



Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area

Regional & Local Plans
PY 2020 - PY 2023



Western Arkansas Local-Region Plan

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, hereafter referred to as WIOA, requires regional planning- a broad strategic approach to planning focused on the overarching vision, goals, alignment and shared responsibilities within the region. Arkansas intends to implement a two-tiered regional approach to meeting this requirement by allowing a two-year transitional plan. This approach provides latitude for regions that may not yet be able to address all the outlined elements required in a four-year regional plan.

- A. *A reference name for the planning region.*
Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area (WAWDA)

- B. *Identification of the local workforce development areas that comprise the planning region.*
Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area (WAWDA)

- C. *Identification of the counties each local workforce development area serves.*
Crawford, Franklin, Logan, Polk, Scott, Sebastian

- D. *Identification of the key planning region committee members charged with drafting the regional plan.*
Rachel Mize - Stark Manufacturing LLC (private sector); Stacy Muntz - City of Mulberry (economic development); Zach Sloan (Labor); Dennis Williamson - Western Arkansas Planning & Development District (board staff); Debbie Faubus-Kendrick - Crawford County Adult Education Center (workforce); Cathy Creekmore - Harry Robinson Buick (private sector); Justin Smith - ATU-Ozark (education); Greg Aleshire - Aleshire Electric (private sector); Brandon Fisher - Arkansas Valley Electric (private sector); Erick Wiggins - Bekaert (private sector); Jennifer Turner - Guy Fenter Co-op (Perkins/education); Krystal Thrailkill - UARM (education); John Craig - BancorpSouth (private sector); Dana Byrum - Arkansas Rehab Services (workforce), Sasha Grist - (economic development), Heather Edwards - Literacy Council of Western Arkansas (workforce).

- E. *Indication of the local workforce development area each committee member is associated with.*
Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area (WAWDA)

- F. *A list of key planning region committee meeting dates. [WIOA Sec. 106(a) and (c)].*
March 5, 2020, March 10, 2020, March 14, 2020, December 15, 2020, August 30, 2021, September 21, 2021, October 24, 2022, March 13, 2023

Appendix A: Western Arkansas Local Plan

WIOA requires each local workforce area to develop a local plan that supports and is submitted as a component of its associated regional plan. The narratives framed in the local plan will include more detailed, actionable plans and objectives, consistent with the local plan's respective regional plan strategic visions and goals.

Section 1: Workforce and Economic Analysis

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

The Western Arkansas WDA is expected to experience a net growth of employment with 8,565 jobs forecast to be added during the projection period. Goods-Producing industries are projected to have a net gain of 560 jobs, while the Services Providing industries are estimated to add 7,797. The area is predicted to gain 208 jobs for Self-Employed and Unpaid Family Workers. The population grew 1.36 percent from 2008 to 2018 for a total population of 260,744. The not-seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate for 2018 was 3.6 percent. The Education and Health Services supersector is expected to be the top and fastest growing supersector, with a gain of 3,797 jobs, a 15.93 percent increase. Driving this growth is Food Services and Drinking Places with an increase of 1,343 new jobs. Ambulatory Health Care Services is close behind with a projected gain of 1,316. Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions could more than double in size between 2018 and 2028, making it the fastest growing industry in the Western Arkansas WDA. On the negative side of the labor market, Fabricated Metal Products Manufacturing is estimated to lose 166 jobs between 2018 and 2028, while Nonmetallic Mineral Product Manufacturing could lose 29.63 percent of its workforce, becoming the fastest declining industry in the area. Information is slated to be the only declining supersector, losing 28 jobs, or 2.63 percent. The Western Arkansas WDA is projected to see a 7.17 percent growth of its workforce between 2018 and 2028, which is slower than the state growth rate. Around 15,091 annual job openings are expected to be available during the projection period, with 5,558 created from employees leaving the workforce, 8,677 from those changing jobs, and 856 from growth and expansion. Food Preparation and Food Serving Related Occupations is projected to be the top growing major group, with a gain of 1,502 jobs. Driving this growth is Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food, with an increase of 748 jobs. Personal Care and Service Occupations is slated to be the fastest growing major group, increasing employment by 24.70 percent from 2018 to 2028. Personal Care Aides is predicted to be the fastest growing occupation in the area and second in numeric change, increasing by 43.10 percent. On the negative side of the job market, Assemblers and Fabricators, All Other, Including Team Assemblers is forecasted to lose 206 jobs, becoming the top declining occupation in Western Arkansas, while Pressers, Textile, Garment, and Related Materials is slated to lose 29.03 percent of its workforce, becoming the fastest declining occupation.

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area Projected Job Growth (2018-2028) for all is +7.17%

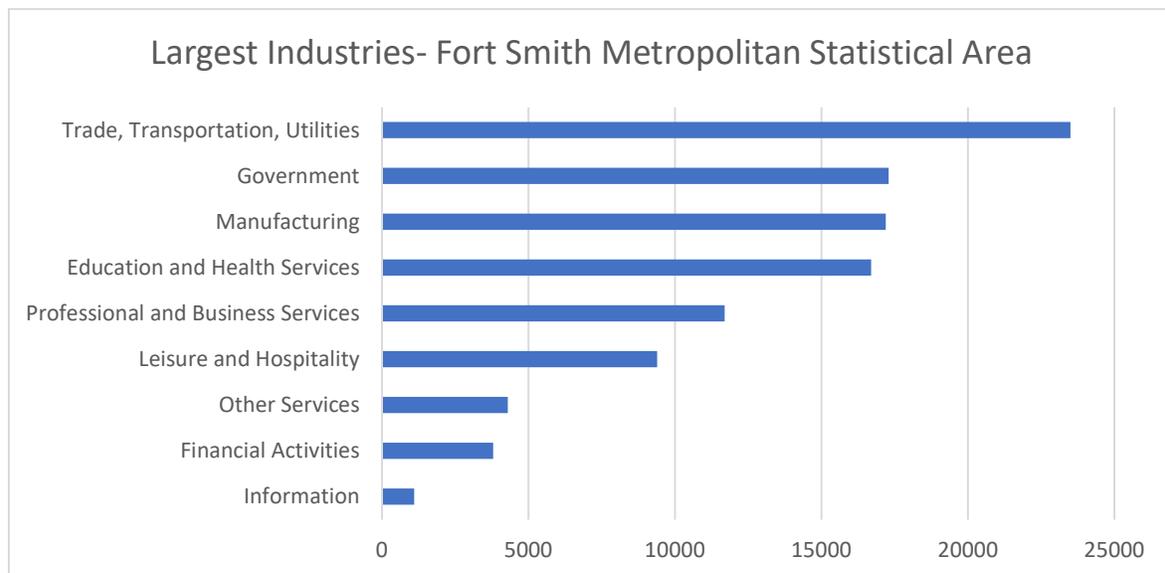
<https://www.discover.arkansas.gov/docs/Publications/Projections/2018-2028/LT-LWDA-18-28.pdf>

Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area 2018-2028 Industry Projections Rankings (by NAICS Subsector)

Top 10 Growing Industries Ranked by Net Growth

NAICS Code	NAICS Title	2018 Estimated Employment	2028 Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change
722000	Food Services and Drinking Places	7,896	9,239	1,343	17.01%
621000	Ambulatory Health Care Services	5,301	6,617	1,316	24.83%
624000	Social Assistance	2,525	3,218	693	27.45%
611000	Educational Services	8,212	8,894	682	8.30%
311000	Food Manufacturing	9,019	9,679	660	7.32%
623000	Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	3,439	4,029	590	17.16%
484000	Truck Transportation	4,060	4,581	521	12.83%
622000	Hospitals	4,359	4,875	516	11.84%
999200	State Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	1,803	2,236	433	24.02%
813000	Religious, Grantmaking, Civic, Professional, and Similar Organizations	2,850	3,207	357	12.53%

<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov>



<https://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Data-Search-Tool/CES>

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

Top 10 Growing Occupations Ranked by Net Growth

SOC Code	SOC Title	2018 Estimated Employment	2028 Projected Employment	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Annual Exits	Annual Transfers	Annual Change	Total Annual Openings
35-3021	Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food	3,832	4,580	748	19.52%	335	414	75	824
39-9021	Personal Care Aides	1,580	2,261	681	43.10%	142	126	68	336
29-1141	Registered Nurses	2,495	2,909	414	16.59%	75	69	41	185
53-3032	Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	3,785	4,167	382	10.09%	164	288	38	490
51-9198	Helpers--Production Workers	2,116	2,470	354	16.73%	122	216	35	373
31-1014	Nursing Assistants	2,163	2,454	291	13.45%	124	135	29	288
29-2061	Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	1,149	1,331	182	15.84%	42	52	18	112
35-2014	Cooks, Restaurant	721	903	182	25.24%	43	72	18	133
21-2011	Clergy	1,014	1,153	139	13.71%	47	70	14	131
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	1,384	1,519	135	9.75%	101	178	14	293

<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov>

The local board will evaluate this data at reasonable intervals to share with system partners to assist area industry in meeting labor demands and job seekers in finding good employment.

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

Most employers need their employees to have basic knowledge and skills of literacy and math, problem solving, computing, communication, work readiness and other skills. Additionally, skills are varied and particular to each job. Advanced manufacturing employers are seeking individuals who have technical skills such as Computerized Numerical Controller (CNC). Information tech companies need individuals who are skilled and knowledgeable in computers and mathematics. Hospitals needs include the entire range of skills necessary for all the jobs in the facility from food service, maintenance, and laboratory, to all levels of nursing care and ancillary services.

In-person training and panels with the board using sector partnerships are part of the ongoing plans for Western Arkansas. As collaborative efforts are being placed more on barrier/underserved populations like the immigrant and marginalized minorities as well as justice involved. Input is being gleaned directly from these population through directed industry roundtables as we facilitate direct communications between business and job seekers in these open meetings. Locally, the workforce board has coordinated additional extensive services with the Arkansas Economic Development Institute at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock. This provided a series of reports and analysis that are being used in sector partnerships focused on those occupations identified as in demand or growing. These services have also evaluated the region's 2 & 4-year educational institutions program offerings in comparison to training gaps of in-demand industries and occupations. The workforce board continues to review this information in partnership with the state's LMI department on an annual basis with information/research sessions being facilitated at least annually for board

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

and CEOs both internally and with outside workforce experts like the training provided in October of 2022.

- 1.3. *Provide an analysis of the local workforce, including current labor force employment (and unemployment) data, and information on labor market trends, and the educational and skill levels of the workforce in the region, including individuals with barriers to employment. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(1)(C)] and [proposed 20 CFR 679.560(a)]*

2022 LWDA Average Labor Force		2022 LWDA Average Unemployment- County	
Labor Force	118,174	Crawford	3.2%
Employment	114,281	Franklin	3.5%
Unemployment	3,893	Logan	3.8%
Unemployment Rate	3.37%	Polk	3.7%
		Scott	3.0%
		Sebastian	3.2%

<https://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Employment/Labor-Force-By-County>

Education Attainment, Population Age 25+ in WAWDA

	Pop 25+ (1,000s)	High School Graduate	Some College	Associate's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate Degree +	*High School Graduate+	*Bachelor's Degree +
Arkansas	1,999	34%	22.6%	7%	14.4%	8.1%	86.2%	22.6%
WAPDD	174	35.9%	23.5%	7.8%	11.1%	5.3%	83.7%	16.5%
Crawford	42	37.4%	24.2%	8.2%	10.5%	4.8%	85.2%	15.3%
Franklin	12	40.1%	23.1%	7.6%	9.0%	2.8%	82.6%	11.8%
Logan	15	45%	21.4%	6.6%	8.3%	3.8%	85.1%	12.1%
Polk	14	37.4%	24.1%	9.9%	8.0%	5.3%	84.6%	13.3%
Scott	7	43%	20.0%	6.8%	4.8%	4.3%	78.9%	9.1%

U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, S1501, Educational Attainment 2018

The Arkansas Division of Career and Technical Education (ADCTE), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) and the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) provide vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities. According to the September 2022 report on Disability Employment Statistics on individuals ages 16 and over from the Department of Labor Statistics (<http://www.dol.gov/odep>) nationwide there is a 23.2% labor force participation for persons with disabilities and a 67.8% participation rate for persons without disabilities. The unemployment rate of persons with disabilities is 7.3%, while the unemployment rate of people without disabilities is 3.1%.

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

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

Western Arkansas's workforce development activities are coordinated through the following agencies at the local level: Western Arkansas Planning & Development District (WAPDD), the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS), the Arkansas Division of Career and Technical Education (ADCTE), the Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of County Operations (DCO).

The Western Arkansas Workforce Centers are at the forefront of the workforce activities in the area and represents Arkansas's version of the American Jobs Center. There is one comprehensive workforce center in Fort Smith and an affiliate center in Mena with multiple access points across the six-county area with the capability to provide service locations in rural parts of the Western Arkansas via mobile workforce center units that travel the state. The Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board (WAWDB) directs the Arkansas Workforce Centers in the Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area in cooperation with other state and local workforce agencies. The local board is comprised of representatives of local businesses, labor, partner agencies, and other key stakeholders to create a diverse and functional group. The board, in alignment with the states' vision, provides front line strategic implementation for statewide initiatives in addition to locally determined priorities. State initiatives include sector strategies, career pathway development, and delivery of standardized business services. Local priorities include layoff aversion, specific career pathway development, youth programs, targeted sector partnerships, and various work-based learning. The local board is responsible for procuring a One-Stop operator for the oversight of daily operations of the center(s) in accordance with WIOA 121(d). The board coordinates workforce activities with workforce partners through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to implement core, non-core, and other partner programs. Operating as a fully integrated shop the Western Arkansas Comprehensive Workforce Centers support WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, Wagner-Peyser, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Unemployment Insurance (UI), Adult Education and Family Literacy, and Vocational Rehabilitation. With this foundation for service integration, the Western Arkansas Workforce Development System operates under the "No Wrong Door" philosophy. This design creates an intake process that identifies the needs of the individual, gathering information and utilizing the appropriate resources to meet those needs regardless of the partner that provides them. These resources are also initiated by a referral system between partner programs. Customers are provided solutions and follow up steps to their questions, barriers, and issues by connecting them directly to the appropriate workforce delivery system partner, which is all a part of this philosophy. The Arkansas Division of Career and Technical Education/Adult Education Division (ADCTE/AED) funds six local adult education programs and four literacy councils. The local service delivery system is diverse to meet a variety of needs and situations. The funding for these programs comes from the public-school systems and community colleges. Local programs provide adult education services such as teaching academic skills to people who function from beginning reading through a 12.9 functioning grade level and English as a Second Language (ESL). These services are free and provided in classes held in locations throughout each county. Additional programs such as family literacy and Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™) are offered in some counties. DSB supports an accessible kiosk for consumers at the Western Arkansas Comprehensive Workforce Center location. The kiosk provides consumers the same access to the Internet to

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

search for jobs as a sighted person seeking services from the workforce center. DSB provides training to workforce center staff and clients on the use of the kiosk.

Workforce Delivery System Services - The Western Arkansas Comprehensive Workforce Center offers the full array of career services outlined in WIOA 134(c)(2) for unemployed and underemployed jobseekers. Basic career services are available at all service locations throughout Western Arkansas. The comprehensive center has computers, printers, copiers, printed resources, and staff to assist jobseekers. Many of the services, including Arkansas Job Link and Discover Arkansas Labor Market Information Portal, are accessible through the internet via computer, smart phone, or tablet. Arkansas Job Link is the state job matching system and the virtual one stop shop where Arkansans can centralize all their career search activities. It allows jobseekers to self-enter resumes and job search anytime. Arkansas Job Link also provides access to a toolbox of job search assistance links, including career exploration, training resources, self-marketing tools, unemployment insurance information, and additional job banks. It also has a built-in event calendar that communicates upcoming hiring events, job fairs, and other workforce activities. The Western workforce area is part of the development team working with FutureFit AI on the revamp of the Ready For Life web based platform to create a seamless virtual workforce entry point for job seekers in the state of Arkansas. The program team is working in concert with the developer and other local areas to make this a tool that minimizes duplication for staff and end users to create quicker turn times on entry to services and exits to successful workforce engagement.

Discover Arkansas LMI Portal allows jobseekers to make informed data-driven career decisions. This labor market system provides a wide variety of local and regional labor market services, such as labor trends, statistics, economics, demographics, salaries, and employer data. It allows jobseekers to set up a personal page for their career exploration data to be readily accessible. Basic career services also extend beyond the virtual world. After the initial assessment customers, as appropriate, may be provided with direct linkages to additional workforce activities, including multiple education and training opportunities across the workforce delivery system through partner referrals. The workforce center has representatives available from most of the partners.

Jobseeker Services - The Western Arkansas Comprehensive Workforce Center offers a full range of activities to prepare jobseekers to meet the needs of today's workplace. Services offered aid jobseekers with soft skills and technical training assistance employers desire and need in the modern labor pool. These services include job search assistance, job referral, placement through Title 1-B Provider, Adult Education Centers, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Wagner-Peyser, and Career Readiness Assessment and Certification, occupational skills assessment from the same as well as 2 & 4- year institutions in the region. These services are driven by the demand occupations of the area based on information validated through sector partnerships. Labor exchange services provide labor market information to the individuals seeking services. The information is regularly updated and includes information on local, regional and national labor markets. Also provided is information such as job vacancies, skill requirements for jobs, in-demand occupations and related earning potential, and opportunities for advancement in those occupations. The state and Western Arkansas

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

Workforce Development Area partners are members of the America's Job Link Alliance for job matching. Jobseekers, as well as employers, utilize this database for employment purposes. Arkansas Job Link provides self-service, case management, fiscal management, reporting, and more.

Career Services – Basic career services provided are outreach, intake and orientation, initial assessment, labor exchange services, eligibility determination, program referral, performance and cost information, information on unemployment insurance, financial aid information, and follow-up services. This allows the One-Stop and partners to ensure the appropriate services are offered for individuals to obtain or retain employment. These services include Individual Employment Plan (IEP), Individual Service Strategy (ISS), career planning and counseling, comprehensive assessment, occupational skills assessment, short-term prevocational services, internships, and work experience, which work with transitional jobs and industry partnerships. Workforce preparation, out-of-area job search, English language acquisition, and financial literacy are also available.

Specific services include adult basic skills and occupational interest assessment, career development facilitation, career readiness preparation and certification offered and complimented between partners based upon program criteria. Pre-apprenticeship and Apprenticeship opportunities are supported by the local workforce delivery system through referral among core partners and educational institutions. Adult Education Centers, Title 1-B, Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Division of Services for the Blind provide other services such as English literacy, citizenship instruction, financial and health literacy services based upon the client's system entry point and needs.

Career Pathways Initiative aligns services with the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Department of Human Services, Adult Education, community and faith-based organizations, and other programs to ensure that barriers are overcome, and that employment and educational needs are met without duplication of services. The career pathway approach is a paradigm shift in how we prepare individuals for work and lifelong learning. It reorients existing education and workforce services from myriad disconnected programs to a structure that synchronizes employers' workforce needs with individuals' education and training needs.

Training Services - Typical career services are not always enough to enable job seekers to obtain self-sufficient employment. In some instances, formal training is required such as General Education Diploma (GED) preparation, skills testing, basic education services and digital literacy. Arkansas Workforce Centers and Area partners offer multiple training services such as occupational skills training, on-the-job training (OJT), registered apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeship programs, incumbent worker training, skill upgrading and retraining, entrepreneurial training, adult education and family literacy activities. The National Apprenticeship Training Foundation and the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalitions hosted a regional apprenticeship meeting for the Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area. This meeting focused on aligning the enrollment process and eliminating barriers between workforce delivery system partners to increase referrals to apprenticeship programs. Other services provided by the region's workforce delivery system are training services funded through WIOA programs, Pell Grants, partner programs, and state and local grants which the

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

program assists participants in obtaining. To improve employability, the local area follows all federal and state guidelines as they pertain to implemented programs. Through multiple initiatives and projects, the region is focusing training and career development activities on sector strategies and demand sector partnerships. These round tables will also define career pathway development.

Arkansas Promoting Readiness of Minors on Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) was a research project, completed in 2018, open to youth ages 14 to 16 who currently receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. For 1000 youth, PROMISE provided additional services to youth and their families to support their education and career goals. Services included intensive case management, two paid competitive work experiences, education and employment training and support for youth and families, health and wellness training, and benefits counseling. The region participated in the program and provided the work experience opportunities in the local communities. Students were placed in appropriate career fields for the required number of hours.

At the state level, the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) is updated pursuant to WIOA Sections 122 and 134. This list ensures that Arkansans can make informed decisions on training providers and programs based on accurate data including completion and placement rates, labor market information, and wage expectations. To add validation and current relevance of training to job demand the area received grants to implement sector strategies and create sector partnerships to advance the business approach to lowering unemployment and improving the prevailing wage.

Supportive Services - These services are available to eligible jobseekers to assist in obtaining or retaining employment through career or training services. Arkansas Workforce Centers offer a variety of supportive services with the Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board providing policy that outlines types, eligibility, and limits for these services. Examples of supportive services include childcare, transportation, needs-related payments, tools and equipment, uniforms, and other required clothing. In addition to WIOA-funded supportive services, local areas have developed relationships with community partners that assist with utility payments, food, shelter, and other basic needs to aid those working within the system. Supportive services are coordinated based on program eligibility, the economic need thresholds of the partner agencies, and the availability of program funds.

WIOA Title I, Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services provide supportive services. Services include transportation assistance, childcare assistance, needs related payments, and other services as the case may require, to job seekers that assist in obtaining and retaining employment. Through assessments and evaluations, Career Planners determine the needs of each participant and create an Individual Employment Plan or Individual Service Strategy to address the identified barriers. Transportation assistance is provided once client need is established in the form of a reimbursement or contracted public transit, when available. Day care assistance is provided through vouchers to state approved childcare and adult care facilities agencies. Referrals to partner agencies are made to ensure the participants are receiving the optimal services to meet the individual's need. This process is facilitated and

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

organized based on the local board referral policy and referral ticketing process. All partners to the system as they are added, including community-based organizations, are trained on this process by the one stop operator.

Adult Education Centers in the Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area provide referrals to Career Pathways at local community colleges, career assessments, Career Coach assistance, job readiness /soft skills training, and educational and career goal planning. The Centers aid with childcare, transportation, tuition, and materials. Pre-apprenticeship programs introduce students to specific trades and the Centers partner with area employers to provide apprenticeship opportunities. Each adult education center has a local service directory that is utilized for student support services. Supportive services such as transportation, daycare, etc. are coordinated with partner agencies through participant referrals. Adult Education coordinates with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to help provide persons with disabilities access to services, evaluations of capabilities and limitations, guidance and counseling, assistive technologies, and job placement.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Services for the Blind are mandated to research and apply all comparable benefits for services from other resources prior to using vocational rehabilitation funds. The most frequently applied comparable resources come from sources outside of the core partner agencies. Examples are tuition assistance in the form of grant funding, housing assistance from Housing and Urban Development, the individual's own medical insurance that is applied first for physical and mental restoration services. The supportive services provided by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Services for the Blind are arranged and coordinated according to an individual plan for employment which specifies a career goal and the areas that the individual may need supports to reach that goal. The supports needed are determined through assessments, evaluations, as well as the analysis and application of state and federal regulations and policies. The following supports services are assessed for eligibility determination and priority for services. Substantiality of services will be ongoing utilizing comparable services/benefits to each individual case: maintenance assistance for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs, counseling and guidance, physical and mental restoration services, rehabilitation engineering, and transportation to participate in employment or training activities. These support services are time limited and must accompany a substantial service that is directly related to obtaining or maintaining employment. The most frequently applied comparable resources come from sources outside of the core partner agencies. For example, tuition assistance in the form of grant funding, housing assistance from Housing and Urban Development, the individual's own medical insurance must first be applied to physical and mental restoration services."

Business Services - The focal point of all workforce delivery system activities is business and industry as well as overall economic development of the area. A renewed effort of business outreach is continuing as a collaboration of workforce delivery system partners develops the business outreach team. This team of cross agency individuals coordinate business visits and share pertinent data to help focus system resources on demand occupations and to layoff aversion efforts. The board is completing development of workforce delivery system portal as a shared partner resource to businesses and job seekers. Activities include access to Workforce

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

Center facilities, allowing businesses to conduct meetings, trainings, orientations, or interviews to name a few. Other services provided are assessments to measure the skills, interests and/or personality traits of potential or current employees. Business education is a service offered in the form of seminars, round tables, workshops, and focus groups. Information is available to existing or new employers pertaining to the various incentive programs or other information that provides a benefit to that business. Hiring events are customized for employers to assist in recruiting, interviewing, and hiring for open positions or upcoming needs.

Planning and hosting of job fairs event for area employers assists in recruiting, interviewing, and hiring for open positions or future needs. Job openings are posted by staff or via web-entered job orders approved by Center staff. Labor market information is available on state and local labor market conditions, industries and occupations, and characteristics of the area workforce. Information on identified skills needed by local businesses, employer wage and benefit trends, short and long-term industry and occupational projections, worker supply and demand, and job vacancies survey results are all made available to area companies. The state's Rapid Response team working with the local board provides a variety of services to businesses facing restructuring and downsizing. More information on available services is found at <http://www.arkansas.gov/esd/Programs/GDWTF/index.htm>. The services will work to design and provide specific training and retraining to aid businesses with current or future employee needs. These programs include, but are not limited to On-the-Job Training, Work Experience, Incumbent Worker Training, or some other related service based upon skills needs.

Services to Disabled Persons - Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), and the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) provide vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities. According to the September 2022 report on Disability Employment Statistics on individuals ages 16 and over from the Department of Labor Statistics (<http://www.dol.gov/odep>) nationwide there is a 23.2% labor force participation for persons with disabilities and a 67.8% participation rate for persons without disabilities. The unemployment rate of persons with disabilities is 7.3%, while the unemployment rate of people without disabilities is 3.1%.

Historically, there are significant barriers to the inclusion of people with disabilities into Arkansas's economic development strategy. ARS in partnership with the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) are leading the charge for providing targeted training and education for people with disabilities to develop the skills and abilities needed to obtain competitive integrated employment in Arkansas. It is a part of the local strategy that all partners be active participants in these efforts.

Through Governor Hutchinson's January 14, 2016 renewal of Governor Beebe's Executive Order 10-17, which was signed in 2010 all Arkansas state agencies are charged with monitoring and recruiting, training, and retaining qualified persons with disabilities in state government. It also ensures that state agencies will work towards coordinating efforts to increase employment of Arkansans with disabilities through the Employment First Taskforce.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

Strengths:

- Executive Staff – communicating and developing partnerships.
- CEOs are invested in workforce development system in the region.
- WAWDB has a very active board especially private sector participation.
- The partners in the region have a passion for change focused on improving the local workforce delivery system.
- Pursuing multiple programs to diversify opportunities to assist greater number clients both business and job seekers.
- The local board is being provided training in a variety of manners to aid them in carrying out their support role to the workforce delivery system.
- There is a strong belief in regionalism and all counties within the region are involved at some level to continually improve and support a regional approach to workforce development.
- Partners, private and public are committed long-term to the workforce development system for the region.

Weaknesses:

- Still a lack of visibility of the workforce development system.
- The system is difficult to navigate and is not user friendly especially for those not directly working in workforce.
- Programming is typically targeted and following traditional directions of past regulations and philosophies.
- Partners at federal, state and local levels are poor at promoting the services that can be provided by the local workforce development system.

Opportunities:

- It is a good time for private and public sectors to work together to evolve the future of the workforce delivery system.
- Funding challenges encourage shared resources.
- With unemployment at historic lows and the speed of technology changes it forces innovation.
- Greater political awareness of the importance of quality workforce development.

Challenges:

- There are challenges to funding due to political decisions and policies.
- Artificial intelligence is creating sweeping systematic changes.
- Speed of technology changes makes it difficult to maintain or anticipate workforce needs.
- Generational mindset differences create communication challenges that translate to program failures.
- Societal ignorance of workforce needs challenge support of funding and program sustainability.

Section 2: Strategic Vision and Goals

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

Western Arkansas has adopted the state's Vision and Goals and adapted them to the local area. The local board will strive to prepare an educated and skilled workforce through partnerships with all core partners through various means including adult education, apprenticeship, institutional training, literacy training, on-the-job training, and work experience. Further to ensure inclusion and appropriate services are provided to all citizens throughout the region aid in completing an education program or to secure and hold employment the local board has defined additional assistance barriers for youth. These are defined as an individual that lives in a remote rural area where training and employment are almost non-existence that requires proof of address; physical or mental limitations that will require a doctor statement or school IEP; is from a single parent family with proof as listed on the application; is a member of a family receiving food stamps, TEA, or SSI requiring a letter from DHS; has not held a fulltime job for more than three (3) consecutive weeks and is looking for, but unable to secure a job must be listed in the employment history on the application; is eligible for the free or reduced school lunch program must have a letter from school; lives with a grandparent(s) or caretaker other than natural parents requires family verification; lacks transportation with self-attestation.

Vision

To carry out this mission a collaboration of the workforce delivery system partners and sector industry partners will utilize job market data to align services to provide improved long-term employability of citizens within the Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area.

Mission

The Western Arkansas workforce development system will create a workforce that is well educated, skilled, and supported to ensure the long-term labor needs of the Region's business community are met. This supports Arkansas's economy, keeping it competitive in the global marketplace.

Goals

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

Goal 1 Objectives:

1. Expand employer partnerships through the support of industry engagement.
2. Identify and promote best practices (private and public) for developing and sustaining partnerships.
3. Improve communication/participation between education entities, local and state boards, government agencies, community-based organizations, and employers.
4. Increase the utilization of Registered Apprenticeship programs as viable talent development opportunities.

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

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

Goal 2 Objectives:

1. Utilize a common intake process developed by the state for jobseekers and businesses that will efficiently connect them with services available from all workforce development partner programs and identify any barriers to employment that need to be addressed.
2. Identify and utilize an integrated data system that will enable information sharing between partner agencies to provide efficient services for employers and jobseekers.
3. Develop a menu of services available at each system access point listing the services and training opportunities available through Arkansas's talent development system.

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

Goal 3 Objectives:

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

Strategic Goal 4: Address Skills Gaps

Goal 4 Objectives:

1. Participate in a statewide skills and asset analysis to determine the skills gap present and resources available to solve the skills issue.
2. Help to implement an action plan to close the basic core, technical, and soft skills gaps in Arkansas.
3. Analyze the effectiveness of currently used job readiness standards and ensure coordination between the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate program as well as other available assessment tools.

The local board will strive to prepare and educate a skilled workforce through partnerships with all core and other partners.

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

The Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board's vision and goals align with the state's and will strive to have a workforce that is well educated, skilled and working to keep Western Arkansas competitive in the global marketplace.

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

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

The Western Arkansas Workforce Development area shares the Governor's vision as illustrated in the adoption of the Governor's goals stated in section 2.1 for Economic Development and the state's Strategic Plan that defines a stronger partnership between education, economic development, and the state workforce system to attract, retain and grow Arkansas's high growth industries. The local area reinforces the Governor's goals to support employer partnerships through expanded outreach strategies and including more partner programs that can improve skills and supportive services for the developing labor pool. As stated, promotion of better communication with all partners will also support these goals with improved opportunities of co-enrollment. The local board has established a desire for local partners and support programs to utilize tools that will allow for common intake that also promote co-enrollment. The local board has identified tools and applications of technology to expand awareness of the local workforce delivery system including a central website promoting programs within the regions workforce delivery system. This site has been created to increase access to program information for both employers and job seekers. The local area uses state, local and outside sources to analyze skills needs and gaps to align available tools from system programs to minimize duplication but promote gains.

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

For participants enrolled in educational/skills training the goal is to complete training, to obtain their credential and accomplish measurable skills gain. Participants will be directed to higher paying jobs with a livable wage focused to ensure higher retention rates at program exit. For participants receiving basic and individualized career services the same goal applies. The board has an intensified focus on business engagement to ensure job training aligns with job demand. This will be evaluated by business participation and lowered unemployment numbers. Better development of the local workforce delivery system's business engagement is necessary; however, this will improve with regional industries through sector partnerships.

Section 3: Local Area Partnerships and Investment Strategies

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

- A. A description of the local workforce development system; include key stakeholders and entities associated with administrative and programmatic/service delivery functions. Examples include elected officials, advocacy groups, local workforce development board and committee structure, fiscal agent, operator(s), required program partners, and major contractors providing Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth program elements. Describe respective roles and functional relationships to one another.
- The Chief Elected Officials of Western Arkansas are comprised of 17 county judges and mayors of tier 1 cities. Daniel Rogers, Mayor of city of Paris, nominated by his peers, is

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

- the chair and signatory. These individuals are the Governor's subgrant awardees responsible for Title I funds in the WAWDA.
- The Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board meets all the WIOA requirements and is comprised of 51%+ business representation. Standing committees include the executive committee, youth committee, One-Stop and disability committee. The board is made up of appointees of the Chief Elected Officials with the responsibility to research, guide, and provide direction of the workforce delivery system in meeting the areas workforce needs.
 - Western Arkansas Planning & Development District, Inc. (WAPDD) is the appointed Administrative and Fiscal entity for the Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area. It is responsible for administration of these subgrant funds, coordinates partnerships among workforce entities, and serves as staff to the board.
 - The Title I-B program operator of the Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth programs as appointed by the local workforce board and chief elected officials is also Western Arkansas Planning & Development District. WAPDD works with business and job seeking clients providing a variety of services described under WIOA.
 - Required program partners include Title II Adult Education Providers Fort Smith Adult Education, Crawford County Adult Education, Arkansas Tech University-Ozark Campus Franklin and Logan County Adult Education, University of Arkansas Rich Mountain, Scott, and Polk County Adult Education; Title III Wagner-Peyser Arkansas Division of Workforce Services; Title IV Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and Arkansas Department of Human Services, Services for the Blind. These are some of the partners described under WIOA. They provide varied services to diverse populations within the community to provide opportunity to all individuals seeking employment and a better life.
- B. A list of all Arkansas Workforce Centers in the local area; include address, phone numbers, and hours of operation.

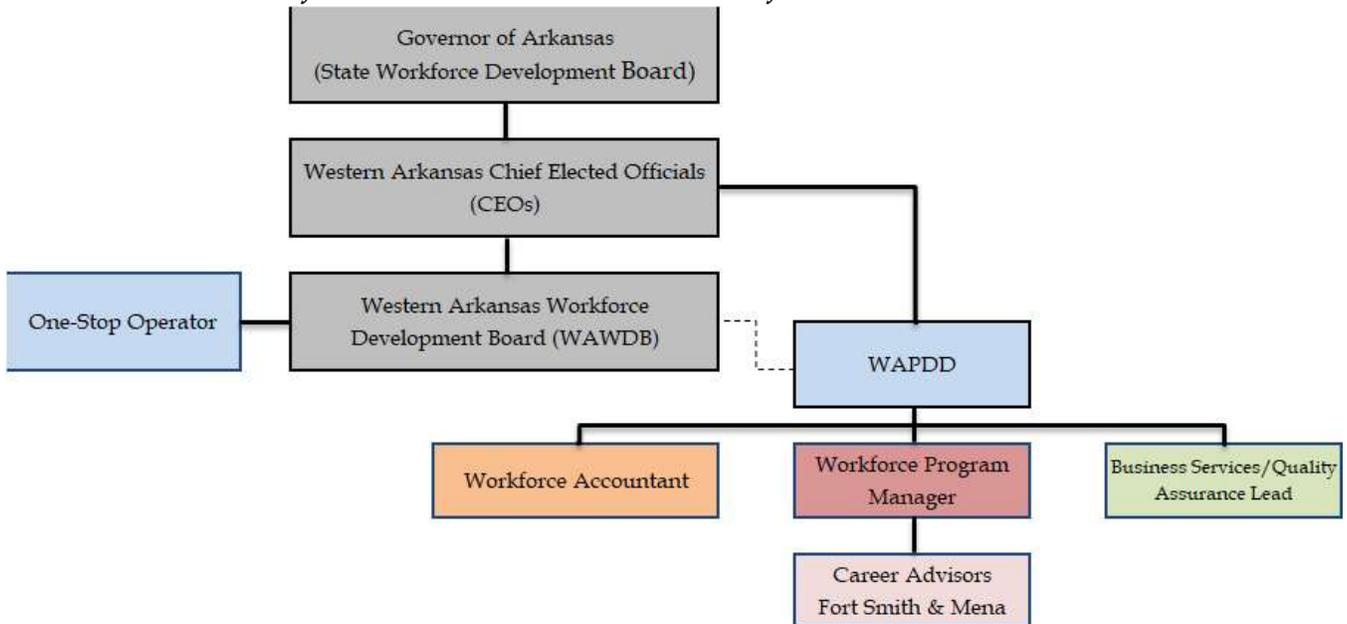
Arkansas Workforce Center at Fort Smith, 616 Garrison Ave. Room 101, Fort Smith, AR 72901. (479) 783-0231 Center is open 8:00am to 4:30pm.

Arkansas Workforce Center at Mena, 1100 College Ave., Mena, AR 71953. (479) 394-3060 Center is open 8:00am to 4:30pm.

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

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

Flowchart of the WIOA Governance and Flow of Funds in the Western Arkansas LWDA



Western Arkansas Planning Development District (WAPDD) is Fiscal Agent/Administrative Entity and provides staff to the Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board. It has been appointed as provider of Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs.

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

The Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area is a system of core and non-core partners who work towards common goals. The delivery system partners include Western Arkansas Planning & Development District providing Title I services to adults, dislocated workers, and youth, Arkansas Division of Workforce Services delivering services under Wagner-Peyser, three locations of Arkansas Division of Career and Technical Education that provide WIOA Title II services of adult education and family literacy, and Arkansas Vocational Rehabilitation Title I services as well as the Department of Human Services that provides Title I vocational services for the blind. Non-core programs that are also critical to the delivery system provide services such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker assistance, and Trade Adjustment Assistance. The delivery system coordinates services with Job Corp, AARP Foundation, and various veteran services as well. Not all providers are within each workforce center, but the board and One-Stop operator facilitate regular communication and meetings among all partners and as new technologies become available through the state or other means shares this out to the delivery system.

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

The Workforce center is expected to be a one-stop solution for job seekers and regional businesses with the overarching goal of improving community prosperity. The primary and satellite Workforce centers are committed to be a community resource and provide excellent customer service. The Western Arkansas Workforce Development system understands that to provide a complete menu of services that support the entire region, partners must collaborate on common goals. Services are delivered in a comprehensive One-Stop center, through partner connections and affiliate sites. Services are also made available virtually at these sites to insure no one walks without assistance or information to gainful employment.

Building strategic partnerships and designing innovative workforce solutions, will create a pipeline of skilled and talented workers to support regional employers. The system needs to be adaptive as to provide life changing opportunities and economic stability to the citizens we serve. Targeted employment services help job seekers via career pathways, skills updates and work-related training. These programs provided through partner specific criteria increase employability, retention and long-term earning potential. Continuous improvement will be necessary to create the seamless integration of partner services that will minimize overlapping of services. In developing the talent pipeline, the board and system also work closely with educational institutions including University of Arkansas at Fort Smith, Arkansas Tech University - Ozark campus, and University of Arkansas Rich Mountain. During this period the local area has also piloted pre-apprenticeship projects connected to registered apprenticeship programs in several of the regions high school in a partnership with the Perkin CTE Cooperatives.

To this end the Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board will provide oversight of the local delivery of systems. The local board will coordinate work with the core programs through a referral process that ensures an individual seeking services is made aware of the available core program services. The board and staff will regularly monitor planned service provisions to meet reasonable performance measures in the region. The board will also provide research and cultivate partnerships across private sector, public and non-profit organizations to ensure an understanding of industry need, which will provide jobs for seekers.

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

Workforce center staff will review the individual's needs to determine what programs may provide the appropriate services and then refer that individual. Perform outreach to targeted populations, increase referrals between system partners, coordination with colleges on career pathways. By driving sector partnerships and community roundtables, the board will assist the system partners in understanding the needs of industry in the region. Promoting the requirements shared by business partners to create curriculum in the regions education system with a focus on skills that will allow job seekers to continue on a path to livable wages and economic prosperity. These career pathways can connect through the traditional education

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

system, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities, and other non-traditional training services. Aligning services means removing partner boundaries and understanding that shared information and customers will allow the system to transform so that every Arkansan that want a job can get a meaningful job. The system will work together to overcome individual agendas to make the focus for the community's greater good.

- 3.4 *Identify and describe (for each category below) the strategies and services that are and/or will be used to:*
- A. Facilitate engagement of employers, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations, in workforce development programs in addition to targeted sector strategies.

Western is conducting business forums throughout the area, with an emphasis on small business and workforce needs. The Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board will engage targeted industries via business forum format and develop sector partnerships. The sector partnerships will define critical occupations and the skills needed for those occupations. The sector partnerships will then engage with training institutions to develop training to satisfy identified needs. The board has begun securing data to provide value to local businesses with a focus on demand industries and occupations. The board has become more educated on sector strategies through the assistance of Maher and Maher as well as the information services of the Arkansas Economic Development Institute at University of Arkansas, Little Rock. With these tools and the work of the local workforce delivery system's business outreach team the area will improve the employability of the labor pool while focusing on the needs of the region's industries. The local area has also held a business outreach training facilitated by experienced trainers from Business Retention Expansion International (BREI), University of Arkansas Extension Services, state and local practitioners.

B. Support a local workforce development system that meets the needs of businesses. Improved outreach to the regions businesses of the full array of services at the Arkansas Workforce Centers through business services, outreach, job fairs, and expos, open house at workforce centers, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and work-based learning are ways that the local workforce development system may meet the needs of businesses. The area needs will be identified through sector partnerships with demand industry partners. This endeavor requires time and trust to build, but through continued outreach, utilizing the relationships of workforce delivery system partners and regional Chief Elected Officials will net benefit to the area's business community and overall economy.

C. Better coordinate workforce development programs and economic development. The Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board will leverage resources with the Western Arkansas Planning and Development District by participating in community outreach events. They will also work with Chambers of Commerce, Arkansas Economic Development Commission staff, and economic developers throughout the region. Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board recognizes economic and workforce developments are interdependent, and that job placement activities must coincide with job creation activities. It is crucial to include the private sector in the decision-making process, and all decisions pertaining to training programs must be data driven.

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

The local area will work with our partner agencies to inform the business community on what services each of our partner agencies can provide to support, build, and maintain their workforce. The goal is to employ the strategies mentioned above like on-the-job training, apprenticeship training, educational training, support services, job fairs, and technical assistance. We do currently partner towards this end. Through Adult Education, we can ensure that the appropriate level of reading, writing, and math skills apply to entry-level position. Through Workforce and Vocational Rehabilitation, we can target advanced training requirements. Vocational Rehabilitation will also provide assistive technology technical assistance, devices, or services as appropriate.

D. Strengthen linkages between the One-Stop delivery system and unemployment insurance programs.

This may include the implementation of initiatives such as incumbent worker training programs, on-the-job training programs, work-based learning programs, apprenticeship models, customized training programs, industry and sector strategies, career pathways initiatives, utilization of effective business intermediaries, and other business services and strategies that support the local board's strategy in element 3.1. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(4)(A) & (B)].

Unemployment Insurance is co-located in all Western Arkansas Workforce Centers. Partners at the workforce centers routinely meet to discuss better methods of serving customers, including unemployed individuals.

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

The Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board (WAWDB) will continue to build partnerships with the Small Business Administration (SBA), Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC), The Innovation Hub and by leveraging the various programs promoted by the planning district to connect clients who wish to open their own business with partners who provide those specific services. By building relationships with Small Business Administration and Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center, the WAWDB will be able to assist small enterprises with their specific workforce needs. Many small and medium firms do not have the resources to train staff. The WAWDB through the Business Services team, Western Arkansas Planning and Development District and WIOA can link jobseekers to small business employment opportunities.

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

The local board will coordinate education and workforce investment activities with secondary and postsecondary education programs and activities through input at partner meetings. These meetings will allow comparison of services and identify gaps of each independent program as they relate to specific services to job seekers and businesses. By identifying opportunities to partner programs will share their resources on activities according to their specific mission thereby providing support necessary to overcome the different program shortfalls and at the same time involved partners will identify who will supply specific services to guard against

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

duplicating services. These opportunities of co-enrollment or if necessary, handoff between programs will be facilitated through partner meetings as shared need and outcomes are analyzed by to ensure the right programs are involved to secure success for participants and business clients alike. These opportunities to work together to provide a support network will also minimize the probabilities of duplicating services. There is also collaboration between the board, secondary and postsecondary education programs providing services to the youth following the same practices as allowed under WIOA.

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

All supportive services will be coordinated through the core programs as well as other resources available. Supportive services are coordinated based on program eligibility, the economic need thresholds of the partner agencies, and the availability of program funds. Title 1 Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth services provide supportive services such as transportation assistance, childcare assistance, needs related payments, and other supportive services (tools and equipment, uniforms, and other clothing), to job seekers to assist in obtaining and retaining employment. Through assessments and evaluations, Career Advisors determine the needs of each participant and create an Individual Employment Plan or Individual Service Strategy to address the identified barriers. Transportation assistance is provided once client need is established and when available. Childcare assistance is provided through vouchers to state approved childcare agencies. Needs Related Payments are provided through a stipend. Referrals to partner agencies are made to ensure the participants are receiving the optimal services to meet the individual's need.

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

Adult Education provides referrals to Career Pathways at local community colleges, career assessments, Career Coach assistance, job readiness /soft skills training, and educational and

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

career goal planning. Career Pathways assists with childcare, transportation, tuition, and materials. Each adult education center has a local service directory that is utilized for student support services. Supportive services such as transportation, daycare, etc. are coordinated with partner agencies through participant referrals. Adult Education and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services partner to help provide individuals with disabilities access to services, diagnosis and evaluations of capabilities and limitations; guidance and counseling; assistive technologies; and job placement.

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

Wagner-Peyser staff and the Adult/Dislocated Worker and Youth provider staff are co-located in all the Workforce Centers, which simplifies the process. Central to WIOA is the integration of service delivery among multiple workforce and talent development programs. Western has strong partnerships among state agencies, community colleges, economic development, and community-based organizations. A priority of the local board and central to the implementation of the strategic plan is to prevent and eliminate duplication across programs and align core programs.

Alignment of core and optional programs are executed via the following strategies:

- **Reflect Robust Partnerships** – Reflect the establishment of robust partnerships among partners. The One-Stop operator facilitates an integrated, co-located partnership that seamlessly incorporates services of the core partners and other workforce center partners. They have regular partner meetings.
- **Organize Service by Function** – Organize and integrate services by function (rather than by program); when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating staff communication, capacity building and training efforts. Functional alignment includes having workforce center staff that is cross-trained to serve all customers seamlessly (including target populations) by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with the purpose, scope and requirements of each program.

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

A function of local workforce boards, identified under section 107(d)(11) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), is to coordinate local workforce activities with education and training providers, including providers of adult education and literacy activities under Title II of WIOA. The coordination of education and training activities includes the review of applications for providing adult education and literacy activities submitted to the Division of Career and Technical Education, Adult Education Division for funding under Title II. Local board review of Title II applications is to ensure that applications for providing adult education and literacy activities are consistent with local workforce board plans (WIOA, 107(d)(11)(B)(i)(I)). If a local workforce board determines that an application is not consistent

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

with the local workforce board plan, the local workforce board shall make recommendations to the eligible provider that “promote” alignment of the application to the local plan (WIOA, 107(d)(11)(B)(i)(II)). Local workforce boards are not responsible for approving or denying applications submitted under Title II of WIOA. However, they are expected to evaluate the extent to which an application submitted under Title II addresses the requirements of the local plan developed in accordance with WIOA (WIOA, 108(b)(13)).

The board committee received the application on February 28th 2017. Each committee member independently reviewed and scored the 5 applications received from the Arkansas Division of Career and Technical Education. The committee met on March 6th, 2017 to discuss the merits of each application per the provided rubric and a consolidated score was given. The committee presented the information to the Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board minus those representing an applicant on March 8th, 2017. The consolidated score sheets were submitted to the Arkansas Division of Career and Technical Education.

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

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

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

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

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

- ✓ Healthcare, emerging and ongoing
- ✓ Construction Trades, emerging
- ✓ Advanced Manufacturing, emerging and ongoing
- ✓ Retail and Hospitality, exploring
- ✓ Transportation and Logistics, emerging

Early in 2015 a committee met to begin forming a partnership in healthcare. There was limited success with contact made with one local hospital. The limited data available hampered further meetings. There is now a partnership of local care centers participating in outreach and training entry level clients as CNAs. Several are now participating in an exploratory opportunity with apprenticeship in this occupation and have begun discussions of career pathways. This effort, started in early 2019 and carried into 2020, was based on data and analysis the board received from the Arkansas Economic Development Institute (AEDI) in 2018. Opportunities with ATU-Ozark have been discussed as a coordinated effort with Adult Education and Mercy hospital to meet a similar need. Efforts will be made Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine to offer training and resources to meet the health occupation needs in Western Arkansas.

Several board members are working to stimulate partnerships in advanced manufacturing. This is also a sector in need of skilled labor though the demand is there the job growth is low and data is very limited. There have been round table meetings of manufacturers initiated by the business outreach team in coordination with economic development agencies. Discussions continue to seek solutions to the sector partner's needs. A successful pilot program of apprenticeship with a small manufacturer was provided through a partnership of Adult Education and Title I. A second program is currently underway started in fall 2019 with Simmons Foods creating a standard program of development while setting a baseline for future growth.

Transportation and logistics are an ongoing effort with the local institutions of higher education at the forefront. Programs have been designed with input from local companies like USA Truck and ArcBest to help fulfill current and future needs particularly in CDL certification.

The board is still exploring the needs of the restaurant, hospitality, and retail trades. Though these are typically low wage, entry positions there is evidence that new entrants to the workplace gain opportunities to advance and even base skills that translate or allow access to unrelated fields. With living wage and economic stability being regional initiatives options like apprenticeship, on-the-job training, and work experience may be an option pursued by the local system.

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

There is a substantial amount of evidence that the construction trades are suffering due to limited skilled candidates. Representatives of the board have met several times with construction sector partners to discuss needs and potential solutions through coordinated efforts of public and private organizations. Apprenticeship has been used as a connecting tool with local contractors. This has allowed for recruitment of new employees into career fields of electrical and mechanical trades including clients with barriers.

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

The board currently leverages and has oversight of funding outside WIOA Title I. Additional funding includes National Emergency Grants that focus on community recovery from events like disastrous weather or a significant layoff. Department of Labor Discretionary Grants provides support to initiate innovative projects like those that bring value to industry to collaborate on workforce development. The Promoting Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income (PROMISE) Grant served youth with disabilities receiving Supplemental Security Income providing them with the experience to work and learn skills employers value. The intent of this experience was that employing people equals employment outcomes. This grant ended in September of 2018. The region has launched two apprenticeship initiatives under AAPI and AREA grant funding and intends to continue to promote the expansion of apprenticeship in Western Arkansas. Programs underway at this time have been developed to share out to other areas of the state that have interest in apprenticeship expansion. Leverage resources include WAPDD community and economic development funds for joint projects such as career center development in Logan and Sebastian Counties. With a more holistic community approach, the workforce delivery system will look to partner with community outreach organizations such as Project Restore Hope, The Hope Campus and Antioch Youth and Family Mission. We will also apply for future opportunity grants as they become available.

Section 4: Program Design and Evaluation

- 4.1 *Describe the One-Stop delivery system in the local area including:*

A. The local board's efforts to ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services, including contracted service providers and providers on the eligible training provider list, and ensure that such providers meet the employment needs of local employers, workers and jobseekers. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(6)(A)]

The board ensures continuous improvement by monitoring of contracted service providers and review and evaluation of eligible training providers and applications closely to ensure that the training provided is meeting the needs of employers and that employers are hiring from those training programs, additionally meeting with the educational institutions to ensure needs are understood and conveyed on an ongoing basis. The board will also use a report created by the Arkansas Research Center for the Division of Workforce Services pursuant to Act 852 of 2105 which provides Employment and Earnings Outcomes for Arkansas graduates of state supported higher learning institutions

<http://dws.arkansas.gov/News/PDF/Act%20852%20Economic%20Security%20Report.pdf>

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

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

Two Workforce Centers cover the six counties that make up the workforce development area. Access to a Center may be limited in very remote areas. In these cases, staff will travel to work with participants and employers on an as needed basis. Arkansas Job Link is the state's technology system that allows participants and employers to access many services on a self-serve basis as well as in Centers. As technology continues to evolve, Western will continue to utilize it to reach out and serve participants and employers alike. As needed, the Arkansas Mobile Workforce Unit is available. The board is finalizing the development of a workforce delivery system portal utilizing the most current web technologies for ease of use by business and job seeking customers.

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

The Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area will comply with WIOA section 188 by ensuring accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology, and materials for persons with disabilities by providing staff training and support by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and Services for the Blind. Periodic monitoring and reports to the local workforce board will be directed by the Services to Persons with Disabilities committee to ensure compliance. Western Arkansas Workforce Centers provide the magnification software MAGic and Jobs Access with Speech (JAWS). JAWS computers are designed for visually impaired individuals to gain access to job services. These systems are available in both comprehensive and affiliate sites.

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

The required partners for the Western Arkansas Workforce Delivery Area are Adult Education, Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services), DWS - Employment Services, and Arkansas Rehabilitation. Arkansas Community Corrections has been a significant partner in the Western area by providing referrals through the Alternative Sentencing Program. Western has two (2) one-stop centers located at 616 Garrison Ave, Fort Smith, AR and 1000 College, Mena, AR that host several of these partners and many of the local workforce delivery system services are available via partner websites.

Adult Education provides many services to assist individuals in preparation for employment, such as: GED, TABE, WAGE certification, CRC certification, pre-employability skills training, and ESL classes. These services are available in Fort Smith at 501 S 20th, Mena at 1100 College, Van Buren at 301 Mt. Vista Blvd, and Ozark at Highway 23 N.

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth provide services to individuals through basic career services, individualized career services, and training services. Title I assist clients in paying for training costs, as well as supportive services to alleviate barriers to employment. Services are available at both one-stop centers and at 1109 S 16th in Fort Smith.

Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) provides employment services through Unemployment Insurance and Job Services for those individuals working towards re-entry into the workforce. DWS also provides Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) to help decrease the burden of living expenses. These services are available at both one-stop centers.

Arkansas Rehabilitation offers services to people with disabilities and provides them with the appropriate accommodations to be successful in the workforce. They also provide training assistance to those who are seeking an education and qualify for their services. The offices of ARS are located at 400 Rogers Ave., suite C, Fort Smith with some services available at the one-stop centers by appointment.

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

Our local area advocates and supports an integrated information system at the state and local level that would allow entities that carry out core programs to better coordinate service delivery for mutual customers and cross program referrals. Currently, all DOL-funded partner programs utilize Arkansas Job Link (AJL) as a technology platform. The state is exploring information technology options that will assist in the transitioning to an integrated common intake component which acts as the front end to the state's workforce programs. Until such an option exists, our workforce center staff maximizes the utilization of currently available technology to consolidate, streamline services and enhance the overall customer experience.

Western Arkansas intends to participate with partners as integrated case management systems are developed that insure secure customer service throughout the customer's interaction with the integrated system. The area seeks to utilize systems allowing information collected from customers at intake to be captured once. Customer information is properly secured in accordance with personally identifiable information guidelines, and facilitated as appropriate, with the necessary memoranda of understanding or other forms of confidentiality and data sharing agreements, consistent with federal and state privacy laws and regulations. Data, however, would be shared with other programs, for those programs' purposes, within the workforce delivery system only after the informed written consent of the individual has been obtained, where required.

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

The local board follows the WIOA Act in determining the type of employment and training activities that may be provided to adults and dislocated workers. Through coordinated efforts of the area partner's business outreach team, college campuses, and other eligible training providers listed on the Arkansas Consumer Report System the region has sufficient training

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

providers available to meet the needs of the participants. Basic Career services and Individualized Career Services, Work Experience, On-the-Job Training, Registered Apprenticeship, partner with the schools for occupational skills, provide supportive services such as transportation, housing and childcare, Individual Training Account's, job search, labor market information, career counseling.

Examples of industry outreach and interaction are illustrated through the specialized training University of Arkansas, Fort Smith created to provide unique training to workers laid-off after the Whirlpool plant closure in Fort Smith. Participants were offered training in modern manufacturing skills with a curriculum established from request of local industry leader. ATU-Ozark establishes skills certification training based upon request from industries in need of qualified labor. Cooperative efforts of the region's Adult Education Centers and the Building Association have created apprenticeship-training opportunities in demand construction trades. These are examples of recent efforts. The sector partnerships which are now being built to establish a stronger bond with the region's businesses will allow the area to provide a business demand approach to help put more participants to work quicker while solidifying the economic base at the same time.

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

Rapid Response is an early intervention designed to coordinate transitional services at the earliest point possible for employers and workers affected by mass layoffs or plant closure. Rapid Response works closely with the local workforce development board and local elected officials in adversely affected areas to ensure that dislocated workers receive program information and services. More program information is available at the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services <http://www.arkansas.gov/esd/Programs/GDWTF/index.htm> .

The Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force is responsible for the statewide rapid response and layoff aversion activities. Immediately upon receiving notice of a closure or workforce reduction, the Task Force contacts company officials. A community meeting is scheduled with elected officials and business leaders to create action plans to assist both the community and dislocated workers. To avoid duplication and confusion, local Arkansas Workforce Center staff does not initiate contact with an employer regarding a layoff without first speaking with the Task Force Coordinator.

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

The Task Force Coordinator also serves as the liaison to the local chambers of commerce in the area. Information is provided to them about the affected workers, including their occupations and their educational and skill levels. The local Arkansas Workforce Center staff builds on the services provided through the Governors Dislocated Worker Task Force by providing information and services to the affected employees.

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

Dislocated workers are given a full array of services through the Arkansas Workforce Center partnership and community organizations.

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

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

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

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

The Western Arkansas local area operates under an umbrella MOU including most partners and agencies listed in the following agencies. As additional agencies may be included, they will be recommended to join the existing MOU or be required to participate under a separate MOU. Within the elements where not directly identified, services are provided by the Title I-B program provider, WAPDD.

WIOA Youth Program Elements

	Element	Implementation
1.	<p><u>Tutoring, study skills training and instruction leading to high school completion, including dropout prevention strategies.</u> Dropout prevention strategies can include, but are not limited to, placement in an alternative secondary school services setting, facilitating involvement of families and community, taking an individualized approach based on youth's individual needs.</p>	<p>Title I and ARS provide services on-line coursework, one-on-one instruction, peer-to-peer interaction, or in a group setting. By referrals to partners providing educational services and the use of on-line tutorials. The primary goal of local WIOA youth programming is to ensure youth completion of a High School Diploma. When this is not possible the local system refers individuals to the adult education program closest to their home. The primary centers are located in Fort Smith, Van Buren, Ozark and Mena with secondary sites in Booneville, Paris and Waldron.</p>

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

2.	<p><u>Alternative secondary school services</u> which offer specialized, structured curriculum inside of the public-school system which may provide work, study and/or academic intervention for students with behavior problems, physical/mental disabilities, who are at risk of dropping out, and/or who are institutionalized or adjudicated youth. <u>Or, dropout recovery services</u> through Adult Education facilities which allow youth to gain their High School Equivalency Diploma.</p>	<p>WIOA youth programs will work closely with alternative schools, AE programs, and Literacy Councils throughout the Western Arkansas Region. Alternative schools, like Future School in Fort Smith and Belle Point Center, a part of the Fort Smith School System are local sources for referrals of eligible WIOA Youth participants as their services become available. Job Corps system operated throughout the state is connected to the local one-stop system. WIOA youth services are designed to complement activities occurring within alternative schools. The primary goal is for the youth to obtain their high school diploma or its equivalency.</p>
3.	<p><u>Paid and unpaid work experiences</u>, including internships and job shadowing; are short-term, planned, structured learning experiences that occur in a workplace and are focused on career exploration and the development of work readiness skills. The primary purpose of work experiences is to expose youth to the requirements of work and to employer's expectations. An employer may benefit from the work done by a youth, but the primary benefit must be to the youth.</p>	<p>Work opportunities with an emphasis on jobs in in-demand and emerging industries are coordinated by ARS and Title I. These opportunities will not be limited to just not-for-profit entities. These placements target individual youth interests and goals with the goal of introducing the youth to the field they wish to pursue.</p>
4.	<p><u>Occupational skills training</u> constitutes an organized program of study that provides specific vocational skills that lead to proficiency in performing actual tasks and technical functions required by certain occupational fields at entry, intermediate, or advanced levels. These include programs that lead to the attainment of a certificate or credential, participation in Job Corps, apprenticeship programs, and training programs that provide skills necessary to enter or advance in a specific occupation.</p>	<p>Enrollment into programs that provide recognized degrees, certifications, or marketable skills for in-demand and emerging occupations. We use local colleges and universities surrounding our area as well as utilize apprenticeship opportunities that best fit with the youth's specific goal(s) in mind.</p>
5.	<p><u>Education offered concurrently with workforce preparation and training for a specific occupation</u> – an integrated education model using workforce preparation activities, basic academic skills, and hands-on occupational skills training to assist youth with their goals.</p>	<p>The combination of several previously mentioned elements are provided to make a customized plan for the participant. These elements include #s 2,3, and 4 to create an integrated and customized education plan to meet the individual youth's needs.</p>
6.	<p><u>Leadership development opportunities</u>, which include community service and peer-centered activities that encourage responsibility, employability, and other positive social behaviors. Examples include community volunteering, peer mentoring or tutoring, character education, citizenship education, including how and why to vote, serving on a youth council, community or advocacy organization board, leadership training consisting of how to work in a team, how to run meetings, diversity training, and life skills training such as parent education, financial education, goal setting and conflict resolution.</p>	<p>Participation in community service-learning projects, peer centered activities, teambuilding, life-skills training, healthy lifestyle choices provided by Title I, Adult Education and Literacy Council. Pre-Employment Transition Program is offered through ARS. DSB to provide soft skills training with a focus on social behaviors to enhance the development of employment skills fostering the knowledge and growth of independent living skills, communication, and interpersonal skills prompting an understanding of employer expectations related to timeliness and performance on the job. ARS will provide</p>

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

		or coordinate services to students with disabilities to the Youth Leadership Forum designed to foster leadership skills.
7.	<u>Supportive services</u> to enable an individual to participate in WIOA Youth program activities. These may include, but are not limited to, housing, meals, medical care, day care, transportation, school related supplies, training related supplies, etc.	DHS, TEA/TANF and Title I offer assistance with transportation, childcare, clothing, supplies, and related needs. ARS and DSB can also arrange Supportive services related to the employment goal of the individuals. Referrals to Antioch Consolidated Association to assist individuals in response to food insecurity.
8.	<u>Adult mentoring</u> for a duration of at least 12 months; this service may occur during program participation or during the Follow-up period. Adult mentoring is a one-to-one supportive relationship between an adult and a youth that is based on trust. High-quality adult mentoring programs include an adult role model who builds a working relationship with a youth and who fosters the development of positive life skills in youth.	Referral to community, faith based, and other organizations to provide one-on-one encouragement, confidence, employability, self-determination and direction. Youth in program element #3 may receive Adult Mentoring from an employee of the work site as illustrated in job site agreements. Employers sponsoring Registered Apprenticeship programs can likewise mentor WIOA eligible youth hired as apprentices.
9.	<u>Follow-up services</u> include activities after completion of participation to monitor youths' success during their transition to employment and further education and to provide assistance as needed for a successful transition. Follow-up services must be provided for not less than 12 months after obtaining employment and/or completion of participation.	Frequent interaction, including guidance and counseling, support services, and other assistance for at least 12 months after completion of services as required by agency under WIOA. These services will be utilized to ensure continued success in employment or gaining a secondary or post-secondary program. These services will be made available as long as the youth requests and needs them.
10.	<u>Comprehensive guidance and counseling</u> which may include drug, alcohol, mental health counseling. Referrals to counseling as appropriate to the needs of the individual youth.	Advisors and counselors will make referrals to qualified professionals as deemed necessary when such services cannot be provided by the local program provider. Advisors and counselors will work closely with partner programs and qualified professionals to ensure the success of youth participants.
11.	<u>Financial literacy education</u> to help youth gain the skills needed to create household budgets, initiate savings plans, and make informed financial decisions about education, retirement, home ownership, wealth building, or other savings goals. An example of financial literacy education is the FDIC approved Money Smart curriculum.	Local program provider will work with the Fort Smith Literacy Council, banks and credit unions to provide information on how to manage money, balance a check book, saving for the future etc. in workshops and/or one-on-one instruction.

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

12.	<i>Entrepreneurial skills training including the use of curriculum based training modules that teach youth the value of being skilled and applying those skills to meet a consumer need or demand; to think creatively and critically; to problem solve; how to recognize opportunities, and other skills related to entrepreneurialism.</i>	Entrepreneurial skills training is supported by activities such as partnerships with economic development agencies, like WAPDD and referrals to business development organizations. Partners may plan events with Winrock International.
13.	<i>Services that provide labor market information through career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration by using LMI data about in-demand industry sectors or occupations available in the local area.</i>	Workshops and other services that prepare youth for careers in demand and/or emerging occupations are provided by each of the core partners. Information is provided through the local one-stops or on-line systems such as the Arkansas Job Link O*Net, and LMI data. Information about in-demand industry sectors or occupations is available in areas, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services.
14.	<i>Activities that help youth prepare for and transition to post-secondary education and training includes the delivery of activities listed within the 14 WIOA program elements and other activities that provide exposure to post-secondary education options; assisting youth with placement into post-secondary education; and placement into training opportunities such as apprenticeships and occupational skills training.</i>	Individual guidance and counseling, including career pathway discussion; assistance with applications for FAFSA; and referral to enrollment and career counseling services at post-secondary institutions are provided by ARS, DSB, Adult Education and Title I. The region has three (3) local public institutions of ATU-Ozark, UA Fort Smith, and UA Rich Mountain.

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

The local board will continuously monitor program to ensure compliance with the laws and performance measures are met. Board members are continually working to improve their knowledge and understanding of WIOA and the part they play to ensure the integrity and sustainability of the local workforce delivery system. Policies and procedures regularly reviewed for relevance and to maintain an adaptive system to meet local workforce needs. The board assist in research and analysis of the economic conditions, knowledge and skills needs, and the resources necessary to provide a quality workforce in the region. The members participate in board retreats and training activities to remain knowledgeable and current on workforce development activities essential to respond to changing industry needs.

PowerNotes, LLC facilitator Mary Ann Lawrence worked with the local board at a retreat on March 14, 2020, at the Wilkinson Pavilion in Greenwood, AR. Members continued training to deepen knowledge of WIOA and their role in the workforce delivery system. The 2020-2023 plan was a focus and discussion around a more in-depth approach to performance management. The board discussed dashboards and scorecards to drive performance as well as the creation of a performance committee. The board committed to continued training to ensure continual improvement of the knowledge and skills of the board to assist the local workforce development process and to the ability to adapt to changing economic conditions. Using training tools provided by DOL and other outlets to educate board and CEOs including

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

bringing workforce and development experts in to facilitate continuous improvement and learning opportunities on the latest effective practices. Board members also give their personal time to attend workforce development related conferences with staff to network and participate in workshops sharing new practices with the full board and committees.

- 4.6 *Describe how training services will be provided in accordance with WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(G), the process and criteria for issuing individual training accounts. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(19)]*
Training services will be provided to eligible participants and will include on-the-job training, work experience, apprenticeship, classroom training, customized training or incumbent worker training.

The individual training accounts (ITA) system is used by participants who are eligible for training services and choose to attend training. A Career Advisor will work with the participant to determine their financial and training needs. The individual selects the course of study from the eligible training provider list. The individual must have made application and have received determination from other funding sources and present the award letter to the career specialist to show the monetary amounts of unmet financial need. They must also present a statement of how much the family will be able to contribute to the cost of the training. Consideration of all available funds, excluding loans, will determine the person's overall need for WIOA funding. The ITA may be used to cover expenses for tuition, books, fees, supplies, and/or tools. Employment/Training Advisors will make sure that there is no duplication of services.

The amount of monies available from all sources, the financial status of the family, and the potential of the applicant prior to a determination of qualification are also taken into consideration. If approved, the ITA is completed by the career coach. The Eligible Training Provider bills the WIOA Program each semester. ITA's may be adjusted up or down based upon case necessity. ITA's are not issued if the training program is not on the Arkansas Job Links (AJL) eligible training providers list.

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

The projected employment opportunities list is available to the customers for them to select a training program that is in demand. The Eligible Training Providers list is available online in all workforce centers. Participants approved for training through the ITA system must choose one of the approved programs to receive an ITA. Contracts may be used if it reflects a training program that is in demand.

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

All training providers will complete an online electronic application through the automated Arkansas Job Links (AJL). All training must be directly linked to employment opportunities either in the local area or in an area to which an individual is willing to relocate. Training for a

participant that is paid by WIOA funds must be on the Projected Employment Opportunities List for the state or local area.

To be included on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), providers must submit an electronic application to the local board for their approval. The providers and accepted training they offer are screened annually based upon the occupation demand list agreed upon by the state and Western's board annually. The board will continually seek out training providers and programs based upon sector partnership recommendations as these partnerships are established. The board and system partners will also work one-on-one with companies seeking specialized training to grow in the region. The board is procuring services from Maher and Maher to assist in developing Sector Partnerships with demand industries/occupations. It is also procuring services, which can provide data, and analysis information that is more current on a county-by-county basis. This information will be processed and compared to the educational institutions in the region to evaluate future needs in training and services to meet demand of sector partners.

Adult Education can negotiate employer specific training as it relates to services available within Adult Education's capabilities. This includes adult basic education and adult secondary education courses. Adult Education can accommodate such employer demands by providing courses on site at the employer's location, providing specific on-demand basic education courses, providing flexible class schedules, assessments, etc. These services will be negotiated between the employer and Adult Education Director.

Section 5: Compliance

- 5.1 *Describe the replicated cooperative agreements, as defined by WIOA 107(d)(11), in place between the local board and the Vocational Rehabilitation programs operated in the area with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to persons with disabilities and to other individuals, such as cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers, and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration, and coordination. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(14)]* Interagency agreements typically are memoranda of understanding. These will be developed by the state Transition Roundtable Policy Committee as part of the Workforce Certification document.

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

- Provision of staff training and technical assistance regarding the availability and benefits of, and information on eligibility standards for, vocational rehabilitation services
- The promotion of equal, effective, and meaningful participation by persons with disabilities in workforce investment activities in the state through the promotion of program accessibility, the use of nondiscriminatory policies and procedures, and the provision of reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and services, and rehabilitation technology, for persons with disabilities

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

- Use of information and financial management systems that link all components of the statewide workforce development system, that link the components to other electronic networks, including nonvisual electronic networks, and that relate to such subjects as employment statistics, and information on job vacancies, career planning, and workforce innovation and opportunity activities; use of customer service features such as common intake and referral procedures, customer databases, resource information, and human services hotlines
- Establishment of cooperative efforts with employers to facilitate job placement
- Carry out any other activities that the designated state unit and the employers determine to be appropriate; identification of staff roles, responsibilities, and available resources, and specification of the financial responsibility of each component of the statewide workforce investment system regarding paying for necessary services (consistent with state law and Federal requirements)
- Specification of procedures for resolving disputes among such components.

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

The local workforce board will assist in facilitating cooperation among the delivery system partners and their involvement in these agreements. The rehabilitation services committee will also provide oversight and report to the Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board any deficiencies in services among the partners. The board will work with partners to overcome issues and any issues they are unable to resolve will be forwarded to the state workforce board for further assistance.

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

The Western CEO's have appointed the Western Arkansas Planning & Development District, Inc. as the administrator and fiscal agent for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Dennis Williamson, Director of Workforce Development
Western Arkansas Planning & Development District
1109 S. 16th St, Fort Smith, AR 72901
479-785-2651

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

The local board uses an Request for Proposal (RFP) or Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process to award One-Stop Operator contract as outlined in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I-B Financial, Procurement, Monitoring Policies & Procedures adopted by the board and

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

approved by the Western Arkansas Workforce Development Area Chief Elected Officials. The notice advertising the RFP or RFQ is placed in a statewide newspaper, provided to ADWS for posting to their website and on the administrative entity’s website. Additional media sources may be used. Each proposal submitted scored based on specific criteria. After the evaluation, the score of each proposal is presented to the full board. The board selects the operator based upon the specified criteria and presented to the chief elected officials for final approval. Western Arkansas Planning & Development District (WAPDD) has been appointed to provide Title I services to adults and dislocated workers by the local board and approved by the chief elected officials per WIOA regulations. At the discretion of the local elected officials, as outlined in WIOA regulations, have designated WAPDD to also provide Title I services to youth.

The following addresses conflict of interest and is outlined in the policy mentioned in the previous paragraph. Each recipient shall ensure that no individual in a decision-making capacity, including board members, will engage in an activity, including participation in the selection, award, or administration of an award or contract supported by WIOA funds if a conflict of interest, real or apparent, would be involved. Such a conflict would arise when the individual, any member of the individual’s immediate family, the individual’s partner, or an organization that employs, or is about to employ, any of the above, has a financial or other interest in the firm or organizations selected for award.

- 5.4 Describe the local area’s negotiated local levels of performance for the federal measures and their implications upon the local workforce system; attach the completed Performance Targets Template. [WIOA Sec. 108(b)(17)]

(Note: Local performance measures for each local area will be the same as the state goals.)

Western WIOA Performance Measures	Western PY18-PY9 Performance Goals
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)	
Adult	85.0%
Dislocated Worker	85.0 %
Youth	75.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)	
Adult	84.0%
Dislocated Worker	87.0%
Youth	78.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)	
Adult	\$6649
Dislocated Worker	\$7427
Credential Attainment Rate	
Adult	81.0%
Dislocated Worker	81.0%
Youth	64.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	
Adult	73.0%
Dislocated Worker	70.5%
Youth	61.0%

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

Effectiveness in Serving Employers	
Adult	Baseline
Dislocated Worker	Baseline
Youth	Baseline

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

Local and state monitoring of the fiscal agent, Title I Service Provider and One-Stop Operator will be conducted at least annually. The local board will be made aware of any issues or concerns that may arise from the monitoring. Performance reports will be presented to the board at the end of each program year for the board to approve/disapprove once sufficient data for accountability has been established by DOL and ADWS. The fiscal agent, Title I service provider and One-Stop operator shall be audited on an annual basis as required in WIOA. The board will be presented the eligible training provider list and programs as requested. The board staff is required to review and approve all acceptable programs as established annually by designated committee in cooperation of the LMI department of ADWS. The fiscal agent will ensure funds are expended timely as mandated under WIOA and is required to report variances to the board as appropriate. Service providers are expected to provide quarterly reports to the board related to the negotiated performance measures along with stories of client successes supporting performance. The one-stop operator will be reviewed annually by the board and staff utilizing available reporting tools that include contracted and regulatory requirements. Successes, improvements, opportunities and deficiencies will be reported to the one-stop committee and made available to all board members at the quarterly meeting following the review.

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

The Vision of the Arkansas Workforce Development Delivery System was shared at the March 2016 board meeting. This provided the board with overview of the Governor’s vision for the system under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

During the June 2016 meeting, the board was asked for input into the development of the local plan. At the September 2016 meeting the guidance and template from Arkansas Division of Workforce Services was shared with the board members and a request was made for input on the development of the plan. A committee was formed to work on the plan. Much of the work was performed via email and teleconference. An initial draft of the regional plan was forwarded to the board volunteers for input and review. Further CEO input has been requested at the December 2016 meeting and through review via email.

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

Workforce Center partners provided input into the plan at the ongoing partner meetings. Businesses, labor organizations, partner agencies, educators, and economic developers from the local area are all represented on the board and had the opportunity to comment.

Since that time the board or committees have met routinely and as necessary to update this plan as outlined in the Regional Plan portion in section 1.1, subsection F. A significant amount of update work was performed at the board retreat on March 9, 2019. This work was continued on March 14, 2020, along with a deeper discussion on performance.

On October 24, 2022, WAPDD and WAWDB staff facilitated workforce planning training open to all partners and the public to work on consideration for resource development and to provide continue development of staff, board members, CEOs, and community representatives in understanding the intent and scope of WIOA and employment development activities at the local level. This training was intended to provide insight and resource discovery to evaluate current activities and initiate brainstorming of innovative ideas to connect workforce development resources to those barriered to sustainable employment in the region. This included the approach of understanding business outreach to discover need and receptiveness of business partners to populations previously not considered for opportunities. Adaptions in the plan update were cultivated from that training that was funded through state discretionary funding and facilitated by an industry expert.

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

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

A public notice was run in the SW Times Record and Arkansas Democrat Gazette newspaper advising of a public comment period of 30 days starting on March 16, 2023, on the plan update. It is also available online at www.westernarkansasworks.com and at the Western Arkansas Planning & Development District office at 1109 S. 16th St., Fort Smith, AR.

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

No public comments were received.

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

No public comments were received.

5.8 *List the name, organization, and contact information of the designated Equal Opportunity Officer for each workforce center within the local area.*

Donna Scott WAPDD dscott@wapdd.org (for both centers)
Arkansas Workforce Center at Fort Smith

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

616 Garrison Ave. Room 101, Fort Smith, AR 72901
(479) 783-0231

Arkansas Workforce Center at Mena
1100 College Ave, Mena, AR 71593
(479) 394-3060

Section 6: Plan Assurances

	Planning Process and Public Comment	References
☒	6.1 The local board has processes and timelines, consistent with WIOA Section 108(d), to obtain input into the development of the local plan and provide the opportunity for comment by representatives of business, labor organizations, education, other key stakeholders, and the public for a period that is no less than 30 days.	WIOA Sections 108(d); proposed 20 CFR 679.550(b)
☒	6.2 The final local plan is available and accessible to the public.	Proposed 20 CFR 679.550(b)(5)
☒	6.3 The local board has established procedures to ensure public access (including people with disabilities) to board meetings and information regarding board activities, such as board membership and minutes.	WIOA Section 107(e); proposed 20 CFR 679.390 and 679.550
	Required Policies and Procedures	References
☒	6.4 The local board makes publicly available any local requirements for the public workforce system, such as policies, including policies for the use of WIOA Title I funds.	Proposed 20 CFR 679.390
☒	6.5 The local board has established a written policy or procedure that identifies circumstances that might present conflict of interest for any local workforce investment board or entity that they represent and provides for the resolution of conflicts.	WIOA Section 107(h); proposed 20 CFR 679.410(a)-(c)
☒	6.6 The local board has copies of memoranda of understanding between the local board and each One-Stop partner concerning the operation of the One-Stop delivery system in the local area and has provided the state with the latest versions of its memoranda of understanding.	WIOA Section 121(c); proposed 20 CFR 678.500-510
☒	6.7 The local board has written policy or procedures that ensure One-Stop operator agreements are reviewed and updated no less than once every three years.	WIOA Section 121(c)(v)
☒	6.8 The local board has negotiated and reached agreement on local performance measures with the local Chief Elected Official(s) and the Governor.	WIOA Sections 107(d)(9) and 116(c); proposed 20 CFR 679.390(k) and 677.210(b)

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

☒	6.9 The local board has procurement policies and procedures for selecting One-Stop operators, awarding contracts under WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker funding provisions, and awarding contracts for Youth service provision under WIOA Title I in accordance with applicable state and local laws, rules, and regulations, provided no conflict exists with WIOA.	WIOA Sections 121(d) and 123; proposed 20 CFR 678.600-615 and 681.400
☒	6.10 The local board has procedures for identifying and determining the eligibility of training providers and their programs to receive WIOA Title I individual training accounts	WIOA Sections 107(d)(10), 122(b)(3), and 123; Proposed 20 CFR 679.370(l)-(m) and 680.410-430
☒	6.11 The local board has written procedures for resolving grievances and complaints alleging violations of WIOA Title I regulations, grants, or other agreements under WIOA and written policies or procedures for assisting customers who express interest in filing complaints at any point of service, including, at a minimum, a requirement that all partners can identify appropriate staff contacts and refer customers to those contacts.	WIOA Section 181(c); proposed 20 CFR 683.600
☒	6.12 The local board has established at least one comprehensive, full-service One-Stop center and has a written process for the local Chief Elected Official and local board to determine that the center conforms to the definition therein.	WIOA Section 121(e)(2)(A); proposed 20 CFR 678.305
☒	6.13 All partners in the local workforce and education system described in this plan ensure the physical, programmatic and communications accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology and materials in One-Stop centers for persons with disabilities.	WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR parts 37.7-37.9; 20 CFR 652.8(j)
☒	6.14 The local board ensures that outreach is provided to populations and sub-populations who can benefit from One-Stop services.	WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR 37.42
☒	6.15 The local board implements universal access to programs and activities to individuals through reasonable recruitment targeting, outreach efforts, assessments, service delivery, partner development, and numeric goals.	WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR 37.42
☒	6.16 The local board complies with the nondiscrimination provisions of Section 188 and assures that Methods of Administration were developed and implemented.	WIOA Section 188; 29 CFR 37.54(a)(1)
☒	6.17 The local board collects and maintains data necessary to show compliance with nondiscrimination provisions of Section 188.	WIOA Section 185; 29 CFR 37.37
☒	6.18 The local board complies with restrictions governing the use of federal funds for political activities, the use of the One-Stop environment for political activities, and the local board complies with the applicable certification and disclosure requirements	2 CFR Part 225 Appendix B; 2 CFR Part 230 Appendix B; 48 CFR 31.205-22; RCW 42.52.180; TEGL 2-12; 29 CFR Part 93.100

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

☒	6.19 The local board ensures that One-Stop Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker (MSFW) and business services staff, along with the Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker program partner agency, will continue to provide services to agricultural employers and MSFWs that are demand-driven.	WIOA Section 167
☒	6.20 The local board follows confidentiality requirements for wage and education records as required by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended, WIOA, and applicable Departmental regulations.	WIOA Sections 116(i)(3) and 185(a)(4); 20 USC 1232g; proposed 20 CFR 677.175 and 20 CFR part 603
Administration of Funds		References
☒	6.21 The local board has a written policy and procedures to competitively award grants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities (or applicable federal waiver), including a process to be used to procure training services made as exceptions to the Individual Training Account process.	WIOA Section 108(b)(16); proposed 20 CFR 679.560(a)(15); WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(G); proposed 20 CFR 680.300-310
☒	6.22 The local board has accounting systems that follow current Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and written fiscal-controls and fund-accounting procedures and ensures such procedures are followed to insure proper disbursement and accounting of WIOA adult, dislocated worker, and youth program funds.	WIOA Section 108(b)(15)
☒	6.23 The local board ensures compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA through annual, on-site monitoring of each local sub-recipient.	WIOA Section 184(a)(3); proposed 20 CFR 683.200, 683.300, and 683.400-410
☒	6.24 The local board has a written debt collection policy and procedures that conforms with state and federal requirements and a process for maintaining a permanent record of all debt collection cases that supports the decisions made and documents the actions taken with respect to debt collection, restoration, or other debt resolution activities.	WIOA Section 184(c); 20 CFR Part 652; proposed 20 CFR 683.410(a), 683.420(a), 683.750
☒	6.25 The local board will not use funds received under WIOA to assist, promote, or deter union organizing.	WIOA Section 181(b)(7); proposed 20 CFR 680.850
Eligibility		References
☒	6.26 The local board has a written policy and procedures that ensure adequate and correct determinations of eligibility for WIOA-funded basic career services and qualifications for enrollment of adults, dislocated workers, and youth in WIOA-funded	Proposed 20 CFR Part 680 Subparts A and B; proposed 20 CFR Part 681 Subpart A

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

	individualized career services and training services, consistent with state policy on eligibility and priority of service.	
☒	6.27 The local board follows guidelines for determination of eligibility, determination of need, and assignment of ITA.	WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(G); Proposed 20 CFR 680.300-320
☒	6.28 The local board has a written policy and procedures that establish internal controls, documentation requirements, and leveraging and coordination of other community resources when providing supportive services and, as applicable, needs-related payments to eligible adult, dislocated workers, and youth enrolled in WIOA Title I programs.	WIOA Sections 129(c)(2)(G) and 134(d)(2); proposed 20 CFR 680.900-970; proposed 20 CFR 681.570
☒	6.29 The local board has a written policy for priority of service at its workforce centers for local workforce providers that ensures veterans and eligible spouses are identified at the point of entry, made aware of their entitlement to priority of service, and provided information on the array of employment, training and placement services and eligibility requirements for those programs or services.	Jobs for Veterans Act; Veterans' Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act; 20 CFR 1010; TEGL 10-09

Appendix B: Planning References and Resources

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

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

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

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

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

Goal 1 Objectives:

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

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

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

Goal 2 Objectives:

1. Develop a common intake process for jobseekers and businesses that will efficiently connect them with services available from all workforce development partner programs and identify any barriers to employment that need to be addressed.
2. Develop an integrated data system that will enable the sharing of information between partner agencies to more efficiently service both employers and jobseekers.
3. Promote training that leads to industry recognized credentials and certification.
4. Support transportable skill sets for transportable careers.
5. Support career pathways development and sector strategy initiatives as a way to meet business and industry needs.
6. Expand service delivery access points by the use of virtual services.
7. Develop a common business outreach strategy with a common message that will be utilized by all workforce system partners.
8. Develop a menu of services available at each service delivery access point that provides a list of the services and training opportunities available through Arkansas's talent development system.
9. Utilize customer satisfaction surveys to ensure continuous improvement of the state's talent development system.
10. Explore data sharing opportunities with non-governmental organizations that are committed partners to the state's workforce center system that will lead to improved intake, referral, and case management for customers served by multiple agencies (both public and private).

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

Goal 3 Objectives:

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

Strategic Goal 4: Address Skills Gaps

Goal 4 Objectives:

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

Western Arkansas Regional & Local Plans PY 2020-23

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

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

II. State Policy and Guidance.

State policy can be found at <http://dws.arkansas.gov/programs/workforce-innovation/>

III. Labor Market and Workforce Information.

A. Discover Arkansas

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

B. Arkansas State Plan Economic and Workforce Analysis

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

- Industries in 2012
- Job Growth in 2022
- Projected Job Growth by Workforce Development Area
- Projected Job Growth by Industry
- Percent Workforce in 2022

These data demonstrate the current makeup of the workforce by major industry, as well as projections of the number of jobs these industries will need in 2022. To the right of the visualizations are "filters" to help explore the data choosing multiple regions to compare, such as United States vs Arkansas, Arkansas vs. workforce region, or directly compare regions. The data available at

<http://arkansasresearchcenter.org/arc/index.php?cID=154> includes:

- Arkansas Occupations, Current and 2022 Projections, which includes data visualizations concerning occupations in Arkansas, both currently and projections for 2022. Occupations are listed by their Standard Occupation Code (SOC) title. The SOC system is hierarchical. SOC Major codes are the top-level occupational areas,

such as "Construction and Extraction Occupations." At the next level would be SOC Minor, one of which for the above would be "Construction Trades Workers." Finally, there is SOC Detail, such as "Stonemasons" or "Carpenters." This web tool allows users to manipulate the data by indicating the level of detail desired.

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

V. Other Resources.

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