

# NCIFTI Apprenticeship Policies

## Employer FAQs



### **1. Why is a sponsor/indenture agreement important? Why do we need apprentices?**

Sponsorship is an investment in your employees; an opportunity to provide finishing trades workers with a long-lasting career; and the best way to ensure longevity of our trade, our market share, our union, and our health/retirement benefits. Apprentice retention is uneven and appears to be highly correlated with work experience. Typically, apprentices who drop from the program before graduating spend six months or less in the program and experience extended periods (three or more months) of no work. This suggests that the inability to secure work is a primary cause for apprentice drops. Further, PDC 30's membership is aging, retirements are increasing, and – as apprentice levels remain low – the ability of PDC 30 signatory employers to replace retiring journey workers may be compromised. We are in the midst of a wave of retirements. In 2021, it was estimated that nearly 350 active members were likely to retire in the next five years. At current rates of apprentice graduation, a significant gap will remain in replacing these journey workers. In order to fill this gap and meet the long-term workforce needs of the industry, labor and management must work together to prioritize the sponsor/indenture and retention of apprentices throughout apprenticeship.

### **2. What is the difference between a sponsored/indentured apprentice and a temporary hire apprentice?**

The standard method for hiring a “new” apprentice is done through sponsorship. Employers ready to provide an apprentice with reasonably continuous employment for the full term of apprenticeship should hire a sponsored/indentured apprentice. Alternatively, an employer wishing to employ an apprentice for a short-term job or for a short period of the year shall use the temporary hiring method. In this case, following consultation, the NCIFTI will provide you with eligible candidates from the “pool of registered apprentices.”

### **3. Can I still hire whoever I want, or am I now forced to hire someone from the pool?**

This is a partnership; apprentices are never forced on employers. You are always able and encouraged to hire whoever you wish, so long as you are committed to hiring the individual for the full three-year program as a sponsored/indentured apprentice. If you don't have a candidate in mind but are looking to hire a full-time apprentice, the NCIFTI can recommend an ideal candidate from the “pool of registered apprentices.” Alternatively, if you are bringing on an apprentice through the temporary hiring method, you still have the ability to consult with the NCIFTI to select an eligible candidate from the “pool of registered apprentices” based on your specific trade/zone/scope needs.

#### **4. What happens if the pool of registered apprentices is empty?**

If no registered apprentices are available in the pool, the NCIFTI will provide you with a candidate from the NCIFTI's applicant list, which is made up of evaluated affiliate members and candidates identified during recruitment efforts or recommended by NCIFTI's various work-readiness program partners. This placement would be considered a temporary hire; sponsorship/indenture would NOT be required.

#### **5. What is considered reasonable continuous employment?**

Ideally, reasonably continuous employment constitutes enough on-the-job-learning (OJL) hours to progress through the apprenticeship as prescribed in the NCIFTI Student Handbook. But this may not always be possible. If the above is not possible due to work hours reduction, reasonably continuous employment may be determined based on an employer's total number of hours worked by PDC 30 members. For example, if an employer reports monthly hours on behalf of five (5) PDC 30 members (including the apprentice) totaling 560 hrs. (160, 160, 120, 80, 40), the average (112 hours) may be used to determine what is reasonable for the employer.

#### **6. What do I do when I run out of work for an indentured apprentice?**

To accommodate reduced work, employers may lay off an apprentice and they will be moved to the pool of registered apprentices. Once a sponsored/indentured apprentice experiences fewer than 80 hours during a four-week period, they will be considered laid off and will enter the pool, or at the time an employer reports the layoff to the NCIFTI, whichever is sooner. Loaning an indentured apprentice from one employer to another employer is allowed and encouraged to prevent an apprentice from experiencing fewer than 80 hours during a four-week period or a layoff. The sponsored/indentured apprentice will return to the original employer when work increases and before the employer is able to hire or employ a new apprentice.

#### **7. How many apprentices can I have?**

Employers can have one (1) apprentice if at least one (1) journey worker is employed. After the employer employs three (3) journey workers, the employer is allowed one (1) additional apprentice; with six (6) journey workers, the employer is allowed an additional apprentice; with each additional three (3) journey workers, an additional apprentice is allowed.

#### **8. Can I have multiple indentured apprentices?**

Yes! The standard hiring method and exceptions are not meant to limit employers from hiring or employing multiple apprentices. Employers are encouraged to utilize the standard hiring method and the exceptions for multiple apprentices providing that the employer remains in compliance with the Apprentice-to-Journey Worker ratio prescribed in Section 11.1 of the CBA.

### **9. Can I still have multiple temporary hire apprentices?**

Absolutely! Please reach out to the NCIFTI for the most current record of individuals available within the pool of registered apprentices or information on candidates from the NCIFTI applicant list looking for an opportunity to start their career.

### **10. Is there a way to try out a new apprentice before committing to a sponsorship?**

Definitely, through a 30-day Pre-Apprentice permit. Following NCIFTI authorization and depending on the type of job, an employer can hire and employ a new Pre-Apprentice for a thirty (30) day trial period. During this time, both parties – the employer and potential apprentice – are given a chance to see if the placement is a good fit. This is only available for new individuals entering the program for the first time.

### **11. What is the difference between the pool of registered apprentices and the NCIFTI applicant list?**

The NCIFTI pool of registered apprentices is made up of current registered apprentices that have been laid off due to reduced work hours available through their sponsoring/indenturing employer. Often called an “out-of-work” pool, these apprentices are contacted and vetted by the NCIFTI regularly both to confirm their availability as well as to update their skills and certifications. This ensures that employers will be matched with ideal candidates when a need to hire from the pool arises. The NCIFTI applicant list is made up of evaluated PDC 30 affiliate members; candidates identified during career fairs and recruitment efforts; individuals and pre-apprentices recommended by work-readiness program partners such as Helmets to Hardhats, Chicago Women in Trades, and Job Corps; and other individuals who have registered their interest in apprenticeship with the NCIFTI.

### **12. What is the difference between an affiliate member and a pre-apprentice?**

PDC 30 affiliate members are workers that are EITHER currently performing industry related work with non-union contractors but are looking for an opportunity to be hired by a union employer, OR currently employed in other industry sectors but are looking for an opportunity to enter the construction trades. Many affiliate members have been evaluated by the NCIFTI instructors and come with some on-the-job experience. Pre-apprentices are individuals who have registered their interest in NCIFTI apprenticeship and are subsequently considered candidates for apprenticeship. Pre-apprentices are often candidates identified during career fairs and individuals recommended by NCIFTI’s various work-readiness program partners.

### **13. Can I still call the Local business representative that I have a relationship with when the need for an apprentice arises?**

Of course, but it is preferred that you call the NCIFTI directly as well – and the business representative will most likely make the same suggestion. NCIFTI staff members have the most current and accurate records of available apprentices at any given time.

#### **14. When am I required to contact the NCIFTI?**

We ask that you contact the NCIFTI: 1) prior to hiring an apprentice, 2) when you have issues with a registered apprentice, and 3) prior to layoffs or termination. Additionally, you are encouraged to contact the NCIFTI when your apprentices are scheduled to complete the program, so arrangements can be made for all parties to attend the annual NCIFTI apprentice graduation.

#### **15. Can I end a sponsor/indenture agreement?**

Yes, sponsor/indenture agreements can be ended for two main reasons: behavior and performance. If a sponsored/indentured apprentice violates the company policy resulting in immediate termination (behavior), notice is to be provided to the NCIFTI with the explanation of the violation and the company policy. If an employer has performance concerns, the NCIFTI and the employer will work together to review the on-the-job learning (OJL) performance evaluations and related technical instruction (RTI) module assessments, which will result in an individualized remedial training strategy. If the individual remedial training strategy is unsuccessful, all parties will agree to terminate the agreement. To accommodate concerns related to “fit” or other preferences, a sponsored/indentured apprentice may also voluntarily terminate an agreement at any time.