



BUILDING JOINT APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

A ROAD MAP TO
SUSTAINABLE
WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Registered apprenticeship is a unique form of job training because it is more than training—it is also a job. Combining classroom learning with on-the-job training, apprenticeship goes beyond theory to practice. It is considered the gold standard of workforce development and has a significant return on investment—\$1.44 returned for every \$1 invested overall and \$100,000 per apprentice in advanced manufacturing.¹ Workers don't have to finish training before working and earning a living; they are productive and earning income from day one. Employers build a workforce pipeline that can be replicated and sustained over the long term to continually fill skilled jobs, including hard-to-fill jobs. Registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs) help workers earn better wages, build a career and earn a valuable credential with no debt; in return, they provide a highly skilled workforce that offers increased loyalty and job retention to the employer.



¹ A survey of companies in a Department of Labor grant program showed that from the start of the RAP to five years after completion, median return on investment for apprentices' productivity was \$144 for every \$100 invested in the registered apprenticeship program; for advanced manufacturing companies, median per-apprentice net benefits (both direct and indirect) were \$100,000. Source: "Do Employers Earn Positive Returns to Investments in Apprenticeship? Evidence from Registered Apprenticeship Programs under the America Apprenticeship Initiative," Abt Associates, Urban Institute, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, August 2022, available at www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/OASP/evaluation/pdf/AAI/AAI_ROI_Final_Report_508_9-2022.pdf [accessed Feb. 27, 2025].

ADVANTAGES OF REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS

For Workers

Apprenticeship Programs offer numerous benefits for workers, including wage progression aligned with skill attainment, industry-recognized credentials, and career advancement.



- Free training (with no debt!)
- Wage progression aligned with skill attainment
- Higher lifetime earnings



- Increased skills
- Industry-recognized credential
- Career advancement
- Start work on day one often possible



- Higher job satisfaction
- Mentorship
- Apprentices develop into subject matter experts

For Employers

Apprenticeship Programs offer numerous benefits for employers, including increased productivity, improved loyalty, and a safer environment.



- Increased productivity & production
- Decreased downtime
- Improved quality
- Safer workplace environment



- Improved loyalty and company culture
- Increased retention and retained company expertise
- Reduced turnover



- Improved pipeline of skilled workers
- Customized training



- Reduced scrap & waste
- Reduced liability costs
- Access to additional resources (tax credits, state and local funding)

4 STEPS TO REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP IN MANUFACTURING



Getting Ready

- Formalize a labor management agreement
- Form a Joint Apprenticeship Committee (JAC)



Program Development

- Define the occupation
- Outline the instruction
- Set up the recruitment and mentorship processes
- Register the Standards of Apprenticeship



Implementation

- Assign apprenticeship coordinators
- Onboard apprentices
- Begin instruction



Evaluation

- Document progress and outcomes
- Use feedback for continuous improvement



STEP 1: GETTING READY

FORMALIZE THE AGREEMENT

If an employer and a union have an informal agreement to establish a RAP, they should formalize it through such options as:

Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)

Negotiate contract language to incorporate the creation and operation of the RAP, including the establishment of a joint apprenticeship committee (JAC) to run the RAP, and employer financial contributions.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

If the RAP initiative begins between contracts, an MOU can define the terms for establishing the JAC and starting up the RAP. The parties should state in the MOU that they both agree to incorporate the language into the next CBA.

FORM A JOINT APPRENTICESHIP COMMITTEE (JAC)

A JAC will lead the program and ensure the apprentices meet the skill requirements. The committee, composed of equal numbers of union and employer representatives, has a chairperson and a secretary and regular meetings, and works with the apprenticeship coordinators to fulfill its role.

Role of JAC

Strategy

Formulate strategy to develop and implement apprenticeship program.

Implementation

Develop RAP standards and guide implementation.

Program Oversight

Actively review program outcomes and work by the apprenticeship coordinator(s).

Ongoing Improvement

Establish process of feedback, review, and continuous improvement of the RAP.

STEP 2: PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT



Identify an occupation for the apprenticeship.

- Designate an occupation based on the workforce needs of the employer(s).
- If necessary, conduct a needs assessment to pick an occupation.



Define work processes for on-the-job training (OJT).

- Review existing work processes and training to customize.
- Designate subject matter experts from management and labor to review and validate the work process.
- Develop an OJT checklist for each occupation.



Customize the related technical instruction (RTI).

- Identify training needs for coursework and classroom instruction.
- Research local, in-person or online training options.
- Identify the RTI provider.



Develop apprentice recruitment and selection policies.

- Establish recruitment and selection policies and assessment procedures.
- Develop an orientation program for the apprentices.



Develop an OJT mentorship plan and selection process.

- Develop a plan and selection process for an OJT mentorship program.
- Select or develop a train-the-trainer program.



Register the standards of the apprenticeship.

- Connect with the federal Office of Apprenticeship or state apprenticeship agency.
- Determine wage scale and the ratio of apprentices to journeyworkers.
- Complete sponsor application and standards.
- Submit standards for registration.



STEP 3: IMPLEMENTATION

Launch and Implement the Program

Launch and implement the program by appointing apprenticeship coordinators from both labor and management, onboarding apprentices, and assigning trained mentors. Begin the on-the-job training (OJT) plan alongside initial classroom instruction (RTI) to fully activate the program.

STEP 4: EVALUATION

Monitor, Evaluate, and Improve the Program

Monitor and evaluate the program by tracking apprentice progress, documenting outcomes, and reporting data to the appropriate state or federal system. Establish a process for resolving complaints and utilize feedback and evaluations to continually improve the program.

Funding

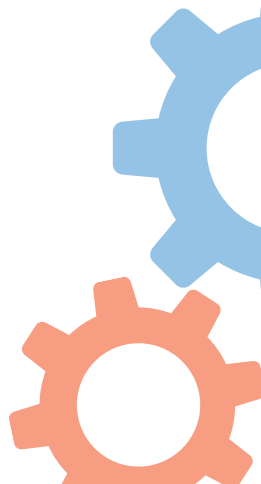
Sustaining the RAP, especially beyond the first cohort, is critical. An employer should commit to investing in the RAP as part of its regular budget, and this should meet the baseline funding requirements; external funding can supplement this foundation. In the construction trades, most joint RAPs are funded by a trust fund with contributions made by the employer while the trustees jointly manage the funds.

Employer contributions:

- Trust fund, negotiated and jointly managed by the employer and union
- Managed by the employer as part of their budget

External funding, to supplement employer contributions:

- Federal and state funding, such as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
- American Job Centers (workforce investment boards)
- Private philanthropy



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Apprenticeship is a Partnership

- **Employer(s)/sponsor**—Hires apprentices and hosts the RAP.
- **Group sponsor**—A third party that sponsors the RAP on behalf of multiple employers by coordinating standards, administrative matters, training, and resources.
- **Union** (this makes a “joint” program)—Participates and co-manages the RAP.
- **Joint Apprenticeship Committee (JAC)**—Governs the RAP.
- **Apprenticeship coordinators**—Union and management designees implement the RAP.
- **Subject matter experts** (workers, managers, and external experts)—Customize and validate content for the RTI and OJT.
- **Training partners**—Provide classroom training and OJT mentorship training.
- **Community organizations**—Support recruitment and services to support the apprentices’ completion.
- **State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAA) or federal Office of Apprenticeship (OA)**—Register the programs and ensure compliance (see [Department of Labor map](#) for more details).

The Role of Apprenticeship Coordinator(s)

The employer and union should each designate an apprenticeship coordinator. These individuals work closely with the JAC and serve as the primary program administrators. They have several important roles, including:

- Coordinating all aspects of OJT, including mentors, training and recordkeeping.
- Recruiting, selecting and enrolling apprentices using agreed-upon criteria.
- Providing each apprentice with work agreements, classroom materials, course schedules and progress reports.
- Maintaining records of all activities; informing federal or state apprenticeship offices of the outcome for each apprentice.
- Serving as a nexus between industry standards, training providers, employers and apprentices.
- Promoting the program inside and outside the worksite(s).



Pre-apprenticeship Programs

A preparation program approved by the JAC can prepare participants to enter and be successful in the RAP. Known as pre-apprenticeships, they are great opportunities to work with community-based organizations for increased recruitment and to provide wraparound services. A pre-apprenticeship has a curriculum based on the skill requirements of the apprenticeship, and often includes career awareness, tours of workplaces and observing the work, interview preparation and résumé development, and life skills. Graduation from the pre-apprenticeship may allow for advanced standing in some RAPs.

- Pre-apprenticeships should include the following key characteristics:
- Connectivity—A direct partnership with the RAP.
- Alignment—Focus on the same occupation as the RAP.
- Commitment—The RAP partner provides at least one of the following:
 - Facility tours
 - Internships, externships or co-op opportunities
 - Guaranteed job interviews
 - Guaranteed acceptance into the RAP
 - Career counseling

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