

# What is Registered Apprenticeship?

## **Introduction**

The Registered Apprenticeship system has been utilized to meet 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 experiences. Registered Apprenticeship is a leader in preparing American workers to compete in a global 21st Century 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 is highly active in traditional industries such as construction and manufacturing, but it is also instrumental in the training and development of emerging industries such as healthcare, energy, and homeland security.

## **It's an Immediate Job**

Apprentices start working from day one with incremental wage increases as they become more proficient on the job. Apprenticeships range from one to six years, but the majority are four years in length. In 2011, more than 130,000 individuals nationwide became apprentices.

## **It's On-the-Job Learning and Education**

The "Earn and Learn" training model of Registered Apprenticeship provides a unique combination of structured learning with on-the-job training from an assigned mentor. Related instruction, technical training or other certified training is provided by apprenticeship training centers, technical schools, community colleges, and/or institutions employing distance and computer-based learning approaches. The goal is to provide workers with advanced skillsets that meet the specific needs of employers.

## **It's a Credential**

Upon completion of a Registered Apprenticeship program, participants receive an industry issued, nationally recognized credential that certifies occupational proficiency, is portable, and can provide a pathway to the middle class. In many cases, these programs provide apprentices with the opportunity to simultaneously obtain secondary and post-secondary degrees. In 2011, over 55,000 participants nationwide graduated from a Registered Apprenticeship program.

## What are the Advantages of Registered Apprenticeship?

The Registered Apprenticeship system provides a wide array of benefits.

For apprentices, benefits include:

- **Improved skills and competencies** that meet the specific needs of the employer
- **Incremental wage increases** as their skills improve
- **On-the-job training** and occupation focused education
- **Career advancement**
- **Industry issued, nationally recognized credentials**
- **Articulation agreements** between certain apprenticeship training programs and 2- and 4-year colleges that create opportunities for college credit and future degrees

For employers, benefits include:

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

## What is the Role of the Government?

The Office of Apprenticeship (OA) works in conjunction with independent State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAAs) to administer the program nationally. These 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

### **What are the Program's Requirements?**

Registered Apprenticeship programs are a written plan designed to move an apprentice from a low or no skill entry-level position to full occupational proficiency. These programs must meet parameters established under the National Apprenticeship Act that are designed to protect the welfare of the apprentice. The Act and its promulgating regulations are administered by the Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship or a State Apprenticeship Agency approved by the Secretary of Labor for federal purposes.

A Registered Apprenticeship program is sponsored by an individual business or an employer association and may be partnered with a labor organization through a collective bargaining agreement. Upon finishing the training program, an apprentice earns a "Completion of Registered Apprenticeship" certificate, an industry issued, nationally recognized credential that validates proficiency in an apprenticeable occupation.

Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors identify the minimum qualifications to apply into their apprenticeship program. The eligible starting age can be no less than 16 years of age; however, individuals must usually be 18 to be an apprentice in hazardous occupations. Program sponsors may also identify additional minimum qualifications and credentials to apply, e.g., education, ability to physically perform the essential functions of the occupation, and proof of age. Based on the selection method utilized by the sponsor, additional qualification standards, such as fair aptitude tests and interviews, school grades, and previous work experience may be identified.

**NOTE:** This information has been cross-posted on Wikipedia. A DOL employee and representative of the Office of Apprenticeship was the original author of both the Wikipedia article and this webpage.