

Strategic Workforce Development



Innovative strategies to identify, train, place, and retain workers in highway construction jobs that support the Nation's highway system.



Photos: USDOT/Getty Images

The need for workers in highway construction, maintenance, and operations is on the rise, driven further by the industry's ongoing technological evolution, which demands a new set of skills. The U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) employed its Every Day Counts program to help answer the demand for highway construction, maintenance, and operations workers. Today's State-based model identifies and deploys proven yet underutilized innovations that make our transportation system adaptable, sustainable, equitable, and safer for all. The Every Day Counts Strategic Workforce Development initiative continues to identify, train, place, and retain underrepresented groups, including minorities and women, in jobs that can change their lives.

AN INDUSTRY AND PUBLIC WORKFORCE COLLABORATION

A 2022 Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) [survey](#) indicates that 91 percent of construction firms can't fill their job openings, the majority of which are craft workforce positions.

FHWA partnered with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, AGC, the American Road & Transportation Builders Association, and the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration to bring together various parties interested in workforce development in the highway construction field. This partnership resulted in a highway construction workforce development playbook called "[Identify, Train, Place.](#)" The playbook helps State, local, and tribal communities identify, train, and place workers in the contractor workforce to meet resource needs to

deliver highway construction projects. Additionally, with its workforce partners, FHWA developed a comprehensive [toolkit](#) with factsheets, profiles, case studies, and marketing materials.

For example, the [guidance counselor fact sheet](#) is designed for States to provide local high school systems with a means of educating their students and parents about highway construction careers. In addition, the toolkit contains case studies, including [success stories](#) highlighting programs that offer female minority participants opportunities for lasting careers in highway construction.

BENEFITS

Effective Solutions. Case studies, metrics, and other resources are available to help identify potential workers to enter highway construction training programs and careers.

Proven Training. Agency collaborations have created successful highway construction training programs that are graduating trained employees ready for the workforce.

Customizable Outreach. Strategic workforce development [toolkit materials](#), [webinars](#), and peer exchanges can boost efforts to place and retain workers in highway construction careers.

STATE OF PRACTICE

Across the country, State departments of transportation partner with workforce development boards, community colleges, nonprofits, and contractors to tackle the shortage of qualified workers for highway construction

projects. Through Round 7 of the [Every Day Counts initiative](#), States meet virtually and in person regularly for knowledge-sharing events, sharing best practices and challenges of building and maintaining workforce development programs. These events allow the Strategic Workforce Development team to gain insights into State-led initiatives and disseminate this knowledge to other States.

- ▶ Texas's [ConnectU2Jobs](#) program prepares and trains justice-involved young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 for careers in the heavy highway construction industry. Two cohorts graduated in 2022, and almost all cohort participants graduated with their National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Core Construction Level 1 Certification and NCCER Heavy Equipment Operator Level 1 Certification.
- ▶ The Arizona chapter of the AGC developed an [Industry Readiness Program](#) that offers 10 weeks of on-the-job training for job seekers entering the heavy civil construction industry. In 2021, 121 trainees participated in the program, and 19 apprentices reached journeyman status.
- ▶ Idaho's Highway Construction Workforce Partnership established a [Heavy Equipment Operator Training Program](#) that includes certifications in heavy equipment operation as well as hazardous waste operations and emergency response. In 2023, 100 percent of the trainees graduated from the program, and 74 percent obtained jobs in the construction industry.
- ▶ In 2022, 130 active career mentor volunteers worked with the [Vermont Works for Women Program](#) and matched 37 people with mentors, providing job search and application support, coaching, and advice about their profession and field. In addition, the program supported 92 women in finding, changing, or advancing their careers. These women came from 12 of Vermont's 14 counties.

RESOURCES

[Highway Construction Workforce Partnership / Strategic Workforce Development Website](#)
[Strategic Workforce Development Promotional Brochure](#)
[Strategic Workforce Development Toolkit SWD Toolkit](#)

Webinars

[Highway Construction Workforce Partnership Webinars](#)
[SWD Fireside Chat November 30, 2023](#)
[EDC-7 SWD Webinar to Welcome New States! September 7, 2023](#)
[Women in Construction March 21, 2023](#)

Videos

[ConnectU2Jobs: A Pipeline to Employers](#)
[Strategic Workforce Development: ConnectU2Jobs](#)
[Contractor Engagement in Strategic Workforce Development Initiatives](#)



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