



Webinar: Advocating for Your Construction Workforce

Chat Pod Questions and Answers

Webinar Date: November 15, 2022, 1:30-3:00 p.m. ET (12:30-2:00 p.m. CT)

Questions for Lone Star College - Christina Todd

- 1. Question:** Do you have registered apprenticeships?
Answer: Yes, we have registered apprenticeships with the Department of Labor (DOL).
- 2. Question:** Does the college offer a “concierge service” for employers?
Answer: Employers are not engaging in official apprenticeships because of the bureaucratic effort that goes into tracking students and employees through the programs. With the college tracking for the employers, they have the time to provide their employees with an apprenticeship—and provide them the opportunity to send one-off students for apprenticeships.
- 3. Question:** How many students do you have in an apprenticeship?
Answer: We do not have a ton of apprenticeship students, but we do have a lot of employers who, through college, continuing education, and credit programs, provide funding for their employees to get their students training and provide them with work.
- 4. Question:** Are these official apprenticeships?
Answer: It is not always an official apprenticeship, but it still has some of the same components of an apprenticeship. By being a college that holds a registration, we hope it helps employers choose the more official route, especially when we do the tracking tasks for them.

Questions for Partner4Work and The Builders Guild of Western PA - Rob Cherry, Jeff Nobers

- 1. Question:** Do your unions pay any portion of the training as a partner?
Answer: We have 16 joint apprenticeship training centers covering about 35 different trades, and the contractors in the union fully pay for them. There is no tuition cost to the apprentices, and the same goes with our pre-apprenticeship program, which receives different funding streams. An apprentice pays for course books and maybe a few tools for around \$500. We have programs that can help them pay that if they need assistance.
- 2. Question:** Do you find that older participants need more or less supportive services than younger participants? Which services are needed most for older participants?
Answer: I do not know that it is age-based. If anything, our older participants tend to be better prepared for what they are embarking on. The biggest thing we deal with is homelessness. Fortunately, we have a relationship with the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, who help us secure living quarters for some participants. Driver’s licenses are another big thing for us. It is a requirement to have a valid license to apply and to be accepted into an apprenticeship. The State of Pennsylvania recently did a grant with immunity for some past fines, but we still have issues where people lose their license for a minor drug offense or for lack of paying child support. However, taking someone’s license away for not paying child support is counterproductive because it eliminates any chance they will have of paying it. We actively work with other groups and are trying to change some of these laws here in Pennsylvania.
- 3. Question:** What percentage of your pre-apprentices are women?
Answer: Seventeen percent. Women make up about 8 percent of the construction workforce, which is not as terrible as the national average, but obviously we want more. We lost a lot of women because of COVID-19, which certainly had an impact on everything. A lot of women left the construction workforce during the recession from 2007 to 2011 and never came back. Before the recession, we were probably around 13–14 percent female. We have never regained the 5–6 percent that left the industry during that time and have gone on to other things.

- 4. Question:** Does your program work with large educational institutions for trades placements, like with the University of Pittsburgh, Duquesne University, Robert Morris University, or State universities?
Answer: We work with the Community College of Allegheny County, which is the county Pittsburgh sits in, and the Community College of Beaver County, which is just north of Allegheny County. They handle most of the community college activity in this region. We have had conversations with the University of Pittsburgh about two-year programs that would award technical degrees in robotics, installation, and repair. They got off track during COVID-19, but we want to revisit that because Pittsburgh is a big robotics area. It makes sense for us to want to pursue that type of program at a four-year university. There is an opportunity to do that here in the region because all our schools are accredited under the same system. So, our technical colleges, community colleges, and universities are all accredited under the same system.
- 5. Question:** Do the participants in your training programs receive a training stipend or subsidy? If so, how are you able to incorporate and support it (e.g., DOL grant, etc.)?
Answer: They receive a daily stipend of \$30 for six weeks, five days a week, incorporated into the budget. The funding is part of the training and comes from Partner4Work and private foundations. When they leave our program, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) guarantees a thousand hours of training in the heavy highway area. Then, the stipend or subsidy becomes a function of PennDOT and the contractor.
- 6. Question:** What is the success of apprentice completion as a percentage of participants in the Partner4Work program?
Answer: About 96 percent of the participants complete the program. Retention is where you have to fight the battles, and our retention rate is over 75 percent, which is about 15 percent higher than the trades retention rate.

Questions for Oregon Tradeswomen, Oregon Bureau of Labor & Industries, Oregon Department of Transportation - Kelly Kupcak, Larry Williams, Angela Crain

- 1. Question:** Do you offer a stipend or subsidy?
Answer: Some of the pre-apprenticeship programs offer a stipend. We found that particularly in the longer pre-apprenticeship programs, it is difficult to ask people that are trying to transition out of public assistance into a more fulfilling career or to ask working people to take time off their “survival job” to do pre-apprenticeship training unless they have some way to pay bills. So, the stipends really do help.
- 2. Question:** How do you recruit participants into your programs? What strategies do you use to convince women into trade programs that are nontraditional for them?
Answer: The Oregon Tradeswomen provides regular career information sessions about skills, construction, trades, registered apprenticeships, and free apprenticeships—positioning them as exciting, dynamic, and family-supporting careers. We believe that if you cannot see it, you cannot be it. Women on our staff are role models. We know what they are going through. It is about boots on the ground saying, “This changed my life,” which is great.

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