PAY-FOR-PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE PAYMENTS PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Registered Apprenticeship Program Sponsors (External)

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Overview

What is the Pay-for-Performance (PfP) Incentive Payments Program?

- The PfP Incentive Payments Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), incentivizes the expansion and growth of Registered Apprenticeship programs on a national scale.
- Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors (hereafter referred to as 'RA sponsors') can receive direct payments of up to $6,000 for each new apprentice that reaches verified retention and progression milestones. The payments will support the hiring and retention of new apprentices, reduce barriers for employers, and help fill high-growth jobs in high-demand industry sectors.
- This performance-based model links federal funding to measurable outcomes, putting taxpayer dollars to work where they matter most, creating real jobs, real skills, and real opportunities in the industries that will define America's future economic competitiveness.
- In July, the Department of Labor awarded nearly $162 million to five organizations to lead nationwide efforts to train thousands of Americans for jobs in priority industry sectors that include shipbuilding and defense industrial base;

Super Intelligence (SI), semiconductor, and nuclear energy infrastructure; telecommunications; information technology; and transportation.

- On Monday, November 2, 2026, DOL announced that RA sponsors can begin applying for direct payments of up to $6,000 per apprentice through the following five PfP incentive funds:
    - **Information Technology Apprenticeship Incentive Fund -** The Trustees of Clark University administer this $27 million fund to support Registered Apprenticeships in information technology occupations. Participating RA sponsors with eligible occupations may receive a one-time payment of $6,000 incentive payment for each eligible new apprentice who remains employed for at least 90 days.
    - **Shipbuilding and Defense Industrial Base Apprenticeship Incentive Fund -** The Florida Department of Commerce administers this $40 million fund to support Registered Apprenticeships in occupations tied to shipbuilding and the defense industrial base. Participating RA sponsors with eligible occupations may receive a baseline payment of $2,000 for each new apprentice who remains employed for at least 90 days, with payments of days up to $6,000 available for Registered Apprenticeships who meet at least one strategic priority area.
    - **Super Intelligence (SI), Semiconductor, and Nuclear Energy Infrastructure Apprenticeship Incentive Fund -** Jobs for the Future, Inc. administers this $40 million fund, which support Registered Apprenticeships in Super Intelligence, data centers, semiconductor fabrication, and nuclear energy infrastructure and quantum-related fields. Participating RA sponsors with eligible occupations may receive up to $6,000 per eligible new apprentice, paid in two installments: $3,750 after 90 days of retention, and $2,250 upon program completion or after 12 months, whichever occurs first.
    - **Telecommunication Apprenticeship Incentive Fund -** The Wireless Infrastructure Association administers this $29.9 million fund to support Registered Apprenticeships in telecommunications occupations. Participating RA sponsors with eligible occupations may receive up to $6,000 per eligible new apprentice across three milestones: $1,500 after 90 days of retention, $2,500 upon completion of related technical instruction, and $2,000 upon successful completion of the program.
    - **Transportation Automotive Technician Apprenticeship Incentive Fund -**The ASE Education Foundation administers this $25 million fund to support Registered Apprenticeships for automotive and truck service

technicians. Participating RA sponsors with eligible occupations may receive $3,500 per apprentice, including an initial $2,500 payment at the 90-day retention benchmark and an additional $1,000 payment after nine months.

- The PfP Incentive Payments program builds on the American Manufacturing Apprenticeship Incentive Fund (AMAIF), a $35.8 million cooperative agreement between DOL and the Arkansas Department of Commerce, Division of Workforce Services to expand Registered Apprenticeship programs in advanced manufacturing across the country for a combined total of nearly $200 million invested across six PfP incentive funds.

Are the PfP incentive funds available nationwide?

- Yes. The PfP incentive funds are available nationwide. RA sponsors in all states and territories are eligible to apply. Applications for all incentive funds are accepted on a rolling basis and will continue until 100% available incentive funds are obligated.

Where can I find more information about each of the PfP incentive funds, including target industries, payment structure, application portals, and points of contact?

- Please visit Apprenticeship.gov.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply for PfP incentive funds?

- RA sponsors in all states and territories are eligible to apply. For eligible RA sponsors in State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) states (CA, CT, DC, MD, MA, NM, NY, NC, OR, WA, and WI) that do not use the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Database System (RAPIDS) as their case management system, eligibility will be verified with these SAAs.
- Eligible RA sponsors must have an established apprenticeship program that is registered with the DOL or an SAA at the time of their application submission in an approved occupation. Applicants may also refer to U.S. CFR § 29.2 for definitions of “Employer” and “Sponsor”.

- *Employer* means any person or organization employing an apprentice whether or not such person or organization is a party to an Apprenticeship Agreement with the apprentice.
- *Sponsor* means any person, association, committee, or organization operating an apprenticeship program and in whose name the program is (or is to be) registered or approved.

What entities are not eligible for PfP incentive funds?

- Organizations that do not have an apprenticeship program that is registered with the DOL, or an SAA (i.e., pre-apprenticeship programs or unregistered apprenticeship programs) are not eligible to receive incentive payments from the PfP or AMAIF incentive funds.

Registered Apprenticeship Program Sponsors

What is required of RA sponsors?

- RA sponsors must meet the eligibility requirements described above, as well as any additional requirements that may be established for each specific PfP incentive fund.
- RA sponsors must maintain apprentice enrollment for a minimum of 90 days to receive an initial payment with the intent for apprentices to successfully complete the program. **Please note**: there are no partial payments for apprentices who do not reach the 90-day apprentice enrollment benchmark.
- RA sponsors must adhere to all required processes and procedures, including the use of RAPIDS (as applicable), regarding the formal registration of apprentices and/or the registration or modification of existing apprenticeship programs under the jurisdiction of either the Office of Apprenticeship (OA) of the U.S. Department of Labor or the relevant SAA as recognized by OA (CFR § 29.3).
- The organizations administering the PfP incentive funds will verify program and apprentice registration information through RAPIDS. For the SAA states that do not use RAPIDS (CA, CT, DC, MD, MA, NM, NY, NC, OR, WA, and WI) as their performance management system the organizations administering the PfP awards will reach out to them directly to ensure the sponsor's program is registered and the 90-day apprentice retention period has been fulfilled.

- RA sponsors are responsible for safeguarding personal information and must follow all applicable requirements for collecting, storing, retaining, and destroying participant data.
- RA sponsors applying for incentive funds under the SI, Semiconductor, and Nuclear Energy Infrastructure Apprenticeship Incentive Fund and the Shipbuilding and Defense Industrial Base Apprenticeship Incentive Fund must provide additional industry verification, such as an Employer Acceptance Agreement, a project contract, or another form of documentation to validate the specific industry. For example, a community college sponsor applying to the Shipbuilding and Defense Industrial Base Apprenticeship Incentive Fund can use an Employer Acceptance Agreement with a shipyard to show that the apprentice is in fact working in the shipbuilding industry.

Can RA sponsors apply for the PfP incentive funding and other Registered Apprenticeship incentive opportunities?

- RA sponsors may apply for incentive funding under the AMAIF and one or more PfP Incentive Payment Programs, as applicable.
- RA sponsors **cannot** apply for incentive funding across the AMAIF and the PfP Incentive Payments Program **for the same apprentice in the same occupation**.
- RA sponsors will be asked to attest in their application(s): (1) if they have an application pending under the PfP or AMAIF incentive funds, and/or (2) if they are currently receiving incentive funding under the PfP Incentive Payments Program or the AMAIF. Answering yes to these questions will not necessarily lead to denying an application.

Does the Registered Apprenticeship program structure (part-time employment, program schedule or program structure) factor into apprentice eligibility?

- No. Apprentice eligibility for initial payment is determined by counting 90 days from the date the Registered Apprenticeship begins. This date is the apprentice's start date as recorded in RAPIDS, or, for SAA portal states, the start date reported to the state's case management system and subsequently reflected in RAPIDS. This rule applies uniformly; there is no differentiation between Registered Apprenticeship programs, schedules, or structures. **Note:** RA

Sponsors should consult with the specific PfP incentive fund to confirm timeframes for any additional retention or progression payments.

Incentive Fund Payments

What are the requirements RA sponsors need to meet before receiving incentive fund payments?

- Application eligibility will be determined based on the information provided in the application, including verification that the sponsor exceeds the Substantial Growth Threshold (SGT) requirement and confirmation that the apprentice is eligible for payment. Additionally, the apprentice must be enrolled in an eligible occupation beginning on or after July 1, 2026, complete at least 90 days of participation, and meet all other eligibility requirements.

Progression Payments

What is a progression payment?

- A progression payment is an additional payment received when an apprentice reaches another benchmark after the 90-day enrollment benchmark.
- Progression payments will vary based on the PfP incentive fund. For example: once an apprentice has been enrolled for 270 days a year, or when they complete the program.
- A sponsor must apply separately for a progression payment once an apprentice reaches the benchmark.

Which apprentices can be claimed for progression payments?

- Any apprentice who reaches a progression benchmark and is above the SGT enrollment threshold for the sponsor can be claimed for a progression payment, regardless of whether the sponsor received an initial payment for the same apprentice.

Does the same apprentice need to be claimed for both the initial and progression payments?

- No, an apprentice ID used for a progression payment does not need to have been previously submitted for an initial payment. For example, if an apprentice claimed for an initial payment drops out, a sponsor can claim a different apprentice at the progression benchmark (e.g. one-year) as long as the apprentice is eligible and the sponsor's enrollment is above the SGT.

Substantial Growth Threshold: SGT

What is the SGT?

- The SGT is determined at the occupation level and represents the number of newly enrolled apprentices that must be exceeded within an eligible Registered Apprenticeship program for additional enrollments to count toward incentive payments.

How is the SGT calculated?

- The SGT equals 125% of the median active apprentice count in the eligible occupation across 12 quarters prior to July 1, 2026 (FY 2023 Q4 through FY 2026 Q3).

What is the SGT for new programs?

- When an existing sponsor or a new sponsor registers a new program for a distinct eligible occupation after July 1, 2026, the SGT for that program is zero, and newly enrolled apprentice counts immediately toward payment eligibility. To be a distinct occupation, the new program must be in an occupation with a different RAPIDS occupational code from any existing programs operated by the sponsor.

Do I have to calculate the SGT?

- No. The SGT is provided to the program sponsor by the appropriate PfP incentive fund. Questions about the SGT calculation may be directed to the appropriate PfP incentive fund point of contact located on Apprenticeship.gov.

Occupations

What criteria are used to determine the list of eligible occupations for each PfP incentive fund?

- The eligible occupations for each PfP incentive fund are based on grantee-identified occupations within their designated industries. OA reviewed these occupations and active apprentice counts to confirm industry alignment, ensure consistency with current industry clusters, and minimize overlap across AMAIF and PfP incentive funds. OA also considered labor market data, including wages, employment levels, and occupational projections, to ensure the eligible occupations reflect a clear industry focus.

What steps can a sponsor take if an occupation is not on the approved list?

- All incentive funds maintain an eligible occupations list at launch; however, these lists are not final. In consultation with PfP incentive funds, DOL will consider additional occupations for inclusion once the five new PfP incentive funds have been operational for several months. RA sponsors may request occupations not on the eligible occupations list directly with the appropriate PfP incentive fund by providing justification for consideration within each fund's application portal. RA sponsors can also reach out to the appropriate PfP incentive fund contact located on Apprenticeship.gov.
- RA sponsors that do not see their occupation(s) on the Occupations List are encouraged to determine whether occupation(s) may be eligible under the AMAIF or other PfP Incentive Funds.

My program is not registered. What support is available to me?

- Apprenticeship staff in every state and U.S. DOL Registered Apprenticeship Industry Intermediaries offer free expertise to help employers, RA sponsors, and industry partners launch, promote, and expand Registered Apprenticeship programs by providing technical assistance for program development, supporting curriculum and competency model development, and connecting employers to existing Registered Apprenticeship programs.

- More information about Registered Apprenticeship, including the benefits of registering a program and instructions for doing so, can be found here on Apprenticeship.gov.
- More information about Registered Apprenticeship Industry Intermediaries can be found on Apprenticeship.gov at Registered Apprenticeship Industry Intermediaries.
- The Partner Finder tool on Apprenticeship.gov helps employers and other industry partners locate and connect with existing RA sponsors, training providers, intermediaries, and apprenticeship offices in their area or industry.