



# **Gov. Rauner advances apprenticeships as crucial driver of workforce readiness**

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CHICAGO - Apprenticeship programs are a boon both to workers who gain key proficiencies and to businesses that benefit from the resulting skilled workforce pipeline. Participating companies are to be commended, and expansion of such programs well beyond the traditional trades model is economically vital, Gov. Bruce

Rauner said at a National and Illinois Apprenticeship Week celebration today at Chicago's Aon Center.



“There is no one-size-fits-all way to a career,” Rauner said. “Here in Illinois, we are expanding our understanding of career pathways to include learn-and-earn models. Increasing our support for apprenticeships is just one of the ways Illinois is working to advance our world-class workforce.”

Aon and Accenture hosted today’s event, which celebrated business-led programs and the state’s efforts to expand opportunities. Both companies are founding members of the Chicago Apprenticeship Network, and each highlighted how apprenticeships have helped to build and maintain their respective workforces.

Aon is one of the 412 Registered Apprenticeship programs throughout Illinois. The Aon program allows apprentices to be regular, full-time Aon employees while they work their way to an associate’s degree through the City Colleges of Chicago. Upon successful completion, the workers have the opportunity to continue in their roles.

“We wanted to make sure young people had the skills they needed to compete in the economy of the future,” said Bridget Gainer, Aon’s vice president of global public affairs. “Through this program, we are learning that combining classroom education with real-world experience gives students from two-year colleges a winning formula.”

Accenture offers Chicago apprentices work experience, training and technical education in a one-year program that develops skills and proficiencies in high-demand fields such as IT and cybersecurity. In its second year, Accenture recruits people who have or are pursuing associate’s degrees to participate in its program, providing on-the-job learning, mentoring and the potential for an offer of full-time employment. Building on its success so far, Accenture recently committed to expanding its number of apprenticeships to 25 a year.

“Apprenticeships play an essential role in providing more people with the skills and job experience they need to succeed in their local communities,” said Jim Coleman, senior managing director of Accenture’s Chicago office. “At a time when employers are looking to drive innovation and growth, we believe apprenticeships help to build a pipeline of new talent while engaging individuals in some of the most dynamic areas of the local economy.”

The Rauner administration has worked in tandem with business to increase and support learn-and-earn programs throughout every industry. In July, under the guidance of the Governor’s Cabinet for Children and Youth, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced \$1.5 million in funding for the initial

Apprenticeship PLUS pilots. The pilots target youth between the ages of 16 and 24, and provide them with career education, a chance to earn industry-recognized credentials and on-the-job training.

“It is our goal to provide resources to those looking to start a new, fulfilling career while helping employers cultivate a skilled workforce,” said DCEO Assistant Director Brittany Ladd.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Illinois was home to 13,754 registered apprentices in 2016 — an understated figure since unregistered programs exist.

In addition to supporting registered programs, the State of Illinois also promotes pre-apprenticeship, youth apprenticeship, and non-registered apprenticeship programs. Resources and information are available through DCEO’s Office of Employment and Training or at [www.illinoisworknet.com](http://www.illinoisworknet.com).