



Starting and Registering an Apprenticeship Program:

A Practical Guide for Employers,
Sponsors, & Partners



Registered Apprenticeship Programs

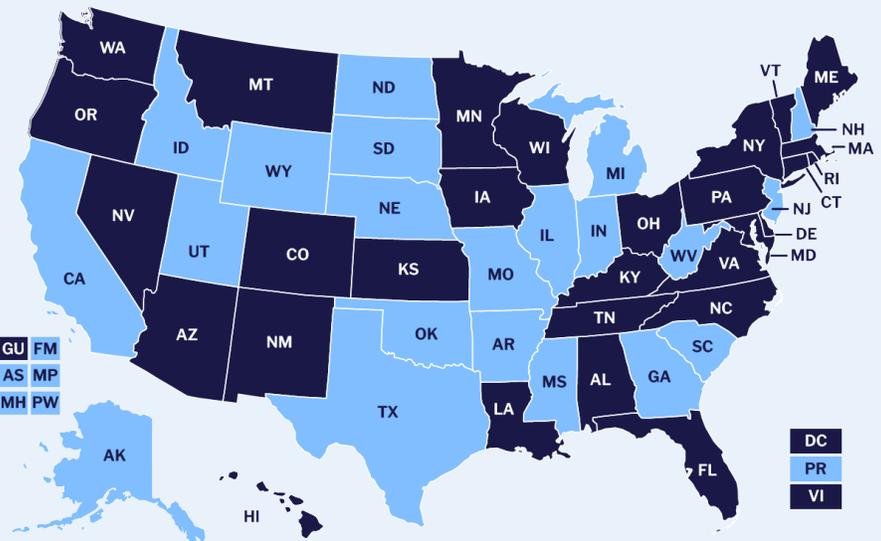
Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) combine paid work experience, structured learning, mentorship, and nationally recognized credentials. This guide provides a step-by-step overview to help employers, sponsors, and partners develop and register a RAP, whether through the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or a State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA). Organizations can also seek support from apprenticeship intermediaries.

While this guide focuses on the general federal process, it's important to note that some SAA states may have additional or slightly different requirements, forms, or procedures. Employers should always confirm the specific process that applies in their state. This guide is for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice.

Understanding OA vs SAA States

When registering a Registered Apprenticeship Program, it's important to determine whether your state is managed directly by the OA or by an SAA. OA states follow a standardized federal registration and compliance process through www.Apprenticeship.gov. In contrast, SAA states operate their own apprenticeship systems under federal oversight, but may have additional state-specific requirements, forms, and reporting processes.

To avoid delays or errors, program sponsors should confirm early which system applies in their state, connect with the appropriate office, and ensure they are following the correct steps. This helps ensure their program meets both federal and state standards and that apprentices earn credentials that are recognized nationwide. Visit the [Apprenticeship State System](#) website for the most up-to-date contact information and requirements for each state.



Map of OA and SAA States

- Office of Apprenticeship (OA)
- Recognized State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAA)

STEP 01

Outline Your Program

The U.S. DOL has established over 1000 Registered Apprenticeship Programs in 20 industries. If your desired apprenticeship occupation does not currently exist, you can submit the occupation to an apprenticeship consultant to determine if the occupation is eligible for a Registered Apprenticeship Program.

- ✓ Search the **DOL database** or the **Urban Institute's Apprenticeship Standards Database** to see if the occupation already exists.

→ If it exists, see if the DOL training plan aligns with the program you'd like to implement.

→ If it does mostly align, take note of the elements you'd like to customize to your program and edit the occupation accordingly.

- ✓ If there is no existing occupation in the database, use an existing occupation as a template or guide to creating a new one.

→ Identify the Work Activities associated with the occupation that are necessary for Apprentices to complete as part of On-the-Job Training in order for workers to be successful.

→ Sample Competency-Based Occupational **Frameworks in Software Development**.

- ✓ Create entry requirements.

→ The requirements that Apprentices must meet to enter into the program must be standard and equitable for all candidates. Common requirements include:



Be 18 years of age.



High school diploma (or equivalent).



Proficiency in algebra or other math.

→ Partner with a Pre-Apprenticeship Program that can help candidates meet these requirements.



Job Corps and YouthBuild are federally funded programs that exemplify characteristics of a quality pre-apprenticeship program.

- ✓ Decide if your program is time-based, competency-based, or a hybrid of both.

→ Time-Based Registered Apprenticeship Programs require that a set number of hours of On-the-Job Training and classroom instruction be met before progressing in the apprenticeship.

→ Competency-Based Registered Apprenticeship Programs focus more on Apprentices meeting certain skill requirements before progressing.

→ Hybrid Registered Apprenticeships use a mix of both models.

Design Your Program Components

There are five key components to every Registered Apprenticeship Program.



Paid Job:

Apprentices are paid employees. Apprentices are paid on a progressive wage plan, meaning as they hit certain markers (time- or skill-based), the apprentice's wage increases.

- Create a wage progression schedule based upon the markers your program sets forth. It is important for employers to ensure all wages meet or exceed state, federal, and local minimum wage requirements at all levels.
- Employers can adjust the entry rate and progression intervals to match industry norms, regional wage standards, and skill demands.
- In a competency-based model, progression may occur when specific skills are demonstrated, rather than at fixed time intervals.
- The following is a sample of how to provide wage increases throughout an apprentice's participation in a program.

Sample Wage Progression Scale

Level	Milestone Achieved	Hourly Rate	Notes
Entry Level	Program Start (Day 1)	\$18/hr.	The apprentice is new to the trade. (Minimum Wage)
Level 1	After 6 months or 1,000 OJT hours	\$20/hr.	Completion of initial competencies
Level 2	After 12 months or 2,000 OJT hours	\$23/hr.	Mid-level skills and classroom hours
Level 3	After 18 months or 3,000 OJT hours	\$25/hr.	Advanced competencies completed
Completion	Upon program completion (e.g., 4,000 OJT hours + RTI completed)	\$28/hr.	Certified worker or equivalent



On-the-Job Learning (OJT):

For a RAP to be successful, apprentices must receive high-quality training. There should be a structured plan for delivering the training to ensure that an apprentice is provided with all the necessary tools to become a successful, highly trained employee.

- All approved occupations have established training plans. Employers can use these, tailor an existing plan to their specific needs, or create their own outline.



Related Technical Instruction (RTI):

Apprentices must receive supplemental classroom education. For this requirement, organizations can partner with an educational institution or deliver the education internally.

- Define the skills and knowledge necessary for Apprentices to be successful. Ask current workers and supervisors what information they feel is necessary and beneficial for employees to receive.



Sample Competency-Based Occupational Frameworks in Advanced Manufacturing.

- Decide if RTI will be conducted in person, virtually, or in a hybrid **model**.

- Decide if the instruction will be delivered internally – if so, build the model.

- If not, partner with educational institutions to design the program. Consider:



Consider partnering with community colleges, vocational schools, online providers, etc.



Visit the Partner Finer website for RTI providers.



Mentorship:

Organizations that employ RAPs must have an internal mentorship program. Each apprentice is designated a mentor to help them throughout the apprenticeship.

- The **mentor program** helps pass along institutional knowledge and answers questions about the skills necessary for the apprentice to be successful in the RAP.



Credentials:

Upon successful completion of the RAP, the apprentice receives a nationally recognized credential that is accepted across the industry.

STEP 03

Build Key Partnerships

03

There are a variety of partners that can help create a successful Registered Apprenticeship Program.



Apprenticeship Offices help by providing technical assistance and support to a program.



- ✓ Sponsors (any person, association, committee, or organization that operates a RAP) assume “full responsibility for administration and operation of the apprenticeship program.”
- ✓ Educators are necessary for the classroom learning element of an apprenticeship. RAPs can deliver classroom education via a 4-year college, community college, occupational school, or career and technical school.
- ✓ **Intermediaries** are organizations that help organizations create, launch, and expand apprenticeship programs.
- ✓ **Workforce Development Boards, American Job Centers, and Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS)** are all resources that help connect employers with job seekers.

STEP 04

Establish Management and Compliance Processes

04

Strong operational processes are the backbone of sustainable apprenticeship programs, ensuring consistency, compliance, and quality across all aspects of the program.

- ✓ **Compliance Requirements:**
Registered Apprenticeship Programs must comply with the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) requirements outlined in Title 29 CFR Part 30. Under the regulation, program sponsors must:

- Ensure their program does not discriminate against an apprentice with regard to any recruitment/outreach efforts, selection procedures, benefits, terms, conditions, or privileges associated with the program.
- Adopt and publicly post an EEO pledge, affirming their commitment to providing equal opportunity, and inform all applicants for apprenticeship, apprentices, and individuals connected with the administration or operation of the RA program.
- Implement measures to ensure that its outreach and recruitment efforts are universal to all persons available for apprenticeship within the sponsor’s relevant recruitment area without regard to race, sex, ethnicity, or disability.
- Implement measures to ensure their programs are free from harassment, intimidation, and retaliation. As well as provide anti-harassment training to all individuals connected with the administration or operation of the program.
- Designate an individual, like a coordinator, to oversee and ensure compliance, and they must have the proper support and resources to ensure effective implementation.

- Collect and maintain demographic data, records of selection procedures, outreach efforts, and progress of apprentices to ensure compliance.
- Develop an affirmative action plan for programs with 5+ apprentices who have been operating for at least 2 years.



Establish a Record Keeping System:

Creating and maintaining a database is integral to the success of any Registered Apprenticeship Program.

- Use a secure digital or physical filing system where all program and apprentice data is organized, accessible, and regularly updated.
- Develop standardized forms for applications, selection scoring, apprenticeship agreements, OJL logs, and classroom instruction records.
- Organize records by apprentice and by program year. Ensure records are labeled, dated, and easy to access for compliance reviews or audits.
- Protect sensitive apprentice information, particularly demographic and complaint data, by limiting access to authorized personnel only.
- Keep detailed records of recruitment efforts, interviews, selections, promotions, completions, terminations, and any related communications.
- Conduct periodic self-assessments of your record-keeping and EEO compliance processes to identify and correct gaps early.
- Ensure staff, reviewers, and mentors are trained on EEO obligations, documentation requirements, and anti-discrimination policies. The Employer and Program Sponsor



Design Affirmative Action Plan:

Even if your program does not yet have that number, it is important to begin to **develop an AAP** for the future that includes:

- Establishing inclusion goals by race, sex, ethnicity, and individuals with disabilities.
- Creating a plan for targeted outreach, recruitment, and retention.
- An availability analysis comparing your workforce to the available workforce by race, sex & ethnicity.
- A utilization analysis comparing your workforce to the federal goal for individuals with disabilities.
- Annual self-assessment review to ensure the sponsor operates a program free from discrimination.

STEP 05

Register and Launch Your Program

Once the occupation, training plan, and partnerships have been established, an organization can register a program.

- ✓ **Submit program paperwork** either to the U.S. DOL Office of Apprenticeship or your State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA).

→ Review state-specific forms and instructions if in an SAA state.

→ Connect with your local apprenticeship office or consultant for support.

- ✓ Once your program is approved and registered, you can begin recruiting, selecting, and enrolling apprentices.

→ Begin marketing and recruiting apprentices.

→ Implement the OJL, RTI, mentorship, and support structures.

→ Monitor, evaluate, and adjust the program to ensure continuous improvement.

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