



**Construction Workforce Plan (2021-2023)**  
Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative

**Introduction**

Data show that Construction has become a high growth industry in the Portland Metro Area. In the next ten years, over 15,000 new jobs are expected, outpacing other industries in the region. These are high paying jobs, averaging over \$25 per hour. Current and future building trends, both public and private, are rapidly increasing the demand for skilled tradespeople in the region. One-fifth of the region’s Construction workforce is at, or nearing, retirement age.

Contractors are currently looking across the country to fill positions. How can we work together to address training and workforce needs locally and capture this opportunity to build a supply of locally trained workers?

The COVID-19 pandemic, the national reckoning with racism, as well as the ongoing challenges of a rapidly retiring workforce have added layers to this work and how to prioritize in order to emphasize that which is most important.

Additionally, the Columbia Willamette Workforce Collaborative (CWWC) is leading on an initiative to develop a Quality Jobs framework, whereby public workforce investments are centered on the importance of prioritizing careers that include characteristics of a quality job. In January of 2021 the CWWC Regional Construction Industry Panel discussed ongoing challenges and to begin the process of engaging companies in the development of the 2021-2023 regional, industry-specific workforce strategy.

Creating a regional construction plan allows us to identify common industry workforce challenges, coalesce around shared goals and align the efforts of the public workforce system to make a greater overall impact for the sector. Industry panel members opted to focus on four priority areas, indicating a strong emphasis be placed throughout on better marketing the career opportunities, recruiting non-traditional construction workers, creating industry support tools such as mentoring to retain their workforce, and helping industry strengthen best practices for recruiting and screening the best candidates.

**Construction Workforce Plan Priority Areas:**

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| <p><b>1. Connect youth to jobs, training and apprenticeship opportunities in Construction</b></p> | <p><b>2. Advance equity and diversity in the Construction industry</b></p> | <p><b>3. Improve retention of existing apprentices and workers</b></p> | <p><b>4. Connect “career changers” to jobs, training and career opportunities in Construction</b></p> |
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**Plan Development Process:**

Over the past 5 years, the CWWC Construction Industry Panel, made up of regional construction industry leaders, has been implementing a regional construction workforce plan. This is the update of that Plan, along with descriptions of their accomplishments to date.

The Industry Panel consists of contractors throughout the six-county Oregon and SW Washington region, and also includes trade organizations, labor, training providers, WorkSource staff, educators and other industry-supporting organizations. The Industry Panel identified and prioritized several high-level strategies the public workforce system could deploy to more effectively support contractors. The draft plan was shared with community stakeholders for comment and to identify areas of alignment and collaboration with existing initiatives.



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Industry Panel members will guide implementation, plan oversight and evaluation of the results and impacts of plan initiatives.

**Priority Area #1: Connect Youth to jobs, training and apprenticeship opportunities in Construction**

Attracting youth to construction careers is important for an adequate labor pipeline to meet industry demand. However, younger generations tend to have misconceptions about construction and lack a true understanding of what the work entails, the career opportunities and the pathway to pursuing those careers. It is important to recognize the influence of parents, educators and counselors on young people’s career decisions. This plan seeks to engage these influencers to develop and enhance a clear understanding of the construction industry’s unique benefits and offerings.

Priority Area #1 will increase opportunities for industry exposure and awareness for both youth and the individuals who influence their career decisions. Strategies will help bridge the gap that so often exists between youth, businesses, and these various influencers. This will include the development of tools to help businesses connect with their future workforce.

**Priority Area #1 Activities and Outcomes:**

Strategy A: Promote effective youth events to support increased interest and awareness of the Construction trades

- Improve coordination of industry representation at regional youth events
- Create regional shared calendar of existing construction career related events

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*Accomplishment: Industry Panel partner organizations created a visual roadmap for youth audiences of the Construction pathway process, including work experience, pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship options: AGC-Oregon’s Build Oregon resources: <http://www.build-oregon.com/training>*

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Strategy B: Educate influencers with data-driven outlooks for careers in Construction

- Expand an industry messaging platform, approach, and materials to raise awareness of existing programs and opportunities
- Develop a communication plan to promote industry messaging tools to direct service staff, career counselors, and parents
- Update CWWC regional construction labor market report and distribute widely

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*Accomplishment: Industry Panel members have partnered with Beaverton School District to create the first-of-its-kind District wide Construction Magnet Program at Merlo High School: <https://www.beaverton.k12.or.us/departments/student-programs/career-technical-education-cte/merlo-programs>*

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Strategy C: Inspire meaningful engagement between industry and education

- Partner with industry leaders to connect 30 educator teams with construction worksite externships
- Support 150 youth internships in construction, focused on female and

youth of color students

- Connect industry experts to opportunities to engage with K12 construction related programs

Strategy D: Align education and legislation



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- Work with legislative liaisons to develop a shared policy platform that improves public education connections to careers in Construction, both at the local and State level

**Priority Area #2: Advance equity and diversity in the Construction industry**

Construction has historically been both a male dominated and has lacked racial diversity. With a workforce shortage and a rapidly changing region, the need to diversify and open more opportunities to more members of the community is critical. Contractors and industry have recognized the need to attract more talent and build a workforce that better reflects the community.

In addition to attracting a robust and diverse workforce, industry has recognized the need to shift the workplace culture in order to also maximize productivity, efficiency and real teamwork. This Plan recognizes where contractors, labor, and training programs can help implement a change in jobsite culture and increased support that will bring multiple returns. This Plan also aligns with and supports other regional efforts such as the **Construction Career Pathways Project (C2P2)** being led by regional public Project Owners and the **Safe from Hate Alliance**, an industry led initiative to address racism, sexism and hostility on construction jobsites.

Priority Area #2 strategies are designed to help contractors attract new workers to the industry, increase diversity of skilled workers, and lead to more positive jobsite success.

**Priority Area #2 Activities and Outcomes:**

Strategy A: Create trusted relationships that promote success for diverse workers in Construction

- Catalogue existing community outreach events with industry partners to educate on opportunities and address specific outreach gaps
- Based on gaps, work with partners, employers, and community organizations to plan and hold events that connect community members to opportunities in the Construction industry
- Promote a mentorship network for existing diverse workers and work together to scale existing efforts

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*Accomplishment: Since 2016, over 300 women and people of color have graduated from local partnering pre-apprenticeship providers through regional workforce investment grants.*

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Strategy B: Develop robust marketing strategy highlighting diversity

- Expand an industry messaging platform, approach, and materials to raise awareness of existing programs and opportunities

Strategy C: Allocate resources for pre-apprenticeship, training, screening capacity, and support for women and people of color

- Double number of women and people of color graduates of BOLI certified pre-apprenticeship programs
- Connect 200 WorkSource diverse job seekers to construction employment after receiving training and/or placement services
- Attract funding to provide support resources for barriered early term diverse apprentices



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- Expand training of direct service staff on the opportunities in Construction and how to best prepare interested diverse jobseekers

**Strategy D:** Incorporate best practices that institutionalize diversity

- Continue to support and promote evidence-based standardized jobsite culture curriculum for industry partners to utilize on their jobsites
- Encourage uptake and utilization of jobsite culture trainings by fifteen trade organizations and twenty employers
- Connect with Joint Apprentice Training Committees (JATCs) and training agents to ensure supportive dispatch of early term diverse apprentices

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*Accomplishment: CWWC developed an industry messaging platform, approach, and materials to raise awareness of existing programs and opportunities:*  
<https://careersnw.org/construction/>

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**Priority Area #3: Improve retention of existing apprentices and workers**

Over the next ten years, contractors in the region will need to replace more than 20,000 mid- to high-skilled workers due to industry growth and retirements from an aging workforce. Industry has recognized that workers who enter the trades need to be retained to address the workforce shortage and maximize the training investments that are being made. Skill sets developed through years of experience simply are not available in newly trained workers entering the industry and cannot be attained overnight. Therefore, increased focus must be placed on supporting existing workers and apprentices to continue their career paths to journey level, supervisor, or even to become business owners themselves.

Priority Area #3 strategies will help contractors to retain workers, develop their skills and advance them into higher-skilled positions that will be left vacant in the years ahead.

**Priority Area #3 Activities and Outcomes:**

**Strategy A:** Promote and provide standardized tools for jobsite culture success

- Continue to support and promote evidence-based standardized jobsite culture curriculum for industry partners to utilize on their jobsites
- Encourage uptake and utilization of jobsite culture trainings by fifteen trade organizations and twenty employers

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*Accomplishment: Industry panel members became part of a regional initiative to garner momentum around improving jobsite culture through the Safe from Hate Alliance, a regional table of industry partners committed to implementing the Safe from Hate jobsite culture pledge:*  
<https://www.worksystems.org/news-events/news/worksystems-supports-initiative-address-jobsite-culture-construction-industry>

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**Strategy B:** Create a formal mentorship for building relationships, teaching, and problem solving

- Promote a mentorship network for existing workers and work together to scale existing efforts
- Work with Joint Apprentice Training Committees (JATCs) to explore journey level teacher trainings such as Mentorship Matters and pilot with 5 trades

**Strategy C:** Provide life skills training and resources



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*Accomplishment: Industry panel members participated in a regional effort to review and recommend emerging best practice jobsite culture trainings to share with industry leaders to adopt and implement in the region:*

<https://www.worksystems.org/sites/default/files/>

- Attract funding to provide support resources for barriered early term apprentices
  - Decide on and expand industry-informed standardized life skills curriculum (financial planning, assertiveness training, etc.) for 100 early term apprentices in the region
- Strategy D: Identify worker aptitude early**
- Collectively decide on and expand industry-informed standardized screening processes (i.e. multi-craft core curriculum) for 5 preparatory training organizations to adopt in region

**Priority Area #4: Connect “career changers” to jobs, training and career opportunities in Construction**

With the employment upheaval and subsequent recovery efforts due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a big opportunity to appeal to jobseekers who have been laid off or experienced underemployment over the past year. These workers oftentimes have transferrable skills to the skilled trades, including those coming from manufacturing, food production, or the service and retail industry. In most cases, these career changers could see increased wages and benefits by entering the construction industry, as well as a more promising outlook into a lifelong career path.

Priority Area #4 strategies will help contractors to attract opportunity workers and advance them into higher-skilled positions in the high-demand construction industry.

**Strategy A:** Educate direct service staff with data-driven outlooks for careers in Construction

- Expand an industry messaging platform, approach, and materials to raise awareness of existing programs and opportunities
- Develop a communication plan to promote industry messaging tools to direct service staff
- Update CWWC regional construction labor market report and distribute widely
- Connect direct service staff with Apprenticeship Training Centers and other opportunities to learn about Construction

**Strategy B:** Inspire meaningful engagement between industry and the public workforce system

- Partner with industry leaders to develop jobseeker workshops relevant to entering the construction industry
- Support and expand on-the-job training and paid work experience resources to connect engaged employers and interested jobseekers



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**2021 Workgroup Participants:**

• AGC Oregon/Columbia Chapter	• Andersen Construction
• Bricklayers Local 1	• Building Industry Association of Clark County
• Hoffman Structures	• Laborers Local 737
• IBEW Local 48	• Pacific NW Carpenters Institute
• Mt. Hood Community College	• Professional Minority Group, Inc
• Oregon Laborers Apprenticeship	• Workforce SW Washington
• Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters	• Clackamas Workforce Partnership
• Walsh Construction	• Worksystems
• WorkSource Oregon	• NECA-IBEW Electrical Training Center
• LatinoBuilt	• Home Energy Life Performance

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