

National Apprenticeship Week Celebrates Advancements in Apprenticeship

“Apprenticeships are experiencing a modern renaissance in America, because the earn-while-learn model is a win-win proposition for workers looking to punch their ticket to the middle class and for employers looking to grow and thrive in our modern global economy.”

~ Thomas Perez, Secretary of Labor

President Obama has made creating an economy that works for every American a priority for his Administration. Job-driven apprenticeships are among the surest pathways to provide American workers from all backgrounds with the skills and knowledge they need to find high-paying jobs and careers. Apprenticeships help grow the economy by providing businesses with the highly-skilled workforce they need to compete and thrive. As a result, the President has made unprecedented investments to expand apprenticeship across the nation.

Even with businesses having added 15.5 million jobs since early 2010, and the economy having seen the longest streak of job creation on record, we must continue efforts to ensure all American workers and businesses can be successful. The jobs available to workers today, and the jobs of the future, require more education and advanced skills. Businesses must continually adapt to forces of technology and globalization. Under President Obama’s leadership, the apprenticeship system in the United States – ApprenticeshipUSA – has been transformed and provides the increased investment in skills training needed to support workers and businesses across all sectors of the economy.

Last year, the President signed into law the first-ever annual funding for apprenticeship programs in the Fiscal Year 2016 spending bill. Enacted through historic bipartisan support from Congress, this \$90 million for ApprenticeshipUSA reflects agreement by the Administration and Congressional leaders about the importance of apprenticeship to the American economy and workforce. This year, the United States Department of Labor (DOL) is strategically investing these funds to help states accelerate apprenticeship strategies, grow the use of apprenticeship programs in new industries, and ensure the economic opportunities offered through apprenticeships are within reach for more Americans.

National Apprenticeship Week

The week of November 14, 2016 marks the second annual National Apprenticeship Week. This week will celebrate the advancements in apprenticeship in the United States. Across the country, employers, education providers, industry associations, labor unions, elected officials, and communities large and small will hold events recognizing the important role that apprenticeship plays in providing employers with skilled employees to grow their business and workers a path to new skills and better jobs and careers.

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The first National Apprenticeship Week in 2015 was highly successful, with over 300 events held in 47 states. President Obama began the week with a Presidential Proclamation which started a movement that generated 57 additional State and local proclamations across the country. Through events ranging from apprentice graduations and business-to-business roundtables, to career exploration activities for youth, employers, educators, labor leaders, and elected officials joined together to encourage and support Registered Apprenticeship. A summary of activities held during last year's National Apprenticeship Week can be found [HERE](#).

Building on this success, the 2016 National Apprenticeship Week will celebrate the ways Registered Apprenticeship fosters innovation and prosperity. Events across the nation will tell the stories of how apprenticeship programs have changed the lives of Americans by opening up new opportunities – and changed the economic fortunes of businesses by providing the workforce solution for competing in the global economy. To learn more about 2016 National Apprenticeship Week activities, click [HERE](#).

Growing Apprenticeship for Businesses and Workers

In 2014, President Obama issued a call to action to double the number of apprentices in the nation within five years. Since then, the U.S. has added 125,000 new apprenticeships, the largest increase in nearly a decade. With over 500,000 apprentices in the country today, the rate of expansion has accelerated in each of the last four years.

Throughout this expansion, the integrity and quality of apprenticeships, which has made it the gold-standard model in job-driven training, has been maintained. An impressive 89% of apprentices are employed after completing their program. Apprentice graduates earn a credential equivalent to a two- or four-year college degree, and earn an average starting wage of \$65,000 a year. A 2012 Mathematica study found that Registered Apprenticeship program completers earn \$240,000 more over their lifetimes than similar non-participants. Apprenticeships provide American workers a way to increase their skills to keep pace with the rapidly-changing economy, while providing pathways to middle-class careers with wages to support their families.

The growth in Registered Apprenticeship reflects the fact that more businesses, across more industries, are turning to apprenticeship programs to recruit, train, and retain a highly-skilled workforce. While traditional apprenticeship programs in the U.S., started in the 1900s, focused on construction jobs, today's apprenticeship system of today is being used increasingly in the high-growth sectors that drive the American economy, including health care, IT, and advanced manufacturing. There are currently apprenticeship programs in more than 1,000 occupations. Over the last two years, new apprenticeship programs have been created for jobs as diverse as application developers at Microsoft, to health information managers at AHIMA, to insurance adjusters at Zurich Insurance.

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The value of apprenticeship to businesses is captured in an impressive return on investment. International studies suggest that starting an apprenticeship program pays off – for every dollar spent on apprenticeship, employers get back an average of \$1.47 in increased productivity and greater front-line innovation. Through a private-public partnership among the U.S. Department of Commerce, JPMorgan Chase, the Joyce Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a study is underway on apprenticeship’s return on investment in the U.S. The study is led by economists at Case Western Reserve University and the U.S. Department of Commerce. More businesses in more sectors are recognizing that modern apprenticeship is a flexible training model that works. Apprenticeship programs can be customized to each employer’s skill needs, human resource strategies, and company culture, making it a cost-effective workforce solution for any industry sector.

Promoting Apprenticeship through Business Champions and Industry-Driven Partnerships

Many of America’s top companies rely on apprenticeship to build the skilled workforce they need to grow and thrive. DOL has enlisted these businesses leaders to promote and support the expansion of apprenticeship programs. These business champions, working in partnership with labor and education leaders, have provided a powerful voice regarding the value of apprenticeship for our nation’s economy. DOL is also investing in other industry-driven strategies to increase apprenticeship across all industry sectors.

Sectors of Excellence in Apprenticeship. DOL has implemented an industry-led, sector-based strategy to expand ApprenticeshipUSA in key industry sectors – advanced manufacturing, construction, energy, financial services, healthcare, IT, and transportation. These Sectors of Excellence in Apprenticeship (SEAs) serve as a focal point for business and industry engagement in apprenticeship. DOL first convened a series of SEA forums in 2015 to explore opportunities to adopt apprenticeship among businesses in these sectors, and then held a series of industry-focused events in 2016 to accelerate the launch of apprenticeship programs for in-demand jobs in these sectors. The SEAs – by bringing together business with labor, workforce, education, and other leaders – have provided opportunities for businesses to work together as an industry to ensure the needed supply of trained workers and a forum for the exchange of ideas and best practices. To learn more about the SEAs, click [HERE](#).

Apprenticeship LEADERS. More than 180 employers, along with colleges and labor organizations, have signed on to be ApprenticeshipUSA LEADERS (Leaders in Excellence in Apprenticeship Development, Education and Research) by starting or expanding their own work-based learning programs and encouraging their peers to follow. LEADERS have committed to raising the visibility of apprenticeship and promoting its potential as a talent development strategy for all sectors in the American economy. LEADERS have pledged to

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create nearly 20,000 new apprenticeship positions throughout the nation. More information about LEADERS is available [HERE](#).

National Industry Partners. In September 2016, DOL invested \$14 million in contracts to ten national industry intermediaries. These contracts will catalyze industry partnerships in fast-growing and high-tech industries, including health care, IT, construction, transportation and logistics, hospitality, and advanced manufacturing. The partners will launch national efforts to make it easier for employers to start and for workers to find apprenticeship opportunities. More information on these national industry partnerships can be found [HERE](#).

Investing in State Strategies to Expand Apprenticeship

DOL recognizes governors' unique ability to create smart statewide strategies to expand apprenticeship. In fact, nearly half of the states have grown their apprenticeship systems by more than 30% in the last two years. Examples of state strategies include Colorado, which has created a Business Experiential Learning Commission to put businesses in the driver's seat in developing youth apprenticeship pathways, providing high school students the chance to build credits toward post-secondary education in several industries. South Carolina established a business tax credit for each apprentice employed. As a result of the tax credit and effective state-level marketing strategies, South Carolina has increased its number of apprentices from 777 in 2007 to 5,800 today. The Governor of Iowa set a goal of 70% of the state's workforce having post-secondary education or training. Through state-level investments and targeting underserved populations, Iowa has achieved a 61% rate of growth in the number of active apprentices.

Over the past two years, DOL has made several significant investments in state apprenticeship strategies that build on the demonstrated success of states to accelerate the growth of apprenticeship and create economic opportunities for workers and businesses. The funds provided through these initiatives will help to strengthen the foundation for the rapid and sustained expansion of quality apprenticeships nationwide. To learn more about these state apprenticeship investments, click [HERE](#).

State Accelerator Grants. A total of \$10.4 million was awarded to 52 states, territories and the District of Columbia in April 2016. These funds are helping states to develop comprehensive game plans for encouraging businesses in diverse industries to establish apprenticeship programs.

State Expansion Grants. In October 2016, 37 states and territories were awarded \$50.5 million in grants to build on the Accelerator grants provided in the spring. The State Expansion Grants will allow these states to undertake new apprenticeship efforts and help a diverse set of workers enter in-demand careers in growing industries. This funding will help states integrate

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apprenticeship into their education and workforce systems; engage industry and other partners at a scale to expand apprenticeship to new sectors and new populations; and implement state innovations, incentives, and system reforms.

American Apprenticeship Initiative Grants. These investments follow \$175 million in competitive grants awarded in 2015 to 46 American Apprenticeship Initiative grantees, which are public-private partnerships among employers, organized labor, non-profit groups, local governments, and educational partners that are expanding high-quality apprenticeships. The 2015 grantees are well on their way to creating more than 34,000 new apprentices in high-growth and high-tech industries – including health care, IT and advanced manufacturing – over the next five years.

New investments in state apprenticeship strategies build on the new opportunities for apprenticeship expansion created by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Signed into law by President Obama in 2014, WIOA reformed workforce development programs that help millions of businesses and workers across the nation every year. WIOA expanded the ways in which states can adopt apprenticeship as a key strategy, by automatically adding Registered Apprenticeship programs to State Eligible Training Provider lists, enabling States and local areas to spend WIOA funds to support apprenticeship programs, and promoting apprenticeship as a career pathway for youth. More information about the ways that WIOA promotes apprenticeship can be found [HERE](#).

Ensuring All Americans Have Access to Apprenticeship Opportunities

For our economy to work for every American, we must provide every worker with the opportunity to contribute to our country's success. Apprenticeship programs provide the skills to obtain more advanced jobs, and the knowledge to adapt to changes in technology and systems. Businesses are also most successful with diverse workforces that tap into our nation's full talent potential. Therefore, President Obama is committed to ensuring that all workers – regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age, or disability – have opportunities to become apprentices.

National Equity Partners. In September 2016, DOL awarded nearly \$6 million in contracts to four national equity partners. These investments will create “opportunity partnerships” that will boost apprenticeship participation among women, people of color, disconnected youth, and individuals with disabilities. More information on national equity partnerships can be found [HERE](#).

Youth Apprenticeship Framework. DOL is working to ensure that all youth can access apprenticeship as a pathway to good careers and advanced education after high school. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, DOL is developing a national framework on

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Youth Apprenticeship. This framework will provide employers, school counselors, teachers, and others with strategies for developing high-quality apprenticeship programs that open up economic opportunities for our nation's youth.

Strengthening National and International Partnerships to Grow American Apprenticeships

DOL continues to pursue innovations that build connections among partners that will pave the way for apprenticeship expansion. Efforts at the national and international levels support the valuable investments made by the Obama Administration over the past two years to grow new apprenticeships and to ensure that all workers can access apprenticeship programs.

Registered Apprenticeship-College Consortium. The Registered Apprenticeship-College Consortium (RACC) – a joint initiative of the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education – is a network of colleges and apprenticeship programs working together to grow educational opportunities for apprentices across the nation. Participating colleges allow apprentice graduates to turn their on-the-job and classroom training into colleges credits toward an associate or bachelor's degree. Since RACC was launched in 2014, nearly 300 colleges and over 900 apprenticeship training facilities nationwide have joined. RACC provides colleges with a new source of degree seekers, creates a national network for apprentices to further their education, and helps to develop and standardize curricula for employers with apprenticeship programs.

Federal Apprenticeship Programs. The Administration has been leading by example to expand apprenticeships. Through the Department of Labor's Secretary's Skills Working Group, DOL, along with the Departments of Education and Commerce, have been developing collaborative strategies to promote and expand ApprenticeshipUSA. Apprenticeship programs have been established for jobs at DOL, USDA, DOT, and PTO. These programs provide agencies with new sources of qualified workers, while offering affordable educational and career opportunities to more Americans.

International Connections. Several international partnerships have also been launched in the past few years that are helping to accelerate apprenticeship in the U.S. DOL has developed apprenticeship partnerships with the Trans-Atlantic Training and Technology Alliance and the governments of the United Kingdom, Netherlands and the European Union. In 2015, the U.S. signed joint declarations of intent to collaborate on apprenticeship with Switzerland and Germany. USDOL also works closely with SelectUSA in highlighting how apprenticeship programs are a critical workforce development assist to support companies considering investing in the United States.

Advancing Innovation and Technology in the Apprenticeship System

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As the global economy continues to advance, ApprenticeshipUSA also must adapt to continue to meet the needs of businesses and workers. The Administration is therefore promoting innovation and advancing the use of technology in order to grow apprenticeship. Toward these goals, DOL has invested in new tools that support businesses in launching apprenticeships by streamlining registration processes and creating more options for designing apprenticeship programs to meet business needs.

ApprenticeshipUSA Standards Builder. This year, DOL launched a new web-based tool – the ApprenticeshipUSA Standards Builder – that provides a quick and easy way for businesses to customize apprenticeship programs to meet their specific workforce needs. This online tool combines the design of an apprenticeship program and the steps to register the program with DOL into one streamlined process. By creating new efficiencies, and cutting through the red tape that slowed down apprenticeships in the past, this tool has decreased the time needed for businesses to go from idea to implementation. More information about the Standards Builder is available [HERE](#).

Competency-Based Apprenticeships. In today’s global economy, businesses are looking for new ways to assess whether workers have the skills and knowledge needed to do the job. With fast-paced and technology-driven industries looking to use apprenticeship, DOL has created new methodologies that enable businesses to use skill competencies, as opposed to just the time apprentices spend in training, as the basis for advancement within apprenticeship programs. DOL is also working to develop industry-driven national frameworks for competencies in 60 occupations. These industry-validated frameworks will provide the building blocks upon which businesses can quickly customize and design their own apprenticeship programs.

Visit [the ApprenticeshipUSA site](#) today to learn how to become part of the national apprenticeship system.