



A Reflection on the Scaling Apprenticeship Grantees' Journey and Their Efforts to Sustain Apprenticeships Beyond the Grant

On July 15, 2019, the H-1B Scaling Apprenticeship through Sector-Based Strategies (Scaling Apprenticeship) grant was awarded to 23 grantees spanning all six Department of Labor (DOL) workforce regions, with funding ranging from \$1.9 million to \$12 million. These grantees developed a variety of programs, including pre-apprenticeship, unregistered, and Registered Apprenticeship initiatives, along with strategies aimed at advancing and scaling apprenticeships in healthcare (HC), advanced manufacturing (AM), and information technology (IT) sectors across the nation. The grant was extended for up to one year for 21 of the 23 grantees, with the new period of performance ending July 2024.

The technical assistance provider, Manhattan Strategy Group (MSG), conducted interviews with a select group of grantees representing all three sectors to gain insight into the grantees' experiences. This brief offers a window into the perspectives of seven grantees regarding the apprenticeship landscape, both prior to and during the grant, while also reflecting on which developments will be sustained beyond the grant's lifespan.

Grantee Types of Programs, Sectors, and Businesses Served

The grantees featured in this brief provide a diverse and representative snapshot of the broader grantee pool. Chart 1 below provides information about the grantees interviewed. A checkmark means that grantees interviewed are active in the activity.

Chart 1. Types of Programs and Businesses Served by Grantees

Industry (# of Grantees)	Pre-Apprenticeship	Unregistered	Registered	Large Business	Small- & Medium-Sized Business
HC (2)	✓	NA	✓	✓	✓
AM (4)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IT (1)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

The interviews concentrated on four general areas:

- the grantee's exposure and familiarity to apprenticeship programs within the overall college system before the grant began,
- the grantee's experience and development of apprenticeship programs throughout the life of the Scaling Apprenticeship grant,



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- c. insight from grantees on the benefits and challenges of administering the grant, and
- d. the grantee's plans for integrating and sustaining apprenticeships into the future vision of the college system.

Apprenticeship Program Experience Before the Scaling Apprenticeship Grant

Apprenticeship Knowledge. The seven grantees came from diverse backgrounds, with varying degrees of familiarity with apprenticeship programs prior to receiving the Scaling Apprenticeship grant. These experiences ranged from no prior involvement with apprenticeship programs in their college systems to individual colleges (or college systems) that had already established an infrastructure for apprenticeship programs. Their exposure to apprenticeship programs depended on the level of support and endorsement they received from college or college system leadership, government officials, and state initiatives. The section below provides a glimpse of the grantees interviewed, categorized by sector.

Healthcare



One of the **healthcare** grantees had no prior experience with apprenticeship programs before the grant. The other HC grantee had exposure to union-based apprenticeships, as well as to apprenticeship programs in AM and IT. However, neither of these grantees had previously managed or administered an apprenticeship program. Additionally, as part of grant implementation, partner colleges for each of the interviewed HC grantees developed pre-apprenticeship programs; however, not all partner colleges offered pre-apprenticeship opportunities.



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Advanced Manufacturing

Advanced manufacturing grantees exhibited a range of apprenticeship program experiences, from having no prior involvement to having a couple of established programs within their college system. Notably, one grantee had previously received Registered Apprenticeship funding from the American Association of Community Colleges, and the program design from that grant was pivotal in shaping the Scaling Apprenticeship grant. Another grantee emphasized their governor's strong commitment to advancing apprenticeship programs statewide, with the state providing funding to bolster apprenticeship programs.

As part of the Scaling Apprenticeship grant, each AM grantee offered pre-apprenticeship programs as an option for both employers and participants. One grantee had developed a work-based learning model before the Scaling Apprenticeship grant was awarded, which seamlessly integrated into its grant model. In contrast, the other three grantees developed pre-apprenticeship models with the support of the grant.



Information Technology



The information technology grantee had limited experience with apprenticeship programs in a college system. However, its state was familiar with union-based apprenticeship programs. As part of the array of services offered through the Scaling Apprenticeship grant, partner colleges developed pre-apprenticeship programs; however, not all partner colleges offer pre-apprenticeship services.



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Other Information Gathered About the Grantees Before the Grant

Communications and Relationships. Effective communication, building relationships, and an in-depth knowledge of how to promote apprenticeship programs are all vital components when initiating an apprenticeship program. During the interviews, the grantees emphasized the importance of having pre-established relationships with employers, job seekers, students, their college system, and other stakeholders to launch apprenticeship programs, particularly with anchor employers. Anchor employers play a crucial role in championing successes and in conveying the value and advantages of apprenticeship programs within their business networks.

Evaluation of Program Delivery. Colleges administering apprenticeship programs evaluated how best to manage apprenticeship programs within their college systems. Apprenticeship programs represent a departure from conventional college programs that primarily focus on filling classroom seats; the focus is on the student instead of the employer. Also, grantees have found that the timing of a new cohort does not always align with typical semester-based calendars.

Apprenticeship programs require a deeper level of collaboration with employers. Most colleges have employer engagement departments, also known as career centers, though one of the interviewed HC grantees reported that it does not have access to a campus career center team or employer engagement department. Therefore, the grantee completed outreach and business development for its grant through its internal grant team. In general, college staff responsible for engaging with employers collaborate closely with employers and community organizations to gather insight about program development based on employer and business requirements, as well as to enhance awareness about program availability, such as apprenticeship programs. These staff also collaborate with employer partners to design programs and elicit feedback on curriculum. Ultimately, the workforce drives the development of any apprenticeship programs, and this impacts apprenticeship program enrollments within a college system. Scaling Apprenticeship grantees collaborate with employers willing to establish apprenticeship programs, hire apprentices, and provide on-the-job training. This creates a much richer partnership with employers since the employers fill the classroom seats with their workers. These activities are critical for apprenticeship programs.

Apprenticeship Perspectives During the Life of the Scaling Apprenticeship Grant

Infrastructure – Processes. Throughout the interviews, the grantees stressed the value of establishing a strong infrastructure to support apprenticeship programs. This infrastructure should be comprehensive, encompassing various key elements of support such as governance, policies and procedures, programmatic administration, contractual and fiscal processes, internal controls, data collection and management, performance management (monitoring and reporting), and a comprehensive understanding of all facets of the grant.

One HC grantee collaborated closely with a major employer to establish standardized programs and processes and subsequently shared the model with other employers for adoption.



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Chart 2 is a word cloud with examples of processes, procedures, templates, and platforms grantees established to create the Scaling Apprenticeship grant infrastructure.

Chart 2. Examples of Infrastructure



Infrastructure – Relationships. In addition to establishing internal infrastructure systems, fostering strong relationships and partnerships with stakeholders is essential. This includes a wide array of stakeholders, such as employers, the workforce system partners, internal departments, the state’s broader college systems, industry associations, state apprenticeship agencies, federal apprenticeship offices, and other entities that support apprenticeship programs. Effective communication with these stakeholders is pivotal in cultivating these relationships, conveying the value and benefits of apprenticeships, and scaling the programs and occupations, particularly in collaboration with employers.

A successful approach to building relationships involves aligning the program with local workforce development boards, as exemplified by the AM partnership between West Los

The South Bay Workforce Investment Board facilitated employer-focused advisory groups that helped define the competencies and direction of unregistered and Registered Apprenticeship programs for multiple sub-sectors and employers (i.e., the aerospace and biotechnology fields).

Angeles College and the [South Bay Workforce Investment Board](#), a sub-awardee. This board provides invaluable expertise in managing and administering DOL grants. The team developed data tracking and collection tools/platforms for the overarching grant infrastructure. Additionally, the board has an extensive network of employers who place trust in its guidance and leadership. The board listens and responds to employer needs.



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This successful partnership has positioned West Los Angeles College as a leader in achieving its grant objectives and outcomes. The grantee is on track to meet or exceed its performance outcomes by the end of the grant, and it has been able to scale its apprenticeship programs across California and into more than 20 other states. In fact, the grantee attended a 2023 conference in Louisiana (as a participant), where it was pleasantly surprised to hear a speaker mention its Aeroflex model, demonstrating the program's recognition across the nation!

Two other AM grantees maintain close relationships with the workforce system to ensure coordinated services and support for the employers and apprentices.

Infrastructure – Performance Management. The grantees are also focused on their performance data and collection systems. The interviewed IT grantee engaged a vendor specializing in a case management and data collection platform. While there are challenges with the platform, the grantee is satisfied with the capabilities in tracking the program and performance outcomes of its participants.

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Innovative Service Delivery. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges for all the grantees; however, it also accelerated transitions to online learning and spurred innovative thinking about novel strategies and approaches, especially in developing and enhancing workplace safety requirements. Stringent protocols for in-person settings were established to safeguard all parties from potential COVID transmission.

One AM grantee operating across multiple states accelerated its virtual learning options during the pandemic, not only to maintain program continuity but also to extend its services to employers and apprentices across those multiple states. Another AM grantee created pre-

One AM grantee introduced modularized program components to cater to employer demands. The grantee found that not all employers need the exact same skillsets for an occupation. Not all employers will need training in a specific skill, and therefore value the customized, modular approach. These individualized programs allow employers to select the most valuable modules for their organization, further highlighting the flexibility and adaptability of the approach.

apprenticeship opportunities, such as boot camps, during the pandemic to stimulate employer interest, serving as a small stepping stone to the full apprenticeship program. These pre-apprenticeship opportunities served as a pipeline for both unregistered and Registered Apprenticeship programs and played a crucial role in keeping employers engaged in employee development during the economic slowdown.

Grantees who incorporated existing programs into their apprenticeship models capitalized on the momentum, making it easier to garner employer support. Other grantees had to explore innovative approaches to entice employers, such as offering stackable or modularized programs that could be customized for a specific employer and their needs.



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Finally, the HC grantees encountered specific challenges in securing commitments from employers and apprentices during the COVID-19 pandemic. This difficulty arose because apprentices needed to complete training prior to having access to on-the-job learning opportunities, but an online learning curriculum was not initially available. Additionally, HC workforce shortages were already a problem in the years leading up to the pandemic and were exacerbated by the pandemic, with a shortage of both HC workers and instructors available to train new workers in HC occupations, especially nursing. Notably, instructors in nursing and HC fields typically earn less than practitioners. As previously mentioned, COVID-19 played a role in expediting the development and acceptance of online learning practices; however, the HC industry did not have the capacity to develop an online curriculum during the pandemic.

MSG discovered that the grantees each approached these challenges in their own ways but also relied on the solutions discussed with their coaches and fellow grantees, particularly during Affinity Group calls.

Benefits and Challenges: Insights from Grantees

Scaling Apprenticeship grantees shared their insights into both the benefits and challenges encountered in administering a DOL-funded apprenticeship grant. These benefits and challenges are detailed below.

Benefits

- **Enhanced Partnerships.** Grantees strengthened their relationships with community partners, including the workforce system, employers, community-based organizations, and other educational institutions.
- **Catalyst for Integration.** Grantees noted that the Scaling Apprenticeship grant made it possible for their colleges to introduce apprenticeship programming into their college systems.
 - The colleges were interested in integrating apprenticeship programs into their college systems previously, and this grant was the catalyst that allowed it to happen.
- **Alternatives to Registered Apprenticeship Programs.** Providing alternatives to Registered Apprenticeships through the Scaling Apprenticeship grant, such as pre-apprenticeship and unregistered apprenticeship programs, proved to be highly advantageous for the grantees, particularly considering the workforce challenges and slowdowns posed by the pandemic. Amid the pandemic, employers were understandably reluctant to allocate extensive time and resources to apprenticeship programs as they focused on sustaining profitability and business continuity.
 - **Pre-Apprenticeships.** Pre-apprenticeship programs effectively equip workers with essential skills before they are hired. Employers find value in selecting participants who complete pre-apprenticeship programs and demonstrate certain competency standards.
 - **Unregistered Apprenticeships.** Unregistered apprenticeships are often a more feasible option for employers to commit to than Registered Apprenticeships. These programs



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have less of a time commitment and less administrative paperwork. Employers are still introduced to apprenticeship program concepts, along with the Five Hallmarks of an apprenticeship as defined for Scaling Apprenticeship grants. Once a program concludes, grantees have noted that it is easier to engage in discussions regarding the formal registration of the program and to address any remaining requirements.

Challenges

- **Data Collection Challenges.** Grantees encountered obstacles in data collection due to the frequent requirement changes in performance reporting throughout the grant.
 - Reprogramming and/or remapping the data collection systems to capture Participant Individual Record Layout data elements was complex and time consuming.
 - It was sometimes challenging to capture data that was not normally collected by colleges. For example, the reporting system was designed for the workforce development system. Collecting information about whether a participant was a newly hired employee or an incumbent worker was challenging for colleges to capture.
 - Employers were not always willing to share personally identifiable information on their employees for grant reporting purposes. Some grantees learned the value of including specific data collection requirements in the subrecipient agreements for both the employers and college partners.
- **Differences in Grant Administration.** Grantees discussed the differences and more restrictive nature of administering a DOL grant compared to grants awarded from the U.S. Department of Education, especially in reporting data that is not normally collected by a college.
- **Limitations on Innovation.** While this grant provides grantees with an opportunity to scale apprenticeship programs and occupations, the grantees indicated that they often were not able to innovate within their apprenticeship models. Grantees proposed innovative approaches to their apprenticeship models, but the design or the occupation was not always approved. For example, one AM grantee proposed a customized and modularized approach to apprenticeships, where each module equated to one academic year. These standalone apprenticeable occupations/programs were meant to be stackable for apprentices pursuing the four-year Registered Apprenticeship program. The modules allowed employers to select the modules most relevant to their apprentices' work. However, the grantee was informed that they were not able to count each module as a distinctive apprenticeship program.

Future Vision and Sustaining Apprenticeship Programs for Grantees

The interviews conducted for this brief yielded valuable insight into the impact of the grant on both the grantees and their respective college systems. Thanks to this grant, grantees broadened their partnerships with the workforce system, industry leaders, and industry associations and discovered novel approaches to address the needs of employers and students (job seekers). In many cases, these enhanced relationships and processes will be maintained after the Scaling Apprenticeship program concludes.



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Process Improvement. The grantees with limited exposure to apprenticeship programs prior to this grant expanded employer engagement activities for their programs (and sometimes for their overall college systems) to better integrate their traditional classroom learning with alternative apprenticeship programs. Many grantees are developing apprenticeship programs that are credit-bearing to allow participants to receive degrees. This grant empowered college systems to explore innovative ways to serve and support their colleges, communities, citizens, and businesses through pre-apprenticeships, unregistered apprenticeships, and Registered Apprenticeship programs. These programs (or aspects of these programs) will be maintained in the future. Additionally, apprenticeship programs enhance initiatives to support diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). For example, one AM grantee, in partnership with a community organization, developed a series of interactive forums to showcase employers' approaches to addressing DEIA in the workplace.

Tools and Platforms. During the grant period of performance, the grantees collaborated with partner colleges to pursue the overall grant outcomes. Most grantees devised tracking tools and progress reports with secure portals, which served as central repositories to share and transfer data, resources, and other information. These portals will be used for future grants and programming for apprenticeship programs, as well as other types of grants.

Value of Partnerships and Collaboration. One AM grantee cultivated noncompetitive relationships with its partner colleges where it assessed which college was best suited to serve the customer based on the programs available at that college. Another AM grantee, the Pennsylvania College of Technology, established a strong partnership with a college system in a different state, Tennessee. Their partnership has led to valuable learning opportunities, where the two state college systems share processes and incorporate elements that strengthen each other's programs and that will continue to synthesize ideas and grow together.

Because of this partnership and the grantee's support, the Tennessee Board of Regents has expanded apprenticeship programs from two colleges initially to 13 colleges currently. The Board presented its progress and achievements to the presidents and vice presidents of colleges to introduce the initiative and available funding.

Through collaboration between Pennsylvania College of Technology and the Tennessee Board of Regents, Tennessee was able to provide concrete examples of how Registered Apprenticeships and unregistered/specialized training were implemented at employer sites. Conversely, the Pennsylvania AM grantee provided support in onboarding Tennessee colleges online, breaking down the process into manageable components and covering aspects like data tracking, program development, what to ask employers, and what to capture in curriculum development.

Collaboration on Apprenticeships Across Colleges. Building upon what has been learned throughout the course of this grant, at least two IT grantees have initiated workgroups aimed at fostering discussions about apprenticeships within their college systems. These workgroups are focused on identifying and developing best practices for infrastructure, processes, paperwork,



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fiscal systems, compliance, and data management. One of the IT grantees discussed its plan to create a Listserv for its college system to discuss process improvements and efficiencies when implementing apprenticeship programs. The other grantee organized a national forum for colleges and universities during the 2023 National Apprenticeship Week.

Sustaining Apprenticeships. Grantees highlighted that their experience working on the Scaling Apprenticeship grant has significantly bolstered their institutional capacity to develop and scale apprenticeship programs in diverse sectors. Furthermore, it has enabled them to foster and broaden partnerships with employers, workforce boards, and community-based organizations to pursue future apprenticeship opportunities.

Within the college system, the colleges are better equipped to manage DOL-funded programs, which typically have different requirements compared to U.S. Department of Education grants and funding. The colleges have established data collection and tracking systems aligned with DOL Participant Individual Record Layout requirements that can be replicated for future programs and grants. Additionally, their contracts and fiscal departments are more adept at crafting subrecipient agreements that define the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of their partners.

The grantees have developed program handbooks that can be adapted for new programs. For instance, one AM grantee collaborated closely with its workforce board to develop tracking tools, data collection systems, forms, resources, and policies due to its experience managing workforce programs. This partnership was instrumental in the early stages of the program. The board provided guidance and understanding of DOL grant requirements and expectations. However, this partnership with the board was established well before the Scaling Apprenticeship grant.

The grantees have strengthened their partnerships with workforce boards and other colleges; many of the programs reach beyond state borders. These new and enhanced relationships foster increased coordination in programming to better serve shared customers, workers, and communities. Notably, the colleges participating in the Pennsylvania and Tennessee partnership (discussed earlier) are learning from each other. They exchange ideas and refine their approaches to apprenticeship programs based on their discussions.

Other grantees are identifying ways to collaborate and expand their networks with other college systems nationwide. For example, the University of Cincinnati hosted a convening (“Building Bridges”) with other colleges across the nation to learn about best practices for apprenticeship programs in college systems. This event was held during National Apprenticeship Week 2023. These strategic and nationwide collaborations enhance colleges’ abilities to sustain and scale apprenticeship programs in the future.

Each of the seven grantees interviewed is committed to sustaining various aspects of their established programs. One grantee mentioned that at least three of its sub-awardees have secured funding through the Apprenticeship Building America grant, which aligns with Scaling Apprenticeship programming. That AM grantee is also awaiting feedback on state funding for a proposal it submitted. It intends to continue offering unregistered apprenticeship programs to



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employers while actively promoting the conversion of programs into Registered Apprenticeships.

HC grantees have been pursuing alternate funding grants and resources, including the new round of Strengthening Community College grants and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funding. Similarly, the IT grantee has proactively sought opportunities to braid apprenticeship funding and intends to maintain its partnerships with intermediaries like Apprenti.

An AM grantee expressed uncertainty about whether its position would be retained once the Scaling Apprenticeship grant concludes. It acknowledges adjustments to programming may be necessary based on new funding streams, programmatic requirements, alternative work-based learning approaches, or the changing needs of employers and partners.

Conclusion

The Scaling Apprenticeship grant has opened new avenues and expanded opportunities for colleges and college systems to engage in Registered Apprenticeship and other work-based learning programs. Grantees have collaborated with companies of varied sizes. Most grantees have established relationships with anchor businesses, allowing for an increased number of apprentices in programs. However, the grantees also noted the importance of working with small and midsize businesses, which often have more flexibility to approve contracts and agreements more efficiently than large businesses.

MSG coaches have frequently noted that the funding from the Scaling Apprenticeship grant has empowered both the college system and grantees to explore new pathways in work-based learning. This grant has unlocked new doors for the grantees and will help colleges and college systems expand apprenticeship programs in new and emerging industries and occupations.