



Apprenticeships: Pathways to Careers

In 2021, California introduced the Creative Workforce Act (Senate Bill 628), which established “creative arts workforce development” as a state priority and marked the beginning of its commitment to supporting apprenticeship and “earn and learn” models for talent interested in pursuing a career in the entertainment industry.

Fast forward to 2022, education partners, employers, government agencies, labor unions, and career pathway and training programs came together to form the [Entertainment Equity Alliance](#) (EEA), with a goal of establishing a collaborative system to build a more inclusive and diverse school to career pipeline and entertainment workforce. The [Arts, Media, and Entertainment High Road Training Partnership \(AME-HRTP\)](#) was in turn born out of the EEA to establish a network of registered apprenticeships, training, and mentorship programs for high-wage, high-skill careers and drive economic mobility for underrepresented individuals in California’s creative economy.

Registered apprenticeships are a government-backed workforce development Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) program that includes:

- 1080 hours (minimum) of paid on-the-job training with one wage increase
- Minimum of 144 hours of free related instruction, as determined by the employer
- An official certificate of completion that is often viewed as an alternative to a college degree

These types of programs typically target 16–24 year-old youth, however all individuals regardless of their level of education, can be considered and benefit from an “earn and learn” approach.

Registering an apprenticeship with the state or federal government can be an arduous process of paperwork and administrative work, particularly for employers navigating a system they are unfamiliar with – this is where intermediary program sponsors, like the BRIC Foundation and The Handy Foundation, come in. They can help with targeted recruitment to meet company needs, help companies navigate and benefit from government subsidies, grants, and incentives to support program sustainability, handle data collection and reporting, and facilitate successful registered apprenticeship programs by offering extended wraparound services for apprentices.

Apprenticeships differ from internships in various ways:

- Internships typically require some type of college enrollment and/or degree, whereas apprenticeships do not.

- Internships range 8-12 weeks in length, while apprenticeships typically last much longer (12 weeks is usually just the probationary period)
- Apprenticeships are led by employers and relevant hiring professionals, who provide their input on the structure and attributes.
- Internships typically provide lower pay / wages than apprenticeships. Union-approved apprenticeships specifically are guaranteed minimum contractual rates.

Apprenticeships in Action

Apprenticeships have long existed in the workforce development space; however, the creative industry has taken longer to leverage them as a talent pool source. The partnership and support of organizations like BRIC Foundation and Handy Foundation is crucial to ensuring employers have access to diverse, highly skilled talent, while also overseeing the management of necessary program administrative tasks on behalf of employers (e.g., registering apprentices, complying with apprenticeship standards, and coordinating with relevant agencies). Employers then navigate their company's internal processes to ensure they can successfully hire, pay, train, and support apprentices, while also providing their voice and input on program structure and attributes. It is important that the training apprentices receive is extensive enough to help individuals develop the skills they need to accelerate in their careers.

Apprenticeships in the creative sector differ from those in other sectors, largely due to the scale of apprentices that companies can take on. Typically, entertainment employers take on 1 to 2 apprentices at maximum and sometimes they even share apprentices across other companies, which allows talent to get a broad range of training and experience.

Lionsgate began a partnership with the [Handy Foundation](#) to pilot an apprenticeship in the post-production space. The model they created allowed Lionsgate to provide direct input on the internal integration of the program, while also relying on the Handy Foundation to recruit and prepare talent and handle program logistics. The Handy Foundation's Assistant Editor program was launched in 2020 remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has enabled them to remain nimble to change and transition in this "post-COVID" world. Their program consists of professional training courses on current unscripted and scripted film and television practices, specifically around post-production.

The [BRIC Foundation](#) has a state and federally recognized apprenticeship program in animation, visual effects, and gaming (AVG) – participants receive mentorship for 12 months, paid on-the-job training for 6+ months with an employer partner, and 144 hours of related supplemental instruction. Among their partners is Warner Bros. Discovery and HBO, who are hosting a 2023 Visual Effects (VFX) Production Management BRIC apprentice, the first-ever state and federally recognized apprentice in this pathway. Internally, their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) department served as a conduit for developing and formally launching the apprenticeship. For more information about BRIC's AVG Apprenticeship, including an overview of the apprenticeship process, the services BRIC provides as an Intermediary Program Sponsor, and employer benefits, visit bricfoundation.org/apprenticeship-employers.

Apprenticeships exist in the jobs and pathways we need to fill as an industry. In addition to the benefits for participants, it is also a business imperative for employers. Time and resources are not used to the highest potential with small talent pools.

Registered Apprenticeships in California

To date, California has 38 different occupations / pathways that have been registered as apprenticeships:



REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS

The following AME Registered Apprenticeship programs are all US Department of Labor and/or CA Division of Apprenticeship Standards approved. They are designed to allow for pre-apprenticeship and youth apprenticeship integration in career education and community workforce training programs. For more information email: ameprograms@cde.ca.gov

CA STATEWIDE PROGRAMS

MUSIC FORWARD FOUNDATION

Target Occupations: Entertainment Production Accountant, Music Publisher, General & Operations Manager, Talent Buyer, Lighting Technician, Grip, Stagehand, Audio & Video Technician, Audio Engineer, Costume Attendant, General Marketing Coordinator, Marketing Manager, Special Events Sales Manager Website: <https://musicforwardfoundation.org/>

BRIC FOUNDATION

Target Occupations: Animator, Game Designer, Visual Effects Artist, Storyboard Artist, Concept Artist, Background Artist, Digital FX Artist, Production Manager Website: <https://www.bricfoundation.org/avg>

HANDY FOUNDATION

Target Occupations: Assistant Editor/Digital Editor, Data Wrangler, Audio Editor, Production Coordinator, Assistant Story Producer, Virtual Production Specialist Website: <https://www.handyfoundation.com/>

KEYCODE MEDIA

Target Occupations: Media & Entertainment Post Production Engineer Website: <https://www.keycodemedia.com/>

EVEN

Target Occupations: Audio Technician, Automation Technician, Lighting Technician, Scenic and Staging Technician, Special Effects Technician, Video Technician Website: <https://theevennetwork.org/>

ARTS2WORK

Target Occupations: Multimedia Producer, Digital Editor, Graphic Designer Website: <https://arts2work.media/>

REGIONAL PROGRAMS SERVING SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN LOS ANGELES

BETTER YOUTH

Target Occupations: Game Designer, Project Manager, Digital Video Editor, Animation Artist, Multimedia Artist Website: <https://www.betteryouth.org/>

JAIL GARAGE DOORS

Target Occupations: Digital Video Editor, Audio Engineer Website: <https://www.jailguitardoors.org/>