

Promoting Apprenticeships through Regional Training Networks for Employers' Required Skills (PARTNERS) Act

Senator Tammy Baldwin

Background:

Middle skill jobs—those requiring more than a high school diploma, but not a four-year degree—make up 53 percent of today's labor market, but only 43 percent of U.S. workers are trained at this level. This creates a skills gap, leaving businesses struggling to find workers with appropriate skills, and workers without meaningful pathways to better paying jobs.

Apprenticeships and work-based learning programs provide individuals with paid, on-the-job training and classroom instruction. Employers can align training with the skills they need, and workers learn while they earn.

Small and medium sized businesses often lack the infrastructure and resources to establish apprenticeships or work-based learning programs. Industry partnerships can help address the skills gap by bringing together employers, education, training, labor, and community-based organizations to develop work based learning programs.

Summary of the PARTNERS Act:

The PARTNERS Act would establish a grant program to support the creation and expansion of industry and sector partnerships to help small and medium sized businesses develop work-based learning programs and provide mentoring and support services for workers.

The H-1B Nonimmigrant Petitioner Fee Account gives the Department of Labor broad authority to award grants to provide job training for workers in in-demand industries and economic sectors. The PARTNERS Act authorizes the use of 50 percent of the funds deposited into the H-1B Nonimmigrant Petition Account for use by the Department of Labor for partnerships grants, resulting in no additional cost to taxpayers.

The Department of Labor would distribute grants to states using the same allocation formula as Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. States would provide grants of up to \$500,000 for three years to partnerships. The funds would support small and medium-sized businesses in establishing or expanding work-based learning programs and providing support services for workers.

The partnerships can assist small and medium sized businesses:

- Recruit participants for paid work-based learning programs, with focus on SNAP and TANF recipients
- Connect with education providers to develop classroom instruction to complement on-the-job learning
- Assist with the design and development of work-based learning curriculum
- Serve as employer of record for workers in the work-based learning program during the transitional period before the business hires the individual for permanent employment
- Provide education and skills development to managers and front-line workers who will train or mentor workers in the learning program
- Provide career preparation activities
- Navigate the Department of Labor apprenticeship registration process

The partnerships can provide support services for workers such as:

- Adult basic education classes
- Pre-work-based learning or training or pre-apprenticeship programs
- Mentorship and retention support services
- Access to tools, work attire, transportation, child care services, and other items required for employment