



What is an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship is a work force training concept designed to prepare individuals for occupations in the skilled trades or craft. By combining on-the-job training under the supervision of a qualified tradesperson and classroom learning, apprenticeship programs have proven to be successful and effective training programs.

Apprenticeship programs are an integral and successful component of work force development. In fact, the US Department of Labor currently recognizes 850 occupations in its Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT) program. Registered Apprenticeship programs include the following key elements.

- An organized, structured, standards-based training plan for the skilled trade or craft
- A minimum of 2000 hours of work experience
- Qualified instruction and supervision on the job
- Related and supplemental instruction in subjects related to the trade or craft
- A Certification of Completion that is commonly identified and recognized throughout an industry

Apprenticeship is a method of learning the skills and knowledge necessary to become a skilled worker and a certified journey person.

Kevin Carr, Apprentice

Today there are approximately 480,000 apprentices working with more than 31,000 sponsors in registered apprenticeship programs across the country. Apprenticeship programs typically take one to seven years to complete and apprentices earn wages during the program. The combination of on-the-job training and classroom learning enables apprentices to develop specific marketable skills. The Certification process ensures that their experience and skills are recognized in the job market.

Why are apprenticeships important for the craft industry?

Apprenticeships have the power to expand the quality and quantity of the craft industry in two distinct ways. First, apprenticeships create a new context for the passing down of traditional arts, filling in the gaps where family and community life have been disrupted. Artists often host apprentices to pass along knowledge and creative traditions. In return, they receive production assistance that enhances their ability to create more objects. Second, apprenticeships help advance the creative process as new artists either interpret and integrate traditional methods into contemporary work or use instruction to develop new techniques for unique handmade objects. The synergistic relationship between artist and apprentice is based in creativity, with both participants often growing their individual talent as a result of the mentoring process.



Students find craft apprenticeships valuable because of the first-hand learning and understanding of what an artist life is like... from creation to selling. Although the creative application is certainly of primary importance, the business skills associated with entrepreneurship are also critical. Learning the administrative, marketing and financial sides of the craft business are vital to making a successful living as a full-time artist. This training is also a good barometer for budding artists to understand whether they have the talent, discipline and desire to make a living at a creative profession. Apprenticeships offer both hobbyists and emerging artists the opportunity to learn all aspects of the business from seasoned professionals.

In addition, apprenticeships allow for personal relationships to grow out of the learning process and mentorship. The intimate training that is provided by the artist to apprentice allows for a customized pace and skill development based on the individual's needs and desires. Folklorist Susan Levitas calls the one-on-one learning processes "intimate conservatories."¹

How to Use This Toolkit

The purpose of this information is to help expand apprenticeships in the craft industry by systematizing the process for selecting and participating in these learning experiences. The toolkit is designed to make it easier and more efficient for artists to select and host apprentices, and for students to prepare and participate in successful on-site experiences. The toolkit also identifies additional resources available to support artists and apprentices in the creative learning process.

The seven-part toolkit is designed to assist artists and potential apprentices:

- Determine if an apprenticeship is appropriate
- Learn the steps and activities recommended to prepare for an apprenticeship
- Understand how to partner the right apprentice and artist
- Outline the terms and conditions for successful apprenticeships
- Evaluate the apprenticeship

Two separate toolkits are available – one for the student and one for the artist – to help each audience plan and make appropriate, informed decisions.

¹Source: In Good Hands: A Portrait of State Apprenticeship Programs in the Folk & Traditional Arts, 1983 - 1995