



2025 APPRENTICESHIP ILLINOIS BOOTCAMP

From Outreach to Impact: Building Strong Foundations and Developing Expertise

OCTOBER 8-9, 2025

8:30AM-5:00PM

**MORaine VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
BUILDING M
9000 WEST COLLEGE PKWY PALOS HILLS, IL**

PRESENTED BY:



Illinois
Department of Commerce
& Economic Opportunity
OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING
JB Pritzker, Governor



Northern Illinois
University

WORKFORCE
POLICY LAB

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APPRENTICESHIP BOOTCAMP 2025

DAY 1

10/8/25



Registration & Coffee (Main Hall)

8:30 AM - 10 AM

Pre-Conference: Apprenticeship 101 (Upstairs)

9 AM - 9:50 AM

This introductory session led by **Apprenticeship Illinois TA Manager Nate Carlson** will cover the seven components of registered apprenticeship programs and what is needed to register an apprenticeship program with the US Department of Labor.

Welcome Address, State Updates, & Funding Opportunities

10 AM - 11:05 AM

DCEO Deputy Director **Julio Rodriguez** will formally kick off this year's bootcamp before being joined by **Whitney Thompson (ICCB)** for a discussion of current state initiatives and funding opportunities related to work-based learning.



Strategies for Successful Employer Engagement

11:05 AM - 12 PM

Will County **Apprenticeship Specialist John Hall** will share key insights on employer engagement from the field, including case studies of successful programs registered and expanded in the healthcare sector.



Networking Lunch & Apprenticeship IL Tax Credit Overview

12 PM - 1 PM

12:30 PM - 1 PM



Rotating Table Topics & Town Hall Discussion

1 PM - 2:30 PM

TA Program Manager Nate Carlson will lead a series of in-depth table discussions of key topics in the work-based learning and apprenticeship ecosystem, culminating in a Town Hall-style forum where participants can ask questions, elevate opportunities and barriers, and share insights with the full group of attendees.

Afternoon Break Period

2:30 PM - 2:45 PM



Scaling Employer Engagement for Registered Apprenticeship Success

2:45 PM - 4:45 PM

This interactive training session led by **Safal Partners' Apprenticeship Subject Matter Expert Angela Baker** will use a mix of best practices, data-driven examples, and group discussion to equip attendees with practical tools for building sustainable and mutually beneficial employer partnerships.

APPRENTICESHIP BOOTCAMP 2025

DAY 2

10/9/25



Coffee & Networking (Main Hall)

8:30 AM - 9 AM

Day 2 Welcome, US Legislation/Policy Updates

9 AM - 10 AM

Dan Serota, Chair - IWIB Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Committee and VP - Government and Public Affairs at Aon will share national-level insights from his work in Washington, D.C. and his partnerships with leading national apprenticeship organizations, connecting those perspectives to Illinois' vision for expanding apprenticeships through the IWIB's WBLA Committee.

The State of Registered Apprenticeships in Illinois - A Data-Driven Perspective

10 AM - 10:45 AM

Brian Richard and Jennifer Foil from the NIU Workforce Policy Lab will present and unpack the state-level data on registered apprenticeships, providing attendees with a deeper understanding of the work-based learning landscape in Illinois.

Morning Break Period

10:45 AM - 11 AM

Implementing Train-the-Trainer to Increase Apprentice Retention in RAPs

11 AM - 12 PM

Bonnie Moore, Director for the Center of Business and Industry at Lake Land College leads this session on concepts and best practices for implementing Mentorship/Train-the-Trainer services in RAPs.

Networking Lunch

12 PM - 1 PM

LWIA 17's Business Services Coordinator RAP

1 PM - 1:50 PM

LWIA 17 Director Justin Arnold and Business Services Coordinator Taylor Black will discuss their RAP, designed to cultivate leadership talent in workforce development.

Afternoon Break Period

1:50 PM - 2 PM

Turning Big Ideas Into Action: Business Strategies and Operating a True Demand-Driven System

2 PM - 4 PM

This training led by **TAD Grants' Director of Training and Development Aaron Leson** will equip attendees with strategies to translate goals into outcomes. Participants will explore how to respond to labor market needs, foster partnerships across education and industry, and implement solutions that deliver results.

Apprenticeship Bootcamp Trivia & Closing

4 PM - 4:45 PM

Join us for a live trivia game on your smartphone or device for a chance to win prizes, followed by closing remarks from DCEO to wrap up another exciting year of the Apprenticeship Bootcamp.

APPRENTICESHIP BOOTCAMP 2025

Our Trainers & Presenters:



Daniel Serota is Vice President of Government and Public Affairs at Aon, a leading global professional services firm. Daniel creates meaningful and sustainable connections with a wide variety of stakeholders to further Aon's public service mission and community outreach activities. Daniel was appointed to the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board by Governor J.B. Pritzker of Illinois and sits as the chair of the Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Committee, which is focused on growth of apprenticeship programs in Illinois.



Julio Rodriguez is Deputy Director for the DCEO Office of Employment and Training (OET). Under Julio's leadership, OET has met or exceeded performance, developed nationally recognized sector-based training initiatives, secured 50 million additional federal dollars to support new programs, developed training policy to increase the number of individuals receiving credentials, and led a team that launched a successful initiative to expand the use of new technology in the workforce system.



Whitney Thompson serves as the Deputy Director for Workforce Education for the Illinois Community College Board. Whitney has worked at the agency in various roles for the last nine years. In her current capacity, she provides leadership to the community college system on workforce initiatives including postsecondary career and technical education, adult education, statewide program review and evaluation, and apprenticeship programming. Whitney is currently a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Administration program at Illinois State University.



Angela Baker has over 17 years of experience as a workforce development and registered apprenticeship subject matter expert (SME). She successfully sponsors registered apprenticeship programs in St. Louis, MO, and also works as an Apprenticeship SME for Safal Partners, a national industry intermediary. Angela leads the employer engagement and outreach efforts under Safal Partners' Department of Labor contract to develop and scale IT/cyber registered apprenticeship programs in the U.S.



Aaron Leson, Director of Training and Development at TAD Grants, is a nationally recognized expert in workforce and career development. With a focus on authentic communication and relationship-building, Aaron has trained thousands of professionals across the country to design systems that empower job seekers and meet employer demand. His work bridges policy and practice, helping organizations adapt to evolving legislation while staying rooted in community impact.



Sergio Talavera has been with DCEO as the Apprenticeship Tax Credit Program Manager since 2023. He has been a public servant for the good people of Illinois since 2017 alongside other ventures into the private sector. Previously, Sergio worked as a Community Outreach Coordinator and a Manager for the Cannabis R3 Program. He holds a Bachelor's in Business Administration from the University of Illinois and is currently pursuing an Associate's degree in Construction Management at Lincoln Land Community College.



Justin Arnold, Ph.D. is Director of the East Central Illinois Workforce Board and President of the Illinois Workforce Partnership, the state association of local boards. He convenes partners, manages workforce programs, and advances promising practices across Illinois.

APPRENTICESHIP BOOTCAMP 2025

Our Trainers & Presenters:



Bonnie Moore brings extensive experience in workforce development and apprenticeship program leadership to her role as the Director to the Center for Business & Industry at Lake Land College. With a deep commitment to bridging the skills gap, she has been instrumental in developing and expanding registered apprenticeship programs across multiple industries. Bonnie is passionate about equipping people with practical tools and strategies needed to effectively support the next generation of skilled workers, focusing on real-world application and measurable outcomes that benefit both apprentices and employers.



Taylor Black is the Business Services Coordinator for Champaign County Regional Planning Commission. He leads the local business services team and directs investments in customized training, on-the-job training, and other work-based learning strategies. He also serves as the region's Apprenticeship Specialist, partnering with Apprenticeship Illinois to expand apprenticeship opportunities.



John Hall is the Business Services Supervisor and Apprenticeship Specialist with the Workforce Investment Board of Will County, where he leads employer engagement, program development, and strategic workforce initiatives. In this role, he has spearheaded the creation and registration of multiple new Registered Apprenticeship Programs, including the AdventHealth Bolingbrook Nurse Residency Apprenticeship. With a background spanning both private industry and public service, John brings expertise in business development, workforce partnerships, and economic growth strategy.



Brian Richard, Ph.D., leads the NIU Workforce Policy Lab. At the WPL, his most recent work concentrates on the evaluation of state and local workforce development and training programs. Previously, Brian was an Assistant Professor in the Department of Economic and Workforce Development at the University of Southern Mississippi where he taught courses focused on research methods, economic development finance, and business recruiting and retention.



Jennifer Foil, Ph.D., is a Director at NIU's Workforce Policy Lab, where she collaborates with the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board on strategies to expand work-based learning and apprenticeships statewide. She leads efforts to strengthen partnerships among workforce, education, and economic development stakeholders and collaborates nationally with apprenticeship directors in other states to share best practices and scale innovation. Previously, Jennifer worked in the defense industry at Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding, supporting large-scale shipbuilding programs.



Nate Carlson is a proud team member with the NIU Workforce Policy Lab, where he leads the development and delivery of training and technical assistance for the Apprenticeship Illinois grant programs. He specializes in translating complex policy into actionable programs, ensuring compliance and high engagement among grantees. Nate brings a proven track record in workforce development and collaborative stakeholder engagement from prior roles with Eastern Illinois University and Local Workforce Area 23, where he cultivated partnerships and designed training programs that connected business needs with accessible work-based learning.



Julio Rodriguez (DCEO-OET) and Whitney Thompson (ICCB)
State-Level Updates

Insights Gained:

What did you learn that was new/surprising/useful?

Key Takeaways:

What are 2-3 ideas, strategies, or resources you want to remember?

Action Steps:

What will you apply in your work? List specific actions you plan to implement.

Support Needed:

What resources, connections, or tools would help you put this into practice?

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John Hall (LWIA 10 - Will County)
Strategies for Successful Employer Engagement

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Sergio Talavera (DCEO)
Apprenticeship Illinois Tax Credit Overview

Insights Gained:

What did you learn that was new/surprising/useful?

Key Takeaways:

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Angela Baker (Safal Partners)
Scaling Employer Engagement for Registered Apprenticeship Success

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Daniel Serota (Aon / IWIB WBLA)
US Legislation/Policy Updates

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Brian Richard and Jennifer Foil (NIU Workforce Policy Lab)
The State of Registered Apprenticeships in Illinois -
A Data-Driven Perspective

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Bonnie Moore (Lake Land College)
Implementing Train-the-Trainer to Increase Apprentice Retention in RAPs

Insights Gained:

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Justin Arnold & Taylor Black (Champaign County)
LWIA 17's Business Services Coordinator RAP

Insights Gained:

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Key Takeaways:

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Aaron Leson (TAD Grants)
Turning Big Ideas Into Action:
Business Strategies and Operating a True Demand-Driven System

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