INNOVATE
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Executive Committee

February 27, 2020
2:00 p.m.

Arkansas Division of
Workforce Services
#2 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, Arkansas

ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

AGENDA

February 27, 2020

ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

2:00 P.M.

Call to Order ..... Tom Anderson, Committee Chair

Agenda Item 1: ACTION

Approval of the WIOA State Plan ..... Kris Jones, Employment Assistance Division of Workforce Services

Cassondra Williams-Stokes, Director
Division of Services for the Blind

Announcements

Adjournment

Little Rock Workforce Center
#2 Capitol Mall – 2nd Floor Conference Room
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203

ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

For Consideration of the
Arkansas Workforce Development Board
Executive Committee

February 27, 2020

AGENDA ITEM 1: ACTION: WIOA State Plan Approval

INFORMATION/RATIONALE: In accordance with the Arkansas Workforce Development Board By-Laws, the Executive Committee shall be formed and meet as needed between the quarterly board meetings.

The Executive Committee shall have the authority of the Board to act during the interim between Board meetings but shall defer to the Board, whenever practical, action on matters of major policy implications. Executive Committee decisions will be implemented immediately and will be ratified at the next full Board meeting.

On April 11, 2019, Governor Asa Hutchinson signed the Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019. This comprehensive state government reorganization effort realigned agencies in an effort to reflect a more modern and efficient way to operate state government.

This reorganization resulted in changes related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Programs in Arkansas.

ARKANSAS WIOA STATE PLAN REVISIONS

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson embarked upon his Transformation of Arkansas State Government in early 2019. As a result, the Transformation and Efficiencies Act 2019 authorized the reduction of the number of cabinet-level agencies from 42 to 15. These cabinet-level agencies will fall under the supervision of newly-appointed Department Secretaries. This piece of state legislation went into effect on July 1, 2019 and reflects a reorganization of the workforce partner agencies in Arkansas.

Specifically, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services has become the Division of Workforce Services and incorporates the former Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and Adult Education Services. Additionally, the Division of Services for the Blind is now a stand-alone entity. Each of these entities is governed by the newly-appointed Secretary of Commerce.

The Governor has provided Transitional Authority to the new position of Secretary of Commerce. Organizational changes are to be expected in the transition period which will impact the titles of program administrators as well as Organizational Charts within the larger Department of Commerce. These changes will be included in this revised WIOA State Plan as soon as they are finalized and approved by the Secretary of Commerce or the Governor.

The changes in this revised plan reflect the new organizational structure of and relationship between the WIOA Core Partners. These changes consist of the usage of the new agency names and acronyms:

- ADWS – Arkansas Division of Workforce Services
- DSB – Division of Services for the Blind
- ARS – Arkansas Division of Workforce Services – Arkansas Rehabilitation Services
- AES – Arkansas Division of Workforce Services – Adult Education Services
- OSD – Office of Skills Development
- DOC – Department of Commerce

WIOA State Plan
State of Arkansas FY2020-2023

Overview

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines the four-year strategy for the State's workforce development system. The publicly-funded workforce development system is a national network of Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all job-seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive funding for core programs. WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training, to integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of WIOA's principal areas of reform is to require States to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Unified or Combined State Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State and fosters development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers.

Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans.

Options for Submitting a State Plan

A State has two options for submitting a State Plan — a Unified State Plan or a Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for the core programs. The six core programs are—

- the Adult program (Title I of WIOA),
- the Dislocated Worker program (Title I),
- the Youth program (Title I),
- the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program (Title II),

- the Wagner-Peyser Act program (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III), and
- the Vocational Rehabilitation program (Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).

Alternatively, a State may submit a Combined State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for WIOA's core programs plus one or more of the Combined Plan partner programs. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" (Sections II and III of this document) where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program where such planning requirements exist separately for the program. The Combined State Plan partner programs are—

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of Title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (Programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)
- Unemployment Insurance Programs (Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (Programs authorized under Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Community Services Block Grant Program (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)) *
- Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program (Programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))

* States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training

activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) and 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

How State Plan Requirements Are Organized

The major content areas of the Unified or Combined State Plan include strategic and operational planning elements. WIOA separates the strategic and operational elements to facilitate cross-program strategic planning.

- The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the State's economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the State's workforce development system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.
- The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the State's efforts to support the State's strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the State has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:
    - State Strategy Implementation,
    - State Operating Systems and Policies,
    - Assurances, and
    - Program-Specific Requirements for the Core Programs, and
    - Program-Specific Requirements for the Combined State Plan partner programs. (These requirements are available in a separate supplemental document, Supplement to the Workforce and Innovation Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements. The Departments are not seeking comments on these particular requirements).

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.* States must develop strategies that look beyond strategies for the general population and develop approaches that also address the needs of target populations.

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* Target populations include individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in WIOA Sec. 3, as well as veterans, unemployed workers, and youth.

I. WIOA State Plan Type

Unified or Combined State Plan. Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs.

Unified State Plan. This plan includes the Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program. No

Combined State Plan. This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as one or more of the optional Combined State Plan partner programs identified below. Yes

Combined Plan partner program(s)

Indicate which Combined State Plan partner program(s) the State is electing to include in the plan.

Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) No

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.) Yes

Employment and Training Programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)) Yes

Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))) No

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers Programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.)) Yes

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.) Yes

Unemployment Insurance Programs (Programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law) Yes

Senior Community Service Employment Program (Programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.)) No

Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development No

Community Services Block Grant Program (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.)) No

Reintegration of Ex-Offenders Program (Programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))] No

II. Strategic Elements

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs.

a. Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State's workforce system and programs will operate.

1. Economic and Workforce Analysis

A. Economic Analysis

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State. This must include-

i. Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

ii. Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupation

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

iii. Employers' Employment Needs

With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in 1 and 2 above, provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

The State of Arkansas is in many ways a reflection of the changes facing the nation as a whole. Despite a population size of only one percent of the nation, seven of the Fortune 500 companies are headquartered here. This list includes the largest retailer in the world (Walmart), one of the largest food producers in the world (Tyson), and a national chain of gas stations (Murphy USA). The other four companies making that list, Murphy Oil, Dillard's, Windstream, and J.B. Hunt, further demonstrate the diverse economic base of the state. Arkansas is also fortunate to be home to major operations with companies headquartered in other states such as Baxter International, Lockheed Martin, Hewlett-Packard, FedEx, Post Foods, Kimberly-Clark, and Nucor to name a few. Arkansas has been fortunate to host the creation of unique information and service provider companies, such as Acxiom, Southwest Power Pool, and the aforementioned Windstream. The Arkansas workforce is cosmopolitan, with workers from all corners of the globe that come for the opportunities available in the Natural State.

Arkansas has many natural wonders and is a popular tourist destination. However, its greatest strength is in its human capital. Arkansas continues to be a leader in the extraction of energy and minerals, timber production, and agriculture. These industries also lead to a large number of jobs in the areas of support for these industries as well as in production of value-added products such as Tyson and Murphy USA. However, as reflected in the national trend, the Arkansas economy will generate most of its revenue through service industries. Much of Arkansas is rural, and the majority of service industries are located in metropolitan areas. This creates even greater challenges for economic development in the state's rural areas. Despite the challenges, rural areas of the state continue to be home to numerous contract manufacturers as well as manufacturers of unique products.

The Arkansas Economic Commission has identified 15 targeted industries for the state: Advanced Food Manufacturing and Packaging; Aerospace/Aviation; Biosciences; Data Centers; Distribution and Logistics Services; Firearms and Ammunition; Paper and Timber Products; Regional Headquarters; Smart Grid Technologies (Power Electronics); Software Development and Data Management Services; Steel Production; Sustainable Building Products and Fixtures; Technical Support Services; Transportation Equipment Manufacturing; and Walmart Suppliers. http://www.arkansasedc.com/industries

These targeted industries represent the diversity of Arkansas enterprises, a product of the natural resources, labor force, and entrepreneurial spirit available in the state.

To prepare this report and provide 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.discover.arkansas.gov. 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.

While Arkansas's current and future industry outlook is similar to the nation, there are important areas of distinction.

Jobs by Industry 2014

Industry	**Arkansas**	**US**
Health care and social assistance	15.57	14.59
Manufacturing	14.12	9.34
Retail trade	12.47	11.77
Educational services: state, local and private	9.97	10.43
Accommodation and food services	8.91	9.66
Administrative and support and waste mgt.	5.58	6.57
Transportation and warehousing	4.89	3.56
Wholesale trade	4.27	4.46
Construction	4.22	4.70
Other services (except public administration)	4.10	4.90
Professional, scientific, and technical services	3.72	6.40
Finance and insurance	3.33	4.55
Management of companies and enterprises	2.96	1.66
Information	1.25	2.10
Real estate and rental and leasing	1.19	1.57
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	1.18	1.06
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	0.96	1.61
Utilities	0.72	0.42
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0.62	0.65

Manufacturing employs a greater percentage of Arkansas workers, 14.12 percent, than at the national level of 9.34 percent. Health Care and Social Assistance is also larger at 15.57 percent in the state compared to 14.59 percent of the nation, in part because of high poverty and obesity rates in the state. Arkansas lags the nation in the number employed in Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services, 3.72 percent to 6.40 percent, but leads the nation in Management of Companies and Enterprises, 2.96 percent to 1.66 percent. These two areas are of special interest in Arkansas because they provide some of the highest wages in the state. Arkansas also leads in the percentage of workers in Transportation and Warehousing, 4.89 percent to 3.56 percent. J.B. Hunt, the fifth leading commercial carrier in the nation, recently announced an expansion that will create over 1,000 jobs in the next few years. Despite the large role Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting play in the state, there are actually a similar percentage of Arkansas workers in those industries compared to the national level. While manufacturing and transportation play a large role in the state's economy and employ a large number of its workers, these industries are also subject to increased efficiency which can lead to fewer jobs.

While Arkansas's current workforce is somewhat similar to the nation's, there are dramatic differences between regions of the state. For example, Manufacturing industries employ a dramatically different percentage of workers across the nation, state and regions.

MANUFACTURING 2014

Local Workforce Area	**Percentage**
Southwest	25.43
Southeast	23.06
Northeast	21.29
Western	21.29
Northwest	16.19
West Central	15.68
State of Arkansas	14.12
North Central	12.37
Eastern	9.56
U.S.	9.34
Central	8.26

Local Workforce Area	Percentage
Little Rock	4.74

Within the regions, manufacturing employment as a percentage of total employment varies greatly, ranging from 4.74 to 25.43 percent. A significant percentage of workers in the Southwest area are in manufacturing. In fact, six of the regions (also Southeast, Northeast, Western, Northwest and West Central) employ a higher percent than the state. North Central and Eastern fall between the state and nation, while only Central and Little Rock have a smaller percentage of manufacturing employees than the United States. This employment swing demonstrates that each region of the state has something of a unique makeup of industries in its area, with its own challenges for meeting the needs of employers in that region.

Looking at industry projections for Arkansas and its local workforce development areas, these differences become even more readily apparent. The bubble chart below shows each of Arkansas's local workforce development areas. The size of the bubble represents the number of jobs expected to be added to those local areas by 2024. The vertical axis represents the total number of jobs in those local areas, and the horizontal axis represents the percent of growth by local area.

Total Job Growth Region

Area	Jobs 2024	No Chg	Percent 2014	Percent Change
West Central	110,815	8,952	100	8.8
Northeast	108,452	15,414	100	16.6
Western	108,539	9,378	100	9.5
North Central	72,189	7,986	100	12.4
Southeast	63,315	1,742	100	2.8
Eastern	35,235	1,441	100	4.3
Central	161,082	18,330	100	12.8
Little Rock	166,210	15,039	100	9.9

Area	Jobs 2024	No Chg	Percent 2014	Percent Change
Northwest	237,838	27,982	100	13.3
Southwest	77,891	3,577	100	4.8

The Northwest local area is projected to continue to employ the largest number of Arkansans, over 237,000, and to have robust growth of 13.3 percent. However, the Northeast local area is projected to grow at a higher rate of 16.6 percent but will employ only about 108,000 workers. The Central (12.84 percent) and North Central (12.44 percent) local areas are also projected to have job growth at rates higher than the state average of 10.25 percent, while all other local areas will have below average growth. The Southeast local area is projected to have only 2.83 percent growth in jobs. The largest city in the Southeast, Pine Bluff, declined in population by 6.6 percent between 2000 and 2010 and declined another 4.43 percent between 2010 and 2013, earning it the title of one of the "Fastest Shrinking Cities" in the nation.

A look at a specific industry sector such as manufacturing also demonstrates the different needs of employers in those local areas.

Manufacturing Job Growth Region

Area	Jobs 2024	No Chg	Percent 2014	Percent Growth
Little Rock	7,401	233	5	3.3
Central	11,910	120	8	1.0
Eastern	3,405	173	10	5.4
North Central	8,416	477	12	6.0
West Central	16,308	332	16	2.1
Northwest	35,463	1,485	16	4.4
Western	21,288	176	21	0.8
Northeast	22,431	2,627	21	13.3
Southeast	13,397	-803	23	-5.7

Area	Jobs 2024	No Chg	Percent 2014	Percent Growth
Southwest	18,667	-231	25	-1.2

While the Northwest is projected to continue to have the most workers employed in manufacturing, over 35,000, the projected growth of 4.3 percent and addition of 1,485 manufacturing jobs is less than the 13.3 percent growth and addition of 2,627 jobs in the Northeast local area. The Southeast is projected to lose 803 jobs in that sector by 2024, a decline rate of 5.7 percent.

Manufacturing in Arkansas is very diverse, with the production of guided missiles, specialty petroleum products, railcars, heavy equipment, medical supplies, recreational boats, turbine blades, steel pipe, commercial trucks, tires, etc. This is in addition to the manufacturing of food products which is in virtually every region of the state, but also varies from the production of chips and cereal products in the Northeast, poultry products in the Northwest, and beef and pork processing in the West Central local area. What manufacturers in the state need in terms of a skilled workforce varies greatly by region, and the same is true for all other industry sectors. It is important that workforce development in the state be regionally focused and centered on the industry needs in those local areas.

The industries which will have the greatest rate of growth vary some between the national and state levels.

Industry Growth 2024

Area	Industry Sector	Percentage Growth
Arkansas	Accommodation and food services	18.895
Arkansas	Administrative and support and waste mgt.	11.64
Arkansas	Construction	11.847
Arkansas	Health care and social assistance	17.99
Arkansas	Professional, scientific, and technical services	13.059
Arkansas	Real estate and rental and leasing	11.352
Arkansas	Wholesale trade	10.505

Area	Industry Sector	Percentage Growth
US	Construction	12.9
US	Health care and social assistance	19.8
US	Professional, scientific, and technical services	12.5

In this example of the industry sectors in Arkansas which are projected to have a rate of growth of 10 percent or higher, what is most striking is that Accommodation and Food Services is not a top area of growth for the nation, even though it is projected to grow 18.9 percent at the state level. Arkansas's second highest area of growth at 17.9 percent will be in Health Care and Social Assistance, and this is similar to the 19.8 percent growth at the national level.

The industries which will have the lowest rates of growth won't very much.

Industry Least Growth 2024

Area	Industry Sector	Percentage Growth
Arkansas	Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	2.34
Arkansas	Information	-2.93
Arkansas	Manufacturing	2.98
Arkansas	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	2.92
Arkansas	Utilities	1.42
U.S.	Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting	-5.5
U.S.	Information	-1
U.S.	Manufacturing	-6.7
U.S.	Transportation and warehousing	2.9
U.S.	Utilities	-8.7

The above graph shows industries where projected growth by 2024 is less than 3 percent, which will be five industries in Arkansas and at the national level. While manufacturing is projected to have a modest growth of 2.98 percent in the state, at the national level manufacturing is projected to lose jobs with a rate of -6.7 percent.

B. Workforce Analysis

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in section 3 of WIOA. This population must include individuals with disabilities among other groups** in the State and across regions identified by the State. This includes: Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. ** Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.*

i. Employment and Unemployment

Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.

ii. Labor Market Trends

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

iii. Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

iv. Skill Gaps

Describe apparent 'skill gaps'.

Population

This section analyzes the demographics of Arkansas during 2010-30. Specifically, the study focuses on age and race populations at the state level, and urban-rural populations at the metropolitan, micropolitan and non-metropolitan level. Estimates (2010-18) are based on

available data from the US Census Bureau and projections (2019-30) from the Institute for Economic Advancement at UALR and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Online Database.

Age Distribution

Figures 1-3 show Arkansas' population distribution by gender and age group for 2010, 2018 and 2030. As shown in these graphics, between 2010-18 the number of people 65+ grew substantially while the younger population (under-20) reduced. In fact, the 65+ group increased its share of the total population from 14.4% in 2010 to 17.0% in 2018, a growth of about 90,000 people. During the same period, the under 20 age group went down from 27.3% to 26.0%, a net decrease of about 14,000. Based on the population projections, by 2030, 26.7% of the state population will be under age 20 while 20.3% will be age 65 or older resulting in the older population continuing to increase its share of the total population. See Table 1 and Figure 4.

Population Pyramids for Arkansas

Figure 1

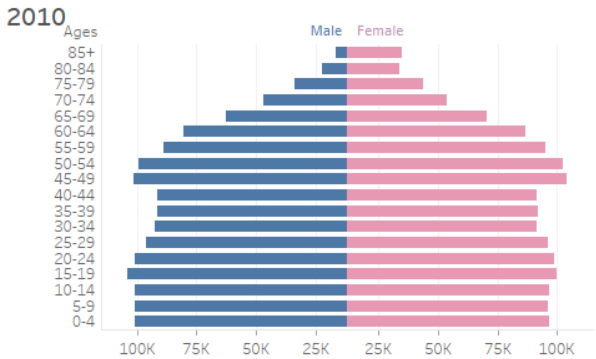


Figure 2

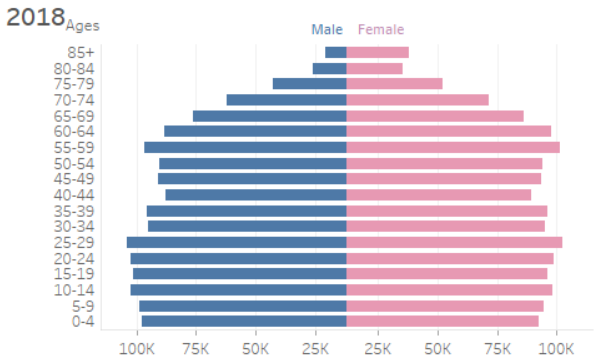


Figure 3

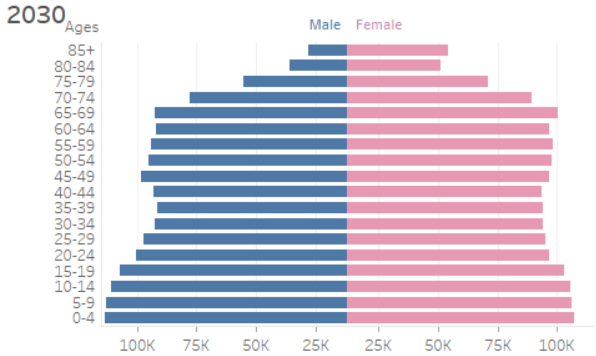
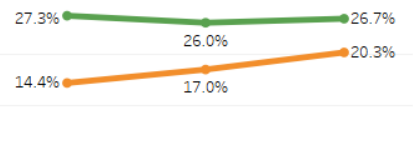


Table 1: Age Group Population Distribution for Arkansas

	2010	2018	2030
Under 20	795,930	782,120	866,073
Adults 20-64	1,700,007	1,719,878	1,717,729
Adults 65+	419,981	511,827	656,406
Grand Total	2,915,918	3,013,825	3,240,208

Figure 4

Estimated and Projected Percentage of Population for Children (Under 20) and Older Adults (65+)



Sources
2010 data: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census estimates.
2018 data: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division. Annual estimates. Release Date: June 2019.
2030 data: Population Projections, United States, 2004 - 2030, by state, age and sex, on CDC WONDER Online Database (based upon U.S. Census Bureau data)

Racial and Ethnic Composition

This subsection describes the projected racial and ethnic composition of the state population from 2013-2060. Four major ethno-racial groups are identified: whites, blacks, Hispanics, and other races. Hispanics are not a racial group but rather an ethnic group, which means that whites, blacks and other races are found in this group. In this study, the whites, blacks and other races groups exclude Hispanics. The ethno-racial composition of the total population (all ages) and the younger population (under age 20) are examined.

Racial and Ethnic Composition, 2013-60

Figure 5: Arkansas Population - All Ages

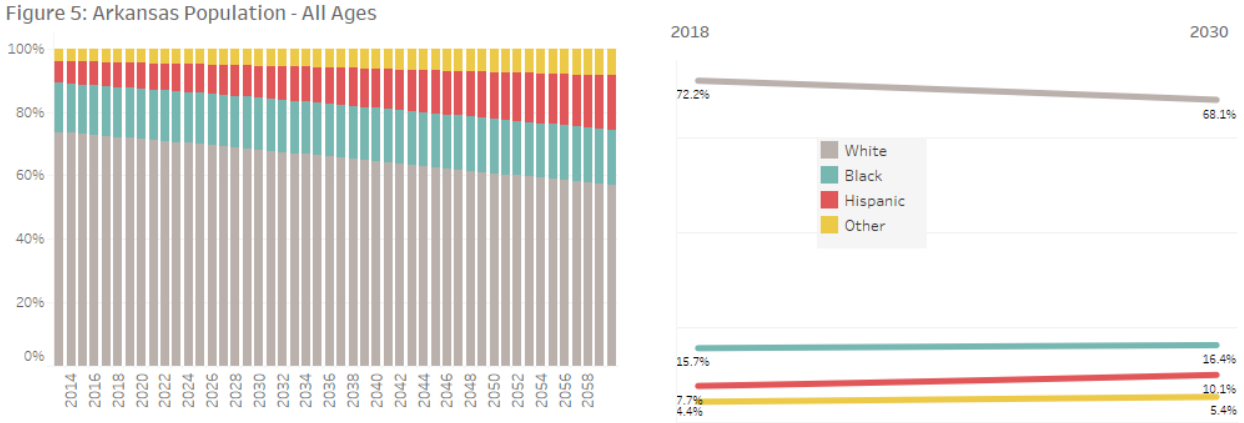
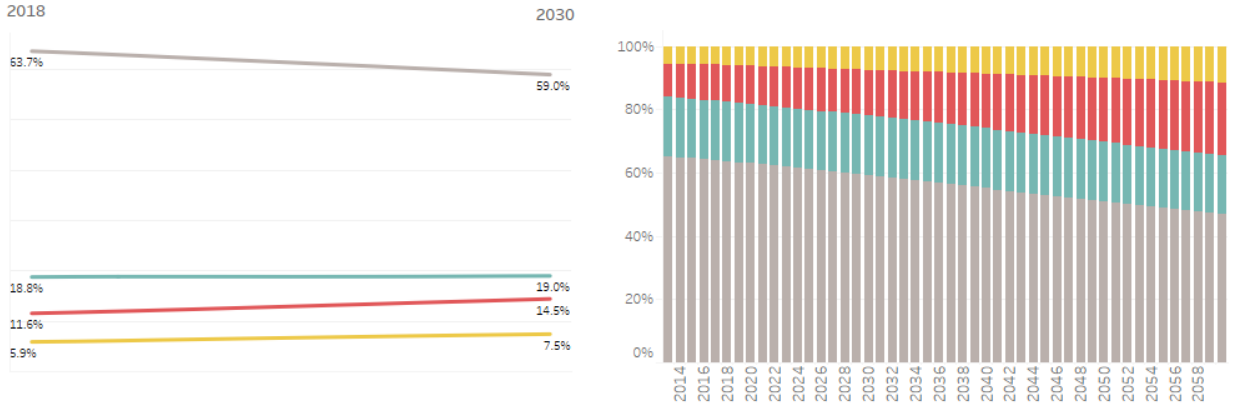


Figure 6: Arkansas Younger Population - Under 20



Source: Institute for Economic Advancement, College of Business, UALR. Projections 2013-20160 - Released in June 2014

According to Figures 5 and 6, whites constitute the current and projected predominant population group in Arkansas. The under 20 age group is more diverse than the total population with whites constituting 63.7% of the under 20 population in 2018 as compared to 72.2% of the total population (all ages).

The white population group is expected to experience a decrease in its share of the total population from 72.2% in 2018 to a projected 68.1% in 2030, a decrease of about 4.1 percentage

points. The trend is also expected for the under age 20 population, with the share of the white group decreasing from 63.7% in 2018 to a projected 59.0% in 2030, a decrease of 4.7 percentage points.

The remaining three groups (blacks, Hispanics, and other races), all are expected to show an increase in their share of total population. However, the Hispanics are anticipated to experience the largest percentage growth going from 7.7% in 2018 to 10.1% in 2030. This is also true for the under age 20 population with the Hispanic group growing from 11.6% in 2018 to 14.5% in 2030.

Urban-Rural

There are two different definitions that categorize urban and rural areas in the country, one developed by the US Census Bureau and the other by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The US Census Bureau defines urban and rural areas based strictly on population size and density and they do not necessarily follow municipal boundaries. The OMB follows a regional-economic concept to define counties or county-equivalent units as metropolitan, micropolitan or neither. A metropolitan area (MSA) consists of one or more counties with a core urban population of 50,000+ and a micropolitan area has a core urban population of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000. Metropolitan areas are categorized as urban while counties that are not part of a metropolitan area are considered rural. Table 4 lists the eight metropolitan areas in Arkansas and their constituents.

Population Estimates for Arkansas Metropolitan, Micropolitan and Other Rural Areas, 2010 - 2018

Map 1

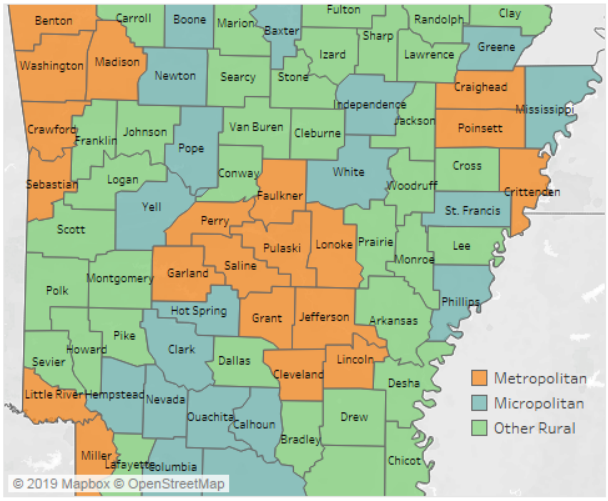


Figure 7: MSAs Population Share as a % of State Popul..

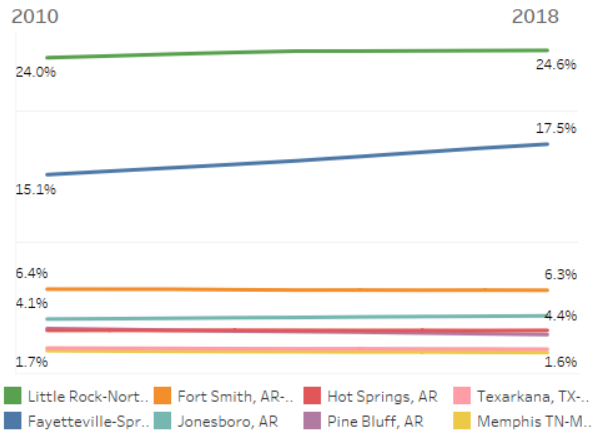


Table 2: Population Estimates

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Metropolitan	1,757,419	1,778,242	1,794,815	1,808,428	1,822,505	1,837,779	1,854,032	1,869,938	1,883,774
Micropolitan	609,048	609,081	607,459	604,343	602,452	601,724	600,260	597,897	596,251
Other Rural	555,511	553,084	549,835	546,778	542,769	538,904	536,118	535,162	533,800
Total	**2,921,978**	**2,940,407**	**2,952,109**	**2,959,549**	**2,967,726**	**2,978,407**	**2,990,410**	**3,002,997**	**3,013,825**

Table 3: Population Share as a % of State Population

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Metropolitan	60.1%	60.5%	60.8%	61.1%	61.4%	61.7%	62.0%	62.3%	62.5%
Micropolitan	20.8%	20.7%	20.6%	20.4%	20.3%	20.2%	20.1%	19.9%	19.8%
Other Rural	19.0%	18.8%	18.6%	18.5%	18.3%	18.1%	17.9%	17.8%	17.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: US Census Bureau, Population Division, Annual Estimates. Release Date: June 2019

This subsection follows the OMB definition of urban and rural to classify the state counties into three major groups: metropolitan, micropolitan, and other rural (see Map 1 above). Tables 2 and 3 provide annual population estimates for these three groups and their share of the total population from 2010-2018. Based on these figures, the majority of the state population is urban. In 2010, about 60% of all Arkansans lived in metropolitan areas while about 40% lived in rural areas (micropolitan and other rural). Population estimates from 2010-18 show that metropolitan areas are growing steadily but modestly. On the other hand, the populations of the micropolitan and other rural areas keep shrinking. In 2018, the share of all Arkansans living in urban areas grew to 62.5% while population in rural areas (micropolitan and other rural) decreased to 37.5%.

Figure 7 examines population estimates at the metropolitan level from 2010-18. Out of eight metropolitan areas, Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, Fort Smith, and Jonesboro are the most populated. In 2010, these four areas alone hosted close to half (49.6%) of the state population and in 2018, their share passed the halfway mark with 52.8% of all Arkansans living in these metropolitan areas.

Table 4: Population Estimates for Metropolitan Counties as a % of State Population

Cbsa	County	Year (Population) 2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, AR	Pulaski	13.1%	13.2%	13.2%	13.2%	13.2%	13.2%	13.2%	13.1%	13.0%
	Faulkner	3.9%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%
	Saline	3.7%	3.7%	3.8%	3.8%	3.9%	3.9%	3.9%	4.0%	4.0%
	Lonoke	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%
	Grant	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
	Perry	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
	Total	24.0%	24.2%	24.3%	24.4%	24.5%	24.5%	24.6%	24.6%	24.6%
Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, AR-MO	Benton	7.6%	7.8%	8.0%	8.1%	8.3%	8.4%	8.7%	8.9%	9.0%
	Washington	7.0%	7.1%	7.2%	7.3%	7.4%	7.5%	7.6%	7.8%	7.9%
	Madison	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
	Total	15.1%	15.4%	15.7%	15.9%	16.2%	16.5%	16.8%	17.2%	17.5%
Fort Smith, AR-OK	Sebastian	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	4.2%
	Crawford	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%
	Total	6.4%	6.4%	6.4%	6.4%	6.4%	6.4%	6.3%	6.4%	6.3%
Jonesboro, AR	Craighead	3.3%	3.3%	3.4%	3.4%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%	3.6%	3.6%
	Poinsett	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
	Total	4.1%	4.2%	4.2%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	4.3%	4.4%	4.4%
Hot Springs, AR	Garland	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%
	Total	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.3%
Pine Bluff, AR	Jefferson	2.6%	2.6%	2.5%	2.5%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	2.3%	2.3%
	Lincoln	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%
	Cleveland	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
	Total	3.4%	3.4%	3.3%	3.2%	3.2%	3.2%	3.1%	3.0%	3.0%
Texarkana, TX-AR	Miller	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.4%
	Little River	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
	Total	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%
Memphis TN-MS-AR	Crittenden	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%
	Total	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%
Grand Total		60.1%	60.5%	60.8%	61.1%	61.4%	61.7%	62.0%	62.3%	62.5%

Source: US Census Bureau, Population Division, Annual Estimates. Release Date: June 2019

Figure 8: International and Domestic Migration as a Share of MSA Population Change

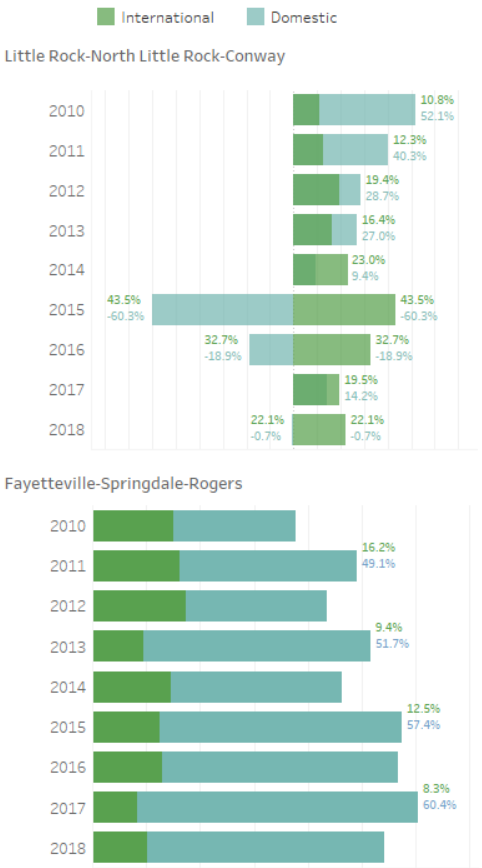


Table 4 takes a more detailed look at the population estimates at the county level in the metropolitan areas. For example, in 2018, 21.1% of the state population lived in Pulaski, Faulkner and Saline counties in the LR-NLR-Conway metropolitan area. In the same year, within the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers area, Benton and Washington counties were the most populated sharing 16.9% of the total population. Between 2010 and 2018, most of the gains in the state urban population came from population growth in Benton and Washington. During this period, these two counties alone increased their share of total population by 2.3 percentage points (Table 4).

In general terms, the population in a geographic region can vary over time due to changes in several factors: number of births, deaths, and migration. Figure 8 focuses on migration, international and domestic, as source of annual population change for the LR-NLR-Conway and the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers metropolitan areas from 2010-18. For instance, in 2011, 52.6% of the population change (from the previous year) in the LR-NLR-Conway MSA was due to migration into the area. Out of this, domestic migration accounted for 40.3% while

international migration contributed 12.3%. On the other hand, in 2016, 18.9% of the population change was due to domestic migration out of the region (hence a negative percentage) while 32.7% was due to international migration into the area.

The overall migration patterns for these two metro areas are different. During this period, the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers area experienced consistently positive international and domestic migration accounting jointly for about 60% or more of their annual population change. On the other hand, domestic migration in the LR-NLR-Conway area has been decreasing over the years and at times has even been negative. Since 2014, annual international migration in this area has accounted for a larger share of population change compared to their domestic counterpart.

Industry

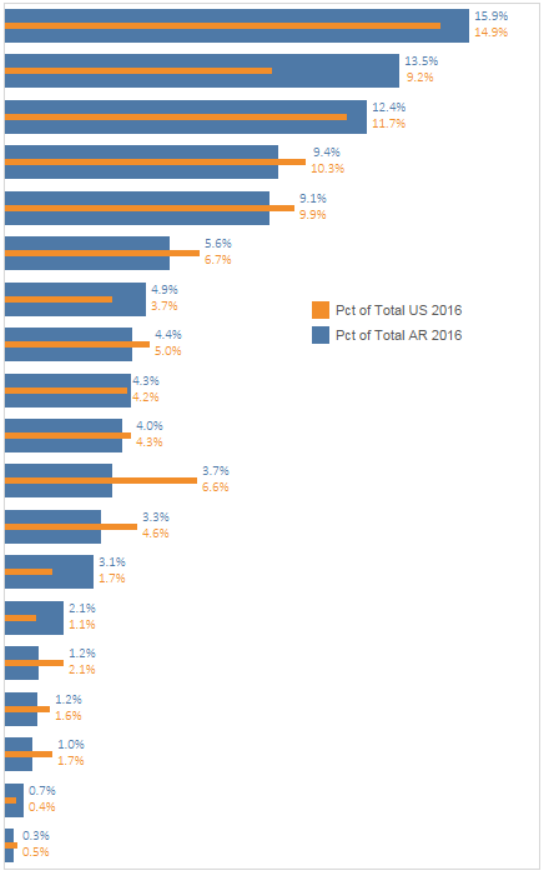
This section describes projected labor demand trends by industry sector for the state and Local Workforce Development Areas (WDA) for the decade of 2016-26. The analysis is based on the long-term (2016-26) State and Local WDA industry projections published by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and the national long-term industry projections published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The industries analyzed include all the 2-digit industry sectors defined by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), except for two – the self-employed and government sectors.

Industry Sectors at the State Level

Table 5: Number of Jobs by Industry Sector, Arkansas, Projections 2016-26

		2016	2026	Change
Large	Health Care and Social Assistance	182,304	219,955	37,651
	Manufacturing	154,599	158,865	4,266
	Retail Trade	142,235	157,084	14,849
	Educational Services	107,517	115,492	7,975
	Accommodation and Food Services	104,238	119,183	14,945
Medium	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	64,767	71,257	6,490
	Transportation and Warehousing	55,698	61,161	5,463
	Construction	50,297	56,580	6,283
	Other Services (except Government)	49,734	51,225	1,491
	Wholesale Trade	46,263	49,509	3,246
	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	42,608	48,826	6,218
	Finance and Insurance	38,305	41,071	2,766
	Management of Companies and Enterprises	35,108	43,137	8,029
Small	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	23,681	25,521	1,840
	Information	13,552	13,315	-237
	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13,290	14,690	1,400
	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	11,039	11,972	933
	Utilities	7,696	7,975	279
	Mining	4,008	3,916	-92
	Total (19 Industries)	1,146,939	1,270,734	123,795

Figure 9: Share of Jobs (%) by Industry Sector, 2016, Arkansas and US



Sources: (1) Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information and (2) Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections
Note: Educational Services includes Local and State Government Education. Health Care and Social Assistance includes Local and State Government Hospitals.

Table 5 shows the employment projections by each industry sector in the state in 2016 and 2026. According to the data, labor demand in the state is expected to increase by 123,795 jobs between 2016-26. This increase will mainly come from growth in the top five industry sectors: Health care and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, Retail Trade, Educational Services, and Accommodation and Food Services, which jointly are anticipated to add 79,686 jobs.

Figure 9 shows the employment numbers in 2016 as a percentage of the total jobs at the state and national level. According to these numbers, there are differences in the state and national job distribution patterns. The sectors in Arkansas that employ significantly more people compared to their counterparts in the nation are: (1) Manufacturing, (2) Transportation and Warehousing, (3) Management of Companies and Enterprises, and (4) Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting. On the other hand, the industry sectors that employ significantly less people than at the national

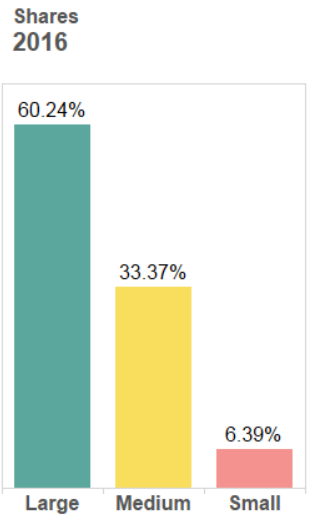
level are: (1) Professional, Scientific and Technical Services, (2) Finance and Insurance, (3) Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services, and (4) Information.

To facilitate the analysis, the industry sectors at the state level are divided into three groups based on the number of jobs: Large (employing 100,000 or more), Medium (employing between 35,000-100,000) and Small (employing less than 35,000).

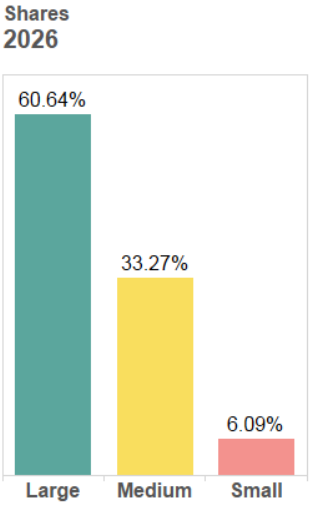
Even though the percentage distribution of jobs among the industry sectors in the state are different from the nation, the job distribution numbers among the three groups mentioned above are about the same. For instance, the large group (comprising the top five industry sectors) accounts for 60.3% of all jobs in Arkansas and 56% of all jobs in the country. The medium group (next eight industry sectors) accounts for 33.4 % of jobs in Arkansas and about 36.8% of jobs in the country and finally, the small group (consisting of the bottom six sectors) accounts for 6.4% of the state jobs and 7.4% of the nation's jobs (Figure 9).

Figure 10 below shows the number of jobs and corresponding percentage share of state jobs for the three groups in 2016 and 2026. This figure shows that even though jobs are expected to increase by 123,795 in a decade, the percentage share of state jobs are projected to stay very close to the 2016 level for all three groups.

Figure 10: Number of Jobs by Industry Sector Size and Share (%) of State Total, 2016 and 2026



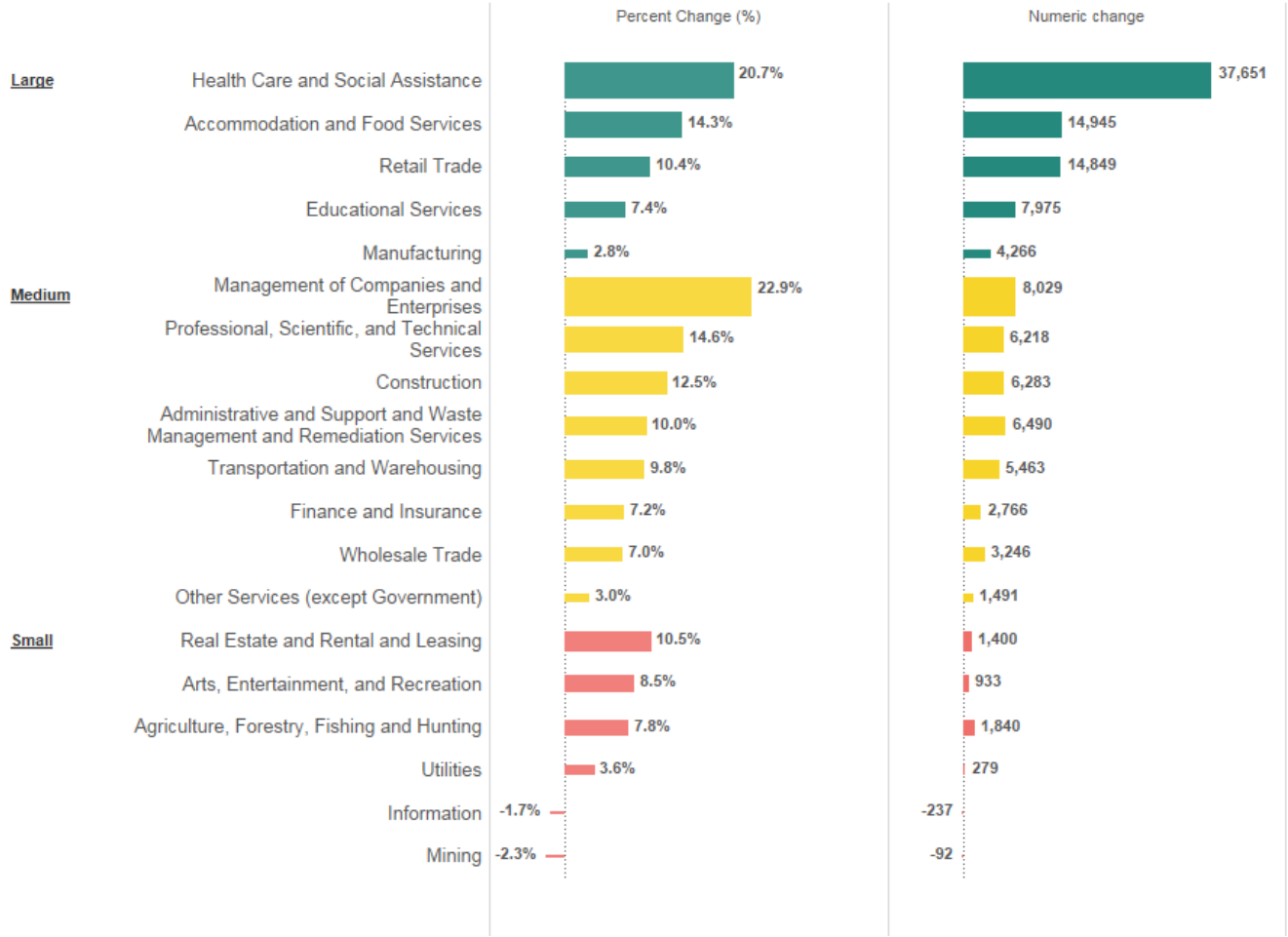
Number of Jobs	2016	2026
Large	690,893	770,579
Medium	382,780	422,766
Small	73,266	77,389
Total	1,146,939	1,270,734



Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information- State Long Term Projections 2016-26

Figure 11 below displays the percentage and numeric change in the number of state jobs for the three groups between 2016 and 2026. All industry sectors are expected to show growth except for two – Information and Mining. For the large industry sectors, Health Care and Social Assistance is projected to show the fastest growth (20.7% increase and 37,651 additional jobs). Similarly, for the medium-sized industry sectors, Management of Companies and Enterprises is expected to grow the fastest (22.9% and 8,029 jobs) and likewise, among the small-sized sectors Real Estate and Rental and Leasing are expected to grow by 10.5% and 1,400 jobs.

Figure 11:Percent Change and Numeric Growth by Industry Sector, Arkansas, Projected Jobs 2016-26



Industry Sectors at the Local WDA Level

Arkansas is divided into ten local Workforce Development Areas. Figure 12 lists the ten areas along with their projected percent and numeric change in total employment for all sectors between 2016-2026. The Northwest WDA is expected to grow at the fastest rate (14.2%) and also add the greatest number of jobs (37,546).

Figure 12: Percent Change (%) and Numeric Growth by Region, Projections 2016-26

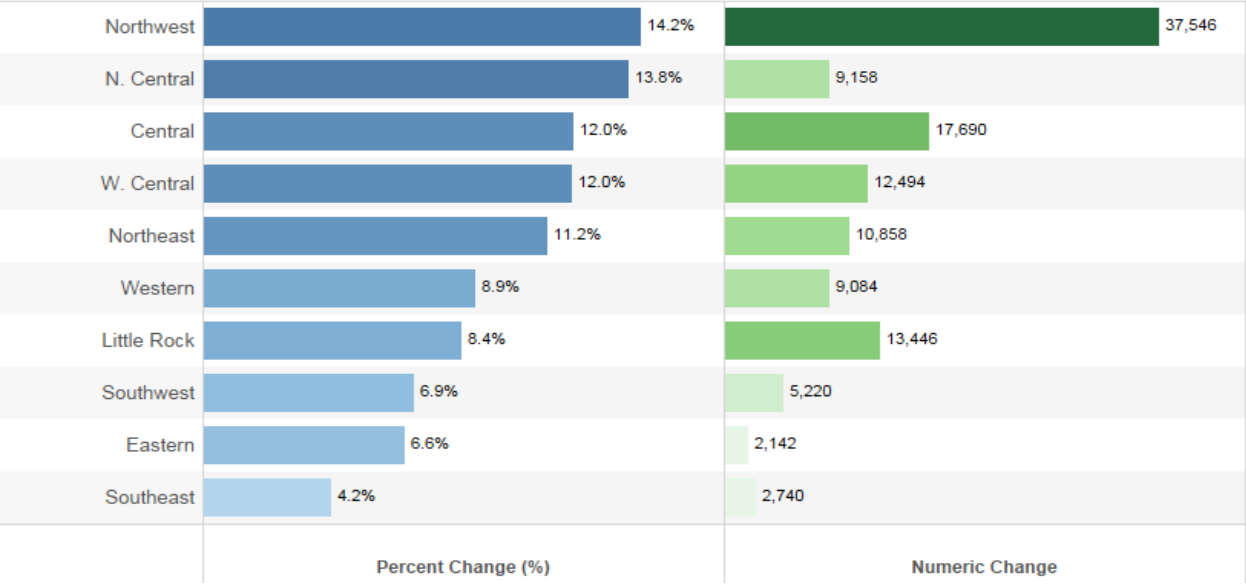


Table 6: Number of Jobs by Industry Sector and Local Region, Projections 2016

		Central	Eastern	Little Rock	N. Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southeast	Southwe..	W. Central	Western
Large	Health Care and Social Assist..	21,320	5,996	38,493	12,924	16,734	31,861	11,452	10,169	16,336	15,267
	Manufacturing	11,610	3,393	7,465	8,083	19,358	34,341	14,275	19,064	15,984	20,886
	Retail Trade	23,462	4,904	15,705	9,621	12,777	31,982	7,724	8,861	14,240	12,614
	Educational Services	12,881	4,203	11,074	8,341	10,527	24,995	7,809	7,996	11,167	8,155
	Accommodation and Food Se..	16,999	3,023	13,588	6,041	8,692	26,132	4,420	5,328	11,249	8,720
	Total	86,272	21,519	86,325	45,010	68,088	149,311	45,680	51,418	68,976	65,642
Medium	Administrative and Waste Ser..	8,477	1,552	10,649	2,139	4,869	11,318	2,175	2,273	5,252	6,388
	Transportation and Warehous..	7,149	2,223	5,251	3,759	3,072	17,269	2,664	3,928	4,289	6,001
	Construction	9,956	921	4,775	2,368	3,794	10,910	2,076	3,599	4,563	3,906
	Other Services (except Gover..	8,580	1,297	8,960	2,669	2,707	9,631	2,420	3,524	4,796	4,286
	Wholesale Trade	6,599	2,117	6,928	1,646	3,386	9,794	2,072	1,914	1,942	3,560
	Professional and Technical S..	7,045	500	10,022	1,131	1,620	12,133	856	1,041	1,962	1,998
	Finance and Insurance	4,229	737	11,943	2,010	2,290	6,674	1,880	1,867	3,027	2,421
	Management of Companies a..	1,303	173	3,955	303	610	24,199	356	1,069	411	2,430
	Total	53,338	9,520	62,483	16,025	22,348	101,928	14,499	19,215	26,242	30,990
Small	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing ..	1,786			2,285	3,558	3,142	3,573	2,524	3,144	1,475
	Information	1,143	197	5,166	500	724	2,535	315	455	847	1,138
	Real Estate and Rental and L..	1,853	556	2,698	583	1,038	2,719	575	743	1,074	1,120
	Arts, Entertainment, and Recr..	1,470	674	1,526	508	511	3,042	236	386	2,139	495
	Utilities	515	208	1,538	669	447	1,119	580	539	1,345	653
	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil an..	550			609	102	132	55	739	536	816
	Total	7,317	1,635	10,928	5,154	6,380	12,689	5,334	5,386	9,085	5,697
	Grand Total	146,927	32,674	159,736	66,189	96,816	263,928	65,513	76,019	104,303	102,329

Note: The cells are shaded for dark blue to light gray based on job numbers.

Table 6 shows the number of jobs in 2016 for each of the industry sectors at the WDA level. The majority of the jobs across all industry sectors are located in three local Workforce Development

Areas – Northwest, Little Rock and Central. The three areas together account for about 51.2 % of all WDA jobs with the Northwest taking the largest share. Apart from jobs in Health Care and Social Assistance, the majority of the jobs in the large industry sectors are located in the Northwest. The Little Rock Area accounts for the largest number of jobs in Health Care and Social Assistance. Among the medium-sized industry sectors, most of the jobs in Transportation and Warehousing and Management of Companies and Enterprises are located in the Northwest.

Table 7 shows the estimated projected percentage change in the number of jobs for each of the industry sectors at the WDA level between 2016 and 2026. In the large industry sectors, the Health Care and Social Assistance sector is expected to grow significantly across all local WDAs, while Manufacturing shows modest growth or decline in all areas except for North Central and North East where it shows a relatively strong growth. Among the medium-sized sectors, Management of Companies and Enterprises is expected to experience the fastest growth among all industry sectors across all WDAs with the exception of West Central. Among the small-sized industrial sectors, Information shows an across the board decline with the exception of the Central WDA, which shows a significant growth. The Mining sector also shows a modest growth or decline in all WDAs except for the Northeast.

Table 7: Percent Change (%) in Industry Sector Jobs by Local Region, Projections 2016-26

		Central	Eastern	Little Rock	N. Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southeast	Southwe..	W. Central	Western
Large	Health Care and Social Assistance	24.9%	22.2%	17.6%	19.8%	17.1%	23.1%	18.8%	21.2%	20.9%	21.3%
	Manufacturing	-0.6%	-4.8%	3.2%	9.3%	8.9%	4.1%	-1.4%	0.1%	2.9%	0.3%
	Retail Trade	10.2%	6.0%	1.1%	10.4%	9.8%	16.9%	6.2%	10.6%	11.7%	10.0%
	Educational Services	9.5%	-1.6%	5.8%	9.2%	9.3%	10.8%	-1.1%	0.0%	9.0%	9.3%
	Accommodation and Food Services	16.5%	5.5%	8.3%	23.3%	8.9%	13.9%	7.9%	10.2%	27.9%	11.7%
Medium	Administrative and Waste Services	9.7%	10.1%	6.2%	26.7%	27.5%	11.7%	10.1%	19.5%	8.3%	4.5%
	Transportation and Warehousing	7.0%	6.8%	2.4%	10.3%	14.2%	14.1%	-7.1%	7.4%	12.9%	13.9%
	Construction	12.9%	4.2%	12.6%	15.0%	14.4%	14.3%	7.6%	9.5%	12.1%	10.3%
	Other Services (except Government)	7.2%	-0.6%	2.8%	3.3%	-0.9%	9.0%	-3.9%	-5.3%	-3.8%	-1.0%
	Wholesale Trade	4.2%	3.3%	4.4%	16.9%	4.2%	12.9%	-0.5%	0.4%	1.1%	3.5%
	Professional and Technical Services	15.7%	11.8%	12.1%	15.7%	15.6%	15.7%	17.2%	6.5%	15.7%	15.6%
	Finance and Insurance	4.5%	2.7%	6.4%	5.5%	4.1%	9.7%	-4.5%	-0.5%	22.5%	3.0%
	Management of Companies and Enterprises	30.5%	28.9%	11.3%	42.2%	37.9%	23.6%	16.0%	36.8%	-6.6%	24.4%
Small	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	15.6%			23.2%	4.0%	17.8%	-5.6%	8.6%	3.2%	4.7%
	Information	19.5%	-5.6%	-4.9%	-5.4%	-6.1%	-2.4%	-9.2%	-10.1%	2.4%	-4.0%
	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	6.9%	4.0%	8.4%	4.0%	9.2%	19.1%	6.4%	7.7%	14.0%	8.4%
	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	8.1%	5.0%	5.9%	9.7%	9.0%	10.8%	11.0%	-0.3%	7.5%	15.6%
	Utilities	15.7%	0.0%	4.2%	4.2%	1.1%	4.2%	0.5%	4.3%	4.2%	-4.9%
	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1.3%			-3.3%	12.8%	-20.5%	-9.1%	-5.3%	-4.3%	-0.9%

Note: Positive % changes are represented in shades of green while negative % changes are represented in shades of red.

Labor Force and Unemployment Rate

This section describes the State labor force and unemployment rate estimates for the period between January 2008 – September 2019 published by the Division of Workforce Services. Stated simply, the labor force includes all civilians 16 years and older who are employed or unemployed.

Table 8: Arkansas Employment Status, 2017

	Total	Labor Force Participation Rate	Employment / Population Ratio	Unemployment rate
Population 16 years and over	2,351,061	58.1%	54.3%	6.3%
AGE				
16 to 19 years	159,890	35.6%	28.2%	20.7%
20 to 24 years	205,401	72.5%	63.7%	11.5%
25 to 29 years	196,865	78.3%	72.0%	7.3%
30 to 34 years	190,888	78.7%	73.1%	6.7%
35 to 44 years	367,460	78.3%	74.0%	5.2%
45 to 54 years	381,092	74.1%	71.0%	4.1%
55 to 59 years	193,913	64.7%	62.5%	3.5%
60 to 64 years	179,385	48.2%	46.9%	2.8%
65 to 74 years	277,145	22.1%	21.4%	3.0%
75 years and over	199,022	6.3%	6.1%	3.2%
RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN				
White alone	1,859,731	57.8%	54.6%	5.3%
Black or African American alone	346,651	57.3%	50.5%	11.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	15,335	52.0%	47.4%	8.4%
Asian alone	33,582	65.8%	62.7%	4.5%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	4,518	61.1%	57.1%	6.5%
Some other race alone	49,008	70.4%	66.8%	5.1%
Two or more races	42,236	58.5%	53.2%	8.4%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	137,412	68.7%	64.9%	5.1%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	1,776,600	57.3%	54.1%	5.3%
Population 20 to 64 years	1,715,004	72.0%	67.6%	5.8%
SEX				
Male	848,276	77.0%	71.9%	6.0%
Female	866,728	67.2%	63.4%	5.5%
With own children under 18 years	316,317	71.5%	67.2%	5.9%
With own children under 6 years only	73,221	67.7%	61.7%	8.7%
With own children under 6 years and 6 to 17 years	65,400	64.5%	60.4%	6.2%
With own children under 6 to 17 years only	177,696	75.7%	72.1%	4.7%
POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS				
Below poverty level	281,384	46.5%	36.1%	22.3%
At or above the poverty level	1,392,444	79.0%	75.7%	3.8%
DISABILITY STATUS				
With any disability	261,041	34.7%	30.5%	11.9%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT				
Population 25 to 64 years	1,509,603	72.0%	68.2%	5.0%
Less than high school graduate	188,642	53.9%	48.8%	9.4%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	508,200	67.4%	63.2%	6.2%
Some college or associate's degree	463,632	74.9%	70.8%	4.9%
Bachelor's degree or higher	349,129	84.6%	82.4%	2.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Table 8 above takes a detailed look at the labor force data for the year 2017 calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau (based on the 2013-2017 American Community Survey). The table includes labor force participation rates, employment-to-population ratios and unemployment rates for various demographics. The highest unemployment rates are found among the younger population, Blacks or African Americans, persons with disabilities, and those with less than a high school diploma.

Figure 13: Arkansas Labor Force and Number of Employed, January 2008 - September 2019

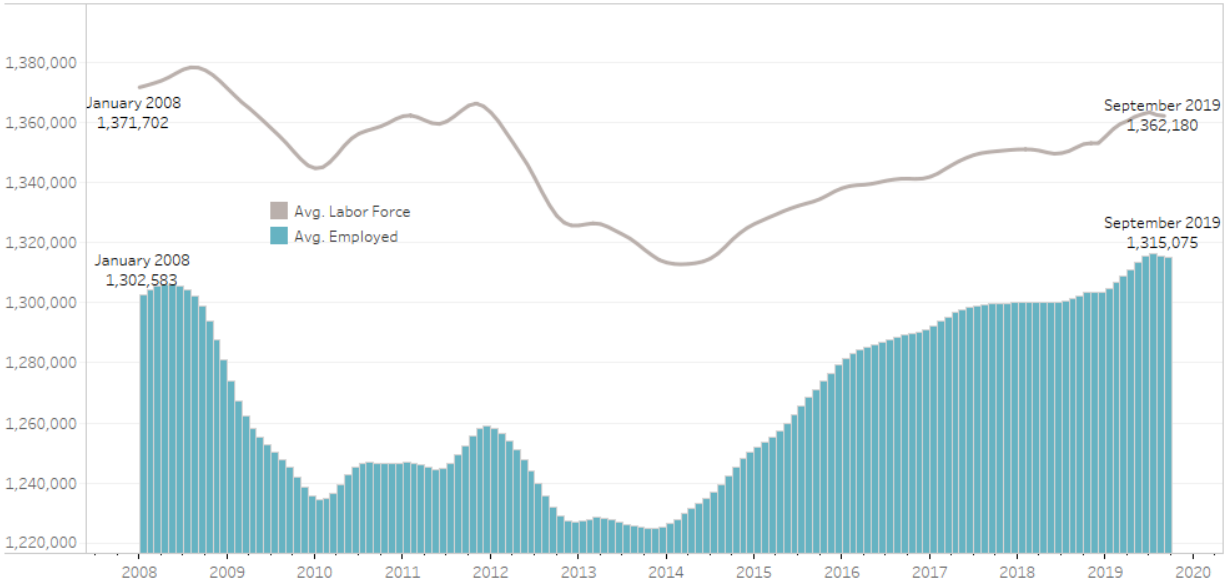
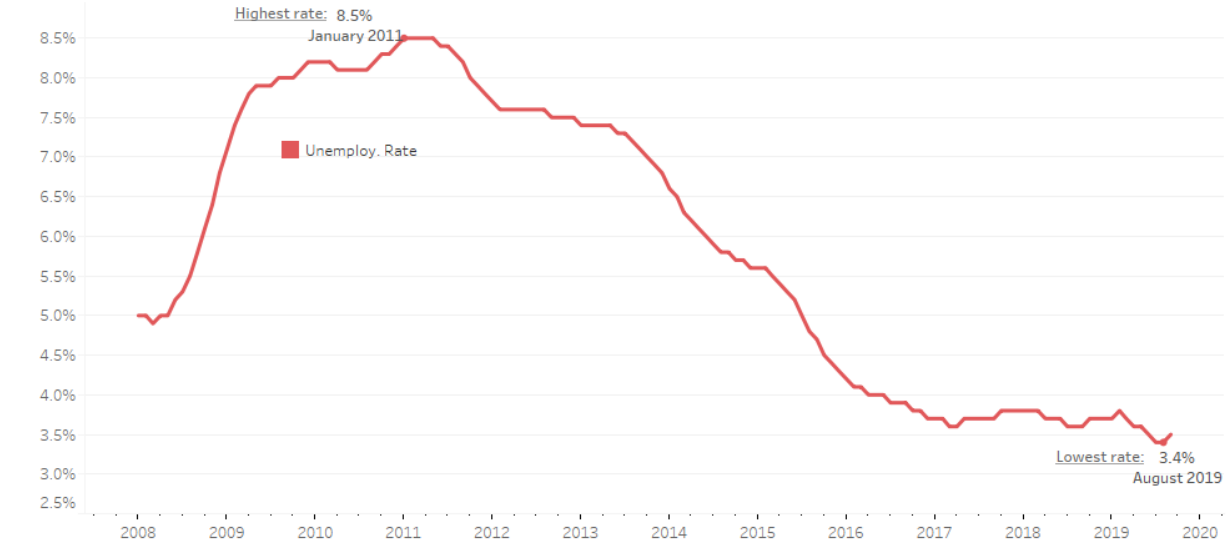


Figure 14: Arkansas Monthly Unemployment Rate, January, 2008 - September, 2019



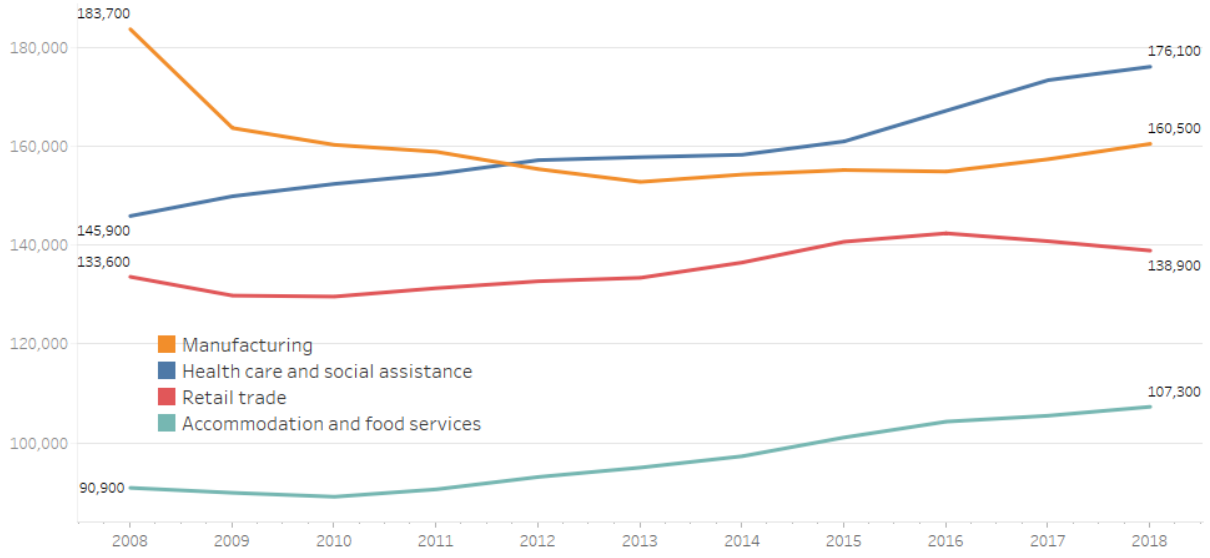
Source: Division of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information

Figures 13 and 14 show historical data (January 2008 – September 2019) for the State labor force and the number of employed. As a consequence of the Great Recession of 2008, both the labor force and the number of unemployed decreased from 2008 till 2010. They made a modest recovery from 2010-2012 and then shows a sharp decline again until 2014. From that point onward the labor force and number of unemployed have experience a steady increase. However, since 2014 the number of employed has increased at a faster rate than the labor force. In fact, the number of employed in September 2019 has surpassed the pre-recession level while the labor force is just approaching its pre-recession level. As a result, the unemployment rate has been steadily decreasing from its highest in May 2011 (8.5%) to its lowest at 3.4% in August 2019 (See Figure 14).

Nonfarm Industry Employment Estimates

Trends in the employment estimates from 2008-2018 for the Large, Medium, and Small nonfarm Industry Sectors are analyzed in this section. The Large, Medium, and Small Industry Sectors are defined in the above section on Industry Employment Projections. The Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting sector is excluded from this analysis while Utilities is incorporated into the Transportation and Warehousing sector.

Figure 15: Annual Employment Estimates for Large Industry Sectors, 2008-2018



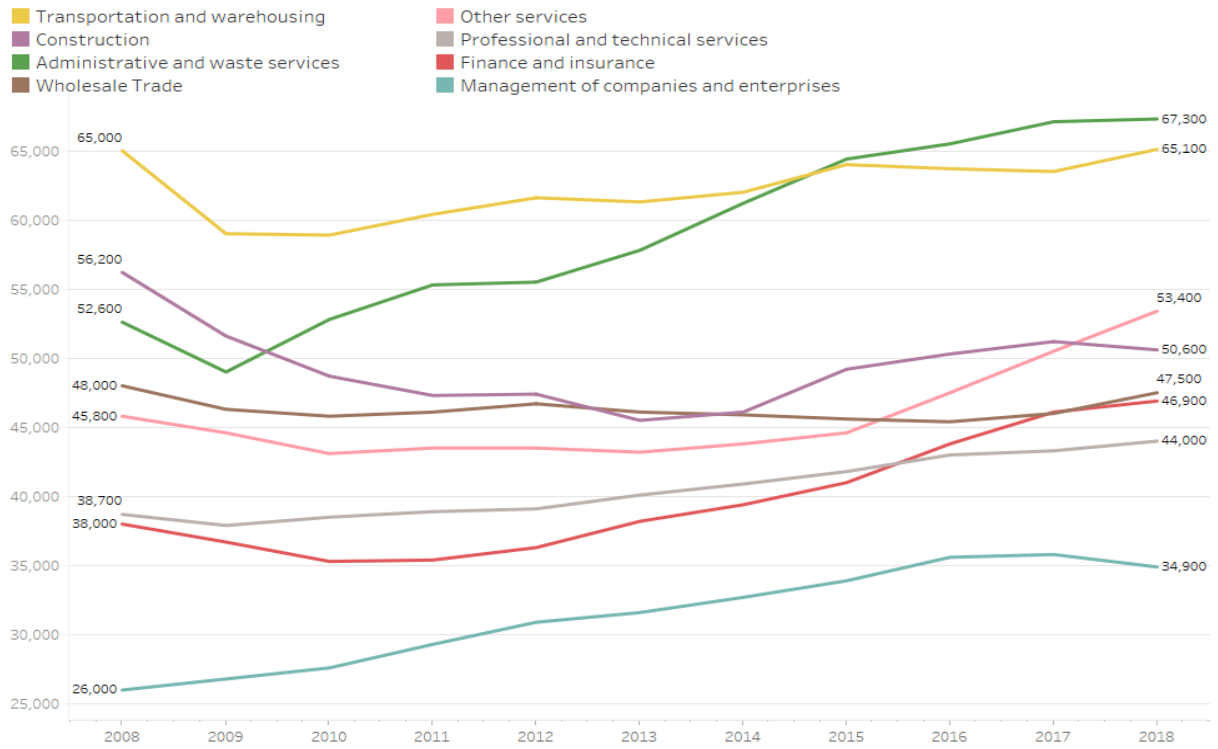
Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information (CES)

Table 9: Large Industry Sectors Annual Employment Estimates - 2018, 2016 and 2008							
				2-year Change		10-year Change	
NAICS Industry Title	**2018**	**2016**	**2008**	**Numeric**	**%**	**Numeric**	**%**
Manufacturing	160,500	154,900	183,700	5,600	3.6%	-23,200	-12.6%
Health care and social assistance	176,100	167,200	145,900	8,900	5.3%	30,200	20.7%
Retail trade	138,900	142,400	133,600	-3,500	-2.5%	5,300	4.0%
Accommodation and food services	107,300	104,300	90,900	3,000	2.9%	16,400	18.0%
Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information.							

Among the large sectors, Health Care and Social Assistance has been consistently increasing in the past decade while Manufacturing showed a sharp decline from 2008-2013 and since then shown a modest growth in employment (see Figure 15). In terms of percentage change, Health Care and Social Assistance experienced the fastest growth at 20.7% (Table 9).

In the medium-sized sectors, all industries showed a modest growth from 2010 onward with Administrative and Waste Services experiencing the greatest numeric change with 14,700 jobs added while Management of Companies and Enterprises experienced the greatest percentage change at 34.2%. See Figure 16 and Table 10.

Figure 16: Annual Employment Estimates for Medium Industry Sectors, 2008-2018

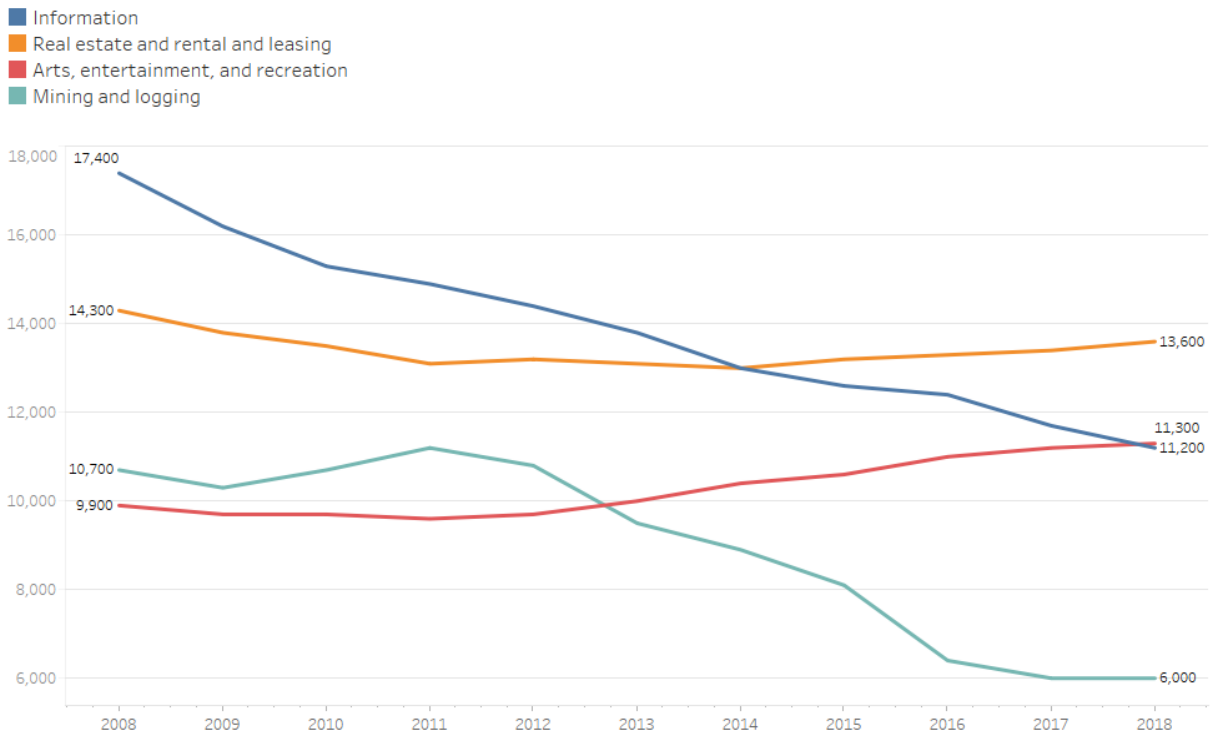


Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information (CES)

Table 10: Medium Industry Sectors Annual Employment Estimates - 2018, 2016 and 2008							
				2-year Change		10-year Change	
NAICS Industry Title	**2018**	**2016**	**2008**	**Numeric**	**%**	**Numeric**	**%**
Transportation and warehousing	65,100	63,700	65,000	1,400	2.2%	100	0.2%
Construction	50,600	50,300	56,200	300	0.6%	-5,600	-10.0%
Administrative and waste services	67,300	65,500	52,600	1,800	2.7%	14,700	27.9%
Wholesale Trade	47,500	45,400	48,000	2,100	4.6%	-500	-1.0%
Other services	53,400	47,500	45,800	5,900	12.4%	7,600	16.6%
Professional and technical services	44,000	43,000	38,700	1,000	2.3%	5,300	13.7%
Finance and insurance	46,900	43,800	38,000	3,100	7.1%	8,900	23.4%
Management of companies and enterprises	34,900	35,600	26,000	-700	-2.0%	8,900	34.2%
Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information.							

For the small-sized sectors, all industries show either a decline or a slight increase in employment. The Mining and Logging sector showed the largest percentage decline at 43.9% (a loss of 4,700 jobs) followed by Information at 35.6% (6,200 jobs lost). See Figure 17 and Table 11

Figure 17: Annual Employment Estimates for Small Industry Sectors, 2008-2018



Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information (CES)

Table 11: Small Industry Sectors Annual Employment Estimates - 2018, 2016 and 2008							
				2-year Change		10-year Change	
NAICS Industry Title	**2018**	**2016**	**2008**	**Numeric**	**%**	**Numeric**	**%**
Information	11,200	12,400	17,400	-1,200	-9.7%	-6,200	-35.6%
Real estate and rental and leasing	13,600	13,300	14,300	300	2.3%	-700	-4.9%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	11,300	11,000	9,900	300	2.7%	1,400	14.1%
Mining and logging	6,000	6,400	10,700	-400	-6.3%	-4,700	-43.9%
Source: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information.							

Table 12 is a more comprehensive list of the nonfarm employment estimates for all industry sectors for 2018, 2016 and 2008.

Table 12: Arkansas Nonfarm Employment - Annual Average							
				2-year Change		10-year Change	
NAICS Industry Title	**2018**	**2016**	**2008**	**Numeric**	**%**	**Numeric**	**%**
Total nonfarm	1,261,900	1,233,000	1,202,500	28,900	2.3%	59,400	4.9%
Total private	1,049,700	1,021,200	988,700	28,500	2.8%	61,000	6.2%
Goods-producing	217,100	211,500	250,600	5,600	2.6%	-33,500	-13.4%
Mining and logging	6,000	6,400	10,700	-400	-6.3%	-4,700	-43.9%
Construction	50,600	50,300	56,200	300	0.6%	-5,600	-10.0%
Specialty trade contractors	32,000	32,000	32,700	0	0.0%	-700	-2.1%
Manufacturing	160,500	154,900	183,700	5,600	3.6%	-23,200	-12.6%
Durable goods	76,500	74,500	95,300	2,000	2.7%	-18,800	-19.7%
Nondurable goods	84,100	80,400	88,400	3,700	4.6%	-4,300	-4.9%
Service-providing	1,044,800	1,021,500	951,900	23,300	2.3%	92,900	9.8%
Trade, transportation, and utilities	251,500	251,600	246,500	-100	0.0%	5,000	2.0%
Wholesale Trade	47,500	45,400	48,000	2,100	4.6%	-500	-1.0%
Retail trade	138,900	142,400	133,600	-3,500	-2.5%	5,300	4.0%
Transportation and warehousing	65,100	63,700	65,000	1,400	2.2%	100	0.2%
Information	11,200	12,400	17,400	-1,200	-9.7%	-6,200	-35.6%
Financial activities	60,500	57,100	52,400	3,400	6.0%	8,100	15.5%
Finance and insurance	46,900	43,800	38,000	3,100	7.1%	8,900	23.4%
Real estate and rental and leasing	13,600	13,300	14,300	300	2.3%	-700	-4.9%
Professional and business services	146,200	144,000	117,300	2,200	1.5%	28,900	24.6%
Professional and technical services	44,000	43,000	38,700	1,000	2.3%	5,300	13.7%
Management of companies and enterp	34,900	35,600	26,000	-700	-2.0%	8,900	34.2%
Administrative and waste services	67,300	65,500	52,600	1,800	2.7%	14,700	27.9%
Education and health services	191,200	181,600	158,000	9,600	5.3%	33,200	21.0%
Educational services [1/]	15,100	14,500	12,100	600	4.1%	3,000	24.8%
Health care and social assistance	176,100	167,200	145,900	8,900	5.3%	30,200	20.7%
Ambulatory health care services	58,300	53,900	45,000	4,400	8.2%	13,300	29.6%
Social assistance	40,000	39,600	30,000	400	1.0%	10,000	33.3%
Leisure and hospitality	118,600	115,400	100,800	3,200	2.8%	17,800	17.7%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	11,300	11,000	9,900	300	2.7%	1,400	14.1%
Accommodation and food services	107,300	104,300	90,900	3,000	2.9%	16,400	18.0%
Accommodation	11,300	11,300	11,700	0	0.0%	-400	-3.4%
Food services and drinking places	95,900	93,000	79,200	2,900	3.1%	16,700	21.1%
Other services	53,400	47,500	45,800	5,900	12.4%	7,600	16.6%
Government	212,200	211,900	213,800	300	0.1%	-1,600	-0.7%
Federal government	20,100	20,300	21,200	-200	-1.0%	-1,100	-5.2%
State government	77,900	77,900	72,800	0	0.0%	5,100	7.0%
State government, excluding educatior	48,200	48,600	46,300	-400	-0.8%	1,900	4.1%
Local government	114,200	113,700	119,800	500	0.4%	-5,600	-4.7%
Local government, excluding educatior	44,200	44,100	NA	100	0.2%	NA	NA
Source: Division of Workforce Services, Labor Market Information.							
1/ Educational Services does not include Local and State Government Education.							

Arkansas Department of Commerce Research Team Inputs to WIOA State Plan

Important stylized facts about labor markets involve patterns of turnover, job stability, and length of tenure. Many hires lead to jobs of short duration, lasting less than a year. Such transient hires tend to comprise a small share of the total stock of jobs at any given time, however. Figure 1 shows the share of stable jobs existing at the end of 2018 that began in 2016 or later, by industry. Across all industries, about half of jobs had appeared, or the most recent hire into the job had taken place, three years prior or less. But the ratio varied greatly by industry, from 76% in accommodation and food services, to under 40% in utilities and education.

Figure 1: The share of the end-2018 workforce that was hired in 2016 or later varies greatly by industry

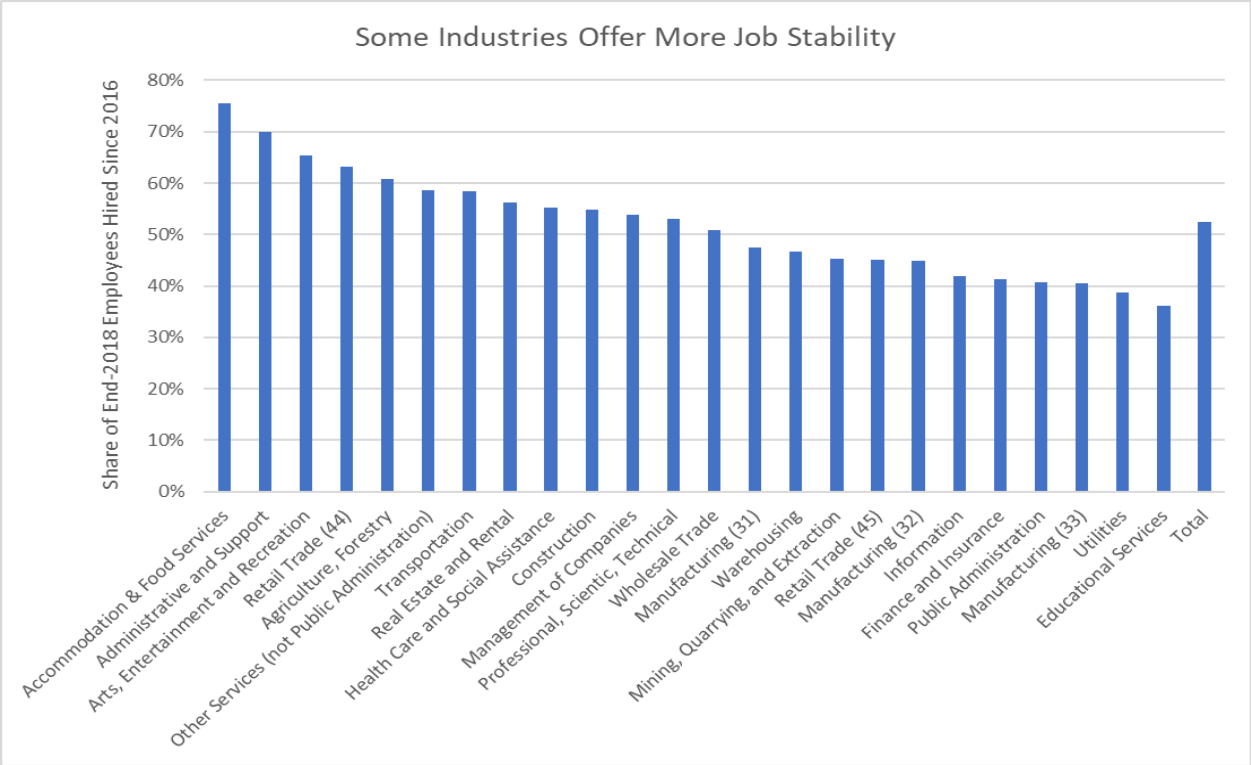
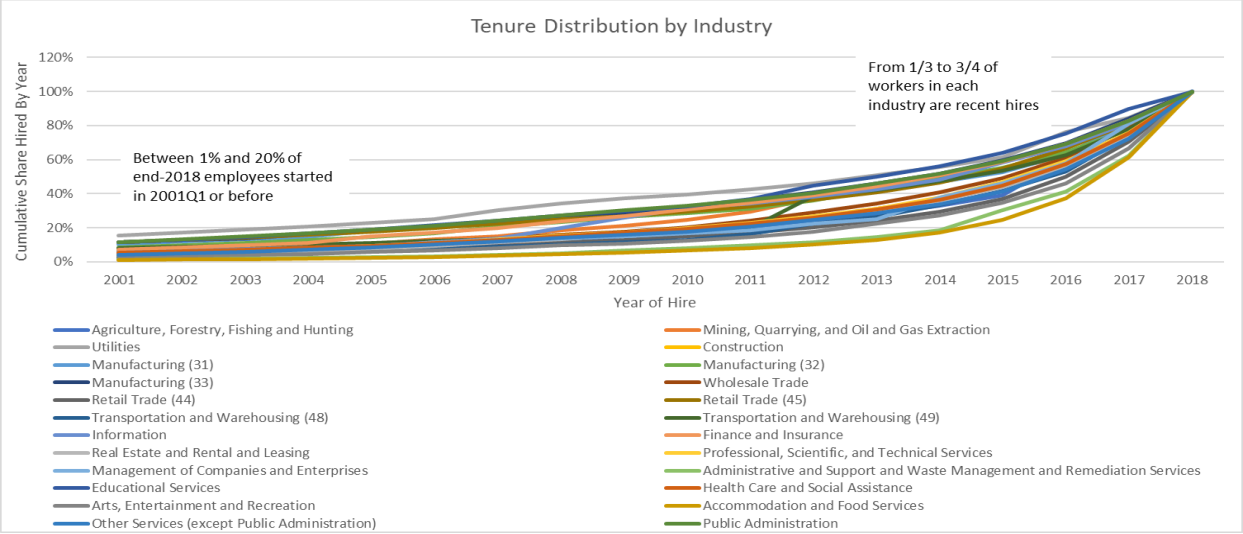


Figure 2 expands on Figure 1 by showing, for each industry, the cumulative share of the workforce that was hired during or before an ascending year. Each curve in Figure 2 represents an industry. The curves necessarily slope up because the share of the workforce that was hired during or before a given year is necessarily equal to or greater than the share that was hired during or before the previous year. The curves describe the accumulation of what became the end-2018 workforce. Besides sloping upward, the curves are all bowed towards the lower right corner of the chart, because a disproportionate share of the workforce are recent hires, many of whom will turn over, whereas long-term employees tend to be more stable. The expected future duration of a job is an increasing function of its past duration. But while all the curves share an

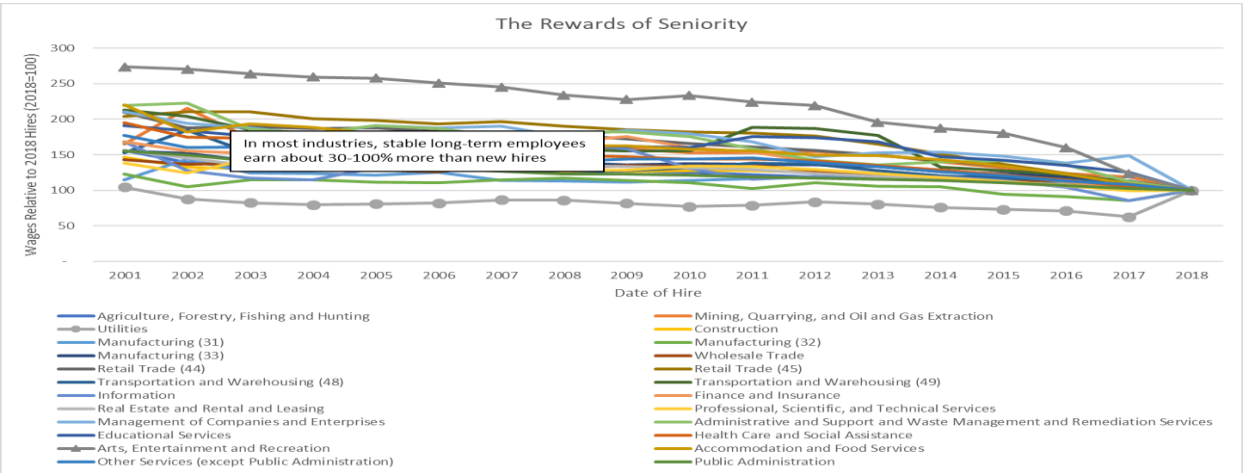
upward slope and a bowed shape, some are much higher than others, reflecting very different turnover patterns across industries. The share of today's workers who were in their current jobs ten or fifteen years ago is many times greater in some industries than others.

Figure 2: Cumulative workforce shares by date of hire, by industry



Long-term jobs tend to pay better, as shown in Figure 3. Figure 3 shows the ratio of average wages of workers hired in each year (moving averages are used for the middle years to smooth fluctuations) to the average wages of recent hires. In most industries—utilities are an intriguing exception—the long-term workers earn substantially more than the recent hires. While obvious explanations for this include firm-specific on-the-job training and rewards for organizational loyalty, it could also reflect the skill and/or effort levels of transient versus permanent workers. Either way, it suggests the value of placing people in long-term, stable jobs.

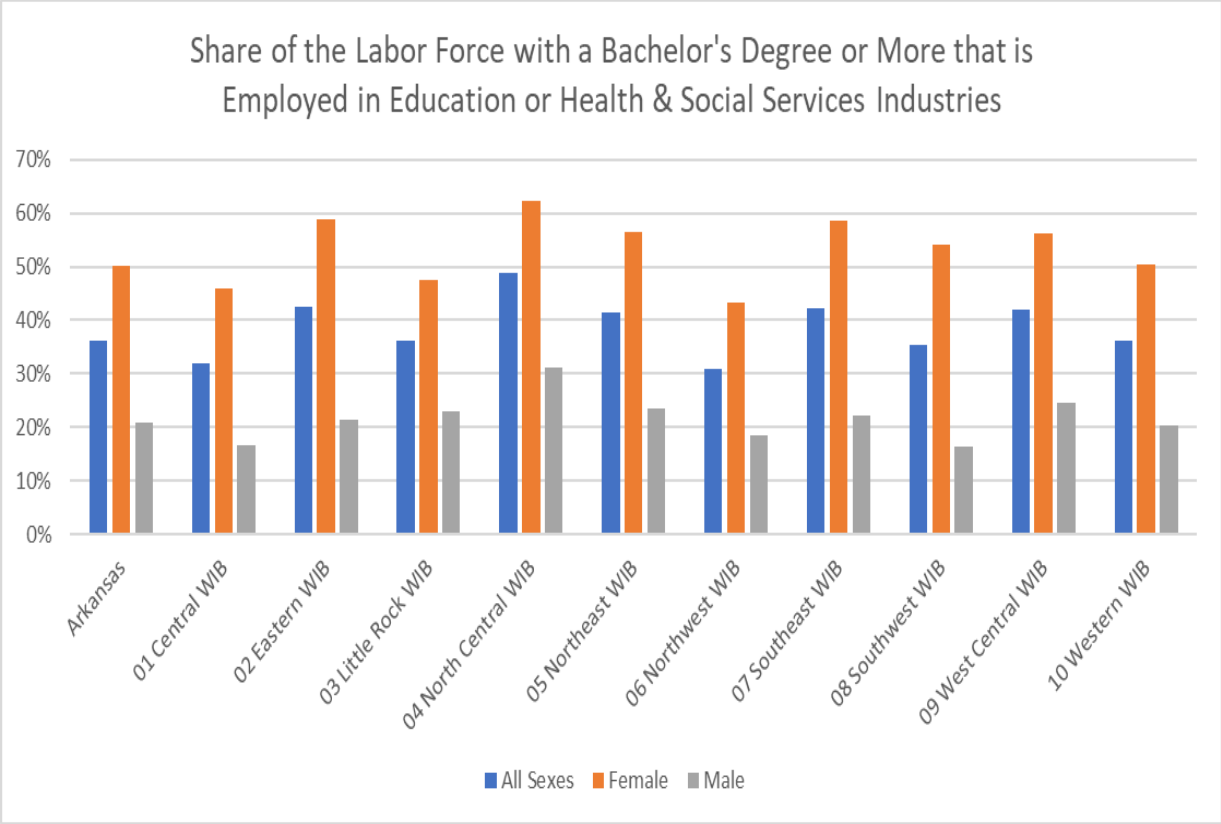
Figure 3: Ratio of average wages by year of hire to average wages for 2018 hires



Industries Employing College-Educated Workers, by Gender and Region

College-educated workers are found in all industries, but they are more concentrated in some industries relative to the workforce as a whole. These patterns of industry concentration vary somewhat by region as well. One striking pattern is that women with a bachelor's degree or more tend to be concentrated in the health and education industries, especially outside metropolitan centers, as shown in Figure 1. The share of college-educated working women who are in health or education exceeded 60% in the North Central WIB area and was nearly 60% in the Eastern and Southeast WIB areas. It was lowest in the Northwest WIB, at just over 40%.

Figure 4: College-educated women, but not men, are concentrated in the health and education industries (Source: QWI)



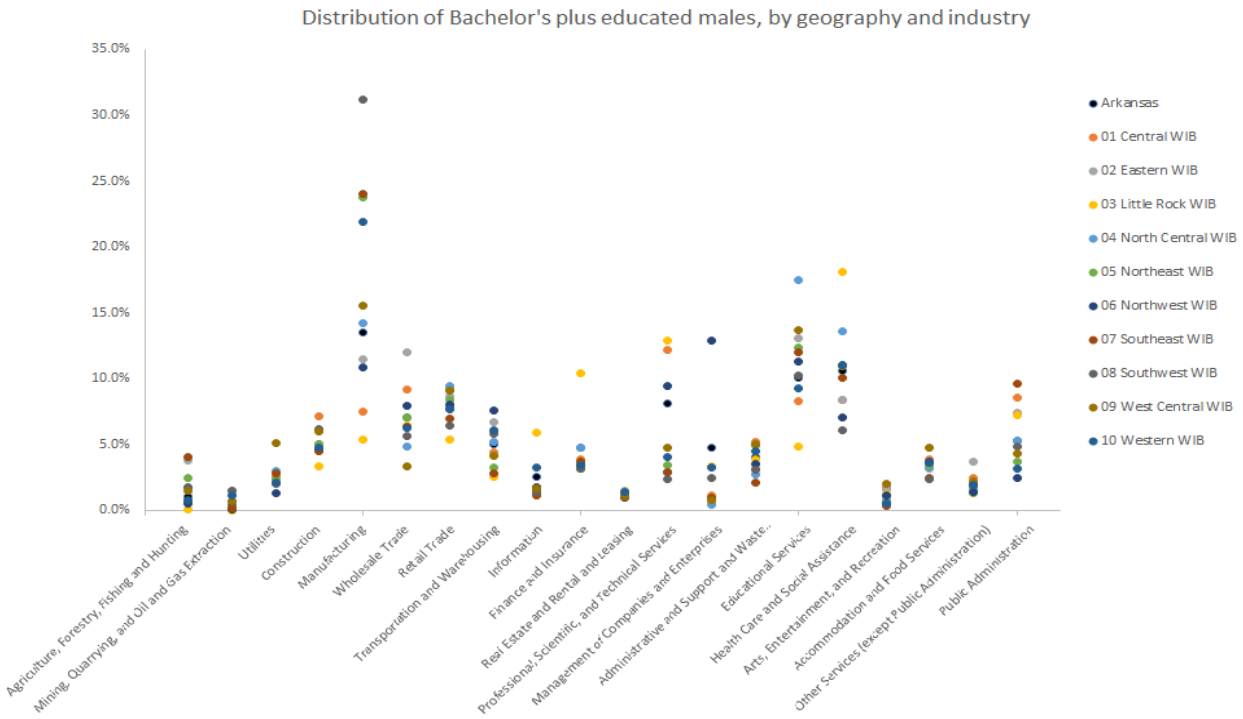
The share of college-educated men working in health and education was everywhere much lower than the share of college-educated working women. It was highest in the North Central WIB area, at just over 30%, and under 20% in the Northwest, Southwest, and Central WIB areas.

If college-educated men don't work in health and education, where do they work? Figure 2 shows that the answers vary a lot by region. Manufacturing, for example, employs 31% of college-educated working men in the Southwest WIB area, and 24% in the Northeast WIB area,

but only 11% in the Northwest WIB area, 8% in the Central WIB area and 5% in the Little Rock WIB area. By contrast, professional, scientific and technical services employ 13% of college-

educated working men in the Little Rock WIB area, 12% in the Central WIB area, and 10% in the Northwest WIB area, but under 5% in most WIB areas and under 3% in some.

Figure 5: Industry distribution of bachelor's degree or more educated males, by region (Source: QWI)



Educational Awards by Level, Region, and Field of Study

Figure 3 shows how many educational awards, altogether and at various levels, were awarded in each of the WIB regions of the state. Substantial interregional differences are visible. First, of course, regions with major bachelor's degree granting institutions stand out for awarding more bachelor's degrees per capita. Thus, Northwest WIB area, home of UA-Fayetteville, awards 184 Bachelor's degrees per 10,000 people, and Northeast WIB, home of ASU-Jonesboro, awards

146, but Southeast only 68, Southwest only 42 and Eastern WIB none. Little Rock WIB (UALR) and Central WIB (UCA) are the other bachelor's degree hubs. There seems to be a pattern whereby regions that award fewer bachelor's degrees tend to award more certificates, which should make sense if all populations have some demand for postsecondary education and certificate programs and bachelor's degree programs are substitutes.

Figure 6: Awards per 10,000 people (Source: JobsEQ)

AGGREGATE	01 Central WIB	02 Eastern WIB	03 Little Rock WIB	04 North Central WIB	05 Northeast WIB	06 Northwest WIB	07 Southeast WIB	08 Southwest WIB	09 West Central WIB	10 Western WIB
All Award Levels	216.6	176.8	372.6	415.9	432.5	350.8	188.5	343.5	346.9	123.0
Certificate < 1 Yr.	18.1	90.1	0.7	85.6	38.3	23.3	32.9	86.1	60.8	24.5
Certificate 1+ but < 2 Yr	39.8	30.4	0.6	89.7	26.5	27.8	27.0	93.4	43.1	11.1
Associate's	45.0	56.3	43.1	112.0	73.8	55.8	45.7	72.2	65.1	26.2
Certificate 2+ but < 4 Yr	0.0	-	-	-	-	-	1.7	-	-	-
Bachelor's	83.9	-	184.6	94.0	146.0	184.0	68.3	42.0	146.9	61.2
Post-Baccalaureate	0.7	-	13.7	-	2.0	1.6	-	0.3	1.8	-
Master's	24.5	-	77.7	26.4	113.0	47.7	12.9	49.5	28.1	0.1
Post-Master's	1.5	-	0.4	-	28.5	0.4	-	-	0.8	-
Doctorate	3.1	-	51.7	8.3	4.4	10.2	0.1	-	0.3	-

Figure 4 classifies awards by field of study (but not level) in order to shed light on regional differences in choice of field. The total numbers of awards differ because the data source, ARC's Economic Security Report, does not include private institutions. In some cases, the concentration of graduates from particular fields of study in particular regions fit with known distributions of economic activity across the state. The fact that business and management awards per capita is highest in Northwest WIB area makes sense in light of the concentration of corporate headquarters in that part of the state. Likewise, the concentration of health professions degrees in Little Rock WIB area reflects Little Rock's role as a hospital and health care hub with a large

catchment area. It is less clear why education awards are concentrated in Northeast WIB area, or transportation awards in North Central WIB area.

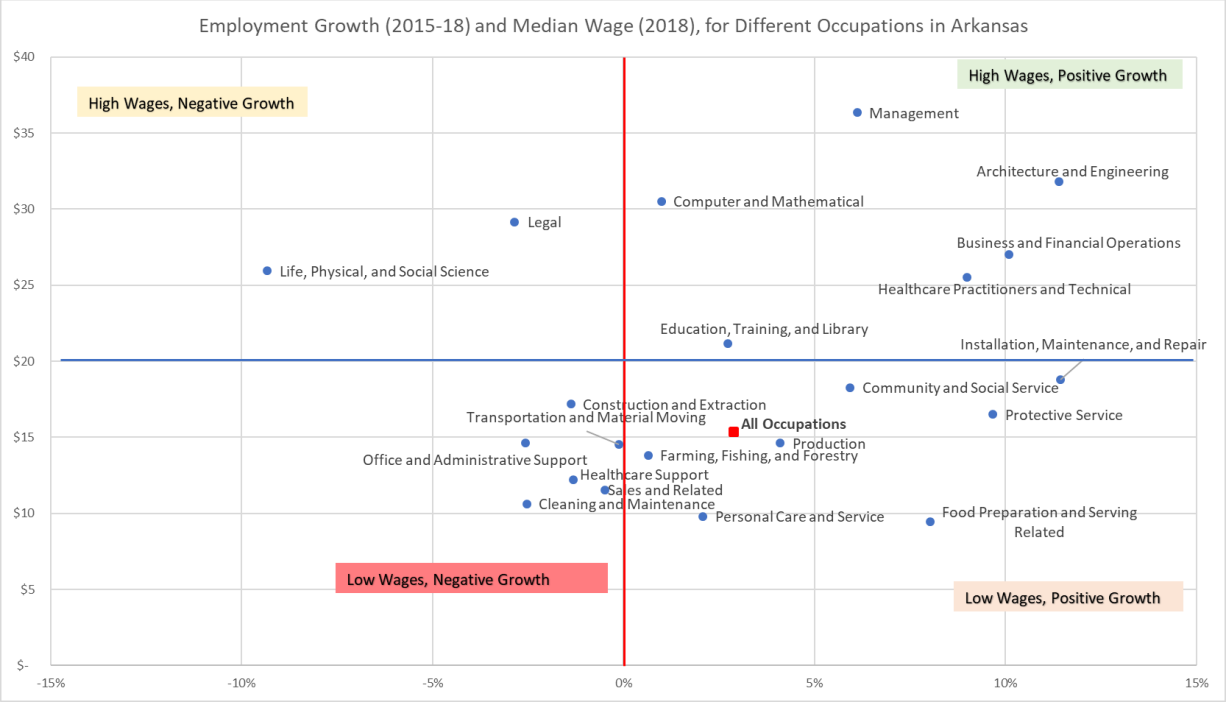
Figure 7: Awards from public institutions by region, field of study

Awards per 10,000 people	01 Central WIB	02 Eastern WIB	03 Little Rock WIB	04 North Central WIB	05 Northeast WIB	06 Northwest WIB	07 Southeast WIB	08 Southwest WIB	09 West Central WIB	10 Western WIB
ALL	138	116	322	170	331	247	137	198	263	98
Business, Management & Marketing	18	3	33	9	27	43	12	14	22	15
Communication & Journalism	2	0	5	0	7	11	1	1	4	1
Education	14	1	20	4	107	12	10	12	34	7
Engineering	0	0	4	0	3	18	0	0	4	0
Health Professions	25	21	122	53	60	30	26	46	53	14
Law Enforcement & Protective Serv.	0	1	11	3	9	3	8	26	9	4
Legal Professions & Studies	1	0	13	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
Liberal Arts & Sci., Gen. Studies	30	31	14	39	35	20	21	23	34	12
Mechanic & Repair Technologies	3	1	0	10	2	1	1	4	6	1
Multi/Interdisciplinary Studies	1	1	4	3	2	0	4	6	21	9
Parks, Recreation, Leisure & Fitness	1	0	0	0	8	10	2	3	4	0
Public Admin. & Social Service	0	1	15	0	10	2	1	2	2	0
Transportation & Materials Moving	0	0	0	11	0	1	0	0	1	0
All the others	42	56	81	37	62	91	50	62	68	33

Looking for Growing Occupations with Good Wages

Occupational categories differ in prevailing pay rates and job growth, as shown in Figure 5. In recent years, there have been job losses for office and administrative support occupations in most regions of the state. Most regions have also seen a decline in legal occupations (except NW Arkansas) and in life, physical, and social science occupations. By contrast, there has been strong growth in food preparation and serving related occupations, though with considerable regional variation. However, food service is a poorly paid occupation, earning less than $10/hour median wages throughout the state.

Figure 8: Occupational categories by median wages and job growth (Source: OES)



Some appealing occupational options are found in the upper-right sector of Figure 5. These occupations have both high job growth and solid to high wages. But all these occupations are predominantly high-skill occupations that tend to require a high level of education, including management, architecture and engineering, business and financial, computer and mathematical, and healthcare.

A promising occupational option for persons with limited aptitude or inclination for extended academic study may be installation, maintenance and repair occupations. These occupations are fairly job-rich, accounting for roughly 5% of the workforce in all regions. They pay well, with median wages substantially above $15/hour everywhere except Hot Springs. And they have enjoyed strong job gains statewide in recent years, and in every region of the state except North Arkansas nonmetropolitan, where there was a slight decline. Job growth has been especially strong in NW Arkansas, Hot Springs, and Jonesboro.

Appendix A shows the regional distribution of employment growth and median wages for the larger occupational categories.

Appendix A. Employment Growth and Wages by Occupational Category and Region

Figure 9: Employment growth by occupational category and region

employment growth	00-0000	11-0000	13-0000	25-0000	29-0000	31-0000	33-0000	35-0000	37-0000	39-0000	41-0000	43-0000	47-0000	49-0000	51-0000	53-0000
STATE	All	Management	Business and Financial Operations	Education, Training, and Library	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	Healthcare Support	Protective Service	Food Preparation and Serving Related	Building and Grounds Cleaning and	Personal Care and Service	Sales and Related	Office and Administrative Support	Construction and Extraction	Installation, Maintenance, and	Production	Transportation and Material Moving
Arkansas	2.9%	6.1%	10.1%	2.7%	9.0%	-1.3%	9.7%	8.0%	-2.5%	2.1%	-0.5%	-2.6%	-1.4%	11.4%	4.1%	-0.1%
Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, AR-MO	10.0%	5.1%	2.2%	23.7%	14.7%	22.1%	39.4%	17.4%	2.4%		-1.9%	1.3%	9.7%	25.4%	8.6%	19.6%
Fort Smith, AR-OK	-0.9%	17.2%	21.9%	5.0%		11.0%	-9.3%	8.3%	-9.7%		3.7%	-7.0%	-6.0%	7.4%	-9.3%	-13.0%
Hot Springs, AR	-0.4%	5.9%	-16.5%	-7.3%		3.2%		13.3%			-19.6%	0.4%	1.4%	34.7%	-13.7%	15.2%
Jonesboro, AR	10.1%	14.4%	24.2%	-8.5%			-1.1%	27.1%	8.0%		5.2%	2.1%	2.3%	25.9%		3.0%
Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, AR	2.9%	3.1%	18.0%	6.8%	8.4%	5.7%	13.1%	8.8%	-8.0%	2.0%	0.2%	-2.7%	1.2%	9.7%	-2.1%	3.4%
Pine Bluff, AR	-3.8%	8.0%	1.0%	-17.9%	-9.7%	-16.0%	-4.0%	-5.1%	-28.0%		-4.0%	-3.5%	-26.5%	4.7%	7.9%	-1.3%
North Arkansas nonmetropolitan area	-0.8%	6.7%	11.9%		8.4%	-17.2%	16.1%	-1.4%	-8.5%		-1.2%	1.3%	-16.2%	-2.1%	-3.3%	-0.5%
East Arkansas nonmetropolitan area	-1.9%	13.7%	-6.7%	-3.6%	12.2%	-22.4%	8.5%	-9.7%		0.0%		-0.4%	9.6%	12.7%	-2.0%	-17.3%
West Arkansas nonmetropolitan area	0.0%	-1.1%	10.7%	10.1%	12.0%	-11.3%	-4.0%	6.3%	-5.2%	-30.0%	9.9%	-16.3%	-22.2%	18.0%		-1.1%
South Arkansas nonmetropolitan area	-2.0%	5.1%	1.3%	-0.6%	3.7%	-18.4%	1.8%	-1.9%	14.2%	11.1%	-8.5%	-10.0%	2.5%	3.3%	-1.8%	-8.0%

Figure 10: Median wages by occupational category and region

median wage ($/hr) STATE	00-0000 All	11-0000 Management	13-0000 Business and Financial Operations	25-0000 Education, Training, and Library	29-0000 Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	31-0000 Healthcare Support	33-0000 Protective Service	35-0000 Food Preparation and Serving Related	37-0000 Building and Grounds Cleaning and	39-0000 Personal Care and Service	41-0000 Sales and Related	43-0000 Office and Administrative Support	47-0000 Construction and Extraction	49-0000 Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	51-0000 Production	53-0000 Transportation and Material Moving
Arkansas	15.3	36.4	27.0	21.2	25.5	12.2	16.5	9.5	10.6	9.8	11.6	14.7	17.2	18.8	14.6	14.5
Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, AR-MO	16.5	46.5	31.0	22.2	27.4	12.6	17.3	9.6	11.8	10.4	12.0	15.6	17.4	19.0	13.9	17.0
Fort Smith, AR-OK	14.3	35.2	26.4	21.4	25.2	11.6	15.3	9.4	10.8	9.4	11.5	14.3	16.7	17.7	12.8	14.6
Hot Springs, AR	13.1	27.6	24.5	22.2	25.4	11.4	17.1	9.5	10.6	9.9	11.3	13.8	15.1	14.8	13.7	12.3
Jonesboro, AR	14.5	32.9	23.4	19.3	25.4	12.8	17.9	9.4	9.9	9.7	11.8	13.8	16.0	17.9	14.2	14.6
Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, AR	16.9	37.8	26.2	-	27.4	13.1	16.8	9.5	11.0	10.1	12.5	15.7	18.0	19.1	16.3	14.2
Pine Bluff, AR	15.3	34.4	24.3	21.8	25.6	11.5	17.5	9.4	10.0	9.7	10.7	14.1	19.0	19.1	15.6	12.9
North Arkansas nonmetropolitan area	13.7	29.1	21.7	20.4	22.6	11.8	15.9	9.4	10.3	9.5	10.8	13.4	15.9	18.2	14.0	12.7
East Arkansas nonmetropolitan area	14.4	33.1	24.6	19.5	22.5	11.7	15.9	9.4	10.0	9.7	10.1	13.9	16.4	18.7	17.1	12.9
West Arkansas nonmetropolitan area	14.2	31.0	24.3	20.7	22.3	11.2	15.9	9.4	10.2	9.4	10.6	13.7	16.1	20.1	14.4	13.5
South Arkansas nonmetropolitan area	14.3	31.4	24.1	19.8	22.0	11.2	15.3	9.3	9.5	9.5	9.8	13.2	17.0	18.5	14.8	13.5

2. Workforce Development, Education and Training Activities Analysis

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs

of the workforce, as identified in Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in Employers' Employment Needs above. This must include an analysis of –

A. The State's Workforce Development Activities

*Provide an analysis of the State's workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop delivery system partners.**

_____

* Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

STATE AGENCY PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITY

Agency	Core Program	Non-Core Program
ADWS	§ Adult (Title I) § Dislocated Worker (Title I) § Youth (Title I) § Wagner-Peyser (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title III)	§ Trade Adjustment Assistance for Worker Program (Chapter 2, Title II Tract Act) § Jobs for Veterans State Grants (Title 38, Chapter 41) § Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program (Title I) § Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program (42 U.S.C.)
ADWS	§ Adult Education and Family Literacy (WIOA Title II) § Vocational Rehabilitation (Title I Rehabilitation, as amended by Title IV) as of July 1, 2016	
DSB	§ Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (Title I Rehabilitation, as amended by Title IV) as of July 1, 2016	
DHS		§ SNAP Employment & Training

ARKANSAS WORKFORCE CENTERS

The Arkansas Workforce Centers are at the forefront of the workforce activities and represent Arkansas's version of the American Jobs Center. There are 30 workforce centers spread across the state providing access to many Arkansans. In addition to these locations, Arkansas has six mobile workforce center units that travel the state and provide service locations in rural parts of the State.

The Arkansas Workforce Centers are overseen at the state level by the ADWS and are managed locally by each of the local workforce development boards. Local boards are comprised of local businesses, labor, partner agencies, and other key stakeholders to create a diverse and functional group. The boards, in alignment with the States' vision, provide front line strategic implementation for state-wide initiatives in addition to their 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, work-based learning, and others.

Local boards are tasked with procuring a one-stop operator for the daily operation of their perspective center(s) in accordance with WIOA 121(d). These boards carry out workforce activities by partnering locally though Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) to implement core, non-core, and other partner programs. Arkansas Workforce Centers are fully integrated with WIOA, Wagner-Peyser, Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG), Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Unemployment Insurance (UI), Adult Education and Family Literacy, and Vocational Rehabilitation. Local partnerships and integration also exist in many areas with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training Programs and others.

With this foundation for service integration, Arkansas Workforce Centers operate under the "no wrong door" philosophy, while local areas have developed their own customer flow strategies that are unique to their areas. Typical customers entering the center are engaged by an intake process that is designed to identify the needs of the individual by gathering information and then utilizing the appropriate resources for those needs. In some cases, the resources are initiated by a referral to a partner program. Customers are given solutions and next steps to their questions, barriers, and issues by connecting directly with the appropriate workforce system partner as part of this philosophy.

The Adult Education Section funds 36 local adult education programs, including two community-based and/or privately operated literacy councils, and special projects such as the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center through state and federal grants. The service delivery systems are diverse. Programs are funded through a variety of local administrative entities, including public schools systems, community-based organizations, colleges, community

colleges, technical institutes, and the Arkansas Department of Corrections. Local programs provide adult education services such as teaching academic skills to people who function from beginning reading through NRS educational functioning ABE Level 6level and all levels of English as a Second Language (ESL). These services are free and provided in classes held in locations throughout each program's service area. Additional programs such as family literacy, Integrated and Education Training, and Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™) are also offered in workplaces and correctional institutions. In the 2018-2019 program year, 22, 980 adult Arkansans received services from programs receiving adult education funding; 4, 611 or 20 percent were English Language Learners s and 3, 438 or 15 percent were individuals in institutional settings such as correctional facilities or community corrections programs.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) has field offices co-located at Arkansas Workforce Centers in Harrison and Searcy. ARS maintains counselor itinerary points at all other Workforce Centers.

DSB continues to support its 17 accessible kiosks for consumers at Arkansas Workforce Center locations. The original ten kiosks were placed in the same cities where DSB has offices; the second set of seven kiosks was placed in cities with either two- or four-year institutions of higher education. The kiosks provide consumers the same access to the Internet to search for jobs as a sighted person seeking services from workforce centers. DSB provides training to workforce center staff and clients on the use of the kiosks.

WORKFORCE SYSTEM SERVICES - UNEMPLOYED AND UNDEREMPLOYED

Arkansas Workforce Centers offer the full array of career services outlined in WIOA 134(c)(2) for unemployed and underemployed jobseekers. Career services available at the centers vary because of local area inflexion and needs of particular communities. Basic career services are available at approximately 30 locations throughout Arkansas. Each center has computers, printers, copiers, printed resources, and staff to assist jobseekers. Many of the services, including Arkansas Job Link and Discover Arkansas LMI Portal, can be accessed virtually though 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 his/her resume(s) and job search 24/7. 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. The built-in event calendar communicates upcoming hiring events, job fairs, and other workforce activities.

Discover Arkansas LMI Portal allows jobseekers to make informed data-driven career decisions. This labor market system provides a wide variety of regional labor market services, such as labor

trends, statistics, economics, demographics, salaries, and employer data. It allows jobseekers to set up a personal page for their career exploration data to be readily accessible. Basic career services also extend beyond the virtual world. After the initial assessment, customers, as appropriate, may be provided with direct linkages to additional workforce activities, including multiple education and training opportunities across the workforce system though partner referrals.

Many of these partners are housed within the workforce center.

JOBSEEKER SERVICES

Individualized career services within the Arkansas Workforce Centers vary across the state, but all the offices offer a full line of activities to prepare jobseekers for the modern workforce. They address many of the soft skills and technical skills training Arkansas employers require such as:

Labor exchange services must also provide labor market information to the individuals seeking services. The information must be accurate and include information on local, regional and national labor markets, such as:

- Job vacancies
- Skills necessary to obtain the jobs
- In-demand occupations and related earning potential
- Opportunities for advancement in those occupations

All One-Stops must provide the following career services:

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

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

- Individual Employment Plan (IEP)
- Career planning and counseling (no longer called case management)
- Comprehensive assessment
- Occupational Skills Assessment
- Short-term prevocational services
- Internship and work experience, including transitional jobs and industry partnerships
- Workforce preparation
- Out-of-area job search
- English language acquisition
- Financial literacy

TRAINING SERVICES

Career services are not always enough to enable job seekers to obtain self-sufficient employment. In some instances, formal training is required. Arkansas Workforce Centers offer multiple training services such as:

- Occupational skills training
- On-the-job training (OJT)
- Registered Apprenticeships
- Incumbent worker training
- Skill upgrading and retaining
- Entrepreneurial training, and
- Adult education and family literacy activities

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

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

In order to assist jobseekers in obtaining or retaining employment through career or training services, Arkansas Workforce Centers offer a variety of supportive services. Local areas are responsible for establishing a supportive service policy that outlines types, eligibility, limits, etc. Examples of supportive services include childcare; transportation; needs-related payments; tools and equipment; uniforms; and other 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.

BUSINESS SERVICES

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

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

- **Training and retraining** - Any service provided to a business that involves the training or retraining of current or future employees including OJTs, Work Experiences, Incumbent Worker Training, etc.

The individual program services offered are detailed and provide program specific information in Section VI and VII.

SERVICES TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is the general vocational rehabilitation agency in Arkansas. It has the responsibility of providing targeted services to eligible Arkansans with disabilities that assist clients in obtaining or maintaining competitive integrated employment. Currently there remain significant barriers to working age Arkansans with disabilities in participating in the state's workforce. This is evidenced by the Annual Disability Statistics Compendium: 2018, indicating only 30.8% of individuals age 18 to 64 with disabilities are employed. This places the state in the lower 10% nationally.

Through the Governor's Executive Order 10-17, DSB coordinates with other state agencies to increase employment of Arkansans with disabilities. The order also aims to focus consumer services first toward the goal of self-sufficiency through employment.

B. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A) above.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Initial analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Arkansas's workforce development activities suggests that our talent development system has the right expertise and pockets of excellence.

Successfully serving common customers in our system will require continued collaboration, coordination and re-assessment. During a strategic planning session of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges were identified for the workforce development system in Arkansas.

STRENGTHS

- The State has strong workforce development programs in place; however, the state needs to focus on outreach and education about the services available.

- The State's business leaders are at the table as champions of the programs through input into program design, identification of skills development, and commitment to continuous improvement of the talent development system.
- Key industries are involved in strategic planning and committed to driving the talent development system in Arkansas.
- Economic development is involved in planning activities at the state and local level and has identified targeted industries.
- Partnerships at state level are strong and will enable the state to successfully and fully implement WIOA, thereby enhancing services to the public through the State's talent development system.
- Despite stagnant budgets, staffing has been maintained to provide services in all 75 counties.

WEAKNESSES

- Arkansas has a shrinking labor force.
- Secondary education's involvement in workforce development, strategic planning and program design needs to be strengthened.
- Funding for community colleges is insufficient.
- While there are strong partnerships in some areas of the state with community colleges and workforce development, involvement from all community colleges statewide should be stronger.
- Funding models for education are inadequate.
- Marketing and outreach of the State's talent development system is inadequate and too many employers and jobseekers are unaware of the services and opportunities available.
- Employers' outreach to students and their parents regarding potential occupations needs to be increased.
- Parent and students lack knowledge of business/industry in the State.
- Government is not at the table as an employer.
- Kiosks for consumers who are blind are not available statewide and staff turnover at the locations make it necessary to provide frequent and ongoing training.
- Staff training programs for serving the customers across agencies are not in place, especially recognizing the special needs of serving persons with disabilities.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Current Registered Apprenticeship presents tremendous opportunities for opening workforce development strategies.
- Strong industry/workforce partnerships exist in some areas of the State.
- The State has new leadership to drive the new current agenda of collaboration and coordination.
- Bringing community colleges to the table to enhance the State's talent development system.
- Opportunities for community college programs to increase capacity.
- Program-based learning needs to be explored and utilized.
- Community College partnerships should be expanded to increase credential attainment.

CHALLENGES

- Arkansas has an aging workforce and the younger generation is not skilled to replace retiring workers.
- Regional disparities in workforce and industries make it difficult to recruit new industries.
- Misalignment of services and programs could threaten enhanced service delivery and integrity of the talent development system.
- Duplication of efforts and programs reduces the efficiency of already stagnant or declining budgets.
- Systemic education issues exist in secondary and higher education.
- Industries may be lost due to a lack of skilled labor.
- There is a lack of existing workforce training funds.
- Budgets for workforce development programs are stagnant or declining due to a lack of funding from federal sources.
- Coordination at the state level for implementation of WIOA is strong; however, this level of collaboration and coordination is labor intensive and often takes team members away from oversight and leadership responsibilities. Maintaining the current level of collaboration is critical to success.

C. State Workforce Development Capacity

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A) above.

Arkansas is well-poised to provide workforce and talent development activities given the strong knowledge base of its practitioners. Due to nationally recognized system components, such as a career pathway system with many bridges and stackable credentials; a robust Registered Apprenticeship program; and training programs that meet industry demands, our pursuit becomes one of continuous improvement. Arkansas has implemented a workforce system designed to increase capacity to serve more customers. Led by the strategic vision set by Governor Asa Hutchinson and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, the functional design of the Arkansas workforce system starts with coordination at the highest level through the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, which provides a common direction at the state agency level for driving workforce development. This partnership at the highest level will increase capacity and extend the alignment of the system to a broader and more diverse population of jobseekers across the state.

The agencies represented in this plan, some who are new to being co-located in a workforce center, will develop a streamlined customer experience through referrals from and to core, non-core, and program partners to coordinate workforce activities and increase the capacity of each partner by allowing specialized services to function optimally and assist in the elimination of the duplication of services. Furthermore, through direction by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board and one of the objectives of this plan, the State will explore ways to increase capacity, especially in rural areas across the state beyond bricks-and-mortar, through virtual services.

Concern continues for many of the programs of this plan, including the WIOA Title I programs, Wagner-Peyser, TANF, and Adult Education that have experienced stagnant or declining funding over the last several years. The lack of new funding in many programs means the State must continue to find more efficient ways to provide services to Arkansans.

Although funding has been stagnant over the past 20 years in Adult Education, providers still serve all 75 counties in Arkansas. Adult education currently receives $19 million in state funding and $5.2 million in federal funding to serve approximately 28,000 clients. The funding continues to be used for Adult Education and Family Literacy activities, such as adult basic education, literacy, workplace education, family literacy activities, English language acquisition activities, integrated English literacy and civics education, workforce preparation, correctional education, and integrated education and training.

The Adult Education Section has a strong working collaborative relationship with other state agencies and organizations to help provide education, literacy, and workforce services to clients that help reduce duplication of services and provide braided funding opportunities of approved activities. Some of the current collaborations include:

- The Arkansas Literacy Council to increase the number of literacy councils throughout the state

- The Division of Workforce Services and the Department of Human Services to provide educational support and training to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) clients
- The Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to provide assistance for adult education students with a documented disability(ies)
- Local courts and community corrections programs to provide academic instruction to first time offenders and reentry individuals
- Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC) to provide career pathways that lead to a sustainable income to students without a high school diploma
- The Arkansas Department of Corrections to continue to provide federal funding to incarcerated adults without a high school diploma

In addition, besides the traditional classroom, one of the ways adult education is providing services is through distance education. In 2018-2019, 83 percent of programs provided distance learning instruction. Currently, all adult education and literacy providers, with the exception of Arkansas Correctional School, has trained staff to offer distance learning. The state office has restructured the distance learning program to provide professional development training and certified curricula that can assist with student learning. For students who are unable to attend an adult education or literacy council program or desire to work independently, distance learning has been a great alternative for education access.

The capacity to provide needed workforce development services to individuals with disabilities is difficult to predict. The WIOA mandate to spend 15 percent of client service dollars on pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities has required the state's vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies to take a hard look at how best to utilize existing resources to address overall client needs. It is essential VR agencies look for partnership opportunities at both the state and local levels to find alternative ways of providing services that allow individuals with disabilities to enter into and remain in competitive integrated employment.

The State has a strong partnership between the workforce development system and Registered Apprenticeship (RA). This partnership has been strengthened through a series of USDOL RA focused discretionary grants awarded to the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services through the ApprenticeshipUSA Initiative. The awarded grants through the ApprenticeshipUSA Initiative include: the Arkansas Apprenticeship Pathways Initiative (AAPI), Arkansas Expands Apprenticeship (AREA), and the State Accelerator Planning grant. These grants promote the expansion of both the number of registered apprentices across the State as well as the number of occupational-based RA programs to meet employer-driven workforce needs in both traditional and non-traditional RA industries. Additionally, these grants promote an increased diversity in the population being served across RA programs. These grants are geared towards creating and

expanding RA programs in targeted growth industries, strengthen employer and service provider partnerships, as well as provide an opportunity for participants to learn occupational specific skills as well as good wages while gaining college credit. Through partnerships with the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, Community Colleges, ADWS and Local Workforce Development Area Business Services Outreach Staff, the USDOL State Office of Apprenticeship, and the Office of Skills Development, the State is working to utilize RA as an integrated WIOA workforce development tool to serve employer workforce development needs. Furthermore, all Registered Apprenticeship programs that desire so have been added to the list of approved eligible training providers.

b. State Strategic Vision and Goals

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include—

1. Vision

Describe the State's strategic vision for its workforce development system.

Vision

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

Mission

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

Arkansas's Talent Development System Philosophy

- We believe that there must be a pipeline of skilled workers for employers and a job for every Arkansan that wants one.
- We believe that the talent development system of Arkansas must be relevant to the labor market in order to meet the needs of employers and jobseekers, and for Arkansas to compete globally.
- We believe that every Arkansan should have opportunity and access to training and education that leads to a career with gainful employment.
- We believe innovation and partnerships centered on local economic priorities maximizes effectiveness and puts the State in the best position to address local and regional workforce needs.

- We believe Arkansas's workforce system should be a viable resource for business and industry.
- We believe that in order for the talent development system to be the preferred system, the system must be accountable, flexible, and align education and training with business and industry needs.
- We believe that in order for the talent development system to be effective, we must eliminate overlap and duplication of resources and services and streamline investment of funds.

Vision for the Arkansas Workforce Development Delivery System

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

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board adopted a vision for the Arkansas Workforce Development Delivery System at their regular quarterly meeting in October 2015. This vision provides standards for a high-quality workforce center including customer service, innovation and service design, and systems integration and high-quality staffing.

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

Under WIOA, partner programs and entities that are jointly responsible for workforce and economic development, educational, and other human resource programs collaborate to create a seamless customer-focused workforce delivery system that integrates service delivery across all programs and enhances access to the programs' services. The workforce delivery system includes six core programs (Title I adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs; Title II adult education and literacy programs; Title III Wagner-Peyser program; and Title IV vocational rehabilitation program), as well as other required and optional partners identified in WIOA. In Arkansas, these programs are administered by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (Titles I, II, III) and the Rehabilitation Services portion of Title IV. The Division of Services for the Blind administers the remaining portion of Title IV. Through the Arkansas Workforce Center network, these partner programs and their service providers ensure that businesses and job seekers—a shared client base across the multiple programs identified above— have access to information and services that lead to positive employment outcomes. Under WIOA, workforce centers and their partners:

- Provide job seekers with the skills and credentials necessary to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages.
- Provide access and opportunities to all job seekers, including individuals with barriers to employment, such as individuals with disabilities, to prepare for, obtain, retain, and advance in high-quality jobs and high-demand careers.
- Enable businesses and employers to easily identify and hire skilled workers and access other supports, including education and training for their current workforce.
- Participate in rigorous evaluations that support continuous improvement of workforce centers by identifying which strategies work better for different populations.
- Ensure that high-quality integrated data inform decisions made by policy makers, employers, and job seekers.

The management of the Arkansas workforce delivery system is the shared responsibility of States, local boards, elected officials, the core WIOA partners, other required partners, and workforce center operators. The Divisions encourage all of these entities to integrate the characteristics below into their work, including developing state, regional, and local strategic plans; establishing workforce center certification criteria; examining the state, regional, and local footprint of workforce centers; conducting competitions for selecting workforce center operators; developing local Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs); updating other workforce center policies and procedures; and operating and delivering services through the Arkansas Workforce Centers.

Characteristics of a High-Quality Arkansas Workforce Center

The characteristics identified below, consistent with the purpose and authorized scope of each of the programs, are designed to reflect elements that contribute to a high-quality workforce delivery system. They demonstrate the spirit and intent of the WIOA, and they will strengthen the successful integration and implementation of partner programs in Arkansas Workforce Centers. For clarity and readability, the characteristics have been grouped into three functional categories: (a) Customer Service; (b) Innovation and Service Design; and (c) Systems Integration and High-Quality Staffing.

Customer Service

Arkansas Workforce Centers provide excellent customer service to job seekers, workers and businesses. Meeting the needs of job seekers, workers and businesses is important in developing thriving communities where all citizens succeed, and businesses prosper. High-quality workforce centers:

- **Reflect a Welcoming Environment:** Reflect a welcoming environment to all customer groups who are served by the workforce centers. All workforce center staff are courteous, polite, responsive, and helpful to job seekers, businesses, and others who visit the workforce centers, either in person or by telephone or e-mail. Moreover, workforce center staff are sensitive to the unique needs of individuals with disabilities and are prepared to provide necessary accommodations.
- **Provide Career Services that Empower:** Provide career services that motivate, support and empower customers, including individuals with disabilities, to make informed decisions based on local and regional economic demand and effectively attain their personal employment and education goals.
- **Value Skill Development:** Value skill development by assessing and improving each individual's basic, occupational, and employability skills.
- **Create Opportunities:** Create opportunities for individuals at all skill levels and levels of experience by providing customers, including those with disabilities, as much timely, labor market, job-driven information and choice as possible related to education and training, careers, and service delivery options, while offering customers the opportunity to receive both skill-development and job placement services.
- **Improve Job Seeker Skills:** Improve the skills of job seeker and worker customers. Workforce centers offer access to education and training leading to industry-recognized credentials through the use of career pathways, apprenticeships, and other strategies that enable customers, including those with disabilities, to compete successfully in today's global economy. They provide businesses with access to the quantity and quality of talent they need and support upskill/backfill strategies that expand job opportunities in the community.

- **Deliver Quality Business Services:** Develop, offer, and deliver quality business services that assist specific businesses and industry sectors in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent for the regional economy. To support area employers and industry sectors most effectively, workforce center staff identifies and has a clear understanding of industry skill needs, identify appropriate strategies for assisting employers, and coordinate business services activities across workforce center partner programs, as appropriate. This includes the incorporation of an integrated and aligned business services strategy among workforce center partners to present a unified voice for the workforce center in its communications with employers. Additionally, workforce centers use the forthcoming performance measure(s) on effectiveness in serving employers to support continuous improvement of these services.
- **Innovation and Service Design:** Arkansas Workforce Centers reflect innovative and effective service design.

Integrate Intake Process

Use an integrated and expert intake process for all customers entering the workforce centers. Frontline staff is highly familiar with the functions and basic eligibility requirements of each program and can appropriately assist customers and make knowledgeable referrals to partner programs, as needed and as appropriate given the authorized scope of the program.

- **Actively Engage Industry Sectors:** Design and implement practices that actively engage industry sectors and use economic and labor market information, sector strategies, career pathways, Registered Apprenticeships, and competency models to help drive skill-based initiatives.
- **Use Market Driven Principles:** Balance traditional labor exchange services with strategic talent development within a regional economy. This includes use of market-driven principles and labor market information that help to define a regional economy, its demographics, its workforce and its assets and gaps in skills and resources.
- **Use Innovative Delivery Models:** Incorporate innovative and evidence-based delivery models that improve the integration of education and training, create career pathways that lead to industry-recognized credentials, encourage work-based learning, and use state-of the-art technology to accelerate learning and promote college and career success.

Offer Virtual and Center-Based Services: Include both virtual and center-based service delivery for job seekers, workers, and employers. Both methods of delivery support the talent needs of the regional economy, although each may better serve different customers with different levels of service needs at any given time. The workforce delivery system can expand its reach by delivering robust virtual services; and increasing the accessibility of those services through

community partners, such as libraries, community and faith-based organizations, and other partners.

Ensure Access to All Customers: Ensure meaningful access to all customers. Workforce centers must be physically and programmatically accessible to all customers, including individuals with disabilities. In so doing, workforce centers use principles of universal design and human-centered design, such as flexibility in space usage; the use of pictorial, written, verbal and tactile modes to present information for customers with disabilities or limited English proficiency; providing clear lines of sight to information for seated or standing users; providing necessary accommodations; and providing adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistants. Workforce centers use assistive technology and flexible business hours to meet the range of customer needs.

Systems Integration and High-Quality Staffing

Arkansas Workforce Centers operate with integrated management systems and high-quality staffing. High-quality workforce centers:

- **Reflect Robust Partnerships:** Reflect the establishment of robust partnerships among partners. The workforce center operator facilitates an integrated, co-located partnership that seamlessly incorporates services of the core partners and other workforce center partners.
- **Organize Services 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 who perform similar tasks serve on relevant functional teams, e.g. Skills Development Team, Business Services Team. Service integration focuses on serving all customers seamlessly (including targeted populations) by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with the purpose, scope, and requirements of each program.
- **Use Common Performance Indicators** Use common performance indicators to ensure that federal investments in employment and training programs are evidence-based, labor market driven, and accountable to participants and taxpayers. Center performance is transparent and accountable to the communities and regions served; data entry staff are trained and understand the importance of data validation, data collection processes, and the importance of accurate reporting.
- **Offer Highly Trained Career Counselors:** Staff the center with highly trained career counselors, skilled in advising job seekers of their options, knowledgeable about local labor market dynamics, aware of available services inside and outside the workforce center, and skilled in developing customers' skills for employment success.

- **Implement Integrated Policies:** Develop and implement operational policies that reflect an integrated system of performance, communication, and case management, and use technology to achieve integration and expanded service offerings.
- **Cross-Train and Equip Center Staff:** Train and equip workforce center staff in an ongoing learning process with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to provide superior service to job seekers, including those with disabilities, and businesses in an integrated, regionally focused framework of service delivery. Center staff are cross-trained, as appropriate, to increase staff capacity, expertise, and efficiency. Cross-training allows staff from differing programs to understand every program and to share their expertise about the needs of specific populations so that all staff can better serve all customers.
- Center staff is routinely trained and are keenly aware as to how their particular function supports and contributes to the overall vision of the local board.
- **Maintain Integrated Case Management:** Develop and maintain integrated case management systems that inform customer service throughout the customer's interaction with the integrated system and allow 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 system only after the informed written consent of the individual has been obtained, where required.

2. Goals

Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the above analysis of the State's economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include—

A. *Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers of employment* and other populations. ***
B. *Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.*

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* Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals

who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

** Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth and any other populations identified by the State.

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

Goal 1 Objectives:

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

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

Goal 2 Objectives:

11. 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.
12. Develop an integrated data system that will enable the sharing of information between partner agencies to more efficiently service both employers and jobseekers.
13. Promote training that leads to industry recognized credentials and certification.
14. Support transportable skill sets for transportable careers.
15. Support career pathways development and sector strategy initiatives as a way to meet business and industry needs.
16. Expand service delivery access points by the use of virtual services.
17. Develop a common business outreach strategy with a common message that will be utilized by all workforce system partners.
18. 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.
19. Utilize customer satisfaction surveys to ensure continuous improvement of the State's talent development system.
20. 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:

21. Increase access to the workforce development system through a no wrong door approach to services.
22. Change employer and jobseeker perceptions of the workforce system.
23. Develop an image-building outreach campaign that educates Arkansans about the services and the career development opportunities available in the State.

24. Utilize technology, including social media and search engine optimization, to better connect jobseekers and employers with the talent development system in Arkansas.

25. 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 general public.

Strategic Goal 4: Address Skills Gaps

Goal 4 Objectives:

26. Conduct a statewide skills and asset analysis to determine the skills gap present and resources available to solve the skills issue.

27. Develop and implement an action plan to close the basic core, technical, and soft skills gaps in Arkansas.

28. 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.

    The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has a focus on helping low-income and disadvantaged populations. Workforce development professionals operate within a highly integrated one-stop career system, complete with co-located partners, procured service providers, and shared resource leveraging. However, funding and available public resources are still finite and limited, so populations with significant or multiple barriers to employment should receive priority for services. Sometimes these populations will be referred to as "hard-to-serve" or "hard-to-employ" clients.

    Some special populations the workforce system serves include, but are not limited to:

- Veterans and eligible spouses
- Individuals with disabilities, both youth and adults
- English language learners (Limited English Proficiency)
- Migrant and seasonal farmworkers
- Out-of-school youth
- Adult and youth ex-offenders (justice-involved)
- Public assistance recipients (TANF, SNAP, SSI, Medicaid, etc.)

- Youth in, or previously in, foster care
- Homeless individuals, both youth and adults
- Runaway youth
- Pregnant and parenting youth
- The long-term unemployed
- Low-income workers earning wages below self-sufficiency
- Basic skills deficient individuals
- The over 55 age group

The vision of the one-stop system is that service providers leverage all available assets, ensure universal access, and allocate funding for low income and special populations. Many local areas have established more inclusive priority of service policies to ensure that their hard-to-serve and disadvantaged populations receive a focus in their service delivery.

Each of the four major goals of this plan will be implemented with the above listed special populations in mind to increase the services and enrollment of these populations. The ultimate goal is to find, and help disadvantaged individuals, which in turn leads to greater overall economic prosperity for the State. Persistent, incremental accommodations or assistance can often result in a safety net that can eventually lead to huge gains for the individuals seeking help.....raising the overall level of economic prosperity for the community, when they achieve positive labor market outcomes. Thus, proactive intake of special populations helps the State attain a larger return on investment for the funding, assets and staff resources employed. This requires leadership and vision in labor market-relevant planning, including evaluation, assessments, data-driven decision-making, and collaboration to best meet the needs of special populations, jobseekers, workers and businesses alike. The four major goals, when implemented will achieve this outcome.

3. Performance Goals

Using the table provided in Appendix 1, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

WIOA ensures that Federal investments in employment and training programs are accountable to jobseekers, employers, customers, and taxpayers. WIOA establishes common performance measures across the four core programs and also requires other programs authorized by the Act to report on the same indicators. In addition, WIOA requires the establishment of primary

indicators on credential attainment and skills gain and on the effectiveness of services to employers. Arkansas's common performance targets are located in Appendix 1.

4. Assessment

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) is the state board given statutory responsibility with overseeing the State's talent development system, evaluating effectiveness, and ensuring continuous improvement. The Program and Performance Evaluation Committee of the Board, which is led by a private sector chair, acts in an advisory capacity to the Board to carry out the following functions:

- Continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system in local areas, including providing assistance to local boards, one-stop operators, one-stop partners, and providers with planning and delivery of services, such as training and supportive services to workers, jobseekers, and employers;
- Development and updating of comprehensive state performance accountability measures, including state adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the core programs in the state;
- Identification and dissemination of information on best practices, including best practices for:
- The effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment;
- The development of effective local boards, which may include information on factors that contribute to enabling local boards to exceed negotiated local levels of performance, sustain fiscal integrity, and achieve other measures of effectiveness; and
- Effective training programs that respond to real time labor market analysis; effectively use direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences; and that evaluate such skills; and competencies for adaptability; to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways;
- Objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of one-stop centers;
- The preparation of an annual report;
- The development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system;

- The development of such other policies as may promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the state; and
- The development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures. This would (include the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information, and performance accountability measurement and reporting processes and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation, to improve coordination of services across one-stop partner programs).

This committee will meet at least quarterly to review progress of accomplishing state goals, performance outcomes, and program evaluations. The committee will give direction on needed improvements and identify and disseminate best practices.

To date, a primary focus of the state has been the implementation of the new workforce system strategic plan and the development of a balanced scorecard approach to system evaluation. Work will continue on studies and reports to support the implementation of the systemic strategic plan and to design and launch projects to strengthen the four strategic pillars that form the foundation of the strategic plan: efficient partnerships, enhanced service delivery, increased awareness of the State's talent development system, and addressing skills gaps. Additionally, the AWDB will evaluate programs to identify any gaps or duplications in planning or service delivery, and any other programs that adversely affect the seamless delivery of services. Any problems identified by AWDB will be included in the annual report on strategic plan implementation and the results of measures taken by AWDB to address those problems.

Program and other data from across the workforce system are critical in evaluating the extent to which workforce system programs, services, and products are meeting the needs of customers and stakeholders. The collection of key data, as well as the reporting and analysis of that data, in a consistent and useful manner are essential in demonstrating outcomes, determining if changes are required or desired, and establishing benchmarks for future performance.

Under the new strategic plan, the AWDB will continue to work with system partners to improve and systematize these processes. The system evaluation structure will be redesigned yet will continue to address all elements required by statute.

The State Board will assess the overall effectiveness of Arkansas' workforce development system by reviewing and evaluating program-specific reports on a quarterly as well as an annual basis of all workforce development activities administered by state agencies involved with workforce development. Key areas of focus include developing linkages and better coordination with vocational education, apprenticeship, adult education and literacy, vocational rehabilitation programs, and other workforce development and training programs. It is the plan of the State

Board to develop data tools, such as a performance dashboard, to assist them in determining the effectiveness of the system.

In Summer 2019, the State Board began negotiating a contract with the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville to complete a comprehensive workforce system evaluation. The evaluation will use designs that employ the most rigorous analytical and statistical methods that are reasonably feasible, such as the use of control groups (20 CFR § 682.220) as appropriate:

A. Local Integration Study- Sample Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I or Title III participants for 3 Local Workforce Development Areas. This part of the evaluation will focus on two primary areas: 1. Co-enrollment and Co-funding of REQUIRED WIOA Partners and 2. Leveraging of Local Resources available in the Local Workforce Development Area.

1. Sample Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I and Title III participants for 3 Local Workforce Development Areas-to determine if, based on the participants information in the Case File, the participant might have been eligible to receive services under the required partners listed in 20 CFR § 678.400.

2. For each local area selected, interview leadership to identify partner programs and non-profits that collaborate with the Workforce Centers beyond the list of required partners above. For all partners, required in number 1 and other partners identified in 2, report whether there exists:
   - Memorandums of Understanding between the programs/entities
   - Referral Procedures
   - Training for partners regarding the services provided or alternative print materials to assist in collaboration OR
   - An alternative method to refer clients between the partners effectively

3. Identify and report entities in the selected local areas that provide services to the following targeted populations:
   - Displaced Homemaker
   - Low Income
   - Limited English Proficiency
   - Migrant Worker
   - Disabled
   - Veteran
   - Older Worker
   - Out of School Youth
   - Foster Youth

- Basic Skill Deficient
- Ex-Offender
- Single Parent
- TANF Recipient
- SNAP Recipient
- SSDI Recipient
- UI Claimant
- Long-Term Unemployed

4. For all programs and services identified in steps 1, 2, and 3, report whether sampled participants were: referred to or co-enrolled in other programs or services.

B. In the Comprehensive Centers for the 3 Local Areas selected for sampling, report case studies on effectiveness of identifying and closing Skill-Gaps

   Interview staff for examples of:

   i. Skills-gap identification on either the occupation level, based on demand, or the skill-level based on interaction with an employer.
   ii. Determine the services that were provided to address the skills-gap
   iii. Provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the services provided in closing the skills-gap, if possible.

C. Review a sample of Arkansas Workforce Centers against the State's certification policy and applicable laws/regulations for four comprehensive centers and two affiliate centers. Each of the six centers selected should be located in different Local Workforce Development Areas and may be selected from Local Workforce Development Areas that overlap the 3 selected above

D. Conduct a statewide customer service survey for business customers of WIOA Title I and Title III receiving services over the most recent 12 months available.

E. Provide evaluation status reports on a monthly basis on overall project goals. These reports will be issued at the end of February, March, April, May, June, and July of 2020.

F. Provide a preliminary evaluation report by August 15, 2020.

G. Provide a final evaluation, with results, best practices, and recommendations by September 30, 2020.

c. State Strategy

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

1. Describe the strategies the State will implement, including industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations and career pathways, as required by WIOA section 101(d)(3)(B), (D). "Career pathway" is defined at WIOA section 3(7) and includes registered apprenticeship. "In-demand industry sector or occupation" is defined at WIOA section 3(23).

The state's workforce system is complex, comprising numerous programs, services, and initiatives administered by state agencies, secondary and higher education, community and technical colleges, local adult education providers, Registered Apprenticeship, and vocational rehabilitation providers. System partners are responsible for the delivery of a wide range of workforce education and training programs and related services, as well as education programs that support career preparation and advancement.

The system is interrelated because the programs and agencies serve either a common customer or are charged with achieving similar employment and education outcomes for their targeted customer groups. Therefore, the strategic planning process is designed to identify and focus on systemic issues that affect multiple parts of the system programs or agencies that address broad, big-picture workforce issues. Because the system strategic plan focuses on issues that span agencies and programs, it fulfills a unique and complementary role in the workforce system and does not duplicate the purpose or scope of other agency or program plans.

Several priority issues were identified by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board that are being addressed by system partners during our ongoing strategic planning activities.

Industry Sector Partnerships

The Arkansas Sector Partnership (ASP), a partnership of employers, state agencies, education providers, Registered Apprenticeship, and community leaders, will engage project stakeholders in ongoing regional planning efforts across the state to assess workforce development needs and job demand. Input obtained from regional planning efforts will be used to adjust training (on an as needed basis) to meet employer needs. The ASP will utilize a regional planning sector framework that focuses on critical factors that include: 1) existing labor market information and other workforce related data; 2) regional input from community stakeholders; 3) industry

sector/employer input; 4) aligned education and training activities to meet employer needs; 5) aligning business services/workforce services/case management services to serve workforce customers (both employers and dislocated workers); and 6) continuous improvement and sustainability after the life of the grant.

ASP will engage in regional planning activities, structured around WIOA regions, including assessing the workforce development and economic landscape to identify employer training needs, industry trends, and areas of job growth. The resulting information, data, and analysis will serve as a basis for serving dislocated workers and employers under ASP as well as serve as the cornerstone of WIOA regional and statewide planning activities. The regional and sector strategies planning activities will include career pathways to design career ladders that will focus on hard to serve individuals.

Both geographic and industry-based sector strategies are proven to be effective methods for aligning workforce service providers and community partners to address the occupational based training needs of employers.

The ASP regional planning process will also assess existing workforce services and community resources infrastructure to support workforce development efforts emphasizing the needs of hard to serve populations including those participating in career pathways. The ASP will engage in the following activities to ensure the development of a comprehensive regional and sector plan:

- Partnership and program development with stakeholders, employers, and training programs;
- Acquisition, analysis, and utilization of LMI and workforce information to identify regional trends;
- Asset mapping and other analysis, such as SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats);
- Developing regional plans;
- Training for staff in State and local areas necessary to facilitate regional planning and implement regional strategies;
- Establishing social and/or peer learning networks among regions using sector strategies;
- Identifying and mapping the necessary skills and competencies for in-demand jobs;
- Assessing how well those skills and competencies are reflected in existing training programs and curricula; and
- Identifying aligned industry credentials for those skills and competencies needed.

This structure will also ensure that employers and regional industry representatives are actively engaged in designing and implementing strategies in five key areas: 1) serving on the project's leadership team; 2) helping implement program strategies and goals; 3) identifying and mapping

the necessary skills and competencies for the programs; 4) assisting with curriculum development and designing the program; and 5) assisting with the design of an assessment and/or credential that will address industry skill needs.

Finally, the state utilized WIOA Set-Aside funds to award additional funding to each of the state's ten (10) Local Workforce Development Areas. This additional funding was used for regional planning purposes and designed to assist the areas in their ongoing broad strategic approaches.

Career Pathways

Arkansas leaders recognize the need for an education and training system that addresses the state's economic challenges. Through the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative (CPI), the state has sought to coordinate publicly funded education with social services and workforce and economic development programs to produce a better-trained workforce and promote economic growth. The Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative is a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector and to advance over time to successively higher level of education and employment in that sector. Each step on a career pathway is designed explicitly to prepare workers and students for the next level of employment and education. Using the career pathways framework, the workforce system seeks to target jobs in industries of importance to local economies and create avenues of advancement for current workers, jobseekers, and future labor market entrants, as well as a supply of qualified workers for employers.

Community colleges play a linchpin role in career pathways. The career pathways framework promotes systemic reform for community colleges -- providing a model that better aligns their various mission areas of workforce development, academic credentialing, transfer preparation, and remediation with the needs of employers. Pathways commonly feature community colleges working in partnership with other educational entities, workforce and economic development agencies, employer and labor groups, and social service providers to ensure investments in education and training pay off for the region's economic vitality. Students entering into adult literacy or college remedial coursework are better able to advance to and succeed in college-level programs, and all students can more readily earn postsecondary credentials and make progress toward a career. Incumbent workers are provided training opportunities that help increase their skills and subsequent wages.

CPI, which began serving clients in fall 2005, seeks to improve the earnings through postsecondary education attainment of Arkansas's low-income "TANF-eligible" adults by enabling them to work in industries of regional importance. Administered by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) with funding from the Division of Workforce Services (DWS), ADHE/CPI provides an opportunity for 25 campuses to develop Career Pathways Initiatives. Through the implementation of WIOA, the State seeks to use lessons learned and the

framework created through the CPI to educate and encourage other jobseekers to utilize career pathways as a method for preparing for their eventual career.

CPI's objectives for program participants are:

- Increased enrollment in college-level certificate and associate degree programs;
- Increased attainment of college-level certificates and associate degrees;
- Increased job attainment and job retention in key industries; and
- Improve the level of engagement among educators and employers to generate work opportunities for students and serve the workforce needs of the private sector.

Finally, Arkansas has become aware that some of the WIOA program partners are currently utilizing a software product that helps job seekers build career plans based upon their individual knowledge, skills, and abilities from previous jobs and education. The product then recommends occupations, career clusters, training programs, and available jobs. The software program is applicable to all types of workforce clients: youth, dislocated workers, TANF or SNAP E&T participants, Veterans, individuals with disabilities, and more.

In early 2018, discussions began in earnest to implement the use of this product across all WIOA programs and participants.

Registered Apprenticeship

Many of the things that keep Arkansas's many industries operative today were built long ago by trade and craftsmen. Fewer people are choosing a career in the trades, even as demand and unemployment rates continue to escalate. Arkansas, like many states in America, is suffering from a widening skills gap that desperately needs to be filled. That means, for everyone who enjoys modern day necessities like electricity, indoor plumbing, paved roads, air conditioning, homes, and buildings to live and work in, things could take a downward turn, because craftsmen and tradesmen are retiring at an alarming high rate, and not enough people are training to take their place.

Tradesmen and craftsmen are needed now more than ever. For those men and women that do step up to fill the ever-growing expertise gap in Arkansas, big opportunities await. From work-while-you learn apprenticeships to career-elevating college and technical courses, there are hundreds of ways to kick start a craft career in Arkansas.

Support for Registered Apprenticeship continues to grow in the State due to the relationship between the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship, the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coordination Steering Committee (a Governor appointed committee), the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, the Office of Skills Development, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board who collaborate continuously to address key issues regarding workforce development needs throughout the State of Arkansas.

As a way to attract more workers to Registered Apprenticeship, the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coordination Steering Committee established a website to inform jobseekers who may be interested. http://arkansasapprenticeship.com/. This website informs prospective apprentices of the occupations, the training, and what employment opportunities exist.

Closing the Gap 2020 - A Master Plan for Higher Education in Arkansas

A master plan for improving Arkansas higher education attainment was presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board on October 30, 2015. The 2015-2020 five-year planning cycle adopted in this plan is a critical component in the long-term objective to reach the 2025 goal of a 60 percent post-secondary attainment rate in Arkansas, increasing from the current estimate of 43.4 percent. By 2020, the plan is to reduce the educational attainment gap in Arkansas by increasing the number of postsecondary credentials by 50 percent over the 2013-2014 academic year levels; increasing the number of certificates awarded to 19,200; associate's degrees to 12,700; and bachelor's degrees to 19,900.

As the State moves to the implementation stage of the Closing the Gap Master Plan, the plan has been divided into core subsections. Each subsection has a committee tasked with finding the best way to implement the policy that will help achieve the goals of the master plan related to their subsection. The subsections include:

- Adult Learners
- College Readiness
- Remediation
- Student Success Innovation
- Affordability
- Institutional Funding
- Non-Formula Funding
- Communication Strategies

Supporting Goals

Below is a summary of proposed goals from the Closing the Gap 2020 Master Plan. The Closing the Gap 2020 Master Plan is accessible online at https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/adhe/Closing_the_Gap_2020.pdf.

GOAL 1: Raise completion and graduation rates of colleges and universities by 10 percent.

- Reduce the percentage of students needing remediation to prepare them for college-level course work.

- Reduce the time needed for students to complete remedial requirements.
- Raise first year retention rates of students to Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) regional averages.

GOAL 2: By fall 2018, increase the enrollment of adult students, age 25 to 54, by 50 percent.

- Reduce the remedial course enrollments for adults by 50 percent through alternative means of preparing adults for college-level work
- Improve communication of the value of higher education to non-traditional students

GOAL 3: Raise the attainment rates of underserved student groups in the state by 10 percent.

- Raise the overall college-going rate for all student groups by 5 percent from 50.1 percent to 55.1 percent
- Raise the underserved student college-going rate to equal that of other students
- Raise completion rates of underserved student groups equal to other students.

GOAL 4: Improve College Affordability through Effective Resource Allocation

- Reduced time to degree for students
- Allocate 25 percent of state scholarship funds to need-based programs
- Re-allocate institutional spending to maximize efficiency and effectiveness

Jobs for Arkansas's Graduates (JAG)

The Jobs for Arkansas's Graduate (JAG) program is a state affiliate of the national Jobs for America's Graduates. Middle and high school students, who are experiencing barriers to graduation, are provided a comprehensive set of services designed to keep them in school through graduation and improve the rate of success in achieving their education and career goals. Along with the academic support, JAG also provides work-based learning experiences that will assist students to further their education and training in pursuit of a rewarding career.

The JAG model is based on and evaluated by a series of performance measures and standards, which allow the program to report student outcomes. The data collected and reported includes student demographics, contact hours with students, graduation rate, direct work experience, job placement one year after graduation, and employment outcomes.

The former Arkansas Department of Career Education and Arkansas Division of Workforce Services established a strong partnership to ensure Arkansas high students graduate and continue on the path to success either in today's workforce in or postsecondary education.

Arkansas Career Coach Program

The College and Career program is designed to motivate and support Arkansas students to achieve their goals as it relates to college and career planning. Students may begin working with a Career Coach in the 8th grade (7th, if enrolled in Career Orientation) with continued services through high school graduation. Career Coaches work in partnership with the Career Orientation instructors and school counselors to assist with the development and revision of the student's college and career plans. The College and Career Coach program provides assistance and information for resources in the areas of academic tutoring, career counseling, mentoring, financial guidance, and other supports necessary for postsecondary education/training access, retention, and success.

The Arkansas College and Career Coach Program was introduced as a pilot initiative in January 2010. The program was administered through the former Arkansas Department of Career Education and established partnerships with the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and Arkansas Division of Workforce Services. During the pilot phase, the program was designed to provide college and career planning services and activities to middle/high school students within the twenty-one most economically challenged counties across the state of Arkansas. After the completion of the pilot phase, the program demonstrated a positive impact in the areas of college-going rate, ACT Scores, remediation rates, and financial aid applications and was expanded beyond the initial twenty-one counties.

Sector and Regional Planning

One of the functions of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board found in 20 CFR § 679.130 and under WIOA sec. 101(d) is assisting the Governor in the:

> "Development and continuous improvement of the workforce development system, [including the] development and expansion of strategies to meet the needs of employers, workers, and job seekers particularly through industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations.

In a 2019 USDOL Region IV meeting, the USDOL Regional Administrator introduced the State of Colorado Workforce Development Council's Sector Strategies Plan. Arkansas has developed a similar strategy.

On February 9, 2017, - Release of Issuance PY16-10 to Local Workforce Development Boards- "Guidance for Implementation of Sector Strategies under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act".

https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/src/files/PY16-10-Guidance-for-Implementation-of-Sector-Strategies-under-the-WIOA.pdf

June 8, 2018 - Release of Issuance PY17-09 to Local Workforce Development Boards- "Applications for Regional Planning and Industry/Sector Partnerships Funding Assistance".

https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/src/files/PY-17-09-LWDB-Assistance-Proposals-Issuance.pdf

CURRENT- Planning adjustments to Regional planning fund requirements, including increased allotments (funding permitted) and reporting requirements that would allow Arkansas to report on Sector Strategy implementation.

Finally, a comprehensive review of the Colorado program identified the following areas in which Arkansas can make improvements in the development of its system.

Quick GAP between AR and CO information, based on the website:

Colorado Web Page	Key Content	Currently Available at ADWS	Next Steps and Additional Requirements
Sector Partnerships	Map of Active Sector Partnerships	Not Available	ADWS would require LWDB receiving Sector Planning funds to provide a list of engaged employers in the sector partnerships and how this aligns with local plans.
Sector Partnerships Community of Practice	Webinars by Sector	Not Available	ADWS and LWDBs would need to establish the sector partnerships before this would be feasible, so no change in current strategy.
Sector Partnership Directory	For each Sector Partnership established: POC, Chairs, web pages for the sector, local area, Conveners	Not Available	Currently, ADWS would require LWDB receiving Sector Planning funds to provide a list of engaged employers in the sectors in their reporting. We would need to provide additional support or funding to establish a web page for each sector as a later improvement.
Colorado Web Page	**Key Content**	**Currently Available at ADWS**	**Next Steps and Additional Requirements**
Sector Partnership Technical Assistance	Contact information for TA and resources	Access to Technical Assistance from Staff and other resources could be gathered and	

		provided on a similar web page	
Industry Intermediary Consortium	List of engaged Trade Associations		This might not be necessary at first. ADWS could provide the information in the Sector Partnership page, for each partnership the association is participating. A strategy should be considered for developing and sustaining relationships with industry associations and professional associations (i.e., SHRM, etc.). This provides an opportunity for broadened industry impact across several companies in a region. Currently, ADWS would require LWDBs receiving Sector Planning funds to report Trade Associations similarly to engaged businesses.
Statewide Education Sector Partnership	NA	NA	NA- No similar statewide sector partnerships are in place but might result from further efforts.
Business Engagement Guide	Overview and Access to a 31-pg. document for engagement	TPMA study material and other resources are currently available to share on a similar website	*Could be combined with the Technical Assistance page

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV
Complete	Relatively Administrative	Mostly Administrative	Mostly Administrative
Guidance to LWDBs and Initiation of Sector Planning Funds	Increase Funding Levels Available and allow flexibility for Sector OR Regional Planning Add requirements to engage at least 3 employers, establish chairs, support meetings and conventions, engage trade associations, report participating businesses and associations, and post meeting materials on their website.	Establish web pages: Technical Assistance (and resources) Business Engagement Guide Sector Partnerships Sector Partnership Directory to mirror Colorado resources	Add Sector Meeting information on the individual Local WDB pages we have already established, which would mirror the “community of practice” page in Colorado

2. Describe the strategies the State will use to align the core programs, any Combined State Plan partner programs included in this Plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs, and any other resources available to the State to achieve fully integrated customer services consistent with the strategic vision and goals described above. Also describe strategies to strengthen workforce development activities in regard to weaknesses identified in section II(a)(2).

Center to WIOA is the integration of service delivery amongst multiple workforce and talent development programs. Arkansas has strong partnerships among state agencies, two- and four-year educational institutions, economic development, Registered Apprenticeship, and community-based organizations. A priority of the Arkansas Workforce Development 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 will be made possible by the following strategies.

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

Organize Service by Function Organize and integrate services by function (rather than by program); when permitted by a program's authorizing statute and as appropriate, and by coordinating staff communication, capacity building, and training efforts. Functional alignment includes having workforce center staff who perform similar tasks serve on relevant functional teams, e.g. Skills Development Team, Business Services Team. Service integration focuses on serving all customers seamlessly (including targeted populations) by providing a full range of services staffed by cross-functional teams, consistent with the purpose, scope, and requirements of each program.

Use Common Performance Indicators Use common performance indicators to ensure that federal investments in employment and training programs are evidence-based, labor market driven, and accountable to participants and taxpayers. Center performance is transparent and accountable to the communities and regions served; data entry staff are trained and understand the importance of data validation, data collection processes, and the importance of accurate reporting.

Offer Highly Trained Career Counselors Staff the center with highly trained career counselors, skilled in advising job seekers of their options, knowledgeable about local labor market dynamics, aware of available services inside and outside the workforce center, and skilled in developing customers' skills for employment success.

Implement Integrated Policies Develop and implement operational policies that reflect an integrated system of performance, communication, and case management, and use technology to achieve integration and expanded service offerings.

TANF and WIOA programs will enter a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate and establish a common intake, assessment, and client engagement model. A low-income job seeker may qualify for the Medicaid or SNAP program, under their respective eligibility and enrollment rules and be referred to TANF through MOUs with the Arkansas Department of Human Services. TANF staff will be instructed to engage these individuals through a low touch model and offer referral services to education and workforce partners who could best service them. And, where these jobseekers can be considered TANF eligible, they can then be enrolled in direct TANF services provisioning through TANF funded programs, as well as optimize service provisioning through co-enrollment with partnering programs. TANF and WIOA programs have also agreed in the MOU to leverage their existing IT systems to achieve these objectives and others, such as the development of referral forms to streamline services to these clients.

Cross-Train and Equip Center Staff Train and equip workforce center staff in an ongoing learning process with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to provide superior service to job seekers, including those with disabilities, and businesses in an integrated, regionally focused framework of service delivery. Center staff are cross-trained, as appropriate, to increase staff capacity, expertise, and efficiency. Cross-training allows staff from differing programs to understand every program and to share their expertise about the needs of specific populations so that all staff can better serve all customers. Center staff is routinely trained and are keenly aware as to how their particular function supports and contributes to the overall vision of the local board.

Maintain Integrated Case Management Develop and maintain integrated case management systems that inform customer service throughout the customer's interaction with the integrated system and allow 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 system only after the informed written consent of the individual has been obtained, where required.

III. Operational Planning Elements

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that supports the State's strategy and the system-wide vision described in Section II. (c) above. Unless otherwise noted, all Operational Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. This section must include—

A. State Strategy Implementation

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include—

1. State Board Functions

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e. provide a description of Board operational structures and decision-making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

The roles and responsibilities of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) were established under Arkansas Act 907 of 2015 and WIOA Section 101(d). The AWDB has policymaking and oversight responsibilities for the Arkansas Workforce Development system. Additionally, Arkansas Act 907 of 2015 gives the AWDB responsibility for oversight of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

The AWDB operates under a committee structure of four standing committees, which include the Executive Committee, Strategic Planning Committee, Program and Performance Evaluation Committee, and TANF Oversight Committee.

The board and committees meet quarterly and may call special meetings as necessary. Each of the statutory roles and responsibilities outlined in WIOA Section 101(d) and A.C.A. §15-4-3706 have been assigned to the committee which best fits the function of the role or task. The chairs of the standing committees report to the full board at each quarterly meeting their activities and progress in accomplishing their goals.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall be formed and meet as needed between the quarterly board meetings at the call of the chair of the executive committee or upon the request of seventy-five percent (75%) of the executive committee members.

The Executive Committee shall have the authority of the Board to act during the interim between Board meetings but shall defer to the Board, whenever practical, action on matters of major policy implications.

Strategic Planning Committee

The Strategic Planning Committee shall act in an advisory capacity to the Board to carry out the following functions:

- The development, implementation, and modification of the state workforce development plan
- The review of statewide policies, of statewide programs, and of recommendations on actions that should be taken by the state to align workforce development programs in the

state in a manner that supports a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system in the state, including the review and provision of comments on the state plan, if any, for programs and activities of one-stop partners that are not core programs;

- The development and continuous improvement of the workforce development system in the state, including:
- The development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across programs supported under the workforce development system;
- The development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the state's one-stop delivery system, including the development of—
- The development of strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access to, and improve the quality of, services and activities provided through the one-stop delivery system, including such improvements to:
- Enhance digital literacy skills;
- Accelerate the acquisition of skills and recognized postsecondary credentials by participants;
- Strengthen the professional development of providers and workforce professionals; and
- Ensure such technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals residing in remote areas;
- The development of allocation formulas for the distribution of funds for employment and training activities for adults, and youth workforce investment activities, to local areas.

Program and Performance Evaluation Committee

The Program and Performance Evaluation Committee shall act in an advisory capacity to the Board to carry out the following functions:

- The continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system in local areas, including providing assistance to local boards, one-stop operators, one-stop partners, and providers with planning and delivering services, including training services and supportive services, to support effective delivery of services to workers, jobseekers, and employers;

- The development and updating of comprehensive state performance accountability measures, including state adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the core programs in the state;

- The identification and dissemination of information on best practices
- including best practices for:
    - The effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment;

- The development of effective local boards, which may include information on factors that contribute to enabling local boards to exceed negotiated local levels of performance, sustain fiscal integrity, and achieve other measures of effectiveness; and
- Effective training programs that respond to real time labor market analysis, that effectively use direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences, and that evaluate such skills, and competencies for adaptability, to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways;

- The objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of one-stop centers;
- The preparation of an annual report;
- The development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system;
- The development of such other policies as may promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the state; and
- The development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures (including the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information, and performance accountability measurement and reporting processes and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation, to improve coordination of services across one-stop partner programs).

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Oversight Committee
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Oversight Committee provides oversight of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program and ensures that all program participants are receiving the assistance, information, and the services needed to help these low-income parents prepare for and connect with employment that will lead to a self-sufficient wage.

2. Implementation of State Strategy

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in Section II(c). above. This must include a description of—

A. Core Program Activities to Implement the State's Strategy

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services shall use funds made available under WIOA Title I to support local workforce development board activities to provide services through the adult, dislocated worker, and youth programs. Services through these programs include career services such as outreach, intake, and orientation; initial assessment; labor exchange services; eligibility for services; referrals to programs; performance and cost information; information on unemployment insurance; financial aid information; and follow-up services. Additionally, for those who qualify, training and supportive services will be provided. Training services may include occupational skills training, on-the job training (OJT), Registered Apprenticeships, incumbent worker training, and skill upgrading and retaining.

The ADWS will provide labor exchange services through funds provided under WIOA Title III including labor market information to the individuals seeking services. The information will include information on local, regional and national labor market areas such as:

- Job vacancies in labor market areas
- Information on job skills necessary to obtain the jobs
- Local, in-demand occupations and related earning potential
- Opportunities for advancement in those occupations

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

- Individual Employment Plan (IEP)
- Career planning and counseling (no longer called case management)
- Comprehensive assessment
- Occupational skills assessment
- Short-term prevocational services
- Internship and work experience including transitional jobs and industry partnerships
- Workforce preparation
- Out-of-area job search

- English language acquisition
- Financial literacy

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services - Adult Education Section shall use funds made available under section 222(a)(2) for the following adult education and literacy activities (Section 203 of WIOA):

- Adult Education
- Literacy
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities
- Family literacy activities
- English language acquisition activities
- Integrated English literacy and civics education
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training that:
    - Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
    - is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Adult Education and Literacy Activities include instruction and education services below a postsecondary level in reading, writing, and speaking in English, and computing and solving problems. These services increase a student's ability to achieve a secondary school diploma or equivalent, transition to postsecondary education and training, and obtain employment.

Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities include instruction at a workplace or an off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce. will include contextualized literacy, English language acquisition, and workforce preparation at Educational Functioning Levels appropriate to learners. Successful workplace literacy activities involve strong partnerships with employers or employee organizations in the design and delivery of the instructional program based on workplace needs.

Family Literacy Activities include interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children. To offer family literacy activities as defined in WIOA requires coordination with other services for the children's component.

English Language Acquisition includes adult education and literacy activities for English language learners with an additional skill requirement, comprehension of the English language.

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education will provide Immigrants and English learners access to English language acquisition services and civics education and may include workforce training. English infused with civics education helps immigrants and English learners understand the American system of government and what it means to be a citizen and to be involved in civics activities. To live and work in the United States means not only a command of the language, but equally important are the civics-related skills and knowledge necessary to become involved parents, workers, and community members. Therefore, every adult education and literacy council program offering English language acquisition services will also include civics education.

Workforce Preparation includes activities, programs, or services designed to help individuals acquire a combination of basic academic skills and employability skills such as critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills. These activities include competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment. Workforce preparation skills will be integrated in the adult basic education and literacy curriculum, therefore, occurring concurrently with adult basic and literacy skills instruction

Integrated education and training activities include concurrent instruction in basic academic skills and/or English language acquisition skills, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training contextualized for specific occupations or occupational clusters. Education will be provided in the context of industry-specific needs that involve employers and is integrated with occupational skills training. Programs will provide work-relevant instruction through career pathways and integrated education and training activities. Instruction will be offered at Educational Functioning Levels appropriate to learners. The purpose of instruction will be education and career advancement. Providers will assist students in their roles as parents and family members by providing foundational skills that enable them to support their children's learning needs and improve economic self-sufficiency for their families.

Funds may not be used for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

Allowable activities, referred to as vocational rehabilitation (VR) services, are those activities necessary to assist an individual with a disability to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain competitive integrated employment. In general, services can be divided into pre-employment transition, transition, and vocational rehabilitation services. Required pre-employment transition

services target students with disabilities to better determine career interests by providing job exploration; work-based learning experiences; counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education; workplace readiness training; and instruction in self-advocacy. Transition services assist students with disabilities in transitioning from secondary education into postsecondary education and employment. An individualized plan for employment (IPE) is the foundation for vocational rehabilitation services. The IPE, jointly developed by the client and VR counselor, takes into consideration the individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. It identifies a client's vocational goal, necessary services, and roles and responsibilities related to the achievement of the goal. Services provided could include vocational counseling, vocational training, restoration, assistive technology, on-the-job training, and job placement.

The Division of Services for the Blind engages in activities similar to its partner Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. One hundred percent of DSB-funded services are focused on the most significantly disabled, individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. DSB provides this population with specialized vocational rehabilitation counseling services, which are designed to assist persons who are blind or have visual impairments to prepare for employment that is commensurate within their abilities, interests and informed choice, and is consistent with their strengths, resources, concerns and capabilities. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in conjunction with their consumers develop employability plans, which outline the barriers, services, and steps to reach their employment goals. Referrals are made to partner programs to provide any additional services necessary to meet or exceed the employment goals in their plans. In addition to vocational counseling, DSB funds transition services; training for careers that are in demand; post-secondary education; placement with employers; accommodations needed for job placement or retaining employment; restorative medical services; internships; paid work experiences; pre-apprenticeship training; vending stand opportunities under the Randolph-Shepherd Act; and business ownership opportunities under the Small Business Program. In recent years, DSB has begun placing more emphasis on the employer as a customer.

Beginning in 2014, the core programs have worked diligently together to align services across core programs and other program partners and are including other non-core programs such as TANF, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Career and Technical Education, Carl D. Perkins secondary and post-secondary programs, Registered Apprenticeship and others. Staff from the core agencies is actively engaged in training opportunities that include all operational levels of the core partners and key stakeholders named in the combined plan. Arkansas has a good history of core programs alignment, but to better facilitate these activities, strategies including a common intake process, inter-agency data sharing, case management integration, and co-location of resources when possible, are being developed and implemented. This cross-agency team is currently in the process of developing a state policy regarding co-enrollment and developing

common intake processes. This process will encompass all programs located in the Arkansas Workforce Centers and will not be limited to only core programs.

B. Alignment with Activities outside the Plan

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

The best way to ensure that activities continue to be aligned with programs and activities provided by mandatory one-stop partners is through communication. The purpose of the WIOA law is to ensure that core state agencies work together to enhance the workforce development system. As a state, we have created a combined state plan that will serve as the blueprint of how the system will work. Local Workforce Investment Boards have been restructured to ensure that all core agencies are represented including employers and other optional-one stop partners. It is up to the local Workforce Investment Board to ensure that local activities are aligned with the State Plan and the law.

To best align services and resources, core and optional programs will develop joint policies and initiatives that spur collaboration, braiding of resources, and support the inclusion of key stakeholders in development and implementation. In order to continue to be inclusive of other programs and align with all workforce development resources in Arkansas, it is imperative that the work of the WIOA Roundtable continue and transition from an implementation body to a coordination and continuous improvement body. By doing so, we set ourselves up to more efficiently bring in other federal, state, and private or non-profit resources to the benefit of our citizens. By utilizing this design, the WIOA Roundtable can approach additional partner programs with a united front.

Through the WIOA Roundtable, optional partners are at the table including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Career and Technical Education, Carl D. Perkins (secondary and post-secondary), SNAP Employment & Training, and Job for Veterans State Grant. While these partners are optional, we consider their input as vital to making the Arkansas workforce development system streamlined and effective. Every policy developed for statewide implementation is reviewed by subject matter experts from both core and non-core programs.

C. Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Individuals

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop partner programs

will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services (e.g. transportation), to individuals, including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B), and individuals in remote areas The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

All core partners provide services to individuals within statutory requirements of the programs. Since the implementation of WIOA, leaders from core, mandatory partners, and several optional partners in the workforce development system have been working to better align programming to best serve the people of Arkansas.

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

For example, currently Arkansas Rehabilitation Services has counselors that come to the Adult Education programs to provide services to eligible students. Likewise, adult education providers have offered classes onsite at some of the Rehabilitation offices. This has been proven to be very beneficial for students because it reduces the barriers of transportation and increases the support clients may need to successfully transition.
In addition, both Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and local workforce boards offer on the job training to clients who qualify. Several adult education students have been able to gain valuable work experience as well as a salary while working towards their high school equivalency diploma.

In addition, both Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and local workforce boards offer on the job training to clients who qualify. Several adult education students have been able to gain valuable work experience as well as a salary while working towards their high school equivalency diploma.

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

statewide. One such jointly developed policy is the Arkansas Workforce Centers Certification Policy, which establishes standards for use by local core, mandatory, and optional partner personnel to ensure a high level of services in the workforce centers and to support the coordination of services delivered by all partners. In order for centers to become certified and eventually meet excellence standards, partners must come together to coordinate activities, align services, and meet the needs of both jobseekers and employers.

The goal of the certification process is to develop a world-class workforce center network that goes well beyond the minimal requirements established by the Federal Workforce Investment Act. It is critical to make the centers user friendly and attractive, creating a public image that is inviting to jobseekers, education seekers, and employers seeking skills and talent in the local labor markets.

The certification policy brings all the tools approved by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) into a single reference for Local Workforce Development Board members and partner programs involved in certifying or recertifying local Arkansas Workforce Centers. It is the intent of the AWDB to provide this instrument as a guide to what is expected, not to provide the means of how it is to be accomplished. Ongoing organizing, implementation, and ensuring continuous improvement of the local certification process are the responsibility of the local boards and partners.

Included are minimum core standards that must be a part of the local certification and recertification process. In a clear, concise manner this guide documents the Arkansas Workforce Board Certification Process needed by the local board when conducting certification site visits. It also reviews the Quality Assurance Process to be used by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) to ensure minimum standards are met and that the Arkansas Workforce Center brand name is protected. It is expected that each local workforce investment area may supplement these core standards with additional locally applicable criteria and performance measures to ensure continuous improvement.

Certification is not just about a one-time designation. It is an ongoing process that keeps all parties involved and achieving at high performance levels. As such, the certification process also allows for achieving excellence standards as continuous improvement planning occurs. This certification process serves as an opportunity to continually re-examine, improve, and revise procedures to ensure that the Arkansas workforce development system is a primary asset in Arkansas's economic growth and subsequent high quality of life.

The local certification process also requires workforce center partners to coordinate their services to employers through the development of business service liaison teams operating under a common message and clear menu of services among all partners.

The excellence standards of the certification criteria require the following higher levels of coordination:

• Coordination with economic development and social service leaders

• Coordinated marketing messages among all workforce center partners

• Coordination with other workforce centers, especially business service liaison teams from other workforce centers

D. Coordination, Alignment and Provision of Services to Employers

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Since the passage of WIOA, the Arkansas WIOA Roundtable, consisting of core partners, meets monthly to share information, identify resources, and build relationships. Because of the large number of members, working committees are utilized to work on specific issues and the policy committee is tasked with the coordination, alignment and provision of services to employers. A working group has been established that consists of leaders from each agency tasked with business relations from all of the core programs and key workforce stakeholders. The intent of this partnership is to allow for all business relations representatives to be versed in the services provided by all core programs and key stakeholders in order to provide this information to employers.

In 2015, an informal study was conducted to determine all of the contact points with employers that are made by the various agencies. These contact points were defined to include the purpose and need for employer engagement. This information was shared with more than 250 managers, directors, and leaders in core and non-core programs during a partners meeting in the fall of 2015. This information will be used by the working group to establish a streamlined process for making contact with employers that will meet requirements set forth in the Arkansas Workforce Center Certification criteria.

The Arkansas Workforce Center Certification Criteria requires the center to have a business liaison team as the single point of contact for business services. It is expected that staff involved with initiating employer contacts will participate on the team in a coordinated outreach program under the Arkansas Workforce Center name and marketing approach. The team will consist of business contact staff from all partner programs and will, at a minimum, provide the following structure and coordination in approaching the business community:

- A team leader to coordinate the activities of the team

- A coordinated “script” to market the system to employers
- Use of the Arkansas Workforce Center name as the primary marketing approach, with agency specialty areas (i.e. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Services for the Blind, DVOP/LVER Veterans Services) presented as a part of the overall system as needed
- An information sharing strategy that makes contact results available to all team members
- A clear menu of services across all partners
- A division of duties with employer sector specializations as deemed appropriate for quality customer service
- Multiple agency participation with clear cost and information sharing commitments
- At a minimum, job search, employer contacts, job orders, or job development leads performed by any center staff as a result of outreach will be entered into the Wagner-Peyser database (Arkansas Job Link)

Arkansas has received several discretionary grants from the U.S. Department of Labor to address workforce development and training needs of Arkansas employers and jobseekers. Specifically, through the Arkansas Apprenticeship Pathway Initiative, Arkansas Sector Partnership, and the Arkansas Job Driven National Emergency Grant, the State has been able to connect with numerous employers throughout the state to identify existing and emerging occupations and training needs. These grants have enabled to the state to be very flexible and immediately responsive to the training needs identified by employers. Through the use of project management teams comprised of core, mandatory, and optional partners in addition to Registered Apprenticeship, two- and four-year educational institutions, local workforce development boards, and non-profit organizations, the State is able to most effectively deliver services through these grants and maximize on subject matter expertise from all involved.

Arkansas understands that the WIOA legislative mandate has changed workforce development. As such, we are currently seeking a “business facing” workforce development solution that is a collaborative platform to connect people, jobs, programs, and data to advance the economic viability of our state.

The Division of Workforce Services - Adult Education Section offers a trademarked job readiness program, Workforce Alignment for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™) in which students can earn up to six certificates in industrial, employability, customer service I and II, office technology, and bank teller. Adult Education WAGE Coordinators work with local employers to customize training that meets the needs of their workforce. In order to stay abreast of employers’ needs, the WAGE Advisory Committee is made up of 51% business and industry and chaired by an employer.

Salesforce Implementation

Salesforce is a customer relations management tool that will assist business services teams to track and report business engagement activities across partner programs. In Fall 2019, the initial implementation of Salesforce began and allowed business services staff to begin recording actual business engagement activity in the system. As we launched the system, we established a "working group" to assist in developing some ground rules (or protocols) for moving us forward utilizing the tool. The "working group" also takes the lead in working through any issues that may arise using the system and determining their potential solutions.

The Salesforce tool is being developed in four phases (or sprints) that include:

- Sprint 1 – Business Leads and Account Management
- Sprint 2 – Training Application
- Sprint 3 – Reports and Dashboards
- Sprint 4 – Needs Assessment and Skills Gap Analysis

The testing, development, and training on the product are complete.

Currently, evaluating several "next steps" to broaden the base of Salesforce users as well as enhance the system's value through collaborative efforts and data integration.

Here is a listing of potential next steps:

- Purchasing additional licenses to broaden the user base among partner programs. This is in addition to the original 35 licenses that have been purchased.

- Assessing/evaluating potential integration with Arkansas Economic Development Commission employer needs assessment data.

- Assessing and evaluating potential opportunities for integration with Arkansas Job Link data.

- Assessing and evaluating the utilization of an external community portal feature within the system that could provide capabilities to interface with employers.

- Evaluating whether to continue administrative support with the Salesforce vendor (Coastal Cloud) under a managed services agreement over the next year.

E. Partner Engagement with Educational Institutions

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges and area career and technical education schools, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv).

Core and non-core programs have strong partnerships with the State's two- and four-year institutions of higher education, especially at the community college level. Several Arkansas Workforce Centers are located on community college campuses, which enable a streamline process to move jobseekers into needed training or resources to upgrade their skills on the campus. Community colleges are at the forefront of workforce development in Arkansas and have strong connections with local employers, which enable core and non-core programs such as the WIOA Title I Youth, Adult, and Dislocated Worker programs, Trade Adjustment Assistance, and the TANF program to connect their customers to training that leads to occupations that are in-demand.

The TANF program funds the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative that provides funding to the State's community colleges to provide post-secondary training to low-income custodial parents that are TANF eligible. This program provides supports to eligible parents to begin training in a career pathway that will enable them to move up the ladder of success in their chosen field.

Service delivery systems for adult education programs are funded through a variety of local administrative entities, including public school systems, colleges, literacy councils, and one correctional institution to name a few. In fact, fifty percent of administrative units for adult education fall under the administration of community colleges. Many local adult education programs work directly with colleges in supporting summer transition bridge programs to college. Others assist in helping students increase their basic academic skills in order to reduce the need for remediation.

The Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section (ADWS-AES) has partnered with the Arkansas Community Colleges to offer Accelerating Opportunity to four community colleges and adult education programs in the state. Accelerating Opportunity (AO) is a community college initiative of Jobs for the Future whose goal is to ensure that more workers have the skills needed to earn credentials that lead to family-sustaining careers. The AO programs are transitioning to focus more an Integrated and Education training programs across the state. Both initiatives aim to change how Adult Basic Education is structured and delivered through a collaborative effort in which a basic skills instructor and technical college instructor provide concurrent and contextualized instruction for adults at various levels of education and skills. For the 2018-2019 program year, 343 participants were enrolled in AO and IETs combined. Program Directors continually evaluate these programs to ensure relevance to students and the local workforce needs.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) actively engages the State's education and training providers including two-year and four-year colleges and career and technical education schools as partners in the workforce development system to create job-driven education and training opportunities for individuals with disabilities. A large portion of the agency's budget is committed to support client enrollment in these types of trainings with a goal of client attainment of competitive integrated employment. ARS's VR counselors and assistive technology staff routinely engage education and training personnel regarding needed accommodations necessary for clients to successfully complete training programs. Agency staff also participate in Ark-AHEAD, the Arkansas affiliate of the Association of Higher Education and Disability.

Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) has a partnership which provides college preparatory classes to blind and low vision students utilizing the campus of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. DSB has arranged for college and technical school tours for blind and low vision students, so that the students and the institutions of higher education can interact and discuss career goals prior to applying for admission.

F. Partner Engagement with Other Education and Training Providers.

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's other education and training providers, including providers on the state's eligible training provider list, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system.

The core and non-core partners have a strong partnership with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Arkansas Community Colleges, Registered Apprenticeship, and the Arkansas Board of Private Career Education, the licensing board for private education in Arkansas. This partnership will be nurtured under the implementation of this plan and encourage training providers from both public and private institutions to engage with the State's workforce development system and provide feedback for continuous improvement.

For example, one adult education provider partners with the Electrical Apprenticeship program to provide basic skills instruction primarily in math. Apprentices entering the electrical trade are required to be licensed by the Arkansas Department of Labor, Board of Electrical Examiners. This is a four-year program consisting of 640 hours of classroom instruction coinciding with 8,000 hours of on-the-job training. When a student completes the program, he or she will be granted a "release to test" and can submit an application to sit for the journeyman electrician's exam. The adult education classes are offered through partnership with the Arkansas Construction Education Foundation. In 2018-19, the adult education program served 29 students for 1,669 hours (in basic math as part of the electrical program).

Through partnership with the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, the State has collected necessary data to add all Registered Apprenticeship programs desiring such to the list of approved eligible training providers. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has and will continue to work with local workforce development boards to educate training providers on the

process to become eligible training providers in an effort to increase the number of providers and customer choice in training.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has partnered with the Arkansas Research Center and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education in an effort to compile required performance data for the continued eligibility of training providers in an effort to offset the administrative burden to the provider. The State anticipates that this assistance will enable many eligible training providers to remain on the list of approved training providers that otherwise would have dropped off due to the significant reporting requirements under WIOA.

G. Leveraging Resources to Increase Educational Access

Describe how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments that have enhanced access to workforce development programs at the above institutions, described in section (E).

Education is the key to successfully implement career pathways programs across the state. The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) federal funds support the advancement of individuals into postsecondary education and work. The grants to eligible providers require states to consider "whether the eligible provider's activities provide learning in context, including through integrated education and training, so that an individual acquires the skills needed to transition to and complete postsecondary education and training programs, obtain and advance in employment leading to economic self-sufficiency, and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship" (Section 231(e) (8)). The integration of literacy instruction and occupational skills training is an allowable activity that states can use leadership and federal funds to support.

AEFLA funds may be used to support the portion of an Integrated Education and Training (IET) or career pathways program that provides instruction in reading, writing, mathematics, or English proficiency that is below the postsecondary level. This instruction in basic literacy skills and the English language should be contextualized to support the occupational skills portion of the program. Curriculum for a career pathways program should adequately address basic literacy skills, workforce preparation and the occupational competencies needed for the participant to complete the program successfully. AEFLA funds may be used to plan, develop, and deliver the portions of the curriculum that address basic literacy skills and appropriate workforce preparation.

As part of the state's Accelerating Opportunity partnership with the Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC), adult education was able to use funds to support instruction, curriculum and development, and training; whereas, the ACC was able to use funds to pay the tuition and fees for students without a high school diploma. Both enrolled college students in a career pathway and participating adult students were able to benefit from having a contextualized and basic skills instructor co-teaching together. For Integrated Education and Training programs, similar support and partnerships are being developed and planned.

Pre-employment transition and transition services are key components of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services' system of service delivery. Pre-employment transition services help students determine career interests while transition services assist students in transitioning from secondary education into postsecondary education and employment. Roles and responsibilities for providing these types of services are outlined in agreements between the agency and involved education agencies. The individualized plan for employment (IPE) is the foundation for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. It is intended to outline shared responsibility between the agency, the client, and other involved parties. The IPE addresses the specific client vocational goal as well as services (including education and training) needed to achieve the goal, and outlines who is responsible for providing the service and how it will be paid.

DSB researches and applies all federal and state comparable services and similar benefits available for educational access at all institutions of higher education, career, community college, and area career and technical schools. Once this is done, DSB provides financial support to the participants individually, based on their goals and needs. We work in conjunction with Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative to identify training programs that lead to real world employment experiences to match education with obtaining employment.

Through the implementation of a co-enrollment policy for core and non-core programs, opportunities for braided funding will be realized that will essentially "stretch" the funding available through the programs. This is possible by each program contributing what they can instead of one program picking up the entire cost of training and supportive services. Non-core programs will be incorporated into this customer flow and co- enrollment process.

Furthermore, the Arkansas Community Colleges, the association representing all two-year colleges in the State, has been a vital partner in delivering services through several discretionary grants including the Arkansas Apprenticeship Pathway Initiative, the Arkansas Sector Partnership, and the Arkansas Job Driven National Emergency Grant. Their leadership and partnership have assisted the State in better connecting the workforce development center system with the State's two-year college system.

H. Improving Access to Postsecondary Credentials

Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

A master plan for improving Arkansas higher education attainment was presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board on October 30, 2015. The 2015-2020 five-year

planning cycle adopted in this plan is a critical component in the long-term objective to reach the 2025 goal of a 60 percent post-secondary attainment rate in Arkansas, increasing from the current estimate of 43.4 percent. By 2020, the plan is to reduce the educational attainment gap in Arkansas by increasing the number of postsecondary credentials by 50 percent over the 2013-2014 academic year levels; increasing the number of certificates awarded to 19,200; associate's degrees to 12,700; and bachelor's degrees to 19,900.

Title I of WIOA allows funds to be provided for adults and dislocated workers who meet WIOA Title I eligibility requirements for occupational skills training, on-the-job training, programs that combine workplace training with related instruction, skills upgrading and retraining, entrepreneurial training, job-readiness training, adult education and literacy activities described in section 134(3) (D) of WIOA. ADCE-AED is collaborating with Title I programs to combine resources, reduce duplication of services, and provide support to Arkansans.

During the state's administrators' meeting the program manager from the Office of Apprenticeships does a workshop session on apprenticeship programs across the state and how adult education can be a partner in the process. Apprentices who may need additional academic assistance are often referred to adult education. One of the challenges is the availability of evening classes offered in the adult education centers to accommodate working adults. One of the ways the state is combatting this issue is by increasing the number of distance learning classes being offered to provide around the clock access.

The Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC), adult education's professional development center, have provided consultation and training for local programs to establish career pathways and Integrated Education Training programs that align with local workforce needs. The AALRC hired consultants, Michelle Carson and Libby Livings-Eassa, to provide over 40 hours of professional development training on Career Pathways to adult education directors, staff, and partners. In addition, trainings on establishing Integrated Education Training programs and developing contextualized instruction have been provided for local program directors and instructors. Adult education directors are aware that career pathways is now one of the 13 considerations that must be met in order to receive federal funds; "whether the eligible provider's activities coordinate with other available education, training, and social service resources in the community, such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary schools, postsecondary educational institutions, institutions of higher education, local workforce investment boards, one-stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies, business, industry, labor organizations, community- based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and intermediaries, for the development of career pathways Section 231(e) (8)).

Local adult education providers have been working with community colleges, apprenticeship programs, Title I programs, and health care providers to offer industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, that are portable and stackable. Currently, some providers have offered

National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) certifications, Certified Nursing Assistant credentials, Industrial Safety, OSHA training, and Welding to name a few. Other core partners such as Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, TANF, DHS, and DWS assist by either paying for some of these classes and certifications or offering support services such as transportation and childcare.

ARS recognizes the importance of increasing access to industry recognized credentials for its clients. Discussion of the need for credential attainment is a consideration in the development of a client's individualized plan for employment. ARS continues to work to realign resources for training and education as evidenced by the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI), ARS' internal training unit, which focuses on providing training programs that result in industry recognized credentials. With the transition of ACTI to a nonresidential program, consideration is given to partnering with local community rehabilitation programs to replicate credentialed programs in other areas across the state. Plans also include ACTI taking a lead role in ARS's utilization of pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship training for clients.

There are plans for continued expansion of the use of pre-apprenticeship for VR clients in Arkansas. In the second quarter of FFY 2018, 100 students have registered for pre-apprenticeship training.

DSB has traditionally paid tuition for vocational and postsecondary education that will lead to employment. DSB will increase its use of Registered Apprenticeship training opportunities for its consumers and align its resources for training and education resulting in industry-recognized postsecondary credentials.

It is imperative for staff from core and non-core programs to increase engagement with training providers and programs that lead to postsecondary credentials engage to ensure that they apply and are accepted onto the Eligible Training Provider List.

I. Coordinating with Economic Development Strategies.

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies and activities in the State.

The State recognizes that workforce development cannot be performed in a vacuum without the connection to economic development and the priorities established by both state and local economic development entities. To ensure that economic development strategies are at the forefront of state, regional, and local planning, representatives of economic development organizations are on the state and local boards. Furthermore, economic development representatives are members of the WIOA Roundtable, which is the interagency WIOA planning

team. Seven of the ten local workforce development boards have administrative and fiscal entities that are also local economic development organizations.

This close connection ensures that local planning is on target with local economic development strategies. Furthermore, in 2015, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education implemented the Workforce Investment Initiative, which provided funding for regional workforce development planning. To qualify and apply for funding, applicants had to have a partnership that included the support of the local workforce development board, educational entities, and that planning was based on local economic development strategies.

b. State Operating Systems and Policies

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in ***Section II Strategic Elements.*** *This includes—*

1. The State operating systems that will support the implementation of the State's strategies. This must include a description of–

A. State operating systems that support coordinated implementation of State strategies (e.g., labor market information systems, data systems, communication systems, case-management systems, job banks, etc.).

<u>Arkansas Division of Workforce Services</u>

Arkansas JobLink (AJL) is the state's integrated web-based workforce development management information system (MIS) used by the state and local areas to share and manage participant data between the Wagner-Peyser program, the Trade Adjustment Assistance program and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program. AJL provides jobseekers, employers, and workforce development professionals with tremendous flexibility and capacity for accessing, tracking, and reporting services: self-directed, staff-facilitated, staff-assisted, and case management.

All staff has access to and can view all services provided to clients regardless of individual program funding. This approach allows funding streams (regardless of specific target group) to consider the "complete package" of services provided or made available to the client reducing duplication of effort and maximizing outcomes. It also facilitates a single process to extract required data for the generation and submission of performance or demographic client details as required by current mandates. In short AJL provides all workforce partners with a "whole person view" of the services available, or provided to, each client or group.

Arkansas Job Link provides:

- One-stop case management, data collection and reporting
- A single-job placement system, which is used by all partner agencies
- Program management and reporting for WIA adult, dislocated worker, youth programs, labor exchange, and Trade Adjustment Assistance
- A staff assisted and a self-service job match system for jobseekers and employers
- An eligibility determination process that leads staff to identify programs for which the individual might be eligible
- Because of this program, jobseekers and business clients receive significant benefits affecting opportunity and success. Impacts are:
    - Entry to the system from multiple locations, including home or office
    - Decreased number of times the client has to provide basic information
    - Access to additional useful information (career preparation, labor market, disabilities resources, support services, etc.)
    - Better prepared and more timely referrals between partner agencies
    - Jobseeker access to job listings and employer access to resumes.

Arkansas has taken a lead in the development of a direct electronic interface between our AJL and Unemployment Insurance (UI) systems. Through this interface we ensure that all UI claimants are registered for work and eliminates repetitive information gathering from UI claimants. We have also implemented a proactive approach to Reemployment Services (RES) and Reemployment and Eligibility Assessments (REA) to claimants with the goal of reducing the average length of time a client is out of work. This effort would have been exponentially more difficult if we were not dealing with an integrated service delivery system. Through the use of electronic wage matching, records are regularly updated with information received from the State and other sources to identify those who have obtained employment and calculate average earnings.

Each quarter, quarterly wage record information is loaded into AJL to measure the progress on State and local common performance measures. The quarterly wage information includes wages paid to an individual, the social security account number, the name of the individual, and the Federal employer identification number of the employer paying the wages to the individual. State wage records are available to other member states through the Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) on a quarterly basis. Likewise, Arkansas is able to track participants that work or move outside of Arkansas for performance measurement purposes through WRIS wage records from member states.

All local WIOA Title I service providers have access to the state wage record information for the purpose of measuring local common performance measures. AJL can be found at https://www.arjoblink.arkansas.gov.

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 general public.

Adult Education Section

The Adult Education Section Division utilizes the Literacy, Adult and Community Education System (LACES) for reporting purposes. All programs receiving adult education federal and state funds from the Adult Education Section must report student data for both reportable individuals and participants in LACES, which is an online accessible system that allows the state and local programs to complete reports for the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). Required information includes demographic measures, participation measures, and follow-up measures. Approved users can access the website at https://laces.literacypro.com/laces/.

The Adult Education Section implemented LACES for the 2017-18 program year. Previously, the state used the Adult Education Reporting Information System (AERIS) from the 2005 PY through the 2016 PY.

Data collected on each adult student include demographic data (age, gender, ethnicity), barriers to employment, county residence, entering educational functioning levels as defined by the National Reporting System (NRS), progression through educational functioning levels, employment status at entry, follow-up achievements, test scores, class enrollment, and daily attendance. Data collected on each instructor/tutor include personal data, title, certification, classes, and attendance for each class. Through the data collected above, federal, state, and local reports are generated using any and/or all of the data. In addition, through a memorandum of understanding between the Arkansas Department of Higher Education and the Division of Workforce Services, follow-up measures for exited participants that enter post-secondary education or gain employment can be tracked.

All adults who receive services from adult education and literacy programs are considered reportable individuals. Adults who have received services; and have a completed an Intake Form, should be entered into LACES whether an assessment has been administered. Students who have 12 or more contact hours within a program year (July 1 to June 30) are considered participants by the National Reporting System (NRS) of the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). Students should be pre-tested before they have acquired 12 instruction contact hours.

All student data must be entered into LACES by the 15th of each month for the previous month's data. All data must be reviewed by the 22nd of each month for the previous month's data. This

includes post-test scores in which students do not show educational gains. Students with both a pretest and post-test will be recorded in NRS Table 4B, which is a required federal table. In addition, all assessment scores in the system should be dated on the exact date the test was given. Test documentation must be available in the students' files and is subject to monitoring during site visits and program reviews.

Each program is required to maintain and follow a policy and procedure for data entry that includes checks and balances for data collection steps, personnel responsible for entering data, and personnel who checks and verifies data. The process is the same for all adult education providers regardless of location. Verification of data is checked through desk audits and on-site visits by state program advisors.

According to Assurance 13 of the Adult Education Section Assurances, which is signed at the time of the adult education grant award, all programs that receive adult education funds agree to submit student data according to schedules set by the Adult Education Section. If programs are missing data in LACES, or have data with errors or deviations, they will be notified by a program advisor and will be required to correct the problem within one month. According to Assurance 33, the Adult Education Section may reduce funding or terminate agreements in part or whole if it has been determined that a program has failed to comply with the assurances.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services

The Arkansas Rehabilitation Services system of record for Vocational Rehabilitation is System 7™ is a highly configurable and intuitive case management platform. System 7™ has built-in design-for-configurability using an XML and table-driven approach. Custom applications can be delivered quickly and affordably as well as interface with multiple outside sources. With HTTPS and SSL security, data will remain secure in transit and at rest. System 7™ is web-based, does not require installation on individual user workstations, and can be used anywhere there is an Internet connection. Its use of switch settings and role-based security delivers a secure and flexible solution. System 7™'s Report Control Center and table-driven approach also allows custom data queries and easy ad-hoc reporting. Users can easily view and collect data in real time.

System 7™ offers an intuitive Graphical User Interface (GUI) and contains an existing VR form set for use in implementing the case management functionality. Interactive electronic forms that mirror an agency's paper forms can be used to enter data directly into the system, eliminating time wasted on transcription from paper into traditional information management systems. In addition to providing a form set, another desirable feature of System 7™ is that tools are included that allows the VR agency to maintain and create their own reports and letters. Also, System 7™ supports digital signatures using multiple models of electronic signature pads. In addition, it allows for centralized storage of scanned documents, as well as functionality that allows forms and notes to be sent to other users securely.

Information within System 7™ is separated into modules, each of which is integral to and enhances the functionality of the system as a whole. The case management module tracks consumer information, while the vendor and services module allow participating vendors to be added to the application and linked to the services they offer. An employment module tracks employers and job opportunities. The System 7™ voucher module provides a means for preparing, reviewing, and controlling, and submitting fiscal information to any third-party fiscal system. Budget accounts are created and maintained within System 7™. Authorizations and invoices are used to track which vendors provided which services to a consumer or group of consumers.

Division of Services for the Blind

The Division of Services for the Blind's (DSB) case management system is known as AWARE from Alliance Enterprises, Inc. This case-management system provides records management software for Vocational Rehabilitation. It provides systems to monitor case progression, program finances, and overall agency performance. It also contains a job bank of employers who have hired blind and visually impaired clients of DSB.

DSB operates as a true web-based system, meaning it has the accessibility of Internet technology coupled with security to provide access to case information on a need-to-know basis. Data can be accessed, collected, and reported on the vocational rehabilitation program for the blind from any workstation within the state's network, or if allowed by agency policy with a secure connection from outside the state network. Staff who works with participants at schools, job sites or other facilities can "check out" a case(s) and use perform case work in the field. Upon returning to the office, staff checks the case back into the central system.

DSB is also pursuing Data Sharing Agreements with the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and has an agreement with the Arkansas Research Center through the Department of Health and Human Services in order to collect and report on employment outcomes.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

Arkansas Workforce Integrated Networks System (ARWINS) ARWINS is an information services platform conceived and developed by the Arkansas TANF Digital Transformation Office to support job training and other services for TANF families. With appropriate extensions, this IT system aligns perfectly with the desired outcomes across many unique welfare and workforce development programs like SNAP, Medicaid and WIOA. Just as important, ARWINS is affordable with the ability to be supported by in-house IT staff. It is built using open source software, specifically Ruby on Rails, and it follows the service standards and conventions promoted by the Whitehall Project, (for the UK Government) U.S. Department of Labor, Instagram and Bloomberg among others. Thus, the software, as open source, has been used, tested, and proven by a variety of other adopters, allowing new projects to benefit from those past experiences allows for wide-spread usage at an affordable cost.

ARWINS is designed for digital use. It is future oriented and geared toward today's end users. In an effort to match the current and future needs of a variety of users, ARWINS is compatible with laptops and mobile devices—any device size or type, enabling usage anytime, anywhere, at the full convenience of the end user.

Because ARWINS was initially developed for managing and reporting TANF programs, it has a wide array of configurable assessments and supports. It is designed to analyze information provided to support staff and consumers in overcoming barriers that prevent long term sustainable employment. It was also designed in a format that could be modified to enable individuals, including vulnerable populations, to use the system as a tool to support their own growth and development, empowering them to be engaged in their own success!

ARWINS is a web-based suite of tools and resources that provides:

Jobseekers:

• A workforce system registration module that integrates structured work readiness assessments to identify employment barriers across a range of factors, such as:

- Employment History
- Education
- Legal Issues
- Physical and mental health problems
- Substance Abuse
- Transportation
- Child Care

• Ability to develop a consumer and family-centric career pathway plan that incorporates an employment preparation plan. This plan includes a wrap-around barrier reduction plan that consists of temporary supportive services offered across traditional workforce (core WIOA partners) and welfare reform (TANF) programs as well as social programs like SNAP, Child Care, and Medical Services.

Employers and Providers:

• A workforce system registration module that gives access to a one-stop workforce services experience

• Insight and access to customized labor market information

• Expanded visibility to potential traditional and non-traditional jobseeker candidate databases

• Program administrators and operating partners

• Screening, intake, eligibility determination and benefits issuance (EBT)

• Initial and ongoing case management

• Single view of a consumer where appropriate and feasible vis-à-vis a single individual view that intersects provision of contextual and behavioral consumer data

• Consumer information can be recorded once and shared across multiple programs for integrated work readiness assessment, employment planning, cross-program eligibility determination, and aligning provider services, referrals, and invoicing, with case management tracking.

• An outreach and communication platform that integrates with social media channels to organize events, partnering organizations and entities, as well as active constituent relationship management

• The system looks for and alerts users to indicators of events that need attention prior to, rather than following, an event that may be avoided when identified in time. For example, a TANF case manager may become aware that a participant is nearing sanction early enough to prevent that action.

• Program Performance - Reporting, Fraud, Overpayments and Collections, Quality Assurance

ARWINS tracks payments to education, training and service providers across all programs. Integrated processing and tracking allow partners to share resources for payments, consolidate payment requests, and track payments across multiple programs for each consumer across the entire participant budget. ARWINS tracks and identifies total costs of benefits provided to any consumer. This information can be used to determine total costs per consumer participating in a range of activities as well as provides data on which development paths are most effective and cost-efficient enabling outcome and expenditure planning and reporting.

ARWINS also manages the privacy and security that is needed, and within this constraint, allows multiple professionals to record and review appropriate information about the consumers they serve. Security can be configured in a way that allows each participant's service team, whether collocated or not, to stay current on what is being addressed, how, the expected outcomes, and actual results for that participant. This provides each team member, which may include a variety of professionals from different partnering organizations or businesses, a view of the universe of that participant, including needs, barriers, progress, and goals. ARWINS intends to allow communities to configure security in a way that supports the needs of the teams while protecting the privacy of the individual.

The Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) supports the development of, or enhancements to, longitudinal administrative databases that integrate workforce data education data. WDQI also emphasizes promoting improvements and the level of quality of these systems, in addition to increasing the accessibility of performance data, including data reported by employment services and training providers. Education data is being collected under the Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) initiative funded by the U.S. Department of Education to which the WDQI is a

parallel effort. The SLDS emphasizes the collection of workforce data and the WDQI was created, in part, to accompany the work being done on the education side to gather longitudinal data. WDQI is a collaborative partnership at the Federal level between the Departments of Labor and of Education. The long-term WDQI and Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems goal for States is to use their longitudinal data systems to follow individuals through school and into and through their work life. WQDI grant recipients are expected to demonstrate similarly established partnerships between state workforce and educational agencies. High quality and consistent data that is available from service providers about services offered, and how well their customers benefited as they enter or re-enter the labor market, are integral to informed consumer choices. In Arkansas, the WDQI is administered by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services through partnership with the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Department of Human Services, Office of Skills Development and the Arkansas Research Center.

Data made available through the WDQI has been utilized to produce performance outcomes for various workforce development programs and to produce the baseline performance data for the WIOA core performance goals.

A cross agency team has been developed to review the existing data systems and to develop a plan for integrating the data available through these systems. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has been identified as the lead state agency and will be responsible for working with the Arkansas Department of Information Systems to develop an Information Technology Plan for implementation.

Arkansas Act 912 of 2017 established a Chief Data Officer and Chief Privacy Officer within the Arkansas Department of Information Systems. This Act supports the state's vision of sharing data across state agencies, while ensuring that all data will be properly protected under the joint leadership of the Chief Privacy Officer, Chief Security Officer, and Chief Data Officer.

It is the hope of the Governor that Arkansas will become the first state in this nation to achieve statewide data sharing and transparency capability.

B. Data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including those present in one-stop centers*.

SEE ABOVE

2. The State policies that will support the implementation of the State's strategies (e.g., co-enrollment policies and universal intake processes where appropriate). In addition, provide the State's guidelines for State-administered one-stop partner programs' contributions to a one-stop delivery system.

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and its Adult Education Section, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and Division of Services for the Blind began meeting to discuss the implication of the new legislation and begin necessary discussions for the successful implementation of the federal law in Arkansas.

In November 2014, representatives from each of these agencies formed a WIOA Roundtable that met monthly and soon were joined by additional representatives from Registered Apprenticeship, higher education, secondary education, two- and four-year educational institutions, Carl D. Perkins secondary and post-secondary programs, Career and Technical Education, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, human services, and elected officials to engage in discussions about integration of services provided by a multitude of service providers. This planning team established committees to focus on critical areas in WIOA implementation to include finance, IT system integration, policy development, core performance measures, sector strategies, and the development of the state workforce development plan.

The WIOA Roundtable Policy Committee meets routinely and has engaged the use of work groups formed from staff members across all agencies to draft policies for consideration by the policy committee. Each agency has representation on the policy committee in order to coordinate and align activities. After the WIOA Roundtable Policy Committee has reviewed and approved the policy, it goes to the appropriate committee of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board for consideration and adoption. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services as staff support for the AWDB takes lead on posting policies for public comment and making WIOA Title I-B policies available for all staff to access on the WIOA page of the website www.dws.arkansas.gov/wioa.htm.

In Fall 2017, the initial WIOA Title I-B Policy Manual was presented to and approved by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, which included the following:

Co-Enrollment and Co-Funding- Policy Number: WIOA I-B- 2.7

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to describe the requirements and regulations concerning co-enrollment and/or co-funding of WIOA Title I-B participants with various WIOA Title I-B programs, with other WIOA programs, with Arkansas Job Center partners, and with other appropriate entities, in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA), the WIOA Final Rule, Training and Employment Guidance Letters (TEGLs) published by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor (ETA), and policies of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB).

REFERENCE:

WIOA § 134(b)(2)(A)(v)

20 CFR 680.230

20 CFR 680.350

20 CFR 681.430 - 440

TEGL 19-16

A.C.A. 15-4-3711(a)(10)(D)

POLICY:

Under WIOA I-B, participants may be eligible for youth, adult, and/or dislocated worker services. The participant may also be eligible for the services of other one-stop partners, as well as services for non-one-stop partners. WIOA I-B case managers must be informed about the services of all WIOA funding streams (including other titles and subtitles). Case managers must coordinate with other agencies as appropriate to provide the full array of services documented as needed by the participant [WIOA § 134(b)(2)(A)(v); 20 CFR 680.230]. Co-enrollment (or dual enrollment) and/or co-funding with other entities is encouraged in order to give participants the best array of services [TEGL 19-16].

Co-enrollment within WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs

Individuals who meet the respective program and service eligibility requirements may participate in Adult/Dislocated Worker and Youth programs concurrently. Local programs operators may determine the appropriate level and balance of services under the Youth and Adult/Dislocated Worker programs. This determination depends not only on the eligibility requirements of each program, but also on the services needed by each participant [TEGL 19-16].

Services available under each funding stream will depend on eligibility for services under that funding stream. Local program operators may determine the appropriate level and balance of services for each individual under each program. Local program operators must identify and track the funding streams that pay the costs of services and ensure no duplication of services [20 CFR 681.430]. However, if it is determined that only the Youth or the Adult/Dislocated Worker program array of services is appropriate for an individual aged 18 - 24, then the local program provider may enroll the participant in only one program [20 CFR 681.440].

Co-enrollment and Co-funding with Other Programs

WIOA Title I-B program providers are encouraged to work with other Workforce Center partners and other entities to provide a full array of needed services to participants. Not only does this strategy provide more services, it provides more case management to the participant, thus providing greater probability for success.

WIOA funding for training is limited to participants who are unable to obtain grant assistance from other sources to pay the costs of their training or require assistance beyond that available

under grant assistance from other sources to pay the costs of such training. WIOA Title I-B Service Providers must not only ensure that participants apply for Pell Grants and other appropriate grants, but they must also coordinate funding with other one-stop partners and other entities for which the participant is eligible [20 CFR 680.230]. In order to appropriately coordinate funding and co-enrollment, case managers must be trained in programs and eligibility requirements of other one-stop partners and other local and state entities providing services needed by their participants so they can leverage the funding of other sources to provide all services needed by WIOA Title I-B participants [A.C.A. 15-4-3711(a)(10)(D)]. DOL has established a goal of co-enrolling 50% of TAA participants in either WIOA Title I Adult or Dislocated Worker programs. Therefore, co-enrollment of TAA participants into the WIOA Title I Dislocated Worker or Adult program is strongly encouraged if the TAA participant meets eligibility requirements. The specific services provided to these participants will depend on the needs of the participant and funding availability in the local area. Some of these potential entities include, but are not limited to:

- Career Pathways Initiative for custodial parents attending Arkansas two-year colleges
- Single Parent Scholarship Funds for each county (www.aspsf.org/scholarships)
- Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and Division of Services for the Blind
- TEA / Work Pays
- TAA
- WIOA Title I-D Dislocated Worker Grants and other Discretionary Grants
- Veterans' Services
- State and institutional scholarships
- Department of Human Services
- Food Stamp Employment and Training Programs
- Arkansas Human Development Corporation (National Farmworker Jobs Program)
- American Indian Center of Arkansas
- Local housing authority
- Local homeless shelter(s)
- Local food banks and distribution centers
- Local provider of assistance with utilities
- Local provider of older worker services (Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965, 42 U.S.C. § 3056 et seq.)
- Community Service Block Grants
- Programs funded by the Second Chance Act
- Other Arkansas Job Center partners, as appropriate

WIOA Title 1-B Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth participants should be referred to and co-enrolled (or co-funded) with these services and other available services as appropriate. Local

areas should have policies and procedures in place to ensure that other funds are leveraged [A.C.A. 15-4-3711(a)(10)(D), 20 CFR 680.230(b)].

WIOA Title I-B Adult and Dislocated Worker funds may support adult education and literacy activities of the Adult Education Section, the Arkansas Literacy Council, and other programs providing adult education and literacy activities if the participant is also engaged in one of the following [20 CFR 680.350]:

- Occupational skills training, including training for nontraditional employment
- On-the-job training (OJT)
- Incumbent worker training, as described in ADWS Policy No. WIOA I-B - 3.6 (Incumbent Worker Training)
- Programs that combined workplace training and related instruction, which may include cooperative education programs
- Training programs operated by the private sector
- Skill upgrading and retraining
- Entrepreneurial training

Local areas must ensure that services are not duplicated for individuals enrolled in multiple programs.

3. State Program and State Board Overview

A. State Agency Organization

Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

Arkansas Division of Workforce Services administers nine of the thirteen programs represented in this plan. The agency goal is to provide quality workforce services that support the development of a well-trained workforce that meets employer needs. The Division provides many services that support both jobseekers and employers and helps people succeed throughout their working lives. We support workers during times of unemployment, track and analyze labor market trends, and link businesses and jobseekers to a diverse range of employment services provided by the state's workforce system. Through DWS' local offices, the needs of employers and job-seeking individuals are facilitated by matching qualified workers with an employer's specific employment needs.

DWS avidly supports Arkansas's employer community and is cognizant of their needs. DWS offers many services to Arkansas jobseekers and residents including: referral to suitable employment opportunities; job training assistance to economically disadvantaged individuals and those dislocated due to business closings, layoffs, and natural disasters; case management for

disabled veterans; assessment of an individual's needs and referral to supportive agencies and programs.

The agency director is appointed by the Governor and is a member of the Governor's Workforce Cabinet. The agency has approximately 1,000 employees and has eight divisions which include: Unemployment Insurance, Employment Assistance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Legal Services, Financial Management and Administrative Services, New Hire Registry and Career Readiness Certification, and Field Operations.

Below is a list of programs administered by the Division.

- Wagner-Peyser Employment Services
- Local Veterans Employment Representatives
- Disabled Veterans Outreach Program
- WIOA Youth Program
- WIOA Adult Program
- WIOA Dislocated Worker Program
- Rapid Response and Layoff Aversion
- Trade Adjustment Assistance
- Alien Labor Certification
- Workforce Opportunity Tax Credit
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Transitional Employment Assistance
- Arkansas Work Pays Program
- Labor Market Information
- Unemployment Insurance
- Trade Readjustment Allowance
- New Hire Registry
- Career Readiness Certification
- Discretionary Grants

Note: Effective July 1, 2019, the Division added the Adult Education Section, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, and the Division of Services for the Blind under the Governor's Transformation.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services also serves as the Governor's Administrative Entity for WIOA Title I funding, provides staffing support for the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, provides technical assistance to local workforce development boards, and monitors their activities. The agency operates the above listed programs through a budget of just over $1 billion annually and awards funding for WIOA Title services to ten local workforce development boards for delivery of services locally in addition to numerous sub grantees for delivery of services through the TANF program and discretionary grants awarded to the agency from multiple sources.

The Office of Skills Development (OSD) is under the authority and leadership of the Career Education and Workforce Development Board. The State Board is appointed by the Governor and is charged with the responsibility for overseeing and directing the work of OSD. The Director for the agency is appointed by the Governor. Their mission is to provide leadership and contribute resources to serve the diverse and changing career educational needs of Arkansas youth, adults, and persons with disabilities.

Please note that under the Governor's Transformation Plan, the yet to be appointed Secretary of Commerce will have transitional authority regarding the Boards and organizations falling under the Department of Commerce. This transitional authority may impact the staffing of the Career Education and Workforce Development Board.

Adult Education Section Division (AES) funds 36 local adult education programs and literacy councils and the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC), the adult education's professional development training center. The adult education programs are supported with $5.2 million received under Tittle II of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act and $19 million in state funding.

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) is the General Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency in Arkansas. Consistent with Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, states must appoint a state director and establish a State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) in order to receive federal vocational rehabilitation funds.

In Arkansas, the ARS Commissioner is the state director of the vocational rehabilitation program. SRC members are Governor appointed. The ARS Commissioner and senior management provide leadership to the agency's major components including, Field Services, the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI), Access and Accommodations, and Business Engagement.

Field Services personnel provide access for clients in need of vocational rehabilitation services. Services provided fall in three primary categories including pre-employment transition, transition, and general vocational rehabilitation services. The VR counselor has primary responsibility for determining eligibility, individualized plan for employment development, case management, vocational rehabilitation counseling, and related job readiness services with a goal of assisting clients in obtaining or maintaining competitive integrated employment. ACTI, ARS' internal training unit, provides vocational training programs with a focus on industry recognized credentials as well as providing an array of supportive services. Access and Accommodations is organized to address a client's assistive technology needs at school and at work. The Business Engagement unit is ARS' primary link to employers providing information regarding services and supports available to businesses.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) is Arkansas's largest state agency, with more than 7,500 employees working to ensure citizens are healthy, safe and enjoying a high quality of life. The agency's skilled and passionate staff cares for Arkansans of all ages. People needing support will find at least one local DHS office in each of the state's 75 counties. Arkansans may apply for a vast array of services at their local county office as well as online. Services include ARKids First health insurance for children, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps), Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA) and Medicaid. Through a blend of federal and state Medicaid funds, DHS pays for 64 percent of the babies born in Arkansas each year and for the care of 69 percent of the state's nursing home patients. Additionally, DHS protects children and the elderly who have been abused or neglected; finds adoptive homes for foster children; funds congregate and home-delivered meals for the elderly; regulates nursing homes and childcare facilities; supports high-quality early childhood education; treats and serves youth in the juvenile justice system; oversees services for blind Arkansans; runs residential facilities for people with developmental disabilities; manages the Arkansas State Hospital and Arkansas Health Center for those with acute behavioral health issues; and supports nonprofit, community and faith-based organizations that depend on volunteers to continue programs vital to our communities. The agency also works with a system of community mental health care centers to provide mental health services to nearly 74,000 people each year. In all, DHS serves more than 1.2 million Arkansans every year. To manage these services and programs efficiently, DHS has ten divisions and five support offices headquartered in Little Rock in addition to the 85 county offices.

The DHS program included in this plan is the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment & Training Program.

The Division of Services for the Blind is the designated State Agency to provide services for rehabilitation and social services to blind and severely visually impaired persons age 14 and above in Arkansas. The agency has a director appointed by the Governor, but federal regulations

stipulate the vocational rehabilitation designated state unit must utilize a commissioner. The DSB Director and the senior leadership of DSB provide oversight and coordination within the constraints of state and federal laws to fulfill its mission through the following goals:

- Employment - To assist Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired to secure or maintain employment and consistent with their skills, abilities, and interests.

- Rehabilitation - To assist Arkansans who are blind or visually impaired to live as independently as possible through the development of skills, accommodations, or adaptations that are necessary to perform all activities of daily living.

- Prevention of Blindness - To assist in preventing blindness stabilizing vision, and, where possible, restoring vision.

- Field Services personnel provide the local level coordination and facilitation of all general vocational rehabilitation services for individuals with blind or visual impairment issues. This includes, but is not limited to, vocational rehabilitation counseling, vocational case management, eligibility determination, individual employment plan development, transition services, and job placement.

- Business and Technology personnel provide assistance to educate consumers to develop management and business ownership within the Vending Facility Program (VFP). The Vending Facility Program Services are available to eligible blind persons who are interested in and have the necessary skills to manage snack bars

Beginning July 1, 2019, consistent with the Governor's Transformation Plan, all core partner programs will be in the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS). Please note that under the Governor's Transformation Plan, the yet to be appointed Secretary of Commerce will have transitional authority regarding Boards and Organizations falling under the newly created Department of Commerce. This transitional authority may impact the titles of program administrators. Changes to all Organizational Charts will be provided once they are approved by the Secretary of Commerce or Governor.

B. State Board

Provide a description of the State Board, including—

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board was created by Arkansas Act 907 of 2015 and serves as the policymaking and oversight body for the State's workforce development system. The Arkansas Workforce Development Board is a 32-member private sector led board. Of the 32 members, 17 members are private sector business leaders from various industries from

throughout Arkansas. Also represented on the board are representatives from organized labor, Registered Apprenticeship, chief elected officials, community-based organizations, and the directors of the state agencies responsible for workforce services, career education, economic development, vocational rehabilitation, education, and higher education.

The membership roster for the Arkansas Workforce Development Board can be found online at http://dws.arkansas.gov/workforce-innovation/ and includes the membership category of representation as well as their professional affiliation.

The board meets on a quarterly basis and has a standard agenda layout to ensure that all of the activities of the board are being reported consistently and that the Executive Committee is able to monitor those activities. The order of business includes:

• Roll call

• Action on the minutes of the preceding meeting(s)

• Report of the Chairperson

• Report of the staff director

• Report of the Executive Committee

• Report of the standing committees

• Report of any ad hoc committees

• Other specified agenda items

• Communications, petitions and miscellaneous

• Adjournment

STATE BOARD MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board Membership Roster, as of January 1, 2020 is:

1. Mr. Thomas Anderson (Chair) Business Representative
2. Mr. Len Blaylock Business Representative
3. Mr. Scott Bull (Vice-Chair) Business Representative
4. Mr. Mike Rogers Business Representative
5. Ms. Melissa Hanesworth Business Representative
6. Dr. Julie Roberson Business Representative
7. Mr. George Nunnally Business Representative
8. Ms. Abby Houseworth Business Representative
9. Mr. Randy Finegan Business Representative
10. Ms. Rebecca Ives Business Representative

11. Ms. Holley Little Business Representative
12. Mr. Paul Riveria Business Representative
13. Ms. Chanda Chacon Business Representative
14. Mr. Robert Thorne Business Representative
15. Mr. Jeff Griffin Business Representative
16. Mr. Randy Henderson Business Representative
17. Dr. Diana Wright Business Representative
18. Mr. Kelley Sharp Labor & Apprenticeship
19. Mr. Lindsay Brown Org. Labor
20. Mr. Alan Hughes Organized Labor
21. Ms. Karen Breashears Labor & Apprenticeship
22. Mr. Brian Marsh Community-Based Org.
23. Dr. Maria Markham Train. or Educ. of Eligible Youth
24. Mr. Johnny Key Train. or Educ of Eligible Youth
25. Dr. Trenia Miles State Agency Director
26. Dr. Charisse Childers State Agency Director
27. Mr. Alan McClain State Agency Director
28. Ms. Cassondra Williams-Stokes State Agency Director
29. Sec. Mike Preston Economic Development
30. James Sanders City Mayor
31. Brandon Ellison County Judge
32. **Asa Hutchinson Governor**

i. Membership roster

Provide a membership roster for the State Board, including members' organizational affiliations.

SEE ABOVE

ii. Board Activities

Provide a description of the activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively.

Every new member is provided a thorough orientation that includes information on the following:

• Introduction to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

• Introduction to the Arkansas Workforce System to include the purpose, guiding principles, employer-driven focus, importance of business relationships, and services to employers and jobseekers

• Information regarding the Arkansas Workforce Centers including the hallmarks of excellence, goal of workforce centers, accessing services, operational and functional requirements for a workforce center, partner programs, more detailed info on employer and jobseekers services, employment resources, assessments, job coaching, and building toward excellence

• Information on the workforce board including the board vision, mission, role of the board, strategic planning, using labor market information, oversight responsibilities, evaluation, innovation, collaboration, attracting and involving employers, and targeted industries in the State

• Information regarding how to be a successful board member including areas of responsibility, the appointment process, key characteristics of a successful workforce board member, networking, conflict of interest, Arkansas Freedom of Information Act, and board staff roles

Since its formation in June 2015, newly appointed and experienced members receive annual training regarding their roles and responsibility as a board member. Additionally, the full board and its Strategic Planning, Program and Performance Evaluation, and TANF Oversight Committees conduct quarterly meetings.

4. Assessment and Evaluation of Programs and One-Stop Program Partners

A. Assessment of Core Programs

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

The State will assess its core programs through on-going continuous improvement strategies including:

• State and local level fiscal and programmatic monitoring (on-site and/or desk reviews) of all programs within our combined plan

• Customer Satisfaction Surveys (for both the jobseeker and employer) are conducted annually

• State and local level data validation of all programs within our combined plan

• The Program and Performance Evaluation Committee, a subcommittee of Arkansas Workforce Development Board, will meet quarterly to make recommendations on performance standards for the forthcoming year and to review actual outcomes across programs, make recommendation for improvement and/or corrective action to ensure attainment of performance standards for all partners

• As a state agency, there are annual audits of programs conducted and specific, as needed, audits conducted by a third party

The state also ensures that local workforce development areas meet performance accountability measures and will provide technical assistance when needed. ADWS plans to issue a policy on system assessment to ensure that the current actions are being coordinated in a way that allows core partners to review relevant information and take action to improve the system.

Each agency will be responsible for conducting an evaluation of their programs and reporting results to the PPE Committee of the State Board.

B. Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs

Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

At a minimum, workforce delivery system partner program services, and the partner programs included in this Combined State Plan, will be assessed using performance measures they have in common, in addition to other performance accountability measures required by each program's funding source(s) and grants. Performance will be reviewed at both the state and the local workforce area level.

Each program's performance in each of the primary indicators of performance will be a start point for further evaluation of the quality, effectiveness and opportunities for improvement. Each partner program will submit their performance metrics into a statewide dashboard on a quarterly basis. Each partner program will report out to the Program and Performance Evaluation (PPE) Committee with their accomplishments, plans, and strategies to continue to make improvements, how they address areas that are not being met and the identification of resources or support they need to move forward.

The state and local areas will be assessed based on a comparison of the actual performance level with the adjusted level of performance each quarter and annually. The following definitions will be utilized to determine if a core program exceeded, met, or failed to meet the negotiated levels of performance. These definitions are developed based on the understanding that they are the same definitions to be utilized by the federal agencies in determining if the State met performance. Absent federal guidance on this subject at the time of plan development, these definitions may need to be adjusted subsequent to the issuance of federal guidance later in 2016.

Levels of Proficiency and Actions "Exceed" Condition: If the actual performance in any indicator is greater than 100 percent of the adjusted level, the measure will be considered to "exceed" the measure's adjusted rate.

Action: This is an indication that the program is providing high quality and effective services. The state or local area is expected to, consistent with economic conditions and characteristics of the participants continue to improve its performance. The programs are encouraged to innovate

in service delivery, processes and practices. An example is to evaluate programs through a process improvement models, such as Lean Six Sigma, process mapping, simulation, DRIVE.

"Meet" Condition: If the actual performance in any indicator is 90 percent or more and lower than 100 percent of the adjusted level, this measure will be determined to "meet".

Action: The program is required to improve its performance to meet 100 percent of the adjusted rate. The program will continue to improve processes, practices and to adjust strategies in order to create a higher quality workforce system.

"At-Risk" Condition: If the actual performance in any indicator is more than 50 percent and below 90 percent of the adjusted level, the measure will be characterized as "At-Risk ". According to the proposed threshold outlined in §677.190(d)(1), each program is required to average at least a 90 percent average of their indicator scores in order to pass the Overall Program Score criteria. Additionally, the second threshold in §677.190(d)(1) requires the state's Overall Indicator Score to be an average score of 90 percent or greater in each indicator across all core programs. In the case of performance characterized as "At-Risk", the individual indicator does not achieve 90 percent of the adjusted score. This may put the state or local area at risk of failing the Overall Indicator Score and Overall Program Score criteria. Meeting the 50 percent threshold is only an indicator that the quality and effectiveness of the program in a specific measure meets the minimum standards established by the Federal government in a specific measure. This performance level, however, is not an indication that the overall quality and effectiveness of the program necessarily met.

Action: The program is required to improve its performance to meet the 90 percent threshold by improving processes, practices and to adjust strategies in order to create a higher quality workforce system.

"Fail" Condition: If the actual performance in any indicator is less than 50 percent and the adjusted level, this measure will "fail" the proposed threshold outlined in §677.190(d) (2). This indicates a specific measure requires improvement in order to be compliant with federal standards. It is the minimum standard of the quality and effectiveness of services.

Action: In instances when the state or a local area falls below this threshold, immediate technical assistance will be provided by the appropriate office to improve the proficiency of staff members in providing WIOA services, provide an opportunity to develop strategies to improve the program's ability to meet performance measures.

Levels of Proficiency Requirements:

- Exceeding Indicator Greater than 100 percent
  - Innovate and stay on top
  - Strive for national excellence
- Meet Indicator between 90-100 percent

- Process, practice improvement, adjust strategies
- At-Risk Indicator between 50-90 percent
  - Technical Assistance available, process, practice improvement, adjust strategies
- Fail Indicator Less than 50 percent
  - Immediate mandatory Technical Assistance, process, practice improvement

Additional Metrics

In addition to the primary indicators of performance, secondary metrics may be created and reviewed to more fully assess the activities and performance of a program. The data elements on the WIOA annual state and local report as well as the Eligible Training Provider reports will be reviewed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to workforce training programs. Areas for improvement may be identified from these metrics.

In early 2018, the new chair of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board began to shift the Board's focus beyond the implementation phase and began expressing a desire to implement "evidence-based" policymaking. While this idea is currently in its infancy, it is expected that the framework will include four (4) key components: 1) program assessment via the systematic review of all available program data 2) developing an inventory of funded programs 3) categorizing programs by their evidence of effectiveness, and 4) attempting to identify each programs' return on investment.

Additionally, the State Board believes that this approach will identify best practices, highlight gaps in our service delivery system, and allow for strategic program improvement.

C. Previous Assessment Results

Beginning with the state plan modification in 2018 and for subsequent state plans and state plan modifications, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board has monitored the performance of WIA (now WIOA) Title I program as well as the Wagner-Peyser Performance. All common and supplemental measures were met or exceeded. A formal evaluation of the Arkansas Workforce Center System has not been conducted since before program year 2011. However, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) has continued to conduct annual monitoring of programmatic and fiscal management of grants to ensure that funds are being spent in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations. As part of this ongoing annual

monitoring, we have also included a risk management protocol for our WIOA formula and discretionary grants under the purview of ADWS.

The WIOA Roundtable, made up of representatives of the WIOA core partners, plan to re-institute Customer Satisfaction Surveys. These surveys will be similar to those formerly required under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). Using the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) as a guide, we will capture common customer satisfaction information from both program participants and employers that can be aggregated and compared across the WIOA partner programs. We believe that this will allow us to assess our workforce system as well as gauge our progress toward continuously improving our service delivery.

In addition, the continuation of oversight of performance outcomes, the Program and Performance Evaluation committee will focus on partners' performance and eligible training providers. Not only do they establish and monitor partner performance, they will also look at continuous improvement strategies related to credential, skills gains, and business performance.

The levels of performance established by the Adult Education Division for each of the core indictors of performance for adult education and literacy activities are expressed in objective, quantifiable, and measurable forms and will show progress towards continuously improving performance.

In order to ensure optimal return on the investment of federal and state funds in adult education and literacy activities, ADCE-AED shall reach an agreement with the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) on target levels of performance for each of the core indicators of performance for each year of the grant. In addition, the state office shall submit an annual report to OCTAE showing progress and continuous improvement. ADCE-AED will continue to conduct annual reviews and evaluations on local programs according to goals and objectives established and agreed upon by the AED and the local program.

Levels of Performance (Adult Education): Core Indicators (CI) of Performance - Section 116(b) of WIOA measures the percentage of Adult Education participants (12 contact hours or more) who complete or advance one or more educational levels in reading, writing, and speaking in the English language; numeracy; problem solving; English language acquisition; and other literacy skills measured by mastery of one or more competencies identified on a standardized instrument approved by Adult Education Division (AED). For 2016-17, the achievement of a secondary school diploma was included in these measurements. The completion percentages for each level is outlined below.

Entering Educational Functioning Level	2015-16	2016-17
Target	Target	
ABE* Level 1	48%	49%
ABE Level 2	43%	44%
ABE Level 3	41%	43%
ABE Level 4	42%	44%
ASE** Level 5	40%	48%
ASE Level 6	N/A	N/A
ESL*** Level 1	34%	32%
ESL Level 2	43%	39%
ESL Level 3	40%	46%
ESL Level 4	42%	48%
ESL Level 5	34%	39%
ESL Level 6	27%	20%

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*ABE= Adult Basic Education; ** ASE= Adult Secondary Education; ***ESL= English as a Second Language

Follow-up Outcome Measures were changed between the 2015-16 and 2016-17 program years due to implementation of WIOA. For 216-17, target indicators were not implemented, and actual achievements have not yet been calculated. All follow up measures apply to those participants who exited during the program year.

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2015-16 Follow-up Outcome Measures	2015-16 Target	2016-17 Follow-up Outcome Measures	2016-17 Targets
Entered Employment*	67%	Employed 2nd Quarter after exit	

2015-16 Follow-up Outcome Measures	2015-16 Target	2016-17 Follow-up Outcome Measures	2016-17 Targets
Retained Employment**	76%	Employed 4th Quarter after exit	Targets for the WIOA follow-up measures have not been set.
Enter Post-Secondary Education or Training***	97%	Median Earning 2nd Quarter after exit	
GED****	29%	Attained a Secondary School Diploma/Recognized Equivalent and Enrolled in Postsecondary Education or Training within one year of exit	Baseline data will be submitted in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 program years.
		Attained a Secondary School Diploma/Recognized Equivalent and Employed within one year of exit	
		Attained a Postsecondary Credential while enrolled or within one year of exit	

*Includes learners employed and not employed at time of entry and in the labor force and attain employment by the first quarter after exit quarter.

**Includes learners who were employed at the time of entry and who were employed the third quarter after exit

***Includes learners who earned a secondary credential while enrolled in adult education, or had secondary credentials at entry, or are enrolled in a class specifically designed for transition to postsecondary education or training.

****Includes learners who took all GED tests, or enrolled in adult high school at the high ASE level.

The following summarizes Arkansas Rehabilitation Services efforts to achieve its goals:
To establish baselines and meet benchmarks for state with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. During FY 2018, ARS had 2,520 successful employment outcomes, which is 4.1% below the number of successful outcomes reported in FY 2017. This number is not unexpected as the focus of WIOA is on long-term outcomes. During PY 2018 Second Quarter and Forth Quarter the employment performance measure rate and the median income rate increased statewide.

Increase the availability of Supported Employment (SE) services to youth and adults with significant disabilities. During PY 2018, ARS worked with state and community-based partners to develop agreements to continue provider transformation transitioning facility-based services to

a community-based model through support from an Office of Disability Employment Programs grant. In partnership with the Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Services, ARS piloted and implemented sequential funding of supported employment services and initiated strategies to implement State Agency as Model Employer in Arkansas. ARS and other involved state agencies signed an agreement that provides guidelines for necessary coordination to ensure competitive employment is the preferred options for individuals with disabilities.

Improve public relations, marketing, information, outreach, and referrals. ARS updated marketing materials and provided education and outreach for the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) through multimedia posts and ACTI success stories in agency publications. Field Services improved service provision within the Hispanic population by providing informational resources and increasing utilization of interpreters for Spanish speaking clients. ARS found it not feasible at this time to collect data on CRPs who identify individuals who because of rural living, a lack of transportation, or English as a second language might benefit from ARS services and other support services.

Increase collaboration with business that leads to increased employment outcomes. ARS continued to support the growth of Disability: IN – Arkansas. Business Engagement staff developed presentations and revamped print and digital materials to address employer perspectives. ARS facilitated the 4th Annual Arkansas Business Employment summit and collaborated with WIOA and community partners to provide career fairs across the state. ACTI expanded apprenticeships, internships, and part-time employment opportunities, engaged in pre-apprenticeship activities with business members of the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, and expanded the registered apprenticeship program to include people with disabilities.
Expand and improve transition services program. ARS developed procedural guidance for counselors, vendors, and schools participating in Pre-ETS, and promulgated policy that supports both the traditional Transition and the Pre-ETS programs. ARS developed a transition committee that provides input and suggestions to the various models of Pre-ETS currently in place. ARS signed a statewide Memorandum of Agreement outlining the duties and responsibilities of involved state agencies working in Pre-ETS and transition and developed individualized MOUs with school districts regarding the implementation of Pre-ETS within the district. ARS conducted Transition Expos across the State and assisted in the planning and training of the Arkansas Transition Services bi-annual State Transition Summit. ARS provided, through the ARS Transition Program and ACTI, the four-week Transition Employment Program (TEP). ARS also partnered with community providers and Arkansas businesses to host the Project SEARCH® program.

Develop and improve Community Rehabilitation Programs. Based on results from the annual ACTI monitoring, ARS concluded ACTI should move from a residential services program to a

community-based program. Short- and long-term maintenance needs indicated the residential model was not cost effective to continue. Initial plan development for the new model is underway. ARS hosted Lunch and Learns to increase quality of relationships with CRPs. It also provided training on Pre-ETS and job placement, which enabled CRP partners to provide new job placement services and new Pre-ETS services such as job exploration, postsecondary guidance, and work-based learning in the schools. ARS initiated new purchased service agreements for community-based services with outcome reimbursement payments.
Improve training, resources, and continuing education. ARS trained staff on the external employment vendor services with the addition of the 2018 implementation of the ARS/DDS service partnership and on how to complete case management. Field Services management provided information to Staff Development and Training about staff training needs on a monthly basis and Staff Development and Training monitored the effectiveness of the trainings offered. ACTI partnered with National Park College to arrange an articulation agreement for the Certified Production Technology class.

Improve ARS' ability to act as a resource when assisting individuals with disabilities and employers in addressing accommodation needs. ARS renamed the Retaining a Valued Employee (RaVE) program to Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/TRW) to better reflect programs/practices in the private/public sector employment and to better communicate functional intent. ARS sufficiently staffed AT@ Work by filling a vacant Occupational Therapist position and by transferring a Physical Therapist position.

Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery for agency clients. Trained field staff to reduce data entry error ratios and audit findings. ARS partnered with the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville to provide career counseling to all sub-minimum wage 14(c) providers serving over 6,000 clients. Field Services updated the agency's policy to include the WIOA changes, with an effective date of January 1, 2019. Rehab area managers trained staff on the policy updates and reviewed and monitored policies and procedures at monthly staff meetings. ACTI converted its paper case management system to an electronic system, which has improved communication between ACTI counselors and field counselors.

Division for Service of the Blind (DSB) previous assessment results provides the results of an assessment of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner program included in the plan during the preceding 2-year period. Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

During FY2014 and FY2015, DSB increased the number of individuals who achieved employment outcomes from 335 in FY2014 to 366 in FY2015. In FY2014, sixty-three percent of the participants who exited the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program for the blind and visually impaired achieved an employment outcome. Sixty-eight percent of individuals who

exited the VR program for the blind and visually impaired achieved an employment outcome in FY2015. All DSB clients are individuals with significant visual impairments or blindness.

Below is a detailed report of the strategies used in FY2015 and the assessment results of those strategies. DSB is using these strategies to strengthen and improve service delivery to visually impaired and blind participants who want to work by focusing on independent living skills that will allow participants to have freedom of movement, self-care skills, and the technological access they need to compete with non-disabled
individuals. Next, DSB focuses on educational preparation in high school, career counseling and work experience situations. Youth and adult clients with no previous work history require similar strategies. DSB has improved from FY2014 to FY2015 by focusing on post-secondary educational preparation programs for participants, programs that are readily available in the job market and have frequent hiring upon graduation. Participants are encouraged to be active partners in their career selection by researching career fields, visiting job sites, and talking to colleges. DSB clients know who is hiring and where prior to beginning a field of study. DSB assists by making the connections and conversations happen. Moving forward DSB will focus on improving relationships with employers so that participants have ready access to real world situations and possibilities.

Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals. An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must: • Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals. • Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities. Evaluation of FY 2015 VR Goals: Below are the evaluation and reports of progress for the most recently completed FY 2015 VR Goals and Priorities, covering October 1, 2014 - September 30, 2015: Goal 1: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired. Strategy: VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers will make job contacts with employers. Performance Measure: • Each VR Counselor and Rehabilitation Teacher will make two face-to-face job contacts with employers per month. • A brochure will be developed to give employers. Goal Met/Extended: Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers continue to make two face-to-face contacts with employers per month and document them in monthly reports. Development of an employer brochure is continuing in cooperation with the Department of Career Education. Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment. Performance Measure: • All self-employment proposals will be reviewed by a team composed of the Business and Technology Unit Manager, the Field Services Administrator, and the VR Counselor to ensure that a proposal is realistic and sustainable before it is approved and any funds are provided. • In addition to the goal and steps of self-employment being on the IPE, the consumer must complete a written business plan with the DSB business-ownership team described above. • A brochure will be developed to provide interested consumers with

information about DSB's small business self-employment program. • Staff will receive training in Operation Jumpstart, a hands-on, microenterprise development program designed to help entrepreneurs test the feasibility of their business ideas and plan to launch new ventures.

DSB's Operation Jumpstart's mission is to help consumers who have expressed an interest in starting their own business, explore the possibility, develop a business plan, and start their own business. In doing so we help them become economically independent and be an active part of their communities.

Goal Met/Extended: This process was followed, and business plans were submitted and approved. However, the Small Business Program was restructured and moved to the Field Services unit. As a result, plans for a small business brochure are being revised. Instead of doing an Operation Jumpstart training in 2015, it was decided to do one-on-one assistance to consumers as needed using the Small Business Developer.

Strategy: Based upon consumer response and effectiveness, DSB will continue to hold Job Clubs to assist participants in acquiring job seeking skills and improving their probability of securing employment. Job Clubs also encourage peer mentoring.

Performance Measure: Job Clubs will be held at least once a month at the DSB Tech Lab and field offices.

Goal Met: Job Clubs are being conducted as planned.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer individuals for benefits counseling.

Performance Measure: Area Supervisors will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors will refer at least 10 consumers per caseload for benefits counseling.
The monthly report will be revised to capture this information.

Goal Met: The White River Area Agency on Aging continues as an employment network doing benefits counseling for DSB consumers. Instead of revising the monthly report, a form specific to benefits counseling referrals was developed.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer eligible Older Blind individuals to VR.

Performance Measure: DSB will refer 100% of eligible Older Blind individuals to VR.

Goal Met: All Older Blind individuals interested in employment are referred to VR.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful consumers and their employers and will encourage peer mentoring.

Performance Measures: Each counselor who has been in his/her position for at least a year will nominate one individual from his/her caseload as a candidate for state Consumer of the Year and encourage the individual to serve as a peer mentor to other people who are blind or severely visually impaired. DSB will award Consumer of the Year candidates and their employers with trophies/plaques and related publicity.

Goal Met: Counselors are nominating outstanding Consumers of the Year, and the consumers and their employers are being recognized with trophies/plaques and publicity.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment.

Performance Measures: DSB will acquire specialized training to develop the skills and credentials of Rehabilitation Teachers. DSB will continue to assign new Rehabilitation Teachers to assistive technology training as vacant positions are filled, so that staff can provide basic technology support to consumers in their respective geographic areas statewide. Supervisors will schedule veteran RTs for remedial training as a formal part of their professional development plan. DSB will continue to provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur in order to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of consumers. DSB staff will continue to meet consumers at Workforce Services offices, including DSB-sponsored accessible kiosks, in order to assist consumers in their job searches and in becoming more comfortable interacting with the public in an employment setting.

Goal Met: DSB provided new Rehabilitation Teachers with assistive technology training and continued to train Workforce Services staffs. VR Counselors met consumers at accessible kiosks to assist them in their job
searches.

Strategy: DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning.

Performance Measures: Novice counselors will attend a specific orientation to VR issues and will participate in specialized training, through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association or other qualified sources. Novice counselors will be exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans.

Goal Met: Novice counselors were given the opportunity to attend the ARA annual conference and to apply for stipends to attend the conferences of professional organizations.

Strategy: DSB will contract with local providers to secure select VR services to capitalize on the established relationships of such contractors with local employers, to secure appropriate employment for DSB clients in geographic proximity to their homes.

Performance Measure: Deliverables within the contracts will be met.

Goal Met: Instead of contracting with employment providers, DSB decided to pay private, local job placement specialists on a fee-for-service basis.

Strategy: DSB will establish multi-layered support systems for clients by developing performance based contracts with Faith-Based Organizations (FBO's) and other providers across the state, as an extension of their missions, to provide depth to volunteer employment-related transportation and other services in rural areas of the state.

Performance Measure: Deliverables within the contracts will be met.

Goal Met: Deliverables were met by CIL's who participated in the RFQ and contracted with DSB, but some CIL's chose not to participate. No responses were received from FBO's.

Strategy: DSB will establish an information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstration lab on selected college campuses to inform Transition Partner organizations of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost-effective resources available to them.

Performance Measure: An information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstration lab will be established on at least one college campus.

Goal Met: The Business and Technology Unit demonstrated technology to college and high school students on a college campus.
Strategy: DSB will explore ways to better utilize the DSB central Tech Lab.

Performance Measure: DSB will redesign the technology needs assessment and database process for the DSB central Tech Lab to better align it with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering. This is a specific initiative of the DSB Leadership Training Team, in partnership with the Oklahoma Wicked Innovation: Next Generation Solutions (WINGS) leadership training project.

Goal Met: A survey about Tech Lab services was received by consumers and DSB staff. The response rate was very low, but the WINGS project itself led to the purchase of an instructional library for use when teaching in the Tech Lab. This library includes tutorials for MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook for use with JAWS, MAGic, Window-eyes, and Internet Explorer. The tutorials are updated on a regular basis and additional instructional materials for other software and equipment is added as needed or available.

Strategy: DSB will convert its client data MIS system to a web-based environment.

Performance Measures: Counselors will be able to enter client data and gather signatures during local visits, which will streamline the flow of services. The new system will facilitate the production of statistical reports.

Goal Met: DSB purchased the AWARE data management system and all staff are now proficient in its use.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in a variety of situations to allow experienced consumers to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced consumers, often leading and guiding by example of his/her success in an area.

Performance Measures: Peer mentoring will be used to connect consumers interested in self-employment with individuals who have owned small businesses and can offer advice and support. Consumers of the Year will be encouraged to provide peer mentoring to other individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired that are trying to manage their rehabilitation plans, gain marketable skills, and secure good jobs. Participants in Job Club will be encouraged to mentor each other in their searches for employment and development of job readiness skills.

Goal Met: Peer mentoring is occurring as planned. Goal 2: DSB will increase its services to transition students.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations.
Performance Measure: DSB will sponsor or participate in at least one training or event that will bring together transition partners for the purpose of exchanging information that will specifically benefit students who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Goal Met: A Parent Summit was held in Harrison and West Memphis in 2015 for transition students and their families from throughout the state. Transition partners were invited to attend,

and some were asked to make presentations. The success of the summit confirmed that additional summits will be held around the state in coming years.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed.

Performance Measure: The Transition Coordinator will review the database to insure it is being maintained by Rehabilitation Assistants, who input local information. Goal Met: The Transition Coordinator reviewed the database and insured it was being maintained.
Strategy: VR Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to ensure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school.

Performance Measure: Area Supervisors will monitor this during case reviews to ensure that no transition student will graduate without a current IPE. Goal Met: Case reviews showed no students were graduating without current IPE's.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits around the state to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

Performance Measure: In FY 2015, DSB will invite ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to Parent Summits with VR Counselors and Rehabilitation Teachers, to provide information about students' rights and accommodations.

Goal Met: A Parent Summits were held in West Memphis and Harrison for transition students and their families from throughout the state. ESVI was included on the agenda. The information provided included IEP's, but topics extended beyond high school and into college services. The success of the summit confirmed that additional summits will be held around the state in coming years.

Strategy: VR Counselors or Rehabilitation Teachers will make face-to-face visits to each school counselor assigned to students who are blind or visually impaired in their territories.

Performance Measure: VR Counselors or Rehabilitation Teachers will have from the beginning of the school year to December 1, to complete the face-to-face visits to school counselors described above. Goal Met: VR Counselors made face-to-face contacts within required timeframes.

Strategy: DSB will continue to provide assessments to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available

transportation resources, self- advocacy, and acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, and rights and responsibilities as an informed consumer.

Performance Measure: All transition students will be referred to Rehabilitation Teachers for assessment of daily living skills and needed instruction. Goal Met: Transition students are referred for assessments in accordance with policy and the State Plan.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with public schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Performance Measure: DSB will continue its system of mail-outs and emails to public schools.

Goal Met: Mail-outs and emails are sent to contacts in public schools and have improved communication and strengthened relationships. Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with ESVI.

Performance Measures: DSB will continue its system of mail-outs and emails to area ESVI representatives. In addition to the local networking efforts, the Transition Coordinator will dialogue with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB. DSB will refer young consumers to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ESVI to DSB.

Goal Met: Mail-outs and emails are sent to ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and have improved communication and strengthened relationships. The Transition Coordinator maintains contact with ESVI at a state level.

Goal 3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability.

Performance Measure: Each VR Counselor will man at least one DSB exhibit at a widely attended or significantly relevant event in his/her territory.

Goal Met: VR Counselors met or exceeded this goal in each territory.

Strategy: DSB will contract with CIL's to reach out to faith-based organizations and inform them of DSB services.

Performance Measure: CIL's will submit to DSB copies of minutes of meetings with faith-based groups, reports on trainings, and monthly reports, including the number of faith-based referrals.

Goal Met: DSB staff monitoring the contract determined that CIL's submitted program and financial documentation as required by the RFQ.

Strategy: DSB will increase its services to minorities.

Performance Measures: DSB will make at least one minority outreach effort to Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of its geographic areas in FY 2015.

Goal Met: VR Counselors met or exceeded this goal in each area.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

Performance Measure: DSB will continue to send at least five supervisors/administrators to these conferences and will make presentations as requested.

Goal Met: DSB exceeded the number of supervisors and administrators that were to be sent to conferences of blindness consumer groups. Opportunities to attend these conferences were extended to direct service staff, and some staff chose to participate. An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment (SE) program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved.

The evaluation must:

- Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
- Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

Evaluation of FY 2015 SE Goals: Below are the evaluation and reports of progress for the most recently completed FY 2015 SE Goals and Priorities, covering October 1, 2014 - September 30, 2015:

Goal 1: Increase the number of Supported Employment Providers to better serve DSB consumers.

Strategy: DSB will provide resources to significantly expand the capacity of its partners World Services for the Blind (WSB) and Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind (LFB) as Community Rehabilitation Programs to provide Supported Employment services to DSB consumers.

Performance Measure: WSB and LFB will begin providing SE services to at least half of the DSB consumers in supported employment during FY 2015.

Goal Met: DSB referred 100 percent of its SE consumers to WSB and LFB in 2015. DSB also established a methodology for each VR Counselor to submit two SE referrals to WSB, so that 26 consumers would be referred each year forward of 2015.

Strategy: DSB will continue to collaborate with other agencies, such as Arkansas Chapter of APSE: Advancing Employment, Connecting People, to expand the number of SE providers.

Performance Measure: At least two new potential SE providers will be identified and contacted.
Goal Met: Career Links and Friendship Community Care became new SE providers for DSB.

Strategy: DSB will encourage consumers' family members and other natural support individuals to become SE providers.

Performance Measure: DSB will collaborate with TACE and other organizations to develop training for the family support member and consumer.

Goal Met: Training for natural supports was developed in 2013 and finalized and held in March 2014, trainings continued into 2015.

Strategy: DSB will continue to encourage CRPs to become Employment Networks (ENs).

Performance Measure: A meeting will have taken place with at least one CRP to discuss the possibility of it becoming an EN.

Goal Met: DSB discussed the possibility of becoming EN's with WSB and LFB.
Goal 2: Increase the quality of SE Providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. Strategy: DSB will collaborate with TACE and other organizations to develop training for the family support member and consumer.

Performance Measures: At least one training on SE will be offered to family support personnel and SE consumers.

Goal Met: DSB collaborated with TACE, WSB and LFB to develop the training for natural supports. The first training was held in March 2014 and continued into 2015.

Strategy: Orient DSB staff to new program design. Performance Measures: • At least one staff training on SE program design will be conducted in FY 2015.

Goal Met: Staff received training on the new program design at the annual field service meeting.

DSB is transitioning into using the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. Steps have been taken to conduct a statistical analysis over the last three years in order to develop a baseline of performance percentages for the agency in order to move forward to set applicable performance standards under section 116 of WIOA.

D. Evaluation

Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA.

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) has the responsibility for ensuring public accountability by evaluating the effectiveness of the overall workforce development system. For the federal WIOA performance accountability measures and state measures, each core partner will have a monitoring and corrective action process at the state level that assures identified deficiencies, to the extent they occur, are addressed. This process is intended to be based primarily on data analysis but shall also include monitoring tools at the discretion of the core program. If annual performance targets are not met by any core program, the AWDB may request that the core program submit a corrective action plan.

In the event of a corrective action plan being implemented, the partner will provide regular progress reports to ADWS and other parties.

The AWDB will evaluate its core programs through on-going continuous improvement strategies including:

1. Program performance effectiveness utilizing the State's Information Management System at the state and local level

2. Review of state and local level data presented on a performance dashboard

3. Core Program Monitoring and Compliance reviews annually

4. Local Workforce Development Area annual reports

5. State and local risk assessment evaluations to review:

Governance

Administrative, program/grant, and financial management systems o Program services, delivery systems, and documentation, and o Performance accountability.

Statewide core partner meetings held bi-annually to discuss and review program effectiveness, best practices and provide technical assistance.

As previously mentioned, we plan to enhance our evaluation protocols beyond the standard program performance matrix with the re-introduction of customer satisfaction surveys for both program participants and employers. We believe that this will provide WIOA core program administrators and Local Workforce Boards with sufficient data to assess the quality of our state's workforce development system.

Additionally, we plan to seek guidance from and coordinate with the Employment and Training Administration - Office of Policy Development and Research to ensure that our efforts are in line with the increased focus upon program evaluations under WIOA.

Title II, AEFLA: Adult Education Section

Adult education state staff evaluates providers quarterly through the review of each program's quarterly report submission. In it, providers review and report progress on average attendance hours, educational functioning level (EFL) gains, number and percentage of students post-tested, etc. Quarterly reports also allow providers to review operational aspects of the program such as the percentage of funds expended, completion of required professional development, and completed personnel activity reports.

ADWS/AES also performs an annual site visit for each adult education and literacy provider to ensure that state and federal laws and policies are followed, to review program performance, and to connect with Local Education Agency Administrators. Based upon the findings during the site visit, regional program advisors provide technical assistance to program directors and staff to ensure continuous improvement.

Additionally, each year 25% of the current 36 adult education and literacy providers receive a program review, which is a three-day intensive program monitoring and technical site visit by a team of program advisors in the state office. Each provider can expect to have a program review every four years provided there are no major risks or violations identified during an annual site visit, which would increase review frequency. Providers are assessed in areas including, but not limited to, Program Management and Reporting, Financials, Technology, and Collaboration. This program review process allows program advisors and the State Disabilities Project Manager

to thoroughly assess program operations, observe classroom instruction, and review state and federal laws and policies. Once each program is reviewed, ADWS/AES requests a full financial audit review by the agency's state finance department.

ADWS/AES evaluates each program annually through an E&E (Effective and Efficient) calculation, currently based upon the programs' progress on the federally negotiated benchmarks in Table 4. Programs that do not meet the determined percentage of the benchmarks are provided additional technical assistance in order to prepare a performance improvement plan. Plan implementation is monitored throughout the year. Upon not meeting the requirements of E&E for three consecutive years, ADWS/AES makes a recommendation to the Arkansas Workforce Development Board as to whether or not the program should continue to be funded.

Lastly, mandatory Administrators' Meetings are held twice a year in which policies and procedures are discussed and information is disseminated. During the administrators' meeting, providers share best practices with one another as well as gain additional professional development training from staff or guest speakers.

New Evaluation

As required by 20 CFR § 682.200(d), States must use funds reserved by the Governor for statewide activities to conduct evaluations of activities under the WIOA title I core programs in order to promote continuous improvement, research and test innovative services and strategies, and achieve high levels of performance and outcomes.

ADWS, following input from the AWDB during the July 16, 2019, meeting negotiated a contract for an evaluation with the University of Arkansas. The following requirements are the basis of the negotiation.

The following evaluations using *designs that employ the most rigorous analytical and statistical methods that are reasonably feasible, such as the use of control groups* (20 CFR § 682.220) as appropriate:

A. Local Integration Study- Sample Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I or Title III participants for 3 Local Workforce Development Areas. This part of the evaluation will focus on two primary areas: 1. Co-enrollment and Co-funding of REQUIRED WIOA Partners and 2. Leveraging of Local Resources available in the Local Workforce Development Area.

1. Sample Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I and Title III participants for 3 Local Workforce Development Areas-to determine if, based on the participants information in the Case File, the participant might have been eligible to receive services under the required partners listed in 20 CFR § 678.400.

2. For each local area selected, interview leadership to identify partner programs and non-profits that collaborate with the Workforce Centers beyond the list of required partners above. For all partners, required in number 1 and other partners identified in 2, report whether there exists:
   - Memorandums of Understanding between the programs/entities
   - Referral Procedures
   - Training for partners regarding the services provided or alternative print materials to assist in collaboration OR
   - An alternative method to refer clients between the partners effectively

3. Identify and report entities in the selected local areas that provide services to the following targeted populations:
   - Displaced Homemaker
   - Low Income
   - Limited English Proficiency
   - Migrant Worker
   - Disabled
   - Veteran
   - Older Worker
   - Out of School Youth
   - Foster Youth
   - Basic Skill Deficient
   - Ex-Offender
   - Single Parent
   - TANF Recipient
   - SNAP Recipient
   - SSDI Recipient
   - UI Claimant
   - Long-Term Unemployed

4. For all programs and services identified in steps 1, 2, and 3, report whether sampled participants were: referred to or co-enrolled in other programs or services.

B. In the Comprehensive Centers for the 3 Local Areas selected for sampling, report case studies on effectiveness of identifying and closing Skill-Gaps

Interview staff for examples of:

I. Skills-gap identification on either the occupation level, based on demand, or the skill-level based on interaction with an employer.

II. Determine the services that were provided to address the skills-gap
III. Provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the services provided in closing the skills-gap, if possible.

C. Review a sample of Arkansas Workforce Centers against the State's certification policy and applicable laws/regulations for four comprehensive centers and two affiliate centers. Each of the six centers selected should be located in different Local Workforce Development Areas and may be selected from Local Workforce Development Areas that overlap the 3 selected above

D. Conduct a statewide customer service survey for business customers of WIOA Title I and Title III receiving services over the most recent 12 months available.

E. Provide evaluation status reports on a monthly basis on overall project goals. These reports will be issued at the end of February, March, April, May, June, and July of 2020.

F. Provide a preliminary evaluation report by August 15, 2020.

G. Provide a final evaluation, with results, best practices, and recommendations by September 30, 2020.

5. Distribution of Funds for Core Programs

Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

A. For Title I programs

For Title I programs, provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for—

i. Youth activities in accordance with WIOA section 128(b)(2) or (b)(3),

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB) coordinates and establishes policy for conducting all employment and training activities within the workforce investment system created by the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 and Arkansas Code §15-4-3707 through 15-4-3713, including all activities conducted in and through Arkansas's one-stop centers. The criteria for funding the programs included in this plan will be consistent with the federal and state laws governing those programs and are described in detail in the funding sections below.

The chief elected official or lead elected official in a local workforce development area will serve as the local grant recipient for, and shall be liable for any misuse of, the grant funds

allocated to the local area for youth, adult, and dislocated worker activities under Sections 128, 129, 132, and 133 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

In a case in which a local workforce development area includes more than one unit of general local government, the chief elected officials of such units will execute an agreement that specifies the respective roles of the individual chief elected officials, including responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the allocated funds. If, after a reasonable effort, the chief elected officials are unable to reach agreement about this responsibility, the Governor makes the determination. The local plan must include the agreement concerning this responsibility.

In order to assist in the disbursement of the grant funds, the chief elected official or lead elected official of a local workforce development area may designate an entity to serve as a local grant sub-recipient for such funds or as a local fiscal agent. Such designation shall not relieve the chief elected official or lead elected official of the liability for any misuse of grant funds. The local grant recipient or sub-recipient will disburse such funds for workforce development activities at the direction of the local board. The local grant recipient or sub-recipient will disburse the funds immediately on receiving such direction from the local board. The local board, in partnership with the chief elected official(s), will conduct oversight with respect to local programs of youth activities authorized under WIOA Section 129, local employment and training activities authorized under WIOA Section 134, and the One-Stop delivery system in the local area.

WIOA Title I Youth Funding Allocation Formula The in-state allotment of funds to local workforce investment areas for Title I youth activities under the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act will be made using the formula described at Section 128(b)(2)(A)(i), as follows:

• 33 1/3 percent of the funds to the local workforce investment areas will be based on the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each workforce development area compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in all areas of substantial unemployment in the state

• 33 1/3 percent of the funds based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each workforce development area compared with the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the state

• 33 1/3 percent of the funds based on the relative number of disadvantaged youths in each workforce development area compared to the total number of disadvantaged youths in the state

To ensure that youth funds are distributed equitably and to avoid significant shifts in funding levels to local areas, a hold-harmless provision will be applied. Under this provision, consistent with WIOA Section 128(b)(2)(A)(ii), a local area will not receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence will be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

In accordance with WIOA law, Arkansas Workforce Development Board has adopted a funding allocation methodology for those Local Areas with High Concentrations of Eligible Youth. This methodology calculates determines each Local Area's weighted average of "eligible youth" and, if the average exceeds the overall state average, additional funding will be awarded.

ii. Adult and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) or (b)(3),

The in-state allotment of funds to local workforce investment areas for Title I adult activities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act will be made using the formula described at Section 132(b)(1)(B)(ii), as follows:

• 33 1/3 percent of the funds to the local workforce development areas will be based on the relative number of unemployed individuals in areas of substantial unemployment in each workforce development area compared to the total number of unemployed individuals in all areas of substantial unemployment in the state

• 33 1/3 percent of the funds based on the relative excess number of unemployed individuals in each workforce development area compared with the total excess number of unemployed individuals in the state

• 33 1/3 percent of the funds based on the relative number of disadvantaged adults in each workforce development area compared to the number of disadvantaged adults in the state

To ensure that adult funds are distributed equitably and to avoid significant shifts in funding levels to local areas, a hold-harmless provision also will be applied. Under this provision, consistent with WIOA Section 132(b)(1)(B)(iv), a local area will not receive an allocation percentage for a fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence will be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

iii. Dislocated worker employment and training activities in accordance with WIOA section 133(b)(2) and based on data and weights assigned.

Funds for dislocated workers will be allocated based on an allocation formula prescribed by the Governor of Arkansas. This formula may be amended by the Governor not more than once for each program year. The formula will use the most appropriate information available to the Governor to distribute amounts to address Arkansas's worker readjustment assistance needs. The in-state allotment of funds to local workforce development areas for Title I dislocated worker activities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act will be distributed by placing the following weights on six factors:

• 5 percent insured unemployment

• 15 percent unemployment concentrations

• 30 percent plant closings and mass layoffs

• 15 percent declining industries

• 5 percent farmer-rancher economic hardship

• 30 percent long-term unemployment

To ensure that dislocated worker funds are distributed equitably and to avoid significant shifts in funding levels to local areas, a hold-harmless provision also will be applied. Under this provision, consistent with WIOA Section 133(b)(2)(B)(iii), a local area will not receive an allocation percentage for fiscal year 2016 or subsequent fiscal year that is less than 90 percent of the average allocation percentage of the local area for the 2 preceding fiscal years. Amounts necessary for increasing such allocations to local areas to comply with the preceding sentence will be obtained by ratably reducing the allocations to be made to other local areas.

Not more than twenty-five percent of the total state allotment will be reserved for Rapid Response activities. Rapid Response activities in Arkansas are administered by Arkansas Division of Workforce Services as the lead agency of the Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force.

B. For Title II:

i. Describe how the eligible agency will award multi-year grants or contracts on a competitive basis to eligible providers in the State, including how eligible agencies will establish that eligible providers are organizations of demonstrated effectiveness.

The Adult Education Section will award multi-year grants to eligible local providers through a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process for the purpose of developing, implementing, and improving adult education and literacy within the state. The grant will be for a four-year cycle that applies to all programs; however, the state office will review the performance level of providers after two years to determine whether or not to conduct a new competition.

In order for an application to be reviewed, considered and scored for funding, the applicant must:

1. Be currently located and providing services within the state of Arkansas.
2. Be an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness:
   - An applicant that has been previously funded under *AEFLA*, as amended by *WIOA*, must submit performance data required under section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness.
   - An applicant that has not been previously funded under *AEFLA*, as amended by *WIOA* must provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of its success in achieving outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and

training

If an applicant applies as a consortium, demonstrated effectiveness data from each consortium member is evaluated to determine if each member is an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness. All consortium members must be determined to be an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness in order for the consortium application to be reviewed, scored and considered for funding. **Only applicants that have been determined to be submitted by an eligible provider of demonstrated effectiveness are forwarded to be reviewed, scored and considered for funding.**

(ii) *Describe how the eligible agency will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers to apply and compete for funds and how the eligible agency will ensure that it is using the same grant or contract announcement and application for all eligible providers.*

The Adult Education Section will ensure that all eligible providers are given direct and equitable access to compete for Title II, AEFLA sections 225 (Correctional/Institutional), 231 (Direct and Equitable), and 243 (Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education) federal funds. The same grant announcement, application, and process will be used for all eligible providers and each proposal will be treated the same way in evaluation.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) announcement will be placed in the statewide newspaper for three consecutive days and on the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration's website as required by the state's Procurement process. In addition, the announcement will be placed on the Adult Education Section's website. Prior to the announcement of an RFP, the Adult Education Section state staff will be provided training on the RFP process by the Adult Education Senior Management Team, which includes the State Director to ensure internal control and standardization. Once the RFP has been publicly announced, no staff member may discuss with any applicant anything regarding the RFP application or process. Any inquiries will need to be e-mailed to adulted@arkansas.gov. On a bi-weekly basis the date, name of person, question, and response will be placed on the website in a cumulative RFP Questions and Answers spreadsheet. This ensures that all eligible applicant has a direct and equitable access to the questions.
All applicants that have shown and met the demonstrated effectiveness requirement will also be evaluated using the 13 Statutory Considerations as found in the law at 231 (e)(1-13). In addition to the RFP application, eligible providers will have a rubric that shows how applications will be evaluated.

A formula method will be used to determine the amount of funding and takes into consideration the literacy rate and the core indicators of performance as outlined in Title II of the WIOA law. The state will identify, assess, and award grants using the RFP process of providers who have

demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education activities to eligible individuals. An eligible individual is an individual who has attained 16 years of age; who is not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and who is basic skills deficient; does not have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and has not achieved an equivalent level of education; or is an English language learner.

In addition, other factors that will be considered is the ability of the eligible providers to meet the literacy needs in the area may include, but not limited to, the ability to comply with WIOA and state expectations, the ability to provide services to special populations such as an individual with barriers to employment as defined in WIOA Section 3 (24), past performance of the entity in providing literacy instruction and meeting programmatic goals, overall program management, timely submission of financial and quarterly reports to the state office, and the overall qualification and expertise of the providers' personnel. Again, the list of criteria used to evaluate demonstrated effectiveness and the scoring rubric has been made available as part of the RFP process. At the end of two years, the state will reevaluate the providers to determine whether to conduct a new Request for Proposal competition or not.

Currently, the adult education providers in the state are divided into five regions and include the Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Northwest, and Central Regions. Although there may be multiple providers within an area, the state has reconfigured all 75 counties to better align with the 10 Workforce Development Boards (WDB). The purpose of restructuring the state is to help align service delivery under WIOA and enhance the coordination and support of the overall economic development of the State.

Adult education/literacy providers are housed under a local education agency such as a school districts, community colleges, institutions of higher education, and literacy organizations. Other eligible providers have been and will continue to be considered using a direct and equitable process. Funding is awarded to local adult education/literacy providers through a competitive grant process based on literacy rate and the core indicators of performance as outlined in Title II of the WIOA law. Applications are competitive, open, and available to all eligible applicants. Grants/contracts are awarded for one year, with two one-year renewals based on performance and available funding.

No less than 95% of federal funds shall be expended for carrying out adult education and literacy activities; and the remaining amount, not to exceed 5%, shall be used for planning, administration (including carrying out the requirements of section 116), professional development, and the activities described in WIOA paragraphs (3) and (5) of section 232.

C. Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation

In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i)of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

Distribution of funds between the two Vocational Rehabilitation designated state units, (Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Division of Services for the Blind) is done under written agreement of the heads of the two DSUs in consideration of the incidence and severity of disability and the historical cost of rehabilitation for the two populations. Such agreement distributes 88% of the VR grant to Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) and 12% to Division of Services for the Blind (DSB). In accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(i)of the Rehabilitation Act, Arkansas state law designates the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) as the state agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind.

6. Program Data

A. Data Alignment and Integration

Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State's plan for integrating data systems should include the State's goals for achieving integration and any progress to date.

i. Describe the State's plans to make the management information systems for the core programs interoperable to maximize the efficient exchange of common data elements to support assessment and evaluation.

This plan represents thirteen workforce development programs that utilize seven different data systems to determine eligibility for programs, capture case management activities and provide data for required federal and state reporting requirements. It is the intent of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board to integrate these data systems so that a common portal will exist to streamline intake for programs, exchanging information for case management purposes and provide the necessary data for required federal and state reporting.

ii. Describe the State's plans to integrate data systems to facilitate streamlined intake and service delivery to track participation across all programs included in this plan.

Efforts to identify an integration method for these various data systems is ongoing, with the ultimate goal of securing a common intake overlay for each of these legacy systems. WIOA Title I Statewide Activities funding has been earmarked for this project and the project began in the Spring 2016 with a formal evaluation of the systems currently being used and the data needs of each program. The project development is led by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and coordinated with the other partner agencies through the Information Technology Committee of the WIOA Interagency Roundtable. Progress is being monitored by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board.

iii. Explain how the State board will assist the governor in aligning technology and data systems across required one-stop partner programs (including design and implementation of common intake, data collection, etc.) and how such alignment will improve service delivery to individuals, including unemployed individuals.

The state board has established data systems alignment as one of its objectives under the overall goal of enhancing service delivery to workforce customers. The Board has charged staff with researching the availability of an integrated data system that will enable the sharing of information between partner agencies to more efficiently service both employers and jobseekers. The identification of such a system must be in compliance with the Governor's overall vision.

iv. Describe the State's plans to develop and produce the reports required under section 116, performance accountability system. (WIOA section 116(d)(2)).

Until such time that an integrated system can be built, the core program agencies will work cooperatively to produce the required federal performance reports utilizing Unemployment Insurance wage data and the Arkansas Longitudinal Data System, which connects data from education, higher education and workforce programs.

Planning Note: States should be aware that Section 116(i)(1) requires the core programs, local boards, and chief elected officials to establish and operate a fiscal and management accountability information system based on guidelines established by the Secretaries of Labor and Education. States should begin laying the groundwork for these fiscal and management accountability requirements, recognizing that adjustments to meet the elements above may provide opportunity or have impact on such a fiscal and management accountability system.

B. Assessment of Participants' Post-Program Success

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

Moving forward, the Arkansas Workforce Development Board's vision is for the state's workforce development system partners to develop the ability to capture a more complete set of

customer data from all federal and state-funded employment and training programs coupled with a customer-focused data model that will allow aggregating data into any combination of programs and characteristics. This will allow our system to meet program reporting requirements as well as permit other views of the data. Key to its effectiveness is the ability to report a participant's outcomes the same way for every program or aggregation of data.

While the progress of participants who are exiting from the core programs will be assessed through follow up by the core programs that provided service, it is important to remember that follow-up services should help each participant complete training and/or maintain employment. Furthermore, follow-up should provide a continuous link to the workforce system as a whole, including referral networks and partner programs. While there may be some variances in the follow-up, based upon needs of the individual, a consistent message in each follow-up contact will ensure that participants know which services are available to them, even after program exit.

The WIOA Roundtable will seek to develop a common follow-up procedure that are designed for the purpose of career planning, rather than required program performance reporting.

C. Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data will be utilized for data matching purposes for assessing and reporting on state and local employment and training program performance, evaluating training provider performance, and for other purposes allowed by state law and data sharing agreements among state agencies. By utilizing UI Wage Data, the State can measure entered employment, employment retention, and earnings of the individual. This will help measure the success of the workforce development services being provided.

Furthermore, the State will utilize Wage Record Interchange System (WRIS) data to track performance outcomes. The use of WRIS data permits state workforce program performance agencies to secure wage data of individuals who have participated in workforce investment programs in one state, then subsequently secured employment in another. By participating in WRIS, the State has a more robust picture of the effectiveness of workforce development programs and is able to report more comprehensive outcomes against their performance measures.

D. Privacy Safeguards

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

The State is aware that a key element of success to utilizing data across agencies for either improved customer service or improved measurement and tracking of outcomes is ensuring the integrity of all data and ensuring confidential data is treated as such. This is accomplished with various technical safeguards and ensuring personnel handling this data are properly trained in all relevant regulations and the fundamentals of handling personal and confidential data. Technical safeguards may include:

- Approved processes that limit access to the data to only those personnel who require access to carry out their daily job functions;
- Network security, monitoring, firewalls, etc. to prevent unauthorized access to data from entities outside of State government;
- Encryption technology; and
- Secure data transport mechanisms.

Data Sharing Agreements are used when confidential information is shared with another entity. All partners that will provide and share data in collaboration efforts will enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and/or a data sharing agreement to ensure security of sensitive information.

All partners expressly agree to abide by all applicable federal, state, and local laws regarding confidential information and to adhere to the same standards of confidentiality as state employees, including but not limited to: 29 U.S.C. 2935; as amended by WIOA - reports, recordkeeping, and investigations. 29 U.S.C. 2871(f)(3); as amended by WIOA - regarding confidentiality. 20 CFR Part 603 - safeguards and security requirements regarding disclosed information under Unemployment Compensation. 42 U.S.C. 503 - regarding state laws governing Unemployed Insurance operations. 20 CFR 617.57(b) - regarding disclosure of information under the Trade Act. 29 U.S.C. 49I-2(a)(2); as amended under WIOA - regarding information to be confidential under the Wagner-Peyser Act. The Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552). The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g).}34 CFR 361.38 - protection, use, and release of personal information of Vocational Rehabilitation Services participants. HIPAA: 45 CFR 164.500 - 164.534. 2 CFR 200.303 - regarding reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information.

7. Priority of Service for Veterans

Describe how the State will implement and monitor the priority of service provisions for veterans in accordance with the requirements of the Jobs for Veterans Act, codified at section 4215 of 38 U.S.C., which applies to all employment and training programs funded in whole or in part by the Department of Labor. States should also describe the referral process for veterans determined to have a significant barrier to employment to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist.

Arkansas provides veterans' priority of service as mandated by Veterans Program Letter 07-09., "Implementing Priority of Service for Veterans and Eligible Spouses in all Qualified Job Training Programs Funded in Whole or in Part by the U.S. Department of Labor. Service is provided to ensure veterans and covered persons receive consideration for all opportunities, for which they qualify. This increased focus includes the implementation of strategies and polices designed to ensure veterans and eligible persons of veterans receive the highest level of quality service within the framework of priority of service.

Arkansas requires that all Arkansas Workforce Center staff members provide priority of service to veterans and eligible persons while Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists focus their efforts on serving veterans in most need of intensive services including disabled veterans and the targeted veteran population identified in the State Plan.

Local offices must ensure that veterans and eligible persons are served first and that this protocol is addressed in the functional alignment plans and customer flow process. During the registration process, a series of questions identifies veteran status. Once the veteran or other eligible person is identified, the first available AWC staff conducts an initial assessment. This initial assessment uses a customized intake form, to help determine if the veteran or other eligible person has a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE) or that they may be a member of another special priority group. During the initial assessment it is determined that the veteran has a SBE; they will be immediately referred to a Disable Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) or other trained staff for the provision of intensive case management service and other services the veterans may need to meet their career goals.

Arkansas's policy for priority of service to veterans includes up to a 24 hour hold for new job orders placed in the AJL system. Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) staff has access to federal contractor job listings through VetCentral, which are fed into the AJL system. This access provides opportunities for priority referrals of target veterans to Federal contractors. After registration in VetCentral, the system provides automatic notifications to the veteran when a job opening occurs in their field.

Services to veterans through the Gold Card Initiative are available at the Arkansas Workforce Centers (AWC). The Gold Card Initiative provides unemployed post-9/11 era veterans with the intensive and follow-up services they need to succeed in today's job market. The Gold Card initiative is a joint effort of the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS).

ADWS monitors priority of service by providing guidance and reviewing policies within the Agency. The priority of service policy VPL 07-09 was disseminated through ADWS Issuance 09-08 to ensure that a written copy of the policy is available at the point of entry. All AWC's are monitored for priority of service for veterans and eligible persons using the Arkansas Joblink system 9002 series reports. Offices are monitored for visible signage informing all veterans of priority of service offered. Additionally, office managers are required to be notified if any

discrepancies are found, and implementation of corrective actions are undertaken. Specific programs such as referral to Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment services through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and job developments created through partners of the workforce system are promoted to all staff to encourage the referral and application of veterans.

8. Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals with Disabilities

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

The workforce center delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the workforce delivery system partners) will comply with section 188 of WIOA and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) with regard to the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. The State ensures that Arkansas Workforce Center system complies with section 188 of WIOA and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 through the development and implementation of a Methods of Administration Policy that outlines all requirements of the system. Reviews are conducted annually to make sure that workforce centers meet requirements. Furthermore, training is offered at least annually to equal opportunity officers of the local workforce development boards. To demonstrate compliance with this provision, the one-stop center operators and the delivery system partners will collaborate to develop and provide periodic and new-hire staff training and system-wide support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. A rotating certification review team will be established, to provide scheduled evaluation, certification and recertification of the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities and to address any compliance issues that arise.

According to the Arkansas Workforce Center Certification criteria, all Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance requirements must be met before a center is eligible to receive the Arkansas Workforce Center certification or utilize the Arkansas Workforce Center name and logo. Both the Methods of Administration and the Arkansas Workforce Center Certification criteria are being updated to reflect changes in the WIOA law. The original Methods of Administration policy and Arkansas Workforce Center Certification policies are

available online at http://dws.arkansas.gov/AWDB/Information.htm under the Policies and Procedures section.

Programs that apply for funding from the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services - Adult Education Section have access to the resources, training, and materials available from the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC). The AALRC is responsible for providing information, materials, resources, and training to local programs to assist in ensuring equitable access to and participation in those programs, including all students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries.

All local programs are required to post public notices that address non-discrimination policies regarding accessibility and participation regardless of gender, race, national origin, age, or religion, in accordance with the Civil Rights Act. In addition, local programs are required to provide on-going information to applicants, participants, beneficiaries, and other interested parties regarding the rights of people under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Title II applications to their particular programs, services, and activities. Methods of providing information include publication in handbooks, manuals, and enrollment and application materials that are distributed to the public to describe the local program and its activities. Other methods include the display of informational posters in local programs and other public places and/or information broadcast on television or radio. Public notice of ADA requirements must be made available in alternative formats to meet the diverse communication needs of persons with disabilities.

Since 1995, the AALRC has specifically addressed two major barriers to program access in Arkansas. Steps taken to address barriers to access are listed below:

• Provide in-depth training about learning disabilities to all programs.

• Assist programs in complying with legal requirements as mandated by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the ADA, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Assistance includes providing information, training, and resources.

• Assist programs in coordinating with other state agencies and organizations that provide services and resources for individuals with disabilities, such as the Office for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired (ODHI), Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN), and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS).

• Provide training to a variety of state agencies and organizations about learning disabilities and how to coordinate services, including screening, diagnosis, materials and resources, strategies and accommodations. Provide training and information to all state GEDâ examiners about requesting and receiving accommodations on the GEDâ tests.

• Provide assistance to local programs in the administration of other tests and instructional materials with accommodations.

• Work with publishing companies to ensure test materials used in adult education and literacy programs are available in alternative formats e.g., CD/DVD, Braille, large print, etc., to accommodate students with disabilities. Also, that the tests have been field-tested and conform to test norms for adults with disabilities populations.

• Continue to coordinate training efforts with University Affiliated Programs to provide training in the ADA for local service providers.

• Create a seamless, statewide system which ensures that any adult education or literacy student with possible undiagnosed learning disabilities will have access to diagnostic assessment; that local programs providing services know how to access the statewide system; and that the system includes an agreed-to protocol regarding gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age, to ensure equitable accessibility and participation.

• Assist local programs in the provision of instructional materials available in alternative formats, as well as assisting in the implementation of accommodated instruction for students with disabilities.

• Assist local programs in the acquisition of technology devices that assist accommodated instruction and assessment for students with disabilities.

9. Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for Individuals who are English Language Learners.

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials.

The One-Stop Delivery System must meet the needs of the limited English proficient (LEP) individuals seeking services. One stop centers and system partners should provide multi-lingual forms, brochures, and other related materials that relate to services, information, and guidance to LEP individuals. Multi-lingual materials should reflect the common or dominate language(s) locally. One stop centers should establish relationships with local businesses to provide employment referrals compatible for LEP individuals. One stop centers and system partners should establish an effective referral process to local adult education centers with English as a second language (ESL) classes to provide LEP individuals language education and other educational services, such as gaining a high school equivalency diploma and employability certificates. One stop center staff should be trained to access the appropriate materials and resources for LEP individuals. When possible and needed, an effort to hire and train bilingual staff should be made. There are ten workforce centers in the State that have bilingual staff members. Furthermore, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has contracts with various

vendors to provide interpreter services in multiple languages. These interpreter services can be utilized by LEP individuals and staff members in any of the State's workforce centers.

IV. Coordination with State Plan Programs

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and its Adult Education Services Division, Rehabilitative Services Division, and Division of Services for the Blind began meeting to discuss the implication of the new legislation and begin necessary discussions for the successful implementation of the federal law in Arkansas.

In November 2014, representatives from each of these agencies formed a WIOA Roundtable that met monthly and soon were joined by additional representatives from Registered Apprenticeship, higher education, secondary education, two- and four-year educational institutions, Carl D. Perkins secondary and post-secondary programs, Career and Technical Education, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, human services, and elected officials to engage in discussions about integration of services provided by a multitude of service providers. This planning team established committees to focus on critical areas in WIOA implementation to include finance, IT system integration, policy development, core performance measures, sector strategies, and the development of the state workforce development plan.

The WIOA Roundtable continues to meet monthly to discuss ways to best align programs, prevent duplication, and increase access to services for jobseekers and employers. This plan was developed jointly by members of the Arkansas WIOA Roundtable.

In March 2015 and September 2015, a meeting of directors, managers, and supervisors from local workforce development boards and core partners was held and attended by more than 250 individuals from across Arkansas to talk about implementation strategies at the local level.

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board, a business led board, was formed in May 2015 and includes the directors of the core partner program agencies as members in addition to secondary education, higher education, and economic development. The goals and strategies included in this plan are the product of many months of strategic planning and input from various sources.

In July 2015, a statewide WIOA training and strategy session was held and was attended by 500 individuals representing state and local workforce boards members, core and optional workforce partner programs, secondary and higher education, state and local economic development, community-based organizations, employers, and elected officials.

In November and December of 2015, a strategic planning session was held by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board to frame out the goals and strategies to be included in the state plan. An invitation was extended to the Arkansas Career Education and Workforce Development Board, the oversight board for the agency that administers the Adult Education and Vocational Rehabilitation Services programs, to join in the planning process to ensure that both boards were moving in the same direction as it relates to workforce development in Arkansas.

Beginning in 2016 and continuing since then, the biannual WIOA statewide partners meetings have been conducted. These meetings are a continuation of the training and strategy sessions that began in 2015 and provide ongoing opportunities for all WIOA partner representatives to convene and discuss the ongoing development of the state's workforce development system.

V. Common Assurances (for all core programs)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that—

1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts; Yes

2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes; Yes

3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs; Yes

4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administrating the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public; (b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board; Yes

5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and

accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities; Yes

6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3); Yes

7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable; Yes

8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program; Yes

9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs; Yes

10. The State has a One-Stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all One-Stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA); Yes

11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and Yes

12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor. Yes

VI. Program-Specific Requirements for Core Programs

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

Program-Specific Requirements for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities under Title I-B

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B--

a. Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Activities General Requirements

1. Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas

A. Identify the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the State.

The State of Arkansas consists of ten local workforce development areas and nine planning regions.

The ten local workforce development areas (LWDA) are as follows: Central LWDA, which consists of Faulkner, Lonoke, Monroe, Prairie, Pulaski, Saline counties; the City of Little Rock LWDA, which consists of the city limits of Little Rock, Arkansas; Eastern LWDA, which consists of Cross, Crittenden, Lee, Phillips, Saint Francis counties; North Central LWDA, which consists of Cleburne, Fulton, Jackson, Independence, Izard, Sharp, Stone, Van Buren, White, Woodruff counties; Northeast LWDA, which consists of Clay, Craighead, Greene, Lawrence, Mississippi, Poinsett, Randolph counties; Northwest LWDA, which consists of Baxter, Benton, Boone, Carroll, Madison, Marion, Newton, Searcy, Washington counties; Southeast LWDA, which consists of Arkansas, Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Cleveland, Desha, Drew, Grant, Jefferson, Lincoln counties; Southwest LWDA, which consists of Calhoun, Columbia, Dallas, Hempstead, Howard, Lafayette, Little River, Miller, Nevada, Ouachita, Sevier, Union counties; West Central LWDA, which consists of Clark, Conway, Garland, Hot Spring, Johnson, Montgomery, Perry, Pike Pope, Yell counties; and Western LWDA, which consists of Crawford, Franklin, Logan, Polk, Scott, Sebastian counties.

For planning purposes, the following nine regions were identified: Central Region, which is made up of the Central LWDA and the City of Little Rock LWDA; Eastern Region, which is made up of the Eastern LWDA; North Central Region, which is made up of the North Central LWDA; Northeast Region, which is made up of the Northeast LWDA; Northwest Region, which is made up of the Northwest LWDA; Southeast Region, which is made up of the Southeast LWDA; Southwest Region, which is made up of the Southwest LWDA; West Central Region, which is made up of the West Central LWDA; and the Western Region, which is made up of the Western LWDA.

A visual depiction of the Local Workforce Development Areas is available at:

http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart14.html

B. Describe the process used for designating local areas, including procedures for determining whether the local area met the criteria for "performed successfully" and "sustained fiscal integrity" in accordance with 106(b)(2) and (3) of WIOA. Describe the process used for identifying regions and planning regions under section 106(a) of WIOA. This must include a description of how the State consulted with the local boards and chief elected officials in identifying the regions.

The local workforce development areas were selected based on infrastructure already in place under the previous federal law (Workforce Investment Act) and the alignment those areas have with local economic development planning districts. Each of the previous ten local workforce investment areas had sustained fiscal integrity as defined by the Workforce Innovation and

Opportunity Act, and while only one of the ten local areas had met 100 percent of all nine performance targets two years in a row, the local areas did meet performance within 80 percent of targets, which is the measure of success for the State as a whole.

All multi-county local workforce development areas are considered to be regions for the purposes of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act planning. Any local workforce development area that is smaller than two counties will be part of a region for WIOA planning purposes with the local workforce development area(s) that closely aligns with the region's economic development planning district or metropolitan statistical area.

Local boards and chief elected officials were consulted during the formation of both the local workforce development areas and regions. The opportunity for public comment was also provided and many chief elected officials provided positive comments in support of the structure.

C. Provide the appeals process referred to in section 106(b)(5) of WIOA relating to designation of local areas.

For purposes of appeal, a unit of general local government (including a combination of such units) or grant recipient that requests but is not granted designation of an area as a local area may submit an appeal to the Arkansas Workforce Development Board under an appeal process established in the State plan. If the appeal does not result in such a designation, the Secretary of Labor, after receiving a request for review from the unit or grant recipient and on determining that the unit or grant recipient was not accorded procedural rights under the appeals process described in the State plan, may require that the area be designated as a local area.

All appeals for reconsideration of local workforce development area designation should be submitted to the following address:

Arkansas Workforce Development Board Attn: Appeal/Grievance Review P.O. Box 2981 Little Rock, Arkansas 72202

D. Provide the appeals process referred to in section 121(h)(2)(E) of WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.

The State distributed a MOU template to Local Boards in Summer 2017. This template included the requirements for funding infrastructure costs. In part, the template provided guidance that local boards, with the agreement of chief elected officials of the area, must develop and enter into memorandums of understanding (MOU's) with statutorily required one-stop partners for operation and funding of a one-stop delivery system in the local area. Local boards may also enter into MOU's with other optional partners, as described by WIOA. Among several required provisions, the MOU must include a final plan, or an interim plan if needed, on how the infrastructure costs of the one-stop centers will be funded.

The template included a dispute resolution that if a one-stop partner appeals to the state regarding infrastructure costs and the appeal results in a change to the one-stop partner's

infrastructure cost contributions, the MOU must be updated to reflect the final one-stop partner infrastructure cost contributions.

2. Statewide Activities

A. Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities.

All policies for use by local workforce development boards in administration of WIOA Title I programs and for information on statewide activity programs are posted online on the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services website at www.dws.arkansas.gov/wioa.htm.

B. Describe how the State intends to use Governor's set aside funding. Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds to respond to layoffs and plant closings and coordinate services to quickly aid companies and their affected workers. States also should describe any layoff aversion strategies they have implemented to address at risk companies and workers

The State intends to use the funding set aside for statewide activities for the required and allowable activities. Since Arkansas is a small state, the state set aside funding is smaller in comparison to larger states. The majority of the funding will be used for administration of the WIOA Title I grant, grants management, monitoring, support of state board activities, evaluations, technical assistance to local boards and training providers, training for case managers, capacity building for local boards and partners, and the integration of data systems, to include intake and case management systems. Not more than 25 percent of the total state allotment will be reserved for Rapid Response activities. Rapid Response activities in Arkansas are administered by Arkansas Division of Workforce Services as the lead agency of the Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force.

C. In addition, describe the State policies and procedures to provide Rapid Responses in cases of natural disasters including coordination with FEMA and other entities.

Arkansas's Division of Workforce Services Rapid Response protocols are designed to address adverse economic and / or community impacts resulting from actual or imminent natural or manmade crisis or disaster. These protocols include maintaining communications, close coordination and establishment of appropriate partnership arrangements with other entities and resources, including FEMA if necessitated by the situation. Protocols also dictate appropriate oversight arrangements to ensure requisite scope, design speed, monitoring and supervision of emergency operations.

Rapid Response partners with government agencies and with disaster response entities to ensure it fulfills its obligation to deliver services and transition workers to new employment as quickly as possible. In the event of a disaster, Rapid Response will utilize its partnerships with Emergency management organizations (i.e., state emergency management agencies and FEMA);

Chief Elected Officials (CEO); Chambers of Commerce; Economic development organizations; Labor and industry organizations; USDOL, to stay on top of the events as they occur to make sure we are in place to assist areas and workers affected by disaster. In addition, partnerships are in place with the Arkansas Workforce Centers and local workforce development boards. Rapid Response is a key convener to plan a state's response to a disaster and has a role in the delivery of reemployment and transition services to those impacted by a disaster.

Rapid Response will ensure the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services website is updated with needed information, and the team will secure access for affected areas to utilize Mobile Workforce Centers that are ready to be deployed when needed. These units can assist with communications, emergency unemployment, insurance claim assistance, etc. These preparations, combined with flexibility and creativity in responding to the truly unexpected events of a disaster, allow Rapid Response to quickly and effectively respond to major events.

As stated above, Mobile Workforce Centers are part of Rapid Response's resources; the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services maintains a fleet of Mobile Workforce Centers consisting of three RV style vehicles and two 5th wheel trailers which are supported by a 2008 Ford F-350 Pickup. The Mobile Centers contain multiple computer stations (with full internet connectivity), public announcement systems, printers, copiers and fax machines. These units are also equipped with flat-televisions, DVD/VCR players, Smart-boards, JAWS (Jobs Application with Speech) software for visually impaired jobseekers and are handicap accessible. These units supplement local office resources, support opportunity and job fairs, promote employer hiring initiatives and facilitate numerous training endeavors designed to assist jobseekers across the state. Additionally, the Mobile Centers have been utilized for Rapid Response Worker Transition Centers. The Mobile Workforce Centers have become very popular at various Community Outreach events and have been deployed several times to aid in disaster response initiatives both in Arkansas and in neighboring states. These units have been identified as an asset for natural disaster response by the State Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM).

D. Describe how the State provides early intervention (e.g., Rapid Response) to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) petition has been filed. (Section 134(a)(2)(A).) This description must include how the State disseminates benefit information to provide trade-affected workers in the groups identified in the TAA petitions with an accurate understanding of the provision of TAA benefits and services in such a way that they are transparent to the trade-affected dislocated worker applying for them (Trade Act Sec. 221(a)(2)(A) and Sec. 225; Governor-Secretary Agreement). Describe how the State will use funds that have been reserved for Rapid Response to provide services for every worker group that files a TAA petition.

Arkansas's Rapid Response protocols and the partnership with the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program have been recognized by Department of Labor.

- If there is the slightest possibility that reduction in workforce is trade affected the necessary info is gathered by Rapid Response personnel and a petition is submitted to the DOL;
- Once DOL issues a petition number Rapid Response notifies the Company representatives and TAA staff;
- Petition progress is monitored by both Rapid Response and Trade Program staff on the DOL website;
- Upon Certification, If the Company is unwilling or unable to provide a workers list then UI data is engaged to establish eligibility for workers;
- Trade Program staff prepares Eligibility Letters which are mailed to every client listed on the workers list (workers list vetted through Rapid Response). Notices of Eligibility may also be placed in local newspapers of general circulation;
- TAA Information Sessions are scheduled and invitation letters are mailed to eligible clients. The purpose of these Information Sessions is to meet with the dislocated workers and convey information about the benefits for which they may be eligible along with important timelines and information on other supportive services that may be available to them.

Arkansas's Rapid Response will continue to utilize its allocated funding to provide services to all companies experiencing a workforce reduction and affected workers including those for whom a Trade Petition is filed with the U.S. DOL. These services include Worker Assistance Workshops, Transition Assistance, Referral Services and Trade Petition preparation and submission. During the DOL's investigation process, Rapid Response serves as the primary point of contact pending certification, at which time Trade Program staff is engaged and continue to partner with Rapid Response staff to facilitate provision of services to identified workers.

ADWS' Rapid Response Unit developed and maintains a Rapid Response Tracking System (RRTS) which is used by Agency personnel to monitor and track all dislocation events including certification status of Companies for whom a Trade Petition was submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor.

b. Adult and Dislocated Worker Program Requirements

1. Work-Based Training Models

If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. On-the-job training, Incumbent Worker training, Transitional Jobs, and Customized Training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State's strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

Through the use of work-based training models, training objectives will be aligned with employer goals in such a way that when the participant meets objectives, they will also be

meeting the employer goals. This process will begin with new employee orientation training where participants will learn workplace ethics and acquire soft skills training. While doing work-based training, participants will be introduced to new production models and technologies. The state will also strengthen partnerships with Registered Apprenticeship systems to help jobseekers immediately start working and increase their work literacy and earnings.

On April 10, 2018, Arkansas implemented a new Work-Based Learning Program, via Policy Number WIOA I-B – 5.1. This program is designed to meet the needs of Arkansas businesses, provide job opportunities and training to populations with barriers to employment, and to increase the diversity and quality of training methods in Arkansas.

2. Registered Apprenticeship

Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., job center staff taking applications and conducting assessments).

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) has a strong partnership with Registered Apprenticeship (RA) and consistently includes Registered Apprenticeship training as a training option in discretionary grant proposals and encourages local workforce development boards to utilize RA as a workforce development tool serving both employers and job seekers. The ADWS is working with local workforce development boards to more fully integrate RA and other work-based learning options into WIOA Title I.

Under the USDOL awarded ApprenticeshipUSA State Accelerator grant, ADWS is working with RA partners and stakeholders to develop a State Plan for RA Expansion and Diversification. A major component in the development of the State Plan for RA Expansion and Diversification includes an asset mapping analysis that will identify assets and funding streams associated with RA and look for opportunities to leverage resources for potential expansion to serve both employers and job seekers within growth industry and occupational fields. The State Plan for RA Expansion and Diversification is due to be completed by May 31, 2018.

Information on RA is shared with dislocated workers that attend information sessions while preparing for or recovering from a layoff. Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) staff routinely notify TAA eligible clients of the option to pursue RA as a viable training option. Registered Apprenticeships are presented to clients as a training option at both the TAA Information Sessions and during one-on-one assessments. If a client expresses interest in an Apprenticeship program, they are provided with the appropriate RA program contact information for follow-up purposes to learn more about RA training and employment opportunities.

The partnership between the Workforce system and RA programs will serve to increase options for both youth and adults. The RA “earn while you learn” model provides job seekers with a USDOL recognized skill attainment credential while allowing for an upwardly mobile career pathway. Likewise, RA benefits employers by developing highly skilled employees, reducing

turnover rates, increasing productivity, and lowering the cost employee recruitment efforts. Adults, dislocated workers and youth have opportunities under RA to increase their earnings, skill sets, and will receive training in a high demand industry. Apprentices in Arkansas Registered Apprenticeships are co-enrolled in Title-I programs, when appropriate. ITAs and supportive services will be provided as wrap around support to participants in Registered Apprenticeships. On-the-Job-Training (OJT) contracts may be written with registered apprenticeship providers for the training portion of the program. Registered Apprenticeship program, OJT contracts must follow the State and local policies on OJT and depending on the length of the program, these funds may cover some or all of the registered apprenticeship training. Attainment of a credential, employment, retention of employment and wages of apprentices will be counted in performance measures for those who meet program eligibility requirements.

The Arkansas Apprenticeship Pathway Initiative (AAPI) provides $4,000,000 of grant funds from the U.S. Department of Labor to create and expand registered apprenticeships in targeted H-1B growth industries, strengthen employer and service provider partnerships, as well as provide an opportunity for participants to learn occupational specific skills as well as good wages while gaining college credit.

The industries of focus for this grant include advanced manufacturing and the construction trades with opportunities for expansion into other industry growth sectors based on employer demand. A primary goal under the AAPI is to enroll 600 RA's over the life the grant. The grant has an end date of September 30, 2020.

Arkansas Expands Apprenticeship (AREA) provides $900,000 of grant funds from the U.S. Department of Labor to create, expand, and diversify registered apprenticeships in growth industries. The industries of focus for this grant include advanced manufacturing, construction trades, and transportation with opportunities for expansion into other industry growth sectors based on employer demand. A primary goal under the AREA is to enroll 100 RA's and 100 pre-apprentices over the life the grant. The grant has an end date of April 30, 2019.

3. Training Provider Eligibility Procedure

Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

To be included on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), providers must submit an online application to the Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) for the area where they wish to provide training services. A separate electronic application must be submitted for each training program, and the training program must be on the current Projected Employment Opportunities List. An application can be made online through the Arkansas Consumer Report System. The Arkansas Consumer Report System, or ACRS for short, is an interactive web site that contains a

comprehensive listing of training providers and programs within the State of Arkansas. However, ACRS is best known as the web site that houses the WIOA Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL).This list is a subset of providers and programs that have been certified by Local Workforce Development Boards (LDBs) as eligible providers of training under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Through this website, training providers who wish to be included on the ETPL can submit an electronic application and LDBs can evaluate the applications.

Providers who may apply to be included on the ETPL include:

• An institution of higher education that provides a program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential;

• Another public or private provider of a program of training services, which may include joint labor-management organizations, and eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities, if such activities are provided in combination with occupational skills training. These providers must have all appropriate licenses to operate in the State of Arkansas and will be required to submit copies of such licenses. The information will then be verified by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS).

• An entity that carries out programs under the National Apprenticeship Act will be included and maintained on the ETPL for so long as their program remains registered. These providers will be required to contact ADWS to make known their desire to be listed and provide documentation that verifies their program is a registered apprenticeship program certified by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship.

As of July 1, 2015, the TAA program for the State of Arkansas utilizes the WIOA Eligible Training Provider (ETP) List for enrollment of TAA participants in training in demand occupations.

4. Describe how the State will implement and monitor the priority for public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient in accordance with the requirements of WIOA sec. 134(c)(3)(E), which applies to individualized career services and training services funded by the Adult Formula program.

The requirements of priority of service that apply to adult recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient as described in WIOA 3(5)(B) will be included in a directive to the local workforce development boards. The state management information system (MIS) will be utilized to identify adults who have been designated as meeting this definition. Specific allowable documentation to be stored in the case manager's participant folder will be itemized and communicated to the local boards and will be reviewed during regular monitoring visits.

5. Describe the State's criteria regarding local area transfer of funds between the adult and dislocated worker programs.

A local board may transfer, up to and including 100 percent of the funds allocated to the local area for a fiscal year between the adult employment and training activities and the dislocated worker employment and training activities. Under the Workforce Investment Act, the State had a waiver that increased the level of transfer between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams. The waiver provided greater flexibility in the design of local area adult and dislocated worker service delivery plans and enhanced the ability of local boards to respond to changing workforce and economic dynamics. Local boards were able to provide targeted assistance in response to customer needs.

In order to transfer funds between programs, the local workforce development board shall submit a funds transfer request to the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, stating the amount of the requested transfer, the percentage of funds the transfer represents, the reason for the transfer, and an assurance that adequate funds still remain in the contributing program to support existing and future enrollments. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, as the Governor's Administrative Entity, will review the transfer request and issue a determination on the request.

c. Youth Program Requirements

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, —

1. Identify the State-developed criteria to be used by local boards in awarding grants or contracts for youth workforce investment activities and describe how the local boards will take into consideration the ability of the providers to meet performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance for the youth program as described in section 116(b)(2)(A)(ii) of WIOA in awarding such grants or contracts.*

* Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

Arkansas's strategy for providing comprehensive services for youth calls for a collaborative approach with local boards to prepare youth for success in a global, demand-driven economy. The state will issue policy guidance regarding the competitive sub-grant award process for youth workforce investment activities. In an effort to meet the needs specific to the local area, local boards will develop a process of review to determine if providers are able to meet performance accountability measures based on the criteria below. Consequently, state monitors will review local area polices and processes so as to ensure compliance.

1. Vision, Mission and Philosophy

2. Management Plan

3. Financial Plan

4. Employer Services

5. Individual Customers

6. Marketing

7. Partner Coordination Service Plan

8. Site/Location Plan

9. Organizational Qualifications

10. Performance/Experience

11. Anticipated Program Deliverables

12. Anticipated Program Outcomes

13. Budget Procedures

2. Describe the strategies the State will use to achieve improved outcomes for out-of-school youth as described in 129(a)(1)(B), including how it will leverage and align the core programs, any Combined State Plan partner programs included in this Plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs, and any other resources available.

In order to improve the outreach and recruitment of out-of-school youth, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services and its divisions will partner with the Department of Human Services, and other community-based organizations to create a streamline pathway and align services to meet the needs of youth participants. Core programs will no longer serve out-of-school youth in siloes, but rather through a referral system leveraged within these partnerships. Local Workforce Development Boards will work with referrals of able bodied young adults in the SNAP Employment & Training sector of the Department of Human Services, juvenile offenders within the juvenile justice system, clients receiving housing assistance through the local housing authority agencies and community organizations assisting homeless youth to boost enrollment and performance in the out-of-school youth core programs. These partners may prove beneficial in addressing persons with identified and unidentified disabilities, high school equivalency credentials, leadership development and supportive service needs.

As part of the State's overarching outreach strategy, we will hire a Targeted Populations Advisor who will be solely devoted to developing our comprehensive outreach plan to reach certain populations, including Out-of-School youth.

3. Describe how the state will ensure that all 14 program elements described in WIOA section 129(c)(2) are made available and effectively implemented, including quality pre-apprenticeship programs under the work experience program element. *

* Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(I)

A state issued directive listing the 14 elements will require that all are made available to individuals in each local area. During their regular visits state monitors will review local policies, participant folders, conduct interviews with participants and staff, and review literature containing information relating to available services.

4. Provide the language contained in the State policy for "requiring additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program, or to secure and hold employment" criterion for out-of-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) and for "requiring additional assistance to complete an education program, or to secure and hold employment" criterion for in-school youth specified in WIOA section 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII). If the state does not have a policy, describe how the state will ensure that local areas will have a policy for these criteria.

The definition and requirements for the youth additional assistance high risk category are specific to the local area. A state issued directive will require each local area to establish a policy that is specific to their area of service that applies to the predominant population of youth within their service boundaries.

5. Include the State definition, as defined in law, for not attending school and attending school as specified in WIOA Section 129(a)(1)(B)(i) and Section 129(a)(1)(C)(i). If State law does not define "not attending school" or "attending school," indicate that is the case and provide the state policy for determining whether a youth is attending or not attending school.

Mandatory school attendance is required for individuals between the age of five and 17. The statute requires enrollment in an approved school including private, public, parochial or home school that meets the requirements for legal operation. The individual must attend school each day the school is open unless:

• The child has received a high school diploma or its equivalent,

• A child 16 years of age or older who is enrolled in a post-secondary vocational-technical institution, a community college, or two-year or four-year institution of higher education, or

• Any child 16 years of age or older who is enrolled in an adult education program.

A specific definition for "not attending school" is not available other than an individual who does not comply with the above.

6. If using the basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA Section 3(5)(B), include the State definition which must further define how to determine if an individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society. If not using the portion of the definition contained in WIOA Section 3(5)(B), indicate that is the case.

The state definition of basic skills aligns with the definition at WIOA 3(5)(B) and is used in conjunction with the priority categories for adult eligibility to receive individualized career services and/or training services. Additionally, out-of-school youth who have attained a secondary diploma and are low-income must also be basic skills deficient or an English language learner.

d. Single-area State Requirements

In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must include—

1. Any comments from the public comment period that represent disagreement with the Plan. (WIOA section 108(d)(3).)

2. The entity responsible for the disbursal of grant funds, as determined by the governor, if different from that for the State. (WIOA section 108(b)(15).)

3. A description of the type and availability of WIOA title I Youth activities and successful models, including for youth with disabilities. (WIOA section 108(b)(9).)

Arkansas is not a single-area State.

4. A description of the roles and resource contributions of the one-stop partners.

5. The competitive process used to award the subgrants and contracts for title I activities.

6. How training services outlined in section 134 will be provided through individual training accounts and/or through contracts, and how such training

approaches will be coordinated. Describe how the State will meet informed customer choice requirements regardless of training approach.

7. How the State Board, in fulfilling Local Board functions, will coordinate title I activities with those activities under title II. Describe how the State Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under title II consistent with WIOA secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA sec. 232.

8. Copies of executed cooperative agreements which define how all local service providers will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the one-stop delivery system, including cooperative agreements with entities administering Rehabilitation Act programs and services.

e. Waiver Requests (optional)

States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

1. Identifies the statutory or regulatory requirements for which a waiver is requested and the goals that the State or local area, as appropriate, intends to achieve as a result of the waiver and how those goals relate to the Unified or Combined State Plan;

2. Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;

3. Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;

4. Describes how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

- **supporting employer engagement;**
- **connecting education and training strategies;**
- **supporting work-based learning;**
- **improving job and career results, and**
- **other guidance issued by the Department.**

5. Describes the individuals affected by the waiver, including how the waiver will impact services for disadvantaged populations or individuals with multiple barriers to employment; and

6. Describes the processes used to:

- **Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;**
- **Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;**
- **Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;**
- **Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.**
- **Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report**

7. The Secretary may require that States provide the most recent data available about the outcomes of the existing waiver in cases where the State seeks renewal of a previously approved waiver;

The State of Arkansas anticipates seeking a waiver after the full approval of the State's Medicaid Expansion Program, called Arkansas Works.

Arkansas Works provides health care coverage to Arkansans who are U.S. citizens and certain legally residing immigrants ages 19-64 with household incomes below 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level for their family size. If determined eligible for this program, individuals will be enrolled in either a Qualified Health Plan or Employer Sponsored Insurance (ESI). Medicaid will pay most or all of the premiums for the plan while the individual may be responsible for co-pays and a small part of the premium. If eligible, individuals may have a small co-pay for doctor visits, prescriptions and certain other medical services. All Arkansas Works Program recipients will be referred to the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services for free job assistance services.

WAIVER REQUEST 1

Out-of-School Youth Expenditure Requirement

1. The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the State would like to waive

ADWS is seeking a waiver of the requirement under WIOA §129(a)(4) and 20 CFR 681.410 that the state and local workforce areas spend not less than 75 percent of youth funds to provide services to out-of-school youth (OSY).

2. Actions the State has taken to remove state or local barriers

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers that would impede implementation of the requested waiver.

3. State strategic goal(s) and Department of Labor priorities (e.g. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.) supported by the waiver

This request is for a waiver to allow the state and all workforce areas in Arkansas the flexibility to direct up to 50 percent of youth funds to deliver workforce and educational services to ISY, while continuing to serve OSY as a priority population.

On September 20, 2018, DOLETA granted this same waiver request to Texas, reducing the OSY expenditure requirement from 75 percent to not less than 50 percent of youth funds. DOLETA authorized the waiver for WIOA program years 2018 and 2019 (July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2020).

While the provision of services to OSY is vital, the requirement to expend 75 percent of youth statewide and formula funds on OSY prohibits states and workforce areas from using discretion when serving youth based on state and local demographics, resources, economies, employment outlooks, and other labor market factors. The requirement also weakens Title I's ability to design and deliver meaningful career pathway programs to all youth, regardless of school status. The 75 percent OSY expenditure requirement limits state and local ability to carry out such initiatives that provide necessary educational and training experiences for students and that meet employer's workforce education and skills needs.

Reducing the OSY expenditure requirement to 50 percent and permitting flexibility to calculate OSY expenditures on a collective statewide basis, instead of per workforce area, would allow ADWS and Boards to continue serving the OSY population while also increasing their ability to meet the needs of ISY throughout the state in alignment with WIOA's intent by supporting career pathways and the preparation of young people for in-demand careers in the workforce, regardless of a youth's school status. Under this waiver, Boards would continue to serve OSY as a priority population and track OSY services, expenditures, and performance metrics.

Approval of this waiver request would allow ADWS to meet the following state goals:

- **Serve youth regardless of school status:** Allow Boards flexibility to increase spending on providing education and training to ISY would not only increase the workforce opportunities available to all youth, but also help prevent at-risk ISY from dropping out of school or not pursuing additional education and training that would lead to meaningful work and economic self-sufficiency.
- **Serve ISY in rural communities:** Help ISY living in rural workforce areas overcome the unique economic and employment challenges facing rural—and often remote—Arkansas communities.

- **Serve youth according to local and statewide need:** Provide local- and state-level flexibility to serve OSY and ISY in a way that best meets each workforce area's needs according to population, resources, economy, employment outlook, and other labor market factors.
- **Continue serving out-of-school youth as a priority population:** ADWS and Boards will continue to give priority of service to OSY and achieve any OSY expenditure target authorized by DOLETA through this waiver request.

This waiver request aligns with DOL's policy priorities in that it:

- focuses on ensuring that eligible youth achieve secondary and postsecondary educational success;
- increases youths' access to and opportunities for the education, training, employment, and support services that they need;
- aligns with WIOA's intent by supporting career pathways and the preparation of young people for in-demand careers; and ensures that ISY do not fall into an at-risk category because of expenditure restrictions.

4. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver

Approval of this waiver would permit Boards the opportunity to determine how best to meet the educational and training needs of youth, regardless of school status, and specific to the population, geographical location, and economic and employment conditions of each workforce area. Increasing outreach to ISY while maintaining a focus on serving OSY will help develop a larger pool of young people qualified and prepared to meet the current and future needs of employers in their workforce areas and throughout the state.

5. Individuals, groups, or populations benefiting from the waiver

- At-risk ISY statewide who face barriers to education, training, and employment
- OSY because they will continue to be served as a priority population in accordance with WIOA
- Boards through increased flexibility to develop unique solutions to better serve youth according to local conditions and needs

6. How the State plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

Upon DOL's approval of this waiver request, ADWS will communicate the waiver allowance to Boards and workforce system partner programs. ADWS will monitor progress under this waiver by reviewing monthly performance reports submitted by the Boards, through regularly scheduled

meetings with Board executive directors, and through its monitoring and performance accountability system. ADWS will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report.

7. Assurance of State's posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected Local Workforce Development Boards

ADWS will include this waiver request as part of the agency's PT2020-2023 WIOA Combined State Plan when the plan was presented for public comment. ADWS has notified all Boards and sought their input regarding this waiver request.

WAIVER REQUEST 2

Eligible Training Providers Performance Reporting Requirements

1. The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the State would like to waive

ADWS is seeking a waiver of WIOA §116(d)(4) and 20 CFR §677.230(a)(5) in order to allow eligible training providers (ETPs) to collect and report performance data for WIOA-funded participants only.

2. Actions the State has taken to remove state or local barriers

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers that would impede implementation of the requested waiver.

3. State strategic goal(s) and Department of Labor priorities (e.g. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.) supported by the waiver

Under WIOA §116(d)(4)(A) and 20 CFR §677.230(a)(5), ETPs must report performance data with respect to all individuals engaging in a program of study (or the equivalent). While ADWS recognizes the value and importance of monitoring provider performance, requiring ETPs to produce data on all individuals instead of just WIOA-funded participants places an undue burden on ETPs to collect, enter, and report excessive data. This is especially burdensome when ETPs have many students of whom only a small percentage are WIOA participants. DOL and ED acknowledge this burden in their response to comments regarding 20 CFR §677.230 in the preamble to the WIOA Final Rule by stating, "The Departments are cognizant of the reporting burden the ETP performance report places on ETPs and do not want to place additional burden on these entities," yet did not modify the regulatory text to ease that burden.

Further, ETPs and ADWS are concerned that providing data—including Social Security numbers—on all individuals engaging in a program of study (or the equivalent) instead of WIOA-funded participants only may conflict with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which protects the privacy of student education records. Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student to release any information from a student's education record (34 CFR §99.30). Releasing student information on individuals who

are not workforce system participants without their explicit consent may be in violation of federal law and compromise their personally identifiable information (PII) and potentially make those students vulnerable to identity theft and privacy risks.

Burdensome reporting requirements combined with mandatory submission of PII for non-WIOA-funded participants disincentivizes training providers from participating or remaining in the ETP system. A shortage of participating providers could result in limited customer choice locally or even statewide.

Under this waiver, ETPs will continue to collect and report performance data for all WIOA-funded participants in accordance with WIOA §116(d)(4)(A) and as specified at 20 CFR §677.230.

Approval of this waiver request would allow ADWS to meet the following state goals:

- **Ease undue reporting burden on ETPs:** Reporting performance data on all individuals engaging in a program of study (or the equivalent) consumes considerable time and expense. Reducing ETPs' reporting requirements to include only WIOA-funded participants would save considerable time and expense to allow ETPs to focus on education and training outcomes while still providing the required data on WIOA-funded participants.
- **Ensure protection of non-WIOA participants' PII:** Not reporting data for individuals who are not WIOA participants would reduce ETPs' liability for potential breach of those individuals' PII.
- **Ensure that local areas have sufficient numbers of and diversity of training providers:** Establishing a more provider-friendly system will help ensure that local areas have sufficient numbers of and diversity of training providers necessary to create an effective marketplace of training programs for WIOA participants utilizing ITAs.
- **Incentivize training providers to participate in the ETP system:** Minimizing the reporting burden and eliminating the need to provide sensitive data on non-WIOA-funded students would make ETP participation more attractive to training providers and would therefore help increase the number of new ETPs and retain providers that are already participating in the ETP system.
- **Ensure accuracy of performance data:** Eliminating reporting barriers and limiting reporting to only WIOA-funded participants would result in more consistent and more accurate provider performance data.
- **Maximize customer choice:** A provider friendly ETP system attracts more training providers, resulting in increased customer choice.

- This waiver request aligns with DOL's policy priorities in that it:

- connects education and training strategies by reducing the reporting burden on ETPs, thus allowing them to focus more time and resources on producing successful outcomes for WIOA-funded participants; and
- further protects the privacy rights of ETPs' students who are not WIOA participants.

4. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver

Approval of this waiver would reduce the reporting burden on ETPs and allow them to focus more time and resources on producing successful outcomes for WIOA-funded participants as well as for their non-WIOA students.

5. Individuals, groups, or populations benefiting from the waiver

- Eligible training providers

6. How the State plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

Upon DOL's continued approval of this waiver request, ADWS will communicate the waiver allowance to Boards and workforce system partner programs. ADWS will monitor progress under this waiver by continuing to collect data from ETPs on their WIOA-funded students and to submit that data via ADWS's annual report to DOL. ADWS will report waiver outcomes in the state's WIOA Annual Report. If the state requests renewal of this waiver, then TWC will provide the most recent outcomes data available.

7. Assurance of State's posting of the request for public comment and notification to affected Local Workforce Development Boards

ADWS will include this waiver request as part of the agency's PT2020-2023 WIOA Combined State Plan when the plan was presented for public comment. ADWS has notified all Boards and sought their input regarding this waiver request.

Waiver Impact

Through this waiver, ETPs will be more willing to submit data on their WIOA-funded students and to remain in the ETP program, thus allowing the Arkansas workforce system to continue delivering essential training services that meet the needs of employers, job seekers, and workers.

WAIVER REQUEST 3

Waiver to increase on-the-job-training reimbursement up to 90 percent for businesses with 50 or fewer employees. WIOA Section 134(c) (3)(H)(i) and 20 CFR 680.720 (b)

Arkansas is requesting a waiver to the current allowable employer reimbursement rate of up to 50 percent of the wage rate of the On-the-Job-Training (OJT) participant for the extraordinary

costs of providing training and additional supervision related to the OJT as described in the WIOA Section 134(c) (3)(H)(ii). The waiver require has been developed following the WIOA guidelines in Section189 (i)(3)(B) and the WIOA Federal regulation at 20 CFR 680.720(b).

Arkansas is proposing a sliding scale of reimbursement to the employer based on its size and capability. Under this waiver, the following scale will be implemented: up to 90% reimbursement for employers with 50 or less employees; up to 75% reimbursement for employers with a workforce between 51 and 250 employees. For employers with 251 employees or more, the statutorily defined 50% limit will continue to apply.

The waiver is requested for all WIOA formula funds: Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, National Dislocated Worker Grants, as well as other Discretionary grants, as appropriate.

1. The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the State would like to waive

ADWS is seeking a waiver of the requirement under WIOA Section 134(c) (3)(H)(ii)(II) and the accompanying regulations as promulgated at 20 CFR 680.720 (b) state that employers may be reimbursed up to 50 percent of the wage rate of an OJT participant for the extraordinary costs of providing the training and additional supervision related to the OJT.

2. Actions the State has taken to remove state or local barriers

There are no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers that would impede implementation of the requested waiver.

3. Description of the waiver goals; relationship of goals to the strategic plan goals; and expected programmatic outcomes:

The waiver is consistent with national policy to develop a workforce system that is responsive to the demands of both individual and employer customers. The State anticipates the following goals will be achieved with approval of the waiver request:

- Maximize the flexibility needed to impact local economic vitality and direct resources where demand for services is greatest by assisting local areas in marketing OJT as a vehicle to engage employers, particularly in targeted sectors, to hire and provide training to new workers. This will build the capacity and future viability of both the workforce and the industries themselves.
- Assist with the transformation of the current workforce system to a demand-driven, sector based and d regionally driven talent development pipeline.
- Increase training and transitional employment opportunities for unemployed workers and hard-to serve youth and adults.
- Equip individuals with relevant job training and transferable skills in high-skill, high-wage, high demand occupations and industries.

- Increase business usage of the local workforce system by providing added incentives to hire and train new workers.

Local workforce development boards have provided feedback with regard to employer needs for assistance with economic competitiveness in the current economic downturn. Allowing businesses to be reimbursed on a sliding scale will address the primary reason for prior limited use of OJT and increase employer participation.

Employer feedback indicates that they will be more likely to use this opportunity if reimbursement was greater than 50%. Small to medium-sized employers are responsible for the majority of all the jobs in Arkansas, therefore the State estimates that small to medium-sized employers will comprise a significant percentage of OJT opportunities.

4. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver

Approval of this waiver would increase the opportunity to utilize the OJT model to hire and train new workers.

5. Description of the individuals impacted by the waivers:

The need for training is especially acute for those workers most in need: dislocated workers transitioning to new occupations and industries, long-term unemployed individuals in need of advancing outmoded skills in order to catch up with emerging technologies, and low-income and entry-level workers seeking to start their careers in a weak economic climate. Approval of the waiver will increase training options
for WIOA-eligible job seekers.

The reduced match requirement for employers, particularly new start-ups and other small to medium-sized businesses, will provide an attractive and cost-effective financial incentive. This waiver will allow Arkansas businesses to more rapidly adapt to both technological and general marketplace changes by improving their capacity to expand and remain competitive with affordable OJT options uniquely designed to
achieve their specific developmental goals.

6. How the State plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

Upon DOL's continued approval of this waiver request, ADWS will communicate the waiver allowance to Boards and workforce system partner programs. ADWS will monitor progress under this waiver and to submit that data via ADWS's annual report to DOL.

7. Description of the process used to: Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment from business and labor; provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver; provide affected local boards the opportunity to comment; and monitor implementation:

ADWS will include this waiver request as part of the agency's PT2020-2023 WIOA Combined State Plan when the plan was presented for public comment. ADWS has notified all Boards and sought their input regarding this waiver request.

WAIVER REQUEST 4

Waiver to allow flexibility in the use of funds reserved by the Governor to provide disaster relief as permitted under Dislocated Worker Grants for disaster relief, including temporary work. WIOA Section 134(a)(2)(A), WIOA Section 134(a)(2)(B) and WIOA Section 134(a)(3)

1. The statutory and/or regulatory requirements the State would like to waive

Arkansas requests a waiver of WIOA Section 134(a)(2)(A), (2)(B), and (3) to add flexibility in the use of the funds reserved by the Governor for use to provide statewide rapid response activities, for use to provide statewide employment and training activities, and to underwrite or fund disaster relief to affected areas of pending National Dislocated Worker Grants.

Under this allowance, Governor's funds would only be used to fund temporary cleanup efforts and will only be made available to local areas impacted under a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declaration. Governor's funds allotted to local areas under this waiver, who are subsequently awarded funds under the pending National Dislocated Worker Grants application, will refund the Governor's discretionary funds.

The purpose of this waiver request is to expedite the delivery of temporary cleanup resources and will be limited to one $200,000 allotment, per Local Area, per qualifying event.

2. Actions undertaken to remove state or local statutory or regulatory barriers

There are currently no state or local statutory or regulatory barriers to implementing any of the requested waivers.

3. State strategic goal(s) and Department of Labor priorities (e.g. expansion of apprenticeship, improved employer engagement, etc.) supported by the waiver

This request is for a waiver will provide local workforce areas in Arkansas the flexibility to more quickly implement cleanup efforts while awaiting the final approval of subsequently awarded funds under the pending National Dislocated Worker Grants application

4. Projected programmatic outcomes resulting from implementation of the waiver

Approval of this waiver would greatly enhance local workforce areas' ability to address emergency situations swiftly that negatively impact Arkansans suffering from disasters.

5. Description of the individuals impacted by the waivers:

This waiver would benefit those workers most in need, dislocated workers, as well as the general citizenry of the geographical areas that are negatively impacted by disasters.

6. How the State plans to monitor waiver implementation, including collection of waiver outcome information

Upon DOL's continued approval of this waiver request, ADWS will communicate the waiver allowance to Boards and workforce system partner programs. ADWS will monitor progress under this waiver and to submit that data via ADWS's annual report to DOL.

7. Description of the process used to: Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment from business and labor; provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver; provide affected local boards the opportunity to comment; and monitor implementation:

ADWS will include this waiver request as part of the agency's PT2020-2023 WIOA Combined State Plan when the plan was presented for public comment. ADWS has notified all Boards and sought their input regarding this waiver request.

Title I-B Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient; Yes

2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist; Yes

3. The state established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members. Yes

4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2). Yes

5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership. No

6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions. Yes

7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7). Yes

8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan. Yes

9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I. Yes

10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report. Yes

11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3); Yes

Program-Specific Requirements for Wagner-Peyser Program (Employment Services)

All program-specific requirements provided for the WIOA core programs in this section must be addressed for either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

a. Employment Service Professional Staff Development.

1. Describe how the State will utilize professional development activities for Employment Service staff to ensure staff is able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

The state uses professional development activities for Employment Services staff such as targeted training activities to cross-train in specific program areas (Veterans and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Unemployment Insurance) to ensure staff is able to

provide quality services to both jobseekers and employers. These training activities enable staff to assist jobseekers with knowing and improving their skills, obtaining the best job possible, and progressing in a career pathway. Staff has been provided with the required information about programs and hear a consistent message regarding expected levels of performance, service delivery and service quality. Training is provided throughout the state to promote consistency.

2. Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program, and the training provided for Employment Services and WIOA staff on identification of UI eligibility issues and referral to UI staff for adjudication.

In contrast to most states, Arkansas continues to maintain unemployment insurance staff members in each of the State's workforce centers. The continuing presence of unemployment insurance staff members in local workforce centers enables ADWS to be poised to provide in-depth assistance to UI claimants and its workforce partners. UI Administration continues to utilize the UI Technical Unit to provide staff training to unemployment insurance staff. UI Technical provides necessary training to Employment Services and WIOA staff concerning general concepts related to the unemployment insurance program and potential issue identification.

b. Explain how the State will provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals requesting assistance in filing a claim for unemployment compensation through One-Stop centers, as required by WIOA as a career service.

The presence of UI staff in all of ADWS' local offices significantly lessens the need to rely on Employment Service and WIOA staff to provide information and meaningful assistance to individuals seeking to file unemployment compensation claims through the one-stop centers. However, UI Technical provides basic training to Employment Services and WIOA staff to enable them to provide basic information and meaningful assistance to UI claimants. Furthermore, the interconnectivity of the electronic interface that exists between the UI data system and the Wagner- Peyser data system enable the immediate registration of UI claimants to register and apply for jobs through the Arkansas JobLink system.

c. Describe the state's strategy for providing reemployment assistance to Unemployment Insurance claimants and other unemployed individuals.

The Arkansas Reemployment Services (RES) program uses claimant demographic data to mathematically identify Unemployment Insurance (UI) claimants that are most at risk of exhausting benefits before finding employment. The Division of Workforce Services, through the Arkansas Workforce Centers, provides additional assistance to these participants, and

requires completion of a job search workshop to maintain their UI benefits. The goal of the program is to keep these claimants from exhausting their benefits before they move on to gainful employment.

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

- An orientation to the Arkansas Workforce Center system
- Partner Program Information
- An overview of program requirements
- Labor market information
- Career Readiness Certification information
- Job search assistance
- Proper resume and application preparation
- Interviewing skills information Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Program. The RESEA program enhances the current RES process by removing barriers to employment for those receiving UI benefits, including transitioning veterans receiving UI compensation for ex-service members to assist them in reentering the workforce more quickly. The RESEA program requires additional services for selected claimants to maintain benefits including the Career Readiness Certificate, an occupational skills assessment and an individual reemployment plan contract.

The goal of the RESEA program is not only to keep claimants from exhausting their benefits before moving on to employment, but also to reduce the number of weeks claimed and to reduce the total benefits paid to result in a new savings for the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. Additional requirements for the RESEA program include:

One-on-one assessment appointments to assist with:

- Resume creation and review o Job search techniques
- Proper application completion o Interview skills and techniques
- Basic skills testing utilizing Career Ready 101 online curriculum as a first step to obtain a Career Readiness Certificate

Presently we have five RESEA locations throughout the state.

d. Describe how the State will use W-P funds to support UI claimants, and the communication between W-P and UI, as appropriate, including the following:

1. Coordination of and provision of labor exchange services for UI claimants as required by the Wagner-Peyser Act;

Currently claimants who file initial, additional or reopened claims for unemployment insurance benefits through ADWS' EZARC system simultaneously create registrations through the Arkansas Job Link "AJL" system. Once registered, jobseekers have access to all of the online features, such as searching for jobs, identifying employment occupational information, using the virtual recruiter to automatically receive alerts of new jobs that match the job skills in their resume, and having the resume viewable by employers registered in the system.

2. Registration of UI claimants with the State's employment service if required by State law;

Per Ark. Code Ann. 11-10-507 and Regulation 14, claimants who file initial, additional or reopened claims for unemployment insurance benefits through ADWS' EZARC system simultaneously create registrations through the Arkansas Job Link "AJL" system. The filing of an initial, additional or reopened claim for unemployment insurance benefits through ADWS' EZARC system creates a unique "AJL" registration for all applicants. These registrations are then monitored and utilized by Employment Service staff to provide job finding and placement services.

3. Administration of the work test for the State unemployment compensation system, including making eligibility assessments (for referral to UI adjudication, if needed), and providing job finding and placement services for UI claimants; and

UI claimants must submit weekly certifications through ArkNet (Internet) or via ArkLine (Telephone) that they satisfied the continuing eligibility requirements of the unemployment insurance program. Those requirements are continuing to be totally unemployed or working part-time; able to work; available for work; and actively seeking work as demonstrated by contacting a specific number of employers each week based on their labor market. Claimants who fail to meet all of the eligibility requirements are referred to unemployment insurance staff members for further analysis and if applicable, to adjudication staff. UI Technical staff will provide necessary training to Employment Services and WIOA staff concerning general concepts related to the unemployment insurance program and potential issue identification.

4. Provision of referrals to and application assistance for training and education programs and resources.

Currently jobseekers are provided information on the Wagner-Peyser services available at the Workforce centers. Customers needing further information about training are referred to register in the Arkansas Job Link system to begin self-service activities by using resources such as computers and phones to conduct job searches, create a resume, and respond to employment opportunities through Arkansas Job Link system. Jobseekers can manage their UI claim through the Ark Net website. In addition, to self-service options, claimants can also receive staff-assisted services, such as job search workshops, assistance with access and navigating the Arkansas Job Link system, referral to veteran services, and referral to education, and training.

e. Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP). Each State agency must develop an AOP every four years as part of the Unified or Combined State Plan required under sections 102 or 103 of WIOA. The AOP must include--

1. Assessment of Need

Provide an assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers in the area based on past and *projected agricultural and farmworker activity in the State. Such needs may include but are not limited to: employment, training, and housing*.

Arkansas is a major producer of a variety of agronomic crops. Agriculture is Arkansas' largest industry, adding around $16 billion to the state's economy annually. The Natural State's diverse landscape and climate produce a wide variety of Arkansas agricultural products. Arkansas is a major exporter of rice, soybeans, cotton, poultry and feed grains. There are 49,346 farms statewide and 97 percent of Arkansas' farms are family owned. A mere 16 percent of Arkansas' farms account for a whopping 92 percent of production.

The production of these crops is centered in the eastern third of the state but there are notable concentrations elsewhere, particularly in the river valleys of the Arkansas River (central Arkansas) and the Red River (southwest Arkansas).

Commercial and greenhouse production of fruit, vegetable, ornamental, and turfgrass crops are also economically important in many sections of the state.

Agriculture Activity

According to the University of Arkansas — Division of Agriculture Research and Extension' 2019 Arkansas Agricultural Profile, 42% of Arkansas land was comprised of farms. There were 42,500 farms on 13.9 million acres, with the average farm size of 327 acres.

In terms of cash receipts, Arkansas' top agricultural commodities were Soybeans, Rice, Corn, Cotton, and Wheat.

Assessing the unique needs of the MSFW population in Arkansas, like many other states, presents several challenges. The MSFW is difficult to identify, share information with or locate. Despite high agricultural activity within the state, it appears a significant number MSFWs pass through Arkansas for seasonal work and continue to other states, looking at Arkansas as merely a "stopover".

Typical comments from Employers and their permanent, full-time field supervisors suggest that MSFs come here to work, earn their money and move to the next location. They most generally are sending a significant portion of their pay to their families and must bring in a paycheck. They have no time for training for other employment, unless they can no longer work in the fields due to age, health or other factors. Employers, obviously, want to keep these valued workers and would be reluctant to encourage training or employment outside of meeting the agricultural needs they have.

Other factors such as healthcare, schooling for children, employer requirements, rights, insurance, health & safety information, availability of adequate work clothing and transportation, among others, are needs of the MSFWs. Lack of identification and contact makes it difficult to know how great the needs are. MSFWs are rarely provided transportation to be able to come to town or a career center. Career centers are not available when they are not working. The needed information must be brought to the MSFW in the fields, communities, or frequented businesses/services they utilize.

A. An assessment of the agricultural activity in the State means: 1) identifying the top five labor-intensive crops, the months of heavy activity, and the geographic area of prime activity; 2) Summarize the agricultural employers' needs in the State (i.e. are they predominantly hiring local or foreign workers, are they expressing that there is a scarcity in the agricultural workforce); and 3) Identifying any economic, natural, or other factors that are affecting agriculture in the State or any projected factors that will affect agriculture in the State.

The main agricultural crops in Arkansas are soybeans, rice, corn, cotton, and sweet potatoes, with an estimated projected harvest of six million acres that were harvested in program year 2018. Most of these main agricultural crops are concentrated in Central, Eastern, and Northeastern Arkansas.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, most of these main agricultural crops are concentrated in the following regions:

• District 60 (East Central Arkansas) — Arkansas, Cross, Crittenden, Lee, Lonoke, Monroe, Prairie, Phillips, St. Francis, and Woodruff counties.

• District 30 (Northeastern Arkansas) — Clay, Craighead, Greene, Independence, Jackson, Lawrence, Mississippi, Randolph, and White counties.

• District 90 (Southeast Arkansas) — Ashley, Chicot, Desha, Drew, Jefferson, and Lincoln counties.

These are seasonal jobs requiring over two thousand migrant and seasonal workers to cultivate and plant, till and harvest these crops. Agricultural employers are increasingly faced with the lack of domestic labor willing and able to do these long and hard jobs outdoors in all kinds of weather. The majority of these seasonal workers are foreign born workers entering the country on H2-A Visas (temporary agriculture) and most of the returning workers are coming from Mexico and a few are traveling from South Africa. Free housing is included for these workers and any domestic worker than is unable to return to his/her home each day.

Although there are estimated to be fewer than 500 migrant and seasonal farmworkers (MSFWs) in the state at any time, the overall majority of H2-A workers enter from Mexico and Spanish is the native language spoken. Over the past couple of the years, there has been an approximately 30% increase in the new agricultural jobs entered into the Arkansas Job Link system.

According to the University of Arkansas — Division of Agriculture Research and Extension, the top five (5) labor-intensive crops, months of heavy activity, and geographic area of prime activity are detailed in the chart below.

Agricultural Activity in Arkansas – Calendar 2018

CROPS	ACRES HARVESTED	PRODUCTION	DURATION OF HARVEST	GEOGRAPHIC
SOYBEANS	3,240,000	165,240 BU	July 15 Thru November 15	Lee, Phillips, St. Francis, Cross
RICE	1,427,000	107,325 CWT	August 10 Thru October 1	Arkansas, Monroe, Prairie
CORN	645,000	116,745 BU	June 25 Thru August 31	Lee, Phillips, Cross
COTTON	480,000	1,150 BALES	August 15 Thru October 21	Mississippi, Craighead, Crittenden
WINTER WHEAT	95,000	5,225 BU	November 30 Thru March 1	Lonoke, Prairie, Lee, St. Francis

While there were no natural disasters that affected agriculture in the State of Arkansas, the State has experienced historically heavy rainfall in 2019. This rainfall, and accompanying flooding, negatively impacted the State's agricultural planting and harvesting seasons.

B. An assessment of the unique needs of farmworkers means summarizing Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) characteristics (including if they are predominantly from certain countries, what language(s) they speak, the approximate number of MSFWs in the State during peak season and during low season, and whether they tend to be migrant, seasonal, or year-round farmworkers). This information must take into account data supplied by WIOA Section 167 National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees,

other MSFW organizations, employer organizations, and State and/or Federal agency data sources such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Employment and Training Administration.

Arkansas' foreign MSFWs primarily are from Mexico. The other main country of origination for our foreign MSFWs is South Africa. The primary language spoken by MSFWs is Spanish with some MSFWs speaking Afrikaans, with English frequently being a primary or secondary language for South Africa.

A review of Arkansas' Foreign Labor Certification program for the past three years finds that H-2A posted 80% of their job openings during December – February of each year. The remaining 20% were posted throughout the remaining months of the year.

In 2019, employers indicated that the unpredictable season & weather played a large role in seasonal prep, planting, maintaining, harvesting and finishing of all crops, frequently changing numbers of workers needed onsite from day to day. This unseasonal weather also resulted in long periods waiting on the weather to break, resulting in short bursts of high activity, mostly being completed by local and available workers.

Moving forward, we anticipate that a change in the definition of MSFWs in our Arkansas Job Link (AJL) System will result in more correctly identified MSFWs, but also fewer mis-identified MSFWs.

Unique Needs of MSFWs

MSFWs are a unique and very important segment of Arkansas' agricultural economy as they are willing to complete the necessary harvesting and manual labor job duties. However, MSFWs also face a number of challenges seldom faced by other workers. These include the following:

• Education: the education level among MSFWs tends to be low

• Language: general lack of ability to speak and read English and, at times, Spanish

• Economic Status: the income level of MSFWs frequently falls well below the poverty level

• Limited access to public transportation in most rural areas of the state

• Limited access to medical services

2. Outreach Activities

The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

Arkansas strives to continue improvement interacting with and providing assistance to our MSFW community. Arkansas is not designated as a significant MSFW state due to the low

percentage of MSFWs identified. Previously, most contact with MSFWs is through our National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee. However, in January 2020, we began identifying, training and assigning state merit center staff who meet the required qualifications for an outreach worker and who are currently working in areas of high MSFW activity. These outreach workers will work under the direct supervision of our Statewide Targeted Populations Outreach Coordinator. Upon completion of outreach training, these staff will begin locating and contacting MSFWs in their assigned area of the state, as part-time outreach workers. This outreach activity will be revisited a minimum of once a year to review data collected and determine if the number of outreach workers or their locations need to be adjusted.

The State Monitor Advocate (SMA) will ensure fluid communication of data, information and provision of manpower in a unified manner throughout the state.

We are currently developing additional partnerships to provide more sources for dissemination of information about the Arkansas Workforce Centers and other partners' services, training opportunities, and MSFW rights, health and safety information.

A. Contacting farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services has a cooperative agreement with the Arkansas Human Development Corporation (AHDC), a National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantee, which is co-located in several Arkansas Workforce Centers. These Arkansas Workforce Centers are part of the State's WIOA one-stop system, serving either a comprehensive one-stop center or an affiliate one-stop. Through this partnership, efforts continue to be made to make outreach contacts with migrant and seasonal farmworkers to assist with training for anyone wishing to break the farming cycle. Outreach staff establishes a list of available resources and develops partnerships with other organizations serving MSFWs.

B. Providing technical assistance to outreach workers. Technical assistance must include trainings, conferences, additional resources, and increased collaboration with other organizations on topics such as one-stop center services (i.e. availability of referrals to training, supportive services, and career services, as well as specific employment opportunities), the employment service complaint system, information on the other organizations serving MSFWs in the area, and a basic summary of farmworker rights, including their rights with respect to the terms and conditions of employment.

In 2019, our Targeted Populations Outreach Coordinator attended several trainings and an on-site technical assistance visit to Colorado to better understand how to conduct outreach and also train merit local office staff.

The Targeted Populations Outreach Coordinator has also contacted other relevant agencies, including Arkansas Department of Agriculture, Legal Aid of Arkansas, the Mexican Consulate and various other organizations.

Subsequently, we have begun our efforts to provide more extensive training to ADWS and partner staffs in Arkansas Workforce Centers to better identify MSFWs, their needs and service requirements, and provide informational material to those MSFWs, employers and organizations in their counties served. A draft desk aid for staff to assist in the proper identification of MSFWs has been created and distributed. This is a first step in acclimating center staff & partners to more aggressive identification of and assistance to MSFWs. More training on MSFW identification and system issues as related to Arkansas Workforce Center staff is in its initial stages of development.

ADWS will coordinate with the WIOA Section 167 NFJP recipient with regard to MSFW needs, and to facilitate or provide intensive services and training services. This will be facilitated by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The ADWS will engage with other agricultural groups, associations and organizations for the purpose of identifying and assisting MSFWs. Similarly, ADWS will develop and maintain relationships with agencies who may assist or who work specifically with the MSFW.

C. Increasing outreach worker training and awareness across core programs including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and the training on identification of UI eligibility issues.

In Arkansas, state merit staff members are very familiar with the UI Program, which is embedded into their regular job duties. However, as part of the outreach worker training, we will incorporate the core elements of partner programs, including the Unemployment Insurance (UI) program and UI eligibility. This training will address items such as eligibility, program services and benefits, resources for additional or more detailed information, application and contact information. Plans are for both this topic of training as well as other outreach related topics, to occur a minimum of once a year, with training on any adjustments, new topics or responsibilities occurring as needed. Training has occurred for outreach workers.

Sexual Harassment Training

Arkansas' WIOA Program Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) officer has been providing sexual harassment training to the state's Arkansas Workforce Center staff. We will require that this training is provided to the State Monitor Advocate and AHDC staff as well, beginning early 2018. This training will be periodically conducted to ensure that all new staff members have been trained as well.

D. Providing State merit staff outreach workers professional development activities to ensure they are able to provide high quality services to both jobseekers and employers.

For the continuing training and development of outreach workers, state or national professional development opportunities will be attended by State merit staff outreach workers within the limits of available resources. These continuing training and development opportunities for State merit staff outreach workers will take advantage of statewide WIOA related trainings, employee continuing education and other related training/informational events which will benefit their knowledge and skills.

ADWS will take full advantage of the wealth of training and information provided by the *Workforce GPS* website. We will implement a minimum number of training hours per year for this staff.

E. Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.

Similar to other states, ADWS entered into a statewide memorandum of understanding (MOU) with AHDC. This MOU assists in establishing and demonstrating effective outreach coordination.

The NFJP grantee, AHDC, provides career and training services and related assistance for MSFWs, along with Arkansas Workforce Center staff. The cooperative agreement between ADWS and AHDC was developed to coordinate and enhance service delivery to MSFWs. This partnership provides for the sharing of labor market information, basic, individualized, and career services, training, supportive services and job-related resources available to MSFWs.

The State Monitor Advocate will meet quarterly with AHDC to discuss improving coordination and the administration of employment and training services offered to MSFWs. Additionally, the State Monitor Advocate will meet with Arkansas Workforce Center staff to discuss the efforts of AHDC and to improve shared responsibility of the outreach efforts.

3. Services provided to farmworkers and agricultural employers through the one-stop delivery system.

Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

A. Providing the full range of employment and training services to the agricultural community, both farmworkers and agricultural employers, through the one-stop delivery system. This includes:

1. **How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers;**

2. **How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.**

Employment and Training Services

MSFWs are provided access to the full range of employment services, benefits, information, and protection available in the state's one-stop system. Outreach materials are disseminated throughout the state, especially in the areas of the state where MSFWs are likely to gather and work.

Through the Arkansas Job Link (AJL) job matching system, agricultural jobs are listed statewide and are available to all jobseekers in the state as well of out of state by creating an account and searching for suitable employment. An AJL employer account provides the ability to post job openings, search resumes for qualified employees, receive emails on new jobseeker resumes and receive assistance listing the agricultural job opening. ADWS will provide agricultural employers with applicants who meet the job-related selection criteria established by the employers.

Our goal for this year is to better meet the needs of agricultural employers. As such, ADWS will continue to improve the agricultural referral process including, but not limited to, the following:

- Providing information regarding available services to workers when arriving at job sites
- Engaging agricultural employers to determine short- and long-term employment goals
- Providing agricultural employers with information related to farmworker rights
- Develop strategies to facilitate and coordinate the engagement of the agricultural industry into the workforce development system
- Assist agricultural employers in creating year-round, permanent jobs

Perhaps our most important change will be engaging the Arkansas Department of Education's Migrant Education Program (ARMEP). The Arkansas Migrant Education Division administers programs that provide supplemental academic and supportive services to the children of families who migrate to find work in the agricultural and fishing industries.

The programs are designed to help migrant children, who are uniquely affected by the combined effects of poverty, language, cultural barriers, and the migratory lifestyle, to meet the same challenging academic content and student academic achievement standards that are expected of all children.

B. Marketing the employment service complaint system to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups.

The Arkansas Employment Service complaint system was severely outdated and not clearly communicated to one-stop center staff. Consequently, it is currently being re-developed and modernized. Upon completion, training will be provided to state merit and other workforce center staff. This process will be monitored by the SMA, through desk reviews and on-site local office visits, and when deficiencies are identified, training is provided.

It is also anticipated that giving further training to one-stop center staff in properly identifying MSFWs will result in more MSFW complaints being identified. Outreach workers and their activity in work and community settings, will allow for increased knowledge of not only the complaint system but all available resources. Additionally, training of the complaint system for all one-stop center staff should also lead to increased use of the complaint system.

Outreach materials to be developed will include complaint system information for workers, employers and organizations who work with MSFWs.

C. Marketing the Agricultural Recruitment System to agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such publicity.

The State Monitor Advocate receives training from the Regional and National Monitor Advocates regarding the Agricultural Recruitment System and how it is used to assist employers get domestic labor prior to the introduction of H2-A worker requests.

To meet agricultural employers' needs, ADWS will continue its efforts to partner with agricultural associations to provide educational seminars to provide information to agricultural employers. This will include the development of specific sections on both the ADWS and the AHDC websites that provides information related to MSFWs.

4. Other Requirements

A. Collaboration

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

Arkansas will continue its collaborative agreement with the Arkansas Human Development Corporation and other agencies in the state, such as the Arkansas Farm Bureau, OSHA, Wage & Hour and the Department of Labor's Office of Foreign Labor Certification. Additionally, the State Monitor Advocate will lead the development of partnerships with organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC). LULAC has five (5) local councils in Central and Northwest Arkansas which are provide advocacy for and services to the Latino population in Arkansas.

As previously mentioned, the Targeted Populations Outreach Coordinator is forming a partnership with Arkansas Department of Education's Migrant Education Program (ARMEP). Other partnerships will be established with the Hispanic Community Services, El Centro Hispano, and the Hispanic Women's Organization of Arkansas.

B. Review and Public Comment.

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP. The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

In developing the AOP, the State Monitor Advocate solicited information and suggestions from the NFJP grantee, AHDC. Other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, and interested organizations were provided the opportunity to review and provide comment during the required State Plan Public Notice period. No comments were received.

C. Data Assessment.

Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

A review of the past four (4) years of data shows that Arkansas has room for great improvement. Due to the Fall 2019 on-site monitoring visit by the UDSOL, specific areas requiring improvement have been identified.

Specifically, we are now aware that our MSFW definition in our Arkansas Job Link (AJL) system was incorrect. This error has resulted in a lack of confidence in our previous data by both ourselves and the USDOL.

The state believes the proper identification of MSFWs at Centers and in AJL will result in the meeting of 4 or more equity indicators each quarter, in the future.

D. Assessment of progress

The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

The State Monitor Advocate has met with all of the local office managers to continually advise and inform them and their staff on any new issues or regulations that are relevant to service to farmworkers and their families in Arkansas.

It is expected that the hiring of a Targeted Populations Coordinator, plus the strategic formation of Business Services Teams in our Local Workforce Areas will greatly enhance our progress in providing services to MSFWs.

We believe that we have experienced progress in the following areas:

- Identification of significant documents, informational materials and other items used daily by our centers which need translation to Spanish, the primary non-English language identified;
- Identification of pertinent agricultural groups, organizations and associations and pursuing alliances with them;
- Ongoing training to center staff with a desk aid for proper identification of MSFWs; Desk aid with new MSFW definition trained upon and provided. This training will be ongoing.
- Improved partnership and developing a new MOU with our NFJP partner; and
- Identification of community-based events related to MSFWs or their communities is ongoing.

E. State Monitor Advocate

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

The State Monitor Advocate, Maria Garcia, participated in the preparation of the agricultural plan and has been afforded the opportunity to approve and comment on the plan. Such review indicates that the plan has been prepared properly, omitting none of the prescribed requirements and properly describing the activities planned for providing services to both agricultural employers and migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

All recommendations were included as the State Monitor Advocate presented them in the annual MSFW summary developed under 20CFR 653.108(t) in the preparation of this plan.

Wagner-Peyser Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time. (sec 121(e)(3)); Yes

2. The State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111 (State agency staffing requirements) if the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers; Yes

3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and Yes

4. State agency merit-based public employees provide Wagner-Peyser Act-funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations. Yes

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAMS

The State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to Adult Education and Literacy programs under title II, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

(a) Aligning of Content Standards. *Describe how the eligible agency will, by July 1, 2016, align its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).*

(a) The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section (ADWS-AES) adopted the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education (OCTAE)'s College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards for Adult Education developed by Susan Pimentel during program year 2014-2015, but was not fully implemented until the fall of 2016. Adult education's content standards are aligned with K-12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which were adopted by the Arkansas Department of Education for K-12 schools during the 2013-2014 year, through the adoption of the Career and College Readiness (CCR) standards. The CCR standards were adopted due to its rigorous research and scientific evidence of effectiveness and applicability to Adult Education. Additionally, the standards are designed to prepare learners for postsecondary education and training and/or unsubsidized employment.

The CCR standards used the CCSS to "identify a manageable set of the CCSS most indispensable for college and career readiness and important to adult students". The CCR Standards then are translated into curriculum and lessons for teaching within the content of the standards to students. Classroom activities, assignments, and a range of formative and

summative assessments all help determine whether or not students are absorbing the essential skills and knowledge included in the standards.

The Arkansas CCR Framework encompasses language, math, reading, science, social studies and writing and contains a list of references and all materials utilized in the document in addition to a key of all terms used. The framework provides content standards, sample classroom activities and various learning materials to facilitate learning for all learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Instructors can utilize the framework to build their own curriculum and lesson plans to further impact student learning. The framework is designed as a living document, changing over time as do resources and student needs.

Professional development training is provided to understand and instruct within the context of content standards. For example, during the Masterpiece- Reading/Language Art for Part-time Teachers workshop, adult education instructors learned how to lead students to master close reading and evidence-based writing. The facilitator provided a brief refresher on how to use the standards to develop curriculum and strengthen students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. To ensure adult education instructors are able to have access to content related trainings, the state provides professional development opportunities in the evening, regionally, online, face-to-face, and by request, on weekends.

Statewide software purchased by the state for academic learning must also be aligned to content standards. In addition, at the local level, textbooks and other supportive learning tools must be aligned to the college and career readiness standards before being approved to purchase. Adult education instructors are expected to identify the CCR standards in lesson plans. During program reviews and technical site visits, lesson plans and/or syllabi are reviewed to ensure compliance.

Over the past two years, professional development has been focused on helping teachers to align the CCR framework into the curriculum and integrate employability, digital, and financial literacy standards within lesson plans. In addition, improving the quality of instruction is also a professional development goal. Therefore, ongoing professional development using evidenced-based practices in core subject areas is a key area of focus for teacher development.

To improve student pass rate and outcomes on the high school equivalency assessment, the state office provided adult education center directors with direct access to analytical documents from high school equivalency testing site. This enables the directors to have constant access to data useful in determining the effectiveness of classroom instruction. The expectation is that student scores should be on the increase in tandem with the increased focus on teaching CCR standards. Directors may discern which content areas show strength and which show weakness by researching group data, rather than being totally dependent upon annual or quarterly reports.

(b) **Local Activities.** *Describe how the State will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide adult education and literacy activities, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of local activities.*

Adult Education and Literacy Activities (Section 203 of WIOA)

Adult education;
Literacy;
Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
Family literacy activities;
English language acquisition activities;
Integrated English literacy and civics education;
Workforce preparation activities; or
Integrated education and training that—

1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Service, Adult Education Section provides Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and English Second Language (ESL) services to all eligible adult education and literacy programs in Arkansas. Using the thirteen considerations, eligible programs will be funded as stated in "Distribution of Funds for Core Programs" using the previously stated competitive processes. Eligible provider's activities include reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider, will be based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice. In addition, adult education and literacy providers work collaboratively with other agencies to enhance services. For example, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services use federal funding to provide services to individuals with disabilities. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services provide funds to those individuals seeking to enter or retain employment or receive specialized training after completing basic skills acquisition through Arkansas Adult Education.

All providers receiving state and/or federal funding from the Adult Education Section will be required to provide the following services in year one: adult education and literacy activities which include, English language acquisition, integrated English literacy and civics education, workplace education, workforce preparation activities or integrated education and training. Details of these activities will be provided in each program's proposal.

1. Adult Education and Literacy Activities include instruction and education services below a postsecondary level in reading, writing, and speaking in English, and computing and solving problems. These services increase a student's ability to achieve a secondary school diploma or equivalent, transition to postsecondary education and training, and obtain employment.

1a. Scope: All organizations receiving WIOA Title II funds, hereinafter "local providers," will offer Adult Education and Literacy Activities.

1b. Organization: The organization of Adult Education and Literacy Activities may vary according to the population served and the resources available, but all programs will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

2. English Language Acquisition includes adult education and literacy activities for English language learners with an additional skill requirement, comprehension of the English language.

Note: Eligible providers with less than 500 adults in their counties that speak English "less than very well," based on the most current census data, are not required to offer English language acquisition programs.

2a. Scope: All providers will offer English Language Acquisition activities if there is a sufficient number of adult English language learners in their service areas.

2b. Organization: The organization of English Language Acquisition Activities may vary according to the populations served and the resources available, but all programs will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

3. Family Literacy Activities include interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children. To offer family literacy activities as defined in WIOA requires coordination with other services for the children's component. Family literacy defined in WIOA must integrate all of the following activities:

- Parent or family adult education and literacy activities that lead to readiness for postsecondary education or training, career advancement, and economic self-sufficiency.
- Interactive literacy activities between parents or family members and their children.
- Training for parents or family members regarding how to be the primary teachers for their children and full partners in the education of their children.
- Age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

3a. Scope: Local providers may offer Family Literacy Activities in partnership with other agencies or organizations such as schools. The scope of family literacy activities will be determined by the interest of external partners.

3b. Organization: Family literacy activities will be organized collaboratively between local providers and their partners, but all programs will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

4. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education will provide Immigrants and English learners access to English language acquisition services and civics education and may include workforce training. English infused with civics education helps immigrants and English learners understand the American system of government and what it means to be a citizen and to be involved in civics activities. To live and work in the United States means not only a command of the language, but equally important are the civics-related skills and knowledge necessary to become involved parents, workers, and community members. Therefore, every adult education and literacy council program offering English language acquisition services will also include civics education

4a. Scope: Local providers who can demonstrate adequate numbers of adult English language learners in their service areas may apply to offer Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Activities. In addition, providers who meet the criteria and demonstrate effectiveness in performing the integrated English literacy and civics education in combination with integrated education and training activities will be awarded. Depending upon the amount of funding from the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, the State will fund between 4-6 providers in areas of greatest need using Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education funds.

4b. Organization: The organization of Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Activities may vary according to the populations served and the resources available, but all programs will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

5. Workforce Preparation includes activities, programs, or services designed to help individuals acquire a combination of basic academic skills and employability skills such as critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills. These activities include competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of postsecondary education or training, or employment. Workforce preparation skills will be integrated in the adult basic education and literacy curriculum, therefore, occurring concurrently with adult basic and literacy skills instruction. Per grant assurances, teachers will integrate

technology use in their lesson plans and all students will have access to and use computers and technology to enhance their learning and digital literacy skills. Each program will also be required to have a Career Development Facilitator to assist students in transitioning into the workforce and/or postsecondary education or training (state requirement).

5a. Scope: All providers will offer Workforce Preparation Activities.

5b. Organization: The organization of workforce preparation activities may vary according to the populations served and resources available, but all programs will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

6. Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities include instruction at a workplace or an off-site location that is designed to improve the productivity of the workforce. Instruction will include contextualized literacy, English language acquisition, and workforce preparation at Educational Functioning Levels appropriate to learners. Successful workplace literacy activities involve strong partnerships with employers or employee organizations in the design and delivery of the instructional program based on workplace needs.

6a. Scope: Local providers may offer Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities in partnership with employers or employee organizations. The scope of Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities will be determined by the interest of external partners.

6b. Organization: Workplace Adult Education and Literacy Activities will be organized at a workplace or an off-site location in collaboration between local providers and their partners, but will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

7. Integrated education and training activities include instruction in basic academic skills and/or English language acquisition skills, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training contextualized for specific occupations or occupational clusters. Education will be provided in the context of industry-specific needs that involve employers and is integrated with occupational skills training. Programs will provide work-relevant instruction through career pathways and integrated education and training activities. Instruction will be offered at Educational Functioning Levels appropriate to learners. The purpose of instruction will be education and career advancement. Providers will assist students in their roles as parents and family members by providing foundational skills that enable them to support their children's learning needs and improve economic self-sufficiency for their families.

7a. Scope: At least 50% of the current local providers, which will be chosen using an RFP process that gives a high value consideration to Integrated Education and Training Activities, will offer Integrated Education and Training Activities in a career pathways model

7b. Organization: Integrated Education and Training Activities will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking. Instruction for learners who enroll in pathways available in the Accelerating Opportunity Arkansas model will include co-enrollment in postsecondary career technical education courses team-taught by basic skills and career technical instructors. Some programs will provide expanded transition services including career development facilitators and college success classes.

During the next four years, the state will continue to pilot and refine the integrated education and training model based on the Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) model from the state of Washington. Arkansas has been participating in the Accelerating Opportunity program since 2014-2015 program year. The initial pilot includes four programs with adult basic education students that are simultaneously enrolled in the GED® and a career and technical certificate program. Students will learn about career ladders and how to earn stackable credentials. This will provide options for accelerated learning for those adults that are motivated to move ahead as quickly as possible. The goal is to increase the number of students that earn their high school diploma or equivalent and earn entry level industry recognized certification/credential. Statewide implementation of career pathways will occur in phases as additional programs begin the planning and design activities. Support will be provided in planning and implementation grants as funds are available.

8. Financial Literacy Activities (State Required) include instruction that entails the knowledge of properly making decisions pertaining to certain personal finance areas like real estate, insurance, investing, saving, tax planning, and retirement. Financial literacy will be integrated into the curriculum to assist learners in financial matters to confidently take effective action that best fulfills personal, family, and global community goals. (State Required)

8a. Scope: All providers will offer financial literacy activities.

8b. Organization: The organization of workforce preparation activities may vary according to the populations served and resources available, but all programs will follow the state's Adult Education Policies, the Assessment Policy and Distance Learning Guidelines, which outlines enrollment, orientation, assessment, instruction, and test taking.

Due to WIOA standards, The Adult Education Section has encouraged Adult Education programs in Arkansas to develop career pathways with business and industry in each local program area. These partnerships will address the needs of both business/industry and ABE, ASE and ESL students. Local Adult Education programs and Literacy Councils have established local boards that consist of representatives from business and industry. Each adult education and literacy provider is required to have someone trained as a Career Development Facilitator. At each local program, a Career Development Facilitator is either on staff or available to visit with students to reinforce the career focused skills and activities being taught at the centers. These

facilitators use career assessment results and career plans with short-term and long-term goals to assist students in transitioning to the workforce. Career Development Facilitators are trained to study each local job market and review data from the Workforce Development office to communicate high demand openings and career options to students.

Programs also invite representatives from business and industry to present to students and assist with their transition into the workforce. Students who have a desire to study specific trades that offer apprenticeships receive relevant training in these occupational clusters that are vital to each local community. Each of these activities and goals are incorporated into adult education and literacy activities, family literacy classes, English language acquisition classes, workplace adult education and literacy classes, integrated English language and literacy classes as well as Workforce preparation activities. This makes the relationship between Adult Education and the workforce that much more valuable because career pathway initiatives are woven into all aspects of our educational services.

Special Rule. Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

(c) <u>Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals.</u> *Describe how the State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II subtitle C, any of the following academic programs for:*

- *Adult education and literacy activities;*
- *Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;*
- *Integrated education and training;*
- *Career pathways;*
- *Concurrent enrollment;*
- *Peer tutoring; and*
- *Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.*

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

(c) Providers serving individuals in a correctional facility are required to offer adult education and literacy activities and transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. Although not required, providers who receive correctional education funding are encouraged to offer integrated education and training and develop career pathways. Integrated education and training will include more job skills training. Career pathways will include apprenticeship opportunities. In addition, programs are encouraged to use guidance and supportive services where possible and to provide education and training through cooperative efforts with providers in correctional settings. Special education as determined through the intake process will provide appropriate and effective instructional and testing accommodations for students who are identified as having a disability. Peer tutoring is a tutoring arrangement in which students work in pairs to help one another learn material or practice an academic task.

A correctional institution includes any prison; jail; reformatory; work farm; detention center; halfway house; community-based rehabilitation center; or any other similar institution designed for confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders. A criminal offender is any individual who is charged with or convicted of any criminal offense.

Funds will be distributed on a competitive basis that is direct and equitable through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process as described under Section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and title II subtitle C. The same grant announcement, application, and process will be used for all proposals and treated the same way in evaluation. The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services shall use not less than 82.5 percent of the grant funds to award grants and contracts under section 231 and to carry out section 225, of which not more than 20 percent of such amount shall be available to carry out section 225.

Each eligible provider seeking federal funds must submit and meet the requirements of the grant. Allocation of the available funds is based on each eligible provider's enrollment, performance, and demonstrated effectiveness. Funds available under section 225 (a) (1) of the WIOA will be a multi-year grant cycle. However, the ADWS-AES state office will review the performance levels of providers each year to ensure continuous improvement of outcomes.

In addition to any reports required by Adult Education, each eligible correctional institution receiving funds under this section shall annually prepare and submit a report of progress. Reports of progress shall include, but not limited to, activities carried out under this section,

relative rate of recidivism, enrollment, educational gains and/or High School Equivalency outcomes, employment (sustainable wage) and employment retention (length of employment).

(d) <u>Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program</u>. *Describe how the State will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA, for English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries.*

(d) The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section (ADWS-AES) will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IEL/CE) under Section 243 to provide educational services to adult English language learners (ELLs), including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries to acquire English language skills necessary to function effectively as parents, workers, and citizens. IEL/CE program providers will be established through an open and competitive process that is direct and equitable as outlined in section III "Distribution of Funds for Core Programs".

(d2) Describe how the State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of Title II, subtitle C, an Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program and how the funds will be used for the program.

(d2) IEL/CE funds will be allocated to providers based on a direct and equitable, competitive process. Funds will be distributed on a competitive basis that is direct and equitable through the RFP process. Funds available under section 243 of the WIOA will be for a four-year cycle, however, the ADWS-AES state office will review the performance level of providers after two years to determine whether or not do conduct a new competition. Funds will be allocated using a model that references adult ELL demographics and immigration patterns for the state. It is anticipated that the Arkansas adult education will receive at least the established and historical minimum of $200,000 per year. In accordance with the requirements of Title II, programs requesting IEL/CE grant-based funds through the RFP process will be awarded based on a local program's ELL enrolled population; ELL enrolled population growth; performance in educational gains and outcomes; and, availability of Integrated and Education Training programs. Programs requesting funds through the RFP will include a budget and narrative describing the program's plans for funds; the ELL population enrolled for the previous fiscal year; and, actual or anticipated ELL population growth based on the Department of Labor statistics. Each RFP will be evaluated based on a rubric provided by the state and funds will be distributed based on need and services provided.

The providers who meet the criteria and demonstrate effectiveness in performing the integrated English literacy and civics education in combination with integrated education and training

activities will be awarded. Services will include instruction in the following areas: literacy, English language acquisition, rights and responsibilities of citizenship, civic participation, and workforce training.

(d3) ***Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.***

(d3) In order to prepare and place adult ELL in employment and integrate with the local workforce, IEL/CE courses must provide content-based and integrated instruction on topics proposed by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), local workforce/employer needs and requests as well as ELL needs within Arkansas. Programs are highly encouraged to involve students in activities. The topics are as follows:

1. English Language Instruction

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening
- Speaking

2. Civics activities

4 Pillars of Civics:

- Naturalization & Citizenship
- Civic Participation
- US History
- Government

3. Workforce Training

- Soft Skills: Completing Employment Applications, Interview Techniques, Computer Literacy, Workplace Culture
- Employability Certificates: CRC, WAGE™
- Training Programs: Accelerating Opportunity, Apprenticeships, Employer requested Training

IEL/CE programs will operate in combination with integrated education and training activities through Career Pathways, including partnerships with business and industry and other educational institutions, and language instruction to address local needs. Partnerships provide opportunities for students to participate in employment training through accelerated opportunities, internships, and apprenticeships. IEL/CE programs can actively and specifically engage students by hosting guest speakers from and organizing field trips to local agencies and businesses as well as guiding students through language, civic, and employment education.

IEL/CE programs will provide English language instruction within a content-based Civics curriculum based on topics and guidelines provided by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as well as the English Language Proficiency Standards. In addition to English language instruction, digital literacy and financial literacy, workforce skills will be emphasized and integrated. Workforce skills include soft skills development; industry recognized credentials; and, training opportunities, such as apprenticeships and national programs such as Accelerating Opportunity. In addition to partnerships with workforce agencies, local programs will foster employers and vocational training service providers. The IEL/CE content and activities are aimed to be delivered through effective practices that enable ELLs to increase their English language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening in combination with civics and workforce education in order to better understand and navigate governmental, educational, and workplace systems and key American institutions. In addition to classroom instruction, programs are encouraged to involve students in activities supported by IEL/CE funds, such as field trips to civic or historic related venues; guest speakers to expand and enhance classroom instruction; and, organized visits to local workplaces.

Along with explicit content-based classroom instruction, partnerships with other agencies, such as the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), as well as Business and Industry, should aim for ELLs to obtain, retain, and/or upgrade employment. Workforce training should be developed based on student and local employment needs. These may include, but are not limited to, soft skill development internships, apprenticeships, or employer on-site training for employment and language skills.
The State has developed a prescribed list of topics and objectives based on USCIS guidelines and suggestions for Civics Education. Employment was added to be in accordance with WIOA guidelines regarding IEL/CE. Programs that are supported with IEL/CE grant funds should cover the following topics and objectives. Programs are encouraged to add or further develop these topics and objectives.

Topic	Objective
Consumer Economics	Banking/Finance: types of accounts, budgeting, check cashing, paychecks, taxes Consumer Rights: filing complaints Housing: types of housing, lease/rent, housing assistance, tenant rights, utility providers
Community Resources	Advocacy: civic- oriented organizations, community issues Directory: career services, important places and services available in the city, county, state, and national level (library, city hall, DMV) Education: post-secondary institutions, K-12 school system, parent involvement, organizations, job work training opportunities Family: childcare, parenting, senior services, family activities and resources in the community Immigrant Resources: rights, organizations, and services Safety/Security: emergency services, personal safety, household safety, victim rights, workplace safety
Health	Emergencies: emergency services, procedures Healthcare: nutrition, resources, providers, cost, insurance, drugstores, pharmacies, mental illness, substance abuse, patient rights
Employment	Employment Services: career centers, ADWS, requirements, certifications/licenses, WAGE™ Workplace Skills: job applications and interviews, job training programs, workplace culture, computer skills Rights: worker rights, safety

Government and Law	Citizenship Preparation: structure and role of government on local, state, and federal levels, voting laws and rights Enforcement: role of police, how to speak and behave when interacting with police Identifications: obtaining a driver's license, state identification, permanent resident card Laws: domestic violence laws. child abuse laws, right to a lawyer

Programs that receive IEL/Civics Education grant funds must complete an annual report that includes the number of students served with funds (both ESL and ABE/ASE) and the lessons and materials used in the following areas:

*US History and government
*Language instruction
*Civic participation
*Employability skills
*Agency Partnerships and Business & Industry
*Rights and Responsibilities of citizenship
*Naturalization procedures

(d4) Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

(d4) Arkansas IEL/CE grant awardees are expected to reference the local Workforce Development Boards' plans to identify the high demand industries and skills in each of the program's area/region. Local Program Directors regularly attend local Workforce Development Board meetings in order to be aware of local business needs, changes, and challenges in the area/region and how they may impact program design and instruction. Grant awardees select relevant workforce preparation content that is aligned with local needs and the available Integrated and Education Training program.
Recruitment and enrollment of students into IEL/CEs will be a focus in this grant application process. Interest, language ability and cost are the specific barriers to many students. Recipients of IEL/CE funds are expected to connect with other programs such as Title I and Title III to identify participants and help provide additional supportive services.

(e) <u>State Leadership.</u> Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section will use no more than 12.5% of federal funds for the following adult education and literacy activities to develop or enhance the adult education system of the state:

(A) The alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, to implement the strategy identified in the unified State plan under section 102 or the combined State plan under section 103, including the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities.

(A) Since Fall 2015, a WIOA Executive Committee comprised of key core partners that include representatives from Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV was created to develop the State Plan and address the needs of employers and the workforce. Some of the partners include Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division for Services for the Blind, and the Division of Workforce Services. Leadership meet regularly as the WIOA Executive Committee where plans are made for meeting the needs of clients and students, as well as completing the recent state plan modifications. Subcommittees on policy, information technology, finance, core measures, sector strategies, and transition also meet to ensure continued progress in these areas. State-level and local core partners statewide meet semi-annually to share progress in various initiatives, highlight collaborative efforts and conduct activities geared toward improving collaboration between the partners. At the local level, an adult education provider serves on the local workforce development board as a representative of other adult providers in the region. In addition, some adult education programs are located within workforce centers or have a satellite program located there, and all of the adult education programs across the state provide services to one-stop participants.

Collaboration between ADWS/AES and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services allows adult education students to receive a diagnosis of disabilities and receive services, if eligible, through Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. Additionally, a local adult education program provided instruction to students with disabilities at the residential Arkansas Career and Technical Institute, a part of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services.

Adult education providers have collaborated with other core partners to offer career pathways opportunities for students. For example, Van Buren School District Adult Education program offers a pre-apprenticeship program in nursing to students. This partnership includes Title IV, Arkansas Career Technical Institute, which supplies the instructor and equipment, National Apprenticeship Training Foundation, which provides the curriculum, and the Western Region Local Workforce Development Board, which provides the funding. Adult education provides the facility and a basic skills partnership. This is a great example of how a career pathway has been developed for an entry level position and how different sources of funding are being utilized to meet a common objective.

Adult education also provides Career Readiness Certificate testing for Title I and Title III participants. The Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate involves collaboration between ADWS-AES, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, Arkansas Workforce Centers, the

Arkansas Department of Higher Education, the Arkansas Community Colleges, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, and the Arkansas Department of Education, with the Governor signing the official Arkansas CRC certificates. Adult education programs provide basic skills improvement through regular adult education services when test takers fail the CRC twice. Recently, this initiative has begun offering the Platinum CRC, which takes higher skill levels to earn. It is hoped that this move will increase the number of people who come to adult education to improve their skills in order to earn this credential.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section will continue its partnership with the Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC) to support Integrated Education and Training programs to adults without a high school diploma. ACC supports the 22 community colleges in Arkansas and supports individuals on their pathway to a better career. In addition, ACC has links to all of the community colleges in Arkansas, which also contains the degree and career pathways offered. Although adult education is not under the community college system, each of the community college serves as the fiduciary agency for 22 adult education providers.

Adult education provides support to students who have been accepted into college but require developmental courses through its transition/bridge program. For example, during the summer Northwest Arkansas Community College adult education program provides a Transition to College course for both adult education students and those recently accepted into college. Adult education provides instruction in basic skills such as reading, math, and English. In addition, providers also integrate financial literacy, digital literacy, employability skills, time management, test taking strategies, and study skills into the course. The class is designed to not only give students' academic support, but also to provide an overview of what to expect in college once enrolled. Ultimately, the bridge class can help improve the retention and success rate of students.

ADWS/AES works with the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services as well as the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to match employment and postsecondary data for its students, providing information essential for reporting.

ADWS/AES partnered with the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide services to Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) enrolled in the Employment and Training (E&T) Program of DHS's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Through this partnership, ADWS/AES monitors the progress of ABAWDs referred to the E&T program and provides Adult Basic Education, workplace skills, certification opportunities through the office's WAGE™ and Integrated and Education Training (IET) programs, to assist the participant in meeting educational and vocational goals. In addition to those referred by DHS, ADWS/AE works to identify and serve Adult Education students who may also benefit from SNAP E&T services. The partnership currently services 74 of the state's 75 counties, with the last county being serviced by a Local Education Agency that provides adult education services.

In summary, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section (ADWS/AES) has worked in close collaboration with its partners to ensure success in implementation of the state plan and thereby, meeting the needs of Arkansans.

(B) The establishment or operation of high quality professional development programs to improve the instruction provided pursuant to local activities required under section 231(b), including instruction incorporating the essential components of reading instruction as such components relate to adults, instruction related to the specific needs of adult learners, instruction provided by volunteers or by personnel of a State or outlying area, and dissemination of information about models and promising practices related to such programs.

(B) Arkansas has its own professional development resource center, The Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC). The AALRC is funded through the Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative by the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section (ADWS/AES). It was established in 1990 to provide a source for identification, evaluation, and dissemination of materials and information to adult education/literacy programs. The AALRC is located in Little Rock, Arkansas and has seven full-time employees, which include a Director, Professional Development Coordinator, Information Technology Specialist, Disabilities Project Manager, Media Coordinator, Secretary, and Administrative Assistant. State funds support employee salaries while federal funds are used for the fulfillment of our mission.

The coordination of the ADWS/AES's professional development programs is managed by the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC). The AALRC is funded through the Southeast Arkansas Education Service Cooperative by ADWS/AES. It was established in 1990 to provide a source for identification, evaluation, and dissemination of materials and information to adult education and literacy programs. The AALRC is located in Little Rock, Arkansas and has seven full-time employees, including a Director, Professional Development Coordinator, Information Technology Specialist, Disabilities and Online Learning Coordinator, Media Coordinator, Receptionist, and Administrative Assistant. State funds support employee salaries while federal funds are used for the fulfillment of our mission.

Except in specific circumstances approved by ADWS/AES, teachers must hold an Arkansas teacher license in order to teach adult education classes in Arkansas. Teachers must participate in at least 36 hours of professional development annually in order to maintain the license. In addition, Arkansas requires adult education directors, full-time instructors and counselors to be certified in adult education within three years of initial full-time employment. The AALRC supports this effort by providing tuition reimbursement for those completing this requirement. The AALRC supports the Adult Education Section by supporting statewide program administrators' meetings, numerous committee meetings, publishing a directory of literacy services, and maintaining a website (http://www.aalrc.org).

ADWS/AES has adopted the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards set forth by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. State staff along with teachers and directors from the field examined each CCR standard in order to align materials used in the field. Subject-focused trainings are provided to assist teachers statewide in delivering high quality instruction based on the CCR Standards.

During the 2017 legislative session, the Arkansas General Assembly passed Act 1061 (the Right to Read Act). Beginning with the 2021-2022 school year, all kindergarten through sixth grade teachers and kindergarten through 12th-grade special education teachers must show proficiency in the knowledge and practice of scientific reading instruction (evidence-based practices that teach a student how to learn to read). All other teachers must demonstrate an awareness. In addition to Act 1063, Act 416 of 2017 requires education preparation programs to teach scientific reading instruction. Since adult education teachers are required to have a current Arkansas teacher's license, they will also have to meet the Department of Education requirements in order to maintain their license. Arkansas adult education currently has teachers participating in the Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR) pilot program. The teachers will be trained, and then later help train other teachers across the state. The AALRC also offers professional development training in other content areas such as math, science, and social studies.

The AALRC supports practitioners and trainers through professional development opportunities at state and national conferences. Those include Arkansas Association for Continuing and Adult Education & Adult Literacy Alliance (AACAE/ALA) Conference, Learning Disabilities Association (LDA), Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE) Conference, Hot Springs Institute for Technology, and California State University Northridge (CSUN) Assistive Technology Conference. The AALRC also supports local programs by maintaining a current library of materials, providing research support/information, purchasing/distributing software and materials, and upgrading/redistribution of equipment.

The AALRC uses a variety of methods to ensure that local program directors and staff are aware of professional development activities. An email is sent to the program directors explaining each training event, and event information is included on the AALRC website (www.aalrc.org) under the professional development heading. Information regarding training activities is also placed in the AALRC newsletter which is published quarterly. The newsletters are available on the website and mailed to each local program. For those attending training sessions, the AALRC pays travel expenses according to the state travel guidelines for those participants paid with adult education funds.

The AALRC uses a system called ESC Works to track activities and participants. Educators in the State of Arkansas must register for and track professional development events with this online system. Participants are able to manage their own transcripts in the system to add

professional development attended outside of the AALRC (i.e. state conference, national conference).

In order to assess the quality of its professional development programs, the AALRC uses Guskey's model for the Five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation. Evaluations are aggregated and evaluated to determine quality of training and adjustments are made according to the results in order to improve effectiveness of the professional development program and the impact on student learning outcomes.

To support local programs and instructors, a combination of methods is used to assess the effectiveness of professional development training. Classroom observations, student educational gains of teacher participants, focus groups, and overall self-reporting tools are used to determine professional development effectiveness. Data from the adult education management information system are utilized to evaluate and determine if and how the professional development activities impact student learning outcomes.

(C) The provision of technical assistance to eligible providers of adult education and literacy activities receiving funds under this title, including—

(i) the development and dissemination of instructional and programmatic practices based on the most rigorous or scientifically valid research available and appropriate, in reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, English language acquisition programs, distance education, and staff training;

(ii) the role of eligible providers as a one-stop partner to provide access to employment, education, and training services; and

(iii) assistance in the use of technology, including for staff training, to eligible providers, especially the use of technology to improve system efficiencies.

(C) The Adult Education Section will continue to offer technical assistance to eligible providers. Many program directors have registered with the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS), which offers a plethora of resources, professional development, and an opportunity to connect with other practitioners. During administrators' meetings and through the professional development resource center, AALRC, trainings by experts in the field of English as a Second Language, Learning Disabilities, Math, Literacy, Distance Education, and much more continue to be offered.

Mandatory Administrators' Meetings are held semi-annually during which policies and procedures are discussed and information is disseminated. During the administrators' meetings, providers also share best practices with one another as well as gain additional professional development training from staff or guest speakers. Additionally, state-level partners share pertinent information with local directors to assist with local collaboration.

The Adult Education Section staff provides technical training on the state's data management system (LACES). The *LACES 101* training covers the basics of data entry, explanation of federal tables, and data extraction. In the *LACES 201* training, participants analyze program data based on teacher performance and student gains and create a program performance report card. State staff provides over ten data management information systems a training a year regionally, as well as during administrators' meetings and conferences. State staff also offers webinars and teleconference training to providers. All providers participate in at least two data management information systems training a year. Technical support is available for LACES via email or telephone and by request, face-to-face.

During the 2018-19-year, specific topics in the use of LACES have been developed and provided at a distance to improve access. The AALRC provides technical assistance through email and telephone contact as well as face-to-face meetings with providers. The AALRC IT Specialist provides software and hardware support to all programs almost on a daily basis.

(D) Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and improvement of adult education activities as described in section 223 (1)(d).

(D) Adult education state staff evaluates providers quarterly through the review of each program's quarterly report submission. In it, providers review and report progress on average attendance hours, educational functioning level (EFL) gains, number and percentage of students post-tested, etc. Quarterly reports also allow providers to review operational aspects of the program such as the percentage of funds expended, completion of required professional development, and completed personnel activity reports.

ADWS/AES also performs an annual site visit for each adult education and literacy provider to ensure that state and federal laws and policies are followed, to review program performance, and to connect with Local Education Agency Administrators. Based upon the findings during the site visit, regional program advisors provide technical assistance to program directors and staff to ensure continuous improvement.

Additionally, each year 25% of the current 36 adult education and literacy providers receive a program review, which is a three-day intensive program monitoring and technical site visit by a team of program advisors in the state office. Each provider can expect to have a program review every four years provided there are no major risks or violations identified during an annual site visit, which would increase review frequency. Providers are assessed in areas including, but not limited to, Program Management and Reporting, Financials, Technology, and Collaboration. This program review process allows program advisors and the State Disabilities Project Manager to thoroughly assess program operations, observe classroom instruction, and review state and federal laws and policies. Once each program is reviewed, ADWS/AES requests a full financial audit review by the agency's state finance department.

ADWS/AES evaluates each program annually through an E&E (Effective and Efficient) calculation, currently based upon the programs' progress on the federally negotiated benchmarks in Table 4. Programs that do not meet the determined percentage of the benchmarks are provided additional technical assistance in order to prepare a performance improvement plan. Plan implementation is monitored throughout the year. Upon not meeting the requirements of E&E for three consecutive years, ADWS/AES makes a recommendation to the Arkansas Workforce Development Board as to whether or not the program should continue to be funded.

Lastly, mandatory Administrators' Meetings are held twice a year in which policies and procedures are discussed and information is disseminated. During the administrators' meeting, providers share best practices with one another as well as gain additional professional development training from staff or guest speakers.

(E) Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.

(1) Permissible activities from Section 223 (2) that the state will support will be used to expand the services of adult education in the state and may include the following from the law:

> (2) The development and implementation of technology applications, translation technology, or distance education, including professional development to support the use of instructional technology.
>
> (3) Developing content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways.
>
> (4) The development and implementation of a system to assist in the transition from adult education to postsecondary education, including linkages with postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education.
>
> (5) Activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities.
>
> (6) Identifying the curriculum frameworks and aligning rigorous content standards that—
>
> > (a) specify what adult learners should know and be able to do in the areas of reading and language arts, mathematics, and English language acquisition; and
> >
> > (b) take into consideration the following:
> >
> > > (i) State adopted academic standards.
> > >
> > > (ii) The current adult skills and literacy assessments used in the State or outlying areas.

(iii) The primary indicators of performance described in section 116 of WIOA.

(iv)Standards and academic requirements for enrollment in non-remedial, for-credit courses in postsecondary educational institutions or institutions of higher education supported by the state or outlying area.

(v) Where appropriate, the content of occupational and industry skill standards widely used by business and industry in the State or outlying area.

(7) Developing and piloting strategies for improving teacher quality and retention.

(F) Assessing Quality. ***Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under Title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA.***

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section monitors programs quarterly through a desk audit process in which measures such as average attendance hours, educational functioning level (EFL) gains across demographic groups, number of students post-tested, etc. are reported and reviewed. The desk audits also allow programs to review operational aspects of the program such as the percentage of funds expended, completion of required professional development, and completed personnel activity reports.

Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section also performs an annual site visit for each adult education and literacy program to ensure that state and federal laws and policies are followed, to review program performance, and to connect with Local Education Agency Administrators. Based upon the findings during the site visit, regional program advisors provide technical assistance to program directors and staff to ensure continuous improvement.

Additionally, approximately every four years, a team of program advisors conducts an intensive program review through which Division staff assesses each program in the following areas:

1. Program Management and Reporting
2. Financials
3. Advisory Committees
4. Personnel and Professional Development
5. Student Intake, Documentation, and Orientation
6. Program Policies
7. Instruction
8. Teaching/Classroom Observation
9. Technology
10. Recruitment/Retention

11. Collaboration
12. Facilities
13. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

The program review process allows program advisors and the State Disabilities Project Manager to thoroughly assess program operations, observe classroom instruction, and review state and federal laws and policies. Each program review is accompanied by a full financial review by the state finance department.

Once each program is reviewed, the program receives a report which indicates all findings, recommendations, and commendations. The program then develops and submits a Corrective Action Plan (CAP), if applicable, which details how each finding will be remedied. The program director and program advisor work together to ensure that each finding is corrected, at which time the program and Local Education Agency are notified.

The state office requires adult education directors to attend a State Administrators' meeting twice a year. During this time, state staff review policies and procedures, state performance, answer questions, and give providers an opportunity to share best practices.

Evaluating Professional Development

In addition to the technical assistance provided through the evaluation processes, The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section provides varied professional development through the efforts of the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC). Through the AALRC, program directors, faculty and staff have access to training in educational technology, student assessments, and assisting students with disabilities along with many other topics. The AALRC uses a state-wide assessment of professional development needs of educators to plan professional development for the field in order to improve instructional and programmatic practices.

The establishment or operation of professional development programs to improve the quality of instruction pursuant to local activities will continue to be a top priority for the state in order to increase the success of student outcomes. Training will continue for local adult education/literacy providers on the use of resources available electronically, for accessing curricula and for sharing locally produced curricula with other providers. In addition, a stronger emphasis will be placed on ensuring that materials and training will incorporate the research-based components of phonemic awareness, system phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension.

In order to promote continuous improvement of professional development activities and the impact on student learning outcomes, The Division of Workforce Services, Adult Education Section through the AALRC will include ongoing and systematic needs assessment and

evaluation processes to not only provide information about the impact of professional development, but to provide data for refining and adjusting professional development activities.

1. Participant evaluations/surveys will be collected for all professional development activities. These evaluations will reflect the response of participants to the objectives, material, presentation and the trainer providers.

2. Evaluations/surveys will be aggregated and evaluated to determine quality of training and adjustments will be made according to the results. These results will be analyzed for areas in need of improvement and changes will be made accordingly.

To support local programs and instructors, a combination of methods is used to assess the effectiveness of professional development training. Classroom observations, student educational gains of teacher participants, focus groups, and overall self-reporting tools is utilized to determine professional development effectiveness. Data from the adult education management information system is utilized to evaluate and determine if the professional development activities impact student learning outcomes. This is an area that the state continues to revisit and make modifications as needed.

The AALRC currently uses Guskey's model for the Five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation. The data from the evaluations is used to analyze the effectiveness of the professional development program and the impact on student learning outcomes.

Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (General)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan* must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA:

_____

* Sec. 102(b)(D)(iii) of WIOA

a. Input of State Rehabilitation Council

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

1. **input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and**

analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions;

The Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a citizen advisory council appointed by the Governor that partners with the Arkansas Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) to develop and to carry out the VR State Plan and ARS' goals and priorities. The SRC assists in shaping and reviewing policy, engages in strategic planning, evaluates the effectiveness of the VR Program, analyzes consumer satisfaction, and provides guidance when developing and reviewing cooperative agreements. The SRC meets quarterly and is updated on important events affecting ARS.

The SRC provided analysis and guidance on the following initiatives:

- The 2018 VR State Plan update and the 2020-2023 VR State Plan
- ARS Field Policy Manual updates
- The 2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

2. the Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and

ARS welcomes and appreciates SRC input and recommendations. The Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner attends all meetings and senior managers provide section updates at each meeting. ARS informs the SRC of state level initiatives affecting VR operations. For example, at its March 2019 meeting, the ARS Commissioner briefed the SRC about the state-level reorganization effort known as the Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019 that would place ARS within the Division of Workforce Services, the WIOA partner within Arkansas for Titles I and III programs. The SRC expressed approval of the proposed reorganization, which was signed into law on April 11, 2019. At its quarterly meeting on December 19th, 2019, the SRC reviewed the proposed 2020-2023 VR State Plan and expressed approval without comment.

3. the designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.

No input or recommendation from the SRC was rejected by ARS.

b. Request for Waiver of Statewideness.

When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

1. a local public agency will provide the non-Federal share of costs associated with the services to be provided in accordance with the waiver request;

Not applicable to ARS.

2. the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and

Not applicable to ARS.

3. requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

Not applicable to ARS.

c. Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System. Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:

1. Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;

ARS collaborates and coordinates services with federal, state, and local agencies that contribute to the vocational rehabilitation and independent living of Arkansans with disabilities. Collaborating agencies include:

- Arkansas Department of Education, Division of Learning Services, Special Education Unit – Arkansas Transition Services
- Arkansas Governor's Employment First Taskforce
- Centers for Independent Living
- Community Rehabilitation Programs
- Developmental Disability Providers
- DHS - Division of Adult, Aging and Behavioral Health Services, Working Disabled Medicaid Program, and Division of Developmental Disabilities Services.
- Supported Employment Vendors
- Social Security Administration Ticket to Work
- Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission

2. State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

ARS is the lead agency for the Arkansas Assistive Technology (AT) program. AT initiatives supported through the Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN) program include device demonstration, loan, and reutilization activities. ARS also has administrative responsibility for the Alternative Financing

Program (AFP) that provides low interest rate, extended term loans for the purchase of assistive technology.

3. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture;

ARS has no cooperative agreements with programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture.

4. Noneducational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and

ARS maintains an active presence on numerous councils and committees, including:

- Arkansas Workforce Development Boards (state and local)
- Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council
- SoundStARt
- The Arkansas Independent Living Council
- The Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities
- Arkansas Trauma Rehabilitation Program
- Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition
- Disability:IN – Arkansas

5. State use contracting programs.

ARS has no state use contracting programs.

d. Coordination with Education Officials. Describe:

1. DSU's plans

The designated State unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

A pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) counselor and a Transition counselor are assigned to high schools in the state. Counselors provide direct services to students in the school setting under the core service categories for Pre-ETS, and they provide counseling and guidance

on moving into transition services, fully affording students both knowledge and the means to enter into the vocational rehabilitation program.

In order for Pre-ETS to be provided in the school setting, an application for services must be completed by the entity proposing to provide services. The application must be reviewed and approved by a selection committee. Next, an agreement to operate within the school system is developed and approved by all parties. Pre-ETS require monthly reporting by the vendor, prior approval of the curriculum, and monitoring by ARS and the Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) with collaboration and input from the local school officials.

Additionally, ARS has developed a plan to partner with school systems to provide Opportunities for Work-Based Learning (OWL). School systems complete proposals to provide services, which delineate Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and WIOA responsibilities. The partnership includes measurable criteria, a reporting structure, and a monitoring guideline.

The following are the responsibilities of ARS and DSB regarding transition planning and vocational rehabilitation services for eligible youth:

1. Designate vocational rehabilitation personnel to be responsible for the provision of technical assistance, consultation, and the development of statewide program strategies and procedures applicable for youth with disabilities and those eligible for 504 plans.
2. Facilitate the identification of youth with disabilities who may benefit from vocational rehabilitation services as early as possible, but no later than the academic year in which the student turns 16.
3. Make relevant data available about eligibility for vocational rehabilitation services and track information about employment outcomes for youth with disabilities.
4. Assign vocational rehabilitation counseling personnel to develop relationships with LEAs to formalize collaborative approaches to student outreach and transition planning and referral development and tracking.
5. Make LEA personnel, students, and their families aware of the vocational rehabilitation program, including VR eligibility requirements (in accordance with 34 CFR 361.42), and the application procedures and scope of services (in accordance with 34 CFR 361.48) that are provided to all eligible or potentially eligible individuals.
6. Provide the core Pre-ETS to eligible and potentially eligible students with signed parent/guardian consent.

2. **Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:**

A. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;

ARS has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit (ADE SEU) for students in public schools. The parties agree to participate in technical assistance and in-service training to assist educational agencies in planning and coordinating services to ensure eligible individuals receive timely and appropriate supports and services. ARS Transition policy requires counselors to engage school personnel to generate student referrals and to develop an IPE for each student determined eligible. ADE is financially responsible for the delivery and coordination of secondary education as set forth through IDEA. ARS is responsible for coordinating Pre-ETS, taking applications, determining eligibility, and providing vocational rehabilitation services for individuals determined eligible for transition services.

ARS participates in the state level Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP). AITP is a taskforce made up of representatives of state agencies, including ARS, DSB, ADE SEU – Arkansas Transition Services, the Arkansas Workforce Development Board, DHS-Division of Adult, Aging and Behavioral Health Services, and parent advocates.

Consultation and Technical Assistance

In order to improve the transition of students with disabilities from school to postsecondary education and employment, ARS and DSB support the following transition services to vocational rehabilitation personnel, the ADE SEU, and the local education agencies by:

1. Providing instruction to vocational rehabilitation counselors, school transition personnel, and other persons supporting students with disabilities through group conferences, instructional materials and guidelines, reporting forms, webinar training, and telephone/email communications.
2. Coordinating public speaking and training activities on transition services provided by local education agencies under IDEA.
3. Developing model transition demonstration projects and establishing or supporting partnerships involving the local education agencies to achieve the goals of improved transition outcomes.

4. Expanding Pre-ETS in schools throughout the State and at Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI).

ARS, LEAs, ADE, and VR service providers receive intensive technical assistance and professional development from the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) on topics like implementing evidence-based practices and preparing graduates for success in postsecondary education and employment.

B. transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;

ARS provides eligibility determination according to ARS policy, and consultation and technical assistance to educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services when requested and appropriate. ARS counselors meet with special education teachers during the school year and provide information to schools about VR services, and ensure schools have appropriate forms and information for students to apply for services. ARS works with schools to assist the student with significant disabilities in identifying, selecting, and pursuing appropriate career objectives.

Partner high schools agree to work cooperatively with ARS to provide appropriate transition services to students to equip them for entry into the workforce, postsecondary education or training, and independent living. Schools carry out all required transition planning provisions mandated by the IDEA and state regulations, conduct regular staff development training regarding transition requirements and include ARS counselors in the training when appropriate, provide referrals to counselors, provide private space for counselors to meet with students, include counselors in students Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings with authorization by parents or guardians and student knowledge, communicate regularly with counselors, and provide copies of school records.

ARS provides accommodations as needed to aid in successful completion of the vocational education program for VR eligible youth in accordance with their respective IPEs, unless these accommodations are the responsibility of the LEA pursuant to Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) regulations. ARS provides technical assistance to local education agencies to ensure all youth and students have equal educational opportunities to participate in programs, activities, and job opportunities, and to analyze, identify, and change policies and activities that impede the achievement of equal opportunities for all individuals.

C. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;

The Interagency Agreement between the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit – Arkansas Transition Services, Division of Career and Technical Education, and ARS defines each party's responsibilities with regard to ensuring FAPE for eligible students, ages 16-21, and younger when appropriate, which are identified as having a disability in accordance with IDEA.

ADE SEU, ARS, and DSB jointly agree to the following:

1. The ADE SEU is the agency responsible for ensuring that FAPE is made available to eligible students pursuant to IDEA (20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(1).
2. School districts have the primary planning, programmatic, and financial responsibilities for the provision of education transition services and related services for students as a component of FAPE and these services are provided to eligible students with disabilities, ages 16 to 21, and younger when determined appropriate through the implementation of the IEP. The parties acknowledge ADE SEU has general supervisory responsibility over the educational program of any public agency providing FAPE to individuals with disabilities, ages birth to 21, as defined in state and federal statutes.
3. The distinction between transition and related services that are the planning, programmatic, and financial responsibility of the school district is determined based on a delineation of the customary services the school provides under IDEA Part B. These distinctions describe the activities, supports, and funding ARS provides to support Pre-ETS in partner school settings or during the school day.
4. ARS is financially responsible for providing Pre-ETS to students with disabilities who qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and for providing vocational rehabilitation, job training, and placement services. They work cooperatively to ensure individuals with disabilities have access to the training and necessary supports to transition successfully from secondary school to postsecondary activities, including but not limited to vocation training and employment, and completing an IPE before leaving the school setting. ARS agrees the student and/or designated party has choice in the development of the IPE.

D. procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

ARS counselors attend IEP and transition planning meetings, career fairs, back to school nights, group orientations, and transition fairs, and make presentations to schools and families throughout the year with partner agencies like Arkansas Transition Services, Department of Youth Services, Department of Human Services, Adult Education, Workforce Services and the Division of Services for the Blind. ARS collaborates with partner agencies through shared recruiting and the application processes for special programs outreach. These outreach efforts provide creative programs like the Youth Leadership Forum, the Inclusion Film Camp, the Transition Employment Program, and the Opportunities for Work-Based Learning Program in order to identify students and get them interested in work and in participating in the full array of transition services. Additionally, ARS goes directly to educational settings in Department of Youth Services facilities, where youth who are at-risk are identified and provided Pre-ETS, as well as given an opportunity to apply for full vocational rehabilitation services. ARS also provides brochures and introductory meetings to explain what Project SEARCH can offer youth seeking permanent employment outcomes.

ARS works directly with the schools and community partners to provide education on Pre-ETS and Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.

Transition stakeholders and partners participate in NTACT's sponsored capacity building activities, such as The Capacity Building Institute and related regional and/or national meetings. Arkansas utilizes a state implementation team to support personnel development opportunities for Arkansas educators and service providers. The implementation team participates in data review, problem solving, and strategic planning that informs personnel development opportunities.

e. Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations. Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

ARS requires potential vendors to complete an application process and provide required credentialing to become an approved vendor. ARS contracts with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) utilizing Purchased Service Agreements. All vendors are required to meet standards to ensure VR clients achieve acceptable employment outcomes, and vendors are compensated based on performance outcomes.

f. Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services. Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify

and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

ARS maintains cooperative agreements/contracts with private non-profit and for-profit CRPs, which define the requirements for the provision of supported employment (SE) services and extended services. The cooperative agreements/contracts include commitments by the CRP to fund extended services for a period of time as needed by the client and the employer for successful employment.

ARS maintains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of Human Services - Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) in which DDS agrees to pay for extended services for clients who receive waiver services after ARS has closed the case as successfully employed.

g. Coordination with Employers. Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

1. VR services; and

The Business Engagement Unit (BEU) is responsible for employer outreach. The BEU builds relationships with employers to identify and provide solutions to assist businesses in overcoming the challenges of recruiting, retaining, and developing talent, and provides disability awareness and sensitivity training. The BEU provides counselors with information about labor market, job vacancies, skills necessary to obtain jobs in high demand occupations, and earning potential and advancement opportunities in various occupations to increase opportunities for achieving competitive integrated employment.

ARS works with Career Workforce and Local Workforce Boards to identify potential skill deficits that may act as barriers to employment and identifies the most appropriate training to assist clients in obtaining employment.

ARS provides presentations, evaluation, expertise, and assistance to counselors, their clients, employers, and employees with disabilities in the provision of accommodations to facilitate successful vocational outcomes through the AT@Work and Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs.

2. transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

ARS provides and/or procures transition services including Pre-ETS for students and youth with disabilities through community rehabilitation programs that place students into paid work experiences with a variety of employers throughout the state or directly with employers, depending on the vocational interests of the student or youth. Employers facilitate opportunities in group settings and individually with job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, and workplace readiness training. Employers are also contracted to provide on-the-job training experiences, job placement, supported employment and customized employment opportunities. ARS provides assistive technology assessments and training to assist students transitioning from school to postsecondary or to vocational training or to work.

h. Interagency Cooperation. Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

1. **the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;**

The Arkansas Department of Human Services operates the State Medicaid program. ARS, the State Medicaid program, and other agencies have in place an interagency agreement that delineates roles and responsibilities related to sequential funding for combined waiver programs for individuals participating in employment related activities under WIOA. ARS, the State Medicaid program, and the other agencies collaborate on the Arkansas' Employment First and State Agency Model Employer initiatives.

2. the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and

The Department of Human Services – Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS) is responsible for providing services to individuals with developmental disabilities. ARS, DDS, and other involved agencies collaborate on Arkansas' Employment First and State Agency Model Employer initiatives. ARS, DDS, and the other involved agencies have in place an interagency agreement that delineates roles and responsibilities related to sequential funding for combined waiver programs for individuals participating in employment related activities under WIOA.

3. the State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

The Department of Human Services – Division of Adult, Aging and Behavioral Health Services (DAABHS) is responsible for providing mental health services. ARS, DAABHS, and other

involved agencies have in place an interagency agreement that delineates roles and responsibilities related to sequential funding for combined waiver programs for individuals participating in employment related activities under WIOA. ARS, DAABHS and other involved agencies collaborate on Arkansas' Employment First and State Agency Model Employer initiatives.

i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development. Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

1. Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

A. Qualified Personnel Needs. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

i. the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

ARS currently is serving 14,662 clients and employs a total of 316 staff.

Access and Accommodation – (Total 8)
Administration – 2
Evaluation – 4
Administrative Support – 1
Extra Help – 1

ACTI – (Total 65)
Administration – 7
Counseling – 6
Training – 17
Evaluation (RIDAC and LEC) – 14
Other (Maintenance, Engineering, Security Skilled Trade, Equipment Tech) – 11
Administrative Support – 5
Extra Help – 5

Field Services – (Total 186)
Managers – 13
Counselors – 91

BERs – 11
Administrative Support – 68
Extra Help – 3

Central Office – (Total 57)
Commissioner's Office – 4
Field Administration – 5
PPD&E – 11
IT – 2
Finance – 12
Communication – 3
HR – 7
Administrative Support – 8
Extra Help – 5

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

Access and Accommodation – (Total 12)
Administration – 4
Evaluation – 6
Administrative Support – 1
Extra Help – 1

ACTI – (Total 78)
Administration – 9
Counseling – 7
Training – 22
Evaluation (RIDAC and LEC) – 16
Other (Maintenance, Engineering, Security Skilled Trade, Equipment Tech) – 12
Administrative Support – 7
Extra Help – 5

Field Services – (Total 204)
Managers – 13
Counselors – 95
BERs – 13
Administrative Support – 80
Extra Help – 3

Central Office – (Total 69)
Commissioner's Office – 4
Field Administration – 7
PPD&E – 11
IT – 2
Finance – 13
Communication – 4
HR – 9
Administrative Support – 8
Extra Help – 10

iii. projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Access and Accommodation – (Total 12)
Administration – 4
Evaluation – 6
Administrative Support – 1
Extra Help – 1

ACTI – (Total 78)
Administration – 9
Counseling – 7
Training – 22
Evaluation (RIDAC and LEC) – 16
Other (Maintenance, Engineering, Security Skilled Trade, Equipment Tech) – 12
Administrative Support – 7
Extra Help – 5

Field Services – (Total 204)
Managers – 13
Counselors – 95
BERs – 13
Administrative Support – 80
Extra Help – 3

Central Office – (Total 69)
Commissioner's Office – 4

Field Administration – 7
PPD&E – 11
IT – 2
Finance – 13
Communication – 4
HR – 9
Administrative Support – 8
Extra Help – 10

B. Personnel Development. Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

i. a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;

Currently, the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville and the University of Arkansas – Little Rock provide degrees in rehabilitation counseling. ARS monitors student enrollment in vocational rehabilitation and related programs at each institution by category, the number of students currently enrolled, the number of students graduating the previous year, and certification or licensure. ARS works with the institutions to provide internship and practicum opportunities and notifies the universities when job openings become available.

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

- University of Arkansas – Fayetteville MRC — 23 (FT) and 3 (PT)
- University of Arkansas – Little Rock MRC — 78 (FT) and 103 (PT)

iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

- University of Arkansas – Fayetteville MRC — 17 (FT) and 3 (PT)
- University of Arkansas – Little Rock MRC — 29 (No distinction between FT/PT)

2. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel. Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare,

and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

ARS focuses on the successful recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified personnel, and maintains a working relationship with colleges, universities, and higher education programs within the state. ARS provides information about agency benefits such as tuition assistance and loan forgiveness to partner universities that have vocational rehabilitation programs.

ARS maintains staff liaisons with the university programs at the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville, the University of Arkansas – Little Rock, the University of Arkansas – Pine Bluff, and Arkansas Tech University, and meets quarterly with the universities to provide vocational rehabilitation field updates, and to give practitioner input.

The agency actively recruits minorities and students with disabilities and encourages students to join professional rehabilitation organizations such as the National Rehabilitation Association and the National Association of Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns. These rehabilitation professional organizations provide scholarship opportunities to individuals, including minorities, who major in the field of rehabilitation.

ARS partners in job fairs, maintains a positive relationship with the community and its representatives, and utilizes online recruitment efforts.

ARS provides staff training, especially to those providing direct services to clients. Professional qualifications for counselors are monitored to ensure current certification and to track educational progress for those achieving certification.

3. Personnel Standards. Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and 34 CFR 361.18(c) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

A. standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

The State of Arkansas has no established standards that apply to the VR counselor position. However, ARS has a goal for all rehabilitation counseling positions to meet the master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling with Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) standard. The agency seeks to hire MRC/CRC counselors as a first priority. In situations where the agency is unable to recruit and hire an MRC/CRC, ARS has a minimum hiring standard of a master’s or

doctoral degree in a field of study related to vocational rehabilitation counseling or a baccalaureate degree in a field of study reasonably related to vocational rehabilitation plus a minimum of one year of demonstrated work or service experience in a vocational rehabilitation setting.

Individuals employed as counselors who have not achieved the MRC/CRC designation or standard are provided ongoing training to prepare for the CRC and/or MRC.

B. the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The Deputy Chief of Field Services reviews curriculum for Rehabilitation Counseling higher education programs and provides input on current educational needs for incoming counselors.

The ARS Commissioner is a member of the WIOA Board, the Chief of Field Services is a member of the executive WIOA Committee, and rehab area managers are members of the local workforce boards. These individuals provide updates on labor force initiatives at both the state and local levels to agency personnel. They also have the responsibility of educating other board members about the needs of individuals with disabilities.

4. Staff Development. Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

A. a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

Staff is provided training opportunities through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association Training Conference, Special Topics Training, Administrative Assistants Training Conference, online training, and webinars. Training is also available through the state Interagency Training Agency, the University of Arkansas CURRENTS program, CRC training, CEU training for purposes of certification or licensure in the professions, and training provided internally by the agency in case management and policy and procedures compliance.

Employees have opportunities to complete the Facilitating Career Development program through the National Career Development Association, which provides relevant skills and knowledge to assist clients in planning careers and obtaining meaningful work.

Access and Accommodations works with counselors in collaboration with ICAN and community partners to provide training about assistive technology and related programs and services available to clients to assist in the home, at work, or in school.

B. procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

While findings from the 2019 CSNA indicated the leadership team is very well-trained and boasts an excellent core group of field counselors, there is a need for training throughout the organization, but in particular for counselors in the areas of serious mental health issues and autism. The survey team recommended ARS give a higher level of concentration to training needs and use survey methods to identify training needs for each employee level. The CSNA also indicated employees feel the agency leadership could do a better job of communicating with rank and file staff. Staff was often unaware of changes even when those changes affected their work directly.

The agency enables employees to attend classes, seminars, and conferences, and disseminates information through newsletters, in-service training, workshops, and conferences. The field program conducts monthly area meetings. Topics include the latest techniques for providing services to clients, updates on statewide performance measures, and guidance on other WIOA initiatives.

5. Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs. Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

ARS provides access and contracts as needed to employ personnel who communicate in the native languages of applicants and clients with limited English-speaking ability. ARS also provides special communication modes such as interpreters, captioned videos, specialized telecommunications services, and materials for individuals who are deaf and deaf-blind, as well as other specialized media systems for individuals with disabilities. Interpreters are provided for the deaf or hearing impaired. Sign language skills are included as a minimum qualification for positions providing services to persons who are deaf or hearing impaired.

6. Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

ARS staff participates in state, regional, and national transition meetings and conferences. ARS Field Program staff serves on the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP) Team and attends the annual National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) Conference. In addition, they help plan, coordinate, and facilitate the bi-annual State Transition Summit, and help lead the planning and coordination of local transition fairs and parent's nights with assistance from rehab area managers and local VR counselors. AITP promotes personnel development through online training for teachers, students, and families, and through an annual Summer Agency Connection, which includes ARS rehab area managers, ACTI, Access and Accommodations personnel, and representatives from high schools. AITP maintains a directory of services provided by ARS and other stakeholders.

j. Statewide Assessment

1. Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:

A. with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

The most recent Arkansas Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment was completed in April 2019. ARS contracted with the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville who worked collaboratively with the State Rehabilitation Council, key stakeholders, and ARS to survey the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Arkansas. Multiple data gathering strategies were used including focus group discussions with clients and participants from ARS, SRC, key stakeholders, vendors, employers, and ACTI administrators and staff, and structured surveys were sent to all ARS counselors, a random sample of clients, employers, and ARS leadership.

Findings

Individuals with the most significant disabilities were the largest underserved group, and supported employment and transition services were consistently listed as most needed services.

Recommendations

- ARS should continue to work across departments and agencies to increase funding for the provision of supported employment and transition services.
- ARS should increase training for CRPs, specifically to address the fear families have about the loss of benefits when individuals achieve competitive integrated employment.

- ARS should explore ways for CRPs to play a more vital role in providing supported employment services across the state.

B. who are minorities;

Findings

Hispanic/Latino clients who do not speak English as a first language were identified as needing interpreters provided by ARS, in order to ensure that counselor-client communications are effective.

Recommendation

- ARS must make stronger efforts to locate interpreters who will be available for applicants who do not use English as their primary language.

C. who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

Findings

Data collected through focus groups as well as online surveys revealed that racial and ethnic minorities experienced barriers when seeking VR services. Certain geographic areas were considered underserved, including the Delta Region counties, the Southeast quadrant of the state, and some counties in Northeast Arkansas.

Recommendations

- ARS must pursue the expansion of services to geographically underserved areas of the state as well as the underserved populations.
- ARS must expand its outreach to these populations to overcome a lack of trust in state government, which is common in the underserved geographic regions.

Findings regarding Center for Independent Living

Arkansas' Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are required to provide five core services: peer support, information and referral, individual and systems advocacy, independent living skills training, and transition. There are four CILs operating in the state located in Fayetteville (SOURCES), Little Rock (Mainstream Living), Whitehall (Delta Resources), and Hot Springs

(SAILS). CILS work hard to provide outreach and to serve individuals from outlying areas who are most in need, but they only cover 25 of the 75 counties in Arkansas.

The CILs work cooperatively and maintain courteous relationships but have very few collaborative programs. The CILs advocate strongly for their clients; however, there is little intentional integration between CILs and the VR system. For example, counselors were unaware that one Center provides transition services in public schools in their service area, and both counselors and rehab area managers were unaware that SOURCES manages the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) grant and employs five Community Work Incentive Coordinators throughout the state to provide benefits counseling.

The CILs provide excellent services and embrace the philosophy people with disabilities are the experts on their needs, and therefore, they must take the initiative, individually and collectively, in designing and promoting better solutions, and must organize themselves to work together for those solutions. To fully live in this philosophy, Arkansas' CILs must work more closely together to advocate for expanded IL services in Arkansas.

Recommendations

- CILs should work with the VR system and specifically with ARS to become a fully integrated and intentional partner with the agency. There are a number of valuable services provided by the CILs not fully understood by the agency; when there is understanding and collaboration, it is too often centered with senior management and is not known or understood by the rank and file counselors and staff across the state.
- A CIL representative should be a member of the State Rehabilitation Council. It is not enough to have a SILC representative on the council, since the CILs and SILC are separate and distinct entities.
- CILs should work closely with ARS and act as advocates for additional funding to operationalize a fifth CIL in the state. It is not acceptable to have the majority of Arkansas' counties located outside of a CIL service area.

D. who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and

Findings

ARS has taken a leadership role in developing and maintaining partnerships with WIOA partners. The creation and ongoing review of the WIOA state plan is one example of the

collaboration and cooperation among the partners. However, the most frequently stated concern with the Workforce/ARS partnership revolves around the "no wrong door" concept, which hinges on the development of a common intake system. Workforce applicants with disabilities, who are transferred to co-located ARS counselors, provide duplicative information to initiate the ARS application, since the two agencies have not developed a common intake system. The ARS IT staff continue to work for a better system.

Recommendations

- ARS leadership should continue to take a leadership role in the WIOA partnership efforts.
- ARS should push for the development of a shared database to eliminate the significant workload added to ARS counselors and support staff to duplicate information already provided by the consumer to a WIOA partner.

E. who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.

Findings

ARS provides transition and Pre-ETS services across the state and meets the WIOA requirement to utilize at least 15% of the state's VR funding to provide Pre-ETS to support youth with disabilities in transition from secondary school to postsecondary school and employment. ARS recruits and contracts with CRPs and willing public-school districts.

Recommendations

ARS must take a leadership role in bringing Transition partners fully on board.

2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and

Findings

It has taken several years for Community Rehabilitation Programs in Arkansas to accept and embrace the need to meet federal and state guidelines as outlined in Section 511 of the Rehabilitation Act; however, they now are working to become compliant by providing access to

mandated career counseling and information and referral services to their program participants, and by working with the ARS monitoring unit.
If ARS is to successfully meet the needs of individuals who have significant disabilities throughout the state, the network of CRPs will be critical partners. The agency has done a good job of communicating the new requirements and of setting deadlines for their implementation, but this is just the first step in the process. Initiating the second step in the transformation of the CRP network is no less important to the provision of needed services. It is imperative for ARS to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and support within the CRP network.

Recommendations

- ARS and representatives from the CRPs should meet and work together to create a path forward for these programs. Potential service additions and changes must meet the expanding needs of Arkansas' citizens with disabilities as defined by ARS, while providing an expanded array of services and funding options for CRPs. Opportunities for CRPs include:
- Expanded Supported Employment services for individuals with significant disabilities. ARS can assume a more active role in the development of additional funding sources for initial Supported Employment services as well as long-term supports when needed. Possible partnerships with DDS should be sought.
- Expanded School to Work Transition and Pre-ETS opportunities. ARS' challenge is to explore ways to utilize CRPs to expand these services. One example is for CRPs to partner in the OWL program.
- Partnering with ACTI to provide training and certification programs in local communities. ACTI staff would be responsible for maintaining certifications for existing programs, as well as expanding those offerings as resources warrant, and for monitoring the training services provided in the communities. CRP staff could provide the hands-on, day-to-day supports to help clients master the training ACTI provides.
- Additional training programs for CRP staff. ARS should work with CRPs to identify specific training needs and then develop and make available training presentations in affordable and accessible formats in local communities.

Findings regarding Arkansas Career Training Institute

ACTI has a dedicated staff who have worked hard to seek and earn national certifications for their program offerings. ACTI leadership has actively explored apprenticeship opportunities for individuals with disabilities. In addition, ACTI staff have established and provided innovative programs for transition-aged youth including the Transition Employment Program (TEP). This comprehensive pre-employment training service provides Arkansas high school students with

disabilities who have completed the 11th grade with job exploration counseling, work-based learning opportunities, counseling on postsecondary opportunities, and instruction in self-advocacy. In just a few short years, the enrollment in the TEP has grown and has proven to be an excellent tool for motivating students to think more broadly about their options after high school.

However, three major downsides to operating ACTI under a twenty-four hour, residential model are: the distance clients have to travel from most areas of the state to attend ACTI makes the program inaccessible for some; the long waiting periods for acceptance and enrollment at ACTI causes many potential referrals out of contention to drop prior to having their application considered; and the perception remains in the local communities that ACTI does not accept referrals who have significant disabilities.

An additional concern relates to fiscal issues. ACTI's annual budget for 2018 was $11,142,101, which is approximately one-third of the total ARS services budget. During 2018 only 249 individuals were served, with 55 designated as "successful completers." The cost per individual served is $44,587 per year.

Recommendations

- ARS should, as soon as is practical, cease to operate ACTI as a residential program to which selected individuals are referred, and adopt a different business model to provide an array of supports to individuals throughout the state that is fiscally sustainable.
- ACTI should be transformed from a residential program housing a variety of training programs in one central location, to a team of experts facilitating training and credentialing programs across the state. This "hub and spoke" model would retain the core group of excellent training staff and credentialing experts who form the leadership of ACTI. By establishing the "hub and spoke" model, ACTI would provide an effective response to the three major negative viewpoints cited in this study. First, since these programs would be offered closer to home, individuals will no longer be forced to travel long distances and live in a residential setting to participate in ACTI certification programs. Second, the long waiting periods for acceptance and enrollment in ACTI programs would be eliminated. There should be an exponential increase in the number of individuals served by these certification programs through partnerships with the network of CRPs, thereby reducing the waiting time for enrollment. Finally, the addition of hands-on support from well-trained CRP staffers to provide assistance to individuals enrolled in the local programs would make completion and certification accessible to individuals with more significant disabilities.

- ACTI should seek out and develop partnerships with existing CRPs throughout the state to create specific training programs similar to those currently being offered at the residential facility. ACTI community-based training programs could be implemented solely by the CRPs or in conjunction with existing two-year colleges. In many cases, programs which parallel ACTI training programs already exist in the two-year colleges as certification programs and are available for the non-disabled population. By utilizing CRP staff trained and monitored by ACTI staff, individuals who have disabilities would have the opportunity to complete the existing courses and receive certifications. ACTI staff would act as liaisons to assist CRPs in establishing the training programs, and would monitor for quality, essentially acting as the licensing and certification entity for partner CRPs.
- ACTI should continue to develop and expand ancillary programs like TEP, and aggressively pursue apprenticeship programs that could be incorporated into the CRP partnership model.

3. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Findings

ARS has worked diligently to provide transition and Pre-ETS services across the state, and has met the WIOA requirement that at least 15% of the state's vocational rehabilitation funding be used to provide Pre-ETS to support youth with disabilities in transition from secondary school to postsecondary school and employment. ARS management and field staff have worked tirelessly to recruit CRPs and willing public-school districts with whom to contract in order to meet the requirement. However, to meet the 15% benchmark quickly, ARS allowed some Pre-ETS providers to pay students for "work experience" placements for as much as 20 hours per week. While this incentive worked well in terms of recruiting employers and providers, based on the estimated 17,700 individuals with disabilities who received supports in 2018 is not sustainable for the long term unless the total number of individuals served is reduced.

Recommendations

- ARS leadership, in consultation with providers and school personnel, should set a lower number of hours for work experience. ARS must make some significant changes in order to continue an acceptable level of services. ARS partners, CRPs and school districts, have allowed some students to work as much as 20 hours per week, with ARS paying those wages, which is not sustainable, nor in line with

best practices. The purpose of the Pre-ETS program is to provide paid work experience. It is not to create long term jobs for these students. A series of work site experiences, averaging eight hours per week, for an expanded number of students, would provide the desired workplace exposure. Adjustments must be made to the structure of the program to ensure its sustainability, and the sustainability and viability of the existing VR program.

- ARS must take a leadership role in bringing Transition partners fully on board.
- ARS should continue to negotiate with public schools and the Department of Education to increase the portion of transition costs paid through IDEA.

k. Annual Estimates. Describe:

1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services;

In Arkansas, out of a total of 1,762,496 non-institutionalized population aged 18 to 64, there are 285,023 individuals with disabilities. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey.

2. The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:

A. The VR Program;
ARS estimates 16,700 eligible individuals with disabilities will receive vocational rehabilitation services and 3,000 youth will receive pre-employment transition services.

B. The Supported Employment Program; and

ARS estimates 375 eligible individuals with disabilities will receive supported employment services.

C. each priority category, if under an order of selection;

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is not under an Order of Selection.

3. The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is not under an Order of Selection.

4. The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services is $13.9 million for VR services and $6.7 million for pre-employment transition services. Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is not under an Order of Selection.

l. State Goals and Priorities. The designated State unit must:

1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

ARS and the State Rehabilitation Council developed and agreed upon goals and priorities based on the 2019 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

2. Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.

The purpose of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is to assist Arkansans with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment. The goals and priorities identified to support this purpose are:

Goal 1: ARS will meet performance accountability measures as outlined in WIOA.

Priorities:

- ARS will monitor established performance accountability measures.
- ARS will provide career counseling to 14(c) program participants to meet Section 511 requirements.
- ARS will strengthen data verification procedures.

Goal 2: ARS will provide pre-employment transition and transition services as outlined in WIOA.

Priorities

- ARS will expand and improve Pre-ETS.
- ARS will provide pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) and ensure students with employment and training goals are moved into Vocational Rehabilitation prior to the second semester of the senior year of high school.
- ARS will increase the number of Transition students that enter employment by having students work-ready upon graduation from high school or postsecondary training.

Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities.

Priorities:

- ARS will focus on public and private sector employers and increase business and industry awareness of ARS' services.
- ARS will develop and strengthen partnerships with business, workforce development partners, economic development agencies, and community organizations to meet the needs of existing and new business customers.
- ARS will increase services provided to public and private sector employers by leveraging Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs to assist employers in keeping the employees with disabilities on the job.

Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priorities:

- ARS will determine effective methods to serve the underserved/unserved populations.
- ARS will strengthen relationships with WIOA partners and business and industry.
- ARS will improve service delivery to job seekers and businesses by consistently providing services that meet individual needs.
- Staff will receive comprehensive training to improve service delivery.
- ARS will ensure clients have access to assistive technology services by evaluating the need for assistive technology throughout the rehabilitation process, and by making the proper referrals when assistive technology is appropriate.

Goal 5: ARS will increase the utilization of Community Rehabilitation and Supported Employment providers to achieve employment outcomes.
Priorities:

- ARS will increase the effectiveness of current and new external Employment/Supported Employment providers.
- ARS will expand the availability of community employment providers and partner services that meet the needs of Arkansans with disabilities, including those requiring supported employment.
- ARS will transform ACTI from a residential program to a new service delivery model.

3. Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:

A. The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;

Using data from the 2019 CSNA, ARS and the SRC developed the goals and priorities listed in Section L.2 above.

B. the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and

The performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA are addressed in Goal 1: ARS will meet performance requirements, under the priorities: ARS will monitor established performance accountability measures, and ARS will strengthen data verification procedures.

C. other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

Input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council contributed to the development of Goals and Priorities as outlined previously. ARS' existing strategic plan was also utilized.

m. Order of Selection. Describe:

1. Whether the designated State unit will implement an order of selection. If so, describe:

A. The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.

ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection. However, in the event that available vocational rehabilitation funding cannot support the full range of services for all eligible individuals, the ARS Commissioner will initiate a structured process to move to an Order of Selection. This process will include public participation and comment, notification to the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and input from the State Rehabilitation Council.

An Order of Selection requires that priority be given to individuals with the most significant disabilities in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. Therefore, after determining eligibility, ARS counselors will determine the client's priority for services based on the significance of the client's disability using the categories defined below.

Priority Category I – Most Significantly Disabled
An individual with a most significant disability is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment that seriously limits at least four functional capacity areas (mobility, communication, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome, and whose vocational rehabilitation is expected to require multiple services over an extended period of time.

Priority Category II – Significantly Disabled
An individual with a significant disability is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment that seriously limits three functional capacity areas (mobility, communication, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome and whose vocational rehabilitation is expected to require multiple services over an extended period of time.

Priority Category III – Non-Significantly Disabled
An individual with a non-significant disability is defined as one who has a physical or mental impairment that seriously limits one or two functional capacity areas (mobility, communication, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome.

If an Order of Selection becomes necessary, ARS anticipates that individuals who are receiving services under Individualized Plans for Employment at the time the Order is implemented will continue to receive services through closure of their cases.

B. The justification for the order.

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

C. The service and outcome goals.

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

D. The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

E. How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities.

Because ARS does not currently follow an Order of Selection, this subsection does not apply.

2. If the designated State unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

If an Order of Selection becomes necessary, ARS anticipates serving all eligible individuals requiring specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

n. Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds.

1. Specify the State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.
ARS addresses the provision of supported employment services in Goal 5: ARS will increase the utilization of Community Rehabilitation and Supported Employment providers to achieve employment outcomes.

Priority – ARS will increase the effectiveness of current and new external Employment/Supported Employment providers.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Target individuals with the most significant disabilities to provide customized employment, supported employment, and other individualized services.
- Collaborate with qualified vendors, community partners, and employers to expand supported employment initiatives.
- Continue to partner with other state agencies to provide collaborative services to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

Priority – ARS will expand the availability of community employment providers and partner services that meet the needs of Arkansans with disabilities, including those requiring supported employment.

Strategies - ARS will:

- Develop a community employment advisory committee.
- Develop partnership resources with other state agencies, provider associations and advocacy organizations to expand employment opportunities, transportation access, funding for extended services, and/or wrap around services for individuals not on Medicaid waiver.

2. Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including:

A. the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and

ARS sets aside 50 percent of supportive employment funds specifically for youth programs that support competitive integrated employment.

B. how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Determine methods for funding extended services for youth with disabilities not to exceed four years through the Employment First Vendors (CRPs, SE providers, and other external employment).
- Develop new service components or agreements with partners of state agencies for sequential funding of extended services to assure youth with disabilities have successful employment opportunities.
- Provide education and instruction of WIOA expectations to providers and will establish Memorandums of Understanding or contract services to providers to initiate services to potentially eligible clients.

o. State's Strategies. Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

1. The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

ARS addresses the methods to be used to expand/improve services in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will determine effective methods to serve the underserved/unserved populations.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Work with WIOA partners to establish a common intake process that streamlines client application for services across partner programs.
- Collaborate with WIOA partners' field staff statewide to provide information and awareness about vocational rehabilitation services.

- Host partners' training conferences to provide education and resources available for potential clients.
- Work with local workforce boards to identify local in demand occupations.
- Work with business and industry to establish on-the-job training, work-based learning opportunities, and apprenticeships.

2. How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.

Field Services staff receives training to determine whether a client would benefit from the provision of assistive technology services and devices at each stage of the rehabilitation process. As appropriate, counselors refer clients to ARS' Assistive Technology at Work (AT@Work) and Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs for assessment and consultation regarding the need for assistive technology as it relates to the achievement of their vocational goals. Counselors are also aware of services addressing the Arkansas Assistive Technology Act of 1998 offered by ICAN and the associated AFP.

ARS addresses the provision of assistive technology services for individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will ensure clients have access to assistive technology services by evaluating the need for assistive technology throughout the rehabilitation process and make the proper referrals when assistive technology is appropriate.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Make the assistive technology/AT@Work referral available in the CMS at the time of intake, plan development, placement, and post-employment checks.
- Train staff on the assistive technology services available to clients.
- Make application forms for various community service programs dealing with assistive technology available in the CMS.

ARS also addresses this provision in Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities.

Priority – ARS will increase services provided to public and private sector employers by leveraging Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) programs to assist employers in keeping employees with disabilities on the job.
Strategies – ARS will:

- Increase the overall number of SAW/RTW and Job Retention clients.
- Increase the number of employer referrals for SAW/RTW services.
- Incorporate SAW/RTW services when business engagement staff interacts with businesses.

3. The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

ARS will address outreach procedures in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will determine effective methods to serve the underserved/unserved populations.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Partner with local Hispanic and Marshallese communities to increase awareness and availability of services.
- Collaborate with other partners to more effectively reach the deaf/hard of hearing community.
- Partner with the Centers for Independent Living to provide information about ARS services in the geographically underserved areas.

4. The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).

ARS addresses pre-employment transition services in Goal 2: ARS will provide pre-employment transition and transition services as outlined in WIOA.

Priority – ARS will expand and improve Pre-ETS.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Create internships in competitive integrated settings that could lead to on-the-job training and/or job placement.
- Identify industry recognized curriculums and train counselors to utilize it with students.

- Develop partnerships by contacting Special Education personnel in schools and by attending school board meetings.
- Create and implement marketing campaigns.
- Create standards and benchmarks evaluation criteria for each core service for vendors, schools, and counselors to use in identifying the knowledge/skills/abilities gained by students in the program.
- Increase awareness of viable work options in the areas where students live.
- Create a peer mentorship program including mentoring with CILS.
- Create a Professional Advisors Learning Series (PALS) where professionals in a field provide hands-on demonstrations to students on the work in that field, offer job shadowing opportunities, and informational interviews on the job duties.
- Promote and track employment outcomes directly from Pre-ETS services.

Priority – ARS will provide pre-employment transition services and ensure students with employment and training goals are moved into vocational rehabilitation prior to the second semester of the senior year of high school.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Spend at least 15% of VR grant on Pre-ETS.
- Direct students with disabilities into classes leading to certifications in Career and Technical Education and concurrent enrollment postsecondary training while in high school.
- Provide students in Pre-ETS with paid and unpaid work experiences.
- Provide students participating in Pre-ETS with career portfolios upon exiting high school.
- Provide Pre-ETS core services internally or by utilizing external contractors.
- Develop and implement a process for Pre-ETS students to become traditional VR services clients and monitor results.

Priority – ARS will increase the number of Transition students that enter employment by having students work ready upon graduation from high school or postsecondary training.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Develop and support apprenticeships for students prior to graduation.
- Increase credential attainments in high school by moving Pre-ETS-VR ready students to VR services prior to graduation.
- Develop and support on-the-job trainings/direct job placement and supported employment with businesses that have Pre-ETS internship sites.

5. If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.

ARS addresses the provision of supported employment services in Goal 5: ARS will more effectively utilize Community Rehabilitation and Supported Employment Providers to achieve employment outcomes.

Priority – ARS will transform ACTI from a residential program to a new service delivery model.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Develop a new organizational structure consistent with meeting the demands of the new model, which will address:
- Career and Technical Education training programs to meet the needs of students and labor market demands.
- Pre-apprenticeship training programs to facilitate placement in USDOL approved registered apprenticeship programs.
- Registered apprenticeships.
- Pre-employment transition and career development services to assist students in transitioning to postsecondary education and employment.
- Talent development for Pre-ETS and Transition customers.
- Co-developing programming with Field Services to assist students in achieving career goals including identifying needed accommodations in postsecondary education and employment.
- Obtain resources to support direct and facilitated provision of training and vocational rehabilitation services at the central location in Hot Springs and with partners across the state.
- Develop a new plan for marketing and branding the new program model.

6. Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

The Quality Assurance (QA) team ensures statewide consistency in state and federal vocational rehabilitation compliance issues by providing information to support the delivery of comprehensive services in order to prepare individuals with disabilities to enter and to remain in the workforce. The QA team monitors and reviews the field program for policy compliance by randomly selecting cases from specific categories for on-site review. Throughout the year, the QA team provides case management training during new counselor orientation training, and financial resources training.

ARS addresses performance accountability measures in Goal 1: ARS will meet performance accountability measures as outlined in WIOA.

Priority – ARS will monitor established performance accountability measures.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Utilize all available data to monitor performance outcomes.
- ARS Field staff will receive ongoing performance accountability measurement training.

Priority – ARS will provide career counseling to 14(c) program participants to meet Section 511 requirements.

Strategy – ARS will:

- Transition career counseling services from a contracted external provider to internal provision through ACTI.

Priority – ARS will strengthen data verification procedures.

Strategies – ARS will:

- The QA team will monitor and review randomly selected cases from specific categories for on-site review.
- Train personnel on acceptable data verification criteria and acceptable documentation.
- Collaborate with DSB to establish consistent documentation practices for data verification.

7. Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.
ARS addresses assisting the workforce development system in Goal 3: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities.

Priority – ARS will focus on public and private sector employers and increase business and industry awareness of ARS' services.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Continue to market to employers how ARS can be an effective resource as it relates to the hiring of individuals with disabilities and assisting them in remaining in the workforce.
- Maintain its partnership with Disability: IN - Arkansas and assist in membership recruitment by leveraging partnerships with existing business customers.
- Work with employers to identify opportunities for pre-apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship, and On-the-Job programs.

Priority – ARS will develop and strengthen partnerships with business, workforce development partners, economic development agencies, and community organizations to meet the needs of existing and new business customers.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Utilize state agency transformation to expand relationships with partner agencies within the Department of Commerce.
- Continue to advance relationships with other WIOA partners at both the state and local levels.
- Conduct joint business service team meetings with all Workforce Development Boards.
- Develop products and services that meet individual business customer needs.

ARS also addresses assisting the workforce development system in Goal 4: ARS will increase effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

Priority – ARS will improve service delivery to job seekers and businesses by consistently providing services that meet individual needs.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Develop and implement a Job Club initiative and collaborate with counselors to support clients in honing soft skills to enhance job readiness.
- Assist counselors and clients in IPE development by providing local labor market in information so clients are trained for employment with in-demand industries in order to create opportunities for sustainable employment.
- Work with counselors to develop a mechanism to determine when referral for job placement is appropriate.
- Develop career pathways with input from private industries and educational training providers in the state.

Priority – Staff will receive comprehensive training to improve service delivery.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Assist counselors and clients in IPE development by providing local labor market information and regional sector strategies.
- Train counselors to determine when referral for job placement is appropriate.
- Host statewide training to ensure understanding of policy and procedures.
- Provide training on special populations to include those with serious mental illness and autism spectrum disorders.

Priority – ARS will strengthen relationships with WIOA partners and business and industry.

Strategies – ARS will:

- Conduct partner meetings with educational training providers on a quarterly basis to foster stronger relationships.
- Participate in business and industry Expo/Chamber events with other workforce partners.
- Participate in monthly "Core-Four" partner's meetings with other WIOA partners.
- Seek opportunities for rehab area managers and counselors to collaborate with BEU staff through joint business customer visits to meet employer needs.
- Train field personnel on apprenticeships/pre-apprenticeships, on-the-job training opportunities, and paid work experiences available for students and youth.
- Rehab area managers will access local workforce board funding and resources to utilize as a similar benefit in service delivery.

Priority – ARS will improve service delivery to Arkansas businesses by consistently providing services that meet the employers' needs.

Strategies – Business Engagement will:

- Utilize Salesforce CRM as licenses are issued to share information with partner agencies to more effectively serve business customers.
- Implement a customer satisfaction survey to measure the effectiveness of services offered to business customers.

8. How the agency's strategies will be used to:

A. achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;

ARS and the SRC jointly developed the goals, priorities, and strategies based on input provided by the most recent CSNA and input from key stakeholders. ARS has developed a strategic plan that supports the goals, priorities, and strategies. The strategies are intended to position ARS to successfully meet WIOA performance requirements, to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of services provided to agency clients including those who are unserved or underserved, and to create opportunities to enhance relationships with employers, community organizations, and WIOA partners.

B. support innovation and expansion activities; and

The primary focus for innovation and expansion will be to more effectively provide services to the unserved and underserved populations as identified in the most recent statewide comprehensive needs assessment. ARS will target minority populations in need of vocational rehabilitation services and geographic areas of the state where fewer vocational rehabilitation services are available.

C. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.

ARS recognizes that providing Arkansans with disabilities equitable access and the opportunity to fully participate in its programs and services is and has been an ongoing issue as evidenced by results from the most recent CSNA where the unserved/underserved populations of Hispanics and the deaf/hard of hearing were specifically mentioned. In addition, ARS recognizes, geographically, a significant part of the state is rural, and the availability of services is limited including supported employment. ARS believes the following goals will address this issue: Goal 2: ARS will create effective partnerships to advance employment for Arkansans with disabilities; Goal 3: ARS will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery; and Goal 4: ARS will increase the utilization of community rehabilitation and supported employment providers to achieve employment outcomes. The intent is to provide more opportunities for these populations to participate in services provided or sponsored by ARS.

p. Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals. Describe:

1. An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
Goal 1: To establish baselines and meet benchmarks for state with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

ARS will increase referrals, enhance job development and placement services, and recruit qualified rehabilitation counselors to fill vacancies to meet or exceed past performance in employment outcomes.
ARS will increase performance in Supported Employment for youth and adults with disabilities with emphasis on serving an increased number of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including developmental/intellectual, behavioral health concerns and cognitive disabilities.
ARS will provide training to improve outreach activities to unserved and underserved minority populations in order to improve performance.
Goal 1: Evaluation and Progress

ARS:

- Increased referrals from 5,704 in 2016/2017 to 5,773 in 2017/2018, which is a 1.2% increase. Counselor vacancies decreased from 17% to 4.5%.
- Had 2,630 successful employment outcomes in 2016/2017; however, in 2017/2018 the employment outcomes decreased to 2,520 successfully closed. Nevertheless, the employment rate and median income rate increased statewide.
- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit) performance measure rate for PY2017 was 52% and increased to 73.7% in PY2018
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit) performance measure rate for PY2017 was 51% and increased to 69.1% in PY2018
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) Median earnings for PY2017 was $5,119.46 and increased to $5,624.90 in PY2018
- Median Earnings (Fourth Quarter after Exit) Median earnings for PY2017 was $5447.94 and increased to $6,171.97 in PY2018.
- Services to youth increased 19% from 58 youth in PY2017 to 69 youth in PY2018, who were placed in employment and successfully closed. Overall, closure for individuals of all ages increased from 4.7% in PY2017 to 4.9% in PY2018.
- ARS field program set aside 50% of supportive employment dollars to engage youth and provide vocational services. Youth services increased by 3% and adult services by 5%.
- Hosted ten trainings to improve consumer awareness about ARS services. Other topics covered during the trainings included transportation, employment opportunities, and job development preparation.

Goal 2: Increase the availability of Supported Employment (SE) services to youth and adults with significant disabilities.

- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP) team, is receiving technical assistance from the Department of Labor, Office

of Disability Employment Policy subject matter experts on methods to use Medicaid Waivers and other partners' funds in restructuring to expand and improve SE services. The team includes: The Department of Human Services Divisions of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), Behavioral Health Services (DBHS), Services for the Blind (DSB), Medical Services (DMS), Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), Department of Workforce Services (DWS), and the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit (ADE SEU).

- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, will initiate revised MOUs based on the WIOA, including new rates and reimbursement methodology for braiding services.
- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, will provide technical assistance to the pilot projects focused on transitioning from facility-based services to community-based services.

Goal 2: Evaluation and Progress

ARS:

- Met with the EFSLMP team to focus on implementing streamlined supported employment services, to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), to continue provider transformation, and to transition facility-based services (subminimum wage) to community-based services through funds provided by a 2018 Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Programs (DOL ODEP) grant.
- With the Department of Human Services, Developmental Disabilities Service (DDS) piloted and implemented sequential funding of supported employment services utilizing streamlined services, provider requirements, and outcome payments to secure competitive integrated employment for individuals with significant disabilities.
- Signed a Memorandum of Understanding along with the Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind, the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit and the Arkansas Department of Human Services' divisions of Aging and Adult Services, Developmental Disabilities Services, Behavioral Health Services, and Medical Services. The MOU provides guidelines for the necessary coordination between state agencies to ensure competitive integrated employment is the preferred option for individuals with disabilities, including individuals with significant disabilities, who are eligible for more than one publicly funded program administered by the parties to this MOU.
- In partnership with DHS – DDS, through the DOL ODEP grant, initiated strategies for Arkansas to implement the State Agency Model Employer (SAME.) DHS – DDS piloted the project, and nine individuals with the most significant disabilities became state employees through extra help positions. These individuals are working for DHS, ARS, and the Department of Finance and Administration.

Goal 3: Improve public relations, marketing, information, outreach, and referrals.

- ARS will continue the marketing plan to increase awareness of VR services to citizens, service providers, and business and industry, and to increase employment outcomes to improve performance accountability measures.
- Access and Accommodations in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN, State AT Program) will provide a new informational website to provide resources for accommodation and assistive technology as it relates to home, education, and employment.
- ARS will develop outreach strategies designed to improve access to VR services for the state's Hispanic residents with disabilities. Field personnel will distribute materials and information in a variety of formats designed to reach and serve the growing diverse population in Arkansas.
- ARS will develop educational and informational materials designed to inform potential referral sources about the referral process and the scope of ARS.
- ARS will utilize its network of Community Rehabilitation Programs to identify individuals with disabilities who are minorities and/or have the most significant disability. These individuals, who because of rural living, a lack of transportation, or English as a second language, can be referred to ARS and other support service networks needed to reach employment.
- ARS Communications will work with ACTI to increase education and outreach about programs and services provided at ACTI. This includes strategies for internal and external stakeholders.

Goal 3: Evaluation and Progress

ARS:

- Improved service provision within the Hispanic population by providing informational resources and pamphlets in Spanish, and by providing Spanish translators and interpreters for Spanish speaking clients.
- Launched a new website for the State AT Program, ICAN, to provide Arkansans in need of assistive technology and accommodation solutions better access to information, training, technical assistance, and devices to assist them in remaining independent in the home, with education, and with employment. For this reporting period 7,252 individual users accessed the website viewing 22,061 different pages and performing 4,059 searches within the website.
- Updated marketing materials and provided education and outreach for ACTI through Twitter posts and ACTI success stories in agency publications. Communications also

updated the ACTI webpage on the agency website and forwarded public comments and questions from the website comment link to ACTI staff for review. ACTI Staff members provided education and outreach to high schools across the state, attended job fairs, and communicated with internal and external partners.

- Found it not feasible at this time to collect data on CRPs who identify individuals who because of rural living, a lack of transportation, or English as a second language might benefit from ARS services and other support services.

Goal 4: Increase collaboration with business that leads to increased employment outcomes.

- ACTI will work to expand the success of registered apprenticeships, internships, and part-time employment opportunities for ARS clients.
- ARS has developed the statewide business and industry advisory board and implemented the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP). ARS will expand and grow TAP to increase job potential for agency customers.
- ARS will increase the number of business relations representatives to provide job placement services in all Field Services offices and ACTI.
- A statewide advisory group will be established and composed of individuals from business and industry, counselors, job placement specialists, and other appropriate professionals to explore participating in the National Employment Team.
- ARS will actively support the development of the Arkansas Business Leadership Network. ARS will continue to meet with companies from across the state throughout the year to garner support and identify an anchor employer(s) to facilitate the application process.
- The local business advisory group at ACTI will be integrated into the statewide ARS business advisory group with the goal of expanding job placement and employment outcomes.
- ARS will enhance relationships with businesses whose corporate offices are headquartered in Arkansas and partner with senior corporate officers and managers. Through a dedicated full-time corporate business relations consultant, ARS will be positioned to build relationships with key decision makers as well as connect with the State Chamber of Commerce to solidify its status as an economic contributor and not just a social service provider.
- ARS will actively market ARS' Business Relations services to companies seeking qualified applicants with disabilities.
- ARS will develop and initiate activities and events to recognize individuals who have overcome their disabilities, and give recognition to employers and businesses, who have demonstrated "best practices," hired people with disabilities, and made unique and cost-effective reasonable accommodations.

- ARS will develop a presentation to advocate the benefits of hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities.
- ARS will update promotional/educational videos, brochures, mailers, etc., and target businesses.
- District managers will partner with business relations representatives to effectively market ARS services to business and industry, performing an intentional and active role on the business relations team.
- ARS will evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of current marketing strategies and how ARS is currently engaging employers.
- Through the Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work program, the Access and Accommodations team will continue to be a resource for employers and employees for expertise in seeking information on providing accommodation and comprehensive assistive technology evaluations.

Goal 4: Evaluation and Progress

ACTI:

- Expanded apprenticeships, internships, and part-time employment opportunities, engaged in pre-apprenticeship activities with business members of the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, and expanded the registered apprenticeship program to include people with disabilities and added new occupations such as Certified Nursing Assistants, Medical Administrative Assistants, and Information Technology Generalist. There were challenges to provide these opportunities across the state and VR consumer participation was less than optimal.
- Continued its efforts to integrate the ACTI local business advisory group into the statewide ARS business advisory group to expand job placement and employment outcomes.

ARS:

- Partnered with Arkansas Support Network and WIOA Partners (Division of Services for the Blind and Adult Education) to host ten career fairs across the state.
- Supported the growth of Disability: IN – Arkansas with core partners (JB Hunt, Tyson, TJX, Walmart, and Regions Bank).

The Business Engagement Unit:

- Revamped print and digital marketing materials to reflect the needs and perspective of employers, changing the emphasis from supply to demand.

- Developed a presentation geared to employers, which presents a business case for creating an inclusive workforce, and covers return on investment, human capital, market, diversity, innovation, and ARS services.
- In partnership with CSAVR, developed a promotional PSA video outlining the no cost services ARS can provide employers. The video can be accessed on the ARS website.
- Facilitated the Fourth Annual Arkansas Business Employment Summit in 2018, which focused on empowering all through inclusion. During the Summit, companies demonstrating best practices in hiring people with disabilities were recognized through various awards including the Distinguished Partnership Award, the Business Partnership Award of the Year, the Leadership Award, and the Community Partnership Award.
- Received technical assistance from the Job Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (JDVRTAC) to strengthen relationships with ARS field offices, which resulted in counselors, rehab area managers, and senior management accompanying Business Engagement representatives on scheduled business visits. This collaboration encouraged a shared understanding of the "bigger picture" of job-driven vocational rehabilitation, which led to a shift in the collective thinking on the alignment of client skill attainment with skills actually needed in the job market.
- Assisted counselors in obtaining the latest labor market information to assist the client in developing an effective IPE.
- Presented with Field personnel information to employers about job training experiences, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities for transitional students. For example, The Fort Smith Business Engagement team met with Answer Fort Smith to design an accommodations training program.
- Is exploring the redesign of its customer satisfaction survey. Currently, employers receive a short email after services are provided to gauge satisfaction and to gain information on how to improve services to business.

Access and Accommodations:

- Provided accommodation and assistive technology solutions in the workplace through the Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW) program for 72 individual cases from 44 different employers across Arkansas, with 13 of these employers returning multiple employees for services through the program.

Goal 5: Expand and improve transition services program.

- ARS has been actively engaged in the development of legislation to implement comprehensive transition and postsecondary education programs in institutions of higher education and will continue to act as a resource in the development and implementation

of postsecondary education programs. ARS will also provide information to clients about these programs.

- ARS will conduct an assessment of transitional services statewide and implement policy and procedures consistent with WIOA.
- ARS will explore combining both transition programs and establish one vision for transition services.
- ARS will develop a transition committee to initiate a statewide plan to provide innovative transition services to students.
- ARS will provide pre-employment transition services such as job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences including internships that provide integrated environments.
- ARS will provide counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs.
- ARS will provide workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living.
- ARS will provide instruction in self-advocacy and peer mentoring.
- ARS district managers will work with WIOA partners, school districts, and educational co-ops to enhance working relations to effectively provide transitional services.
- ARS will explore hiring a Transitional Coordinator who will implement strategies of enhancing transitional services and providing statewide training to counselors.
- ARS will work with business and industry to establish on-the-job training, apprenticeships, and paid work experiences to prepare students for the workforce.
- ARS will collaborate with WIOA partners and other state agencies to utilize braided funding for services.
- ARS leadership will work with the State Department of Education to strengthen relationships between schools and rehabilitation district managers and counselors.
- ARS leadership will work with school districts throughout the state to facilitate and enhance the working relationships between the local high schools and local rehabilitation district managers and counselors.
- ARS will continue to host Transition Expos across the state to market ARS transition services. ARS will continue to partner with Arkansas Transition Services (ATS) to provide technical assistance with transition planning, and will support the bi-annual state Transition Summit for local transition teams and cadre meetings throughout the school year in an effort to identify local resources and continue to increase awareness of ARS services. ARS will continue to refer clients to College Bound Arkansas to prepare transition students living with a disability for college, will continue to sponsor Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), and will support the annual Disability Awareness activities. ARS will initiate and implement specialty camps available to all students with disabilities designed to focus on pre-employment transition core services.

- ARS counselors will continue to coordinate with special education teachers to identify students with individual education plans to implement transition services prior to the senior year.
- If a student is determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, a plan for employment will be completed prior to graduation.
- The ARS Field Program and the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) will continue to expand opportunities for young people with disabilities to participate in the four-week, jointly developed Transition Employment Program (TEP) in which students receive a comprehensive assessment/evaluation, OSHA certification training, job readiness and soft-skill development, and three internship rotations at ACTI.
- ARS will continue to partner with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), and ACCESS Group, Inc. to increase the number of young adults served in the UAMS Project SEARCH® site. In addition, ARS will look for opportunities to increase the number of Project SEARCH® sites by partnering with other community partners. ARS will continue to support the youth model site in Fayetteville in partnership with Lifestyles, Inc., Fayetteville Public Schools, and Washington Regional Medical Center.
- Access and Accommodations will work with counselors, educators, and employers to assist students with disabilities who utilize assistive technology by providing assessments, consultation, and acquisition as part of the transition process from secondary education to postsecondary education and work.
- Access and Accommodations (AT@Work) in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Program (ICAN, State AT Program) and community partners will provide training to appropriate staff as it relates to the legal provisions of assistive technology as an accommodation in education and employment settings.

Goal 5: Evaluation and Progress

ARS:

- Assisted the University of Arkansas' Empower Program with the policy and procedural elements of Pre-ETS and traditional Transition services that support the program.
- Developed procedural guidance for counselors, vendors, and schools participating in Pre-ETS, and promulgated policy that supports both the traditional Transition and the Pre-ETS programs. ARS utilizes a model of a continuum of services for Pre-ETS and Transition services, in which the Pre-ETS program is the first step to exploring careers, positive work attitudes and behaviors by using curriculums and activities that instruct on all five Pre-ETS core services. Prior to graduation, students are introduced to their transition counselors, who work with them using the existing documentation from Pre-ETS to develop plans for employment prior to the student's high school graduation.

- Developed a transition committee that provided input and suggestions to the various models of Pre-ETS currently in place: 1) school-based model, 2) vendor services model, 3) counselor driven direct services model, and 4) camps and forums. Work-based learning/work experiences are conducted in the most integrated setting available. Additionally, 33 schools have performance-based contracts with ARS to provide work-based learning and work readiness training to students in high school.
- Reviewed the curriculum and activities of over 25 vendors and approved 20 vendors that provide direct instruction on counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs. In addition, Pre-ETS counselors received curriculum and instructional activities in this core area that meet the scope of service for counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs.
- Provided self-advocacy training utilizing established curriculum and provided peer mentoring in group settings by vendors and schools, which is monitored by Pre-ETS counselors.
- Rehab area managers attended WIOA Board meetings, CIRCLES trainings with school districts, and educational co-op trainings.
- Made available paid work experiences to 3,750 students in 150 high schools, which are available after school and on the weekends through 20 vendors statewide.
- Collaborated with school districts to share in the delivery and cost of services. With vendor programs in the school system, schools provide transition services outlined in agreements as the responsibility of the school and carried out by school funding, while vendors provide the Pre-ETS core services not provided by the school. School teachers monitor and oversee the delivery of Pre-ETS core services in their classrooms. With the OWL contracts, schools fund and provide career exploration, self-advocacy, and counseling on postsecondary education, as well as some soft skills training prior to a work experience. ARS funds the work experience and work readiness skills that are taught and reinforced on the job.
- Signed a statewide Memorandum of Agreement outlining the duties and responsibilities of all agencies working in Pre-ETS and Transition. It emphasizes collaboration between ARS, Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind, the Department of Education – Special Education Unit, and the local school districts.
- Developed individualized MOUs with school districts regarding the implementation of Pre-ETS within the district.
- Conducted Transition Expos across the State and assisted in the planning and training of the Arkansas Transition Services bi-annual State Transition Summit.
- Referred students to College Bound Arkansas. Developed, implemented, and executed the Youth Leadership Forum, and participated in Disability Awareness activities offered by the Statewide Independent Living Council.
- Implemented a Film Camp offered by Joey Travolta's Inclusion Films.

- Ensured all students eligible for vocational rehabilitation services have plans for employment prior to graduation. Part of the continuum of services in transition is to identify and refer Pre-ETS students to Transition counselors in their senior year so individual plans for employment can be written and implemented for students as they exit high school.
- Provided, through the ARS Transition Program and ACTI, the four-week Transition Employment Program (TEP), where students received a comprehensive assessment/evaluation, OSHA certification training, job readiness and soft-skills development, self-advocacy instruction, and work-based learning experiences including three internship rotations at ACTI. In FY 2018, TEP had 114 participants with 103 completions (90% completion). In FY 2019, there were 74 participants with 70 completions (95% completion).
- Partnered with ten Arkansas businesses to host the Project SEARCH® program to provide on-the-job training consisting of three ten-week internship rotations for all participants. Currently, ARS partners with the ACCESS Group, Inc. to provide Project SEARCH® sites at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Arkansas Children's Hospital, CHI St. Vincent (Hot Springs and the Hot Springs Lakeside and Fountain Lake School Districts), Ouachita County Medical Center, St. Bernard's Regional Medical Center, Mercy Hospital (Fort Smith), University of Arkansas – Pine Bluff, and the Bentonville School District at Embassy Suites in Rogers. ARS supports the Washington Regional Medical Center Project SEARCH® site in partnership with Lifestyles, Inc. and the Fayetteville and Springdale School Districts, and with Friendship Community Care, Inc. at the Saint Mary's Regional Medical Center site. There are 115 Arkansas businesses that serve on the Project SEARCH® Business Advisory Council.
- Provided 59 individual trainings through Access and Accommodation staff including ICAN, which included individuals with disabilities, family members or guardians of individuals with disabilities, education representatives, employers, allied health facilities representatives, community living representatives, technology field representatives, and ARS field and managerial staff. Training included the provision and implementation of individual pieces of technology or accommodations and the "dos and don'ts" of providing accommodations in an employment setting.

Goal 6: Develop and improve Community Rehabilitation Programs.

- ARS will continue assigning a rehabilitation counselor as a liaison to each CRP in each District.
- ARS district managers will assume a more active role with CRPs to develop more positive working relationships.
- ARS will train CRPs on the WIOA requirements for services to youth and students with disabilities as it relates to Section 511 – Limitations on Sub-Minimum Wage.

- ARS will initiate purchased service agreements focused on moving CRPs from fee for service to performance-based outcome payments.
- ARS, in partnership with the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, the Arkansas SRC and the RSA State Liaison, will establish technical assistance guidelines focused on CRPs transitioning from facility-based services to community-based services.
- ARS and ACTI administrators will review the current and future role and function of ACTI in the provision of services designed to assist in meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- ARS will, in consultation with RSA, develop short-term and long-range maintenance plans for ACTI, a state owned and operated CRP that annually utilizes approximately one third of ARS' total VR allotment from RSA.
- ACTI will continue to utilize the Professional Career Performance Program designed to reinforce positive behaviors essential to attaining and maintaining employment.
- ARS will expand the OSHA ten-hour training as a weeklong stand-alone program.
- A Call Center Training program will be designed and implemented to help students gain the foundational skills needed for immediate placement with call centers. ACTI is working with several call centers who have recruited students completing the customer service training. This program will address the challenges some students are experiencing when navigating entrance competency examinations and evaluations.
- A Heavy Equipment Operation program will include a collaborative training agreement with a local two-year college to provide CDL training and licensing as well as a six-week hands-on training on hydraulic excavator simulator.
- ACTI will conduct an annual assessment in conjunction with the triennial needs assessment to determine the optimum adequacy of its programs and infrastructure as a state operated CRP. This includes necessary and critical upgrades to infrastructure and accessibility.

Goal 6: Evaluation and Progress

ARS:

- Hosted Lunch and Learns to increase quality of relationships with CRPs.
- Provided training on Pre-ETS and job placement, which enabled CRP partners to provide new job placement services, and new Pre-ETS services such as job exploration, postsecondary guidance, and work-based learning in the schools.
- Added 15 new CRP vendors. ARS assigns a rehabilitation counselor as a liaison to each CRP, and liaisons complete a monthly report to help monitor CRP needs.
- Trained approximately 50 CRPs and 14(c) Certificate holders (65 participants) on WIOA requirements and ensured the 3,500 employees at 14(c) Organizations received career

counseling, information about competitive integrated employment, and referrals as deemed appropriate.

- Initiated new purchased service agreements for community-based services with outcome reimbursement payments.
- Encouraged and provided information to CRPs interested in transformation on how to apply for technical assistance from the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (DOL ODEP) Provider Transformation Program. CRPs also received information on how to utilize the ODEP "Provider Transformation Pilot Version" manual released May 2017.
- ARS, in partnership with DHS – DDS, offered Transformation and Pre-ETS training offered by subject matter experts (SME) to CRPs. Thirty CRPs were trained. In addition, Employment First Strategic Planning was initiated through a SME as part of the DOL ODEP grant.

ACTI:

- Based on results from the annual ACTI monitoring, concluded ACTI should move from a residential services program to a community-based program. Short- and long-term maintenance needs indicated the residential model was not cost effective to continue. Initial plan development for the new model is underway.
- Saw a reduction in discharges as a result of utilizing the Professional Career Performance Program, which is designed to reinforce positive behaviors.
- Expanded the OSHA 10 stand-alone program and approximately 200 students have completed the two-day program.
- Discontinued Call Center Training for lack of interest.
- Observed limited interest in CDL training and hands-on hydraulic excavator training.

Goal 7: Improve training, resources, and continuing education.

- ARS will review the needs identified in the Training Needs Assessment conducted by ARS Staff Development and Training to identify significant training and continuing education activities.
- Staff Development and Training will coordinate and conduct task force meetings representing a cross section of agency personnel to analyze the identified needs submitted. Information from the task force will be incorporated, if appropriate, into the proposed Career Development Enhancement Program and the employees' training and education plans. Training delivery method will vary depending on the subject matter and all resources available will be considered.
- ARS will train staff to increase awareness related to Employment First (E1st) provider transformation and integrated community-based services as it relates to Community

Rehabilitation Programs, Supported Employment Programs, and External Job Placement vendors.

- ARS/ACTI will undertake a feasibility study and memoranda of agreement with Higher Education providers to further the agency's desire to provide continuing education and training for VR clients wishing to pursue higher accreditation in skilled trades and to enhance employment outcomes.
- Access and Accommodations (AT@Work) in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Program (ICAN, State AT Program) and community partners will provide training to appropriate staff as it relates to the legal provisions of assistive technology in education and employment settings.

Goal 7: Evaluation and Progress

ARS:

- Trained staff on the external employment vendor services with the addition of the 2018 implementation of the ARS/DDS service partnership and on how to complete case management.
- Provided information from Field Services management to Staff Development and Training about staff training needs on a monthly basis. Staff Development and Training monitored the effectiveness of the trainings offered and reviewed all training needs with the Employee Engagement Team, a cross section of staff. After discussion with the Employee Engagement Team, the Career Development Enhancement Program was modified.
- Increased online training during 2018.

ACTI:

- Partnered with National Park College to arrange an articulation agreement for the Certified Production Technology class.
- Assisted ACTI students pursuing higher education in obtaining credit for the training completed.

Access and Accommodations/ICAN:

- Partnered with the University of Arkansas' Partners for Inclusive Communities to provide statewide trainings focusing on accessibility of facilities, documentation, and digital media. Those attending included individuals with disabilities, education settings representatives, allied health program representatives, and ARS field and managerial staff.

Goal 8: Improve ARS' ability to act as a resource when assisting individuals with disabilities and employers in addressing accommodation needs.

- ARS will reorganize/realign its Special Programs section to better communicate the availability of resources to assist in the accommodation process. As part of this change Special Programs will be renamed Access and Accommodations.
- ARS will rename its Retaining a Valued Employee (RaVE) program to Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work (SAW/RTW). This language is consistent with programs/practices in private/public sector employment and communicates functional intent.
- As part of the Governor's Employment First Task Force, ARS will assume a lead role in the implementation of a SAW/RTW program within Arkansas state government.
- ARS will work with WIOA partners at both the state and local level to support SAW/RTW efforts in both public and private sector employment.
- ARS will sufficiently staff its Assistive Technology at Work (AT@Work) program to meet referral demands from the ARS Field Program and SAW/RTW initiative. Staff will have expertise to address accommodation needs in training and employment settings.

Goal 8: Evaluation and Progress

Access and Accommodations:

- Created the Community Service Program Director position, under Access and Accommodations, which reports to the Associate Commissioner of Access and Accommodations. This position oversees five Community Service Programs, provides guidance and direction, and enables more diligent administration of those programs.
- Renamed the Retaining a Valued Employee (RaVE) program to Stay at Work/Return to Work (SAW/TRW) to better reflect programs/practices in the private/public sector employment and to better communicate functional intent.
- Made presentations and conducted training about SAW/RTW efforts at WIOA partners meeting, State Agency Model Employer (SAME) trainings, and regional Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM) trainings.
- Sufficiently staffed AT@ Work by filling one Occupational Therapist position and by transferring one Physical Therapist position formerly located at ACTI to AT@Work.

Goal 9: Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery for agency clients.

- ARS will ensure the development and implementation of comprehensive training for rehab area managers and counselors to effectively serve clients.

- ARS will adequately staff the field program to reduce caseloads and allow counselors to devote additional time to direct consumer contact and provision of services.
- ARS will examine the agency referral sources and ensure counselors are trained to provide effective services to clients with mental health concerns and intellectual/developmental disabilities.
- ARS will increase the role of the rehab area manager in the areas of outreach and marketing at local levels statewide to cultivate positive working relationships with employers, partners, and stakeholders.
- ARS will implement training that will focus on increasing the number of individuals exiting the system with quality employment outcomes.
- ARS will evaluate the Supported Employment services provided statewide and focus on expansion in rural areas.
- ARS will strengthen the relationships with WIOA partners such as Workforce Services, Services for the Blind, Adult Education, and Department of Human Services to better serve agency customers with resources.
- ARS will implement and develop policies for WIOA and provide statewide training for the field program.
- ACTI will evaluate programs on effectiveness and implement new talent development programs that give student's competitive training for the 2020 workforce.
- ACTI will implement efficient communication processes with the field program to ensure counselors are aware of ACTI programs.
- ACTI will improve marketing and outreach to employers, schools, and prospective clients.

Goal 9: Evaluation and Progress

ARS:

- Compiled data on services provided during the FFY2018 to establish baselines for annual service evaluation.
- Trained field staff utilizing the Quality Assurance Department, rehab area managers, Office of Personnel Management, and Staff Development and Training, which reduced data entry error ratios and audit findings.
- Provided training for rehab area managers on the Hidden Rules of Social Class offered by University of Arkansas CURRENTS.
- Reduced the counselor vacancy rate from 17% to 4.5 %, which lowered the caseloads statewide by 5%. The national caseload average is 156 and ARS is at 160 cases per counselor. ARS field programs established specialty counselors for Pre-ETS and deaf and hard of hearing to reduce caseloads.

- Partnered with DDS to provide E1st services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. ARS partnered with the University of Arkansas – Fayetteville to provide career counseling to all sub-minimum wage 14(c) providers serving over 6,000 clients.
- Collaborated with WIOA partners. For example, the Chief of Field Services sits on the WIOA Executive Board and rehab area managers sit on local WIOA Boards, participate in Partner Meetings, and provide informational presentations on vocational rehabilitation services to local WIOA partners. The WIOA Executive Board hosted two statewide trainings to provide education and referral alignment throughout the state. ARS is working on a unified referral process.
- Saw an increase in Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit) from $5,119.46 in 2017 to $5,624.90 in 2018. Median Earnings (Fourth Quarter after Exit) for 2017 were $5,447.94 and increased to $6,171.97 in 2018.Collaborated with DHS to provide individuals with developmental disabilities work opportunities through the State Agency Model Employer program.
- Updated the agency's policy to include the WIOA changes, with an effective date of January 1, 2019. Rehab area managers trained staff on the policy updates and reviewed and monitored policies and procedures at monthly staff meetings.

ACTI:

- Converted its paper case management system to an electronic system in June 2018. It appears this change has improved communication between ACTI counselors and field counselors. In addition, communication protocols are now in place that support and enhance the shared roles of case management.
- Participated in community outreach activities throughout the state with the goals of increasing referrals and of raising community awareness of ACTI services. In total, ACTI staff participated in 654 activities through presentations, exhibit booths, conference attendance, and other activities that targeted field staff, the general community, potential employers, high school teachers, and parents.
- Continued to offer talent development programs at ACTI. In FFY2017, ACTI served 582 clients through nine programs. In FFY2018, 500 clients were served through 11 programs. Actual certifications increased by 20% and 200 clients participated in three off-campus programs.

Outreach: Strategy

ARS provides outreach activities to individuals from minority backgrounds, individuals with the most significant disabilities, and others who are unserved or underserved. For PY 2018, ARS' focus was to provide training to improve outreach activities, and to utilize its network of CRPs to

identify individuals with disabilities who are minorities and/or have the most significant disability. These individuals, who because of rural living, a lack of transportation, or English as a second language, can be referred to ARS and other support service networks needed to reach employment.

Outreach: Evaluation and Progress
ARS:

- Developed a multi-pronged program for serving the state's Hispanic community.
- Implemented training for counselors and professional assessment staff to learn the cultural values of the state's Hispanic community and ways to break down cultural and language barriers to accessing VR services.
- Worked with the state's Hispanic transition clients to encourage them to consider VR counseling as a career.
- Developed a statewide strategy with the state's graduate VR programs to recruit more Hispanic/Spanish speaking students who would subsequently be recruited by ARS.
- Established an itinerary point to better serve the Marshallese community, and to disseminate pamphlets and vocational information.
- Located new itinerary points across the state to better serve the underserved and unserved.
- Explored ways to partner with the Centers for Independent Living to provide awareness about ARS' services for individuals with disabilities.
- Increased efforts to work with WIOA partners to more effectively provide services to individuals with disabilities throughout the state.

B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

There were two factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities: (1) mandated funding for Pre-ETS, and (2) ACTI maintenance, both of which reduced the funding available for general VR services. While an Order of Selection is not currently justified, ARS is exploring options for implementing an Order if and when one becomes necessary. Also, ARS is in the process of transforming ACTI from a residential model to a community-based model.

2. An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
ARS increased the availability of supported employment services to clients by providing training and technical assistance to vendors and vocational rehabilitation counselors. ARS placed a greater emphasis on proven and innovative supported employment outcomes related to

competitive integrated employment performance-based outcomes. ARS created a new monitoring process to track the number of vendors in each area, number of clients served by each vendor, milestone payments made, and expenditures. Successful closure data is shared with CRPs.

Supported Employment: Evaluation and Progress

During PY2018, SE referrals remained at the PY2017 level at 286. The SE successful employment outcomes increased from 116 to 117, which is a one percent increase. However, based on all 26 closures, SE successful employment outcomes continued at five percent.

B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

There were two factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities: (1) mandated funding for Pre-ETS, and (2) ACTI maintenance, both of which reduced the funding available for general VR services. While an Order of Selection is not currently justified, ARS is exploring options for implementing an Order if and when one becomes necessary. Also, ARS is in the process of transforming ACTI from a residential model to a community-based model.

3. The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.

ARS served 12,437 individuals – 2,372 exited in competitive integrated or supported employment, 1,556 exited without an employment outcome, and 1,251 exited after Eligibility but prior to a signed IPE. The employment rate second quarter after exit was 4.91%, and the median wage rate second quarter after exit was $3,996.34. The measurable skill gains performance indicator was 27.3%.

4. How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

During PY2018, ARS utilized I&E funds to support activities of the State Rehabilitation Council. Monies were also utilized to fund a large portion of the State Independent Living Council's (SILC) budget as outlined in the SILC's resource plan. Funds were used to support outreach activities to unserved and underserved Arkansans with disabilities and to strengthen relationships with our business partners.

q. Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services. Include the following:

1. The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

During PY2018 ARS:

- Ensured the quality of SE services by monitoring data related to expenditures, through ongoing communication with the counselors, and by monitoring CRPs, who received specific funding amounts, through vendor case review.
- Hosted two trainings provided by DOL ODEP Subject Matter Experts that targeted state leadership and focused on supported employment for individuals with significant behavioral health concerns. Additionally, ARS hosted a stakeholder meeting where 40 participants discussed supported employment services/individual placement and supports, and what it means to be an Employment First state.
- Partnered, by utilizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with Division of Workforce Services, Division of Services for the Blind, Arkansas Department of Education – Special Education Unit, and the Department of Human Services: Division of Developmental Disabilities Services and Division of Adult, Aging, and Behavioral Health Services. The MOU defines the partnership, the roles and responsibilities between the agencies, and successful employment as competitive integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Collaborated with AR APSE to host the organization's biennial conference, which focused on best models of service provision for supported employment, customized employment, and provider transformation.
- Hosted free online job coach certification training with a total of 284 participants certified and provided training on supported employment to 676 participants.

2. The timing of transition to extended services.

ARS provided transition from employment to extended services beginning when individuals reach a point of stabilization on the job and for the next 90 days towards successful closure. After ARS closes the cases as successful, extended services is transitioned to the provider responsible for funding. If the individual is on waiver, originally funding has been through the Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities Services Waiver Program. In PY2018, this funding transferred to the Provider-led Shared Savings Entity (PASSE), a model of organized care created by Act 775 of 2017. Each PASSE is made up of governing providers who have entered into a partnership with an experienced program administration organization. If the individual is not on waiver, providers must generate funding to provide extended services.

ARS developed the Youth Extended Services (YES) policy for individuals under the age of 25. This policy allows ARS to pay for youth extended services if no other resources are available up to four years or age 25. Once the case is closed successful (status 26), this service is transitioned

to the provider responsible for funding, which may include payment through the Department of Human Services Developmental Disabilities Services if the individual has a community employment services waiver plan.

Certifications

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **Arkansas Rehabilitation Services** (DSU)

Name of designated State agency **Division of Workforce Services**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Alan McClain**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Commissioner**

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The **designated State agency or designated State unit (as appropriate) listed above** is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA*, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.** Yes

2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the **designated State agency listed above** agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan; Yes

3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan* , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan; ** Yes

4. The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement; Yes

5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement. Yes

6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law. Yes

7. The **Authorized Representative listed above** has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement; Yes

8. The **Authorized Representative listed above** has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services; Yes

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement. Yes

Footnotes

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Certification 1 Footnotes

* Public Law 113-128.

** Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

Certification 2 Footnotes

* All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

** No funds under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

*** Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76,77,79,81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3485; and the State VR Services Program regulations.

Certification 3 Footnotes

* No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

** Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in *** under Certification 2 footnotes

Additional Comments on the Certifications from the State

Certification Regarding Lobbying — Vocational Rehabilitation

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:
If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and

submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant's Organization **Arkansas Rehabilitation Services**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Alan McClain**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Commissioner**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable) (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html). If applicable, please print, sign, and email to MAT_OCTAE@ed.gov

Certification Regarding Lobbying — Supported Employment

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

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Applicant's Organization **Arkansas Rehabilitation Services**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Alan McClain**

Title of Authorized Representative: **Commissioner**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable) (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html).

Assurances

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

The State Plan must provide assurances that:

1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:

The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:

The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.

3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. the establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (**B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council**

c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.

d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).

e. the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds **No**

f. the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs: **No**

g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan. **No**

h. the descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.

j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.

k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.

l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities.

m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.

4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services:

The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act .

c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act?

Agency will provide the full range of services described above

d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.

e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

f. comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.

g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.

h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14)of the Rehabilitation Act.

i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs

j. with respect to students with disabilities, the State,

- **i. has developed and will implement,**
  - **A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and**
  - **B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and**
- **ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25)).**

5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:

a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.

c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act.

6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:

a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and,

the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.

7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:

a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. The designated State agency assures that:

- **i. the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act**
- **ii. an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act , which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.**

Additional Comments on the Assurances from the State

Program-Specific Requirements for Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan* must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA:

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* Sec. 102(b)(D)(iii) of WIOA

a. Input of State Rehabilitation Council

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

1. input provided by the State Rehabilitation Council, including input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, recommendations from the Council's report, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions;

The Division of Services for the Blind is an independent consumer-controlled commission. Hence, this section is not applicable.

2. the Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and

This agency is an independent commission.

3. the designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.

The Division of Services for the Blind is an independent consumer-controlled commission. Hence, this section is not applicable.

b. Request for Waiver of Statewideness

When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

1. a local public agency will provide the non-Federal share of costs associated with the services to be provided in accordance with the waiver request;

The Division of Services for the Blind has not requested a waiver of statewideness. Hence this section is not applicable.

2. the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and

The Division of Services for the Blind has not requested a waiver of statewideness. Hence, this section is not applicable.

3. All State plan requirements will apply

Requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

This agency has not requested a waiver of statewideness. Hence this section is not applicable.

c. Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System.

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system with respect to:

1. Federal, State, and local agencies and programs;

The Division of State Services for the Blind (DSB) cooperates with other WIOA partners and can make referrals for adult literacy, higher education, DHS programs, and other services as needed. DSB and ARS have shared cooperative agreements with the 33 Institutions of Higher Education. DSB works in close partnership with schools, especially the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide vocational rehabilitation services and Pre-ETS to students. DSB also coordinates with the Department of Education's Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI) to serve high school students who are blind or visually impaired. DSB has a cooperative agreement with the following DHS agencies DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services; DHS Division of Behavioral Health (DBHS); DHS Division of Children and Family Services; DHS Division of County Operations; DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS); and DHS Division of Youth Services. There are also the following interagency and non-profit agreements between Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), DDS, DBHS, ADE SEU, and DSB for increasing the number of individuals in competitive employment and expanding Supported Employment. An agreement between ADE SEU, ARS, and DSB regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

DSB shares broadcast engineering services and uses facilities at the Arkansas Educational Television Network to provide DSB's Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS) and Newsline. People who are blind or visually impaired can access AIRS broadcasts of news and other informational programming 24 hours a day via computers, smart phones, laptops, and live streaming. The signal is also broadcast on the secondary audio (MTS) of AETN-4 and is carried by many cable TV systems. Newsline enables people who are blind or visually impaired to

access over 300 newspapers and magazines via phone, Internet, digital talking-book player and Mp3 players.
DSB works cooperatively with service organizations and non-profits to raise awareness of blindness issues and promote the independence of people who are blind or visually impaired. These organizations include Arkansas Lions Clubs, the National Federation of the Blind Arkansas Chapter, the American Council of the Blind Arkansas Chapter. The Arkansas Lions Eye Bank and Laboratory at UAMS, Mid-South Sight and Hearing, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) and the Arkansas Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

2. State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

The DSB Business and Technology Unit continues to coordinate with the DWS Office of Information and Technology to ensure its Data Loss Protection (DLP) project does not take any action that would affect access to adaptive software and accommodations by DWS employees who are blind or visually impaired.

The DSB Business and Technology Unit has tested accessibility on the AWARE data management system project, Office 365, and 508 Enhancements, a national project that will assist individuals who are blind or visually impaired in using Microsoft Share products. The DSB State Rehabilitation Technologist has been involved in testing some of the DWS Office 365 cloud programs. Assessments for assistive technology are completed by the DSB Business and Technology Unit, which has helped VR Counselors install computer equipment and perform other technology related tasks, so that they can provide basic technology support to participants in their respective geographic areas statewide. This initiative has also expanded the capacity of the DSB Business and Technology Unit.

DSB has formed partnerships with businesses that will train counselors on new assistive technology. DSB is among the agencies and organizations tasked with implementing the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act in Arkansas. Its partner World Services for the Blind has been designated to distribute technology equipment under the federal legislation. Through the Act, participants will be exposed to more technology available to assist them in their daily lives, job searches and workplaces.

DSB continues to collaborate with the Arkansas Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (ALBPH) and maintains several digital recorders to be used by staff to teach participants how to access digital talking books, both by standard mail distribution and through the Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) website. Additionally, available technology services can be offered and augmented by DSB's technology staff and lab.

Each year DSB coordinates with the Governor's Office, the Department of Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Office of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and related consumer groups to proclaim and celebrate the last week of June as Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Week and observe her birthdate June 27. A deaf-blind consumer is chosen to accept the proclamation from the Governor at the State Capitol.

DSB has a cooperative agreement with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to have dual caseloads in regard to participants who are deaf—blind. DSB provides blindness services and ARS addresses deafness needs.

3. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture;

DSB makes referrals of participants to commodity programs and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which are under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

4. Noneducational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and

DSB maintains an active presence on numerous councils and committees, including: Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership, Arkansas Workforce Development Board, Interagency Steering Committee on Integrated Employment, Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council, The Arkansas Independent Living Council, Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) The Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities, Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program, Youth Leadership Forum, Accessible Parking Taskforce, Local Workforce Development Boards across the state.

5. State use contracting programs.

DSB has no state use contracting programs.

d. Coordination with Education Officials

Describe:

1. DSU's plans

The designated state unit's plans, policies, and procedures for coordination with education officials to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from school to the receipt of VR services, including pre-employment transition services, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students.

DSB has a cooperative agreement with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education, regarding transition services to students who are blind or severely visually impaired

and are in public schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI). The interagency agreement with the Department of Education outlines the roles and responsibilities, financial responsibility, determination of lead agency, and qualified personnel.

DSB also has cooperative agreements with Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Arkansas School for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI), and 33 Institutions of Higher Education.

DSB is a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses related issues. AITP has representatives from agencies and organizations including, but not limited to, Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of Human Services (DHS), DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website. AITP held a Summer Agency Connections conference in the summer of 2018 in Little Rock and sponsors bi-annual Transition Summits.

DSB sends representatives to these conferences and will continue to participate in 2020-2023. As a part of AITP at the local level, DSB reaches out to Local Education Area Supervisors in the school districts across the State to strengthen the relationship between the Department of Special Education and DSB. Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and regularly sends information by mail and email to contacts on the list. As part of AITP and the initiative to reach as many participants as possible under pre-employment transition services, DSB is reaching out to each Local Education Area Supervisor in the school districts across the State and each high school across the State to give presentations/information on services available under pre-employment transition services. DSB has seven designated pre-employment transition services counselors and one Pre-ETS Area Manager to reach participants throughout the state.
DSB Transition Counselors assist participants in developing Individual Plans for Employment (IPE's) before students determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leave the school setting.

Regarding the development and approval of IPE's, all DSB participants, including transition students, receive services based upon their IPE. The counselor and the participant and/or a representative, as appropriate, develop the IPE jointly and mutually approve its contents. The IPE must be designed to achieve the specific employment outcome chosen by the individual and be consistent with the individual's unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, career interests, and informed choice. The services, service providers, and all activities selected by the participant must be necessary to meet the employment outcome goal.

The VR Counselor communicates with the participant and other service providers, such as ARS, to avoid duplication of services and to ensure consideration of comparable benefits, where applicable.

Potentially Eligible consumers are those students with a disability that have not applied and been determined eligible for the VR program. Once a student has been determined ineligible for VR services, they no longer qualify to receive Pre-ETS because they are no longer considered potentially eligible. A consumer who is determined eligible for VR services would receive their Pre-ETS services under the VR Case Type.

Secondary schools invite DSB to their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings to be part of the planning team to assist education agencies in preparing students who are blind or severely visually impaired for transition from school to post-school activities, such as employment, training, supported employment, and other VR services. The IEP outlines the roles and responsibilities of DSB, the student, the school, and any other agency/organization involved in providing transition services.

In June of each year, DSB conducts Jump Start, a statewide career development program for high school students age 16 to graduation who are blind or severely visually impaired. Thirty (30) students from across the state are accepted into the program each year. DSB coordinates with the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) in the planning and operation of Jump Start. ASBVI holds its summer learning program for youth under age 16 at the same time that DSB has Jump Start for high school students, so the two agencies share cafeteria staff, infirmary nurses, and security guards, and at least one ASBVI staff member is assigned to assist during Jump Start. DSB houses the students at ASBVI during the week (students go home on weekends). This three-week program exposes Jump Start students to the world of work and assisted them in transitioning from high school to competitive integrated employment or post-secondary education. Students were placed in part-time jobs appropriate for their skills, abilities, and interests. They worked in the mornings and during the afternoons and evenings participate in educational and recreational activities. Students learned independent living and job readiness skills; computer technology; and, if needed, orientation and mobility skills. Jump Start increases the students' confidence, social skills, and self—esteem. It also strengthens DSB's relationship with ASBVI.

DSB has an RSA-approved agreement with the Department of Education/Special Education, which provides information on financial responsibilities, the lead agency, and qualified personnel. DSB participates in monthly conference calls with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services to ensure transparent fiscal monitoring and oversight of the Pre-ETS funds allocated to the State of Arkansas.

Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and sends letters, emails and information to contacts on the list. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB. DSB Pre-ETS counselors continue to make face to face visits to all schools across the state in their areas throughout the school year, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visionally Impaired. DSB Pre-ETS counselors also present and visit schools during transition fairs, open houses, parent nights, school staff meetings, and any other school functions they can attend to discuss available Pre-ETS services. DSB Pre-ETS counselors mail out letters annually to all schools across the state regarding the DSB Pre-ETS Jump Start program. The letters sent to the schools, provide information about DSB for potential referrals. Counselors have also hosted transition fairs for schools.

2. Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to:

A. consultation and technical assistance to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including VR services;

DSB is working cooperatively with the Educational Services for the Visually Impaired, Department of Education, Special Education Teachers for the Visually Impaired, and local education areas to identify the technology needs, independent living needs, and educational training needs of identified students beginning at age 16 in the school system and through IPE meetings and planning meetings for those meeting the 504 regulations. Monthly meetings are held with our VR and Pre-ETS counselors and the school consultants to determine goals and objectives for students. Quarterly visits to schools are conducted to provide labor market information, university application and scholarship information, and technical school opportunities available within the key labor market sectors of the State.

An updated agreement with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education, regarding transition services to students who are blind or severely visually impaired, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI) was developed to address the Section 113 Pre-employment transition activities that are authorized under WIOA and the requirements of Section 511.This MOU was created in conjunction with the Arkansas Rehabilitation Service Agency. The agreement was signed. The interagency agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities, financial responsibility, determination of lead agency, and qualified personnel. DSB has reached out to each Local Education Area Supervisor in the school districts across the State and each high school across the State to give presentations/information on services available under pre-employment transition services. DSB has seven designated pre-employment transition services counselors that provide information to eligible and potentially eligible students with visual impairments both in large print and electronically through the school system.

Pre-ETS services include five core areas: Job exploration counseling: these are services to assist the student in exploring the world or work and learning more about their interests, abilities and future career goals. Work-based learning experiences, (which may include in-school or after school opportunities, experience outside the traditional school setting including internships, that are provided in an integrated environment). Counseling on opportunities in comprehensive transition or enrollment in postsecondary educational programs. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living. Instruction in self-advocacy/peer mentoring. DSB works to ensure our Pre-ETS transition counselors have a strong relationship with the local school districts and the local Work Force Development Boards. Summer work experiences, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and other work-based learning experiences have been implemented and will continue to expand as the population of high school students we serve increases.

DSB begins working with students as early as age 14. Pre-ETS counselors provide VR services. At age 16-22 students receive Pre-ETS services as described above as soon as possible, but the time shall not exceed 90 days after the enrollment. DSB, in collaboration the local education agency, will provide services to assist the student in developing and successfully achieving their Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) goal. On a statewide basis, DSB has seven designated Pre-ETS high school transition staff and one Pre-ETS Manager to provide leadership, information and referral, advocacy, technical assistance, and to promote collaboration among consumers, parents, adult service providers, and other service agencies. DSB will continue to have counselors assigned to each school district and high school. It is the role of the assigned counselors to provide outreach, technical assistance, information and referrals to the secondary education officials in their assigned schools and districts as well as to assure the provision of direct services to eligible youth.

Potentially Eligible consumers are those students with a disability that have not applied and been determined eligible for the VR program. Once a student has been determined ineligible for VR services, they no longer qualify to receive Pre-ETS because they are no longer considered potentially eligible. A consumer who is determined eligible for VR services would receive their Pre-ETS services under the VR Case Type.

Section 511 of WIOA intends that individuals with disabilities, especially youth with disabilities, must be afforded an opportunity to prepare for, obtain, maintain, advance in, or re-enter competitive integrated employment. The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education are working together to identify students that are blind and visually impaired that have been provided services in a sub-minimum wage setting. We are collaborating on plans to expand services to mutual consumers that includes a systematic approach to better identify consumers who could benefit

from supported employment services (in an integrated setting, achieving at least the minimum wage) and are not receiving them at this time. A Memorandum of Agreement was developed and signed in 2017 through the team effort known as Vision Quest, which is an extension of Governor Asa Hutchinson's Employment First Taskforce. Vision Quest includes the following agencies: The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education. The proposal includes provisions for use of joint agency resources to ensure quality service delivery and long term supports for supported employment. With the cooperation of the partner agencies DSB will contact blind and visually impaired individuals every 6 months who are in sub-minimum wage situations to provide career counseling and information and referral services, designed to promote opportunities for competitive integrated employment.

DSB's Director joined the other Vision Quest Directors in the official signing of the Super MOU in winter of 2018. DSB currently does not serve any individuals in a sub-minimum wage or 511 situations.

B. transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs;

DSB counselors assist participants in developing Individual Plans for Employment (IPE's) at age 14. The IPE is developed no later than 90 days after eligibility is determined. DSB works to develop IPEs at age 14 and every year until the student transitions out of high school. Secondary schools invite DSB's counselors to Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, to be part of the planning team to assist education agencies in preparing students who are blind or severely visually impaired for transition from school to post-school activities, (such as employment, training, supported employment, and other VR services). DSB conducts independent living, technology and vocational assessments after the determination of eligibility in order to address planning needs. This information is shared with the education staff in determining career goals and objectives. DSB will provide accommodations according to the IPE that are not the responsibility of the LEA pursuant to FAPE regulations. Peer support and mentoring is arranged for the duration of transition services. The IEP and the IPE outline the roles and responsibilities of DSB, the student, the school, and any other agency/organization involved in providing transition services. DSB is working cooperatively with the Educational Services for the Visually Impaired, Department of Education, Special Education Teachers for the Visually Impaired, and local education areas to coordinate Pre-Employment Transition Services. New federal mandates require that DSB, in collaboration with local educational agencies, offer to transition age high school students with disabilities (ages 16-22) Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) using 15% of our federal allocation on an annual basis.

Pre-ETS services include: Job exploration counseling. Work-based learning experiences, (which may include in-school or after school opportunities, experience outside the traditional school setting including internships, are provided in an integrated environment). Counseling on opportunities in comprehensive transition or enrollment in postsecondary educational programs. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living. And, instruction in self-advocacy/peer mentoring.

In order to reach our goals, DSB is ensuring our seven Pre-ETS transition counselors and Pre-ETS Area Manager have a strong relationship with the local school districts and the local Workforce Development Boards. Summer work experiences, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and other work-based learning experiences have been implemented and will continue to expand as the population of high school students we serve increases.

Pre-employment transition services as described above will be arranged throughout the school year and in the summer. Planning and implementation begin as soon as possible and shall not exceed 90 days after the enrollment. On a statewide basis, DSB has designated high school transition staff to provide leadership, information and referral, advocacy, technical assistance, and to promote collaboration among consumers, parents, adult service providers, and other service agencies. DSB continues to have counselors assigned to each school district and high school. It is the role of the assigned counselors to provide outreach, technical assistance, information and referral to the secondary education officials in their assigned schools and districts as well as to assure the provision of direct services to eligible youth.

Transition regarding Section 511of WIOA intends that individuals with disabilities, especially youth with disabilities, must be afforded a full opportunity to prepare for, obtain, maintain, advance in, or reenter competitive integrated employment. The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education are working together to identify students that are blind and visually impaired that have been provided services in a sub-minimum wage setting. We are collaborating on plans to expand services to mutual consumers that includes a systematic approach to better identifying consumers who could benefit from supported employment services (in an integrated setting, earning at least the minimum wage) and are not receiving them at this time. A new Memorandum of Agreement was developed through the team effort known as Vision Quest, which is an extension of Governor Asa Hutchinson's Employment First Taskforce. Vision Quest includes the following agencies: The Division of Services for the Blind, Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services and the Arkansas Department of Education. The Agreement includes provisions for use

of joint agency resources to ensure quality service delivery and long term supports for supported employment. With the cooperation of the partner agencies DSB will contact blind and visually impaired individuals every 6 months who are in sub-minimum wage situations to provide career counseling and information and referral services, designed to promote opportunities for competitive integrated employment. DSB's Director joined the other agencies Directors at the official signing of the MOU in the winter of 2018. DSB does not have any consumers employed in a 511 or less than minimum wage situation.

C. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services;

VR services delivered under WIOA do not remove, reduce, or change the school district's responsibility to deliver a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. VR services supplement, but do not supplant services delivered through the school districts.

The roles and responsibilities for each partner agency as required by federal and state regulations are as follows: 1. Local education agencies provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education for students with visual impairment and those with low or no vision, including preparation for transition from school to work or other postsecondary activities. 2. DSB and the Department of Education, Special Education, ESVI and Teachers for the Visually Impaired assist with student transition from secondary school to work through postsecondary training, education, or direct placement services necessary to achieve a successful employment outcome. The Division of Services for the Blind and the Department of Education, Special Education share the financial responsibility of ensuring that the provision of pre-employment transition services are planned and implemented within the school system. 3. The Division of Development Disabilities Services in collaboration with the Division of Services for the Blind and the Department of Education, Special Education work to reduce the number of sheltered workshop placements by promoting competitive employment in an integrated setting to all low vision and blind participants. In order to promote independence and self-sufficiency, the agency shall provide support and services, within available resources, to assist customers enrolled in Medicaid waivers who choose to pursue gainful employment. Financial Responsibilities DSB and the Department of Education, Special Education, ARS, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services are committed to meeting financial responsibilities as required by law. Agency/Division heads for the organizations will periodically identify areas for improved programmatic and financial efficiencies and develop strategies to meet financial responsibilities, including joint appropriations requests from the state legislature and negotiations with federal agencies. Each party is financially responsible for the services it provides under its own laws and rules.

D. procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

For outreach and identification of students who are blind or severely visually impaired, DSB continues to coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors and Regional Certified Vision Consultants of Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI). A collaborative data base of lists of transition students is maintained.

DSB Counselors will continue to make face—to—face visits to LEA Supervisors in their territories and will contact them at least twice a year by sending information by mail and emails. Counselors and their assistants serve as agency contacts. DSB make presentations at school assemblies, parent—teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on pre—employment transition services and how to access these services. DSB will continue outreach efforts to private, home, and accredited virtual schools. DSB's Pre-ETS team hosts a parent summit annually in August before school starts to inform students and parents of available resources. DSB brings in speakers to discuss assistive technology, college, workplace readiness, etc. DSB Pre-ETS team also hosts and attend transition fairs and parent summits around the state for students and parents to gather available resources from vendors participating in the events such as colleges, disability rights, community rehabilitation facilities. ARS, Arkansas Transition Services, etc. DSB has hosted transition fairs/parent summits in El Dorado, Dumas, Little Rock, Pine Bluff and Magnolia. DSB has attended transition fairs in Dumas, Dewitt, Lake Village, Greenwood, North Little Rock, Little Rock, Pine Bluff, Dermott, Cedar Ridge, Monticello and Crawford and Washington counties. DSB Pre-ETS staff will continue to host and attend these events around the state.

DSB will continue its system of mail—outs and emails twice a year to area ESVI Consultants. In addition to the local outreach efforts, the Pre-ETS Area Manager will reach out to ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB. DSB will refer participants under age 14 to ESVI and solicit referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB.

As a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), DSB is able to coordinate transition services and discuss related issues with AITP representatives from agencies and organizations, including, but not limited to Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of Human Services (DHS), DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website. AITP holds a Summer Agency Connections conference annually and sponsors bi-annual Transition Summits. DSB sends representatives to these conferences.

As a part of AITP at the local level, DSB reaches out to Local Education Area Supervisors in the school districts across the State to strengthen the relationship between the Department of Education and DSB. Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and regularly sends information by mail and email to contacts on the list. As part of AITP and the initiative to reach as many participants as possible. DSB reaches out to each Local Education Area Supervisor in the school districts across the State and each high school across the State to give presentations/information on services available under Pre-ETS. DSB has seven designated Pre-ETS counselors and one Area Manager that do outreach to participants throughout the state.

Each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and sends letters, emails and information to contacts on the list semi-annually. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB. Outreach for the Pre-ETS and WIOA required activities that include: Job exploration counseling. Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships) that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible. Counseling and guidance on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living. Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

The procedures for outreach and identifying students who would benefit from these services are as follows: 1. All transition counselors engage with the LEA staff on a monthly basis to provide literature in large print and digitally by electronic means to be then provided to special education teachers throughout the state on the referral process, the core services provided under Pre-ETS, and how to access DSB services to engage in exploration of competitive integrated employment settings. 2. All DSB transition counselor staff make face-to-face visits with the nursing staff, school counselor staff, and special and regular education staff within each high school on at least a monthly basis to offer this information and to provide further clarification and to answer questions on the process, what the core services are under Pre-ETS and how to access those services. Referrals are taken both digitally and by paper referral process. 3. All DSB transition counselor staff along with the Statewide Field Administrator attend monthly meetings with ESVI and Teacher for the Blind meetings to discuss upcoming events and to identify students currently in sub-minimum wage situations that need information and counseling on how to access DSB services to work towards competitive integrated employment.

e. Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(3)). Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

DSB develops agreements in response to: (1) state and federal laws and regulations, (2) results of needs assessments, (3) suggestions from consumer groups, and (4) recommendations of staff and stakeholders including those in the Workforce Services arena. DSB uses the RSA guideline template to develop cooperative agreements.

DSB has been a long-standing partner with the Arkansas Deaf blindness Project: Children and Youth with Sensory Impairment (CAYSI), formerly known as the Deaf/Blind Consortium. DSB refers participants to CAYSI and serves on its Advisory Committee, which provides training for parents and professionals to foster stronger partnerships among agencies who work with this population. The project maintains a deafblind registry and requests related information from DSB. DSB has accepted an invitation from the Helen Keller National Center to become a member of its National Community of Practice, formerly known as state affiliates. The group is currently composed of 38 organizations and agencies, with more being added as responses are received from invitations that were sent out by HKNC. DSB operates the Arkansas Information Reading Services (AIRS), which began as a private non-profit organization and is now part of the state agency. The organization's founders formed Friends of AIRS (FAIRS) to continue its support of the station. DSB leases facilities for AIRS from the Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN), which provides DSB with in—kind services in the form of engineering services and other technology.

f. Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(4)). Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

DSB has contractual agreements with private non-profit and for-profit agencies in the state to provide supported employment and extended services as applicable to our consumers with most significant disabilities, including youth with most significant disabilities. These services have been provided by World Services for the Blind, Easter Seals, Job Connections, Goodwill Industries, Ed Davis Inc. Team Academy, Building Bridges, S.W. Chance, and Arkansas Support Network.

DSB, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS), and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), Special Education Unit (SEU), Transition Unit are partners in a cooperative agreement outlining responsibilities and the provision of services, including supported employment, to transition-aged participants. The agreement produced an interagency

steering committee which works on supported employment issues. During its formulation, the steering committee was facilitated by the EmployAbility Project, a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant (MIG) program that was housed in the DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services.

Supported employment is integrated competitive employment, or an individual working in an integrated employment setting towards integrated competitive employment. This includes customized employment. Each of the SE services providers provides extended services for 24 months or as long as the individual is employed.

Half of the funds that Arkansas receives under the supported employment state grant is used to support youth with the most significant blindness and low vision needs (up to age 24), and these youth may receive extended services (i.e., ongoing supports to maintain an individual in supported employment) for up to 4 years.

Each of the SE services providers are responsible for extended services as noted above. Building Bridges, S.W. Chance, Ed Davis Inc., Arkansas Support Network and TEEM are new SE service providers. A new Supported Employment Vendor Application was developed to improve client and vendor service delivery

g. Coordination with Employers

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(5)). Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

1. VR services; and

DSB has designated a minimum of 26% of the workday of each counselor to be devoted to developing internships, on-the-job training, job shadowing, and volunteer job site opportunities for all participants. DSB counselors serve as business consultants, because they are most familiar with the skills, training, and capabilities of their clients. This activity is done with the interest of the participant in mind. Counselors seek out employers who have career matches that meet the interest and abilities of the participant or it is done with the aspirations and future goals of the participant in mind. This way more territory is covered, and the counselors can match potential careers to the individuals they directly support. DSB currently has 26 VR counselors performing this function. Counselors conduct outreach to businesses and provide information and demonstrations on accommodations and technology to employers. DSB tracks all business contacts and is working on a common system in conjunction with all the workforce partners to have a shared platform of business leads. DSB counselors play a significant role in sharing the business needs with other partners and, in turn, have access to other business leads developed by workforce partners.

DSB is in the process recruiting for a Business Engagement Coordinator position. The anticipated date for the position to be filled is February 2020. The addition of the Business Engagement Coordinator will strengthen existing and new partnerships with businesses and corporations to allow DSB clients more job opportunities in competitive wage industries.
DSB and other WIOA partners work together on the WIOA Business Engagement Committee to share information and provide information to employers on hiring individuals with disabilities. Additionally, DSB has reached out to larger businesses to develop job site training placements and direct hire opportunities for DSB participants. DSB is currently working with Children's Hospital and Verizon Wireless on expedited interviews for candidates that meet the education and skill needs of these companies for current vacancies. Candidates are given an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, and once selected on-the-job training is arranged. DSB has also arranged for internship opportunities within state government and will continue to expand this project.

2. transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

In regard to pre-employment transition services, tours and informational interviews of large employers like Fed—Ex, Heifer International, Wal-Mart Distribution Centers and JB Hunt have been arranged to expose students and youth to real world opportunities within the State.

Through local business and industry, pre-employment transition students and youth are exposed to work experiences within a call center environment, a manufacturing environment, and computer applications.

h. Interagency Cooperation

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

1. the State Medicaid plan under title XIX of the Social Security Act;

DSB will continue close working relationships with the DHS Division of Medical Services (DMS), which houses Medicaid; the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDS); and the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS). DSB has cooperative agreements outlining responsibilities and the provision of services with the DDS and DBHS. A similar agreement is being formulated for the provision of services to State Medicaid recipients. DSB coordinates services with DBHS, DMS, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

2. the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and

DSB will continue active working relationships with the DHS Division of Medical Services (DMS), which houses Medicaid; the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDS); and the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS). DSB has cooperative agreements outlining responsibilities and the provision of services with the DDS and DBHS. A similar agreement is being formulated for the provision of services to State Medicaid recipients. DSB coordinates services with DBHS, DMS, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and sends a representative to meetings of the Arkansas Children's Behavioral Health Care Commission. Also, DSB and the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities serve on the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses education—related issues.

3. the State agency responsible for providing mental health services.

DSB will continue active relationships with the DHS Division of Medical Services (DMS), which houses Medicaid; the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDS); and the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS). DSB has cooperative agreements outlining responsibilities and the provision of services with the DDS and DBHS. A similar agreement is being formulated for the provision of services to State Medicaid recipients. DSB coordinates services with DBHS, DMS, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.10)). Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

1. Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

A. Qualified Personnel Needs.

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

i. the number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;

The number of personnel who are employed by the State agency in the provision of VR services in relation to the number of individuals served, broken down by personnel category;
Division of Services for the Blind is dedicated to ensuring an adequate supply of qualified professionals and support staff. DSB has a strong commitment to providing and making available training programs especially for staff that provide direct services to participants. The Arkansas

Division of State Services for the Blind (DSB) supports a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) as required by Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1992. DSB's CSPD Plan is aimed at securing and maintaining an adequate supply of qualified rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals to provide rehabilitation services to blind and severely visually impaired individuals. DSB requires VR Counselors to be certified by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) or at minimum be qualified to be certified and working toward certification. These state standards are consistent with national standards requiring recognized certifications for personnel providing vocational rehabilitation services. The DSB Staff Development Coordinator, Field Services Administrator, and Area Field Supervisors monitor progress by staff to meet CSPD standards. An employee that declares retirement receives a lower priority in attaining the CSPD standard but is required to complete designated coursework to increase rehab expertise. Counselors have established timeframes (seven years from date of hire) to meet the requirements or face reclassification and demotion or other measures. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors receive priority in training for CSPD requirements.

The spring 2019 legislative session gave DSB the authority to pay tuition for its VR Counselors working on their CRCs. Effective July 1, 2019, all DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors were reclassified as either grade level GS06 Rehabilitation Counselor or GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. The GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor classification requires CRC certification. According to state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requirements, DSB now advertises for a GS08 position with the preferred qualification being a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and CRC certification. State hiring policy authorized by OPM allows DSB to hire graduates with Bachelor's degrees in Rehabilitation for GS06 positions when there is no suitable applicant with a Master's degree with the condition the person will seek and obtain a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling within seven years of employment and will meet CRC certification or become eligible to sit for CRC certification within one year of receipt of the Master's degree.

Caseload Data Projected Number of Replacement Staff in the Next Five Years -DSB anticipates an elevated level of retirement among its experienced staff in the next five years. It is expected that there will be a fairly regular replacement rate for staff during the next five years. For FFY 2019, the 26 VR caseloads had an average caseload of 32 individuals with 950 active cases statewide and 1,519 individuals served for the Federal Fiscal Year. The number of staff on hand as of the December 2019 DSB Board meeting and projected annual number of replacements by category are as follows: Division of Services for the Blind operates with 78 full time employees to implement the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. DSB has 28 Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor (CRC) positions. The Field Services section currently has 5 Certified Counselors to provide Counseling and Guidance and 23 non-certified counselors are either seeking certification or waiting to complete the CRC exam. 25 support staff provide administrative support for Field

Services operations. The remaining 23 employees provide administrative support for the agency or work in the Randolph Sheppard program. DSB has 30 extra help positions authorized. 16 of those extra help positions are reserved for Rehab Counselor Interns. The job title used for interns is Rehabilitation Instructor. Each intern is mentored by a Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor and an immediate supervisor. The intern serves 6 months or less to fulfill academic obligations towards a Masters' degree in Vocational Rehab Counselling. 10 of the 30 extra help positions are reserved for the 3-week Jump Start summer program. The job title for these positions are Residential Care Assistants. The assistants are employed to provide 24- hour oversight to the youth ages 16-21. The remaining 4 part-time extra help positions are used to fulfill administrative obligations for the agency as needed. DSB works aggressively to fill vacancies promptly.

Category Over the next 5 years
Total Positions Administrative Staff 21 -filled 2-vacancies 0-projected vacancies Counselor Staff 23-filled 7-vacancies 2-projected vacancies Staff Supporting Counselor Activities 22-filled 3-vacancies 2- projected vacancies

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

Division of Services for the Blind is dedicated to ensuring an adequate supply of qualified professionals and support staff. DSB has a strong commitment to providing and making available training programs especially for staff that provide direct services to participants.
Current Staffing Levels The number of staff on hand as of the December 2019 Division of Services for the Blind is authorized 78 full time employees to implement the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. DSB has 28 Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor (CRC) positions. The Field Services section currently has 5 Certified Counselors to provide Counseling and Guidance and 21 non-certified counselors are either seeking certification or waiting to complete the CRC exam. DSB created 2 new job responsibilities to implement WIOA activities. The Pre-ETS Area Manager was hired March 2018 to manage Pre-ETS related activities. DSB is in the process recruiting for the Business Engagement Coordinator position. The anticipated date for the position to be filled is February 2020. The addition of the Business Engagement Coordinator will strengthen existing and new partnerships with businesses and corporations to allow DSB clients more job opportunities in competitive wage industries. 25 support staff provide administrative support for Field Services operations. The remaining 23 employees provide administrative support for the agency or work in the Randolph Sheppard program. DSB has 30 extra help positions authorized. 16 of those extra help positions are reserved for Rehab Counselor Interns. The job title used for interns is Rehabilitation Instructor. Each intern is mentored by a Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor and an immediate supervisor. The intern

serves 6 months or less to fulfill academic obligations towards a masters' degree in Vocational Rehab Counseling. 10 of the 30 extra help positions are reserved for the 3-week Jump Start summer program. The job title for these positions are Residential Care Assistants. The assistants are employed to provide 24-hour oversight to the youth ages 16-21. The remaining 4 part-time extra help positions are used to fulfill administrative obligations for the agency as needed. DSB works aggressively to fill vacancies promptly. For FFY 2019, the 30 VR caseloads had an average caseload of 32 individuals with 950 active cases statewide and 1,519 individuals served for the Federal Fiscal Year.

iii. projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the State agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors.

Projected Number of Replacement Staff in the Next Five Years DSB anticipates an elevated level of retirement among its experienced staff in the next five years. It is expected that the replacement will have minimal impact on agency outcomes during this time period. For FFY 2019, the 30 VR caseloads had an average caseload of 32 individuals with 950 active cases statewide and 1,519 individuals served for the Federal Fiscal Year. The number of staff on hand as of the December 2019 DSB Board meeting and projected annual number of replacements by category are as follows: Division of Services for the Blind is authorized 78 full time employees to implement the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. DSB has 28 Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor (CRC) positions. The Field Services section currently has 5 Certified Counselors to provide Counseling and Guidance and 21 non-certified counselors are either seeking certification or waiting to complete the CRC exam. 25 support staff provide administrative support for Field Services operations. The remaining 23 employees provide administrative support for the agency or work in the Randolph Sheppard program. DSB has 30 extra help positions authorized. 16 of those extra help positions are reserved for Rehab Counselor Interns. The job title used for interns is Rehabilitation Instructor. Each intern is mentored by a Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor and an immediate supervisor. The intern serves 6 months or less to fulfill academic obligations towards a masters' degree in Vocational Rehab Counseling. 10 of the 30 extra help positions are reserved for the 3 -week Jump Start summer program. The job title for these positions are Residential Care Assistants. The assistants are employed to provide 24- hour oversight to the youth ages 16-21. The remaining 4 part-time extra help positions are used to fulfill administrative obligations for the agency as needed. DSB works aggressively to fill vacancies promptly. Total Positions Administrative Staff 21 -filled 2-vacancies 0-projected vacancies Counselor Staff 23-filled 7-vacancies 2-projected vacancies Staff Supporting Counselor Activities 22-filled 3-vacancies 2- projected vacancies

B. Personnel Development

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

i. a list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;

Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals:

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling through the Rehabilitation Education and Research Program housed in the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources and Communication Disorders. The Spring 2018-2019 has 26 students enrolled, there are 23 full—time students, 3 part—time students, and 20 students who graduated.
The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with an Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling. The Masters in Rehabilitation Teaching (MRT) program has been dissolved, but the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program will continue. Both the RCE and O&M programs are housed in the Counseling, Adult and Rehabilitation Education (CARE) degree Master of Arts. The Spring 2018-2019 has 80 students enrolled. Of these students there are 78 full—time students, 2 part—time students, and 32 graduates.

The University of Wisconsin-Stout Department of Counseling Psychology is primarily a graduate department, offers a master's degree (M.S.) in counseling specializing in community counseling. The department emphasizes the integration of multiculturalism and diversity into counseling psychology and is committed to multiculturalism broadly defined in teaching, research, practice, and service. The Spring 2018-2019 has 38 students enrolled, there are 27 full—time students, 11 part—time students, and 19 graduates.

The Staff Development Coordinator maintains contact with the institutions of higher education and gathers data. The Coordinator reports this data to the Field Services Administrator and the Assistant Director. Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals: The Staff Development Coordinator attempts to maintain contact with the institutions of higher education to gather data. Turnover of staff may prevent timely collection of graduates and student's data in rehab programs. The Coordinator reports this data to the Field Services Administrator and the Assistant Director.

Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals:

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

DSB has had students enrolled online at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) and the University of Wisconsin-Stout through a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) grant that UNT received in 2009 with the agreement that it would fund a limited number of VR Counselors outside of Texas. DSB does not currently have any counselors enrolled in the UNT program.

iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.
Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals:

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(CSPD) grant that UNT received in 2009 with the agreement that it would fund a limited number of VR Counselors outside of Texas. DSB does not currently have any counselors enrolled in the UNT program.

2. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

DSB has cooperative agreements with each of the 33 colleges/universities in Arkansas in order to promote the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education.

To address current needs for qualified personnel, DSB posts vacancies on the state employment website arstatejobs.com, the statewide newspaper, Workforce Services offices, other state agencies, and college and university recruitment bulletins. It also sends job notices to the Arkansas American Council of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind for distribution. Recruitment efforts are ongoing to the 15 fully accredited graduate programs within TACE Region VI, including Arkansas colleges and universities in the region and those with a historically predominate minority enrollment.

Universities in Arkansas with Rehabilitation Counseling Programs include:

Institution: University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) Location: Fayetteville Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling and doctoral degrees in Rehabilitation and in Counseling Education.

Institution: University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) Location: Little Rock Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling.

Institution: The University of Wisconsin-Stout Department of Counseling Psychology is primarily a graduate department, offers a master's degree (M.S.) in counseling specializing in community counseling.

Effective July 1, 2019, all DSB vocational rehabilitation counselors were reclassified as either grade level GS06 Rehabilitation Counselor or GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. The

GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor classification requires CRC certification. According to state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requirements, DSB now advertises for a GS08 position with the preferred qualification being a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and CRC certification. State hiring policy authorized by OPM allows DSB to hire graduates with Bachelor's degrees in Rehabilitation for GS06 positions when there is no suitable applicant with a Master's degree with the condition the person will seek and obtain a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling within seven years of employment and will meet CRC certification or become eligible to sit for CRC certification within one year of receipt of the Master's degree.

Bachelor's degree or Non—MRC Master's degree — L051C Rehabilitation Counselor/GS06 — $36,154.98 (annual) — $17.3822 (hourly)
Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC)/CRC — L098C Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor/GS08 — $45,009.95 (annual) — $21.6394 (hourly)

The Staff Development section reviews the current training levels of all personnel and develops and monitors agency policy and procedure for training and retaining qualified personnel meet standards required by the Department of Education and other federal/state requirements. All DSB employees receive an annual personnel performance evaluation from their immediate supervisor, which is reviewed and approved by DSB Director. The evaluation considers the training each employee needs to fulfill job duties in providing services to our consumers.
DSB will continue to work closely with the universities to provide internship and practicum opportunities for students and notify universities when job openings become available. Students are recruited from university and college rehabilitation programs within the state to seek employment with DSB upon graduation. DSB maintains communication with the university programs including the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A), the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR), The University of Wisconsin-Stout. In addition, DSB will plan to meet quarterly with the universities to provide updates within the vocational rehabilitation field to give practitioner input, and to receive first—hand information regarding graduates from the MRC programs.

The agency actively recruits minorities and students with disabilities. Students, including minorities, are encouraged to join professional rehabilitation organizations such as the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) and the National Association of Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns (NAMRC). These rehabilitation professional organizations provide scholarship opportunities to individuals, including minorities, who major in the field of rehabilitation.
DSB revised VR Counselor job descriptions to update roles and responsibilities due to increasing duties, and also to assist with increasing salaries for DSB VR Counselors competitive to surrounding regions. Additionally, leadership is reviewing training and development opportunities to help with retention of counselors.

B. Personnel Development

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

1. A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program;

The Staff Development Coordinator maintains contact with the institutions of higher education and gathers data. The Coordinator reports this data to the Field Services Administrator and the Assistant Director. Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals: The Staff Development Coordinator attempts to maintain contact with the institutions of higher education to gather data. Turnover of staff at the IHE's may prevent timely collection of graduation rates and student success data. The Coordinator reports this data to the Field Services Administrator and the Assistant Director. Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals: The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling through the Rehabilitation Education and Research Program housed in the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources and Communication Disorders. Of the 38 students enrolled, there are 27 full—time students, 11 part—time students. Employees Sponsored by ARS and/or RSA, 27 full-time and 11 part-time. Arkansas State University (ASU) at Jonesboro offers a MS in Psychology and Counseling but do not offer MS degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Arkansas State University (ASU) at Jonesboro offers a master's Rehabilitation Counseling program, which is housed in the Psychology and Counseling Department. Of the 17 students enrolled, there were 13 full—time, including three with disabilities and four who are minorities, and there were four part—time students, including one with a disability and two who are minorities. Of these, 50% (three) are working in community counseling agencies, one has been accepted into a doctoral program to pursue a PhD in Rehabilitation, one is taking some time off to spend with family, and one is currently looking for work. DSB does not currently have any counselors enrolled in the UNT program. University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) and Arkansas Tech University (ATU) at Russellville do not offer master's degree programs in Rehabilitation Services but do offer bachelor's degree programs in Rehabilitation Science.

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals:

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with an Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling. The Masters in Rehabilitation Teaching (MRT) program has been dissolved, but the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program

will continue. Both the RCE and O&M programs are housed in the Counseling, Adult and Rehabilitation Education (CARE) degree Master of Arts. The Spring 2018 RCE program at UALR has116 students enrolled. Of these students there are 49 full—time, 67 part—time. The Fall 2017 had 127 students enrolled. Of these students there are 53 full-time, 74 part-time. Graduates in Fall 2016-2017, 17 graduated in Fall 2016, 17 graduated in Spring 2017, and 5 in Summer 2017. In the Fall 2018 there are 18 graduates.

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling through the Rehabilitation Education and Research Program housed in the Department of Rehabilitation, Human Resources and Communication Disorders. Of the 38 students enrolled, there are 27 full—time students, 11 part—time students. Employees Sponsored by ARS and/or RSA, 27 full-time and 11 part-time.

Arkansas State University (ASU) at Jonesboro offers a MS in Psychology and Counseling but do not offer MS degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. >

DSB has had students enrolled online at the University of North Texas (UNT) through a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) grant that UNT received in 2009 with the agreement that it would fund a limited number of VR Counselors outside of Texas. DSB does not currently have any counselors enrolled in the UNT program.

University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) and Arkansas Tech University (ATU) at Russellville do not offer master's degree programs in Rehabilitation Services but do offer bachelor's degree programs in Rehabilitation Science.

iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received, or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals:

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) offers a Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with an Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling. The Masters in Rehabilitation Teaching (MRT) program has been dissolved, but the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program will continue. Both the RCE and O&M programs are housed in the Counseling, Adult and Rehabilitation Education (CARE) degree Master of Arts. The Spring 2018 RCE program at UALR has116 students enrolled. Of these students there are 49 full—time, 67 part—time. The Fall 2017 had 127 students enrolled. Of these students there are 53 full-time, 74 part-time. Graduates in Fall 2016-2017, 17 graduated in Fall 2016, 17 graduated in Spring 2017, and 5 in Summer 2017. In the Fall 2018 there are 18 graduates.

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2. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

DSB has cooperative agreements with each of the 33 colleges/universities in Arkansas to promote the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated state unit and institutions of higher education.

To address current needs for qualified personnel, the DHS personnel office posts DSB vacancies on the DHS website, the state employment website arstatejobs.com, the DHS Intranet site, the statewide newspaper, Workforce Services offices, other state agencies, and college and university recruitment bulletins. The DSB Personnel Section also sends job notices to the Arkansas American Council of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind for distribution. Recruitment efforts are ongoing to the 15 fully accredited graduate programs within TACE Region VI, including Arkansas colleges and universities in the region and those with a historically predominate minority enrollment. Universities in Arkansas with Rehabilitation Counseling Programs include:

Institution: University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) Location: Little Rock Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling

Institution: University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) Location: Fayetteville Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling and doctoral degrees in Rehabilitation and in Counseling Education

Institution: Arkansas State University (ASU) Location: Jonesboro Programs: Master's in psychology and Counseling but do not offer MS degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

Institution: University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) Location: Pine Bluff Programs: Bachelor's degree in Rehabilitation Science

Institution: Arkansas Tech University (ATU) Location: Russellville Programs: Bachelor's degree in Rehabilitation Science

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Bachelor's degree or Non—MRC Master's degree — L051C Rehabilitation Counselor/GS06 — $36,154.98 (annual) — $17.3822 (hourly)

Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC)/CRC — L098C Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor/GS08 — $45,009.95 (annual) — $21.6394 (hourly)

The Staff Development section reviews the current training levels of all personnel and develops and monitors agency policy and procedure for training and retaining qualified personnel meet standards required by the Department of Education and other federal/state requirements. All DSB employees receive an annual personnel performance evaluation from their immediate supervisor, which is reviewed and approved by DSB Director. The evaluation considers the training each employee needs to fulfill job duties in providing services to our consumers.

DSB will continue work closely with the universities to provide internship and practicum opportunities for students and notifies universities when job openings become available. Students are recruited from university and college rehabilitation programs within the state to seek employment with DSB upon graduation. DSB maintains communication with the university programs including the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (UAF), the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR), the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB), Arkansas State University (ASU), and Arkansas Tech University (ATU). In addition, DSB will plan to meet

quarterly with the universities to provide updates within the vocational rehabilitation field to give practitioner input, and to receive first—hand information regarding graduates from the MRC programs.

The agency actively recruits minorities and students with disabilities. Students, including minorities, are encouraged to join professional rehabilitation organizations such as the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) and the National Association of Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns (NAMRC). These rehabilitation professional organizations provide scholarship opportunities to individuals, including minorities, who major in the field of rehabilitation.

DSB revised VR Counselor job descriptions to update roles and responsibilities due to increasing duties, and to assist with increasing salaries for DSB VR Counselors competitive to surrounding regions. Additionally, leadership is reviewing training and development opportunities to help with retention of counselors.

3. Personnel Standards

Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) and 34 CFR 361.18(c) to ensure that designated State unit professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including:

A. standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

The Arkansas Office of Personnel Management (OPM) continues to recommend the minimum qualifications, job descriptions and salary rates for specific classifications, based upon labor market surveys, which are then reviewed and approved by the legislature. The spring 2019 legislative session gave DSB the authority to pay tuition for its VR Counselors working on their CRCs. DSB is exploring ways to assist Area Field Supervisors with the costs of tuition to meet CSPD standards.
Internships are available to students in the rehabilitation programs across the state. In FY 2015, DSB had seven interns to include 5 females and two males. One minority female from the Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling program from Arkansas State University has been hired full time.

DSB recruits, and, to the degree possible, hires counselors with a master’s degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or other closely related degree. DSB implements individual education plans for existing personnel to be retrained to meet certification standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Counselors have seven years to meet CSPD requirements from date of hire.

Effective July 1, 2019, all DSB vocational rehabilitation counselors were reclassified as either grade level GS06 Rehabilitation Counselor or GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. The GS08 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor classification requires CRC certification. According to state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requirements, DSB now advertises for a GS08 position with the preferred qualification being a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and CRC certification. State hiring policy authorized by OPM allows DSB to hire graduates with Bachelor's degrees in Rehabilitation for GS06 positions when there is no suitable applicant with a Master's degree with the condition the person will seek and obtain a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling within seven years of employment and will meet CRC certification or become eligible to sit for CRC certification within one year of receipt of the Master's degree. Internships are available to students in the rehabilitation programs across the State in FY 2017, DSB had one intern to include 1 female. One Caucasian female was from the Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling program from University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.
As of the December 2019 DSB Board meeting, the CSPD status is as follows: Field Services Administrator-Noncertified; 5 VR Counselors with CRC. 4 VR Counselors anticipating taking CRC exam October 2018. 1 VR Counselors with LPC. 4 currently enrolled in CRC Master's level program. 6 pending enrollments in a CRC Master's level program. 5 Supervisors with CRC.

B. the establishment and maintenance of education and experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act, to ensure that the personnel have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

The Arkansas Office of Personnel Management (OPM) continues to recommend the minimum qualifications, job descriptions and salary rates for specific classifications, based upon labor market surveys, which are then reviewed and approved by the legislature. The spring 2019 legislative session gave DSB the authority to pay tuition for its VR Counselors working on their CRCs. DSB is exploring ways to assist Area Field Supervisors with the costs of tuition to meet CSPD standards.

DSB recruits, and, to the degree possible, hires counselors with a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or other closely related degree. DSB implements individual education plans for existing personnel to be retrained to meet certification standards for Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) and Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Counselors have seven years to meet CSPD requirements from date of hire.

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position with the preferred qualification being a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and CRC certification. State hiring policy authorized by OPM allows DSB to hire graduates with bachelor's degrees in Rehabilitation for GS06 positions when there is no suitable applicant with a master's degree with the condition the person will seek and obtain a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling within seven years of employment and will meet CRC certification or become eligible to sit for CRC certification within one year of receipt of the master's degree. Internships are available to students in the rehabilitation programs across the State in FY 2017, DSB had one intern to include 1 female. One Caucasian female was from the Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling program from University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

As of the December 2019 DSB Board meeting, the CSPD status is as follows: Field Services Administrator-Noncertified; 5 VR Counselors with CRC. 4 VR Counselors anticipating taking CRC exam October 2018. 1 VR Counselors with LPC. 4 currently enrolled in CRC Master's level program. 6 pending enrollments in a CRC Master's level program and 4 Area Managers with CRC.

4. Staff Development.

Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

A. a system of staff development for professionals and paraprofessionals within the designated State unit, particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998;

DSB staff must possess specific knowledge concerning the problems of blindness and be allowed the opportunity for career development as related to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services. DSB actively assesses the training needs of its employees and solicits their input regarding training needs. DSB surveys staff annually to determine the training or resources they require to perform their duties more efficiently and effectively. DSB also uses a state—approved personnel performance evaluation document to review an employee's performance and to identify individual training needs.

Leadership development and capacity—building opportunities are offered through a wide variety of methods:

• U of A CURRENTS periodically surveys rehabilitation staff regarding training needs and develops courses and conferences based on the results or on requests by DSB and other agencies.

In the last fiscal year, CURRENTS offered face-to-face trainings and teleconferences on topics including: Writing and Marketing Your Business Plan; All Paths Lead to Adult Life: Important Partnerships and Components of Quality Transition Planning for Students with Intellectual Disabilities Sessions 1 and 2; Making Ethical Decisions in the Vocational Rehabilitation Process; Psychological Evaluations: Not Just for Eligibility; Using the DSM—5 Assessment Tools and International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) As Training Tools for Rehabilitation Counselors; Therapeutic Interventions with Aggressive Clients; Evaluating Vocational Communication Skills of Persons Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing; Multiculturalism and Disabilities; Using the Updated CRC Code of Ethics to Make Ethical Decisions in Everyday Tasks; Putting Together Your Business's Winning Team; Transition to Success for Individuals with Autism; Using Social Media to Plan Careers and Find Employment; Working with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS); Resources: You Got 'Em, Now Use 'Em; Job Success with Young Adults Diagnosed with DSM 5 Neurodevelopmental Disorders; The Use of Interest Inventories and Other Techniques with People Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Changing Nature of Disability in the 21st Century; The Medical and Psychosocial Aspects of Multiple Sclerosis Parts 1 and 2; Rehabilitation of Persons with Bipolar Disorders; Rehabilitation of Persons with Depressive Disorders; Flipping the Script: Viewing Our Work Through a Social Model Lens; Working With Justice—Involved VR Clients; Using Qualitative Tools in Career Counseling; and Backs in a Flash.

• In-house training is provided through DSB's Quality Assurance Coordinator, Field Administrator, and other experienced, credentialed professional staff; DSB's annual Statewide meeting; the annual Field Services meeting; periodic training meetings; and one-on-one training which is made available to all staff depending upon the need. Information is distributed at Director's meetings, Supervisors' meetings, emails and the agency website. Training is also purchased from outside sources, such as the Older Individuals Who Are Blind Training provided by Mississippi State University.

• Staff are encouraged to participate in professional, service, and consumer organizations, such as the National Rehabilitation Association, Lions Clubs, the National Federation of the Blind, the American Council of the Blind, and the Arkansas Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), and opportunities are available to attend organizations' state and national conferences.
Retention of qualified personnel is addressed through CEU credit for staff training, as well as opportunities for expanding skills and knowledge in a variety of areas.

B. Acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge

Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

DSB staff must possess specific knowledge concerning the problems of blindness and be allowed the opportunity for career development as related to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services.

DSB actively assesses the training needs of its employees and solicits their input regarding training needs. DSB surveys staff annually to determine the training or resources they require to perform their duties more efficiently and effectively. DSB also uses a state—approved personnel performance evaluation document to review an employee's performance and to identify individual training needs.

Leadership development and capacity—building opportunities are offered through a wide variety of methods: • When it was operating Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center periodically surveyed rehabilitation staff regarding training needs and developed courses and conferences based on the results or on requests by DSB and other agencies. From 2011 through the 1st quarter of 2014, TACE offered face—to—face trainings and teleconferences on topics including: Writing and Marketing Your Business Plan; All Paths Lead to Adult Life: Important Partnerships and Components of Quality Transition Planning for Students with Intellectual Disabilities Sessions 1 and 2; Making Ethical Decisions in the Vocational Rehabilitation Process; Psychological Evaluations: Not Just for Eligibility; Using the DSM—5 Assessment Tools and International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) As Training Tools for Rehabilitation Counselors; Therapeutic Interventions with Aggressive Clients; Evaluating Vocational Communication Skills of Persons Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing; Multiculturalism and Disabilities; Using the Updated CRC Code of Ethics to Make Ethical Decisions in Everyday Tasks; Putting Together Your Business's Winning Team; Transition to Success for Individuals with Autism; Using Social Media to Plan Careers and Find Employment; Working with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS); Resources: You Got 'Em, Now Use 'Em; Job Success with Young Adults Diagnosed with DSM 5 Neurodevelopmental Disorders; The Use of Interest Inventories and Other Techniques with People Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Changing Nature of Disability in the 21st Century; The Medical and Psychosocial Aspects of Multiple Sclerosis Parts 1 and 2; Rehabilitation of Persons with Bipolar Disorders; Rehabilitation of Persons with Depressive Disorders; Flipping the Script: Viewing Our Work Through a Social Model Lens; Working With Justice—Involved VR Clients; Using Qualitative Tools in Career Counseling; and Backs in a Flash. As we move forward with WIOA and the emerging new Technical Assistance Centers, DSB is working with the WINTAC towards Job Driven practices/best practices, best practices in pre-employment transition services, addressing section 511 subminimum wage requirements, and performance accountability. DSB in combination with Arkansas General is working with the Transition Technical Assistance Center of the University of North Carolina to improve and strengthen the transition program.

• The Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) provides opportunities for training DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to take the Certified Employment Support

Professional (CESP) exam. Although DSB is eligible, no slots will be used this year due to the distance of exam locations. When the exam was being given in Louisiana in FY 2013, four DSB staff took the exam, with three passing and becoming CESP's. This certification falls in line with DSB's training plan.

• In-house training is provided through DSB's Database Administrator, Field Administrator, and other experienced, credentialed professional staff; the DHS Organizational Development and Training Unit (until the structural support for ADWS is finalized); DSB's annual Statewide meeting; the annual Field Services meeting; periodic training meetings; and one-on-one training which is made available to all staff depending upon the need. Information is distributed at Director's meetings, Supervisors' meetings, emails, the agency website, and ADWS SharePoint. Training is also purchased from outside sources.

• Staff are encouraged to participate in professional, service, and consumer organizations, such as the National Rehabilitation Association, Lions Clubs, the National Federation of the Blind, the American Council of the Blind, and the Arkansas Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), and opportunities are available to attend organizations' state and national conferences.

Retention of qualified personnel is addressed through CEU credit for staff training, as well as opportunities for expanding skills and knowledge in a variety of areas.

5. Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs

Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

Appropriate modes of communication, including sign language interpreters, are available on a contractual basis. The directive to utilize the contracts has been provided to all staff and is on file in each DSB office; it is also in DSB policy.

DSB has been a long—standing partner with the Arkansas Deafblindness Project: Children and Youth with Sensory Impairment (CAYSI), formerly known as the Deaf/Blind Consortium. DSB refers participants to CAYSI and serves on its Advisory Committee, which provides training for parents and professionals to foster stronger partnerships among agencies who work with this population. The project maintains a deafblind registry and requests related information from DSB.

DSB has accepted an invitation from the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) to become a member of its National Community of Practice, formerly known as state affiliates. The group is currently composed of 38 organizations and agencies, with more being added as responses are received from invitations that were sent out by HKNC.

DSB provides interpreter services for communication with persons with limited English-speaking ability on a contractual basis. In addition, one of the Area Field Supervisors speaks Spanish and French and understands Portuguese from having lived in Brazil (Central Arkansas has a community of Brazilians). Another Area Field Supervisor speaks Norwegian, Icelandic, Danish and Swedish languages. A member of the Business and Technology staff is fluent in Spanish. DHS has an in—house, certified Spanish interpreter in Miller County. These communication resources can be utilized as needed to serve participants.

Reader service, guide service, and any special adaptive equipment are made available to applicants for services, DSB participants, and DSB personnel. Information is also available in the medium of choice for persons making application for DSB services and for persons with disabilities who are employed by DSB.

6. Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

DSB is a charter member in the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP), which coordinates transition services and discusses education—related issues. AITP has representatives from agencies and organizations, including, but not limited to Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), Department of Human Services (DHS), DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), DSB, parent centers, the private sector, and public and private schools. AITP involves transition agencies and organizations at a state level through quarterly meetings and shares information through its website.

Through the AITP, local issues are addressed by local teams. The local teams provide oversight to ensure that transition goals and services are in place by the time a child becomes eligible, as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

DSB works with Arkansas Workforce Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education to plan and develop pre-employment transition services and to coordinate services for individuals being served dually and under the PROMISE grant. The Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education staff provide training and information on transition services to vocational rehabilitation and workforce services staff. In turn, vocational rehabilitation staff, both DSB and ARS train and collaborate with Education and Workforce to provide training on how to establish work based learning experiences, providing job exploration counseling and counseling on opportunities in enrollment in post-secondary counseling, as well as cross training on instructional models in supported employment. Our agencies work together towards utilizing best practices on Section 101, IDEA,

ADA and the Individual Education Plan (IEP). DSB's transition coordinator participates in monthly meetings with ESVI staff and teachers for the visually impaired.

j. Statewide Assessment

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(a)).

1. Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those:

A. with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

In December 2019, DSB conducted a statewide needs assessment to measure the effectiveness in providing services and assess possible needs. The DSB Quality Assurance team used email, and traditional postal mail to send surveys to DSB consumers, DSB staff, DSB partners, and employers. In cases for which email addresses were available, an email with a brief description of the need's assessment, instructions for completing the online survey, and a direct link to the survey were provided to recipients. In total 451 surveys were emailed: 377 consumer surveys, 52 staff surveys, and 22 partner surveys. In cases for which email addresses were not available, surveys were sent by traditional postal mail. In total, 1,676 surveys were mailed. 1,313 employer surveys and 363 consumer surveys. **Surveys were completed in January 2020.**

To ensure that outlined needs are being addressed, DSB plans to focus more extensively on conducting assessments via various research methodologies, implementing strategic action plans, and facilitating systematic progress reviews to measure effectiveness.

Based on the needs assessment results, it is recommended that DSB partners more consistently with employers, the Workforce Development System, and various other community rehabilitation programs in an effort to provide more job services and training opportunities to those who are most significantly disabled and those who are underserved.

Because the needs assessment results suggest that those who require long-term support and extended services to maintain employment, those who reside in rural communities, and Veterans are the most underserved, it is recommended that DSB create more outreach initiatives to engage with these populations.

Additional considerations may be given to identifying, coordinating and providing transition career services and pre-employment transition services to youth and students with disabilities.

A. with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

Needs Assessment results suggest that those with the most significant disabilities are most in need a job services, with 33% of respondents stating "job development and placement" as an essential service, 27% stating "employment preparation" as an essential service, 23% stating that "on-the-job training" as an essential service, and 17% stating "soft skills development" as an essential service.

B. who are minorities;

Needs Assessment results suggest that 38% of consumers served are of a racial/ethnic minority group, with 29% reporting as Black or African American, 7% reporting as Hispanic/Latino, 1% reporting as a Mix of two or more races, and 1% reporting as Asian. Overall, transportation, job services, and training present the greatest barriers to employment for this group.

C. who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

Needs Assessment results suggest that those who require long-term support and extended services to maintain employment, those who reside in rural communities, and Veterans are the most underserved, with 53%, 43% and 43% respectively reporting these categories.

D. who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and

Needs Assessment results suggest that at least 50% of respondents have worked with individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

E. who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services.

Needs Assessment results suggest 24% of consumers who responded are students or youth with disabilities who may be able to benefit from pre-employment transition services or other transition services.

2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State;

Needs Assessment results suggest that community rehabilitation programs within the State need to establish, develop and improve in efforts to provide job services and independent living skills, with 57% and 29% respectively reporting these categories.

3. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are

coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Needs Assessment results suggest that additional research is needed in this area.

k. Annual Estimates

Describe:

1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services;

Basis for Estimates—DSB used disability compendium report, population growth, the incidence of blindness, and historical data as the basis to project the number of individuals to be served through Part B of Title I and the number of supported employment cases to be served through Part B of Title VI.

Estimates for Part B of Title I:

DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,000 participants at a total cost of $4,516,818 ($4,516 per participant). Of this number, it is projected that 400 will be minorities.
Note: In addition to a growing Hispanic population, Arkansas has one of the highest Marshallese populations in the United States. In the 2010 Census count for Arkansas, 4,324 people identified themselves as Marshallese, placing the state as having the highest Marshallese population in the continental United States and the second highest overall (with Hawaii having 7,412). The Compact of Free Association (COFA), which allows the Marshallese to live and travel freely and at—will between the Marshall Islands and the United States, will end in 2023.

Estimates for Part B of Title VI:
DSB estimates it will serve 20 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of $289,000 ($14,450 per participant).

Estimates of Eligible Participants:
Based on statistical reporting derived from the American Community Survey, an overall rate of 2.9% for visual disability for the Arkansas population aged 16 to 64 showed approximately 18,000 persons in Arkansas might be eligible for and could receive vocational rehabilitation services from DSB.

2. The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:

A. The VR Program;

DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,000 participants. Of this number, it is projected that 400 will be minorities. Note: In addition to a growing Hispanic population, Arkansas has one of the highest Marshallese populations in the United States. In the 2010 Census count for Arkansas, 4,324 people identified themselves as Marshallese, placing the state as having the highest Marshallese population in the continental United States and the second highest overall (with Hawaii having 7,412). The Compact of Free Association (COFA), which allows the Marshallese to live and travel freely and at—will between the Marshall Islands and the United States, will end in 2023.

B. The Supported Employment Program; and

DSB estimates it will serve 20 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of $289,000 ($14,450 per participant).

C. each priority category, if under an order of selection;

NA

3. The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and

NA

4. The cost of services for the number of individuals estimated to be eligible for services. If under an order of selection, identify the cost of services for each priority category.

DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,000 participants at a total cost of $4,516,818 ($2,863 per participant). Of this number, it is projected that 400 will be minorities. DSB estimates it will serve 20 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of $289,000 ($14,450 per participant).

l. State Goals and Priorities

The designated State unit must:

1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed

Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed and agreed to by the State VR agency and the State Rehabilitation Council, if the State has a Council, and jointly agreed to any revisions.

The DSB Board, an independent commission, approved the goals and priorities.

2. Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.

DSB developed the following goals, based on WIOA, RSA guidance, recommendations by the DSB Board, and the most recent comprehensive, statewide needs assessment. Below are the goals, as approved by the DSB Board: 1) Increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired. 2) Increase pre-employment transition services to high school students; increase transition services to out-of-school youth. 3) Expand outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as those who are unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders. 4) Increase coordination with employers.

The DSB Board approved the following goals for carrying out our Supported Employment program. 1) DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants. 2) DSB will increase Supported Employment services to Pre-ETS students and out-of-school youth. 3) DSB will increase the quality of SE providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

3. Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas:

A. The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates;

In December 2019, DSB conducted a statewide needs assessment to measure the effectiveness in providing services and assess possible needs. The DSB Quality Assurance team used email, and traditional postal mail to send surveys to DSB consumers, DSB staff, DSB partners, and Employers. In cases for which email addresses were available, an email with a brief description of the needs assessment, instructions for completing the online survey, and a direct link to the survey were provided to recipients. In total 451 surveys were emailed: 377 consumer surveys, 52 staff surveys, and 22 partner surveys. In cases for which email addresses were not available, surveys were sent by traditional postal mail. In total, 1,676 surveys were mailed. 1,313 employer surveys and 363 consumers.

B. the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and

DSB continues to transition into using the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. Steps have been taken to conduct a statistical analysis over the last 3 years for consideration by DSB, in consultation with its Independent Commission and RSA, to develop a baseline of performance percentages for the agency to move forward in setting applicable performance standards under section 116 of WIOA.

C. other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

DSB was monitored by RSA in 2011. As a result, DSB adjusted goals and strategies to better serve the blind and visually impaired community in correlation with RSA's findings. Improving transition services and increasing employment outcomes for youth with disabilities and students with disabilities became a main goal. The report indicated, "From FY 2006 through FY 2010, DSB experienced similar declines in performance with respect to the number of transition-age youth served and those who achieved employment as it did for all of its consumers. According to Table 2.1, the number of transition-age youth served by DSB declined from 63 in FY 2006, to 56 in FY 2010, a difference of 11.1 percent. ...the number of transition-age youth who exited the VR system with an employment outcome after receiving services decreased from 25 in FY 2006, to 20 in FY 2009. In FY 2010, this figure sharply declined to 12."

To improve services and focus on this population, DSB has added 7 counselors and an Area Manager positions that are dedicated to pre-employment transition services and transition services. These counselors received intensive on-sight training at selected training centers for the blind and visually impaired. Training is provided on-the-job and monthly meetings are held with the Field Administrator regarding best practices, outreach, and locating work experience locations for the students. Monthly quality assurance reporting forms are turned in regarding each student and the 5 authorized PETS activities to verify that VR counselors are meeting the goals and objectives set forth in monthly meetings and so that ongoing supports can be arranged as needed.

m. Order of Selection

DSB has drafted the following Order of Selection criteria to be promogulated into policy spring, 2020.

C. each priority category, if under an order of selection;

The DSB Director will determine the priority levels that will remain open prior to the start of the Federal fiscal year based on the availability of its resources. Individuals in Priority Category 1 will be selected first for VR services. Individuals in Priority Category 2 will be served only after all individuals in Category 1 receive services. Individuals in Category 3 will receive services after all individuals in Categories 1 and 2 have been served. DSB will apply the Order of Selection in the following manner, if needed:

<u>Priority 1 Most Significant Disability</u>:

Priority 1 includes individuals eligible for DSB services with the most significant disability whose impairment severely limits four or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in

terms of an employment outcome and requires substantial VR services over an extended period of time.

Priority 2 More Significant Disability:

Priority 2 includes individuals eligible for DSB services with a significant disability whose impairment limits three functional capacities in terms of employment outcome and requires substantial VR services over an extended period of time.

Priority 3 Significant Disability:

Priority 3 includes individuals eligible for DSB services with a significant disability whose impairment limits one or two functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and requires substantial VR services over an extended period of time.

Job Retention

Individuals who are at immediate risk of losing employment may be served outside of the Order of Selection (See 34 C.F.R. 361.36(a)(3)(v). Immediate need means that an individual would almost certainly lose his/her current job if not provided specific services or equipment in the very near future that would enable him/her to retain that employment. Only services or equipment needed to maintain that current employment may be provided outside of the Order of Selection. If the individual loses their job or chooses a different employment outcome, they will resume their waiting list status. Also, any additional services or needs for the consumer must be provided under the established Order of Selection.

Describe:

1. Whether the designated State unit will implement and order of selection. If so, describe:

A. The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services.

DSB has drafted an Order of Selection policy to be followed should implementing Order of Selection become necessary. When the policy has been promulgated, the policy should be in place and implemented if necessary.

B. The justification for the order.

NA

C. The service and outcome goals.

NA

D. The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.

NA

E. How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and

NA

2. If the designated State unit has elected to serve eligible individuals, regardless of any established order of selection, who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment.

NA

n. Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds.

1. Specify the State's goals and priorities for funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services.

DSB's activities for supported employment services and programs funded under both Titles I and VI-B are intended to increase the number of persons receiving supported employment services and to improve employment outcomes for these individuals. DSB believes that the most effective and efficient strategy to accomplish this is by expanding and strengthening its collaborative linkages with relevant state agencies and/or private not-for-profit agencies for the provision of supported employment and extended support services. DSB will continue to expend available grant funds obtained under Title VI, Part B (Supported Employment Services), towards the administration of the supported employment program and the purchase of services in accordance with the WIOA proposed rules of April 16, 2015. No more than 2.5% of supported employment grant funds will be used for administrative activities, including but not limited to, data collection and analysis, training, and consultation costs. The remainder of grant funds under Title VI, Part B will be used to purchase supported employment services under Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) for individuals with the most significant disabilities who have been determined eligible for supported employment. DSB will expend 50% or more of these funds on Youth with Disabilities that need supported employment services. The State will provide a match of at least 10 percent in non-Federal expenditures for the total amount of expenditures incurred with half of the allotment reserved to provide SE services to youth with the most significant disabilities, our focus being blindness or severe visual impairment. DSB's electronic case management system provides the ability to ensure that Title VI-B funding is the primary source of payment for supported employment services until that funding is exhausted, at which point funding continues to be provided through Title I. DSB projects to provide supported employment

services to 20 individuals during FFY 2020. As explained above, when necessary both Title VI-B and Title I funds will be used for the provision of services. To successfully meet the supported employment needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities (blind or visually impaired), DSB is building relationships with the Division of Developmental Disabilities, the Division of Medical Services for the provision of extended services for supported employment clients. DSB counselors and vocational staff from the above agencies work together to identify individuals who would be appropriate referrals to DSB for supported employment services. DSB works with the Department of Education, Special Education to assure that youth with the most significant disabilities are accessing career, transition and employment services including supported employment services. DSB has worked to ensure best practices, so that the needs of youth with the most significant disabilities are met.

DSB counsels with those in subminimum wage situations who are blind and visually impaired to provide information and access to vocational rehabilitation to achieve competitive integrated employment in the community. DSB works with the Department of Education, Special Education, along with the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Medical Services to identify those that are blind and visually impaired age 24 or younger, so that the following occurs prior to the individual seeking work paying subminimum wage (less than Federal minimum wage): 1) During team consultations it is documented and ensured that the individual has received pre-employment transition services or transition services under IDEA. 2) The individual was given an opportunity to apply for VR services. Placement in subminimum wage situations are considered only after the individual has been found ineligible for services, or has been determined eligible for VR services but has not been successful and has been provided career counseling, information and referral to other appropriate resources for services designed to assist the individual in attaining competitive integrated employment.

2. Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including:

A. the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and

DSB uses several vendors to provide comprehensive supported employment services to youth and adults identified as blind or visually impaired. The services begin with identifying blindness skills, addressing psychological and social needs, and then moving on to skills training, placement and job coaching.
Supported employment is integrated competitive employment, or an individual working in an integrated employment setting working towards integrated competitive employment. This includes customized employment. The standard post-employment extended support service under supported employment is 24 months.
Half of the funds that DSB receives under the supported employment state grant will be used to support youth with the most significant blindness and low vision needs (up to age 24), and these

youth may receive extended services (i.e., ongoing supports to maintain an individual in supported employment) for up to 4 years.
DSB is developing an agreement with CRPs and Medicaid through the Division of Medical Services and with the Division of Development Disabilities to share the cost of extended services in supported employment.

B. how the State will leverage other public and private funds to increase resources for extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities for youth with the most significant disabilities.

Supported employment is integrated competitive employment, or an individual working in an integrated employment setting towards integrated competitive employment. This includes customized employment. The standard post-employment extended support service under supported employment is 24 months. Half of the funds that Arkansas receives under the supported employment state grant will be used to support youth with the most significant blindness and low vision needs (up to age 24), and these youth may receive extended services (i.e., ongoing supports to maintain an individual in supported employment) for up to 4 years.
DSB is developing an agreement with CRPs and Medicaid through the Division of Medical Services and with the Division of Development Disabilities to share the cost of extended services in supported employment.

o. State's Strategies

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

1. The methods to be used to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities.

VR Strategies DSB has developed the following VR strategies to expand and improve services to its consumers:

Goal 1: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: VR Counselors will schedule and attend face-to-face job exploration meetings to interview human resource professionals regarding the types of jobs they have, and the skills needed to do those jobs. Performance Measures: A minimum of two employer job exploration meetings will be scheduled per month for each client in job-readiness status. DSB will provide

additional training on conducting outreach. The DSB Quality Assurance Unit will develop methods to track employer contacts in AWARE and Salesforce.

Strategy: VR Counselors will ensure that participants in job ready status are actively seeking employment. Performance Measures: VR Counselors will require three job contacts per week. Assist job-ready participants with registration at Workforce Services. Assist job-ready participants with registering and applying for careers available through the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP); and assist participants with registering and applying for jobs through employer internet accessible application processes with private, federal, state and non-profit employers. VR counselors will update employer information in the AWARE module and Quality Assurance staff will implement a more effective use of the employer module.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment. Performance Measures: Through the DSB Small Business Coordinator, participants will be provided access to Small Business Association trainings and the Arkansas Secretary of State's trainings on small business enterprises. The Small Business Coordinator will schedule job shadowing experiences with participants who are blind/visually impaired that have maintained successful businesses. Each self-employment proposal submitted by a participant will be reviewed by a team composed of the Business and Technology Administrator, the Field Services Administrator, the Small Business Coordinator, and the participant's VR Counselor to ensure that a proposal is realistic and sustainable before it is approved and any funds are provided. VR counselors will receive Operation Jumpstart training to help individuals plan their new ventures. DSB will revise their policy and procedures for funding small businesses.

Strategy: DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants. Performance Measures: DSB will refer participants to World Services for the Blind, Alpha Pointe, the Louisiana Center for the Blind, Sources, Goodwill and other providers as necessary for additional skills training, including, but not limited to soft skills and work readiness training to assist participants in improving their probability of securing competitive employment. DSB will work with provider agencies to develop more high demand training for more high demand jobs. DSB will ensure that appropriate guidelines are in place to monitor providers and training.

Strategy: DSB will provide detailed benefits counseling information to each participant on SSI and SSDI. Performance Measures: DSB will refer 100% of clients, adults, students and youth on SSI and SSDI to the DSB benefits counselor for a one-on-one benefits analysis. Area Managers will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors are referring 100% of SSI and SSDI VR participants to benefits counseling. Counselors will make participants aware of benefits counseling at the time of application, at the time of IPE's, and at the time of closure. New

counselors will receive benefits counseling training and current counselors will receive benefits counseling updates.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) and interested in employment to VR services and will ensure that its OIB contractor will as well. Performance Measures: DSB and its OIB contractor will refer 100% of Older Blind individuals who are interested in employment to VR services. VR counselors will make contact with agencies that serve older individuals such as Green Thumb, and AAA to seek referrals and to educate these agencies about DSB services.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful participants and their employers. Performance Measures: Each year each counselor will recognize one individual from his/her caseload as an area Consumer of the Year and nominate the individual as a candidate for the overall state Consumer of the Year. DSB will award area Consumers of the Year and their employers with trophies/framed certificates and related publicity.

Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment. Performance Measures: DSB will provide trainings to employers on the use and function of common assistive technology devices for the blind and visually impaired. Provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of participants. DSB staff will continue to meet participants at Workforce Services offices, including DSB sponsored accessible kiosks, to assist participants in their job searches and in becoming more comfortable interacting with the public in an employment setting.

Strategy: DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning. Performance Measures: Novice counselors will attend a specific orientation to VR issues and participate in specialized immersion training during their first six months. Training through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association, Vision Quest with Louisiana Center for the Blind and other qualified sources. Novice counselors will be exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in transition and job ready exploration to allow experienced participants to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced participants. Performance Measures: Peer mentoring will be used to connect participants interested in self-employment with individuals who have owned small businesses and can offer advice and support. Area Consumers of the Year will be encouraged to provide peer mentoring to other individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired that are trying

to manage their rehabilitation plans, gain marketable skills, and secure good jobs. Participants are connected to DSB Vendor Operators. A Peer Mentoring program will be developed for Pre-ETS students.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among the core partners of WIOA. Performance Measures: DSB staff will be active members of the Workforce Investment Boards and WIOA planning committees throughout the State. DSB Executive staff attend monthly WIOA Executive Roundtable meetings. Staff attend bi-annual partner trainings. Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings. Performance Measures: DSB will arrange for and accompany job ready adult participants to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits. DSB will assist participants with reviewing entrance requirements to college, vocational/technical, or universities. DSB will implement a university or vocational school checklist to include a student responsibility form.

Goal 2: Increase Pre-Employment Transition Services to high school students; increase transition services to out-of-school youth.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations. Performance Measures: DSB will sponsor or participate in at least one training or event that will bring together transition partners for the purpose of exchanging information that will specifically benefit students who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed. Performance Measures: Counselors will coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors to maintain lists of where transition students are located.

Strategy: Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to ensure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school. Performance Measure: Area Supervisors will monitor this during case reviews to ensure that no transition student will graduate without a current IPE. Pre-ETS Counselors will facilitate a meeting with high school staff, college disability services for those attending college.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings. Performance Measures: Annually, DSB will invite ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to a Parent Summit with VR Counselors to provide information about assistive technology; rights and responsibilities; available resources and services; benefits counseling; and funding for college and career start—

up costs. DSB will conduct an annual Back to School Parents Summit and parent summits in local areas.

Strategy: VR Counselors will make face-to-face visits to LEA Supervisors in their territories. Performance Measure: VR Counselors will have from the beginning of the school year to May 1st, to complete the face—to—face visits with LEA Supervisors.

Strategy: DSB will continue to provide assessments and services to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available transportation resources, self—advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, benefits counseling, and rights and responsibilities as an informed participant. Performance Measures: Formal evaluations for assistive technology will be performed by Tech Lab staff in accordance with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering. Counselors will arrange for training for Pre-ETS students and youth to acquire independent living skills and technological skills in order for them to participate in career exploration services.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Performance Measures: DSB will present at school assemblies, parent—teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on Pre-ETS and how to access these services. DSB will establish an information clearinghouse and schedule demonstration labs on selected high school campuses to inform parents, students, and education professionals of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost-effective resources available to them. DSB will continue its system of mail outs and emails to public schools. DSB will continue efforts to reach private, home, and accredited virtual schools.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI). Performance Measures: DSB will continue its system of mailouts and emails twice a year to area ESVI representatives. In addition to the local networking efforts, the Pre-ETS Manager will dialogue with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB. DSB will refer participants under age 14 to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB.

Goal 3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB will expand and improve services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired in the underserved Delta area. Performance Measures: DSB will formulate an alliance with Delta Circles, a non-profit organization established in the Delta region, to provide

economic literacy and soft skills trainings to individuals living in poverty in the Delta region of the State of Arkansas. DSB will explore a partnership with APRIL.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability. Performance Measures: Each VR Counselor will staff at least one DSB exhibit at a widely attended or significantly relevant event in his/her territory. Staff will increase participation at job fairs and health fairs.

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith—based groups. Performance Measures: DSB will establish a cooperative agreement with the Urban League in Little Rock and Springdale to reach the underserved and unserved populations. VR Counselors will make at least four faith—based outreach efforts in each of their geographic areas annually. VR Counselors will make at least two minority outreach efforts to Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of their geographic areas annually. DSB will develop a new Faith-Based Outreach program.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well. Performance Measures: DSB will continue to send all of its supervisors/administrators to these conferences to interact with participants and they will make presentations as requested. Participate with other state conferences of blindness and visual impairment organizations to network on issues faced by other states and gain ideas about how to better serve individuals.

Goal 4: DSB will increase coordination with employers.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities and work experience in their chosen career field at the job site. Performance Measures: DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for job ready adult participants to explore potential career opportunities. DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for job ready adult participants. DSB will arrange for informational interviews for job ready adult participants to explore job opportunities. DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for job ready adult participants to explore career fields. DSB will accompany job ready adult participants to career seminars and career fairs.

Strategy: VR Counselors will become Chamber of Commerce members. Performance Measures: VR counselors will make contact with at least two Chamber members per month to learn about the trends and needs of those businesses. Each Counselor will obtain an updated Chamber list for their area.

Strategy: VR Counselors will conduct public speaking engagements. Performance Measure: At least one presentation per year will be given to the local area Lions, Rotary, Civitan, or Kiwanis Club in order to form relationships with local leaders.

Strategy: DSB management staff will connect with employers in each economic development district. Performance Measure: DSB management staff will establish at least one ongoing internship site per region for DSB participants. DSB management staff will work in conjunction with the Arkansas Apprenticeship program to locate apprenticeship opportunities for participants.

Supported Employment Goals and Strategies:

Goal 1: DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants.

Strategy: DSB will collaborate with organizations such as World Services for the Blind, Job Connections, AEDD Inc., Easter Seals and Goodwill to increase SE service availability in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues. At least one meeting will be held with providers to discuss ways to increase SE services to rural areas.

Goal 2: DSB will increase Supported Employment services to Pre-ETS students and out-of-school youth.

Strategy: Counselors will determine whether students or youth are candidates for SE services during the employment planning process. Performance Measures: DSB will train new staff and provide updates to veteran staff on identifying and providing SE services to Pre-ETS transition youth.

Goal 3: DSB will increase the quality of SE providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.
Strategy: DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its participants. Performance Measure: At least one presentation or training will be made to educate SE providers about vendor standards.

2. How a broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities at each stage of the rehabilitation process and on a statewide basis.

A broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired as appropriate at each stage of the rehabilitation process in accordance with the individual's employment goal and IPE. The provision of assistive

technology services and devices is based upon assessments and recommendations by the DSB Technology Unit, availability of funds, and the participant's IPE.

3. The outreach procedures that will be used to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, as well as those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program.

DSB will use a variety of outreach methods, such as exhibit booths, to educate the public about DSB services and their availability. DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith—based groups. DSB will establish an agreement with Delta Circles and APRIL to reach the most impoverished citizens of Arkansas. DSB will also enter into an agreement with the Urban League to reach minority populations and those unserved and underserved in the inner-city areas of Little Rock and Northwest Arkansas. Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well.

4. The methods to be used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).

DSB works in conjunction with the Arkansas Education Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI) and the Department of Education, Special Education Division to identify blind and visually impaired students. Most recently, DSB has expanded its outreach effort to include private schools, alternative schools, and accredited online high school systems. DSB is improving and expanding efforts by offering seminars and in person talks to these educational organizations to inform teachers, parents, and students of the services that are available. DSB offers Parent Summits to provide coordinated efforts to allow students and parents to learn about the options in blindness skills training, education, and employment services. DSB continues to provide a three-week transition learning experience for up to 30 students from across the state, which includes paid work experiences, lessons in self advocacy, peer mentoring, financial literacy, independent living skills, career counseling, and planning for the future; the students are housed at Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and go home on weekends. DSB intends to expand this program throughout the State to offer students and youth an opportunity to receive services closer to the communities in which they live. DSB is also working to offer work experience training, soft skills training, career counseling, and advocacy skills to pre—employment transition students throughout the State.

5. If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State.

DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants. DSB will collaborate with organizations to increase SE service availability in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues. DSB will increase the quality of SE providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its participants. At least one presentation or training will be made to educate SE providers about vendor standards.

6. Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

DSB is transitioning into using the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. Steps have been taken to conduct a statistical analysis over the last 3 years for consideration by DSB, in consultation with RSA and its Independent Commission in the development of a baseline of performance percentages for the agency to move forward to set applicable performance standards under section 116 of WIOA.

DSB will address areas of deficiency from our recent FFY Standards and Indicators measures to improve the employment outcomes of individuals with blindness and visual impairment in Arkansas. Specifically, DSB will strive to increase the number of individuals who are employed and the wages of those individuals through labor market analysis, targeted counseling on job market areas and the availability of career tracks using Arkansas Labor Market statistics to help individuals make choices that will increase their employability and earning potential. Additionally, DSB commits to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the six WIOA-required performance measures and will use findings from our Standards and Indicators in this endeavor. DSB will continue to provide training to all DSB staff on the common measures and improve relationships with Delta Circles and the Delta Regional Authority to reach the un-served and underserved minority populations in Southeast and South Arkansas. DSB staff will attend Chamber of Commerce events, Lions Club International events, and provide outreach to local area businesses to demonstrate the capabilities and successes of blind and visually impaired Arkansans to enhance relationships and employer willingness to provide on-the-job trainings, apprenticeships, internships, volunteer opportunities, and job shadowing for those we serve. The business and technology section will host "technology talk" seminars and provide demonstrations on college campuses. This activity increases awareness, acceptance, and opens doors for employment opportunities. Case Review teams have been developed to conduct monthly independent reviews of case files to offer advice and best practices on service provisions. DSB has begun to discuss topics related to vision loss on the radio and on local television news programs. DSB has increased the number of certified rehabilitation counselors in the last year. DSB will continue to seek out certified rehabilitation counselors and provide skills

enhancement opportunities to the current staff. DSB is working closely with World Services for the Blind to provide employment training tracks for our clients that result in careers.

7. Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

DSB has cooperative agreements with local Workforce Investment Boards, which are updated as necessary. DSB also has cooperative agreements with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (a general agreement and a deafblind agreement). DSB, ARS, the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (DDS), the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services (BHS), and the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), Special Education Unit (SEU), Transition Unit are partners in a cooperative agreement outlining responsibilities and the provision of services, including supported employment, to transition—aged participants.

The DSB Director serves on the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, which meets quarterly, and VR Counselors are members of the local Workforce Investment Boards, which meet quarterly across the state.

DSB counselors and support staff are now located in local Workforce Services' offices. Our technology lab staff are also located in the Little Rock office. Executive and administrative staff have moved to the Department of Commerce building with ARS, and Career Education partners. DSB continues to support its 17 accessible kiosks for participants at Workforce Center locations. The original 10 kiosks were placed in the same cities where DSB has offices; the second set of seven kiosks were placed in cities with either two—year or four—year Institutions of Higher Education. The kiosks provide participants the same access to the Internet to search for jobs as a sighted person seeking services from Workforce.

8. How the agency's strategies will be used to:

A. achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment;
B. support innovation and expansion activities; and

DSB will continue to improve the data management system in regard to WIOA implementation. Efforts to begin building data into the employer module will contain information regarding employers and job openings. DSB will provide funding to support technology updates within the NFB Newsline application provided to all Arkansans. Counseling labs that are school based locations are coordinated with the School for the Blind to provide pre-employment transition core services during the school day to groups of students.

C. overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State VR Services Program and the State Supported Employment Services Program.

The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment indicated that assistive technology and access to affordable transportation are the topmost significant barriers to employment. The third most critical barrier is the need for direct job placement assistance. The DSB technology lab is implementing changes to provide assistive technology recommendations at a faster turn-around rate; the lab is scheduling appointments for assistive technology evaluations within seven days of receipt of requests. Evaluations are being provided within five days of the assessment. Transportation continues to be a significant need. DSB is continually searching for affordable vehicular transportation services for clients and arranges for payment of these services when appropriate to the plan and goal. DSB has identified drivers and vetted those drivers through background checks and screenings in order to qualify them to drive for clients. DSB will continue these efforts to offer transportation services throughout the State. Lastly, clients have asked for direct job placement assistance. DSB has worked with providers in neighboring states and negotiated agreements for these providers to expand into Arkansas to provide direct job placement assistance. DSB counselors have been provided continuing education training on providing direct job placement assistance to clients. DSB has also partnered with Workforce Services to locate current job openings in order to meet with employers and negotiate direct placements for participants. A broad range of assistive technology services and devices will be provided to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired as appropriate at each stage of the rehabilitation process in accordance with the individual's employment goal and IPE. The provision of assistive technology services and devices is based upon assessments and recommendations by the DSB Technology Unit, availability of funds, and the participant's IPE.

p. Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals

Describe:

1. An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.

<u>Goal 1</u>: DSB will increase the employment opportunities for people who are blind or severely visually impaired.
Strategy: VR Counselors scheduled and attended face to face job exploration meetings to interview human resources professionals regarding the types of jobs they have, and the skills needed to do these jobs. Each counselor scheduled a minimum of two employer job exploration

meetings per month. Staff attended Business Expos with Chamber of Commerce and exhibited at other events. DSB coordinated and shared information with ARS Business Relations staff.
Strategy: VR Counselors will ensure that participants in job ready status are actively seeking employment. Counselors are referring clients to Workforce, TAP, and assisting them with applying for jobs with employers

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self-employment. Counselors provided participants to trainings on small business enterprises. Counselors scheduled job shadowing experiences with participants who are blind/visually impaired that have maintained successful businesses.

Strategy: DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants. DSB refers participants to World Services for the Blind, Alpha Pointe, Louisiana Center for the Blind, Sources, Goodwill, and other providers as necessary for additional skills training, including but not limited to soft skills, and work readiness training to assist participants in improving their probability of securing competitive employment.

Strategy: DSB will provide detailed benefits counseling information to each participant on SSI and SSDI. DSB refers 100% of clients, adults, students, and youth on SSI and SSDI to benefits counseling for a one-on-one benefits analysis. Counselors provide benefits counseling at the time of application, at the time of IPE's, and at the time of closure.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) and interested in employment to VR services and will ensure that its OIB contractor will as well.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful participants and their employers. Individuals are recognized as area and state Consumer of the Year along with their employers.
Strategy: DSB will continue to expand its assistive technology services and improve access to these services and equipment. DSB provides trainings to employers on the use and function of common assistive technology devices for the blind and visually impaired. DSB continues to provide training to new Workforce Services staff as vacancies occur in order to increase their knowledge of accessible technology and the needs of participants. DSB staff continue to meet participants at Workforce Services offices, including DSB sponsored accessible kiosks, in order to assist participants in their job searches and in becoming more comfortable interacting with the public in an employment setting. The Pre-ETS program has set up a Technology Closet so that students can try out technology before purchasing equipment. DSB's Counselors are now located in 10 Workforce Services offices.

Strategy: DSB will increase the skills, credentials and professional affiliations of its novice Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as they move to assume senior counseling responsibilities in connection with DSB overall succession planning. Novice counselors attend a specific orientation to VR issues and will participate in specialized training through the Arkansas Rehabilitation Association or other qualified sources. They are exposed to professional organizations each year, as documented in their professional development plans.

Strategy: To augment the efforts of DSB staff, DSB will use peer mentoring in transition and job ready exploration to allow experienced participants to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced participants. Peer mentoring is used to connect participants interested in self-employment with individuals who have owned small businesses and can offer advice and support. Area Consumers of the Year are encouraged to provide peer mentoring to other individuals who are blind and severely visually impaired that are trying to manage their rehabilitation plans, gain marketable skills, and secure good jobs.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among the core partners of WIOA. DSB staff are active participants of the Workforce Investment Boards and WIOA planning committees throughout the State. Staff have also served on WIOA Executive Roundtable and committees. They also attend WIOA Partners semi-annual trainings.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings. DSB arrange for and accompany job ready adult participants to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits. They also assist participants with reviewing entrance requirements to college, vocational/technical, or universities.

Goal 2: Increase Pre-ETS to high school students; increase transition services to out-of-school youth.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all Pre-ETS students and transition youth receive exposure to work experiences and career exploration activities. DSB arrange for tours of local businesses for Pre-ETS students to explore potential career opportunities. Counselors arranged job shadowing opportunities for Pre-ETS students. Informational interviews were arranged to explore job opportunities. DSB provides a successful Jump Start 3-week program.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations. DSB will sponsor or participate in at least one training or event that will bring together transition partners for the purpose of exchanging information that will specifically benefit students who are blind or severely visually impaired. Pre-ETS Counselors participated in Deaf-Blind Train the Trainer training with ARS, CAYSI, and Goodwill. Participate with the

school districts at the Arkansas Transition Summit. DSB staff host and attend transition fairs statewide.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed. Counselors coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors to maintain lists of transition students.

Strategy: VR Counselors continue to track transition students on their caseloads to ensure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school. Pre-ETS counselors develop and update IPE's of transition students before they graduate.

Strategy: DSB will hold Parent Summits to assist parents and other stakeholders in becoming more knowledgeable and better prepared to advocate for their children at Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings. Annually, DSB invites ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants and transition parents to a Parent Summit with VR Counselors to provide information about assistive technology; rights and responsibilities; available resources and services; benefits counseling; and funding for college and career start-up costs.

Strategy: DSB continue to provide assessments and services to transition students specifically focused on activities of daily living, including but not limited to, mobility, knowledge of available transportation resources, self—advocacy, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, benefits counseling, and rights and responsibilities as an informed participant. Counselors arrange for training for Pre-ETS students and youth to acquire independent living skills and technological skills in order for them to participate in career exploration services. DSB has established an Assistive Technology Loaner program for Pre-ETS students so that they can try out the equipment before purchasing.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. DSB staff present at school assemblies, parent-teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on Pre-ETS and how to access these services. DSB has established an information clearinghouse and scheduled demonstrations on selected high school campuses to inform parents, students, and education professionals of the needs of students with significant vision problems, and the cost-effective resources available to them. DSB continue its system of mail-outs and emails to public schools. They also continue efforts to reach private, home, and accredited virtual schools.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI). DSB continue its system of mail-outs and emails twice a year to area ESVI representatives. In addition to the local networking efforts, the Transition Coordinator network with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB. DSB will refer participants under age 14 to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB. Staff attends the annual AER conference

Goal 3: DSB will expand its outreach efforts to include the general public, as well as the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders.

Strategy: DSB continue to expand and improve services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired in the underserved Delta area. DSB formulated an alliance with Delta Circles, a non—profit organization established in the Delta region, to provide economic literacy and soft skills trainings to individuals living in poverty in the Delta region of the State of Arkansas.
Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability. Each VR Counselor conducts at least one DSB exhibit at a widely attended or significantly relevant event in his/her territory.

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith—based groups. DSB established a cooperative agreement with the Urban League in Little Rock and Springdale to reach the underserved and unserved populations.

Strategy: Area Supervisors and DSB administrative staff will continue to attend the state conferences of blindness consumer groups, and opportunities will be offered to direct service staff as well. DSB continues to send all of its supervisors/administrators to NFB and ACB state and national conferences to interact with participants and they will make presentations as requested.

Goal 4: DSB will increase coordination with employers.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities and work experience in their chosen career field at the job site. DSB arranges tours of local businesses for job ready adult participants to explore potential career opportunities. DSB arrange job shadowing opportunities and informational interviews for job ready adult participants to explore job opportunities. Volunteer opportunities are arranged for job ready adult participants to explore career fields. DSB staff accompany job ready adult participants to career seminars and career fairs.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings. DSB staff arranged for and accompany job ready adult participants to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits. DSB assist participants with reviewing entrance requirements to college, vocational/technical, or universities.

Strategy: VR Counselors will become Chamber of Commerce members. VR counselors make contact with at least two Chamber members per month to learn about the trends and needs of those businesses.

Strategy: VR Counselors will conduct public speaking engagements. Counselors conduct at least one presentation per year in their local area Lions, Rotary, Civitan, or Kiwanis Club in order to form relationships with local leaders.

Strategy: DSB management staff connect with employers in each economic development district. DSB management staff establish internships for DSB participants.

Supported Employment Goals:

Goal 1: DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants.

Strategy: DSB collaborated with organizations such as World Services for the Blind, Job Connections, AEDD Inc., Easter Seals and Goodwill to increase SE service availability in unserved or underserved areas of the state due to geographic or other issues. DSB added new providers TEEM and Building Bridges that serves the southern region of the state to include the rural areas.

Goal 2: DSB will increase Supported Employment services to Pre-ETS transition students and out-of-school youth.

Strategy: Counselors will determine whether students or youth are candidates for SE services during the employment planning process. The Pre-ETS counselors identify youth up to age 24 that are appropriate for SE services. DSB trained new staff and provide updates to veteran staff on identifying and providing SE services to pre—employment transition youth.

Goal 3: DSB will increase the quality of SE providers for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its participants. DSB provides information and training to SE providers.

B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.
The largest factor that impedes the achievement of the supported employment goal is the lack of statewide community rehabilitation programs offering supported employment to the blind and visually impaired. DSB has enlisted some new providers, including TEEM and Building Bridges to serve the Delta (underserved) rural area. DSB has a low number of consumers with most significant disabilities that need supported employment services in order to obtain and retain employment.

2. An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved. The evaluation must:

A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.

DSB continued to enlist new SE providers that provide services to the blind and visionally impaired, to include TEEM and Building Bridges that serve the rural and underserved population.

DSB's Field Administrator serves on the state APSE Board and works with other APSE members to enhance supported employment opportunities across the state. DSB staff serve on the conference committee, and the next statewide conference will be March 2020.
DSB has been able to refer youth up to age 24 in our Pre-ETS program to supported employment services. Students that enroll in our Jump Start program explore different career options and some of these individuals are referred to community rehabilitation providers for services.

A new vendor application and monitoring forms were developed for the community rehabilitation providers and training was provided.

DSB encouraged participants' family members and other natural support individuals to become SE providers.

DSB works with ARS and providers to provide training for the SE providers.

3. The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.

DSB is transitioning into using the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. Steps have been taken to conduct a statistical analysis over the last 3 years for consideration by DSB, in concert with RSA and DSB's Independent Commission in order to develop a baseline of performance percentages for the agency in order to move forward to set applicable performance standards under section 116 of WIOA.

4. How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

Funds for innovation and expansion were used to expand the services of Newsline, which can now be accessed through more methods, including live streaming.

q. Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services.

Include the following:

1. The quality, scope, and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

DSB remains committed to increasing the quality, scope and extent of Supported Employment Services to eligible consumers. DSB uses vendors to provide comprehensive supported employment services to youth and adults identified as blind or visually impaired. Services include: an individual evaluation of rehabilitation potential via supported employment, provision of job development services (including job analysis and appropriate accommodations), intensive on—the—job training and job coaching, and provision or coordination of support services such as counseling or transportation. Services are provided within federal guidelines until the employment is secure and appropriate extended services are in place.
Once the individual has maintained stability on the job for an appropriate period of time, the funding for and provision of extended services transitions to an extended services provider. The rehabilitation counselor continues to track the individuals progress and job stability during the transition period. If the individual maintains stabilization for 90 days or more after transition to extended services, the case is closed successfully. If needed, post—employment services may be provided at any time after closure.

Regarding supported employment (SE), DSB has gradually increased the number of individuals who receive this service by increasing the number of Community Rehabilitation Programs in the State that offer Supported Employment to the Blind and Visually Impaired.
There are not enough service providers who deliver supported employment in the state on a fee for service basis. DSB continues to work towards a Memorandum of Agreement for the provision of extended services with the Medical and Developmental Disabilities Divisions of the Department of Human Services to provide financial supports in on—going extended services to many consumers who are both intellectually disabled and legally blind. All work programs will be in integrated settings paying the minimum wage.

2. The timing of transition to extended services.

Transition to extended services is at least 90 days after successful placement, no later than 18 months.

Certifications

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **Division of Services for the Blind**

Name of designated State agency **Division of Services for the Blind**

Full Name of Authorized Representative **Cassondra Williams-Stokes**

Title of Authorized Representative: **DSB Director**

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The **designated State agency or designated State unit (as appropriate) listed above** is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA*, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.** Yes

2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the **designated State agency listed above** agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under section 111 of the Rehabilitation Act are used solely for the provision of VR services and the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan; Yes

3. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act for supported employment services, the designated State agency agrees to operate and administer the State Supported Employment Services Program in accordance with the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan* , the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations , policies, and procedures established by the Secretary of Education. Funds made available under title VI are used solely for the provision of supported employment services and the administration of the supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan; ** Yes

4. The designated State agency and/or the designated State unit has the authority under State law to perform the functions of the State regarding the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement; Yes

5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement. Yes

6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law. Yes

7. The **Authorized Representative listed above** has the authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement; Yes

8. The **Authorized Representative listed above** has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services; Yes

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan and its supplement. Yes

Footnotes

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Certification 1 Footnotes

* Public Law 113-128.

** Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

Certification 2 Footnotes

* All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

** No funds under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

*** Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76,77,79,81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3485; and the State VR Services Program regulations.

Certification 3 Footnotes

* No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

** Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in *** under Certification 2 footnotes

Additional Comments on the Certifications from the State

Certification Regarding Lobbying — Vocational Rehabilitation

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:
If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant's Organization **Division of Services for the Blind**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Cassondra Williams-Stokes**

Title of Authorized Representative: **DSB Director**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable) (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html). If applicable, please print, sign, and email to MAT_OCTAE@ed.gov

Certification Regarding Lobbying — Supported Employment

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:
If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the

required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $10,000 and not more than $100,000 for each such failure.

Applicant's Organization **Division of Services for the Blind**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Cassondra Williams-Stokes**

Title of Authorized Representative: **DSB Director**

SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only if applicable) (http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html).

Assurances

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances: **The State Plan must provide assurances that:**

1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures:

The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement:

The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a unified plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.

3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. the establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable **A) is an independent State commission**

c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.

d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).

e. the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds **No**

f. the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs: **No**

g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan. **No**

h. the descriptions for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.

j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.

k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.

l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities.

m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.

4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services:

The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:

a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.

c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act?

Agency will provide the full range of services described above

d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.

e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

f. comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act.

g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.

h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14)of the Rehabilitation Act.

i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs

j. with respect to students with disabilities, the State,

- **i. has developed and will implement,**
  - **A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and**
  - **B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and**
- **ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25)).**

5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:

a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.

c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act.

6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:

a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(G) and (H) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when providing supported employment services specified in the

individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.

7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:

a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. The designated State agency assures that:

- **i. the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act**
- **ii. an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act , which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.**

Additional Comments on the Assurances from the State

VII. Program-Specific Requirements For Combined State Plan Partner Programs

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program— and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner programs it includes in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program.* If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" in Sections II and III of that document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program (available on www.regulations.gov for public comment). The requirements that a State must address for any of the partner programs it includes in its Combined State Plan are provided in this separate supplemental document. The Departments are not seeking comments on these program-specific requirements, which exist under separate OMB control numbers and do not represent requirements under WIOA. For further details on this overall collection, access the Federal eRulemaking Portal at http://www.regulations.gov by selecting Docket ID number ETA-2015-0006.

* States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) and 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

States that include TANF in the Combined State Plan must outline how the State will meet the requirements of section 402 of the Social Security Act including how it will:

a. Conduct a program designed to serve all political subdivisions in the State (not necessarily in a uniform manner) that provides assistance to needy families with (or expecting) children and provides parents with job preparation, work, and support services to enable them to leave the program, specifically cash assistance, and become self-sufficient (section 402(a)(1)(A)(i) of the Social Security Act).

Arkansas operates a TANF Block Grant assistance program on a statewide basis in accordance with all applicable federal and state laws and policies. This statewide program has been fully articulated in previously approved TANF State Plans by the Administration for Children and Families.

The Division of Workforce Services and the Department of Human Services - Division of County Operations work collaboratively in making the TANF Program services available in each of Arkansas's seventy-five (75) counties.

POPULATIONS TO BE SERVED

Transitional Employment Assistance will be available to economically needy families with children under the age of eighteen (18) years who are residing in the State of Arkansas and meet specified eligibility requirements.

Families receiving cash assistance must meet all the following eligibility criteria.

Definition of Needy Family

A needy family is defined as one which includes a child or children under the age of 18 years and the parent(s) or other adult relative caretaker who is living with such child(ren) and whose family income and resources are within specified limits.

Definition of Other Adult Relative Caretaker

Other adult relative caretaker is defined as a non-parent relative who is providing care for the child (when there is no natural parent in the home) and is in one of the following degrees of relationship to the child:

a. A blood or adoptive relative within the fifth degree of kinship (e.g., grandparent, aunt, etc.);

b. Stepfather, stepmother, stepsister, stepbrother;

c. A spouse of any of the above.

For purposes of determining family size and family income and resource eligibility, any other adult relative caretaker as defined above, with the exception of a stepparent, may choose to be included as an eligible family member or not.

If such relative chooses not to be included (i.e., is a payee only), then his/her income and resources will not be considered when determining eligibility. In addition, employment services described in Section 4 will not be available to such excluded adult relative and the time limit described in Section 3.6 will not apply.

Income Limit

Cash Assistance

The family's countable income (as defined in the State's policy and procedures manual) must be equal to or below $223 per month. The one income limit applies to all family sizes and to initial and on-going eligibility. This amount is 25% of what a full-time (40 hours/week) worker would have earned at the federal minimum wage that was effective September 1, 1997 ($5.15/hour) in a month.

For the purposes of income eligibility, the following deductions will be made from a family's gross monthly-earned income:

a. For initial eligibility, a 20% deduction for work related expenses (e.g., taxes).

b. For on-going eligibility, the 20% work-related deduction followed by a 60% work incentive deduction from the remainder.

Resource Limit

Cash Assistance

The family's countable resources must be equal to or below $3,000. The one resource limit applies to all family sizes and to initial and on-going eligibility.

Resources include real and personal property which are currently available or for which the family has the legal ability to make available for current use.

In accordance with Arkansas Act 514 of 2007, the following categories of resources are disregarded:

(a) The family's homestead;

(b) One operable motor vehicle;

(c) Household and personal goods;

(d) Income-producing property;

(e) Monies deposited in an approved Individual Development Account (IDA) or approved escrow account for business or career development;

(f) Any other property specified in the State policy and procedures manual that the agency had determined would be cost-efficient to exclude or which must be excluded due to federal or state statute.

Citizenship Requirement

Recipients must be citizens, qualified aliens who entered the United States before August 22, 1996, qualified aliens who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 who are excepted from the five-year bar, or aliens who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 and have been in "qualified alien" status for at least five (5) years.

Time Limit Requirement

A needy family who meets all other eligibility requirements will not be eligible to receive TEA assistance if the family includes an adult parent (or other adult relative caretaker who is included as an eligible member) who has received such assistance for twenty-four (24) months unless it is determined that the family meets one of the criteria outlined in Section 5 (Exemptions/Deferrals). The twenty-four months need not be consecutive months. The twenty-four (24) month count began July 1, 1998.

A needy family that includes an adult parent who meets the criteria outlined in Section 5 (Exemptions/Deferrals) and is deferred from the twenty-four (24) month time limit will not be eligible to receive TEA assistance beyond the sixty (60) month federal time limit unless it is determined that the family meets one of the criteria outlined in Section 5 (Hardship Extensions).

Personal Responsibility Agreement Requirement

The Personal Responsibility Agreement (PRA) is an agreement between the department and recipient specifying the recipient's responsibilities that are a condition of receiving employment assistance, which may include an employment plan that describes what the recipient and the department will do to assist the recipient to achieve self-sufficiency through employment. (See Section 8.1 for a description of the PRA.)

Drug Screening and Drug Testing

Drug screening of all TEA and Work Pays applicants and current recipients that are otherwise eligible shall be conducted. During their respective eligibility determination or redetermination, the drug screening will be used to determine whether there is reasonable cause to believe the applicant or current recipient engages in the use of drugs. The TEA and Works Pays drug screening and testing program is separate from any employer-required drug screening and/or drug testing. Drug testing information shall be kept confidential.

Drug Screening

Applicants and recipients that are otherwise eligible shall submit a completed drug screening questionnaire as a part of the eligibility determination or redetermination for TEA and Work Pays benefits. Refusal and/or failure, without good cause, to submit a completed drug screening questionnaire shall result in denial of the application or ineligibility of recipient.

If the result of the drug screening indicates a reasonable suspicion to believe that the applicant or recipient has engaged in the use of drugs, then the applicant or recipient shall be required to take a drug test.

Exemption from Drug Screening and Testing Requirements

The following are exempt from the drug screening and testing requirement:

A dependent child under eighteen (18) years of age unless the dependent child is a parent who is also an applicant for the TEA and Work Pays Programs and who does not live with a parent, legal guardian, or other adult caretaker relative.

An entity or individual participating in the Career Pathways Program or Community Investment Initiative under the TEA and Work Pays Programs.

Drug Testing and Treatment

If the applicant or recipient that is otherwise eligible tests positive for drugs, the drug testing entity will administer a confirmation test using the same specimen sample from the initial positive test. The results of the confirmation test will determine whether the program refers the applicant or recipient for a substance abuse evaluation and treatment. The applicant or recipient will be able to present a prescription for any medication or a written certification and a registry identification card issued under Arkansas Constitution, Amendment 98, she/he is taking to the drug testing entity for review in conjunction with any positive test results.

Disqualification Related to Drug Testing and Treatment Requirements

A refusal to take a drug test shall result in the applicant's or recipient's ineligibility for TEA and Work Pays benefits for six (6) months.

If the applicant that is otherwise eligible complies with drug testing and/or treatment requirements, the applicant may be eligible for TEA and Work Pays benefits. The applicant or recipient complying with the substance abuse evaluation and treatment/recovery plan may continue to receive benefits for duration of the program treatment not to exceed six (6) months.

After the six (6) months of treatment or disqualification, the applicant or recipient that is otherwise eligible will be re-tested. If the applicant or recipient tests positive for drugs in a subsequent drug test, validated by a confirmation test, the applicant or recipient that is otherwise eligible shall be ineligible to receive TEA and Work Pays benefits for six (6) months from the date of the positive confirmation test.

Designating a Protective Payee

If an applicant or recipient that is otherwise eligible and is found ineligible to receive TEA and Work Pays benefits as a result of a positive drug test or failure to begin, participate in, and/or complete the drug treatment/recovery support resource program, that applicant or recipient shall not be eligible for benefits and removed from the benefit unit. However, the dependent child's eligibility for TEA and Work Pays benefits shall not be affected.

ADWS or authorized agency shall designate a protective payee, either a caretaker relative or legal guardian of the child, to receive the dependent child's TEA benefits. No person who is the applicant for or recipient that is otherwise eligible for TEA and Work Pays benefits and tests positive for the use of drugs shall serve as a protective payee.

Appeal Drug Screening and Drug Testing

An applicant or recipient that is otherwise eligible may appeal any denial of eligibility for TEA and Work Pays benefits as a result of drug screening or drug testing in accordance with appeal procedures in the TEA Policy manual.

Assignment of Child Support

The adult caretaker must agree to assign child support rights to the State. Such assignment will become effective upon receipt of cash assistance.

Drug-Related Convictions

In accordance with Section 16 of the Arkansas Personal Responsibility and Public Assistance Reform Act, Arkansas opts out of Section 115 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996. Section 115 states that assistance may be denied to anyone who has

been convicted of any felony involving a controlled substance including the use or possession of a controlled substance

Minor Parent Living Arrangements

An unmarried parent under the age of 18 must reside in a place of residence maintained by a parent, legal guardian, or other adult relative except in the following situations:

a. It has been determined that the unmarried minor parent's current living arrangement is appropriate. In this situation, the minor parent and child will be required to continue to reside in such living arrangement as a condition of eligibility unless it is determined that such living arrangement is no longer appropriate due to changed circumstances.

b. The minor parent has no parent, legal guardian, or other adult relative of his or her own who is living or whose whereabouts are known.

c. The minor parent's parent or legal guardian will not allow the minor parent and child to live in his/her home and there is no other adult relative who will allow the minor parent and child to live in their home.

d. The minor parent or child is being or has been subjected to serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation in the home of the minor parent's parent or legal guardian.

e. Substantial evidence exists of an act or failure to act that places the minor parent or child at risk of imminent or serious harm in the home of the minor parent's parent or legal guardian.

f. The agency determines that it is in the best interest of the minor parent's child to waive the living arrangement requirement for the minor parent and child.

Family Violence Option (FVO)

Arkansas continues to utilize the Family Violence Option (FVO) for victims of domestic violence. This will allow us to modify program requirements and extend time limits to help victims of domestic violence.

b. Require a parent or caretaker receiving assistance to engage in work (defined by the State) once the State determines the parent or caretaker is ready to engage in work, or once he or she has received 24 months of assistance, whichever is earlier, consistent with the child care exception at 407(e)(2) (section 402(a)(1)(A)(ii) of the Social Security Act)

In accordance with federal requirements, Arkansas requires parents and caretakers to engage in work as a condition of ongoing eligibility unless they are unable to do so due to one or more of the specific criteria outlined in our Exemptions/Deferrals policy. A non-parent adult caretaker

who has chosen not to be included as an eligible member is not required to participate in work activities.

Minor parents are excluded from the employment requirement; however, they must be engaged in appropriate education or training programs.

The following individuals may be exempted or temporarily deferred from any work activity requirement:

• A parent caring for a child:

a. Under three (3) months of age; or

b. Between three (3) and twelve (12) months of age if childcare for such child is not available.

Note: A parent may be exempted for this reason for a maximum of twelve (12) months in his or her adult lifetime.

• An individual with disabilities (parent or caregiver)

• A woman in the third trimester of pregnancy.

• A parent or caregiver who is caring for individuals with disabilities (child relative or adult relative) living in the home.

• A teen parent/head-of-household under the age of twenty (20) who maintains satisfactory attendance as a full-time student at a secondary school.

• An individual for who support services necessary to engage in a work activity are not available.

• An individual who is unable to participate in work activities due directly to the effects of domestic violence.

• An individual unable to participate in a work activity due to circumstances beyond his or her control.

• A parent or other adult caretaker who is over sixty-(60)-years of age.

The twenty-four (24) month time limit will not apply in any month in which an individual is exempt/deferred for any of the above reasons. In addition, the following individuals may receive an extension of the time limit:

• An individual who cooperated and participated in required activities but was unable to obtain employment because of circumstances beyond his or her control.

Time limit, particularly, but not limited to, cases in which it is necessary to protect the child from risk of neglect.

Individuals participating in education and training activities who have reached the end of their twenty-four (24) month cumulative limit on financial assistance, have complied with all TEA requirements and are within six (6) months of completing their current education or training program However, the Local office can make an exception and provide an extension to the six months on a case-by case-basis.

Exemption or deferral from the twenty-four-month time limit does not exempt an individual from the federal sixty-(60)-month time limit. Therefore, individuals who have reached the sixty-(60)-month time limit due to exemptions or deferrals from the twenty-four-month time limit may receive an extension of the 60-month time limit if the individual meets one of the following hardship extension criteria:

a. The adult has a physical or mental impairment that is too severe for Rehabilitation services and the individual has been denied SSA/SSI disability through an appeal.

b. The adult is receiving services through Arkansas Rehabilitation Services in a sheltered workshop and ARS has stated that is the extent of activities the individual can do.

c. The adult is receiving treatment through the Severe Barriers Project and the Severe Barriers Project team is providing case management services.

d. The adult has been, and continues to be, unable to participate in work activities due directly to the effects of domestic violence.

e. The adult was unable to participate in work activities due to circumstances beyond the adult's control.

c. Ensure that parents and caretakers receiving assistance engage in work in accordance with section 407 (section 402(a)(1)(A)(iii) of the Social Security Act)

As articulated in the federally approved Work Verification Plan, Arkansas determines the appropriate number of hours of work participation for each parent and caretaker. The appropriate number of hours is based upon the development of the participant's employment plan. Note: The approved Work Verification Plan may be viewed at: https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/temporary-assistance-for-needy-families/

Arkansas has implemented the following minimum number of hours of participation in work activities for Single Parent and Two-Parent Cases:

• Single Parent Cases - A single TANF/TEA participant must be engaged in work activities for a minimum of 30 hours per week.

• Two-Parent Cases - In two parent families, one parent must be engaged in a work activity for a minimum of 35 hours per week. If the second parent is not deferred, then both parents must be

engaged in work activities - one for a minimum of 35 hours per week and the other for a minimum of 20 hours per week.

Once the employment plan has been developed, the case manager inputs this data into the state's ANSWER system that opens the case. Case managers then obtain documentation of actual hours of participation and, upon verification, enter these hours into the state's TANF Program IT System, called ANSWER.

The ANSWER System tracks the actual hours of participation entered for the required activities. In order to remain eligible to receive financial assistance, a participant must participate in the activities outlined in the employment plan for the required number of hours. ANSWER assists the case manager in recognizing the lack of sufficient hours entered via Exception Reports. These Exception Reports are generated monthly and contain those participants who have not participated in enough hours to comply with the federal requirements.

Work and Self-Sufficiency

As a condition of eligibility, parents, and other adult caretakers who are included as eligible family members, will be required to seek and accept employment unless they are unable to do so due to one or more of the criteria outlined in Section 5 (Exemptions/Deferrals). Minor parents are excluded from the employment requirement, however, must be engaged in education or career and technical education.

Applicant Intake

During the initial interview with the applicant, information will be obtained regarding household and family employment circumstances. This information will be assessed, and options or courses of action will be discussed with the applicant. The family may be diverted from assistance at this point through a Diversion Assistance payment (See Section 6.6 regarding Diversion).

Employability Assessment

The purpose of the employability assessment will be to determine the applicant's abilities, talents, proficiencies/deficiencies, etc. The assessment is completed to determine the applicant's ability to move into employment and may be done by an agency or organization other than DWS.

During the assessment, the DWS Workforce Specialist will present an orientation/overview of the program, gather pertinent information, and identify barriers that may prevent the applicant from becoming self-sufficient through employment. The DWS Workforce Specialist may also identify the following.

- Family situation/circumstances
- Employment history/work experience
- Educational attainment/ literacy level/functional educational level
- Skills

- Interests
- Supportive Service needs, if any.

NOTE: Participants who are identified as victims of domestic violence will be referred for appropriate services. Appropriate services may include but are not limited to:

Counseling, housing relocation assistance, referral to mental health, referral to prosecuting attorney and/or law enforcement and the DHS Division of Children and Family Services. The DWS Workforce Specialist will, where appropriate, use all available resources to help the victim of domestic violence receive timely/needed services.

Employment Plan

Information obtained during the assessment will be used to develop the Employment Plan and engage the participant in work or a work-related activity designed to move him/her into full-time employment in the shortest period of time.

The employment plan is a written document that specifies a planned series of actions necessary for the participant to accept full time employment. The plan will identify (1) the participant's employment goals; (2) problems or impediments which may delay or adversely affect employment and what is needed to solve those problems; (3) the particular TEA work activity which is most appropriate for the participant; and (4) specific actions planned with, for, and by the participant in order to attain employment.

During the employment-planning interview, the DWS Workforce Specialist verifies, with the participant, the severity of any problems (i.e., poor/lack of housing, drug abuse, and domestic violence) and identifies actions required to alleviate them. Services will be limited to those necessary for the participant to accept employment.

Upon completion of the assessment process, the DWS Workforce Specialist may engage the participant in one or more of the following work activities: Employment (Unsubsidized or Subsidized); Education; Career and Technical Education; Job Skills Training; Job Search/Job Readiness; On-the-Job Training; Community Service, Work Experience Training and Micro-Enterprise (self-employment).

Work Activities

Arkansas defines its work activities in accordance with federal guidelines, as submitted in the State's approved Work Verification Plan. The Work Verification Plan can be accessed by the public on the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services webpage at: https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/temporary-assistance-for-needy-families/

Employment

This activity is for participants who enter employment but are not yet self-sufficient. Employed participants may be involved in additional activities directed at increasing their earning potential. To the extent possible, program services for participants will be arranged so as not to conflict with the participant's employment.

Employment may be either unsubsidized or subsidized.

Unsubsidized Employment

Unsubsidized employment is supervised full-time or part-time employment in the public or private sector with wages paid by the employer that are not supplemented by TANF or any other public program. The determination of whether or not employment is subsidized depends on whether the employer, rather than the participant, receives a direct subsidy. Self-employment and College Work Study are considered unsubsidized employment in Arkansas.

Subsidized Employment

Subsidized private sector employment is supervised employment in the private sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing a participant for an established trial period. It is agreed that at the end of the trial period, not to exceed six months, the subsidized employment may be in either the private sector or public sector. Such employment is directly supplemented by federal or state funds.

Subsidized public sector employment is defined as supervised employment in the public sector for which the employer receives a subsidy from TANF or other public funds to offset some or all of the wages and costs of employing a participant for an established trial period. It is agreed that at the end of the trial period, not to exceed six months, the employer is expected to retain the participant as a regular employee without receiving a subsidy.

In subsidized employment, both Private and Public, the participant must receive the same wages, benefits, and working conditions as other employees who are performing comparable work. The employer must meet or exceed Federal Minimum Wage requirements.

Education Directly Related to Employment

This activity is an educational program that is related to a specific occupation, job, or job offer. This includes courses designed to provide the knowledge and skills for specific occupations or work settings and includes English for Speakers of Other Languages and Basic Education. When it is a prerequisite for employment by an employer, this activity may include education leading to a GED or a high school equivalency diploma. Supervised time spent in study halls is included in the definition.

Career and Technical Education

Career and Technical Education (not to exceed 12 months with respect to any individual) is organized educational programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for employment in current or emerging occupations requiring training. Vocational Education does not include baccalaureate or advanced degrees.

Career and Technical Education must be provided by education or training organizations such as: vocational-technical schools, community colleges, postsecondary institutions, proprietary schools, non-profit organizations, and secondary schools that offer vocational education.

Job Skills Training

Job skills training is training or education for job skills required by an employer to provide an individual with the ability to obtain employment or to advance or adapt to the changing demands of the workplace.

Job skills training includes customized training that meets the needs of a specific employer, general training that prepares an individual for employment, and vocational education training that continues after the twelve-month time limit, if it fits in the definition of this activity.

Job Search and Job Readiness

Job search and job readiness is assistance in seeking or obtaining employment or the preparation for seeking or obtaining employment. Job search activities include making contact with potential employers, applying for vacancies, and interviewing for jobs. Job readiness activities include classes or workshops where participants can improve their employability skills. Participants learn techniques such as resume writing, workplace etiquette, interviewing, and life skills.

Job readiness activities also include substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment (including mental health treatment needed to address domestic violence), or rehabilitation activities for those who are otherwise employable.

Such treatment or therapy must be determined to be necessary and certified by a qualified medical or mental health professional or treatment provider.

On-the-Job Training

On-the-job training (OJT) is training in the public or private sector that is given to a paid employee while he or she is engaged in productive work and that provides knowledge and skills essential to the full and adequate performance of the job. On-the-job training differs from subsidized employment in that the OJT employer receives a subsidy to help with costs associated with training. “Supported work” for individuals with disabilities is considered OJT if onsite training is included.

Community Service

Community service is a structured program with activities designed to improve the employability of participants not otherwise able to obtain employment and must be supervised on an ongoing basis no less frequently than daily.

Participation in Community Service enables participants with limited or no experience to learn valuable work habits and socialization skills that employers require of their workers. Community Service activities are performed with a government entity (city, county or state), or community and charitable organizations.

Work Experience

Work Experience is supervised unpaid work in a public-sector or private-sector setting that allows participants to develop employment/job skills and improve work habits through time-limited unsalaried job training at a clearly defined, well-supervised training site. The Work Experience definition includes Unpaid Internships. Unpaid Internships are short-term and usually part-time worksite learning assignments with a public or private organization that enhances the participant's employability through skill building. The participant does not receive a wage.

Self-Employment

Self-employment is defined as income generated from working for one's self rather than for others. The number of hours of self-employment counted towards participation is determined by calculating the participant's gross income, minus business expenses, divided by the Federal Minimum Wage.

Satisfactory Attendance at Secondary School

As a condition of eligibility for TANF cash assistance, a teen parent who does not have a high school diploma or a GED will participate in this activity.

This activity is defined as high school attendance or participation in a GED preparation class.

Providing Childcare

This is a defined, structured activity whereby a participant provides unpaid childcare to enable another TANF participant to participate in a community service program. This activity does not include providing childcare to a TANF participant participating in any activity other than community service nor allows one parent in a two-parent family provide childcare for his or her own child while the other parent participates in community service.

d. Take such reasonable steps as the State deems necessary to restrict the use and disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving

assistance under the program attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government (section 402(a)(1)(A)(iv) of the Social Security Act)

Arkansas restricts the disclosure of information about individuals and families receiving assistance under the program. It is unlawful, except for purposes directly connected with the administration of the TANF program, for any person or persons to solicit, disclose, receive, make use of, or to authorize, knowingly permit, participate in, or acquiesce in the use of, any list of names, or any information concerning persons applying for or receiving such assistance. This includes information from the records, papers, files or communications of the state or local or county office; or information acquired in the course of the performance of official duties.

Information concerning an applicant, recipient, or other persons known to the Department will not be made available without the written consent of the applicant, recipient, or other persons known to the Department except to authorized employees of the Departments of Workforce Services and Human Services and other state or federally funded agencies for certain purposes directly connected to the implementation of the program or other federally funded programs based on need.

e. Establish goals and take action to prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies, with special emphasis on teenage pregnancies (section 402(a)(1)(A)(v) of the Social Security Act)

Arkansas continues to operate programs using state and federal funds to prevent or reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies, including abstinence education.

The Arkansas State Legislature implemented the TANF-funded Community Investment Initiatives which includes a component designed to improve outcomes for youth. These outcomes include reducing risky behaviors such as sexual activities, drug use, and criminal behavior.

Plan to Reduce Unwed Births and Teenage Pregnancy

Introduction

Unmarried birth prevention should be viewed *as* a process, not a program, involving multiple strategies and multiple agencies in a sustained effort. The rise in unwed births is an urgent social problem that resists easy solutions. Arkansas' approach is multifaceted with four major components:

- Abstinence programs using funding in the welfare reform act
- Improve access to family planning services statewide
- Community-based efforts in targeted counties
- Two state level steering committees to coordinate the efforts

Abstinence Programs

Arkansas Act 1705 required the establishment of the Community Investment Initiative to provide services to children, adults, families, and parents.

The TANF-funded Community Investment Initiative includes a component designed to improve outcomes for youth. These outcomes include reducing risky behaviors such as sexual activities, drug use, and criminal behavior.

Partnerships are formalized with community and faith-based organizations through the award of TANF-funded contracts on an annual basis.

These community partnerships recognize the reduction of out-of-wedlock births as a priority and have developed programs that include strategies to enhance educational attainment, reduce teenage pregnancies, and reduce the incidence of criminal behaviors by participating youth.

Services offered by providers meet TANF Goal 3, to prevent and reduce the incidence of out-of-wedlock pregnancies by providing prevention and intervention programs for students who live in poor communities and/or show evidence of academic underperformance, dropping out, or engaging in negative behaviors that can lead to dependency, out-of-wedlock births, or imprisonment.

Improved Access to Family Planning Services

Arkansas Act 1705 required the establishment of the Community Investment Initiative to provide services to children, adults, families, and parents.

The TANF-funded Community Investment Initiative includes components designed to improve parenting and family functioning through services and support to parents, children, and to families. Additionally, this initiative addresses improving marriage and relationship skills among youth and engaged and married couples.

Partnerships are formalized with community and faith-based organizations through the award of TANF-funded contracts on an annual basis.

Services offered by providers meet TANF Goal 4, to encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

These community partnerships recognize the importance of both family planning as well as enhanced family functioning.

Education and Training on Rape Prevention

The Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape, and Domestic Violence (ACCARDV) of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) is authorized to allocate and administer funds for Sexual Violence Prevention and

Education through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

These funds strengthen sexual violence prevention and education efforts through the provision of grants to community-based organizations to provide comprehensive sexual violence primary prevention aimed at preventing the initial occurrence of sexual violence.

Currently, there are eight (8) programs funded across the state. These contracts solicit the assistance of community organizations to provide sexual violence prevention and education to youth, at-risk youth, and adults. These programs are designed to change attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that allow sexual violence to occur.

Educational programs are available to specific populations, including males, Hispanics, African Americans, and persons with disabilities.

f. Conduct a program designed to reach State and local law enforcement officials, the education system, and relevant counseling services, that provides education and training on the problem of statutory rape so that teenage pregnancy prevention programs may be expanded to include men (section 402(a)(1)(A)(vi) of the Social Security Act)

The state uses TANF funds for emergency assistance activities that were previously authorized as of September 30, 1995 under the AFDC Emergency Assistance State Plan.

The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services, in collaboration with the Arkansas State Police, provide services to families to alleviate emergency situations, including allegations of child mistreatment, neglect, and statutory rape.

For families who are experiencing an emergency situation, the Division provides a maltreatment assessment of the family needs.

Statutory Rape Prevention and Education

In Arkansas, a person commits rape if he or she engages in Sexual Intercourse or Deviate Sexual activity with another person:

• By forcible compulsion; or

• Who is incapable of consent because he or she is physically helpless, mentally defective, or mentally incapacitated; or

• Who is less than 14 years of age; or actor is more than 3 years older than victim who is less than 18 years of age, and the actor is

a. The victim's guardian

b. Uncle, aunt, grandparent, step-grandparent, grandparent by adoption

c. Brother, sister or the whole or half-blood or by adoption

d. Nephew, niece or first cousin

The Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape, and Domestic Violence serves as the lead entity in administering an educational and training effort to increase the awareness of sexual abuse, including statutory rape, provided to state and local law enforcement, educational and related counseling service providers.

In 2007, the Arkansas Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Comprehensive Planning Team was formed by the Arkansas Commission on Child Abuse, Rape and Domestic Violence and the Arkansas Department of Health through the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Injury Prevention's Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) Cooperative Agreement. The planning team conducted a comprehensive assessment of sexual violence prevention efforts in the state to articulate a vision and broad goals for Rape Prevention in Arkansas.

Additionally, each year the Centers for Disease Control provides funds to the state for Rape Prevention Activities through which the Commission awards contracts to local entities across the state to provide sexual violence, including statutory rape, training.

The Department of Human Services and Arkansas State Police maintain a contractual agreement that jointly maintains the Family Protection Unit, now known as the Crimes Against Children Division (CACD). The CACD is composed of two sections: 1) the Child Abuse Hotline, and 2) specially trained civilian and law enforcement officials who assess child maltreatment reports. Again, these child maltreatment assessments include sexual abuse (statutory rape) reports. The CADC maintains an around-the-clock statewide intake process (Child Abuse Hotline) for accepting reports of alleged child maltreatment.

Arkansas conducts programs addressing the problem of statutory rape for law enforcement officers, the education system, and relevant counseling organizations through comprehensive prevention strategies using a public health approach. This includes:

- Delivering school-based primary prevention programs that educate youth on healthy relationships;
- Training students from middle school to college to intervene when they see someone engaging in unhealthy behaviors;
- Working with communities to implement social norms approaches to promote safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments;
- Strengthening the ability of the state and communities to plan, implement, and evaluate sexual violence prevention efforts.

State Steering Committees

Separate Steering Committees are currently in place to provide input and direct the State's Abstinence and Unwed Birth Prevention initiatives.

The Governor's Abstinence Education Steering Committee, composed of ten members appointed by the Governor, was established by Executive Order of the Governor. This committee provides input regarding abstinence education programs on a statewide basis.

The Unwed Birth Prevention Steering Committee is a legislatively appointed committee of twenty members. This committee provides oversight and makes recommendations regarding the Unwed Birth Prevention Program.

g. Implement policies and procedures as necessary to prevent access to assistance provided under the State program funded under this part through any electronic fund transaction in an automated teller machine or point-of-sale device located in a place described in section 408(a)(12), including a plan to ensure that recipients of the assistance have adequate access to their cash assistance (section 402(a)(1)(A)(vii) of the Social Security Act)

TANF Program participants have access to their monthly cash assistance benefits through electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure that TANF benefits are only used by recipients to purchase goods and services essential or necessary for the welfare of their families.

The state's EBT Restrictions Plan, approved by the Administration for Children and Families, details the specific policies and procedures related to in place to ensure that monthly cash assistance benefits are both accessible and only used for eligible products and services.

Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Transactions

The Middle-Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 (Pub. L. 112-96). Section 4004 of the Act requires States (but does not require Tribes) to prevent the use of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) assistance in electronic benefit transfer (EBT) transactions at specified locations. In particular, the law requires States receiving TANF grants "to maintain policies and practices as necessary to prevent assistance provided under the State program funded under this part from being used in any electronic benefit transfer transaction in any liquor store; any casino, gambling casino, or gaming establishment; or any retail establishment which provides adult-oriented entertainment in which performers disrobe or perform in an unclothed state for entertainment."

The law defines an electronic benefit transfer transaction as "the use of a credit or debit card service, automated teller machine (ATM), point-of-sale (POS) terminal, or access to an online system for the withdrawal of funds or the processing of a payment for merchandise or a service."

The State Plan also must include an explanation of how the State plans to ensure that (1) recipients of the assistance have adequate access to their cash assistance, and (2) recipients of assistance have access to using or withdrawing assistance with minimal fees or charges, including an opportunity to access assistance with no fee or charges, and are provided information on applicable fees and surcharges that apply to electronic fund transactions involving the assistance, and that such information is made publicly available.

Implementation Steps (Revised 5/12/14)

The Division of Workforce Services will implement the following steps to restrict the use of TANF EBT cards at the specified establishments. These steps include:

Step One - Establishment Identification:

- Identifying those establishments identified as "liquor stores" by requesting a list of licensed establishments from the Arkansas Department of Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Enforcement.
- Identifying those establishments identified as "gaming establishments" by requesting a list of licensed establishments from the Arkansas Racing Commission.
- Identifying those establishments identified as "adult entertainment establishments" by requesting a list of licensed "private clubs with adult entertainment" establishments from the Arkansas Department of Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Enforcement.

In Arkansas, casinos are allowed to legally operate in Crittenden, Garland, Jefferson, Pope Counties. These casinos have been identified and transactions in these establishments will be monitored.

It must be noted that "casinos" are not legally allowed to operate in the State of Arkansas. However, two establishments, Southland Greyhound Park and Oaklawn Racing and Gaming, are statutorily allowed to have gaming on their premises in addition to dog and horse racing.

Additionally, casinos are located in the adjoining states of Oklahoma, Louisiana, and Mississippi. These casinos have been identified and transactions in these establishments will be monitored.

Step Two - Federal Restrictions - Merchant Notification:

- Sending a letter to the Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Enforcement soliciting their assistance in informing establishments of the federal restrictions regarding the use of TANF EBT cards in their locations.

Step Three - Federal Restrictions - Participant Notification:

- Sending a letter to all current TANF participants advising them of the federal restrictions regarding the use of TANF EBT cards in these locations.
- Incorporating information regarding the federal restrictions on the use of TANF EBT cards in the initial assessment process for all new TANF participants. Additionally, participants will be required to sign an acknowledgement that they have been made aware of the EBT restrictions as well as the consequences for utilizing their EBT cards at restricted establishments.

Step Four - Federal Restrictions - Staff Notification:

- Development and delivery of training for DWS TANF staff regarding the Federal Restrictions.

Step Five - Development of Program Policies

- Development of TANF Program policies that addresses the following:
    - Penalties for clients who uses or accesses TANF cash benefits in an EBT transaction in a prohibited location.
    - Penalties for merchants/establishments that allow prohibited EBT transactions.
    - Process by which agency staff that becomes aware of prohibited EBT transactions to report such transactions.

Step Six - Development of EBT Transactions Monitoring

- Development and deployment of EBT Transactions monitoring activities will continue within the existing DWS TANF Unit activities.

Ensuring reasonable access to TANF EBT

The implications for restricting TANF benefit access at inappropriate locations is a reduction in the number of cash access locations available to EBT cash recipients. This is especially true in rural locations that have very few alternatives for cash access.

While use of or access to TANF benefits in an EBT transaction is limited as described above, the department is also required by federal law to ensure TANF participants have adequate access to their cash benefits. “Adequate access” to TANF benefits is determined on a case-by-case basis and may vary depending on individual participant strengths and barriers, including access to transportation.

When a TANF client expresses concern with access to their cash benefits or a worker determines a TANF participant does not have adequate access to benefits, the department will take reasonable steps to ensure adequate access for the participant. Reasonable steps do not include granting EBT withdrawals at one of the prohibited establishments.

EBT Card Access Fees and Charges

Currently, TANF participants may use an ATM two times per month for free. Some ATMs and retailer POS terminals may surcharge your account. A surcharge is different from a transaction fee and may or may not be charged by a bank or retailer each time the TANF participant utilizes their card to access their cash benefits. There will be a warning about this fee. TANF participants do not have to pay the fee if they choose not to get their cash at locations where the fee is charged.

Some ATMs and most retailer POS terminals do not surcharge. TANF participants are encouraged to find a location that does not surcharge.

After the second cash withdrawal, TANF participants are charged a transaction fee. If they do not have a sufficient remaining balance in their account to pay this fee, the transaction will be denied.

h. Ensure that recipients of assistance provided under the State program funded under this part have the ability to use or withdraw assistance with minimal fees or charges, including an opportunity to access assistance with no fee or charges, and are provided information on applicable fees and surcharges that apply to electronic fund transactions involving the assistance, and that such information is made publicly available (section 402(a)(1)(A)(viii) of the Social Security Act)

When benefits are first issued, Arkansas provides clients information about the fees and surcharges that stores may charge clients when using the EBT card to get cash from their TANF benefit accounts. Clients receive an informational brochure with the initial EBT card disbursement.

The brochure explains that clients receive two free ATM transactions per calendar month. For the third and subsequent TANF cash withdrawal in a calendar month, a retailer has the option to

charge recipients a fee of $0.65 per transaction. Retailers are not permitted to charge a TANF recipient any other fees or surcharges in connection with the client's use of their TANF benefit account.

Additionally, the EBT Customer Service telephone number is provided to clients so they can receive information related to lost or stolen cards, PIN retrieval, or report potential erroneous charges or fees.

i. Indicate whether it intends to treat families moving from another State differently from other families under the program, and if so how (section 402(a)(1)(B)(i) of the Social Security Act)

Arkansas does not treat families moving into the state differently than other families under the program.

Treatment of New State Residents

The same benefits will be available to new residents of Arkansas as are available to all other Arkansas residents.

j. Indicate whether it intends to provide assistance to non-citizens, and if so, include an overview of the assistance (section 402(a)(1)(B)(ii) of the Social Security Act)

Arkansas provides assistance under the TANF Program to individuals who are not citizens of the United States in the same manner and based upon the same eligibility criteria as US citizens, if the non-citizen meets the definition of "qualified alien". These qualified aliens are persons who entered the United States before August 22, 1996, qualified aliens who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 who are excepted from the five-year bar, or aliens who entered the United States on or after August 22, 1996 and have been in "qualified alien" status for at least five (5) years.

k. Set forth objective criteria for the delivery of benefits and the determination of eligibility and for fair and equitable treatment, including an explanation of how it will provide opportunities for recipients who have been adversely affected to be heard in a State administrative or appeal process (section 402(a)(1)(B)(iii) of the Social Security Act)

Arkansas determines eligibility and delivers benefits under the TANF Program in accordance with federal requirements.

A ten-day notice of adverse action is sent to recipients prior to the adverse action being taken. The recipient is allowed to appeal the adverse action if he or she responds within the 30-day time period. Continuation of benefits will be granted provided the appeal was received within ten days from the date of the notice.

The Department of Human Services administers and conducts hearings in accordance with the Arkansas Administrative Procedures Act 25-15-201 et seq.

BENEFITS

The TEA program provides various services and assistance to low-income families. TEA benefits may include monthly cash assistance; employment and supportive services for cash assistance recipients and Extended Support Services for certain former cash assistance recipients. In some situations, a family may be determined eligible for a diversion payment instead of regular monthly TEA assistance. In addition, relocation assistance may be available on a limited basis.

The State also has the flexibility to authorize the use of TANF funds to provide assistance or services to at-risk children or families through programs deemed consistent with the intent of federal and/or state law.

Cash Assistance

Monthly Cash Assistance Payment Amount

The following amounts by family size are the monthly cash assistance maximums an otherwise eligible TEA family may be paid:

Family Size	Maximum Grant
1	$81
2	$162
3	$204
4	$247
5	$286
6	$331
7	$373
8	$415
9 or more	$457

Cash Assistance Payment Calculation

The above monthly amounts are not reduced by monthly countable income until a specified income trigger is achieved. When the family's monthly gross earned income plus unearned income equals the monthly equivalent of 20 hours per week of work at the September 1997 minimum wage, then the above maximum payment for the family size is reduced by 50%. Based on the September 1997 minimum wage of $5.15 per hour, this income trigger is $446.

Family Cap

The cash assistance amount is not increased due to the addition of a newborn to the family Newborn is defined as a child born while the mother is receiving TEA benefits, either for other children of her own or as a minor child herself, or who is born within nine months of the month such assistance was terminated to the mother unless the mother's case has been closed continuously for at least six (6) months.

Penalties for Program Non-Compliance

A family's cash assistance will be reduced when the adult caretaker or a minor parent is found to be in non-compliance with the child support cooperation requirement, the work activity requirements, and/or other requirements of the Personal Responsibility Agreement.

Non-Cooperation with the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE)

When the OCSE determines that an adult caretaker or a minor parent whose cooperation is required in order to establish paternity or to obtain child support payments has failed to cooperate in those activities and so notifies the DHS county office, the non-compliance penalty will be imposed,

The non-compliance penalty is a 25% reduction of the full cash assistance payment.

The penalty may be lifted at any time upon compliance with child support enforcement requirements.

Non-Compliance with the Work Activity Requirements

When it is determined that a person who is required to participate in work activities has failed to do so without good cause, a sanction will be imposed.

Non-Compliance with Other Requirements of the PRA

When it is determined that a person who has signed a Personal Responsibility Agreement has failed to comply with any other activity required by the PRA (such as ensuring the children receive immunizations), the appropriate non-compliance penalty will be imposed. The penalty may be lifted at any time upon the receipt of proof that the particular requirement has been met

Supportive Services

Appropriate supportive services will be available to TEA family members. Such services include, but are not limited to, case management services, child care assistance, medical coverage for all Medicaid eligible family members, transportation or reimbursement for transportation costs, purchases (or reimbursements) for work related expenses, referrals to appropriate agencies or organizations for counseling, treatment, etc., and other services deemed necessary by the DWS Workforce Specialist for successful participation by the participant.

Supportive services will be available to TEA applicants whose TEA cash assistance case previously closed due to non-compliance with a work activity requirement. Such services include but are not limited to childcare and transportation and other services as deemed necessary by the DWS Workforce Specialist for successful compliance prior to approval of the TEA application.

The Transitional Employment Assistance Program allows for funding for the Arkansas Better Chance for School Success Program to be utilized in Arkansas' TANF program. The expenditures are utilized in accordance with the regulations provided for under the Arkansas Better Chance program.

Relocation Assistance

Cash assistance to help a family move from an area of limited job opportunities to a new locality within Arkansas for full-time employment may be available on a limited basis. Before relocation assistance is provided, the person must have a bona fide offer of full-time employment in the new locality.

Individual Development Accounts (IDA)

TEA recipients may establish Individual Development Accounts (IDA) for the purpose of accumulating savings, up to certain maximums specified in the State policy and procedures manual, for education for themselves or their children, small business development, home ownership, or transportation needs. Such funds will not be considered an available asset in determining the family's TEA eligibility for as long as the family receives TEA.

TEA recipients who secure employment while participating in this project will receive matching fund donations to their IDAs. Recipients who are not employed will not receive matching funds.

Extended Support Service

For those families who become ineligible for continued TEA benefits due to employment, or who choose to no longer receive cash assistance due to employment, or who reach a state or federal time limit and the adult is employed, extended support services will be available as provided for by federal and state law.

Such families are deemed financially eligible for Extended Support services if they were eligible for TANF cash assistance in the month prior to case closure due to employment. Such services

will include one year of extended Medicaid coverage for those who meet the eligibility criteria under federal law for such coverage and one year of extended child care assistance at no cost with an additional year of child care assistance based on the current Division of Child Care fee scale.

Extended Support Services — Employment Bonus

For those families who become ineligible for continued TEA cash assistance benefits due to employment, or who choose to no longer receive cash assistance due to employment, or who reach the state or federal time limit and the adult is employed, an Employment Bonus cash payment will be made to such family provided a bonus payment has not already been made to the family in the preceding twelve (12) months. The purpose of such payment is to help the employed adult meet employment related expenses, until he or she has received a full month's earnings. It is expected that this one-time bonus payment will help enable the adult to maintain his or her employment.

The Employment Bonus will not count toward the adult's maximum twenty-four-month limit.

Extended Support Services - Transportation

For those families who become ineligible for continued TEA cash assistance benefits due to employment, or who choose to no longer receive cash assistance due to employment, or who reach the state or federal time limit and the adult is employed, one month of Extended Support Transportation assistance will be made to the family. The payment will assist the family in meeting transportation costs in the first month following termination of TEA cash assistance.

The Extended Support Transportation payment will not count toward the adult's maximum twenty-four-month limit.

Extended Support Services - Job Retention

For those families who become ineligible for continued TEA cash assistance benefits due to employment, cash payments for the purpose of enabling the adult to retain his or her job may be made during the twelve-month period following the closure due to employment.

The Extended Support Job Retention payments will not count toward the adult's maximum twenty-four-month limit.

Extended Case Management Services

Extended Case Management Services are provided to an individual whose case closes due to employment for up to twelve months following case closure. Periodic contacts are made with the employed person to ensure that necessary support services are being received and to make appropriate referrals if necessary.

Diversion Payment

A diversion payment may be provided to an otherwise eligible TEA family in certain specified circumstances so that the family does not come on to regular TEA cash assistance. To qualify for diversion, the adult caretaker must meet the following conditions:

1. Have a minor child living in the home;
2. Be currently employed but having a problem that jeopardizes the employment; or
3. Be promised a job but needs help in order to accept the job (e.g., needs car repairs, uniforms, etc.)
4. Has never received a diversion payment;
5. Agree to forego any TEA benefits for a period of 100 days.

The diversion payment will be the actual cost of what it would take to resolve the problem up to a maximum equal to three (3) months of what the monthly TEA cash assistance would have been for the family size. Under Arkansas State Law, a diversion payment is considered a loan. If not repaid, it will count toward the adult's maximum time limit of twenty-four (24) months.

l. Indicate whether the State intends to assist individuals to train for, seek, and maintain employment (Section 402(a)(1)(B)(v) of the Social Security Act)—

1. providing direct care in a long-term care facility (as such terms are defined under section 1397j of this title); or

2. in other occupations related to elder care, high-demand occupations, or occupations expected to experience labor shortages as, determined appropriate by the State for which the State identifies an unmet need for service personnel, and, if so, shall include an overview of such assistance.

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services works collaboratively with the State's twenty-five (25) two-year colleges and technical institutions to provide training to low-income recipients in medical occupations to address the low workforce demand.

Prior to the provision of this training, a determination is made regarding whether or not these occupations are determined as "high-demand" in the geographical area by the Department's Labor Market Information Unit. Attracting and training individuals in elder care will ensure a pool of employees with the skill set necessary to provide quality care.

m. Provide for all MOE-funded services the following information: the name of the program benefit or service, and the financial eligibility criteria that families must meet in order to receive that benefit or

service. In addition, for TANF MOE-funded services (co-mingled or segregated MOE) describe the program benefit provided to eligible families (SSP services do not have to include a description but the Department of Health and Human Services encourages it) (§263.2(b)(3) & §263.2(c) preamble pages 17826-7)

Arkansas provides funding for the Arkansas Better Chance for School Success Program that is utilized in Arkansas's TANF program for MOE purposes. The expenditures are utilized in accordance with the regulations provided for under the Arkansas Better Chance program.

The Arkansas Better Chance Program is a school readiness program for children ages 3-5 at state licensed childcare centers and at schools governed by local health and safety laws for families with gross income not exceeding 200% of the FPL.

TANF MOE funds are not used to fund any other services.

TANF Certifications

States that include TANF in the Combined State Plan must provide a certification by the chief executive officer of that State, that during the fiscal year, the State will:

Operate a child support enforcement program under the State Plan approved under part D. (section 402(a)(2) of the Social Security Act) Yes

Operate a foster care and adoption assistance program under the State Plan approved under part E, and that the State will take such actions as are necessary to ensure that children receiving assistance under such part are eligible for medical assistance under The Unified or Combined State Plan under title XIX. (section 402(a)(3) of the Social Security Act) Yes

Specify which State agency or agencies will administer and supervise the program referred to in paragraph (1) for the fiscal year, which shall include assurances that local governments and private sector organizations (section 402(a)(4) of the Social Security Act)—have been consulted regarding the plan and design of welfare services in the State so that services are provided in a manner appropriate to local populations; Yes

Specify which State agency or agencies will administer and supervise the program referred to in paragraph (1) for the fiscal year, which shall include assurances that local governments and private sector organizations (section 402(a)(4) of the Social Security Act)—have had at least 45 days to submit comments on the plan and the design of such services Yes

Provide each member of an Indian tribe, who is domiciled in the State and is not eligible for assistance under a tribal family assistance plan approved under section 412, with equitable access

to assistance under the State program funded under this part attributable to funds provided by the Federal Government. (section 402(a)(5) of the Social Security Act) Yes

Establish and enforce standards and procedures to ensure against program fraud and abuse, including standards and procedures concerning nepotism, conflicts of interest among individuals responsible for the administration and supervision of the State program, kickbacks, and the use of political patronage. (section 402(a)(6) of the Social Security Act) Yes

(optional) Establish and Enforcing standards and procedures to (section 402(a)(7) of the Social Security Act). — screen and identify individuals receiving assistance under this part with a history of domestic violence while maintaining the confidentiality of such individuals; Yes

(optional) Establish and Enforcing standards and procedures to (section 402(a)(7) of the Social Security Act). — refer such individuals to counseling and supportive services; Yes

(optional) Establish and Enforcing standards and procedures to (section 402(a)(7) of the Social Security Act).—waive, pursuant to a determination of good cause, other program requirements such as time limits (for so long as necessary) for individuals receiving assistance, residency requirements, child support cooperation requirements, and family cap provisions, in cases where compliance with such requirements would make it more difficult for individuals receiving assistance under this part to escape domestic violence or unfairly penalize such individuals who are or have been victimized by such violence, or individuals who are at risk of further domestic violence Yes

Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))

a. General Requirements

The State agency must prepare and submit an Employment and Training (E&T) Plan to its appropriate Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Office. The E&T Plan must be available for public inspection at the State agency headquarters. A State agency may include its plan for the SNAP E&T program in a Combined Plan under WIOA but will require FNS approval prior to implementation and must continue to make a copy of the plan available for public inspection. If a State includes SNAP E&T in a Combined Plan under WIOA, the State agency will detail the following for each year covered by the Combined Plan:

1. The nature of the E&T components the State agency plans to offer and the reasons for such components, including cost information. The methodology for

State agency reimbursement for education components must be specifically addressed;

The SNAP Act of 1977, as amended by the Food Security Act of 1985, the Hunger Act of 1988, the Mickey Leland Domestic Hunger Relief Act of 1990, the Personal Responsibility and Reconciliation Act of 1996, the Balanced Budget Act of 1997, the Farm and Rural Investment Act of 2002 and the code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 7 Part 273 requires States to operate a SNAP E&T Program. The Arkansas Department of Human Services is the agency responsible for the administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The purpose of the SNAP E&T Program is to assist any eligible SNAP recipient who wishes to volunteer in the program the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to obtain and maintain employment through voluntary participation in work programs and education/training activities. The program is administered through contracts and a Third Party FNS match program, with adult education centers, public schools, vocational schools, community colleges, community-based organizations, and work force service agencies to operate a volunteer E&T program. Participation in E&T is designed to promote self-sufficiency through employment for any eligible SNAP recipient referred to the program. The E&T components include: Independent Job Search, Job Search Training, Occupational Skills, English As A Second Language, Work Experience, On the Job Training, Job Retention, GED & Basic Skills Education, Vocational, Self-Employment, Apprenticeship, and Internship Training/Programs.

Arkansas' initial vision of "building on our history as an innovator in the delivery of human services, to develop a robust, statewide, job-driven, employment and training program that will produce a job-ready workforce able to meet the needs of Arkansas' current employers, attract new industry, and build Arkansas' economy" is more clear in that the FY18 AR E&T program will serve 37 of our 75 counties, and 75% of all the States work registrants.

In previous years Arkansas had a USDA approved waiver from the SNAP Requirement To Work (RTW) provisions. The waiver was based on labor surplus estimates from the Department of Labor, however like many other States, the economy improved and unemployment rates decreased, and the areas available to be covered by the waiver have decreased or disappeared, and this was the case for Arkansas beginning January 1, 2016. This group will now be subject to the PRWORA sponsored participation limits of 3 full months of SNAP benefits in a fixed 36-month period unless they are exempt or complying with the requirements associated with the RTW.

Arkansas' April 2017 unemployment rate was 5.5%. Arkansas is one of 26 States classified as Strikeforce States by USDA, and E&T is offered in 22 Strikeforce counties.

The E&T Program components are listed below:

• Independent Job Search (IJS) - E&T participants can perform independent job search for not more than half of the 20-hour average per week, per month requirement to meet a job search component. The participant must make at least 3 job contacts each week of assignment to this component. IJS may last up to 10 weeks during a 12-month period.

• Job Search Training - This component will include job skills assessment. It may include one-on-one help with resume development, procuring job leads, and interview coaching. Skills testing may also be conducted. Participants may be provided employment counseling, motivational techniques, and effective job search methods and instructions in a group setting. Participants may be assigned an employment counselor or case manager for the following supports:

1. Develop an employment and training plan;

2. Provide encouragement;

3. Assist in finding financial aid for education;

4. Manage referrals; and/or,

5. Monitor and report progress.

Education - Participants may be provided:

1. Educational programs or activities designed to improve basic skills including literacy, reading and math programs to improve functional levels;
2. Assistance in acquiring a high school diploma/equivalency;
3. Assistance to acquire proficiency in the English language;
4. Occupational skills training, including but not limited to work keys and self-guided computer-assisted learning programs;
5. Short courses (e.g., Certified Nursing Assistant); and/or,
6. Post-secondary vocational training (limited to 24 months).

• Work Experience - An activity or program designed to help SNAP recipients gain skills, training, or work experience that will improve their likelihood to obtain regular employment. Participants in this component do not receive any monetary compensation for their work. Work experience training should take place at a supervised training site.

• On the Job Training (OJT) - Participants receive training on the job, or through an apprenticeship, that provides knowledge or skills direct at a specific job. Under OJT or apprenticeship, participants may be hired by a private or public employer and will be paid at the same rate as other employees performing the same or similar jobs. Job Retention - This component consists of cash payments to vendors on behalf of a former E&T Program participant

to support job retention. This supportive service is available up to 90 days to individuals who have secured employment. Only individuals who have received other employment and training services under the E&T program are eligible for job retention services. The request for assistance from the individual must be for an immediate job-related need. Some examples of the job retention services that DHS will cover are:

1. Clothing required for employment;

2. Equipment or tools required for employment;

3. Testing fees;

4. Vision correction (such as eyeglasses, eye exams, etc.);

5. Mandatory membership fees or dues, e.g., union or professional association dues; and,

6. Licensing and bonding fees.

Independent Job Search

In conjunction with another assigned component, E&T Program participants may be required to make a pre-determined number of inquiries to prospective employers over a specified period of time prior to referral for additional employment services. Type of Component This is a non-work component. Geographic Areas Covered and Variations Among Local Areas This component is expected to be a part of the SNAP E&T Program for the FFY 2018. Number of ABAWDS expected to begin the component Independent Job Search is 2830 The cost for 2830 projected participants is $490 per client Number of non-ABAWD participants expected to begin the component 7 Number of participants expected to receive a reimbursement 189 Estimated Allowable Reimbursements $34,900 ÷ 189 = $185 (estimated average per participant) Targeted Population Participants who either have no barriers that would prevent employment, or who already possess job seeking skills or training will be assigned to this component. Level of Participant Effort or Number of Hours of Participation in the Component and Duration E&T participants can perform independent job search for not more than half of the 20-hour average per week, per month requirement to meet a job search component. The participant must make at least 3 job contacts each week of assignment to this component. IJS may last up to 10 weeks during a 12-month period. Organizational Responsibilities: The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations will contract with the participating contractors to administer and verify the independent job search component of the SNAP E&T Program. Cost of the Component per Placement $115,445 ÷ 2830 = $41.

Job Search Training

All E&T Program participants will be placed in this component. This component will include a job skills assessment, including an assessment of functional educational level and employability. In addition, this component may include help with resume development, job leads, and interview

coaching. Participants may be provided employment counseling, motivational techniques, and effective job search method and instructions in a group setting or through an employment counselor or case manager who works with the participant individually. Type of Component This is a non-work component. Geographic Areas Covered and Variations Among Local Areas This component is expected to be a part of the SNAP E&T Program for the FFY 2018. Estimated Allowable Reimbursements (estimated average per participant) $45,280 ÷ 243 = $186 (estimated average per participant) Targeted Population Participants that need help with basic job skills and/or job-seeking skills may be assigned to this component. Level of Participant Effort or Number of Hours of Participation in the Component and Duration All E&T participants will receive job search training, for less than half of the 20-hour average per week, per month requirement to meet a job search component. This component is taken in conjunction with another job search component. Organizational Responsibilities: The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, will contract with participating contractors to administer and verify the assisted job search component of the SNAP E&T Program. Cost of the Component per Placement $39.Total Cost of the Component $98,377 ÷ 2516 = $39 per participant GED & Remedial Education

Participants in this Educational Activities sub-component will receive assistance completing a GED program to increase their qualifications for employment. Type of Component This is a non-work component. Geographic Areas Covered and Variations Among Local Areas This component is expected to be a part of the SNAP E&T Program for the FFY 2016. Number of ABAWDS expected to begin the Component is 557. The cost for 557 projected participants is $44 per client Number of non-ABAWD participants expected to begin the component 12 Number of Participants Expected to Receive a Reimbursement 68 Estimated Allowable Reimbursements $10,960 ÷ 68 = $161 (average estimate per participant) Targeted Population Participants assigned to this component are in need of a high school degree or equivalency to become job ready. Level of Participant Effort or Number of Hours of Participation in the Component and Duration Participants will be asked to attend classes and to comply with the educational requirements and activities as defined in the E&T contract. Organizational Responsibilities: The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, will contract with participating contractors to administer and verify the GED component of the SNAP E&T Program Cost of the Component per Placement $24,407 ÷ 557 = $44 per participant.

Occupational Skills Participants may be enrolled in activities designed to help the participant improve basic skills including reading and math, acquire a high school diploma or GED, learn the English language, or gain occupational skills including but not limited to work keys and self-guided computer-assisted learning programs. Participants may also be enrolled in short courses such as, but not limited to, certified nursing assistant training or post-secondary vocational training as long as the client is progressing. Type of Component: This is a non-work component. Geographic Areas Covered and Variations Among Local Areas: This component is expected to be a part of the SNAP E&T Program for the FFY 2018. Number of ABAWDS expected to begin

the Component is 1517. The cost for 1517 projected participants is $43 per client Number of non-ABAWD participants expected to begin the component 12 Number of Participants Expected to Receive a Reimbursement 346 Estimated Allowable Reimbursements $141 ($48,730 ÷ 346 participants) Targeted Population Participants assigned to this component are in need of an educational skills enhancement to become job ready. Level of Participant Effort or Number of Hours of Participation in the Component and Duration Participants will be asked to attend classes and to comply with the educational requirements and activities as defined in the E&T contract. Organizational Responsibilities: The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, will contract with participating contractors to administer and verify the Basic Skills component of the SNAP E&T Program. Cost of the Component per Placement $43 ($68,809 ÷ 1517 participants) Total Cost of the Component $43.

English as a Second Language

Participants will comply with programs that increase English language skills. Type of Component: This is a non-work component. Geographic Areas Covered and Variations Among Local Areas: This component is expected to be a part of the SNAP E&T Program for the FFY 2018. Anticipated Number of ABAWDS Who Will Begin the Component 24. The cost for 24 projected participants is $48 per client Number of non-ABAWD participants expected to begin the component 0Number of Participants Expected to Receive a Reimbursement 5 Estimated Allowable Reimbursements $270 ÷ 5 = $54 average per participant Targeted Population Participants assigned to this component are in need of an educational skills enhancement to become job ready. Level of Participant Effort or Number of Hours of Participation in the Component and Duration Participants will be asked to attend classes and to comply with the educational requirements and activities as defined in the E&T contract. Organizational Responsibilities: The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, will contract with participating contractors to administer the Basic Skills component of the SNAP E&T Program. Cost of the Component per Placement $48 ($1, ÷ 81 participants) Total Cost of the Component $94 ($7,591 ÷ 81 participants)

Work Experience

Participants will comply with programs that increase specific job skills. Type of Component: This is a work component. Geographic Areas Covered and Variations Among Local Areas: This component is expected to be a part of the SNAP E&T Program for the FFY 2018. Anticipated Number of ABAWDS Who Will Begin the Component 200. Number of non-ABAWD participants expected to begin the component 0 Number of Participants Expected to Receive a Reimbursement 24 Estimated Allowable Reimbursements $3,000 ÷ 24 = $125 average per participant Targeted Population Participants assigned to this component are in need of an educational skills enhancement to become job ready. Level of Participant Effort or Number of Hours of Participation in the Component and Duration Participants will be asked to attend classes and to comply with the educational requirements and activities as defined in the E&T

contract. Organizational Responsibilities: The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, will contract with participating contractors to administer the Basic Skills component of the SNAP E&T Program. Total Cost of the Component $53 ($10,587 ÷ 200 participants).

On the Job Training (OJT)

Participants receive training that provides knowledge or skills pertaining to a specific job, or participation in an apprenticeship program, and are capable of working in a supervised setting and abiding by normal work rules. OJT or apprenticeship sites can be developed with either private or public employers. Participants in this activity will receive pay from the employer for their work. Type of Component: This is a-work component. Geographic Areas Covered and Variations Among Local Areas: This component is expected to be a part of the SNAP E&T Program for the FFY 2018. (OJT sites will be developed for individual clients on an as needed basis.) Anticipated Number of ABAWDS Who Will Begin the Component is 200. Number of Participants Expected to Receive a Reimbursement 48 Estimated Allowable Reimbursements $7,000 ÷ 48 = $146 average per participant Targeted Population Participants assigned to this component will be in need of work experience. Level of Participant Effort or Number of Hours of Participation in the Component and Duration Each placement will be designed to meet the unique needs of the sponsoring employer and the participant. Duration is expected to be three to six months. Organizational Responsibilities: The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, will contract with participating contractors to administer and evaluate the assisted job search component of the SNAP E&T Program. Total Cost of the Component $53 ($10,587 ÷ 200 participants).

Job Retention

A cash payment is issued to a vendor on behalf of a former E&T Program participant to help the former participant retain his or her job. The request for assistance must be for an immediate job-related need, such as a uniform or tool required to do the job. Type of Component This is a nonwork/case management component. Geographic Areas Covered and Variations Among Local Areas This component is expected to be a part of the SNAP E&T Program for the FFY 2018. Anticipated Number of ABAWDS Who Will Begin the Component is 187. The Number Expected to Receive a Reimbursement 93 Estimated Allowable Reimbursements $191 ($17,800 ÷ 93 participants) Targeted Population 0 Level of Participant Effort or Number of Hours of Participation in the Component and Duration A former E&T Program participant whose E&T case was closed due to the person finding employment. Organizational Responsibilities Not applicable. Total Cost of the Component $ $122,952 ÷ 737 = $167

Vocational Training

Participants may be enrolled in education programs or activities designed to help the participant improve basic skills including reading and math, acquire a high school diploma or GED, learn

the English language, or gain occupational skills including but not limited to work keys and self-guided computer-assisted learning programs. Participants may also be enrolled in short courses such as, but not limited to, certified nursing assistant training or post-secondary vocational training as long as the client is progressing. Type of Component: This is a-work component. Geographic Areas Covered and Variations Among Local Areas: This component is expected to be a part of the SNAP E&T Program for the FFY 2018. Anticipated Number of ABAWDS Who Will Begin the Component is 194. The Number of Participants Expected to Receive a Reimbursement 20 Estimated Allowable Reimbursements $5,000 ÷ 20 = $250 average per participant Targeted Population Participants assigned to this component will be in need of work experience. Level of Participant Effort or Number of Hours of Participation in the Component and Duration Each placement will be designed to meet the unique needs of the sponsoring employer and the participant. Duration is expected to be three to six months. Organizational Responsibilities - The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, will contract with participating contractors to administer and evaluate the assisted job search component of the SNAP E&T Program. Total Cost of the Component $184 ($9,895.51 ÷ 194 participants).

2. An operating budget for the Federal fiscal year with an estimate of the cost of operation for each Federal fiscal year covered by the Combined Plan. Any State agency that requests 50 percent Federal reimbursement for State agency E&T administrative costs, other than for participant reimbursements, must include in its plan, or amendments to its plan, an itemized list of all activities and costs for which those Federal funds will be claimed, including the costs for case management and casework to facilitate the transition from economic dependency to self-sufficiency through work. Costs in excess of the Federal grant will be allowed only with the prior approval of FNS and must be adequately documented to assure that they are necessary, reasonable and properly allocated. A State must submit a plan amendment to request budget adjustments at least 30 days prior to planned implementation;

The Arkansas SNAP E&T Program is jointly funded by the federal and state governments. The State intends to contract with the local adult education centers, vocational schools and community colleges to operate the SNAP E&T Program.

Use of Funds: The Arkansas Department of Human Services, SNAP E&T Program will use E&T Program funds to serve participants classified as ABAWDs and other work registrants who volunteer to participate in the E&T Program.

OPERATING BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2018

Name of Partner/Contract	Total Contract	Total Participant	Total Cost	% of Budget
Arkansas Department of Career	830,203	0	830,203	20%
Arkansas Northeastern College	148,884	0	148,884	4%
East Arkansas Community College	106,829	0	106,829	3%
Goodwill Industries	1,871,714	300,000	2,171,714	52%
Our House	251,948	2,700	254,648	6%
Northrop Grumman	421,034	0	421,034	10%
Workforce Development Board of Eastern AR	202,889	0	20,889	5%

Planned Fiscal Year Costs of the State E&T Program by Category of Funding for SFY 2018

	STATE COST	FEDERAL	TOTAL
I. DIRECT COSTS:			
a) Salary/Wages	127,786	127,786	
b) Fringe Benefits* Approved Benefit Rate 37%	47,281	47,281	
c) Contractual Costs (Admin Only, no reimbursements)	1,905,695	2,108,584	4,014,279
d) Non-Capital Equipment and Supplies			
e) Materials			
f) Travel	6,048		
g) Building/Space			
h) Equipment & Other Capital Expenditures (NG MIS)	421,034	421,034	
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS	**1,905,695**	**2,710,733**	**4,616,428**
II. INDIRECT COSTS:			
III. IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION:			
State in-kind contribution			

	STATE COST	FEDERAL	TOTAL
TOTAL ADM COSTS (TOTAL OF ITEMS I, II, AND III)	**1,905,695**	**2,710,733**	**4,616,428**
100% Federal E&T Grant	985,900	985,900	
50% Additional Administrative Expenditure	1,905,695	1,980,784	3,886,479
IV. Participant Reimbursement (State Plus Federal)			
a) Dependent Care (including contractual costs)	30,625	30,625	61,250
c) Transportation & Other Costs	332,600	332,600	665,200
Total 50 percent Participant Reimbursement Expenses	363,225	363,225	726,450
V. TOTAL COSTS	2,268,920	3,073,958	5,342,878

Exhibit 1: E&T Program Federal/State Financial Participation Categories

Activities	**Financial Participation**
E&T administrative costs under Section 16; including workfare if it is part of the E&T Plan.	100% Federal funding 50% FNS/50% Contractor
E&T administrative costs which exceed the 100% unmatched Federal funding.	50% Federal and 50% State funding 50% FNS/50% Contractor
Participant reimbursement for expenses incurred in order to participate in the E&T Program.	50% Federal and 50% State funding up to the State limit per month per participant for transportation costs and other costs up to the actual cost or the Statewide limit, whichever is lowest. Expenses above these amounts per month do not receive Federal reimbursement. The State will not provide reimbursement for dependent care costs.

3. The categories and types of individuals the State agency intends to exempt from E&T participation, the estimated percentage of work registrants the State agency plans to exempt, and the frequency with which the State agency plans to reevaluate the validity of its exemptions;

Arkansas began FY18 with 6 contractors serving 37 counties and 1 contractor that will initiate Phase II of the state's MIS for a total of 7 contractors.

Goodwill will continue as an E&T Third Party program partner in FY18 expanding their service area from 15 to 16 counties, Benton, Washington, Crawford, Sebastian, Marion, Baxter, Garland, Saline, Pulaski, Jefferson, Independence, Jackson, Poinsett, Craighead, Greene, and adding Lonoke county beginning October 1, 2017. Drew, Pope, Hempstead, Miller and Union counties ended their 100% Federal contracts on September 30, 2017, however, the Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE) will start as an E&T Third Party program partner to assist Arkansas in serving eligible SNAP recipients in 14 counties, Yell, Faulkner, Nevada, Lafayette, Ouachita, Columbia, Ashley, Desha and Chicot counties, and ACE will also pick up Drew, Pope, Hempstead, Miller and Union on October 1, 2017.

Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE) will initiate Phase II of their E&T program partner to assist Arkansas in serving eligible SNAP recipients in 13 additional counties, Bradley, Calhoun, Clark, Cleburne, Conway, Dallas, Grant, Hot Spring, Lincoln, Perry, Van Buren, White and Woodruff on February 1, 2018. This will expand Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE) into 27 counties. Phase III is planned for July 2018.

The Workforce Investment Board a 100% federally funded E&T contractor has changed their name to the Workforce Development Board of Eastern AR and will now serve Phillips county in addition to Crittenden.

The AR Northeastern College will serve Mississippi county as a Third-Party program partner beginning October 1, 2017.

SNAP applicants are required to register to work unless one of the following exemptions is met.

- Work at least 20 hours per week, averaged monthly
- Comply with a WIOA program for 20 hours or more per week
- Participate in a SNAP E&T program
- Comply with a Workfare program
- Participate at least half time in a refugee program operated by the Office of Refugee Resettlement
- Under age 16, or age 60 or older
- Age 16 or 17 and living with a parent or attending a school or training program at least half-time
- Disabled
- Receiving TEA Cash Assistance
- Caring for a dependent child under age 6 or an incapacitated person
- Receiving unemployment benefits

- Currently participating in a treatment program for alcoholism or drug addiction
- Employed or self-employed on a full-time basis
- A full-time student in a high school or an institution of higher education

4. The characteristics of the population the State agency intends to place in E&T;

Table 2: Estimated E&T Placements, Federal Fiscal Year 2018

Estimated E&T Placements in 37 Counties

Figure	Description	Total Estimated
I.	Anticipated number of work registrants in the State on Oct. 1, 2017 (unduplicated count): **Participation in E&T is voluntary in Arkansas.**	123,008
II.	Total number of planned **State option** exemptions from E&T Participation: **Participation in E&T is voluntary in Arkansas.**	123,008
III.	Percent of all work registrants exempt from E&T	100%
IV.	Anticipated number of E&T mandatory participants	0
V.	Anticipated number of voluntary E&T participants	92,308
VI.	Anticipated number of Able-Bodied Adults in the State during the Federal FY. (already filtered for possible exempt status)	8,819
VII.	Anticipated number of Able-Bodied Adults in waived areas of the State during the Federal FY.	n/a
VIII.	Anticipated number of Able-Bodied Adults to be exempted under the State's 15 percent ABLE BODIED ADULT exemption allowance during the Federal FY (CC 3D)	230
IX.	Number of potential at-risk Able-Bodied Adults expected in the State during the Federal FY. (F-(G+H))	8,589

5. The estimated number of volunteers the State agency expects to place in E&T;

The State expects about 14,811 work registrants who do not meet the ABAWD criteria to volunteer for the E&T Program in the 13 counties. All SNAP recipients classified as "ABAWDs" who live in a county where the E&T Program is operated are automatically referred to the E&T Program and given an opportunity to participate in the Program. Any other work registrant who lives in a county where an E&T Program is operating, will be referred to the E&T Program if he or she volunteers to participate in the E&T Program. These E&T Program

participants are classified as volunteers. Any household member subject to SNAP work registration may be referred to an E&T program, however, they are not subject to sanction for failure to comply with E&T Program requirements.

6. The geographic areas covered and not covered by the E&T Plan and why, and the type and location of services to be offered

Arkansas began FY18 with 6 contractors serving 37 counties and 1 contractor that will initiate Phase II of the state's MIS for a total of 7 contractors.

Goodwill will continue as an E&T Third Party program partner in FY18 expanding their service area from 15 to 16 counties, Benton, Washington, Crawford, Sebastian, Marion, Baxter, Garland, Saline, Pulaski, Jefferson, Independence, Jackson, Poinsett, Craighead, Greene, and adding Lonoke county beginning October 1, 2017.

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7. The method the State agency uses to count all work registrants as of the first day of the new fiscal year;

Reports generated from the agency's automated SNAP records will provide information regarding persons registered for work, total number exempted and new work registrants for month. This information will be used to obtain the initial count of work registrants and the number of ABAWDs to be served in the E&T Program. This information is the basis for the data reported on line 3a of form FNS-583.

8. The method the State agency uses to report work registrant information on the quarterly Form FNS–583

Reports generated from the agency's automated SNAP records will provide information regarding persons registered for work, total number exempted and new work registrants for month. This information will be used to obtain the initial count of work registrants and the number of ABAWDs to be served in the E&T Program. This information is the basis for the data reported on line 3a of form FNS-583.

Contracted providers will be required to submit a monthly report of E&T activities. Information to be reported includes number of work registrants, exemptions, component participation and non-participation, amount disbursed for services rendered, and amount authorized for reimbursements and additional reporting requirements defined in the contract. This report must be submitted to the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, Office of Program Planning and Development, by the 10th workday of the month following the report month.

9. The method the State agency uses to prevent work registrants from being counted twice within a Federal fiscal year. If the State agency universally work registers all SNAP applicants, this method must specify how the State agency excludes those exempt from work registration under 7 C.F.R. §273.7(b)(1). If the State agency work registers nonexempt participants whenever a new application is submitted, this method must also specify how the State agency excludes those participants who may have already been registered within the past 12 months as specified under 7 C.F.R. §273.7(a)(1)(i);

The automated data processing system in Arkansas has established files of unduplicated work registrants using the social security numbers as the source for identifying duplications. The system counts the number of unduplicated social security numbers at the beginning of business on October 1, each year and will match the social security numbers on this file with the social security number of each work registrant keyed to the recipient file each workday thereafter. If no match is found, the social security number is added to the file of unduplicated work registrant social security numbers and the count increased by one. Reports are generated quarterly.

10. The organizational relationship between the units responsible for certification and the units operating the E&T components, including units of the statewide workforce development system, if available. FNS is specifically concerned that the lines of communication be efficient and that noncompliance by the participant be reported to the certification unit within 10 working days after the noncompliance occurs;

Currently, county office workers are responsible for the following duties: intake, application processing, recertification, work registration, and referring non-ABAWD work registrants to the E&T Program if these individuals are interested in participating in the program. Each household member subject to the work registration requirements will be notified by the DHS worker that he or she has been work registered via the DCO-260. In E&T counties, the work registration notice advises each household member classified as an ABAWD that he or she will be referred to the E&T Program. The notice also advises other work registrants that they may volunteer to participate in the E&T Program in E&T counties. The E&T Provider will be able to use our online benefit check to determine if a SNAP client is eligible for E&T. If a client is receiving benefits it will show through benefit check. If the client comes back as a match in the universe of E&T participants, then they can participate in the program and the provider can make an immediate referral electronically through the E&T MIS. The Provider must have the individual's social security number to verify their benefits through benefit check. If the individual is not a SNAP participant may also complete an online application by logging into https://access.arkansas.gov/Voter.aspx. Once the client is determined eligible for SNAP then they can be referred through the E&T MIS by the County Office. Arkansas has chosen the option to reinstate the eligibility of ABAWDs who have used their 3 months but who can verify that they will meet the ABAWD work requirement within 30 days from the date of application. If a client applies for SNAP and states that they want to participate in E&T, then the application will be approved, and an immediate referral will be made through the E&T MIS. The provider will receive the referral the next day and contact the client to schedule an appointment. If the client does not comply with the appointment and assessment process within 30 days, then the provider notifies the county office through the E&T MIS and also sends a message through the E&T MIS messenger system notifying them of the non-compliance. The county office will then close the SNAP case and process an overpayment. Able Bodied Adults may be exempt from work requirements if certain conditions are met and a determination is made by the eligibility worker. If the exemption is granted, the eligibility worker must change the Able-Bodied Adult's program status in the ANSWER eligibility system. Upon receipt of the referral the provider initiates a contact within 5 days with the individual to schedule an assessment, and logs in the contact to the Referral Log. If the participant misses the first appointment, a second appointment can be scheduled within 10 days. The second appointment will be put in the mail no later than the next business day following the missed appointment, and all missed appointments are entered into the case file and the reason if one is provided. If the participant misses both appointments that were issued during the referral month, enter on the State report entitled "Monthly Report" that the person was a "no show". **Inter-Agency Coordination**

The Department of Human Services is the single agency responsible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program in Arkansas**.** Community based partners, local adult education centers, vocational schools, and community colleges will implement all E&T services in the E&T counties through a contractual relationship with DHS.

Methods of Coordination

Newly work-registered household members classified as ABAWDs will be automatically referred to the E&T Program. The *E&T Program referral* (DCO-205) will be used to refer work-registered volunteers to the E&T Program as requested, or due to a case action in participating E&T counties.

Coordination Time Frames

Activity	**Agency**	**Timeframe**
Referral of newly registered ABAWDs	DHS - Automated report	Weekly or Bi-weekly
Referral of Volunteer Work Registrants	DHS - County Office Worker (DCO-260)	Within 5 days of date application approved
E&T Assessment and Component Assignment	Contractor - E&T Coordinator	Within 30 days of receipt of referral
Reimbursements for E&T Participants	DHS - Finance Office	Once policy is implemented, within 10 days

11. The relationship between the State agency and other organizations it plans to coordinate with for the provision of services, including organizations in the statewide workforce development system, if available. Copies of contracts must be available for inspection;

Summary of Interagency Coordination for the E&T Program in FFY 2016 effective July 1 - September 30, 2016

The Division of County Operations (DCO) within DHS will contract with community-based partners, local adult education centers, public schools, vocational schools, and community colleges for implementation and coordination of all components provided under the SNAP E&T Program. The contract is structured as follows:

§ The SNAP Policy Unit and the DCO Contracts Unit (as of July 1, 2016 DCO will no longer have a Contracts unit. Some activities will fall under the DHS Office of Finance and Administration, Contract Support, and DHS SNAP unit and Financial unit in Central office) are responsible for coordinating the E&T Program from the DHS Central Office.

§ The participating community-based partners, local adult education centers, public schools, vocational schools and community colleges will provide an E&T Program coordinator in each of

the covered counties in their respective local offices. The E&T program coordinators will be funded by 100% E&T funds and 50/50 funds (50% FNS & 50% Contractor)

- Community Based Partners approved in this E&T plan that are participating in the 50/50 reimbursement model with FNS, provide 50% of the contract budget with non-federal dollars.
- The Community Based Partner submits a monthly invoice for the full amount of monthly expenses for E&T to the State/DHS for approval.
- The State/DHS confirms approval and reimbursement of 50% of the entire invoice, or approval and reimbursement of 50% of allowed monthly expenses.
- The State/DHS draws/requests the approved invoice amount from FNS.
- The State/DHS reimburses the Community Based Partner
- DHS will make client transportation reimbursements and pay all other allowed expenses directly to the provider or vendor.

DCO contracts with the following adult education centers, public schools, vocational schools, community colleges, and work force investment board to operate a volunteer E&T program.

Moving forward with attracting more Community Based Partners to utilize the 50/50 reimbursement opportunity from FNS and redirecting the State's 100% E&T grant funds, we have made the following amendments to our contracts. The following partnerships will be renewed to start on July 1, 2016 with an estimated end date of December 30, 2016, with the exception of Valley View Schools. Goodwill is scheduled to begin its contract August 1, 2016, and Arkansas is currently assessing other potential partners. Each local provider will have the capacity to offer a core of E&T Program components: Independent Job Search, Job Search Training, Education, Work Experience, or On the Job Training. Additionally, coordinators will assist clients who secure employment with job retention services. Each local contractor will report the following to the Division of County Operations (DCO) on a monthly basis: 1. Number of referrals received, 2. Number of assessments completed, and number of no-shows 3. Employment plans developed, 4. Number of job placements and the average hourly entry wage for the participants, 5. Number of participants placed in each component, 6. Number of participants who complete each component 7. Number of contacts made 8. Number of participants that declined participation 9. Name of participant, month participated, and each component assigned to participant DCO performs monthly evaluations that track the effect of participation in the E&T Program on SNAP participation, and an annual report is compiled to determine the effectiveness of the E&T Program. Any SNAP participant who is classified as an ABAWD (as defined in the glossary) and who lives in a county where an E&T Program is operational is automatically selected in ANSWER by specific coding, downloaded to a report and emailed to an E&T contractor at least monthly by a DCO case worker. The worker also identifies non-ABAWD work registrants and offers the services of the E&T Program, if they request and are approved to participate, a DCO-205 is completed and they take this referral form

to a participating contractor. A monthly report of DCO-205 referrals is compiled and emailed to a contractor in a participating E&T county. The contractor is responsible for: 1. Contacting each referred individual by letter and/or telephone and scheduling the assessment interview if they request to participate in the program. 2. All SNAP recipients who agree to participate in the program will be assessed by the contractors within 30 days of receipt of the referral for possible placement in an E&T program component. However, participation in the program is voluntary. 3. The assessment identifies: a. Work related strengths or weaknesses b. Barriers to employment c. Job readiness d. any support services needed to get and maintain employment, such as transportation e. Functional educational level f. Learning and other disabilities g. Job skills (work history) Aptitude 4. Developing an employment plan customized to the needs of each assessment to assist the participant in setting goals and participating in components that lead to employment and self-sufficiency. 5. Monitoring and tracking participants as defined in the contract, and for at least 90 days after employed.

Outcome Data

The provider data for FFY 2017 reports the following:

Number of work registrants	**64,995**
Number of ABAWDS participating in a qualifying component	8,987
Number of ABAWDS in non-qualifying component	371
Number of 15% Exemptions	18,266
Components Participation	See Below
ESL	3
GED	653
Job Retention	128
OJT	226
Vocational	67
Work Experience	157
Education	956
Job Search Training	5,923

12. The availability, if appropriate, of E&T programs for Indians living on reservations after the State agency has consulted in good faith with appropriate tribal organizations;

Not applicable to Arkansas.

13. If a conciliation process is planned, the procedures that will be used when an individual fails to comply with an E&T program requirement. Include the length of the conciliation period

A conciliation process is not planned as the program is voluntary at this time.

14. The payment rates for childcare established in accordance with the Child Care and Development Block Grant provisions of 45 CFR 98.43, and based on local market rate surveys.

The State will not provide reimbursement for dependent care costs.

15. The combined (Federal/State) State agency reimbursement rate for transportation costs and other expenses reasonably necessary and directly related to participation incurred by E&T participants. If the State agency proposes to provide different reimbursement amounts to account for varying levels of expenses, for instance for greater or lesser costs of transportation in different areas of the State, it must include them here.

I. E&T Program Participant

A. Participant Reimbursement

E&T Program expenditures may be reimbursed directly to program participants or paid directly to the provider of the service, as needed.

B. Method of Reimbursement

Vendors will be paid directly for uniforms, books, and other similar expenses at the actual cost up to the maximum allowed unless verification is provided by participating contractors that this was an out-of-pocket expense paid by the participant. Tuition and fees will be paid directly to the institution up to the maximum allowed. E&T Program funds will only be applied after Pell grants, scholarships, and other educational programs are exhausted or for education-related expenses not covered by such programs.

Each E&T Program participant will be eligible to receive reimbursement for transportation costs required to partake in component activities. Reimbursement for transportation in the client's personal vehicle will be based on the current State reimbursement rate or the actual costs (e.g.,

for bus service or transportation provider). The State proposes to automatically adjust the mileage reimbursement rate up or down as the State mileage reimbursement rate changes. All reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenses and/or transportation will not exceed a monthly maximum of $285.00 per calendar month per participant. (DCO plans to scale back these 50%Fed/50%State funds to a maximum of $50 per month per client starting July 1, 2016.)

C. Procedures for Reimbursement

E&T Program Participants will be reimbursed by DHS only after expenses have been incurred. Reimbursement procedures will be explained to the E&T Program participant by the local coordinator at the time of the assessment, employability update, and other times deemed appropriate.

II. Former E&T Program Participant

A. Job Retention Reimbursement

SNAP E&T job retention payments will be paid directly to the vendor. B. Method of Reimbursement

Vendors will be paid directly. The amount of the payment will be the actual amount required to resolve the job-related need. However, the E&T coordinator must determine if there are any local sources available to meet the need and utilize those sources first.

The monthly maximum payment total during the 90-day period after gaining employment will be $285.00 per calendar month per participant. (DCO plans to scale back these 50%Fed/50%State funds to a maximum of $50 per month per client starting July 1, 2016.)

C. Procedures for Reimbursement

Reimbursements will not be released to vendors until the E&T Program coordinator has received verification from the employer of the former E&T Program participant that the need (and associated cost) in question is valid and, if not resolved could result in the termination of employee.

D. Impact Clarification

Based on the number of E&T Program participants placed in jobs last year, DHS allocated .25% of the contractual cost to the Job Retention component.

Activities Financial Participation E&T administrative costs under Section 16; including workfare if it is part of the E&T Plan. 100% Federal funding E&T administrative costs which exceed the 100% unmatched Federal funding. 50% Federal and 50% State funding Participant reimbursement for expenses incurred in order to participate in the E&T Program. 50% Federal and 50% State funding up to the State limit per month per participant for transportation costs and other costs up to the actual cost or the Statewide limit, whichever is lowest. Expenses above

these amounts per month do not receive Federal reimbursement. The State will not provide reimbursement for dependent care costs.

16. Information about expenses the State agency proposes to reimburse. FNS must be afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed reimbursements before they are implemented.

See response to number 15.

b. Able-bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD)

A State agency interested in receiving additional funding for serving able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs)* subject to the 3-month time limit, in accordance with 7 C.F.R. §273.7(d)(3), must include the following for each Federal fiscal year covered by the Combined Plan under WIOA: *7 CFR § 273.7(c)(7)

1. Its pledge to offer a qualifying activity to all at-risk ABAWD applicants and recipients

Its pledge to offer a qualifying activity to all at-risk ABAWD applicants and recipients;

Not applicable at this time.

2. Estimated costs of fulfilling its pledge

Not applicable.

3. A description of management controls in place to meet pledge requirements

Not applicable.

4. A discussion of its capacity and ability to serve at-risk ABAWDs.

Not applicable.

5. Information about the size and special needs of its ABAWD population

Not applicable.

6. Information about the education, training, and workfare components it will offer to meet the ABAWD work requirement.

Not applicable.

c. Plan Modification

If FNS determines that the performance of a State agency with respect to employment and training outcomes is inadequate, FNS may require the State agency to make modifications to the

State E&T plan to improve the outcomes.*

_____

*7 U.S.C. 2025(h)(5)(E) as amended by Agricultural Act of 2014 .

Funding Disclaimer

Funds may not be available when SNAP E&T portions of a Combined State Plan under WIOA are approved. FNS's obligation after approving a SNAP E&T plan submitted as part of a Combined State Plan is contingent upon the availability of an appropriation from which payment can be made. Any FNS funding resulting from an approval of a SNAP E&T plan submitted as part of a Combined State Plan is subject to FNS receiving sufficient funds (in the Program Financial Control System for FNS) to fund this and all prior approved SNAP E&T plans submitted as part of a Combined State Plan in their entirety in the time and date order received. Federal reimbursement to States for 50 percent of State administrative expenditures and for participant reimbursements is subject to the above conditions.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA)

There are no program-specific state planning requirements for TAA. If the state includes TAA in a Combined State Plan, the state must incorporate TAA in its responses to the common planning elements in sections II, III, IV, and V of the WIOA State Plan requirements instrument.

The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is a Federal program that offers a variety of benefits and services to workers whose employment has been adversely impacted by foreign trade. Through a number of benefits and services, the TAA program provides trade—affected workers with opportunities to obtain the support, resources, skills, and credentials they need to return to the workforce in a good job. These include employment and case management services, training, job search allowances, relocation allowances, reemployment and alternative TAA wage subsidies for older workers, and income support in the form of Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA).

(a) The TAA program is a required partner in the one—stop delivery system, established under section 121 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Therefore, given that the TAA program is part of the broader workforce system and a key goal for the TAA program is to ensure that trade—affected workers are able to successfully return to work, ETA strongly encourages States to integrate their TAA program activities in concert with other workforce system core and partner programs that may also address the needs of trade—affected workers. WIOA Sec. 103(3)(A)(B). Consistent with the Governor—Secretary Agreement, the States agree to use funds obligated under the TAA Annual Cooperative Financial Agreement (CFA), to carry out the TAA program, including: 1) ensuring integration of the TAA program into its one—stop

delivery system; 2) using the centers in this system or network as the main point of participant intake and delivery of TAA program benefits and services; and 3) ensuring the terms of the Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the Local Workforce Investment Boards, as established under WIOA section 121(c) will apply to the assistance provided by other one—stop partners to TAA participants. (Trade Act Sec. 239 (a) as amended by WIOA section 512 (hh)) Describe the State's process for operating the TAA program that ensures coordination and integration with WIOA core and partner programs. Provide examples, if available, of how the co—location of Wagner—Peyser in one—stop centers and the addition of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), have improved access to these services for trade—affected workers. The TAA Program in Arkansas has two program operations managers responsible for Field Staff and Fiscal Services. These two managers and the Fiscal staff are located in the Central Office and provide support to the seven TAA program monitors that are outstationed across the state. These seven program monitors oversee the 16 TAA workforce specialists who work directly with TAA clients in our 34 local offices. These TAA specialists meet individually with the clients and conduct initial assessment services while also providing more detailed program information. During these one—on—one assessments the client is provided with information regarding the other supportive services available to them via the Workforce Center to include WIOA and TANF. When WIOA or TANF staff is present the clients are escorted to the appropriate staff member. In the event that WIOA or TANF representatives are not then available, a referral form is completed so staff can arrange to meet with the client at a later time. Having TAA staff co—located at the local offices with other partner programs is extremely beneficial in providing supportive services to clients. Having all partners share a common space builds professional relationships and leads to all members of the group being vested in the outcomes for our mutual clients. These relationships also allow staff to identify trends and share information in a way which provides the client with their best chance for success.

TAA and WIOA Staff are generally able to answer basic questions about both programs. When a dislocated worker comes into a Workforce Center, it is important to establish if the worker has been either totally or partially separated from employment at a company whose workers were certified as eligible to apply for TAA. Any workers who are potentially TAA—eligible are immediately referred to TAA Program staff.

A worker eligible for WIOA services immediately after notice of layoff will become eligible for TAA benefits and services only after he or she has totally or partially separated from the trade—impacted employer. When the TAA—eligible worker is receiving WIOA services, it is very important that the WIOA staff works closely with the staff delivering TAA benefits and services to develop a single plan of service for that worker.

Arkansas's Trade Program has consistently pursued more and better integration and coordination between the WIOA and TAA programs. Specifically, Trade Program hopes that workers receiving TAA benefits are also able to access core and intensive services. There is ongoing

development of integration between WIOA and TAA services, including decisions between the parties about what services will be provided, how those services will be provided and discussions on performance measures.

Benefits of integration between Programs: Additional Resources to Provide Training and Income Support: The Trade Act may provide additional training and income support resources for certified individuals that would reduce WIOA Title I out—of—pocket costs for two of the costliest components;

Improved Participant Outcomes: By coupling the Trade Act training and income support dollars with WIA's capacity for counseling, case management, and follow—up, superior performance outcomes may be obtained in both programs.

Benefits to TAA Customers and Program: Enhanced Service Delivery: Co—enrollment in WIOA and/or other programs can provide TAA certified customers with access to a wide array of vitally important services; Increased Services to Customers: Co—enrolled workers may gain access to supportive services like child care, utility subsidy and transportation assistance, as well as to other services such as in—depth assessment, interest inventories and reviews of transferable skills.

(b) States must develop and manage resources (including electronic case management systems) to integrate data, including co—enrollment data, provided through different agencies administering benefits and services to trade—affected workers in order to ensure consistent program administration and fiscal integrity, as well as reliable fiscal and performance reporting. (WIOA section 103(b)(3))

Describe how the State will use TAA funding for infrastructure, other shared costs, and the promotion of the development of integrated intake, case management and reporting systems.

In addition to paying a portion of the overhead and office expenses of the locations where TAA staff are located the TAA program also provides significant support for the Arkansas Job Link (AJL) system. AJL is our integrated intake, case management, and reporting system and is a part of the America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA).

The Arkansas Division of Workforce Services utilizes AJL as a staff assisted and self—service tool for the Labor Exchange, Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program beneficiaries and to assist employers when recruiting viable employment candidates.

America's Job Link Alliance (AJLA) is a consortium of state workforce agencies dedicated to providing workforce development systems. Collaborating and sharing resources allows AJLA to deliver its members the best possible return on investment for their software dollars. The United States Department of Labor encourages the use of state partnerships to support the public workforce investment system, as described in Training and Employment Notice 07—11, released

August 30th, 2011. Formation of AJLA was supported by the United State Department of Labor (US DOL). The Alliance was formed to allow the members to share technology development costs to reduce their cost of ownership and maximize their return on investment.

AJLA has thirty—five (35) years of experience in developing and maintaining workforce development solutions. AJLA member states guide the design and ongoing development of AJLA products by nominating representatives to the AJLA Steering Committee. Subscribers submit requests for system enhancements to AJLA's two Subcommittees: America's Job Link and Reporting. An ADWS employee currently serves as Vice—Chair of the Steering Committee.

The AJLA—Technical Support annual vendor subscription fee encompasses full system support of the fully functioning, comprehensive labor exchange system, including:

• System maintenance to resolve product related issues; • System upgrades and enhancements improving operational and processing efficiencies and effectiveness at no additional charge; and • System upgrades to meet Federal programmatic mandates, regulations, and initiatives at no additional charge;

Not only does AJLA provide a self—service tool for multiple programs administered by ADWS, it tracks enrollments and services for all seventeen one—stop partner programs

(c) Except for States covered by the regulatory exemption 20 CFR 618.890 (c) or to perform non—inherently governmental functions, States must engage only State government personnel to perform TAA—funded functions undertaken to carry out the TAA program, and must apply to such personnel the standards for a merit system of personnel administration applicable to personnel covered under 5 CFR part 900, subpart F. (20 CFR 618.890)

Describe how TAA program—funded benefits and services are approved by merit—staffed employees in accordance with 20 CFR 618.890.

All TAA services in the state of Arkansas are provided by dedicated TAA staff. All TAA services for clients including on—site information sessions, one—on—one assessments, training program development and approval, job search and relocation allowance administration and ATAA/RTAA are provided to clients via these full—time TAA staff members. Utilization of full—time TAA staff ensures proper training which results in a consistent level of service being provided to all program recipients.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program Assurances. The Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) program is a Required Partner in the one—stop system, established under section 121 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). However, to receive TAA program funds, states must adhere to the signed Governor—Secretary Agreement, in addition to the terms and conditions provided in the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Annual Cooperative Financial Agreement (CFA) and the Unemployment Insurance (UI) Annual Funding Agreement, executed each fiscal year between the state and ETA.

The CFA, which is incorporated by reference into the Governor—Secretary Agreement, explains program requirements, limitations on the use of funds, assurances, and other important grant provisions that states must follow to receive TAA program funding for Training and Other Activities (which includes training, employment and case management services, and allowances for job search and relocation and state administration of these benefits and services).

At the beginning of each fiscal year, ETA provides each Cooperating State Agency (CSA) with a CFA for that year, which the CSA is required to execute and submit to ETA's Office of Grants Management. The Unemployment Insurance (UI) Annual Funding Agreement is the mechanism for funding the state administration of TRA and older worker wage subsidies through the state agency that administers the unemployment insurance laws for the state.

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) Program Assurances. The State Plan must include assurances that: 1. On an annual basis, the CSA will execute TAA Cooperative Financial Agreements and UI Funding Agreements for each fiscal year during the four—year State planning cycle.

Has the state incorporated TAA into the sections indicated above? Yes

Jobs for Veterans' State Grants

The Jobs for Veterans' State Grants (JVSG) are mandatory, formula-based staffing grants to (including DC, PR, VI and Guam). The JVSG is funded annually in accordance with a funding formula defined in the statute (38 U.S.C. 4102A (c) (2) (B) and regulation and operates on a fiscal year (not program year) basis, however, performance metrics are collected and reported (VETS-200 Series Reports) quarterly (using four "rolling quarters") on a Program Year basis (as with the ETA-9002 Series). Currently, VETS JVSG operates on a five-year (FY 2015-2019), multi-year grant approval cycle modified and funded annually.

In accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(b)(5) and § 4102A(c), the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (ASVET) makes grant funds available for use in each State to support Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) staff. As a condition to receive funding, 38 U.S.C. § 4102A(c)(2) requires States to submit an application for a grant that contains a State Plan narrative, which includes:

a. How the State intends to provide employment, training and job placement services to veterans and eligible persons under the JVSG

The State will continuously evaluate the geographical assignment of DVOP and LVER staff in an effort to increase the availability, quantity, and quality of services to be provided. The state will continue to monitor and modify staff placement, upon approval of DOL VETS, within our

Arkansas Workforce Centers (AWCs) to ensure that DVOP staff are in the best locations to serve our veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBEs). Currently, DVOPs are positioned in the major metropolitan areas with the largest population of veterans, as indicated by VA county population reports. Within the AWCs, DVOP specialists will be co-located with WIOA staff because of similarities in WIOA and JVSG case management practices and to promote program co-enrollment and the appearance of a seamless application process for Veterans who apply to one or both programs. They will be available, as needed, to other AWCs to provide employment assistance to Veterans with SBEs when necessary.

One full-time DVOP is stationed at the Vocational Rehabilitation Facility at Fort Roots, in North Little Rock. The remaining DVOP and LVER staffs will be located at service delivery points throughout the state and integrated with AWC staff to effectively conduct employer outreach (LVER staff) and to provide intensive services (DVOP staff). DVOP and LVER staffs fall under the supervision and direction of the local office manager (LOM), who has the flexibility to direct their work based on the unique needs of each location.

The shift to full-time DVOPs increases the need for staff to travel in order to provide services to veterans at service delivery points that do not have grant funded staff. Travel will only be authorized if DVOP services are required by a job seeking veteran. This flexibility is critical in providing effective geographic coverage of the state. LVER staff will be encouraged to participate in meetings and job fairs of various organizations for networking and referral purposes.

Current grant funding supports 10 full-time and 11 half-time DVOPs, and 5 half-time LVERs. As attrition occurs, staffing decisions will be made in consultation with Arkansas' DVET. Efforts will be made to expeditiously fill vacancies. DVOP and LVER openings will be advertised and all qualified applicants considered. When vacancies are announced, the minimum requirements for the position are taken from Title 38 U.S.C., Chapter 41. Preference will be given to disabled veterans. All vacancies will be placed in the local newspaper, in the Arkansas Job link System, and on the Arkansas State Government Jobs website.

DVOP specialists and LVER staff members will attend mandated training provided through the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) as close as possible to their hire date but within 18 months, as required. Training dates and classes are scheduled by NVTI staff. DVOPs and LVERs will be afforded the opportunity to attend training as seats become available.

b. The duties assigned to DVOP specialists and LVER staff by the State; specifically implementing DVOP and LVER duties or roles and responsibilities as outlined in 38 U.S.C. § 4103A and 4104. These duties must be consistent with current guidance;

DVOPs will be required to provide intensive services to eligible veterans and other eligible persons, as mandated in VPL 03-14 and VPL 03-19, in order to meet their employment needs. They will prioritize services to special disabled and other disabled veterans as defined by 38 U.S.C. 4211. The Secretary of Labor has identified veterans, ages 18-24, as eligible for DVOP services because of this population's high rate of unemployment. DVOPs will initiate and foster ongoing and active lines of communication with local organizations that provide services to targeted veterans groups or others with significant barriers to employment. They will be expected to actively maintain contact with County Veteran Service Officers and detention facilities within their area. Arkansas plans to increase outreach activities to Veterans Centers, Community Based Outreach Clinics, and other similar organizations and agencies that serve veterans in the identified target groups.

In conjunction with using Arkansas' labor market information, DVOP specialists will be required to utilize the Transferable Occupation Relationship Quotient (**TORQ)** which is a web-based assessment system. TORQ assists in identifying a veteran's knowledge, skills and abilities acquired during previous work experience. It then utilizes that information to rank alternative demand occupations based on the ability to easily move into that occupation by identifying any skills gap the veteran may have. The system combines Arkansas state and local labor market information, which includes the median wage and job outlook in the area for the suggested occupations, with O*Net knowledge, skills and abilities, and current job posting information (from Job Central, Simply Hired, Indeed and Arkansas Job Link) to provide veterans with the most relevant and up-to-date information and assist them in identifying any possible career change.

DVOPs will be required to work with veterans to provide assessments, develop individual employment plans, and manage referrals to services to address identified barriers to employment. DVOP specialists will be expected to provide a full range of services to veterans including but not limited to:

- Comprehensive assessment of skill levels and service needs;
- Development of an individual employment plan with identified employment goals;
- Appropriate achievement objectives and an appropriate combination of services for the veteran to achieve employment goals;
- Individual and group employment counseling, and career planning;
- Short term pre-vocational services that may include academic skills, communication skills, punctuality, personal maintenance skills, and personal conduct to prepare individuals for unsubsidized employment or training.

Once significant barriers to employment are identified by Wagner-Peyser staff, veterans will be directed to the nearest DVOP for a comprehensive assessment and the development of an Individual Employment Plan (IEP), if necessary. DVOP staff providing individual career

services will be required to use Arkansas Job Link (AJL) to record services, case notes, referrals, and follow-up services.

Arkansas LVER staff will advocate, on behalf of veterans, with businesses and industries. LVERs will perform the full range of employer outreach activities outlined in VPL 03-14 and VPL 03-19, which are offered through the workforce system. Staff will report outreach activities, on a quarterly basis, in the Manager's Quarterly Report. This includes the facilitation of employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans through the state's employment service. They are, but are not limited to:

- Planning and participating in job and career fairs;
- Conducting employer outreach;
- Conducting job search workshops, and establishing job search groups;
- Coordinating with unions, apprenticeships programs and business or business organizations to promote and secure employment and training programs for veterans;
- Informing Federal contractors of the process to recruit qualified veterans;
- Promoting credentialing and licensing opportunities for veterans; and
- Coordinating and participating with other business outreach.

LVERs will also have an active partnership with community-based organizations that provide or coordinate an array of services to veterans.

LVERs will inform AWC partner staff of current employment initiatives and programs for veterans. The LVER may also serve as part of the AWCs Business Services Team. The activities of the Business Services Teams, ideally, result in increased job developments and an increased demand for veterans that may reduce the length of time a veteran must rely on unemployment insurance compensation.

c. The manner in which DVOP specialists and LVER staff are integrated into the State's employment service delivery system or one-stop delivery system partner network;

DVOP and LVER staff integration will go beyond co-location, and function as seamlessly as possible within the assigned AWC or other outreach location where services can be leveraged to better facilitate the placement of SBE veterans. LVER staff will serve on Business Services Teams in a manner that is consistent with their federally mandated roles and responsibilities. Integration will also allow other than DVOP staff to deliver services on a priority basis. Arkansas will promote cross training in the way of case management and alignment with other providers of intensive services. Veterans and other eligible persons receive priority of service by all AWC staff to ensure access to the full range of resources available within the One Stop System.

Arkansas Job Link (AJL) is the state's integrated web-based workforce development management information system (MIS) used by the state and local areas to share and manage participant data between the Wagner-Peyser program, the Trade Adjustment Assistance program and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program. All staff has access to and can view all services provided to the veteran regardless of funding stream. By partnering with other state agencies, ADWS is maximizing its outreach potential. Efforts aimed at providing information about our services to veterans include promoting and attending local Job Fairs and Hiring our Heroes and Women Veterans Summits events. All hiring events are advertised in the local paper and video streamed on public access media throughout the local AWC. We also seek the assistance of County Veteran Service Officers for those seeking employment. Arkansas is also exploring ways to better connect veterans seeking employment with Apprenticeship opportunities. We have strengthened our partnership with Registered Apprenticeship in recent years through collaboration with the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition in implementing the Arkansas Energy Sector Partnership grant. Through this collaboration, the state now has a mobile training center which is operated by the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition to provide "green" skills education to apprentices statewide.

We promote the Federal Bonding Program among all our partners and staff to increase awareness of this tool to improve outcomes for the offender population. We also routinely include discussion of this program and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program's target populations when speaking to employers, since many job seekers are members of both of these groups.

d. The Incentive Award program implemented using the 1% grant allocation set aside for this purpose, as applicable;

Implementation of the incentive award program will increase cooperation between and most importantly, the performance outcomes of DVOPs, LVERs and other ADWS staff serving veterans. ADWS will award the incentive funds to the staff members at the service delivery point that successfully achieved the negotiated performance measures and achieved the highest score for services provided to veterans.

The "Veterans Employment Service Award" is awarded to fifteen individuals from within the state. They are chosen from the following categories: DVOP, LVER, and ES Staff members. Although ES staff member is listed, any partner within the workforce system (other than an LVER or DVOP) is eligible for the award).

The Division of Workforce Services performs the performance calculations and identifies the winners. The award amount of $15,345 (based on approximately 1% of the annual grant allocation) is as follows: First Place: $1,289 Second Place: $989 Third Place: $791.

The selection criteria are based on performance and job service activity from each area of operation. This information is obtained from the Arkansas Job Link System (AJL), the state

management information system. This database is used to track the number of Veterans and types of services provided virtually and/or through staff assisted services. Based on the data provided by AJL for each office, we are able to identify if the local office achieved the negotiated performance outcome, and if they are eligible for further consideration. The second level is determined by identifying the individual staff member who served the veteran client. Those scores are then arranged in descending order and the staff member in each category with the highest scores is awarded the respective amount.

This method is intended to provide the most transparency of the process. It also has the advantage of being modifiable to shift the focus to other performance measures or target groups (such as outcomes after receiving intensive services).

e. The populations of veterans to be served, including any additional populations designated by the Secretary as eligible for services, and any additional populations specifically targeted by the State Workforce Agency for services from one-stop delivery system partners (e.g., Native American veterans; veterans in remote rural counties or parishes);

Veterans and eligible persons with significant barriers to employment (SBE), economically or educationally disadvantaged, recently separated, homeless, including domestic violence and other dangerous or life threating conditions, offenders and veterans between the ages 18-24, Vietnam-era veterans, and eligible transitioning service members, identified in VPL 03-19 as the target groups for services by Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists. The state will focus efforts to increase services and outreach to the target populations as identified in guidance.

The State will take steps to ensure that veterans with significant barriers receive intensive services by DVOP specialists. During the initial assessment, if a veteran self-attest to meeting one or more of the SBE criteria, Arkansas Workforce Center (AWC) staff will refer the individual to a DVOP specialist for intensive case management services.

To promote the hiring and retention of veterans, we are actively reaching out to both two and four-year institutions of higher education to provide direct assistance in placing veterans that obtain credentials and to increase awareness of the range of services available through the AWCs. This strategy, combined with the Career Readiness Certificate program and the Microsoft IT Academy, is designed to provide veterans intensive services and occupational and computer skills training to help veterans be more competitive and appealing to potential employers. These tools will also provide veterans with an advantage when pursuing educational and training credentials.

The Arkansas Job Link System (AJL,) the state management information system, provides detailed performance reports. This database is used to monitor and track the number of Veterans

and types of services provided virtually and/or through staff assisted services. Based on the data provided by AJL we are able to measure at both the local and state level the effectiveness of our outreach to the targeted veteran population. The information is also used to calculate the incentive awards for DVOPs, LVERs, and AWC staff that provide exceptional service and meet performance measures.

Targeted veterans are identified as the following:

- Special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms are defined in 38 U.S.C. §4211(1) and (3); Special disabled and disabled veterans are those
  who are entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans' Affairs; or were discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability
- Homeless, as defined in Section 103(a)and (b) of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a) and (b), as amended;
- A recently separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C. § 4211(6) who has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months;
- An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 101(27), who is currently incarcerated or has been released from incarceration
- Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate; or
- Low-income (as defined by WIOA at Sec. 101(25)(B).

VPL 01-09 encourages that a DVOP specialist be outstationed to serve as the Intensive Services Coordinator (ISC) for Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) clients referred to AW Cs for job placement assistance. A physical presence at the facilities increases coordination with VR&E staff. The ISC refers VR&E clients to programs authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Vocational Rehabilitation under United States Code (38 U.S.C.), Chapter 31, and other federal and state programs that provide services and activities to assist the veteran in determining an employment or training plan, to include apprenticeship and on the job training (OJT) to enhance employment potential.

Arkansas does not have designated tribal lands and does not have a specific strategy for outreach to Native American veterans.

f. How the State implements and monitors the administration of priority of service to covered persons;

The State provides priority of services in accordance with VPL 07-09. When a veteran is identified as having a barrier to employment, they are fast tracked on a priority basis to ensure that those barriers are resolved. Priority starts with the first workforce specialist that comes in contact with the veteran.

During the reception process, a series of questions identifies veteran status. Qualified veterans and/or eligible spouses are provided services prior to other customers and an initial assessment is completed by the first available Arkansas Workforce Center (AWC) staff. If during the initial assessment it is determined that the veterans has a significant barrier to employment (SBE) or is a member of another special category, they are immediately referred to a DVOP specialist.

When a covered person is identified as having barriers to employment, they are referred on a priority basis to ensure that those barriers to employment are resolved as soon as possible.

Covered persons receive priority for employment and job training opportunities available through WIOA funding, on the job training, skills development training, and youth contracts. Veterans can locate training opportunities through the Arkansas Job Link System (AJL) data base and receiving training at facilities which have been approved through the State Training Provider List.

The State closely monitors the provision of priority of service in conjunction with the local workforce centers. The Veteran Program Technician shall periodically conduct site checks to ensure all required priority of service signs are present and properly displayed, and the workforce center staff understands both the requirements of priority of service and its proper implementation. During the site visits, the Veteran Program Technician pays particular attention to the implementation of priority of service beyond career services.

All new job orders are not displayed in the AJL system for 48 hours, allowing workforce specialists to contact veterans first, providing priority to veterans for new job listings. Veterans receive priority for employment and training opportunities available through WIOA funding. If a veteran meets the eligibility criteria, their training costs are paid by the WIOA program through an Individual Training Account.

Local Veteran Employment Representative (LVER) staff identifies jobs and training opportunities for veterans, as they promote veterans as potential employees. These priority services are made available to veterans, transitioning service members, Chapter 31 veterans and veterans with significant barriers to employment.

The performance results are submitted to DOL ETA quarterly. Performance reports include entered employment, employment retention, and six-month average earnings. Priority of Service, performance measures and outcomes will be monitored at the state level using, but not limited to:

- Interviewing of AWC staff
- Site Visits
- Accompanying DVET during federal audits
- Quarterly Managers Reports

Measures needing improvement are identified and that information is relayed to the LOM and shared with the Area Operations Chief. In efforts to increase performance, the Managers Quarterly Report will be reformatted to include performance measures, by office, and the performance of individual staff providing services to veterans. This will improve the ability of each JVSG staff member to self-monitor performance.

g. How the State provides or intends to provide and measure, through both the DVOP and one-stop delivery system partner staff:

1. job and job training individualized career services,

The Arkansas Job Link System (AJL) is the State's management information system. It provides detailed performance reports. This database is used to monitor and track the number of Veterans and types of services provided virtually and/or through staff assisted services. Based on the data provided by AJL we are able to measure at both the local and state level the effectiveness of services to the veteran population.

2. employment placement services, and

The Arkansas Job Link System (AJL) is the State's management information system. It provides detailed performance reports. This database is used to monitor and track the number of Veterans and types of services provided virtually and/or through staff assisted services.

3. job-driven training and subsequent placement service program for eligible veterans and eligible persons;

The Arkansas Job Link System (AJL) is the State's management information system. It provides detailed performance reports. This database is used to monitor and track the number of Veterans and types of services provided virtually and/or through staff assisted services. Based on the data provided by AJL we are able to measure at both the local and state level the effectiveness of services to the veteran population.

h. The hire date along with mandatory training completion dates for all DVOP specialists and LVER staff; and

In conjunction with ADWS Human Resources Department, the Veteran Program Technician maintains a spreadsheet of all JVSG staff hire dates and work in conjunction with the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) scheduling staff to ensure that all staff members attend training within 18 months, as required.

Local Office Address	Staff Name and Email Address	Date Appointed to Current Position (Not date of hire)	Date Last Completed NVTI Required Courses for Current Position
Batesville 396 Barnette Drive, Batesville, AR 72503	Qualls, Mary Mary.D.Qualls@arkansas.gov	10/1/2016	7/24/2017
Benton 400 Edison Ave, Benton, AR 72015	Farmer, Cynthia Cynthia.Farmer@arkansas.gov	1/29/2018	9/26/2018
Blytheville 822 West Plantation Drive, Burdette, AR 72321	Bradley, Felicia Felicia.Bradley@arkansas.gov	6/22/2015	4/15/2016
Conway 1500 N. Museum Rd. 111, Conway, AR 72032	Woodle, Larry Larry.Woodle@arkansas.gov	9/30/2014	9/23/2011
Fayetteville 1416 N. College Ave., Fayetteville, AR 72703	Hopper, Sharon sharon.hopper@arkansas.gov	7/7/2014	4/17/2015
Fayetteville 1416 N. College Ave., Fayetteville, AR 72703	Vacant		
Forrest City 300 Eldridge Rd. Ste. 2, Forrest City, AR 72335	Vacant		
Fort Smith 616 Garrison Ave., Fort Smith, AR 72901	Rodriguez, Juan Juan.Rodriguez@arkansas.gov	7/5/2016	4/4/2017
Harrison 818 N. Hwy 62-65, Harrison, AR 72601	Eppes, Joshua Joshua.Eppes@arkansas.gov	10/1/2015	5/6/2016
Hope 700 S. Elm St., Hope, AR 71801	Sanders, Bryan Bryan.Sanders@arkansas.gov	10/1/2016	3/23/2012
Hot Springs 2254 Albert Pike Road, Hot Springs, AR 71913	Ezelle, Stephen Stephen.Ezelle@arkansas.gov	9/2/2014	4/15/2016
Jacksonville 2 Crestview Plaza, Jacksonville, AR 72076	Woolford, George George.Woolford@arkansas.gov	9/2/2014	4/15/2016

Local Office Address	Staff Name and Email Address	Date Appointed to Current Position (Not date of hire)	Date Last Completed NVTI Required Courses for Current Position
Jacksonville 2 Crestview Plaza, Jacksonville, AR 72076	Cook, Russell Russell.Cook@arkansas.gov	9/24/2007	9/16/2011
Jonesboro 2311 East Nettleton Ave., Jonesboro, AR 72401	Norris, Richard Richard.Norris@arkansas.gov	11/29/2009	3/23/2012
Jonesboro 2311 East Nettleton Ave., Jonesboro, AR 72401	Jones, Hershel Hershel.Jones@arkansas.gov	4/29/2013	5/15/2015
Little Rock 5401 S. University Ave., Ste. 24, Little Rock, AR 72209	Bland, Lee Lee.Bland@arkansas.gov	4/1/2016	8/21/2015
Little Rock 5401 S. University Ave., Ste. 24, Little Rock, AR 72209	Cohens, Fredrick Fredrick.Cohens@arkansas.gov	10/7/2019	
Mena 601 C Hwy 71N. Mena, AR 71953	Davis, Kristina Kristinia.Davis@arkansas.gov	4/25/2016	4/4/2017
Monticello 477 S. Main St., Monticello, AR 71655	Harding, Michael Michael.Harding@arkansas.gov	10/1/2016	4/1/2016
Paragould 1015 Linwood Drive, Suite 4, Paragould, AR 72451	Crawford, Cherice Cherice.Crawford@arkansas.gov	03/11/2019	08/06/2019
Pine Bluff 1001 S. Tennessee Street, Pine Bluff, AR 71601	Meadows, Howard Howard.Meadows@arkansas.gov	9/23/2017	8/28/2017
Russellville 104 S. Rochester Ave., Russellville, AR 72801	Teach, Jermaine teach.jermanie@arkansas.gov	6/5/2017	9/16/2014
Searcy 501 W. Arch Ave., Searcy, AR 72143	Smith, Tina Tina.M.Smith@arkansas.gov	2/16/2016	9/12/2016
Texarkana, 1702 Hampton Road, Texarkana, AR 75503	Vacant		

Local Office Address	Staff Name and Email Address	Date Appointed to Current Position (Not date of hire)	Date Last Completed NVTI Required Courses for Current Position
West Memphis Mid-South Community College West Broadway, West Memphis, AR 72301	Vacant		
VA Hospital 2200 Fort Roots Dr., Bldg. 89 North Little Rock, AR 72114	Lytle, Jack Intensive Service Coordinator Jack.Lytle@arkansas.gov	2/15/2016	10/31/2014
Central Office 2 Capitol Mall, Little Rock, AR 72201	Robinson, Stephanie Program Manager stephanie.v.robinson@arkansas.gov	4/9/2018	8/14/2015

i. Such additional information as the Secretary may require.

Arkansas will cooperate with the Secretary in furnishing any such information required.

Unemployment Insurance (UI)

The Unemployment Insurance (UI) program requires a State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) on a 2-year planning cycle that is a condition of receipt of administrative funding to administer the program. The SQSP is the State's UI performance management and planning process that allows for an exchange of information between Federal and State partners to enhance the UI program's ability to reflect their joint commitment to performance excellence and client-centered services. A formal two-year SQSP is submitted biennially. On the off years, States may be required to modify the SQSP with additional corrective action plans and narrative if they are failing any new performance measures, and they are required to provide updated budget documents, certifications, and assurances. ETA Handbook No. 336, 18th Edition provides detailed guidance for the preparation and submittal of the SQSP and supplemental guidance is provided in an annual UIPL, issued as UIPL 21-14 for the FY 2015 SQSP. The Social Security Act (SSA) sections 302 and 303 authorize the Secretary of Labor to provide funds to administer the UI program and govern the expenditure of those funds. States that choose the option to include UI in a WIOA Combined State Plan will be required to submit their SQSP through the Combined State Plan process. The SQSP must be prepared in accordance to the instructions in ET Handbook 336, 18th Edition and there are no changes to the established SQSP cycle if a State chose to submit their SQSP through the Combined State Plan process.

a. Contents of a complete UI SQSP package

A complete UI SQSP package includes the following documents, as described in Chapter 1, ETA Handbook 336, 18th Edition:

1. Transmittal Letter

A cover letter to the appropriate Regional Office (RO) transmitting all the required SQSP documents.

August 20, 2019

Mr. Nicholas E. Lalpuis
Regional Administrator
US Department of Labor
525 South Griffin Street, Room 315
Dallas, TX 75202

Dear Mr. Lalpuis:

Enclosed are the original copies of ADWS' State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) for the Alternate Year and UI Integrity Action Plan for Fiscal Year 2020. The SQSP identifies ADWS' performance during the most recently completed Secretary's Year. As you are aware, the submission of this SCSP represents the first time that ADWS has not been subject to a corrective action plan for failing to meet minimum performance measures. Our biennial SQSP reflects ADWS' performance during the most recently completed Secretary's Year and outlines our strategies for the upcoming Fiscal Year continued commitment to performance excellence and client-centered services. ADWS' Integrity Action Plan outlines the activities that ADWS will undertake during Fiscal Year 2020 to improve the Improper Payment Rate. The SQSP and UI Integrity Action Plan will be submitted in accordance with Unemployment Insurance Program Letter (UIPL) No. 15-19.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Pamela Vance at 501-683-5366.

Sincerely,

Charisse Childers, Ph.D.

Director

CC/pv

Enclosures

THE SIGNED COPY OF THE TRANSMITTAL LETTER IS MAINTAINED WITH THE AGENCY AND THE REGIONAL OFFICE

2. Budget Worksheets/Forms

Budget worksheets/forms and plan for program administration based on projected allocations received from the Federal partner. These forms include Worksheet UI-1 and SF 424, SF 424A and SF 424B. The SF 424A is only required if the State vary the quarterly distribution of base claims activity staff years.

SF 424

Title: 17.225 Unemployment Insurance

Description: Unemployment Insurance Grant - Administrative operation of Unemployment Insurance in the State of Arkansas for Federal Fiscal Year 2019 - Reference UIPL No. 10-18,

Source Date: 08/20/2019.

Funding Total: $17,209,313.00

Project Start Date: 10/01/2019

Project End Date: 09/30/2020

Name of Authorizing Representative: Charisse Childers, Ph.D.

THE SIGNED COPY OF THE BUDGET-RELATED WORKSHEETS/FORMS ARE MAINTAINED WITH THE AGENCY AND THE REGIONAL OFFICE

3. The State Plan Narrative

The State Plan Narrative is a vital element of the SQSP that provides a vehicle for sharing with the Federal partner State-specific efforts that affect the administration of the UI Program. The State Plan Narrative allows the State to describe in a single narrative: a) State performance in comparison to the Government Performance Review Act goals; b) actions planned to correct deficiencies regarding UI programs, UI program reviews and reporting requirements; and c) results of customer satisfaction surveys (optional).

STATE PLAN ALTERNATE YEAR NARRATIVE ARKANSAS — FY 2020

During FY 2020, the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) will continue to pursue a strategic direction designed to take ADWS from a mainframe legacy environment to a new web-based environment using server technology and focusing on customer self-service. The intent of this new environment is to better leverage staff resources due to continued declines in federal program and administrative funding.

ADWS launched its Automated Adjudication System (AAS) in July 2005. Like the UI State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES), ADWS' AAS system is a web-based system

designed to streamline and increase the efficiency of the nonmonetary determination process. Since AAS was implemented in Arkansas, ADWS has continued to enhance the system to further streamline the adjudication process. In March 2012, ADWS deployed its electronic response system for employers to the World Wide Web. Through the electronic response system employers receive and respond to Notices to Last Employer, Notices to Base Period Employer, and questionnaires regarding nonmonetary issues via the Internet. ADWS is aware that the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) encourages states to fully implement SIDES; however, ADWS' Automated Adjudication System and electronic response system for employers, which is based upon our own server technology and state UI law, enables Arkansas to maintain the same functionality as SIDES along with ability to tailor questionnaires designed to elicit more information from employers with no additional subscription costs to the agency. ADWS will consider incorporating SIDES into its modernized benefits system.

To compliment ADWS' electronic response system, during the second quarter of 2014, ADWS deployed the first phase of its fax manager system. This system enables bar coded documents and any related attachments returned to the agency via fax to transfer seamlessly to the appropriate claim. A subsequent analysis of field and central office operations revealed that one of the biggest areas of opportunity with regard to increasing staff efficiency related to the number of staff hours needed to prepare and process documents to the imaging repository throughout the unemployment insurance program. During the fourth quarter of 2015, ADWS began utilizing the fax manager system as a gateway to electronically transfer appeal related documents to associated unemployment insurance claim files. The electronic transfer of appeal related documents resulted in a measurable decrease in the number of staff hours devoted to processing appeal related document imaging repository. In August 2017, ADWS implemented the new imaging process throughout the unemployment insurance program. The implementation of the new imaging process has enabled ADWS to streamline some functions and improve overall efficiency of available staff resources.

In March 2015, ADWS deployed its "Claims Processing Hotline" to selected Workforce Centers as a method of leveraging staff resources by shifting one local office's claimstaking workload to another local office experiencing a lower claimstaking volume. The deployment of the Claims Processing Hotline did not alter existing claimstaking procedures, the only difference being that a claimant may be served at a local office via telephone rather than in-person. Due to the success of the Claims Processing Hotline pilot, during FY 2016 ADWS deployed the Claims Processing Hotline to all remaining Workforce Centers. In June 2017, ADWS deployed a pilot project to selected local offices to evaluate the impact of transferring claimstaking and claims maintenance as well as the diversion of Workforce Center incoming telephone calls to a full hotline environment. During the expanded pilot project, ADWS obtained sufficient data to meaningfully evaluate the impact of a full hotline environment on local office operations, internal and external customer satisfaction as well as UI timeliness and quality standards. The expanded pilot project

revealed increased efficiency of available staff resources with minimal adverse impact on claimstaking and claims maintenance functions. By April 30, 2018, all local offices were integrated into the expanded Claims Processing Hotline environment. ADWS will continue to examine its Claims Processing Hotline in an effort to effectively leverage available administrative grant funding.

Current Financial Considerations Impacting Performance

Staffing, funding limitations and requirements to operate and maintain current systems continue to impact the ADWS' ability to implement the move from a legacy mainframe environment to an Internet and server-based environment. ADWS continues to examine ways to efficiently and cost effectively automate and reduce staff. The completion of the UI Benefits Operations Self-Assessment Tool and collaboration with NASWA's UI Integrity Center Review Team will further ADWS' goal of effectively automating systems while maximizing available resources. While ADWS performs well above the median in most performance measures, there are areas of opportunity for ADWS to further improve is performance ratings, particularly with regard to the Improper Payment Rate. As highlighted by ADWS' UI Benefit Operations Self-Assessment, the legacy mainframe environment is an impediment to fully maximizing available fiscal resources and staffing. Due to continued delay in the development and implementation of movement towards a new web-based environment, ADWS will begin examining consortium and third-party products in order to expedite the deployment of a modernized benefits system. A concerted effort to move from a legacy mainframe environment to an Internet and server-based environment will enable ADWS to reduce or eliminate barriers impacting the efficiency and accuracy of the UI program.

Training and retention continues to be major points of emphasis for ADWS in order to cultivate and maintain a well-trained and experienced staff. ADWS continues in its mission of cultivating staff with a focus on succession planning. During the summer of 2018, ADWS began utilizing the National Integrity Academy as a tool for staff development and improvement for UI Administration management staff. In 2019, the National Integrity Academy was made available to Field Operations staff to further promote staff development and claim integrity. ADWS remains committed to providing quality service along with a commitment to reduce and eliminate improper payments; training emphasis will continue to focus on promoting a thorough understanding and working knowledge of the unemployment insurance program. This commitment to staff development will be instrumental in ensuring continued improved program performance with regard to Core Measures and Integrity efforts.

Integrity Related Law Changes for FY 2020

ADWS continues in its effort to improve the prevention, detection, and recovery of improper unemployment insurance benefits. During the 2019 Arkansas legislative session, ADWS pursued legislation designed to address issues impacting its Improper Payment Rate. Act 453's most significant provisions increases the disqualification period for committing unemployment insurance fraud, increases the length of enforcement of the disqualification, and increases the penalty assessed to fraud overpayments from 15% to 50%. Act 453 also prohibits claimants who have fraud overpayments issued from receiving future unemployment insurance benefits until such time as their fraud overpayment is repaid in full, including penalty and interest. The provisions of Act 453 will be assessed to nonmonetary determinations and overpayment determinations issued on and after October 1, 2019. Finally, Act 375 creates the "UI Integrity Fund" which will consist of the proceeds of penalty in excess of the federal minimum of 15% assessed on fraud overpayments. Act 375 limits the use of the 35% excess penalty to activities related to the prevention, detection and recovery of improper unemployment insurance benefits. This revenue stream will enable ADWS to implement new programs designed to reduce our primary cause of improper payments, Benefit Year Earnings issues; education of employers and claimants regarding their roles in preventing and reducing improper payments; and to ensure claimants are engaged in meaningful and appropriate work search activities.

GPRA Goals and Targets – FY 2020

First Payments – Intrastate: The goal for FY 2020 is that at least 87% of intrastate first payments for full weeks of unemployment be made within 14/21 days from the week ending date of the first compensable week. Actual performance for ADWS for the SY 2019 was recorded at 93.18% and ADWS recognizes that this is a critical area and will continue to monitor first payments in an effort to ensure that we maximize performance results and continue to exceed the measure during FY 2020.

New Status Determinations: The GPRA goal for FY 2019 was that 89% of status determinations for new employers be made within 90 days of the end of the first quarter in which liability occurred. ADWS' performance for SY 2019 was at 90.90%. The GPRA goal for FY 2020 is that 89.0% of status determinations for new employers be made timely. While performance improved slightly from SY 2018 to SY 2019, ADWS recognizes the importance of making new status determinations timely and will continue to train staff and monitor performance of its system and processes to insure ADWS continues to exceed the measure.

Detect Benefit Overpayments: The GPRA goal for FY 2020 is at least 54.5% of the estimated detectable, recoverable overpayments will be established. The overpayment detection rate for Arkansas was 50.43% for SY 2019. ADWS will continue with its efforts to improve preventing, detecting and recovering improper unemployment insurance overpayments.

The majority of Arkansas' overpayments are the result of Benefit Year Earnings issues. ADWS continues in its efforts to educate claimants on the importance of reporting earnings and reporting the earnings correctly. Wage investigations are initiated on 100% of the cases involving employees reported through the National New Hire Directory and State New Hire Directory. Each week, all hits involving active claims are distributed to local office staff in order to contact claimants and employers to ensure the timely and accurate reporting of earnings during the continued claim process. ADWS' IVR Cross Match System installs control dates on claims whenever there are matches made between claimants and the State New Hire Directory.

Local offices then contact claimants and employers if a week is claimed and there is a match with the State New Hire Directory. This process enables the local office staff another opportunity to address potential earnings fraud and to detect potential separation issues. In October 2017, ADWS began electronically distributing its "Fraud: It's A Crime!" newsletter to claimants who filed a new or additional claim. In June 2018, ADWS deployed its "Stopped Earnings Report" to the local offices. The report is designed to identify claimants who reported earnings for two consecutive weeks and then abruptly stop. The "Stopped Earnings Report" enables local office staff to rapidly identify potential earnings fraud and other nonmonetary issues during a claim series. On August 1, 2019, ADWS began electronically distributing a second fraud alert newsletter, "Fraud Alert—Unemployment Law Changes for 2019," which highlights the increased penalties for committing unemployment insurance fraud beginning October 1, 2019.

Assessment of Program Performance in Prior Years

For the first time, ADWS' performance did not fall below minimum performance standards for any of the established Core Measures. Accordingly, there are no Corrective Action Plans required in accordance with the Additional Planning Guidance for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Unemployment Insurance (UI) State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) as per UIPL 15-19 dated June 28, 2019.

Core Measures

<u>Detection of Overpayment Measure</u>
ALP = the percentage of detectable/recoverable overpayments established for recovery must meet or exceed 50%. With regard to the Core Measure, ADWS will continue to strive to meet or exceed the Core Measure of 50% to 95% for the Detection of Overpayments. ADWS' performance for SY 2019 was 56.36%, an increase from 48.35% for SY 2018 and from 47.94% for SY 2017.

<u>Effective Audit Measures</u>

ALP = total score of 7 or more and passing scores in all four factors. Passing scores in the four factors follow: Factor 1, Employers Audited = 1.0%, Factor 2, Change in Total Wages from Audits = 2.0%, Factor 3, Total Wages Audited = 1.0% and Factor 4, Average Number of Misclassified Employees Detected per Audit = 1.0%.
Performance for CY 2018: ADWS had the following factor scores: Factor 1 = 1.2%, Factor 2 = 3.3%, Factor 3 = 1.5% and Factor 4 = 2.3%. ADWS anticipates again meeting the Core Measure for Effective Audit Measures for CY 2019.

Data Validation – Tax
ALP = all tax populations submitted and passing.

Improper Payment Measure – Integrity Action Plan Included.
ALP = maintain an Improper Payment Rate of less than 10% for covered programs.
Performance for IPERA Year 2018: The Improper Payment Measure is defined as all UI benefits overpaid and underpaid as estimated from the BAM survey of paid UI claims for the IPERA year which begins on July 1 and ends on June 30 of the following calendar year. For IPERA year 2018 ending on June 30, 2018, ADWS met the ALP by recording an Improper Payment Rate of 9.864%. While ADWS met the Improper Payment Measure, strategies will continue to be developed and implemented to continue to improve program performance in this critical area.

UI Overpayment Recovery Measure
ALP = The recovery rate is calculated by dividing the amount of improper overpayments recovered by the amount of improper overpayments identified. The ALP for the recovery rate measure is 68% for the 2018 IPIA period.
Performance for IPIA Year 2018: ADWS exceeded the ALP by recording an overpayment recovery rate of 126.51%.

Secretary Standards in Regulation

Data for the most recent Secretary's Year showed acceptable levels of performance by ADWS in all categories. No narratives required.

UI Programs

State Directory of New Hires (SDNH)/National Directory of New Hires (NDNH)
ADWS' Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM) Unit is compliant with the NDNH matching requirements as set forth in ET Handbook No. 395, 5th Edition, Chapter VI, UIPL 03-07, and UIPL No., Change 1.

Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM)
The Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM) Annual Determination Letter for CY 2018 reflects that ADWS' BAM Unit is compliant with investigative as well as all method and procedure requirements set forth in ET Handbook No. 395, 5th Edition, and through findings established through ET Handbook No. 396, 4th Edition.

Tax Performance System (TPS)
ADWS' UI Tax Operations are in compliance with Federal reporting and oversight requirements. For CY 2018, all TPS sample reviews were passing.

Data Validation (DV)
ADW submitted all DV items for validation and certification by June 10, 2019. All DV items passed for Validation Year 2019.

UI Program Integrity
During SY 2019, ADWS maintained an Improper Payment Rate of less than 10%. While ADWS has maintained an Improper Payment Rate of less than 10% for the past few years, ADWS continues to experience fluctuations of the Improper Payment Rate of lowering to below 10% and rising to greater than 10%. ADWS' primary root cause of Improper Payments continues to be Benefit Year Earnings issues. During the most recent legislative session, ADWS pursued legislation that will increase the penalties for individuals who commit unemployment insurance fraud and provide a revenue stream for activities designed to prevent, detect and reduce the Improper Payment Rate.

Issue Detection Date and Determination Date
ADWS entered the correct Issue Detection Date and Determination date in at least 95% of the nonmonetary determinations evaluated during SY 2019. While ADWS met minimum performance standards with regard to the Issue Detection Date and Determination Date, continued staff training and ongoing refresher Benefits, Timeliness and Quality training with regard to issue detection dates for adjudication staff. Issue detection date errors remain part of the Adjudicators' and Adjudication Supervisors' performance appraisals; this internal performance standard should maintain the awareness of the importance of the need to maintain the desired level of achievement of at least 95%.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
WIOA is designed to provide job seekers with increased access to employment, education, training and other support services to succeed in the labor market, match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete, improve the coordination of employment and training services and resources, and strengthen collaboration with state and local partners. During SY 2018, ADWS continued its efforts in fully implementing the WIOA program, in collaboration

with the program's core and non-core partners. The State of Arkansas elected to coordinate and integrate as many workforce development programs as possible, and therefore, elected to submit a combined state plan designed to streamline the investments in our workforce development system. The combined plan integrates and streamlines the services provided by program partners: ADWS and its Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and Adult Education Services Divisions, the Division of Services for the Blind, and the Arkansas Department of Human Services. As part of this effort, ADWS hosts biannual statewide partner meetings each spring and fall. These training and strategy sessions included workforce development partners and stakeholders, including employers, economic developers, Workforce Development Board Members and community college representatives with the goal of developing broader and deeper partnerships, integration of programs and services within their regional area to help prepare Arkansas' workforce to meet the needs of current and potential employers.

Additionally, our workforce development partners present their programs' information to the Arkansas Workforce Development Board at their quarterly meetings in an effort to increase the level of integration of the state's workforce program. Moving forward, ADWS plans to continue our efforts in collaborating with private sector employers, non-profit organizations and stakeholders who can assist us in maximizing the full potential of the Arkansas' workforce system.

ADWS has long benefited from the integration of its workforce partner programs, including UI, within its 30 local offices. The longstanding practice of having the UI program integrated into 30 local offices throughout the state has enabled the UI program to ensure that income support is available to eligible individuals who are simultaneously utilizing the onsite services provided by partner programs. To ensure that claimants are aware of the array of services provided through the workforce center, claimants are required to obtain ES staff assisted services as part of their initial claim filing process. Specific enhancements made by UI include notification to claimants with inactive Arkansas Job Link (AJL) accounts of the requirement that their accounts be activated and current, including a resume. Beginning in July 2016, ADWS began notifying claimants at the time of filing UI claims they must upload a resume to their individual AJL account. Resumes uploaded to an individual AJL account are then searchable by employers. An up to date AJL account ensures that claimants have maintained their work registrations and are able to access services offered through the Arkansas Workforce Centers.

Maintaining Solvency of the State's Trust Fund

The continued strengthening of Arkansas' labor market is reflected in the unemployment insurance data for SY 2019. For the weeks ending April 7, 2018 through the week ending March 30, 2019, Initial Claims totaled 93,290 and Continued Claims totaled 590,846. Arkansas had an average insured unemployment rate of 0.96% during that same period. During the comparable period of SY 2018, Initial Claims totaled 102,482 and Continued Claims totaled 707,704. The

average insured unemployment rate was 1.16% during that same period. The data for SY 2019 represents an 8.9% decrease in Initial Claims; a 16.5% decrease in Continued Claims activity; and a 0.2% decrease in the average insured unemployment rate.

Arkansas' Unemployment Insurance program served as an important safety net for thousands of Arkansas families during the Recession. Unfortunately, the increase in demand for unemployment claims quickly exhausted the program's trust fund. Arkansas was one of 35 states that had to take advances from the federal government in order to meet the funding needs resulting from additional UI claims. The ADWS UI Trust Fund received $360 million in Title XII Advances in order to pay UI Benefits. As of the end of CY 2018, the UI Trust Fund had an average high cost multiple of 1.21 and will continue to rise in CY 2019. ADWS projects a trust fund balance of $855,000,000 at the end of CY 2019.

During the 2019 Arkansas legislative session, ADWS sought to ease the tax burden on employers by pursuing legislation to create a flexible taxable wage base. SB 298, now Act 512 of 2019, is designed to slow the growth of the UI Trust fund while easing the tax burden on Arkansas' employers by providing for the automatic adjustment of the taxable wage base based on economic factors directly affecting the UI Trust Fund. Beginning January 1, 2020, the taxable wage base has the potential to increase or decrease between $7,000 and $10,000 every calendar year based on the average insured unemployment rate for the most recently completed state fiscal year. Act 512 of 2019 also contains special triggers that could result in the taxable wage base being set at $11,000 or $12,000 depending on expenditures from the UI Trust Fund and the UI Trust Fund balance as of June 30, 2019. These special triggers will supersede the regular factors used to determine the taxable wage base for the following calendar year.

ADWS implemented the Treasury Offset Program concerning delinquent employers in October 2015. For the period of January 1, 2019 through July 31, 2019, ADWS received $25,979.81 through offsets of delinquent employers' tax returns. An additional $104,955.09 was received in response to the tax intercept notices sent to employer. Since the implementation of the Treasury Offset Program, ADWS received $214,126.73 through offsets of delinquent employers' tax returns and $560,948.39 in response to notices sent to delinquent employers who received notices that their debts were submitted for collection through the Internal Revenue Service.

In addition to the current legislatively authorized activity, ADWS previously implemented some varied strategies to protect or replenish the trust fund. ADWS began participating in the Treasury Offset Program in SY 2013 to recover benefit overpayments. Since that time, ADWS has intercepted $57,081,171.61. For the period of January 1, 2019 through July 31, 2019, ADWS intercepted $3,337,630.76.

In March 2012, ADWS began matching claims with the state payroll system, AASIS, in order to detect improper payments to state employees as quickly as possible. The crossmatch returns weekly earnings for the match weeks, eliminating the need to send wage audit requests to individual agencies. In 2014, ADWS deployed its front-end identity verification to reduce the risk of fraudulent unemployment insurance claims. ADWS enhanced its front-end identify verification practices in 2016. In order to make initial claim eligibility determinations faster and more accurate, ADWS will continue to seek to increase employer utilization of the online response systems available to employers to respond to notices to last employer, notices to base period employers, the adjudication questionnaires, and wage audit notice requests. ADWS continues to experience positive results with the online, general fraud reporting system available to the general public on the ADWS home page.

Assurances

Per UIPL 15-19, by signing the SQSP Signature Page, ADWS certifies that it will comply with the assurances listed in Handbook 336, 18th Edition. ADWS will institute any plans or measures necessary to comply with the requirements.

Additionally, UIPL 15-19 requires information for Assurance "H", "Assurance of Contingency Planning"; and Assurance "J", "Assurance of Automated Information Systems Security.

H. Assurance of Contingency Planning:
- Date IT Contingency Plan Implemented: 2004
- IT Contingency Plan Reviewed/Updated: Biannual
- IT Contingency Plan Tested: Scheduled for November 2019

J. Assurance of Automated System Security
- Date Risk Assessment Conducted: May 2019
- System Security Plan Reviewed/Updated: Biannual
- System Security Plan implemented: 2004

UI Integrity Action Plan (IAP)		
Back to Biennial Overview 2020		Back to Alternate Overview 2021
State	**Federal Fiscal Year**	**Accountable Agency Official(s):**
Arkansas	**2020**	***Charisse Childers, Ph.D., Director; DeeVee Pearson, Deputy Director-Internal Operations; Ron Snead, Deputy Director-External Operations; Don Denton, General Counsel; Pamela***

		Vance, Assistant Director-Unemployment Insurance; Local Office Managers; FIRE Unit; Automated Adjudication Systems; UI Technical.	
	Top Three Root Causes (Calendar Year 2018) https://www.dol.gov/general/maps/data	**Calendar Year 2017 (% of $ Overpaid)**	**Calendar Year 2018 (% of $ Overpaid)**
Root Cause #1:	Benefit Year Earnings	**55.36%**	**60.81%**
Root Cause #2:	Separation Issues	**21.91%**	**17.08%**
Root Cause #3:	All Other Causes	**10.50%**	**8.64%**
State	**Federal Fiscal Year**	**Accountable Agency Official(s):**	

Summary: (Provide a summary of the plan that the state has designed. The summary should include outreach efforts planned by the agency to inform all UI and workforce staff, and employers of the strategic plan to ensure everyone understands the importance of maintaining program integrity.)

ADWS' UI IPIA Integrity Rate for the period of July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018 was 9.86%. The UI IPIA Integrity Rate for the period of July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017 was 8.18%. The IPIA Integrity Rate for the period ending June 30, 2018 represents an increase of 1.68% from the previous IPERA year. ADWS continues to strive to reduce its UI IPIA Integrity Rate.

The following causes have been identified by ADWS' Benefit Accuracy Measurement (BAM) Unit as the top three root causes of overpayments: (1) Benefit Year Earnings: At 5.18%, Benefit Year Earnings issues continue to be the leading cause of overpayments. Benefit Year Earnings issues continue to occur as a direct result of claimants failing to report their earnings, either in whole or in part, during the continued claim process. The percentage of Benefit Year Earnings issues compared to dollars paid during IPIA year 2018 represents a .48% increase from IPIA Year 2017. BAM data for the period ending June 30, 2018 indicate that 55.97% of dollars overpaid is the direct result of claimant error in failing to report earnings or due to claimants incorrectly reporting earnings. The percentage of dollars overpaid for IPIA Year 2018 is a decrease from 60.38% the previous IPIA year. The decrease in the percentage of dollars overpaid suggests that while the number of fraudulent overpayments is increasing, the amount of the resulting overpayment is decreasing due to earlier detection. (2) Separation Issues: At 2.10%, the second leading cause of overpayments is attributed to claimant error, employer error or a combination of the two regarding separation issues. The percentage Separation Issues compared to dollars paid during IPIA Year 2018 represents an increase of .68% in separation issues resulting in overpayments. BAM data indicate that 22.505% of dollars overpaid during the period ending June 30, 2018 is the result of incorrect or inadequate separation information provided by one or both of the parties. The percentage of dollars overpaid for IPIA Year 2018 represents a 3.675% increase from the preceding IPIA Year. (3) Other Issues. At 0.746%, the third leading cause of overpayments during IPIA Year 2018 is attributed to "Other Issues." These types of issues are generally due to claim maintenance errors, appeal reversals, and fraud outside the key week. BAM data for IPIA Year 2018 reflects that 7.99% of dollars overpaid is the result of "Other Issues." The percentage of dollars overpaid because of "Other Issues" during IPIA Year 2018 reflects a 1.066% decrease in overpayments due to "Other Issues" when compared to IPIA Year 2017.

ADWS continues to work to improve preventing, detecting and recovering improper unemployment insurance overpayments. The GPRA goal for FY 2020 is that at least 54.5% of the estimated detectable recoverable overpayments will be established. ADWS' GPRA performance for SY 2019 was 50.43%. ADWS is currently at

56.75% for the period ending June 30, 2019. With regard to the Core Measure, ADWS met the Core Measure of 50% to 95% for the Detection of Overpayments with 56.36% of the detectable/recoverable overpayments established for recovery. ADWS will continue in its efforts to ensure its UI staff and workforce partners are well trained in identifying and addressing issues impacting a UI claim during its life cycle. A well-trained workforce and knowledgeable partners are a critical component in reducing the improper payment rate. Maintaining adequate staffing levels in the FIRE Unit and BPC will ensure the continued timely issuance of determinations and the establishment of overpayments.

In order to continue to improve the overpayment detection rate and reduce the operational overpayment rate further, ADWS will continue to pursue the following major strategies: 1. Prevent, detect and reduce future overpayments by continuing with efforts to increase the number of employers who respond to ADWS requests for information through our electronic systems; 2. Prevent and reduce future overpayments through claimant messaging; 3. Prevent, detect, reduce and recover overpayments by interlinking more of the investigative and administrative systems; 4. Prevent, reduce and recover overpayments by continuing ADWS efforts to follow-up with employers who have not returned wage audit notices.

With regard to Benefit Year Earnings issues, ADWS continues to educate claimants on the importance of reporting earnings timely and accurately. ADWS' IVR Crossmatch System installs control dates on claims whenever matches are made between claimants and the State New Hire Directory. Local offices then review those claims and, if appropriate, contact claimants regarding reporting earnings. All claims that have a “hit” on the State New Hire Directory and/or National New Hire Registry result in the issuance of a wage audit notice to the employer. In 2016, ADWS central office staff began emailing the IVR Crossmatch hits to the local offices to be more proactive in contacting claimants who have been matched with the State New Hire Directory. This provides ADWS with an early opportunity to verify that claimants are properly reporting work and earnings as well as provide an opportunity for early intervention. ADWS continues to mail letters to claimants who claim the week in which a match was made from the State New Hire Directory. These letters congratulate claimants for obtaining new employment and serve as another opportunity to issue instructions regarding reporting earnings. In November 2017, ADWS began distributing its “Fraud: It’s A Crime!” newsletter to every claimant who files an initial, additional or reopened claim. This newsletter is also delivered electronically to all claimants who provided an email address during the claims filing process. In August 2019, ADWS began distributing a second claimant newsletter focusing on the pending enhanced penalties for committing unemployment insurance fraud.

To further combat Benefit Year Earnings issues, ADWS implemented a process during the second quarter of 2018 which requires claimants who reported earnings for two consecutive weeks and then stopped reporting earnings during their continue claim series to report to their local office for a claim review. During the second quarter of 2020, ADWS projects anticipates the implementation of process to conduct random audits of active partial claims in an effort to ensure that work and earnings issues are prevented or detected in its earliest states. A random sample of claimants receiving partial benefits will be required to submit to a random earnings audit during the third and seventh week of the claim series. This will provide ADWS with yet another opportunity to ensure that claimants understand their rights and responsibilities with regard to reporting earnings from work or self-employment. ADWS will also have the opportunity to stress the importance of timely reporting any other potential eligibility issues that may arise during the claim series. The process will be evaluated to determine whether the random audit process should specifically target continued claimants reporting less than 40% of their weekly benefit amounts.

In the third quarter of 2018, ADWS implemented updates to the online wage audit notice response system (IRME), which added a comment section at the bottom of the online wage audit notice form to allow employers to provide additional information. The modification to the online wage audit notice form has been beneficial in

detecting new nonmonetary issues outside of work and earnings. All responses are reviewed by a fraud investigator and then forwarded to the adjudication unit for adjudication.

In addition to the enhancements made to ADWS' IVR Crossmatch System, ADWS deployed an employer reporting tool to securely report instances of claimant activity that impact eligibility and an online reporting system for citizens to report suspected claimant and employer unemployment insurance fraud, job refusals and failure to report for job interviews. Referrals made by citizens are simultaneously forwarded to UI Administration and UI Technical and are typically assigned for investigation within 24 hours of receipt. The quick notification to ADWS of these events, when substantiated, will continue to reduce improper payments.

To emphasize the importance that the highest levels of Arkansas government have placed on preventing inaccurate wage reporting by claimants, beginning in March 2012, ADWS developed and deployed a wage crossmatch that runs biweekly with state employee payroll. This report contains the weekly pay of any state employee who also claimed benefits within the applicable two-week period. ADWS utilizes this tool to identify claimants with earnings issues and immediately initiates a priority investigation.

ADWS will continue efforts to message and to educate employers and claimants on the importance of timely and correctly reporting earnings as well. In the follow-up projects on non-returned 901As from the new hire crossmatches and the quarterly wage crossmatches, FIRE Unit personnel explain the processes available to employers for completing the requests. Additionally, these same personnel are available to provide on-site or on-line training for employers upon request.

In January 2016 ADWS FIRE Unit initiated the Quarterly Crossmatch Review Project. This is an in-house project initiated to maximize detection of overpayments and minimize the number of improperly paid weeks. This follow-up project is modeled after the New Hire Follow-up Project that ADWS has operated for approximately seven years. For the quarters 2017-3 through 2018-2, the New Hire Follow-up Project resulted in increases in returned new hire wage audit notices from approximately 61.75% to 93.94% per week.

In the first year after its inception, Quarterly Crossmatch Project raised the pre-follow-up return rate average of 59.59% to an approximate average of 71.52% post-follow-up, which is the equivalent of 10,791 additionally returned notices from employers. The pre-follow-up Quarter Crossmatch return rate was an approximate average of 71.90% for the period of 2017-3 through 2018-2 quarterly wage crossmatches. The approximate average return rate after the follow-ups for this same period was 82.87%, or a total of 8,421 returned audit notices. The average return rate represents an average increase of 2,105 audit notices each quarter during that period. The Quarterly Crossmatch Review Project performs follow-ups on employers for the previous audit quarter. The follow-ups are performed six weeks prior to a new crossmatch begin date and completed within a five-week period. The project began with employers with 30 or more outstanding wage audit notices who did not return their initial wage audit notice requests. The employers are contacted again either by telephone or email. ADWS is utilizing all available resources to increase overall performance and efficiency in the area of detection of benefits overpayments and investigations. ADWS depends on the involvement and contributions of key experienced employees for the future success of this project. ADWS expanded the project in January 2017 to follow-up with employers with 20 or more non-returned 901As. When the unit is fully staffed, ADWS will expand the project yet again by establishing a lower threshold for non-returned 901As. By the end of October, ADWS expanded the follow-ups to include employers with ten or more non-returns. ADWS later expanded the threshold to include employers with five or more audit notices that were not returned. Given the success to date of the project, ADWS eventually will expand this project to review all employers with non-returned notices; however, the lack of available experienced staff to perform follow-ups is a factor that adversely affects these efforts.

The second leading cause of overpayments in Arkansas is separation issues due to inadequate or untimely separation information being provided by the employer. In March 2012, ADWS deployed its electronic response system for employers to the World Wide Web. Through the electronic response system, employers may receive and respond to Notice to Last Employers, Notice to Base Period Employers, and adjudication questionnaires via the Internet. This system enhances ADWS' adjudication system by enabling it to have the same functionality as SIDES at a lower cost. The implementation of this method of response has improved the quality of nonmonetary determinations and reduced the number of improper payments due to the untimely employer responses to adjudication questionnaires or appeals. Marketing to employers continues to be essential to the effectiveness of this system. In combination with ADWS' efforts to better educate our employers on the importance of accurately and timely responding to requests from ADWS for separation information, ADWS expects a continued reduction in errors that arise during the adjudication process.

To address nonmonetary adjudication quality, ADWS designated an AAS Training Officer whose primary responsibility is to evaluate and improve the existing procedures for our adjudication staff. AAS supervisory staff are required to review a sampling of all adjudicators' determinations in order to ensure consistent and accurate interpretation of Arkansas' unemployment insurance laws. During FY 2019, the AAS Program Operations Manager and AAS Supervisors participated in BTQ training which served as a refresher course on the essential elements of timely and quality nonmonetary adjudications. AAS staff are required to submit to mandatory 100% case review whenever an improper finding is detected as a result of supervisory case review and/or a BAM investigation in order to ensure the proper and consistent application of law and policy. Adjudication staff continue with its effort to improve the quality of the adjudication process by exceeding the minimum number of reasonable attempts that must be made to obtain information from an interested party. The improvement in the quality of nonmonetary determinations should help reduce the total amount of improper payments to claimants who are later determined to be ineligible for UI benefits as a result of the appeal process.

The third leading cause of overpayments in Arkansas is the result of "Other Issues." These types of issues are generally due to claim maintenance errors, appeal reversals, and fraud outside the key week. ADWS continues to educate staff regarding law and policy to reduce and prevent claim maintenance errors, misinformation provided to claimants and employers, and appeal reversals arising from insufficient information. Continued education of claimants and employers will also be a significant point of emphasis in order to prevent and detect potential issues during the life cycle of the claim. While Arkansas' improper payment rate is not impacted by work search issues due to the ability to issue a waiver, returning claimants to work as expeditiously as possible continues to the primary objective of ADWS. To that end, the implementation of a random work search audit process for claimants will further ADWS' primary objectives and serve to ensure that claimants are complying with UI eligibility requirements. The random audit process will also provide an opportunity for UI staff to ensure that claimants understand their rights and responsibilities with regard to their UI claim.

Instructions for the following section: In each individual section below, enter a Root Cause, from above, and the top three focused Strategies that will be employed to correct or reduce this cause of overpayments. An additional line is available in each section to include other significant strategies that target the root cause.

Root Cause #1: Benefit Year Earnings

Strategies	Actions	Targets & Milestones	Resources
1. Prevent UI Overpayments by continuing to educate claimants regarding timely and accurately reporting earnings and potential claim issues when filing continued claims.	Continued dissemination of "Your Unemployment Insurance Information Handbook" through direct and electronic contact.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Continued distribution of the "Fraud: It's A Crime" newsletter to claimants emphasizing how to properly report earnings and other potential issues during a claim series.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Require claimants who are in continued claim status and reported earnings for two consecutive weeks and stop reporting earnings to report to the local office for review of potential separation and/or other issues.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Integration of NASWA educational video regarding Benefit Year Earnings issues into the EZARC claims filing process.	First Quarter of 2020	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
2. Prevent, detect, and reduce UI overpayments by educating employers of the importance of providing timely and accurate wage information to ADWS.	Continued outreach to educate employers regarding state and federal unemployment laws through employer trade groups and periodic employer updates.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Continued distribution of employer newsletter regarding the unemployment insurance program.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Field Operations, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Distribute 901A response instructions with the ADWS Online Employer Services portal.	Ongoing	Legal and FIRE Unit
	Follow up with noncompliant new hire employers.	Ongoing	Legal and FIRE Unit

3. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments by increasing employer usage of electronic wage information into BARTS.	Market 901A response options with the ADWS Online Employer Services portal.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
	Expanded marketing of ADWS Online Employer Services portal to employers.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, Contributions, FIRE Unit and UI Technical
	Evaluate the effectiveness of the federal and state New Hire Registry in detecting potential earnings issues.	12/31/2019	UI Administration, Legal, FIRE, BAM, and UI Technical
4. Prevent, detect and reduce Benefit Year Earnings issues by conducting random audits of partial claims.	Develop a random audit process for partial unemployment insurance claims to individuals to report to their assigned local office with wage verification for earnings during the second and seventh week in the claim series.	3/31/2020	UI Administration, Field Operations and UI Technical
	Implement random wage audit process for partial unemployment insurance claims.	6/30/2020	UI Administration, Field Operations and UI Technical
	Explore whether available resources would best be served by focusing on partial unemployment claims of individuals who report 20% to 35% of their weekly benefit amount.	6/30/2020	UI Administration, Field Operations and UI Technical
5. Prevent, detect and reduce Benefit Year Earnings issues by continuing to partner with NASWA's Integrity Center to further ADWS' integrity efforts.	Explore utilizing customized BAM sub codes to further identify the causes of benefit year earnings issues.	12/31/2019	UI Administration, BAM, and UI Technical
6. Prevent, detect and reduce Benefit Year Earnings issues by evaluating the impact the 2019 legislative changes had on the fraud rate.	Analyze the impact of the 2019 legislative changes had on reducing the fraud rate and consider any other changes that may be needed during the 2021 legislative session.	9/30/2020	UI Administration, Legal, UI Technical, BAM, and FIRE Unit
Quarter 1 status report (12/31/2019):			
Root Cause #2: Separation Issues			

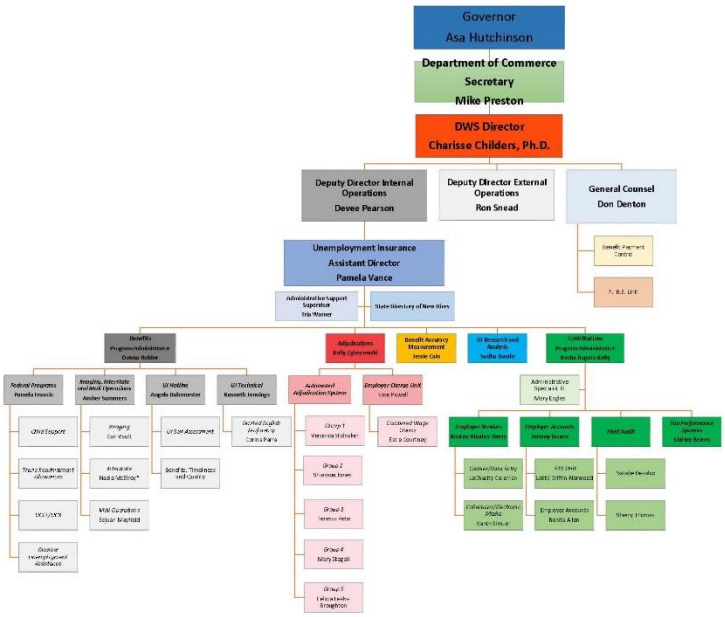
Strategies	Actions	Targets & Milestones	Resources
1. Reduction in the number of improper nonmonetary determinations through continued adjudicator training.	Continued education and monitoring of AAS staff to ensure consistent and accurate interpretation of Arkansas' unemployment laws.	Ongoing	UI Administration, AAS Program Manager, and AAS Satellite Office Supervisors
	Reduction of the number of wrong last work issues by confirming last employer when more than three weeks have passed between the separation date and the IC date.	Ongoing	UI Administration, AAS Program Manager, and AAS Satellite Office Supervisors
	Mandatory 100% case review for any adjudicator who receives a BAM finding for an improper separation nonmonetary determination.	Ongoing	UI Administration, AAS Program Manager, and AAS Satellite Office Supervisors
	Continued case review for adjudicators by AAS Satellite Office Supervisors.	Ongoing	UI Administration, AAS Program Manager, and AAS Satellite Office Supervisors
2. Reduction in the number of improper nonmonetary determinations by increasing the number of reasonable attempts to contact employers for information.	Exceed the minimum number of attempts (2) to contact an employer for separation information in cases that will likely result in a finding of eligibility.	Ongoing	UI Administration, AAS Program Manager, and AAS Satellite Office Supervisors
3. Reduction of improper payments through monitoring of appeal decisions.	Continued monitoring of appeal decisions to rapidly install stop payments in appeals filed by employers that result in a reversal of benefits.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Board of Review, Appeal Tribunal, UI Technical, and Field Operations

	Continue to provide list of appeal reversals to Local Office Managers and Area Operations Chiefs to ensure local offices are properly installing stop payments and forwarding to BPC to establish overpayments.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Board of Review, Appeal Tribunal, UI Technical, and Field Operations
4. Prevent UI overpayments by continuing to educate employers of the importance of providing timely and sufficient information regarding separation issues.	Continued dissemination of "Unemployment Insurance Handbook for Arkansas Employers" through direct and electronic contact.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Contributions, UI Technical, and ADWS Website
	Continued distribution of employer newsletter regarding the unemployment insurance program.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical
5. Detect concealed separation issues through continued utilization of the "Stopped Earnings" report.	Continued utilization of the "Stopped Earnings" report to detect potential unreported separation and other nonmonetary issues.	Ongoing	UI Administration, UI Technical, and Field Operations
Quarter 1 status report (12/31/2019):			
Root Cause #3: All Other Causes			
Strategies	**Actions**	**Targets and Milestones**	**Resources**
1. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments resulting from appeal reversals.	Continued review of Appeal Tribunal cases to identify employer appeal reversals to ensure prompt implementation of appeal decision to reduce the amount of overpayments.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Board of Review, Appeal Tribunal, UI Technical, and Field Operations
2. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments resulting from unreported nonmonetary issues.	Continued monitoring review of field operations daily reports to ensure proper application of law, policy and procedure.	Ongoing	UI Administration, UI Technical, and Field Operations
	Continued dissemination of claimant and employer newsletters covering potential	Ongoing	UI Administration, UI Technical,

	nonmonetary issues that may arise in a claim series.		and Field Operations
3. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments resulting from claim maintenance errors.	Continued review of randomly case files for each staff member to identify quality control and training issues.	Ongoing	UI Administration, UI Technical, and Field Operations
	Mandatory retraining and claim review for staff members who fail two or more quality reviews in a six-month period.	Ongoing	UI Administration, UI Technical, and Field Operations
4. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments through more focused training for workforce partners and non-UI Field Operations staff.	Development of a mid-level training program of the UI program for workforce partners and non-UI Field Operations staff to better identify potential issues impacting an unemployment insurance claim.	3/31/2020	UI Administration, UI Technical, RESEA, and Field Operations
	Training sessions workforce partners and non-UI Field Operations staff to empower them to readily identify potential nonmonetary issues and to increase ability to properly advise claimants on UI requirements.	6/30/2020	UI Administration, UI Technical, RESEA, and Field Operations
4. Prevent, detect and reduce potential work search issues by conducting random audits of claims.	Develop a random work search audit process to require selected claimants to report to their assigned local office during the third and eight weeks in the claim series.	9/30/2020	UI Administration, Field Operations and UI Technical
	Implement random work search audit process.	12/31/2020	UI Administration, Field Operations and UI Technical
5. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments by working NASWA's Integrity Center to identify areas of opportunity for claimant messaging.	Continue to explore opportunities in the claims filing and continued claims processes to incorporate claimant messaging.	Ongoing	UI Administration, Legal, FIRE Unit, and UI Technical

6. Organizational Chart

The organization chart must conform to the requirement for delivery of service through public employment offices, or such other designated providers as the Secretary may authorize; show the State's configuration from the Governor of the State down to the point of Employment Service and UI customer service delivery; and provide sufficient detail to show each organizational unit involved and the title of the unit manager.



7. SQSP Signature Page

The State administrator must sign and date the SQSP Signature Page. By signing the Signature Page, the State administrator certifies that the State will comply with all the assurances and activities contained in the SQSP guidelines.

U.S. Department of Labor SQSP SIGNATURE PAGE

OMB Approval No. 1205-0132 Expires 2/28/2021

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR Employment and Training Administration FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2019 STATE ARKANSAS

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE STATE QUALITY SERVICE PLAN SIGNATURE PAGE

This Unemployment Insurance State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) is entered into between the

Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, and

Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

The Unemployment Insurance SQSP is part of the State's overall operating plan and, during this Federal fiscal year, the State agency will adhere to and carry out the standards set forth in Federal UI Law as interpreted by the DOL, and adhere to the Federal requirements related to the use of granted funds.

All work performed under this agreement will be in accordance with the assurances and descriptions of activities as identified in the SQSP Handbook and will be subject to its terms.

TYPED NAME AND TITLE SIGNATURE DATE

STATE ADMINISTRATOR

Charisse Childers, Ph.D., Director

DOL APPROVING OFFICIAL

DOL APPROVING OFFICIAL

THE SIGNED COPY OF THE SQSP SIGNATURE PAGE IS MAINTAINED WITH THE AGENCY AND THE REGIONAL OFFICE

Appendix 1. Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each State submitting a Unified or Combined Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the covered by the plan. The State is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education on state adjusted levels of performance for the indicators for each of the two years of the plan

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for each indicator, except for those indicators that are listed as "baseline" indicators below.

For this Plan, the Departments will work with States during the negotiation process to establish the negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs.

Baseline Indicators for the First Two Years of the Plan

Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth):

- Measurable Skill Gains
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Title II programs (Adult Education):

- Employment in the 2nd quarter
- Employment in the 4th quarter
- Median Earnings
- Credential Attainment
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Title III programs (Wagner-Peyser):

- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Title IV programs (Vocational Rehabilitation):

- Employment in the 2nd quarter
- Employment in the 4th quarter
- Median Earnings
- Credential Attainment
- Measurable Skill Gains
- Effectiveness in Serving Employers

States may identify additional indicators in the State plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the State indicators. Please identify any such State indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Table 1. Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY 2020 Expected	PY 2020 Negotiated	PY 2021 Expected	PY 2021 Negotiated
Adults	**82.00**	**00**	**82.00**	**00**
Dislocated Workers	**81.90**	**00**	**81.90**	**00**
Youth	**67.50**	**00**	**67.50**	**00**
Adult Education	**Baseline**	**Baseline**	**Baseline**	**Baseline**
Wagner-Peyser	**66.00**	**00**	**66.00**	**00**
Voc. Rehabilitation	**Baseline**	**Baseline**	**Baseline**	**Baseline**

Table 2. Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY 2020 Expected	PY 2020 Negotiated	PY 2021 Expected	PY 2021 Negotiated
Adults	77.00	00	77.00	00
Dislocated Workers	77.00	00	77.00	00
Youth	70.30	00	70.30	00
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	67.00	00	67.00	00
Voc. Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

Table 3. Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY 2020 Expected	PY 2020 Negotiated	PY 2021 Expected	PY 2021 Negotiated
Adults	5,653.00	00	5,653.00	00
Dislocated Workers	6,300.00	00	6,300.00	00
Youth	3,024.47	00	3,024.47	00
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	4,275.00	00	4,275.00	00
Voc. Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

Table 4. Credential Attainment Rate

Program	PY 2020 Expected	PY 2020 Negotiated	PY 2021 Expected	PY 2021 Negotiated
Adults	66.80	00	66.80	00
Dislocated Workers	68.50	00	68.50	00
Youth	67.50	00	67.50	00
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Voc. Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

Table 5. Measurable Skill Gains

Program	PY 2020 Expected	PY 2020 Negotiated	PY 2021 Expected	PY 2021 Negotiated
Adults	72.14%	00	72.14%	00
Dislocated Workers	70.19%	00	70.19%	00
Youth	61.03%	00	61.03%	00
Adult Education	Baseline	00	Baseline	00
Wagner-Peyser	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Voc. Rehabilitation	24%	Baseline	24%	Baseline

Table 6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Measure	PY 2020	PY 2020	PY 2021	PY 2021
Line 1 (enter the measure	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Line 2	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Line 3	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Line 4	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Line 5	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Line 6	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

Line 1. - Approach 1 - Retention with the Same Employer in the 2nd and 4th Quarter After Exit.

Line 2. - Approach 3 - Employer Penetration Rate

Table 7. Additional Indicators of Performance

NONE.

User remarks on Table 7

Appendix 2. Other State Attachments (Optional)

Note: Beginning July 1, 2019, consistent with the Governor's Transformation Plan, all core partner programs became part of the Arkansas Division of Workforce Services. The Secretary of Commerce has transition authority regarding these core partner programs and changes in the organization charts for the entities listed below will be made available once they are approved by the Secretary of Commerce or Governor.

Appendix: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services:

Appendix: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services – Adult Education Section:

Appendix: Division of Services for the Blind

Appendix: Arkansas Division of Workforce Services – Arkansas Rehabilitation Services