

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) Activity Policy

I. Introduction

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides services to employers in both the public and private sectors to: recruit, hire, and retain a skilled workforce that meets their current needs as an employer. In addition, existing employees and new recruits can increase their skills, productivity levels, and wages, fostering economic development through a unique combination of On-the-Job Learning with Related Instruction hours and providing a wage increase during or upon completion of related instruction training.

The Junta Local de Conexión Laboral INC (JLCL, for its acronym in Spanish) is working to ensure that workers have the opportunity and support to thrive in their jobs, as well as to ensure that workers are valued, work on equal terms and are trained so that they can retain their jobs. We also need to help employers continue to foster the economic development of the region and the island we represent.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that workers do not have to worry about losing their jobs by investing in supporting employers in the North Central region, providing the necessary tools through Registered Apprenticeship with job-related instruction. It aims to enable participants in the registered apprenticeship program to attain competitive skills for a specific occupation and, as a result, retain employment, receive salary increases, and obtain a nationally recognized credential issued by the USDOL.

Similarly, it promotes the economic development of a high-quality workforce that can access better job opportunities by meeting the labor demand of the communities we serve.

III. Legal Basis

- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (Public Law 113-128 - WIOA) Section 3(44) and 134(c)(3)(H) (Public Law 113-128) Federal Register Vol. 81 No. 161 of August 19, 2016, sections: 20 CFR 680.600, 20 CFR 680-61; 20 CFR 680-650; 20 CFR 682.200; 680.700; 680.710; 680.720, and 680.730.
- Policy No. WIOA-PP-04-22 Amendment 1 Requirements for Work-Based Training (WBT) Activities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- TEGL 13-16 Guidance on Registered Apprenticeship Provisions and the Opportunity Act (WIOA), January 12, 2017.
- TEGL 19-16 Guidance on Services Provided through the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), January 12, 2017.

- 29 CFR 29&30 Apprenticeships Programs: Labor Standards of Registration, Amendment of Regulations and EEO for Apprenticeships.
- Incentives Law for SME Generation and Retention (Law No. 120 of July 31, 2014).
- Administrative Bulletin No. 2018-047 DDEC.
- Municipal Code of Puerto Rico (Law No. 107 of August 14, 2020) Puerto Rico Unified State Plan 2020.
- TEGL 10-16: Performance Accountability Guidance for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I, Title II, Title III, and Title IV Core Programs, Change 2, (September 15, 2022).
- WIOA Desk Reference: Incumbent Worker Training; Employment and Training Administration, January 2017.

IV. Definitions

a. Apprentice

A worker aged 16 years or older, with a minor's permit issued by the Department of Labor certifying the tasks the minor can perform to learn and develop knowledge through an apprenticeship occupation within the registered apprenticeship program. Individuals aged 18 and older do not require a minor's permit.

b. Registered Apprenticeship (RA)

It is a structured training model leading to a credential that provides a unique combination of On-the-Job Learning (OJL) with Related Instruction hours and a wage increase during or upon completion of training.

c. Occupational Credential (Completion Certificate)

A recognized credential awarded to an apprentice upon completion of the required hours of Registered Apprenticeship. This is issued by the Federal Department of Labor or an entity accredited by it. Additionally, the credential is nationally recognized, certifies the worker's professional mastery, and is portable.

d. Extraordinary Cost

It is a non-recurring expense incurred by the employer associated with the on-the-job training of a participant and their low level of productivity.

e. Significant Training Cost

It is the portion of the On-the-Job Training (OJT) cost that the employer will contribute, considering the following: the size of the company, the number of employees participating in the training, the salary and benefits level of those employees (at the beginning and end of the training), the training's relationship with the participant's competitiveness, other training provided by the employer, and the company's progression opportunities.

f. Credential

It is a recognition granted to an individual for obtaining a measurable technical or occupational skill necessary for obtaining paid employment (recognized certification, high school diploma or its equivalent, certificate for completing an apprenticeship program, state or federally recognized license, associate or bachelor's degree).

g. Conexión Laboral Norte Central (CLNC)

Designation by the governor to a geographical area, composed of one or more municipalities, where workforce development activities occur.

h. Contract

It is a document that evidences an agreement between the parties to provide some good or service in exchange for compensation.

i. Disbursement

Any payment made with budgetary funds evidenced by an electronic transfer or check must always be accompanied by a disbursement voucher and all necessary documents to evidence that the good or service was received.

j. Invoice

It is an informational document that records and evidences the provision of a service and/or work performed. It must contain the required supporting documents before issuing a payment. The necessary evidence includes: Employer attendance, issued payroll stub, canceled check, or direct deposit.

k. Mentor

It is a worker with experience in the related occupation. They are a role model, an occupational advisor, and an instructor.

l. Related Instruction

It is the theoretical training that complements the technical knowledge of the OJT component of the Registered Apprenticeship (RA) program. This helps refine the technical and academic skills applied in the job. The training (classroom sessions) can be offered on or off-site (e.g., company, manufacturing, university) as determined by the employer's resources.

m. Instructor

They are experts in teaching and learning. They are educators who impart correct knowledge for the development and performance in registered apprenticeship (practice).

n. Occupations

It is the class or type of work performed, with the specification of the job position held.

o. Employer

A natural or legal person who in his own name and on his own account assumes the obligations, benefits, losses and other risks of the work entity and is in charge of its management and administration as owner or not, as well as the legal, moral and social responsibility of one or more workers for the work they perform on a dependent basis.

p. Worker

A person who provides services that are paid for by another person to whom the worker is subordinate, which may be a private individual, a company or an institution.

q. On Job Learning (OJL)

Learning is a strategy that trains a worker for a specific occupation using a structured combination of on-the-job learning (OJL) and related instruction.

r. On Job Training (OJT)

Structured training provided by an employer, whether public or private, for-profit or non-profit, to a participant who earns a wage while performing productive work in a job. OJT is related to the introduction of new technologies, introduction of new production or service, skill enhancement for new workers, and the retention of these employees.

s. Pre-apprenticeship (Apprentice)

A worker at least 16 years old, except when a higher minimum age is established by law, who is employed to learn an occupation as an "apprentice" in Registered Apprenticeship.

V. Work-Based Training

The Opportunity and Innovation Law provides different alternatives to meet the needs of its workforce, such as:

- a. It provides viable alternatives for the employer based on current, future, or entrepreneurial needs for the employer.
- b. It trains the workforce, improving productivity in quality standards.
- c. These trainings allow acquiring and developing the necessary skills for the position. At the same time, it keeps up with technology.
- d. It provides the worker with significant work experience, where they can acquire academic and technical skills to perform in a non-subsidized job.
- e. It provides the employer with 50%-75% of the training costs.
- f. There is the possibility of a 90% reimbursement to the employer subject to waivers approved by DOLETA.
- g. It offers access to hundreds of in-demand occupations in the labor market. Hours will be approved based on what is approved by the federal government subject to the amount of available funds (CLNC).

A. Types of Work-Based Training

1. On-the-Job Training (OJT)

- a. OJT aims to provide participants with structured training provided by the employer in a workplace; in return, the participant receives significant compensation based on hours worked.
- b. The employer will provide the participant with equal working conditions, including wages and fringe benefits.

2. Customized Training

- a. It is designed to meet the specific needs of an employer or group of employers.
- b. The employer must be committed to retaining employees who successfully complete the training.
- c. The employer will pay a significant portion of the training, as determined by the Local Board. Considering the type of training, company size, employee participation, and earned salary.

3. Incumbent Worker Training

- a. This type of training is related to the introduction of new technologies, introduction of new products.
- b. Promotions to new positions that require additional skills to occupy the position to which the employer refers.

4. Registered Apprenticeship Program (RA)

- a. It is a proven apprenticeship model that has been validated by the United States Department of Labor or a State Apprenticeship Agency.
- b. Registered Apprenticeship (RA): is a service strategy to train a worker in a specific occupation: structured OJT training with Related Instruction hours, leading to the attainment of a credential upon completion of the hours.
- c. The Registered Apprenticeship Program is an opportunity for employers to steer, develop, and prepare the workforce, while participants gain paid work experience, salary increases, and a nationally recognized credential.
- d. Apprentices can be new or existing employees who need to update their skills to achieve greater competitiveness to retain their jobs.
- e. It provides national recognition upon completion of all training.
- f. This requires employer commitment to retention. In addition to providing the participant with a salary increase during or after the activity is completed.

VI. Five (5) Elements of a Registered Apprenticeship Program

1. **Participation of Employer (OJL)**
2. **On-the Job Learning**
Includes OJL, minimum of one year or 2,000 hours. These hours are determined by the National Apprenticeship Office and cannot be changed.
3. **Related Instruction**
Includes academic components that can be in-person or distance-based; with a minimum of 144 hours per year of OJL.
4. **Salary Increase**
This salary increase must align with the skills acquired by the participant.
5. **Occupational Credential**
Nationally Recognized

VII. Benefits of Registered Apprenticeship

1. Nationally Recognized Credential
2. Quality Standards
3. Safe and High-Quality Working Conditions: minimizing compensation for workplace accidents
4. Assistance and Technical Support
5. Tax Credits
6. Federal Resources

VIII. Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

These are designed to provide instruction and/or training to increase mathematical skills, literacy, and other vocational and pre-vocational skills necessary to enter a Registered Apprenticeship program (RA). These must be linked to one or more registered apprenticeship programs and have a strong track record of enrolling their graduates in RA programs. Pre-apprenticeship is part of the Paid or Unpaid Work Experience component of the Youth program.

IX. Availability of Funds for Registered Apprenticeship

The CLNC Local Board will support any employer registered in in-demand occupations, and that is previously approved by the PDL and also meets the minimum requirements to formalize a contract. These will be subject to fund availability.

In addition, the employer must guarantee retention of employees for a minimum of one year or more and provide evidence of measurable earnings increase.

| | | |
|---------------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| One (1) year | 2,000 hours | 144 hours of Related Instruction |
| Two (2) years | 4,000 hours | 288 hours of Related Instruction |

X. Use of WIOA Title I Funds for On-the-Job Learning Activities

There are several ways in which WIOA Title I funds can support the components of registered apprenticeship for adult, dislocated worker, and youth categories. These are subject to fund availability.

1. Individual Employment Accounts (Youth) (combination of OJT and ITAS)
2. On-the-Job Learning (OJL)
Structured training provided by the employer to newly recruited and existing employees through teaching and learning in a workplace or designated classroom provided by the employer.
3. On-the-Job Training (OJT)
These must be new employees or existing ones who require developing additional skills such as: introduction to new technology, production of new products, or promoting employee promotions among others.
4. Customized Training.
5. Incumbent Worker Training.
6. Occupational Skills Training in the Youth program.
7. Support Services

XI. Steps to Follow in Registered Apprenticeship

CLNC staff will offer On-the-Job Learning with Related Instruction as the first service alternative.

1. Registration
To determine if the occupation to be trained qualifies under the Registered Apprenticeship Program, it must be verified on the following website: www.apprenticeship.gov under employers: occupation finder.
 - a- Sponsors register their programs through the state office designated by the Federal Department of Labor.

b- In the case of Puerto Rico, it is the Department of Economic Development and Commerce. It delegates functions to the Labor Development Program and the Labor Development Program in turn delegates responsibility to local areas for the funds that have been delegated to them.

2. The Registered Apprenticeship Program has three (3) ways of providing or offering training:

a. Time-Based

The hours of on-the-job learning are determined and cannot be changed (O'NET Code, Apprenticeship).

b. Competency:

This is an evaluation process by the employer through on-the-job learning hours. Registered apprenticeship must comply with a minimum of one year of training, equivalent to 2,000 hours to qualify for the occupation.

The JLCL in order to support employers, in both OJL and Related Instruction activities. These will be subject to evaluation by the Local Board and the availability of allocated funds.

The teaching and learning curriculum must be well-written and break down the costs of related instruction. Employers can offer related instruction before or during training. This must be certified (evidenced) by an invoice and the CLNC reimbursement will be 50% of the related instruction.

However, if the employer provides related instruction with internal resources; CLNC will not reimburse any expenses for related instruction. This will only happen when the company invests in external resources.

c. Hybrid:

It is allowed to have apprentices in both time-based and competency-based, under the registered apprenticeship program. Related instruction can be provided weekly, monthly for up to a maximum of six (6) months for every 144 hours (2,000 hours) of training offered to the employee.

3. For each year of training (2,000 hrs), a minimum of 144 hours of related instruction will be required.

These can be provided before or during On-the-Job Learning hours.

XII. **Established Goals in Registered Apprenticeship**

Related instruction is provided by training centers, technical schools, community colleges, and/or universities or other institutions that employ technology-based and distance-based learning approaches. They can also be provided by internal employer resources that are qualified for the subjects required by the program. It is to provide apprentices with a set of advanced knowledge that meets the specific needs of the employer(s).

WIOA establishes three (3) goals to meet the RA exit which must be evidenced in the participant's file.

1. Salary Increases
2. Credential Attainment
3. Measurable Skills Gains

This Policy shall take effect immediately upon its approval. It shall be the responsibility of the nominating authority to disseminate and orient personnel within five (5) days following the date of its approval.

Approved today, 20 of March 2024.



Miguel Ramos Morales
Local Board President