Apprenticeship Building America (ABA)
State Apprenticeship System Building and Modernization Grants Study

Industry/Employer Protocol

This protocol provides a comprehensive set of questions that will be adapted based on the employer's role in the ABA-grant sponsored registered apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for meeting with us today. My name is [name] and I am here with my colleague [name] and we work for [the Urban Institute/Mathematica], a private research organization that conducts policy-related research on a variety of social welfare and economic issues.

This project is being conducted under contract to the U.S. Department of Labor. Our visit here today is part of the Evaluation of Registered Apprenticeship Initiatives (ERAI), a national study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor that, in part, is examining the implementation of the Apprenticeship Building America (ABA) grants. [State name] received a grant under the ABA to expand and modernize its state apprenticeship system. Today, we are seeking to learn more about role and involvement of employers and industry partners in [State's name] apprenticeship system.

Privacy Statement: I/we know that you are busy and we will be as focused as possible and will only ask questions that are relevant to your experience. We have many questions and will be talking to many different people, so please do not feel as though we expect you to be able to answer every question. If you don't know the answer to a question, just let us know and we can move on. Your participation in this interview is voluntary and you may choose not to answer some or any of our questions. We will do everything we can to secure the privacy of the information you provide but ask that you consider using headphones or finding a private space to talk so that other people cannot hear or see this conversation.

We believe there are no direct benefits to you, but we hope that the findings from this study will benefit the registered apprenticeship system by providing research insights on how state systems can expand and modernize apprenticeship programs. We believe the risks of participating in this study are minimal.

My colleague and I will be taking notes in order to document what we hear during our discussion. We do not share these notes with anyone outside of our research team, including DOL. We will destroy these notes after the end of our project. When we compile our reports, the names of individual respondents will not be included. If we choose to quote you, you will not be quoted by name and we will be sure that the quote cannot be directly attributed to you.

Finally, to help us accurately capture the information you share, we would like to record this interview. The recording is just a back-up for our notes and will be kept within our small research team. The interview recording will be deleted once we have developed a full set of notes from the interview.

Do you have any questions for me?

[If we decide to record the interview] Are you okay with us recording the interview to improve the accuracy of our notes? [If yes, start recorder. If no, take hand-written notes].

Do I have your permission to begin the interview? [Begin interview if consent granted]

Thank you. We know that you have/may have a rich history of training programs and registered apprenticeships, but I want to remind you that our focus today is on recent activities that have occurred since the ABA grant in summer 2022.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. Respondent and company background information

1. Collect the following information for each respondent:
   - Name(s):
   - Title(s):
   - Company name:
   - Brief description of company (what it does, size)
   - Years working for the company

2. How long have you personally been involved with supporting and/or developing registered apprenticeship programs? Pre-apprenticeship programs?

B. Overview of employer and their role

1. Verify the following background information about the employer's involvement in registered apprenticeship/ABA grant. [Note: Collect and pre-fill this information prior to the visit from the grant application or other available documentation and verify with the respondent.]
   - Broadly speaking, how would you describe your company's role the [state]'s registered apprenticeship system? *[Probe for possible employer roles: Do you participate as a:*
       o *Thought leader*
       o *Developer of pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeships*
       o *Sponsor of registered apprenticeship programs*
       o *Recruitment partner*
       o *Education and training partner*
       o *Employer of apprentices/pre-apprentices*
       o *Job placement partner (after program completion)*
       o *Other?]*

2. How long has your company been participating in each of these roles?
   - How have these roles changed over time?
   - Can you speak to how these roles have changed since your involvement in the current ABA grant?

3. Has your company been involved in developing and implementing any policy or procedural changes to support apprenticeship expansion as a part of or as a result the grant? What are they intended to do? Have they worked as intended? How so or not? *[Probe for:*
   - *State or local legislation*
   - *State or local policy guidance*
   - *Increased state or local government funding*
   - *Enrollment policy changes at a community college*
   - *Credit or articulation policy changes at a community college (e.g., credit for prior learning)*
   - *Policies/procedures on apprentice safety*
   - *Policies/procedures on apprentice supervision*
   - *Policies/procedures on equal employment opportunity for apprentices*
   - *Policies on other aspects of apprenticeship (e.g., wage progression or employer incentives)]*

4. Has your company been involved in developing new or enhancing apprenticeship standards/credentials/curriculum for a registered apprenticeship program? If yes, for which programs/industries? Please describe your involvement, and how it has changed under the ABA.

5. Which organizations, either [grantee] or other key partners, does your company work closely with on pre-apprenticeships/apprenticeships?
   - Why do you collaborate with [identified organizations]? What activities do you work on together? What are their roles?
   - How does your company engage with or communicate with [state grantee/key partners]?
   - How long have you been collaborating with these partners to promote/expand registered apprenticeships?

- Have your collaborations changed under the ABA grant? If so, how?

6. Does your company participate in any meetings related to the ABA grant? If so, which staff attend?

C. Environmental context

1. Do you work in specific geographic area(s) or regions for your apprenticeship work? If so, what are they? *[Note: Collect information prior to the visit and verify during interview.]*

2. What are the key labor force characteristics of the population and any other distinguishing social or economic features of [the area(s) of the employer's focus for the ABA grant]. *[Probe for: large numbers of unemployed/incumbent workers in need of training, aging skilled workforce nearing retirement]*

3. Prior to the grant (awarded in summer 2022), how would you describe the state of training programs, including pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeships in your industry within [geographic area served by employer]?
   - How would you describe the extent and quality of training available for skilled occupations in your industry?
   - Have individuals been able to participate in unregistered, or registered
   - What was role of community colleges, other training providers?
   - How has this changed with ABA?

4. How has COVID-19 impacted your industry, including your workforce and how you do your work? *[Probe for: more telecommuters, harder to retain staff, more need for skilled workers, longer-term impacts that they are currently/still experiencing/contending with, etc.]*

D. Employer/industry recruitment and engagement

1. How did you learn about the opportunity to be involved in apprenticeship under the ABA system building and modernization grant? What methods were used to reach out to engage your company? Which methods do you think are more and less successful? *[Probe for:*
   - *Direct contact through telephone or emails by state or partners*
   - *Distribution of flyers*
   - *Program staff outreach presentations or orientations with employers or business organizations*
   - *Referrals from other organizations and employers (e.g., the Chamber of Commerce, other businesses organizations, employers sponsoring apprenticeships, workforce development programs, etc.)*
   - *Outreach campaigns using media (e.g., PSAs, TV, radio, newspaper, etc.)*
   - *Websites/social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.) – please specify, which types of social media are used and how*
   - *Word-of-mouth]*

2. Why did your company decide to engage in [expanding or building] pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship programs?
    * What are the key factors that motivated your company to start or expand its pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program(s)? *[Probe for:*
        o *Existing or future shortage of qualified workers*
        o *Expected benefits during and soon after the apprenticeship*
        o *Subsidies to firms or for related instruction*
        o *Ability to benchmark skills to high levels*
        o *Screening process effective at identifying workers likely to succeed*
        o *Help in reaching a diverse, qualified workforce*
        o *National credential linked to registered apprenticeship*
        o *Assistance in developing skill standards and registration]*
    * What, if any, concerns did you have?
    * [If employer is involved in both pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship programs] Were there different reasons or concerns about pre-apprenticeship compared to apprenticeship program(s)?

3. Were you provided any financial supports or incentives from the [state grantee] to [expand or develop] apprenticeships in [state]? If so, please describe them. *[Probe for incentives to: support establishing or expanding, creating new national guidelines and/or programs standards*
    * How much did you receive, and for what activities?
    * When were they provided? Over what time period?
    * Were the incentives effective in encouraging your participation? Why or why not?
    * In the end, were the incentives sufficient to cover the costs/resources your company expanded to conduct the pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship activities? Please explain.
    * What impact will the incentives have on sustainability in the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program(s) over time (i.e., after the grant ends)? Will your company continue to participate in the absence of the incentives?

4. Which staff at your company are involved in pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship activities and what are their roles?
    * How did you decide on the staff to be involved in the program (e.g., supervisors, mentors, trainers)?
    * How did you prepare staff for these roles?
    * How have you monitored their performance?
    * [If employer is involved in both pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship] Are there any differences in staff involvement between the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program(s)?

[If the employer / industry association is a sponsor]
5. How do you identify employers?
6. What is your role in program design? What is your role in program registration?
7. Who is involved in providing oversight to the programs?
8. What challenges have you faced in sponsoring a registered apprenticeship program?

9. Why is apprenticeship important to your industry?
10. How do you sell apprenticeship to employers and apprentices?
11. What interaction do you have with state and grantee staff?

E. Pre-apprenticeship and apprentices program characteristics

[Note: This section only applies to employers that indicate they are offering, revising, or plan to offer a pre-apprenticeship or registered apprenticeship program supported by the ABA grant.]

1. What role did you have in developing [or expanding] the ABA grant-supported program?
   - Who is the sponsor of the apprenticeship program (e.g., a group sponsor, employer, union, etc.)?
   - How did you select the occupation?
   - How involved were you in the registration process? Can you describe that process? Did you get any assistance or guidance from grantee or state staff? How easy or difficult was the process

2. Is the program time-based (e.g., completion of specific numbers of hours of training), competency-based, or a combination of the two?
   - [If time-based] Typically how long is participation in the pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program? Is there variation in how long it takes apprentice to complete? If yes, what is the range of time (in weeks, months, or years)? Why might it vary on a case-by-case basis?
   - [If competency-based] How is it determined that a participant has achieved the necessary level of competence to complete the pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program? How long does it typically take someone to reach the necessary level of competence? How much variation is there across participants?

3. Please provide a brief overview of the related instruction (RI) provided as part of the program. [Note: If applicable, request a syllabus for the coursework or a topic outline for the training.]
   - How many hours of RI (either classroom/web-based) are provided? For how many weeks?
     - Where and how is instruction provided (e.g., classroom, web-based, hybrid, laboratory/shop)?
     - Where is instruction provided (e.g., at a community college, at a union, at an employer site)?
     - How did you and your partners determine which organization should provide the training?

4. What is the typical schedule for a pre-apprentice/apprentice each week – e.g., 4 hours of formal classroom instruction and 36 hours of work)? Does this schedule change over the course of the program?

- Is RI and OJT provided concurrently, is it front-loaded, or does RI and OJT alternate during the program?

5. Do pre-apprentices/apprentices incur any costs for the RI (e.g., tuition, fees, equipment/books)?

6. [For apprenticeship programs only] What is the schedule of wages and benefits for apprentices?
   - What is the starting wage?
   - What is the ending wage?
   - On average, how large is the hourly wage increase in dollars: $_____
   - What milestones trigger increases in hourly wages? (e.g., annual increases, achievement of certain set of competencies, completion of RI)

7. [For pre-apprenticeship programs only] What on-the-job learning (OJL) opportunities do you provide to pre-apprentices? How is it structured?
   - Do you provide the pre-apprentices a stipend or wage for the OJL? If so, what is the wage/stipend?

8. Where can individuals apply for your company's pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program(s)? [Probe for:
   - *Employers*
   - *Community college*
   - *Your organization*
   - *Union/labor organization*
   - *Another intermediary*
   - *Pre-apprenticeship program*
   - *American Job Center*
   - *Secondary school]*

9. What are the eligibility criteria for participating in the program(s)?

10. Please also briefly discuss the assessment and intake process and who is responsible for screening participants. What are the challenges with this process, if any?

11. Did your company provide input on eligibility criteria and intake processes? Please describe the nature of input and specific criteria or requirements.
    - [If no] Was your company given the opportunity to provide input?

12. Are pre-apprentices/apprentices enrolled in cohorts? If yes, how often are new cohorts enrolled (e.g., 4 times a year)? How big is each cohort?

13. Is any of the pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship training connected to higher education? If so, how?
    - Do participants receive post-secondary (college) credits, credentials, or certificates?
    - What are the credits, credentials, and/or certificates they receive?
    - Are certain credits, credentials, or certificates more valuable/important then others? Why or why not?

- How long does it take participants to achieve these credits, credentials, or certifications?

14. [For apprenticeship programs only] Do apprentices receive any of the following benefits other than their wages during their apprenticeship program? [Note: Check any that are mentioned.]
    - Health benefits
    - Paid sick leave
    - Paid vacation time
    - Retirement benefits
    - Other, please describe: _____

15. What features of the OJL and RI components of the program makes it easier for pre-apprentices/apprentices to complete the program? *[Probe for:*
    - *Online related instruction (rather than going to campus or provider)*
    - *Self-paced instruction*
    - *Competency-based learning*
    - *Contextualized learning*
    - *Integrated instruction/team teaching*
    - *Prior learning assessments/credit for prior learning*
    - *Technology-enabled learning other than online learning (e.g., simulation labs)*
    - *Paid time for related instruction*

16. [If have pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs] Please explain the links between your pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship program.
    - What skills does the pre-apprenticeship obtain to become eligible for the apprenticeship program?
    - What is the process for a pre-apprentice to enroll in the apprenticeship program?

17. What are the goals (if any) for enrollment in your company's pre-apprenticeship/ apprenticeship program(s)?
    - How many pre-apprentices did you expect to enroll annually?
    - How many apprentices did you expect to enroll annually?
    - [If have pre-apprenticeship program leading to apprenticeship program] How many pre-apprentices did you expect to enroll in your apprenticeship program?

18. What is your experience with apprentices' retention and completion of the program?
    - To date, about how many pre-apprentices/apprentices have been enrolled in your company's program(s)? And how many completed?
    - To what extent is participant retention a challenge?

[If the employer hires apprentices (thus operates the program), ask 19 and 20]

19. What types of technical assistance, if any, has [state grantee/key partners] provided your company to help in planning and initiating apprenticeship programs? *[Probe for:*
    - *Help with recruiting apprentices/pre-apprentices*
    - *Help identifying a technical instruction provider and/or curriculum*
    - *Help developing standards of apprenticeship*
    - *Help developing wage structure and schedule*
    - *Help completing relevant forms and register the apprenticeship program*
    - *Help communicating with the DOL Office of Apprenticeship or State Apprenticeship Agency and/or handling the paperwork for the employer*
    - *Help reporting to RAPIDS or equivalent state reporting]*

20. [If technical assistance was received] To what extent has the technical assistance been helpful? Please explain.

21. From your perspective, what are the key obstacles or reservations employers face in establishing an apprenticeship program? *[Probe for:*
    - *Apprenticeship training is too expensive*
    - *Apprentices might be hired or "poached" by competitors after completing their training*
    - *The employer cannot spare the time of other workers to provide mentorship or on-the-job training*
    - *Employer has a training they are currently happy with*
    - *The registration process is too complicated*
    - *Regulatory compliance costs associated with apprenticeship are too high*
    - *Apprenticeship may encourage unionization efforts*
    - *Apprenticeship training is more intensive than the training that the employer needs*
    - *Employers are concerned about liability*
    - *Fear of involvement with the government]*

22. From your perspective, has the [state grantee] engaged in any strategies to overcome these challenges?

F. Supports for completion and employment success

1. What <u>wraparound/supportive services</u> are available to participants in pre-apprenticeship/ apprenticeship program(s)? These services may include transportation assistance, work clothes/equipment, housing support, childcare, and needs-based payments. Please describe each service.
   - How are these services structured?
   - Who provides these services?
   - What is the source of funding?
   - How are participants informed about these services?
   - How have the services available changed since the ABA grant?
   - [If employer is involved in both pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship] Are there any differences between the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program(s)?

2. What <u>employment and job supports</u> are available to participants in your pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program(s)? Employment supports may include career coaches/navigators, career coaching, basic skills training, or job search. Please describe each support.
   - How are these services structured?
   - Who provides these services?
   - What is the source of funding?
   - How are participants informed about these services?
   - How have the supports available changed since the ABA grant?
   - [If employer is involved in both pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship] Are there any differences between the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program(s)?

3. Are there any additional supports or other strategies used to help pre-apprentices/apprentices from underserved populations successfully complete the program? If so, please describe.

4. To what extent do these supports promote program participants engagement and completion of the pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program(s)?
   - Are the current supports and services sufficient to meet the academic, wraparound, and employment needs of participants? Why or why not?
   - Are there any other barriers to participation that are not being adequately addressed?
   - Are there any that are unique to underrepresented groups? If yes, please describe.
   - [If employer is involved in both pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship] Are there any differences between the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program(s)?

G. Focal populations and participant recruitment

1. Is your company involved in the outreach to or recruitment of pre-apprentices/ apprentices? If yes, please describe your role.

2. How, if at all, has your role changed under the ABA grant?

[Note: Ask the following questions as relevant to the company's role:]

3. [If employer has pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program] What are the typical recruitment source(s) for your company's program(s)?

4. How has your company marketed pre-apprentices/apprenticeships to prospective participants? What methods are used? *[Probe for:*
   - *Distribution of flyers, posters or other educational/informational*
   - *Program staff outreach presentations or orientations held in the area served*
   - *Informational websites*
   - *Toll-free informational hotlines*
   - *Outreach campaigns using media (e.g., PSAs, TV, radio, newspaper, ads on buses/bus shelters)*

- *Social media (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) – please specify, which types of social media are used and how*
- *Direct mail campaign*
- *Word-of-mouth*
- *Primary partners]*

5. Do you recruit apprentices from your workforce and enroll them in the program(s)? Why or why not?
   - [If yes] Are there particular qualifications you look for?

6. [If employer is involved in both pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship] Are there any differences in outreach and recruitment between the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program(s)?

7. Overall, what recruitment or referral strategies have been most successful? Do you feel any of these strategies are new, unique, and/or innovative?

8. What populations and/or subpopulations does your company focus on for your pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program(s)? *[Probe for:*
   - *Incumbent workers*
   - *Workers currently employed (but not at employer)*
   - *New entrants to the labor force*
   - *Unemployed, underemployed, long-term unemployed*
   - *Public workforce system clients*
   - *College students*
   - *High school students*
   - *Populations that may traditionally be underrepresented in apprenticeship, including: veterans, military spouses, transitioning service members, women in construction fields, people of color, people with disabilities, and people previously involved in the justice system]*

9. Why do you focus on these groups?
   - Was your company involved in deciding what groups you would try to recruit?
     - o [If no] *Was your company given the opportunity to provide input?*

10. What special strategies, if any, has your company used to recruit individuals from groups who are underserved by apprenticeship programs, such as women, Black/African American and Latinx/Hispanic youth, out-of-school youth, veterans, people with disabilities?
    - Which groups have you been successful with and with which groups have you been unsuccessful?
    - Which strategies seem successful or not?

11. [For employers in the construction fields] What special strategies, if any, has your company used to recruit women? Have these strategies been successful?

12. How successful has your company been in recruiting participants to participate in your pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program(s)?
    - Has it been easier to reach and recruit any particular group(s)?

13. [If employer is involved in both pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship] Are there any differences in between the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program(s)?

14. What challenges, if any, have you experienced with recruitment?

H. Data collection/use

1. What information do you collect on your pre-apprentices/apprentices after the program?

2. How do you use this information?

I. Program quality and sustainability

1. How satisfied are you and your company with the pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program(s)? Has it met your expectations to date? Why or why not?
    - How could the program(s) be improved?
    - [If employer is involved in both pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship] Are there any differences between the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program(s)?

2. Are participants well-prepared for jobs at your company after completing the pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program(s)? Why or why not?
    - What elements of the program are preparing participants for jobs at your company?
    - What elements are not as effective at preparing participants for jobs at your company?
    - [If employer is involved in both pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship] Are there any differences between the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program(s)?

3. How have pre-apprentices/apprentices responded to the program(s)? Has the feedback been positive or negative? Please describe.
    - [If employer is involved in both pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship] Are there any differences between the pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program(s)?

4. Will your company continue to offer its pre-apprenticeship/apprenticeship program(s)? If multiple, which ones will continue? Why or why not?

5. Which partnerships have been most successful? The most challenging? To what extent will the partnership and your activities be sustained after the grant ends?
    - What aspects of the partnership(s) have been successful/challenging?

J. Lessons learned

1. To date, what do you believe to be the main lessons from your involvement in developing/expanding/participating in apprenticeship/pre-apprenticeship program(s)?

2. Which apprenticeship program(s) or models have been most successful? Why?

3. From your perspective, what are the key barriers for companies related to participating in pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship program(s) generally?
   [Probe for:
   * *Lack of knowledge about apprenticeship*
   * *Administrative hassle and paperwork involved in registering the program*
   * *Fear of involvement with the government*
   * *Costs of the program*
   * *Difficulty in finding related technical instruction provider that is a good fit*
   * *Lack of trainers*
   * *Concern about unionization*
   * *Not enough of a pool of employers in the area served that are interested in apprenticeships*
   * *Lack of employers hiring*
   * *Lack of employer facing shortages of skilled workers*
   * *COVID-19 pandemic]*

4. What innovations and strategies have you or the state implemented that can contribute to efforts to encourage more employers to adopt apprenticeships?

5. Are there any gaps in the capacity of state systems to support apprenticeship, that could be filled with further assistance? If yes, please elaborate.

6. Is there anything we did not ask you think we should be aware of?