



ABA Quick Tips

Aligning Related Training Instruction to Employer and Apprentice Needs

The purpose of this **Quick Tip** is to offer ABA grantees promising practices for aligning Related Training Instruction (RTI) to employer and apprentice needs. RTI covers the technical and academic knowledge that supports the on-the-job training (OJT) component of an apprenticeship. RTI can be offered by community colleges, technical schools, apprenticeship training schools, provided on-line or at the job site. RTI should be offered at least for 144 hours per year of the apprenticeship (Healthcare Career Advancement Program, 2017). RTI can be delivered in a classroom, remotely, or on-site.

Quick Tips offer short, easy to use strategies, recommendations, and tips for Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) grantee consideration, exploration, and use. The tips and recommendations listed below draw from the expertise of ABA Technical Assistance Coaches, research, and grey literature (see references below).

TIPS TO ALIGN RTI WITH EMPLOYER NEEDS

Here are methods and techniques for training providers to align RTI to what employers need.

- ▶ **Solicit direct input from employers.** Rather than coming to the table with what you have to offer, start by soliciting input from the employer to understand the job success profile and skills required for the targeted occupation. Once you have a deep understanding of these areas, collaboratively determine the areas of focus for the RTI. Continue this level of engagement throughout the program design, launch, and monitoring of the apprenticeship, never losing sight of the employer's needs. This will ensure the RTI remains targeted and relevant.
- ▶ **Ensure alignment between RTI and OJT activities.** RTI and OJT activities need to be closely aligned. For each RTI topic area, assess how it will help the apprentice understand the work process. Does the sequence of topics complement and align with the sequence of OJT? The RTI should progress from understanding basic concepts to understanding deeper theoretical ones. This should correspond to doing simple OJT tasks to progressively more complex ones.
- ▶ **Conduct a gap analysis of current curricula and courses.** Once there is agreement on the RTI topic areas, inventory your existing curricula and courses to determine what you have that might be usable, so you do not need to develop RTI from scratch. Then, enlist the employer's internal subject matter experts and/or journey workers to review the curricula/course outlines and ask them to validate content and identify gaps.
- ▶ **Develop new curricula and course(s) to fill gaps.** Once the employer has identified the content gaps, develop additional curricula/courses to address those gaps. Invite the employer to serve in an advisory role as the curricula/courses are designed to validate content and offer ideas for learning activities.

TIPS TO ALIGN RTI WITH APPRENTICE NEEDS

Here are methods and techniques for training providers to align RTI to what apprentices need.

- ▶ **Ensure appropriate pacing.** Pacing needs to be a central consideration for RTI. It is important to find a teaching pace that provides apprentices a chance to absorb the material. Think of this as the Goldilocks Zone—not too fast, not too slow. In general, most instructors have the tendency to go too fast as they feel pressure to cover all the material. However, if apprentices feel rushed or do not understand the material, they may end up feeling frustrated or lost. This can have a negative impact on apprenticeship retention. Create an open learning



environment where apprentices can provide feedback on program pacing and ask questions if they do not understand a concept.

- ▶ **Integrate real-world examples.** Help apprentices start making connections between RTI and actual work processes by integrating real-world examples throughout coursework. For example, the instructor can state “on the job, you need to know this to...” or “this will help you to...” Ask the employer to provide real-world examples in advance so that they can be weaved into classes seamlessly.
- ▶ **Use a variety of teaching approaches.** Apprentices will have different learning styles and come from a range of educational backgrounds. Take this into account and round out formal presentations with groups discussions, videos, labs, hands-on activities, and projects. In addition, integrate soft skills into RTI. Share how soft skills, such as teamwork and communication, are used on the job and provide apprentices opportunities to apply these skills in learning activities.
- ▶ **Provide support and intervention.** For community college or other formal education partners, support and intervention are part of the RTI offerings. This includes financial aid, advising, and counseling. If RTI is offered through another entity, be sure to set up these supports either through your organization or another partner to help flag any issues apprentices may have with keeping up with classes.
- ▶ **Institute a continuous improvement process.** Apprentices can offer some of the most relevant feedback on how RTI is aligned to OJT and learning. Invite apprentices to complete course evaluations and/or ask for their feedback directly. In addition, ask their mentors to share feedback on how apprentices are applying what they are learning in the workplace. Use this feedback to update and improve curricula/courses.

REFERENCES

Apprenticeship.Gov—Employer’s Playbook for Building an Apprenticeship Program,
[Advanced Manufacturing Industry Resources](https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-industries/advanced-manufacturing) (<https://www.apprenticeship.gov/apprenticeship-industries/advanced-manufacturing>)

Healthcare Career Advancement Program (HCAP) – [Toolkit for the High Road Apprenticeships in the Healthcare Industry](https://www.hcapinc.org/registered-apprenticeship-toolkit) (<https://www.hcapinc.org/registered-apprenticeship-toolkit>)