**REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP IN THE YOUTHBUILD PROGRAM - #4 Podcast Script:**

Welcome back!!! I’m Ronald Vargas, and I’m Marjorie Fong of the U.S. Employment and Training Administration’s (ETA) Office of Special Initiatives and Demonstrations. This presentation is part of the (Exploring Rural YouthBuild Programs) podcast series, where we explore the dynamics YouthBuild programs experience during program planning, implementation, and program sustainability efforts in rural areas. Our focus will center on the common factors affecting service delivery in regards to: funding, staffing, geographic accessibility of services, training and employment, technological capacity, partnerships, and population.

Today’s recording will be focusing on Registered Apprenticeship within the YouthBuild Program. Eliska Champagne-Veselka; YB Coach from YB USA will be discussing the strategic approach to incorporating Registered Apprenticeship into YouthBuild programs and her experience over the years assisting YB grantees with Registered Apprenticeship.

1. **Ron:** Welcome Eliska. So would you like to start off by providing us a little background of your organization and what role the YB coaches play apart from the FPO?

Eliska: Thank you Ron, I’m glad to be here today. For over 40 years, YouthBuild USA has supported the more than 300 programs nationally by providing training, technical assistance, information system, opportunities to promote sustainability and other expertise to ensure maximum quality and impact of YouthBuild programs around the world. The YouthBuild model’s powerful impact comes from its versatility in applying its unique framework, the integration of the five key program elements, in community-based settings which are locally designed and implemented. YouthBuild Technical Assistance coaches focus on how to tailor the framework to each context, pulling from and applying best practices and innovative strategies from across the network and helping programs determine how and what best fits each program’s local community need, resources and objectives.

While Federal Project Officers ensure that the DOL funds are being used in the manner intended, what we might call the “what” of program design, TA Coaches focus on the “how” in this multi-faceted and complex model.

1. **Ron:** In terms of Apprenticeship, there is a significant opportunity for a young person who is motivated, well disciplined, willing to make a long-term commitment to a highly structured program, and has strong basic skills.

But before we dive into more of your experience with RA can you explain in a simple manner what RA is and what are your thoughts on the benefit of RA to the YB program and the YB participants?

**Eliska:** Apprenticeship is both a general term referring to an approach to skills training and a specific term related to the DOL’s National Registered Apprenticeship System. Some of the Key features of apprenticeships include:

* one-on-one instruction and guidance from a master craftsworker;
* experiential, on-the-job learning; focused theoretical study to support handson

training; and

* income growth directly linked to skills proficiency.

For YouthBuild graduates, apprenticeships may be an alternative to a four-year college

degree and an opportunity to earn immediate wages.

**Eliska:** Registered apprenticeships provide an excellent opportunity for the right participants to launch onto a career pathway, with built in advancement opportunities where they will earn a liveable wage to sustain themselves and their families. Registered apprenticeship also provides the opportunity for graduates to continue with their education who otherwise may not have been able to due to financial need, as they are able to work and earn a decent starting wage while simultaneously progressing along a career ladder.

**Ron:** Thanks Eliska, and its important mention that when employers choose to register their programs with DOL they do so to show prospective job seekers that their apprenticeship program meets national quality standards.

There are five key components of an apprenticeship. These components differentiate

apprenticeships from other types of workplace training programs in several ways:

* Paid job, classroom learning, work-based learning, credentials, and mentorship.

The length of an apprenticeship program can vary depending on the employer, complexity of the occupation, industry, and type of program.

The Registered Apprenticeship System that is administered by DOL includes the Office of Apprenticeship (OA) which is the registration authority for the National Registered Apprenticeship System at the federal level. The OA provides leadership, guidance, information, and technical support to employers, labor management organizations, and workers interested in developing apprenticeship programs. The OA also recognizes apprenticeable occupations and standards set by the industry, they maintain records on all registered apprenticeship programs and registered apprentices, and they also provide program administration to the National Registered Apprenticeship System.

There is also a network of State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAAs) which exist in 25 states and

the District of Columbia and have been granted recognition by the Secretary of Labor to

serve as the entities for state registration and/or approval of local apprenticeship

programs and agreements for federal purposes. The national OA also provides technical

assistance and oversight to these SAAs as well as the District of Columbia and two

territories.

1. **Marjorie:** Eliska, what are some of the different apprenticeship programs you have seen while providing RA TA to grantees and what have been some of the pitfalls?

**Eliska:** The most common registered apprenticeship program that programs tend to build relationships with are in the fields of construction. Many programs have built strong relationships with their local building trades, including the laborers, flooring, roofing, HVAC and electrical apprenticeship programs.

Increasingly, as RAs are expanding nationally, programs are starting to work with apprenticeships in other industries. Some programs are establishing relationships with medical apprenticeships, such as a Medical Assistance apprenticeship offered at a private hospital. I’m also hearing of partnerships developing with RAs in agriculture, forestry, manufacturing and IT, though many of these are in the early stages of development and not all of these industries have gone through the process of having their apprenticeship Registered with DOL.

The most frequent pitfall I see is in over-committing to employer and apprenticeship partners. While the apprenticeship pathway will be the perfect fit for some program graduates, it is not for everyone. It requires a high level of dedication and commitment to the field, as well as a level of maturity and stability that not all program graduates may have reached by the time they graduate from YouthBuild. Making sure that programs are sending the “right fit” to apprenticeship partners is critical everywhere to build a strong relationship; and even more essential in rural areas where networks are small, resources are limited and people talk. Reputation is so critical to successfully building lasting partnerships that provide opportunities for program graduates. Therefore, it is important when building relationships with RA programs that programs are realistic about the number of program graduates they will be able to refer to the RA program after program completion.

Another pitfall I have seen frequently is programs devote significant amounts of time and energy into building the partnership and/or setting up the right curriculum, without placing adequate emphasis on the program culture and ensuring participants are building the soft skills necessary to succeed in an RA program. Participants need support in building skills in time management, communication, and self-regulation of their emotions, as well as have a well-developed habit of extremely high attendance and punctuality. In my experience, these are the skills that will really make it or break it for a young person once they leave YouthBuild and transition into the high level of expectations within an apprenticeship program.

1. **Marjorie:** What do you recommend for grantees who want to incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into their YB program?

**Eliska:** First, I would say Identify the registered apprenticeships in your local area. Determine if they are working independently, meaning they are connected to one specific company, or if they work in collaboration with others in the industry, such as a “Directors of Trades Training Council.” If there is a collaborative effort available, you may get ‘more bang for your buck’ in building the partnership with the collaboration that will expand the opportunities for your young people.

Once you have identified what is available, review participant interest and the hiring forecast for these industries in your local area. You will also want to look at what you are currently doing in training, to determine what you are most readily able to prepare participants for versus what will take more significant program adjustments, training, resources or staffing.

Once you have identified target industries or apprenticeship programs, do some research on the program. Many may have their own target outcomes to meet in outreach, diversity or labor shortages, which YouthBuild may be able to help them reach. As in any partnership, it is important to look for the win-win, which can help you both open the door to beginning conversations and help to sustain the partnership in the long term. Use this information to help target and prioritize your approach for relationship building efforts.

1. **Ron:** Eliska, a current stat that is discussed often with RA is that 94%

of apprentices who complete an apprenticeship program retain employment, with an average annual salary of $70,000. In your experience, what do you see as major benefits RA provides to YB programs and Employers?

**Eliska:** As I mentioned previously, RA provides career pathway opportunities, beyond just a job. Participants are able to receive living wages, support their families and find some security, so the benefit to program participants is clear. Programs can benefit directly as well, however. There are increasingly funding opportunities designed around partnerships and sector strategy, which support pre-apprenticeship/training pipelines into apprenticeships. Programs may be able to finding funding opportunities through these partnerships, particularly in rural areas where there may be limited programs able to partner with apprenticeship programs to provide the opportunity to apply for such funds.

For the employer, YouthBuild can be a pipeline of qualified applicants to build their workforce, in a time of intense labor shortages. Additionally, as many of our participants come from non-traditional backgrounds, YouthBuild can help meet target goals of diversity and inclusion within their workforce. While this is a strong selling point to the employers, YouthBuild participants should also provide advocacy and research to make sure that graduates placed in these companies will be well supported, particularly if the company may not yet have a diverse workforce in place.

1. **Ron:** Eliska, can you discuss with us from your experience how RA work practically, and what have you seen in reference to YB programs connecting with sponsors?

**Eliska:**

When first connecting with sponsors, it is important that the program is intentional about establishing credibility in their ability to prepare young people for the identified RA industry. Often in rural areas a YouthBuild program may be known more for their ability to serve youth, less for workforce development; and more so this reputation may be connected to the stereotypes associated with our young people. Programs may need to be strategic in how to combat this stereotype and showcase the strengths of the training itself, and the qualities of program graduates. This may mean ensuring that there is someone knowledgeable about the specific industry and able to use industry lingo in the early stages of partnership development, such as having a Construction Trainer accompany a Program Manager or Director to a first partnership building meeting. Another means of establishing credibility may be through placing one or two individuals in the RA program before initiating discussions about a more in-depth or formalized partnership. Finally, using the personal networks of small communities and rural areas can help to open doors – be creative in considering who knows who and may be able to get you a seat at the table with a desired sponsoring partner.

Additionally, programs need to recognize that building a solid relationship with an RA program often takes time. Using a few participants as a pilot may help both parties to identify what works and what doesn’t in identifying the qualities of the most successful referrals, the key strategies in making the transition from YouthBuild to the RA, in how both sides can best support the graduate as they embark in the RA. Learning from the successes and challenges of these first participants can guide the ways in which the longer term, more formalized partnerships are developed.

As high standards of work ethic, commitment and employability skills are essential, programs need to be deliberate about when they decide to move from an informal placement opportunity to a more formalized connection or partnership. As mentioned above, in rural communities reputations spread quickly, and a negative reputation can be hard to shake. It may take several strong placements to build credibility, but only one unsuccessful placement to tarnish the partnership for years. Focus on program standards and culture, before initiating the conversations of deeper partnership, and then start by sending only your strongest graduates. Once you have a handful of successful placements, a strong relationship and reputation, you may be able to open the opportunity up more widely and partners may be willing to “ take a chance” on a graduate who has a few more unknowns or levels of instability, but only after they know that your program is committed to and delivers a strong workforce development.

Finally as the relationship develops, continue to look for ways to deepen it. Can you bring some of the training into the program, so that more participants are ready to make the transition? Can some sort of industry mentorship be developed within the RA program to support the graduates as they move into this next step? Are their mutually beneficial grant or funding opportunities that you may want to pursue together, or ways to support the sponsors in understanding the needs of a diverse workforce where YouthBuild may be able to provide trainings or support to increase the employee retention for the sponsor overall? Having limited service providers, RA opportunities and sponsors or industry partners in a rural area means that all entities are pushed together to meet mutually beneficial needs and YouthBuild programs can position themselves in the center of this if the process is done deliberately and with intention.

**Ron:** Thank you so much Eliska. So wrapping up today I want to mention how labor market trends and employment statistics indicate that greater levels of preparation are required for today’s young people to be able to successfully access opportunities that pay living wages and can withstand the pressures and labor market changes inherent in our

global economy. Registered apprenticeship programs should be a part of the portfolio of

opportunities available to YouthBuild students.

**Marjorie:** We hope this recording will help YouthBuild programs take the first steps in building effective platforms and connections to registered apprenticeship as an important pathway to learning and work opportunities for YouthBuild graduates. Thank you so much Eliska and all who joined us for today’s recording. For more information on RA Want and find apprenticeship opportunities near you, visit the U.S. Department of Labor’s one-stop source for all things apprenticeship: [www.apprenticeship.gov](http://www.apprenticeship.gov).

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