

CTE and Career Readiness in Northwest Arkansas

INSIGHTFUL EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

NWA K-12 CTE Pathway Analysis

Prepared for the Walton Family Foundation

June 2026





ABOUT THIS ANALYSIS

High-quality K-12 career and technical education (CTE) pathways aligned with regional economic needs can provide students with the knowledge, skills and credentials that lead to continued advancement and economic security.

In 2023, the Walton Family Foundation engaged Insightful Education Solutions to examine the quality and accessibility of CTE programs in Northwest Arkansas.

This analysis provides updated data and insights on:

- **Does CTE pathway activity align with regional economic priorities?**
- **Are NWA CTE students achieving metrics of pathway quality?**

The findings can help the region's educators, postsecondary institutions and employers continue to strengthen pathways that prepare NWA students for success after high school.

Two-year aggregate: 2023–24 and 2024–25



56,750 total high school students across 16 NWA districts (2023–25)

REGIONAL CTE STUDENTS

44%

of concentrators are economically disadvantaged

42%

of completers are economically disadvantaged

NWA'S 6 REGIONAL PRIORITY SECTORS



Healthcare



Building & Construction



Advanced Manufacturing



Transportation, Distribution & Logistics



Business & Management



Education & Training

* Information Technology occupations are included in the analysis as well, due to their cross-cutting nature.

✦ Completion rate = completers ÷ concentrators (two-year aggregate; not cohort-tracked — actual rates may be slightly higher as some completers lag concentrators by one year).

What data was used in this analysis —
and how key terms are defined

DATA COLLECTION

AR Dept. of Education Division of Career & Technical Education

Concentrator/completer counts, credential attainment, work-based learning (WBL) completions, early postsecondary credit data (AP/IB, dual & concurrent credit); provided through University of Arkansas Office of Innovation in Education

AR Dept. of Higher Education

Postsecondary matriculation data — 2022–23 and 2023–24 cohorts

Lightcast (Q1 2026 analysis for Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA)

Regional labor market data: wages, job growth, occupational demand

KEY DEFINITIONS

CTE Concentrator

A student who has enrolled in two or more credits within a CTE program area. Concentrators represent meaningful engagement within a pathway but have not yet completed the full sequence.

CTE Completer

A student who completes three or more courses within a career cluster program of study. Completers represent full pathway completion and are the primary lens for quality metric outcomes.

H2 Occupation

High-demand, high-skill, and higher-wage occupations — identified through a composite of labor market demand, five-year growth projections, and median wage earnings relative to the regional average (>\$20.00/hr).

Priority Industry Sector

Healthcare, Building & Construction, Advanced Manufacturing, Transportation, Distribution & Logistics, Business & Management, and Education & Training. Information Technology is treated as a cross-cutting sector spanning all six.

DATA METRICS INCLUDED

- 16 school districts & 49 Active CTE pathways
- Concentrator & completer counts (2023–24 & 2024–25)
- Industry credential attainment
- Early postsecondary credit attainment (EPS)
- Work-based learning course completions
- Postsecondary matriculation (2022–23 & 2023–24 cohorts)

Important context for correctly reading these findings

1 Data Suppression

Any cell with fewer than 10 students is suppressed per state policy and displayed as “<10.” Suppressed values are excluded from totals and rate calculations. Zero values may represent true zeroes OR suppressed counts (1-9). Small programs should be interpreted with caution.

2 Postsecondary Cohort Lag

Postsecondary enrollment data reflects 2022–23 and 2023–24 graduating cohorts — one year earlier than the concentration/completion data. Some students from the 2024–25 cohort may not yet appear in postsecondary enrollment records.

3 Credential Quality Variation

Credential data aggregates all industry-recognized credentials — from entry-level Career Readiness Certificates (Bronze/Silver/Gold/Platinum) to rigorous licensure exams. Not all credentials carry equal labor market value. Several pathways (Welding/AWS, Auto/ASE) show zero credential attainment despite clear available certifications.

4 Student Counts vs. Pathway Enrollments

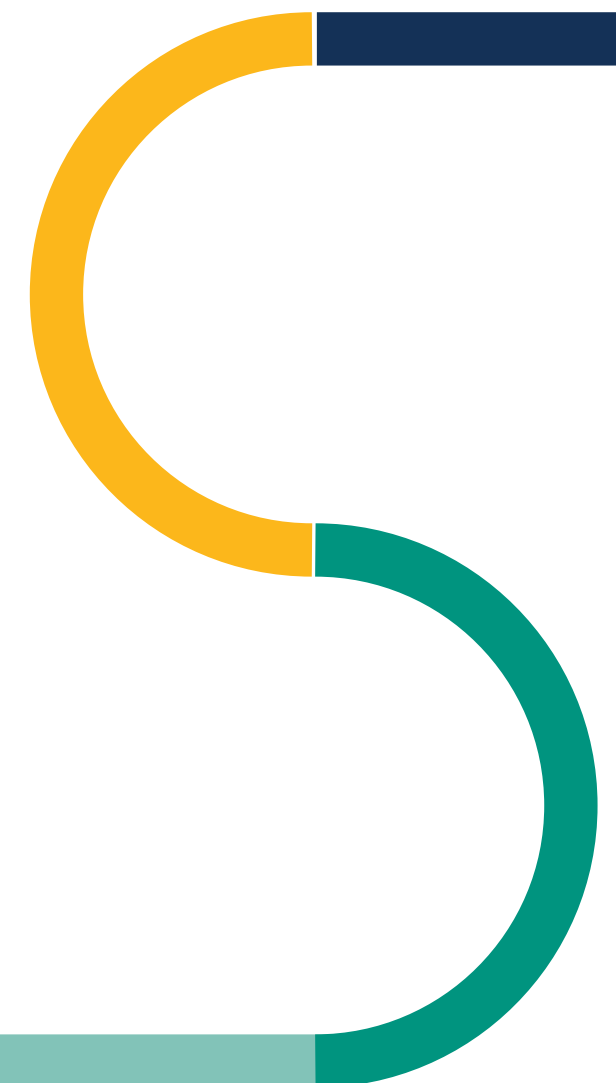
Topline figures (21,587 concentrators; 7,640 completers) are unique student counts. However, at the district level, the totals are pathway-level counts, not unique student counts. Therefore, a student active in both Healthcare and Education pathways counts for both in district tables.

5 Early Postsecondary (EPS): Credits, Not Students

EPS data reports total credits earned — not distinct students who earned any credit. “Credits per concentrator” ratios above 1.0x indicate the average concentrator earns more than one college credit, not that all concentrators earn credit.

6 Sector Classification

The six priority sector classifications in this analysis are based on priority sectors identified with NWA stakeholders in 2023. Individual pathway-to-sector assignments are analytical judgments made for this analysis.



This definition was developed with NWA stakeholders in 2023, as part of the first analysis of NWA K-12 CTE

A high-quality CTE pathway is a sequence of aligned, interconnected academic and workforce experiences that enable learners to **master a particular subject, set of competencies or program, earn one or more employer-valued credentials and go on to pursue an occupation with sustainable wages.**

1 Labor Market Alignment

Aligns with high-demand, high-skill, and higher-wage (H2) sectors and occupations with documented regional employer need.

2 Employer-Valued Credentials

Offers credentials that are recognized and valued by employers — ranging from industry certifications to licensure exams.

3 Sequential & Progressive Courses

Reflects a course sequence that builds knowledge and skills progressively, not a collection of standalone electives.

4 Robust Academic & Technical Standards

Includes strong standards representing necessary academic, technical and employability skills aligned to the program of study.

5 Early Postsecondary Credit

Includes courses and/or exams eligible for early postsecondary credit — AP, IB, dual credit or concurrent enrollment.

6 Work-Based Learning Continuum

Incorporates a continuum of WBL experiences — from classroom-based exploration to internships and apprenticeships.

Strong state and local CTE programs offer a range of high-quality pathways across multiple sectors — ensuring access, breadth and meaningful alignment to regional workforce needs.

Recent legislation and state-level CTE reforms shaping the landscape for this analysis

2023

Arkansas LEARNS Act

- Required all high schools to offer at least one H² (High Demand, High Wage) CTE pathway.
- Created a career-ready diploma pathway aligned with high-wage, high-growth jobs.
- Established student success plans with defined course sequences for diploma pathways.

2025

Arkansas ACCESS Act

- Eliminated costs (tuition, fees, materials) for all high school concurrent credit courses.
- Expanded accelerated coursework recognition beyond AP/IB to include concurrent credit.
- Required all districts to offer at least four accelerated coursework options.

ONGOING

CTE Pathways Redesign

- 18 H² pathways identified and aligned to high-demand, high-wage occupations statewide.
- Created a regular review process to align CTE offerings with labor market priorities.
- State Start-Up Grants established to support districts implementing new H² pathways.

CLASS OF 2028

New Graduation Pathways

- Career-ready diploma pathway introduced for students pursuing H² CTE programs of study.
- Students must complete 3+ credits in ADE Success Ready Pathways / CTE Program of Study.
- Students graduate with merit or distinction based on attainment of quality metrics.

What the data says — and where to focus next

ALIGNMENT

Enrollment and priority sectors are misaligned — particularly in the highest-opportunity areas.

- Building & Construction and Transportation, Distribution & Logistics offer the strongest labor market opportunity — but Construction enrollment is critically low region-wide.
- Agriculture drives enrollment but is not a priority sector. Advanced Manufacturing and IT — explicit regional priorities — remain severely underdeveloped.
- Education & Training has the region's largest priority-sector enrollment but there are limited sub-baccalaureate labor market opportunities in this sector.

ACCESS

District access to priority pathways is uneven — and small districts are disproportionately excluded.

- Building & Construction is inaccessible to students in all 10 small districts. Advanced Manufacturing concentrations exist in only 2 small districts (Huntsville and Gravette, albeit in low numbers — just 39 concentrations for the latter).
- Small districts lack access to the region's top-growth sectors. Huntsville's Advanced Manufacturing is an exception and may be worth exploring further.

QUALITY

Quality metrics attainment is low across NWA CTE pathways. Some pathways serve as bright spots, however.

- Medical Skills & Services, Construction Technology, and Pre-Engineering are pathways that are associated with attainment of multiple metrics.
- Agribusiness (3,443 concentrators), Culinary Arts (2,151) and Office Administration (1,103) show minimal quality metrics despite large enrollment.
- Welding earns high EPS credits but has zero credential attainment — a specific and addressable (data?) gap given AWS certification availability.

A Positive Direction: Pathway Alignment Is Shifting

While quality metrics are not directly comparable across analyses, the composition of student activity has meaningfully changed

2020-22 Original Analysis

3 of 10

top completed pathways aligned with priority sectors

- **5 of top 10** completed pathways were Agriculture
- Agriculture = **~69%** of top-10 completions
- Healthcare, Manufacturing and Construction **barely visible** in top completions

2023-25 Updated Analysis

7 of 10

top completed pathways aligned with priority sectors

- **2 of top 10** completed pathways are Agriculture
- Agriculture = **~38%** of top-10 completions
- Medical Skills, Pre-Engineering, Construction, and Sports Medicine **all enter top 10**



INTERPRETATION NOTE: Quality metrics (credential attainment, early postsecondary credit, postsecondary enrollment) are not comparable across these two analyses. Changes in CTE program structures, the industry credential list, and the shift from H³ to H² make direct quality comparisons methodologically unsound. The alignment shift shown here reflects the composition of student activity.

What these findings suggest for the region

1 Realign Enrollment with Economic Opportunity

Student activity is still concentrated outside several of the region's strongest sectors – closing that gap is NWA's clearest growth lever.

2 Treat Pathway Access as a Regional Challenge

Small districts can't reach the top-growth sectors on their own; access is a regional problem requiring regional solutions.

3 Make Quality Metrics the Next Frontier

Pathway composition is moving in the right direction – attainment of quality metrics now needs to catch up.

4 Investigate Metric Reporting & Data Completeness

Reported metrics may understate what students actually achieve; the reporting pipeline itself deserves scrutiny.

A MATURING SYSTEM: With 49 active pathways and alignment trending in the right direction, NWA's CTE ecosystem is maturing. The central challenge is shifting from building pathways to ensuring they deliver stronger outcomes, complete reporting and access for every district.

QUESTION 1

Does CTE Pathway Activity Align with Regional Priorities?

Examining pathway activity, labor market opportunity and district access across NWA's six priority industry sectors.



Source: Lightcast Q1 2026 · Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers MSA ·
Sub-bachelor's occupations unless noted



Healthcare

Sub-BA Jobs _____ 3,600
Avg Hourly Wage __ \$32.80
5-Yr Job Growth ___ +13.9%



Building & Construction

Sub-BA Jobs _____ 9,269
Avg Hourly Wage __ \$25.23
5-Yr Job Growth ___ +18.3%



Transportation, Distribution & Logistics

Sub-BA Jobs _____ 2,758
Avg Hourly Wage __ \$36.06
5-Yr Job Growth ___ +9.5%



Education & Training

Sub-BA Jobs _____ 7,819
Avg Hourly Wage __ \$28.64
5-Yr Job Growth ___ +4.6%



Information Technology

Sub-BA Jobs _____ 1,254
Avg Hourly Wage __ \$25.87
5-Yr Job Growth ___ +7.1%



Advanced Manufacturing

Sub-BA Jobs _____ 10,399
Avg Hourly Wage __ \$28.42
5-Yr Job Growth ___ +7.5%



Business & Management

Sub-BA Jobs _____ 12,246
Avg Hourly Wage __ \$26.02
5-Yr Job Growth ___ +7.0%

Top CTE-Accessible Occupations in NWA

NWA K-12 CTE Pathway Analysis

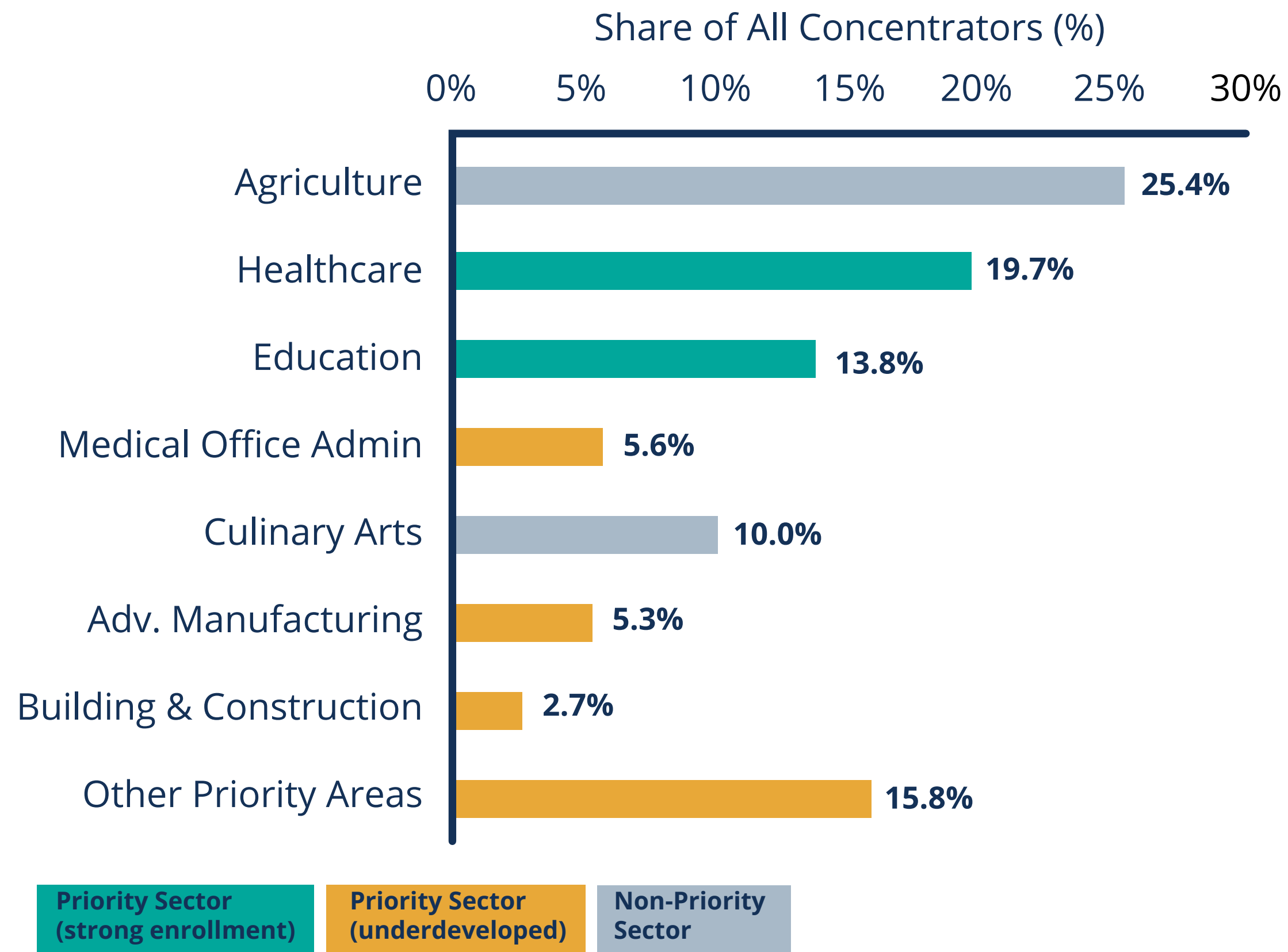
Sub-bachelor's entry education only · Median wage ≥\$20/hr · Positive 5-yr growth

#	Occupation	Sector	Entry Education	2024 Jobs	5-Yr Growth	Median Hourly	Opportunity Score*
1	First-Line Supervisors, Construction	Construction	HS Diploma	1,382	+17.9%	\$31.69	81.4
2	Transportation, Storage & Distribution Mgrs	Transportation	HS Diploma	249	+15.4%	\$54.32	81.3
3	Executive Secretaries / Admin Assistants	Business	HS Diploma	357	+16.7%	\$30.82	74.4
4	Dental Hygienists	Healthcare	Associate's	367	+13.5%	\$40.35	73.2
5	Plumbers, Pipefitters & Steamfitters	Construction	HS Diploma	659	+20.1%	\$24.88	72.9
6	Electricians	Construction	HS Diploma	2,045	+15.4%	\$24.54	70.9
7	Carpenters	Construction	HS Diploma	1,168	+18.0%	\$23.02	69.7
9	Industrial Machinery Mechanics	Manufacturing	HS Diploma	855	+12.5%	\$28.35	68.8
10	Heating, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration Mechanics	Construction	Certificate	1,142	+15.4%	\$23.71	68.5
10	Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	Transportation	HS Diploma	188	+16.2%	\$23.71	68.5

Opportunity tier based on composite score: earnings (30%), job growth (30%), job volume (30%), education accessibility (10%).

Enrollment vs. Economic Priority: Where the Gaps Are

Concentrator share vs. Labor market opportunity tier · 2023–25 aggregate



Healthcare: Strong Alignment

19.7% of concentrators are in Healthcare — a sector that demonstrates significant labor market opportunity. Medical Skills & Services alone accounts for 10.3% of all concentrators.

Education & Training: 4-year Degree Route Only

At 13.8% of concentrators, Education & Training has only a 15% completion rate — the lowest of any sizeable pathway. The sector has limited sub-baccalaureate labor market opportunities, so students should plan for a 4-year degree.

Critical Underdevelopment

Building & Construction (2.7%) and Advanced Manufacturing (5.3%) are two of the region's highest-growth, most accessible priority sectors — but together hold just 8.0% of concentrators.

Notable patterns in enrollment, completion and priority sector alignment

1 Agriculture Dominates — But Is Not a Priority Sector

Agribusiness Systems is the single largest pathway (3,443 concentrators), and Agriculture accounts for 25.4% of all concentrators. Completion is solid (42.5% sector avg), but Agriculture is not among the six regional priority sectors — creating a structural mismatch between where students concentrate and where economic priorities lie.

2 Priority Sector Volume Is Concentrated in Two Sectors

Healthcare (4,262 conc., 19.7%) and Education & Training (2,984 conc., 13.8%) account for the large majority of priority sector enrollment. The remaining four named priority sectors — Business & Finance, Adv. Manufacturing, Transportation and Construction — collectively hold 4,208 concentrators (19.5%). Information Technology, treated as cross-cutting, adds a further 1,020 concentrators (4.7%) spanning all sectors.

3 Two Priority Sectors Are Critically Underdeveloped

Building & Construction (587 conc., 2.7%) and Transportation, Distribution & Logistics (653 conc., 3.0%) are the most underenrolled priority sectors relative to NWA labor market demand. Information Technology (1,020 conc., 4.7%) and core Advanced Manufacturing pathways also show significant enrollment gaps despite strong regional employer demand.

4 Priority Sector Enrollment Doesn't Guarantee H2 Alignment

Business & Management's largest pathway, Office Administration (1,103 conc.), maps primarily to general office roles (secretaries, clerks, administrative assistants) whose wages fall below the \$20/hr wage threshold. By contrast, Medical Office Administration maps to healthcare-specific roles growing at 14.1%. Each priority sector warrants pathway-level labor market review to assess genuine H2 alignment.

District Access: All 16 NWA Districts

NWA K-12 CTE Pathway Analysis

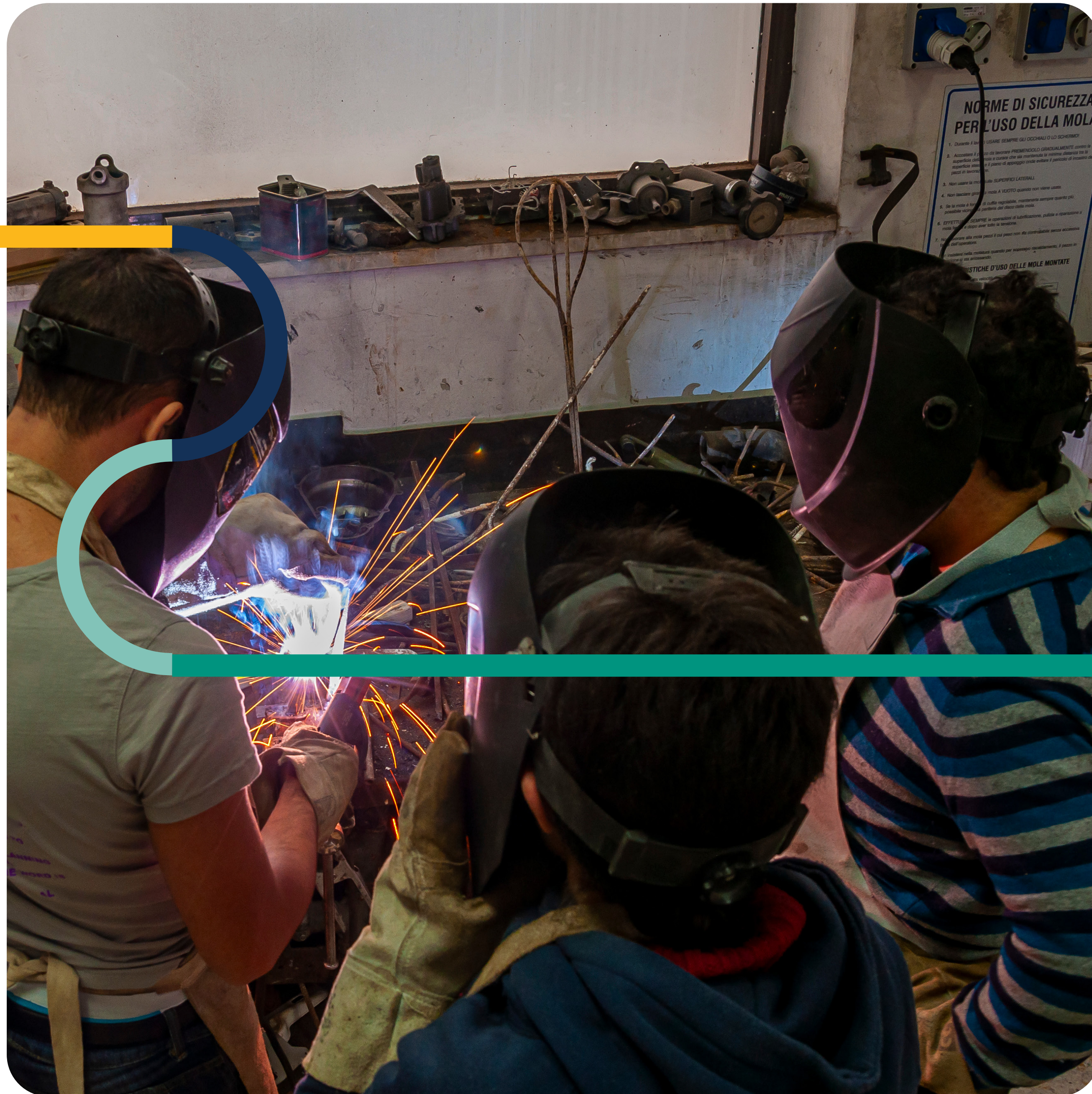
2023-25 aggregate

✓ = more than 10 concentrators in at least one pathway in this sector

✗ = fewer than 10 concentrators



Occupation	Healthcare	Construction	Advanced Manufacturing	Transportation	Business	IT	Education
Bentonville	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Decatur	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
Elkins	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Farmington	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Fayetteville	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Gentry	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Gravette	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greenland	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Huntsville	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Lincoln	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
Pea Ridge	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Prairie Grove	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Rogers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Siloam Springs	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Springdale	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
West Fork	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗



QUESTION 2

Are NWA CTE Students Achieving Metrics of Pathway Quality?

Examining three outcome indicators: industry credential attainment, early postsecondary credit and postsecondary enrollment.

Three Metrics of Pathway Quality: Regional Scorecard

NWA K-12 CTE Pathway Analysis

Concentrator and completer rates across all 49 pathways · 2023–25 aggregate

INDUSTRY CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT

9.4%

2,031
Concentrators

7.1%

540
Completers

Lower credential attainment rates for completers can be traced to the number of large pathways (e.g., Agribusiness) with high completion rates but low credential attainment, dragging the overall average down.

EARLY POSTSECONDARY CREDIT (EPS)

9,375

Total Credits
0.43 avg. Per
Concentrator

4,558

Total Credits
0.60x NWA Avg.
(per completer)

NWA baseline: 0.43 credits/concentrator · 0.60 credits/completer. Welding (2.9x) and Aviation Technology (1.6x) are the highest-ratio pathways relative to this regional average. Most pathways fall well below 1.0x, meaning the average concentrator earns less than one college credit.

EPS data: total credits, not distinct students

POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT (IN-STATE)

8.2%

1,774
Concentrators

9.7%

733
Completers

Postsecondary enrollment rates are very low across NWA CTE pathways. It is not clear to what extent this is a data and reporting issue. Completers enroll at a slightly higher rate. Digital Cinema (30%) and A/V Tech & Film (20%) lead on postsecondary enrollment despite limited credential/EPS activity.

Postsecondary data: 2022–23 & 2023–24

Multi-Metric High Performers

Pathways demonstrating quality across two or more outcome indicators



Medical Skills & Services

2,221 concentrators | 41% completion

Cred. Rate (Comp.)

18%

EPS Credits

813 credits (completers)

Postsec Enroll.

20%

Credential attainment, EPS credit generation and postsecondary enrollment all strong — and it's the region's top-enrolling priority healthcare pathway.



Criminal Justice

169 concentrators | ~48% completion

Note: not a priority sector pathway

Cred. Rate (Comp.)

40%

EPS Credits

—

Postsec Enroll.

17%

40% of completers earn an industry credential — the highest rate of any pathway — and 17% go on to enroll in postsecondary. EPS activity is minimal, but on the two metrics it leads, it is strong.



Construction Technology

493 concentrators | 57% completion

Cred. Rate (Comp.)

15%

EPS Credits

316 credits (completers)

Postsec Enroll.

9%

Solid across all three metrics with a 57% completion rate. Represents the strongest quality signal in a critically underenrolled pathway region-wide.



Pre-Engineering

888 concentrators | 56% completion

Cred. Rate (Comp.)

3%

EPS Credits

566 credits (completers)

Postsec Enroll.

11%

Strongest EPS credit generator among priority pathways — 566 credits among 496 completers, suggesting strong dual-credit/articulation agreements.

✦ **HONORABLE MENTION:** Architectural/CAD (94 concentrators) — 94% completion rate (highest in the region), 18% credential rate for completers. Small scale but exceptional quality signals.



Pathways with notable performance on individual quality indicators

EPS CREDIT STANDOUTS

2.9x
credits/conc.

WELDING
271 conc. · 68% completion
Cred: 0% · Postsec: 0%

No reported credentials or postsecondary connections — but students earn college credit.

1.6x
credits/conc.

AVIATION TECHNOLOGY
53 conc. · 81% completion
Cred: — · Postsec: —

Small (53 conc.) but credit-intensive. 83 EPS credits among 43 completers. Strong program signal for a high-opportunity sector.

1.2x
credits/conc.

AUTOMOTIVE SERVICE TECH
380 conc. · 55% completion
Cred: 0% · Postsec:

Good EPS generation; clear ASE certification opportunities likely not being captured.

1.1x
credits/conc.

EDUCATION & TRAINING
2984 conc. · 15% completion
Cred: 13% · Postsec: 15%

EPS credits despite a low completion rate — suggesting articulation may be capturing students before formal completion.

POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT OUTLIERS

30%
postsec.

DIGITAL CINEMA PRODUCTIONS
192 conc. · Cred: 0% · EPS: —

Highest postsecondary enrollment in region. No credential or EPS activity in this dataset.

20%
postsec.

A/V TECH & FILM
444 conc. · Cred: — · EPS: —

On par with Medical Skills despite very different industry profile. Another pathway where the postsecondary pipeline is strong but other quality metrics are minimal.

20%
postsec.

MEDICAL SKILLS & SERVICES
2221 conc. · Cred: 18%
EPS: 813 credits

Better postsecondary enrollment backed by similar credential and EPS performance.

0%
postsec.

MEDICAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATION
1205 conc. · Cred: 11%
EPS: —

Unusual gap: 6th-largest pathway in the region, some credential activity — but zero completers enrolled in postsecondary.

Large Pathways with Quality Metric Gaps

High enrollment without quality outcomes — where is the biggest improvement opportunity?

Pathway	Conc.	Comp. Rate	Cred. (Comp.)	EPS (x/conc.)	Postsec. (Comp.)	Key Insight
Agribusiness Systems	3,443	45%	4%	0.2x	~5%	The single largest pathway in the region — but quality metrics are minimal. Even modest improvement in credential attainment (from 4% to 10%) would generate the largest absolute gain of any pathway in the region. However, increasing quality metric attainment in a non-priority sector pathway may not be the best strategy long-term.
✦ Education & Training	2,984	15%	13%	1.1x	15%	A priority sector pathway — but the 15% completion rate (lowest of any sizeable pathway) severely undermines quality metrics. With stronger completion support, EPS credit activity (1.1x ratio) could become a quality story.
Culinary Arts	2,151	26%	7%	0.2x	7%	Low across all three quality metrics and a below-average completion rate. ServSafe and other food safety credentials are low-level and easy to attain, which raises questions about whether students have opportunities to earn them. The postsecondary pipeline is thin.
✦ Office Administration	1,103	16%	~0%	~0x	0%	Near-zero on all three quality metrics for completers. Combined with a 16% completion rate, this pathway demonstrates very limited quality metrics. A strategic reassessment of program structure is warranted — both due to the alarming quality gaps and the fact that associated occupations are low-paying (even though the pathway is in a priority sector).
Ag Power, Structural & Technical Systems	1,949	36%	~5%	0.4x	~5%	Second-largest pathway by concentrators. Completion is moderate, but quality metrics are thin. Strong candidate for introducing structured credentials given the technical nature of the content. However, such high rates of student activity in a non-priority sector raise separate questions about alignment and longer-term occupational opportunities.
✦ Software Development	664	24%	~0%	~0x	~0%	A priority sector pathway (Information Technology) with concerning quality metrics. Produces only ~160 completers, with no credential attainment or postsecondary connection. CompTIA certifications represent an accessible credential opportunity.

✦ = PRIORITY SECTOR PATHWAY

Career Practicum participation across 49 pathways — and the limits of what current data can tell us

18

pathways with WBL activity

31

active pathways with zero reported WBL

34%

of concentrators in zero-WBL pathways

LARGEST PATHWAYS WITH ZERO REPORTED WBL COMPLETIONS

Ag Power, Structural & Technical Systems	1,949 conc.
✦ Medical Office Administration	1,205 conc.
✦ Pre-Engineering	888 conc.
✦ Software Development	664 conc.
✦ Sports Medicine	612 conc.

WORK-BASED LEARNING DATA ISSUES

WBL reporting is still maturing

Arkansas' standardized WBL data collection is relatively new. Districts are still building consistent habits around reporting completions — meaning current data almost certainly undercounts actual WBL activity.

Only Career Practicum shows completions

Every WBL completion in this dataset is a "Career Practicum" course. Other recognized WBL types — internships, apprenticeships, job shadows, cooperative education — report zero completions across all 16 districts. These experiences are happening on the ground but are not reliably captured in state data.

"Zero WBL" and employer engagement

A pathway showing zero reported WBL may reflect incomplete reporting rather than absence of activity. However, it may also signal a lack of coordinated and sustained employer engagement in priority industry sectors.

✦ = PRIORITY SECTOR PATHWAY

Among the 18 WBL-active pathways, all use "Career Practicum" as the course type. Completion rates vary from 86% (T&I Transportation & Logistics) to 0% (T&I Manufacturing).

The next phase of CTE pathway improvement

Grow Enrollment Where the Economy Is Growing

Building & Construction, Transportation, Advanced Manufacturing and IT remain underenrolled relative to regional labor market demand.

ACTION: Pair targeted recruitment and wage-informed counseling with LEARNS Start-Up grants to launch – and fill – new H² pathways.

Support Completion, Not Just Enrollment

Education & Training (15%) and Office Administration (16%) completion rates undermine otherwise large enrollments.

ACTION: Use structured course sequences and early advising to convert concentrators into completers.

Investigate Metric Reporting & Data Completeness

Reported outcome may be incomplete, and very low metric attainment may partly reflect reporting gaps rather than student activity.

ACTION: Review how districts capture and report these metrics — starting with pathways reporting zero credentials.

Build Regional Solutions for Small-District Access

Building & Construction is inaccessible to students in all 10 small districts, and Advanced Manufacturing is barely present.

ACTION: Explore shared regional programs, consortium models and employer-hosted training sites that no single campus could sustain alone.

Embed Credentials Where They Already Exist

Several pathways show zero credential attainment despite well-established industry certifications (Welding/AWS, Automotive/ASE, Software/CompTIA).

ACTION: Partner with employers, fund exam fees and build exam preparation into coursework – accessible near-term wins.

Scale the Models That Are Working

Medical Skills & Services, Construction Technology and Pre-Engineering demonstrate multi-metric quality at meaningful scale.

ACTION: Replicate the features associated with stronger outcomes — structured sequencing, embedded credentials, employer engagement and sustained student participation.

49 active pathways across 16 NWA districts

Pathway-to-sector assignments are analytical classifications used in this analysis

HEALTHCARE

Priority sector

- Medical Skills & Services
- Sports Medicine
- Medical Office Administration
- Biomedical Sciences
- Nursing Services
- Emergency Services

BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION

Priority sector

- Construction Technology
- Architectural/CAD

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

Priority sector

- Pre-Engineering
- Welding
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Engineering/CAD
- Industrial Equipment Technologies
- Automation & Robotics Technology

TRANSPORTATION & LOGISTICS

Priority sector

- Automotive Service Technology
- Supply Chain & Logistics
- Aviation Technology
- Unmanned Aerial Systems
- Medium/Heavy Truck Technology

BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Priority sector

- Office Administration
- Business Management
- Marketing
- Digital Marketing
- Accounting
- Retail Management
- Consumer Services

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Priority sector

- Education and Training

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Cross-cutting priority (spans all sectors)

- Software Development
- General Computer Science (Non-H²)
- IT & Security
- Social Media & Communications

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Non-priority sector

- Agribusiness Systems
- Ag Power, Structural & Technical Systems
- Animal Systems
- Plant Systems
- Food Products & Processing Systems

OTHER NON-PRIORITY PATHWAYS

Non-priority sector

- Culinary Arts
- A/V Tech & Film
- Advertising & Graphic Design
- Digital Cinema Productions
- Commercial Photography
- Hospitality & Tourism
- Criminal Justice
- Clothing & Housing Design
- Human & Social Services
- Navy JROTC
- Food Production, Mgmt. & Services
- Firefighting

