

Advantages of Apprenticeship Training

✓ APPRENTICESHIP IS THE “OTHER FOUR-YEAR DEGREE”

In the building and construction trades, registered apprenticeship programs provide participants with a high-quality, portable and nationally recognized credential that certifies occupational proficiency in the construction industry.

The 15 building trades unions maintain 1,900 training centers throughout North America. (See [Construction Apprenticeship](#) by North America’s Building Trades Unions.)

The building trades and their signatory contractors invest more than \$1.3 billion annually in apprentice and journey-level training.

The safest and most highly skilled and productive construction craft workers in the world receive their training through local joint apprenticeship and training committees (JATCs), which offer state-of-the-art curricula that is recognized nationally.

✓ LEARN WHILE YOU EARN

Apprenticeship is a “learn while you earn” model in which participants obtain wages, which are graduated upward as the apprentice accumulates greater skills and experience on the job. Higher wages represent a tangible outcome of their engagement in a combination of classroom education and job-related training over 3 to 5 years.

This approach provides income to apprentices and adds to their ability to enter the middle class, actively contributing to America’s economy. The average apprentice is an adult of about 30 years of age. Wages earned while training is a necessity that helps to maintain their standard of living.

✓ PRIVATE SECTOR AND SUSTAINABLE

When apprentices enter a registered apprenticeship program operated by a joint labor-management committee, they are engaged in a private sector, self-funding institution that is not dependent upon government grants or tax dollars. This is a system that is governed by unions and employers, working together for the good of the entire industry...its productivity...its workers...and the communities in which working families reside.

These joint labor-management bodies demonstrate the commitment of employers toward ongoing skill training—while the voice of workers helps to guarantee the quality and worker-centered nature of the training. This model of apprenticeship is sustainable and makes a durable contribution to economic growth and widely shared prosperity.

✓ CONTINUOUS SKILL UPGRADING

Skill upgrading is built into the system as a routine practice. An apprentice who graduates from a registered apprenticeship program operated by a joint labor-management body has access to continuing skill training. High-quality apprenticeship provides a foundation of broad skills that enable a worker to learn more specific skills and job-related techniques as technology changes.

This “upskilling” aspect of the apprenticeship system builds employment security for the skilled practitioner and the mobility to move from employer to employer.

Skill upgrading is offered by certified instructors who deliver courses in dedicated training centers or educational institutions in the local community.

✓ LINK TO ASSOCIATE DEGREES AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Many apprenticeship programs have links to local community colleges. This relationship enables apprentices to receive college credit for the time and experience they receive on the job. A graduating apprentice is well on the way to the credits necessary to obtain a two-year associate degree, a gateway to further baccalaureate education.

The importance of this relationship with community-based educational institutions has been validated by the U.S. Department of Labor, which opened the Registered Apprenticeship College Consortium (RACC) in 2014 to facilitate the articulation of apprenticeship for college credit across the nation. (See RACC at www.doleta.gov/OA/racc.cfm)

Apprentices are empowered to direct their own careers in the context of changing industry conditions. They gain the self-confidence and motivation to keep up with new technology and understand business conditions. In the building and construction trades, many union contractors started out as successful apprentices in their chosen occupation. Apprenticeship provides the combination of knowledge and skills necessary to start a business.

✓ RESPONSIVE TO ACTUAL LABOR MARKET NEEDS

This is a “job-driven training” system directly responsive to local and regional labor market conditions.

Registered apprenticeship programs operated by joint labor-management organizations are directly responsive to labor market needs. The governing bodies of these programs are in continuous contact with employers. They are aware of the job creation potential of local, state and federal economic development projects. Apprenticeship slots are open when the governing body determines that there is a likelihood of increased jobs.

This system is responsive to the needs of industry as members of the baby-boom generation retire. The responsiveness of the system helps to avoid the problem of the local labor market being flooded with expert practitioners in an occupation where jobs are not available in sufficient quantity to employ both skilled workers and apprentices.