

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 396

To promote registered apprenticeships, including registered apprenticeships within in-demand industry sectors, through the support of workforce intermediaries, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FEBRUARY 23, 2021

Mr. COONS (for himself, Mr. YOUNG, Mr. MORAN, and Mr. BROWN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

A BILL

To promote registered apprenticeships, including registered apprenticeships within in-demand industry sectors, through the support of workforce intermediaries, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Apprenticeship Hubs
5 Across America Act of 2021”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Registered apprenticeship programs provide
2 apprentices employment with structured on-the-job
3 training, little to no student loan debt, competitive
4 wages, industry-recognized credentials, direct access
5 to jobs and careers, and in some cases, the potential
6 to earn college credit toward an associate's or bach-
7 elor's degree.

8 (2) According to the Department of Labor Ap-
9 prenticeship Toolkit, the average wage for a fully
10 proficient worker who completes an apprenticeship is
11 \$50,000 annually. Apprentices who complete their
12 program earn approximately \$300,000 more during
13 their career than non-apprenticeship workers.

14 (3) There are still very few apprenticeship posi-
15 tions in sectors with high job growth. According to
16 data from the Department of Labor, health care—
17 the industry with the greatest job growth—had only
18 1,852 apprentices in 2016. Information technology,
19 another sector with rapidly expanding job opportuni-
20 ties in the United States, had fewer than 1,000 ap-
21 prentices in 2016.

22 (4) A major barrier to expanding registered ap-
23 prenticeships in high-growth job sectors is employ-
24 ers' lack of familiarity with the process to establish,

1 and the requirements of, registered apprenticeship
2 programs.

3 (5) Workforce intermediaries, which are organi-
4 zations at the national, regional, State, or local level
5 that help ease the process for employers in devel-
6 oping and delivering new registered apprenticeship
7 programs, can serve as a catalyzing force for cre-
8 ating and expanding registered apprenticeships in
9 high-growth job sectors through technical assistance
10 and capacity building for employers, labor organiza-
11 tions, educational institutions, and government enti-
12 ties.

13 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

14 In this Act:

15 (1) APPRENTICESHIP.—The term “apprentice-
16 ship” means an opportunity in a registered appren-
17 ticeship program.

18 (2) IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR.—The term
19 “in-demand industry sector” means a sector de-
20 scribed in subparagraphs (A)(i) and (B) of section
21 3(23) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity
22 Act (29 U.S.C. 3102(23)).

23 (3) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
24 term “institution of higher education” has the

1 meaning given the term in section 101 of the Higher
2 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

3 (4) LOCAL BOARD.—The term “local board”
4 has the meaning given such term in section 3 of the
5 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29
6 U.S.C. 3102).

7 (5) NONTRADITIONAL APPRENTICESHIP OCCU-
8 PATION.—The term “nontraditional apprenticeship
9 occupation” means an occupation that has not tradi-
10 tionally engaged in carrying out registered appren-
11 ticeship programs, but which the Secretary deter-
12 mines would benefit from having such a program
13 (such as an occupation in a financial services, ad-
14 vanced manufacturing, information technology,
15 health care, or hospitality industry sector).

16 (6) REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM.—
17 The term “registered apprenticeship program”
18 means a program registered under the Act of Au-
19 gust 16, 1937 (commonly known as the “National
20 Apprenticeship Act”; 50 Stat. 664, chapter 663; 29
21 U.S.C. 50 et seq.).

22 (7) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
23 the Secretary of Labor.

24 (8) STATE BOARD.—The term “State board”
25 has the meaning given the term in section 3 of the

1 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (29
2 U.S.C. 3102).

3 (9) WORKFORCE INTERMEDIARY.—The term
4 “workforce intermediary” means an entity that, at
5 the national, regional, State, or local level—

6 (A)(i) facilitates the establishment of reg-
7 istered apprenticeship programs; or

8 (ii) if awarded a grant under this Act, has
9 the capacity, and will work, to facilitate the es-
10 tablishment of registered apprenticeship pro-
11 grams; and

12 (B) may be a partnership that includes 1
13 or more of the following as partners:

14 (i) A business or industry organiza-
15 tion.

16 (ii) A community-based organization.

17 (iii) A joint labor-management part-
18 nership.

19 (iv) An institution of higher edu-
20 cation.

21 (v) A State board or local board.

22 (vi) A nonprofit organization.

23 (vii) An industry or sector partnership
24 as defined in section 3 of the Workforce

1 Innovation and Opportunity Act (29
2 U.S.C. 3102).

3 (viii) An industry association.

4 (ix) A joint labor-management organi-
5 zation.

6 (x) A consortium of organizations that
7 provide technical assistance to support and
8 to increase the development of registered
9 apprenticeship programs.

10 (xi) Any other entity that the Sec-
11 retary considers to be appropriate.

12 **SEC. 4. WORKFORCE INTERMEDIARIES GRANT PROGRAM.**

13 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—From amounts made avail-
14 able to carry out this Act, the Secretary shall establish
15 and carry out a workforce intermediaries grant program
16 by awarding grants, on a competitive basis, to workforce
17 intermediaries, to enable the workforce intermediaries to
18 engage a variety of stakeholders, such as local boards, sec-
19 ondary schools, institutions of higher education, and em-
20 ployers, to support, develop, and implement registered ap-
21 prenticeship programs in accordance with section 6.

22 (b) DURATION.—A grant awarded under this Act
23 shall be for a period of not more than 4 years.

24 (c) AMOUNT.—A grant awarded under this Act shall
25 be in an amount of not more than \$6,000,000, and such

1 amount shall be determined based on the relative number
 2 of apprentices a workforce intermediary plans to facilitate.

3 (d) GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY.—In awarding grants
 4 under this Act, the Secretary shall ensure that there is
 5 geographic diversity in the areas in which activities will
 6 be carried out under the grants.

7 (e) MATCHING FUNDS.—A workforce intermediary
 8 receiving a grant under this Act shall provide matching
 9 funds, from non-Federal sources, for the activities sup-
 10 ported under the grant. The matching funds shall be in
 11 an amount that is not less than 20 percent of the amount
 12 of grant funds provided under the grant.

13 **SEC. 5. APPLICATIONS.**

14 (a) IN GENERAL.—A workforce intermediary desiring
 15 a grant under this Act shall submit an application to the
 16 Secretary at such time, in such manner, and containing
 17 such information as the Secretary may require.

18 (b) CONTENTS.—The application described in sub-
 19 section (a) shall include—

20 (1) information regarding—

21 (A) in the case of a workforce intermediary
 22 described in section 3(9)(A)(i), the extent to
 23 which the workforce intermediary is working, as
 24 of the date of the application, with stakeholders

1 to provide activities such as the activities de-
 2 scribed in section 6; or

3 (B) in the case of a workforce intermediary
 4 described in section 3(9)(A)(ii), the capacity of
 5 the workforce intermediary to begin providing
 6 activities described in section 6 upon receipt of
 7 the grant, including information demonstrating
 8 that the workforce intermediary would be suc-
 9 cessful in carrying out such activities;

10 (2) information regarding the extent to which
 11 the grant will help the workforce intermediary—

12 (A) expand apprenticeships for in-demand
 13 industry sectors that lack apprenticeships at the
 14 time of the application; or

15 (B) target populations that are underrep-
 16 resented—

17 (i) in apprenticeships generally; or

18 (ii) in the fields in which the appren-
 19 tices will be trained;

20 (3) assurances that—

21 (A) the workforce intermediary will cooper-
 22 ate in the evaluation of the project conducted
 23 under section 7; and

24 (B) the workforce intermediary will meet
 25 the matching requirement under section 4(e);

1 (4) information about the workforce
2 intermediary's—

3 (A) experience in providing activities de-
4 scribed in section 6 and capacity, or ability to
5 develop or expand capacity, to provide such ac-
6 tivities;

7 (B) experience working in a collaborative
8 environment with government and nongovern-
9 mental entities;

10 (C) ability to raise or provide funding to
11 cover operating costs for the long-term sustain-
12 ability of the activities supported under the
13 grant; and

14 (D) capacity and infrastructure to track
15 outcomes and measure results, including capac-
16 ity to track and analyze program performance
17 and assess program impact; and

18 (5) information describing how the workforce
19 intermediary will promote the diversity described in
20 section 6(b)(1)(F).

21 **SEC. 6. USE OF FUNDS.**

22 (a) IN GENERAL.—A workforce intermediary that re-
23 ceives a grant under this Act shall use the grant funds
24 to carry out activities, which may include activities de-
25 scribed in subsection (b) or other strategies as may be nec-

1 essary, that support the development and successful imple-
 2 mentation of registered apprenticeship programs.

3 (b) SUGGESTED USES.—A workforce intermediary
 4 may carry out subsection (a) through 1 or more of the
 5 following activities, as determined appropriate by the Sec-
 6 retary:

7 (1) OUTREACH AND MARKETING.—A workforce
 8 intermediary may provide services to engage employ-
 9 ers in registered apprenticeship programs, which
 10 may include—

11 (A) marketing apprenticeships regionally,
 12 to employers and to potential apprentices;

13 (B) marketing apprenticeships to sec-
 14 ondary school students, counselors, school ad-
 15 ministrators, or parents;

16 (C) recruiting and evaluating candidates
 17 for apprenticeships;

18 (D) conducting outreach to employers to
 19 persuade the employers to adopt the apprentice-
 20 ship model;

21 (E) matching employers with apprentices;
 22 and

23 (F) promoting diversity among apprentices
 24 by promoting outreach to underrepresented
 25 populations (such as women and minorities),

1 youth, individuals with disabilities (as defined
2 in section 3 of the Americans with Disabilities
3 Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12102)), and veterans.

4 (2) EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT.—The workforce
5 intermediary may provide services to engage employ-
6 ers in, and develop curricula for, registered appren-
7 ticeship programs, which may include assisting a
8 small or medium-sized employer with—

9 (A) designing a curriculum for a registered
10 apprenticeship program that blends occupation-
11 specific skills and general industry skills;

12 (B) designing a comprehensive training
13 plan for apprentices;

14 (C) navigating the registration process for
15 the registered apprenticeship program;

16 (D) identifying skills, both technical and
17 behavioral, needed to perform the occupation in
18 question;

19 (E) providing training to managers and
20 front-line employees to serve as trainers or
21 mentors to apprentices in the registered appren-
22 ticeship program;

23 (F) paying for the cost of off-site training
24 provided to apprentices;

1 (G) coordinating activities between training
2 instructors and worksite supervisors of appren-
3 tices;

4 (H) conducting or arranging for off-the-job
5 training related to the apprenticeship;

6 (I) convening employers to define skills for
7 the registered apprenticeship program; and

8 (J) developing occupational standards that
9 are nationally recognized and portable to help
10 guide employers and sponsors in establishing
11 new registered apprenticeship programs.

12 (3) SUPPORT SERVICES FOR APPRENTICES.—

13 The workforce intermediary may provide support
14 services for apprentices to assure their success in,
15 and after, registered apprenticeship programs, which
16 may include—

17 (A) providing guidance to, mentorship to,
18 and oversight of apprentices during the pro-
19 gram, to ensure retention and completion;

20 (B) providing services to address chal-
21 lenges that surface for apprentices during the
22 apprenticeship;

23 (C) providing professional development
24 training needed for apprentices to succeed in a
25 full-time job after the apprenticeship;

1 (D) providing post-apprenticeship job
2 counseling and job placement services;

3 (E) coordinating pre-apprenticeship train-
4 ing or off-the-job training related to the occupa-
5 tion involved in the apprenticeship; and

6 (F) arranging for an institution of higher
7 education to provide training courses.

8 (4) LOCAL AND NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR REG-
9 ISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS.—The workforce inter-
10 mediary may support registered apprenticeship pro-
11 grams locally and nationally, which may include—

12 (A) developing national guidelines and
13 standards for registered apprenticeships in non-
14 traditional apprenticeship occupations;

15 (B) connecting multi-region efforts for reg-
16 istered apprenticeship programs;

17 (C) documenting best practices in oper-
18 ating a workforce intermediary; and

19 (D) providing the ongoing infrastructure to
20 support apprenticeships in an industry.

21 (c) EMPHASIS ON IN-DEMAND REGISTERED APPREN-
22 TICESHIP PROGRAMS.—In carrying out activities under a
23 grant under this Act, the workforce intermediary receiving
24 the grant shall place an emphasis on supporting registered

1 apprenticeship programs that lead to skilled jobs and
2 wages in in-demand industry sectors.

3 **SEC. 7. PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION.**

4 (a) PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORTS TO THE
5 SECRETARY.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall require
7 each workforce intermediary receiving a grant under
8 this Act to submit performance progress reports at
9 such time, in such manner, and containing such in-
10 formation as the Secretary may require.

11 (2) ELEMENTS.—Each report described in
12 paragraph (1) shall include, at a minimum—

13 (A) the goals, plans, and accomplishments
14 of the workforce intermediary;

15 (B) how grant funds have been used; and

16 (C) how the workforce intermediary has
17 furthered the purposes described in section
18 4(a).

19 (b) EVALUATIONS.—

20 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall conduct
21 an evaluation of each workforce intermediary that
22 receives a grant under this Act 6 years after the
23 date on which funds for the grant are first dis-
24 bursed.

1 (2) CONTENTS OF EVALUATION.—The evalua-
2 tion described in paragraph (1) shall include a crit-
3 ical analysis of the workforce intermediary—

4 (A) by addressing topics such as—

5 (i) the goals of the workforce inter-
6 mediary;

7 (ii) the core competency training of-
8 fered by the workforce intermediary, with-
9 out regard as to whether such training was
10 supported by grant funds;

11 (iii) the structure of the wage progres-
12 sion or career ladder for each registered
13 apprenticeship program established or sup-
14 ported by the workforce intermediary;

15 (iv) the major recruitment sources of
16 apprentices for the workforce intermediary;

17 (v) information on how apprentices
18 are selected by the workforce intermediary;

19 (vi) the recruitment challenges that
20 the workforce intermediary faces;

21 (vii) the demographic and educational
22 characteristics of apprentices supported by
23 the workforce intermediary;

1 (viii) the structure of the workforce
2 intermediary, including the number of staff
3 employed by the workforce intermediary;

4 (ix) the factors that contribute to a
5 workforce intermediary's sustainability and
6 replicability; and

7 (x) the number of apprenticeships fa-
8 cilitated by the workforce intermediary and
9 the occupations involved in the apprentice-
10 ships; and

11 (B) that evaluates the workforce inter-
12 mediary using information on—

13 (i) the levels of performance achieved
14 by the workforce intermediary with respect
15 to the performance indicators under sec-
16 tion 116(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Inno-
17 vation and Opportunity Act (29 U.S.C.
18 3141(b)(2)(A)), for all apprentices who
19 complete a registered apprenticeship pro-
20 gram supported by the workforce inter-
21 mediary;

22 (ii) the completion rates for appren-
23 tices in each registered apprenticeship pro-
24 gram supported by the workforce inter-
25 mediary;

1 (iii) job retention of apprentices,
2 based on 1 year after completing the reg-
3 istered apprenticeship program supported
4 by the workforce intermediary;

5 (iv) the income level of jobs obtained
6 by apprentices after completing the ap-
7 prenticeship program; and

8 (v) the occupations in in-demand in-
9 dustry sectors, and nontraditional appren-
10 ticeship occupations, that the workforce
11 intermediary has successfully served
12 through the grant by creating registered
13 apprenticeship programs in those occupa-
14 tions.

15 (3) SCOPE OF EVALUATION.—In conducting the
16 evaluation under paragraph (1), the Secretary shall,
17 to the fullest extent practicable, limit the evaluation
18 to the efforts of the workforce intermediary sup-
19 ported under this Act, but shall also consider all of
20 the efforts of the workforce intermediary to support
21 registered apprenticeship programs.

22 (4) REPORT.—By not later than 90 days after
23 the evaluation is completed, the Secretary shall pre-
24 pare and submit to the workforce intermediary, and
25 make publicly available, a report that will contain—

1 (A) the results of the evaluation, including
2 the topics and information described in para-
3 graph (2); and

4 (B) recommendations on how to further
5 improve the outcomes of the workforce inter-
6 mediary.

7 (c) RENEWAL.—The Secretary shall use the perform-
8 ance progress reports and the results of an evaluation
9 under this section for a project to determine whether to
10 renew a grant for the workforce intermediary for that
11 project.

12 **SEC. 8. WORKSHOPS; BEST PRACTICES.**

13 The Secretary shall use not more than 5 percent of
14 the funds made available under this Act to—

15 (1) plan and conduct workshops throughout the
16 United States to instruct interested organizations on
17 how to create workforce intermediaries on a na-
18 tional, State, or local level, and navigate the grant
19 process described in this Act; and

20 (2) disseminate best practices on effective devel-
21 opment and implementation of registered apprentice-
22 ship programs through workforce intermediaries.

1 **SEC. 9. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2 There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out
3 this Act \$25,000,000 for each of fiscal years 2022 through
4 2026.

