



**ARKANSAS  
WORKFORCE  
STRATEGY**



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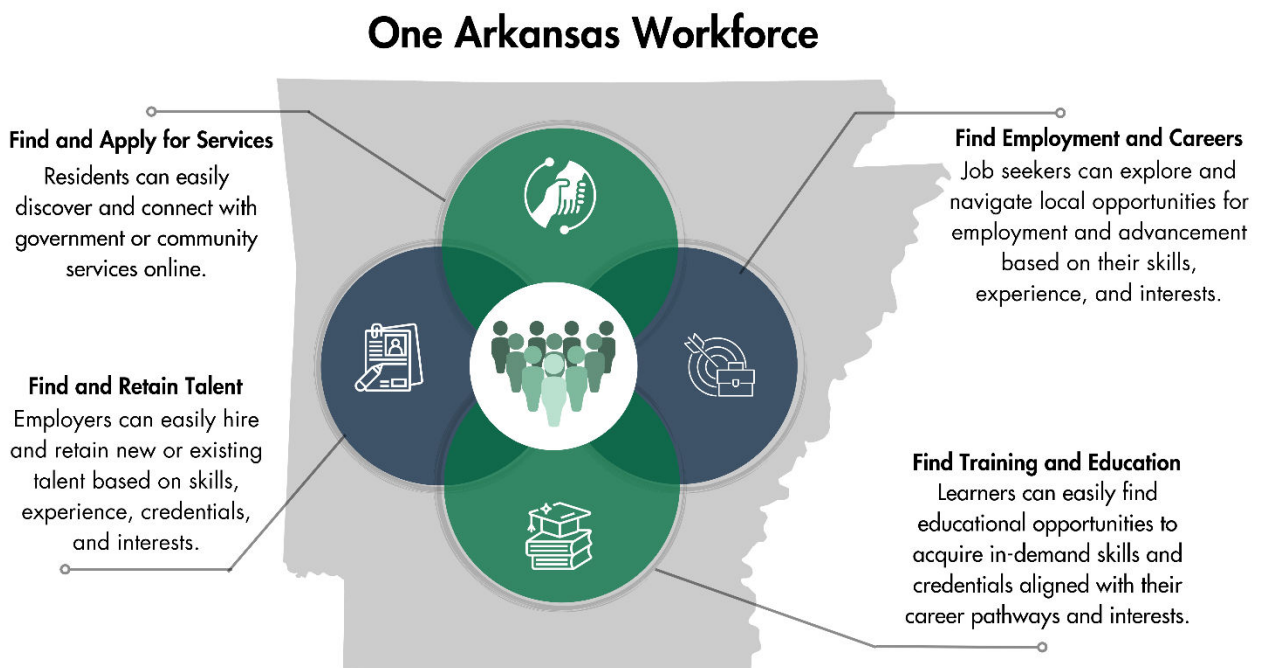
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## Introduction

Arkansas is steadfast in the belief that a highly qualified workforce is more than a means to an end. It is possible for every Arkansan. Meaningful employment offering a livable wage is one of the most powerful tools to break cycles of adversity. When our residents find satisfaction and pride in their work, we witness transformative social outcomes: reductions in poverty, incarceration, substance abuse, mental health issues, suicide, homelessness, and educational shortfalls, alongside improvements in overall health.

Our priority is identifying, growing, recognizing, and celebrating each person's unique strengths and skill sets. Our goal is to help every individual in Arkansas navigate learning and employment, make informed decisions, and help them reach the next rung on the ladder to achieve personal and professional success.

In Arkansas, we see the workforce as a combination of diverse skills, talents, and untapped potential and we know everyone brings different things to the table. Together, we will build a future where every Arkansan has the opportunity to grow, thrive, and contribute to our shared prosperity.



## Executive Summary

The Arkansas Workforce Strategy is a collaborative, competency-based, customer-centric, and responsive workforce system that meets current and future needs of employers, incumbent workers, and job seekers.

Arkansas employers are facing significant challenges in attracting talent with the skills needed to run and grow their businesses. This is largely due to low labor force participation and educational attainment coupled with an increasingly dynamic labor market with evolving skill requirements. Many Arkansans are underemployed or detached from the labor force, and facing challenges with poverty, food insecurity, housing, health, and criminal justice system involvement.

Solving these challenges can lead to improved employer productivity and growth; attraction of new business and industry; improved educational, credential, and skill attainment; improved population health and economic security; reduced recidivism; and increased efficiency and effectiveness at all levels.

To address these needs, the Arkansas Governor's Workforce Cabinet has developed a comprehensive strategy that is resident-centric, employer-led, demand-informed, and data-driven. The strategy was developed leveraging established best practices, broad stakeholder engagement, user-centered design, a national network of experts, emerging technological advances, and Arkansas' mature foundation for data-driven transformation and shared services.

Employer-facing supports include Talent Pipeline Management for timely signaling of evolving job and skill needs, and support for hiring, upskilling, and retention through workforce analytics, digital credentials, and skills-based hiring. Education and training providers will receive timely information for continuously aligning programs with employer needs and the ability to communicate program enrollment needs to close employer demand gaps. State and community-based programs and the public-facing online portal will support all residents on pathways to employment and economic security, maximizing the impact of braided state, federal, and philanthropic funding through "no wrong door" integrated service delivery strategies. The entire system will be supported by secure, compliant, privacy-preserving data sharing, integration, and analytics for continuous monitoring, improvement, evaluation, and research.

## Workforce Strategy Recommendations

**Recommendation #1: The Arkansas Department of Commerce (ACOM) should lead the alignment of business and industry priorities.**

- Realign division policies and practices to improve skills to meet employer needs.

**Recommendation #2: The Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), in partnership with the Department of Transformation and Shared Services (TSS), should lead the alignment of training and career pathways to ensure students learn applicable skills and competencies.**

- Identify which skills are most important to Arkansas employers and reward meaningful credentials, i.e., certificates, diplomas, degrees, that align with the needs of job seekers, educators, and employers.
- Improve the public school accountability system to reward schools for providing real-world skills through high demand industry certifications.
- Effectively market non-traditional postsecondary paths.
- Realign the higher education funding formula to enhance the value of providing training that leads to gainful employment.

**Recommendation #3: Provide services to meet the needs and goals of job seekers and employers.**

- Create a statewide workforce portal that allows Arkansans to:
  - Seek jobs aligned to their skillset.
  - Further their training and education to develop job readiness and real-world skills.
  - Access existing resources, scholarships, and grants.
  - Access a record of their skills and educational background that provides hiring and enrollment insight for employers and institutions of higher education.

**Recommendation #4: Invest in regional strategic focus centers.**

- Align focus centers with Arkansas' market strengths: Aerospace and Defense, Advanced Manufacturing, Firearm and Ammunition Manufacturing, Energy, Forestry, Food Manufacturing, Industrial Maintenance/Refrigeration/Boiler, Lithium Mining and Battery Technology, Precision Agriculture, Semiconductors, and Steel Manufacturing.
- Enhance programs at existing Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Secondary Career Centers in the following areas: Broadband, Construction, Engineering, Healthcare, Law Enforcement/EMT/Fire, Leadership/IT/Retail/Entrepreneurship, Skilled Trades, Tourism and Outdoor Economy, Transportation, and Utilities.
- Align state and federal resources with the workforce strategy to maximize outcomes and economic development.

## Why Was This Strategy Developed?

In recent years, Arkansas, like many states, has faced evolving economic and labor market challenges that necessitated a fresh approach to workforce development.

- **Changing Economic Landscape:** The state's economy has been transitioning, with growing and emerging sectors demanding new skills and competencies. This shift required a reevaluation of the workforce skills being developed to ensure they align with current and future market demands.
- **Skill Gaps and Labor Force Participation:** Arkansas is challenged by a noticeable skills gap, where employers struggle to find candidates with the necessary skills, especially in fast-growing industries. Additionally, labor force participation rates lagged behind national averages, pointing to untapped potential in the state's workforce.
- **Educational Alignment with Industry Needs:** There is a growing recognition that educational pathways need better alignment with industry requirements to ensure that students and job seekers are prepared for successful careers.
- **Social Determinants of Employment:** Factors such as access to childcare, transportation, and healthcare are increasingly understood to impact employment opportunities and outcomes, necessitating a more holistic approach to workforce development.
- **Technological Advancements:** The rapid pace of technological change underscores the need for a workforce system that can adapt to future developments and integrate new tools and data analytics effectively.

In response to these needs, Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders issued [Executive Order \(EO\) 23-16](#), which created the Governor's Workforce Cabinet and the position of the Chief Workforce Officer (CWO) to advise the Governor on issues regarding workforce development and career education in Arkansas and to undertake the following duties:

- Coordinate, integrate, and optimize services, funding, and resources to maximize desired outcomes and improve operational efficiencies.
- Ensure a talent-driven education and workforce system that addresses the current and future needs of Arkansas employers and individuals.
- Prepare and implement a data-driven workforce strategic plan using high-quality data and subject matter expertise.

The workforce strategy was thus developed to address these dynamic challenges. It is designed to create a more collaborative, skills-based, customer-centric, and responsive workforce system that not only meets the current needs of employers and job seekers but is also poised to adapt to future economic and technological shifts.

## Governor's Workforce Cabinet: Leading Arkansas' Workforce Transformation

In the pursuit of a robust and future-ready workforce, the Governor's Workforce Cabinet brings together a team of dedicated and experienced leaders. Each member plays a pivotal role in shaping our workforce strategy, drawing on their unique expertise and insights.

### **Chief Workforce Officer: Mike Rogers**

Mike Rogers, as the Chief Workforce Officer, spearheads the strategic direction and coordination of Arkansas' workforce development initiatives.

### **Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Commerce: Hugh McDonald**

Hugh McDonald oversees the state's economic development and works to ensure that the workforce strategy aligns with the evolving needs of Arkansas' business community.

### **Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Education: Jacob Oliva**

Jacob Oliva focuses on the educational aspects of workforce development, ensuring that our schools and educational institutions provide the skills and knowledge needed in the modern job market.

### **Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Corrections: Joe Profiri**

Joe Profiri plays a key role in workforce reintegration strategies, focusing on providing opportunities and training for individuals re-entering society from the correctional system.

### **Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Human Services: Kristi Putnam**

Kristi Putnam's contribution involves addressing the human aspects of workforce development, including access to childcare, healthcare, and other support services that enable Arkansans to participate fully in the workforce.

### **Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Labor and Licensing: Daryl Bassett**

Daryl Bassett's expertise lies in ensuring fair labor practices and fostering a regulatory environment conducive to business growth and protecting the public.

### **Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs: Kendall Penn**

Kendall Penn focuses on the integration of veterans into the workforce, ensuring that their valuable skills and experiences are recognized and utilized in civilian employment.

### **Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Transformation and Shared Services: Leslie Fisk**

Leslie Fisk's role is instrumental in streamlining government services and processes to support workforce development, ensuring efficiency and effectiveness.

## Development of The Strategy

The development of the Arkansas Workforce Strategy involved multi-faceted stakeholder engagement and was developed through a comprehensive process that combined data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and best-practice research.

- **Employers:** Input from over 500 employers was gathered during site visits, employer focus groups, forums, and workshops. This input provided critical insights into employer challenges, needs, and successful strategies.
- **Resident Personas:** A design thinking workshop brought together the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, agency staff, and national thought leaders to ideate a holistic vision for the workforce strategy.
- **National Experts:** Participation from national organizations brought in a wealth of knowledge and best practices from across the country, providing valuable insights into the strategy formulation.
- **Industry and Non-Profit Organizations:** Extensive engagement with businesses and non-profits offered real-world perspectives on labor market needs, employment barriers, and potential solutions.
- **Educational Institutions:** The strategy involved inputs from all levels of the Arkansas education system.
- **Workforce Development Boards and Career Coaches:** These partnerships provided insights into the ground realities of job matching, career counseling, and skill development.
- **Community and Economic Development Entities:** This involvement helped in understanding the broader economic implications of the workforce strategy.

The creation and development of the Arkansas Workforce Strategy were marked by a collaborative, data-driven, and innovative approach.

- **Data-Driven Research and Analysis:** The process began with a thorough analysis of Arkansas' labor market data, economic trends, and workforce challenges. This included studying unemployment rates, skill gaps, industry demands, and educational outcomes.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** A series of workshops and forums were conducted to gather input from a diverse range of stakeholders. This included employers, industry leaders, educational institutions, workforce development professionals, community organizations, and policymakers. Their insights were crucial in understanding the real-world implications and needs of the workforce system.
- **Design Thinking Workshops:** These workshops brought together state, regional, and cross-sector stakeholders to brainstorm innovative solutions for Arkansas' workforce development challenges.
- **Best Practices Research:** The development team conducted extensive research on national and global best practices in workforce development. This helped in understanding what strategies have been effective elsewhere and how they could be adapted to fit Arkansas' unique context.
- **Collaboration with Policy Experts:** Policy experts were consulted to ensure that the strategy was aligned with state and federal laws and regulations and to ensure its feasibility and effectiveness.



## Who Is This Strategy Intended to Serve and Benefit?

The Arkansas Workforce Strategy is designed to serve a broad spectrum of stakeholders, ensuring that the benefits of a robust and dynamic workforce are widespread across the state.

- **Job Seekers, Underemployed, and Unemployed Individuals:** The strategy provides access to training and upskilling opportunities, equipping individuals with the skills necessary to compete for in-demand jobs.
- **Individuals with Barriers to Employment:** The strategy provides tailored support and training to individuals who face barriers to employment such as child and eldercare, transportation, or housing.
- **Incumbent Workers:** For those already employed, the strategy offers avenues for upskilling and reskilling, helping them advance in their careers and adapt to changing job requirements.
- **Employers and Businesses:** The strategy benefits employers by ensuring a supply of skilled workers aligned with industry needs, thus improving productivity and economic competitiveness.
- **Educational Institutions and Training Providers:** Schools, colleges, and universities benefit from the strategy's focus on aligning educational programs with labor market needs, enhancing the relevance and value of their offerings.
- **Rural and Underserved Communities:** The strategy stimulates economic growth and workforce development in rural and underserved areas, addressing regional disparities.
- **Learners:** The strategy ensures that all learners, including youth and adults, are well-prepared with relevant skills and knowledge.
- **Economic Developers and Policymakers:** By enhancing the state's workforce quality, the strategy supports broader economic development goals and aids policymakers in strategic decision-making.
- **State and Local Economies:** Overall, a more skilled and adaptable workforce benefits the entire state economy by attracting future businesses and residents, encouraging investment, and fostering innovation.

The Arkansas Workforce Strategy is intended to serve as a comprehensive framework benefiting individuals across various stages of their career journey, businesses seeking skilled labor, educational entities, communities, and the broader state economy. Its inclusive approach ensures that the advantages of a skilled and responsive workforce extend to all corners of Arkansas, fostering economic growth and prosperity.

## How Does This Strategy Intend to Effect Meaningful Change?

The Arkansas Workforce Strategy's theory of change focuses on transforming the state's workforce system into one that is skills-based, customer-centric, responsive, and collaborative. This transformation is guided by four strategic themes:

1. **Collaborative:** Fostering partnerships across sectors to align workforce development with industry needs.
2. **Skills-Based:** Aligning training and career pathways with real-world skills and competencies.
3. **Customer-Centric:** Tailoring services to meet the unique needs and goals of job seekers, incumbent workers, and employers.
4. **Responsive:** Adapting quickly to economic changes and labor market trends for timely alignment of workforce efforts.

These themes collectively aim to create a more dynamic, inclusive, and effective workforce ecosystem in Arkansas. Each of these themes is implemented through multiple strategic initiatives which are detailed in the following sections.



## Strategic Theme 1: Collaborative

Collaboration is a guiding principle of the Arkansas Workforce Strategy. Addressing workforce challenges requires the expertise and insights of various sectors, including education, business, government, and community organizations. The complexities of the modern workforce system necessitate a coordinated approach.

Collaboration breaks down silos between different entities, leading to more cohesive and efficient strategies. It acknowledges that building a resilient, dynamic, and skilled workforce is a collective effort, requiring the commitment and participation of all stakeholders. Arkansas prioritizes partnership and alignment across sectors and departments to create a cohesive workforce development effort.

## Governor's Workforce Cabinet

As an interagency body, the Governor's Workforce Cabinet serves as the central coordinating and decision-making entity overseeing the implementation and continuous improvement of the workforce strategy.

### Role in the Arkansas Workforce Strategy:

- **Cross-Functional Partnership:** The Cabinet members work across roles, transcending traditional agency boundaries to partner on comprehensive solutions. This cross-functional collaboration ensures that every aspect of workforce development is addressed from multiple perspectives, providing dynamic solutions to complex challenges.
- **Barrier Removal and Simplification:** A core goal of the Cabinet is to dismantle obstacles that hinder workforce development and employment. This involves simplifying processes, making it easier for Arkansas residents to access the services they need without getting entangled in bureaucratic complexities.
- **Creative Problem Solving and Innovation:** Open communication and innovative thinking are at the forefront of the Cabinet's problem-solving approach. By fostering an environment of creativity and open dialogue, the Cabinet finds novel solutions to workforce challenges, ensuring that strategies are not only effective but also forward-thinking.
- **Operational Excellence Through Continuous Improvement:** The Cabinet's initiatives lead to operational excellence by continuously improving processes and workflows. This commitment to ongoing refinement ensures that the strategies implemented are efficient, effective, and aligned with the evolving needs of the workforce.
- **Seamless Service Transition for Residents:** One of the Cabinet's primary goals is to facilitate a seamless transition of services to Arkansas residents, eliminating the confusion and frustration often associated with navigating multiple government agencies. The Cabinet aims to create a streamlined, user-friendly experience for all who engage with workforce development services.
- **A Commitment to Collaborative Success:** Through these strategies, the Governor's Workforce Cabinet is not just addressing the immediate workforce needs of Arkansas but is also laying a foundation for sustained economic growth and individual empowerment. Their collaborative approach symbolizes a new era of workforce development, one where every stakeholder – from government to individual resident – plays a vital role in shaping a prosperous future for Arkansas.

The Governor's Workforce Cabinet is more than just a steering committee; it is a dynamic force driving the Arkansas Workforce Strategy. Its ongoing role is integral to the strategy's success, ensuring that the vision of a skilled, adaptable, and thriving Arkansas workforce is realized and sustained over time.

## Employer Collaboratives through Talent Pipeline Management

Employer collaboratives are industry-led partnerships that play a crucial role in aligning workforce development efforts with the specific needs and challenges of various sectors. The primary focus of employer collaboratives is to convene businesses, industry leaders, and key stakeholders to work together to address workforce challenges and opportunities in their respective sectors.

Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) is a cutting-edge approach to meeting talent demand. Developed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, TPM is revolutionizing how businesses address their workforce needs.

### **Role in the Arkansas Workforce Strategy:**

- **Align Education with Industry Needs:** TPM helps align educational and training programs with the specific needs of industries, ensuring that students and job seekers acquire relevant, in-demand skills.
- **Close Skills Gaps:** By clearly articulating employer needs, TPM helps to close the skills gap, ensuring that the workforce is trained for the jobs that are available now and in the future.
- **Create Efficient Talent Pipelines:** Through collaboration with education providers and workforce development programs, TPM creates more efficient and targeted talent pipelines.
- **Enhance Workforce Data Analysis:** TPM's focus on data and metrics contributes to a more sophisticated understanding of labor market dynamics, assisting in strategic workforce planning.
- **Strengthen Employer Collaboration:** TPM fosters a collaborative environment where businesses within sectors and industries work together to address common workforce challenges.
- **Inform Policy and Strategy:** Insights from TPM inform state workforce policies and strategies, ensuring they are responsive to actual employer needs.
- **Support Economic Development:** By ensuring a skilled workforce, TPM aids in attracting new businesses and supporting the growth of existing ones, thereby driving economic development.
- **Enhance Career Pathways:** By providing clear information on industry needs, TPM helps in crafting career pathways that are aligned with real job opportunities.

In Arkansas, TPM is integrated into the workforce strategy as a key tool for engaging employers and ensuring that workforce development efforts are closely aligned with the needs of the state's economy. By adopting TPM, Arkansas is taking a proactive, employer-centric approach to workforce development, setting the stage for a more responsive and effective workforce ecosystem.

## Strategic Theme 2: Skills-Based

Skills-based practices are foundational to the Arkansas Workforce Strategy. They represent a shift in focus from traditional educational credentials to the skills and competencies that individuals possess, aligning workforce development more closely with current and emerging market demands.

By focusing on skills rather than traditional job qualifications, this approach directly addresses the skills gap, ensuring that the workforce possesses the competencies that employers need. Through this approach, Arkansas intends to build a workforce that is adaptive and prepared for the challenges of the future economy.

## Credential Transparency

Credential transparency revolutionizes how credentials are recognized and valued across the state's workforce and educational systems by creating clarity and uniformity in the credentialing landscape. It is intended to make the qualifications of job seekers more transparent and understandable to employers, educators, and individuals themselves.

### Role in the Arkansas Workforce Strategy:

- **Establish Credential Registry:** Implements a comprehensive, state-wide registry that lists all available credentials, including degrees, certificates, licenses, badges, and apprenticeships, along with their associated skills and competencies.
- **Facilitate Skills-Based Practices:** Offers human and machine-readable data that demonstrates the relationship between skills, credentials, and learning opportunities, thereby aligning educational and occupational pathways with current market demands.
- **Increase Accessibility and Usability:** Ensures that information about credentials and programs is easily accessible and usable by all stakeholders, including job seekers, employers, and education providers.
- **Empower Job Seekers:** Individuals can better understand and communicate their qualifications, making informed decisions about their career paths and educational opportunities.
- **Aid Employers in Talent Acquisition:** Employers gain a clearer understanding of potential employees' skills and competencies, leading to more effective hiring and workforce development strategies.
- **Support Data-Driven Decision Making:** The credential registry provides valuable data that can inform policy decisions, educational program development, and workforce planning.

Credential transparency plays a crucial role in creating a more transparent, efficient, and responsive workforce system, one where every credential is recognized for its value and relevance in the broader economic context. This initiative enhances the alignment of education and training with real-world career opportunities, benefiting individuals, employers, and the state's economy alike.

## Learning and Employment Records

In the rapidly evolving job market, traditional credentials are often insufficient to fully capture an individual's skills and experiences. The Arkansas Workforce Strategy addresses this gap through the implementation of Learning and Employment Records (LERs).

Learning and Employment Records are digital records that comprehensively document an individual's learning achievements and work experiences, providing a portable and verified record of their skills and competencies.

### **Role in the Arkansas Workforce Strategy:**

- **Empower Individuals with Data Ownership:** LERs give individuals control over their data, allowing them to manage and share their professional information as needed or desired.
- **Interoperability:** LERs are designed to be interoperable across various platforms and systems, ensuring that they can be easily shared and recognized by employers, educational institutions, and other stakeholders.
- **Verification and Security:** These digital records are securely stored and verifiable, ensuring the authenticity of the information they contain and the privacy of the individuals they represent.
- **Improve Hiring Efficiency:** Employers benefit from a more accurate understanding of candidates' skills, leading to more efficient and effective hiring processes.
- **Bridge Education and Employment:** LERs help bridge the gap between educational institutions and the job market, ensuring that training programs are aligned with real-world skill demands.

Learning and Employment Records enable a more accurate matching of skills with job requirements, facilitating better alignment between workforce capabilities and employer needs. LERs empower individuals to showcase their full range of competencies and experiences, promoting a more dynamic and responsive skills-based labor market.



## Skills-Based Learning, Employment, and Advancement Platform

A forthcoming online portal will be a skills-based learning, employment, and advancement platform designed as part of the Arkansas Workforce Strategy. It will serve as a one-stop hub for accessing a wide range of resources, including training programs, job listings, and career guidance, personalized to each individual's unique skills, experience, preferences, and goals. The portal will simplify the journey from learning to employment, making it more efficient and user-friendly for Arkansas residents.

### Role in the Arkansas Workforce Strategy:

- **Skills-Based Matching:** Utilizing advanced matching algorithms, the portal will connect job seekers with employers based on skill compatibility, moving beyond traditional credential-based hiring.
- **Leverage Learning and Employment Records (LERs):** Incorporating LERs, the portal will enable individuals to maintain a comprehensive and verified record of their skills and work history.
- **Connect Learning to Employment:** The platform will provide access to a range of learning and training opportunities, allowing individuals to acquire or upgrade skills in alignment with market demands.
- **Empower Individuals:** The platform will empower job seekers and workers by providing them with tools and information to navigate their career paths effectively.
- **Enhance Employer Engagement:** The portal will enable employers to identify and connect with candidates more efficiently, based on skill needs.
- **Facilitate Continuous Learning and Advancement:** The platform will promote a culture of continuous learning and skill development, crucial for career advancement and workforce adaptability.
- **Streamline Work Search Activities:** The portal will feature an intuitive dashboard for Unemployment Insurance claimants to track their required weekly work search activities to maintain benefit compliance while simultaneously connecting with jobs that match their skills and experience.

The online platform will provide an integrated digital environment where individuals can explore, acquire, and showcase their skills and competencies. The portal will support the overall Arkansas Workforce Strategy by seamlessly integrating education, training, and employment services into a unified platform, aligning individual skill sets and career aspirations with local employment and advancement opportunities.

## Strategic Theme 3: Customer-Centric

A customer-centric approach underpins the Arkansas Workforce Strategy, highlighting the commitment to design and deliver workforce services that are attuned to the needs, preferences, and experiences of both job seekers, incumbent workers, and employers.

By focusing on the needs and feedback of the customer, workforce services become more accessible, intuitive, and effective, leading to higher satisfaction and better outcomes. This theme is about more than just providing services; it's about creating positive, impactful experiences for every individual and employer who interacts with the Arkansas workforce system. Through this approach, the strategy seeks to build a more inclusive, responsive, and user-friendly workforce environment in Arkansas.

## Integrated Service Delivery

Integrated service delivery is a holistic approach to providing public services that focuses on efficiently and effectively meeting the needs of individuals through coordinated and streamlined processes. It is characterized by the integration of services across different agencies and sectors to provide a comprehensive support system for individuals seeking employment, training, or other related services.

One strategic activity to support integrated service delivery is the implementation of [CiviForm](#), an innovative digital tool designed to streamline the application process for government and community services. Developed with support from Google.org, it simplifies the experience of finding and applying for various services, making them more accessible and efficient for residents.

### **Role in the Arkansas Workforce Strategy:**

- **Facilitate Access to Workforce Services:** Integrated service delivery, enabled by tools like CiviForm, allows residents easy access to a range of services critical for employment and training.
- **Enhance Efficiency and Effectiveness:** By breaking down silos between different service providers, integrated service delivery ensures that resources are utilized more efficiently and effectively, leading to better outcomes for residents.
- **Data-Driven Service Improvement:** The data collected through integrated service delivery processes can be used to continuously improve service delivery, tailor services to meet emerging needs, and inform workforce policy decisions.
- **Enhance User Experience:** By providing a one-stop-shop for services, integrated service delivery makes it easier for residents to access the support they need, improving overall satisfaction and engagement.

Integrated service delivery reflects the commitment to a more coordinated, efficient, and customer-centric approach to workforce development. This initiative is crucial for ensuring that all Arkansans can easily access the support and opportunities they need to succeed in today's dynamic job market.

## Workforce Data Infrastructure

The establishment of a shared services workforce data infrastructure will serve as an essential foundation for facilitating integrated service delivery and enhancing customer-centric practices. It represents a strategic investment in creating a robust and interconnected data ecosystem.

### **Role in the Arkansas Workforce Strategy:**

- **Enable Integrated Service Delivery:** Robust, shared data infrastructure is crucial for facilitating the seamless flow of information between education, training, employment, and supportive services to address the specific needs and goals of individuals and employers.
- **Enhance Communication and Coordination:** With shared data, agencies and programs can more effectively communicate and coordinate their efforts. This unified approach ensures that individuals receive comprehensive support tailored to their needs.
- **Streamline Referral Processes:** Workforce data infrastructure supports "No Wrong Door" service delivery by enabling streamlined and efficient referral processes across different agencies and programs, ensuring individuals receive comprehensive and coordinated services regardless of their initial point of contact.
- **Privacy and Security:** Prioritizes data privacy and security, ensuring that sensitive information is protected in compliance with legal and ethical standards.

The establishment of a robust shared service workforce data infrastructure harnesses the power of data to create a more adaptive, responsive, and effective workforce ecosystem, catering to the ever-changing needs of the Arkansas economy and residents.

## Strategic Theme 4: Responsive

A responsive workforce system is agile, adaptable, and capable of responding to changing economic conditions, labor market trends, and individual needs. It is crucial to cater to the diverse and evolving needs of job seekers and workers, providing support that is tailored to individual pathways and career goals.

This theme is about ensuring that Arkansas' workforce is dynamic, forward-thinking, and capable of meeting the challenges of a rapidly evolving job market. By embracing adaptability and responsiveness, Arkansas can ensure its workforce is prepared for the future, contributing to the state's overall economic resilience and growth.

## Jobs and Employment Data Exchange

The [Jobs and Employment Data Exchange](#) (JEDx) is a public-private partnership initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation that modernizes workforce data through standardized data formats and data trusts. It is designed to produce enhanced, timely data on jobs and employment, facilitating better labor market information and more efficient administration of government programs.

### Role in the Arkansas Workforce Strategy:

- **Streamline Employer Reporting:** Simplifies how employers report data, reducing burden and improving data quality.
- **Generate Longitudinal Workforce Data:** Offers comprehensive data about jobs and employment, supporting advanced workforce analytics while maintaining privacy.
- **Empower Individuals:** Provides workers with current, verifiable employment records for job applications, educational opportunities, and accessing benefits.
- **Enrich Job and Work Experience Data:** Extends job-related data, including skills, tasks, and responsibilities for inclusion in Learning and Employment Records through the online portal and other LER-enabled platforms.

By providing clearer, more timely insights into employer demand and labor market trends, JEDx enables Arkansas to adapt workforce development efforts swiftly, aligning training and policies with real-time economic needs. This initiative not only supports the strategy's overarching goals but also fosters a more dynamic, informed, and effective workforce ecosystem.

## Workforce System Digital Twin and Analysis

The Workforce Digital Twin concept involves creating a virtual model of the state's workforce ecosystem, using real-time data and analytics to simulate, predict, and visualize workforce dynamics, enabling more informed decision-making.

### **Role in the Arkansas Workforce Strategy:**

- **Enhance Workforce Planning:** The digital twin serves as a powerful tool for advanced workforce planning, allowing for a deeper understanding of the workforce ecosystem and its future trajectory.
- **Support Proactive Policy Making:** By simulating various policy outcomes, it helps in crafting proactive strategies that can better address future workforce needs.
- **Optimize Resource Allocation:** The digital twin concept identifies the most effective ways to allocate resources for training, education, and workforce development.
- **Facilitate Collaboration and Innovation:** Encourages innovative approaches to workforce development and fosters collaboration by providing a common platform for understanding workforce trends and needs.

By providing a virtual representation of the workforce ecosystem, the workforce digital twin concept allows for agile responses to labor market changes and proactive planning. This approach ensures that the workforce system remains adaptable, efficient, and aligned with both current and future economic and employment trends, thereby supporting the broader objectives of the Arkansas Workforce Strategy.

## How Will This Strategy Be Funded and Supported?

A critical aspect of the Arkansas Workforce Strategy involves establishing mechanisms for funding, resource allocation, and ensuring the sustainability of the strategic initiatives. This section outlines the approach to securing the necessary resources and managing them effectively to support the long-term viability of the strategy.

### **Funding and Optimization Strategies:**

- **Financial Oversight and Coordination:** Establish a task force within the Governor's Workforce Cabinet to manage and prioritize workforce-related revenue streams across state government, ensuring effective allocation and use of funds.
- **Development of a Funding Stream Inventory:** Create a comprehensive inventory of all funding streams in a structured data format, detailing allowable uses to inform optimization models for effective fund allocation.
- **Educational Initiatives on Funding Flexibility:** Launch educational campaigns and workshops to raise awareness and understanding among state departments about blending and braiding funds, adhering to federal and state regulations.
- **Integration of State and Federal Resources:** Leverage the Arkansas Department of Transformation and Shared Services' infrastructure, including advanced analytics and cloud-native applications, to optimize resource utilization and improve service delivery.

These strategies aim to optimize the use of funds while ensuring compliance with laws and regulations, ultimately enhancing the efficiency and impact of Arkansas' workforce development initiatives.



## How Will the Success of This Strategy Be Measured and Evaluated?

Performance management, evaluation, continuous improvement, and communication are essential components of the Arkansas Workforce Strategy, ensuring that the strategic initiatives are not only effective but also adaptable and responsive to changing needs and conditions.

### Performance Management Framework:

- **Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Developing clear KPIs aligned with the strategic goals, such as employment rates, skill gap closure, employer satisfaction, and participant engagement levels.
- **Regular Monitoring:** Implementing systems for the regular collection and analysis of performance data to assess progress against objectives.

### Evaluation Mechanisms:

- **Program Evaluations:** Conducting periodic evaluations of all programs and initiatives to assess their effectiveness, impact, and return on investment (ROI).
- **Stakeholder Feedback:** Gathering and incorporating feedback from participants, employers, educators, and other stakeholders to understand the effectiveness of initiatives from multiple perspectives.

### Continuous Improvement Processes:

- **Data-Driven Decision Making:** Utilizing data and insights gained from performance management and evaluations to inform decisions and improve strategies.
- **Adaptive Approach:** Remaining flexible by adapting strategies and initiatives in response to performance outcomes and emerging trends.
- **Innovation and Best Practices:** Encouraging innovation and the adoption of best practices to enhance program effectiveness and efficiency.

### Communication and Transparency:

- **Regular Reporting:** Sharing performance results with stakeholders through reports, dashboards, and presentations to maintain transparency and accountability.
- **Collaborative Review Sessions:** Hosting regular sessions with key stakeholders to review performance data, discuss challenges, and identify opportunities for improvement.

These processes ensure that the implementation of the strategy remains effective, relevant, and aligned with the state's strategic workforce initiatives. By fostering a culture of accountability, adaptability, and continuous learning, the strategy is well-positioned to make a meaningful impact on Arkansas' workforce ecosystem.

## How Can Individuals and Organizations Get Involved or Contribute to Arkansas' Workforce Future?

We invite all stakeholders—employers, educators, community organizations, state agencies, and residents—to join us in realizing the vision of the Arkansas Workforce Strategy. This strategy is not just a plan; it's a commitment to a brighter, more prosperous future for our state and its people.

**Employers and Industry Leaders:** Engage with us to shape the future of workforce development.

**Educators and Training Providers:** Help us build a pipeline of skilled workers who are ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

**Community and Non-Profit Organizations:** Collaborate with us to reach and support individuals across Arkansas.

**Policymakers and Government Agencies:** Join us in this cross-agency effort to create a cohesive and comprehensive workforce system.

**Residents of Arkansas:** Your future is at the heart of this strategy. Your skills, your dreams, and your hard work are the cornerstones of Arkansas' tomorrow.

**Join us in this exciting endeavor to empower our people and strengthen our state. Let's build a stronger Arkansas.**