

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

DWD Technical Assistance 2025-05: Department of Workforce Development Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

Date: 04/10/2026

Contact: WBL@dwd.in.gov

Program: Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship

PURPOSE

To provide Local Workforce Development Boards and other pre-apprenticeship subrecipients with an overview of the components and requirements for the certification of a pre-apprentice program through the Indiana Department of Workforce Development's (DWD) Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship (DWD WBLA).

REFERENCES

See **Attachment A.**

DEFINITIONS

See **Attachment B.**

CONTENT

A pre-apprenticeship¹ is a program or set of strategies that is designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). Pre-apprenticeship programs (PRAPs) utilize a wide range of program designs and approaches and often vary in duration to meet the needs of diverse populations and employers.

DWD Certified PRAP Required Components²

DWD WBLA provides oversight and leadership for all certified PRAPs. Only DWD WBLA certified PRAPs are recognized by the State of Indiana and eligible for federal funding.

In Indiana, a certified PRAP is recognized as meeting key quality standards. DWD WBLA has established five program components that are required for DWD certification. A brief overview of the components is provided below.

¹ APPRENTICESHIPUSA, *Explore Pre-Apprenticeship*.

² Based on the Office of Apprenticeship (OA) recommended elements of quality a PRAP as identified by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA). See TEN 23-23 for additional guidance.

Related Technical Instruction (RTI)

RTI is the classroom or theoretical learning component within a PRAP, where participants receive instruction on technical concepts. The training curriculum is based on industry standards/ competencies and its approved RAP partner.³

On-The-Job Learning (OJL)⁴

Meaningful Hands-on experiences (OJL) that are connected to classroom instruction that provide real world understanding of how to apply skills acquired through the RTI coursework. Within a PRAP, the OJL environment can consist of any combination of the following meaningful hands-on experiences:

- Paid work experience;
- Volunteer experience;
- Lab/project based hands-on; or
- Simulated job site.

Career Counseling, Mentoring, and Other Supportive Services

Coaching/Mentoring is a structured relationship where an industry-knowledgeable individual who provides guidance, support, and knowledge transfers to the participant, helping them to obtain knowledge of the technical and soft skills for the defined industry pathway throughout their training period.

Note: For more in-depth information and training materials on mentoring, please review the Mentoring Toolkit which can be accessed on DWD's Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship's *Support* webpage.⁵

Supportive services are wrap-around services or referrals to help participants complete the program (e.g. childcare, transportation).⁶ Funding for supportive services may be leveraged from Federal, state, local, and private funding, as well as community organizations that provide these types of services.⁷

Industry Recognized Credential

Industry recognized credentials are certifications, licenses, or other credentials that are verified by employers and endorsed by a trade association or industry organization. These certifications assist in demonstrating knowledge and skills obtained by participants and hold value within the hiring process.

Indiana's Promoted Industry Certifications is a list of certifications that have undergone a rigorous process for inclusion and promotion in the state. To be included on the list, a certification must meet the state's quality and verification standards, be recognized and valued by industry, and lead to quality employment.

³ APPRENTICESHIPUSA, *Explore Pre-Apprenticeship*.

⁴ NOTE: OJL training cannot displace paid employees.

⁵ <https://www.in.gov/dwd/owbla/support/>.

⁶ APPRENTICESHIPUSA, *Explore Pre-Apprenticeship*.

⁷ TEN 23-23.

Articulation Agreement

An articulation agreement is a formal agreement between a PRAP owner and a RAP sponsor outlining how specific RTI and OJL knowledge gained within the PRAP will be recognized by the RAP sponsor. Recognition could include credit for RTI and OJL towards the registered apprenticeship RTI and OJL; facilitated or direct entry into the registered program; or other items agreed upon by both parties. Typical information found within an articulation agreement can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Standardized Learning Outcomes
- Grades and Attendance Expectations
- Responsibilities of PRAP programs
- Responsibilities of RAP program
- Areas of Credit Awards (RTI/OJL)
- Facilitated or Direct Entry Opportunities
- Application Processes

Primary Entrance Program Types

A quality PRAP is designed to help all individuals enter and succeed in a RAP. Organizations that run certified PRAPs may include high schools, post-secondary educational institutions, community-based organizations, employer associations, labor organizations, and joint labor-management organizations. Due to the wide variety of program types and partners the program development process will vary. Four primary entrance program types are provided below.

- Secondary (High School)
- Post-secondary or Training Provider
- Adult Education
- Employer Provided

DWD WBLA has developed a certification criteria matrix for each of the four primary entrance program types listed above. The matrix provides requirement details for each of the DWD WBLA PRAP certification components (RTI, OJL, Counseling/Mentoring/Other Supportive Services, Credential, and Articulation) which can be found on the DWD Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship *Support* webpage.⁸

DWD WBLA Certification

Building a Certified PRAP

Although all four primary entrance program types must include the five required program components, each quality PRAP will vary in content, required hours, partner(s), etc. Therefore, the specific steps involved in building a quality PRAP will also vary.

⁸ <https://www.in.gov/dwd/owbla/support/>.

DWD WBLA has developed toolkits that are primary entrance program type-specific that provide details on how to build quality pre-apprenticeship programs. Toolkits can be accessed on the DWD WBLA *Support* webpage.⁹

Information and Supporting Documentation

Regardless of primary entrance program type, organizing required PRAP information and gathering required documentation is universal and will assist in completing the certification application and process.

The information needed is related to specific details on the five components. See **Attachment C** for additional guidance.

Documents to support the required information are as follows:

- Syllabus or course curriculum (RTI);
- OJL program breakdown, to include OJL type and hours; and
- A signed copy of Articulation Agreement between Pre-Apprenticeship (PRAP) and Registered Apprenticeship (RAP) partner.

Application for Certification

To ensure that pre-apprenticeship programs have continued secured access to their program's information, DWD has created a single-entry point for both application and program data entry at Indiana's *Access Indiana* website.

The application for PRAP certification must be submitted via DWD's *NextLevel Jobs Portal*.

DWD WBLA has developed step-by-step instructions for application submission, Pre-Apprenticeship Toolkit, *Submitting an Application for Program Certification* which can be accessed on the DWD Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship *Resource* webpage.¹⁰

PRAP Development Assistance

Interested stakeholders may obtain assistance with developing a PRAP by completing the contact form. The form can be accessed on the DWD WBLA *About Us* webpage.¹¹

DWD WBLA Certified Program Reviews

Pre-apprenticeship programs that have achieved certification will be reviewed yearly to ensure continued eligibility of certification status. Programs will be reviewed for:

- Continued required components and hours;
- Continued RAP partnerships;
- Program usage and outcomes; and
- Needed updates.

⁹ <https://www.in.gov/dwd/owbla/support/>.

¹⁰ <https://www.in.gov/dwd/owbla/resources-and-links/>.

¹¹ <https://www.in.gov/dwd/owbla/about-us/>.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – References

Attachment B – Definitions

Attachment C – PRAP Certification Information

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions regarding the content of this publication should be directed to wbl@dwd.in.gov.

ATTACHMENT A REFERENCES

- 29 CFR part 29
- TEN 23-23 *Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Programs*
- TEN 25-19 *Understanding Postsecondary Credentials in the Public Workforce System*
- Indiana Department of Workforce Development, *Indiana's Promoted Industry Certifications* webpage
- Indiana Department of Workforce Development, Office of Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship, *Pre-Apprenticeship* webpage
- APPRENTICESHIPUSA, *Explore Pre-Apprenticeship*¹²
- APPRENTICESHIPUSA, *Registered Apprenticeship Program*¹³
- Indiana Department of Workforce Development, *Access Indiana*¹⁴
- Indiana Department of Workforce Development, *NextLevel Jobs*¹⁵

¹² <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/employers/explore-pre-apprenticeship>.

¹³ <https://www.apprenticeship.gov/employers/registered-apprenticeship-program>.

¹⁴ <https://www.in.gov/access/>.

¹⁵ <https://www.in.gov/dwd/nextleveljobs/home/>

ATTACHMENT B DEFINITIONS

Apprenticeable occupations¹⁶ are: 1) customarily learned in a practical way through a structured, systematic program of on-the-job supervised training supplemented by related technical instruction; 2) clearly identified and commonly recognized throughout an industry; and 3) involves the acquisition of manual or technical skills and knowledge.

An **Articulation Agreement** is a formal agreement between a pre-apprenticeship program owner and a registered apprenticeship sponsor outlining how specific related technical instruction and on-the-job learning knowledge gained within the pre-apprenticeship program will be recognized by the registered apprenticeship sponsor.

An **industry-recognized credential**¹⁷ is either 1) developed and offered by, or endorsed by, a nationally- or regionally recognized industry association or organization representing a sizeable portion of the industry sector, or 2) a credential that is sought or accepted by companies within the industry sector for purposes of hiring or recruitment, which may include credentials from vendors of certain products or 3) a credential of value designated in the [Graduation Pathways](#) list for secondary programs.

Pre-apprenticeship program¹⁸ means a training model designed to assist individuals who do not currently possess the minimum [academic or skills] requirements for selection into an apprenticeship program to meet the minimum selection criteria established in a program sponsor's apprenticeship standards¹⁹ and which maintains at least one documented partnership with a Registered Apprenticeship program. It involves a form of structured workplace education and training in which an employer, employer group, industry association, labor union, community-based organization, or educational institution collaborate to provide formal instruction that will introduce participants to the competencies, skills, and materials used in one or more apprenticeable occupations.

A **Registered Apprenticeship program**²⁰ is an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience with a mentor, receive progressive wage increases, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential. Registered Apprenticeships are industry-vetted and approved and validated by the U.S. Department of Labor or a State Apprenticeship Agency.

Supportive services may refer to any service that assists participants to qualify for and maintain participation in a pre-apprenticeship program or Registered Apprenticeship

¹⁶ US Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, *Apprenticeship Toolkit, Module 1: Understanding Apprenticeship Basics*.

¹⁷ TEN 25-19.

¹⁸ 29 CFR 30.2.

¹⁹ Required under 29 CFR part 29.

²⁰ APPRENTICESHIPUSA, *Registered Apprenticeship Program*.

Program. Broadly, supportive services are those intended to assist individual participants with an assessed need in order to ensure participants' success in completing the pre-apprenticeship program, gaining employment, acquiring necessary skills, or addressing any other identified barriers. Quality pre-apprenticeship programs may directly provide supportive services to pre-apprentices or facilitate the provision of supportive services through referrals. The intent of this term is to ensure supportive services are available and emphasize the importance of such services being integrated into pre-apprenticeship programs.²¹

²¹ TEN 23-23.

ATTACHMENT C

PRAP CERTIFICATION INFORMATION

Information Element	Description
Pre-Apprenticeship Program Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The name must be reflective of the occupation and career pathway intended.
RTI Provider and Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may reflect multiple partnerships, such as: Ivy Tech, Adult Education, and/or employer provided. List any courses dual credit courses and college partner, if applicable.
Total contact and/or Seat RTI Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RTI hours must align with primary entrance program type.
Available Industry Recognized Credentials to RTI participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the available credentials are accessible to the intended participant i.e. age, location, educational level, background requirements.
Type(s) of Provided OJL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of organizational partners that will be providing the OJL experiences. Identify if they are paid experiences. Identify any lab/project-based projects to be completed. List total OJL hours to be completed. OJL hours must align with primary entrance program type.
Type(s) of Provided Participant Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentoring, coaching/counseling, etc.
Articulation Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be prepared to discuss the terms of the articulation: RTI, OJL, Wage (award for prior learning or acknowledgment of skill gain), etc.

Note: The list above is not all-inclusive, and additional information may be requested.