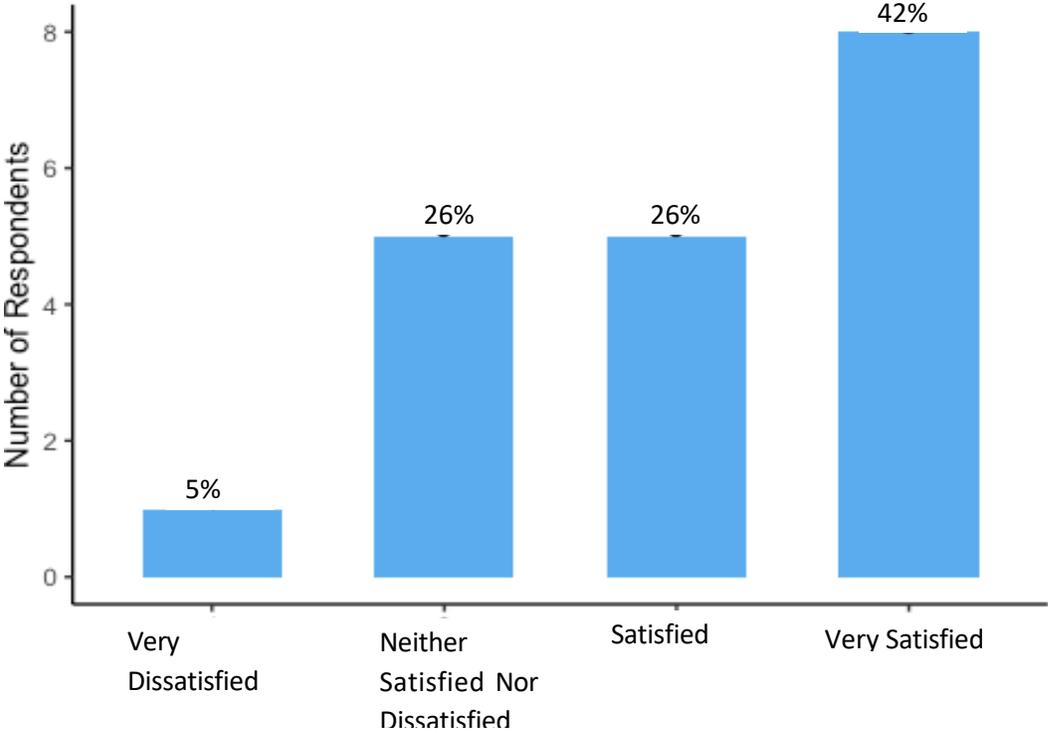
Fifty-two percent of WIOA recipients reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the services in the WIOA program. Approximately 26% of recipients reported that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the WIOA program. Approximately 11% of recipients reported that they were dissatisfied with the WIOA program, and an additional 11% of recipients reported that they

were very dissatisfied with the WIOA program. It should be noted that the number of participants who responded to this question was small. This resulted in three of the categories showing the same percentage of responses. The evaluators are confident, however, that the results are representative and generalizable for the survey.

- How satisfied were you with the professionalism and accessibility of staff?
  - a. Very Dissatisfied;
  - b. Dissatisfied;
  - c. Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied;
  - d. Satisfied;
  - e. Very Satisfied

Table 6: Satisfaction With ADWS and WIOA Staff

How satisfied were you with the professionalism and accessibility of staff? Choose from the following:



Sixty-eight percent of WIOA recipients reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with ADWS staff. Twenty-six percent of recipients reported that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with ADWS staff, while 5% of recipients reported that they were very dissatisfied with ADWS staff.

**Comments from WIOA Recipients**

As part of the evaluation of WIOA services, survey respondents were offered the opportunity to provide feedback comments. Only three respondents provided input in this manner. Those comments are included here: 1) “Some terms of Customer Service requires additional skills etc. troubleshooting call centers are not the same as McDonald customer service”. 2 ) “You need more business service reps in the field.” 3) “Have someone tell me how I could benefit.”

## **Findings, Business Survey**

There is much to celebrate in the survey of Arkansas business and industry as it relates to ADWS and the WIOA programs. The businesses that responded to the survey were generally very supportive of WIOA staff and the programs that are provided. When 68% of respondents report being “Satisfied” or “Very Satisfied” with ADWS staff, that is indeed, a compliment. Relationships and connections between staff and the business community are one of the most important factors in creating and improving the state’s workforce. There are, as always, items and issues to work on, but overall, the report is excellent.

# ANALYSIS OF THE ADWS WIOA CUSTOMER SURVEY

*Produced for Arkansas Division of Workforce Services*



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**March, 2024**

## Executive Summary Customer Survey

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) provides assistance to residents in acquiring and retaining employment. Two primary funding sources for these services come from the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Wagner-Peyser Title III programs.

In 2022-2023, the University of Arkansas began working with ADWS to review services provided under the WIOA program with the goal of understanding how the program meets the needs of Arkansas' labor market.

The ADWS WIOA Customer Survey (see Appendix VII) explores how Arkansas job seekers feel about their experiences with the WIOA program. The data collected in this study will be used in several ways: as a review of outcomes associated with the WIOA program in Arkansas; to help inform future planning about the manner in which the program is directed and operated; and as a benchmark for review in future years.

The ADWS WIOA Customer Survey conducted a survey of 34,340 individuals with valid emails as of June 30, 2023. The survey focused on a distribution by local workforce development areas for a more balanced sample and produced an overall response rate of 9.3% (320 individual surveys). Descriptive statistics for the survey can be found in Appendix X. The survey captures information and perceptions that can be grouped into seven key areas:

- Comprehension of Responsibilities in the WIOA Program;
- Recommendation of the WIOA program;
- Status of Services Received;
- Satisfaction with the WIOA Program;

- Satisfaction in ADWS Staff;
- Attainment of Employment;
- Retention of New Employment (if applicable).

The following tables document the responses from the Customer Survey. Findings based on the responses from the survey. Comments and findings will be included immediately following the tables.

Service	%	#
Adult (Training/Workforce) Services	11%	24
Dislocated Workers Services	7%	16
Employment Services, Such as Job Search or Resumes	42%	96
Rehabilitation Services	1%	2
Services for the Blind	0%	1
Youth Services	0%	1
Other	37%	83

Table 6: Type of Service Provided

Table 7: Case Manager Assignment

Were you assigned a case manager or workforce representative to help you develop a plan for employment?	Percentage	Count
Yes	27%	61
No	58%	131
Unsure	15%	35

Table 8: Responsibilities to participate:

Do you understand your responsibilities to participate in the program?	Percentage	Count
Yes	52%	118
No	34%	78
Unsure	14%	31

Table 9: Would you recommend this program?

Would Not Recommend	45%	102
Would Possibly Recommend	19%	43
Would Recommend	21%	49
Would Strongly Recommend	6%	13
Would Very Strongly Recommend	9%	21

Table 10: Did you receive the help you needed to reach your goals

Received All Services Needed	29%	54
Received most but not all services needed	8%	15
Received none of the services needed	49%	92
Received some of the services needed	14%	27

Table 11: Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your WIOA Program

	Percentage	Count
Very Dissatisfied	38%	86
Dissatisfied	12%	27
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	23%	53
Satisfied	17%	38
Very Satisfied	10%	23

Table 12: How satisfied were you with the professionalism and accessibility of staff?

	Percentage	Count
Very Dissatisfied	32%	73
Dissatisfied	12%	26
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	20%	45
Satisfied	23%	52
Very Satisfied	13%	30

Table 13: Were you able to find employment in your career field after you completed this program?

Not Seeking Employment At This Time	11%	26
Not Applicable	24%	54
No, I Did Not Find Employment	42%	95
Yes, I Found Employment But Not In My Career Field	11%	24
Yes, I Found Employment In My Career Field	12%	28

Table 14: If you found employment, are you likely to keep this job over the next six months?

	Percentage	Count
Yes	54%	103
No	15%	29
Unsure	31%	58

It is troubling that fully 45% of the survey respondents report that they would not recommend the program. Thirty-six percent report that they either would recommend, would strongly recommend, or would very strongly recommend the program. Thirty-seven percent reported that they received all of the services they needed, or “most but not all” of the services they needed to reach their goals. A disappointing 63% reported receiving some or none of the services they needed to reach their goals. Another disappointing finding was that only 27% of customers reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the WIOA program.

Further findings are listed in figure 2 below:

**Findings and Recommendations, Customer Survey**

Figure 1: Findings and Recommendations

Findings and Recommendations	
Findings	
1	42% of survey respondents received ‘Employment Services, Such as Job Search or Resumes; 37% listed “other” as the service type.
2	Only 27% of customers reported having an assigned Case Manager or Workforce Representative to help with the development of a plan for employment. 58% did not have a case manager, and 14% were unsure.
3	52% of recipients understood their responsibilities under WIOA. 34% did not and 14% were unsure.
4	45% of respondents reported that they would not recommend the program. 21% would recommend, and 15% would strongly or very strongly recommend.

5	38% of respondents reported being “very dissatisfied” and another 12% were “dissatisfied” with the WIOA program. 27% reported being satisfied or very satisfied.
6	37% of respondents reported receiving all or most of the services they needed to reach their goal. 49% reported receiving none of the services they needed, and another 14% reported receiving “some” of the services they needed.
7	44% of respondents reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the professionalism and accessibility of staff. 36% were satisfied or very satisfied..
8	When asked, “were you able to find employment in you career field” 12% replied in the affirmative. Another 11% responded that they found employment but not in their career field. NOTE: 24% responded with “NA” to this question, ad 11% replied, “Not seeking employment at this time”
9	54% of those who found employment report that they are likely to keep the job for the next 6 months. 31% were unsure.
<b>Recommendations</b>	
1	Satisfaction with the WIOA program and ADWS staff could be improved by ADWS leadership providing additional and routine training rooted in customer service and program offerings to office and/or customer facing employees. A number of online training programs such as ServiceSkills.com may be accessed for the purpose of increasing customer service in local Workforce centers.
2	It appears that WIOA and ADWS staff have greater success working with businesses than with individual job seekers. ADWS leadership may need to address this through training or job

	realignment. Are higher quality staff being inadvertently assigned to work with business than with individuals?
3	Customer service respondent comments are revealing. It is a fact that some individuals have very unrealistic expectations and expect staff to “do for them” rather than “do with them”. The fact that some comments in this survey are negative does not mean that ADWS staff are uncaring and unwilling, but ADWS leadership must be open to all possible solutions.
4	The employment attainment rate suggests improvements can be made. ADWS leadership, specifically at local offices, should consider development or continued development of partnerships between local offices and employers in the area. This is clearly happening in some offices, and great strides are being made.
5	The rate at which respondents received needed services should be improved. The evaluators recommend regular assessment of all channels of communication and service. Comments highlighted a desire for more feedback from case managers and local offices. ADWS leadership should consider the current procedure for feedback from case managers and/or manners to improve accountability and feedback to WIOA program recipients.
6	Improvement to online resources for reporting and participating in the WIOA program and/or phone system technology could improve satisfaction and outcomes. Many comments noted the difficulty in aspects of the WIOA program – reporting, communication, etc. ADWS leadership should review if investment in more online offerings/reporting and/or phone system technology are warranted.

### Customer Service Survey Comments

As previously mentioned, some of the comments received in the survey are harsh. Experienced evaluators know to take these comments with a grain if not a pound of salt. All customer comments must be considered seriously, but in context. The individuals who commented harshly in this survey are probably at a very low point in their lives. They need to work, and in some cases, they are in desperate need. This situation can cause usually levelheaded people to make comments that they might not otherwise make. It's also true that the anonymity of a survey of this nature can be seen as permission to vent—an event that might otherwise be taken as a small slight or a step backwards, can then become fodder for our worst thoughts.

At the request of ADWS leadership, the evaluators have provided all survey comments, good and bad, for review by leadership. These comments have not been included in full in this report but are on file with ADWS. The survey question that led to most of the negative comments was: “What changes would you suggest to improve the services in this program?” The evaluators encourage ADWS Leadership to read the comments with that in mind—there are some good points that may be lost in a sea of bitterness.

## **Conclusions**

The statistical summaries combined with aggregate comments from respondents highlight areas which can be addressed to improve the experience within the WIOA program and subsequent outcomes. Notable issues raised are:

- Many respondents reported either “poor customer service”, “a rude attitude”, “inattentive staff”, or “uninformed staff” when describing ADWS staff.
- ADWS leadership should consider providing additional training about program offerings, stress management, and other aspects of customer service as these would be a beneficial

investment.

ADWS leadership may consider having case managers receive additional training to provide better service to recipients and their unique problems based on their input. The comments brought up issues with accessibility, both physical and technological, which likely impacts all applicants.

Several comments mentioned a mismatch between jobs posting or recommendations and the background of recipients. The evaluators recommend that ADWS leadership continue to work to refine the job search process for all customers.

The evaluators recognize significant improvements since 2021 in terms of partnerships between local offices and employers in their areas. Continued developments of this nature could help produce better job searches and job matches for recipients.

Additional online resources for reporting and participating in the WIOA program would also be beneficial. Numerous comments mentioned the hassle of going to local offices for parts of the process which could be done online. Further development of online options could improve accessibility and reduce wait times at local offices. The user-friendly aspect of online options is also an important current and future consideration.

Additional feedback from case managers was a common comment among respondents. The sentiment among respondents is that additional case manager feedback would help to improve outcomes by accountability and progress of the recipient. One of the survey findings was that a significant number of WIOA customers either don't have a case manager or aren't sure who that person is. The evaluators recognize the difficulties related to providing this service effectively and efficiently but recommend that ADWS Leadership continue to work on improving that part of the process.

As in the 2021 study, several comments were related to the difficulty of getting through to staff via telephone. This is very discouraging to customers who are already faced with problems with unemployment or under employment. Improvements in the phone system technology, more staff, or moving more of the necessary steps online may help to resolve part of this issue.

In conclusion, the present report utilizes high-quality data from a statewide evaluation survey to obtain an empirical assessment of past WIOA recipients' sentiments and outcomes of participating in the WIOA program. The data and report provide several benefits to the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services. First, the report provides sentiments and outcomes with detailed summaries about ADWS location, and WIOA service. The data can serve as a baseline assessment of the WIOA program in Arkansas. In addition, aggregate comments have provided detailed feedback and suggested areas of improvement. The aim of this report is to provide a critical assessment which can be utilized to improve the structure and operations of the WIOA program in Arkansas. The ultimate goal is to improve outcomes of WIOA recipients, strength the Arkansas workforce, and to improve the well-being of residents.

### **Overall Study Findings:**

The purpose of this study is to provide an in-depth examination of the processes that are used to identify, analyze, and close skills gaps in economic regions served by three selected local workforce development centers. In addition, the evaluators examined a number of processes and procedures utilized by workforce centers and WIOA partners across the state to identify strengths and barriers related to the services provided to ADWS customers. From the data collected and the analysis of said data, the evaluators developed recommendations of "best practices" for identifying and closing skills gaps and for improving services to ADWS customers. The evaluators, in analyzing

the results of the study, submit the following findings to Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board for consideration.

**Findings, levels of Co-Enrollment in partner programs:**

Co-enrollment is defined as enrollment in two or more WIOA programs, and/or special grant programs funded by Workforce Services. Co-enrollments will always be for the benefit of the customer and are used to leverage services that are available to ensure a positive outcome. Coordination of co-enrollment will eliminate the duplication of these services and reduce the amount of time staff spends providing intensive services such as case management, job search assistance, and follow-up services. Results of customer reviews in the three selected centers confirmed a range of 2.3% co-enrollment to a high of 10% for these individual partner providers, with an overall average rate for all reporting providers of 4.26%. This is not an optimum rate of co-enrollment.

As previously noted, the rates of co-enrollment reported by the employers assigned for this survey by the workforce center managers may have been adversely affected by the inclusion of individuals in the Employment Services category. In the Southwest region, for example, the vast majority of customers during this period were enrolled in job search programs. Because Employment Services is a universal category, individuals with this designation do not necessarily have specific barriers to employment, and therefore may not be candidates for or interested in co-enrollment.

This distinction was not obvious to the evaluators prior to the survey, and while the final rates of co-enrollment may have been affected somewhat, the evaluators nevertheless find that the rates of co-enrollment in partner programs during the most recent reporting period should be higher.

**Findings, Partner Programs and Agencies:**

Managers in the assigned local workforce development areas provided a list of partner agencies and programs for their areas. There were twenty-one in the Central Arkansas Planning and Development District, forty-two in the Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Center, thirty-three in the Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District, twenty-two in the Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board, thirty-three in the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board, and twenty-two in the Little Rock Workforce Development Board. While the numbers vary somewhat, it is the opinion of the evaluators that each of the assigned workforce areas has worked hard to develop these partnerships. The evaluators noted significant progress in this area since the previous assessment. One of the key principles of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is to streamline services in order to promote efficiency and optimize performance. This can only be accomplished by leveraging resources and collaborating with partner programs and agencies.

**Findings, Referral Procedures:**

WIOA authorizes “career services” for adults and dislocated workers, and requires the provision of information and referrals to, and coordination of activities with, other programs and services. Referral procedures are in place for the three assigned workforce areas. Examples of referral forms and procedures are included in Appendix III. All three managers reported that referrals are also received via email and telephone as an alternative when necessary. Referral procedures and customer support are well laid out and well documented at all assigned workforce areas. Procedures are in place and are available for review by potential customers. During the interviews conducted with workforce center staff, one area manager said, “We have good procedures in place, and do our best to maintain a good and effective online presence, but in the end, a solid referral is sometimes

dependent upon one staff person maintaining an old-fashioned rolodex.” The opinion of the evaluators is that the assigned workforce areas are in substantial compliance with this requirement.

**Findings, Training Services:**

The three selected areas provide training concerning available services as necessary. The most common method reported was through information provided on the center’s website, with follow-up through staff face-to-face contact and the provision of print materials to customers. The evaluators find that the training opportunities are, in many cases, insufficient to meet the needs of the workforce customer base. While the website may contain pertinent information, and may, in fact work well for many customers, staff must have other training methods available at a moment’s notice. The evaluators recommend the adoption of a series of training methods to ensure that potential customers are comfortable with the services provided. These methods should be varied to meet the needs of customers with varied learning styles. One suggested method is the creation of a series of short but engaging videos that will educate potential customers and lead them through the application process. These should be short, simple and to the point. One additional point should be made here; all of the high-impact branding and marketing processes that can be developed cannot replace face-to-face communications. Staff must be encouraged to talk with (not just “to”) customers. Though time consuming, the ideal way to educate is through personal outreach and conversation. The evaluators find that, while the customer training requirement is met at a minimal level in the three selected workforce areas, more should be done to ensure understanding by all ADWS customers. It should be noted that training about WIOA and ADWS processes are important, not just for customers, but for the business community. One comment from respondents in the business survey in answer to the question, “what changes would you like to see?” was, “Have

someone tell me how I could benefit.”

### **Findings, Skills Gap Identification and Amelioration:**

Strategies for identifying skills gaps clearly demonstrated some differences among the centers. All of the assigned areas have solid plans in place for identifying skills gaps, both from the occupational side and on the skills gap side. None of the area managers posited the idea that one manager voiced in the previous (2021) evaluation. His position was at that time, “We are dependent solely on the employer telling us their needs.” All area managers now have plans in place and are clearly working closely with local industries to put those plans to work.

These Workforce Centers reported regularly reviewing labor market information and attending industry specific meetings. At the occupational level, managers reported that WIOA and DWS staff serve as members of the Workforce Development Committee through the Chamber of Commerce, where information is shared regarding local business needs and demand occupations. At the skill level, these centers reported that, “DWS works with the employer to determine the skill set needed for posted job positions.” Workforce centers report significant additional services to address identified gaps. The area managers utilize career services, occupational skills training, and supportive services to assist customers who have an interest in a demand occupation obtain the skill set needed to become employed in a demand occupation and maintain employment. Area managers report that customers are encouraged to complete the Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) in order to meet their employment goals and to help determine what areas need improvement. The Workforce Center, in collaboration with the employer, determines which level rating on the (CRC) is needed for the job posting. Applicants who meet this level on the CRC can apply for this job and the employer has crucial information at the beginning of the interview process. If an applicant is not

currently meeting a required level on the CRC, they are referred to the local Adult Education facility to improve their skill sets and retest for the CRC.

Staff at these Workforce Centers report using targeted recruiting to help employers build a pipeline to the training that's available at the Workforce Center.

The tools for identifying skills gaps are available in equal measure to all WIOA and ADWS Centers in Arkansas. It is the recommendation of the evaluators that DWS leadership take advantage of area managers and staff who excel at these tasks and find ways for them to pass their expertise on to other Workforce areas around the state.

**Assessing the Effectiveness of Skills Gaps Interventions:**

All of the selected workforce centers reported using repeat, continued business with employers and job placement and retention as one measure of the effectiveness of services provided. One center reported as additional specific measures, annual WIOA performance ratings, success in meeting their own performance measures, employer feedback, and the success of customers remaining employed. In addition to these performance measures, two members of the cohort reported a number of other measures of their effectiveness.

All of the assigned workforce areas are doing excellent work in this area, and it is the opinion of the evaluators that standard protocols for measuring the effectiveness of ameliorating skills gaps should be developed and shared with all workforce areas.

**Findings, Compliance Review:**

The evaluators reviewed a sample of six Arkansas Workforce Centers approved by Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, against the State's certification policy and applicable laws and regulations. All centers reviewed meet or exceed

minimum requirements established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for physical accessibility. External entrances into the facilities in which workforce services are housed are at least minimally accessible for individuals who have mobility impairments. Ramps and level entrances into the facilities are present at all locations reviewed.

The affiliate centers evaluated self-report that they are somewhat lacking in the areas of recruitment of employees for local industry, and report that they are not able to provide adequate information to customers regarding performance information and program cost information on eligible providers of training services in the local area. They also report a weakness in providing information, in formats that are usable by and understandable to one-stop center customers, regarding how the local area is performing on the local performance accountability measures. In spite of the affiliate centers exacting self-evaluations, the evaluators find them to be in compliance with all requirements.

The comprehensive centers evaluated for this study meet or exceed all guidelines and requirements. It is the opinion of the evaluators that the six centers reviewed for this study are in substantial compliance with all ADWS regulations, and that the managers take their regulatory responsibilities seriously. The evaluators further believe that the review of these six centers provides a representative picture of ADWS centers across the state, and that ADWS and those who manage the Local Workforce Areas, as well as Arkansas' taxpaying citizens, should be confident in the work of the thirty-two workforce centers located throughout the state.

**Findings, Business Survey:**

The survey of business partners conducted for this evaluation finds that WIOA recipients display a moderate degree of satisfaction with the WIOA program and the ADWS. Some areas of

concern were reported, however, and these areas require attention by Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board. These include the following:

- Less than half of WIOA recipients (42%) reported receiving the majority of services needed to address workforce needs.
- Many respondents described Workforce Center staff as “unresponsive” or “inattentive.”
- Many comments brought up the difficulty of posting job openings through the ADWS or the online options made available to employers.
- Several comments noted a lack of interaction between staff and businesses.

**Findings, Customer Survey:**

This survey showed a 62% overall satisfaction rate with WIOA programs and a 68% satisfaction rate with Workforce Center staff. While these numbers are good, there are findings in the survey that require attention from Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board. The survey found that, “many” respondents reported “poor customer service”, “a rude attitude”, “inattentive staff”, or “uninformed staff”. In spite of the high overall satisfaction rating with the program, the fact that “many” respondents cited these issues, the evaluators recommend additional training in customer service for all local center staff. In addition, the survey found that, “The current phone system does not appear suited to surge demand of ADWS or WIOA services.” It is possible that the increased demand on the phone system due to the COVID pandemic is at least partially responsible for the problems reported by customers. This possibility should be evaluated as soon as possible. In addition, efforts to improve online accessibility of the WIOA program and an improved user experience (UX) design would streamline the program

for many. The suggested upgrades, should the evaluation of the current system indicate such a need, will no doubt be expensive. The evaluators believe, however, that they will help improve the delivery of quality services and ensure an effective and reliable communication system.

**Overall Study Recommendations:**

Creating better work opportunities for Arkansans means building a well-trained workforce for our state's employers. This will require ADWS to collaborate with businesses large and small, WIOA partners, nonprofit organizations, and others. It also requires a workforce system in which workforce centers are willing learn from the best practices across the state. The following recommendations may be used by ADWS to develop training courses or modules which can be provided to ADWS centers around the state. In doing so, ADWS may increase the quality of skills gap identification and analysis, as well as overall service quality across the state.

**Recommendations, Co-Enrollment:**

Co-Enrollment in partner programs, though a WIOA mandate, seems to be little more than an afterthought for many center staff members. Data documenting rates of co-enrollment were not immediately available to the evaluators and were obtained through surveys and interviews with partner programs. The evaluators recommend that Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board and area managers develop data collection methods to effectively track and monitor rates of co-enrollment. Only by having accurate and up-to-date information concerning co-enrollment can ADWS begin to encourage and promote additional co-enrollment with WIOA partners.

**Recommendations, Partner Programs and Organizations:**

In an online “One-Stop Operations Guidance” document (doleta.gov TEG), the Department

of Labor states that, “WIOA places a strong emphasis on planning across multiple partner programs to ensure alignment in service delivery. One key goal is to develop effective partnerships across programs and community-based providers to provide individuals the employment, education, and training services they need. Effective partnering is pivotal to maximize resources and to align services with career pathways and sector strategies.” Many partner organizations reported that they do not have data available to adequately partner with Workforce Centers. Information collected from partner organizations in all assigned areas indicate that they have significant difficulty in collecting and providing quality data. These organizations are willing and even eager to partner with ADWS centers, but don’t have processes in place to collect data and provide support and assistance. It is recommended by the evaluators that Arkansas Workforce Department Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board work with all workforce areas to identify and engage additional community partners, and to provide training and assistance to those partners in data collection techniques.

**Recommendations, Business Survey:**

It is recommended by the evaluators that ADWS address each of the concerns expressed in the survey. These concerns are serious, and even though the overall results showed a “...moderate degree of satisfaction with WIOA programs...” the concerns must be addressed. These concerns include: Less than half of WIOA recipients (42%) reported receiving the majority of services needed to address workforce needs; Many respondents described Workforce Center staff as “unresponsive” or “inattentive;” Many comments brought up the difficulty of posting job openings through the ADWS or the employers’ website; Several comments noted a lack of interaction between staff and businesses. The evaluators recommend that additional training programs be established to improve

staff/customer relationships. It is further recommended that training and promotional materials specific to web based job postings be developed and implemented. As an initial step, the evaluators recommend that all web based processes be evaluated for ease of use. Any processes that are considered unwieldy or awkward should be modified to maximize usefulness. It is necessary that the website used for posting job openings be user friendly in order to encourage its use. Upon completion of necessary website revisions, educational methods related to the use of the site for job postings should be developed and initiated. Ease of use must be the primary goal. According to Kelly Azevedo (shesgot systems.com), "We're all busy people. Reading about something new feels like a chore. Most people are visual or kinesthetic learners, who need to see, feel and have their hands on something to really learn how it works. Set up ways for customers to watch your new service in action with a live demo, video guides or sample products for customers to test out themselves." The evaluators recommend that short video guides be developed and added to the website to lead potential posters and customers through the job posting process.

**Recommendations, Customer Survey:**

This survey showed a 62% overall satisfaction rate with WIOA programs and a 68% satisfaction rate with Workforce Center staff. While these numbers are good, there are findings in the survey that require attention from Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board. The survey found that, "many" respondents reported "poor customer service", "a rude attitude", "inattentive staff", or "uninformed staff". In spite of the high overall satisfaction rating with the program, "many" respondents cited these issues. The evaluators, therefore recommend additional training in customer service for all local center staff. In addition, the survey found that, "The current phone system does not appear suited to surge demand

of ADWS or WIOA services.” Because it is possible that the increased demand on the phone system due to the COVID pandemic is at least partially responsible for the problems reported by customers, the evaluators highly recommend that the phone system be professionally evaluated immediately. If these problems continue post-COVID, the evaluators recommend that the system be upgraded as soon as it is feasible. This upgrade, installed across all workforce centers in the state will no doubt be expensive, but quality services are dependent upon an effective and reliable communication system.

**Recommendations, Compliance Review:**

The evaluators make no recommendations for change in this area. As previously stated, it is the opinion of the evaluators that the six centers reviewed for this study are in substantial compliance with all ADWS regulations, and that the managers take their regulatory responsibilities seriously. The reviewed centers provided compliant but unique services. Centers were able to meet or exceed overall guidelines and regulations while maintaining unique services designed to meet the specific service needs of the regions in which they are located. The evaluators further believe that the review of these six centers provides a representative picture of ADWS centers across the state.

Other Recommendations: It is highly recommended that ADWS establish methods for high performing centers and workforce areas to provide training for other centers. In the areas of referral procedures, training of service recipients, and skills gaps identification and assessment, centers all seem to recognize the need for the services. There exists, however, a significant difference in the quality and success of the services provided. It is recommended that ADWS provide incentives for high performing areas to develop training modules (in-person and online) which can be shared with less successful centers. The evaluators further recommend Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board establish a system to ensure ongoing

supervision and monitoring of the quality improvement process. This system should include regular formative and summative evaluation on a regular basis

**Summary and Conclusion:**

In 2020, the leadership of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS), engaged two University of Arkansas departments, the Counselor Education Program and the Center for Business and Economic Research at the Walton College of Business to complete a comprehensive WIOA Systems Evaluation, Skills Gap Analysis, and a series of Customer Service Surveys. The evaluators worked in cooperation with ADWS in the design and implementation of all surveys, analysis, assessments, and evaluations in order to implement processes and procedures necessary to ensure that accurate and relevant data were collected and used for evaluation purposes. The evaluation was completed under the leadership of the project’s Principal Investigators, Dr. Brent Williams, Associate Professor, University of Arkansas Counselor Education and Supervision, and Mervin Jebaraj, Director, Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Arkansas’ Walton College of Business.

The evaluators are grateful to the leadership of ADWS and to the management and staff of the three workforce areas assigned for the bulk of the study. The managers of the three local areas, Dennis Williamson (Western Arkansas Planning and Development District), Rodney Larson (Central Arkansas Planning and Development District), and James Morgan (Northeast Arkansas Works), were very helpful to the process, and were willing to provide all requested information to the evaluators. ADWS leadership asked the evaluators to review a sample of Arkansas Workforce Centers located in different Local Workforce Development Areas against the State’s certification policy and applicable laws and regulations. The six centers assigned to the evaluators for the review, along with their

managers and staff, were very open and cooperative with the reviewers, and made the process a pleasure. The Workforce Centers included in the review were located in Conway, Mena, Hot Springs, Russellville, Searcy, and Arkadelphia. These Workforce Centers and their leadership are to be commended for their openness and as well as for their compliance with all regulations.

The Center for Business and Economic Research at the Walton College of Business conducted two separate statewide surveys for the study. The study results of the WIOA Business Survey and the WIOA Customer Survey were analyzed and are included in the study. The response rates for the customer and business surveys were 11.8% and 9.9% respectively. These response rates provide ample data from which to make solid conclusions.

Overall, the evaluators found that ADWS and the local workforce centers are viewed positively by both customers and businesses. There are, however, training and customer service issues associated with local centers that must be addressed as soon as possible. In addition, a number of complaints were received about the quality of the computer systems used by customers.

While the findings and recommendations sections of this report contain specific suggestions for service quality improvements, the evaluators feel that the Arkansas Workforce Development Leadership and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board have reason to be pleased with the work done by the agency. Improvements can be realized across the state by identifying local centers that perform strongly in specific areas and providing incentives for these centers to share their best practices.

## Appendices

### Appendix I:

#### Partners Listed By Managers of Assigned Areas

- **Little Rock Planning and Development District:**
  - Little Rock Reentry
  - Pathway Home 3
  - U of A Pulaski Tech
  - Arkansas Economic Development Commission
  - CSI Academy
  - Restore Hope
  - City of Little Rock
  - American Job Center Network
  - Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force
  - Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification
  - Arkansas Job Link
  - Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
  - Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind
  - Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services
  - Community Services Block Grant
  - Division of County Operations
  - Office of Community Services
  - Food Stamp Employment and Training Programs
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
  - Transitional Employment Assistance
  - US Department of Housing and Urban Development Employment and Training Program
  - Arkansas Human Development Corporation
  - National Farmworker Jobs Program
  - Cass Job Corps Center

- Little Rock Job Corps Center
- American Indian Center of Arkansas
- Employment and Training Program
- Little Rock Center
  
- **Central Arkansas Planning and Development District Partner Programs**
  - Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP)
  - Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER)
  - Arkansas Rehabilitation Services' (ARS)
  - ADWS Unemployment Insurance (UI)
  - The American Indian Center of Arkansas
  - Arkansas Department of Career Education (ADE)
  - Arkansas Department of Health (ADH)
  - Arkansas Division of Workforce Services
  - Career Readiness Certification
  - Governor's Dislocated Workers Task Force
  - Migrant Farm Labor Center
  - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
  - Trade Adjustment Assistance,
  - Arkansas Human Development Corporation (AHDC)
  - Arkansas Job Corps
  - CareLink
  - Central Arkansas Development Council
  - Arkansas Office of Child Support Enforcement
  - Community Service
  - Community Action Program for Central Arkansas
  - American Job Center
  
- **Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Center:**

- Adult Education
- BRTC Corning Adult Education Center
- ASU Newport
- Black River Technical College/Paragould Adult Ed
- Mission Outreach Of NEA
- BRTC Walnut Ridge Adult Ed. Center
- Arkansas Northeastern College Adult Education Program
- Mississippi County Literacy Council
- Arkansas Northeastern College
- Arkansas Northeastern College Adult Education Program
- Asun Marked Tree Adult Education
- Asun Marked Tree Adult Education Trumann Center
- Black River Technical College/Adult Education Program
- American Indian Center of Arkansas
- Arkansas Apprenticeship
- Arkansas Department of Higher Education
- Arkansas Department of Human Services
- Arkansas Delta Workforce Opportunities for Rural Communities (ADWORC)
- Arkansas Human Development Corporation (Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker)
- Arkansas Job Corp
- Arkansas Relay
- Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
- Arkansas State University
- Arkansas State University Newport
- Arkansas Northeastern College @ Blytheville / Burdette / Paragould
- Black River Technical College @ Pocahontas
- Black River Area Development (BRAD) Corporation
- City Youth Ministries

- Crowley's Ridge Development Council
- Division of Workforce Services
- Division of Services for The Blind
- Division of Children and Family Services
- Discover Arkansas
- El Centro Hispano
- Employment & Training Services, Inc.
- Entrepreneurial Training
- Great River Economic Development Foundation
- Health Insurance Marketplace
- Incumbent Worker Training
- National Caucus and Center on Black Aging, Inc.
- Office Of Skills Development - Arkansas Department Of Commerce
- Trade Adjustment Assistance - Dislocated Worker Taskforce
- Veteran Services
- **Northwest Arkansas Economic Development Center:**
  - Careers, NWAR
  - Startup Junkie
  - Northwest Arkansas Council
  - Arkansas Workforce Centers, ADWS
  - Chamber of Commerce
    - Harrison
    - Fayetteville
    - Rogers-Lowell
    - Eureka Springs
    - Mountain Home
    - Greater Bentonville
    - Siloam Springs
    - Springdale

- Northwest Arkansas Community College
- Arkansas Women’s Business Center
- Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
- Ozark Literacy Council
- North Arkansas College
- Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center
- Northwest Technical Institute
- Business and Industry Training
- Arkansas JobLink
- Size Up Bentonville
- Venture Noire
- SCORE
- Arkansas Economic Development Institute
- EforAll
- Startup NWAR
- Women’s Foundation, Arkansas
- Endeavor
- Arkansas Inc.
- Searcy County

- **Southeast Arkansas Economic Development Area:**

- Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services
- Community Services Block Grant
- Division of County Operations, Office of Community Services
- Food Stamp Employment and Training Programs
- Division of County Operations
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
- Transitional Employment Assistance
- Division of County Operations

- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
- Division of Services for the Blind
- US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Employment and Training Program
- Arkansas Human Development Corporation
- National Farmworker Jobs Program
- Job Corps
- Cass Job Corps Center
- Little Rock Job Corps Center
- American Indian Center of Arkansas
- Employment and Training Program
- Little Rock Center
  
- **Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area**
  - Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU).
  - South Arkansas Community College
  - Southern Arkansas University
  - Southern Arkansas University Tech
  - Arkansas Environmental Academy
  - Arkansas Fire Academy,
  - Arkansas Law Enforcement Training Academy
  - University of Arkansas Hope-Texarkana
  - Southwest Arkansas ED CO-OP
  - South Central Service CO-OP
  - DeQueen-Mena Education Services
  - Department of Workforce Services (DWS)
  - Adult Education SAU Tech, UA Hope/Texarkana
  - UA Cossatot

- Unemployment Insurance Department of Workforce Services (DWS)
- Transitional Employment Assistance
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Vocational Rehab Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
- Veterans Employment
- Division of Services for the Blind (DSB)
- Dept Human Services
- Carl Perkins Career Pathways SAU Tech,
- Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker
- Title V Older Workers
- Experience Works
- Job Corps
- ESA Staffing
- Manpower Employment Agency
- SNAP
- Department of Workforce Services
- Apprenticeship USA

## **Appendix II: Example Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

**(Provided by Northwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area, Arkansas Workforce Center Operations)**

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is entered into in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA). This agreement among the signature agencies and organizations describes how their resources will be utilized to better serve mutual customers in the Northwest Arkansas Workforce Development Area, and the Arkansas Workforce Centers, which are a part of the American Job Center network and the Arkansas Workforce Development System. It is understood that the Arkansas Workforce Centers will be a collaborative effort based on trust and teamwork among agencies working together as partners to accomplish a shared goal of improving the quality of life for individuals through employment, training, and education.

### **Purpose**

This MOU is executed between the Northwest Arkansas Local Workforce Development Board (Local Board), the Arkansas Workforce Center Partners (Partners), and the Chief Elected Officials (CEOs). They are collectively referred to as the "Parties" to this MOU. This MOU is developed to confirm the understanding of the Parties regarding the operation and management of the two Arkansas Workforce Centers in the Northwest Local Workforce Development Area (Local Area). The Local Board provides local oversight of workforce programming for the Local Area. The Local Board, with the agreement of the CEOs, has competitively selected NWAEDD as the one-stop operator for the Local Area, as further outlined in the One-Stop Operator section. The One-Stop Operating Budget and Infrastructure Funding Agreement establish a financial plan, including terms and conditions, to fund the services and operating costs of the Local Area Arkansas Workforce Centers. The Parties to this MOU agree that joint funding is an essential foundation for an integrated service delivery system and necessary to maintain the Local Area's high-standard Arkansas Workforce Center network. The Vision, Mission, System Structure, Terms and Conditions, One Stop Operating Budget, and Infrastructure Funding Agreement outlined herein reflect the commitment of the Parties to their job seeker and business customers, as well as to the overall community.

### **Vision**

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

### **Mission**

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

### **Arkansas's Talent Development System Philosophy**

- We believe that there must be a pipeline of skilled workers for employers and a job for every Arkansas jobseeker.
- 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 on local economic priorities maximizes effectiveness and puts the State in the best position to address local and regional workforce needs.
- We believe Arkansas's workforce system should be a viable resource for business and industry.
- We believe that in order for the talent development system to be the preferred system, the system must be accountable, flexible, and align education and training with business and industry needs.
- We believe that in order for the talent development system to be effective, we must eliminate overlap and duplication of resources and services and streamline investment of funds.

### **Characteristics of a High-Quality Arkansas Workforce Center**

The publicly funded workforce system envisioned by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is quality focused, employer-driven, customer-centered, and tailored to meet the needs of regional economies. It is designed to increase access to, and opportunities for, the employment, education, training, and support services that individuals need to succeed in the labor market, particularly those with barriers to employment. It aligns workforce development, education, and economic development programs with regional economic development strategies to meet the needs of local and regional employers, and provides a comprehensive, accessible and high-quality workforce development system. This is accomplished by providing all customers access to high-quality workforce development centers that connect them with the full range of services available in their communities, whether they are looking to find jobs; build basic educational or occupational skills; earn a postsecondary certificate or degree; obtain guidance on how to make career choices; or are businesses and employers seeking skilled workers. For successful integration and implementation of Partner programs, all Partners agree to support and reinforce the following characteristics of a high-quality workforce delivery system.

#### **Customer Service**

- Reflect a Welcoming Environment

- Provide Career Services that Empower
- Value Skill Development
- Create Opportunities for Individuals at all Skill Levels
- Improve Job Seeker Skills
- Deliver Quality Business Services

### **Innovation and Service Design**

- Integrated Intake Process
- Actively Engage Industry Sectors
- Use Market Driven Principles
- Use Innovative Delivery Models
- Offer Virtual and Center-Based Services
- Ensure Access to All Customers

### **Systems Integration and High-Quality Staffing**

- Reflect Robust Partnerships
- Organize Services by Function
- Use Common Performance Indicators
- Implement Integrated Policies
- Cross-Train and Equip Center Staff
- Offer Highly Trained Career Counselors
- Maintain Integrated Case Management

### **Arkansas Workforce Centers (American Job Centers)**

The Local Area has two Arkansas Workforce Centers, also known as one-stop centers, that are designed to provide a full range of assistance to job seekers and businesses under one roof. The Arkansas Workforce Centers are proud partners of the American Job Center network.

Established under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 and continued by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the centers offer a comprehensive array of services designed to match talent with opportunities.

### **Common Identifiers**

Section 121(e)(4) of WIOA requires each one-stop delivery system to use a common identifier on all products, programs, activities, services, electronic resources, facilities, and related property and new materials. States and local areas are also permitted to use any State- or locally-developed identifier.

The Departments established the "American Job Center" network, a unifying name and brand, that identifies online and in-person workforce development services as part of a single network of publicly-funded services

(20 CFR 678.900, 34 CFR 361.900, and 34 CFR 463.900).

The one-stop delivery system must use either that common identifier as its name or use the tag line phrase "a proud partner of the American Job Center network." Either the plain text or one of the logos may be used. If a logo is used, it must be used in accordance with the guidelines contained in federal and state regulations.

### One-Stop Operator

The Local Board selected the one-stop operator, NWAEDD, through a competitive process in accordance with the Uniform Guidance (2 C.F.R. 200 et seq. entitled Grants and Agreements), WIOA and its implementing regulations (Pub. L. 113-118), and State and Local procurement laws and regulations (Ark. Code Ann. 15-4-3701 et. seq). All documentation for the competitive one-stop operator procurement and selection process is published and may be viewed on the Local Board website at nwaedd.org. All Parties agree that this MOU shall be reviewed and renewed the lessor of every three years or whenever a new one-stop operator is selected or a new partner is added or an existing partner withdraws from the center. Functional details are outlined in the Roles and Responsibilities of Partners section, under One-Stop Operator.

### American Job Centers/Arkansas Workforce Centers

#### Arkansas Workforce Center in Harrison, AR

*[Repeat the tables for each location. Note- Listed partners are required for comprehensive centers; Affiliate centers require one or more partners as described in 20 CFR § 678.310- please delete any unnecessary fields when duplicating charts for affiliate locations]*

**Business Hours for Center:** 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Partner Program	Partner Organization	Authorization/Category	Contact Information & Type of Presence
<i>WIOA Title I-B:</i> <b>Workforce Development Activities- Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth</b> programs	Northwest Workforce Development Board	WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs	NWAEDD 818 Hwy 62-65 N. Harrison, AR 72601 pmethvin@nwaedd.org 870-741-5404 Physical presence M-F 8:00 to 4:30
<i>WIOA Title I-</i> <b>Job Corps</b>	Job Corps	Job Corps, WIOA Title I, Subtitle C	Cass Job Corps 21424 Hwy 23 Ozark, AR 72949 479-667-0332 Venorris Webb-Delesline <a href="mailto:Venorris.web-delesline@udsa.gov">Venorris.web-delesline@udsa.gov</a> Electronic presence M – F 8:00 to 4:30

<b>Partner Program</b>	<b>Partner Organization</b>	<b>Authorization/Category</b>	<b>Contact Information &amp; Type of Presence</b>
<i>WIOA Title I- Youth Build</i> program		WIOA—Title I, Section 171	n/a
<i>WIOA Title I- Native American</i> programs	American Indian Center of Arkansas	WIOA—Title I, Section 166	American Indian Center of Arkansas 400 West Capitol Suite 2380 Little Rock, AR 72201 501-666-9032 Star Jackson, Executive Director <a href="mailto:star@aicargo.org">star@aicargo.org</a> Not physically co-located
<i>WIOA Title I- Migrant &amp; Seasonal Farmworker</i> programs	National Farmworker Jobs Program	WIOA—Title I, Section 167	National Farmworker Jobs Program 300 Spring Street Suite 700, Little Rock, AR 72201 <a href="mailto:cyoung@arhdc.org">cyoung@arhdc.org</a> 501-374-1103 Not physically co-located
<b>Adult Education and Family Literacy Act</b> program ( <i>WIOA Title II</i> )	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education	WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) program	Cherie Conner 1515 Pioneer Dr., Harrison, AR 72601 870-391-3517 <a href="mailto:cconner@northark.edu">cconner@northark.edu</a>  Electronic presence M-F 8:00 to 4:30
<b>Wagner-Peyser/Employment Service</b> program ( <i>WIOA Title III</i> )	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services,	Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) as amended by WIOA Title III	Arkansas Workforce Center 818 US 62-65 Harrison, AR 72601 <a href="mailto:Aaron.johnson@arkansas.gov">Aaron.johnson@arkansas.gov</a> Physical presence M-F 8:00 to 4:30
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation</b> program ( <i>WIOA Title IV</i> )	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, <b>Arkansas Rehabilitation Services</b>	State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 720 et seq.), as amended by title IV of WIOA	818 Highway 62-65 North Harrison, AR 72601 870-741-7153 <a href="mailto:Kevin.Cook@arkansas.gov">Kevin.Cook@arkansas.gov</a> Physical presence M-F 8:00 to 4:30
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation</b> program ( <i>WIOA Title IV</i> )	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Division of Services for the Blind	State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 720 et	818 Highway 62-65 North Harrison, AR 72601 870-280-6042 <a href="mailto:Kevin.Estes@arkansas.gov">Kevin.Estes@arkansas.gov</a> Physical presence M-F 8:00 to 4:30AARP

Partner Program	Partner Organization	Authorization/Category	Contact Information & Type of Presence
		seq.), as amended by title IV of WIOA	
<b>Senior Community Service Employment program (SCSEP)</b>	AARP	Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et. seq.)	Marty Hausam, Project Director Workforce Programs/SCSEP 3291 S. Thompson Suite E101 Springdale, AR 72764 479-379-3001 mhausam@aarp.org  Not physically co-located
<b>Career and Technical Education programs at the postsecondary level</b>	North Arkansas College	Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)	Nell Bonds 1515 Pioneer Dr., Harrison, AR 72601 870-391-3181 <a href="mailto:nbonds@northark.edu">nbonds@northark.edu</a>  Not physically co-located
<b>Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program</b>	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services,	Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) auth. under Ch.2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C.2271 et seq.)	Christie Dunbar Program Operations Manager Governor’s Dislocated Worker Task Force 870-234-3440 <a href="mailto:Christie.dunbar@arkansas.gov">Christie.dunbar@arkansas.gov</a> Not physically co-located
<b>Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) programs</b>	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services,	Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG), authorized under chapter 41 of title 38, U.S.C. N	818 Hwy. 62-65 North Harrison, AR 72602 870-741-6865 <a href="mailto:vickie.linch@arkansas.gov">vickie.linch@arkansas.gov</a> 870-741-7302 Physical presence M – F 8:00 to 4:30
<b>Community Service Block Grant-employment &amp; training activities</b>	Ozark Opportunities, Inc.	Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)	Richard “Toby” Atkinson Ozark Opportunities PO Box 1400, Harrison, AR 72602; rtatkinson@ozarkopp.org 870-741-9406 x 227  Not physically co-located
<b>*HUD Employment &amp; Training activities</b>	NW AR Regional Housing Authority	Housing and Urban Development regulations	Neal Gibson NW AR Regional Housing Authority 114 Sisco Ave

Partner Program	Partner Organization	Authorization/Category	Contact Information & Type of Presence
			Harrison, AR 72601 870-741-5522 <a href="mailto:neal@nwregionalhousing.org">neal@nwregionalhousing.org</a>  Not physically co-located
State Unemployment Insurance program	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services,	Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs under state unemployment compensation laws	<a href="http://www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov">www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov</a> 1-844-908-2178 Electronic presence M – F 8:00 to 4:30
Second Chance Act- The Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO)		Section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532)	n/a
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment & Training	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education	Section 4022 of the Agricultural Act of 2014	Cherie Conner 1515 Pioneer Dr., Harrison, AR 72601 870-391-3517 <a href="mailto:cconner@northark.edu">cconner@northark.edu</a>  Electronic presence M – F 8:00 to 4:30
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program	Arkansas Department of Human Services,	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), authorized under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)	2126 Capps Road Harrison, AR 72601 870-741-6107  204 Bucher Drive Mountain Home, AR 72653 870-425-6011  Electronic presence M – F 8:00 to 4:30

### Arkansas Workforce Center in Fayetteville, AR

**[Repeat the tables for each location.** *Note- Listed partners are required for comprehensive centers; Affiliate centers require one or more partners as described in 20 CFR § 678.310- please delete any unnecessary fields when duplicating charts for affiliate locations]*

**Business Hours for Center:** 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Partner Program	Partner Organization	Authorization/Category	Contact Information & Type of Presence
WIOA Title I-B: Workforce Development Activities- Adult,	Northwest Workforce Development Board	WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs	NWAEDD James Moss 2153 East Joyce Blvd. Suite 201 Fayetteville, AR 72703

<b>Partner Program</b>	<b>Partner Organization</b>	<b>Authorization/Category</b>	<b>Contact Information &amp; Type of Presence</b>
<b>Dislocated Worker and Youth</b> programs			479-521-1595 jmoss@nwaedd.org Physical presence M-F 8:300 to 4:30
<i>WIOA Title I- Job Corps</i>	Job Corps	Job Corps, WIOA Title I, Subtitle C	Cass Job Corps 21424 Hwy 23 Ozark, AR 72949 479-667-0332 Venorris Webb-Delesline <a href="mailto:Venorris.web-delesline@udsa.gov">Venorris.web-delesline@udsa.gov</a> Electronic presence M – F 8:00 to 4:30
<i>WIOA Title I- Youth Build</i> program		WIOA—Title I, Section 171	n/a
<i>WIOA Title I- Native American</i> programs	American Indian Center of Arkansas	WIOA—Title I, Section 166	American Indian Center of Arkansas 400 West Capitol Suite 2380 Little Rock, AR 72201 501-666-9032 Star Jackson, Executive Director <a href="mailto:star@aicago.org">star@aicago.org</a>  Not physically co-located
<i>WIOA Title I- Migrant &amp; Seasonal Farmworker</i> programs	National Farmworker Jobs Program	WIOA—Title I, Section 167	National Farmworker Jobs Program 300 Spring Street Suite 700, Little Rock, AR 72201 cyoung@arhdc.org 501-374-1103  Not physically co-located
<b>Adult Education and Family Literacy Act</b> program ( <i>WIOA Title II</i> )	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education	WIOA Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) program	Ben Aldama One College Drive, Bentonville, AR 72712 479-986-6934 baldama@nwacc.edu  Nicholas Ryburn 610 East Emma Suite 200, Springdale, AR 72764 479-751-0181 <a href="mailto:nryburn@nwti.edu">nryburn@nwti.edu</a>  Robbie Cornelius 300 South Ray Ave. Fayetteville, AR 72703

Partner Program	Partner Organization	Authorization/Category	Contact Information & Type of Presence
			479-444-3041 <a href="mailto:Robbie.cornelius@fayar.net">Robbie.cornelius@fayar.net</a>  <a href="#">Ozark Literacy Council</a> <a href="#">2596 Keystone Crossing</a> <a href="#">Fayetteville AR 72703</a> <a href="#">Mina Phebus</a> <a href="mailto:mena@ozarkliteracy.org">mena@ozarkliteracy.org</a> <a href="tel:479-521-8250">479-521-8250</a>  Not physically co-located
<b>Wagner-Peyser/Employment Service program</b> <i>(WIOA Title III)</i>	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services,	Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) as amended by WIOA Title III	Arkansas Workforce Center 2152 East Joyce Blvd. Suite 201 Fayetteville, AR 72703 <a href="mailto:John.jones@arkansas.gov">John.jones@arkansas.gov</a> <a href="tel:479-521-5730">(479) 521-5730</a> Physical presence M-F 8:00 to 4:30
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation program</b> <i>(WIOA Title IV)</i>	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services	State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C.720 et seq.), as amended by title IV of WIOA	3715 N Business Dr Ste 104, Fayetteville, AR 72703 <a href="mailto:Jennifer.ragsdale@arkansas.gov">Jennifer.ragsdale@arkansas.gov</a> 479-582-1286 Electronic presence M – F 8:00 to 4:30
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation program</b> <i>(WIOA Title IV)</i>	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Division of Services for the Blind	State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C.720 et seq.), as amended by title IV of WIOA	Heather Grigsby <a href="mailto:Heather.grigsby@arkansas.gov">Heather.grigsby@arkansas.gov</a> Matthew Bronson <a href="mailto:Matthew.bronson@arkansas.gov">Matthew.bronson@arkansas.gov</a> 2153 E. Joyce Blvd., Ste 201 Fayetteville, AR 72703 479-444-2803 Physical presence M-F 8:00 to 4:30
<b>Senior Community Service Employment program (SCSEP)</b>	AARP	Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et. seq.)	Marty Hausam, Project Director Workforce Programs/SCSEP 3291 S. Thompson Suite E101 Springdale, AR 72764 479-379-3001 <a href="mailto:mhausam@aarp.org">mhausam@aarp.org</a>  Not physically co-located
<b>Career and Technical Education programs</b> at the postsecondary level	NWTI	Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)	Jim Rollins – NWTI 709 S Old Missouri Road Springdale, AR 72764 <a href="mailto:jrollins@nwti.edu">jrollins@nwti.edu</a> <a href="tel:479-751-8824">(479) 751-8824</a>

<b>Partner Program</b>	<b>Partner Organization</b>	<b>Authorization/Category</b>	<b>Contact Information &amp; Type of Presence</b>
			Not physically co-located
<b>Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)</b> program	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services,	Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) auth. under Ch.2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C.2271 et seq.)	Christie Dunbar Program Operations Manager Governor’s Dislocated Worker Task Force 870-234-3440 <a href="mailto:Christie.dunbar@arkansas.gov">Christie.dunbar@arkansas.gov</a> Electronic presence M – F 8:00 to 4:30
<b>Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)</b> programs	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services,	Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG), authorized under chapter 41 of title 38, U.S.C. N	2152 East Joyce Blvd. Suite 201 Fayetteville, AR 72703 479-587-3064 Sharon Hopper <a href="mailto:Sharon.hopper@arkansas.gov">Sharon.hopper@arkansas.gov</a> Physical presence M – F 8:00 to 4:30
<b>Community Service Block Grant</b> -employment & training activities	Economic Opportunity Agency	Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)	614 E. Emma Ave #M401 Springdale, AR 72764 479-872-7479 Delia Anderson Farmer <a href="mailto:dfarmer@eoawc.org">dfarmer@eoawc.org</a>  Not physically co-located
<b>*HUD Employment &amp; Training</b> activities	Fayetteville Housing Authority	Housing and Urban Development regulations	Fayetteville Housing Authority 1 N. School Avenue Fayetteville, AR 72701 479-521-3850 Derrek Sherburne <a href="mailto:Derrek@fayettevilleHA.org">Derrek@fayettevilleHA.org</a> Not physically co-located
<b>State Unemployment Insurance</b> program	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services,	Unemployment Insurance (UI) programs under state unemployment compensation laws	<a href="http://www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov">www.ezarc.adws.arkansas.gov</a> 1-844-908-2178 Electronic presence M – F 8:00 to 4:30
<b>Second Chance Act- The Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO)</b>		Section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532)	n/a
<b>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment &amp; Training</b>	Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education	Section 4022 of the Agricultural Act of 2014	Ben Aldama One College Drive, Bentonville, AR 72712 479-986-6934 <a href="mailto:baldama@nwacc.edu">baldama@nwacc.edu</a>  Nicholas Ryburn

Partner Program	Partner Organization	Authorization/Category	Contact Information & Type of Presence
			<p>610 East Emma Suite 200, Springdale, AR 72764 479-751-0181 <a href="mailto:nryburn@nwti.edu">nryburn@nwti.edu</a></p> <p>Robbie Cornelius 300 South Ray Ave. Fayetteville, AR 72703 479-444-3041 <a href="mailto:Robbie.cornelius@fayar.net">Robbie.cornelius@fayar.net</a></p> <p><a href="#">Ozark Literacy Council</a> <a href="#">2596 Keystone Crossing</a> <a href="#">Fayetteville AR 72703</a> <a href="#">Mina Phebus</a> <a href="mailto:mena@ozarkliteracy.org">mena@ozarkliteracy.org</a> <a href="tel:479-521-8250">479-521-8250</a></p> <p>Not physically co-located</p>
<p><b>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program</b></p>	<p>Arkansas Department of Human Services, of</p>	<p>Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), authorized under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)</p>	<p>4201 N. Shiloh Drive Suite 110 Fayetteville, AR 72703-2084 479-521-1270</p> <p>900 SE 13th Ct. Bentonville, AR 72712 479-273-9011</p> <p>Electronic presence M – F 8:00 to 4:30</p>

**Additional One-Stop Partners**

Other entities that carry out a workforce development program, including Federal, State, or Local programs and programs in the private sector, may serve as additional Partners in the Arkansas Workforce Center network if the Local Board and chief elected official(s) approve the entity’s participation.

**Partner Services**

At a minimum, Partners will make the below services available, if applicable to the program, consistent with and coordinated via the Arkansas Workforce Center network system. Additional services may be provided on a case-by-case basis and with the approval of the Local Board and the CEO.

Each Partner will provide a representative to the Workforce Business Services Team. The purpose of a Business Services Team is to coordinate the available services of each Partner to provide appropriate services

to businesses and to create a single point of contact for businesses.

Each Partner will provide the following services within the Harrison and Fayetteville Workforce Centers, either on-site or electronically, as applicable to the represented programs:

- Serve as a single point of contact for businesses, responding to all requests in a timely manner
- Provide information and services related to Unemployment Insurance taxes and claims
- Assist with disability and communication accommodations, including job coaches
- Conduct outreach regarding Local workforce system's services and products
- Conduct on-site Rapid Response activities regarding closures and downsizings
- Develop On-the-Job Training (OJT) contracts, incumbent worker contracts, or pay-for-performance contract strategies
- Provide access to labor market information
- Provide customized recruitment and job applicant screening, assessment and referral services
- Provide employer and industry cluster-driven Occupational Skills Training through Individual Training Accounts with eligible training providers
- Assist with the interpretation of labor market information
- Conduct job fairs
- Develop customized training opportunities to meet specific employer and/or industry cluster needs
- Use of one-stop center facilities for recruiting and interviewing job applicants
- Consult on human resources issues
- Coordinate with employers to develop and implement layoff aversion strategies
- Post job vacancies in the state labor exchange system and take and fill job orders
- Provide information regarding disability awareness issues
- Provide incumbent worker upgrade training through various modalities
- Provide information regarding workforce development initiatives and programs
- Provide information regarding assistive technology and communication accommodations
- Develop, convene, or implement industry or sector partnerships

### **Job Seeker Services**

For those partners offering Job Seeker Services the following is a non-exclusive list of services required.

- **Basic Career Services**
  - Outreach, intake and orientation to the information, services, programs, tools and resources available through the Local workforce system
  - Initial assessments of skill level(s), aptitudes, abilities and supportive service needs

- In and out of area job search and placement assistance (including provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations and non-traditional employment)
  - Access to employment opportunity and labor market information
  - Performance information and program costs for eligible providers of training, education, and workforce services
  - Information on performance of the Local workforce system
  - Information on the availability of supportive services and referral to such, as appropriate
  - Information and meaningful assistance on Unemployment Insurance claim filing
  - Determination of potential eligibility for workforce Partner services, programs, and referral(s)
  - Information and assistance in applying for financial aid for training and education programs not provided under WIOA
- **Individualized Career Services**
    - Comprehensive and specialized assessments of skills levels and service needs
    - Development of an individual employability development plan to identify employment goals, appropriate achievement objectives, and appropriate combination of services for the customer to achieve the employment goals
    - Referral to training services
    - Group counseling
    - Literacy activities related to work readiness
    - Individual counseling and career planning
    - Case management for customers seeking training services; individual in and out of area job search, referral and placement assistance
    - Work experience, transitional jobs, registered apprenticeships, and internships
    - Workforce preparation services (e.g., development of learning skills, punctuality, communication skills, interviewing skills, personal maintenance, literacy skills, financial literacy skills, and professional conduct) to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training
- **Training**
    - Occupational skills training through Individual Training Accounts (ITAs)
    - Adult education and literacy activities, including English language acquisition (ELA), provided in combination with the training services described above
    - On-the-Job Training (OJT)
    - Incumbent Worker Training
    - Programs that combine workplace training with related instruction which may include

- cooperative education Training programs operated by the private sector
- o Skill upgrading and retraining
- o Entrepreneurial training
- o Customized training conducted with a commitment by an employer or group of employers to employ an individual upon successful completion of the training
- o Other training services as determined by the workforce partner's governing rules

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Partners**

The Parties to this agreement will work closely together to ensure that all Local Area Arkansas Workforce Centers are high performing workplaces with staff who will ensure quality of service.

### **All Parties**

All Parties to this agreement shall comply with:

- Section 188 of the WIOA Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Regulations (29 CFR Part 38; Final Rule, published December 2, 2016),
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-352),
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended,
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336),
- The Jobs for Veterans Act (Public Law 107-288) pertaining to priority of service in programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor,
- Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 37-14, Update on Complying with Nondiscrimination Requirements: Discrimination Based on Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Stereotyping are Prohibited Forms of Sex Discrimination in the Workforce Development System and other guidance related to implementing WIOA sec. 188,
- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR part 99),
- Confidentiality requirements governing the protection and use of personal information held by the VR agency (34 CFR 361.38),
- The confidentiality requirements governing the use of confidential information held by the State UI agency (20 CFR part 603),
- all amendments to each, and all requirements imposed by the regulations issued pursuant to these acts

The above provisions require, in part, that no persons in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, age, disability, political beliefs or religion be excluded from participation in, or denied, any aid, care, services or other benefits provided by federal and/or state funding, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination.

Additionally, all Parties shall:

- Collaborate and reasonably assist each other in the development of necessary service delivery protocols for the services outlined in the Partner Services section above,
- Agree that the provisions contained herein are made subject to all applicable federal and state laws, implementing regulations, and guidelines imposed on either or all Parties relating to privacy rights of customers, maintenance of records, and other confidential information relating to customers, and
- Agree that all equipment and furniture purchased by any party for purposes described herein shall remain the property of the purchaser after the termination of this agreement.

### **Chief Elected Official**

The CEOs will, at a minimum:

- In Partnership with the Local Board and other applicable Partners within the planning region, develop and submit a single regional and/or local plan that includes a description of the activities that shall be undertaken by all Local Boards and their Partners, and that incorporates plans for each of the Local areas in the planning region, if applicable
- Approve the Local Board budget and workforce center cost allocation plan,
- Approve the selection of the one-stop operator following the competitive procurement process, and
- Coordinate with the Local Board to oversee the operations of the Local Area Arkansas Workforce Center network.

### **Local Board**

The Local Board ensures the workforce-related needs of employers, workers, and job seekers in the Local Area and/or the region are met, to the maximum extent possible with available resources. The Local Board will, at a minimum:

- In Partnership with the CEOs and other applicable Partners within the Local Area, develop and submit a Local Area plan that includes a description of the activities that shall be undertaken by the Local Board and its Partners, and that aligns its strategic vision, goals, objectives, and workforce-related policies to the regional plan and economy,
- In Partnership with the CEOs and other applicable Partners within the planning region, develop and submit a single regional plan that includes a description of the activities that shall be undertaken by all Local Boards and their Partners, and that incorporates plans for each of the Local areas in the planning region,

- In collaboration and Partnership with the CEOs and other applicable Partners within the planning region, develop the strategic regional vision, goals, objectives, and workforce- related policies,
- In cooperation with the Local CEOs and the other Local Boards within the regional area,
  - design and approve the Arkansas Workforce Center network structure. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Adequate, sufficient, and accessible one-stop center locations and facilities, Sufficient numbers and types of providers of career and training services (including eligible providers with expertise in assisting individuals with disabilities and eligible providers with expertise in assisting adults in need of adult education and literacy activities),
  - A holistic system of supporting services, and
  - One or more competitively procured one-stop operators.
- In collaboration with the CEOs, designate through a competitive process, oversee, monitor, implement corrective action, and, if applicable, terminate the one-stop operator(s),
- Determine the role and day-to-day duties of the one-stop operator,
- Approve annual budget allocations for operation of the Arkansas Workforce Center network,
- Help the one-stop operator recruit operational Partners and negotiate MOUs with new Partners,
- Leverage additional funding for the Arkansas Workforce Center network to operate and expand one-stop customer activities and resources, and
- Review and evaluate performance of the Local Area and one-stop operator.

### **Local Workforce Development Board Staff**

Specific responsibilities include, at a minimum:

- Assist the CEO and the Local Board with the development and submission of a single regional and local plan,
- Support the Local Board with the implementation and execution of the regional vision, goals, objectives, and workforce-related policies, including all duties outlined above,
- Provide operational and grant-specific guidance to the one-stop operator,
- Investigate and resolve elevated customer complaints and grievance issues,
- Prepare regular reports and recommendations to the Local Board, and
- Oversee negotiations and maintenance of MOUs with one-stop Partners.

### **One-Stop Operator**

The one-stop operator will assist the Local Board in establishing and maintaining the Arkansas Workforce Center network structure. This includes but is not limited to:

- Ensuring that State requirements for center certification are met and maintained,
- Ensuring that career services such the ones outlined in WIOA sec. 134(c)(2) are available and accessible,
- Ensuring that Local Board policies are implemented and adhered to,
- Adhering to the provisions outlined in the contract with the Local Board and the Local Board Business Plan,
- Reinforcing strategic objectives of the Local Board to Partners, and
- Ensuring staff are properly trained by their formal leadership organizations and provided technical assistance, as needed.
- Integrating systems and coordinating services for the center and its Partners, placing priority on customer service. Integrated Workforce Service Delivery, as defined by WIOA, means organizing and implementing services by function (rather than by program), when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating policies, staff communication, capacity building, and training efforts.
- Aligning activities functionally, e.g., Skills Development Team or Business Services Team.
- Ensuring service integration focuses on serving all customers seamlessly (including targeted populations) by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with the purpose, scope, and requirements of each program. The services are seamless to the customer, meaning the services are free of cumbersome transitions or duplicative registrations from one program service to another and there is a smooth customer flow to access the array of services available in the workforce center.
- Overseeing and coordinating partner, program, and Arkansas Workforce Center network performance. This includes but is not limited to:
  - Providing and/or contributing to reports of center activities, as requested by the Local Board,
  - Identifying and facilitating the timely resolution of complaints, problems, and other issues,
  - Ensuring open communication with the formal leader(s) in order to facilitate efficient and effective center operations,
  - Evaluating customer satisfaction data and propose service strategy changes to the Local Board based on findings.
  - Managing fiscal responsibilities and records for the center. This includes assisting the Local Board with cost allocations and the maintenance and reconciliation of one-stop center operation budgets.

The one-stop operator will not assist in the development, preparation, and submission of Local plans. They cannot manage or assist in future competitive processes for selecting operators or select or terminate one-

stop operators, career services providers, or Youth providers. The operator cannot negotiate local performance accountability measures or develop and submit budgets for activities of the Local Board. Local Board is responsible for the negotiated performance measures, strategic planning, budgets, and one-stop operator oversight (including monitoring).

### **Partners**

Each Partner commits to cross-training of staff, as appropriate, and to providing other professional learning opportunities that promote continuous quality improvement. Partners will further promote system integration to the maximum extent feasible through:

- Provide access to its programs or activities through the workforce center system,
- Provide applicable career services,
- Effective communication, information sharing, and collaboration with the one-stop operator in accordance with Ark. Code Ann. 11-10-314 et seq,
- Joint planning, policy development, and system design processes,
- Commitment to the joint mission, vision, goals, strategies, and performance measures,
- The design and use of common intake, assessment, referral, and case management processes,
- The use of common and/or linked data management systems and data sharing methods, as appropriate,
- Leveraging of resources, including other public agency and non-profit organization services.
- Participation in a continuous improvement process designed to boost outcomes and increase customer satisfaction, and
- Participation in regularly scheduled Partner meetings to exchange information in support of the above and encourage program and staff integration.

### **Data Sharing**

Partners agree that the use of high-quality, integrated data is essential to inform decisions made by policymakers, employers, and job seekers. Additionally, it is vital to develop and maintain an integrated case management system, as appropriate, that informs customer service throughout customers' interaction with the integrated system and allows information collected from customers at intake to be captured once. Partners further agree that the collection, use, and disclosure of customers' personally identifiable information (PII) is subject to various requirements set forth in Federal and State privacy laws. Partners acknowledge that the execution of this MOU, by itself, does not function to satisfy all of these requirements. All data, including customer PII, collected, used, and disclosed by Partners will be subject to the following:

- Customer PII will be properly secured in accordance with the Local Board's policies and procedures

regarding the safeguarding of PII.

- The collection, use, and disclosure of customer education records, and the PII contained therein, as defined under FERPA, shall comply with FERPA and applicable State privacy laws.
- All confidential data contained in UI wage records must be protected in accordance with the requirements set forth in 20 CFR part 603 and Ark. Code Ann. 11-10-314 et seq.
- All personal information contained in VR records must be protected in accordance with the requirements set forth in 34 CFR 361.38.
- Customer data may be shared with other programs, for those programs' purposes, within the Arkansas Workforce Center network only after the informed written consent of the individual has been obtained, where required.
- Customer data will be kept confidential, consistent with Federal and State privacy laws and regulations.
- All data exchange activity will be conducted in machine readable format, such as HTML or PDF, for example, and in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. § 794 (d)). All one-stop center and Partner staff will be trained in the protection, use, and disclosure requirements governing PII and any other confidential data for all applicable programs, including FERPA-protected education records, confidential information in UI records, and personal information in VR records.

### **Confidentiality**

All Parties expressly agree to abide by all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations regarding confidential information, including Personally Identifiable Information (PII) from educational records, such as but not limited to 20 CFR Part 603, 45 CFR Section 205.50, 20 USC 1232g and 34 CFR part 9934 CFR 361.38, and Ark. Code Ann. 11-10-314 et seq., as well as any applicable State and local laws and regulations. In addition, in carrying out their respective responsibilities, each Party shall respect and abide by the confidentiality policies and legal requirements of all of the other Parties.

Each Party will ensure that the collection and use of any information, systems, or records that contain PII and other personal or confidential information will be limited to purposes that support the programs and activities described in this MOU and will comply with applicable law.

Each Party will ensure that access to software systems and files under its control that contain PII or other personal or confidential information will be limited to authorized staff members who are assigned responsibilities in support of the services and activities described herein and will comply with applicable law. Each Party expressly agrees to take measures to ensure that no PII or other personal or confidential information is accessible by unauthorized individuals.

To the extent that confidential, private, or otherwise protected information needs to be shared amongst the Parties for the Parties' performance of their obligations under this MOU, and to the extent that such sharing is permitted by applicable law, the appropriate data sharing agreements will be created and required confidentiality and ethical certifications will be signed by authorized individuals. With respect to confidential unemployment insurance information, any such data sharing must comply with all of the requirements in 20 CFR Part 603, including but not limited to requirements for an agreement consistent with 20 CFR 603.10, payments of costs, and permissible disclosures, as well as relevant State laws regarding unemployment insurance information.

With respect to the use and disclosure of FERPA-protected customer education records and the PII contained therein, any such data sharing agreement must comply with all of the requirements set forth in 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and 34 CFR Part 99. With respect to the use and disclosure of personal information contained in VR records, any such data sharing agreement must comply with all of the requirements set forth in 34 CFR 361.38.

## **Referrals**

The primary principle of the referral system is to provide integrated and seamless delivery of services to workers, job seekers, and employers. In order to facilitate such a system, Partners agree to:

- Familiarize themselves with the basic eligibility and participation requirements, as well as with the available services and benefits offered, for each of the Partners' programs represented in the Local Area Arkansas Workforce Center network,
- Develop materials summarizing their program requirements and making them available for Partners and customers,
- Develop and utilize common intake, eligibility determination, assessment, and registration forms or systems, with the exception of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, its employees or facilities,
- Provide substantive referrals – in accordance with the Northwest Area Referral Policy—  
to customers who are eligible for supplemental and complementary services and benefits under partner programs,
- Regularly evaluate ways to improve the referral process, including the use of customer satisfaction surveys,
- Commit to robust & ongoing communication required for an effective referral process, and
- Commit to actively follow up on the results of referrals and assuring that Partner resources are being leveraged at an optimal level.

## **Accessibility**

Accessibility to the services provided by the Arkansas Workforce Centers and all Partner agencies is essential to meeting the requirements and goals of the Arkansas Workforce Center network. Job seekers and businesses must be able to access all information relevant to them via visits to physical locations as well as in virtual spaces, regardless of gender, age, race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran's status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law.

### **Physical Accessibility**

One-stop centers will maintain a culture of inclusiveness and the physical characteristics of the facility, both indoor and outdoor, will meet the ADA Standards for Accessible Design or subsequent federal standards. Services will be available in a convenient and accessible location, taking into account reasonable distance from public transportation and adequate parking (including parking clearly marked for individuals with disabilities). Indoor space will be designed in an "equal and meaningful" manner providing access for individuals with disabilities.

### **Virtual Accessibility**

The Local Board will work with the Arkansas Workforce Development Board (State Board) to ensure that job seekers and businesses have access to the same information online as they do in a physical facility. Information must be clearly marked and compliant with Section 508 of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services codes. Partners will comply with the Plain Writing Act of 2010, the law that requires that federal agencies use "clear Government communication that the public can understand and use" and all information kept virtually will be updated regularly to ensure dissemination of correct information. Partners should either have their own web presence via a website and/or the use of social media or work out a separate agreement with the Local Board to post content through its website or the State Board website.

### **Communication Accessibility**

Communications access, for purposes of this MOU, means that individuals with sensory disabilities can communicate (and be communicated with) on an equal footing with those who do not have such disabilities. All Partners agree that they will provide accommodations for individuals who have communication challenges, including but not limited to individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, individuals with vision impairments, individuals with speech- language impairments, and individuals with limited English proficiency. Those services include adaptive technology for visual impairment computers with magnifiers and screen readers, ASL translator for Hearing Impaired and Interpreters and translators for individuals with limited English proficiency.

### **Programmatic Accessibility**

All Partners agree that they will not discriminate in their employment practices or services on the basis of gender, gender identity and/or expression, age, race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran's status, or on the basis of any other classification protected under state or federal law. Partners must assure that they have policies and procedures in place to address these issues, and that those policies and procedures have been disseminated to their employees and otherwise posted as required by law. Partners further assure that they are currently in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations regarding these issues. All Partners will cooperate with compliance monitoring that is conducted at the Local level to ensure that all Arkansas Workforce Center programs, services, technology, and materials are physically and programmatically accessible and available to all.

Additionally, staff members will be trained to provide services to all, regardless of range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, or comprehension or education level. An interpreter will be provided in real time or, if not available, within a reasonable timeframe to any customer with a language barrier. Assistive devices, such as screen-reading software programs (e.g., JAWS, DRAGON, or MAGic) and assistive listening devices must be available to ensure physical and programmatic accessibility within the Arkansas Workforce Center network.

### **Outreach**

The Local Board and its Partners will develop and implement a strategic outreach plan that will include, at a minimum:

- Specific steps to be taken by each partner,
- An outreach plan to the region's human resources professionals,
- An outreach and recruitment plan to the region's job seekers, including targeted efforts for populations most at-risk or most in need,
- An outreach and recruitment plan for out-of-school youth,
- Sector strategies and career pathways,
- Connections to registered apprenticeship,
- A plan for messaging to internal audiences,
- An outreach tool kit for Partners,
- Regular use of social media,
- Clear objectives and expected outcomes, and
- Leveraging of any statewide outreach materials relevant to the region.

### **Dispute Resolution**

The following section details the dispute resolution process designed for use by the Partners when unable to successfully reach an agreement necessary to satisfy the requirements of the MOU in accordance with WIOA § 181(c) and 20 C.F.R. 683

(Note: This is separate from the Local Area Customer Grievance and Complaint Management Policy.) A

disagreement is considered to have reached the level of dispute resolution when an issue arises regarding the terms, conditions, or performance requirements of the MOU that cannot be resolved by agreement of the Parties. It is the responsibility of the Local Board Chair (or designee) to coordinate the MOU dispute resolution to ensure that issues are being resolved appropriately. Any party to the MOU may seek resolution under this process.

1. Parties are advised to actively participate in Local negotiations in a good faith effort to reach agreement. Any disputes shall first be attempted to be resolved informally.
2. Should informal resolution efforts fail, the dispute resolution process must be formally initiated by the petitioner seeking resolution. The petitioner must send a notification to the Local Board Chair (or designee) and all Parties to the MOU regarding the conflict within 10 business days from the date that it is determined that agreement cannot be reached.
3. The Local Board Chair (or designee) shall place the dispute on the agenda of a special meeting of the Local Board's Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall attempt to mediate and resolve the dispute. Disputes shall be resolved by a 2/3 majority consent of the Executive Committee members present.
4. The decision of the Executive Committee shall be final and binding unless such a decision is in contradiction of applicable State and Federal laws or regulations governing the Partner agencies.
5. The right of appeal no longer exists when a decision is final. Additionally, final decisions will not be precedent-setting or binding on future conflict resolutions unless they are officially stated in this procedure.
6. The Executive Committee must provide a written response and dated summary of the proposed resolution to all Parties to the MOU.

### **Monitoring**

The Local Board, or its designated staff, officials from the State and Local administrative entities, the U.S. Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services have the authority to conduct fiscal and programmatic monitoring to ensure that:

- Federal awards are used for authorized purposes in compliance with law, regulations, and State policies,
- Those laws, regulations, and policies are enforced properly,
- Performance data are recorded, tracked, and reviewed for quality to ensure accuracy and completeness,
- Outcomes are assessed and analyzed periodically to ensure that performance goals are met,
- Appropriate procedures and internal controls are maintained, and record retention policies are followed, and

- All MOU terms and conditions are fulfilled.

All Parties to this MOU should expect regular fiscal and programmatic monitoring to be conducted by each of the above entities, as appropriate.

### **Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity**

All Parties to this MOU certify that they prohibit, and will continue to prohibit, discrimination, and they certify that no person, otherwise qualified, is denied employment, services, or other benefits on the basis of: (i) political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identification and/or expression, race, color, creed, or national origin; (ii) sex or age, except when age or sex constitutes a bona fide occupational qualification; or (iii) the physical or mental disability of a qualified individual with a disability.

The Parties specifically agree that they will comply with Section 188 of the WIOA Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Regulations (29 CFR Part 38; Final Rule December 2, 2016), the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.), the Non-traditional Employment for Women Act of 1991, titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights of 1964, as amended, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Age Discrimination Act of 1967, as amended, title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended, and with all applicable requirements imposed by or pursuant to regulations implementing those laws, including but not limited to 29 CFR Part 37 and 38.

### **Indemnification**

With the exception of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, its employees or facilities, all Parties to this MOU recognize the Partnership consists of various levels of government, not-for-profit, and for-profit entities. Each party to this agreement shall be responsible for injury to persons or damage to property resulting from negligence on the part of itself, its employees, its agents, or its officers. No Partner assumes any responsibility for any other party, State, or non-State, for the consequences of any act or omission of any third party. The Parties acknowledge the Local Board and the one-stop operator have no responsibility and/or liability for any actions of the one-stop center employees, agents, and/or assignees. Likewise, the Parties have no responsibility and/or liability for any actions of the Local Board or the one-stop operator. Any claims against the state workforce agency must be made through the Arkansas Claims Commission. Nothing in this MOU should be construed as a waiver of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services' sovereign immunity.

### **Severability**

If any part of this MOU is found to be null and void or is otherwise stricken, the rest of this MOU shall remain in force.

### **Drug and Alcohol-free Workplace**

All Parties to this MOU certify they will comply with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, 41 U.S.C. 702 et seq., and 2 CFR part 182 which require that all organizations receiving grants from any Federal agency maintain a drug-free workplace. The recipient must notify the awarding office if an employee of the recipient is convicted of violating a criminal drug statute. Failure to comply with these requirements may be cause for suspension or debarment under 2 CFR part 180, as adopted by the U.S. Department of Education at 2 CFR 3485, and the U.S. Department of Labor regulations at 29 CFR part 94.

### **Certification Regarding Lobbying**

All Parties shall comply with the Byrd Anti-Lobbying Amendment (31 U.S.C. Section 1352), 29 C.F.R. Part 93, and 34 CFR part 82, as well as the requirements in the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200.450. The Parties shall not lobby federal entities using federal funds and will disclose lobbying activities as required by law and regulations.

### **Debarment and Suspension**

All Parties shall comply with the debarment and suspension requirements (E.O. 12549 and 12689) and 2 CFR part 180 and as adopted by the U.S. Department of Labor at 29 CFR part 2998 and by the U.S. Department of Education at 2 CFR 3485.

### **Priority of Service**

All Parties certify that they will adhere to all statutes, regulations, policies, and plans regarding priority of service, including, but not limited to, priority of service for veterans and their eligible spouses, and priority of service for the WIOA Title I Adult program, as required by 38 U.S.C. sec. 4215 and its implementing regulations and guidance, and WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(E) and its implementing regulations and guidance. Partners will target recruitment of special populations that receive a focus for services under WIOA, such as individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, basic skills deficient youth, English language learners, and others with barriers to employment.

### **Non-Assignment**

Except as otherwise indicated herein, no Party may, during the term of this MOU or any renewals or extensions of this MOU, assign or subcontract all or any part of the MOU without prior written consent

of all other Parties.

### **Governing Law**

This MOU will be construed, interpreted, and enforced according to the laws of the State of Arkansas. All Parties shall comply with all applicable Federal and State laws and regulations, and Local laws to the extent that they are not in conflict with State or Federal requirements.

### **Modification Process**

Renewal of an MOU requires all parties to review and agree to all elements of the MOU and resign the MOU. An amendment or modification of the MOU must be in writing and must be signed by all parties. When the MOU is amended or modified *all* entities will be required to resign the new version of the MOU. If a new member or CEO is added to the MOU, only *that* member or CEO is required to sign the new MOU, as long as the MOU they are signing is the latest approved version of the MOU. For reference, MOU guidance can be found at (20 CFR 678.SOO(b)(6), (d), and (e); 34 CFR 361.SOO(b)(6), (d), and (e); and 34 CFR 463.SOO(b)(6), (d), and (e)).

The Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) is considered a separate addendum to this MOU; and, changes to the IFA do not necessarily constitute an amendment or modification to the MOU. The IFA governs costs associated not only to partners who are physically located within the workforce centers, but partners who are connected electronically with the workforce centers. Each local area must determine how infrastructure costs are charged to each partner in proportion to the partner's use of the one-stop center and relative benefit received. Merely updating the IFA by reflecting changes in partner occupancy does not require renewal of the MOU.

The following steps will be taken to modify the MOU:

### **Notification**

When a Partner wishes to modify the MOU; the Partner must first provide written notification to all signatories of the existing MOU and outline the proposed modification(s).

### **Discussion/Negotiation**

Upon notification, the Local Board Chair (or designee) must ensure that discussions and negotiations related to the proposed modification take place with Partners in a timely manner and as appropriate. Depending upon the type of modification, the modification can be accomplished through electronic communication among all the Parties. If the proposed modification is extensive and is met with opposition, the Local Board Chair (or designee) may need to call a meeting of the Parties to resolve the issue. Upon agreement of all Parties, a modification will be processed.

If the modification involves substitution of a party that will not impact any of the terms of the

agreement, it can be accomplished by the original party and the new party entering into an MOU that includes the Local Board, wherein the new party assumes all of the rights and obligations of the original party. Upon execution, the Local Board Chair (or designee) presents the agreement as a proposed modification to the MOU, and the remaining steps are followed.

If determined that a Partner is unwilling to agree to the MOU modification, the Local Board chair (or designee) must ensure that the process in the Dispute Resolution section is followed.

### **Signatures**

The Local Board Chair (or designee) must immediately circulate the MOU modification and secure Partner signatures. The modified MOU will be considered fully executed once all signatories have reviewed and signed.

The modification may be signed in counterparts, meaning each signatory can sign a separate document as long as the Local Board Chair (or designee) acquires signatures of each party and provides a complete copy of the modification with each party's signature to all the other Parties.

### **Termination**

This MOU will remain in effect until the end date specified in the Effective Period section below, unless:

- All Parties mutually agree to terminate this MOU prior to the end date. Federal oversight agencies charged with the administration of WIOA are unable to appropriate funds or if funds are not otherwise made available for continued performance for any fiscal period of this MOU succeeding the first fiscal period. If there is a risk of termination pursuant to this provision, the party unable to perform shall notify the other Parties as soon as the party has knowledge that funds may be unavailable for the continuation of activities under this MOU.
- WIOA is repealed or superseded by subsequent federal law.
- Local area designation is changed under WIOA.
- A party breaches any provision of this MOU and such breach is not cured within thirty (30) days after receiving written notice from the Local Board Chair (or designee) specifying such breach in reasonable detail. In such event, the non-breaching party(s) shall have the right to terminate this MOU by giving written notice thereof to the party in breach, upon which termination will go into effect immediately.

In the event of termination, the Parties to the MOU must convene within thirty (30) days after the breach of the MOU to discuss the formation of the successor MOU. At that time, allocated costs must be addressed. Any party may request to terminate its inclusion in this MOU by following the modification process identified in the Modification Process section above. All parties agree that this MOU shall be reviewed and renewed the lessor of every four years or whenever a new one stop operator is selected.

## **Effective Period**

This MOU is entered into on July 1, 2023. This MOU will become effective as of the date of signing by the final signatory below and must terminate on June 30, 2025, unless any of the reasons in the Termination section above apply.

## **One-Stop Operating Budget**

The purpose of this section is to establish a financial plan, including terms and conditions, to fund the services and operating costs of the Local Area Arkansas Workforce Center network. The Parties to this MOU agree that joint funding is a necessary foundation for an integrated service delivery system. The goal of the operating budget is to develop a funding mechanism that:

- Establishes and maintains the Local workforce delivery system at a level that meets the needs of the job seekers and businesses in the Local area,
- Reduces duplication and maximizes program impact through the sharing of services, resources, and technologies among Partners (thereby improving each program's effectiveness),
- Reduces overhead costs for any one partner by streamlining and sharing financial,
- procurement, and facility costs, and

Ensures that costs are appropriately shared by Arkansas Workforce Center Partners by determining contributions based on the proportionate use of the one-stop centers and relative benefits received and requiring that all funds are spent solely for allowable purposes in a manner consistent with the applicable authorizing statutes and all other applicable legal requirements, including the Uniform Guidance.

The Partners consider this one-stop operating budget the master budget that is necessary to maintain the Local Area's high-standard Arkansas Workforce Center network. It includes the following cost categories, as required by WIOA and its implementing regulations:

- Infrastructure costs,
- Career services, and
- Shared services.

All costs must be included in the MOU, allocated according to Partners' proportionate use and relative benefits received, and reconciled on a quarterly basis against actual costs incurred and adjusted accordingly. The one-stop operating budget is expected to be transparent and negotiated among Partners on an equitable basis to ensure costs are shared appropriately. All Partners must negotiate in good faith and seek to establish outcomes that are reasonable and fair.

The One-Stop Budget for the Northwest Center is itemized as follows:

Personnel Services/Salary	\$18,486.00
Fringe Benefits	\$5,546.00
Travel	\$1,000.00
Training and Education	\$300.00
Communications	\$600.00
Printing/Reproduction	\$100.00
Materials and Supplies	\$100.00
Membership/Subscriptions/Professionals	\$100.00
Maintenance and Repair	\$100.00
3 <sup>rd</sup> Party Monitoring	\$3,435.00
Indirect Costs	\$3,033.00
<b>Total One-Stop Operator Budget</b>	<b>\$32,800.00</b>

The Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs) and Operating Budgets will be implemented in accordance with the timelines established by the U. S. Department of Labor's Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 17-16 and its' subsequent changes or guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Labor and may require a modification to this MOU to incorporate the changes.

**Signatures**

By signing below, you agree to comply with the terms of this agreement. Persons signing this MOU on behalf of a Party swear and affirm that they are authorized to act on behalf of such Party and acknowledge that the other Parties are relying on their representations to that effect.

**Chief Elected Official**

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization \_\_\_\_\_

**Local Board Chairperson**

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature Date

**Partner Program** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
 Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_

**Partner Program** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
 Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title \_\_\_\_\_

---

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Partner Program** \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_

---

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Partner Program** \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_

---

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Partner Program** \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_

---

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Partner Program** \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Title \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix III**  
**Referral Forms and Procedures (Examples):**

**Little Rock Workforce Development Board**



## WIOA Referral Form

### Referral Guidelines

#### Referral:

1. You may submit the referral form to Debra McGee, Case Manager, by email [debra.mcgee@arkansas.gov](mailto:debra.mcgee@arkansas.gov) or call 501-682-3720 for additional information.

### Referral Information

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

This customer is being referred for the following WIOA Program or Service:

WIOA Adult Program

WIOA Dislocated Worker Program

WIOA Youth Program

Other

Referred By: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Name: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Internal Use Only**

Received By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

**Southeast Arkansas Economic Development District:**



Southeast Arkansas  
WIOA partners

# REFERRAL FORM

**TO:** Southeast Arkansas Economic Development District/AR Workforce Centers

*Name of Service Provider and/or Organization*

P.O. Box 9028 Pine Bluff, AR 71611 / 1001 Tennessee St. 870) 619-4803

*Contact Person*

**Please complete this form, scan, and email to: [eddie.thomas@seaedd.org](mailto:eddie.thomas@seaedd.org)**

This form is to introduce \_\_\_\_\_  
**Client's Name**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Address*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Phone*

Who may be eligible or is interested in your services. Based on an assessment of his/her needs, we believe this individual will benefit from the services provided by your agency.

Reason for Referral and Additional Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**FROM:**

If you have any questions about this referral, please contact our representative:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\*WIOA Partner Representative/Agency

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Representative

(\*Title I-Youth/Adult/Dislocated Worker Program; Wagner Peyser: DWS, TANF; Adult Ed; DS; ARS; Experience Works; NBCA; AHDC)

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Mailing Address*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Email Address*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Phone*

---

Staff Representative Signature

---

Date of Referral

~Second Page of This Form on Back~

## Authorization to Release/Obtain Information

In order to meet the goal of making partner services more accessible to clients in the Southeast region of AR, the agencies listed below are working together to make their services available to you and at the same time reduce the number of forms you are asked to complete. In order to accomplish this goal and better serve you, it is necessary for these agencies to share certain information about you. Please read this form carefully.

The following agencies may share the information described below:

SEAEDD WIOA Service Provider/Arkansas Workforce Centers of Southeast Arkansas  
Department of Workforce Services  
TANF/TEA/Workpays Programs  
Arkansas Adult Education Program & affiliates  
Arkansas Rehabilitation Services  
DHS Division of Services for the Blind  
Court Systems including Juvenile Services  
Department of Human Services  
Department of Education and local school districts  
Department of Workforce Education and affiliated training providers  
Department of Higher Education and affiliated educational institutions  
Experience Works Program  
NBCA Program  
Foster Care/Residential Facilities & Program  
Community Housing Authority Programs  
Job Corps  
Arkansas Human Development Corporation  
Arkansas Registered Apprenticeship Programs  
Private and career training institutions  
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal information that may be shared includes income, military service, court records, education level, work experience, and other information related to helping you secure employment or advance your career goals.

I understand that these records may be protected under State and Federal law and if so cannot be disclosed without my consent.



WAWDB to collect about me.

Client Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:

**Office Use Only:** Date of Service \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

*approved ver. 5.14.2020*

Northeast Arkansas Workforce Center:

**Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development  
Board (NEAWDB)  
Policy Procedures**

<b>Policy Number:</b>	NEAWDB - Policy 2019-03
<b>Chan2e Number:</b>	None
<b>Effective Date:</b>	09-26-19
<b>Date Approved by Board:</b>	09-26-19

Purpose:

The purpose is to develop a policy to ensure WIOA participants are properly referred to other agencies where they can receive needed services.

Background Information:

WIOA Law - Section 129. Use of Funds for Youth Workforce Investment Activities (c)(3)(A) states:

*"INFORMATION AND REFERRALS. - Each local board shall ensure that each participant shall be provided-*

- (i) information on the full array of applicable or appropriate services that are available through the local board or other eligible providers or one-stop partners, including those providers or partners receiving funds under this subtitle; and*
- (ii) referral to appropriate training and educational programs that have the capacity to serve the participant either on a sequential or concurrent basis."*

**A. Youth Requirement**

Policy: The Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board requires that the following be available to each Youth participant:

1. Provide participants with information about the full array of applicable or appropriate services through the Arkansas Workforce Center system and other appropriate providers.
2. Refer these participants to appropriate providers that have the capacity to serve them on a sequential or concurrent basis. A referral may be provided by telephone, written, electronically, face to face, or a combination of these processes. If a referral occurs, staff must document the following in the participant file and/or Arkansas Joblink:
  - a. The referral of the participant
  - b. The outcome of the participant referral

**B. Adult & Dislocated Worker Requirement:**

The Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board requires that the following be available to the Adult & Dislocated Worker participant:

1. A menu of services be posted at each Northeast Arkansas Workforce Center.
2. If needed, the Northeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board requires the service provider refer Adult and Dislocated Worker participants to appropriate providers that have the capacity to serve them on a sequential or concurrent basis. A referral may be provided by telephone, written, electronically, face to face, or a combination of these processes. If a referral occurs, staff must document the following in the participant file and/or Arkansas Joblink:
  - a. The referral of the participant
  - b. The outcome of the participant referral

**Appendix V**  
**Skills Gaps Surveys/Interviews, Local Employers**

As part of our evaluation, we have surveyed the workforce managers in three ADWS centers and have received their responses. As a follow up to these responses, we are now asking you, as key employers in your region, to address the same questions. The ADWS manager in your region has recommended you for our study. Please address the following questions. If you wish to talk with us directly, please let me know and I will contact you by phone. Thank you once again for agreeing to complete the survey. Consider your partnership with your local Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Center:

Do you feel that you have a productive partnership with the ADWS center?

Have you had conversations with your ADWS center concerning skills gaps that you face?

If so, do you feel that the ADWS center adequately addressed your skills gap concerns:

What kinds of services did the ADWS center provide to assist your company with addressing your specific skills gaps?  
How would you assess the effectiveness of the services provided in closing the skills gaps?

Do you have other thoughts, concerns, or comments related to your relationship with your ADWS center?

**Appendix VI**  
**ADWS Center Compliance Surveys/Interviews**

Certification Policy:

Centers must:

Be strategically located to maximize service to employers and employees.

Have enough traffic to warrant operations.

Provide on-site services (interpreter, documents, etc.) based on demographic need.

Have hours of operation that are based on customer needs and are customer driven.

Ensure that uniform procedures are in place to implement priority of service for veterans, individuals with disabilities, English-as-a-Second Language persons, and any other priority populations identified at the federal, state or local level for job placement.

Ensure that priority of service for job training opportunities for veterans, individuals with disabilities, English-as-a-Second Language persons, and any other priority populations identified at the federal level is clearly implemented for all U.S. DOL programs such as employment, training, and placement services.

	Yes	No	If No, Is A Plan for Compliance in Place? Yes/No
Compliance with ADWS Policies (above)			
ADA Accessibility			
Use of Management Information Systems for customer tracking			
Memorandum of Understanding with Partners			
Arkansas Workforce Center and American Job Center Brands Used Appropriately			
Wagner-Peyser Services are Co-Located			

**Required Program/Partner Checklist**

In the column named "On-Site", indicate programs/partners that are currently located on-site.

In the column named "Off-Site Electronic Connection", make a check mark for the programs/partners that are off-site but their basic career services are made available to customers through an electronic connection. Note: Not all customers will be able to use the electronic connection(s) without help from workforce system staff.

For programs/partners that are off-site but an agreement is in place to provide their basic career services in another manner, check the last column and attach a narrative explaining how this is accomplished (use a separate sheet).

Required Programs/Partners	One-Site (Average Hours/Week)	Off-Site Electronic Connection	Off-Site Basic Career Services Made Available in Another Manner
WIOA Title I Adult Services WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker			
WIOA Title I Youth Services			
Wagner-Peyser Title III			
Adult Education and Family Literacy Title II			
Vocational Rehabilitation – Arkansas Career Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services			
Vocational Rehabilitation – Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Services for the Blind			
Title V – Older Americans Act/Senior Community Service Employment Program			
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families			
Career and Technical Education Programs			
Trade Adjustment Assistance			
Jobs for Veterans State Grant			
Community Services Block Grant			
Housing & Urban Development Employment and Training			
Unemployment Compensation			
Second Chance Act			

Additional Partners (not mandated)

Additional Programs/Partners	One-Site (Average Hours/Week )	Off-Site Electronic Connectio N	Off-Site Basic Career Services Made Available in Another Manner
Ticket to Work and Self Sufficiency			
Small Business Administration			
SNAP Employment and Training			
(Please add partners as appropriate)			
Orientation to Arkansas Workforce Centers			

Career Services Checklists

In the column named "On-Site", check the basic career, individualized career, and training services that are currently available on-site for all job seeking customers who come into the workforce center or affiliate site.

Basic Career Services	On-Site (Mark with X)
Initial assessment of skill levels (including literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency), aptitudes, abilities (including skills gaps), and supportive service needs	
Outreach, intake and orientation to the information and other services available through the one-stop delivery system	
Eligibility determination	
Labor exchange services, including job search and placement assistance, career counseling, provision of information on in-demand industry sectors and occupations, provision of information on nontraditional employment	
Appropriate recruitment and other business services on behalf of employers, including small employers, which may include providing information and referral to specialized business services not traditionally offered through the one-stop delivery system	
Referrals to and coordination of activities with other programs and services, including programs and services within the one-stop delivery system and other workforce development programs	
Workforce and labor market employment statistics information, including accurate information relating to local, regional, and national labor market areas, including job vacancy listings in labor market areas; information on job skills necessary to obtain the jobs; and information relating to local occupations in demand and the earnings, skill requirements, and opportunities for advancement for such occupations	
Performance information and program cost information on eligible providers of training services and eligible providers of youth workforce investment activities, providers of adult education, providers of career and technical education activities at the postsecondary level, and career and technical education activities available to school dropouts, and providers of vocational	

rehabilitation	
Information, in formats that are usable by and understandable to onestop center customers, regarding how the local area is performing on the local performance accountability measures and any additional performance information with respect to the onestop delivery system in the local area	
Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims for Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for onestop center customers, relating to the availability of supportive services or assistance, including child care, child support, medical or child health assistance benefits under the supplemental nutrition assistance program, assistance through the earned income tax credit, assistance under State program for temporary assistance for needy families, and other supportive services and transportation provided through funds made available in the local area	
Provision of information and assistance regarding filing claims for unemployment compensation	
Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs	
Translation Services	

Individualized Career Services	On-Site (Mark with X)
Comprehensive and specialized evaluation to Identify barriers to employment and employment Goals	
Development of Individualized Employment Plan (IEP)	
Group Counseling	
Individual Counseling	
Career/ Vocational Planning	
Short-Term Preemployment/ Vocational Services	
Internships and work experiences	
Workforce preparation activities	
Financial literacy activities	
Out-of-Area Job Search and relocation assistance	
English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs	
Follow-up services	

Check the business services that are available to employers.

Business Services	On-Site (Mark with X)
Establish and develop relationships and networks with large and small employers and their intermediaries	
Develop, convene, or implement industry or sector partnerships	

Other Business Services (not mandatory)

Customized screening and referral of qualified participants in training services to employers	On-Site (Mark with X)
Customized services to employers, employer associations, or other such organizations, on employment-related issues	
Customized recruitment events and related services for employers including targeted job fairs	
Human resource consultation services, e.g., writing/reviewing job descriptions and employee handbooks; Developing performance evaluation and personnel policies; Creating orientation sessions for new workers; Honing job interview techniques for efficiency and compliance; Analyzing employee turnover; or Explaining labor laws to help employers comply with	
Wage/hour and safety/health regulations;	
Customized labor market information for specific employers, sectors, industries or clusters	
Customized assistance or referral for assistance in the development of a registered apprenticeship program	
Listing of Job Orders	
Applicant Referral	
Employer Needs Assessment	
Unemployment Insurance Access	
Access to Facilities	
Translation Services	
Developing and delivering innovative workforce investment services and strategies for area employers, e.g., career pathways, skills upgrading, skill standard development and certification for recognized postsecondary credential or other employer use, apprenticeship, and other effective initiatives for meeting the workforce investment needs of area employers and workers	
Assistance in managing reductions in force in coordination with rapid response activities and with strategies for the aversion of layoffs, and the delivery of employment and training activities to address risk factors	

Marketing of business services offered to appropriate area employers, including small and mid-sized employers	
Assisting employers with accessing local, State, and Federal tax credits	

Evaluation Criteria

Each site is asked to work together with leadership and staff to develop responses to the following:

Rank on a scale of 1 to 5, where the site believes it is in its path toward meeting, or exceeding, the stated standard.

5 = achieved the standard and excelling

4 = significantly meeting standard with some work yet to do 3 = have some of the elements in place, some of the time

2 = making progress but long way to go 1 = no progress yet

These scores will be used by the Evaluation Team as benchmarks for the site and help point to both areas of excellence and those in need of improvement.

Provide clear evidence and examples of current status and future plans with strategies and timelines to reach these standards.

<b>Functional and Programmatic Integration</b>
It is critical for Arkansas Workforce Centers and its partners to think and act as an integrated system. Arkansas Workforce Center partners ensure that client services are aligned to common goals and the customer experience is seamless – regardless of funding streams. Each customer is mutually regarded as a shared customer, with all staff and programs operating at the site having a vested stake in that customer’s success. Integration of programs is incorporated into planning, intake, assessment, registration, and service processes, information sharing, resource decisions, actions, results, and analyses.
Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Functional and Programmatic integration. <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 1
Describe your site’s approach to integrated service delivery and the use of functional teams to deliver career services to all customers.
Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

### Performance Accountability

Results and outcomes for the public investment in Arkansas Workforce Centers are essential to the system's relevance. The effectiveness of Arkansas Workforce Centers for employers and job seekers is evident in system performance and service delivery decisions are based on data. On an ongoing basis, customer data from one-stop partners and regional economic data is collected, analyzed, and shared with all workforce system staff and community stakeholders. Plans for improvement, enhancement, or adjustment are established and acted upon.

Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Performance Accountability.

5     4     3     2     1

Describe how you measure, analyze, review, and improve system performance through the use of data and information.

Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

### Service Provision, Universal Access, and Outreach

Improved availability, a welcoming atmosphere, inclusive settings, and high quality customer service benefit all customers. Arkansas Workforce Centers extend services and outreach not just to individuals who walk in the door, but also to those who have become disengaged in the labor force. Integrated, quality services are provided to all customers within the center and via technology through online or phone access. Principles of universal design are considered, which designs inclusive space and materials to be available to individuals regardless of their range of abilities, mobility, age, language, learning style, intelligence, or educational level.

Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Service Provision to all customers including Services, Access, and Outreach to populations with barriers.

5     4     3     2     1

Provide evidence that basic ADA requirements have been met, including processes to provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities.

Describe initiatives or strategies in developing universal access and provide tangible evidence of implementation or solution driven plan development. Address the following four specific areas of access:

Physical: Architectural or building

Information: all paper, printed or posted materials

Digital: software, web-based programs and alternatives to print

Communication: verbal, non-verbal access for services, phone and other

Describe your wireless internet infrastructure.

How are the needs of populations with barriers met through staff-assisted and other means?

Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

### Customer Satisfaction

Performance and value are ultimately judged by customers – businesses and job seekers. Customer-centered design relies upon satisfying customer needs, identifying shortcomings and responding accordingly on a timely and ongoing basis. Tools to obtain feedback are appropriate for each customer’s use and take into consideration factors including literacy levels, use of technology, disability, and language.

Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Customer Satisfaction.

5     4     3     2     1

Describe how the voice of the customer is heard and how your site incorporates both job seeker and business customer feedback as part of continuous quality improvement? How are the voices of populations with barriers heard and brought to the table when designing services and facilities? How do you inform customers of how their feedback was reviewed and any action taken from their feedback? What metrics are used to show improvement and success?

Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

### Staff Competence and Staff Training Participation

Professional development is a key feature in order to ensure that staff are aware of the implications of recent evidence-based research and can implement the latest policies and procedures established at the local, State and Federal levels. Also of vital importance is the use of labor market information by staff to better inform customers' career and training decision-making. The investment in staff development is substantial, ongoing, and focused on cross-training with partner programs, overall skill development, and use of labor market information. Every member of the one-stop staff has the ability and authority to meet customer needs, either directly or, where appropriate, by helping the customer make the right connections to the expertise he or she seeks. Participation in one-stop-sponsored training is required.

Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Staff Competence and Staff Training Participation.

5    4    3    2    1

How are staff and leadership trained and cross-trained on an ongoing basis to stay current on programs and services? How is this tracked to ensure that all staff participate?

How do you actively engage staff of all programs – Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, TANF, ABE, DVR, Perkins, etc. – in design of services, action planning and analysis of indicators and trends? How are all staff informed of progress towards site performance and goals?

Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

## Partnership

The one-stop system is built upon a foundation of partners linked together to deliver a comprehensive array of services and reach the shared outcomes of employment, education, skills gains, and earnings. All core and required one-stop partners are present at the site and invested in the development and implementation of service delivery to connect customers to resources.

Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Partnership.

5     4     3     2     1

Describe how the partnerships function at the site and the roles of each core partner from Title I – Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth, Title II - Adult Basic Education, Title III - Wagner-Peyser, and Title IV - Vocational Rehabilitation.

Describe how the partnerships function at the site with other required partners from postsecondary Career and Technical Education (Perkins Act), CSBG, HUD, Job Corps, National Farmworker Jobs Program, Re-entry programs, SCSEP, TAA, TANF, UI, VETS, and YouthBuild.

Describe how the site is linked to other partners beyond the site to ensure alignment with community and regional strategies. Please give examples of how this functions and the results for customers.

Describe how leadership works together to set the vision and goals for the site and then implements service strategies to achieve shared objectives.

Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

## Employer Engagement

Business is one of our primary customers and one-stop partners work collaboratively to deliver value-added services and eliminate duplication. Business services staff from all one-stop partners have a comprehensive understanding of labor market conditions, economic development activities, skill needs of the workforce and are connected to regional and local business partnership activities and sector strategies. Employers' human capital needs are communicated to and acted upon by the workforce system. Business services are coordinated to the maximum extent possible to limit duplication and streamline the employer experience.

Check the box where you think the site is with regard to Employer Engagement.

5       4       3       2       1

Describe how partners work to deliver seamless business services. How do business services staff use and share labor market information? What strategies are used to involve employers in identifying skill gaps and developing solutions to meet their workforce needs?

Describe how regional and local sector strategies are used to target services and resources to focus workforce efforts on investments and improve outcomes.

How are career pathways and training modalities such as industry-recognized credentials, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, and other work-based learning opportunities aligned with employers' needs and marketed to support talent development?

Please list any best practices to highlight and share for continuous improvement.

**Appendix VII**  
**Customer Service Survey, WIOA Title I and Title III Customers**

## ADWS Customer Survey

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Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q1

Dear Arkansas Department of Workforce Services Customer,

On behalf of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS), the University of Arkansas is conducting a customer satisfaction survey in an effort to improve ADWS services. We would be grateful if you would please fill out this short online survey to assist with this process. Your identifying information will not be gathered, stored, or used in the analysis of the data collected. Response will be reported anonymously, in aggregate, to provide ADWS input from a broad cross section of customers. This process is vital to ADWS' efforts to provide their customers with the most effective services possible. Your input matters.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Brent Williams at the University of Arkansas, via e-mail at [btwilli@uark.edu](mailto:btwilli@uark.edu), or by phone, (479) 575-8696. Your time and consideration are greatly appreciated.

Brent Thomas Williams, Ph.D.,  
Associate Professor  
University of Arkansas, Counselor Education and Supervision  
(479) 575-8696, University office  
[btwilli@uark.edu](mailto:btwilli@uark.edu)

### INFORMED CONSENT

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE CONDITIONS OF THIS SURVEY. I UNDERSTAND I AM UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY AND THERE WILL BE NO CONSEQUENCES IF I CHOOSE NOT TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY.

- I agree to take the survey. (1)
- I do not agree to take the survey. (4)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Dear Arkansas Department of Workforce Services Customer, On behalf of the Arkansas Department of... = I do not agree to take the survey.*

---

Q1 What type of services did you receive from the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services? (Click all that apply)

- Adult Education (1)
  - Adult (Training/Workforce) Services (2)
  - Dislocated Workers Services (3)
  - Employment Services, Such as Job Search or Resumes (4)
  - Rehabilitation Services (5)
  - Services for the Blind (6)
  - Youth Services (7)
  - Other (8)
- 

Q10 Were you assigned a Case Manager or other workforce representative to help you develop a plan for employment?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
  - Unsure (3)
- 

Q2 Did you clearly understand your responsibilities to participate in the program?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
  - Unsure (3)
-

Q3 Would you recommend this program?

- Would Not Recommend (1)
  - Would Possibly Recommend (2)
  - Would Recommend (3)
  - Would Strongly Recommend (4)
  - Would Very Strongly Recommend (5)
- 

Q4 Did you receive the services needed to achieve your goal as outlined in the plan you developed with your case manager?

- I Don't Know (1)
  - Received All Services Needed (2)
  - Received Most But Not All Services Needed (3)
  - Received None of the Services Needed (4)
  - Received Some of the Services Needed (5)
- 

Q5 Overall were you satisfied with the services in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program?

- Very Dissatisfied (1)
  - Dissatisfied (2)
  - Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (3)
  - Satisfied (4)
  - Very Satisfied (5)
-

Q7 How satisfied were you with the professionalism and accessibility of staff?

- Very Dissatisfied (1)
  - Dissatisfied (2)
  - Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (3)
  - Satisfied (4)
  - Very Satisfied (5)
- 

Q10 Were you able to find employment in your career field after you completed this program?

- Not Seeking Employment At This Time (1)
  - Not Applicable (2)
  - No, I Did Not Find Employment (3)
  - Yes, I Found Employment But Not In My Career Field (4)
  - Yes, I Found Employment In My Career Field (5)
- 

Q8 If you found employment, are you likely to keep this job over the next six months?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
  - Unsure (3)
- 

Q9 What changes would you suggest to improve the services in this program?

---

End of Block: Default Question Block

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**Appendix VIII**  
**Business Survey, WIOA Title I and Title III Customers**

**ADWS- WIOA Business Survey**

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Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q17 Dear Arkansas Department of Workforce Services Partner,

On behalf of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS), the University of Arkansas is conducting a customer satisfaction survey in an effort to improve ADWS services. We would be grateful if you would please fill out this short online survey to assist with this process. Your identifying information will not be gathered, stored, or used in the analysis of the data collected. Response will be reported anonymously, in aggregate, to provide ADWS input from a broad cross section of partners. This process is vital to ADWS' efforts to provide their customers with the most effective services possible. Likewise, analysis of this data will be instrumental in improving the efficacy of ADWS' collaborations with its partners. Your input matters.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Brent Williams at the University of Arkansas, via e-mail at [btwilli@uark.edu](mailto:btwilli@uark.edu), or by phone, (479) 575-8696. Your time and consideration are greatly appreciated.

Brent Thomas Williams, Ph.D.,  
Associate Professor  
University of Arkansas, Counselor Education and Supervision  
(479) 575-8696, University office  
[btwilli@uark.edu](mailto:btwilli@uark.edu)

INFORMED CONSENT

I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE CONDITIONS OF THIS SURVEY.

I UNDERSTAND I AM UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY AND THERE WILL BE NO CONSEQUENCES IF I CHOOSE NOT TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY.

- I agree to take the survey. (1)
- I do not agree to take the survey. (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If Dear Arkansas Department of Workforce Services Partner, On behalf of the Arkansas Department of... = I do not agree to take the survey.*

---

Q15 What type of services did you participate in through the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services? (Click all that apply).

- Adult Education (1)
  - Local Workforce Services Provider (2)
  - Employment Services (job search, resumes, etc) (3)
  - Rehabilitation Services (4)
  - Services for the Blind (5)
- 

Q7 During your participation in the WIOA program, did you clearly understand your responsibilities?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
  - Unsure (3)
- 

Q8 Would you recommend the WIOA program in which you participated?

- Would not recommend (1)
  - Would possibly recommend (2)
  - Would recommend (3)
-

Q1 What Arkansas Division of Workforce Services program were you covered by:

- WIOA Title I Youth, Adult, & Dislocated Worker Programs through Local Workforce Development Boards (1)
  - WIOA Title III Employment Services through Arkansas Workforce Centers (2)
  - Unsure (4)
- 

Q10 Did you receive the services needed for you to address your workforce needs? Choose from the following:

- I don't know (4)
  - Received none of the services needed (5)
  - Received some of the services needed (6)
  - Received most but not all services needed (7)
  - Received all services needed (8)
- 

Q11 Overall were you satisfied with the services in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program? Choose from the following:

- Very Dissatisfied (4)
  - Dissatisfied (5)
  - Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (6)
  - Satisfied (7)
  - Very Satisfied (8)
-

Q12 How satisfied were you with the professionalism and accessibility of staff? Choose from the following:

- Very Dissatisfied (4)
- Dissatisfied (5)
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (6)
- Satisfied (7)
- Very Satisfied (8)

Q14 What are the business services provided through the one-stop delivery system, and how are they provided?

- Customized screening and referral of qualified participants in training services to employers (1)
- Customized services to employers, employer associations, or other such organizations, on employment-related issues (2)
- Customized recruitment events and related services for employers including targeted job fairs (3)
- Human resource consultation services, including but not limited to assistance with: (4)
- (i) Writing/reviewing job descriptions and employee handbooks; (5)
- (ii) Developing performance evaluation and personnel policies; (6)
- (iii) Creating orientation sessions for new workers; (7)
- (iv) Honing job interview techniques for efficiency and compliance; (8)
- (v) Analyzing employee turnover; (9)
- (vi) Creating job accommodations and using assistive technologies; or (10)
- (vii) Explaining labor and employment laws to help employers comply with discrimination, wage/hour, and safety/health regulations; (11)

- Customized labor market information for specific employers, sectors, industries or clusters (12)
  - Other similar customized services (13)
  - Developing and implementing industry sector strategies (including strategies involving industry partnerships, regional skills alliances, industry skill panels, and sectoral skills partnerships) (14)
  - Customized assistance or referral for assistance in the development of a registered apprenticeship program (15)
  - Developing and delivering innovative workforce investment services and strategies for area employers, which may include career pathways, skills upgrading, skill standard development and certification for recognized postsecondary credential or other employer use, and other effective initiatives for meeting the workforce investment needs of area employers and workers (16)
  - Assistance to area employers in managing reductions in force in coordination with rapid response activities and with strategies for the aversion of layoffs, which may include strategies such as early identification of firms at risk of layoffs, use of feasibility studies to assess the needs of and options for at-risk firms, and the delivery of employment and training activities to address risk factors (17)
  - Assisting employers with accessing local, State, and Federal tax credits (18)
- 

Q6 How many years has your business been in operation:

- 0-5 years (1)
  - 6-10 years (2)
  - 11+ years (3)
- 

Q5 What is the total number of employees at your business? Please choose from the following:

1-9 (4)

10-49 (5)

49-100 (6)

100-249 (7)

250+ (8)

---

Q3 What is the primary industry of operation for your business? Choose from the following:

- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting (4)
- Administrative Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services (5)
- Mining, Quarrying and Oil and Gas Extraction (6)
- Utilities (7)
- Information (8)
- Transportation and Warehousing (9)
- Management of Companies and Enterprises (10)
- Wholesale Trade (11)
- Accommodation and Food Services (12)
- Educational Services (13)
- Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (14)
- Manufacturing (15)
- Other services except Public Administration (16)
- Finance and Insurance (17)
- Construction (18)
- Real Estate and Rental Leasing (19)
- Retail Trade (20)
- Health Care and Social Assistance (21)
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (22)
- Public Administration (23)

---

Q2 What is the primary city/county of operations for your business:

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---

Q13 What changes would you suggest to improve the services in the WIOA program in which you participated?

---

End of Block: Default Question Block

---

# Appendix IX

## Descriptive Statistics

### 1. Business Survey

#### 1.1 Descriptive Statistics

	se	n	mean	sd	median	mad	min	max	range	skew
Q15*	0.22094296	20	2.650000	0.9880869	3.0	0.0000	1	5	4	0.06919358
Q7*	0.21151086	20	1.500000	0.9459053	1.0	0.0000	1	4	3	1.41787605
Q8*	0.16858545	20	2.600000	0.7539370	3.0	0.0000	1	4	3	-0.67202783
Q1*	0.17631361	19	2.421053	0.7685332	2.0	1.4826	1	4	3	-0.09828172
Q10*	0.18474894	18	2.555556	0.7838234	3.0	0.0000	1	4	3	-0.51842893
Q11*	0.31119464	20	3.600000	1.3917047	4.0	1.4826	1	6	5	-0.30717722
Q12*	0.23254881	20	3.150000	1.0399899	3.0	1.4826	1	5	4	-0.28070880
Q14*	0.92938384	17	5.058824	3.8319477	4.0	4.4478	1	12	11	0.40304882
Q6*	0.07254763	20	2.000000	0.3244428	2.0	0.0000	1	3	2	0.00000000
Q5*	0.34758967	22	3.090909	1.6303400	2.5	2.2239	1	6	5	0.17580261
Q3*	0.83673058	22	6.545455	3.9246143	7.0	5.9304	1	12	11	-0.14351595
Q2*	1.27153654	19	9.052632	5.5424993	9.0	7.4130	1	18	17	0.04008991
	kurtosis									
Q15*	-0.01347714									
Q7*	0.45073529									
Q8*	-0.22936214									
Q1*	-0.65830844									
Q10*	-0.50820297									
Q11*	-0.89857396									
Q12*	-1.03367614									
Q14*	-1.37416727									
Q6*	6.02500000									
Q5*	-1.53866264									
Q3*	-1.56319901									
Q2*	-1.42918166									

## 2. Customer Survey

### 2.1 Descriptive Statistics

	se	n	mean	sd	median	mad	min	max	range
Q1*	0.15233089	228	5.175439	2.3001460	4.0	2.2239	1	9	8
Q10_1*	0.04339736	228	1.894737	0.6552858	2.0	0.0000	1	4	3
Q2*	0.04841394	228	1.627193	0.7310345	1.0	0.0000	1	4	3
Q3*	0.08763833	229	2.174672	1.3262087	2.0	1.4826	1	6	5
Q4*	0.07783240	189	2.502646	1.0700186	3.0	1.4826	1	5	4
Q5*	0.09375986	228	2.508772	1.4157429	3.0	1.4826	1	6	5
Q7*	0.09719941	227	2.748899	1.4644568	3.0	1.4826	1	6	5
Q10_2*	0.07622050	228	2.899123	1.1509043	3.0	1.4826	1	6	5
Q8*	0.06542132	191	1.774869	0.9041407	1.0	0.0000	1	4	3
Q9*	3.23319726	148	71.250000	39.3335423	74.5	48.1845	1	139	138

	skew	kurtosis
Q1*	0.19918978	-1.4791346
Q10_1*	0.20336985	-0.3599785
Q2*	0.76892635	-0.5187504
Q3*	0.88108815	-0.2988080
Q4*	-0.29187964	-1.1573985
Q5*	0.35785979	-1.1735754
Q7*	0.10899978	-1.3710113
Q10_2*	0.29987287	-0.3835033
Q8*	0.49643081	-1.4927146
Q9*	-0.08562097	-1.1595719

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Internet access and job search

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Mobile Centers:

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