



California
Community
Colleges

Replicating and Scaling Regional Intermediary Networks

The California Blueprint

AT A GLANCE

This report provides a comprehensive guide to replicating and scaling California's regional apprenticeship intermediary networks. It offers actionable insights on how these networks can streamline employer engagement, foster inclusivity, and align educational programs with industry needs, serving as a powerful blueprint for expanding apprenticeship programs beyond state borders.

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Jobs for the Future (JFF) drives transformation of the U.S. education and workforce systems to achieve equitable economic advancement for all.

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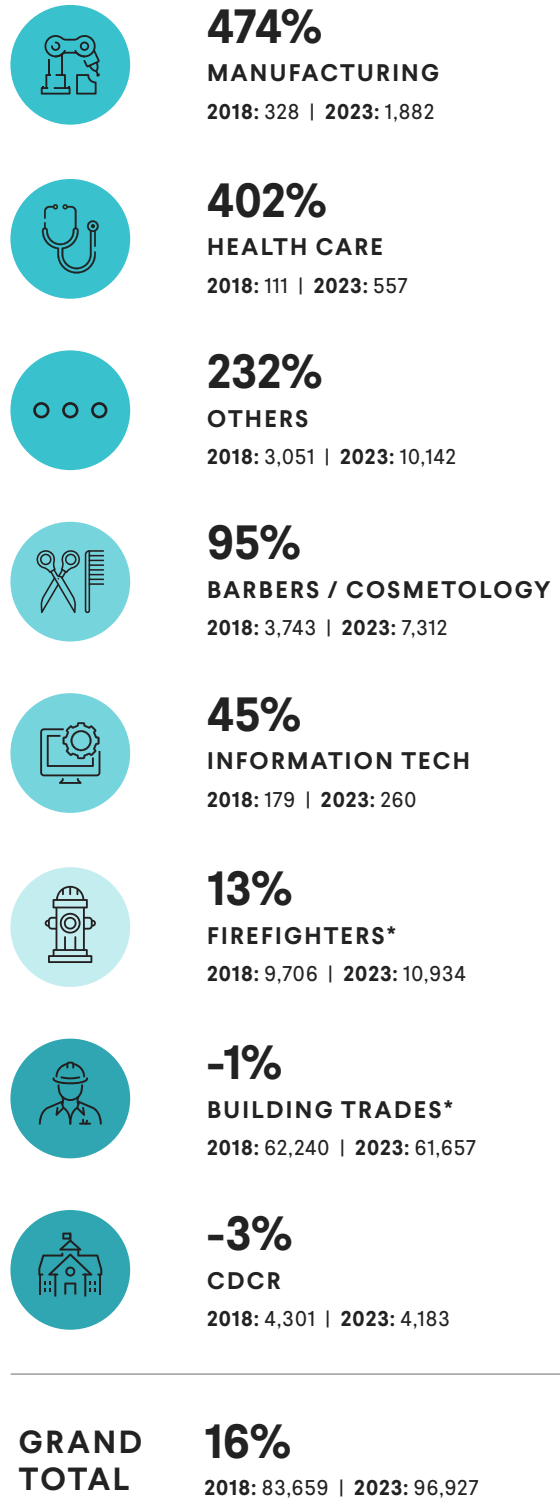
Introduction

Apprenticeship is a leading and rapidly growing workforce development strategy across the United States. California, the country’s economic giant, has invested heavily in expanding and modernizing sectors and industries to bolster its rapidly evolving economy. California has been eager to scale apprenticeships, and the governor’s priorities for apprenticeship expansion underscore this commitment. Since 2018 and Governor Gavin Newsom’s call for 500,000 apprenticeships by 2029, billions of dollars have been invested into bolstering and expanding apprenticeships statewide, specifically focusing on new and emerging industries. The number of apprentices registered with the Division of Apprenticeship Standards grew 16%, with 96,927 apprentices registered in 2023 versus 83,659 in 2018. The most significant increases in apprenticeships over the last five years were in manufacturing (474%), health care (402%), barbers and cosmetologists (95%), and IT (45%).

While the apprenticeship landscape is vast and often confusing, one scalable solution that can help simplify registration processes and streamline regional stakeholder engagement would be partnering with a regional apprenticeship intermediary network. Regional apprenticeship intermediary networks provide apprenticeship providers with access to a myriad of supports. They include connections to local employers; group exchanges of best practices to ensure the success and inclusiveness of apprenticeship programs; strategies for engaging required stakeholders, such as labor, government, or other education providers; and a community of peers to ask questions.

FIGURE 1

California’s Apprenticeship Growth (2018–2023)



Source: Division of Apprenticeship Standards, 2018 and 2023

* These occupations are not governed by IACA.



The federal government has placed a significant emphasis on the development of regional apprenticeship intermediaries as Under the recently awarded Apprenticeship Building America 2.0 (ABA2) funding announcement,¹ millions of dollars were awarded to intermediaries tasked with growing employer involvement, registering programs, and ensuring that apprenticeship inclusion increases on a large scale. It also requires that these intermediaries are inclusive of the wide array of diverse stakeholders in their region and expand their existing networks of partners. This funding priority from the federal government signals a need for more alignment and cohesion of apprenticeship stakeholders in high-demand, often new, and emerging occupations in the United States. This report aims to address this priority by providing actionable insights on how to model California's system of Registered Apprenticeship (RA) regional intermediaries, ensuring readiness and adaptability in the evolving landscape of apprenticeship funding and support, to build networks that can advance apprenticeship partner and program unity across your region.

These networks can enable the alignment of educational programs with industry needs, foster streamlined employer engagement efforts, increase inclusivity by actively engaging and supporting populations explicitly or implicitly not represented in apprenticeship programs, and facilitate resource optimization.



For more information about California's regional intermediary networks, including the LAUNCH Apprenticeship Network, Northern California Apprentice Network (NCAN), and Southern California Apprenticeship Network (SCAN), please see [Part 1](#) of this blog series.

Replicating and Scaling California's Regional Apprenticeship Intermediary Network Model

California as the Model

California's regional intermediary networks play a crucial role in facilitating apprenticeship programs across the state, serving as neutral connectors across diverse stakeholders. California's regional intermediary networks are not exclusive to any particular sector or occupation and are not affiliated with a specific employer, educational institution, or government agency. This level of independence allows them to build trust across each unique apprenticeship stakeholder and focus on labor market demand. By connecting the various stakeholders, including employers, workforce development boards, colleges and universities, local education agencies, training providers, nonprofits, community organizations, labor organizations, foundations, the Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS), and the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), regional intermediary networks enable these individual organizations to focus on their specific role in the registration and implementation processes. **California's success with regional intermediary networks, within vast and diverse labor markets and ecosystems, provides a blueprint for other states looking to replicate and scale their apprenticeship efforts.**



Regional intermediary networks are uniquely positioned to convene employers to determine skills needs and workforce trends to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities.² **Employers have recognized several benefits of partnering with regional apprenticeship intermediaries and networks:**

- Employers can leverage the network's established relationships with educational providers and organizations to access valuable support services.
- Employers receive targeted recruitment support, often focused on populations who have been explicitly or implicitly excluded from industries and professions. The networks also may offer simplified processes for managing, tracking, and reporting apprentices.
- Employers gain access to unbiased information about best practices. Networks can help employers more quickly deploy and scale apprenticeship programs that meet their workforce needs.
- Networks bring expertise and relationships with workforce and education partners that can augment what employers can accomplish on their own.³

These networks provide a cohesive structure that facilitates collaboration, reduces administrative burdens, and ensures that apprenticeship programs are responsive to regional demands.



California's RA regional intermediary networks serve as a powerful blueprint for expanding and sustaining apprenticeship programs beyond state borders and align with the direction of the DOL. While the creation of California's regional intermediary networks was birthed from a combination of labor market demand, apprenticeship ecosystem congestion, and employer interest, DOL has isolated regional, national, and sector-specific intermediaries as a necessary resource for the expansion of apprenticeship to growing sectors.

This guide offers actionable insights into how to model California's successful approach by leveraging key features and strategies that have proven effective across the state, including creative funding strategies, adequate staffing, ecosystem building, and collaboration with stakeholders. By following these guidelines, other regions can replicate California's success in developing a robust apprenticeship ecosystem that meets local needs and drives economic growth. This guide also emphasizes the importance of engaging with existing intermediaries, prioritizing employer needs, and providing comprehensive support to apprentices to ensure program effectiveness and scalability.



Key Features

Regional Demand and Ecosystem Building

When creating a regional network, define the region size and ensure the size of the region is manageable (8-10 million population) for optimal collaboration and resource allocation. Understanding and responding to regional demand is vital for program relevance. Building an ecosystem involves collaboration among various stakeholders. A well-functioning apprenticeship ecosystem brings together all stakeholders, facilitating smoother interactions and providing essential support.

Central Coordinating Body

A regional intermediary network serves as a central coordinating body for the following apprenticeship stakeholders, which may overlap in ecosystem engagement:

Employers: Apprentice hiring, incumbent worker skills development, mentorship, on-the-job training, sponsor, and training provider.

Workforce Boards: Funding of workforce training programs, apprentice referral, sponsor, employer engagement, wrap-around support, and insight into regional labor market needs.

Local Education Agency or Community College: Curriculum development, training provider, credits/credentials, apprentice referral, sponsor, and employer engagement.



Community-Based Organizations (CBO): Provide wraparound supports and/or workforce training programs; particularly important for achieving Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) outcomes, employer engagement, apprenticeship program management, and apprentice referral.

State Apprenticeship Agency (if applicable): Apprenticeship registration and compliance, apprentice data reporting, funding, programmatic guidance, and support.

Chamber of Commerce, Industry Associations, and/or Labor Organizations: Sponsor, employer engagement, and insight into regional labor market needs.

Funders: Local, state, and federal philanthropic, government, and private financial backers for workforce initiatives, engaging with all of the above.

Staffing Capacity and Personnel Power

Adequate staffing and skilled personnel are crucial for operational success. Some regional intermediary networks started off with as little as one full-time employee, which was funded through initial seed funding. However, maximizing impact is a core focus of these networks, so personnel growth should be a primary focus. It is important to assess the needs of your region and ensure sufficient staffing levels and capabilities to manage and execute programs effectively.

Creatively Leveraged Funding

Flexible funding with adaptable allocations enables intermediaries to respond to regional needs while leveraging funds of an established fiscal agent allows them to focus on regional ecosystem development. Successful and unbiased regional intermediary networks utilized a strong fiscal agent for human resources, payroll, billing, and other administrative tasks, which allowed each entity to focus on tasks relevant to their regional goals.





Implementation Tips for Establishing Regional Intermediary Networks

Form Out of Necessity

- What challenge(s) exist within your region that are pertinent to apprenticeship scaling and/or expansion?
- What employer partners are champions for apprenticeship and would be willing to codesign or influence the creation of this network?
- Does your organization focus on a sector with stakeholders who are seeking more organization around apprenticeship in the region?
- Will the creation of this regional apprenticeship intermediary network enhance efforts to grow and scale apprenticeships in a specific sector or region?
- Do you have a respected figurehead in the region who can lead without bias and/or preference for apprenticeship models and providers?



Start Small and Build Gradually

Initial Steps: Begin by forming a core team to set the foundation. Organize an initial meeting to define clear goals and outcomes for affiliated RA programs. Focus on starting with a manageable scope before expanding. Bloom from a strong fiscal agent as the core team will most likely be small.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Assemble the core team.
- Define goals and desired outcomes.
- Plan a kickoff event to introduce the program and services.
- Identified leveraged services.





Isolate and Leverage Existing Organizations and Resources

Identify Key Groups: Collaborate with existing organizations listed under key roles such as employers, community-based organizations, workforce boards, foundations, local education agencies, colleges and universities, government agencies, chambers of commerce, industry associations, and labor organizations.

Isolate Priority Engagement Groups: A uniform regional intermediary or network aims to solve a challenge in your region. Isolate the stakeholder groups most necessary for getting your intermediary or network started and the core steering committee.

Utilize the Expertise, Connections, and Resources of Local Stakeholders: Engage these stakeholders comprehensively in both the design and execution of apprenticeship programs. By doing so, you can tap into their deep understanding of regional needs, access diverse funding sources, and build strong networks that will support and sustain your apprenticeship initiatives. Collaborative engagement ensures that apprenticeships are tailored to local industry demands and community priorities, fostering a more effective and inclusive program.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Map out and engage with existing organizations.
- Establish a local apprenticeship network that includes key stakeholders in the apprenticeship ecosystem.
- Introduce the intermediary and/or network to the region. Scan the region for questions, interests, and levels of engagement. What information is needed the most? Who is eager to be involved? What challenges are practitioners facing? Organize initial feedback to help drive future subcommittees and information-sharing sessions.
- Form subcommittees to manage specific aspects of the initiative. Examples of subcommittees include but are not limited to program development and implementation support, technical assistance and partnership building, supporting DEIA, and development and fundraising. If a representative from your state apprenticeship agency can join from time to time, ensure they provide updates on news from the state, or ask them to support a subcommittee around program registration, development, or implementation.

Focus on Collaboration Across All Regional Intermediary Stakeholders

Promote active collaboration and knowledge sharing among stakeholders. Regular check-ins and joint initiatives help align messaging and resources.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Encourage regular meetings and communication among network members, however, listen to your members. What is the best time to meet? What is the best cadence?
- Convene partners to share knowledge and best practices in unique and engaging settings. Try to host in-person events if possible.
- Foster joint initiatives across subcommittees for aligned strategies.

Coordinate Across and Engage Other Regional Intermediary Networks

Learn From Experience: Engage with existing regional intermediary networks who have experience and knowledge, such as the Northern California Apprentice Network, the Southern California Apprenticeship Network, and LAUNCH. These regional intermediary networks provided much of the blueprint for future alike programs in California and can provide valuable insights and resources for yours.



Share Information: Actively share information and coordinate efforts to minimize competition and duplication.

Unified Approach: Ensure resources are used effectively and that programs complement rather than compete with each other. When funding opportunities arise, encourage regional proposals to best leverage skills and existing funding.

Utilize Proven Models: Avoid reinventing the wheel by connecting with existing groups and introducing apprenticeship as a solution to their challenges. Manage technology tools that will help with communications and share updates, such as a webpage or forum.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Reach out to experienced intermediaries for guidance.
- Identify successful models and strategies already in place.
- Integrate apprenticeship solutions into existing frameworks and programs.
- Maintain regular communication and collaboration with other regional intermediary networks in order to align on messaging, resources, opportunities, and best practices.

Prioritize Employer Needs

Reduce administrative burdens for employers by providing clear, consolidated information and comprehensive support.

Encourage strong employer relationship building for continuous and growing employer involvement.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- **Reduce Administrative Burden:** Take on the majority of the administrative responsibilities, including managing registration documents, which can overwhelm employers.
- **Regional Program Sponsorship Model:** This model allows multiple businesses and colleges to share the responsibilities of apprenticeship programs, ensuring no single entity bears the entire weight. Align with apprenticeship programs about shared regional sponsorship models.
- **Adapt to Feedback and Challenges:** Continuously adjust strategies based on feedback from employers, such as addressing gaps in youth participation by hiring apprenticeship system navigators.
- **Enhance Coordination:** Connect employers with the right partners from a network of options, reducing the complexity of navigating numerous apprenticeship programs and workforce development entities.
- **Avoid Duplicative Efforts:** Minimize competition and duplication among internal organizations by fostering a unified approach to employer engagement.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Actively share best practices and expertise to enhance the effectiveness and scalability of apprenticeship programs. Offer clear information to aid employer decision-making.
- **Incentive Funding for Employers:** Cover part of the costs for developing RA programs. Connect employers to incentive funds in your state or with national or local intermediaries.
- **Ensure employers have a space to share their story.** Sometimes the most impactful information is employer-to-employer communication. Additionally, allow employers to share their challenges with the apprenticeship ecosystem.
- **Develop impactful one-to-one relationships with key employer partners.** Nurture established employer partners and prioritize in-person (when able) engagement with new employer partners. Visit their offices or headquarters, share a lunch, bring employers to other established apprenticeship programs or training providers.

Provide Comprehensive Apprenticeship Support

Offer career navigation support, including interview preparation and resume reviews to ensure smooth transitions for apprentices.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Provide academic bridge coursework and counseling support.
- Offer robust tutoring, technological support, and financial counseling.
- Assist with college navigation, childcare, and transportation.
- When unable to provide these opportunities, connect apprentices or apprentice providers to workforce boards, postsecondary institutions, and other organizations where these supports can be leveraged.

Provide Technical Assistance and Subject-Matter Expertise to RA Programs

To ensure the successful development and implementation of RA programs, regional intermediary networks must provide robust technical assistance and subject-matter expertise to program providers. This support should cover various aspects of RA programs, including program design, registration processes, system navigation, and workforce alignment. By offering targeted expertise and resources, intermediaries can help streamline the complex processes associated with RA programs.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Develop Technical Assistance Resources

- Create comprehensive guides and toolkits that cover essential aspects of RA programs, including program setup, compliance, and best practices for integrating apprenticeships into existing workforce structures.
- Offer templates and checklists to simplify the RA program registration process, ensuring employers have the necessary tools to meet state and federal requirements.
- Provide specialized resources tailored to specific industries or sectors, addressing unique challenges and requirements.

Offer Training and Workshops

- Conduct training sessions and workshops for employers, workforce boards, and educational institutions on RA program design and implementation.
- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for stakeholders to stay updated on the latest trends and regulations in RA programs.
- Facilitate peer learning opportunities where stakeholders can share experiences and lessons learned in apprenticeship program management.



Innovative and Braided Utilization of Funding and Resources

Maximize creativity in the use of various funding sources, such as Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) dollars and foundation grants, to support and sustain apprenticeship programs.

Explore opportunities for seed funding, including local and regional sources, particularly from philanthropic groups interested in economic development.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Identify potential funding sources, especially those focused on specific demographics like foster youth.
- Engage potential steering committee members with philanthropic interests.

Feedback for Continuous Improvement

Implement a data collection and feedback system to assess program effectiveness and identify areas for improvement.⁴

KEY ACTIVITIES

- Create a data collection/reporting and record retention plan.
- Develop a continuous feedback loop and evaluation plan.
- Make recommendations for program improvements based on evaluation results.



Conclusion

California's regional intermediary networks serve as vital connectors, facilitating a smoother interaction between employers and apprenticeship initiatives. By providing essential support, they help streamline the process for all apprenticeship stakeholders. This approach not only simplifies participation for employers but also significantly contributes to the overall success and sustainability of apprenticeship programs. Regional intermediary networks illustrate the benefits of partnership and shared knowledge in the apprenticeship ecosystem and underscores the value of unified communication, collective expertise, and cooperative engagement for scalable and sustainable apprenticeship programs. Other states interested in expanding apprenticeship offerings would be well served by replicating California's system of regional apprenticeship intermediaries.



Call to Action

To build a strong and effective regional apprenticeship ecosystem and network, it is essential to bring together all relevant entities and stakeholders. **Here's how you can take action:**



Connect with Existing Regional Intermediaries

Begin by identifying and engaging with regional intermediaries already operating in your area. These intermediaries can provide valuable insights, resources, and partnerships to help you grow your apprenticeship programs. Federally or otherwise funded regional intermediaries may also be the right partner to house a regional network.





Create Your Region's Network

If no regional network exists in your space, consider taking the initiative to create one or expand your programming to fill this void. A regional network can live out of any specific stakeholder (workforce board, education institution, etc.), however, this entity should have access to a wide range of regional apprenticeship stakeholders and flexibility to reach across them.



Engage with National Groups and Existing Meetings

Look for opportunities to connect with national groups and workforce board members already meeting in your region. Understand what discussions are happening and where you can align your efforts with existing initiatives. If you aspire to become a regional intermediary, think strategically about which employers and industries you want to engage.

By taking these steps, you can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of apprenticeships, drive workforce development, and create opportunities for workers and employers alike.

Now is the time to act—whether by connecting, creating, or engaging, your efforts will help build a more inclusive and dynamic apprenticeship ecosystem.



Resources

1. [California: Investing in Intermediaries to Sustain and Scale Apprenticeship](#)

This WorkforceGPS blog post highlights California's strategic investments in apprenticeship intermediaries to expand and sustain RA programs. It details the state's approach, including the allocation of \$175 million in state funding for Apprenticeship Innovation Funding (AIF), which supports intermediaries in nontraditional sectors. The post also discusses how intermediaries help aggregate employer needs, streamline administrative processes, and scale apprenticeship programs across the state.

2. [JFF Apprenticeship Work-Based Learning Intermediaries](#)

This resource by JFF provides information on apprenticeship and work-based learning intermediaries. It includes links to additional resources at the bottom, offering a comprehensive overview of intermediary roles and best practices in the apprenticeship ecosystem.

3. [New America: What Is an Apprenticeship Intermediary?](#)

This report by New America explores the role of apprenticeship intermediaries, particularly in the context of community colleges. It discusses the promise and challenges of using intermediaries to expand and support apprenticeship programs.

4. [Apprenticeship.gov Partner Finder](#)

This tool helps employers and organizations find local partners involved in apprenticeship programs. It is a useful resource for those looking to connect with intermediaries, training providers, and other apprenticeship stakeholders in their area.

5. [DOL Industry Fact Sheet on Registered Apprenticeship Intermediaries](#)

This fact sheet from the U.S. Department of Labor provides an overview of the role of industry intermediaries in RA programs. It highlights how intermediaries can support employers by streamlining processes and offering expertise in apprenticeship implementation.

6. [Urban Institute: How Intermediaries Can Help Apprenticeships Offer More Structure and Support](#)

This article from the Urban Institute discusses how intermediaries can provide structure and support to apprenticeship programs, particularly in ensuring quality and consistency across different sectors and regions.

7. [Urban Institute: How Intermediaries Can Promote Youth Apprenticeship](#)

Focused on youth apprenticeship, this publication from the Urban Institute explores how intermediaries can play a crucial role in connecting young people to apprenticeship opportunities, offering guidance, and ensuring successful program outcomes.



Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Department of Labor. (2024, July 11). *U.S. Department of Labor Announces New Initiatives to Expand Access to Apprenticeships*. Retrieved from <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20240711-0>.
- 2 U.S. Department of Labor. (2020, September 25). *Department of Labor Announces \$100 Million in Funding to Expand Registered Apprenticeships*. Retrieved from <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20200925-3>.
- 3 AIR. (2022, November). *Rapidly Deploy and Scale Apprenticeship Intermediary Guide*. Retrieved from <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/Rapidly-Deploy-Scale-Apprenticeship-Intermediary-Guide-November-2022.pdf>.
- 4 Jobs for the Future. (2023, September). *Registered Apprenticeship Roles: Sponsors and Intermediaries*. Retrieved from https://www.jff.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/RA_Roles_-_Sponsors_and_Intermediaries_-_4-12-2022.pdf.





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