SUMMARY

In 2020, Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) partnered with the Office of Apprenticeship (OA) and the Office of Policy Development and Research (OPDR) within the Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and funded contractors Urban Institute and Mathematica to conduct the State Apprenticeship Capacity Assessment under the Apprenticeship Evidence-Building Portfolio of studies. The qualitative study aims to conduct a methodical review and assessment of the capacity of state systems and their partnerships to design and deliver Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) and services (including pre-apprenticeship services). The findings will be presented in a series of briefs.

This Department of Labor-funded study was a result of the annual process to determine the Department's research priorities for the upcoming year. It contributes to the labor evidence-base to inform Apprenticeship programs and policies and addresses Departmental strategic goals and priorities.

Registered apprenticeship provides an opportunity to help strengthen rural workforce development and labor markets by training the rural workforce for local industry needs. This brief describes approaches to promoting rural apprenticeship expansion based on discussion with state apprenticeship administrators, local apprenticeship partners, and employers in seven states.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- States reported that the main challenges to registered apprenticeship in rural areas include difficulties engaging small rural employers who have limited resources and misconceptions about apprenticeship, limited state capacity and presence in rural areas, long commuting distances and structural barriers for apprentices like transportation, and a limited pool of skilled workers to fill apprenticeship slots.

- Several approaches emerged across the states in the study that respondents found to be promising for engaging rural employers in apprenticeship, including partnering with community colleges, industry organizations, and regional and local workforce staff; identifying solutions for incumbent workers; and pursuing nontraditional industries and occupations for apprenticeship that align with local supply and demand, such as public health apprenticeships to combat the opioid crisis.

- States also described strategies that they found promising for connecting workers to apprenticeship opportunities, including incorporating online related technical instruction (RTI) into training, recruiting through community colleges and secondary educational institutions, pre-apprenticeship programs, and providing supportive services like transportation.

SEE FULL STUDY

The Department of Labor's (DOL) Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) sponsors independent evaluations and research, primarily conducted by external, third-party contractors in accordance with the Department of Labor Evaluation Policy. CEO's research development process includes extensive technical review at the design, data collection and analysis stage, including: external contractor review and OMB review and approval of data collection methods and instruments per the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), Institutional Review Board (IRB) review to ensure studies adhere to the highest ethical standards, review by academic peers (e.g., Technical Working Groups), and inputs from relevant DOL agency and program officials and CEO technical staff. Final reports undergo an additional independent expert technical review and a review for Section 508 compliance prior to publication. The resulting reports represent findings from this independent research and do not represent DOL positions or policies.