

## Construction TOOLS Program

**ORGANIZATION(S) PREPARING/  
SUBMITTING INITIATIVE:** Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (SWWDB), Community Action of Rock & Walworth Counties, Inc., and Wisconsin Literacy Council

### Objectives:

The Construction TOOLS Program will provide construction industry-specific training through a blended learning process of classroom and hands-on instruction leading to industry recognized certification. Learning will be complimented by the presence of intensive career and individual counseling intended to assist low income workers gain the skills need to obtain family sustaining wages in the construction industry. The Construction TOOLS model is designed to enhance the basic skills knowledge of the participant while providing them with hands on experience in the construction field.

The Construction TOOLS Program will utilize a “career pathways” approach to learning skills and competencies in the construction field with an emphasis on “green” skills. The goal of career pathways is to provide workers with stepping stones to skills and credentials. The Construction TOOLS Program will focus on preparing participants for entry-level job skills and apprenticeship preparatory training designed to build technical and employability skills. When participants complete the TOOLS Program, they will be prepared to move directly into construction employment through a traditional apprenticeship program, direct employment, or possibly through an On-the-Job training contract with an employer.

Additionally, the program will utilize the tested Washington State I-BEST (Integrated Basic Employment Skills Training) model. I-BEST pairs Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Education Development (GED) instructors with professional-technical instructors in the same classroom to concurrently provide literacy education and workforce skill development s training to Basic Education (ABE/GED) adult students.

The Construction TOOLS Program will be a collaborative effort between numerous Beloit community partners including the Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board (SWWDB), Community Action Inc. of Rock and Walworth Counties (CAI), the Stateline Literacy Council, Blackhawk Technical College, and the AFL-CIO Labor Education Training Center (LETC). The partner agencies will bring specific expertise and collaborate to achieve successful outcomes.

The Construction TOOLS program will be delivered in the City of Beloit and will be targeted to serve individuals from Beloit’s inner city neighborhoods. Beloit is often described as a “small city with big city problems.” Beloit has experienced the closure of the Janesville General Motors Assembly plant and subsequent closure of numerous automotive suppliers and affiliates in December of 2008. This occurred while the community was still recovering from the loss of significant durable goods manufacturing facilities in the early 2000s. The unemployment rate in Rock County in July 2009 was 12.8%, the second highest county-wide unemployment rate for the State of Wisconsin, and the City of Beloit had the largest metropolitan unemployment rate in Wisconsin for the same month at 17.6%, nearly double the federal and State unemployment rate in the same period.

The construction sites utilized for the hands-on training will be rehabilitation of the 14 homes purchased by CAI Action for the Merrill Revitalization project in Beloit. Technical/construction skills instruction will be provided by CAI staff with experience in hands on construction training.

It is anticipated that all enrollees will be co-enrolled in WIA either as adults or older youth participants. WIA co-enrollment will provide case managed assistance for clients.

The Beloit Construction TOOLS Program will focus on the following performance outcomes:

- 200 participants will be enrolled in employability training and computer skills training
- 100 participants will be enrolled in construction related education/training activities
- 100 participants will receive basic education services
- 85 participants will successful complete construction related education/training and receive a degree/certificate
- 76 participants who successfully complete education/training activities will be placed in unsubsidized employment
- 70 participants who are placed into unsubsidized employment will be placed in employment directly related to their training
- 68 of the participants placed into unsubsidized employment who be retained for 6 months following placement.

The Construction TOOLS Program will showcase that employment programs for individuals with employment barriers must contain extensive wrap-around services in order to lead to long-term employment. This type of organized and structured training program is needed to address employment barriers and provide long-term employment and family-sustaining wages. The true pathways out of poverty start with empowerment and education, the two critical components of the Beloit Construction TOOLS Program.

**Progress to Date:**

This initiative is a new venture between CAI, SWWDB, and the Literacy Connection. A proposal was submitted in 2009 under the Pathways Out of Poverty program but the initiative was not funded. A similar proposal was submitted under the DOL Green Jobs initiative that also was not funded. The partners are considering other funding options, but a new proposal has not been submitted. SWWDB has previously operated a basic skills work experience project several years ago, although the focus of skill training was not on construction occupations.

**Barriers:**

The Rock County area, and particularly Beloit, in a microcosm of urban America with many of the same problems and issues of larger metropolitan areas. A recent seminar titled *Auto Communities and the Next Economy: Partnerships in Innovations* discussed programs that will assist metropolitan communities address issues of economic recovery and growth. Beloit needs to find a niche where it can compete with the more heavily populated metropolitan communities. Because Beloit and Rock County are not part of a regional economic corridor, the area would be an ideal location for a demonstration project because it would be easier to track the outcomes of interventions implemented.

**Where federal agencies can help/what type of partnership would help:**

This initiative relies heavily on the federal government recognizing that Beloit, Rock County and other Midwest urban and rural communities are struggling and need assistance. While larger metropolitan communities tend to receive much of the focus of funding initiatives, it is hoped that there will be a balance with smaller communities needing assistance. Earlier in the Spring, Wisconsin received a \$6 million State Energy Sector Partnership and Training Grant. While the initiative includes Rock and Kenosha counties, the only DOL designated auto impacted communities in Wisconsin, this grant has a statewide focus building apprenticeship training curriculum. It does not focus on updated green building or green manufacturing skills training or job creation in green energy occupations which are desperately needed in Beloit and Rock County to successfully compete in local recovery efforts. Flexibility and assistance so Energy Sector funding can come to smaller urban and rural communities.

**Budget:**

Budget Item	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Salaries	469,920	484,557	503,939	1,458,416
Fringe Benefits	223,642	232,587	241,891	698,120
Travel	7,875	8,500	5,125	21,500
Supplies & Materials	14,900	42,400	0	57,300

Equipment / Building Rental	55,000	64,120	22,969	142,089
Other Costs / Expenses	8,000	5,000	5,000	18,000
Administration	77,534	83,716	77,892	239,142
Total	\$852,870	920,880	856,816	2,630,567