

# EQUITY PARTNERS PROGRAM

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Chicago Regional Council of Carpenters' Apprenticeship and Training Program, working in partnership with Chicago Women in Trades, developed the Equity Partners Program as a means to promote women's retention and advancement in the industry. Women currently make up 47% of the labor force, but just 7% of carpenter apprentices and an even smaller percentage journey-level carpenters. To learn more about the attrition rate for women in our trade, we conducted surveys with active members. Of the 50 women returning surveys, only 51% worked 9 months or more and 75% identified "lack of employment" as the primary issue which caused them to consider leaving the trade. Since the surveys were sent to union members in good standing only, it is very likely that lack of employment is a major factor in prompting women to leave the trade. If we are going to be successful in building women's participation in our industry, then, we must do so in partnership with our contractors.



The elements of the program were identified to counter some of the common issues that affect women's retention in the apprenticeship program, by providing them with early employment, support in understanding and adjusting to the expectations of the workplace, meaningful on-the-job training and evaluation to help them improve their performance, and as much employment stability as is possible in our industry. It is our hope that this intentional investment in their development will extend to ensuring that women find a place within the core crews of your company, but even if lack of work prevents this, a strong start in the program will go a long way to setting them up for future opportunities and continued advancement in the trade.



Ensuring fair and equitable opportunity for women to enter and succeed in our industry is not only the right thing to do, it is essential to our future workforce and we hope you will join with us in making a commitment to building a diverse and skilled workforce together.

### Why should my company become an Equity Partner?

What is the average age of your foreman, superintendents and skilled journeyman? How many years of training will it take to replace them? The apprenticeship school has never provided more training or certifications than it does right now, but ultimately, we have them for one month and contractors have them for 11 months each year of their apprenticeship. There is no substitute for quality on the job training and without it, our collective investment in female apprentices is largely lost as lack of income and opportunity drive them from our workforce or relegate them to low skilled work. A skilled and diverse workforce is in everyone's self-interest and we are looking for those forward thinking companies who are willing to lead the way and demonstrate that this investment in cultivating skilled women carpenters is good for the future of our workforce. Moreover, the recognition you receive as an Equity Partner can only enhance your reputation and improve your ability to compete for jobs and employees, as the economy recovers.

## What are we committing to in terms of on-the-job-training?

We are asking that you take steps to ensure that the women hired through this program are trained according to the contract, achieving competency in the work you perform relative to their year of apprenticeship. If you perform different types of carpentry work, we would also hope to see a plan for rotation among the specialties over time, allowing her to build a wider range of skills and making her a more valuable asset to your company. We recognize that it can often be challenging for contractors to effectively monitor OJT assignments, but it is critical that women have the opportunity to work with the tools, which is really at the heart of what we are requiring here. We ask that you make her aware of your expectations for her progress and provide evaluation and support in addressing any deficiencies, including referring her to the school for additional training as needed. You are free to use whatever existing process you might have in place for evaluating apprentices or complete the form provided under this initiative.



## What is meant by mentorship under this program?

For most women hired out of our pre-apprenticeship program, this will be their first experience on a construction crew. In addition to a lack of familiarity with the culture, organization, and expectations of the job site, she is likely to be the only or one of just a few women on the project. By assigning a mentor, you provide someone who can orient and connect her to the crew, making introductions, answering questions, providing guidance, navigating issues and more. The mentor could be the journey person assigned to train her or a woman who works for the company whether or not it is on that job site or both. This does not need to be a formal arrangement, but the mentor should be someone who is willing to be available when needed and is trusted to provide sound guidance and support. Under this initiative, mentorship training is available to support your employees in providing effective mentorship.

## What if we don't have enough work to honor our employment agreement?

This program is intended to address the reality that many women are hired to meet goals on specific projects and laid-off when that project is complete, rather than reassigned to the next project. By asking you to make a time commitment and invest in their training, we are asking you to be intentional about integrating them into the core crews that are moved from one project to the next. Certainly, we understand that this is not always possible, even for your most valued employees, so we ask only that she is not among the first apprentices laid off and that every effort is made to retain her if work for apprentice carpenters exists.

## What if a person hired under this program doesn't work out?

The purpose of this program is to provide women with a solid foundation on which to build their careers in the industry and to demonstrate that specific attention to integrating women into the workforce will reward contractors with skilled, loyal workers that contribute to the bottom line as well as achieve diversity goals in our industry. In other words, we are looking for a win-win for workers and contractors and, while we are asking you to invest in training and work to resolve issues prior to dismissal, we are not asking you to retain employees that cannot adequately meet basic requirements such as attendance. We also expect that some participants may leave the industry for a variety of reasons, not related to their employment with your company. In the event that your participant is dismissed or voluntarily leaves the program, we will work with you to find a suitable replacement.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:



Kina McAfee  
Chicago Regional Council of Carpenters  
Apprentice and Training Program  
kmcafee@chicap.org  
847-640-7373



Jayne Vellinga  
Chicago Women in Trades  
jvellinga@cwit2.org  
312-942-1444