



## PROMISING PRACTICES

# State Strategies for Advancing Apprenticeship

*Expanding Apprenticeship by Aligning State Systems and Partnerships*

### MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING AND REGULATION

*Organizational and Resource Alignment to Advance Apprenticeship*

Maryland has positioned apprenticeship as a core workforce development strategy through an organizational realignment, and is better leveraging resources and expanding business engagement to grow opportunities in new industry sectors and for underserved populations.

In the past, Registered Apprenticeship programs in Maryland were predominately in the skilled trades. The Division of Labor and Industry provided oversight over the Maryland Apprenticeship and Training Program (MATP) and resided four floors above the workforce agency. While the two agencies are both within the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR), they had little interaction and never considered integration. In 2017, state leaders recognized the need to integrate apprenticeship into the workforce system as a way to address the workforce needs of Maryland's businesses. Under the leadership of Governor Larry Hogan, the state legislature unanimously passed a bill that designated DLLR's Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning as the State Apprenticeship Agency. The legislation allowed the state to programmatically and physically move MATP and begin the process of repositioning apprenticeship front and center in the state.

After the move, one of the first orders of business was to build a strong, qualified team. With a director in charge of multiple programs and only two apprenticeship staff, MATP was significantly understaffed. The State Apprenticeship Expansion (SAE) grant provided funding to add six new staff. In addition, state business service staff (funded through the Wagner-Peyser program) can spend up to 20% of their time in support of apprenticeship with funding from the State Apprenticeship Accelerator grant. A half-time position funded through the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) grew the team further at no cost to the apprenticeship program. With this staff capacity, MATP has been able to greatly increase business engagement across industry sectors and coordination across partner programs.

To integrate apprenticeship even deeper into the workforce system, business service representatives from partner programs are also trained on apprenticeship and how to do a "warm hand off" to MATP staff. These partner programs, which include the Jobs for Veterans State Grant program, Rapid Response, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Vocational Rehabilitation, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and community colleges, promote apprenticeship

as part of their service delivery. Maryland makes an ongoing investment to keep everyone in the know – both apprenticeship and partner staff – by constantly reinforcing the message through training and outreach.

Along with the organizational change and increased staffing, MATP shifted the singular focus on oversight to a business-driven approach that acknowledges and supports sponsors. They launched a large-scale outreach campaign with the goal of connecting with every inactive sponsor in the state. If a Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor didn't have an apprentice in the last year, they made hard contact with the sponsor, either through a phone call or an in-person visit. According to Chris MacLarion, Director of Apprenticeship and Training, "We wanted sponsors to know that just because you're inactive, it doesn't mean you don't exist." At times, it took a lot of sleuthing to figure out if non-responsive businesses had relocated, or closed, or changed owners, etc. While some sponsors were cancelled – either because they no longer existed or truly did not have a business need for apprenticeship – MATP found many sponsors who were ready to engage and reactivate their apprenticeships.

To draw in new partners with new ideas, Maryland set aside \$620,000 in funding from their SAE grant to create an Apprenticeship Innovation Fund. The fund provides seed money to local community partners to either

**We realize we can complement each other through a systems approach, so there is a feeling of trust and collaboration.**

**- Erin Roth, Director of Policy,  
Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning**

implement new and promising ideas, or to adapt proven strategies at the systems or service delivery level that expand the reach of pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs. Projects that work to expand opportunities to non-traditional industry sectors and/or Maryland's WIOA target populations are given priority. One project awarded to the Maryland Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) enables MEP to serve as the

sponsor organization for the industry across the state to provide structure, training, content, and tracking for multiple small and medium-sized manufacturers. Another pilot project with the Regional Council of Carpenters is creating a pre-apprenticeship program targeting women of color in the city of Baltimore. Its goal is to increase the number of women in the carpenters' apprenticeship program from 2% to 10%.

## ADVICE TO OTHER STATES

- **If at First You Don't Succeed, Try, Try Again.** When Maryland piloted a program for a varied population and it didn't work, they didn't just write it off. Instead, they pulled the team together and discussed issues and solutions to find a new approach. "This takes a lot of trust and time for all the partners, and for the sponsor. You have to humble yourself and try again," says Erin Roth, Director of Policy.
- **Strongly Committed Stakeholders are Key to Systems Change.** A comprehensive system of realignment begins from the ground up. It takes a dedicated effort to completely change how business is conducted within the agency and advance a vision to integrate the apprenticeship program with the workforce system. Legislation created the structural change in Maryland's apprenticeship system; however, it is the strong commitment from leadership that has sustained the system's change.
- **Never Miss an Opportunity.** MATP goes wherever they're invited, even on nights and weekends, never letting a graduation or industry event go unattended. This serves as a goodwill gesture and a relationship builder, and a tremendous promotional opportunity with businesses and communities. Registered Apprenticeship is more than just the apprenticeship team. The secretary, assistant secretary, and deputy assistant secretary regularly attend events and are constantly promoting Registered Apprenticeship as a workforce solution. According to Chris MacLarion, "The partners and sponsors have said they've never seen this level of action from the program. We've interjected ourselves into every sponsor's business and are committed from the top down. We have attended dozens of Registered Apprenticeship graduations this year alone. In fact, both the lieutenant governor and the secretary have attended graduations. We aren't just sitting behind desks anymore – we're in the field."

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR REPLICATION

- **Upgrade Technology.** If you're still using an "old-school" tracking system, upgrade to an electronic data system before embarking on a program expansion effort. Maryland lacked a modernized system, and updating it was an extensive undertaking. Maryland shifted to the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Data System (RAPIDS 2.0, the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship's data system), which required manual entry of each program one by one – a tedious and time-consuming effort.
- **Take the Time to Educate Your Partners.** As one MATP staff put it, "We didn't realize how worthwhile the time investment in training other business service reps on apprenticeship was. It was worth its weight in gold!" Well-trained and informed partner staff can be champions for apprenticeship. With ongoing training, support, and inclusion in the world of apprenticeship, they will promote and advocate for the program and suggest ideas to improve. Knowledge is power!

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

- The state's first competency-based apprenticeship in the Environmental Care Supervisor occupation just got underway. As part of the SAE equity cap breaker, the department is partnering with the Baltimore Alliance for Careers in Healthcare (BACH) to pilot a project for the state's skilled, work-authorized immigrants. BACH, which targets low-income residents to pursue healthcare careers, will serve as the program's sponsor. The first class was almost entirely female, and many are English Language Learners.
- Discussion has begun on public sector apprenticeships. As the state works to expand apprenticeship opportunities and break into new industries, the public sector seems like a natural fit.

To learn more about the Maryland Apprenticeship Training program, visit:

<https://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/appr/>

## CONTACT

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