



# Apprenticeship

*It Makes Good  
Business Sense*

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The North Carolina Department of Labor, Apprenticeship and Training Bureau is pleased to provide you with this employer toolkit. It is designed to give you what you need to know about apprenticeship—what it is and how it benefits your business. You will learn how apprenticeship works and how it can affect your bottom line

Tools and resources are available to get your company started training apprentices. This toolkit was designed to answer some of the most common questions about apprenticeship.

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## Apprenticeship:

### *It Makes Good Business Sense*

Between 1991 and 2001, the number of people working in skilled trade occupations dropped by 3.8 percent. This decrease creates a significant impact on your ability to find skilled employees. Ensuring the availability of a strong labor force now, and in the future, is important for the sustainable growth of your business.

You require skilled and qualified workers to get the job done. Training apprentices is the best way to ensure that your employees are trained the way you want them to be, allowing you to pass on your—and your journeypersons’—knowledge and experience.

The N.C. Department of Labor Apprenticeship and Training Bureau is pleased to provide you with this *Employer Toolkit*. It is designed to provide you with everything you need to know about apprenticeship—what it is, why it benefits your business, how it affects your bottom line, and how it works.

Tools and resources are readily available to get your company started on an apprenticeship program. This toolkit is meant to answer some of the most common questions about apprenticeship and includes the following information:

- Benefits of training apprentices
- How apprenticeship can improve your bottom line
- Tips to implementing a successful apprenticeship
- Valuable information on effective mentoring techniques
- Simple steps to starting a successful apprenticeship program in your business
- Quotes from apprenticeship sponsors who are making apprenticeship work for them
- Who to contact to obtain more information



## A Message From the N.C. Apprenticeship Advisory Council

If you own or manage a business, you make investment decisions every day. Some of the major decisions include investing in space (office space, warehouse, shop space, production space, work space or retail space), investing in materials, raw materials, products or supplies, and investing in your equipment. These are all tangible investments. They can all be touched, felt and seen.

There is another kind of investment that companies make. It is called the “human investment.” Successful companies realize that their employees are one of their most valuable assets. Your workforce has to be a positive reflection of your company. Organizations that train tend to thrive, even in the face of strong competition. If your business and North Carolina’s economy are going to grow, it is important to develop a skilled workforce.

North Carolina’s apprenticeship program is a resource you can utilize to ensure that your company operates at peak efficiency. Apprenticeship is a time-honored training system that involves a combination of classroom and on-the-job training under the direction of a skilled worker. Training apprentices is the best way to guarantee that your employees are trained in industry-accepted practices as well as in specific techniques and methods employed by your company.

To assist you in making a decision to invest in your workforce, here are three reasons that companies train apprentices:

**Productivity:** What if everyone in your company was either in apprenticeship training or had completed an apprenticeship? It is a simple fact that a person who is properly trained is far more productive than someone who has not been trained.

Classroom Instruction + On-the-Job Training = Increased Productivity

**Retention:** Numerous studies have shown that employees who are properly trained tend to work for the same employer longer. In addition, they use fewer sick days. One of the reasons is the difference between working in a job and having a career. In general, those who are in careers tend to stay with their employers.

**Quality:** The apprenticeship training process instills a sense of pride. The training environment in both the classroom and in the field dictates that it is simply not acceptable to “slap things together.” This learned attitude increases the overall standard of quality.

Companies that offer apprenticeship training opportunities often attract higher quality job applicants. The person who wants to serve an apprenticeship is one who is willing to make a commitment to his or her career and to your company.

It all comes down to a willingness to invest in your most valuable resource—your employees. Training apprentices is one of the best ways to accomplish this investment. If you empower your employees through training, you will see direct benefits. Take the first step and find out more about how you can make the apprenticeship training process work for you.

## What Is Apprenticeship?

The apprenticeship method of training—a skilled worker passing on craft knowledge to another—is almost as old as recorded history.

Since the Middle Ages, skills have been passed on through a master-apprentice system in which the apprentice was indentured to the master for a specified period of years. The apprentice usually received food, shelter and clothing in return for the work the apprentice performed while under the apprentice indenture. Today's apprenticeship programs provide a more formalized and structured system of training.

The National Apprenticeship Act of 1937, also known as the Fitzgerald Act, provides guidance on apprenticeship from the federal level. The N.C. Administrative Code, Title 13, Chapter 14, also provides standards for apprenticeship programs in North Carolina. Thousands of apprentices have gone through the North Carolina apprenticeship system and have contributed to the state's economy.

## Eight Essential Components of Apprenticeship Training

1. **Structured Training:** Apprenticeship is a training strategy that:
  - Combines supervised, structured on-the-job training with related instruction.
  - Is sponsored by employers, employer associations or labor/management groups that have the ability to hire and train in a working environment. The employment opportunity is the most basic requirement for any apprenticeship. Without the job, there is no on-the-job training. On-the-job training represents about 90 percent of the program.
  - Provides quality related instruction. Related instruction is theoretical and technical, and is usually provided by the N.C. Community College System, a university or a company recognized training. Related instruction is a key part of each apprenticeship and is required by apprenticeship regulations. Apprentices are required to participate in a minimum of 144 hours of related instruction a year.
2. **Skilled Training:** Apprenticeship is a training strategy that prepares people for skilled employment by conducting training in bona fide and documented employment settings. The content of training, both on-the-job and related instruction, is defined by the industry.

North Carolina uses input from the state Apprenticeship Advisory Council, professional associations and industry to formulate minimum state standards for each trade and to make recommendations to the Apprenticeship and Training Bureau.

Members of the Apprenticeship Advisory Council are made up of an equal number of employee/employer members from various industries/industry groups involved in

training apprentices as well as representatives from the N.C. Department of Public Instruction and the N.C. Community College System.

3. **Apprenticeship Regulations:** Apprenticeship is a training strategy with requirements clearly stated in federal and state laws and regulations. The National Apprenticeship Act of 1937 (also known as the Fitzgerald Act) provides the guidance from the federal level. N.C. Administrative Code, Title 13, Chapter 14, provides additional state requirements. These regulations establish minimum requirements for apprenticeship standards, such as:

- a. The length of training
- b. Type and amount of related instruction
- c. Supervision of the apprentice
- d. Appropriate ratios of apprentices to journey workers
- e. Apprentice selection and recruitment procedures

4. **Credentials:** Apprenticeship is a training strategy that leads to a certificate of completion and officially recognized craftsman status. The completion certificates are issued by the N.C. Apprenticeship and Training Bureau and the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship Training. These credentials are nationally recognized.

Also required is the approval and monitoring of the program by the NCDOL Apprenticeship and Training Bureau. When employers desire to start or modify an apprentice program, the bureau provides technical assistance.

5. **Investment in Training:** Apprenticeship is a training strategy that involves a tangible investment on the part of the apprentice, program sponsor, individual employer or labor/management group. An apprentice's investment is the time to learn skills and to perfect those skills on the job. Apprentices are expected to manage their time, keep work records, attend classes and progress in their apprenticeship training program. An apprentice may also be required to pay for tuition or books. The employer's investment includes allowing time for the apprentice to complete the related instruction and paying the wages of the apprentice while training on the job under the supervision of a skilled craftsman.

6. **Earn and Learn:** Apprenticeship is a training strategy that pays wages to apprentices during the term of their apprenticeships. These wages are a portion of the skilled wage rate that increases throughout the training program in accordance with a predetermined wage scale. The entry wages must average no less than 50 percent of the trained rate of pay for the occupation, normally reach at least 85 percent of the trained rate by the last period of training, and must be above the minimum wage rate.

7. **Supervised Training:** Apprenticeship is a training strategy in which participants learn by working directly under the supervision of skilled workers, mentors or craftsmen in the occupation.

8. **Apprentice Agreement:** Apprenticeship is a training strategy that involves a written agreement between the apprentice, the employer and the state. This agreement specifies the length of the training, the related instruction requirements, an outline of the skills of the occupation to be learned, and the wages the apprentice will receive.

## Benefits of Training Apprentices

Your company needs to be ready to compete in the 21st century. By training apprentices you will gain employees who will make a contribution to your bottom line. Apprenticeship training is a key investment in your company's future. Following are some of the key benefits of training apprentices:

- **Apprenticeship equals trained employees:** By combining on-the-job training with classroom instruction, apprenticeship provides an employer with fully trained employees. It creates better skilled workers for your company by providing skill training and job-related theory to meet your company's needs. Participating in an apprenticeship program ensures that you will have employees that are trained to industry standards, as well as to your company's.
- **Apprenticeship means less turnover:** Invest in your employees and they will invest in you. When you commit to training your workforce, you will see employee motivation and interest increase, improvements in overall work ethics, and increased employee loyalty. Training young people in your business creates skilled and experienced employees, many of whom will stay with you, becoming your supervisors and managers of the future.
- **Apprenticeship saves you money:** Although you pay for apprenticeship training, the actual cost to you is minimal. The program includes both classroom and on-the-job training, so apprentices will be producing for you while they learn. The result is employees ready to contribute to your bottom line. Also, if your business is in a field requiring licensing, when your employees finish the program, they are prepared for the exam.
- **Improve productivity:** The completion of an apprenticeship program results in highly-trained professionals who noticeably contribute to your bottom line and ensures a higher level of quality production and productivity. Their knowledge, skills and hands-on experience enable them to develop a thorough understanding of your business needs and how best to meet them.
- **Apprenticeship helps you provide career opportunities:** The apprenticeship program is a way to train qualified individuals by providing career opportunities and trained people in your industry. This means you will have trained employees when you need them. Apprenticeship will provide a pipeline of skilled employees for your industry's future growth needs.
- **Apprenticeship helps you plan for the future:** North Carolina will be experiencing a significant labor shortage as the number of people turning age

65, fueled by the aging of the baby boomer generation, surpasses the number of people turning age 18 due to low birth rates. Consequently, the number of workers entering the labor force will not be sufficient to replace those ending their working careers.

Implementing an apprenticeship program in your business will assist you to be better able to plan and meet your future workforce needs, ensuring that you have a pool of experienced employees of different ages within your company.

- **Recruit veterans for your organization:** Veteran's returning from duty already have many skills that you may require in your organization. These men and women bring maturity, experience and prior training to the job. Eligible veterans are able to use their GI Bill benefits while participating in a registered apprenticeship program. The NCDOL Apprenticeship and Training Bureau is the state-approving agency for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and provides a communication link for veterans seeking employment and companies seeking workers. Click on the following link for additional information: [http://www.nclabor.com/appren/veterans/veteran\\_info.htm](http://www.nclabor.com/appren/veterans/veteran_info.htm).

## Tips to a Successful Apprenticeship

Here are some tips to consider when implementing your apprenticeship program:

- Employers with a solid record of retention conduct a thorough assessment of candidates to ensure that apprentices will adapt successfully to their company and remain with the business.
- Take your time when evaluating potential apprentices and make good selections.
- Explain the nature of your business, how it works and how the apprentice fits into the bigger picture. Apprentices are motivated when they feel they are an important part of a growing progressive company and are treated with respect.
- Clearly identify your training objectives. Review the apprentice contract with them to develop a basic understanding of your expectations and skill requirements.
- Communicate regularly with the skilled workers and apprentices to ensure an appropriate level of supervision is taking place. As the apprentices progress, they will develop more confidence and will require less supervision.
- Conduct regular performance reviews and adjust your apprentices' level of responsibility accordingly. Offer new challenges and vary the job routine. This will ensure that apprentices stay interested in their work and will also increase the overall skill base of the company.
- Remind your supervisors to be supportive of and involved in the related instruction component of the program.
- Educate your staff on the value of training and the importance of having apprentices on the jobsite. Fostering a positive working environment where apprentices feel appreciated by the company and their peers will increase employee retention, thereby reducing future hiring and training costs.
- Demonstrate your commitment to training by visibly displaying training certificates and providing recognition for excellent employees.

## Valuable Tips for Effective Mentoring Techniques

### A Guide for Journey Workers and Frontline Supervisors/Mentors

Getting the job done right requires workers to use their head as well as their hands. But if your apprentices are not receiving quality on-the-job training, they won't become the skilled employees you need. Effectively applied training techniques help make apprentices become more proficient and self-reliant. Here are a few mentoring skills that will make a difference when you train apprentices:

**Time Management.** Time management means more than establishing priorities and delegating specific tasks. Time management should be a primary concern for the mentor. It is an important part of the apprentice's training to realize that there is always a dynamic tension between accomplishing all job requirements in a timely manner while maintaining a standard of quality workmanship. Good time management skills include:

- ❖ Ability to clarify priorities
- ❖ Ability to eliminate time wasters
- ❖ Ability to structure the day
- ❖ Ability to overcome procrastination
- ❖ Ability to control the details
- ❖ Ability to focus on results

**Understand the Role of the Apprentice.** The mentor must understand the role of the apprentice. Apprentices are learners. The supervisor must:

- ❖ Recognize the skill level of the apprentice
- ❖ Recognize the learning style of the apprentice
- ❖ Establish skill level advancement, so the apprentice knows how to reach the next step
- ❖ Explain the trade/occupational language, including tools and processes

**The Supervisor Serves as a Mentor.** Mentoring is a partnership based on mutual respect with both parties contributing to the discussion as the mentor and apprentice work together. The mentor will have more experience, insight or knowledge, but the relationship is one of sharing and teaching. The mentor's role includes:

- ❖ Explaining the expectations of the employer.
- ❖ Explaining the expectations of co-workers.
- ❖ Explaining what the apprentice can expect from the employer.
- ❖ Listening to the concerns of the apprentice.
- ❖ Explaining the working relationship between the trades.
- ❖ Making the apprentice aware of all safety aspects of the job.
- ❖ Actively participating in the apprentice's on-the-job learning.

Apprentices learn by doing. Apprenticeship training is 10 percent classroom instruction and 90 percent on-the-job learning. Good apprenticeship training takes planning and requires that a supervisor/mentor be responsible for that planning. The apprenticeship mentor must be diligent about planning work activities for the apprentice so that the apprentice is able to obtain the well-rounded skills he or she expected to receive when signing the apprentice training agreement.

The result will be better on-the-job training, more proficient employees, happier customers and a healthier bottom line.

To learn more about NCDOL's Transition to Trainer Workshop, call (919) 733-0327 or visit <http://www.nclabor.com/appren/appindex.htm>.

## Getting Started

### How to Implement an Apprenticeship Program in Your Company

Making the apprenticeship program a part of your company's training strategy is a lot easier than you may think. Here is a step-by-step guide to help you make apprenticeship support the success of your business.

**Assess the Needs of Your Business.** To begin, clearly define your company's training needs and what role an apprentice could play within your business. If appropriate, implement an internal apprenticeship advisory group made up of management, supervisors and skilled workers. It is also important to identify a journey worker who is capable and who is committed to training new workers to meet your standards and business requirements.

**Identify Skill Needs.** Determine what knowledge and skills are needed for the occupation to be included in the program. The NCDOL Apprenticeship and Training Bureau has consultants and licensed job profilers who can assist you in this task.

**Contact Your Local Apprenticeship Consultant.** An NCDOL apprenticeship consultant will make an on-site visit and work with you to develop your training plan in accordance with apprenticeship standards.

**Develop Minimum Standards.** Standards for the program need to be developed. Minimum standards include:

- A schedule of work processes in which an apprentice is to receive training and experience on the job.
- Related instruction designed to provide the apprentice with knowledge in technical subjects related to the occupation/trade for a minimum of 144 hours per every 2,000 hours of on-the-job learning.
- A progressively increasing schedule of wages.
- Selection of apprentices based on qualifications.
- Equal opportunity to apply for an apprenticeship.
- Proper supervision of on-the-job training with adequate facilities to train apprentices.
- Periodic evaluation of the apprentice's progress, both on the job and in related instruction.
- The maintenance of records.
- Recognition for successful completions.

## Basic Provisions

Following is a guide to the provisions that should be part of any apprenticeship program:

### Occupations:

Determine what occupations or types of jobs will be covered by the program. Contact your apprenticeship consultant for more information.

### Work processes:

List the major on-the-job training processes for each occupation separately. Traditional occupations have core recommended work processes. Competency checklists and/or task lists can be developed to enhance the on-the-job learning portion of your training program. Contact your apprenticeship consultant for more information.

### Allocation of Work Training Time:

Determine the number of hours for each work process. This is the time an apprentice is expected to work on the process to become proficient. You may also have a “competency-based” program that allows apprentices to complete the training when they are proficient in all the requirements of the occupation. Many companies use a hybrid approach that includes a blend of both time-based and competency-based programs, giving the apprentice and employer more flexibility to complete the training.

### Term of Apprenticeship:

In most traditionally apprenticeable occupations, the term of apprenticeship has been established. The term of apprenticeship ranges from 2,000 hours (one year) to 10,000 hours (five years), depending on the occupation. There are more than 1,000 nationally approved apprenticeable occupations. A list of these occupations can be found at:

[http://www.nclabor.com/appren/trades/apprenticeable\\_occupations\\_900.pdf](http://www.nclabor.com/appren/trades/apprenticeable_occupations_900.pdf)

New occupations continue to be developed as technology changes to meet industry demands.

### Apprentice Qualifications:

What qualifications will applicants need to enter your program? These should be clear, objective and consistent with company policy.

### Related Classroom Instruction:

Each apprentice must attend related instruction—a minimum 144 hours for every 2,000 hours of on-the-job learning. The related instruction is developed to meet the requirements of the skills required in the occupation.

### Number of Apprentices:

The number of apprentices to be trained is usually determined by a ratio of apprentices to skilled workers.

## **Apprentice Wages:**

There must be a progressive schedule for wage increases during the term of the apprenticeship. The wage scale is determined by the company. Your apprenticeship consultant can assist you.

## **Supervision of Apprentices:**

Apprentices are customarily under the immediate supervision of an assigned skilled employee/mentor.

## **Apprentice Agreement:**

A fundamental part of the state's apprenticeship program is the agreement between the employer and apprentice. This agreement must be approved by the Apprenticeship and Training Bureau.

## **Hire an Apprentice:**

When you are ready to start training a new apprentice, remember to look to promote from within. This will assist in building loyalty at your company and will provide you with an opportunity to "grow your own" skilled workers.

## **Monitor Your Apprentices' Progress:**

Systematically track your apprentices' on-the-job training hours and make sure they are developing the skills they need to meet the trade-specific work processes and training standards.

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Apprenticeship and Training Bureau**

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