

Step-by-Step Apprenticeship Implementation Guide

Key steps for vocational rehabilitation agencies to consider when developing paid work experience programs.

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Assess



Identify



Build



Define



Strategize



Implement



Evaluate



Improve



Explore VR
Informing Research, Policy, and Practice

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The mission of the public vocational rehabilitation (VR) services program is to empower people with disabilities to achieve employment and economic self-sufficiency. Pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship are two established work-based learning (WBL) models that can help people with disabilities enhance their skills and secure full-time, paid employment with established career ladders. Strengthening apprenticeship-focused partnerships between VR and the public workforce system, businesses, and higher education institutions can increase the number of people with disabilities who will enter or return to the workforce, and can ultimately lead to increased numbers of individuals with disabilities who meet the demand for rapidly expanding career fields.

State VR agencies can participate in pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs in a number of ways, such as recruiting VR customers, supporting the costs of training, and providing VR customers with access to critical supportive services. There are already many pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs across the country, and state VR agencies are encouraged to explore opportunities to participate in these existing programs. When existing options are limited, state VR agencies can also work with partners to begin planning programs in specific areas.

The Step-by-Step Apprenticeship Implementation guide outlines key steps for VR programs to consider for participating in pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs.



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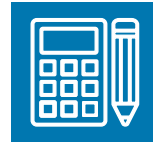
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STEP 1

Assess



Assess Labor Market Trends



The first step that state VR agencies should take to identify opportunities for participating in pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs is completing a labor market analysis. This includes identifying occupations that are in demand now and are projected to have substantial job opportunities in the future, and the skills and career ladders associated with those positions. State VR agencies can partner with their state labor market information units to assess information such as:

- Occupations that are currently in demand in regional economies
- The skills, experience, and credentials that are needed for these positions
- Established career ladders and lattices that exist for these positions
- Occupations that are projected to have substantial job openings in the future along with the skills, experience, and credentials required for these positions, and career ladders and lattices associated with them

State VR agencies should also assess VR consumers' interest in specific occupations in their regional economies, and training and WBL programs that already exist for these programs. This includes:

- Assessing the vocational goals of persons with disabilities
- Determining if these occupations are in demand now and will be in the future
- Identifying the skills, experience and credentials required for these positions, and if these positions have established career ladders and lattices
- Determining if the training and WBL programs that the state VR agency currently accesses to help consumers prepare for these positions are sufficient, or could be enhanced or expanded

STEP 2

Identify

Identify Existing Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship Programs



After determining occupations that are in-demand in regional economies and in which VR consumers are interested in pursuing employment, state VR agencies should begin identifying existing pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs. VR programs can complete three critical tasks to support this work.

First, VR agencies can begin establishing relationships with the state apprenticeship directors or federal staff responsible for apprenticeship programs in their respective states. These individuals can help state VR agencies develop a strong understanding of pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs, foster relationships with specific employers that are or could be involved in these programs, and identify existing pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships focused on target occupations. There are many benefits to registering a program according to national standards for registration with the U.S. Department of Labor or an approved State Apprenticeship Agency. Here is a guide to registering apprenticeship programs: www.doleta.gov/oa/employers/apprenticeship_toolkit.pdf

Second, VR agencies can use their labor market analysis and conversations with state apprenticeship directors and federal apprenticeship staff to identify specific employers within their targeted occupations. As they identify specific employers, agencies can determine if there are pre-existing relationships with these employers, as well as any role they already play in WBL and other education and training programs. These two factors can make it more likely to develop successful collaborations.

Third, state VR agencies should identify existing pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs focused on their target occupations. Pre-apprenticeships are formal training programs that help job seekers, including people with disabilities, enhance their skills and prepare for enrollment in a registered apprenticeship program. There are existing registered apprenticeship programs in a range of occupations and industries across the country, from building trades to health care and information technology. As noted above, state apprenticeship directors and federal apprenticeship staff can help identify these existing programs, as well as the specific steps needed to participate in them.

There are many existing registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs across the country. In addition to speaking with state apprenticeship directors and federal apprenticeship staff about these programs, state VR agencies can identify specific registered apprenticeship programs through both federal and state databases. For example, the U.S. Department of Labor maintains a database of federal apprenticeship sponsors: <https://oa.doleta.gov/bat.cfm>

Some states maintain databases of apprenticeship sponsors registered in their states. The following is an example of one such database, in New York state: <https://labor.ny.gov/apprenticeship/sponsor/index.shtm>

In addition, Businesses and their partners that are Apprenticeship LEADERS can be found here: www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/leaders.htm.



Build

Build a Team



Apprenticeships by definition involve partnerships. It is also critical to have an internal team to lead this initiative. Together, the internal and external partners develop a vision and a purpose as they work together to pursue opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs.

There are some key elements to consider when building a team and developing promising partnerships:

Choose Strategic External Partners

Develop partnerships that will support the reach, implementation, and ability of apprenticeship programs to include people with disabilities. Employers must be involved in any apprenticeship program, and other potential partners include the public workforce system, state apprenticeship agencies, community colleges, economic development agencies, labor unions, public schools, disability agencies, and advocates. In rural areas, maximize relationships with local partners such as small businesses, civic organizations, and community coalitions.

It is vital to approach partnerships having a clear understanding of the goals of participating in a pre-apprenticeship or registered apprenticeship, and also to determine what would make the partnership fruitful for all of the entities in the partnership. The focus of the partnership will vary based on the existing apprenticeship-related programs in the region. In many cases state VR agencies will be exploring opportunities to collaborate and develop strong linkages with existing pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs, while others may be working with a range of partners to create a new pre-apprenticeship program.

Use the space on the next page to list potential partnership entities and existing contacts that would be helpful. Then list your thoughts on what would make the partnership mutually beneficial to the VR agency and the potential partner.

Choose Strategic External Partners

Partnership Entity	Potential Contacts	Notes (what the partner brings to the table, what is needed from partner, how the collaboration can benefit the partner, who should reach out to the partner, etc.)

Develop an internal team

It is vital to develop an internal team at your agency that includes staff at the direct service, middle management, and leadership levels. In the initial phases of development, as you explore and begin to collaborate with state apprenticeship agencies, employers, and other external partners, middle-management and leadership should be heavily involved. Determine how you might educate your staff about the pre-apprenticeship or registered apprenticeship program, and discuss their roles in making it a reality. Identify champions for staff at each level, determine how to get buy-in from leadership, and brainstorm how to develop their competence and understanding about the impact of these apprenticeship-related programs for consumers.

VR staff	What do they need to know about your apprenticeship program?	How do you plan to educate them about their roles?	Who are the champion(s)/ key players?
Direct service/ counselors			
Middle management			
Leadership			

Determine team operations

Defining team operations will vary depending on the nature of the partnership (such as participating in an existing pre-apprenticeship program, or developing a new program), and the scope of the proposed team at the central, regional, and leadership levels. Brainstorm about the roles and functions of each team (internal and external).

Team	Possible Team Lead(s)	Roles & Functions

STEP 4 Define

Define Your Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship Program



Registered apprenticeship programs have five key components¹:

Business Involvement

Businesses are the foundation of any apprenticeship program, and must play an active role in building and implementing the program and should be involved in every step of the partnership.

Structured On-the-Job Training

Apprentices get on-the-job learning from an experienced mentor at the job site, usually for a year or more.

Related Technical Instruction

Apprentices receive related instruction that supports on-the-job learning. This instruction provides the technical, workforce, and academic competencies that apply to the job, and can be provided by a community college or other education and training provider or the employer. Education partners develop curriculum in collaboration with the employer.

Rewards for Skill Gains

Apprentices receive increases in pay as their skills and knowledge increases.

National Occupational Credential

All Registered apprenticeship program graduates receive a nationally-recognized credential.

Pre-Apprenticeships have five suggested components²:

- partnership with a registered apprenticeship program
- training and curriculum that aligns with the skill needs of employers
- supportive services
- hands-on learning activities
- industry-recognized credentials

A variety of federal and state resources are available to support the different components of pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeship programs. This includes the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) where funds are available through local Workforce Development Boards to support on-the-job training and related instruction, Pell grants, VR funds, and state-funded workforce development programs.

The following lists the key components of registered apprenticeship programs. If working with partners to develop a new registered apprenticeship program, what will be the approach for each of these components?

	Component ³	Objectives	Capacity
1	Business Involvement		
2	Structured on-the-job Training		
3	Related Technical Instruction		
4	Rewards for Skill Gains		
5	National Occupational Credential		

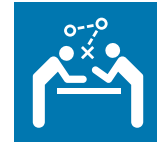
¹DOL: https://www.doleta.gov/oa/employers/apprenticeship_toolkit.pdf

²DOL: https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_13-16.pdf

³Adapted from DOL: https://www.doleta.gov/oa/employers/apprenticeship_toolkit.pdf

STEP 5

Strategize



Strategy Development to Support People with Disabilities



After identifying how the state VR agency will participate in pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs, brainstorm about barriers that can prevent VR consumers from entering and succeeding in these programs and strategies to address them. Consider how your agency will meet employer demands and also help ensure that barriers facing people with disabilities are adequately addressed.

Consider these specific questions as you complete the chart below. What barriers do VR clients face in the current system? How can these be overcome? What resources are needed to create an accessible, inclusive program?

Barriers	Strategies	Resources Needed

STEP 6

Implement



Program Implementation



Completing steps 1-5 will enable state VR agencies and their partners to determine which approach they will use to participate in pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs. Primary options are participating in existing pre-apprenticeship programs, developing new pre-apprenticeship programs, linking with existing registered apprenticeship programs, and working with partners to develop a new registered apprenticeship Program. Factors that state VR agencies can consider when assessing these options include strength of

employer partnerships, placement opportunities, addressing the needs of people with disabilities, and cost. State apprenticeship directors and federal staff that work on apprenticeships can help state VR agencies assess their different options.

After identifying the approach(es) that the state VR agency will use to participate in pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs, develop an implementation plan with action steps, work products, performance measures, and time lines. Then, get started! Put your plan in motion.

Work Plan Template

Activities, Tasks, Responsible Personnel, Milestones, & Timelines

XX Activities													
Milestones	Responsible Personnel								Timeframe				Complete
									Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Activity 1:													
Activity 2:													
Activity 3:													

STEP 7

Evaluate

Evaluate Progress and Measure Results



There are a number of metrics often used to evaluate the success of pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs. For pre-apprenticeship programs, these include the number of individuals that enroll in these programs, the number that complete these programs, and the number of graduates that enroll in or matriculate to registered apprenticeship programs. For registered apprenticeship programs, these include the number of apprentices enrolled, the number of apprentices that receive nationally recognized credentials, wages upon completion, the number of apprentices that complete the program, and job retention rates.

As state VR agencies and their partners begin working together to develop specific programs, it is important to outline some thoughts about how you will define the success of your programs before, during, and post program implementation. What are the baseline measures, desired outcomes, and metrics will you use?

Begin by exploring and brainstorming key metrics to measure progress or success.

Below are some guiding questions to help your program develop an evaluation tool that responds to your funders' expectations, your own program design and priorities, and the general principles that guide apprenticeship program implementation nationwide.

Guiding questions:

- What outcome measures have funders established for the program?
- How are successful outcomes measured?
- What is an example of a successful outcome?
- How many participants reach a successful outcome?
- What percentage of participants do not reach a successful outcome?
- What barriers impede participants in reaching a successful outcome?
- Is there a continuous improvement plan in place? If so, what is it?
- Are there plans for expansion? If so, what are they?
- What challenges have been identified going forward?
- Is sustainability built into the program? If so, how? If not, how might we add it in?
- Do I need data from the perspective of the participant, client, beneficiary, or customer?



Here is a tool that you can use/ adapt to measure your WBL program outcomes:

www.explorevr.org/measuring-success-paid-work-experience-programs



Improve

Make Improvements



After you start participating in a pre-apprenticeship or registered apprenticeship program, it is important to make continuous improvements based on the feedback and outcomes you receive.

Resources

Department of Labor. Employment and Training Administration. A Quick Start Toolkit: Building Registered Apprenticeship Programs. www.doleta.gov/oa/employers/apprenticeship_toolkit.pdf

Department of Labor. Employment and Training Administration. Training and Employment Guidance Letter WIOA No. 13-16 Operating Guidance for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_13-16.pdf

Department of Labor. Apprenticeship LEADERS. <https://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship/leaders.htm>

Department of Labor. Database of Federal Registered Apprenticeship sponsors. <https://oa.doleta.gov/bat.cfm>

For more information about pre-apprenticeship, registered apprenticeship, and other WBL models, visit Jobs for the Future's Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning at: <https://center4apprenticeship.jff.org>

For more information and learning resources on paid work experience programs for VR including webinars, implementation guides, case studies, briefs, and more visit the Paid Work Experiences Toolkit at www.explorevr.org/toolkits/customized-training-toolkit.

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