

Speaking Points – Highway Construction Workforce Partnership (HCWP)/Strategic Workforce Development (SWD)

January 2022

- Labor shortages in the construction industry remain significant and widespread. According to Ken Simonson, the Associated General Contractors of America’s (AGC) chief economist—“the best way to encourage continued economic growth, make it easier to rebuild aging infrastructure, and place more young adults into high-paying careers is to address construction workforces shortages.”
- A 2021 AGC survey indicates that almost 90 percent of highway contractors have trouble finding qualified workers, and 90 percent also responded that they have jobs that they can’t fill at all. However, these are good-paying jobs and rewarding careers as heavy equipment operators, skilled laborers, pipelayers, concrete workers, truck drivers, etc.
- The recently enacted Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will increase investment in the Nation’s highway program annually from \$46 billion to \$70 billion for the next 5 years resulting in an even greater need for skilled workers.
- To address the workforce challenge, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), AGC, the Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA), and the Federal Highway Administration came together to establish the Highway Construction Workforce Partnership (HCWP).
- The purpose of the HCWP is for industry and public workforce system representatives to work collaboratively to recruit and improve practices to identify, train, and place individuals into highway construction jobs.
- The public workforce system is managed by ETA and consists of 600 State and local Workforce Development Boards (WDB) and 2,500 American Job Centers throughout the U.S. to assist and support industry workforce development. AGC and ARTBA have a chapter in each State that, together with State Departments of Transportation and the FHWA Divisions, are key members of the HCWP Working Groups.
- FHWA, with help from the national partners, developed the [HCWP Playbook](#) as a guide to others on how to organize and implement an HCWP Program. The Playbook includes eight “Plays” or chapters that provide a step-by-step approach to establish an effective HCWP Program that will start individuals on rewarding careers in the highway construction industry.

The “Roads to Your Future” website is also available to provide information about ongoing HCWP programs, including innovative approaches to highway construction workforce development. Visit the [FHWA - Highway Construction Workforce Partnership](#) website to access “Roads To Your Future” for State and local HCWP program profiles, case studies, and examples of successful HCWP activities.

- HCWP is one of the seven Every Day Counts (EDC) initiatives, now designated as Strategic Workforce Development (SWD). As an EDC program, FHWA has established an SWD Working Group to develop additional HCWP support materials and resources, including an [SWD Toolkit](#).



Highway Construction Workforce Partnership/ Strategic Workforce Development



- As a result of EDC, the HCWP Program has been expanded to include 32 States with partner Working Groups that have come together to identify, train, and place individuals into highway construction jobs by addressing a wide range of needs in the construction industry, from operating heavy equipment to blueprint reading.
- FHWA has also awarded \$4 million to 11 State Departments of Transportation (DOT) to expand existing HCWP Programs and establish new programs. The State DOTs are to organize HCWP Working Groups made up of key partner organizations including highway contractors, WDBs, Departments of Labor, community colleges, and others in formulating the HCWP Program in their States.
- The HCWP provides a model that can be replicated throughout the U.S. The EDC SWD initiative and HCWP grants will help move the HCWP Program forward. The goal is to institutionalize successful workforce programs and practices for the highway construction industry.
- For more information about the HCWP, contact Clark Martin at clark.martin@dot.gov, 703-235-0547, or Christina Currier at christina.currier@dot.gov, 202-923-0986, with the FHWA Transportation Workforce Development Team, or via e-mail at RoadsToYourFuture@dot.gov.

