



Apprenticeship Expansion Program Year 2025 Apprenticeship Specialists Kickoff

A conversation about
Advancing Apprenticeship Leadership and Impact

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Office of Employment and Training
July 16, 2025

Advancing Apprenticeship Leadership and Impact



- State vision and progress
- Elevating the Apprenticeship Specialist Role
- Identifying areas for support
- Call to Action
- Planned activities
- Q & A

QUESTION

Who's online today?

Daniel Serota

Chair, IWIB WBLA Committee
Aon VP, Gov't & Public Affairs
Co-Founder, Chicago
Apprentice Network





Illinois Workforce Innovation Board

Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Committee

WHAT IS IT?

Established 2016

An Employer-led coalition of Illinois stakeholders

WHAT DOES IT DO?

Advises the State on policy, practices, and use of funding to expand work-based learning and apprenticeship

Drives overall goals for Apprenticeship in IL

Aggregates input from stakeholders, designates Apprentice Ambassadors, conducts outreach work, produces research

HOW DO SPECIALISTS FIT IN?

Ultimate Goal – Create more opportunities for apprentices in family sustaining careers

Expand RAPs & WBL through Apprenticeship Specialists and Intermediaries

Apprenticeship Specialists embedded within Business Services Teams to address one of the largest barriers to expansion - Employer Participation

WHAT ARE THE LARGER GOALS?

Unify and align apprenticeship efforts across the state for greater impact

5-Year Plan Overarching Goals For State, Regions, & Local Areas

- **Goal 1:** Coordinate and Expand Services to Workers and Career Seekers
- **Goal 2:** Coordinate and Expand Services to Employers
- **Goal 3:** Coordinate and Expand Services to Education, Training, Workforce, and Economic Development Partners
- **Goal 4:** Planning and System Development



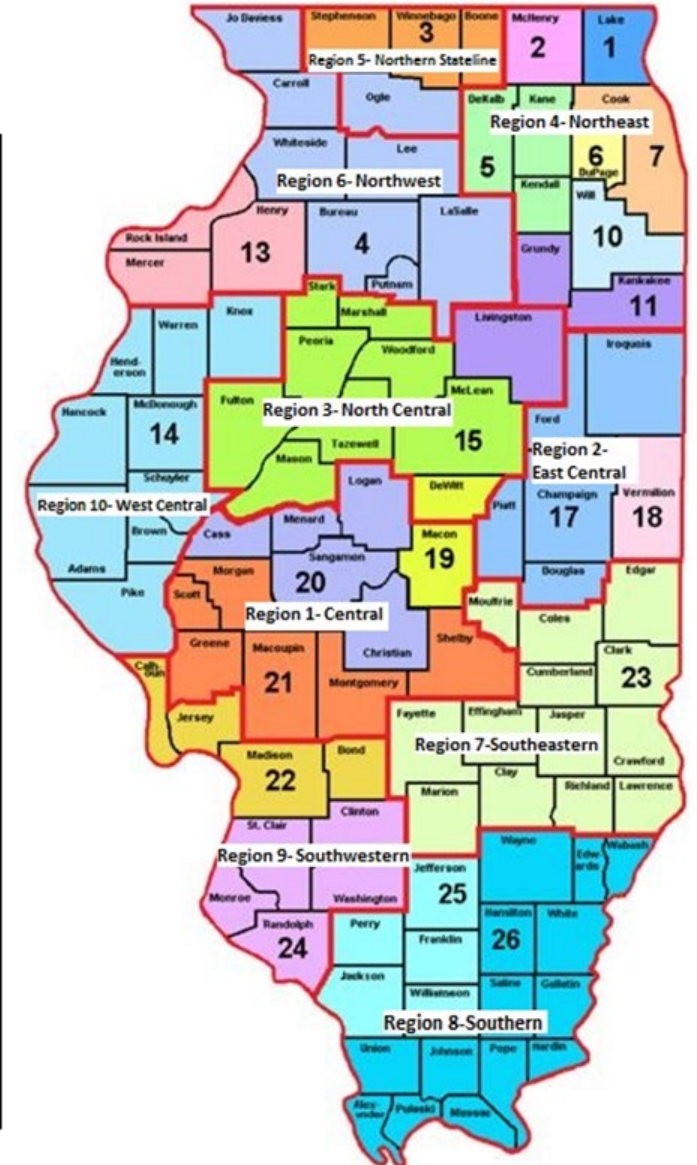


9 Years IWIB WBLA Committee

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Active Apprentices	14,160	14,920	16,356	17,711	17,502	17,543	19,388	20,668	21,934
New Apprentices	5,167	5,132	6,226	6,477	4,688	6,301	8,264	8,692	9,094
Construction Trades	3,819	3,783	4,594	4,794	3,417	4,331	5,565	6,114	5,823
% Construction Trades	74%	74%	74%	74%	73%	69%	67%	70%	64%
All Other	1,348	1,349	1,632	1,683	1,271	1,970	2,699	2,578	3,271
% All Other	26%	26%	26%	26%	27%	31%	33%	30%	36%

2025 Illinois Apprenticeship Specialists

LWIA	Grantee
1	Lake (and McHenry) County
3	The Workforce Connection
6	DuPage County
7	Chicago-Cook Workforce Partnership
10	Will County
13	Rock Island
15	Career Link
17	Champaign County
18	Danville/Vermillion County Works
20	Land of Lincoln
23	C.E.F.S.
25	ManTraCon



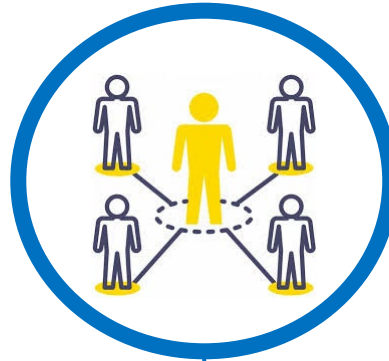
5-years USDOL SAEF Formula Funding ~\$7.7million Building the Impact



SAEF Round 1, 2023
~\$1.3 million
**Foundation &
Awareness**



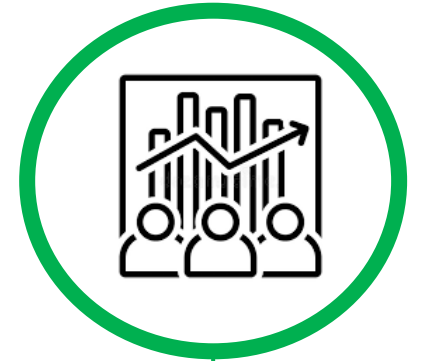
SAEF Round 2, 2024
~\$1.6 million
**Connection &
Collaboration**



SAEF Round 3, 2025
~\$1.6 million
**Ownership &
Leadership**



SAEF Round 4, 2026
~\$1.6 million
**Integration &
Influence**



SAEF Round 5, 2027
~\$1.6 million
**Sustainability &
Impact**

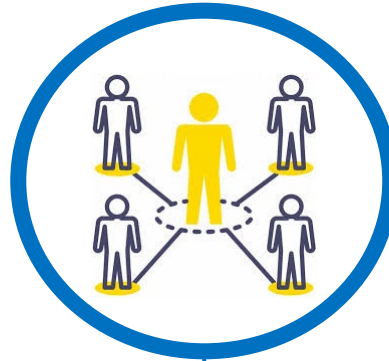
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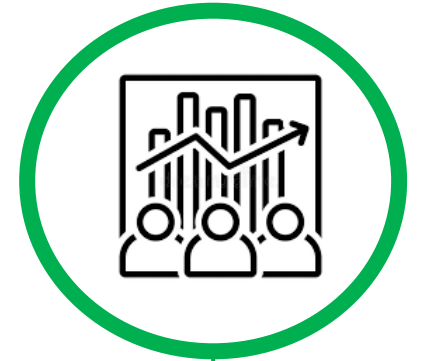
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SAEF Round 5, 2027
~\$1.6 million
Sustainability & Impact

Golden Opportunity Regional WBL and Apprenticeship Integration

- The federal landscape is uncertain – Illinois is a federally-run OA State
- Federal administration → apprenticeship as a driving tool in workforce development
- Federal Goal – 1 million active apprentices
- Possible 10% of funding allocated to RAPs
- Spring 2026 formal document submission requirement – Unified State Plan Mid-Point Modification



Apprenticeship Specialists and IBSTs

As an Apprenticeship Specialist, you're expected to...

- **Embed yourself in the region's IBST**
- **Help it function as a coordinated team**
- **Drive apprenticeship and WBL expansion**



**Own the Coordination.
Elevate the Service Standard.
Maximize the Impact.**

QUESTION

Do you feel like your regional partners either understands your role as an Apprenticeship Specialist or that your LWIA provides these services?

Lead with a Sector Lense Drive Greater Regional Impact Through Industry Alignment

WHY IT MATTERS

- Target **skill gaps** with coordinated, industry-informed solutions
- Create **consistent messaging** and **shared priorities** across partners
- Align apprenticeship with **regional economic goals** and employer demand

YOUR ROLE

- Be **plugged into regional sector strategies**, understand the landscape, trends, and key players
- Become the **go-to technical expert** on how apprenticeship supports sector growth
- Go beyond employers, **engage education, workforce, and economic development** partners to co-design solutions (IBST)

QUESTION

What's the biggest barrier to stronger collaboration with your IBST partners?

Raising the Bar

More Leadership, More Ownership, More Impact

- **Build a Seamless System.** Promote a “**no wrong door**” approach. No matter who the employers talk to first, they should be consistently routed to the right support.
- **Follow Through Relentlessly.** A lead is only as good as the follow-up.
- **Overcommunicate.** Don’t assume – check back! Ask: *Did you get what you needed?*
- **Close the loop.** One missed handoff can damage trust and credibility.
- **Treat outreach as opportunity.** Every inquiry is a chance to deliver value and build the system.
- **Set the bar high, then raise it.** Don’t just check boxes. Be the one who squeezes out the extra % that moves an employer from *interested* to *engaged*.

QUESTION

**How can the IWIB WBLA
Committee and the State support
better integration?**

ELEVATED PROGRAM ELEMENTS

REGIONAL EXPERTISE AND COORDINATION

Know Your Region, Build the Network

Be the go-to regional expert: own your region, know the landscape, bring people and ideas together, and lead with coordination, clear messaging, and action.



ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND ROLE INTEGRATION

Embedded, Empowered, Essential

Drive lasting impact.

Apprenticeship Specialists must be fully supported, deeply integrated into business service teams, aligned with regional priorities, and positioned as trusted guides.



Make work-based learning and apprenticeship a core service, not an afterthought.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

From First Contact to Program Launch

You're not just a connector, you're a builder.

Lead employers from interest to implementation, co-own the programs you help create, align training with real needs, and stay engaged every step of the way.



COLLABORATION AND NETWORK PARTICIPATION

Power of the Group – Locally and Statewide

Collaboration is impact.

Share what works, solve problems together, and show up for your region, your peers, and the state.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Always Learning, Always Leading

Lead through learning.

Be the regional expert, and help others become one, too.



REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Track. Report. Drive Impact.

Data tells the story.

...and you need both the numbers and the narrative. Use quantitative data to show progress, and qualitative insights to bring it to life.



It's Time to Level Up.
**Be More Than a Role, Be
a Regional Force.**

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QUESTION

What are some challenges you all have encountered in expanding apprenticeships and WBL?

Some Challenges Identified

- Aligning Strategies among all partners
- Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship outreach requires a multi-faceted skill set!
- Even within workforce development, people need to be “sold” on apprenticeship
- Digital infrastructure and data collection
- Different partners have different services, models, and priorities

QUESTION

What are some lessons you have learned along the way?

A Few Lessons Learned

- Employer hesitancy towards apprenticeship is reduced with comprehensive support
- Leadership matters
- On-going professional development is needed at different levels
- Relationships matter and they take time to build – one of the most important skill sets
- Consultative process – understanding sales, data analysis, policy, business models, economic trends
- Apprenticeships are the long game





Technical Assistance Goals

**Build Capacity. Strengthen Systems & Quality.
Advance Apprenticeship.**

- **Ensure consistent messaging** about registered apprenticeship across all grantees and their state/local partners.
- Empower grantees to effectively **communicate about, develop, and submit registered apprenticeships** to DOL for approval.
- Promote best practices for high-quality apprenticeship outcomes
- Facilitate collaboration and peer learning across regions
- Create a library of localized tools and resources
- Establish feedback loops for continuous improvement
- Build a strong, connected statewide apprenticeship network



Annual Apprenticeship Bootcamp

Save the Date!

October 8 & 9, 2025

Moraine Valley Community
College

\$50 per person

All invited.



Drop-In Office Hours

Apprenticeship Illinois offers weekly drop-in Office Hours open to **grantees, employers, and any workforce stakeholders** seeking guidance on developing, registering, or expanding an apprenticeship program.



Printable Resources/Guides

Regional Specialist Process

CONTACT AND PROGRAM REGISTRATION

APPRENTICESHIPILLINOIS.COM

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Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO)
Office of Employment and Training

Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity
JB Pritzker, Governor

Illinois 2021 Apprenticeship Expansion

Apprenticeship Illinois Intermediary Program Guide

October 2022

Understanding Apprenticeship Concepts #2

Registered Apprenticeships are: A PAID JOB

What does this mean?

Unlike internships, which are often unpaid, registered apprenticeships are a paid (usually full-time) job from Day One*. Additionally, apprentices earn a progressive wage schedule throughout their apprenticeship, which consists of time and/or competency-based milestones that they must reach to earn raises towards a journeyworker/mentor-level salary.

Why does this matter?

One of the major reasons behind registered apprenticeship programs' high retention rate is the transparency that comes with the progressive wage schedule; apprentices don't play a guessing game as to when they'll see a pay increase, but earn direct rewards for their skill gains.

What else should I know?

Pay schedules for registered apprenticeships can be as simple or as complex as the employer prefers, but programs that provide apprentices with consistent wage increases will see stronger retention and a greater incentive for improved performance. Employers struggling with the concept of a progressive wage schedule may require a higher level of assistance at that stage of program development.

PRO TIP:

To ensure that employers are remaining competitive, be sure to share the regional salary ranges for their program occupations found at www.onetonline.org.

*In programs where classroom instruction is front-loaded and apprentices are not being paid by the employer for classroom time, apprentices will not begin earning wages until they begin on-the-job training.

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Registered Nurse Apprenticeship Program at Clay County Hospital

Prepare • Train • Retain

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects an annual average of 194,000 nursing openings through 2030. This increase is due to the rising demand for nurses resulting from industry retirements, limited workforce support, and the expanding elderly population. Shortages pre-dated the COVID-19 pandemic and grew due to the pressures and impact of the virus.

To address ongoing nursing shortages and as a way to compete for staff with larger hospital systems, Clay County Hospital (CCH) approached their local training partner at Illinois Eastern Community Colleges (IECC) to launch an innovative apprenticeship program for registered nurses. The program launched in 2023 with the first cohort of two apprentices and plans to continue onboarding two apprentices each year.

Though this program functions out of a 20-bed hospital, this model is not confined to smaller facilities. Instead, it is the belief of CCH and Apprenticeship Illinois that with proper hospital investments and partnerships this model can help address the ongoing nursing shortage in Illinois and across the nation.

CCH's program demonstrates apprenticeship's mutual benefits to the employer and apprentices. CCH gains a stable talent pipeline to directly address staff shortages and remain competitive in the labor market. Apprentices are offered financial and job stability while gaining four years of progressive healthcare experience.

 Training Location IECC location & Clay County Hospital	 Cohort Capacity One cohort with two apprentices per year	 Program Length Four years (Two years classroom & clinicals, Two-years RN residency)	 Front Loaded Training One shift per week as CNA/LPN & clinicals toward RN
 On-the-Job Training Two-year RN residency as part of the four-year program	 Certificate/Degree Licensed Practical Nurse Certificate & Associates Degree in Nursing	 Financial Investment CCH pays tuition, CNA/LPN wages, classroom stipend, LPN certification, NCLEX fees, full-time RN wages	 Program Pre-Requisites CNA Certified, accepted to the IECC Nursing Program

Marketing Materials

Apprenticeship at a Glance

Developing a skilled workforce requires strategic planning. Address skill shortages and foster a healthy workforce pipeline by starting an apprenticeship program!

Apprenticeship is a framework that allows employers to develop their future workforce through flexible training and paid jobs.

Why Choose Apprenticeship

Skills development:

- Employers cultivate a skilled, knowledgeable workforce.
- Current or new workers learn the specific skills.
- Bring in and train new talent in a cost-effective way.

Pipeline creation:

- Create and foster healthy pipelines of diverse individuals who are trained to meet future demands.

Knowledge management:

- Facilitate smooth succession planning, maintain expertise and create continuity.

Tax credits:

- Up to \$3,500 per apprentice per year as a reimbursement for educational expenses.
- Additional \$1,500 for apprentices who reside in a IL Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) Zone.

Per the American Apprenticeship Initiative Evaluation, employers experience a 44.3% ROI on apprenticeship programs: every \$100 invested results in \$144.30 in benefits.



Benefits

Apprenticeship helps employers with:

- Cost-effective recruitment
- Smooth succession planning
- Reduced turnover
- Stronger employee loyalty
- Improved company culture
- Strengthened pipeline of skilled workers
- Higher worker productivity
- A more diverse workforce
- Fewer skill shortages
- Development of future leaders
- Community engagement

Apprenticeships have expanded into almost every sector!

Industries

Apprenticeships are most common in:

- Agriculture
- Construction
- Education
- Finance
- Healthcare
- Technical Services
- Real Estate
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Care Economy (including Social Services and Education)
- Cybersecurity
- Energy
- Hospitality
- Information Technology
- Public Service
- Telecom
- Transportation
- Utilities

How Apprenticeships Work

Employers connect with their local or State Apprenticeship Specialist to find training providers, funding opportunities, and help set up their program for free!

Employers work with the designated Apprenticeship Specialist to develop a Registered Apprenticeship training program that includes:

- Direct business involvement
- On-the-job training
- Related instruction
- Progressive wage schedule
- Credentials

Employers can hire new candidates or upskill their existing workforce in the program.

Apprentices work a paid job while also engaging in classroom learning. Upon completion of the program, they earn a nationally-recognized industry certification.

How To Get Started

- Apprenticeship Specialists are here to help your business build a Registered Apprenticeship program from start to finish at no cost! Explore more information at ApprenticeshipIllinois.com.
- Reach out to educational institutions and intermediaries to build partnerships.
- Design your program, integrating the specific skills you need your workforce to have.
- Register your program.
- Launch and interview!
- Promote your program by listing it on the Apprenticeship Finder website: www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-job-finder



Visit ApprenticeshipIllinois.com to learn more.



Innovative Career Pathways for Employers and Career Seekers!

Employers – Train and Retain Your Future Workforce!

LinkedIn Apprenticeship Illinois

ApprenticeshipIllinois.com

ApprenticeshipIllinois.com

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Apprenticeship ILLINOIS.com
Prepare • Train • Retain

Innovative Career Pathways for Thousands of Occupations
Including High-Growth and Emerging Industries!

EMPOWER EMPLOYERS TO:

- Build a Skilled Workforce
- Improve Productivity
- Reduce Turnover
- Foster Employee Loyalty
- Receive Tax Credits

ApprenticeshipIllinois.com



Apprenticeship Illinois Website

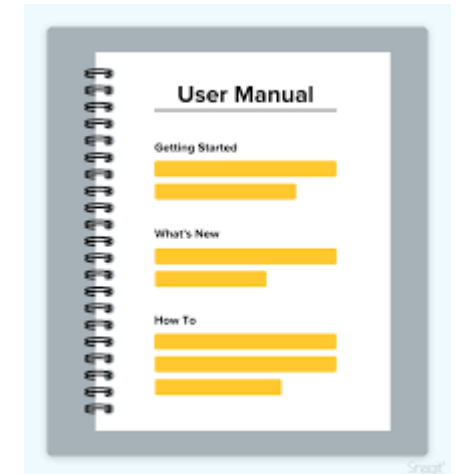


ApprenticeshipIllinois.com

NEW

Data, Program Manuals, Master Calendar of Events

- Dashboard using RAPIDS data
- Monthly Report – metrics and qualitative
- Comprehensive program manual
- Master calendar of Apprenticeship and WBL events around the state – *support provided*



Other Planned Activities

Date / Time	Location	Title/Registration Link	Audience
7/21/2025 12-1pm	Webinar	Apprenticeship 101	Open to anyone
7/28/2025 12-1pm	Webinar	Standards Builder/New Program Approval Guidelines	Open to anyone
8/4/2025 12-1pm	Webinar	Apprenticeship Illinois Virtual Cohort Introduction & Planning Session	All Grantees
8/6/2025 1:30-2:30pm	Webinar	Using the Illinois <u>workNet</u> Navigator Tool for Outreach and Reporting [Meeting Link] Add to <u>Calendar</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google ; Outlook ; Yahoo 	Apprenticeship Specialist Grantees
TBD 12-1pm	Webinar	Panel: Engaging Employers in Consultative Sales	Open to anyone
9/8/2025 12-1pm	Webinar	Panel: Train the Trainer / Mentorship Training to Support RAP Employers	Open to anyone

QUESTION

What other supports or professional development do you need or want? What could we do better?

Final Thoughts

People Powered - Partnership Driven

- **You're part of something bigger.** Illinois literally has thousands of people working towards some type of workforce development goal – Lean into that network!
- **Apprenticeship and/or work-based learning is for everyone.** Bust myths, expand mindsets, and elevate the model.
- **Language matters, but relationships matter more.** Build trust, stay present, and follow through.
- **Success is local.** Show up, stay persistent, and bring the right people to the table.
- **It takes a village.** Your IBST is your village.
- **Start with the willing.** Early adopters create momentum, partnerships build systems.
- **We share one mission:** Reach more employers. Expand opportunity. Drive impact.

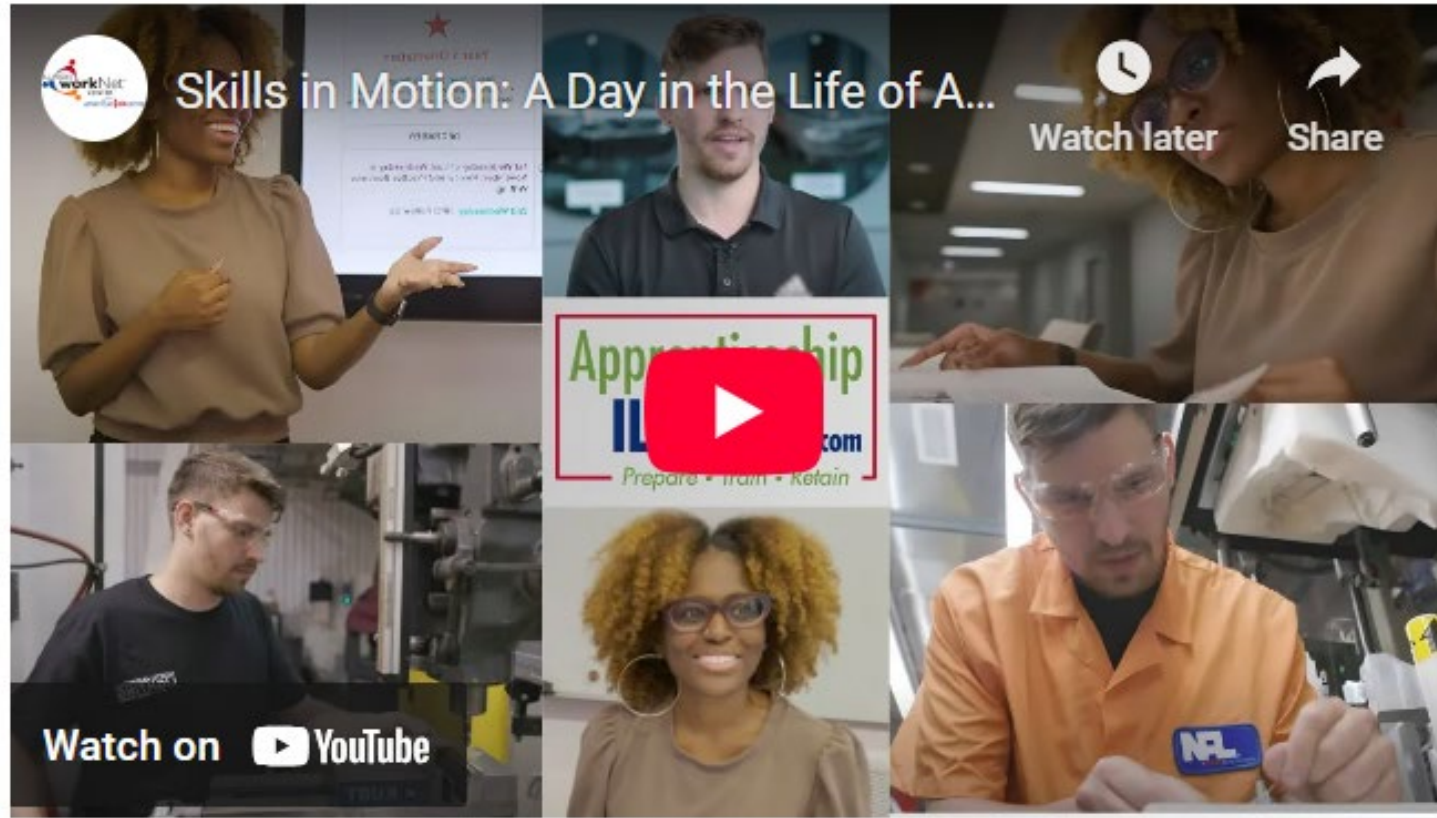
DISCUSSION TIME

We've talked about elevating your leadership and your regional role...

- What's something you plan to implement this year that takes it to the next level?
- Which of the elevated role elements do you think will be hardest to implement and why?
- What have you been doing that is working in your area?
- What is something the Directors or Board members would like to see from the system or state?



Why we do this.....



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SbsawyjPiJs&t=16s>