



Highway Construction Workforce Partnership Strategic Workforce Development

Source: USDOT/Getty

Placing Tomorrow's Highway Construction Workforce

Alabama, Arizona, Denver

When it comes to placing qualified individuals into the highway construction positions that support the nation's transportation industry and drive the economy forward, the Highway Construction Workforce Partnership (HCWP) established by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) offers a seamless pathway. HCWPs in Alabama, Arizona, and Denver have instituted programs that offer the training, support, and placement to sustain a lasting workforce.

Preparing Workers for Needed Roles

Highway construction workforce needs vary across the nation's rural and urban areas. Most job sites require workers to possess a basic skill set, but some positions require individuals to master crafts like pouring concrete, applying asphalt, or operating heavy equipment. To fulfill specialized roles in Arizona, the HCWP engages general superintendents and foremen quarterly to identify workforce needs. In addition, they track training program participants to understand where their professional interests and skills align.

"We try to be flexible so individuals can determine what works best for their career," said Corey Foster, Workforce Development Specialist for the Arizona Chapter of Associated General Contractors of America. "With 25 different crafts available, I can't emphasize enough how important it is to find the one you want to perfect."

According to Foster, giving job seekers direct access to general superintendents is key to successfully placing them in highway construction careers that will last. "We partner individually with the superintendents," said Foster. "They know job seekers by first name. We talk about their career plan, so they have a clear pathway within companies. When our superintendents are saying 'I want to see this person be successful,' it helps tremendously with placement."

"We want the people in our program to be the next operator, foreman, or superintendent. We try to find the most successful option for everyone."

COREY FOSTER
Arizona HCWP

Engaging With Industry Representatives

The Alabama HCWP enhances its placement success rate by maintaining a close working relationship with hiring contractors. David Felton, Dean of Workforce Economic Development at Bishop State Community College in Alabama, said employers complete commitment forms at the beginning of each training class to indicate how many individuals they intend to hire.

"Our program is designed so participants get hired," said Felton. "Employers sign an agreement confirming their participation in the program, ensuring they'll consider a certain number of graduates for full-time employment, and indicating how much they'll pay the individuals they hire."

To ensure the program continues to produce viable candidates, the Alabama HCWP regularly considers input from its industry representatives. "We are making improvements to our internal processes continuously," said Felton. "We've developed score cards for employers to fill out to identify any issues regarding performance, so we can address them when they occur."

Expanding Placement Efforts

Staying connected with members of the industry helps HCWPs keep a pulse on changing workforce needs, so they can continue to place qualified individuals into the highway construction jobs of the future. In Denver, industry representatives regularly address training program participants to garner interest in needed roles.

“We have to keep communicating and tweaking our programs, so employers want to hire our participants and individuals can pursue the opportunities they desire.”

DAVID FELTON
Alabama HCWP



Source: USDOT/Getty

“Having someone give a high-level review of available opportunities is a game changer,” said Erika Anderson of the Associated General Contractors of Colorado and Construction Careers Now Program Director. “It sparks direct conversations about what is needed, plus provides a connection for candidates to get follow-up information.”

For Denver, when contractors share success stories about the training program graduates they hire, everybody wins. “Engaging peer-to-peer connections has been on the frontier in the last few years and it continues to help us stay close to the community. We just need to know what workforce demand is, so we can find folks and give them the skills they need to succeed.”

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