



Rural YouthBuild Programs & Registered Apprenticeships: Tips for Success

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YouthBuild USA

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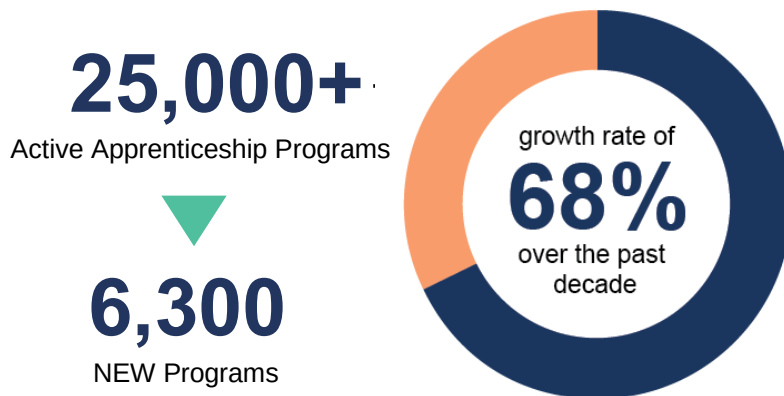
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***RAP: Registered Apprenticeship Program**



Introduction

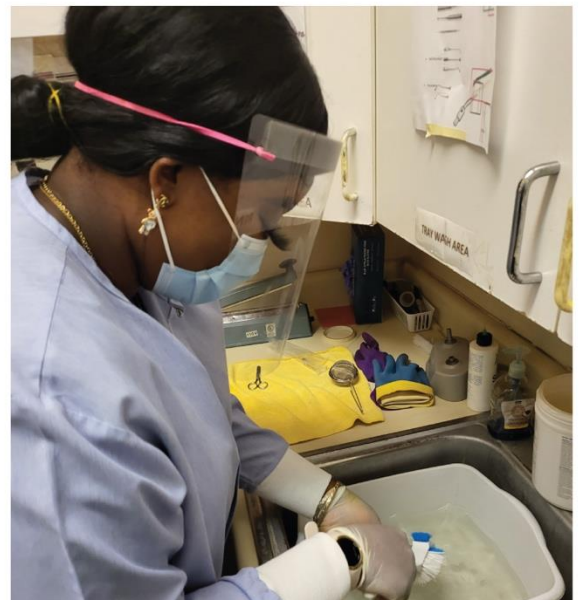
According to Apprenticeship.gov, registered apprenticeship (RA) is an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce. Individuals can obtain paid work experience and receive progressive wage increases, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential.



Source: Office of Apprenticeship

Rural YouthBuild programs, despite having unique challenges like the distance to a registered apprenticeship and lack of transportation options, have many strengths that lend themselves to building a vital pathway and placement into a registered apprenticeship that will benefit both the young people they serve and the employers that rely on this pipeline for new employees.

This tip sheet offers insights and actionable strategies for rural YouthBuild programs. Programs can utilize the many links to additional resources in this document as you work to create and implement pathways to registered apprenticeships.





INSIGHT 1: GROWTH OF “APPRENTICEABLE” OCCUPATIONS

Apprenticeships are often equated with the trades. However, registered apprenticeship programs are available in almost every industry. New ones are cropping up in financial services, early childhood education, and information technology (IT). Rural communities' ability to sustain and/or grow depends on expanding local resources and strengthening education, health care, and other skilled workforces. Cultivating a local population's skills and education to meet the needs of their communities will benefit all.

Strategies

- 1 Build a workforce ecosystem:** Bring together your local chamber of commerce, workforce board, elected officials, employer partners, community college, and others who you feel would have a vested interest in building an infrastructure that will support the development of apprenticeship opportunities. [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov) has various tools to assist you in finding RA partners and existing programs and assisting youth in exploring different apprenticeship opportunities.
- 2 Conduct a gap analysis between the current and desired future state of workforce needs:** This information will help you identify and prioritize opportunities, challenges, and barriers that must be addressed as you build your apprenticeship strategy.
- 3 Explore [apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov):** Now that you have identified your workforce ecosystem members, identify what RAs already exist in your area and work with them to develop new strategies.
- 4 Don't forget the voice of the population you serve – youth:** Engage youth who may aspire to leave their community to share what would motivate them to stay and build a life. Inquire about what types of support they need and the careers they are interested in that might be supported through a registered apprenticeship program (RAP) structure.



INSIGHT 2: EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIPS

Small towns are built by neighbors helping neighbors. Most employers are small businesses, even in rural areas, where large companies have a foothold (e.g., auto manufacturing and distribution centers). As viable members of these communities, YouthBuild programs play a vital role in forming a future workforce. YouthBuild staff members can leverage personal and professional connections to build employer relationships in your community.

Strategies

- 1 Conduct a scan of “who knows who”:** This process can reveal your program’s many matrixed relationships and connections. Consider attending community events, signing up for different community newsletters, hosting an open house, and other types of activities that broaden connections to community leaders, employers, and others who may be able to assist in developing a RAP.

- 2 Educate staff on RAPs:** All program staff should be informed about how RAs work and the steps to create and implement one. This will position them as advocates and supporters of building registered apprenticeships at your program. Use [apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov) and resources on the [Apprenticeship](#) and [YouthBuild Community of Practice](#) to assist in this onboarding.

- 3 Develop deeper partnerships:** Strengthening relationships one employer at a time helps build knowledge and implementation of apprenticeships. This process may take time and multiple attempts, but finding the right people is vital to a solid partnership. Educating employer partners about the benefits of a RAP and sharing how your program trains and supports young people during and after the program may increase interest and foster a solid foundation. [The Sector Strategy How To Guide](#) and the [RA Partnership Planning Checklist](#) will be helpful with this strategy.

- 4 Become or connect with an Apprenticeship Ambassador and Trailblazer:** The [Ambassador Apprenticeship Initiative](#) launched in 2021, creating a “national network of employers, labor organizations, industry associations, program sponsors, educators, workforce intermediaries, minority-serving institutions, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders to serve as champions for expanding and diversifying Registered Apprenticeship.” Additionally, the [Apprenticeship Trailblazer Initiative](#) was launched to build a “national network of diverse apprentices and apprenticeship graduates of all ages and backgrounds to highlight how RAs increase opportunities for underserved populations.” Work with your team and young people to research how to become an [ambassador](#) or [trailblazer](#).



INSIGHT 3: FUNDING

Large companies may have the staff and financial resources to pay apprentices, cover the cost of related instruction, offer benefits, provide mentoring, and administer the registered apprenticeship program. Small businesses may not have these supports, and intermediaries may not be in these rural areas.

Strategies

- 1 Connect with your local workforce boards to access WIOA funds:** States can leverage WIOA-funded sector partnerships in high-need fields to finance apprenticeships in rural areas. Funding from WIOA, private/public sources, and even your DOL YouthBuild grant can support paying for some transportation, tools, and uniforms that may be required for a RAP.

- 2 Research federal funding targeting state apprenticeship expansion:** Conduct research within your state to identify where this funding is being implemented and advocate for your program's access to this funding within your local area. Work with your broader team to identify other braided funding opportunities, including state and local funds that could act as seed funding.

- 3 Leverage Work Opportunity Tax Credits:** Thirty-nine states and territories presently offer [tax credits for hiring apprentices or tuition reimbursement for apprentices](#). Work Opportunity Tax Credits offer employers incentives through tax credits to hire employees from certain target groups such as YouthBuild participants.



INSIGHT 4: CONNECTING TO YOUTH

Young people are an asset to their local communities. Building opportunities for registered apprenticeships may be a way to encourage youth to stay in their communities long-term, especially in rural areas. More young people can get a job right out of YouthBuild without incurring college debt and have more access to careers that pay well and provide a pathway to self-employment.

Strategies

- 1 Expose youth to opportunities in different career fields:** DOL-funded YouthBuild programs are considered pre-apprenticeship programs, and must expose young people to the opportunities a registered apprenticeship can offer. Exposing young people to various opportunities from day one will support your program with developing a strong career pathway focus and culture.
- 2 Work with RAP sponsors to enhance young people's educational/skill needs:** Within your YouthBuild program, create a culture that teaches the soft skills necessary for success. Implement a 12-month follow-up plan that continues these activities, especially if the RA is further down the road for the young person. Invite the RAP sponsor to connect with young people during active programming time to enhance soft skills and build relationships with the participants.
- 3 Engage partners with your young people:** Engaging partners with your young people during the active program phase can expose them to a variety of opportunities, help them learn more about the registered apprenticeship and its benefits, and generate enthusiasm. The employer may be willing to present to the group, offer a tour of their facility, or provide a job shadow, which can further prepare youth to be ready for the experience.



INSIGHT 5: DIVERSIFY REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM (RAP) OPPORTUNITIES

Today's young people are more adept in different technological spaces, and this can benefit rural communities as it pertains to RAPs. Consider diversifying your RA offerings through virtual means and working with small local employers to create new ones. This can help balance out a local employer who may be willing to provide the RA and on-the-job training but lacks the knowledge and skills to deliver instruction, or a college or training partner hours away from the program.

While there is a lack of mass transit options and limited ride-sharing and taxi services available, rural programs can still successfully bring RA opportunities to the youth.

Strategies

- 1 Research virtual opportunities:** The apprenticeship system has adapted well to technological improvements. There are various types of RAPs, including virtual instruction and on-the-job training. [Virtual delivery](#) of an apprenticeship program can reduce the cost of transportation, appeal to today's youth who are more tech-savvy and adaptable to online options, increase access to a more diverse offering of apprenticeships that are out of the geographic area, and provide additional methods of instruction.
- 2 Academically prepare your young people:** Your academic instructor or educational service provider can prepare and support youth for the rigors of the instructional portion of the RAP. This includes increasing their skills and confidence in the types of modalities that may be used.

Conclusion

Although rural YouthBuild programs may face many challenges, you also have many strengths and resources within your smaller communities. By tapping into these unique talents and relationships and using strategies and local ingenuity, you can build career pathways that will benefit your young people and community.

Thank you to the rural DOL YouthBuild programs that contributed to discussions in developing this resource.

EXAMPLES OF RURAL APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- [Rural Health Association of Tennessee](#)
- [National Rural Water Apprenticeship Program](#)
- [Alaska Works Partnership](#)
- [Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners](#)
- [Texas Workforce Solutions Rural Capital Area](#)
- [Kansas Farm Bureau](#)

RESOURCES

- [Apprenticeship.gov](#)
- [Rural Assembly](#)
- [Skills Commons](#)
- [Rural Apprenticeships for Young People: Challenges and Strategies for Success](#)
- [Jobs for the Future: How to Engage Rural Employers in the Promise of Apprenticeship](#)
- Washington State Department of Labor & Industries - [Registered Apprenticeship: Options for Incentivizing Apprentice Utilization and Policy Option Recommendations Addressing Apprenticeship Issues in Rural Communities](#)
- [USDA Resource Guide for Rural Workforce Development](#)