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I. APPRENTICESHIP BASICS

1. What is Registered Apprenticeship?

Most Americans are familiar with the concept of an apprenticeship: the apprentice, or trainee, works for a period of time under the guidance of a mentor or expert in a field, gradually accumulating knowledge, skills and hands-on competency. Another way to think of it would be the opportunity to “earn while you learn” in a structured environment.

Apprenticeships are innovative work-based learning and post-secondary “earn and learn” models that meet national standards for registration with the U.S. Department of Labor or federally-recognized State Apprenticeship Agencies. Registered Apprenticeships connect job seekers looking to learn new skills with employers looking for qualified workers, resulting in a workforce with industry-driven training and employers with a competitive edge.

The Registered Apprenticeship system has been meeting the needs of America’s skilled workforce for over 75 years. It is a unique, flexible training system that combines job-related technical instruction with structured on-the-job learning. Registered Apprenticeship is a leader in preparing American workers to compete in the 21st century global economy, because the system keeps pace with advancing technologies and innovations in training and human resource development.

The Registered Apprenticeship system provides the opportunity for workers seeking high-skilled, high-paying jobs and for employers seeking to build a qualified workforce. In this regard, the Registered Apprenticeship system effectively meets the needs of both employers and workers.

Registered Apprenticeship helps mobilize America’s workforce with structured, on-the-job learning in traditional industries such as construction and manufacturing, and it is also instrumental in the training and development of new/emerging industries such as healthcare, information technology, telecommunications, energy, and homeland security.

2. How is an apprenticeship different from other job training, education and work-based training programs?

To start, apprentices receive a paycheck from day one that is guaranteed to increase as their training, knowledge, skills and abilities progress. Apprenticeships, which can last from one to six years, also connect education and work simultaneously: apprentices gain industry-recognized credentials, and – in many cases – college credits that can lead to an associate or bachelor’s degree.

Finally, apprenticeship programs provide on-the-job learning and job-related instruction. The on-the-job learning is conducted in the work setting under the direction of an experienced mentor.

3. Is an apprenticeship a job?

Yes, apprentices start working from day one with steady wage increases as they become more proficient. The average starting wage for an apprentice is \$16.50 per hour.

4. How does a worker qualify for a Registered Apprenticeship program?

Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors identify the minimum qualifications to apply for a program. The eligible starting age can be no less than 16 years of age; however, individuals must usually be 18 years of age to be an apprentice in hazardous occupations.

Program sponsors also identify additional minimum qualifications, such as education and ability to physically perform the essential functions of the job. All applicants are required to meet the minimum qualifications. Based on the selection method used by the sponsor, additional qualification standards – such as aptitude tests, interviews, school grades or previous work experience may be included for qualification.

5. What occupations can workers train for through Registered Apprenticeship?

Nationwide, there are Registered Apprenticeship programs in over 1,000 occupations and that number continues to grow. While 75 years ago the apprenticeship system started in construction and other skilled trades, today there are apprenticeships for careers in the healthcare, information technology, advanced manufacturing, transportation and logistics, and energy industries.

For a list of apprenticeship occupations, please visit <http://www.doleta.gov/OA/occupations.cfm>.

6. Where can I find Registered Apprenticeship programs?

You can visit http://www.doleta.gov/oa/apprentices_new.cfm to view the apprenticeship programs in your area.

II. BENEFITS OF APPRENTICESHIP

1. How much money can an apprentice earn?

Apprentices earn competitive wages, a paycheck from day one and incremental raises as skill levels increase. The average wage for a fully-proficient worker who completes an apprenticeship translates to approximately \$59,900 annually. Apprentices who complete their program earn approximately \$300,000 more over their career than non-apprenticeship workers.

2. How does a Registered Apprenticeship program benefit employers?

First and foremost, apprenticeship sponsors develop highly-skilled employees. Once established, apprenticeship programs also reduce turnover rates, increase productivity, lower the cost of recruitment and increase safety in the workplace.

Some of the other benefits include:

- ✓ Customized training, resulting in highly-skilled employees trained to industry/employer specifications
- ✓ Increased knowledge transfer, due to on-the-job learning from an assigned mentor, combined with related technical instruction
- ✓ Enhanced employee retention: 87% of program completers in 2011 were still employed nine months after completing their apprenticeship
- ✓ Emphasis on safety training that may reduce worker compensation costs
- ✓ A stable and predictable pipeline of qualified workers
- ✓ A systematic approach to training that ensures employees are trained and certified to produce at the highest skill levels required for the occupation
- ✓ The ability to conduct a ready assessment of continuous improvement
- ✓ A proven training model that allows employers to set the benchmark and structure for Return on Investment of training dollars

Finally, involvement in Registered Apprenticeship results in tax benefits and workforce development grants in some states.

3. How does Registered Apprenticeship benefit individuals?

From Day One, apprentices receive a paycheck that is guaranteed to increase as their training progresses. Apprentices also complete a combination of industry-specific related instruction and hands-on training at the job site leading to nationally-recognized, portable certifications. **Other specific benefits include:**

- ✓ **Hands-on career training:** As an apprentice, you will receive practical on-the-job training in a wide selection of programs, such as health care, construction, information technology and geospatial careers

- ✓ **An education:** You'll receive hand-on training resulting in improved skills and competencies as well as the potential to earn college credit, even an associate or Bachelor's degree, in many cases paid for by your employer
- ✓ **A career:** Once you complete your apprenticeship, you will be on your way to a successful long-term career with a competitive salary, and little or no educational debt
- ✓ **National industry certification:** When you graduate from a career training program, you will be certified and can take your certification anywhere in the United States

4. **How does Registered Apprenticeship benefit states, regions and communities?**

Registered Apprenticeship programs result in a more highly-skilled workforce. Nationally-certified employees give your state, region or community a competitive edge, attract companies, increase wages and ultimately increase tax revenue. Because apprentices pay income tax on their wages, it is estimated that every dollar the federal government invests in Registered Apprenticeship yields more than \$50 in revenues.

5. **Do you earn college credit while participating in a Registered Apprenticeship program?**

Today, Registered Apprenticeship opportunities include on-the-job training and related instruction, provided by apprenticeship training centers, technical schools, community colleges and even distance learning. Often Registered Apprenticeship sponsors work directly with community colleges that ultimately provide college credit for apprentices.

III. APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND MODELS

1. Who operates Registered Apprenticeship programs?

Every Registered Apprenticeship program has a “sponsor”. The sponsor is responsible for the overall operation of the program. Sponsors are often a single business or a consortium of businesses. They can also be a range of workforce intermediaries, including an industry association or a joint labor-management organization. Community colleges, workforce organizations, and community-based organizations can also serve as sponsors for Registered Apprenticeship programs. Regardless of who serves as the sponsor, Registered Apprenticeships are always employer-driven and employers are involved throughout the process.

Today, there are nearly 29,000 sponsors representing more than 250,000 employers, including UPS, the United States Military Apprenticeship Program, Werner Enterprises, CVS/Caremark Pharmacy – and many others.

2. Are all Registered Apprenticeship programs union-based?

No. Registered Apprenticeship is used widely across all industries and sponsors of apprenticeship can include joint labor management organizations, labor organizations, employers, colleges, industry associations, government and the military.

3. What are the requirements for Registered Apprenticeship?

- ✓ Registered Apprenticeship programs provide a structured process for moving an apprentice with little or no skill in an entry-level position to full occupational proficiency. These programs must meet requirements set under the National Apprenticeship Act designed to protect the welfare of the apprentice.
- ✓ Every Registered Apprenticeship program has a sponsor that is responsible for the overall operation of the program. Upon finishing the program, an apprentice earns a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship – an industry-issued, nationally-recognized credential that validates proficiency in an occupation.

4. What are the different designs of Registered Apprenticeship programs?

Time-Based occupations require a minimum of 2,000 program hours, which includes an outline of the specific work processes and the approximate time requirement for each individual work process under that occupation.

Competency/Performance-Based

The competency-based approach measures skill acquisition through the individual apprentice’s successful demonstration of acquired occupational skills and knowledge, as verified by the program sponsor or by a third party. Programs utilizing this approach require apprentices to complete an on-the-job learning component of Registered Apprenticeship. The occupational program standards must address how on-the-job learning will be integrated into the program,

describe competencies, and identify an appropriate means of testing and evaluation for such competencies.

In competency/performance-based programs, apprentices may accelerate the rate of competency achievement, or take additional time beyond the expected time of completion or attainment – due to the open entry and exit design of the program. Competency is defined as, “An observable, measureable pattern of skills, knowledge, abilities, behaviors and other characteristics that an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully.”

Competency/performance-based training programs have the following characteristics:

- ✓ Competencies are identified and defined through a job/task analysis, and directly related to the job/role
- ✓ Organized learning activities must be structured and, wherever possible, self-paced with open entry and open exit
- ✓ Measures or tests of competency attainment should be observable, repeatable and agreed to in advance

Hybrid Program Requirements

A third alternative has evolved which, in effect, is a "hybrid" of the two types of programs previously mentioned. This third type of program is basically a combination of time and performance considerations where work processes are developed with a minimum - maximum time/hours for each task or job requirement (i.e., minimum 200 hours, maximum 400 hours).

5. How long are Registered Apprenticeship programs?

The length of an apprenticeship program depends on the complexity of the occupation and the type of program the sponsor chooses. Apprenticeship programs range in length from one year to six years – the majority of programs are four years in length. During the program, the apprentice receives both structured, on-the-job training (OJT) and job-related instruction. For each year of the apprenticeship, the apprentice typically receives 2,000 hours of on-the-job training and at least 144 hours of classroom instruction.

6. What does it mean to provide mentoring and supervision? Does this mean employers have to provide both a mentor and a separate supervisor?

The distinctions between a mentor and supervisor are dependent on the structure of the industry. The requirement for apprenticeship is for the apprentice to learn from an experienced and fully proficient worker (or journey worker). This can take multiple forms: either a mentor who is an experienced worker, a supervisor with experience working in the field, or a combination of both. There is no requirement for both a mentor and supervisor. Each program should ensure the on-the-job learning opportunities appropriate for the industry while making sure the apprentice learns from an experienced worker.

7. What does it mean to provide 2,000 hours of OJT?

Structured on-the-job training is provided as part of an apprentice's employment. This is not an additional requirement beyond the individual's regular job duties. Instead, it reflects the expectation that what they learn on the job is thoughtful and structured, leading to the apprentice's full proficiency of the job.

8. What does it mean to provide a recommended 144 hours of related instruction?

Similar to the OJT requirement, this is an expectation that the apprentice learns the theoretical and other requirements for the job. Employers can develop their related technical instruction program by building off their existing training requirements and delivery methods. Employers may also supplement this instruction with community college or other training providers. There is no requirement for all related technical instruction to be above and beyond what the employer already provides his/her workforce. However, employers are encouraged to review their existing training offerings and determine where there are gaps to fill to ensure the apprentice attains full proficiency of all key aspects of the job.

9. Does DOL only accept a ratio of 1:1 journey workers to apprentices for all industries?

These ratios are determined by industry, with DOL ensuring that the safety and welfare of the apprentice is protected. Typical ratios in the construction industry have been 1:1, but other ratios have been approved in other industries, based on consultation with key stakeholders from that industry.

10. What does an apprentice receive upon completion of a Registered Apprenticeship program?

After completion of an apprenticeship program, the apprentice earns a nationally-recognized credential from the U.S. Department of Labor that is portable and stackable. This means that other employers in that industry will recognize its value and that the apprentice can build on its foundation to further their knowledge and education. Additionally, an apprentice that completes an apprenticeship may be elevated to journey worker status – leading to increased pay and upward career opportunities.

IV. BUSINESS AND PARTNER ROLES

1. What is an employer's role in Registered Apprenticeship?

Employers play an indispensable role in any Registered Apprenticeship program. There cannot be apprenticeship without an employer. Employers drive an apprenticeship program design and provide the on-the-job training component of an Apprenticeship program. Apprenticeship programs must provide evidence of employer engagement and involvement.

An individual business or an employer association usually sponsors a Registered Apprenticeship, sometimes in partnership with a labor organization. These "industry sponsors" of apprenticeships may include larger employers, labor-management organizations or the military. Industry sponsors make significant investments – an estimated \$1 billion per year – to design and execute Registered Apprenticeship programs, provide jobs to apprentices, oversee training development and provide hands-on learning and technical instruction for apprentices.

The benefits of sponsoring apprenticeships are that employers get a highly-skilled workforce with higher productivity, high morale and lower turnover.

2. What is the role of government in Registered Apprenticeships?

The Office of Apprenticeship in the U.S. Department of Labor works with State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAAs) to administer the program nationally. These registration agencies are responsible for:

- Registering apprenticeship programs that meet federal and state standards
- Protecting the safety and welfare of apprentices
- Issuing nationally-recognized and portable Certificates of Completion to apprentices
- Promoting the development of new programs through marketing and technical assistance
- Assuring that all programs provide high quality training
- Assuring that all programs produce skilled, competent workers

3. Who are typical Registered Apprenticeship partners?

Through a proven system of public-private partnerships, Registered Apprenticeship involves a wide range of organizations, including (but not limited to):

- Businesses, employers and industry associations
- Labor and joint labor-management organizations
- State and local workforce development agencies
- State and local workforce Investment Boards
- Two- and four-year colleges that offer associate and Bachelor's degrees
- U.S. Military
- Community-based organizations
- Economic development organizations

4. What is the link between Registered Apprenticeship and the workforce development system?

The 21st century economy demands a workforce with postsecondary education credentials, and the adaptability to respond immediately to changing economic and business needs. The public workforce system plays a leadership role in meeting these demands through innovative talent development and lifelong learning strategies that enable American workers to advance their skills and contribute to employers' success in the global economy.

Registered Apprenticeship, which is available in every state in the country, is an important component of these talent development strategies. The model is business- and industry-driven, and provides a means for employers in high-growth industries to overcome the shortage of skilled workers – now and in the foreseeable future. Full collaboration between the public workforce system and Registered Apprenticeship leverages each system's strengths to maximize the benefits for talent development strategies.

V. REGISTRATION OF APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

1. What are the advantages of registering my company's apprenticeship program with the U.S. Department of Labor?

Apprenticeship programs develop highly-skilled employees that provide value for employers. These programs have been shown to: reduce turnover rates; increase productivity by developing custom skill sets; lower the cost of recruitment; increase workplace safety and create a stable pipeline of highly-trained workers.

Registration of an apprenticeship program also provides for:

- **Technical Assistance and Support.** The program joins the Registered Apprenticeship system, which provides access to a nationwide network of expertise, customer service, and support at no charge.
- **National Credential.** Graduates of Registered Apprenticeship programs receive a national, industry-recognized credential.
- **Quality Standards.** Registration means the program has met national and independent standards for quality and rigor. Registration tells prospective employees, customers and suppliers that you invest in your workforce and that you believe your employees are your most important asset!
- **Tax Credits.** In many states, businesses can qualify for tax credits related to apprenticeship programs. In addition, employers may be able to claim some expenses for training as a federal tax credit.
- **Federal Resources.** Businesses and apprentices can access funding and other resources from many federal programs to help support their Registered Apprenticeship programs.

2. Where can I find technical assistance resources to help me develop and register my apprenticeship program with the U.S. Department of Labor?

The U.S. Department of Labor maintains a number of web-based resources available at <http://www.doleta.gov/oa/employers>. On that site you will find the newest technical assistance products, including the [Quick Start Toolkit](#), which provides helpful steps and resources to start and register an apprenticeship program. The site also contains the [Federal Resources Playbook](#), which provides information on using other Federal funds and resources to support your registered apprenticeship program.

**For more information on Registered Apprenticeship,
please visit www.dol.gov/apprenticeship**