

The Arkansas Career Training Institute: Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program Case Study



Quick Facts

CREDENTIAL

OSHA 10 Certification, CRP Certification

POPULATION

Vocational Rehabilitation and Arkansas Department of Workforce Services participants with interest, training, or skills in construction trades

OUTCOMES

Began in September 2016 with 20 participants. 19 finished the pre-apprenticeship, and 14 are now employed in apprenticeships.

FUNDING

Apprenticeship USA Accelerator Grant

KEY PARTNERS

Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Arkansas Career Training Institute
National Apprenticeship Training Foundation
Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition

About the Program:

The Arkansas Career Training Institute (ACTI) provides vocational training and services that lead to employment opportunities for students served by Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), a division of the Department of Career Education. Located in Hot Springs, Arkansas, ACTI is one of only eight comprehensive rehabilitation centers in the United States. Among other programs, the Institute offers National Center for Construction Education and Research-certified instruction in a wide variety of fields within Construction Technology, including Carpentry, Electrical, HVAC, Painting, and Plumbing.

To respond to the ever-growing demand for skilled tradesmen in Arkansas, ACTI developed a pre-apprenticeship program in collaboration with the National Apprenticeship Training Foundation (NATF). The Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program is a week-long learning experience open to ACTI students, vocational rehabilitation (VR) clients, and interested individuals referred by Arkansas Workforce Services. The program provides certification in OSHA 10 and CPR, as well as assessment of occupational skills and instruction in soft skills such as team building, problem solving, and interviewing techniques.

NATF is an independent training organization that serves a consortium of businesses. The partnership between ACTI and NATF is mutually beneficial. The two organizations share the teaching responsibilities for the one-week program. ACTI brings students with applicable skills to the program while NATF brings employers seeking qualified applicants for apprenticeship programs. While there are employment opportunities in the construction trades, employers are having a hard time finding viable candidates.

ACTI involves statewide ARS counselors from the beginning in the referral process. ACTI staffers ask counselors about their expectations for the referral from the beginning, and they involve the counselors in disseminating information statewide about available apprenticeships and what consumers need to be successful in the pre-apprenticeship program.

The pre-apprenticeship program serves as both screening and preparation for job candidates. On the last day of the program, the top performers have interviews with participating businesses. About 50% of the students have mock interviews with feedback from instructors and the opportunity to try again in the next class.

There are rigorous standards for participation in the Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program. Punctuality and active involvement in class activities are required. Students are expected to report to and participate in this learning event as if reporting to a job. Tardiness leads to expulsion from the program. Work habits are evaluated, and only the most engaged students are recommended for actual interviews. There is a 95%

completion rate, and approximately 15% of the students are offered a job as an apprentice.

An Arkansas Accelerator Grant provides funding for the program. ACTI provides space, lunch, and some instructional time. NATF provides instruction, employer mentors, and evaluation and placement services through the Accelerator Grant. Offering this training to students who receive VR services creates the possibility of expanding apprenticeships to an under-represented population. Accelerator Grants exist to expand such opportunities and to open registered apprenticeships to more occupations.

Example of Pre-Apprenticeship Training Schedule					
Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00 AM	Registration Participant Introductions	CPR Certification	Skills Assessment	Completing & submitting employment applications and/ or resume	Real World Workplace Scenarios
9:00 AM	Overview of Pre-Apprenticeship Training Agreement				
10:00 AM	Employer Expectations		Problem Solving Activities		
11:00 AM	Employee Responsibilities	Mock Interviews			
12:00 PM	Lunch provided onsite	Lunch provided onsite	Lunch provided onsite	Lunch provided onsite	Lunch provided onsite
1:00 PM	Team Building	CPR Certification	OSHA 10 (4 hours)	OSHA (3 hours)	EMPLOYER INTERVIEWS
2:00 PM	OSHA 10 (3 hours)				
3:00 PM					
4:00 PM		Dressing for Success			
5:00 PM	Dismissed	Dismissed	Dismissed	Dismissed	Dismissed

Key Features of Pre-Apprenticeship Training

- Provides stackable credentials including OSHA 10 and CPR certification necessary for construction apprenticeships.
- Feeds into registered apprenticeship program, allowing for participants to continue building knowledge while employed.

- Week-long program ends with interviews for apprenticeship positions with participating businesses.
- Skills learned are crucial in preparing participants for a number of apprenticeship opportunities in a variety of construction trades.
- Accommodates a broad range of disabilities with counseling support and trained certified instruction.

There were 5 selection criteria that each of the work-based learning programs featured in case studies exhibited.

Criteria:

1. Must be paid work experience
2. Must involve a business partnership
3. Must provide development/support of participants
4. Must involve a career pathway
5. Must have some evidence of successful outcomes

These key criteria are crucial in increasing access to work-based learning, building real-world skills, providing opportunities once the experience is complete, and helping employers to meet their needs for skilled workers, especially in high-demand occupations.

Must be paid work experience

Since this is a short-term training program, students are compensated with free tuition and ARS pays for room and board. The pre-apprenticeship training increases the likelihood of entering a paid position as a registered apprentice.

Must involve a business partnership

The Arkansas Apprenticeship Coalition (AAC) is comprised of a wide range of about a thousand businesses. Many are involved in the program. NATF, in partnership with AAC, represents union and non-union employers, some taking part in the training and interviewing participants for registered apprenticeship positions.

Must provide development/support of participants

ACTI has vocational counselors on staff who are active in referring participants to and supporting them in the Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program. In addition, most of the participants are enrolled in the ACTI Construction Technology program with access to the instructors' support. Throughout the week of the Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program, the course instructors provide feedback on performance and coaching in mock interviews.

Must involve a career pathway

The Construction Technology programs at ACTI lead to industry certifications. The Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program provides OSHA 10 certification that is required for all construction trade apprenticeships. Whether or not students are offered an apprenticeship position, they will complete the program with this certification, which they can use whenever and wherever they seek employment.

Apprenticeships create career pathways with incremental pay increases as workers attain skill levels. In the trades, apprenticeship leads to journeyman, then foreman/supervisor, superintendent/project manager, and ultimately, senior manager/CEO/company owner.

Must have some evidence of successful outcomes

The Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program at ACTI is relatively new. The first class started in September 2016 and the second in May 2017. To date, ACTI has enrolled 48 participants. The first cohort of ACTI students completed the pre-apprenticeship program in September 2016. In this group, 19 successfully completed the program. Following are outcomes for those 19: 74% (14/19) are employed; 53% are employed in skilled trades, including registered apprenticeships; and one of the completers is making over \$60,000 a year.

Successful outcomes for this program are measured using the following data points:

- Number of students who successfully complete the training program.
- Number of students interviewed for Registered Apprenticeships on the last day of the training program.
- Number of students employed in a Registered Apprenticeship after completing the program.

Lessons Learned and Keys to Replicating this Model

Implementation Challenges:

- Getting appropriate referrals from the field
- Overcoming stigma of “union jobs”

Replication Tips:

- Identify partners/employers committed to apprentice development
- Identify skills gaps in the workforce; businesses that need skilled workers

For additional information, please contact:

Jonathan Bibb, ACTI Director: jonathan.bibb@arkansas.gov

Karen Breashears, NATF Director: Karen@NATF.US

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