



National Science Foundation

AI-Ready America

State of Arkansas

AI Coordination Hub

Secretary Hugh McDonald

Jennifer Fowler

Robert McGough

Monday April 20, 2026

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



**AI-READY
AMERICA**



ETA



NIFA

- **Announced March 25**
- **Co-sponsored by NSF, USDA, DOL, and SBA**
- **Only 1 award per state, 3 rounds of awards planned**
- **\$1 million / year for 3 years, possible 1-year extension**



Existing trusted networks are infrastructure for AI readiness and deployment:

—COOPERATIVE—
EXTENSION



AMERICAS
SBDC
SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

NATIONAL
GOVERNORS
ASSOCIATION



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EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP®



U.S. Chamber of Commerce



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA



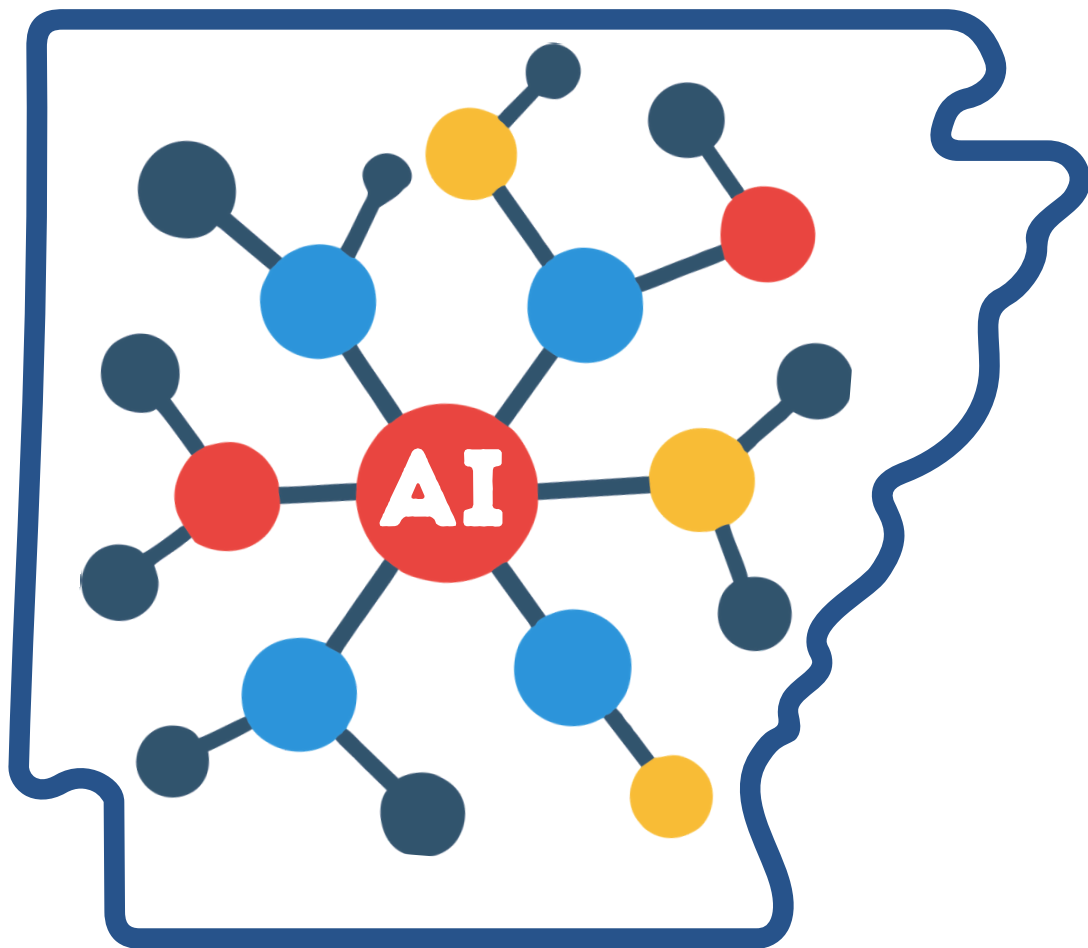
The Big Data
Innovation Hubs

 **IEEE**
IEEE★**USA**





Establish State-level AI Resource Hubs



Act as neutral convening entity to connect local partners across education, industry, and government



Establish a repository for high-quality AI resources, training, and practitioners



Develop state-level AI readiness plan in coordination with key stakeholders

Commerce will lead the proposal in coordination with multiple State offices and partners:



Arkansas Division of
Reemployment



MANUFACTURING SOLUTIONS



ARConnect
The Arkansas State Broadband Office



Grow with **Google**



ARKANSAS
STATE CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE



OUT OF SCOPE:

- **Conducting research or extensive data collection**
- **Directly providing services and training**
- **Overriding existing programs and mandates**



IN SCOPE:

- **Compiling existing programs, resources, assets**
- **Facilitating knowledge exchange and resource sharing**
- **Aligning ongoing and new efforts**

5 MAJOR GOALS FOR HUBS



- 1 AI Learning & Resource Navigator
- 2 State-level AI Readiness Strategic Plan
- 3 AI Deployment Support
- 4 AI Readiness Training & Capacity Building
- 5 Coordination Within Priority Industry Sectors

 *These do NOT have to be ready on day 1 - this is what the hub will do over the course of the project*

1 AI Learning and Resource Navigator

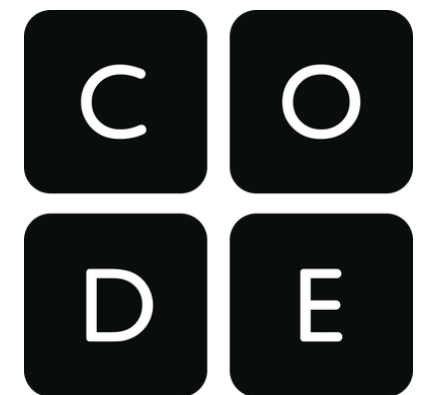
↳ Maintain a publicly accessible and user-friendly inventory of state and territory AI-related resources, including training programs, physical infrastructure, and support services.



Credential
Engine™



CENTRAL
ARKANSAS
LIBRARY
SYSTEM



2 State-level AI Readiness Strategic Plan

↳ Develop a strategic plan to meet State priorities around AI readiness, integrating data collection and evaluation to monitor progress and support evidence-based decision-making.



AI CENTER OF EXCELLENCE



3

AI Deployment Support

Provide assistance for AI adoption to municipalities, businesses, entrepreneurs, academic organizations, and others in coordination with implementation partners.

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ARKANSAS SMALL BUSINESS AND
TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT CENTER



WIOA
WORKFORCE INNOVATION OPPORTUNITY ACT



MANUFACTURING SOLUTIONS



entergy

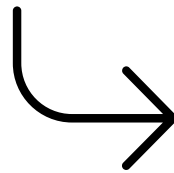
TRUSTED
PROVIDERS



Logos only convey scope - not representative of all stakeholders or commitments

4

AI Readiness Training & Capacity Building



Coordinate across education, workforce, and industry to expand access to experiential AI learning opportunities and align curriculum with national AI literacy guidance.



COLLEGES

UNIVERSITIES

K12 SCHOOLS



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5 Coordination Within Priority Industry Sectors

↳ Convene stakeholders in critical economic sectors and facilitate collaboration through events and resource sharing.



METALS



DATA



ARKANSAS STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



ASSOCIATED INDUSTRIES OF ARKANSAS

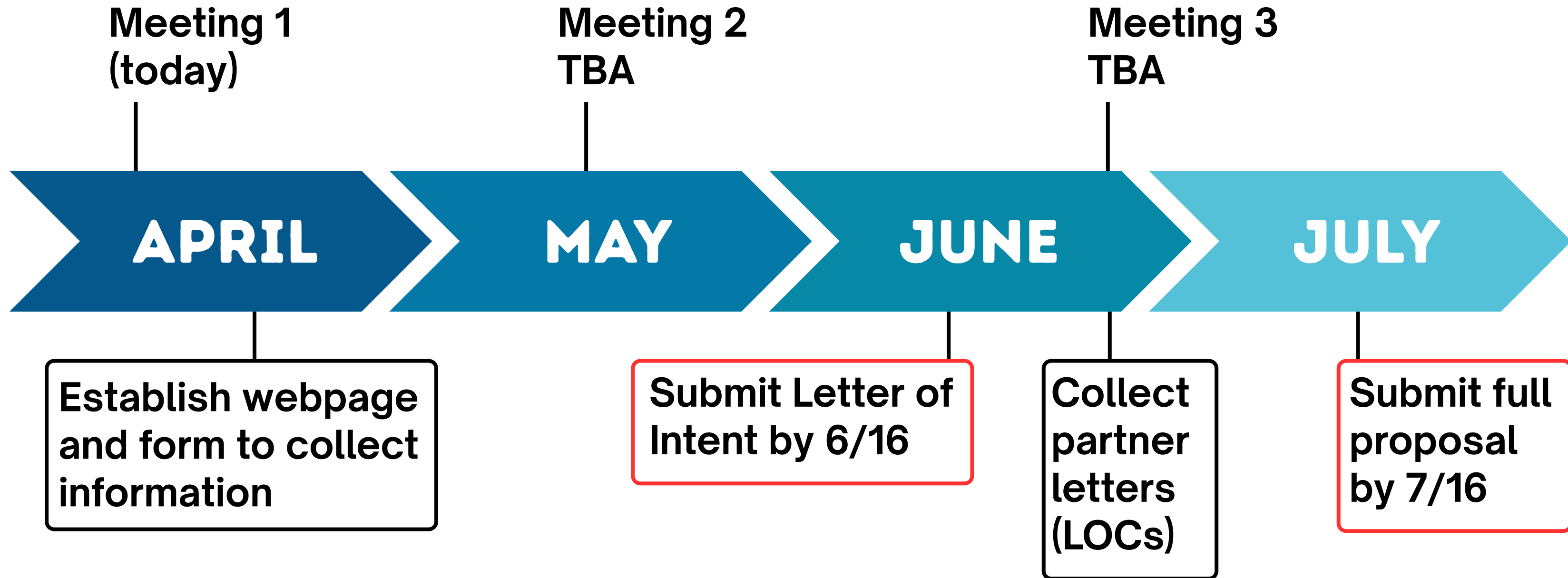


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GENERAL TIMELINE



- First round of awards 6-12 months after deadline (dependent on \$\$ and volume of proposals)
- Likely award period: July 1, 2027 - June 30, 2030 (possible 1-year extension)

NEXT STEPS



- **Commerce will soon begin collecting input from stakeholders and setting up additional meetings**
- **Anyone interested in getting involved should read solicitation and prepare to share ideas**
- **NSF hosting a webinar on 4/23 with SBA, DOL, USDA to define agency collaboration**
- **www.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/ai-ready**

Questions / Discussion

