

DEFINITION AND PRINCIPLES FOR EXPANDING QUALITY APPRENTICESHIP IN THE U.S.



The Apprenticeship Forward Collaborative is a network of national organizations committed to expanding American apprenticeship through research, public engagement, and on-the-ground innovation. The Collaborative is a forum for diverse national organizations to come together, share information on emerging trends and best practices in apprenticeship and support the expansion of apprenticeship to the benefit of more businesses and workers.

Apprenticeship is a proven strategy for connecting Americans to well-paying jobs. By combining paid, on-the-job training with productive contributions and classroom learning, apprenticeship is an affordable postsecondary pathway for students and workers, and a key talent strategy for employers. Despite a long history in the U.S., apprenticeship remains an underutilized strategy to develop the American workforce compared to many of our international peers.

In recent years federal and state policymakers have taken steps to expand apprenticeship to more industries and employers of all sizes and to improve program access and completion for a diverse range of youth and working adults. Complementing investments at the state level, the federal government has invested \$665 million in apprenticeship since 2015, and in 2017 the President signed an Executive Order on expanding apprenticeship through Industry Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAPs).

Policymakers play a key role in supporting apprenticeship expansion and innovation on the ground. To see the desired results for workers and employers, there must be attention to quality and a clear vision to expand American apprenticeship. That is why the undersigned organizations offer the following definition for quality apprenticeship and a set of shared principles to guide future expansion efforts by the administration and Congress. We believe policy and practice aligned with the definition and principles below will

enable more employers to offer high-quality apprenticeship opportunities to a broader range of workers – meeting business need, improving workers’ skills, and spurring U.S. economic growth.

DEFINITION FOR QUALITY APPRENTICESHIP

There is bipartisan consensus around the value of expanding apprenticeship, but policymakers lack a clear definition to guide investments, policy development, data collection, and evidence building. A clear and consistent definition for apprenticeship bolsters efforts by practitioners and provides clarity for employers, workers, and students. Informed by the collective experience of the members of the Apprenticeship Forward Collaborative, quality apprenticeships – including both industry-recognized and registered programs – share these core characteristics:

- Paid, structured, productive on-the-job training combined with related classroom instruction;
- Clearly defined wage structure with increases commensurate with skill gains or credential attainment;
- High quality third-party evaluation of program content, apprenticeship structure, mentorship components, and standards to meet business demand and worker need;
- Ongoing assessment of skills development culminating in an industry-recognized credential and full-time employment.



PRINCIPLES FOR EXPANDING QUALITY APPRENTICESHIP

The Apprenticeship Forward Collaborative offers a set of principles to guide future action on apprenticeship. We believe expanding quality apprenticeship requires:

- 1. Strong business demand for apprentices.** Policymakers should support the documentation and dissemination of evidence on how apprenticeship can help meet business' demand for skilled workers, highlight businesses that have successfully used apprenticeship to build their worker pipeline, and support the development of apprenticeships for companies of all sizes, in all industries, and for nonprofit and government employers.
- 2. Advancement of the livelihood of U.S. workers.** Policymakers should ensure programs provide valuable related instruction, wage increases, mentoring, and safety training requirements. Apprenticeships should also include occupational standards that describe the competencies apprentices must achieve to gain certification, and how apprentices will contribute to the production of goods or services within their on-the-job training.
- 3. Partnerships between local businesses, the workforce and education systems, human services organizations, labor and labor-management partnerships, and other community-based organizations.** Policymakers should support the formation and expansion of state, local, and regional partnerships to expand apprenticeship opportunities. They must also make vital investments in current workforce, education, and human services programming that are at the foundation of apprenticeship expansion.
- 4. Accessibility for new and incumbent workers that supports the success of a diverse pipeline of apprentices.** Policymakers should ensure underrepresented populations have access to new and existing apprenticeship opportunities, support measures to improve gender and racial/ethnic diversity in apprenticeable occupations, and invest in supports that improve retention and enable success for workers with barriers to employment while providing businesses with a return on investment.
- 5. Alignment with K-12 and postsecondary educational opportunities to support lifelong learning and skill attainment.** Policymakers should support the integration of higher education into our apprenticeship system to create transferable, for-credit credentials that meet business and worker demand. Policymakers should also expand pathways that reach into our high schools to offer more American students high-quality dual enrollment opportunities through the apprenticeship model.
- 6. Robust data systems to continuously improve outcomes for business and workers.** Policymakers should require and support the collection and distribution of disaggregated data on apprenticeship enrollment, completion, and outcomes, promote research on the return-on-investment of programs, and empower state integration of apprenticeship outcomes with state longitudinal data systems to foster equitable access to and completion of quality apprenticeships.
- 7. Building on innovative state and local practice.** Policymakers should highlight and bring best practices from across the country to scale, including those developed throughout our country's history with registered apprenticeship.

