



PREPARING YOUNG ADULTS FOR REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP



A YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP
READINESS PROGRAM TOOLKIT

SPRING 2022

ABOUT BUILDING FUTURES



Building Futures launched in 2007 as a construction industry partnership focused on leveraging the Registered Apprenticeship model of workforce development. For over 100 years, unions and employers have jointly operated quality registered apprenticeships in construction occupations to train individuals as highly-skilled tradespeople.

Our work spans three distinct but highly aligned areas.

For the benefit of low-income Rhode Islanders, Building Futures developed and operates a comprehensive pre-apprenticeship program to prepare diverse, low-income men and women for success in employment as registered apprentices in the building trades. In addition, we work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that construction projects provide employment opportunities for apprentices at the appropriate level to meet future demand for skilled labor through our Apprentice Utilization Program. Our pre-apprenticeship and apprentice utilization program together provide an effective system for workforce development in Rhode Island's construction sector.

From this foundation we have established Apprenticeship Rhode Island, an initiative to expand the use of Registered Apprenticeship beyond the construction sector. Now, we are helping to develop new registered apprenticeship programs in multiple sectors, which include healthcare, information technology, advanced manufacturing and green/plant-based occupations, among others. Working with employers, industry partnerships, government, and community-based organizations, we are spreading this proven model of Registered Apprenticeship to benefit the state's workforce and economy.

Registered Apprenticeship (RA) is structured employment designed and driven by the employer. RA is a proven earn while you learn model that pairs relevant education with mentored on-the-job learning (OTJL). Career advancement and predictable wage increases are guaranteed with successful completion of education and OTJL benchmarks, making this on-the-job learning model accessible to new workers and transitioning career changers. 97% of employers surveyed who use Registered Apprenticeship would recommend RA as a talent development and retention strategy.

APPRENTICESHIP READINESS FOR YOUNG ADULTS



Building Futures' construction pre-apprenticeship program is a rigorous 200-hour hands-on training that models industry standards. Like the Registered Apprenticeships we connect our graduates to, the pre-apprenticeship program requires candidates to have developed physical stamina, endurance and the soft skills necessary to succeed on the job.

The average age of participants is 27; however, Building Futures consistently sees younger applicants who often have areas for improvement before being a successful candidate for pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship.

We developed an apprenticeship readiness program to address the skills gap in young adult applicants aged 18-24 and encourage a longer-term relationship with potential applicants. Rather than rejecting candidates and encouraging them to reapply during a later program cycle, we can now work with them directly to help develop skills and strengths to be better prepared for pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship.

Thanks to funding from Rhode Island Department of Transportation, Building Futures piloted a youth apprenticeship readiness program, *Bridge to the Future*, in the fall of 2021. This toolkit summarizes what we learned piloting this new program to expand opportunities for young adults.

APPRENTICESHIP READINESS PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Selection

During the assessment process of Building Futures' pre-apprenticeship program, 15 individuals were selected from applicants based on their age (18-24), readiness, and demonstrated motivation to learn.

Participants

Of the 12 participants who entered and completed the pilot program:

- 75% resided in Central Falls, Providence, and Pawtucket and three participants are from Cranston, West Warwick, and Johnston respectively;
- 83% were Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC);
- 42% identified as Latino/a; and
- 100% were experiencing poverty.



Staff worked with participants to address numerous barriers, including homelessness, license restoration, and mental health issues and provided referrals as needed.

Program Highlights



Work Readiness & Soft Skills:

- Personal responsibility
- Goal setting
- Financial literacy
- Résumé building & Interviewing

Health and Wellness:

- Physical fitness and training
- Nutrition classes
- Locally produced healthy lunches via Farm Fresh RI's Harvest Kitchen

Career Exploration:

- Construction, with an emphasis on roadways and infrastructure
- Green infrastructure (design, installation and maintenance)
- Urban Forestry, Arborists, and Tree Stewardship
- Environmental Engineering and Remediation

Program Experience

Participants in the Bridge to the Future Pilot program:

- Explored careers available through Registered Apprenticeship via hands-on learning, including roadway and infrastructure construction
- Learned roadway related environmental engineering principles including erosion management, soil remediation, and heat sink mitigation
- Practiced tool identification and jobsite health and safety
- Planted 120 Trees (different species, ages, and sizes) on roadways
- Gained new skills during planting process, including masonry, de-paving, and tree guard installation
- Understood (and practiced) better nutrition, including locally-sourced food and meal planning
- Improved physical conditioning and stamina through customized group fitness workouts
- Increased financial literacy skills, e.g, budgeting and avoidance of predatory practices

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“The program gave me experience with construction and other career opportunities. It is a good learning experience. I am looking forward to BF200 [Construction Pre-apprenticeship] and a trades career. I’m interested in electrical, masonry, and laboring.”

Mario Monello, *Bridge to the Future 2021*



“[At Building Futures] they are just trying to pull you through the right path. The program went step by step to teach you. It was hands-on and gave us tools to succeed.”

Fred Wehyee, *Bridge to the Future 2021*

BEST PRACTICES FOR SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

1. Design program and curriculum in collaboration with industry stakeholders to meet emergent needs

Quality Apprenticeship Readiness Programs are pathways to employment via Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). Designing programs in collaboration with industry RAP sponsors clarifies program goals and the specific needs addressed, which in turn helps to crystallize all other program attributes, from outreach to program design to outcomes.

At Building Futures, we connect people to Registered Apprenticeships that lead to rewarding careers in high-growth industries. Our Construction Pre-apprenticeship meets a community need for high-wage career paths while also addressing an urgent industry need to train more construction and infrastructure workers. It was designed in close collaboration with the sponsors of jointly managed construction trade RAPs.

The goal of our programming is placement in Registered Apprenticeship. With this goal in mind, we design programming that helps participants develop specific, measurable skills. We also work with employers and RAP sponsors to promote graduate placement.

Through this collaboration, we identified a skills gap in young adult applicants who were otherwise highly motivated to join the industry and designed programming to address that gap.

2. Create robust outreach and referral systems

Ensure referrals are mission appropriate and linked to program goals.

Our Apprenticeship Readiness Program for young adults is directly linked to our well-established Pre-apprenticeship Program, creating a direct line of referral. Applicants are referred to our youth program at various stages of the pre-apprenticeship assessment process. Direct referral pathways ensure that youth are motivated to achieve program goals and that outreach connects directly with the population that can most benefit from the supports the program offers.

As programming and external partnerships expand, there can be a natural extension of referral and outreach through tangible, impactful partnerships.

3. Provide access to appropriate supportive services

Defined social services provide a lattice of support, enabling young adults to succeed in programming and overcome long-term barriers to employment.

Building Futures' social services coordinator conducted assessments with each participant, regularly checked in with them throughout the program, helped troubleshoot problems both in and outside of the program, and worked with participants and training staff to identify key areas of growth. By embedding social services within our program, we provide strong support for participants and can develop relationships with external organizations for housing assistance, mental health and substance use counseling, and transportation services, as well as other resources participants may need.

This holistic approach strengthens participant outcomes. For example, if a participant's family is struggling to find stable housing, supporting the participant and their family through the issue allows them to continue in the program and move through the barrier, rather than having to seek help externally and return to the program at a later date.

4. Establish strong partnerships



Strong partnerships ensure programming is adding value, not reinventing the wheel in your community.

Building Futures established new partnerships, including the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, Providence Neighborhood Planting Program, and Groundwork RI. Community partners supported the delivery of the program's service-learning project components and classroom learning.

Relationships with partner organizations were designed to maximize mutually beneficial goals for each organization, enabling each entity to achieve more in partnership than they could have alone.

5. Design meaningful and contextualized hands-on training



When program design focuses on maximum impact for both participants and the surrounding community, relevant programming and strong partnerships are a natural outcome.

In designing curriculum and identifying service-learning projects Building Futures considered:

- the goal of supporting young adults in acquiring the physical and technical skills relevant to a construction industry career; and,
- the community need in Rhode Island's urban core cities.

Our goal was to ensure programming that was accessible and met participants' needs while simulating the work environment and experience of our partner RAPs.

The resulting program:

- Cultivated a program culture and process that allowed young adults to gain the knowledge, skills, and ability to succeed in careers that start with Registered Apprenticeship; and
- Improved the natural and built environment in the state's urban core cities with impactful service-learning projects that engage 18-24-year-old participants.

Our pilot service-learning project focused on developing tree canopy in dense urban areas, emphasizing roadways and roadside improvements. Skill development in roadway landscaping and tree planting included de-paving, installation, cement and masonry work, and general laborer skills.

This project focus provided opportunities for hands-on training that offered enhanced physical conditioning and stamina, supported rudimentary knowledge of construction skills (e.g., tool identification, project and building principles, etc.), and provided a better understanding of the physical skills and requirements of each trade.

Classroom learning complemented the hands-on training. Classroom segments that covered construction career pathways, on-the-job physical safety, and a variety of transportation/construction-related environmental issues, including soil remediation, mitigating heat sink, and the utility of tree planting to combat erosion,

Participants gained valuable skills while also making a lasting community impact.

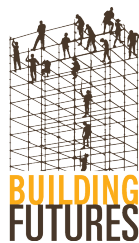
6. Leverage program to achieve additional impacts

Identifying tangible next steps for young adult participants supports positive outcomes.

Bridge to the Future provides a career pathway that ensures low-income, diverse young adults are prepared for high-demand, well-paying careers while supporting Rhode Island's infrastructure needs. Participants knew from the first day with the program their goal was pre-apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship in construction and infrastructure related employment.

Having a shared goal enabled a culture of growth within the cohort, supported participants through the regular ups and downs of a physically demanding program, and enabled both participants and staff to work together to meet participant goals. It also allowed for flexibility appropriate to young workers just embarking on their careers. Staff worked with participants to identify immediate post-program steps, including referral to our Construction Pre-Apprenticeship, employment allowing graduates to address long-term barriers prior to Pre-Apprenticeship, and continuing education.

THANK YOU



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