

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

State of Arkansas
90th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2015

As Engrossed: S3/19/15 H3/27/15

A Bill

SENATE BILL 891

By: Senator J. English

By: Representatives Gossage, E. Armstrong, Bentley, Blake, Bragg, Davis, Eubanks, M.J. Gray, House, Leding, Tucker, Vaught

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT OF
2015; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO ESTABLISH THE WORKFORCE INITIATIVE ACT
OF 2015.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative intent – Findings.

(a) The General Assembly finds that is it necessary for Arkansas to properly evaluate and address the workforce training needs of our state in order to compete with an aggressive and effective economic development strategy for the twenty-first century.

(b) Consideration of secondary and postsecondary education, including career and technical programs, is essential for creating a successful economic climate in the state.

(c) Encouraging Arkansans to pursue high-demand jobs, including without limitation industry-recognized credentials, career and technical certificates, associate degree programs, and bachelor's degree programs is essential to building a skilled and work-ready workforce.

(d) A program that offers short-term career and technical training and those programs that produce certificates of proficiency, technical certificates, Associate of Applied Science degrees, and Bachelor of Applied Science degrees or similarly designed bachelor degrees are critical to the



success of economic development in Arkansas.

(e)(1) Institutions and organizations will unite around shared regional sector strategies that support an employer demand-driven workforce system.

(2) This system should support:

(A) Creation of state and regional industry-sector driven partnerships that employers lead and to which education institutions respond;

(B) Data-driven decisions on development and deployment of workforce training and education programs;

(C) Development of articulated education pathways, from grades K-12 to baccalaureate, that are aligned with employment career pathways that include industry-recognized credential and employment step-out points; and

(D) Increased diversity and representation from all regions of the state.

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 60, Subchapter 1, is amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

6-60-105. Workforce initiative funding.

(a)(1) The Department of Higher Education shall act as the disbursing entity for all funds for the Workforce Initiative Act.

(2) The Department of Higher Education shall establish procedures for the request for proposals under subdivision (b)(2) of this section that shall:

(A) Be approved by the Governor;

(B) Include input from the Department of Education, the Department of Workforce Services, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, and the Department of Career Education; and

(C) Be reported to the Legislative Council.

(3) The Department of Higher Education shall establish a grant application review and award process under this section that shall:

(A) Be approved by the Governor; and

(B) Include recommendations from the Department of Education, the Department of Workforce Services, the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, and the Department of Career Education.

(b)(1) The Department of Higher Education shall set funding priorities

in three (3) phases.

(2)(A)(i) Phase one shall seek requests for proposals from alliances consisting of technical institutes, community colleges, universities, the kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) education system, educational cooperatives, or employers, with input from local workforce investment boards, to receive planning grants of up to one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000).

(ii)(a) The local workforce investment boards shall identify the industry sectors for each of their ten (10) areas.

(b) The identification process shall include a comprehensive data analysis of employer skill requirements in each sector in each region.

(c) The identified industry sectors and employment skills shall serve as the basis for an application to a request for proposal from the Department of Higher Education.

(B) A request for proposal shall include an education and employer alignment plan that includes state-approved, employer-driven career pathways that are supported by a secondary center that awards concurrent credit courses that can be applied to a certificate of proficiency, technical certificate, Associate of Applied Science degree, or Bachelor of Applied Science degree or a similarly designed bachelor degree.

(C) Recognizing the limited state resources, the priority for planning grants shall be given to the applicants that best enhance regional efforts, including collaboration between community colleges, universities, public schools, education service cooperatives, the local workforce investment boards, career and technical education programs, multidistrict vocational centers, and private partnerships with clearly defined and measurable performance and effectiveness objectives.

(3)(A) Phase two shall provide implementation grants in an amount necessary to provide the resources to implement approved projects concluded and approved by the Department of Higher Education from phase one.

(B) Implementation grants shall include clearly defined outcome measures and last for up to two (2) years.

(4)(A) Phase three shall provide continuation grants for phase two recipients that meet or exceed the outcome measures.

(B) Continuation grants shall be used to align the

performance and relevance of programs to ever changing workforce training needs.

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code Title 19, Chapter 5, Subchapter 12, is amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

19-5-1255. Workforce Initiative Act of 2015 Fund.

(a) There is created on the books of the Treasurer of State, the Auditor of State, and the Chief Fiscal Officer of the State a miscellaneous fund to be known as the "Workforce Initiative Act of 2015 Fund".

(b) The fund shall consist of those general revenues as may be authorized by law and other nonfederal funds as may be provided by law.

(c) The fund shall be used by the Department of Higher Education for distributing grants to programs identified under § 6-60-105.

/s/J. English