Head Start and Early Head Start
Apprenticeship Kick-Start Guide

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Curated Resources to Support Key Components Needed for Innovative, Successful Responses to the Early Learning Staffing Crisis

Prepared by Tara Dwyer
for the HeadStarter Network
and the National Head Start Association

In January 2021, NHSA released the paper, *Broader, Deeper, Fairer: Five Strategies to Radically Expand the Talent Pool in Early Education*. *Through this paper, NHSA furthered the thinking and actions related to innovative, high-quality early childhood career pathways. One of the paper's outcomes was forming a nationwide early childhood education apprenticeship work circle. This work circle consisted of advocates, early learning systems leaders, early pioneers in early childhood education apprenticeships, and federal leaders invested in training. Over time, the group dug deeper into various models and shared their challenges and successes. Soon, the work circle began to identify critical components in early childhood education apprenticeships; these components were standard in successful models and missing from short-lived programs.*

Armed with this knowledge, the group created a list of recommendations that would support expansion. In the end, it seemed that these colleagues had more to share, so we continued to dig deeper, present together, and learn from one another. Finally, the lessons and experiences of these pioneers have informed the insights in this paper. Captured here are the process, conundrums, and bright ideas of early adopters so your apprenticeship journey can build on ours. Together, we can fully realize the potential of early childhood education apprenticeships.

–Yasmina Vinci, Executive Director of the National Head Start Association

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HEADSTARTER NETWORK

The HeadStarter Network is a nonprofit organization created to provide a nimble, interdisciplinary, and forward-looking engine for driving innovation in early childhood development and education. We constantly seek to apply best practices and innovations from technology, business, and academia to shape new models of early childhood education.

N H S A
NATIONAL HEAD START ASSOCIATION

The National Head Start Association is a nonprofit organization committed to the belief that every child, regardless of circumstances at birth, has the ability to succeed in school and in life. The opportunities offered by Head Start lead to healthier, empowered children and families, and stronger, more vibrant communities. NHSA is the voice for more than 840,000 children and families from systemically underserved populations, 250,000 staff, and 1,600 Head Start grant recipients.

Overview

Many male-dominated professions have used registered apprenticeships to transfer workers' knowledge, skills, and competencies to new and developing workers. In early childhood education, a predominantly female-dominated profession, this same method is used without classifying it as such—leaving millions of dollars in support and tuition on the table. Given the profession's need to universally increase access to funding and streamline career pathways, registered apprenticeship seems particularly well suited for early childhood education.

As shifts across the country occur in hopes of diversifying participation in apprenticeships and acknowledging inequities in educator preparation programs, the timing of this movement could not be better. Yet, joining a system that is only sometimes inclusive of early learning can be challenging, especially when done one-by-one at the local level.

This paper seeks to support programs, advocates, and early childhood education partners in their thinking and designing of apprenticeships and provide a foundation for getting started. Our goal is to support the development of apprenticeships, link programs to this work, and develop strategies to attract and retain the workforce, and combat the stratification that has long impacted our profession.

The Department of Labor's Quick Start Toolkit: Building Registered Apprenticeships explores five steps to move from idea to implementation. Without the early childhood education context, this tool is not designed to support those of us who are just starting our apprenticeship journey. In this guide, we have adopted a similar pathway for moving apprenticeships forward but framed the steps, guidance, and resources for an early childhood education audience. The critical five steps, as described in the *Building Registered Apprenticeships*, are:

1. Explore   **2. Partner**   **3. Design**   **4. Register**   **5. Launch**

We have framed this guide into the same five steps. Under each section, we provide a brief overview of the focus. When appropriate, there are suggested action steps and real-life examples of implementation; this is named throughout as "Promising Practices." These Promising Practices, for the most part, are supported by the experience of early pioneers since most of the apprenticeship work done to this point is still too new to be grounded in evidence. Finally, we end with resources to inform apprenticeship efforts.

This guide aims to provide a framework to design and launch early childhood education apprenticeships, including Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The ultimate goal is to create models that leverage local resources to meet the specific needs of the early childhood education community. Better than anyone, Head Start programs understand how to meet parents and teachers where they are. Hence, programs are well-positioned to advocate for these needs to be present in models.

Step 1. Exploring Options for Early Childhood Educator Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a career pathway that have served hundreds of professions for many decades. There is a strong history and system connected to apprenticeship in the United States. Yet, it wasn't until recently that registered apprenticeships began to gain momentum within the early learning profession. *The Department of Labor's Quick Start Toolkit: Building Registered Apprenticeships* offers a framework for streamlined, locally driven career pathways for early childhood educators.

Traditional pathways to degree or credential attainment have long excluded many early educators and have led to the stratification of our workforce. With an apprenticeship, it is possible to design a pathway inclusive of academic and professional supports that lowers barriers which may have prevented many early educators' career progression. All early educators leaders should have access to meaningful credentials that have a life-changing impact on their workforce and the young children they serve, and the most effective apprenticeships offer that opportunity.

Whether the driving interest in apprenticeship is accessing new funding, creating a responsive model at the community level, or ensuring programs have well-prepared, skilled educators serving children and their families, the registered apprenticeship model is worth exploring.

First, seek to understand who your apprentice will be. Possible recruitment pools include:

- **high school students**: to attract new potential to the program
- **incumbent workers**: to build skills and further credentials for staff already in programs
- **families of the children in your program**:; to deepen connections with and opportunities for those you serve
- **underrepresented groups in higher education**:; to reflect the life experiences of enrolled children
- **community members**:; to reflect the life experiences of enrolled children
- **senior citizens or career-changers**:; to welcome those looking for meaningful work

After defining who you are building this apprenticeship for, define the credentials and skills your apprentices will develop. This could be an entry-level milestone—such as earning a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential—or a career progression—like growing current staff talent from an assistant to lead teacher role. When building your apprenticeship, there will be plenty of opportunities to refine your approach; it may be wise to focus on a short-term goal so you can quickly measure success.

Regarding industry-recognized credentials, the early learning profession has invested heavily in system-building and credential creation. This was done state-by-state, so requirements vary. Head Start's established qualifications are aligned with research and funding; as a profession, these are the professional qualifications we should lean into when designing apprenticeship pathways.

Ponder

Early childhood education leaders in apprenticeship implementation have growing opportunities to learn from, join, or adapt responsive approaches to the unique needs of the early educators they seek to engage. Looking at existing models for inspiration will help inform your design, but staying grounded in the context of your program and community is critical. To do this, you must be clear on the problem you hope to address. Whether you are trying to build a pipeline, attract new staff, strengthen and retain current staff, or recruit staff that reflect the experience of the families and children in your program, there is likely an existing design that can work.

Promising Practice

Investing in career pathways for your workforce has been shown to help support staff recruitment and retention. NHSA offers CDA® Training Pathway at The Academy that gives learners the flexibility and support they need to achieve their goals. This training provides learners with everything they need to know to succeed in Head Start and provides nine credits towards their bachelor's degree in early childhood education at National University.

Registered, meaningful early childhood education (ECE) apprentice programs that currently exist include:

- **ECE Level I**: Assistant teacher qualifications (leads to CDA) credential or a state-awarded certificate that meets or exceeds the requirements for a CDA credential)

- **ECE Level II**: Teacher qualifications (leads to the attainment of an associate's degree or Level II Competency attainment for related and unrelated degrees)

- **ECE Level III**: Teacher Qualification (leads to a bachelor's degree in ECE or child development; may be part of a certification or non-certification track or initial master's degree)

There are also opportunities to expand apprenticeship programs beyond educator preparation. Some intermediaries and states have already started on this journey. Apprenticeship offers an excellent opportunity to qualify individuals for many specialized knowledge areas connected to the profession. Specialized knowledge areas can include: home visitor; director; early interventionist; family advocate; and many more possibilities.
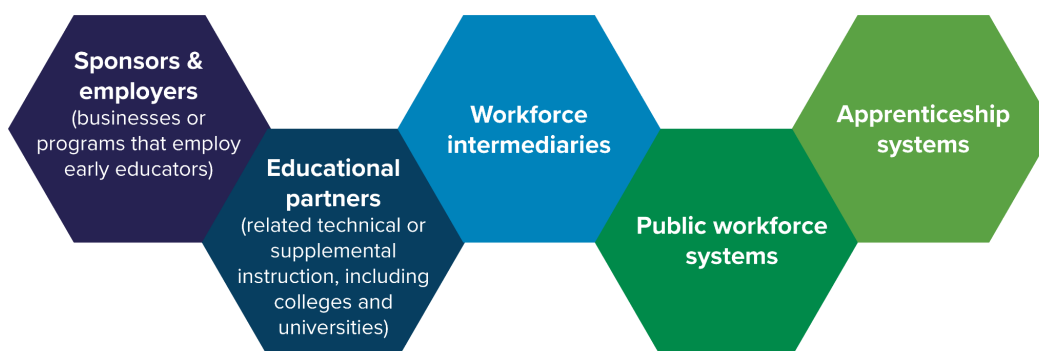
Ultimately, as the employer, you will be responsible for building a vision for the program, so it is vital to understand your needs for this program. Below are some first steps to help employers understand their capacity and conditions for their apprenticeship program.

- Conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps in staffing or project future staffing needs.

- Determine your program's capacity to host, hire, and support wage increases once apprentices complete the apprenticeship.

- Consider what resources are critical to career and academic success but need more supply for working adults who may be first-generation college students, and align your budget with the value of supporting apprentices through the completion of their program.

- Plan and prepare your budget to pay progressively higher wages as skills increase or at least once apprentices complete the program.

- Consider how you will provide on-the-job training and mentoring for apprentices.

- Consider whether you can assign one person to serve as the program coordinator for the apprentices in your program.

- Be prepared to advocate for the success of your apprentices from vision to completion.

- Nurture a supportive and inclusive work environment to support the long-term retention of the apprentices.

- Check your local and state resources for funding specifically for registered apprenticeships.

Step 2. Growing the Table: Critical Partners in Early Childhood Education Apprenticeships

Once you have decided who your apprenticeship is for and what credential it will award, it is time to get more partners on board. Early childhood education apprenticeships are at the nexus of three systems: 1) early learning; 2) workforce development; and 3) higher education systems. Building partnerships and relationships that extend across these three systems means joining new tables while making room at tables for those who may have been inadvertently excluded in the past. It is unlikely that employers alone can build (and fund!) a sustainable, effective registered apprenticeship. So, grow the table and make new friends.

Critical partners in apprenticeship include:

Sponsors & employers
(businesses or programs that employ early educators)

Educational partners
(related technical or supplemental instruction, including colleges and universities)

Workforce intermediaries

Public workforce systems

Apprenticeship systems

Each partner's role is defined below. Note that the level of engagement and resources can differ significantly. In the experience of those who have implemented an early childhood education apprenticeship, approaching these conversations with a lens of thought-partnership, problem-solving, and finding win-win scenarios has generated the most success.

1. Sponsors and Employers

Some registered apprenticeships use a sponsor. Sponsors provide oversight and are the backbone of the collective approach. The sponsor is responsible for the program's overall operation, collecting data, collaborating with the partners, and measuring success. Sponsors can be a business or an employer; a consortium of businesses, ranging from workforce intermediaries, community-based organizations, industry associations, to joint labor-management organizations; or community colleges.

Employers are at the heart of designing the apprenticeship pathway, since it is their needs that apprentices will be filling. Head Start programs have direct supervision of and are responsible for employing apprentices; they are the employers. The employer's role in a registered apprenticeship is to be the program driver, advocate for the apprentices, and provide on-the-job learning. Employers can decide whether to design and implement an apprenticeship alone or to share the effort and work with other Head Start or child care programs in their region. In some cases, it may be more cost–and energy efficient to pull together several early learning programs that share the need to retain and attract new staff while seeking the same credentials. Whether you do this alone or with other employers, the goal is to create a sustainable group of apprentices who can navigate the program, share resources, and be a part of a cohort that supports each other through a shared community.

2. Related Instruction Partners

With consensus built around the role you are looking to fill through apprentices, your Related Instruction (RI) or Professional Development (PD) partner is the next to get on board. All registered apprenticeships require technical instruction to be paired with on-the-job learning. When registered, there should be at least 141 hours of related technical instruction per year. However, this can depend more on the model and credential being sought. RI partners are sometimes referred to as PD partners in early learning. Some state apprenticeship systems refer to the RI partner as Related Supplement Instruction (RSI) or Related Technical Instruction (RTI) partner. Either way, this partner's role is to deliver professional development, whether credit-bearing or not. There is flexibility in the type of RI partner. An RI partner can be a four-year college, community college, career and technical education, or an approved training program—all are considered related instruction providers in the registered apprenticeship system. These partners play a vital role in apprenticeship; without this partner, an apprenticeship cannot launch.

It is vital to ensure your RI partner is dedicated to practices that support the success of your apprentices. Our profession is richly diverse. To maintain this richness, RI partners may need to be able to serve populations which are historically underrepresented in their institutions or organizations. It is vital to ensure your RI partner is dedicated to practices that support success. This means instructors who are ready to think beyond current programming patterns are a great fit for this work.

There is plenty of research to consult when determining what supports may help your apprentices complete their credentials successfully. The support apprentices need will differ over time and throughout the apprenticeship; therefore, it is crucial to center the voice and expertise throughout the program.

So, it is essential to talk with apprentices regularly about their experience. Take time before launching to understand and address the barriers your apprentices anticipate and ensure equitable access to the support colleges offer. While many colleges offer student and academic support, these services are not always responsive to working adults with full lives and schedules. To this end, it is vital to cautiously approach general support offered at institutions of higher education unless they are specially designed to support your apprentices.

Making sure the related RI is the best fit for your apprentices can be challenging, but ensuring you are on the same page is vital. The best way to do this is to get to know the partner and their capacity to serve your apprentices effectively. You want success; ensuring your RI is willing to do what it takes to accomplish this goal is critical.

Initial considerations for related technical instruction partnerships include:

1. How will your institute, faculty, or program create opportunities for apprentices to learn alongside each other in cohort groups?
2. What options do you have to ensure that the location and timing of courses are free of participation barriers for apprentices?
3. Will the content you deliver be relevant to all early educators, especially for those working in zero-to-five settings?
4. Can you ensure the instructors' life experiences, culture, and background are reflective of the apprentices?
5. What student supports does your institute offer, and how can they be accessible to apprentices?
6. What costs, fees, or additional supports should be considered? Who will fund these?
7. Where and how will this coursework articulate into the next level credential?

Ponder

Apprenticeships can bring an opportunity for innovation and modernization for RI partners, opening doors to many and giving early educators a chance to see themselves and their experiences reflected in their instructors and the content. Be prepared to advocate for success along the way, but set this expectation up from the start, so this is a common goal from the beginning.

Ponder

Some examples of related instruction supports include:

- embedded and outside tutoring;
- holding classes in child care or Head Start centers;
- hiring bilingual instructors or instructors of color from the local community;
- allowing smaller sized cohort classes;
- offering classes online, hybrid, and/or in-person on weekends/ evenings;
- engaging with apprenticeship staff to ensure alignment between theory and on-the-job training.

3. Workforce Intermediaries

While not required in apprenticeship, workforce intermediaries can significantly support partnerships in the registration and data collection portion of apprenticeship. Intermediaries differ greatly, but overall, they offer technical support and can help navigate the world of apprenticeship or workforce development. Intermediaries can be local or national, and every intermediary may offer different services and levels of support.

As the Department of Labor has increased its focus on apprenticeship to further diversity and inclusion culture in career pathways, one of the challenges to launching registered apprenticeships is navigating the apprenticeship and workforce system and processes. In hopes of lowering that barrier, funding for sector-specific intermediaries is emerging. Sector-specific intermediaries have specialized expertise and deep knowledge of the profession they support. When apprenticeships are funded by intermediaries who understand early learning and registered apprenticeship programs, this can help ease the building, registering, launching, and sustaining process. Knowing both systems allows for alignment across priorities, develops a shared language, and reduces the burden on the employers' need to learn the workforce system.

Every registered apprenticeship program has a "sponsor." The sponsor is responsible for the program's overall operation, collecting data, collaborating with the partners, and measuring success. Sponsors can be: a single business or a consortium of businesses, and can range from workforce intermediaries, community-based organizations, industry associations, joint labor-management organizations, to community colleges.

Guiding questions for identifying an intermediary:

- What is the intermediary's experience with the early childhood profession?

- What is this agency's experience with non-traditional, innovative education-based apprenticeship pathways that center equity?

- Will this intermediary support the partnership through registration and act as a sponsor moving forward?

- If this intermediary is also a sponsor, do they have data to support the efficacy of their model?

- What services are being offered by this intermediary, and does that align with your needs?

4. Public Workforce System

The public workforce system is localized and oversees the spending of workforce dollars and employer resources. Partnering with Workforce Investment Boards (WIB) is critical to ensure that funding for your registered apprenticeship program is maximized, but it is not required. It is essential, however, to create a relationship with your workforce board, get on their radar, and eventually be able to access Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds. The public workforce system has millions of dollars to spend each year on registered apprenticeships, especially non-traditional apprenticeships, which is highly incentivizing.

Promising Practice

As faculty, deans, and department chairs work to align the success of early learning apprentices with their policies and practices, it can be challenging to do so in a silo. It may be helpful for institutions of higher education to come together in the community and share strategies they are implementing to navigate systems and barriers. In the community, relationships are built, problems are elevated and solved, and lasting change can happen through the cross-pollination of bright ideas. There can be power in shared efforts, and when it comes to innovation at the institutions of higher education-level, bringing folks together can drastically accelerate the rate of change.

In Pennsylvania, a consortium of higher education partners was launched through the support of the National Governors Association. This work started as an effort to unite promising practices related to apprenticeship, reduce the stress on colleges trying to combat biased beliefs and outdated thinking, and ultimately increase innovation across the state-wide network of colleges. This group has been in existence for over five years, and together they have worked to influence policy at the state and expand access to early learning degree-based apprenticeships that align program-to-program for a clean 2+2 pathway to the bachelor's degree.

Workforce boards can also help support pre-apprenticeships for new to the profession or emerging early educators. Financing is not the only reason to partner with the workforce system. Many supports and resources that can benefit employers and the workforce are housed within this system, including job placement for under-employed adults, eligibility for workforce development, and supports like case management. Overall, the workforce system is fruitful for those who know how to navigate it. Not leveraging these resources on behalf of early educators would perpetuate inequities in our workforce systems.

As an early learning leader, getting your workforce board to understand our profession's critical role in the economic wellbeing of our community can be a beneficial relationship for both parties. Permit yourself to challenge their practices and thoughts and, when needed, bring other leaders from your community to the table. The benefits will be plentiful. To find out whether the Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAA) governs your state or territory, visit this site for an interactive map.

3. Apprenticeship System

Each state and territory is either serviced by the Department of Labor's OA or has established an SAA. The OA is run by federal employees who oversee programs and registration processes in states without a recognized SAA. They have standardized documents and use the same data reporting system. State apprenticeship agencies are recognized by the OA but have the authority to oversee programs and register apprenticeships in that state. They may or may not use the standard federal documents and may or may not use their data systems. Either way, a workforce intermediary can support you in navigating this process when it comes to registering your program.

Real Life Application

Dedicated employers are not just how apprenticeships get launched; they also ensure the program's success. There are success stories from large and small models. A CDA-registered apprenticeship in North Carolina used a three-prong approach in its design method. This model was equally committed to training, support, and compensation. Notably, the program took an active role in all three approaches simultaneously. They accomplished this through thoughtful leadership, intentionality, and steadfast commitment to leaving all possibilities on the table. First, the program set a goal of a wage ladder that was more competitive with local businesses to attract and retain staff long-term. Then, leadership sought out a well-trusted community member to offer CDA coursework and support through the assessment piece. Program leadership supported the apprentices by doing all they could to ensure success and access to the pathway. They spent time proofreading assignments, holding study sessions, supporting the wellness of every apprentice, and even cheering them on with balloons on the day of their classroom observations. This created a sense of success, cultivated belonging, and strengthened relationships across the program.

Meanwhile, because of COVID-19, the program saw a steady decrease in the families needing their services. So, after carefully considering and assessing community needs, the program decided they could responsibly consider an enrollment reduction while remaining compliant. This action, combined with cost-of-living increases and years of planning, allowed the organization to increase the wages as they had hoped—up to $6 more per hour! This is a perfect example of how careful planning and evaluation of a program can lead to a more aligned vision between budget and community needs.

Step 3. Putting the Pieces Together: Building an Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship programs can be customized to meet the needs of businesses and the skills of apprentices. However, the main ingredients in all apprenticeships remain the same. We have already explored the critical role employers and related instruction partners play in apprenticeship. This section will cover the three components that make registered apprenticeship unique from other career pathways:

1. On-the-Job Learning
2. Apprenticeship Types
3. Funding Opportunities

Now that you have all the right players at the table, it is time to start putting the vision into action. Approach this phase with flexible dedication, careful communication, and a timeline that partners co-create. Your initial apprenticeship program will likely offer all your partners a learning opportunity, but if all are dedicated to a "no fail" approach in supporting apprentices to completion, building your apprenticeship model will be a success, even when it feels like all you learned was what not to do again.

1. On-the-Job Learning

On-the-job learning is a significant component of the apprenticeship. Employers drive the on-the-job learning to ensure the apprentices are learning meaningful, everyday skills that will lead to retention and rewards in the workplace. On-the-job learning is an opportunity to bridge the learning from the related instruction to the classroom. There is no shortage of models to reference when implementing this component, but this section will outline essentials and make recommendations for getting started. Over time, you may choose to build upon and refine.

In registered apprenticeships, journey workers or experienced teachers/mentors directly support the apprentice in translating theory into practice. This role must be filled by an employee with at least the credential or higher than that the apprentice is seeking. However, an employer may increase this requirement if a mentor-to-apprentice ratio can be maintained. When it comes to early education apprenticeships, a mentor teacher should meet more than just the qualifications or required credentials outlined in the standards. They also demonstrate a knowledge of developmentally and culturally appropriate practices, a solid commitment to the profession, a temperament or disposition valued in early educators, such as a growth mindset or commitment to inclusion, and possibly desirable scores in classroom and family assessments.

When a teacher becomes a mentor, they have added responsibilities and should be compensated for their efforts. Mentors make time to work with the apprentice inside and outside the classroom, all the while seeking an opportunity to supplement their skill set, and their wages should reflect this effort. There are public resources for training mentors to be coaches and growing an understanding of adult learning principles, but this is not required when registering for a program. Most Head Start programs have mentor teachers and/or coaches on staff, and this model can likely be expanded to support apprentices as well.

Promising Practice

When mentors are given the opportunity to develop competencies and understand effective coaching and leadership practices, they gain skills that deepen their expertise. This, overall, can increase wage prospects and potentially diversify our profession with more proportional representation across experiences, race, and culture.

Real Life Application

In the Philadelphia area, there is a partnership between a community college and a community-based organization that seeks to support apprentices and mentors with on-the-job learning. This partnership allows for a unified approach between on-the-job learning, related instruction, and mentoring while reducing the burden on single employers to design a mentoring model and process that work for them. First Up serves as the community based organization since they employ early educators with a deep knowledge of the profession and diverse programs and are trained to do coaching and technical assistance in the field.

Community colleges have limited capacity to visit programs, and program leaders often need support in designing, supporting, and managing mentoring projects on-site,

Documenting on-the-job learning can happen in various ways, so it is important that the employer provide each mentor with the structure or framework they will use throughout their mentorship. This will help to ensure a similar experience across apprentices and maximize learning, but it will also keep your model's integrity. At a minimum, employers may want to log meetings between the mentor and apprentice, document observations, create a portfolio that demonstrates competencies attained, or document the attainment of competencies along the way. Again, depending on funding, time, and availability, various learning frameworks can be used to structure this work-based learning and mentor development.

Time-based models are measured through time as RI is completed. Whereas competency-based models offer an approach that requires the mentor or employer to verify competencies as they are attained, this can move at the educator's pace and provide a chance for optimal individualization and opportunity for authentic assessment of learning. In addition to assessing competencies, hybrid models hold the apprentice to a ratio of work experience and competency development. This model allows for authentic assessment through a self-directed approach to on-the-job learning while tracking verifiable work experience. This model can serve our profession well since work experience is often tied to state requirements and credentialing systems. This is likely why most early learning apprenticeships currently registered are registered as hybrid models.

so First Up supports multiple employers with the mentor in content knowledge related to the competency assessment and develops skills in coaching, adult learning principles, and instructional leadership. This on-the-ground approach ensures alignment between the related instruction and the mentoring, creating more significant opportunities for program-level quality improvement, and apprentice learning.

2. Funding Opportunities

Through partnerships, early learning leaders can access and use various funding streams to support their work. Funding eligibility and priorities can change yearly and differ greatly from state to state, even county to county. So, to say that there is flexibility in funding options is one way to say there is no easy solution. However, registered apprenticeships allow for more funding opportunities than a non-registered pathway. To maximize funding opportunities, blending and braiding funding is the best way to make the most for apprentices.

Think comprehensively when it comes to funding for apprenticeship pathways. Holistically support apprentices and their needs by tapping into as many sources as possible. This means maximizing your Head Start budget and navigating public resources that many early educators qualify for. Since you are working across systems and partners, there will be a lot of eligibility requirements. With no streamlined application, apprentices can quickly feel overburdened by the bureaucratic process. Maximize access by including multiple funding streams in the design of your application. This way, multiple partners can assess eligibility from one source and avoid overburdening the apprentices with paperwork. It will also be important to work with partners to target funding and aid to most in-need apprentices. This will mean focusing on needs-based funding rather than first come first served or merit-based. This will require a mindset shift for some partners but, in the long run, will help to ensure equitable access to your apprenticeship.

Outside of the funding your partners can offer, additional funding streams have been used to support apprenticeships across the country. Examples of these funding streams include:

- Labor and Industry (DOL state office) grants
- Child Care Development Funds
- TEACH scholarships
- Perkins
- State and local American Rescue Plan funding
- Community College Foundation Grants

- Preschool Development Grants
- WIOA
- Foundations
- TANF
- Head Start Training and Technical Assistance funds
- Department of Labor apprenticeship expansion grants

Temporary or one-time funding like Preschool Development Grants, American Rescue Plan dollars, or workforce expansion grants have helped many collectives build, launch, and expand their early learning apprenticeships. These dollars can support mentoring and on-the-job learning development, fund transformation at higher education programs, and even fund technical assistance or intermediaries. However, these dollars are temporary and do not provide long-term sustainability. Temporary dollars tend to have a temporary impact. To improve the quality and responsiveness of partners, dependable funding is the best way to achieve this. Braiding workforce dollars with Head Start funding can support sustainable models and expansion.

Real Life Application

One of the most successful and long-lasting apprenticeship programs has been developed by the Head Start and Early Head Start impact programs of YMCA of the East Bay. Over time, YMCA leadership has supported the development of this program, from start-up to sustainability, using various funding options. While the inaugural cohort was modeled after a learn-and-earn program that targeted Head Start parents, this program has since registered this apprenticeship. It can now boast supporting over 500 apprentices with over a million-dollar budget. To get started, YMCA used Head Start Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) funds to cover the 12 credits equivalent to the CDA in California. TTA and basic Head Start funds were used to pay the wages of these parents as they grew in their ability to meet the needs of the children in the program and their children at home. After this pathway was earned, parents were now qualified to move into assistant and associate teacher roles, and many continued to engage in the AA apprenticeship pathway and beyond. Over time, as the program has grown, so have the quality, services, budget, and success of the program.

The YMCA has worked across systems to secure funding from the state, philanthropy, and local workforce systems. It has continued to leverage its Head Start budget to grow the model to the place it is today. Diversifying funding has allowed for a fully supported apprentice pathway that includes technical training, success (academic, personal, and professional) support, and soft skills training. Apprenticeship has also granted opportunities to the program staff, not just apprentices. YMCA pays mentor teachers overtime for time spent in professional development and with apprentices. With additional funding from outside sources, another critical role developed the success coordinator. This role is like the family advocate but focuses on the apprentice's success and learning. Plus, by partnering with a sector specific intermediary—Early Care and Education Pathways to Success (ECEPTS), the YMCA has limited administrative burden related to compliance; plus, it can easily access support and data that attest to the program's success and quality. Overall, the YMCA of East Bay has used creative funding and innovative thinking to redesign their professional development and quality improvement efforts so that meaningful credentials can be earned through these endeavors—as well as providing a career pathway for Head Start parents and other low-income community members.

"It was more than just school to me, [the apprenticeship program] was a community. And that is what I needed most."

—Dereka Williams,
Apprentice at YMCA of East Bay

Step 4. Making a Case for Long-Term Change: Registering Your Apprenticeship Program

Just as the quality of child care can vary greatly, so can unregistered apprenticeships. Through evidence-based standards and regulations, Head Start programs meet a baseline of reliable quality; registered apprenticeships are similar. Apprenticeships that are *registered* with either a state or federal apprenticeship office have met quality criteria and are part of a career pathway governed by an evidence–and standard-based system that assures the quality and consistency of the professional development and career pathway offered.

Additionally, just as tracking child outcomes is essential to the quality assurance of Head Start programs, verifiable data is collected on all registered apprentices. This data aids in the quality improvement of pathways by tracking completion and retention rates and will help predict when access-related interventions are needed. This data can also inform funding and policy over time. This structure allows employers to recognize the value of apprenticeships across states and programs, just as families can realize the quality across states in Head Start programs. Furthermore, registering not only helps to qualify apprenticeships but also lends itself to a shared understanding of credential attainment that just has not happened through the early learning system alone and easier access to workforce funding.

Registered apprenticeship also comes with rules and regulations that help to protect the apprentice and give them some fundamental labor rights, including wage increases as roles and responsibilities increase. Registered apprenticeships require employers and apprentices to agree upon hiring or promotion terms upfront, and these agreements are documented. This not only protects the apprentice, but it also allows for more complete data on compensation and retention. This data can help to drive systems building, public will, and financing.

If registering your apprenticeship is of interest but the burden of doing so is overwhelming, local and national intermediaries can help. When participating in a registered apprenticeship, additional opportunities include:

- Technical assistance and support for navigating the apprenticeship system;

- Alignment of roles and responsibilities with skills, competencies, and knowledge;

- A bottom-up approach for establishing more streamlined clearly defined stackable pathways;

- Accountability and data-driven measurements that do not deplete early childhood-specific funding;

- Federal resources include access to over one billion dollars in funding for related instruction, mentor stipend, and supports;

- Tax credits for employers who host apprentices;

- Financial aid funding specific to an apprenticeship program; and

- G.I. Bill certification

Step 5. From Idea to Implementation: Launching Your Apprenticeship

Once the program design is funded and you have either moved forward with registering or joining a registered apprenticeship program, you are ready to recruit and put your apprenticeship into action. Follow each step below. Soon, your model will be up and running!

1 **Communicate**
Create flyers and start marketing your apprenticeship–this is a great way to generate interest from potential apprentices and attract new partners to work. Don't forget to let your Head Start parents know!

2 **Recruit**
Cast a wide net! Have interested candidates share essential information with you, so you can easily follow up and revisit interest at each enrollment period. Consider identifying one person at the agency to serve as the contact; this way, potential apprentices don't get lost. Outreach methods can help to ensure you are generating interest from folks who would most benefit from an inclusive, well-supported career pathway. Recruit broadly, but outreach to specific individuals and communities in places they will be.

3 **Screen and Select**
Whether you are attracting new staff or recruiting from your current staff, it is essential to remember that apprentices are progressing through a career pathway which means they will soon be qualified for a new role. As the employer, you need to foresee any barriers that may challenge that goal.

4 **Hire and Register**
Communicate clearly about the program and outcomes to ensure your goals and those of the apprentices align. Make the commitment official and firm up any additional funding needed.

5 **Individualize**
All apprentices may not need the same support, so it is important to individualize support as necessary. After apprentices are selected, be proactive in understanding their customized needs for support by conducting a needs assessment.

6 **Connect**
Your apprenticeship representative or intermediary can be an essential resource who will be there to provide ongoing support and technical assistance when you need help. They are also great resources connecting you to available grants, funding, and resources.

7 **Enroll**
Determining services eligibility and enrolling in coursework can be time-consuming and challenging. Employers can work with partners to streamline this process and reduce the burden on apprentices.

8 **Track the Data**
As the program continues, track your apprentices' progress as they advance through the apprenticeship and increase their skills–your intermediary can support this effort to ensure you are compliant.

9 **Assess**
It's your apprentice program! Continue to assess its performance to meet your changing needs and ensure the apprentices' success. Listen to the apprentices!

10 **Tell Your Story**
You can support new employers and inspire them to follow your path when you share your success. Bring your model to local or national conferences. Let your experience ignite change in others, and soon early learning apprenticeships will be offering workforce solutions to employers across the nation.

Resources

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