



## Frequently Asked Questions: Registered Apprenticeships

### What Is an Apprenticeship and How Does It Differ From a Registered Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a structured workforce development program that combines paid on-the-job learning with related classroom instruction. Apprentices earn wages while developing skills and competencies needed for a specific occupation. Registered Apprenticeship Programs are approved by the U.S. Department of Labor (the Department) or a federally recognized State Apprenticeship Agency. Registered Apprenticeships must:

- Meet nationally recognized standards.
- Be approved by the Department of Labor or State Apprenticeship Agency.
- Provide a portable, industry-recognized credential upon completion.
- Potentially qualify employers for federal, state, or local funding opportunities and tax incentives.
- Give employers access to technical assistance and apprenticeship support networks.

Unlike traditional hiring models that rely on finding workers who already possess the required skills, apprenticeships allow employers to develop talent internally while creating clear career pathways for workers. Today, apprenticeship models are also being used in information technology, cybersecurity, health care, advanced manufacturing, and other high-demand occupations.

### Why Are Registered Apprenticeships Important for Employers, and What Are Barriers to Implementation?

Registered Apprenticeships can help organizations build talent pipelines, address skills shortages, and develop workers with competencies tailored to their specific workforce needs. According to SHRM research:

- 84% of HR professionals whose organizations offer or partner with apprenticeship programs reported that those programs were somewhat effective or very effective at addressing talent shortages.
- 59% of HR professionals agree that apprenticeship programs can be used to develop skills where talent is needed.

However, many organizations encounter barriers to adoption. Among organizations that do not currently offer apprenticeship programs, HR professionals most commonly cite staffing limitations (37%), unclear return on investment (33%), and time constraints (26%). In addition, only 8% of HR professionals agree

that the administrative process for Registered Apprenticeships is easy to navigate, highlighting ongoing concerns about program complexity and regulatory requirements.

## **What Is The Federal Government Doing to Expand Registered Apprenticeships?**

The federal government has made apprenticeship expansion a central workforce development priority and is investing significant resources to increase employer participation and apprentice enrollment nationwide. In April 2025, the Administration issued the executive order [\*Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future\*](#), directing federal agencies to strengthen and expand apprenticeship opportunities and support workforce development in high-demand industries. The Department subsequently [issued guidance](#) aimed at accelerating apprenticeship growth, reducing administrative burdens, and improving transparency.

To support these efforts, the Department announced approximately [\\$85 million in formula funding](#) for states and territories through the State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula (SAEF) grants. The funding will support apprenticeship expansion in critical and high-growth sectors, including artificial intelligence infrastructure, information technology, advanced manufacturing, shipbuilding, nuclear energy, and domestic mineral production.

In addition, the Department of Labor announced the upcoming availability of [\\$145 million in funding](#) to support a new pay-for-performance apprenticeship expansion initiative. Under this model, funding will be tied to measurable outcomes, such as the creation of new Registered Apprenticeships and increases in apprentice participation. The Department described the initiative as the most significant federal investment to date in support of the Administration's goal of expanding apprenticeship opportunities nationwide.

Taken together, the [scale of these investments](#) reflects a strong federal commitment to apprenticeships as a workforce development strategy and signals that apprenticeship programs will likely remain a major focus of federal workforce policy in the coming years.

## **What Does This Mean for HR professionals?**

For HR professionals, these investments create new opportunities to leverage apprenticeship programs as part of a broader skills-first talent strategy. As federal and state governments continue to prioritize apprenticeship expansion, employers may gain greater access to funding, technical assistance, and partnership opportunities that can help offset training costs while developing talent pipelines in high-demand occupations.

Organizations that have not previously explored Registered Apprenticeships may find that growing government support makes these programs more accessible and attractive as a solution to persistent workforce and skills shortages. At a time when 68% of organizations report difficulty filling full-time positions, Registered Apprenticeships offer employers a structured and increasingly supported pathway to build the workforce they need.

Explore whether a Registered Apprenticeship program is right for your organization by visiting the U.S. Department of Labor's [Apprenticeship Resources portal](#). To stay informed about the latest workforce development and apprenticeship policy developments, contact [Governmentaffairs@SHRM.org](mailto:Governmentaffairs@SHRM.org).