



Your Role in Registered Apprenticeship:

A Guide for Employers and Industry Partners



Why Employers Matter in Apprenticeship Programs

Registered Apprenticeship is a smart investment in your business and the future workforce. As industries face growing talent gaps and the pressure to stay competitive, employers are increasingly turning to apprenticeships to build strong pipelines of skilled, job-ready talent.



Employer partners play a vital role in this equation. By offering hands-on training, mentorship, and workplace support, employers directly influence apprentice success. Your workplace becomes the classroom, your team becomes the mentors, and your leadership helps unlock pathways for the next generation of workers. However, apprenticeship works best when everyone knows their role.

This guide helps clarify what's expected from sponsors, employers, and partners and how working together creates a stronger, more efficient, and higher-performing apprenticeship program. It also shows how clear responsibilities lead to better outcomes for everyone—businesses, training partners, and people entering the workforce.

What Is a Program Sponsor vs. Employer Partner

Employers can participate in Registered Apprenticeship programs (RAPs) through two primary roles: program sponsor or employer partner. Understanding the difference between these roles is essential for clarifying responsibilities, ensuring compliance, and successful partnerships.

Program Sponsor



A program sponsor is the entity legally responsible for registering and operating the program. This includes ensuring compliance with all federal and state regulations, particularly those outlined in 29 CFR Part 29 (program standards) and 29 CFR Part 30 (Equal Employment Opportunity in Apprenticeship). Sponsors may be employers, joint labor-management organizations, industry associations, educational institutions, workforce boards, or nonprofit intermediaries.

Key Responsibilities:

✓ **Program Registration:**

Submit and maintain official registration with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or a State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA).

✓ **Related Technical Instruction (RTI) Oversight:**

Coordinate or provide access to classroom or online instruction aligned with occupational skills.

✓ **Compliance Reporting**

Submit required documentation such as apprentice registration forms, demographic data, wage progression records, and EEO compliance reports.

✓ **Program Design:**

Develop the apprenticeship standards, including work processes, duration, and competencies.

✓ **Affirmative Action & EEO:**

Create and implement Affirmative Action Plans (AAPs) if required and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies as required by law.

✓ **Monitoring & Quality Assurance:**

Ensure all training providers and employer partners meet program expectations and compliance standards.

Benefits of Being a Sponsor:

Full Program Control:

01

Ability to design, update, and scale the apprenticeship program to meet organizational or industry needs.

Access to Funding:

02

Eligible to apply for and manage federal, state, and philanthropic grants that support apprenticeships.

Talent Development Pipeline:

03

Build a long-term, tailored workforce pipeline while branding your organization as an industry leader in workforce development.

Recognition & Influence:

04

Gain visibility as a registered sponsor, with opportunities to shape industry standards and practices.

Employer Partner



An employer partner participates in a RAP that is registered and managed by another entity (the sponsor). Employer partners host apprentices at their job sites and are responsible for delivering high-quality, on-the-job training (OJT) as outlined in the program's work process schedule. The employer works closely with the sponsor to ensure alignment with training objectives, data tracking, and compliance measures.

Key Responsibilities:

✓ **On-the-Job Training:**

Provide structured, supervised work experiences that align with the program's training plan.

✓ **Mentorship:**

Assign qualified mentors to guide apprentices, reinforce skills, and model workplace professionalism.

✓ **Workplace Environment:**

Ensure the job site is inclusive, safe, and in compliance with all applicable labor and safety laws.

✓ **Performance Reporting:**

Track and report apprentice attendance, evaluations, and progression data back to the sponsor.

✓ **Support Compliance Goals:**

Participate in EEO activities and ensure that apprentices are treated fairly on the job.

Benefits of Being an Employer Partner:

Reduced Administrative Burden:

01

Sponsors handle registration, compliance paperwork, and program audits, allowing employers to focus on training.

Technical Assistance

02

Receive guidance, tools, and templates from the sponsor to support implementation and performance tracking.

Workforce Development

03

Gain early access to motivated workers trained to meet specific business needs, with minimal cost to the employer.

Scalable Entry Point

04

This option is ideal for small—to mid-sized businesses or those new to apprenticeship, offering a pathway to participate without taking on full sponsorship responsibilities.

By clearly delineating roles and responsibilities, program sponsors and employer partners can build effective, compliant, and high-impact apprenticeship programs that benefit businesses, apprentices, and the broader workforce ecosystem.

Types of Sponsors and Partners in Registered Apprenticeship Program



Registered Apprenticeship programs are built on partnerships. Understanding the different sponsor types—and the roles of key partners like employers—helps ensure clarity, compliance, and effective program delivery.

Types of Program Sponsors

Program sponsors are the entities officially registered with the U.S. Department of Labor or a State Apprenticeship Agency. They hold legal responsibility for the design, operation, and compliance of the apprenticeship program.

01

Individual Employer Sponsor

A single employer who registers and manages the apprenticeship program, providing both OJT and RTI.

02

Group Joint Sponsor

A partnership between a group of employers and one or more labor unions. Both share responsibility for training and program operations, often through a joint apprenticeship committee.

03

Group Non-Joint Sponsor

A group of employers that jointly operate an apprenticeship program without union involvement, often coordinated through a trade association or industry group.

04

Intermediary Sponsor

An organization, such as a nonprofit, workforce board, or trade association, that sponsors the program on behalf of multiple employers. They handle registration, compliance, and coordination while partnering employers provide OJT.

05

Educational Institution Sponsor

A community college, university, or technical school that registers the program and delivers related instruction. These sponsors partner with employers for the work-based learning portion.

06

Industry or Sector Partnership Sponsor

A collaborative sponsor model involving stakeholders across an industry—employers, educators, unions, and workforce organizations—working together to manage a scalable, sector-focused apprenticeship program.

Key Apprenticeship Partners

While the sponsor holds legal accountability, successful RAPs rely on other key partners, especially employers.

01

Employer Sponsor / Employer Partner

An employer that provides structured OJT and works in partnership with a program sponsor is not legally responsible for the entire program. However, the employer is critical to delivering high-quality, hands-on training aligned with the apprenticeship standards.

02

Related Technical Instruction Providers

Colleges, training centers, or education vendors that deliver the classroom or online instruction portion of the program, often under contract with the sponsor.

03

Labor Organizations

Unions that may co-sponsor a program (in joint sponsorship) or serve as a partner by supplying mentors, training resources, and advocacy.

04

Workforce & Community Organizations

Entities that help with outreach, recruitment, supportive services, and wraparound supports, especially for people who are underrepresented in apprenticeship.

Who Does What: Staying Aligned on Key Responsibilities

Even though the sponsor is accountable for compliance, employers are responsible for delivering the actual work experience. This makes alignment crucial for quality, retention, and compliance.

Program Sponsors Handle:



Develop and Implement Affirmative Action Plans

Create a written plan that outlines goals, strategies, and actions to increase participation from underrepresented populations in the apprenticeship program.



Conduct Universal Outreach and Recruitment

Partner with community-based organizations, workforce development boards, and education providers to ensure recruitment reaches a broad pool of applicants, including women, people of color, veterans, and individuals with disabilities.



Maintain Demographic and Progression Data

Track and analyze race, ethnicity, gender, and other relevant demographic data for applicants and apprentices. Record progress through the program to detect and address any disparities in advancement or completion.



Monitor and Enforce Nondiscriminatory Selection Procedures

Ensure that selection criteria and processes are applied consistently and fairly, without bias. This includes standardizing interview questions, scoring rubrics, and eligibility criteria.



Submit Reports and Updates to Regulatory Agencies

Provide regular updates and compliance documentation to the OA or the applicable SAA, including apprentice registration, demographic reporting, and compliance audits.

Employer Partners Are Expected To:



Supervise Apprentices and Provide Mentorship

Assign skilled, qualified mentors to guide apprentices through hands-on training. Ensure mentors receive appropriate training on EEO practices and inclusive supervision.



Ensure a Harassment-Free, Fair Workplace

Uphold workplace policies that prevent discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. Address concerns promptly and report issues to the sponsor as needed.



Report Attendance, Skills Progress, and Job Performance

Track apprentice hours, milestones, and job performance in alignment with the work process schedule and share this information with the sponsor regularly.



Communicate Apprenticeship Feedback to the Sponsor

Serve as a feedback channel between apprentices and the sponsor, helping to identify training gaps, workplace challenges, or support needs.



Support EEO Expectations in Daily Practice

Actively contribute to a safe work environment by treating all apprentices fairly, participating in sponsor-led training, and promoting equal opportunity values in team culture.



By working in tandem, sponsors and employer partners ensure that RAPs not only meet regulatory requirements but also provide fair, meaningful training experiences that prepare apprentices for long-term career success.

Common Pitfalls to Avoid

When roles and responsibilities between program sponsors and employer partners are not clearly defined, programs can suffer from inefficiencies, compliance risks, and poor apprentice outcomes. These issues often stem from preventable misunderstandings or a lack of formal coordination.

Common Challenges Include:

Assumptions Without Clarification

Sponsors may assume employers are conducting mentor evaluations, while employers may believe the sponsor is handling EEO-related complaint tracking. These unchecked assumptions can leave critical compliance tasks incomplete.

Communication Gaps

Infrequent communication or lack of structured feedback loops can lead to missed deadlines, delayed reporting, or misalignment in apprentice performance assessments and wage progression.

No Written Agreements or Frameworks

Relying on verbal agreements or informal practices can create confusion, especially during staff transitions or audits. Without documentation, it becomes challenging to track responsibilities, enforce standards, or maintain consistency.

How to Avoid These Pitfalls:

Proactive planning and shared accountability are key to building a strong apprenticeship partnership. Here are some strategies to prevent common issues:

01

Use Clear, Written Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs):

Document each party's responsibilities with signed agreements that can be referenced, updated, and shared.

02

Set Regular Check-Ins

Schedule routine meetings or check-ins (monthly or quarterly) to review apprentice progress, troubleshoot issues, and ensure ongoing alignment.

03

Share Tools, Templates, and Training

Provide employers with compliance checklists, mentor evaluation forms, EEO guidance, and communication protocols to ensure they have the resources needed to meet expectations.

Defining Roles With MOUs & Sub-Agreements

A well-drafted Memorandum of Understanding or sub-agreement is more than a formality—it's a strategic tool that creates clarity, accountability, and alignment. These documents help avoid duplication, missed obligations, or confusion by clearly outlining:

Apprentice Supervision and Feedback Processes:

Who provides day-to-day guidance, how progress is evaluated, and when feedback is reported to the sponsor.

Responsibilities for EEO and Workplace Conduct

Which party handles complaint intake, investigations, and resolution, and how workplace policies will be enforced to protect apprentice rights.

Data Reporting Expectations

What data needs to be shared (e.g., attendance, evaluations, wage progression), how often, and through what format or system.

Site Visit and Evaluation Timelines

When and how the sponsor will conduct site visits, mentor evaluations, and program audits to ensure quality and compliance.

By formalizing these expectations in writing and maintaining open communication, sponsors and employer partners can build resilient, compliant, and high-performing apprenticeship programs that benefit everyone involved.

Bringing It All Together

Whether you are a program sponsor or an employer partner, your role is critical to the success of a Registered Apprenticeship program. At the heart of any effective apprenticeship initiative is shared compliance, a collaborative approach to meeting legal, operational, and educational responsibilities in a way that promotes quality, equity, and sustainability.

When each party understands and fulfills its role, the result is more than compliance; it's a program that delivers real value to apprentices, employers, and the broader workforce system. Shared compliance isn't just about avoiding penalties or checking boxes. It is about:



Protecting apprentices' rights and ensuring they receive a fair, inclusive training experience.



Reducing risk for sponsors and employers by clarifying who does what, and how.



Creating accountability leads to better decision-making, stronger partnerships, and continuous program improvement.



Building a workforce that includes everyone, which enhances business outcomes, community trust, and access to opportunity.

Key Reminders:

→ Clarify Roles Early:

Know what your organization is expected to do, and what the sponsor handles.

→ Put It in Writing:

Use MOUs or agreements to document shared responsibilities.

→ Check In and Adjust:

Regular updates and collaboration help address problems before they grow.

→ Use Available Tools:

Templates, checklists, and forms make it easier to stay on track.

Compliance shouldn't be seen as a burden; rather, it should be recognized as an opportunity. When approached strategically, compliance lays the groundwork for excellence. When employers and sponsors collaborate as genuine partners, apprenticeship evolves from merely being a workforce tool into an effective business strategy. This approach not only helps in building talent but also improves employee retention and enhances competitiveness in a changing economy.

By clarifying roles and collaborating, sponsors and employer partners can create fair, future-ready apprenticeship programs that nurture talent, elevate standards, and provide opportunities for the next generation of workers.



Memorandum of Understanding for the Registered Principal Apprenticeship

SECTION I: PARTIES

Program/Group Sponsor:

- **Organization Name:**
[Insert Partner Organization Name]
- **Address:**
[Insert Partner Address]
- **Primary Contact:**
[Insert Partner Contact Name and Title]
- **Email and Phone:**
[Insert Partner Contact Information]

Partner Organization:

- **Organization Name:**
[Insert Partner Organization Name]
- **Address:**
[Insert Partner Address]
- **Primary Contact:**
[Insert Partner Contact Name and Title]
- **Email and Phone:**
[Insert Partner Contact Information]

SECTION II: PURPOSE

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is to outline the roles and responsibilities of the parties involved in implementing a Registered Apprenticeship in **[Program Type/Role]** (“Program”). **[Program Sponsor Name]** shall serve as program sponsor, **[Training Partner Name]** shall serve as the Related Instruction Provider, and **[Employer Partner Name]** will serve as the apprentice Employers. All sponsors and partners will implement the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) in accordance with Title 29 CFR Parts 29 and 30 and the principles of shared compliance.

SECTION III: RESPONSIBILITIES OF [PROGRAM SPONSOR NAME]

A

Responsibilities of the program sponsor are fully outlined in the Standards of Apprenticeship 29 § CFR 29.5. **[Program Sponsor Name]** must conduct, operate, and administer this program in accordance with all applicable provisions of Title 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 29, subpart A, and part 30, and all relevant guidance issued by the Office of Apprenticeship (OA) and the State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA).



SECTION IV: RESPONSIBILITIES OF [EMPLOYER PARTNER NAME]

A

The Employer shall employ each apprentice in a **[Program Role]** position that facilitates hands-on training in the duties and responsibilities of an **[Program Role]**. Apprentices shall be paid according to the Employer's salary schedule for the apprentice position. Apprentices must earn pay increases, which may be according to the Employer's existing salary schedule or according to a new salary schedule created for the **[Program Role]** position.

B

The Employer certifies that all apprentices in the program shall be placed alongside a fully certified, high-quality **[Mentor Role]**, who will serve as a mentor. The employer certifies that any payments provided to assigned mentors will be the employer's financial responsibility unless otherwise indicated in a competitive grant program offered through the Program Sponsor.

C

The Employer acknowledges that apprentices must engage in administrative activities and training related to the following areas: **[List Relevant Focus Areas]**

D

The Employer acknowledges that apprentices will not serve as an **[Program Role]** before completion of the apprenticeship program.

E

The Employer shall assess the apprentice's progress in on-the-job competencies and make a final recommendation of competency mastery, as outlined in the Standards of the Program's Apprenticeship.

SECTION V: RESPONSIBILITIES OF [TRAINING PARTNER NAME]

A

The Training Provider agrees to provide coursework leading to an apprenticeship certification to become a **[Program Role]**.

B

The Training Provider agrees to allow the apprenticeship program to satisfy the on-the-job training requirements otherwise required for apprentice graduation.

C

The Training Provider agrees to provide wraparound support to the apprentice to ensure academic, career, and certification success.

D

The Training Provider shall assess the apprentice's progress along related technical instruction competencies and make a final recommendation of competency mastery, as outlined in the Program's Standards of Apprenticeship.



SECTION VI: JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES

A

The Program Sponsor and Partners agree to arrange for apprentices to complete all coursework while remaining full-time apprentices. On-the-job training requirements shall be arranged through the apprentice's full-time position.

B

Apprentices will not serve in the **[Program Role]** during the Program. They may be assigned to this role only after completing all certification and preparation requirements. The Employer isn't obligated to place the apprentice immediately after the Program; they should make reasonable efforts to do so as soon as possible.

C

The Program Sponsor and Partners agree to recruit apprentices from within their local communities, whenever possible.

D

The apprentice-candidate will apply to the Program, providing all requested application material, which may include a letter of recommendation from the Employer.

- a. The Program Sponsor and Partners will recommend apprentices, giving priority to Employer-recommended candidates.

E

The Program Sponsor and Partners agree to collect required performance, participation, and demographic data on each apprentice and to report such data to the Program Sponsor as needed to support compliance with federal, state, or grant-related requirements under the registered apprenticeship program.

This agreement is effective from [Start Date] to [End Date] and will be reviewed annually or as needed.

Program Signatory _____ **Date** _____

Print Name and Title _____

Employer Signatory _____ **Date** _____

Print Name and Title _____

Training Signatory _____ **Date** _____

Print Name and Title _____

Sample Partner Evaluation Form



Site Visit Protocol and Mentor Evaluation Form

To be completed by the sponsor or program manager to assess/evaluate quality, mentor performance, compliance, and effectiveness during apprenticeship site visits.

Site Visit Details	
Date of Visit:	Sponsor Representative:
Partner / Site Visited:	
Interviewed Apprentice(s)	

Site Visit Checklist
Program & Partnership Review Confirm that an active MOU or agreement exists, roles are clearly defined, and the partner has sufficient resources to support the apprenticeship.
Notes:
Compliance & EEO Verify that the EEO policy is posted, that staff understand complaint procedures, and that efforts are made to maintain a fair environment.
Notes:



Sample Partner Evaluation Form

Instruction & Training Quality

Ensure that on-the-job training and related instruction align with the work process schedule and are delivered by qualified personnel.

Notes:

Apprentice Experience

Interview apprentices to confirm they receive mentorship, feel supported, and are engaged in meaningful work aligned with program goals.

Notes:

Data, Reporting & Documentation

Review records for OJT hours, RTI attendance, evaluations, and confirm that timely reporting to the sponsor is occurring.

Notes:

Reviewer Notes/Recommendations

Use this section to document key findings, concerns, and any recommended follow-up actions.

Notes:



Sample Partner Evaluation Form

Mentor Evaluation Details

Date of Visit:

Sponsor Representative:

Partner / Site Visited:

Interviewed Apprentice(s):

Mentor Evaluation Review

1 = Does Not Meet Expectations, **2** = Needs Improvement, **3** = Meets Expectations, **4** = Exceeds Expectations, **5** = Exceptional Performance

Demonstrates industry knowledge: Understands and effectively applies relevant trade skills and standards.

Engages in effective apprentice supervision: Provides structured, timely guidance and ensures the apprentice is working on appropriate tasks.

Engages in effective apprentice supervision: Provides structured, timely guidance and ensures the apprentice is working on appropriate tasks.

Encourages a respectful and fair environment: Fosters a worksite culture that supports diversity and ensures the apprentice feels welcome and supported.

Provides timely feedback and communicates with the sponsor: Shares apprentice progress regularly and addresses concerns promptly.

Overall Comments or Recommendations

Provide any observations about the mentor's effectiveness, areas for improvement, or successes.

Notes:

Next Steps or Training Needs (if any):

Identify any follow-up actions or support that may help improve the mentor's performance.

Notes:

Sample Apprentices Feedback Form



Apprentice Anonymous Feedback Survey

Your feedback helps improve the quality and fairness of your apprenticeship program. This survey is anonymous and confidential.

Do you feel you are being trained in a safe and respectful work environment?

Notes:

Do you know who to contact if you experience discrimination or harassment?

Notes:

Has your mentor been supportive and accessible?

Notes:

Do you feel your work experience is helping you grow in the trade?

Notes:

Is there anything you would like to see improved in your apprenticeship?

Notes:

Additional Resources

For more information and practical tools to support your program's compliance with Title 29 CFR Part 30, we recommend exploring the following resources:



Jobs For The Future

5 Equal Employment Opportunity Steps to Take When Setting Up a Registered Apprenticeship Program:

This tool documents the steps RA sponsors need to take under the Apprenticeship Equal Employment Opportunity regulations, 29 CFR Part 30.

5 Initial Steps to Equal Employment Opportunity for Registered Youth and Adult Apprenticeships:

This self-paced, online training course walks you through the first five actions RA programs must complete to meet EEO obligations.

Responses to Potential Sponsors' Concerns About Equal Employment Opportunity in Apprenticeship:

Organizations considering registering an RA program often have concerns about what EEO regulations mean for them. These talking points address many of their frequently asked questions.

Other Resources

- **Kansas State EEO Information Page:** Information and resources on the EEO requirements and implementation for program sponsors. **Colorado State EEO Information Page.**
- **Apprentice Outreach and Recruitment:** This webpage provides a list of helpful tools, links, and training webinars for universal outreach following EEO regulations.
- **Conducting Demographic Analysis for Registered Apprenticeship Programs:** A quick reference guide for apprenticeship sponsors to help understand workplace demographics.
- **RAPIDS Partner Finder Guide:** The Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Database System, or RAPIDS, is a case management program that is the primary platform for managing apprentices, occupations, and relevant job openings.
- **US Department of Labor EEO Complaint Form:** Information and Complaint Form on how apprentices can submit formal complaints with the USDOL.
- **US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Contact Info:** Information and resources on finding and contacting your local field office and employee rights on EEO complaints.

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