



WIOA NOTICE: 24-NOT-01

TO: Chief Elected Officials
Local Workforce Innovation Board Chairpersons
Local Workforce Innovation Board Staff
WIOA Title IB Fiscal Agents and Grant Recipients
WIOA Title IB Program Services Administrators
Illinois workNet® One Stop Operators
WIOA Core Partners
Other Interested Persons

SUBJECT: Program Year 2025 (PY'25) Apprenticeship Illinois Expansion Grant Funds Application

DATE: April 24, 2025

I. SUBJECT INDEX

Statewide Apprenticeship Illinois Expansion
Planning

II. PURPOSE

This notice informs all Local Workforce Innovation Boards (LWIBs) and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Core Partners about Apprenticeship Illinois Expansion funding availability to support a qualified Apprenticeship Specialist in their local area. The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) will accept one application per Local Workforce Innovation Area (LWIA) that may be submitted by any of the WIOA Core partners designated by the LWIB. Please note that this funding depends on receiving funding from the US Department of Labor.

The Apprenticeship Specialist will expand employer participation in Registered Apprenticeships and other work-based learning (WBL) programs that lead to apprenticeship opportunities. Apprenticeship Specialists will (1) develop and support a network of regional integrated business services team members working together for greater impact and (2) engage with employers, helping them understand how WBL and apprenticeship training models align with their operations and providing them with hands-on technical assistance to set up the program(s). Apprenticeship Specialists will support both the creation and growth of high-quality apprenticeship programs. Additionally, they will strengthen workforce partnerships by providing apprenticeship-related training and leadership to their Integrated Business Services Team members.

Apprenticeship Specialists funded by this grant must be embedded within business services teams focused on employer outreach and engagement efforts while serving as a central resource for apprenticeship program development. They will collaborate with education, workforce, and economic development partners to recruit, advise, and assist employers and other potential program sponsors in developing and registering apprenticeship programs.

III. ISSUANCES AFFECTED

A. References:

U.S. DOL Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) No. 25-31: State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula

U.S. DOL Training and Employment Notice (TEN) No. 20-15, Change 1: New Apprenticeship USA Brand Information and Updated Technical Assistance Resources for Expanding and Modernizing Registered Apprenticeship Programs

IV. PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The US Department of Labor (USDOL) issued Funding Opportunity Announcement 25-31, outlining \$85 million in formula grants for States to expand registered apprenticeships. USDOL provides the formula funding to increase the State's ability to serve, improve, and strategically expand the national apprenticeship system. This funding opportunity is the third of an anticipated five-year program. Illinois' share of the formula funding for PY 2025 is \$1,665,343, which will have an expected performance period from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026. The continuation of funding is subject to the discretion of USDOL and contingent upon the availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the State's projects, and adequate stewardship of federal funds. Note that the issuance of grants under this notice is contingent on Illinois receiving the PY 2025 award from the USDOL.

V. PROGRAM DESIGN - APPRENTICESHIP ILLINOIS

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, as of March 2025, Illinois has approximately 455 Registered Apprenticeship programs with approximately 20,965 apprentices. These programs have been vetted by industry and are registered with the USDOL.

Apprenticeship Illinois Framework

The State of Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) has developed the Apprenticeship Illinois Framework (Appendix I) that focuses on expanding apprenticeships and work-based learning/training opportunities through Apprenticeship Specialists and Intermediaries (see Appendix II). Workforce strategies like registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs) connect job seekers to quality employment in priority industry sectors. RAPs are an industry-driven, flexible training model that can be customized to meet the needs of businesses across multiple industries and enable employers to develop and train their future workforce while offering career seekers affordable paths to secure quality, high-paying jobs. Registered Apprenticeship programs (RAPs) are vetted, approved, and validated by the USDOL.

Apprenticeship Specialist - Roles and Responsibilities

Since the apprenticeship model is employer-driven, successful and sustained apprenticeship expansion requires effective business engagement strategies. Awareness and education are vital to helping businesses understand the value of apprenticeships and how they can solve their workforce challenges. Beyond that, employers are often intimidated by the perceived complexity of the apprenticeship registration process, and the small number of in-state USDOL apprenticeship staff may be limited in their capacity to provide businesses with the one-on-one support necessary to facilitate program development successfully. To increase business outreach capacity and the amount of apprenticeship opportunities available in the State of Illinois, DCEO and the IWIB Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship Committee instituted the concept of Regional Apprenticeship Specialists to build the foundation for apprenticeship

expansion in Illinois. Additionally, Apprenticeship Specialists were established to increase capacity for program development and expansion by working with Apprenticeship Intermediaries.

Apprenticeship Specialists serve as the primary point of contact for businesses interested in launching apprenticeship programs. They collaborate with employers, intermediaries, education and training providers, DOL Apprenticeship Training Representatives (ATRs), and other key partners to develop and expand apprenticeship opportunities. By conducting employer outreach, fostering partnerships, coordinating regional stakeholders, and providing technical assistance, Specialists help build a strong apprenticeship network. They also identify funding sources and develop strategies to minimize employer risks, ensuring the successful implementation and expansion of Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) and other work-based learning initiatives.

To sustain and expand the Apprenticeship Illinois Network, the State will focus resources on coordinating the Apprenticeship Specialist roles and responsibilities within the local integrated business service teams, including representatives from the WIOA Core Partners and other local workforce, education, and economic development partners. *(See Appendix II for more information on Apprenticeship Specialists)*

Integrated Business Service Teams

Integrated Business Service Teams (IBST) are critical in promoting, marketing, and connecting businesses with workforce programs and services tailored to their needs. The State's workforce board established the [Illinois Integrated Business Services Framework](#) through its IBST Workgroup to enhance coordination and strengthen business engagement statewide. Regions effectively implementing this framework are well-equipped to serve as specialists for apprenticeship expansion. DCEO is leveraging this framework to guide Apprenticeship Specialists in building partnerships and tapping into a broader network to drive apprenticeship growth.

By leveraging the IBST model, Apprenticeship Specialists will foster alignment among workforce, education, and economic development partners. This ensures that employer outreach is not conducted in isolation but as part of a unified, solutions-focused effort to expand work-based learning and apprenticeship opportunities. See Appendix III for more details on the Framework for Integrated Business Services.

The State is anticipated to continue to provide Apprenticeship Specialists and other IBST members with training and support in the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's [Talent Pipeline Management \(TPM\)](#) framework, a strategy to help address chronic regional and local skill gaps. The TPM strategy has succeeded in Illinois when recruiting employers to sponsor apprenticeships, create consistent messaging, address barriers, and provide opportunities to align workforce solutions. Apprenticeship Specialist can directly support the creation of industry sector partnerships using the TPM framework.

State of Illinois 5-Year Apprenticeship Expansion Plan

Illinois' 2025 State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula (SAEF) applications to the USDOL under FOA-ETA-25-31 outlined four goals supported by the Intermediary and Apprenticeship Specialist framework to expand RAPs. This framework builds on existing systems and strategies to advance

the vision of integrating an apprenticeship ecosystem at the state, regional, and local levels.

- Goal 1: Coordinate and Expand Services to Workers and Career Seekers
- Goal 2: Coordinate and Expand Services to Employers
- Goal 3: Coordinate and Expand Services to Education, Training, Workforce, and Economic Development Partners
- Goal 4: Planning and System Development

Goal 1: Coordinate and Expand Services to Workers and Career Seekers

Increase the number of apprentices starting and completing Registered Apprenticeship Programs by identifying and replicating successful models, supporting intermediaries, and expanding employer participation. Address barriers to entry, retention, and completion through targeted awareness and best practices. Enhance outreach by leveraging data-driven marketing and community engagement to connect more individuals with apprenticeship opportunities.

Goal 2: Coordinate and Expand Services to Employers

Increase employer participation in Registered Apprenticeship Programs by embedding Apprenticeship Specialists within business services teams and enhancing their training. Strengthen employer engagement through coordinated outreach, aligning efforts across education, workforce, and economic development partners. Foster industry sector partnerships and employer collaboratives to identify workforce needs and expand apprenticeship adoption. Address employer challenges by streamlining processes, developing resources, and creating incentives to support program creation, registration, and implementation.

Goal 3: Coordinate and Expand Services to Education, Training, Workforce, and Economic Development Partners

Enhance coordination and expand services by fostering collaboration among education, training, workforce, and economic development partners. Provide leadership and support at the regional level to align systems, making it easier for employers and apprentices to navigate apprenticeship opportunities. Proactively engage stakeholders, including employers, community colleges, high schools, and other potential sponsors, to develop and sustain high-quality apprenticeship programs. Strengthen partnerships by sharing knowledge, delivering professional development, and facilitating collaboration among regional and statewide stakeholders to drive apprenticeship growth and accessibility.

Goal 4: Planning and System Development

Enhance statewide apprenticeship expansion through strategic planning, research, and continuous system improvements. Refine Illinois' apprenticeship model by assessing challenges, opportunities, and outreach strategies while strengthening collaboration and referral networks. Establish regional core planning groups to represent all stakeholders and guide system development. Solidify and support the statewide apprenticeship ecosystem by identifying funding opportunities, expanding partnerships, and improving communication.

VI. COMPONENTS

A. Eligible Applicants

One WIOA Core partner in each LWIA designated by the LWIB can apply for the 2025 apprenticeship expansion funds to advance the strategies outlined in this Notice. Applicants

must complete and submit the IWIB designation letter to document the IWIB's approval of the local application.

B. Required Program Elements

Grantees that receive funding through this notice must implement the Apprenticeship Illinois program elements designed to ensure statewide consistency, accountability, and impact in creating or expanding RAPs and other work-based learning models.

1. *Regional Expertise and Coordination*

Apprenticeship Specialists must develop and maintain a comprehensive understanding of the existing apprenticeship and work-based learning programs and the broader network of education, workforce, and economic development partners in their region. This includes core WIOA partners, local employers, community colleges, training providers, industry associations, chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, and others engaged to support a skilled workforce pipeline. A key component of this network is the Integrated Business Services Team (IBST), which may include any combination of regional partners committed to supporting business engagement and workforce solutions.

Apprenticeship Specialists are expected to actively unify their IBST by promoting a coordinated, employer-centered approach to apprenticeship expansion. This includes helping partners understand the apprenticeship model, developing shared outreach strategies, and establishing a system of cross-referrals and aligned services. Specialists must facilitate collaboration among partners and ensure that program development efforts are streamlined, responsive to employer needs, and integrated with broader workforce and economic development initiatives. Regular coordination with the IBST and the region's USDOL Apprenticeship Training Representative (ATR) is important to ensure alignment, eliminate duplication, and maximize impact. Apprenticeship Specialists must serve employers across all industries, regardless of their organization's internal priorities.

2. *Organizational Commitment and Role Integration*

The Apprenticeship Specialist role is intentionally structured to serve as the face of apprenticeship in each region with the support of IBST. This individual acts as a central point of contact and trusted guide for employers and partners, helping coordinate efforts across the ecosystem and reduce fragmentation. By designating an Apprenticeship Specialist to lead and align regional apprenticeship strategies, Illinois ensures that apprenticeship expansion is both accessible and streamlined for businesses, while also fostering consistency and collaboration among workforce, education, and economic development partners. Therefore, successful implementation depends on the full support of the host organization and its leadership. Grantees must ensure that the Apprenticeship Specialist is integrated into broader business service and partner engagement efforts, with appropriate staff, resources, and leadership support behind them.

3. *Employer Engagement and Program Development*

Apprenticeship Specialists provide full-service support to employers throughout the apprenticeship development process. This includes guiding businesses from initial outreach and consultative sales through program design and successful registration using the USDOL Standards Builder platform. Specialists are expected to take ownership of the programs they help create and remain actively involved. Simply referring employers to the USDOL ATR is insufficient; Specialists must be engaged partners in ensuring program quality, continuity, and long-term viability.

Specialists must also assist employers in identifying and partnering with appropriate education and training providers to deliver the apprenticeship's related technical instruction (RTI) component. This may include connecting businesses to community colleges, career and technical education programs, union training centers, or other qualified providers. Specialists should help facilitate these connections and support the alignment of instructional content with program design and occupational competencies.

4. *Collaboration and Network Participation*

Each Specialist is part of a broader statewide Apprenticeship Specialist Network and is expected to participate actively. Specialists regularly engage with their peers across regions to share promising practices, troubleshoot challenges, and coordinate strategies to expand RAPs and related work-based learning initiatives. Specialists will contribute to peer learning and help build a collective knowledge base that supports the ongoing development of Illinois' apprenticeship ecosystem. In addition to statewide collaboration, Specialists must actively collaborate with education, workforce, and economic development professionals and partners within their region, particularly those serving on the Integrated Business Services Team (IBST), to align outreach strategies, leverage partner expertise, and ensure a coordinated approach to employer engagement and apprenticeship expansion. Apprenticeship Specialists are expected to collaborate with their IBST and DCEO partners (including the RED team) to coordinate marketing efforts, brand awareness, National Apprenticeship Week initiatives, and other high-impact outreach events.

5. *Professional Development and Capacity Building*

Specialists will participate in professional development activities. DCEO and its partners will provide various training opportunities; attendance at designated sessions is mandatory. Specialists are also expected to serve as strategic leaders and thought partners within their region. This includes identifying barriers, proposing solutions, and offering feedback that can help inform state policy and continuous improvement efforts. In addition to building their capacity, Specialists should help educate and inform their IBST partners about the apprenticeship model, program requirements, and opportunities for alignment. By doing so, they contribute to a more coordinated and apprenticeship-ready regional service delivery system.

6. *Reporting and Accountability*

Apprenticeship Specialists must maintain accurate and timely records in the Illinois workNet Navigator Tool, updated weekly to support performance tracking and transparency. Reporting should document employer outreach, program development activities, and overall progress. Specialists are also responsible for submitting detailed

quarterly narrative reports and complying with any additional reporting requirements communicated by DCEO. In some cases, Specialists may be asked to present updates to the IWIB Work-Based Learning and Apprenticeship (WBLA) Committee and are expected to attend quarterly IWIB WBLA Committee meetings in person when geographically feasible.

C. Program Activities and Outcomes

Specific project outcomes, goals, and deliverables must be included in the *Activity and Outcomes* tab of the project workplan. Proposals will clearly articulate how the activities funded under this grant would expand apprenticeships in Illinois. The activities and outcomes will include, but are not limited to, the:

- Number of new businesses meaningfully consulted on developing or expanding a registered apprenticeship program.
- Number of existing sponsors that receive technical apprenticeship expansion assistance (to increase program cohort size, add program occupation, or expand an existing program to additional employers, etc.)
- Number of businesses that receive monetary incentives to develop or expand a registered apprenticeship program
- Number of outreach events (seminars, workshops, stakeholder events coordinated, etc.) *(Note: these events should be employer-facing. Career fairs for individuals who may be interested in becoming apprentices do not count.)*
- Number of new Registered Apprenticeship programs developed
- Number of new Registered Apprenticeship programs added to the Eligible Training Provider List
- Number of existing Registered Apprenticeship programs expanded (by increasing program cohort size, adding additional program occupations, or adding an employer)
- Number of new Pre-Apprenticeship programs developed
- Number of existing Pre-Apprenticeship programs expanded
- Total number of new employers engaged that adopt the apprenticeship model because of the grant project
- Number of IBST engagements focused on apprenticeship expansion programs, projects, or initiatives per quarter
- Number of new registered apprenticeship programs in active development per quarter

D. Program Funding

The Department anticipates awarding approximately \$1.5 million to support Apprenticeship Specialists across the State. It is anticipated that individual grant awards will range from \$50,000 to \$200,000, depending on proposed activities and projected impact. While geographic distribution is important, funding decisions will prioritize the quality of applications, specifically the applicant's ability to increase the number of businesses establishing new or expanding existing apprenticeship programs rather than a set number of Apprenticeship Specialists.

All funds must be used to support apprenticeship expansion activities directly. Funds may be used for one-time employer incentives for employers not previously registered or participating in a registered apprenticeship program. Although these employer incentives

may be participant supportive services, any services directly to participants funded through this funding notice must be *fully case managed* in Illinois WorkNet, including intake and career planning processes. Requests must be reasonable, necessary, and directly related to the purpose of this notice.

E. Application Due Date and Submission Instructions

Applicants must submit an electronic “application package” with the information listed below to CEO.OET.Grants@illinois.gov.

- ☐ Uniform Grant Application
- ☐ Mandatory Disclosure
- ☐ Conflict of Interest
- ☐ Formatted Technical Proposal
- ☐ Project Workplan (*Excel spreadsheet with attachments as individual tabs*)
 - Attachment 1: Project Summary
 - Attachment 2: Program Activities & Outcomes
 - Attachment 3: Staffing & Partnerships
 - Attachment 4: Implementation Plan
- ☐ Uniform Budget Template
- ☐ IWIB Designation Letter

Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling, first-come, first-served basis until funds are exhausted. To guarantee a funding commitment by June 30, 2025, applications must be received by June 2, 2025. The grant term is anticipated from July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2026.

F. Program Information Session

DCEO will coordinate an information session to review the details of this Funding Notice and answer questions about the Apprenticeship Expansion Program on May 1, 2025, at 1:00 PM. Please register for the information session at:

https://illinoisstate.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_FcpzBqYIT5SgL_kZh5yiMA

G. Application Review

A team of subject matter experts will review the applications on a first-come, first-served basis until the available funds have been committed. Applications will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- Applicant Capacity and Previous Performance (40%)
- Quality / Commitment to Required Program Elements (40%)
- Budget / Reasonableness of Costs (10%)
- Geographic Distribution of Awards (10%)

H. Reporting Requirements

Grantees will be required to record and report program activities in Illinois workNet. This program activity and outcome data will be included in the quarterly reports for this grant. Illinois workNet reporting will consist of logging new businesses meaningfully engaged/consulted, status updates to apprenticeship programs in development, and detailed quarterly narrative reporting, among other responsibilities to be communicated to

the grantees as needed.

I. Fiscal Management and Monitoring

This program is funded by the USDOL Apprenticeship SAEF Grants (*assistance listing number 17.285*). The funding for this grant will be provided on a reimbursement basis, and pre-award costs may be allowed. All costs must be associated with allowable apprenticeship expansion activities and must be documented in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards located at 2 CFR Part 200. This grant will be included in the annual monitoring of the local workforce areas by the Office of Employment and Training, as appropriate.

VII. ACTION REQUIRED

Local Workforce Innovation Boards, Integrated Business Service Teams, and WIOA partners are requested to review this notice, identify apprenticeship expansion activities, and apply for funding as appropriate.

VIII. INQUIRIES

Inquiries related to this application funding notice should be directed to the Office of Employment and Training Regional Managers Ruth Whitis Ruth.Whitis@Illinois.gov, Bryan Ellis Bryan.Ellis@Illinois.gov, or Kelly Lapetino Kelly.Lapetino@Illinois.gov.

IX. EFFECTIVE DATE

This notice is effective on release.

X. EXPIRATION DATE

This notice will remain in effect until June 30, 2026.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julio Rodriguez', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julio Rodriguez, Deputy Director
Office of Employment and Training

JR:jl

Appendix I – Apprenticeship Specialists

Appendix II – Illinois Apprenticeship Expansion Framework

Appendix III – Framework for Integrated Business Service

Attachment A – Formatted Technical Proposal (PDF Form)

Attachment B – Project Workplan Template (Excel)

Attachment C – Template LWIB Letter (PDF Form)

Attachment D – Uniform Grant Application for State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula Program (PDF Form)

Attachment E – Apprenticeship Expansion Formula Uniform Budget Template (Excel)