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## ABA Quick Tips

### Getting Employer Buy-In

The purpose of this **Quick Tip** is to offer ABA grantees promising strategies to gain employer buy-in to engage and support Registered Apprenticeship programs (RAPs). One of the key objectives of ABA grants is to partner with employers who will in turn support and engage program participants in RAPs within their business. Some employer partners may have experience with RAPs, while others may have little to no experience. Below are quick tips that offer strategies to solicit engagement with employers with various level of experience with apprenticeship.

**Quick Tips** offer short, easy to use strategies, recommendations, and tips for Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) grantee consideration, exploration, and use. The tips and recommendations listed below draw from the expertise of ABA Technical Assistance Coaches, research, and grey literature (see references below).

#### Employers with Limited Knowledge or No Experience with Apprenticeships

To gain buy-in from employers with little experience with apprenticeships or RAPs, consider:

- ▶ **Offering concrete information to support employer participation.** Research is essential ahead of meetings to establish yourself as a partner committed to addressing the employer's workforce needs. Sources of information that you may rely on to support your initial engagements include industry association websites and journals, job postings, the company's website, the U.S. Department of Labor's apprenticeship and O\*NET websites, and social media. Use region-specific labor market information to outline career pathways and the anticipated growth of the employer's specific occupations to underscore RAP opportunities.
- ▶ **Communicating how the benefits of apprenticeship meet the specific needs of the employer.** Employers will be more inclined to consider a RAP once they understand the value of apprenticeships. Explain how combined training and employment through a RAP can meet their talent-development demands, grow their business, improve productivity, and increase profitability.
- ▶ **Facilitating connections to local labor organizations, community colleges, technical schools, and community-based programs (CBOs).** Many communities already have the essential requirements of an apprenticeship system in place, so employers may not need to develop programs from scratch. Employers are more likely to buy-in when they understand partners' roles and the resources already available to support their potential RAP. Employers can rely on these partners for recruitment, to develop curricula and classroom instruction, and offer wraparound support to facilitate the successful entry and completion of program participants.
- ▶ **Connecting the employer to potential RAP sponsors.** To help new employers engage in RAPs identify non-traditional sponsors. One successful strategy is to link them to CBOs who can serve as RAP sponsors if the employer does not have the infrastructure or interest to do so. Employers can create formal agreements with RAP sponsors to ensure their programs meet state and federal requirements.

#### Employers with Moderate Apprenticeship Experience

To gain buy-in from employers that have some experience with apprenticeship, such as industry recognized apprenticeships but perhaps not RAPs, consider:

- ▶ **Listening to feedback from the employer.** Discuss the employer's experiences within the industry and on-the-job training. Infuse this feedback into the work you are proposing to do with the employer to show how you are both building upon their successes as well as adding value to instruction, delivery methods, and training. Involve the



employer in the RAP design from the start. This assures program elements meet the needs of the employer and apprentices and respond to changing economic conditions.

- ▶ **Providing non-employment services to employers to acclimate to RAP requirements.** Help remove administrative barriers by creating a framework to support the employer and capture program data. Tools such as templates and processes for wage progression, RAP requirements, technical instruction, and reporting are helpful to new employers and sponsors.
- ▶ **Reviewing the rigor and relevance of pre-apprenticeships and other onboarding activities.** The key to a successful RAP is ensuring the right candidates are selected for the program. Develop a candidate selection philosophy to help ensure qualified, accountable candidates are recruited and selected for the RAP. Assure career and technical training requirements of pre-apprenticeships and other onboarding activities meet the needs of the employer for appropriate referrals and success.

## Employers with RAP Experience

To gain buy-in from experienced employers, consider:

- ▶ **Sharing information with employers about the resources and funding streams available to create and expand RAPs.** Early on, apprenticeship programs can be costly, and employers may struggle with sustainability. Be knowledgeable about funding for RAPs, local partnerships to broaden financial support, grants, tuition reimbursements, and hiring incentives for employers.
- ▶ **Calculating the return on investment (ROI).** Employers that use registered apprenticeships to recruit and train employees achieve a significant ROI. When ROI data is collected and used to evaluate the apprenticeship program, the highlighted benefits can lead to continued and expanded RAPs. Offer these qualitative and mathematical calculations on reports to enhance the employer relationship, speak to the needs of the business, and allow for improvements in the program.
- ▶ **Measuring success.** Apprenticeship programs must be flexible and address employers' workforce challenges. Continually monitor progress to assure that apprentices are completing the program and learning essential skills for success on the job and for the company. Start small with one or two specific occupations and measure success before expanding RAP offerings.

## References

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