



Strategic Workforce Development – Fireside Chat on Women in Construction

Date: April 9, 2024, from 1:30–3:00 p.m. ET (12:30–2:00 p.m. CT)

Recording Link: Available [here](#).

Q&A Session

1. **Question:** What are equitable methods for providing childcare support services? Has the option of offering stipends instead of specific supports, such as childcare or transportation, been considered?
 - a. **Answer by Lark Jackson, Chicago Women in Trades:** Yes, our programs have previously implemented stipends. Notably, unions have made significant contributions to childcare support. For example, in 2017, the Iron Workers union introduced a paid leave benefit for pregnant women and new mothers, granting up to six months of leave at two-thirds pay, contingent on a medical certificate. Additionally, the policy allows for eight weeks of paid leave postpartum, or in the case of a C-section, with the benefit available every two years. The North Central States Regional Council of Carpenters and various local unions have also developed policies in line with state laws to support childcare.
 - b. **Answer by Ariane Hegewisch, Institute for Women's Policy Research:** Childcare support is crucial in sectors like construction, where non-traditional hours are common. The Oregon collaboration between the Department of Transportation and the Department of Labor has been evaluating childcare support from the outset. The report by Mora Kelly highlights the impact of childcare on workforce retention, emphasizing that it's not only women who benefit from these services.

Currently, two pilot programs by building trade unions are examining how childcare aids their members—one in New York City and another in Minnesota. These initiatives have revealed that workplace childcare centers are less common than anticipated. Instead, solutions like vouchers and partnerships with state or city programs to enhance access to childcare are gaining traction. For instance, in Boston, large construction projects contribute a portion of their contracts to the city's childcare fund, bolstering the overall infrastructure.

Moreover, addressing the need for early morning childcare, often provided by home-based services, is essential. Both Oregon and Boston have engaged with providers offering such services, supplying them with resources and information. This approach helps construction workers, who typically earn higher wages post-apprenticeship, find suitable childcare options.

California's Women in Construction initiative further exemplifies this effort, offering grants to apprenticeship programs that expand childcare access through vouchers. These examples demonstrate various ways departments of transportation and construction can contribute to solving childcare challenges.



2. **Question:** Does the statistic of women earning 65 cents on the dollar after apprenticeship reflect their annual wages, and does it include both union and non-union women?
 - a. **Answer by Ariane Hegewisch, Institute for Women's Policy Research:** The figure of 65 cents on the dollar for women post-apprenticeship refers to their hourly wage, encompassing both union and non-union workers. It's based on the first job's earnings after completing an apprenticeship, not necessarily an annual salary. The disparity is largely due to occupational segregation, with insufficient efforts to enroll women in higher-paying apprenticeships like electricians compared to lower-paying roles like nursing assistants. Change is possible, as seen in programs that have successfully attracted more women, but many still lack this focus.

3. **Question:** What insights can you provide about the participation of women of color in trades, given the federal workforce goals for diversity?
 - a. **Answer by Ariane Hegewisch, Institute for Women's Policy Research:** The data indicates that the construction and apprenticeship workforce is diverse, encompassing women of color, not just white women. Efforts to increase female participation are geared towards inclusivity, aiming to integrate underrepresented groups. Despite the diversity, women of color encounter unique challenges. Our research, which I co-authored, delves into these complexities.
 - b. **Answer by Lark Jackson, Chicago Women in Trades:** The "Here to Stay" briefing paper, located in the best practices link provided, delves into the experiences of Black, Latina, and Afro-Latina women in construction trades. Notably, on page 3, a summary presents encouraging trends alongside existing disparities. From 2016 to 2019, Latina apprentices nearly doubled, and Black women apprentices increased by 50%. This data, while highlighting slow progress, confirms positive change is underway. The paper concludes with recommendations addressing gender and racial occupational segregation, which I highly recommend reviewing.

4. **Question:** What are effective strategies for engaging with on-site workers to advance our objective of fostering a culture that retains women in trades?
 - a. **Answer by Kelly McClellan, Heartland Women in Trades:** Communication is key; we're all human and approachable. Familiarity with the construction process, from inception to completion, is beneficial. Programs like Seattle's Rise Up offer respectful workplace training for all levels, from leadership to union members. Chicago's trades have a similar initiative, possibly named the Gold Seal program, which also promotes a respectful work environment. These resources, available on their respective websites, are excellent starting points for creating a positive job site culture.



Resources:

- [Chicago Women in Trades, Here to Stay: Black, Latina, and Afro-Latina Women In Construction Trades Apprenticeships and Employment](#)
- [Portland State University, 2022 Evaluation of the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program](#)
- [Illinois General Assembly, Illinois Works Jobs Program](#)
- [Untapped Resources, Untapped Labor Pool: Using Federal Highway Funds to Prepare Women for Careers in Construction](#)
- [Interstate Bridge Replacement Program, Regional Infrastructure Workforce Market Study](#)
- [Institute for Women's Policy Research, Numbers Matter: Women Working in Construction](#)
- [Tradeswomen Taskforce](#)
- [Tradeswomen Building Bridges](#)