

Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative
Progress Report of Activities and Outcomes during
Program Year Four
(July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009)

ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's uncertain economy, states and regions are experiencing myriad workforce challenges. In the short run, layoffs and unemployment resulting from the current economic downturn dictate an immediate need for education and training to prepare workers for key occupations. In the long run, states and regions continue to exist in a global economy where ability to compete and success are determined by how well the skills of the workforce meet the needs of businesses.

Given these realities, Arkansas—a state with a high poverty rate—needs to increase the number of low-income and low-skill adults who access and complete education and training enabling them to attain good jobs and to contribute to the state's competitive position. To address this challenge, the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative (CPI), which is administered by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE), marshals public education and training resources to improve the employment and earnings prospects of low-income adults by preparing them to work in industries of importance in their regions. This report details the CPI activities and outcomes during FY09, the program's fourth year of operations.

Key Updates for FY09

Although the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between ADHE and Department of Workforce Services (DWS) stated that the award amount was \$12 million annually for FY08 and FY09, DWS reduced the CPI budget to \$11.2 million (-7%). Grant awards to campuses for FY09 ranged from \$235,151-\$633,513. Most campus grants were not increased and were equal to the prior year's program expenditures in spite of an increase in number of students served and a greater need for transportation, childcare, and education-related support services.

Due to the decrease in funding, Phase III institutions (the last 14 CPI sites added to the program) did not receive funding to hire employability coordinators to assist students with pre-employment skills and job placement support. ADHE's concern is that due to inadequate staffing, the Phase III colleges will not meet employability benchmarks and goals established by DWS.

To preserve direct-student support at the campuses, ADHE/CPI chose to eliminate sub-grants with AATYC (\$500,000) and Southern Good Faith Fund (SGFF) (\$280,000) in FY09. Program marketing, employability services and counselor training/community-based organization outreach provided in the past by these organizations no longer existed. To compromise,

ADHE/CPI printed brochures and posters and distributed to the campuses for the public information and employability services/training became a priority for statewide staff. Additionally in FY09, all 25 sites expressed a continued concern throughout the year with the lack of childcare funds from Department of Childcare (DCC). DCC reported that the lack of childcare funds was a statewide problem that not only affected pathways, but also lead to the closing of some childcare facilities. The last 14 sites established had limited funds for student support, and most childcare cases from these campuses were ineligible since DCC considered these as new cases. Department of Workforce Services (DWS) allocated an additional \$1.5 million for childcare services for the children of employed CPI students. Two grants for \$750,000 each awarded from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant were effective January 1-June 30, 2009 and July 1 –December 31, 2009.

THE ARKANSAS CAREER PATHWAYS INITIATIVE: BACKGROUND

Arkansas leaders recognize the need for an education and training system that addresses the state's economic challenges. Through the Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative (CPI), the state has sought to coordinate publicly funded education with social services and workforce and economic development programs to produce a better-trained workforce and promote economic growth. "Career pathways" is the term for a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector. Each step on a career pathway is designed explicitly to prepare workers and students for the next level of employment and education. Using the career pathways framework, the workforce system seeks to target jobs in industries of importance to local economies and create avenues of advancement for current workers, jobseekers, and future labor market entrants, as well as a supply of qualified workers for employers.

Community colleges play a linchpin role in career pathways. The career pathways framework promotes systemic reform for community colleges—providing a model that better aligns their various mission areas of workforce development, academic credentialing, transfer preparation, and remediation with the needs of employers. Pathways commonly feature community colleges working in partnership with other educational entities, workforce and economic development agencies, employer and labor groups, and social service providers to ensure that investments in education and training pay off for the region's economic vitality. Students entering into adult literacy or college remedial coursework are better able to advance to and succeed in college-level programs, and all students can more readily earn postsecondary credentials and make progress toward a career. Incumbent workers are provided training opportunities that help increase their skills and subsequent wages.

CPI, which began serving clients in fall 2005, seeks to improve the earnings and postsecondary education attainment of Arkansas' low-income "TANF-eligible" adults by enabling them to work in industries of regional importance. Administered by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) in association with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS), CPI provides funding for two-year colleges to develop career pathways initiatives.

Objectives for CPI

CPI seeks to improve the working relationships among public systems and enhance existing programs and services to help low-income people gain workplace skills leading to economic self-sufficiency and reduced Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) reliance. It also seeks to provide employers in key industries in Arkansas with skilled workers. The initiative accomplishes these goals by enabling upward educational and career mobility in targeted career fields for low-skill and low-wage individuals. This focus represents a shift from traditional programs in Arkansas, which have typically aimed to reduce TANF rolls by moving recipients into low-wage, entry-level jobs that provide little opportunity for career development and industry focus.

CPI's objectives for program participants are:

- Increased enrollment in college-level certificate and associate degree programs
- Increased attainment of college-level certificates and associate degrees
- Increased job attainment and job retention in key industries

The initiative serves students who are current or former recipients of Transitional Employment Assistance (TEA); current recipients of Food Stamps, ARKids, or Medicaid; or those earning 250 percent of the federal poverty level or less. Individuals must be the adult caretaker of a child under the age of 21 to be eligible.

Additionally, the initiative seeks to improve the level of engagement among educators and employers to generate work opportunities for students and serve the workforce needs of the private sector.

Phased Launch

The initiative was officially launched during the fall semester of 2005, when \$8 million in funding was awarded by the TEA Board to carry out this work. Eleven two-year college sites were selected to develop pilots based on the number of TANF-eligible individuals in their service areas, the percent of the population that was TANF-eligible, and the existence of a Workforce Alliance for Growth in the Economy (WAGE) program (see description in Appendix B). Referred to as Phase I, six of the sites were selected to run pilots in an initial round of funding in fall 2005.¹ The remaining five sites were funded and joined CPI during Phase II, in January 2006.² Sites were funded with approximately \$500,000 each during the first year of the initiative; those funds were used to establish at each site a new career pathways office, where

¹ Phase I sites: Arkansas Northeastern College, Arkansas State University–Newport, Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas, Ouachita Technical College, Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, and Southeast Arkansas College.

² Phase II sites: Arkansas State University–Beebe, Black River Technical College, East Arkansas Community College, Mid-South Community College, and Pulaski Technical College.

staff coordinate program activities and provide guidance and support services for students, as explained in more detail in Appendix B.

During the second year of the initiative, Phase I and II sites continued operations with budgets of approximately \$500,000 per site. Also during the second year, Phase III was launched, awarding funds to build career pathways programs to the state's 11 remaining two-year colleges and three technical centers affiliated with four-year institutions.³ The new sites were approved by the TEA Board in January 2007, and each received a grant award of only \$250,000 to begin building CPI on their campuses. The expectation at these campuses was that they would receive the \$500,000 received initially by Phase I and II.

In FY08, during the third year of the initiative, the grant award for 25 campuses was \$12 million, or \$4,000,000 for 14 additional campuses. DWS requested that ADHE reduce the FY09 grant by approximately 6% for a total grant award of \$11,213,131. ADHE/CPI retained \$713,131 for leadership and training and the remainder of the grant was sub-granted to the 25 CPI sites. To preserve direct-student support at the campuses, ADHE/CPI sacrificed the sub-grants with AATYC and SGFF.

Performance Measurements and Incentive Funding

The initiative's legislative mandate, Act 514, requires performance to be measured in student enrollment, student-earned certificates/degrees, employment rates, and employment retention rates. TEA client enrollment was included as an additional performance measure at the request of the Department of Workforce Services. New student enrollment and Current TEA/Work Pays were also added as a measure of institutional performance in FY09. After each fiscal year, incentive funding is disbursed based on performance during the previous year. The performance measures established under the plan are as follows:

Enrollment: Enrollment goals for FY08 were analyzed and a 5% increase was applied to all sites. Cost per participant for FY08 was also considered, with \$1,500 being the goal. Cost per participant is calculated by dividing total campus expenditures by the number of enrollments. ADHE/CPI expenditures and budget are not considered. All proposed FY09 budget totals were divided by the goal of \$1,500. To emphasize the importance of both increasing enrollments and monitoring the cost per participant, the campus enrollment goal was the number of enrollments resulting from a 5% increase over actual past year enrollments or the cost per participant equation, whichever was higher. The FY09 statewide enrollment goal was 8,275 students.

³ These sites were Arkansas State University–Mountain Home, Arkansas Tech University–Ozark Campus, National Park Community College, North Arkansas College, Northwest Arkansas Community College, Ozarka College, Rich Mountain Community College, South Arkansas Community College, Southern Arkansas University–Tech, University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville, University of Arkansas Community College at Hope, University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton, University of Arkansas at Monticello College of Technology–Crossett, University of Arkansas at Monticello College of Technology–McGehee.

TEA Clients: At the request of DWS, current TEA and Work Pays clients were tracked as a sub-population within the total population of enrollees.

Criteria:

- Past institutional performance in enrolling current TEA
- TEA clients in CPI site's home county

To emphasize the importance of enrolling current TEA and working with TEA case managers to enroll students in Arkansas Work Pays, the campus TEA enrollment goal is unique by campus. Campus goals for enrolling TEA are no less than 10 students, and no more than 50% of the TEA clients in the home county, unless past institutional performance (defined as actual current TEA enrolled in the prior year plus one) demonstrates that a higher goal is achievable. The only exceptions are PTC and SEAC. Each of these campuses has a goal of approximately 20% of the county current TEA count as a goal.

- *Certificates/Degrees Attained:* The certificates/degrees tracked under this initiative are educational stepping-stones. The performance goal for FY09 certificate/degree attainment was 50 percent of the enrollment goal—4,138 certificates or degrees.
- *Employment:* The minimum percentage of student completers who must match the Arkansas Unemployment Insurance data (UI data match) is 55 percent. This target was chosen based on performance in other employment programs and input from site directors on realistic expectations.
- *Employment Retention:* Retention rates for CPI program completers are measured using Arkansas UI data from the Department of Information Services (DIS). The goal aims for 80 percent of CPI completers who entered employment initially to be retained after six months—and 80 percent of those who retained employment after six months to be retained after 12 months of employment.

ADHE/CPI distributes incentive funds on a per capita basis for each benchmark reached during the previous fiscal year. Additional funding is awarded for performance that exceeds the minimum benchmark. For example, if a college with a minimum enrollment benchmark of 20 TEA clients enrolls 25, the college will receive incentive funds for all 25 clients. However, if the college enrolls only 17 clients, it will receive no incentive funding for current TEA/Work Pays client enrollment. Incentive funds are awarded using a graduated system in which higher levels

of academic completion have higher incentives (for example, a Technical Certificate is worth more than a Certificate of Proficiency).

The incentive structure is to encourage sites to advance students up the academic ladder. One million of the FY09 budget was set aside for incentives based on institutional performance and a pro-rated formula. Per capita incentive funding is as follows:

- *Enrollment*
 - Each current TEA/Work Pays client enrolled: \$200
 - Each new student enrolled (not enrolled at the college during the previous term): \$100

- *Award Attainment*

Certificate or Degree Attainment	Enrolled Student	Current TEA/Work Pays
GED	\$100	\$200
Employability/WAGE/CRC	\$100	\$200
Certificate of Proficiency	\$200	\$400
Technical Certificate	\$300	\$600
Associate Degree	\$500	\$1,000

- *Employment among those who earn awards*
 - Each student employed after program completion: \$200
 - Each student employed after program completion in a targeted industry: up to \$750
 - Each current TEA/Work Pays client who completes an award and enters employment: \$500

- *Entered Employment Retention*

- Each degree or certificate awardee retained in employment after six months: \$200
- Each degree or certificate awardee retained in employment in targeted industry: up to \$750
- Current TEA/Work Pays client retained in employment: \$500

CPI ACTIVITIES IN FY09

Supporting Student Success in Tight Budgetary Times

Recognizing that low-skill and low-income students often face challenges in completing their courses of study, CPI endeavors to provide direct student support services to help students succeed. Providing these services was challenging for Phase III sites, which were funded at approximately half the level of Phase I and II sites during FY08 and FY09. To supplement the limited support services experienced by Phase III sites in FY09, CPI encouraged sites to augment their relationships with community-based organizations. Additionally, constraints on the availability of childcare and transportation funds at all sites made providing these services challenging.

Phases I and II sites, which have received approximately \$500,000 in funding annually since the initiative was launched, typically provide support services including academic support and counseling, pre-employment skills training, job placement assistance, transportation and childcare assistance, and referrals to other outside services. The limitations on funding for Phase III sites, which receive an annual allocation of approximately \$250,000, resulted in fewer such support services at these sites. Most notably, many Phase III sites do not have dedicated staff to provide career support services, which may affect job attainment and retention in future years. These limitations have affected career exploration counseling; interview and resume guidance; and pre-employment courses covering topics such as workplace attire and behavior, punctuality, and conflict resolution. Additionally, Phase III sites lack staff dedicated to posting job announcements or working with employers to facilitate job placement and retention.

To address budget challenges, many sites found innovative ways to provide support services to their students. Many campuses developed partnerships with local Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) to provide funding for tuition, transportation, and childcare. Other sites raised funds for student support services from the employer community. In other instances, cost-cutting measures helped stretch resources. Most sites initiated a program to lend textbook and school-supplies from a “loaner library”, while other sites began delivering financial planning seminars to teach students how to use Pell grants for childcare and transportation. Another campus set limitations on student support funds by requiring students to complete the earliest tiers of the career pathway—either an Employability Certificate or Career Readiness Certificate—before becoming eligible to receive support service funds.

In addition, counseling efforts have been stepped up to encourage students to use all of the services and resources available to them. For example, CPI sites provide financial aid counseling that guides them through applications for Pell grants and other assistance programs. When students are ineligible or have exhausted their benefits from other financial aid sources, CPI offices are authorized to provide tuition assistance, although tight budgets makes these instances more rare.

Emphasis on Career Support Services

A major emphasis was placed on “career support services” during FY09. The employability coordinator title was changed to reflect this emphasis to Career Support Service (CSS) Facilitator. The state CPI office uses this term to describe the capacity of an individual to successfully obtain and retain a job. Services are the range of services provided to assist students to do this—particularly in high-demand industries. As noted above, Career Support Services Facilitators work with students to provide services such as career exploration counseling, interview and resume guidance, pre-employment courses covering a variety of topics, job placement, and post-placement retention services. During FY09, the state CPI office worked to develop a standardized system to improve the entering employment outcomes of CPI completers. The system consists of a flow chart depicting the steps for transitioning students from school to work, a student file for completers, and a database for recording career counseling and job placement services provided to students. Some CSS Facilitators participated in Career Development Facilitator training, a 20-week on-line course that outlines 12 competencies needed by career service professionals. Completers of the course are eligible for a national certification.

CPI’s incentive structure encourages sites to place emphasis on entering employment and job retention among program completers (see Performance Measures and Incentive Funding). In FY09, ADHE/CPI reviewed employment data for program completers and incentives were distributed accordingly. Using state UI data, information was collected for each student completing the program to determine employment status earnings and occupational cluster in which the student is employed.

In FY09, the state continued using the Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) as an employability certificate, which is a portable, assessment-based credential that measures an individual’s proficiency in key workplace skills. Students wishing to obtain a CRC use a tool called Key Train® to assess their skill level in basic reading, mathematics and locating information. CPI students may participate in tutorial assistance if needed. When students demonstrate suitable

proficiency they take the WorkKeys® assessment, and depending on their test, performance can earn a bronze, silver or a gold level CRC.

The partnering state agencies involved in developing the CRC were led by DWS with assistance from the state One-Stop Career Centers, DWE, AATYC, the state Economic Development Commission, ADHE/CPI, and the Arkansas Department of Education. DWS purchased Key Train® and WorkKeys® assessments for the entire state. A number of employers in the state require entry-level applicants to possess a CRC as a hiring condition. Within CPI, the CRC is another way to obtain an employability credential, in addition to the WAGE and CPI Employability Certificates. CPI students attained 1,555 CRCs in FY09.

Adapting to Rapid Economic Change

Recognizing that national and state economies are rapidly changing and local employers need a qualified workforce with up-to-date skills to be competitive, CPI sites are required to prepare students for jobs in high-demand fields. Coordinating program development with economic trends is intended to provide students with higher wages and economic self-sufficiency, while serving employers' current needs for skilled workers.

Each career pathways site completes a "gap analysis" for its region to determine areas where the education and training system needed improvement to meet employers' skilled-worker needs. DWS maintains labor market data regarding industries and occupational titles throughout the state. The site provides historical, current, and projected job openings by occupational title, along with net job growth/loss in all major industries. Using this data, each site identified key industries in its community and conducted surveys with employers in these fields to ascertain skill needs. In career counseling sessions, CPI advisors then encourage students to target the high-demand, well-paying occupations identified during the gap analysis.

Ongoing Technical Assistance to Sites

ADHE/CPI seeks to institutionalize best practices for assisting low-income students at each college. To do so, the state office organized workshops for sites on the following topics during FY09.

ADHE/CPI provides leadership/training and development for the 25 sites.

- ADHE/CPI received the **Innovative Community Development Program Award** from the Arkansas Community Development Society.

- *Charting a Path: An Exploration of the Statewide Career Pathway Efforts in Arkansas, Kentucky, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin*, a report by the Seattle Jobs Initiative, cited Arkansas as one of four state implementing successful pathways programs. ADHE/CPI provided the information for this publication.
- ADHE/CPI staff conducts workshops, in collaboration with ADHE Perkins coordinator, on *Bridges out of Poverty* and the **Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative** for CPI sites and CPI partners including the tier-four (lowest counties in income) high school counselors; University of Arkansas at Monticello; Cossatot Community College; Arkansas Tech University-Ozark Campus; East Arkansas Community College; Single Parent Scholarship Annual Meeting and Arkansas Community Development Society. The workshops provide strategies for working more effectively with students in poverty.
- The annual retreat in February was a time of strategic planning for the 25 sites. Statewide goals for FY10 were established:
 - **Priority 1- Focus on Student Success**
 - **Priority 2-Improve Career Services Support Efforts**
- Monthly conference calls or face-to-face trainings to update all CPI program directors on statewide-CPI issues are a part of technical assistance provided by ADHE/CPI. An employability workshop conducted in October and a budget meeting in January provided technical assistance provided by the ADHE/CPI program specialist in employability/finance. The Career Support Services system was introduced at the annual employability meeting. Seven CPI staff were approved to attend the Career Development Facilitator (CDF) training and give feedback on the national training at the FY10 annual meeting. The CSS module was developed and implemented in FY09 so all completers could be tracked for entering employment results.
- ADHE/CPI hosts quarterly state program advisory committee meetings. Representatives from DHS, Here's Life in the Inner City, Department of Volunteerism, TEA case managers and CPI Program Directors with a student from one of the CPI sites participates in the meetings. A collaborative effort for mentoring at the CPI sites has resulted from the meetings. In FY10, this advisory group will become a **Student Focus Group** with the purpose of creating an awareness of

success strategies as seen by student completers. The deliverable will be a monograph of success strategies for the FY10 annual retreat.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FROM THE FOURTH YEAR

FY09 was a year of growth for CPI as enrollments increased by almost 23 percent—growing from 7,834 students to 9,627 students.

As shown in Table 2, students in the initiative attained a total of 5,167 certificates/degrees during this program year. This is an increase of 2,393 over the previous year and exceeds the 4,138-attainment goal. The success rate calculation—measured as the percentage of students who attained a certificate or degree or were retained into the next quarter was changed to mirror the ADHE success rate measure used for all two-year colleges. With this change, CPI students can be compared to other students enrolled at the two-year colleges.

Overall, as shown in Table 4a, the program is meeting its total enrollment and certificate/degree attainment goal. TEA client enrollment fell slightly below goal. Table 4b shows that 18 of the 25 sites met or surpassed the employment goal with a statewide total of 59%. Eighty-three percent (83%) of those meeting the goal were still employed after six months. Appendix A provides additional statistics regarding CPI participants.

Table 1: Enrollment Growth Program Years One through Three

	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09
Total Enrollments	2,233	3,750	7,834	9,627

Table 2: Certificates/Degrees Attained

Type of Certificates/Degrees	FY08	FY09	Change
GEDs	99	101	2
WAGE/Employability Certificates	1,234	3039	1805
Certificates of Proficiency	598	660	62
Technical Certificates	437	751	314
Associate Degrees	406	616	210
Total Certificates/Degrees Attained	2,774	5,167	2,393

Table 3: Success Rate

Students	FY09	% FY09	Traditional Success Rate for Two-Year Colleges
Students in Cohort	955	654	6,594
Students Completing a Cert. or Degree from Cohort	75	11.5	6.2
Students Retained	428	65.4	55.2
Students Withdrawing or Dropping from Cohort	151	23.1	38.6
Success Rate (Completing and Retained Students)	503	76.9	61.4

The Cohort includes students who enrolled for the first time in the Fall 2008 in a college program and were full-time, degree-seeking students. The retention number represents the number of students who returned in the Fall 2009. The students completing a certificate or degree from the cohort were calculated into a percent. Percent of students retained in the cohort was calculated and success rate represents percent of student completing and the percent of students retained.

Table 4a: Overall Enrollment, TEA Enrollment, Certificate and Degree Attainment Outcomes

FY09 Goals	Goal	Actual
Enrollment	8,275	9,627
Current TEA/Work Pays Clients	919	906
Certificate or Degree Attainment	4,138	5,167

Table 4b: Employment Outcomes FY08 Completers

Institution	Employment		6-Mo Retention (80%)
	Goal (55%)	Actual (%)	
AR Northeastern College	55	63	78
AR State University—Beebe	55	64	76
AR State University – Mountain Home	55	55	83
AR State University—Newport	55	64	77
AR Tech University – Ozark	55	44	
Black River Technical College	55	62	87
Cossatot Community College of University of AR	55	60	86
East AR Community College	55	42	
Mid-South Community College	55	56	77
North Arkansas College	55	67	90
National Park Community College	55	65	82
North West Arkansas Community College	55	42	
Ouachita Technical College	55	81	85
Ozarka College	55	58	93
Phillips Community College of University of AR	55	45	
Pulaski Technical College	55	58	81
Rich Mountain Community College	55	61	83
South Arkansas Community College	55	50	
Southern Arkansas University	55	61	80
Southeast AR College	55	70	77
U of A Community College – Batesville	55	39	
U of A Community College – Hope	55	68	94
U of A Community College – Morrilton	55	38	
U of A at Monticello- Crossett	55	62	79
U of A at Monticello – McGehee	55	55	89
State Total	55	59	83

Analysis of FY09 Statistics (Presented in Appendix A)

- *Enrollment Demographics:* As shown in Table A-1 of the appendix, an enrollment of 9,627 was posted during the last program year, with the enrollment at each site ranging from 181 to 778 students. The average age of a career pathways student statewide was 31. Overwhelmingly, the students were female (91 percent), and the data on ethnicity and race indicated that nearly 62 percent were White, 33 percent were Black, and small percentages were Hispanic or other minorities.
- *Eligibility:* The program enrolled 919 current TEA/Work Pays clients and many students who met other eligibility requirements. As shown in Table A-2, data indicate that 57 percent of participants were single parents and a large majority of student (86 percent) received Food Stamps or Medicaid. Other students were current or former TEA recipients (26 percent) or met the eligibility criteria based on qualifying incomes (35 percent).
- *Previous Education and Employment Status:* As shown in Table A-3, 92 percent of career pathways students were either high school graduates or GED recipients upon enrollment. This number remains the same as the FY08 percentage. Some 26 percent of pathways students were employed at the time of enrollment.
- *Certificates/Degrees Attained by Type:* Table A-4 shows that enrollments in associate degree programs were the most common, with nearly 60 percent of students pursuing that award and 616 successfully completing the degree. Employability certificates (3,216) had the second-highest enrollment technical certificate programs (2,980), followed by programs for certificates of proficiency (381), and GEDs (459). Over four thousand (4,822) students were new enrollments.

PROMOTING SYSTEMIC CHANGE: NEXT STEPS

The sites were well positioned in FY09 to affect change in the ways regional education and workforce organizations work together by enhancing partnerships among CPI campuses and workforce agencies, building stronger relationships with the employer community, and providing support services during these trying economic times to help students succeed in school and go to work.

The fast expansion of the program during the past four years speaks to the viability of the CPI concept; however, several key challenges and “growing pains” suggest opportunities for

improvement moving forward. In particular, it is recommended that CPI sites focus on forming partnerships with external service providers. Especially at sites that have identified shortcomings in funding availability or provided services, partnerships with external service-providing organizations can help to bridge the budget and service gaps. The following concerns and recommendations suggest ways to address key challenges:

Concerns:

- **CPI Funding**

Although the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between ADHE and DWS stated that the award amount of \$12 million was for FY08 and FY09, the CPI budget was reduced to \$11.2 million (-7%). Grant awards to campuses for FY09 ranged from \$235,151-\$633,513. Most campus grants were not increased and were equal to the prior year's program expenditures in spite of an increase in student enrollment goals and a greater need for transportation, childcare, and education-related support services.

Due to the decrease in funding, Phase III institutions (the last 14 CPI sites added to the program) did not receive funding to hire Career Support Services Facilitators to assist students with pre-employment skills and job placement support. ADHE is concerned that due to inadequate staffing, the Phase III colleges will not meet entering employment benchmarks and goals established by DWS.

Another result of the reduction in total grant funds was that sub-grants with AATYC (\$500,000) and Southern Good Faith Fund (SGFF) (\$280,000) were not funded in FY09. Program marketing, employability services and counselor training/community-based organization outreach provided in the past by these organizations were not offered. ADHE/CPI printed brochures and posters and distributed to the campuses for the public information and employability services/ training was added to the duties of statewide staff.

- **CPI Annual Plan**

The FY09 CPI plan developed jointly by ADHE, DWS and WIB with performance measures had not been finalized for the campuses at the end of fiscal year three and was not approved by the TANF oversight board until August. The lack of an approved plan places ADHE and CPI campuses in the unfortunate position of supporting staff and general operations without approved performance measures.

The delayed approval of the FY09 plan also affects the achievement of performance goals when colleges are not given identified outcomes prior to the beginning of the fiscal year. Therefore, there is no time allowed for institutions to plan or make necessary adjustments if the preceding year's performance measures shift.

Recommendations:

- **Incentives**

Institutional performance for Career Pathways Initiatives has exceeded the traditional performance standards of two-year colleges in Arkansas. Success rates of 89% in the first year and 90% in the second and third year demonstrate the importance of performance measures with individual campus goals. Although the two-year colleges have recommended that CPI incentive funds be transferred to the 14 newest sites (Phase III sites) to fund CSS Facilitators assisting students with pre-employment skills and job placement support, such a change is not supported by ADHE. Incentive funds drive the CPI performance model and should remain intact to reinforce continuous improvement of institutional performance. Additionally, Act 514 requires ADHE/CPI to provide resources based on performance incentives for enrolling, completing courses, obtaining jobs and staying employed. Reduction of performance targets for these programs might be necessary.

- **Timeline**

Updates to the CPI plan should be a part of the planning and budgeting process (April-June) for each fiscal year. Institutional performance drives the funds allocated to individual campus budgets. CPI sites must submit a comprehensive plan and proposed budget with narrative for the upcoming year. If expectations are not discussed during this time and goals are changed, an opportunity for a data-driven planning process is lost.

- **Provide funds for CSS Facilitators for the Phase III sites**

While federal funds used for this program have been reduced, DWS should use any future increases in funding for CSS Facilitator salaries at the Phase III sites. Without this position, the likelihood of meeting the required benchmarks for entering employment and staying employed in the targeted job categories is diminished. CPI is one of the most successful programs under the TANF and ADHE umbrella. The successes, however, are based upon the success of Phase I and Phase II programs that are fully staffed.

- **Align CPI activities with the revised TANF work definitions**

Current TEA students must participate in a work activity and upon becoming a CPI student; they (parents with childcare and transportation issues) may have a full class schedule. TANF guidelines, which were effective October 1, list only 12- work activities. ADHE/CPI defined and submitted to DWS for consideration student activities that are a part of the campus initiatives. A crosswalk to align existing educational and work activities would help create success for the TANF client/student.

APPENDIX A: TABLES

The following tables provide descriptive statistics regarding career pathways participation:

- Table A-1: Mean Age of Participants and Percentage of Participants by Gender and Race/Ethnicity for Program Year Four
- Table A-2: Percentage of Participants by Eligibility Requirement for Program Year Four
- Table A-3: Percentage of Participants by Previous Education and Employment Status at Application for Program Year Four
- Table A-4: Enrollments and Attainments by Award Type during Program Year Four

Table A-1: Mean Age of Participants and Percentage of Participants by Gender and Race/Ethnicity for Program Year Four

	Enrollments	Age (Mean)*	Gender		Race/Ethnicity			
			F (%)	M (%)	Black (%)	Hispanic (%)	White (%)	Other (%)
AR Northeastern College	430	30	93.26	6.74	38.60	2.33	58.84	.23
AR State University—Beebe	592	30	89.36	10.64	7.77	2.36	85.81	4.05
AR State University—Mountain Home	352	30	88.35	11.65	.28	1.99	94.03	3.69
AR State University—Newport	421	30	83.37	16.63	33.02	1.43	62.95	2.61
AR Technical University—Ozark	357	30	85.15	14.85	4.48	3.36	86.83	5.32
Black River Technical College	559	31	88.19	11.81	2.86	1.25	94.28	1.61
Cossatot Community College of University of AR	356	31	87.64	12.36	20.22	6.46	67.98	5.34
East AR Community College	343	29	93.59	6.41	62.97	.58	32.36	4.08
Mid-South Community College	457	31	93.87	6.13	73.74	.44	23.85	1.97
National Park Community College	400	31	85.50	14.50	18.50	3.25	75.00	3.25
North AR College	337	31	86.94	13.06	0.0	2.37	96.14	1.48
Northwest AR Community College	299	31	93.65	6.35	5.69	13.04	72.24	9.03
Ouachita Technical College	431	31	90.26	9.74	23.20	1.39	73.32	2.09
Ozarka College	419	31	92.60	7.40	0.0	1.19	97.85	.95
Phillips Community College of University of AR	425	30	96.94	3.06	69.41	1.41	27.53	1.65
Pulaski Technical College	778	31	94.86	5.14	70.44	2.70	23.52	3.34
Rich Mountain Community College	181	30	91.71	8.29	0.0	.55	97.24	2.21
South AR Community College	310	30	94.52	5.48	59.68	2.58	35.81	1.94
Southeast AR College	368	29	94.57	5.43	71.47	.54	27.45	.54
Southern AR University —Tech	235	30	88.09	11.91	59.57	1.28	37.87	1.28
University of AR Community College at Batesville	420	32	86.43	13.57	6.90	3.10	87.62	2.38
University of AR Community College at Hope	497	31	93.56	6.44	53.12	3.82	41.45	1.61
University of AR Community College at Morrilton	275	31	92.73	7.27	17.82	4.00	73.09	5.09
University of AR at Monticello College of Tech—Crossett	197	31	88.83	11.17	35.53	2.54	60.41	1.52
University of AR at Monticello College of Tech—McGehee	188	33	79.26	20.74	71.28	.53	26.06	2.13
Overall	9,627	31	90.52	9.48	33.00	2.53	61.72	2.75

* In “Arkansas Career Pathways Initiative: Progress Report of Activities and Outcomes during Year One,” data reflected the median age of participants rather than the mean.

Table A-2: Percentage of Participants by Eligibility Requirement for Program Year Four

	Single Parent (%)	Current TEA (%)	Former TEA (%)	Food Stamps/Medicaid (%)	At/Less Than 250% of Poverty (%)
AR Northeastern College	54.19	10.23	22.56	80.47	26.05
AR State University—Beebe	44.26	8.95	11.66	84.97	12.50
AR State University—Mountain Home	47.44	7.10	0.00	80.40	12.22
AR State University—Newport	50.59	11.64	17.58	83.85	52.73
AR Technical University—Ozark	57.98	3.64	14.57	82.91	63.59
Black River Technical College	36.14	3.04	10.91	69.41	94.63
Cossatot Community College of University of AR	46.35	1.97	6.46	75.28	94.94
East AR Community College	59.18	10.50	27.41	74.05	31.49
Mid-South Community College	70.24	8.97	20.35	55.14	35.67
National Park Community College	58.00	6.00	13.25	75.75	58.00
North AR College	48.96	8.01	9.79	79.53	14.84
Northwest AR Community College	67.89	11.04	8.03	93.31	5.35
Ouachita Technical College	55.68	3.71	.46	83.99	11.83
Ozarka College	37.71	2.63	15.04	88.31	80.67
Phillips Community College of University of AR	63.06	25.65	13.88	74.59	10.59
Pulaski Technical College	85.09	15.04	36.12	81.49	14.52
Rich Mountain Community College	39.23	6.08	8.84	83.98	23.20
South AR Community College	76.13	9.35	24.52	96.13	3.55
Southeast AR College	81.25	25.27	29.62	87.50	8.97
Southern AR University—Tech	57.02	9.36	.85	86.81	29.36
University of AR Community College at Batesville	30.95	2.86	18.57	79.05	79.52
University of AR Community College at Hope	71.83	7.24	21.53	86.72	18.31
University of AR Community College at Morrilton	58.91	3.27	7.64	80.00	6.91
University of AR at Monticello College of Technology—Crossett	65.99	6.60	24.87	82.23	15.23
University of AR at Monticello College of Technology—McGehee	57.98	12.77	13.83	58.51	23.40
Overall	57.43	9.05	16.23	80.06	34.63

Note: Some participants are eligible under multiple criteria.

Table A-3: Percentage of Participants by Previous Education and Employment Status at Application for Program Year Four

	Previous Education			Employment
	H.S. Diploma (%)	GED (%)	No H.S. Diploma or GED (%)	Employed at Application (%)
AR Northeastern College	71.40	20.00	8.84	31.63
AR State University—Beebe	65.88	25.68	8.78	7.09
AR State University—Mountain Home	68.75	23.30	7.95	21.31
AR State University—Newport	69.83	16.39	13.78	28.27
AR Technical University—Ozark	58.26	36.69	5.04	15.97
Black River Technical College	72.63	25.22	2.15	30.95
Cossatot Community College of University of AR	78.65	17.70	3.93	26.40
East AR Community College	85.13	12.24	2.62	27.11
Mid-South Community College	72.87	12.69	14.44	18.16
National Park Community College	65.25	29.50	5.25	31.75
North AR College	64.99	25.52	9.50	26.41
Northwest AR Community College	64.88	27.42	8.03	16.39
Ouachita Technical College	71.46	20.65	18.12	31.55
Ozarka College	60.86	34.13	5.25	10.02
Phillips Community College of University of AR	78.82	10.59	10.82	34.59
Pulaski Technical College	70.82	14.91	14.27	16.97
Rich Mountain Community College	69.61	24.86	5.52	50.28
South AR Community College	72.26	18.06	9.68	25.81
Southeast AR College	73.64	18.21	8.15	35.05
Southern AR University—Tech	81.70	11.49	6.81	34.04
University of AR Community College at Batesville	58.10	24.05	18.10	42.62
University of AR Community College at Hope	81.69	14.29	4.02	43.66
University of AR Community College at Morrilton	72.36	22.91	4.73	21.09
University of AR at Monticello College of Technology—Crossett	58.38	29.95	10.66	14.21
University of AR at Monticello College of Technology—McGehee	75.00	15.43	10.11	21.28
Overall	70.56	20.99	8.53	25.93

Table A-4: New Enrollments and Completions by Award Type during Program Year Four

	New Enrollments in FY09	GED		Employability Certificate		Certificate of Proficiency		Technical Certificate		Associate Degree	
		Enr	Comp	Enr	Comp	Enr	Comp	Enr	Comp	Enr	Comp
AR Northeastern College	195	18	6	62	0	94	57	65	31	250	32
AR State University - Beebe	328	19	2	193	6	105	76	79	25	316	35
AR State University – Mountain Home	191	16	4	0	0	89	68	48	10	220	13
AR State University - Newport	324	8	1	341	166	65	59	101	48	75	3
AR Technical University - Ozark	175	17	11	115	34	7	6	244	53	229	27
Black River Technical College	258	8	2	0	0	49	32	216	43	308	56
Cossatot Comm College of U of AR	143	10	1	172	87	20	9	104	22	204	21
East AR Comm College	178	0	0	37	89	20	9	167	35	308	32
Mid-South Comm College	185	43	8	19	0	237	18	3	0	144	8
National Park Community College	229	11	3	128	68	9	7	166	35	233	36
North AR College	190	21	10	151	58	9	2	130	18	193	20
Northwest AR Comm College	88	18	7	117	39	7	3	3	0	243	22
Ouachita Technical College	152	26	4	213	94	47	28	77	49	212	31
Ozarka College	191	6	4	1	1	19	11	192	57	236	25
Phillips Comm College of U of AR	144	36	6	220	127	51	16	61	17	258	41
Pulaski Technical College	376	95	7	336	188	40	23	226	98	602	70
Rich Mountain Comm College	86	6	3	43	28	32	23	34	18	131	14
South AR Comm College	173	26	4	273	110	16	13	118	13	110	4
Southeast AR College	250	23	5	154	88	59	48	137	34	135	18
Southern AR University- Tech	148	3	1	152	43	28	0	52	16	122	19
University of AR Comm College at Batesville	202	16	4	10	0	90	45	114	17	288	21
University of AR Comm College at Hope	246	5	0	45	34	159	62	417	63	452	33
University of AR Comm College at Morrilton	154	2	0	157	92	64	16	59	11	167	23
University of AR at Monticello College of Technology - Crossett	95	7	5	153	75	59	27	88	22	36	8
University of AR at Monticello College of Technology - McGehee	121	19	3	124	57	6	2	79	16	13	4
Total	4,822	459	101	3,216	1484	381	660	2,980	751	5,485	616

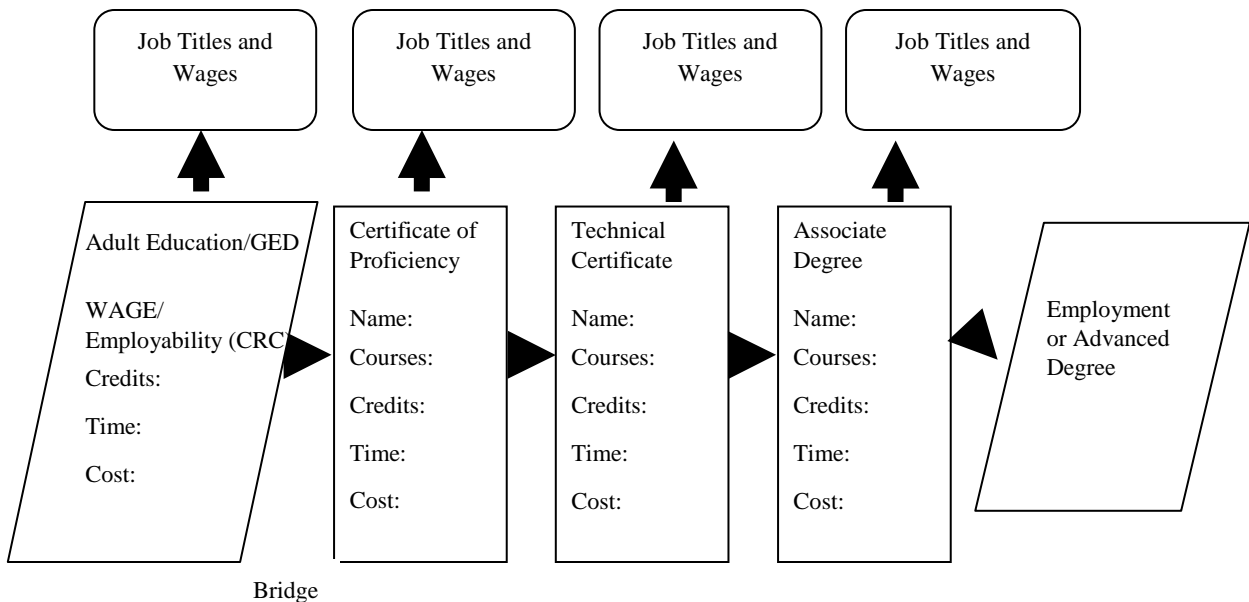
Note: Some students may have enrolled and completed more than one program during program year four.

APPENDIX B: THE CPI MODEL

Before CPI began to serve clients in fall 2005, two-year colleges, workforce entities, social service providers, community- and faith-based organizations, adult education providers, and economic development agencies operated in relative isolation from one another. CPI brings together these agencies to provide low-income participants with employability skills, basic skills, remediation, advanced skill training in high-demand occupations, and college coursework.

The educational stepping stones that comprise the career pathways include Adult Education/GED programs, Career Readiness Certificate, WAGE/Employability programs, contextualized bridge programs, credit-bearing certificate programs at the college level, and associate degree programs. Each site adopts the career pathways framework for the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) approved programs at their campus and is required to complete a flowchart developed by ADHE/CPI that depicts educational stepping-stones comprising a career pathway, as shown by the sample in Figure 1. The educational stepping-stones adopted by the CPI initiative are described below.

Figure 1: CPI Flowchart Template



- *Adult Education/GED*: Adult Education provides Adult Basic Education (ABE), English as a Second Language (ESL), and GED programs. CPI refers enrolling students without a high school diploma or GED to Adult Education.

- *WAGE or Employability Certificate/Career Readiness Certificate:* The WAGE program is a work-oriented adult education program that delivers basic skills training to low-skill clients. Employability certificates earned through the WAGE program teach computer literacy and soft skills for workplace environments. If there is no WAGE program at a two-year college, the institution is permitted to develop employability certificate programs that deliver comparable training. The Career Readiness Certificate is an equivalent employability certificate.
- *Bridge Program:* Bridge programs create easy transitions between different levels of education. Developed under CPI, these programs prepare educationally disadvantaged students to enter academic courses by teaching developmental or basic skills. They enable students who are not ready to enter directly into credit-based courses to raise their academic competencies in preparation for entering these courses.
- *Certificate of Proficiency:* The Certificate of Proficiency is awarded to students who have demonstrated proficiency in skills or knowledge within specific fields. The award is granted for programs that range from 7–18 semester credit hours depending on the field. Credits earned during Certificate of Proficiency coursework can be applied toward earning a Technical Certificate and associate degree in the same field.
- *Technical Certificate:* The Technical Certificate is awarded to students who successfully complete a one-year planned program of classroom and laboratory work at the collegiate level (24–42 credit hours depending on the field). It recognizes the completion of a specified level of competency in an occupational field. Upon completion, credits are applicable toward earning an associate degree in the same field.
- *Associate Degree:* An associate degree is awarded to students who successfully complete a program of collegiate-level work with an occupational objective. The majority of occupational courses and all general education courses are transferable toward a baccalaureate degree (60–72 credit hours). Some associate degrees articulate with four-year institutions in the state.

Description of CPI Sites

To help low-income students succeed in their educations and advance in careers, each CPI site opens a career pathways department generally staffed with a program director, community outreach coordinator or student advisor/counselor, intake/data/administrative and Career Support Services (CSS) Facilitator. Depending on budget availability, sites may have from two to ten of these program specialists. CPI staff members seek to develop programs and establish new partnerships with social service organizations, education and training providers, and workforce and economic development organizations. They also work with local employers to identify high-demand occupations, job requirements, and pathways for advancement in local business and industries.

The program director is the overall manager of campus career pathways operations. The student advisor/counselor helps students overcome both academic and non-academic barriers by developing individual career plans, holding regular one-on-one meetings, and referring students to support services as needed. The community outreach coordinators serves as the liaison between CPI campuses, the local TEA caseworkers, DHS, and community- and faith-based organizations to enroll TEA clients into CPI programs. The intake/data/administrative support specialist collects and maintains student data and assists with completing applications and verifying eligibility. The CSS Facilitator develops and oversees campus employability programs and tracks completers entering employment and job retention rates.

CPI budgets fund staff salaries and benefits, office equipment, classroom facilities, instructional equipment and software, instructional and administrative supplies, advertising, student support services, and employability training. The source of funding for CPI is a DWS-approved TANF grant. All participating colleges have contributed in-kind funds to the career pathways effort.

The Role of the State Career Pathways Division

The ADHE Career Pathways Division (ADHE/CPI) oversees CPI and provides guidance with leadership and training to career pathways sites for running local offices. The CPI director, who reports to the ADHE deputy director, is responsible for the overall management of the division, including the career pathways grant. The division is organized into program specialist areas: career services, data and finance. The FY10 plan includes the addition of a site monitor.

- *Career Support Services:* CPI strongly focuses on developing employability skills among the target group. To accomplish this, CPI mandates that all sites establish WAGE, comparable employability programs, or administer the CRC on their campuses. CSS Facilitators perform some specific kinds of tasks that help individuals learn about themselves, learn about jobs, make career choices and plans, and then carry out those plans. Facilitators in this department track student completion data that is analyzed for continuous improvement. Career Development Facilitator (CDF) training is provided for sites by ADHE/CPI.
- *Curriculum:* ADHE/CPI provides guidelines to develop educational pathways and institutional strategies for assisting students to advance educationally along their chosen paths. Specifically, colleges develop and implement processes for shortening the time requirement to improve students' basic skills and meet their developmental education needs. Initiative innovations include bridge programs, open-entry/open-exit courses, modularized coursework, specialized training, and effective use of instructional software. To help develop these innovations, the state office provides technical assistance, workshops, and assistance in developing educational pathways for all approved programs at the campus.
- *Data/Accountability:* CPI promotes data sharing across state agencies—a practice not previously undertaken in measuring employment and educational outcomes for TANF-eligible students. The CPI database has created linkages between multiple agencies and data systems, enabling a more comprehensive view of outcomes for career pathways students. ADHE provides data on enrollment and completion, remediation, and student demographics to CPI partners, while DWS through DIS provides data from the unemployment insurance system to monitor job placement, wages, and job retention. The Department of Health and Human Services matches data to verify student eligibility.
- *Finance:* The financial structure of CPI is designed to provide flexibility for colleges as they implement career pathways. The CPI finance staff administers the grants to local CPI sites and works monthly with DWS for reimbursement of campus expenditures.