



# **Working with Apprenticeship Intermediaries**

## **A Guide for Employers**



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## Introduction

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs are a proven strategy for meeting workforce needs through paid, On-the-Job Learning (OJL) combined with Related Instruction (RI). For many employers, however, launching or expanding an RA program can be complex, particularly when navigating registration requirements, building partnerships, and managing compliance. Apprenticeship intermediaries can play a critical role in making the process easier and more effective.

This guide is designed to help you, as an employer, understand the many roles of intermediaries and includes details on the different types, assistance that they offer, examples of effective partnerships, and how to determine if engaging an intermediary is the right step for your organization. Through real-world examples and actionable insights, you will gain the knowledge needed to explore partnerships that can strengthen your workforce development efforts.

## Understanding Apprenticeship Intermediaries

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), “An **apprenticeship intermediary** is an organization with the capacity, expertise, and network to help businesses successfully create, launch, and expand apprenticeship programs” ([DOL](#)). They serve as a bridge between employers, training providers, government entities, and jobseekers, streamlining the process and ensuring that programs align with both business needs and apprenticeship standards. In many examples, they serve as an RA program sponsor for one or multiple employers. The sponsor takes on the responsibility of developing and registering the program in collaboration with key partners: employer(s), educator(s), and additional support partners. The sponsor then oversees the program, including apprentice progress, and provides administrative support to ensure that the program is running smoothly. An apprenticeship intermediary should not be confused with workforce intermediaries, which primarily facilitate workforce solutions on local, regional, and national scales for both employers and job seekers. However, DOL recognizes that workforce intermediaries can serve as RA program sponsors and/or support with some of the functions on behalf of apprenticeship expansion ([Bulletin 2016-26](#)).

## Types of Intermediaries

### NATIONAL INDUSTRY INTERMEDIARIES

Beginning in 2016, DOL invested in [national industry intermediaries](#) to grow apprenticeships in healthcare, transportation and logistics, energy, manufacturing, and information and communications technology industries. By offering technical assistance, industry-specific solutions, and direct incentive funding in some cases, industry intermediaries have helped accelerate the pace of RA programs and apprentices across the U.S. To learn more about the organizations currently funded by DOL, view this [Factsheet](#).

### STATE AND REGIONAL INTERMEDIARIES

Intermediaries have also been established on local and regional levels through efforts and investments by DOL and states directly. Through grant awards, states have leveraged funds to improve their statewide apprenticeship strategies and expansion efforts. For example, the Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) grant that was first announced by DOL in 2022 with a second round in 2024, offered funding to grantees to establish Registered Apprenticeship Hubs. The goal was to have organizations serve as intermediaries to establish industry-led networks by convening stakeholders locally or regionally and serving as multi-employer program sponsors. Through this opportunity, community colleges, universities, workforce development organizations, community-based organizations, and industry associations have served in the role of apprenticeship intermediaries across regions and states.

### YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP INTERMEDIARIES

Intermediaries also support the expansion of youth apprenticeship programs, specifically designed for individuals between the ages of 16-24. In 2019, DOL invested in organizations on a national scale to develop RA programs for high school students and out-of-school youth. Understanding that state labor laws differ for young people under 18, organizations, such as the Urban Institute and Jobs for the Future (JFF), were selected to help implement strategies for program design that considered how youth can begin their apprenticeship journey while working towards their high school diplomas and ultimately complete their RA program shortly after graduation. From this effort, intermediaries on a local level have formed to support youth apprenticeship programs with recruitment, RI, supportive services, and advocating for more opportunities. For more information, check out the Urban Institute's report: "[How Intermediaries Can Promote Youth Apprenticeship](#)."

## Intermediary Examples



### California's Regional Intermediary Networks

One innovative solution to scale RA programs is evidenced by the California Apprenticeship Initiative through [California Community Colleges](#) to create and sustain regional intermediary networks. The networks serve as conveners of stakeholders interested and involved in the region's apprenticeship efforts. Individuals representing employers, RA sponsors, education institutions, service providers, government, industry associations, labor, and others meet regularly to collaborate on mutual apprenticeship goals. They also foster partnership building and connections to bridge barriers to scaling RA programs throughout the region. For more information, you can access two reports published by JFF: [California's Regional Intermediaries: A Scalable Solution for Regional Apprenticeship Expansion](#) and [Replicating and Scaling Regional Intermediary Networks: The California Blueprint](#).



HAROLD K.L. CASTLE  
FOUNDATION

### Castle Foundation: Hawaii Youth Apprenticeship Network Design Sprint

Through a request for partnerships process, the [Castle Foundation](#) along with the [Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship](#), or PAYA, initiated an innovative [Design Sprint](#) to identify partners who will serve as intermediaries to expand Youth Apprenticeship programs throughout Hawaii. The goal is to select and fund entities that “will design and develop a work plan to launch a youth apprenticeship program” over the course of six months. Successful partners may then apply for additional funding to launch their RA program.



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
TENNESSEE  
SYSTEM

### The University of Tennessee System: Grow Your Own

In Tennessee, addressing teacher shortages through RA became a priority in 2022 with the development and registration of a state-wide [Registered Teacher Apprenticeship program](#) through the State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA). Serving as an intermediary and program sponsor, the [Tennessee Grow Your Own Center](#)—housed within The University of Tennessee System—primarily assists with developing partnerships between local education agencies and education preparation programs. Programs are sustained by the Center's support and with funding through competitive grants from the Tennessee Department of Education. Check out this [brief](#) for more information.



## Services and Supports Offered by Intermediaries

The services and supports that apprenticeship intermediaries offer can vary based on their role, but ultimately, they exist to help employers and partners develop and sustain quality RA programs.

### CONVENER

#### Promoting RA as a workforce solution by

- Convening key stakeholders such as industry/trade organizations, employers, educational institutions, workforce development agencies, chambers of commerce, and other organizations.
- Offering presentations, webinars, and information sessions to stakeholders.
- Supporting partners in hosting events such as Apprenticeship Accelerators.
- Training professionals on RA standards, regulations, and best practices for program design including staff with local workforce development boards, American Job Centers, SAAs, industry associations, higher education institutions, and others.



### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXPERT

#### Providing technical assistance for RA program development, registration, launch, and sustainability by

- Introducing and facilitating connections to the registration agency (Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or SAA), other stakeholders, and potential partners.
- Supporting program sponsors with registration documentation and submission, including developing core components: OJL, supplemental education, minimum entry qualifications, selection procedures, a wage schedule, etc.
- Recommending strategies to recruit, prepare, and retain mentors and apprentices.
- Offering resources and support for program administration, including data collection, record keeping, and reporting.
- Identifying funding options through local, state, and federal grants, contracts, tax credits, and/or other avenues for program sustainability.
- Reviewing program for continuous quality improvement and assisting with program revisions based on evaluations from stakeholder feedback.



### PROGRAM SPONSOR

#### Sponsoring RA programs to ease the process of development, registration, and implementation by

- Accepting all responsibilities of an RA program sponsor in collaboration with key partners, especially employers and training providers.
- Serving as a program administrator to manage program and apprentice documentation, data, and reporting, as well as maintaining records as required.
- Interfacing with multiple employer partners in group sponsored programs to ensure the RA program is designed to meet their needs.
- Ensuring program sustainability with regard to quality design, funding, and opportunities for expansion.
- Fulfilling additional roles as needed related to program components such as mentor training, outreach and recruitment, minimum qualifications, selection procedures, wage schedule, RI, supportive services, and tracking apprentice progress.



## Are You Ready to Work with an Apprenticeship Intermediary?

Now it's your turn as an employer to determine if and how you would like to work with an Apprenticeship Intermediary. Include company leadership, human resources staff, department directors or managers, and other staff who may be involved in the RA program to review the information, consider your options, and make necessary decisions. The following questions can help guide the conversation:

### COMPANY READINESS

Are key stakeholders and internal staff on the same page when it comes to understanding RA?

- ☐ Would company personnel benefit from additional RA information and training sessions?
- ☐ Are you considering RA for specific occupations within a particular industry?
- ☐ Does your company have staff with capacity to oversee and manage the responsibilities of an RA program?
- ☐ Do you have staff available to manage program documentation, records, data, and other necessary information?
- ☐ Do you have staff who will maintain communication with the registering agency (OA or SAA)?
- ☐ Will your company be able to provide ongoing support to apprentices and mentors?
- ☐ Will your company be able to invest in the RA program and sustain it for long-term operation?

### COMPANY ROLE

What role do you anticipate having with the RA program?

- ☐ Is your company able to register the program and act as the program sponsor?
- ☐ Would you rather have an intermediary serve as the program sponsor while you provide the OJL and mentoring components to apprentices?
- ☐ Will you need to engage other partners for support to make your program successful? Other partners can include an educational institution and/or community organization(s).

Your answers to the questions above will help you understand your needs and capacity to develop, register, and operate an RA program. By making note of the areas where you will need the most support, you can prepare key questions to ask when meeting with an apprenticeship intermediary to help determine if the partnership will be a good fit. Be sure to get a clear understanding of what the intermediary can offer as it aligns with your needs, but also to clarify what your responsibilities will be.



## Tips on Finding an Apprenticeship Intermediary

There are many types of apprenticeship intermediaries and finding the right one depends on your needs. Here are a few tips on how to find an intermediary:

1. **DOL Industry Intermediaries:** A list of entities directly contracted with the federal government to offer expertise in support in high-growth industries can be found in the Registered Apprenticeship Industry Intermediaries [Factsheet](#) on [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov).
2. **DOL [Partner Finder](#):** This feature allows you to search for partners by need. You can search using your location and enter key words for occupation or industry. Refine your search by selecting “I want to join an existing program.” Results will show a list of RA program sponsors who operate a group program.
3. **DOL [Apprenticeship System](#):** Contact your state’s apprenticeship representative (OA or SAA) and request assistance to find an intermediary in your area or statewide.
4. Explore other options through a search on your preferred internet browser. Use keywords “apprenticeship intermediary” and other details such as location or industry.

## Conclusion

Apprenticeship intermediaries offer essential services and technical assistance to help expand RA programs across all industries. Different types of intermediaries can provide additional services, potential funding, and expertise to build, register, and launch RA programs. Now, with a greater understanding of this critical partner and links to useful resources, employers can connect directly with an apprenticeship intermediary to get started.