State of Arkansas

WIOA Combined State Plan PY 2016 – PY 2019

Overview

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the U.S. Secretary of Labor that outlines a four-year workforce development strategy for the State's workforce development system. The publicly-funded workforce 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 jobseekers 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 Literacy 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. 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))

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* 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.

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.* While discussion of and strategies for every target population is not expected, States must address as many as are applicable to their State's population and look beyond strategies for the general population.

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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 Worker Program, Dislocated Worker Program, Youth Program, Wagner-Peyser Act Program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program, and Vocational Rehabilitation Program 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 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. 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 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 Department of Workforce Services Labor Market Information (LMI) website, http://www.discoverarkansas.net/ . These data were then turned into interactive visualizations, which are available at the following websites. These visualizations can be downloaded as an image or in PDF format. The goal is to help stakeholders at the state and local level better understand future industry and occupational needs and to provide workforce development boards with the tools needed to better serve their areas.

The data available at http://arkansasresearchcenter.org/arc/index.php?cID=153 includes:

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

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

The data available at http://arkansasresearchcenter.org/arc/index.php?cID=154 includes:

- Arkansas Occupations, Current and 2022 Projections, which includes data visualizations concerning occupations in Arkansas, both currently and projections for 2022. Occupations are listed by their Standard Occupation Code (SOC) title. The SOC system is hierarchical. SOC Major codes are the top level occupational areas, such as "Construction and Extraction Occupations." At the next level would be SOC Minor, one of which for the above would be "Construction Trades Workers." Finally there is SOC Detail, such as "Stonemasons" or "Carpenters." This web tool allows users to manipulate the data by indicating the level of detail desired.

While Arkansas's current and future industry outlook is similar to the nation, there are important areas of distinction. Manufacturing employs a greater percentage of Arkansas workers, 11.95 percent, than at the national level of 8.2 percent. Health Care and Social Assistance is also larger at 12.97 percent in the state compared to 11.68 percent at 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, 2.97 percent to 5.55 percent, but leads the nation in Management of Companies and Enterprises, 2.34 percent to 1.38 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, 4.1 percent to 3 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 six years. Despite the large role Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting play in the state, surprisingly, there are actually a smaller percentage of Arkansas workers in those industries than at 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. Reference Graph 1: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart1.html

While Arkansas's current workforce is somewhat similar to the nation's, there are dramatic differences between regions of the state. For example, the industries which employ the greatest percentage of workers in the Southeast region of the state are much different than both the state and the nation.

A greater percentage of workers in the Southeast are in Manufacturing, 17.62 percent, and, not surprisingly, a much larger percentage of workers in this very rural area of the state are employed in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting. The most dramatic difference is that while Health and Social Assistance employs 12.97 percent at the state level, only about 4 percent of workers in the Southeast are employed in that industry. This is somewhat counterintuitive since the Southeast is an area of the state with especially high rates of poverty. 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. Reference Graph 2: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart2.html

Looking at industry projections for Arkansas and its local workforce development areas, these differences become even more readily apparent.

The Northwest local area is projected to continue to employ the largest number of Arkansans, over 300,000, and to have robust growth of 12.8 percent. However, the Central local area is projected to grow at a higher rate of 15.2 percent but will employ only about 200,000 workers. The North Central (13.83 percent), West Central (12.2 percent), and Northeast (12.14 percent) local areas are projected to have job growth at rates higher than the state average of 10.46 percent, while all other local areas will have below average growth. The Southeast local area is projected to have only 2.82 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. While the projected growth of jobs in Arkansas by 2022 is similar to the projected growth rate of the nation, the industry sectors which will lead the growth vary greatly between local areas of the state.

Reference Graph 3: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart3.html 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 2022. 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.

A look at a specific industry sector such as manufacturing also demonstrates the different needs of employers in those local areas. While the Northwest is projected to continue to have the most workers employed in manufacturing, almost 35,000, the projected growth of 5.3 percent and addition of 1,766 manufacturing jobs is less than the 12.1 percent growth and addition of 2,350 jobs in the Northeast local area. The Southeast is projected to lose 685 jobs in that sector by 2022, a decline rate of 4.6 percent. Reference Graph 4 at: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart4.html

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 greatly between the national, state, and regional levels. Reference Graph 5: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart5.html

In this example of the industry sectors which are projected to have a rate of growth of 10 percent or higher, what is most striking about Arkansas projections is that construction is not a top area of growth for the state, even though it is projected to grow 28.8 percent at the national level. Arkansas's second highest area of growth at 21.2 percent will be in Accommodation and Food Services, while this industry is expected to grow only 8 percent at the national level. There are much greater differences between the regions of the state.

The industries which will have the lowest rates of growth vary even more.

The five Arkansas industries projected to have a growth of less than 6.5 percent by 2022 are manufacturing, information, agriculture, utilities and federal employment. While manufacturing is projected to have a modest growth of 4.47 percent in the state, at the national level manufacturing is projected to lose jobs with a rate of -4.6 percent. In addition to these five state industries, at the national level, educational services, local government, and management of companies/enterprises are also projected to have less than a 6.5 percent growth rate. Reference Graph 6: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart6.html

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’.

Demographics

The demographic makeup of Arkansas’s citizenry is changing in fundamental ways, as outlined in the “Arkansas Demographic Research Brief” published by the Institute for Economic Advancement at the Center for Economic Development at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. (http://www.aiea.ualr.edu/images/rokdownloads/DemoRes/Research%20Publications%20and%20Briefs/DemChar.pdf)

An aging workforce is the most dramatic change and the one which has the greatest implications for workforce in the state. The ratio of aged persons to youth is expected to rise from 49.2 percent in 2000 to 60.7 percent in 2020. This increase in the number and proportion of aged persons has big implications for health and social services, education, available workforce, and other areas. Reference Graph 7: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart7.html

Another major demographic change will be greater diversity in the state, with the non-white population expected to rise to 30 percent by 2020, from a low of 18.4 percent in 1970. This increase in proportion is in large part attributable to an influx of Hispanics in the state, with the Hispanic population growing by 337 percent between 1990 and 2000. Reference Graph 8: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart8.html

The other area of major change in the demographics of Arkansas is increasing urbanization. In 2000, 56.7 percent of Arkansans lived in urban areas, but this portion is expected to rise to 61 percent by 2020. Reference Graph 9: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart9.html

The population of Arkansas grew to 2,966,369 in 2014, adding 7,604 between 2013 and 2014 and 50,451 between 2010 and 2014. Arkansas’s civilian labor force decreased 6,800 between 2013 and 2014, but employment increased 9,600 over the same period. Compared to 2004, the size of the civilian labor force is up a slight 300 while employment is down 5,200. Unemployment decreased 16,400 between 2013 and 2014, with the unemployment rate dropping by 1.3 percent. Compared to ten years ago, unemployment has increased 5,200 with the unemployment rate increasing by four-tenths of a percentage point to 6.1 percent in 2014 (see the chart below). The State’s unemployment rate continued to drop throughout 2015, with November 2015 declining to 5.0 percent. The table below reports the Arkansas civilian labor force estimates as annual averages.

	2014	2013	2004	1-Year Change	10-Year Change
Civilian Labor Force	1,300,600	1,307,400	1,300,300	-6,800	300
Employment	1,220,900	1,211,300	1,226,100	9,600	-5,200
Unemployment	79,700	96,100	74,200	-16,400	5,500
Unemployment Rate	6.1	7.4	5.7	-1.3	0.4

Graph 10 shows the number of employed Arkansans from January 2005 to November 2015. Notice the decline at the start of the recession in 2008 and the steady increase that began towards the end of 2013. The number of employed has still not rebounded to pre-recession levels. Reference Graph 10: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart10.html

The table below shows Labor Force data calculated by the U.S. Census Bureau (based on the 2010-2014 American Community Survey). Labor Force data is included for various demographics,

including age, race, sex, poverty status, disability status, and educational attainment. *Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

Subject	Total Estimate	In Labor Force Estimate	Employed Estimate	Unemployment Rate Estimate
Population 16 years and over	2,315,782	59.2%	54.1%	8.4%
AGE				
16 to 19 years	159,995	36.4%	26.5%	27.2%
20 to 24 years	205,824	72.8%	61.2%	15.2%
25 to 44 years	749,130	79.2%	72.3%	8.2%
45 to 54 years	395,446	74.7%	70.2%	5.8%
55 to 64 years	363,212	57.3%	54.9%	4.2%
65 to 74 years	251,769	22.2%	21.3%	4.3%
75 years and over	190,406	5.9%	5.7%	3.7%
RACE AND HISPANIC OR LATINO ORIGIN				
One race	2,280,871	59.3%	54.1%	8.4%
White	1,852,561	58.9%	54.5%	7.1%
Black or African American	339,996	59.0%	49.6%	15.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native	14,585	58.4%	52.2%	10.1%
Asian	30,146	65.5%	61.5%	5.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	3,763	72.5%	60.3%	16.8%
Some other race	39,820	72.6%	67.2%	7.2%
Two or more races	34,911	56.4%	49.5%	11.6%
Hispanic or Latino origin (of any race)	125,760	69.4%	64.1%	7.1%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	1,771,732	58.5%	54.1%	7.1%
Population 20 to 64 years	1,713,612	72.7%	66.8%	7.8%
SEX				
Male	847,492	77.9%	71.1%	8.1%
Female	866,120	67.7%	62.6%	7.4%
With own children under 6 years	142,086	67.6%	60.3%	10.8%
POVERTY STATUS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS				
Below poverty level	293,401	50.5%	36.5%	27.7%
DISABILITY STATUS				
With any disability	255,291	36.0%	30.5%	15.3%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT				
Population 25 to 64 years	1,507,788	72.7%	67.6%	6.8%
Less than high school graduate	200,172	55.6%	48.9%	12.0%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	516,823	69.2%	63.4%	8.3%
Some college or associate's degree	460,803	75.6%	70.1%	6.8%
Bachelor's degree or higher	329,990	84.7%	82.0%	2.8%
PERCENT IMPUTED				
Employment status for population 16	5.7%	(X)	(X)	(X)

Subject	Total Estimate	In Labor Force Estimate	Employed Estimate	Unemployment Rate Estimate
years and over				

The State of Arkansas had 1,157,630 average covered employees in 2014. Of those, 82.7 percent worked in the private sector, 1.7 percent worked in Federal Government, 6.1 percent worked in State Government, and 9.5 percent worked in Local Government.

Nonfarm Payroll Job Trends

Between 2013 and 2014, the average number of nonfarm payroll jobs rose 12,600. Eight major industry sectors posted over-the-year growth, while three sectors declined. Professional and business services added 4,700 jobs, mostly in administrative and support services (+3,200). Jobs in trade, transportation, and utilities rose 3,500. Most of the hiring occurred in retail trade (+2,600). Leisure and hospitality added 3,400 jobs between 2013 and 2014, largely in food services (+2,800). The largest annual decline occurred in government, down 1,500. Losses in local government (-1,800) more than offset minor gains in state government (+600).

Compared to 2004, average nonfarm payroll employment in 2014 increased 30,700. All the growth was in service providing industries (+83,400), which was partially offset by the losses in goods producing industries (-52,800). Seven major industry sectors expanded between 2004 and 2014, while four sectors declined. Educational and health services reported the largest increase, adding 29,600 jobs. Most of the hiring was in health care and social assistance (+27,800). Jobs in professional and business services rose 25,400, with growth seen across all three sub-sectors. Leisure and hospitality added 17,400 jobs over the decade, mostly in food services (+15,800). Government expanded by 13,000 jobs, largely attributed to gains in state government (+10,900). The largest decline between 2004 and 2014 occurred in manufacturing, which lost 49,100 jobs. Most of the loss was in durable goods manufacturing (-31,400). Smaller declines were reported in information (-6,100), construction (-5,500), and financial activities (-1,200). The table below reports the Arkansas Nonfarm Payroll Jobs as annual averages.

NAICS Industry	2014	2013	2004	1 Year Change	10 Year Change
Total Nonfarm	1,188,800	1,176,200	1,158,100	12,600	30,700
Goods Producing	209,400	207,700	262,200	1,700	-52,800
Natural Resources and Mining	8,900	9,500	7,000	-600	1,900
Construction	45,900	45,500	51,400	400	-5,500
Specialty Trade Contractors	28,900	28,500	30,000	400	-1,100
Service-Providing	979,300	968,500	895,900	10,800	83,400
Manufacturing	154,700	152,800	203,800	1,900	-49,100
Durable Goods Manufacturing	76,700	75,600	108,100	1,100	-31,400
Non-Durable Goods Manufacturing	78,000	77,200	95,700	800	-17,700
Trade, Transportation and Utilities	244,800	241,300	242,000	3,500	2,800
Wholesale Trade	46,600	46,700	46,200	-100	400
Retail Trade	135,900	133,300	130,800	2,600	5,100
Transportation, Warehouse, and Utilities	62,300	61,300	65,000	1,000	-2,700
Information	13,700	14,200	19,800	-500	-6,100
Financial Activities	49,700	49,600	50,900	100	-1,200

NAICS Industry	2014	2013	2004	1 Year Change	10 Year Change
Finance and Insurance	36,800	36,400	37,600	400	-800
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	12,900	13,100	13,300	-200	-400
Professional and Business Services	133,600	128,900	108,200	4,700	25,400
Professional, Scientific, and Technical	40,300	39,900	33,700	400	6,600
Management of Companies	32,500	31,400	23,000	1,100	9,500
Administrative and Support Services	60,800	57,600	51,500	3,200	9,300
Education and Health Services	172,200	171,500	142,600	700	29,600
Educational Services	13,700	13,700	11,900	0	1,800
Health Care and Social Assistance	158,400	157,800	130,600	600	27,800
NAICS Industry	2014	2013	2004	1 Year Change	10 Year Change
Ambulatory Health Care	49,300	48,500	39,600	800	9,700
Social Assistance	36,900	36,300	23,600	600	13,300
Leisure and Hospitality	108,300	104,900	90,900	3,400	17,400
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	10,600	10,000	9,100	600	1,500
Accommodation Services	11,000	11,100	10,900	-100	100
Food Services	86,700	83,900	70,900	2,800	15,800
Other Services	43,800	43,200	41,300	600	2,500
Government	213,400	214,900	200,400	-1,500	13,000
Federal Government	20,200	20,400	20,800	-200	-600
State Government	77,400	76,800	66,500	600	10,900
Local Government	115,900	117,700	113,100	-1,800	2,800

The job market in Arkansas is predicted to improve between 2014 and 2016 with 29,413 new jobs, an increase of 2.27 percent. Goods-producing industries are estimated to see a net gain of 3,122 jobs, while the service-providing industries are forecasted to increase 25,105. Arkansas's self-employed ranks are estimated to experience a net gain of 1,186, an increase of slightly less than one percent. Professional and business services is projected to be the top growing major industry sector, adding 7,798 jobs to total 138,918.

Employment Projections by Skill and Education

Despite the vibrant business environment in Arkansas, it is difficult to ignore the disparity of prosperity and opportunity between regions in the state as well as groups of workers within those regions. This disparity among workers persists in even the most prosperous areas of the state and is seemingly institutionalized in the poorer regions. There are three key indicators of Arkansas's workforce competiveness among other states in the union; it is 49th in the number of citizens with a bachelor's degree, 46th in terms of poverty, and number one in terms of obesity rates. The challenges facing Arkansas in developing a dynamic and educated workforce to compete in a global marketplace are daunting. The barriers to prosperity are especially concentrated in historically poor regions of the state, as well as areas of poverty even within the state's more prosperous areas.

One of the greatest challenges facing Arkansas's workforce is the fact that it has one of the lowest levels of education in the nation. For example, the US Census Bureau has Arkansas ranked at 49th in the number of adults with a bachelor degree or more (https://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p20-566.pdf?cssp=SERP). While nationwide 27.9 percent

percent of Americans age 25 and older have a bachelor's degree or more, only 18.9 percent of Arkansans have a bachelor's or more, with West Virginia being the only state with a lower percentage of 17.3 percent.

What is even more striking is the disparity in education among different groups in the state. The ACT profile for the high school graduating class of 2015 has 28 percent of students in the nation scoring at or above ACT's benchmark for college readiness, but only 21 percent of Arkansas 2015 graduates met that standard. However, only 4 percent of African Americans in the state met all four benchmarks, and only 14 percent of Latinos met those standards.

Arkansas finds itself lagging in educational attainment compared to most other states in the nation, and increasingly, the U.S. finds itself lagging behind an increasing number of nations. It is clear the twin forces of automation and globalization continue to create more opportunities for those with postsecondary education while the number of occupations available for those with a high school diploma or less continues to decrease. This is a global phenomenon, which a report from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Skills Outlook 2013 demonstrates (http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/8713011e.pdf?expires=1462995223&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=DE0E588B16C9CD0BBB5885ED7E88BA41)

As a southern state, some areas of Arkansas may be in what Tony Carnevale, research professor and director for the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, describes as in a "low-wage/low-skill equilibrium," where the supply of skills and demand for skills are balanced at low-education and low wage levels (https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/DecadeBehind.FullReport.073112.pdf). In such areas, low educational achievement is both a cause and consequence of the industries and occupations in those areas. Areas where the majority of occupations require little education provide fewer incentives for those seeking to improve their employment through education.

Areas with low levels of educational attainment in the state continue to have a higher concentration of jobs in manufacturing, utilities, and transportation. However, long-term job growth in these industries is easily compromised by the productivity growth that increases output with fewer workers. Manufacturing jobs are also susceptible to both global and regional competition, which have been demonstrated by the high number of trade certified company layoffs and closures in Arkansas. However, other companies in Arkansas have recently announced expansions which will create thousands of jobs.

While the majority of jobs in the Arkansas economy are low-skilled jobs (those that require a high school diploma or less), it is the middle-skill jobs that are projected to be the fastest growing skill group with a growth rate of 13.35 percent. Middle-skill jobs are defined as occupations that require more than a high school diploma, but less than a bachelor's degree. Middle-skilled jobs are estimated to increase 21,390 and have 53,262 openings between 2012 and 2022. As seen on the chart below, the ratio of middle-skill job employment to total state employment is projected to go up from 12.33 percent in 2012 to 12.65 percent in 2022. The rate for low-skilled jobs is expected to fall slightly, as a percent of total employment.

Arkansas 2012-2022 Projections by Skill-Level

Skill	2012	2022	Net Growth	Percent Growth	Growth Openings	Replacement Openings	Total Openings
Middle	160,185	181,575	21,390	13.35%	21,627	31,635	53,262

Skill	2012	2022	Net Growth	Percent Growth	Growth Openings	Replacement Openings	Total Openings
Low	915,470	1,002,034	86,564	9.46%	90,828	220,022	310,850
High	223,533	251,526	27,993	12.56%	28,079	46,864	74,943

Source: Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Assignments

Reference Graphs 11 and 12: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart11.html and http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart12.html

Every education category is projected to see positive net growth between 2014 and 2016. Occupations requiring less than a high school education are expected to add the most jobs during the projection period, adding 11,205 jobs. Jobs requiring a high school diploma or equivalent are estimated to increase 10,597. At 3.22 percent, jobs requiring less than a high school education are projected to be the fastest growing educational group. Occupations requiring a bachelor's degree are expected to grow by 4,264 jobs or 2.28 percent. Growth in occupations requiring a master's degree or doctoral or professional degree are estimated to be 2.02 percent and 2.55 percent respectively. Educational attainment of the State's population aged 25 years and over shows that 83.7 percent have earned a high school diploma/equivalent or higher, while 20.1 percent have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

Projected Employment by Educational Attainment (2014-2016)

Education Title	2014 Estimated Employment	2016Projected Employment	Net Growth	Percent Growth	Annual Openings-Growth	Annual Openings-Replacement	Annual Openings-Total
Doctoral or professional degree	29,315	30,062	747	2.55%	393	548	941
Master's degree	18,769	19,148	379	2.02%	214	358	572
Bachelor's degree	187,025	191,289	4,264	2.28%	1,663	3,584	5,247
Associate's degree	43,336	43,900	564	1.30%	486	827	1,313
Postsecondary non-degree award	99,501	100,989	1,488	1.50%	972	1,850	2,822
Some college, no degree	13,398	13,567	169	1.26%	45	280	325
High school diploma or equivalent	558,687	569,284	10,597	1.90%	3,734	11,533	15,267
Less than high school	347,741	358,946	11,205	3.22%	3,130	10,939	14,069

In the chart below (based on employment in 2012), the workers (red bar) are an estimate of the number of people in the labor force who have obtained the level of education needed for the occupation. The jobs (blue bar) are an estimate of the number actually employed in the occupation.

For both middle-skilled and high-skilled occupations, the number of workers trained for those occupations is higher than those employed in the occupation. The gap for middle-skilled occupations is high, with 398,458 trained for the occupation and 160,185 actually in the occupation. For high-skilled jobs, the gap is much lower. The gap for low-skilled jobs is reversed, where the people actually working in these jobs is much higher than those who have trained for these jobs. This can be interpreted to mean that a large number of workers trained in middle and high-skilled occupations are employed in lower-skilled occupations. The charts below indicate roughly more than 250,000 workers are underemployed, with the majority affecting middle-skilled occupations.

The chart below includes five high-demand occupations that require middle-skill training.

High Demand Middle-Skill Occupations (by Industry and Wage)

High-Demand Middle-Skilled Jobs	Industry	2014 Wages
Registered Nurses	Healthcare	$ 56,480
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	Manufacturing	$ 50,240
Aircraft Mechanics and Service Technicians	Aerospace	$ 43,240
Computer User Support Specialists	Information Technology	$ 41,210
Heavy and Tractor Trailer Truck Drivers	Trucking	$ 36,350

Skill Gaps

Recent surveys of employers attending statewide regional advisory council meetings of the Career and Technical Education program indicated that the skills needed by employers fall into four groups - 1) soft skills, 2) basic/core skills, 3) technical skills and 4) education programming and promotion. Of the responding employers, 91 percent indicated that soft skills and basic core skills were needed and only nine percent indicated that technical skills were an issue. Many employers indicated that if they could find workers that had the soft, basic core skills, they could train them for the technical skills needed.

- **Soft Skills** refers to areas including attendance, ownership, initiative, attitude, work ethic, perspective, teamwork, customer service, dress code, and professionalism
- **Basis /Core Skills** refers to interviewing, resumes, computer skills (MS Office software), math, problem solving, communication, writing, reading, troubleshooting, critical thinking, and attention to detail
- **Technical Skills** refers to a particular job skill such as electronics, maintenance, tool & die, certified nursing assistant, welding, technical certifications, robotics, equipment and computer programming, computer aided design, math, biology, chemistry, and drawings and schematics.
- **Education Programming and Promotion** refers to demonstrations by employers at schools, internships, job shadowing, apprenticeships, tours, mentoring, job/career fairs, concurrent credit, equipment donations, and work-based learning for students, teachers, counselors, career coaches, parents, and administrators.

In addition to the data collected at the regional advisory councils, the Arkansas State Chamber conducted a survey of business leaders in order to better understand the employment needs of Arkansas manufacturing and trade businesses. The online survey included 168 respondents representing manufacturing, construction, transportation, utilities, agriculture, forestry, mining, wholesale trade, and other related industries. The results of the survey were analyzed and four key items were identified by the Chamber:

- Lack of Qualified Workers - 82 percent of companies regularly have jobs or positions that they are not able to fill with qualified workers based on specific skill sets.
- Reasonable Education Requirements - 84 percent of companies are looking for an educational attainment of two-year degree or less.
- High Wage Jobs Available - 44 percent of average, entry level salaries for open positions are between $31,000 and $50,000.
- Lack of Partnerships - Employers are aware of training programs, but too many are not partnering with them for recruiting purposes.

The survey also collected data from the respondents related to key skills required, key recruiting efforts, and key problem areas.

- Key skills required

o CAD

o Computer Programming

o Blueprint Reading

o Electrical

o Engineering

o Fork Lift Operation

o Machining

o Welding

o CNC Programming

o Tool & Die

o Trucking

- Key recruiting efforts

o Workforce Centers

o Word of Mouth/Employee Referrals - *best employees come through this way*

o Temp Agencies

o Newspaper Ads

o Training Certification Schools

o Online Advertising (Monster, Craig's List, Career Builder)

- Key problem areas

o Attendance

o Problem Solving/Analytical Thinking

o Interpersonal Skills/Teamwork

o Following Directions/Reading & Using Information

o Basic Computer Skills

o Drugs

Requested Revision(s)

The state needs to provide links that work and go directly to a table, image or chart.

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) §	§ Trade Adjustment Assistance for Worker Program (Chapter 2, Title II Tract Act) § Jobs for Veterans

Agency	Core Program	Non-Core Program
	Wagner-Peyser (Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by Title III)	State Grants (Title 38, Chapter 41) § Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker Program (Title I) § Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program (42 U.S.C.)
ADCE	§ Adult Education and Family Literacy (WIOA Title II) § Vocational Rehabilitation (Title I Rehabilitation, as amended by Title IV) as of July 1, 2016	
DHS	§ Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind (Title I Rehabilitation, as amended by Title IV) as of July 1, 2016	§ 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 46 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, 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 Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division (ACE/AED) funds 38 local adult education programs, nine 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 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 and Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE™) are also offered in workplaces and correctional institutions. In the 2014-2015 program year, 27,636 adult Arkansans received services from programs receiving adult education funding; 5,484 or 20 percent were ESL students and 2,939 or 11 percent were individuals in institutional settings such as correctional facilities or community corrections programs.

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 were 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 46 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 child care; 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 Disabled Persons

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 attaining employment. A 2008 study (StatsRRTC[1]) 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.

Through the Governor's Executive Order 10-17, the Department of 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.

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[1] Reference: Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics (StatsRRTC), (2008); Report on Disability Demographics for Arkansas; Retrieved 12/21/2015, URL: https://www.disabilitystatistics.org/reports/report.cfm?fips=2005000emp-state.

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 have 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 opportunities present a tremendous 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 makes 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.

In WIOA Title I programs, several local boards have made changes in their program administration and service delivery, such as entering into consortia with other partners to operate the workforce centers request waivers to provide core and intensive services, rather than hire private providers with cost margins. This has resulted in savings at the local board level, which enables more funding to be directed to services and training.

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 Division has a strong working collaborative relationship with other state

agencies and organizations to help provide education, literacy, and workforce services to clients that helps 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 Department 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. Currently, 64 percent of adult education and literacy providers 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 of the state to provide workforce development for persons with disabilities is difficult to predict. The existing infrastructure for service provision is inadequate because of the added responsibilities related to transition services for students with disabilities. It will take creative partnerships with stakeholders in secondary education to be successful. It is critical for local resources to include provisions to assist people with disabilities to develop the skills needed for competitive integrated employment. The current staff members have designated duties above and beyond cross-training other agencies. Direct client services are positively impacted by these activities, so they are a priority; however, increased workloads and performance goals put a strain on vocational rehabilitation staff.

The State has a strong partnership between the workforce development system and Registered Apprenticeship. This partnership has been strengthened through the Arkansas Apprenticeship Pathway Initiative grant that will create and expand registered apprenticeships 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 a partnership with the Arkansas Apprenticeship Steering Committee and the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, the State is working to develop a referral process at the local workforce development board level, which increase the number of individuals served through the WIOA Title I programs and enrolled in Registered Apprenticeship training programs. Furthermore, all Registered Apprenticeship programs that desire so have been added to the list of approved eligible training providers.

Requested Revision(s)

We request the State include the U.S. DOL Office of Apprenticeship in this section.

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 around 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 Department of Workforce Services (Titles I & III), the Arkansas Department of Career Education (Title II), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (Title IV) and Division of Services for the Blind of the Arkansas Department of Human Services (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 Departments 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 identify and have 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 are 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 are 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.

Requested Revision(s)

The state needs to include the text in the link provided, in the portal of this section.

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—

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

_____

* 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:

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

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

Goal 3 Objectives:

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

Strategic Goal 4: Address Skills Gaps

Goal 4 Objectives:

1. Conduct a statewide skills and asset analysis to determine the skills gap present and resources available to solve the skills issue.
2. Develop and implement an action plan to close the basic core, technical, and soft skills gaps in Arkansas.
3. Analyze the effectiveness of currently used job readiness standards and ensure coordination between the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate program and the Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE) program.

Requested Revision(s)

The state needs to specifically address barriers to employment, including direct information on how Arkansas will identify who these individuals and where they're located. Also include the barriers they face and what Arkansas will do to overcome them.

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.

A primary focus of the state plan in Fiscal Year 2016 will be the first year of 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.

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). "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 will be addressed by system partners during the strategic plan period.

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.

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 Department 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.

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 Arkansas Department of Career Education, the Arkansas Department 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 http://www.adhe.edu/institutions/higher-education-master-plan/.

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 Arkansas Department of Career Education and Arkansas Department of Workforce Services have 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 (formerly known as Arkansas Works) 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 is administered through the Arkansas Department of Career Education and has established partnerships with the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, and Arkansas Department 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.

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.

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 are 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 support 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 in Arkansas Act 907 of 2015 and WIOA Section 101(d). The AWDB has policy–making 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.

2. Implementation of State Strategy

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined 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.

The Arkansas Department 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 Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division (ADCE–AED) 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:

o 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

o Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

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 individuals with disabilities to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain gainful

employment. An individualized plan for employment (IPE) is the foundation for all activities funded by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) for eligible individuals. Both the outcome goal and the services outlined on each individual's IPE must be consistent with their respective strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, informed choice and economic self-sufficiency. VR services, as practicable, should likewise align with the resources of core partners, and other stakeholders to ensure that people with disabilities meet or exceed their IPE goals. In addition to VR counseling, IPE's may include pre-employment transition and transition services, rehabilitation technology, training for careers that are in demand, post-secondary education, placement with employers, interpreters, accommodations needed for job placement or retaining employment, restorative medical services, positive behavior supports, internships, paid work experiences, and pre-apprenticeship training.

The Department of Human Services Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) 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.

Requested Revision(s)

For the paragraph starting with "There are multiple activities funded through Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) that will support the State's strategy and workforce Development Board." The remainder of the paragraph, comprised of two sentences [(1)The foundation of funded activities is … in their plans. and (2) In addition to vocational counseling, ARS funds … grants and loans to people with disabilities.] must be deleted.

In lieu of the deleted sentences, RSA recommends five statutorily correct statements that accurately describe the VR process, etc. "Allowable activities, referred to as vocational rehabilitation (VR)

services, are those activities necessary to assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain gainful employment. An individualized plan for employment (IPE) is the foundation for all activities funded by ARS for eligible individuals. Both the outcome goal and the services outlined on each individual's IPE must be consistent with their respective strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, informed choice and economic self-sufficiency. VR services, as practicable, should likewise align with the resources of core partners, and other stakeholders to ensure that people with disabilities meet or exceed their IPE goals. In addition to VR counseling, IPE's may include pre-employment transition and transition services, rehabilitation technology, training for careers that are in demand, post-secondary education, placement with employers, interpreters, accommodations needed for job placement or retaining employment, restorative medical services, positive behavior supports, internships, paid work experiences, and pre-apprenticeship training."

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.

Requested Revision(s)

This narrative needs to describe the alignment with activities outside the plan and partners. This section also needs to describe how this will be accomplished or with which partners it will align. While it does mention the required partners, it does not address the optional ones.

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 to individuals including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B). The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

All core partners will 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.

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 Investment 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 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

Requested Revision(s)

The narrative does not explain "how" the partners will coordinate the services and activities

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. 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.

Requested Revision(s)

We suggest the state include the $4M Registered Apprenticeship grant in the coordination of activities and resources needs.

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 enables 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 Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division (ADCE-AED) partnered with the Arkansas Community Colleges to offer Accelerating Opportunity to four community colleges and adult education programs in the state. Accelerating Opportunity 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 initiative aims to change how Adult Basic Education is structured and delivered through a collaborative effort in which a basic skills instructor and technical college instructor co-teach and plan the curriculum for low skill level adults in a technical course leading to a certificate credential. For the 2014-2015 program year, 144 students were enrolled in a college career pathways program. Out of that total, 16 percent of the individuals did not have a high school credential. By the end of the program year, 149 credentials were achieved, 4,810 credit hours were completed, and 75 or 52 percent of students are continuing in a career pathways program. Only 12 percent of students exited without completing a post-secondary credential. This has been a very successful initiative in Arkansas. The goal in the next two years is to increase the number of adult education and community college career pathway partnerships by 300 percent.

Adult education provides $300,000 in pass through funds to the Career Technical Education Division (CTE) to support the Adult Apprenticeships program. Currently, there are 89 programs that provide education and structured, on-the-job training to almost 4,000 apprentices, primarily professionals requiring certifications and licenses, such as plumbers and electricians. Adult education works in partnership with the Apprentice Program to assist with providing basic skills instruction to many apprentices.

Vocational Rehabilitation partners actively engage the State's education and training providers including community colleges and area career and technical education schools as partners in the workforce development system to create job-driven education and training opportunities for people with disabilities. A transition committee of the WIOA Roundtable was formed to develop strategies and partnership with secondary education partners. This group includes statewide leaders in secondary and post-secondary Career and Technical Education and secondary special education. In addition, higher education, secondary education, career and technical education, two-year colleges, registered apprenticeship and secondary schools for the blind and deaf are represented at the WIOA Roundtable and have access to information related to activities of the core programs and opportunities for collaboration, coordination, and partnering.

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.

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 Department 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 Department 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.

Requested Revision(s)

The state needs to describe "how" they will engage other education and training partners particularly Registered Apprenticeship.

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 both the basic literacy skills 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.

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. Lastly, as a result, over 200 credentials have been awarded to students participating in career pathways.

ARS's comprehensive approach to transition services will provide increased access to education. By working closely with students with disabilities to align their individual plans for employment with their individual education plans, opportunities for increasing accessibility and accommodations needed for postsecondary education increase significantly. The intent of this focus on transition is to make the best use of resources of secondary education providers and vocational rehabilitation while facilitating education and training that leads to careers that spur economic development of the state.

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 Department 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 has assisted the State in better connecting the workforce development center system with the State's two-year college system.

Requested Revision(s)

We encourage the State to include Arkansas Community College, a key partner in RA $4m grant, to leverage resources.

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.

Lastly, the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC), adult education's professional development center, 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. Career pathway is a new concept for many adult education providers and in order for this to be a successful initiative, training was imperative. Administrators' were reminded of adult education's role in assisting students to gain portable and stackable certificates. Programs were encouraged to start identifying partners who can help develop career pathways for students. Adult education directors were also reminded 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)).

Over the last five years, ARS has worked to align resources for training and education resulting in industry recognized postsecondary credentials. ARS first focused on its own provider of postsecondary training, the Arkansas Career Training Institute where the training and services provided did not result in industry recognized postsecondary credentials. Now, all training programs meet national accreditation standards, and students are able to attain multiple industry recognized credentials. In addition, when individual plans for employment are designed, the training and education must result in these types of credentials demonstrating value in the attainment of

competitive integrated employment. ARS has plans to utilize statewide registered apprenticeship training providers to facilitate placement in registered apprenticeship and one provider has been approved as a vendor for this service. Within the next year there are plans for six 40-hour pre-apprenticeship training classes to train 90 people with disabilities.

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.).

Arkansas JobLink 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:

o Entry to the system from multiple locations, including home or office

o Decreased number of times the client has to provide basic information

o Access to additional useful information (career preparation, labor market, disabilities resources, support services, etc.)

o Better-prepared and more timely referrals between partner agencies

o 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 Reporting Information System All adult education and literacy programs receiving adult education federal and state funds from the Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division must report student data for both served and enrolled students using the state student management information system, Adult Education Reporting Information System (AERIS). AERIS 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 descriptive measures, participation measures, and outcome measures. Approved users can access the website at www.aeris.aalrc.org .

The state has been using AERIS as a case management system since 2005. The Adult Education Division is exploring other management information systems, including a custom built unified data management system with other core partners. One of the features the state would like in a new system is the ability to link to labor market information and jobs.

Data collected on each adult student include personal data such as age, gender, ethnicity, county residence, beginning educational functioning grade levels in reading, math, and language, progression by grade level, status upon entry, outcome achievements, test scores, classes, and attendance (either daily or monthly). 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 Department of Workforce Services, outcomes for students that enter post-secondary education, and enter and retain employment can be tracked.

All adults who receive services from adult education and literacy programs are considered served students. Adults who receive services, have a completed Intake Form, and have received at least one contact hour of instruction, should be entered into AERIS even if they have not taken a pre-test. Students who have 12 or more contact hours within a program year (July 1 to June 30) are considered enrolled students 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 AERIS by the 15th of each month for the previous month's data. All data must be approved 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 pre-test and post-test will be recorded in NRS Table 4B, which is a required federal table. In addition, all test 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.

Only users with the role of a Local Education Agency (LEA) Administrator may approve data. Data entry personnel should not be responsible for approving data. The local program director should approve all data. Data audits will be conducted by the Adult Education Division during on-site reviews to verify the accuracy of data in AERIS and to verify that correct assessment procedures have been followed. The process is the same for all adult education providers regardless of location.

According to Assurance 13 of the Adult Education Division 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 Division. If programs are missing data in AERIS, 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 Division 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.

System 7 The Arkansas Rehabilitation Services system of record for Vocational Rehabilitation is System 7™. 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 allows 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.

AWARE System The DHS 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 Department 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.

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:

o Employment history

o Education

o Legal issues

o Physical and mental health problems

o Substance abuse

o Transportation

o 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 allows 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 Department of Workforce Services through partnership with the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Department of Human Services, Arkansas Department of Career Education 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 Department 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. It is expected that by December 2016, a plan for integrating data amongst these systems will be developed.

Requested Revision(s)

The state needs to coordinate their strategy to integrate. No mention of the WDQI grant to build the data warehouse. They must state what they are doing and include benchmarks.

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

SEE ABOVE

* For the PY 2016 state plan, descriptions of data collection and reporting processes need only include currently known indicators.

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, describe the State’s process for developing guidelines for State-administered one-stop partner programs’ contributions to a one-stop delivery

system, including benchmarks, and its guidance to assist local boards, chief elected officials, and local one-stop partners in determining equitable and stable methods of funding infrastructure in accordance with sec. 121(h)(1)(B). Beginning with the state plan modification in 2018 and for subsequent state plans and state plan modifications, the State must also include such guidelines.

With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, Arkansas Department of Career Education - Adult Education and Literacy and Rehabilitative Services divisions, and the Arkansas Department of Human Services - 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 Department of Workforce Services as staff support for the AWDB takes lead on posting policies for public comment and making policies available for all staff to access on the WIOA page of the website www.dws.arkansas.gov/wioa.htm .

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 Department of Workforce Services The Department 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 Department 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 Department.

- 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

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services also serves as the Governor's Administrative Entity for WIOA Title I funding, provides staffing support for the Arkansas Workforce Development, 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 subgrantees for delivery of services through the TANF program and discretionary grants awarded to the agency from multiple sources.

An organizational chart of the agency is included in Appendix 3.

Arkansas Department of Career Education The Arkansas Department of Career Education (ADCE) 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 ADCE. The Director for the agency is appointed by the Governor. The

agency has four divisions and includes Adult Education, Career Technical Education, Office of Skills Development, and Rehabilitation Services. The 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. Arkansas is fortunate to have two of the four required core partners under one agency along with an optional partner, Career Technical Education.

The Arkansas Department of Career Education (ADCE), Adult Education Division funds 47 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 program is supported with $5.2 million received under Tittle II of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act and $19 million in state funding.

The Designated State Agency for General Vocational Rehabilitation in Arkansas is the Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE) division of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS). Title IV of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and as amended in 1998, provides for states receiving federal vocational rehabilitation funds to appoint a state director and to create a State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The state director of the Arkansas vocational rehabilitation program is the Commissioner of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services and is appointed by the ACE Director. The ARS Commissioner and the senior leadership of ARS provide oversight and coordination for three major components including, Field Services, the Arkansas Career Training Institute, and the programs under Access and Accommodations.

Field Services personnel provide the local level coordination and facilitation of all general vocational rehabilitation services. This includes, but is not limited to, vocational rehabilitation counseling, vocational case management, eligibility determination, individual employment plan development, transition services, and job placement. The Arkansas Career Training Institute is a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation center and provides an array of training, vocational evaluation, accommodation, and supportive services for ARS clients. The programs organized under Access and Accommodations provide an array of assistive technology, technical assistance, and advocacy services for consumers with significant disabilities, and their potential employers, concerning ergonomics and accommodations in the workplace, i.e., flashing light systems, modified keyboards, voice activated software, and text magnification aids.

The organizational chart for the Arkansas Department of Career Education can be found in Appendix 3.

Department of Human Services 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.

Two of DHS' programs are represented in this plan including Vocational Rehabilitation Services provided through the Division of Services for the Blind and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment & Training Program.

The Department of Human Services, 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 throughout the state. VFP locates the sales site, equips and stocks the facility initially, maintains the equipment, and provides oversight and record keeping.

The organizational chart for the DSB may be found in Appendix 4.

Requested Revision(s)

The paragraph that begins as follows: "Field Services personnel provide the local level coordination and facilitation of all general vocational rehabilitation services.... " The last sentence in said paragraph reads as follow: "The programs organized under Access and Accommodations provide a variety of direct client and business services and include ... facilitation of attainment of resources through loans and grants, ... in the workplace." Said sentence should be replaced with the following: "The programs organized under Access and Accommodations provide an array of assistive technology, technical assistance, and advocacy services for consumers with significant disabilities, and their potential employers, concerning ergonomics and accommodations in the workplace, i.e., flashing light systems, modified keyboards, voice activated software, and text magnification aids."

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 policy-making 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/AWDB/BoardMembers.htm 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

1. Membership roster

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

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

2. 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

The newly formed board received orientation in June 2015, had a two-day training and strategy session on WIOA law in July 2015, and held a two-day strategic planning session in November and December 2015 to formulate goals and objectives for the state plan. Between June 2015 and January 2016, there have been five full board meetings and thirteen committee meetings in preparation for the implementation of WIOA in Arkansas.

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 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 is however, 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

o Innovate and stay on top

o Strive for national excellence

- Meet Indicator between 90-100 percent

o Process, practice improvement, adjust strategies

- At-Risk Indicator between 50-90 percent

o Technical Assistance available, process, practice improvement, adjust strategies

- Fail Indicator Less than 50 percent

o 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.

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 an assessment 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 programs 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. When the WIA State set aside funding was reduced from fifteen percent of the total grant to only five percent, funding did not exist to conduct formal evaluations; however, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services has conducted 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.

The Arkansas Department of Career Education oversees the performance outcomes Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Education, and Carl Perkins funding to ensure both federal and state standards are met.

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 measureable 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 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 CI 1.1 Percentage of enrolled (12 contact hours or more) Adult Basic Education (ABE) Beginning Literacy adult learners (0.0-1.9) who complete or advance one or more educational functioning 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): 45% for 2013-2014 47% for 2014-2015 CI 1.2 Percentage of enrolled ABE Beginning Basic adult learners (2.0-3.9) who complete or advance one or more educational functioning 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 AED: 39% for 2013-2014 47% for 2014-2015 CI 1.3

Percentage of enrolled ABE Intermediate Low adult learners (4.0-5.9) who complete or advance one or more educational functioning 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 AED: 40% for 2013-2014 41% for 2014-2015 CI 1.4 Percentage of enrolled ABE Intermediate High adult learners (6.0-8.9) who complete or advance one or more educational functioning 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 AED: 41% for 2013-2014 42% for 2014-2015 CI 1.5 Percentage of enrolled Adult Secondary Education (ASE) Low adult learners (9-10.9) who complete or advance one or more educational functioning 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 AED: 38% for 2013-2014 46% for 2014-2015 CI 1.6 Percentage of enrolled English as a Second Language (ESL) Beginning Literacy adult learners who will acquire the level of English language skills needed to complete or advance one or more educational functioning levels. Test benchmark: BEST Literacy: 0-20; BEST Plus=

Follow-up Outcome Measures CI 2.1 Percent of learners who are unemployed and in the labor force when they entered the program and who exit during the program year. (Entered Employment): 65% for 2013-2014 43% for 2014-2015 CI 2.2 Percent of learners who were not employed at time of entry and in the labor force, who enter employment by the first quarter after exit quarter; and learners employed at entry who exit during the program year. (Retained Employment): 74% for 2013-2014 70% for 2014-2015 CI 2.3 Percent of learners who earned a secondary credential while enrolled in adult education, or who had a secondary credential at entry, or who are enrolled in a class specifically designed for transition to postsecondary education or training, who exit during the program year. (Enter in Post-Secondary education or training): 27% for 2013-2014 10% for 2014-2015 CI 2.4 Percent of learners who take all GED tests, or are enrolled in adult high school at the high ASE level, or are enrolled in the assessment phase of the External Diploma Program (EDP), who exit during the program year: (Receipt of secondary diploma or GED): 96% for 2013-2014 98% for 2014-2015

During FY2014 and FY2015, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) met or exceeded all performance standards and indicators required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration. ARS increased the number of individuals who achieved employment outcomes from 2,917 in FY2013 to 3,077 in FY2015. Seventy-two percent of individuals who exited the VR program after receiving services achieved an employment outcome. Over 99 percent achieved an employment outcome in competitive, self-employment, or Business Enterprise Program employment, earning at least minimum wage. Ninety-eight percent of those earning at least minimum wage were individuals with significant disabilities.

The above successes can be attributed to ARS' goals and strategies to expand and improve services offered to individuals with disabilities. ARS significantly improved its name recognition resulting in improved referrals and increased employment outcomes. ARS provided education to employers about disability issues and the value and experience individuals with disabilities has to offer. Vocational rehabilitation counselors and business relations representatives were trained on how to better reach the unserved and underserved minority populations, and how to utilize Assistive Technology at Work (AT@Work) and the Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN) to provide individuals with disabilities with a broad range of assistive technology services and devices.

In collaboration with stakeholders, ARS developed a job coaching training certificate program and implemented it in FY2014 through FY2015. The job coach training was offered online and through

live training throughout the state to supported employment providers. ARS worked closely with the Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI), a comprehensive rehabilitation center, to place graduates in employment. ACTI provided counseling and case management, vocational assessments and evaluations, vocational training, and employability skills. The Arkansas Transition Program and ACTI partnered to develop and implement the Transition Employment Program (TEP). This program targeted high school students to provide training and work experiences during the summer following their junior year.

ARS, in collaboration with Arkansas Transition Services, provided guidance to high schools to improve transition services from school to post-school activities including postsecondary educational and employment opportunities. In addition, ARS worked with Arkansas PROMISE, a research project open to youth ages 14 to 16 who currently receive SSI benefits. Participants and their families received services to support their education and career goals. Services included: intensive case management, two paid competitive work experiences, education and employment training and support for youth and families, health and wellness training, and benefits counseling.

ARS continued to support Project SEARCH, an international one-year internship program for individuals with developmental disabilities who desire sustainable, competitive employment.

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 re-design 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 insure 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 insure 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 its 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.

For the federal WIOA performance accountability measures and state measures determined by Arkansas Workforce Development Board (AWDB), 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, 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:

- Program performance effectiveness utilizing the State's Information Management System at the state and local level
- Review of state and local level data presented on a performance dashboard
- Core Program Monitoring and Compliance reviews annually
- Local Workforce Development Area annual reports
- State and local risk assessment evaluations to review:

o Governance

o Administrative, program/grant, and financial management systems

o Program services, delivery systems, and documentation, and

o Performance accountability.

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

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—

1. 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 subrecipient 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 subrecipient will disburse such funds for workforce development activities at the direction of the local board. The local grant recipient or subrecipient 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 youth in each workforce development area compared to the total number of disadvantaged youth 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.

2. 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.

3. 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 Department of Workforce Services as the lead agency of the Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force.

B. For Title II:

1. Multi-year grants or contracts

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.

(i) The Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division (ADCE-AED) 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 within the state. The grant will be for a four year cycle that applies to all programs; however, the ADCE-AED state office will review the performance level of providers after two years to determine whether or not to do a new competition. All programs competed will adhere to direct and equitable provisions to award funds under WIOA sections 225 (Corrections Education), 231 (Grants and Contracts for Eligible Providers), and 243 (Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education). The same grant announcement, application, and process will be used for all proposals and all proposals will be treated the same way in evaluation, and evaluated by the 13 considerations as found in the law at 231 (e)(1-13).

A formula method will be used to determine the amount of funding and will take into consideration the literacy rate and the core indicators of performance as outlined in Title II of the WIOA law. The formula will be designed to consider the levels of performance in the local programs as compared to established benchmarks as a basis for an increase or decrease in funds.

Demonstrated effectiveness of an eligible provider will be determined by provided performance data in its application. According to Arkansas Act 1280 of 2007, Section 30, "All funds that become available for adult education shall first be distributed to those administrative units determined to be operating effective and efficient adult education programs, under criteria established by the Career Education and Workforce Development Board. The criteria shall include the relative efficiency of administration of the program in the counties served and achievement of the federal performance indicators." 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 in 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 barrier 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. The list of criteria used to evaluate effectiveness and the scoring rubric will be 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 Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Northwest, and Central Region. Although there may be multiple providers within an area, the state will reconfigure all 75 counties to align them with the 10 Workforce Investment Boards (WIB). 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 district or community college, institutions of higher education, and literacy organizations. Other eligible providers will be considered using a direct and equitable process. Not 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.

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 will 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.

Not 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.

Applications—Title II of the Workforce Innovation an Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 (Public Law 113–128) Sections 223, 225, 231, 232: Each eligible provider desiring a grant or contract shall submit Request for Proposal (RFP) application to the Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division containing support information and assurances that will include the following: (1) a description of how funds awarded under this title will be spent consistent with the requirements of this title; (2) a description of any cooperative arrangements the eligible provider has with other agencies, institutions, or organizations for the delivery of adult education and literacy activities; (3) a description of how the eligible provider will provide services in alignment with the local plan under section 108, including how such provider will promote concurrent enrollment in programs and activities under title I, as appropriate; (4) a description of how the eligible provider will meet the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3), including how such provider will collect data to report on such performance indicators; (5) a description of how the eligible provider will fulfill one–stop partner responsibilities as described in section 121(b)(1)(A), as appropriate; (6) a description of how the eligible provider will provide services in a manner that meets the needs of eligible individuals; and (7) information that addresses the considerations described under section 231(e), as applicable.

Eligible Providers—WIOA Section 203 (5) The term “eligible provider” means an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education and literacy activities that may include: (A) a local educational agency; (B) a community–based organization or faith–based organization; (C) a volunteer literacy organization; (D) an institution of higher education; (E) a public or private nonprofit agency; (F) a library; (G) a public housing authority; (H) a nonprofit institution that is not described in any of subparagraphs (A) through (G) and has the ability to provide adult education and literacy activities to eligible individuals; (I) a consortium or coalition of the agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in any of subparagraphs (A) through (H); and (J) a partnership between an employer and an entity described in any of subparagraphs (A) through (I).

Grant Process Adult Education Division will run a classified advertisement in a statewide newspaper of record for three consecutive days, including the weekend, notifying the public of the availability of federal funds and providing information on how to apply. This information and the Request for Proposal (RFP) application will also be posted on the Department of Finance and Administration’s website (www.dfa.arkansas.gov) as well as the Department of Career Education’s website (www.ace.arkansas.gov). Individuals may also request an application by mail or e–mail by sending a written request to 3 Capitol Mall Little Rock, AR 72202 or AdultEd@arkansas.gov. Any eligible provider submitting a completed application for any adult education funding by the due date will be considered for funding.

Evaluation of Applications—Section 231 (e) (1–13) Each eligible provider submitting a completed Request for Proposal (RFP) Application by the due date specified by the ADCE–AED will be evaluated using a rubric. In cases where a program’s past performance is low, a meeting with the evaluation committee may be required. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the eligible provider’s proposal and past performance and to determine whether the candidate would be a viable applicant for funds. Goals may be negotiated and educational benchmarks may be established for the provider’s program before any funding is awarded.

In awarding grants or contracts under this section, an applicant must meet the following 13 considerations in order to be considered for funding: (1) the degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to: (A) regional needs as identified in the local plan under section 108; and (B) serving individuals in the community who were identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals: (i) who have low levels of literacy skills; or (ii) who are English language learners; (2) the ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities; (3) past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State–adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy; (4) the extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under section 108, as well as the activities and services of the one–stop partners; (5) whether the eligible provider’s program: (A) is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and (B) uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction; (6) whether the eligible provider’s activities, including whether reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider, are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice; (7) whether the eligible provider’s activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance; (8) 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; (9) whether the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well–trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means; (10) 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; (11) whether the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs; (12) whether the eligible provider maintains a high–quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with section 116) and to monitor program performance; and (13) whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.

The state may implement an adult education rule or policy that is not a federal requirement; however, it must clearly identify it as a State or outlying area requirement.

Demonstrated Effectiveness According to Arkansas Act 1280 of 2007, Section 30, "All funds that become available for adult education shall first be distributed to those administrative units determined to be operating effective and efficient adult education programs, under criteria established by the Career Education and Workforce Development Board. The criteria shall include the relative efficiency of administration of the program in the counties served and achievement of the federal performance indicators."

To be considered effective and efficient, local adult education programs and literacy councils receiving adult education funds will be required to meet or exceed the percentage of the federal negotiated core indicators as determined by the Deputy Director of Adult Education. Programs not meeting percentage requirement, in the first year will be required to submit an improvement plan. The improvement plan will address each core indicator of performance that was not met and will include measurable objectives for correcting deficiencies during the following year. State program advisors will provide technical assistance to each program submitting an improvement plan and closely monitor programs during the year. Core indicators of performance are defined in the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, Title II, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA); however, using the core indicators as criteria for effective and efficient evaluations and imposing a minimum score is a state decision.

Programs that do not meet the percentage requirement of their negotiated core indicators of performance for a second consecutive year will be assigned a state technical assistance team to assist the program in addressing its deficiencies. The team members may include, but not limited to state and local staff, administrators, teachers and students. Quarterly progress reports will be submitted by the program being monitored to the Adult Education Division describing the progress being made to bring the program into compliance with core indicators. Programs not achieving percentage requirement, of their negotiated core indicators of performance for three consecutive years will be submitted to the Career Education and Workforce Development Board for appropriate action prior to continuation of funding.

Requested Revision(s)

The state needs to describe the regional structure that will be used to distribute funds in the state.

2. Ensure direct and equitable access

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 procedure for all eligible providers.

The Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division will use the same grant announcement and application process for all eligible providers in the state. In addition, all eligible providers will have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for grants or contracts and will be treated the same in evaluation. The Request For Proposal (RFP) applications will be shared in the form of a classified advertisement in the statewide newspaper, The Arkansas Democrat Gazette, an announcement on the Department of Finance and Administration and Department of Career Education's websites, and the use of other means of available communication in order to ensure that all perspective eligible providers will have access to the same standardized information. Any noncurrent provider inquiring about adult education and literacy grants through the state office prior to the grant official announcement will be added to the e-mail distribution list of current adult education providers. Once the RFP grant announcement has been officially posted on the website and in the public newspaper, the state office will send notification out to all potential eligible providers on the state's e-mail distribution list. The grant application procedures will be the same for all eligible providers.

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 State 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 State 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 State Services for the Blind (DSB) of the Department of Human Services 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.

1. 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.

2. 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.

The state board has established this as an objective under the overall goal of enhancing service delivery to workforce customers and charged staff with developing an integrated data system that will enable the sharing of information between partner agencies to more efficiently service both employers and jobseekers.

3. 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.

WIOA Title I Statewide Activities funding has been earmarked for this project and the project will begin in the Summer of 2016 with a formal evaluation of the systems currently being used and the data needs of each program. The project development will be led by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services and coordinated with the other partner agencies through the Information Technology Committee of the WIOA Interagency Roundtable. Progress will be monitored by the Arkansas Workforce Development Board.

4. 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. Separately, the Departments of Labor and Education anticipate working with States to inform future

guidance and possible information collection(s) on these accountability systems. 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.

The progress of participants who are exiting from the core programs will be assessed through follow up by the core programs that provided service. Furthermore, the Program and Performance Evaluation Committee (PPE) of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board will monitor outcomes through quarterly progress reports on the WIOA core measures.

State agencies, federal agencies, private companies and non-profits collect a vast amount of data that can be utilized by States in ensuring that their talent supply and demand are aligned. One valuable tool that combines and translates this data into useable information is a dashboard, which highlights important figures and visualizes large datasets in ways that users can easily digest and use to spur action. The PPE Committee will establish a performance dashboard that will review outcomes across core programs and eventually will include performance of all programs under this plan and may include performance standards outside of the core WIOA targets.

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. If a veteran self-attests during the initial assessment by AWC staff, the veteran will be referred to a DVOP Specialist 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 Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division, 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, and referrals. Provide training and information to all state GED examiners about requesting and receiving accommodations on the GED 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., audiocassette, 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 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 Department 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 Department of Workforce Services, Arkansas Department of Career Education – Adult Education and Literacy and Rehabilitative Services divisions, and the Arkansas Department of Human Services – 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.

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. 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 will issue its policy on the requirements for funding infrastructure costs in an Arkansas Workforce Development Board policy issuance no later than June 30, 2017. In part, the policy will state 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 policy also will state 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.

The appeals process will be outlined in the policy issuance.

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 Department 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 Department 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 Department of Workforce Services Rapid Response protocols are designed to address adverse economic and / or community impacts resulting from actual or imminent natural or man-made 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 Department 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 Department 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 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. Leadership from these Programs was requested to present identified "Best Practices" at a Joint Trade Roundtable hosted by DOL Regions IV and VI.

- 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 Workers Program Requirements

1. 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.

2. Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy and services.

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) has a strong partnership with Registered Apprenticeship and consistently includes Registered Apprenticeship training as a training option in discretionary grant proposals and encourages local workforce development boards to utilize this training strategy. The ADWS is working with the U.S. Department of Labor, leaders from the Arkansas Apprenticeship Steering Committee, the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition, and local workforce development boards to establish a procedure for enrolling WIOA Title I participants in

Registered Apprenticeship training and supporting the apprentice through training fees and supportive services for up to one year.

Information on Registered Apprenticeship 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 Registered Apprenticeship 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 referred to the Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition (AAC) to determine what fields of study that may be available.

The partnership between the Workforce system and Registered Apprenticeship programs will increase options for both youth and adults. Registered Apprenticeships provide youth with career pathways and a credential. Adults and Dislocated Workers 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, Health Care, and Information Technology and will train a total of 600 unemployed, underemployed, dislocated, and underrepresented individuals over the life of the grant, with 480 individuals completing training and receiving credentials.

3. 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 Department 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.

The procedures for initial and continued eligibility for the Eligible Training Provider List are available online at: www.dws.arkansas.gov/wioa.htm

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 funding 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. The vast majority of requests to transfer funds was from dislocated worker funds to the adult funding stream because a large number of dislocated workers qualify for training under the Trade

Adjustment Assistance program. The ability to transfer funds enables local areas to serve more adults that were not trade impacted.

In order to transfer funds between programs, the local workforce development board shall submit a funds transfer request to the Arkansas Department 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 Department 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 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.*

* 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 subgrant 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, and 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 Department of Workforce Service will partner with the Arkansas Department of Career Education, the Department of Health and 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.

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.*

* 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).

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.

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 not using the basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA Section 3(5)(B), include the specific State definition.

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 also 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. The type and availability of WIOA Title I Youth Activities, including an identification of successful providers of such activities. (WIOA section 108(b)(9).)

Arkansas is not a single-area State.

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:

A. supporting employer engagement;
B. connecting education and training strategies;
C. supporting work-based learning;
D. improving job and career results, and
E. 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 process used to:

A. Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;
B. Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;
C. Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;

D. Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.
E. Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report

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 requests approval of three waiver requests.

1) Waiver Request to allow the Credential Attainment Rate to be considered a baseline indicator for the first two years of the plan to allow the WIOA Title I youth, adult, dislocated worker programs, Adult Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation to gather data on credential attainment of participants and establish a baseline for negotiation of performance targets in program year 2018.

2) Waiver Request to allow the Measurable Skill Gains Rate to be considered a baseline indicator for the first two years of the plan to allow the Vocational Rehabilitation to gather data on measurable skills gains of participants and establish a baseline for negotiation of performance targets in program year 2018.

3) Waiver Request to allow the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate program and the Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE) program completion of curriculum and certification to be counted as a credential for the purposes of calculating the Credential Attainment rate.

Waiver Request: Baseline Indicator for Credential Attainment Rate This waiver request is to allow Arkansas to add the Credential Attainment Rate to the list of designated baseline indicators for the following programs for the first plan submission for program year 2016 and 2017.

Adults Dislocated Workers Youth Adult Education Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

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

Statutory Reference: WIOA Section 116 (b)(2)(A)(i)(IV), Credential Attainment Rate.

The selection of primary indicators for the designation as a baseline indicator was made based on the likelihood of a state having adequate data on which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance. At this time, Arkansas does not believe that it has adequate reliable data available on which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance for these programs. A goal will be to ensure that pertinent data is captured in a management information system and that is readily available to the partner programs.

2) Actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;

This is not applicable. There is no State or local statutory or regulatory barrier.

3) Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;

A goal will be to ensure that pertinent data is captured in a management information system and that it is readily available to the partner programs for reporting purposes. The actual performance data reported for these indicators in the first two years of the Combined Plan will serve as baseline data in future years. While the State has reported credential attainment for youth in the past, the population served through the youth program was predominantly in-school youth, which earned a high school diploma as a credential. With the new focus on out-of-school youth, the previous credential attainment rates cannot be used as a baseline. For that reason, we are requesting that the credential attainment rate be considered a baseline indicator for the first two years.

4) Describes how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

(A) supporting employer engagement;

This is not applicable to this waiver request.

(B) connecting education and training strategies;

This is not applicable to this waiver request.

(C) supporting work-based learning;

This is not applicable to this waiver request.

(D) improving job and career results, and

This is not applicable to this waiver request.

(E) other guidance issued by the Department.

This is not applicable to this waiver request.

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

This is not applicable to this waiver request.

(6) Describes the processes used to:

(A) Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;

Progress will be monitored through monthly reviews of the management information system(s) reports for all programs to which the waiver applies.

(B) Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;

The waiver request will be published in the Arkansas WIOA state plan for public comment.

(C) Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;

The waiver request will be published in the Arkansas WIOA state plan for public comment.

(D) Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.

The waiver request will be published in the Arkansas WIOA state plan for public comment.

(E) Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.

The actual performance data for these indicators will be reported in the annual report for the first two years of the Combined Plan and will serve as baseline data in future years.

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.

This is not applicable to this waiver request.

Waiver Request: Baseline Indicator for Measurable Skill Gains This waiver request is to allow Arkansas to add the Measurable Skill Gains Rate to the list of designated baseline indicators for the following programs for the first plan submission for program year 2016 and 2017.

Vocational Rehabilitation Vocational Rehabilitation, Services for the Blind

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

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) and the Department of Human Services - Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) requests a waiver to allow the Measurable Skill Gains, primary performance accountability measure found in Chapter 4, Section 116.(b)(2)(A)(i)(V) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, to be considered a baseline indicator for program years 2016 and 2017 . This measure is defined as:

The percentage of program participants, during a program year, who are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment;

2) Actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers; There are no statutory or regulatory barriers to this waiver.

3) Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;

The goal of this waiver is to allow for time to develop a tracking system for this performance accountability measure. Otherwise, there will be no data from which to establish baselines and negotiate performance rates.

The state has been working with the existing providers of case management services for ARS, but was informed in November 2015 the provider was changing its business model and would no longer provide vocational rehabilitation case management services. DSB uses a case management system known as AWARE by Alliance Enterprises. AWARE is working to develop a tracking mechanism for tracking these measures.

The current case management system, utilized by ARS, does not include standardized tracking of this measure; therefore, past performance data for the establishment of baselines is not available. ARS proposes to establish a standardized tracking system by October 1, 2016. Data will be collected for one year to establish a baseline for this performance accountability measure. The effect of this waiver is to ensure levels used for negotiation will reflect levels with decreased probability of inaccurate measures related to incomplete data. Additionally, the current case management system utilized by DSB does not include a tracking mechanism for this measure. Similarly, there is no baseline information in which to set a current performance measure. DSB proposes to establish a standardized tracking system within AWARE by October 1, 2016. Data will be collected for one year to establish a baseline for this performance accountability measure. The effect of this waiver will ensure accurate data in which to draw predictions for the coming years.

5) Describes how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities;

The waiver for both agencies supports employer engagement, connecting education and training strategies work-based learning, and improving job and career results. This will provide much more accuracy in performance accountability system and the future strategies developed based on these measures. The lack of data could lead to erroneous assessments of performance.

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

If this waiver is not approved, it has the potential to negatively impact the services provided to people with disabilities. This would be a result of decisions being made by incomplete data related to the performance of eligible providers, which could be either significantly inflating or under-reporting performance.

(6) Describes the processes used to:

(A) Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;

Progress will be monitored through monthly reviews of the management information system(s) reports for all programs to which the waiver applies.

(B) Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;

The waiver request will be published in the Arkansas WIOA state plan for public comment.

(C) Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;

The waiver request will be published in the Arkansas WIOA state plan for public comment.

(D) Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.

The waiver request will be published in the Arkansas WIOA state plan for public comment.

(E) Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.

The Commissioner of ARS, in conjunction with the ARS Chief of Field Services, will be responsible for ensuring compliance with this waiver for Arkansas Rehabilitation Services. The Commissioner

will track the development of the tracking system and ensure timelines are met. ARS leadership will provide status updates to the members of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board during regular meetings and summarize progress of the waiver plan for the State's WIOA Annual Report.

For DSB, the Director of DSB, as well as the DSB Field Administrator, will be responsible for ensuring compliance with this waiver for the Division of Services for the Blind. The Director will track the development of the tracking system and ensure timelines are met. The DSB Director will provide status updates to the members of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board during regular meetings and summarize progress of the waiver plan for the State's WIOA Annual Report.

Progress from both agencies will be routinely reported to the Program and Performance Evalucation Committee of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board.

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.

This is not applicable to this waiver request. Waiver Request: Career Readiness Certificate and WAGE Program to be Counted As Credentials This waiver request is to allow the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) Program and the Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE) Program to be counted as credentials for the purposes of calculating the Credential Attainment Rate

(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;

Statutory Reference: WIOA Section 3 (52), Recognized Postsecondary Credential.

Background:

Career Readiness Certificate The Career Readiness Certificate is a portable credential based on the ACT WorkKeys assessments that substantiate to employers that an individual possesses the basic workplace skills they are seeking. Individuals who earn an Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate are automatically eligible for the National Career Certificate (NCRC). Even if an individual has a high school diploma, GED or a post secondary degree, the Career Readiness Certificate further verifies that he or she can handle tasks that are common and vital in today's workplace such as finding information, reading instructions and working with figures.

To earn an Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate, job seekers must successfully complete the Career Ready 101 instruction and score at least a level 3 on the WorkKeys assessments in Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics and Locating Information. As a result of the WorkKeys assessment scores, job seekers receive a Platinum, Gold, Silver or Bronze certificate or identify areas in which they need further instruction.

Reading for Information - The ability to understand information in common workplace documents such as letters, memos, procedures and instructions.

Applied Mathematics - The ability to use mathematical reasoning in solving common workplace situations.

Locating Information - The ability to understand and extract information from graphics such as diagrams, tables, forms, graphs, and charts. The benefits of the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate to Employers are:

• Reduces turnover, overtime, and waste while improving morale • Take the guesswork out of selection decisions • Improve the effectiveness of training dollars • Streamlines hiring by including a preferred certificate level in job postings • Meets EEOC requirements

The benefits of the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate to Job Seekers are: • Builds confidence that skills meet the needs of local employers • Gives advantage over other job applicants who have not demonstrated needed skills • Determines skill improvement and training needs • Possesses a portable skills credential that enhances employability and sets the stage for possible career advancement and lifelong learning

The benefits of the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate to Educators are: • Increases chances that graduates will be hired • Enables students to see a reason to take coursework seriously • Improves students success in entry-level and subsequent jobs • Aligns curricula to meet the job skills employers need • Provides a workforce development tool that ensures no worker is left behind

The benefits of the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate to the Community are: • Keeps employers from moving entry-level jobs to other cities, states, or countries • Decreases unemployment rates • Creates a work-ready community to improve the quality of life for residents • Increases the tax base through more profitable business partners • Attracts new employers to the state, resulting in economic development

WAGE™ Certificate WAGE™ is a job readiness training program conducted through the Adult Education Division of the Arkansas Department of Career Education. It includes 112 basic skills competencies based on the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) which have been determined as essential by the nation's and Arkansas' employers. WAGE™ offers six state-issued certificates: Employability, Industrial, Customer Service Level I, Customer Service Level II, Bank Teller and Office Technology. The WAGE™ program accepts students who assess at less than a 12.9 grade-level (12th grade, 9th month) equivalency on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)™ and who have a goal of obtaining a job, retaining a job, improving their skill level to gain improved employment, or entering next-level workplace training. It is based on the same alliance principles as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and requires more than 50 percent employer participation on the local WAGE™ alliance advisory committee for an Adult Education Center to become WAGE™-certified. The alliance also includes participation agreements with the Arkansas Department of Human Services, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, WIOA, chambers of commerce, human resources associations, local leaders, staffing and training agencies, economic development agencies and boards, as well as other educational providers. Participating employers allow adult educators to perform literacy tasks analysis on positions that rely on foundation skills for maximized employee performance. Adult educators use the literacy task analyses to customize competencies within the context of local employers. WAGE™ uses consistent assessment and aptitude instruments statewide. WAGE™ industrial and clerical certificates are recognized by employers statewide as having the same standards of 12.9 grade level equivalency on the Level A TABE™ (math, reading, and language), 100 percent on the WAGE™ test, and consistent achievement levels on the specific industrial and clerical components' assessments and aptitudes. Participating employers agree to give added consideration to WAGE™ students; given all other candidate qualifications are equal. Some employers provide various incentives to encourage employees to complete WAGE™ including: a sign on bonus, increase in hourly rates, release time for classes, or as a pre-requisite to be enrolled in next-level workplace training.

(2) Describes the actions that the State or local area, as appropriate, has undertaken to remove State or local statutory or regulatory barriers;

This is not applicable. There is no State or local statutory or regulatory barrier.

(3) Describes the goals of the waiver and the expected programmatic outcomes if the request is granted;

The goal will be to improve the overall employability of Arkansas' workforce. The outcome will be unemployed and underemployed individuals who will be able to substantiate to employers that they possess the basic workplace skills they are seeking.

(4) Describes how the waiver will align with the Department's policy priorities, such as:

(A) supporting employer engagement;

The benefits of the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate to Employers are: • Reduces turnover, overtime, and waste while improving morale • Take the guesswork out of selection decisions • Improve the effectiveness of training dollars • Streamlines hiring by including a preferred certificate level in job postings • Meets EEOC requirements The WAGE™ program requires more than 50 percent employer participation on the local WAGE™ alliance advisory committee for an Adult Education Center to become WAGE™-certified.

(B) connecting education and training strategies;

The benefits of the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate to Educators are: • Increases chances that graduates will be hired • Enables students to see a reason to take coursework seriously • Improves students success in entry-level and subsequent jobs • Aligns curricula to meet the job skills employers need • Provides a workforce development tool that ensures no worker is left behind

The WAGE™ program accepts students who assess at less than a 12.9 grade-level (12th grade, 9th month) equivalency on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)™ and who have a goal of obtaining a job, retaining a job, improving their skill level to gain improved employment, or entering next-level workplace training.

(C) supporting work-based learning;

This is not applicable to this waiver request.

(D) improving job and career results, and

The benefits of the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate to Job Seekers are: • Builds confidence that skills meet the needs of local employers • Gives advantage over other job applicants who have not demonstrated needed skills • Determines skill improvement and training needs • Possesses a portable skills credential that enhances employability and sets the stage for possible career advancement and lifelong learning

The WAGE™ program accepts students who assess at less than a 12.9 grade-level (12th grade, 9th month) equivalency on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)™ and who have a goal of obtaining a job, retaining a job, improving their skill level to gain improved employment, or entering next-level workplace training. Participating employers agree to give added consideration to WAGE™

students; given all other candidate qualifications are equal. Some employers provide various incentives to encourage employees to complete WAGE™ including: a sign on bonus, increase in hourly rates, release time for classes, or as a pre-requisite to be enrolled in next-level workplace training.

(E) other guidance issued by the Department.

This is not applicable to this waiver request.

(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

The benefits of the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate to Job Seekers are: • Builds confidence that skills meet the needs of local employers • Gives advantage over other job applicants who have not demonstrated needed skills • Determines skill improvement and training needs • Possesses a portable skills credential that enhances employability and sets the stage for possible career advancement and lifelong learning

The benefits of the Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate to the Community are: • Keeps employers from moving entry-level jobs to other cities, states, or countries • Decreases unemployment rates • Creates a work-ready community to improve the quality of life for residents • Increases the tax base through more profitable business partners • Attracts new employers to the state, resulting in economic development

The WAGE™ program accepts students who assess at less than a 12.9 grade-level (12th grade, 9th month) equivalency on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE)™ and who have a goal of obtaining a job, retaining a job, improving their skill level to gain improved employment, or entering next-level workplace training. Participating employers agree to give added consideration to WAGE™ students; given all other candidate qualifications are equal. Some employers provide various incentives to encourage employees to complete WAGE™ including: a sign on bonus, increase in hourly rates, release time for classes, or as a pre-requisite to be enrolled in next-level workplace training.

(6) Describes the processes used to:

(A) Monitor the progress in implementing the waiver;

Progress will be monitored through monthly reviews of the number of Career Readiness and WAGE™ certifications that are issued and periodic reviews of the number of employers that recognize and accept such certifications.

(B) Provide notice to any local board affected by the waiver;

The waiver request will be published in the Arkansas WIOA state plan for public comment.

(C) Provide any local board affected by the waiver an opportunity to comment on the request;

The waiver request will be published in the Arkansas WIOA state plan for public comment.

(D) Ensure meaningful public comment, including comment by business and organized labor, on the waiver.

The waiver request will be published in the Arkansas WIOA state plan for public comment.

(E) Collect and report information about waiver outcomes in the State's WIOA Annual Report.

The state has submitted a waiver request is to allow Arkansas to add the Credential Attainment Rate to the list of designated baseline indicators for the following programs for the first plan submission.

Adults Dislocated Workers Youth Adult Education Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

Actual performance data will be reported in the annual report for the first two years of the Combined Plan. Career Readiness and WAGE™ certification will be a part of the Credential Attainment Rate baseline data in future years.

(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.

This is not applicable to 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 will use 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 will enable staff to assist jobseekers with knowing and improving their skills, obtaining the best job possible, and progressing in a career pathway. Staff will be provided with the required information about programs and hear a consistent message regarding expected levels of performance, service delivery and service quality. Training will be provided throughout the state to promote consistency.

2. Describe strategies developed to support training and awareness across core programs and the Unemployment Insurance 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 will continue to utilize the UI Technical Unit to provide staff training to unemployment insurance staff. UI Technical will provide 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 will significantly lessen 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 will provide 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 Department 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: continue 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 JobLink 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 JobLink system. Jobseekers can manage their UI claim through the ArkNet 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 JobLink 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.

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.

1) The main agricultural crops in Arkansas are rice, cotton, soybeans, corn and sweet potatoes, with an estimated projected harvest of over six million acres that will be harvested in PY ’16. The heaviest activity for these crops are in the months of June, July, August and September located primarily in the Eastern Delta Region of the state, along the Mississippi River Basin and the Southeastern quadrant of the state. These are seasonal jobs requiring over two thousand workers to cultivate, plant, till and harvest these crops. 2) Most agricultural employers usually keep one to two workers on their payroll as full-time employees, but because of 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 that is unable to return to his/her home each day. 3) Farming is always a gamble no matter where it is in the United States. Excessive rain or heat or drought can make or break the farm owners’ bottom line.

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.

Although there are estimated to be fewer than 500 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 120 new jobs are entered into the Arkansas JobLink system each year requesting roughly 2000 workers for the work needed in the coming year. This information comes from the Arkansas Farm Bureau, The US Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, the Arkansas Human Development Corporation (NFJP Grantee), the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service and data obtained from Arkansas JobLink.

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:

A. Contacting farmworkers who are not being reached by the normal intake activities conducted by the employment service offices.

We have a cooperative agreement with the Arkansas Human Development Corporation (AHDC), a 167 NFJP Grantee, and through co-location in several of our local offices; they continue to make outreach contacts with migrant and seasonal farmworkers to assist with training for anyone wishing to break the farming cycle. The State Monitor Advocate has and will continue to travel with AHDC staff to contact MSFW workers based on leads that they receive in their regional offices and from various faith-based and community organizations.

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.

AHDC has a full staff available for assisting with outreach to workers and they attend national training conferences each year for important updates provided by the U.S. Department of Labor and other farmworker and MSFW organizations. When a MFSW client is identified in the local office, staff works with them to assist with job referrals on listed openings or job developments where an employer may need workers that are not listed with the state. They are afforded the opportunity to be referred to supportive services that they may need while in the area. Also MSFW Complaint Posters are in all offices and staff is trained on how to assist with the complaint process, which includes follow-up by the State Monitor Advocate.

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.

AHDC is available for training in all local offices and farming communities across the state. Furthermore, information is relayed to local office managers at their meetings throughout the year to ensure that staff is aware of the services. Through the implementation of WIOA in Arkansas, core partners will be educated on the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworker services available through the Arkansas Workforce Centers.

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.

The State Monitor Advocate attends several state and national training and professional seminars and conferences each year for important DOL updates related to MSFWs.

E. Coordinating outreach efforts with NFJP grantees as well as with public and private community service agencies and MSFW groups.

The State Monitor Advocate usually attends many of the same national farmworker and MFSW focused conferences that AHDC staff attends, such as MAFO and AFOP. The State Monitor Advocate is also an active Board Member of AHDC. MSFW outreach is coordinated with AHDC by attending and speaking at their agricultural related seminars in Arkansas and jointly speaking to agricultural growers to gain access to the MSFW population that they employ.

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:

i. **How career and training services required under WIOA Title I will be provided to MSFWs through the one-stop centers;**
ii. **How the State serves agricultural employers and how it intends to improve such services.**

Once a client is identified as a MSFW in the local one-stop, the staff will further interview and assist by starting the process for any needed career counselling or training through AHDC, the Arkansas Department of Human Services, agricultural employers and other service providers, such as faith and community based organizations like Catholic Charities, Central Arkansas Development Council, Arkansas Literacy Council and the Community Action Agency that can offer assistance with healthcare, transportation, utilities and education, through the Single Parent Scholarship. When a client expresses a desire to “break the cycle” of farm labor, a job development may also be used for referral to an employer that may hire them to begin a new career.

Through the Arkansas Job Link (AJL) management information system, agricultural jobs are listed statewide and are available to all jobseekers in the state as well as 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.

This year’s objectives are: to increase the percentage of referrals to agricultural employers; to increase the percentage of agricultural openings filled; to enhance employer/worker job match through the interstate clearance process. ADWS will participate in meetings and conferences of agricultural employers and inform them of employment services and the agricultural recruitment system. Nearly 287,000 Arkansas workers, in 20% of the state’s jobs, were employed as a result of agriculture production and processing, receiving $8.9 billion in wages and salaries - about 19% of the state’s total employee income. The farms in Arkansas are highly mechanized and few require a significant number of manual laborers. Although Arkansas has a relatively large number of farmworkers, many of them are job attached and work year after year for the same employers. They are usually on lay-off during the winter months and return to work in the spring.

(B) Marketing the employment service complaint system to farmworkers and other farmworker advocacy groups.

The Monitor Advocate keeps MSFW Complaint posters and updated literature available for all of the local offices and regional offices of the Arkansas Human Development Corporation. All staff has been trained on how to assist the client with a complaint and forwards the complaint to the state Monitor Advocate for review and further action, as needed.

(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 (ARS) and how it is used to assist employers get domestic labor prior to the introduction of H2-A workers requested.

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 continue to collaborate with other agencies in the state, such as the Arkansas Farm Bureau, OSHA, Wage & Hour and the Office of Foreign Labor Certification.

(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.

The WIOA Section 402 Program Operator has reviewed the state Agricultural Service Plan and AHDC, State and Federal Departments of Labor, Wage and Hour, OSHA, and the Southern Migrant Legal Services had the opportunity to comment on the State AOP. The AOP as contained in the State Plan was posted for public comment on February 9, 2016. Five simultaneously held public meetings were held on February 23, 2016 in Little Rock, Fayetteville, Camden, Jonesboro, and Pine Bluff to offer an opportunity for the public or stakeholders to make comments. No comments were received. ADWS will coordinate activities with AHDC, State and Federal Departments of Labor, Wage and Hour, OSHA, Migrant Education, and other organizations to gain and share information, which should enhance ADWS's ability to more effectively provide technical assistance to employers. To provide for an effective labor exchange service delivery system for agricultural communities across the state, the Monitor Advocate will develop strategies to enhance and measure employment services provided through One-Stop centers. Activities will include assessing the needs of agricultural employers and job seekers, providing outreach services to inform customers of services being provided through One-Stop centers, and developing customer orientations on the use of electronic self-assistance tools in the One-Stop resource centers.

(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.

Arkansas expects to meet at least four of the five MSFW service equity indicators. The counseling indicator is the possible exception. Due to decreased funding levels and the elimination of trained counselors in the local offices, ADWS is not able to assure a significant amount of counseling. ADWS believes that by using veteran representatives with counseling experience in the local offices to identify MSFW veterans, it will make an improvement in the level of counseling effort to MSFWs. This also will increase the other four indicators.

(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.

(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 has reviewed and approved the Wagner–Peyser Plan of Service to be delivered by the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services for MSFWs.

F. 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 Adult Education and Family Literacy Act 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)).

The Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division (ADCE-AED) 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. A task force was created to focus on the CCR standards and the updated high school equivalency test, the computer based GED® assessment. The Task Force was comprised of program directors, resource center personnel, teachers and state staff. On May 22, July 10, and July 11, 2014, the task force met and developed a plan to assist teachers in meeting CCR Standards. The framework was sent out to the field in draft mode on October 16, 2014. The CCR standards were implemented along with Common Core, which is the state standard that has been adopted by the Arkansas Department of Education for K-12 schools by the end of the 2013-2014 program year.

The process of the state's adoption of adopting the CCR with common core included forming a task force and scheduling meetings twice a month to discuss the research and progress towards a framework that could be used statewide. The CCR standards were studied as well as the Common Core State Standards that have been adopted by the Arkansas Department of Education, for k-12 schools. The taskforce consisted of approximately 18 people, which included five state staff members, two professional development members, four adult education directors and seven adult education teachers. Various task force members researched frameworks and curriculum guides created by other states to find the best practices. Some of the Common Core Standards from other states examined included Kentucky, New York, Georgia and Florida. Each CCR standard was examined closely and the committee held a two-day "retreat" where activities and resources were aligned with each standard. Task force members searched through online and printed curriculum to provide examples of each of the skills that students needed to master at each level. The task force decided to address sample activities and the framework for grade levels 6.0 - 12.9 during the initial phase of this project. Once the framework was completed, the task force set a date for the lower levels to be completed after the document was sent out to all of the programs in the state so that teachers could begin using the tool and provide feedback.

Leadership funds were used to support the task force meetings and included webinars, conference calls, and face to face meetings. State office technical assistance was also provided to support the project and include site visits, conference calls, and regional trainings. The framework was presented as a break-out session at the State's Spring Administrators' Meeting and the Arkansas Association of Continuing Adult Education Conference. Participants were given the opportunity to provide additional input.

Lastly, the Arkansas Adult Learning Resource Center (AALRC), the state's professional development training center, was created to provide a source for identification, evaluation, and dissemination of materials and information to adult education/literacy programs. Several workshops

were held such as Career & College Readiness Mathematics, Language Arts, Integrating Technology in the Classroom, and Regional GED® training to help prepare teachers to teach to a more rigorous curriculum.

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 the 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 literacty 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 Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division 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 Department 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.

The Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division has developed the Arkansas College and Career Readiness Framework (ACCRF) based on OCTAE’s College and Career Readiness (2013). The ACCRF for the educational functioning level (EFL) 6.0-12.9 was finalized and distributed to all Arkansas Adult Education programs in 2014. The ACCRF Committee has since expanded the ACCRF EFLs to 0.0 – 5.9. The ACCRF is designed to be used by instructors for classroom instruction for all levels of ABE and ASE students. Arkansas Adult Education teachers will be able to expand and adapt ACCRF to meet the local and student needs. The updated ACCRF will be distributed to all Arkansas Adult Education programs within the 2016 program year. The Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division is also currently preparing an ESL Curriculum based on the CCR, which will be finalized and distributed no later than July 1, 2017. These standards form

the foundation of lessons where career oriented analogies are presented for students to solve in efforts of developing skills in job related career clusters.

The ACCRF contains OCTAE standards and skill levels along with sample activities and resources developed by the ACCRF Committee, which consisted of state office representatives, instructors, and program directors from across the state. The scope of the ACCRF project included creating sample activities and a list of resources designed to prepare students for the high school equivalency exam and entering post-secondary training or the workforce.

Programs are expected to adhere to all standards and align with the ACCRF by July 1, 2017. Between August 2016 and July 2017, programs will receive local and regional training on the implementation and use of the ACCRF with special emphasis on rigor, text complexity, evidence, building knowledge, application, process, fluency, concept and understanding. Programs will then use the framework to select curriculum that meets the standards set in the framework and will discuss their curriculum during their regional or statewide training. In addition, as an extension of the ACCRF Committee, a statewide Curriculum Committee will be established to provide leadership in curriculum development, review and recommend curriculum, and evaluate curriculum in a systematic manner on a regular basis to ensure that they are current and relevant to the state office.

Due to WIOA standards, The Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division 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.

Funding is awarded to local adult education/literacy providers through a competitive grant process based on the literacy rate and core indicators of performance as outlined in Title II of the WIOA law. State funds are allocated annually using a predetermined formula approved by the State Board of Career Education and Workforce Development and included in the department's appropriation law. Federal funds are allocated using a competitive process. Applications will be 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.

Not 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.

The Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division will coordinate services with state and local agencies to leverage funds and services to maximize the effectiveness of such resources and expand the participation of business and industry along with individuals in the statewide workforce development system.

The Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division shall use funds made available under section 222(a)(2) to eligible providers (Section 231 of WIOA) 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__

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

I. *Applications*—Title II of the Workforce Innovation an Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 (Public Law 113–128) Sections 223, 225, 231, 232:

Each eligible provider desiring a grant or contract shall submit Request for Proposal (RFP) application to the Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division containing support information and assurances that will include the following:

(1) a description of how funds awarded under this title will be spent consistent with the requirements of this title;

(2) a description of any cooperative arrangements the eligible provider has with other agencies, institutions, or organizations for the delivery of adult education and literacy activities;

(3) a description of how the eligible provider will provide services in alignment with the local plan under section 108, including how such provider will promote concurrent enrollment in programs and activities under title I, as appropriate;

(4) a description of how the eligible provider will meet the State adjusted levels of performance described in section 116(b)(3), including how such provider will collect data to report on such performance indicators;

(5) a description of how the eligible provider will fulfill one–stop partner responsibilities as described in section 121(b)(1)(A), as appropriate;

(6) a description of how the eligible provider will provide services in a manner that meets the needs of eligible individuals; and

(7) information that addresses the considerations described under section 231(e), as applicable.

II. *Grant Process*

Adult Education Division will run a classified advertisement in a statewide newspaper of record for three consecutive days, including the weekend, notifying the public of the availability of federal funds and providing information on how to apply. This information and the Request for Proposal (RFP) application will also be posted on the Department of Finance and Administration's website (www.dfa.arkansas.gov) as well as the Department of Career Education's website (www.ace.arkansas.gov). Individuals may also request an application by mail or e–mail by sending a written request to 3 Capitol Mall Little Rock, AR 72202 or AdultEd@arkansas.gov.

Any eligible provider submitting a completed application for any adult education funding by the due date will be considered for funding.

III. *Evaluation of Applications*—Section 231 (e) (1–13)

Each eligible provider submitting a completed Request for Proposal (RFP) Application by the due date specified by the ADCE–AED will be evaluated using a rubric. In cases where a program's past performance is low, a meeting with the evaluation committee may be required. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the eligible provider's proposal and past performance and to determine whether the candidate would be a viable applicant for funds. Goals may be negotiated and educational benchmarks may be established for the provider's program before any funding is awarded.

In awarding grants or contracts under this section, an applicant must meet the following 13 considerations in order to be considered for funding:

(1) the degree to which the eligible provider would be responsive to—

(A) regional needs as identified in the local plan under section 108; and

(B) serving individuals in the community who were identified in such plan as most in need of adult education and literacy activities, including individuals—

(i) who have low levels of literacy skills; or

(ii) who are English language learners;

(2) the ability of the eligible provider to serve eligible individuals with disabilities, including eligible individuals with learning disabilities;

(3) past effectiveness of the eligible provider in improving the literacy of eligible individuals, to meet State–adjusted levels of performance for the primary indicators of performance described in section 116, especially with respect to eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy;

(4) the extent to which the eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan under section 108, as well as the activities and services of the one–stop partners;

(5) whether the eligible provider's program—

(A) is of sufficient intensity and quality, and based on the most rigorous research available so that participants achieve substantial learning gains; and

(B) uses instructional practices that include the essential components of reading instruction;

(6) whether the eligible provider's activities, including whether reading, writing, speaking, mathematics, and English language acquisition instruction delivered by the eligible provider, are based on the best practices derived from the most rigorous research available and appropriate, including scientifically valid research and effective educational practice;

(7) whether the eligible provider's activities effectively use technology, services, and delivery systems, including distance education in a manner sufficient to increase the amount and quality of learning and how such technology, services, and systems lead to improved performance;

(8) 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;

(9) whether the eligible provider's activities are delivered by well–trained instructors, counselors, and administrators who meet any minimum qualifications established by the State, where applicable, and who have access to high quality professional development, including through electronic means;

(10) 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;

(11) whether the eligible provider's activities offer flexible schedules and coordination with Federal, State, and local support services (such as child care, transportation, mental health services, and career planning) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and complete programs;

(12) whether the eligible provider maintains a high–quality information management system that has the capacity to report measurable participant outcomes (consistent with section 116) and to monitor program performance; and

(13) whether the local areas in which the eligible provider is located have a demonstrated need for additional English language acquisition programs and civics education programs.

The state may implement an adult education rule or policy that is not a federal requirement; however, it must clearly identify it as a State or outlying area requirement.

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. Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals

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:

a. Adult education and literacy activities;
b. Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
c. Secondary school credit;
d. Integrated education and training;
e. Career pathways;
f. Concurrent enrollment;
g. Peer tutoring; and
h. 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) Allocated funds from section 222 (a)(1) shall be used to support correctional education programs. Allowable correctional activities are: • 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.

Funds will be distributed on a competitive basis that is direct and equitable through the RFP process as described in section III “Distribution of Funds for Core Programs”. Funds available under section 225 (a) (1) of the WIOA will be for a four year cycle, however, the ADCE-AED state office will review the performance level of providers after two years to determine whether or not do conduct a new competition. All programs competed will adhere to direct and equitable provisions to award funds

under WIOA sections 225 (Corrections Education). The same grant announcement, application, and process will be used for all proposals and all proposals will be treated the same way in evaluation, and evaluated by the 13 considerations as found in the law at 231 (e)(1-13). The Arkansas Department of Career Education 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.

The activities for the correctional education programs are the same as those for regular programs of instruction for adults. 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. Integrated education and training will include more job skills training. Career pathways will include apprenticeship opportunities. 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.

For programs serving criminal offenders in a correctional institution, priority is given to serving individuals who are likely to leave these institutions within five years of participation in the program. Eligible providers who offer classes for incarcerated adults must consult with facility staff about expected release dates of potential students to assess eligibility and to determine class locations. Programs are asked to address this requirement in their applications, and the Adult Education Division monitors compliance.

Each eligible correctional institution seeking funds submits an application responding to the requirements of the ADCE-AED. Allocation of the available funds is based on each eligible correctional institution's enrollment, performance, and demonstrated effectiveness. 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. Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program

1. 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.

The Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division (ACE/AED) 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". Funds available under section 225 (a) (1) of the WIOA will be for a four year cycle, however, the ADCE-AED state office will review the performance level of providers after two years to determine whether or not do conduct a new competition. 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.

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 (UCIS), 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: Accelerated 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 opportunity 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 (UCIS) as well as OCTAE's Civics Education. In addition to English language instruction, 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 Accelerated 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 Department of Workforce Services (DWS) 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 UCIS 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, DWS, 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 *Agency Partnerships and Business & Industry *Language instruction *Rights and Responsibilities of citizenship *Civic participation *Naturalization procedures *Employability skills

2. Describe how the State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II, subtitle C, Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education services and how the funds will be used for those services.

IEL/CE funds will be allocated to providers based on a direct and equitable, competitive process based on the 13 considerations. Funds will be distributed on a competitive basis that is direct and equitable through the RFP process as described in section III "Distribution of Funds for Core Programs". Funds available under section 243 of the WIOA will be for a four year cycle, however, the ADCE-AED 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 ADE will receive at least the established and historical minimum of $60,000 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; and, performance in educational gains and outcomes. 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.

E. State Leadership

1. Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out the required State Leadership activities under section 223 of WIOA.

The Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division 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) **Response:** The Adult Education Division has either met or is in the process of meeting the requirements of Section 223 of WIOA and funds will be used accordingly. The Adult Education Division continues to have monthly meetings with other state agencies and divisions including the Department of Workforce Services, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Workforce Investment Board, and Services for the Blind and Deaf. 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.

The Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate involves collaboration between ADCE-AED, 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 as well as the Key Train software. Several adult education centers also provide the WorkKeys assessment which an individual must pass to receive an Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate. 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 Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division will continue its partnership with the Arkansas Community Colleges to offer Accelerating Opportunity, a career pathway program, to adults without a high school diploma. Accelerating Opportunity 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 initiative aims to change how Adult Basic Education is structured and delivered through a collaborative effort in which a basic skills instructor and technical college instructor co-teach and plan the curriculum for low skill level adults in a technical course leading to a certificate credential. Arkansas will be in its third year as an Accelerating Opportunity program and plans to continue the program in the future.

(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) **Response**: 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 Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division. 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.

In order to teach adult education classes in Arkansas, teachers must hold an Arkansas teacher license. Teachers must have at least 60 hours of professional development to keep their license current. In addition, Arkansas requires adult education directors, full-time instructors and counselors to be certified in adult education within four years of initial full-time employment. The AALRC supports this effort by providing tuition reimbursement for these individuals. The AALRC supports the ACE/AED agency goal of “providing and effective communication system that is involved, informative, and interactive,” by holding statewide directors meetings, numerous committee meetings, publishing a statewide newsletter, publishing a directory of literacy services, and maintaining a web-site (http://www.aalrc.org).

The AALRC also supports practitioners and trainers through professional development opportunities at state and national conferences. Those include:, AR Association for Continuing and Adult Education & Arkansas Literacy Council, Inc. Conference (AACAE/ALC), Learning Disabilities Association (LDA), Commission on Adult Basic Education Conference (COABE), Hot Springs Institute for Technology, Project Ideal, LINCS Region 2 Regional Resource Center Training, ATIA Conference, and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

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 Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division has adopted the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Standards set forth by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education by Susan Pimentel. State staff along with teachers and directors from the field developed a standard curriculum teachers could use to inform instruction that was based on best practices and research. Each CCR standard was examined closely and resources were aligned with each standard. Task force members searched through online and printed curriculum to provide examples of each of the skills that students needed to master at each level. The task force decided to address sample activities and the framework for grade levels 6.0 - 12.9 during the initial phase of this project. At the request of the field, lower educational functioning levels will be added to the document.

(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) **Response**: The Adult Education Division 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 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.

As mentioned earlier, adult education programs provide basic skills improvement through regular adult education services as well as the Key Train software to the Department of Workforce (DWS) clients as well as our own. Several adult education centers also provide the WorkKeys assessment which an individual must pass to receive an Arkansas Career Readiness Certificate. Eligible clients from DWS may enroll in adult education classes. Since most adult education programs are collocated at one-stop centers, the referral process for clients is much smoother.

The Adult Education Division staff provides technical training on our management information system, AERIS. We developed an AERIS 101 and 201 training, and most recently AERIS for Teachers. The AERIS 101 training is for the very basics of how to enter data, what the federal tables mean, and how to extract the information you need from the system. The 201 training session is more intense. In this training, programs look at their data and analyze by teacher performance and student gains and the participants create a program performance report card. We conducted about eight trainings and have had about 95% participation from at least one provider. For those providers who failed to attend, we have required them to send at least one representative in the next few months to the next training or risk sanctions. We provide about 10 trainings a year to local programs, which last approximately 6 hours.

The state staff has an Administrative Assistant III along with regional Program Advisors who help provide technical assistance to the field. The state has a data management e-mail, aeris.help@arkansas.gov, in which local programs can send in help tickets. Assistance is also provided over the phone as well as face to face. Help tickets are tracked and logged to see common issues and are either passed on to the host company of the system or used to hone in on technical assistance and training that need to be provided to the field. In addition, AERIS contains a message screen so state staff can contact all AERIS users at one time. There is also an email distribution list for AERIS users and a listserv where users can post questions and get answers from state staff.

(D) The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the State.

(D) **Response:** Each year the staff from the Arkansas Department Career Education, Adult Education Division (ADCE-AED) will conduct a number of Technical Assistance Program Reviews evaluations. These evaluations address issues in the implementation of Title II of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

(AEFLA), the Arkansas Adult Education Program Policies, the Arkansas National Reporting System for Adult Education Guidelines, and the Learning Disabilities Policy Manual, including: accountability, compliance, promising practices, program improvement processes, learning disabilities and technical assistance needs. Extensive three day program reviews are conducted in the following areas every five years for each provider: management, finances, personnel, student intake and orientation, program instruction, technology, recruitment and retention.

• The AED staff will update the following items included in the program review packet annually:

• The questions to be used to guide the review

• checklist that goes back to the program

• Corrective Action Plan (CAP) template

• Local program notification letter

• Letter that goes out with the evaluation report

• Letter closing the CAP, and the

• Compilation of commendation; recommendations; and findings.

The ADCE-AED staff determines which programs will be reviewed. Programs that have never had a state program review are chosen first. This ensures that all programs will have at least one program visit from the state before any program is seen twice. The ADCE-AED staff determines the dates of the reviews and a technical assistance team is formed with two other staff members to determine tentative dates to conduct program reviews.

Transmittal letters are sent to the local program director and local education administrator (LEA) that will be reviewed informing them of the review, dates, and format of the review. If there is a conflict, the director will communicate that to the program advisor who then tries to be flexible in finding an agreeable date. The local program director will be sent a list of program review questions in advance to prepare for the visit. The director should provide supporting documents or evidence in a notebook that answers each of the program review questions. Notebooks will be prepared for each team member including the local director.

A team from ADCE-AED goes to local program and conducts the review. The team uses the questions and checklist to conduct the review. The checklist with the additional spaces is used to record notes during the review. The ADCE-AED team meets each evening to compare notes and record answers on the checklist. The choices on the checklist consists of Yes, No, or not applicable (N/A). The team will also choose the appropriate comments from the comment document compiled from previous program reviews. Writing a new comment is acceptable also. The areas to comment on may contain Commendations, Recommendations, and Findings. The commendations will be on accomplishments of the local program. Recommendations are strategies that the local program may wish to implement to improve program quality and accountability standards. The Findings are areas of noncompliance requiring actions that the local program must address in the form of a CAP.

The program advisor for that particular program is responsible for compiling the report. Each team member will double check the report before it is mailed to the local program and returns it to the program advisor in time to meet the four week deadline of return to the program.

The letter that will be sent with the report to the local program is prepared. The Deputy Director and the Associate Director will review the letter and the program review report before it is mailed to the local program.

The evaluation report will be mailed to the local program administrator and adult education contact person within four weeks of the program review. The report will include:

• Report transmittal letter

• Program Review Report

• Program Review Checklist

• Technical Assistance Program Review Report (comments, etc.),

• CAP template, and

• CAP template example.

The CAP template will also be sent electronically to the local program. The LEA has 45 days to complete and submit the CAP by mail (snail mail) and e-mail to the Adult Education Division Office.

When the CAP is received in the Adult Education Division Office, it is date stamped and a copy made and put in the CAP notebook for that program year. All program review CAPs (reviews conducted for that year) will be kept in the same notebook and a copy in the program's individual green folder.

The program advisor for that region will approve the CAP. The CAP will be monitored by the program advisor for that region. The program advisor works with the local program in order to close the different areas of the CAP as information is submitted to the Adult Education Division Office from the local program until the CAP has been closed completely.

After the CAP is closed, a letter is mailed to the LEA administrator and director informing them that the CAP has been closed. This letter is signed by the Deputy Director of adult education. Also, all deadlines such as the review date, date report sent, number of findings, date CAP due, etc. will be kept on an Excel sheet by the administrative specialist.

Site visits is another monitoring tool used by the state. Site visits are conducted annually on all providers. During site visits, program advisors, monitor student folders, make classroom observations, randomly check Personnel Activity Reports, review program self and staff evaluations, check inventory, and go over the program's current and prior year performance in meeting negotiated benchmarks.

Another monitoring and evaluation tool we use to determine whether a program is meeting the performance requirements is using our Effective and Efficient (E&E) calculations. To be considered effective and efficient, local adult education programs and literacy councils receiving adult education funds will be required to meet or exceed the percentage of the federal negotiated core indicators as determined by the Deputy Director of Adult Education. Programs not meeting percentage requirement, in the first year will be required to submit an improvement plan. The improvement plan will address each core indicator of performance that was not met and will include measurable objectives for correcting deficiencies during the following year. State program advisors will provide

technical assistance to each program submitting an improvement plan and closely monitor programs during the year. Core indicators of performance are defined in the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, Title II, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA); however, using the core indicators as criteria for effective and efficient evaluations and imposing a minimum score is a state decision.

Programs that do not meet the percentage requirement, of their negotiated core indicators of performance for a second consecutive year will be assigned a state technical assistance team to assist the program in addressing its deficiencies. The team members may include but not be limited to state and local staff, administrators, teachers and students. Quarterly progress reports will be submitted by the program being monitored to the Adult Education Division describing the progress being made to bring the program into compliance with core indicators. Programs not achieving percentage requirement, of their negotiated core indicators of performance for three consecutive years will be submitted to the Career Education and Workforce Development Board for appropriate action prior to continuation of funding.

In addition, Mandatory Administrators' Meetings are held twice a year where 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.

2. Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.

B. Describe how the State will use the funds to carry out permissible State Leadership Activities under section 223 of WIOA, if applicable.

B) In addition, continued emphasis will be place on developing and maintaining linkages with post-secondary institutions so that students can be place in post-secondary education and or career pathways training programs.

Permissible activities from Section 223 (2) that the state will support 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.

(4) Developing content and models for integrated education and training and career pathways.

(6) 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.

(8) Activities to promote workplace adult education and literacy activities.

(9) 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 nonremedial, 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.

(10) 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 Department of Career Education, Division of Adult Education evaluates programs quarterly through a desk audit process in which measures such as average attendance hours, educational functioning level (EFL) gains, 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 Department of Career Education, Division of Adult Education 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 five 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

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. 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) 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.

Evaluating Professional Development

In addition to the technical assistance provided through the evaluation processes, The Arkansas Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division 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 Department of Career Education, Adult Education Division 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 will be used to assess the effectiveness of professional development training. Classroom observations, student educational gains of teacher participants, focus groups, and overall self-reporting tools will be utilized to determine professional development effectiveness. Data from the adult education management information system will be utilized to evaluate and determine if the professional development activities impact student learning outcomes.

In order to assess the quality of its professional development programs, the AALRC will use Guskey's model for the Five Critical Levels of Professional Development Evaluation. The main evaluation levels include Participants' Reactions, Participants Learning, Organization support and change, Participants' use of new knowledge or skills, and Student Learning Outcomes. The data from the evaluations will be used to analyze the effectiveness of the professional development program and the impact on student learning outcomes.

Certifications

States must provide written and signed certifications that

1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan. **Yes**

2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program. **Yes**

3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan. **Yes**

4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law. **Yes**

5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan. **Yes**

6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan. **Yes**

7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan. **Yes**

8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program. **Yes**

Certification Regarding Lobbying

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 Department of Career Education**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Dr. Charisse Childers**

Title of Authorized Representative: **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 OCTAE_MAT@ed.gov

Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding supplement and not supplant provisions). **Yes**

2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA. **Yes**

3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA. **Yes**

4. The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities; **Yes**

5. The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to (1) 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 and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program; and **Yes**

6. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. **Yes**

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 (General)

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; (General)

The Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a key partner with Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS) in the administration of the State's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program. The Arkansas SRC is a citizen advisory council, appointed by the Governor, to provide guidance to ARS to help individuals with disabilities, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, to obtain, maintain and regain competitive integrated employment, promote full inclusion and integration into society, and to maximize independence and economic self-sufficiency. Its membership helps ARS to develop and operationalize the VR State Plan, develop and operationalize ARS' state goals and priorities, shape and review policy, engage in strategic planning, evaluate the effectiveness of the VR Program, analyze consumer satisfaction and provide guidance, including development and review of cooperative agreements.

The SRC met quarterly during the last two fiscal years, and was updated on important events affecting ARS. The SRC reviewed the agency's service planning and goals. SRC members were informed about the various programs within the agency, and received refresher training on its roles and responsibilities. The SRC also received training on the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act with emphasis on its implications to members, and specifically regarding meetings and required notification of meetings to the public. The following initiatives were implemented in collaboration with the SRC's analysis and guidance.

- Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) renovations
- ARS Budget
- ARS Business Leadership Network development plan
- ARS Expos
- Business Relations Representative job placement activities
- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development and CRC training
- VR State Plan
- Project SEARCH
- PROMISE Grant

2. the Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and (General)

ARS welcomes and appreciates SRC input and recommendations. For example during the June 2014 quarterly meeting, members of the ACTI Behavior Management Team (BMT) provided an overview to the SRC on its recently developed Positive Behavior Support Program (PBSP) which is known as the Professional Career Performance Plan (PCPP), which was currently under consideration for implementation. The ACTI BMT is comprised of the PCPP coordinator, the supervisor of psychological counseling, the Director of Student Life, the Director of Admissions, and the Chief of Campus Safety and Security. The PCPP is designed to support positive behaviors needed for employment and effective social interaction. The supports are based on six pillars: accountability, respect, work performance, hygiene, customer service, and legal issues. Each student is evaluated daily based on these pillars as part of their programming at ACTI. For students that do not demonstrate optimal levels of performance in these areas, interventions are conducted. The interventions may or may not be documented based on frequency or severity of the behaviors. A majority of the initial interventions are conducted by instructors, counselors, Student Life staff, and security. All ACTI staff members are trained on positive behavior supports and techniques for conducting interventions.

Most students respond positively to the supports offered through periodic intervention, however, based on the severity of actions or repetitive behaviors students may be referred to the PCPP

coordinator for a formal intervention with the PCPP coordinator and/or review by the Behavior Management Team.

Two SRC members provided expertise in the development and implementation of these types of programs. SRC recommendations were acknowledged with plans to incorporate them into both the program guidelines and rollout strategy for implementation. Program development and implementation updates were provided to the SRC as part of subsequent quarterly meetings. In addition to the PCPP Program, BMT staff are responsible for directing admissions and business relations, providing psychological services to students, directing residential services and providing safety and security services at the center.

In August 2015, the SRC provided recommendations regarding the new ARS Policy Governing the Rates of Payment for Purchased VR Services.

3. the designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations. (General)

No input or recommendation from the SRC was rejected by ARS.

b. Request for Waiver of Statewideness (General)

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; (General)

Not applicable to ARS.

2. the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and (General)

Not applicable to ARS.

3. All State plan requirements will apply (General)

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. (General)

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the servivces 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; (General)

ARS collaborates and coordinates services with federal, state, and local agencies that contribute to the vocational rehabilitation and independent living of Arkansans with disabilities. ARS cooperates with agencies in carrying out activities including planning and coordinating services to people with disabilities in order to build capacity in communities, improve the quality and quantity of services, and avoid duplication of services.

Collaborating agencies include:

- Arkansas Assistive Technology Alternative Financing Program
- Arkansas Department of General Education, Special Education - Transition
- Arkansas Governor's Employment First Taskforce
- Arkansas Kidney Disease Commission
- Centers for Independent Living
- Community Rehabilitation Programs
- Developmental Disability Providers
- DHS - Division of Aging and Adult Services
- DHS - Division of Services for the Blind
- DHS - Working Disabled Medicaid Program
- DHS - Division of Behavioral Health Services
- DHS - Division of Developmental Disabilities Services
- Supported Employment Vendors
- Social Security Administration Ticket to Work
- Spinal Cord Commission
- Telecommunication Access Program
- PROMISE Grant

2. State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; (General)

ARS is the lead agency for Arkansas's Assistive Technology Act of 1998 program, Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN). ARS counselors as well as ICAN and Alternative Financing Program (AFP) staff are informed of the various services available through each program.

3. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture; (General)

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 (General)

ARS maintains an active presence on numerous councils and committees, including:

- Arkansas Association on Higher Education and Disability
- Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership
- Arkansas Workforce Development Board
- Building Better Futures
- Central Arkansas Workforce Development Board Youth Advisory Council
- Governor's Developmental Disabilities Council
- Interagency Steering Committee on Integrated Employment
- Behavioral Health Planning and Advisory Council
- SoundStARt
- The Arkansas Independent Living Council
- The Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities
- Arkansas Trauma Rehabilitation Program
- Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program
- Youth Leadership Forum
- Accessible Parking Taskforce
- The State's Local Workforce Development Boards
- National Consortium of State Operated Comprehensive Rehabilitation Centers

5. State use contracting programs. (General)

ARS has no state use contracting programs.

d. Coordination with Education Officials (General)

Describe:

1. DSU's plans (General)

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.

ARS assigns VR counselor liaisons to each high school statewide. VR counselors work collaboratively with combined plan partners.

ARS will set aside 15 percent of federal VR program funding to provide pre–employment transition services such as job exploration counseling, and work–based learning experiences including internships in integrated environments. ARS will provide counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs, will provide workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living skills, and will provide instruction in self–advocacy and peer mentoring.

Transition students/youth will be determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation within 60 days after application and the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) will be completed within 90 days after eligibility.

ARS was noncompliant in FY 2015 with regards to the 15% pre-employment transition reserve. ARS reported a pre-employment transition shortfall of $4,755,143 in FY 2015. RSA records indicate ARS

expended merely $1,200,000 of its required $5,955,143 in pre-employment transition services in FY 2015 (based upon a total VR award of $39,700,955).

The MOUs with the LEAs essentially mirrors the MOU with Special Education. ARS is in the process of updating its MOU with Special Education to include Section 511 requirements. Once this is completed, ARS will update MOUs with LEAs statewide. ARS will amend the current agreement to provide information and awareness about Section 511. Furthermore, ARS will provide the following: training to schools on Section 511 to make them aware of the section in WIOA and the activities they can provide in areas, such as self-advocacy and career counseling; training through ARS CRP staff to the providers on referrals and related provider information; training to ARS Managers and ARS VR counselors on providing and understanding the assessment and evaluation process; and will provide training on Trial Work Experience in the community to determine potential work skills if applicable.

Section 511

ARS in collaboration with the SRC and in consultation with its RSA State Liaison proposes to implement the following strategies to address the requirements of Section 511. ARS will:

1. Develop and provide training for all VR Counselors on what section 511 is/does, its requirements, and agency/counselor responsibilities.

2. Revise its MOU with Developmental Disabilities to include how both agencies will develop policy/procedure to address clients effected or might potentially be effected by Section 511.

3. Revise its MOU with Behavioral Health to include how both agencies will develop policy/procedure to address clients effected or might potentially be effected by Section 511.

4. Revise its MOU with Special Education to include how both agencies will develop policy/procedure to address students effected or might potentially be effected by Section 511. The MOU will address the issue of referring students to CRPs for services while the student is still enrolled in school or referring the student to a CRP upon graduation as part of transition planning.

5. Work with Special Education to develop/provide training to special education teachers and special education supervisors regarding Section 511.

6. Work with colleges and universities within the state that train special educators and VR Counselors to include in their curriculum information on section 511.

7. Attempt to revise language in each MOU to include language that specifically addresses section 511. ARS currently has MOU’s with 155 individual school districts across the state.

8. Revise its contracts with CRP’s to include language that addresses the presence of policies/procedures that Section 511 issues. This may include an assurance signed by the CRP that the program will inform clients, family/caregivers, and where applicable school districts of Section 511 requirements. This may also include a form signed by the client or legal guardian to affirm the sharing of information.

Pre-Employment Transition

ARS in collaboration with the SRC and in consultation with its RSA State Liaison proposes to implement the following strategies to address the RSA requirements related to pre-employment transition.

1. ARS recognizes some of the services provided through its piloted ATP program apply to pre-employment transition. ARS will evaluate the program's strengths and weaknesses and apply lessons learned as it implements its pre-employment transition program.

2. ARS also recognizes clients served through the PROMISE Grant may also qualify for pre-employment transition services. ARS will work with PROMISE leadership and other PROMISE partners to identify opportunities to partner/provide pre-employment services to PROMISE participants.

3. ARS will develop and provide training for all VR Counselors on what pre-employment transition is/does, its requirements, and agency/counselor responsibilities.

4. ARS will develop and implement a means to track clients served through pre-employment transition, including pre-employment expenditures thus ensuring funds earmarked address the 15% requirement

5. ARS will revise its MOU with Special Education to include pre-employment transition. As part of the MOU, ARS will request Special Education's assistance in gaining access to all students in the state age 14 an older who have an IEP or 504 plan.

6. ARS will work with Special Education to develop/provide training to special education teachers and special education supervisors on pre-employment transition.

7. ARS will work with colleges and universities within the state that train special educators and VR Counselors to include in their curriculum information on pre-employment transition.

8. ARS realizes providing pre-employment services to all Arkansas students with IEPs or 504 plans may require utilization of outside resources. ARS proposes to develop and issue a request for qualifications to determine potential outside providers of pre-employment transition services. It envisions the provider list of eligible programs might include CRPs or even educational cooperatives.

2. Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to: (General)

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; (General)

ARS maintains interagency agreements with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit (ADE SEU) and provides transition services to students in public schools. ARS maintains an interagency agreement with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) with the objective of seamless provision of vocational rehabilitation services and access to higher education. The parties agree to participate in technical assistance and in–service training to assist educational agencies in planning, and to coordinate services to ensure timely and appropriate supports and services are provided to eligible individuals. ARS Transition policy requires ARS counselors to engage school personnel to generate referrals of students to ARS and to develop an

IPE for each student determined eligible. ADE is financially responsible for secondary education and ARS is responsible for taking applications, determining eligibility, and providing VR services to those determined eligible for transition services. ARS participates in the state level Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP). AITP is a task–force made up of representatives of state agencies, including ARS, Department of Human Services (DHS)–Division of Services for the Blind (DSB), Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education–Transition, Arkansas Workforce Development Board, DHS–Division of Behavioral Health Services, and parent advocates. ARS will develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) and WIOA partners to provide pre–employment transition services. ARS will expand and increase utilization of pre–employment transition training services at ACTI.

ARS has initiated contact with the appropriate parties and progress is underway to re–negotiate its interagency agreements with ADE, ADHE, DHS agencies, and Workforce Services during FY 2016.

B. transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs; (General)

ARS agrees to provide eligibility determination according to ARS policy, and 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 when requested and appropriate. ARS counselors will provide information to schools about VR services, meet with special education teachers during the school year, and ensure schools have appropriate forms and information for students to apply for services. ARS will work 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 assure the student's entry into suitable employment, postsecondary education or training, and independent living. Schools will carry out all required transition planning provisions mandated by IDEA and state regulations, will conduct regular staff development training regarding transition requirements and include ARS counselors in the training when appropriate, will provide referrals to ARS counselors, will provide private meeting space for ARS counselors to meet with students, will include ARS counselors in students IEP meetings with authorization by parents or guardians and student knowledge, will communicate regularly with ARS counselors, and will provide ARS with copies of school records.

ARS will ensure each student with a significant disability enrolled in a vocational education program receives an interest assessment, and identifies capabilities. ARS will provide accommodations as needed to ensure 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 FAPE regulations. ARS will provide technical assistance to local education agencies to ensure equal educational opportunities including full opportunity to participate in programs, to ensure activities and job opportunities are provided to all youth and students, 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; (General)

The Interagency Agreement between the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit – Arkansas Transitions Services, Arkansas Department of Career Education, and ARS is set forth to define each party's responsibilities with regard to ensuring a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for eligible students, ages 16–21, and younger when appropriate, which are identified as having a disability in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

This agreement between ADE, ACE, and ARS is based on the following principles:

- The parties have a common and concurrent interest in providing a free appropriate public education to eligible individuals with disabilities, ages 16 to 21, and younger when determined appropriate by the IEP team.
- The parties have a common and concurrent interest in working cooperatively to ensure individuals with disabilities have access to the skills, training, and necessary supports to transition successfully from school to work.
- The parties have a common interest in assisting local agencies in developing and initiating vocational programs and services to individuals with disabilities.
- The Special Education/ATS 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.
- The parties agree to facilitate provision for the development and approval of an individualized plan for employment before each student determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services leaves the school setting.
- The parties agree to promote from their respective agencies the development and implementation of appropriate services for persons with disabilities and to provide outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services.

D. procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services. (General)

ARS counselors will provide information to schools about VR services, meet with special education teachers during the school year, and ensure schools have appropriate forms and information for students to apply for services. ARS will work with schools to assist the student in identifying, selecting, and pursuing appropriate career objectives.

In addition, ARS has a Transition Coordinator that will assist with managing transition services as an agency, and will also ensure services are appropriate and efficient for the clients, schools, and partnerships. Additionally, the Transition Coordinator will work directly with the schools to provide education on section 511of the Rehabilitation Act. Furthermore, the agency will be providing detailed information about pre-employment transition services for students with IEP and 504 plans.

The Agency will work directly with the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT), Intensive Technical Assistance Partnerships. NTACT may provide staff time for phone, email, web-based, on-line, and on-site training and consultation.

Arkansas's implementation team will participate in NTACT's sponsored capacity building activities (i.e., Capacity Building Institute and related regional or national meetings) by sending a team representing at least the SEA and State VR Agency, as well as stakeholders such as parent centers or local agencies to these events.

The state implementation team will support personnel development opportunities for educators and service providers across Arkansas annually, structured on the mode of convening interdisciplinary

teams from local communities for personnel development, data review, problem solving, and facilitated strategic planning. The state implementation team will explore the use of NTACT's data analysis and planning tools (i.e., transitionprogramtool.org, STEPSS) for use in this process.

The Transition Employment Project (TEP) is designed to give high school students the skills, knowledge, and attitude necessary to successfully transition to adult life through engaging in a variety of instructional assessments and training activities. Through TEP students participated in a five-week project the previous year to prepare them for paid work experiences in the summer of 2016. During the project they completed assessments and had opportunities to participate in on the job training site and receive their Career Readiness Certificate (CRC).

Project SEARCH assists with adult VR services, and transition. A new high school model is planned for the Hot Springs area. The Fayetteville site was recognized as 1 of 53 sites recognized for 80 - 90% competitive integrated employment outcomes.

The Promise Grant is the 32.5 million dollar five-year research grant designed to promote the readiness of minors on SSI (Supplemental Security Income) for success beyond high school. Arkansas is one of five single states and one collaborative group of states to be awarded this grant. Currently, 1,367 AR Promise youth have been recruited as of 8/17/15, and 164 employers provided work experiences from 25 counties. The goal for 2016 is 550 employer provided work experiences.

e. Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations (General)

(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.

ARS has cooperative agreements with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) throughout the state as part of the Purchased Service Agreements. ARS and representatives from CRPs developed and implemented standard procedures for the referral process and outcome indicators resulting in a fee for service schedule for individuals served by CRPs.

ARS's standard procedures for external Employment First private non–profit and public VR service providers and CRPs are standards of compliance ensuring VR consumers achieve acceptable outcomes related to employment. The procedures for a CRP to be accredited as a vendor and to maintain accreditation are:

(1) The CRP submits a vendor application documenting required experience in working with consumers with disabilities and employers. (2) ARS reviews the application to assure ARS requirements are met, and submits a certificate and agreement documents to the ARS Commissioner for signature. (3) The CRP is required to sign certification agreement documents assuring the ARS requirements as a vendor will be met. (4) Once accredited, ARS provides a current vendor packet and provides training to the entity, as needed. ARS informs the ARS district manager and the VR counselors of the vendor. (5) The VR counselor refers the consumer to the CRP and monitors the consumer's progress. (6) A VR counselor liaison is assigned to each CRP and provides monthly reports to the appropriate ARS personnel. (7) ARS case review personnel from Program Planning, Development and Evaluation perform a standardized audit of CRP consumer files to ensure training criteria is met, the CRP demonstrates acceptable consumer progress/plans, appropriate documents are in the file, and the amount billed meets accepted guidelines of cost to value. CRP personnel files are reviewed to assure performance standards are acceptable and staff training requirements are met.

ARS will initiate new cooperative agreements focused on moving CRPs from fee for service to performance based outcomes.

ARS, in partnership with the Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, will establish pilot projects focused on transitioning from facility based services to community based services.

f. Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services (General)

(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.

ARS maintains written cooperative agreements with private non–profit and for profit agencies in the state that provide supported employment (SE) services and extended services to ARS consumers with the most significant disabilities. The service providers commit to funding extended services for as long as the consumers remain employed on the original job.

ARS will continue to work with the Department of Human Services agencies to recruit Developmental Disabilities Centers, Behavioral Health Centers, and other related programs serving individuals with the most significant disabilities to seek certification to provide SE services.

ARS will create new agreements based on technical assistance received from RSA; in consultation with the Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council and the Department of Labor, Office of Department of Employment Services experts in Employment First and WIOA.

The MOUs with the LEAs essentially mirrors the MOU with Special Education. ARS is in the process of updating its MOU with Special Education to include Section 511 requirements. Once this is completed, ARS will update MOUs with LEAs statewide. ARS will amend the current agreement to provide information and awareness about Section 511. Furthermore, ARS will provide the following: training to schools on Section 511 to make them aware of the section in WIOA and the activities they can provide in areas, such as self-advocacy and career counseling; training through ARS CRP staff to the providers on referrals and related provider information; training to ARS Managers and ARS VR counselors on providing and understanding the assessment and evaluation process; and will provide training on Trial Work Experience in the community to determine potential work skills if applicable.

Section 511

ARS in collaboration with the SRC and in consultation with its RSA State Liaison proposes to implement the following strategies to address the requirements of Section 511. ARS will:

1Develop and provide training for all VR Counselors on what section 511 is/does, its requirements, and agency/counselor responsibilities.

2.Revise its MOU with Developmental Disabilities to include how both agencies will develop policy/procedure to address clients effected or might potentially be effected by Section 511.

3.Revise its MOU with Behavioral Health to include how both agencies will develop policy/procedure to address clients effected or might potentially be effected by Section 511.

4.Revise its MOU with Special Education to include how both agencies will develop policy/procedure to address students effected or might potentially be effected by Section 511. The MOU will address the issue of referring students to CRPs for services while the student is still enrolled in school or referring the student to a CRP upon graduation as part of transition planning.

5.Work with Special Education to develop/provide training to special education teachers and special education supervisors regarding Section 511.

6.Work with colleges and universities within the state that train special educators and VR Counselors to include in their curriculum information on section 511.

7.Attempt to revise language in each MOU to include language that specifically addresses section 511. ARS currently has MOU's with 155 individual school districts across the state.

8.Revise its contracts with CRP's to include language that addresses the presence of policies/procedures that Section 511 issues. This may include an assurance signed by the CRP that the program will inform clients, family/caregivers, and where applicable school districts of Section 511 requirements. This may also include a form signed by the client or legal guardian to affirm the sharing of information.

Pre-Employment Transition

ARS in collaboration with the SRC and in consultation with its RSA State Liaison proposes to implement the following strategies to address the RSA requirements related to pre-employment transition.

1.ARS recognizes some of the services provided through its piloted ATP program apply to pre-employment transition. ARS will evaluate the program's strengths and weaknesses and apply lessons learned as it implements its pre-employment transition program.

2.ARS also recognizes clients served through the PROMISE Grant may also qualify for pre-employment transition services. ARS will work with PROMISE leadership and other PROMISE partners to identify opportunities to partner/provide pre-employment services to PROMISE participants.

3.ARS will develop and provide training for all VR Counselors on what pre-employment transition is/does, its requirements, and agency/counselor responsibilities.

4.ARS will develop and implement a means to track clients served through pre-employment transition, including pre-employment expenditures thus ensuring funds earmarked address the 15% requirement

5.ARS will revise its MOU with Special Education to include pre-employment transition. As part of the MOU, ARS will request Special Education's assistance in gaining access to all students in the state age 14 an older who have an IEP or 504 plan.

6.ARS will work with Special Education to develop/provide training to special education teachers and special education supervisors on pre-employment transition.

7.ARS will work with colleges and universities within the state that train special educators and VR Counselors to include in their curriculum information on pre-employment transition.

8.ARS realizes providing pre-employment services to all Arkansas students with IEPs or 504 plans may require utilization of outside resources. ARS proposes to develop and issue a request for qualifications to determine potential outside providers of pre-employment transition services. It envisions the provider list of eligible programs might include CRPs or even educational cooperatives.

g. Coordination with Employers (General)

(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 (General)

ARS employs an agency to business and business to VR consumer relationship strategy that is designed to foster improved competitive and integrated employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The strategy permits ARS to become an integral employment/recruitment stakeholder in business and industry and the business and industry partner to become an integral part of the VR program's service delivery model. The following goals reflect this strategy:

- Strategically collaborate with ARS district managers and VR counselors in an effort to develop employer relationships that can lead to improved employment outcomes.
- Increase employer outreach and disability awareness through networking and marketing activities, which include but are not limited to activities such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) meetings, professional organization conferences, business coalition seminars, and updating and incorporating a business section on the agency website, etc.
- Expand disability awareness and/or sensitivity training that is developed, conducted, and organized to target the disability inclusion managers of corporate customers.
- Increase consumer contact visits to employers who are federal contractors and/or federal subcontractors to identify specific jobs and workforce needs pertaining to federal mandate for above entry level positions.
- Increase consumer contact with companies headquartered in Arkansas, and make the business case for hiring ARS consumers into competitive, integrated employment at the middle and upper management levels.
- Improve the quality of candidate screening activities to provide business customers a higher caliber candidate thus increasing the opportunity for ARS consumers to be given higher consideration for key positions.
- Increase utilization of labor market analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of target occupational environments by increased analyzing of job trends and factors to promote strategic placement activities for ARS consumers.
- With the passage of WIOA, a greater emphasis is being placed on ARS partnering with businesses, workforce partners, and other stakeholders. To achieve this outcome, ARS created Partners in Progress (PIP) to engage businesses and to provide them with qualified applicants while securing competitive jobs for ARS consumers. The PIP initiative provides job seekers and workers access to employment, education, training, and support services in the labor market. Matching employers with skilled workers creates a mutual benefit for both stakeholders. Additionally, ARS holds business career symposiums around the state in local field offices.

- ARS will continue to utilize the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) system, which allows the agency to update consumer resumes and backgrounds in an electronic system that can be utilized by employers nationally. This increases the opportunities for consumers to a national level since a company may have a location in Arkansas but the recruiting and hiring authority is located in another state. This also may open doors to integrated employment and competitive wages and benefits.
- ARS will host a business employment summit to coincide with National Disability Employment Awareness month. The conference will bring business and industry leaders together with other stakeholders to increase awareness regarding hiring people with disabilities, and will provide opportunities to establish relationships with federal contractors that may result in hiring ARS consumers.

ARS is working diligently to expand the state's Business Leadership Network, which is made up of major employers in the state with a long–standing history of supporting employment of people with disabilities. This network will help in finalizing MOUs with employers as well as formalizing the relationship to ensure mutually beneficial business relationships.

The Business Relations Section meets with businesses, chambers of commerce, and stakeholders to provide education about the Business Leadership Network (BLN) and the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. To date ARS has signed MOUs with 118 employers and will continue to market and provide education to business and industry to increase collaborative partnerships.

ARS works directly with employers to develop and modify its services. ARS utilizes a mobile app to provide information about ARS as well as a follow–up form used by staff to interact with employment leaders so business relations representatives are able to provide more convenient follow–up.

ARS will work with Career Workforce Boards and Local Workforce Boards to identify potential skill deficits that may serve as barriers to employment, while identifying the most appropriate training to assist consumers in obtaining employment.

ARS will work with business and industry to establish on–the–job training agreements, job shadowing opportunities, and paid/unpaid work experiences.

Access and Accommodations provides presentations (Worker's Comp conference, U of A Conference, etc.), expertise, and assistance to employers seeking to provide workplace accommodations to current and potential employees; such programs as AT@Work, Stay at Work/Return to Work.

2. transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities. (General)

Beginning in 2015, ARS has partnered with the National Apprenticeship Training Foundation (NATF) to provide pre–employment training, job development, and placement for ARS consumers. In addition, NATF is working with Arkansas Career Technical Institute (ACTI) to develop a week–long pre–apprenticeship training program that includes interviewing with employers for both placement and for feedback for those needing additional training or vocational rehabilitation services

Access and Accommodations provides assistive technology assessments and presentations, expertise and assistance to students, therapists, educators, and employers seeking to provide school and workplace accommodations.

ARS, in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN, State AT Program) and community partners, provides assistive technology training, demonstrations, and loans as it relates to transition to school or work.

ARS will pursue other opportunities currently under development with CRPs around the state to provide pre–employment transition services and other transition services.

ARS will collaborate with employers by fostering integrated systems, coordinating services, and providing career pathways for adults and youth/students with disabilities.

ARS will collaborate with secondary education institutions to coordinate partnerships with employers to provide summer and non–seasonal employment, apprenticeship programs, and internships for students with significant disabilities. ACTI works directly with potential employers to provide internship sites for students nearing the completion of their training programs; all of whom have significant disabilities. To date ten employers provide paid and non–paid internship and work–based learning opportunities. Supervisors from the businesses provide weekly feedback on the interns' quality of work and the students are graded based on the measures included on the employer feedback form. Additionally, ACTI offers internship opportunities at ACTI to prepare students with significant disabilities for employment opportunities available in the Hot Springs area.

Field Services and business relations representatives will continue to work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment opportunities for students with disabilities, including internships as part of the Transition Employment Program (TEP).

h. Interagency Cooperation (General)

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; (General)

ARS serves on the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, AR Employment First State Leadership team with 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), University of Arkansas PROMISE Grant, and the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit (ADE SEU). The team in consultation with both the Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) State Liaison will be updating the current interagency agreements to fund braided services and apply for combined waiver programs related to opportunities where individuals participated in employment related activities under WIOA.

2. the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and (General)

ARS serves on the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, AR Employment First State Leadership team with 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), University of Arkansas PROMISE Grant, and the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit (ADE SEU). The team in consultation with both the Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council and the RSA State Liaison will be updating the current interagency agreements to fund braided services and apply for combined waiver programs related to opportunities where individuals participated in employment related activities under WIOA.

3. the State agency responsible for providing mental health services. (General)

ARS serves on the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, AR Employment First State Leadership team with 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), University of Arkansas PROMISE Grant, and the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit (ADE SEU). The team in consultation with both the Arkansas State Rehabilitation Council and the RSA State Liaison will be updating the current interagency agreements to fund braided services and apply for combined waiver programs related to opportunities where individuals participated in employment related activities under WIOA.

i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development (General)

(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 (General)

A. Qualified Personnel Needs. (General)

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; (General)

ARS currently is serving 14,402 clients and employs a total of 432 staff, including 5, 188, 170, and 69 respectively, identified to Access and Accommodations, ACTI, Field Services, and Central Office. 15 of the 21 staff, previously assigned to Access and Accommodation, were reclassified as ACTI staff in September of 2015.

Access and Accommodations – 5

Occupational Therapists (2), Program Manager (1), Speech Language Pathologist (1), Administrative Assistant (1)

ACTI – 188

Administration – 4

Director (2), Administrative Specialist (2)

Campus Safety and Security – 11

Director (1), Public Safety Security Officer (2), Security Officer (7), Administrative Specialist (1)

Finance – 1

Radiology Technician (works part time as RT and then part time in Finance)

Admissions – 5

Administrative Specialist (2) Rehabilitation Program Coordinator (1), Counselor (1), Extra Help – Receptionist – (1)

Maintenance – 32

Maintenance Manager (1), Maintenance Supervisor (1), Skilled Tradesman Supervisor (1), Stationary Engineer (5), Skilled Tradesman (12), Equipment Operator/Technician (7), Inventory Control Technician (1), Mail Services Assistant (1), Storeroom Supervisor (1), Administrative Specialist (1), Extra Help – Equipment Operator (1)

Therapeutic Recreation – 4

Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Recreational Activity Leader (2), Administrative Specialist (1)

Student Living – 10

Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Residential Care Technician (6), Administrative Specialists (2), Certified Nursing Assistant (1)

Vocational Training – 20

Rehabilitation Director of Vocational Training (1), Certified Vocational Teacher (16), Vocational Instructor (1), Licensed Practical Nurse (1), Administrative Specialist (1)

Evaluation and Counseling – 13

Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator (2), Fiscal Support Analyst (1), Social Worker (2), Vocational Rehabilitation Placement Specialist (2), Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (2), Administrative Specialist (3)

Short-Term Industry/Talent Development – 6

Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Certified Vocational Teacher (3) Vocational Instructor (1), Career Planning and Placement (1)

Medical – 19

Medical Services Director (1), Physician (1), Dentist – part time (.5), Pharmacist (1), LPN (3), RN Supervisor (1), Nursing Services Unit Manager (1), Medical Records Supervisor (1), Certified Vocational Teacher (1), Occupational Therapist (1), Physical Therapist (1), Medical Technologist (1), Administrative Specialist (5)

Food Services – 21

Dietary Services Director (1), Food Preparation (15), Baker (1), Cook (3), Administrative Specialist (1)

Environmental Services – 22

Institutional Services Supervisor (4), Institutional Assistant (15), Maintenance Coordinator (1), Administrative Specialist (1), Inventory Control Technician (1)

RIDAC – 19

Psychologist (3), Physician (2), Psychological Examiner (13), Administrative Specialist (1)

Other

Extra Help (1)

Field Services 170

Counselor (78), Administrative Specialist, AKA VR Assistants (63), District Manager (10), Business Relations Representatives (10), Interpreters (4), Extra Help – Administrative Specialist (3)

Central Office - 69

Accounting/Finance – 20

Fiscal Division Manager (1), Accounting Coordinator (3), Buyer (2), Fiscal Support (4), Inventory Control (1), Procurement Coordinator (1), Warehouse (2), Purchasing (2), Administrative Specialist (3), Extra Help (1)

Field Services – 8

Chief of Field Services (1), Rehabilitation Director (1), Vocational Education Coordinator (2), Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Records Management (2), Administrative Specialist (1)

Human Resources – 10

Human Resources Administrator (1), Assistant Personnel Manager (2), HR Analyst (1), Business Operations Specialist (1), Staff Development (1), Rehabilitation Program Coordinator (1), Human Resources Representative/Specialist (2), Administrative Specialist (1)

Commissioner's Office/Administration – 6

Commissioner (1), Executive Assistant (1), Institutional Services Assistant (2), Administrative Assistant/Specialist (2)

IT – 3

Software Analyst (2), Administrative Specialist (1)

Program Planning, Development and Education – 10

Director (1), Program Manager (2), Quality Assurance Manager (1), Rehabilitation Services Facility Specialist (1), Quality Assurance Coordinator (4), Administrative Specialist (1)

Communications – 3

Public Information Coordinator (1), Public Information Manager (1), Public Information Specialist (1)

Security – 1

Extra Help (1)

Other - 8

Extra Help (1)

Contract – (7)

UA – Contract – Program Evaluator (1), CAI – Contract – Database Administrator (1), CAI – Contract – Lead/Supervisory Technician (2), CAI – Contract – Desktop Field Technician (3)

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and (General)

ARS currently employs 432 individuals. The number of personnel currently needed is 503. It includes 6, 222, 193, and 82 respectively, identified to Access and Accommodations, ACTI, Field Services, and Central Office. Accordingly, approximately one (1) out of every 6 (six) needed positions, or 16.43 percent, of ARS' currently needed positions, are unfilled, including, 1, 34, 23, and 13 unfilled positions, respectively, for Access and Accommodations, ACTI, Field Services, and the Central Office. ARS attributes these vacancies to attrition due to low salaries and the required compliance with the hiring freeze process within state government.

Access and Accommodations – 6

Occupational Therapists (3), Program Manager (1), Speech Language Pathologist (1), Administrative Assistant (1)

ACTI – 222

Administration – 4

Director (2), Administrative Specialist (2)

Campus Safety and Security – 11

Director (1), Public Safety Security Officer (2), Security Officer (7), Administrative Specialist (1)

Finance – 1

Radiology Technician (works part time as RT and then part time in Finance)

Admissions – 6

Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Administrative Specialist (2) Rehabilitation Program Coordinator (1), Counselor (1), Extra Help – Receptionist (1)

Maintenance – 36

Maintenance Manager (1), Maintenance Supervisor (2), Skilled Tradesman Supervisor (1), Stationary Engineer (5), Skilled Tradesman (14), Equipment Operator/Technician (8), Inventory Control Technician (1), Mail Services Assistant (1), Storeroom Supervisor (1), Warehouse Specialist (1), Administrative Specialist (1)

Therapeutic Recreation – 6

Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Recreational Activity Leader (3), Administrative Specialist (1), Recreational Activity Supervisor (1)

Student Living – 18

Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Residential Care Technician (12), Administrative Specialists (4), Certified Nursing Assistant (1)

Vocational Training – 24

Rehabilitation Director of Vocational Training (1), Certified Vocational Teacher (18), Vocational Instructor (1), Licensed Practical Nurse (1), Administrative Specialist (1), Nurse Instructor (2)

Evaluation and Counseling – 16

Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator (3), Fiscal Support Analyst (1), Social Worker (2), Vocational Rehabilitation Placement Specialist (2), Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (4), Administrative Specialist (3)

Short-Term Industry/Talent Development – 9

Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Certified Vocational Teacher (3) Vocational Instructor (1), Career Planning and Placement (1), Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator (1), Administrative Specialist (2)

Medical – 22

Medical Services Director (1), Physician (1), Dentist – part time (1), Pharmacist (1), LPN (4), RN Supervisor (1), Nursing Services Unit Manager (1), Medical Records Supervisor (1), Certified Vocational Teacher (1), Occupational Therapist (1), Physical Therapist (2), Administrative Specialist (5), Medical Technologist (1), Therapy Assistant (1)

Food Services – 25

Dietary Services Director (1), Food Preparation (17), Baker (1), Cook (5), Administrative Specialist (1)

Environmental Services – 23

Institutional Services Supervisor (5), Institutional Assistant (15), Maintenance Coordinator (1), Administrative Specialist (1), Inventory Control Technician (1)

RIDAC – 20

Psychologist (3), Physician (2), Psychological Examiner (13), Administrative Specialist (2)

Other

Extra Help (1)

Field Services - 193

Counselor (95), Administrative Specialist, AKA VR Assistants (72), District Manager (10), Business Relations Representatives (13), Interpreters (5), Extra Help – Administrative Specialist (3)

Central Office - 81

Accounting/Finance – 24

Fiscal Division Manager (1), Accounting Coordinator (3), Buyer (2), Fiscal Support (5), Inventory Control (2), Procurement Coordinator (1), Warehouse (2), Purchasing (3), Administrative Specialist (4), Extra Help (1)

Field Services – 11

Chief of Field Services (1), Rehabilitation Director (2), Vocational Education Coordinator (2), Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Records Management (2), Administrative Specialist (3)

Human Resources – 11

Human Resources Administrator (1), Assistant Personnel Manager (2), HR Analyst (1), Business Operations Specialist (1), Staff Development (1), Rehabilitation Program Coordinator (1), Human Resources Representative/Specialist (3), Administrative Specialist (1)

Commissioner's Office/Administration – 8

Commissioner (1), Executive Assistant (1), Institutional Services Assistant, (2), Administrative Assistant/Specialist (2), Attorney (1), Deputy Commissioner (1)

IT – 4

Software Analyst (2), Administrative Specialist (1), Chief Information Officer (1)

Program Planning, Development and Education – 11

Director (1), Program Manager (2), Quality Assurance Manager (1), Rehabilitation Services Facility Specialist (2), Quality Assurance Coordinator (4), Administrative Specialist (1)

Communications – 4

Public Information Coordinator (1), Public Information Manager (1), Public Information Specialist (1). Web Developer (1)

Security – 1

Extra Help (1)

Other - 8

Extra Help (1)

Contract – (7)

UA – Contract – Program Evaluator (1), CAI – Contract – Database Administrator (1), CAI – Contract – Lead/Supervisory Technician (2), CAI – Contract – Desktop Field Technician (3)

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. (General)

ARS currently employs 432 individuals. The number of personnel projected over the next five years is 547. It includes 8, 235, 219, and 85 respectively, identified to Access and Accommodations, ACTI, Field Services, and Central Office. Accordingly, ARS projects that it will need approximately 115 additional staff (26.7 percent) 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. ARS attributes this substantial increase to the need for additional personnel to adequately serve VR clients needing pre-employment transition, transition, and supported employment services as required by WIOA.

Access and Accommodations – 8 Occupational Therapists (4), Program Manager (2), Speech Language Pathologist (1), Administrative Assistant (1)

ACTI – 235 Administration – 4 Director (2), Administrative Specialist (2)

Campus Safety and Security – 11 Director (1), Public Safety Security Officer (2), Security Officer (7), Administrative Specialist (1)

Finance – 1 Radiology Technician (works part time as RT and then part time in Finance)

Admissions – 6 Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Administrative Specialist (2) Rehabilitation Program Coordinator (1), Counselor (1), Extra Help – Receptionist (1)

Maintenance – 36 Maintenance Manager (1), Maintenance Supervisor (2), Skilled Tradesman Supervisor (1), Stationary Engineer (5), Skilled Tradesman (14), Equipment Operator/Technician (8), Inventory Control Technician (1), Mail Services Assistant (1), Storeroom Supervisor (1), Warehouse Specialist (1), Administrative Specialist (1)

Therapeutic Recreation – 6 Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Recreational Activity Leader (3), Administrative Specialist (1), Recreational Activity Supervisor (1)

Student Living – 18 Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Residential Care Technician (12), Administrative Specialists (4), Certified Nursing Assistant (1)

Vocational Training – 32 Rehabilitation Director of Vocational Training (1), Certified Vocational Teacher (26), Vocational Instructor (1), Licensed Practical Nurse (1), Administrative Specialist (1), Nurse Instructor (2)

Evaluation and Counseling – 20 Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator (5), Fiscal Support Analyst (1), Social Worker (2), Vocational Rehabilitation Placement Specialist (2), Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (6), Administrative Specialist (3)

Short-Term Industry/Talent Development – 11 Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Certified Vocational Teacher (5) Vocational Instructor (1), Career Planning and Placement (1), Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluator (1), Administrative Specialist (2)

Medical – 22 Medical Services Director (1), Physician (1), Dentist – part time (1), Pharmacist (1), LPN (4), RN Supervisor (1), Nursing Services Unit Manager (1), Medical Records Supervisor (1), Certified Vocational Teacher (1), Occupational Therapist (1), Physical Therapist (2), Administrative Specialist (5), Medical Technologist (1), Therapy Assistant (1)

Food Services – 25 Dietary Services Director (1), Food Preparation (17), Baker (1), Cook (5), Administrative Specialist (1)

Environmental Services – 23 Institutional Services Supervisor (5), Institutional Assistant (15), Maintenance Coordinator (1), Administrative Specialist (1), Inventory Control Technician (1)

RIDAC – 20 Psychologist (3), Physician (2), Psychological Examiner (13), Administrative Specialist (2)

Field Services - 219 Counselor (105), Administrative Specialist, AKA VR Assistants (77), District Manager (12), Business Relations Representatives (15), Interpreters (7), Extra Help – Administrative Specialist (3)

Central Office - 85

Accounting/Finance – 24: Fiscal Division Manager (1), Accounting Coordinator (3), Buyer (2), Fiscal Support (5), Inventory Control (2), Procurement Coordinator (1), Warehouse (2), Purchasing (3), Administrative Specialist (4), Extra Help (1)

Field Services – 11 Chief of Field Services (1), Rehabilitation Director (2), Vocational Education Coordinator (2), Rehabilitation Program Manager (1), Records Management (2), Administrative Specialist (3)

Human Resources – 12 Human Resources Administrator (1), Assistant Personnel Manager (2), HR Analyst (1), Business Operations Specialist (1), Staff Development (1), Rehabilitation Program Coordinator (1), Human Resources Representative/Specialist (3), Administrative Specialist (1), Recruiter (1)

Commissioner's Office/Administration – 8 Commissioner (1), Executive Assistant (1), Institutional Services Assistant, (2), Administrative Assistant/Specialist (2), Attorney (1), Deputy Commissioner (1)

IT – 6 Software Analyst (4), Administrative Specialist (1), Chief Information Officer (1)

Program Planning, Development and Education – 11 Director (1), Program Manager (2), Quality Assurance Manager (1), Rehabilitation Services Facility Specialist (2), Quality Assurance Coordinator (4), Administrative Specialist (1)

Communications – 4 Public Information Coordinator (1), Public Information Manager (1), Public Information Specialist (1). Web Developer (1)

Security – 1

Extra Help (1)

Other - 8

Extra Help (1)

Contract (7)

UA – Contract – Program Evaluator (1), CAI – Contract – Database Administrator (1), CAI – Contract – Lead/Supervisory Technician (2), CAI – Contract – Desktop Field Technician (3)

B. Personnel Development (General)

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; (General)

ARS maintains and annually updates a list of higher education institutions in Arkansas that prepare rehabilitation professionals. ARS monitors students enrolled in vocational rehabilitation and related programs at each of the institutions by category, the number of students graduating the previous

year, and certification or licensure. ARS works with the institutions to provide internship and practicum opportunities for students and the universities are notified when job openings become available within the agency. The following institutions are preparing VR professionals:

- University of Arkansas Fayetteville (UAF) MRC
- University of Arkansas Little Rock (UALR) MRC
- Arkansas State University (ASU) MRC

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and (General)

- University of Arkansas Fayetteville (UAF) MRC – 32 (FT) and 4 (PT)

iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of theose 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. (General)

- University of Arkansas Fayetteville (UAF) MRC – 30 (FT) and 2 (PT)
- University of Arkansas Little Rock (UALR) MRC – 32 (FT) and 0 (PT)
- Arkansas State University (ASU) MRC – 2 (FT) and 0 (PT)

2. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel (General)

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.

A comprehensive and well–managed personnel development program is critical to ARS's efforts to expand and enhance customer services, and to ensure consumers receive quality rehabilitation services from qualified professional personnel. ARS is strongly committed to providing training programs to all staff, especially those providing direct services to consumers. ARS maintains training records for all staff, updated annually, to reflect training requests and completions specifying the training source, name, credit hours, and attendance date. Professional qualifications for counselors are monitored to ensure current certification and to track educational progress for those achieving certification.

The Human Resources (HR) department shapes ARS's strategies by understanding workforce trends, identifying potential resource opportunities and gaps, and developing effective initiatives. HR takes the initiative and delivers results on strategic business issues, such as, new development, talent management, training, and mobility.

To meet ARS's goals, HR ensures successful recruitment, preparation, and retention of qualified personnel. HR maintains a working relationship with colleges, universities, and higher education programs within the state, partners in job fairs, maintains a positive

relationship with the community and its representatives, and utilizes online recruitment efforts. In addition, ARS is involved with all major social media, newspapers, and industry driven communication.

The Arkansas Legislature authorized special language to ARS for a waiver of the Continuing Professional Education policy prohibiting state agencies from providing college courses to employees. The special language allows ARS to provide college level coursework in degree programs designed to result in a Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) for eligible employees selected by the agency. The special language assists the agency in assuring qualified professional personnel are in place to provide quality rehabilitation services to Arkansans with disabilities.

ARS set an effective date of October 1, 2016, for all rehabilitation counselor positions to meet the standard of having a Master's degree and to be Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) certified. Those who do not meet the standard have a prescribed time period to achieve the designation per the CRC policy. Rehabilitation counselors who do not meet the standard are cross–graded in position and must be working towards meeting the standard. Counselors working towards meeting the standard will continue to perform counseling functions.

Counselors who do not meet requirements and are not working towards meeting the standard will perform limited case management functions and will not be authorized to perform the following functions: (a) Determination the applicant requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment, i.e., eligibility determination and Certification of Eligibility and/or Certificate of Ineligibility; (b) Development and approval of all components of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) including annual review; (c) Amendments to IPE; and (d) Determination of a satisfactory outcome that the employment outcome is satisfactory and the individual is performing well in the employment, i.e., Closure Amendment.

During the 2009 Arkansas Legislative Session, ARS received permission to institute a graduated pay incentive to counselors who progress toward an MRC/CRC, which aids ARS in recruitment efforts to obtain the best candidates for present and future needs. Additionally ARS continues to utilize the Student Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program, which has resulted in enhanced counselor recruitment. Under this program newly hired VR counselors can be provided up to $2,000 per year repayment to the student loan creditor. Counselors who participate in the Student Loan Forgiveness Program agree to continue working for the agency for two years in return for each year of repayment.

Effective July 1, 2009, all ARS vocational rehabilitation counselors were reclassified as either grade level C117 Rehabilitation Counselor or C119 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. The C119 Certified Rehabilitation Counselor classification requires CRC certification. According to state Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requirements, ARS now advertises for a C117 position with the preferred qualification being a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and CRC certification. ARS was able to establish an internal salary grid with OPM approval. This grid allows the agency to hire VR counselors in the counselor C117 series under different salary ranges based on qualification and certification and allows for cost of living rates for counselors in the C119 classification. State hiring policy authorized by OPM allows ARS to hire graduates with Bachelor's degrees in Rehabilitation for C117 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 four 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/C117 – $32,249 (annual) – $15.5044 (hourly)

Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC)/No CRC – L051C Rehabilitation Counselor/C117 – $34,234 (annual) – $16.4586 (hourly)

MRC and CRC with less than five (5) years VR experience – E034C Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor/C119 – $35,554 –(annually – $17.0933 (hourly)

MRC and CRC with five (5) or more years VR experience – E034C Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor/C119 – $37,743 –(annually) – $18.1456

ARS was approved for a labor market rate increase for district managers with a starting salary of $48,000 per year. The increase helps with recruitment and retention within the field program.

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 including ACTI staff to meet standards required by the Department of Education and other federal/state requirements. All ARS employees receive an annual personnel performance evaluation from their immediate supervisor, which is reviewed and approved by their respective senior manager. The evaluation considers the training each employee needs to fulfill job duties in providing services to our consumers.

ARS works 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 ARS upon graduation. ARS maintains staff liaisons 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, ARS meets quarterly with the universities to provide updates within the vocational rehabilitation field and ARS, 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.

ARS is currently working on revising VR Counselor job descriptions to update roles and responsibilities due to increasing duties, and also to assist with increasing salaries for ARS VR Counselors competitive to surrounding regions. Additionally, leadership is reviewing training and development opportunities to help with retention of counselors.

ARS Leadership is working with the Arkansas Executive Branch to facilitate timely hiring freeze exceptions.

3. Personnel Standards (General)

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 (General)

ARS reviews policies and procedures in all areas of personnel standards to ensure all personnel, including professionals, instructors, and paraprofessionals, receive appropriate and adequate training for their recognized certifications, licensures, and job requirements set out by their performance evaluations. Because there is no standard established by the State of Arkansas, ARS bases its personnel standards for VR counselors on the degree needed to meet the national CRC requirements through the Commission on Rehabilitation Counseling Certification (CRCC). ARS requires a Master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or a closely related field, as defined by the CRCC eligibility criteria, and to be CRC certified. The Staff Development Section reviews the current training levels of all personnel, and will continue to ensure training is not only updated but elevates experience levels for VR counselors and required standards, evaluation of training needs, and timelines are established. Human Resources is responsible for ensuring all VR counselors and support staff receive training on the DSU's policies and procedures and consequently meet the required standards set out therein.

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. (General)

To ensure ARS employees have a 21st century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities, the Deputy Chief of Field Services will continue to periodically meet with Rehabilitation Counseling higher education programs to review curriculum (i.e., case management) and provide input on current educational needs for incoming ARS counselors. ARS utilizes as a resource for addressing the evolving labor force, the Career Education and Workforce Development Board, which is composed of 13 members appointed by the Governor in conjunction with Act 892, to provide a wealth of resources and leadership to the agency. Board members are leaders in business, industry, education, economic development, and rehabilitation services across the state, and are charged with creating a comprehensive statewide program of career education and workforce development focused on educational opportunities retention with the goal of economic development.

ARS will utilize the Career Development Enhancement Program to establish and maintain education and experience requirements to ensure staff have an understanding of the labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities. A chief component of this program is the National Career Development Association (NCDA) Career Development Facilitator (CDF) Training program. Internationally recognized, the NCDA Career Development Facilitator Training provides individuals with relevant skills and knowledge to assist others in planning careers and obtaining meaningful work. The 120–hour program enhances the knowledge and skills of individuals working in a variety of career development settings. The Career Development Facilitator may serve as a career group facilitator, job search trainer, career resource center coordinator, career coach, career development case manager, intake interviewer, occupational and labor market information resource person, human resource career development coordinator, employment/placement specialist, or workforce development staff person.

As of 2015, 148 ARS employees have completed the CDF training, and each year will increase the number of staff selected for the program by 25 percent. Annually, a refresher course will be presented to update staff on the latest information on labor force and employment for persons with disabilities. Additionally, HR will focus on training all staff to improve conflict management skills, constructive communication skills, time management, and diversity. HR will conduct intense training for supervisors and managers.

4. Staff Development. (General)

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. System of staff development (General)

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 Development monitors the current training levels of all personnel for required standards and training needs. Staff Development will implement the ARS Career Development Enhancement Program (CDE), a competency–based program. Employees will successfully complete job related requirements such as, but not limited to, meeting experience requirements, completing mandated job–related training, demonstrating satisfactory job performance, and exhibiting appropriate conduct.

The Program will include all ARS staff, and will be conducted in six phases with the first three phases targeting all staff; phases four and five focusing on subject matter specific training in the area of expertise such as counselors, administrative staff, instructors, etc.; and phase six targeting managers and supervisors.

Other opportunities for training are provided to all staff via 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, CRC training, CEU training for purposes of certification or licensure in the professions, and training provided internally by the agency in case

management and compliance with policy and procedures. Internal policy and procedures are developed and monitored for the agency in terms of hiring, training, or retraining personnel to meet agency standards. The universities are utilized to provide training opportunities.

Access and Accommodations sections will work with counselors in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Network and community partners to provide quarterly trainings in the area of assistive technology as it relates to home, work or school.

To ensure training provided at ACTI remains relevant to current business and industry standards, the Vocational Training Staff attend quarterly instructor workshops.

B. Acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge (General)

procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals.

ARS ensures all personnel receive appropriate and adequate continuing education. The agency enables employees to attend classes, seminars, and conferences, and disseminates information through newsletters, in–service training, workshops, and training conferences. The field program conducts district meetings in their respective districts where the latest techniques for providing services to consumers are discussed. The Deputy Chief of Field Services provides best practice training on various VR and ARS procedures throughout the state. The Deputy Chief of Field Services also provides a seminar for CRC candidates and best practice training in periodic Special Topics Training. The Chief of Field Services meets monthly with district managers to provide updates and training regarding policy and procedures with client services and day–to–day operations.

5. Personnel to Address Individual Communication Needs (General)

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 continues to employ personnel who communicate in the native languages of applicants and consumers 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.

Arkansas continues to experience a large influx of Spanish speaking citizens requesting VR services, and promotes hiring employees with Spanish language skills. ARS requested and the Arkansas General Assembly granted permission to the agency to compensate employees who demonstrate relevant foreign language skills at enhanced levels when using their skill set for the benefit of VR consumers. The agency provides assistance to our employees in order to help them accommodate consumer needs.

6. Coordination of Personnel Development Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (General)

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 district managers and local VR counselors. AITP promotes personnel development through online–based educational vignettes for teachers, students, and families, and through an annual Summer Agency Connection, which includes ARS district managers, Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI), Access and Accommodations in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN) personnel, and representatives from high schools. AITP also developed a directory of services that includes ARS and other stakeholders.

For FY 2016 the Staff Development and Training Unit will coordinate and meet with focus groups representing counselors, managers, transition counselors, administrative support staff, and other work groups to determine their training needs. The Staff Development and Training Unit will evaluate the information gathered and make required adjustments to the Career Development Enhancement Program. Training modules may be delivered via online, webinar, or classroom.

j. Statewide Assessment (General)

(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: (General)

A. with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services; (General)

The most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) for Arkansas was completed in December 2015. ARS contracted with Dan Hopkins & Associates, Inc. who worked collaboratively with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), key stakeholders and ARS to complete a CSNA of rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Arkansas. Multiple strategies to gather data and information were used including: (a) A focus group discussion with participants from ARS, SRC, key stakeholders, and vendors; (b) A structured survey of all ARS counselors; (c) A structured survey of a random sample of ARS consumers throughout Arkansas; (d) Focus groups of consumers; (e) An ACTI focus group of administrators and staff; (f) Interviews and surveys of the agency leadership; (g) Questionnaire and an abbreviated focus group with district managers; (h) Review of 2014

RSA 911 data; and (i) Review of data from the American Community Survey and 2014 Current Population Survey.

Implications

1. The WIOA and Rehabilitation Act requirements for SE services for individuals with the most significant disabilities not only includes a significant expansion of SE services, but also includes an increase in the number of consumers, including students and youth, who are eligible for SE services. The mandate for expansion of SE services and consumers served requires a significant increase in the resources necessary to meet those requirements in terms of manpower and service providers.

2. The Arkansas Department of Education data indicates there is a large potentially eligible population along with a high demand for SE services within the state.

3. There are many geographical areas within the state where there are no SE services or a lack of SE services.

4. According to the survey, ARS district managers state many CRPs indicate they do not have the financial resources to provide supported employment services.

Recommendations

1. The agency should determine the geographical areas and communities within its districts where there are no SE services.

2. The agency's leadership should consider its overall priorities, including the availability of resources, and an increase in the number of counselors that provide SE services in order to build capacity to provide SE services by utilizing the available resources of WIOA partners, CRPs, agency field services counselors, support staff, management, business relations representatives, ICAN, ACTI, and others for the benefit of SE consumers.

3. The agency leadership should explore the possibility of providing start–up funds for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand the provision of SE services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. CRPs should collaborate and form cooperative partnerships in those areas where services are lacking.

4. The agency leadership should explore the feasibility of ACTI providing SE services directly to consumers with the most significant disabilities. Potential SE services might include assessment, planning, job development, job placement, job coaching, and other services necessary in a multidisciplinary approach to meet the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities. Close collaboration with ARS Field Services' counselors is necessary to provide SE services at ACTI especially when consumers contemplate returning to their local communities.

B. who are minorities; (General)

Implications

1. As the number of minority individuals and emerging disability populations continues to increase, a broad range of topics and issues for agency consideration are presented, these

include: outreach and marketing strategies; diversity of language and culture; availability of appropriate services; and the availability of trained personnel to address these issues and meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

2. The high number of consumers exiting the system without an employment outcome has significant implications for the agency and the issue suggests the need to assess the effectiveness of services provided during the service delivery process, for example, assessment/evaluation planning; counseling and support; the nature and scope of services provided; and job development and placement strategies. Large caseloads and a perceived limit on time the counselor spends in direct contact with consumers, coupled with the delays in services, contribute to the number of consumers exiting without a positive employment outcome.

3. The agency should examine the high degree of emphasis on numbers and services as opposed to a focus on quality employment outcomes when analyzing consumers who leave the program with an employment outcome.

4. As indicated the growing number of individuals with a mental disability being referred by multiple sources suggests the need for examination of referral sources, availability of effective services, and trained personnel to serve this consumer population.

5. The large number of consumers being referred/coded as having a mental disability has at least three major implications for consideration: (1) The accuracy of coding of the disability; (2) The nature and scope of services required to adequately serve this population; and (3) The availability of trained personnel to adequately meet their needs.

6. Counselor time devoted to case recording, documentation, and data entry, along with the consumer's need for employment–related assistance, suggests these factors may impede the agency's ability to adequately serve its consumers and retain qualified counselors.

Recommendations

1. The agency should consider developing strategies for effective outreach and marketing in order to reach the unserved and underserved populations around the state.

2. The agency should explore the feasibility of increasing the role and function of the district managers in the areas of outreach, marketing, and stimulating local community resource involvement.

3. The agency should enhance its comprehensive training and continuing education program for district managers, counselors, and other appropriate personnel to effectively and efficiently serve consumers from diverse and emerging populations.

4. Current and potential referral sources and strategies should be examined to ensure the referral of all individuals with disabilities be expedited.

5. The effectiveness of the services provided during the service delivery process be studied (including assessment, planning, counseling, job development/employment services), with the goal of achieving quality employment outcomes.

6. Consideration should be given to strategies that enable counselors to devote additional time to direct consumer contact and provision of services. These include a reduction of caseload sizes, training in caseload management, and improved utilization of support personnel and technology.

7. The agency should consider developing strategies for personnel training that lead to increasing the number of consumers exiting the system with quality employment outcomes.

8. The agency should make every attempt to recruit qualified professionals who are culturally competent serving multi–cultural and Spanish speaking consumers along with other emerging disability populations.

C. who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program; (General)

Implications

1. As the number of minority individuals and emerging disability populations continues to increase, a broad range of topics and issues for agency consideration are presented, these include: outreach and marketing strategies; diversity of language and culture; availability of appropriate services; and the availability of trained personnel to address these issues and meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

2. The high number of consumers exiting the system without an employment outcome has significant implications for the agency and the issue suggests the need to assess the effectiveness of services provided during the service delivery process, for example, assessment/evaluation planning; counseling and support; the nature and scope of services provided; and job development and placement strategies. Large caseloads and a perceived limit on time the counselor spends in direct contact with consumers, coupled with the delays in services, contribute to the number of consumers exiting without a positive employment outcome.

3. The agency should examine the high degree of emphasis on numbers and services as opposed to a focus on quality employment outcomes when analyzing consumers who leave the program with an employment outcome.

4. As indicated the growing number of individuals with a mental disability being referred by multiple sources suggests the need for examination of referral sources, availability of effective services, and trained personnel to serve this consumer population.

5. The large number of consumers being referred/coded as having a mental disability has at least three major implications for consideration: (1) The accuracy of coding of the disability; (2) The nature and scope of services required to adequately serve this population; and (3) The availability of trained personnel to adequately meet their needs.

6. Counselor time devoted to case recording, documentation, and data entry, along with the consumer's need for employment–related assistance, suggests these factors may impede the agency's ability to adequately serve its consumers and retain qualified counselors.

Recommendations

1. The agency should consider developing strategies for effective outreach and marketing in order to reach the unserved and underserved populations around the state.

2. The agency should explore the feasibility of increasing the role and function of the district managers in the areas of outreach, marketing, and stimulating local community resource involvement.

3. The agency should enhance its comprehensive training and continuing education program for district managers, counselors, and other appropriate personnel to effectively and efficiently serve consumers from diverse and emerging populations.

4. Current and potential referral sources and strategies should be examined to ensure the referral of all individuals with disabilities be expedited.

5. The effectiveness of the services provided during the service delivery process be studied (including assessment, planning, counseling, job development/employment services), with the goal of achieving quality employment outcomes.

6. Consideration should be given to strategies that enable counselors to devote additional time to direct consumer contact and provision of services. These include a reduction of caseload sizes, training in caseload management, and improved utilization of support personnel and technology.

7. The agency should consider developing strategies for personnel training that lead to increasing the number of consumers exiting the system with quality employment outcomes.

8. The agency should make every attempt to recruit qualified professionals who are culturally competent serving multi–cultural and Spanish speaking consumers along with other emerging disability populations.

D. who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and (General)

Implications

1. The low percentage of ARS consumers exiting the Program with an employment outcome suggests a need for the increased utilization of Workforce Center services in preparing consumers for employment and to assist in job placement.

2. The lack of a well–developed working relationship with Workforce Centers in some Districts indicates programs and services available within the Workforce System are not being fully utilized by ARS to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes.

3. The current working relationship between ARS and Workforce Centers limits ARS's knowledge of local labor market trends, job requirements, and employment opportunities within the state.

4. ARS has limited familiarity with WIOA implementation requirements and the requirements and methods for collaboration and cooperation with Workforce partners.

Recommendations

1. Training is recommended to familiarize ARS leadership and counselors with the state Workforce System, the Workforce Centers, and the resources available in the ARS Districts.

2. ARS should conduct follow–up meetings with Workforce Centers to increase and improve working relationships and collaborative efforts.

3. ARS should consider surveying the availability of services within the ARS Districts with the goal of utilizing the Workforce Centers as a resource to prepare consumers for employment and to assist in job placement, especially in those areas lacking services.

4. ARS should provide training on WIOA requirements and appropriate policy and procedure to implement the Act.

E. who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services. (General)

Implications

1. Study results indicate the WIOA and Rehabilitation Act requirements for pre–employment and other Transition services for students and youth are at a much higher level and require a significant increase in resources in terms of manpower and services in order to meet those mandates.

2. ARS has two approaches to Transition services with different outcome goals. One is the Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), formerly the Pilot Transition Project, which operates in six school districts in Crittenden, Jefferson, Pulaski, and Washington counties. The second is a more general/traditional approach of the Field Program provided by the caseload counselors throughout the state.

3. One of the limitations of the ATP is it only works with a small number of schools and the outcomes vary from school to school; in addition, there are a limited number of referrals to the Field Program.

4. Study findings indicate there is a varying level of appreciation of the ATP by ARS managers and counselors throughout the state. The level of acceptance by VR counselors and managers is dependent upon the effectiveness of the ATP transition counselor and the number of referrals to ARS counselors.

5. Another critical issue affecting both programs is the varying responses encountered in the different school districts. Many school districts or schools within a district do not want the ATP transition or VR counselors to provide services.

Recommendations

1. ARS leadership should convene a transition task force to consider the overall priorities of the agency, including the available resources; to increase the number of counselors and positions to provide Transition services as mandated; to build capacity to provide Transition

services by utilizing the available resources of WIOA partners and CRPs; and to utilize all components of the agency including not only Field Services counselors, but support staff, management, business relations representatives, ICAN, ACTI, and others to provide direct services to Transition consumers.

2. The transition task force should review the activities and outcomes of the Arkansas Transition Program and the VR Field Services Transition program in order to identify best practices that can be implemented throughout the state.

3. ARS should explore combining the efforts of the two programs to seek economies of scale and efficiency in providing Transition services to consumers.

4. ARS district managers and management should collaborate with the state's school districts in order to facilitate the working relationship between the school districts, the agency, and local VR counselors.

5. ARS leadership and management should work with the State Department of Education to insure rehabilitation counselors have ready access to all students with disabilities.

6. ARS should develop a protocol wherein students reporting a disability, and any student with an IPE, be contacted by a transition or rehabilitation counselor prior to or during middle school/junior high.

7. ARS should develop a protocol wherein all students with an IPE have a Plan or be determined ineligible for rehabilitation services by the time they reach the age of 16.

8. ARS Field Services should form a Transition Committee to survey and assess the schools and resources in the community and within the DSU, including providers and funding, in order to set goals, objectives, and activities for the assessment and the provision of Transition services in the ARS Districts.

2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and (General)

Implications

1. As indicated by study results, the lack of a sufficient number of CRPs together with the need for some CRPs to expand and improve services, have significant negative consequences for individuals with disabilities in their achievement of timely and relevant services and positive rehabilitation outcomes.

2. The lack of consistency in provision of services among CRPs around the state limits the counselor's and agency's ability to provide equal access to services for consumers.

3. The continued emphasis of CRPs on providing workshop type services limits ARS's ability to utilize them for achieving acceptable outcomes according to RSA regulations.

4. Vocational rehabilitation services are not available in certain areas of the state, particularly in rural areas, thus consumers do not have access to many services needed for successful completion of their vocational goals.

Recommendations

1. District managers and agency Leadership should assume a more active role with the CRPs for purposes of (a) Conducting a survey of the CRPs and other service providers to assess and evaluate the availability of critical rehabilitation services; (b) Services needed, but not provided; and (c) To develop a more positive working relationship with CRPs and local service providers.

2. ARS should consider promoting the expansion of needed services in all areas of the state, especially the expansion and establishment of CRPs in those geographical areas identified.

3. ARS should seek out innovative ways to encourage CRPs to provide the essential services needed by consumers. This might be accomplished by providing innovative approaches to funding such as providing seed funds to CRPs to partner together to provide supported services in a combined geographical service area.

4. ARS should enhance communications with CRPs to explore the possibility of developing a more open and coordinated effort to expand the availability of services in all areas of the state.

Arkansas Career Training Institute

Implications

1. Study results indicate the need to more closely align the mission of ACTI and the Field Program with the new WIOA requirements. With additional emphasis on integrated competitive employment, as well as Pre–employment Transition, Supported Employment, and expansion of services to students and youth with disabilities, there is a need for enhanced communication, training, and provision of services at ACTI and close collaboration with Field Services.

2. ACTI is being underutilized because counselors do not feel appropriate services are available for many of their consumers. This is especially true for the lower functioning and special disability groups, such as those with mental health issues. In addition, the Field Program states the referral and admission process takes too long, requires unneeded action by the counselors, and rejects the acceptance of many consumers who need services.
Recommendations

1. ARS and ACTI administrators and leadership should 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. Special consideration should be given to: (1) The emerging trends in disability populations; (2) The unserved and underserved disability groups; (3) The lack of service resources available throughout the state, especially in rural areas; (4) The absence of local services and programs; (5) The large number of geographical areas without CRPs; (6) The limited services and trained personnel in CRPs; (7) The emerging ethnic minority populations; (8) The nature and scope of services mandated for Transition; and (9) The processes used for referral and admission from the Field to the Institute.

2. ARS should design and implement strategies to improve the working relationship between ACTI and the Field Program.

3. ACTI and the Field Program should streamline the referral and admission process.

4. ACTI should improve marketing activities to prospective consumers, schools, employers, and other partners.

5. ARS and ACTI leadership should explore the feasibility and opportunities for ACTI to provide agency training/continuing education and other organizational development needs by providing the facilities and accommodations for these and related activities which may contribute to the development of needed resources related to Supported Employment and Transition personnel and other needs related to WIOA implementation

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 . (General)

Implications

1. Study results indicate the WIOA and Rehabilitation Act requirements for pre–employment and other Transition services for students and youth are at a much higher level and require a significant increase in resources in terms of manpower and services in order to meet those mandates.

2. ARS has two approaches to Transition services with different outcome goals. One is the Arkansas Transition Program (ATP), formerly the Pilot Transition Project, which operates in six school districts in Crittenden, Jefferson, Pulaski, and Washington counties. The second is a more general/traditional approach of the Field Program provided by the caseload counselors throughout the state.

3. One of the limitations of the ATP is it only works with a small number of schools and the outcomes vary from school to school; in addition, there are a limited number of referrals to the Field Program.

4. Study findings indicate there is a varying level of appreciation of the ATP by ARS managers and counselors throughout the state. The level of acceptance by VR counselors and managers is dependent upon the effectiveness of the ATP transition counselor and the number of referrals to ARS counselors.

5. Another critical issue affecting both programs is the varying responses encountered in the different school districts. Many school districts or schools within a district do not want the ATP transition or VR counselors to provide services.

Recommendations

1. ARS leadership should convene a transition task force to consider the overall priorities of the agency, including the available resources; to increase the number of counselors and positions to provide Transition services as mandated; to build capacity to provide Transition services by utilizing the available resources of WIOA partners and CRPs; and to utilize all components of the agency including not only Field Services counselors, but support staff,

management, business relations representatives, ICAN, ACTI, and others to provide direct services to Transition consumers.

2. The transition task force should review the activities and outcomes of the Arkansas Transition Program and the VR Field Services Transition program in order to identify best practices that can be implemented throughout the state.

3. ARS should explore combining the efforts of the two programs to seek economies of scale and efficiency in providing Transition services to consumers.

4. ARS district managers and management should collaborate with the state's school districts in order to facilitate the working relationship between the school districts, the agency, and local VR counselors.

5. ARS leadership and management should work with the State Department of Education to insure rehabilitation counselors have ready access to all students with disabilities.

6. ARS should develop a protocol wherein students reporting a disability, and any student with an IPE, be contacted by a transition or rehabilitation counselor prior to or during middle school/junior high.

7. ARS should develop a protocol wherein all students with an IPE have a Plan or be determined ineligible for rehabilitation services by the time they reach the age of 16.

8. ARS Field Services should form a Transition Committee to survey and assess the schools and resources in the community and within the DSU, including providers and funding, in order to set goals, objectives, and activities for the assessment and the provision of Transition services in the ARS Districts.

k. Annual Estimates (General)

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(b)). Describe:

1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services; (General)

In Arkansas, out of a total of 1,762,235 non–institutionalized population aged 18 to 64, there are 264,645 individuals with disabilities. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 American Community Survey.

2. The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under: (General)

A. The VR Program; (General)

Arkansas estimates 17,700 eligible individuals with disabilities will receive vocational rehabilitation services, including approximately 250 as students at ACTI, a state owned and operated CRP. ACTI, pursuant to the services provided by 3 psychologists and 12 psychological examiners (all of whom are stationed at the central office or regional offices),

and were considered staff of ARS' Access and Accommodations Division through September of 2015, will likewise provide approximately 6,000 evaluations for applicants and consumers referred by ARS' field staff. ARS' Access and Accommodations Division, per services provided by its occupational therapists, physical therapists and speech pathologist, is estimated to serve approximately 400 individuals with disabilities referred by ARS' field staff.

B. The Supported Employment Program; and (General)

400

C. each priority category, if under an order of selection; (General)

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is not under an Order of Selection for FY 2016.

3. The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and (General)

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services is not under an Order of Selection for FY 2016.

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. (General)

$1,173

I. State Goals and Priorities (General)

The designated State unit must:

1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed (General)

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 (SRC) developed and agreed upon goals and priorities based on the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment completed December 2015, and RSA recommendations from the most recent 107 Monitoring Review.

ARS in collaboration with the SRC proposes to implement the following to fulfill its RSA requirement of allotting 50% of its supported employment funds to serve youth with disabilities:

ARS will attempt to identify early on youth with disabilities that can benefit from supported employment services. ARS recognizes that a number of individuals with disabilities served

through the Promise Grant will be potential candidates for supported employment services and that as it develops an effective pre-employment transition program a number of individuals serviced will also benefit from supported employment services. Developing an effective referral system for individuals served through Promise and pre-employment transition will be a priority. ARS also recognizes that in some areas CRPs have established an arrangement with local school districts to provide services. ARS will make it a priority to work with local CRPs and local school districts to help identify and refer to ARS potential supported employment candidates. This will also be in line with ARS's efforts to address Section 511 requirements. In addition, as ARS revises its MOU's with Developmental Disabilities Services and Behavioral Health a priority will be established to include language addressing the provision of supported employment services to youth with disabilities.

With the effective implementation of the activities identified above and with additional guidance provided by the RSA Liaison, ARS and the SRC fully expect to meet the SE requirement.

ARS in collaboration with the SRC and in consultation with its RSA State Liaison proposes to implement the following strategies to address the requirements of Section 511. ARS will:

1.Develop and provide training for all VR Counselors on what section 511 is/does, its requirements, and agency/counselor responsibilities.

2.Revise its MOU with Developmental Disabilities to include how both agencies will develop policy/procedure to address clients effected or might potentially be effected by Section 511.

3.Revise its MOU with Behavioral Health to include how both agencies will develop policy/procedure to address clients effected or might potentially be effected by Section 511.

4.Revise its MOU with Special Education to include how both agencies will develop policy/procedure to address students effected or might potentially be effected by Section 511. The MOU will address the issue of referring students to CRPs for services while the student is still enrolled in school or referring the student to a CRP upon graduation as part of transition planning.

5.Work with Special Education to develop/provide training to special education teachers and special education supervisors regarding Section 511.

6.Work with colleges and universities within the state that train special educators and VR Counselors to include in their curriculum information on section 511.

7.Attempt to revise language in each MOU to include language that specifically addresses section 511. ARS currently has MOU's with 155 individual school districts across the state.

8.Revise its contracts with CRP's to include language that addresses the presence of policies/procedures that Section 511 issues. This may include an assurance signed by the CRP that the program will inform clients, family/caregivers, and where applicable school districts of Section 511 requirements. This may also include a form signed by the client or legal guardian to affirm the sharing of information.

ARS in collaboration with the SRC and in consultation with its RSA State Liaison proposes to implement the following strategies to address the RSA requirements related to pre-employment transition.

1.ARS recognizes some of the services provided through its piloted ATP program apply to pre-employment transition. ARS will evaluate the program's strengths and weaknesses and apply lessons learned as it implements its pre-employment transition program.

2.ARS also recognizes clients served through the PROMISE Grant may also qualify for pre-employment transition services. ARS will work with PROMISE leadership and other PROMISE partners to identify opportunities to partner/provide pre-employment services to PROMISE participants.

3.ARS will develop and provide training for all VR Counselors on what pre-employment transition is/does, its requirements, and agency/counselor responsibilities.

4.ARS will develop and implement a means to track clients served through pre-employment transition, including pre-employment expenditures thus ensuring funds earmarked address the 15% requirement

5.ARS will revise its MOU with Special Education to include pre-employment transition. As part of the MOU, ARS will request Special Education's assistance in gaining access to all students in the state age 14 an older who have an IEP or 504 plan.

6.ARS will work with Special Education to develop/provide training to special education teachers and special education supervisors on pre-employment transition.

7.ARS will work with colleges and universities within the state that train special educators and VR Counselors to include in their curriculum information on pre-employment transition.

8.ARS realizes providing pre-employment services to all Arkansas students with IEPs or 504 plans may require utilization of outside resources. ARS proposes to develop and issue a request for qualifications to determine potential outside providers of pre-employment transition services. It envisions the provider list of eligible programs might include CRPs or even educational cooperatives.

2. Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. (General)

The goals and priorities for Arkansas Rehabilitation Services are as follows:

Goal 1: Establish baselines and meet benchmarks for performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA.

Goal 2: Increase the availability of Supported Employment (SE) services to youth and adults with significant disabilities.

Goal 3: Improve public relations, marketing, information, outreach, and referrals.

Goal 4: Increase collaboration with business that leads to increased employment outcomes.

Goal 5: Expand and improve the transition services program.

Goal 6: Develop and improve Community Rehabilitation Programs including the ARS Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI).

Goal 7: Improve training, resources, and continuing education.

Goal 8: Improve ARS's ability to act as a resource when assisting individuals with disabilities and employers in addressing accommodation needs.

Goal 9: Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery for agency customers.

3. Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas: (General)

Goals and priorities have been based on the most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA, and monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

A. The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates; (General)

ARS and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) developed and agreed upon goals and priorities based on the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment completed December 2015, and RSA recommendations from the most recent 107 Monitoring Review.

B. the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and (General)

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services' first goal is to establish baselines and meet benchmarks for performance accountability measures of 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 finding and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107. (General)

ARS and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) developed and agreed upon goals and priorities based on the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment completed December 2015, and RSA recommendations from the most recent 107 Monitoring Review.

m. Order of Selection (General)

Describe:

1. Whether the designated State unit will implement and order of selection. If so, describe: (General)

A. The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services. (General)

This agency is not operating under an Order of Selection.

B. The justification for the order. (General)

This agency is not operating under an Order of Selection.

C. The service and outcome goals. (General)

This agency is not operating under an Order of Selection.

D. The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order. (General)

This agency is not operating under an Order of Selection.

E. How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and (General)

This agency is not operating under an Order of Selection.

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. (General)

This agency is not operating under an Order of Selection.

n. Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds. (General)

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. (General)

Expanding and enriching the availability of Supported Employment (SE) Services to consumers through technical assistance, specifically intense training to vendors and increase the number of referrals for SE services is the DSU's targeted result via the distribution of section 603 SE funds. The strategy employs technical assistance and key incentives to SE providers, including CRPs, designed to increase the availability of SE services to consumers. At the same time, the agency will place greater emphasis on proven and innovative supported employment outcomes and community integrated services, which result in performance based outcomes. The strategy involves an increased focus on SE

outcomes resulting in a competitive wage in integrated employment culminating in a career outcome in contrast to the traditional sheltered employment.

Based on WIOA, ARS will update interagency agreements with the state agencies serving individuals with the most significant disabilities including Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, Special Education, Behavioral Health Services, and the Division of Services for the Blind. These agreements place an emphasis on competitive employment as a desirable outcome for individuals with the most significant disabilities including those with developmental disabilities, and the partnership, roles, and responsibilities between the agencies. ARS is developing marketing strategies to increase additional certification for rural SE service providers.

ARS will maximize the ability of individuals with most significant disabilities to achieve competitive employment through customized employment, supported employment, and other individualized services.

ARS will collaborate with WIOA partners, private funding, and other state agencies to help individuals with most significant disabilities to receive extended services to increase employability in an integrated environment.

Based on the success rate for competitive employment outcomes in the inaugural Project SEARCH initiative, ARS in collaboration with ACCESS Group, Inc., other community partners, and Project SEARCH International will expand the Arkansas Project SEARCH.

2. Describe the activities to be conducted, with funds reserved pursuant to section 603(d), for youth with the most significant disabilities, including: (General)

A. the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and (General)

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).

ARS will set 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. (General)

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).

ARS will develop new service components or agreements with partners of state agencies for braided funding of extended services to assure youth with disabilities have successful employment opportunities.

ARS will 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 consumers.

o. State's Strategies (General)

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. (General)

- ARS will meet all the corrective actions required to address ARS' remaining FY 2011 compliance findings by no later than the completion of the first quarter of FY 2017.
- The agency will host or participate in business conferences including Chamber of Commerce events, Society of Human Resource Managers annual statewide meetings, and Industry Liaison Group business symposiums to promote the hiring of people with disabilities. These conferences will provide information and education on the value added services offered by ARS and will provide opportunities to establish relationships that result in hiring of consumers.
- ARS will enhance relationships with businesses whose corporate offices are headquartered in Arkansas, and will build partnerships with senior corporate officers and managers to gain support for hiring consumers.
- ARS will develop performance-based contracts with supported employment providers across the state to increase the percentage of sustainable employment outcomes.
- ARS will implement a marketing plan to increase awareness of ARS VR services to private citizens, service providers, and business and industry, and that will more clearly identify underserved communities and transition and pre-employment transition consumers as recommended in the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment.
- ARS will work with other interested parties and organizations to educate employers and businesses regarding disability issues and to provide outreach to increase opportunities for consumers to attain competitive employment. As part of this effort, Access and Accommodations will target business related conferences including Arkansas Workers' Compensation Educational Conference, Arkansas Self-insurers Association Conference, etc., to provide information and training as it relates to accommodating employees with disabilities in the workplace.
- ACTI will begin, expand, and offer training and evaluation services in local communities beyond Hot Springs. This will include Rehab Initial Diagnosis and Assessment for Clients (RIDAC) and Learning and Evaluation Center (LEC) evaluations.
- ACTI will work with statewide partners to facilitate pre-apprenticeship training for registered apprenticeships.
- ARS will focus additional efforts toward placement of ACTI graduates. This includes working with employers in automobile collision repair, automobile service repair, cosmetology, and construction technology. In addition, ACTI will continue to offer short-term programs including: Transition Employment Program, Career Readiness Certificate training, OSHA certification, Professional Career Performance Program

(Positive Behavior Support), forklift operation certification, logistics training block (Basic Logistics, Certified Logistics Technician, and Certified Production Technician), and call center training to address skills gaps identified by employers from across the state.

- ARS will, in consultation with RSA, complete necessary improvements to the Army Reserve Building adjacent to ACTI in order to improve VR services and to increase employment outcomes.
- ARS/ACTI will coordinate with local and statewide higher education institutions, independently and respectively, to provide continuing education and training for VR consumers wishing to pursue higher accreditation in skilled trades and to enhance employment outcomes.
- ACTI will realign vocational evaluation services to better serve ARS consumers. These services will focus on identifying accommodations, evaluating skills and abilities needed for in-demand careers in Arkansas, and providing comprehensive feedback to consumers and ARS counselors to facilitate more effective individual plans for employment.
- ACTI will increase use of the electronic case management system to streamline the referral process and provision of feedback to vocational counselors and managers in the field.
- ACTI staff will provide face to face meetings with field staff to supplement electronic notifications of programming changes.

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. (General)

- Field Services will offer the Access and Accommodations' Stay at Work/Return to Work and Assistive Technology at Work (AT@Work) services through all field offices for assessment and consultation as it relates to the adequacy of assistive technology equipment. Field Services will also collaborate with Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN, the State AT Program) to promote the demonstration, loan, and reuse of assistive technology equipment and related devices including assisting in the opening of a satellite office located in Fayetteville to promote statewideness.
- Field Services will collaborate with the Arkansas Alternative Financing Program (AFP), and the Telecommunications Access Program regarding assistive technology services and supports available to all Arkansans with disabilities.
- ARS will continue to collaborate with Career Technical Education and Adult Education, for VR eligible consumers with disabilities, in accordance with their respective IPEs, to provide basic and advanced skill based services and resources.

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. (General)

- ARS will continue to provide outreach activities to individuals from minority backgrounds, individuals with the most significant disabilities, and others who are unserved or underserved.

- ARS will provide training to improve outreach activities to unserved and underserved minority populations in order to improve performance on the performance accountability indicators.
- 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.

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). (General)

•ARS will meet with school designees prior to the close of the 2015/2016 school year to review referral procedures and to identify students who may benefit from SE and VR services, including pre-employment transition services.

•ARS will provide a liaison to the schools to provide education about VR services and to meet with school staff and students.

•ARS will assist students with disabilities in transitioning from school into employment, postsecondary education, and training.

•ARS will provide all of the required WIOA Section 113 pre-employment transition through job exploration counseling, work based learning experiences in integrated work settings and workplace readiness training, i.e., internships.

5. If applicable, plans for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs within the State. (General)

ARS is working with a design professional to develop a long-term critical maintenance plan for the ACTI campus, a State owned and operated CRP which is supported by approximately one third ARS' overall annual allocation of VR funds from RSA.

6. Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA. (General)

• ARS has developed a data sharing agreement and is working with the Arkansas Research Center to develop baselines for the performance accountability measures using historical data from the DSU's case management system along with corresponding employment data.

• ARS will work with the other core programs in consultation with the Arkansas SRC and RSA's State Liaison, to facilitate a common intake process and electronic protocols that will allow for near real-time evaluation of performance accountability measures.

• ARS will provide training and establish performance goals for VR counselors and business relations representatives to improve outreach activities to unserved and underserved minority populations.

• To improve outreach to unserved and underserved minority populations, ARS will continue to participate in Community Connection and Partners in Progress events targeted in regions with a distressed economy and poor performing school systems. Representatives from every service component including Field Services, ACTI, Special Programs, and Business Relations participate in these events. Employers are encouraged to participate in mini-job fair activities.

• Access and Accommodations in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Program (ICAN), State AT Program, will provide and disseminate brochures printed in Spanish to reach more Arkansas residents and inform them of the benefits of assistive technology.

• District managers and business relations consultants will continue to promote VR services on morning radio and TV talk shows to increase consumer awareness of services and to educate businesses about the availability of the qualified and dependable workforce represented by ARS consumers.

• ARS will recruit qualified rehabilitation counselors, including bi-lingual English Sign Language VR counselors, to fill vacancies to meet or exceed past performance in employment outcomes.

• ARS will increase performance in Supported Employment for adults and youth with disabilities with emphasis on serving an increased number of individuals with developmental/intellectual disabilities, behavioral health concerns, and cognitive disabilities.

• ARS will use the comprehensive monitoring instrument for CRPs, including ACTI, developed in response to RSA compliance findings from the FY 2011 monitoring review that remain unresolved as of date. The monitoring instrument will establish performance indicators including substantial increases in employment outcomes. The recently developed monitoring instrument will likewise evaluate if Field Services' needs are met for service provision to ARS consumers.

• Access and Accommodations in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Network will work with the Division of Services for the Blind to develop a certification review team for compliance of the one stop delivery system with section 188 of WIOA and applicable provisions of the ADA.

7. Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities. (General)

• ARS will integrate the use of CSAVR's Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP) to connect VR consumers with business partners, and will continue to recruit businesses to list employment opportunities in the TAP.

• ARS will collaborate with the Workforce Center staff to increase the ability of ARS staff to conduct intake interviews and take applications in a confidential manner while located at a Workforce Center site.

• ARS district managers will conduct presentations to Workforce employees to increase and improve working relationships and collaborative efforts.

• ARS will collaborate with Workforce Centers to identify potential employers to provide employment opportunities, apprenticeships, and on the job training for transition students.

• Access and Accommodations, AT@Work will provide an AT professional housed in the Fayetteville office to assist ARS counselors, consumers, and employers to increase access to Stay at Work and Return to Work programs. In addition, Access and Accommodations in collaboration with Increasing Capabilities Access Network (ICAN), State AT Program, will open a satellite office in Northwest Arkansas to support state wideness and access to assistive technology.

8. How the agency's strategies will be used to: (General)

A. achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment; (General)

Strategies to Achieve Goals and Priorities

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 develop performance-based contracts with supported employment providers to increase the percentage of supported employment closures.

• ARS will provide training to improve outreach activities to unserved and underserved minority populations in order to improve performance.

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 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 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 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's 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.

• Area 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 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 consumers 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 rehab area 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 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 to identify local resources and continue to increase awareness of ARS services. ARS will refer consumers to College Bound Arkansas to prepare transition students with disabilities for college, will continue to sponsor the annual Youth Leadership Forum (YLF), and will support the annual Disability Awareness activities.

• ARS counselors will contact all special education teachers of students with an IEP prior to or during the junior year, and when there is staff turnover will notify schools as soon as a new counselor is assigned.

• ARS leadership will promote all students with an IEP be provided eligibility determination for VR services before they graduate high school.

• 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 five-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 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 outcomes 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 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 on the new services and standards for Community Rehabilitation Programs beginning July 1, 2016.

• 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 consumers 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 8: Improve ARS's 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 9: Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery for agency consumers.

• ARS will ensure the development and implementation of comprehensive training for district managers and counselors to effectively serve consumers.

• 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 consumers 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 short term 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 consumers.

B. support innovation and expansion activities; and (General)

ARS commits to driving innovation and expansion of activities directly provided or facilitated by the agency that lead to competitive integrated employment while harnessing the unique talents and abilities of the people we serve.

ARS will invest in innovative services and programming tied to industry sectors with projected short and long term growth. ARS leadership will focus its efforts on expanding programing and services that lead to increases in the performance accountability measures. This includes opportunities to better collaborate with other core programs and to forge mutually beneficial partnerships with business and industry partners.

Another high priority for ARS is efficiency. The driving forces are leveraging resources through committed partnerships and maximizing the results of each dollar spent to serve people with disabilities.

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. (General)

Overcoming barriers to equitable access and the full participation of Arkansans with disabilities is an essential and indispensable goal of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services' statewide needs assessment. While the general population is well served, the statewide needs assessment recommends a greater emphasis be placed on providing state VR services and supported employment services in rural areas of the state. As part of a comprehensive strategy to address the need, ARS has instituted a program called Community Connections, is partnering with more local service provider agencies, and hosts career fairs that targets individuals with disabilities - especially the youth. Additionally, the implementation of programs like the Transition Employment Program and Project Search provide opportunities to acquire employability training and independent living skills to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities while ensuring equitable access to VR consumers throughout the state. Moreover, ARS has identified specific areas of the state that have historically been underserved primarily as a result of the small number of supported employment vendors located in the rural areas of the state. ARS is working diligently to expand the service areas of existing supported employment vendors while concomitantly developing incentives to establish new supported employment vendors for the express purpose of ensuring equitable access and greater opportunities for participation for individuals with disabilities.

p. Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals (General)

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: (General)

A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals. (General)

The goals and strategies for FY 2014 and FY 2015 are:

Goal 1: To meet or exceed the benchmarks for the state performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.

Strategy

• ARS successfully employed 3,077 consumers to competitive integrated employment.

• ARS hosted Community Connection Events at each local office, which provided an overview of VR services to business and industry. ARS partnered with local businesses and industry to answer consumer's questions and provide an overview of the labor needs.

• ARS promoted services through radio, newspaper, and other activities to reach potential consumers, which increased the number of referrals.

ARS Performance Standards and Indicators for FY 2014 and FY 2015

Performance Indicator 1.1 The data indicates the number of individuals in Arkansas who achieved an employment outcome increased from 2,917 in FY 2013 to 3,044 in FY 2014 and to 3,077 in FY 2015. This met the federal benchmark of equaling or exceeding performance in the last two fiscal years.

Performance Indicator 1.2 In FY 2014 the data indicates 65.8 percent of the individuals in Arkansas who exited the VR program after receiving services achieved an employment outcome. In FY 2015 the data indicates 72.4 percent of the individuals in Arkansas who exited the VR program after receiving services achieved an employment outcome. This exceeded the federal benchmark of 55.8 percent in both years.

Performance Indicator 1.3 The data indicates the percentage of individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome, which exited the VR program in competitive, self-employment, or Business Enterprise Program (BEP) employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage in Arkansas is 98.6 percent for FY 2014 and 99.5 percent for FY 2015, which exceeded the federal benchmark of 72.6 percent.

Performance Indicator 1.4 The data indicates of all individuals who exited the VR program in competitive, self-employment, or Business Enterprise Program (BEP) employment, with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the percentage who are individuals with

significant disabilities in Arkansas is 97.9 percent in FY 2014 and 98 percent in FY 2015, which exceeded the federal benchmark of 62.4 percent.

Performance Indicator 1.5 The data indicates the result for Performance Indicator 1.5 in Arkansas is the ratio of 0.66 in FY 2014 and 0.64 in FY 2015, which exceeded the federal benchmark of 0.52.

Performance Indicator 1.6 The data indicates the mathematical difference between the percentage reporting their own income as the largest single source of economic support at exit and the percentage reporting their own income as the largest single source of economic support at application in Arkansas is 53.4 for FY 2014 and 56.7 in FY 2015, which met and exceeded the federal benchmark of 53.0.

Standard 2: Equal Access to Services

Performance Indicator 2.1 The data indicates the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds, as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities in Arkansas is 0.88 for FY 2014 and 0.91 for FY 2015, which exceeded the federal benchmark of 0.80.

ARS Evaluation and Progress on Goal 1 ARS met or exceeded the minimum performance required on all performance standards and indicators during FY 2014 and FY 2015. Performance on standard 1.1 employment outcomes went from 2,917 to 3,044, a 4.2 percent increase for FY 2014 and from 3,044 to 3,077, a 2 percent increase for FY 2015. Performance on standard 2.1 Minority Background Service Rate went from 0.84 to 0.88 in FY 2014 and from 0.88 to 0.91 in FY 2015, which exceeded the minimum standard.

Section 116 WIOA Performance Accountability Measures

ARS is working with the Arkansas Research Center to perform an analysis of historical data to develop baselines for the performance accountability measures, which should be completed in January 2016. These baselines will be used to negotiate benchmarks for the performance accountability measures as listed under section 116 of WIOA, which include:

1. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;

2. The percentage of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program;

3. The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;

4. The percentage of program participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent (subject to clause (iii)), during participation in or within 1 year after exit from the program;

5. The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and

6. The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers established pursuant to clause (iv).

7. Any additional state identified performance accountability indicators.

Youth

1. The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit from the program;

2. The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment, during the fourth quarter after exit from the program; and

3. The primary indicators of performance described in subclauses (III) through (VI) of subparagraph (A)(i)(iii) Indicator Relating to Credential. For purposes of clause (i)(IV), or clause (ii)(III) with respect to clause (i)(IV), program participants who obtain a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent shall be included in the percentage counted as meeting the criterion under such clause only if such participants, in addition to obtaining such diploma or its recognized equivalent, have obtained or retained employment or are in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within 1 year after exit from the program.

Goal 2: ARS will use a portion of the funds in compliance with Section 101(a)(18) for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities.

Strategy

• ARS will use a portion of the funds under Section 101(a)(18) for the support of the SRC and/or the SILC.

• ARS will continue Expos across the state to provide marketing of ARS services and outreach to local communities targeting individuals with minority backgrounds and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved.

ARS Evaluation and Progress on Goal 2

ARS hosted open houses statewide to provide awareness and education of agency services to potential consumers with disabilities, vendors, stakeholders, and business and industry.

ARS hosted Partners in Progress events statewide, which focused on business and industry's needs for personnel. ARS invited employers into local offices to answer questions about potential jobs and openings for ARS consumers who were trained and ready for work.

ARS established On-the-Job Training (OJT) cooperative agreements with business and industry to provide career readiness and real life work experiences for consumers. ARS's marketing strategy significantly improved the VR program's name recognition and resulted in improved referrals and markedly increased employment outcomes over past years.

Goal 3: Increase the availability of Supported Employment (SE) Services to consumers by providing technical assistance to vendors and increasing the number of referrals for SE services.

Strategy

• ARS will continue to collaborate with the Developmental Disabilities Services and Behavioral Health Services agencies to explore methods to use Medicaid Waiver and Medicaid restructuring to expand and improve SE services.

• ARS will continue to provide technical assistance and access to certification for SE providers and standards for job coaches to expand and improve SE services.

ARS Evaluation and Progress on Goal 3

Over a two year period, ARS has increased the number of certified SE vendors by 52 percent from 35 to 67. In addition, some vendors have satellite SE offices (29) around the state. ARS has assisted 241 individuals in successful competitive integrated employment, which is an increase in successful closures by 78 percent.

ARS trained 343 participants for job coach certification statewide. The training venue options were in-person or through the new free online job coach training. Some individuals certified were employed by Workforce Development entities. The online training is hosted on the Arkansas Waiver Association website, and includes testing with results forwarded to ARS to certify job coaches and track job coaches by certified vendors.

ARS, in partnership with Vision Quest and the AR Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program team, developed standard definitions for supported employment services, plus rates and reimbursement methodology through technical assistance received 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 for expansion and improvement of 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 collaborated with a group of stakeholders (20) to develop and update the job coach training certificate program. The stakeholders group included new and long standing SE leadership who represented large, small, and rural providers, potential SE providers of developmental disabilities, the Developmental Disabilities Providers Association, the Arkansas Waiver Association, and the Arkansas APSE Association. ARS developed a training program and updated the testing requirements for job coaches. The job coach training website went live in FY 2015

ARS provided training on updates to SE policy requirements in the agency manual updated January 2014, Basic SE, and 21st Century Supported Employment to 380 participants.

Goal 4: Improve public relations, marketing, information, outreach, and referrals.

Strategy

• ARS will implement the marketing plan to increase awareness of ARS VR services to both private citizens, service providers, and business and industry as recommended in the

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. The goal of the marketing program is to increase employment outcomes to improve performance on the Standards and Indicators.

• ARS will develop outreach strategies designed to improve access to VR services for the state's Hispanic residents living with a disability. Materials and information will be provided in a variety of formats for field personnel to distribute at the local community level. The materials will provide special attention to strategies designed to reach and serve a growing diverse population in the state.

• ARS Expos will provide marketing of ARS services and outreach to local communities targeting individuals with minority backgrounds and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved.

• ARS will develop educational and informational materials designed to inform potential referral sources about the referral process and the scope of ARS services as recommended in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

ARS Evaluation and Progress on Goal 4

ARS's marketing strategy significantly improved ARS's name recognition and resulted in improved referrals and markedly increased employment outcomes over past years. The ARS Expos, a community centered manifestation of the marketing approach, contributed significantly to the increase in employment outcomes, including the minority communities. ARS will utilize Partners in Progress and Community Connections for outreach in the future.

Goal 5: Improve and expand job development, placement, and employment.

Strategy

• ARS will increase the number of business relations representatives placement specialists employed within the state from 14 to 20 in order to have them available at all Field Services offices and ACTI.

• A statewide advisory group will be established composed of individuals from business and industry, counselors, job placement specialists, and other appropriate professionals to explore participating in the National Employment Team.

• The local business advisory group at ACTI will collaborate with the statewide ARS business advisory group with the goal of expanding job placement and employment outcomes.

ARS Evaluation and Progress on Goal 5

Over FY 2014 and FY 2015, ARS deployed 14 business relations representatives.

The local ACTI business advisory group has successfully assisted with job placement at ACTI. Beginning in July 2013, several members of the advisory group began facilitating internships for ACTI students. Success at these first internship locations has allowed for expansion to other employers in the area. To date over 150 students have been placed in local internships; the program has clearly demonstrated to local employers the viability of consumers served at ACTI to fill competitive employment vacancies; and has resulted in additional closures.

However, the number and percentage of ACTI's consumers receiving competitive integrated employment outcomes remains particularly low given ACTI's annual budget of approximately $13,000,000. For example, 80 of ARS' total of 3,044 competitive integrated employment outcomes in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 were secured by individuals served by ACTI. Likewise 102 of ARS' total of 3,077 competitive integrated employment outcomes in FY 2015 were secured by individuals served by ACTI. The average hourly earnings reported by ACTI for these consumers with competitive integrated employment outcomes in FY 2014 and FY 2015 was, respectively $8.58 and $8.88.

Over the past two years, ARS certified 61 external job placement vendors to assist in the expansion of employment opportunities around the state, which is a 75 percent increase.

ARS's Project SEARCH employment success rate was 91.7 percent with the participants receiving employer benefits.

Goal 6: Expand and improve transition services program.

Strategy

• ARS leadership will work with the State Department of Education to insure rehabilitation counselors have ready access to all students with disabilities as recommended by the Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

• ARS leadership will work with the school districts throughout the state to facilitate and enhance the working relationship between the school districts and local rehabilitation district managers and counselors.

• ARS will promote all students reported to have a disability and an IEP be contacted by a transition or rehabilitation counselor prior to or during their junior year of school.

• ARS will promote all students with an IEP will be provided eligibility determination for VR services before they graduate high school.

• ARS policy indicates an IPE will be developed for all eligible students before they exit the school setting.

ARS Evaluation and Progress on Goal 6

• ARS worked in collaboration with Arkansas Transition Services to host Reality Fairs statewide that focused on postsecondary education, budgeting, and dressing for success.

• ARS field counselors were assigned as liaisons for each high school statewide. Each counselor visited the assigned high school twice during the year and provided information on vocational rehabilitation services.

• Eligible transition students had an individualized plan for employment completed by their graduation date.

• ARS participated in Transition Fairs, local Summits, and Centered Planning Meetings to help educate teachers, administration, and parents regarding ARS transitional services.

• In the inaugural class of the ATP/ACTI Transition Employment Program - 100 percent of the 15 TEP participants completed the five-week program, and successfully completed the OSHA Certification Training to become General Industry OSHA certified. The success of the inaugural class is evidenced by the increase of applicants for summer 2015 TEP from 16 applicants for the pilot class to 42. Through the efforts of ATP and ATS, there is an increase from one to eight in the number of student applicants not served by an ATP counselor.

• The success of the UAMS Project SEARCH adult model is evidenced by the quality of job placements of the inaugural class. The closure rate was 91.7 percent for first year completers. All were working full-time and the top wage was $11.86.

• The UAMS Project SEARCH success has contributed to the growth of the Business Advisory Council (BAC), which consists of 18 major employers (Dillard's, Baptist Health Hospital, Embassy Suites, City of Little Rock Parks & Recreation, Maverick Transportation, St. Vincent Health System, UAMS, and others).

• ARS leadership approved the request to include the expansion of Project SEARCH in its Legislative Budget request (submitted June 2015). Funding will allow ARS to expand the UAMS Project SEARCH site, continue funding the Fayetteville youth model, and add additional sites in the state over the next five years. ACTI is supporting the UAMS Project SEARCH by providing room, board, recreational activities, and transportation to and from UAMS, which enables more general VR counselors from outside Central Arkansas to refer their consumers to this evidence-based project. This accommodation has assisted ARS in recruiting applicants from across the state.

• Through the PROMISE grant, competitively awarded to the University of Arkansas, ARS has had the opportunity to provide meaningful and comprehensive pre-employment transition services to an additional 1,000 youth selected to participate in AR PROMISE. ARS transition specialists funded by the PROMISE Grant are responsible for serving youth on SSI beginning at age 14, and for providing career readiness training, soft-skill development, career exploration activities, work-readiness training, and administering and/or utilizing skills and needs self-inventories, career interest assessments. Likewise, ARS will fund, as practicable, the two paid work experiences for participating students placed in jobs developed by the Department of Workforce Services.

• Through the joint efforts of ATP and ATS, significant progress has been made in piloting the CIRCLES program in fall 2015. All ATP counselors, general VR counselors, and the ATS consultants have been trained.

• By spring 2014, ARS had entered into Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with 120 individual high schools; however, these MOUs will be re-negotiated based upon WIOA regulations.

Goal 7: Develop and improve Community Rehabilitation Programs.

Strategy

• ARS will continue assignment of a rehabilitation counselor as a liaison to each CRP in each District.

• ARS district managers will assume a more active role with CRPs for purposes of developing a more positive working relationship as recommended by the Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

• ARS will identify the specific services needed, but not currently provided by CRPs in their area including services for emerging populations and low-functioning consumers as recommended by the Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

• ARS will complete an instrument used to monitor CRPs and the ARS Arkansas Career Training Institute to ensure agency performance standards are met in compliance with the FY 2011 RSA On-Site Monitoring.

• ARS and ACTI administrators and leadership 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.

• A task force representative of a cross section of ARS personnel will convene to analyze current and future needs and to provide input regarding the role and function of ACTI and the nature and scope of services provided.

• ARS will develop short-term and long-range maintenance plans for ACTI.

• ACTI will retain the services of an architectural consultant to improve the efficiency and ability to expedite the process of addressing infrastructural concerns.

• The FY 2013 Comprehensive Needs Assessment recommends ARS continues to work with the RSA to address the identified infrastructure issues and needs to ensure the safety of students and staff; to acquire the federal property and facilities available for the expansion and improvement of services; and increase the number of individuals with disabilities served at ACTI.

• ARS will implement replacement of the ACTI water system; acquisition and renovations of the former Army Reserve Building at 200 Reserve St., Hot Springs, Arkansas; and complete removal and build-back process for the concrete wall roof panel on Buildings 53, 54, and 55 at the ARS Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) facility.

ARS Evaluation and Progress on Goal 7

ARS currently has a short-term facility maintenance plan that includes significant maintenance to Building 1, Ross Hall, and the former Army Reserve Building. ARS has retained the services of architectural consultants and the scope of work for the long-range facility plan has been developed. However, further development of this plan has been delayed until FY 2016 to allow for completion of projects identified in the short-term plan. To date milestones of the short-term plan include completion of build-back of the fascia panels on buildings 53, 54, and 55; completion of all the training areas in the former Army Reserve Building; and completion of infrastructure components of the ACTI campus water system. The remaining construction is limited to the fire suppression components of the water system in buildings 1 and Ross Hall. This will be completed in February 2016.

ARS trained 129 individuals on revamping of Community Rehabilitation Program services, which covered information about transitioning from fee for service to performance based

outcomes, new draft CRP services, and other states' mandated Employment First Executive Orders. The participants included: ARS field staff, ARS CRPs, ARS SE providers, Developmental Disabilities providers, the Developmental Disabilities Provider Association, the Arkansas Waiver Association, ARS employment vendors, and the Department of Education - Arkansas PROMISE grant staff. ARS presented to 113 individuals with disabilities participating in a facility based program about the Americans with Disabilities Act and employment.

During CRP site monitoring visits, ARS outlined the changes in the draft WIOA regarding community based services versus segregated settings, including the use of programs holding subminimum wage certificates.

Goal 8: Enhance collaboration and partnerships with the Workforce Development System.

Strategy

• ARS will collaborate with the Workforce Center staff to increase the ability of ARS staff to conduct intake interviews and take applications in a confidential manner while located at a Workforce Center site.

• ARS district managers will conduct follow-up contacts with Workforce managers to increase and improve working relationships and collaborative efforts.

• ACTI has received approval to provide testing for the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services CRC candidates who are individuals with disabilities. The individuals must be VR consumers. The CRC is the National Career Readiness Certificate developed by ACT. CRC is a national industry-recognized, portable, evidence-based credential that certifies essential skills needed for workplace success.

ARS Evaluation and Progress on Goal 8

As of September 30, 2015, 391 ARS consumers have attained a career readiness certificate as a result of the collaboration between the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services and ACTI.

ARS counselors attended Arkansas Workforce Centers (AWC) biweekly to increase referrals and ARS's presence. AWC provided counselors office space and telephone and internet connections to help ensure service delivery.

ARS district managers provided PowerPoint presentations about services to employees at the Workforce Centers. AWC managers provided presentations to ARS employees' statewide regarding workforce services.

ARS district managers are committee members on local workforce committees statewide and provide input regarding ARS services. ARS partnered with ADWS to host job fairs, job summits, and mock interviews to prepare consumers for employment outcomes.

Goal 9: Enhance training and continuing education.

Strategy

• Significant training and continuing education is recommended by the Comprehensive Needs Assessment for most if not all agency personnel in a broad range of areas. ARS will review the needs identified in the Training Needs Assessment conducted by ARS Staff Development and Training.

• ARS will convene a task force as recommended in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment representing a cross section of Agency personnel to analyze the identified needs and to assist in the design of the Training and Education Plan. ARS will consider personnel from the Regional TACE program.

• Staff Development and Training will use the information from the task force proposed above to develop its in-service training proposal for subsequent years.

• ARS will develop and implement a Training and Continuing Education Plan designed to meet these needs.

ARS Evaluation and Progress on Goal 9

The Training Needs Assessment in general indicated soft skills training in a number of areas such as: Dealing with Difficult People, Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (CPI), Team Building, and Conflict Resolution were needed. In addition there was a great need for increased information with job placement. Since 2010 for job placement, ARS has offered Career Development Facilitator (CDF) training, which covers resume writing, career selection, and mock interviews to name a few of the topics.

The ARS task force met on an as needed basis and consisted of district managers and various staff members with collaboration from the regional TACE program.

Staff Development and Training continues to monitor the needs of the agency and will modify the training and education plan as needed.

ARS has a Training and Education Plan utilized by the field staff, and is currently working on a more detailed plan for the clerical support staff. Other professions in the agency have their specific plans and continuing education for their disciplines.

Goal 10: Develop and improve agency Information Technology (IT) to enhance services to individuals with disabilities.

Strategy

• Standardization of equipment and software towards mobile and/or web based options.

• Standardization of IT policy.

• Continuous training for staff in IT.

• Continue to pursue hiring IT staff to meet agency needs.

• ARS will integrate its core service management system with special programs and ACTI instructional programs client service tracking mechanisms for the purpose of enhanced and comprehensive wrap around services for the state's VR clients.

ARS Evaluation and Progress on Goal 10

IT understands the most commonly used device by Arkansans (when accessing state agency information) is the mobile phone. As a result, the Arkansas Department of Career Education, ARS's parent agency, continues to pursue web-based and mobile ready tools. The Communications Department is developing a new web portal built on responsive design that will adjust to the form factor of the device accessing the agency's information. IT utilized secured, encrypted SaaS (Software as a Service) for the web-based client case management system for Rehabilitation Services.

IT is improving Cybersecurity efforts. All IT Policy is documented as part of the Human Resources personnel documentation and is required to be reviewed, acknowledged, and signed by all employees and their managers. IT plans to utilize, with Dell SecureWorks' staff, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and Data Privacy Security Awareness training in the coming months. Once in place, each staff person will be required to complete the training modules each calendar year.

IT continues to seek out the necessary training to stay at the forefront of Cybersecurity and over all professional development, and has established an ongoing self-paced training process where staff utilize PluralSight (a computer based training application) to keep up with the latest changes in Active Directory, Server Management, Web, and other job related functions like project management, MS SharePoint, and database management. IT has deployed the Microsoft IT Academy training for Developers and IT Staff has been trained on Office 365 Administration.

The IT Department continues to need stability. With 85 percent of its Helpdesk and Network Administration Support outsourced, IT recognizes the need to reinstitute a fully in-house IT Administrative Support Department. Outsourcing the Administrative Support Team has helped to bring in staff with more current skills and training, but the turnover rate of contracted staff remains an a challenge.

IT conducted a needs assessment for a new student information and client services system to be built by ARS Field Services' Case Management System provider, Libera. However, Libera recently informed ARS it will no longer provide software development for VR. ARS must develop a new plan to integrate core service management. ACTI has hired a new Assistant Administrator, who will develop a plan for implementing better tracking of students by increasing its access to employment data services available from the Department of Workforce Services.

Outreach

Strategy

The agency implemented the ARS Expo program. The Expos are marketing and outreach programs that inform Arkansas citizens about the availability of ARS services. The Expos provide outreach activities to individuals from minority backgrounds, individuals with the most significant disabilities, and others who are unserved or underserved. The Expos take place in communities across the state, and include representatives from Field Services, ACTI, Special Programs, and all services components of ARS. Employers are present for job fair activities. Media was used to inform the community about Expo activities. Activities extended beyond the regular work-day hours in order to serve individuals after work hours.

The lessons learned from the ACE/ARS Expo program will be incorporated into all outreach activities. This includes education and outreach to internal and external stakeholders.

ARS will implement the marketing plan to increase awareness of ARS VR services to both private citizens, service providers, and business and industry as recommended in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. The marketing plan will utilize an approach of direct mail, public service announcements, video, and printed materials including a format having continuity of style and color for the various components of the agency. Activities in the marketing plan include outreach to unserved and underserved populations to increase employment outcomes for those populations. The goal of the marketing program is to increase employment outcomes to improve performance on the Standards and Indicators.

ARS Evaluation and Progress

In July of 2012, ARS awarded a contract to a marketing firm to increase awareness of ARS VR services to private citizens, service providers, and business and industry as recommended in the Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment. The goal of the marketing program is to increase employment outcomes to improve performance on the Standards and Indicators.

ARS is developing a multi-pronged program for serving the state's Hispanic community. Counselor training sessions have been implemented wherein counselors and professional assessment staff learn the cultural values of the state's Hispanic community and ways to break down cultural and language barriers to accessing VR services. Additionally, transition counselors are working with the state's Hispanic transition consumers encouraging them to consider VR counseling as a career. ARS is developing a statewide strategy with the state's graduate VR programs in higher education to recruit more Hispanic/Spanish speaking students who would subsequently be recruited by ARS.

ARS has fully developed the marketing and branding of VR services delivered by the agency. Agency expos grew in attendance and co-sponsored collaboration. The agency now has a robust website offering interactive video vignettes enabling the public to learn about every program and service offered by the agency.

B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities. (General)

While progress was made toward achievement of goals and priorities, the challenges experienced as part of the progress were renovations at ACTI which interrupted client training programs, counselor attrition, and transition of senior leadership.

The recent state needs assessment indicated ACTI may be an option for supportive employment services. There are several challenges with this recommendation. First, ACTI is located in West Central Arkansas which makes providing statewide job coaching and required follow-up with consumers utilizing SE services problematic. There are just too few CRPs in the rural areas adding to the challenges with providing services. In addition, significant changes would need to be made to the current admissions practices.

To accommodate clients with developmental disabilities ACTI would need to dramatically increase the outsourcing and/or staffing levels to provide required attendant care, psychological/medical therapies, residential assistance, and security. This has the potential

to drive costs at the center to unprecedented levels with little or no increase to WIOA performance accountability measures.

However, there is a need to increase the availability of SE services for the state as demonstrated in the comprehensive needs assessment. Also in the comprehensive needs assessment it was inferred the decrease referrals to ACTI was the lack of services for consumers with developmental disabilities or serious mental health disabilities.

While this may be one factor in decreased referrals, there may be others that contributed to the decrease. Part of the issue is lack of knowledge about programming options at ACTI by the field. While internal education and outreach activities are conducted, there is much work to be done because of the number of new counselors in the field and the growing variety of services directly provided or facilitated by ACTI. Field Services is assisting in this area by having the district managers include ACTI staff in the district meetings to update staff about ACTI programs and to collaborate to assist clients with services. Furthermore, ACTI and Field Services monitor referrals updates on a continual basis to review

In regards to referrals from the field, the increase in field counselor vacancies contributed to the decrease as well as to the insufficient face to face contact with consumers. The lack of field VR counselors required leadership to transfer additional caseloads to existing VR counselors. This, in turn, also added to the caseload challenges from current staff. However, ACTI and Field Services are working together to address transportation issues for the clients who do not want to move to Hot Springs to attend ACTI to assist with retaining referrals. Furthermore, there is further collaboration to bring ACTI programs to the field offices by both introducing mobile training programs like OSHA, and reassigning 15 of the 18 staff previously classified as Access and Accommodations Division staff to ACTI - namely, 3 psychologists and 12 psychological examiners. These reclassified staff will continue to provide approximately 6,000 annual rehabilitation initial diagnoses and assessments for applicants and eligible consumers referred by VR counselors from ARS' Field Services Division. But, per their reclassification and supervision by ACTI's director, ARS proposes that these reclassified psychologists and psychological examiners will be better attuned to the full array of VR and SE services available to ARS' consumers at ACTI. Hence, ARS projects a substantial increase of referrals to ACTI by better-informed VR counselors.

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: (General)

A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals. (General)

The goals from 4.11(c)(4) for FY 2014 and FY 2015 were to increase the availability of Supported Employment (SE) Services to consumers by providing technical assistance to vendors and to increase the number of referrals for SE services. The strategy employs technical assistance and key incentives to SE providers, including CRPs that are designed to increase the availability of SE services to consumers. At the same time, the agency will place greater emphasis on proven and innovative supported employment outcomes and integrated community performance based outcomes.

The strategy involves an increased focus on SE outcomes resulting in a competitive wage integrated employment that culminates in a career outcome in contrast to the traditional sheltered employment. Based on WIOA, ARS will update the interagency agreements with the state agencies serving individuals with the most significant disabilities including: 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) The agreement places an emphasis on competitive employment as a desirable outcome for individuals with the most significant disabilities including those with developmental disabilities and mental health diagnoses.

ARS is developing additional certification criteria for SE service providers. The criteria include updated requirements for certification and training for job coaches. ARS increased fee schedules and negotiated contracts for services with providers in an attempt to increase service providers, and incentives to service providers, to increase employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

ARS Evaluation and Progress

- Over the last two years, ARS increased SE referral authorizations by 69 percent (370) with 273 individuals securing SE employment outcomes, which is an increase in successful closures by 73 percent. However, SE outcomes constituted only 4.1 percent and 4.8 percent, respectively, in FY 2014 and FY 2015; substantially lower than the national average for all VR General Agencies of approximately 12 percent.
- ARS collaborated with a group of stakeholders (20) to develop and update the job coach training certificate program. The stakeholders group included new and long standing SE leadership who represented large, small, and rural providers, potential SE providers of developmental disabilities, the Developmental Disabilities Providers Association, the Arkansas Waiver Association, and the Arkansas APSE Association.

B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities. (General)

The agency has made significant progress in providing SE services to clients. This is documented by the number of clients served. The challenge of availability of services statewide remains. Progress is being made in this area by existing vendors expanding territories served, by the addition of new vendors, and by the modification of the reimbursement structure.

3. The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA. (General)

ARS is working with the Arkansas Research Center to perform an analysis of historical data to develop baselines for the performance accountability measures, which should be completed in September 30, 2016. These baselines will be used to negotiate benchmarks for the performance accountability measures as listed under section 116 of WIOA.

4. How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized. (General)

Title I funds for innovation and expansion are reserved and used to support the SRC in the annual resource plan. Title I funds are also used, along with funds from the Division of Services for the Blind, to support the SILC annual budget. Innovation and expansion funds supported ARS community forums, called ACE/ARS Expos, in FY 2014 and FY 2015 in several communities. The Expos are marketing and outreach efforts to reach individuals with disabilities, parents, community leaders, schools, and businesses in the community. The Expos are a combination outreach and job fair with booth displays of ARS field services, transition services, assistive technology, Arkansas Career Training Institute, Adult Basic Education, and employers.

q. Quality, Scope, and Extent of Supported Employment Services. (General)

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. (General)

ARS continues initiatives to expand and improve Supported Employment (SE) Services for individuals with the most significant disabilities throughout the state. ARS, in partnership with WIOA partners and other state agencies, are reviewing Employment First status for the state of AR. ARS will be updating Interagency Agreements with the state agencies serving individuals with the most significant disabilities or providing employment related services available to individuals with disabilities.

The partners collaborating with ARS include: 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). These agreements emphasize competitive integrated employment as a desirable outcome for individuals with the most significant disabilities, and the partnership, roles and responsibilities between the agencies.

Another purchased service agreement is in place with SE service vendors to implement strategies to expand the SE system including job placement services and extended services. Strategies include increasing the number of vendors offering SE and job placement statewide through enhanced incentives; utilizing a performance based approach with CRPs and SE providers; revised CRP fee schedules; and commitment from partnering state agencies to emphasize employment as a high priority outcome as a result of the Governor’s Executive Order Employment First Initiative for People with Disabilities.

- ARS collaborated with a group of stakeholders (20) to develop and update the job coach training certificate program. The stakeholders group included new and long standing SE leadership who represented large, small, and rural providers, potential SE providers of developmental disabilities, the Developmental Disabilities Providers Association, the Arkansas Waiver Association, and the Arkansas APSE Association. ARS developed a training program and updated the testing requirements for job coaches.
- ARS hosted job coach certification training at four regional venues and initiated the free online training with a total of 343 participants. Initiated in FY 2015, the free web–based job coach certification training, hosted on the Arkansas Waiver Association website, includes testing with results forwarded to ARS to certify job coaches and track job coaches by certified vendors.
- ARS provided training on updates to SE policy requirements in the agency manual updated January 2014, Basic SE, and 21st Century Supported Employment to 380 participants.
- ARS, in partnership with the DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services and other state partners, has extensively reviewed the current MOUs and will initiate revised MOUs based on the WIOA, and new rates and reimbursement methodology created through the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment "Vision Quest" initiative for Infusing Integrated Employment in Medicaid Waiver and State Plan Options.

Over a two year period, active SE cases went from 278 in FY 2013 to 603 in FY 2015, a 46 percent increase in individuals served. However, SE outcomes constituted only 4.1 percent and 4.8 percent, respectively, in FY 2014 and FY 2015; substantially lower than the national average for all VR General Agencies of approximately 12 percent.

ARS provides Supported Employment (SE) Services in compliance with the Definitions in the Act based on a determination of the needs of an eligible individual, as specified in an individualized plan for employment. When job training is provided, it is provided on–site.

SE services include placement in a competitive integrated setting for the maximum number of hours possible based on the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of individuals with the most significant disabilities. SE providers are utilized statewide. All providers of SE services to ARS consumers agree in writing to provide extended services for the consumer as long as the consumer has the current job.

2. The timing of transition to extended services. (General)

The timing of the transition from employment to extended services is immediate. Extended services begin immediately after the case is closed status 26 when the employment outcome is achieved.

Certifications (General)

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **Arkansas Rehabilitation Services**

Name of designated State agency **Arkansas Rehabilitation 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 1 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 (General)

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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 (General)

Certification Regarding Lobbying — Vocational Rehabilitation (General)

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(General)

(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.

(General)

(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.

(General)

(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 (General)

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 (General)

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(General)

(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.

(General)

(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.

(General)

(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 (General)

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).

Assurances (General)

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: (General)

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: (General)

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: (General)

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. (General)

b. the establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. (General)

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. (General)

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). (General)

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. (General)

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. (General)

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. (General)

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. (General)

i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act . (General)

j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act. (General)

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. (General)

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. (General)

m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act. (General)

4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: (General)

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. (General)

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 . (General)

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? (General)

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. (General)

e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. (General)

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. (General)

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. (General)

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. (General)

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 (General)

j. with respect to students with disabilities, the State,

- **has developed and will implement,**

strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and

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

- **has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25)).**

(General)

5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement: (General)

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. (General)

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. (General)

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. (General)

6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program: (General)

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. (General)

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. (General)

7. Provision of Supported Employment Services: (General)

a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act. (General)

b. The designated State agency assures that:

- **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**
- **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.**

(General)

Additional Comments on the Assurances from the State (General)

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 (Blind)

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; (Blind)

The Arkansas 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 (Blind)

This agency is an independent commission.

3. the designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations. (Blind)

The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind is an independent consumer-controlled commission. Hence, this section is not applicable.

b. Request for Waiver of Statewideness (Blind)

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; (Blind)

The Arkansas Division of Services for the Blind has not requested a waiver of statewideness.

2. the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and (Blind)

The Arkansas 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 (Blind)

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.

c. Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Development System. (Blind)

Describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the servivces 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; (Blind)

The Department of Human Services Division of State Services for the Blind (DSB) has cooperative agreements with the following agencies not carrying out activities under the statewide Workforce Investment system:

Arkansas Educational Television Network Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired 33 Institutions of Higher Education Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Educational Services for the Visually Impaired DHS Division of Aging and Adult Services DHS Division of Behavioral Health DHS Division of Children and Family Services DHS Division of County Operations DHS Division of Developmental Disabilities Services DHS Division of Community Service and Nonprofit Support DHS Division of Youth Services

Coordination with DHS

Co–location – DSB serves all 75 counties in Arkansas, and VR counselors have base offices in DHS offices in 10 geographic locations around the state. Referrals may be made directly to the appropriate DSB field office serving the individual's community or through the DSB Central Office.

Leadership Training – DSB coordinates with other DHS Divisions by, including but not limited to, participating in "Leadership in a High Performance Culture" workshops and other training for managers and supervisors.

Mental Health – DSB coordinates with the DHS Division of Behavioral Health Services, the DHS Division of Medical Services, and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and sends a representative to meetings of the Arkansas Children's Behavioral Health Care Commission.

Access – The DSB State Rehabilitation Technologist participates in the Accessibility Work Group which meets monthly to discuss accessibility issues with websites and software applications used by state employees. The group is comprised of technology staff from each of the DHS divisions.

The DSB Business and Technology Unit continues to coordinate with the DHS Office of Systems 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 DHS 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. DSB has a DHS Share account and expects the 508 Enhancements project to benefit its employees who are blind or visually impaired. The DSB State Rehabilitation Technologist has been involved in testing some Google mail and Google apps, working with some other states that are migrating to put their emails out on the Google system. DSB will be using an internal Office 365 cloud program through DHS.

Assistive Technology Coordination

Assessments for assistive technology are done by the DSB Business and Technology Unit, which has trained VR Counselors to 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 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 a number of 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.

Coordination of Deaf–blind Services

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.

Coordination with United States Department of Agriculture

DSB refers participants to commodity programs and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which are under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Outreach Efforts

DSB continues its efforts to increase VR awareness and referrals and does outreach, not only to participants, but also to minority organizations and the general public. DSB participates in health, job, and transition fairs by having informational exhibits. VR Counselors do presentations at eye clinics, medical seminars, hospital in–service trainings, schools, public libraries, Chambers of Commerce, civic clubs, DHS offices, churches, driver improvement classes, and colleges/universities/technical institutes. Counselors meet with diabetic support groups; businesses with high numbers of immigrants and minorities; eyeglass retailers; faith–based non–profits; farms and agricultural–related businesses; pharmacies; and numerous local organizations around the state to educate them about DSB services and referrals.

DSB staff attend events at Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind, World Services for the Blind, the Little Rock Job Corps facilities, and Goodwill Industries of Arkansas. DSB staff are made aware that referrals can be made as needed to Laity Involved in Free Transportation (LIFT), a volunteer program through the First United Methodist Church of Little Rock, which provides free transportation services to individuals in Little Rock and North Little Rock who have no other means of transportation to doctor appointments and medical treatments.

Emergency Preparedness Collaborations

DSB collaborates with organizations charged with developing strategic plans for emergency preparedness; response and recovery; and maintenance of services in the aftermath of a disaster. DSB was involved in the initial development of the DHS Business Continuity and Contingency Plan (BCCP), which addresses continued operations in the event of a disaster. DSB reviews the BCCP annually and updates the agency's part of the plan as needed.

Coordination with Blind Agencies/Organizations

DSB collaborates with the following organizations, agencies, and non–profits through their participation on the DSB board and in the day–to–day provision of services to participants: the Arkansas Lions; Arkansas Affiliate National Federation of the Blind (NFB); Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER); World Services for the Blind (WSB); Arkansas Association of Blind Business Enterprise Managers; the Blinded Veterans Association; Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ASBVI); and the Arkansas Chapter American Council of the Blind (ACB). The Disability Rights Center (DRC) and the Arkansas Independent Living Council (AILC) are routinely scheduled for presentations at each board meeting. Time is also scheduled every quarter for consumer input during DSB board meetings.

The DSB Director is a member of the AILC and Workforce Services boards. DSB staff and DSB Board members attend ACB, NFB, WSB, and AER local, state and/or national activities/events. DSB representatives are frequently asked to be presenters at these organizations' annual state conferences, and representatives from these organizations are frequently invited to be presenters at DSB meetings and conferences. Some DSB staff are members of these organizations. VR Counselors participate in staffings regarding their participants at WSB. Arkansas Lions Clubs assist DSB with local presentations for the annual area Consumer of the Year (COY)

awards. In areas where there are no Lions Clubs, DSB coordinates COY presentations with Kiwanis, Rotary, or Chambers of Commerce. DSB continues to work closely with consumer groups.

Each year DSB coordinates a White Cane Safety Day planning committee composed of the agencies and organizations involved in blindness issues. The committee includes representatives from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Department of Counseling, Adult Education, and Rehabilitation Education; Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI); WSB; Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind; Arkansas Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped; Arkansas Lions Eye Bank and Laboratory; NFB; Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System; Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired; Arkansas Lions; ACB; and AER. White Cane Safety Day has been observed every year since President Lyndon B. Johnson signed it into law in 1964. The event is part of October's Blindness Awareness Month. The Arkansas Governor's Office issues a proclamation proclaiming October 15 as White Cane Safety Day, and the planning committee plans an observance event each October on or near that date that draws participants from across the state. The white cane is an important tool and a symbol of independence, because it increases mobility for people who are blind or visually impaired. The white cane also raises awareness for pedestrian safety.

Support Groups

DSB staff are knowledgeable about support groups, which are located around the state in El Dorado, Fayetteville, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Little Rock, Mountain Home, Ozark, Paragould, Pine Bluff, Springdale, Harrison, and Texarkana. VR Counselors are available to speak to support groups on vocational topics.

Coordination with Education–related Partners In June of each year, DSB conducts Jump Start, a statewide career development program for high school students who are blind or severely visually impaired. About 22 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 14 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). The three–week program is designed to expose Jump Start students to the world of work and assist them in transitioning from high school to employment or post–secondary education. Students are placed in part–time jobs appropriate for their skills, abilities, and interests. They go to work in the mornings and in the afternoons and evenings participate in educational and recreational activities. Students learn 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 continues to coordinate services with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI). DSB includes ESVI as an integral partner in Parent Summits for students who are blind or visually impaired and their families. Parents learn information aimed to ease their concerns about students transitioning from high

school to college; the educational rights of students who are blind or visually impaired; and the resources and services available to them.

Relationships with ESVI are also strengthened by outreach and coordination initiatives that consist of sending information by mail and email to ESVI Regional Certified Vision Consultants at least twice a year, in the fall and winter months. VR Counselors and their assistants serve as agency contacts.

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 will hold a Summer Agency Connections conference in summer of 2016 in Little Rock 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 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. VR Counselors and their assistants serve as agency contacts. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB.

The DSB Director, the Staff Development Coordinator, and an Area Supervisor meet annually with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Advisory Board to ensure that DSB is involved with their planning for higher education needs.

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Crime Victims

DSB is actively involved in the Crime Victims with Disabilities Council, a subset of Partners for Inclusive Communities–University of Arkansas Medical Sciences.

Additional Information: Cooperation with Agencies within the Statewide Workforce Investment System

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.

DSB is an active participant in the Governor's task force to increase the hiring of state employees with disabilities.

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 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.

2. State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; (Blind)

The following programs and activities are carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998:

The DSB State Rehabilitation Technologist participates in the Accessibility Work Group which meets monthly to discuss accessibility issues with websites and software applications used by state employees. The group is comprised of technology staff from each of the DHS divisions.

The DSB Business and Technology Unit continues to coordinate with the DHS Office of Systems 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 DHS 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. DSB has a DHS Share account and expects the 508 Enhancements project to benefit its employees who are blind or visually impaired. The DSB State Rehabilitation Technologist has been involved in testing some Google mail and Google apps, working with some other states that are migrating to put their emails out on the Google system. DSB will be using an internal Office 365 cloud program through DHS.

Assistive Technology Coordination

Assessments for assistive technology are done by the DSB Business and Technology Unit, which has trained VR Counselors to 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 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 a number of 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.

3. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture; (Blind)

DSB refers 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 (Blind)

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 •The Governor's Commission on People with Disabilities •Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (APSE) •Youth Leadership Forum •Accessible Parking Taskforce •Local Workforce Development Boards across the state

5. State use contracting programs. (Blind)

DSB has no state use contracting programs.

d. Coordination with Education Officials (Blind)

Describe:

1. DSU's plans (Blind)

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) • 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 will hold a Summer Agency Connections conference in the summer of 2016 in Little Rock 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 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 to reach participants throughout the state.

Transition Planning DSB 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.

In regard to 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.

Secondary schools invite DSB 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. 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 who are blind or severely visually impaired. Twenty–two 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 14 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). The three–week program is designed to expose Jump Start students to the world of work and assist them in transitioning from high school to employment or post–secondary education. Students are placed in part–time jobs appropriate for their skills, abilities, and interests. They go to work in the mornings and in the afternoons and evenings participate in educational and recreational activities. Students learn 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.

Responsibilities

DSB is both a DSU and a DSA. DSB is also a division within the Department of Human Services. 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.

Outreach Procedures

DSB continues to follow directives to improve communication with schools. Field Services Directive 08–06 was developed for contacting schools and distributing information at least semi–annually. Per the directive, each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and sends letters and information to contacts on the list. In 2011 an email option was added. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB.

2. Information on the formal interagency agreement with the State educational agency with respect to: (Blind)

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; (Blind)

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 14 in the school

system and through IPE meetings and planning meetings for those meeting the 504 regulations. Monthly meetings are held with our transition 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) is being developed to address the Section 113 Pre-employment transition activities that are authorized under WIOA and the requirements of Section 511.The proposed MOU is being created in conjunction with the Arkansas Rehabilitation Service Agency. The agreement is set to be in place by the summer of 2016. It is in the final draft stage. The interagency agreement will outline the roles and responsibilities, financial responsibility, determination of lead agency, and qualified personnel. 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 that provide information to eligible and potentially eligible students with visual impairments both in large print and electronically through the school system.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS)

New federal mandates require that DSB, in collaboration with local educational agencies, offer to transition age high school students with disabilities (ages14-21) Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) using 15% of our federal allocation on an annual basis.

PETS 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, 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.

In order to reach these goals DSB is ensuring our transition counselors have a strong relationship with the local school districts and the local Work Force Development Boards. Summer work experiences, work place 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 will begin working with students as early as age 14. Pre-employment transition services as described above will be arranged 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 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 will continue to have counselors assigned to each school district and high school. It is the role of the assigned liaison 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 in Regards to Section 511

Section 511 of WIOA intends that individuals with disabilities, especially youth with disabilities, must be afforded a full 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 identifying 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 new Memorandum of Agreement is being 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 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.

B. transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs; (Blind)

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 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.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS)

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 (ages14-21) Pre-Employment Transition Services (PETS) using 15% of our federal allocation on an annual basis.

PETS 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, 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.

In order to reach these goals DSB is ensuring our transition counselors have a strong relationship with the local

school districts and the local Work Force Development Boards. Summer work experiences, work place 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 will begin as soon as possible, the

time 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 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 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 in Regards to Section 511

Section 511 of 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, achieving at least the minimum wage) and are not receiving them at this time. A new Memorandum of Agreement is being 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 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.

C. roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services; (Blind)

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.

Roles and Responsibilities

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. (Blind)

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.

VR 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. VR Counselors and their assistants serve as agency contacts. DSB will 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 will continue its system of mail–outs and emails twice a year to area ESVI Consultants. In addition to the local outreach efforts, the Transition Coordinator 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 will hold a Summer Agency Connections conference in the summer of 2016 in Little Rock 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 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 that do outreach to participants throughout the state.

DSB continues to follow directives to improve communication with schools. Field Services Directive 08–06 was developed for contacting schools and distributing information at least semi–annually. Per the directive, each DSB regional office maintains a contact list for all secondary schools in its service area and sends letters and information to contacts on the list. In 2011 an email option was added. This process gives schools a pathway for increased communications with DSB.

Outreach for PETS and WIOA Section 511

PETS required activities 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 must 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 PETS, and how to access DSB services to engage in exploration of competitive integrated employment settings.

2. All DSB transition counselor staff are to 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-employment transition services and how to access those services. Referrals will be taken both digitally and by paper referral process.

3. All DSB transition counselor staff along with the Statewide Field Administrator will 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 (Blind)

(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 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 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 (Blind)

(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 provides SE services through World Services for the Blind, Easter Seals, Job Connections, and Goodwill Industries.

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 worked 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.

Extended Services

Each of the SE services providers: World Services for the Blind, Easter Seals, Job Connections, and Goodwill Industries, will be responsible for extended services.

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 service support service under supported employment is 24 months.

Focus of Supported Employment on Youth: Half of the money 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.

Each of the SE services providers: World Services for the Blind, Easter Seals, Job Connections, and Goodwill Industries, will be responsible for extended services as noted above.

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g. Coordination with Employers (Blind)

(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 (Blind)

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 24 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.

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.

In regards 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.

2. transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities. (Blind)

In regards 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 (Blind)

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; (Blind)

As part of DHS, DSB enjoys 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 and sends a representative to meetings of the Arkansas Children's Behavioral Health Care Commission.

2. the State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and (Blind)

As part of DHS, DSB enjoys 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 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. (Blind)

As part of DHS, DSB enjoys 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 and sends a representative to meetings of the Arkansas Children's Behavioral Health Care Commission.

i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development (Blind)

(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 (Blind)

A. Qualified Personnel Needs. (Blind)

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; (Blind)

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.

Procedures for evaluating progress:

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 a designated course which will increase 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 2013 legislative session gave DSB the authority to pay tuition for its VR Counselors working on their CRCs. DSB is developing legislation to expand this opportunity to Area Field Supervisors, since they are also required to meet certification standards.

DHS 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.

Caseload Data

The 30 VR caseloads had an average caseload of 61 individuals as of October 1, 2015, with a statewide total of 1,453 active cases and a total of 1,522 served during the preceding 12 months.

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.

The number of staff on hand as of the December 2015 DSB Board meeting and projected annual number of replacements by category are as follows:

DHS Division of Services for the Blind is authorized 82 full time employees to implement the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. DSB has 30 Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor (CRC) positions. The Field Services section currently has 9 Certified Counselors to provide Counseling and Guidance and 21 non-certified counselors are either seeking certification or waiting to complete the CRC exam. 23 support staff provide administrative support for Field Services operations. The remaining 29 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 13 -filled 1-vacancies 3-projected vacancies

Counselor Staff 30-filled 10-vacancies 2-projected vacancies

Staff Supporting Counselor Activities

9-filled 3-vacancies 0- projected vacancies

Other Staff 7-filled 2-vacancies 0- projected vacancies

ii. the number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and (Blind)

DHS 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 2015 DSB DHS Division of Services for the Blind is authorized 82 full time employees to implement the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. DSB has 30 Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor (CRC) positions. The Field Services section currently has 9 Certified Counselors to provide Counseling and Guidance and 21 non-certified counselors are either seeking certification or waiting to complete the CRC exam. 23 support staff provide administrative support for Field Services operations. The remaining 29 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. Average caseload size was 61. 1,453 active cases and a total of 1,522 served during the preceding 12 months.

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. (Blind)

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.

The 30 VR caseloads had an average caseload of 88 individuals as of October 1, 2015, with a statewide total of Average caseload size was 61, 1,453 active cases and a total of 1,522 served during the preceding 12 months.

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.

The number of staff on hand as of the December 2015 DSB Board meeting and projected annual number of replacements by category are as follows:

DHS Division of Services for the Blind is authorized 82 full time employees to implement the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. DSB has 30 Certified Vocational Rehab Counselor (CRC) positions. The Field Services section currently has 9 Certified Counselors to provide Counseling and Guidance and 21 non-certified counselors are either seeking certification or waiting to complete the CRC exam. 23 support staff provide administrative support for Field Services operations. The remaining 29 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.

Category Over the next 5 years

Total Positions

Administrative Staff 13 -filled 1-vacancies 3-projected vacancies

Counselor Staff 30-filled 10-vacancies 2-projected vacancies

Staff Supporting Counselor Activities

9-filled 3-vacancies 0- projected vacancies

Other Staff 7-filled 2-vacancies 0- projected vacancies

B. Personnel Development (Blind)

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; (Blind)

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 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 Masters of Arts. The RCE program at UALR has 135 students enrolled. Of these students there are 52 full–time, 83 part–time, 30 who are minorities, and 47 with disabilities. Of the 39 students who graduated in 2013, 15 are employed in state vocational rehabilitation; 10 are in non– profit rehabilitation; three are employed at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program; one is employed in a federal agency working with veterans counseling; two are in a private for–profit rehab setting; four are employed in for–profit or non–profit agencies providing mental health services; and four are employed in substance abuse treatment programs.

The O&M program has a total of 63 students, all enrolled part–time. Of these, five are minorities, 54 are female, nine are male, and five are students with disabilities. Of the eight students who graduated this year, seven are employed by state or private rehabilitation agencies and six of those are employed out of state.

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 36 students enrolled, there are 32 full–time students, four part–time students, 11 students that are minorities, 13 males, 26 females, and 19 students with disabilities. Of the 17 graduates, nine are employed in vocational rehabilitation for state and federal agencies, primarily the Veterans Administration; five are employed in private not–for–profits; one is employed in private for–profit rehabilitation; and two are pursuing doctoral degrees.

Arkansas State University (ASU) at Jonesboro offers a Masters Rehabilitation Counseling program, which is housed in the Psychology and Counseling Department. Of the 17students 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. In 2013, there were six graduates. 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 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 degree programs in Rehabilitation Science.

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and (Blind)

Below is the most recent information available from the institutions of higher education that have programs preparing vocational rehabilitation professionals:

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iii. the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of theose 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. (Blind)

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 Masters of Arts. The RCE program at UALR has 135 students enrolled. Of these students there are 52 full–time, 83 part–time, 30 who are minorities, and 47 with disabilities. Of the 39 students who graduated in 2013, 15 are employed in state vocational rehabilitation; 10 are in non– profit rehabilitation; three are employed at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program; one is employed in a federal agency working with veterans counseling; two are in a private for–profit rehab setting; four are employed in for–profit or non–profit agencies providing mental health services; and four are employed in substance abuse treatment programs.

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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 degree programs in Rehabilitation Science.

2. Plan for Recruitment, Preparation and Retention of Qualified Personnel (Blind)

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, 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. 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 Little Rock (UALR) Location: Little Rock Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling Education (RCE) with Emphasis in Rehabilitation Counseling

Institution: University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (UofA) Location: Fayetteville Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling and doctoral degrees in Rehabilitation and in Counseling Education

Institution: Arkansas State University (ASU) Location: Jonesboro Programs: Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling

Institution: University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) Location: Pine Bluff Programs: Bachelor degree in Rehabilitation Science

Institution: Arkansas Tech University (ATU) Location: Russellville Programs: Bachelor degree in Rehabilitation Science

3. Personnel Standards (Blind)

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 (Blind)

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 2013 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.

As of the December 2015 DSB Board meeting, the CSPD status was:

• 1 Program Administrator with CRC • 6 VR Counselors with CRC • 3 VR Counselor anticipating ttaking CRC exam March 2016 • 0 VR Counselors with LPC • 2 currently enrolled in CRC Master's level program • 20 pending enrollment in a CRC Master's level program • 4 Supervisors with CRC CRC Senior Counselors mentor new counselors to comply with RSA's prior approval standards regarding eligibility determination, approval of IPE's, and closure determinations.

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. (Blind)

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 2013 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.

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4. Staff Development. (Blind)

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. System of staff development (Blind)

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

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:

• The Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE) Center 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, 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.

• The Oklahoma and Texas Departments of Rehabilitation Services again gave DSB staff four spots in their leadership training program Wicked Innovation: Next Generation Solutions (WINGS), which was developed in conjunction with TACE.

• The Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (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; 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 DHS 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.

B. Acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge (Blind)

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 TAC of of the University of North Carolina to improve and strengthen the transition program.

• The Association of People Supporting EmploymentFirst (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; 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 DHS 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 (Blind)

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 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 (Blind)

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 insure that transition goals and services are in place by the time a child becomes eligible, as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

DSB has begun work 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 (Blind)

(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: (Blind)

A. with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services; (Blind)

DSB conducts a comprehensive, statewide needs assessment at least every three years and the results are used in developing goals in the State Plan and providing services to participants who are blind or severely visually impaired. The most recently completed Comprehensive Needs Assessment was conducted in 2015, and had 229 respondents. The Needs Assessment indicated that assistive technology and access to affordable transportation are the top most 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.

The need for supported employment services throughout the State was indicated as a service that requires improvement throughout the State. The rural areas have a lack of supported employment vendors for the blind and visually impaired. DSB is working with community rehabilitation programs throughout the State to locate and hire qualified staff that can provide O&M training, low vision interventions, and supports on the job to make supported employment outcomes successful for the blind and visually impaired. The shift to focus on expending 50% of the Supported Employment reserve on Youth with Disabilities that need supported employment

services was not specifically addressed on the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Comments on the Assessment did indicate that those in subminimum wage situations who are blind and visually impaired want information and access to vocational rehabilitation to achieve competitive integrated employment in the community. To that end DSB is working 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, and those above age 24 to offer supported employment services.

B. who are minorities; (Blind)

30% of respondents to the needs assessment identified themselves as a minority. These respondents have needs in the following areas: Of these respondents, they identified transportation as their most urgent need, next was understanding and acquiring assistive technology devices and services, and the third highest need was identified as job placement assistance.

C. who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program; (Blind)

15% of respondents identified their areas as unserved or underserved. All of these respondents lived in south Arkansas, which historically has some of the highest unemployment in the state. The most frequently identified need of this subset was job placement assistance/assistance with locating available employment opportunities, the second most identified need was transportation, and the third was learning activities of daily living as a blind individual.

DSB is reaching out to those identified as blind and visually impaired and as being HIV positive through the Department of Medical Services. Staff training on appropriate interventions in addressing the needs of this population have been developed and implemented.

D. who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and (Blind)

This information was not captured in the needs assessment.

E. who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services. (Blind)

17% of respondents were youth/students who are blind or severely visually impaired. Low vision technology and job placement tied as their highest needs. After these came college prep and tuition.

2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and (Blind)

Issues affecting supported employment in Arkansas include: the limited number of service providers statewide; the rural nature of the state; the lack of consistent available funding for extended services; and the lack of knowledge, experience, and training SE providers have in the provision of supported employment services and placement for individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired.

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 . (Blind)

This question was not addressed in the 2015 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. It is DSB's understanding, from working with the Arkansas Interagency Transition Partnership (AITP) and the Local Education Area Supervisors in the school districts across the State that individuals with significant blindness and low vision require transition career services and pre-employment transition services particularly in the following areas:

1. Job Exploration Counseling. Students need an understanding of the real world careers available in the areas in which they wish to live. Students need to be educated on career pathways and the training required, along with the earning potential of those careers prior to selecting an employment goal.

2. Work Experiences. Our students require exposure to real world settings in employment. It is through job shadowing, internships, and volunteer opportunities that students have an understanding of the job functions and what will be meaningful to them.

DSB did not address in the CSNA the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. However, DSB understands that coordination of transition services with the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education is essential to providing comprehensive services to students that are blind and low vision. Working with ESVI and the teachers for the visually impaired throughout the state, we have formulated team meetings to address the needs of our students, which include both PETS services and traditional VR services. The Expanded Core Curriculum now available through the school system addresses workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living. Transition counselors and school personnel are working together to provide those services in a school setting as provided by IDEA.

k. Annual Estimates (Blind)

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(b)). Describe:

1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services; (Blind)

Basis for Estimates–DSB uses census data, 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 1,730 participants at a total cost of $4,516,818 ($2,863 per participant). Of this number, it is projected that 686 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: (Blind)

A. The VR Program; (Blind)

DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,730 participants Of this number, it is projected that 686 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 (Blind)

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; (Blind)

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 (Blind)

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. (Blind)

DSB estimates it will serve a projected total of 1,730 participants at a total cost of $4,516,818 ($2,863 per participant). Of this number, it is projected that 686 will be minorities. DSB estimates it will serve 20 participants in supported employment, at a total cost of $289,000 ($14,450 per participant).

I. State Goals and Priorities (Blind)

The designated State unit must:

1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed (Blind)

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. (Blind)

DSB developed the following goals, strategies, and performance measures 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 the unserved, underserved, minorities, and stakeholders. 4) Increase coordination with employers.

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 Measure: A minimum of two employer job exploration meetings will be scheduled per month.

Strategy: VR Counselors will ensure that participants in job ready status are actively seeking employment. Performance Measure: 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.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self–employment. • Performance Measure: 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. • Performance Measure: 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. • Performance Measure: A brochure will be developed to provide interested consumers with information about DSB's small business self–employment program.

Strategy: DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants. Performance Measure: 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.

Strategy: DSB will provide detailed benefits counseling information to each participant on SSI and SSDI. • Performance Measure: 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. • Performance Measure: Area Supervisors will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors are referring 100% of SSI and SSDI VR participants to the benefits counselor. • Performance Measure: 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.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind and interested in employment to VR and will ensure that its OIB contractor will as well. Performance Measure: DSB and its OIB contractor will refer 100% of Older Blind individuals who are interested in employment to VR.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful participants and their employers. • Performance Measure: Each year each counselor will select 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. • Performance Measure: 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 Measure: DSB will provide trainings to employers on the use and function of common assistive technology devices for the blind and visually impaired.

Strategy: DSB will explore ways to better utilize the DSB central Tech Lab. • Performance Measure: DSB will provide outreach and training to community organizations on technological advances in low vision and blindness. • Performance Measure: 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 participants. • Performance Measure: DSB staff will 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.

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 Measure: 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. • Performance Measure: 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 Measure: 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. • Performance Measure: 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.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among the core partners of WIOA. Performance Measure: DSB staff will be active members of the Workforce Investment Boards and WIOA planning committees throughout the State.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings. • Performance

Measure: DSB will arrange for and accompany job ready adult participants to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits. • Performance Measure: DSB will assist participants with reviewing entrance requirements to college, vocational/technical, or universities.

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 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.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed. Performance Measure: Counselors/Rehabilitation Assistants will coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors to maintain lists of transition students. The Supervisor over transition will review the database to insure it is being maintained by Rehabilitation Assistants, who input local information.

Strategy: DSB will update the collaborative database of transition students as needed. Performance Measure: Counselors/Rehabilitation Assistants will coordinate with Local Education Area (LEA) Supervisors to maintain lists of where transition students are located. Strategy: VR Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to insure 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 insure that no transition student will graduate without a current IPE.

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 Measure: 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.

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 Measure: Formal evaluations for assistive technology will be performed by Tech Lab staff in accordance with RSA guidelines on Rehabilitation Engineering. • Performance Measure: Counselors will arrange for training for pre–employment transition 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 Measure: DSB will present at school assemblies, parent–teacher organization meetings, and open houses to provide information on pre–employment transition services and how to access these services. • Performance Measure: 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. • Performance Measure: DSB will continue its system of mail–outs and emails to public schools. • Performance Measure: 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 Measure: DSB will 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 will dialogue with ESVI at a state level to discover any transition students that need services and should be referred to DSB. • Performance Measure: DSB will refer participants under age 14 to ESVI and will encourage referrals from ages 14 and older from ESVI to DSB.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all pre–employment transition students and pre–employment transition youth receive exposure to work experiences and career exploration activities. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for pre–employment transition students to explore potential career opportunities. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for pre–employment transition students. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for informational interviews for pre–employment transition students to explore job opportunities. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for pre–employment transition students to explore career fields. • Performance Measure: DSB will accompany pre–employment transition students to career seminars and career fairs. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for and accompany pre–employment transition students to college, vocational/technical, or university campus visits.

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 Measure: 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.

Strategy: DSB will use exhibit booths to educate the public about DSB services and their availability. Performance Measure: Each VR Counselor will staff 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. • Performance Measure: DSB will establish a cooperative agreement with the Urban League in Little Rock and Springdale to reach the underserved and unserved populations. • Performance Measure: VR Counselors will make at least four faith–based outreach efforts in each of their geographic areas annually. • Performance

Measure: VR Counselors will make at least two minority outreach efforts to Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic groups in each of their geographic areas annually.

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 all of its supervisors/administrators to these 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. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for tours of local businesses for job ready adult participants to explore potential career opportunities. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for job shadowing opportunities for job ready adult participants. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange for informational interviews for job ready adult participants to explore job opportunities. • Performance Measure: DSB will arrange volunteer opportunities for job ready adult participants to explore career fields. • Performance Measure: DSB will accompany job ready adult participants to career seminars and career fairs.

Strategy: VR Counselors will become Chamber of Commerce members. Performance Measure: VR counselors will 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. 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. • Performance Measure: DSB management staff will work in conjunction with the Arkansas Apprenticeship program to locate apprenticeship opportunities for participants.

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS PY 2016 – PY 2019 July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2020

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. Performance Measure: 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–employment 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. Performance Measure: DSB will train 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. Performance Measure: At least one presentation or training will be made to educate SE providers about vendor standards.

3. Ensure that the goals and priorities are based on an analysis of the following areas: (Blind)

A. The most recent comprehensive statewide assessment, including any updates; (Blind)

DSB conducts a comprehensive, statewide needs assessment at least every three years and the results are used in developing goals in the State Plan and providing services to participants. The most recently completed Comprehensive Needs Assessment was conducted in 2015, and had 229 respondents.

B. the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and (Blind)

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 its Independent Commission and RSA, 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.

C. other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and finding and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107. (Blind)

DSB was monitored by RSA in 2011. As a result of that monitoring report, 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."

In order to improve services and focus on this population, DSB has added 7 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 needed can be arranged.

m. Order of Selection (Blind)

Describe:

1. Whether the designated State unit will implement and order of selection. If so, describe: (Blind)

A. The order to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services. (Blind)

NA

B. The justification for the order. (Blind)

NA

C. The service and outcome goals. (Blind)

NA

D. The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order. (Blind)

NA

E. How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and (Blind)

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. (Blind)

NA

n. Goals and Plans for Distribution of title VI Funds. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. The Division 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 analyses, 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 the half of the allotment reserved to provide SE services to youth with the most significant disabilities, blind or visually impaired. 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 30 individuals during FFY 2016 and to 35 individuals during FFY 2017. 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.

Section 511 goals and priorities

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 individuals 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: (Blind)

A. the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed 4 years; and (Blind)

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 service support service under supported employment is 24 months.

Focus of Supported Employment on Youth: Half of the money 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. (Blind)

Extended Services

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 service support service under supported employment is 24 months. Focus of Supported Employment on Youth: Half of the money 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 (Blind)

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. (Blind)

VR Strategies DSB has developed the following VR strategies to expand and improve services to its consumers. The performance measures are included with the goals in a previous section. Here are the strategies: 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.

Strategy: VR Counselors will ensure that participants in job ready status are actively seeking employment.

Strategy: DSB will encourage and support viable self–employment.

Strategy: DSB will work in conjunction with provider agencies to provide work appropriate skills and training to blind and low vision participants.

Strategy: DSB will provide detailed benefits counseling information to each participant on SSI and SSDI.

Strategy: DSB will continue to refer Older Individuals who are Blind and interested in employment to VR and will ensure that its OIB contractor will as well.

Strategy: DSB will continue to recognize successful participants and their employers.

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

Strategy: DSB will explore ways to better utilize the DSB central Tech Lab.

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.

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.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among the core partners of WIOA.

Strategy: DSB will ensure that all job ready participants will receive career exploration activities in their chosen career field at training settings.

Strategy: DSB will support training and the exchange of information among state transition partner organizations.

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

Strategy: DSB will maintain a database of transition students.

Strategy: VR Counselors will continue to track transition students on their caseloads to insure that the IPE is developed or updated before a student graduates from high school.

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.

Strategy: VR Counselors will make face–to–face visits to LEA Supervisors in their territories.

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.

Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with schools, including Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Strategy: DSB will continue to strengthen relationships with Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI). Strategy: DSB will ensure that all pre–employment transition students and pre–

employment transition youth receive exposure to work experiences and career exploration activities.

Strategy: DSB will expand and improve services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired in the underserved Delta area.

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

Strategy: DSB will increase its outreach to minorities and faith–based groups.

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.

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.

Strategy: VR Counselors will become Chamber of Commerce members.

Strategy: VR Counselors will conduct public speaking engagements.

Strategy: DSB management staff will connect with employers in each economic development district.

Innovation and Expansion Activities

DSB will continue the implementation of its new data management system and will begin building data into the employer module that will contain information about employers and job openings.

DSB has developed the following SE strategies to expand and improve services to its consumers. The performance measures are included with the goals in a previous section. Here are the strategies:

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.

Strategy: Counselors will determine whether pre–employment transition youth are candidates for SE services during the employment planning process.

Strategy: DSB will determine SE vendor standards targeted to meet the blindness and visual impairment needs of its participants.

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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 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). (Blind)

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 22 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. (Blind)

DSB will increase the number of Supported Employment providers to better serve DSB participants. 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. 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. (Blind)

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 in order 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, 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. (Blind)

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 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: (Blind)

A. achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs assessment; (Blind)

B. support innovation and expansion activities; and (Blind)

DSB will continue improve of its new data management system in regards to WIOA implementation and will begin building data into the employer module that will contain information about employers and job openings. DSB will provide funding to support technology updates within the NFB Newline application provided to all Arkansans. Counseling labs that are school based locations are being coordinated, being 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. (Blind)

The Needs Assessment indicated that assistive technology and access to affordable transportation are the top most 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 (Blind)

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: (Blind)

A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals. (Blind)

DSB has increased the number of successful employment outcomes over the last 4 years. In FY 2015, DSB achieved 366 successful employment outcomes, as opposed to 313 in 2012, 327 in 2013, and 335 in 2014.

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 will make job contacts with employers. Performance Measures: • 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 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 Measures: • 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 participant must complete a written business plan with the DSB business–ownership team described above. • A brochure will be developed to provide interested participants 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 participants 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 participants as needed using the Small Business Developer.

Strategy: Based upon participant 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 Measures: • Area Supervisors will monitor caseloads to ensure that VR Counselors will refer at least 10 participants 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 participants. 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 participants 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 participants 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 participants. • DSB staff will 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. Goal Met: DSB provided new Rehabilitation Teachers with assistive technology training and continued to train Workforce Services staffs. VR Counselors met participants 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 re–design 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 participants 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 participants to provide information, advice, and support to less experienced participants, often leading and guiding by example of his/her success in an area. 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. • Participants 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: Parent Summits were held in Harrison and West Memphis in 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 insure 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 insure 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: 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, acquisition of a variety of reading options, awareness of job opportunities, and rights and responsibilities as an informed participant. 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 participants 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.

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 participants.

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 participants. Performance Measure: WSB and LFB will begin providing SE services to at least half of the DSB participants in supported employment during FY 2015. Goal Met: DSB referred 100% of its SE participants 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 participants 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 participants' 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 participant. Goal Met: Training for natural supports was developed in 2013 and finalized and held in March 2014. The 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 its 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 participant. Performance Measures: At least one training on SE will be offered to family support personnel and SE participants. 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 3 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.

B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities. (Blind)

DSB has increased the number of successful employment outcomes over the last 4 years. In FY 2015, DSB achieved 366 successful employment outcomes, as opposed to 313 in 2012, 327 in 2013, and 335 in 2014.

In regards to supported employment (SE), DSB has not significantly increased the number of individuals who receive this service. In FFY 2013, services were provided to 8 individuals, none were closed successfully. In FFY 2014, 6 individuals were receiving services in supported employment, 0 have successfully achieved sustained employment. In 2015, 10 individuals entered supported employment and one has sustained employment successfully. The biggest 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 been working with WSB, Easter Seals, Job Connections, Goodwill Industries, Career Links, and Friendship Community Care to provide services in Arkansas and DSB is assisting with growing their capacity to offer services to the maximum extent allowable; however, lack of dedicated staff to devote to this endeavor has impeded the training available to CRPs to grow their capacity for this service. The Lighthouse for the Blind was a partner agency in 2014 in the provisions of Supported Employment services; however, a change of ownership to the National Industries for the Blind ended the availability of that resource to those we support.

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: (Blind)

A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals. (Blind)

In regards to supported employment (SE), DSB has seen no significant increase in the number of individuals who receive this service. There is lack of Community Rehabilitation Programs with the capacity to support the blind and visually impaired in the State. In the last three years only one individual has exited the program still maintains employment. In FFY 2013, services were provided to 8 individuals, none were closed successfully. In FFY 2014, 6 individuals were receiving services in supported employment, 0 have successfully achieved sustained employment. In 2015, 10 individuals entered supported employment and one has sustained employment successfully.

DSB has attempted a number of strategies to increase the success of the supported employment program in the last 4 years. An agreement was entered into with WSB and the Lighthouse for the Blind to offer supports training to the families, blindness skills trainings, and the place and train model of supported employment, payable using the milestone payment system. DSB has increased providers

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 participants.

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 participants. Performance Measure: WSB and LFB will begin providing SE services to at least half of the DSB participants in supported employment during FY 2015. Goal Met: DSB referred 100% of its SE participants 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 participants 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 participants' 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 participant. Goal Met: Training for natural supports was developed in 2013 and finalized and held in March 2014. The 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 its 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 participant. Performance Measures: At least one training on SE will be offered to family support personnel and SE participants. 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.

B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities. (Blind)

Goals were met.

3. The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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 individual‘s 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.

In regards to supported employment (SE), DSB has slowly 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. In FFY 2011, DSB served 6 individuals in SE services. One individual was a successful employment outcome. FFY 2012, services were provided to 8 individuals, none were closed successfully. In FFY 2014, 20 individuals were receiving services in supported employment, 4 have successfully achieved sustained employment. In FFY 2015 we gained the full support of World Services for the Blind as a partner in each milestone of the supported employment service, which includes supports and training for the care givers of the individuals receiving services.

DSB has 35 clients receiving services at WSB in FFY 2016 towards a Supported Employment goal of that 10 have been identified as youth with the most significant disabilities (blind or low vision).

There are not a sufficient number of service providers who deliver supported employment in the state on a fee for service basis. DSB is working towards an 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. (Blind)

Transition to extended services is at least 90 days after successful placement, no later than 18 months.

Certifications (Blind)

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate **Arkansas Department of Human Services Division of State Services for the Blind**

Name of designated State agency **Arkansas Department of Human Services**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Katy Morris**

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 1 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 (Blind)

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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 (Blind)

Certification Regarding Lobbying — Vocational Rehabilitation (Blind)

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(Blind)

(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.

(Blind)

(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.

(Blind)

(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 (Blind)

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 Department of Human Services Division of State Services for the Blind**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Katy Morris**

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 (Blind)

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(Blind)

(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.

(Blind)

(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.

(Blind)

(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 (Blind)

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 Department of Human Services Division of State Services for the Blind**

Full Name of Authorized Representative: **Katy Morris**

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 (Blind)

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: (Blind)

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: (Blind)

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: (Blind)

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. (Blind)

b. the establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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). (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act . (Blind)

j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act. (Blind)

4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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 . (Blind)

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? (Blind)

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. (Blind)

e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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 (Blind)

j. with respect to students with disabilities, the State,

- **has developed and will implement,**

strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and

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

- **has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(25)).**

(Blind)

5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement: (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program: (Blind)

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. (Blind)

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. (Blind)

7. Provision of Supported Employment Services: (Blind)

a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act. (Blind)

b. The designated State agency assures that:

- **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**
- **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.**

(Blind)

Additional Comments on the Assurances from the State (Blind)

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.

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* 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 Department 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 of the following eligibility criteria.

Definition of Needy Family

A needy family is defined asone 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. Step-father, step-mother, step-sister, step-brother;

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 step-parent, 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.)

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

An individual who has been found guilty of or has pleaded guilty or nolo contendere to any state or federal offense classified as a felony by the law of the jurisdiction involved, and which has as an element of the offense, the distribution or manufacture of a controlled substance (as defined in section 102(6) of the Controlled Substance Act) will be ineligible for TEA benefits. This provision applies only to offenses occurring after July 1, 1997.

The eligibility of the other family members will not be affected by the ineligibility of a person described above. The amount of assistance for which they may be eligible will be determined without regard to the ineligible member's needs. However, if such ineligible person is the child's parent, his or her income and resources will be considered in determining the children's eligibility and amount of assistance.

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 child care 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.

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 asvictims of domestic violence may 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 isa 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.

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.

<u>Unsubsidized Employment</u>

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 issupervised 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 definedas 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 TeenagePregnancy

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 is 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 victimwho 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 sexual abuse, including statutory rape.

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.

Finally, the Arkansas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training requires all law enforcement officers to complete a minimum of twenty (20) hours of training concerning sexual assaults as a part of the basic police training course curriculum.

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." T

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 Department 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.

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:

o Penalties for clients who uses or accesses TANF cash benefits in an EBT transaction in a prohibited location.

o Penalties for merchants/establishments that allow prohibited EBT transactions.

o 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.

Notices of adverse action are sent to applicants 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

MonthlyCash 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 child care 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.

ExtendedSupport 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 Department 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 Servicecs 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 child care 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;

During the past year Arkansas had a USDA approved waiver from the SNAP RTW provisions. The waiver that covers the state is based on labor surplus estimates from the Department of Labor. As the economy has improved and unemployment rates have decreased, state agencies have seen the areas available to be covered by the waiver decrease or disappear. This is the case for Arkansas beginning January 1, 2016.

On January 1, 2016 the SNAP recipients in Arkansas who have been identified as ABAWDs will be subject to the PRWORA sponsored participation limits on this population called the requirement to work. Under these regulations an ABAWD will have 3 months in a fixed 36 month period to receive assistance unless they are exempt or complying with the requirements associated with RTW. Participants will need to be participating in a SNAP E&T component for at least 20 hours per week, but with less than half the required time spent in the countable job search or job search training components. Individuals may also meet the requirement by volunteering in agency designated special Workfare programs that lead to skill building and potential employment.

Arkansas decided to form better practices that offer appropriate avenues for individuals to comply with work requirements in other ways that involve job search, training, OJT, work experience, education, and Workfare opportunities. Arkansas' vision includes "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". As a result, Arkansas was selected by FNS as 1 of 10 States with robust goals, to receive 2 years of technical assistance from SJI (the Seattle Jobs Initiative) and ultimately renamed E&T as the "SNAP to Skills" initiative. The initiative is supported by 50% funds from FNS that match non-federal dollars from new partners willing to serve this population.

The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations (DCO) has designated six components (with subcomponents) to be used in the E&T Program: Independent Job Search, Job Search Training, Education, Work Experience, On the Job Training and Job Retention. These components are structured to reach ABAWDs who may not possess the skills or employer qualifications needed to secure and retain employment. (After these ABAWDs become employed, DCO will work to ensure that eligible households continue to receive SNAP benefits.) Components may vary among E&T counties based on services available in that locality.

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 2016. Number of ABAWDS expected to begin the component Independent Job Search is 1416 The cost for 1,416 projected participants is $163 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 (see table 4) $196,246 ÷ 1423 = $138 Total Cost of the Component $231,146 ÷ 1423 = $162

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 2016. Number of ABAWDS expected to begin the component is 2011 (see table 4): The cost for 2011 projected participants is $163 per client Number of non-ABAWD participants expected to begin the component 29 Number of participants expected to receive a reimbursement 243 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 (see table 4) $139 (282,826 ÷ 2040 participants) Total Cost of the Component $328,106 ÷ 2040 = $161 per participant

Employment Counseling

Participants may be provided with counseling related to: • Educational programs or activities designed to improve basic skills including literacy, reading and math programs to improve functional levels. • Assistance in acquiring a high school diploma/equivalency. • Assistance to acquire proficiency in the English language. • Occupational skills training, including but not limited to work keys and self-guided computer-Assisted learning programs. • Short courses (e.g., Certified Nursing Assistant). Post-secondary vocational training (limited to 24 months). 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 2214 ABAWDs (see table 4): The cost for 2214 projected participants is $166 per client Number of non-ABAWD participants expected to begin the component 43 Number of Participants Expected to Receive a Reimbursement 282 Estimated Allowable Reimbursements $55,160 ÷ 282 = $196 estimated average per participant Targeted Population Participants assigned to this component are in need of educational assistance 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 comply with the educational requirements and activities as defined in the E&T contract no less than 3 hours per week over a 24-month period. 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 $139 (314,786 ÷ 2257 participants) Total Cost of the Component $367,946 ÷ 2257 = $163

Job Club

A sub-component of Job Search Training, participants in this component will comply with support services to increase employability. 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 989 (see table 4): The cost for 989 projected participants is $177 per client Number of non-ABAWD participants expected to begin the component 25 Number of Participants Expected to Receive a Reimbursement 141 Estimated Allowable Reimbursements $27,760 ÷ 141 = $197 average per participant Targeted Population Participants assigned to this component are in need of educational assistance 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 no less than 3 hours per week over a 24-month period. Organizational Responsibilities The Arkansas Department of Human Services, Division of County Operations, will contract with participating contractors to administer and verify the Job Club component of the SNAP E&T Program Cost of the Component per Placement $145 (146,825 ÷ 1014 participants) Total Cost of the Component $172 (174,585 ÷ 1014 participants)

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 $741. The cost for 741 projected participants is $148 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 $98,757 ÷ 753 = $131 per participant Total Cost of the Component $109,717 ÷ 753 = $146 per participant

OccupationalSkills

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 2016. Number of ABAWDS expected to begin the Component 4641 The cost for 4641 projected participants is $153 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 $143 ($663,270 ÷ 4653 participants) Total Cost of the Component $153 ($712,000 ÷ 4653 participants)

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 2016. Anticipated Number of ABAWDS Who Will Begin the

Component 81 The cost for 81 projected participants is $94 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 $90 ($7,321 ÷ 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 2016. Anticipated Number of ABAWDS Who Will Begin the Component 407 The cost for 407 projected participants is $161 per client 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. Cost of the Component per Placement $153 ($62,453 ÷ 407 participants) Total Cost of the Component $161 ($65,453 ÷ 407 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 2016. (OJT sites will be developed for individual clients on an as needed basis.) Anticipated Number of ABAWDS Who Will Begin the Component is 609 The cost for 609 projected participants is $147 per client Number of non-ABAWD participants expected to begin the component 3 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. Cost of the Component per Placement $135 ($82,464 ÷ 612 participants) Total Cost of the Component $146 ($89,464 ÷ 612 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 non-work/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 2016. Anticipated Number of ABAWDS Who Will Begin the Component is 718 The cost for 718 projected participants is $171 per client Number of non-ABAWD participants expected to begin the component 19 Number of Participants 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. Cost of the Component per Placement $105,152 ÷ 737 = $143 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 2016. Anticipated Number of ABAWDS Who Will Begin the Component is 216 The cost for 216 projected participants is $203 per client Number of non-ABAWD participants expected to begin the component 22 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. Cost of the Component per Placement $163 ($38,768 ÷ 238 participants) Total Cost of the Component $184 ($43,768 ÷ 238 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 2016

Components	ARDHS Contractor 100% Funds	Goodwill & 50/50 Direct	Goodwill Admin & Personnel	DHS 50Fed/50St Trans. Reimb.	DCO Admin	Total
Independent Job Search .16 + Goodwill .05	122,542	48,333	15,453	32,000	12,818	231,146
Job Search Training .20 + Goodwill .10	153,178	88,000	30,906	40,000	16,022	328,106
Employment Counseling .24 + Goodwill .10	183,813	86,000	30,906	48,000	19,227	367,946
Job Club .13 + Goodwill .03	99,656	29,333	9,272	26,000	10,414	174,585
GED/Remedial Education .04 + Goodwill .06	30,636	49,333	18,544	8,000	3,204	109,717
Basic Skills .06 & Occupational Skills .11 + Goodwill .49	84,248	445,500	151,440	22,000	8,812	712,000
OJT .02 + Goodwill .06	15,318	50,000	18,544	4,000	1,602	89,464
Job Retention .08 + Goodwill .03	61,271	30,000	9,272	16,000	6,409	122,952
Vocational Training .02 +	15,318	16,667	6,181	4,000	1,602	43,768

Components	ARDHS Contractor 100% Funds	Goodwill & 50/50 Direct	Goodwill Admin & Personnel	DHS 50Fed/50St Trans. Reimb.	DCO Admin	Total
Goodwill .02						
ESL Goodwill .01	0	4,500	3,091	0	0	7,591
Work Experience .00 + Goodwill .05	0	50,000	15,453	0	0	65,453
Total	765,888	897,667	309,062	200,000	80,110	2,252,727

Total Component Costs - 974,808

Overall State Agency Operational Cost - 71,190

Total State E&T Cost - 1,045,998

Planned Fiscal Year Costs of the State E&T Program by Category of Funding for SFY 2016

FUNDING CATEGORY	Approved SFY 2015 Budget	Proposed SFY 2016 Budget
1. 100 Percent Federal E&T Grant H4X	774,578	765,888
2. Share of $20 Million ABAWD Grant (if applicable)	-	-
3. Participant Expenses:	-	-
a. Transportation/Other (Job Retention) H6X	208,310	200,000
50% Federal	104,155	100,000
50% State	104,155	100,000
b. 50% FNS/50% Contractors (Goodwill)	-	1,206,729
50% FNS	-	603,365
50% Contractor	-	603,364
4. Total E&T Program Costs (1+2+3a+3b=4)	982,888	2,172,617
5. 100% State Agency Operational Costs	94,331	80,110
6. Total Fiscal Year Allocation	1,077,219	2,252,727
Total Federal	1,077,219	910,403
Total State	135,595	
Total FY16 Grant	1,045,998	
Goodwill	1,206,729	
Total Budget	2,252,727	

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%	50% Federal and 50% State funding 50% FNS/50% Contractor

Activities	Financial Participation
unmatched Federal 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.

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;

On July 1, 2016 DHS will have 11 contracts serving 12 counties. Beginning August 1, 2016 Goodwill initiates their contract in 8 additional counties.

Arkansas began FY16 with an E&T program in 13 counties through 12 E&T contractors. Work registrants must:

- If referred, participate in a Workfare program, (currently only in Stone County)
- Respond to any requests from a DHS worker for information regarding employment status or availability for work.
- Accept a bona fide offer of suitable employment at a wage not less than the higher of the State or Federal minimum wage.
- Continue employment at a suitable job.
- Avoid reducing one's work effort to less than 30 hours per week.

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;

By a system-generated report, those SNAP participants who meet the definition of an ABAWD and who are not employed at least 20 hours per week on an average; and

By caseworker action, any other work registered household member who *asks* to participate in the E&T Program.

Once a SNAP recipient is referred to the E&T Program, participation will be voluntary. No participant who refuses or fails to cooperate with an E&T Program requirement will be penalized.

DHS estimates that approximately 23,237 individuals will be referred to the E&T Program in the 21 counties during the upcoming Federal Fiscal Year. We expect about **14,811** work registrants who do not meet the ABAWD criteria to volunteer for the E&T Program.

During FFY 2016, an estimated 8,676 ABAWDs in 13 E&T counties will be referred to participate in the SNAP E&T program, out of a total of 38,568 ABAWDs statewide. This projection reflects over a 4% decrease in SNAP caseload from June 2014 to June 2015.

As the time-limit approached (April 1, 2016), there were 9,170 ABAWDs at risk of losing SNAP due to non-compliance, of the total population of 26,440 ABAWDs.

Since PRWORA, the State of Arkansas has chosen to utilize all of the ABAWD 15% exemptions granted by FNS.

FFY 2015, quarter 3 indicates 10,244 automated ABAWD referrals to our 13 contracted counties, compared to 9,179 in quarter 3 last year. Quarter 4 projections reflect a total of 13,659 ABAWDs will be referred to participate at the close of FFY 2015.

FFY 2014, 12,663 ABAWDs were referred to participated in the SNAP E&T program, in initially 14 counties, losing 3 counties in May 2014, but adding 2 more counties in September 2014. 477 declined to participation, and 1,928 were exempt from participation.

FFY 2013, 12,524 ABAWDs were referred to participate in the SNAP E&T program in 14 program counties. 432 declined to participate, and 1,812 were exempt.

Table 1: Estimated Participation Levels Federal Fiscal Year 2016

Figure	Description	2016
A.	Anticipated number of work registrants in the State during the fiscal year	66,128
B.	1. Exempt Category: Geographic	0
B.	2. Exempt Category: Certification period less than 3 months	

Figure	Description	2016
B.	3. Exempt Category: Personal exemptions granted by contractor **	2012
B.	*Total Exemptions*	29,572
C.	Percent of all work registrants exempt from E&T (B/A)	
D.	Number of E&T Program mandatory referrals	8,676
E.	Anticipated numbers of ABAWDs in the State during the fiscal year	38,568
F.	Anticipated number of ABAWDs in waived areas of the State during the fiscal year, as of Aug 26, 2015, State is under statewide waiver, so this number is ABAWDs in non-E&T counties	29,892
G.	Anticipated number of ABAWDs to be exempted under the State's 15% ABAWD exemption allowance during the fiscal year	1,301
H.	Number of at-risk ABAWDs expected in the State during the fiscal year (E-(F+G))	8,676

**NOTE: ****this data provided by the 12 Contractors for 13 Counties, in FFY 2015.

The State currently operates a voluntary program with automatic referrals, with no waivers.

Table 2: Estimated E&T Placements, Federal Fiscal Year 2016

Estimated E&T Placements in 13 Counties

Figure	Description	Total Estimated
1.	Number of ABAWD applicants and recipients expected to participate in a qualifying ABAWD component each month.	1,290
2.	Number of all other applicants and recipients (including ABAWDs involved in non-qualifying activities) expected to participate in a component each month.	14
3.	Total number of applicants and recipients the State agency expects to participate in a component each month during the fiscal year.	1,304

Estimated Individual Participation in 21 Counties

Federal Fiscal Year 2016

Description	Total Estimated
Number of individuals expected to participate in the E&T Program during the fiscal year 2016	23,237

FFY 2015 Contractor annual reports, total ABAWD Assignments

FFY 2015 Contractor reports, volunteer referrals column, Q1-Q3 totals + Q4 projection

FFY 2015 Contractor annual reports, total Assignments

FFY 2015 Contractor reports, total referrals column, Q1-Q3 totals + Q4 projection

March 2016 ABAWDs for Goodwill counties is 9,578, or 798 per month.

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

As of August 26, 2015, the SNAP E&T program operates in 13 counties through 12 contractors. The counties were selected based on the following criteria: availability of an enthusiastic local WIA partners to contract for E&T Program services; a county administrator committed to the goals of the E&T Program; and sufficient employment opportunities in the local labor market to reasonably expect that a successful participant might find employment. The 13 counties initially under contract for FFY 2016 were:

1. Sebastian

2. Hot Spring

3. Crittenden

4. Drew

5. Faulkner

6. Grant

7. Hempstead

8. Independence

9. Craighead

10. Miller

11. Pope

12. Union

13. White

See number 1 above for services to be provided.

For the period July 1, 2016 - September 30, 2016 Arkansas' E&T coverage covers Sebastian, Pope, Independence, White, Faulkner, Crittenden, Hot Spring, Grant, Drew, Hempstead, Miller, and Union. These E&T contracts will be renewed July 1, 2016 with the beginning of our SFY. Our current Workfare contractor is in Stone county, and the new 8 Goodwill Industry counties effective August 1, 2016 are: Benton, Washington, Baxter, Greene, Craighead, Pulaski, Saline, and Jefferson.

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 work day 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 work day 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.

With a new application, recertification or periodic report, the county office worker determines the work registration status of SNAP household members and work-registers all non-exempt individuals. Each month, all newly work-registered ABAWDS are automatically referred to participating contractors by DHS. This automated referral is made in the DHS eligibility system, currently ANSWER, by the case worker. A “SNAP E and T Referral Letter” is generated in ANSWER containing the SNAP participants name, address, telephone number, SSN, case number, and certification period. The DCO Systems/Reporting unit collects the letters for the month, places them in a DCO Public folder, and emails the folder to the E&T contractors. The contractors use the information from the letters to make initial contact with the ABAWD, and to schedule an assessment.

The SNAP unit in Central Office is also provided access to monthly reports generated by the Systems/Reporting unit that contain a list of ABAWD case closures, and ABAWD referrals (should contain the same cases as the referral letters that were also sent to the Contractors). These reports are also emailed by the 10th of each

month to the E&T contractors. Work registrants not classified as an ABAWD that wish to participate in the E&T Program will be manually referred by a DHS county office worker. In E&T counties, the DHS case worker completes a DCO 205A, (SNAP - E&T Referral Form/Status Change - E&T Participation Record).

The E&T assessment will be conducted by the local E&T Contractors. They are also responsible for component assignment, monitoring compliance with component requirements, and submitting reports as specified in the contract.

The DHS DCO SNAP unit is responsible for monitoring the contractor compliance through desk reviews, invoice audits, and visits, scheduled and unscheduled.

Coordination Flow:

1. DHS DCO County Office takes SNAP Application

2. DHS DCO County Office completes work registration, auto refers ABAWDs, & manually refers non-ABAWDs to E&T participation and make referrals to contractor

3. E&T Contractor conducts assessments and assigns participant to E&T component

4. E&T Contractor monitors participation and reports monthly to DHS DCO, or as requested.

5. DHS DCO SNAP unit in Central Office monitors contractor compliance.

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. A copy of the DCO-205 will be given to the household.

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	Contractor - E&T	Within 30 days of receipt of

Activity	Agency	Timeframe
Component Assignment	Coordinator	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.

Contractors	County	Estimated End Date
1. ASU Beebe	White County	Dec 30, 2016
2. Valley View School	Craighead County	June 30, 2016
3. Monticello School District	Drew County	Dec 30, 2016
4. Superintendent of Conway Public Schools	Faulkner County	Dec 30, 2016
5. College of the Ouachita's	Grant & Hot Spring Counties	Dec 30, 2016
6. University of Arkansas Community college at Hope	Hempstead & Miller Counties	Dec 30, 2016
7. UACC at Batesville	Independence County	Dec 30, 2016
8. Texarkana School District	Miller County	Dec 30, 2016
9. Russellville School District	Pope County	Dec 30, 2016
10. WIB of Eastern AR	Crittenden County	Dec 30, 2016
11. South Ark. Community College	Union County	Dec 30, 2016
12. Harbor House - Ft. Smith	Sebastian County	Dec 30, 2016
13. Goodwill Industries	Benton,Washington,Baxter,Craighead, Pulaski, Saline,Jefferson,Greene	This amendment is for Aug-Sep 2016

On July 1, 2016 DHS will have 11 contracts serving 12 counties. August 1, 2016, Goodwill initiates their contract in eight additional counties; Benton, Washington, Baxter, Pulaski, Saline, Jefferson, Greene,and Craighead.

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)

h. 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.

The participation requirements for all work and non-work components will be up to 120 hours per month. Specific requirements vary among components. Once an E&T Program participant has begun a component, the E&T Program funds needed to complete the component will be provided to the contractors as long as the E&T Program participant is fully complying with component requirements. DCO started the year with 12 individual contracts in 13 counties however, the contract with Valley View School ends June 30, 2016, leaving 11 contractors in 12 counties on July 1, 2016. Starting August 1, 2016, a new community based partner, Goodwill Industries, will start serving E&T participants in 8 additional counties, resulting in a total of 12 contractors covering 20 counties.

Areas of Coordination	All Agencies Involved	Number of E&T Placements Expected	Methods of Coordination
Delivers an E&T Component	• Supt. of Conway Public Schools • University of Arkansas Community College at Hope • Monticello School District • Russellville School District • Texarkana AR School District 7 • ASU Beebe • Crowley's Ridge Tech Institute • Univ.of AR Comm Colg at Batesville	-	Each agency has a local coordinator and DHS has a State E&T Coordinator to administer the SNAP E&T Program.

Areas of Coordination	All Agencies Involved	Number of E&T Placements Expected	Methods of Coordination
	• South Arkansas Community College • College of the Ouachitas • Workforce Invest Brd-Eastern AR • Harbor House of Fort Smith • Goodwill Industries		
The E&T Program delivers a service for another agency or program.	• Supt. of Conway Public Schools • University of Arkansas Community College at Hope • Monticello School District • Russellville School District • Texarkana AR School District 7 • ASU Beebe • Crowley's Ridge Tech Institute • Univ.of AR Comm Colg at Batesville • South Arkansas Community College • College of the Ouachitas • Workforce Invest Brd-Eastern AR • Harbor House of Fort Smith • Goodwill Industries	-	Each agency has a local coordinator and DHS has a State E&T Coordinator to administer the SNAP E&T Program.
Joint component of the E&T Program and another agency or program.	• Supt. of Conway Public Schools • University of Arkansas Community College at Hope • Monticello School District • Russellville School District • Texarkana AR School District 7	-	Each agency has a local coordinator and DHS has a State E&T Coordinator to administer the SNAP E&T Program.

Areas of Coordination	All Agencies Involved	Number of E&T Placements Expected	Methods of Coordination
	• ASU Beebe • Crowley's Ridge Tech Institute • Univ.of AR Comm Colg at Batesville • South Arkansas Community College • College of the Ouachitas • Workforce Invest Brd-Eastern AR • Harbor House of Fort Smith • Goodwill Industries		
Referral of individuals from the E&T Program to another program or agency.	• Supt. of Conway Public Schools • University of Arkansas Community College at Hope • Monticello School District • Russellville School District • Texarkana AR School District 7 • ASU Beebe • Crowley's Ridge Tech Institute • Univ.of AR Comm Colg at Batesville • South Arkansas Community College • College of the Ouachitas • Workforce Invest Brd-Eastern AR • Harbor House of Fort Smith • Goodwill Industries	-	Each agency has a local coordinator and DHS has a State E&T Coordinator to administer the SNAP E&T Program.

Outcome Data

Beginning August 1, 2016, it is projected Goodwill will serve 3,353 at-risk ABAWDs, and a total of 9,578 ABAWDs in the eight additional counties.

For the period 10/01/15 - 09/30/16, the amended projection is as follows:

Referrals	23,237
Exemptions Granted	3,449
Employment Plans Prepared	2,167
Assessments Conducted	2,907
Increased Basic Education Skills	479
Placed in jobs	503
Reimbursement Requests	1,542

The above estimates are based on actual reported data for 3 quarters of FFY 2015 with Q4 Projections based on the DCO SNAP E&T Components report submitted by the contractors, amended to add projected ABAWDs served by Goodwill in eight additional counties.

The Contractor Annual Reports indicate the following ABAWDs & NABAWDs that completed all components in **FFY 2014:**

	ABAWDs	Non ABAWDs	TotalCompletions	Total Assignments
Independent Job Search	507	7	514	1016
Job Search Training	907	29	936	1226
Employment Counseling	1249	43	1292	1443
Job Club	656	25	681	765
Basic Education	68	12	80	265
Basic & Occupational Skills	352	12	364	664
ESL	0	0	0	0
On the Job Training	4	3	7	124
Job Retention	216	19	235	494
Vocational Training	34	22	56	75
Total	**3993**	**172**	**4165**	**6072**

The contractors provided the following statistics for October 2014 - June 2015

Automated Referrals	**10,244**
Volunteer Referrals	**55**

The contractors report that **167** individuals were placed in jobs during the period October 2014 - June 2015.

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 child care 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.*

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*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 out-stationed 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 most costly 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 Department 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 Sub-Committees: America's JobLink 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 23 FTE's: 15 full–time and 5 half–time DVOPs, and 11 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 Joblink System, and on the Arkansas State Government Jobs web–site.

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, 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 intensive case management services will be required to use Arkansas JobLink (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, 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 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. 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 of 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 Department of Workforce Services performs the performance calculations and identifies the winners. The award amount of $14,000 (based on approximately 1% of the annual grant allocation) is as follows: First Place: $1,200 Second Place: $900 Third Place: $700

The selection criteria are based on performance and job service activity from each area of operation. This information is obtained from the Arkansas JobLink 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, identified in VPL04-14 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 JobLink 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 employed 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 out-stationed 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.

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.

In conjunction with the local workforce centers, the State closely monitors the provision of priority of service. The Veteran Program Technician shall periodically conduct site checks to ensure all required priority of service signs are present and properly displayed, and staff members understand the requirements of priority of service.

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:

- Vets 9002 and 200 Reports
- 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 JobLink 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 JobLink 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 JobLink 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 will maintain 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.

(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 25, 2015

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) and UI Integrity Action Plan for Fiscal Year 2016. The SQSP identifies areas where ADWS fell below the Acceptable Level of Performance. The Corrective Action Plans are included for these items in accordance with the Core Measure criteria for FY 2016 SQSP as per guidelines set forth in UIPL17–15 dated July 17, 2015.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Pamela Vance at 501–683–5366.

Sincerely,

Daryl E. Bassett Director

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 2016 - Reference UIPL No. 21-15, Source Date: 08/20/2015.

Funding Total: $20,001,582.00

Project Start Date: 10/01/2015

Project End Date: 09/30/2016

Name of Authorizing Representative: Daryl Bassett

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 NARRATIVE ARKANSAS – FY 2016

Overview

The Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) continues 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 bring ADWS to the customer rather than the customer to ADWS. ADWS continually leverages new technology in implementing this strategy.

In the summer of 2004, ADWS deployed the “LOARC” system which enabled claimant usage through the local ADWS offices to self–file initial claims through a web–based system. In January 2008, ADWS deployed the “ArkNet” system which enabled claimants to self–file their continued claims via the Internet from any location with Internet access. ADWS developed the “EZARC” system that allows claimants to self–file their own initial claims via the Internet from any location with Internet access. The EZARC system was deployed to the World Wide Web in October 2011. The EZARC system is considered a success as effectively all initial claims are filed via the Internet by claimants at the local offices or from remote locations. In March 2015, ADWS developed the “Claims Processing Hotline” in order to leverage local office staff by shifting one local office’s workload for claims filed via the EZARC system to another local office experiencing a lower claimstaking volume by utilizing customer call stations and linking them with available local office staff throughout the state.

Beginning in FY 2004, ADWS began upgrading its earnings issue investigative ability through automation. ADWS deployed BARTS (Benefit, Audit, Reporting and Tracking) in December 2004. BARTS processes approximately 85% of earnings issue investigations with minimal, but critical, human effort in the form of data input. Processing of investigations is accomplished primarily through automated cross matches – Quarterly Benefit/Wage Cross Match and the New Hire Cross Match. Per quarter in SY 2015 ADWS investigated approximately 30,100 claims and sent an average of 32,800 wage audit notice requests to employers. In May 2006 ADWS upgraded BARTS to include IRME (Internet Response Module for Employers). IRME allows employers to receive email notification of new 901As, and to respond to those requests online. In 2014, ADWS upgraded BARTS 2.0 to BARTS 4.3 to effectuate more efficient case processing in terms of both system and personnel resource capabilities and will promote more effective and efficient prosecutions through enhanced investigation assignment capabilities.

ADWS launched its Automated Adjudication System (AAS) in July 2005. Like the UI State Information Data Exchange (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 may now receive and respond to Notices to Last Employers, Notice to Base Period Employers, and questionnaires regarding nonmonetary issues via the Internet. ADWS' effort to pursue a strategic direction geared toward using server technology will continue to drive its desire to enhance the Automated Adjudication System in order to maintain the same functionality as SIDES with no additional subscription cost to the agency.

Two web–based applications for employers were launched in FY 2007. The Employer Registration System (ERS) provides online capability to register and maintain UI tax account information for the individual employer or their representative. The Wage Reporting System (WRS) offers online electronic filing for quarterly wage and UI tax reports, including the option for UI tax payments via electronic funds transfers. Both systems were later modified for Intranet usage by ADWS staff, an improvement that allowed ADWS staff the same online, real time updates as the employer users and reduced processing time and costs. The ERS and WRS systems launched in FY 2007 were still dependent on mainframe applications for some processes and other tax functions were also rooted in mainframe processes. In an effort to further enhance the existing internet based system, ADWS developed TAX21 to create a user friendly system for employers and ADWS personnel. The ERS and WRS systems were rewritten and enhanced along with the majority of mainframe processes. For the first and second quarters of 2012, all filings by employers and ADWS' processing were accomplished through TAX21. In FY 2013 ADWS migrated nearly all of the remaining tax processes from the mainframe environment to the new Internet based system. Search capabilities for ADWS personnel were improved to aid in serving employer customers when they contact ADWS, but also to aid in early detection of potential SUTA Dumping employers to minimize large debts of unpaid taxes and protect the Trust Fund. Employers may now register as a seasonal employer online, and are automatically registered as such according to industry codes, subject to opting out manually in response to an email notification. Accounts of acquired companies are now transferred online and immediate notification of any existing tax lien is emailed automatically to the acquiring employer. FY 2016 and 2017 activities for TAX21 include programming to notify the IRS of delinquent employer judgments for collection through the Tax Offset Program.

These enhancements also incorporated the ETA 581, Data Validation and Tax Performance System programs in order to eliminate inconsistencies that may arise when operating in mainframe and Internet environments; Data Validation – Tax passed completely for SY 2014. In FY 2014, the online system was enhanced to provide employers with all account notices, and those notices are imaged real time, allowing ADWS personnel immediate access to them. Additionally, a TAX21 employer can prepare a .pdf of an account registration, adjustment voucher, account maintenance, and other documents and upload them directly to ADWS staff computers and from there to the ADWS imaging system. Enrollment records reveal that in CY 2013 approximately 21% of employers were registered to use the system while as of July 31, 2015 approximately 55% of employers are registered. In 2015, ADWS upgraded TAX21's .NET architecture in order to enhance processing time and to remove virtually all batch processes from the mainframe legacy environment to TAX21's Internet environment. ADWS conducts quarterly training of staff to aid in improving employer usage of TAX21.

In 2008, ADWS launched a new UI benefit payment program using bank issued VISA debit cards. In June 2010 ADWS expanded the UI benefit payment program by rolling out a direct deposit payment option for claimants. On August 8, 2014, a snapshot of UI claims shows debit card to direct deposit payments at 49.58% to 49.89%. In June 2011, ADWS expanded the VISA debit card program to include DUA claimants. In September 2011, ADWS launched new benefit payment options for the TRA program. Claimants may now elect to receive their TRA payments by debit card or direct deposit. The roll out of the VISA debit card and direct deposit payment option for TRA claimants is considered to have been a success and as of August 2012, all TRA benefit payments are made by debit card or through direct deposit.

In FY 2011, DWS replaced the existing overpayment accounting system based on 1970's mainframe technology, MRS (Model Recovery System) with ARCO (Automated Recovery and Collection Operations). This upgrade replaced MRS with 2 systems – NORM (New Overpayment Recovery Module) and RECOVER and provided new capability with ENFORCE. NORM serves as a single repository on each claimant of any adjudicated issue, regardless of whether or not that issue leads to an overpayment. This single look repository was novel to Arkansas. NORM establishes and mails the overpayments and tracks all collections. RECOVER performs billing of collectible overpayment accounts through a progressive billing structure to encourage claimants to remain current on repaying the money owed to the trust fund. ENFORCE automates the identification and processing of payable overpayment accounts that can be collected through legal processes, including prosecution, liens, garnishments, and civil actions, based on programmable legal and policy criteria. Upgrades to RECOVER in FY 2014 improved account processing and provided a new hire cross match to aid in locating claimants with no known current address. Improvements to ENFORCE in FY 2014 automated the import of the lien returns. In an effort to improve performance and system efficiency, NORM upgrades were completed during FY 2015 in order to improve performance and increase system efficiency.

In 2015 ADWS further progressed on its system upgrade strategy by improving several other existing systems to realize more efficient processing at a lower cost through updated technology. The agency imaging system was converted from VB 6.0 to ASP 4.0. The conversion of the imaging platform will enable ADWS to deploy programming which will allow facsimiles to be automatically imaged significantly reducing man–hours and costs associated with printing and imaging paper documents. The facsimile to imaging project should be deployed to production by the end of the fourth quarter of 2015. ADWS also will deploy an in–house developed new hire repository and reporting system, reducing costs, improving performance, and moving this vital function to responsive agency control. During FY 2015, a state income tax refund intercept cross match was deployed in order to automate the balance update requirements for that program, eliminating a manual process and significantly reducing excess intercepts. ADWS continues in its efforts to integrate its AAS system with NORM to enable a more efficient manner of establishing overpayments. The AAS/NORM interface project is expected to deploy during FY 2016.

In March 2015, ADWS deployed its "Claims Processing Hotline" to selected Workforce Centers as a method of leveraging local office staff by shifting one local office's claimstaking workload to another local office experiencing a lower

claimstaking volume. Claimstaking procedures remain unchanged with the only difference being that a claimant may be partially served at a local office via telephone rather than in–person. Finally, a claimant identification scanning and repository system will be deployed to archive claimant identification in order to address possible identity theft issues. ADWS anticipates piloting the claimant identification scanning and repository system in late 2015 with deployment statewide no later than the end of the first quarter of 2016.

ADWS has two UIRS Grant projects (SBR) underway at this time:

• Short–Time Compensation Grant to automate the submission of the employer's Short–Time Compensation Plan application and for the filing of initial and continued Short–Time Compensation Weekly Claims.

• Remployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Grant to develop and run a weekly profiling model to identify and unemployment insurance claimants who are most likely to exhaust their claims as well as transitioning veterans receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex–Service members (UCX) and develop individualized reemployment plans designed to enable them to quickly and effectively reenter the workforce.

Current Financial Considerations Impacting Performance

Staffing and funding limitations and requirements to operate and maintain current systems continue to impact the Department's ability to dedicate the resources necessary to implement the automation changes required to move quickly from a legacy mainframe environment to an Internet and server based environment. ADWS has made progress in updating current systems, in the completion of all upgrades and deployment of a new IVR system, in the deployment of the electronic response system for employers, in the new enhancements to the online employer wage and tax reporting system via TAX21, and in the other system upgrades. However, ADWS anticipates continued shrinking administrative funding as the economy moves from recession and the claims load lightens. Accordingly, ADWS continues to examine ways to efficiently and cost effectively automate and reduce staff.

Training and retention will continue to be major points of emphasis for the Department in order to cultivate and to maintain a well–trained and experienced staff, as well as to provide appropriate training of new hires. To further ADWS' commitment to provide quality service, training emphasis will continue to focus on promoting a thorough understanding and working knowledge of the UI program. To precipitate this strategy, ADWS has developed online training that includes mock production performance that can be presented on demand and that can present consistent training content to staff.

GPRA Goals and Targets – FY 2016

First Payments – Intrastate: The goal for FY 2016 is that 87.5% 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 2015 was recorded at 93.5%, an increase of 1% over SY 2014. ADWS recognizes that this is a critical area and will continue to monitor first payments in an effort to

insure that we obtain maximum performance results and continue to exceed the measure during FY 2016.

New Status Determinations: The GPRA goal for FY 2016 is 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 2015 was at 90.5%, an increase of 1.1 % over SY 2014. As anticipated last year, the training of staff and the new Tax 21 system allowed ADWS to exceed the measure in FY 2015. The Tax 21 system enhances the employer registration process by asking specific questions to better detect instances when a new account is attempting to be established rather than a successor account. Additionally, the system provides a means of allowing employers to send immediate notifications when they attempt to file an account type that is not allowed online because of special requirements. New accounts filed online in SY 2015 totaled 4,798. ADWS has had several training sessions this year to prepare staff to educate employers, on the necessity of filing new accounts timely. 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 2016 is at least 67.9% of the estimated detectable, recoverable overpayments will be established. ADWS' performance for SY 2015 was at 53.49%, an improvement over the SY 2014 rate of 40.78% but under the FY 2015 goal of 55.3%. ADWS will continue in its efforts to meet or exceed the Core Measure of 50% to 95% for the Detection of Overpayments, which it has accomplished during the 2013–4, 2014–1, 2014–2, 2014–3, 2014–4 and 2015–1 quarters. In line with the national trend, 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 earnings correctly. 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 if the week in which a match was made from the State New Hire Directory is claimed. To further enhance the IVR Cross Match System, in May 2012, ADWS began mailing letters automatically to claimants if the week in which a match was made from the State New Hire Directory is claimed. This project has resulted in affording local office staff another opportunity to address potential earnings fraud and to detect potential separation issues. Additionally, ADWS contacts as many employers as possible that do not return new hire wage audit notices timely, in an attempt to increase response rates and thus the detection rate. This strategy effort has resulted in an increase in the average initial wage audit return rate from 55% to 69% in SY 2015 and in the average final wages audit notice return rate to 91% on new hire investigations. In FY 2016, ADWS will pursue efforts to increase detection rates by concentrating on identifying categories of large numbers of quarterly benefit wage crossmatch investigations which are more labor intensive and less likely to result in overpayments, by substituting other categories of such investigations which are more likely to result in higher overpayments. In FY 2016, ADWS will continue to expand the quarterly crossmatch wage audit notice follow up to encompass more employers.

Assessment of Program Performance in Prior Years

For SY 2015, ADWS' performance below the Core Measures is identified below. Corrective Action Plans are submitted for these items in accordance with the Core

Measure criteria for the FY 2016 SQSP in accordance with the Additional Planning Guidance for Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Unemployment Insurance (UI) State Quality Service Plan (SQSP) as per UIPL 17–15 dated July 17, 2015.

CORE MEASURES

Effective Audit Measure – Corrective Action Plan Included

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 2014: ADWS had the following factor scores: Factor 1 = .6%, Factor 2 = 4.5%, Factor 3 = .7%, and Factor 4 = 2.7%

SECRETARY STANDARDS IN REGULATION

Data for the most recent Secretary's Year showed acceptable levels of performance by ADWS in all categories. No narratives are required.

OTHER UI PROGRAM MEASURES

Data Validation – Benefits: Items submitted passed validation – Corrective Action Plan Included

ALP = Pass with a validation score of +/– 1% in Population 4.

Performance for Validation Year 2015 passed in all data validation items but for ETA 5159 Claims and Payment Activities related to federal claims.

Data Validation – Tax: Items submitted passed validation – Corrective Action Plan Included

ALP = Pass all three components +/– 2% in Population 3.

Performance for Validation Year 2015 passed Status New and Status Successor but failed in Terminations.

Improper Recording of Issue Detection Date – Narrative

ADWS recognizes a need to improve the recording of issue detection dates and has continued in its improvement since 2013. In SY 2013 ADWS' total performance was 90.25%, in SY 2014 total performance increased to 91.18%, during SY2015, further increased performance to 93.33%. ADWS acknowledges it did not meet the desired level of achievement of 95% for issue detection dates during SY 2015. Non–achievement stems from an increase in retirement of more experienced and supervisory staff and hiring of staff with little or no prior experience in unemployment insurance and/or adjudication processes and practices.

ADWS plans to improve on the issue detection date measure by continuing to provide in–depth and ongoing refresher Benefits, Timeliness and Quality (BTQ) training with regard to issue detections dates to all adjudication staff, as well as, quarterly refresher material on issue detection dates. The unit will evaluate quarterly BTQ grading results and provide feedback to all adjudication staff on any issue detection date errors each quarter. Adjudicator Supervisors will continue to grade random cases for quality and correct issue detection dates and provide corrective action to adjudicators on a monthly basis. As detection date errors remain part of the Adjudicators' and Adjudication Supervisors' performance appraisals, this internal performance standard should continue to help to increase the accuracy of issue detection dates, which along with reminders and training to all adjudication staff, will help move this performance measure closer to the desired level of achievement of 95%.

UI PROGRAM NATIONAL PRIORITIES

Improve State UI Program Capacity – Narrative

ADWS began the process of building its administrative capacity in CY 2014 when it began development of a strategic plan effective through CY 2018. Integral to that plan is a Plan–Do–Check–Act cycle process for development of sustainable solutions for the upcoming challenges. In developing the plan, ADWS Senior Staff analyzed processes internal to and external to the agency in order to identify areas of strength and weakness and the tools available for leveraging improvements in all areas. Several key areas that were identified are the wise use of technology, the investing in staff training and recognition, and the transferring of staff knowledge to new staff. Additionally, a commitment has been made to avoid the pitfalls of providing services based on funding, rather than customer needs. In this regard ADWS is dedicated to utilizing flexible funding sources and will continue to evaluate future SBR opportunities and technical assistance opportunities on that basis. Finally, ADWS has committed itself to enhancing collaboration within the agency.

Improve Prevention, Detection, Recovery – OPs – Narrative

As outlined throughout this SQSP, ADWS completely agrees with the need to protect the integrity of the trust fund. Since 2004 ADWS has invested millions of dollars in systems and improvements to combat improper payments and to collect overpayments, including the FY 2014 deployment of the BARTS 4.3 upgrade that improved efficiency and reduced costs. ADWS has been integral in developing systems that can be implemented in other states. This long–term strategy of investing in these systems has resulted in ADWS meeting the Core Measure of 50% to 95% for the Detection of Overpayments for the first time in its history in the 2013–4 quarter, and again in the 2014–1, 2014–2, 2014–3, 2014–4 and 2015–1 quarters. ADWS remains committed to continuing to find the most effective solutions for reducing improper payments and stands ready to evaluate any proposed solution for implementation in Arkansas.

Improve UI Performance Nationally – Narrative

ADWS' strategies have moved it in recent years to a program with nationally significant results. In SY 2015 ADWS excelled in State Rankings of Core Measures. In Tax Quality, ADWS passed. In "Nonseparation Determination Quality Scores",

ADWS ranks 19th in the nation with a score of 86.7%, compared to the national average of 76.6%. In “New Employer Status Determinations 90–day Timeliness”, ADWS ranks 12th in the nation with a score of 90.5%, compared to the national average of 87.9%. In “Nonmonetary Determinations 21–day Timeliness”, ADWS ranks 10th in the nation with a score of 89.9%, compared to the national average of 71.6%. In “Separation Determination Quality Scores”, ADWS ranks 11th in the nation with a score of 83.3%, compared to the national average of 69.5%. In “All First Payments 14/21–day Timeliness”, ADWS ranks 4th in the nation with a score of 94.1%, compared to the national average of 82.5%. ADWS strives for all opportunities to lead the nation in the effort at improving UI performance. ADWS routinely reviews the UI Performs results immediately upon their availability to monitor performance, and it adjusts strategies to improve performance where warranted. In the past ADWS has sought Regional Office guidance and has implemented many recommended changes to address improper payments. ADWS will continue to do so as it seeks to improve its integrity efforts.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

WIOA, which went into effect July 1, 2015, 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. ADWS hosted a unique training and strategy session, July 21 – 22, on implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in Arkansas, which is the first major reform in workforce development in 15 years. At this interactive session, 500 workforce development partners and stakeholders, including employers, economic developers, Workforce Development Board members and community college representatives learned and discussed how they can develop broader and deeper partnerships, integrate programs and services and develop within their regional area of the state to help prepare Arkansas’ workforce to meet the specific needs of current and potential employers. ADWS will continue to pursue strategies to increase connections between the unemployment insurance claimants and the opportunities available through our workforce partners to secure employment services and job training in in–demand industries and occupations.

Facilitate the Reemployment of Claimants – Narrative

While no GPRA goal for FY 2016 was established, the rate for CY 2014 was 57%. Actual performance for ADWS for CY 2015 was 66.7% exceeding standards which also exceed the ALP of 59% established for CY 2016. ADWS received a Remployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) Grant to develop and implement a weekly profiling model to identify and unemployment insurance claimants who are most likely to exhaust their claims as well as transitioning veterans receiving Unemployment Compensation for Ex–Service members (UCX) and to develop individualized reemployment plans designed to enable them to quickly and effectively reenter the workforce. For FY 2016 ADWS will continue to provide employment services for all job seekers, including unemployed claimants, in order to continue excellent service to claimants in the furtherance of assisting them in their efforts to reenter the workforce.

Worker Misclassification – Narrative

ADWS recognizes the national priority in reducing employer misclassification of workers. ADWS' commitment in this area is demonstrated by results of audits conducted in SY 2014. The Effective Audit Measure score for ADWS has ADWS out–performing nearly all other states in the Region in two of the four factors. In the past SY ADWS improved its audit identification process. Audits still are identified through the UI benefit claim filing process. When wages are missing on a claim the 515 Unit investigates. If the 515 Unit determines that the employer misclassified the claimant as a contract worker, the unit sends the employer a liability letter stating the reasons why the claimant should have been classified as an employee. The employer has 30 days to appeal the decision. If no appeal is filed or if ADWS prevails on the appeal, and depending upon the availability of auditors, the employer is subject to a complete audit. In addition to this process, in the fourth quarter of 2013, ADWS refined the random audit identification process to include a total wages component. Employers selected for random audit now will have to have a minimum dollar of total wages. This will more effectively utilize limited auditor resources. In SY 2015 ADWS discovered 1,316 misclassified workers, underreported wages totaling $30,494,595 and discovered $494,361 in unreported contributions through this process. ADWS is proactive in addressing misclassification by seeking to better educate employers regarding worker misclassification through posting of subject matter materials on the ADWS website and through the development of brochures for dissemination by the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and the UALR Small Business and Technology Development Center. At each quarterly ADWS Advisory Council meeting, misclassification of workers is an agenda item. ADWS will continue to pursue misclassified workers. In the coming FY ADWS is anxious to evaluate the additional opportunities DOL will present to improve the targeting of audits, to improve employer education and to combat egregious employer schemes collectively.

Strategy for Evaluating Customer Satisfaction

ADWS periodically publishes alerts to employers to promote a greater understanding of procedures and policies which also serves as a means to alert them to upcoming changes, new laws, etc. The Department's website also encourages feedback from our customers, both claimants and employers, as it solicits complaints, problems and suggestions. All questions received are forwarded to the appropriate section for immediate response. During SY 2012, ADWS introduced an official ADWS Information Desk to assist claimants and employers with general information regarding services provided by ADWS and claim assistance. It is the goal to handle all inquiries within 24 hours of receipt. As with the feedback received from our customers via our website, customers who need more detailed assistance than can be provided by the Information Desk are forwarded to the appropriate section for immediate response.

During SY 2015 ADWS implemented an annual telephonic customer service survey of randomly selected job seekers and employers. ADWS contracted with the Survey Research Center at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. ADWS collaborated with the SRC on the design of the survey instrument, but the execution of the survey was done independently by SRC staff to attain the most accurate, unbiased assessment. As with prior survey results, ADWS uses the results to measure program effectiveness and aid in the modification and development of strategies to improve agency processes and services.

Results from the job seeker survey reveal that the of claimants find the IVR service options for filing claims continues to be viewed as “very easy to use.” Of claimants using the ArkLine system, 58% rate the telephone system with the highest rating of “10” while 57% rate the online system for weekly claim filing with the highest rating of “10.” When asked to rate their overall satisfaction with Workforce Center services, ratings given by the job seekers averaged to 7.5 on the satisfaction scale. Approximately 1 in 3 job seekers gave the service a "10.” This represents an increase of 5 percentage points compared to 2013. Finally, nearly three–fourths (73%) of job seekers rated the Workforce Center staff’s willingness to help as either "Excellent" or "Good."

During SY 2015 ADWS implemented a voluntary customer service survey for individuals utilizing the “Claims Processing Hotline.” Survey results were used to measure effectiveness of the “Claims Processing Hotline” and to aid in the potential modification and development of strategies to improve the initial claims filing process and related service. Results from the survey revealed an overwhelmingly positive response to the effectiveness of the “Claims Processing Hotline” to reduce customer service times, increase customer satisfaction and increase efficiency by seamlessly reallocating staff resources from local offices experiencing lower claims volumes to those offices experiencing high claim volume or experiencing staffing shortages. The results of the surveys prompted ADWS to expedite the deployment of the “Claims Processing Hotline” to all remaining local offices enabling the project to become completed four months ahead of schedule.

Maintaining Solvency of the State’s Trust Fund

As of August 1, 2015, the preliminary TUR rate for Arkansas was 5.7%. Through the week ending July 4, 2015, Initial Claims totaled 81,771 and Continued Claims totaled 626,642. Data on the ETA UI–3 reports indicate that through June 2014, CY 2014 Initial Claims totaled 77,213 and Continued Claims totaled 658,441. This represents a slight increase in Initial Claims and a significant decrease in Continued Claims for the same period in CY 2014.

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. On October 1, 2014, ADWS made the made the final, voluntary payment on these advances. ADWS projects a trust fund balance of $354,500,000 at the end of CY 2015.

While the UI Trust Fund has not reached the recommended average high cost multiple of 1, bills passed during the 2015 Legislative Session are increasing trust fund solvency. Act 412 amends ADWS’ Unemployment Insurance law by reducing the total number of full weeks of UI benefits from 25 to 20 and changes the weekly benefit amount calculation from using the high quarter to using an average of all four quarters in the base period. ADWS projects Act 412 will result in a reduction of disbursements by 30 to 40 million per year. Act 690 amends ADWS’ Unemployment Insurance law by allowing ADWS to offset the federal tax returns of employers who are delinquent in the payment of their unemployment insurance taxes.

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; in SY 2013 ADWS intercepted a net $16,853,664.14 of which approximately $9,299,655.36 was returned to the trust fund; in SY 2014 ADWS intercepted a net $8,108,965.38; for SY 2015 intercepted a net $9,633,542.28; and for SY 2016 through July 31, 2015 intercepted a net of $2,199,885.82. 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 cross–match returns weekly earnings for the match weeks, eliminating the need to send wage audit requests to individual agencies. In the coming FY, ADWS projects to deploy front–end identity verification. ADWS will continue to examine the feasibility of automating the import of appeal statuses to the overpayment repository and the deployment of the AAS/NORM interface to automatically establish many non–earnings issue overpayments. In order to make initial claim eligibility determinations faster and more accurate, ADWS will continue to seek to increase employer utilization of the response systems for employers to respond to notices to last employer, notices to base period employers, the adjudication questionnaires, and wage audit notice requests. To complement the subject specific online fraud applications, ADWS continues to experience good results with the online, general fraud reporting system available to the general public on the ADWS home page.

Assurances

Per UIPL 21–14, by signing the SQSP Signature Page, ADWS certifies that it will comply with the assurances listed in Handbook 336, 18th Edition, Change 3. ADWS will institute any plans or measures necessary to comply with the requirements.

Additionally, UIPL 21–14 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: Monthly

• IT Contingency Plan Tested: Scheduled for Fall 2015

J. Assurance of Automated System Security

• Date Risk Assessment Conducted: January 2014

• System Security Plan Reviewed/Updated: January 2015

• System Security Plan implemented: 2004

4. Corrective Action Plans (CAPs)

Corrective Action Plans (CAPs): CAPs are expected as a part of the SQSP when State's annual performance does not meet the established criteria for core measures, Secretary's Standards, UI program, assurances, and other program deficiencies identified in the annual SQSP guidance provided by the Department. The CAP must list both specific milestones for key corrective actions or improvement activities, and the completion date for each milestone.

Corrective Action Plan 1

State: Arkansas

Federal Fiscal Year: 2016

Measure: **Effective Audit Measure (EAM) - Score ≥ 7; exceed all 4 factors**

Performance Measure: EAM - Factor 1 (Contributory Employers Audited) - Score ≥ 1

Performance Level: Current - 0.6; 12/31 - Pass; 03/31; 06/30; 09/30

Performance Measure: EAM - Factor 3 (Total Wages Audited) - Score ≥ 1

Performance Level: Current - 0.7; 12/31 - Pass; 03/31; 06/30; 09/30

ADWS did not pass the Effective Audit Measure, though it continued to perform well in two of the four factors. In Factor 2, ADWS ranked seventh with a 4.5%, while in Factor 4, ADWS an average of 2.7 misclassified workers were detected per audit. Two of the factors were deficient for the following reasons: Factor 1 - Contributory Employers Audited - ADWS has thirteen auditor positions: Four auditors are still in training and are not auditing - a process that can take as long as a year; two are non-auditing positions; and two conduct audits on blocked claims only. The 1% penetration rate was not met due to a lack of staff, staff turnover, and other competing job responsibilities assigned to the auditors. Factor 3 - Total Wages Audited - This factor was not met due to audits being performed on employers with smaller amounts of annual wages. In Arkansas 80% of employers have fewer than 10 employees and account for only 13% of the total wages. Previous audit identification processes did not weigh audit selection in favor of larger employers.

ADWS has already undertaken the following actions to cure the deficiencies: Factor 1 - Training of new employees will continue to enable newly hired auditors to begin auditing. ADWS increased the production quotas for auditors in an effort to increase the penetration rate and removed other responsibilities to increase productivity. Factor 3 - Audit identification processes were adjusted to select employers with payrolls exceeding $700,000.

ADWS did not meet its projected pass for CY 2015 under the existing corrective action plan largely due to the loss of three seasoned auditors and lower production quotas for remaining staff. In an effort to pass Factor 1, audit quotas have been increased and the responsibility of collecting has been centralized taking this responsibility from out-stationed auditors. While ADWS believed it was poised to pass Factor 3, a miscommunication between two Field Audit Supervisors resulted in the increase in total annual wages not being communicated to all field auditors. Once

the miscommunication was detected it was corrected; however, it was not soon enough to increase the percentage for Factor 3.

In order to monitor and assess the accomplishment of the planned actions and for controlling quality after achieving performance goals, ADWS will undertake the following actions: Factor 1 - Once the new staff has been trained the Field Auditor Supervisors will monitor and assess the contributory employers audited percentage rate. If necessary, auditor job responsibilities will we reviewed and standards adjusted with an increase in the audit quota assigned to each auditor. Factor 3 - Field Auditor supervisor will work with the TPS Coordinator in reviewing the 581 report each quarter to ensure this goal is met and to make certain that the quality of audits have remained unchanged.

Corrective Action Plan 2

State: Arkansas

Federal Fiscal Year: 2016

Measure: **Benefits Data Validation**

Performance Measure: Data Validation Benefits - All Submitted and Passing

Performance Level: Current - Fail (Pop 4); 12/31 - Pass; 03/31 - Pass; 06/30 - Pass; 09/30

ADWS did not pass Data Validation - Benefits Population 4. A passing measure is validation within plus or minus 1%. Of the 13 groups for Population 4.11 Report Validation, ADWS did not pass Group 4.11 ETA 5159 Claims and Payment Activities related to federal claims. An analysis of the data suggests that this group did not pass in large part due to cancelled claims. The cancellation of claims impacts the "Amounts Paid" by creating variances in the dollar amounts causing the population to not be able to pass validation.

ADWS believes that the variance between the numbers reported and the numbers validated were due to cancelled federal claims. ADWS will draw an extract for the universe closer in days to the reported count to minimize the risk of cancelled claims having an impact on the extract universe. The decrease in the claims load should also result in a decrease in the number of potential cancellations.

ADWS will continue to analyze data to identify and isolate potential factors that could create a variance in the reported count and the validation count.

Corrective Action Plan 3

State: Arkansas

Federal Fiscal Year: 2016

Measure: **Tax Data Validation - All Submitted and Passing**

Performance Level: Current - Fail (Pop 3); 12/31 - Pass; 03/31 - Pass; 06/30; 09/30

ADWS passed all of CY 2015 Data Validation requirements with the exception of terminations which caused Population 3 to receive a failing score. This resulted from a previously reported error that Tax 21 had erroneously counted federal accounts as active employers. When the federal accounts were eliminated it created a variance in the number of termination account records for the remainder of the validation year.

The programming error that caused Population 3 to erroneously record federal accounts as active employers was corrected and is not expected to recur during the CY 2016 Data Validation.

5. UI Program Integrity Action Plan (UI IAP)

The UI IAP outlines the strategies the State will undertake during the planning period regarding the prevention reduction and recovery of UI improper payments.

ADWS' operational overpayment rate for the year ending June 30, 2014, was 8.380%, down from 9.63% for the year ending June 30, 2013, while its UI IPIA Integrity Rate was 9.441%. For CY 2014 the operational overpayment rate was 7.979%, which was a reduction of 1.571% from CY 2013. 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 4.427%, Benefit Year Earning issues are the leading cause of overpayments, though this is a decrease from 5.10% the previous year. BAM data for the year ending June 30, 2014 indicate that 49.886% of dollars overpaid is the direct result of claimant error in failing to report earnings or due to claimants incorrectly reporting earnings. (2) Separation Issues: At 3.325%, the second leading cause of overpayments is attributed to claimant error, employer error or a combination of the two regarding separation issues; this is down from 3.59% the previous year ending June 30, 2013. BAM data indicate that 35.219% of dollars overpaid during the period ending June 30, 3014 is the result of incorrect or inadequate separation information provided by one or both of the parties. (3) Other Issues. At .752%, the third leading cause of overpayments is attributed to "Other Issues;" this is up slightly from 0.56% during the period ending June 30, 2013. These issues include: appeal reversals, claimant fraud outside the key week, and claim maintenance issues. BAM data indicate that 7.960% of dollars overpaid is the result of other issues.

ADWS continues to work to improve preventing, detecting and recovering improper unemployment insurance overpayments. The GPRA goal for FY 2016 is that at least 67.9% of the estimated detectable recoverable overpayments will be established. ADWS' GPRA performance for SY 2015 was 53.49%, an increase of 12.71% over SY 2014. 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, which it did for six consecutive quarters beginning with the 2013–4 quarter. Training will continue to be a major point of emphasis in order to cultivate and maintain a well–trained and experienced staff to better minimize the occurrence of overpayments. Staff turnover in the FIRE Unit and BPC negatively impacts the determination of issues and the establishment of overpayments and is critical to continued success.

Over the past three years the BAM Operational Rate continued to decrease from 11.27% to 10.17% to 9.63% to 8.380%. In order to increase the overpayment detection rate and reduce the operational overpayment rate further, ADWS will pursue the following major strategies: 1. Prevent, detect and reduce future overpayments by increasing employer electronic responses; 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 prosecuting the most egregious fraudulent offenders.

With regard to Benefit Year Earnings issues, ADWS continues to educate claimants on the importance of reporting earnings timely and accurately. In addition, ADWS' IVR Cross Match 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. To further enhance the IVR Cross Match System, in May 2012, ADWS began automatically mailing 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 addition to the enhancements made to ADWS' IVR Cross Match System, ADWS deployed an employer reporting tool to securely report instances of claimant activity that impact eligibility and an online fraud reporting system for citizens to report suspected claimant and employer unemployment insurance fraud. Referrals made by citizens are simultaneously forwarded to UI Administration and UI Technical and are typically assigned for investigation within 24 hours of receipt. In SY 2015, ADWS received job refusal referrals, 212 drug test failure referrals, 74 claimant fraud referrals and 19 employer fraud referrals through these systems. 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 cross match 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 fast track investigation.

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 in 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. The Training Officer also reviews a sampling of all adjudicators' determinations in order to ensure consistent and accurate interpretation of Arkansas' unemployment insurance laws. The improvement in the quality of nonmonetary determinations should also help reduce the total amount of improper payments to claimants who are later determined to be ineligible for UI benefits via the appeal process.

The third leading cause of overpayments in Arkansas is the result of "Other Issues." These issues include fraud outside the key week, appeal reversals and claim maintenance issues. Staff training will continue to be a major point of emphasis in order to prevent improper payments resulting from appeal reversals and claim maintenance errors. ADWS recognizes the correlation between the average case age of higher and lower authority appeals and the dollar amount of improper payments categorized as "Other Issues" resulting from appeal reversals. The reduction of the average case age of higher and lower authority appeals has had a significant impact in this area. The Board of Review and the Appeal Tribunal have made considerable efforts to reduce their average case ages and are well within compliance with their performance measures.

ADWS will continue to take steps necessary to improve the recovery of overpayments. Future efforts will seek to finalize the electronic link with AAS to allow for immediate electronic entry of overpayments and to link with the appeal system to automate appeal decisions. ADWS will also seek to deploy an automated cross match to better coordinate its TOP and state tax refund intercept process in order to minimize refunds to claimants from overlapping intercepts. These projects will ultimately free BPC resources to further increase the recovery of overpayments.

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.

UI Integrity Action Plan (IAP)	**.**	**.**
State	**Federal Fiscal Year**	**Accountable Agency Official(s):**
Arkansas	**2016**	***Daryl Bassett, Director; Ron Snea Deputy Director; Ronald Calkins, Assistant Director – Unemployme Insurance; Don Denton, Chief Counsel; UI Administration; UI Technical; Area Operations Chief BPC; FIRE Unit; Local Offices***
Top Three Root Causes (IPIA 2014)	**.**	**Calendar Year 2013**
Root Cause 1: Benefit Year Earnings	**.**	**.**

Strategies	Actions	Tar Mil
1. Prevent UI Overpayments by continuing to educate claimants regarding timely and correctly reporting earnings.	Continued dissemination of "Your Unemployment Insurance Information Handbook" through direct and electronic contact.	On
2. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments by educating employers of the importance of providing accurate and timely responses to ADWS wage requests.	Continued outreach to educate employers regarding state and federal unemployment laws through Advisory Council, employer trade groups, and periodic employer updates.	On
.	Distribute 901A response instructions with the ADWS Online Employer Services portal.	On
.	Follow up with noncompliant new hire employers.	
.	Develop and deploy a wage request query for the quarterly cross match to identify egregious noncompliant employers for follow up efforts.	
.	Obtain feedback from employers.	
3. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments by increasing employer usage of electronic wage information into BARTS.	Issue inserts to employers mailed 901As and quarterly statements.	
.	Market 901A response options with the ADWS Online Employer Services Portal.	
.	Continue to explore acquiring SIDES for the earnings import capability.	
4. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments by data analysis to prevent identity theft.	Deploy ID scanners to record and save physical IDs of claimants within the claim file.	
.	Identify instances of wages from multiple employers reporting wages for the same social security number.	
.	Identify and investigate suspected fictitious employer accounts.	
Root Cause 2: Separation Issues	**.**	
Strategies	**Actions**	
1 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.	
.	Continued outreach to educate employers regarding state and federal unemployment laws through Advisory Council, employer trade groups and periodic employer updates.	
.	Increase marketing of electronic UI response system for employers to respond to Notice to Last Employers and separation questionnaires	

Root Cause 1: Benefit Year Earnings	**.**	**.**
Strategies	**Actions**	**Tar Mil**
1. Prevent UI Overpayments by continuing to educate claimants regarding timely and correctly reporting earnings.	Continued dissemination of "Your Unemployment Insurance Information Handbook" through direct and electronic contact.	On
2. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments by educating employers of the importance of providing accurate and timely responses to ADWS wage requests.	Continued outreach to educate employers regarding state and federal unemployment laws through Advisory Council, employer trade groups, and periodic employer updates.	On
.	Distribute 901A response instructions with the ADWS Online Employer Services portal.	On
.	Jointly market the electronic UI response system with the electronic wage audit notice return system in BARTS.	UI Adr Co UI and Off
.	Continued marketing of e–Tools available through ADWS Online Employer Services portal.	
.	Finalize the electronic link between AAS and NORM to reduce and recover UI overpayments.	
2. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments arising from adjudication process.	Finalize the electronic link between AAS and NORM to reduce and recover UI overpayments.	
.	Continued education and monitoring of AAS staff to ensure consistent and accurate interpretation of Arkansas' unemployment laws.	
Root Cause 3: Other Issues	**.**	
Strategies	**Actions**	**T**
1. Explore developing a link between Appeal Tribunal and Board of Review systems and NORM to reduce and recover UI overpayments.	Complete feasibility review for linking the new appeal database/inquiry system with the overpayment repository.	
.	If feasible, including funding availability, program and deploy the necessary system modifications.	
2. 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 amount of overpayments.	
3. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments arising from adjudication process.	Finalize the electronic link between AAS and NORM to reduce and recover UI overpayments.	

Root Cause 1: Benefit Year Earnings	.	.
Strategies	**Actions**	**Tar Mil**
1. Prevent UI Overpayments by continuing to educate claimants regarding timely and correctly reporting earnings.	Continued dissemination of "Your Unemployment Insurance Information Handbook" through direct and electronic contact.	On
2. Prevent, detect and reduce UI overpayments by educating employers of the importance of providing accurate and timely responses to ADWS wage requests.	Continued outreach to educate employers regarding state and federal unemployment laws through Advisory Council, employer trade groups, and periodic employer updates.	On
.	Distribute 901A response instructions with the ADWS Online Employer Services portal.	On
4. Explore the recovery of UI overpayments through electronic repayments, including credit and debit cards.	Evaluate the feasibility, including legal hurdles to accepting ACH payments, credit card payments and debit card payments for overpayments.	
.	If feasible, develop test and deploy the capability to accept electronic repayments.	
5. Explore the feasibility of recovering UI overpayments by integrating a skip tracing system into the existing billing and overpayment systems.	Evaluate the feasibility, including funding availability, long–term costs and projected increases to collections.	
.	If feasible, including funding and resource availabilities, develop and deploy the system.	

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.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART IS MAINTAINED WITH THE AGENCY AND THE REGIONAL OFFICE

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 10/31/2014

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Employment and Training Administration FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2016 STATE AR

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 (STATE'S NAME)

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

Daryl Bassett, Director

DOL APPROVING OFFICIAL

DOL APPROVING OFFICIAL

THE SIGNED COPY OF THE SQSP SIGNATURE PAGE IS MAINTAINED WITH THE AGENCY AND THE REGIONAL OFFICE

(b) Requirements for States electing to include UI in the Combined State Plan

States that elect to include UI in the Combined State Plan must:

1. Submit an SQSP in the following manner depending on their timing in the SQSP cycle:

(A) If a State is in the first year of their 2-year cycle, a complete SQSP package must be submitted. A complete SQSP package will include the Transmittal Letter, Budget Worksheets/Forms, State Plan Narrative, CAPs (including the milestones and the completion date

for each milestone), the UI IAP, Organizational Chart, and the SQSP Signature Page. One of the key goals for the UI program is to ensure that claimants are able to successfully return to work. As such, the SQSP State Plan Narrative must provide a discussion of the plan coordination with other WIOA Combined Plan programs to ensure a coordinated effort and integrated service delivery.

SEE ABOVE

(B) If a State is in the second year of the 2-year cycle, the State is required to submit the most recently approved complete SQSP package with a modification that must include the Transmittal Letter, Budget Worksheets/Forms, Organizational Chart, and the SQSP Signature page. The modification may also include CAPs for new identified performance deficiencies, and any required modifications to existing CAPs. The CAP must list both specific milestones for key corrective actions or improvement activities, and the completion date for each milestone.

2. Submit the required off-year SQSP components as a modification to the Combined State Plan on the same cycle as the regular SQSP process which must be approved by September 30th each year.

Appendix 1. Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability indicators based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA.

Instructions: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 first two years 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 first two years of the plan.

Table 1. Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level

Adults	74.00	Baseline	75.00	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	73.00	Baseline	74.00	Baseline
Youth	75.00	Baseline	76.00	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	60.00	Baseline	61.00	Baseline
Vocational Rehabilitation</	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 1

Table 2. Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	73.00	Baseline	74.00	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	73.00	Baseline	74.00	Baseline
Youth	74.00	Baseline	75.00	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	60.00	Baseline	61.00	Baseline
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 2

Table 3. Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	6,281.00	Baseline	6,300.00	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	6,253.00	Baseline	6,300.00	Baseline
Youth	2,923.00	Baseline	2,950.00	Baseline

Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	4,228.00	Baseline	4,300.00	Baseline
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 3

Table 4. Credential Attainment Rate

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	40.00	41.00	Baseline	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	37.00	38.00	Baseline	Baseline
Youth	26.00	27.00	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 4

While the State has reported credential attainment for youth in the past, the population served through the youth program was predominantly in-school youth, which earned a high school diploma as a credential. With the new focus on out-of-school youth, the previous credential attainment rates cannot be used as a baseline. For that reason, we are requesting that the credential attainment rate be considered a baseline indicator for the first two years. No baseline data exists for adult and dislocated workers as this wasn't a performance target under the Workforce Investment Act for those programs.

Please reference waiver request 1.

Table 5. Measureable Skill Gains

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/	PY 2016 Negotiated/	PY 2017 Proposed/	PY 2017 Negotiated/

	Expected Level	Adjusted Level	Expected Level	Adjusted Level
Adults	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	41.00	Baseline	42.00	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 5

Table 6. Effectiveness in Serving Employers

Program	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level
Adults	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Dislocated Workers	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Youth	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Adult Education	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Wagner-Peyser	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline
Vocational Rehabilitation	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline	Baseline

User remarks on Table 6

Table 7. Combined Federal Partner Measures

Measure	PY 2016 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2016 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level	PY 2017 Proposed/ Expected Level	PY 2017 Negotiated/ Adjusted Level

User remarks on Table 7

Appendix 2. Other State Attachments (Optional)

The organziational charts for the state agencies are available at the following links.

Appendix 2: Arkansas Department of Workforce Services:
http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart15.html

Appendix 3: Arkansas Department of Career Education:
http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart16.html

Appendix 4: Arkansas Department of Human Services and Division of Services for the Blind: http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart17.html and http://dws.arkansas.gov/WorkForcePlan/chart18.html