STEM Career Apprenticeship Driver Alignment Assessment

Apprenticeship Drivers: (Driver Roles and Who Are Drivers)

In a review of guidance and practice in the field, five prime "drivers" have been identified for implementation of an apprenticeship initiative that is effective in including youth with disabilities:

a) Businesses/Intermediaries

The business or business sector is the primary focus for workforce development efforts. Businesses are in communities for strategic market and resource reasons. Businesses, as the ultimate "consumer" for talent, often assume a leadership role in growing the skills and expertise available to them. Whether on their own individually, with other businesses, or through the engagement of an "intermediary" organization, businesses can assume a "driver" role in the development of apprenticeship activity that effectively meets their skill requirements.

b) Education/Training Providers

For the purposes of service alignment, we look at education and training providers as those entities that provide **related training and instruction** (RTI) to individuals as a part of their apprenticeship, which complements their on-the-job training. These entities may also function situationally as a workforce intermediary or sponsor, placing them in a business role as a driver. In the role as an education or training provider, these entities will develop and provide RTI and may serve as registered apprenticeship program coordinators and assist employers with assessments.





c) Apprenticeship Office/ Apprenticeship Advisory Council

States will work with the Federal Office of Apprenticeship (OA) or have established their own State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA). How states establish responsibility for registering apprenticeship programs is outlined here: Apprenticeship System SAAs are required to establish a State Advisory Council which operates in either a "regulatory" or an "advisory" capacity.

d) Workforce System

The workforce development system includes a workforce development board (state and/or local) and will generally include participation by programs that operate as either "core" or "required" programs. All core and required programs must make their services available through the public workforce system. Core programs have enhanced roles in supporting the governor and the state workforce development board in implementing WIOA statewide. For a complete list of all core and required programs see Toolkit #3 – Apprenticeship Drivers (Descriptions and Relevance)

e) Stakeholders

For an initiative that targets the inclusion of a specific population, such as youth with disabilities, These are the organizations that are the 'gatekeepers' to that population. This is where these individuals and families/support systems receive information that they trust and often operate with a 'grass roots' focus that represent the interests and welfare of this population. Reasons to include these stakeholders in leadership roles for collaborative initiatives include:

1. input in planning that reflects the interests of this community
2. access and engagement of this community for outreach and education
3. increased engagement of people from this population in project activity and outcomes

How to Use This Assessment Tool

This assessment is designed to help your leadership team understand the current level of alignment among the prime apprenticeship drivers in your community. It is most effective when reviewed as a leadership team to compare perspectives and identify shared priorities.

Use this tool early in your initiative to:

- Identify which apprenticeship drivers are currently engaged
- Determine the level of coordination among partners
- Identify who are serving as a navigators for youth
- Recognize gaps in access, awareness, and pathway opportunities

Portions of this assessment can be revisited at different stages of your work, based on areas that your team identifies as priorities. Many communities complete identified sections:

- At the start of planning (full assessment)
- As needed through implementation
- When reviewing progress and sustainability

The goal is not to score the community. The goal is to develop a shared understanding of who is involved, how they work together, and where alignment can be strengthened to support youth with disabilities in STEM career pathways.

Leadership

Complete with current apprenticeship leadership structure

Driver	Representation (Name)	Representation (Title)	Level of Engagement Leadership	Level of Engagement Leveraged	Level of Engagement Yet to be engaged
Business					
Education					
Apprenticeship Office					
Workforce System					
Stakeholder					
Other					

*** Level of Engagement Categories**

- Leadership
  - This driver is actively coordinating or guiding apprenticeship development. They help shape decisions, strategy, and implementation.

- Leveraged
  - This driver is contributing resources, access, or expertise, but is not currently in a leadership role. Their involvement supports progress, but they are not directing it.

- Yet to Be Engaged
  - This driver is not currently involved, or involvement is limited to awareness. This indicates a potential outreach or relationship-building need

Level of Driver Engagement (link 06)

How closely do the apprenticeship drivers currently work together toward shared STEM apprenticeship outcomes?

This section helps your leadership team determine how closely the apprenticeship drivers in your community are working together. Discuss each driver's level of engagement and select the level that best reflects your current state across all drivers. It is possible that a couple of the drivers are more closely aligned to each other, than with the other drivers. It is important to consider how they all align as a single group.

Engagement Level	What It Means in Practice
Isolated	Drivers work independently with no shared activities or communication.
Communication	Drivers exchange basic information when needed, but do not plan or act together.
Coordination	Drivers align some activities or share resources to meet short-term goals.
Collaboration	Drivers plan and implement strategies together toward shared outcomes.
Integration	Drivers blend or formalize systems, activities, or resources to function as a unified team.

Rate Level of Alignment of Leadership Drivers

Isolated	Communication	Coordination	Collaboration	Integration
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Recognized STEM Career Pathways in Community

A STEM career pathway is a sequence of education, training, work-based learning experiences, apprenticeships and paid career opportunities that prepare and engage individuals for a STEM-related occupation. These pathways may already exist in schools, colleges, career centers, or industries in your community. Examples may include:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Environmental Science
- Healthcare
- Information Technology
- Technical Trades
- Transportation Technology

Instruction:
List the STEM pathways in your community that are currently recognized, supported, or promoted through education programs, training providers, industry partners, or local workforce efforts.

Community Resources (Mapping)

This section helps your leadership team identify the existing supports that can help youth participate in STEM career pathways and apprenticeship opportunities. Resources may already be in place across schools, VR, community organizations, businesses, and training providers.

Instruction:
For each category below, list the agencies, programs, or individuals that currently provide support. Include contact information when possible. If a category is empty, this signals a place where new partnerships or resource development may be needed.

Category	Examples – Community Resources	Community Resource	Contact Name / Link
Career Exploration and Awareness	School career programs, STEM clubs, fairs, employer speakers, youth transition programs		
Skill Building and Training	CTE programs, dual credit courses, pre-apprenticeship, summer programs, workforce training centers		
Hands-On Experience	Job shadows, internships, paid work experiences, lab work, project-based learning		
Disability Support Services	VR counselors, independent living centers, peer support groups, case managers, family advocacy networks		
Employer and Industry Partnerships	Local businesses, industry associations, chambers, sector partnerships, existing apprenticeship sponsors		
Postsecondary / Apprenticeship Pathways	Community colleges, universities, apprenticeship offices, training providers		

How to Discuss This as a Team

Ask:
• Which resources are strong in our community
• Which exist, but are not connected to each other
• Which are missing or limited
• Where youth lose momentum or access

This leads naturally into the **Gap Analysis** discussion which will follow..

Why This Matters
When a youth says "Who can help me do this?", the community resource map and the Navigator map together show **where to send them and who will walk with them.**

This is the foundation for consistent access, not just one-time connections.

Businesses Engaged

List businesses or industry partners who participate in or influence STEM career preparation.

Current Pathway Description

STEM Career Pathway engagement for youth with disabilities:

Describe how youth with disabilities currently access or participate in STEM learning, experiences, or programs in your community.

Prompt to guide thinking:
Consider school-based programs, out-of-school activities, paid experiences, mentoring, or exploration opportunities.

Information Access

How do youth and families learn about STEM career and apprenticeship opportunities?

Prompts:
• School counselors
• Teachers or case managers
• Family networks
• Online resources
• Community organizations

Are there groups of youth with disabilities who do not have access to these opportunities? (e.g., out of school youth?)

Professional Awareness

Do educators, VR counselors, youth providers, or instructors understand apprenticeship well enough to support youth with disabilities in following that career path?

Navigators

A navigator is a person who helps a young person move from interest to action. Navigators provide guidance, connections, and support at key transition points. This is a function, not a job title. Different people or organizations may take on this role at different stages of the pathway.

In most communities, navigator roles show up in places such as:
• Schools and career counseling offices
• Youth or transition programs
• Vocational rehabilitation
• Community organizations
• Business or industry mentors
• Training providers or apprenticeship coordinators

The key is not the title, it is the **role they play**.

A young person might ask:

“This sounds great. Who do I talk to so I can get started?”

The Navigator is the person who answers that question and stays connected long enough to help them begin, continue, and complete the pathway step they are on.

How to Identify Navigators in Your Community

Use the four stages below to map who performs the navigator function at each point in the youth experience. There may be more than one agency or individual in each stage. There may also be gaps. Both are important to recognize. (**Navigator Guide**)

Use this table to identify who is already providing Navigator support — and where there may be gaps or opportunities to strengthen coordination.

Explore

Agency	Navigator and contact Information

Connect

Agency	Navigator and contact Information

Monitor

Agency	Navigator and contact Information

Complete

Agency	Navigator and contact Information

Explore Introduces STEM careers or apprenticeship as a possibility. Sparks interest. Connects the youth to people who can answer questions about pathways.

Connect Helps the young person access experiences, applications, training, or referrals. Networks with wrap-around support services that might be needed.

Monitor & Support Stays engaged while the young person is participating. Checks progress and helps solve problems, through coordination with support network.

Complete & Advance Ensures the young person finishes the step and knows what comes next. Supports transition to employment or advanced training. This can be an ongoing navigation role as an individual pursues their career through each milestone along the way.

Instruction:
List agencies, programs, or individuals who currently act in these roles. If no one fills a role, leave the space blank. Blank spaces show where system-building needs to occur. There may be multiple individuals who can fill the role.

What to Look For During Discussion
Ask your team:
• Where is the handoff smooth
• Where do young people get lost
• Where is no one responsible for guiding the next step

These answers will connect directly to your Gap Analysis.

Gap Analysis

The Gap Analysis helps your leadership team determine where alignment, access, or coordination needs to be strengthened. This section takes the insights from the driver assessment, the pathway review, and the navigator mapping and turns them into **clear next steps**.

Instruction:
For each category below, discuss the current status for each row. Identify one objective and one suggested action for each area where improvement is needed.

Category	Current Status	Objective (Change Desired)	Suggested Action
Leadership			
Stakeholder Participation			
Pathway Opportunities (STEM pathways identified and apprenticeship options available)			
Awareness of Opportunities among youth, families, educators, and support professionals			
Business Engagement (in planning and in providing work-based learning or apprenticeship opportunities)			
Navigators (Explore, Connect, Monitor, Complete)			

How to Complete the Table

Current Status:
Describe what is happening now. Keep this factual and brief.
Examples:
• Leadership team meets regularly
• No consistent outreach to families
• One STEM employer engaged, but no apprenticeship options yet

Objective:
State what you want to improve.
Examples:
• Increase business participation in pathway planning
• Improve how information about apprenticeships reaches youth and families

Suggested Action:
Identify the first step that moves the work forward.
Examples:
• Schedule a meeting with the local industry association
• Develop a shared outreach message for schools and community partners
• Identify who will serve as Monitor navigator for youth who begin training

Important Note
This is not about completing all areas at once. Most communities begin with one to three priorities that are meaningful and manageable.

Next Steps

The Assessment Tool is intended to establish a shared understanding of your community's current strengths, priorities, and needs. Use the objectives and suggested actions identified in the Gap Analysis to inform your next steps in strategic planning. The leadership team should choose one to three priority areas to address first, based on readiness, importance, and available resources. This tool may be revisited throughout the initiative to assess progress, adjust strategies, and plan for sustainability.