

## Responses from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education

**What key workforce preparation programs does your agency/organization oversee or offer to Arkansans?**

- Regional Workforce Grants
- Workforce training at colleges and universities
- Post-secondary Carl Perkins
- Career Pathways Initiative

**How much State and Federal funding are received for these programs? How many Arkansans are served by the programs?**

- Consists of general revenues authorized by law and other nonfederal funds as provided by law:
  - Implementation Grant:
    - Total Amount Awarded (with 3.05% reduction) = \$15,242,125.73 (biennial)
    - Approximate number of participants served ~8,855
- No direct funding but supported through institutional general operating budgets. Annually serving approximately 14,000 students in credit programs, 51,000 in non-credit programs (duplications may exist for students participating in multiple programs)
- \$2.6M. 25,536 are specifically classified as Perkins students. Since Perkins funds programs and not individuals, it is accurate to say that all career and technical students receive some level of benefit.
- Arkansas receives Federal funding through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant in the amount of \$7,150,000 million dollars. The grant has served over 30,000 participants since its inception in 2005; spanning 22 community colleges and 3 technical centers, and currently serves an average of over 4,000 participants per year. ADHE/CPI receives \$429,000 to manage the grant and the remaining \$6,721,000 funded for campus staff and student services supports.

**How do these programs address the larger workforce needs of the State? How is this determination made? What data/resources do you rely upon to make informed decisions about program offerings and their success?**

- The Regional Workforce Grant encourages and facilitates regional workforce and education alignment. The program seeks to create a statewide, comprehensive structure enabling students in Arkansas universities, community colleges, and secondary centers to participate in career and technical education programs developed with input from area employers. This coordination is essential for creating a successful economic climate in Arkansas. Preparing and encouraging Arkansans to pursue high-demand jobs, including, but not limited to, those stemming from industry recognized credentials, career and technical certificates, associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees is necessary for building a skilled and employment-ready workforce.
- The competitive grants are awarded by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education based on recommendations from the following state workforce development partners:
  - The Arkansas Department of Education Commissioner (or his/her designee)
  - The Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (or his/her designee)
  - The Director of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (or his/her designee)
  - The Director of the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (or his/her designee)
- Grant proposals must include the following core requirements:
  - Include representation from mandatory partners: a high school or secondary center that awards concurrent credit courses; a technical institute, community college or university offering career and technical education programs; and employers representing critical needs in the identified workforce region;
  - Enhance, expand, or create clearly defined career and technical education pathway program(s) at technical institutes, community colleges or universities that includes concurrent secondary center programs to fill a critical, demonstrable local workforce need;
  - Include programs which emphasize basic skills instruction concurrently with occupational training;
  - Embrace diversity of student enrollment;
  - Provide essential support services which link to resources that assist students in progressing along the identified pathways, including advising on academic, employment, financial, and personal issues; and
  - Develop and implement collaborative apprenticeship or training programs that prepare workers for rapid entry into the workforce or provide recognized industry certifications.

- Grantees are required to submit four progress reports during the 2-year grant period and one interim report
  - Metrics are utilized throughout each project to track how credentialed job candidates are being provided the skills needed by employers
  - Measurable outcomes of achievement are defined, as well as strategies used to measure the outcomes
  - Expenditures for each budget line item are submitted for review
    - Any line item variation from more than 5% requires ADHE approval
    - An assessment of partnerships is provided, detailing each industry partner and its role in achieving the goals of the grant
- Updates regarding workforce needs and if/when needs are being met by participants in Regional Workforce Grant Programs
- ADHE works with other multiple entities in reviewing workforce education data provided by institutions, consolidated into reports by Research and Analytics. The primary purpose of this review is to ensure the workforce initiatives at institutions are in line with the workforce education definitions newly developed by the Workforce Metric Working Group for the productivity formula.
- Any program offered for a credit credential must be approved by the AHECB with demonstrated industry and student demand
- ADHE utilizes the following definition and guiding questions to determine if a course should be considered for non-credit workforce reporting: Workforce Training/Education is defined as those postsecondary activities (seminar, workshop, course, customized training, etc.) that develop or enhance the skills of existing employees or members of any business or industry. Also included is any training provided to individuals, whether employed or unemployed, which is designed to meet the employment needs of the student and/or employer by enhancing occupational, technical, and/or soft (communication, computational, and interpersonal) skills. The goal of workforce training is to increase individual opportunity in the labor market and to improve human knowledge, skills and ability.
- Use of funds is prescribed by federal legislation and is limited to associate and below technical and academic for-credit training. Within those parameters, colleges use Perkins funds for CTE student success, employment preparation, industry certifications/licensures, gender nontraditional recruitment and retention (i.e. men in nursing or women in STEM), professional development, and equipment upgrades.
- Colleges determine how to use funds based on performance results, program needs and in response to needs of business and industry.
- ADHE Perkins provides data to colleges in six performance areas. These results are provided on students by program CIP, gender, race and special

population categories. This data is supplemented by data at the college level and is the beginning point for identifying activities for funding.

- The CPI program addresses the larger workforce needs of the people of Arkansas and the desires of policymakers by setting goals for the state to enable low-income Arkansans upward educational and career mobility in targeted career fields. The program seeks to improve the working relationships with other public systems to improve existing programs and services and reduce the need for public assistance.
- The determination for participation in the program is solely based upon the current eligibility standards under TANF, which totally funds the CPI program, and it serves only those students who are current or former recipients of Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA); current recipients of Food Stamps, *ARKids*, or Medicaid; or earning 250% of the federal poverty level. Applicants must be an adult caretaker, parent, or relative of a child living in the home under the age of 21.

**How do you connect with business and industry to understand workforce skill needs, trends, technology, etc.? Are there standing groups that you work with? If so, who, how, and why?**

- Representation from mandatory partners is required for all regional workforce grants: a high school or secondary center that awards concurrent credit courses; a technical institute, community college or university offering career and technical education programs; and employers representing critical needs in the identified workforce region;
- Not at this time
- ADHE takes part in the following working groups to maintain connection with business/industry workforce trends (1) Arkansas STEM Coalition, (2) Urban Schools Human Capital Academy project with the Arkansas Department of Education, (3) Arkansas Student Affairs Associate, (4) Arkansas Concurrent Credit Working Group, (5) Association for Institutional Research (AIR)
- Colleges collaborate with local advisory boards, WIOA partners, local workforce development agencies, and through business and industry local initiatives.
- Arkansas Department of Career Education and Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative. These organizations are either focused on career and technical training, workforce preparation or job placement which are goals in common with Perkins. Collaboration is generally project based so is dependent upon the needs of the project.
- The Career Pathways Initiative connects with various business and industry in order to ensure that participants enter employment upon completion of a program of study. CPI connects with business and industry through data sharing across state agencies. Some data/resources CPI relies on to make informed decisions

about program offerings and their success are, the CPI database, which has created linkages between multiple agencies and data systems enabling a comprehensive view of the outcomes for CPI students.

- The evidence of the impact of the CPI program is vitally important, as decisions are made to continue to support Arkansas' workforce goals. The return on investment for the state has been great. The state could provide additional help by utilizing the existing data to improve funding, flexibility in spending, and ensuring that more Arkansans become aware of the program's success so additional supports/resources can be provided.

**What additional help can the State provide to offer greater understanding or clarity around its workforce needs? Is there additional data that you could use? What improvements are needed for the State's workforce/education/talent development system? What improvements are needed for the programs you oversee or offer?**

- None at this time
- Greater connection between industry, academia and state/national partners to understand the difference between micro and macro trends in terms of education/training needs as they relate to workforce trends in the state.
- (1) Workforce development is complicated especially when LMI data is involved. If there is not one, we need a master plan for talent development that can inform state agencies and educational institutions when choosing activities to be funded with federal dollars. (2) ADWS's Discover Arkansas is a tremendous resource but is so robust, it can be difficult to find specific information so any effort to improve its usability or provide training would be beneficial.
- (1) Longitudinal data from high school to college to work so that we can better understand the relationships and trends for student migration through the pipeline. (2) CTE student performance data separated from all student performance data. We need a better profile of CTE students before we can create action plans.
- Common vision so that each agency can formulate plans within the context of this common vision while meeting the requirements of various federally legislated programs. (2) A statewide system of career pathways for all CTE program areas, a system that includes not only academic study but occupational information and student support services. The system should be designed to meet the needs of all students—disabled, rural, cultural, etc. (3) Significant enhancements and expansions to prior learning for college credit offerings. (4) Improve ability to transfer AAS credit into bachelor programs. (5) Sustainable source of funding for equipment upgrades in college CTE programs so that students are trained on current industry needs.
- (1) Addition of CTE courses into ACTS with recommended industry certifications attached to each technical program. (2) Skills and knowledge needed for

industry certification or licensure embedded into college CTE coursework. (3) Colleges to better use the U.S. Department of Education's career clusters so that there is a common organizational approach for alignment between high school and college programs.

- Some improvements that may be needed for the State's workforce/education/talent development system would be in providing additional resources to fund successful programs; particularly, CPI. For CPI, improvement would need to be made in allowing for additional funding for case management services for "the most underserved population", the TEA recipients. The State could also provide more training for CPI staff to be able to support students more effectively. TANF funds provides not only financial supports in the forms of payments for tuition, fees, supplies, childcare and transportation, but also, for mental and behavioral supports. However, despite the program's success, it has received decreases in funding over the past few years. The program now receives \$7.15 million dollars a year from the TANF grant; down from a high of \$13 million a few years ago. The challenge is finding additional financial supports for the program. CPI's recent rigorous evaluation shows that case management services for students has been key to the success for most. However, it is very difficult to expect colleges to provide the level of quality services needed, especially for the population CPI services without sufficient numbers of personnel and training.
- Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) serves as the overseer for the CPI program. ADHE provides data on enrollment and completion, remediation, and student demographics to CPI and its partners, while Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) funds the program through awarding the TANF grant to ADHE/CPI, and ADWS monitors and audits the provide as well as provides technical assistance. ADWS, through Department of Information Systems (DIS) provides the data from Unemployment Insurance (UI) System to monitor job placement, wages and job retention. The Department of Health and Human Services matches data to verify student eligibility. Lastly, the program has had a recent external three-year evaluation. Beginning in 2015, the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Annie E. Casey, and the Ford Foundation, combined efforts to fund the "College Count\$: Evidence of Impact research study. The research team was spear headed by the Metis Associates of New York City. Research protocols of the United States Department of Education "What Works Clearinghouse" were followed to ensure that all finding met the criteria for being evidence-based. The evidence is that the CPI program is an innovative state investment of TANF dollars is paying huge dividends for the state. The evidence also suggests that CPI's efforts are contributing not only to increased economic self-sufficiency for participants, but will also have an impact on the next generation and will contribute to a significant reduction in multi-generational poverty in the state of Arkansas.

**What other organizations and/or state agencies do you currently work with to prepare the Arkansas workforce? How and why do you work with them? Are there other groups or state agencies that you would benefit from working with?**

- Public institutions awarded Regional Workforce Grants
- To ensure goals of the grant are being met and funds are being spent per approved budget
- None of which we are aware
  
- Higher Learning Commission (HLC), provides important insights into how HLC accreditation standards impact our institutions in terms of engaging/identifying external constituencies, communities of interest (i.e. employers) and meeting their needs in terms of their individual mission. Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), provides important data, information regarding regional trends in terms of academia, workforce growth areas within the 16 member states: Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), provides information in terms of accreditation standards for STEM workforce trends. Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), provides data/engagement around K-12 licensure requirements, and state K-12 education needs.
- Arkansas Economic Development Commission, this state agency's mission/activities directly impact academic institutions degree development trends. This information/discussions would be beneficial for ADHE staff.
  
- Arkansas Department of Career Education and Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative.
- These organizations are either focused on career and technical training, workforce preparation or job placement which are goals in common with Perkins. Our collaboration is project based so is dependent upon the needs of the project. Examples include poverty simulations and workshops and career development facilitator training to colleges and other state agencies. Arkansas Department of Workforce Services by virtue of postsecondary Perkins being included in WIOA legislation. Arkansas Department of Human Services and Arkansas Department of Community Corrections to better understand how to meet the career training needs of these population. ADHE Perkins is participating with Career Ed in the Advancing Career Pathways System project. We have a pilot going on right now that is focused on Robotics/automation programs but, with the knowledge we can through the pilot, we would like to expand into other program areas. This is a very long-term project but would increase alignment, decrease remediation, and improve career preparation for students. ADHE Perkins is providing free training for high school and college career advisors, preparing them to test for Certified Career Service Provider certification. We generally have 25+ students each year. This is a primary source of training for high school career coaches.

- None of which we are aware
- The CPI program works with various agencies: such as, ADHE, ACC, ADE, ADWS, DIS, DHS and various local businesses and industry where the CPI program is located.
- Various collaboration and partnerships are taking place at each site in order to conduct data sharing and provide additional supports and opportunities for participants.
- CPI could benefit from K-12 partnerships and K-12 could benefit from CPI, since the data is unique in the fact that it permits and examination, not only of outcomes for the participants, but also explores the impact of the efforts on the children of the participants.

**What is the most important piece of information that this taskforce, for workforce education excellence, should consider as it moves forward with its work?**

- As the last cycle of implementation grants begins, how best to distribute funds for future projects.
- The most important information to consider is that the mechanism for delivering workforce education already exists. Arkansas supports a vibrant two-year college system that provides regionally demanded technical training. We also provide adequate student financial support through a combination of scholarships and grants. The missing piece is student recruitment into the existing programs. Arkansas needs a comprehensive messaging plan to educate students, teachers, and parents about the career prospects and related training opportunities.
- Statewide longitudinal data system. (2) Career pathways system to align education across levels. (3) Speed to completion through improved prior learning and CTE course transferability.
- The most important piece of information that the taskforce for workforce education excellence should consider as it moves forward with its work is that the data on the state's investment of Federal TANF dollars in support of the comprehensive CPI program for a vulnerable population of low-income Arkansans at its community colleges, is paying off with huge returns. The CPI program staff, community colleges, and participants think that the efforts are fulfilling the goals for comprehensive welfare reform and is an important model for giving low-income families a hand-up, helping individuals gain the workforce skills to achieve economic self-sufficiency rather than remaining dependent upon public assistance.