

A man and a woman, both wearing lanyards with access cards, are in a server room. The woman is holding a tablet and looking at it, while the man stands next to her, also looking at the tablet. They are both smiling. The background shows server racks with various cables and lights.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GUIDE

*to Identifying Pre-Apprenticeship
and Registered Apprenticeship Partners*



INTRODUCTION

As a workforce development strategy, Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is well-aligned with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and provides a proven method for workforce systems to meet critical local, regional and state economic priorities.

Apprenticeship is a valuable tool for the workforce system to deliver value to its primary customers - employers and job seekers. It provides employers with a customizable, scalable strategy for recruiting and retaining new talent, as well as upskilling incumbent workers, and provides job seekers with a career pathway entry point for in-demand occupations while gaining paid, mentored on-the-job learning and industry-validated instruction that results in a portable, national credential.

However high-quality, sustainable RA programs require a network of committed partners. The workforce system is uniquely poised to convene stakeholders to build effective, strategic apprenticeship partnerships.

With all 50 states and 6 US territories incorporating RA into their WIOA Unified and Combined Plans, and a strong, sustained focus and financial investment by the federal government and most state governments in RA expansion, state and local workforce systems should be a driving force for developing dynamic partnerships to expand RA pre-apprenticeship programs.

This guide is intended to be a starting point to help state and local workforce professionals understand the key players in the apprenticeship space, what role(s) those partners typically play in supporting RA programs, and how you can play a leadership role in creating RA partnerships that engage those entities.



KEY APPRENTICESHIP STAKEHOLDERS AND POTENTIAL PARTNERS

It is essential to understand the key stakeholders who can contribute to strong, sustained RA partnerships. The most common organizational types engaged in - or having the ability to engage in and support - apprenticeship are:

- US Department of Labor (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA)
- State and Local Workforce Systems
- RA Program Sponsors & Employers
- Educational Institutions (High Schools, Career and Technical Education Centers, Adult Education Programs, Community Colleges, and Universities)
- Intermediaries
- Unions/Labor Organizations
- Community-Based Organizations

Understanding the roles that each partner can play in supporting RA programs will help your board convene the right people and organizations to expand RA opportunities for local job seekers and support local employers in building stronger, more skilled talent pipelines.

Depending on the role(s) they play, partners may provide:



Paid On-the-Job Learning (OJL)



Related Instruction (RI)



Supportive Services



Technical Assistance (TA)



Funding



Apprentice/Employer Recruiting



RA Program Awareness



USDOL Office of Apprenticeship State Office or State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) Office

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) was established in 1937 through the National Apprenticeship Act (NAA). RA programs are registered with, and overseen by, the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship (OA) and recognized State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAA). Approximately half of US states and territories are "OA states," meaning federal DOL OA staff register and oversee RA programs in those states, and the remaining states and territories are "SAA states" meaning an OA-recognized agency acts on behalf of DOL to register and oversee RA programs.

The [State Apprenticeship Director](#) and staff in your state, either from USDOL OA or your SAA, is a critical early connection to make. Either the DOL OA office or an SAA office in your state is responsible for registering and overseeing RA programs. Apprenticeship system staff in your state provide initial TA to help program sponsors develop and register their program, provide ongoing support to program sponsors, connect employers to training providers for RI, and make information available to RA sponsors and key partners on sources of federal, state and local funding. [Learn which type of registration agency oversees RA in your state](#). Learn who is responsible for administering RA in your state by visiting [Apprenticeship.gov's "State Offices" page](#).

Typically provide:



TA



Funding



RA Program Awareness

Your state's RA system staff will:

- Explain the requirements and process for developing or expanding RA programs or pre-apprenticeship program sponsors.
- Provide guidance on federal relevant state policy.
- Inform you of federal and state resources.
- Connect you to other key players in your local or state RA system.
- Serve as a useful gateway to other contacts at the local, state, and national level.

USDOL has invested over \$1 billion since 2015 to support the growth of RA. Your [state director](#) can tell you which DOL investments have been awarded to grantees and/or contract holders operating in your state that may be able to support your local partners' new or expanded RA program development work. Active federal USDOL investments can be found on [Apprenticeship.gov's "Investments, Tax Credits, and Tuition Support" page](#). All active investments can be found on [Apprenticeship.gov's "Active Grants and Contracts" page](#).

RECENT USDOL APPRENTICESHIP INVESTMENTS INCLUDE:

2022

- Women in Apprenticeship & Non-Traditional Occupations (WANTO) Technical Assistance grants
- Apprenticeship Building America grants

2021

- Expansion of Registered Apprenticeship Programs through Industry Intermediaries Services contracts
- State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity and Innovation (SAEEI) grants
- Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Technical Assistance (TA) Centers of Excellence grants

2020

- Building State Capacity to Expand Apprenticeship through Innovation grants
- National Industry Intermediary contracts
- Youth Apprenticeship Readiness Grants
- Apprenticeship Closing the Skills Gap grants

Registered Apprenticeship Sponsors & Employers

While most RA programs are sponsored by an employer or union, RA sponsors can be employers, industry associations, local workforce boards, community colleges, Career and Technical Education (CTE) Centers, or other community-based organizations. The sponsor is at the center of an RA program – serving as the contact point for registering the program with the OA or SAA staff in the state, communicating with the state's registration agency, ensuring program compliance with state and federal guidelines, registering apprentices, and assuring that apprentices are receiving the OJL and RI outlined in the program's standards.

In cases where the sponsor is not the employer, for example if a company joined a RA program sponsored by their local workforce board or community college, the apprentice is still an employee of the participating company, and their employer provides structured OJL as well as progressive wages based upon skills gains. The employer is also the final arbiter of an apprentice's competence and validates that the apprentice has become fully skilled in the occupation before certifying their completion.

Typically provide:



OJL

Typically looking for partners to provide/support:



RI



Supportive Services



TA



Funding



Apprentice/Employer Recruiting



RA Program Awareness

Finding existing sponsors in your area:

While there is no comprehensive, single list of RA program sponsors in the US, you can search on [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov) for sponsored programs in your area and contact your state apprenticeship director. You can also contact a [USDOL national industry intermediary](https://www.usdol.gov) to learn more about existing sponsors operating programs in industries aligned with your board's industry priorities.



Educational Institutions

(High Schools, Career and Technical Education Centers (CTE), Adult Education Programs, Community Colleges and Universities)

Increasingly educational institutions are participating in RA to better connect students to, and prepare them for, the workforce. Educational institutions can serve in a variety of roles as an RA partner including:

- Serving as the related technical instruction (RI) provider.
- Serving as the RA program sponsor.
- Acting as an intermediary helping employers with RA program design and connecting employers and sponsors with other supportive partners.
- Acting as a training consultant to program sponsors in vetting curriculum and ensuring that training aligns with academic and RA program pathways.
- Providing supportive services for apprentices enrolled as students completing RI at the institution (eg. tutoring and academic support, access to additional resources and program support through GI Bill Benefits, etc.)
- Offering pre-apprenticeship programs for students aligned with other RA programs.



Typically provide:



RI



RA Program Awareness

Typically looking for partners to provide/support:



OJL



Funding



Supportive Services



Apprentice/Employer Recruiting



TA

Finding educational institutions in your area:

The state OA or SAA staff person that serves your area can tell you which CTE Centers or [community colleges](#) are already participating in RA as sponsors and/or RI providers. They can also help you identify the right point person which can be helpful especially in the case of community colleges. Because colleges are large institutions, it may be difficult to find the right contact simply by calling a main campus phone number. Some colleges house their RA programs in their academic or “for-credit” programming, while others run RA or pre-apprenticeship as part of their continuing education or workforce development (“non-credit”) programming. Checking the college or CTE Center’s website may help point you in the right direction.

Intermediaries

Intermediaries serve as a key resource in RA program development or expansion with a particular strength in aligning supply and demand along the talent pipeline to increase the likelihood of students and job seekers successfully preparing for, applying to, and completing RA programs. Many employers prefer to work through a trusted intermediary as their single point of contact. Intermediaries can serve as a hub for employers, service providers, community-based organizations, community colleges, workforce boards and training providers. Intermediaries can bring together various stakeholders for program development or expansion, providing TA and leadership in RA program development, providing subject matter expertise in occupational training and/or RA, and advocating on behalf of RA program sponsors and partners.

Typically provide:



TA



Apprentice/Employer Recruiting



Funding



RA Program Awareness

Typically looking for partners to provide/support:



OJL



Funding



RI



Apprentice/Employer Recruiting



Supportive Services

Intermediaries may provide the following support:

- Serve as the RA Program sponsor.
- Provide RA technical assistance and program subject matter expertise on RA and industry occupation training outlines to help design an RA program for an employer or potential sponsor.
- Provide incentive funding through the organization's federal or state contracts or grants.
- Serve as the RI provider and/or introduce program sponsors to RI providers.
- Connect employers and sponsors with other RA supportive partners.
- Act as a training consultant to program sponsors in vetting curriculum and ensuring that training aligns with academic and RA program pathways.
- Offer pre-apprenticeship programs aligned with one or multiple RA programs.

Finding intermediaries in your area:

In addition to formally designated USDOL intermediaries which hold federal contracts or grants to [expand RA within certain industries](#) or [among certain populations](#), there are dozens of local organizations that can provide intermediary and technical support to employers and potential sponsors.

Unions and Labor Organizations

While not all RA programs are union affiliated, if there are significant opportunities for your board to support and expand RA-based career pathways for local jobseekers through companies which work under a collective bargaining agreement, you will need to engage the union. Historically, unions are strong supporters of RA and can be valuable pre-apprenticeship partners as well.

Unions can:

- Serve as a RA program sponsor.
- Some construction-related unions may be able to provide apprentices with connections to high-quality employers which may offer direct full-time employment for apprentices after program completion, ensuring that apprentices have broader options for career advancement.
- Provide access to state-of-the-art facilities, expert instructors, and other training resources.
- Provide input or validation of curriculum for RI partners.
- Hosting on-site tours or visiting classrooms, career fairs, etc. to inform potential apprentices about their RA program.
- Offer potential mentors for pre-apprenticeship programs.
- Refer individuals interested in the industry but not yet ready for their RA program.

If there are local employers in your area that work with – or have RA programs with – unions, it's best for the company to make the initial connection and introduction. If you are reaching out directly to the union, the best contact is their apprenticeship coordinator or training director.

Typically provide:



OJL



Apprenticeship/Employer Recruiting



RI

Typically looking for partners to provide/support:



RI



Apprenticeship/Employer Recruiting



Supportive Services



RA Program Awareness



Funding

Finding Unions/Labor Organizations in your area:

You can search [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov) for [RAPs sponsored by unions in your area](#) and [contact your state apprenticeship director](#). You can also contact a [USDOL national industry intermediary](#) to learn which unions may provide RA programs and pre-apprenticeship related services in their field.

Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations can play a broad and supportive role in building new or expanded RA programs.

Community-based organizations can:

- Provide employers and sponsors with access to a vetted pipeline of potential RA program applicants.
- Increase awareness of the benefits of RA for the populations they serve – both for potential applicants and among “apprentice influencers,” such as parents, guidance counselors, coaches, etc. - individuals who regularly interact with and can speak to a potential apprentices’ future career pathway planning.
- Offer facilities access for RI.
- Provide supportive services for apprentices they serve (eg. transportation, childcare, tutoring, etc.).
- Offer or incorporate pre-apprenticeship training components into their existing programming (eg. soft skills/core employability skill classes).

Typically provide:



Supportive Services



RA Program Awareness



Apprentice/Employer Recruiting

Typically looking for partners to provide/support:



OJL

Finding community-based organizations in your area:

In addition to [contacting your state apprenticeship director](#) and local Chambers of Commerce which may know of community-based organizations focused on RA program-related job training assistance, [USDOL’s Universal Outreach Tool](#) can help you find local community-based organizations to help employers and sponsors expand their RA program talent sourcing.



Building Pre-Apprenticeship Partnerships

Because apprenticeship is the gold standard of workforce development strategy, increasingly educators, employers, and workforce system leaders are building pathways into RA programs through pre-apprenticeship. Pre-apprenticeship programs provide individuals with additional training or support prior to entering a RA program so that the candidate is a more qualified, attractive candidate for an RA program and is more likely to persist through to completion. It is for this reason that many pre-apprenticeships include educational institutions or community-based organizations as key partners.

Pre-apprenticeship is different from other job training programs in that these programs not only deliver high-quality instruction but also have a direct connection to at least one existing RA program so that program completers can have a direct entry point to continue building their skill toward mastery of an occupation. In addition, RA program sponsors can choose to apply instruction and/or hands-on experience earned through a pre-apprenticeship program to RA program requirements by awarding Credit for Prior Experience (for OJL) or Credit for Prior Learning (for RI), thereby accelerating an apprentices' time to completion. Some educational institutions may also provide a way for apprentices to earn college credit for RI completed through a pre-apprenticeship program.

Historically pre-apprenticeship programs have not been as well-defined as RA programs and have not been registered. In 2012 DOL issued [TEN 13-12](#) that defines a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program and provides information on pre-apprenticeship resources. [USDOL outlines the core components of a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program as:](#)



industry-aligned curriculum



supportive services



simulated work experience



sustainable partnerships



facilitated entry into a RA Program



efforts to increase diversity

Understanding that pre-apprenticeship is preparation to succeed in apprenticeships, organizations that participate in RA are critical partners to pre-apprenticeship programs and should participate in creating alignment between the skills and competencies of the pre-apprenticeship and RA programs. These organizations should provide direct input on the quality and content of the pre-apprenticeship curriculum. RA program sponsors and employers can also host work-based learning opportunities to help prepare students for the OJL component of a RA program. In addition, they can provide guidance to students about other aspects of the talent development pipeline, including understanding how and when to apply for their RA program.

Building Pre-Apprenticeship Partnerships (Continued)

In some states there is a movement to formalize pre-apprenticeships, including the registration of pre-apprenticeships. [Contact your OA or SAA State Director](#) to learn if pre-apprenticeship programs are required to be registered in your state as well as what organizations are involved in pre-apprenticeship programming for critical occupations in your state, regional or local area and what resources may be available to support pre-apprenticeship program development.

Some states that currently require pre-apprenticeship program registration (and related resources to support development) include:

- [Massachusetts Pre-Apprentice Application Package](#)
- Oregon [Pre-Apprenticeship Application Toolkit](#) and [Application for Pre-Apprenticeship Certification Form](#)
- [Washington Apprenticeship Preparation Program Recognition](#)
- [Wisconsin Certified Pre-Apprenticeship for Employers Website](#)



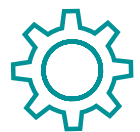


KEY TAKEAWAYS



- Successful RA programs are built on a network of diverse, committed partners.
- Most partners tend to play one primary role within the RA ecosystem but increasingly educational organizations and intermediaries in particular are playing multiple roles and can support RA programs across numerous fronts.
- Connecting with your state DOL OA office or SAA office staff early in the partnership-building process can save you time and help you bring the right people and organizations to the table.
- Understanding the typical role that each partner plays in RA can help your board determine the role they could play in a board-led RA consortium or committee.
- Understanding what types of RA-based partnerships organizations look for can help your board quickly and efficiently connect partners.
- Identifying federal funding and resources to support local RA program development and expansion can help your board make funding allocation decisions and guide partners in determining how to access and braid multiple sources of funding to support RA programs.

ABOUT US



The USDOL Registered Apprenticeship Technical Assistance (RA TA) Center of Excellence on Strategic Partnerships and System Alignment was launched by Safal Partners and a team of national apprenticeship partners in 2020 to establish, build, and sustain partnerships that support system alignment of the national workforce and education systems to accelerate registered apprenticeship adoption and expansion; and to provide technical assistance on a national scale by drawing on proven innovation at the state and local level. Learn more about the Center, access and request TA through [the Center's website](#).

WORKFORCEGPS RESOURCES



In addition to resources and information on [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov), [WorkforceGPS](#) provides an [Apprenticeship Community of Practice](#) that provides resources, tools, and information that your board can utilize to learn more about apprenticeship and accelerate development of strong, sustainable strategic RA partnerships in your area.

- [“Apprenticeship Development and Design”](#)
- [“Apprenticeship Partnership Models in Action,”](#)
- [Apprenticeship Resource Page](#)
- [“General Apprenticeship Resources”](#)
- [“Pre-Apprenticeships: Building Strong Apprentices,”](#)
- [“Youth Apprenticeship”](#)



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