

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

Section-by-Section

Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR-1) and Rep. Drew Ferguson (R-GA-3)

Section 1: Short Title

The Act may be cited as the Promoting Apprenticeships through Regional Training Networks for Employers' Required Skills Act of 2017 or PARTNERS Act.

Section 2: Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to support the creation and expansion of industry and sector partnerships for small and medium sized businesses within in-demand industries to develop registered apprenticeships and other work-based learning programs.

Section 3: Definitions

This section provides definitions for the terms "eligible intermediary," "in-demand industry sector," "registered apprenticeship," "work-based learning program," "Governor," "industry or sector partnership," "local board," "State board," "outlying area," "recognized post-secondary credential," "State," and "Secretary."

Section 4: Availability of Funds

The bill authorizes the Department of Labor to use funds deposited into the H-1B Nonimmigrant Petition Account for sector partnerships grants.

The statutory authorization for the H-1B Nonimmigrant Petitioner Fee Account gives the Department of Labor broad authority to use the funds to award grants to eligible entities to provide job training for workers in in-demand industries and economic sectors. Amending the use of funds from the H-1B Nonimmigrant Petitioner Fee Account for the PARTNERS Act grant program improves the innovation and flexibility of the current account, and results in no additional cost to taxpayers.

Section 5: Allotment to States

States, in consultation with State boards and local boards, would submit grant applications outlining sector partnerships that would be reviewed by the Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services. The applications would outline: the partnerships and the in-demand industry sector served, the work-based learning programs supported, the populations targeted, the business engagement and support services for workers, and the performance indicators. The Department of Labor would distribute grants using the allocation formula outlined in Title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Secretary of Labor may reserve no more than 5 percent of the funds for the costs of technical assistance.

Section 6: Grants to Eligible Intermediaries

The Governor of a state that receives funds under Section 5 of this Act would distribute grants of up to \$500,000 for a period of three years to eligible intermediaries to support or establish

industry or sector partnerships. Each partnership must designate a fiscal agent to receive funds under this section. Entities can participate in more than one partnership receiving a grant under this section. States are directed to consider geographical diversity in the distribution of the grants.

Section 7: Use of Funds

Eligible intermediaries that receive a grant under Section 6 shall use the funds to support or establish a registered apprenticeship or other work-based learning program. This should include business engagement, support services for workers, and other strategies to support the development and implementation of work-based learning programs, and participant retention in and completion of those programs. This may include:

Business engagement:

- Recruit participants for paid work-based learning programs, with particular focus on SNAP and TANF recipients.
- Connect business 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.
- Help navigate the Department of Labor apprenticeship registration process.

Support services for workers:

- Connect participants with adult basic education classes.
- Connect participants with pre-work-based learning or training or pre-apprenticeship programs.
- Provide additional mentorship and retention support services.
- Provide access to transportation and child care services.

Section 8: Performance and Accountability

No later than one year after receiving a grant, and annually thereafter, each eligible intermediary shall conduct an evaluation and submit a report to the state on levels of performance achieved using the primary indicators of performance for all workers and with respect to individuals with barriers to employment, disaggregated by each population outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

No later than 24 months after receiving the local reports, states must submit a report to the Secretary of Labor detailing levels of performance, aggregated across all eligible intermediaries.

Section 9: Conforming Amendments

This section makes two conforming amendments to the American Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act and the Immigration and Nationality Act.