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# A BRIEF HISTORY OF APPRENTICESHIP

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An Intelligent Partnerships Publication



# A Brief History of Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships have a long history, beginning in the Middle Ages, when formal education was not accessible.

Traditionally, apprentices trained under a master craftsman in a certain trade. In exchange for room and board, apprentices would begin training and working at the age of 10-15. Most contracts lasted for seven years before either becoming a master craftsman or a journeyman. Whereas master craftsmen would own their workshop, journeymen were considered skilled employees and earned wages.

This apprenticeship model is somewhat still maintained among trades, such as those occupations in the construction sector represented in the National Building Trades Unions (NABTU), the auto industry, or the manufacturing industry. In these models, Apprentices receive a certain percentage of a journeyman's wage, which progressively increases throughout the duration of the Apprenticeship until they are classified as a journeyman and receive commensurate compensation.

While Apprenticeship has largely been utilized within the trades, the United States has begun to expand into other sectors – such as Information Technology, Healthcare, and Finance – via the Registered Apprenticeship Program.





# History of Apprenticeship and Workforce Training Legislation

Historically, legislation affecting apprenticeship has been passed in the wake of an economic recession or depression in order to rapidly train and bring workers into the workforce, thereby creating a sustainable pipeline of skilled workers.

## Smith-Hughes Act (1917)

The Smith-Hughes Act was legislation created to expand vocational courses as businesses and trade unions recognized the need for skilled labor due to the rapid industrialization that occurred in the United States in the wake of World War I. This Act was the first time the federal government invested in secondary vocational education. Trade and industrial education, agriculture, and home economics were included in the Smith-Hughes Act to create opportunities for women in jobs that also emphasized domestic skills like sewing.

Source: [Britannica](#)

## National Industrial Recovery Act (1933)

Passed during the Great Depression, the National Industrial Recovery Act was part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Prior to the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), apprenticeship programs were largely unregulated. Though the Supreme Court declared NIRA unconstitutional, the Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins went on to establish the Federal Committee on Apprenticeship, which was tasked with recommending federal policies for apprenticeships. This would ultimately lead to the passage of the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937.

Source: [The Catalog](#)

## George-Deen Act of 1936

The George-Deen Act allotted \$14 million in funds for agriculture, home economics, and trade and industrial education. It also expanded vocational education to include teacher education and training for marketing occupations.

Source: [CUPDF](#)

## National Apprenticeship Act (“Fitzgerald Act”) of 1937

The National Apprenticeship Act of 1937 established minimum standards for apprenticeship programs. It would ultimately be amended to give the U.S. Department of Labor jurisdiction over issuing regulations on apprenticeship programs regarding apprentices' health, safety, and welfare. They were also tasked with encouraging the hiring and employment of apprentices through contracts.

Source: [Department of Labor](#)

## George-Barden Act 1946

The passage of the George-Barden Act built upon the previous Acts by allotting \$29 million for the program, which doubled previous funding. In line with the flexibility that the George-Deen Act offered, the newest iteration allowed state boards of vocational education to distribute the funds into specified fields. In addition to instructor and supervisor salaries, a limited amount of monies were allocated for out-of-school youth programs and the purchase or rent of necessary equipment for instruction, training, guidance, and research. This Act also added funding for Future Farmers of America and the New Farmers of America.

Source: [The Department of Labor](#)

## National Defense Education Act of 1958

The National Defense Education Act acted as an extended and enhanced science, mathematics, and foreign language instruction in schools, and it added data processing training as a technical occupation under apprenticeship.

Source: [History Archives](#)

## Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962

This Act is considered to have established the first major federal jobs training program. It targeted unemployed and underemployed persons for teaching new skills and upskilling workers.

Source: [Department of Labor](#) Photo Source: [JFK Library](#)





## **Vocational Education Act of 1963**

The Vocational Education Act of 1963 replaced the Smith- Hughes Act of 1917 and created an advisory panel whose purpose was to evaluate vocational educational programs and make recommendations for change. This Act also increased funding to \$225 million, created work study programs, reduced federal oversight, and promoted gender equity. As for the curriculum, agriculture was expanded beyond farming, allocated funds for research and experimental programs, and expanded home economics programs.

This was the first time that gender equality was addressed in occupational guidance. Additionally, funding by the state was now appropriated based upon the student population, with special funds for academically and economically disadvantaged and disabled students.

Source: [Institute of Education Sciences](#)

## **Vocational Education Amendments of 1968**

These amendments marked the first time post-secondary students were included in vocational legislation. Under these amendments, additional funding was set aside for specific populations.

Source: [Congress. Gov](#)

## **Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act Amendments of 1990**

Under these amendments, modern day vocational education began taking shape. These changes allowed for accountability expansion and programs aligned with secondary and post-secondary academics and business partnerships.

Source: [CUPDF](#)

## **Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act Amendments of 1998**

These Amendments further aligned academics and business partnerships connected to the programs.

Source: [CUPDF](#)

## **Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act of 2016**

As the name alludes, this update strengthened the CTE Act of 2006 by streamlining funding and program requirements.

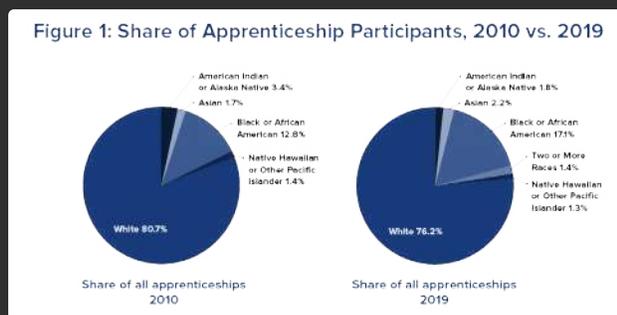
Source: [CUPDF](#)

# The History of DEIA in Apprenticeship

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) policies have not traditionally been included in CTE and Apprenticeship legislation. In fact, acts like the Smith-Hughes Act specifically tracked women into home economics trades and African Americans into agricultural trades, while White males were provided with more access to the more lucrative trade and industrial education sector. Furthermore, the overall system of apprenticeship has inherent negative connotations with terminology like "indentured apprentices". With the foundations in slavery, this term is understandably off-putting to many people, especially descendants of former enslaved people. The ensuing results of all these circumstances have led to decades of occupational segregation and wage gaps that are still being felt today.

## Modern DEIA in Apprenticeship

In recent years, the Department of Labor has made a concerted effort to incorporate stronger DEIA policies into Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs), which are federally sanctioned Apprenticeships. According to a study conducted from 2010 to 2019, representation of most minority groups in RAPs increased:



Though RAPs have become more diverse, it is clear that there is still a great opportunity for improvement. For example, eliminating the term "indentured" in favor of "registered" has the potential of making an immediate impact upon inclusivity in RAPs.

[Image Source](#)

## The Future of Apprenticeship

With a long, proven success of Apprenticeship in the United States, the Department of Labor is making a concerted effort to expand Registered Apprenticeships. Recognized as an effective and efficient method to rapidly train a skilled workforce, this effort is more important than ever as America recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and prepares for the execution of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that President Biden signed into law on November 15, 2021.

While apprenticeship has been integral to building trades, the expansion of Registered Apprenticeship will be important in getting the workforce into family-transforming careers. The opportunities presented through Registered Apprenticeship will not only provide workers with necessary skills, but they will also increase the available pool of skilled workers for organizations of all kinds as Registered Apprenticeship expands into new sectors.

Source: [The White House](#)

# The Future of Apprenticeship and DEIA

With the support of the Department of Labor to expand DEIA within RAPs, along with the overall expansion of RAPs, there is a great opportunity for organizations to embrace DEIA policies and practices via Registered Apprenticeship. Utilizing Registered Apprenticeship to create a pipeline of highly skilled workers and creates an equitable pathway of entry for traditionally underrepresented populations. Furthermore, true integrations of DEIA policies and practices into an organization have been proven to have a positive bottom-line impact for organizations by reducing group think, expanding customer base, improving productivity, and reducing turnover.

## Apprenticeship and Automation

The rapid advances in technology have ushered in a new world of work where automation has become integral to the everyday functioning of most businesses. While this automation has led to the elimination of some jobs, especially redundant jobs like bank tellers and grocery check stands, it has created many more jobs than will be lost.

Automation is not just limited to these two jobs; it will inevitably affect every sector. Because automation boosts efficiency and productivity, other jobs are created as a byproduct. These new jobs will require that the worker “can complement the new automation and perform tasks beyond the abilities of machines” (Brookings). Furthermore, according to Brookings, “workers who can gain more education and training, either on the job or elsewhere, can learn new tasks and become more complementary with machines.” Apprenticeship is the perfect medium to help equip the workforce for these much-needed skills.

Additionally, there is an increased need for technical jobs to help support the functioning of the machines and robots used in automation and artificial intelligence. The primary jobs that support automation are mainly concentrated in the Information Technology sector, where Registered Apprenticeships are already instrumental in educating and training a workforce that can make an immediate impact on an organization through the implementation of automation.

Source: [Brookings](#)



# The Future of Work and Apprenticeship

As the future world of work continues to transform, the rapid training and onboarding of workers is becoming increasingly more important. As organizations continue to pivot in order to maintain relevant and increase their market share, it is imperative to capture the human capital that longtime employees offer. Apprenticeship is the perfect tool for the incoming workforce to gain this valuable institutional knowledge, as mentorship is a major element of Registered Apprenticeship. These new workers will not only be equipped with the best training via the Registered Apprenticeship Program, they will also benefit from a mentor who can transfer valuable knowledge that cannot be found in a training manual.

Though the original vocational/apprenticeship legislation focused on trade and industry, agriculture, and home economics, the current iteration of Apprenticeship has evolved to include 9 sectors and has plans to expand to more in the coming years. The expansion of Registered Apprenticeship Programs has also seen changes to the program model. Whereas the traditional Apprenticeship is time-based, now Apprenticeships often follow a competency-based model where Apprentices must hit certain markers (determined by the RAP) before progressing to the next tier of their Apprenticeship. Some models follow a blended design, which incorporates both time and competency into the program.

## Remote Workforce and Apprenticeship

The COVID-19 Pandemic has forced the entire world to make giant pivots, with the rapid embrace of technology perhaps forever changing the way the workforce reports to work. According to Forbes, “twenty-five percent of all professional jobs in North America will be remote by 2022, and remote opportunities will continue to increase through 2023.”

Source: [Forbes](#)

Registered Apprenticeship Programs have already begun to adapt to this new normal. The Healthcare Career Advancement Program (H-CAP) conducts its RAPs almost fully remotely by utilizing digital platform tools to deliver training for occupations such as medical billing. As Registered Apprenticeship Programs expand into new sectors, they will be able to leverage the success of H-CAP's existing remote program to model remote delivery of new successful programs. For more information about Apprenticeship from Intelligent Partnerships, visit [ipartnerships.net](http://ipartnerships.net)



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