

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION ADVISORY SYSTEM U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR Washington, D.C. 20210	CLASSIFICATION Registered Apprenticeship
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ADVISORY: OFFICE OF APPRENTICESHIP CIRCULAR NO. 2026-03

TO: NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM STAKEHOLDERS
OFFICE OF APPRENTICESHIP STAFF
STATE APPRENTICESHIP AGENCIES
STATE CTE DIRECTORS
STATE EDUCATION AGENCY HEADS
STATE WORKFORCE AGENCY HEADS

FROM: MEGAN BAIRD
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SUBJECT: Registered Apprenticeship Program Completion Rates

1. **Purpose.** To inform Office of Apprenticeship (OA) staff, State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAAs), Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors, and other Registered Apprenticeship stakeholders of OA’s policies for calculating completion rates to evaluate program performance and to announce new efforts to improve transparency regarding Registered Apprenticeship completion rates.
2. **Action Requested.** OA and SAA staff should review and adhere to this guidance when conducting reviews of Registered Apprenticeship programs. Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors and other Registered Apprenticeship stakeholders should review and become familiar with this guidance to understand how Registration Agencies will use completion rates in evaluating program performance.
3. **Background.** The regulation at Title 29 of the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) at part 29 (part 29) directs Registration Agencies to evaluate the performance of Registered Apprenticeship programs, including program completion rates. In February 2015, OA published Bulletin 2015-10, “Program Performance–Calculation of Registered Apprenticeship Program Completion Rates,” to remind OA and SAA staff, Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors, and other Registered Apprenticeship stakeholders of the process for calculating completion rates for Registered Apprenticeship programs required under part 29.

OA is replacing Bulletin 2015-10 with this Circular, as Circulars—not Bulletins—are the vehicle by which OA announces policy guidance (such as the procedures for calculating completion rates). This

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Circular further clarifies the methodology for calculating completion rates contained in Bulletin 2015-10, and how Registration Agencies assess completion rates in program evaluations.

4. **Guidance.**

a. **Completion Rates.**

29 CFR 29.6(b)(1)(iii) establishes completion rates as one of the factors that must be used by Registration Agencies to evaluate the performance of Registered Apprenticeship programs. 29 CFR 29.2 defines completion rate as “the percentage of an apprenticeship cohort who receive a certificate of apprenticeship completion within one year of the projected completion date. An apprenticeship cohort is the group of individual apprentices registered to a specific program during a one year time frame, except that a cohort does not include the apprentices whose apprenticeship agreement has been cancelled during the probationary period.”

As specified in 29 CFR 29.6(c), the Registration Agency must review a program’s completion rates in comparison to the national average for completion rates and provide technical assistance to programs with completion rates lower than the national average. The primary purpose of identifying programs with a completion rate below the national average is for the Registration Agency to provide technical assistance and help the sponsor improve the quality of the program. Per 29 CFR 29.8(b)(1)(ii), completion rates are only to be considered a persistent and significant failure to perform—warranting deregistration proceedings—if the sponsor “demonstrates an ongoing pattern of very low completion rates over a period of several years”

To calculate a program’s completion rate, the Registration Agency should take the following steps:

1. **Establish the Cohort.** An apprenticeship cohort is the group of individual apprentices registered to a specific program during a one year time frame, aggregated on a fiscal year (FY) basis. The cohort does not include apprentices whose apprenticeship agreement has been cancelled during the probationary period.
2. **Calculate the Time Period.** Take the expected completion date (ECD) from the apprenticeship agreement at the time of registration and add one full year, for each apprentice in the cohort.
3. **Formulate the Numerator.** Apprentices who have completed their apprenticeship program by that date (ECD plus one year) are counted in the numerator.
4. **Formulate the Denominator.** The total number of registered apprentices with the same ECD plus one year minus the total number of registered apprentices in the cohort who exited the program during the probationary period is the denominator.
5. **Calculate the Completion Rate.** Calculate the completion rate for that cohort of apprentices by dividing the numerator by the denominator.

In summation, the completion rate formula is $x / (y-z)$, where:

- x = total number of apprentices in the cohort who completed their program requirements on or before one full year after the program’s ECD.
- y = total number of registered apprentices in the cohort with an ECD for a set period of time (e.g., FY 2024) plus one full year.
- z = total number of apprentices in the cohort who exited the program, for whatever reason, during the probationary period.

For example, an apprentice in a four-year carpenter program is included in the numerator of the completion rate calculation if the apprentice completes the program within five years. If an apprentice enrolled in this program on January 20th of 2020, then their ECD was January 20th of 2024 and their ECD plus one year was January 20th of 2025. If the apprentice completed the program by January 20th of 2025, the apprentice would be included in both the numerator and denominator of the completion rate formula for FY 2024. If that apprentice did not complete the apprenticeship program by January 20th of 2025 and did not exit the program during the probationary period, the apprentice would be included only in the denominator of the completion rate formula for FY 2024.

To support the implementation of this requirement under part 29, OA is releasing the national average completion rate publicly available on [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov) through a new completion rate data portal. This data portal also allows users to search average completion rates by State and industry.

This data portal also includes average cancellation rates—which are the percentage of an apprenticeship cohort that did not complete the program, for whatever reason, and exited after the probationary period—nationally and by State and industry.

OA encourages staff, SAAs, and other Registered Apprenticeship stakeholders to review this data and develop insights and strategies to help improve completion rates. Potential strategies could include providing early interventions for apprentices that are identified as being at risk of leaving the program and improving coordination with the public workforce system—such as by coordinating with and utilizing available resources from State and local workforce boards to support apprentices through program completion.

Time Lag in Publishing Completion Rate Data

As noted above, completion rate is defined by § 29.2 as “the percentage of an apprenticeship cohort who receive a certificate of apprenticeship completion within one year of the projected completion date.” Accordingly, **OA adds one full calendar year to the expected date of “normal” completion** to align with this regulatory definition and accommodate factors outside the direct control of program management, and that completion timelines may differ across training approaches. **To accommodate this time lag, the calculation of the completion and cancellation rates for a given FY are not released until the following year.** For example, the data released at the end of FY 2025 reflect the completion rates for FY 2024, which are calculated based on the number of expected completers in FY 2024. This one-year lag in the publication of FY 2024 completion rates is to allow an additional year for program participants to complete beyond their ECD.

5. Inquiries.

If you have any questions concerning the content of this Circular, please contact the Office of Apprenticeship at OA.Policy@dol.gov.

6. References.

- National Apprenticeship Act, 29 U.S.C. 50
- 29 CFR parts 29