Dear Oklahoma employers,

Many Oklahoma business leaders and employers are facing structural skills challenges within their workplaces. These challenges include a gap between the skills the labor market offers and the skills employers want, an aging workforce, and “soft skills” deficits. To address these issues, employers throughout the state and the nation are embracing apprenticeship as a solution for creating a skilled, cost-effective, and sustainable talent pipeline.

The Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development (OOWD) works directly with Oklahoma employers to identify business needs and build a customized, high-quality apprenticeship program so that employers can develop their own ideal workforce.

The information provided in this employer guide is intended to allow you to explore Registered Apprenticeship, consider whether apprenticeship might be the right fit for your workforce needs, and discover how to get started on your journey of becoming an Oklahoma Registered Apprenticeship sponsor.

The Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development is committed to assisting you through every stage of creating your apprenticeship program. Please contact us to get started or with any questions you may have.

We look forward to working with you to create solutions that are tailored to your specific needs.

Sincerely,

Jenna Morey
Director of Apprenticeship and Work Based Learning
Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development

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OKLAHOMA APPRENTICESHIPS

There is a 23% skills gap between Oklahoma’s current workforce and what employers will need by 2020. Registered Apprenticeship programs provide employers the opportunity to develop their ideal workforce by creating custom programs that pair on-the-job training with classroom instruction. Apprenticeship allows businesses to fast-track new hires into skilled positions or up-skill current employees. Oklahoma Works partners with the U.S. Department of Labor, state partners and local businesses to ensure quality.
Registered Apprenticeship programs are available to Oklahoma job seekers.

Benefits for Employers:

- Well-trained and highly skilled workforce
- Improved productivity and bottom line
- Reduced turnover and liability costs
- Increased employee loyalty and retention

Registered Apprenticeships offer over 1,000 OCCUPATIONS in diverse global industries including:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Aerospace and Defense
- Agriculture and Biosciences
- Construction
- Creative Industries
- Education, Training and Development
- Energy
- Health Care
- Information and Financial Services
- Transportation and Distribution

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WHAT IS REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP?

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is a structured education and training program that takes place in the workplace and includes formal on-the-job (OJT) training and classroom-based, related technical instruction (RTI). An apprentice is a full-time, paid employee of the sponsoring organization from the start of the program. For each year of the apprenticeship, the apprentice will normally receive 2,000 hours of on-the-job training and a recommended minimum of 144 hours of related classroom instruction. Apprenticeships are typically one to six years in length, with a national average of four years.

An apprenticeship is not an internship, nor is it a short-term training program. Apprentices work full-time and are paid a wage that is subject to minimum wage regulations, but may begin below that of incumbent worker. As the apprentice hits milestones such as completing a certain number of program hours or demonstrating job competencies, his or her wages increase according to the agreement signed by the employer and the apprentice at the beginning of the program.

1. The apprentice is a full-time, benefit-receiving, paid employee of the sponsoring organization.

2. The apprenticeship program includes at least 2,000 hours of On-the-Job (OJT) training and 144 hours of Related Technical Instruction (RTI), which can take place in a classroom at the workplace or at a local college or education provider.

3. The apprentice must be paid at least minimum wage, with wages progressing as the apprentice moves through the program.

4. On-the-job training must be structured, planned, and coordinated. It cannot simply be a job-shadowing experience or a short term employee induction program.
Registered Apprenticeship programs are customized to meet the needs of organizations and the skills of apprentices. These programs combine on-the-job training (OJT) with related instruction (RTI) to fast-track new hires into skilled positions.

**Flexibility in Program Design**
Apprenticeships can be designed to be time-based, competency-based, or a hybrid of the two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time-based programs</th>
<th>Competency-based programs</th>
<th>Hybrid approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete a required number of hours in on-the-job training and related instruction</td>
<td>Progress at their own pace – demonstrate competency through proficiency tests</td>
<td>Using minimum and maximum range of hours + Successful demonstration of identified and measured competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not required to complete a specific number of hours</td>
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**Flexibility in Related Instruction**
There are many options for how the related instruction is provided to apprentices. Related instruction can be based at a school, provided at the job site, or completed online. It can take place during work time or after work hours.

**Flexibility in Training Model**
The training components can be arranged in different ways to develop a model that works for both businesses and apprentices. In a traditional apprenticeship model, apprentices receive both related instruction and on-the-job training concurrently throughout the program. For a “front-loaded” model, apprentices complete some related instruction before starting a job, in order to learn the critical skills required for the first day on the job site. Programs can also be built using a “segmented” model in which apprentices alternate between related instruction and on-the-job training.
**BENEFITS OF REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP**

Registered Apprenticeship is an effective way for businesses to ensure a pipeline of well-qualified, highly trained workers by engaging directly in their preparation, education, and training. Unlike traditional post-secondary education programs that are designed to prepare students for any number of careers and generally focus more on theory than practice, apprenticeship is designed by and for the employer and is highly specialized to meet the unique needs of a specific job.

Because apprentices learn primarily in the workplace, they are trained using the same state-of-the-art equipment that they will use on the job. They will also be instructed and mentored by skilled workers who have done the job the apprentice is training to do and who will ensure that apprentices are oriented to workplace norms and expectations. Those who complete a registered apprenticeship receive a credential that is nationally recognized as a mark of distinction.

Employers that utilize apprenticeship within their organization generally report the following benefits:

- Filling vacancies that otherwise couldn’t be filled due to skills gaps among available workers
- Attracting a broader range of candidates and diversifying the workforce
- Improving employee morale and loyalty—thus reducing turnover
- Ensuring that workers are trained to the employer’s standards using the employer’s equipment and protocols
- Shortening the amount of time before new employees are productive
- Decreasing error and accident rates
- Ensuring that the knowledge and experience of aging workers is transferred to the next generation of workers
Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs provide a practical solution to prepare a skilled workforce. Apprenticeships can be customized to meet the needs of any company. Employers benefit from reduced turnover costs and increased employee loyalty, while apprentices start an immediate career path and earn a living while they learn.

For every dollar spent on an apprenticeship, employers get back an average of

$1.47

✓ Fill vacancies that otherwise couldn’t be filled due to skills gap among available workers
✓ Attract a broader range of candidates and diversify workforce
✓ Ensure that workers are trained to employer standards using employer equipment and protocols
✓ Shorten the amount of time before new employees are productive

On-the-job learning and job-specific training lead to INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

Apprenticeship programs provide a stable and predictable method for DEVELOPING QUALIFIED WORKERS

SAFETY TRAINING
Decreases error and accident rates

Assigned mentors and experienced trainers drive KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER
Program Components of Registered Apprenticeship

Business Involvement

Employers are the foundation of every apprenticeship program. They play an active role in building the program and remain involved every step of the way. Employers can even manage apprenticeship programs together through apprenticeship councils, industry associations, or other partnerships to share the administrative tasks involved in maintaining apprenticeship programs.

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Structured On-the-Job Training
Apprenticeships always include an on-the-job training (OJT) component. Apprentices receive hands-on training from an experienced mentor at the job site. OJT focuses on the skills and knowledge an apprentice must learn during the program to be fully proficient on the job. This training is based on national industry standards, customized to the needs of the particular employer.

Related Technical Instruction
One of the unique aspects of apprenticeships is that they combine on-the-job training with related technical instruction. Education partners collaborate with business to develop the curriculum, which often incorporates established national-level skill standards. The related instruction may be provided by community colleges, technical schools, or apprenticeship training schools – or by the business itself. It can be delivered at a school, online, or at the job site.

Rewards for Skill Gains
Apprentices receive wages when they begin work and receive pay increases as they meet benchmarks for skill attainment. This helps reward and motivate apprentices as they advance through their training.

National Occupational Credential
Every graduate of a Registered Apprenticeship program receives a nationally-recognized credential. This is a portable credential that signifies to employers that apprentices are fully qualified for the job.
1. **Explore**
   Contact OOWD to get started on the pathway to apprenticeship. Discover different types of programs and how they are customizable to your needs.

2. **Plan**
   Form your internal program team, typically including a decision maker, project lead and HR representative. Gather existing internal training plans and create an apprenticeship job description.

3. **Connect**
   Reach out to OOWD staff who can help you execute your plan, identify resources and coach you to the finish line.

4. **Partner**
   Link up with local or national training providers. Expand your existing education relationships or foster new partnerships.

5. **Build**
   Identify your wage scale, clarify work processes and develop related training curriculum. Outline recruitment and selection plans to hire new apprentices.

6. **Register**
   Work with OOWD to complete the apprenticeship standards template. Connect with the U.S. Department of Labor and apply to become an ApprenticeshipUSA program.

7. **LAUNCH!**
   Utilize state and federal resources to start recruiting and hiring apprentices. Begin to see a return on your investment!
GETTING STARTED

The Pathway to Apprenticeship provides a general overview of how to apply, register, and launch a Registered Apprenticeship program.

Convinced apprenticeship is the right tool to build your organization’s workforce? Eager to get started? Here are 6 things you can work on to jump-start your apprenticeship registration.

☑ SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION
  - Find existing or create a job description for a fully-skilled worker in the occupation

☑ DEFINE WAGE SCALE
  - Full-performance level wage
  - Entering wage for new apprentice
  - Benchmarks for increasing the wage as employee advances in the program
    - Time or skill-attainment based

☑ PROGRAM MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS
  - Age, education, ability to physically perform the essential functions of the job, etc.

☑ PROGRAM TYPE
  - Time-based, competency-based, or hybrid

☑ ON-THE-JOB TRAINING (OJT)
  - Competency areas
    - Specific skills within each competency area
  - Number of hours for each competency area
  - Length of program

☑ RELATED TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION (RTI)
  - Provider: in-house or external
  - Specific classes
  - Number of hours (DOL recommends at least 144 per year)

Contact us with any questions while you are on the pathway to apprenticeship.
During an apprenticeship program, apprentices receive hands-on training from an experienced mentor at the job site. Workplace mentoring is shown to reduce turnover, promote growth, help employees adjust to new positions, and become prepared to move up in the company.

Nearly 80% of all learning is considered to be informal, meaning that it is not done by reading or taking classes, but rather by learning on the job and from others. Mentors elevate and escalate “knowledge transfer,” which is useful in shortening a learning curve in the workplace, so companies can have highly-productive employees in a much shorter period of time than they would had mentors not been implemented.

Mentorship also provides the important opportunity to build relationships between generations. As mentor and mentee develop their own relationship, they help create and perpetuate a positive company culture that combines the best qualities of the individuals, regardless of their age.

Organizations across industries are embracing the benefits of a diverse workforce. Some of these benefits include:

- Diverse cultural perspectives can inspire creativity and drive innovation
- Drawing from a culturally diverse talent pool allows an organization to attract and retain the best talent
- Diverse teams are more productive and perform better
Identifying an Effective Mentor

Mentors play a critical role in preparing your company’s future workforce by driving knowledge transfer. Look for these qualities when identifying mentors within your organization:

1. **SKILLED & KNOWLEDGEABLE**
   A great mentor knows the job inside and out and is able to share their skills, knowledge and expertise.

2. **STRONG WORK ETHIC**
   Choose a mentor that is committed to excellent work output, demonstrates a positive attitude and acts as a role model.

3. **WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT APPRENTICES**
   A great mentor takes a personal interest in building a mentoring relationship. The mentor has an open door policy and time to help.

4. **EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR**
   Choose a mentor with strong interpersonal communication skills. A great mentor is willing to listen and able to provide constructive feedback.
WORKPLACE DIVERSITY

Workplace Diversity leads to more innovation and opportunities for all, better access to talent, and improved business performance.

What is workplace diversity?

Having a workforce made up of people from a variety of backgrounds

Providing equal opportunity in:

✓ Recruitment
✓ Employment
✓ Promotion

Benefits to employers:

Fresh Ideas and Perspectives
Drive Innovation

Increased Morale
and Productivity

Attract and Retain Top Talent

Enhanced Company Image

Implementing Diversity:

• Involve every employee in formulating and executing diversity initiatives
• Encourage employees to express their ideas and opinions and attribute a sense of equal value to all
• Promote diversity in leadership positions
• Utilize diversity training
We are here to help. Please contact us with any questions:

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**About the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development**

The Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development (OOWD), as established by the Governor, is the designated administrative entity for the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). As the WIOA designee, OOWD supports and implements the vision of the state WIOA board, the Governor’s Council on Economic and Workforce Development (GCWED).

The Governor’s Council is composed of business leaders appointed to the Council who represent Oklahoma’s diverse geography, who are from rural and urban areas, and who represent our state’s major industry economic drivers. The mission of the Council is to assist the Governor in the development, recommendation and implementation of wealth generating policies and programs within the workforce system.

In support of GCWED’s mission, the Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development oversees the work of seven local WIOA boards which includes the operation of 54 workforce centers across the state. The office also administers Title I funding, including the Adult and Dislocated Worker program. In addition to these activities, the OOWD also serves many facilitative roles including:

- Coordinating strategic priorities and plans across the education and workforce system
- Aligning and connecting the education and training pipeline with the needs of the state’s regional economies
- Integrating and using workforce and economic development data to inform policy, track progress, and measure success.
- Building partnerships between industry and education at the regional and local levels.
- Promoting work-based learning opportunities and facilitating partnerships for quality work-based learning statewide, including on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, job shadow, mentorship, internships, externships, and Registered Apprenticeships
- Optimizing resources and incentives to achieve the goals of Oklahoma Works, the Governor’s workforce development initiative
- Providing equal opportunity guidance and monitoring to local workforce boards
- Leading all statewide Rapid Response and layoff aversion efforts
The Oklahoma Office of Workforce Development/Oklahoma Works is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.