



PROMISING PRACTICES

State Strategies for Advancing Apprenticeship

Expanding Apprenticeship by Aligning State Systems and Partnerships

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

ApprenticeshipFLA

Florida is striving to expand Registered Apprenticeships by forging system-wide partnerships and closer collaboration across state agencies. As a unified force, workforce and educational partners are breaking through systemic silos to bridge gaps that strengthen the state's sector strategy initiatives. Recognizing the need to position apprenticeship as a proven model that helps employers build a highly skilled workforce, key leaders will be tapped for their expertise as members of Apprenticeship Catalyst Workgroups focused on four strategic focus areas: Governance/Policy, Business Outreach, Population Outreach, and Data Sharing.

To better respond to the talent needs of businesses now and in the future, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), the Florida Department of Education (DoE), and CareerSource Florida recognized early on that they needed to build relationships and refine processes that positively impacted partners who provide skilled workers in targeted industry sectors (supply side) as well as those who need skilled workers in those sectors (demand side).

That need sparked an idea to build a statewide coalition of the like-minded and the willing – individuals who will serve on Apprenticeship Catalyst Workgroups and identify strategies to expand pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprentices in the state. Together, these work groups will develop policy recommendations that support Registered Apprenticeship expansion, systemic innovation, and responsiveness to employers and job seekers in underrepresented populations. In an overwhelming response, more than 100 people stepped up, providing a way to leverage the insight and expertise of a diverse mix of partners as Florida moves towards systems integration that lasts well beyond the life of the State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) grant.

The Apprenticeship Catalyst Workgroups include representatives from the three core partners – DEO, DoE, and CareerSource Florida – as well as from local workforce development boards, school districts, community/technical colleges, and business and industry.

To ensure that business needs for skilled workers in critical sectors are always at the forefront, ApprenticeshipFLA identified four targeted industries – manufacturing, healthcare, information technology, and construction – for statewide

outreach. Women, minorities, veterans, ex-offenders, and youth will also be engaged to increase the number of underrepresented Floridians who can use apprenticeships as an entry point to career pathways on the road to economic prosperity.

The infrastructure of the agencies was there, but communication and coordination were missing. This effort is helping us best utilize the infrastructure to serve common needs, grow apprenticeship, and serve businesses.

**-Richard Norman, Director of Apprenticeship
Florida Department of Education**

ApprenticeshipFLA is focusing on the four key drivers that will make a difference in advancing apprenticeship – policy, business outreach, population outreach, and data and technology. Each of the four Apprenticeship Catalyst Workgroups has a clear focus and an ambitious agenda.

- **Governance & Policy** – identify additional funding sources and braided funding options; identify federal and state statutes and regulations and policies that hinder apprenticeship expansion; identify curriculum frameworks in each targeted industry sector; and look for best practices that can be easily replicated.
- **Business Outreach** – align existing apprenticeship program sponsors (3,000+) by sub-state territories within the four targeted industry sectors; identify business advocates and champions; create outreach materials with a value proposition; and identify and foster linkages with statewide business groups and industry associations.

- **Population Outreach** – explore Career & Technical Education and vocational rehabilitation programs for engagement; identify best practices in apprenticeship engagement for youth and other special populations; and create marketing and outreach materials for special populations.
- **Data Sharing & Technology** – find ways to capture data that is important to the three core partners, and better understand linkage opportunities across multiple databases, including Employ Florida, RAPIDS 2.0, the Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program, and the Salesforce Customer Relationship Management system.

The Workgroups are providing a structure and focus for building system-wide partnerships within the apprenticeship model. After the workgroup participants provide recommendations, the knowledge generated and the partnerships leveraged will ultimately change how business is done, break down silos across programs and systems, and significantly expand the use of apprenticeship in the state.

Another way that Florida is forging system-wide partnerships is by increasing the use of apprenticeship by the workforce system and

leveraging the state’s Sector Strategies initiative. One of the key focus points for the Sector Strategies initiative is to empower the local system to use sector partnerships to move beyond developing training programs to establishing career pathways. Armed with the knowledge that only 4 of Florida’s 24 Local Workforce Development Boards actively use apprenticeship as part of their services, and less than one percent of all participants in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs engage in apprenticeship, Florida determined that a natural evolution of the sector and career pathways strategy was to focus on apprenticeship as a time-tested model for building talent pipelines.

Florida and sub-state regions, particularly local workforce development boards, have since been working alongside talent supply side partners, all under a sector strategies approach, focusing on expanding apprenticeship. For example, in July 2017, they held an Apprenticeship 101 training webinar that brought together Apprenticeship Training Representatives representing the 6 regions of the State’s Apprenticeship Agency and Business Service Representatives representing the state’s 24 local workforce development boards. This cross-training event showcased a local board demonstrating how apprenticeships can be integrated into the career pathways model using WIOA funds without major structural changes.

ADVICE TO OTHER STATES

- **Offer Value to All Stakeholders.** Involve a diverse set of stakeholders who can inform and promote your work, and design the effort to create value for multiple stakeholders. Andra Cornelius, Senior Vice President of Business & Workforce Development with CareerSource Florida notes, “The President’s recent emphasis on apprenticeships underscores our collective goals to eliminate hurdles, overcome challenges, showcase apprenticeship’s value to both business and individuals, and grow the numbers.”
- **Get to Know Your Partners.** The three core partners have invested time to get to know each other’s programs and goals, and to really understand how their colleagues approach their work. As Ted Norman, Director of Apprenticeship, advises, “Learn how each partner functions and find ways to address their needs while understanding strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, you should find out how to cooperate and work together to find solutions to challenges.”
- **Speak the Same Language.** Part of getting to know your partner is understanding their language – and working towards a common understanding. As DEO notes, “Businesses who offer apprenticeships may not speak the same language as our workforce development teams across the state. We responded to this challenge by hosting “Apprenticeship 101” training to educate our partners and strengthen our relationships across agencies and the business community.”

CONSIDERATIONS FOR REPLICATION

- **Find a Jumping Off Point.** Florida is using its SAE grant as a catalyst to bring partners to the table and focus on apprenticeship as a shared goal. This is the foundational springboard for finding common ground, identifying mutually-aligned goals, and discovering new, complementary ways to expand Registered Apprenticeship.
- **Leverage Human Capital.** When undertaking an effort to greatly expand apprenticeship, the limited number of state apprenticeship staff can be a challenge. The time needed for expanding business outreach and support with the apprenticeship development and registration process can quickly outpace current staff capacity. Explore whether you can share the workload among staff with the same or similar responsibilities. For example, Florida's local Business Service Representatives and state apprenticeship staff are now working together.

FUTURE OUTLOOK

- To build for sustainability, DEO summed it up best: "One of the strengths of this partnership is that we are thinking strategically beyond just the life of the grant program. We want to build a sustainable, engaging apprenticeship model across the state." The partners are seeking a better understanding of how Registered Apprenticeship programs are funded by DoE, and identifying how to better leverage workforce funding for pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships.
- A side benefit partners expect from the effort is that once people are comfortable working with each other, their alliances won't be limited to apprenticeships. Work under the ApprenticeshipFLA project is already leading to other forms of collaboration that span beyond the workforce and educational systems and contribute to feeding the talent pipeline for Florida businesses.

Visit the Florida Department of Education's website at <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/apprenticeship-programs/>

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