



**AGC**

**THE CONSTRUCTION  
ASSOCIATION**

---

**2022 National Construction Industry  
Workforce Summit:  
Success Stories & New Strategies**

---

## **About the 2022 Construction Industry Workforce Summit**

Hundreds of professionals involved in construction workforce development—from construction firms, AGC of America chapters and construction education and training programs—gathered in Phoenix in early November 2022 for the second annual **National Construction Industry Workforce Summit**. Much of the event was organized into topical breakout sessions that allowed participants to share knowledge and generate ideas. There were also formal presentations of workforce success stories shared with the entire group.

## **Construction Workforce Development Efforts Are Well Underway**

This year's **Workforce Summit** featured nine breakout sessions. Summit attendees spent time in these small-group sessions that focused on a range of workforce challenges related at a high level to **cultivating the workforce of the future** and **managing the current workforce**. This included recruitment, development and retention of employees.

During these breakout sessions, participants shared details of steps they are taking to successfully address workforce issues and they also brainstormed new ideas to address the challenges.

## **ARCORO**

Arcoro was a sponsor of the **2022 Workforce Summit** and supported AGC in the production of this report and associated content.

## **The Workforce Summit Report: Capturing the Collective Wisdom of Construction Workforce Development Pros**

This report is presented in three sections. The first two share summaries of the various workforce solutions that were discussed during the **Workforce Summit** including brief descriptions of successful workforce strategies that are already in place. Also included are details about proposed new workforce solutions that were crafted during the various breakout sessions.

- **The first section focuses on topics related to creating the construction workforce of the future**, including how the industry is working with high schools and career and technical education to prime younger people to enter the industry. It also looks at recruiting from diverse and new populations.
- **Section two includes topics around effective management of the current workforce** including benefits and compensation, training and advancement and managing the workforce through a potential recession.
- **The third section includes summaries of eight success story presentations** that were shared with all attendees at the **Workforce Summit**. These success stories reflect a broad variety of different workforce development efforts, from working with equipment manufacturers and dealers to offering in-school training, to a new, union-friendly twist on career signing days.

The point of the Construction Industry Workforce Summit and this summary document is to eliminate the need to reinvent the wheel when it comes to workforce development. Contact [workforce@agc.org](mailto:workforce@agc.org) if you would like contact info for any of the workforce examples listed in this report.

---

There is no shortage of successful approaches to workforce development. One of our key roles at AGC of America is to connect members and chapters with those workforce success stories so they can recreate them in their local area.

---

# I: Cultivating the Future Construction Workforce

The industry is working hard to find ways to address the worker shortfall, creating new approaches and programs to encourage young people to enter the industry, while also targeting employees from diverse and under-represented populations.

In this section, we offer highlights from sessions at the **Workforce Summit** that focused on creating the future construction workforce including:



Engaging the Future Workforce through School-to-Work Experiences



Sharing Experiences and Resources with Career and Technical (CTE) Education Programs



Meeting the Need for Apprenticeship Training



Targeted Diversity: Strategies for Attracting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce



Re-entering the Civilian Workforce: the Veteran and Criminal Justice Opportunity



Partnerships that Support Workforce Initiatives



## Engaging the Future Workforce through School-to-Work Experiences

Participants in this breakout session agreed that there are many successful practices in place that support youth employment opportunities in construction. However, they noted that these are fragmented and often done in isolation.

What successful programs have in common is strong involvement and alignment with many partners, including:

- construction firms
- local trade association officials
- educators
- parents
- public officials with labor/workforce/education/transportation administration agencies and community-based organizations
- labor
- project owners

**One of the challenges of the school-to-work experience is the misperception that people under 18 years of age are not allowed on construction sites.** Participants noted this is simply not true. While there are child labor law restrictions on what minors can do on the job site, they are allowed to be on project sites, and in many instances can participate in restricted activities for educational purposes.

- The student must be enrolled in a school-recognized training program, such as school-to-work.
- Firms need an on-site mentor with a coaching/teaching mindset that can deal with the students, provide safety instructions and ensure that the students understand them.
- Firms need to provide a training plan.

Participants who are involved with workers compensation programs added that students will be covered in those programs.

---

**Firms need to be organized in their efforts to engage both educators and students, involve multiple partners in developing the framework for youth experience, seek funding to support the efforts, and promote their success stories widely.**

---



## **New ideas discussed in this session**

### **Involve educators in AGC**

AGC chapters should find ways to involve local teachers in their social and educational events. Inviting them to attend, for free, chapter activities including social functions will help strengthen the connection between the industry and educators. Also consider inviting them to serve on workforce development committees, or other volunteer efforts where they may be able to contribute.

### **Increase awareness of youth apprenticeship**

Identify construction youth apprenticeship programs available to students in the local area and look for ways to educate teachers and counselors about those programs. This could include arranging tours for educators or bringing the youth apprenticeship leaders to meetings with educators. Likewise, AGC chapters can help educate their members about these youth apprenticeship programs and ensure they are using them as a recruiting resource.

### **Create a “Getting Started Guide” for employers on hiring youth**

AGC chapters can create guides for member firms to catalogue the various programs and schools providing any form of construction education and training for youths. These guides can also include tips about the best way to reach the educators for the programs and recruit these future workers. And they can include contact information for the relevant local training and education programs.

### **Start outreach to youth early**

Firms and AGC chapters should explore opportunities to expose younger students in middle and even elementary school to career opportunities in construction. This could include organizing construction fairs for younger students, volunteering to support local middle and grade school programs, or giving their workers paid time off to participate in school activities where they talk about what they do for a living. The industry can also work with local school officials to organize an event like the National Building Museum’s [Big Build](#) that exposes younger students to construction.

### **Incorporate social responsibility**

To break the poverty cycle, provide resources to younger workers, including access to transportation and work clothes to make it easier to recruit younger and more diverse workers.

## Successful efforts shared in this session

**Paid teacher externships** are supported by the AGC of Massachusetts. [The AGC MA Building Advancement Externship](#) pays teachers to spend time during the summer embedded with member firms so they can learn about the industry and the many high-paying construction career opportunities available within it. **They noted that investing in teachers as if they were employees helps cultivate a strong pipeline from school to construction careers.**

Member firm The Boldt Company utilizes Wisconsin's Youth Apprenticeship program to **work with high school aged students to offer on the job work experiences** that count toward the students' high school credits. At the end of the youth apprenticeship program, the students participate in a signing day event where, much like with sports recruits, they publicly commit to a specific union apprenticeship program or to continue learning at a technical college or university. In Wisconsin, students are allowed to sign into apprenticeship with a union in their senior year once they have turned 18 and are on track to graduate.

Building on the Boldt example, many union construction firms report that it is essential to get **trade partner buy-in** on creating school-to-work opportunities. This requires union officials, and firms, to approach apprentice recruiting in a new way, but the extra work and challenge are worth it.

Many firms report they have been successful **working with schools to arrange project site tours for students**. This allows them to see first-hand what construction is like and the many different opportunities that exist within the industry. **They stressed that the month of March is a good time to organize these experiences since that is when students are looking for programs for the summer and enrolling in courses for the upcoming school year.**

Other firms are creating **opportunities for students to shadow workers in various jobs**, and they arrange for students to participate in career visits. These career visits are like a college visit, but instead of touring a campus and meeting with admissions staff, the students tour a construction firm and meet with potential future co-workers.

Some firms and AGC chapters noted they are leveraging their chapter connections with local public officials, particularly within school districts, to **conduct outreach events at schools** and to promote construction careers there. The AGC of California's [Build California](#) campaign and other chapters such as the Georgia AGC regularly organize events at schools.

Some firms noted that **skills competitions**, including [Skills USA](#), offer another great way to get students interested in construction opportunities. The firms work with local school districts to essentially sponsor a Skills USA team. This includes:

- helping coach the students
- arranging for their entry into the competition
- helping with related travel and competition logistics

**Firms that do this suggest having a well-defined MOU between the school and the company that articulates clear responsibilities and clear roles.**



## Sharing Experiences and Resources with Career and Technical (CTE) Education Programs

Participants noted that there are many ways to connect and support CTE programs. They added, however, that being successful requires dedication, persistence, collaboration, monetary investments and public understanding of the value and necessity of CTE education.

While the group agreed that although CTE education looks different in every state, there are common themes and challenges that include:

- limited funding
- lack of support
- disconnect between education and industry

---

There are many ways to connect and support career and technical education programs.

---



### New ideas discussed in this session

#### Use social media

Firms and AGC chapters should take advantage of social media to create and post content about the industry targeted to educators. Many social media platforms offer relatively low-cost opportunities to target content to specific audiences—including by location and profession. This is a great way to get content in front of the educators and counselors who will influence students' career choices.

#### Align CTE courses with core academic requirements

AGC chapters are in a good position to work with state education officials to ensure that the content of career and technical courses—particularly those focusing on construction—align with core academic requirements. For example, make sure that a class on basic carpentry offers enough exposure to math concepts to offer core credits to students. Not only will this make CTE programs more attractive to students, but it will also offer ways for non-traditional learners to earn credits on subjects where they might otherwise struggle.

#### Attend educator events

While it is important to invite educators to attend industry events, it is not realistic to expect many will have the time or interest to attend. Instead, chapter and member employees should prioritize attending educator events. This includes state and local school board meetings. Get involved as community representatives in local school parent/teacher organizations or school improvement programs and attend school functions. This will pay off with better connections into local schools and give the industry a 'seat at the table' when it comes to crafting school curriculums and influencing career counseling.



## Utilize teacher externships

Firms and AGC chapters should invest in teacher externships. These programs pay teachers to spend time, typically during the summer, working at construction firms. This exposes the educator to the many career opportunities within the industry and helps build a stronger, working bond between schools and the industry.

## Successful efforts shared in this session

**Create a construction impact fund that offers monetary incentives for teachers** with the goal of ensuring that students who are considering a construction career do not slip through the cracks because they can't afford key learning materials or equipment.

One AGC chapter created the **MathLab curriculum** that has proven successful in the three schools where the program has been implemented. The program teaches relevant math content by using real life applications and satisfies core class math requirements. As a result of the program, more students are choosing a construction pathway in the high schools where the program is in place.

Some educators report they are **moving away from 'traditional' classrooms**. Instead, they are evolving programs so they are engaging and relevant, which requires continuous realignment to address ever-changing industry dynamics. This creates opportunities for the industry to get involved to help support more **hands-on learning experiences** for students. This helps educators while providing students with greater exposure to construction career opportunities.

Educators also report they are **establishing micro schools**, essentially schools within a school to focus on specific pathways, including construction. These programs are formed through community evaluation, collaboration, and identified local needs. The structure of these schools is then designed based on student needs and is adjustable based on continuous evaluation. **Success requires partnerships with industry and identifying trade experts/professionals to serve as teachers/student mentors**, allowing the program to be very affordable as schools don't have to hire additional teachers. Industry participation ensures the most relevant content is being learned.

Other participants reported success with finding ways to **align educators and industry**. For example, they are working together to use the same vocabulary to talk about construction opportunities in the same way. They are also creating collaborative groups of educators and industry representatives to structure educational programs that will provide relevant construction skills and expose more students to the career opportunities available in the industry. No more making bird houses, but instead learning about what construction is really like.



## Meeting the Need for Apprenticeship Training

In this session, participants indicated that there is a trend among public and private sector owners to support or require that a certain percentage of the construction workforce be involved in a registered apprenticeship training program. They noted that the key to getting more people into these apprenticeship programs lies in:

- introducing them to the concept
- providing opportunities for them to explore the programs
- enrolling younger people in pre-apprenticeship programs

Participants also noted that apprenticeship offers a career roadmap and development plan—which employees are looking for. Apprenticeship also allows students to engage in applied learning, which can be a more successful way of learning and they earn while they learn. But they added that it is difficult to find instructors for apprenticeship programs. This is why they stressed the need for the industry to support union and open shop registered apprenticeship programs.

---

Apprenticeship offers a career roadmap and development plan—which employees are looking for.

---



## New ideas discussed in this session

### Employ construction instructors

Just like in schools, apprenticeship programs are having a hard time finding qualified instructors to hire. Firms can help by employing apprenticeship instructors to do some project work in addition to instruction. This will likely lead to better pay for the instructors and ensure that apprenticeship programs have sufficient capacity to produce needed workers.

### Create retirement pipeline through instruction

Due to the physical demands of the construction trades, some skilled craft workers may retire at an earlier age but are still interested in working. Recruiting these exiting workers to train the next generation of skilled workers for their trade is a way to identify instructors while providing a less physically demanding work option.

### Partner with community or technical colleges

Community and technical colleges already have much of the infrastructure and capability to serve as registered apprenticeship programs. Firms and AGC chapters should consider partnering with these institutions to create registered apprenticeship training programs that could provide the workers needed for the growing number of projects with registered apprenticeship participation rates.

## Create industry pre-apprenticeship programs

Firms and AGC chapters should consider establishing a broad focused construction pre-apprenticeship program. This program provides an exploration of construction and allow participants to determine what career path to follow after completing the program.

## Successful efforts shared in this session

Mortenson & Turner are working with Meta to build data centers and, at Meta's insistence, are **using the [Hardhats in Hand](#) pre-apprenticeship program**. New employees work for the general contractor for a four-week period. After completing that program, employees enter a registered apprenticeship in partnership with subcontractors to continue training and working on the job site. The intention is to build their career through training. Meta is investing in this to help build the pipeline because they have seen the impacts of labor shortages on their projects and appreciate that it is in their interest to help resolve it.

Some firms have been able to **tap into Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) federal funds** to support enrolling underrepresented populations in apprenticeship programs. It is important to note that WIOA funds are very outcome-based. As a result, there are a lot of rigors in tracking the success of these apprentices and reporting that back to the funding agency.

In heavily union Alaska, one local school district has **an agreement with union partners to lead an Introduction to the Trades program** in the spring. The school district recruits the kids, and the unions teach the class. Once the students complete the program, they are eligible to directly enter a union apprenticeship training program. **The retention rate within the apprenticeship of those students is above 90 percent.**



## Targeted Diversity: Strategies for Attracting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce

In this session, the group focused on outlining ways to attract and retain diverse workers, including women and minorities, particularly from traditionally under-represented communities.



### New idea discussed in this session

#### Obtaining driver's licenses and vehicles

One of the biggest recruiting challenges, particularly for traditionally underrepresented groups in the industry, is transportation to construction jobs sites. Work on projects typically starts before many public transportation systems begin operating in the morning. Being able to drive to work is essential. Firms should explore ways to help individuals secure their driver's license and look at ways to help get them access to vehicles. This could include:

- Connecting the employee to license recovery services
- Membership in a car share service
- Uber and Lyft subsidies
- Pay advances to cover car purchases

#### Successful efforts shared in this session

Firms that have been successful in recruiting diverse workers noted that they **show potential workers the clear value of a career at the firm**, including offering competitive wages and benefits. It was stressed that it was more important to show potential employees that there is a clear, well-defined, and available-to-every-successful-employee career path to advancement and leadership.

Firms also talked about the need to **deliver on that career path promise** to successfully retain diverse workers, including the role of creating a welcoming and inclusive culture.



Many firms, for example, are successful **using the instruction materials included in the [AGC Culture of Care](#) program** to do exactly that. While they urge other firms to take the Culture of Care pledge, they also emphasized the need to get buy-in on the program from job site leaders and supervisors. That is crucial because they are the ones who play the lead role in defining the culture at construction project sites.

**Training jobsite leaders on what a welcoming and inclusive culture means, identifying those that have demonstrated related behaviors, and seeking diversity in culture leaders is key.**

---

Firms that have been successful in recruiting diverse workers noted that they show potential workers the clear value of a career at the firm, including offering competitive wages and benefits.

---



## Re-entering the Civilian Workforce: the Veteran and Criminal Justice Opportunity

Participants stressed the importance of providing assessments for both populations—veterans and criminal justice-involved individuals—to assess their skill sets, instead of automatically placing them in entry-level positions. They added that there are multiple programs and resources within each community to support recruitment of veterans and people exiting the criminal justice system. Participants also emphasized that firms need to develop partnerships and be intentional in their recruiting for these two populations and, as important, intentional in their mentoring of both groups once hired.



### New ideas discussed in this session

#### Promote the “We” in construction

Veterans and criminal justice-involved individuals are looking for a team experience. This is because it is what they knew in the military and/or what they need coming out of prison. Firms and AGC chapters should create and distribute career marketing materials that highlight the team aspect of construction.

#### Understand the terminology

AGC chapters can work with veterans and criminal justice groups to prepare resource materials to help decode military resumes and appreciate prison-based professional development programs. Military and criminal justice terminology tends to be very different from what is used in construction, and it can be hard to decode resumes from individuals coming out of both systems. Creating these resources will help keep firms from missing out on qualified personnel because of different terminologies.

#### Prepare for both populations

Construction firms should offer training for current employees on how to work with and support new hires coming out of the military and the criminal justice system. This training could focus on creating the kind of culture that supports individuals from both systems, understanding their terminology, and identifying ways to support and mentor these new workers.

#### Create onsite mentors

Firms should also identify and prepare individuals to serve as dedicated mentors to new employees coming out of the military and/or criminal justice system. These mentors could also have come out of those systems. But the important thing is for these new hires to have someone they can count on to show them around, help them figure out the new workplace culture and be there for them to talk through challenges they may be having.

#### Partner with pre-release programs

Firms and AGC chapters should identify and partner with pre-release programs, particularly for individuals incarcerated at medium security prisons, to encourage those individuals to pursue careers in construction upon their release. These partnerships could include offering training opportunities and connecting them with members who are hiring. The partnership should also explore ways to overcome obstacles—like access to transportation, scheduled meetings with parole officers, as well as housing and equipment needs.

## Partner with veterans' placement programs

Firms and chapters can take advantage of programs like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's [Hiring our Heroes](#) and the North American Building Trades Unions' [Helmets to Hardhats](#) to help identify and recruit military members about to be discharged. These programs arrange career fairs at military bases for service men and women about to be discharged, have online job boards and offer resources to help decode military resumes.

## Recruit from the National Guard

Firms and AGC chapters should establish partnerships with local National Guard units. Many people involved in the Guard may be in lower wage or menial jobs and are trying to supplement their income while acquiring new career skills. Firms that can build inroads with the Guard will have an opportunity to recruit workers looking for better opportunities.

## Use the NCRC assessment tool

The [National Career Readiness Certificate](#) (NCRC) is a standardized test for working-aged individuals that assesses their current skill set and viability for certain careers. Firms and AGC chapters can work with the criminal justice system to have this assessment administered to soon-to-be released inmates, or even offer them to individuals applying for a position within the firm.

## Successful efforts shared in this session

The [AGC of New Mexico](#) has crafted a **5-day program they offer in a state penitentiary** that provides OSHA 10-hour training as well as a host of soft work skills instruction. The program works with prisoners who were nearing release. Once they are released and placed within construction firms, the chapter works with the parole officers to do meetings at the job site (discreetly) so the new workers would not have to drive away from the site mid-shift for required meetings.

The [Inland Northwest AGC](#) chapter is working with “justice-involved” individuals—people recently released from prison—to **offer construction training and placement into the industry**. The [Head Start to Construction Trades](#) program, which requires coordination with the parole and prison system as well as law enforcement officers, has successfully reduced the recidivism rate from 65 percent to 25 percent among individuals enrolled in the program.

Other AGC chapters and firms report they are **working with local juvenile detention centers**. They are going into the facilities and offering mock interviews and providing soft skills training for the incarcerated youth. They then work with them upon release to steer them into the appropriate craft training pathway with the goal of getting them into construction careers.

---

Firms need to develop partnerships and be intentional in their recruiting for these two populations and, as important, intentional in their mentoring of both groups once hired.

---



## Better Together: Partnerships that Support Workforce Initiatives

Workforce shortages are so profound that no single entity can solve the issue alone. This group discussed how finding ways to build partnerships between industry, educators and community groups is essential. Participants reported on several programs they have put in place that are helping break down local barriers and build programs to help address construction workforce shortages.



### New idea discussed in this session

#### Apply for workforce grants

It is important for firms and AGC chapters to understand their community partners and work with them to apply for workforce grant funding. They can then use this funding to build training programs and offer outreach to students, under-represented populations, and other target groups.

---

Workforce shortages are so profound that no single entity can solve the issue alone.

---

### Successful efforts shared in this session

San Diego created an **eco-system to break down silos** by bringing together education partners with industry and economic development councils and other city partners. Through this approach, students receive hands-on training during a day-long experience focusing on construction. The partnership is now focusing on inviting more teachers to come and see the day and have the “hands on” experience with the students.

In Michigan, the AGC chapter created **co-op programs in high schools** with union and non-union contractors to help students who are considering a construction career learn more about the industry. The co-op program brings all the trades and open shop groups to the table with a sole focus on helping students be more successful.

In Nevada the local AGC is **bringing together educators and the building trades to build programs** that expose more students to career opportunities in construction. These programs provide a clearer pathway for interested and qualified students to enroll in apprenticeship programs after graduating from high school. They also host “staff development days” where high school educators and career counselors are taken on a job-site tour to learn more about modern construction and get a better appreciation of what those career opportunities offer.

Florida and Georgia have **“adopt a school” programs** that are asking ‘what do you need and how can we do it?’ The industry can take advantage of these programs by adopting a school and working with the educators to craft programs that educate students while exposing them to career opportunities within the industry.

## II. Managing the Current Workforce

While actively working on creating new workers for the industry, construction firms are rising to the challenge of retaining and enhancing the current workforce. Firms are looking at new and innovative approaches to compensation and benefits, training and performance management.

In this section, we share highlights of breakout sessions related to:



Compensation and Benefit Strategies



The Importance of Craft Worker Development and Advancement



Recession Readiness and Maintaining Your Workforce





## Show Me the Money: Compensation and Benefit Strategies

In this breakout session participants suggested that giving people an opportunity to earn benefits, extending benefits to family, and understanding that employees are happier workers when their mental health and home life are prioritized is as vital as salary levels. They also stressed the importance of communicating the value of these more inclusive benefits packages to employees and prospective employees. And they added that young workers in particular are looking for a workplace culture that values health, family and outside of work activities as much, or oftentimes more than, total pay.



### New ideas discussed in this session

#### Use profit-sharing plans

Create a profit-sharing plan where executive team members hand-deliver profit sharing checks during team meetings. This creates an opportunity to remind workers they all have a vested interest in the success of the firm and provides a good way to recognize employees and their contributions. This will help with employee retention.

#### Address basic health needs on-site

Bringing basic health services like simple screening and scanning on-site for employees and employee spouses will encourage more employees to engage in preventive medical practices. This will also make it easier for them to take advantage of their health benefits and create a greater sense of loyalty to the firm.

#### Use referral insurance programs

Programs like Teledoc provide additional care and financial incentives for employees that stay with the company for a set time. This encourages retention.

#### Institute variable bonuses

Firms should consider utilizing a structured bonus program that is based on management level. These programs offer a bonus percentage range that is influenced by variables like job level, safety performance, and productivity.

#### Create performance issue teams

Create a system of experts on staff that can identify and remedy employee performance issues can keep people on track and feel cared about.

## Use exit interviews

Firms should conduct exit interviews with all departing employees to understand why they are leaving. They should use the feedback from these interviews to improve the workplace culture, change training programs and guide salary decisions.

## Consider incentives for exempt employees

Exempt employees earn a fixed salary, but when they are sent to the field and work longer hours to complete a project, they may get discouraged. Firms could consider offering exempt employees incentives for working in the field as a way to help retain key personnel.

---

It's important to communicate the value of benefits packages to both current and prospective employees.

---

## Successful efforts shared in this session

Many firms are preparing **employee-specific reports that itemize the total value of combined benefits offerings**, including total compensation, benefits, bonuses, etc. The report is not distributed during the annual performance review period, but instead it is sent as a mid-year reminder. These reports are not only given to employees, but also mailed to their families so they can also be aware of the many benefits of working at the firm.

Other firms report they are **awarding bonuses based on total company profitability** instead of per-project related bonuses. This breeds a greater sense of teamwork and avoids discouraging top performers that are needed on tougher projects from missing out on deserved bonuses.

Firms note that providing workers with **Paid Time Off (PTO)** is a great way to retain workers. They noted that PTO offers workers greater flexibility to cope with anything from a sick child to a planned vacation.

Firms that are **employee-owned** report they **see far greater buy-in** to the work of the firm because employees have a vested interest not just in the success of their specific projects, but in the success of the entire company. This gives them a leg up when it comes to employee retention.

Other firms report they have had much success with **strategically offered health benefits**, including offering a benefits package to the families of construction workers. This helps with employee retention by creating a greater sense of economic security within workers' families.



## **Climbing the Ladder: the Importance of Craft Worker Development and Advancement**

This breakout session focused on a variety of ways to enhance training opportunities for construction workers—to help retain them and provide opportunities for advancement. Sometimes that means creating new, in-house training programs. But some firms have found a way to partner with community and technical colleges to run the skills development programs through those institutions. Meanwhile, union construction firms are working with organized labor to expand training opportunities beyond apprenticeships, and to look at innovative ways to support continuing education. They are also embracing a model where people who complete an apprenticeship earn half of the credits required for an Associate Degree of Applied Science.



### **New ideas discussed in this session**

#### **Reverse mentoring**

Create opportunities for younger and/or more junior employees to mentor older or more senior employees. For example, these younger workers can teach about new technologies and techniques they use on the job site or approaches to collaborating with colleagues that the older workers may not be as familiar with. These are great opportunities to develop leadership and coaching skills among younger workers, boost confidence and learn new skills and techniques.

#### **Rain means train**

On days when the weather prohibits certain types of construction activities, instead of sending workers home, offer training opportunities. This allows the workers to stay engaged and acquire new skills and confidence. Learning these new skills will also make it easier for them to advance professionally.

#### **Mind the gap**

Firms should be intentional to create opportunities to build a solid relationship between field and office. This means finding ways to educate people who work in the field about what happens in the front office, and vice versa. This will help create a more cohesive team and could help field employees think through their preferred career paths.

#### **Unique training programs**

Firms should consider crafting unique training programs tailored to the goals and aspirations of individual workers. Much like a student selects their courses at college, firms could offer a la carte training opportunities that workers could select from based on their preferred interests and desired career path.

### Informational interview opportunities

Create multiple opportunities for workers at all levels to schedule information interviews with managers and leaders within the company. The point of these interviews is to learn about the work they are doing and better understand the culture and management of the firm. These conversations will help workers identify their preferred career path and feel more connected to the firm.

### Highlight craft professionals

Firms should explore ways to highlight specific craft individuals in their internal and external communications. It doesn't require much to do a quick write-up on someone but means a lot to most people to have their story told. Focusing on these craft professionals should help support worker retention as well.

### Use programs like Path to Pro

In addition to cultivating in-house talent, construction firms can also identify and recruit craft talent using a variety of job boards and postings, including the [Path to Pro](#) program developed by Home Depot.

### Offer a NextGen leadership program

Firms can establish a program for employees identified as future leaders and offer dedicated training for those individuals on a range of leadership and management approaches. This will provide these workers with essential leadership skills while giving them a sense that their work is appreciated and valued. The challenge is to establish systems to accurately identify potential future leaders.

### Leverage instructional coaches

Identify instruction coaches that can help coach individual employees on specific skills. Ideally these coaches will be a peer, not at the administrative or executive level. For example, a firm can take their best pipefitters and have them spend time coaching other pipefitters on various jobsites. This is a good way to cultivate future leaders, expand craft skills and keep people engaged.

## Successful efforts shared in this session

Meta requires a 4-week **craft worker development program**, [Hardhat in Hand](#), that uses the [NCCER](#) curriculum to help enhance the skills of the craft workers involved in the construction of the technology company's data centers and other facilities. The program, which was created in partnership with the construction firms involved in those projects, is designed to help those firms retain workers by giving them the skills needed to advance in their careers. The broader significance is that an owner is actively involved in construction workforce development as an expression of social responsibility.

Other firms stressed the need to create **in-house construction training** programs. In part, this is in response to the fact that many new employees lack construction skills. But it is also a way to help workers expand their range of skills and retain them through ongoing development opportunities.

Some firms are investing in **measures to boost craftworker pride**. This includes providing workers with clean, well-tailored uniforms and/or new PPE. They find this helps workers feel better about the work they do and have pride in the firm where they are working.

Some union construction firms talked about how they are **including funding for additional training opportunities in collective bargaining**. This could include requiring continuing education. In addition, some unions have already earned the U.S. Department of Education certification required to be able to confer college credits on students who complete their apprenticeship programs. These extra educational and degree programs help employees continue to develop their skills, making construction careers an easier sell with their family members because it is a means of continuing education.

[Caddell Construction](#) focuses their training efforts on three areas: **large-scale training, position-based training and crafting individual growth development plans**. The goal with these plans is to help workers find a position where they will want to be and then help them grow into that position. Once those plans are crafted, Caddell conducts regular check-ins to monitor employee growth and performance. They also use bench planning, in which they call supervisors about every six weeks and go over any struggles they are facing and decide what skills or instructions the firm can offer to help the supervisors (and the people they supervise) be more successful.

Breakout participants also discussed the value of **creating partnerships with community colleges** to craft worker development programs. Dr. Nate Barry talked about the partnerships the [Metropolitan Community College](#) CTE program has built in the Omaha area with the construction industry. Firms are working with the school to provide skills advancement training for their workers.

Similarly, Wilson Electric and Sundt Construction are working with [Central Arizona College](#) to create **a program where workers start their apprenticeship** using the NCCER program at CAC before getting hired and finishing their training in house at Sundt, Wilson or other participating programs.



## **Recession Readiness and Maintaining Your Workforce**

Participants in this conversation focused on how to prepare the workforce for a possible downturn through training and evaluation. They noted that better, more systemic employee evaluations make it easier for firms to identify and nurture successful talent. Identifying talent now will make it easier to select key personnel to retain during market downturns. Firms are also investing in training, including cross-training, to help retain talent and prepare them to shift into different roles based on market needs.



### **New ideas discussed in this session**

#### **Create tiered employment levels**

Firms should consider giving employees greater flexibility in the balance between pay and benefits. For example, employee A might want to receive their full benefits package with a slightly lower salary. Employee B would want some, but not all benefits and a slightly higher salary. And employee C would opt for a higher wage, but no benefits. This would allow employees to be compensated based on their life needs and might provide extra flexibility for firms as market conditions change. Employers should be sure such a tiered approach is allowable under all applicable labor and compensation laws in their regions and markets.

#### **Collaboration days**

Contractors should explore opportunities to bring together craft and office personnel for specific collaboration days. This would create mixed teams that work to identify solutions for in-office and field challenges. This gives firms a chance to see how workers handle different types of challenges and identify talent that can succeed in multiple roles.

#### **The people are the projects**

Employers should put as much priority in building strong leaders as they do in completing successful projects. Just as there are personnel dedicated to tracking the daily progress and accomplishments of various projects, firms should identify people who are responsible for tracking the accomplishments of their personnel, particularly those identified as strong performers and/or future leaders.

## Successful efforts shared in this session

Several firms noted they are **investing in cross-training key personnel**. They are doing this to prepare to shift them to different roles within their companies based on changes or reductions in demand for certain services. This prepares the company to retain key talent should economic conditions change significantly.

Other firms report they are becoming more sophisticated in their **performance management programs**, adopting measures like 360 and blind reviews. This allows them to collect better data to use when making succession planning decisions. They can be more systemic about identifying successful talent, instead of successful personalities. This allows them to retain and prepare the right personnel.

Firms are also changing the language in their performance review systems to **emphasize professional development**. Instead of talking about employee shortcomings, they are focusing on identifying professional goals and growth opportunities instead. Then, if they see misalignments in performance that are preventing the employee from reaching those goals, they can have a conversation in a better context.

Firms are also **using mentoring programs** to identify successful talent and make sure they are in roles that are a good “fit” for their skillsets. This allows the employee to be successful and helps the firm identify talent to retain during down markets.

---

Firms are investing in training, including cross-training, to help retain talent and to prepare them to shift into different roles based on market needs.

---



## III. Success Stories on Recruiting, Training and Retaining Talent

In addition to the nine breakout sessions, the Workforce Summit also included a series of brief presentations from successful programs that are working to recruit, train and retain the next generation of workers in innovative and exciting ways.

### More Than a Million Dollar Prize!

The [Harbor Freight Tools for Schools](#) program has been working to lift up and support high school skilled trades programs across the US. The program has a focus on teaching excellence and recognizes and awards teachers and schools each year.

### Closing the Workforce Gap: The Long Play

Allied Construction Industries' [Construction Career Advocacy Program \(CCAP\)](#) is a workforce development model that aligns construction industry employers, educators, and students. CCAP provides mutually beneficial solutions through applied learning and professional development workshops resulting in long-term and sustainable partnerships connecting classrooms to careers in construction.

### Build Montana: Connecting Students to Industry

[Build Montana](#) is a hands-on, experiential program created through a partnership of the Montana Contractors Association and the Montana Equipment Dealers Association. Focused on construction heavy equipment, Build Montana offers high school students the opportunity to learn about the operation and maintenance of machines used in the industry. The program currently uses curriculum from the John Deere University to teach subject matter and culminates with students getting real-time experience in operating heavy equipment. Local contractors and equipment dealers representing a variety of heavy equipment manufacturers, including John Deere, Caterpillar, and Volvo, have worked together to offer a learning experience that is unmatched by other industries. Build Montana has partnered with school districts in Billings, MT and Kalispell, MT, and will offer a program in Spring 2023 to schools in Missoula, MT.

### ACE Mentoring

[ACE Mentor Program of America](#) (ACE) is a free award-winning afterschool program designed to attract high school students into pursuing careers in the Architecture, Construction and Engineering industry, including skilled trades.

### Successful Workforce Development Strategies

Southland and [People Working Together](#) (PWT) created a successful partnership to hire new apprentices for their project in Sacramento, CA. Learn about specific steps they took to identify the right people and how they maintained success throughout the project.



## **AGC of Washington Foundation**

The Foundation developed [CORE PLUS Construction](#), an official Washington State program of study that allows high school students to explore careers in the construction industry. Students use hands-on learning to gain real-world skills and earn graduation credits.

## **Pima Joint Technical Education District**

The [Pima Joint Technical Education District program](#) demonstrates how AGC chapters and members can build a positive, successful working relationship with local public school CTE programs that increase the quality of education and provide better-prepared candidates for the industry.

## **The Boldt Company**

[Boldt](#) is investing in the next generation of workforce by establishing **youth apprenticeship opportunities on project sites**. Partnering with high schools has allowed Boldt to advocate for careers in construction, primarily in the trades. Signing Day has become a staple in the community which engages parents, teachers, mentors, and unions in celebrating the student commitment to enter into registered apprenticeship.

---

**The Associated General Contractors of America** works to ensure the continued success of the commercial construction industry by advocating for federal, state and local measures that support the industry; providing opportunities for firms to learn about ways to become more accomplished; and connecting them with the resources and individuals they need to be successful businesses and corporate citizens. Over 27,000 firms, including more than 6,500 of America's leading general contractors, nearly 9,000 specialty-contracting firms and almost 11,000 service providers and suppliers belong to the association through its nationwide network of chapters. Visit the AGC Web site at [www.agc.org](http://www.agc.org).

**Arcoro** is a rapidly growing SaaS company, offering proven modular HR solutions for construction and field-based industries. Our leading product suite and software platform offer end-to-end HR functionality to help drive business outcomes. With Arcoro's flexible solutions, customers select the modules that meet their needs for talent acquisition, talent management, core HR, benefits administration, time and attendance tracking and more. Learn more at [arcoro.com](http://arcoro.com).



Send a message to [workforce@agc.org](mailto:workforce@agc.org) for contact information about any of the workforce ideas listed in this report or to be added to the AGC of America Workforce eForum.

[workforce.agc.org](http://workforce.agc.org)