

CareerSource Okaloosa Walton

PY2026 Sectors of Strategic Focus Apprenticeship Expansion Grant

Implementation Plan

CareerSource Okaloosa Walton (CSOW) is committed to expanding Registered Apprenticeship opportunities as a workforce solution for employers and a career pathway for job seekers throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties. This initiative supports CSOW's ongoing workforce development strategy of connecting businesses with talent solutions while providing individuals access to education, training, industry-recognized credentials, and employment opportunities that lead to long-term economic self-sufficiency.

CareerSource Okaloosa Walton will review local workforce policies related to participant eligibility, training investments, supportive services, and work-based learning to maximize participant access while reducing barriers to participation. Policy updates will be implemented where appropriate to support the goals of this initiative.

The workforce needs of Okaloosa and Walton Counties continue to be driven by growth in healthcare, construction and skilled trades, advanced manufacturing, transportation, aviation, defense, and related industries. Employers throughout the region consistently identify the recruitment and retention of qualified workers as a significant challenge. Apprenticeship models provide an effective solution by allowing employers to develop their own talent pipelines while providing individuals with the opportunity to earn wages, gain hands-on experience, and obtain industry-recognized skills.

Through the PY2026 Sectors of Strategic Focus Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, CSOW will build upon existing workforce programs, employer relationships, educational partnerships, and community resources to expand Registered Apprenticeships, Pre-Apprenticeships, On-the-Job Training (OJT), Employed Worker Training (EWT), and other work-based learning opportunities throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties.

The focus of this initiative will be to increase apprenticeship opportunities within targeted industries while creating clear career pathways that lead to credential attainment, employment, and career advancement. Services will be delivered through CSOW's existing workforce delivery system, providing eligible participants with access to services through both in-person and virtual options.

Apprenticeship Expansion Strategy

CareerSource Okaloosa Walton views apprenticeship expansion as a key component of its regional workforce development strategy. Rather than creating a standalone initiative, CSOW

will integrate apprenticeships into existing employer engagement activities, workforce programs, and career services.

CSOW will collaborate with employers interested in developing Registered Apprenticeship programs and will explore opportunities to serve as an apprenticeship sponsor when appropriate. Staff will coordinate with CareerSource Florida, Florida Commerce, the Florida Department of Education, educational partners, and industry organizations to provide technical assistance, support program development, and assist employers throughout the apprenticeship registration process.

CSOW will build upon existing apprenticeship relationships while actively pursuing new opportunities in industries experiencing significant workforce demand. Current employer discussions with Peaden Air Conditioning, Plumbing and Electrical; and HCA Healthcare demonstrate growing interest in apprenticeship as a workforce solution.

Peaden represents an opportunity to expand apprenticeship pathways within the skilled trades sector. As a regional leader in HVAC and mechanical services, Peaden has identified the need for a consistent pipeline of skilled technicians. CSOW will continue working with Peaden to explore apprenticeship opportunities that provide participants with structured training, firsthand experience, and a direct pathway into high-demand careers.

Healthcare continues to be one of the fastest-growing industries throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties. CSOW will continue engaging with HCA Healthcare to explore potential healthcare apprenticeship opportunities designed to address workforce shortages while creating accessible career pathways for area residents.

CSOW will also build upon existing apprenticeship efforts, including the welding apprenticeship opportunity currently supported through Reliance Test & Technology (RT&T), which prepares participants for careers in the skilled trades. This initiative serves as a model for expanding apprenticeship opportunities with additional employers in construction, manufacturing, fabrication, and related industries.

In addition to Registered Apprenticeships, CSOW will continue expanding Pre-Apprenticeships, On-the-Job Training, Employed Worker Training, and other work-based learning opportunities that provide businesses with effective talent development strategies while creating pathways to long-term employment.

CSOW will actively participate in statewide meetings, technical assistance sessions, peer learning opportunities, and collaborative activities coordinated by CareerSource Florida and FloridaCommerce.

Regional Partnerships and Training Provider Collaboration

Successful apprenticeship expansion requires strong partnerships between employers, education providers, workforce organizations, and community partners. CSOW will continue strengthening these relationships to ensure apprenticeship opportunities align with employer needs and available training resources.

Educational partners, including Emerald Coast Technical College (ECTC), Okaloosa Technical College (OTC), and Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC), will play a key role in developing career pathways aligned with regional workforce demand. CSOW will work with these training providers to identify opportunities where occupational skills training, technical education, and industry certifications can serve as entry points into apprenticeship programs.

Programs in areas such as welding, plumbing, electrical, healthcare, and other technical fields provide valuable opportunities to connect classroom instruction with employer-driven career pathways. Through continued collaboration, CSOW will help ensure participants have access to training that leads to industry-recognized credentials and employment opportunities.

CSOW will also continue working with economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, industry associations, and community partners to increase awareness of apprenticeship opportunities and encourage employer participation.

Participant Recruitment, Career Pathways, and Career Services

CSOW will utilize its existing career services model to identify and recruit WIOA-eligible participants who may benefit from apprenticeship and work-based learning opportunities. Eligible participants will include individuals served through the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs.

Career Advisors will provide individualized services including assessments, career exploration, labor market information, employability planning, supportive services, and training referrals. When appropriate, apprenticeship opportunities will be incorporated into Individual Employment Plans to ensure participants understand available career pathways and training options. Career Advisors will utilize the Florida CLIFF Dashboard to help participants evaluate career pathways, projected wage progression, and long-term economic self-sufficiency.

Participants will have access to occupational skills training, work-based learning opportunities, credentialed training programs, and supportive services designed to reduce barriers to participation and employment. CSOW will prioritize training investments that lead to industry-recognized credentials, measurable skills gains, and employment opportunities aligned with employer demand.

Co-enrollment strategies will be utilized when appropriate to maximize available resources and provide comprehensive workforce services. By connecting participants with multiple workforce programs and funding sources, CSOW will help individuals successfully complete training, enter employment, and continue progressing along a career pathway.

Employer Engagement and Business Services Strategy

CSOW's Business Services Team will serve as the primary point of contact for employers participating in this initiative. The team's established relationships with businesses throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties provide a solid foundation for identifying apprenticeship opportunities and developing employer-driven workforce solutions.

Business Services staff will respond to employer apprenticeship inquiries within two business days whenever possible and provide technical assistance throughout apprenticeship program development and implementation.

Employer engagement efforts will focus on understanding workforce challenges, identifying occupations with recruitment and retention issues, assessing training needs, and determining whether apprenticeships are an appropriate solution.

CSOW will position apprenticeship as one component of a comprehensive workforce strategy that may include:

- Pre-Apprenticeships
- On-the-Job Training (OJT)
- Employed Worker Training (EWT)
- Individual Training Accounts (ITA)
- Candidate recruitment and screening
- Labor Market Information (LMI)
- EmployFlorida job postings
- Hiring events and recruitment assistance

Through these efforts, CSOW will provide employers with customized workforce solutions while expanding access to apprenticeship opportunities throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties.

PY2026 Performance Goals

Set Aside Initiative: Sector of Strategic Focus		
Apprenticeship Expansion		
Program Output/Outcomes	PY2025 Baseline	PY2026 Goals
Enrollment	6	3
Placed in ITA Funded Training	6	3

Placed in Work Based Training	0	2
Received Supportive Services*	0	2
Obtained Credentials**	1	2
Employed***	1	3
Employers contacted	221	100
Active OJTs being funded	0	0

CSOW will monitor grant performance through quarterly reporting and ongoing evaluation of employer engagement, participant enrollments, training activities, credential attainment, measurable skills gains, employment outcomes, and apprenticeship expansion activities. Performance data will be used to continuously improve service delivery and ensure timely progress toward grant objectives.

Conclusion

Through the PY2026 Sectors of Strategic Focus Apprenticeship Expansion Grant, CareerSource Okaloosa Walton will expand apprenticeship opportunities by building upon existing employer relationships, workforce programs, education partnerships, and community resources. This initiative will strengthen the local talent pipeline by helping businesses develop skilled workers while providing individuals with opportunities to earn wages, gain industry-recognized credentials, and advance into sustainable careers. By integrating Registered Apprenticeships with Pre-Apprenticeships, On-the-Job Training, Employed Worker Training, and other workforce strategies, CSOW will continue supporting employer-driven solutions and expanding economic opportunities throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties.