



Highway Construction Workforce Partnership Strategic Workforce Development

Source: USDOT/Getty

Providing Support to Launch Lasting Careers in Highway Construction

Denver, Los Angeles, Rhode Island

To address the nation's shortage of highway construction workers, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) established the Highway Construction Workforce Partnership (HCWP). In locations like Denver, Los Angeles, and Rhode Island, working groups formed to identify, train, and place qualified individuals into skilled trades to fill workforce gaps. The regional HCWPs quickly learned that many individuals need additional support to launch careers that will keep the transportation industry and economy moving forward.

Identifying Individual Needs

When individuals express interest in joining the highway construction workforce, they learn about the education, transportation, time, and cost requirements that can accompany job training. To support successful completion of training programs and provide a seamless transition into the workforce, HCWPs offer support that can include everything from housing and rental assistance to protective clothing, tools, and transportation to and from training and the job site.

"Participation in our program not only affects individuals, but also their families. We can provide housing, rental assistance, or childcare to help people meet their training requirements."

ROBERT CHAVEZ
Los Angeles HCWP

In Rhode Island, case managers meet with individuals at the time they express interest in joining the program. They discuss employment barriers as well as career goals to determine what resources will help ensure success for each applicant. According to Andrew Cortes of Rhode Island's HCWP, their working group establishes a budget around helping people make the transition into the workforce.

"We do a lot to remove barriers so individuals can go to work," said Cortes. "We'll help reinstate driver's licenses, provide health and nutritional benefits, or offer language support services." Cortes also emphasized the importance of continued support once individuals graduate from the training programs. "We'll hold alumni gatherings and have 200 people show up to connect with each other."

Partnering to Provide Community Support

In Los Angeles, prospective highway construction workers first learn about the levels of support offered at program information sessions. This also gives the HCWP an opportunity to hone in on specific needs for each cohort, so they can find community partners willing to help provide the resources that will eliminate barriers to program completion.

Robert Chavez of the Los Angeles HCWP said that community support comes from many types of organizations, including veterans' programs, small businesses, and even local contractors. "It has been very important for us to connect with businesses in our community," said Chavez. "We try to streamline the process by getting a list of organizations willing to donate before we know what an individual needs."

The Los Angeles HCWP has found that tools and transportation often top the list of needed support services. Building an expansive list of partners from big box stores to mom-and-pop shops helps them make sure they have the resources to get someone started on their first day.

Supporting Lasting Careers

For the Denver HCWP, making sure program participants know what support services are available is key to taking them to their first day on the job and beyond. Alena Jimenez, Navigator and Business Services Coordinator for the Center for Workforce Initiatives, said that stabilizing an individual at program start is important in retaining them on the job.

“Once a person’s home life is stable enough for them to get to the job, we can work on career development,” said Jimenez. “We start with a basic list of stabilizing resources. As we get to know an individual, we’re able to cover other needs they have.”

Because reliable personal transportation is often needed for highway construction jobs in Denver, the HCWP has helped individuals with expenses related to repairing vehicles or buying gas. “By taking care of urgent needs to get people on the right track, you create a pathway to long-term sustainability,” said Madison Cassels of the Denver Area Labor Federation.

“Rely on the services of your partner organizations. Having a strong relationship with trusted people in your community is important for connecting individuals to the resources needed to get started.”

MADISON CASSELS
Denver HCWP



Source: USDOT/Getty

Learn More

To get information about how you can address highway construction workforce shortages in your region by supporting qualified individuals interested in starting careers in the industry, contact Clark Martin, HCWP program manager, at clark.martin@dot.gov.

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