



Key Highlights of the 2024 Apprenticeship Building America Convening

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Introduction

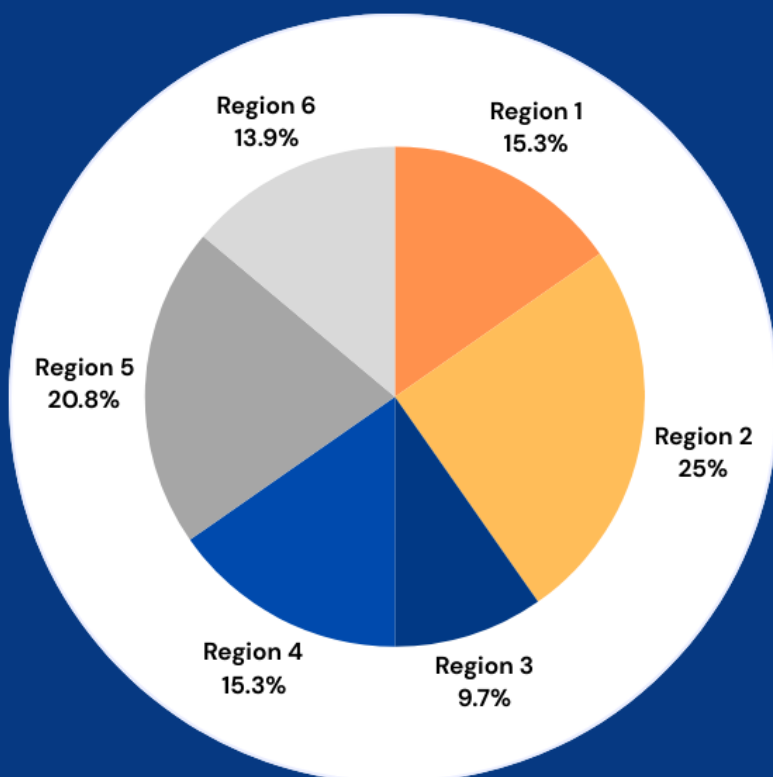
On Oct. 15-17, 2024, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) hosted the Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) Convening. The Convening was hosted at the Frances Perkins building in Washington, D.C. and included ABA grantees, ICF coaches and program staff, Registered Apprenticeship Technical Assistance (RATA) Centers of Excellence, industry intermediary contractors, and DOL representatives, including representatives from all six DOL regions. Sessions throughout the two and a half days included plenaries, informational sessions, regional meetings, peer exchanges, performance reporting sessions, end-of-day reflections, and an intermediary expo.

Convening sessions spanned a wide range of topics from successful grant set up to long-term sustainability, pre-apprentice/apprentice outreach and recruitment strategies to retention. In addition to hearing from fellow grantees through presentations and panels, both the ABA1 and ABA2 cohorts had time to connect at the Regional Meet and Greets, Peer Exchanges by Industry, and during lunch breaks.

Dr. Sulbrena Day, Administrator, Reset to Success Foundation

"Sustainability comes naturally when we explain the kind of services we provide and the gap we are addressing. Apprenticeship programs help address job retention issues and lead to more employer investment. We sit down with employers to discuss vacancy needs with a future focus, addressing the question: 'What do you need to get there?'"

Who Was There



**87% of ABA
Grantees
Attended the
Convening**



What We Heard

CONTENT RELEVANCY

Strongly agreed or agreed that the content was relevant to their organization/program.

PROGRAM BENEFIT

Strongly agreed or agreed that they learned information that will benefit their organization.

APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Strongly agreed or agreed they have ideas for specific plans or next steps to apply what they learned to their organization/program.

90%

81%

77%

ABA GRANTEE SATISFACTION SURVEY

An overwhelming majority of attendees anecdotally commented on the “brilliance” of bringing together ABA grantees from both cohorts. They also valued:

- The time spent with other grantees in their region.
- Hearing about resources to enhance their work.
- Learning more about the RATA Centers of Excellence and the various industry intermediary contractors.

Setting the Stage

To launch the ABA Convening, the DOL Office of Apprenticeship (OA) welcomed everyone, previewed the agenda, and discussed the vision and goals for the ABA Convening.

Kristen Rhinehart-Fernandez, Director, Investments Division, DOL emphasized the importance of meeting, collaborating, networking, and learning with fellow grantees. She highlighted the sharing of knowledge and success stories, as well as discussing challenges and ideas. Rhinehart-Fernandez also took a moment for silence and time to breathe, recognizing the efforts of the DOL teams. She outlined the goals of the session, which included facilitating knowledge sharing, strengthening rapport, implementing comprehensive technical assistance strategies, approaches, and resources, ensuring quality customer care, and promoting continuous improvement and integrity.

John Ladd, Administrator, DOL focused on the significant emphasis on creating big and quality jobs through Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Programs. He stressed the commitment to ensuring that every job is a good job and that individuals can access jobs created through the Investing in America Program. Ladd discussed the expansion, diversification, and modernization of the RA Program system and acknowledged the critical role ABA grantees play in the apprenticeship ecosystem. He noted the popularity of teacher apprenticeships over the past couple of years and shared impressive statistics thus far, two years into the grant for ABA1:



- ▶ ABA grantees have provided services to over 4,600 unique participants.
- ▶ Category 1-3 grants have placed over 1,300 participants into RA Programs.
- ▶ Grantees have the highest record of service to underserved populations, leading with the highest proportion of people with disabilities served (11%).

Key Highlights

Most Helpful Resources for ABA2 Start Up: OA office hours, webinars, and ABA Peer-to-Peer Sessions; resources from Jobs for the Future, Urban Institute, and Apprenticeships for America; and utilizing your coach for guidance in an area where not many others are doing this work.

Grants & Performance Management Tips: Creating templates for partners and conducting quarterly check-ins to ensure data accuracy; using the Quarterly Narrative Report to highlight numbers and events; and tracking progress as you go.

Lessons Learned in Employer Engagement: Identifying the team within employers who will champion the program; understanding that employers are looking to fill jobs; “handholding” smaller employers is essential for the success of RA Programs; and make the process easy for employers, even if it means more work for the program administrators.

What Works in Pre-Apprentice/Apprentice Outreach & Recruitment Bring opportunities to the neighborhoods you want to reach; utilize info sessions, career fairs, and invite local employers to interview candidates; partner with faith-based organizations to endorse higher education and workforce development; use the [Universal Outreach Tool](#) on the website; and reach out to individuals in diversity, equity, and inclusion departments rather than talent acquisition for better success.

Pre-Apprentice/Apprentice Retention Strategies: Employ social support managers who meet individually with each apprentice to address barriers; the “3:3:3 Strategy” - meeting with the apprentice and employer on the third day, the third week, and the third month after starting the RA Program; clear communication about program requirements and pathways.

Approaches for Reaching for Youth: Addressing the challenge of engaging school districts by providing a toolkit for [students](#), [educators](#), and [school districts](#); utilizing [technology](#) to create an inclusive space for youth; having a career support specialist as part of the school staff; and creating a youth advisory council helps understand who is and who is not having the greatest success.

Must Have Wrap-Around Supports

For Pre-apprentices/Apprentices

- ☒ transportation cards, financial assistance with car repairs, and bus cards
- ☒ tools
- ☒ individual and group therapy
- ☒ case management
- ☒ mental health services that are readily accessible
- ☒ community scholarships that pay for apprentices' tuition (local foundation managed)
- ☒ clothing assistance (improves clients' self-confidence & quality of life!)
- ☒ childcare
- ☒ gift cards
- ☒ eye exams

Partnership are key to providing wrap-around supports to pre-apprentices/apprentices.



Tips for Empowering Grant Staff: Look for outgoing, positive individuals who fit well with the team; build a bench by learning what everyone does within the team; allowing staff to make mistakes and then coach them on how to do things differently; and find creative ways to celebrate success, such as cheers for peers and quarterly fun events.

Insights from Federal Project Officers (FPOs): It is important to connect and coordinate with each other to create a superhub and ensure sustainability after the grant ends; ask questions, especially regarding setting up and reporting, and to share challenges and observations in trends grantees are seeing; and remember there is flexibility and room for innovation and creativity within the funding opportunity announcement (FOA).

What is Left to be Done

Help Communities

1

Help get communities back to work after a natural disaster. This is a current issue for grantees and the communities they serve. RA Programs and apprentices from states directly impacted by recent national disasters have unique needs. Changes in programming could be designed to provide a pipeline of workers through RA Programs with contractors coming in to rebuild.

Incentivize Partners

Incentives attract employers, encourage their investment, and provide a “proving ground” for both the grantees and employers. There is a need to better understand the existing incentives (such as Workforce Opportunity Tax Credit) and to find new ways to build in incentives. In addition to employers, there is a need to incentivize outcomes for other partners to take concrete action.

2

Address Challenges

3

Address the challenges of youth apprenticeship for those under the age of 18. While youth apprenticeships continue to grow, those for students under the age of 18 continue to experience challenges. These include youth labor laws, pushback from employers, and dual enrollment that may not fit in-school youth schedules.

Closing

Jessica Diep, Supervisory Program Analyst, DOL and **John Ladd** thanked the grantees for traveling to Washington, DC to engage in discussions about apprenticeship and the grant program. They emphasized that the DOL learns from the ABA grantees and that these convenings spur innovation within the field. They encouraged grantees to follow up with their coaches and reach out for any resources needed in the future.

Vanessa Bennett, Director, Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning, Jobs for the Future

“Data helps illustrate the impact partners have and the critical role they play. It is important to tell the story of pre-apprenticeship, employer partners, and the young people in the programs. Data helps identify who is not being engaged and how they can be reached.”