

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.

Apprenticeship Advantage

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.