



Community Workforce Agreements to Provide Registered Apprenticeship Opportunities

The United States has utilized Community Workforce Agreements (CWAs) for decades in the construction industry, supporting equity in the most common sector for Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). CWAs are a proven and effective strategy to intentionally integrate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) into RAPs.

A CWA is a ‘Pre-Hire Agreement’ in which project owners and project contractors—often through labor unions—establish DEIA-related goals to ensure a construction project provides an equitable workplace. Various goals of CWAs can include Priority Hire for workers who are disadvantaged economically, safe worksite conditions, fair employee compensation, effective project execution, and transparent compliance and reporting protocols to resolve labor disputes without resorting to strikes and lockouts.

CWAs go beyond traditional agreements that establish the terms and conditions of employment for a specific construction project, taking the extra step to ensure that workers from populations that have been explicitly or implicitly excluded in family-sustaining professions benefit from capital construction investments in their communities. CWAs typically include community workforce goals that increase access to construction jobs for veterans, local residents, disadvantaged workers, and small businesses, allowing workers and contractors to participate in projects that expand the qualified local workforce while contributing to regional economies. As Registered Apprenticeship (RA) expands to nontraditional occupations, similar CWA policies are poised to be more widely adopted, which can help usher in an unprecedented focus on DEIA in the workplace.

Expanding RAPs Through CWAs

In designing a CWA, local policymakers set targets and goals for workforce diversity, typically intended to ensure that groups and communities who have been disadvantaged economically benefit from local capital construction investments. These benefits include access for local workers and contractors to engage in construction opportunities, which helps to expand the qualified local workforce.

Since CWAs can include provisions requiring a certain number of labor hours to be completed by apprentices, a predictable market is established for RAPs, thus supporting RA expansion. Additionally, including DEIA conditions in CWAs generates a demand for contractors to hire and retain diverse talent pools for job sites.

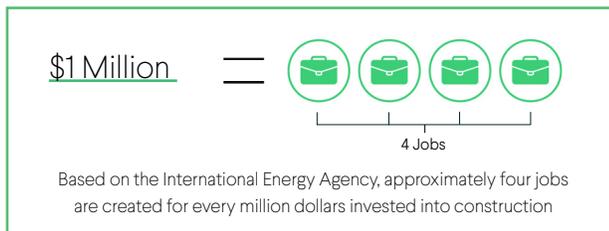
To seamlessly integrate skilled apprentices in construction projects while maintaining CWA standards, Job Readiness Programs (sometimes referred to as Pre-Apprenticeship Programs) are integral to developing an experienced pipeline of diverse worker pools. A quality Job Readiness Program helps prepare workers to meet entry-level requirements for RAPs and provides a pathway for candidates to transition into an RA upon program completion.

In many cases, RAPs partner with Job Readiness Programs to streamline the process of establishing a diverse group of workers to be trained and ready for construction job sites. Beyond individual projects covered by CWAs, this process creates a pipeline of skilled workers in the construction industry which helps contractors meet CWA requirements and provides equitable opportunities for candidates in traditionally underserved communities.



Key Metrics: CWAs in Federal Construction

In 2022, the federal government established an executive order (EO) highlighting CWA language on federal construction projects over \$35 million. This EO is expected to affect \$262 billion in federal construction contracting and improve job quality for nearly 200,000 workers.



Therefore, the establishment of the 2022 EO has the potential to create 262,000 jobs and 13,100 new career opportunities for apprentices.

Integrating CWA Elements Into RAPs

CWA-style provisions transform construction projects by advocating for DEIA efforts, apprenticeship, and local workforce engagement. As policymakers establish CWA priorities, several design elements, including Priority Hire, Stakeholder Education, Third-Party Administrator Utilization, and the Project Administration Committee, are critical in ensuring that a CWA sets and delivers DEIA goals succinctly and efficiently.

Priority Hire

Priority Hire refers to the process by which disadvantaged workers can access a family-

transforming career. A Priority Hire worker may be affected by one or multiple avenues of potential financial disadvantage, such as being a woman, a person of color, a person convicted of a crime, or residing in an economically distressed zip code. CWAs often include a provision that requires not only the use of Priority Hire workers but also sets goals for a certain percentage of project hours to be performed by Priority Hire workers.

Stakeholder Education

Uniting community stakeholders can prove challenging due to decades of distrust among various community groups, local governments, residents, and labor and community members. A CWA can typically provide jointly agreed goals that allow stakeholders to capture the value they seek while contributing jobs to the local economy. Through various mediums, business owners, labor organizations, communities, and workers should be properly informed of the benefits of a CWA, the criteria under which it will operate, and the roles they can each play in the process.

Third-Party Administrator Utilization

An essential component of a successful CWA is ensuring proactive compliance structures are managed from the onset. The managing can be done internally by the owner or public agency compliance division or supplemented through a competent Third-Party Administrator (TPA). A neutral TPA provides on-site monitoring to ensure that all parties adhere to the terms of the CWA. The TPA also helps contractors and subcontractors achieve the inclusion goals of the CWA.

Project Administration Committee (also referred to as the Joint Advisory Committee)

The Project Administration Committee (PAC) is a structure created within the CWA to facilitate a safe space to raise concerns and provide for dispute resolution that helps avoid costly external legal actions as a first step. The PAC meets regularly to discuss various items, such as the progress of the project, any site issues, and the inclusion of disadvantaged workers. The goal of the PAC meeting is to create a transparent review space for the project and prevent issues from escalating by ensuring that all parties are meeting the milestones and objectives.

Key Resources

Community Workforce Agreements in Practice

<https://online.flippingbook.com/view/296740794/>

Expanding DEIA Programs Through Registered Apprenticeship

<https://online.flippingbook.com/view/689242765/>

Priority Hire: Generating Value-Driven Workforce Design Protocols

<https://online.flippingbook.com/view/314681/>

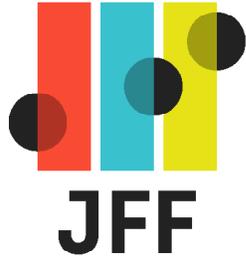
CWA Usage Moving Forward

As the power of CWAs becomes more widespread across the country, local and state governments should commit to promoting CWA usage for public construction projects to ensure equitable opportunities for the local workforce. Policymakers should also consider expanding

CWA-style provisions into public investments in other sectors to establish a diverse and equitable workforce for the local community. With state, local, and education procurement accounting for \$1.5 trillion per year, the combination of labor hours conducted by apprentices and hiring goals for populations underrepresented in RA has the power to create a broad market for equitable RAPs.

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