

Outreach and Business Engagement



① *State Leadership and Policy*



② **Outreach and Business Engagement**



③ *State Capacity to Develop, Launch, and Manage Programs*



④ *Pipeline of Apprentices and Increased Diversity*



⑤ *Alignment with Career Pathways and Post-secondary Education*

Since fall 2016, states have been using State Apprenticeship Expansion grants from the U.S. Department of Labor to build capacity for Registered Apprenticeship, expand apprenticeships into new industry sectors, and increase participation by diverse populations. This series captures promising practices for state-driven efforts to grow Registered Apprenticeship, with five briefs focused on each of the five key elements of effective apprenticeship expansion. This brief explores Element 2 - Outreach and Business Engagement.

Visit the Apprenticeship State Expansion Grants Community, ase.workforcegps.org, for the full series of promising practice briefs and other resources on the five elements of apprenticeship expansion.

EXPANDING APPRENTICESHIP THROUGH OUTREACH AND BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

As an employer-driven model, successful and sustained Registered Apprenticeship expansion demands effective business engagement

strategies. States are increasing awareness-building activities and putting in place policies and practices that increase business demand for apprenticeship. The following examples illustrate the different outreach and business engagement strategies that states are pursuing to grow apprenticeship. *Italicized states are profiled in greater detail later in this document.*

- ➔ States are **RESPONDING TO BUSINESS CONCERNS AND NEED FOR INFORMATION ABOUT APPRENTICESHIP COSTS**. Some states, such as *South Dakota*, *Illinois*, and *New Jersey*, are offsetting apprenticeship costs by providing small grants or reimbursements to employers to cover part of the costs of starting up apprenticeship programs. *Oregon* launched a return-on-investment tool designed to help businesses explore the costs and benefits of apprenticeships, while *New Hampshire* is developing a series of case studies focused on the return on investment of apprenticeship.
- ➔ States are **RAMPING UP BUSINESS AWARENESS OF APPRENTICESHIP**. States such as *Iowa*, *South Dakota*, and *New Hampshire* have launched new business-friendly websites to increase understanding of the apprenticeship model, address misperceptions, and promote apprenticeship as a talent development solution. Some states, such as *Mississippi* and *Colorado*, are using social media to share information and engage employers.
- ➔ To engage employers more effectively, some states are **CREATING COORDINATED AND SKILLED BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT TEAMS**. For example, *Idaho* created and trained local teams consisting of workforce and education business services professionals to ensure coordinated and effective outreach to employers.
- ➔ Many states are **USING BUSINESS CHAMPIONS TO PROMOTE APPRENTICESHIP** through strategies ranging from video testimonials to outreach events, and some states have created structured programs for apprenticeship champions. For example, the *Maryland Apprenticeship Ambassador Program* uses business and other leaders to advance and support outreach activities and events, raise awareness of apprenticeship, and drive stakeholders to action.
- ➔ Some states are **LEVERAGING SECTOR STRATEGIES TO GROW APPRENTICESHIP** in nontraditional apprenticeship industries. States such as *Montana* and *Michigan* are partnering with associations and other industry organizations, and leveraging efforts that engage employers in an industry to collaborate with workforce and education systems, to create multi-employer solutions that accelerate apprenticeship expansion.

This brief describes how states are using State Apprenticeship Expansion grants, and leveraging key partnerships and other state resources and efforts, to find new and effective ways to conduct outreach and engage businesses in apprenticeship.

SOUTH DAKOTA: PROVIDING INCENTIVE FUNDING TO EMPLOYERS

In 2018, the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) Start Today SD Apprenticeship Program was looking to increase the results from its investment in Registered Apprenticeship. By awarding incentive funding to employers, the State aimed to quickly increase the number of employers, programs, and apprentices; expand apprenticeship to more occupations; and increase apprenticeship opportunities for underrepresented populations. Through the Start Today SD Incentive program, two cohorts of 36 total recipients have become models and advocates for apprenticeship, helping to propel expansion across South Dakota.

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

Employers and other potential sponsors were invited to participate in a competitive application process to obtain funding to help offset the initial startup costs of developing a new Registered Apprenticeship Program. DLR used contracts, rather than grant agreements, because the agency had found from previous experience that this approach was more accessible to businesses, resulted in better outcomes, and was less time-intensive for the State to administer. To generate interest in apprenticeship and awareness of the opportunity for incentive funds, DLR undertook a significant outreach campaign through social media, traditional media, webinars, meetings, and conferences.

Applicants submitted proposals that addressed the following key elements and formed the Statement of Work:

- ➔ A program plan outlining the components of the program, such as the occupation, the business providing the on-the-job learning, and an outline of the related instruction
- ➔ A detailed description of how the funds would be utilized
- ➔ A timeline on when the program would be registered with the U.S. Department of Labor
- ➔ The number of apprentices to be hired
- ➔ A description of how the program would partner with a local American Job Center
- ➔ A commitment to work closely with the state Apprenticeship Program Specialist on creating, monitoring, and reporting on the program
- ➔ A sustainability plan

“We want Registered Apprenticeship to be something businesses really take pride in.”



Rebecca Long

*Labor Program Specialist, South Dakota
Department of Labor and Regulation*

Awards were limited to a maximum of \$30,000 for the first cohort and \$20,000 for the second cohort. Awardees received funds in two stages—one-third of the award after submitting program standards and the final two-thirds 90 days after the first apprentice entered the program. Employers could use the funds for training costs, including development of curricula, online and technology-based learning, and competency-based training; supportive services and stipends for apprentices; staff costs for developing and operating the program; and outreach activities. To diversify occupations, the State awarded an additional \$2,000 to employers in high-demand industries such as healthcare, hospitality, and agriculture. Employers could also receive a \$2,000 bonus if their application incorporated underrepresented populations into their programs.

Employers also received technical assistance from DLR to establish their programs and partner with American Job Centers, technical colleges, and training providers. This assistance started with an in-person orientation and was followed by one-on-one meetings, calls, and webinars. Employers also worked together as a cohort to support each other in launching new apprenticeships. Deadlines from the State helped to keep them motivated to achieve program registration. Employers provide quarterly reports to DLR, that include progress updates, apprentice demographics, and completion rates, and they are also subject to annual compliance monitoring.

Interested in Learning More?

- ➔ Visit South Dakota's apprenticeship website at <https://www.starttoday.sd.com/>
- ➔ Contact Rebecca Long, Labor Program Specialist, South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation at Rebecca.Long@state.sd.us

IMPACT AND RESULTS

As of May 2020, all 17 employers from the first cohort were still operating their Registered Apprenticeship Programs. The first cohort included three employers signing on to national programs, including the American Hotel & Lodging Association's program for lodging managers and Compass Military Services' program for paramedics. The employers and apprentices alike take great pride in their programs and have become advocates for apprenticeship among their peers. A few examples illustrate the impact that the Start Today SD Incentive program is having for businesses and workers, particularly in rural areas of the State:

- ➔ Huron, SD is a small town (population 13,000) with a notable foreign-born community. The Huron Regional Medical Center is sponsoring a program for licensed practical nurses and has proactively recruited from the town's population of refugees from Myanmar.
- ➔ Employers in the second cohort are partnering with tribal organizations to promote recruitment of Native Americans to their programs.
- ➔ For LemmonMade, Inc., a butcher shop in remote Lemmon, SD, where the closest post-secondary training provider is located several hours away, the incentive funds were used to find an online training program for the apprenticeship.

DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

- ✓ **ALLOW FOR PROGRAM GROWTH OVER TIME.** Recognize that apprenticeship is a long-term workforce strategy—programs that start small can grow to include more apprentices and more occupations over time.
- ✓ **STAY FOCUSED ON BUSINESS NEEDS.** Keep the emphasis on the relationships with employers, and keep it simple. Learn to minimize government language and instead speak to employers about apprenticeship in terms of the return on investment to their business.
- ✓ **ALLOW EMPLOYERS TO PROMOTE THEIR SUCCESSES.** Employers with Registered Apprenticeship Programs are the best advocates for the apprenticeship model with their peers. Look for opportunities to encourage peer-to-peer learning among program sponsors and for apprenticeship employers to share their experiences.

New Business-Friendly Websites Aim to Modernize Apprenticeship Perceptions

As part of their outreach efforts, many states have rolled out new websites designed to increase awareness, address misconceptions, and promote modern Registered Apprenticeship to businesses. For example, Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) launched a new, customer-friendly [Earn and Learn](#) website in 2018 to encourage businesses, as well as job seekers, to explore apprenticeship opportunities. The site helps business leaders understand how apprenticeship works and the value it brings to businesses and provides resources to help them get started. Professionally produced employer video testimonies are front and center and work together to drive home the message: *Apprenticeship is flexible, customizable, and simple; enables you to expand your talent pool and grow your business; and brings increased loyalty and retention. And we're here to help make it work for you.*

Since the launch, IWD worked with a marketing company to develop and roll out digital marketing strategies that, in the first six months, drove 16,300 businesses and job seekers to the site, garnered several hundred video views, and spurred 15 businesses to contact IWD to set up new apprenticeship programs. The Earn and Learn site enables the many organizations involved in the Iowa's Registered Apprenticeship ecosystem—business and industry leaders, the State Workforce Council, state agencies, secondary and post-secondary schools, and the Governor's office—to provide a consistent message on apprenticeship and one-stop access to information.



For more examples of states launching customer-friendly websites to promote Registered Apprenticeship, check out New Hampshire's [ApprenticeshipNH](#), Colorado's [Apprenticeship Evolution](#), and South Dakota's [StartTodaySD](#) sites.

OREGON:

BUILDING AN APPRENTICESHIP RETURN ON INVESTMENT TOOL

One of the most asked questions by Oregon businesses and policymakers exploring Registered Apprenticeship as a workforce training model is “How much will it cost?” In response, Oregon set out to help the private and public sectors understand how apprenticeship contributes to the economy and creates an actual return for businesses. By creating a return on investment (ROI) tool, Oregon can provide a satisfying answer to that question backed by hard numbers and promote apprenticeship as a good investment.

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

The Oregon Employment Department (OED) and the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI), the State’s apprenticeship agency, work closely together on apprenticeship expansion and collaborated on the development of the ROI calculator. When OED and BOLI staff members began, they had three objectives. First, they aimed to create an instrument that could be used to market apprenticeship. Second, they hoped to develop a flexible and customizable tool that would not require constant data inflows and updates. Oregon has a small apprenticeship team with a small information technology department, so solutions that required long-term maintenance of data or other staff interventions were not feasible. Third, they aimed to develop a tool that would be visually attractive so that they could use it alongside their other marketing collateral.

OED utilized a simple and practical planning process before engaging a professional software developer. A joint agency team, consisting of staff from OED, BOLI, the Department of Education, and the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, was formed and held a series of targeted internal conversations. This team identified the challenges that the tool would address and available data sources. They also collected a set of samples from other states to inform their ideal interface and define user requirements. When it was time to select a developer, they included in the vendor bid package these samples from other states and model formulas to convey how they hoped the tool would calculate information. These visual aids helped communicate their vision, set clear parameters, and demonstrated where there was room for prospective vendors to include their innovative ideas.

Community Attributes Inc., the firm selected to build Oregon’s ROI calculator, used a four-part design process:

1. A robust landscape survey of all existing ROI tools to inform the design and decision making
2. A survey of local businesses to gather firm-specific data
3. A set of recommendations regarding what could be done using Oregon’s data management and other guidelines
4. A case study process to gather Oregon and industry-specific information where available

From conception to execution, Oregon’s ROI calculator took two and a half years to develop and was launched in 2019. Most of the effort was focused on intermittent planning and internal conversations, and Oregon utilized multiple apprenticeship grants from the U.S. Department of Labor to move the project forward over this time. The American Apprenticeship Initiative grant supported the initial work of expanding statewide apprenticeship and identifying barriers to further growth, such as a lack of ROI knowledge. Next, the Accelerator grant brought resources for planning and recommendations for the ROI tool. Finally, funding for the developer came from the State Apprenticeship Expansion grant. While a significant length of time was required from the initial idea to launch of the ROI calculator, all the preparation and planning enabled Oregon to produce a robust tool that met desired objectives.

“The quality of the ROI tool depends on the quality of the data.”



Shaun Engstrom

*Apprenticeship Program Liaison,
Oregon Employment Department*

The final product reflects that Registered Apprenticeship is a business investment with associated costs and benefits. The ROI calculator provides businesses with the common benefits and costs from apprenticeship and guides them through calculating the potential ROI for their company. Users can customize the calculation by selecting from a list of cost variables and benefit variables, as well as adding other variables that impact their operations. A report for the ROI results can be generated and downloaded. The tool also includes a resource section where users can search the glossary for terms used within the calculator, explore common wages and wage progression by industry and occupation, and download reference materials to learn more about apprenticeships and their ROI.

IMPACT AND RESULTS

The ROI calculator allows employers to determine if Registered Apprenticeship is the right solution for their talent needs and is a good fit for their business model. The tool also can help apprenticeship programs understand how their specific program is returning money to a business. In addition, OED and BOLI staff members see two key benefits of the finished product. First, the ROI calculator helps the apprenticeship team understand the factors that contribute to an economic return. They have a nuanced explanation of apprenticeship’s value for businesses, policymakers, and others who want to know how apprenticeship benefits employers. Second, the ROI calculator is a technical assistance tool that workforce boards, community organizations, and other partners can use as they work with employers to explore apprenticeship and consider developing programs.

Interested in Learning More?

- ➔ Visit Oregon's apprenticeship website at www.oregon.gov/boli/atd/pages/index.aspx
- ➔ Access the ROI calculator at www.oregonapprenticeship.org/roi-calculator
- ➔ Contact Shaun Engstrom, Apprenticeship Program Liaison, Oregon Employment Department at shaun.c.engstrom@oregon.gov

DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

- ✓ **WORK FROM EXISTING MODELS.** Explore existing models first, and then determine an approach that will satisfy the specific needs in your state. For example, Oregon's formulas are flexible, and the data could be modified and utilized by others.
- ✓ **KNOW YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE.** Identifying the target audience for the ROI tool is critical. If the audience consists of employers, identify beforehand what they would want from the tool and use that information to create a tool that meets the desired needs.
- ✓ **UNDERSTAND THAT GATHERING DATA IS COMPLEX.** Conduct a data landscape survey to identify available data streams that can be leveraged and incorporated into the ROI calculator.

Apprenticeship Promotion through Social Media and Virtual Communication

Many states are looking for new communication channels to increase awareness and interest in Registered Apprenticeship. For example, the Mississippi Apprenticeship Program (MAP) is proactively using social media and other virtual communications tools to enhance their outreach efforts, keep employers engaged, and demonstrate how apprenticeship works for various industries and for diverse populations.

MAP employs a robust business engagement strategy that includes outreach through conferences, presentations, and meetings, as well as direct program development support. However, the apprenticeship team needed a way to stay connected with employers while they considered apprenticeship as a workforce development solution. To address that need, MAP developed a multi-channel communication strategy that includes Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, a newsletter, and blogs. Through these channels, MAP provides useful content and keeps the connection alive until the employer is ready to move forward.

MAP customizes its content to the specific channel based on how businesses use these platforms. For example, Twitter allows for relatively frequent communication without a significant time investment in creating new content. Several times per week, MAP tweets about something related to apprenticeship based on already available content, such as local or national media stories or content from thought leaders and peer states. Facebook and LinkedIn provide similar opportunities to share information, with the added benefit of creating more robust connections among people and organizations. MAP leverages the enhanced features on these platforms to promote dialogue

with stakeholders and cross-promote content with key partners. Facebook and LinkedIn also allow for more photos and video from apprentice graduations, conference presentations, and other events. These tools allow employers to learn about the broad range of apprenticeship resources, activities, and strategies across the country.

In addition to social media channels, MAP publishes both a blog and a newsletter. The Latitudes Blog and Cartographer Newsletter provide more specific content on apprenticeship in Mississippi. These more in-depth articles are developed by MAP staff and highlight new programs, accomplishments, and important updates on key partners. This content demonstrates what is possible with apprenticeship and allows employers to envision their own involvement.

A guiding principle for these communications is that the focus is less on selling apprenticeship and more on sharing information that is interesting and helpful to the audience. By highlighting more than its own programs, this approach demonstrates MAP's commitment to addressing the workforce challenges of employers. Social media also provides an opportunity to build a vibrant community around topics of common interest, and MAP uses these tools to build excitement around apprenticeship and invites others to participate. The content showcases the experiences of real people, including diverse populations, in a variety of industries and occupations.



MAP reaches thousands of businesses and other apprenticeship stakeholders through these communications and has found that they lead to multiple inquiries each week from interested employers and other prospective partners. To check out MAP's efforts, visit their [website](#) and accounts on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Twitter](#).

MONTANA: EXPANDING APPRENTICESHIP IN HEALTHCARE

Montana's Registered Apprenticeship Program (MRAP), a division of the Montana Department of Labor & Industry (MTDLI), saw a critical need for healthcare workers and recognized that Registered Apprenticeship could be an important part of the solution. MTDLI and MRAP have taken a comprehensive approach to engaging the healthcare industry, including three primary strategies: developing partnerships, working with regulators, and building career ladders. Apprenticeship is now an essential component of how Montana trains its healthcare workforce.

PRACTICE DESCRIPTION

To deepen engagement with the healthcare industry, MRAP is continuously growing its network of partners, both within the State and nationally. MRAP learned an important lesson early in its outreach

to healthcare employers—company administrators and human resources personnel have many responsibilities, are extremely busy, and are rarely receptive to cold calls. However, if you approach them in partnership with an association, they are much more willing to listen and engage in a conversation about their workforce challenges. MRAP has partnered with consortia like the Montana Health Network and the Montana Hospital Association to enhance credibility and convey that apprenticeship has real value to their members.

The Montana Health Network, a consortium of hospitals, rural clinics, nursing homes, and other healthcare providers, has played a critical role as an advocate for apprenticeship among its members, as well as serving as a sponsor of Registered Apprenticeship Programs. MRAP has also partnered with the American Health Information Management Association Foundation, a national organization that supports innovation in health information management, which has provided funding and technical assistance to support training, testing, and credentialing for apprentices and reimbursement to employers. Another notable partner is the Office of Rural Health at Montana State University, which has led the development of curricula for apprenticeship programs and supported apprentice recruitment.

MRAP has learned a second important lesson for working in the healthcare sector—get the regulators involved early. MRAP engaged all relevant licensing boards, including the Board of Nursing, at the very beginning of its healthcare initiative to understand their requirements. MRAP presented at several board meetings and was invited to participate in several of their work groups. The boards have been supportive and have worked in partnership with MRAP to address complexities for apprenticeships in healthcare occupations, such as medication aide and licensed practical nurse.

Montana’s commitment to healthcare apprenticeships has grown to encompass a broad range of occupations. MRAP has found the most success with paraprofessional occupations and other mid-level areas of care such as surgical technologists, radiologic technologists, pharmacy technicians, laboratory technicians, medical coders and billers, and behavioral therapists. MRAP is also working with education partners in the State to develop career ladders through apprenticeship. For example, apprenticeship can be used to support certified nursing assistants advancing to licensed practical nurses, x ray technicians advancing to radiologic technologists, or peer support specialists advancing to licensed addiction counselors. One notable aspect of Montana’s healthcare workforce is that, for behavioral health technicians and community health workers, apprenticeships are the only way to get the credential needed for insurance billing.

“Surround yourself with good staff that have the ability to communicate, and good listeners to hear what those employers need.”

” **Jay Reardon**

*Apprenticeship Director, Montana
Department of Labor & Industry*

IMPACT AND RESULTS

Until just a few years ago, about 90 percent of all Registered Apprenticeship Programs in Montana were in the skilled trades. In 2017, the State had programs in just a few healthcare occupations. As of April 2020, apprenticeships in healthcare had grown to 23 different healthcare occupations with 56 different employers. The 314 active apprentices in those programs account for 15 percent of the apprentices in Montana. Further, the expertise and strategies that MRAP has developed from the healthcare initiative have informed its approach to business engagement with other industry sectors that are new to apprenticeship. For example, MRAP is actively partnering with the Montana Brewers Association and the Montana Ski Areas Association to identify occupations in those sectors for which apprenticeships could be developed.

Interested in Learning More?

- ➔ Visit Montana's apprenticeship website at apprenticeship.mt.gov
- ➔ Contact Jay Reardon, Apprenticeship Director, Montana Department of Labor & Industry at James.Reardon@mt.gov

DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

- ✓ **GROW YOUR OWN.** Montana's employers know that it is very difficult to draw new workers to rural areas. The apprenticeship model is a great solution for many rural communities to train and keep their skilled workforce.
- ✓ **LISTEN AND LEARN.** When first engaging an employer, start by learning about their workforce challenges, what is and is not working for them, and their ideas for the future. They will be more receptive to learning about apprenticeship when they feel that their workforce needs are understood.
- ✓ **BE PATIENT AND PERSISTENT.** Employers are often not ready to move forward with program development after the first time discussing apprenticeship. Maintaining the relationship with employers through communication and relevant information may lead to them reaching out a few months later. Sometimes it takes time for them to work through their needs and strategies internally before they are ready to engage with apprenticeship.