



Program Year 2026 Apprenticeship Illinois Expansion Grants Funding For Apprenticeship Specialists

State of Illinois WIOA Notice: 25-NOT-02

*Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
Office of Employment and Training
April 23, 2026*



US DOL STATE APPRENTICESHIP EXPANSION FORMULA FUNDING

IL PROGRAM FOCUS: Support State capacity and State planning while also driving system innovation and reform

PREVIOUS FUNDING ROUNDS

- **Round 1 - 2023:** IL base funding = \$1.3 million
- **Round 2 – 2024:** IL base funding = \$1.6 million
- **Round 3 – 2025:** IL base funding = \$1.6 million
Award range per grant \$75k - \$175k based on quality, activities, & potential impact

CURRENT FUNDING ROUND

- IL base funding = \$2.7 million (***July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2029***)
- Anticipated range per grant \$100k - \$400k based on quality, activities, & potential impact.
- Grant term is anticipated from July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2028.

USDOL TEGL-09-25 REQUIREMENTS

Statewide Expansion Goals. States must establish a statewide expansion goal for the total # of active apprentices, by industry sector and occupation.

- *Local Applicants will need to provide apprenticeship expansion projections by industry sector and occupation*
- *Local Applicants will need to commit to developing a strategy that will result in at least 10% of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title IB formula expenditures within a WIOA Program Year will be dedicated to work-based learning activities by June 30, 2029.*

USDOL TEGL-09-25 REQUIREMENTS

Support Employers and Registered Apprentices in Targeted Industries. States must specify a percentage of SAEF4 funding that will be reserved to directly support Registered Apprenticeship programs within targeted industries identified by the state.

- *Local applicants must identify at least two (2) priority sectors*
- *Local applicants must concentrate at least seventy-five (75) percent of the SAEF4 grant funds on expanding apprenticeships in these industries.*

USDOL TEGL-09-25 REQUIREMENTS

Leveraged Resources Requirements States must commit leveraged resources and funds to an amount that is at least fifty (50) percent of the formula allocation to support costs allowable under TEGL 8-25.

- *Local applicants will be required to include leveraged costs in the grant application budget narrative but not in the excel template*
- *Local applicants encouraged to leverage existing public workforce and education system funding streams, such as funds provided under WIOA, Perkins Career and Technical Education and other relevant funding sources*

Program Design – Apprenticeship Illinois What Stays the Same

*Before we get to what's new, here's
what hasn't changed.*

PROGRAM DESIGN

- Illinois Workforce Innovation Board Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Committee
- [Apprenticeship Illinois Framework](#) → Funding Apprenticeship Specialists & High-Impact Intermediaries
- Apprenticeship Specialist as the regional SME and embedded in business services teams
- [State of Illinois Framework for Integrated Business Services](#)
- No cost concierge service to employers & other sponsors to set up programs from concept to implementation

OVERARCHING GOALS

STATE OF ILLINOIS FIVE YEAR PLAN

- **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



REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Track. Report. Drive Impact.



- Use Illinois workNet Navigator Tool weekly.
- Report outreach, program development, and outcomes.
- Submit quarterly narratives and other required reports.
- Be prepared to present to the IWIB WBLA Committee when needed.

Data tells the story!

Program Design – Apprenticeship Illinois What’s New & Why it Matters

***Three years of learning, building on
foundation, & new requirements.***

SPECIALIST AS SECTOR STRATEGIST AND CAREER PATHWAY ARCHITECT

- Strada Education Foundation's [*Framework for Effective Employer Intermediaries*](#)
- U.S. Department of Labor's [*Sector Strategies Framework*](#)
- US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's [*Talent Pipeline Management \(TPM\)*](#) framework
- Align with each region's WIOA Regional and Local Workforce Plan (<https://www.illinoisworknet.com/WIOA/RegPlanning>)

QUALIFIED WITH “PROTECTED TIME”

- Minimum 50% of time dedicated to apprenticeship and WBL activities
- Must demonstrate knowledge of the RAP model: OJT, RTI, USDOL registration, and wage progressions
- Must have working knowledge of regional CTE programs, community colleges, and training providers in priority sectors
- Must be fluent in the full WBL spectrum and able to explain the WBL-to-RAP continuum to employers and education partners
- If not yet hired: attach job description, hiring timeline, and plan for coverage during any gap



FOCUSED SECTOR STRATEGY

75% of Time

- Identify at least 2 priority sectors aligned with regional labor market demand
- Identify at least 2 target occupations per sector, must appear on in-demand lists or reflect documented employer hiring difficulty
- Name at least 2–3 specific employers per sector you will engage
- Inventory existing CTE programs, community college offerings, and training providers in priority sectors
- Align sector strategy with Chapter 3 of your Regional and Local Workforce Plan



COMMITTED IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

- **RTI partner(s):** Named community college, CTE program, union training center, or other qualified provider, letters of commitment or MOUs strongly preferred
- **Employer entry point(s):** Industry association, sector collaborative, chamber, or employer collaborative, cold outreach alone is not sufficient
- **Partner roles:** Define what each partner will do, not just who they are
- **IBST integration:** Describe your starting point honestly and your plan for building coordinated engagement during the grant year

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

From First Contact to Program Launch

- **Employer engagement:** Build trust and understand talent challenges before introducing apprenticeship
- **Solutions design:** Co-develop OJT work process, RTI alignment, and wage progressions with the employer
- **Solutions brokering:** Connect employers to RTI providers, WIOA funding, and DOL ATRs
- **Implementation support:** Stay engaged after registration — support first cohort launch and identify replication opportunities
- **Administrative support:** Handle USDOL registration complexity so employers can focus on the work

Strada Education Foundation's [Framework for Effective Employer Intermediaries](#)

WBL TO RAP PIPELINE

- Map existing WBL activity across employer and education settings in priority sectors
- Identify high school CTE programs and community college offerings that can feed into RAPs
- Describe conversion strategy: how will active WBL employer relationships move toward RAP exploration?
- Set a conversion goal for the grant year
- Describe how education partners will be brought into program design, not just notified after an employer commits

WBL TO RAP PIPELINE EXAMPLE

Incumbent Worker Upskill → RAP (Manufacturing)

A regional manufacturer has several Machinist Level 1 employees who are ready to advance but there is no formal pathway.

- The Apprenticeship Specialist works with the employer to use Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) funds to upskill them into a Machinist Level 2 role and structures that upskill as a 2-year Registered Apprenticeship.
- The local community college delivers the RTI.
- Once those employees advance, the employer needs to backfill the Machinist Level 1 positions.
- The Specialist helps the employer register a second RAP for the entry-level role, recruiting new hires, including recent local high school CTE graduates, directly into the program.
- One employer conversation produces two registered programs.

WBL TO RAP PIPELINE EXAMPLE

CTE Program → Youth RAP (Healthcare)

A high school CTE program offers a two-year Health Sciences pathway that includes a state-approved CNA training program.

- Students who are at least 18 years old, pass a background check, and complete the required training are eligible to sit for the CNA certification exam before they graduate.
- The Apprenticeship Specialist connects the CTE program and the local community college's advanced programs with a regional hospital system that has consistently struggled to fill CNA, LPN, and RN positions.
- Together, they develop a WBL to RAP pipeline – while still in high school, students complete OJT at the hospital.
- After graduation, they sit for the CNA certification and begin the RAP as an LPN or RN while working as a CNA.

THREE-YEAR STRATEGY TO ALIGN WIOA INVESTMENTS TO APPRENTICESHIPS

This is a new requirement for PY26. LWIAs must develop a strategic plan for progressively increasing investment in WBL and apprenticeship over three years.

- Directional target: **10% of WIOA formula funds** directed toward WBL and apprenticeship-related activities by end of PY2028
- Provide a baseline estimate of current apprenticeship-related spending
- Project annual targets for PY26, PY27, and PY28
- Name specific actions the LWIA will take to increase investment (e.g., prioritizing OJT with employers in active RAP development, directing ITA funds toward RTI-eligible programs)
- Leadership commitment required: LWIA Director must describe how this will be tracked and reviewed at the board level

Application Information

PROGRAM FUNDING

- Funding range per grant - \$100,000 to \$400,000
- Period of Performance – 24 months, July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027
- Eligible – LWIAs or core WIOA partners, need designation
- Must work with regional partners (LWIAs, community colleges, and other education, economic, and workforce development partners)
- Consideration given to quality and impact vs. the number of specialists
- Must utilize funds to support apprenticeship expansion activities
- Requests must be reasonable, necessary, and directly related to notice





APPLICATION CHECKLIST

- Uniform Grant Application
- Mandatory Disclosure
- Conflict of Interest
- Formatted Technical Proposal
- Project Workplan (*Excel spreadsheet with individual tabs*)
 - Tab 1: Project Summary
 - Tab 2: Program Activities & Outcomes
 - Tab 3: Staffing & Partnerships
 - Tab 4: Sector Strategy
 - Tab 5: Projected Three-Year WIOA Investment Alignment
 - Tab 6: Employer Engagement Methodology
 - Tab 7: Implementation Plan
- Uniform Budget Template
- IWIB Designation Letter
- Specialist Resume
- Partner Commitment Letters

FORMATTED TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

Section I: Organizational Commitment and Specialist Designation

Section II: Specialist Qualifications and Regional Knowledge

Section III: SECTOR STRATEGY

- Priority Industry Sectors, Occupations and Employers
- Education and Training Partner Alignment

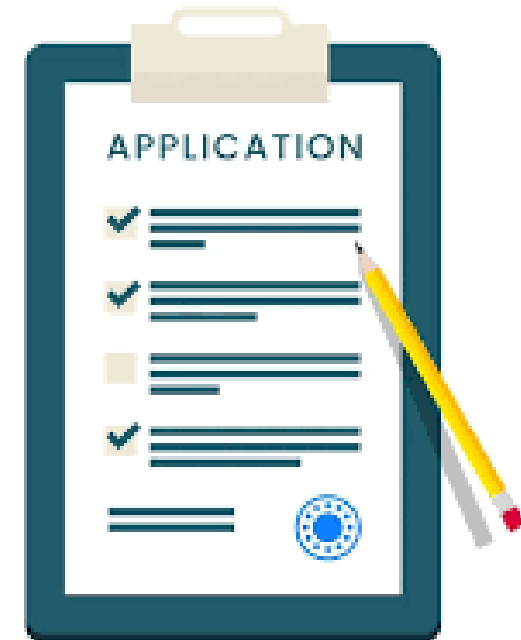
Section IV: Implementation Partners and Regional Coordination

Section V: Employer Engagement Approach and Methodology

Section VI: Work-Based Learning Strategy

Section VII: Post-Award Deliverable Commitment

Section VIII: Budget Narrative



PROJECT WORKPLAN TEMPLATE

Excel Workbook with attachments as individual tabs

- Tab 1: Project Summary
- Tab 2: Program Activities & Outcomes
- Tab 3: Staffing & Partnerships
- Tab 4: Sector Strategy
- Tab 5: Projected 3-Year WIOA Investment Alignment
- Tab 6: Employer Engagement Methodology
- Tab 7: Implementation Plan

PLEASE SUBMIT THE PROJECT WORKPLAN AS AN EXCEL WORKBOOK

UNIFORM BUDGET TEMPLATE

- *May include employer incentive funds in both budget template and narrative*
- *Do not include leveraged funds in template. Leveraged funds must be described in narrative.*

FISCAL MANAGEMENT, MONITORING, AND REPORTING

- Program funded by USDOL Apprenticeship USA Grants
- Grant funding provided on a reimbursement basis; pre-award costs allowed (*July 1, 2026 anticipated*)
- Costs must be associated with allowable apprenticeship expansion activities
- Costs must be documented in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200
- Grant awards are subject to monitoring by DCEO and USDOL
- Grantees must submit standard program and fiscal reports

DELIVERABLES WITHIN 1st QUARTER

- Three (3)-year plan to align WIOA investments with work-based learning and apprenticeships
- Regional WBL and CTE Inventory (full mapping of existing WBL activity and education partners in priority sectors)
- Training Provider Inventory (complete inventory of RTI-capable providers in priority sectors)
- Sector Strategy Refinement (expanded detail including LMI analysis, TPM back-mapping, and WBL-to-RAP conversion plan)
- Regional Referral and Handoff Process for Employer Engagement (written process for partner referrals to the Specialist)



STATE AND LOCAL APPRENTICESHIP EXPANSION TEAM MEETINGS

Mandatory TA Partner Session #1	July 2026
Mandatory TA Partner Session #2	August 2026
Mandatory TA Partner Session #3	September 2026



Technical Assistance → Partner Meetings

Starting in PY26, what were previously called "TA sessions" are evolving into **Partner Meetings**

- Building the apprenticeship ecosystem together → state and local side-by-side
- We don't have all the answers. These meetings are where we find them together.
- Driven by what's happening in your regions
- Separate from IWIB convenings, dedicated time for peer learning and shared problem-solving
- Your experience and expertise help shape the system for every region in Illinois

We need you at the table.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

- Organizations that request funds under notice should submit a completed application electronically to CEO.OET.Grants@illinois.gov
- Applications must be received by May 22, 2026, to guarantee consideration for funding commitments before the June 30, 2025, State of Illinois fiscal year end.
- Note that this deadline has been established to support the State of Illinois' federal funding application

APPLICATION REVIEW

DCEO will review applications on a *first-come, first-served* basis until all available funds have been committed based on the following criteria

- Applicant Capacity and Previous Performance (40%)
- Quality/Commitment to Required Program Elements (40%)
- Budget / Reasonableness of Costs (10%)
- Geographic Distribution of Awards (10%)



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

