
Competency Models In Action:

Denver Project Uses Career Pathways to Prepare Workers for Transportation and Construction Sectors

September 2014

- Maximizing existing resources to prepare workers and meet employer needs
- Collaborating with key industry and community partners
- Creating a skilled workforce to meet area needs

Introduction

The Regional Workforce Initiative Now (WIN) project, funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration, is an innovative partnership led by Denver's Regional Transportation District (RTD) in collaboration with the Community College of Denver (CCD), Denver Transit Partners (DTP) and the Urban League of Metropolitan Denver.

WIN is implementing a series of career pathways in the transportation and infrastructure construction industries. To do this WIN utilizes two competency models from the U.S. Department of Labor, the Transportation, Distribution and Logistics and Commercial Construction Competency Models, along with resources from the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University.

"Our college is pleased to be partnering with RTD in preparing students and community members to attain and retain careers in transportation and infrastructure construction," says Dr. Everette Freeman, President, CCE. "For any community college, working directly with a major industry provider such as RTD results in a powerful workforce development tie for the college, its students and the community."

The Workforce Need

Unprecedented challenges in recruiting, training and retaining a sustainable workforce confront the transportation industry in Denver with the FasTracks expansion project. It is a comprehensive plan to build 122 miles of new commuter rail and light rail, 18 miles of bus rapid transit, 21,000 new parking spaces at light rail and bus stations, and to enhance city bus service in Denver. In partnership with local training and resource programs and the public workforce system, WIN advances participants' skills to prepare for trade, office, design and administrative positions on local infrastructure projects like FasTracks.¹

¹ Community College of Denver, <https://www.ccd.edu/org/workforce-initiative-now-win>

Approach

“We rely on existing resources that we can leverage and limit duplication,” says Katrina Wert, Director of Workforce Initiatives, CCD. “Our project is designed to capitalize on economic investment in the public transportation infrastructure. We leverage economic development with community resource development. It’s not only about providing training, but also creating jobs, including those for individuals such as women and people of color who have been traditionally underrepresented in the transportation and construction sectors. We develop the positions and we have skilled workers in the pipeline ready to be employed. “

Each of WIN’s founding partners plays a distinct role in the initiative. RTD, Colorado’s largest public transit network, provides overall program oversight. “There are many impacts resulting from community members participating in infrastructure projects,” says Phil Washington, RTD General Manager. “Participants earn a decent wage for their families which goes back to the local community. When you have people building their own communities with infrastructure projects, there is a lot of pride. The legacy of this project is providing the opportunity for a slice of the American dream.”

DTP, a joint venture of skilled engineering, construction and project management companies that are executing key transit projects, coordinates industry and employer perspectives on program operation. The Urban League of Metro Denver provides community outreach. CCD coordinates the WIN office, including WIN network training resources, and uses pathways models to build stackable certificate programs.

“WIN serves many types of people ranging from those just out of school to incumbent workers who need retraining or updated certifications,” says Ms. Wert. To accommodate these diverse needs, WIN utilizes a coordinated network of existing training and resource partners organized into three progressive tiers, which correlate with its career pathways.

- The public workforce system and local non-profit organizations provide *basic skills building*.
- Area community and technical colleges focus on *middle skills development*.
- A broad array of providers offers *professional skills advancement* including colleges and universities, registered apprenticeship programs, small businesses and trade associations.

To view WIN’s Competencies and Career Pathways for Transportation-Driver/Operator positions, Control + Click here <https://www.winforwork.org/gsipub/index.asp?docid=443>

Return on Investment

Since its inception in 2011, WIN has provided demand-driven workforce service to employers and connected work-ready local residents with high-quality employment opportunities in construction and transportation. Selected project accomplishments include:

- Family sustaining wages: Average starting hourly wage for WIN placements is \$16.25 (\$32,300 annually)

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- Increased retention: 93% of individuals placed by WIN are employed at the same company 90 days later
 - Skills development: Nearly 70% of WIN participants complete at least one industry-endorsed course or attain at least one industry-endorsed certification

Career advancement: On average, 15% of WIN participants advance to new positions within one year²

Next Steps

“Our focus is on sustainable workforce development,” says Ms. Wert. “We will continue to leverage existing resources independent of future grant funding. We foresee continuing significant growth in the construction and transportation sectors. Our job is to use our career pathways models to maintain a pipeline of skilled workers that will keep Denver competitive.”

Related Links

Workforce Initiative Now (WIN)

<http://www.winformwork.org>

Community College of Denver

<https://www.ccd.edu>

Regional Transportation District

<http://www.rtd-denver.com>

Denver Transit Partners

<http://www.denvertransitpartners.com>

Urban League of Metropolitan Denver

<http://www.denverurbanleague.org>

² Community College of Denver