

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 combine on-the-job training with classroom instruction, leading to portable credentials. Participating employers develop a steady pipeline of skilled workers. As of 2013, there were over 280,000 active apprentices in about 19,500 apprenticeship programs registered with the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship. Data suggest the number of unregistered apprentices would far exceed the number of registered ones.²¹

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 (but not registered with), the U.S. Department of Labor.

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 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, 41 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.²²

HOW PROGRAM CAN SUPPORT CAREER PATHWAYS

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.

Registered Apprenticeship programs are career pathways. Pre-apprenticeship programs are very similar to career pathway bridge programs; they are designed to help individuals without mandatory skills or prerequisites gain the necessary education to enter a Registered Apprenticeship 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. Some colleges have agreed to automatically award college credit, based on a third-party evaluation, for apprenticeship programs sponsored by employers or labor unions.²³ Through a Registered Apprenticeship program, young people considering a work-based approach are not given a false choice between their career and an education.

Federal funding for Registered Apprenticeship supports federal staff, who work with employers to sponsor programs and ensure compliance with federal, state, and industry requirements. Sponsors can be individual employers, employer associations, or labor-management partnerships. Funding for services such as training and career counseling can come from Apprenticeship sponsors, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, foundation funds, state grants, or other sources. 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, WIOA, 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.²⁴ The state also gives apprentices a 50 percent discount on community college tuition.²⁵

Registered Apprenticeship staff have deep connections to industry and can work to develop new apprenticeship programs as part of a pathway initiative. Apprenticeship programs can also be connected to community/technical colleges and college credit; this promotes integration with career pathways. While these connections are not widespread, some states and community colleges encourage collaboration.²⁶

A comprehensive partnership in **New Jersey**—led by the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC), New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and New Jersey AFL/CIO—developed a statewide model to award college credit for participating registered apprenticeships in the building and construction trades. New Jersey Pathways Leading Apprentices to a College Education (NJ PLACE), which includes New Jersey's 19 community colleges, organized labor, and several state agencies, was designed for current and former apprentices to apply apprenticeship training toward a college degree.²⁷

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.

Apprenticeship Carolina™ is an initiative in the **South Carolina** Technical College System. Over 11,000 apprentices have been served in 676 apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship Carolina works to ensure every South Carolina employer has access to the information and technical assistance they need to create demand-driven Registered Apprenticeship programs.²⁸ 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 staff and marketing, 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 include program standards agreed to with a sponsoring employer, employer association, or labor-management partnership and an increasing schedule of wages.²⁹
- 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 other programs that can support career pathway initiatives (e.g., WIOA).³⁰
- Coordinate employer engagement activities between Registered Apprenticeship and career pathway initiatives.
- Include Registered Apprenticeship as part of the overall career pathways approach.
- Support academic credit for graduates of apprentice-

ship programs or components of programs in order to increase opportunities for college-level work.

The American Apprenticeship Initiative of 2015 will invest approximately \$100 million in an anticipated 25 public/private partnerships to accomplish these goals:³¹

- Support the expansion of quality, innovative American Apprenticeship programs into high-growth occupations and industries;
- Create career pathways that encompass American Apprenticeship and align with other postsecondary educational offerings;
- Use strategies to significantly increase apprenticeship opportunities for jobseekers and workers; and
- Leverage and develop public policies that increase demand for American Apprenticeship and support sustainability.