IN BUSINESS, IT’S TALENT THAT DRIVES INNOVATION. TO GROW AND THRIVE IN TODAY’S ECONOMY, EMPLOYERS IN ALL INDUSTRIES NEED A HIGHLY SKILLED WORKFORCE. NOW, MORE AND MORE ARE DISCOVERING A PROVEN STRATEGY FOR BUILDING ONE: APPRENTICESHIP.

Combining classroom instruction with on-the-job training, apprenticeship programs help bridge skills gaps and bring new and diverse talent into the workplace, including people with disabilities and those with diverse backgrounds and educational experiences. The result is a pipeline of primed and ready workers for years to come.

What’s more, apprenticeship is a strategy for preparing workers in not only traditional trades, such as construction, but also high-growth industries, such as health care, information technology, transportation, energy, and many others.

In short, Apprenticeship Works… for workers, for opportunity, for inclusion, for employers, FOR BUSINESS.

Hear More About Apprenticeship
Interested in learning more about how apprenticeships can help build a skilled, diverse workforce for your company or industry? View "#ApprenticeshipWorks," a video produced by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy. This video features interviews with representatives from four organizations that manage or sponsor apprenticeships in a range of fields, including information technology, health care information management, and shipbuilding. It is one in a two-part series; the other video focuses on the value of apprenticeships to individuals. To view either video, visit www.dol.gov/odep/topics/youth/Apprenticeshipworks-video-series.html.
What is an apprenticeship?
An apprenticeship is a job-based training pathway that allows individuals to simultaneously earn money and learn a skill through a combination of education and hands-on training. For employers, it is a way to acquire workers with the specific skills and knowledge they need. For individuals, it is a way to gain valuable experience and earn income while learning.

Who sponsors apprenticeships?
Apprenticeships can be set up in any workplace or industry in need of a reliable, stable stream of skilled, qualified workers. However, employers don’t have to sponsor apprenticeships alone, and in fact the vast majority do not. Typically, programs are run in collaboration with many partners, including but not limited to industry associations, state labor offices, economic development entities, two- and four-year colleges and universities. The U.S. Department of Labor is currently in the process of partnering with industry groups, companies, nonprofit organizations, unions, joint labor-management organizations, and many others to help them design apprenticeship programs that fill their unique industry needs. Some employers also work with such partners to offer pre-apprenticeships, which prepare people to enter and succeed in apprenticeships. Like apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships involve both instruction and hands-on training.

Do apprenticeships strengthen workforce inclusion?
Yes! Increasingly, apprenticeships are an effective and efficient strategy for increasing workforce inclusion. Because of the range of opportunities available, they provide a good career path for people with disabilities. For businesses, this increased diversity means a broader range of perspectives on how to confront challenges and achieve success. The U.S. Department of Labor protects applicants and current registrants in Registered Apprenticeship programs from discrimination on the basis of disability. Moreover, Registered Apprenticeship programs are taking proactive steps to recruit individuals with disabilities. These steps support an inclusive workforce, which benefits all employers and the business as a whole.

Each Registered Apprenticeship program’s sponsor develops its own minimum qualifications related to education and the ability to perform essential job functions. For a qualified apprentice with a disability, an apprenticeship sponsor must provide a reasonable accommodation to allow equal employment opportunity, unless to do so would cause undue burden. An applicant for an apprenticeship or an apprentice may request a reasonable accommodation to assist in applying and interviewing for an apprenticeship. Generally, the individual with a disability must inform the sponsor that an accommodation is needed.

When people with disabilities disclose a disability to request accommodations is a personal choice, and many disabilities are not readily apparent. Thus, key to a disability-inclusive workplace culture are policies and practices that are flexible in facilitating success for all employees.

Where can I get help to develop a Registered Apprenticeship Program?
The national Registered Apprenticeship system is overseen by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship in collaboration with state apprenticeship programs. These agencies work together to ensure programs meet established standards, protect the welfare of apprentices, and issue nationally recognized certificates of completion. They also promote the development of new programs, with input from a range of stakeholders, including industry associations, educational institutions, and workforce and economic development organizations. To help employers interested in learning more about sponsoring apprenticeships, the department offers a number of resources, including an employer toolkit and information on potential funding sources and state-based tax credits that can assist in getting a program up and running. All this and more is available at the Department of Labor’s website.