

Braiding Funds to Grow and Sustain Registered Apprenticeship

A Tool for Workforce Development Boards





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Introduction

Employers across diverse industries are increasingly utilizing Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs to meet critical workforce demands. Accelerating adoption of RA requires that employers can access the full spectrum of funding support. State and local workforce development boards (WDBs) can play a crucial role in meeting employers' needs and supporting the expansion of RA nationwide with strategic use of both Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and non-WIOA funds. This tool is designed to provide local WDB leadership and staff with knowledge and tools to leverage, or “braid,” a wide array of funding sources to support local employers in growing sustainable RA programs.

Understanding Braided Funding and Its Benefits

Braiding funds means weaving together multiple funding sources to support comprehensive, integrated service delivery that is seamless for the customer. Each individual funding source maintains its own identity and is tracked separately per its individual program requirements.

The [Association of Government Accountants](#) defines braided funding as

[A] funding and resource allocation strategy in which entities use existing funding streams to support unified initiatives in as flexible and integrated a manner as possible while still tracking and maintaining separate accountability for each funding stream. One or more entities may coordinate several funding sources, but each individual funding stream maintains its award-specific identity.

Braiding funds means leveraging resources from two or more funding sources to provide comprehensive support for the costs associated with developing and/or operating apprenticeship programs.

Braided funding should not be confused with **blended funding**. Blending funds combines all funds into a single pool without maintaining their original sources and specific requirements. When funds are braided, each funding source retains its own rules, regulations, and reporting requirements. Your board policy should be to braid funding when using WIOA funds, as they must maintain their original source with federal requirements.



To learn more about blended funding, refer to [“Blending, Braiding, and Sequencing”](#) from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL).

Braiding Funds: A Five-Step Approach

This tool outlines a five-step approach to braiding funds. Effectively executing these steps can enable successful cost-sharing across funding sources to support your employers' RA program costs.

STEP 1: CONVENE YOUR PARTNERS

Braided funding efforts require long-term support from leadership to cultivate and maintain partnerships. These partnerships are the driving force to ensuring that resources and support are available for employers' RA program development and expansion.

The first place to start when building a partnership strategy to support RA development is your board's American Job Center (AJC) or One-Stop partners.



WIOA-Required One-Stop Partners

WIOA Title I

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| (i) Adults | (v) YouthBuild |
| (ii) Dislocated workers (DW) | (vi) Native American programs |
| (iii) Youth | (vii) Migrant and seasonal farmworker programs |
| (iv) Job Corps | |

WIOA Title II

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program

WIOA Title III

Wagner Peyser Program

WIOA Title IV

Vocational Rehabilitation Act Program

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education

Career and technical education programs at post-secondary level

Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) Programs

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG)

Housing and Urban Development Employment & Training Programs

Unemployment Compensation Programs

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Your board may have access to a variety of other funding resources, including federal formula and discretionary grants, private donations, foundation and charitable funding, and state or local support. All of these funding streams can be strategically braided to provide financial support for local employers' RA efforts.

When seeking partners consider the following questions:

- **Who is your target audience for RA support?** Are you focusing on youth, veterans, individuals with disabilities, or another group?
- **What type of RA programs are you intending to focus on?** Is there a specific industry sector or cluster of occupations that are in high demand in your local area that you want to support with RA enrollment? How long are those programs? What type of qualifications are employers likely to want in an RA candidate?
- **What expertise, services or support might local RA program sponsors or participating employers need?** For example, do they require labor market information to determine what types of RA programs they should develop or expand? Tuition assistance to defray the cost of required Related Instruction for apprentices? Short-term On-the-Job Training (OJT) contract support to offset a portion of apprentice wages?

Establishing a dedicated RA committee made up of partners aligned or committed to advancing RA initiatives can be an effective way to plan for, formalize, and strengthen collaborative efforts. In addition to the previously noted AJC partners, other key potential partners could include representatives from:

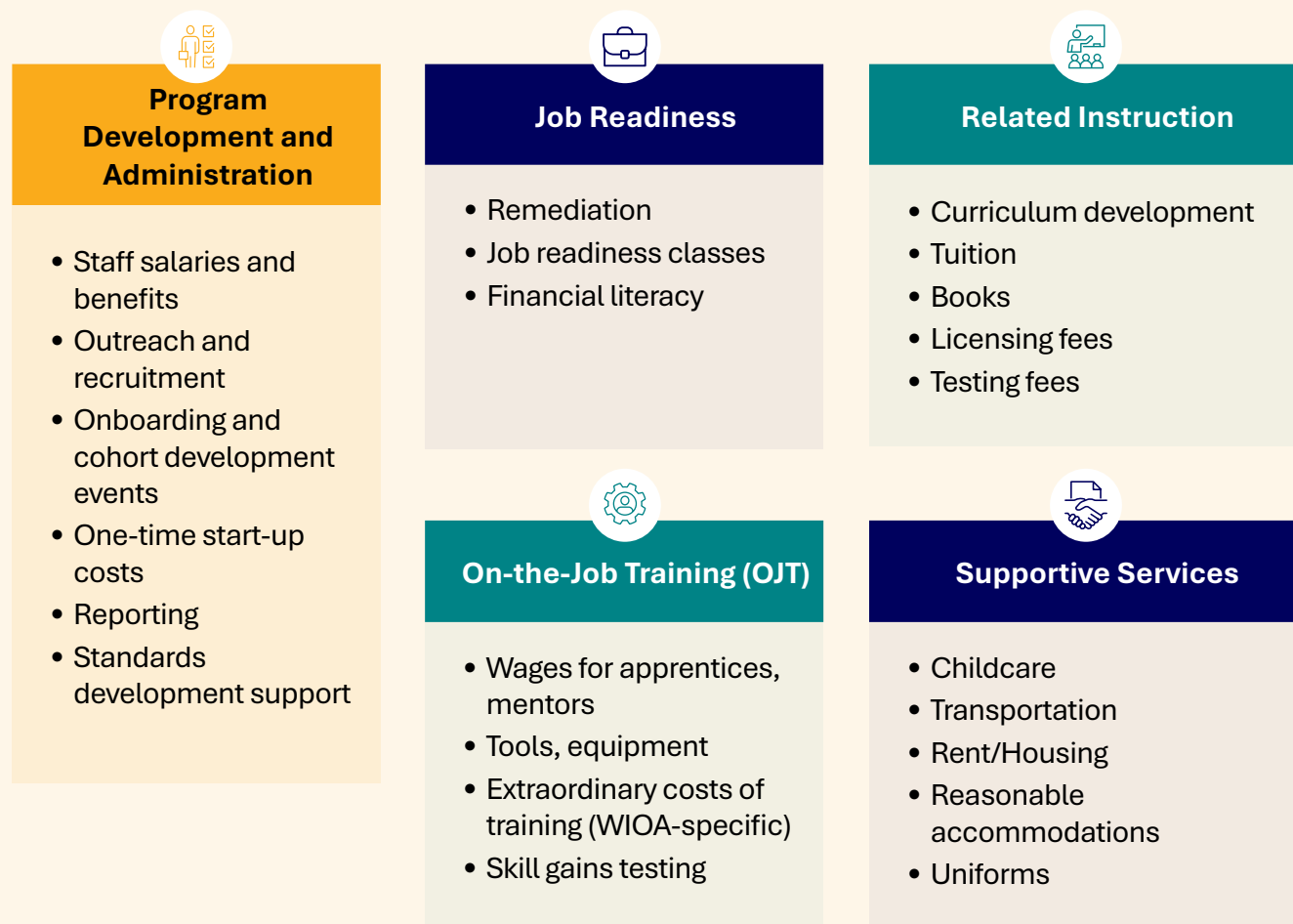
- The local DOL Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA)
- Chambers of commerce
- Philanthropic organizations
- Community-based organizations
- Educational providers

To determine potential committee members, disseminate a simple partner stakeholder survey to your WDB area's potential partnering organizations. This can help identify potential organizations' interest and capacity to expanding local RA programming.


STEP 2: MAP POTENTIAL RA PROGRAM COSTS/SERVICE NEEDS

You are now ready to collaborate with your partners to brainstorm the potential costs and/or individual apprentice service needs and how those costs or services align with your group's collective resources. **Tip: Your SAA or OA representative can help clarify the minimum requirements for registered programs and the most common needs cited by employers for their RA programs.**

Potential RA costs may look something like the example below:



After compiling all potential needs, costs and services, work with partners to develop a shared consensus on priority costs to be covered for employers and apprentices. This exercise might result in a simple initial planning chart like the one below:



Consensus on Apprentice Costs to be Covered

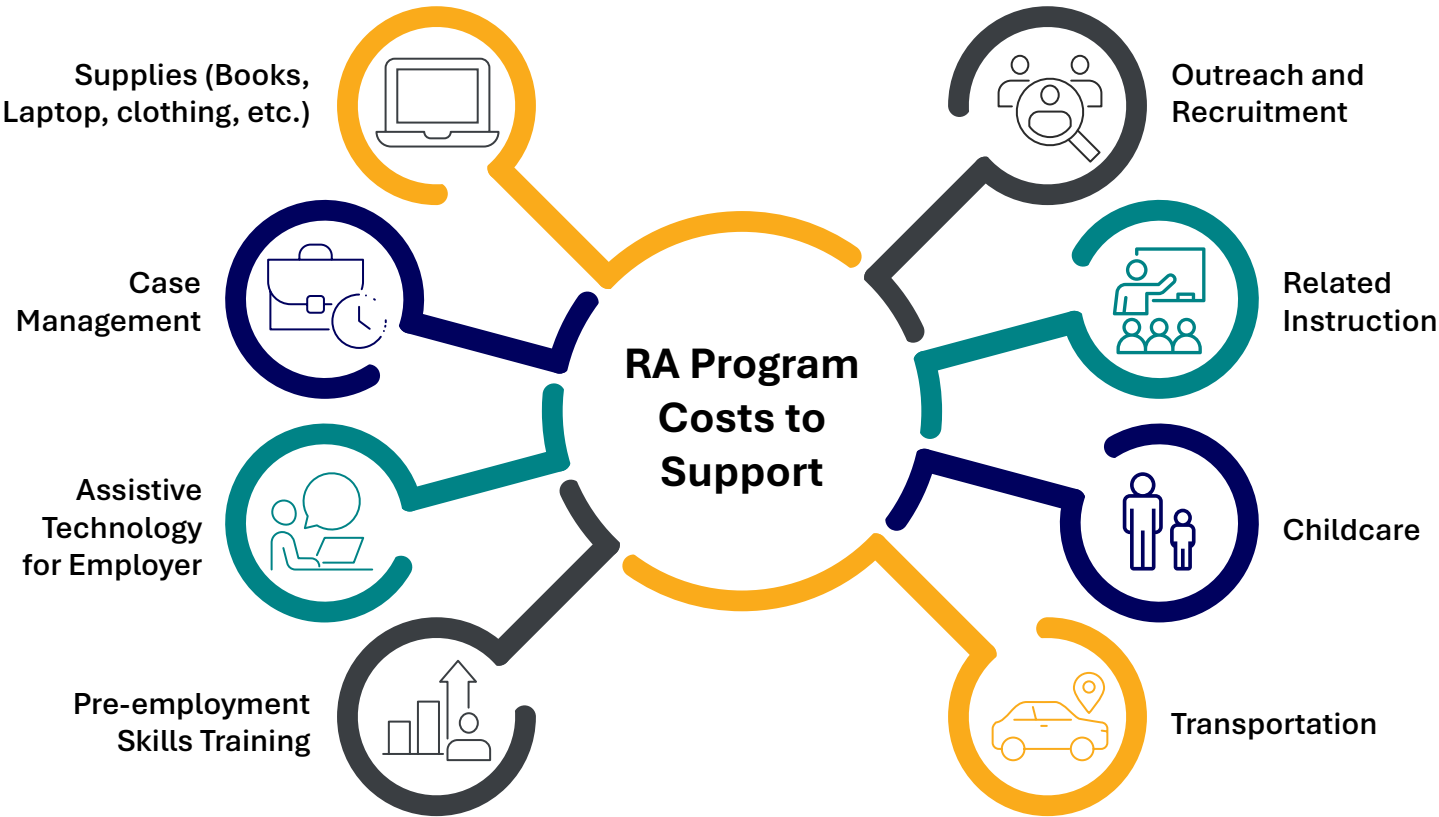
- Related Instruction
- Transportation
- Childcare
- Supplies (Books, Laptop, clothing, etc.)

- Case Management
- Pre-employment Skills Training
- Assistive Technology for Employer

STEP 3: MAP YOUR ASSETS

The next step is conducting an environmental scan to map the funds and resources that all the partners identified in Step 1 toward the priorities agreed upon in Step 2. The key question during this phase is: **What resources are available to braid to support the core needs identified for an employer’s RA program?** This exercise will help you determine whether new partners are needed or if there are any gaps in your partnership landscape that should be addressed. Keep in mind that the example below is simplified. As mentioned earlier, there are numerous other partner programs and potential funding sources for RA initiatives that you should consider in your broader scan.

Example: Potential Partner Resource Map to Support RA Programs



Following is a chart showing, for example, how seven different funding streams—WIOA Title I, II, III, and IV, TANF, JVS, and GI Bill Benefits—could be mapped to key components of an RA program to develop a braiding strategy.

Partner	WIOA Title I – Adult, DW, and Youth	Title II – Adult Education	Title III – Wagner-Peyser	Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation	TANF	JVS	GI Bill Benefits
Tuition / Scholarship / Individual Training Account	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	✓
OJT Wage Reimbursement / Support	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	N/A	N/A	✓
Supportive Services	✓	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outreach / Recruitment	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓	N/A
Case Management	✓	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A
Soft Skills Training	N/A	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	✓	✓

STEP 4: DEVELOP A PLAN







With a clear sense of RA program costs, apprentice service needs, and partner assets and resources, you should develop a plan that aligns them. Be sure to keep in mind these overarching goals:

- Customize each individual resource plan to the employer/apprentice’s specific needs.
- Be cognizant of incorporating as many of the program partners as possible from Step 1.
- Where possible, identify a consistent “owner” for every needed service or resource identified in Steps 2 and 3 that you are proposing to provide (e.g., tuition, support services, case management) for the employer/apprentice.
- Be mindful to include any eligibility, restrictions, or qualifications on resources and/or partnership limitations when developing the plan so all RA stakeholders are aware.

Rule to follow:

- Individuals must be eligible for and enrolled in any program that provides funding before being employed in and starting the RA program.
- Employers must be eligible for and enrolled in a business service program before participating in an RA program.
- Duplication of services is prohibited if using federal funding resources.
- If using other funding resources, eligibility and requirements should be reviewed before dedicating funds.

Example: Consensus Plan for Supporting RA Program Success

	Cost: Recruitment	Source: Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation		Cost: Case Management/Counseling	Source: Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation
	Cost: Related Instruction	Source: Title I WIOA Adult		Cost: High School Equivalency Prep	Source: Title II Adult Education
	Cost: Transportation	Source: Title I WIOA Adult		Cost: Assistive Technology for Employer	Source: Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation

In the example below, the individual has been deemed WIOA Title I Adult eligible through the local workforce board and is also WIOA Title IV eligible through Vocational Rehabilitation. The table illustrates how both funding sources can be braided to support the individual's wages, Related Instruction, and necessary supportive services.

Example: Consensus Plan With Specific Cost Figures

Apprentice	Area of Need	Total Cost	Amount Supported	Explanation
Pipefitter #1 WIOA Title I (Adult) and WIOA Title IV (Voc Rehab) eligible	Wages	\$63,000	\$6,176	WIOA Title I: OJT Cost (50% wages @ 400 hours)
	Related Instruction	\$6,000	\$2,470	WIOA Title I: ITA
	Supportive Services	\$350	\$350	WIOA Title IV Voc Rehab: Tools for job
	-	\$69,350	\$8,996	Two braided funding sources

STEP 5: IMPLEMENT, TRACK, AND IMPROVE

Having clear policies and processes, is vital for effective, ongoing communication with partner agencies. You may want to consider developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that clearly outlines each partners' area of support, responsibility, and commitment to supporting the RA Braided Funding Collaborative.

Recommended actions:

- Establish regular check-ins with partners to review plan progress and modify as needed to ensure consistency and quality.
- Conduct periodic interviews and short online feedback questionnaires with program participants to understand their experiences and identify potential service gaps.
- Utilize participant data to track program progress, completion, and outcomes; analyze the information to identify where additional support may be needed.
- If not already well-established through the funding allocation process, create channels to receive feedback from funders, service provider partners, participating employers, and participants.
- Carefully track funding sources to ensure services are delivered without interruption.

Final Thoughts and Considerations

Through clear and consistent planning, communication, and documentation, local WDBs and their partners can implement braided funding to support scaling RA programs more rapidly and effectively in their communities.

Braided funding strategies can be complex, but the return on investment is unmatched for stakeholders. Employers gain access to talent at a lower cost, program participants receive holistic support, and local organizations become embedded in new workforce development pathways. By implementing this innovative approach, you will have brought together an array of partners who can benefit from their collective effort. In doing so, you will not only strengthen your RA efforts, but also create a sustainable, collaborative service delivery model that provides high-quality workforce solutions for employers and clear pathways to in-demand jobs with progressive wages and ongoing skill development for career seekers.



- Be flexible when developing your funding model.
- Engage relevant partners from day one.
- Expect roadblocks and factor in extra time accordingly.
- Seek technical assistance when needed