

Step-by-Step Apprenticeship Implementation Guide

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

DeBrittany Mitchell
Neil McNeil
Julisa Cully
Jeanne Miller
Peggy Hale
Nerlie Blackburn



Define



Assess



Build



Evaluate



Strategize



Implement



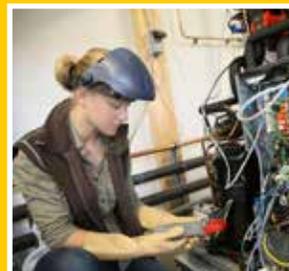
Measure



Improve



Explore VR
Informing Research, Policy, and Practice



Step-by-Step Apprenticeship Implementation Guide

The mission of the public vocational rehabilitation (VR) services program is to empower people with disabilities to achieve employment and economic self-sufficiency. Strengthening paid work experience partnerships between VR and the 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.

Other 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. Sector Strategy Implementation Framework.

<https://businessengagement.workforceegps.org/resources/2016/04/12/13/53/Sector-Strategies-Implementation-Framework>

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.



www.exploreVR.org

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The Step-by-Step Apprenticeship Implementation guide outlines key steps for VR agencies to consider when developing paid work experience programs.

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STEP 1 Define

Define Your Apprenticeship Program



To develop or implement an apprenticeship program in your state, it is critical to start by developing an understanding of the standards set by your state’s office of apprenticeship training. Once you have a clear sense of how apprenticeship programs are defined in your state or local community, then you can move forward customizing your program to fit the needs of your VR consumers and business customers.

Pre-apprenticeship can be a valuable part of defining a state-level program for VR. Start by establishing a clear vision and goals of what you would like to accomplish with your apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program. Consider your organizational capacity, resources, and strategic plan.

The following lists the key components of an apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program. Does your organization or team have the capacity to implement each key component?

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

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

STEP 2

Assess



Assess Current Labor Market Trends



Integrating labor market information (LMI) into VR strategic planning for paid work experience programs is vital to these programs' success. VR programs should make informed decisions about paid work experience program development based on the projections for industries that are hiring the most, occupations that are in demand, and geographic areas that are projected to have the most viable job opportunities for consumers.

LMI data includes historical, current, and future projection metrics at local, state, regional, and national levels on employment, unemployment, working hours, earnings, and labor turnover. It also offers descriptive characteristics of the population in the labor force, and of the skills job seekers require to meet their employment goals.

First, evaluate:

- Whether LMI is being used by your VR system
- If so, how it's being used
- Whether the current uses of LMI are effective in guiding decision-making
- How the use of LMI could be improved to maximize its potential

Next, partner with your state's LMI unit. Discuss strategies for making LMI available in formats that are responsive to the needs of the VR system, and those of the people you serve.

Such an effort should answer these questions:

- What kinds of LMI are available, and which will be most beneficial to your agency?
- Which LMI format will be most useful, both for planning and at the counselor and job-seeker level?
- What kind of training and infrastructure is needed for your staff to make better use of LMI?
- How can you ensure that LMI is used on a consistent and integrated basis?
- Does available LMI include coverage of the local economic environment? If so, is it comprehensive enough for your use?
- What are some growing, in-demand sectors as identified by LMI at the local, state, or national level?



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 design an inclusive apprenticeship system that is open and accessible to persons with disabilities.

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

Choose Strategic External Partners

Develop partnerships that will strengthen the reach, implementation, and impact of apprenticeship programs. Potential partners include the 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 the apprenticeship program from your agency’s perspective, and also to brainstorm about what would make the partnership fruitful for the desired partnership entity. Use the space below 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.

Partnership Entity	Potential Contacts	Notes (what the partner brings to the table, what is needed from partner, who should reach out, 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. Determine how you might educate your staff about the 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 apprenticeship 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 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

Evaluate



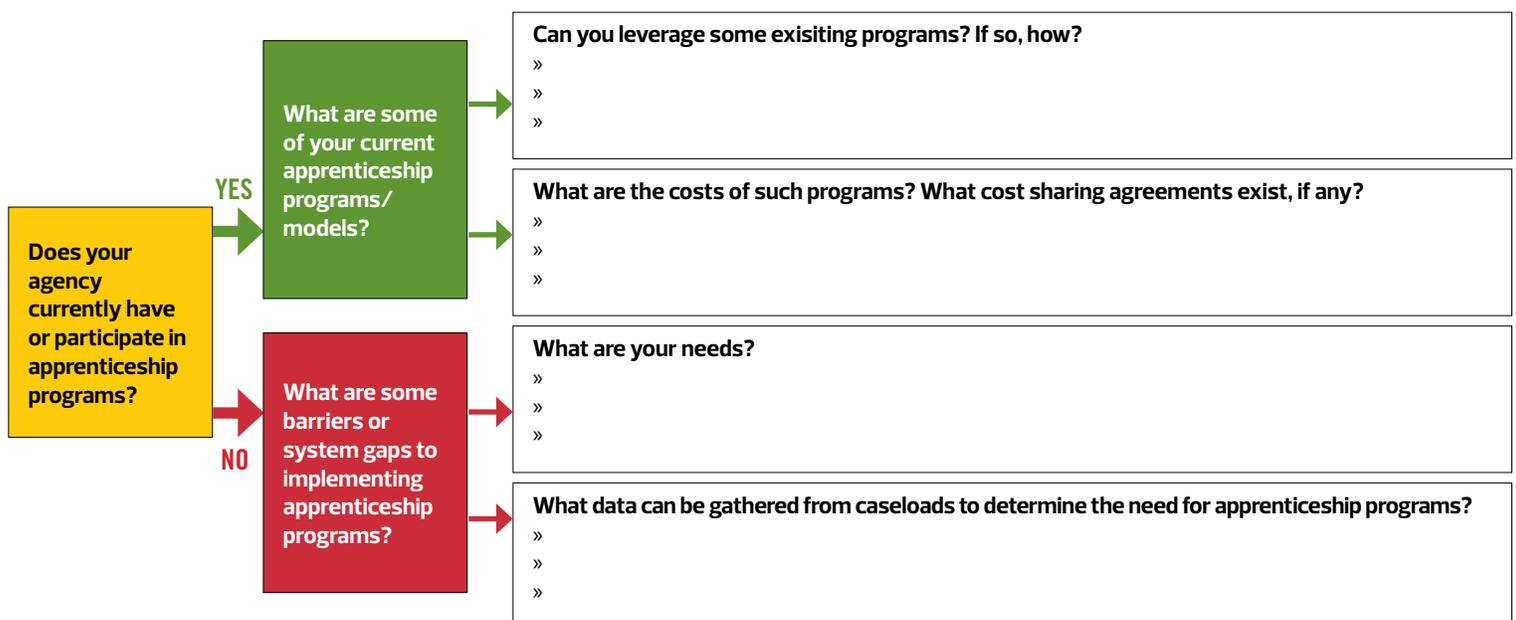
Evaluate the System's Current State



VR programs should first assess the need for apprenticeship programs by determining client demand, as well as the capacity of the VR program to develop a pipeline of viable candidates.

To get started, you'll need to figure out what data has been collected from caseloads to determine the need for apprenticeship programs. For example, do you know how many transition-age youth are seeking non-college post-secondary training, the number of IPEs with apprenticeship job goals in the local economy, the number of clients currently enrolled in apprenticeship programs, and other relevant data?

The following diagram can be used as a brainstorming exercise to help describe the current system by conducting an inventory of all VR paid work experience programs and models. Define how your VR agency participates, and identify the gaps in the system.



STEP 5

Strategize



Develop your strategy

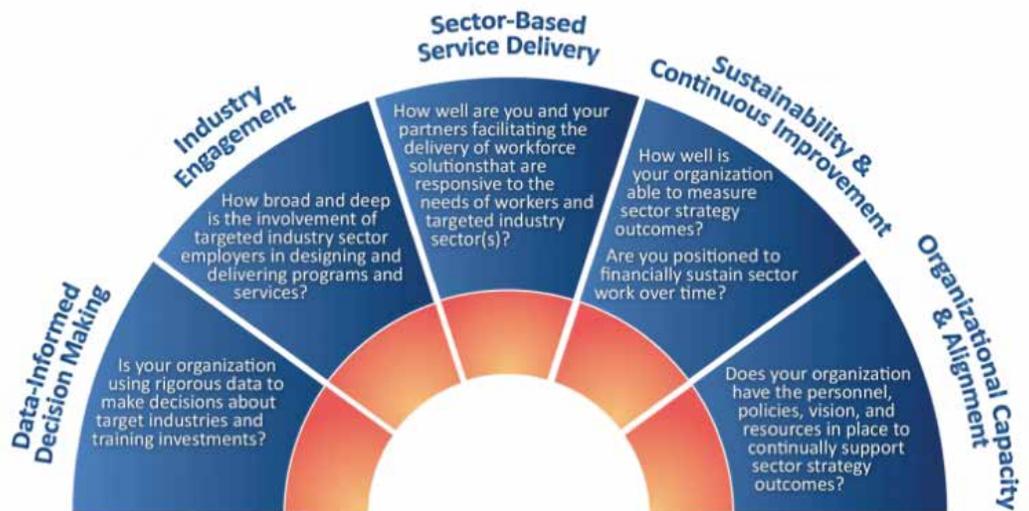


After identifying needs, brainstorm about designing strategies to address them. Consider how your agency will meet employer demands and be responsive to rapidly growing industry sectors (see the framework below).

- What barriers do VR clients face in the current system? How can these be overcome?
- What resources are needed to create an accessible, inclusive system?

Sector Strategy Implementation Framework

Source: Employment and Training Administration



Barriers	Strategies	Resources Needed

STEP 6

Implement



Implement Your Program



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

Measure

Evaluate Progress and Measure Results



Though there is no one-size-fits-all approach to evaluating the success of paid work experience 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. At this time, there is no established set of standards for programs to evaluate their apprenticeship projects and programs. Nevertheless, literature reveals that many programs measure their projects based on the criteria that are common for all registered apprenticeship programs, as well as their own expectations and outcome priorities.

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.

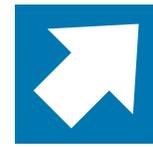
Guiding questions:

- 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/develop to measure your paid work experience program outcomes:
www.explorevr.org/measuring-success-paid-work-experience-programs



Improve



Make Improvements



After you establish your apprenticeship program, it is important to make continuous improvements based on the feedback and outcomes you receive. In addition, there are many benefits to registering your program according to national standards for registration with the U.S. Department of Labor (or an approved State Apprenticeship Agency).

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, there are multiple options to register programs including:

National Guideline Standards (NGS)

NGS are generally appropriate for organizations with multiple chapters or affiliates across the country. NGS are useful when organizations seek to provide some level of consistency across their affiliates but wish to allow for some ability to customize programs at the local level.

National Program Standards (NPS)

NPS are generally appropriate for large national employers that wish to implement the same apprenticeship program across the country in multiple locations.

Local Apprenticeship Program Standards

Local programs are appropriate for apprenticeship programs operating in one state or region.



Here is a guide to registering apprenticeship programs:

www.doleta.gov/oa/employers/apprenticeship_toolkit.pdf