



January 20, 2023

Senator Michael Dembrow  
Senate Committee On Education  
900 Court St NE, S-311  
Salem, OR, 97301

Dear Senator Dembrow and Committee Members:

I feel blessed to lead an organization—Constructing Hope Pre-Apprenticeship Program—that is building economic equity for low-income Oregonians. Constructing Hope's mission is to rebuild the lives of people in our community by encouraging self-sufficiency through skills training and education in the construction industry. Today, I am writing to express my gratitude for Oregon Community Summer Grant funding in 2022.

Constructing Hope is proud to put unemployed and underemployed Oregonians to work. Last year, we graduated 42 community members and placed 42 graduates in new careers with an average starting wage of \$23.51. Graduates were 60% people of color, 64% returning citizens (coming from incarceration), and 100% entering low-income. Graduates entered careers as carpenters, cement mason/bricklayers, electricians, heavy equipment operators, HVAC technicians, insulators, laborers, and sheet metal workers.

Through our summer youth program, young people gain inspiration and experience to complete high school, develop a viable and rewarding career path, and—for those 18 and older—the opportunity to seek continued training in the skilled construction trades. This program offers a pathway to sustainable employment for young people from low-income homes, those who may have experienced early life encounters with law enforcement, and students who may not complete a college degree. Along with State of Oregon support, we were proud to leverage City of Portland funding for a \$15/hr youth training wage, in-kind partner support for program delivery, and charitable foundation grants for program expenses.

We are immensely grateful for your support, and it is my hope that these efforts will be supported in the future. We also appreciate OAESD and OregonASK being great partners to guide us through the funding process. Please find our 2022 summer youth program report attached.

Sincerely,

Pat Daniels  
Executive Director

# Constructing Hope

## Building Opportunity: Construction Trades Summer Youth Program

### 2022 Report



July 11 – August 12, 2022  
Portland, Oregon

**Constructing Hope is pleased to report a successful summer youth program for 2022.** Your support has enabled 14 low-income youth—predominantly youth of color—to discover and explore pathways to sustainable, rewarding careers in the skilled construction trades. The young people in our program were exposed to new experiences, engaged in hands-on skill building, and bonded as a team with their peers. We had fewer youth than expected because post-Covid recruiting turned out to be more challenging than anticipated, but our youth still had a great experience.



### **2022 Summer Program Activities**

The summer program was held at the Northwest College of Construction (NWCC) and included field trips and hands-on skill-building experiences with NWCC leading the first three weeks of training. In weeks four and five, The Blueprint Foundation worked with the Oregon Solar Energy Education Fund (OSEEF) and Earth Advantage to teach solar installation, green construction, and home energy efficiency. Constructing Hope staff led or co-led activities for all five weeks, providing continuity and culturally specific and culturally responsive programming.

Throughout the five weeks, site visits provided firsthand experiences in construction and construction culture. The young people received an introduction to construction math (for example, calculating the number of linear feet of lumber needed for a project) and blueprint reading, and had the opportunity to select materials for specific applications.

A typical day in the five-week program began at Constructing Hope at 8:00 am, followed by transportation to the NWCC site and breakfast together. In addition to receiving a daily bus ticket for transportation to and from Constructing Hope the next day, this was a good opportunity for team building among the young people and exploration of individual goals. Training began each day with the distribution of safety gear. Each participant received



work boots provided by Constructing Hope and personal protective equipment. Students also received a hot lunch daily.

Our program combined classroom training with visits to job sites and facilities where students could experience the technologies, techniques, and concepts they were learning about firsthand. We taught important safety skills and proper tool usage as a basic foundation for what the youth would be doing throughout the program. The



youth then practiced their skills, starting with small individual projects and working up to a six-sided gazebo. All students experienced hands-on learning in carpentry, welding, masonry, sheet metal, heavy equipment operation, light equipment operation, pipe laying, first aid/CPR training and certification, and plan reading and layout. Most students had never used a drill, hammer, or even a screwdriver before, and by the end of camp they all were proficient with ten-plus tools.



We kicked off the first day with scissor lifts and articulating boom lifts (“light equipment”) that the students operated at heights up to 20 feet. We set up targets in trees in the parking lots which students had to retrieve. Students were excited, taking selfies, etc. After the light equipment activity, we introduced the five week program. On the second day, each student operated an excavator—picking up and removing a large steel plate, then rigging the bucket to remove gravel from the trench, and finally putting the plate back in place. They learned how to operate a moving compactor, and then basic tools like hand saws, speed square, cat’s paw, and hammer. Students who had some experience with hand tools acted as peer instructors. Day three focused on sheet metal. Each student built a small metal box and learned how to use a tack welder. They then learned tools like the electric drill, electric impact gun, circular saws, and chop saws in the wood shop. On day five students, practiced masonry by building brick walls, and they practiced tile setting by designing their own images on a plywood backer. On the fifth day, they learned plan reading in conjunction with onsite tiny house construction.

The second week began with welding including practice with the oxyacetylene torch and the MIG welder followed by rough framing instruction. With the framing practice, students created the structure for a six-sided gazebo. Students then built on their learning to date by designing their own wall with a door and window. Students worked in six teams to design and build the walls. They then assemble their walls into the gazebo. This was followed by CPR and first aid instruction and a “hammer time” hammering competition. Students who didn’t want to compete designed the competition and acted as judges.



In week three, students continued work on the gazebo. They framed in roof rafters coming up from their walls. Then they hung drywall on each side and used mud and tape. They learned basic rigging, basic electrical wiring and problem solving. Also in week three, NWCC led a field trip to see the Freewell Building under construction in Slabtown. The general contractor on the job was R&H Construction. The group discussed and saw examples of structural concrete, rebar, GPS mapping technology,

what it looks like to build a mockup of an elevation, applications called Bluebeam and PlanGrid (blueprint/ construction software), and window testing. The last day of week three was big party!

Weeks four and five explored green construction and energy efficiency. The Blueprint Foundation introduced our students to green building practices and how green building techniques can improve residential construction, including learning about weatherization, standard construction shortcomings, climate change, and the impact of energy efficiency on the planet. Students learned firsthand about high performance new construction and existing home retrofit practices.

We took students on field trips to learn about solar installations. With Portland Rescue Mission, they saw solar panels at a home for women and children. They got to meet with engineers who were onsite inspecting the panels, ask career questions, and see the panels up close. At Sun Bridge Solar in Vancouver, Washington they learned about solar installations and saw what happens in a simulated blackout.

We also made a trip where students could suit up in hazmat gear to learn about insulation and home energy efficiency. This gave the participants experience in confined spaces working solo or in groups.

The final field trip was to Bonneville Dam where students about learned renewable energy production, opportunities for positive environmental impact with hydropower, and careers in sustainable energy.

Participants built a solar panel charger made of recyclable items that can they can use to recharge their cell phones. They did the wiring including an LED that shows charging status. The project provided transferrable skills for electricians or HVAC, not just for solar installers. The students were so excited that some even skipped breakfast to finish their project—and breakfast is usually a popular activity!

### **Training Wages**

This year, we were thrilled to secure City Of Portland support for youth training wages of \$15/hour, so each participant could earn up to \$450 per week during the five-week program. In past years, grant funds helped us pay a stipend of \$100 per week.

### **Who We Served**

Our 14 summer program participants were 100% low-income youth, ranging in age from 16 to 19. The program is open to all races and ethnicities, but we were successful in recruiting youth of color: this year, our participants were 47% Black, 20% multiracial, 13% Latinx, 13% White, and 7% Native American. Two young women, one non-binary youth, and 11 young men participated. Nine students completed the program.

Students were recruited through high schools; faith communities; Self Enhancement, Inc.; Urban League; Oregon Youth Authority; Magnolia I & II affordably housing; Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO); IRCO Africa House; Portland Public Schools Delayed Expulsion School Counseling Center; Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA); and Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center.

## Outcomes

We are proud that over the history of the summer program, all youth program graduates have either gone on to complete the next year of high school or, if over the age of 18, pursued training in the skilled construction trades.

We measured progress through the following outcomes:

- **Number of Students Served:** 14 participants enrolled in the program. Recruitment was unexpectedly challenging post-Covid. Other organizations told us that there were a large number of summer programs this year, but not all youth were participating. We expect that next year we will again reach our goal of enrolling 25 students.
- **Program Completion:** Of the 14 students who entered the program, 9 completed the five weeks, representing a 60% completion rate. This was lower than our target of 80%, but we believe there are many positive factors that will help boost program completion back up to our target next year.
- **Low Income Participation:** 100%. (Met target of 100%).
- **Minority Participation:** 87% of participants were youth of color. (Exceeded target of 80%).
- **Career Awareness:** 100% of graduates demonstrated increased awareness of construction industry careers and pathways, including green construction. (Met target of 100%).
- **Education and Career Attainment:** 100% of graduates either enrolled in the next year of high school or entered a construction training program—specifically, all graduates enrolled in high school. This year was unusual in that no youth immediately enrolled in pre-apprenticeship or apprenticeship training, but that was because we had younger students this year (Met target of 90%-100%).

We have been impressed by the professionalism and positive attitudes the young men and women have brought to their experiences at Constructing Hope. We teach the students to treat the summer program like



they would a job, so they learn to stay in contact, letting us know, for example, if they will be late or unable to attend on a certain day. They are building skills, positive habits, and accountability that will be important in the workforce.

### **Student Feedback**

Here's what students told us about the program:

*I have constructed walls, worked with sheet metal, had time to work with welding, etc. I learned how to prioritize time and etiquette. What I learned about myself was that I can do things even though they seem tough in the moment. There's many times where I second guessed myself and the staff motivated me to do it. I learned that the heat is not for me...so I would go into the sheet metal HVAC trade. It seems a lot simpler and less outside environmental factors. The teachers said that they need workers. My favorite thing about the camp was creating a wall and leveling it to make an octagonal shaped house. I would recommend it. I actually did try to get someone in, but they were busy. I love the staff here. They're amazing.*  
- Cesar



*My favorite thing about this camp was to be unique in the designs. We had a lot of ways to express our creativity. Throughout this program, I learned how to do a variety of things, including operating machinery such as scissor lifts or skill saws as well as how to deconstruct buildings...and lay bricks. I really enjoyed the welding metal and sheet paneling using drywall. I would definitely do this again, and I think my friends would enjoy it too.*  
- Brooke

*On the first day, I learned how to drive and operate Light Equipment. I learned how to work hand tool and remove and place nails. I've learned that I need to wake up early and have a sleep schedule. My favorite thing about camp was the nail tournament. I would want to go to construction...because I want to work hands on with hand tools.*  
- Damaree

### **Lessons Learned**

Each year we look for a learning lesson, and this year it was about continuity. We had a staff change at the middle of the camp, and this interfered with staying in touch with case manager and counselors at referring organizations.

Strategically, the summer program is having a positive impact on recruitment for our adult program. As word of mouth from summer program participants has spread information about Constructing Hope, we continue to see an increase in 18- to 19-year-olds contacting Constructing Hope to ask if they can go directly into our adult program—even if they have not had the chance to attend the summer youth program.

## **Summary**

In a time of increasing income disparities, decreasing funding for vocational training, and a shortage of skilled construction workers, “Building Opportunity: Construction Trades Summer Youth Program” addressed community needs and workplace opportunities. The program effectively introduced low-income youth to attainable, sustainable careers and career pathways in the skilled construction trades.