



**IDAHO AGC**  
THE CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION



WEST CENTRAL MOUNTAINS  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
Valley County • Cascade • Donnelly • McCall • Meadows Valley

## CONSTRUCTION AND TRADES PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PLAYBOOK

This playbook was developed by the West Central Mountains Economic Development Council under contract with the Idaho Associated General Contracts (AGC) and was funded by a grant from the Idaho Workforce Development Council. It is intended to be used for informational purposes only. Please contact the Idaho AGC for more information or assistance in implementing the processes outlined in the playbook.

**Challenge:** Labor markets are strapped amid a tight housing market and limited interest in many skilled sectors.

**Solution:** Lower the barrier to entry for lifelong learners of all ages in sectors vital to the local and state economy through lean, effective training platforms that get people work-ready quickly, efficiently, and effectively. Pre-apprenticeship bridges the intellectual and structural gaps between the mindset of today's labor force labor and industry's retention, attrition and resource concerns. Once the processes outlined in this playbook produce meaningful outcomes, it can be utilized to establish full registered apprenticeship, internship, or related programming that will expand upon the opportunities for both employers and employees. The end goal: **RECRUIT TO RETAIN.**

This playbook illustrates a flexible framework for how to:

- Set up a training and recruitment team (collaborative) in smaller, rural environments where resources are limited
- Build a lean recruitment and training program that makes sense to local businesses
- Utilize existing infrastructure to create efficiencies in program delivery
- Establish internal and external partnerships that will add value to the end product
- Deliver a meaningful program structure/outcome that gets people to work, with an eye on retention

The goal of this playbook is to ensure any community in Idaho can take the resources they have, no matter how limited, and produce a program at any scale that makes good sense to local industry partners. This playbook is oriented toward the construction industry, however the methods can be used for most sectors. The outcomes and specific processes for each individual community or region will look a little different, based on available resources, partners and time frames. You should feel free to adapt the processes outlined in this playbook to meet your community's local needs. We hope that you will share any successes you have in doing so with the Idaho AGC so that they can be shared with others.

**Before you begin:**

Questions to start with for the lead organization:

- Why us?
- Who are key local, regional, and statewide stakeholders?
- What is the problem (root cause) and how can it be solved with existing resources?
- What innovation could we bring to the table to solve the challenge or add value?
- In a perfect world, what does success in this effort look like?
- What should the common goals of partners be?

Asking these questions will help you frame the initial scope of your effort, and help you to articulate why partners might be interested in coming to the table for an initial meeting. It is also important to reflect on why your organization is leading this initiative, and explore who might be able to add value to your leadership team.

# Step 1: Setting up the team

You'll need partners to make your program a success. Whether your team is founded in the public sector, private sector or not-for-profit sector, there are many potential partners who can come to the table to ensure you are successful.

We recommend calling an initial meeting with the following groups, as available, to do a brain dump and sort through possibilities and potential program needs. We recommend offering lunch and keeping the meeting to not more than 90 minutes to demonstrate respect for everyone's time:

- Local businesses who have communicated their labor supply shortage
- Local chambers of commerce
- University of Idaho Extension Office
- Idaho Workforce Development Council
- Local/regional Idaho Dept. of Labor delegates
- Local school districts (leadership as well as guidance counselors and teachers)
- City government
- County government
- Local facilities teams
- Idaho Dept. Commerce
- Regional workforce training centers: CSI, CWI, EIC, ISU, LCSC, NIC

## ***Some key questions to explore at this initial meeting include:***

- Why are you here today? This should generally be because there is a labor shortage and they want to see more and better workforce options, but listen carefully to other important reasons WHY everyone is at the table to ensure you capture their needs and opportunities and can add value to their participation.
- IMPORTANT: If the labor deficiency is in a low-or-non-skilled space, what are the wage realities for these positions? The pre-apprenticeship model is typically more oriented toward skilled position recruitment and training, so vetting "good fit" on the front end will save time and ensure you have the right partners at the table.
- Industry-specific questions:
  - What skills and characteristics are critical for a worker's first day on the job? Articulate what hard and soft skills are imperative to the program's success.  
EXAMPLES:
    - Plan reading
    - Worksite safety
    - Hard working
    - Shows up on time
    - Willing to learn
    - Basic ability to operate power tools
  - What local facilities could be available for low or no cost for a training program?  
EXAMPLES:
    - Community centers

- Libraries
  - Local lumber yards
  - Public meeting space(s)
- Who's missing from the discussion? EXAMPLES:
  - Other contractors
  - Other training providers
  - Other talent pipeline advocates
- What existing training models do you utilize and why? EXAMPLES:
  - OSHA 10-card
  - Basic first aid
  - CPR
  - Penn Foster
  - Local workforce training center (CSI, CWI, EIC, ISU, LCSC, NIC)
- When is the best time of year to train/recruit talent and what times of year are not optimal? In some communities in Idaho, there is a very short building season or other factors that need to be accounted for.
- Are you or someone from your team available to teach a class session? This will generally be one or two evenings for a couple of hours in total.
- Are you able to share in the costs of the program to help make it free or low cost for participants?
- How long should the pre-apprenticeship program be so that industry partners, employee candidates, training partners, and other stakeholders will remain engaged and see the outcomes they aspire to? We generally recommend keeping your initial program to 4-6 weeks in total length.
- Generally, what days of the week and what time of day works best for everyone to offer training sessions?
- What is the maximum cohort size where we can be effective and meet the immediate need for partners?
- Do you offer employment to people under the age of 18, and what are the conditions of that employment? In some cases, employers cannot employ minors, which is important to account for early in the process. If minors are to be accounted for in your program, you may need to add special insurance, parental consent, and instructor oversight and training to ensure they are kept safe and to ensure you are following state and federal laws. We advise consulting an HR professional or attorney as you work through your program design.

# Step 2: Build the program

Now that you know what you're building, why you're building it, for who, where and when, you can get to work assembling a pre-apprenticeship program that meets the needs of the group. Try to keep it focused, functional and make sure it accounts for the needs of training partners, students, industry partners, and recruitment partners. REMEMBER: people have very short attention spans. Less is often more.

## ***Identify a time frame for your program:***

EXAMPLE: 30 day window, meeting Thursdays from 4-6pm, starting April 28th. For construction and trades, consider kicking off your program using the Idaho State University Construction Combine--a mobile two day event where students can learn high level skills and explore if a career in the trades is something they want to explore. More information:

<https://constructioncombine.org/>

***Soft skills:*** Soft skills are critical to all sectors. Identify a way to build in soft skills training for each session. Spend 15-20 minutes in each session talking through a key component of soft skills development that will be important as students head into the workforce. You may have someone local who specializes in soft skills training, or you may want to reach out to a third party resource.

## ***Lock in trainers:***

Using the example above, you would schedule the Construction Combine through Idaho State University as your kick-off, and go through their process for working with a local lumber yard and partners at the Idaho National Guard. This stand alone effort will require some planning, so set aside plenty of time to coordinate with them directly. From there, identify which industry partners should teach which segments of the corresponding training. A sample calendar is illustrated below for reference:

- April 28-29 Construction Combine done by Idaho State University locally
- May 6th 4-6pm: Workplace safety, etiquette, and PPE (Jane's Plumbing)
- May 13th 4-6pm: Hard skills, plan reading, power tools, material handling, and measurements (John's Custom Homes)
- May 20th 4-6:30pm: Work readiness, spatial awareness, earn your way up, resume writing and GRADUATION (Jack's General Contracting + Idaho Dept. of Labor local office)
- OSHA 10 card (independent study online through workforce training center or similar)
- Basic First Aid & CPR (independent study or schedule through a local hospital or fire district)

## ***Lock in training locations:***

Schedule the optimal facilities for each session. This can include anything from a local library to a school district classroom to an active job site. **IMPORTANT:** Send out calendar invitations to all partners once the trainer and location is set.

### **Curriculum development:**

Now that you have a calendar set, locations identified, and trainers in place, put them to task to develop a one-page syllabus for their session. This is their opportunity to advocate for the outcome they want to see from the pre-apprenticeship.

- Using the example above, if Jane's plumbing is teaching workplace safety, professional etiquette and personal protective equipment (PPE) use, have Jane or one of her employees spell out what they will cover during their session. Have them include the following components in their syllabus:
  - Location
  - Time
  - Staff allocated to the training
  - Introductions
  - Overview of why their topic is critical to the industry
  - Breakdown of session deliverables and any prerequisites or important guiding principles. EXAMPLE:
    - Workplace safety
      - OSHA overview (touch on the 10-card components and what to expect)
      - Insurance considerations
      - Working on teams in small spaces
      - Avoiding injuries
      - Best practices
    - Professional etiquette
      - Sexual harassment
      - Conflict management
      - Working with customers
      - Professionalism
      - Timeliness
    - PPE
      - Why we use PPE
      - PPE used in our industry
      - Proper use of gear
      - Proper handling of materials
- Have partners build similar syllabi for all sessions.

### **Budgeting:**

You will need to build a strawman budget for your program to ensure you can cover costs through either partnership contributions or through charging a nominal fee for the program. Charging too much can be a deterrent for some students but charging nothing can also lead to lower engagement and attendance issues. Work with your partners to determine the right "skin in the game" ratio, based on local needs and student/audience economic metrics. Major costs to account for include:

- Facilities: these can usually be reserved for free, but some may require a fee

- Material costs: in some cases (like with the Construction Combine) you may have significant costs for lumber and materials.
- Swag (tee shirts, hats, stickers, etc.): some industry and training partners may have some minor costs associated with offering swag to attendees, but these are typically optional, and the cost should usually be born by the partner.
- Trainer costs: we advise offering your industry trainers a modest stipend for their time and effort. You can also offer to cover their travel expenses, if appropriate.
- Third party certifications: account for the core training costs up front and identify the right training partner for these kinds of items (online offerings can save significant costs).

EXAMPLES:

- OSHA 10 card
- CPR
- Basic First Aid
- Meals: if offering longer training windows, you may want to consider building in a line item for lunches, cookies, drinks, etc.
- Staff time: account for the time and effort the lead organization will need to put into setting up a collaborative and pre-apprenticeship model.
- Partner costs: you may need to account for additional travel/hotels/per diem if partners have travel or ancillary costs.
- Surveys: we recommend performing a pre and post survey with students. Some survey software is free (Google, Survey Monkey) and some have associated costs (Qualtrics)

# Step 3: Registration & marketing

With your schedule, budget, curriculum and team in place, it's time to hit the ground running on recruitment and marketing. Your first step is to set up a registration process that is seamless and easy to use. We recommend setting up a web page that accounts for what the program is, when, how much and where. Include some easy to deploy talking points so partners can readily communicate the program's value to numerous audiences. Registration can be as easy as sending an email in (for no-cost programs) or you can integrate a point of sale and formal registration process into the mix. EXAMPLES:

- <https://wcmcdc.org/lets-get-building/>
- <https://wcmcdc.org/lets-get-cooking-2-0-an-introduction-to-the-culinary-arts/>

Marketing your program is critical to its success. This is where your partners should play an important role. If industry partners have some “green” or new candidates in the field, they can send them to the training to get them work-ready. Other partners can perform external and internal recruitment using your registration page as the basis for their outreach. EXAMPLES:

- School districts sharing the opportunity with seniors and recently graduated students
- Local Dept. of Labor team sharing with clients looking to upskill
- Underemployed workers from other sectors looking to make more money and learn a new trade
- Local economic development partners, cities, chambers of commerce and counties should share through numerous channels to reach a wide audience:
  - Email drip campaigns
  - Social media
  - Word of mouth
  - Newsletters
  - Local newspaper and radio

In the highly competitive job market, it is important to be thoughtful about how you will differentiate your recruitment effort from other sectors. We recommend pulling together a strategic recruitment meeting with local marketing and HR professionals to discuss how to reach the most appropriate audience in an effective manner. Timing of messaging, type of messaging and platform should all be well thought out as you develop a ‘block and tackle’ marketing plan that works for your community.

You can also put out a challenge for sponsorships and fundraising around this effort, where appropriate. We also recommend setting up a rough communication strategy and calendar that will take you from recruitment into deployment. EXAMPLE:

- March 1: initial call for recruitment and marketing push (through above channels)
- March 7: second push/reminder
- March 14: notification of closing of registration date and available spaces
- March 21: first email out to registrants with additional program information and program expectations



- March 22: reminder email and phone calls to all training partners to ensure they have what they need and are all set for deployment
- March 28: close registration and send out pre-survey to registrants
  - Pre-post surveys: be sure to ask students what they expect to learn from the program on the front end, and what worked and what didn't on the back end.

# Step 4: Deployment

It's time to put all of your hard work into motion. By now you have all of your partners and processes set up, and a cohort has been recruited. If utilizing the Construction Combine, you'll need to make time with your team to prep for the event. If not, make sure you have frequent and thoughtful communication with all partners to ensure they have what they need to offer a great training session. Some critical items to account for as you deploy include:

- Order lunches, snacks and meals ahead of time
- Verify facility offerings and instructor needs, including audio/visual equipment, internet passwords, etc.
- Schedule time to ensure all logistics are covered and in place
- Deploy your communication plan with both partners and students
- Order materials and supplies well ahead of time
- Closely monitor your registrations and engagement to be sure you cover your program needs for day one

You've done the work to prepare a great training program. Now it's time to let the partnerships and schedule deliver the product. We recommend having one or two staff or partners available for each session to ensure the training partners are well supported and to troubleshoot any potential issues.

Some "OTHER" items you might want to include in your planning and deployment:

- Graduation ceremony
- Micro job fair after program completion to connect partner employers/trainers with candidates
- Printable certificate of completion that is locally or regionally recognized and includes the a la carte training items (like OSHA 10 card, CPR, first aid, etc.)

# Step 5: Wrap up and post mortem

You and your partners have delivered a high quality local program that has led to industry labor force enhancement, recruitment and placement. Most importantly, you have proven a platform for communication at the sector level, locally and have proven that with partnerships and planning, you can create a high quality program with limited resources. Be sure to capture the feelings of students (and partners) through some post surveys:

- Ask students whether the program met their needs and expectations
- Ask partners whether the program met their needs and expectations

The goal of pre-apprenticeship is to bridge the gap between more robust training programs and the “green” or unskilled workforce. Your program should be positioned to be expanded upon, based on industry feedback. Shortly after completion of your program, set up some time for your regional Dept. of Labor delegates to spend some time with your industry partners to explore setting up a full apprenticeship program where recruits can expand upon their training and employers can further retain and train their best employees. This ensures a long term return on their initial investment and can lead to additional/expanded opportunities for your sector team. Your state and local partners will be happy to see tracking of these metrics, and the value of your program can be expanded through full registered apprenticeship, internship, and externship programming in the long term.

## **CONCLUSION:**

We thank you for your time and consideration. We hope this playbook has offered some value for you and wish you well on your workforce development journey.

**Appendix A:** Pre-apprenticeship modeling video from our partners at UI Valley County Extension (Culinary): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D\\_c-kHekINY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_c-kHekINY)