



# Scaling Apprenticeships for Small Businesses: Strategies That Work

# Housekeeping

- The event is being recorded, and the recording will be posted online afterward.
- Speaker biographies and related materials are available online.
- All participants are muted, but you can type your questions or comments into the Q&A box at any time. We will have a Q&A segment at the end of the session.
- You can hide captions or adjust settings with the Live Transcript button.

# About the Urban Institute

The Urban Institute is a nonprofit research organization founded on one simple idea:

To improve lives and strengthen communities, we need practices and policies that work. For more than 50 years, that has been our charge. By equipping changemakers with evidence and solutions, together we can create a future where every person and community has the opportunity and power to thrive.

# Presentation Roadmap & Goals

- Provide overview of the Small and Medium Business Tech Apprenticeship Project
- Celebrate impact achieved
- Share lessons learned
- Highlight the experiences and perspectives of our state and employer partners

# Small and Medium Business Tech Apprenticeship Project

## ■ Project Objectives

- Support SMB employers to launch or expand a Registered Apprenticeship
- Increase pathways into quality tech jobs through apprenticeships
- Document and share best practices for supporting apprenticeships among SMB employers
- Diversify the tech industry

## ■ Geographic Focus

- North Carolina & South Carolina



# Why Focus on Supporting SMBs?

- Evidence from the American Apprenticeship Initiative Evaluation shows **SMBs experience the greatest return on investment** from registered apprenticeship
- Compared to larger companies, **SMBs face additional challenges** and barriers to adopting registered apprenticeship programs
- SMBs represent an important segment of employers with talent needs, and good job opportunities for skilled workers

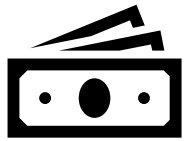
# Identifying Challenges SMB's Face



Gaining Access to (and retaining) Talent



Administrative Burden



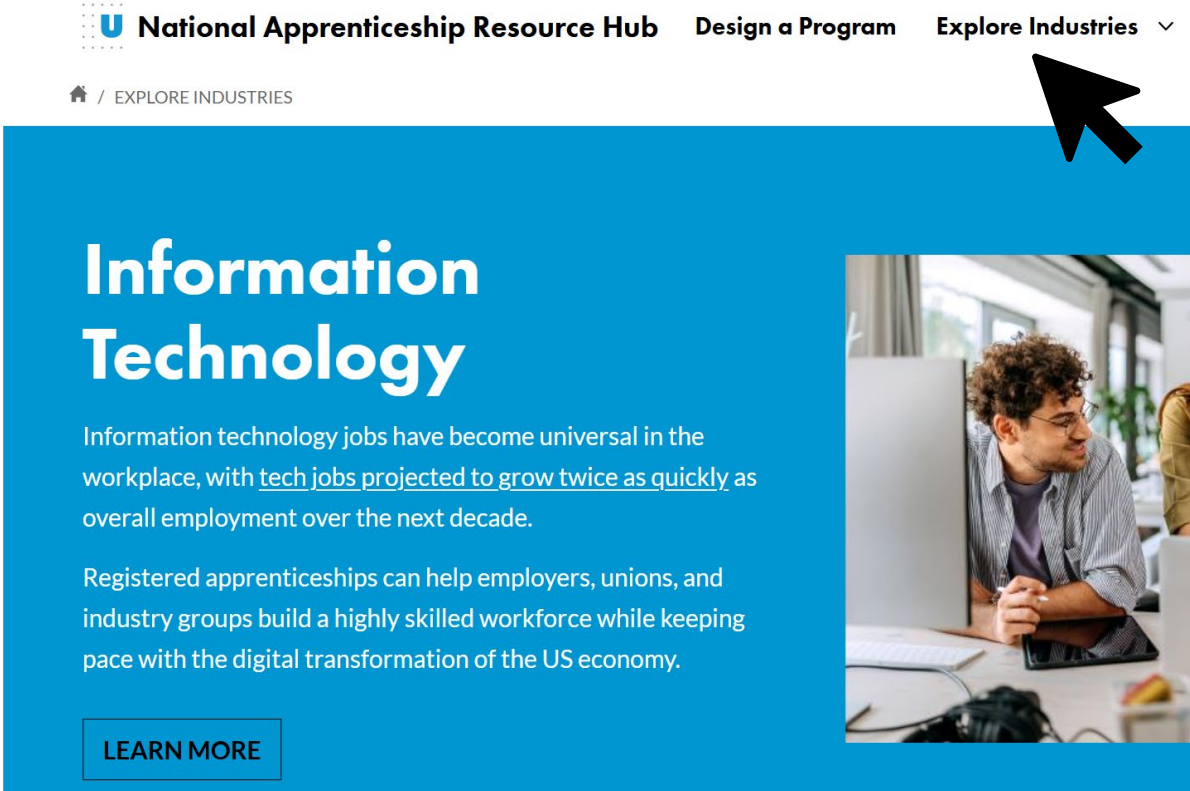
Start-Up Costs



Awareness and Understanding of RAPs

# Urban's SMB Project Approach

- Establish partnership with state agencies & opportunities to add capacity
- Leverage existing resources to support program design
  - National Apprenticeship Resource Hub & National Occupational Frameworks
- Incentive Funding
- Individualized Technical Assistance



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the National Apprenticeship Resource Hub website. The navigation items are: National Apprenticeship Resource Hub, Design a Program, and Explore Industries (with a dropdown arrow). Below the navigation is a breadcrumb trail: Home / EXPLORE INDUSTRIES. The main content area has a blue background and features the heading 'Information Technology'. Below the heading is a paragraph: 'Information technology jobs have become universal in the workplace, with tech jobs projected to grow twice as quickly as overall employment over the next decade.' This is followed by another paragraph: 'Registered apprenticeships can help employers, unions, and industry groups build a highly skilled workforce while keeping pace with the digital transformation of the US economy.' At the bottom left of the content area is a 'LEARN MORE' button. On the right side of the content area is a photograph of a man with curly hair and glasses sitting at a desk with a computer monitor, looking at the screen. A black mouse cursor arrow is pointing at the 'Explore Industries' dropdown menu in the top right corner.

**U** National Apprenticeship Resource Hub Design a Program Explore Industries ▾

🏠 / EXPLORE INDUSTRIES

## Information Technology

Information technology jobs have become universal in the workplace, with tech jobs projected to grow twice as quickly as overall employment over the next decade.

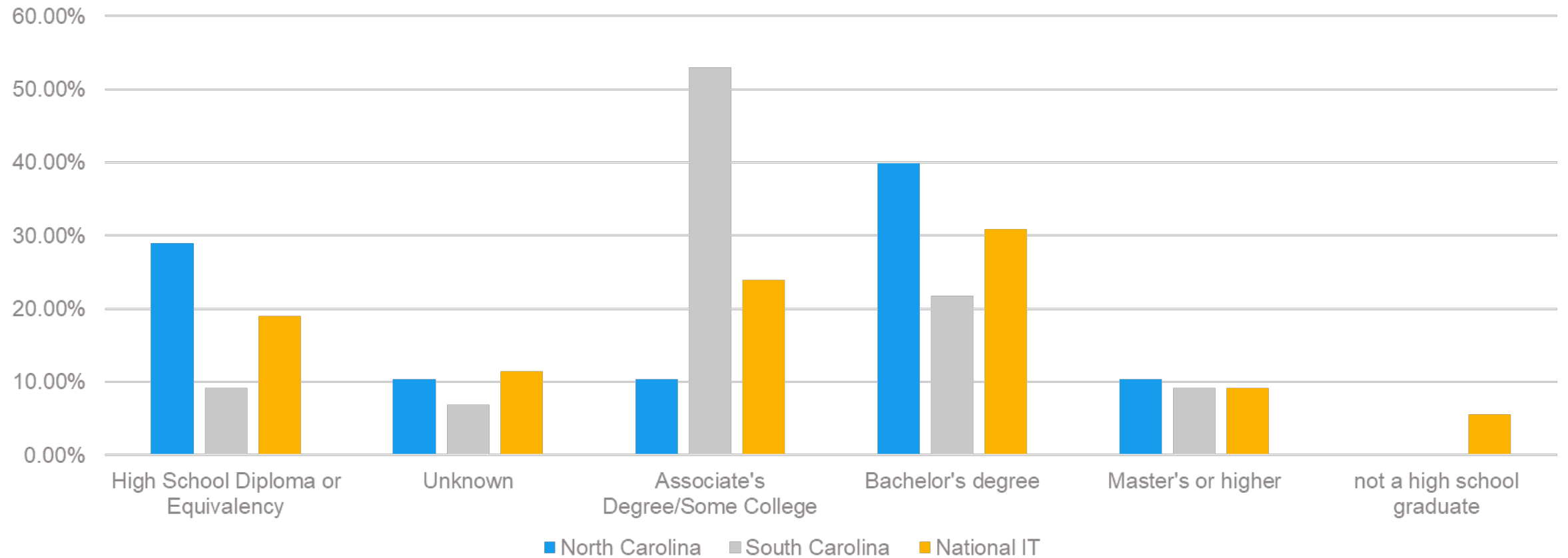
Registered apprenticeships can help employers, unions, and industry groups build a highly skilled workforce while keeping pace with the digital transformation of the US economy.

[LEARN MORE](#)

# Project Outcomes

Project Deliverables	Total
Support <b>200</b> new tech apprentices employed by SMBs	275
Number of <b>SMBs</b> supported over the course of the project	15
Support and launch <b>12</b> new tech apprenticeship programs	12
<b>Newly Registered Tech Apprenticeship Programs</b>	Project Management, IT Generalist, Computer Support Specialist, Data Analyst, Cloud Computing, Automation Tech, Data Analyst
<b>Incentive dollars distributed</b>	<b>\$542,750</b> Including <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$47,250 (retention stipends)</li><li>• \$9,500 (completion bonuses)</li></ul>

# Apprentice Educational Backgrounds



# 15 SMBs supported

## North Carolina

- Cloud for Good
- Code the Dream
- Innovative Systems Group, Inc.
- Nehemiah Community Empowerment Center
- Stiegler EdTech
- RHC Workforce Solutions, LLC



## South Carolina

- Build Carolina
- Fusion Centers
- PositiveHire
- Postal Plus
- Swiss Krono
- Technically IT
- Training Concepts
- Value Systems
- Goodwill Industries of Upstate/Midlands South Carolina



# Program Spotlight: **Nehemiah Community Empowerment Center**

- Greensboro, North Carolina
- Serving at-risk youth, teens, and adults to STEM, robotics, and the IT industry
  - Referred by schools, city council members, and court officials
- IT Generalist Registered Apprenticeship
  - 95% completion rate
  - 85% of apprentices finding employment in IT sector



“The technical lessons gave me confidence to troubleshoot and connect systems, while the people skills taught me how to connect with others.”

- Joshua Colon, apprentice

# Program Spotlight: Build Carolina

- Greenville, South Carolina
- Offers a variety of experiences, from bootcamps to apprenticeships
- Registered Apprenticeships:
  - Software engineering
  - Data Analytics
  - Cloud engineering
- Since 2022, 60 individuals have completed their apprenticeship



“We weren’t getting coffees or anything. We were sweating, trying to meet deadlines on the delivery of this very real product suite that depends on us to see it to completion.”

- Camby Chavis, apprentice alumnus

# Program Spotlight: **Cloud for Good**

- Asheville, North Carolina
- IT consulting firm
  - Hire, train, deploy apprenticeship structure
- Salesforce Administrator Registered Apprenticeship launched in 2022
  - 88% retention rate
  - 70% of apprentice hired by Cloud for Good clients



“[The program] gave me the confidence to be able to step into [the tech industry] in a professional Salesforce role.”

- Lia Burt, apprentice alumna

# Lessons Learned

# Disrupting the Tech Industry Through Apprenticeships:

## *Lessons on Improving Diversity in Recruitment from Small and Medium Businesses*

**Problem:** Tech workforce demand exceeds conventional talent pipelines, while systematic barriers reinforces access inequities

**Solution:** SMBs can address challenges and equity through intentional program level recruitment strategies.

### **Recommendations:**

- Create strategic partnerships with education and community partners
- Use intentional screening methods to mitigate bias
- Support applicant readiness through short-term training programs
- Improve representation across all levels to reflect the communities being served

# Improving Tech Apprenticeship Retention Outcomes for Small and Medium Businesses

**Problem:** High turnover rates within tech companies and challenges with diversity and inclusion

**Solution:** SMBs use of apprenticeship can grow and sustain a diverse talent pipeline to meet the IT industry's needs

## Recommendations:

- Provide apprentices with higher compensation when and where possible (not just wages)
- Foster a sense of belonging and inclusion in the workplace
- Accommodate flexibility in programming and scheduling
- Leverage SMB resources to enhance core elements of the apprenticeship

# How Intermediaries Can Support SMBs to Access Apprenticeship Programs

- Expand capacity of state staff
- Inform program design & implementation
- Connect SMBs to resources
- Serve as program sponsors
- Help SMBs build strategic partnerships

*"As an employer and sponsor, we value registered apprenticeships as a key talent development strategy. However, **registering a program can be challenging without the right intermediary.** When people ask me how to start a registered apprenticeship, I tell them to connect with the Urban Institute. They did fantastic work helping us register—supporting us in building a program tailored to our needs, working with the state to complete registration, and braiding funding. Without an intermediary, navigating all of this would be difficult—but it shouldn't have to be that hard." —**Tal Frankfurt, Founder and CEO, Cloud for Good***



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