



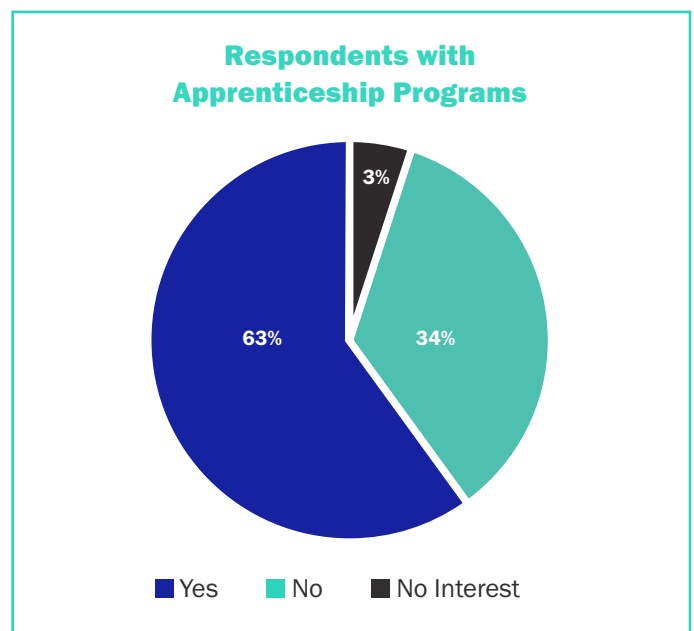
THE STATE OF APPRENTICESHIP AMONG WORKFORCE BOARDS

Workforce boards and the apprenticeship system share the same fundamental goals: they connect workers to economic opportunity while meeting the skill needs of employers in high-demand industries.

Among the many services that workforce boards provide, they train and refer jobseekers, work with businesses to establish on-the-job training and other talent development solutions, and anchor partnerships with a wide variety of stakeholders for seamless service delivery. Although all of these activities can be significant assets to the apprenticeship system, workforce boards and the apprenticeship system have traditionally operated on parallel tracks. New efforts in each system are now working to change that. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and apprenticeship guidance from the U.S. Department of Labor are encouraging integration of these efforts by positioning workforce boards to engage in apprenticeship in a variety of roles.

The apprenticeship system is growing, with workforce boards as a potential major partner in that expansion. Yet little is known about how much traction these federally led integration efforts are having on the ground with workforce boards. The National Association of Workforce Boards, in collaboration with Jobs for the Future, disseminated a survey in the summer of 2017 to better understand how workforce boards are engaging in apprenticeship and what challenges they face as they try to expand apprenticeship in their regions. The 145 local and single-state workforce

development boards that responded represent 26 percent of those surveyed and 24 percent of all state and local boards in the country. While the survey results may overestimate current activity, because engaged boards are more likely to complete an apprenticeship survey, the respondents provide insight into the nature of apprenticeship activities and interest among workforce boards across the country.



This briefing details the key lessons learned from the workforce board respondents. First and foremost, apprenticeship is gaining ground among workforce boards. Nearly two-thirds of workforce board respondents are currently engaged in active apprenticeship programs. By and large, those not currently involved with apprenticeship programs are interested in becoming involved in the future (92 percent), and four already have apprenticeship plans underway. Current apprenticeship work spans numerous industries, with workforce boards serving in many roles and incorporating the work into their American Job Center activities. Moreover, four out of five respondents have incorporated apprenticeship into their local, regional, or state workforce board plans.

These workforce boards indicate that they appreciate the value that apprenticeship can offer to the employers and jobseekers they work with, but that apprenticeship is new territory for many of them. They are feeling their way through it the best that they can, but are looking for more support as they continue on this journey. The key areas of both activity and concern among the workforce boards are employer engagement, recruitment of apprentices, administration and implementation processes, and funding. Rural boards and those without current apprenticeship activity could also benefit from targeted support. With additional resources and technical assistance in these areas, apprenticeship is poised for growth among workforce boards.

What is Apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship is model of workforce training that allows employees to earn while they learn. These programs generally last from one to six years and include a combination of on-the-job training and formal classroom instruction. Registered apprentices earn progressively increasing wages and an industry-recognized credential. Apprenticeships can be overseen either by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship or by a State Apprenticeship Agency, while employers and other sponsors administer individual apprenticeship programs.

Visit the [U.S. Department of Labor](#) and read the [Training and Employment Guidance Letter 13-16](#) to learn more about Apprenticeship.

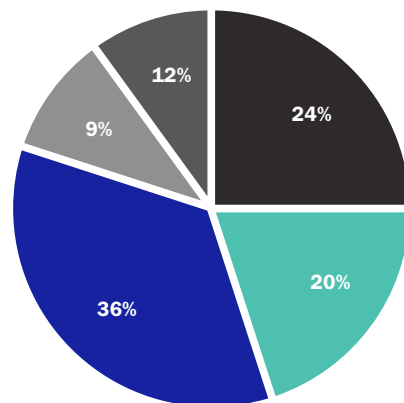
Current Board Involvement

Despite the workforce and apprenticeship systems traditionally operating on parallel, but separate, tracks workforce board respondents now indicate widespread engagement with apprenticeship. The two-thirds of boards engaged in apprenticeship have involvement that spans both industries and roles. In addition, workforce boards frequently designate staff to lead their apprenticeship activities.

Not only are most boards involved in apprenticeship, but 80 percent of these boards are connected with apprenticeship programs that are registered at the federal level (24 percent), the state level (20 percent), or some combination of the two (36 percent). Only 9 percent of the boards are connected with apprenticeship programs that are not.

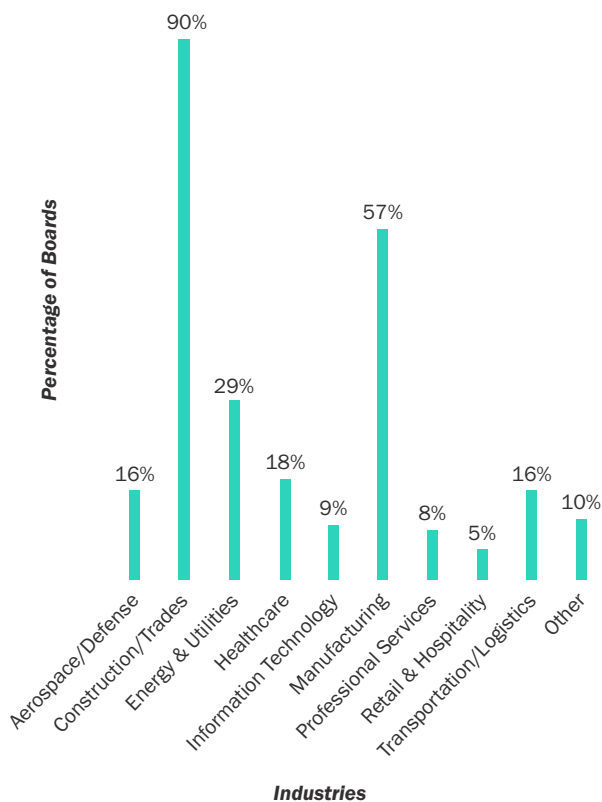
The industry composition of these apprenticeship programs reflects the evolving industries supported by the apprenticeship system as a whole. The largest percentage of boards, by far, are connected to apprenticeships in construction or the trades. This has historically served as the anchor for the apprenticeship system nationally, followed by manufacturing occupations. Manufacturing is the second most common industry for boards, at 57 percent. Workforce

Apprenticeship Registration



Federal
 State
 Both
 None
 Do Not Know

Apprenticeship Industries

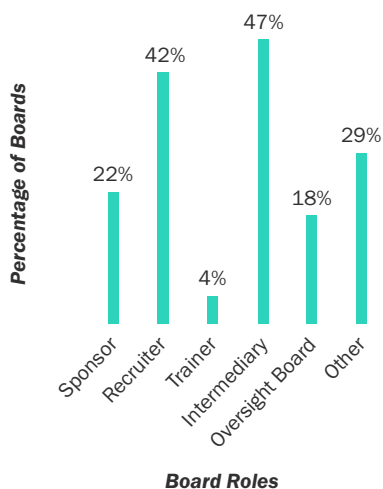


boards are now connected to apprenticeships in a range of nontraditional industries that are emerging as priorities for growth in the apprenticeship system, including energy and utilities (29 percent), and health care (18 percent). Smaller numbers of boards also identified a wide range of industries for their apprenticeships such as agriculture, shipbuilding, ironworking, food industry, finance and insurance, workforce development, and operations/government compliance. The boards note that interest in these nontraditional occupations is expanding.

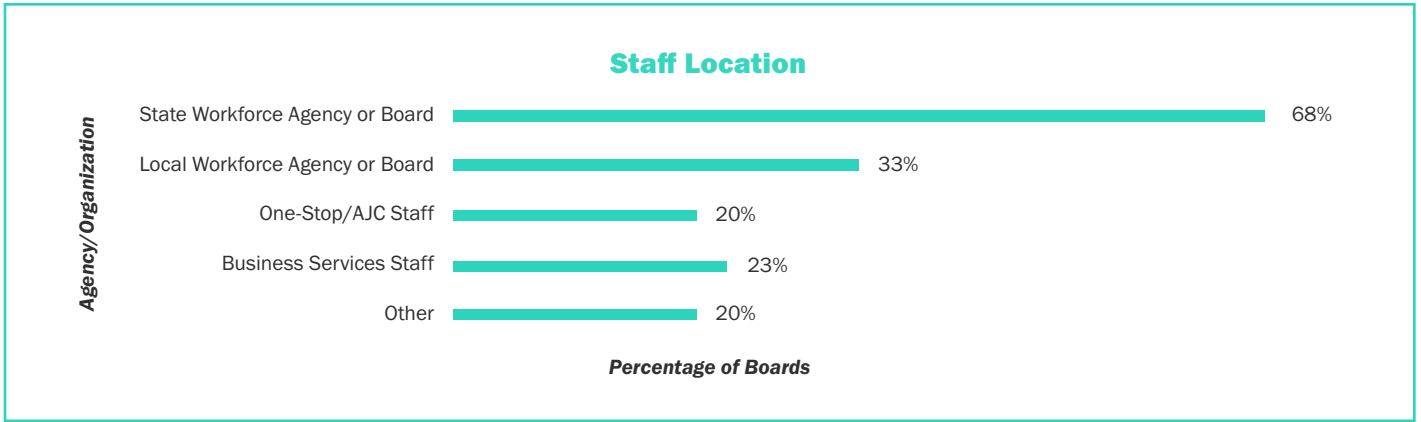
Workforce boards have assumed a wide range of roles as apprenticeship partners. Almost half (47 percent) of those boards engaged in apprenticeship report that they serve as intermediaries that aggregate industry demand and connect apprenticeship partners such as employers, training providers, and other nonprofits. Only slightly less (42 percent) serve in a recruiter role to refer apprentices to programs. Eighteen percent are members of boards overseeing an apprenticeship program. One surprising result is that 22 percent of respondents report that they serve as apprenticeship “sponsors.” A sponsor formally administers and operates the program, registering it with the appropriate federal state agency, although it is unclear if respondents understand this technical definition of sponsorship in the apprenticeship system. West Michigan Works!, the first nationally known example of a workforce sponsor, recently began playing this role in 2015, and this expansion is previously undocumented. In addition, 29 percent of board respondents participate in other roles. While these responses do not represent many boards, they illustrate the wide range of responsibilities for which boards are well positioned. Six boards indicate that they provide funding, three provide oversight or guidance, two create partnerships with employers, and two directly provide program services. Individual boards also note a range of program support roles:

- Serving as the fiscal agent
- Applying for grants
- Serving as a convener
- Promoting the programs
- Serving as an employment/apprenticeship navigator
- Conducting case management
- Providing support to the community college

Board Apprenticeship Roles



Looking from the perspective of the board’s core functions, 14 respondents provide insight into how apprenticeship activities are integrated into the services offered to their dual customers—jobseekers and businesses. Respondents describe apprenticeships as “one of the many services



the WDB and our career centers offer to companies and jobseekers” and “part of [the board’s] training services to the jobseeker community, as well as a customized training option for the business community.” A few boards identify apprenticeship as a service provided at the One-Stop Career Centers. Consistent with their common role as an apprenticeship recruiter, other boards focus their activities specifically on referring candidates to existing programs and pre-screening candidates as WIOA eligible.

These activities by the workforce board are possible, in part, because of staff expertise and time dedicated to apprenticeship activities. Four-fifths of responding boards indicate that there is a designated person in the state or regional workforce system that handles apprenticeships, with an additional 6 percent unsure. Among those indicating the presence of a designated agent, over two-thirds of the boards point to a designated state workforce agency or board staff person, and one-third note a local workforce agency or board staff person. Other designated staff identified by the boards are business services staff, at 23 percent, and One-Stop Center / American Job Center staff, at 20 percent. Twenty percent of the responding boards note other agencies with designated apprenticeship staff work, including community college systems; other (non-workforce) state agencies; and apprenticeship agencies, coalitions, or groups.

Integrating Apprenticeship Into Planning

WIOA’s overhaul of the regulations governing workforce boards supports the adoption of apprenticeship in numerous ways. For example, the legislation requires that boards include apprenticeship members, makes apprenticeship providers automatically eligible for the eligible training provider list, encourages work-based learning investment

using on-the-job training funds, dedicates a share of youth funds to work-based learning, encourages pre-apprenticeship programs, and includes apprenticeship-friendly performance metrics. This apprenticeship focus has been reinforced in a recent Employment and Training Administration Training and Employment Guidance Letter promoting apprenticeship (TEGL 13-16). While these components of WIOA are a major boost for apprenticeship, there is no certainty that these elements will be prioritized as boards are also faced with adopting many other WIOA regulations. Based on survey responses, workforce boards are, in fact, incorporating apprenticeship as a strategic priority as intended.

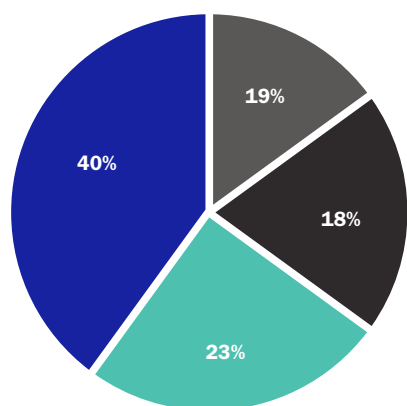
The impact of WIOA is beginning to be apparent in the workforce boards. Several respondents note apprenticeship representation on their board of directors. Others note that apprenticeship programs are now listed on their eligible training provider list. In fact, 37 percent of the workforce boards have noticed an increase in the number of apprenticeship programs included on the eligible training provider list. About half of these credit the change to WIOA. Some boards are conducting outreach to apprenticeship programs to add them to the list. Access to the eligible training provider list has also begun to pay off: a few respondents indicate that this policy change has sparked interest among employers. Only 23 percent of boards have seen no increase in the number of apprenticeship programs included on their state’s eligible training provider list, while the remainder are unsure.

Perhaps more significantly, workforce boards are actively planning how to further include apprenticeship within their broader plans. Eighty-two percent of the responding boards have integrated apprenticeship into their local, regional, and/or state workforce board plans. Comments from 45 boards illuminate the significance of apprenticeship in the plans. Some discuss its prominence, listing it as an

“emphasis,” “policy,” “goal,” “objective,” “strategic objective,” “strategic priority,” or part of a “strategic agenda.” Others note that it is “valued,” “encouraged,” or considered a “best practice.”

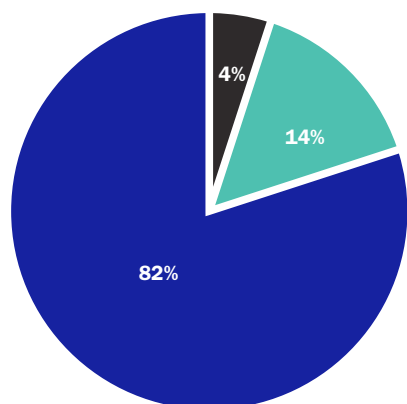
Apprenticeship is incorporated into these boards’ plans in myriad ways. A few include it within a work-based learning plan or as part of their work-based learning goals and objectives. Others identify apprenticeship as an activity and consider it a business engagement strategy or a jobseeker service. Individual boards describe apprenticeship variously as a tool “to provide skilled labor alongside career pathways,” a tool for “employment and career building,” and a “viable training model.”

Increase in Apprenticeships on the Eligible Training Provider List



■ Increase Because of WIOA Focus ■ No Increase
■ Increase but Not Sure Why ■ Do Not Know

Apprenticeship Integrated into Plan



■ Yes ■ No ■ Do Not Know

The role of apprenticeship in board plans echoes a broader state and local policy focus on apprenticeship. Respondents note support from their state departments of labor, as well as local chambers of commerce. At least six boards describe apprenticeship as a state focus, some adding that the state has made money for apprenticeship available to the local boards. One board even describes apprenticeship as “a focal point for future legislative needs . . . and [they] have developed a subcommittee to help provide support and guidance.”

PROMOTING AND EXPANDING APPRENTICESHIP

Thirty-four respondents provide insight into the strategies the boards’ plans put into place for promoting and implementing apprenticeship. Boards have built apprenticeship into their industry sector initiatives and career pathway efforts, and have made it a part of their business support strategy. One board conducted a “significant and detailed skills gap study in 2015, which set its strategy for increasing ‘training-after-hire’ models.”

Partnership efforts to expand apprenticeship span pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeship programs. A number of boards are supporting and developing pre-apprenticeship programs. One describes a collaboration with an adult school consortium offering pre-apprenticeship courses. At the apprenticeship level, boards are working with existing programs to develop training plans for WIOA participants. A few boards are looking at replicating existing apprenticeship programs in order to increase opportunities. Others focus on developing new apprenticeship programs. One is working with a community college and another is “piloting a small apprenticeship model that will include 5 businesses and 15 apprentices. The apprentices will be co-enrolled in WIOA programs and will also receive services from WIOA.”

One board illustrates how these strategies to connect with and expand apprenticeship come together:

Apprenticeships are a high-priority focus area for our local workforce board. This apprenticeship focus is a natural component of our long-standing goal of building more effective career pathways to our region’s targeted sector strategy industries: advanced manufacturing, information technology / e-commerce, and health care.

One of our top priorities is to create new pre-apprenticeship programs that will connect career seekers from our region’s high schools and American Job Centers . . . to existing apprenticeship programs. We’re also exploring opportunities to

create two new apprenticeship programs to meet industry workforce training demands.

There are two aspects to this focus: 1) Traditional Apprenticeship Programs: Many of these traditional apprenticeship programs fill the critical workforce need of our advanced manufacturing companies . . . [and] 2) Non-Traditional Apprenticeship Programs: This is an emerging area of focus for us, especially in the health care and information technology / e-commerce industries.

One theme among respondents, regardless of their desired role in the delivery of an apprenticeship partnership, is the need for outreach to promote the value of apprenticeships. While employer engagement, described below, is critical, some areas are adopting broader strategies. One respondent describes that Michigan “has developed a marketing campaign and established an apprenticeship learning network to help train and assist One-Stop Center staff in expanding apprenticeships in their regions.” Outreach is also client focused: one board is promoting apprenticeship “through robocalls and emails to customers who have used the One-Stop Center.” Boards also note that these promotion activities exist within a larger context in which apprenticeship is being marketed at the federal, state, and local levels. Many states have implemented statewide apprenticeship initiatives, some with dedicated funding streams.

Supporting Board Engagement in Apprenticeship

This section draws out several key issues common to boards as they engage in apprenticeship: employer engagement, apprentice recruitment, lack of knowledge or capacity for the administration and implementation of apprenticeship, and funding. These topics surface in respondents’ descriptions of current and desired expansion of apprenticeship activities, along with their most common challenges and requests for resources. In addition, some boards, such as rural ones and those without apprenticeship experience, highlight issues that are more specific to their realities.

Strategies to expand apprenticeship engagement among boards should proactively address the most significant challenges that boards face in connecting employers and/

or jobseekers to apprenticeship opportunities. Among the 69 respondents, only one claims that “we have not encountered any challenges at this time.” The rest cite many challenges in both the supply and demand sides of apprenticeship programs. 94 respondents also suggest resources that would help them become more engaged and participative in apprenticeship programs.

Employer Engagement

Employers are at the heart of apprenticeship programs, and so it is no surprise that employer engagement is a key workforce board apprenticeship strategy and concern. Boards are reaching out to employers, promoting apprenticeship programs and asking them to register as apprenticeship sponsors. Although many are having initial success, boards find that convincing employers of apprenticeship’s value is challenging, and they could use support in making their case.

Respondents are enabling employer outreach through a mix of trained staff and written outreach materials. A few respondents have business services specialists whose job is to recruit workers and businesses into apprenticeship programs, and one board has assigned a full-time staff member to apprenticeship. At IowaWORKS, “One-Stop Center staff are educating our local businesses about the benefits of apprenticeships, encouraging them to learn more about them and offering a worksheet in developing standards and connecting them to a staff [person] from the Office of Apprenticeship.” Another board in Texas is developing memorandums of understanding with its state Chapter 133 apprenticeship programs as mandatory One-Stop partners. “We’ve seen a 300 percent increase in business engagement from a year ago.” This board is among a number of respondents, including workforce boards who are early promoters of apprenticeship in their region, for whom these outreach efforts have yielded great initial results. One board describes employer interest as still in its “infancy,” but growing with continued outreach. In another case, “The apprenticeship model had not been used in this region. We recently held our first [apprenticeship] employer outreach meeting and we had three employers commit to participate in the model.”

Some interest and earlier apprenticeship delivery is being generated within the employer community, rather than emanating from the workforce boards. In some areas, current apprenticeship programs are spreading the word to other employers in the area. One board with German companies in the area has benefited from their familiarity with the apprenticeship model. Another board points to the power

of large companies. “Companies such as Microsoft are jumping in head first; Amazon is putting their toes in the water, but they have the capital and influence to explore and implement.”

The main reason for this turnaround in employers’ attitudes seems to be the current shortage in skilled labor, along with the looming growth in shortages due to the imminent retirement of many of their current skilled workers. Employers are looking at the supply side of the worker market, and seeing low unemployment, a large number of job openings, and a limited number of skilled applicants. Faced with this reality, employers are seeking new models for the training and onboarding of skilled workers, and they are beginning to see the value of “earn-and-learn” models that include hands-on training. One board notes that “at multiple meetings with area manufacturers, the need for apprenticeships was a top-of-mind discussion and there is clear interest and support. Many who have not engaged in apprenticeships in years are now coming to the table.”

CHALLENGES

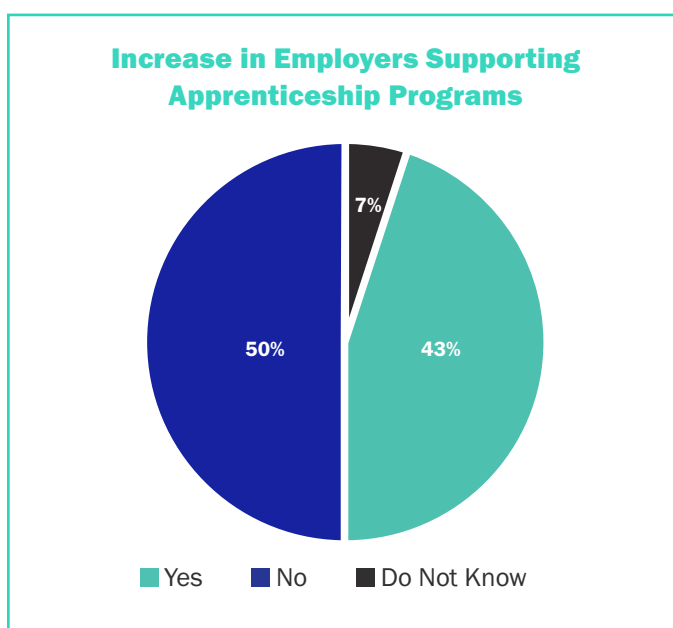
Despite these efforts and some uptick in employer interest, employer involvement in apprenticeship has not proven to be easy. Less than half (43 percent) of board respondents report an increase in the number of employers seeking support for establishing apprenticeship programs, while a full 50 percent have not seen an increase in employer support.

One board attributes their challenges to the messaging. “As with most programs we [the public workforce system] sponsor or support, our weakness is in being able to communicate to the industry in a language they understand. Apprenticeship is on-the-job training [that] requires some classroom training, plain and simple. For some reason, most think it is very complicated, subsidized, and difficult to access. Again, a focus on dispelling the myths associated with apprenticeship will be key in encouraging employers to participate.”

Boards also identify a wide range of specific barriers that discourage even “bullish” employers from undertaking apprenticeship programs:

- Lack of in-house apprenticeship knowledge among employers.
- Concern about paperwork and government intrusion. One board describes employers as put off by “the heavy bureaucratic requirements [of apprenticeship] as compared to simply creating training programs.”

- Perception that apprenticeships are a union model. This can also lead to tension between union and non-union employers.
- Existing labor contracts can seem daunting, with apprenticeships adding another level of complexity.
- Fear that the apprentice will leave, taking the benefits of a company’s significant private investment to another employer. Employers “argue that they are taking all the risks with no guarantee of successful completion or commitment from the employee.”



Several boards highlight challenges related to the long-term nature of apprenticeships that contrast the “quick fix” that employers hope for. Employers that move and change quickly may not think they have time to implement long-term solutions. An apprenticeship program takes time to set up and time to train. As an in-depth training approach, apprenticeships also require substantial employer investment. One board believes that “employers [were unwilling] to invest in the long-term strategy with compensation increases.” While one board finds that “the cost of the training component can be prohibitive for some employers,” others focus on scheduling needs. One board writes that “employers are challenged when asked to accommodate workers’ attendance for related training.” Another relates the challenges to “shift and overtime requirements for production in manufacturing environments.” Ultimately, many respondents believe that employers are not convinced that the value of apprenticeship is worth the time and money it would cost them.

Mirroring the value of employer champions in spreading apprenticeship, some boards are challenged by a lack of relevant apprenticeship programs to feature to employers in their region. Some boards say they have no apprenticeships in their areas. While one board faces a “lack of demand for workers in traditional apprenticeship programs,” many boards are challenged by employers’ perceptions that apprenticeship is only for “the construction trades [or other traditional apprenticeship industries].” They find it difficult to convince employers that apprenticeships in other industries and occupations are possible. According to one board, “small- to medium-size employers outside of the construction trades are reluctant to establish formal apprenticeships. They are reluctant to move forward unless they see others do so, and we currently have very few models in the area.”

Boards that are not yet involved in apprenticeship express the same challenges with employer interest and engagement as other boards, but often to an even greater degree. Their barriers begin with the initial connection to employers. One board has trouble finding the “time to collaborate with business and partners” and to “[develop] a local process.” Another has difficulty just getting “into their place of business to promote the opportunity.” These boards are also likely to describe these barriers as inherent to apprenticeship rather than as employer perceptions that can be fixed. For example, “the application package for a business is huge and offers no real incentives.” Similarly, another says that “our employers seem very reluctant about apprenticeships; they want funding to cover downtime on equipment used for the training and funds to pay their supervisors for doing the training. Apprenticeships that I am aware of do not offer employers any incentive other than a future workforce.” Finally, one of these boards suggests that “sometimes employers like to organize these things without government help.” Given these perspectives, it is not surprising that the boards that do not know whether they want to pursue apprenticeship describe lack of employer interest as one of their reasons.

Again, a focus on dispelling the myths associated with apprenticeship will be key in encouraging employers to participate.

SOLUTIONS

Workforce boards are looking for a range of support for their efforts to promote apprenticeship among employers. While one respondent hopes for the systemic change of requiring businesses “to consider apprenticeship programs when applying for government contracts,” many requests center on how to best market apprenticeships to an employer audience. One board faces the challenge “to convince all parties that apprenticeship is a new OLD WAY of training. We now market it as work-based training. Go figure.” Similarly, another board even requests replacing “apprenticeship” with a name that employers do not associate with unions.

Respondents are looking for apprenticeship outreach and promotion by stakeholders beyond workforce boards. One requests “more media coverage, with emphasis on forming ‘new’ apprenticeship programs,” another hopes that the state will “do a better job promoting apprenticeships,” and yet another suggests a “national awareness campaign.” Boards see value in having employers play a key role in an outreach strategy. One respondent wants “testimonials from employers of all sizes to share when conducting...outreach.” Another says that “we also need businesses who are already doing apprenticeship (especially in non-construction fields) to be champions and credible messengers for other businesses.”

Workforce boards also want “more information to share with employers.” Respondents have asked for tools and materials to help with their marketing. Ideas for materials include information brochures about apprenticeship; white papers and data on the benefits and return on investment of apprenticeships for employers; and case studies and examples of the benefits provided to employers by apprenticeship programs.

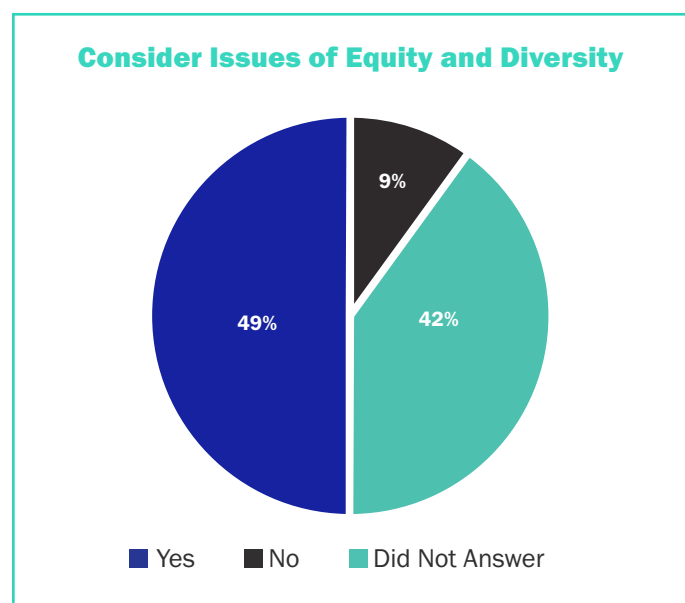
Workforce boards have also requested a tool that gets beyond marketing to help employers implement apprenticeships. A simple, easy-to-read guide would walk employers through the apprenticeship process. Further, respondents seek a toolkit for employers to create their own apprenticeships that incorporates available resources such as connections to related instruction, and public benefits such as tax breaks. It is not clear based on the survey responses whether boards are looking for resources beyond publications such as the U.S. Department of Labor’s [A Quick-Start Toolkit](#), or if greater dissemination of existing tools would meet this need.

Apprentice Recruitment

Because new programs cannot succeed without a ready supply of skilled apprentices, recruiting apprenticeship candidates will be critical to expanding the apprenticeship system. Workforce boards are emerging as natural partners in this role, given their basic role in preparing individuals for and referring them to high-demand workforce opportunities. Consistent with workforce boards listing recruitment as their second most frequent role in apprenticeship programs, many survey responses highlight recruitment activities and challenges, as well as request additional support in this area.

Parallel to employer outreach efforts, many boards partner with, or benefit from, local outreach to potential apprentices. Outreach to apprentices is being conducted by local, state, and federal staff, as well as partners in vocational rehabilitation, health and welfare, and youth organizations. Workforce boards note the use of apprenticeship models by their partners to prepare high school students for careers and bring dislocated workers back into the workforce. These outreach efforts can also support the diversification of apprenticeship programs: Almost half of board respondents consider issues of equity and diversity when making referrals or placements with apprenticeship programs. Only 9 percent do not consider equity and diversity, with 42 percent not responding.

Boards also mention the value of publicity through news media. One board notes that “locally, we have a lot of construction projects taking place,” and there has been



recruitment, outreach, and publicity “about the numerous opportunities available to jobseekers.” In some cases, these referrals reflect the specific apprenticeship partnerships that are in place. One workforce board is “currently supporting and partnering with [its] building trades on an apprenticeship readiness program, [and it is] getting inquiries about that program.” In some cases, referrals are actually coming from employers themselves. Most of the increase in individuals seeking apprenticeship at one board is “due to companies and training providers referring jobseekers to the American Job Centers.” Another similarly finds that “several employers and apprenticeship programs [are directing] applicants to the workforce centers.”

When jobseekers are interested in apprenticeship, workforce boards are increasingly prepared to respond. One board has staff that is more informed to discuss the opportunities,” and another now offers “a list of apprenticeship programs available at the workforce center.” Some workforce boards find that the combination of publicity, targeted outreach, and workforce board follow-up is beginning to translate into jobseekers who are more aware of the benefits of apprenticeship in terms of pay and program structure.

CHALLENGES

Despite their outreach efforts, only 18 percent of board respondents have experienced an increase in the number of jobseekers inquiring about apprenticeship opportunities in their American Job Centers. Many boards are still having trouble getting the message out about what apprenticeship is and why it is beneficial to all parties. “There is no clear pathway for us as intermediaries to make the connection. Messaging for boards and training providers needs to be clear so effective collaboration can take place.” Boards say that they also need a better campaign, especially in the K-12 system, as well as a marketing and outreach strategy. As one board notes, “the concept is still an unknown in our region. We are educating ourselves and our workforce partners on the apprenticeship model.” Until partners understand the benefits, they cannot help attract new apprentices into the system.

Many boards face a challenge in identifying individuals who are willing to invest the time in training. Many individuals want immediate employment, and the starting wage in apprenticeship may be lower than these jobseekers were willing to take. As one workforce board describes, “from the jobseeker perspective, it is a great commitment and we are seeing individuals who do not have the time or motivation

to both work and attend school at the same time.” One board notes that this is particularly challenging for longer apprenticeships, as they struggle to recruit into a five-year program.

Boards that are not currently involved have a less positive view of the potential benefit of apprenticeship to individuals. One notes that jobseekers believe “the apprenticeship program is antiquated and takes too long,” while another prioritizes options that it believes are better for its clients. “Students can accomplish more in less time with an early college high school and community college. Forcing students to go through thousands of hours through the apprenticeship program should be changed.”

Three boards note that these recruitment challenges are compounded for boards when addressing the issue of equity. One notes the “historical exclusion of people of color,” and another identifies the “biggest challenge we see within our grants and partnerships [is] serving women, people of color, individuals with barriers, and young adults.” One board has difficulty attracting candidates from these communities because “diverse jobseekers believe the system is rigged against them and are hesitant to engage.”

The final challenge in recruitment for survey respondents is matching apprenticeship supply and demand, a problem faced by both boards engaged in apprenticeship and those not currently involved. While some boards do not have enough apprenticeship opportunities for individuals, others do not have enough individuals to fill existing slots. One board works with “employers [that] can only handle one or

two apprentices at a time, so we have more interest than an employer can take on.” In contrast, another board indicates that he is challenged “finding the right candidates to refer,” and yet another finds that “the skills gap of [the] current workforce is too great for the minimum requirements of most apprenticeship programs.” Beyond having the right number of available candidates, one board captures the “art” of apprenticeship, saying, “It has to be the right match between the jobseeker and the employer. It has to be the right fit.” In other cases, employers are not interested in any new employees, instead filling their positions with incumbent workers.

SOLUTIONS

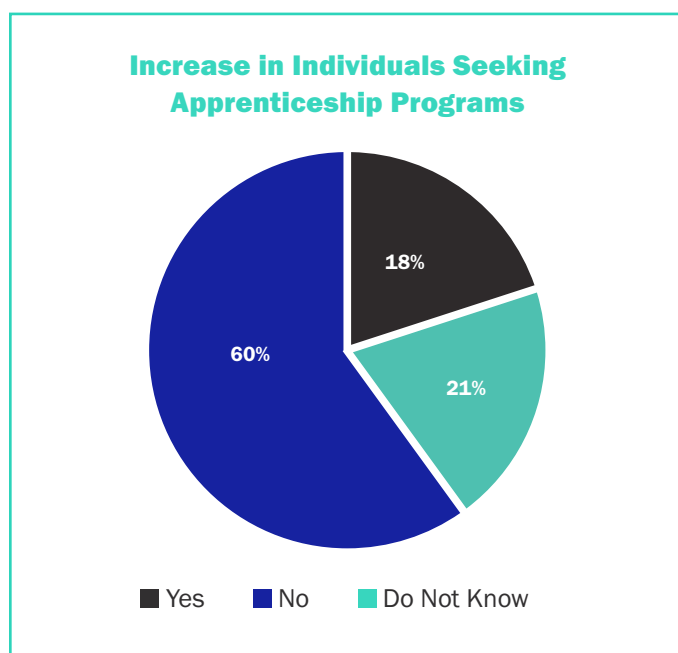
Workforce boards recognize that they could use help in attracting new candidates to apprenticeship. In particular, one board wants guidance on working with “high school senior students to bring them out of school ready for [apprenticeship].” The board is particularly concerned about this topic and does not want “to risk dealing with in-school more, as [WIOA requires] moving away from in-school.”

Respondents are requesting tools to assist with jobseeker outreach much like what they seek for employer outreach. Materials that would be helpful to workforce boards include information brochures about apprenticeship to give jobseekers, or a simple guide for the jobseeker on the process and benefits of apprenticeship. Workforce boards are also asking for white papers and data on the benefits of apprenticeships for employees.

Administration and Program Implementation

While survey respondents are increasing their capacity and training staff to implement apprenticeship, some of these boards still feel that they lack sufficient knowledge about how apprenticeships work. Because of this, they feel ill-equipped to promote and support the apprenticeship model. Some boards have trouble navigating the apprenticeship process. One board simply states that, “process-wise, we don’t have our arms around this to effectively put anything into place.” Other boards are more specific about their challenges. One board has difficulty identifying openings, and another is “unfamiliar with specific requirements and uncertain about the allowability of costs to partially reimburse employers.”

Respondents are also challenged by some of the logistics associated with building an apprenticeship program. In



some cases, the need is holistic. One board notes that “we don’t have any real expertise in organizing a multiyear work-and-learn model—while we like the concept, we’ve never put one together, so what do we have to offer them?” Another board describes that “there are no apprenticeship programs in this part of the state, so we need additional help in developing these programs for employers.” In other cases, the boards face a range of implementation challenges along the way, with everything from identifying curricula and convincing qualified training institutions to apply to be on the eligible training provider list, to working with the unions, the formal registration process, and red tape.

SOLUTIONS

Boards want two types of solutions to support their process challenges. First, they look to state and federal policy changes to simplify the apprenticeship system and systems alignment with WIOA. Second, they seek technical assistance to more smoothly navigate the existing process.

Respondents have highly targeted policy requests, such as one board’s desire for changes to “ITA payment policies to ease the burden of accepting an application from the board” and easier Eligible Training Provider List entry. A number of requests are state focused. One board wants “standard language statewide,” and another would like the “state apprenticeship agency to . . . offer ways to combine the state apprenticeship effort with . . . local work-based learning opportunities.” In terms of apprenticeship registration, boards would like to be able to register through an easier process with a “simple template” and an expedited approval process. In addition, one board hopes for more flexible and non-Registered Apprenticeship options. Similarly, one board wants “clear credential exit points within the five-year apprenticeship programs—after 24 months.”

Workforce boards also want information to make it easier to administer programs. Workforce boards look to the U.S. Department of Labor as having the potential to be a centralized location of information. “[It] seems standards are out there, but it takes so much time to find [them].” There is a request for curriculum designed by the U.S. Department of Labor, and for online training modules that apprentices could use, so that “all the employer had to do was provide the on-the-job training, . . . leaving the rest to online training.”

Workforce boards are also looking for guides and other written materials. One respondent summarizes the need of many boards: “I don’t know how to start from scratch. I need a resource to walk me through ‘how to.’” Respondents

also request technical support on specific topics, such as eligibility requirements for enrolling in the program for both employers and jobseekers. Another board indicates a need for WIOA Title I questions and answers on financial and programmatic implementation guidelines for workforce boards. More broadly, one respondent is looking for answers about “who needs to be at the table and what . . . the requirements to qualify as an apprenticeship [are].” One board would like to see all of this come together as “a simple guide for the American Job Center staff.”

Funding

“Money drives programming. Period. National grants to aid apprenticeship expansion have driven us forward, otherwise, without funding, it will not move much.” This board’s observation about the importance of funding is especially true of apprenticeships, because they are not cheap. They require resources for on-the-job learning and related instruction over a period of a year or more. Many apprenticeship stakeholders are eager to partner with workforce boards in part because they see the boards as a funding strategy. In fact, a number of boards have dedicated resources to apprenticeship. These respondents are either providing funding for apprenticeship activities or have successfully identified external funds to expand their apprenticeship work. As one board describes, “through industry partnerships and consortia, we have positioned ourselves to deliver specific state and other funds directly toward launching new apprenticeships.” While only a few boards include funding among their challenges, numerous boards note how specific new funding would support the expansion of workforce board involvement in apprenticeship.

Boards are developing creative ways to integrate apprenticeship into existing activities. Boards have dedicated WIOA funds to apprenticeship by:

- Supporting co-enrollment with WIOA
- Using WIOA funds to support students that are in technical training at a community college
- Providing on-the-job training funds, while other funds are used for the classroom training provided by community colleges
- Developing a special apprenticeship supportive services policy that provides more funding than its “regular customer” supportive services
- Setting aside budget funds to support apprenticeships

While boards are beginning to access WIOA for these activities, one board cautions that this is not a new source of funding: “WIOA doesn’t get paid to do apprenticeship. We can add apprenticeship after an [on-the-job training] but it does require staff via business services. Much has been made about integration but very little real discussion about the mechanics. We could use some discussion on mechanics versus just talking about how great it is.”

In other cases, workforce boards leverage existing public funds. One board describes North Carolina’s “NCWorks Apprenticeship, a comprehensive program that helps workers learn new specialized skills needed in today’s workforce through its apprenticeship programs.” In Michigan, one board looks to the state’s “Skilled Trades Training Program, which, among other funding opportunities for business, offers up to \$3,000 toward classroom and work-based learning per new apprenticeships.”

Other boards pursue other funds to implement apprenticeship programs. Grants, public and private, are one source of funding. One board “secured a \$140,000 equipment grant for the [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers’] local training facility to ensure that they have state-of-the-art instructional technology.” Another board suggests that a variety of “special grants targeting apprenticeships in sectors” are attracting new companies to the model. The downside, noted by another respondent, is that employer interest in apprenticeship could significantly decline with the end of the National Emergency Grant funding.

Boards variously describe employers as concerned about funding and a possible source of funds for their apprentices. One board that is not currently involved in apprenticeship points out that different industries are likely to have different levels of business investment. “Current apprenticeship programs in the trades are funded through and managed by the unions. For other industries, there is no similar entity and there are very few, if any, incentives for businesses or customers to pursue this.” This group of uninvolved boards are more likely overall to cite resources as a challenge to implementing apprenticeship activities.

SOLUTIONS

Funding is more critical as a strategy for expanding apprenticeship and workforce board roles than in addressing immediate challenges. One board describes that “our resources are currently adequate for this engagement; as our relationships grow with our apprenticeship partners, we may require additional resources.” Yet no survey of

desired resources would be complete without requests for funding. Respondents tie their resource requests to specific goals that are aligned with expansion activities. Boards seek funding to:

- Conduct outreach, information sharing, and business recruitment
- Offset employer and other training costs
- Incent employer engagement with wage subsidies
- Match curricula to employer demands
- Provide apprenticeship-readiness training and remediation to jobseekers prior to entering apprenticeship programs

One board’s request highlights how the typical funding constraints of workforce boards narrow their ability to systematically expand partnerships to key apprenticeship stakeholders. Rather than new funds, they would prioritize the “availability to use funds for a wider audience. For example, we have discussed developing a partnership with local schools to have graduates move straight into a summer pre-apprenticeship program, but we are limited with funds in this capacity. This also can’t be a small grant here or there. This needs to be a long-term, dedicated effort, which would allow for momentum to be built and sustainability to take hold.”

Tied closely with the request for program funds is a request for resources to hire additional business services staff who could be dedicated to apprenticeship. Boards envision new staff in roles to recruit businesses and provide administrative support that allows “[removing] the state official from being directly ‘hands on’ at the business.” Finally, boards are interested in additional staff to develop apprenticeship programs and standards.

“Money drives programming. Period. National grants to aid apprenticeship expansion have driven us forward, otherwise, without funding, it will not move much.”

Board-specific Strategies

While most key activities, challenges, and solutions are common across respondents, two types of boards stand out as having unique issues that need attention to support their expansion into apprenticeship: workforce boards in rural areas and workforce boards that are not yet engaged in apprenticeship.

RURAL BOARDS

A number of rural boards indicate that they have apprenticeships in their plan, but have limited opportunities to pursue them. Rural areas almost always note that apprenticeship is not a viable option for them, yet one rural area noted its appropriateness for the area, pointing out that jobs in rural areas only come in ones or twos, and that full classroom training resulted in many trainees going without positions.

Rural boards face particular challenges with employer engagement. One board offers “apprenticeships as a training option, but [has] not had any business interested in providing an apprenticeship. [It is] very rural and [has] limited business resources.” Small, rural employers may not even know where to start, and may lack the resources needed to implement apprenticeship. One board not engaged with apprenticeship notes that, “in more rural areas with less of an employer concentration in any one sector,” individual employers do not have enough of a demand to fill a single cohort for instruction at a college. Another board echoes this concern and suggests that, regardless of location, “for smaller employers, more efforts have to be made to [align] apprenticeship programs . . . to serve several employers.”

Rural boards have several requests that focus on their circumstances. Boards seek two types of information: first, hands-on examples of rural apprenticeships; second, guidance on how to develop apprenticeship programs where there are few participants. Beyond written resources, one board is hoping for a policy adjustment that recognizes that boards in rural communities “have to be evaluated differently, especially on a cost-per” basis.

BOARDS NOT INVOLVED IN APPRENTICESHIP

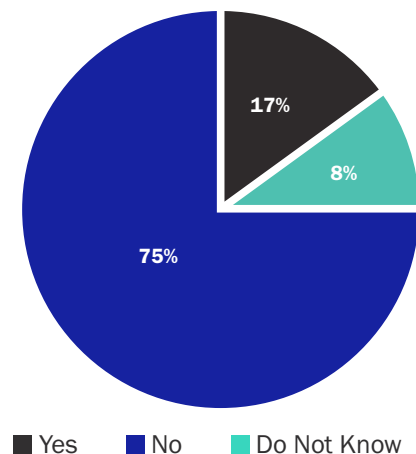
Workforce boards that are not engaged in apprenticeship almost always want to engage (92 percent), but only 17 percent have past experience with apprenticeship programs. In many ways, these boards that are not currently engaged in apprenticeship resemble other workforce boards. Most

are interested in the apprenticeship model, and cite similar implementation and employer engagement challenges as boards with apprenticeship activities. Most also see it as a strong training model, although they voice more skepticism than other boards about the value of apprenticeship and registration. Any effort to introduce apprenticeship activities among these boards should recognize and prioritize overcoming the major hesitations of the board.

Boards without apprenticeship activity are ripe for expanding their role in apprenticeship. Seven of these respondents see apprenticeship as a model worth pursuing because of its history of success. Thirteen boards describe it as a good training model, specifically in its focus on skill building, work-based learning, earning while learning, and career pathways. Twelve highlight its benefits to employers in ensuring that they are able to obtain workers with the skills they need. Fifteen focus on the benefits to jobseekers in setting them on a path for a good job with good wages. Two boards even note the value of apprenticeship to the boards themselves. One expects that apprenticeship can help them meet placement goals, while the other describes that it can help them serve “as [an] intermediary in terms of convening partners and developing programs serving multiple employers and/or training vendors,” adding that it also helps “the One-Stop recruitment component.”

But these boards are divided. While some see the value, others are hesitant to engage in apprenticeship. Concerns cited throughout this brief are greater challenges with employer engagement, questions about the relative value to apprentices, and more difficulty securing adequate

**Respondents Without Current Apprenticeships:
Had Past Apprenticeship Programs**



resources for apprenticeship. In addition, boards' interest in apprenticeship is sometimes grudging. One board describes apprenticeship as a "requirement," while two indicate that it is something that their workforce board members want them to pursue.

Several of these boards are looking toward implementing variations in the apprenticeship model. One board says that they are "actually now looking at ways we can create apprenticeships using the model of [on-the-job training]

and classroom training being done concurrently without having to necessarily get them registered. It allows us to be much more flexible and meet the needs of employers, particularly for occupations that have not traditionally used apprenticeships." Another is more interested in pursuing an "apprenticeship model for other [non-union] industries... [which is] an education-driven model, not a business-driven model." A related concern of one respondent is that they believe that, because the state is "already...in the trenches doing the same thing," it is best to avoid duplication.

Recommendations

The apprenticeship experiences and challenges of boards throughout this brief provide insight into the ways in which workforce boards can be empowered to strengthen and grow the apprenticeship system. The challenges faced by boards, and particularly their perceptions about the hesitations among employers, point to a need for better information, assistance, and successful examples and best practices from leading boards. The boards are, in fact, asking for more such examples among their peers. Survey respondents want materials that feature apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship in action, as well as partnership models. Apprenticeship stakeholders should focus partnership materials on the topics that best position boards to expand apprenticeship: best practices for employer outreach and real-life examples of how "nontraditional" apprenticeships that have been created and sustained.

Written materials are important but are not enough to translate into action. Boards want more hands-on assistance as well. One is looking for a "mentorship," while many respondents seek training, workshops, webinars, and "employer roundtables." We recommend that the U.S. Department of Labor, state apprenticeship agencies, and other stakeholders invested in the expansion of the apprenticeship system make the following investments to better engage workforce boards:

- Provide a centralized hub that is trusted by workforce boards to disseminate existing publications and tools, with a focus on the topics requested by workforce boards and included throughout this brief

- Develop step-by-step resources targeted exclusively to workforce boards, so that available materials better integrate the perspective and needs of workforce boards
- Identify and create case studies of workforce boards that have developed successful apprenticeship programs for partnerships
- Convene regional in-person apprenticeship accelerator events that address both national and state-specific apprenticeship challenges and opportunities
- Establish an ongoing peer learning group for workforce boards interested in expanding apprenticeship that includes customized and shared technical assistance support
- Offer ongoing convenings and webinars to teach the mechanics of developing apprenticeship programs to local boards
- Support the implementation of outreach and recruitment strategies to attract high-quality pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship candidates through the American Job Centers
- Pilot apprenticeship programs with workforce boards as intermediaries or sponsors, focusing on strategies with high potential for impact, such as in rural areas or in nontraditional occupations

With this hands-on support, workforce boards can establish their capacity to serve as anchors for a growing apprenticeship system that supports both an evolving economy and workers seeking to advance their careers.

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About Equity Partners in Apprenticeship

Under a contract awarded by the U.S. Department of Labor, JFF is serving as an equity partner in Apprenticeship and working to connect women, people of color, and opportunity youth to Apprenticeship programs. JFF has convened a national partnership that includes the National Association of Workforce Boards (NAWB), CVS Health, Hilton, The Hartford, Community College Workforce Consortium, Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund, Upwardly Global, and FASTPORT, as well as regional partners in Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles / Long Beach, and Philadelphia. These employers, community colleges, workforce boards, and community-based organizations, with technical assistance from JFF, seek to advance equity in apprenticeships by creating stronger referral systems into programs, creating new pre-apprenticeships or aligning existing job training programs to apprenticeship models, and enhancing services that increase the retention and success of apprentices.



JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

JFF is a national nonprofit that builds educational and economic opportunity for underserved populations in the United States. JFF develops innovative programs and public policies that increase college readiness and career success, and build a more highly skilled, competitive workforce. With over 30 years of experience, JFF is a recognized national leader in bridging education and work to increase economic mobility and strengthen our economy.



National Association of Workforce Boards

NAWB is the national voice for workforce development boards, the regional and local business-led organizations that convene and collaborate to reduce unemployment and boost economic development by preparing jobseekers and connecting employers with a highly skilled workforce. The association represents approximately 600 business-led workforce development boards and 12,000 business and public-sector volunteers who sit on those boards and plan state and local workforce development initiatives, and job-training programs in their communities.



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