

Executive Summary

California's apprenticeship ecosystem has strong foundations in the building trades, but promising pilots in nontraditional sectors (health care, IT, public sector, climate resilience, education, advanced manufacturing) remain fragmented. Key challenges include: 1) unclear statewide standards for youth apprenticeship; 2) inconsistent registration and launch processes for nontraditional programs; 3) patchwork funding; 4) limited intermediary capacity; and the absence of shared statewide data and awareness infrastructure.

This blueprint is guided by the [five principles developed by the Partnership for Advancing Youth Apprenticeship](#), however, we intend for these to direct apprenticeship expansion beyond the programmatic lens and influence the apprenticeship ecosystem as a whole through both policy and budget recommendations as of January 2026, following the Governor's recent proposed budget. The outcomes section, therefore, provides clear guidance to California policymakers that are interested in systems change to expand apprenticeship across the state via legislative and budget recommendations.

Principles

Outcomes

CAREER-ORIENTED

Learning is structured around knowledge, skills, and competencies that lead to careers with family-supporting wages.

EQUITABLE

Learning is accessible to every student, with targeted supports for those adversely impacted by long-standing inequities in our education system and labor market.

- The recommendation integrates on-the-job and classroom learning to provide a coherent learning experience that prepares students to navigate the economy through work and postsecondary education.
- The recommendation leads to improved, measurable economic success for students in both the short- and long-term.
- The recommendation equips students with skills and competencies that are valued throughout an industry and can be further developed to advance within that field.

- The recommendation is designed to acknowledge and address local equity challenges.
- The recommendation provides targeted student support services to ensure equitable representation and success across all industries involved in the recommendation.
- The recommendation expands opportunity and leads to improved education and employment outcomes.

Principles	Outcomes
<p>PORTABLE Learning leads to postsecondary credentials and transferable college credit that expands options for students.</p> <p>ADAPTABLE Learning is designed collaboratively to be recognized and valued across an industry or sector.</p> <p>ACCOUNTABLE Student, employer, and program outcomes are monitored using transparent metrics to support improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendation is designed to acknowledge and address local equity challenges. • The recommendation provides targeted student support services to ensure equitable representation and success across all industries involved in the recommendation. • The recommendation expands opportunity and leads to improved education and employment outcomes. • The recommendation promotes strategies that involve multiple employers, leverage industry-wide standards, and connect to local education and community partners. • The recommendation addresses the needs of participating employers by broadening their access to talent with industry-recognized skills and valued credentials. • The recommendation supports the economic success of local, regional, and state employer partners. • The recommendation sustains active, high-level leadership and support from all relevant partners, including education institutions, employers, intermediary organizations, and the community at large. • The recommendation's outcomes data are disaggregated and reported publicly to track success for both students and employers. • The recommendation's partners share responsibility for ensuring the success of apprentices and the continuous improvement of the recommendation as a whole.

1. Youth Apprenticeship & Pathway Design (K-16 Alignment)

Core Problem: California lacks clear, unified definitions and structure for youth apprenticeship; youth pathways are fragmented across K-12, community colleges, workforce systems, and employers; and the system still defaults to a “college-or-nothing” paradigm rather than blended earn-and-learn pathways.

Policy Recommendation	Outcomes	Fiscal Range
<p>Adopt a statewide definition and framework for youth apprenticeship aligned across education, labor, and workforce agencies.</p> <p>Fund and scale the Career Apprenticeship Bridge (CAB) program statewide as a core youth pathway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a single statewide “youth apprenticeship product” (less fragmentation across K-12/CCC/workforce). • Reduces local reinvention and lowers barriers for employers/LEAs to start programs. • Improves equity because a baseline model exists regardless of region capacity. • Moves CA from isolated pilots to a repeatable, scalable youth apprenticeship pathway. • Expands paid, debt-free routes, weakening the “college-or-nothing” default. • Strengthens regional labor-market alignment because pathways are co-designed with employers + education. 	<p>Low-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopting statewide frameworks will require little to no dollars given it will reside under existing state entities. • Use existing program administration resources (CDE/CC CTE, DAS youth apprenticeship) and align reporting instead of creating new parallel systems. • Bundle reporting into existing Cradle-to-Career / labor market reporting expansions where feasible. <p>High-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency coordination, Related and Supplemental Instruction Reimbursement (RSI), insurance, administration, etc. will be needed to stand up a statewide CAB program. • Moderate to high depending on scale. Planning-range: \$10M–\$25M (pilot) to \$40M–\$80M/year (statewide scale). • Start with regional pilots aligned to Jobs First regions; scale only after meeting cost-per-completer targets. • Braid funding where applicable: COYA, WIOA youth, CCC Strong Workforce/CAI, ETP, etc. • Leverage employer cost-sharing so that wages are paid by employers and state dollars focus on coordination, RSI, supports, etc.

Policy Recommendation	Outcomes	Fiscal Range
<p>Align K-12, higher education, workforce boards, and employers around seamless, stackable youth pathways that connect school, work, and credentials.</p> <p>Invest in wraparound supports (childcare, transportation, coaching, technology) as eligible and expected components of apprenticeship funding.</p> <p>Target funding and program design toward Opportunity Youth, justice-impacted individuals, and others historically excluded from career pathways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces true ladders, from High School to a paid apprenticeship to a postsecondary credential, without dead ends. • Reduces duplicated training/seat-time and speeds up time to credential. • Improves completion by addressing predictable barriers. • Closes equity gaps for rural youth and historically marginalized populations. • Creates a more reliable pipeline for employers. • Makes apprenticeship a credible poverty-disruption strategy for Californians most excluded from traditional pipelines. • Improves employment stability (reducing long-term public costs tied to disconnection). • Reduces reliance on “who has the right network” for access. 	<p>Moderate-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some one-time investments for curriculum alignment and articulation tools: ~\$2M–\$10M one-time; ~\$1M–\$3M ongoing. • Use existing CCC curriculum/CTE infrastructure (Strong Workforce, Guided Pathways) rather than new standalone structures. • Governor’s Budget: Tie to the proposed \$100M investment in the Master Plan for Career Education for dual credit opportunities or to the \$37M to expand the Credit for Prior Learning Initiative. <p>High-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaling wraparound supports, especially for opportunity youth, will need additional appropriations. • Governor’s Budget: Tie to the proposed \$2.8B for pathways programs through the Student Support and Discretionary Block Grant. <p>Moderate-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs largely driven by provided supports and case management. Often \$3,000–\$10,000 per participant depending on intensity and needs. • Governor’s Budget: Tie to the proposed \$2.8B for pathways programs through the Student Support and Discretionary Block Grant.

2. Employer Engagement, Intermediaries & Public-Sector Leadership

Core Problem: Nontraditional employers lack the capacity to design and run apprenticeships on their own; intermediaries exist but are under-resourced and funded inconsistently; and public-sector apprenticeship has momentum but lacks clear targets and accountability.

Policy Recommendation	Outcomes	Fiscal Range
<p>Invest in intermediary capacity to convene employers, educators, and workforce partners and to manage apprenticeship infrastructure.</p> <p>Establish clear public-sector apprenticeship targets for state and local agencies, paired with reporting requirements. This is especially critical given the severe 2026 budget outlook – public sector apprenticeship positions can be a required portion of existing staff allocations at no additional cost to the state.</p> <p>Require companies receiving state or local government contracts to hire apprentices or contribute to a training fund.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables nontraditional sector scale by funding the backbone functions employers won't build alone. Speeds program launch and replication (less bespoke design each time). Brings small/medium employers into apprenticeship without prohibitive overhead. Makes the public sector an anchor employer that normalizes apprenticeship beyond construction. Improves hiring/retention in hard-to-recruit classifications by creating pipelines instead of perpetual recruitment. Increases demand for apprenticeship in nontraditional sectors. Creates a durable revenue stream for intermediaries, supports, data, etc. Levels the playing field so vendors investing in workforce aren't underbid by those that don't. 	<p>Moderate-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning-range: \$20M–\$40M/year for statewide intermediary base grants plus per-apprentice support add-ons (scale-dependent). <p>Moderate-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low to moderate if largely embedded in existing staffing allocations; higher if new subsidies are added. Planning-range: \$0–\$10M/year depending on design. Require departments to allocate a portion of existing training/recruitment budgets to apprenticeship pathways. Use philanthropic/federal support to launch pilots; transition to agency-funded models and proven programs. <p>Low-Cost to Revenue-Positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative costs: ~\$0.5M–\$2M/year for oversight and reporting. Use the training fund to pay for CAB/intermediary supports and statewide data infrastructure.

3. Sustainable & Aligned Funding

Core Problem: Apprenticeship funding is fragmented across programs (AIF, CAI, WIOA, ETP/ETT, Prop 98, etc.); heavy reliance on short-term grants destabilizes programs and discourages long-term employer participation, and funding structures reward competition rather than collaboration.

Policy Recommendation	Outcomes	Fiscal Range
<p>Reauthorize the Apprenticeship Innovation Fund (AIF) for at least three additional years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stabilizes programs so they can run multi-year cohorts and keep employers engaged. Supports sustained growth in nontraditional sectors (not episodic pilot bursts). Aligns funding incentives toward completion/quality rather than one-time grant wins. 	<p>High-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning-range: \$30M–\$80M/year depending on target apprentices supported and per-apprentice rate. Tie growth in AIF appropriations to proven models based on completion and employer match ratios. Blend with federal apprenticeship expansion grants and redirect a portion of a potential training fund into AIF-like formula supports. Governor’s Budget: No new investments.
<p>Explore a permanent funding vehicle for apprenticeship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moves CA from one-time grant cycles to durable system-building finance. Reduces administrative churn and enables long-term partnerships. Reliably funds cross-system infrastructure no single employer/program will pay for. 	<p>High-cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate start-up costs for administration (~\$1M–\$3M/year), with spending driven by available revenues/appropriations. Use GF only as a starting point in early years, taper off as needed. Design fund to be self-sustaining via procurement contributions and employer participation as the system scales.
<p>Move toward formula-based or role-based funding that supports intermediaries, employers, education partners, and support services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates a replicable financing architecture that supports scale and quality. Improves consistency by reliably resourcing intermediaries, RSI, and supports. Reduces administrative burden by replacing one-off pilots with known structures. 	<p>Moderate-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate to high depending on rates and scale (often substitutes for ad hoc grants). Shift spending from fragmented one-time grants into a consolidated rate-card approach that reduces administrative waste. Governor’s Budget: Tie to the proposed \$2.8B for pathways programs through the Student Support and Discretionary Block Grant.

Policy Recommendation	Outcomes	Fiscal Range
<p>Add apprenticeship as an eligible program vehicle in existing funding pools (e.g. ensure hours are 'for credit' and lead to a degree whenever possible).</p> <p>Fund key positions at DAS, CCCCCO, and CDE to implement youth apprenticeship and CAB.</p> <p>Utilize funding within the Master Plan for Career Education for K-16 providers in-district.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes apprenticeship a mainstream pathway option inside existing education/workforce systems. Increases credential-connected apprenticeships (more portability and mobility). Improves efficiency by leveraging existing funds and reducing duplicative programs. Builds durable state capacity to deliver system reform and technical assistance. Improves consistency and speed for launching/modernizing programs statewide. Reduces bottlenecks that stall nontraditional sector expansion. Makes K-16 pathway-building routine infrastructure rather than one-off pilots. Expands the number of regions where youth can access apprenticeship early. Improves alignment between education offerings and regional workforce needs. 	<p>Low-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximize use of existing appropriations (Prop 98, Strong Workforce, WIOA, ETP) with clarified eligibility with the intention of utilizing and improving programs rather than creating new ones. <p>Moderate-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning-range: ~\$3M-\$8M ongoing depending on headcount and classification. Start with limited-term funding; transition as programs become more measurable and even automatized. <p>Moderate-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governor's Budget: Utilize proposed \$100 million one-time Proposition 98 General Fund as the platform and avoid duplicative standalone data systems and navigation portals.

4. System Infrastructure and Cross Agency Collaboration

Core Problem: Apprenticeship registration is slow, inconsistent, and program-by-program; employers face unnecessary administrative burden, especially in nontraditional sectors; and there is no shared statewide data, communications, or awareness infrastructure.

Policy Recommendation	Outcomes	Fiscal Range
<p>Adopt state occupational frameworks or other mechanisms to simplify registration and allow faster program launch.</p> <p>Build statewide data, communications, and awareness infrastructure so learners, employers, and policymakers can easily navigate opportunities and track outcomes.</p> <p>Secure more authority and resources, potentially private and public, for DAS in occupational approval, system reform, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes program launch faster and more predictable for employers entering apprenticeship. Shifts from bespoke approvals to scalable templates (with quality safeguards). Accelerates nontraditional sector growth by reducing administrative risk and uncertainty. Creates a navigable statewide apprenticeship system. Improves accountability and policy learning by making gaps/successes visible statewide. Strengthens cross-agency alignment by anchoring the system to shared metrics and narrative. Modernizes the apprenticeship “operating system” so reforms move faster and stick. Improves quality/consistency while enabling innovation in emerging sectors. Builds durable state capacity to scale nontraditional apprenticeships statewide. 	<p>Low-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning-range: \$1M–\$5M one-time + \$1M–\$3M ongoing. Prioritize a limited set of high-demand occupations first; expand only as capacity and ROI permit. Leverage federal apprenticeship modernization funds where available. <p>High-Cost</p> <p>Planning-range: \$8M–\$15M one-time build + \$3M–\$6M/year ongoing (data operations + communications).</p> <p>Moderate to High-Cost</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning-range: \$2M–\$10M/year depending on scope. Sunset innovation authority after 5 years; renew only if evaluation shows improved speed without quality loss. Use philanthropic partnerships for technology modernization; state dollars focus on ongoing staffing and oversight.