



Highway Construction Workforce Program Strategic Workforce Development

Source: Arizona Chapter, Associated General Contractors of America

Arizona Workforce Development Program Increases Diversity in Highway Construction Through Flexibility, Support, and Inclusion

Across the nation, the highway construction industry competes with various other trades to attract and retain qualified candidates to fill critical workforce vacancies. Teaming up with the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) Strategic Workforce Development Program, the Arizona chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America (AZAGC) has developed several initiatives to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of available positions in highway construction. The programs began as a pilot within the FHWA’s Highway Construction Workforce Partnership but have grown into permanent training and development strategies that provide guaranteed careers for a diverse pool of applicants.

Intensifying Outreach and Recruitment Through Partnership

According to Corey Foster, a workforce development specialist with the AZAGC, partnering is key to successfully reaching and recruiting prospective applicants into available highway construction positions.

“We act as a hub for job centers, workforce development boards, and contractors across the State to come together,” says Foster. “We secure employment opportunities first—then partner with State departments of transportation and other groups to create joint flyers, social media announcements, website updates, and other outreach materials.”

Foster says that reinforcing the message that “all are welcome” throughout marketing materials helps to level the playing field for targeted applicants who may be underrepresented. “We interact with everyone who comes to the door,” says Foster. “Some people need more support, so we offer programs and services to make sure they succeed.”

Through its partnerships with hiring contractors, the AZAGC is able to identify existing career pathways and offer support and job security based on applicants’ career goals and any barriers they may have to employment.

Launching Successful Highway Construction Careers for All Applicants

Because applicants can require various support services to complete highway construction workforce training programs, flexibility has been key to the AZAGC’s success in transforming a diverse pool of applicants into career professionals.

“We are sensitive to make sure there is a path for everyone who shows up,” says Foster. “That often starts by making a connection with the right contractor.”

To strengthen connections, the AZAGC works closely with partners across several sectors. “When we engage with cities, communities, and contractors from across the State, we work to get buy-in from everyone,” says Foster. “Find out what your partners want, and you’ll know where they’ll commit their resources.”

“No matter what you look like or where you come from, if you’ve got the skills—we’ll provide a pathway and help you develop them.”

COREY FOSTER, MSM,
Workforce Development
Specialist,
Arizona Chapter,
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Enhancing Diversity Across the Nation's Highway Construction Workforce

Foster says the success of diversity recruitment efforts for the AZAGC stems from close collaboration with both applicants and workforce development partners. For applicants, that means focusing on ways to reduce various barriers to employment.

“What works here and across the country is approaching heavy civil construction as a whole,” says Foster. “That person you get to the door may have to work in various departments within a company to grow. You’ve got to look at how they can grow—and help them get there.”

For AZAGC partners like contractors, collaboration is all about sharing power and recognizing every player’s role in program success.



Source: FHWA



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“Working with various contractors or associations who provide jobs takes balance. Encourage partners to walk a mile in someone else’s shoes. Finding ways to compromise or share goals goes a long way.”

COREY FOSTER, MSM,
Workforce Development Specialist,
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U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

#RoadsToYourFuture

Learn more: For more information on ways to increase diversity across your State’s highway construction workforce, contact Chrisy Currier at christina.currier@dot.gov or Corey Foster at cfoster@azagc.org.