



# High-Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Programs: Community Colleges

January 2020

---

Community colleges have always played a key role in providing career pathway opportunities for students, new workers, or underprepared learners. More recently, colleges have taken on a larger and more significant role in the nation's Registered Apprenticeship system. More than ever before, colleges are serving as apprenticeship sponsors, training providers, and local leaders in the development and implementation of high-quality apprenticeship programs.

With this increased engagement, colleges are uniquely positioned to apply career pathways strategies to apprenticeship through pre-apprenticeship preparation.

Once thought of as mediocre entry-level vocational training programs, pre-apprenticeships are now being designed as important steps in career pathways that provide the instruction, preparation, and supports students need to enter and succeed in Registered Apprenticeships or other high-quality work-based learning programs and then advance to careers.

Pre-apprenticeships can be delivered by a range of entities, including community-based organizations, high schools, labor organizations, workforce agencies, or community colleges.

Educational institutions that offer pre-apprenticeships should integrate the programs directly into their existing curricula and academic structures. If they offer strong, well-executed pre-apprenticeship programs, colleges can serve as bridges to more advanced work-based learning opportunities for students and new workers. Pre-apprenticeships can also be particularly effective vehicles for preparing people from underrepresented populations for rewarding employment opportunities. And pre-apprenticeship programs that succeed in reaching underrepresented populations can in turn help increase diversity and equity throughout the U.S. apprenticeship and workforce systems.

JFF developed its [framework for a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program](#) to build on the U.S. Department of Labor's pre-apprenticeship guidance and to provide a deeper look into the specific, aspirational characteristics of a high-quality pre-apprenticeship program, drawing from our work with pre-apprenticeship initiatives around the country that serve a wide range of populations.

We hope that this framework will inspire community colleges to review their programs and spark a needed conversation among colleges, companies, and the field at large about how to support, structure, and fund high-quality pre-apprenticeship programs that enable diverse populations to succeed.

## JFF's Framework for a High-Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Program

### 1. Transparent Entry and Success Requirements

- Clearly articulates entry requirements, including stipulations on any academic prerequisites, employability skills, and social-emotional skills.
- Clearly articulates expectations for participation, such as self-management, persistence skills, and other success requirements.
- Clearly articulates requirements for successful transition from the pre-apprenticeship program to at least one apprenticeship program, including skills, credentials, and other aspects that ensure access to stable employment (such as a drivers' license, fees, drug testing, or GED).
- Identifies and flags for participants which requirements, such as physical capabilities or absence of specific criminal convictions, cannot be overcome through program supports, and works with Registered Apprenticeship sponsors to add accessibility by removing these barriers whenever possible.
- Implements strategies to help participants address gaps in requirements for entry into an apprenticeship.

### 2. Alignment with Skills Sought by Local Employers and High-Quality Apprenticeship Programs

- Supports participants in acquiring employability skills such as teamwork, written communication, problem solving, initiative, flexibility, and reliability.
- Supports participants in acquiring sufficient skills and academic credentials for entry into a high-quality apprenticeship or an entry-level job with advancement potential in the industry.
- Aligns curriculum with a range of training and employment pathways.
- Designs instruction and training to reach underserved populations.

### **3. Culmination in One or More Industry-Recognized Credentials**

- Facilitates earning credentials that support direct entry into the workforce, are aligned with labor-market demand, and are validated by regional and/or national employers or industry associations.
- Facilitates earning credentials that are stackable and portable.
- Facilitates earning credentials that prepare participants or align with the skills identified for training and curriculum.
- Embeds preparation for earning industry-recognized credentials into the curriculum, including supports such as test delivery.

### **4. Development of Skills Through Hands-On Activities and Work-Based Learning**

- Embeds hands-on activities into the curriculum, including work-based learning or on-the-job learning, that are relevant to the target occupation.
- Structures hands-on activities to make clear what skills are gained, how they are validated, and how they can be applied in a future career.
- Structures hands-on activities in a classroom, worksite, or lab to be experiential, problem-based, and designed with input from employers and apprenticeship sponsors.
- Prioritizes opportunities for work-based learning, in which the participant completes meaningful job tasks in a workplace.
- Uses work-based learning to develop participants' understanding and ability to navigate company and industry culture, as well as specific position functions and workplace policies and procedures.

## 5. Offering of Academic, Career Exploration, and Wraparound Supports

- Provides orientation to the industry and exposure to a range of occupations, career paths, wages, and information about job opportunities.
- Supports exploration of postsecondary credential options aligned with career interests.
- Supports participants in developing a career plan that identifies short- and long-term goals, including potential barriers and possible solutions.
- Provides wraparound supports such as tutoring and case management, including access to resources for child care, mental health, transportation, and housing.

## 6. Transition into a Registered Apprenticeship or Other High-Quality Apprenticeship Program

- Partners with industry, employers, unions, intermediaries, and the public workforce system to facilitate placements.
- Works with program sponsors to determine their form of selection preference for program graduates, such as guaranteed interviews or direct entry into a high-quality apprenticeship.
- Facilitates the provision of advanced standing when the curriculum of the pre-apprenticeship program overlaps with the apprenticeship program.
- Connects program graduates who do not enter an apprenticeship to a postsecondary education and training option, or to an employer in a related field for an interview.

*For more resources on apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship, visit [center4apprenticeship.jff.org](https://center4apprenticeship.jff.org).*