



INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM (IRAP) GENERAL FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND

The 2017 Executive Order (EO), “Expanding Apprenticeships in America,” contained several sections to help modernize America’s education systems and workforce development programs. Section 4 of the EO, titled “Establishing Industry-Recognized Apprenticeships,” directed the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to consider proposing regulations that promote the development of apprenticeship programs by third parties. Section 8 of the EO called for the establishment of a Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion to identify strategies and proposals to promote apprenticeships, especially in sectors where apprenticeship programs are insufficient. In May 2018, the Task Force on Apprenticeship Expansion submitted a set of recommendations noting that the establishment of Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAPs) could provide industry organizations and employers more tools to create high-quality apprenticeship programs and opportunities. To address America’s skills gap and to rapidly increase the availability of high-quality apprenticeship programs in sectors where apprenticeship opportunities are not widespread, DOL has issued a Final Rule that establishes a system for advancing the development of high-quality IRAPs.

WHAT IS AN IRAP?

IRAPs are high-quality apprenticeship programs that provide individuals with opportunities to obtain workplace-relevant knowledge and progressively advancing skills. IRAPs include a paid-work component and an educational component and result in an industry-recognized credential. An IRAP is developed or delivered by entities such as trade and industry groups, corporations, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, unions, and joint labor-management organizations. The final rule establishes a process for the DOL’s Office of Apprenticeship Administrator to recognize qualified third-party entities, known as Standards Recognition Entities (SREs), which will, in turn, evaluate and recognize IRAPs consistent with the Department’s standards.

HIGH-QUALITY IRAP REQUIREMENTS

High-quality IRAPs include the following 10 requirements:

1. **Paid Work.** IRAPs ensure apprentices are paid at least the applicable Federal, State, or local minimum wage. The program must provide a written notice to apprentices of what wages apprentices will receive and under what circumstances apprentices' wages will increase.
2. **Written Training Plan.** The program has a written training plan, consistent with its SRE's requirements and standards. The written training plan, which must be provided to an apprentice prior to beginning an IRAP, must detail the program's structured work experiences and appropriate related instruction, must be designed so that apprentices demonstrate competency and earn credential(s), and provide apprentices progressively advancing industry-essential skills.
3. **Written Apprenticeship Agreement.** IRAPs maintain a written apprenticeship agreement for each apprentice that outlines the terms and conditions of the apprentice's employment and training. The apprenticeship agreement must be consistent with its SRE's requirements.
4. **Specialized Knowledge and Experience.** IRAPs must train apprentices for employment in jobs that require specialized knowledge and experience and involve the performance of complex tasks.
5. **Safety.** IRAPs must provide a working environment for apprentices that adheres to all applicable Federal, State, and local safety laws and regulations and complies with any additional safety requirements of its SRE.
6. **Equal Employment Opportunity.** IRAPs must affirm their adherence to all applicable Federal, State, and local laws pertaining to EEO.
7. **Credit for Prior Knowledge.** IRAPs must provide credit for prior knowledge and experience to apprentices relevant to the instruction of the program.



8. **Mentorship.** IRAPs provide apprentices structured mentorship opportunities throughout the duration of the apprenticeship that involve ongoing, focused supervision and training by experienced instructors and employees, to ensure apprentices have additional guidance on the progress of their training and their employability.
9. **Industry-Recognized Credentials.** IRAPs provide apprentices industry-recognized credential(s) during participation in or upon completion of the program.
10. **Disclosure of Costs and Fees.** IRAPs must disclose to apprentices, before they agree to participate in the program, any costs or expenses that will be charged to them (such as costs related to tools or educational materials).

WHY IRAPS?

To help close the growing skills gap, our nation needs to expand the apprenticeship model to help Americans obtain relevant skills and high-paying jobs. IRAPs offer benefits for today's business leaders and career seekers.

For Business Leaders, IRAPs:

- Provide an additional pathway to assist career seekers and job creators;
- Serve the needs of business by expanding apprenticeships across more industries;
- Use innovative, industry-driven approaches to scale a proven workforce education model;
- Allow more flexibility to design apprenticeship programs that meet business needs;
- Supply an immediate pool of workers for today and skilled talent for tomorrow;
- Create potential to access tools and products to help businesses develop and launch programs quickly; and,
- Are approved by organizations that have received recognition from USDOL.

For Career Seekers, IRAPs:

- Offer opportunities to earn and learn, while obtaining valuable, portable, industry-recognized, competency-based credentials;
- Provide training in standards that are developed by the industry, ensuring an apprentice develops the skillset needed for career success;
- Increase the opportunities for apprenticeship programs across all sectors in the economy; and,
- Provide an alternative to college for finding career success that allows workers to obtain high paying jobs without going into debt.

HOW TO LEARN MORE ABOUT IRAPS

DOL's application portal launched on May 11, 2020 for organizations interested in serving as SREs. Entities may consult with and receive technical assistance from DOL about how to prepare their applications.



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT IRAPS AND SRES

- Visit www.apprenticeship.gov to review the IRAP Final Rule and resources to become familiar with IRAPs and the roles and responsibilities of SREs.
- Sign up for our [Apprenticeship Newsletter](#) to receive the latest apprenticeship related news from the USDOL.