



## Building Idaho's Future

### A Comprehensive Review of Workforce Development Methods Employed in the Construction Field

As Idaho leads the nation in economic recovery, it has enjoyed the favorable position of continuing to post gains in the creation of new construction jobs. In fact, Idaho had the nation's highest monthly year-over-year gain in construction employment for most of the last two years. Recently the state's position in these rankings has slipped, not due to a lack of job creation, but due to a lack of qualified workers to fill the available positions. More and more it is becoming clear that the construction industry must focus on workforce development if it is to continue to prosper.

Workforce Development is an umbrella term housing many ideas; To the Idaho Associated General Contractors (AGC) it encompasses all efforts to encourage entry into the multiple career paths that make construction such a rewarding lifelong endeavor. Typically, our efforts have been divided into three areas: 1) attracting, training, and retaining entry level tradesmen in a wide range of crafts and functions; 2) promoting mid-range entry into the industry through four-year degrees in construction management; and, 3) developing the next generation of senior managers and executives to lead the industry for the next several decades.

This document will explore a number of strategies to address these pressing issues. First, it will examine prior efforts made by the Idaho AGC. Second, it will outline the work already being done in Idaho by the Idaho AGC's ever-growing circle of partnering organizations and how the Idaho AGC might participate in advancing these efforts. Third, it will catalogue projects and programs operated by the Idaho AGC's sister chapters elsewhere across the nation, many of which could be easily adapted to fit Idaho's needs. Following a short description of each idea is a paragraph outlining what level of resources are anticipated should the Idaho AGC determine to expand or implement the program described in Idaho.

#### **What is the Idaho AGC currently doing to address Workforce Development?**

**Scholarship.** In addition to promoting the academic scholarships made available through the AGC of America, the Idaho AGC (through its Education Foundation) offers an annual scholarship to students attending an Idaho institution of higher learning and enrolled in a construction related field of study (i.e., construction management, engineering, business, etc.). In an effort to ensure that scholarship recipients ended up joining the construction

workforce, the program was revitalized in 2014 to focus on returning students (juniors and seniors) instead of high school graduates. Up to three \$1,500 scholarships are available each year.

*No additional resources are required to continue this effort at its current level.*

**WeBuildIdaho.org.** After reviewing a wide range of workforce development offerings already available in the state, the Idaho AGC determined in 2015 that its first real effort should be a website that provided a single platform for those interested in exploring a career in the construction industry. It evaluated several possible platforms before hiring an Idaho based web developer to design, build, and host [www.WeBuildIdaho.org](http://www.WeBuildIdaho.org). The website provides information for potential students and those that help guide them (i.e., parents, educators, counselors, etc.) including the latest job trends and salary figures. It also provides direct links to a wide range of training opportunities all across the state. WeBuildIdaho.org also includes the state's only construction specific job board, a service operated by BirdDogHR that allows AGC member firms to post job openings for no charge.

Each year the Idaho AGC Education Foundation dedicates a significant portion of its limited resources to promoting WeBuildIdaho.org to educators, guidance counselors, and students. Each time AGC staff and members participate in such events the website experiences a significant spike in activity; however, there are not sufficient resources to make this an on-going, continuous effort.

*Continued operation of WeBuildIdaho.org requires around \$8,000 per year (\$6,000 for the job board and another \$2,000 for website hosting and maintenance).*

*The Idaho AGC Education Foundation dedicates around \$15,000 per year to promote WeBuildIdaho.org. In addition, the Idaho AGC dedicates significant staff time and covers all travel and other related expenses for the employees working on the project. It estimates that it would require an additional \$45,000 per year to conduct proper promotional efforts.*

**High School Outreach.** Over the past year, Idaho AGC staff has reached out to career technical instructors at schools across Idaho to identify areas of possible partnership. Many have responded and have needs that AGC member firms may be able to fulfill. These include serving on advisory panels, speaking with and mentoring students, and providing financial support.

In a limited number of cases, the Idaho AGC has been able to visit the school's construction program, provide a WeBuildIdaho.org sign for their workshop, and match them with an AGC member in an effort to launch an on-going relationship.

*While the outreach effort requires few financial resources, it is very time consuming. In order to continue this work and to expand it beyond just a few schools per year the Idaho AGC would require \$24,000 per year to fund a part-time, temporary position. Doing so would free up time for the Director of Education and Training which operates the outreach effort.*

**Supervisor Training Program (STP).** Starting in 2016, the Idaho AGC began offering courses from the AGC of America's Supervisor Training Program (STP), a certification program consisting of six courses covering communication, leadership, risk management, contracts, and other construction related topics. Each course is taught by a qualified instructor from an Idaho AGC member firm. STP is excellent training for those making the transition from laborer to supervisor or those who have been a supervisor but never received structured training on how to best accomplish the tasks associated with their position.

The first three courses have been offered in both Eastern and Western Idaho. Sessions for the remaining three courses were planned but were cancelled due to limited enrollment. The Idaho AGC is examining how to deliver the STP material online or through independent learning.

*Continuing STP training does not impose a financial burden on the Idaho AGC since each participating student pays tuition sufficient to cover the costs of conducting the training.*

**Apprenticeship Program.** When federal regulators required apprenticeship hours on all federally funded highway work, the Idaho AGC was successful in securing approval for an apprenticeship program focused on equipment operators and general laborers. The voluntary program operated for several years through the hard work of a handful of Idaho AGC member firms. Idaho AGC staff assisted in the coordination of training, hour tracking, and other program requirements.

Participation in the program dried up when the federal mandate on apprenticeship hours ended. Nevertheless, the Idaho AGC continues to maintain the required approvals to operate the program should the need arise to do so again in the future.

*Reinvigorating the apprenticeship program would require significant staff time and the dedication of a number of member firms.*

### **What are other partners already doing in Idaho to address workforce development?**

All across Idaho, public and private organizations are working to bridge the gap between high school graduation and a meaningful career. In the last year or two, many have realized that just pushing kids into college preparatory classes is insufficient and that students are better served by empowering them and their parents to make decisions that match student aptitude with available career choices. As a result, more and more school districts are refocusing on career technical education in the fields of medical services, mechanical and aircraft maintenance, and construction trades.

In the last year, the Idaho AGC has assumed a much more active role in the state's workforce development community. As a result, it has laid the groundwork for establishing meaningful partnerships with a wide range of organizations across the state.

**Inland Northwest AGC Apprenticeships.** The Inland Northwest chapter of the AGC has apprenticeship programs in carpenters, construction equipment operators, and construction laborers that are certified to operate in Idaho. The chapter employs a training director that operates the program, conducts much of the in-class training, and works with employers and employees to ensure proper documentation of training hours and other paperwork requirements. The program is open to contractors in either Idaho or Washington.

However, restrictions put into place by Washington state labor unions block the participation of Idaho AGC member firms and their employees in the program. Currently, Idaho AGC member firms who want to participate must also join the Inland Northwest chapter and pay the appropriate membership dues. The two chapters are currently discussing a proposal that would afford Idaho AGC members in Idaho's ten most northern counties free membership in the Inland Chapter. Should the two chapters reach an agreement, Idaho AGC members in Northern Idaho would be granted access to the apprenticeship program for no addition fee.

*There is no cost associated with the promotion of these apprenticeship opportunities.*

**Colleges and Universities.** Idaho's institutions of higher learning each provide programs connected to the construction industry, including the following offerings:

College of Western Idaho

- Construction Site Erosion Control
- Drafting
- Electrical Apprenticeship
- Flagging and Traffic Control
- HVAC Apprenticeship
- Plumbing Apprenticeship
- Programmable Logic Controls
- Welding
- Masonry Apprenticeship

Lewis-Clark State College

- HVAC-R Technology
- Welding Technology
- Engineering Technology
- Industrial Electronics Technology

North Idaho College

- Carpentry & Construction Tech
- HVAC
- Industrial Mechanical/Millwright
- Machining and CN Technology
- Welding Technology

Eastern Idaho Technical College

- Welding
- Machine Tool Technology
- Energy Systems Technician

College of Southern Idaho

- Electrical Apprenticeship
- Plumbing Apprenticeship
- Maintenance Apprenticeship
- Air Conditioning, Refrigeration & Heating Technology
- Cabinetry/Woodworking Tech
- Drafting Technology
- Welding Technology
- Automated Engineering Tech

Boise State University

- Construction Management
- Civil Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Materials Science & Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering

Idaho State University

- Drafting
- Electrical
- Machining
- Welding
- Surveying & Geomatics
- Engineering Technology

BYU Idaho

- Construction Management

University of Idaho

- Civil Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Materials Science & Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Nuclear Engineering

Northwest Lineman College

- Electrical Linesman

Each institution continues to seek support for their ongoing efforts and most have approached the Idaho AGC with requests to provide financial and/or promotional support.

In addition, these facilities might serve as excellent settings for career fairs focused on the construction trades.

*There is no cost directly associated with the continued promotional support of these activities. Requested financial support would need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.*

**Support of BSU Construction Management Department.** The Idaho AGC and its Education Foundation have long histories of supporting the CM department at BSU and the AGC Student Chapter located there. The Idaho AGC currently manages the finances of both the student chapter and department's advisory board. In addition, it provides regular financial support.

In early 2017, the Idaho AGC met with several local advertising firms to design a possible campaign to attract additional students to the department. Through this process it was learned that it would be possible to develop and conduct a successful 18-month recruitment campaign focused on students already on campus but unhappy with their current major, students without a declared major, entering freshmen, and graduating high school seniors. The campaign would focus on events and media most commonly used by the target populations with the goal of doubling the number of students enrolled in the program.

*In the past, both the Idaho AGC and its Education Foundation has spent between \$2,000 and \$5,000 annually in support of the BSU Construction Management department and/or the AGC Student Chapter at BSU. This is likely to continue with no additional resources.*

*It is estimated to cost between \$35,000 and \$45,000 to fully develop and operate the student enrollment campaign.*

**Idaho Department of Corrections.** Recently, the Department has launched an effort to provide skills training to inmates in an effort to provide them a path to employment upon release. Inmates who are being prepared to reenter the community receive skills training in carpentry, cabinetry, masonry, drywall, or painting. The Department then works with interested employers to place the trained worker as they complete their time in custody.

*The Idaho AGC could play a more expanded role in helping the Department place graduates with AGC member firms. Doing so would require a small commitment of staff time.*

**Skills USA.** As part of a larger, national effort, Idaho hosts an annual competition for students enrolled in CTE courses from across the state. The Idaho event currently includes competitions in over 90 areas of study from carpentry to video game design and just about everything in between. After successfully completing a skills demonstration at their school, students participate in the statewide event at locations around the Treasure Valley (a few areas of study also hold events in Twin Falls and Lewiston). Winners of the statewide competition have the opportunity to compete at the national event in Louisville, KY each spring.

The Idaho AGC has long supported this effort and has increased its support significantly over the past three years. In each of the past two year's, the Idaho AGC and the Idaho AGC Education Foundation each donated \$500 towards the statewide competition. In addition, Idaho AGC Director of Training and Education Kristy Watson currently serves as a member of the Idaho Skills USA Board of Directors.

*Opportunities to expand the Idaho AGC's participation in this activity range from investing additional time to recruit employees from AGC member firms to serve as judges to providing increased financial support. Doing so would require additional staff time. In addition, the program would welcome any additional financial support the Idaho AGC or its Education Foundation could provide.*

### **What are other AGC chapters doing to address workforce development?**

Most AGC chapters operate a scholarship program similar to that offered by the Idaho AGC. In addition, many have active apprenticeship programs that cover a wide range of fields.

Likewise, most AGC chapters have launched a website focused on workforce recruitment. These range in scope and sophistication. Several employ the BirdDogHR job board platform used by WeBuildIdaho.org. Others are built on the Build Your Future or Build America platforms. These platforms offer turnkey operations to chapters. While the Build America platform is focused solely on the website, Build Your Future also includes a full-scale public relations and outreach effort. Chapters pay an average of \$50,000 annually for a Build America website and over \$500,000 annually for the Build Your Future campaign.

A number of AGC chapters (including Colorado and Wyoming in the West) operate craft training centers that provide hands-on training and certification in a number of trades.

Most were established years ago and use tuition dollars to support their ongoing operations. Others are jointly operated by the AGC and a union apprenticeship program.

Several AGC chapters operate charter schools focused on the construction trades. While many chapters host career fairs, two (California and Iowa) have different approaches as outlined below.

Other activities currently being offered by other AGC chapters include:

**Alaska Construction Academies.** In 2006, the AGC of Alaska partnered with the Anchorage Home Builders Association, Anchorage School District, Alaska Works Partnership, Inc., Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and Cook Inlet Tribal Council to create a program to provide construction skill training to both high school students and adults. They used existing facilities and instructors in the Anchorage School District's King Career Center to provide instruction during the day to students and in the evenings and weekends to adults. AGC and the other partners promoted the academy and covered the costs the first year.

Since its adoption, the program has gained support from the State Legislature which now funds academies in six different locations across the state. All are housed in school facilities and adult enrollment is free. Courses include:

- Blueprint Reading
- Construction Math
- Sheetrock Installation & Taping
- Gas Metal Arc Welding
- Ironwork & Welding
- Electrical Pre-Apprenticeship
- Pipefitting Pre-Apprenticeship
- Carpentry
- Ironwork & Welding
- Weatherization Tech
- Framing

*While it is unlikely that the Idaho AGC would have the financial means to sponsor a program similar to the Alaska Construction Academies, it could work with the Idaho Division of Career Technical Education and local schools to examine the possibility of state funding for a similar program across Idaho. Several facilities suitable for such an effort already exist and some are already offering adult education courses. More than likely they would be open to having a partner like the Idaho AGC pursue additional funding for these programs. Doing so will require a significant amount of staff time, but no additional resources.*

**California Construction Career Awareness Day.** The AGC of California uses grant funds from CalTrans and sponsorship dollars to host multiple events across the state that share information on union and non-union apprenticeship programs and other training opportunities. Each event is hosted by a general contractor at their main location, an active job site, or other facility. Displays are set up in a tented area where training providers operate tables and demonstrations while hands-on activities are set up in a separate area. In some locations, the events have been expanded to include adults.

The AGC of California prides itself in that these are “not just another career fair” but a “hands on opportunity unlike any other.”

The AGC of Missouri conducts a similar event, called its “Construction Career Expo” at the fairgrounds outside St. Louis. Special focus is given to ensure that the event is a hands-on learning experience unlike a traditional career fair.

*In order to launch such an effort here in Idaho, the Idaho AGC would require \$24,000 per year to fund a part-time, temporary position. Doing so would free up time for the Director of Education and Training to explore the possibility of conducting such an event. Several Idaho AGC service and supply members have the resources and locations available to host an event that could prove to be a meaningful experience for students to attend. Likewise, the Idaho AGC has existing partnerships that could be leveraged to bring additional volunteers and resources to the table.*

*Beyond the extra staff time to organize the event, the Idaho AGC would require an estimated \$25,000 in additional resources to fund the event itself. Along with additional resources from other sponsors, these funds would help cover the costs of transporting the students to the location, provide a t-shirt or other keepsake, and the other costs associated with hosting a superior event.*

**Colorado Construction Careers Now.** The two AGC chapters in Colorado partner with a local technical college to offer a four week Introduction to Construction Careers course. At the conclusion of the month-long program, enrollees participate in a hiring fair where AGC member companies who are actively looking to hire are introduced to the students. Many companies conduct interviews on site and even offer positions right at the hiring fair.

Over the course of the four weeks, 16 classes are held on Monday through Thursday evenings. The course is offered eight times a year (starting in January and running through October). Topics covered include:

- Opportunities and Career Paths
- Construction Terminology
- Equipment and Power Tools
- Construction Math
- Safety
- Blueprint Reading
- Concrete Foundations
- Framing
- Drywall Installation
- Leadership Skills
- Work Ethic
- Time Management
- Communication
- Interview Skills
- Computer Skills

It costs nothing for students to enroll. Course costs are paid by a grant from the Colorado Department of Labor. The required private match for the grant is generated by AGC members paying a fee to participate in the hiring fair.

*The Colorado AGC chapters created this program after first successfully lobbying the state legislature to fund the grants that fund the program’s operation. A similar effort could be*



*launched in Idaho. Doing so would require a significant investment of staff time and effort as well as coordination between our local technical and community colleges.*

**Colorado Construction Leadership Academy.** The AGC chapters in Colorado have launched a very successful leadership academy patterned after the one conducted in Idaho several years ago. Their version capitalizes on the expertise located within the regional FMI office in Denver by using FMI consultants to organize and teach the week-long course. Training runs from Sunday evening through Friday evening and is paid for through a \$5,000 per enrollee tuition (non-AGC members pay a higher fee to participate). The AGC chapters promote the academy and help with its scheduling.

*The Idaho AGC Education Foundation has examined partnering with Boise State University's School of Business to conduct similar training in Idaho. After much discussion, it was determined that the course was too costly to pursue at the time. This challenge could be overcome if the Foundation had resources sufficient to subsidize the tuition. Doing so would require approximately \$15,000 annually.*

**Georgia Adopt a School.** The AGC of Georgia matches AGC member firms with career technical program instructors at middle and high schools located nearby. The AGC members agree to serve on the school's CTE advisory board, provides mentoring to individual students, visits the classrooms and shops to provide hands-on experiences, and sometimes donates resources. The AGC documents all these activities and shares them across the construction community. Doing so helps ensure that member firms are recognized for their effort and helps recruit new volunteers.

The AGC of New York has a similar program in which representatives from AGC member firms not only assist the instructor, but also lead the class in a simulated construction experience in which students play the roles of owner, GC, subcontractor, engineer, architect, etc.

*While the outreach effort requires few financial resources, it is very time consuming. In order to expand its effort to the levels experienced in Georgia, the Idaho AGC would require \$24,000 per year to fund a part-time, temporary position. Doing so would free up time for the Director of Education and Training to expand her efforts.*

**Iowa Construction Week.** The AGC chapter in Iowa began hosting construction career fairs years ago. In the last few years, they have concentrated these efforts into a single week in order to gain more attention and press coverage. During this week-long effort, individual AGC member firms visit local schools and plan worker appreciation events to draw attention to the need for additional workers. The AGC provides companies with well developed resources and step-by-step best practice instructions to ensure event success. It also documents the activities to help generate press coverage.

*While the outreach effort requires few financial resources, it is very time consuming. To organize such an event here, the Idaho AGC would require \$24,000 per year to fund a part-*

*time, temporary position. Doing so would free up time for the Director of Education and Training to operate the effort.*

**Oregon Education Externships.** The Oregon Columbia AGC Chapter launched its educator externship program in 2016 with 10 high school teachers. The program was expanded in 2017 to include 30 educators from high schools and middle schools from across the state.

Over a two week period, educators learn about the career opportunities available in construction and the education and other skills required. Participants learn how the construction industry operates, receive basic safety information, tour job sites, and visit the CM department at Oregon State University. In addition, they spend three days job shadowing construction professionals: a company owner who covers bidding and budgets; a project manager who covers scheduling and subcontracting; and a skilled worker who covers the hands-on aspects of the industry.

Participants receive a stipend as well as travel and lodging costs for the two weeks. In addition, each receives continuing education credits from the Oregon Department of Education. At the conclusion of the externship, they are required to produce a lesson plan that draws upon what they have learned.

*In order to launch such an effort here in Idaho, the Idaho AGC would require \$24,000 per year to fund a part-time, temporary position. Doing so would free up time for the Director of Education and Training to explore the possibility of coordinating such an activity.*

*Beyond the extra staff time to organize the effort, the Idaho AGC would require an estimated \$25,000 in additional resources to fund the event itself. This would cover the direct costs of ten educators as well as meals and other items necessary to host the event.*

**Kentucky Boy Scout Badge Day.** The AGC of Western Kentucky hosts an annual opportunity to assist scouts in earning merit badges in construction related fields such as architecture, engineering, computer-aided drafting, electrical, welding, and others. The AGC organizes volunteers to provide demonstrations and mentoring. Events are held at AGC member firm locations as well as training centers at local high schools.

*While the outreach effort requires few financial resources, it is very time consuming. In order to do so here, the Idaho AGC would require \$24,000 per year to fund a part-time, temporary position. Doing so would free up time for the Director of Education and Training to organize the effort.*

**Washington Lemonheads.** The Inland Northwest AGC chapter in Spokane operates a summer employment program for 16- and 17-year olds dubbed “lemonheads” because of the yellow hardhats the students wear. Normally, students this age are barred from working on construction sites. However, the lemonhead program operates through a federally recognized Student to Registered Apprenticeship Program (STRAP) that extends eligibility to younger participants provided that they are employed in low risk positions (i.e., they cannot operate heavy equipment or perform labor intensive tasks).

The AGC chapter provides basic skills and safety training and then places students with member firms where they perform work in the areas of delivery, cleaning, or assisting project managers.

*Creating a program like this in Idaho would require a great deal of effort and would begin with contacting the state and federal Departments of Labor. Should they agree to pursue such an effort, the Idaho AGC would then need to make application for STRAP certification – a time consuming process in itself. Once certified, the Idaho AGC would need to partner with local schools to identify students and AGC member firms to identify opportunities.*

*While the direct costs are few, the commitment of staff time would require significant resources and some time to implement.*

### **Identifying Next Steps**

It's obvious that there are many worthwhile efforts to be considered. What is not so easily identified is a clear path forward that employs limited available resources for the most return. In an effort to prioritize the industry's efforts, the Idaho AGC Education Foundation's Board of Directors reviewed the multiple programs and opportunities included above and identified the following next steps. Each is listed in order of priority and includes a cost estimate and benefits.

**#1 Proposal: Expand the current part-time, temporary position at the Idaho AGC to a full-time, temporary position.**

**Cost: \$24,000 annually**

Adding additional staff resources at the Idaho AGC office will allow the Director of Training and Education to focus more fully on the association's workforce development efforts. The temporary employee would be responsible for reproduction of training material, managing the calendar for the association's training center, and other routine tasks that currently occupy a significant portion of the Director's schedule. It is anticipated that the Director would then have more time available to continue the scholarship program, expand outreach to high schools, participate in career fairs and other WeBuildIdaho.org outreach efforts, expand partnerships, and capitalize on other opportunities as they arise.

#2 Proposal: XXX

Costs: xxx

Explanation

#3 Proposal: xxx

Costs: xxx

Explanation

#4 Proposal: XXX  
Costs: xxx

Explanation

#5 Proposal: xxx  
Costs: xxx

Explanation

#6 Proposal: XXX  
Costs: xxx

Explanation

#7 Proposal: xxx  
Costs: xxx

Explanation

#8 Proposal: XXX  
Costs: xxx

Explanation

#9 Proposal: xxx  
Costs: xxx

Explanation