

YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP QUALITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

High-quality youth apprenticeships offer young people affordable, reliable, and equitable pathways from high school to good jobs and postsecondary credentials. Youth apprenticeship can also deliver a positive return on employer investment by building a pipeline of young, diverse talent and fostering a culture of learning and innovation that attracts and retains employees.

As youth apprenticeship has gained traction across the U.S., many programs have adopted the Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA) [Definition & Principles for Youth Apprenticeship](#) to guide program design and implementation. Building from those principles, PAYA has developed this Youth Apprenticeship Quality Assessment Tool as a piece of a four-step protocol aimed at assisting education providers, employer and industry partners, intermediary organizations, and other youth apprenticeship leaders in collaboratively identifying ways to improve policies, procedures, and practices in support of learner success.



For each of the PAYA principles, the tool outlines factors that influence the extent to which youth apprenticeships are of high quality and lead to equitable opportunities and outcomes for students. In particular, the tool prompts youth apprenticeship leaders to document strengths and areas of improvement related to their partnership structures, the design of their programs, and the specific requirements and components of each occupational pathway offered. Leaders are encouraged to consider the role that each stakeholder plays in advancing quality programming and eliminating barriers to advancement and mobility, particularly for apprentices from historically underserved and marginalized groups.

CAREER-ORIENTED

High-quality youth apprenticeships structure learning around knowledge, skills, and competencies that lead to careers with family-supporting wages. Career orientation is critical to quality because it ensures that youth who complete apprenticeships gain valuable work experience and academic learning that, combined, prepare them to compete and succeed in the labor market.

Quality Indicator	Assessment (Yes / No / Needs Improvement)	Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
<p>Each youth apprenticeship pathway’s prerequisites are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • necessary for success in the occupational pathway; • consistent across secondary, postsecondary, employer, and other key partners; • aligned with employment requirements; and • aligned with credentialing requirements. 			
<p>The related technical or classroom instruction for each youth apprenticeship pathway equips students with the competencies and skills required for career entry and advancement.</p>			
<p>The on-the-job training of each youth apprenticeship pathway equips students with the competencies and skills required for career entry and advancement.</p>			
<p>Each youth apprenticeship pathway prepares students for an in-demand occupation that pays a family-supporting wage.</p>			
<p>The apprenticeship provides youth opportunities for long-term career growth and advancement.</p>			

EQUITABLE

High-quality youth apprenticeships ensure that learning is accessible to every student, with targeted supports for those adversely impacted by long-standing inequities in our education system and labor market. Without deliberate design features that confront inequities that unfairly limit access and opportunity, youth apprenticeships could reinforce educational and labor market segregation or privilege the most well-resourced students.

Quality Indicator	Assessment (Yes / No / Needs Improvement)	Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
Youth apprenticeship partners regularly assess whether prerequisites systematically exclude or could exclude particular groups of students.			
Youth apprenticeship partners have and follow a defined process for addressing the inequitable treatment, participation, and outcomes of apprentices.			
Youth apprenticeship recruitment efforts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reach populations of students who are underrepresented in paid work-based learning programs and career pathways within the program’s target industries; • include a wide range of trusted education and community partners and engage diverse stakeholders that represent or can relate to target student populations in meaningful ways; • explicitly address real or perceived barriers to participation and potential solutions (e.g., cost, transportation); • provide prospective youth apprentices and their families early exposure to the program; and • take into account the scheduling and language needs of students and families. 			

<p>Youth apprenticeship partners provide guidance and support to prospective apprentices to assist with the application process (resume review, mock interviews, etc.).</p>			
<p>Support services (e.g. transportation, tutoring, etc.) are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsive to the needs of apprentices; • readily available and well-publicized; and • structured to remove barriers to program persistence, completion, and credentialing. 			
<p>The location, structure, and scheduling of classroom-based instruction (i.e., related technical instruction) reduces physical or other barriers that students, including those with disabilities, might face to program participation and completion.</p>			
<p>The location, structure, and scheduling of on-the-job learning reduces physical or other barriers that students, including those with disabilities, might face to program participation and completion.</p>			
<p>The scope and sequencing of each youth apprenticeship pathway's courses positively impacts student success and program completion (through front-loading of content to support on-the-job learning and productivity, integration of remedial content to address learning gaps, etc.).</p>			
<p>For each youth apprenticeship pathway, the cost of postsecondary instruction and materials is fully funded or subsidized.</p>			
<p>Youth apprenticeship partners work with employers to provide a welcoming and supportive environment for youth apprentices, particularly those who are underrepresented at the job site and in the industry (via implicit bias and cultural competency training, etc.).</p>			

PORTABLE

High-quality youth apprenticeships ensure learning leads to postsecondary credentials and transferable college credit that expand options for students. Portability is critical to quality because it makes higher education accessible and affordable and equips youth with valuable postsecondary credentials, including degrees, that facilitate economic mobility.

Quality Indicator	Assessment (Yes / No / Needs Improvement)	Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
The competencies gained through each youth apprenticeship pathway are aligned with state K–12 and/or higher education learning standards.			
Each youth apprenticeship pathway provides opportunities to earn academic credit toward a high school diploma for learning that takes place on the job.			
Each youth apprenticeship pathway provides opportunities to earn academic credit toward a postsecondary credential or degree for learning that takes place on the job.			
Academic credits earned through each youth apprenticeship pathway are easily transferable toward core requirements for a major or degree to support future educational attainment.			
The program provides support to youth apprentices to help them navigate postsecondary education and training options during and after program participation.			

ADAPTABLE

High-quality youth apprenticeships ensure learning is designed collaboratively to be recognized and valued across an industry or sector. Adaptability is critical to quality, because it expands career mobility and advancement opportunities for youth.

Quality Indicator	Assessment (Yes / No / Needs Improvement)	Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
The competencies and credentials gained through each youth apprenticeship pathway are clearly defined and documented via a work process schedule, documentation of apprenticeship standards, etc.			
The competencies and credentials for each youth apprenticeship pathway are informed by employer and industry partners in the region and reviewed on a regular basis.			
The competencies and credentials for each youth apprenticeship pathway are valued in the labor market as evidenced by the hiring and promotion of apprentices, etc.			
Each youth apprenticeship pathway leads to an occupation that offers clear options for advancement and upward mobility within the field or industry.			
All youth apprentices are provided with information about the multiple career options within their given industry, including information on the education, training, and experience needed to pursue those options.			

ACCOUNTABLE

High-quality youth apprenticeships monitor student, employer, and program outcomes using transparent metrics to support improvement. Accountability is critical to quality, because it exposes performance and opportunity gaps and positions stakeholders to design and measure the impact of targeted continuous improvement efforts.

Quality Indicator	Assessment (Yes / No / Needs Improvement)	Strengths	Opportunities for Improvement
Youth apprenticeship partners routinely collect and share data on program and pathway participation, completion, and outcomes.			
Youth apprenticeship partners routinely use data to identify gaps in program and pathway participation, completion, and outcomes based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, special population status (as defined by Perkins IV), occupational pathway, and other factors.			
Youth apprenticeship partners routinely use data to inform modifications to program and pathway design, including recruitment strategies, coursework and on-the-job training, student supports, and the discontinuation of specific occupational pathways.			
Youth apprenticeship partners routinely collect and use qualitative data (through surveys, focus groups, etc.) to measure apprentice satisfaction and identify areas of improvement.			
Youth apprenticeship partners routinely collect and use qualitative data from employers (through surveys, focus groups, etc.) to measure satisfaction and identify areas of improvement.			
Performance data is publicly available to students, parents, and the general public to facilitate informed decisions about education and training options.			

YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP QUALITY ASSESSMENT PROTOCOL

1. Determine priority areas for assessment.

The Youth Apprenticeship Quality Assessment Tool is organized around PAYA's [Definition & Principles for Youth Apprenticeship](#). While each of the five principles are equally important to the development and delivery of high-quality youth apprenticeships, leaders may choose to initially prioritize the principle(s) that will have the most significant impact on learners.

2. Inventory available information and data to inform assessment.

To determine whether a youth apprenticeship is designed with quality in mind and implemented in a way that leads to positive and equitable outcomes for all learners, program leaders can examine multiple qualitative and quantitative data points. Before engaging the Youth Apprenticeship Quality Assessment Tool (step 3), leaders should identify and compile information and data that can be used to monitor and drive improvement.

Early-stage youth apprenticeship initiatives might rely primarily on information about program operations (recruitment processes, delivery of support services, etc.), curriculum design, and the relevance of target competencies and credentials to help with assessments about a program's potential to yield positive youth education, training, and employment outcomes. Mature youth apprenticeship initiatives may be better positioned to examine data on the demographic characteristics of learners, their rates of program participation and completion, post-apprenticeship outcomes, and surveys of learner or employer satisfaction.

PAYA's [Youth Apprenticeship Data Framework](#) is a helpful starting point for examples of data and information that partnerships can compile. It offers a comprehensive (though non-exhaustive) list of relevant, actionable information and data youth apprenticeship partners can collect to document their processes; monitor apprentice progress; and track outcomes for apprentices, employers, and other key stakeholders.

3. Use the Tool to assess the presence of youth apprenticeship quality indicators.

With data and information readily accessible, leaders are well positioned to meaningfully engage with the Youth Apprenticeship Quality Assessment Tool. For each of the PAYA principles, the tool outlines factors that influence the extent to which youth apprenticeships are of high quality and lead to equitable opportunities and outcomes for students. The tool prompts youth apprenticeship leaders to document strengths and areas of improvement related to their partnership structures, the design of their programs, and the specific requirements and components of each occupational pathway offered. Leaders are encouraged to consider the role that each stakeholder plays in advancing quality programming and eliminating barriers to advancement and mobility, particularly for apprentices from historically underserved and marginalized groups.

4. Develop a plan to address improvement priorities.

Once leaders have worked through the Youth Apprenticeship Quality Assessment Tool, the next step is to develop a plan to address improvement opportunities. A plan should, at minimum, address the following:

- Which quality indicators are of highest priority and why?
- What actions need to be taken to address program and/or pathway design or outcome improvement goals?
- Who is responsible for the action items identified?
- When will priority action items occur?
- What measures will the partnership rely on to determine the success of program and/or pathway improvement efforts?
- What additional information or data could/should be collected to monitor and drive improvement?