

CONCEPT PAPER

Los Angeles Workforce Infrastructure Network



Prepared by
City of Los Angeles
Economic and Workforce Development Department

INTRODUCTION

The Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD), the LA City Workforce Development Board and the Mayor's Office commissioned this concept paper to develop high level recommendations from key partners of the Los Angeles workforce development eco-system to:

1. Assess status of workforce preparation for federal Investment Infrastructure and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) capital investments;
2. Develop strategies to prepare the Los Angeles workforce for these investments, and;
3. Ensure equity and inclusion in the new opportunities of quality skilled career pathways for all LA residents.





RECOMMENDATIONS

The LA City's Economic and Workforce Development Department, Workforce Board, and the Mayor's Office should:

1. Establish an on-going workforce development system collaborative between representatives of the various public, k-12 and higher education institutions, union locals, industry employers, and community partners supporting quality careers. The Los Angeles Workforce Infrastructure Network under the Mayor's Office and Economic Workforce Development Department will provide a consistent platform to communicate, share information, and integrate activities on behalf of city residents. Currently, there is no on-going city collaborative structure to discuss how to prepare the workforce for these new capital investments.
2. Conduct a thorough inventory and analysis of the educational, union and community- based infrastructure industry-recognized workforce training programs available to city residents. Currently, there is no established platform that catalogues and distributes information to LA City workforce partners or residents.
3. Pursue a city policy to set-aside of one to three (1-3) percent of all city capital infrastructure projects funded by the federal infrastructure bill to be directed for workforce development projects. Funds from federal infrastructure projects are allowed to expend on related workforce development, however, it is not mandated. This is a local policy decision. Pennsylvania has implemented such a policy.
4. Invest at least \$2 million in workforce experience dollars (General Fund, LA County, or other grant funds) to seed and expand infrastructure-related system workforce development programming, including expansion of registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs), to increase workforce participation, specifically by investing in high barrier groups. This will immediately increase the resources to expand quality skilled job training opportunities in Los Angeles.
5. Assemble a city, union, and community partner grant writing team to apply for the large- scale federal Department of Labor, Commerce, and EPA grants to increase the overall resources for the Los Angeles workforce development eco-system. Currently, there is no established collaborative working team to pursue these large-scale federal workforce development grants.
6. Explicitly include this policy statement "The LA City's Economic and Workforce Development Department, Workforce Board, and the Mayor's Office are committed to encouraging gender equity, diversity and inclusion among our workforce partners, and eliminating unlawful gender discrimination and workforce segregation."

BACKGROUND

Los Angeles and the wider region are poised to receive an extraordinary level of financial support aimed at developing crucial infrastructure, renewable energy projects, and expanding broadband access. Beyond the anticipated federal funds dedicated to infrastructure, the city has boosted its own spending on housing, transportation, renewable energy, and water management.

This wave of investment from federal, state, and local sources is expected to create thousands of construction and infrastructure-related jobs in the area. While the exact number of jobs is yet to be determined, it is widely acknowledged that we will see a significant increase in high-quality, career-advancing positions in skilled trades.

Dr. Martha Ross highlights the significance of these times, stating, "The U.S. is making once-in-a-generation investment in infrastructure and clean energy through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021 and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022. With the federal government allocating an unprecedented amount of funds to enhance our transportation, water, energy, and broadband systems, cut down on greenhouse gas emissions, and tackle other climate-related challenges, we are looking at a potential for substantial job growth—estimated at 15 million new jobs over the next decade. However, our infrastructure workforce is aging, and employers are facing challenges in both retaining their current workforce and hiring new workers. This underscores the urgent need to attract, train, and retain a new generation of workers."

As federal dollars make their way from Washington D.C. to the state and then to Los Angeles, local leaders are called upon to strategically deploy these investments. The goal is not only to include all residents, especially those who have been left out of recent economic recoveries, but also to ensure these large-scale investments help reduce economic disparities rather than perpetuate them. Developing a skilled workforce capable of realizing these goals is crucial, ensuring that the benefits of these investments broaden economic opportunities for communities that have historically been overlooked.



LOS ANGELES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ECO-SYSTEM



Navigating the workforce development landscape in the City of LA reveals a diverse and expansive network of programs, initiatives, and partnerships aimed at equipping a broad spectrum of individuals with the skills and opportunities needed to engage with the modern workforce. This system is multifaceted, comprising a broad array of programs and initiatives aimed at developing a skilled workforce ready to meet the demands of today's and tomorrow's labor markets. Despite its extensive resources and initiatives, the system often struggles with coordination and connectivity among its various components, highlighting a need for a more integrated approach to workforce development.

Numerous unions, particularly those in building and construction trades, have robust RAPs developed over many decades. They offer industry-driven, practical learning opportunities with zero tuition costs for apprentices. Partnering with community colleges can enhance these programs by providing academic credits for the training, resulting in industry credentials and degrees for participants.

Additionally, LAUSD, LACCD, and community-based programs all offer a variety of career and technical education (CTE) and related programming. The city workforce system funds dozens of community agencies to provide services to high barriered populations, and the city departments have both hiring needs and provides support to these programs. Listed below is only a sample of resources and assets.

Structure & Operations

At the heart of the city's workforce development efforts are the Workforce Development Board (WDB), the Mayor's Office, and the Economic & Workforce Development Department (EWDD), which oversee the administration of 14 WorkSource Centers and 14 YouthSource Centers. These centers are foundational to reaching job seekers across the city, offering access to certified training, support services, and job placement assistance. As summarized below, the city of Los Angeles is rich with educational and skilled based training opportunities.

Registered Apprenticeships & Training Programs



Apprenticeship is a time-tested, proven workforce development approach where learners earn wages while acquiring crucial skills, experience, certifications, and professional connections. The apprenticeship model offers employers an effective means to build their talent pipeline by engaging in apprenticeship partnerships designed to develop a highly skilled workforce. In California, there are approximately 95,000 registered apprentices, approximately 67% of which are in the building, construction, and fire trades. There are numerous registered apprenticeship and apprenticeship readiness programs throughout Los Angeles.

Host to approximately 19,000 registered apprentices, Los Angeles County comprises 20% of California's total apprentices, approximately 11% of which are outside of building and fire trades occupations. Recognizing the statewide potential, Governor Newsom has set a goal to expand beyond traditional apprenticeship programs and serve 500,000 apprentices by 2029.

Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs), which are regulated by the California Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS), offer a well-defined pathway into a career, supported by clear standards outlining apprentices' job expectations. Apprenticeships, though different from traditional classroom-based postsecondary education, can serve as a college pathway. In California, strong ties between community colleges and the apprenticeship system make it both a workforce and postsecondary education strategy.

Funding for training comes from related and supplemental instruction (RSI) funds, alongside apportionment funding for credit-bearing community college courses. In addition, new state investments have been directed at decreasing the gender gap in the construction trades, such as the Equal Representation in Construction Apprenticeship (ERiCA) Grant. Other investments, like the California Apprenticeship Initiative (CAI) and California Opportunity Youth Apprenticeship (COYA) grant programs, allocate millions annually to bolster local and regional partnerships, facilitating the launch and expansion of innovative apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship initiatives in other emerging industry sectors such as transportation and advanced manufacturing.

Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building & Construction Trades Council

With 48 local unions, this council administers over 24 state and federally recognized joint apprenticeship training centers (JATCs) and registered apprenticeship programs throughout Los Angeles. The 48 local unions include, but are not limited to: Laborers, Plumbers/Pipefitters, Ironworkers, Sheet Metal Workers, Electricians, Painters, Drywall Finishers, Tile Layers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Elevator Constructors, Operating Engineers, Glaziers, Plasterers, Insulators, Roofers, and Teamsters.

Apprenticeship Readiness Fund

The Apprenticeship Readiness Fund is the workforce development arm of the LA/OC Building & Construction Trades Council. The Fund partners with over 20 organizations that include various community colleges, community-based organizations, and school districts in Los Angeles to deliver the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) Apprenticeship Readiness training. The training is the only Department of Labor Industry Recognized Credential (IRC) that was created by, and with the input from, the North American Building Trades Unions (NABTU). This training prepares individuals from underrepresented communities and diverse backgrounds for opportunities within all the building & construction trades unions in Los Angeles. The Fund acts as a regional intermediary for funding on behalf of all its partnering programs and provides case management and graduate placement support into all 48 affiliated local unions.

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD)

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) offers hundreds of CTE, Linked Learning, and work-based-learning pathways in all industry sectors and through a variety of settings, including alternative education programs and adult education centers, where accelerated courses are offered for adult learners to obtain industry-recognized certifications (e.g., HVAC, Truck Driving, Aviation Mechanic, etc.). Numerous CTE training centers, many of which collaborate with local trade unions such as the LA/OC Building Trades, offer pre-apprenticeship programs as a bridge into registered apprenticeships for underrepresented populations. One example is the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum

(MC3) program, recognized nationally as a pre-apprenticeship program for the building and construction trades.

In addition, LAUSD's Linked Learning program provides secondary students with access to career-themed pathways such as engineering, architecture, and skilled trades. K-12 Career and Technical Education (CTE) provides industry-specific skills and knowledge and includes job shadowing, internships, and virtual apprenticeships.



Los Angeles Community College District

The nine community college campuses of LA Community College District offer an array of skill-based training programs for credit and non-credit that are utilized by local public and private employers. Los Angeles Trade Tech College offers Construction, Maintenance & Utilities (CMU) Pathway delivers most current industry relevant training, including sustainable construction techniques and other green technologies to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skill sets to obtain, sustain, or advance in their chosen career paths.

Certificates and degrees are offered in Architectural Technology; Carpentry; Electrical Construction and Maintenance; Electrical Line-Worker (Lineman); Heating, Ventilating, Air Conditioning (HVAC) and Refrigeration; Operation and Maintenance Engineering - Steam Plant; Plumbing; Solid Waste Management Technology; Street Maintenance Technology; Supply Water and Waste Water Technology; Welding - Gas and Electric; and stacked credentials in renewable energy including Renewable Energy Technician - Solar PV Installation and Maintenance, Renewable Energy Technician - Solar Thermal and Renewable Energy with Energy Efficiency Emphasis.

Community Based-Organizations

Community-based program models such as YouthBuild and Conservation Corps (among other LA youth workforce programs) play a significant role in expanding access to training in skilled trades, emphasizing the acquisition of valuable industry-recognized credentials, and therefore, serve as vital entry points to infrastructure careers for individuals facing high barriers to employment. These models have a long history in working with Los Angeles Opportunity Youth, ages 16 -24, and their programming emphasizes construction and skilled trades. Though several community-based agencies provide similar workforce and education programming, there is no easily accessible list of such resources. A few examples include Coalition for Responsible Community Development, Alliance for Community Empowerment, and LA Conservation Corps.

Philanthropy

Philanthropy is another major player in supporting and expanding the local infrastructure workforce. One example is Harbor Freight Tools for Schools, the flagship program of the Smidt Foundation whose mission is to increase understanding, support, and investment in skilled trades education.

Harbor Freight Tools for Schools partners with L.A. County public high schools and community-based organizations to offer excellent, year-round, and summer, hands-on skill trades education. High school student in these programs successfully earn high-value Industry Recognized Credentials such

as: American Welding Society (AWS), L.A. City Welding, and GRID Intermediate Solar Training Certification. This effort is advancing excellent skilled trades education in LA County high schools.

LA City Departments & Propriety Departments

The city itself, through departments such as Department of Street Services and Department of Sanitation; and the three propriety departments: Port of Los Angeles, Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA), and the Department of Water and Power, has invested in training programs that not only meet their hiring needs but also support broader workforce development goals. For instance, HireLAX represents a successful hiring partnership that leverages city resources, contractors, local unions, and community partners to create pathways into quality jobs.



Challenges & Opportunities

While Los Angeles boasts an impressive array of programs and partnerships aimed at workforce development, the system faces challenges in achieving a cohesive and coordinated approach. The richness of resources and opportunities is often matched by complexities in navigation and access, underscoring the need for enhanced connectivity and integration among programs, educational institutions, community organizations, and city departments. Addressing these challenges will require strategic efforts to streamline pathways into quality jobs and career advancement, ensuring that all Angelenos, regardless of their starting point, have access to the education and training necessary to thrive in the evolving economy.



LOS ANGELES WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

While much of this federal funding allows workforce development activities, relatively few of the new federal programs require it. Many of the federal and state entities receiving funding are unfamiliar with or have not prioritized workforce development in the past. The public workforce system and community colleges were not included in the new federal legislation. It is a massive disconnect.

Likewise, there was no new funding for the local workforce development agencies to prepare its workforce for the new employment opportunities created by the infusion of funds.

Meanwhile, for many young people, the pathway to adulthood and a good job is an obstacle course. The road from high school to further education and careers can be hard to find or access – this is especially true for young people from low-income backgrounds or whose parents do not have college degrees. Tens of thousands of young adults in Los Angeles cycle through unemployment, post-secondary education, and low-wage jobs without gaining traction.

In a community where the potential of every teen and young adult is as varied and promising as its demographic composition, understanding, and supporting their unique needs and aspirations is paramount. The objectives of establishing the “Los Angeles Workforce Infrastructure Network” are to:

1. Increase the ongoing collaboration between public, union, and community-based organizations to develop on-going communication and planning;
2. Increase the awareness and utilization of current Industry Recognized infrastructure workforce training programs;
3. Increase the identification of gaps in current partner offerings, and;
4. Increase the number of young adults in skilled trades pathways to meet Los Angeles infrastructure workforce needs.

STRATEGIES

In crafting The Workforce Infrastructure Network, the Economic and Workforce Development Department, LA City Workforce Development Board and the Mayor's office should deploy a series of strategies including, but not limited to:

- Include the concept of the “Los Angeles Workforce Infrastructure Network” in the City’s Workforce Development Annual Plan which will include the formal establishment of the collaboration.
- Include the funding of at least \$2 million of available workforce resources in the Annual Plan to be made available through an RFI which would allow for the seeding and funding of specific workforce training partnerships that lead to union apprenticeships.
- Further engagement of intermediary to further develop the partnership design of the collaborative. Explore other national and state program models and inventory current program offerings of the workforce development system partners. Develop a design that builds upon current public and private investments.
- Continue to build upon the city’s Project Labor Agreements and Community Benefit Agreements to support the entry and retention of LA residents into the skilled trades.
- Build upon the current education and training partners of established certified apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships and secondary school training programs including LAUSD K-12 CTE Linked Learning Division and Division of Adult Career Education, Community College Districts, other higher education institutions and community-based training programs like YouthBuild. The pathways should be aligned to the union-based, community-based training hubs such as the Apprenticeship Readiness Fund, which works with Union trades apprenticeship programs.
- Organize a specific convening of employer partners, union and skilled trades, and registered apprenticeship program (RAP) sponsors (including pre-apprenticeships) to align their current efforts and programs, as well as identify future areas for expansion of RAPs in other high- growth sectors such as transportation and advanced manufacturing, integrating green technology.
- Develop a long-term implementation plan for the EWDD to build a system wide “LA Workforce Infrastructure Network” to be used as a model for collaboration and program integration.
- Develop and enforce policies that promote gender equity, diversity, and inclusion within the workforce. This includes implementing equal opportunity policies, prohibiting gender discrimination, and addressing workforce segregation. Ensure that these policies are communicated effectively to all workforce partners and stakeholders and provide resources and training to support compliance.
- Ensure funding to women's education and training programs and training on gender equity, diversity, and inclusion for employers, employees, and workforce partners. Provide resources and guidance on best practices for creating inclusive work environments and addressing barriers to gender equity in hiring, promotion, and retention.
- Collaborate with local businesses, community organizations, educational institutions, and other stakeholders to promote gender equity and diversity in the workforce. Establish partnerships with organizations that specialize in supporting underrepresented groups, such as women in construction fields or minority-owned businesses, to expand access to opportunities and resources.



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