

2 Revitalize Our Work-Based Learning Platforms

Increasing Access. Strengthening Outcomes. Expanding Opportunity.

Work-based learning can serve as an important bridge between education and employment, giving students opportunities to develop technical knowledge, employability skills and real-world experience while exploring potential careers.

For construction, these programs are particularly important. They allow learners to connect what they learn with the realities of the workplace while helping employers develop the skilled workforce they need. Despite their potential, participation remains uneven and persistent barriers continue to limit the reach and effectiveness of work-based learning programs.

The challenge is not whether work-based learning has value. It is how we make these opportunities easier to access, easier for employers to support, and more responsive to the needs of learners and industry.

Three Main Forms of Work-Based Learning



APPRENTICESHIPS

Structured, paid training that combines on-the-job learning with related instruction



INTERNSHIPS

Time-limited experiences that connect classroom learning with real work



COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

Academic credit earned through alternating periods of study and work

667,000 individuals

were enrolled in registered apprenticeship programs in FY2024

41% of registered apprentices

are age 25 or younger

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?



SIMPLIFY

Streamline requirements and make it easier for employers to participate.



INCENTIVIZE

Provide tax incentives and other support for employers who invest in young workers.



EXPAND

Grow access to high-quality apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities.



RECOGNIZE

Ensure programs align with industry standards and lead to valued credentials and career outcomes.

Read all 7 recommendations in the 2026 update to Restoring the Dignity of Work
Find the full report at www.NCCER.org/research/