

# Strategic Workforce Development

The Highway Construction Workforce Partnership (HCWP) brings together the highway industry and the workforce development community to identify, train, and place individuals into transportation careers.

## THE HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE CHALLENGE

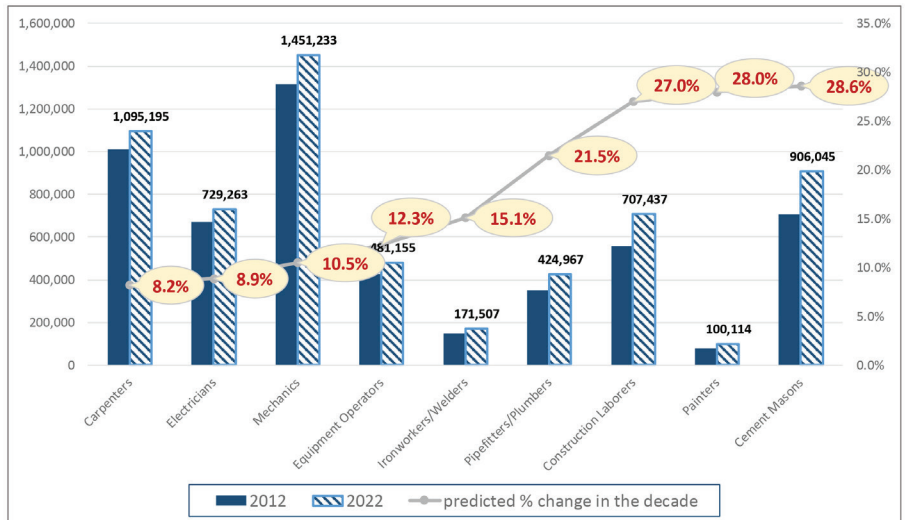
The demand for highway construction, maintenance, and operations workers is growing, while at the same time, emerging technologies require these workers to have new skills. The Highway Construction Workforce Partnership has developed new resources and innovative strategies for identifying, training, and placing individuals in the Contractors' Workforce filling the construction jobs that support the Nation's highway system.

State departments of transportation (DOTs), local public agencies, contractors' associations, and State/local workforce boards have to come together to develop the Contractors' Workforce to continue moving the Nation's highway infrastructure forward. According to Ken Simonson, the Associated General Contractors of America's (AGC) chief economist, labor shortages in the construction industry remain significant and widespread: "The best way to encourage continued economic growth, make it easier to rebuild aging infrastructure, and place more young adults into high-paying careers is to address construction workforces shortages."

A [2019 national survey](#) by AGC reports that 80 percent of construction firms have difficulty finding qualified workers to hire. A [2015 report](#) by the U.S. Departments of Transportation, Energy, and Labor estimated that the transportation sector will need to hire approximately 4.6 million workers between 2012 and 2022.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) partnered with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), AGC, the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), and the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) to establish the Highway Construction Workforce Partnership (HCWP) and conduct a 2-year HCWP Pilot Program.

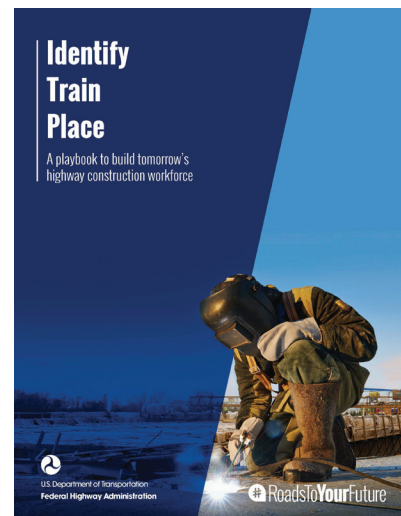
Working groups of highway and workforce system representatives came together in six cities and six States across the United States to leverage resources and share successful practices to identify, train, and place individuals into the Contractors' Workforce.



Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projected change in demand for skill sets.

## HCWP PLAYBOOK

An HCWP Playbook titled [Identify, Train, Place](#) was developed from the lessons learned from the pilot locations. The playbook is aimed at helping State and local agencies identify, train, and place workers in the Contractors' Workforce to meet resource needs to deliver highway construction jobs. It contains a set of eight simple, repeatable "plays" that others can use to fill highway construction jobs. The plays provide a framework for the Working Groups to effectively address the industry workforce challenge based on the experiences and lessons learned from the 12 HCWP Pilot locations.



In addition to the Playbook, FHWA and the HCWP partner organizations developed an HCWP outreach campaign called [Roads To Your Future](#) and the Roads To Your Future website. The website includes messaging and marketing materials that are free for anyone to download and use. Many of the materials can be customized with local information to market jobs and training to potential applicants. See RESOURCES.

## THE PLAYBOOK “PLAYS”

**Play 1 – Let Industry Lead Your Team:** Construction firms and their representative organizations, e.g. AGC and ARTBA, need to be actively involved, from identifying workforce needs to training and job placement.

**Play 2 – Organize Your Players for Success:** The most successful locations have the deepest bench. Recruit as far and wide as possible from potential partners to form the HCWP Working Group. At a minimum involve the contractor, State DOT, FHWA Division, and State and/or local workforce board representatives.

**Play 3 – Focus on Fundamentals:** Construction firms prefer to train workers to the specific trade skills of their jobs. Look to provide workers with basic job and life skills, including general math, oral and written communication skills, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10-hour course.

**Play 4 – Communicate the Value of Highway Construction Careers:** Not everyone appreciates that the highway industry has rewarding career opportunities. FHWA created a suite of free marketing materials that are available for download and can be customized. See RESOURCES.

**Play 5 – Find and Fill the Small Cracks:** Work with local community organizations beyond the transportation industry to provide support for prospective workers and for current workers who leave the workforce.

**Play 6 – Bring Community Colleges Into the Game:** Community and tribal colleges are well suited to address the workforce development needs of local highway construction companies and can help with training and job placement.

**Play 7 – Start With Proven Strategies:** Existing programs and products offer the quickest path to addressing local highway workforce development shortfalls. Someone, somewhere most likely has a training and education solution that can be replicated. The HCWP Playbook and website are good resources.



Source: USDOT/Getty

**Play 8 – Keep Your Eye on the Ball:** The HCWP will not be a short-term undertaking. Stay focused on the mission, maintain the commitment, and work with partners to sustain the effort.

## BENEFITS

- ▶ Gains support from the highway contractors for the promotion and growth of the programs
- ▶ Works with partners to help identify, train, and place workers into highway construction careers
- ▶ Connects to a National partnership of highway construction practitioners and resources
- ▶ Helps solve the Contractors' Workforce shortage problem, thus helping communities thrive while solving one of today's most persistent national transportation problems

## RESOURCES

- ▶ HCWP Playbook: [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovativeprograms/centers/workforce\\_dev/hcwp/playbook/](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovativeprograms/centers/workforce_dev/hcwp/playbook/)
- ▶ HCWP Roads To Your Future: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/RoadsToYourFuture>
- ▶ HCWP Marketing Materials: [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovativeprograms/centers/workforce\\_dev/hcwp/marketing\\_materials/default.aspx](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovativeprograms/centers/workforce_dev/hcwp/marketing_materials/default.aspx)



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