



Strengthening the OST Workforce:

A Guide to Developing Apprenticeships



Apprenticeships are gaining momentum in out-of-school time (OST) as an alternate career pathway that supports equity in the workforce. Learn why apprenticeships are a useful strategy for OST staff, programs, and field leaders. Identify challenges to address and explore key elements of an apprenticeship program and promising practices.

MAKING THE CASE FOR OST APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Apprenticeships are industry-driven career pathways that combine classroom instruction, on-the-job training (paid work experience), and mentorship, generally leading to a nationally recognized credential or degree. Why should you consider developing OST apprenticeships in your state, territory, or tribe?

An apprenticeship can be an additional entry point into the field, providing an affordable and accessible training model. OST professionals are essential to the well-being of our local, state, and national economies, but OST programs have consistently struggled to recruit enough staff. At the same time, there is the potential for OST jobs to lead to a career and to employment pathways. States, territories, and tribes need to pay attention to who makes up this workforce and what supports and opportunities that workforce needs.

Benefits

- › **Offer an alternate pathway into the OST field.** Apprenticeships can offer one pathway into the field in a multi-pathway system. They provide a supportive structure (pay, training, mentorship, and a cohort of peers) to bring people into the workforce who are deeply motivated to work with children and youth, but who don't have a feasible pathway because of barriers such as the cost of education.

Apprenticeships are especially appealing to experiential learners or nontraditional students. They create pathways for nontraditional students into professional positions and a supported approach to community college. Apprentices are therefore well-poised for their next career step: either further education, a position with more leadership, or possibly work in a related field.

- **Support equity in the workforce.** A strength of the OST workforce is its diversity. Often staff come from the communities they serve, and therefore they reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of youth and families. However, people of color disproportionately lack pathways to move up.¹ Apprenticeships offer an affordable pathway to a credential or degree and career advancement. It is a pathway that supports the workforce in the communities in which they live and work. Apprenticeships eliminate the cost of higher education, a common barrier to entry to the field and to career advancement. Apprenticeships can also lead to job opportunities in allied fields (see “OST as Part of a Teacher Pathway” below), helping to diversify the workforce in those fields.
- **Increase compensation for the workforce.** Careers in OST should pay a living wage and offer opportunities for future economic growth to support and retain the workforce. When the apprenticeship includes on-the-job training, aspiring professionals can earn while they learn, which can help with staff retention. Not only are apprenticeships an accessible way into the field, if properly designed, they ensure a higher salary upon completion.²



Benefits for Individuals	Benefits for Programs and Employers	Benefits for the OST Field
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Offers an alternative and experiential approach to learning ➤ Supports learning through supervisors, mentors, and a cohort of peers ➤ Eliminates the high cost of education through earning while learning ➤ May increase compensation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provides one source of dedicated staff through a “grow your own” approach ➤ Brings leadership opportunities for more experienced staff who can serve as mentors ➤ May help recruit and retain staff in a sustainable way to strengthen the OST workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strengthens career pathways ➤ Supports professionalization of the field by creating education, training, and advancement opportunities ➤ Builds equity in the workforce ➤ May increase compensation for the OST workforce

APPRENTICESHIP MODELS

There are several different types of apprenticeships: registered apprenticeships, youth apprenticeships, and OST apprenticeships. Each are described below.

Registered Apprenticeships

Registered apprenticeships are models that have been validated by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) or a state apprenticeship agency. The DOL may lend credibility to a program and offer benefits such as technical assistance (TA), federal resources, and potential tax credits to employers. They require quality standards and result in a national credential.

- **Benefits:** Offers credibility and benefits such as TA, federal resources, and tax credits for employers.
- **Challenges:** It can be difficult for participants to meet the required work hours with part-time OST positions. There is no nationally recognized credential in OST.

› Examples:

- » *West Virginia Apprenticeship for Child Development Specialist* was the first early childhood registered apprenticeship program in the United States. The two-year program is intended for those already working in the field (birth–12) who have a high school diploma or GED. The majority of funding comes from the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services, which partners with the DOL. Employers give pay increases of .25 per hour each semester, and participants also receive a financial bonus for completing the program. Apprentices need to work at least 20 hours per week directly with children, 3,200 hours total. Guidance is provided to apprentices either through on-site sponsors and supervisors or through a paid mentor. West Virginia has developed their own classroom curriculum and has articulation agreements with several colleges. About 4,000 people have received certifications through the program to date.
- » North Carolina is piloting an early childhood registered apprenticeship to increase the early childhood teacher pipeline. School-age placements and coursework will be offered. Partners include the Department of Health and Human Services, the Division of Child Development and Early Care and Education, community colleges, T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood, Child Care Services Association, and ApprenticeshipNC.

› Explore more:

- » *Registered Apprenticeships: A Viable Career Path for the Early Childhood Workforce* (2019). This brief from the Bipartisan Policy Center describes registered apprenticeships in early childhood education and highlights examples of existing programs in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Colorado.
- » *Apprenticeships as a Degree Attainment Strategy for the Early Childhood Workforce* (2018). This paper by Alison Lutton focuses on the Pennsylvania Early Childhood Education (ECE) Apprenticeship Program, but it also offers additional general information and background on apprenticeships in early childhood, including a chart of existing ECE programs.
- » [Federal Registered Apprenticeship Program](#). This website provides information on the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP).

Youth Apprenticeships

Youth apprenticeships are a form of experiential learning that support high school students' development and career readiness. These apprenticeships may be referred to as pre-apprenticeships when they are part of a formal partnership with a RAP. They combine on-the-job training, paid employment, and classroom learning during the last one to three years of high school and may have the potential to link to a RAP as part of a career pathway. Apprenticeships can be a developmental support to youth,³ but they also benefit employers who can strengthen their workforce pipeline by reaching youth before they would typically enter the workforce.

- › **Benefits:** Foster youth development through meaningful engagement and reach a potential workforce early.
- › **Challenges:** Youth need more support and guidance than older workers and will have more limited availability. Participating youth may miss out on afterschool activities such as sports, arts, and clubs.
- › **Examples:**
 - » Maine, through the *Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network* (MRTQ PDN), is currently piloting youth apprenticeships for early childhood and is exploring the potential of offering youth apprenticeships for school-age professionals. Maine has established credentials in early childhood and OST and is looking to partner with technical high schools along with the YMCA and Parks Department to offer a two-year OST apprenticeship experience. Summer programs could offer practicum hours for the first year, with seniors then working apprenticeship hours during the school week. Earning their Youth Development Credential with their high school diploma means starting higher on Maine's career lattice. MRTQ has established a staff position to lead the apprenticeship and credential program development.

› **Explore more:**

- » [Colorado Succeeds](#). This website provides information on building a youth apprenticeship program. [Colorado](#) has undertaken initiatives to increase diversity in the teacher workforce through apprenticeships for high school students.
- » [Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship](#), an initiative of New America, may serve as a resource. The organization makes a [strong case](#) for the value of youth apprenticeships.
- » [Engaging Youth as Workers in Afterschool Programs](#). This paper from Temescal Associates and the How Kids Learn Foundation discusses the benefits of engaging older youth as workers in afterschool programs.



OST Apprenticeships as Part of a Teacher Pathway

Some field leaders are also exploring OST apprenticeships as a step in a teacher career pathway. In this model, those entering the workforce would work at OST programs in conjunction with their teacher training. This model is seen as a strategy to address teacher shortages, but OST programs also benefit by having a source of new temporary staff. Social work and other human services training may already use OST practicum placements, hinting at similar pathways from OST to other related fields.

- › **Benefits:** Addresses teacher shortage and helps diversify the teacher workforce; offers individuals a pathway into a professional, relatively well-compensated career; supplies OST programs with dedicated temporary staff.
- › **Challenges:** Does not strengthen pathways for retaining OST professionals in the field.
- › **Examples:**
 - » California has been exploring this model as a way to address the statewide teacher shortage and increase the diversity of the teacher workforce. The [Expanded Learning Teacher Apprenticeship Pathway Project](#) is looking at how an apprenticeship could be blended with a teacher residency program for those in training to gain experience at expanded learning sites. A committee has been developing coursework, defining on-the-job competencies, and making recommendations for associated wage increases. Guidance from community college representatives as well as early childhood programs has been helpful. The next step will be to secure higher education and employer partners.
- › **Explore more:**
 - » [Afterschool as a Teacher Pathway](#). This brief from the How Kids Learn Foundation and Temescal Associates explores the potential of collaborations between afterschool and the K-12 education system to prepare the workforce. A webinar further discusses this model.

CHALLENGES

Although apprenticeship models offer many benefits, there are challenges to creating OST apprenticeships. Underlying several of these is the high percentage of part-time positions that need to be accommodated.

Challenges	Solutions
<p>Compensation</p> <p>Funding to pay apprenticeship wages is not readily available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In other fields, budgeting for staff pay is not necessarily a stumbling block as employers are already equipped to pay competitive wages. However, OST programs struggle to afford staff salaries. Funding for apprenticeship programs often cannot be used by employers for wages (e.g., State Apprenticeship Expansion, Equity, and Innovation Grants). ➤ Funding to ensure current and future livable wages and increases in compensation commensurate with experience, education, and training cannot be guaranteed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Partner with private foundations or other more flexible funding sources to support compensation. ➤ Continue to advocate for public and private funding to support compensation for the OST workforce.
<p>Licensed vs. Unlicensed Programs</p> <p>Many OST programs do not participate in state child care licensing systems, but apprenticeship programs are often set up to only support licensed facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish flexibility around licensing when creating apprenticeship programs. ➤ Look for opportunities to partner across sectors (early childhood and OST) and align supports. ➤ Provide incentives for programs to become licensed. ➤ Consider other ways to ensure high-quality program placements, such as with existing quality assessment tools.
<p>Part-Time Positions</p> <p>Part-time OST positions make it difficult to meet the required work hours for registered apprenticeships.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Registered apprenticeships require 3,200-4,000 work hours, or approximately two years. But many OST jobs are part-time, which means 2,000 hours in two years is more realistic. ➤ Relatedly, some potential apprentices may be interested in working full-time and therefore seek placements in early childhood education where full-time work is available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish flexibility around the number of required work hours, keeping in mind part-time schedules. Advocate for this flexibility when partnering with state and federal DOLs. ➤ Consider ways to create full-time OST positions, for example by including administrative tasks and training. ➤ As some apprenticeship programs do, count the on-the-job hours clocked prior to enrolling in an apprenticeship program.

Challenges	Solutions
<p>Lack Of Credential</p> <p>There is no widely accepted national credential in OST.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ A key aspect of registered apprenticeships is earning a nationally recognized credential. The early childhood recognizes the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. Although many states have established afterschool, youth development, or school-age credentials, there is not yet one nationally recognized (and therefore transferable) credential. It is more difficult to incentivize the achievement of a locally-recognized, non-transferable credential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look to existing OST credentials and degrees to build from. ➤ Consider advocating for a nationally recognized credential in OST. ➤ Provide financial incentives for completing credentials as part of apprenticeship programs and beyond.
<p>Hard-To-Meet Partner Requirements</p> <p>Requirements of partners can create barriers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ For example, community colleges have requirements related to admissions, course prerequisites, and regulations around transferring credits. Workforce Investment Boards may require apprentices earn according to wage scales that employers cannot afford. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Focus on relationship-building with partners. ➤ Offer ideas and discuss how partners might be more flexible. ➤ Be patient and problem-solve together.

ACTION STEPS AND CONSIDERATIONS

There are many lessons learned from established early childhood apprenticeship programs and from leaders currently working to establish new programs in OST. Here are steps to take:

- **Design apprenticeships with input from community partners.** Include OST organizations and staff, youth, state afterschool networks, local intermediaries, and other statewide OST organizations. Ensure representation of racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity as well as other demographics, such as urban and rural, among these voices.
- **Consider starting small.** Pilots can be an effective way to build relationships among partners, uncover and address barriers, and make the case to expand.
- **Identify partners that can provide a component of the program and/or be a champion to advocate for the program.** Partners needed:
 - » A coordinating agency to administer the program
 - » Institute(s) of higher education, most likely community colleges and vocational schools (in the case of youth apprenticeships)
 - » Employers who will host the apprenticeship and provide on-the-job training, a mentor, and wages
 - » U.S. Department of Labor, in the case of registered apprenticeships
 - » Funders to support the cost of classroom learning and administrative expenses as well as apprenticeship wages
 - » Participating apprentices

- **Build on existing resources.** Existing resources may include a professional development system to link to, for example, QRIS; credentials or certificates already offered at a college; or a statewide career lattice that can incorporate a new apprenticeship program.
- **Support employers.** After identifying employers with the capacity to support apprentices, keep in mind they may need support and/or training for mentors and supervisors, as well as support to complete paperwork and find funding sources. Establishing an employer network or community of practice is one mechanism to provide support.
- **Develop classroom curriculum.** Work with your education partners to create the classroom component, building on existing credential or degree programs. Consult with existing apprenticeship or credential programs. One example is the [Youth Development Practitioner Apprenticeship](#) developed by FHI 360.
- **Secure sustainable funding.** While this is the goal, programs may begin with a pilot funded by a short-term grant. However, potential sources of financial support include the following:
 - » Federal support, although availability will change with administrations.
 - » [Tax credits](#) as incentive for employers, such as in the case of registered apprenticeships.
 - » Private funding through foundations or business partners.
 - » State funding for OST might support youth apprenticeships, for example, 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) or Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) quality set-aside funds.
 - » City funding or local support is an option, although it will vary by location.
 - » Partners can share the financial burden. For example, an intermediary can take on administrative costs, and employers may be able to pay at least a percentage of wages. Scholarships (e.g., through [T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood](#)) can work hand-in-hand with apprenticeship programs to pay for classroom learning.
- **Provide adequate compensation.** Wages may not be allowable expenses under some funding sources, and employers may not be able to shoulder the burden of increasing wages as required and desired. Having a career ladder with pay scales can help determine what resources will be necessary to provide adequate compensation.
- **Evaluate program success.** Collect data on the number of apprentices, salaries earned, recruitment success, future job titles and wages, etc., to be able to make the case to funders and policymakers for continued support of apprenticeship programs.

Endnotes

- 1 Russel, C., & Butler, A. (2020). *The afterschool leadership landscape: Supporting and strengthening racial equity*. National Afterschool Association.
- 2 Reed, D., Liu, A. Y., Kleinman, R., Mastri, A., Reed, D., Sattar, S., & Ziegler, J. (2012). *An effective assessment and cost-benefit analysis of registered apprenticeships in 10 states*. Mathematica Policy Research. Retrieved from <https://mathematica.org/publications/an-effectiveness-assessment-and-costbenefit-analysis-of-registered-apprenticeship-in-10-states>
- 3 Halpern (2009). *The means to grow up: Reinventing apprenticeships as a developmental support in adolescence*. Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Many of the ideas in this guide emerged from discussions among seven state teams that have been part of an NCASE Topical Interest Group exploring ways to ensure apprenticeships are available to out-of-school time and youth development professionals. The group has been meeting since April 2021. Participants from California (Partnerships for Children and Youth, Department of Education Expanded Learning Division), Indiana (AYS), Maine (Maine Roads to Quality), New Jersey (YMCA State Alliance, Burlington Community Action Partnership), North Carolina (Southwestern Child Development Commission School age Initiative), Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania Key), and West Virginia (21st CCLC) have contributed to the development of this guide by generously sharing ideas, resources, and lessons learned from their work, as well as by offering feedback.

