FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can Community Works help me begin a career in construction?

Community Works is a 6-week adult workforce training program offered in Springfield and Holyoke to prepare qualified applicants for an apprenticeship in the building trades - the pathway to a rewarding career in construction.

Through Career Readiness and Occupational Skills Training, with classroom and hands-on learning experiences, Community Works will provide you with the knowledge and skills you need to apply for and enter into a state-registered Building Trades apprenticeship program. You will also receive coordinated case management and placement services to help you achieve your career goals.

Why should I explore a career in construction?

Many people think that the only way to a lifelong successful career is by going to college, sitting in a cubicle five days a week and moving up the office ladder.

But that’s just not true. Joining the building and construction trades can bring you a lifetime of economic security and satisfaction — with more action and hands-on experience than an office job. If you enjoy working with your hands, being part of a team, and building something you can be proud of, the building trades are for you.

There are many different options for careers in union construction and not every position keeps you on the job site. You can rise through the ranks to become a union business manager or business owner, which puts you in charge of hundreds of people and projects with budgets ranging into the millions. Whether you want to work with your hands or work in the corner office, the union construction industry has a career path for you.

What is a building trades apprenticeship?

No matter where you want to go you have to start at the beginning — the apprenticeship. Unlike any other program of its kind, the union apprenticeship allows you to earn while you learn. First-year union apprentices earn approximately the same amount most college students’ pay for a year’s tuition.

Once you become an apprentice, you work and attend classroom training. The classroom training provides you the entry-level skills you need to get started. You also work under a skilled journey-level crafts person on the job, learning to become the very best in your craft.

With more than 23 trades to choose from, and 32 apprenticeship programs across Massachusetts, there is sure to be one that interests you. And, with a little help from us and LOTS of dedication from you, you will be on path to a rewarding career in construction.

How much does Community Works cost?

There is no cost for you to participate in Community Works. In fact, participants will receive a free set of work boots and will be provided safety gear for shop classes. But there are a few limitations:

- Space is limited to no more than 20 participants
- You must be qualified to participate.
- Classes are taught in English

When and where do classes take place?

There are two Community Works training cycles — one in Springfield in the fall of 2013 and the second in Holyoke in the winter/spring of 2014. The Springfield training cycle will begin with an Orientation Session on November 1st. Classes will begin on Monday, November 4th and end with graduation on December 20th. Training will take place at the New England Carpenters Training Center’s Springfield site located at Building 19, Springfield Technical Community College. The dates and location for the Holyoke session are yet to be determined.

Who is eligible?

There are several minimum eligibility requirements that applicants must meet to apply to Community Works. You must:

- be 18 years of age or older at start of training
- be a low income unemployed or under-employed resident of Springfield or Holyoke metro area
- be authorized to work in US
- possess a high school diploma or GED (individuals with college degrees not eligible)
- possess a valid driver’s license

You must also:

- have an insured and operable vehicle (or a realistic plan to obtain a vehicle by the end of the program)
- have an interest in pursuing a career in the building trades
- be able to perform physically challenging work and tolerate weather extremes
- be drug free and able to pass a drug test for admission into and during the program
- be proficient in math and English
- have no prior affiliation with a building trades union or work in commercial construction

How do I apply?

If you want to apply to Community Works, you must first attend an Information Session, and submit a completed application form with proper documentation. Applications for the Springfield
session are due by 4 pm on September 13, 2013. See application form for submission requirements.

**How are applications evaluated?**

Those applicants who meet the minimum eligibility criteria will move to Step 2 of the application process. At this step each applicant will be evaluated based upon their responses to application questions, reference(s), and his/her commitment to the selection process.

Applicants who receive a positive evaluation in Step 2 must then pass a series of tests before proceeding to the final step of the application process, which is the interview. The Step 3 tests include the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), with specific focus given to reading, math, and language scores. In addition, applicants must pass a drug test and a physical aptitude test.

The interview portion of the application process consists of questions administered by experienced construction industry personnel and our staff. Applicants are asked questions specifically designed to identify obstacles which may impede their progress through the program – and ultimately through an apprenticeship.

**What training will I receive?**

Once you are admitted to the program, you will receive 6 weeks of comprehensive training designed to prepare you for entry into apprenticeship. Instruction will be delivered on Monday – Friday from 7 am – 3:30 pm.

We will teach in two ways: classroom training and hands-on activities. We will provide employment and interpersonal skills training which will allow you to practice not only résumé writing and interviewing skills, but such essential skills as teamwork, workplace problem-solving, effective communication, as well as other life skills. The hard skills training will introduce you to the duties and responsibilities of the various building trades and apprenticeship, and provide instruction in the types and components of a construction project, workplace safety and health, basic construction math, construction tools, blueprint reading, labor history, workers’ rights, and workforce diversity.

The hands-on learning component will consist of shop classes at participating apprenticeship training centers. You will also take field trips to various building trades apprenticeship programs and active construction sites which will allow you to experience what each trader entails.

**Will I receive any other services through Community Works?**

Case management services will be provided as needed for each participant beginning at the start of the program and through successful placement. Case management will include counseling and/or referral and follow-up for issues such as childcare, transportation, housing, healthcare, financial services, and legal services.

We will also work with you to secure admission into a building trades apprenticeship program where you will earn while you learn your trade. While we can't guarantee that you'll gain admission into an apprentice program, we can guarantee that you'll be ready to apply. You'll just have to want it.

Community Works will also offer a 2-week work experience for those participants who are identified by program staff as needing additional training in order to successfully enter an apprenticeship program.

For more information about the Community Works Building Trades Pre-Apprenticeship Program, contact: Pam Howland, Community Works Project Director at 413-545-1472, or howland@umass.edu.