



ARKANSAS

STATE SUMMARY
2025

Arkansas at a glance

THE STATE OPPORTUNITY INDEX combines research-backed strategies for improving education-to-career outcomes with benchmarking measures to track progress for all 50 states, giving policymakers and institutions a framework for strengthening the link between education and opportunity.

For each state, the Index reports the percentage of students who experience a positive return on investment and summarizes progress in five key areas for improving success beyond completion: Clear Outcomes, Quality Coaching, Affordability, Work-Based Learning, and Employer Alignment. States are grouped into four categories: Leading (at the forefront, demonstrating strong progress); Advanced (substantial progress); Developing (early stages of improvement); and Foundational (just beginning their journey).

Positive ROI

68%



**State
Opportunity
Index**

strada

Learn more at strada.org/state-opportunity-index

References for "unavailable" refer to states in which there was insufficient data to assign a rating at this time.

In cases where the margin of error crosses a category threshold, states are given a combined category.

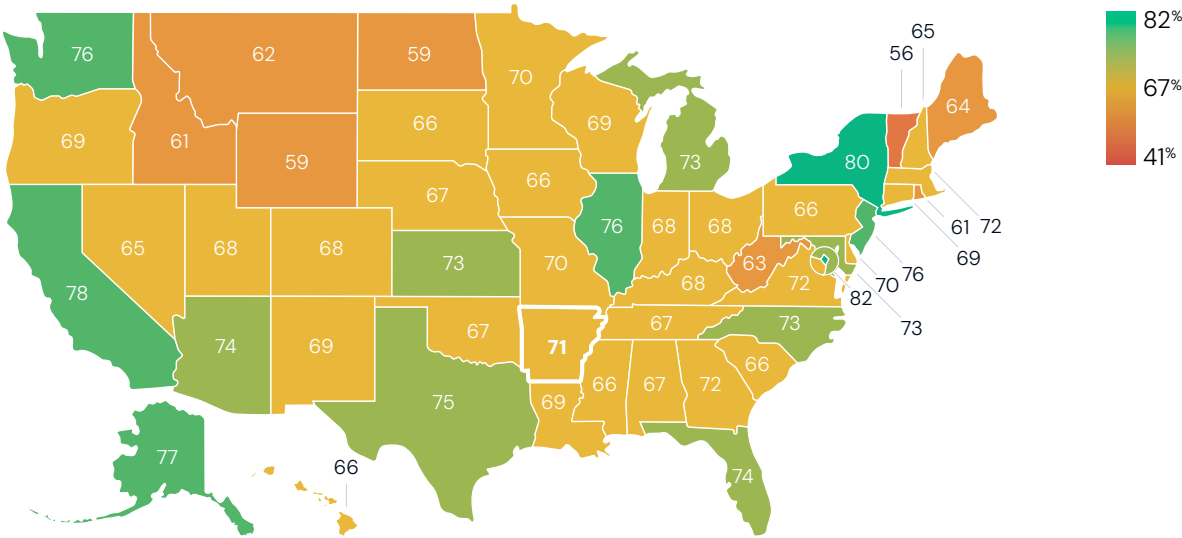
Positive ROI

Arkansas

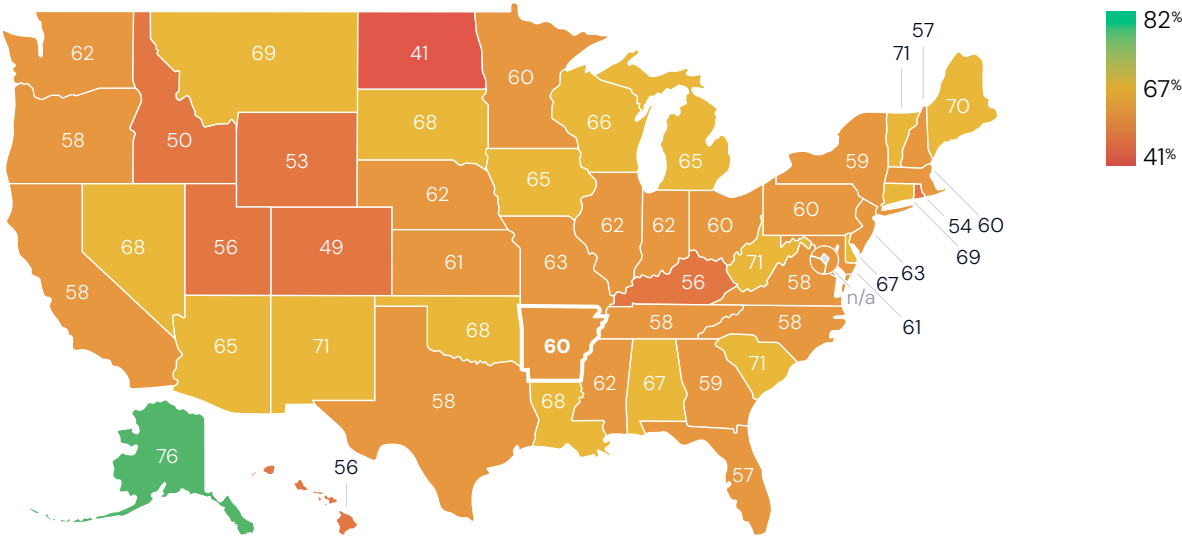
The positive ROI value for each state represents the estimated percentage of public college graduates whose earnings premium over high school graduates is enough to repay their total cost of a degree within 10 years.

	Alabama	U.S.
Overall	68%	70%
Bachelor's	71%	73%
Associate	60%	60%

Percentage of graduates with positive 10-year ROI by state – bachelor's degrees



Percentage of graduates with positive 10-year ROI by state – associate degrees





Everyone should have access to accurate information on employment outcomes that can help them make informed decisions about education after high school. The Clear Outcomes measure is based on 10 critical elements that contribute to the capacity of state education-to-employment data systems to strengthen the connection between education and opportunity.

COLLECT

State data system elements	State description	Rating
1 Includes learner-level and program characteristic data for nondegree and noncredit postsecondary education and training programs	Arkansas collects enrollment and credential outcome data for multiple nondegree and noncredit postsecondary education and training programs. The state collects these data for: (i) college-issued, for-credit nondegree credentials; (ii) college-issued, noncredit nondegree credentials through occupational training; (iii) WIOA-eligible training providers; (iv) occupational licensure; and (v) other third-party credentials, including industry certifications and apprenticeships. Arkansas integrates college-issued, for-credit nondegree credential data with employment outcomes .	ADVANCED
2 Examines earnings by occupation, pay rate, and work location	Arkansas does not collect any of the three enhanced elements. The state is participating in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Jobs and Employment Data Exchange initiative to improve employment data collection.	DEVELOPING

INTEGRATE

State data system elements	State description	Rating
3 Integrates and delivers information on learner's earnings and employment after postsecondary education and training completion, and over time	Arkansas has extensive integration and publication of postsecondary education and training and employment data, including: (i) public four-year institutions to employment, (ii) private four-year institutions to employment, (iii) community colleges to employment, and (iv) WIOA-eligible training providers to employment. Employment outcomes for public four-year institutions, private four-year institutions, community colleges, and college-issued, for-credit nondegree credentials are available as a downloadable dataset (subject to login) through MyARData and a public interactive reporting tool through MyARDashboard . Employment outcomes for WIOA-eligible training providers are available as a downloadable dataset (subject to login) through MyARData and a public interactive reporting tool is under development. Data in the public interactive reporting tools are not disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, or family income or economically disadvantaged status.	LEADING
4 Integrates and delivers information on learner's earnings and employment after high school completion and over time	Arkansas is in the process of integrating high school completion data with earnings and employment data through its SLDS modernization project, with planned disaggregation of the data.	DEVELOPING
5 Partners with national and multi-state initiatives to assess education-to-opportunity outcomes for graduates and non-graduates of postsecondary education and training programs who relocate or work outside the state	Arkansas partners with Multi-State Data Collaborative and State Wage Interchange System.	ADVANCED

CATEGORY KEY

Extent to which elements are present in state data infrastructure.



Leading
Fully present



Advanced
Partially present



Developing
In development



Foundational
Not in development



PROVIDE

State data system elements	State description	Rating
6 Provides comprehensive and timely open data files containing anonymized education-to-opportunity statistics that anyone can access, download, and otherwise use	Arkansas has numerous upcoming projects to expand open data coverage under the Workforce Data Quality Initiative, Justice Reinvestment Initiative, Statewide Longitudinal Data System Grant Program, Democratizing Our Data Challenge, and the state Medicaid expansion program.	DEVELOPING
7 Publishes robust, timely, and easily understandable interactive resources informing education-to-opportunity decision-making by learners, families, and institutions	Arkansas has dashboards containing education-to-employment outcomes for (i) public four-year institutions; (ii) private four-year institutions; and (iii) community colleges.	LEADING
8 Gives researchers access to individual-level matched education-to-opportunity datasets	Arkansas has established the Arkansas Research Environment in the Administrative Data Research Facility. Through this environment, researchers can access person-level information that has been assigned a pseudonym identifier. The datasets are pre-matched across PSET programs into employment with transparency into linkage methods and metadata for sensitivity training and record linkage bias mitigation. The system has an online application form and a unified interagency approval process. Additionally, state agencies can access individual-level data for operational purposes through the Arkansas Data Hub.	LEADING

(I·I) IMPACT

State data system elements	State description	Rating
9 Enables learners and earners to access and utilize their own verified data, unlocking opportunities for college and career advancement	In 2025, Arkansas announced Arkansas LAUNCH, a skills-based platform. LAUNCH leverages Arkansas state administrative data and individual skills, experience, education, and preferences to create customized learning and career path recommendations for learners and jobseekers. The platform uses the same data to help employers find skilled workers. The Chief Data Officer's Office (ARData) has responsibility under the Arkansas Workforce Strategy for the implementation and support of LERs. ARData will provide data integration through the state data hub, provide technical support for publishing of credentials and LERs, and lead efforts to raise awareness, adoption, and use of LERs and skills-based hiring. Since 2020, Arkansas has been establishing an ecosystem that will support the issuance of LERs, leveraging governance and interoperable data infrastructure, which includes streamlined data-sharing agreements, a credential registry, and identity management.	ADVANCED
10 Designates a unit with responsibility and dedicated, full-time capacity for generating education-to-employment insights to inform state policymaking and resource allocation decision-making	The Arkansas Chief Data Officer's Office (ARData) is statutorily responsible for maintaining a longitudinal data system linking education-to-employment data to help state leaders and service providers develop an improved understanding of individual outcomes, identify opportunities for improvement by using real-time information, and continuously align programs and resources to the state's evolving economy. The unit is responsible for producing numerous public-facing E2E insights, including reports on labor market supply/demand attributes . ARData has dedicated full-time capacity, including a chief research officer, chief policy officer, chief skills strategy officer, and more than a dozen staff trained in evaluation and research. The office has close partnerships with education (K-12, CTE, postsecondary), workforce development, economic development, and other stakeholders.	LEADING

CATEGORY KEY

Extent to which elements are present in state data infrastructure.

- **Leading**
Fully present
- **Advanced**
Partially present
- **Developing**
In development
- **Foundational**
Not in development



Quality Coaching

Arkansas

FOUR-YEAR

DEVELOPING

TWO-YEAR

DEVELOPING

Everyone should have access to coaching that helps them reflect on their talents and interests, choose a career goal, chart a path, and navigate challenges. Graduates who receive such guidance are more likely to land a job that requires a degree and feel satisfied with their career trajectory. The Quality Coaching measure is based on the percentage of two-year students and four-year senior students who reported receiving personalized guidance, timely labor market information, and support to create a plan and overcome barriers.

Personalized guidance		Four-year	Two-year
Percentage of students at public institutions who report receiving personalized coaching or guidance to help select the education that will help prepare them for a successful career.		40% DEVELOPING	47% DEV./ADV.
Timely labor market information		Four-year	Two-year
The average share of students at public institutions who receive timely labor market information, across the various types below, before enrolling or during their first year.		21% FOUNDATIONAL	23% FND./DEV.
Education-to-career paths that might be a good fit for student's strengths and interests		25%	35%
Job opportunities that a particular education program could lead to		21%	29%
Potential earnings in different careers related to student's education program		21%	19%
Career outcomes of students from their own institution		15%	9%
Support		Four-year	Two-year
The average share of students at public institutions who receive at least some support in setting goals and in overcoming obstacles.		70% ADV./LEAD.	76% ADV./LEAD.
Setting education and career goals and developing a plan to achieve these goals		70%	75%
Identifying and overcoming barriers		71%	77%
CATEGORY KEY			
When the margin of error crosses a category threshold, states are given a combined category.			
Leading ≥75%		Advanced 50% to <75%	Developing 25% to <50%
			Foundational <25%
National results		Four-year	Two-year
Personalized guidance		34%	45%
Timely labor market information		21%	33%
Support		71%	74%



Affordability

Arkansas

FOUR-YEAR

FOUNDATIONAL

TWO-YEAR

ADVANCED

Quality post-high school programs should be within everyone's financial reach, allowing for equitable opportunities for success. The Affordability measure is based on how many hours a week the average student would need to work to cover the in-state net price (total cost of attendance minus any grants and scholarships), how many hours a student from a low-income family would need to work to cover their typical in-state net price, and the percentage of students that complete their degree on time – a critical factor in the cost of a degree.

Student hours of work needed	Four-year	Two-year		
Average student hours of work needed	FOUNDATIONAL 34 hours per week Average annual net price, four-year institutions: \$14,430	ADVANCED 18 hours per week Average annual net price, two-year institutions: \$9,594		
Low-income student hours of work needed	DEVELOPING 25 hours per week Average annual net price for low-income students, four-year institutions: \$11,517	ADVANCED 14 hours per week Average annual net price for low-income students, two-year institutions: \$8,354		
CATEGORY KEY	Leading <10 hrs	Advanced 10 to <20 hrs	Developing 20 to <30 hrs	Foundational ≥30 hrs

On-time completion rate		Four-year		
On-time completion rate	DEVELOPING			
	40%			
CATEGORY KEY	Leading ≥65%	Advanced 50% to <65%	Developing 35% to <50%	Foundational <35%



Work-Based Learning

Arkansas

FOUR-YEAR

DEVELOPING

TWO-YEAR

FND./DEV.

All students should have access to quality work-based learning experiences, such as paid internships and apprenticeships, that are linked to higher earnings, greater job satisfaction, and lower underemployment. The Work-Based Learning measure is based on the percentage of two-year students and four-year senior students who reported participating in at least one of the following types of paid experiences: paid internship, paid apprenticeship, paid co-op, paid practicum, or paid undergraduate research experience.

Quality Work-Based Learning	Four-year	Two-year
Percentage of students at public institutions who participated in at least one of five types of quality paid work-based learning experiences	36% DEVELOPING Paid internship participation: 34% Percentage of students who participated in at least one of the five types of experiences (paid or unpaid): 66%	30% FND./DEV. Paid internship participation: 26% Percentage of students who participated in at least one of the five types of experiences (paid or unpaid): 45%

CATEGORY KEY

When the margin of error crosses a category threshold, states are given a combined category.

● **Leading**
≥75%

● **Advanced**
50% to <75%

● **Developing**
25% to <50%

● **Foundational**
<25%

National results	Four-year	Two-year
Any quality paid work-based learning experience	43%	17%
Paid internship	37%	14%
Any work-based learning experience (paid or unpaid)	72%	33%



In addition to student self-reporting of apprenticeship participation, states have other sources of information on participation in registered apprenticeships via the U.S. Department of Labor. In Arkansas, **0.75 percent** of the state labor force is made up of active apprentices, for a total of **10,679 apprentices**. Across the country, this number ranges from 0.9 percent (Hawaii) to 0.12 percent (Oklahoma). In countries with leading apprenticeship systems, such as Germany, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, and England, apprentices constitute about 2.5–3.0 percent of the labor force, so all states in the U.S. have substantial room for improvement.



Employer Alignment

Arkansas

DEVELOPING

Students should have access to programs that lead to quality jobs and mobility, and employers should assess and advance individuals based on skills and experiences, not just degrees. The Employer Alignment measure is based on the percentage of terminal bachelor's degree holders aged 25–34 employed in a college-level job as well as the supply/demand ratio for a variety of high-demand, high-wage jobs in each state.

College-level employment

The percentage of bachelor's degree graduates who are employed in college-level positions

DEVELOPING

Supply/demand ratio

The overall ratio: the average of the entry-level supply/demand ratios for these nine opportunity occupational groups

FOUNDATIONAL

Information technology and business

Data analytics

LEADING

Finance and accounting professionals

ADVANCED

Finance and accounting support

FOUNDATIONAL

Information and cybersecurity

LEADING

Software development and engineering

LEADING

Health care

Health care technicians and technologists

FOUNDATIONAL

Nursing

FOUNDATIONAL

Manufacturing and engineering

Engineering

LEADING

Manufacturing/Trades technicians and technologists

FOUNDATIONAL

CATEGORY KEY

● **Leading**
≥75%

● **Advanced**
60% to <75%

● **Developing**
50% to <60%

● **Foundational**
<50%