

Arkansas Department of Workforce Services
Labor Market Information

**Workforce Information Grant
July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016
Annual Report**

Program Year 2015 Arkansas' Workforce Information Grant Annual Report

The Employment and Training Administration (ETA) stresses via Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) 39-14 that Workforce Information Grants (WIG) are an essential part of supporting data-driven planning and service delivery to job seekers and businesses. This report provides an overview of Arkansas' accomplishments towards this goal through the required deliverables and activities contained within this grant.

I. Workforce Information Database (WIDb)

All mandatory core tables of the WIDb were updated by June 30, 2016. This is a continual project, as some tables are updated on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. Arkansas also populates many of the non-required demographic and economic tables when information is made available.

On August 29, 2016, a new version of the *Discover Arkansas* Labor Market Information (LMI) website (<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov>) was launched. With this release, version 2.6 of the WIDb has been implemented and is currently being maintained by staff. Among other features, the website continues to provide Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) area profiles that are now automatically updated when new data is loaded into the WIDb.

All required licensing data are currently up to date with the last submission to the National Crosswalk Service Center on June 15, 2015. New licensing data will be collected and disseminated in Program Year (PY) 2016.

II. Industry and Occupational Employment Projections

Arkansas continues to produce and disseminate state and sub-state industry and occupational employment projections using the methodology, tools, and guidelines developed by the Projections Managing Partnership (PMP) consortium of states. One staff member attended the PMP Summit in Minneapolis in June 2016.

Statewide Long-Term Employment Projections – The statewide 2014-2024 industry and occupational employment projections were completed in June 2016 and files were submitted to the PMP at the same time. The appropriate files were also loaded into the WIDb for use in the *Discover Arkansas* website. A pdf version of the publication can be viewed at the link below.

http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Portals/136/Publications/Projections/LT_St_14_24.pdf

Statewide Short-Term Employment Projections – The statewide 2015-2017 industry and occupational employment projections were completed in February 2016 and files were submitted to the PMP at the same time. The appropriate files were also loaded into the WIDb for use in the *Discover Arkansas* website. A pdf version of the publication can be viewed at the link below.

http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Portals/136/Publications/Projections/AR_2015_17%20Acc.pdf

Sub-State Long-Term Employment Projections – Work has begun on the sub-state 2014-2024 industry and occupational employment projections for LWDB areas and will be complete in the spring of 2017. The 2012-2022 WIDb files and publication remain on the *Discover Arkansas* website. That publication can be viewed at the link below.

http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Portals/136/Publications/Projections/LT_WIA_12-22.pdf

Sub-State Short-Term Employment Projections – The sub-state 2015-2017 industry and occupational employment projections for LWDB areas were completed in June 2016. The appropriate files were loaded into the WIDb for use in the *Discover Arkansas* website. A pdf version of the publication can be viewed at the link below.

<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Portals/136/Publications/Projections/ST%20WDA%202015-17.pdf>

III. Annual Economic Analysis and Other Reports

Throughout PY 2015, Arkansas' LMI section has made itself available for research, provided economic and labor market information, and conducted special studies for our many partners and customers. Some of these include the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, Governor's Office staff, Chambers of Commerce, Departments of Education and Higher Education, and LWDBs. Staff utilizes multiple sources for information including Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the Local Employment Dynamics (LED) system, *Discover Arkansas*, the Local Employment and Wage Information System (LEWIS) and our Economic Modeling System, Inc. (EMSI) Analyst tool to relay information and answer questions and concerns that customers have about the state or local labor markets, economic conditions, and special initiatives.

Arkansas' Labor Market and Economic Report 2016 – The LMI section of the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) will release the tenth edition of the *Arkansas Labor Market and Economic Report* prior to September 30, 2016. Printed versions of the report will be submitted to the Governor and the State Workforce Development Board at the next full board meeting after its release. This report will be posted on the publications page of *Discover Arkansas*.

Career Watch Arkansas – Arkansas distributed approximately 60,000 copies of this very popular career magazine in PY 2015. *Career Watch Arkansas* provides students (and their parents) with over 20 areas of interest in exploring the world of work. Topics covered include career planning, resumes, apprenticeships, work ethic, military opportunities, top occupations, occupational profiles, scholarship information, financial aid programs, higher education in Arkansas, and more. *Career Watch Arkansas* is also available for viewing and downloading at: www.careerwatch.org. Career Watch can also be followed through social media accounts of Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest at the following sites: <https://www.facebook.com/CareerWatchAR>, <https://twitter.com/careerwatchar>, and <https://pinterest.com/careerwatchar>. A *Career Watch Teacher's Guide* is also available for teachers and students that allows them to explore the magazine while engaging in activities on paper and on-line.

<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Career-Watch>

Arkansas' High Demand Targeted Industries – Through cooperation with the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC) a list of high demand targeted industries is published on *Discover*

Arkansas. This list is linked to data on the workforce, education, the industry's unique attributes, Arkansas' competitive advantages, and the recent movement within the industry. The LMI section worked closely with AEDC staff during the process of defining the newest list of industries.

<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Industry/High-Demand-Targeted-Industries>

Arkansas Demographic Data – This section of *Discover Arkansas* provides labor market information that is designed to assist employers in evaluating the utilization of women and minorities in their workforces and in establishing goals to improve such utilization. The data is available for the State, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) and counties and can be downloaded from the website to the user's PC.

<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Demographic-Data>

The Future Awaits – Arkansas continues to distribute and update this publication. Its focus is to teach young adults pre-employment and basic skills including resume preparation, how to apply for jobs, appropriate dress, interview tips, and basic guidance on how to complete federal tax forms. The publication is available in hardcopy or on *Discover Arkansas*.

http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Portals/136/Publications/Career%20Resources%20-%20Other/Future_Awaits.pdf

Pocket Resume – This was such a popular feature in the *Future Awaits* that it has been reproduced into a stand-alone workforce tool for job seekers to use in their everyday work search. It is made to print and complete for use as a handy reference tool for filling out job applications and going on interviews. It is available in hardcopy or on Discover Arkansas.

http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Portals/136/Publications/Career%20Resources%20-%20Other/pocket_resume.pdf

Projected Employment Opportunities List (Demand Occupations List) – Arkansas continues to produce this publication that identifies future job opportunities and links them to training programs within the state. The publication presents information in two columns, with the first providing the occupation's Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code, title, and a statewide estimated average annual wage. The second column lists the corresponding Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) training code and title for the occupation. A list is included for the state and each of the 10 LWDB areas. This product is distributed to help the workforce system and its users make better training decisions. It was last updated on July 1, 2016, and is available in hardcopy or on *Discover Arkansas*.

<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Occupation/Projected-Employment-Opportunities-List>

LWDB Area Statistics and Profiles – Arkansas created localized labor market profiles for each of its LWDB areas. The profiles contain local employment projections, wages and other key economic information for each local area. These reports are driven by the WIDb and are updated automatically as new data is loaded. They can be found on *Discover Arkansas*.

<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Local-Workforce-Development-Area-Statistics>

Other Printed Publications with Web Access – Arkansas continues to update and produce other LMI-based publications such as the *Arkansas Wage Survey*, *Arkansas Labor Market*, and *Covered Employment and Earnings*. This information is all posted on the publication page of *Discover Arkansas* for viewing and downloading by customers.

<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Publications/PublicationsContainer/PID/42793/evl/0/CategoryID/590/CategoryName/Labor-Market-Information>

Career Posters – Arkansas produced various posters with career themes including *Arkansas' Hot 45*, *Education Pays!*, and *So You Want to Go Pro?*. These posters display demand occupations, the monetary benefits of continuing your education, and alternate occupations to playing sports professionally. The posters are aimed at high school students and are very popular with career counselors across the state. They can be downloaded from *Discover Arkansas*.

<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/Publications/PublicationsContainer/PID/42793/evl/0/CategoryID/591/CategoryName/Career-Publications>

Local Employment and Wage Information System (LEWIS) Reports – Arkansas' LMI staff utilizes the LEWIS tool to provide information on wages and staffing patterns. Analysts regularly provide specialized reports to the Arkansas Governor's Office, Arkansas' Economic Development Commission, area economic developers, employers and other agencies on request.

Economic Modeling System, Inc. (EMSI) Analyst Tool – Arkansas continues its relationship with EMSI in order to provide economic information even when in-house data is not releasable due to confidentiality issues. Through the relationship with EMSI, Arkansas has access to the Job Posting Analytics tool which can provide LMI staff with real-time job listings and analysis to help better serve customers.

All publications posted on *Discover Arkansas* have a link to a user survey where customers can rate each publication. Feedback is compiled and evaluated to determine what changes need to be made to stay reactive to customer needs.

IV. Customer Consultations

Arkansas continues to strive for excellence while developing a product mix that provides citizens with good, reliable, and accurate labor market information regardless of whether they are individuals, employers, agency partners, or local and state workforce entities.

The Labor Market Information section is housed within the Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) and is part of the Office of Employment Assistance. LMI is co-located with State Workforce Development Board (SWDB), State Dislocated Worker Unit, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Unemployment Insurance (UI) staff. This arrangement allows for constant contact and consultation with these groups to identify and produce needed information. A representative from LMI attends all State and most Local Workforce Development Board meetings in order to maintain a presence and stay on top of the informational needs of the Boards. In fact, LMI staff is in daily contact with staff from one of the 10 LWDBs and their workforce centers and/or one of the 32 full time ADWS local offices. Information is provided on topics ranging from demand occupations that designate a WIOA training requirement to labor supply information for a new industry that is considering locating in one of

the LWDB areas. Along with providing labor market information to the LWDBs, reports are often provided to area economic development organizations, educational partners, Chambers of Commerce, and other state government agencies.

In PY 2015 the LMI section held a focus group designed to set the state's list of demand occupations. It included representatives from two- and four-year colleges, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, the Arkansas Department of Career Education, economists from the Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration and the Institute of Economic Advancement at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and the Dislocated Worker and TANF Units of ADWS.

Arkansas' LMI section continues to be aggressive in pursuit of grant deliverables, and as of this writing have obtained 100 percent of timed goals for PY 2015. As work continues throughout the year, customer demands evolve and more varied types of information are required. LMI data is relied on more and more to fill this need. Every effort is made to deliver customers with information that is simple to understand while providing the technical level desired by each user. With the use of supplemental products such as the EMSI Analyst tool and the LEWIS program, most customer requests can be fulfilled in a complete and timely manner.

V. Activities Undertaken to Meet Customer Needs

Throughout the year, LMI attended conferences and meetings where staff was able to interact with almost 4,500 customers to get their feedback on products and services. New product development is often based on gaining such knowledge. Examples of events or venues that were attended and/or presented at include:

- Arkansas Career Development Association Conference
- Wrightsville Prison – Women's Unit
- Arkansas Department of Education Conference
- State WIOA Training
- R.E.A.L. Economics Arkansas Conference
- Educational Cooperatives In-service Training
- North Little Rock School Counselor's Meeting
- Job Corps – Royal, AR
- ADWS Manager's Meeting
- National Park Community College
- High School Career Days/Fairs
- LMI to Re-Employment Specialists Training
- Arkansas State University Northeast Arkansas Town Hall Meeting
- 2016 Phi Beta Lambda Conference
- State/Local Demand Occupation Focus Group
- Career Education Career Pathways
- State/Local WDB Meetings

Arkansas' primary means of providing access to labor market information and various products and tools are via the Internet. Three of the LMI websites (*Discover Arkansas*, *Career Watch*, and *Arkansas Consumer Report System*) accounted for over 570,000 visitor sessions in PY 2015.

VI. New Tools and Resources

Arkansas continuously evaluates current products prior to developing new ones due to our very limited funding. Keeping with this line of thought, the following section describes what was completed during PY 2015.

Discover Arkansas Website – *Discover Arkansas* is the state's on-line LMI delivery system utilizing information in Arkansas' WIDb. The website supports the informational needs of LWDBs, business, education, other agencies, and the general public. This fully ADA compliant system is continually updated with new information, reports, and consumer products. Over the years *Discover Arkansas* had become dated which initiated Arkansas to join a consortium with three other states (Montana, Nevada, and Michigan) to update the system into a new environment that allows utilization of the most modern and advanced Internet and web design technology. Throughout PY 2015, LMI staff worked with the state of Montana to re-write and re-design the website. On August 29, 2016, a new version of *Discover Arkansas* was launched. With this release, version 2.6 of the WIDb was implemented.

<http://www.discover.arkansas.gov/>

Real-Life Arkansas Website – In continuing support of our partners in education and employment, Arkansas re-released a new version of *Real-Life Arkansas* lifestyle budget calculator on August 11, 2015. It is now hosted and maintained in-house by Arkansas Department of Workforce Services (ADWS) staff. The website is designed to help students learn how much money they will need to earn in order to have the kind of lifestyle they may want in the near future.

<https://www.workforce.arkansas.gov/real-life/>

Arkansas Consumer Report System (ACRS) Website – Arkansas continues to actively maintain and provide customer service for ACRS on a daily basis. ACRS provides a customer driven search engine to review educational entities and prospects within state boundaries. It is also the vehicle that houses and maintains the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Early in PY 2015 work began on enhancing ACRS to meet the new requirements of WIOA. In June 2016 the updates to the system were completed.

<https://www.workforce.arkansas.gov/acrs/>

Arkansas Legislative Act 852 of 2015 – On June 30, 2016, ADWS released an economic security report of employment and earnings outcomes for degrees and certificates at state-supported institutions of higher education. The report used data available to ADWS and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) and was compiled by the Arkansas Research Center (ARC). The LMI section was charged with assuring this report was completed. Beginning July 1, 2016, all two- and four-year state-supported institutions of higher education will provide enrolled students with electronic access to this report annually before the student registers for classes. Also, as of August 1, 2016, all public school students in grades seven through twelve, or their parent/guardian, will receive a two-page summary and electronic access to the economic security report produced.

<http://dws.arkansas.gov/News/PDF/Act%20852%20Economic%20Security%20Report.pdf> (Full Report)

[http://dws.arkansas.gov/News/PDF/08-01-16%20Arkansas ESR 2016 Summary.pdf](http://dws.arkansas.gov/News/PDF/08-01-16%20Arkansas%20ESR%202016%20Summary.pdf) (Summary)

Arkansas Legislative Act 920 of 2015 – This legislation requires ADWS to collaborate with various professional boards to identify communities underserved by professionals of necessity, assess the need of having these professionals reside and work in the identified communities, and develop a strategic plan that may involve administrative and legislative action to encourage these professionals to relocate to the underserved communities. The LMI section was again charged with determining a way to accomplish this. As a first step, staff contacted licensing boards to identify the number of professionals licensed and the communities where they live. Research is still being conducted at this time. With assistance from the ARC, a report will be compiled and is due to the legislature no later than November 15, 2016.

VII. Efforts to Create and Support Partnerships and Collaborations

In PY 2015 existing partnerships were improved and new ones were created. These partnerships are a result of LMI's recognized ability to provide expertise in the collection and reporting of data relevant to customer needs.

LMI continued to work closely with the Arkansas Economic Development Commission (AEDC). Over the years the relationship with AEDC has become an important piece in facilitating industry growth within Arkansas and its economic regions. Not only does LMI staff provide vital information to AEDC to use in the recruitment of business to the state, but AEDC provides valuable feedback on data sets such as employment projections to enable LMI staff to produce better products for all customers.

A new relationship that has been fostered is with the newly created Office of Skills Development within the Arkansas Department of Career Education (ACE). In order to make wise decisions with limited training money, ACE requested extensive industry and occupational data including employment projections, wages, education level, licensing requirements, training and experience needed. LMI staff was able to provide the information and assist in mining through the data to get to exactly what they needed to present to their board for determining grant awards.

The LMI section continued to provide the state and local Workforce Development Boards with the data necessary to meet their ever changing needs. Special reports were compiled specifically to assist LWDB staff write their local plans for WIOA. A request has again been made for each area to submit their meeting dates so a LMI staff person can be present as often as possible.

VIII. Activities to Leverage Funding

As a small state, funding is one of the largest hurdles Arkansas faces. It will continue to be an issue until Federal and State government leaders realize the value of sound statistical information. With a new director, there is a better understanding within our agency of the value of the information that LMI develops and distributes. Hopefully this will result in an increase of partner agency funding for the work and information provided. However, in most cases those agency funds have also been reduced as well.

Arkansas' LMI section works with WIOA leaders in the state and receives some funding to carry out projects such as developing and maintaining the ACRS website. Also, within PY 2015 ADWS was awarded a Job Driven National Emergency Grant. Supplemental funding under this grant was given to the LMI

section for use in the maintenance of ACRS, re-write of Discover Arkansas and development of data for Arkansas Legislative Act 852 of 2015.

IX. Recommendations

As mentioned above, Arkansas' main concern is funding. In a smaller state it is nearly impossible to deliver enhanced products on a comparable level to those produced by larger states that have considerably more funding and staff. It is our belief that we need enhanced funding for our product mix or, at the least, an understanding by ETA that we cannot produce the highly refined products (i.e., special studies) that larger states produce with the current funding levels.