

A BUSINESS PLEDGE TO Advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Registered Apprenticeship

Sign the Pledge Today ▶

Since 2014, apprenticeships have undergone a major transformation in the United States. Once regarded primarily as a means of high-quality training for people pursuing blue collar and union jobs in the crafts and trades, the Registered Apprenticeship model is now a more accepted innovation for recruitment and skills training in a range of new industries and occupations.



Apprenticeships are now widely recognized as a win-win talent development strategy that enables employers to develop a skilled, world-class workforce that meets their needs, while providing workers with education, training, and economic advancement opportunities. Due to the model's success over the past 83 years within labor-union-sponsored programs and the building trades, apprenticeship has now been adopted by industries such as IT, cybersecurity, insurance, health care, transportation, and advanced manufacturing.

Apprenticeship contributes to the development of a stronger, more skilled U.S. workforce, increases earnings for workers, prepares workers and students for the jobs of the future, and helps companies meet

their ever-changing workforce needs. Often considered the “gold standard” in workforce training, Registered Apprenticeships build clear and reliable pathways to family-supporting jobs and careers. As the United States recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, Registered Apprenticeships are especially poised to support workers who have lost their jobs. For young people who are entering a weak job market, apprenticeship provides a way to train for the jobs of the future while earning a decent income and avoiding substantial college debt.

Shortly after taking office, the Biden administration [called for](#) the expanded use of and support for the nation's Registered Apprenticeship system. This included a call for

significant support for employers and workers to use apprenticeships to fill existing vacancies and newly created jobs, including forthcoming jobs to be created under the American Rescue, Infrastructure, and clean energy proposals, with diverse, local, and well-trained workers.

To meet this call, business leaders, policymakers, advocacy groups, and other apprenticeship stakeholders must address the opportunity gap within apprenticeship. Women, people of color, people with disabilities, workers who live in rural communities, people who identify as LGBTQ+, and individuals who have had contact with the criminal justice system have historically experienced challenges accessing and completing apprenticeship programs. Data from the nation's apprentice system shows that, while increasingly diverse, participation in Registered Apprenticeship does not reflect the general composition of the American workforce. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), women represent almost half of the labor force but only a small portion of total apprentices. And Black apprentices completed programs at a rate of just 24 percent, significantly lower than their white counterparts who complete at a rate of 33 percent. [There is a need](#) for more intentional diversity, equity, and inclusion recruitment and retention strategies to attract more women, people of color, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented populations into apprenticeship programs.

Labor Secretary Marty Walsh is leading several efforts to expand apprenticeships with a commitment to increasing diversity, equity,

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inclusion, and accessibility. Earlier this year, DOL awarded a cooperative agreement to JFF's Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning to develop JFF's National Innovation Hub for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Registered Apprenticeship to close equity gaps in apprenticeship over the next four years. Through this cooperative agreement, JFF will provide direct, hands-on training, public materials, and support to employers, workforce programs, community groups, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and other stakeholders to increase diversity and inclusion in apprenticeships. As part of this effort, more than 400 new employer partnerships will be created with small and large employers, businesses classified by DOL as "minority-owned," and trade associations committed to DEIA and apprenticeships.

JFF, in partnership with DOL, is calling for businesses to take the Business Pledge to Advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Registered Apprenticeships, a nationwide call to action to accomplish the

shared goal of creating greater access and opportunity for underrepresented groups to join apprenticeship programs. The pledge asks employers to support DEIA strategies in their recruitment, selection, and training of apprentices.

Today's Registered Apprenticeship system is primed to become a core component of workforce strategies for the jobs of today and of the future. To fulfill this promise, we must collectively work together to remove barriers to participation and provide these opportunities for millions across the nation.

By taking this pledge, your business is joining a community of local, state, and national employers and labor partners that believe in removing barriers to increase access and opportunity to underrepresented populations in high-quality Registered Apprenticeships. You will gain access to support, promising practices, and tools to assist you in upholding your pledge. To encourage other employers and stakeholders to participate, you may be contacted by JFF to share promising practices in reducing barriers and adopting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) policies that contribute to the advancement of apprenticeships for all Americans.

[Sign the Pledge Today ▶](https://www.jff.org/pledge)

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The Pledge

I, the undersigned, do pledge on behalf of COMPANY to support a set of principles and practices to ensure that all Americans have the access and opportunity to succeed in the workplace through the proven pathway of Registered Apprenticeships. I pledge to work towards removing barriers that may prevent qualified women, people of color, people with disabilities, workers who live in rural communities, people who identify as LGBTQ+, and individuals who have had contact with the criminal justice system from gaining access to high-quality apprenticeships, training, education, and good jobs and wages.

To fulfill the pledge, your company can take the below actions to achieve the goals of promoting opportunity for all, eliminating barriers to entry into apprenticeship, and providing meaningful opportunities to succeed for people underrepresented in apprenticeship:

- **Revise Recruitment and Talent Attraction Strategies**
 - ▶ Conduct purposeful and intentional outreach to underrepresented groups in apprenticeship, such as to local workforce boards, community colleges, community-based organizations (CBOs) and minority-serving colleges and universities

- **Promote Fair and Equitable Hiring Practices**

- ▶ Engage human resources staff and hiring managers on implementing contemporary DEIA practices and make fair decisions regarding applicants without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, or background
- ▶ Review and revise human resources policies and practices to remove barriers for apprentices
- ▶ Reach out to local workforce agencies, community-based organizations, colleges, and others in your community to attract and recruit a wider range of talent
- ▶ Lead, join, or host apprenticeship opportunity events within your company or community
- ▶ Share promising best practices and success stories with other employers

- **Take Action in Your Local Community**

- ▶ Start a Registered Apprenticeship program reflecting the demographics of your community
- ▶ Provide apprentices, especially those from traditionally underrepresented groups, with access to continued learning, development, and advancement opportunities that support career development and provide for more equitable outcomes for all
- ▶ Conduct outreach to and support apprenticeships within local K-12 school districts, community-based organizations, community colleges, workforce boards, minority-serving institutions, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities

- **Set an Example for Other Businesses**

- ▶ Promote your commitment to the pledge
- ▶ Share and disseminate successes and lessons learned with JFF and DOL to encourage other employers and stakeholders to reduce barriers that contribute to the advancement of apprenticeships for all Americans



JFF is a national nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems. For nearly 40 years, JFF has led the way in designing innovative and scalable solutions that create access to economic advancement for all. www.jff.org



In 2017, JFF launched the [Center for Apprenticeship & Work-Based Learning](#) (the Center) to spur mainstream adoption of equitable, innovative, and high-quality apprenticeship and work-based learning programs. The Center works to expand apprenticeship and work-based learning programs into new industries and fosters access and success for a broader, more diverse group of workers. We are a trusted advisor to organizations looking to make a meaningful and lasting positive impact in the communities where they live and work.

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