

Guiding Questions Before Starting an Apprenticeship Program

We suggest that any company or initiative consider the following guiding questions when developing an apprenticeship program, informed by CSET's report *Biotech Manufacturing Apprenticeships: A Case Study in Workforce Innovation*. Guiding questions are grouped into the three general phases of the development cycle: program exploration, design, and implementation.

1. Program Exploration: Evaluate whether apprenticeships are a good fit for workforce needs in your region, industry, and circumstance.

Assess the current state of the workforce:

- What are the current workforce gaps in terms of roles and numbers?
- What roles are hardest to fill, and what specific skills are most in demand?
- What are the future workforce projections based on industry growth trends?
- Are current talent recruitment pipelines expected to meet demand? If not, what is the projected shortfall?

Assess whether apprenticeships meet the identified workforce needs:

- Do the target roles require a 4-year degree?
- Can the target roles accommodate a hands-on learning approach alongside classroom instruction?
- Are there suitable training providers in the region, and do they have the capacity to host an apprenticeship program?
- Are resources available (from diverse sources) for the upfront investment and continued support needed to sustain an apprenticeship program?
- Does the industry already have occupations registered with the Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship? Are those registered occupations suitable for the in-demand roles?
- If not, do targeted occupations have existing, industry-recognized credentials?

Assess pre-existing resources and build partnerships:

- What existing training programs or certifications could serve as a foundation for apprenticeships?
- What are the state, local, industry, and nonprofit entities that could contribute to the program?
- Do relationships already exist with relevant partners?
- Are there existing outreach programs, community organizations, or other efforts that reach the group you're targeting?
- What is the value to the community, the employers, and the workforce at-large? How can we best convey that value to stakeholders?
- Are there funding sources that could offset program costs and improve sustainability?

2. Program Design: Decide what your apprenticeship program should look like.

Choose an apprenticeship program model and organizational structure:

- What type of apprenticeship model best suits the organization's needs?
- Are there enough local employers with similar workforce needs to sustain a consortium? If so, how standardized are the roles that they would be filling?
- Does your company have the resources to develop and register an apprenticeship program from scratch?
- Are there apprenticeship intermediaries with experience in the target industry?

Integrate industry needs and feedback:

- How will the program ensure that classroom and on-the-job training align with industry standards?
- What mechanisms will be in place to incorporate employer feedback into the curriculum?

Decide whether to include a pre-apprenticeship:

- Is there a need for a pre-apprenticeship program to prepare candidates?
- Does an adequate training program already exist?
- What would it cost to create a training program?
- What does an individual need to know before starting an apprenticeship? Is there a "baseline" of skills or knowledge that would apply to multiple companies within the industry?

3. Program Implementation: Administer and support the program.

Coordinate company operations:

- Who within the company (or companies) needs to be involved? What level of authority, subject matter expertise, and seniority should they have?
- Who is best suited to plan and oversee the conceptualization phase, implementation phase, and day-to-day apprenticeship management phase?
- Are they the same, or will different individuals or parts of the company need to be involved at different stages?
- Are there existing employees available and willing to mentor incoming apprentices?

Conduct extensive recruitment and outreach:

- Who is the program designed to recruit, and where are these individuals now?
- How will potential apprentices hear about the program?
- How can the value of an apprenticeship be marketed to potential participants?