

Youth Apprenticeship Playbook

How to Build Successful High School–Sponsored Programs

Zach Boren, Bhavani Arabandi, Jacqueline Rayfield, and Rayanne Hawkins

Five key components of an apprenticeship program: **it's a paid job; apprentices gain on-the-job experience, classroom training, mentoring, and a national credential.**

Apprenticeship completers earn an average of **\$70,000 in annual income** and **approximately \$300,000 more during their career** than their peers.

Employers experience gains in **employee retention, diversity, succession planning, reduced downtime, and through the productivity increases of the apprentices.**

Success factors:

Close employer partnerships: high school sponsors can ease employers' participation in registered apprenticeships for young people.

Dedicated high school staff are key to program success and sustainability.

Aligning curricula to the apprenticeship requirements often requires **innovation and flexibility.**

WHAT ARE YOUTH APPRENTICESHIPS? CAN HIGH SCHOOLS BE SPONSORS?

Youth apprenticeships can connect high schools and their students with rewarding career opportunities, thereby benefiting students, employers, educators, and the community. High schools make excellent registered apprenticeship program (RAP) sponsors because they can counsel young people about career pathways, provide related technical instruction, and ease employer participation in apprenticeship. As RAP sponsors, high schools administer apprenticeship programs, oversee training development, and organize hands-on learning and instruction for apprentices. High school RAP sponsors can bolster local employers' efforts to meet talent shortages and skills needs.

Effective partnerships, especially with employers, are critical to the apprenticeship ecosystem. In high schools, key staff include the principal, teachers, or work-based learning coordinators. They collaborate with employers, community colleges, and local and state government agencies to build RAPs and identify young people to fill critical jobs in local businesses that require skills training.

In **Iowa**, more than 60 high schools are RAP sponsors organizing and overseeing youth apprenticeships that include high school classes and employer-led hands-on training for students. Apprenticeships are offered in several occupations, including welder, software developer, medical assistant, and computer support specialist. Apprentices complete the apprenticeship in 12 to 24 months on average and may earn college credit or an associate degree.

District 214 in Illinois includes six high schools and is both a RAP sponsor and apprentice employer. They partner with several local employers to develop a talent pipeline for their businesses. Apprenticeships are offered in IT (cybersecurity and helpdesk), automotive services, nursing, construction trades, HVAC, manufacturing, and graphic arts, among others. For the apprentices' classroom instruction, District 214 provides options to take courses either at the high school or among five community colleges and universities. Apprentices receive college credit upon program completion.

This high school student apprenticeship effort has been one of the biggest employee engagement projects we've instituted in years.

—David Ottavianelli, director of strategic investments at John Deere

BECOMING A SPONSOR

High schools register apprenticeship programs to meet the unique needs of their students and local employers by following five steps.

1. **Analyze the local job market and leverage current work-based learning to meet your community's needs.**
 - Examine current career and technical education courses and work-based learning programs to identify opportunities to expand successful programming.
 - Analyze labor market data and scan local job openings by industry, occupation, and sector.

The Urban Institute can analyze labor market data for your area to identify local employers' skills gaps and talent needs.

2. **Build your employer partnerships.**
 - Review local job opportunities and reach out to employers for more information on job openings.
 - Engage local employers and make a case for registered youth apprenticeships to both businesses and students.
 - Identify employer skill needs and pain points for recruiting and retention.

3. **Select occupations for your apprenticeship program.**
 - Select the occupations that best suit your employer partners and students.
 - Use [O*Net Online](#) and the [Apprenticeable Occupations](#) list.

The Urban Institute helps schools identify occupations that work for the local companies and community.

4. **Design your apprenticeship program.**
 - Create an on-the-job training plan for each occupation. Templates are available on [Apprenticeship.gov](#) or the [Competency-Based Occupational Frameworks website](#).
 - Build related instruction curricula based on classes available at your school and local community colleges. Determine how your educational institution can incorporate dual-enrollment and college credit.
 - Define a [wage scale](#) for your apprenticeship program in partnership with employers.
 - Craft recruitment strategies that center on diversity and inclusion.
 - Develop an apprentice schedule that will accommodate work and required courses for graduation.
 - Encourage employers to train mentors who ensure apprentices gain relevant competencies.

The Urban Institute builds apprenticeship standards in partnership with schools and employers.

5. **Review, sign, and submit your standards to the appropriate registration agency for approval.**

The Urban Institute facilitates school communication with the US Department of Labor or State Apprenticeship Agency during the approval process.

6. **Launch your program!**

Registering Your Program

Follow these five steps to register a high school apprenticeship program.

Step 1: Assess community needs

Step 2: Build employer partnerships

Step 3: Select occupations

Step 4: Build Work Process Schedules

Step 5: Submit standards for approval

Step 6: Launch your program!