



Apprenticeship in America

Community Colleges and the Opportunities for Growth



The Context:

US Apprenticeship in 2026

The Opportunity:

Pathways for Growing Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship and Public Policy:

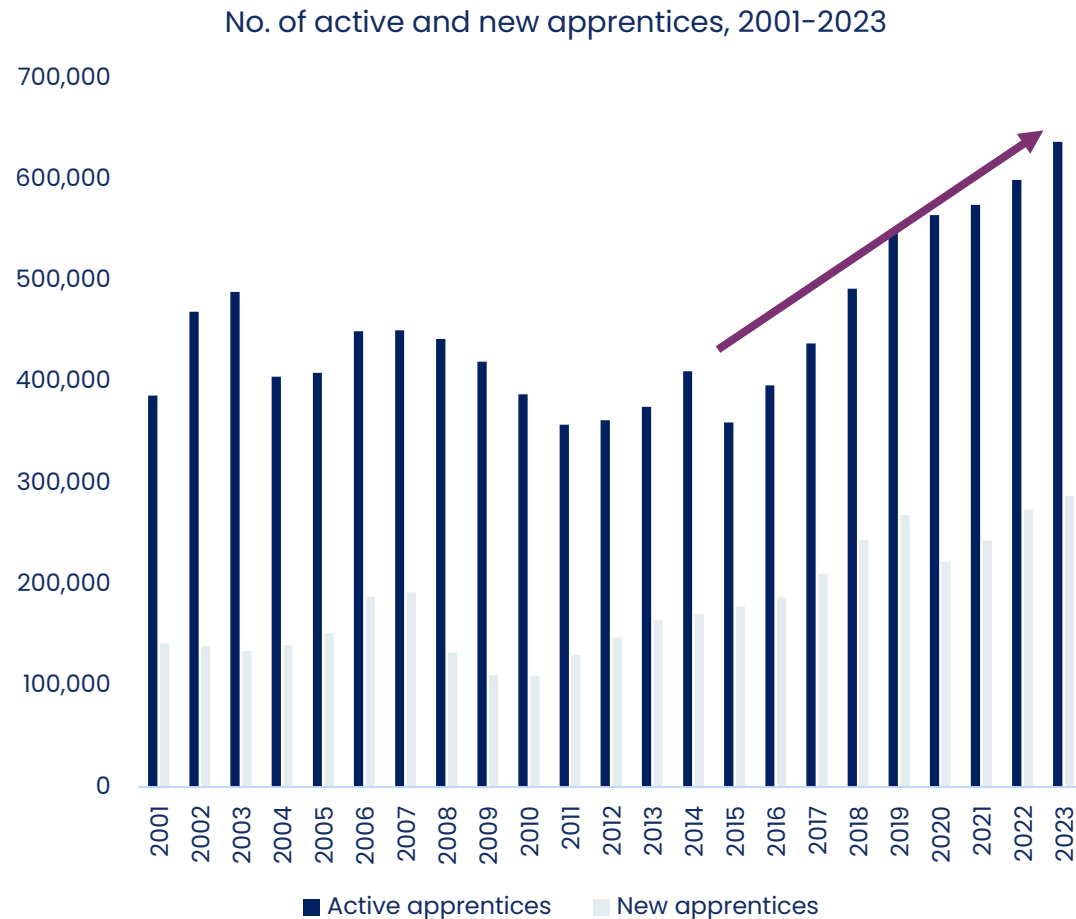
From Transactions to Systems

The Role of the Community College:

Scaling Opportunities

The National Picture

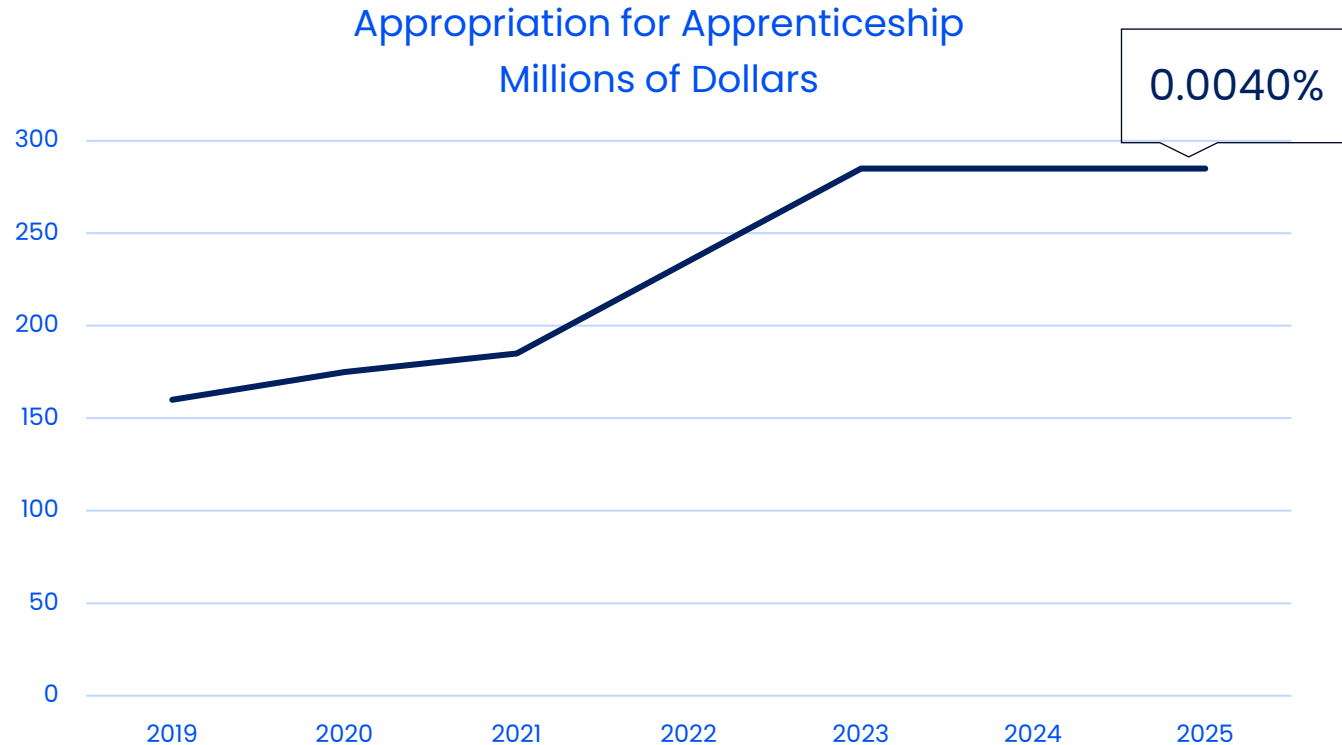
Apprenticeships have been growing since 2015 ...



... but remain far behind international competitors

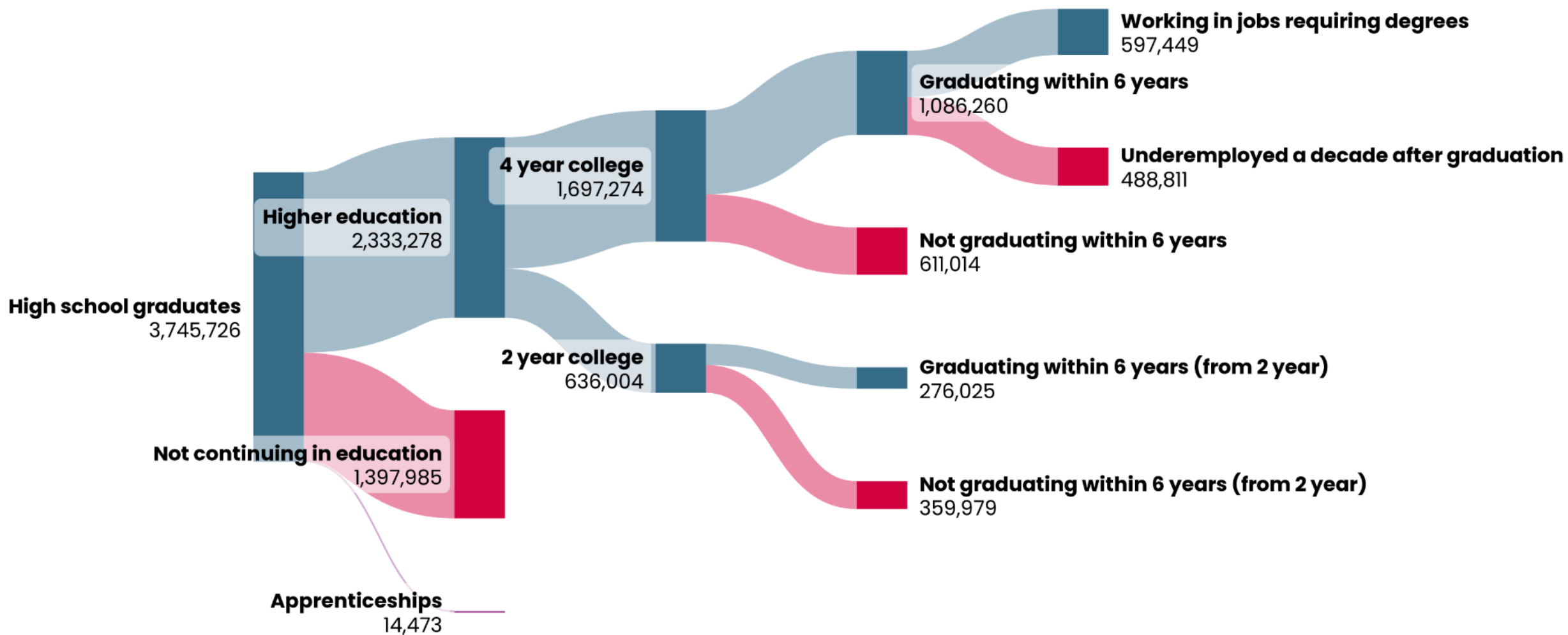
Country	Active Apprentices	Apprentices as a % of labor force
United States	700,388	0.34%
Austria	102,878	2.29%
Switzerland	212,274	3.97%
Germany	1,217,949	2.66%
Canada	498,783	2.21%
Australia	297,925	2.02%
England	761,480	2.70%
France	1,017,500	3.23%

Spending – Not!



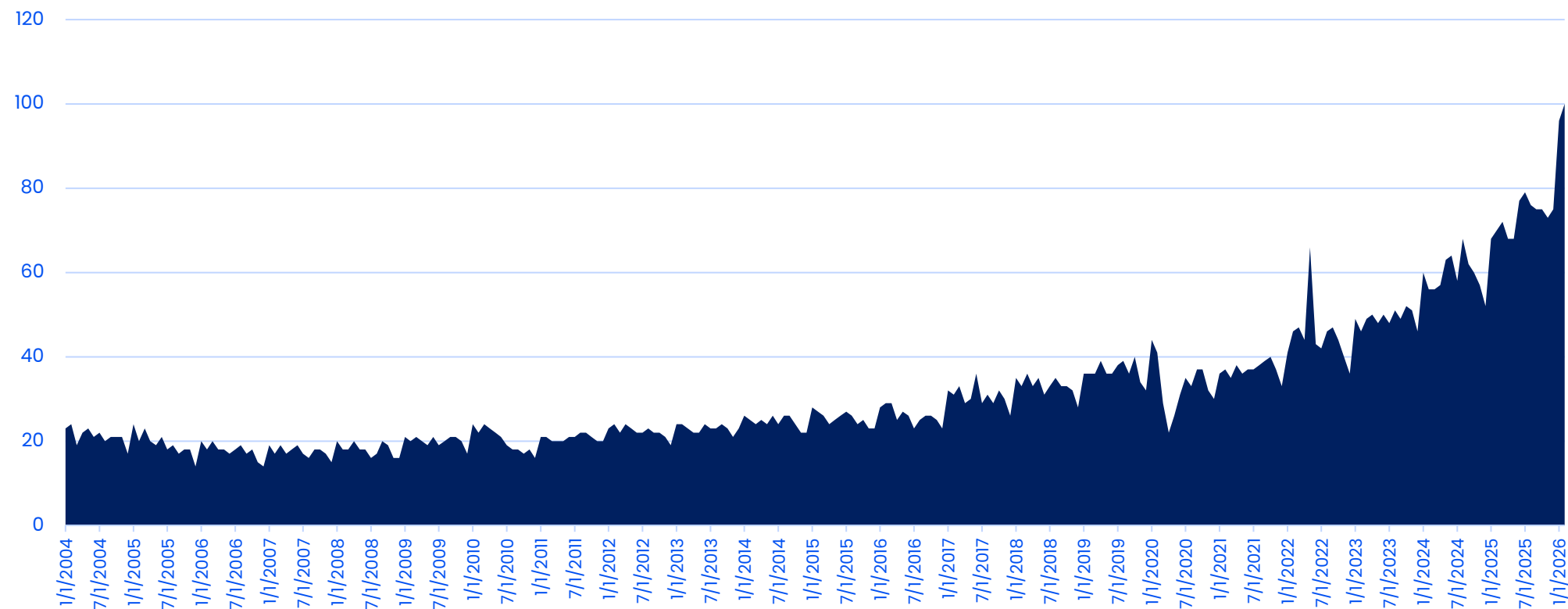
Spending on apprenticeships as % of government spending	
Austria	0.10%
Switzerland	1.50%
Germany	0.37%
Canada	0.24%
Australia	0.26%
England	0.24%
France	1.35%

A Changing Narrative: The Problem with College for All



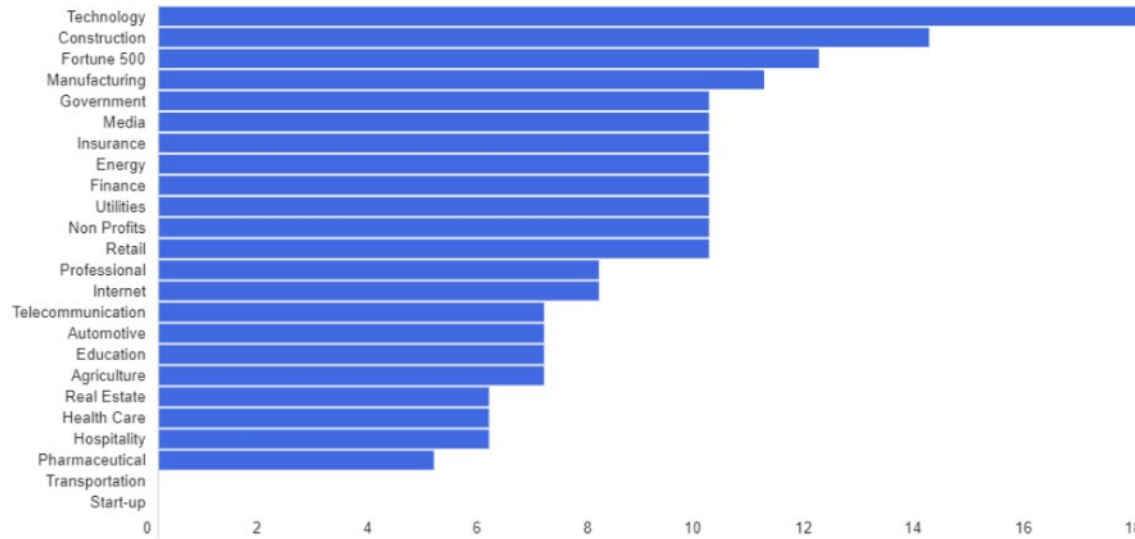
Growing Awareness of Apprenticeship

Google Searches for Apprenticeship



Biggest Unreported Story in Education: Experience Inflation

Average Amount Of Experience Needed For Entry Level Job



*In months, rounded to closest full month

The Washington Post

"It's been really difficult," said Christian Torres, 24, who graduated this spring with an electrical engineering degree from Arizona State University and is still looking for work. "Even the entry-level engineering jobs want four or five years of experience. There's no way to compete, so I'm still living at home, still looking for work."

38.4% of "entry-level" jobs require at least 3 years of experience.

Many "skills-based hiring" initiatives are simply replacing degree requirements with experience requirements.

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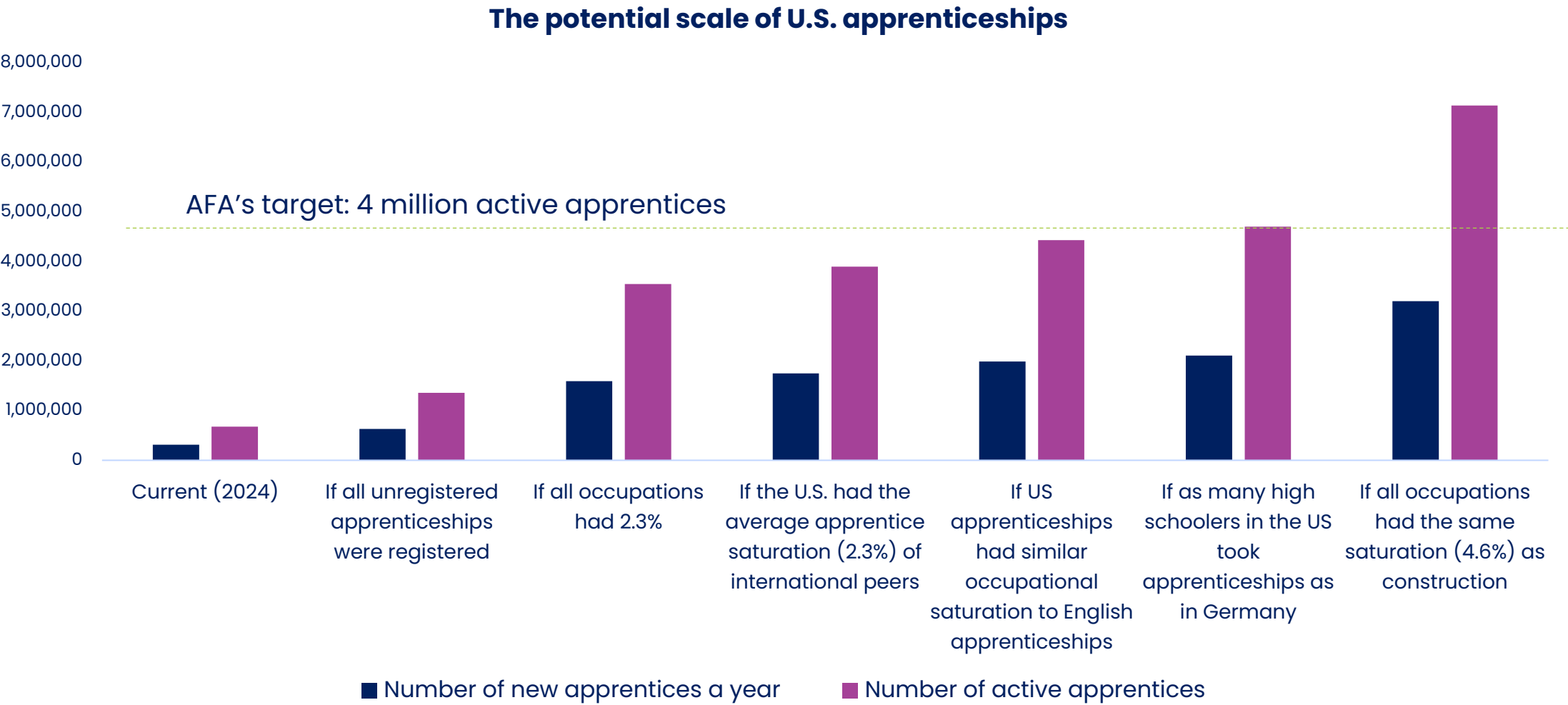
Apprenticeship and Public Policy:

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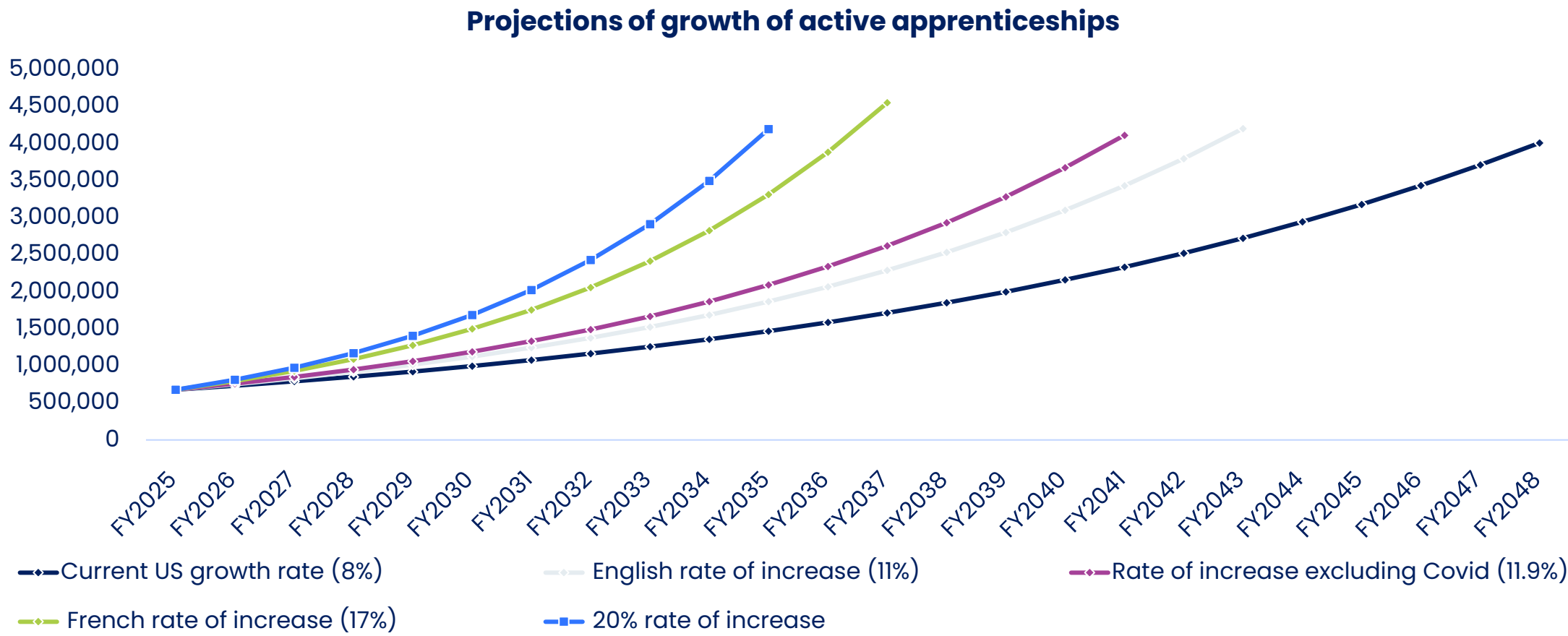
The Role of the Community College:

Scaling Opportunities

4 million is a reasonable goal for the U.S.



Without intervention, it will take 30 years to reach 4 million



Supply is not a constraint to apprenticeship growth

3/4ths of high school graduates could benefit from an apprenticeship ...

- Currently, we **estimate only 0.4% (around 14,000 a year) of high school graduates are taking an apprenticeship 1-2 years** following graduation.
- Of the 3.7 million graduates from high school each year, **75% are underemployed at 25 or do not graduate with a degree** (see slide 4).
- This population could benefit **from a different model of earning and learning**, with occupational education more closely tied to the labor market leading to better employment outcomes (and a degree if necessary).
- Meaning there is scope for **far more young people to take apprenticeships**.

Supply is not a constraint to apprenticeship growth

... and 3/4ths of incumbent workers could benefit from an apprenticeship

36.6 M

workers in high-churn, low-wage jobs, such as fast food and retail sales positions

10.6 M

young workers who are new entries to the workforce without a bachelor degree

12.8 M

underemployed college graduates have a job that doesn't draw on the skills they acquired with their education, and one that offers few pathways to better employment

68 M

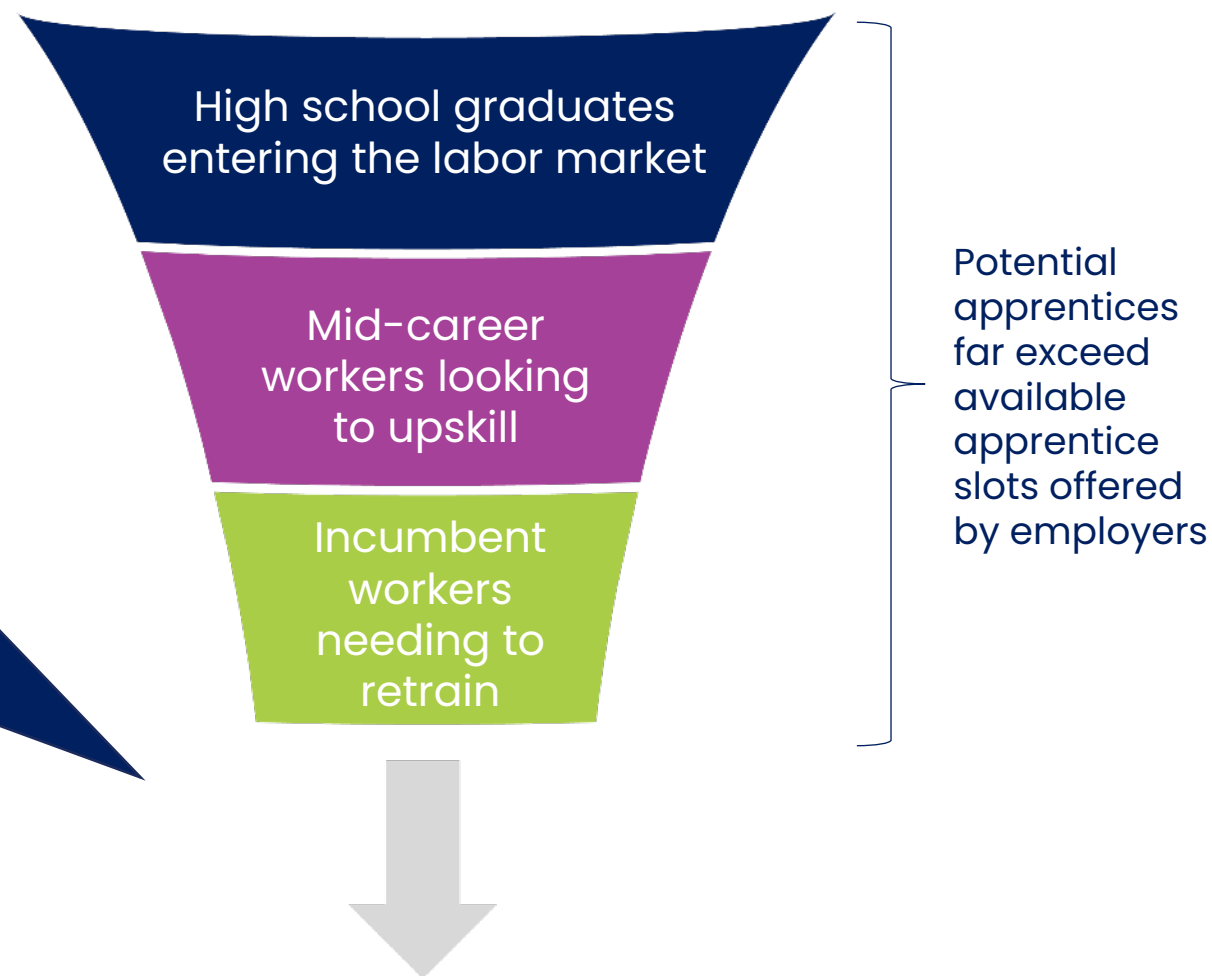
mid-career workers are facing limited progression, and would be well-suited to retraining or upskilling opportunities

Employer adoption remains the limiting factor for scaling apprenticeships

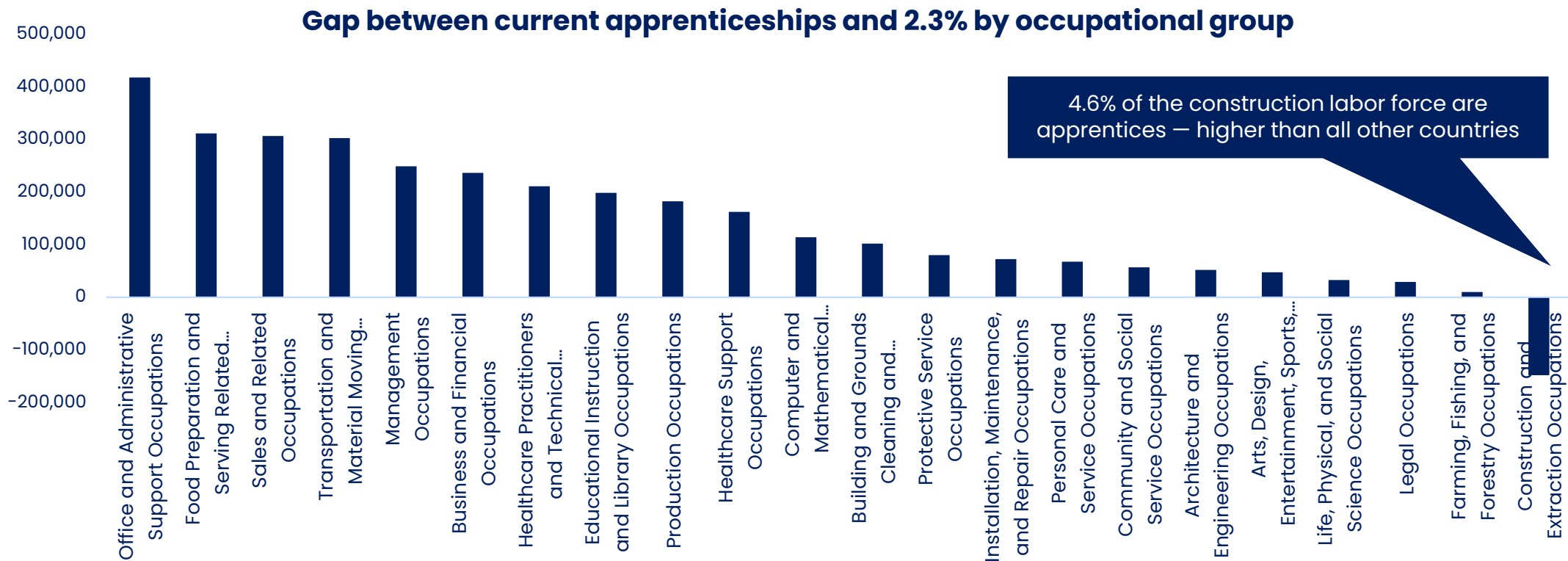
With growing skills gaps, U.S. employers should be taking advantage of apprenticeship programs at scale.

But apprenticeships remain poorly understood, only operating at scale in a handful of industries.

Beyond poor awareness, employers cite administrative/bureaucratic barriers, and a lack of incentivization.



There is scope for significant growth in most occupations



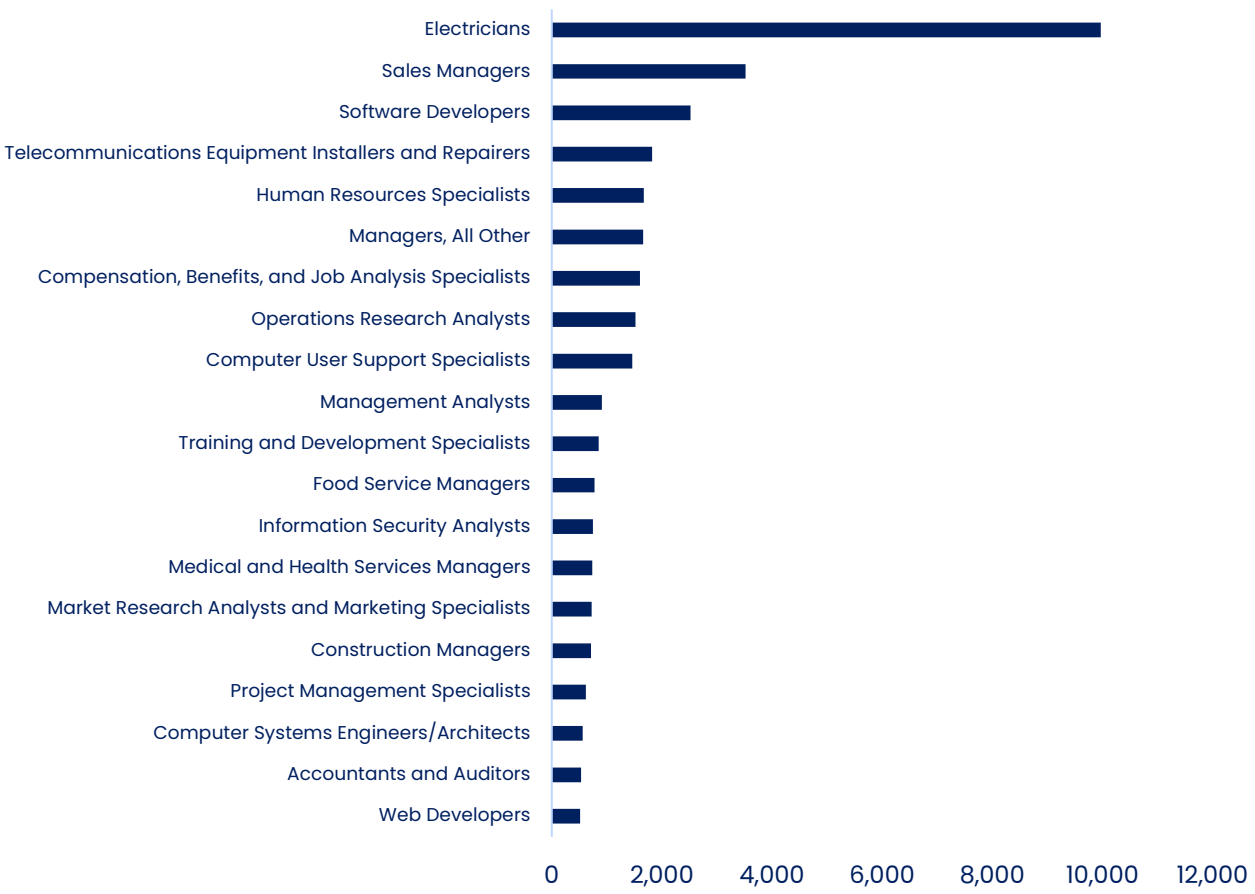
Growth in the top 3 most prevalent occupations alone could easily produce 500,000 new apprentices per year

Over 15% of occupations are apprenticeship-ready, with many more viable

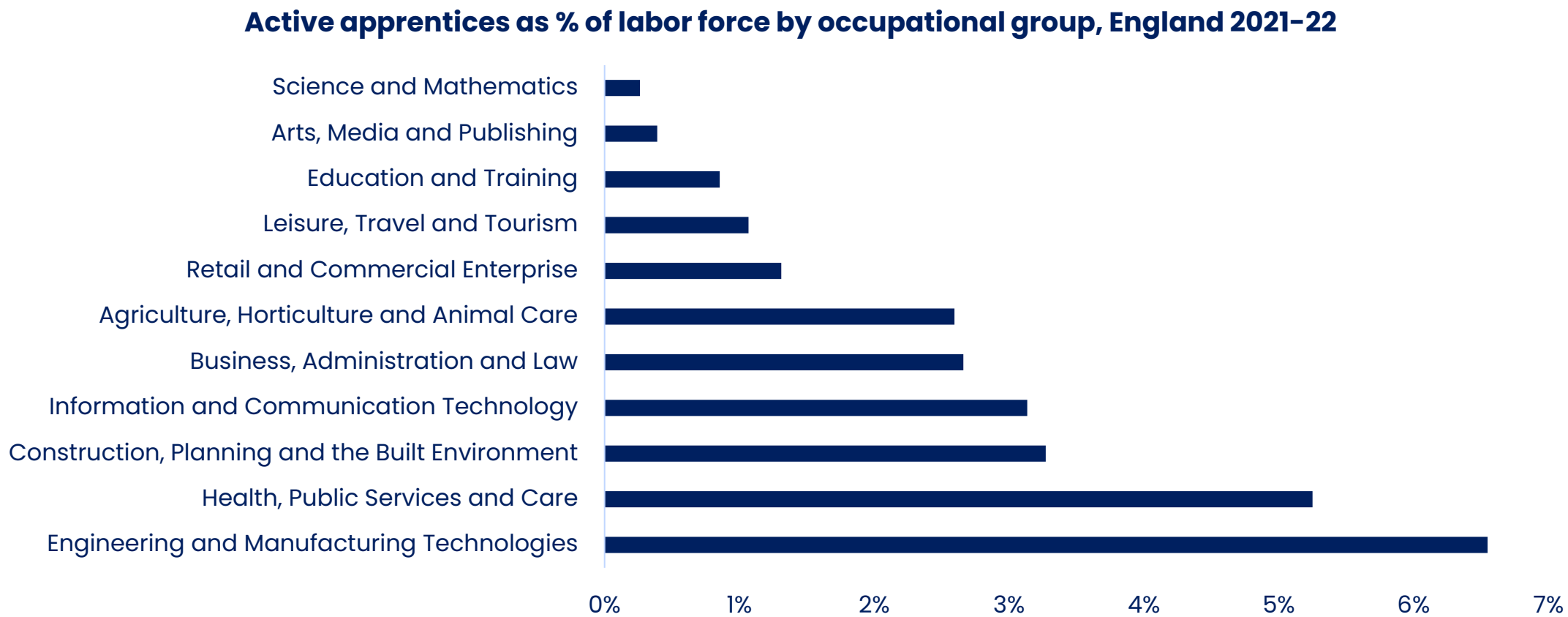
Apprenticeable jobs

- BGI/Multiverse definition:
- Good wages: workers in the 25th percentile earning >\$20 an hour
 - Demand: Expected growth trajectory of >5% from 2021 to 2031
 - Accessible without a Bachelor’s Degree
 - Accessible without related experience
 - On-the-job training
 - Already hosts apprenticeships (over 500 job ads for apprenticeships in 2022)
- 149 of 956 occupations meet these criteria. 245 are viable, without currently hosting apprentices

Number of Job postings for US apprenticeships, 2022

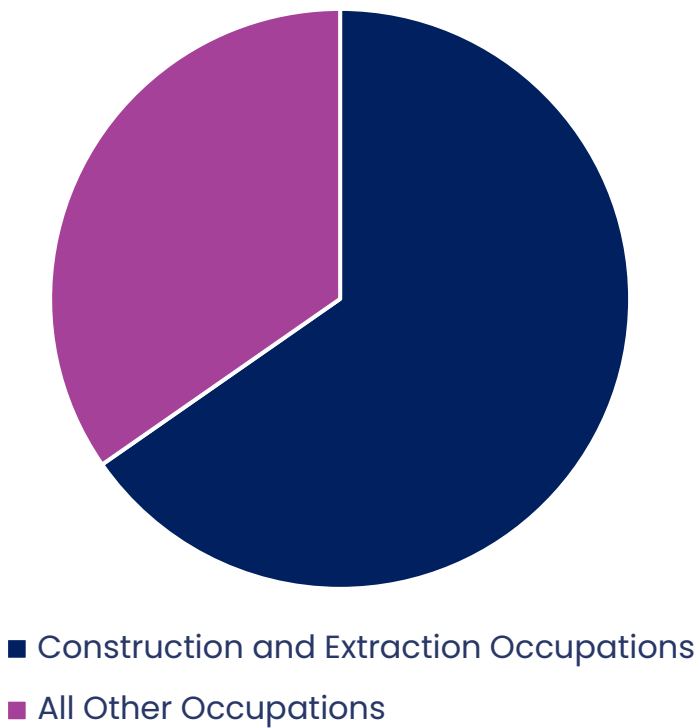


Other countries have achieved occupational diversity in apprenticeships



Most US apprentices are in construction — but occupational diversity is growing

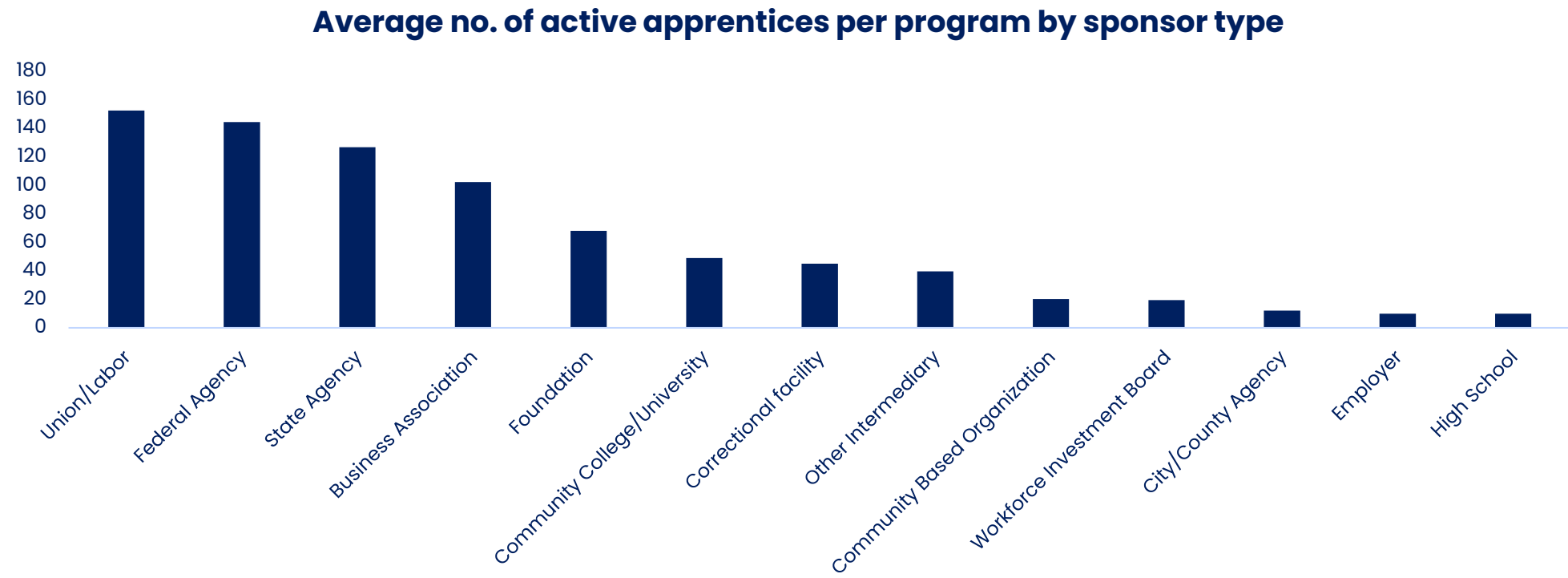
Active apprentices by occupation



New apprentices by occupation

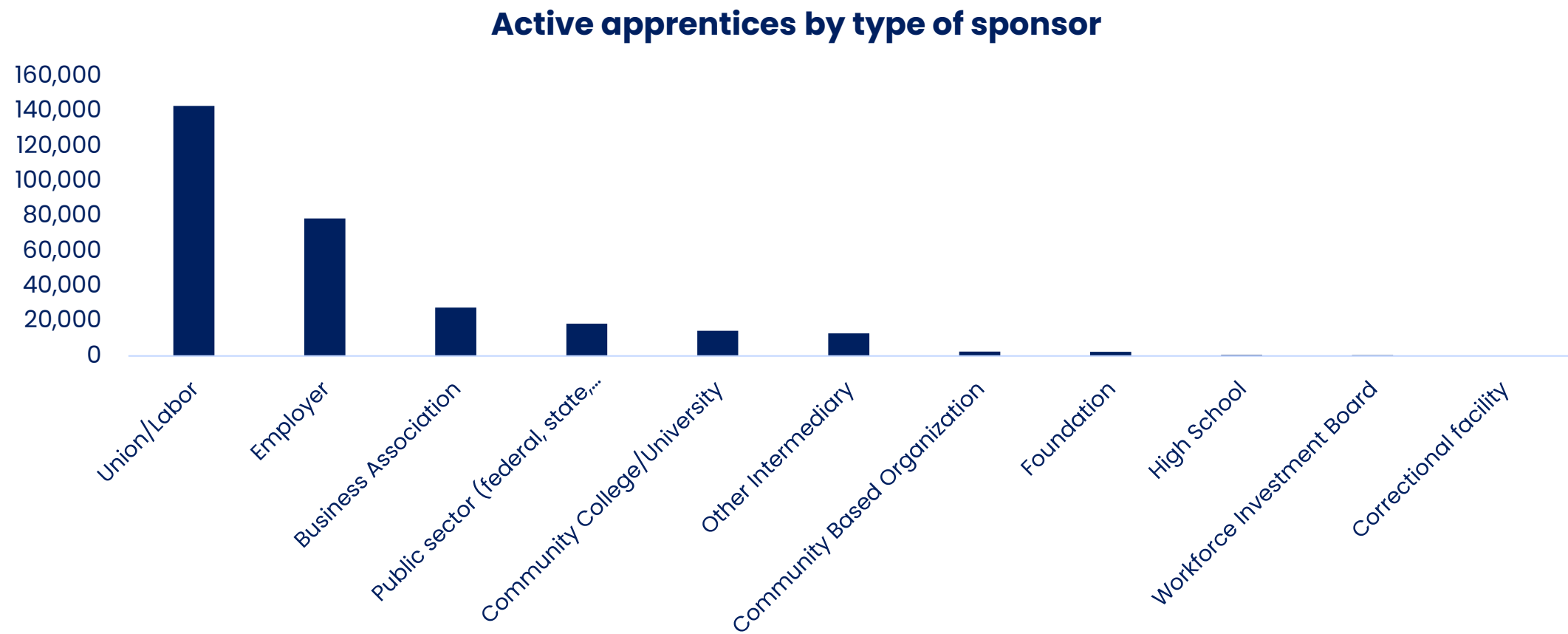


The development of multi-employer intermediaries is the key to scale



Most programs are small and single employer. If all programs operated at the scale of unions — working with multiple employers — there would be 2.8 million active apprentices

Half of current apprentices are sponsored by union/labor organizations



Apprenticeship degrees will play an increasingly major role

- Expansion will require significant participation in apprenticeships by higher education institutions in apprenticeships. Despite a positive trend in removing degree requirements, **many high-wage, high-growth jobs of the future will require degrees.**
- Using BLS' employment projections:
 - There will be **24 million apprenticeable high-wage, high-growth jobs with education requirements below a bachelor's degree** in 2033 — covering 14% of the projected labor force.¹
 - But when you include jobs requiring **bachelor's degrees, there are 53 million apprenticeable high-wage, high-growth jobs** — 31% of the projected labor force.
- Other countries have significant apprenticeship degrees programs: 19% of all apprenticeship starts in 2024/25 in England were at degree level or above. In Germany degree apprenticeships now make up nearly 5% of all higher education enrollment.



If just 3% of bachelor degree enrollments were apprenticeship degrees, that would mean an additional 270,000 apprentices

Public sector and industrial policy drivers will play a part

- The **public sector employs 20.2 million people in the U.S.**, approximately 14.5% of the workforce across federal, state, and local government, covering a very broad range of occupations.
- In other countries, the public sector has been used as a trailblazer to drive scale in apprenticeship and prove occupations are apprenticeable. England set a **mandate for 2.3% of public sector workers to be apprentices**, with some success.
- Public sector spending, beyond direct employment, can also be used as a driver. Most states (and some federal agencies) **set apprenticeship requirements as part of their public works procurement rules**. This has driven the expansion of apprenticeships in construction. This approach could be extended to other areas (e.g. IT contracts) to take advantage of the \$10 trillion annual total government expenditure as a policy tool to grow apprenticeships, without additional expense.



If 2.3% of public sector workers were apprentices, that would equate to 460,000 apprentices

Community colleges are well placed to drive expansion



Community colleges already have the resources and expertise to deliver high quality Related Instruction, and to navigate state and federal funding.



Some are starting to develop more expansive roles in apprenticeship — acting as sponsors and generating demand



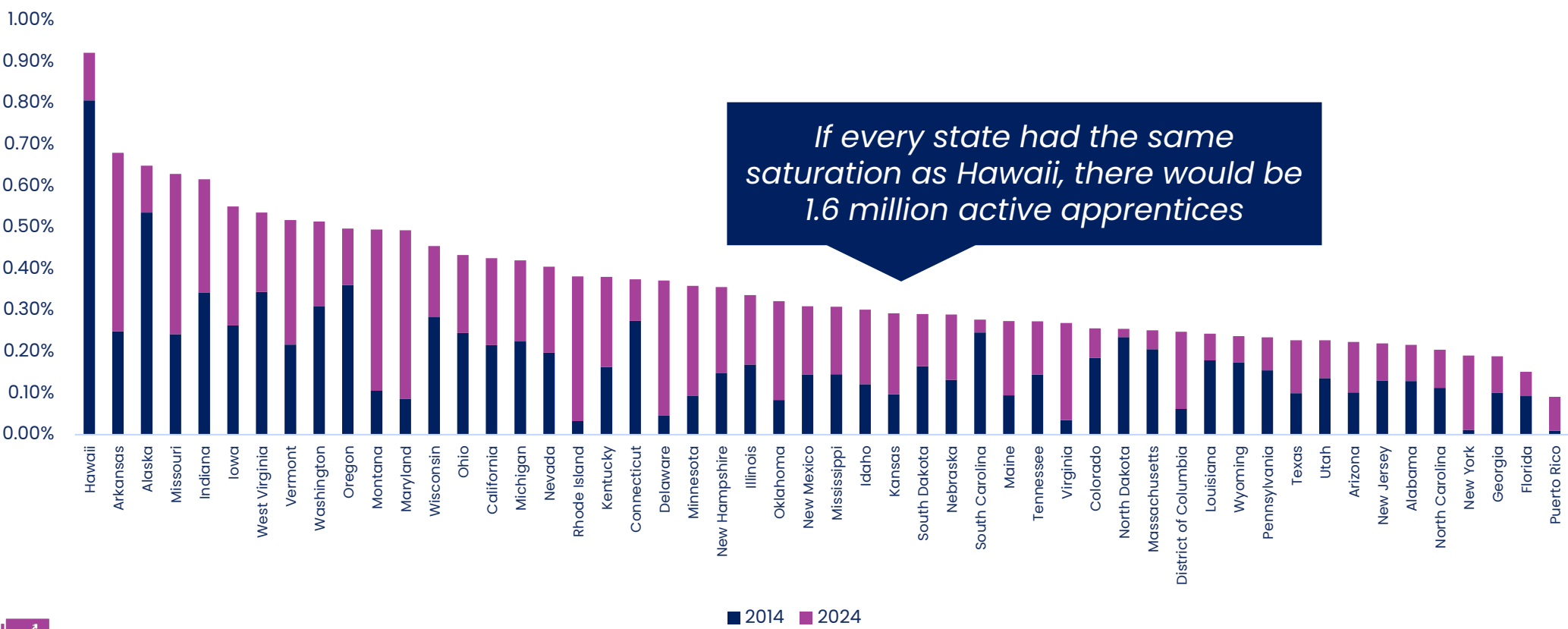
We estimate currently only 3% — 15,500 apprentices — are sponsored by community colleges.



If just 5% of community college enrollments were in apprenticeship programs, that would mean an additional 442,000 apprentices

State progress varies — the right state policy levers could make significant differences

Active apprentices as % of labor force by state, 2014 to 2024



With the right incentives, unregistered programs would convert to registered

- Not much is known about unregistered apprenticeships. Data from the 2016 Adult Training and Education Survey (ATES) suggest **about the same number of American workers have participated in unregistered earn-and-learn training as in registered apprenticeship programs.**
- In 2016, 1.4 million people reported having had a state or federal apprenticeship number, while 1.5 million indicated that they had earned journeyman status but had no apprenticeship number of the kind that would have been assigned in a registered program.
- That would give an **annual flow of around 300,000 people starting an unregistered program.**
- Incentives for employers (and a reduction in administrative burden) would likely mean some of these opportunities convert to registered apprenticeships.¹



If just 20% of unregistered apprenticeships converted to registered, that would equate to 60,000 new apprentices per year

Improving apprentice retention would boost active apprenticeships

Pathway	Typical Completion Rate	Notes & Sources
Registered Apprenticeship	42%	GAO analysis suggests completion within 1 year of expected completion date is 42%
International apprenticeships	60-75%	English apprenticeship completion is currently at 60.5%, Germany at 74.5%
Associate Degree	30% within 3 years (public 2-year colleges)	NCES/IPEDS: 3-year completion rate for public community colleges ≈30%; private 2-year ≈55%
Bachelor's Degree	64% within 6 years	NCES: 6-year graduation rate for first-time, full-time students at 4-year institutions 64%; public 61%, private nonprofit 76%
Certificate Programs	52% within 3 years	U.S. Dept. of Education study: 52% of certificate students completed within 3 years;
Coding Bootcamps	92% (CIRR-verified programs)	CIRR reports: average graduation rate 92% for full-time coding bootcamps.

- Apprentice completion rates are relatively low both internationally and compared to similar programs.
- Apprenticeship completion rate has improved from 35% in 2021 to 42% today, suggesting rapid improvement is possible. English completion grew 5% in one year following government intervention.
- Improving completion would significantly boost supply — improving completion to 50% would be the equivalent of another 60,000 new apprentices

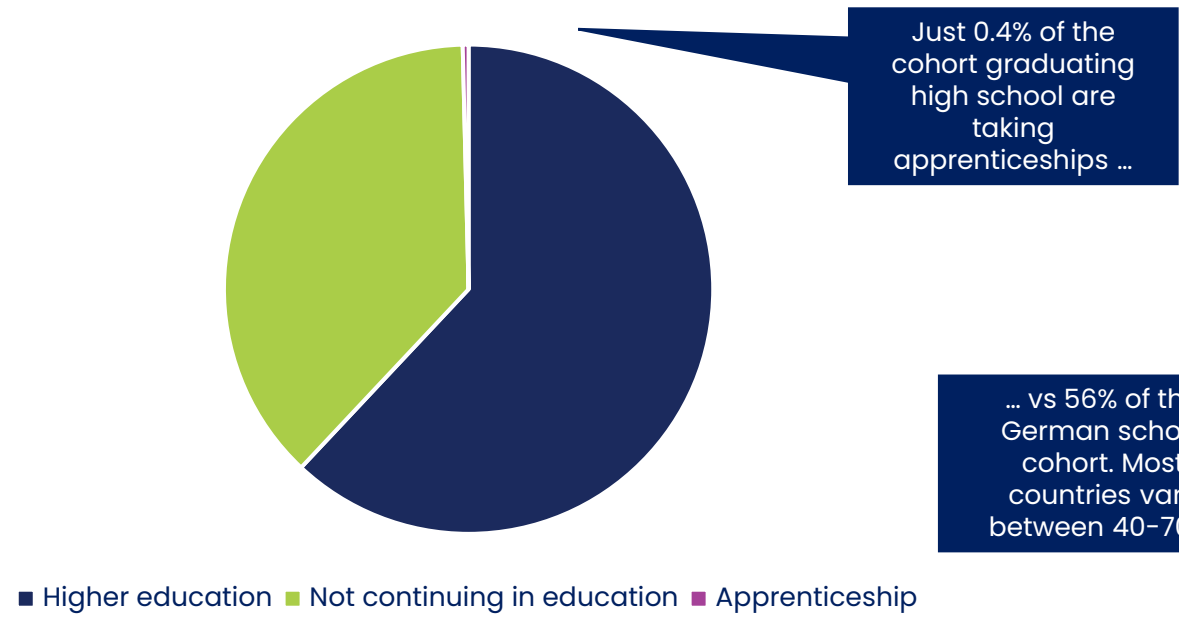


Increasing retention by 8 percentage points to 50% would be the equivalent of another 60,000 active apprentices per year

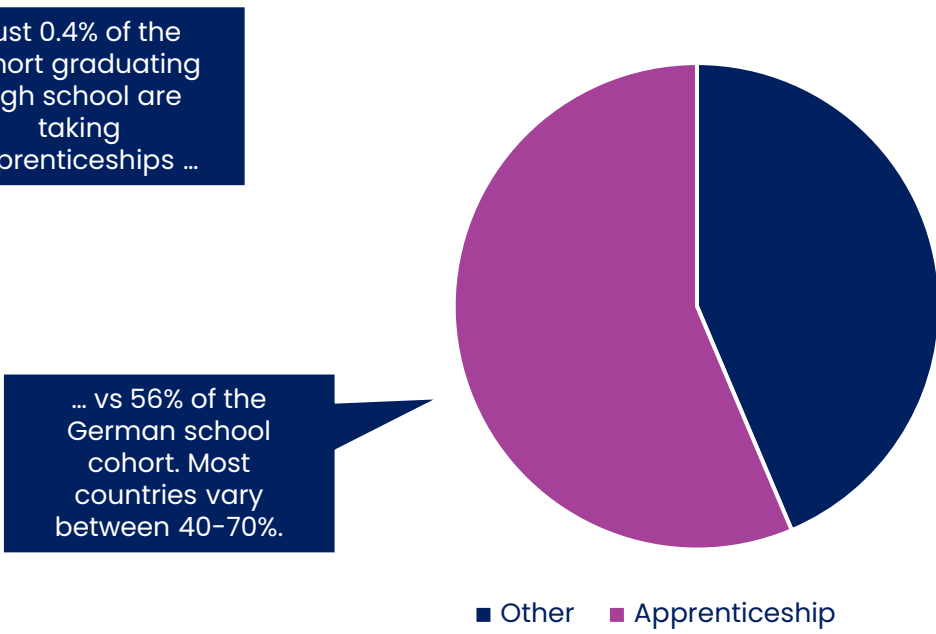
Sources: [GAO](#), [IPEDS](#), [DOE](#), [CIRR](#)

A modest increase in young people taking apprenticeships would add significant flow

Destinations of US high school graduates



Destinations of German high school graduates



If just 10% of the US high school graduate cohort took apprenticeships, that would equate to 360,000 new apprentices per year

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Actions Under Trump 2

- \$162 million **Pay-for-Performance** Incentive Payments Program awarded
- The administration has made impressive efforts to include Registered Apprenticeship in **other funding** streams.
- Pending requests for proposals will create opportunities for the Department to support apprenticeship **intermediary development.**
- The Department of Labor issued “sub-regulatory” guidance on the Registered Apprenticeship system to **improve flexibility, reduce burdens for employers, and improve timeliness of registration.**
- The Department has proposed rules that would **simplify provisions for ensuring equal employment opportunity** compliance.

OVERALL GRADE: B+

Area	AFA Comments	Grade
Pay-for-Performance (PFP) Funding	The Administration has allocated a combined \$181 million for pay-for-performance grants represent historic investments in a promising apprenticeship funding model. The arrangements are somewhat complex, but the commitment to the approach is admirable.	A-
Appropriately Scaled Funding	The U.S. invests about one-tenth of per-apprentice spending by peers like the U.K. or Germany. The Administration's efforts to connect apprenticeship to a broad array of funding initiatives show good intentions, but its dedicated budget proposals ask for flat funding on apprenticeship at best.	C
A Developed Intermediary System	The U.S. needs a network of developed group sponsors operating across all industries and states. The PFP grant program will incentivize more intermediaries to enter the apprenticeship field, and the administration's incorporation of apprenticeship approaches across a range of RFPs can help spur intermediary development. Pending requests for proposals further increase investments in this area.	B
A Smarter Regulatory and Statutory Environment	The Administration has already made good progress with sub-regulatory guidance, including efforts aimed at reducing administrative burden, improving the timeliness of registration processes, and placing greater emphasis on tracking completion outcomes.	B+

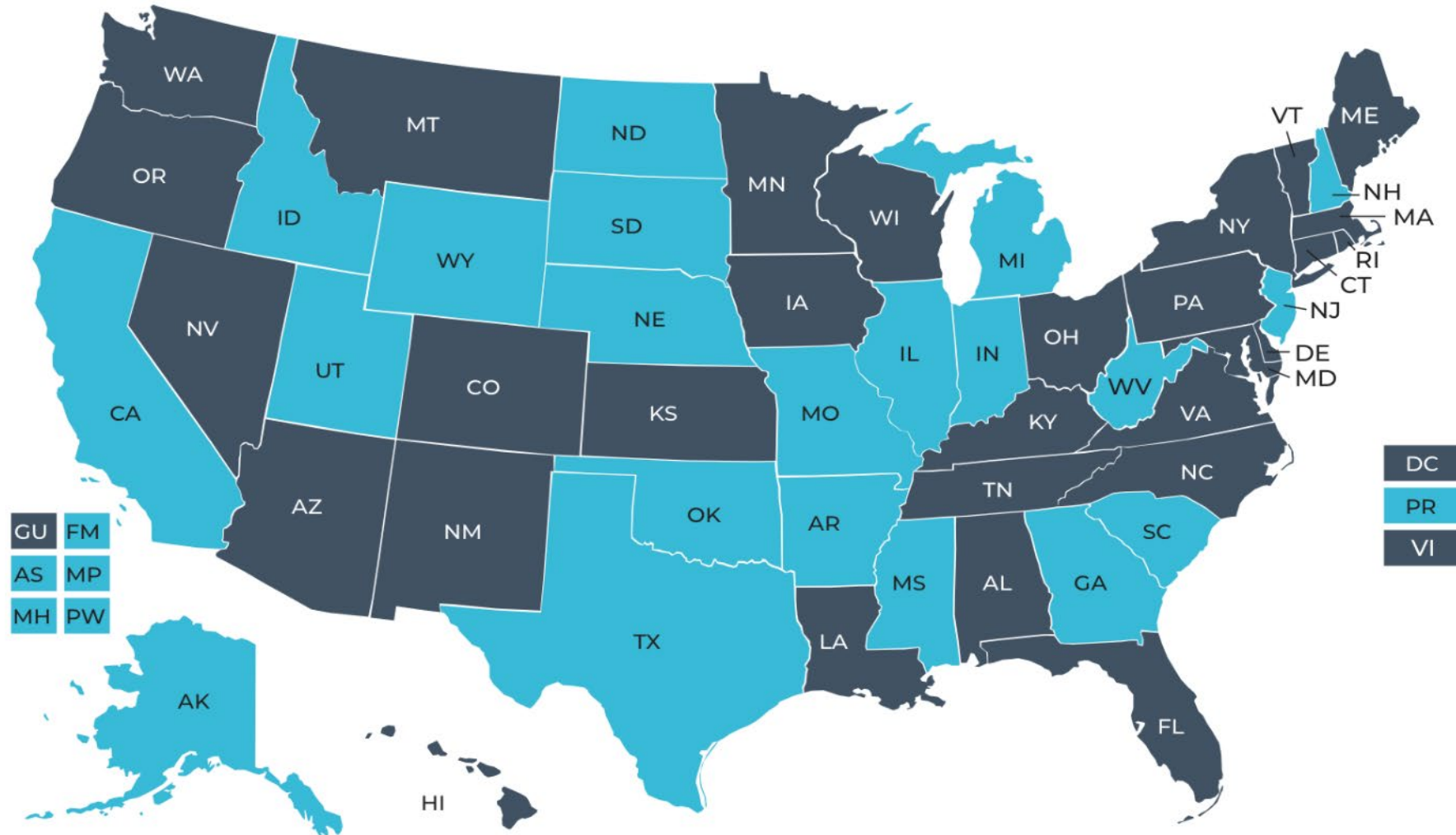
Pay for Performance Awardees

- Florida Department of Commerce
 - Awarded \$40 million for the **defense industrial base**, shipbuilding, and maritime manufacturing sectors.
- Jobs for the Future Inc.
 - Awarded \$40 million for building and maintaining the critical infrastructure that sustains **artificial intelligence, semiconductor, and nuclear energy** industries.
- Wireless Infrastructure Association
 - Awarded \$29.9 million to rapidly expand Registered Apprenticeships in the **telecommunications** sector.
- The Trustees of Clark University
 - Awarded \$27 million for **information technology** apprenticeships.
- ASE Foundation
 - Awarded \$25 million for **automotive and truck service technician apprenticeships**.

Improving the Apprenticeship System



■ Office of Apprenticeship (OA) ■ Recognized State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAA)



Streamlining the Apprenticeship System

Registered Apprenticeship Training Approaches – More Flexibility

- Simplified rules for competency-based programs
- Encourages sponsors to consider end-point assessments
- Rescinds a previous limit on the maximum allowable credit for prior work experience
- Specifies that the minimum of 144 hours of related instruction for each year of apprenticeship is a recommendation, rather than a requirement.
- Requires apprenticeship instructors to meet state requirements, or be a subject matter expert
- Rescinds previous guidance that an apprentice is required to have worked under the program sponsor for a minimum of six months, or 1,000 hours.

Role of State Apprenticeship Councils – Limits to SAC Role

- Clarifies that State Apprenticeship Councils (SACs) cannot directly evaluate, approve, or register apprenticeship standards or programs.
- SACs cannot make occupational apprenticeability determinations, monitor or oversee apprenticeship programs, or suspend or deregister programs.

State Requirements Under SAEF

- States required to set a goal for apprenticeship growth
- Promote apprenticeship growth in particular industries
- Leverage grant by 50%
- Publish apprenticeship registration time-to-approval
- Encourages
 - integration of CTE programs with apprenticeship,
 - developing incentive funding efforts such as pay-for-performance,
 - state capacity and staffing, and
 - strengthening the availability of supportive services for apprentices.

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Last Year's Talk

- **Potential for Community Colleges**

- A strategic shift linking academic and work-based learning could revitalize community colleges, reduce costs, and expand U.S. apprenticeships.

- **Existing Involvement**

- Many community colleges already provide Related Technical Instruction (RTI) and have strong ties with employers, but scale remains limited.

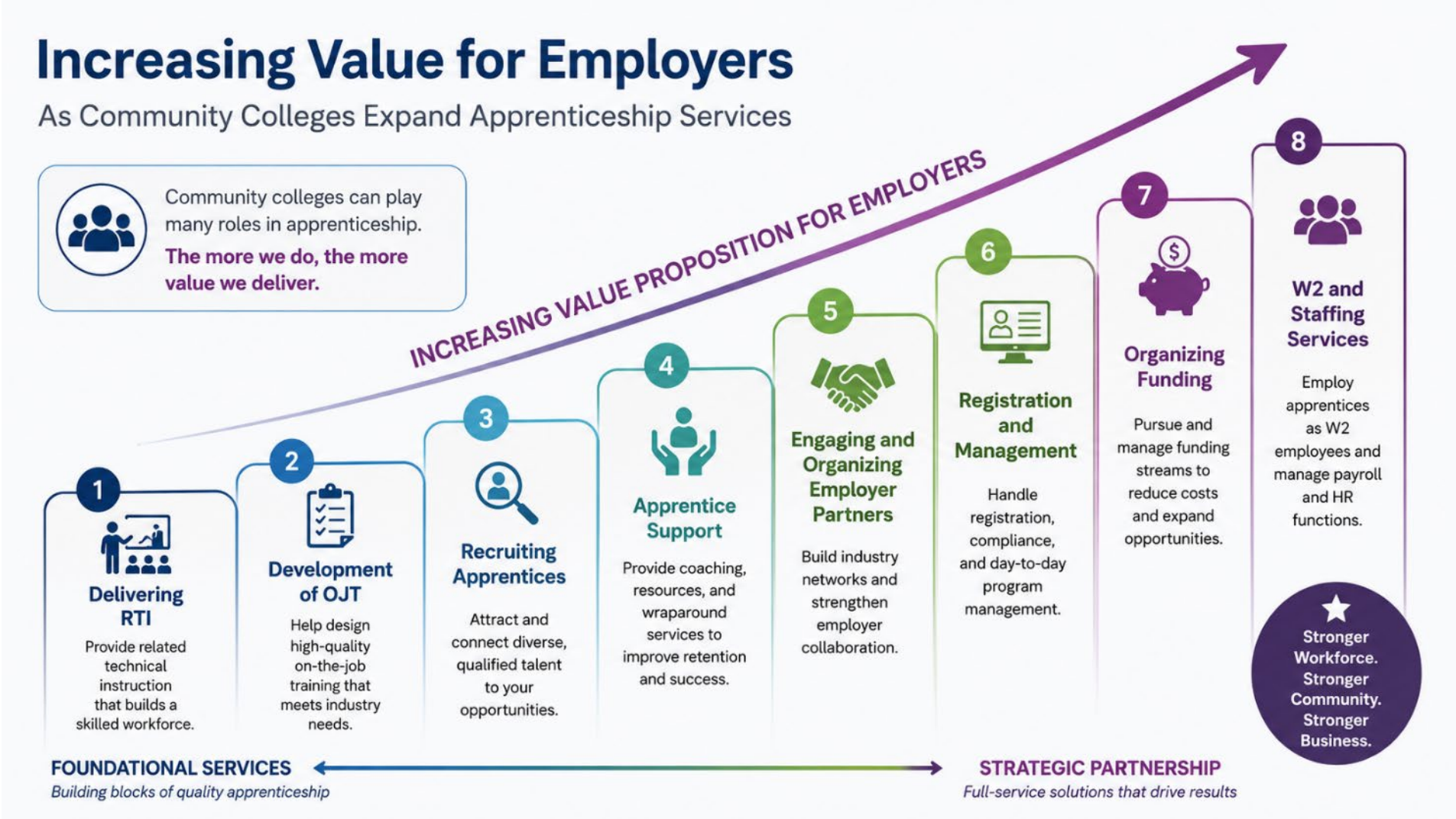
- **Challenges**

- Recruiting employers and expanding programs require significant effort, funding, and incentives. Colleges often lack the resources or motivation to scale apprenticeship programs.

- **Employer Demand**

- Catalyzing employer demand is crucial for expanding apprenticeships. Successful examples, like Apprenticeship Carolina, highlight the need for dedicated staff and resources.

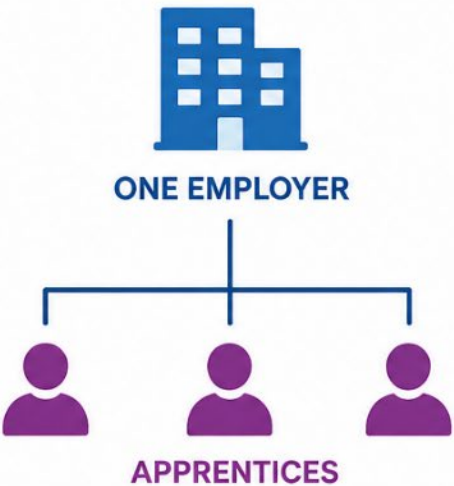
Pathways to Scale: Growing the Value Proposition



Pathways to Scale: Multi-employer Apprenticeship Models

SINGLE EMPLOYER APPRENTICESHIP EFFORT

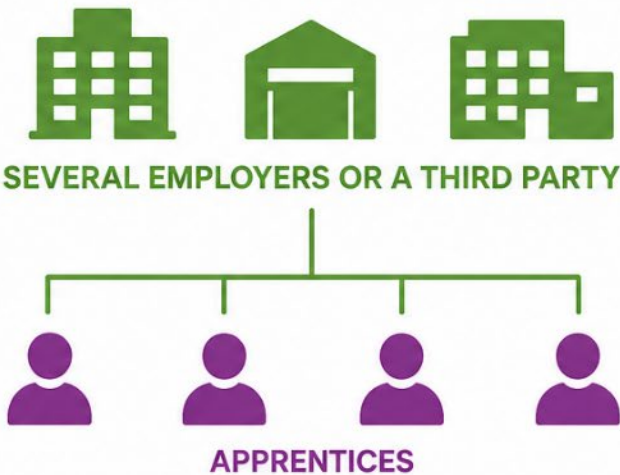
One employer designs, sponsors,
and operates the apprenticeship program.



Training is specific to the needs
of that one employer.

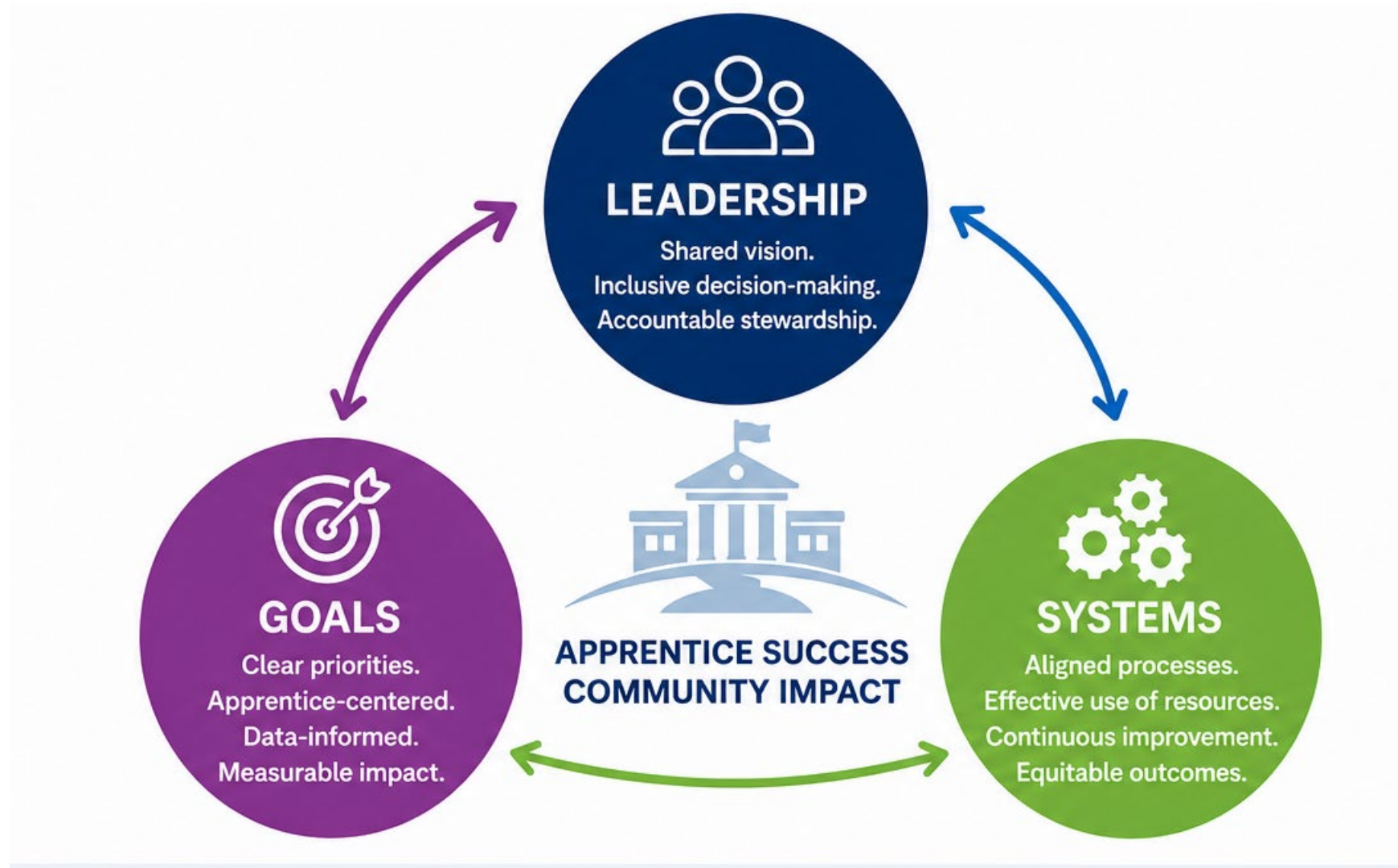
MULTI-EMPLOYER APPRENTICESHIP EFFORT

Several employers or a third party
sponsor and operate the apprenticeship program.

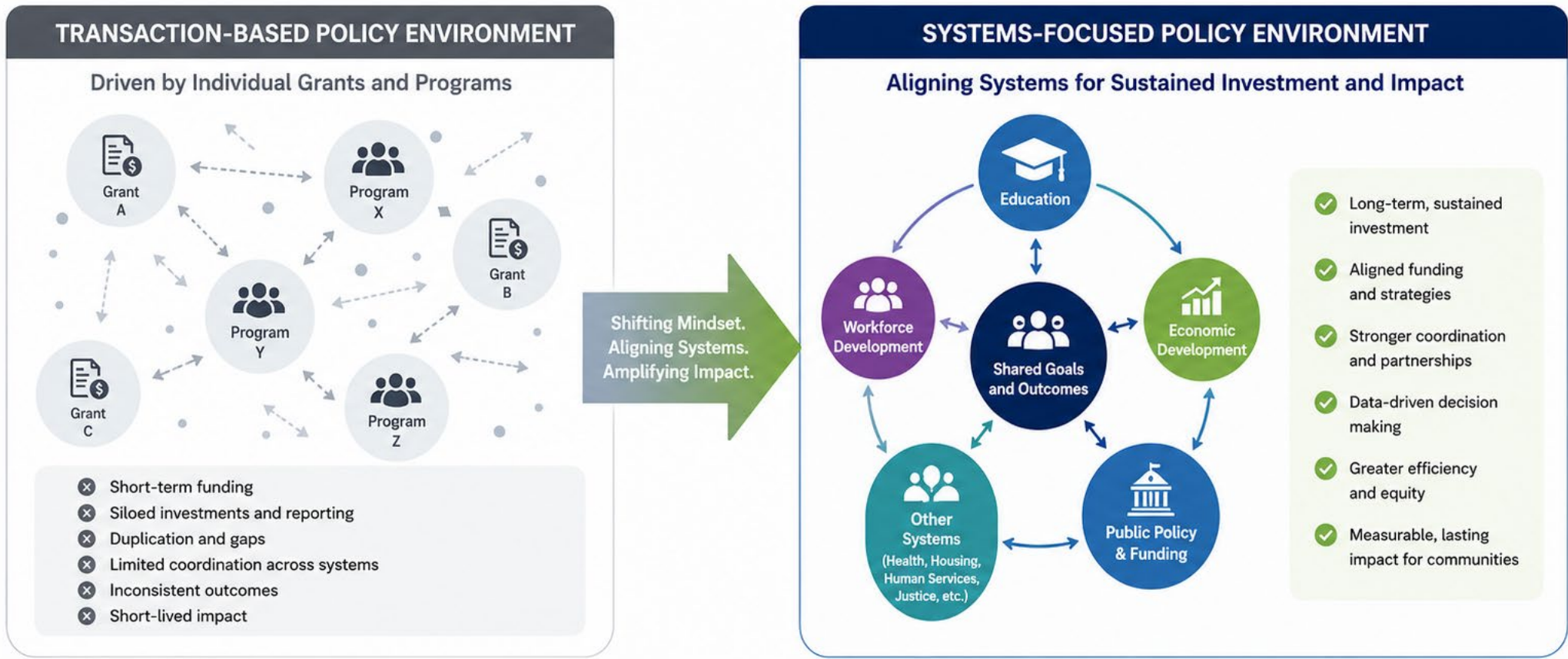


Training is shared across employers
to meet the needs of an industry
or occupation.

Pathways to Scale: Preparing Our Institutions



Pathways to Scale: Shifting the Policy Environment



New Tools for Expansion

- **“Pay for Success” Funding**
- **Workforce Pell**
- **State Initiatives**
 - Illinois Apprenticeship Expansion Grants (\$10 million)
 - ICCB Work on Apprenticeship Strategy