

**SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

for

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
ONE-STOP OPERATOR**

Program Years July 14, 2025 – June 30, 2029

Release Date: May 27, 2025

Introduction to the Local Workforce Area

The Workforce Development Board of Southwest Arkansas covers a twelve-county local area made up of Calhoun, Columbia, Dallas, Hempstead, Howard, Lafayette, Little River, Miller, Nevada, Ouachita, Sevier, and Union county leaders from business, education, labor and government, with the majority of its board members representing the private business sector.

The mission of the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board is to promote and support a talent development system in Southwest Arkansas that offers employers, individuals, and communities the opportunity to achieve and sustain economic prosperity.

Southwest Arkansas Planning and Development District, Inc. (SWAPDD) is the Fiscal Agent, Administrative Entity and Staff Support to the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board. SWAPDD serves currently as the service provider for WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Services. More information can be found <https://swawdb.com/>. Eckerd Connects currently serves as One-Stop Operator.

The Workforce Development Board of Southwest Arkansas is committed to:

- Helping Southwest Arkansas win the skills race, today and in the future.
- Assisting area employers to attract and retain skilled productive workers.
- Working with area education and training leaders to provide curriculum and programs that meet employer needs for works with high-level skills.

Data related to the twelve-county area can be found in the Local Plan Modifications on the home page of <https://swawdb.com/>

Technical Details

This Request for Proposals was prepared based upon the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) and associated U.S. Department of Labor Regulations and guidance. This Federal Law was implemented to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy and vocational rehabilitation programs in the United States. WIOA provides the framework for a national workforce preparation system that is flexible, responsive, customer-focused, and locally managed. Mandatory core program partners include: WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Literacy, and Vocational Rehabilitation, along with required partners specified in the Act. Offerors are strongly encouraged to read Training and Employment Guidance Letter issued by the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines the vision for the One-Stop system under WIOA.

The three hallmarks of WIOA include:

1. The needs of businesses and workers drive workforce solutions, and local boards are accountable for this within the communities they serve.
2. One-Stop Centers provide excellent customer-centric services and focus on continuous improvement; and,
3. The workforce system supports strong regional economies and plays an active role in community and workforce development.

WIOA is built around the following key principles:

- Increase access and opportunity, particularly for those individuals with barriers to employment, to ensure success in the labor market.
- Support the alignment of workforce investment, education, and economic development systems in support of a comprehensive, accessible, and high-quality workforce development system.
- Improve the quality and labor market relevance of workforce investment, education, and economic development efforts to provide workers with the skills and credentials necessary to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages, and to provide employers with the skilled workers they need to succeed in a global economy.
- Promote improvement in the structure and delivery of services to better address the employment and skill needs of workers, jobseekers, and employers.
- Increase the prosperity of workers and employers and the economic growth of communities, regions, and states, and the global competitiveness of the United States.
- Provide workforce investment activities, through statewide and local workforce development systems, that increase the employment, retention and earnings of participants, and increase attainment of recognized postsecondary credentials by participants.

The Southwest Arkansas Local Workforce Development Board (Board) oversees the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds for the twelve-county area and coordinates with the Local Elected Officials.

In Section 107 of the legislation and in § 678.605 of WIOA Regulations Local Workforce Boards are required to competitively procure the One-Stop Operator role and responsibilities. The Southwest Arkansas Local Workforce Development Board has contracted with an independent consultant to assist in soliciting and selecting a One-Stop Operator. The independent contractor will utilize workforce system subject matter experts to review and recommend the One-Stop Operator.

Southwest Arkansas Local Workforce Development Board, with the release of this Request for Proposal, is soliciting submittals to identify a single One-Stop Operator for the Southwest Arkansas comprehensive and affiliate One-Stop Centers:

- Arkansas Workforce Center at Hope (comprehensive)
205 Smith Road
Hope, Arkansas 71801
- Arkansas Workforce Center at Camden (affiliate)
237 Jackson SW
Camden, Arkansas 71701
- Arkansas Workforce Center at Magnolia (affiliate)
104 Harvey Couch Blvd.
Magnolia, Arkansas 71753

The affiliate sites are subject to change. The Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board in coordination with Local Elected Officials and its partners are responsible for determining the locations of the Workforce Centers.

Purpose of Request for Proposals

The purpose of this solicitation is to select a single service provider to serve as One-Stop Operator under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 for the Southwest Arkansas Local Workforce Development Area.

Background and General Information

- A. The Board intends to be as inclusive as possible in this solicitation. The goal is to receive a wide variety of high quality, innovative submittals that meet the workforce development needs of the communities served in Southwest Arkansas.
- B. The resulting contract with the Successful Offeror will be for the period July 14, 2025, to June 30, 2029. Competitive procurement is required at least every four years according to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- C. Once the contract has been awarded, the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board, in collaboration with the Local Elected Officials, reserves the right to modify delivery design. In the event the modification requires additional labor hours on the part of the Successful Offeror terms will be negotiated and the contract modified. The Board also reserves the right to de-obligate funds from the Successful Offeror if it fails to meet contractual requirements and/or if Southwest Arkansas Workforce Board WIOA funding is reduced.

- D. Funding for this Request for Proposals is anticipated to be no more than \$50,000, however all offers will be considered. It is expected the One-Stop Operator will be part-time at 25%.
- E. The Board reserves the right to make an award based on the criteria in this Request for Proposals or to make no awards, if that is deemed to serve the best interests of the Board and Southwest Arkansas. The submittal process is competitive and follows government procurement rules.
- F. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 provides the framework for a national workforce preparation system that is flexible, responsive, customer-focused, and locally managed. The Board envisions a system that meets the needs of residents and businesses alike.
- G. This Request for Proposals is not in itself an offer of work nor does it commit the Board to fund any submittals. The Board is not liable for any costs incurred in the preparation or research involved in the development of the response to this Request for Proposals.
- H. Offerors may be asked to answer questions electronically during the review process of this Request for Proposals.
- I. All commitments made by the Board as a result of this Request for Proposals are contingent upon the availability of funds.
- J. The Board assures it will comply fully with the nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions of the following laws: Section 188 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 law and the related regulations; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended; and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, as amended. This assurance applies to the WIOA Title I financially assisted program or activity, and to all agreements that the Board makes to carry out the WIOA Title I financially assisted program or activity.
- K. By providing a submittal to this Request for Proposals all Offerors are providing an assurance that they will comply with the above nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions.
- L. Offerors should note that under the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, the contents of submittals to the Board is subject to public release upon request, except those items specifically exempt from disclosure. The Offeror shall mark as "proprietary" those parts of its submittal that it deems proprietary. However, the Offeror is alerted that this marking is advisory only and not binding on the Board. If there is a request under the Freedom of Information Act to inspect any part of the submittal so marked, the Board will advise the Offeror and request further justification in support of the "proprietary" marking. If the Board determines, after receipt of the justification, that the material is releasable, the Offeror will be notified

immediately. Under no circumstances will a submittal or any part of a submittal be released prior to the contract award decision.

- M. The Board will authorize the Administrative Entity to negotiate a contract and/or agreement for the provision of programs arising from this Request for Proposals. In the event the Administrative Entity has a conflict of interest with the successful Offeror, the independent contractor will complete the contract negotiations and request a contract be provided per their specifications.
- N. The Successful Offeror is required to maintain a local management office within one of the One-Stop Centers.
- O. The Successful Offeror may not subcontract any part of the services unless approved in the Request for Proposals and/or approved in advance by the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board.
- P. The Successful Offeror must assure that it will comply with Local, State, and Federal program and fiscal monitoring requests.
- Q. Offerors are prohibited from discussing this Request for Proposals with Board Members, the Independent Contractor facilitating the procurement process, or Local Chief Elected Officials. Such contact will result in disqualification of the proposal. A question period is provided within the Request for Proposals timeline.
- R. Offerors who have provided a submittal may protest the award of the contract according to the following process:
 - 1. Protests must be filed electronically and be received by the Board's consultant at malaw528@aol.com by close of business on June 29, 2025. All protests are public information after the protest period ends.
 - 2. All protests must state the basis for the protest in clear terms and provide an alternative the protester finds acceptable. The basis of the protest must be a violation of a State or Federal contracting law, rule, or regulation applicable to the contracting process.
 - 3. The independent consultant will forward all protests to the Board Executive Committee and provide detail on whether the protests meet the above conditions. In the event, the Board Executive Committee has a conflict, the protest information will be forwarded to the Chief Elected Officials.
 - 4. During any part of the review or consideration, the protester may be asked to clarify or amplify statements or to provide proof of claims or other statements. Any such requests must be fully responded to within the time designated by the independent contractor within the request. In the event a protester fails to respond, the protest will be dismissed and no further protest will be accepted relative to this Request for Proposals.
 - 5. The independent contractor will review the protest and make a recommendation to the Executive Committee or the Chief Elected Officials as a complete and final answer to the protest. A response will be issued no later than close of business on June 30, 2025.

6. The independent contractor will document the submission of a protest and the findings in meeting minutes in a report to the full Board and to the Chief Elected Officials.

Resource Information

The United States Department of Labor has a WIOA Online Community of Practice that provides information sharing needed to implement and maintain WIOA at: <http://on.workforcegps.org>.

WIOA law and regulations can be found at: www.doleta.gov/wioa/

Arkansas's WIOA Combined State Plan can be found at:
[https://dws.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/WIOA State Plan PY2020-2023 Agenda Draft 12.30.19 2 .06pm .pdf](https://dws.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/WIOA_State_Plan_PY2020-2023_Agenda_Draft_12.30.19_2_.06pm_.pdf)

RFP Timeline *(any changes to this schedule will be communicated by posting on the website.*

05/29/25	Request for Proposals Released and Posted on https://swawdb.com/
06/02/25	Close of Business Deadline for Questions to Mary Ann Lawrence at malaw528@gmail.com
06/03/25	Questions and Answers Released and Posted on https://swawdb.com/
06/29/25	Proposals Due Electronically at 4 p.m. central time to Mary Ann Lawrence at malaw528@gmail.com
07/02/25	Evaluation and Recommendation
By 06/07/25	Full Board or Executive Committee Approval and Chief Elected Official Approval
07/07/25	Award Announcement and Finalize Contract
07/14/25	Contract Start Date. (this date will be negotiated with the awardee)

Eligible Applicants

Organizations eligible to respond to this Request for Proposals may fall within any of the following categories:

- Governmental Agencies
- Private Non-Profit Organizations
- Private For-Profit Businesses
- Independent Contractors
- Educational Entities (other than elementary and secondary schools)

One-Stop Operator Roles and Responsibilities

The One-Stop Operator must coordinate the service delivery of core and required one-stop partners and other partners working with the comprehensive and affiliate Workforce Centers. This includes managing partner responsibilities in the comprehensive One-Stop Centers as defined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The WIOA MOU serves the key purpose of defining partner roles and focuses, in part, on the shaping of the workforce system. This includes the sharing of resources, referral agreements, etc. In the end, the overall goal is to ensure efficiency within the Southwest Arkansas workforce system.

WIOA was signed into law on July 22, 2014, and went into effect July 1, 2015. WIOA supersedes the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, and amends the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, the Wagner-Peyser Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

WIOA has two tiers of partners: Core Program Partners and Required Partners.

The Core Program Partners who are required to collaborate and participate in the One-Stop System include: WIOA Title I Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth; Wagner-Peyser labor exchange; Adult Education and Literacy; and, Vocational Rehabilitation. Core Program Partners are in the common performance measures pool and must work closely together to achieve success.

Required Program Partners must participate in the MOU process and provide coordinated services with the comprehensive Workforce Centers. Required Program Partners include the four Core Program Partners as well as: Career and Technical Education, Title V Older Americans, Job Corps, Native American Programs, Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers, Veterans, YouthBuild, Trade Act, Community Services Block Grant, HUD, Unemployment Compensation, Second Chance, and TANF. In the event any of the required partners do not have funding in the Southwest Arkansas Local Workforce Development Area, their participation is waived.

Providing businesses with the skilled workforce they need to compete in the global, regional, and local economies is central to Arkansas's vision in implementing the Federal Act. Arkansas's workforce system provides a talent pipeline through the establishment of partnerships between State and local entities, businesses, economic development, education, and community stakeholders. To ensure that the workforce system efficiently meets the needs of both the businesses and the jobseekers that it serves, Arkansas's workforce agencies have jointly developed the State's workforce plan with the intent that this vision is carried out in each of the Local Workforce Development Areas through their Workforce Centers.

The One-Stop Operator will be the point of contact regarding issues pertaining to customer complaints that are substantive to the required partners operating in the comprehensive and affiliate One-Stop Centers. This will include convening partner meetings on a regular basis as well as stakeholder meetings including all core program partners and advising the Administrative Entity and Board Staff on partner operational challenges and successes.

In support of the WIOA MOU the One-Stop Operator responsibilities will also include:

- Facilitating customer flow, customer service, initial assessment, resource room usage, tracking, and referral processes are carried out as agreed upon in the WIOA MOU
- Communicating Board and Administrative policies and procedures to all partners
- Reporting to the Administration and Board on Center activities
- Maintaining minutes of partner meetings

The One-Stop Operator will submit a written and verbal report on work accomplished and challenges encountered on a quarterly basis to the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board. In addition, the One-Stop Operator will gather data for the Board from the partners on a quarterly basis including: common measure information; tracking incoming clients; resource room usage; and program specific referrals as outlined in the WIOA MOU.

Project Budget

The budget for July 14, 2025, through June 30, 2029, for the One-Stop Operator is anticipated to be awarded around \$50,000, although Offerors above \$50,000 will be considered based on the staffing plan and reasonableness of the funding request. Offerors should provide a staffing and costs proposal that demonstrates an understanding and qualification for their submittal. Facility costs are not included in the One-Stop Operator budget, or any Center staff funded by partners. The contract will be cost reimbursement with consideration for performance-based payment when negotiated goals are achieved.

Submission Information and Requirements

General Submission Information

To be considered for funding, an entity must provide a submittal for this Request for Proposals (RFP) including supporting documentation in accordance with the instructions in this RFP. When evaluating a submittal, the independent contractor will consider how well the Offeror has complied with these instructions and provided the required information. The independent contractor reserves the right to request clarifications from any Offeror regarding information in their submittals and may request an oral presentation if deemed appropriate and necessary to make a final recommendation.

Offerors may request clarification to comply with instructions during the Question-and-Answer period May 29, 2025, through June 2, 2025, at 4:00 pm central time by emailing Mary Ann Lawrence at malaw528@gmail.com. Answers to the questions will be posted on <https://swawdb.com/> June 3, 2025. Offerors may also request the questions and answers by emailing malaw528@gmail.com after June 3, 2025.

Offerors shall not direct questions or have conversations regarding this Request for Proposals with any Board Members, Chief Elected Officials, the Consultant, or Southwest Arkansas Board support staff except during the official “question” period. All questions must be communicated through malaw528@gmail.com. Questions submitted should be electronic and must include in the subject line *Questions – Southwest Arkansas Operator Procurement 2025*. Questions without the assigned subject line may not be considered.

The submittal, as well as any reference materials presented, must be typed in English in at least 12-point font and must be on standard portrait 8 ½ “ by 11” size with no less than one inch margins. Landscape orientation containing charts, spreadsheets, and oversize exhibits is permissible. Submittals are limited to thirty pages or less including attachments and supportive information on single side of paper.

Contract Funding Source

Funding is made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor and is administered by Southwest Arkansas Planning & Development District on behalf of the Chief Elected Officials in Southwest Arkansas in partnership with the State of Arkansas.

Compliance Requirements

Any award of a contract under this Request for Proposals will be subject to applicable requirements of the funding sources, including the U.S. Department of Labor, the State of Arkansas, and the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board. These terms and conditions include, without limitation, provisions regarding reporting, insurance, indemnification, audits, nondiscrimination,

minority and women's business enterprise requirements, veterans' priority of service, conflict of interest and local hiring provisions.

Available Funds Note

It is suggested that the Successful Offeror has a minimum of three months operating capital on-hand throughout the term of the contract.

Public Records

Offerors are advised that documents in possession of the Southwest Arkansas Workforce Development Board are considered public records and subject to disclosure under the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act.

Contractor Qualifications and Responsibilities

All businesses/organizations must meet a minimum level of administrative and fiscal capacity in order to contract for the requested services. Therefore, the Successful Offeror must provide the following Documentation of Qualifications within a ten-day period after notification. These are not required to be included in the proposal. Failure to satisfactorily provide the following documentation within a ten-day period after notification could result in disqualification of proposed award.

Documentation of Proposer's Qualifications:

- Legal entity - Proof of Incorporation, 501(c) (3), etc. and designation from the IRS of tax-exempt status, if applicable. Must submit document proving legal entity.
- Written personnel policies if applicable. Must submit table of contents of personnel policies.
- Written conflict of interest policy for staff and board if applicable. Must submit copy of Conflict-of-Interest Policy.
- Must submit bound copy of most recent formal audit, if applicable, completed within last year. Must satisfactorily address all findings.
- Verify that the program has procured and will maintain during the life of the contract the following required insurance coverage: professional liability, errors and omissions; commercial general liability insurance, including contractual liability insurance; business automobile liability (if applicable); worker's compensation coverage; and employee dishonesty insurance. Must submit copies of certificate of insurance with contract.

Submittal Content and Scoring

Proposals will be evaluated on Three Parts:

- Part I Required Format and Content in #1 below
- Part II Experience & Approach (100 points)
- Part III Budget Detail and Staffing Structure (50 points)

1. **All submittals must contain the following documents in this order to be considered:**
 - a. Entire submittal cannot exceed (20) twenty pages and be single-sided
 - b. Title Page Including Entity, Contact Person (email, phone, address)
 - c. Executive Summary (no longer than 2 page which is included in the 20-page limit)
 - d. Narrative
 - e. Budget and Budget Narrative
 - f. Three References Attesting to Relevant Experience – hard copy letters preferred along with list and contact information
2. **Experience and Approach** (80 points)
Answer the following:
 - A. One-Stop Operator (up to 10 points each)
 - a. Describe specific experience with serving as One-Stop Operator.
 - b. Detail the role and responsibilities that will be undertaken as One-Stop Operator.
 - c. Provide a detailed description of a proposed client flow to ensure Core Program Partners are included in upfront services.
 - d. Detail the proposed management of the resource room.
 - e. Detail information on how staff and partner training will be provided.
 - f. Provide information on experience the organization has in regard to One-Stop Certification achievement and maintenance.
 - g. Describe how system and Center orientations will be provided.
 - h. Describe the steps you will go through to launch the contract.
3. **Budget, Budget Narrative** (20 points)
Include in your proposed budget:
 - A. Line-item budget
 - B. Staffing structure including position(s), office location, and salary range
 - C. Corporate structure and support services that will be provided to Southwest Arkansas if applicable
 - D. Reasonableness of line items
 - E. Profit or program income proposed if applicable along with payment point deliverables
 - F. Indirect cost detail if applicable
 - G. Administrative cost detail if applicable