

University of Cincinnati – Cincinnati, OH

Award Amount: \$11,893,184

Project Name: “NEXT” Apprenticeship Program

Projected Apprentices to Be Served: 10, 476

Industry Focus: Information Technology

Private Sector Partners include a business consortium consisting of Curvature, Northrop Grumman, Kinetic Vision, Pepulab, GE Aviation, IBM, and Lubrizol.

Type(s) of Apprenticeship Program Proposed: Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP)

The NEXT project seeks to build robust pathways enabling unemployed and underemployed underrepresented minority populations (URMs), as well as women, veterans, ex-offenders, nontraditional learners and others underrepresented in the IT field, to secure middle- and high-skilled jobs in the high-paying IT sector. The project incorporates flexible educational and experiential (i.e., work-integrated) opportunities tailored to a wide variety of individuals, and incorporates 22 nationally portable, industry-recognized credentials from Cisco, CompTIA, and the IBM Skills Academy.

The project is leveraging the University of Cincinnati’s (UC) experience leading the Cooperative Education Model, which UC founded in 1906, to take the NEXT apprenticeship model to a national scale. Strategies include incorporating multiple education pathways with experiential learning components, expanding regional campus programs to provide industry certifications, and redefining the co-op model to fit the new, competency-based apprenticeship models. For instance, the project is convening industry and education partners at UC’s Remote Work and Employer Learning Center to create new virtual, contract-based, part- and full-time apprenticeships in an experimental setting. Alongside the well-established co-op model, the project is building a framework based on European Union models of skills development, as well as occupation-based training models, boot camps, and workshops in such fields as Cognitive & Artificial Intelligence, Block Chain, and Quantum Computing.

The NEXT project selected 10 MSAs around the country in which to scale the project, based on the concentration of IT jobs in the region and a determination of the areas where entry-level wages afford individuals the greatest purchasing power. The project intends to expand rapidly by leveraging its partner relationships, offering academic programs via distance learning, and using the scalable, articulation-agreement model to expand the program to community colleges in the target MSAs across the United States.

The IHE consortium consists of University of Cincinnati (lead), Johnson C. Smith University, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Xavier University, Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, and Northern Kentucky University.