



EMPLOYER HANDBOOK

South Central WI Youth Apprenticeship Consortium
Dane County Schools



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I. Welcome

Welcome to the South Central Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Employer Handbook, a comprehensive guide designed to support new and existing Youth Apprenticeship Employers with their engagement for the next generation of skilled workers. This handbook serves as a guide for businesses to participate in youth apprenticeship programs, offers insights, best practices, and practical advice to optimize experiences for both employers and youth apprentices.

Investing in the next generation of talent is essential to long-term sustainability and growth for our region. Youth apprenticeships offer a solution to the challenges of skills shortages and innovation by providing a structured pathway to employment, education, and career advancement. By engaging with youth apprenticeship programs, employers not only secure a pipeline of skilled workers, but also play a critical role in shaping the future of their industries and communities.

The purpose of this handbook is to:

- Provide employers with a clear understanding of the significance and benefits of youth apprenticeship programming.
- Equip employers with necessary tools and knowledge to effectively engage youth apprenticeship in the South Central Wisconsin region.

II. YA Program Details

Youth Apprenticeship (YA) programs offer significant opportunities and benefits, including the development of industry-specific skills and competencies that align with employer demands. They provide students with opportunities for career exploration, allowing them to make informed career decisions for their future. Through work-based learning at participating businesses, apprentices gain valuable hands-on experiences under skilled mentors, reinforcing classroom learning and enhancing employability. Additionally, successful completion of a program can lead to industry-recognized credentials, blistering resumes, and increasing job market competitiveness.

YA Program Goals



III. YA Employer Benefits

- **Attract better applications and candidates** who are motivated to learn and contribute to your organization's success
- **Cultivate loyal employees** who have a sense of loyalty and commitment among youth apprentices, leading to higher retention rates and reduced turnover costs
- **Benefit from skilled workers** and knowledge acquired by youth apprentices, enhancing your workforce's capabilities and performance
- **Increase safety and compliance** within your organization through comprehensive training and mentorship for youth apprentices
- **Enhance competitiveness** by positioning your business as an industry leader by investing in youth apprenticeships, demonstrating your commitment to innovation and excellence
- **Instill company values, work ethic, and professional standards** in youth apprentices, aligning them with your organizational culture
- **Develop a knowledgeable and adaptable workforce** through structured training and hands-on experience provided to youth apprentices
- **Replenish the skilled workforce** with continuous replacements by mentoring talent from within through youth apprenticeship programming
- **Boost productivity and efficiency** within your organization by harnessing the energy and potential of motivated youth apprentices
- **Earn a return on investment** through a tangible investment in youth apprenticeship with improved performance, reduced recruitment costs, and enhanced competitiveness

Career Cluster Pathways

Click on the Career Clusters below to view the 80+ different occupational pathways!

 Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources	 Architecture & Construction	 Arts, Audio Visual Technology & Communications	 Business Administration
 Education	 Finance	 Government	 Health Sciences
 Hospitality & Tourism	 Human Services	 Information Technology	 Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security
 Manufacturing	 Marketing	 Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM)	 Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics

IV. Employer Commitment

Employer Responsibilities

- Interview and hire the youth apprentice
- Provide enough working hours to fulfil the youth apprentice work hour requirements (min. 450 hours per year)
- Pay the youth apprentice at least minimum wage
- Ensure the youth apprentice is trained in the required competencies from the on-the-job learning guides (OJLs)
- Provide a workplace mentor
- Ensure all Employment of Minors laws are followed
- Ensure the safety instructions are provided
- Sign and comply with the Education Training Agreement (ETA) for each youth apprentice

YA Employer Timeline (Typical, other options may apply)

- February - Mid March: Start gathering resumes and interview interested youth apprentices for openings to fill your positions
- By end of May: Hire your youth apprentices to fill your open positions
- June 1 – Youth apprentice hours may start being recorded
- Upon hire (or within 30 days of hiring): Sign the Education Training Agreement (ETA) and onboard your youth apprentice
- June 1 - August 30: Maximize your YA's availability and double check they are on track to cover the competencies required in the on-the-job learning guides (OJLs)
- August 30 - End of May: Agree to your youth apprentices availability and ensure that all youth apprentice work hour requirements are met
- After the completion of Youth Apprenticeship Level I Hours – Complete and sign the Employer Verification Form, return it to the school to career coordinator as well as fill out End of Year Paperwork (ensure that there are two reviews completed per youth apprentice)
- After the completion of Year 1 Hours for a Youth Apprentice Level II, Complete and sign the Employer Verification Form, return it to the school to career coordinator. If the youth apprentice is starting a new occupational path, the employer must complete a new ETA for that new occupational path within 30 days of the start of calculating hours for that pathway – only can start this following the June of the Year 1

completion for the youth apprentice. The new ETA must be completed and turned into the school to career coordinator within 30 days.

- After the completion of Year 2 Hours – Complete and sign the Employer Verification Form, return it to the school to career coordinator as well as fill out End of Year Paperwork (ensure that there are two reviews have been completed per youth apprentice)

V. Best Practices

YA Job Descriptions

Crafting a job description for your Youth Apprenticeship (YA) position ensures clear expectations and aligns with the apprentice's learning what a company needs. This transparency fosters a productive and supportive work environment.

Look for All Career Opportunities in Your Business

Reviewing all careers within your business allows you to identify roles that can benefit from fresh perspectives and new skills brought by youth apprentices. By considering a broad range of opportunities, you can then create a more dynamic and adaptable workforce, fostering innovation and long-term growth.

Pathways you may want to consider beyond what your business is known for:

- Graphic design
- Administrative professional
- Human resource professional
- Marketing communications
- Merchandising
- IT
- Accounting

Advocacy

Youth apprenticeship started in 1991 and has continuously evolved to offer 80+ career pathways from 16 career clusters. Advocating to legislators for their support and improvement of youth apprenticeship is crucial for building a skilled workforce. Through highlighting success stories regarding hands-on learning experiences and reducing skills gaps, we can encourage policymakers to invest in and enhance these initiatives.

Annually, there is a YA Day at the State Capital hosted in Madison around mid-March. This is an important time to meet with legislators regarding the Youth Apprenticeship program. Employer participation is encouraged, although not required.

VI. Frequently Asked Questions

What are the eligibility criteria for participating in the youth apprenticeship program?

To be eligible to participate in youth apprenticeships, employers must first be willing to provide meaningful work experience and on-the-job training to students 15+ years of age.

Businesses should review the 16 career clusters and 80+ pathways to determine a position that meets the pathway competencies and hour requirements (450 hours min/year). Employers can contact the regional YA Coordinator and/or School To Career Coordinators to advise on pathways. Additionally, employers must comply with state and federal laws related to the employment of minors.

How are youth apprentices matched with employers, and what is the process for recruitment and selection?

Employers may have junior or senior students in high school employed at their business. If this is the case, it would require a conversation with the School To Career Coordinator to determine if their current position can meet one of the 80+ YA pathways and if the school offers related instruction courses to support the requirements of the program.

Students should find the employer that would sponsor them if they are not currently employed. There is help from the School To Career Coordinator as well as the Regional YA Coordinator. The employer must interview and offer the youth apprentice employment in their desired career field and follow their established hiring procedures to onboard a YA.

What is the YA to RA bridge?

The Youth Apprenticeship to Registered Apprenticeship (YA to RA) Bridge program provides a pathway for youth apprentices to transition smoothly from high school-based apprenticeships to registered apprenticeships in various industries.

It aims to facilitate the seamless integration of youth apprentices into more advanced apprenticeship programs, offering them opportunities for further skill development, career advancement, and long-term success in their chosen fields.

What happens if a situation arises where a student needs to be let go?

Unfortunately, this situation is possible. We highly encourage good communication between the School To Career Coordinator and the workplace mentor regarding challenges. The hope is that the partnership can provide support on both sides to offer guidance to the student in addition to direction from the business regarding employment challenges.

If the employer needs to take immediate action to terminate the Youth Apprentice, please contact the School To Career Coordinator to notify of the termination and reasoning. The YA Regional Coordinator submits documentation to DWD regarding completion or termination of each student.

Is there a wage recommendation for Youth Apprentice positions?

Competitive wages not only attract talented youth individuals but also demonstrate the employer's commitment to investing in the development of the next generation of the workforce. Employers should strive for fair compensation that is competitive within their industry and region.

My business is in manufacturing and/or construction where there are limitations on equipment usage for minors. How do we know what we can allow the student to do?

Wisconsin's employment laws permit minors under 18 from using certain hazardous equipment in manufacturing and construction. The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) has [created a list](#) to help simplify the laws regarding hazardous equipment.

Youth apprentices are classified as "student learners" and are permitted to do some work that is otherwise prohibited if a student learner is performing with a bona fide school-work training program. Youth apprenticeship meets that standard.

VII. Employment of Minor Laws

Youth Apprentices are employed by the businesses involved in the program and are thus bound by all state and federal laws governing the employment of minors if they are under 18 years of age.

Student Learner Status

Wisconsin's Administrative Code outlines the classification of "student learners" as employees. Youth apprentices fall under this classification, as outlined in Wis. Admin. Code § DWD 270.14(3)(a). As student learners, youth apprentices may engage in certain tasks that would otherwise be deemed hazardous, provided that such work is incidental to their training and occurs for short durations. Moreover, this work must be conducted under the direct and close supervision of a qualified individual, with organized and progressive work processes outlined. While some tasks are permitted for student learners, there are specific types of work that remain prohibited regardless of their status. For a comprehensive list of prohibited activities and further details on the student learner classification, refer to Wis. Admin. Code § DWD 270.14, accessible at https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/admin_code/dwd/270_279/270/14

Although youth apprenticeship program curricula are reviewed for compliance with employment laws concerning minors, coordinators are encouraged to contact the DWD Equal Rights Division, Labor Standards Bureau at 608-266-6860 or via email at erinfo@dwd.wisconsin.gov for specific concerns regarding tasks or equipment. To ensure clarity about the apprentices' activities at the worksite, a signed Employment Training Agreement (ETA) must be retained at the worksite.

Work Restrictions and Work Permits

Naturally as juniors and seniors, most students are sixteen years old or older. Wisconsin and federal laws do not limit hours that 16-17 year olds may work, other than during hours of required school attendance. Student learners, however, may work during school hours since they are registered in a work-based learning program – youth apprenticeship.

It is possible for YAs to be fifteen years old. See below for some restrictions for 14- and 15-year olds.

Work permits are not required for the Youth Apprentices for work performed as part of their apprenticeship. If a student is engaged in other work from the employer outside of YA, the exception does not apply, and they should gain a work permit.

Maximum Hours of Work for 14- and 15-year old minors

Working Hours

- Labor Day - May: 7 am - 7 pm
- June 1 - Labor Day: 7 am - 9 pm

Daily Hours

- Non School Days:
 - Labor Day - May: 8 hours
 - June 1 - Labor Day: 8 hours
- School Days:
 - Labor Day - May: 3 hours
 - June 1 - Labor Day: 3 hours

Weekly Hours

- Non School Weeks:
 - Labor Day - May: 40 hours
 - June 1 - Labor Day: 40 hours
- School Weeks:
 - Labor Day - May: 18 hours
 - June 1 - Labor Day: 18 hours

Wages

The Fair Labor Standards Act requires employers to pay youth apprentices for all hours worked as part of their program, no less than minimum wage.

Unemployment Insurance

Wisconsin's unemployment insurance law excludes certain types of work from its definition of "employment" for purposes of unemployment insurance eligibility. Youth apprentices, if enrolled full-time in a non-profit or public education institution and receiving academic credit for their participation in the program, are not eligible to file for unemployment insurance from their YA employer. Youth apprentices who do not meet these criteria may, under

certain circumstances, be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits if they are terminated from their employment.

Worker Displacement

Employers may not hire youth apprentices who would displace a currently employed worker (including a partial displacement - reduction of hours in non-overtime work, wages, or employment benefits).