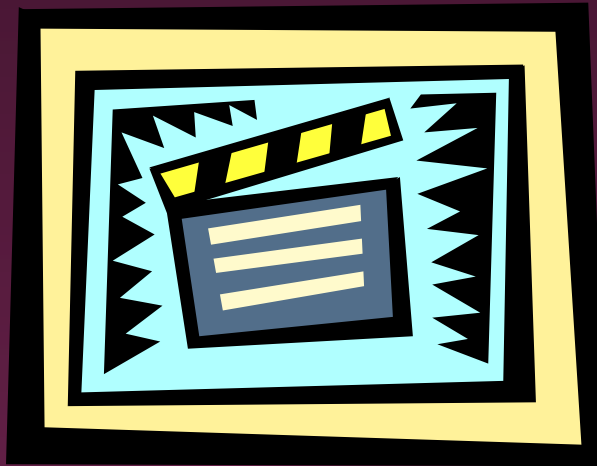


# Action Planning Guide



## Ten Steps to Success



<http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/youthapprenticeship/>

# Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship

## *Action Planning Guide for Local Communities*

### **Introduction**

Wisconsin was one of the first states in the country to pass legislation in 1991 creating a statewide Youth Apprenticeship system for high school students. The program was created as part of a broader school-to-work transition initiative which also included tech prep, post-secondary enrollment options and a statewide student assessment system. In 1993 a system of community career centers was added. All of these programs are designed to help students cross the bridge between high school and productive careers. In 1994 Congress passed into law the nationwide School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA). Wisconsin has incorporated the completed federal design requirements into its program and will continue to make adjustments as future requirements are finalized.

The Youth Apprenticeship Program (YA), administered by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD ), combines classroom instruction with work based learning to provide students with solid academic skills and competencies in a chosen occupational cluster. The program extends the walls of the classroom to the business or industry willing to train the young person for a career in a particular field. Students who complete the program will be prepared to pursue their chosen career and enter the workforce directly after high school, continue on to a technical college, apply for a registered apprenticeship (in a related area if available), or enroll in a four year university.

### **The Purpose of This Guide**

The Department of Workforce Development receives many requests from local communities for information about starting a Youth Apprenticeship program. This guide provides a brief outline of the steps involved in starting a state approved Youth Apprenticeship program. "Youth Apprenticeship" has a specific legal meaning in Wisconsin and refers to the program authorized by the state legislature and administered by the Department of Workforce Development (DWD). Only students enrolled in a DWD approved Youth Apprenticeship program will receive a state Certificate of Occupational Proficiency.)

Information about the basic design of the Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Program and the operating requirements for local programs is provided in the "Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Program: Concept Paper" and "Program Operations Manual for Local Youth Apprenticeship Programs." These documents are available upon request from the Department of Workforce Development by calling (608) 267-7944.

# How Do We Start a Youth Apprenticeship Program?

"Where do we begin?" is the first question most people ask when they decide to develop a Youth Apprenticeship program in their community. This Guide identifies ten essential steps in the planning process and provides you with a brief description of each step and some factors to consider.

However, before you ask others in the community to join your agency in developing a Youth Apprenticeship program, it is important that you understand the philosophy, the design, and the program requirements for the Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Program. You will be asked, often, to explain it to others. It is also important to remember that Wisconsin's program is still evolving, although has achieved national recognition as an exemplary program. Many issues have been resolved, but there are others we are still working through.

Contact the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) at (608) 267-7944 for information and materials about the program. YA staff will be happy to talk with you about the program and answer any questions you may have.

A list of the local Youth Apprenticeship program coordinators has been included in this packet. Most areas of the state are actively involved in Youth Apprenticeship and/or other quality work-based learning programs, therefore most communities have a coordinator already identified. By using the coordinators list you can check to see if your area has an active coordinator and should get acquainted with them over the phone, or through a personal visit. These people will be a valuable resource for you. Let other agencies in the community know what you are doing and recruit those you think will be helpful in advancing your goals. All of these people will serve as resources for information, assistance and as your cheerleaders when you need encouragement.

Change does not come easily and may be resisted by some people. Be prepared and rely on your colleagues and state staff to help you push forward when things are moving slowly or you don't understand why everyone isn't embracing this new idea!

## **STEP ONE Assess the Local Climate.**

Local planners need to assess the local climate to determine how receptive the community will be to a Youth Apprenticeship program. "Community" may include one city or a school district or a multiple city/school district consortium which is working to establish a Youth Apprenticeship program. The following questions may be helpful in assessing your community's receptiveness:

### **Are local educational institutions strengthening school-to-work transition programs?**

Most schools and communities in Wisconsin have developed strategic plans which include school-to-work transition programs and initiatives in their communities. Local schools will be more receptive to the Youth Apprenticeship concept if it is one part of a broader vision to prepare students for careers and further education.

**Are there students and parents likely to be interested in a work-based learning approach that leads primarily to jobs and/or technical college?**

A large number of graduating students entering four year universities may reflect the high value parents place on a college education for their children. A significant number of students entering technical college or the labor force may indicate a willingness by parents and students to pursue careers which do not require a college degree. Youth Apprenticeship can be successfully operated in both environments, but marketing strategies to recruit students need to address the difference in values and expectations for students. Curricula and related courses will require more development in schools which are heavily oriented toward "college prep" and have not yet invested resources in tech prep or other applied academics.

**Are local employers likely to be interested in supporting Youth Apprenticeship?**

Most businesses are interested in hiring qualified entry level workers. To determine whether Youth Apprenticeship would help your local businesses, ask them the following questions: Do they have problems recruiting qualified workers for key jobs? Do they experience high and costly employee turnover? Have they adopted new technology or work processes that require higher levels of reading, writing, and math skills than in the past? Do they hire workers with less than a four-year college degree?

The Job Center of Wisconsin <https://jobcenterofwisconsin.com/> or the local Chamber of Commerce may be able to provide you with this information. If the answer is yes to any of these questions, it is possible that Youth Apprenticeship will address the needs of your local businesses for more prepared entry level workers.

**Are there multiple businesses in the community in the occupations approved for Youth Apprenticeship?**

A Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship program can be operated only in occupations which have been approved and developed by DWD. Statewide curriculum guides will be developed for each occupation and must be used by all programs.

A Youth Apprenticeship program will be viable in communities which have sufficient numbers of businesses to provide enough jobs for youth apprentices and which can instruct students in the range of competencies required in the curriculum guide. While some large companies may be able to hire several youth apprentices, most small businesses may hire only one student. Since it is unlikely that every company in a community will be able to offer instruction in the full range of competencies, a local program may need to include a mix of businesses among which students can be rotated over the course of the program to learn the competencies.

**STEP TWO Organize a steering committee of key partners.**

Youth Apprenticeship will require a long-term commitment from employers, schools, students, and others. Local leaders with patience, persistence and vision will be needed to move the project through the various stages of development and implementation. Identify the "champions" in your community - key leaders in the local schools, the technical college, and the business community - who have the leadership, energy, and perseverance to get things done, and the vision to imagine how the Youth Apprenticeship program can benefit the community. Invite these people to be part of a small steering committee to help explore, develop, and promote the idea of Youth Apprenticeship.

## **STEP THREE Select the occupational areas for the program.**

### **Factors to consider when selecting occupational areas include:**

- Are there enough businesses willing to hire youth apprentices to make the program cost effective for the schools in terms of class size?
- A minimum class size of 10-12 students is usually the most cost effective. Programs can be operated with fewer students, but the instructional costs may be too high for local schools.
- Can businesses provide the full range of instruction required in the state curriculum?
- Some businesses specialize in particular areas and cannot provide the full range of instruction to a student at their site. You may need several businesses which specialize in different areas to agree to rotate students as they progress through the curriculum.
- Is there a local business leader who is willing to champion this program and draw in other employers?

Your best partner for recruiting local businesses to participate in the program is a local business leader who is enthusiastic about and supportive of the program. Another good partner is a representative of the statewide association for the industry. Ask state staff about industry association representatives who may be helpful.

It is advisable to select only one or two areas for the first year of the program so that the steering committee's time can be devoted to building a successful program before expanding into other areas.

## **STEP FOUR Hold a community information meeting.**

Organize an informational meeting for interested businesses and schools to inform them of your plans and gain their support. You may want to invite all secondary schools and technical colleges and local businesses in the area. Or you may want to target certain schools and employers within a given area. Or you may want to target certain types of businesses within the occupation your steering committee has selected (e.g. printers, hospitals, financial institutions, etc.). This meeting can be a simple informational meeting or it can be billed as your Youth Apprenticeship "kick-off" meeting with greater fanfare.

## **STEP FIVE Recruit employers to provide jobs for youth apprentices.**

Before proceeding any further, it is important to know if you have the support of your business community. Develop a plan for informing local employers about the program and encourage them to hire youth apprentices. A brochure or fact sheet specifically designed for employers may be helpful. It should describe the employer's responsibilities as well as benefits to employers for participating in the program.

Employers can be reached using several methods; indirectly through local media, individually through phone calls or personal visits, and/or as a group through an informational meeting. All three methods should be employed in a comprehensive strategy. Using local business leaders to recruit other businesses is a very effective method to solicit business participation.

Determine who is responsible for contacting employers and who will develop informational material to distribute to local businesses.

# How Do We Design A Program?

## **STEP SIX Design a program for the local community.**

This will be the most time-consuming and one of the most important steps in the process. There are many things to consider when designing a local program. The state guidelines provide an overall framework and some specific requirements for operating the program. **The actual operating design of the program will be determined by the local steering committee.** This includes determining the administrative structure for the program, identifying a local coordinator, determining the learning delivery system, and investigating potential funding sources.

You will need to expand the steering committee to include other businesses and appropriate school/community partners. This becomes your formal steering committee, or consortium. It should include all key partners. Representatives from local high schools, from the technical college, employers, labor union, and private industry council member or staff must be part of the steering committee. You may also want to include parents, local Chamber of Commerce staff, School-to-Work Consortium representatives, and other community leaders on your steering committee.

As the program expands, you will need to consider a long range organizational structure. For example, as your program expands to include several different occupations, you may want the consortium to oversee all programs with several subcommittees focusing on specific occupations (e.g. printing employers, finance employers, auto tech employers, etc.).

### **The steering committee will:**

#### **Determine the program administrative structure**

This requires decisions about whether the program needs a separate full or part-time administrator; where the program administration will be located (e.g. at a high school, technical college, business firm, or other location); necessary support staff; how administrative staff will be paid; and the responsibilities of the program coordinator.

#### **Designate a local coordinator**

One of the keys to success in implementing a Youth Apprenticeship program is the effectiveness of the local coordinator. This is the person who provides the "glue" to hold everything together. This is the person who facilitates the partnership between business and education, education and parents and students, and students and business. This position is the "broker" for bringing all parties together. Select this person carefully! A position may already exist in the community which is a logical selection (School to Work Transition Coordinator, Chamber of Commerce Education Director, WIA Youth Coordinator, Tech Prep Coordinator, etc.) or a new position may have to be created. The Coordinator is responsible for serving as a liaison between schools and industry, convening meetings, coordinating workshops, identifying specialists, collecting and distributing information on work-based learning and Youth Apprenticeship, monitoring and evaluating the program.

#### **Design the local program structure and the learning delivery system.**

Designing the program and the learning delivery system involves planning for school based issues (where instruction will take place, who will provide it, school credits to be awarded, etc.), work based learning issues (how mentors will be selected and trained, work hours for the students, etc.), and partnership issues (communication between school and work, articulation agreements, etc.).

## **STEP SEVEN Secure approval for the program from DWD.**

In order for students to receive the state certificate, your program must be approved by the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) via the Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Local Program Application RFP. The Application includes submittal dates and approval criteria. Applications may be submitted at any time up to the dates listed in the Local Application document. Contact the Department of Workforce Development if there are questions regarding the application process.

# How Do We Implement a Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Program?

## **STEP EIGHT Recruit and select students for the program.**

### **Recruiting and Marketing**

In order to recruit students for the program, you need to develop strategies to promote the program to both students and parents in the community. A brochure or fact sheet should be developed which clearly explains what the program is, how it works, whom it will benefit, eligibility criteria, what occupations are available for training, and who students or parents should contact for more information.

Long term strategies for recruiting students should be developed which include career information for students in the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades so they are prepared to make career choices. Specific strategies need to be developed to recruit young women and young men into "non-traditional" careers to ensure that Youth Apprenticeship opportunities are accessible to all students. This strategy should be coordinated with local Community Career Centers, Education for Employment programs, Tech Prep programs, and/or other career counseling and school-to-work transition activities in the local schools. All school staff should be informed about the program so they are able to answer questions from students.

A student/parent orientation meeting should be organized to provide information about the program and to answer questions. This meeting can be held at the school or at a business site that will be hiring youth apprentices. A tour of the business to demonstrate the types of jobs available and the work stations for the youth apprentices can be an attractive feature of the meeting.

DWD has developed general marketing materials for the Youth Apprenticeship program that are available for local use. You may want to develop localized materials which are targeted to students, teachers, employers, parents, and counselors. All forms of materials (brochures, newsletters, videos, radio or television commercials, etc.) will be effective in informing the local community about the program.

### **Selecting Students**

The "Program Operations Manual for Local Youth Apprenticeship Programs" identifies basic eligibility criteria for students. Local programs may establish additional criteria as long as it is fair and objective, does not discriminate against students, and has been approved by DWD. All students must undergo employment interviews with the employers for the positions available. Procedures for the interviews need to be established and employers briefed on the process. Interviews must be conducted in the same manner as interviews for other employees and comply with the Wisconsin Fair Labor Standards requirements. Procedures need to be established for assigning students to the workplaces when they successfully complete the interviews. In some programs students are randomly assigned, in others employers indicate their choices of particular students and work out specific assignments with other employers in the program.

## **STEP NINE Train instructors and workplace mentors.**

Training instructors and workplace mentors is critical to the success of the Youth Apprenticeship program. It is important that everyone involved in teaching and/or working with the youth apprentices understands the purpose of the program, the underlying philosophy, the local program design and goals, and their role in the program delivery.

DWD requires that all workplace mentors receive training before students are placed at the worksite.

Training and orientation for mentors should include:

- an explanation and review of the statewide curriculum required for all programs and the role of the mentors and the instructor in teaching the competencies;
- the rights and responsibilities of employers (child labor laws, grievance procedures, discipline policies, safety instruction, wage and benefits, etc.);
- a review of the Education/Training Agreement;
- communication links between school staff, mentors, and parents;
- the role of the instructor and the mentors in evaluating student performance
- strategies for working with high school students in an adult workplace;

Training and orientation for teachers and school staff should include:

- an explanation and review of the statewide curriculum required for all programs and the role of the mentors and the instructor in teaching the curriculum;
- a review of the Education/Training Agreement;
- communication links between school staff, mentors, and parents;
- the role of school staff in recruiting students, providing academic instruction, providing support services (such as counseling); and
- the role of the instructor and the mentors in evaluating student performance.

## **STEP TEN Develop operational procedures for the program.**

After the program design and implementation steps are completed, there are a myriad of details and procedures that you need to establish to ensure successful program operation. Here are some key activities:

### **Provide orientation information for new students and parents.**

Training and orientation for students and parents of students entering the program will ease the fears of students and reassure parents that the program is well organized, that student outcomes are clear, and everyone understands the expectations for the student. Information to be provided includes: student schedules, including work hours; transportation responsibilities to and from the workplace; dress requirements for work; safety requirements and/or equipment, academic requirements; communication links with employers and school staff; student evaluation procedures; wages and benefits for the work based learning; reviewing the Education/Training Agreement; benefits of the program for the students, including expected post-program outcomes such as advanced standing in the technical colleges and meeting admission requirements for universities; grievance procedures in the workplace; and school contacts. Parents and students can sign the Education/Training Agreement at this meeting or the signing can take place at a special meeting with employers.

### **Develop communication links between school staff, employers, and students and parents.**

DWD requires that school staff, mentors, and parents meet at least once every grading period to discuss the youth apprentice's progress and performance in the program. The procedures for these formal meetings should be established and communicated to everyone.

Many local programs have found that a monthly meeting of the mentors is beneficial. It gives them the opportunity to share ideas, solutions to problems, and helps them feel they are part of a community effort to educate students. Many parents of youth apprentices have organized monthly meetings to stay in touch with the program by inviting the mentors, school staff, or local business leaders to attend and share their views and experiences with the program.

### **Establish communication links between the mentors and the program instructor.**

It is very important that the instructor and the mentors work together to deliver the curriculum. They need to determine which competencies will be taught in the classroom and which will be taught at the workplace. They need to be very familiar with the curriculum, the skill standards checklist, and the specific competencies which will be learned. They also need to determine the evaluation process to be used to determine the student's "grade" for the course on the school transcript.

### **Design support systems for students.**

Youth apprentices will enter a different world in this program, one which spans the bridge between being a student and being a responsible worker in an adult world. They need organized support activities to ensure they are able to balance the responsibilities of both school and work. It is important to provide career counseling to both youth apprentices and their parents to discuss post-program options; to help students arrange to participate in extra-curricular activities at school; to provide special activities for the youth apprentices as a group, and any other support services to ensure student success.

## **Develop an assessment system for students.**

The statewide curriculum guide and skill standards checklist will set the standards to be reached by all students in the program in order to earn the Certificate of Occupational Proficiency. It is the local program's responsibility to establish assessment procedures, such as: who is responsible for determining skill mastery of specific competencies; policies to deal with students who do not attain competency levels; termination procedures for students who involuntarily (because of poor performance, attendance, or behavior) or voluntarily (move away, make other career choices, etc.) leave the program; aligning youth apprentice evaluations with academic evaluation.

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## **Words of Caution**

We offer you some final words of caution from our experiences with this program and from discussions with local operating programs:

- An early surge of enthusiasm may cause everyone to jump on the Youth Apprenticeship bandwagon. Because a Youth Apprenticeship program requires considerable time and effort to develop, it is important to begin small and allow ample time for planning. Early efforts which are successful will allow you to expand more easily in the future.
- Youth Apprenticeship is based on a partnership of employers, educators, and other community leaders. The most effective partnerships recognize that each leader, manager, and line staff person needs to feel that he or she personally, or his/her organization, will benefit directly from involvement in this program. Ownership can be developed by early involvement in planning, shared decision-making power, and fulfillment of organizational needs. When there is disagreement, the needs of the student should drive the outcome.
- Resist the urge to fit this new concept into an old box. This is a program which truly requires "institutional change" to be successful. The skill competencies in the Youth Apprenticeship curricula were developed by Wisconsin employers. These industry skill standards must drive the instruction in this program if we are to reach our goal of improving the skills of Wisconsin workers. This concept may require changes in curriculum at the high school level, the technical college level, and industry training programs.

## **Conclusion**

Congratulations! You have joined the pioneers who have the vision, the energy and the determination to shape a new future for Wisconsin's students and business and industry in our state! Building a Youth Apprenticeship program is not an easy task. But as a local consortium member said, "We would do it all over again because of the tremendous benefits for our students." This will be one of the most challenging and most rewarding endeavors you undertake. Your entire community will benefit from your success!

The Youth Apprenticeship Staff at DWD are ready to help. Please call us with your questions or for help with your planning process.

## Youth Apprenticeship Staff

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