



ARKANSAS
WORKFORCE
CONNECTIONS



Workforce Innovation & Opportunity ACT PYs '26-27 Combined State Plan

ARKANSAS WIOA STATE PLAN



*The 2026–2027 State Plan outlines a transformative vision for a more unified, efficient, and demand-driven workforce development system that **reduces administrative complexity, maximizes public investment in direct services, and strengthens alignment** with employers and career seekers alike.*

*Grounded in the principles of **the Governor’s Workforce Strategy, America’s Talent Strategy: Building the Workforce for the Golden Age** and its five pillars, and new flexibilities provided through **USDOL TEGL 05-25**, this plan advances a bold restructuring of governance, service delivery, education alignment, and business engagement to ensure a more responsive and integrated workforce ecosystem*



State Plan Highlights

- ✓ System Transformation: Toward a “No Wrong Door” Model
- ✓ Education and Workforce Alignment: A Unified Career Pathway System
- ✓ Business Engagement: A Unified Industry-Facing Approach (Arkansas Industry Connect)
- ✓ Service Integration: Improving Outcomes Through Organizational Alignment
- ✓ Fiscal Stewardship: Investing in People and Employers
- ✓ Alignment with America’s Talent Strategy & Governor’s Workforce Strategy

Arkansas Workforce Strategy



- Strengthen alignment across education, workforce, and economic development systems
- Expand access to high-demand career pathways
- Increase workforce participation and reduce barriers to employment
- Modernize systems and improve efficiency across state agencies
- Support employer-driven training models that meet real labor-market needs



Five Pillars

- 1. Industry Driven Strategies-** Align education and workforce programs to employer demand
- 2. Worker Mobility-** Expand access to skills-based training and work-based learning that lead to valued credentials
- 3. Integrated Systems-** Streamline workforce service programs with unified service delivery models; Strengthen regional workforce ecosystems
- 4. Accountability-** deliver measurable results by linking investments to outcomes and program performance
- 5. Flexibility & Innovation-** Modernize workforce systems and reduce federal and governmental statutory regulations; use of AI

Arkansas Workforce Transformation: State Board Functions as Local Board & Single Planning Region Model

The Moment for Bold Workforce Reform

Aligning with America's Talent Strategy & Governor Sanders' Workforce Vision



Arkansas is at a
strategic inflection
point



Workers &
Employers need
faster, simpler access
to training and
careers



Federal policy is
shifting toward
flexible, integrated,
outcomes-driven
systems



Arkansas can lead
nationally by
modernizing WIOA
governance



Waiver Requests

1. State Board functions as Local Board
2. State Plan as Regional Plan
3. State Board Composition Flexibility
4. Reallocation of Funds Across Local Workforce Areas
5. WIOA Training Funds & Supportive Services- Last Dollar Flexibility
6. Network of Affiliate Workforce Center sites in lieu of Comprehensive centers
7. ISY/OSY Funding Flexibility- 50%/50%
8. ITAs for ISY
9. 14 Youth Program Elements Flexibility

Current Landscape



- **National Trend**

- Several states have transitioned to single-planning area models
 - Current: MT, UT, VT, SD, ND, DE, WY
 - Interested: LA, OK, NM, AR

- **USDOL Demand Signals**

- Encourages integrated, streamlined systems
- Expedites policy implementation
- Improved responsiveness to employers
- More efficient use of WIOA funds

- **Arkansas's Readiness for Transition**

- Mature cross-agency collaboration
- Existing integrated systems (Arkansas JobLink, LAUNCH, Civiform, HopeHub)
- Regional restructuring and sector strategies in progress
- Combined WIOA/Perkins State Plans (1st Time in AR)
- Currently piloting this approach with the LRWDB due to the loss of a service provider

Financial Considerations



- ***Current Funding***
 - \$16M WIOA title I
 - Integrated for shared operations (outreach/intake, eligibility, case mgt)
- ***Statewide Administrative and Operational Costs***
 - \$7M available for oversight, compliance, labor exchange, case management, employer engagement, systems, infrastructure
- ***Direct Services to Participants***
 - \$9M estimated to be available for skills training and supportive services.
 - 56% of funds towards training and supportive services
 - 44% of funds toward operational expenses
 - Goal is to have training and supportive services at or above 60%
 - \$2.3M currently expended on training and supportive services
 - Increase of roughly \$6.7M annually shifting directly to participants
 - Approximately 200 more Arkansans served annually



Financial Considerations

Avg. OpEx by % (As Reported)

	PY18 Averages	2024 Averages
Central	80%	85%
City of Little Rock	78%	100%
Eastern	55%	63%
North Central	25%	40%
Northeast	50%	60%
Northwest	77%	82%
Southeast	76%	74%
Southwest	79%	78%
West Central	69%	77%
Western	78%	73%

Disclaimer: Numbers will be reconciled with LWDBs for accuracy

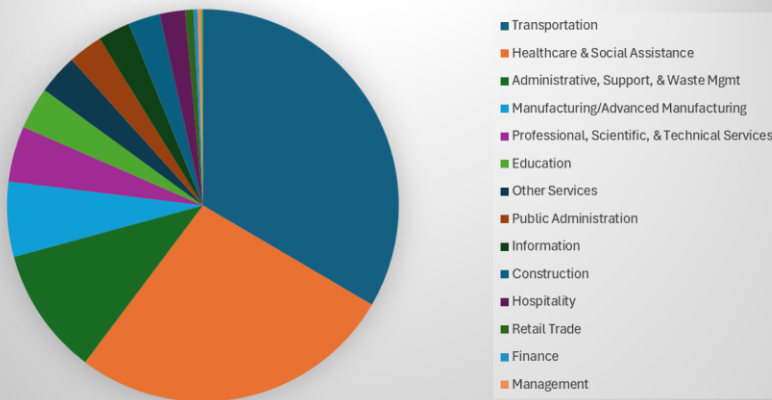
Investment by Industry

Report CY24

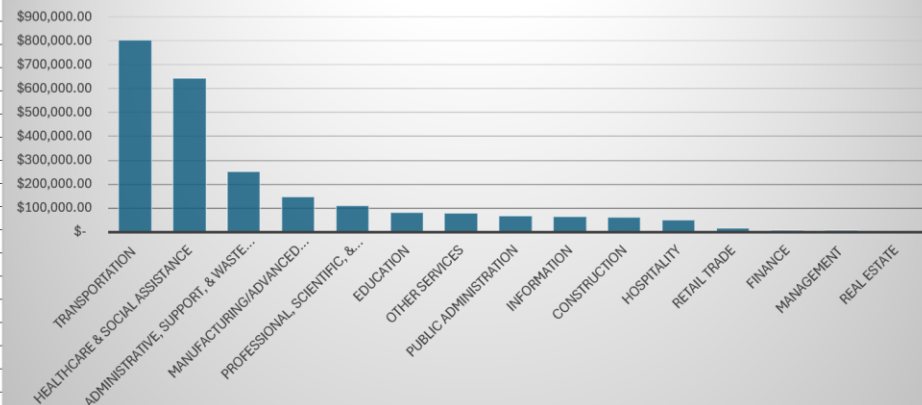


A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Industry	Central	Eastern	Little Rock	North Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southeast	Southwest	West Central	Western	TOTAL STATEWIDE
Transportation	76,975.50	38,777.32	42,630.00	174,142.70	7,660.00	43,990.42	131,100.00	171,968.81	37,526.69	78,885.18	\$ 803,656.62
Healthcare & Social Assistance	-	13,750.18	23,108.80	168,537.67	121,381.14	77,200.64	1,092.00	67,273.06	88,773.36	83,739.23	\$ 644,856.08
Administrative, Support, & Waste Mgmt	-	-	-	10,698.74	137,033.28	8,806.01	-	11,187.77	11,950.84	72,667.88	\$ 252,344.52
Manufacturing/Advanced Manufacturing	-	-	900.00	16,376.94	393.46	7,365.89	-	-	14,658.25	108,964.03	\$ 148,658.57
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	-	-	-	53,663.77	-	1,508.82	825.00	-	25,335.08	28,879.39	\$ 110,212.06
Education	-	-	-	7,734.49	39,641.25	12,641.20	-	-	14,653.83	8,655.64	\$ 83,326.41
Other Services	-	-	-	23,559.44	1,537.10	3,436.62	31,198.00	11,061.00	8,711.49	-	\$ 79,503.65
Public Administration	-	-	-	23,166.85	-	45,353.16	-	-	-	-	\$ 68,520.01
Information	19,050.00	-	-	8,231.86	5,885.00	30,683.99	-	-	32.35	-	\$ 63,883.20
Construction	-	-	15,000.00	17,474.91	936.00	1,139.61	-	3,068.16	-	25,397.72	\$ 63,016.40
Hospitality	-	-	-	801.23	27,821.75	19,998.00	-	-	1,321.68	-	\$ 49,942.66
Retail Trade	-	-	-	2,002.13	-	4,675.84	-	-	467.57	9,575.78	\$ 16,721.32
Finance	-	-	-	-	1,723.19	-	-	-	6,405.52	-	\$ 8,128.71
Management	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,887.59	\$ 7,887.59
Real Estate	-	-	-	2,632.08	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$ 2,632.08
TOTALS	\$ 96,025.50	\$ 52,527.50	\$ 81,638.80	\$ 509,022.81	\$ 344,012.17	\$ 256,800.20	\$ 164,215.00	\$ 264,558.80	\$ 209,836.66	\$ 424,652.44	\$ 2,403,289.88

TOTAL STATEWIDE INVESTMENT BY INDUSTRY



TOTAL STATEWIDE

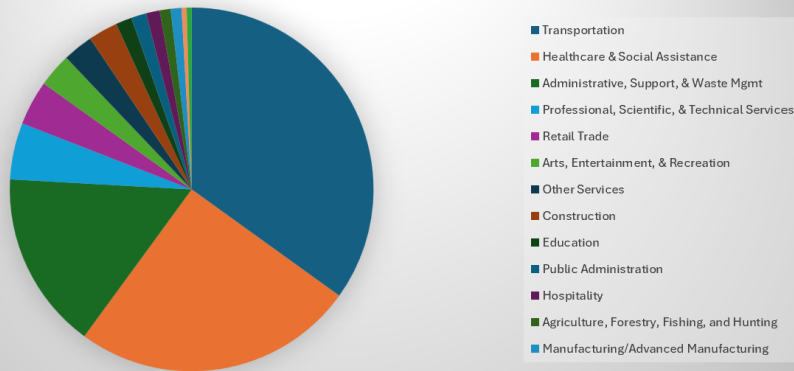


Investment by Industry Report CY25

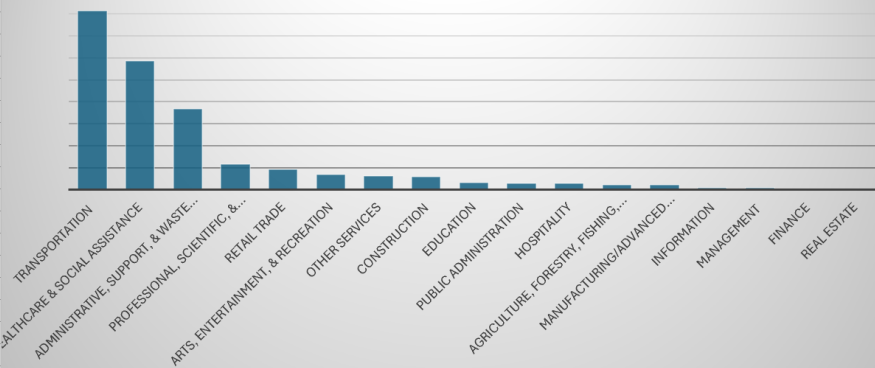


NAICS	Industry	Central	Eastern	Little Rock	North Central	Northeast	Northwest	Southeast	Southwest	West Central	Western	TOTAL STATEWIDE
48-49	Transportation	200,685.00	53,222.74	36,000.00	5,520.80	27,029.50	122,736.40	232,212.70	94,091.45	8,800.00	34,938.93	\$ 815,237.52
62	Healthcare & Social Assistance	110,088.69	83,259.84	19,830.00	45,034.62	157,922.16	71,699.92	12,124.89	43,742.36	24,359.85	18,113.83	\$ 586,176.16
56	Administrative, Support, & Waste Mgmt	59,049.12	-	-	5,240.45	251,345.96	18,843.26	-	-	34,906.82	-	\$ 369,385.61
54	Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	-	-	-	27,368.27	1,812.89	9,355.50	-	-	7,795.06	71,112.52	\$ 117,444.24
44-45	Retail Trade	90,775.18	-	-	475.20	-	-	-	-	743.79	792.98	\$ 92,787.15
71	Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	61,769.76	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,146.54	-	\$ 69,916.30
81	Other Services	-	-	-	-	-	6,604.00	12,028.64	-	6,005.82	38,192.71	\$ 62,831.17
23	Construction	-	-	-	1,784.60	-	10,245.03	-	-	42,202.01	6,688.21	\$ 60,919.85
61	Education	-	565.00	-	9,860.36	4,835.25	10,819.37	3,679.64	3,548.75	-	161.14	\$ 33,469.51
92	Public Administration	-	-	-	22,610.85	2,607.00	-	-	-	-	5,990.00	\$ 31,207.85
72	Hospitality	20,989.29	-	-	1,088.77	-	4,037.00	-	-	2,201.37	-	\$ 28,316.43
11	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Hunting	1,830.05	-	-	-	-	20,817.00	-	-	-	-	\$ 22,647.05
31-33	Manufacturing/Advanced Manufacturing	-	-	525.00	4,596.58	1,543.39	9,210.26	-	2,318.25	1,594.29	2,629.74	\$ 22,417.51
51	Information	-	-	-	4,212.00	-	6,454.00	-	-	-	-	\$ 10,666.00
55	Management	-	-	-	-	-	10,121.00	-	-	-	-	\$ 10,121.00
52	Finance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -
53	Real Estate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	\$ -
	TOTALS	\$ 545,187.09	\$ 137,047.58	\$ 56,355.00	\$ 127,792.50	\$ 447,096.15	\$ 300,942.74	\$ 260,045.87	\$ 143,700.81	\$ 136,755.55	\$ 178,620.06	\$ 2,333,543.35

TOTAL STATEWIDE INVESTMENT BY INDUSTRY



TOTAL STATEWIDE INVESTMENT BY INDUSTRY



Recent Comments from USDOL



“1 in 5 local boards serve fewer than 100 people”

“Little to no WIOA participant placement into Registered Apprenticeship”

“2.2M individuals claim for UI benefits every week, while only 100k WIOA participants are served annually”

“Almost half of all WIOA training dollars are concentrated in just two occupations; only 80,000 of which earn a postsecondary credential”

Results of State Workforce Board Functioning as a Local Board & Single Planning Region



• Unified governance standards, planning, and performance accountability

- 11 administrative entities to 1
- 10 planning regions to 1 region
- 11 sets of performance accountability to 1 accountability structure
- 11 sets of board policies to 1 statewide policy
- 208 board members to a single board structure

• Streamlined service delivery across all Arkansas Workforce Centers

- Creates efficiency in reduction of administration
 - Case Managers, Exec. Staff, Board Director, OSO, other personnel
- Creates path to “No Wrong Door”
- Virtual after-hours service delivery
- Consistent customer experience thru unified onboarding and training

• Greater agility to respond to economic and labor market shifts

- Ability to move funds across areas
 - Future request to move funds across programs (Block Grant)
- WIOA Re-Authorization- Strengthening America’s Workforce Bill & President’s PY 27 Budget Proposal

Implementation

Phase I- March 2026 – June 2026

- Request state board function as local board & single planning region waiver through USDOL
- Incorporate vision, model, and structure into WIOA combined state plan modification
- Consult with stakeholders; Additional follow-up meetings scheduled
- Map out internal processes and integration plans

Phase II- September 2026 – June 30, 2027

- Closeout LWDB subawards & existing contracts (Phased approach)
- Hire and train staff
- Refine service delivery model
- Monitor implementation and prepare for legislative session
 - State Board Restructure

FAQ's



Q. What does this mean for the 10 local workforce boards?

A. While LWDBs will cease to exist, the ten workforce development areas will remain designated as they currently exist. The goal would be to move to single area model in a phased approach.

Q. How will funding be distributed across the state?

A. The state will continue to use its current formula funding methodology to allocate funds to each of the ten workforce areas. Local elected officials and residents in each area can be assured that training funds and services will be made available consistently; now with greater access to more dollars.

Q. What will change about the state workforce board?

A. The Arkansas Workforce Development Board will take on all functions of local workforce boards. Functions will expand from vision and planning to add on policy development, budget oversight, evaluation, and program development.

FAQ's



Q. Why now?

A. Federal departments and the current administration recognize the need for an overhaul of the current WIOA structure. Additionally, Arkansas legislators are recommending bold reform to current workforce systems. USDOL is encouraging states to maximize the moment by asking for more flexibility that will address the inefficiencies of the broken system.

Q. How will this impact Workforce Centers across the state?

A. Arkansas currently operates 23 certified “American Job Centers” across the state. With a requested waiver for more flexibility for affiliate centers, an increase in virtual and remote services leveraging technology and satellite “one-stops” that meet customers where they are, will be offered.

Q. How will local input and a “local voice” be considered?

A. Regional business councils will be established to serve in an advisory capacity informing the agency and state board. The state workforce board will be comprised of business representatives from across the state.

Regional Business Councils



Regional Business Councils, comprised of community employers and leaders will:

- Serve as ambassadors for their region's workforce priorities
- Implement state workforce policy at the local level
- Provide real-time insight into employer needs and skill gaps
- Guide the design of training and supportive service strategies tailored to local labor markets
- Strengthen collaboration among businesses, schools, and training providers
- Ensure that regional perspectives directly shape statewide workforce decisions



Why State Board Functions as Local Board & Single Planning Region Model



- **A state board functioning as the local board & single planning region model:**
 - Creates one statewide talent pipeline strategy
 - Ensures uniform access to services across the state
 - Reduces bureaucracy and improves government efficiency
 - Delivers consistent services to Arkansas citizens and companies
 - Strengthens partnerships with employers, education, and economic development
 - Prioritizes funding for training



State Plan Objectives



The 2026–2027 WIOA State Plan Modification positions Arkansas to:

- ✓ Deliver consistent, high-quality services statewide
- ✓ Reduce administrative and operational costs
- ✓ Strengthen employer partnerships
- ✓ Expand access through virtual and mobile services
- ✓ Integrate Perkins V and strengthen CTE and youth career pathways
- ✓ Leverage AI and data to drive smarter decisions
- ✓ Align education, workforce, and economic development
- ✓ Build a talent pipeline that meets the needs of today's and tomorrow's economy

The Moment for Bold Workforce Reform



Eddie Thomas
Director- Office of Employment and Training
Eddie.Thomas@arkansas.gov