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STARs*
SKILLED THROUGH
ALTERNATIVE ROUTES

Per Scholas Los Angeles + Los Angeles County:

IT & Cybersecurity Apprenticeship

Expanding digital equity and IT career access across LA County

How Per Scholas Los Angeles & Los Angeles County's Internal Services Department (ISD) Expanded Pathways into Tech Careers

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ABOUT LA COUNTY

10M

Population

2M

STARs in county

110,000

County employees

Los Angeles is the largest county in the United States

48,448

STARs in Los Angeles county

88

Cities and unincorporated communities

$49B

Annual budget

About the Per Scholas Los Angeles & LA County Cybersecurity Apprenticeship Program

In 2023, Los Angeles County's Internal Services Department (ISD) Delete The Divide partnered with Per Scholas Los Angeles to launch a registered cybersecurity apprenticeship to expand access to public sector tech careers. As one of the nation's largest local governments, LA County saw apprenticeships as a pathway to modernize its workforce and open doors for STARs.

Goals

- **Connect residents to quality IT jobs.** Apprenticeships provide paid training and a direct path into high-demand cybersecurity and IT roles.

- **Build a workforce that reflects the community.** Removing degree barriers broadens access for underrepresented groups and strengthens equity across county departments.

- **Bring new skills and perspectives into county systems.** Apprentices add up-to-date technical skills and lived experience that support more effective, resident-centered digital services.

- **Serve as the central employer-sponsor.** ISD served as the employer-sponsor, placing apprentices across multiple county departments and managing apprenticeship registration requirements.

THE RESULT

96%

Graduation rate

86%

Earned an industry-recognized CompTIA certification

SABRA JOHNSON

General Manager, Office of Major Programs & Initiatives | LA County

WALTER TUCKER IV

Executive Advisor | LA County

PATRICE MADU

Founder & Managing Director | Per Scholas Los Angeles

The Problem: Why LA County Needed a New Tech Talent Pipeline

LA County faced growing challenges recruiting and preparing the tech talent needed to modernize its digital services.

As LA County accelerated its digital modernization efforts, it faced growing challenges recruiting, training, and retaining the tech workforce needed to maintain secure, resident-centered digital services.

The County needed a scalable, skills-based pathway to bring more residents—especially STARs—into IT and cybersecurity roles.

Challenges

Competition with the private sector limited access to tech talent:

LA County struggled to compete with private-sector salaries, advancement pathways, and hiring speed, leading to persistent vacancies in critical technology roles.

> ✓ **Impact:** Departments lacked the workforce needed to support modernization.

An aging technology infrastructure required new skills:

An aging technology infrastructure required talent with the ability to support legacy systems and the adaptability to transition to newer technologies.

> ✓ **Impact:** Workforce gaps slowed modernization progress.

Legacy degree requirements excluded many skilled candidates:

Degree-based classifications prevented many STARs—workers Skilled Through Alternative Routes—from qualifying for entry-level tech roles, despite having the ability to succeed.

> ✓ **Impact:** Hiring pipelines were narrow and inequitable.

Growing pressure to deliver modern, secure digital services:

Residents increasingly expect seamless, mobile-friendly, secure digital services. Meeting these expectations required expanding the cybersecurity and IT workforce quickly.

> ✓ **Impact:** Departments needed workers who understood security needs and could support digital transformation.

The Solution: How LA County Identified and Built the Right Talent Pathway

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LA County and Per Scholas Los Angeles jointly built a skills-based apprenticeship model—after a deliberate process of evaluating barriers, exploring alternatives, and identifying what would create lasting workforce change.

Why Per Scholas

ISD sought a partner who could help design an apprenticeship grounded in real-world cybersecurity skills while expanding access for STARs.

Per Scholas Los Angeles emerged as the ideal collaborator, bringing deep training expertise, learner support systems, and experience launching workforce programs at scale. Together, they co-designed a model tailored to the county's long-term talent needs.

LA County explored options such as internships, upskilling, and contractor support, but recognized they needed a partner who could provide the structure, training capacity, and long-term support required to build internal cybersecurity talent.

LEARN MORE ABOUT PER SCHOLAS PROGRAMS

ISD-Delete The Divide identified Per Scholas Los Angeles as the right partner and co-built a comprehensive cybersecurity apprenticeship that offered:

20 hours/week ✓ **of paid training** funded by ISD-Delete The Divide	**3-month** ✓ **apprenticeship or internship/externship** combining IT fundamentals and cybersecurity exposure	**Professional skills workshops** ✓ (e.g., financial literacy, workplace readiness)	**Coaching and crisis support** ✓ through a dedicated learner support platform

Technical training aligned to an industry-recognized CompTIA IT certification (86% pass rate) ✓

The Results: Early Impact of the Cybersecurity Apprenticeship

The first LA County–Per Scholas apprenticeship cohort demonstrated strong engagement, skill development, and proof of concept for a scalable public-sector tech talent pipeline.
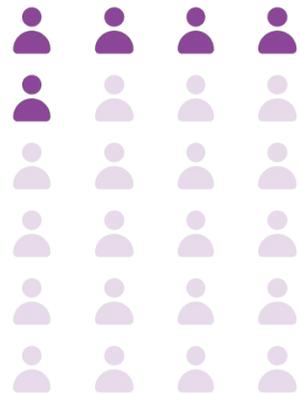
Program Outcomes

96%
Completion rate

86%
Earned the CompTIA certification, demonstrating mastery of industry-aligned cybersecurity skills

Employment Outcomes

5 of the 26 cohort members were hired into full-time roles across LA County and private employers.

While LA County hopes to see this number grow in future cohorts, participants gained industry-recognized certification and meaningful real-world training that strengthened their readiness for IT roles.

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Per Scholas Los Angeles provided professional-level IT instruction we didn't have internally. The chance to offer a real credential to our interns was an opportunity we couldn't pass up.

SABRA JOHNSON

General Manager, Office of Major Programs & Initiatives
Los Angeles County

Key Insights: What This Partnership Reveals About Public-Sector Talent Innovation

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The Per Scholas Los Angeles–LA County apprenticeship demonstrates how public agencies can open new pathways into tech roles and overcome long-standing hiring barriers.

INSIGHT 1

Persistence and coordination are essential when launching a public-sector apprenticeship.

Launching a public-sector apprenticeship requires sustained persistence and close coordination across departments and with the state.

The scale and complexity of a **100,000**-employee system make consistent communication and follow-through essential.

INSIGHT 2

Experienced training providers can expand capacity and streamline implementation.

Per Scholas Los Angeles provided professional-level instruction, learner supports, and apprenticeship expertise the County lacked internally.

The partnership expanded training capacity, delivered industry-recognized IT skills, and streamlined state registration and employer-sponsor responsibilities.

INSIGHT 3

Apprenticeships can open new pathways into public-sector tech roles—but work-based experience must be tightly integrated.

The program delivered strong engagement, certifications, and early hires, but hands-on experience varied due to limited job vacancies, apprenticeships, and networking access.

LA County aims to better align training, externships, and real vacancies to ensure learners gain the practical experience needed for full-time roles.

What's Next: Strengthening Hands-On Training and Job-Aligned Placements

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After completing the first cohort, LA County conducted a thorough review of its internship and apprenticeship efforts and identified opportunities to strengthen the model.

With American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding winding down, evolving departmental needs, and new organizational changes on the horizon, the County is refining its approach with Per Scholas Los Angeles to create a more focused, sustainable pathway that delivers deeper hands-on experience and stronger alignment with real vacancies.

PRIORITIZE DEEPER HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE	ALIGN PLACEMENTS WITH REAL VACANCIES	CONTINUE AS AN EMPLOYER OF REFERENCE	EXPAND CROSS-DEPARTMENT PARTNERSHIPS	PREPARE FOR COUNTYWIDE REORGANIZATION	EXPLORE NEW FUNDING MODELS
Future interns will receive more structured, meaningful on-the-job training.	Interns will be placed only in departments with open roles to strengthen hiring outcomes.	ISD will advocate for alumni across County departments, even when not the hiring unit.	ISD will deepen collaboration with the 32 departments already engaged in tech talent efforts.	A new strategic plan will shift ISD's structure and approach to talent programs including Per Scholas Los Angeles.	ISD will pursue philanthropic and alternative funding to sustain training and digital equity work in partnership w/ Per Scholas.

As ISD refines its approach, the County and Per Scholas Los Angeles remains committed to building equitable, skills-based pathways into public-sector tech careers—now with a more focused, sustainable model aligned to long-term hiring needs.