

Construction Sector

Sector Strategy Update: June 2025

Prepared by the AGC Education Foundation

Please describe the greatest workforce needs facing your sector, with a focus on needs that career-connected learning strategies can help to address.

The construction industry represents continuous improvement in the state and is an important part of growth in all regions.

Both state and nationwide, construction workforce trends are driving innovation, changing the way construction is done, and driving how employers engage with, retain, and develop talent.

Workforce trends and needs:

- “Graying workforce” – the need to attract new talent
- Need for ‘basic employability skills’
- Efforts to build diversity and a more inclusive workforce
- Demand for construction professionals with degrees
- Consistent demand for skilled construction laborers, craft workers
- Demand for increasing the quality of training in construction education programs
- Demand for skills and credentials that are applicable across industry sectors or multitasking
- Desire for employees to be interested in learning how to apply emerging technologies

Utilizing regional focus groups throughout this contract, we found a consensus among employers about concerns about a workforce shortage in the next two to five years. Employers provided data about positions/job titles for the highest need of talent, and the skills that would be desired and necessary in those roles.

A surprising challenge is witnessing the difficulty of participants’ lack of ability to narrow down which types of roles would have, and do have, the highest needs for talent. Their responses validated that every company and all roles have a high demand. Even when pushed for detail, the collective response was always, “all.”

Employers’ responses about the skill sets they would like to hire were also broad. Employers are hungry for new employees and will hire people without work experience for the roles (entry-level roles). They will teach anyone how to do the job, on the job. With this in mind, nearly all survey responses included a focus on soft skills, and strengthening the quality of training programs.

Job titles needed (in order of how often this role was mentioned)

- Construction/Project Managers
- Craft*
- Project engineers

- Carpenters*
- Estimators
- Safety
- Superintendents
- Laborers*
- Foremen
- Accounting
- Drivers (note: reliable transportation also was a point in 'basic employability skills')
- Operators*
- Admin
- Quality (QA/QC)
- Pipe fitter, pipe layer*
- Marketing and Sales
- Ironworkers

(*Can also be considered under the job title of construction laborer)

The roles employers mentioned and themes regarding workforce needs mirror data gathered for industry reports, job postings, DOL, and workforce data from AGC of America.

Strategic, career-connected learning programming can help to address in-demand roles and skills. Strategic recommendations are further detailed in a question below. We believe these three strategies will benefit the priority occupations outlined below while addressing the workforce needs mentioned above.

1. Employers are struggling to hire and retain potential employees due to significant barriers to entry.

Recommendation: Successful CCL programs will build out their offerings for soft skill training and wrap-around support (in addition to construction programming) to make more effective and inclusive programs. Additionally supporting explore/awareness programs, especially those led by people of color that can authentically increase career-connected learning efforts to communities of color, can help develop interest in a construction career pathway and should be prioritized. Successful programs seek employer partnerships that reflect the program's values and efforts.

2. Demand for craft professionals outpaces the number of people entering the profession. Construction professionals are multiskilling and cross-training to meet industry demand.

Recommendation: Programs specializing in craft career connected learning should highlight opportunities for multiskilling and educate participants about where skill sets are applicable across niches and or industry sectors. Providing participants with information about multiskilling, pathways to do so, and jobs across industry sectors or

niches where their skills apply will strengthen program outcomes. The resulting outcomes will increase participants' options for employment and promotion.

3. *Students interested in higher education are not aware of the construction management degrees and prestigious jobs available to them in the industry.*

Recommendation: Programs that support pathway development should make investments in providing industry-recognized certifications, credentials, or college credits. Programs should explore College In the High School (CiHS) or articulation agreements with higher education. Students will benefit from their Career Connected Learning experiences and be introduced to credentials that will illuminate high-wage job opportunities. Construction Management professionals with degrees are in demand and efforts should be made for pathway development.

4. *A lack of qualified construction teaching professionals and the lack of professional development options limit the ability of schools and programs to provide quality and industry-relevant education. It is also reflected in limited programming and impacts interest in construction as a career path.*

Recommendation: Programs should invest in creating relevant construction educator training and continuing professional development options to strengthen all programs. Initiatives should be created to actively seek professionals who have (or can build) experience in industry and educational settings.

Between now and June of 2025, what are your sector's 3-6 occupations that are the highest priority for building supportive career-connected learning pathways? Please focus on occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

- Project Engineer
- Project Manager
- Construction Manager
- Construction Laborer
- Construction Career and Technical Education (CTE) Educator

For each of the occupations identified above, please provide the information below to help inform pathway development efforts and investments.

Project Engineers, Project Manager, Construction Manager

Sub-sector: N/A

These are different roles but have similar demands and credentials. For this document, it works to show the different careers in the same pathway.

Project engineers use a technical, hands-on approach to address issues, provide on-site training, directly manage front-line workers, identify solutions, and liaise with project managers and executives. Project Managers focus on budgets, resource procurement, keeping the project on schedule, and ensuring that progress is aligned with the goals of the business continuously.

Average wage in WA: \$99,000 for a Project Engineer, \$119,000 for a Project Manager, and \$130,000 for a Construction Manager

Which skills/competencies do employers use as a benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?

Building and Construction —

Knowledge of materials, methods, tools, machines
 Related occupations

Administration and Management — Knowledge of business and management principles involved in strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership technique, production methods, and coordination of people and resources. Appropriate software skills and experience.

Engineering and Technology —

Knowledge of the practical application of engineering science and technology. This includes applying principles, techniques, procedures, and equipment to the design and production of various goods and services.

Which credentials do employers cite as a valuable benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?

- Bachelor's degree in Construction Management
- Associate in Construction Management
- Construction Management Certificate
- Completed internship.

Please describe possible career progression opportunities for this occupation:

Construction Management graduates may be given this job title, or they may begin as assistants to project superintendents, project managers, estimators, or field engineers. Advancement would lead to a senior level of these titles and project and company leadership. These roles often lead small projects within five years of employment. Construction/project engineers may also seek a pathway to a chief operating officer role.

Construction Laborers	Sub-sector: N/A
Average wage in WA: Entry level \$55,000	
Which skills/competencies do employers use as a benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?	Which credentials do employers cite as a valuable benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?

<p>Building and Construction — Knowledge of materials, methods, tools, machines</p> <p>Safety — Knowledge of relevant equipment, policies, procedures, and strategies to promote an effective culture of safety.</p> <p>Mechanical — Knowledge of machines and tools, including their designs, uses, repair, and maintenance.</p>	<p>Anyone of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OSHA 10 • Operator license • CDL • Flagging Certification • Fall Protection Certification • Traffic Control Certification • Carpentry experience • Landscaping experience • Physical dexterity • Blueprint reading • Completion of an apprenticeship program
<p>Please describe possible career progression opportunities for this occupation:</p> <p>Through experience and training, construction laborers and helpers can advance into a wide array of positions. This position can be a career or an entry-level opportunity. The advancement opportunity is very high. Specializing as a craft laborer has an earning potential of \$76-91k. For laborers who specialize, it may require certifications in areas like welding, erecting scaffolding, or finishing concrete, and then spending more time performing those activities.</p> <p>Similarly, helpers sometimes move into construction craft occupations after gaining experience in the field as a laborer. This role sees every aspect of the construction process so exposure to many career paths is an important benefit. For example, a laborer could start the pathway to a foreman, or an electrician's helper role may lead someone to become an apprentice electrician. The options for advancement are limitless.</p>	

<p>CTE Teachers (Career and Technical Education) (middle school – post-secondary)</p>	<p>Sub-sector: N/A</p>
<p>Average wage in WA: \$100,210</p>	
<p>Which skills/competencies do employers use as a benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?</p> <p>Building and Construction — Knowledge of materials, methods, tools, machines, and construction industry experience.</p> <p>Education and Training — Knowledge of</p>	<p>Which credentials do employers cite as a valuable benchmark to hire someone in this occupation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From industry to teaching: Verified industry experience, Career and Technical Educator (CTE) Certificate, Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) approved program for the Business & Industry Route, Basic

principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.	<p>skills test completion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Or bachelor's degree, completed WEST-E in subject area, 2000 hours industry experience, residency Teacher Certificate. • More information
<p>Please describe possible career progression opportunities for this occupation:</p> <p>Those with construction experience who earn a teaching degree would be effective educators who could bring the currently needed skills and lessons to classrooms. An effective Construction CTE Teacher could advance to a CTE Director role or lead an employer-based training program.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to use the “graying workforce” as an opportunity. Many who retire from construction are still interested in staying involved or giving back to the industry. There are pathways and short-term certificate programs that can support industry professionals returning to the classroom as instructors.</p>	

<p>Please share the data, employer feedback, and/or Regional Network feedback that helped you identify these as high-priority occupations:</p> <p>Data from the US Department of Labor, O-Net, Associated General Contractors of America Data Resources, Construction and Extraction Occupations: Washington Report from Construction Center of Excellence, job postings, employer interviews, and focus groups, Strategies to Elevate Partnership Success (STEPS) Report by Christina Riley Consulting, LLC for the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries, Sellen Industry Trends Report, WA ESD Projection Dashboard, Washington Career Bridge and WOIS/The career information system, NCCER</p>
<p>Please describe the top barriers employers have identified in hiring for these occupations:</p> <p>The top barrier to hiring is the number of qualified applicants.</p> <p>For Project Engineers and Construction/Project Managers, students who graduate with a degree in construction management have a nearly 100% job placement rate. Nearly all are employed in the industry with internships while they are earning a degree. Enrollment in CWU, UW, and WSU Construction Management Programs is increasing to meet this demand. Still, employers have unfilled roles. Even the most prestigious programs face significant challenges hiring professors. As professors retire there are long-lasting unfilled roles. This impacts the ability of schools to scale successful programs that place students directly into jobs.</p> <p>For Construction Educators, most programs are worried about succession plans for their existing teachers or are having trouble finding qualified applicants. This is happening for k-12, 2 and 4-year institutions and short-term certificate programs. In the k-12 space, teachers with</p>

no construction education or experience are sometimes hired and are teaching with this limited experience with no clear professional development plan to develop this knowledge and related skillsets. School Districts are not equipped to provide the specialized training required for these individuals to become proficient as construction educators and there are extremely limited opportunities for upskilling available for those in the field of Career and Technical Education.

Employers have noticed the lack of quality education – even through apprenticeship programming. In employer interviews, many said they no longer can count on the guarantee of quality.

The combination of educational experience and credentials, and construction industry experience in one candidate is difficult to find. Teaching professionals don't often have a construction background, and industry professionals have higher earning potential in construction than in a classroom. This makes career shifts from industry less persuasive until retirement.

Construction Laborers will always be in high demand for the industry. This occupation has high turnover because it is physically demanding work, and due to promotion/transition within the industry as this role is a steppingstone for many. In addition, many of these roles are cyclical in nature. Employers note the lack of 'employability skills', some of which can likely be attributed to the project-based nature of the industry.

Please describe the type of programs or approaches employers have found helpful in hiring for this occupation:

Project Engineers and Project Managers - Employers interface directly with 2- and 4-year Construction Management degree programs to offer internships and recruit directly from schools. This tactic is highly efficient and serves schools and employers well. Internal training programs and advancement opportunities have been successful for elevating employees to Superintendent roles.

Construction Laborers – Employers find hiring success via unions when they are signatory, open shop employers can cast a wider net but often still rely on apprenticeship programming (that is open shop). With many entry-level options, employers can hire a range of experience levels – even those with no construction experience or 18-year-olds.

Employers can capitalize on summer breaks and students looking for summer work/internships because it coincides with the busy season. Therefore, recruiting from school programming at the HS and post-HS level is beneficial.

Internal training programs are successful for employers to retain and grow talent.

CTE Teachers/Construction Educators – School Districts are increasingly turning to established faculty and staff, with limited or no construction or building background who are willing to attempt teaching construction and building trades courses. The motivation behind this practice is that these individuals already know and understand the unique dynamics of being a High School teacher and have proven their ability to succeed in this challenging occupation.

While this practice may ensure these educators can establish rapport with students and work successfully in the k-12 system, it does raise concerns regarding the level of knowledge, skills, and abilities students learn. Interestingly, more and more packaged curriculum for construction trades subjects is being marketed towards districts that are hiring inexperienced educators for these roles.

Between now and June of 2025, where is there regional momentum to support pathway development in this occupation?

For each region listed, please describe:

1. **Key momentum factors** (e.g., interested employers, high priority for Regional Network, opportunity to improve equitable access, opportunity to scale existing programs, portions of CCW pathway already built)
2. **High-potential opportunities** to support pathway development.
3. Is supporting those high-potential opportunities a **shared priority** across SL and RN?

- **Northwest**

- Key momentum factors:
 - Large near-term infrastructure projects.
 - This region is also active in the agriculture, manufacturing, and maritime industries to which there are significant crossover skill opportunities.
 - Employers in this region are highly engaged and supportive of career-connected learning programs.
 - Well-staffed, effective Skills Centers
 - Successful pre-apprenticeship programs with industry support like ANEW, Inland Northwest AGC Apprenticeship in Bellingham, ----
- High potential opportunities:
 - The existing strong agriculture, maritime, and manufacturing industries have valuable skills that directly transfer to construction roles. This is an opportunity to leverage existing agriculture crossover skills and build more equitable access.
 - Completion of the MAC Welding Framework and the project's partnership with Skagit Valley College will positively impact the workforce needs of construction, maritime, and agriculture industries.
- Shared priority? Yes. We are working with this regional network and related industries closely. There are also several shared priorities: educator training, programming at younger grades, and dual credit/College in the High School.

- **Northeast**

- Key momentum factors:
 - The region has upcoming infrastructure projects and has strong residential and heavy civil sectors, and the regional network has prioritized the construction sector. The region also has excellent training options that provide quality upskilling and degree pathways, and strong leadership from ESD 101 and Greater Spokane Incorporated.
 - This region has a College in the High School pilot program with Core Plus Construction and Clover Park Technical College, with the goal of providing students up to 18 college credits and a basic construction

<p>trades certificate, which will give them a jumpstart on a construction career while allowing them to save on higher education. This pilot launched in the 25-26 academic year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High potential opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ This region includes many rural schools that have shown interest in shared resources and opportunities around construction. ■ Strong automotive programs could be leveraged to support the construction employers and vice versa. ■ Maritime is a regional career-connected learning priority with skill sets that overlap with construction. ○ Shared priority? Yes, we are active in this region with employers, and programs utilize one another's best practices. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● King/Pierce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Key momentum factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The region has numerous ongoing infrastructure projects and steady residential, commercial, and heavy civil sectors. ■ The region also has excellent training options that provide quality upskilling and degree pathways. ■ Large number of employers and high engagement. ○ High potential opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong construction programs and employer support built in this region could translate into sharable resources that would benefit regions where the industry is not a stated priority. ■ The region has larger firms that may be more able to take on CCL programs and partnerships. ○ Shared priority? Yes, we are active in this region with employers, regional networks, and community-based organizations. 	

For each region below, which workforce education & training programs are *effectively* meeting employer needs, or could effectively meet their needs with adjustment or expanded capacity? Where relevant, please color-code responses to reflect their relevance to specific occupations.

Please provide your color-coding key below:

Project Engineers, Project Managers

Construction Laborers/ entry-level craft roles

CTE Teachers

Roles with an asterisk apply to more than one occupation. You will see that many of the opportunities relate to the construction laborer occupation. While it may appear that other programs related to other occupations are lacking exposure, this is not necessarily true. As stated above, the laborer role is a ubiquitous entry-level role for construction careers and provides exposure that would be hard to replicate.

Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Core Plus Construction** ● Thurston County Business2Youth Construction Technology ● Grays Harbor College*
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach Construction (Statewide) • Peninsula College • Try-A-Trade
East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Plus Construction** • Lemonheads* Inland AGC • Apprenticeship* Trade up to Construction* • New Tech Skills Center – CLE* • Spokane Community College* • Clover Park Technical College* • CiHS pilot ** • Pierce Spokane Construction WORKS (WJI)
King & Pierce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Plus Construction** • WABS Job shadow/tours • Sawhorse Revolution – Rainier Beach Build and Boat Build Program • Palmer Scholars • ANEW • Edmonds College • Renton Technical College* • Lake Washington Institute of Technology • Seattle Central College • Green River Technical College* • Clover Park Technical College* • Bates Technical College • Pierce Spokane Construction WORKS (WJI)
Mid-Columbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Plus Construction** • Walla Walla Community College • Columbia Basin College • Tri Tech Skills Center • CTE Without Borders
North Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Plus Construction** • Perry Tech • Yakima Valley College • Wenatchee Valley College
Northwest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Plus Construction** • WAVE Tour** • Technic Training Center • Inland AGC Apprenticeship Expansion* • Bellingham Technical College • TERO Vocational Training Center * • Building Performance Center • Underground Ministries, Underground Employment
South Central	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Plus Construction**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OIC of Washington • CWU • Job Corps • Perry Technical College • Pathway to the Top College & Career Expo • Career Academy
Southwest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Plus Construction** • Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council • Hudson Bay HS - CLE • Cascadia College • Young Contractors Forum
West Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Plus Construction** • Olympic ESD – Construction Trades Career Launch (Non RA) • Peninsula College • Olympic College*

Please describe the types of employers in your sector who are most eager to participate in career-connected learning to meet their workforce needs. Why are these types of employers interested in participating in career-connected learning, and what type of career-connected learning programs are most valuable to them?

Most employers are interested in engagement with workforce development programs; however, the most valuable program is the one that is rightsized to their individual needs. Beyond construction businesses, consider seeking participation from other organization types such as business associations, workforce development councils, community centers, k-12, community colleges, and universities.

Employers are interested in CCL programs because they benefit their workforce pipeline by attracting new talent and upskilling, and/or participating in the local community has a meaningful impact. Identifying why a specific company might be interested and sharing why the engagement will result in a return on investment is key to capturing attention.

Every company will have different interest points and desired levels of participation, and every level has value.

For many companies, entry-level ROI is all they have capacity for at times. This could be a one-time, explore-level event like a career day or a speaking opportunity. These opportunities provide community engagement, foster morale for employees, and provide networking with other companies and organizations with alignment. Entry-level ROI opportunities are not just valuable for new partnerships, even the most invested companies enjoy the opportunities at one-off events. These opportunities may be the most valuable because they are a starting point and a reconnection point.

A deeper type of participation might be an event that provides employers face time and networking with a curated group of community partners or young people who are truly interested in pursuing or promoting construction careers. This next level of participation is

highly demonstrative of a program's ability to provide ROI. Employers know that those curated groups were cultivated by your (program's) work and with their support.

Providing long-term ROI would mean contributing committed and enthusiastic employees to the workforce pipeline. What makes a committed, enthusiastic employee? A person who was able to make informed choices about their interests and future because they had access to meaningful career-connected learning options. Launch programs can most easily demonstrate hiring, but all programs are a working part of the continuum. Programs should build connections among themselves to better illustrate their role in the continuum to employers and support one another.

What is needed to increase the participation of BIPOC students in your sector's high-priority occupations? To increase the participation of students from rural areas? Which programs do this well?

High-priority roles listed above: Project engineers/managers, construction laborers, Construction CTE teachers.

Employers are interested in ways to make the workplace more diverse and recognize that changing established practices and making places of work welcoming and adaptable to the people present. This intention was ubiquitous among employers polled. Employers will be interested in learning about and from programs that are successfully creating authentic, diverse communities around construction education.

This document's recommendations are made with increasing BIPOC participation in mind. The core recommendations in this document address the problems of 1. An employer's ability to attract and retain talent, in part because the talent pool is more diverse than the hiring people and processes. 2. Awareness of construction career paths in general, and especially career paths that begin with a degree. 3. A lack of qualified construction teaching professionals. For BIPOC students, this may be an even larger barrier if a teacher is out of touch with the students and the community in which they are teaching. We believe tackling these recommendations is work that needs to be done to advance BIPOC participation.

Programs that address these topics will produce participants who are educated about their construction career options and become the next leaders in the industry. For that reason, investments must be made to create stable, lasting, strategic programs in areas with diverse populations. Stable, lasting programs will build trust and foster engagement that is committed, rather than on-and-off.

Advancing BIPOC and rural participation in Launch programs.

To create a more diverse population of students in Launch and apprenticeship level programs, more explore and prep programs are needed.

Awareness is a key issue for attracting talent to the construction industry. Supporting explore/awareness programs, especially those led by people of color that can authentically increase career-connected learning efforts to communities of color and help develop an interest in a construction career pathway, should be prioritized.

Expanding programs should ensure content, and its delivery is culturally responsive. Programs doing this successfully will make learning more engaging and impactful for BIPOC students.

The most equitable place to deliver career exploration programs is in school. While not every school system is the same, students in school do not have to worry about the barriers that would exist for an outside program. Transportation, cost, food, and safety are already taken care of for students. These are determining factors for participation and are especially significant for BIPOC and rural students.

Translating career in-school Prep experiences to Launch opportunities.

Students and families who are informed early about career connected learning (CCL) options are most likely to participate. High participation in explore programs will support enrollment of prep programs.

Workforce demands will be met by those who pursue industry-recognized credentials and degree programs. To have more diverse leadership, pathways to these credentials should be developed. Dual-credit high school programs are poised to meet this need and be expanded.

- The ability to receive credit for construction trades classes will benefit students who are interested in construction and higher education.
- The ability to earn college credits for free while still in high school will save resources and will allow people to enter the workforce faster. This could improve the number of people who complete their post-secondary credentials by age 26.
- In-school programs should have low barriers to access (free and consistent content)
- Many other career pathways have dual-credit options in high school with higher education. Construction has fewer of these credit opportunities compared to some other sectors. These potential college credits are a determining factor for students and families. Earning college credits in high school is an opportunity for students to save on tuition funds by earning the credits for free in high school. It also provides confidence for students.
- Programs, employers, and partners are interested in more varied demographics of students served.

Many outstanding programs address BIPOC and rural communities in meaningful ways. A few are: RIZ Partnership (Renton), Core Plus Construction (Statewide), Sawhorse Revolution (Seattle), SkillsUSA-WA (Statewide), Yakima Construction Academy (Yakima), WABS – Job shadow/tours (Seattle), ConstructDiversity (Kent).

Beyond the explore/prep level: ANEW, OIC of Washington (Yakima), Palmer Scholars (Tacoma), Next Success (Vancouver), Lemonheads (Spokane), Technic Training Center (Lynden), NAWIC (Puget Sound), Tulalip TERO (Tulalip), El Centro de la Raza (King Co.), SHE Builds (King Co.), Pierce Spokane Construction WORKS, WABO's COAP.

What overarching strategies do you recommend to support pathway development for the highest-priority occupations in your sector?

We feel these recommendations will benefit workforce growth as a whole but each of these recommendations is especially true for specific occupations.

Employers are struggling to hire and retain potential employees due to significant barriers to entry.

The priority occupation that will benefit most from addressing this challenge:

Construction Laborers

Barriers to entry such as inequitable access to programs, and inadequate wrap-around services. Employers have some uncertainty about how to reach potential employees and retain employees. Employers and programs could benefit from shared learning.

Since beginning this work, we have continually asked employers about the skill sets they would like to hire. Employers are hungry (desperate in some cases) for new employees and will hire people without work experience for the roles (entry-level roles). They will teach anyone how to do the job, on the job. With this in mind, nearly all survey responses included a focus on soft skills. One group dubbed these 'basic employability skills,' and others stated, "essential skills."

'Basic employability skills'

We dug deeper into this idea of basic employability skills to determine employer-specific concerns. They want hires who know how to be employees; showing up on time, ready to work, prepared to communicate if they will not be able to attend work that day, how to give notice, how to ask questions, and an understanding of responsibility. The idea of basic employability skills and soft skills was ubiquitous.

Specifically, we learned that the seeming lack of these "basic employability skills" often creates a barrier to entry and retention in the construction industry. One example includes a license to drive a car and having a reliable car or way to get to a job site. Job sites can have early or late hours and change frequently. Some of these essential 'skills' are also tied to equity and inclusion.

Recommendation: Successful CCL programs will build out their offerings of soft skill training and wrap-around support (in addition to construction programming) to make more effective and inclusive programs. Additionally, supporting explore/awareness programs, especially those led by people of color and that can authentically increase career-connected learning efforts to communities of color, can help develop interest in a construction career pathway and should be prioritized. Successful programs seek employer partnerships that reflect the program's values and efforts.

What does a great employer partnership look like for a CCL program?

- Programs should have an employer partner and that partnership should support learning from one another. Employers should inform students about professional expectations and employers should be learning about the support they can provide young people to be successful in what may be their first job.
- Successful CCL programs build out soft skills and support offerings and find employer partners who are interested in learning to continue this support and explore new training models.
- Employers support the creation of skills content, are a sounding board, and provide hands-on experiences like guest speakers, and tours when needed.

For employers seeking a training program:

- A best practice for employers would be to consider the first year of employment as a paid CCL program that provides internal pathways and off-ramps.
- Employers of entry-level hires (especially those with little work experience) should develop internal programs to support employees during their first year of hire. Even if it's a full-time hire, consider an internship-like approach to improve retention and educate on professional expectations. For example, internal programs could include mentoring, engaging with aspects of the company they may not see in their daily work, immediate, and formal feedback mechanisms, awareness training about a career path with actionable steps, and small incremental pay raises at short intervals, 3, 6, 9mo, 1 year. These recommendations are echoed in the STEPS report mentioned above and registered apprenticeships should be doing this as well (except the pay raises).

Demand for craft professionals outpaces the number of people entering the profession. Construction professionals are multiskilling and cross-training to meet industry demand.

The priority occupation that will benefit most from addressing this challenge:

Construction Laborers

Multiskilling is a rising trend within industry. Multiskilling or cross-sector training refers to a professional obtaining additional skill training and certifications. As the demand for craft professionals is on the rise and as fewer people are entering the profession, many craftspeople are expanding their scope of expertise to meet industry workforce demand.

Craft professionals will benefit from education and training opportunities that highlight a broader range of opportunities for their skill sets. Professionals who multiskill or have skills in demand across sectors have greater hiring potential and awareness about the transferability of skills, making it easier to find work during off-seasons or between projects. Multiskilling also provides pathway development and higher earning potential.

The image below shows the increase in professionals who multiskill and their motivations. (Image: NCCER Research Department)

Recommendation: Programs specializing in craft career connected learning should highlight opportunities for multiskilling and educate participants about where skill sets are applicable across niches and or industry sectors. Providing participants with information about multiskilling, pathways to do so, and jobs across industry sectors or niches where their skills apply will strengthen program outcomes. The resulting outcomes will increase participants' options for employment and promotion and meet industry workforce demand.

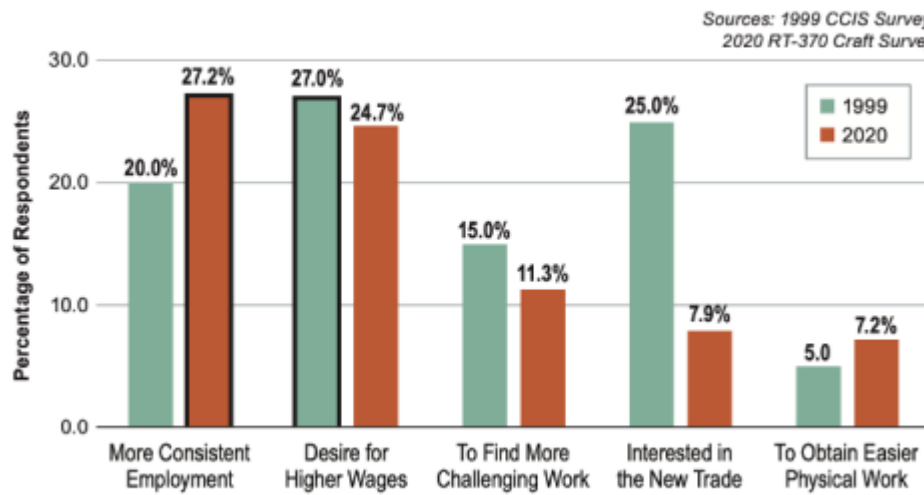


Figure 2: Motivations for Multiskilling Craft Professionals

Students interested in higher education are not aware of the construction management degrees and prestigious jobs available to them in the industry.

The priority occupation that will benefit most from addressing this challenge: [Project engineer](#), [Project Manager](#), [Construction Manager](#)

There is an abundance of registered apprenticeships available. This is promoted well as a pathway to construction without a college degree. Alternatively, the pathway from college (two or four years) to construction is rarely ever introduced as an option thus routing students towards a single-entry point into the construction industry. Failing to inform students of all their available options post-graduation is limiting their potential for a successful career in construction.

The lack of dual credits opportunities available to high school construction programs of study compared to other fields like healthcare and IT gives both students and parents the impression that the construction career path is less than. Construction Management degree programs at University of Washington, Central Washington University, and Washington State University are expanding to meet demand. Students in these programs have excellent paid internship experiences and nearly 100% accept a role in their chosen field before graduation.

Project Engineer/Manager roles are high wage and have excellent advancement potential. These roles are present in nearly all projects and make this role a very stable occupation. Degrees in CM are required to meet this occupational demand.

Recommendation: Programs that support pathway development should make investments in providing industry-recognized certifications, credentials, or college credits. Programs should explore articulation agreements with higher education so students can benefit from their experience and be introduced to other credentials that will illuminate high-wage job opportunities.

A note about the value and need of short-term training programs:

The construction industry has many successful Registered Apprenticeship programs that are expected to grow in the coming years based on increased demand and support from state and federal funding. Within WA's construction industry, there are also employers seeking hiring and job training programs outside of the Registered Apprenticeship program including smaller and residential contractors for whom sponsoring a Registered Apprenticeship may not be feasible. These employers rely on short-term, non-degree training programs that have strong relationships with employers. These training programs connect trainees with entry-level jobs and provide upskilling opportunities for working adults.

A lack of qualified construction teaching professionals and the lack of professional development options limit the ability of schools and programs to provide quality and industry-relevant education. It also is reflected in limited programming and impacts interest in construction as a career path.

The priority occupation that will benefit most from addressing this challenge:

Construction CTE Teachers

Shortages of construction educators affect not only the quality of training in a program, but interest in construction programs, too. Students need motivated, engaged, knowledgeable teachers who share real-world, relevant content. A traditional shop class making a birdhouse is not strategic enough to educate students about the dynamic and exciting options construction offers and illuminate career paths.

Employers have noticed the lack of quality construction education – even through

apprenticeship programming. Employers are investing in more training for new recruits. We also link some of these comments to 'employability skills.

The combination of educational experience and credentials, and construction industry experience in one candidate, is difficult to find. Teaching professionals don't often have a construction background and industry professionals have higher earning potential in a construction career than teaching in a classroom. This makes career shifts from industry less persuasive until retirement.

Benefits of a trained Construction CTE teacher regularly participating in professional development:

- Pathway guidance and connections – this is something that teachers/ guidance counselors/programs struggle to navigate.
- Programs/classes will be better able to build and maintain local industry connections.
- Basic shop class will transform to true CCL and inform students about pathways with actionable steps and connections.

Recommendation: Programs should invest in creating relevant construction educator training and continuing professional development options to strengthen all programs. Initiatives should be created to actively seek professionals who have (or can build) experience in industry and educational settings.

Please describe the types of activities and tactics you believe are needed to make progress against each recommendation between now and June of 2026, including:

1. Key activities and tactics you would like to prioritize as a fully-funded Sector Leader
2. Key activities other partners should consider advancing

1. *Employers are struggling to hire and retain potential employees due to significant barriers to entry.*

Recommendation: Successful CCL programs will build out their offerings of soft skill training and wrap-around support (in addition to construction programming) to make more effective and inclusive programs. Additionally, supporting explore/awareness programs, especially those led by people of color and that can authentically increase career-connected learning efforts to communities of color, can help develop an interest in a construction career pathway and should be prioritized. Successful programs seek employer partnerships that reflect the program's values and efforts.

The priority occupation that will benefit most from addressing this challenge:
Construction Laborers.

Actions by sector lead:

- Support Program Builders in the construction sector and foster interest in starting, expanding, or collaborating with effective programs that reflect industry workforce needs. Guide program builders to build out these aspects to make more effective and inclusive programs.
- Assist program and employer partnership and connections by finding employers partners who are interested in learning to continue this support and explore new training models.
- Supporting explore/awareness programs and programs led by people of color that can authentically increase career-connected learning efforts in communities of color.
- We will prepare a handbook to share exemplary events like the WAVE tour. This event has students rotate through hands-on employer-led stations. Created by NWESD, it is a best practice and should be scaled to other regions.
- We will work with RNs who have expressed interest in hosting an Industry night.

Key activities and tactics other partners should consider undertaking:

- Work toward culturally responsive programming by performing an audit program content and delivery method.
- Seek opportunities to hear from more diverse voices and incorporate learning into decision making at the leadership level. Example, expanding boards and executive committees to represent communities being served.
- Programs without the ability to offer support services should seek partnership opportunities.
- Work with us on the last two bullet points above; promoting short-term credentials, and competency-based credentialing models.

2. **Demand for craft professionals outpaces the number of people entering the profession. Construction professionals are multiskilling and cross-training to meet industry demand.**

Recommendation: Programs specializing in craft career connected learning should highlight opportunities for multiskilling and educate participants about where skill sets are applicable across niches and or industry sectors. Providing participants with information about multiskilling, pathways to do so, and jobs across industry sectors or niches where their skills apply will strengthen program outcomes. The resulting outcomes will increase participants' options for employment and promotion.

The priority occupation that will benefit most from addressing this challenge:
Construction Laborers.

Actions by sector lead:

- Support Program Builders in the construction sector and foster interest in starting, expanding, or collaborating with effective programs that reflect industry workforce needs. Guide program builders to build out these aspects to make more effective and inclusive programs.
- Support programs in identifying multiskilling opportunities and encouraging programs

- to add some 'skills-first' approach language to pathways development content.
- Promote Employer-Recognized, Short-Term Credentials – Expand stackable, non-degree training programs that provide rapid upskilling opportunities.
- Advocate for Cross-Industry Skills Recognition – Support competency-based credentialing models that allow workers to transition more easily between fields.
- Work on cross sector effort with Maritime and Agriculture Sector Leads on the MAC Welding project.

M.A.C. Welding & Fabrication Model Framework Project brief: Develop a statewide, open-source, cross-sector welding and fabrication model framework focused on the maritime, agriculture & natural resource and construction industries. The framework, aligned with OSPI and Department of Labor career clusters, will be accessible, scalable, and adaptable to other industry sectors and regions statewide. The project addresses the lack of equitable access and awareness for students in rural school districts and faculty to industry aligned welding and fabrication exploratory and preparatory programming supporting career paths in their local community. Between now and June this work includes working with community and technical college partners.

Key activities and tactics other partners should consider undertaking:

- Explore multiskilling opportunities and resulting jobs that might apply to a particular program's participants.
- Build programs or content that help illuminate cross niche and sector skills.
- Seek employer partnerships that can represent the opportunities available to craft skillsets.

3. *Students interested in higher education are not aware of the construction management degrees and prestigious jobs available to them in the industry.*

Recommendation: Programs that support pathway development should make investments in providing industry-recognized certifications, credentials, or college credits. Programs should explore articulation agreements with higher education so students can benefit from their experience and be introduced to other credentials that will illuminate high-wage job opportunities.

The priority occupation that will benefit most from addressing this challenge:
[Project Engineers, Project Managers, Construction Managers](#)

Actions by sector lead:

- Participate in the Construction Management Community of Practice workgroup comprised of CTC deans, faculty, and program managers involved with Construction Management programs working to align courses to facilitate credit articulation agreements between k-12 and CTC programs as well as more support for CTC students looking to transfer into 4-year Construction management program. Working with Northport, Cusick, Wilber-Creston, Mt. Spokane, Central Valley, and others to pilot a direct pathway to higher education utilizing College in the High School and

CPC to offer students up to 18 credits that can be applied towards an Associate degree in Construction or transferred to a Construction Management program of study.

- Identify vision/plan for CiHS and dual-credit partnerships to ensure students can graduate with at least 24 college credits.

Key activities and tactics other partners should consider undertaking:

- Programs should identify, and map pathways that connect their construction program participants to Construction Management degree options. Highlight the option to start at a 2-year school and transfer.
- Share: CiHS is now free and available for CTE programs. Explore what this means for your local construction trades classroom.

4. *A lack of qualified construction teaching professionals and the lack of professional development options limit the ability of schools and programs to provide quality and industry-relevant education. It is also reflected in limited programming and impacts interest in construction as a career path.*

Recommendation: Programs should invest in relevant construction educator training and continuing professional development options to strengthen all programs. Initiatives should be created to actively seek professionals who have (or can build) experience in industry and educational settings.

The priority occupation that will benefit most from addressing this challenge:

Construction CTE Teachers

Actions by the sector lead:

- Outline options for cross-training professional development options for CTE teachers.
- We will host teacher professional development to promote relevant construction lessons and allow teachers the opportunity to network with a host of employers who will lead every part of the training.
- Working with a CTC partner to build a professional development and training program for k-12 and CTC faculty in the construction and building trades areas.
- Distribute flyers that promote and provide guidance on how retiring industry professionals can translate their experience into becoming a Construction CTE teacher. We are working with industry HR professionals as they are best poised to promote this document and the post-career pathway.

Key activities and tactics other partners should consider undertaking:

- Construction professionals should join local CTE boards to better support teachers and help their classroom work keep pace with industry needs.
- CTE teachers should seek regional advisory boards rather than host individually. This approach will foster collaboration, networking, and be more effective for teachers and businesses.