



A Business Service Representative's Guide to Apprenticeship Accelerators



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As a Business Service Representative (BSR) your goal is to engage local employers in developing sustainable solutions for their workforce development. Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is the most time-tested, proven method for employers to recruit, train, upskill and retain their workforce. Apprenticeship Accelerators are an ideal format to engage and educate employers in your community about RA as a tool for their human capital strategy.

What is an Apprenticeship Accelerator?

Apprenticeship Accelerators are structured events designed primarily to introduce employers to RA and provide immediate next steps in either developing a new program or joining an existing, third-party sponsored RA program. They can be in-person, virtual or hybrid events and formats are widely variable depending on your goals.

Accelerators are not training sessions or job fairs; they are strategic convenings that focus on helping employers understand how RA can solve their workforce challenges, ideally hear success stories from peers, and connect directly with potential RA partners.

Success Story: Tech Sector Accelerator in Austin, TX



In 2023, a regional workforce board in Austin hosted a virtual Accelerator focused on expanding apprenticeships in IT and cybersecurity. Over 60 employers attended, heard testimonials from two local RA sponsors, and were introduced to three intermediaries offering shared sponsorship options. Within three months, five employers had committed to launching apprenticeships with support from local partners. Attendees cited “learning about funding options” and “hearing from employers like us” as top takeaways.

The focused nature of the Accelerator format can equip employers to go back to their organization’s stakeholders and decision-makers prepared to discuss next steps in developing a new program or joining an existing, third-party sponsored RA program.

Effective Accelerators require strategic planning and coordination. This toolkit is designed to help you think through important details when planning your event to ensure an ideal experience for your targeted employers. Based on best practices and extensive experience, this resource includes key considerations on the “who, what, when, where, and how” for coordinating your event. Also included is an Event Planning Template to help guide your planning and communicate decisions across your Accelerator team.

Event Roles



There are at least two key roles for planning and executing an Accelerator: event host and event partner. Your local board or AJC are natural **event hosts**, serving as a local community convener and with the ability to potentially invite people to an onsite event at one of your facilities.



Your Accelerator **event partners** do not have primary event planning or hosting responsibilities but can help make the event a success. For example, you should consider asking your local [chambers of commerce](#), [economic development agency](#), local [U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship \(DOL OA\) or State Apprenticeship Agency \(SAA\) staff](#), RA sponsors and intermediaries, community and technical colleges, local CTE administrators, and other WIOA core and partner program staff as potential event partners. The goal is to bring the right organizations to the table to help your local employers understand the breadth and depth of support they can tap into to create a new or expanded RA program.



Designate an **accelerator coordinator** on your team to drive the event, develop and maintain the event timeline, and ensure that the event runs smoothly and according to plan. The coordinator is responsible for, at a minimum, communicating timelines and decision-making points, leveraging existing partner relationships to support event logistics and outreach, and delegating tasks based on each team member's availability and strengths.

Strategies to Engage Employers

STEP 1

The first step in determining an employer invitation strategy is to **reach out to your local DOL OA or SAA Apprenticeship Training Representatives (ATRs) or staff**. Ask them for a list of current, active RA sponsors to determine which employers already have programs of their own or who may have already joined a group RA program (e.g., one sponsored by a local community college). It's a good idea to **invite at least one or two employers with active RA programs to speak** about their experience at your event. Their perspective is going to provide social credibility for adopting RA – industry likes to hear from industry when making decisions about how to invest in building a workforce.

STEP 2

Next, consider your local, regional or state sector strategy and **use LMI to determine which occupations are key priorities for your workforce system and local economy**, and the current availability gap for those occupations. That information is pivotal to demonstrating the value of having an RA-style training plan in place for employers with those occupations.

STEP 3

Lastly, consider which local or regional industry or trade associations for those sectors, or representing those occupations, are active in your area. By **inviting association representatives** to participate in event-planning you can leverage their communications vehicles to engage employers and drive attendance.

Event Format

You'll want to determine whether or not to host an in-person, virtual or hybrid Accelerator. There are pros and cons to each format.

IN-PERSON

Hosting an in-person Accelerator is the most effective way to make a strong impression, network with your target audience, and attract local partners.



Key considerations

- A physical location may come with associated costs to rent space, tech equipment, and other materials.
- Make sure the space provides the right layout and has capacity for your anticipated number of attendees.
- Also consider accessibility, parking, access to public transportation (if applicable), and other factors that could deter people from attending.

VIRTUAL

The primary benefit of a virtual event is the flexibility it provides to attract a wider audience.



Key considerations

- Virtual events can feel less inviting and/or impersonal depending on the platform being used and how attendees show up to the event.
- Use online tools to welcome and engage the audience throughout the event. For example, include real-time polling using tools like Mentimeter, or provide breakout rooms where people can connect directly and discuss topics raised.
- Additionally, technical difficulties can arise for anyone – attendees, hosts, and speakers. Make sure someone on the Accelerator planning team can serve as the virtual event support staff and do a dry run to test and troubleshoot in advance.

Regardless of which type you decide, there will be additional preparation tasks and planning logistics you will need to determine. More detailed information appears below in the Planning Timeline section.

Selecting a Date

As you look to schedule your event, research other opportunities that may be occurring to understand if they might compete with or compliment your Accelerator. Consult with your planning team to identify conferences, meetings, national recognition events – such as National Apprenticeship Week – or other convenings with which you might be able to collaborate and coordinate scheduling your event. This can increase your chances of attracting attendees based on a similar theme or purpose. Check for conflicts with local school events, holidays, or conferences that may affect attendance.

Planning Timeline

The accelerator coordinator will be responsible for managing the Accelerator timeline. Ideally you should plan at least 8-10 weeks out from your targeted event date to ensure you can pull together all needed arrangements and allow for enough time to market the event and secure attendance. Key tasks to consider factoring into the planning timeline include:

- Identifying and confirming speakers/panelists
- Gathering bios, photos, logos, and branding from speakers/partners
- Creating promotional materials
- Developing/gathering presentation slides
- Promoting the event
- Planning for necessary components for an in-person event (e.g., A/V equipment, catering, etc.)
- Becoming familiar with and testing any web-based tools for a virtual event (e.g., polling, breakout rooms, QR codes, etc.)
- Performing a walkthrough of the physical space
- Conducting a practice meeting (in-person) or dry run (virtual)
- Completing essential post-event follow-up with attendees

Once you have a comprehensive timeline outlined, schedule periodic check-ins with planning team members to get status updates, troubleshoot challenges, and ensure that all tasks are completed on time. It is recommended to start with monthly meetings and move to weekly meetings once you are four weeks out from the event. Understand that you may need more frequent meetings to address specific planning elements once you get closer to the event date.

Event Agenda

The event agenda (or “run of show”) for the event will depend largely on your format.

- For a **virtual event**, plan for your presentation to last between 60-90 minutes. You will want to allow time for transitions between speakers, opportunities to engage your audience, and to answer questions, not to mention potential technical difficulties that may cause delays.
- For **in-person events**, plan for 2-5 hours depending on your decisions including key components such as presentations, a panel discussion, networking, and refreshments.

In both cases, you want to make your event appealing and worth the attendees’ time. In general, engage your planning team to brainstorm and decide on your event plan, and be prepared for unplanned circumstances (e.g., speaker arrives late, technical issues, etc.). Once you have determined your plan, finalize a simplified agenda for participants and share it as part of your outreach plan.

Sample Agenda: In-Person Accelerator

9:00 – 9:20 AM	Opening Remarks with Mayor
9:20 – 9:40 AM	Overview and Benefits of RA
9:40 – 10:10 AM	RA Sponsor Panel with Q&A
10:10 – 10:40 AM	Networking Break
10:40 – 11:10 AM	RA Partnerships & Funding with LWDB
11:10 – 11:30 AM	Small Group Q&A
11:30 – 11:45 AM	Close, Next Steps, & Contact Information
11:45 – 12:00 PM	Networking and 1-1 Consulting

Sample Planning Agenda: Virtual Accelerator

9:00 – 9:10 AM	Opening Remarks with CEO
9:10 – 9:25 AM	Overview and Benefits of RA
9:25 – 9:45 AM	Process of Program Development, Registration, and Launch
9:45 – 10:05 AM	Partnerships for Program Success
10:05 – 10:20 AM	Q&A
10:20 – 10:30 AM	Close, Next Steps, & Contact Information

Best Practices for an Engaging Event

A well-structured Accelerator incorporates intentional strategies to engage your audience. Best practices include thoughtful facilitation, clear roles, and a focus on ways to involve your audience in the conversation. Plan for a strong opening with welcome remarks and clearly articulate the purpose of the event along with what attendees can expect. Keep things moving with concise, mission-driven presentations and end with clear action steps for your audience members to take after the event. Offer hard copy resources or include QR codes and links to make it easy for attendees to follow-up. Below are a few additional strategies to ensure a smooth and impactful event.

EFFECTIVE METHODS TO REACH YOUR AUDIENCE

Individuals have different learning styles or ways in which they process and retain information. Keep these in mind when developing your agenda:



Visual

Include images, graphics, charts, and short video clips in your presentation. For example, insert a chart that displays labor market information in the area. Or add a photograph of an apprentice on the job alongside a testimonial. These visuals can be more effective ways to present information.



Auditory

When developing a PowerPoint presentation, be sure not to crowd each slide with too much text. Articulate your points through concise speaking points. Make information memorable with short anecdotes or stories. Mix things up with guest speakers or a panel discussion.



Kinesthetic/Experiential

Incorporate opportunities for individuals to learn through doing. Find a time to break from the presentation to allow individuals to reflect on questions or prompts and then engage with others in a small group discussion or breakout room.



Interactive Tools

Some individuals like to take notes or engage in reading and writing to learn new information. For an in-person event, consider providing notepaper and pens along with handouts of important information before the event to help individuals follow along and retain information. For virtual events, encourage participants to take notes and use the chat or Q&A functions to engage in the presentation. Real-time polling features such as Mentimeter can be an effective way to interact with your audience.

QUICK TIPS & IDEAS



Assign Clear Roles

- Host: welcome attendees and introduce speakers.
- Moderator: keep time, manage the flow and transitions, and moderate Q&A.
- Tech Support: handle AV and platform set up and technical issues.



Special Guests

- Invite a dignitary, such as a public official, to give a welcome speech.
- Ask current RA sponsors and apprentices to be on a panel.
- Involve an Apprenticeship Intermediary to present on their services.



Opportunities for Engagement

- Poll the audience on key questions.
- Provide a prompt for attendees to speak in a small group.
- Give ample time for questions and networking.

Event Registration

Once you have determined key details for your event, create a **registration process** to share your promotional materials.

- For an **in-person event**, there are a variety of online options to create an RSVP form. You can also create a simple form through Microsoft 365 or Google to create your registration link.
- For a **virtual event**, the platform you plan to use (e.g., Microsoft Teams, Cisco WebEx, etc.) will typically have a feature that will allow you to enter details and create an event registration link.

Consider the information you would like to collect from attendees such as name, email, organization, and title. You will want to keep track of how many people have registered to attend, capture contact information on your attendees, and use the information to follow-up with individuals after the event.

Event Marketing & Outreach Plan

How will you make sure you get the right people and employers in the room? Start by thinking about how your **target audience** best receives information. Your event marketing creates a natural touchpoint for you to reach out to local employers – both those with whom you have an existing relationship and those whom you have not yet served and need to know the value you represent as a BSR. After you have developed a targeted list of employers to invite, work with event partners to create an outreach plan that includes email, social media, and partner communications. Consider using digital flyers with QR codes, social media posts, partner communications vehicles, news releases to local media outlets, and even word of mouth. Make sure to include a clear Call to Action, asking employers to RSVP so you can plan for refreshments (if offering) and ensure that your space is adequate.

Sample Accelerator Invite Messaging



Join us for an insightful session on how RA can transform your organization's workforce development strategy. This Accelerator will outline the benefits of RA and the locally available resources to help you have a program for current or projected key roles. In this session, you'll discover:

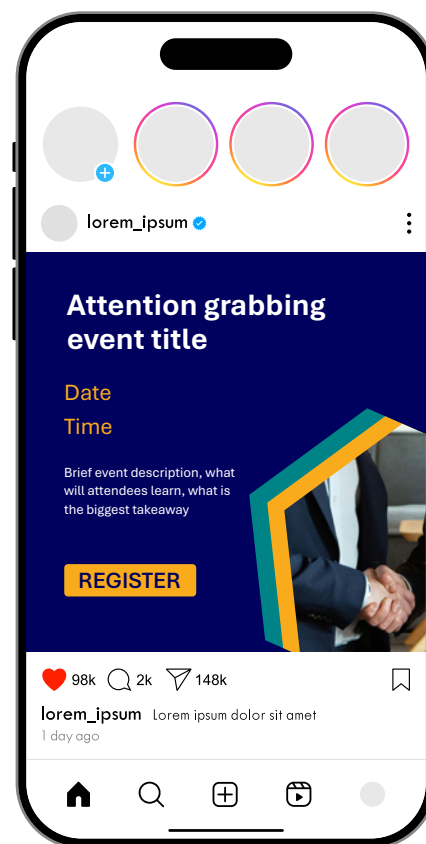
- The essentials and advantages of RA, with insights from [Guest],
- Proven strategies for reducing hiring and training costs while retaining skilled employees, and
- Strategies for developing your own apprenticeship program, including best practices, partnerships, and funding opportunities

MARKETING TIPS

When creating promotional materials, develop **branding guidelines** to ensure a coherent look and message. Also, make sure to include all the necessary details such as title of event, short description, location, objectives or what attendees will gain, a simplified agenda, and how to register, including a registration link or QR code. Adding a flyer to your website and attaching it to an email blast inviting potential attendees can generate significant interest. Using partners' social media platforms to announce events can also draw in attendees. Use tags on your social media platform to ensure the largest audience sees the invitation.

OUTREACH TIPS

Assign roles for outreach. Just as important is having a clear plan on who is conducting outreach. Is it everyone on your planning team or specific people? Be careful not to inundate your target audience with messages from multiple people. It is recommended that you have a comprehensive plan that details who will be responsible for outreach through specific methods. Create templates to ensure that everyone is sending the same message and check for errors before hitting send! Give people enough notice of your event so that it can get on their calendars early. You can achieve this by developing a campaign timeline and spacing out the methods you use to promote your event.



SAMPLE ACCELERATOR OUTREACH TIMELINE

Timeframe	Lead	Details
6 Weeks Before Event	Samantha	Send out email invites with flyer.
5 Weeks Before Event	Samantha & Marcus	Email invites/flyer. LinkedIn post.
4 Weeks Before Event	Marcus	LinkedIn, X, and Facebook posts; article in monthly newsletter
2 Weeks Before Event	Marcus	LinkedIn, X, and Facebook posts. Press release to local media outlets.
1 Week Before Event	Samantha & Marcus	Reminder email to all registered attendees. LinkedIn post.
Two Days Before Event	Samantha	Reminder email to all registered attendees.

Final Walk-through & Dry Run

It is vital to have a final practice meeting a week ahead of the actual event to run through logistics and anticipate where you may need to designate staff to support potential challenges. This could look different depending on your event type – in-person or virtual – and if you have speakers and co-presenters from other organizations.

For **in-person events**, we recommend someone visits the physical space to do a walk-through to understand how you will set-up for your event and where you will designate people to support varying tasks. Consider the following:

- Greeter – welcome people and provide directions to the space (e.g., registration table, bathrooms, etc.)
- Registration Table – have people handle check-in and provide materials (e.g., name tags, agenda, other materials)
- Refreshments Area – if you are offering refreshments, designate an area where people can access food/drink without disrupting the presentation
- Presentation Set Up – locate where you will project your presentation and access to any electrical needs

A week prior to the event, host your practice meeting either in-person or virtually with everyone who will be speaking at your event. The goal is to make sure everyone is fully aware of their role and when they will be prompted to speak. This includes all speakers, moderators, panelists, and support staff.

For **virtual events**, performing a dry run prior to the event is a must to ensure that you work out any technical challenges and troubleshoot any potential issues. Ensure that each speaker knows how long they can speak and develop a plan if someone runs over their allotted time. Test out online tools to ensure that they are working the way you want. Anticipate additional tasks that might be necessary with the virtual platform and identify who will be responsible for offering support. Examples include someone who will allow guests to enter the event, record the session (if applicable), monitor the chat and Q&A, share the presentation on their screen, manage polls and breakout rooms, and support other features.

Event Follow-Up

Timely follow-up is essential to turning event interest into action. Send a thank-you message within two business days. Include:

- Key takeaways
- Links to resources or slides
- A clear call to action (e.g., interest form or meeting request)

Afterwards, reach out to individuals directly through an email, phone call, or meeting to build upon questions or comments that they shared during the event. This can help move the dialogue toward action and result in expanded RA programming.



Apprenticeship Accelerator – Event Planning Template

EVENT DETAILS

Event Title:
Host:
Co-Hosts:
Date & Time (include start/end):
Event Type
In-Person (Enter Location):
Virtual (Select Platform): <input type="checkbox"/> Zoom <input type="checkbox"/> Teams <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Event Description:
Event Goals:
Target Audience:

[illegible]



TIMELINE

8-12 Weeks Before Event

Dates	Tasks

5-7 Weeks Before Event

Dates	Tasks



2-4 Weeks Before Event

Dates	Tasks

0-7 Days Before Event

Dates	Tasks



Add Dates	Tasks

[illegible]

[illegible]