

A GUIDE TO SETTING UP APPRENTICESHIPS

US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
OFFICE OF APPRENTICESHIP

WHAT IS A REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP?

An apprenticeship is the passing of skills and knowledge from one generation to the next. It is a formal training agreement whereby an apprentice will receive the education and on-the-

job training necessary to make him/her proficient in a chosen craft. The documents that outline the apprenticeship agreement between employer and apprentice cover all aspects including starting wage, specific on-the-job training, duration of training, college-level related training, periodic pay increases and qualifications of instructors.

A formal contract is entered into using a form prescribed by the US Dept of Labor, Office of Apprenticeship (DOL/OA). When the apprentice and the employer have agreed to the terms of the apprenticeship training program, the contract is forwarded to the regional DOL/OA Office for approval, thereby "registering" the apprenticeship.

There are several hundred recognized occupations that can be the focus of a registered apprenticeship. Each occupation has assigned to it the minimum number of hours of on-the-job training required to be completed, and all titles require a minimum of 144 instructional hours in related training each year for the term of the apprenticeship.

While the structure of an apprenticeship is mandated by the Office of Apprenticeship, the apprenticeship training program content is developed by the employing firm and may be personalized to fit the employer's needs.

GETTING STARTED

Step one of the process deals with selecting an appropriate occupation title. Although the apprenticeship training program must be in pursuit of a "registered" job title, the actual content of the training is personalized to fit the day-to-day operations of the employing firm. An apprenticeship program for a specific occupation at one firm may look different from that of another because of the type of work the one firm does that differs from another.

NOTE: It is to the advantage of all area employers to work with their local US DOL/Office of Apprenticeship to standardize training for a particular craft as much as possible. This is best illustrated and clarified in examining the start-up process for creating a registered apprenticeship.

Step two of the process deals specifically with defining what skills and knowledge apprentices within a firm must acquire.

There are four basic steps to setting up a registered apprenticeship:

1. Establish an apprentice committee.
2. Establish standards of training for the apprenticeship, i.e., what

CONTENTS

WHAT IS A REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP?	1
GETTING STARTED	1
ESTABLISHING AN APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING COMMITTEE	2
ESTABLISHING TRAINING STANDARDS ..	2
REGISTERING YOUR PROGRAM WITH US DEPT OF LABOR OFFICE OF APPRENTICESHIP	3
SELECTING AND REGISTERING APPRENTICES	3
TRACKING THE APPRENTICE'S PROGRESS	3
CREDIT FOR PRIOR EXPERIENCE	4
MAKING PROGRAM CHANGES	4
THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S ROLE ..	4
ADDITIONAL OFFERINGS	4
HOW TO REACH US	4

training your apprentices will receive.

3. Register the apprenticeship standards with the Office of Apprenticeship and Training.
4. Select apprentices and submit them to the Office of Apprenticeship and Training for registration.

ESTABLISHING AN APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING COMMITTEE

The apprenticeship training committee or supervisor is the driving force behind a firm's apprenticeship program. This group of people should include anyone who could provide valuable input in setting up what training an apprentice should have to create the finished product the company desires. Represented in this group should be skilled professionals now working in the trade to be apprenticed (journey persons), human resources staff, production supervisors, union representatives and anyone else who can provide direction in seeing the program runs smoothly and contains the most effective training components. Typically one person from each area, creating a team of three to five people would be appropriate. Smaller organizations may have fewer, and larger organizations may have more. In some organizations, because of their personnel structure, a single individual acting as an apprentice supervisor who is

familiar with the overall needs of the program may act as the apprentice committee, working with input from key individuals in the organization.

If an organizational meeting is held, minutes should be recorded to reflect the members present and the intent of the apprentice committee. The records of this first meeting become a permanent record of the apprenticeship program's history. If an organizational meeting results in the appointment of an apprentice training supervisor, this should also be recorded in writing. When members of the committee are added or deleted, or the apprentice supervisor changes, a follow-up document should be authored so that the current committee members or supervisor is always accurately recorded.

It is possible that a firm may have more than one occupation apprenticed in their program. Larger firms might have machine tool craftsman, plumbers and pipe fitters, electricians and so on. The firm should decide if additional committees are to be established or if one committee with specific members responsible for specific trades will suffice.

ESTABLISHING TRAINING STANDARDS

While the apprentice committee will have authority over every aspect of the

apprenticeship program, including apprentice selection, starting wages, etc., its first duty is the actual creation of the program. This is where the selection of committee members becomes important. Several things must be decided:

- ✓ What on-the-job skill training is necessary?
- ✓ What formal classroom related training is necessary?
- ✓ What will be the training wage structure?

Early in this process, the Office of Apprenticeship and Training's regional office and area training representative should be contacted. The OA can provide invaluable guidance in formulating standards that represent a quality training program and are consistent with the programs at other organizations in the region.

The Office of Apprenticeship training representative in your area -working with available training providers such as community colleges, can help you develop a model with which your apprentice committee can develop your training program. The apprentice committee will decide what skills are to be taught to the apprentice. It will determine the amount of time the apprentice will spend on each task to acquire these skills. They will also decide what related training, in the form of classroom instruction, should accompany on-the-job training and how that instruction is to be provided.

3 Setting Up Apprenticeships

NOTE: Remember, every apprenticeable registered occupation has assigned to it the minimum number of hours required for on-the-job skills training. In addition, each apprenticeship must include a minimum of 144 hours of related classroom instruction per year. (A four-year apprenticeship would then require 8,000 hours of on-the-job training and a minimum of 576 hours of related instruction.)

Once these elements of the program have been determined, together with the training wage structure, they will be incorporated in the document that will register your program, called the "Standards of Apprenticeship". You OA representative can guide you through the entire process.

REGISTERING YOUR PROGRAM WITH THE BUREAU OF APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINING

When the standards for apprenticeship training have been developed, the employing firm sends a copy to their Office of Apprenticeship training representative. A simple cover letter on company letterhead introducing the firm and their desire to register their program should accompany the forms. The Office of Apprenticeship representative will review the document to see that the on-the-job training and related training in the new standards,

represent a valid path to the apprenticeable trade.

When the new apprenticeship program has been approved and registered, the employing firm is notified in writing by the Office of Apprenticeship. At this time the employing firm may begin to recruit and enroll registered apprentices.

SELECTING AND REGISTERING APPRENTICES

One of the functions of the apprentice committee is to establish the manner in which apprentices are selected. Selection criteria and screening methods are at the discretion of the employing firm, as long as no employment laws are violated. The employer may want a minimum time on the job for an individual to be considered as an apprentice. The employer may want a minimum education or require a skills proficiency exam and recommendations from supervisors. The employer is free to set any minimum standards or require any combination of qualifying criteria for apprentice selection, as long as no employment laws are violated.

Once an apprentice candidate has been selected, it is easy to complete his/her registration. The Office of Apprenticeship representative will supply the sponsoring employer with instructions on setting up their account in the RAIS [Registered

Apprenticeship Information System] where they can manage their apprentices activities, including enrollment and completion.

TRACKING THE APPRENTICE'S PROGRESS

The employing firm must establish a process for tracking the apprentice's progress. The on-the-job training at each specific task must be recorded so that credit for completing each segment is given when due. Eventually the apprentice will have completed all related training and all on-the-job skills training and a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship will be awarded. It is important the apprentice's work performed be accurately recorded. Also, the related training to be accomplished must be similarly tracked. If the training is to be provided by an accredited college-level institution, a transcript of classes completed is adequate documentation. If any other source of related training is to be used, such as in-house training, again some system to quantify and record this training must be established and maintained.

CREDIT FOR PRIOR EXPERIENCE

You will notice when completing the apprentice enrollment agreement "on line" in RAIS, that apprentices can be

given credit for prior work experience and related training.

This can be a valuable tool when an employer is enrolling a new apprentice that has already been pursuing the educational requirements of the apprenticeship and has completed relevant work experiences as well. Having been awarded credit for relevant training already completed, the apprentice need only complete what required training remains as listed in the standards of apprenticeship. Sponsoring employers make this determination when assessing a new apprentice. They can also accept substitute classroom work if approved by the committee. This process should be applied fairly to all apprentices.

Working closely with your Office of Apprenticeship area training representatives in cases such as these is very important. In order to maintain the integrity of your training program, documentation for any credit given must be retained as part of the sponsor's records, and made available to the Office of Apprenticeship when requested.

MAKING PROGRAM CHANGES

As new technologies are developed and the focus of your firm's work changes to remain competitive, you may see a need to change the training components of your apprenticeship program. This is

easily done by a written request for change to the Office of Apprenticeship. On your company letterhead and over the signature of one of your apprentice committee members, simply state what changes you wish to make and include a brief explanation as to your motives. For instance, if the nature of your firm's business now incorporates more work on NC/CNC equipment, you may want to restructure your training to reflect this need.

THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S ROLE

The community college is an invaluable resource for training in communities where they exist. In addition to providing economical career relevant programs, they often provide staff in support of the apprenticeship function. Working together with the Office of Apprenticeship, the community college can develop the specific class and training schedule desired to support your apprenticeship program. To find the community college near you, and to gain other valuable information about apprenticeships, go to: www.aboutmasci.org. This is the web site for the Michigan Apprenticeship Steering Committee incorporated.

How to Reach Us

If you are interested in apprentice programs contact the Office of Apprenticeship near you.

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