



May 2025

Apprentice Utilization Fact Sheet

Summary

Apprentice Utilization Requirements (AURs) require 15% of labor hours for a given public works construction project be performed by Washington State registered apprentices and/or reciprocally recognized apprentices in a different state or federal program. The Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council (WSATC) has an [Apprenticeship Reciprocity Agreement](#)¹ with Oregon and Montana. RCW [49.04.035](#) requires the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries to verify apprentice utilization compliance on public works projects and report the results to the WSATC.

History

The first state-wide AUR initiative came through an executive order under the Locke administration in February 2000. Since that time, AURs have become widespread in Washington encompassing cities, counties, private and public development entities, department of transportation and K-12 school construction.

Driving these efforts is a compelling industry need for skilled workers best captured by the following excerpt from the codification of Gov. Locke's executive order in 2005:

"A well-trained construction trade's work force is critical to the ability of the state of Washington to construct public works. Studies of the state's work force highlight population trends that, without a concerted effort to offset them, will lead to an inadequate supply of skilled workers in the construction industry. State government regularly constructs public works. The efficient and economical construction of public works projects will be harmed if there is not an ample supply of trained construction workers. Apprenticeship training programs are particularly effective in providing training and experience to individuals seeking to enter or advance in the work force. By providing for apprenticeship utilization on public works projects, state government can create opportunities for training and experience that will help assure that a trained work force will be available in sufficient numbers in the future for the construction of public works."

Apprentice Utilization Requirements on public works projects are covered in RCW [39.04.320](#).

¹ The reciprocity agreement may be updated yearly. Please review the current version and any updates to understand changes and effective dates.

Review of Apprentice Utilization Requirements

In accordance with RCW 39.04.320, a minimum 15% of labor hours will be worked by WSATC registered/approved apprentices on the following:

- State agency public works estimated to cost \$1 million dollars or more;
- Department of Transportation projects estimated to cost \$2 million or more;
- School district public works projects estimated to cost \$1 million or more;
- Public works by a state four-year institution of higher learning estimated to cost \$1 million or more; and
- Municipal projects over \$2 million awarded after July 1, 2024.
 - Over \$1.5 million for projects advertised for bid on/after July 1, 2026.
 - Over \$1 million for projects advertised for bid on/after July 1, 2028.

Apprentice Utilization Requirements can also be found on projects not mandated by law. The awarding entity may require apprentice utilization even if the project is below the minimum dollar amount.

There are other types of projects that have Apprentice Utilization Requirements, such as renewable energy projects and projects with tax incentives/rebates. Renewable energy project information can be found in [WAC 296-05-207](#). Apprentice utilization information on projects with tax incentives/rebates can be found by contacting the Department of Revenue.

Each sponsoring jurisdiction/entity for an apprentice utilization requirement may take a slightly different approach. For specifics regarding a particular AUR, refer back to the project bid specifications or contract documents.

Where is L&I getting the data for apprentice utilization?

RCW [39.12.120](#) requires all contractors working on a public works project to submit certified payroll at least once per month using the Prevailing Wage Intents and Affidavits (PWIA) system. L&I can use certified payroll and affidavits to verify apprentice utilization. However, **the apprentice utilization percentage on the affidavits is what is used to determine compliance.**

For questions on certified payroll, contractor training, intents, affidavits, or the PWIA system, please contact the prevailing wage section at 360-902-5335, or PW1@lni.wa.gov.

For any other questions concerning apprentice utilization, please contact the apprenticeship section at 360-902-5320 or Apprentice@lni.wa.gov.

More information can be found on our [website](#) under licensing and permits.

The Easiest Way to Start Training Registered Apprentices

Join an existing program! The easiest way to comply with an AUR is to become what is referred to as a “training agent” employer participating in an existing, approved State Apprenticeship program. This process can be relatively quick, but relies solely on the program sponsor and interested business to carry it through. To join an existing program:

- First, identify the occupations for which you have the capability and desire to train.
- Use L & I's [Apprenticeship Registration and Tracking System \(ARTS\)](#) to find apprenticeship programs by county and/or occupation. The result lists apprenticeship program sponsors in alphabetical order.
- Click on a program name to get the details on the program and occupation, Standards of Apprenticeship, and contact information.
- Call or email the contact person listed for information on program participation.

For any program you may be interested in, study the “Standards of Apprenticeship” document carefully and then sign a “*training agent agreement*” form with the program sponsor. Program sponsors may require fees for participation to cover administrative and training costs.

Starting Your Own Apprenticeship Program

For businesses that do not want to join an existing program and have the desire, capacity and resources to start their own program, help is available:

- Contact the apprenticeship section at 360-902-5320 or Apprentice@lni.wa.gov and you will be referred to an apprenticeship consultant in your area.
- Approval process typically takes approximately six months.
- Potential program sponsors must have the will and resources to complete the approval process and then administer and maintain a registered apprenticeship program including, but not limited to:
 1. New apprenticeship standards for proposals must be substantially similar (e.g., term, work processes, related training) to any existing standards for the occupation in question.
 2. Administrative capacity to oversee day-to-day operations of the apprenticeship program.

3. Ability to comply with equal employment opportunity guidelines in selection of apprentices (programs with more than 4 apprentices)
4. Ability to provide, or the ability to negotiate with an educational institution to provide, a minimum of 144 hours per year of Related Supplemental Instruction (RSI) to the apprentice.

Responsibilities When Employing Registered Apprentices

Employers that provide on-the-job training for apprentices are required to follow certain rules:

- Provide paid on-the-job training to the apprentice in the registered occupation.
- Pay the apprentice the appropriate wages (Apprentices are paid a specified percentage of the Journey rate for the occupation. Program sponsors report Journey rates annually to L & I).
- Monitor ratio of journey level to apprentice workers.
- Ensure proper supervision of apprentices in accordance with the program Standards of Apprenticeship.
- Employ only registered apprentices and journeymen when training for an occupation.

For more information on becoming a training agent or starting a registered apprenticeship, please visit our [Offer a Registered Apprenticeship](#) webpage.