



Young Adults In Registered Apprenticeship

Factsheet

Young adults are invaluable members of our labor market and bring critical talent, capacity, skill, and innovation to the workforce. However, many young adults—especially those ages 16-24 from low-income communities—face significant barriers in the labor market

These young adults, sometimes referred to as “opportunity youth,” may be fully disconnected from work and education or engaged in low-wage jobs that do not cover basic living needs. The barriers they face are driven by policies and practices that perpetuate inequality, and the experience of disconnection negatively impacts their long-term earnings, access to economic advancement, and overall health and security.

More than 4.8 million young people fall into this definition today, and the effects of the pandemic on the workforce and data collection may mean that the number is much higher.

Key Metrics

RA can offer career advancement opportunities to young adults, but racial and gender inequities persist within the program model. While more young adults are engaging in apprenticeship opportunities, apprentices who identify as Black, Asian, American Indian & Native Hawaiian, or female are significantly underrepresented, earn

lower average hourly wages, and experience more consolidation within lower-paying occupations (“occupational segregation”) than their white, male peers.*

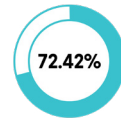
Between 2010 and 2020:



Number of 16-24 year-old apprentices starting a program up 113% (40,293)



Average hourly exit wage \$31



72.42% of youth apprentices were in the construction industry

Source: <https://info.jff.org/apprenticeshipdeia-youth-apprenticeship-rapids>

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Database System (RAPIDS) does not differentiate between young adults engaged in education and those disconnected from work and school, nor does it differentiate between youth-focused programs and adult programs. This makes it difficult to understand the experiences that youth ages 16-24 who are not employed or in school, known as opportunity youth, have within the Registered Apprenticeship system.

*JFF is committed to using language that promotes equity and human dignity. These classifications were provided by the U.S. Department of Labor and we have used them here for data consistency.

How Registered Apprenticeship Can Support Young Adults

Supporting Young Adults

Registered Apprenticeship, especially when paired with pre-apprenticeship, can be an effective strategy for engaging young adults and supporting them in their talent development and long-term career success.

The earn and learn model provides a supportive environment in which they can explore different career pathways while earning a wage and gaining technical skills through on-the-job training.

Existing initiatives in the field offer evidence for the value of apprenticeship as a re-engagement strategy that can reconnect young people to work and education and support leadership development and social capital building.

To ensure that all young people have equal access to the promise of Registered Apprenticeship, we must address and remove the structural and systemic barriers in our workforce system and center young adults in the design of programming. These young adults hold valuable expertise and experience that can inform equitable practices and program design in apprenticeship.

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Programs need to consider best practices along all dimensions of diversity, including age, race, gender identity, religion, socioeconomic status, and others. To support this, programs should be designed with intentionality to support the overlapping of various demographics.

Promising Practices for Engaging Young Adults in Registered Apprenticeship

Key practices for engaging and supporting these young adults in Registered Apprenticeship programs are emerging from the field. Promising strategies focus on creating culturally affirming environments that center young people, providing services and resources to support persistence and removing barriers to entry and completion. Specific examples include:



Creating a culture of belonging and authentically incorporating the voices and feedback of these young adults into program design through advisory groups, leadership opportunities, regular check-ins, and alumni engagement.



Investing in quality mentorship opportunities, including peer-mentorship and mentor training.



Prioritizing career exploration activities to support participants in connecting their apprenticeship training to different pathways.



Building diverse networks of partners to provide wraparound services and supports that can help participants successfully complete training.



Leveraging internal and external resources to remove financial barriers to participation, including covering the cost of equipment and testing fees and providing stipends for work-based learning.

Key Resources



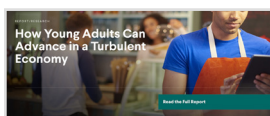
[JFF's Program Design Framework for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Registered Apprenticeship](#)



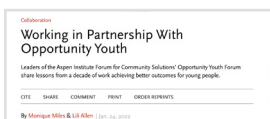
[Promising Approaches for Connecting Opportunity Youth to Registered Apprenticeship Programs](#)



[Measure of America Youth Disconnection Library](#)



[How Young Adults Can Advance in a Turbulent Economy](#)



[Working in Partnership with Opportunity Youth](#)



[A Framework for Effectively Partnering with Young People](#)

Act Now

Contact JFF's National Innovation Hub for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Registered Apprenticeship to make a difference.

This product was developed as a contribution to JFF's National Innovation Hub for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Registered Apprenticeship. Operated by Jobs for the Future (JFF), the Innovation Hub drives change in the Registered Apprenticeship system to increase diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for populations that do not yet have access to the full promise of apprenticeship.

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