As states work to involve more youth with disabilities in the workforce, they are increasingly turning to work-based learning initiatives. Exposure to work-based learning – including internships, apprenticeships, and job shadowing – is one of the strongest predictors of eventual employment success for youth with disabilities, as it allows youth to develop hard and soft work skills in a hands-on setting.

Within the framework of work-based learning, apprenticeships have proven especially effective. In particular, they:

1. (1) Combine on-the-job training with related instruction, providing apprentices with deep and practical knowledge;
2. (2) Are developed in partnership with employers, thereby keeping pace with industry needs and innovations;
3. (3) Result in a nationally-recognized and portable credential, which enhances an apprentice’s employment prospects;
4. (4) Provide a steady (and steadily-increasing) wage from the start, which allows apprentices to earn a credential with little or no educational debt; and
5. (5) Often become long-term employment opportunities, even after an apprenticeship has ended.

Yet not all apprenticeship programs consider people with disabilities in their design or implementation. The Apprenticeship Inclusion Models (AIM) project, an initiative sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), aims to develop and test innovative apprenticeships that ensure equal participation for people with disabilities.

One example of an innovative initiative is the Hershey Company’s Manufacturing Boot Camp. The pre-apprenticeship program was developed through a public-private partnership and is designed to increase the pipeline of qualified individuals (particularly those with disabilities) into its Industrial Manufacturing Technician apprenticeship program. A primary goal of the AIM project is to help employers and policy makers implement and scale up opportunities like these.

AIM is hosting upcoming Webinars to discuss its research and insights on two key elements of inclusive internships: (1) how to design inclusive apprenticeships, and (2) how to fund them.

**AIM Research Brief Series: Incorporating Universal Design and Accessibility into Apprenticeship and Pre-Apprenticeship** will cover how various stakeholders – including program designers, instructors, and mentors – can enhance access and inclusion in apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. Held Friday, August 21, 2020 from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm EDT.

*Registration Link:* [https://www.addevent.com/event/Gs5007592](https://www.addevent.com/event/Gs5007592)

**AIM Research Brief Series: Understanding Institutional Funding Sources as Part of Apprenticeship System Building** will explore funding strategies for inclusive
apprenticeships, including using the Ticket to Work program for funding, and building partnerships to support apprenticeships. Held Thursday, August 27, 2020 from 12:30 pm to 2:00pm EDT.

Registration Link: https://www.addevent.com/event/ct5016656

AIM is a collaboration between Social Policy Research Associates (SPR), Wheelhouse Group (Wheelhouse), and Jobs for the Future (JFF). To learn more about the AIM project, please visit the AIM website at https://www.spra.com/aim/.

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