

# NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON TRADESWOMEN'S ISSUES

## **The National Taskforce on Tradeswomen's Issues' FRAMEWORK FOR PROMOTING EQUITY AND INCLUSION FOR WOMEN AND PEOPLE OF COLOR WORKING IN THE TRADES ON PUBLICLY FUNDED INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

The **National Taskforce on Tradeswomen's Issues (the Taskforce)** is a coalition uniting the expertise and actions of local, regional and national organizations, advocates, allies and individual tradeswomen to support women in achieving access, opportunity, and equity in the construction industry, and other nontraditional occupations.

The Taskforce works to promote public policies and advocacy initiatives at the national, state and local levels to improve, enforce, fund, and promote best practices towards equity in apprenticeship, training, workforce development, career and technical education, nontraditional employment, and the job site experience.

Nearly a quarter of a million women work in the construction trades and earn wages and benefits offering economic security. Over the course of her lifetime, a woman working as an electrician will make more than \$1 million more than her counterpart working in a traditionally female-dominated job, such as a childcare worker or service worker.<sup>1</sup> Poverty rates for women remain at historically high levels, one in seven, substantially higher than poverty rates for men. Access to high-wage careers is critical for women's economic advancement.

Women who obtain high-wage, blue-collar and other nontraditional occupations through quality pre-apprenticeship training, information, and support services, flourish in these careers. However, registered apprenticeship, a primary pathway into high-skilled blue-collar careers, is not serving women. Nationally, women represent only 3% of construction apprenticeships, and only 7% in all registered apprenticeship programs. Several programs and localities around the country have proven that these low numbers are not inevitable when policy and programmatic approaches, as outlined below, are applied.

Research has shown that women, and particularly women of color, face discrimination in hiring and long-term employment and experience high rates of sexual harassment and gender bias on the job. As a result, they are less likely to be retained on core crews, promoted to field leadership positions or to receive the same on-the-job technical training as men, and they do not complete their apprenticeships at the same rates as their male counterparts.<sup>2</sup>

When tradeswomen have access to sustainable careers, which includes equitable work hours, workplace policies that support work/family balance, comprehensive on-the-job training and freedom from sexual and racial harassment, the broader industry benefits greatly from this underutilized portion of demographic in the skilled trades workforce.

The design and delivery of infrastructure investments have a direct impact on tradeswomen and their opportunities. To promote equity and inclusion for women and people of color working in the trades on publicly funded infrastructure projects, the Taskforce believes that any infrastructure package must include the ten components in the below framework.

<sup>1</sup> Mathematica study on apprenticeship effectiveness and cost/benefit analysis, "[An Effectiveness and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States.](#)"

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Burd-Sharps, Kristen Lewis and Maura Kelly, "[Building a More Diverse Skilled Workforce in the Highway Trades: Are Oregon's Current Efforts Working?](#)"

**TEN NECESSARY COMPONENTS TO PROMOTE EQUITY AND INCLUSION FOR WOMEN AND PEOPLE OF COLOR  
WORKING IN THE TRADES ON PUBLICLY FUNDED INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

1. Contractors and subcontractors working on infrastructure projects will make and document their best efforts to meet, without discrimination, project-wide, **annually updated robust numeric participation goals for the percentage of total work-hours that are worked by women, by people of color, and by women of color, by trade and position** (apprentice or journeyworker.) Following current requirements for registered apprenticeship programs (see 29 CFR §§ 30.4-6), goals should be disaggregated by ethnicity and race and either derived from each population group's share of individuals in the relevant recruitment area who are qualified for the apprenticeship or trade, or required by law, contract, or policy (whichever is highest). Contractors and their subcontractors should strive for a 20% apprentice utilization by trade, unless a higher apprentice utilization is locally stipulated by a collective bargaining agreement or local requirement.
2. Projects will require **transparency – public online reporting of achievements toward** the participation goals, updated twice per month.
3. Contractors and subcontractors working on infrastructure projects will **ensure safe, respectful work sites** that are free from bullying, hazing or harassment by, at least, instituting workplace policies and providing effective, on-going respectful-workplace training accompanied by a social campaign designed to create inclusive and diverse work sites.
4. **Community monitoring of** contractors' and subcontractors' **compliance** with these requirements by a committee of community-based organizations and labor representatives who have access to necessary records and meet at least monthly to review compliance. Additionally an ombudsperson will have open access to the work site to monitor conditions, provide support and assistance, and mediate issues.
5. **Agency contracts will include sanctions for noncompliance with these requirements**, including payment suspension, contract termination, denial of the right to participate in future projects for a period of years, liquidated damages, and fines.
6. **Flow-down provisions** – a requirement that owners, developers, contractors, and subcontractors at all tiers include Elements 1-5 in their bid specifications and lower-tier contracts.
7. **New standards to ensure robust agency oversight** of these requirements.
8. A **requirement** that each state spend at least **one-half of one percent (.5%) of the overall federal and state dollars spent for infrastructure in that state for supportive services**, so as to increase state-wide capacity to provide opportunities for underrepresented groups to work in infrastructure- project construction jobs, with special emphasis on maximizing opportunities for women and people of color. The supportive services eligible for funding under this requirement are pre-apprenticeship; childcare; tools; workwear; retention services (including support groups, mentoring, and peer networking); and application fees and other costs of entering registered apprenticeship programs and required pre-employment training. (See 23 USC § 140(b) and 23 CFR § 230.113 for authorization of .5% funding for supportive services in transportation infrastructure projects.)
9. **Robust dedicated funding** in every state and territory and for every Indian tribe **for technical assistance** on policies and best practices adequate to respond to every request for assistance in achieving their participation goals from every contractor and apprenticeship program.
10. A **set-aside** of 25 percent of infrastructure funding in each state **for projects located in low-income communities** (as defined in in the federal Tax Code, 26 USC § 45D(e)(1).

For more information on the National Taskforce on Tradeswomen's Issues, please visit our website at:  
[www.tradeswomentaskforce.org](http://www.tradeswomentaskforce.org) or contact the Co-Chairs at:

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