

Registered Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship

Overview: The National Apprenticeship Act of 1937 authorizes the federal government, in collaboration with states, to oversee the nation's apprenticeship system. Registered Apprenticeship programs provide opportunities for participating individuals to gain on-the-job training combined with classroom instruction, leading to portable credentials. Participating employers develop a steady pipeline of skilled workers. As of 2008, there were about 480,000 apprentices in about 27,000 apprenticeship programs registered with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship. Some estimate that there might be another 500,000 or more individuals in unregistered programs.²⁰

Pre-apprenticeship programs are bridges into Registered Apprenticeship programs for those who do not meet the eligibility requirements for a Registered Apprenticeship program. They are typically short-term training programs that are recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor but are not registered.

Type of Program: Nationally administered program.

Eligibility and Targeting: The sponsor of a Registered Apprenticeship program identifies the minimum qualifications to apply. The eligible starting age can be no less than 16 years of age; individuals usually must be 18 years old to apprentice in hazardous occupations. Program sponsors may identify additional minimum qualifications and credentials to apply (e.g., education, physical ability to perform the essential functions of the occupation, proof of age). All applicants are required to meet the minimum qualifications. Based on the selection method used by the sponsor, there may be additional qualification standards, such as fair aptitude tests and interviews, school grades, and previous work experience.

Services/Program Support: Federal funding supports federal staff, located in state and local offices, who work directly with business and industry to develop programs that meet the skilled training needs of the employer/sponsor. Apprentices receive a mix of paid on-the-job learning, related technical instruction, and mentoring.

Non-federal Funds: There is no state matching requirement for this program. However, 27 states operate and fund State Apprenticeship Agencies recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor to register and oversee apprenticeship programs for federal purposes. Staff in these states develop Registered Apprenticeship programs and provide assistance to program sponsors.

HOW PROGRAM CAN SUPPORT CAREER PATHWAYS AND CAREER PATHWAY BRIDGES

Registered Apprenticeship programs include a mix of on-the-job experience and classroom training, allowing participating individuals to earn wages as they receive training and advance into jobs requiring higher skill levels. In effect, Registered Apprenticeship programs are career pathways. Pre-apprenticeship programs are very similar to career pathway bridges because they are designed to help individuals without the necessary prerequisites or skills to enter a Registered Apprenticeship program and gain the necessary education to begin such a program.

Through articulation agreements between Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors and the community and technical colleges with which they partner in the delivery of classroom training, many participants have the opportunity to simultaneously earn an associate's degree or substantial credit toward one. Through a Registered Apprenticeship program, young people considering a work-based approach to a career do not face the false choice of choosing between a career and an education.

Federal funding for Registered Apprenticeship supports federal staff who work with employers to sponsor programs and ensure they meet the federal, state, and industry requirements to be registered. Sponsors can be individual employers, employer associations, or labor-management partnerships. Funding for services such as training and case management can come from Apprenticeship sponsors, the Workforce Investment Act, foundation funds, state grants, or other funds. Mentoring is a critical, required component of a Registered Apprenticeship. Apprenticeship staff work with employers and training providers to define competencies for pre-apprenticeship programs that act as bridges into Registered Apprenticeship programs. Funds to develop pre-apprenticeship programs may come from the Apprenticeship sponsor, WIA, the training provider, or state or foundation grants.

Washington used WIA state discretionary funds to support some pre-apprenticeship programs as a bridge into Registered Apprenticeship programs.²¹ The state also

gives apprentices a 50 percent discount on community college tuition.²²

Wisconsin has expanded the use of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs as part of its Regional Industry Skills Education (RISE) initiative. The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development is the lead on this initiative, which seeks to create a state policy environment in which career pathways, including bridges, can flourish. The department is holding joint WIA and Apprenticeship training for local WIA program staff and providing State Energy Grant-funded participation for eligible apprentices and journey workers in green construction and energy programs.

Registered Apprenticeship staff have deep connections to industry and can work to develop new apprenticeship programs as part of a pathway initiative. Apprenticeship programs also can be connected to community/technical colleges and college credit, which would promote integration with career pathways. While these connections are not widespread, some states and community colleges encourage collaboration.²³

In the **Wisconsin** Technical College System, apprenticeship-related instruction is considered an approved academic program. Apprentices can earn 39 credits toward a 60-credit journey-worker Associate of Applied Arts degree.

South Carolina has funded Apprenticeship Carolina™, a \$1 million per year initiative housed in the South Carolina Technical College System. Apprenticeship Carolina seeks to ensure that all employers in South Carolina have access to the information and technical assistance they need to create demand-driven Registered Apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship consultants are available, at no charge to employers, to guide companies through the Registered Apprenticeship development process, from initial information to full recognition in the national Registered Apprenticeship System. In addition to the staff and marketing budget for the initiative, the state funds an employer tax credit of \$1,000 per year per apprentice for up to four years as an incentive.

PROGRAM LIMITATIONS

- Registered Apprenticeship training programs must meet standards that are agreed upon by industry.
- To be eligible for a Registered Apprenticeship program, an occupation must require a certain amount of on-the-job learning and related instruction, which may be provided by training centers, technical schools, community colleges or institutions offering online learning approaches.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STATES

- Develop new Registered Apprenticeship programs that use a career pathway framework and are based on employer demand and the availability of qualified workers.
- Support the development and expansion of pre-apprenticeship programs as bridges into Registered Apprenticeships for adults and youth who traditionally have been unable to access these programs.
- Create closer connections between Registered Apprenticeship and the other programs that can support career pathway initiatives (e.g., WIA).²⁴
- Coordinate employer engagement activities between Registered Apprenticeship and career pathway initiatives.
- Include Registered Apprenticeship as part of the overall career pathways approach.
- Support the provision of academic credit for completing apprenticeship programs or components of programs in order to provide students with increased opportunities for college-level work.