



New Technology Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Program Changes Lives in Northwest Arkansas

The InnovateHER Technology Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Rotation Program launched on May 6, 2024, for 20 individuals interested in careers in technology. This program, hosted by Women in Technology of Northwest Arkansas, is a one-year program designed primarily for women coming out of high school or looking for a career change. This program has been approved by OSD as an Arkansas Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Program.

According to Tiffany Benitez, Founder and President of Women in Technology of Northwest Arkansas, "all 22 cohort members were in attendance, as well as most of the mentors. Each cohort member shared what they wanted to get from this program and it was beyond moving! I am so grateful that they have this opportunity ahead."

In addition to certifying the program, OSD is partnering with InnovateHER by providing \$40,000 in training cost support for the first cohort. "This program demonstrates the best of what the apprenticeship model has to offer and we are proud to partner with InnovateHER. Participants can hone their work skills in preparation for a Registered Apprenticeship within a technology field in an Arkansas company. The program will lead to full-time jobs where apprentices continue to learn their craft in both formalized and on-the-job training. OSD's investment in InnovateHER is more than an investment in these individuals, it is really an investment in the future of Arkansas," said Mark McManus, OSD Apprenticeship Expansion Coordinator.

Over the next year, program candidates will go through a rotation of learning and development in preparation for apprenticeships in a technology field. Participants engage in ten-week courses in Data & Analytics, Engineering, Project and Product Management, and Cybersecurity. The program culminates in a team project of a simulation and final presentation, allowing participants to put their knowledge into action. In addition to the technology curriculum, students also receive career training, certifications, mentorship, and the opportunity to make face-to-face connections with industry leaders.

Upon successful completion of the pre-apprentice training, candidates are equipped to move into Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) with partnering employers as facilitated by the Arkansas Center for Data Sciences (ACDS). ACDS serves as the registered apprenticeship program sponsor for partnering employers supporting the InnovateHer pre-apprenticeship training. ACDS works with a group of committed employer partners like Walmart, Data Scout, and Shiloh Technologies which will consider the InnovateHER graduates to become apprentices in their companies.

The partnership between Women in Technology of Northwest Arkansas, OSD, ACDS, and local employers is a great example of what it takes to create a robust and knowledgeable workforce in Arkansas.

