

A National Town Hall

Building Stronger American Workforce and Education System Support for Apprenticeship



June 23, 2025

Center of Excellence Overview

- U.S. DOL initiative to increase alignment, partnerships across apprenticeship, education, and workforce systems
- Led by Safal Partners; 5 national partners
- Provide technical assistance through:
 - Monthly webinars
 - Quarterly virtual office hours
 - Individual state and local customized training
 - Online, implementable resources (desk aids, guides, frameworks, etc.)



[Visit our website,](#)
[request assistance](#)



Today's Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- DOL Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Executive Feature
- Center Accomplishments, Lessons Learned, and Applications
- Spotlight from Center Partners
 - National Association of Workforce Development Partners (NAWDP)
 - Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE)
 - Wireless Infrastructure Association (WIA)
 - National Disability Institute (NDI)
 - FASTPORT
- Moving Forward: Center's Recommendations
- Wrap-Up





DOL ETA Executive Feature



Guest Speakers



Megan Baird

Acting Administrator, USDOL
Office of Apprenticeship



Robin Fernkas

Deputy Administrator, USDOL
Office of Workforce Investment





Center of Excellence: Accomplishments, Lessons Learned & Applications



Presenter

Katie Adams

Chief Delivery Officer
Safal Partners



A “Whole of System” Approach to RA Integration



- **Focus: Increasing alignment, strategic partnerships between apprenticeship, workforce, and educational systems. Tasks include:**
 - Increasing use of RA in WIOA and leveraging WIOA funding
 - Doubling statewide WIOA support for RA programs
 - Informing new policy and program development
- **3-Tier Approach to TA Products and Service Delivery**
 - **Universal:** website, monthly webinars, quarterly virtual office hours, desk aides, toolkits, frameworks
 - **Customized:** Individual TA / 1:1 coaching sessions / Peer-to-peer mentoring
 - **Intensive:** Extended timeline of tailored TA to multiple stakeholders
- **Leverage National Partner Expertise**



Center's Mission

Providing TA and tools to building scalable, sustainable partnerships that accelerate RA adoption and improve America's workforce, education systems alignment with RA.

Outcome #1

Increase understanding about RA in the workforce system

Outcome #2

Increase integration of service delivery and leveraging of resources

Outcome #3

Increase RA partnerships

Outcome #4

Improve system alignment

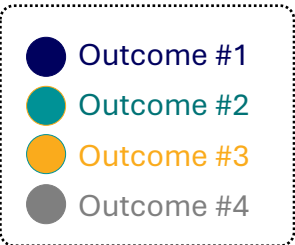
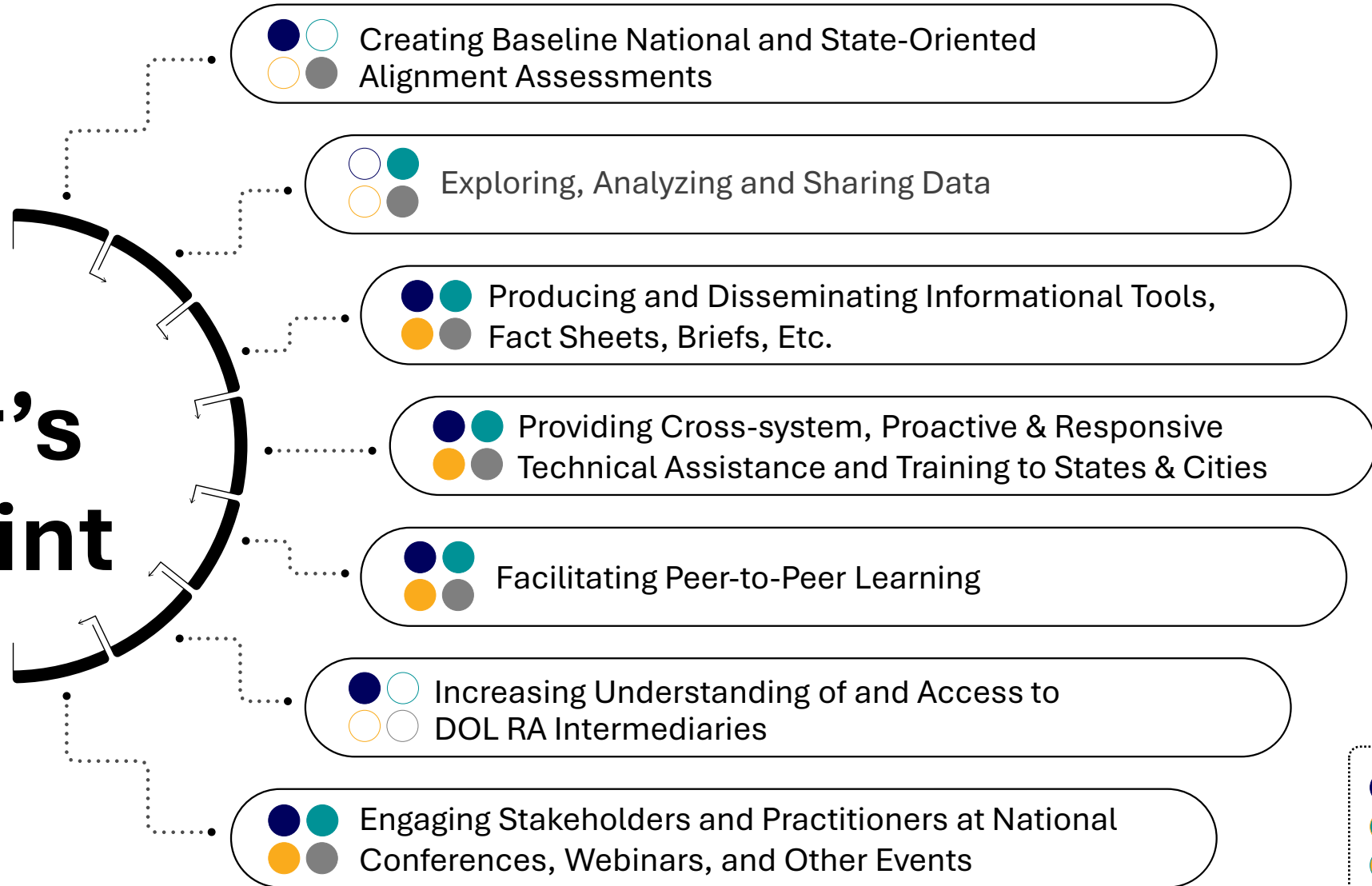




Center of Excellence: Overview of Work, Major Products



The Center's Footprint



National Work >> State/Local Application



National Workforce System RA Knowledge Baseline Report

Established first national baseline assessment of WIOA system RA knowledge.

How to Use Product:

- Learn key RA knowledge gaps among workforce system practitioners
- Determine your own organizational RA knowledge gaps
- Gain TA recommendations to improve RA knowledge, service integration
- Gain insights from leading states and territories in WIOA/RA co-enrollment practices



National WIOA Title I, II Partnerships Report

Analyzed and developed first recommendations for WIOA Title I, Title II partnerships.

How to Use Product:

- Learn key Title II educator RA knowledge gaps, validated TA needs
- Access recommendations for building pre-apprenticeship pathways for Title II adult learners and increasing access to RA
- Improve strategies for engaging industry partners around RA through IET



National Work >> State/Local Application



Comprehensive WIOA State Plan Analysis

Did first-ever analysis of all 50 2020, 2024 WIOA State Plans for RA alignment; held multi-part webinar sessions on WIOA state planning for RA

How to Use Products:

- Review findings from the 50-state scan of WIOA Unified/Combined Plans
- Learn from states whose plans reflect strong WIOA and RA alignment
- Implement recommendations for state, local WIOA Plan focus on RA



National, State WIOA/RA Co-enrollment Data

Undertook first-ever analysis of national, state WIOA/RA co-enrollment data; provided virtual and in-person co-enrollment trainings; built the first co-enrollment dashboard for workforce and RA system leaders

How to Use Products:

- Review your state WIOA/RA co-enrollment data
- Assess/implement case manager training on co-enrollment for data accuracy
- Engage state apprenticeship leader to compare WIOA/RA co-enrollment data, apprentice registrations



National Work >> State/Local Application



First Workforce System RA Alignment Framework

Developed first roadmap, related webinar training for state/local workforce system RA alignment planning.

How to Use Products:

- Explore 6 key components workforce/RA alignment
- Identify which component(s) your organization is ready to implement
- Learn from other workforce systems' RA alignment strategies



National Joint ATR/BSR Training Series

Delivered first-ever 5-part virtual joint training to workforce and RA professionals to increase system knowledge, cross-system collaboration

How to Use Training:

- Have staff watch training to assess current knowledge of RA/WIOA
- Incorporate training into all new hire onboarding
- Review current state of RA/WIOA partnerships; plan to increase staff interaction

937
attended



94%

agree the
information
is useful
in their work

53%

plan to apply
the information
immediately

National Work >> State/Local Application

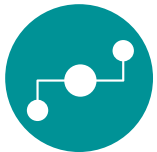
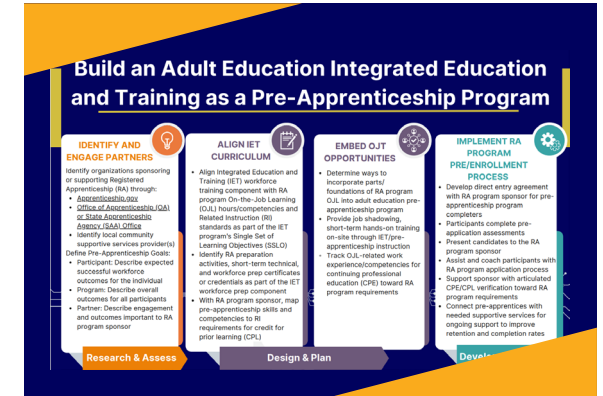


Pre-Apprenticeship Framework for Adult IET

Built first framework for, and delivered training on, developing an Adult Education IET-aligned pre-apprenticeship program

How to Use Products:

- Engage cohort of key industry RA sponsors to identify pre-apprenticeship needs
- Determine path to mapping IET workforce training component to OJL, classroom instruction to RI requirements through pre-apprenticeship
- Co-create articulated CPE, CPL standards to RA requirements



Chamber of Commerce RA Toolkit

Collaborated with [ACCE](#) to increase national, state and local chambers' awareness of and engagement with RA

How to use Product:

- Do joint workforce needs assessment with local Chamber, determine RA readiness
- Partner with local Chamber for joint RA/workforce industry outreach to members
- Implement best practices from Toolkit spotlights



Strong Engagement + Utilization = Systems Change

4,392

Organizations committed to developing new strategic RA partnerships

10,500+

Attendees via 134 virtual, hybrid and/or in person training sessions (avg. 3+/mo TA sessions)

1,250

Additional views of virtual training sessions

242%

Increase in WIOA/RA co-enrollment in 5 targeted states





Center of Excellence: Key Insights and Lessons Learned



What we've learned..

Center Outcome #1

Increase understanding about RA in the workforce system

The Center's work revealed that **workforce organizations aren't as engaged in RA as initially thought**. A key reason was leaders' and front-line professionals' **large RA knowledge gaps**. We identified are four knowledge gap categories:

- **#1: System Knowledge**
- #2: RA Fundamentals
- #3: Funding
- #4: Communications and Outreach

51%	46%	46%	43%
DO NOT UNDERSTAND			
the role of USDOL OA or an SAA	how registered apprenticeship correlates with key WIOA performance measures	the relationship between their state or local Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) and the related instruction (RI) component of registered apprenticeship	how their state or territory's Unified or Combined WIOA plan or local workforce board WIOA plan relates to Apprenticeship
"Very Little" = 38.88%	"Very Little" = 35.87%	"Very Little" = 34.48%	"Very Little" = 34.01%
"None" = 12.38%	"None" = 10.09%	"None" = 11.21%	"None" = 9.41%

What we've learned..

Center Outcome #1

Increase understanding about RA in the workforce system

Knowledge Gap Categories:

- #1: System Knowledge
- #2: RA Fundamentals
- #3: Funding
- #4: Communications and Outreach

45%

41%

40%

38%

35%

DO NOT UNDERSTAND

the responsibilities of an Apprenticeship program sponsor

the supervision requirements for apprentices in registered apprenticeship programs

what registered apprenticeship programs exist in their local area

related instruction (RI) requirements of Apprenticeship programming

the difference between registered apprenticeship and other work and learn models

"Very Little" = 36.21%

"None" = 8.82%

"Very Little" = 31.13%

"None" = 10.15%

"Very Little" = 33.02%

"None" = 7.4%

"Very Little" = 30.81%

"None" = 7.66%

"Very Little" = 28.07%

"None" = 7.28%

What we've learned..

Center Outcome #1

Increase understanding about RA in the workforce system

Knowledge Gap Categories:

- #1: System Knowledge
- #2: RA Fundamentals
- **#3: Funding**
- #4: Communications and Outreach

44%

33%

DO NOT UNDERSTAND

what programs pay for the
components of registered
apprenticeship

how to use WIOA supportive
services to serve apprentices

"Very Little" = 36.73%
"None" = 6.99%

"Very Little" = 26%
"None" = 7.43%

What we've learned..

Center Outcome #1

Increase understanding about RA in the workforce system

Knowledge Gap Categories:

- #1: System Knowledge
- #2: RA Fundamentals
- #3: Funding
- **#4: Communications and Outreach**

47%

42%

30%

DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW TO

convene partners
locally

communicate
benefits of registered
apprenticeship
to employers

communicate the
benefits of registered
apprenticeship to
job seekers

"Very Little" = 37.46%
"None" = 9.18%

"Very Little" = 31%
"None" = 11.09%

"Very Little" = 24.22%
"None" = 6.08%

What we've learned..

Center Outcome #1

Increase understanding about RA in the workforce system

The workforce system recognizes RA as a proven workforce development strategy (as noted in WIOA Plans) **however to increase the use of RA as a service strategy** for career seekers and businesses...

State, local workforce leaders should:

- Standardize staff training on RA, WIOA/RA co-enrollment
- Incorporate training into new staff onboarding (esp. given high turnover rates)
- Embed/require RA expertise by AJC operators

Federal policymakers should:

- Sustain Center's workforce system integration, delivery of state-focused capacity-building work
- Update relevant TENs/TEGLs
- Accelerate OWI/OA collaboration to ensure RA knowledge informs OWI investments

What we've learned..

Outcome #2

Increase integration of service delivery and leveraging of resources

For the quarter ending 12/31/24, workforce system data shows **WIOA Title I and RA co-enrollment rate of only .6%**, indicating an extremely low level of service delivery and resource integration. **To increase integration including WIOA/RA co-enrollment...**

State, local workforce leaders should:

- Provide staff training on WIOA/RA co-enrollment benefits and processes
- Jointly create service strategies with RA leaders
- Provide braided funding training across WIOA core, partner programs

Federal policymakers should:

- Sustain successful national TA investment
- Issue guidance on increasing utilization of OJT contracts for RA, braiding WIOA core & partner program resources
- Require specific WIOA/RA co-enrollment language in WIOA Plans

What we've learned..

Outcome #3

Increase RA partnerships

The majority of industry employers are **unaware of WIOA programs and resources.**

WIOA Title I and II providers serve 1.7 million Americans annually, however **more than 50% of adult educators and workforce system professionals need ongoing RA TA** to develop partnerships and engage clients/learners in RA.

Accelerating partnerships requires...

State, local leaders RA leaders and policymakers to:

- Convene regional or statewide "Apprenticeship Partnership Working Group"
- Implement findings from Center's "Expanding RA Through WIOA Title I, II Partnerships"
- Encourage Title II programs to use the Center's IET Pre-Apprenticeship Roadmap

Federal policymakers to:

- Model interagency leadership, designate interagency RA liaisons
- Provide guidance on RA partnership models
- Align federal investments with RA

What we've learned..

Outcome #4

Improve system alignment

Based on COE's analysis of 2020, 2024 WIOA State Plans and WIOA/RA co-enrollment data, **workforce systems have very low levels of RA alignment.** The Center identified the **top 7 indicators of alignment...**

State WIOA Plan RA Alignment Indicators:

1. RA mentioned as workforce strategy
2. Plan to utilize federal grants to expand RA
3. RA specifically articulated in strategy to meet State Plan vision
4. State level RA work group or committee to State Workforce Board
5. RA expertise embedded in AJCs
6. State-level initiative, investments for RA expansion
7. Specific objectives, goals for increased # of apprentices or new RA programs

What we've learned..

Outcome #4

Improve system alignment

RA Alignment Indicator in 2020 WIOA State Plans

1. Apprenticeship acknowledged as workforce strategy
2. Plans to apply for/utilize federal grants to expand apprenticeship
3. Apprenticeship articulated specifically in strategies to meet State Plan vision
4. State level apprenticeship work group or committee to State WB
5. Registered Apprenticeship expertise in AJCs
6. State level RA initiative (e.g., investment of additional resources, statute designed to incentivize or encourage establishment of apprenticeships)
7. Specific objectives and goals for increased # of apprentices or RA programs

Number of
State Plans
Included

Percent
of
States

Number of
Territories

50

100%

6

42

84%

4

17

34%

3

17

34%

1

16

32%

1

15

30%

2

7

14%

0



What we've learned..

Outcome #4

Improve system alignment

To increase workforce systems' alignment with RA the Center recommends that...

State, local workforce board leaders:

- Use the "Key Components of Alignment" framework for initial baseline assessment
- Include RA leaders in drafting WIOA Plan
- Share successful practices in each component of alignment

Federal policymakers:

- Issue alignment guidance using Key Components product
- Establish WIOA goals around RA alignment
- Use the WIOA State Plan ICR to prioritize RA engagement, SMART RA goal-setting in the process and plans



Partner Spotlights



Workforce Systems Partner: NAWDP



Melissa Robbins

Chief Executive Officer



The National Association for Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) strengthens system-wide RA alignment by equipping frontline staff and workforce boards with tailored TA, peer learning, and credentialing support.

Focus & Key Accomplishments

- Engaged and amplified the importance of RA to workforce boards, business services, and education providers on a national basis
- Developed and disseminated TA tools, webinars, and resources focused on RAP alignment
- Facilitated sessions during national and virtual events to share Center tools and guidance on elevating RA for enhanced system performance
- Managed a dedicated microsite with resources and peer mentoring support
- Provides post-grant access to archived TA materials and Center products



Lessons Learned – Workforce Boards

- **Prioritize Consistent Reporting:**

Ensure accurate data to reflect the impact of WIOA on Registered Apprenticeship.

- **Help Workforce Practitioners Understand Where to Find and How to Engage RA Experts**

Leverage local Registered Apprenticeship experts for guidance and support.

- **Strategic Planning Matters**

Proactively plan how WIOA or new funding will support Registered Apprenticeship initiatives.



Adult Education Partner: COABE



Sharon Bonney

Chief Executive Officer



TRANSFORMATION OF ADULT EDUCATION

As the leading national association for adult education, COABE leverages its extensive network of nearly 100,000 members to elevate awareness and integration of Registered Apprenticeship within the adult education system.



Focus & Key Accomplishments

- Elevated RA awareness and bridged the gap in awareness and knowledge through providing support to ABE educators on RA
- Maintained and contributed to a specialized CoP focused on RA
- Promoted RA alignment via the “Behind Every Employer” campaign
- Leveraged national reach and advocated for state and federal policy improvements for RA and adult education integration
- Developed and delivered TA content, as well as led webinars and participated as a conference speaker to advance the importance of RA for adult learning



Lessons Learned – Adult Education

- Difficulty in understanding partners and their roles/responsibilities with RA
- Internal barriers exist related to program funding and service integration
- Many adults don't have HSE skills and there are scheduling barriers for RA time needed for completion
- Pre-apprenticeship bridge programs are important



Industry Engagement Partner: WIA



Deb Bennett

Vice President



As a national Industry Intermediary and RA program sponsor, WIA leverages its deep ties to the wireless and adjacent sectors to drive the development and expansion of high-quality RA programs. Through strategic partnerships, technical training, and policy leadership, WIA bridges industry needs with workforce system capacity to accelerate RA adoption nationwide.

Focus & Key Accomplishments

- Planned and implemented the initial kick-off National Industry Forum series
- Conducted several workshops for the 30 Minutes of Excellence Training Series
- Developed and delivered BSR Training Series with an employer/practitioner lens of RA
- Supported hands-on regional training as a direct provider of RA as an Intermediary
- Provided RA sponsor lens to Center policy recommendations on Pre-Apprenticeship, Opportunity Youth, and Braided Funding



Lessons Learned - Industry

- Complex paperwork and regulations make it difficult for employers to embrace RA until they understand the process or receive support with the process
- Intermediaries play a critical role in navigating and managing RA requirements
- Financial incentives are essential to motivate and support employers and apprentices in RA programs
- Direct, hands-on TA is vital to RA success for both employers and providers
- Vast majority of employers not aware of or connected to LWDBs, not accessing WIOA candidates or support for RA programs



Workforce Policy & Research Partner: NDI



Doug Keast

Project Manager



NDI brings deep expertise in workforce and disability policy, contributing data-driven insights, stakeholder engagement, and strategic guidance to inform national workforce initiatives. Through research, cross-agency collaboration, and system alignment, NDI strengthens connections across programs and services operating through workforce systems.

Focus & Key Accomplishments

- Extensive subject matter expertise in state policy review and system alignment in a full review of guidance related to RA
- Co-led national initiatives supporting cross-agency collaboration and system integration
- Informed Center strategies with actionable research, including comprehensive national scans such as a review of all WIOA State Unified and Combined Plans
- Bridged connections between Vocational Rehabilitation agencies and workforce stakeholders through the development of resources to support alignment strategies
- Made recommendations to Center
 - Indicators of State Leadership for ongoing assessment
 - Activity to Support State Leadership in increasing recognized impact



Lessons Learned – Policy and Planning

- Clarification is needed on tangible indicators of
 - Leadership
 - Alignment
- Importance of sharing information on WIOA State Plan reviews and examples
- Future support for state leadership is needed
 - Direct technical assistance to state leadership where apprenticeship strategies are identified to meet state objectives
 - Use of the Project Toolkit for alignment assessment and planning
- Support the shared investment and benefits across system drivers



Industry Engagement Partner: FASTPORT



Dave Harrison

Executive Director
Workforce Development
and Government Programs

FASTPORT

Fastport is a national RA program sponsor, fostering collaboration among industry associations, employers, education, and workforce partners. Fastport advances RA alignment through employer-education partnerships, targeted TA, policy guidance, and coordinated efforts with key federal and state agencies.



Focus & Key Accomplishments

- Advanced employer and intermediary engagement in alignment efforts by facilitating convenings and employer/education partnerships
- Strengthened national coordination with DOL, OA, and SAA networks
- Contributed to alignment of RA programs within workforce systems
- Supported Center development of industry-informed TA tools
- Contributed to Center's policy guidance and research review process



Lessons Learned – Industry

- There's still much to learn about the effective use of intermediaries for all RA stakeholders
- A great amount of misinformation and myths exists around understanding RA programs:
 - state oriented complexities of RA programs can prohibit the quick turnaround for development and modification of programs needed by industry
 - apprenticeship regulations that conflict with industry norms,
 - long approval process for new occupations,
 - preconceptions among employers about which industries have apprenticeship
- Consistent misalignment continues to exist between workforce, education and economic development support that could progress RA efforts – much work left to do!





The Path Forward: Center of Excellence Recommendations



Recommendations for Federal Policymakers



Policy & Funding

- Modify WIOA performance measures to include RA specific metrics or “weight” RA to incentivize as training option
- Create federal employer RA tax incentive
- Establish through policy guidance a minimum percentage of local funds that must be spent on RA



Capacity-Building

- Sustain Center’s TA service delivery on WIOA/RA integration to accelerate state implementation
- Expand Intermediary support with workforce system requirements
- Create demonstration projects testing innovative models of integrated service delivery across multiple states



Data Systems, Coordination

- Review interoperability of federal WIOA, RA data architecture
- Provide guidance to states on WIOA/RA data sharing
- Require State WIOA Plans to address workforce/RA data coordination to improve accuracy
- Ensure DOL OA inclusion in other federal agency workforce investments

Recommendations for State Policymakers



Policy & Funding

- Dedicate portion of WIOA set-aside funds for RA expansion
- Prioritize development of RA-supportive workforce, education policies, programs (e.g., CTE student “RA Ready” certification for direct entry, CPL for RI)
- Create state tax credits, tuition support for industry adoption of RA



Capacity-Building

- Encourage LWDBs, WIOA grantees to use “Key Components” product to assess current RA alignment, inform planning
- Incorporate RA planning, with local boards and RA leaders into state and regional sector strategies
- Formalize state recognition, support for RA Intermediaries



Data Systems, Coordination

- Require workforce/RA system leaders to review and report out on current data sharing
- Create easily-accessible RA sponsor database for LWDBs, WIOA grantees to develop partnerships

Recommendations for Local Workforce Leaders



Policy & Funding

- Adopt formal board policy establishing RA as priority workforce strategy
- Incorporate RA goals into board/agency strategic plan for WIOA and non-WIOA funding
- Create SOPs to ensure RA is presented as training option during client assessment
- Create policy to prioritize OJT contract funding for RA



Capacity-Building

- Embed/require AJC operators to have RA SME
- Require RA training for all staff; create annual goals
- Prioritize training on braiding funds (WIOA and partner formula funded programs, discretionary grants, etc.)
- Formalize collaboration plans with local RA ATRs, other WIOA grantees on industry outreach



Data Systems, Coordination

- Review current PIRL RA-related elements with ATRs' apprentice registration data to ensure accuracy
- Create regional apprenticeship consortium to formalize data sharing, facilitate peer RA learning, align RA policies across service areas, develop shared pre-apprenticeship programs, etc.

Cited Resources

- [Center of Excellence Website](#)
- [Workforce System Registered Apprenticeship Baseline Knowledge Assessment Report](#)
- [Expanding Registered Apprenticeship Through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title I and Title II Partnerships](#)
- [Apprenticeship Training Representative \(ATR\) and Business Services Representative \(BSR\) Training Series | safal](#)
- [Pre-Apprenticeship Framework for Adult Education and IET](#)
- Demonstrated State Apprenticeship Leadership in 2020 Unified-Combined Plans
 - [Demonstrated State Apprenticeship Leadership in 2020 Unified-Combined Plans Part 1](#)
 - [Demonstrated State Apprenticeship Leadership in 2020 Unified-Combined Plans Part Two Apprenticeship Expertise in AJCs](#)
 - [Demonstrated State Apprenticeship Leadership in 2020 Unified-Combined Plans, Part Three: Meet State Objectives](#)



THANK YOU FOR JOINING US

Email us your questions at RA_COE@SafalPartners.com

For more information, visit: dolcoe.safalapps.com

