

The History of the Building Trades Apprenticeship Readiness Programs

NABTU's history with pre-apprenticeship training began in 2007 when the Building Trades' Apprenticeship and Training Committee, which is composed of the national Training Directors from each of the affiliated unions, was tasked with creating a pre-apprenticeship training program that would appeal to young people and empower them to make an informed decision about which craft they wanted to pursue. The goals of the program were to increase the number of candidates for registered apprentices across all crafts, increase the diversity of apprenticeship candidates by specifically recruiting women, people of color and transitioning veterans, and increase the retention rate among apprentices by providing them with a deeper understanding of both the industry and the role of craft unions in construction. In addition, NABTU leaders believed that a national pre-apprenticeship training credential would increase participants' ability to seek construction apprenticeships in any part of the country, especially where construction jobs were in demand. All NABTU ARPs are jointly sponsored by Building Trades State or Local Councils in cooperation with community partners, including policy makers, workforce investment boards, community organizations and educational institutions.

In 2007, NABTU piloted the Gulf Coast Construction Career Center, an ARP in New Orleans that was designed to offer local residents, many from underserved communities, the opportunity to earn the apprentice wages described above, after Hurricane Katrina. Over 400 people completed the Gulf Coast CCC program over three years. African-Americans made up 90% of the people enrolled in the GCCC program and women were 9%. Other pilot ARPs were implemented in high schools in the Baltimore – Washington DC metropolitan area.

In 2008, however, the beginning of a national depression in the construction industry greatly limited apprenticeship opportunities. By February 2010, the national unemployment rate in construction hit a high of 27.1%. Thus NABTU's use of ARPs was limited from 2007 to 2014 to just a small number of programs each year. One of the success stories from this period was NABTU's national partnership with YouthBuild USA, which resulted in the use of the Building Trades' ARP curriculum in 26 YouthBuild programs in 16 states. With construction activity on the upswing in 2014, however, the demand for ARPs in the U.S. rapidly increased as construction contractors continued to add workers, fueling the demand for more apprentices.

That year, the number of NABTU ARP programs jumped from 10-15 per year to over 75 ARP locations across the country. This number is still growing today, making the NABTU ARPs the largest pre-apprenticeship training program in the U.S. construction industry.

In many urban areas, Building Trades Councils have worked with elected officials, community groups, educators and workforce development professionals to build model apprenticeship readiness programs:

- In New York City, the Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills places underserved young people in middle class construction industry careers (average salary – \$67,110). From 2001 – October 2013, the Construction Skills program placed 1,443 graduates into union apprenticeship programs. The Construction Skills graduates have an 80 percent retention rate as union apprentices or journey-level workers. Roughly 90 percent of program graduates are black, Hispanic or Asian.¹
- In Los Angeles, the Los Angeles and Orange County Building and Construction Trades Councils partnered with the LA Unified School District (LAUSD), the second largest K-12 district in the US, and many local community organizations, on a \$27 billion Project Labor Agreement (here known as a PSA, or Project Stabilization Agreement) that governed the construction of 111 new schools and the reconstruction of countless others. Under the terms of the LAUSD PSA, the District and the Building Trades agreed to strict guidelines for the hiring of local (district) residents, the participation of apprentices and the participation of small local contractors. In the end, researchers from UCLA found that the LAUSD PSA “met its targeted small business participation and targeted hiring goals or [was] on track to meet these goals.” Over an eight-year period, the LAUSD awarded nearly \$4.15 billion in contracts to small local businesses.²
- In Louisville, Kentucky, the Louisville Urban League, together with state and local politicians, contractors, non-profits and the Greater Louisville Building and Construction Trades Council, created the KentuckianaWorks Construction Pipeline Project. On just one project – the KFCYum! Center sports arena – KentuckianaWorks trained 293 members from underserved communities, including women and people of color, in construction skills and placed 111 graduates into union construction jobs on the project. The specific pre-apprenticeship curriculum used in this program was the

¹ Ester Fuchs, Dorian Warren and Kimberly Bayer, *Expanding Opportunity for Middle Class Jobs in New York City: Minority Youth Employment in the Building and Construction Trades*, Columbia School of International and Public Affairs, March 2014, 1-4.

² Uyen Le, *Project labor Agreements: Pathways to Business Ownership and Workforce Development in Los Angeles*, UCLA Labor Center, California Construction Academy, November 2011.

Building Trades' nationally recognized Multi-Craft Core Curriculum. As the Louisville economy improves and construction opportunities expand, KentuckianaWorks will be expanded to serve even more Louisville residents.³

- In Cleveland, Ohio, the Office of the Mayor and the local Building Trades Council employed a project labor agreement on an “anchor institution,” the University Hospitals and their \$750 million construction budget, in order to use economic power to provide tangible community benefits in 2010. Overall, the University Hospitals project met or exceeded the specified targets for contracts awarded to women-owned and minority-owned enterprises, good and services procured from local and regional firms, and it came close to the target for construction workers who were city residents. The target was 20 percent; the result was an estimated 18 percent.⁴

³ Louisville Urban League, *KentuckianaWorks Construction Pipeline Project: The Louisville Area and Beyond*, 2009.

⁴ Farzana Serang, J. Phillip Thompson and Ted Howard, “The Anchor Mission: Leveraging the Power of Anchor Institutions to Build Community Wealth,” *The Democracy Collaborative*, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 2013, 1-3.