



# WI Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Program Guide

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Prepared by the  
Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards  
and the  
WI Apprenticeship Advisory Council  
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STATE OF WISCONSIN  
  
Department of Workforce Development

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# What is a Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Program?

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A pre-apprenticeship program prepares qualified entry-level workers for registered apprenticeship careers while contributing to the development of a skilled workforce.

To ensure that pre-apprenticeships have a common definition and consistent program elements, these certification guidelines were implemented by the WI Apprenticeship Advisory Council.

**A certified pre-apprenticeship** has been determined by the WI Apprenticeship Advisory Council and Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards to be a program or set of strategies that:

- Prepares participants with skills, competencies, and support to enter a registered apprenticeship
- Has a documented partnership with at least one active registered apprenticeship sponsor
- Incorporates the following five required components, explained in the next section:
  1. Partnership with registered apprenticeship sponsor(s)
  2. Sustainability through partnerships
  3. Meaningful hands-on training that does not displace paid employees
  4. Access to career and supportive services
  5. Strategies that increase registered apprenticeship opportunities for underutilized populations facing significant barriers to employment in the registered apprenticeship labor force

As such, certified pre-apprenticeship programs can provide a bridge to career opportunities for students, new workers, and underprepared learners and prepare underutilized populations for high-quality employment opportunities.

WI State Statute Ch. 106 requires a minimum age of 16 years old for an individual to enter a registered apprenticeship contract. Therefore, it is necessary for individuals to be at least 16 years old to participate in a certified pre-apprenticeship program.

**These certification standards are based on the following references:**

- U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration (2024). Training and Employment Notice No. 23-23: *Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Programs*. U.S. Department of Labor. Retrieved from <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/advisories>

# Five Required Components

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To be certified, a pre-apprenticeship program must incorporate the following components.

## **1. Partnership with registered apprenticeship sponsor(s):**

Quality pre-apprenticeship programs should be designed and delivered, with input from at least one registered apprenticeship sponsor. Examples of partnerships include:

- A written plan developed by the pre-apprenticeship program with training goals to teach participants a defined set of skills required and agreed upon by one or more registered apprenticeship sponsors for entry into their programs.
- Identified engagement between one or more registered apprenticeship sponsors and the pre-apprenticeship program, which can include program visits, access to registered apprenticeship mentors, granting of direct entry, etc.
- The granting of advanced standing/credit from one or more registered apprenticeship sponsors for pre-apprenticeship program graduates.

A letter of support from a registered apprenticeship sponsor is required. The sponsor must meet the following criteria:

- Be active in the industry/occupation the pre-apprenticeship program provides training in.
- Be signed by an individual approved to act on behalf of the sponsor of the registered apprenticeship program.

## **2. Sustainability through partnerships:**

To support their ongoing sustainability, quality pre-apprenticeship programs establish partnerships with entities to collaboratively promote the use of registered apprenticeships as a preferred means for employers to develop a skilled workforce and to create career opportunities and pathways for individuals.

Partnerships may include registered apprenticeship sponsors, DOL-funded intermediaries who develop programs or provide training to programs, community and faith-based organizations, advocacy organizations that represent underutilized populations, labor organizations, joint labor-management organizations, educational institutions (including high schools and community colleges), and the public workforce system.

## **3. Meaningful training combined with hands-on experience replicating a workplace that does not displace paid employees.**

Quality pre-apprenticeships provide hands-on training to individuals in a workplace, simulated lab experience, or work-based learning environment, which does not supplant a paid employee, but effectively simulates the industry and occupational conditions and standards of the partnering registered apprenticeships while observing proper supervision and safety protocols. Pre-apprenticeship programs ideally provide opportunities to obtain an industry-recognized credential, as well as potential stipends or wages when funding allows.

#### **4. Access to career and supportive services:**

Quality pre-apprenticeship programs provide or otherwise ensure access to career and supportive services during the program, which may continue after a pre-apprentice enters registered apprenticeships. Services may include both financial and non-financial supports such as stipends, career counseling, career exploration, mentoring, transportation assistance, childcare, dependent care, rehabilitative services, textbooks, tools, emergency grants, and other types of services necessary for an individual to succeed in pre-apprenticeship programs and registered apprenticeships.

Funding for supportive services can often be leveraged from Federal, State, local, and private funding, as well as community organizations that provide social support and/or registered apprenticeship-around services.

#### **5. Strategies that increase registered apprenticeship opportunities for underutilized populations facing significant barriers to employment in the registered apprenticeship labor force:**

A required strategy includes exposing participants to registered apprenticeships and providing direct assistance to participants applying to those programs.

Examples include:

- Thoughtful, dynamic, and documented recruitment strategies focused on outreach to one or more underutilized populations in local, State, and national registered apprenticeships.
- Educational and pre-vocational services as well as design of instruction and training that reach underutilized populations to assist them in overcoming barriers to entering and succeeding in registered apprenticeships. These include career and industry awareness workshops, job readiness courses, English for Speakers of Other Languages, Adult Basic Education, financial literacy seminars, and math tutoring.

*Successful completion of a certified pre-apprenticeship does not guarantee placement in any registered apprenticeship. Graduates must still meet all program requirements and follow application procedures.*

# Review and Reporting Requirements

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**Certified pre-apprenticeships must regularly report participant data and be reviewed by the Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards.**

**Certified programs will be reviewed by the Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards according to the following timeframes:**

1. Within one year after the first cohort completes, BAS will conduct an onsite visit. An updated letter of support from an active registered apprenticeship sponsor is required and must be submitted within 60 days after the review meeting.
2. Thereafter, BAS will review the program every other year via a virtual meeting unless it is determined an onsite visit is needed. An updated letter of support from an active registered apprenticeship sponsor is required and must be submitted within 60 days after the review meeting.
3. For each review, BAS will notify the applicant of the review date 30 days in advance and provide an outcome letter to the program within 75 days. If BAS notes areas of concern, the program must take corrective action and respond to BAS within 45 days of the letter being issued. Once the program satisfies all requirements, BAS will send a resolution letter indicating the program has been returned to good standing.

*A program will be removed from the BAS website if it is inactive for two years. The applicant may reapply at any time.*

**Certified pre-apprenticeships must maintain and report the following information to the Bureau according to the respective timeframes.**

1. Any time the program title, training provider, or active registered apprenticeship sponsor changes, the applicant must immediately resubmit the application, check "program modification," and highlight the changes.
2. Any time the program competencies or hours change by at least 20%, the applicant must immediately resubmit the application, check "program modification," and highlight the changes.
3. Within two weeks after a cohort completes, the applicant must report all data for each participant using the BAS certified pre-apprenticeship reporting template. If a program does not have a set cohort start date, or a provider has numerous approved certified pre-apprenticeship programs, the applicant must report all data monthly.
4. The Bureau may request this information at any time.

# How to Apply

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## Application Process

1. [Complete the Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Application](#).
2. Attach an official letter of support from your active registered apprenticeship sponsor.
3. Email both documents to [BASPreApprenticeship@dwd.wisconsin.gov](mailto:BASPreApprenticeship@dwd.wisconsin.gov).

### **If your certified pre-apprenticeship program is approved:**

1. BAS will email a confirmation receipt to you.
2. BAS will email a certificate of approval to you.
3. BAS will email the certified pre-apprenticeship reporting template to you.

### **If your certified pre-apprenticeship program is NOT approved:**

1. BAS will email a notification and recommendations for improvement to you.
2. You may implement the recommendations and reapply.
3. If your resubmittal does not resolve the initial concerns, BAS will email further input to you.