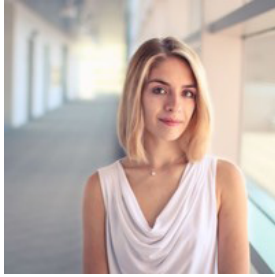


# APPRENTICESHIP UPDATE



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## When You Say You Can't Find Qualified Workers, Are You Sure You've Looked at All the Possibilities?

Recently, there has been discussion in Washington about a renewed emphasis on investing more money in apprenticeship programs. According to a recent TIME article, an estimated \$200 million will be provided for these programs within the next few years. This nearly doubles the existing level of funds. However, most people do not realize that a majority of the target audience is made up of individuals with disabilities. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Disability employment statistics for January 2018 state that the unemployment rate among people with disabilities was 8.8 percent. This shows a 2.2 percent decrease from January 2017. The latest employment statistics also find that only 20.4 percent of people with disabilities are actively in the labor force, as compared to 67.8 percent of people with no disability." The challenge is that there is an absence of universal rules or programs that can access this abundant workforce of people. We all strive to create a workforce environment that values talent development in all people. One way we could address this challenge is by creating apprenticeship programs that offer access to good paying jobs for people with disabilities.

There is a shortage of workers in the manufacturing workforce and each year it becomes extremely difficult to find qualified people to do the work. Encouraging businesses and sectors to examine opening up more opportunities for participation in apprenticeship programs is one possible solution. The mission of The New York Alliance for Inclusion and Innovation (New York Alliance) is to serve as a catalyst for positive change and a leading resource for rehab provider organizations, individuals with disabilities, and/or their families. Over the past two years, the New York Alliance has, together with its members and the manufacturing industry, been working to seek answers on how to best engage businesses. The goal is to not only discuss the need for a diverse workforce, but

how to incentivize businesses to participate in developing apprenticeship programs that are inclusive.

The New York Alliance agrees with both our federal and state government that growth of apprenticeship programs will strengthen our manufacturing industry. However, who will be the student? Manufacturers could potentially find their workforce talent by recruiting people with disabilities. New York could be the leader in rebuilding manufacturing jobs by developing quality registered apprenticeship programs that invite all New Yorkers, with or without disabilities.

It is important to begin to devise ways to implement these types of inclusive programs. Many questions will emerge as to who will give these individuals the support they need to develop a foundation of learning. There are several ways to begin a structured and organized curriculum process. The most critical item will be the partnering of businesses, manufacturing associations, supportive services providers, and education professionals. Together they have an opportunity to fill the gap and create new solutions to the skilled workforce shortage. By starting the programs at the high school level, businesses and educators can work together to provide the support that these individuals need. Let's work together towards a goal to influence legislation at a state and national level to begin to build a workforce world that is meant for everyone.

Sources:

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