



Promising Practices from the Atlanta Apprenticeship Pilot and Los Angeles Collaborative

Background

One important goal of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is to reconnect out-of-school youth with education and jobs.ⁱ Apprenticeships play a key role in providing a learn-and-earn context for youth participants. Under WIOA, DOL-funded YouthBuild programs are recognized as pre-apprenticeship programs.ⁱⁱ However, making the career pathway connection from pre-apprenticeship programming to documented partnerships with apprenticeship sponsors has proven difficult for many YouthBuild programs.

Beginning in 2017, five Department of Labor (DOL) YouthBuild grantees in Atlanta, Georgia began working in conjunction with the Georgia State Office of Apprenticeship to establish partnerships with employers, business associations, and labor management organizations that sponsor apprenticeships. The ability of the Office of Apprenticeship to convene apprenticeship sponsors and the collaborative approach of local YouthBuild grantees have been critical elements of creating apprenticeship pathways for YouthBuild graduates. Early results of this pilot project are promising. The five Atlanta-based DOL YouthBuild grantees have established documented partnerships with three apprenticeship sponsors and have youth on a variety of tracks toward the goals of apprenticeships and job placement.

A similar collaborative approach was implemented in Los Angeles, California, beginning in 2014. The Los Angeles YouthBuild Collaborative consists of 19 YouthBuild grantees that developed partnerships with apprenticeship sponsors from labor management organizations. They have successfully placed over 100 participants and community members in apprenticeship training over the past three years. Placements were the result of coordinated efforts by these YouthBuild grantees to engage apprenticeship sponsors, employers, and other partners in the construction industry. As labor market demand increased, the Los Angeles Collaborative was in a good position to direct YouthBuild graduates to these opportunities.

This fact sheet will highlight a number of lessons and best practices for other DOL YouthBuild grantees to assist in establishing apprenticeship pathways, based on information gathered from these two local efforts, as well as others.

This fact sheet will answer the following important questions:

- What role can Offices of Apprenticeship play in accelerating the establishment of partnerships between YouthBuild grantees and apprenticeship sponsors?
- How do regional collaborations between YouthBuild grantees strengthen apprenticeship pathways? Which elements facilitate regional collaborations among YouthBuild programs?
- What do these pilots suggest about the efforts necessary to accelerate and promote apprenticeship pathways for YouthBuild graduates? Which methods, processes, and structures help to build and sustain these partnerships?

The Challenge: The Problem of Partnership Development

The WIOA Final Rule section 681.480 defines a pre-apprenticeship program based on five key program elements. YouthBuild is recognized as a pre-apprenticeship program model under WIOA (see Final Rule section 688.120). The chart below shows how YouthBuild programs support alignment with the five elements:

Pre-Apprenticeship Program Element	YouthBuild Program Alignment
Approved training and curriculum that aligns with needs of employers	Industry-recognized credentialing opportunities established by national business associations and labor management organizations are used by YouthBuild programs
Access to support services	Counseling/Case management; A wide variety of allowable costs for supportive services and referrals, including transportation, need-based payments, health care, mental health treatment, child care; YouthBuild grantees are required to follow graduates at least one year after exit
Meaningful hands-on training	Youth are involved in some type of hands-on training. This includes building affordable housing, participating in larger affordable housing projects, or participating in other hands-on activities under Construction Plus
Opportunities to obtain at least one industry-recognized credential	HBI-PACT, NCCER, and MC3 are all industry-recognized; C+ credentialing requirements must be industry-recognized and desired
Partnership that assists with placements into apprenticeship	Direct placements with employers or pathways established through partnership with business/industry associations and labor management organizations; typically validated by letters of support or memoranda of agreement/understanding

This last pre-apprenticeship program element is often the most difficult for YouthBuild programs. While a number of YouthBuild grantees have partnerships with employers, business associations, and labor management organizations, many do not. The difficulty in forging these partnerships can be due to the level of time and attention it takes to initiate and sustain partnerships and limitations on the capacity of staff to tend to these important relationships. These partnerships can take months, if not years, to develop.

YouthBuild programs have recognized the need to expand the range of options for viable partnerships leading to career pathways. In May 2018, the President's [Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion Final Report](#) recognized apprenticeship as a "proven model that provides paid, relevant work experiences and opportunities to develop skills that employers value. For workers, it provides affordable paths to good jobs and, ultimately, careers."ⁱⁱⁱ However, the Task Force asserted that apprenticeships are underutilized among employers. In an effort to expand the utilization of apprenticeship, the Task Force identified the need for a separate system from Registered Apprenticeship to "foster apprenticeship in America."^{iv} They recommended the use of "Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship programs [to] expand more traditional work-and-learn models to achieve higher levels of employer engagement and better outcomes."^v Work-and-learn models include a range of activities, such as industry tours, job shadowing, and internships, as well as apprenticeship^{vi}. This diversity of offerings suggests opportunities for a broader range of partnership development activities, in which YouthBuild programs can directly help industry partners develop new apprenticeship pathways.

The solution is for YouthBuild grantees to identify ways to accelerate the partnership development process and establish structures designed to cultivate deeper engagement with employers, business associations, post-secondary institutions, and labor management organizations, all of whom may be apprenticeship sponsors with opportunities to assist with YouthBuild participants' entrance into traditional and non-traditional fields of apprenticeship.

Lessons Learned: Strategies to Address This Challenge

One innovative approach has emerged in Atlanta. The five Atlanta-area YouthBuild programs formed the Metropolitan Atlanta YouthBuild Collaborative (MAYBC), and the Georgia State Office of Apprenticeship acted as a broker by introducing apprenticeship sponsors to the Collaborative. The State Director convened a meeting of apprenticeship sponsors and pitched YouthBuild as a talent source for apprenticeship sponsors in need of employees. The Collaborative described the YouthBuild program and jointly developed a set of apprenticeship readiness criteria based on feedback from employers and other apprenticeship sponsors. These efforts set the stage for documented partnerships between the Collaborative and three separate apprenticeship sponsors, including a Building Trades Multi-Craft Core Curriculum implementation plan with the North Georgia Building and Construction Trades, and memoranda of understanding with both the Atlanta Independent Electrical Contractors and the Laborers' Southeast Training Fund. The MAYBC established a Construction Industry Advisory Council to review apprenticeship readiness criteria and to help place YouthBuild graduates for entry into the construction industry. As of November 2018, seven youth participants have been placed in the construction industry, two have been placed in another local pre-apprenticeship program, seven have applied to apprenticeships, and one is currently in apprenticeship training. These placements occurred within twenty months of the initial meeting between the MAYBC and industry partners. Graduates who applied to apprenticeship programs were first placed in construction industry jobs, which provided additional experience and an opportunity for them to demonstrate their interest and motivation in pursuing careers in the industry. The Collaborative is planning to showcase these graduates at an upcoming Construction Industry Advisory Council.

The partnership development process is described in detail in the earlier DOL publication, [Atlanta Partnership Development Update: YouthBuild and Apprenticeship Sponsors in Construction](#). A brief summary of the steps in the partnership development process follows:

May – December 2016	Educating YouthBuild programs about Registered Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programming.
January – February 2017	The Georgia State Office of Apprenticeship and the Metro Atlanta YouthBuild Collaborative organized meetings to educate apprenticeship sponsors about YouthBuild. YouthBuild USA staff gathered information about apprenticeship entry requirements from each sponsor and brought this information back to the Collaborative.
March – September 2017	The Metro Atlanta YouthBuild Collaborative adopted common apprenticeship readiness criteria based on a national partnership framework YouthBuild USA developed with the Laborers' International Union of North America's (LIUNA) Training and Education Fund. The Collaborative decided to adopt a formal leadership structure and by-laws for the Collaborative member organizations.
November 2017 and February 2018	Employers, as well as representatives from business associations and labor management organizations, provided feedback on the apprenticeship readiness criteria during two construction industry advisory sessions.
March – October 2018	Metro Atlanta YouthBuild Collaborative engaged apprenticeship sponsors to place YouthBuild graduates.

Acceleration Strategy #1: Use the Federal and State Offices of Apprenticeship to Identify Sponsors Looking for Talent

Offices of Apprenticeship can identify apprenticeship sponsors looking for talent and introduce them to local YouthBuild grantees. Depending on whether Apprenticeships are registered federally or at the State level, staff members who work at these Offices of Apprenticeship interact with employers, business associations, labor management organizations, and

community colleges that view apprenticeship as a training solution and can present YouthBuild as a potential talent pool. For grantees, apprenticeship provides a reliable pathway into careers in construction and other industries. The on-the-job training aspect of apprenticeship provides graduates with opportunities to earn money while they are learning a marketable skill.

The Georgia State Office of Apprenticeship (OA) played two key roles in accelerating connections between apprenticeship sponsors and YouthBuild grantees. First, the OA educated YouthBuild grantees about the apprenticeship system. It is important to note the central role that DOL regional staff played in facilitating the initial introduction with the Georgia State Office of Apprenticeship. This began when a Federal Project Officer from Region 3 invited the Georgia State Office of Apprenticeship Director to a Peer-to-Peer event and worked with YouthBuild USA to organize a workshop on apprenticeship. The Director facilitated a panel of apprenticeship sponsors to describe their needs for apprentices. Second, the OA brought apprenticeship sponsors to the table and leveraged its relationships with sponsors to educate YouthBuild about the demand for a trained workforce. They continued this effort by inviting sponsors to meet with the Atlanta YouthBuild grantees, who were able to create deeper, more coordinated engagement via the development of the apprenticeship readiness criteria and the establishment of the Construction Industry Advisory Council.

Contact information for State and Federal Offices of Apprenticeship can be found at <https://www.doleta.gov/oa/contactlist.cfm>.

➤ *Finding Apprenticeship Sponsors*

There are over 1,000 occupations that provide apprenticeship training. The location of apprenticeships and the names of apprenticeship sponsors can be found on the apprenticeship sponsor database on the Federal Office of Apprenticeship website at <https://oa.doleta.gov/bat.cfm>. If there are apprenticeship sponsors in relevant industries within the same geographic area of a YouthBuild grantee, staff should reach out directly or work with the OA that is responsible for registered apprenticeships in their state to set up an introductory meeting to describe the YouthBuild program, share materials, and gauge demand for apprentices. Consider inviting apprenticeship sponsors to visit the program so they can get a better idea of how the YouthBuild partnership can meet their talent needs. The goal of this initial meeting is to make sponsors aware of the value YouthBuild adds to their talent acquisition and development efforts. For example, participants with OSHA-10 training and hands-on construction experience already have the required safety certification and may have more knowledge about construction than someone who is recruited off the street. Additionally, the required one year of follow-up after exit means YouthBuild participants have access to ongoing supportive services to ensure success on the job, including transportation, child care assistance, and additional skills-related training, if needed.

Acceleration Strategy #2: Collaborate with Other YouthBuild Grantees

YouthBuild grantees may be challenged to meet the demands of apprenticeship sponsors to find sufficient numbers of participants who have both an interest in specific career pathways and the soft skills to pursue apprenticeship training. By collaborating with other programs, the available talent pool expands. This makes it easier for YouthBuild grantees to collaboratively and consistently deliver graduates who are motivated and interested, which then maximizes the return on the investments of time required to cultivate and sustain relationships with apprenticeship sponsors. The power of collaboration is solidified when YouthBuild programs develop common criteria for apprenticeship readiness or adopt a common curriculum that aligns with the needs of the local labor market.

Grantees involved in the Metropolitan Atlanta YouthBuild Collaborative took the time to connect with each other around the goals of developing a common collaborative approach and training standards. YouthBuild USA played a role in expanding the capacity of programs to partner with apprenticeship sponsors and each other. YouthBuild USA helped organize agendas,

coached program staff on communicating their message to apprenticeship sponsors, and brought criteria from its national relationship with LIUNA to help develop training standards. The Collaborative member programs were able to leverage their scale and collective interests that, taken together, strengthen the YouthBuild model. Individual program capacities included the time, energy, and availability to participate in meetings and to create a structure for collaboration, including how to relate to the Construction Industry Advisory Council.

Similarly in Los Angeles, YouthBuild grantees banded together as the Los Angeles Regional YouthBuild Collaborative to create a sizable talent pool for the construction industry. Los Angeles-area grantees created a set of common criteria for apprenticeship readiness by adapting the Building Trades Multi-Craft Core Curriculum, developing the YouthBuild Construction Academy as a bridge program for prospective apprentices, and establishing a construction industry advisory panel to provide advice on industry trends. These efforts are described in more detail in [Los Angeles Collaborative Succeeds with 100 Placements in Apprenticeship](#).

Common elements of the collaborative efforts in Atlanta and Los Angeles are summarized in the chart below:

Common Element	Why Collaborate?	How They Did it in Atlanta	How They Did it in Los Angeles
Reaching Out to Apprenticeship Sponsors	YouthBuild can represent a larger talent pool; no one program holds the burden of providing talent	Georgia Office of Apprenticeship Introduced sponsors; Collaborative members followed-up to provide opportunities for career talks; pooled resources for industry tours	Shared the load of reaching out to labor management apprenticeships; pooled graduates and interested community members to respond to labor market demand
Developing Common Criteria for Apprenticeship Readiness	YouthBuild presents a common standard for talent; can easily communicate criteria to apprenticeship sponsors	Developed criteria for Apprenticeship Readiness in consultation with apprenticeship sponsors and other construction industry representatives	Grantees adopted the Building Trades Multi-Craft Core Curriculum across sponsoring organizations; established the YouthBuild Construction Academy as a bridge program
Construction Industry Advisory Council	YouthBuild programs can create more consistency of soft skills and training standards by developing an advisory group of related industry leaders and apprenticeship sponsors. A collaborative approach enhances the YouthBuild program's credibility among industry stakeholders.	Met two times per year to review criteria and advise on placements	Met three times a year to review outcomes; discuss placement opportunities

Discussion: Using Work-and-Learn Models as a Bridge to Partnership

Offices of Apprenticeship can play an important role in brokering relationships with sponsors who can provide apprenticeship opportunities and help define apprenticeship readiness. In the construction industry, YouthBuild grantees can use industry-recognized curricula as a starting point to identify the necessary knowledge and competencies that prospective YouthBuild apprentices may need. For YouthBuild grantees pursuing Construction Plus, the Career One-Stop Competency Model (see <https://www.careeronestop.org/competencymodel/>) provides resources on necessary competencies for a range of in-demand

industries. This can be a starting point for conversations with training and work experience partners in these industries that may lead to placements in jobs or apprenticeship pathways. Demonstrating knowledge of in-demand industries positions YouthBuild as a talent source for these partners and sets the stage for more textured conversations about the needs of the local labor market.

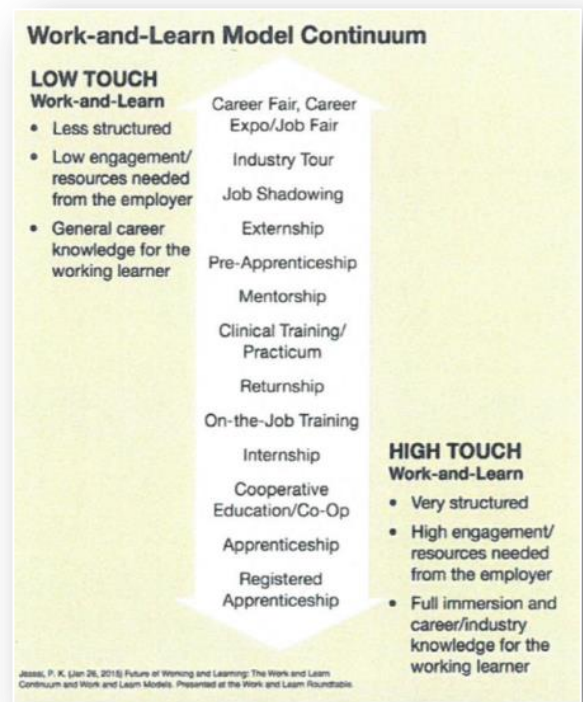
The Atlanta and Los Angeles Collaborative pilots are promising examples of how to effectively leverage and accelerate partnerships with OAs, and their strategies should be considered for replication in Construction Plus pathways. Specifically, where several grantees in a local community share the same Construction Plus pathway focus, the strategy of developing a collaborative approach with these other local YouthBuild grantees to align curricula (if available) and industry training standards with employers and/or business advisory groups could be effective in establishing and sustaining partnerships for work experience, placements, and continuing training. This approach will also position YouthBuild to have a value proposition for these Construction Plus industry partners by providing an established talent pool of employment candidates. Grantees involved in a collaborative will benefit by sharing efforts to develop training standards and support these Construction Plus industry partnerships and pathways across several YouthBuild programs. Additionally, the collaborative approach means that the individual programs also benefit from peer networking and leveraging the relationships and partnerships developed by other local YouthBuild programs.

Expanding Work-and-Learn Models for Pathway Development

The [Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion Final Report](#) also recommended expanding apprenticeship to include a wider range of work-and-learn models. The report highlights the work-and-learn model continuum, which lays out a range of low-touch and high-touch work-and-learn options:

- Low-touch options are less structured experiences that provide YouthBuild participants with general knowledge about an industry. Career Fairs or tours of apprenticeship training facilities are examples of low-touch options and are generally low-cost and require less engagement from employers, business associations, labor management organizations, or post-secondary institutions.
- High-touch options are more structured experiences that provide YouthBuild participants with hands-on opportunities to be fully immersed in an industry. On-the-job training, internships, and apprenticeships are examples of high-touch options and generally have higher costs and require more resources and time from the partner.^{vii}

The continuum supports the goals of apprenticeship training by providing diverse opportunities to approach industry partners for work-and-learn experiences. These work-and-learn opportunities both align with what YouthBuild programs are currently doing to prepare YouthBuild graduates for apprenticeship, and meet the requirements of YouthBuild to offer hands-on work experience in any training industry offered. Examples of some work-and-learn models are highlighted in the white paper, [Pathways to Apprenticeship: Profiles of YouthBuild Pre-Apprenticeship Programs](#).



Summary of Partnership Strategies

A win-win partnership can be created by Offices of Apprenticeship and YouthBuild programs. OAs identify apprenticeship sponsors and employers looking for talent, and YouthBuild programs provide an untapped talent pool of youth participants with foundational training, work readiness skills, and access to supportive services to fill those positions. This ready-made talent pipeline ensures YouthBuild participants are placed on a pathway that affords them an opportunity to develop and deepen relevant skills while earning a good wage.

While many programs do struggle to accomplish the ultimate goal of securing direct entry into registered apprenticeships, the use of diverse work-and-learn options, coupled with the partnership accelerator strategies described above, strengthens the connections between YouthBuild programs and industry and employer partners that support the goal of placement and continued training in in-demand industries. YouthBuild grantees can be well-positioned to prepare participants for placement in construction or Construction Plus career pathways by leveraging their Offices of Apprenticeships, collaborating with other local YouthBuild grantees to strengthen their partnerships, and using diverse work-and-learn models to engage partners toward the goal of further training and placement.

Additional resources to support these efforts are below:

1. [Registered Apprenticeship Toolkit](#)
2. [Construction Plus Framework](#)
3. [DOL YouthBuild Staffing for Placement Toolkit](#)

ⁱ Federal Register Volume 81 Number 161 Friday, August 19, 2016, page 56073

ⁱⁱ WIOA Final Rule Part 688.120

ⁱⁱⁱ *Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion Final Report to the President of the United States, May, 2018 page 14.*

^{iv} Ibid, page 19.

^v Ibid, page 10.

^{vi} Ibid, page 22.

^{vii} *Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion Final Report to the President of the United States, May, 2018 page 22.*