

Partnership Planning Checklist for Registered Apprenticeships

Using This Checklist

This checklist is designed for YouthBuild program staff who are exploring, developing, or strengthening relationships with Registered Apprenticeship (RA) partners. Whether your program is beginning to identify apprenticeship opportunities in your community or preparing for a conversation with an established RA sponsor, the tool aims to help you approach that engagement with greater intention.

Not every RA program will be the right fit for your participants, your training model, or your program calendar. Before reaching out to a potential partner, it is important to understand how the apprenticeship operates, what participants will need to successfully access the opportunity, and where there may be natural alignment with the preparation and support your YouthBuild program already provides.

Use this checklist to:

- Help research potential RA opportunities,
- Assess fit,
- Identify questions or gaps that need further discussion,
- Prepare for conversations with apprenticeship partners, and
- Identify milestones and wins along the way.

You do not need to have all the answers before making a connection. Instead, use the questions to determine what you already know, what you still need to learn, and what you may want to explore together with the apprenticeship partner.

As you work through the checklist, think beyond the immediate question of “*Can we connect participants to this apprenticeship?*” Consider what it would take to build a pathway that works for both the RA partner and your participants. That may include aligning training, understanding recruitment and entry requirements, coordinating program timelines, identifying opportunities for advanced standing, or eventually developing a more formal partnership or direct-entry pathway.

When programs move from identifying and engaging potential RA partners toward formalizing those relationships, the [Sample Partner Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) can serve as a starting point for documenting shared roles, expectations, and participant pathways and can be adapted to reflect the specific partnership.

As we continue to learn from YouthBuild programs, RA partners, and the broader apprenticeship field, we may update or refine this checklist to reflect new insights, promising practices, and lessons learned. The goal is not simply to make an RA connection. The goal is to build the right connection and create a pathway that participants are prepared to access, navigate, and succeed in.

MILESTONE 1: IDENTIFY & UNDERSTAND LOCAL RA OPPORTUNITIES

Wins along the way:

- ☆ Identifying any RA programs currently accepting applicants.
- ☆ Understanding candidate requirements for the RA program, including exams, education certifications, skills, interviews, or other prerequisites.
- ☆ Understanding the RA program's recruitment cycle, application process, and timeline for entry.

Understanding Your Local RA Landscape

☐ I have located one or more RA programs in my area.



There is no comprehensive directory of RAs. Some RAs are registered with DOL nationally and others are registered through state apprenticeship offices.

Try a combination of these tools:

1. Use the [Apprenticeship Finder | Apprenticeship.gov](#)
2. Do a simple online search of RAs near you or use a free AI tool to customize your search
3. Talk to your American Job Center, Workforce Development Board, Federal Project Officer (FPO) and/or coach. They may have information on local RAs, or they can help you design a search strategy

IS THIS RA A GOOD FIT?

Researching Critical Facts Before Pursuing Formal Partnership



Review a sponsor's website, talk to a journeyworker, email or call the local, regional, or national office of a union or employer sponsor.



Ask if the sponsor offers training for more than one occupation. For example, RAs in electrical work might include pathways for inside wireman, outside lineman, or residential wiremen, and telecommunications installer-technicians.

Before you arrange a partnership meeting with an RA sponsor, try to answer the following questions:

- ☐ Is this RA program active and accepting applicants?
- ☐ What is the apprentice-to-journeyworker ratio? Apprenticeships with physical safety precautions assign one apprentice to one journeyworker. Jobs with low physical safety risk may offer additional openings by assigning two or more apprentices to one journeyworker.

- ☐ Do candidates have to take an exam to be considered for an apprenticeship?
- ☐ Does this apprenticeship program have a waitlist?
- ☐ Does this apprenticeship program have candidate prerequisites? For example, does this program require a candidate to have a high school diploma or equivalency upon entry? A driver's license? Is there a minimum age requirement?



If candidates must take an exam, ask what subjects it includes. For example, it may include reading comprehension, mechanical questions, or math. What is the pass rate or required passing score? Does the sponsor provide practice tests or sample questions? Introduce participants to [Sample Apprenticeship Aptitude Practice Exams](#).



Not all apprenticeship programs are alike. Ask how waitlist ranking is determined. Is it possible for a candidate to move higher on the wait list? How?

- ☐ Does this apprenticeship program have physical requirements for candidates, such as the ability to carry and lift a certain amount of weight or to hear safety alarms?



Certain physical abilities may be necessary to perform the essential duties of an occupation. However, there may be reasonable accommodations available for participants with disabilities, such as hearing-impaired strobe warning lights. Review the [Apprenticeship Accommodations Toolkit](#).

- ☐ Does this apprenticeship program have annual recruitment cycles? Quarterly? Rolling? When does recruitment begin? When does it end?

MILESTONE 2: ASSESS ALIGNMENT & INITIATE ENGAGEMENT

Wins along the way:

- ☆ Determining whether your program's training and credentials align with the RA program.
- ☆ Identifying potential participant benefits based on that alignment, such as preferred consideration, direct entry, advanced standing, or credit for prior training.
- ☆ Making contact with a potential RA partner and beginning collaborative dialogue around participant preparation, partnership opportunities, and pathways into RA.

IS THIS RA A GOOD FIT?

Questions for Reflection Before Pursuing Formal Partnership

Before you pursue a formal partnership, you should also consider the needs and assets of your YouthBuild program by reflecting on the following questions:

- ☐ Is our YouthBuild construction or Construction Plus training related to the occupation or industry of this apprenticeship program? Are there transferable skills? If not, are any participants interested in entering this industry or occupation?



Participants might still be interested in pursuing an RA opportunity even if you do not offer training in the industry. For example, some participants might prefer to explore a barber/cosmetology apprenticeship over one in healthcare.

- ☐ Does our YouthBuild pre-apprenticeship training align with first-year training at this apprenticeship program?



Some YouthBuild programs have asked RA sponsors to review their curriculum and training plans to make suggestions for better alignment. Others have invited apprenticeship sponsors to serve on their employment advisory boards.

- ☐ If our training *is* well-aligned, could our participants be eligible to begin as second-year apprentices? Could we negotiate advanced standing?
- ☐ Do our cohort enrollment and graduation dates align with RA recruitment cycle(s)?



If not, you may want to consider making a SOW change to set your participants up for seamless apprenticeship entry. Talk to your FPO.

- ☐ Should I send a formal introduction email or letter to the RA sponsor if we've never connected before?



Try using the [Sample Letter to Apprenticeship Representative](#) template.

MILESTONE 3: FORMALIZING THE RA PARTNERSHIP

While the "Gold Standard" type of partnership is ideal here, establishing any intentional, structured RA-focused partnership is a win for a program that's new to RA.

To that end, wins along the way:

- ☆ Developing and implementing a formalized RA partnership with an RA Sponsor or other apprenticeship ecosystem partner, such as an intermediary or training provider that creates a defined connection between your program, participants and RA opportunities.
- ☆ Establishing clear roles, processes, or commitments that support participant awareness, preparation, referral, application, selection, or transition into RA. Where appropriate, these commitments may be documented through an MOU or other formal agreement.
- ☆ Establishing enhanced access or defined benefits for qualified participants, such as preferred consideration, guaranteed interviews, advanced standing, credit for prior training, or direct entry.

Prepare Your Partnership Pitch

You've decided to pursue an RA partnership, and you've scheduled a date to meet with the sponsor. Here are some tips on pitching the partnership:

- Share flyers or videos with outcomes data and success stories from your YouthBuild program. Bring paper marketing tools if you are meeting in person.
- If cohort graduation dates align with recruitment cycles, explain the advantages of hiring participants receiving wraparound supportive services during the year after YouthBuild exit. Highlight the win-win scenarios in creating a pipeline to apprenticeship.
- Be strategic about discussing specific occupational and career readiness training/curriculum. Apprenticeship sponsors often prefer to hear about the employability and technical skills that participants are learning.
- Name the safety certifications participants have already received through YouthBuild, such as OSHA-10, HAZWOPER, or Flagging. Hiring candidates with safety certifications can reduce onboarding costs for a sponsor or employer.

Gold Standard

The ideal YouthBuild-RA sponsor partnership is signing an MOU creating "direct entry" apprenticeship pathways for participants. Direct entry means that, if a participant graduates the YouthBuild program and meets the agreed upon criteria, they will be offered an apprenticeship with the sponsor without having to go through the typical hiring process.