



# Highway Construction Workforce Partnership Strategic Workforce Development

Source: James Kim Photography + PC Construction

## Learning from the Pilot Programs – Alabama

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### The HCWP Pilot Survey Metrics

To increase the capacity and capability of the highway construction workforce, the Highway Construction Workforce Partnership (HCWP) has partnered with key organizations to develop and deploy highway construction training and placement programs. This initiative has increased the number of individuals trained and hired in highway construction trades and crafts. The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) pilot yielded useful information, including metrics and lessons learned, that will help other organizations develop and launch similar programs.

### The Alabama Department of Transportation Pilot Program

This pilot program targeted entry-level employees (focused on disadvantaged individuals that included women, veterans, and minorities) in the area of heavy highway construction (HHC) to expand the pool of qualified workers. From all accounts, the given goals and objectives were successful. Six students completed the entire program including HHC and a Class A commercial driver's license (CDL). Seven additional students completed the HHC program. Bishop State Community College recruited 66 percent of the desired goal for student enrollment. This was during the pandemic and just after classes began opening back up to an in-person classroom setting. Of the 66 percent of students, 80 percent received all National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) certifications, a CDL license, an Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10-hour training, and an American Traffic Safety Services Association Flagger certification—and all are currently employed. ALDOT promoted the pilot program through social media channels.

### Metrics

The ALDOT pilot program was administered in phases. Phase One tested for Adult Basic Education (TABE), OSHA 10, NCCER Core, soft skills, and financial literacy. Phases Two and Three included training for HHC and focused on Level 1 NCCER curriculum with 25 hours of “seat time” on highway equipment with a partner employer. Phases Four and Five required students to complete the HHC curriculum, take a final TABE test to measure improvement, and complete the final NCCER performance evaluations. Students then progressed to the 8- to 11-week Class A CDL program. The CDL program was reserved for the final phase to retain trainees in the program from being recruited by large industries.

The metrics used for tracking progress were centered around how many students completed the entire 6-month training program. Metrics were measured by tracking each student daily and receiving feedback from ALDOT, local business industry leaders and partners, American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), and Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) each month. ARTBA and AGC assist workforce development in Alabama by providing feedback on the transportation industry's needs. The business and industry buy-in is crucial to active workforce development programs. The competency-based metrics ensured that students can apply and perform what they learned. The metrics also enabled the businesses and industries to use a third-party provider for related technical instruction to help review and screen the students for each competency, as well as attitude, punctuality, personality, enthusiasm, and motivation. These metrics work best when tied directly to work-based

learning in which students participate in on-the-job training and collect a nominal salary. The ALDOT pilot program found when students have more income to support themselves, they stay focused and motivated.

Bishop State Community College collected data monthly and then presented this information to all parties (FHWA, ALDOT, employers, and Alabama Community College System Office representatives for Workforce, Adult Education, and Governmental Affairs) in a monthly update meeting via video call (due to COVID-19). Bishop State submitted all information to ALDOT. A final report will be presented to ALDOT.

## Recommendations

- Tie metrics directly to work-based learning in which students participate in on-the-job training.
- Empower business and industry, the HCWP, the State departments of transportation, and the college provider to define the metrics. Data collection should not be left for the college representatives to provide. ALDOT should be allowed to participate in the field work to sit face-to-face with college representatives to discuss details, as well as visit the program several times throughout its entirety. These meetings and discussions would provide relational values to enhance partnerships with local business and industry, contractors, the college(s), Federal agencies, students, etc.
- Promote consistency by standardizing the format and designated data to be received.
- Refrain from insisting a CDL program be incorporated into the HHC program. When students obtain just their CDL, they are more likely to prioritize and accept a driving job.
- Provide daycare reimbursement for the student's children.

## Looking Ahead

ALDOT is building partnerships with other interested stakeholders (ARTBA, the Alabama Asphalt Pavement Association, and local business and industry representatives) who can help enhance and expand the HCWP initiative. Multiple additional partners can be brought to the table once these relationships are built. This should include K-12 for dual enrollment and possibly pre-apprentice opportunities.



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Learn more. To get information about how you can place qualified individuals into highway construction jobs that will help address workforce shortages in your region, contact Clark Martin, HCWP program manager, at [clark.martin@dot.gov](mailto:clark.martin@dot.gov).