

PAYA

PARTNERSHIP TO ADVANCE YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP

ABOUT YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP

Youth apprenticeship is a strategy for building a more inclusive economy by creating affordable, reliable, and equitable pathways from high school to good jobs and college degrees. Youth apprenticeship is a proven education and workforce strategy that combines paid, structured on-the-job training with related, classroom learning. A youth apprenticeship is a work-based learning program designed to start when apprentices are high-school age.

High-quality youth apprenticeship programs include the following four core elements:

- Paid, on-the-job learning under the supervision of skilled employee mentors;
- Related, classroom-based instruction;
- Ongoing assessment against established skills and competency standards;
- Culmination in a portable, industry-recognized credential and postsecondary credit.

These programs are built on partnerships that include employers, high schools, and providers of postsecondary education, most often a community college. These partners collaborate to develop youth apprenticeship programs that connect the learning needs of students with the talent needs of industry.

YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP: Strengthening the Link Between Education and Economic Mobility

For generations, the promise of American opportunity has been rooted in a simple premise: Work hard in high school, earn a diploma, and then move on to college or right into a job. In either case, most Americans who completed high school could reasonably expect to support themselves and their families, and those who finished college could expect a secure foothold in the middle class. But over the last three decades, the link between American education and economic mobility has grown increasingly fragile. A college degree is more important than ever to achieve financial security but also less of a guarantee—and more than twice as expensive as in the 1990s. Many young people enter adulthood burdened by college debt, and too often without a degree. Even as high school graduation and college-going rates are rising, income inequality and the racial wealth gap continue to grow.

High schools are struggling to prepare young people for today's economy. Too many students are disengaged and have difficulty navigating their options after graduation. Students lack affordable postsecondary opportunities, and many graduates find that a degree alone is not enough to secure a good job with potential for career advancement. These challenges make the path to economic security difficult for young people, especially for those facing the persistent racial, gender, and other inequities present in the country today.

The weakening link between education and economic mobility is troubling, especially at a time when the American economy is creating well-paying jobs in fields like information technology, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and business services, and employers are struggling to fill them. To compete and grow, employers need to build a sustainable pipeline of workers with adaptable skills. Our current approaches to educating young Americans provide few opportunities for employers to connect with a rising generation of diverse talent.

Youth apprenticeship allows students to complete high school, start their postsecondary education at no cost, get paid work experience alongside a mentor, and start along a path that broadens their options for the future. Youth apprenticeship is a cost-effective talent strategy for employers, as apprentices build skills to meet evolving business needs and develop into valued contributors to their employers' bottom line.



ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP TO ADVANCE YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP

The Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA) is a multi-year initiative that supports states and cities working to expand access to high-quality apprenticeship opportunities for high-school age youth by providing direct support to place-based partnerships, facilitating learning and innovation, and strengthening the case and evidence base for youth apprenticeship.

PAYA believes that youth apprenticeship has the power to transform how our education system prepares young people for careers and adulthood. Youth apprenticeship connects the learning needs of youth with the talent needs of industry, creating a more inclusive economy and skilled workforce.

To build toward this vision, New America convenes and mobilizes the expertise, experience, and collective networks of the PAYA National Partners to develop innovative youth apprenticeship programs.

CareerWise

NAPE National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity

Charleston Regional Youth Apprenticeships at Trident Technical College

ADVANCE CTE State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

ESG Education Strategy Group Achieving Greater Impact

JFF

National Governors Association

New America

PRINCIPLES FOR HIGH-QUALITY YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP

Youth apprenticeship programs are growing in states and communities across the country. In 2016, Colorado launched a statewide initiative to increase the number of youth apprentices to 20,000 within 10 years. In South Carolina, the number of youth apprenticeship programs has increased 42-fold since 2007. Meanwhile, states like California, Maryland, and Indiana have invested in programs and policies to establish and grow their own youth apprenticeship systems. The momentum in the field of youth apprenticeship is evidence that the earn-and-learn model is as relevant today as it has been in centuries past. But the landscape of youth apprenticeship is fragmented, and there is significant variation in program design and quality.

To provide clear and common direction to the field, PAYA developed a set of guiding principles. Grounded in research and experience, these principles are structured to be both practical and aspirational. They provide clear guidance to industry, education, and community leaders, and state and local policymakers, while at the same time setting a high-bar for program design, outcomes, and continuous improvement.

PRINCIPLES	OUTCOMES
CAREER-ORIENTED Learning is structured around knowledge, skills, and competencies that lead to careers with family-supporting wages.	▪ The program integrates on-the-job and classroom learning to provide a coherent learning experience that prepares students to navigate the economy through work and postsecondary education. ▪ The program leads to improved, measurable economic success for students in both the short- and long-term. ▪ The program equips students with skills and competencies that are valued throughout an industry and can be further developed to advance within that field.
EQUITABLE Learning is accessible to every student, with targeted supports for those adversely impacted by long-standing inequities in our education system and labor market.	▪ The program is designed to acknowledge and address local equity challenges. ▪ The program provides targeted student support services to ensure equitable representation and success across all industries involved in the program. ▪ The program expands opportunity and leads to improved education and employment outcomes.
PORTABLE Learning leads to postsecondary credentials and transferable college credit that expand options for students.	▪ The program leads to measurable academic gains and increased postsecondary attainment for students in both the short- and long-term. ▪ The program provides affordable postsecondary credentials and credits. ▪ Postsecondary credits earned through the program are transferable to other institutions and valued by the local labor market and across an industry or sector.
ADAPTABLE Learning is designed collaboratively to be recognized and valued across an industry or sector.	▪ The program promotes strategies that involve multiple employers, leverage industry-wide standards, and connect to local education and community partners. ▪ The program addresses the needs of participating employers by broadening their access to talent with industry-recognized skills and valued credentials. ▪ The program supports the economic success of local, regional, and state employer partners.
ACCOUNTABLE Student, employer, and program outcomes are monitored using transparent metrics to support improvement.	▪ The program sustains active, high-level leadership and support from all relevant partners, including education institutions, employers, intermediary organizations, and the community at large. ▪ The program's outcomes data are disaggregated and reported publicly to track success for both students and employers. ▪ The program's partners share responsibility for ensuring the success of apprentices and the continuous improvement of the program as a whole.

Why Career-Oriented

Youth apprenticeship combines valuable work experience with academic learning that is linked to and aligned with careers that offer family-sustaining wages and opportunities for advancement. This unique pathway relies on the direct investment of employers to ensure the knowledge, skills, and competencies apprentices develop are tied to current workforce needs and aligned to relevant industry standards. Alongside educators, employers develop, sequence, and assess student learning to provide a coherent experience that better prepares students for the future.

Why Equitable

Designed well, youth apprenticeship can advance equity by increasing access to valuable, affordable postsecondary credentials and by increasing the social capital and paid work experience that are especially important for under-resourced youth. Programs must guard against inequities that unfairly limit access and opportunity by gender, income, disability, and—most starkly—race. Youth apprenticeship programs must not reinforce educational segregation or privilege the most well-resourced students. This requires programs to recognize inequities embedded within their education and workforce systems and to develop programmatic interventions to address them, including student recruitment strategies, advising, and on-the-job support from employer mentors.

Why Portable

Youth apprenticeship programs provide young people a clear path to a college degree or other valuable postsecondary credential and a foundation for advancing their careers. For youth apprenticeship to expand rather than limit students' postsecondary options, learning must be documented and recognized within the education system as credit, and by industry in the form of certifications, where appropriate. The college credits that students receive through an apprenticeship program should count toward an associate or bachelor's degree and be transferable to other institutions, so apprentices can build upon their learning over time.

Why Adaptable

Youth apprenticeship is an investment by an employer in future talent and an investment by students in their future selves. To protect these investments, employers across a sector must collaborate to ensure the knowledge, skills, and competencies students acquire are not narrowly tied to any single employer and are broadly valued across employers in an industry, sector, or region. Doing so helps employers guard against the risk that they will lose the talent they helped develop and helps students ensure their learning is not tied to a single employer but valued more broadly across an industry, sector, or region.

Why Accountable

Youth apprentices straddle the worlds of education and employment. To support students as they navigate the critical transition to adulthood, youth apprenticeship programs demand high-level buy-in and coordination across employers, postsecondary institutions, high schools, and communities. This complex, mutually-beneficial partnership needs to be managed by an intermediary organization that facilitates the program, balances partners' interests, and holds each partner accountable for the success of the program and the apprentices. To do so, programs must collect, monitor, and disaggregate data to evaluate the whole picture of apprentice and program performance and to drive continuous improvement.

PRINCIPLES IN PRACTICE

Interested in learning how to incorporate these quality principles into your work? Visit newamerica.org/PAYA to access additional information and resources.

To learn more about PAYA, please visit newamerica.org/PAYA



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