

## New Employer Introduction to the **Michigan School-to-Registered Apprenticeship (STRA) Program**

We are pleased that you are considering participation in the Michigan School-to-Registered Apprenticeship (STRA) Program.

Employers are experiencing great difficulty finding and training new employees. This paper will provide you with important introductory information that will assist you in determining whether or not the STRA Program can be utilized at your business as a means of training students as a part of their high school education in a STRA Program.

*Imagine the following . . .*

- Trained and experienced staff who recruit students from high schools in West and Southwest Michigan.
- Candidates who undergo a series of selection activities over 3-4 months that must be completed in order to qualify for interviews.
- Access to a candidate's portfolio containing the student's application, information about grades and attendance, and student's test scores prior to interviewing.
- **After interviewing candidates, making a selection only if you feel you have found the right person for your business.**
- Receiving a \$2000.00 tax credit per year for every student apprentice sponsored.

STRA Program employer participants enjoy many great benefits and advantages. However, participation does require that employers meet certain basic requirements, as well as commit to adhering to program activities, processes, and procedures.

### **WHAT IS STRA?**

STRA stands for "School-to-Registered Apprenticeship." The STRA Program is a system of training modeled after the federal apprenticeship program. Both programs utilize the traditional apprenticeship system of occupational education and training.

### **THE APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM OF TRAINING**

All apprenticeship programs including the STRA Program utilize a combination of two methods of occupational learning, classroom instruction and on-the-job training.

Apprenticeship programs are the only formal, nationally recognized occupational education and training programs that combine both classroom instruction and worksite training. Classroom instruction begins in high school and continues after graduation with occupational classes (with tuition subsidized by the employer) at union sponsored apprenticeship training centers or local community colleges. Worksite training begins in the summer between their junior and senior years and continues during a portion of the school day throughout the student's senior year. Upon graduation, successful students both continue worksite training as a full-time employee and complete classroom instruction requirements.

Apprenticeship programs have been used as a means of occupational training for many, many years. The term “apprenticeship” is more readily recognized by those in specific industries such as construction and manufacturing, where this form of training is more common. Today, partly due to the qualified, skilled labor shortage, apprenticeship programs are becoming more common and widespread. There are programs existing for over 800 different occupations nationwide.

Traditional apprenticeship programs require that applicants be a minimum of 18 years of age and possess a high school diploma. **The STRA Program allows high school students who are at least 16 years of age and of third-year (junior year) status to be apprenticed.** STRA students are certified by the Bureau of Apprenticeship Training just as other apprentices are. STRA Programs are formal apprenticeship programs that allow students to begin occupational education and training while still in high school.

### **OTHER IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT STRA PROGRAMS**

STRA Programs:

- **Are employer-driven!** These programs cannot exist without the need, participation, and support of business and industry.
- **Are long-term in nature.** Training time can last anywhere from 2 to 5 years, depending on the occupation and the employer.
- **Are formal and structured.** All STRA Programs require that students successfully complete the program’s predetermined number of hours in both classroom instruction and on-the-job training.
- **Are developed by employers.** Employers determine their program’s training length and its education and training activities. Employer’s training plans, referred to as “Occupational Standards,” include tasks students must learn to be skilled in the occupation, the time allotted to learn these tasks, and the occupation-related classes the students must successfully complete.
- **Are registered with the Bureau of Apprenticeship & Training.** Once your training program has been developed, it must be approved by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Apprenticeship & Training. Upon approval, you will receive a Certificate of Registration & a registration number. Once registered, you may interview students for participation in your training program every year.
- **Are paid training programs.** Students become an employee upon acceptance into the program. Beginning wage and wage structure are determined by the employer and/or union scale.
- **Provide student completers with nationally recognized credentials.** Students who complete all the program’s on-the-job training and related instruction hours are awarded a Certificate of Completion from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship & Training.

## **STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

Student recruitment generally takes place in January and February. During this time, STRA Coordinators go into the high schools and speak with juniors and seniors about the STRA Program and its many benefits, such as:

- Long-term, paid, quality education and training
- High-skill, high-wage employment opportunities
- Initial and structured wage increases
- High school and subsidized post-high school classroom instruction
- Nationally recognized credentials
- Continued education and employment opportunities

Interested students get a STRA Program packet and a program application.

## **STUDENT SELECTION ACTIVITIES**

Students who wish to be considered for program participation must complete a series of activities and submit paperwork and documentation to qualify for employer interviews. There are no other participation requirements. Students understand that if they fail to complete an activity, they will be disqualified from interviewing. Using this system, any student who wishes an opportunity to try for sponsorship may do so. Students self-eliminate themselves when they fail to complete an activity. This method allows all properly motivated students, who show the ability to follow through by completing all activities, a chance to interview with employers of their choosing.

Employers then interview students with a wide range of academic and technical skills. Employers make their decisions based on what qualifications they believe are most important for the openings they have available.

Selection activities are conducted from February to May and include the following:

- Completing a program application.
- Attending a student/parent orientation.
- Undergoing assessment.
- Participating in business tours.
- Participating in a pre-interview workshop.

Employers are invited to participate in selection activities by making presentations at the orientations, as well as by providing students the opportunity to tour their businesses.

Students who complete all activities will be allowed to sign up for interviews with those companies offering training in their occupational area of interest. Employers view all student information and make selections based on information provided, documents, and the results of the interviews.

## **PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

- Students who are selected by employers begin program activities in the summer with 1-2 weeks of classroom instruction. This time is spent educating the students on the basics of the industry, including safety training.

- Upon completion of classroom time, students begin a full-time, six- to eight-week paid work experience with the sponsoring business.
- When school resumes in the fall, participating students are expected to take the occupational class associated with their worksite training. They also continue on-the-job training during a portion of their school day.
- Upon graduation, successful students become full-time employees for the sponsoring business as well as continue classroom instruction at the union sponsored apprenticeship training center, community college or other approved facility.
- Apprentices continue training until all required hours are completed, at which time they receive their “Certificate of Completion” from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Apprenticeship & Training.

### **EMPLOYER PROGRAM BENEFITS**

Employers who participate in the STRA Program receive many benefits:

- Access to future skilled workers
- Structured training that is customized to meet the needs of the individual business
- Assistance and support in developing occupational standards and completing all other paperwork
- A comprehensive marketing, recruitment, assessment, and selection process for applicants
- Ability to select from a pool of highly motivated applicants who possess the right attitude
- A \$2000 per year tax credit for each high school student sponsored

### **EMPLOYER PROGRAM COMMITMENTS**

Employer participants must also commit to adhering to STRA Program processes and procedures:

- Meet STRA program minimum employer participation requirements.
- Develop and register “Occupational Standards,” which make up the businesses training plan for a specific occupation.
- Assist in student program selection activities such as orientation presentations and business tours.
- Review applicants’ program portfolios and provide an interview to all qualifying student candidates.

- Complete all required program paperwork.
- Provide the selected student with a 6-8 week full-time summer work experience and continued work site training during the school year.
- Upon graduation, provide the student with continued on-the-job training as a full-time business employee and subsidize community college tuition for occupational classes.

### **SO, IS THIS PROGRAM FOR YOU?**

Let's take a look at the facts:

- This program can provide you with a well-prepared, highly motivated pool of future employees.
- Training that you help develop will most certainly help ensure that candidates you select will be educated and trained based on industry standards and the individual needs of your business.
- STRA Program Coordinators perform marketing and recruitment activities and engage students in a selection process whereby students self-eliminate from participation.
- STRA Coordinators also work with you and the student during training to help ensure the best, most successful program experience possible.
- Once your Occupational Standards are registered, you may interview students whenever you have training and hiring needs.

### **Is the STRA Program worth considering? If your answer is “yes,” what’s next?**

If you would like to participate in the STRA Program, your next step **would be to work with a STRA Coordinator at your local high school or career-tech center** to develop your Occupational Standards. This is the occupational training plan that students would be required to successfully complete to obtain a Certificate of Completion.

Occupational Standards are available for most industries that allow employers the opportunity to fine tune according to their employment practices.

In addition, currently participating employers can be utilized as a resource, should you need additional assistance.

STRA Coordinators will supply you with all other program information, including a timeline with program activities and dates.

**We hope that you will consider becoming a STRA Program participant. It can be your ticket to accessing a qualified student who can become a highly trained, capable, and motivated employee, both now and in the future!**