

# Promoting Registered Apprenticeship to Attract Veteran Talent

**INTRO:** Welcome to the National Veterans' Training Institute podcast series, where we discuss pressing issues affecting today's veterans.

**HOST:** Welcome. My name is Hannah, and I'll be the host of today's podcast, Promoting Veteran Apprenticeship to Attract Veteran Talent. We have a fantastic panel joining us today, including a representative from the Department of Labor, an employer, an industry intermediary, and an educator. So, will you each please take a moment to introduce yourself. Tell us where you're from and tell us a little bit about your current role. Would you mind getting us started, Carolyn?

**Carolyn:** Thank you, Hannah. My name is Carolyn Renick, and I'm with the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service. We also refer to it as DOL VETS. I am the Apprenticeship, Licensing, and Credentialing Lead within our Office of National Programs. My role is to provide information about the value of apprenticeship, licensing and credentialing to separating service members, veterans, military spouses, employers, educators, and others to engage in initiatives and lead efforts that promote career pathways that lead to employment for veterans.

**Joe Dan:** Thank you, Hannah. I'm Joe Dan Banker, and I currently serve as the Director for Military Affairs for the University System of Georgia. Before that, I retired as the Deputy Commissioner to the Technical College System of Georgia, and before that I retired as Navy Commander from the United States Navy. I have a lot of experience at retiring, I just can't stay that way. I have experience with both Registered Apprenticeships and military veterans. My current mission is to assist our colleges and universities in recruiting, retaining and graduating military connected students. And I define military connected students as active duty members, reservists, Georgia National Guard, veterans, retired veterans, their spouses and their children.

**Nicholas:** Thank you for inviting me. My name is Nicholas Morgan. I am President of Adaptive Construction Solutions. We established ACS in 2016 specifically to expand Registered Apprenticeship programs for veterans and others seeking sustainable career opportunities. From the start, ACS has focused on apprenticeships as our core strategy, especially as we looked to help veterans reintegrate into the workforce. Our efforts are supported by multiple

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grants from the Department of Labor, including several DOL VETS grants and the operation of an apprenticeship hub through the DOL Apprenticeship Building America grant program. As a combat veteran myself and a company where about a third of our 90-member team are veterans, our mission and dedication to expanding apprenticeships is both professional and profoundly personal to all of us.

**Katie:** It's a pleasure to join you, Hannah. My name is Katie Adams, and I am Chief Delivery Officer at Safal Partners. I'm joining you from just outside the Beltway in Maryland today. Safal is a federal contractor and solutions partner for the Department of Labor, and we focus on technical assistance training and program support for workforce initiatives including the DOL VETS National Veterans Technical Assistance Center. One of my roles is serving as Project Director for Safal's work as the recently announced DOL National Industry Intermediary for Cybersecurity and Tech Apprenticeship Expansion. That's a national initiative to expand paid cyber and tech apprenticeship program opportunities with employers nationwide. We have a special focus on engaging veterans, and we're also in national Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor.

**HOST:** We are happy to have all of you here to discuss this important topic with us today. The Department of Labor defines a Registered Apprenticeship as an industry driven, high quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, receive progressive wage increases, classroom instruction and a portable nationally recognized credential. Registered Apprenticeships are industry vetted and approved and validated by the U.S. Department of Labor or a state apprenticeship agency. What would you like to add to further clarify this definition?

**Nicholas:** A few key points to emphasize about Registered Apprenticeships include their ability to provide a structured pathway for workers to access high quality jobs, coupled with a methodology for employers to recognize and reward high performing individuals with growth opportunities within their organization. For veterans specifically, apprenticeships offer an exceptional approach to beginning a new career in a field that may be vastly different from their military occupation. The clear steps and progression criteria within an apprenticeship aligned really well with the values and expectations of veterans, facilitating A smoother transition into

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their next career. These programs offer veterans a tangible pathway to gaining a promotion, gaining new skills, and being rewarded with long term career success.

**Carolyn:** In addition to what Nicholas shared, Registered Apprenticeship is a proven method to help employers build diversity and equity within their workplaces. Programs are designed to reflect the communities in which they operate, enabling employers to attract and hire underrepresented and underserved populations, such as veterans, women, minorities, individuals with disabilities and others.

**Joe Dan:** Well, I think Registered Apprenticeships are an Americanized apprenticeship program. We can certainly learn a lot from our partners overseas. Other countries do apprenticeships as well. Germany in particular has a very good apprenticeship program within their whole country. But we can't just simply import an apprenticeship from another country and put it in America and make it work. The U.S. Department of Labor has taken the concept, the best parts of the concept, and adapted it to our nation and our way of doing business.

**Katie:** I think it's important to note that apprentices not only gain valuable paid work experience, but that the experience is guided by an experienced professional or mentor in that occupation. It's really the "secret sauce" of apprenticeship. Apprentices take courses in their occupation, but also get direct mentoring in occupational skill building. For the cybersecurity and tech apprenticeship work we are doing as a National Industry Intermediary. We're seeing an increasing number of apprentices also earn one or more industry valued credentials or certifications through their related instruction, and that can result in accelerated career pathways and salary bumps. For veterans participating in GI Bill approved apprenticeship programs, they can also access benefits, including their military housing allowance.

**HOST:** To start us off, would you discuss common misconceptions about apprenticeships that may hinder participation by veterans or by employers? Joe Dan, would you go first?

**Joe Dan:** I believe that the most common misconception of apprenticeship among veterans is simply that they do not know what apprenticeships are, or that they even exist. And I, I like to point this out to all the veterans I have interaction with. In almost every case of veterans' advancement, while they were in the armed forces, was through a kind of an apprenticeship

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program. They, they either learn completely on the job, or they learn on the job combined with classroom at specific points within their career path. And in doing this they receive incremental pay increases, incremental advancement. So, it's it really is an issue of raising awareness among our armed forces of both the underlying processes of what an apprenticeship is and how that is exactly the type of experience they've already had. Also, apprenticeship solved many of the issues the veteran may face upon entering the civilian market for the first time. They need to have immediate income is usually the first thing that they say, and they get that with the Registered Apprenticeship. The more traditional college or technical education, the training and education happens separately and prior to employment. With apprenticeship, employment, education, training all happened together.

**Carolyn:** Many people think that an apprenticeship is the same as an internship which is actually not correct. Department of Labor Registered Apprenticeships are structured training programs that are at least one year in length. They are occupation focused. Apprentices master on the job competencies. They work closely with a mentor. They receive classroom instruction and earn a credential upon completion. On the other hand, internships are typically shorter in length. They are not necessarily structured and often focused on entry level, general work experience. Apprenticeships are paid experiences that often lead to full-time employment. While internships are often unpaid and may not lead to a full-time job.

**Katie:** To add to what Joe Dan and Carolyn said, there's several more misconceptions about Registered Apprenticeships. For example, veterans may think that apprenticeships are only for young people, or that they're only available in construction or other skilled trade occupation. And they may believe that they're only for low skilled positions. Now for employers, some misperceptions that hinder their involvement include the belief that Registered Apprenticeship is also only relevant for skilled trade occupations, but also many believe, erroneously, that they are only for union roles. Employers may also believe that the registration process is too difficult, and they may fear that because their programs are registered with either the federal government or a state apprenticeship agency, that the government would somehow tell employers who they have to hire. But fortunately, these are all misperceptions. Apprenticeship can be used virtually for any occupation, in any sector, in both union and non-union environments. Employers select and hire the apprentices that they choose, and there are intermediaries and organizations such as Safal Partners that can really facilitate that process

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and provide a sort of easy button option to streamlining the development and registration of programs to sometimes within as little as 48 hours.

**Nicholas:** A common misconception is the notion that apprenticeships may be too good to be true, particularly for veterans. As Katie highlighted, veterans can utilize their GI Bill benefits to receive a monthly allowance in addition to their highly competitive apprentice wage and employee benefits. For instance, many of our apprentices earn \$18.00 to \$22.00 per hour at the outset of their apprenticeship and they typically work full time, often even 50 hours a week. For example, in Texas, if they opt to utilize their GI Bill, they may gain an additional \$1700 a month tax free, amounting to well over \$6000 per month just to begin their apprenticeship. This is in addition to those benefits provided by the employer. For businesses, there is often a misconception that apprentices are starting with no prior experience, which is clearly not the case, especially when hiring a veteran. Beyond any previous related experience, veterans bring a willingness to persevere and thrive and accelerated learning environments. Both the employer and the apprentice may initially overlook the unique advantages of an apprenticeship, but it is vital to recognize that there is often no faster or more effective way to develop high quality workers than through this approach.

**HOST:** Now that we know more about apprenticeships, who's eligible to take advantage of Registered Apprenticeship programs? For example, are military or veteran spouses eligible for any Registered Apprenticeship programs?

**Carolyn:** Apprenticeship programs are employer led and employer driven. Many employers are using Registered Apprenticeship to help diversify their workforce. Anyone can apply to an apprenticeship job opening. However, employers choose the candidates based on their established hiring criteria and required minimum qualifications. Veterans are a good fit for apprenticeship programs, since these programs are similar to their military experience. they are structured. Apprentices work closely with mentors and get incremental pay increases. Veterans can learn a new skill that is outside their military occupation or further develop skills learned during military service. This really gives them an opportunity to easily transition into a new career path.

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**Katie:** As Carolyn shared, apprenticeship programs are employer driven. Meaning the sponsor, and typically the employer, determines their own minimum program qualifications, and that's included in something called the program standards. Those minimum program qualifications may include age, perhaps education requirements, physical abilities, maybe background screening, but most programs are what I would call full and open. They're open to any individual that meets minimum program qualifications. The good news is that an increasing number of programs are specifically focused on solely hiring veterans and military or veteran spouses.

**Joe Dan:** Veterans, their spouses, and their children can take advantage of the Registered Apprenticeship program if they are also eligible to work for the particular employer. The employer drives the train to pick candidates for the Registered Apprenticeship within their organization. I think the veterans are always going to be a good bet for the employer.

**HOST:** Although we did touch on the benefits of apprenticeship previously, it's important to focus on this topic. What are the key benefits of apprenticeships for eligible job seekers? Katie, will you share first please?

**Katie:** Happy to Hannah. You know, really the main benefit of Registered Apprenticeship for apprentices is that it's an earn while you learn model. Apprentices are able to continue their education while gaining hands-on experience through on the job. Apprentices don't have to figure out how they're going to pay the bills while going back to school full time because they're earning a paycheck while getting valuable classroom and workplace experience and Registered Apprenticeships also give apprentices a career pathway that has a built-in wage increase over the time that they participate in the program. At the end, they'll earn a portable national credential, which means they can move anywhere in the country, and a hiring employer will know right off the bat that they are highly qualified applicant.

**Carolyn:** Katie said it perfectly. What I would like to add is that eligible veterans can tap into their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits while in an apprenticeship that has been approved for VA education benefits. They are able to get their monthly housing allowance, tax free, based on where the related training occurs, as well as a stipend for books and supplies. This is in addition to any apprentice wages. Employers can give apprentices credit for prior education and military service, which can reduce the amount of time in an apprenticeship program.

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**Joe Dan:** There are quite a few benefits, and in particular for the veterans of our armed forces. Typically, upon leaving the service, a veteran has a little bit more life experience than their civilian counterpart, same age group, and that can also mean that they already have families depending upon them, so they cannot take a break from work and go to college. With Registered Apprenticeships, they can go to work, and they can go to college, and it all happens together at the same time. For the veterans, employment through an apprenticeship promotes a sense of belonging. And that's one thing that's missed among most service members when they leave whatever branch that they were in. They felt like they were part of a whole and that was emphasized with them throughout their entire military career, however long that was. So, when they come out, they have always regularly cited that as something that they've lost. Apprenticeships can develop that sense of belonging to the organization that they've been hired.

**Nicholas:** Often what stands in the way of a job seeker taking advantage of an apprenticeship opportunity is the fact that they still just haven't figured out that an apprenticeship starts with employment. It's not a train and pray that you get a job. It starts with a job, and so job seekers really need to think about this, and understand that as I begin an apprenticeship, I'm going to start a full-time job. Anything less than that is a pre apprenticeship, which is something specifically different. So, everyone really needs the help promote that it starts with employment.

**HOST:** This is great, although apprenticeships obviously have many benefits, it seems that some are unwilling to look into these programs. So, what do you think often stands in the way of eligible job seekers taking advantage of apprenticeship opportunities?

**Joe Dan:** Well, given that the job seeker is aware of apprenticeship opportunities, they generally don't know where to start. They don't know where the front door is, to be frank. Ensuring awareness of the process and that they're sequencing in that process are clear and simple is a very important thing for employers and educators to take into account when they're developing apprenticeship programs. This gets back to my theme that educators and employers need to have a much better and closer relationship. Nothing makes that better than joining together and developing an apprenticeship.

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**Carolyn:** Many people looking for jobs don't even consider an apprenticeship because they think it's only for those that are associated with skilled labor, such as electrician, carpenter, plumber, or other similar occupations. Employers and industries such as IT, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, cybersecurity, transportation, as well as many others, have apprenticeship programs that are helping them develop, grow, and really diversify their workforce. Many separating service members think that their main options after they leave service is to go to school or find employment. VETS is working really hard to inform and educate service members, as well as veterans, about the value and benefits of apprenticeship, so they explore this pathway as an option to get paid, on the job experience while working with their employer, and accumulate no college debt. VETS has included additional information about the benefits of Registered Apprenticeship in the DOL TAP curriculum. We are connecting interested service members to the apprenticeship partners participating in our Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot. We developed an apprenticeship overview for service members to learn about apprenticeship earlier in the military career, and our American Job Centers are connecting these apprenticeship opportunities with our veterans.

**Katie:** I agree with Joe Dan and Carolyn. Really often eligible job seekers are just unaware of Registered Apprenticeship program opportunities, and they may also tend to view Registered Apprenticeship through the lens of the misperceptions we discussed earlier. Registered Apprenticeships can be a new way of finding a career pathway, but often individuals just don't know where to start or how to find them.

**HOST:** This is great information. Now that we know that knowledge of apprenticeship programs or a clear understanding of what they are can hinder participation, what resources exist to help eligible persons take advantage of apprenticeships?

**Carolyn:** VETS has included information about apprenticeship within the DOL Transition Assistance Program curricula that all service members take as they're separating from service. In addition, we have the Department of Labor apprenticeship website which is [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.dol.gov/apprenticeship.gov). This website includes information for veterans, for transitioning service members, for employers, educators, and many others. It includes a page specifically for service members and veterans, as well as for employers who want to hire veterans into their apprenticeship programs. There one can find opportunities for active duty service members and



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veterans, information about how a veteran can use their GI Bill benefits while in a Registered Apprenticeship, the value of hiring veterans, granting advanced standing, as well as information about legislation that supports veterans in apprenticeship.

**Katie:** As Carolyn noted, Apprenticeship.gov has a whole page for individuals to learn more about Registered Apprenticeship. There you can also find the Apprenticeship Job Finder, which lists apprenticeship opportunities around the country. Another great resource for veterans and job seekers looking to take advantage of Registered Apprenticeship, is their local American Job Center, or perhaps called a Career center. They can find their local Career center on Careeronestop.org. Their state's workforce system can help them connect with a Registered Apprenticeship locally and even provide potentially additional support, such as transportation assistance, childcare subsidies, uniforms, tools, or even equipment.

**Nicholas:** In addition to these public sites, you may be surprised at the abundance of apprenticeship opportunities found on platforms even like Indeed. In preparation for this podcast, I conducted a search in St. Louis, MO, Houston, TX, and Atlanta, GA. Each location had hundreds of job openings for apprentices, some even with ACS. While not all of these might be a Registered Apprenticeship, it highlights the importance of utilizing resources like Apprenticeship.gov to verify and vet many of these opportunities. Most apprenticeships don't cost anything with training often covered by employers or the public workforce system. Some programs may require a small application fee. Typically, this is refunded if the candidate completes the application process. The vast majority of programs simply ask apprentices to contribute by showing up and performing high quality work while they earn a competitive paycheck. So, it is very important to vet opportunities, especially if they're asking for a fee. It's a compelling reminder that viable and valuable apprenticeship opportunities are accessible. Diligent research can guide both veterans and their families. For military spouses that are maybe unemployed and searching for a job or relocating to another military installation, consider searching for remote apprenticeship opportunities. Many of the new cybersecurity apprenticeships and other high-tech opportunities often will allow for those new workers to work remotely. This is a great opportunity, especially knowing how challenging it is for many military spouses to find a career while they are committed to relocating from installation to installation with their service member. So regardless of what you find in your backyard, look at all these resources and measure your opportunities and give it a try.

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**Joe Dan:** I believe that educators can and should take the lead in helping eligible persons become more aware of apprenticeship opportunities and how to take advantage of those opportunities. Post-secondary institutions are already clearinghouses for understanding the next step in life. We just need to be better at raising awareness of the apprenticeship opportunities among employers. We need to continually improve our relationship with employers, I'm going to say that again, so that we can more easily assist our students and as we have already stated, Registered Apprenticeships are very beneficial to veterans.

**HOST:** We've talked a good bit about the benefits of apprenticeships for employees, for veterans seeking employment. Of course, it is also always important for employers to know how apprenticeships can be a positive thing for their business. So, let's focus a little bit in on that part now. What are the key benefits of apprenticeships for employers? Nicholas, I believe this is something you enjoy talking about. What, what do you have to say to start us off?

**Nicholas:** Yes, this is indeed one of my favorite topics to discuss. Apprenticeships fundamentally start with the employer. As a business, you are the foundation of an apprenticeship program. Without employers, there is no job, and without a job there is no apprenticeship. Employers do make the most substantial investment in an apprenticeship by accepting the risk of hiring new employees or funding the training for current ones. However, the benefits can be absolutely transformational for a business. Yes, there is an investment and yes, the training is conducted to an industry standard, but apprenticeships are uniquely tailored to develop the very specific skills that an employer requires. The returns don't require 5 or 10 years to materialize. Businesses quickly gain productive, safe, and committed employees, fostering engagement throughout their entire organization. For leaders who might be listening, consider the impact on those that are less productive within your organization. By offering apprenticeship, a business signals to every employee what are the standards within your organization. But it also tells them that they're going to be rewarded if they are committed and do what it takes to increase in skill. As for that investment, collaboration with the Department of Labor, partnerships with state workforce agencies, and local workforce systems can provide a substantial support that DOL's invested in apprenticeship intermediaries that are able to also support new programs or expanding apprenticeships. Many tools are available, ranging from training costs to the supportive services, helping with the outreach and recruitment of new

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apprentices. The local workforce system can provide on the job training contracts, where employer is actually reimbursed for 50 to 75% of a new apprentice's wage for 10 to 26 weeks. This isn't a subsidy, it's a co-investment in the individual where the workforce system is partnering with the employer, who again is making the biggest investment by giving somebody a job. Eligible veterans and their spouses are always prioritized for these resources, making apprenticeships a valuable and strategic choice, not just for the business seeking growth, but also in aligning the transitioning service members and their existing skills into the needs of our workforce.

**Carolyn:** Employers are using the apprenticeship model to help address their workforce challenges. They've been really successful in using it to recruit and diversify staff, develop a pipeline of field employees to backfill roles, upskill and transition current employees into new positions, standardize training across locations, and reduced turnover. Employers are bringing on apprentices at a typically at a lower wage than someone who is fully competent in an occupation which enables them to save money and develop the apprentices to fill their specific needs. And employers with apprenticeship programs are investing in their community and building impactful relationships. Many times, they are partnering with their local community colleges, career and technical schools, high schools, workforce development boards and others to help underserved and underrepresented communities find gainful employment.

**Joe Dan:** Well employers gain quite a lot from adopting an apprenticeship process within their overall human resource planning. From my point of view and my experience in working these, the biggest hurdle for a company to start an apprenticeship program is the ROI or the return on investment. It's extended into the future a ways. However, that ROI is simply amazing once it is fully realized. They almost always result in hard working, loyal, dedicated employees who are not only there for the long haul, they have employees who, once they've completed their programming, have a much deeper understanding of the organization and the way the organization approaches its work. They become like a partner. They have that sense of ownership of the company, and they want to go forward with that. They can hold the line in troubling times as a result of that, and they can more readily see where improvements in efficiency can be readily made, which is another change for the good.

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**Katie:** There are several clear benefits of Registered Apprenticeship for employers. Which is why apprenticeship is considered the gold standard of workforce development. For example, 93% of apprentices who complete their program are then retained as full-time employees. This huge in developing a culture of long-term loyalty because churn is expensive. According to DOL, on average also, employers earn \$144 for every \$100 they invest in apprenticeship. There's a clear financial benefit and of course, the relationships that employers build with the local workforce system, education partners, their state apprenticeship contact, and even community-based organizations within the apprenticeship ecosystem can help them develop a longer and stronger talent pipeline. And of course, possible tax credits and state or federal incentive funding, even wage reimbursement or tuition support from their local workforce board, or variety of sources, can help offset initial and ongoing program costs.

**HOST:** Well, much like the earlier question around why individuals sometimes do not take advantage of apprenticeship opportunities, I've got to ask that given all of these wonderful benefits, what do you think often stands in the way of employers offering apprenticeships?

**Katie:** Really, employers often think that apprenticeship is too difficult to start and complicated to navigate. Which is why accessing help and even direct sponsorship for their program from intermediaries can be really advantageous. Intermediaries, including Safal Partners, which we run the DOL national cyber tech apprenticeship intermediary contract, can really significantly accelerate the process as well as provide a wide variety of supports including related instruction, program marketing, ongoing support, and even modest incentive funding.

**Joe Dan:** The long-range return on investment is typically the most daunting thing when first viewed or explored by an employer. At least in my experience, that's what they raise their eyebrows first over. However, there are ways to mitigate any kind of issues of that that timing with close partnerships with the educators. And there are services through the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, in particular, that can assist as well. It just all depends upon the employer and the candidate that's chosen. So, in the end it comes down to awareness of all there is to a Registered Apprenticeship program or at least where to go to ask questions. As we discussed earlier, I believe this awareness is critical to the student, but the awareness is just as important for the employer. It can be a significant change in how they do business of recruitment and retention, but as we've stated, they're going to benefit greatly by making that change.

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**Nicholas:** It is important to understand that as a business leader, you're not alone in this journey. In my experience, apprenticeships only thrive when there is collaboration. Across the country, organizations offer valuable guidance and support, and businesses do indeed share best practices. Many of these groups, like ACS, have received significant investments from the Department of Labor to help businesses navigate any obstacles in front of them. The elephant often in the room, is that many businesses fear that starting a Registered Apprenticeship creates some sort of unwanted government oversight. Yes, there are standards to maintain. However, in my experience, the Office of Apprenticeship and state apprenticeship agencies function to provide technical assistance and to manage the registration process, while also supporting and coaching sponsors and building new partnerships. For those considering launching an apprenticeship program, working with high impact intermediaries, public workforce systems, and learning from companies with successful programs is highly recommended. Though there may be a learning curve when registering a program, the Department of Labor has invested in intermediaries to assist in this process, such as those represented in this podcast. To be candid, not all employers might be prepared to become a sponsor initially. Sometimes the best course of action is to actually join an existing program that might be managed by a group of employers, a community college, and industry trade association, and for construction the building trade unions. Starting as a signatory employer allows a business to benefit from a thriving program before evaluating when and how to best initiate its own program. This approach mitigates risks while maximizing the potential for success and alignment with the business's specific needs and goals.

**Carolyn:** I agree that many employers who hear about Registered Apprenticeship are unaware of when and where to begin. They also have concerns about government oversight, the registration process, as well as the reporting requirements. But over the last few years Department of Labor has really made great strides to shorten the registration time, fund entities that are providing, technical assistance through employers, provide additional resources to help educate them about the value of the program, and share how they can use the apprenticeship model to diversify their hiring to include attracting more veterans to their program.

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**HOST:** Given all the benefits, it's obvious Registered Apprenticeships can be a win-win for both veterans and employers. What can be done to encourage employers to offer apprenticeships? Joe Dan, would you mind going first?

**Joe Dan:** Well, I think the best step in raising awareness of Registered Apprenticeships and all those benefits for employers is allow them to see examples of apprenticeships, that are ongoing and that are working. And those are all over. And the interesting thing is it's not just at skilled labor, it's at management, leadership, education, all of that is applicable for an apprenticeship program. So, by showing them all these things, they can see they're the drivers. They're in control of the whole process, but the partnership will enable them to be more successful in taking in partners like educators and the and the government, even in the lean times of the beginnings of the program, for their first apprentices, they can get by having better partnerships and closer relations.

**Carolyn:** We can show that Registered Apprenticeship can be a valuable talent developing strategy that can help employers recruit, train, and retain talent, diversify their workforce, and attract veterans and others to their company. We need them to hear about other employers' success using this model, how it is being used across new and emerging industry sectors, as well as the resources available that can help them develop the program and offset costs. We need to continue to show that this model works for all sizes of employers, as well as promote the data that support these programs, such as 90% of apprentices retain employment after the program, the average starting salary after an apprentice completes an apprenticeship is \$80,000, and for every \$1.00 invested, employers are seeing \$1.44 return on investment.

**Katie:** Education is a huge piece here. We just need to ensure that employers understand the tangible benefit of Registered Apprenticeship, such as the increase in retention rates, which again is a huge financial cost to replace someone, especially within their first year on the job. The positive financial return on investment. And really being seen as an employer of choice because you offer paid training. Many states also offer tax credits, covers or partially offset costs for education, and in some states, they even provide direct per apprentice incentive funding. So, hoping employers connect with the right partners, including related instruction providers, is really key. Developing related instruction is often a challenge for employers new to apprenticeship, so intermediaries such as ours and others ensure that they're teamed up with

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the right education providers, and then they get access to and support from a local, state, even potentially national network. That's really crucial.

**Nicholas:** We need to do a better job in promoting the understanding that Registered Apprenticeships are not merely a hiring strategy, but a robust, effective pathway to cultivate skilled workers and enhanced workforce retention. Traditional recruitment methods that pit companies against each other in competition for talent often overlook the long-term benefits of fostering loyalty and engagement. The key is adopting an approach that differs from standard practices. One that is built on collaboration and support. Intermediaries and public agencies with the ability to provide high value guidance and fund pilot programs stand ready to help businesses. We do need associations, chambers, and economic development entities to play a bigger role in promoting and supporting connections. By leveraging public-private partnerships, businesses can create and nurture apprenticeship programs that not only build new talent pipelines, but also establish a culture of retention and commitment. This innovative approach turns apprenticeships into a win-win proposition, aligning individual aspirations with organizational goals and ensuring a return on investment through sustained growth and development.

**HOST:** This is great advice. Thank you all so much. Now we've touched on funding a little bit already, but I think it's really important for us to highlight that individually here. So, will you please discuss a little bit with us the available funding that supports veterans and/or employers in taking advantage of apprenticeships?

**Katie:** Veterans are able to use their GI Bill to cover any books and supplies as well as receive an E-5 housing voucher for GI Bill approved Registered Apprenticeship programs, and that's a really valuable benefit. Beyond that, they may also be eligible for supportive services through their local workforce board, and they're going to want to connect with their local job center or career center to discuss and learn more. For employers, there are DOL designated national industry intermediaries such as I've mentioned, Safal Partners, as well as grant programs that can provide support and modest amounts of direct incentive or supportive funding. Intermediaries and grantees also have expertise in helping employers find access and grant funding from multiple sources. Registered Apprenticeship programs also automatically qualify for GI Bill inclusion, so employers can offer that as a benefit for their veteran apprentice. And

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Registered Apprenticeship programs are also automatically qualified for inclusion on state and local workforce board Eligible Training Provider lists. That means that they can potentially receive funding support to help offset some of those apprentice classroom training costs through something called Individual Training Accounts for qualified individuals. Employers may also be able to access direct wage reimbursement for qualified apprentices through the same local workforce board. Lastly, employers may be eligible for tax credits, or even tuition assistance or direct tuition payment from their state, depending on their state. And all this information can be found on [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.Apprenticeship.gov).

**Nicholas:** As Katie shared, funding and support for veterans and employers engaging in apprenticeships is quite extensive. ACS, for instance, leverages incentive funds and grants, including those from the Department of Labor and a new grant from the Department of Energy, to bolster outreach and prepare new apprentices in the clean energy industry. However, employers shouldn't feel overwhelmed by the abundance of resources, nor should they expect them all; they are tools; not everyone is eligible for them all, nor are they all always available or appropriate. Employers need to be flexible. By promoting the braiding of resources and support, we help ensure that the investment is not solely borne by the business. Often more is provided than promised, we like to always exceed expectations. A prime example was shared last November during a webinar with DOL VETS for the National Apprenticeship Week. One of our signatory employers, McCarthy Building Companies, had employed 107 apprentices through the ACS program on two utility-scale solar projects, and these were predominantly veterans. These apprentices were supported by local workforce development boards and an ACS Department of Labor Dislocated Worker Grant. A comprehensive study conducted by McCarthy identified a significant productivity gain and a cost savings that led to an impressive three to one return on investment. They also shared that they were reimbursed about \$0.70 of every dollar spent, leading to a staggering ten to one return on investment.

**Joe Dan:** Well, veterans with the GI Bill have education benefits that everybody envies, they come with money, and those benefits can be applied to education through Registered Apprenticeships. Additionally, veterans as a group are a priority for Workforce Development funding from the Department of Labor. Also here in Georgia, the Hope Scholarship and Hope Grants are available to veterans, and those can be applied towards a Registered Apprenticeship program as well.



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**Carolyn:** All of these responses are accurate in showing that there are potential federal and state funds available to help offset employers cost to starting an apprenticeship program. And veterans continue to be attracted to Registered Apprenticeships since as apprentices, they not only get paid, they can also tap into their post 9/11 GI bill benefits which provides them with a monthly housing allowance and a stipend for books and supplies. And as Joe Dan highlighted, veterans received priority of service in all DOL funded employment and training programs, including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs, which can fund classroom training on the job training as well as supportive services.

**HOST:** So, lots of great resources. This is this is good news. We also know it takes many different groups to make apprenticeships happen. How are institutions of higher education involved in offering or facilitating Registered Apprenticeship programs? Joe Dan, I know you have a bit to share on this. Will you jump in please?

**Joe Dan:** This is an area that I believe educators can do a lot to improve as a whole. As we discussed, apprenticeships are very different approaches for employers and students. It represents a similar change in approaches for the educators. However, since education exists to affect positive and innovative futures, I think it's important to remember that in our society, a better, smarter, educated workforce with positive, innovative leadership is the best way to achieve that future that we all want. Apprenticeships help the industry and educators to work more closely together, and that's how you affect that future that we all want.

**Katie:** Higher education institutions traditionally have been involved in Registered Apprenticeship by offering the required related instruction component of a program, meaning they're providing that classroom instruction, the coursework. But we're seeing an increase in educational institutions becoming actual sponsors of Registered Apprenticeship programs. In this case, they're providing the administrative oversight of the program, and then signing on their employer partners who employ the apprentices and enroll those apprentices in courses at the college. Many institutions have seen great success with this model, which allows them to offer their students an option to earn not only pay, but also college credit for the courses that they're taking while they're learning an in-demand occupation. We work with numerous community colleges, and actually within the last year developed apprenticeship guidelines for

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Cisco Networking Academies. There's 1600 Cisco Networking Academies nationwide, the majority of which are in secondary and post-secondary educational institutions. And we're rolling those programs out in targeted states through high schools and colleges nationwide.

**HOST:** What resources exist to better support these institutions in supporting the formation of Registered Apprenticeships?

**Carolyn:** The Department of Labor's one-stop-shop for apprenticeship is Apprenticeship.gov. There, employers, career seekers, educators, sometimes others can learn about Registered Apprenticeship. It contains great fact sheets, success stories from employers and apprentices, apprenticeship statistics, funding information, federal resources that support apprenticeship, contact information for apprenticeship state directors, as well as a lot of other really good, useful information. There's a Standards Builder tool where employers can start to build their apprenticeship program from scratch. A Partner Finder Tool to locate resources in their area that can help them build or connect to an existing program, various examples of current programs, and a variety of industry sectors, as well as a list of the DOL funded industry intermediaries that are helping employers and others build and or expand Registered Apprenticeship programs. If someone's interested in learning more, they can enter their information on the Express Interest page on Apprenticeship.gov and apprenticeship representative will respond to their requests within just a few short days.

**Katie:** Apprenticeship.gov is a great starting point for resources. We also recommend that individuals or employers reach out to the office in their state responsible for Registered Apprenticeship, which they can find on Apprenticeship.gov. As I mentioned, Safal Partners, as an industry intermediary, also works with K-12 and post-secondary educational institutions nationwide, as well as employers to provide a no-cost sponsored program option whereby we serve as the sponsor and then the college or educational institution provides classroom instruction, and the employer provides the paid work experience. We welcome organizations to visit [cyber.safalpartners.com](http://cyber.safalpartners.com) to learn more.

**HOST:** This has been so much great information about Registered Apprenticeships today. Beyond what we've discussed, what else do you think is important for employers and eligible persons to understand about Registered Apprenticeships?

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**Joe Dan:** Registered Apprenticeships are a long-term process. Once you've got it rolling, there's nothing that can beat it. You're planning for the future, and not just the next fiscal year, and not just the next couple of fiscal years. As with all long-term projects, the ROI is not immediate, but when it comes in, it's completely positive and will have significant positive impact on the bottom line of your company.

**Carolyn:** Many employers want to hire more veterans into their company, and it is getting more and more competitive with the veteran unemployment rate so low. Employers are beginning to see that Registered Apprenticeship programs can not only be a way to attract veterans to their company, but it can also provide them with a similar structure that they experienced while in service, and they get paid while they're learning a skill.

**Katie:** Our labor market is coming through profound change. Technology is more rapidly changing jobs than ever before, and traditional education systems are moving quickly to keep pace and provide the education and skill building needed for those jobs. However, companies increasingly are beginning to realize they have to be in the training business. They have to have a plan for hiring from a larger pool of candidates than they may have previously considered, and then you have to have a plan for training those applicants. Registered Apprenticeship is growing quickly in popularity as a centuries-old proven way for companies to do just that. But today's apprenticeship is no longer just for skilled trade occupations, programs, and non-traditional occupations such as teaching, healthcare, clean energy, and cybersecurity are growing daily. That's why companies as large as Microsoft, Amazon, Walmart, Wayfair are all using Registered Apprenticeship. Both employers and apprentices have more opportunities today than ever, and along with the growth in apprenticeship, we're excited to see an increase in funding at the federal and state level to support those programs, making it even more attractive to employers to start programs and hire more apprentices.

**Nicholas:** The key part for a business to remember is that a Registered Apprenticeship program is indeed for your business. It's designed to meet your specific needs; that business owners and leaders have a choice. They can continue to try to compete in today's workforce to find top talent, or they can become innovative and grow their own, and find individuals who are willing to do the work, and that inspire to take advantage of these unique opportunities within

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their organization. Somebody gave you a chance. This is an opportunity to find somebody and provide them the dignity of work and to mentor them inside your organization and the business can realize that they can do more than just impact and provide services to their customers, but impact those who work at their sides every day. To see a transition service member, leave the military with a clear plan that just doesn't simply work is a very common story. Apprenticeships are a great way to get back on track and accelerate your life. To be exactly where you want it to be. Many service members as they transitioned from the military, are looking to do something different than that they did in the military, and their apprenticeship will put you on that path. No other program will provide you a better opportunity to earn while you learn. A chance for you to still utilize those GI Bill benefits that you earned that can supplement your income until you get to a point where you're earning those journey level wages that can support not just you, but your family.

**HOST:** I love this, and we so appreciate you all speaking with us today on this important topic. This podcast is going to provide such valuable information to job seekers as well as those assisting veterans and veteran spouses with employment. Would you like to share any final thoughts about apprenticeships with our audience?

**Katie:** You know, Registered Apprenticeship provides veterans and their spouses with an opportunity to work in jobs and industries that they may have never thought was open to them. These apprenticeship programs create paved pathways into high demand jobs that pay family supporting wages. They create expanded opportunities, particularly for individuals that may have been historically underserved, marginalized, or adversely affected by persistent poverty. Apprenticeship levels the playing field, and gives everyone an opportunity to earn really valuable industry credentials and family supporting wages, while they're learning in demand skills for long, well-paying careers. For employers, intermediary organizations can help accelerate the process. We can offer, essentially, to employers, in-house apprenticeship expertise, technical assistance and support at no cost, and employers can then access an enormous number of benefits so that they can start a veteran and military spouse focused or friendly apprenticeship program.

**Joe Dan:** My final thought is also my beginning thought and that Registered Apprenticeships represent a definite sea change for just about all parties involved. In the end apprenticeships

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drive closer, better relationships and partnerships within the total community where the business and the education exist. These improved relations not only drive more successful apprenticeships, but also much more successful communities. All of the partners within the community get better as a result of improved relations that are established by initially starting an apprenticeship program.

**Carolyn:** On behalf of VETS, I want to thank you all for joining our podcast. Each of the participants was able to share how this earn and learn model benefits employers, educators as well as our veterans. We continue to promote Registered Apprenticeships as a proven way for employers to create new talent pipelines that also have an opportunity for veterans to develop in-demand workplace and technical skills. This is all while earning a paycheck and the career of their choice from day one while accumulating no college debt. We hope that you will explore our DOL apprenticeship website [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov) and will work with us to promote apprenticeship and its continued value for veterans. Thank you again for joining us today.

**HOST:** Thank you all for joining us for today's podcast and providing valuable information about Registered Apprenticeships. To our listeners, if you would like more information about serving veterans, please visit [NVTI.org](https://www.nvti.org) to access resources such as this podcast. We are constantly adding new material at [NVTI.org](https://www.nvti.org), so check back often. And we also invite you to continue the conversation at the Making Careers Happen for Veterans: Community of Practice, and of course, make sure you visit [Apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov). Thank you so much.

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