

# Apprenticeship 2025: A Bold Vision for the Registered Apprenticeship System

## Speaker Biographies

**Zach Boren** is a senior policy program manager in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population, where he leads a variety of apprenticeship-focused projects, including youth apprenticeship, and is a technical expert on registered apprenticeship and equal employment opportunity. Before working at Urban, Boren spent 11 years with the US Department of Labor, where he was the director of registered apprenticeship and policy. Boren worked with US Coast Guard on congressional affairs and on Capitol Hill. Boren was selected by the Aspen Institute as a Marano Fellow, participating in their Sector Skills Academy. A native of Indiana, Boren received a bachelor's in public affairs from Indiana University and a master's in congressional and presidential studies from The Catholic University of America.

**Diana Elliott** is a principal research associate in the Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population at the Urban Institute. Her work focuses on families' financial security and economic mobility and the programs and policies that support them, including housing affordability, apprenticeships, and financial empowerment. Elliott was previously research manager of the Pew Charitable Trusts' work on financial security and economic mobility, where she was instrumental in fielding a major national survey on American family finances and published numerous reports and briefs about the state of financial well-being and economic mobility in the United States. Before joining Pew, Elliott was a family demographer in the fertility and family statistics branch in the Social, Economic, and Housing Statistics Division at the US Census Bureau. Elliott holds a PhD in sociology from the University of Maryland, College Park.

**Casandra Hockenberry** is a Senior Policy Analyst with The Council of State Governments Center of Innovation, where she works across a broad number of initiatives, such as the Apprenticeship Data and Practices Technical Assistance Center, which strives to improve the usage and quality of data-based systems supporting a robust apprenticeship environment, and the Overseas Voting Initiative, which researches ways to improve the voting process for military and overseas citizens. Prior to joining The Council of State Governments, she worked for the Kentucky Department of Public Advocacy as a public defender representing indigent clients charged with felonies and misdemeanors. Casandra received her degree in Political Science from Clarion University and her Juris Doctor from Case Western University. Casandra always enjoys a good book, heated debates about music, and time with her sausage dog, Remington.

**Joshua Johnson** is a director at JFF. A member of the team in the JFF Center for Apprenticeship & Work Based Learning, he leads efforts to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in apprenticeship, with a specific focus on helping employers make commitments to building inclusive Registered Apprenticeship programs. Before joining JFF, Joshua was the state director of apprenticeship in Wisconsin. In that role, he oversaw growth in all initiatives related to the creation of intentional career pathways for Wisconsin citizens. His passion for apprenticeship is rooted in its ability to eradicate poverty. Earlier in his career, Joshua worked for the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, where he helped employers connect to the untapped talent pool of individuals with disabilities. While he was the Wisconsin state director of apprenticeship, Joshua was elected by his fellow state directors to serve as vice president of the National Association of State and Territorial Apprenticeship Directors. Joshua spent nearly 10 years in prison and has shared his personal story of reentry to encourage justice-involved individuals to refocus and get

connected prior to release. He also speaks at events about the importance of employers creating diverse and inclusive apprenticeships to ensure that they can compete locally, nationally, and globally. In 2007, Joshua completed a Construction Craft Laborers apprenticeship and then spent three years as a construction craft laborer journeyworker building highways in Illinois and Wisconsin.

**John V. Ladd** became Administrator of the Office of Apprenticeship, Employment and Training Administration in January 2008. As the Administrator, John has responsibility for oversight and activities related to the National Apprenticeship Act as well as the management of OA staff in the National Office, 6 Regional Offices, and numerous field offices across the country. Prior to his appointment as Administrator, John served as the Deputy Administrator for the Office of National Response and the Director of Regional Management in the Office of Field Operations. John has received numerous awards and honors while at ETA including being selected for the inaugural class of ETA's Excellence in Leadership Program. John also has extensive experience in ETA's Regional Offices having spent a number of years in the Boston Regional Office working with workforce development programs in New England. John first came to the Department of Labor as a Presidential Management Fellow in 1993. John also has experience at the local level of the public workforce system having worked in Boston, MA, and Stamford, CT. A native of Boston, MA, Mr. Ladd received his bachelor's degree from Boston University and his Master's in Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

**Mukta Pandit** brings more than 25 years of global consulting experience. Since founding Safal in 2010, Mukta has provided executive oversight in over fifty Safal engagements, including with the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Education, Department of Defense, state education and workforce agencies, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and several school districts. She currently oversees multiple Safal projects with USDOL for expansion of registered apprenticeships. Prior to Safal, Mukta was with the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation for five years, where she led expansion efforts in U.S. education, established the foundation's offices in India and Africa, and drove portfolio analysis, measurement, and sharing of best practices for grants totaling over \$160M. Previously, she was an Engagement Manager at McKinsey & Co. Mukta holds an MBA from Wharton, where she graduated as a Palmer Scholar.