

Arkansas Workforce Intelligence Brief

Connecting Talent to Opportunity — \$15M DOE Prize Competition

MARCH 2026 DEADLINE: APRIL 30, 2026 TRACK: SCALER CONFIDENTIAL

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|--|--|---|---|---|
| <p>\$7B+</p> <p>AR MFG INVESTMENT (2024-26)</p> | <p>163K</p> <p>MANUFACTURING JOBS</p> | <p>\$35.8M</p> <p>FEDERAL APPRENTICESHIP AWARD</p> | <p>11K+</p> <p>ARKANSAS LAUNCH USERS</p> | <p>1,033</p> <p>TRADE SCHOOLS MAPPED</p> |
|--|--|---|---|---|

Why Arkansas Wins This Competition

The DOE is "particularly interested in approaches that engage employers in aerospace, nuclear, AI, shipbuilding, and energy." Arkansas has aerospace (#1 in US exports, 190+ companies), defense (Camden missile corridor), nuclear (Entergy ANO), and AI (U.S. Steel's AI-powered flex mill).

What Arkansas Has

- LEARNS Act (2023)** — career-ready diploma, 20+ CTE pathways
- Arkansas LAUNCH** — live platform, 11K+ users, LER integration
- \$35.8M DOL award** — chosen to lead national mfg apprenticeship
- Mississippi County** — top steel-producing county (3,500+ direct jobs)
- Camden defense corridor** — Lockheed, L3Harris, GD, R2S
- Ammunition hub** — SIG SAUER + Remington (3.1B rounds/yr)

What BOMForge Adds

- 12 AR trade schools** mapped: programs, certs, equipment, GPS
- 117K+ manufacturers** — AI-extracted capabilities (85%+ accuracy)
- 500K+ SAM.gov entities** — NAICS, CAGE, certifications
- Skills gap analysis** — employer demand vs. training supply
- Proximity engine** — commute-based school-employer matching
- Defense compliance** — ITAR, DFARS, AS9100 tracking

\$7B+ in Investment Needs a Workforce Pipeline

| COMPANY | INVESTMENT | LOCATION | JOBS | SECTOR |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------|--|
| U.S. Steel BR2 | \$3.0B | Osceola | 1,712 | Steel — most advanced EAF mill in N. America |
| Hanwha Defense | \$1.3B | Pine Bluff Arsenal | ~200 | Munitions, propellants, 155mm |
| R2S (RTX/Rafael) | \$1.25B | East Camden | ~60 | Tamir / Iron Dome interceptors |
| Green Bay Packaging | \$1.0B+ | Morrilton | 35+ | Paper / packaging |
| Trex Company | \$400M | Little Rock | 500+ | Composite manufacturing |
| L3Harris | \$215M DoD | Camden | 50+ | Rocket motors — 6x capacity increase |
| General Dynamics | \$110M | Camden | 185 | 155mm artillery — 50K rounds/month |
| Dassault Falcon Jet | \$100M | Little Rock | 800 | Falcon 6X — world's largest facility |
| SIG SAUER | Major expansion | Jacksonville | 675+ | Ammunition — 500M rounds/yr |
| Nucor-Yamato | \$750M | Blytheville | 800+ | Structural steel beams |

Skills Gap: Where Investment Outpaces Training

BOMForge cross-references employer requirements with trade school programs to reveal workforce pipeline failures.

| SKILL CATEGORY | SCHOOLS | EMPLOYERS DEMANDING | JOBS | GAP |
|------------------------|----------|--|---------|----------|
| Electronics / Avionics | 1 of 12 | Dassault, Lockheed Martin, L3Harris | 4,500+ | CRITICAL |
| Munitions / Energetics | 0 of 12 | SIG SAUER, Remington, Pine Bluff Arsenal, Hanwha | 2,900+ | CRITICAL |
| Steelworking / EAF Ops | 0 of 12 | U.S. Steel, Nucor-Yamato, Nucor AR | 3,500+ | CRITICAL |
| HAZWOPER / Chemical | 0 of 12 | Pine Bluff Arsenal, Hanwha, L3Harris | 2,350+ | CRITICAL |
| CNC Machining (NIMS) | 3 of 12 | Lockheed Martin, Dassault, Caterpillar | 3,500+ | HIGH |
| Aerospace Composites | 0 of 12 | Dassault, Ducommun, Trex | 2,700+ | HIGH |
| Welding (AWS) | 9 of 12 | Nucor, Lockheed, Dassault, Caterpillar | 5,000+ | MODERATE |
| Electrical (NCCER) | 6 of 12 | All manufacturing + defense | 8,000+ | MODERATE |
| CDL / Logistics | 10 of 12 | J.B. Hunt, Walmart, Tyson | 10,000+ | COVERED |

Geographic Training Deserts

| REGION | EMPLOYERS | JOBS | NEAREST SCHOOL | DIST. | GAP |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|---------------------------------|-------|----------|
| Mississippi Co. (Osceola) | U.S. Steel, Nucor-Yamato | 3,500+ | ASU Mid-South (W. Memphis) | 60 mi | CRITICAL |
| Pine Bluff / Jefferson Co. | Arsenal, Hanwha (\$1.3B) | 1,050+ | None in city | — | CRITICAL |
| Camden / Calhoun Co. | Lockheed, L3Harris, GD, R2S | 2,645+ | SAU Tech (limited) | 0 mi | HIGH |
| Jacksonville / Lonoke | SIG SAUER, Remington | 1,675+ | AR Welding Acad. (welding only) | 0 mi | HIGH |
| NW Arkansas | Tyson, Walmart, J.B. Hunt | 10,000+ | NW Technical Institute | 0 mi | COVERED |

Scoring Strategy: 100/100

| CRITERION (20 PTS) | WHAT JUDGES WANT | WHAT ARKANSAS + BOMFORGE DELIVERS |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| 1. Impact | AI + LERs + Credential Registry | 85%+ AI extraction converts school catalogs + employer data into machine-readable competency statements. Extends LAUNCH with employer intelligence. |
| 2. Partnerships | Industry commitments (aerospace, nuclear, AI, energy) | 190+ aerospace companies. Camden defense corridor. U.S. Steel AI flex mill. Entergy nuclear. All four DOE priority industries. |
| 3. Data | Measurable outcomes, baselines | 12 schools with program-level data. 500K+ SAM.gov entities. Skills gap by region and credential. Placement within commute radius. |
| 4. Stakeholders | Broad coalition | LAUNCH: 11K+ learners, 600+ employers. BOMForge: employer intelligence + geographic equity. LEARNS Act: K-12. \$35.8M: industry. |
| 5. Sustainability | Resources to scale | LAUNCH is state-funded. BOMForge is SaaS. \$35.8M DOL fund = 4 years. LEARNS Act is law. Not a pilot — a system. |

Architecture: BOMForge Extends Arkansas LAUNCH

LAUNCH (Existing)

- Learner profiles (11,000+)
- Job postings (35,000+)
- Employer accounts (600+)
- AI job recommendations
- Credential wallet (developing)

BOMForge (New Layer)

- Employer capability intelligence (AI-extracted)
- Credential → job requirement mapping
- SAM.gov contractor database
- Supply chain workforce demand signals
- Geographic proximity matching
- Defense compliance (ITAR, DFARS)

LAUNCH has the learner side. BOMForge has the employer side. Together: credentials match to capabilities, learners match to employers, training gaps become visible and closeable.

Standards Compliance

| REQUIREMENT | STANDARD | IMPLEMENTATION |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Credential Registry | CTDL (Credential Engine) | Map 12 school programs + 120 apprenticeship occupations |
| Learning & Employment Records | W3C Verifiable Credentials | Extend LAUNCH credential wallet with employer-verified skills |
| Digital Badges | Open Badges 3.0 | AWS, NCCER, NIMS as portable badges |
| Interoperability | T3 LER Toolkit | Vendor-neutral data exchange framework |

Six Reasons Arkansas Is the Strongest Submission

| # | FACT | WHY IT WINS |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | \$7B+ in manufacturing investment (2024-2026) | Proves urgent workforce demand — not hypothetical |
| 2 | DOE priority industries: aerospace, nuclear, AI, energy | Arkansas has all four. Most states have one or two. |
| 3 | \$35.8M DOL apprenticeship leadership (Dec 2025) | Federal validation of workforce capacity |
| 4 | LAUNCH live with 11K+ users and LER integration | Scaler track — not starting from zero |
| 5 | LEARNS Act: 20+ career-ready pathways | Governor-led reform proves political commitment |
| 6 | BOMForge has mapped all 12 schools + employer capabilities | Data exists today — not a promise to collect it |

The bottom line: 3,500+ steel jobs with no nearby school. 2,900+ ammunition jobs with zero training pipeline. 4,500+ defense jobs needing electronics — only 1 school offers it. The Talent Marketplace makes these gaps visible and closeable.

Next Steps

| # | ACTION | BY |
|---|--|--------|
| 1 | Watch CTO Challenge info session recordings | Mar 10 |
| 2 | Contact AR Dept of Workforce Services (runs LAUNCH) | Mar 11 |
| 3 | Contact AR Office of Skills Development (\$35.8M apprenticeship) | Mar 11 |
| 4 | Email pitch + skills gap data to DWS + OSD | Mar 13 |
| 5 | Contact AR Economic Development Commission | Mar 14 |
| 6 | Build Arkansas Talent Marketplace demo | Mar 21 |
| 7 | Secure written commitment letters | Apr 7 |
| 8 | Submit via cto-challenge.com | Apr 28 |