

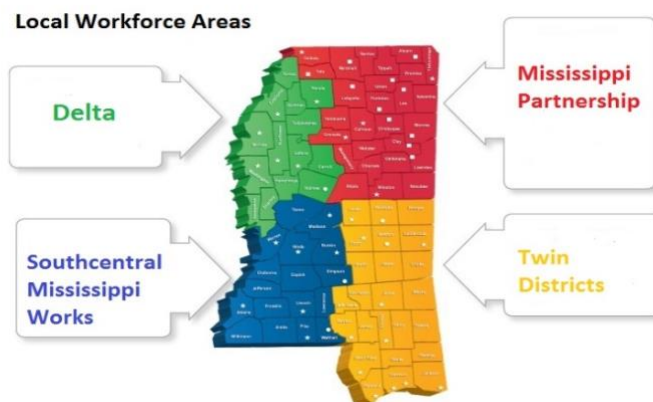


Mississippi Apprenticeship Accelerator (MAA) Program Guidelines

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is a proven strategy for helping businesses grow their skilled workforce through a combination of customized and rigorous on-the-job training and related classroom instruction.

The Mississippi Apprenticeship Program (MAP) assists companies of any size in developing a Registered Apprenticeship program from the initial concept phase to registration and subsequent implementation within the company. Recognizing that RA is business-driven, MAP works closely with companies to identify the occupations and skill sets needed on their job sites to build out an RA program designed to meet their needs. To assist companies and the MAP with expanding RA in Mississippi, AccelerateMS, MAP, and MDES created the Mississippi Apprenticeship Accelerator (MAA) program. The MAA aims to provide critical funding to support RA expansion necessary to reduce critical skill gaps in priority sectors and occupations while expanding training to increase capacity and opportunities for Mississippians. MAA has a critical focus on high-demand, high-wage occupations, which AccelerateMS identified as being of critical importance due to talent demand and supply gaps.

Businesses participating in the Mississippi Apprenticeship Accelerator must employ registered apprentices enrolled in programs leading to these priority occupations, particularly skilled trades workers, which are essential for Mississippi's growth. The program also encourages the establishment of pre-apprenticeships in collaboration with local secondary and post-secondary education institutions and non-credit training providers, ensuring a robust pipeline of skilled workers for the future. AccelerateMS has initially dedicated \$2 million of MS WORKS funds to the MAA program statewide, allowing for approximately 300 new registered apprentices in priority occupations. Funds are available on a first-come, first serve basis until exhausted.



Administration and Oversight

The Local Workforce Development Area (LWDA) will serve as the administrative agency and develop an RA Policy specific to their area, if one does not exist. This will include prioritizing and appropriately using MAA funds for the RA program. The LWDA has the authority to refuse a training agreement with any business in accordance with State law, WIOA law and regulations, or any LWDA policy or guideline. Additionally, AccelerateMS reserves the right to refuse any training agreement with any business in accordance with State law and/or office policies and priorities.

Funding

Participating businesses may be reimbursed an amount equal to 50% of the apprentice's hourly wage up to a maximum of \$3,000 from MS WORKS Funds. Local partners are encouraged to leverage other available funds to increase the impact of this program as industry demands justify. LWDA policy will define the reimbursement conditions (for example, the completion of the agreed-upon training period), the maximum reimbursement amount per business based on available funds, and the duration of hours allowable for apprentices.

The wage reimbursement will be based on the actual work time (this includes time spent in paid training) but will not include overtime, shift differential, premium pay and other non-regular wages paid by the business. Reimbursement shall not be claimed for time which the apprentice is absent due to illness, holiday, plant downtime, or other events during which no work or paid training occurs.

General Eligibility

Apprentices must meet LWDA and MAP eligibility requirements and have a complete MS Works system profile, including WIOA (if funded by WIOA) and apprenticeship training enrollment.

Businesses in the targeted sectors of construction, advanced manufacturing, or information technology, as well as those hiring the priority occupations listed below and implementing an RA program, are eligible to participate.

Priority Occupations:

Aerospace Engineers	HVAC Technicians
Aerospace Technologists and Technicians	Industrial Engineers
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	Industrial Maintenance Technicians
Commercial Electricians	Licensed Practical and Vocational Nurses
Commercial Truck Operators* (not just CDL)	Line Workers
Computer Science Engineers	Logging Equipment Operators
Construction Engineers	Logisticians
Data Center Controls Technician	Machine Operators
Electrical Engineers	Machinists
Electricians	Millwright
EMT	Mechanical Engineers
Engineering Technicians	Mechanical Maintenance Technicians
Fiber Fusion Splicer	Network Technicians
Fiber Fusion Splicing Instructors	Plumber/Pipefitters/Shipfitter
Heavy Equipment Operators	Registered Nurses

Renewable Energy Engineer
Shipbuilding Carpenters
Surveyors

Waterworks Operators (Certified)
Welders

Any eligible for-profit business, according to the Mississippi Works Fund Rules, may apply for the program, subject to the following restrictions:

- Businesses with unresolved violations of local, state (including Unemployment Insurance), or federal labor laws, or those experiencing abnormal labor conditions such as strikes or lockouts, are ineligible.
- If a business is suspended or barred from participating in any Federal Government Procurement programs, it may not apply. Additionally, if a suspension or disbarment occurs during an agreement, the business must promptly notify the MAP and LWDA representatives.
- Retaining MAA apprentices is a factor in determining eligibility. Businesses that show a pattern of failing to provide long-term employment for MAA apprentices will be ineligible to add new apprentices for at least 12 months. "Pattern of failing to provide long-term employment" is defined as having at least 75% of apprentices reimbursed by the business in the past 12 months still employed by the business, with the 12-month retention period beginning at the apprentice's completion date.
- Businesses that have relocated within the past 120 days and caused an increase in unemployment in their previous area of operation cannot utilize MAA until they have been operational at the new location for at least 120 days.
- State agencies, temporary employment agencies, employee leasing firms, staffing agencies, churches, or any facility used for religious worship are ineligible.
- Businesses with representatives on the Local Workforce Development Board are prohibited from applying during the representative's term and for one year after the term ends. This restriction does not apply to representatives of public or government entities.
- MAA cannot be used to employ immediate family members (spouse, child, grandchild, sibling, or sibling's spouse) of the business's owners, partners, board of directors, or the apprentice's direct supervisor.

Occupational Eligibility & Prohibitions

MAA may **not** be utilized for any of the following:

- Occupations with a wage rate below the minimum starting rate of pay as defined by LWDA
- Occupations dependent on commission; tips/gratuities; or draw as a primary source of income
- Contract workers
- Intermittent seasonal or temporary occupations
- Regular part-time occupations—defined as less than 35 hours per week (an apprentice may be in paid part-time on-the-job training while also attending an educational/training program, but the planned end result is full-time employment).
- If, within the past 120 days, the employer has had any layoff, work stoppage, or strike that included the same or substantially equivalent position.
- A situation where the same or substantially equivalent position as the one requested for a RA, is unfilled due to a hiring freeze.

- Any position where the employer has separated a regular employee with the intention of filling the vacancy with an RA.
- A situation where an RA would infringe upon the promotion of or displacement of any current employee or a reduction of work hours for any other employee.
- To train individuals under the age of 16.
- Any companies in or related to the cannabis industry. This shall include, but not be limited to, cultivation facilities, research facilities, testing facilities, and dispensing facilities.
- Any occupation that is involved in religious, anti-religious or political activity of any kind.

Roles and Responsibilities

Each MAA project will include an agreement between the business and the LWDA or their designated service provider. The Mississippi Department of Employment Security's (MDES) Eligible Training Provider (ETPL) system, including the Agreement, Training Outline, and Invoice modules, will be utilized by the LWDA and business for the MAA process.

The MDES MS Works system will be utilized for registration, training enrollment, and ongoing progress tracking.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be developed between the LWDA's, Mississippi Department of Employment Security, and AccelerateMS to define the cash flow process.

Section A. BUSINESS

The participating employer agrees to the following:

The participating employer agrees to the following responsibilities:

1. Hiring new employees for the program.
2. Developing and implementing a structured on-the-job and technical training plan.
3. Providing technical training and/or instruction through community colleges, technical schools, private training providers, online platforms, or at the job site.
4. Offering progressive wage increases based on achieved skill gains (reimbursement will be calculated based on the entry wage amount).
5. Ensuring supervision and mentorship to reinforce learning while apprentices are in the program.
6. Follow legal hiring and employment practices, ensuring no applicant is discriminated against based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or political affiliation or belief.
7. Provide employee orientation and safety training.
8. Maintain Worker's Compensation Insurance coverage throughout their involvement in MAA.
9. Submit a complete job description and associated training outline for each apprenticeship position.
10. Work with and train all MAA apprentices as outlined in the training plan and within the agreed-upon timeframe.

11. Ensure that the training leads to the attainment of a nationally recognized credential for each apprentice.
12. Submit payroll source documentation as required for reimbursement.
13. Notify the LWDA upon receipt of any formal complaint related to or involving an apprentice under a Registered Apprenticeship (RA) agreement.
14. Notify the LWDA in the event of termination or separation of an apprentice from employment.
15. Understand that a representative from the LWDA or its designated service provider will monitor the worksite regularly, and state or federal representatives may also conduct monitoring to ensure compliance with the RA agreement.

Section B: LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The Local Workforce Development Area agrees to the following:

1. Identify prospective industries and employers to provide information on the RA program.
2. Enter into agreements with employers to participate in the MAA program.
3. Enroll participants into MS Works and ETPL systems as apprentices once selected by the participating RA business.
4. Track and report the obligation and expenditures of MAA funds in the ETPL system, within GranTrak, and other reporting as required by AccelerateMS.
5. Utilize a combination of funding, where feasible, including MSWorks funds and WIOA funds to reimburse participating employers. The MS WORKS portion cannot exceed \$3,000 per apprentice. Reimbursement to the employer is based on a maximum of 50% of the apprentice's hourly wage during the agreed upon training period.