

Arkansas Mature Worker Initiative

Summary:

The labor force in Arkansas and across the country will experience a shortage of qualified workers as the baby boomers begin to retire. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 2004 and 2012 up to 43 percent of the current workforce will be eligible to retire in the next 10 years. Two following generations are 15 percent smaller, each. Also, 61 percent of entrants (age 16 to 25) to the workforce are not fully qualified.

To help solve this shortage, the national AARP office launched a workforce initiative to link featured employers with mature job seekers. Arkansas was chosen as a pilot state, and Gov. Mike Huckabee selected the initiative as one of his top priorities for the Arkansas Workforce Investment Board.

The initiative's goal is to increase the awareness and appreciation of mature workers by developing relationships with the public workforce system, states, chambers of commerce, national and local training providers, trade associations, labor unions, community organizations, policy makers and business leaders.

Activities in Arkansas include the following:

- December 2004 – AARP contacted Gov. Huckabee to see if Arkansas would participate as a pilot state for the AARP Mature Worker Initiative.
- January 2005 – Gov. Huckabee agreed to the request. Arkansas received the AARP Mature Worker Concept Paper, AARP reviewed Arkansas' job matching system and other mature worker programs, and conference calls were made with AARP officials to discuss the initiative.
- February 2005 – Other state government partners who have implemented programs for mature workers were identified. AARP announced the launch of its initiative on Feb. 28, 2005, in Washington, D.C.
- March 2005 – Local and national AARP officials met with state agencies to review the concept paper, discuss the state plan and define steps for implementing the initiative.
- April 2005 – The Arkansas Workforce Investment Board selected a subcommittee to work on the initiative.
- September 2005 – Gov. Huckabee signed a proclamation announcing "Hire Older Workers Week." (Go to www.arkansas.gov/esd.)
- March 2006 – AARP Web sites were linked with the DWS and AWIB sites.
- April 2006 – Gov. Mike Huckabee formally announced the initiative, and the first regional meeting with community and business leaders was held in Little Rock.
- May 2006 – A regional meeting was held in Hot Springs.
- June 2006 – A regional meeting was held in Fort Smith.
- July 2006 – A regional meeting was held in Springdale.
- August 2006 – Representatives from the state committee made a presentation at the Arkansas Economic Developers Conference.
- September 2006 – Planning meetings to discuss future regional meetings were held in Mountain Home and Jonesboro.
- October 2006 – Representatives from the state committee made a presentation at the Arkansas Aging Conference, and a regional meeting was held in Mountain Home.
- November 2006 – A regional meeting was held in Paragould.