

# Funding Inclusive Apprenticeships: Strategies for Braiding, Blending, and Aligning Resources

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## About This Project

The U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) sponsored the Apprenticeship Inclusion Models (AIM) initiative. The initiative focused on building capacity for inclusive apprenticeship programs. It also focused on developing and disseminating resources and tools to make apprenticeship onboarding and recruitment, education and training, and workplace experiences and mentoring more inclusive, specifically for people with disabilities. In particular, the initiative sought to learn how inclusive practices from education, workplace, and work-based learning settings could be applied to apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. The AIM initiative used a universal accessibility lens in its work; thus, its activities were also designed to make apprenticeship programs more accessible for everyone. The initiative produced five briefs that provide information to support the scaling of inclusive apprenticeships and to inform and strengthen future national policy around inclusive apprenticeship, workforce development, and employment.

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### The AIM Policy and Practice Briefs

In support of AIM's objective to develop and disseminate resources and tools to make apprenticeship more inclusive of people with disabilities, the initiative has produced five briefs that provide information to support the scaling of inclusive apprenticeships and to inform and strengthen future national policy around inclusive apprenticeship, workforce development, and employment.

The entire series can be found at: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep>

### In This Series:

- Strengthening Supports for People With Disabilities in Pre-Apprenticeships Through Policy, Design, and Practice
- Funding Inclusive Apprenticeships: Strategies for Braiding, Blending, and Aligning Resources
- Using Universal Design for Learning in Apprenticeship
- Connecting Ticket to Work and Apprenticeships
- Emerging Lessons for Inclusive Apprenticeship Programs: Managing Through the COVID-19 Crisis and Beyond

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## Funding Inclusive Apprenticeships: Strategies for Braiding, Blending, and Aligning Resources

### Brief Highlights

Expanding apprenticeship is a key priority of the federal government, and as employers and workforce intermediaries explore Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) and pre-apprenticeship as models to solve talent pipeline problems and offer opportunities to a broad swath of job seekers, including individuals with disabilities, questions of funding are paramount. As discussed in this brief, common operational components for apprenticeship programs include program design and administration, outreach, on-the-job training, related instruction, and supportive services. The largest program costs are the wages and benefits paid to participants during on-the-job training. Other typical costs are staffing for each program component, tuition and fees for related instruction, and costs associated with outreach and supportive services activities, which allow apprenticeship programs to be inclusive of individuals with disabilities. It is important to note that the costs of designing and implementing an inclusive apprenticeship program are not significantly more than the costs of designing and implementing apprenticeship programs without a focus on inclusion.

Project directors and stakeholders of inclusive apprenticeship programs interviewed for this brief identified several common strategies for funding their programs:

**Identify resources for recruitment outreach and supportive services, which are necessary for programs to ensure they are inclusive.** Common ways of supporting these key program components include partnerships and co-enrollment. Outreach is often conducted by a range of partners, such as American Job Centers (AJCs), local education agencies, and vocational rehabilitation agencies and service providers. Co-enrollment partners may include AJCs and vocational rehabilitation organizations.

**Leverage monetary and in-kind support from employers and other sources to cover the costs of each component.** In addition to employers, commonly identified funding streams were Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Title IV funding, federal discretionary grants, and state appropriations for secondary and postsecondary education.

**Implement collaborative funding approaches to braid, blend, and align resources and services to meet the unique needs of participants and the particular context of the program.** (See the Key Definitions sidebar on Page 10 for more about these approaches.) Each program identified at least three separate funding streams and a minimum of four core partners engaged in their work.

**Incorporate specific strategies that support collaborative funding approaches,** including partnership and resource assessments, co-enrollment, pilot demonstration projects, dedicated financial management staff, and a focus on sustainability.

## Introduction

Currently, there are nearly 25,000 Registered Apprenticeship programs (RAPs) operating in the United States.<sup>1</sup> These programs combine applied, on-the-job training with formal classroom instruction and provide skills training and career pathways to high-skill jobs for approximately 633,000 apprentices.<sup>2</sup> RAPs have been embraced by employers across a variety of high-demand sectors, including information technology, health care, logistics, manufacturing, and construction.

As illustrated in Exhibit 1, RAPs present an opportunity to fully integrate employers and their employees into the nation’s education and training pipelines by engaging and supporting them, at their places of work, with employers as the primary trainers. By integrating learning into the workplace, RAPs enable the flexibility needed for workers to adapt to the increasing demands brought by technological change. Moreover, apprenticeships provide career pathway opportunities that are accessible to learners with varying educational levels. This increases the pool of available talent, which is a benefit for both employers and jobseekers. Over the last decade, RAPs have been championed by the public workforce, the education system, and employer partners as a sustainable strategy to address skill shortages and to develop pipelines of qualified talent and career ladders for employees.

**Exhibit 1. Core Components of Registered Apprenticeship Programs**



Adapted from the U.S. Department of Labor’s *Building Registered Apprenticeship Programs: A Quick-Start Toolkit*

## The AIM Initiative

Expanding apprenticeship opportunities is a key priority of the federal government—one that was reinforced by the 2017 [Presidential Executive Order Expanding Apprenticeships in America](#). The promise of apprenticeship is that it provides a structured pathway to skilled jobs that pay living wages for those who want to learn by doing. At a time of increasing wage inequality and a deep recession in the United States, it is more critical than ever for funders, policy makers, and RAP practitioners to consider how RAPs can be designed to be more inclusive of all job seekers.<sup>3</sup> Ensuring that there are multiple, equitable on-ramps to apprenticeship opportunities is part of the current dialogue as we collectively consider how the good jobs of the future will be accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

<sup>1</sup> RAPs were established through the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937, which instituted standards that safeguard the welfare of apprentices. The scope and purpose of the system, as well as the standards, policies, and procedures for programs, are outlined in Title 29, Part 29, of the Code of Federal Regulations (29 C.F.R. § 29). Title 29, Part 30 of the Code asserts that RAPs are equal opportunities and that discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age (40 or older), genetic information, or disability is prohibited.

<sup>2</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), there were 24,788 active programs and 633,476 apprentices between October 1, 2018, and September 30, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Guidance on targeted recruitment is specified in 29 C.F.R. § 30.8. Suggestions include recruiting from organizations and pre-apprenticeship programs that serve underrepresented groups.

In support of these expansion efforts, the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) at the U.S. Department of Labor (U.S. DOL) sponsored the Apprenticeship Inclusion Models (AIM) initiative. The AIM initiative focused on learning how apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs can optimize learning for and inclusion of people with disabilities.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, the project sought to address the accessibility of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs' recruitment, assessment, mentoring, training, and instruction efforts, as well as their general approach to supportive services. In support of these objectives, the initiative has produced five briefs that provide information to support the scaling of inclusive apprenticeships. This brief focuses on funding inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

## This Brief: Funding Inclusive Apprenticeship

Significant costs are associated with developing and running any training program, and building inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs is no different.<sup>5</sup> Startup and ongoing costs include recruiting and outreach to participants and employers; designing and maintaining relevant curricula; training and paying instructors and staff; and facilities and other overhead expenses. Many programs—especially those that serve job seekers with barriers to work—include the additional costs of providing supportive services to assist job seekers with persistence, completion, and job advancement.

Those working to grow apprenticeship programs, and particularly those looking to develop programs that are inclusive of people with disabilities, report that two questions are raised repeatedly by employers and workforce intermediaries as they consider apprenticeship as a training model:

1. What are the costs associated with an inclusive apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program?
2. How are those programs funded?

To answer these questions, we interviewed stakeholders involved in inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs across the country.<sup>6</sup> This brief summarizes the findings of that research and highlights the innovative partnerships and approaches that are being used in the field to fund inclusive programs.

The brief begins with an overview of an inclusive apprenticeship, its components and related costs, and the common funding sources that programs have used to cover those expenses. The next section highlights the importance of partnerships in inclusive apprenticeship program development and introduces three approaches to collaborative funding. This section also identifies common strategies used in support of collaborative funding approaches. The brief concludes with recommendations for employers and intermediaries to consider as they explore funding options for inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. Finally, the appendices provide profiles of the interviewed programs and suggested resources for those who want to learn more about their work

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<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Department of Labor (2012) defines quality pre-apprenticeship programs in Training and Employment Notice No. 13–12. These programs blend classroom training with applied learning (e.g., work-based learning) and are designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in apprenticeships.

<sup>5</sup> The findings presented here on developing inclusive apprenticeship programs (and their components) are applicable to RAPs, pre-apprenticeship programs, non-registered apprenticeship programs, and other work-based learning programs that are interested in working with people with disabilities.

<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this brief, the term “inclusive” refers to programs with a specific focus on serving people with disclosed disabilities as well as those that assist job seekers with other kinds of barriers to employment (e.g., justice system involvement) and those that have design elements that make them inclusive of a broader swath of job seekers, including people with disabilities. The programs interviewed include RAPs, pre-apprenticeship programs, and non-registered apprenticeship programs.

## Costs and Funding Strategies of Inclusive Apprenticeships

From an operations perspective, inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship program costs can be accounted for by five common components, as detailed in the graphic below.

	<b>Inclusive program design and administration</b> from a lead or sponsor organization, which may be a workforce intermediary or other organization, such as an employer or community college.
	<b>Targeted outreach to potential participants</b> , including people with disabilities, which is often conducted by a range of partners, such as American Job Center staff, local education agencies, vocational rehabilitation agencies and service providers, and social services organizations.
	<b>Related technical instruction</b> leading to a credential with value in the local labor market, which is often provided by a community college or community-based workforce training provider.
	<b>Structured on-the-job training</b> with a mentor who is a more senior employee at the partner company.
	<b>Supportive services</b> , including accessible technologies and assistive services, that are needed to help participants succeed in the classroom and on the job, often provided through the agencies and organizations that are also involved in participant outreach.

A 2016 study by the U.S. Department of Commerce and Case Western Reserve University found that the single largest cost in an apprenticeship program was the wages paid to participants.<sup>7</sup> The 13 apprenticeship programs examined in that study ranged in length from 1 to 4 years. Cost estimates per apprentice ranged from less than \$6,000 per year to more than \$25,000 per year, driven primarily by the cost of hourly wages and benefits paid during the on-the-job training component.<sup>8,9</sup> The study identified other typical costs associated with apprenticeship programs, including tuition and other expenses for related instruction, staffing costs associated with mentoring and support activities, and general operational costs, such as equipment, supplies, and marketing.

<sup>7</sup> See Helper et al. (2016) and Reed et al. (2012).

<sup>8</sup> One company in the Helper et al. (2016) study paid full benefits to apprentices. In that company, salaries represented 52% of total apprenticeship costs, while benefits accounted for an additional 18% of total costs.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that while the costs of an apprenticeship program can be significant, multiple studies have found that apprenticeship models show a strong return on investment (ROI). In the Helper et al. (2016) study, employers reported positive results from their apprenticeships, including a strong ROI of up to 40% to 50%. This ROI from apprentices reportedly stemmed from increased worker productivity, reduced turnover and overtime, and new flexibility to expand services or develop new revenue streams due to increased staff capacity. Similarly, a study conducted by Mathematica for the U.S. Department of Labor (Reed et al., 2012) found long-term benefits for participants in RAPs in 10 states. Apprentices had substantially higher earnings than similar non-participants at 6 and 9 years after enrollment—on average, an advantage of more than \$5,000 at each time point. Benefits to employers and society, including added productivity and reduced use of government programs, outweighed the costs of the apprenticeship in every state examined.

In the research for this brief, we interviewed project directors and key stakeholders involved in nine inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs that range in length from 6 weeks to 2.5 years. The estimated average cost per participant ranged from \$2,000 to \$40,000, driven primarily by participant wages and program length. The wide range in estimates is also due in part to the fact that costs are more difficult to track when partners braid or align services while maintaining separate accounting and reporting systems. For example, some programs included wages paid by employers and staffing costs from partner programs in their estimates; others noted that in-kind services and wages were separate, untracked expenses.

Costs of supportive services vary from program to program based on factors such as the types of services provided, the number of participants served, and which partner provides the service. One pre-apprenticeship program estimated costs for supportive services, including wages and benefits for a behavioral health specialist through a partner agency, at approximately \$1,200 per participant. Another program shared that it was less expensive to have a community-based organization provide pre-employment transition services than if those same services were provided by the higher education partner, due to the different wages and benefits provided by each organization.

On the employer side, it is important to note a 2019 study by the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) found that “most employers report no cost or low cost for accommodating employees with disabilities.”<sup>10</sup> In some cases, there is no cost to the employer because jobseekers with disabilities may only need cost-free accommodations, like flexible scheduling, while in other cases they may be enrolled in programs, such as vocational rehabilitation, that cover the cost of assistive technologies or equipment that is needed for employment. For employer-provided accommodations that did have associated costs, employers in the JAN study reported a median one-time expense of just \$500.<sup>11</sup>

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## Program Funding

Beyond the question of how much it costs to implement an apprenticeship program, employers and intermediaries are understandably interested in how programs are funded. When asked how the costs associated with each program component are typically covered, directors and stakeholders identified a wide range of funding streams, including monetary and in-kind support from public, private, and philanthropic sources. In-kind support may involve a variety of staff, material, administrative, technical, political, and other resources that can be difficult to quantify as costs. Most often, programs reported using a mix of funding sources driven by the partners involved and the larger context of the apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program. No program was funded or supported exclusively by one source.

The graphic below summarizes our research findings on the key questions about program costs and funding for the five common operational components of inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

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<sup>10</sup> See Job Accommodation Network (2019), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

## Typical Costs and Potential Funding Sources for Common Operational Components of Inclusive Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

Component	Typical Costs	Potential Funding Sources
 <p><b>Program Design and Administration</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wages and benefits for sponsor/lead organization staff</li> <li>• Start-up and one-time costs</li> <li>• Fundraising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employer, sponsor, or lead organization's general operating funds</li> <li>• Discretionary grants from federal and state agencies</li> <li>• Philanthropic grants and community donations</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Outreach</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wages and benefits for outreach partner staff</li> <li>• Promotional materials for potential participants</li> <li>• Informational materials and training for staff in partner organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner organizations' general operating funds</li> <li>• Discretionary grants from federal and state agencies</li> <li>• Philanthropic grants and community donations</li> <li>• Employers</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Related Instructional Training</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wages and benefits for participants and mentors</li> <li>• One-time costs for new employees</li> <li>• General equipment and supplies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WIOA Title I Individual Training Accounts</li> <li>• <a href="#">Federal Pell Grants</a></li> <li>• SNAP Employment and Training funds</li> <li>• <a href="#">Perkins V</a> funds through community colleges</li> <li>• <a href="#">Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)</a> funds through local education agencies</li> <li>• State-funded college grant and scholarship programs</li> <li>• State education appropriations to secondary and postsecondary institutions</li> <li>• Employers</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Structured On-the-Job Training</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wages and benefits for participants and mentors</li> <li>• One-time costs for new employees</li> <li>• General equipment and supplies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers</li> <li>• <a href="#">Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)</a> Title I Workforce Development Activities and Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation funds</li> <li>• <a href="#">Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)</a> Employment and Training funds</li> <li>• Discretionary grants from federal and state agencies</li> <li>• Revenues from social enterprise</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Supportive Services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wages and benefits for provider staff</li> <li>• Individualized equipment</li> <li>• Pre-employment transition services</li> <li>• Transportation assistance costs</li> <li>• Job search assistance</li> <li>• Childcare assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WIOA Title I, Title III Employment Services, and Title IV funds</li> <li>• IDEA funds through local education agencies</li> <li>• Social Security Administration Ticket to Work funds</li> <li>• Partner organizations' general operating funds</li> <li>• Families</li> <li>• Employers</li> </ul>

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## Program Funding for Supportive Services and Targeted Outreach

While it is important to consider inclusivity when designing each component of the program, interview respondents indicated that supportive services are a necessary component for ensuring that their program is inclusive of all participants, including those with disabilities. Supportive services allow program staff to customize supports for each participant, with services provided either directly by the program or through partnerships. For example, programs may partner with mental health agencies to provide counseling and with vocational rehabilitation agencies to provide job coaches who support job retention or other services. In some cases, participants are co-enrolled in both a vocational rehabilitation program and either an apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program. Additionally, program staff may provide supportive services, such as self-determination training for participants to learn about financial management (e.g., opening a bank account), navigating public transportation, and other life skills. Interview respondents shared that supportive services not only make programs more inclusive, they also help participants to persist and complete the apprenticeship program, leading to better outcomes for participants and employers.

Programs also reported the importance of recruitment partnerships to insure they are reaching a large applicant pool that includes people with disabilities. Programs may have referral partnerships with a variety of organizations, including their local/state vocational rehabilitation agency, re-entry and sober living homes, foster youth agencies, and others. The profiles in the appendices provide additional information on how programs were designed to be inclusive through partnerships that provide targeted outreach and supportive services.

## Collaborative Funding Approaches to Support Inclusive Apprenticeships

Since inclusive apprenticeships involve multiple partners, a broad mix of public, private, and philanthropic funding sources may be leveraged to support different apprenticeship components. The funding picture is further complicated by the fact that each funding source has its own set of usage restrictions, performance measures, and reporting expectations. Partner organizations involved in inclusive apprenticeship programs will need to discuss how best to contribute monetary and in-kind resources, working within the authorized use of the funding, to collaboratively fund the program.

There are three common approaches for collaborative funding: braiding, blending, and aligning.<sup>12</sup> The box to the right provides a definition for each of these terms, which are primarily distinguished by the level of fund or resource integration (combine, coordinate, or collaborate) and performance-tracking responsibilities. In practice, programs report that they often use a mix of funding approaches based on the specific circumstances and partners involved in each program component.

No matter which collaborative funding approach is used, our interviews suggest it is important that partners regularly share updates on their organizations' priorities and resource allocations that may impact future program operations and planning. Moreover, an important strategy underlying all three approaches is having diverse sources of funding which allows for more flexibility because some funds may have restrictions on how they can be spent.

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<sup>12</sup> For additional information, see AGA Intergovernmental Partnership (2014); Pittman (2015); and Urban Institute (n.d.).

While braided, blended, and aligned approaches can all create efficiencies and improve program services and outcomes, it is important to recognize that the choice of a collaborative funding approach depends on the particular program context. For example, braided funding, via a co-enrollment approach, promotes efficiencies because it leverages services and supports that a single program alone cannot provide. Blended funding arrangements may make it difficult to track specific program expenditures by fund source but may be helpful in situations where organizations have access to less restrictive funding sources, like endowment funds and philanthropic grants that can support program operations. It is important to note that fund recipients may need to seek waiver authority or approval from a funder to enter into a blended or braided funding agreement.<sup>13</sup> For example, local areas can request waivers from U.S. DOL with respect to WIOA funds.<sup>14</sup>

### Key Definitions

**Braided funding** coordinates funds or resources from two or more funding sources to pay for a specific program or program component. When braided, expenditures are allocated and reported by individual fund source.

**Blended funding** combines funds from two or more sources to pay for a specific program or program component. When blended, expenditures may be reported by individual fund source if required by the funder.

**Aligned funding** allows two or more organizations to collaborate to more efficiently use funding or resources from different sources in support of a common program, population, or initiative. Each organization allocates and reports expenditures for its own funding source(s) separately.

It is critical that inclusive apprenticeship partners meet regularly to discuss program oversight, review progress to date, and share information to inform funder reports, program evaluations, and sustainability efforts. One way a workforce intermediary can contribute to an inclusive apprenticeship program partnership is by convening these periodic program review meetings.

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## Collaborative Funding Examples

We interviewed representatives from nine state and local inclusive apprenticeship efforts to take a snapshot of how real programs are funded. These initiatives represent a mix of rural and urban communities and target a variety of industries, from more traditional apprenticeship sectors, like manufacturing and skilled trades, to sectors like health care and hospitality that have more recently engaged with apprenticeship as a way to build their talent pipelines. These programs also represent a range of inclusion approaches, from programs intentionally designed for people with disabilities to open-enrollment programs that provide opportunities for both disabled and non-disabled apprentices.

Each of the examples below provides a snapshot from an interviewed program. Together, they illustrate the differences between braided, blended, and aligned funding approaches for inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs leading to competitive integrated employment. Appendices A and B provide more detailed information about the interviewed programs, including program components, the partners involved, and the funding sources and contributions that support their efforts.

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<sup>13</sup> See Butler et al. (2020).

<sup>14</sup> Local and state areas can request waiver authority under WIOA. Information on this process is available at U.S. DOL (2020).

### **Blended Funding Example: Kitchens for Good's Project Launch Apprenticeship Program**

[Kitchens for Good](#), in San Diego, California, operates as a social enterprise—an organization that works to solve a social problem through a market-driven approach.<sup>15</sup> In the Project Launch apprenticeship, people with barriers to employment, including disabilities, train for culinary careers. Kitchens for Good acts as the apprenticeship sponsor, related instruction provider, and initial employer by hiring participants to work in the organization's social enterprise catering business. Kitchens for Good blends revenues from its catering business with grants and donations from its active fundraising arm to support overall operations. This inclusive apprenticeship program is also supported by aligned funding from partner organizations, including social services programs for ex-offenders and homeless-serving organizations, which conduct outreach and provide supportive services for participants.

### **Braided Funding Example: Postsecondary Apprenticeship for Youth (PAY Check)**

[Postsecondary Apprenticeship for Youth \(PAY Check\)](#) is a comprehensive secondary transition program for youth with disabilities. The Human Development Center at Louisiana State University's School of Allied Health Professions acts as the apprenticeship sponsor and intermediary, working with numerous partners in the New Orleans area to identify funding and resources to support youth in the program. The partners have developed a braided funding approach that leverages support from a number of funding sources, including the per-student allotments that local school districts receive from the state, vocational rehabilitation funding from the Louisiana Rehabilitation Services agency, and support from families who provide their students with smartphones and ongoing data service plans. The program is also supported by aligned funding from Delgado Community College, as the related instruction provider, and from employer partners that hire participants in entry-level positions with good wages and benefits.

### **Aligned Funding Example: Manufacturing Technology Training Pre-Apprenticeship Program**

[The Manufacturing Technology Training](#) pre-apprenticeship program operates in rural northwestern Virginia. Each partner in the region—including the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board, the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, and the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services—was leading a separate effort to address the manufacturing workforce pipeline. By working together to align those efforts, the partners created an employment-readiness boot camp and pre-apprenticeship training program to prepare people with disabilities and other job seekers for manufacturing career pathways, including preparation for the Industrial Manufacturing Technician RAP at The Hershey Company.

Please see the appendices for more on these and other programs interviewed for this brief.

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<sup>15</sup> For more information about social enterprises, see Social Enterprise Alliance (n.d.).

## Strategies to Support Collaborative Funding Approaches

Project directors and stakeholders interviewed for this brief identified five common strategies that support braided, blended, and aligned funding approaches for their inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. These include partnership and resource assessment, co-enrollment, pilot demonstration projects, dedicated staff, and a focus on sustainability. Each of these strategies is detailed below.

### Strategy 1: Partnership and Resource Assessment

Most apprenticeship programs are funded by monetary and in-kind support from multiple partners. Each inclusive program interviewed for this brief typically identified three to six partners that were essential to their apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program's success. Overall, the programs identified 14 different types of partners engaged with their work. The graphic below illustrates those partners and emphasizes the central role of employers. As one program director shared, "There is no apprenticeship without an employer." While some of the partners illustrated below are common across all types of apprenticeships, partners that are especially important for inclusive apprenticeship programs include state vocational rehabilitation agencies, community rehabilitation providers, and supported employment service providers.

In order to determine how each program component will be funded, employers and intermediaries that are developing an inclusive apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program should start with a careful assessment of potential partners and the potential monetary or in-kind resources that each partner could contribute to the effort. In some cases, there may be an existing partnership that could be leveraged or expanded to support the program, while in other cases new partnerships will need to be developed to fill gaps in the roles or resources necessary to implement or sustain the program. This assessment is critical for determining which collaborative funding approach(es) will best suit the partners and the program's context.

### Types of Partners Commonly Involved in Inclusive Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs



Adapted from the U.S. Department of Labor's *Building Registered Apprenticeship Programs: A Quick-Start Toolkit*

## Strategy 2: Co-enrollment

Co-enrollment involves enrolling participants in multiple programs for which they are eligible to leverage services and supports that a single program alone cannot provide. For example, a person with a disability may be co-enrolled in WIOA Title I to access Individual Training Account (ITA) funds and in WIOA Title IV to access vocational rehabilitation services. Similarly, pre-apprentices have co-enrolled in the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program, a voluntary program that helps people with disabilities obtain employment.<sup>16</sup> The co-enrollment strategy is particularly important in braided funding approaches where partners recognize that they are serving the same population and may be able to achieve better outcomes by leveraging additional services and supports for individual participants.

## Strategy 3: Dedicated Staff

Since inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs are supported by multiple organizations and funding sources that may shift over time, the program's sponsor or lead organization often has dedicated staff focused on business development, financial management, and reporting, including performance tracking efforts. Even programs with relatively few staff members said they often hired dedicated financial management staff. For example, in collaborative funding approaches, it may be helpful for a dedicated staff person to manage financial and performance reporting activities. This can include facilitating discussions among partner organizations to agree on common data collection and reporting standards to meet the requirements of multiple funders.

## Strategy 4: Pilot Demonstration Projects

Another strategy that inclusive apprenticeship programs said they have used to attract new partners or secure additional resources from established partners is to start with a pilot demonstration project, which provides a "test case" for the model. As participants complete the pilot project and demonstrate their value in the labor market, current partners may be motivated to contribute additional resources; likewise, new partners may join to expand operations. In collaboratively funded programs, this strategy can help partners shift from simply aligning funding to a more integrated braided or blended approach.

## Strategy 5: Focus on Sustainability

While many apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs are developed with discretionary funds and/or other one-time investments, the inclusive programs we interviewed were focused on how to collaboratively sustain operations beyond an initial funding period. The most common sustainability strategy they identified was based on ongoing employer support for the program. Partners also frequently identified WIOA Title I and Title IV funding as well as state appropriations for their sustainability plans. Program alumni are another important resource for sustainability, as they can network with current participants, provide job opportunities, and share critical feedback for program improvement. This focus on sustainability and securing support from more durable ongoing funding streams helps to ensure that inclusive apprenticeship programs are more than just time-limited demonstration projects.

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<sup>16</sup> See Mack and Hebbbar (2020).

## Key Takeaways and Recommendations

As interest in inclusive apprenticeship grows, employers and workforce intermediaries want to know more about the costs associated with the model and how other apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs are funded. This brief highlighted the common operational components of inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, including program design and administration, outreach, on-the-job training, related instruction, and supportive services. Each component has associated costs, such as wages and benefits for participants and staff, equipment and supplies, and tuition. Importantly, the marginal cost of making an apprenticeship inclusive of people with disabilities and other barriers to employment is not significantly greater than the cost of designing and implementing other apprenticeship programs.

To cover those costs, programs typically leverage monetary and in-kind support from multiple partners through one or more collaborative funding approaches. Braided, blended, and aligned approaches allow different funding sources and different organizations to come together to cover the overall costs of an inclusive apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program while still meeting funder reporting expectations and other requirements. More research is needed to better understand how the costs and benefits of collaboratively funded inclusive apprenticeship programs are allocated and realized across partners.

A key finding of this research is that no program is funded by a single source or single organization; inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs are developed, implemented, and sustained by partners. While employers are the heart of any apprenticeship—and they make possible the on-the-job training that is essential to the model—workforce intermediaries and other organizations play critical roles in connecting job seekers with the related instruction and supportive services required for success. For inclusive programs, the mix of partners and potential funding sources should be expanded to include assistive and rehabilitative services and supports that improve outcomes for people with disabilities.

The inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs profiled in this brief represent a mix of braided, blended, and aligned funding approaches driven by the particular employers, other partners, and target populations involved. Employers and intermediaries that are considering an inclusive apprenticeship model should look beyond their typical partners to think more broadly about others already connecting with diverse talent pools. Those programs and organizations have the potential to provide services and supports that will lead to better outcomes overall for both participants and employers.

As the U.S. economy recovers from the impacts of COVID-19, inclusive apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs can provide opportunities for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment to demonstrate the positive impact they can make in the workplace. Employers and workforce intermediaries should keep this population in mind when considering opportunities to extend and improve their talent pool.

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## Appendix A: Profiles of Programs Intentionally Designed for People with Disabilities

The four programs featured in the profiles below were all intentionally designed to improve access and opportunity for people with disabilities to engage in “earn and learn” programs that prepare workers for career opportunities in their local economy. Each program is shaped by its target population, core partners, and local labor market context.

### Kitchens for Good’s Project Launch Apprenticeship Program

San Diego, California

**Target Populations:** People transitioning out of prison, homelessness, and foster care

**Target Industry/Occupation:** Hospitality/culinary

**Program Length:** 300 hours of classroom training and 2,400 hours of on-the-job training (20 months)

**Funding Approaches:** Blended, aligned

**Key Funding Streams:** Social enterprise kitchens; San Diego-area restaurants and hotels; California Apprenticeship Initiative grants; WIOA Title I; SNAP Employment and Training; philanthropic and individual donor support

**About the Program:** Project Launch is a RAP that helps men and women who have significant barriers to employment to launch their careers in the hospitality and culinary industry.

- Approximately half of participants have a disclosed mental health diagnosis, many have disclosed learning disabilities, and most have experienced significant trauma. Instructors and staff receive professional development on trauma-informed practices and universal design approaches to better meet the needs of participants.
- The program is free to participants. It starts with an extensive interview and orientation process, including onboarding as an employee of Kitchens for Good.
- Apprentices participate in 12 weeks of training. They receive about 30 hours per week of related supplemental instruction combined with 5–10 hours per week of on-the-job training in the organization’s catering and events kitchen, which is operated as a social enterprise. The related supplemental instruction components include a heavy emphasis on professional skills and behaviors, especially verbal and nonverbal communication, and career readiness training.
- In addition, apprentices receive intensive case management and participate in community service opportunities, such as preparing meals each week for local hunger relief operations.
- After passing kitchen competency tests, the apprentices are placed in full-time positions with area restaurants and hotels for 17 months to complete their on-the-job training hours and document competency gains leading to the apprenticeship certificate.

Partnership and Resource Assessment		
Core Partners	Role	Contribution
<b>Kitchens for Good</b>	Sponsor Employer	Act as program administrator and catering and events social enterprise operator; the social enterprise generates revenue to pay apprentice wages during on-the-job training, starting at \$13/hour
	Related Instruction Training Provider	Provide related instruction, including job readiness training
	Fundraiser	Serve as active development team, pursuing discretionary grants and philanthropic support, including three California Apprenticeship Initiative grants
<b>Social Services Agencies</b>	Outreach	Recruit individuals through agency work in jails and prisons, re-entry and sober living homes, homeless shelters, and foster youth agencies
	Support Services	Provide supportive services to participants
<b>Restaurants and Hotels</b>	Employer	Employ and mentor apprentices in regular kitchen positions at regular wages and benefits
<b>Departments of Probation and Parole</b>	Supervision	Refer candidates
	Support Services	Provide accommodations for work-site supervision meetings and drug testing
<b>Mental Health Agencies</b>	Support Services	Provide counseling and other services for apprentices Provide professional development for program staff
<b>San Diego Workforce Partnership</b>	Funder	Leverage WIOA Title I and SNAP Employment and Training funding for eligible participants
	Employment Services	Provide employment and other support services
<b>Alumni</b>	Employer and Mentor	Provide apprenticeship opportunities and mentoring of current participants (by alumni who are now executive chefs or sous chefs at restaurants in the region)
	Supporter	Provide donations and critical feedback to the program

More information: [Project Launch home page](#)  
[Eating Well magazine article](#)

## Postsecondary Apprenticeship for Youth (PAY Check)

New Orleans, Louisiana

**Target Populations:** High school youth ages 18–21 with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan

**Target Industry/Occupations:** Health care industry (various non-clinical positions); service industry (various positions in quality control and processing); information technology industry (various support positions)

**Program Length:** 3–5 semesters

**Funding Approaches:** Blended, aligned

**Key Funding Streams:** Employers; WIOA Title IV pre-employment transition services funding; state appropriations for secondary and postsecondary education students and services; local education agencies; families

**About the Program:** PAY Check, a non-registered apprenticeship, “is a comprehensive secondary transition program that uses a fully inclusive approach entirely based in natural community settings.”

- There are four core components to the model: (1) work-based high school diploma; (2) postsecondary education; (3) paid apprenticeship; and (4) self-determination training.
- Students are dual-enrolled in community college to complete their high school diplomas while earning credit for college coursework.
- Intermediary staff work with students to build independence through self-determination training in the community, such as using public transportation and having a bank account with a debit card.
- Students go on work-site visits and complete a job shadowing experience to gain exposure to different types of occupations and build confidence in workplace interactions.
- Through STAR meetings (Students Transitioning to Adult Roles), students with disabilities, their families and friends, and intermediary/partner staff document and celebrate student educational progress, self-determination skills, and career goals.
- In their last semester, students complete a paid, 240-hour work-based learning experience (a non-registered apprenticeship) in a local-demand occupation, such as entry-level positions in sterile processing or inventory control in a hospital setting. For students who do not want to work in health care, the program has additional employer partners in service and IT industries with high-demand, entry-level positions.
- The program provides employment transition assistance following the apprenticeship to help students find good jobs (defined by pay, working conditions, and accessibility to public transportation) in a variety of industries. Transition support continues for 90 days post-placement.

Partnership and Resource Assessment		
Core Partners	Role	Contribution
<b>Human Development Center, Louisiana State University School of Allied Health Professions</b>	Intermediary	Provide staffing for transition and employment support service
	Sponsor	Provide partner engagement and development Provide program administration
<b>Delgado Community College</b>	Related Instruction Training Provider	Offer dual-enrollment classes leading to high school diploma and college credit or an industry training certificate
<b>University Medical Center New Orleans</b>	Employer	Provide employment in regular hospital positions with regular wages and benefits, starting at \$10/hour
<b>Cintas</b>	Employer	Provide employment in regular quality-control and processing positions with regular wages and benefits, starting at \$12/hour
<b>Louisiana Rehabilitation Services</b>	Funder	Through vocational rehabilitation funding, reimburse employers for wages paid to apprentices, up to \$8.35/hour
<b>Local Education Agencies in Jefferson and Orleans Parishes</b>	Outreach	Connect the intermediary with students and their families
	Funder	Leverage the state per-student allotment to contract with the intermediary (to provide student support and transition services) and the education and training provider (for dual-enrollment classes, including tuition, fees, and books for each student)
<b>Parents and Families</b>	Supporter	Build student confidence and independence through family buy-in
	Funder	Provide the student's smartphone and data plan (if financially possible); for those with limited incomes, vocational rehabilitation funds are available to cover these expenses as assistive technologies

More information: [PAY Check home page](#)

[Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation article](#)

## Manufacturing Technology Training Pre-Apprenticeship Program

Shenandoah Valley Region, Virginia

**Target Populations:** Individuals receiving vocational rehabilitation services through the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC); other individuals in the region can participate in the Hershey Boot Camp

**Target Industry/Occupations:** Manufacturing

**Program Length:** 625 hours (16–20 weeks)

**Funding Approaches:** Blended, aligned

**Key Funding Streams:** Employer; American Apprenticeship Initiative grant (U.S. Department of Labor); Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities grant (U.S. Department of Education); WIOA Title I and Title IV funding

**About the Program:** This pre-apprenticeship program in rural northwestern Virginia coordinates the efforts of multiple partners to meet regional workforce demands in manufacturing.

- The program provides extensive assessments and combines manufacturing skills with career readiness training to prepare individuals for entry-level manufacturing positions.
- The WWRC curriculum, based on the Manufacturing Skills Institute's Manufacturing Specialist/ Manufacturing Technician I certification program, includes OSHA 100, Forklift Certification, and the Virginia Career Readiness Certificate, as well as communications, teamwork, interviewing skills, hands-on mock production-line experience, industry engagement, and an apprenticeship education module.
- To address retention issues identified by managers at The Hershey Company and to increase the job prospects of WWRC pre-apprenticeship students, the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board (SVWDB) developed an employment-readiness boot camp to better prepare individuals to meet Hershey's specific workplace expectations.
- Participants are paid to attend the 2-week boot camp consisting of classroom and hands-on experience at Hershey. The classroom portion details job tasks, safety in a production environment, and food safety and regulations, as well as life skills such as budgeting, developing solutions to attendance obstacles, and workplace etiquette. Participants are hired through a temporary agency for the classroom and hands-on work at the Hershey plant. The temporary position provides both the pre-apprentice and Hershey an extended "trial period" to determine if there is a good match.
  - The first boot camp cohort was a pilot demonstration project of the SVWDB's American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI) grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, with all non-wage costs funded by the AAI grant. After the pilot, Hershey assumed more costs and responsibilities for implementation of the boot camps, with less coordination by SVWDB.
- Job coaches from the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) are available to support WWRC and other DARS clients to provide assistive services and mediation for a successful placement.
- The program has led to better onboarding and retention for those who transition to entry-level roles with Hershey, including opportunities to join the Industrial Manufacturing Technician RAP.
- As grant funds are exhausted, partners will sustain the work by co-enrolling WWRC and boot camp pre-apprentices in WIOA Title I and Title IV programs to leverage funds for on-the-job training, vocational rehabilitation services, and other needs.

Partnership and Resource Assessment		
Core Partners	Role	Contribution
<b>Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board</b>	Public Workforce System	Develop and provide policy, planning, and funding related to workforce programs
	Intermediary	Act as long-standing partner and leader in the community
	Apprenticeship Expert	Consult partner on human resources for area employers Provide funding through AAI grant
<b>Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center</b>	Training Provider	Provide accredited vocational training in manufacturing and production
	Vocational Rehabilitation Center	Provide residential vocational rehabilitation services Recommend DARS clients for the program
<b>The Hershey Company</b>	Employer	Provide pre-apprentice employment in entry-level production occupations, paid through a temporary staffing agency
	Training Provider	Provide training materials, key information, and staff for boot camp training
	Sponsor	Provide feedback to workforce partners
<b>Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services of the Valleys</b>	Support Services	Co-enroll clients in WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation Assess clients for alignment with manufacturing positions Provide job coaches to act as a “personal intermediaries” for participants, leading to better retention Liaison with the Virginia Manufacturers Association
	Funder	Provide funding through Career Pathways for Individuals with Disabilities grant
<b>Goodwill Industries of the Valleys</b>	One-Stop Operator	Co-enroll participants in WIOA Title I Adult or Youth programs Refer participants to WIOA Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation programs Provide case management
<b>Virginia Manufacturers Association</b>	Training Development	Work with partners to develop training curricula with hands-on assessments leading to industry-recognized certifications

More information: [WWRC Manufacturing Technology Training Program description](#)  
[Shenandoah Valley Workforce Development Board RAP description](#)  
[VR Workforce Studio interview](#)

## Talent Academy Pre-Apprenticeship Program

Carlisle, Pennsylvania

**Target Populations:** People with disabilities receiving vocational rehabilitation services in central Pennsylvania, and other career seekers

**Target Industry/Occupations:** Warehouse and logistics

**Program Length:** 6 weeks)

**Funding Approaches:** Braided

**Key Funding Streams:** Employer; WIOA Title I and Title IV funding

**About the Program:** This pre-apprenticeship program prepares individuals for warehouse and logistics positions with Syncreon, an international warehouse and supply chain logistics company.

- The Talent Academy program has four phases:
  1. Professional skills development, including verbal and nonverbal communications and interview skills.
  2. First aid and basic lifesaving skills training leading to certification in Basic First Aid.
  3. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)-10 General Industries training and certification.
  4. Technical skills training in warehouse logistics.
- Graduates may be hired for full-time positions at Syncreon or in other area warehouse facilities and may go on to enroll in the Logistics Technician RAP through Goodwill Keystone Area.

### Partnership and Resource Assessment

Core Partners	Role	Contribution
<b>Goodwill Keystone Area</b>	Intermediary	Coordinate and deliver Talent Academy curriculum
	Training Provider	Recruit people with disabilities and other career seekers
<b>Syncreon</b>	Employer Sponsor	Provide paid work-based learning experience leading to full-time positions, starting at \$16 per hour with benefits
<b>Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry</b>	Outreach	Recruit people with disabilities to participate in pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs
	Funder	Fund and provide vocational rehabilitation services Train front-line vocational rehabilitation and workforce system staff on apprenticeship as an important “earn and learn” strategy for people with disabilities
<b>Apprenticeship and Training Office, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry</b>	Supervision	Recruit employers Support the development of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs in the state Train front-line vocational rehabilitation and workforce system staff on apprenticeship as an important “earn and learn” strategy for people with disabilities

More information: [Syncreon announcement of Talent Academy](#)

[Logistics Technician Registered Apprenticeship Program description](#)

## Appendix B: Apprenticeship Programs That Include People With Disabilities

It is important to recognize that many people with disabilities choose not to disclose their diagnoses or conditions to employers and others. Therefore, it is likely that many apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs are unaware that individuals with disabilities participate in their programs. While the programs and initiatives below do not specifically focus on people with disabilities, the funding approaches and partnership strategies they have developed are informative for inclusive and broader apprenticeship efforts alike.

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### Apprenticeship Carolina and the Charleston Regional Youth Apprenticeship Program

In South Carolina, the state technical college system operates the [Apprenticeship Carolina](#) initiative to support and grow RAPs and pre-apprenticeship programs. Through state appropriations and federal and state grant funding, six staff members are assigned to colleges and regions across the state to consult with employers and help set up programs. At the individual program level, colleges leverage Perkins funding to pay for staff in related instruction programs and use other funding streams, such as WIOA Title I or South Carolina Lottery Tuition Assistance, to cover the costs of tuition, supplies, and other expenses. Employers, in addition to funding wages and on-the-job training, are active in conducting outreach to other businesses in the state that may be interested in developing an apprenticeship program, often sharing their successes and lessons learned.

One example is the [Charleston Regional Youth Apprenticeship Program](#), coordinated by Trident Technical College. Working with area school districts and the local chamber of commerce, the partnership has developed multiple 2-year youth apprenticeship programs for high-demand occupations in the region using a braided funding approach. High school students are dual-enrolled at Trident Technical College in certificate programs that are embedded in associate degrees. Tuition, books, and fees are often covered through the South Carolina Lottery Tuition Assistance program, or through scholarships from the local chamber of commerce or philanthropic support. Students also work part-time with an area employer in a variety of positions for on-the-job training and mentoring. The college funds a youth apprenticeship coordinator position to work directly with students and their families, connecting them with services on campus and in the community to improve outcomes.

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## **Apprenticeship Philadelphia and the Direct Support Professional Registered Apprenticeship**

In Philadelphia, the local workforce board, Philadelphia Works, and a local labor–management partnership, the District 1199c Training & Upgrading Fund, collaborate on multiple [Apprenticeship Philadelphia](#) initiatives, including the [Behavioral Health/Direct Support Professional Registered Apprenticeship](#).

The Behavioral Health/Direct Support Professional Registered Apprenticeship is a nontraditional RAP in direct behavioral health service occupations in residential and other settings. The program focuses recruitment on older youth who were previously not engaged in an education/employment pathway. As the lead intermediary, the District 1199c Training & Upgrading Fund leverages multiple funding streams, including AAI grant funds through Philadelphia Works, other state and philanthropic grants, and collective bargaining agreements with regional employers and union members. In addition, District 1199c Training & Upgrading Fund apprentices are co-enrolled in Philadelphia Works' WIOA Title I and other programs to tap into on-the-job training funds and support resources. Employers involved in the Behavioral Health/Direct Support Professional Registered Apprenticeship are actively engaged in reviewing curricula and leading related instruction; they also fund on-the-job training wages and mentor staff.

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## **Wisconsin Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards**

As part of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, the [Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards](#) is responsible for coordinating RAPs, registered youth apprenticeships, and certified pre-apprenticeship programs in the state. In Wisconsin, the state legislature appropriates about \$7 million annually for youth and adult RAPs. The Bureau also leverages discretionary grants and other funding to support certified pre-apprenticeship programs—a key strategy in efforts to grow and diversify the state's apprenticeship talent pipeline.

The Bureau's apprenticeship training representatives act as liaisons with employers and other partners to facilitate implementation and sustainability of apprenticeship programs. The Bureau is also working with the state Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to train front-line vocational rehabilitation and workforce services staff about apprenticeship opportunities for people with disabilities.