

Oregon Department of Transportation

Report on the Use of Federal Funds to Increase Diversity and Prepare those Entering the Highway Construction Workforce (ORS 184.866)

Introduction

Oregon law (ORS 184.866) requires ODOT to expend one-half of one percent up to an amount of \$1.5 million of the federal funds received each biennium by the Department of Transportation pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 140(b), to increase diversity in the highway construction workforce and prepare those interested in entering the highway construction workforce.

ORS 184.866 requires the department to submit a report to the Legislative Assembly by December 1 of each even-numbered year with an analysis of the results of the agency's efforts; the amount available to the department from federal funds for on-the-job training supportive services activities and the amount expended by the department for those activities; and the performance outcomes achieved from each activity, including the numbers of persons receiving services, training and employment.

Background

ODOT's Workforce Development Program (Program) was designed to help build a diverse, skilled construction workforce to meet the needs of the Oregon heavy-highway construction industry now and in the future. The Program provides support to individuals who are either preparing to enter or have entered a trade associated with highway construction. Both basic needs support (such as transportation, childcare, medical expenses, work attire and tools) and training-related services (such as training, tuition, testing fees and safety gear) are available, with a goal of covering each of the supportive services described in ORS 184.866:

- (a) Pre-apprenticeship programs;
- (b) Pre-employment counseling;
- (c) Orientations on the highway construction industry;
- (d) Basic skills improvement classes;
- (e) Career counseling;
- (f) Remedial training;
- (g) Entry requirements for training programs;
- (h) Supportive services and assistance with transportation;
- (i) Child care and other special needs; and
- (j) Job site mentoring and retention services.

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) maintains a close relationship with apprenticeship programs, heavy highway contractors and community-based organizations that seek to bring diversity to the construction workforce. Because of these relationships, ODOT entered into an interagency agreement with BOLI to help provide the supportive services required by the 2009 law. The primary goal of the ODOT/BOLI highway partnership is to increase the effectiveness of ODOT's existing supportive services by raising awareness of

training opportunities and encouraging individuals to enter into and complete highway construction training programs. Since the most common path to careers in the highway trades is through a registered apprenticeship program regulated by BOLI, the program has increased its emphasis on providing services to help registered apprentices reach journey-level status. Program activities have been offered in each of ODOT's five service regions: Portland/Metro, Willamette Valley/Coast, Southwest Oregon, Central Oregon, and Eastern Oregon.

Based on input from contractors, apprenticeship committees, and community-based organizations, ODOT has provided services to apprentices and apprenticeship committees to assist them in addressing barriers to entering into or completing a registered apprenticeship program.

In order to gain a greater understanding of the challenges facing women and minorities in the highway construction trades, ODOT, through BOLI, commissioned needs assessment research from Portland State University. Researchers were asked to perform an analysis of the BOLI apprenticeship database over the past ten years to determine trends in completions and terminations based upon gender and ethnicity. This analysis and in-depth interviews (with a variety of apprenticeship advocates as well as current and former apprentices) were used to develop a structured survey. The results of the survey provide a guide to the types of services that would most likely result in increased retention of women and people of color in the highway trades.

PSU delivered the needs assessment on August 30, 2012 and found that, in addition to the transportation, child care, and tools, work clothes, and personal protective equipment needs, the barriers reported by women and minority apprentices can mostly be grouped under three broad categories:

1. Discrimination and Harassment
2. Lack of Work (including issues of reductions of force and re-employment policies and practices)
3. Lack of supervised training on the job and mentoring off the job

Discrimination and harassment included gendered and sexual jokes and comments, as well as occasional racial jokes and slurs. Women and minority apprentices also reported having the sense that they were unwelcome or treated differently on the job. This is particularly problematic in construction because "the ability to remain employed is largely dependent on personal relationships."

Statistical analysis showed that women and minority apprentices received fewer work hours per month on average than did non-Hispanic white men. In part, this was because they were more often let go in reductions of force and then less likely to have been called by name to return to work.

Women and minorities were more likely to report that they were assigned "repetitive and low skill tasks" and were not being properly trained on the job. Apprentices face competing demands in wanting to be a "good apprentice" by following orders but also be a "good apprentice" by learning the necessary skills of the trade. Women were more likely than men to report that

“having personal problems with journeymen and foremen/supervisors” was a challenge to completing their apprenticeship.

The research particularly commended Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. (OTI) for helping women complete their apprenticeship programs. Women who completed a pre-apprenticeship program reported having received proper training on the job and mentoring off the job, were less likely to say that problems with journeymen and foremen/supervisors were a challenge, and were more likely to have completed their apprenticeship than women who did not complete a pre-apprenticeship program.

All of the supportive services currently offered by the ODOT Program were identified as needs among apprentices in the highway trades, but the researchers noted that the need for fuel assistance might be greater for a first job or after a period of unemployment than at other times. They also noted that tools, clothing, and protective equipment are sometimes provided to apprentices from other sources.

Analysis of Current Activities

a. Pre-apprenticeship programs

The outcomes achieved for pre-apprenticeship programs included career camps, construction presentation, field trips to apprenticeship training centers for highway trades, highway project site visits, and hands-on learning experiences to prepare youth, women, minorities, and disadvantaged individuals for an apprenticeship in the heavy-highway construction trades.

ODOT provided support for a variety of Portland area pre-apprenticeship programs, such as Portland Community Colleges Excellence in Trades and Apprenticeship Preparation (PCC-ETA), Oregon Tradeswomen, Inc. (OTI), Straight Path, and Portland Youthbuilders, from February 2011 through June 2011. Since that time, the Program has emphasized more pre-apprenticeship strategies, such as establishing a path for graduates of the OTI pre-apprenticeship program to qualify for direct entry to the union laborers’ program and replicating OTI’s pre-apprenticeship training in Southern Oregon. This approach serves a smaller number of pre-apprentices but provides support that is more targeted to those pre-apprentices who are planning to enter a specific highway construction trade.

Persons Receiving Service

July 23, 2009¹ – June 30, 2011: 300

July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012: 178

b. Pre-employment counseling

The outcomes achieved for pre-employment counseling in 2010 and 2011 included community outreach. It was distinguished from “orientations” by being a general introduction to the industry, while the orientations were directed toward understanding specific trades and the pre-apprenticeship options available. Pre-employment in 2012 was re-defined to address the services,

¹ SB 894, passed by the 2009 Legislature, became effective July 23, 2009.

such as case management, provided to pre-apprentice graduates and individuals on the apprentice lists of qualified applicants to prepare them for their first apprentice work assignment.

Persons Receiving Service

July 23, 2009 – June 30, 2011: 2334

July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012: 37

c. Orientations on the highway construction industry

The outcomes achieved for orientations included organizing, advertising, and conducting community meetings to educate participants about the opportunities with a career in heavy-highway construction, with an emphasis on reaching women and minorities.

The career exploration services (including a variety of outreach and orientation activities such as community education about highway construction trades, career camps for youth, school presentations, and job fairs) were emphasized early in the Program and accounted for a large number of participants in the February 2011 to June 2011 period.

After June 2011, the program has continued to provide a limited number of construction career camps and programs for high school students, while providing an increased number of presentations about the Program's services that are available to pre-apprentice graduates, qualified applicants to a heavy-highway trade, and apprentices currently registered with a heavy-highway trade.

Persons Receiving Service

July 23, 2009 – June 30, 2011: 4426

July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012: 641

d. Basic skills improvement classes

The outcomes achieved for basic skills improvement classes included career counseling, skill building, training to assist participants to meet the minimum qualifications for apprenticeship programs, and pre-apprenticeship training.

Basic skills improvement classes were provided by subcontractors, Cooper Zietz Engineers (CZE) and the Laborers Training Trust, to individuals identified at community meetings and trade orientations. Basic skills improvement classes were also provided by pre-apprenticeship subcontractors (OTI, ACE Academy, Portland Youthbuilders, PCC-ETAP, and Constructing Hope) to their students on an as-needed basis.

Persons Receiving Service

July 23, 2009 – June 30, 2011: 506

July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012: 35

e. Career counseling

The outcomes achieved for career counseling included establishing relationships with helping professionals, such as school counselors, vocational counselors, and WorkSource Staff, to accept referrals and provide individuals with career guidance and assistance in preparing applications to highway construction apprenticeship programs.

Career counseling was provided by subcontractors, CZE and the Laborers Training Trust, to individuals identified at community meetings and trade orientations. Career counseling was also provided by pre-apprenticeship subcontractors (OTI, ACE Academy, Portland Youthbuilders, PCC-ETAP, and Constructing Hope) to their students on an as-needed basis. Career counseling is also being provided by developing best practices, such as how to improve orientations for apprentices and provide referrals to social support.

Persons Receiving Service

July 23, 2009 – June 30, 2011: 353

July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012: 194

f. Remedial training

The outcomes achieved for remedial training included providing qualified applicants and graduates of pre-apprenticeship programs additional services, such as math courses, mentoring and retention skills, and industry related certifications, to keep them engaged with the highway construction trades while they wait to be registered into an apprenticeship

Remedial training was provided by subcontractors, CZE and the Laborers Training Trust to individuals identified at community meetings and trade orientations. Remedial training was also provided by pre-apprenticeship subcontractors (OTI, ACE Academy, Portland Youthbuilders, PCC-ETAP, and Constructing Hope) to their students on an as-needed basis.

Persons Receiving Service

July 23, 2009 – June 30, 2011: 263

July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012: 10

g. Entry requirements for training programs

The outcomes achieved for entry requirements consisted of evaluating policies and procedures of local joint committees in the highway construction trades to make selection procedures, training programs, and dispatch and out-of-work practices more conducive to supporting a diverse apprenticeship program.

Entry requirements for training programs were provided by CZE and the Laborers Training Trust to individuals identified at community meetings and trade orientations. Entry requirements for training programs were also provided by pre-apprenticeship subcontractors (OTI, ACE Academy, Portland Youthbuilders, PCC-ETAP, and Constructing Hope) to their students on an as-needed basis.

Persons Receiving Service
July 23, 2009 – June 30, 2011: 359
July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012: 57

Most of the following services are provided within a pre-apprenticeship program, although the sequencing may vary with some services required before entering a formal pre-apprenticeship program, and some services provided to pre-apprentice graduates preparing to enter a specific highway-related apprenticeship program.

h. Supportive services and assistance with transportation

The outcomes achieved for supportive services and assistance with transportation included purchasing required tools, work clothing, and personal protective equipment for apprentices in highway related trades so they are able to work.

These services were provided through direct assistance for fuel costs to get to and from work and required classes, as well as for lodging and per diem when work and required classes were more than 60 miles from home and required an overnight lodging.

Persons Receiving Service
July 23, 2009 – June 30, 2011: 42
July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012: 232

i. Child care and other special needs

The outcomes achieved for child care and other special needs included providing child care subsidies to apprentices in highway related trades so they are able to work

Supportive services were provided through subsidies of child care costs based on the rates established by the Employment Related Day Care program through the Department of Human Services for days on which the apprentices worked or attended required related training.

Persons Receiving Service
July 23, 2009 – June 30, 2011: 15
July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012: 156

The above supportive services (H. and I.) are being built from the ground up and take time to establish procedures, to provide information about eligibility, to process applications, and to provide ongoing support. Consequently, there has been a steady increase in the participants receiving this kind of support. The rate of increase accelerated during the summer of 2012 and there have been discussions with the providers about how to contain some costs. The seasonal pattern is expected to be a wave, cresting in late summer and bottoming out in late fall and early winter.

This trend of a gradual but steady increase in supportive services for current apprentices is only apparent when looking at these services separately, as the numbers involved are smaller. These

services are more costly per person served, as opposed to sponsoring a job fair or training someone for a GED, but they are more directly connected with keeping apprentices on the job and in class so they can achieve their journey worker credentials and join the skilled highway construction workforce.

j. Job site mentoring and retention services

The outcomes achieved for job site mentoring and retention included one-on-one mentoring arrangements, social support groups, job site assessments of apprentice progress, information and referral services, and direct assistance for tools, work clothes, and personal protective equipment.

The Program also evaluated policies and practices of training agents in the highway construction trades to ensure the work environment and hiring, supervision, layoff practices were more conducive to supporting a diverse workforce.

Persons Receiving Service

July 23, 2009 – June 30, 2011: 530

July 1, 2011 – September 30, 2012: 503

Performance Outcomes

The Program reached participants across the state in large cities and rural communities, inspired youth and informed adults who might not otherwise have considered future careers in highway construction trades, prepared potential apprentice applicants to access the opportunities that continue to exist in difficult economic times, and supported apprentices trying to get to a first job or return to work after a long lay-off depleted their savings.

As individuals who are eligible for program services become better aware of the temporary assistance to address barriers to becoming successful journey workers in the highway construction trades and as research better identifies the type and magnitude of these barriers, the Program will shift from showing great potential to showing great results for the State of Oregon.

Amount of Funds Available and Expended

Oregon law requires ODOT to expend one-half of one percent up to \$1.5 million of the federal funds ODOT receives under to 23 U.S.C. 140(b) to increase diversity in the highway construction workforce and prepare individuals interested in entering the highway construction workforce.

2009-2011 Biennium:

Total Federal Funds Available for Activities: \$1,500,000

Total Amount Expended (July 23, 2009 – June 30, 2011): \$1,490,338.47

2011-2013 Biennium:

Total Federal Funds Available for Activities: \$1,500,000

Total Amount Expended July 1, 2011 through September 30, 2012: \$566,378.96

Anticipated expenditures for October 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013:

Orientations and Pre-Apprenticeship (Portland Area): \$122,000

Orientations and Pre-Apprenticeship (Outside Portland): \$266,000

Pre-Employment Counseling, Career Counseling, and Entry Requirements: \$218,000

Services to Current Apprentices: \$327,000

Summary

ODOT continues to make steady progress towards fulfilling the obligation of ORS 184.866 and providing a pathway to heavy highway trades careers for all Oregonians. Intergovernmental agreements, partnerships with other agencies and organizations and participation from a variety of groups and individuals are all evidence of the efforts to move this initiative forward.

The ODOT Highway Construction Workforce Development Program is a good investment for the state of Oregon and its people, especially given the current economic climate. It also represents a thoughtful, methodical approach to addressing some of the long-standing issues surrounding the historical under-representation of women and people of color in the construction trades. In the long run, it will not only serve those underrepresented populations well, but will provide the heavy highway industry with its next generation of workers.