



REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

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Earn While You Learn

Apprenticeship is not just a job — it's a career opportunity.

The basic components of apprenticeships are the same today as in 1937, when the National Apprenticeship Act set the foundation for apprenticeships in the United States. Apprentices enter into a structured training program of classroom and paid on-the-job training under the guidance of a mentor. As their skills increase, so do their wages. Upon completion of the program, apprentices earn an industry-recognized credential and usually are hired into a job that marks the start of a career.

The payoff for workers is clear: According to the Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, Washington state apprentices see an employment rate of 83% and annual earnings of \$75,100.¹

With these positive results, Washington state is investing in supporting apprenticeships and other career connected learning opportunities. Students can use the Washington College Grant to help fund their related supplemental instruction. Colleges are working to increase access to programs, especially among underrepresented populations, while modernizing and upgrading equipment, so students learn the most up-to-date skills preparing them to enter the workforce ready for jobs and careers that employers need.

Apprenticeships in Washington

In Washington state, apprenticeships follow the national model. Apprenticeship combines classroom studies with on-the-job training supervised by a journey-level craft person or trade professional.

Classroom studies are offered by a variety of providers, including employer-sponsored schools, union-sponsored schools and community and technical colleges. After successfully completing the program, apprentices earn a journeyworker-level certificate of completion from the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries Apprenticeship and Training Council. This certificate is one of the oldest and most highly portable industry credentials in use today.

Apprentices who take courses at community and technical colleges receive college credit and are eligible for lower tuition rates. At some colleges, completion of an apprenticeship program of at least three years can lead an Associate of Applied Science or an Associate of Applied Science-Transfer with pathways into Bachelor of Applied Science degree program offered at community and technical colleges.

Results

Twenty Washington state community and technical colleges partner with 204 active apprenticeship programs, providing 80% of all supplemental instruction for state registered apprentices.

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- In 2019-20, nine months after leaving college, 91% of apprentices who completed their program were employed with a median wage of \$41.68/hour.²
- Apprenticeship students who completed in 2019-20 were 24% more likely to be employed than their peers who did not complete their programs.³

In the 2023-24 school year, 11,498 students were enrolled in apprenticeship programs at community and technical colleges. Enrollment, hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic as workplaces closed, is beginning to recover after seeing eight years of consistent growth.⁴

Apprenticeships are available in several sectors/occupations including: electrician, carpenter, ironworker, fire fighter, medical assistant, and aerospace machinist.

Benefits to Employers

- By combining on-the-job training with classroom instruction, the apprenticeship model provides businesses with employees who are trained to industry standards.
- Employers get the customized skills they need, including soft skills like communication, work ethic, leadership, and professionalism.
- A mentor/mentee relationship keeps “mentor” employee engaged in their work. Apprenticeship graduates require less supervision than new employees.
- The taxpayer return on investment over 10 years is \$7.80 to \$1.⁵

Benefits to Apprentices

- Apprentices develop a thorough understanding of employers’ needs, along with higher wages and opportunities for professional growth.
- Apprentices earn competitive wages from day one and can expect to see incremental raises as their skill level increases. Over the course of their career, apprentices who complete their program earn about \$300,000 more than non-apprenticeship peers.⁶
- After successfully completing both educational hours and hands-on training, the apprentice will graduate to a highly skilled journey level worker with national accreditation.

How Policymakers Can Help

Washington’s community and technical college system is ready to meet the demand of registered apprenticeships. Industry demand in areas like education, health care and technology, combined with emerging technology and employee retirements mean colleges need to be ready for enrollment growth and infrastructure needs.

However, community and technical colleges have not received dedicated apprenticeship funding since about 2008. Dedicated funding would help by: stabilizing existing enrollment while preparing colleges to meet future demand; supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts; modernizing programs, including faculty professional development; and ensuring curriculum is aligned with the latest industry needs.

Sources/notes:

1. Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. “Washington Workforce Development Services.” 2024. Available at: <https://wtb.wa.gov/research-resources/workforce-training-results/>
- 2-3. SBCTC Data Warehouse, Data Linking for Outcomes Assessment files.
4. SBCTC Data Warehouse, Enrollment Monitoring for Apprenticeship
5. Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. “Washington Workforce Development Services.” January 2022. Available at: <https://www.wtb.wa.gov/planning-programs/washington-workforce-system/>
6. U.S. Department of Labor. “ApprenticeshipUSA Toolkit.” March 2021. Available at: https://www.aacc.nche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Apprenticeship_ROI_Research_and_Statistics.pdf