Arkansas

Analyzing the learner continuum in Arkansas

Arkansas has taken significant steps to strengthen and unify education to workforce policies and programs. Career and Technical Education (CTE) in Arkansas occurs at both career centers, housed in postsecondary institutions, and in traditional high schools. Historically, oversight of the two CTE options was split across two agencies. In 2019, they were merged to both be under the authority of the Department of Education. This streamlining across entities positions Arkansas to build on many of the strong policies already in place, such as its data-collection for industry credentials at the K-12 and postsecondary levels and last-dollar scholarships. Conducting a comprehensive return on investment analysis would continue to shine a light on the areas in need of change and build on the strong sector reviews that are happening to determine quality of programs in career centers.

STRENGTHS

- Arkansas’s last dollar programs that support learners financially to seek and earn a postsecondary credential
- Arkansas’s regular sector reviews to determine the quality of CTE programming in high school career centers
- Arkansas Tech’s micro-credentials to expedite learners career advancement and strengthen the statewide development of stackable credentials

OPPORTUNITIES

- Conduct a return on investment analysis of K-12 and postsecondary CTE program offerings for alignment, quality and equitable access.
- Analyze the adequacy and equitable allocations of CTE funding (for schools and high school career centers) to determine if additional funding is necessary for high-quality programs
- Develop a statewide policy for credit for prior learning, starting in military training or earned industry-valued credentials
**LEARNER PATHWAYS**

Ensure vertical alignment to workforce needs, robust funding, collaboration across agencies and equitable access for all students.

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**HIGH-QUALITY CTE PROGRAMS**
Align all CTE programs with high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations that reflect the state’s economic and workforce priorities. Ensure that these programs feature the academic and technical skills and knowledge learners will need to be successful.

**TARGETED CTE PROGRAM FUNDING**
Dedicate state funding for CTE programs—but only if they are aligned to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage occupations. Target specific funds for pathway completion and demonstrated learner outcomes.

**RETURN ON INVESTMENT ANALYSIS**
Conduct a biennial return on investment (ROI) analysis of CTE programs to assess whether all learners have access to high-demand, high-skill and high-wage pathways. Collect school- and student-level data to evaluate outcomes of CTE programs against established shared metrics for quality and equity.

**STATE CROSS-AGENCY SHARED PRIORITIES**
Establish shared priorities and collective accountability across state agencies and education systems for learner pathway development, supports and success. Ensure that business and industry have a seat at the table and can lead discussions related to demand and training requirements.
**KEY POLICY**

**High-Quality CTE Programs**

**STATE POLICY ANALYSIS**

Arkansas has High School Career Centers, (also known as “secondary vocational centers”) which are sponsored by high schools and offered to students at no cost but are hosted by postsecondary institutions. Arkansas schools and districts can also offer CTE courses. Career Centers were historically housed under a separate state agency, the Department of Career and Technical Education (DCTE). However, in 2019 as part of the Transformation and Efficiencies Act, DCTE was merged with the Department of Education.

Arkansas CTE programs of study are outlined in statute to begin with career exploration and enable high academic standards, leadership, high-skill high-wage employment preparation and advanced continuing education. The CTE programs of study are organized by the National Career Clusters® Framework and there are 61 comprehensive programs of study. Most of the programs are developed locally but are audited at the state level. It is unclear whether or how this process includes clear criteria and definitions to ensure local program alignment with high-demand, high-skill, high-wage occupations. Arkansas has developed five programs of study at the state level that districts can select to utilize. CTE in Arkansas is supported by the Career Education and Workforce Development Board which is charged with creating a comprehensive statewide program of CTE and workforce development. For postsecondary, the Arkansas Division of Higher Education policy requires the approval of new academic programs to be based in part on employer needs and local labor market data and reviewed every 7-10 years.

**OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN**

Arkansas should consider conducting a thorough bi-annual return on investment analysis of its existing K-12 and postsecondary CTE programs of study to (a) ensure that the programs of study align with state workforce and economic demands and projections in high-wage, high-skill and high demand occupations, (b) determine where there are program gap opportunities, and (c) ascertain program quality. A plan should be developed and implemented to phase out all misaligned or low-quality programs of study and phase in revised or new high-quality state-wide programs of study fully reflective of the state’s priorities.

**PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES**

- Delaware – Career and Technical Education Programs
- Tennessee – Career and Technical Education Programs
- Texas – Program of Study Initiative

**RESOURCES**

- Arkansas Perkins V Plan
- Division of Career and Technical Education
- Policies and Procedures for Career and Technical Education 2021

**POLICIES**

- Arkansas Transformation and Efficiencies Act
- Act 1079 of 2019
- Arkansas Code §6-61-214 Review of Existing Degree Programs
- Arkansas Code § 6-5-1001 CTE Programs of Study
**KEY POLICY**

**Targeted CTE Program Funding**

**STATE POLICY ANALYSIS**

In the 2019 legislative session, Arkansas passed Act 179, which provides for tiered funding for high school career centers starting in 2020-21. Under the new model, secondary vocational centers will receive higher funding for high-wage, high-skill and in-demand programs. The Career Education and Workforce Development Board was charged with developing the tiered funding amounts, and this work will occur through the Office of Skills Development. High school career centers are not eligible for federal Perkins Funds.

For districts, the Division of Career and Technical Education annually offers state start-up grants for districts to start a new CTE program of study. Startup funds can be used within programs of study or work-based learning opportunities and must connect to a state priority and labor market data. The amount of funding however is not enough for large changes, for 2022-23 grant award amounts, for the most part, remain below $50,000.

**OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN**

Arkansas can consider conducting a study to determine the adequacy of CTE funding and the potential need to increase state-provided CTE funding for both schools and high school career centers. The state can also consider expanding the tiered funding methodology to schools and districts offering CTE programs of study to increase alignment to high-demand, high-wage, high-skill occupations in the state.

**PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES**

- Indiana – [Funding Methodology](#)
- Ohio – [Innovative Workforce Incentive Program](#)
- Texas – [House Bill 3](#)

**RESOURCES**

- [Arkansas Perkins V Plan](#)
- [Division of Career and Technical Education Funding](#)
- [Office of Skills Development](#)

**POLICIES**

- [Act 179, 2019](#)
Arkansas does not appear to have a formal statute or agency policy/initiative in place to address equitable access to high-quality CTE programs of study that reflect high-demand, high-skill, high-wage (H3) occupations/industries. One element of the return on investment analysis, the quality of programs, however was implemented in 2019. Act 1079, expanded the boards authority and membership of Career Education and Workforce Development Board and charged them with sector reviews of both K-12 and postsecondary and asset mapping. This work gets at one element of the analysis by digging into the quality of the programs being offered in high school career centers. The sector reviews have begun, with delays due to COVID-19, in partnership with business and industry and are being led by the Office of Skills Development. A final report with recommendations will be submitted to the legislature. These sector reviews are taking a critical step for the state in looking into quality in what is being offered in the state’s vocational centers.

Arkansas can consider conducting a thorough return on investment analysis to (1) ensure that existing CTE programs of study are aligned with workforce needs, informed by labor market demand, linked to occupations that are middle to high wage and vertically aligned to postsecondary programs; (2) know where H3 CTE programs are offered across all recognized local education agencies; and (3) understand student access, participation and completion data by student groups to determine potential inequities. ExcelinEd’s Auditing a State Career and Technical Education Program for Quality playbook provides a roadmap for developing and implementing an audit.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Colorado – Return on Investment Reports
• Florida – Executive Order 19-31 and House Bill 7071
(NOTE: While promising, both could be strengthened by more focused analyses on equity and quality of offerings.)

RESOURCES
• Office of Skills Development

POLICIES
• Arkansas Code §6-51-302(f)
  Approval of Center Establishment
• Act 179, 2019
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

The State Board of Education and the Division of Career and Technical Education, legislatively, have the control and authority to appropriate funds for CTE. Historically there was separation in oversight of the vocational centers and schools/districts. In 2019 Arkansas took a strong step in aligning state priorities by consolidating the Department of Career and Technical Education (DCTE) with the State’s Department of Education (ADE) through the Transformation and Efficiencies Act. Additional consolidation and integration occurred across other state agencies through the transformation act including for example, moving the Career Education and Workforce Development Board (CEWDB) and the Arkansas Workforce Development Board under the purview of the Department of Commerce, Office of Skills Development.

The CEWDB is comprised of business and industry with K-12, postsecondary, commerce, workforce services, human services state-agencies participating as ex-officio members. The CEWDB is legislatively required to coordinate with the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The CEWBD is charged with creating a comprehensive statewide program of CTE and workforce development to “meet current and future workforce needs.” The CEWDB is tasked with providing an annual report to the state board of education on the financial viability of vocational centers, enrollment, programs, and the success of students. The CEWDB is also tasked with overseeing an apprenticeship office and developing a catalogue of nationally recognized credentials.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

The CEWDB can consider leading in facilitating shared education to workforce priorities that include shared agency goals and metrics, as well as potentially bundled agency funding to drive state priorities. ExcelinEd’s Building Cross-Sector Partnerships to Support Career and Technical Education Pathways resource provides a step-by-step process for building cross-agency shared priorities.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Delaware – Advisory Council on Career and Technical Education (DACCTE)
- Indiana – Governor’s Workforce Cabinet
- Washington – Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

RESOURCES

- Office of Skills Development

POLICIES

- Arkansas Transformation and Efficiencies Act
- Arkansas Code § 25-30-102 Powers and Duties of the OSD and CEWDB
- Arkansas Code §6-11-203 Vocational Education
POSTSECONDARY ACCELERATION
Streamline postsecondary learning and empower high school students to earn credit to reduce the time required to earn postsecondary degrees.

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COLLEGE ACCELERATION
Provide and incentivize a range of options for learners to earn college credit while in high school. Ensure that all learners have access and financial support to accelerate their journey to a postsecondary credential.

CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING AND CREDENTIALS
Implement a consistent state policy for awarding postsecondary program or elective credit for prior learning, work experience and earned industry credentials.

COLLEGE ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS
Establish statewide articulation agreements to ensure college credits earned in K–12 or at one institution transfer and count toward a degree at another. Minimize or eliminate credit loss and misalignment for transitioning learners.

REMEDIATION
Replace outdated developmental and remedial education with college credit bearing options paired with intensive supports. Adopt co-requisite remediation programs or offer remediation to learners before they graduate high school.
**STATE POLICY ANALYSIS**
Arkansas offers college acceleration options for learners, but great variation in availability and cost exists by school and region. Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes are offered in each school district in the state in the four core areas of English, math, science and social studies. Contingent upon legislative appropriation the state will pay for AP and/or IB exams. In statute, there is an AP incentive and training program providing funding for advance placement teachers, including professional development, and incentive funds for schools to increase enrollment and attainment of AP credit. Advanced Placement content directors in the areas of math, science and English, and professional development for AP and pre-AP teachers. The current status of this program was unable to be located online. Additionally, the Arkansas Department of Education in 2020-21 offered the computer science incentive, providing a monetary incentive for students earning an eligible score on an AP computer science exam.

Concurrent enrollment in Arkansas allows students to obtain credit toward a high school diploma at the same time they earn college credit. The awarding of postsecondary credit, however, is based on local agreements. Act 1118 of 2017 states any student who qualifies for a free or reduced-price lunch shall not be required to pay for up to six hours of endorsed concurrent enrollment courses. Students who do not qualify pay for the cost of the concurrent enrollment. Dual enrollment is the enrollment of a high school student in postsecondary education for exclusively college-level credit.

**OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN**
Arkansas can consider continuing the expansion of college acceleration opportunities for students by promoting a diverse portfolio of options for all learners. To support this effort, Arkansas can consider providing professional development or incentive funding to increase the number of qualified teachers and supplemental funding so all advanced-level offerings can be accessed and completed at no cost to the student. Additionally, this approach could reflect the expansion of awarded credit for advanced coursework completion, AP exams and earned advanced-level industry certifications.

**PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES**
- Florida – [High School Acceleration Programs](#) and [Statewide Agreements on Credit](#)
- Idaho – [Advanced Opportunities Funding](#)
- Louisiana – [TOPS-Tech Early Start Program](#)
- North Carolina – [Automatic Enrollment](#)

**RESOURCES**
- [AP/IB Services](#)
- [Final Rules Governing Grading and Course Credit- Concurrent Enrollment](#)

**POLICIES**
- [Arkansas Code §6-18-223](#) Credit for College Courses
- [ADHE Concurrent Enrollment Policy](#)
- [Senate Bill 673, 2017 Concurrent Credit](#)
- [Arkansas Code §6-5-1203](#) Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program
- [Arkansas Code §6-60-202](#) Dual Enrollment
Key Policy

Credit for Prior Learning and Credentials

State Policy Analysis

In Arkansas, credit for prior learning opportunities vary by the individual postsecondary institutions policies.

Opportunity to Strengthen

Arkansas can consider developing a statewide policy for credit for prior learning for public institutions and streamlining communications for learners to know their options. Arkansas could consider starting with the determining of credit for prior learning for military training or earned industry-valued credentials for how they map to postsecondary degree options (stackable credentials).

Promising Examples from Other States

- Colorado – Prior Learning Assessment Credit Policy
- Kentucky – Prior Learning Initiative
- Ohio – Military Strategic Implementation Team

Resources

- Arkansas State University Prior Learning Assessment
- Arkansas Tech University

Policies

- N/A
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

K-12 to Postsecondary:

- For Advanced Placement the Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) policy requires that all postsecondary institutions award credit for students who score a three or higher on the AP exam.
- For concurrent enrollment individual institutions set up a memorandum of understanding for the awarding of credit, so learners may not receive credit at all postsecondary institutions in the state.

Transfer Between Postsecondary:

- The Arkansas Course Transfer System (ACTS) contains information about the transferability of courses. Students may complete specified general education courses anywhere in the public system as well as many courses in the degree/major that have been pre-identified for transfer.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Arkansas can consider standardizing the acceptance of concurrent enrollment credit across postsecondary institutions.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Florida – Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements
- Indiana – Core Transfer Library
- Kentucky – Transfer Articulation Agreements

RESOURCES

- Arkansas Course Transfer System

POLICIES

- ADHE Advanced Placement Policy
Remediation

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

In 2014, Arkansas convened a taskforce to review remediation rates at public postsecondary institutions. In 2016, in compliance with the §6-61-110, the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) changed its placement policy requiring all institutions to adopt appropriate placement measures supported by student success data. Each institution is required to submit an institutional placement plan which establishes a matrix of assessment measures to evaluate students including metrics such as ACT, high school academic performance, assessment of student motivation to succeed and writing samples.

The ADECB states that “a college or university may allow simultaneous enrollment in college-level credit and developmental courses,” but providing co-requisite remediation is not required at public postsecondary institutions.

The Arkansas Division of Higher Education is legislatively required to submit a report on student remediation rates including statewide trends and data from individual institutions.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

The multiple measures of placement policy is a great first step in supporting remediation across the state. However, to accelerate students' credential attainment and mitigate student debt, Arkansas should require all institutions of higher education to replace traditional development education courses with co-requisite remediation courses.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Georgia – Complete College Georgia
- North Carolina – Multiple Measures of Placement Policy
- Tennessee – Co-Requisite Remediation and Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support (SAILS)

RESOURCES

- Annual Review on First-Year Student Remediation, 2019-20
- ADECB Policies
- ADHE Placement Policy

POLICIES

- Arkansas Code §6-61-110 Testing of Entering Freshman for Remedial Courses
- Arkansas Code §6-61-221 Postsecondary Remediation Reporting
- Arkansas Code §6-5-1104 Reporting Requirements
Reduce barriers—such as funding, lack of alignment and missed opportunities—to help more students attain postsecondary credentials.

**REVERSE TRANSFER CREDENTIALS**
Establish a statewide policy to allow students to earn an associate degree while continuing to work toward a bachelor’s degree. Ensure two-year and four-year college credits can be combined toward the credential.

**LAST DOLLAR/LAST MILE FINANCIAL AID**
Provide dedicated state financial aid to qualifying learners that fills in gaps in federal assistance (last dollar) and promotes attainment for learners just shy of completing a degree (last mile).

**OUTCOMES-BASED FUNDING**
Transition postsecondary funding models from those based on learner enrollment to ones based on learner outcomes. Dedicate more funding to programs and institutions that show demonstrated success in meeting success metrics such as job placement and long-term wage earnings.

**STACKABLE DEGREES AND CREDENTIALS**
Define and promote a combination of industry and academic credentials that reflect articulated pathways to advanced learning and employment. Ensure that postsecondary credential programs are widely accessible to all learners and reflect value in the labor market.
Reverse Transfer Credentials

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Arkansas does not appear to have a formal statute or agency policy/initiative for reverse transfer. Reverse transfer exists on an individual institution by institution basis with students requesting review.

In 2015 Arkansas participated in a coordinated statewide approach to reverse transfer through the philanthropically funded Credit When Its Due (CWID) initiative. Little information could be located on the outcomes of this statewide approach led by the Arkansas Research Center.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
While the vehicle for reverse transfer of degrees is present across various public postsecondary institutions in Arkansas, the state can consider the development and promotion of systemwide policies that affirm the actual conferral of awards consistently across all institutions.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Colorado – Reverse Transfer Process
- Florida – Reverse Transfer Statewide Articulation Agreements
- Texas – Reverse Transfer Process

RESOURCES
- Credit When Its Due Arkansas State Profile
- Reverse Transfer NorthWest Arkansas Community College

POLICIES
- N/A
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Arkansas has three last dollar scholarships.

1) The Arkansas Future grant provides last-dollar tuition and fees for students enrolled in STEM or regional high-demand areas of study for qualifying certificate and associate degree programs at public postsecondary institutions. The grant is awarded on a first-come first-serve basis and includes the requirement that students must have lived in Arkansas for at least three years, complete 10 hours of community services each semester the student receives the grant and receive monthly mentoring.

2) The Arkansas Workforce Challenge scholarship provides funding for workforce training in high demand areas including healthcare, information technology and industry. The workforce challenge amount cannot exceed $800 and is lottery funded.

3) The Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship is available for students currently in high school, already in college, enrolling in college for the first time, or re-enrolling after a period of time out of college. The scholarship is available for two- or four-year colleges, with the scholarship amount increasing as learners progress. Traditional students must have earned at least a 19 on the ACT to be eligible.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Arkansas can continue to analyze the outcomes data in regard to persistence to help drive decision-making and expand additional supports, such as supplemental funds for items such as books, travel, or emergency expenses, that fall outside the funds provided for tuition.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Florida – Last Mile College Completion Program
- Rhode Island – Rhode Island Promise
- Tennessee – Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect

RESOURCES
- Arkansas Future Grant (ArFuture)
- Arkansas Workforce Challenge
- Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship

POLICIES
- Arkansas Code §6-82-1803 Arkansas Future Grant
- Arkansas Code §6-85-212 Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship
- Arkansas Code §6-85-301 Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship
- Arkansas Code §23-115-801 Lottery Proceeds
KEY POLICY

Outcomes-Based Funding

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

Historically, higher education funding in Arkansas was based on the need-based model in tandem with the performance-based model. In 2017, previous funding models were repealed, and the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) adopted policies necessary to implement productivity-based funding for most state-supported institutions of higher education. Productivity-based funding is intended to help align institutional funding with statewide priorities for higher education by incentivizing progress toward statewide goals.

For two-year institutions the productivity funding formula consists of four categories: Effectiveness (90% of formula), Affordability (10% of formula), Adjustments and Efficiency (+/-2% of formula). Effectiveness encompasses credentials, progression, transfer success and gateway course success. Affordability includes times to degree and credits at completion. Adjustments include diseconomies of scale and efficiency is core expense ratio and faculty to administrator salary ratio. ADHE policy states that post-completion success metrics are currently not included in the formula but “will be when adequate data is available.” The productivity-based funding model includes weights for the different categories based on degree level, degree type (including STEM and high-demand credentials) and student characteristics (underserved race/ethnicity, income and academic). The productivity funding formula is the same for four-year institutions with the only difference being the criteria for adjustment is research.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

As noted in the ADHE policy, Arkansas can consider how to include post-completion success metrics such as employment within six months and wages in the productivity-based funding for two-year technical community colleges.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Missouri – Performance Funding
- Tennessee – Outcomes-Based Funding Formula
- Texas – State Technical College Funding Model

RESOURCES

- Arkansas Public Higher Education Operating Recommendations FY 2022-23

POLICIES

- Arkansas Code §6-61-234
- ADHE Productivity Funding Policies
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Arkansas technical schools have defined stackable credentials. Students can earn certificates that can then stack to associate degrees. To further support its stackable credentials, in 2021 Arkansas Tech approved micro credentials with the goal of providing students faster access to educational attainment for short-term career advancement with a stackable credential that can lead directly to a bachelor’s or master’s degree.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Arkansas can consider collecting, aggregating, and analyzing certificate attainment at the postsecondary level. The state can continue to build on this strong start by building out degree and non-degree stackable pathways across K-12, two-year and four-year institutions with a focus on how credit articulates across institutions.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Colorado – Stackable Credential Legislation
• Idaho – SkillStack
• Indiana – Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant

RESOURCES
• ATU Stackable Certificates
• ATU Certificates
• ADHE Strategic Plan

POLICIES
• N/A
**WORKFORCE READINESS**

*Ensure the skills, credentials and apprenticeships students pursue help to prepare a strong workforce within the state.*

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**WORK-BASED LEARNING**

Establish a statewide K–12 and postsecondary work-based learning program that promotes learning through a series of progressive learner experiences both in the classroom and in a work setting. Provide guidance and support for how education and business and industry collaborate to achieve mutual priorities.

**APPRENTICESHIPS**

Establish clearly defined program guidance for state-promoted apprenticeships outlining prerequisites, requirements, funding, stakeholder incentives and participant outcomes.

**INDUSTRY-VALEUED CREDENTIALS**

Ensure all industry credentials earned in K–12 or postsecondary are aligned with high-demand, high-skill, high-wage occupations and valued by state and regional employers.

**SKILLS RETRAINING/CREDENTIALING**

Identify and promote non-degree programs and credentials that support new, transitioning and displaced learners in career change and advancement. Ensure that supports include funding supports for learners and incentives for participating employers who train or retrain them.
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

The Division of Career and Technical Education (DCTE) offers internship, career practicum and pre-apprenticeship work-based learning experiences. Programs of study are not required to include youth apprenticeships or work-based learning opportunities although many of them do.

Additionally, although not formally defined as work-based learning in Arkansas, the state’s Perkins plan outlines that career coaches will support earlier grades with elements of the work-based learning continuum. Career Coaches support and guide students in grades 5 and 6 in career exploration skills. In grades 7 and 8, the Career Coaches will continue to provide support for student success through Career Action Plans and the Student Success Plans. In addition, standards have been developed for grades 5 and 6 to promote the exploration of different careers and the employability skills needed to succeed in those careers.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Arkansas can consider developing a statewide work-based learning strategic plan with leadership and support across state agencies, including K-12 and postsecondary, and private industries. Once developed and implemented, the plan will ensure work-based learning opportunities are a continuum of high-quality opportunities and reflect strong alignment with the academic, technical and employability learning and skills students mastered. As part of this process, Arkansas can collect and analyze data on work-based learning to help support quality, access and outcomes for learners. ExcelinEd’s Developing High-Quality State Work-Based Learning Programs playbook provides guidance on developing a comprehensive work-based learning program.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

• Delaware – Work-Based Learning Practicum
• Georgia – Work-Based Learning Framework
• Rhode Island – PrepareRI Work-Based Learning Navigator

RESOURCES

• DCTE- Work-Based Learning

POLICIES

• Arkansas Code §6-50-503 Work-Based Learning
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services runs the registered apprenticeship program. Employers who provide apprenticeship opportunities are eligible for a tax credit.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Arkansas can consider expanding to a teacher apprenticeship model to support the teacher pipeline in the state.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
• Iowa – Earn and Learn
• Kentucky – Tech Ready Apprentices for Careers in Kentucky and Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship
• New Jersey – Apprenticeship Network
• South Carolina – Apprenticeship Carolina

RESOURCES
• Arkansas Apprenticeship
• Registered Apprenticeship

POLICIES
• Arkansas Code §26-51-509 Apprenticeship Program
• Arkansas Code §6-52-208 Duties of apprenticeship program sponsors
KEY POLICY

Industry-Valued Credentials

STATE POLICY ANALYSIS

According to ExcelinEd’s research on Credentials Matter through a partnership with Burning Glass Technologies, 23% of the credentials earned by K-12 students and 59% of credentials earned by postsecondary students were in demand for 2018-19 for occupations that pay at least $15 an hour. Arkansas was one of only four states that was able to provide postsecondary credential attainment information. For postsecondary 59% of credentials earner are in demand. For K-12, importantly, 45% of the credentials earned are categorized as CTE Assessments (1%) or General Career Readiness (43%)—the categories that reflect low levels of specificity for industry/occupations or low levels of recognition and value by employers.

Arkansas has an approved list of industry credentials for each K-12 programs of study. The state’s Perkins plan notes that the list is “driven by business and industry demand” and “increase in specificity as students’ progress.” Who participates and the process for developing the state’s list, however, could not be located online. Act 1079 of 2019 directed the Office of Skills Development and Career Education and Workforce Board to develop a catalog of nationally recognized credentials for high school, community college or technical institute and a report on the programs of instruction related to the catalog by January 1, 2020.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

Arkansas can consider combining its industry credentials lists into one master list and ensuring that this list aligns to high-skill, high-wage, high-demand occupations in collaboration. The state can also consider a way to incentivize attainment of high-quality industry-recognized credentials. This could be an incentive for additional funds (weighted funding) to districts and schools that offer programs that align to the in-demand, high-skill, high-wage credentials. Or provide funds back to districts and schools per high-value or priority credential earned.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Indiana – Promoted Industry Certifications
- Kentucky – Valid Industry Certifications
- Louisiana – Industry-Based Certification State Focus List

RESOURCES

- Credentials Matter
- Arkansas Perkins V Plan
- Division of Career and Technical Education

POLICIES

- Act 1079 of 2019
ReSkill Arkansas is a program designed for unemployed or underemployed individuals through IT training programs and apprenticeships. Learners who meet the eligibility threshold in an online assessment are connected with apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs in IT and manufacturing. ReSkill Arkansas courses are available at no cost to the learners and is a paid opportunity through the apprenticeship structure. (No statute could be identified codifying the ReSkill Arkansas program)

Arkansas can consider collecting and analyzing the learner outcomes to determine if additional changes are necessary to strengthen the program.

**PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES**
- Indiana – Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready Grant
- Ohio – TechCred
- Washington – Worker Retraining Program

**RESOURCES**
- ReSkill Arkansas

**POLICIES**
- N/A
EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

*Incentivize workforce engagement in student pathways and reduce the barriers that keep employers from participating.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K–12</th>
<th>SUB-ASSOCIATE</th>
<th>ASSOCIATE</th>
<th>BACHELOR’S OR HIGHER</th>
<th>WORKFORCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT INCENTIVES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LEGAL BARRIERS</strong></td>
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**INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT INCENTIVES**

Establish, sustain and promote a comprehensive set of industry and employer engagement incentives for supporting education to workforce pathways. Incentives may include grant funds, tax credits, or local and regional support services.

**LEGAL BARRIERS**

Remove or lessen legal barriers such as liability insurance, workers’ compensation and worksite age restrictions to provide more learners with work-based learning opportunities.
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Arkansas provides an income tax credit to employers for each qualified youth apprentice who is at least 16 years old and is employed to learn an apprenticeable occupation or is in an apprenticeship or work-based learning program. The tax credit is $2000 or 10% of the wages earned by the youth apprentices, whichever is less, for each apprentice.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Arkansas can collect data on the usage of the income tax credit to analyze if the program is having the intended effect for businesses and learners.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Georgia – Work-Based Learning Premium Credit
- Indiana – Next Level Jobs Employer Training Grant
- Iowa – Tax Credit

RESOURCES
- Department of Finance and Administration Business Incentives and Credit
- Work-Based Learning Overview for Potential Business Partners

POLICIES
- Arkansas Code §26-51-509
  Apprenticeship Program
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
No policies removing legal barriers could be identified.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Arkansas can consider implementing policies to reduce legal barriers for employers engaging in K–12 and postsecondary worksite-based learning. Arkansas can consider a partnership with an external company to employ work-based learning students who are then placed at businesses. This helps to reduce many of the burdens such as workers’ compensation liability and other restrictions. Arkansas could also consider allowing public schools to purchase certain insurance coverage for the benefit of businesses and students participating in CTE programs and provide for some immunity from liability of certain public school students participating in these programs.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Kentucky – Apprenticeship Programs & Partnerships
- Rhode Island – Work Immersion Training Grant
- Texas – Insurance Coverage

RESOURCES
- N/A

POLICIES
- N/A
To ensure the strength of all the other policies, there must be cross-sector agreement on outcomes, strategies to get there and data to track progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM QUALITY MEASURES</th>
<th>STATE LONGITUDINAL DATA SYSTEM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish shared statewide definitions and measures for quality of and success in education to workforce pathways. Ensure these shared priorities extend across agencies and systems and inform decisions about program offerings, funding and outcomes.</td>
<td>Ensure the state’s cross-agency data system collects and reports on data needed to evaluate education workforce programs against shared metrics for quality and success. Data should span agencies and education systems and into the workforce to inform decision-making and drive outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STATE POLICY ANALYSIS
Arkansas does not appear to have a formal statute or agency policy/initiative in place to develop shared education to workforce program definitions and indicators that can be transformed used to support aligned policies and priorities across education and workforce systems. Shared program quality definitions and indicators occur on an ad hoc basis. The ARDATA team is working towards having, and utilizing, shared program quality definitions and indicators, through building an analytics team within state government, to work with state departments to develop internal analytics capacity and collaborate with higher education institutions to leverage existing subject matter expertise.

Arkansas does have a shared indicator for postsecondary attainment through Align Arkansas 2026 which has set the statewide goal of “55% of adult Arkansans will possess a college credential by 2030.” Departments across Arkansas are all contributing efforts towards this goal.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN
Arkansas could consider coupling a return on investment analysis (to understand student access and outcomes) with a cross-agency process to develop a public-facing data dashboard that strengthens data collection and reporting to all stakeholders. This would involve a cross-agency, statewide analysis of existing data and gaps in information about labor market opportunities, education and training programs, learner experiences and outcomes to ensure the state can effectively: 1) analyze and make decisions about program offerings, 2) identify and address gaps in access, quality and outcomes and 3) provide useful data about pathway opportunities and quality to all stakeholders (including students and families) to be able to leverage in their pathway development. This could even involve removing types of reporting that is being required of districts or postsecondary institutions to streamline to state priorities.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES
- Colorado – Talent Pipeline Report
- Indiana – Governor’s Workforce Cabinet
- Rhode Island – PrepareRI

RESOURCES
- ARDATA
- Align Arkansas 2026

POLICIES
- N/A
State Longitudinal Data System

The Arkansas public education state longitudinal data system (SLDS) is managed by the Arkansas Research Center (ARC). The ARC was created in 2009 by the and is housed at the University of Central Arkansas. The participating agencies have grown since inception and now includes the Department of Workforce Services, the Department of Human Services, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, the Department of Career Education and the Department of Education. The SLDS is governed by the Open Data and Transparency Task Force within the Arkansas Department of Transportation and Shared Services.

Select information from the SLDS is publicly available on the ADE Education Systems.

Leveraging the SLDS Arkansas annually publishes the Economic Security Report- Arkansas Education to Employment Outcomes for Graduates from State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education. The report, formerly organized by ARC is now authored by the ARDATA Team. The Economic Security report provides employment, earnings and other outcome information on graduates of Arkansas states-supported public institutions of higher education. The report is intended to help readers (students, parents and others) make informed decisions about education and career choices.

OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN

The Economic Security Report contains valuable data for students and parents to utilize in their decision making. Arkansas can consider how to communicate and disseminate the report in a way that is more user friendly for its targeted audience.

PROMISING EXAMPLES FROM OTHER STATES

- Colorado – Talent Pipeline Report
- Florida – Talent Development Council
- Kentucky – KYStats

RESOURCES

- Arkansas Research Center
- Arkansas Department of Transformation and Shared Services

POLICIES

- Arkansas Act 1282 of 2015 Open Data and Transparency Task Force