

REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP & THE PUBLIC SECTOR

This document summarizes a call for state apprenticeship expansion grantees (State Apprenticeship Expansion [SAE], Apprenticeship State Expansion [ASE], and SAE 2020 grantees) held May 27, 2021. The call featured speakers from Urban Institute, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, and the Maryland Department of Labor. These speakers discussed promising practices for expanding Registered Apprenticeship (RA) in the public sector.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

- The nonprofit Urban Institute is a leading research organization dedicated to developing evidence-based insights that improve people's lives and strengthen communities. For more information, contact John Marotta at JMarotta@urban.org.
- The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' ApprenticeOhio program assists employers in developing apprenticeship programs, approves applications for sponsorship, and provides oversight and technical support to existing programs to ensure quality and safety. For more information, contact Rebecca DeMatteis at Rebecca.DeMatteis@jfs.ohio.gov and Julie Mettler at julie.mettler@jfs.ohio.gov.
- The Maryland Department of Labor's Apprenticeship & Training Program is responsible for all RA Programs (RAPs) including program quality assurance and regulatory adherence to federal and state guidelines. For more information, contact Chris MacLarion at christopher.maclarion@maryland.gov.

WHY APPRENTICESHIP WORKS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Apprenticeship is an underutilized tool for workforce development in the public sector and presents an enormous opportunity for expansion. The government sector employed nearly [23 million workers](#) as of April 2019. Local governments account for about two-thirds of this total. There are about [20,000 public sector apprenticeships](#) across the United States, including many in public safety, emergency services, administration, education, healthcare, information technology (IT), repair, maintenance, and transportation.

In studying [Kentucky's public sector apprenticeships](#), the Urban Institute found numerous benefits for the government employers. These benefits include custom training for employees to meet specific skill needs, reduced recruitment and training costs, increased productivity among newly trained workers, enhanced employee loyalty and high employee retention, and structured transference of knowledge from experienced workers to the next generation. Similarly, reported benefits for apprentices include receiving training and education at a reduced cost or no cost, getting paid to learn, earning more pay as new skills are mastered, obtaining nationally recognized and portable industry credentials, gaining hands-on experience, and potentially receiving college credit toward an associate's or bachelor's degree.

With [52 percent](#) of public sector workers age 45 to 64 and approaching retirement, there is enormous opportunity to use apprenticeship as a workforce recruitment strategy. As with many industries, integrating apprenticeship into the public sector can increase the diversity of the workforce and provides states the opportunity to lead apprenticeship expansion efforts by example.

A LOOK AT REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR TODAY

ApprenticeOhio partnered with the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to register a program for IT occupations. After more than a year of sometimes challenging program development, DAS found success with the program and came to recognize the value of apprenticeship for public sector occupations generally. ApprenticeOhio then supported DAS in becoming a group RAP sponsor for multiple state government entities. For example, ApprenticeOhio and DAS have helped the Ohio Department of Commerce create a program for IT occupations and the Ohio Department of Transportation create programs for maintenance and repair occupations.

Maryland has registered eight public sector programs in the last four and a half years. These new programs include programs with entities like the Harper County government for skilled trade occupations, in partnership with the unions' Joint Apprenticeship Committees. The Baltimore County Police, St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources have created programs for emergency services and police officers. These agencies see apprenticeship as a way to increase diversity, rebrand the occupations, and create more appeal to veterans. Maryland also successfully tested a pilot project for youth apprenticeship that it has taken scale across the State. Employer partners include county governments, a wastewater treatment center, local school systems, and a county museum, all with youth apprentices.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Turn challenges into positives. Government entities can be slow to make decisions and restricted by collective bargaining agreements. That same structure can sustain a program for long-term success and provide apprentices jobs that pay well. Where agency budgets are often rigid, funding from apprenticeship grants can provide valuable budget flexibility and support for technical instruction.

Build from existing resources. Many public sector entities already have established training programs, particularly for public safety and emergency services. These entities may need guidance from apprenticeship agencies to recognize how RAPs can enhance their recruitment and training.

Youth apprenticeship works for public sector recruitment. Government entities may be hesitant to create youth-focused pre-apprenticeships and RAPs, but they have proven successful models for many occupations. RA provides a structured approach to engage secondary and post-secondary schools, create articulated degree and career pathways, and recruit and train locally.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Apprenticeship.gov's [Explore Apprenticeship page](#) links to a toolkit, competency models, apprenticeship standards in high-demand occupations, and more.
- The [Youth Apprenticeship](#) page on Workforce GPS offers program examples, outreach materials, and other resources to help expand apprenticeship for youth.