

Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Regional Plan



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PY2016-PY2019

Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board

Transitional Regional Plan

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

Section 1.1 Introduction

The Southeast Arkansas is comprised of the following counties in the southeast corner of the state: Arkansas, Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Cleveland, Desha, Drew, Grant, Jefferson and Lincoln. Each county is represented by two members, with the exception of Jefferson, which has five members.

The Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board Planning Committee is responsible for the development of the Regional / Local Plan. The Planning Committee is comprised of the following members: Mr. William Campbell, Arkansas Department of Workforce Services; Mr. Jimmy Coker, Private Business, Labor and Registered Apprenticeship; Dr. Dewayne Haynes, Private Business; Mr. Cody Graham, Private Business; Mr. Jeff Wardlaw, Private Business and Mr. James Wilson, Private Business.

The Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board and the Planning Committee meets as needed, but no less than quarterly, on the third Wednesday of the month. The committees are scheduled to meet at 10:00 p.m. and report to the Board, which convenes at 12:45 p.m.

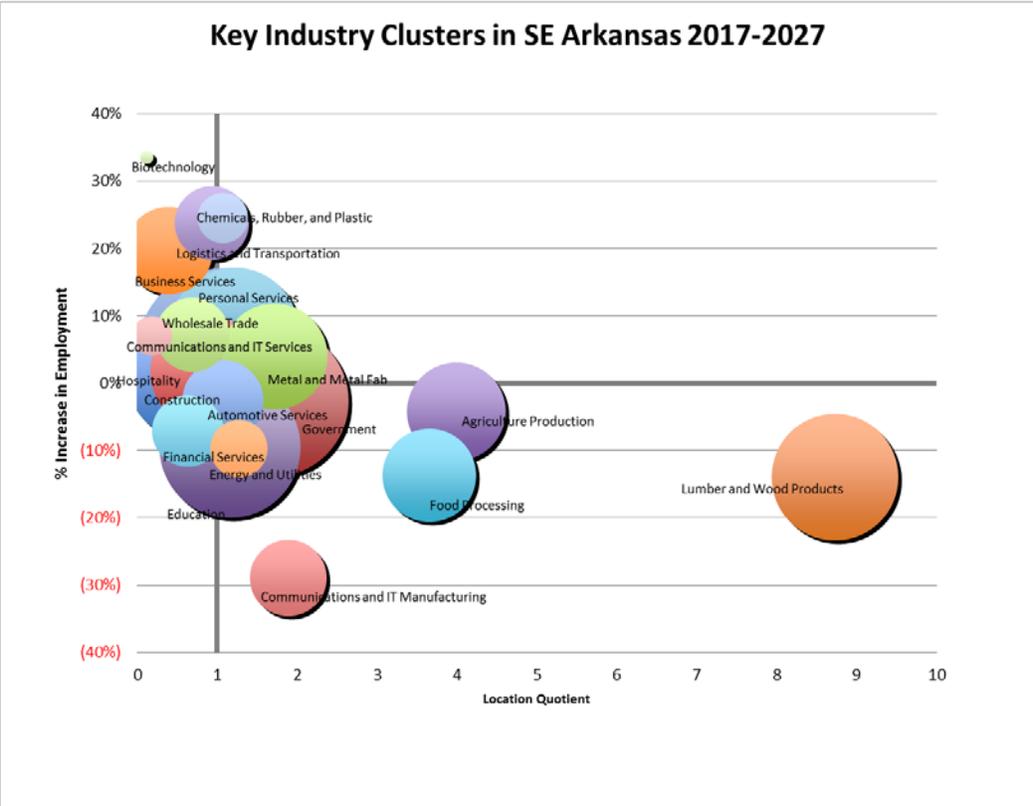
Section 1.2 Historic Labor Market Information

A. Like many rural areas in the United States, the economic and demographic trends in Southeast Arkansas have paralleled the fortunes of the agriculture business and farming sector. In general, farm production has continually increased as the result of new products, the adoption of new technologies, improved production methods, and more efficient transportation systems that have expanded markets for agriculture products. Over time, this expansion altered socioeconomic relationships in these regions freeing people from their dependence on the land. As a consequence, people began to move from rural to urban areas. ¹

For the region, the post-World War II period saw manufacturing industries become the dominate employers and a net out-migration of people to all parts of the country. ^{2,3} As the region moved into the first decade of the 21st century, the area's population continued to decline. Manufacturing employment lost its predominance to employment in the government sector. For now, governments have become one of the major employers in the area, as the region transforms into a more service oriented economy. ⁴

1. This histrionic sketch draws on: Dougan, Micheal. *Business, Commerce, and Industry, The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia>, November 2012. 2 Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/34888/Arkansas/280997/Manufacturing>, November 2011. 3 Holley, Donald. *Leaving the Land of Opportunity: Arkansas Great Migration*, The Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. LXIV, No. 3, Autumn 2005, pps. 245-261. 4. Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce, Regional Economic Accounts.

Aside from the historical data, the following chart indicates that the legacy industries continue to maintain a strong presence in Southeast Arkansas. The jobs required to maintain and operate these sectors are fewer than in the past, due to technology and automation. The task before the Board is to train high school graduates in broad based, hands on, transferable technical skills applicable to a diverse range of industries.



Data Source: EMSIB. The 2014 annual labor force and unemployment data for the Southeast Arkansas Region was as follows:

Annual Average Civilian Labor Force Estimates

Civilian Labor Force	84,025
Employment	77,225
Unemployment	6,800
Unemployment Rate	8.1%

Annual Average Unemployment Rates by County

- 5.4% Arkansas County
- 5.6% Grant County
- 7.0% Cleveland County
- 7.3% Lincoln County
- 8.3% Desha County
- 8.5% Bradley County
- 8.6% Drew County

- 8.9% Jefferson County
- 9.4% Ashley County
- 10.6% Chicot County

As stated earlier, the labor market trends, based upon the most recent data, are limited at best. Below is a breakdown of employment by private vs. public and the projected trends for the ten year period between 2012 and 2022.

Southeast Employment

70,974 Total Employees in 2014 (covered under UI tax law)

76.0% of employees work in the Private Sector

2.8% of employees work in Federal Government

8.6% of employees work in State Government

12.6% of employees work in Local Government

Projected Employment Growth (2012-2022) All Sectors= +2.8%

Top Ten Projected Growth Industries (2012-2022) Ranked by Net Growth

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Net Growth</u>	<u>% Growth</u>
Social Assistance	1,139	39.6%
Food Services and Drinking Places	852	22.1%
Nursing and Residential Care Facilities	796	31.9%
Ambulatory Health Care Services	477	18.7%
State Government, Excluding Education/Hospitals	465	10.4%
Religious, Grant making, Civic, Professional, and Similar Organizations	187	12.2%
Federal Government, Excluding Post Office	182	9.4%
Wood Product Manufacturing	116	7.4%
Hospitals	112	3.7%
Educational Services	79	0.9%

C. In addition to the projected growth industries identified by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, the Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board and the Chief Elected Officials are working with the Arkansas Economic Development Commission and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock’s Institute of Economic Advancement to develop and

market an “industrial corridor” in Desha and Chicot Counties. The planned corridor will center on the newly renovated North Louisiana and Arkansas rail line and will be marketed globally by AEDC and the local communities. The corridor is also projected, by IEA, to indirectly economically impact Ashley, Drew and Bradley Counties. As such, the Workforce Development Area must have the ability to meet the training needs of new and innovative industries.

D. Workforce Development Activities

Southeast Arkansas workforce development activities are coordinated through the following state agencies: the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS), the Arkansas Department of Career Education (ADCE), the Arkansas Department of Human Services - Division of Services for the Blind (DSB), Arkansas Rehabilitation Service, as well as, Adult Education. These agencies are responsible for all the core and non-core programs included in the combined region local plan. These agencies are also represented on the local workforce development board.

Arkansas Workforce Centers are at the forefront of the workforce activities, and represent Southeast’s version of the American Jobs Center. Southeast has five workforce centers spread across the region providing access to many Arkansans. Two comprehensive centers are located in Pine Bluff and Monticello. Three satellite centers are located in Dumas, Crossett and Lake Village. The Division of Services for the Blind is located in Pine Bluff and Arkansas Rehabilitation Services has offices in Pine Bluff and Monticello.

The Arkansas Workforce Centers are established by the Southeast Workforce Development Board. The Board is comprised of local businesses, labor, partner agencies, and other key stakeholders to create a diverse and functional group. The Board, in alignment with the States’ vision, provides 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.

The Southeast Board has undertaken the task of procuring a one-stop operator for the daily operation of their centers in accordance with WIOA 121(d). The Southeast Board carries out workforce activities by partnering locally through 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, Vocational Rehabilitation. Local partnerships and integration also exist in many areas with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training Programs and others.

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 Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division (ACE/AED) funds local adult education programs, community-based and/or privately operated literacy councils. The service delivery systems are diverse. Programs are funded through a variety of local 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 a 12.9 functioning grade level and English as a Second Language (ESL). These services are free and provided in classes held in locations throughout each program's service area. Additional programs such as family literacy, Career Readiness Certification and Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™) are also offered in workplaces and correctional institutions. Division of Services for the Blind continues to support services for consumers at Arkansas Workforce Center locations.

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 the local needs of particular communities. Basic career services are available at all five centers throughout the Southeast region. 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 through the internet via computer, smart phone, or tablet. Arkansas Job Link is the state job matching system and the virtual one-stop-shop where Arkansans can centralize all their career search activities. It allows jobseekers to self-enter 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.

Jobseeker Services

Individualized career services within the Arkansas Workforce Centers vary across the region, 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 and opportunities for advancement in those occupations.

- * Workforce Centers provide the following career services: outreach, intake and orientation, initial assessment, Labor exchange services, eligibility determination, referrals to programs, performance and cost information, and information on unemployment insurance,

financial aid information and follow-up services.

* Workforce Centers 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, comprehensive assessment, occupational skills assessment, short-term pre-vocational services, internship and work experience, including transitional jobs and industry partnerships, workforce preparation, out-of-area job search, English language acquisition and 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. Southeast Workforce Development Board is responsible for establishing and implementing local policies 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. The Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) has been updated pursuant to WIOA Sections 122 and 134 by Department of Workforce Services at the State level. 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. Southeast region is responsible for establishing a supportive service policy that outlines types, eligibility, limits, etc. Examples of supportive services include child care; transportation; needs-related payments; housing; tools and equipment; uniforms; and other clothing. In addition to WIOA-funded supportive services, Southeast has 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 in the region and may include: Access to facilities –Use of Workforce Center facilities by a business for a variety of purposes such as meetings, employee development, 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.

Services to Persons with Disabilities

The Arkansas Department of Career Education, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ACE/ARS), provides vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities. Currently, there are significant barriers for people with disabilities in relation to obtaining employment. A 2008 study (StatsRRTC1) indicated the employment rate for people with disabilities was 33.9 percent when compared to 79.1 percent for people without disabilities. Historically, there are significant barriers to the inclusion of people with disabilities into the overall strategy for economic development in Arkansas. ARS in partnership with the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) are leading the charge for providing targeted training and education for people with disabilities in order for them to develop the skills and abilities needed to attain competitive integrated employment in Arkansas.

Governor Asa Hutchinson decided to continue and build on former Governor Mike Beebe's Executive Order 10-17 by creating the Employment First initiative to encourage state agencies to hire people with disabilities and serve as a hiring model to the private sector. The initiative also instructs agencies to provide consumer services with the goal of self-sufficiency through employment as the end result, rather than the service as an end in itself.

E. Educational Attainment

The educational attainment percentages in the Southeast Arkansas region, according to the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau, were higher than the U.S. at the lower degree levels and lower higher degree levels. This data, collected in 2010 and published thereafter, indicated that the Southeast Arkansas Counties, on average, trailed the State in all categories but high school graduate and less than a high school equivalent.

More recent data made available in the 2013 American Community Survey and list below, indicate that not much has changed in three years.

Educational Attainment (Population over Age of 25)

80.3% have High School Diploma/Equivalent or Higher

Lowest= 73.5% in Lincoln County

Highest= 84.9% in Grant County

13.5% have Bachelor's Degree or Higher

Lowest= 7.9% in Lincoln County

Highest= 19.1% in Drew County

The 2013 American Community Survey did not list educational attainment for persons with a disability.

F. Sector Initiatives

While Southeast Board has only begun to scratch the surface of sector initiatives, one part of the region was awarded a planning grant and is writing a roadmap to forming a successful partnership. Members of the Southeast Board and the One Stop Operator staff have been involved since its inception with the University of Arkansas at Monticello's Sector Initiative Planning Grant and their Act Work Ready Communities Project.

The vision for collaboration between educators and employers is neither novel nor has it just come to light for this group of individuals. The partners in this grant have been working together and sharing dreams for an improved vehicle of change and a heightened regard for career and technical education for the past 30 years. More than ever before, many of the group sees hope for real change and real progress. Instead of working independently ('in siloes' as we say) we recognize this grant as an opportunity to accomplish great things. What have been good ideas and good intentions that may not have been accomplished previously due to territorial issues and/or conflicting regulatory processes are coming together. One such vehicle of change and an integral goal of this grant is the Alliance's objective for counties to become ACT® Certified Work Ready Communities. Working toward aggressive goals will produce outcomes that identify future job needs; develop a productive workforce; and ascertain the competencies and skills needed to determine proficiencies and skill gaps of the workforce.

Arkansas has been a statewide partner of ACT® since January of 2008 to provide avenues for individuals to earn the National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) in the form of the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate (CRC). In partnership with Arkansas Department of Workforce Services and offering the Career Ready 101 curriculum and Work Keys testing, some members of the Alliance are familiar with the value of the ACT credential. The Arkansas

Department of Career and Technical Education has endorsed the curriculum, and high schools as well as Secondary Career Centers are offering the courses and testing around the state. In this region, the Southeast Arkansas Community Based Education Center in Warren and the Occupational Education Center in Monticello will be instrumental in getting young adults through this curriculum and armed with the nationally recognized credential before they graduate from high school.

There are very few counties in Arkansas who are participating in the county level ACT® Work Ready Communities (WRC) initiative. Although the aim is ambitious, the Alliance desires to demonstrate the benefits of increasing each community's attractiveness by becoming a certified ACT Work Ready Community. In agreement with the ACT initiative, it is the WRC Teams' belief that by obtaining job skills requirements from area businesses and industries and having a valid tool to measure individuals' skills, UAM and the UAM Colleges of Technology can plan programs to develop the skills needed to match requirements, and then certify individuals in those essential skills needed for area jobs.

Continuously monitor and adjust to insure that educational services provided from K-16 are based on realistic needs of current and future businesses. The initiative is in line with the Arkansas' workforce development goal of increasing the number of quality jobs/careers attained, improving the quality of lives, and rebuilding communities. Southeast Arkansas needs job growth. Becoming an ACT® Work Ready Community will better ensure business and industry leaders that the skills they need for a successful workforce are being addressed in a systematic and productive manner.

The Board has begun steps to form a Diverse Manufacturing Sector. The initial meeting was held on May 18, 2017 to open lines of direct communication between regional companies and the Board.

Section 1.3 Vision and Goals

Southeast Region will support the vision and goals in the Arkansas Workforce Development Plan.

Vision

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

Goals

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

Goal 1 Objectives:

1. Expand employer partnerships through the support of industry engagement.
2. Expand partnership with economic development to refine sector strategies.
3. Increase the utilization of Registered Apprenticeship programs as viable talent development opportunities.
4. Increase connections with employers and Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to provide support and employment for youth and adults with disabilities.

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

Goal 2 Objectives:

1. Develop a common intake process for jobseekers and businesses that will efficiently connect them with services available from all workforce development partner programs.
2. Promote training that leads to industry recognized credentials and certification.
3. Support transportable skill sets for transportable careers.
4. Support career pathways development and sector strategy initiatives as a way to meet business and industry needs.

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

Goal 3 - Objectives:

1. Work to change employer and jobseeker perceptions of the workforce system.
2. Utilize technology, including social media and search engine optimization, to better connect jobseekers and employers with the talent development system in Arkansas.

Strategic Goal 4: Address Skills Gaps

Goal 4 - Objectives:

1. Develop and implement an action plan to close the basic core, technical, and soft skills gaps in the Southeast region.
2. 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.

Section 1.4 Business Engagement and Sector Strategies [WIOA Sec. 106(c)]

WIOA coordinates with partners to effectively target businesses and employers. The Business Service Teams will build upon successful employer penetration to create momentum and spread the word using employers who believe in the system. This approach has been successful in maximizing information with minimal intrusion.

Section 1.5 Regional Workforce Development Service Strategies [WIOA Sec. 106(c)(B)]

Southeast is defining workforce development strategies by working with partners to determine the best ways to provide services with guidance from the State regarding requirements and opportunities. Regional and Local service strategies must be industry driven. This is an ongoing and living process of change, evaluation and redesign.

Section 1.6 Defining Administrative Cost Arrangements [WIOA Sec. 106(c)(E)]

Southeast will use resource sharing agreements and the memorandums of understanding for the local workforce system. This is a slow process with some, if not most, partners just determining levels of funding.

Section 1.7 Coordination of Transportation and Supportive Services [WIOA Sec. 106(c)(F)]

Partner programs within the Southeast region will determine and coordinate transportation and other supportive services as allowable by their program. The Southeast Board has established a supportive services policy and procedure, with input from the partners. Supportive services will be coordinated with referrals to the partners. In the event that partners are unable to provide the needed services, WIOA Title I will reassess and provide the needed services.

Section 1.8 Coordination of Workforce Programs with Economic Development [WIOA Sec. 106(c)(G)]

Southeast will continue to partner with regional economic development services and providers by leveraging resources with the Southeast Planning and Development District, Chambers of Commerce and other economic development organizations. Southeast Arkansas has held its ground economically, in the face of recessions and disasters only through its partnerships and its area wide commitment to hold together. This commitment has not and will not be altered by federal legislation.

Section 1.9 Establishing Regional/Local Performance Measures [WIOA Section 116(c), [WIOA Sec. 106(c)(H)] [proposed 20 CFR 677.210(b) and (c)] and [proposed 20 CFR 679.510(a)(2)]

At this time, the State has negotiated the performance measures for each Local Workforce Development Area. These measures mirror the overall state measures that were negotiated with the U. S. Department of Labor.

