



Fund our future

Local leaders can create good jobs through apprenticeship readiness

Amanda K. Woodrum

American Rescue Plan Act funds can support community-labor training partnerships and help secure Bipartisan Infrastructure Law resources.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) [guidance from the U.S. Treasury Department](#)* recognizes that the nation will best recover from the pandemic by strengthening the middle class and ensuring that new opportunities for high-quality jobs include those who often face discrimination in the labor market — especially people with low incomes, and Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people. Support for apprenticeship-readiness programs created by community-labor partnerships and serving people or communities that were “disproportionately impacted” by the pandemic are “presumed eligible” ARPA expenditures for state and local governments. ([See definition](#) of “disproportionately impacted” and list of “presumed eligible” ARPA services.) In turn, the creation or expansion of community-labor training partnerships can help state and local governments secure competitive grants from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Successful apprenticeship readiness programs help knock down barriers to employment by connecting participants to on-the-job training opportunities, classroom stipends, child care, transit passes, uniforms and work boots, certificates for qualified employment, and more.

Communities can increase their likelihood for securing competitive grants from the BIL by creating pathways for disadvantaged workers into good union jobs.

Federal infrastructure funds must be used to create good union jobs, generate opportunities for disadvantaged and underserved communities, advance climate resiliency and sustainability, and invest in domestic manufacturing. This is how [communities can maximize the benefits from public dollars](#). To accomplish these ends, the Biden administration is encouraging state and local governments to implement policies in conjunction with federally funded infrastructure projects designed to:

- Create good union jobs (i.e., use project labor agreements, best-value contracting, responsible bidder requirements).
- Target job opportunities to impacted workers and communities left behind.
- Ensure successful implementation, tracking, reporting and accountability.

* If you are reading a hard copy of this document, visit policymattersohio.org/fed-funds for a digital version with live hyperlinks to all source materials.



Fund our future

Local leaders can create good jobs through apprenticeship readiness

For federally funded infrastructure projects, state and local governments can create a first-source referral system that prioritizes applications from disadvantaged workers and communities for job opportunities created through this legislation. They can require 20% of work hours be completed by apprentices in registered apprenticeships or apprenticeship readiness programs, with at least half of those work hours completed by workers from disadvantaged communities. To leverage ARPA funds in this way, disadvantaged communities should be defined using ARPA guidelines for those “[disproportionately impacted](#)” by the pandemic.

For more information on best practices, see our report [Maximizing Value: Ensuring community benefits from federal climate infrastructure package](#). It includes the following spotlight on Building Futures, a community-labor training partnership that builds on-ramps to career pathways in the building trades for disadvantaged communities. Nearly all of the graduates from this apprenticeship readiness program go on to secure well-paid jobs in the trades or other meaningful opportunities.

Building Futures

Quality pre-apprenticeship program

The Building Futures Program is an apprenticeship readiness program run as a partnership among Ohio’s Franklin County, the Columbus/Central Ohio Building and Construction Trades Council, and the Columbus Urban League. The program runs for 12 weeks. It is designed to help people from low-income backgrounds secure jobs in the building trades that will pay livable wages and benefits. The program includes not only the development of trade skills, but also life skills such as financial literacy. Participants alternate between classroom learning and on-the-job training. After completion, participants can join an affiliated trade which includes bricklayers, carpenters, cement masons, drywall finishers, electricians, and other occupations in the construction trades.

The program includes:

- **Recruiting, screening, pre-testing.** Recruitment efforts target women, Black, Latinx, Indigenous people, and other groups that are often excluded. The community-based organizations involved were purposely selected to help the project do so.
- **Credit and non-credit classroom programming,** beginning with basic skills remediation (four weeks), such as life/employability skills, basic math, reading, and writing designed to prepare participants for the rigors of apprenticeship exams. Remedial training is followed by basic skills development, including technical core skills, employment skills, and more math/English, and basic skills enhancement (four weeks), which includes workplace preparation, basic skills for the construction industry, OSHA safety training, and college math.
- **Trade-specific paid internship.**
- **Supplemental services.** The vast majority of participants receive supplemental services such as transportation, child care, dependent care, emergency housing, work clothing or uniforms, licensing or testing fees, medical and health care support services, needs-related payments, stipends, and case management.
- **Apprenticeship program placement for graduates.**

Source: <https://columbusconstruction.org/building-futures/>