



INNOVATION / TECHNOLOGY DEPLOYMENT SUMMARY

ConnectU2Jobs Highway Construction Workforce Partnership Program

CHALLENGE

Texas boasts the largest transportation network among all states, with a staggering 314,000 miles of roads and 55,000 state bridges. To maintain the quality of the roads until 2040, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) estimates a cost of \$547 billion. However, despite the vast amount of work to be done, the Associated General Contractors' 2022 survey found that 91% of construction firms struggle to find suitable workers to hire. Primary contributing factors include the current high level of job mobility, competitive labor market, and the continuing growth of the highway market. As a solution, the Civil Rights Division has developed the ConnectU2Jobs (CU2J) program, an innovative response to this pressing labor issue faced by TxDOT prime contractors and subcontractors.

SOLUTION

Through the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) Highway Construction Workforce Partnership program, TxDOT's CU2J program builds local strategic partnerships to educate and train the next generation of heavy highway construction workers. The program offers Texas' population access to technical training and consistent, high-paying employment in the highway construction industry. Increasing the knowledge and skills of this workforce will result in higher quality projects that are completed on budget and on time. TxDOT currently administers CU2J programs in Dallas, Tarrant, and Brazos Counties. This customized approach creates a model for identifying and engaging locally-sourced, effective, wraparound services targeted to underrepresented communities to support development of structured career pathways for a trained workforce.

PROACTIVE APPROACH

The CU2J program enables TxDOT to create a model of transportation industry career pathways that can be replicated across all districts in the state. These career pathways lead to opportunities for attracting and retaining a skilled workforce of the future that will build safe roads in Texas for years to come.

TxDOT GOALS



Deliver the right projects



Focus on the customer



Foster stewardship



Optimize system performance



Preserve our assets



Promote safety



Value our employees



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BENEFITS

Investing in and developing a highly skilled workforce provides significant benefits to stakeholders and taxpayers, including:

- Increasing the skilled workforce available to meet infrastructure and transportation industry needs.
- Helping to drive down project costs and completion timelines.
- Ensuring employers have direct input on the training and curriculum that participants receive to meet the skilled workforce needs in local communities across Texas.
- On-the-job-training (OJT) goal credit earned for employers that provide paid on-site training hours.
- Promoting positive engagement with communities by supporting underserved, under-represented Texans, including youth impacted by the criminal justice system, helping them to become successful members of local economies.

KEY TASKS

- **Collaborate and Recruit** - TxDOT and employers collaborate with CU2J partners — FHWA, Texas Asphalt Paving Association, Associated General Contractors, Texas Workforce Commission, Dallas College, Tarrant County College, Blinn College, Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas, Lone Star Justice Alliance, Regional Black Contractors Association, Regional Hispanic Contractors Association, and others — to recruit, train, and certify candidates for job readiness.
- **Provide Earn-While-You-Learn Training** - Employer partners provide on-the-job training opportunities for work-ready participants to earn region-specific certifications while gaining real-time job site experience.
- **Retain Graduates** - Participants have the opportunity to earn full-time employment with TxDOT's employer partners.
- **Continue Upskilling the Workforce** - Employer partners can continue to upskill their workforce through TxDOT's OJT and OJT Supportive Services (OJTSS) programs.

DATA SOURCES

- Texas Comptroller [Fiscal Notes - A Review of the Texas Economy: Transportation Infrastructure, Keeping Texas Moving](#): Texas has nearly 314,000 miles of roads and highways, more than any other state.
- [TxDOT Pocket Facts - FY22](#): Texas has about 28,000 more bridges than any other state.
- Associated General Contractors of America [2022 Construction Outlook National Survey Results](#): Staffing and recruitment challenges.

Resources

[ConnectU2Jobs Program \(txdot.gov\)](#)

[ConnectU2Jobs Program Employer Partnerships \(txdot.gov\)](#)

[ConnectU2Jobs Employer Handbook \(PDF\)](#)

[ConnectU2Jobs Trainee Handbook \(PDF\)](#)

[On-the-Job-Training Program \(txdot.gov\)](#)

Contact

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ConnectU2Jobs Highway Construction Workforce Partnership Program

ConnectU2Jobs graduation ceremony, January 2023, Dallas, TX.



CU2J graduate Isaiah Gipson signs on to work for Austin Bridge and Road (AB&R). Also appearing (from left to right): TxDOT workforce development analyst Kim Hunziker, AB&R director of HR Cathy Rodriguez, and Abraham Galicia of AB&R talent acquisition.



From left to right: Megan Dere, FHWA Civil Rights specialist; Joshua Smith; Isaiah Gipson; Devorje Mayes; Keyanauna Utsey; Clarence Ofield; Amahjai Presley; Edward Ofori, deputy division administrator, FHWA Texas Division.



From left to right: Kim Hunziker, TxDOT; Kent Andersen, Workforce Solutions Greater Dallas; Pyeper Wilkins, Dallas College; Isaiah Gipson; Joshua Smith; Devorje Mayes; Keyanauna Utsey; Clarence Ofield; and Amahjai Preseley.