



Supporting Economic Development Organizations with Registered Apprenticeship

A Guide for State Apprenticeship Staff



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Purpose

This guide helps State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAAs) and Office of Apprenticeship (OA) staff effectively support Economic Development Organizations (EDOs) in leveraging Registered Apprenticeship (RA) as a strategic workforce and economic development tool.

Why It Matters

Educating EDOs on RA basics ensures that they can accurately represent and promote apprenticeships as a core workforce strategy. This knowledge empowers them to integrate RA into their economic development efforts, unlock new opportunities for business growth, and strengthen their region's position in a competitive economy.

By embedding RA into regional economic development messaging and strategies, EDOs can position their communities as talent-forward, future-ready, and primed for sustainable business growth—directly supporting both attraction and retention goals while enhancing overall regional competitiveness.

Building a Framework for Utilizing RA

Below are key steps to help EDOs build out a framework for utilizing RA in their business development and employer engagement efforts.

BUILD AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING



Educate EDOs on RA Basics: Offer briefings or workshops on RA components, benefits, and success stories tailored to economic development goals.

EDOs serve as trusted advisors to companies making location, expansion, and workforce decisions. With RA training, EDO staff gain essential knowledge of RA's applications, business case, and value beyond the trades, including in IT, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and aerospace. RA's customized, On-the-Job Learning (OJL) can shift outdated perceptions, positioning it as a strategic tool for business attraction, regional competitiveness, and talent pipeline development. By highlighting and understanding measurable outcomes like reduced turnover and increased productivity, EDOs can make a compelling case for RA to new and expanding industries. Incorporating RA into their toolkit strengthens workforce sustainability and enhances the region's appeal to employers, site selectors, and investors.

Resources:

- [Introduction to Apprenticeship—WorkforceGPS](#): Compilation of “Apprenticeship 101” resources and tools pulled from various pages on WorkforceGPS.
- [ApprenticeshipUSA Fact Sheets](#): One-pager that EDOs can use to brief staff, partners, or business clients, along with a quick reference guide on U.S. Department of Labor(DOL)-related technical assistance.
- [National Governors Association’s State RA Playbook](#): Policy recommendations and real-world case studies showing how RA supports workforce and economic priorities.
- [North Carolina’s Workforce Revival in NC](#): Partnership between the NC Chamber and NC Community College System (NCCCS), where employers have access to free assistance and valuable resources through tailored RA programs for specific employer needs.



Translate RA into Economic Development Terms: Frame RA as a tool for business attraction, retention, and regional competitiveness.

Talent availability is a key driver of site selection, expansion, and investment. By advancing RA programs, a region signals its commitment to building a skilled, industry-responsive workforce, assuring employers of a reliable labor pool. RA addresses immediate talent needs while strengthening long-term workforce infrastructure, supporting business retention and expansion through locally developed talent and reduced turnover. Modern RA programs enhance competitiveness in high-growth sectors like advanced manufacturing, IT, health, and clean energy, boosting a region's appeal for innovation, federal funding, and business investment. With measurable ROI such as higher productivity, lower recruitment costs, and reduced attrition, RA is a proven tool for attracting, retaining, and growing businesses.

Resources:

- Expanding Apprenticeships in the U.S.: An Employer's Perspective—[Global Apprenticeship Network \(GAN\)](#): Insights from employers on how apprenticeships can be scaled and aligned with needs, emphasizing private sector leadership.
- [Apprenticeships: Expanding Economic Opportunities](#)—Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Case Study: Outlines how apprenticeships drove economic recovery in Southern California and includes best practices for designing effective apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, including policy recommendations for integrating apprenticeship into regional economic strategies.
- [Michigan's Advance Michigan Center for Apprenticeship Innovation](#): Example as to how RA is positioned as a business retention and expansion (BRE) tool, securing greater local employer engagement during site selection processes.
- [National Skills Coalition](#): This organization provides resources and reports ([8 Reasons Why Skills Training is Key to Economic Prosperity](#)) on how states are using apprenticeships as part of their workforce development strategies.



Talent availability drives site selection and business growth, RA assures employers have a skilled, reliable workforce. It's proven ROI—higher productivity, lower recruitment costs, and reduced attrition—makes RA a powerful tool for business attraction and expansion.



Highlight ROI: Share data on employer returns, retention rates, and average apprentice earnings.

EDOs considering and disseminating RA information in the areas of employer returns, retention rates, and average apprentice wages demonstrate the positive value that RA programs bring to businesses and regional economies. By emphasizing ROI, retention increase & apprentice wage growth, EDOs can make the case for RA clear and demonstrate the program's pivotal role in creating sustainable, competitive talent pipelines.

- **Employer ROI:** Increased productivity/ reduced cost of hire/ greater workforce quality all point to a significant return.
- **Retention Rates:** Lower retention rates leads to reduced turnover costs and increased workforce longevity.
- **Trainee wages:** This data shows that there are rising overall wages, closing the gap and promoting social mobility.
- **Career Progression:** Apprenticeship involvement provides structured development options and promotes a career path.
- **Policy & Employer Engagement:** Positive results shape policies, encourages employer participation and facilitates the viability of talent pipelines that align with regional economic priorities.

Resources:

- [U.S. Department of Labor—Resource Hub & Fact Sheets:](#) Data related to employer-related benefits of RA on ROI and training cost recovery.
- [Fastport's Return on Investment Calculator:](#) Customizable tool created for employers and EDOs to estimate the ROI of implementing an RA program.
- [Workforce Intelligence Network \(WIN\)'s ROI Calculator:](#) Shows the ROI for an apprentice's wage progression, the wages of an experienced worker in an occupation, the hourly cost of training an apprentice, and more.
- [American Association of Community Colleges—Employer Engagement and Calculating ROI for Industry:](#) Tools, resources, and promising practices across the U.S. on the ROI being received by businesses who are using RA.
- South Carolina's [Apprenticeship Carolina](#) program has helped develop 846 active registered apprenticeship programs supporting 40 partners—many reporting reduced turnover and higher productivity.

ESTABLISH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS



Proactively Engage EDOs: Reach out to local and regional EDOs to introduce RA as a workforce solution.

Collaborate with local and regional EDOs to promote RA as a workforce solution that directly links talent development to business expansion strategies. EDOs are a key part of the infrastructure used to help employers compete regionally for business, attract and retain business, and meet the needs of the local labor market. By framing RA as a tried-and-true model for providing tailored, high-quality training, workforce agencies and partners can also help EDOs present employers with a scalable, sustainable solution for seeding skilled talent pipelines. This partnership, in addition to the immediate response to employment needs, will promote the region's long-term economic sustainability by ensuring that responses to workforce needs are directly linked to the business development aspirations of the region. Having EDOs introduce RA makes use of their power, networks, and economic insight to drive employer engagement, expanding the reach of apprenticeship across industries.

Resources:

- International Economic Development Council (IEDC)—[Effective Economic Development Roles in Workforce Development Report](#): Partnerships developed by five economic development organizations (EDOs) to meet businesses' talent pipeline needs.
- [ApprenticeshipNC](#): Proactive briefings with regional economic developers that led to new employer connections and RA programs starting in rural areas.



Join Economic Development Planning Efforts:
Participate in regional planning meetings and sector strategy sessions.

Integrating RA into regional economic and workforce planning is essential for building a future-ready labor market. By participating in economic planning and sector strategy sessions, workforce stakeholders can align RA programs with industry needs, talent pipelines, and long-term development goals. This positions RA as a strategic tool for closing skills gaps, scaling businesses, and advancing economic mobility. Embedding RA in sector strategies strengthens employer, education, and workforce partnerships, creating a more coordinated, responsive system and ensuring apprenticeships are a sustainable, integral part of innovation, competitiveness, and high-skill workforce development. All these factors help EDOs in their strategies to improve economies and assist employers.



Embedding RA into regional planning and sector strategies ensures that apprenticeship programs align with industry needs.

Resources:

- [Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy \(CEDS\) Guidelines](#): Developed by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) to encourage inclusion of workforce initiatives like RA in regional economic planning documents.
- National Association of Development Organizations (NADO)—[Case Study: Green River ADD's Hire to Operate \(H2O\) Program](#): Hub for connecting regional development districts and planning groups where RA can be positioned.
- [Northwest Arkansas](#): Included RA in its CEDS as a strategy to meet employer demand in healthcare and advanced manufacturing.
- [How One City is Bridging the Gap Between Education and Local Jobs](#): Cross-sector alignment in Columbus, OH, illustrating how integrating education/training with regional economic development yields scalable talent pipelines.



Facilitate Cross-Sector Collaboration: Connect EDOs with workforce boards, community colleges, and intermediaries.

Looking ahead, cross-sector collaboration is essential in building an integrated, adaptable economic and workforce ecosystem. By linking EDOs, workforce boards, community colleges, and intermediaries, economic growth will align with talent development so that training programs respond directly to labor market needs. This collaboration breaks down silos, blends business insights with education and training expertise, and can leverage RA intermediaries to bridge gaps. Through strategic connections, facilitation, and technical assistance, EDOs can foster a shared vision that maximizes resources, unites public and private efforts, and accelerates the creation of high-quality career pathways.

Additionally, RA-affiliated staff can help support the development of a coordinated approach by making connections, enabling collaboration, and offering technical assistance between agencies and organizations at state and local levels to develop a shared vision that encompasses the strengths of every partner, stretches both public and private resources, and rapidly develops a high-quality career pathway.



When EDOs, workforce boards, colleges, and intermediaries work together, they create an integrated and adaptable workforce ecosystem.

Resources:

- [State and Local Workforce Boards](#): Locator tool for finding workforce boards that may be able to assist with screening, recruitment, career counseling, and coordination of resources.
- [Urban Institute—State Workforce and Economic Development](#): Offers practical models for cross-sector partnerships.
- [The Workforce System and Partnerships with Registered Apprenticeship Programs](#): One-pager that EDOs can use to brief staff, partners, or business clients on how the workforce system can support Registered Apprenticeship.

PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



Support RA Program Development: Help EDOs and their business partners understand the registration process and program design.

Educating EDOs and their business partners on the RA registration process is key to expanding its use as a workforce strategy. Many employers see the process as complex and burdensome. However, by clarifying requirements, identifying eligible roles, connecting to training providers, and navigating state or federal steps, RA staff can reduce uncertainty and build employer confidence. Simplifying and streamlining guidance helps all businesses, especially small and mid-sized firms, view RA as a strategic investment in long-term talent development. This not only addresses skills gaps, retention, and succession needs but also strengthens regional economic strategies by embedding RA into talent pipelines that support industry growth and competitiveness.



Simplifying RA registration and program design helps employers, especially small and mid-sized firms, see RA as a practical investment.

Resources:

- [USDOL Apprenticeship Resource Hub](#): Provides RA Fact Sheets, Guides, and Toolkits.
- [Office of Apprenticeship State Contacts](#): Provides direct contact to state and regional apprenticeship staff who can assist with registration and compliance.
- [Registered Apprenticeship Standards Library](#): Comprehensive collection of approved apprenticeship programs across the U.S., including training standards for thousands of occupations, categorized by industry and type (e.g., time-based, competency-based).



Offer Customized Guidance: Tailor support to regional industry needs and economic development priorities.

Providing targeted support to EDOs is critical to integrating RA into regional economic development efforts in ways that are demand-driven, sustainable, and aligned with local priorities. Assistance should be tailored to employer needs, labor force makeup, and strategic growth plans, especially in high-demand sectors such as advanced manufacturing, IT, healthcare, and aerospace. By working with workforce partnering staff (state and local RA staff, local workforce board RA navigators, etc.), EDOs can customize apprenticeship models to local wages, training capacity, and market demand. It is vital that everyone understands the importance of RA programs fitting within broader initiatives such as sector partnerships and innovation hubs. This alignment strengthens employer value and can create high-quality career pathways for apprentices, fostering resilient, innovative local economies.

Resources:

- [USDOL Sector-Based Apprenticeship Expansion Models](#): Guidance on developing RA in key industries such as advanced manufacturing, IT, healthcare, construction, and clean energy.
- Burning Glass Institute / [Lightcast Labor Market Insights](#): Provides real-time labor market data to inform which occupations and skills are in demand locally.
- [Jobs for the Future \(JFF\)—Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning](#): Resources for expanding and creating access to high-quality apprenticeship and work-based learning.
- [JobForward](#): Works directly with RA stakeholders to provide assistance within all areas of workforce development, from strategy to funding to implementation and evaluation.



Assist with Funding Navigation: Guide EDOs and employers through available federal, state, and philanthropic funding streams.

Understanding the various funding options available is key to boosting RA programs, especially for small to mid-sized employers who often struggle with limited resources. That's where state RA staff come in—they can help EDOs and their business partners figure out how to find, understand, and tap into federal, state, and philanthropic funding sources. With this kind of support, financial hurdles are lowered, risks are mitigated, and employers feel more confident about starting and maintaining these apprenticeship programs.

Federal and state funding, including WIOA funds, State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) grants, and tax credits, can help lower costs for training, instruction, and additional support services. By breaking down the funding process and providing customized support, RA staff can empower stakeholders to strategically secure a range of funding sources. This approach not only speeds up the adoption of RA programs but also helps ensure that they remain financially viable and fit into broader goals for workforce and economic development planning.

Resources:

- [Apprenticeship Building America \(ABA\) Grantee Map](#): Shows federal grantees who may offer direct support or sub-grants for RA program development.
- State Apprenticeship Incentive Program Examples
 - [Arkansas: Youth Apprenticeship Tax Credit](#)
 - [Georgia: HOPE Career Grant](#)
 - [California: CalCompetes Tax Credit](#)
 - [Alabama: Employer Tax Credit](#)
 - [South Carolina: Apprenticeship Carolina](#)

PROMOTE SUPPORT SERVICES



Support Wraparound Services: Help EDOs identify resources for housing, transportation, and partner employment to support employers who may be assisting with worker relocation.

Providing wraparound services is essential for apprentice retention, particularly for those relocating for training or work. State RA staff help EDOs connect apprentices with housing, transportation, childcare, and partner employment resources, removing barriers that can prevent program completion. By linking EDOs with local organizations, RA staff build support networks that make apprenticeship pathways more accessible and sustainable. Strategies by embedding RA into talent pipelines that support industry growth and competitiveness.

Resources:

- [WIOA Title I and Title II Funds](#): Offers information related to how WIOA funds can be used for supportive services (transportation, childcare, tools, uniforms, textbooks) for eligible apprentices and jobseekers.
- Local [United Way](#) and Community Action Agencies: Community organizations often fund emergency housing, utility assistance, and transportation for low-income workers, which can be aligned with EDO-led apprenticeship initiatives.
- Local [Housing Authorities](#) and Employer-Assisted Housing Programs: Offer housing stipends, low-interest home loans, or transitional housing for eligible apprentices.

SHARING OF TOOLS AND RESOURCES



Provide Outreach Materials: Supply EDOs with one-pagers, case studies, and industry-specific RA toolkits.

Clear, accessible materials are essential for EDOs to communicate the value of RA to employers and community partners. Many businesses, especially small and mid-sized businesses, are unfamiliar with RA's structure and benefits. Jargon-free, visually engaging resources help prevent RA from being overlooked. State RA staff can equip EDOs with these tools, enabling them to advocate for RA, engage employers, and integrate programs into regional workforce strategies, ultimately supporting broader adoption and long-term sustainability.

Resources:

- [Apprenticeship.gov—Outreach Materials](#): Downloadable fact sheets, brochures, and flyers for employers, jobseekers, and industry partners.
- [USDOL Industry-Specific Toolkits](#): Contains RA guidance for industries such as energy, advanced manufacturing, cybersecurity, and transportation.
- [JFF—Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning Case Studies](#): Includes employer success stories and program implementation spotlights tailored to regional and industry needs.



Highlight Intermediary Support: Connect EDOs with RA intermediaries who can assist with program design and implementation and employer engagement.

RA intermediaries are essential for expanding apprenticeships across industries. They raise awareness, connect employers and labor groups with workforce and education partners, provide technical assistance, and link employers with apprentices. By coordinating training, supporting program development, collecting demand data, and promoting apprenticeship benefits, intermediaries strengthen recruitment, reduce turnover, and help launch and scale RA programs in growing sectors and regions.

Resources:

- [USDOL Apprenticeship Intermediary Directory](#): List of federally recognized intermediaries with expertise in manufacturing, IT, healthcare, construction, and more.
- [AIR—Partnering with Intermediary Sponsors to Rapidly Deploy & Scale Apprenticeships](#): Explains the roles of intermediaries and employers and describes how employers can discover and select an intermediary sponsor that best meets their needs.
- National Intermediary Organizations



Intermediary support strengthens employer engagement and accelerates program growth!

[Cyber and IT Technology—Safal Partners](#)
[Healthcare—AHIMA Foundation](#)
[Advanced Manufacturing—National Institute for Industry and Career Advancement](#)
[Youth Focused—Urban Institute RA Hub](#)

TRACK AND COMMUNICATE IMPACT



Collect and Share Data: Work with workforce boards to track RA outcomes and share success metrics with EDOs.

Measurable results give EDOs data to demonstrate RA's impact on growth, talent retention, and workforce sustainability. By collaborating with workforce boards, educational institutions, and intermediaries to track and analyze outcomes, EDOs can present compelling, data-driven stories that highlight talent pipelines, reduce turnover costs, and attract economic development to the region.



By collecting and sharing outcome data, EDOs can demonstrate RA's impact on business growth and workforce sustainability.

Resources:

- [Apprenticeship Data Visualization Tool—USDOL](#): Offers national and state-level RA data (enrollment, completions, wages) that can be used in reports, outreach decks, and economic planning documents.
- [Workforce Integrated Performance System \(WIPS\)—USDOL](#): Tracks performance data reported by workforce boards, including RA-related grants and WIOA co-enrolled participants.
- [Bookings Institution—Apprenticeship ROI Overview](#): Provides a concise FAQ on apprenticeships, including insights into ROI for employers.
- [Registered Apprenticeship Program Data Tool](#): Iowa invested in the development of a Tableau-powered tool to visualize information from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Database Systems (RAPIDS), which provides insight into data that is displayed in Iowa's annual RA report and navigable by users.
- [Colorado Department of Labor and Employment](#): partnered with workforce regions to generate RA dashboards showing growth trends and wage gains across industry sectors.



Celebrate Successes: Promote stories of RA-driven business growth and regional development through media and outreach efforts. Support document—see separate draft Communications Toolkit: [Registered Apprenticeship Communications Toolkit.docx](#)

Communicating real-world results is one of the best ways to demonstrate the value of RA to businesses, local communities, and the regional economy, as well as foster greater stakeholder engagement. With concrete success stories and data-driven results, the conversation moves past theory to show how RA programs specifically meet workforce shortages, improve retention, and boost income—all in a way that demonstrates economic value. By partnering with EDOs, employers, and workforce boards to elevate these stories through strategic media campaigns, events, and publications, stakeholders can help scale the message that RA is a proven and effective workforce development strategy.

Resources:

- [USDOL Apprenticeship Resource Hub](#) and [Blog](#): Features apprenticeship resources ranging from case studies to videos to research and success stories. Your one-stop site to quickly access files and media items.
- [National Apprenticeship Week \(NAW\) Promotional Toolkit](#): Includes press release templates, social media graphics, and event planning guides to showcase RA initiatives during the annual NAW celebration.
- [WorkforceGPS Media and Outreach Tools](#): Tips and tools for promoting apprenticeship outcomes, employer partnerships, and community impact stories.
- [I Build America Ohio](#): A guide for employers in Ohio on how to host a successful Signing Day for students entering skilled trades.

ADVOCATE FOR RA INTEGRATION



Embed RA in Economic Development Strategies: Encourage state and regional plans to include RA as a core workforce development strategy.

Including RA in state and regional development strategic plans provides a clear and forward commitment to having a sustainable and resilient workforce, which is increasingly more important to businesses considering where to invest, expand, or relocate their operations. By institutionalizing RA as a foundational, sustainable workforce strategy, regions show they aren't just reacting to talent shortages today but rather creating industry-responsive, scalable pipelines that will change the economic future. This strategic focus improves regional competitiveness and helps give employers and investors confidence that local leaders are focused on sustainable talent development and business growth.



Embedding RA into state and regional economic strategies shows a strong, future-focused commitment to workforce sustainability.

Resources:

- [U.S. Economic Development Administration \(EDA\)—CEDS Guidelines](#): Encourages regions to include workforce and skills development (including RA) in their Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS).
- [National Governors Association \(NGA\)—Workforce Policy Resources](#): Offers guidance on how states can incorporate RA into talent strategies aligned with sector-based economic development.
- [Colorado](#) embedded RA into its statewide Talent Pipeline Report and sector strategies (e.g., clean energy, tech, healthcare) coordinated through the Office of the Future of Work.
- [Michigan's "Sixty by 30" Strategy](#): Frames RA as a key mechanism for reaching postsecondary attainment goals and supports local economic development districts in implementation.
- [Apprenticeship Florida—Education Toolkit](#): Apprenticeship Florida created a toolkit to guide workforce, industry, and educational stakeholders through the RA development process, providing helpful models and explaining program options.



Additional Resources

These are additional resources that may be helpful to EDOs in understanding how to use RA in their business development and employer engagement efforts:

[U.S. Economic Development Administration \(EDA\) Directory](#)

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) supports long-term job growth and resilient regional economies by investing in innovation and regional collaboration—two key drivers of global competitiveness, quality jobs, and national economic success.

[International Economic Development Council \(IEDC\)](#)

The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) is the largest non-profit, non-partisan organization supporting over 4,500 economic development professionals. Its members—who work across government, public-private partnerships, and chambers of commerce—focus on creating and retaining jobs to drive community growth, build wealth, and strengthen local economies.

[Leveraging RA to Build a Thriving and Sustainable Economy; Advancing Apprenticeship: Opportunities for States and Business to Create and Expand RAPs](#)

National Governors Association (NGA): The voice of the nation's Governors and a leading forum for bipartisan policy solutions, NGA fosters policy innovation, facilitates information-sharing, conducts research and data development, and provides technical assistance.

[Aligning Registered Apprenticeship with Economic Development Organizations](#)

This guide outlines how EDOs can leverage Registered Apprenticeship—a time-tested, employer-driven training model—as a workforce development program to develop skilled talent pipelines, improve business attraction and retention, and drive regional economic growth and resilience.

[Apprenticeship.gov](#)

One-stop Resource Hub that provides apprenticeship resources ranging from fact sheets, research, data, case studies, and more for the RA ecosystem.

- Notable Resources
 - » [Apprenticeship Finder](#): A tool to find apprenticeship opportunities, by occupation and registered partner, across the nation.
 - » [Partner Finder](#): A tool to connect you with the right partners to help you design, develop or enhance your RA program.

[RA Center of Excellence for Strategic Partnerships & Systems Alignment](#)

USDOL's RA Center that offers tools and resources on how to establish, build, and sustain partnerships that support alignment of industry, workforce, and education to accelerate RA adoption and expansion.

[New America—The Apprenticeship Renaissance](#)

Recap of several Governors outlining innovative apprenticeship pathways and strategies in their State of the State addresses to address immediate and long-term economic and labor market demands.