A Strategic Plan for Expanding Apprenticeship Models in Wyoming
May 2020

State of Wyoming Department of Workforce Services

Governor Mark Gordon

Prepared by:

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Introduction

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship is a proven workforce training strategy to develop new talent in highly skilled occupations and combines paid on-the-job learning with structured related technical instruction. Registered Apprenticeships are high quality, work-based learning and post-secondary training/education models that meet national standards for registration. Since 1937, Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs have met the skilled workforce needs of American industry by training millions of workers for lifelong careers. Once primarily a “best kept secret” of the construction industry, the model is now being utilized around the nation for all growing occupations, such as careers in Information Technology and Healthcare.

For employers, apprenticeship is an effective and cost-efficient strategy to build their current and future workforce. In addition to lower recruitment and relocation costs, apprenticeship can enable employers to develop strong and permanent talent pipelines. In a recent study by the US Department of Commerce, companies were unanimous in their support of apprenticeship programs. They found much value in the program and identified benefits that more than justified the costs and commitments they made to the apprentices. Within the apprenticeship framework, companies found great flexibility to adapt the model to their needs. In fact, Siemens USA found at least a 50% rate of return on their investment. 1

For workers, apprenticeship means a real job that leads to a portable credential that is valued in the labor market, along with the ability to ‘earn while you learn’ - which is particularly beneficial to low-income individuals who can support themselves and their families as they learn the skills their employer needs.

Apprenticeship is a structured training program of education and paid on-the-job training under the guidance of a mentor. As their skills increase, so do their wages. The payoff for workers is clear: most apprentices remain employed with the sponsor or within within the occupation with living wage or above jobs.

Apprenticeship is also a great investment for the public sector. In a research report from 2012, Mathematica Policy Research demonstrated that every public dollar invested in Registered Apprenticeship provided $27 in tax returns and more than $35 in total benefits. The estimated benefit to society of one apprentice completing a program ranges from $49,000 to $124,000. The public also benefits by leveraging significant private sector investments in training, which are estimated at over $1 billion per year.3
Yet despite its proven effectiveness, registered apprenticeship remains notably underused within the United States, outside of construction-based occupations. The United States has fewer new apprentices per capita than most developed nations, and the number of Wyoming’s apprenticeship programs are some of the lowest in the United States. At a time when millions of jobs nationally and potentially thousands of jobs regionally remain unfilled due to a reported ‘skills gap’, and at a time when college debt is a growing national concern, expanding apprenticeship is sound public policy that takes advantage of a proven training model and updates it for the 21st century economy.

For this reason, both the current and previous Presidential Administrations have prioritized the expansion of apprenticeship.\(^4\) Expanding apprenticeship programs enjoys bipartisan support in Congress. The US Department of Labor has made several grants and developed assistance programs available in recent years, thus encouraging states to grow this model.

“Apprenticeships are a time-tested, earn-while-you-learn model that helps create opportunities for American workers to succeed while providing employers with the reliable pipeline of skilled talent.”

– Former U.S. Secretary of Labor Tom Perez

The Office of Apprenticeship also has a program called a pre-apprenticeship that, while not covered under the apprenticeship expansion grant, is a useful tool in helping build a pipeline into the apprenticeship program. It also provides a way for potential apprentices to better understand the career options.
WHAT IS APPRENTICESHIP?

Defining a ‘Registered Apprenticeship’
Registered Apprenticeships are high-quality, industry led, work-based learning and post-secondary earn-and-learn models that meet national standards for registration with the U.S. Department of Labor. “Apprenticeship” is sometimes used as a generic term to describe any work-based experiential learning where one person learns from another person who has more experience. A “Registered Apprenticeship” is part of the National Apprenticeship System and has five core components.  

Business Involvement
Employers are the foundation of every apprenticeship program and play an active role in designing and delivering the program. Employers may work together through joint apprenticeship training councils, industry associations, or other partnerships to share the administrative tasks involved in operating and maintaining a high-quality, registered apprenticeship program.

Structured On-the-Job Training
Apprenticeships always include an on-the-job learning (OJL) component. Apprentices receive hands-on training from an experienced mentor at the job site. The structure of OJL 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 and is further customized to the needs of the employer.

Related Instruction
Apprenticeships combine on-the-job learning with related instruction on the technical and academic competencies that apply to the job. Program sponsors/businesses may collaborate with education partners 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. Instruction can be delivered at a school, online, or at the job site.

Nationally Recognized Credential
A Certificate of Apprenticeship Completion is a nationally recognized credential. Apprenticeships also include industry certifications and college credit toward a degree.

Rewards for Skill Gains
Apprentices receive wages when they begin work and pay increases as they meet benchmarks for skill attainment. The benchmarks for skill attainment can be customized to the employer’s needs. Wage steps can be based on competency attainment, hours/experience on the job, or a combination of both. Competency-based models of apprenticeship are also an option. This is where candidates progress at their own pace and validate competency and skills gains through demonstration and assessments. The “hybrid” program model, combining time and competency models, have increased in popularity.
The Benefits of Registered Apprenticeship

To Employers
The primary benefit of Apprenticeship to the employer community is it is one of the most effective models available to help develop a highly skilled workforce. Apprenticeship has been proven to reduce turnover rates, increase productivity, and lower recruitment costs. It combines a proven ‘off the shelf’ training model that is still customizable to the needs of the individual business, as well as industry standards.

On average, 91% of apprentices that complete their apprenticeship program remain employed with their sponsor nine months later. Furthermore, employers can develop a tiered pay structure that grows as the individual’s value to the company grows. Lastly, sponsoring employers may be eligible for both federal and state-based tax credits and other incentives outlined herein that can help reduce the cost of their investment. From a business perspective, a demonstrated 50% return on investment provides a strong case for registered apprenticeship.

To Workers
From day one of their apprenticeship, a worker receives a paycheck that is guaranteed to increase as their training progresses. They also receive hands-on and classroom-based training (which may be assigned college credit). At the conclusion of their apprenticeship, the worker has earned a nationally portable credential that is recognized by industries throughout the country. The worker has firmly entered the career ladder at a competitive salary, all the while taking on little, if any, educational debt.

To Taxpayers
Apprenticeship is one of the most cost-effective workforce training models available. According to frequently cited analysis conducted for Washington State’s Workforce Board, the state nets almost three times what is spends on apprenticeships within two and a half years of the program’s completion. Benefits to taxpayers’ total about five times the costs. By the time the apprentice completes his or her career, projections indicate the public has received $23 for every $1 spent on apprenticeship. This same study found that CTE programs received the second highest yield for the public, at $9 return for every $1 spent. Importantly, CTE programs can be effectively aligned with registered apprenticeship programs to amplify the impacts of each.
What is Pre-apprenticeship:

Pre-apprenticeship is defined as a program or a set of strategies designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a registered Apprenticeship program and has a documented partnership with at least one, if not more, registered Apprenticeship program(s). These programs may also include services needed to prepare the individuals to meet the prerequisites of one or more registered Apprenticeship programs (e.g. remedial classes/tutoring, Adult Basic Education, job readiness, etc.) A quality pre-apprenticeship is one that incorporates the following elements:

**Partnerships**
Pre-apprenticeship providers will have agreements with Apprenticeship sponsors designed to enable the Pre-Apprenticeship to directly enter in a registered Apprenticeship program or at the very minimum ensure an interview for placement. This agreement will articulate advanced credit, skills and competencies already acquired. If this cannot be accomplished an agreement between those involved in the partnership, to provide direct assistance to participants apply to the registered Apprenticeship program. At the least, I request a definite interview.

**Recruitment and Selection**
Strong recruitment strategies focused on outreach to populations underrepresented, protected classes, or those having difficulty in determining a career pathway, and careful assessment of pre-apprenticeship candidates will help your participants and the program succeed. This step may help find skill sets requiring remediation, for future success.

**Approved Training and Curriculum**
Training developed in partnership with a registered Apprenticeship sponsor, designed to give the Pre-Apprenticeship participants the skills and competencies required to be successful in the Apprenticeship program. An effective curriculum includes basic occupational skills and job readiness skills, specifically tailored to the workforce needs of the occupational sector or business partners or apprenticeship sponsors.

**Retention**
Participants may need ongoing support to complete the pre-apprenticeship and it will be up to the Pre-apprenticeship partners to determine and takes steps to provide this support, e.g. building peer networks, promotion of job retention and training for career pathways, on-boarding, etc.

**Sustainability**
Once a Pre-apprenticeship is in place, it is important to continually evaluate and implement strategies for sustainability and continuous improvement in this partnership with businesses/registered Apprenticeships and the Pre-apprentices. The ultimate goals is to work with employers to develop a skilled workforce and create career opportunities for individuals.
Workforce History in Wyoming

Over the last five years, Wyoming began focusing on growing its workforce training and development options and providing pathways for all Wyoming citizens to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to have successful careers. Wyoming has also worked with employers to identify the needs of their workforce and build programs to meet those needs. This action has led to a variety of workforce development programs that focus on the needs of employers and providing the Wyoming workforce the skills and knowledge it needs to support the local economy.

Wyoming Workforce Development Council:
These efforts have primarily been led by the Wyoming Workforce Development Council and its oversite of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) funding. However, the Wyoming legislature and other community-based organizations have also stepped forward to work in this space and help meet the needs of the state. The Workforce Development Council has set a few specific goals that directly relate to workforce development and apprenticeships in Wyoming:

Goal #1:
Use an integrated approach to increase the effectiveness of the Workforce Development System

Goal #2:
Increase internal and external communication and outreach efforts

Goal #3:
Provide customized support and resources to meet the diverse needs of Wyoming employers and job seekers

Goal #4:
Develop and strengthen partnerships to leverage available resources

Goal #5:
Use the career pathways system to prepare the Wyoming workforce for career opportunities in all industries

Workforce Programs:
- Wyoming Works
  - Wyoming Works provides programs and resources for adult students to learn a skill and secure employment. The program makes available individual grants for students enrolling in approved programs at a Wyoming community college. It also provides a mechanism for colleges to apply for resources in support of the creation of high-demand programs.
• Next Generation Sector Partnerships
  o Next Gen Sector Partnerships are Industry-led, community-supported partnerships that strengthen regional economies and connect people to jobs. Wyoming currently has nearly a dozen partnerships seeing great success in looking for new and innovative ways to train and recruit workforce into the industries that need them most.

• Workforce Development Training Fund
  o The Workforce Development Training Fund (WDTF) is a unique Wyoming-based program connecting employers with professional development opportunities to increase employee skill attainment. Grant Options include Business Training Grants, Pre-Hiring Economic Development Grants, Pre-Obligation Grants, Apprenticeship Grants, and Internship Grants.
    ▪ Internship Grants: Like the long-time Workforce Training Funds grant program, the State of Wyoming started a program that allows employers to apply for funds to help pay for interns. This focus helps entrepreneurs, start-ups, and existing businesses access talent and gives the intern the experience and educational value he/she needs to be successful.
    ▪ Apprenticeship Grants: The purpose of this funding is to develop an industry-specific workforce for business(es) or industries where there is a shortage of skilled workers. Apprenticeship Grants are available to Wyoming-based sponsor(s) with registered apprenticeship programs and Related Instruction Providers associated with a Wyoming-based sponsor. Only the formal related instruction component for the apprenticeship programs is eligible for funding consideration.
Wyoming Education Attainment Executive Council:
In addition to the Workforce Development Council, Wyoming has also been successful in looking at how it increases the education level of our workforce. Originally started by Governor Matt Mead by Executive Order in January of 2018 and codified by Governor Gordon in 2019, the Wyoming Educational Attainment Executive Council is designed to work on increasing educational attainment and economic opportunity for citizens, communities and businesses.

Over the last two years collaborative efforts by Wyoming governors, legislators, state and local agencies, business and industry, and education leaders have resulted in numerous laws and policies that laid the groundwork for the Educational Attainment Executive Council to create the Post-Secondary Attainment 5- and 10-Year Strategic Plan. This plan lays out some key focus areas for education attainment and workforce development in the state in order to get to the goals of:

- 60-67% post-secondary credential (degree or certificate) attainment by 2025; and
- 75-82% post-secondary credential (degree or certificate) attainment by 2040.

Key Focus Areas:
I. Alignment of workforce, workplace, and post-secondary programs
II. Access and infrastructure for recruitment, retention, and completion
III. Funding and affordability
IV. College-going culture K-12, adults, and business/industry
Apprenticeships in Wyoming

In addition to other workforce development initiatives, the state is committed to expanding the apprenticeship options in Wyoming. As part of the effort to expand workforce training options and meet the needs of the workforce in Wyoming, the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services applied for and was awarded an Apprenticeship Expansion Grant. This grant will allow the state to build on the work that the U.S. Department of Labor has done in Wyoming to build apprenticeship programs.

**The Process:**

In order to develop a strategic plan for expanding apprenticeships in Wyoming, the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services contracted with local consultant, Align, to facilitate the planning process. Align committed to starting the process by reviewing strategic plans from other states, collecting information on the current program and conducting interviews with stakeholders who were either currently involved in the apprenticeship program or who had an interest in apprenticeship expansion. The plan was then to pull together a planning group to go through the data and information collected and create the plan to fully integrate apprenticeship programs into state workforce development, education, and economic development strategies.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the plan was altered to account for fewer in-person meetings. Align conducted more phone and virtual interviews and spent more time pulling together the information into a comprehensive plan that will then be presented to stakeholders for final approval.

**Interview Participants:**

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<th>Participant</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lindsey Stutheit</td>
<td>Laramie County School District 1</td>
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<td>Bob Lampert</td>
<td>Wyoming Department of Corrections</td>
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<td>Shawn Taylor</td>
<td>Wyoming Rural Electric Association</td>
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<td>Mark Pepper</td>
<td>Wyoming Association of Rural Water Systems</td>
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<td>Lisa Osvoid</td>
<td>Wyoming Department of Health</td>
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<td>Jennifer Burns</td>
<td>Wyoming Board of Nursing</td>
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<td>Korin Schmidt</td>
<td>Wyoming Department of Family Services</td>
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<td>Corrine Livers</td>
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<td>Chris Jones</td>
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<td>Dale Weber</td>
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<td>Katie Legerski</td>
<td>Associated General Contractors of Wyoming</td>
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<td>Mary Ellen Tast</td>
<td>Laramie County Community College</td>
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<td>Penny Fletcher</td>
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<td>Dr. Michelle Aldrich</td>
<td>Wyoming Department of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Briggs</td>
<td>Wyoming Economic Development Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heidi Peterson</td>
<td>Wyoming State Chamber of Commerce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seth Kamarad</td>
<td>Plumbers &amp; Pipefitters UA Local 192/Workforce Development Council</td>
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Align talked with each interviewee either in person or virtually to gather data and idea for developing the plan. Interview questions included:

- What experience do you currently have with the federal apprenticeships program?
- What do you know about the federal apprenticeship program?
- What challenges have you seen for apprentices or apprentice sponsors?
- What would make it easier for organizations or businesses to participate in the apprenticeship program?
- What would make it easier for individuals to become apprentices?
- Are there specific industries that should be targeted for apprenticeship expansion?
- Are there other workforce systems that apprenticeships should be integrated with?
- If you were looking for information on the apprenticeship program, where would you go?
- What other ideas do you have for expanding the apprenticeship program in Wyoming?

The information collected from the interviews was then analyzed for trends and upon discussion with apprenticeship staff, utilized to develop a strategic plan that addressed key trends and needs in the state. The plan is also designed to integrate with other workforce development programs that have been successful.
Apprenticeship Expansion Strategy

Mission:
To create a state-level approach to expanding apprenticeships to new industries, new workforce sectors, and regions of the state in order to meet employer demand and provide quality employment for all Wyoming citizens.

Vision:
Wyoming will have a vibrant and growing apprenticeship program that is fully integrated into a comprehensive workforce development ecosystem that includes options for education and training for all Wyoming citizens. The program will utilize the strengths of the Wyoming systems and seek ways to overcome the challenges of Wyoming’s current system.

Current Apprenticeship Challenges

Knowledge and Understanding of Apprenticeships.
Understanding apprenticeships is a challenge across the state. Many businesses, including the potential workforce, are uncertain what apprenticeships are. In cases where they do, they may only see them as a way of training for traditional trades (welding, plumbing, etc.). Employers that may benefit from participating in an apprenticeship program may not be aware this is an option and potential employees may not be looking to apprenticeships for their education. There does not appear to be an understanding of the many different industries that can participate and what that participation might look like for their industry.

There are also various levels of this challenge. In addition to the basic lack of understanding of what apprenticeships are and how they might be used, there appears to be a lack of knowledge of the process. For instance, businesses or industries that learn about apprenticeships and wish to participate, may not know where to start or how to structure it so it works with their employees or the options they have in their community. This creates a hurdle for potential sponsors and apprentices to just starting the process. There is also a fear that participation includes too much paperwork and administration for their organization.

Wyoming Geography and Populations
Wyoming’s small population, spread over a very large area, also makes apprenticeships a challenge in various areas across the state. Some businesses would like to participate, but they only have a few employees to go through the program and therefore believe they may not have enough components to create a formal education program. There are only a few population centers in the state where it is feasible to set up the education component of the apprenticeships with a community college.
Integration into a Workforce Pipeline

There are currently a significant number of workforce efforts happening across the state of Wyoming. These range from programs within the formal, higher education programs, to high school CTE experiences, to on the job training experiences. However, apprenticeships do not currently seem well integrated into the overall workforce structure and pipeline. There is currently a disconnect that makes it difficult for employers and potential employees to understand what the workforce development options are and what is the best fit for their circumstances.

Supplemental Application Support

To date, the apprenticeship program in Wyoming has been primarily supported and led by the State Director for the Federal Office of Apprenticeship. While current participants say the Director is knowledgeable and helpful, she operates solo and has limited time and capacity in helping any one group as she covers an extensive geographic area. Examples of challenges that apprenticeship programs could use additional support with include finding support for completing paperwork, working through processes, and understanding how to get started. Additionally, there is not a strong understanding of where to find information or begin the process. This challenge is both a product of having one person focused on the support and the need for marketing and educational pieces around apprenticeships.
Key Goals for Apprenticeship Expansion

After examining the challenges in the state and looking at the mission and vision of the program, the apprenticeship expansion team focused on key goals for the apprenticeship expansion grant.

Increase the understanding and knowledge of apprenticeships.

Key Focus Areas:
- i. Widescale outreach and education on what apprenticeships are and how they can be beneficial.
- ii. Connect potential employers to others that are currently administering apprenticeship programs, so they have a better understanding of how they work and receive guidance on how to put the program together.
- iii. Find ways to direct potential employers and potential apprentices to the Apprenticeship.gov website and the tools that it offers.
- iv. Publish a list/database of active apprenticeship programs in Wyoming to give a better understanding of what is happening statewide.
- v. Provide additional administrative and guidance support for potential apprentices and potential employers that supplement and support the work done by the federal liaison.

Create a plan for expanding a youth apprenticeship pipeline.

Key Focus Areas
- i. Work with high schools and other youth programs (boys’ school, girls’ school, youth terming out of foster care, etc.) to look for opportunities to implement pre-apprenticeship programs.
- ii. Identify how apprenticeships fit into the CTE pipelines being built in high school programs.

Focus on key populations for apprenticeship expansion for both workplaces and potential apprentices.

Key Focus Areas
- i. Build partnerships with the Department of Corrections and the Justice System to look at ways of providing apprenticeship options for people exiting the corrections system.
- ii. Look at how military connections can be made that allow for training of servicemen and women in an apprenticeship, prior to them leaving the service.
- iii. Work with the Next Generation Sector Partnerships across the state to identify potential industry sectors to target expansion.
Look for non-traditional ways the formal education component of the apprenticeship can be delivered.

**Key Focus Areas**

i. Determine if there are ways to provide education virtually or from a distance. This will allow companies from across Wyoming to take advantage of educational opportunities without having to figure out how to support a new program with few students.

ii. Work with the community colleges and other educational institutions to build collaboration and integrate the apprenticeships into new and existing workforce development initiatives.

Increase the collaboration of all state and local entities that are working on apprenticeships as well as the collaboration with other state workforce efforts.

**Key Focus Areas**

i. Look at forming a state-wide apprenticeship coordination group that pulls in stakeholders from the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services, the Office of Apprenticeship, the Wyoming Department of Education, the Community College Commission and any other entities that are currently working directly on apprenticeships.

ii. Increase the coordination and communication with other workforce programs such as the Workforce Development Council, the Educational Attainment Executive Council and other programs to better help develop apprenticeships as part of the overall system.

**In Conclusion**

Recently, Wyoming turned its focus to developing strong workforce development pipelines that meet the needs of both our population and industries. This has led to some strong and innovative programs which are making great progress in our state. Apprenticeships have the potential to grow and have a larger impact on our state. They fit into the goals Wyoming has set for developing our workforce and helping industries grow.

The Wyoming Workforce Development Council and the Wyoming Department of Workforce Services are partnering with the Federal Department of Labor to expand the reach of apprenticeships in Wyoming. By doing this, it will bring about a new generation of employees and employers into this successful and outcomes driven system. By utilizing the federal expansion grant and building strong partnerships across the state, we hope to see apprenticeships grow and become an integral part of Wyoming’s workforce development system.
Appendix