



Employer Playbook

April 2024



The Problem: High Cost of Staff Turnover

The Solution: Registered Apprentices have a 90-93% retention rate post-completion.

The Problem: Aging Workforce

The Solution: Apprenticeship Mentors pass down their knowledge to the next generation of workers for ideal succession planning.

The Problem: Lack of Skilled Applicants

The Solution: In Apprenticeship, organizations invest in internally cultivating skilled workers with \$1.50 on the Dollar ROI.

The Problem: Lack of Credentialed Talent

The Solution: Apprenticeship allows employers to upskill entry-level workers into high-skills, high-vacancy positions.

**Registered Apprenticeship Programs:
A Modern Workforce Solution**

Welcome!

As chair of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Apprenticeship Committee, it is my privilege to welcome you to the Apprenticeship Illinois Employer Playbook.

There has never been a better time to learn about the exciting possibilities presented by Registered Apprenticeship Programs, both in Illinois and across the country. A recent Department of Labor study found that the average return-on-investment for apprenticeship employers is nearly **\$1.50 on the dollar**; a metric that's become increasingly important as the ability to meet and build capacity has come to define a business's success or failure. With more and more employers facing difficulties in hiring and retaining skilled workers, the ability to internally cultivate talent represents one of the greatest investment opportunities for employers of all sizes and sectors.

Whether you're an industry leader or an up-and-coming small business looking to break new ground, we hope the information in this guide empowers your organization to explore, discover, and ultimately pursue the immense possibilities represented by the registered apprenticeship model.

From our dedicated Apprenticeship Specialists working tirelessly in the field to help develop and register your program, to our inspiring Apprenticeship Ambassadors sharing their successes as employer mentors and skilled workers, the Apprenticeship Illinois Team is here to help you and your organization every step of the way.

Yours in earning and learning,

Daniel Serota



What is a Registered Apprenticeship?

When we hear “apprenticeship”, we are undoubtedly reminded of ancient stone masons, medieval blacksmiths, and modern-day trade labor organizations where knowledge is passed down from a wizened mentor to a dedicated learner (we may even picture mythical knights in galaxy far, far away!) But despite these historical connotations however, registered apprenticeship is a robust and modern framework for cultivating skilled talent across all sectors and industries. There are over 1,300 different occupations recognized by the U.S. Department of Labor as being apprenticeable—everything from accounting to zoology!

Simply put, if there is a role in your organization that requires some degree of high-skills training, that role can be apprenticed. So, what does that mean, and what differentiates registered apprenticeship from existing models such as internships and extended onboarding processes?

1. Registered apprenticeships are all about earning and learning.

Registered apprenticeship is a paid training model which combines on-the-job mentorship with classroom learning as apprentices work towards expert-level competencies and wages. Apprentices receive a high-quality education in the classroom and on the job that allows them to put theory into practice as they develop the skills necessary to thrive in their chosen career. For the apprentice, this model provides a proven pathway to career success that is oftentimes debt-free and provides competitive wages. For the employer, this model provides the ability to make a worthwhile investment in cultivating and retaining skilled talent.

2. Registered apprenticeships are an employer-driven workforce solution.

The phrase “DOL-Registered” often conjures up images of endless paperwork and inefficient bureaucracy in the minds of employers. Fortunately, these preconceived notions of regulation and drudgery are a deeply inaccurate portrayal of a model that is at its cornerstone, driven by the needs of employers. While minimum requirements exist for the number of classroom training hours an apprentice must receive and on-the-job hours they must complete to reach journeyworker status, nearly every facet of an apprenticeship program’s design is completely customizable; from the competencies apprentices work towards to the coursework they complete, employers control the development and execution of their apprenticeship.

3. Registered apprenticeship empowers communities and strengthens organizations.

In adopting an apprenticeship model that trains workers as they learn rather than requiring 4-year degrees or other credentials, employers can tap into diverse talent supplies in their surrounding communities that often go ignored or underutilized. This creates a wealth of opportunity not only for the apprentices themselves, but also for the employers, whose company culture is emboldened by increased diversity and the opportunity that arises among current staff to function as mentors for the next generation of skilled career seekers.

4. Registered apprenticeship is the future of work-based learning.

In the wake of COVID-19 pandemic, employers across the country have come to recognize the value of investing in registered apprenticeship. As a result, there has never been a better time to get involved as federal, state, and local municipalities begin to make investments in empowering employers and apprentices alike.

Components of DOL Registered Apprenticeships:

1. Employer Involvement

Neither Apprenticeship Illinois's apprenticeship specialists nor any DOL Representative will ever tell you what your apprenticeship must look like, what classes your apprentices must take, or what your apprentices must be paid. While the components below do include requirements, most decisions regarding registered apprenticeships are made entirely by the employer.

2. Paid Labor

Apprenticeships are a paid, usually full-time job from day one, and apprentices receive a progressive wage schedule that starts them at some percentage of the journeyworker/veteran worker wage for their role and has them work up towards that journeyworker wage as their skills and knowledge increase. Apprentices earn their wage increases by acquiring job competencies that are determined by their employer and evaluated by their on-the-job mentor. The progressive wage schedule rewards apprentices for their skill gains in real time, incentivizing retention and encouraging the pursuit of excellence. In programs where coursework is frontloaded such as in occupations like CDL or CNA, apprentices may not receive wages until their on-the-job learning starts if classroom time is not being compensated.

3. Mentorship

Apprentices are assigned an on-the-job mentor who they may job shadow, work alongside, and receive one-on-one training and guidance from. Mentors track apprentices' progress as they work through their occupational competencies over the course of their apprenticeship. Many training providers and community colleges may provide train-the-trainer curriculum to apprenticeship mentors to help ensure the quality of their feedback and instruction.

4. Supplemental Education

Apprentices must receive a minimum of 144 classroom hours of supplemental education per year of their apprenticeship. Most often, this training is provided by local community colleges or trade schools and is fully subsidized or reimbursed by the employer. Employers may select coursework or pathways from existing certificate/degree/licensing programs or work with an education provider to pursue a customized training option that meets their needs. Employers who fully fund their apprentices' education are eligible for a number of grant funding streams and tax credits.

5. Diversity

Apprenticeships are strengthened by the ability of all people to succeed regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and physical/mental disability. Programs are designed to reflect the communities in which they are based through strong non-discrimination, anti-harassment, and recruitment practices that ensure access, equity, and inclusion. Apprenticeship employers will complete an Affirmative Action Plan with the help and guidance of DOL staff within two years of registering their program.

6. Quality & Safety

Programs are reviewed by DOL to ensure the quality of outcomes for employers and apprentices. Additionally, employers establish a ratio of journeyworkers to apprentices for safety purposes that must be adhered to on all worksites. On prevailing wage worksites where this ratio is not upheld, apprentices will receive prevailing wage instead of their apprenticeship wage.

7. Credentials

Apprentices receive a nationally recognized Journeyworker certificate upon completion of their program. Many programs may provide additional certificates, licenses, or degrees based on the selected training curriculum.

Quick Start Guide: Getting Registered!

As your liaison to the Department of Labor and any education partners, your regional apprenticeship specialist¹ will help streamline the process of getting your apprenticeship program registered; a free concierge service that saves you the hassle and the paperwork!

There are 3 primary components needed to register an apprenticeship with DOL, which the Apprenticeship Illinois team refers to as “*The 3 C’s*”:

Competencies, Coursework, & Compensation!

1. Competencies (What skills will your apprentices need to acquire over the course of their training to be considered a competent journeyworker in their field?)
2. Coursework (What supplemental training will your apprentices receive from an accredited education provider to get the required 144 hours of instruction per year?)
3. Compensation (How much are your apprentices going to be paid as they progress through their training, and how will they earn their raises?)

When you submit your program to the Department of Labor, the document that contains these three pieces of information for each occupation you register is referred to as your **Program Standards**.

Because you can register as many different occupations as meets the needs of your organization, each separate occupation must have its own set of competencies, coursework, and compensation requirements. These are appended to your program standards and referred to as each occupation’s **Work Process Schedule**.

If this is beginning to sound like a worrying amount of paperwork—don’t worry! For every one of the 1,300+ apprenticeship occupations already registered with DOL, there is an existing template Work Process Schedule. This means that simply by knowing which occupations you’d like to provide an apprenticeship for, **up to 70% of the paperwork for your program has already been done for you!**

Simply let your apprenticeship specialist know what occupations you’re interested in and they will provide you with multiple templates that you can revise as needed, or feel free to browse for yourself at <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-occupations>

That takes care of the first C! Next, you’ll work with your specialist to select an education provider for your program.

¹ See Appendix for each county’s Apprentice Specialist and their contact information.

Partnering with an Educational Provider

As accredited training providers with strong connections to local K-12 districts and their surrounding communities, your local community colleges are oftentimes the best choice for providing the supplemental education required in your apprenticeship program.



To see which Illinois Community College Board district(s) your business falls within, visit the ICCB website at <https://www.iccb.org/system-information/college-district-maps/>

In addition to their existing certificate and degree programs, your community college may be able to help develop and provide customized training options, offer special class schedules/modalities to accommodate apprentices, and/or function as an **apprenticeship intermediary**. Intermediaries provide case management to apprentices throughout the course of their apprenticeship, so partnering with them ensures that you have assistance every step of the way once your program is registered.

Some community colleges may also function as **apprenticeship sponsors** for certain occupations, meaning that they are the entity legally responsible for your program and will handle all the paperwork from start to finish on your behalf. Regardless of whether you, another organization, or a training provider are the sponsor for your program, you still control the program's design and execution as the employer partner and are eligible for the associated funding streams and tax credits so long as you are incurring expenses on your apprentices' behalf.

Once you have provided your regional apprenticeship specialist with your business location and the occupations you are interested in developing programs for, they will research and present you with the credential/training providers in your area along with the associated costs and course schedules. These will include local community colleges, trade schools, third-party training providers, and accredited online training providers. As always, the final decision as to who supplies the classroom training for your apprenticeship is up to you as the employer.

That said, we would encourage you to look beyond costs when selecting the supplemental training for your program, as education costs can often be reimbursed through multiple grant funding streams, and programs which offer substantial credentials like certificates and two-year degrees are more likely to recruit and retain high-quality apprentices than those that do not.

Similarly, it is worth noting that employers are not required to pay wages for apprentices' classroom time, but doing so is considered a best practice and can take many forms (travel stipends, minimum pay rate for classroom hours, reimbursement upon receipt of good grades).

Once you have selected the coursework, only one C remains: compensation!

Rewarding Success: Building your Progressive Wage Schedule

In addition to the valuable mentorship opportunities and oftentimes debt-free education apprentices receive, one of the major boosts to apprenticeships' retention comes from the model's progressive wage schedule, which rewards apprentices for their skill gains as they earn and learn their way through their program.

Despite being simple on paper, employers often struggle to conceptualize or develop a progressive wage schedule that works for them; to alleviate that difficulty, here are some examples of what a simple wage schedule can look like for your apprenticeship program:

0-10 Competencies Completed (Starting)	\$15/Hr
10-20 Competencies Completed	\$17/Hr
20-30 Competencies Completed	\$20/Hr
45 Competencies Completed (Journeyworker)	\$25/Hr

0-1000 Hours Completed On-the-Job	\$17/Hr
1000-2000 Hours Completed On-the-Job	\$18/Hr
2000-3000 Hours Completed On-the-Job	\$20/Hr
Associates Degree Completed	\$23/Hr
Associate & Two Industry Certifications	\$28/Hr

To ensure that your program's wages are staying competitive for your state and region, visit the wage information page for your program's occupation at <https://www.onetonline.org/>

Local Wages

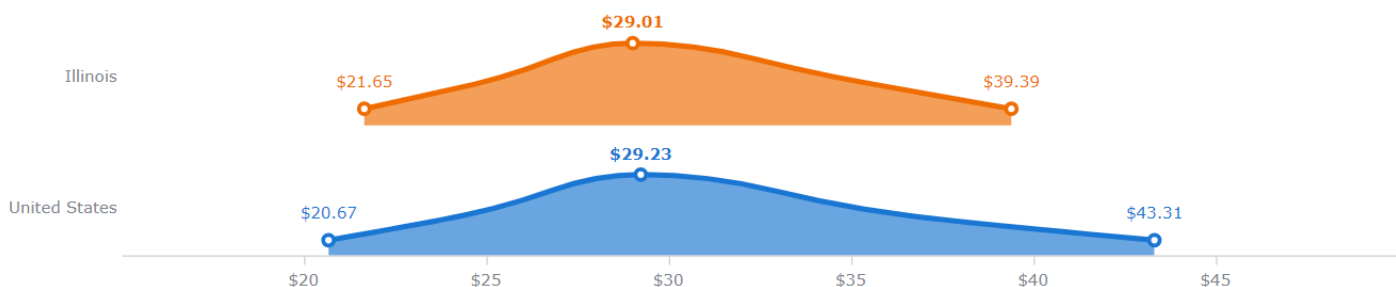
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Wages for state:

Wages near ZIP Code:

Annual Wages

Hourly Wages



Once you have determined the progressive wage schedule for your program, you have your third C! Your regional apprenticeship specialist will now have almost everything they need to submit your program to the Department of Labor for registration.

Finalizing Registration

Congratulations! You've conquered the 3 C's and now your program is ready for registration with the Department of Labor. Your regional apprenticeship specialist will need just a few more minor items of information to submit your program through the DOL's online portal, **Standards Builder**:

- Primary business address
- Number of local employees
- Contact information for whoever will handle program complaints/inquiries
- Specific hiring procedures that will be utilized for each candidate
- Any hiring requirements (Driver's License, Weight-Lifting Requirements, etc)
- Are you interested in opening your program up to other employers?
- Will classroom time be compensated?
- Is your program affiliated with a union? If so, which one?
- Will you allow your competency list to be available on apprenticeship.gov?

Once your specialist has this information, they will submit your completed program package to Standards Builder, where it will be reviewed by a DOL Apprenticeship and Training Representative, or ATR. While review time fluctuates based on the number of programs currently being submitted, this process usually takes 1-2 weeks.

Your region's ATR will ensure that everything is formatted correctly and either ask your specialist for any necessary revisions or will send an electronic copy of the finalized standards to your email address for electronic signature (Be sure to periodically check your spam folder from time to time to ensure the standards were not sent there!)

Once you have electronically signed and returned the finalized standards to your ATR, you will receive a physical copy of your standards along with an official program sponsor certificate to the address listed in your application. At this point, your apprenticeship is officially registered, and you can proceed with the recruitment, hiring, and onboarding of your apprentices.

While your apprenticeship specialist does not conduct the case management provided by intermediaries such as community colleges, local workforce areas, and non-profits, their services will continue to be available to you for any revisions you wish to make to your program in addition to helping you add additional occupations to your program as needed.

For information on uploading/submitting apprentice information or notifying DOL of apprentice completion, contact your ATR once your program has been fully registered.

Funding Basics: WIOA and the LWIA System

Background: In 2014, Congress passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). This legislation sets aside funds for each state to invest in workforce development. To ensure that all localities receive WIOA funds, Illinois is split into 22 regions called Local Workforce Investment Areas, or LWIAs. Each LWIA receives a portion of the WIOA funds that IL receives each year.

LWIAs are governed by Local Workforce Investment Boards, which are made up of local elected officials as well as area business leaders. LWIBs are aided by additional frontline staff members. At the state level, the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board provides guidance and leadership on statewide initiatives and grant programs.

There are two primary categories of services that LWIAs provide using WIOA funds: Business Services and Services for Individuals. Individuals who are determined to be WIOA-eligible receive personalized case management and support services, as well as paid training opportunities or debt-free career-focused education. WIOA Business Services include funding for employee upskilling, wage reimbursement for hiring WIOA participants, and zero cost opportunities to create a youth skills program/funded internship.

Funding for Apprenticeships:

LWIA Business Services can support apprenticeship through Incumbent Worker Training funds (IWT) and On-the-Job Training (OJT) funds. IWT funds are utilized in instances where an employer is using education as a means of upskilling a current employee so that they can receive a significant pay raise and/or promotion.

IWT funding takes the form of a reimbursement paid to your business following the completion of training; it requires a contract completed prior to the start of training as well as multiple forms of documentation (attendance sheets, proof of completion, proof of employee promotion/wage increase). IWT funding amounts and participation may vary.

For new-hire apprentices who are determined to be WIOA-eligible, wage reimbursement is available to employers during the initial stages of their apprenticeship.

Additionally, LWIAs are the primary recipients of Apprenticeship Illinois grant funds from the Department of Labor and may be able to provide you with funding assistance in addition to their regional apprenticeship specialist's concierge services. LWIAs who have not opted into the Apprenticeship Illinois grant will not have access to these additional funds, and we encourage employers to reach out to these non-participating areas and communicate how pursuing these funds would help support apprenticeship in their area.

Funding Basics: DCEO Apprenticeship Illinois Tax Credit

Effective January 1, 2020, employers are allowed a tax credit for qualified educational expenses associated with qualifying apprentices. Employers may receive a credit of up to \$3,500 per apprentice against the taxes imposed by subsections (a) and (b) of Section 201 of the Illinois Income Tax Act, and an additional credit of up to \$1,500 for each apprentice if (1) the apprentice resides in an underserved area or (2) the employer's principal place of business is located in an underserved area.

NOTE: The total tax credits issued by the Department under this program may not exceed \$5 million in any calendar year, which shall be allowed on a first-come first-served basis, based on the date on which each properly completed application is received by the Department.

Eligibility

- A qualifying apprentice must be: (a) an Illinois resident; (b) at least 16 at the close of the school year for which a credit is sought; (c) a full-time apprentice enrolled in an apprenticeship program registered with U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL), Office of Apprenticeship during the school year; and (d) employed by the taxpayer in Illinois.
- To register a program with the USDOL, companies should contact the USDOL, Office of Apprenticeship, cremeens-risinger.d@dol.gov.
- U.S. Department of Labor has the following website to support employers: <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/employers>; additional information specific to Apprenticeship Illinois Employers (illinoisworknet.com).
- Qualified educational expenses include tuition, book fees, and lab fees.
- A qualified school means any Illinois public or nonpublic secondary school that is: (a) an institution of higher education providing a program that leads to an industry-recognized postsecondary credential or degree; (b) an entity that carrying out programs registered under the federal National Apprenticeship Act; or (c) another public or private provider of a program of training services, which may include a joint labor-management organization.

Certification

- Employers must apply to the Department for certification.
- Employers must provide certain supporting information, including but not limited to: (s) the name, age, and taxpayer identification number of each qualifying apprentice employed by the taxpayer; (b) the amount of qualified education expenses incurred with respect to each qualifying apprentice, including supporting documentation; and the name of the school at which the qualifying apprentice is enrolled and the qualified education expenses are incurred.

Record Retention

An employer filing a return claiming the apprenticeship education expense credit shall maintain records of proof as to the education expenses paid for by the employer. The employer shall maintain the records for a period of not less than three years after the date the return on which the employer claimed the apprenticeship education expense credit was filed. Records maintained by the employer shall be subject to inspection by the Department and its duly authorized agents and employees.

For more information contact CEO.ApprenticeshipCredit@illinois.gov or visit the URL below.

<https://dceo.illinois.gov/expandrelocate/incentives/ilapprenticeshiptaxcredit.html>

Apprenticeship Terms Glossary

ATR – Apprenticeship and Training Representatives are the frontline staff for the DOL Office of Apprenticeship in Illinois. ATR’s work with your regional apprenticeship specialist to revise and approve your program submissions and are available to assist you before and after your program has been registered.

DCEO – The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is the recipient of the State Apprenticeship Expansion Funds (SAEF) grant program from the DOL and administers the Apprenticeship Illinois grant program along with IWIB.

DOL – The Federal Department of Labor is the regulating body for registered apprenticeships in Illinois through their Illinois Office of Apprenticeship (OA)

ICCB – The Illinois Community College Board governs community colleges throughout the state and is often the recipient of apprenticeship or work-based learning grants that can be used to support programs which utilize community colleges for training.

Intermediary – An apprenticeship intermediary is an entity which provides training and/or case management services for apprentices regardless of WIOA eligibility. Intermediaries may be community colleges, third-party training providers, industry associations, or other apprenticeship-facing organizations.

IWIB – The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board provides guidance and leadership on state apprenticeship initiatives through its Apprenticeship Committee, which is made up of employers and apprenticeship stakeholders from across the state.

IWT – Incumbent Worker Training funds may be utilized to support employers using apprenticeship as an upskilling mechanism for current entry or mid-level employees. IWT funds are reimbursement for training expenses and are administered by LWIAs as funding availability and local policy allow.

LWIA – A Local Workforce Investment Area is an entity responsible for the allocation of WIOA funds within a designated region of the state of Illinois. LWIAs are governed by a board of local employers and elected officials and many LWIAs have opted to receive Apprenticeship Illinois grant funds which allow for the hiring of a regional apprenticeship specialist.

Mentor – A mentor is the journeyworker/veteran employee designated by the employer to provide one-on-one training and guidance to an apprentice throughout the course of their apprenticeship. Mentors evaluate apprentices’ competencies and progress towards program completion.

OJT – On-The-Job Training funds are provided by LWIAs and encompass both the supportive services and employer wage reimbursement received for a WIOA-eligible new-hire apprentice.

Progressive Wage Schedule – All apprentices receive wage increases throughout their apprenticeship which reflect their skill gains as they work towards journeyworker-level pay. Each program sets the thresholds that must be met to earn these wage increases as part of registration, and this is referred to as the program’s Progressive Wage Schedule.

RAPIDS – The Registered Apprenticeship Partner Information Database System (RAPIDS) is the online platform where apprenticeship sponsors input apprentice information and report completion or non-completion to DOL.

Regional Apprenticeship Specialist – Regional Apprenticeship Specialists provide a free concierge service to employers looking to get involved with registered apprenticeship. Specialists provide consultation to employers, coordinate meetings with training providers and other stakeholders, advise on available grant and incentive funds, and submit the apprenticeship program for registration with DOL on the employer’s behalf.

RTI – Related Technical Instruction is the official term for the supplementary education that apprentices receive from an accredited training provider as a core component of their apprenticeship. Apprentices must complete 144 hours of RTI per year of their apprenticeship, though those hours may be frontloaded as in the case of credentialed occupations such as CNA or CDL.

Sponsor – An apprenticeship sponsor is the entity legally responsible for an apprenticeship program and its related documentation. Employers, community colleges, LWIAs, training providers, and non-profits can all act as apprenticeship program sponsors.

Standards Builder – Standards Builder is the online DOL platform for submitting apprenticeship programs for approval. A Login.gov account is required to access and utilize Standards Builder.

WIOA – The Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act is landmark federal bipartisan legislation from 2014 which sets aside funds for workforce development and training.

Work Process Schedule – The Work Process Schedule is the document that contains the majority of the information needed to register an apprenticeship program with the Department of Labor. It consists of a section listing the necessary competencies for a given occupation as well as the list of courses that apprentices will receive for their Related Technical Instruction.

Appendix: Specialists List

County	Regional Apprenticeship Specialist
Adams	Dirk Lefler, Dirk.Workforce@Gmail.com
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