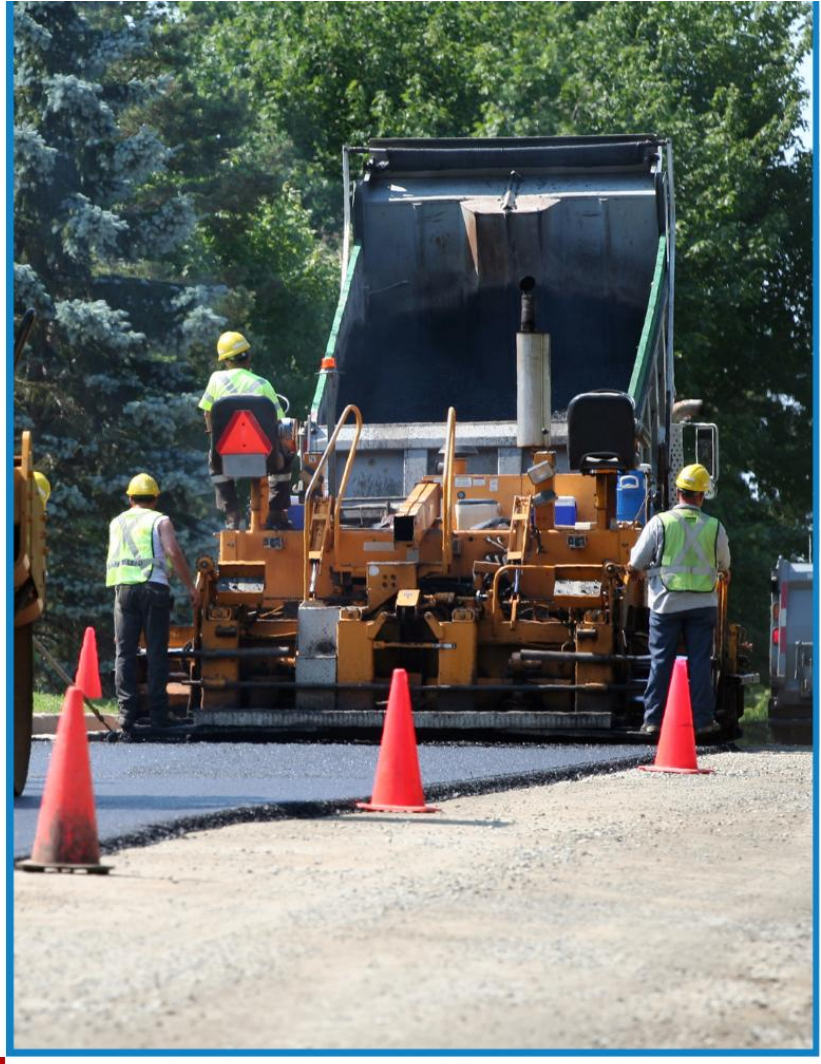
The Impact of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs in Illinois

Evidence from the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Since 2017

August 20, 2025



Frank Manzo IV, MPP
Economist
Illinois Economic Policy Institute

Robert Bruno, PhD
Professor and Director
Project for Middle Class Renewal
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

ILEPI
ILLINOIS ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE

ILLINOIS LABOR & EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS
PROJECT FOR MIDDLE CLASS RENEWAL

Executive Summary

Pre-apprenticeship programs, or apprenticeship readiness programs, have emerged as key pathways into skilled trade careers. By increasing the number of qualified workers eligible for registered apprenticeship programs, pre-apprenticeships combat skilled labor shortages in the construction industry. In Illinois, the two largest pre-apprenticeship programs are the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program.

Registered apprenticeship programs in Illinois' construction industry offer tuition-free training for in-demand careers while delivering access to stable pools of skilled tradespeople for contractors.

- From 2017 through 2024, there were 40,100 newly enrolled construction apprentices in Illinois, of whom 38,300 were in joint labor-management programs affiliated with unions (96 percent).
- Joint labor-management programs have a construction apprentice completion rate of 65 percent, more than double the employer-only (nonunion) completion rate of 29 percent.
- Construction apprentices who completed training from joint labor-management programs earned wages of between $49 and $52 per hour, regardless of racial background or gender identification.

Despite promoting equal pay for equal work, registered apprenticeship programs have historically faced challenges in providing proportionate opportunities to certain demographic groups, particularly people of color and women.

- Black enrollees accounted for 8 percent of new construction apprentices in Illinois from 2017 through 2024, while women represented just 5 percent.
- Research shows that pre-apprenticeship programs can improve access to careers in the trades and increase the industry's access to new domestic labor supply pools.
- The core elements of pre-apprenticeship programs are industry-focused curricula, hands-on learning, services that reduce barriers to entry, and recruitment of individuals into the trades.

Illinois' Highway Construction Careers Training Program is a 10- to 18-week program offered at 11 community colleges that began in 2011 with Federal Highway Administration funding. Since 2017:

- 2,500 participants have been enrolled, receiving stipends of between $10 and $15 per hour.
- The program has placed at least 1,000 participants in registered apprenticeship programs or other employment-related transitions, of whom 54 percent were Black and 21 percent were women.
- The completion rate has been 74 percent, and the apprenticeship placement rate for completers has been 53 percent.

The Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program is a 6- to 12-week program operated by 35 nonprofits and community providers that launched in 2022 as part of the Rebuild Illinois capital plan. Since 2022:

- 3,300 participants have been enrolled, receiving stipends of up to $14.25 per hour.
- The program has placed at least 1,100 participants in registered apprenticeship programs or other employment-related transitions, of whom 58 percent were Black and 25 percent were women.
- The completion rate has been 48 percent and the apprenticeship placement rate for completers has been 71 percent.

These two pre-apprenticeship programs have expanded the pool of qualified applicants for Illinois' registered apprenticeship programs. From 2017 through 2024:

- These programs invested a combined $66 million in grant funding for pre-apprenticeship training.
- Graduates from the two pre-apprenticeship programs accounted for 35 percent of all new Black construction apprentices and 21 percent of all new female construction apprentices in Illinois.

- The number of new construction apprentices in Illinois increased by 52 percent, with new Black apprentices doubling (+95 percent) and new female apprentices tripling (+202 percent).
- Data suggests that clean energy pre-apprenticeship programs that were initiated under the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) could eventually create 3,200 new pre-apprenticeships and 1,200 new placements in registered apprenticeship programs annually.

Illinois' pre-apprenticeship programs deliver positive returns on investment that only grow over time.

- Pre-apprenticeship programs invested between $12,000 and $13,000 in grant funding per participant, and $35,000 in grant funding per placement in registered apprenticeship programs.
- Participants who enroll in joint labor-management registered apprenticeship programs earn $37,000 in their first year of training and $81,000 upon graduating to union journeyworkers.
- Illinois' pre-apprenticeship programs deliver a 4 percent average return on investment (ROI) of grant funding over two years—one for pre-apprenticeship training and one as a registered apprentice.
- Over 10 years, Illinois' pre-apprenticeship programs deliver a cumulative 900 percent return on grant investment, with ROIs ranging from about 700 percent for Black participants to 1,300 percent for Hispanic participants.

The impact of pre-apprenticeship programs is underscored by testimonials from 25 participants who completed training in one of these programs and became registered apprentices. These participants:

- Celebrated the impact on their personal finances, often moving from low-paying jobs in fast food or as cashiers into family-sustaining careers in the trades.
- Expressed appreciation for the wraparound services performed by their provider organizations, including financial support to purchase books, tools, equipment, and work boots.
- Emphasized the connections they formed with their peers and the importance of representing their communities in Illinois' construction trades.

Steps can be taken to increase pre-apprenticeship opportunities and boost program effectiveness. Policymakers, elected officials, employers, unions, and industry stakeholders could:

- Address systemic issues that lower both high school and college graduation rates for Black students.
- Expand pre-apprenticeships by increasing state funding using multi-year grants, boosting incentives for employers to hire graduates, creating a job order tool for pre-apprenticeship program providers to connect graduates with contractors, and forging closer relationships with building trades unions.
- Enhance pre-apprenticeships by raising stipends above the state's minimum wage rate and by delivering more wraparound services, such as mentoring initiatives and childcare services.
- Create an accrediting agency to establish quality standards and promote taxpayer accountability.

The data reveal that pre-apprenticeship programs have positive impacts on Illinois. Pre-apprenticeships are a workforce development solution that expands construction career opportunities to more people while helping the industry access new domestic labor supply pools. These programs could be strengthened to ensure that Illinois' infrastructure is built using skilled local tradespeople.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary i

About the Authors iii

Introduction 1

The Impact of Registered Apprenticeship Programs in Illinois 2

Pre-Apprenticeship Programs as a Workforce Development Solution 5

An Overview of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs in Illinois 7
- *Highway Construction Careers Training Program* 7
- *Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program* 8
- *Illinois Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program and CEJA Workforce Hubs* 9
- *Other Pre-Apprenticeship Programs* 10

The Impact of the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program 11
- *Highway Construction Careers Training Program Metrics* 11
- *Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Metrics* 15
- *Financial Metrics of the Two Pre-Apprenticeship Programs* 18
- *Impact of the Two Pre-Apprenticeship Programs* 20
- *The Return on Investment (ROI) Per Pre-Apprentice* 22
- *Implications for Clean Energy Pre-Apprenticeship Programs* 24

From Their Perspective: The Stories of 25 Pre-Apprentices 27

Potential Policy Options 31

Conclusion 34

Sources 36
- *Citations for the 25 Pre-Apprentice Testimonials* 41
- *Cover Photo Credits* 42

Appendix 43
- *Provider Case Study: HIRE360* 45
- *Provider Case Study: Chicago Women in Trades* 46
- *Provider Case Study: Quad County Urban League* 47

About the Authors

Frank Manzo IV, M.P.P. is an Economist at the Illinois Economic Policy Institute. He earned a Master of Public Policy from the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Political Science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Robert Bruno, Ph.D. is a Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign School of Labor and Employment Relations and is the Director of the Project for Middle Class Renewal. He earned a Doctor of Philosophy in Political Theory from New York University, a Master of Arts from Bowling Green State University, and a Bachelor of Arts from Ohio University.

Introduction

Registered apprenticeships are training programs in which participants "earn while they learn" and obtain portable, nationally-recognized credentials, with tuition costs covered by employers or joint labor-management organizations (DOLETA, 2020).[1] Participants enrolled in registered apprenticeship programs are paid while they undergo structured, certified classroom instruction and on-the-job training tailored to meet industry needs. These formal apprenticeship programs typically take four years to complete, though they can range from under one year to six years depending on the occupation (Farrell & Lawhorn, 2022). Registered apprenticeships are sometimes viewed as an alternative to college for individuals to achieve upward economic mobility (Marcus, 2024; Perna, 2022; Manzo & Bruno, 2020).

Registered apprenticeship programs are vital to the success of the construction industry. Through registered apprenticeship programs, the construction industry operates "the largest privately-financed system of higher education in the country" (Philips, 2014). The importance of these construction apprenticeship programs has been heightened in recent years as state and federal laws were enacted to rebuild and modernize infrastructure and spur investments in clean energy. These include the Rebuild Illinois infrastructure program in 2019 and the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) at the state-level as well as the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act at the federal level, which together invested tens of billions of dollars in Illinois. As a result, active participants in registered apprenticeship programs in the construction and utilities industries have grown significantly. Last year in 2024, there were more than 17,500 active apprentices in these fields in Illinois, a 40 percent increase compared to 2017's level of about 12,500 active apprentices (ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a).

However, while registered apprenticeship programs deliver pools of qualified workers to employers and are integral to preventing skilled labor shortages in construction, they have faced challenges in providing proportionate opportunities to Americans of all backgrounds (Cheney, 2021). People of color and women have historically been underrepresented in the construction industry (Cheney, 2021; Orr, 2018; Dougherty, 2025).

Pre-apprenticeship programs, or apprenticeship readiness programs, have emerged as a potential solution to expand construction career opportunities to more individuals and to replenish the local supply of skilled tradespeople (Dougherty, 2025). Pre-apprenticeship programs prepare individuals to enter and succeed in registered apprenticeship programs (Herzenberg & Polson, 2019). While these short-term programs often last between eight and 14 weeks, they build foundational skills through industry-focused training, hands-on learning, and classroom instruction and reduce participants' barriers to entry in registered apprenticeship programs and other avenues of employment (IWIB, 2021).

This report, conducted jointly by the Illinois Economic Policy Institute (ILEPI) and the Project for Middle Class Renewal (PMCR) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, evaluates the impact of pre-apprenticeship programs in Illinois. The report begins with a review of registered apprenticeship programs in Illinois' construction industry—including data on enrollment, completions, and wages—before discussing pre-apprenticeship programs as a solution to expanding their pool of qualified applicants. Core elements of pre-apprenticeship programs and limited academic research on their effectiveness are presented in this section. Then, the report delves into the two largest pre-apprenticeship programs currently operating in Illinois—the Highway Construction Careers Training

[1] The registered apprenticeship system has been publicly monitored by the federal government since the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937, which is also referred to as the "Fitzgerald Act" (Belman, 2022).[1]

Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program—and assesses their funding, enrollment, completions, placements, and returns on investment. The burgeoning Illinois Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program is also addressed. A qualitative section on actual participants in Illinois' pre-apprenticeship programs subsequently follows. The report wraps up with potential options for policymakers, elected officials, and industry stakeholders to consider before a concluding section recaps key findings.

The Impact of Registered Apprenticeship Programs in Illinois

Registered apprenticeship programs deliver positive economic impacts for workers, employers, and taxpayers. Research shows that registered apprenticeship program graduates earn about $240,000 more in wages during their careers than similar non-participants in constant 2000 dollars, which is equivalent to about $450,000 in 2025 (Reed et al., 2012; BLS, 2025). Employers who sponsor registered apprenticeship programs experience a 44 percent return on their investment, or $1.44 per dollar invested, after five years (Kuehn et al., 2022). In Illinois, registered apprenticeship programs return $3 in economic activity per dollar invested over one year, and $11 per dollar invested in total benefits—including enhanced worker productivity and savings to taxpayers from reduced spending on social assistance programs—over the careers of program participants (Bruno & Manzo, 2016). Additionally, registered apprenticeship programs improve safety outcomes, reducing the workers' compensation claim rates of construction tradespeople by 31 percent (Wuellner & Bonauto, 2022).

There are generally two types of construction apprenticeship programs: those sponsored jointly by labor unions and employers and those sponsored solely by employers or employer associations. Joint labor-management (union) apprenticeship programs are cooperatively administered with institutionalized "cents per hour" contributions that are privately negotiated between labor unions and signatory contractors in collective bargaining agreements. By contrast, employer-only (nonunion) programs are run by single employers or trade associations that unilaterally determine program content. These programs rely on voluntary contributions from contractors, who may have incentives to forgo long-term workforce development investments in order to win project bids in the short-term.

Because of these different funding models, nearly all the investment in registered apprenticeship training comes from joint labor-management programs. Joint labor-management programs accounted for 75 percent of all construction apprentices across the United States between 1999 and 2019, including 85 percent of women apprentices, 79 percent of Black apprentices, and 79 percent of Hispanic apprentices—expanding construction career opportunities into historically underrepresented labor supply pools (Bilginsoy et al., 2022). Joint labor-management programs have been found to train as much as 97 percent of all construction apprentices in Illinois, but also between 55 percent and 93 percent of construction apprentices in neighboring Iowa, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota (Manzo & Bruno, 2020; Manzo & Gigstad, 2021; Manzo, Bruno, & Wilson, 2023a; Manzo, Goodell, & Bruno, 2021; Manzo, Bruno, & Wilson, 2023b; Onsarigo et al., 2017; Herzenberg, Polson, & Price, 2018; Manzo & Duncan, 2018).

The most recent data from the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration's (DOLETA) Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) confirms that joint labor-management programs train the vast majority of registered apprentices in

Illinois' construction industry (ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a).[2] Over the eight-year period from 2017 through 2024, there were about 40,100 newly enrolled construction apprentices in Illinois (Figure 1).[3] Fully 38,300 construction apprentices were enrolled in joint labor-management (union) programs, or 96 percent, while just 1,800 were in employer-only programs (4 percent). Joint labor-management programs trained 96 percent of white apprentices, 94 percent of Black apprentices, and 95 percent of Hispanic apprentices in Illinois' construction industry. Joint labor-management programs also accounted for 96 percent of men and 96 percent of women.

The data show the demographics of construction apprenticeship programs from 2017 through 2024 (Figure 1). In total, 59 percent of new construction apprentices have been white, 8 percent have been Black, and 19 percent have been Hispanic. By gender identification, 95 percent have been men and 5 percent have been women.

Figure 1: Construction Apprentice Enrollment by Demographics and Union Status, 2017–2024

Newly Enrolled Construction Apprentices*	All New Apprentices	Joint (Union) Programs	Employer-only (Nonunion) Programs	Joint Share of Each Group's Apprentices	Each Group's Share of All Apprentices
All Apprentices	**40,079**	**38,329**	**1,750**	**95.6%**	**100.0%**
White (non-Hispanic)	24,315	23,440	875	96.4%	59.2%
Black (non-Hispanic)	3,147	2,951	196	93.8%	7.7%
Hispanic	8,334	7,930	404	95.2%	19.3%
Men	37,734	36,084	1,650	95.6%	94.6%
Women	2,023	1,943	80	96.0%	4.8%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 to 2024 data from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) (ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a). Data are for new apprentices enrolled in programs located in Illinois in the construction and utilities industries. Some participants chose not to identify their gender, or identified as nonbinary.

Completion rates are a useful measure of registered apprenticeship program performance. High completion rates mean that registered apprenticeship programs have successfully expended resources to train workers who have gained portable, nationally-recognized credentials. Low completion rates, on the other hand, represent an inefficient use of resources, with programs not recruiting, screening, and admitting committed trainees and not adequately producing qualified workers for employers or the industry as a whole.

Joint labor-management apprenticeship programs have considerably higher completion rates than the employer-only alternative across demographic groups (Figure 2). Between 2017 and 2024, joint programs had a 65 percent completion rate. This was more than double, or 35 percentage points higher than, employer-only programs (29 percent). Similarly, joint programs enjoyed completion rates that

[2] Registered apprenticeship programs report program-level and participant-level information to the Office of Apprenticeship. The Office of Apprenticeship compiles the information collected from federally-registered programs and state-level registered programs and releases the data through the RAPIDS dataset. While apprenticeship programs are registered with the U.S. Department of Labor, which establishes and maintains quality standards, the Office of Apprenticeship only had access to participant-level data for 41 states prior to 2021, with some states and territories choosing to manage their own performance systems. Since then, the Office of Apprenticeship has worked with the remaining jurisdictions to ensure that RAPIDS includes data for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, each U.S. territory, and the United States Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP) (DOLETA, 2021).

[3] This report refers to "construction apprentices" and "construction apprenticeship programs" but does include data for registered apprenticeship programs in both the construction industry and the utilities industry, since most utilities apprentices work in occupations on energy infrastructure projects that involve construction, installation, and repair and are represented within the building trades.

were 36 percentage points higher for white apprentices, 13 percentage points higher for Black apprentices, and 26 percentage points higher for Hispanic apprentices.

Employer-only programs produce just a handful of completers from construction apprenticeship programs in a given year (Figure 2). For example, while joint labor-management programs graduated nearly 1,100 Black apprentices and 3,600 Hispanic apprentices over the eight-year period, employer-only programs had 26 Black completers and 68 Hispanic completers. Additionally, while employer-only programs ostensibly had a higher completion rate for women, they graduated just 15 women over eight years compared to more than 700 from the joint labor-management programs.

Figure 2: Construction Apprentice Completion Rates by Demographics and Union Status, 2017–2024

Construction Apprentices	Joint (Union) Completers	Joint Completion Rate	Employer-only (Nonunion) Completers	Employer-only Completion Rate	Joint Share of Completers	Joint Completion Difference
All Apprentices	**19,538**	**64.6%**	**376**	**29.1%**	**98.1%**	**+35.4%**
White	12,300	67.2%	201	30.7%	98.4%	+36.5%
Black	1,064	46.2%	26	33.3%	97.6%	+12.9%
Hispanic	3,553	69.9%	68	43.6%	98.1%	+26.3%
Men	18,810	64.9%	359	28.4%	98.1%	+36.5%
Women	712	55.4%	15	62.5%	97.9%	-7.1%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 to 2024 data from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) (ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a). Data are for apprentices enrolled in programs located in Illinois in the construction and utilities industries. Some participants chose not to identify their gender, or identified as nonbinary. Completion rates are estimated by dividing those who completed programs by the sum total of those who completed and cancelled (i.e., actively registered apprentices are excluded).

Participants in registered apprenticeship programs begin earning income on their first day of training. Apprenticeship programs are structured such that workers earn lower wages for an established period in exchange for class-based instruction and on-the-job training. As they progress through their programs and acquire new skills, apprentices earn higher hourly incomes. These graduated wage scales are typically tied to a percentage of the exit wage (or journeyworker rate), reflecting apprentices' status as workers learning new trades and incentivizing employers to hire apprentices who are more affordable on a per-hour basis than fully trained journeyworkers. First-year apprentices typically earn about 50 percent of the exit wage (Belman, 2022).

Construction apprentices in joint labor-management programs earn higher wages than their counterparts in employer-only programs, and are more likely to earn living wages sufficient to cover housing, food, clothing, transportation, and other costs (Bruno & Manzo, 2025). Figure 3 shows inflation-adjusted starting wages, exit wages, and average wage gains for construction apprentices in Illinois by program type between 2020 and 2024. The average joint labor-management program apprentice earned just under $25 per hour on "day one," with those who completed their training earning more than $49 per hour—a growth of 100 percent on average. In comparison, apprentices in employer-only programs earned about $22 at the time of entry and under $35 per hour upon completion, a growth of just 54 percent. Overall, graduates from joint labor-management programs earned 43 percent more than those from employer-only programs, creating a strong financial incentive for high-quality candidates to apply for and complete joint labor-management programs in construction (Figure 3).

The joint labor-management program wage advantage for completers is high across demographic groups (Figure 3). The lowest wage advantage is experienced by Hispanic workers, who earn exit wages of nearly $52 per hour upon completion from joint labor-management programs compared to exit wages

of $36 per hour upon completion from employer-only programs, a 42 percent difference. The difference at exit is 60 percent for Black completers, $49 per hour versus $31 per hour. Additionally, women graduates earn $49 per hour after completing joint labor-management programs, which is 76 percent more than the $28 per hour average exit wage for their counterparts from employer-only programs.

Figure 3: Construction Apprentice Real Wages by Union Status and Demographics, 2020–2024

Construction Apprentices	Joint (Union) Programs			Employer-only Programs			Joint (Union) Exit Wage Difference
	Starting Wage	Exit Wage*	Wage Growth*	Starting Wage	Exit Wage*	Wage Growth*	
All Apprentices	**$24.69**	**$49.44**	**+100.3%**	**$22.34**	**$34.52**	**+54.5%**	**+43.2%**
White	$24.39	$49.47	+102.8%	$22.55	$34.24	+51.8%	+44.5%
Black	$24.19	$48.74	+101.5%	$20.14	$30.38	+50.9%	+60.4%
Hispanic	$25.93	$51.70	+99.4%	$23.27	$36.34	+56.2%	+42.2%
Men	$24.72	$49.46	+100.1%	$22.49	$34.58	+53.7%	+43.0%
Women	$24.57	$48.97	+99.4%	$20.25	$27.88	+37.6%	+75.7%
White Men	$24.39	$49.52	+103.1%	$22.64	$34.24	+51.3%	+44.6%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2020 to 2024 data from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) (ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a). Data are for apprentices enrolled in programs located in Illinois in the construction and utilities industries. *"Exit wage" and "wage growth" are only for apprentices who completed their programs and do not include those who cancelled or dropped out. Wages have been adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) (BLS, 2025).

Figure 3 demonstrates the value in creating more union construction career pathways for workers from all backgrounds. Union journeyworkers who complete their apprenticeships, perform the same trade, and operate the same equipment in the same local market all earn the same wage, per their collective bargaining agreements. All able-bodied journeyworkers who have proven that they have mastered their crafts earn the same hourly income, resulting in strong middle-class wages of between $49 per hour and $52 per hour—regardless of racial or ethnic background, gender identification, or any other characteristic unique to an individual. Expanding access to union construction careers would help reduce economic disparities in Illinois.

Pre-Apprenticeship Programs as a Workforce Development Solution

Pre-apprenticeship programs expand construction opportunities by preparing individuals to apply for, gain admission to, and thrive in registered apprenticeship programs (Herzenberg & Polson, 2019).[4] As with other institutions of higher education or career development programs, admission to registered apprenticeship programs is a competitive process rooted in matching the most qualified candidate with a limited number of available slots. This process can be cyclical, and influenced by broader demand for construction services. By expanding the pool of qualified applicants, pre-apprenticeship programs ensure that the construction industry has access to candidates who match current and future needs.

The Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) has outlined the core elements of pre-apprenticeship programs (IWIB, 2021). These include industry-focused curriculum and training designed to ensure participants meet entry-level requirements of registered apprenticeship programs, hands-on learning to reinforce essential employability skills, retention services with providers identifying and resolving barriers to program participation and completion, and recruitment of individuals into career opportunities—often targeting veterans, people of color, women, and individuals with disabilities.

[4] Pre-apprenticeship programs are also sometimes referred to as apprenticeship readiness programs (ARPs).

Partnerships with employers and registered apprenticeship programs, which can include priority preference for enrollment, comprise another pillar of pre-apprenticeship programs (IWIB, 2021).

In 2010, the Aspen Institute received a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to interview 25 administrators and leaders of pre-apprenticeship programs across the United States to explore how they can become a larger factor in workforce development within the construction industry (Conway, Gerber, & Helmer, 2010). The report found that pre-apprenticeship programs "play a significant role in developing a skilled and diverse construction workforce" but that they vary in program design and operational approaches since they tend to target different populations of workers.

In recent years, researchers have outlined the characteristics of the most successful programs. High-quality pre-apprenticeship programs are transparent about their entry and completion requirements and align skill development with local demand for apprentices and workers (USDOL, 2023; Allen et al., 2021). They also provide access to wraparound services such as childcare, transportation, counseling, and career services, offer stipends and include labor protections, expose participants to multiple trades and career options, and enable participants to acquire certifications or other credentials that demonstrate their ability to perform sector-specific job tasks (USDOL, 2023; Tieszen et al., 2020; IWIB, 2021). Most importantly, they effectively transition participants into placements with registered apprenticeship programs (USDOL, 2023; Allen et al., 2021; Tieszen et al., 2020).

Policy research on pre-apprenticeship programs is limited. In a 2019 study, the Pennsylvania Workforce Development Board contracted the Keystone Research Center to conduct an inventory of Pennsylvania's pre-apprenticeship programs (Herzenberg & Polson, 2019). Researchers spearheaded an online survey of 63 respondents affiliated with pre-apprenticeship programs that were sponsored by nonprofit community-based organizations, labor-management organizations, colleges, career and technical centers, industry associations, and individual manufacturing companies. The survey revealed that nearly all stakeholders accrued value from pre-apprenticeship programs, with 86 percent of respondents indicating that employers reaped rewards, 83 percent saying that participants experienced gains, and 62 percent reporting that apprenticeship programs benefitted. Fully 94 percent of programs delivered industry-standard qualifications such as OSHA-10 safety certification and Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) credentials developed and approved by North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU). When asked about their main challenges, the top answers provided by respondents were funding (61 percent) and recruitment of participants (41 percent) (Herzenberg & Polson, 2019).

Researchers at Portland State University have conducted the most comprehensive research on pre-apprenticeship programs to date. Professors Maura Kelly and Lindsey Wilkinson first studied two pre-apprenticeship programs in Oregon, one that targeted women and another that primarily served people of color and formerly incarcerated individuals. This research found that the two programs had an 82 percent completion rate but a placement rate of only 23 percent among completers (Kelly & Wilkinson, 2017). With funding from the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), these scholars then focused on a series of evaluations of the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program in Oregon. The Highway Construction Workforce Development Program began in 2010 and provides four- to nine-week classes, jobsite trainings, and supportive services that include tools, clothing, personal protective equipment (PPE), childcare subsidies, travel assistance, and non-financial services to prepare individuals for careers in the skilled trades (Kelly, 2023).

Overall, the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program has improved access to Oregon's construction trades for more types of workers (Kelly & Wilkinson, 2020). Specifically, women and people

of color went from just 19 percent of all highway construction apprentices in 2005 to 31 percent in 2017, a 12 percentage-point increase (Wilkinson & Kelly, 2018). That is partially due to the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program, which accounted for 27 percent of all women who went on to complete registered apprenticeship programs in the highway construction trades (Kelly, 2023).

Outside of the United States, Australia's Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations released a study on the impact of pre-apprenticeships on apprenticeship completion and satisfaction (Karmel & Oliver, 2011). In Australia, 28 percent of all construction trades workers participated in pre-apprenticeship programs. The report found that pre-apprenticeship programs increased completion rates for construction apprenticeships by 27 percentage points. Pre-apprenticeship programs were also associated with improvements in satisfaction as it pertained to the "job-related aspects" of apprenticeship programs, including working conditions, hourly pay, and training provided by employers (Karmel & Oliver, 2011).

An Overview of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs in Illinois

In 2020, Northern Illinois University (NIU) released a study on apprenticeship and work-based learning in Illinois that was commissioned by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). The report details five broad types of training, including pre-apprenticeships (Richard & Foil, 2020).[5] Illinois reportedly had 36 pre-apprenticeship programs that trained 393 total participants in 2020.[6] At that time, 83 percent of the pre-apprenticeship programs focused on construction and extraction occupations. Half of the programs (56 percent) received state grants, one-in-five (19 percent) received federal grant funding, and one-in-seven (14 percent) were funded at least in part by unions or labor-management organizations. The majority included basic employability skills such as math, reading, and financial literacy (83 percent) and offered industry-standard credentials (78 percent). Three-in-five had relationships with registered apprenticeship programs that allowed matriculation to full apprenticeship (61 percent) and reported that their participants were hired by participating employers (64 percent). The study also found that 88 percent of participants were people of color, 20 percent were women, 10 percent were experiencing homelessness, and 17 percent were formerly incarcerated or otherwise connected to the criminal justice system (Richard & Foil, 2020).

Highway Construction Careers Training Program

The Highway Construction Careers Training Program was initiated in 2009 by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) through funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The stated goal of the Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) is to increase the participation of underrepresented individuals in the highway construction sector (IDOT, 2024a). The 10- to 18-week program is offered at community colleges across Illinois and provides intensive training in skills pertinent to construction careers, such as mathematics for the trades, jobsite readiness, blueprint reading, power tools usage, heavy machinery and forklift operation, crane safety and signaling, and carpentry and scaffolding. Participants are introduced to various construction trades, are educated

[5] Pre-apprenticeship programs were defined as those with documented partnerships with employers, with supportive and career counseling services, and which were designed to prepare individuals to meet minimum entry-level requirements of apprenticeship programs (Richard & Foil, 2020).

[6] In 2020, there were only 23 non-registered apprenticeship programs in Illinois serving 91 participants (Richard & Foil, 2020). In comparison, there were 21,938 active apprentices enrolled in 357 active registered apprenticeship programs in Fiscal Year 2024, including 17,534 in construction and utilities registered apprenticeship programs (ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a; ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025b).

about entrance requirements for specific apprenticeship opportunities, and can receive Welding 110, First Aid/CPR, and OSHA-30 certification (IDOT, 2024a; Parkland College, 2025).

Program participants must be 18 years old or older, have high school diplomas or equivalents, provide valid driver's licenses and/or birth certificates, and pass drug tests. Participation is free, with training costs, books, supplies, work boots, and tools all covered by grant funding (Parkland College, 2025). Participants receive stipends of $10 to $15 per hour, paid weekly, while enrolled but are also subject to strict "no fault" attendance policies and may be expelled for accumulating too many absences or late arrivals (Parkland College, 2025; Black Hawk College, 2025). Each training session is comprised of 450 hours of classroom and hands-on instruction, enabling participants to earn between $4,500 and $6,750 upon successful program completion (JALC, 2025).

A total of 14 community colleges have provided this pre-apprenticeship training since inception, but currently just 11 have funding and are offering sessions (IDOT, 2024b; IDOT, 2024c). The program does not guarantee direct placement into registered apprenticeship programs upon completion. However, each community college guides and assists graduates with transitions to registered apprenticeship programs, direct placements with construction unions as dues-paying members, or employment at construction companies that do business with IDOT (Parkland College, 2025).

Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program

The Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program was established in 2019 as part of the bipartisan Rebuild Illinois infrastructure law to create a talent pipeline of qualified candidates for construction apprenticeship programs, ensuring that "all Illinois residents have access to State capital projects and careers in the construction industry" (DCEO, 2022).[7] Rebuild Illinois set a goal that apprentices would perform 10 percent of the hours worked on large public works projects in the state, and the pre-apprenticeship program was created to ensure a supply of qualified workers who could apply for and enroll in registered apprenticeship programs (DCEO, 2025a). Furthermore, the law created a bid credit program to make contractors' bids on future state-funded public works projects more competitive if they hire and retain apprentices who have completed the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program (DCEO, 2025b). Bid credits begin at $3,000 for each qualified apprentice hired and then range from $2,000 for retaining a qualified apprentice for a second year up to a $4,500 retention incentive to contractors and subcontractors when the apprentice graduates to journeyworker status (DCEO, 2025c).

Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship grants are awarded to community-based organizations and accredited public colleges and universities with documented plans to implement pre-apprenticeship programs "rooted in national best practices" (DCEO, 2022). Recipient organizations must have the ability to recruit, prescreen, and train workers for employment in the construction industry as well as plans in place to provide preparatory classes, workplace readiness skills, and strategies for overcoming barriers to entry and completion for participants.

[7] Rebuild Illinois included multiple pieces of legislation that detailed funding for transportation infrastructure, funding for building infrastructure, new bonding authority, and project lists (ILEPI, 2025). Senate Bill 690, which includes Illinois Works programs—including the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, the Illinois Works Apprenticeship Initiative, and the Illinois Works Bid Credit Program—passed with 87 yes votes, 27 no votes, and two not voting in the Illinois House and 46 yes votes, 10 no votes, and three not voting in the Illinois Senate—including yes votes from 21 Republican state representatives and from nine Republican state senators (LegiScan, 2019).

The program officially launched in January 2022 when Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced $9.4 million in grant funding to support 23 construction pre-apprenticeship programs providing training and wraparound supportive services for approximately 1,000 participants (Apprenticeship Illinois, 2025). In 2023, 30 program providers were selected to receive funding (State of Illinois, 2023a). By 2024, a total of 35 nonprofits, community colleges, and local governments received funding from DCEO to provide Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program training (State of Illinois, 2024a).[8]

Program participants must be 18 years old or older, be Illinois residents, have high school diplomas or equivalents, possess driver's licenses by the completion of the program, and be able to pass drug tests (DCEO, 2023a). Upon completion, participants can receive OSHA-10 certification, First Aid/CPR certification, and either Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) credentials developed and approved by North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU) or National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Core credentials. The programs offer support services, including but not limited to childcare, transportation assistance, housing assistance, math and reading tutoring, and mental health counseling (DCEO, 2023a).

Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program enrollees receive stipends on a weekly or biweekly basis. Stipends are not legally considered wages but must help participants "stay financially solvent during the pre-apprenticeship period" (DCEO, 2023a). Stipends could not exceed $14.25 per instructional hour in 2024 (DCEO, 2024a). Illinois Works-approved curricula must provide at least 150 hours of hands-on and classroom instruction over six weeks, but no more than 300 hours of training over 12 weeks (DCEO, 2023a). Overall, participants can earn as much as $4,275 for successfully completing the program. In 2024, the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program at Southwestern Illinois College advertised financial stipends equaling $11 per hour, with participants earning up to $3,300 over the course of a 10-week, 300-hour session (SWIC, 2024). The Fry Family YMCA in Naperville had a 12-week program, including 10 weeks of classroom training and two weeks of jobsite training, and paid stipends of up to $2,500 for exposure to 14 different construction trades (Mullins, 2024). HIRE360—a nonprofit organization that recruits, trains, and connects workers with registered apprenticeship programs, trade unions, developers, and contractors—offers an eight-week program in Chicago (HIRE360, 2025a).[9]

Illinois Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program and CEJA Workforce Hubs

The Illinois Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program was created through the bipartisan Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) in 2021 to expand training opportunities and develop the clean energy talent pipeline with a prepared, qualified workforce (State of Illinois, 2023b)[10]. Underrepresented populations and Illinois residents in communities that have historically faced economic and environmental barriers are prioritized. Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship grants are awarded to three regional hubs serving northern Illinois, central Illinois, and southern Illinois that recruit, prescreen, and train workers for employment in clean energy construction jobs. Participants attend these pre-apprenticeship programs tuition-free, receive stipends, and access additional support services through barrier reduction funding. The program officially launched in July 2024 when Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) announced over $13 million in grant funding for the 548

[8] DCEO maintains an updated list of Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Providers on its website (DCEO, 2025d).

[9] For more on HIRE360, see the "Provider Case Study: HIRE360" in the Appendix.

[10] The Climate and Equitable Jobs Act passed with 83 yes votes and 33 no votes in the Illinois House and 37 yes votes, 17 no votes, and five not voting in the Illinois Senate—including yes votes from 11 Republican state representatives and from two Republican state senators (LegiScan, 2022).

Foundation to serve the Chicago metro area and for HIRE360 to cover the central and southern regions (State of Illinois, 2024b).

CEJA also established a related community-based Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program in 13 locations to build pipelines into clean energy careers for "equity eligible individuals" and displaced energy workers. In July 2023, Governor Pritzker and DCEO announced $37.9 million in funding for these "CEJA Workforce Hubs" to provide training and certification "in alignment with the Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework" to prepare people for entry-level jobs in solar, wind, building energy efficiency, and electric vehicle maintenance free-of-charge while developing partnerships with employers to expand job placements (State of Illinois, 2023c). As of July 2024, $27.3 million in grant money had been awarded to 10 nonprofits and community colleges to service Chicago's south, southwest, and west sides plus Alton, Aurora, Champaign, Decatur, Joliet, Rockford, and Waukegan (DCEO, 2024b).

Both the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program and the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program were just getting off the ground in 2024, but are offering essential employability skills, OSHA-10 certification, and First Aid/CPR certification (DCEO, 2023c; DCEO, 2024c). The former is geared towards unionized building trades occupations and offers NABTU's MC3 credentials, while the latter directs participants to receive training in a job-specific area. These job-specific areas include solar photovoltaic training, energy auditor training, weatherization training, HVAC training, construction and building inspection training, hybrid and electric vehicle technician training, or wind turbine construction and maintenance training.

In total, 541 participants were enrolled in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program in May 2025 and 94 had already graduated, but only anecdotal data was available on placements with registered apprenticeship programs (Schoenberg, 2025). For example, the 548 Foundation's workforce hub solar training program had a placement rate that "was inching back to 80 percent" as of May 2025 (Schoenberg, 2025).

Individuals eligible for both programs must be either in communities disproportionately affected by pollution, connected to the foster care system, formerly incarcerated, or reside in areas that have historically been subject to high rates of unemployment, child poverty, and incarceration. The Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program also designates displaced energy workers as eligible participants (DCEO, 2024c).[11] The Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program requires that participants be at least 16 years old and have high school diplomas or be enrolled in schools or programs preparing them for high school diplomas or their equivalents, while the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program's minimum age is 18 years old. Both programs provide stipends based on hours of attendance, which cannot exceed $13 per hour but are given to all participants regardless of need (DCEO, 2023c).

Other Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

There are a number of other pre-apprenticeship programs across Illinois. These range from federally funded programs to privately funded programs. For example, the U.S. Department of Labor's YouthBuild Program has supported pre-apprenticeships to educate and train young people ages 16 to 24 years old to enter careers building affordable housing.[12] In 2024, $7.2 million was awarded to five recipients in Illinois (USDOL, 2024). The Transportation Construction Apprenticeship Readiness Training (TCART)

[11] However, in 2025, legislative proposals to broaden eligibility were under consideration to improve recruitment in both the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program and the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program.

[12] For a provider with a YouthBuild initiative, see the "Provider Case Study: Quad County Urban League" in the Appendix.

Program is a collaborative effort among the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) Local 150, Chicago Laborers' District Council, the Chicago Urban League, the Black Chamber of Commerce of Lake County, and other Chicago-area community organizations to expand participation in highway construction careers across the Chicago metropolitan area. The 11-week program includes three weeks of comportment training and eight weeks of technical training (Chicago Urban League, 2024). Another example is Walsh Construction's Pre-Apprenticeship Program, which featured an eight-week program during renovation of the old Cook County Hospital Building from 2018 through 2020 in which pre-apprentices shadowed management and foremen on the jobsite and received training. Walsh Construction reported that 80 percent of candidates were sponsored into local unions (Walsh, 2025). The University of Chicago also offers a Skilled Trades Pre-Apprenticeship Program in which participants receive one-year contracts with pay and benefits as full-time employees in carpentry, engineering, or steam plant operation and completers can apply for full-time, apprentice-level positions with the university (Currin, Davis, & McDowell, 2023). Finally, the Future Energy Jobs Act, signed in 2016 by Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner, authorized the Multi-Cultural Jobs Program to train individuals in disadvantaged communities for careers in the clean energy sector, including solar installations (State of Illinois, 2016; DCEO, 2023d; CUB, 2020).

The Impact of the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program

The Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Programs are the two largest pre-apprenticeship programs in Illinois that have been in operation for many years. While the Illinois Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program and the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program are expected to significantly expand pre-apprenticeship opportunities in the state, data on their effectiveness is just beginning to become available. Consequently, in the fall of 2024, two Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request were submitted to state agencies. The first was delivered to the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and sought data on the performance of the Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP), including information on participants, completers, and placements since the program's inception, broken down by demographic group and sorted by provider community college. Funding information about the program was also requested. The second was sent to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) for Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program data, including information on participants, completers, and placements since the program's inception, grouped by demographics and organized by provider. Funding information as well as Periodic Performance Reports (PPRs) and Periodic Financial Reports (PFRs) submitted to DCEO by each provider were requested as well. Both IDOT and DCEO responded to and fulfilled the FOIA requests within 15 business days.

Highway Construction Careers Training Program Metrics

Over the seven-year period from 2017 through 2023, the Illinois Department of Transportation invested $25.5 million in the Highway Construction Careers Training Program via Federal Highway Administration grant funding (Figure 4). Funding was distributed to 13 different community colleges across the state, including 11 that provided sessions in the 2023-2024 academic year. The average grant noticeably increased in 2023, from around $300,000 in annual funding over the previous six years to more than $412,000 per provider. However, the 27 percent growth in average funding from 2017 to 2023 brings the grant investment back to 2017 levels after accounting for Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation over the same time period (25 percent) (BLS, 2025). The largest recipient of HCCTP funding has been South Suburban College in South Holland, with $3.8 million in funding since 2017.

Figure 4: IDOT Grant Funding to HCCTP Community College Providers, 2017–2023

#	HCCTP Community College	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
1	Dawson Technical Institute	$293,339	$290,610	$317,922	$341,062	$243,039	$252,608	$382,420	$2,121,000
2	South Suburban College	$544,129	$538,052	$565,767	$476,269	$519,228	$487,144	$684,628	$3,815,217
3	Rock Valley College	$270,721	$39,926	$204,278	$174,914	$191,006	$236,118	$336,419	$1,453,382
4	Black Hawk College	$319,524	$335,375	$314,391	$263,440	$282,357	$251,266	$382,420	$2,148,773
5	Kankakee Community College	$307,605	$298,306	$302,849	$220,665	$259,976	$325,381	$382,420	$2,097,202
6	Illinois Central College	$311,789	$303,237	$323,423	$241,764	$273,487	$239,386	$382,420	$2,075,506
7	Parkland College	$296,419	$318,245	$328,452	$271,188	$242,408	$295,152	$382,420	$2,134,284
8	Lincoln Land Community College	$409,038	$429,512	$435,602	$350,172	$381,641	$397,037	$520,376	$2,923,378
9	Southwestern Illinois College	$239,015	$200,003	$221,693	$234,255	$258,554	$239,690	$382,420	$1,775,630
10	John A. Logan College	$278,502	$286,694	$310,569	$194,260	$218,585	$249,620	$382,420	$1,920,650
11	Shawnee Community College	--	--	--	--	--	--	$316,301	$316,301
12	Richland Community College	$317,913	$310,490	$276,531	$165,637	$212,855	--	--	$1,283,426
13	Lewis & Clark Community College	$305,540	$297,650	$294,685	$278,413	$232,334	--	--	$1,408,622
14	Lake Land College*	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	$0
--	**Total**	**$3,893,534**	**$3,648,100**	**$3,896,162**	**$3,212,039**	**$3,315,470**	**$2,973,402**	**$4,534,664**	**$25,473,371**
--	*Average Grant*	*$324,461*	*$304,008*	*$324,680*	*$267,670*	*$276,289*	*$297,340*	*$412,242*	*$314,486*

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) funding data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) from a July 2024 Freedom of Information Act request (IDOT, 2024b). *Lake Land College received $1,182,506 in grant funding for its HCCTP pre-apprenticeship program between Fiscal Year 2011 and Fiscal Year 2015.

Figure 5: Pre-Apprentice Enrollment, Completions, and Placements for HCCTP Community College Providers, 2017–2023

HCCTP Community College Metrics from 2017 to 2023	Participants	Completers	Placements	Completion Rate	Placement Rate*	Placement-to-Participant Ratio
Dawson Technical Institute	220	204	68	92.7%	33.3%	30.9%
South Suburban College	433	299	182	69.1%	60.9%	42.0%
Rock Valley College	128	102	55	79.7%	53.9%	43.0%
Black Hawk College	175	148	104	84.6%	70.3%	59.4%
Kankakee Community College	206	143	40	69.4%	28.0%	19.4%
Illinois Central College	214	147	73	68.7%	49.7%	34.1%
Parkland College	205	131	78	63.9%	59.5%	38.0%
Lincoln Land Community College	366	294	242	80.3%	82.3%	66.1%
Richland Community College	119	73	20	61.3%	27.4%	16.8%
Southwestern Illinois College	127	78	47	61.4%	60.3%	37.0%
Lewis & Clark Community College	120	70	12	58.3%	17.1%	10.0%
John A. Logan College	193	148	63	76.7%	42.6%	32.6%
Shawnee Community College	40	35	16	87.5%	45.7%	40.0%
Total	**2,546**	**1,872**	**1,000**	**73.5%**	**53.4%**	**39.3%**

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) provider data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) from a July 2024 Freedom of Information Act request (IDOT, 2024b). *Placement rate is only calculated among completers.

From 2017 through 2023, Highway Construction Careers Training Program providers enrolled more than 2,500 participants, graduated nearly 1,900 participants, and helped place 1,000 of its graduates in registered apprenticeship programs or other employment-related transitions (Figure 5).[13] Three out of every four participants went on to finish the program (74 percent) and more than half of all completers found placements following the program (53 percent). The overall placement rate among all participants, including those who dropped out or were expelled from the program, was 39 percent.

Two of the most effective community college providers have been South Suburban College in South Holland and Lincoln Land College in Springfield. South Suburban College had the highest enrollment numbers (433 participants) and the most completers (299 completers), while Lincoln Land Community College was the most successful in transitioning pre-apprentices into apprenticeship and employment opportunities (242 placements) (Figure 5). Completion rates ranged from 61 percent at Richland Community College in Decatur to 93 percent at Dawson Technical Institute of Kennedy-King College within the City Colleges of Chicago. Lewis & Clark Community College in Godfrey had the lowest placement rate (17 percent) but ceased HCCTP operations in 2022, while Lincoln Land Community College enjoyed the highest placement rate of completers (82 percent).

The Illinois Department of Transportation provided information on Highway Construction Careers Training Program participants' transitions into registered apprenticeship programs from 2011 through 2023. The data, presented in Figure 6, reveal that the five registered apprenticeship programs that have matriculated the most HCCTP completers are joint labor-management programs affiliated with the laborers (26 percent), carpenters (25 percent), electricians (8 percent), ironworkers (6 percent), and operating engineers' unions (5 percent). Registered apprenticeship programs jointly administered by signatory contractors and the roofers, cement masons, plumbers and pipefitters, and teamsters' unions each accounted for between 2 and 4 percent of HCCTP placements (Figure 6).

Not all HCCTP transitions were into joint labor-management registered apprenticeship programs, however (Figure 6). About one in every 14 placements was into a direct employment opportunity, including 6 percent who worked for union contractors, 1 percent who worked for the Illinois Department of Transportation (typically as a highway maintainer performing a variety of tasks preserving and repairing roads and bridges), and less than 1 percent who worked for nonunion contractors or developers. Another 1 percent joined unions outside of the building trades, such as a transit union or teacher's union, or pursued Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training. In total, 92 percent of HCCTP transitions were into joint labor-management apprenticeship programs in the construction trades.

Metrics on program participation, completions, and placements by racial or ethnic background and by gender are presented in Figure 7. From 2017 through 2023, more than 2,500 individuals were enrolled in the Highway Construction Careers Training Program at community colleges across Illinois. The majority (56 percent) were Black, three-in-10 were white (30 percent), and one-in-10 was Hispanic (11 percent). Men accounted for 76 percent of participants and women were 21 percent, with the remainder (3 percent) either choosing not to identify their gender or stating that they were nonbinary (Figure 7).

Completion rates in the 10- to 18-week HCCTP program were high across demographic groups (Figure 7). While the program-wide completion rate was 74 percent, it ranged from 71 percent for Black participants to 81 percent for Hispanic participants. White participants had a 75 percent completion

[13] Note that all placement data is from state agencies, but is likely *undercounted*. This is because it can often take multiple years for a participant to get admitted into a registered apprenticeship program, as some do not take applications every year (e.g., elevator constructors or sheet metal workers). In addition, programs—which report the placement data to DCEO or IDOT—may not always be informed by their participants when they are admitted.

rate. By gender identification, 74 percent of men and 73 percent of women completed the program. Attrition from the program was mostly due to dropouts from students deciding the construction trades were not the right fit for them or expulsions from participants who had too many absences or late arrivals. Overall, Black trainees accounted for 54 percent of completers, Hispanic trainees were 12 percent of completers, and women comprised 21 percent of completers (Figure 7).

Figure 6: HCCTP Placements by Joint Construction Program or Other Transition, 2011–2023

HCCTP Placements by Apprenticeship Union or Other	Trade Share of Placements	Demographics of Placements				
		White	Black	Hispanic	Men	Women
Priority Placements						
Laborers	26.0%	33.7%	58.8%	7.2%	77.1%	22.9%
Carpenters District Council	24.7%	28.8%	60.5%	9.6%	81.7%	18.3%
I.B.E.W.	8.3%	29.6%	55.7%	13.9%	87.8%	12.2%
Ironworkers	5.6%	48.7%	47.4%	3.8%	83.3%	16.7%
Operating Engineers	4.5%	49.2%	42.9%	6.3%	63.5%	36.5%
Roofers	3.7%	23.5%	64.7%	9.8%	94.1%	5.9%
Cement Masons	3.5%	31.3%	64.6%	4.2%	75.0%	25.0%
Plumbers & Pipefitters	2.9%	48.8%	36.6%	14.6%	80.5%	19.5%
Teamsters	2.2%	45.2%	54.8%	0.0%	77.4%	22.6%
Sheet Metal Workers	1.9%	44.4%	33.3%	18.5%	81.5%	18.5%
Bricklayers	1.8%	20.0%	64.0%	12.0%	92.0%	8.0%
Painter's District Council	1.5%	23.8%	57.1%	19.0%	61.9%	38.1%
Millwrights	1.4%	45.0%	40.0%	15.0%	80.0%	20.0%
Heat & Frost Insulators	0.9%	30.8%	46.2%	15.4%	76.9%	23.1%
Glaziers	0.9%	58.3%	41.7%	0.0%	75.0%	25.0%
Other Building Trades Unions	2.0%	26.1%	56.5%	17.4%	73.9%	26.1%
Secondary Transitions						
Union Contractor	6.0%	14.5%	69.9%	15.7%	73.5%	26.5%
IDOT	0.9%	23.1%	61.5%	7.7%	46.2%	53.8%
Non-Building Trades Unions*	0.4%	16.7%	83.3%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
CDL Training	0.4%	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%	80.0%	20.0%
Nonunion Contractor/Company	0.4%	20.0%	80.0%	0.0%	60.0%	40.0%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2011 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) provider data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) from a July 2024 Freedom of Information Act request (IDOT, 2024b). *Non-building trades unions include public transit unions and teachers' unions.

Figure 7: HCCTP Enrollment, Completions, and Placements by Demographics, 2017–2023

HCCTP Metrics from 2017 to 2023	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Male	Female
Participants	2,546	766	1,430	282	1,942	538
Completers	1,872	578	1,017	228	1,441	392
Placements	1,000	339	558	90	795	200
Priority Placements*	919	316	509	88	716	180
Completion Rate	73.5%	75.5%	71.1%	80.9%	74.2%	72.9%
Placement Rate**	53.4%	58.7%	54.9%	39.5%	55.2%	51.0%
Placement-to-Participation Ratio	39.3%	44.3%	39.0%	31.9%	40.9%	37.2%
Share of Participants	100.0%	30.1%	56.2%	11.1%	76.3%	21.1%
Share of Completers	100.0%	30.9%	54.3%	12.2%	77.0%	20.9%
Share of Placements	100.0%	33.9%	55.8%	9.0%	79.5%	20.0%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) provider data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) from a July 2024 Freedom of Information Act request (IDOT, 2024b). *Priority placements are estimated using the historical shares of placements into joint labor-management apprenticeship programs, by demographic group, from 2011 through 2023. **Placement rate is only calculated among completers.

Finally, of the 1,000 HCCTP completers who matriculated into registered apprenticeship programs or otherwise transitioned into employment opportunities, 56 percent were Black, 34 percent were white, and 9 percent were Hispanic (Figure 7). Men accounted for 80 percent and women accounted for 20 percent. This translated into placement rates of 59 percent for white completers, 55 percent for Black completers, 39 percent for Hispanic completers, 55 percent for male completers, and 51 percent for female completers. Including those who did not complete the program, white participants had the highest share of placements from start-to-finish (44 percent) while Hispanic participants had the lowest (32 percent).

Perhaps most importantly, the data also allows for estimates on priority placement metrics by demographic group (Figure 7). Figure 7 uses the historical 92 percent share of placements into joint labor-management registered apprenticeship programs since 2011 and applies it to the 1,000 placements between 2017 and 2023. As a result, joint labor-management registered apprenticeship programs took in more than 300 white completers from the HCCTP program from 2017 through 2023. Joint programs also enrolled an estimated 500 Black HCCTP completers and nearly 90 Hispanic HCCTP completers. By gender identification, joint programs enrolled more than 700 men and about 180 women who graduated from the HCCTP program between 2017 and 2023 (Figure 7).

Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Metrics

Over the three-year period from 2022 through 2024, the State of Illinois invested $40.2 million into the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program through DCEO grants (Figure 8). Funding was distributed to 42 distinct nonprofit, community college, and industry providers across the state, including 35 organizations that enrolled participants in 2024. Average grant amounts were about $409,000 in Fiscal Year 2022, $424,000 in Fiscal Year 2023, and $517,000 in Fiscal Year 2024. The largest recipient of Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program funding has been SkillsUSA Illinois, Inc. (or Illinois Foundation of Skills) in Pekin, which is a project of the Youth Workforce Development Foundation that has received $2.4 million in funding since 2022. Rincon Family Services in Chicago has also received more than $2 million in funding ($2.2 million).

From 2022 through 2024, Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program providers received about 3,900 applications and enrolled over 3,300 participants (Figure 9). Nearly 1,600 participants graduated, and more than 1,100 graduates were placed in registered apprenticeship programs or other employment-related transitions.[14] About half of all participants completed the program (48 percent) and seven-in-10 completers found placements following the program (71 percent). The overall placement rate among all participants, including those who dropped out or were expelled, was 34 percent. Notably, both the completion rate and the placement-to-participation ratio improved each year from 2022 to 2024 (Figure 9).

Metrics on program participation, completions, and placements by racial or ethnic background and by gender are presented in Figure 10. From 2022 through 2024, six-in-10 participants were Black (62 percent) and two-in-10 were Hispanic (18 percent). Another 15 percent were white. Men accounted for

[14] Note that all placement data is from state agencies, but is likely *undercounted*. This is because it can often take multiple years for a participant to get admitted into a registered apprenticeship program, as some do not take applications every year (e.g., elevator constructors or sheet metal workers). In addition, programs—which report the placement data to DCEO or IDOT—may not always be informed by their participants when they are admitted. Pre-apprenticeship program providers notified the authors of this study that they sometimes find out two or three years later that a candidate was accepted into a joint labor-management apprenticeship program.

76 percent of participants and women were 23 percent, with the remainder (1 percent) either choosing not to identify their gender or stating that they were nonbinary (Figure 10).

Figure 8: DCEO Grant Funding to Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Providers, 2022–2024

#	ILW Pre-Apprenticeship Grant Award by Grantee	2022	2023	2024	Total
1	Associated Builders & Contractors, Illinois Chapter, Inc.	--	$239,803	$165,000	$404,803
2	Awaken Foundation	--	--	$195,000	$195,000
3	Bethel Family Resource Center	$400,000	$400,000	$440,000	$1,240,000
4	Black United Fund of Illinois, Inc.		$500,000	--	$500,000
5	Chicago Women in Trades	$500,437	$500,352	$770,343	$1,771,132
6	Chicagoland Prison Outreach	--	--	$550,000	$550,000
7	Children First Fund	$250,000	$250,000	$250,000	$750,000
8	Community Assistance Programs	$493,794	$580,637	$656,639	$1,731,070
9	Community Development Institute	$500,000	$500,000	$550,000	$1,550,000
10	Danville Area Community College	--	$302,000	$550,000	$852,000
11	EDDR Foundation: Chicago	$500,000	$500,000	$550,000	$1,550,000
12	EDDR Foundation: Rockford	$400,000	$400,000	$440,000	$1,240,000
13	HIRE360	$550,000	$550,000	$550,000	$1,650,000
14	Hispanic American Construction Industry Association	$500,000	$551,613	$550,000	$1,601,613
15	IL Foundation of SkillsUSA	$500,000	$600,000	$1,301,000	$2,401,000
16	Impact Global Inc	--	$400,000	--	$400,000
17	Lewis University - Joliet	--	--	$550,000	$550,000
18	Lumity	$170,673	$200,000	$330,000	$700,673
19	Macon County	$499,832	$450,000	$429,000	$1,378,832
20	Metropolitan Family Services	$500,000	$500,000	$550,000	$1,550,000
21	Metropolitan Family Services - North	--	--	$550,000	$550,000
22	National Latino Education Institute	--	$300,000	--	$300,000
23	Project H.O.O.D. Communities Development Corporation	--	$500,000	$250,000	$750,000
24	Quad County Urban League	$397,978	--	$330,145	$728,123
25	Rebuilding Exchange	$535,514	$550,000	$550,000	$1,635,514
26	Revolution Workshop	$200,320	$200,000	$220,000	$620,320
27	Richland Community College	--	$450,000	$495,000	$945,000
28	Rincon Family Services	--	$500,000	$1,650,000	$2,150,000
29	Rock Island County	--	--	$195,000	$195,000
30	Safer Foundation	$500,000	--	--	$500,000
31	Sista Girls & Friends, Inc	$500,000	$550,000	$880,000	$1,930,000
32	South Suburban Community Services	$436,000	--	--	$436,000
33	Southwestern Illinois College	$240,000	$295,072	$355,542	$890,614
34	St. Augustine College - Aurora	--	$500,000	$549,999	$1,049,999
35	St. Augustine College - Grayslake	--	$500,000	$549,900	$1,049,900
36	St. Paul Church of God in Christ Community Ministries	$250,000	--	--	$250,000
37	Teens Against Killing Everywhere	--	$400,000	$440,000	$840,000
38	Tools Up Foundation	$326,587	$264,000	--	$590,587
39	Women's Innovation Group	--	--	$260,000	$260,000
40	YBLC, Inc	$250,000	$300,000	$330,000	$880,000
41	YMCA - Buehler Fry	--	--	$550,000	$550,000
42	YMCA - South Side	--	--	$550,000	$550,000
--	**Total**	**$9,401,135**	**$12,733,477**	**$18,082,569**	**$40,217,180**
--	*Average Grant*	*$408,745*	*$424,449*	*$516,645*	*$457,013*

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2022 through 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship funding data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from a July 2024 Freedom of Information Act request (DCEO, 2025a).

Figure 9: Illinois Works Enrollment, Completions, and Placements by Year, 2022–2024

ILW Pre-Apprenticeship Program Metrics from 2022 to 2024	Jan 2022 – June 2022	July 2022 – June 2023	July 2023 – June 2024	2022-2024 Totals
Applicants	859	1,640	1,429	3,928
Participants	734	1,331	1,247	3,312
Completers	185	609	800	1,594
Placements	98	478	558	1,134
*Priority Placements**	*98*	*423*	*476*	*997*
Acceptance Rate	85.4%	81.2%	87.3%	84.3%
Completion Rate	25.2%	45.8%	64.2%	48.1%
Placement Rate**	53.0%	78.5%	69.8%	71.1%
Placement-to-Participation Ratio	13.4%	35.9%	44.7%	34.2%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2022 through 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship provider data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from a July 2024 Freedom of Information Act request (DCEO, 2025a). *Priority placements are those in joint labor-management programs. **Placement rate is only calculated among completers.

Only about half of all participants completed the six- to 12-week Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, regardless of demographic group (Figure 10). While the program-wide completion rate was 48 percent in the first three years, it ranged from 46 percent for Black participants to 55 percent for white participants. Hispanic participants had a 51 percent completion rate. By gender, 47 percent of men and 53 percent of women completed the program. Overall, Black trainees accounted for 59 percent of completers, Hispanic trainees were 19 percent of completers, and women comprised 26 percent of completers.

Figure 10: Illinois Works Enrollment, Completions, Placements by Demographics, 2022–2024

Illinois Works Metrics from 2022 to 2024	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Men	Women
Applicants	3,928	587	2,477	654	2,958	903
Participants	3,312	508	2,054	607	2,522	768
Completers	1,594	278	940	308	1,183	407
Placements	1,134	233	657	194	850	282
*Priority Placements**	*997*	*211*	*580*	*166*	*749*	*247*
Acceptance Rate	84.3%	86.5%	82.9%	92.8%	85.3%	85.0%
Completion Rate	48.1%	54.7%	45.8%	50.7%	46.9%	53.0%
Placement Rate**	71.1%	83.8%	69.9%	63.0%	71.9%	69.3%
Placement-to-Participation Ratio	34.2%	45.9%	32.0%	32.0%	33.7%	36.7%
Share of Participants	100.0%	15.3%	62.0%	18.3%	76.1%	23.2%
Share of Completers	100.0%	17.4%	59.0%	19.3%	74.2%	25.5%
Share of Placements	100.0%	20.5%	57.9%	17.1%	75.0%	24.9%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2022 through 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship provider data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from a July 2024 Freedom of Information Act request (DCEO, 2025a). *Priority placements are those in joint labor-management programs. **Placement rate is only calculated among completers.

Of the more than 1,100 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program completers who earned placements into registered apprenticeship programs or secondary transitions, 58 percent were Black, 21 percent were white, and 17 percent were Hispanic (Figure 10). Fully 75 percent were men and 25 percent were women. Accordingly, overall placement rates were 84 percent for white completers, 70 percent for Black completers, 63 percent for Hispanic completers, 72 percent for male completers, and 69 percent for female completers. The placement-to-participation ratio, which includes those who either dropped out or were expelled from the program, ranged from 32 percent for Hispanic trainees to 46 percent for white trainees.

Among placements or secondary transitions, 88 percent were into registered apprenticeship programs (Figure 10). Of the nearly 1,000 placements into joint labor-management registered apprenticeship programs between 2022 and 2024, about 600 were Black graduates and more than 160 were Hispanic graduates. Joint programs enrolled about 750 men and nearly 250 women who graduated from the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program between 2022 and 2024.

Financial Metrics of the Two Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

Figure 11 assesses the finances of pre-apprenticeship programs over the most recent three-year period. From the 2021 through 2023 academic years, Highway Construction Careers Training Program providers received $10.8 million in Illinois Department of Transportation grant funding to train more than 800 participants, of whom nearly 600 graduated. Consequently, the Highway Construction Careers Training Program invested almost $13,000 per participant from the fall of 2021 to the spring of 2024. For placement into a registered apprenticeship program or other employment-related transition, HCCTP providers spent about $35,000 in grant funding.

Although a newer initiative, the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program—which is funded with State dollars—had an investment that was about four times larger than the Highway Construction Careers Training Program—which is funded with Federal Highway Administration dollars—over a similar three-year period (Figure 11). From January 2022 through June 2024, Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program providers received $40.2 million in Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity grant funding to train more than 3,330 participants, of whom nearly 1,600 graduated. Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program providers invested $12,000 in grant funding per participant and just over $35,000 per placement. Ultimately, the data reveal that pre-apprenticeship programs required grant investments of between $12,000 and $13,000 per participant over the last three years (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Three-Year Financial Performance Metrics of the Two Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

Three-Year Financial Performance Metrics	Highway Construction Careers Training Program	Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program
Grants (Awards)	$10,823,536	$40,217,180
Participants	836	3,312
Completers	585	1,594
Placements	308	1,134
Grant Investment Per Participant	**$12,947**	**$12,143**
Grant Investment Per Completer	**$18,502**	**$25,230**
Grant Investment Per Placement	**$35,141**	**$35,465**
Years	AY21 – AY23	FY22 – FY24

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2021 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and 2022 through 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from two July 2024 Freedom of Information Act requests (IDOT, 2024b; DCEO, 2025a).

Note that Figure 11 only displays the taxpayer-funded grant amount per participant. Pre-apprenticeship programs at Illinois' community colleges also receive either direct financial support or in-kind assistance from the community college provider. For example, administrative costs and occupancy costs for HCCTP programs may be covered by general community college operations, rather than an IDOT grant. Likewise, pre-apprenticeship programs at community-based organizations receive

matching support from their nonprofits, which often provide many other services.[15] In other words, the actual investment per participant is higher than the amounts shown in Figure 11.

To understand the total investment per participant, Figure 12 displays data from a sample of Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program providers. In responding to a FOIA request, DCEO provided Periodic Financial Reports (PFRs) submitted to the Department by 26 providers in 2024. These 26 providers received 89 percent of the total grant funding and enrolled 89 percent of all program participants in 2024.[16]

In total, these programs budgeted $19.0 million in total expenditures over the year (Figure 12). Instructor and staff salaries, fringe benefits, and direct administrative costs were the largest expense at $6.9 million (more than $6,000 per participant), which represented 36 percent of total expenditures. Contractual services and subawards accounted for another $3.5 million (more than $3,000 per participant), or 18 percent of total expenditures. This category includes companies and organizations that contract with the provider to perform actual instructional services, as many community-based nonprofits provide an array of services and may not specialize in workforce readiness training. Consulting services, occupancy costs, equipment and supplies, telecommunications, and staff education and travel each accounted for between 1 percent and 4 percent of total expenditures. "Miscellaneous costs" amounted to $5.7 million (29 percent)—or $5,000 per participant—because stipends paid to program participants are covered under this budgeted line-item expense (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Annual Budgets of 26 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Providers, 2024

Illinois Works Budgeted Expense: Periodic Financial Reports (PFRs)	FY2024 Total	Average Program	Average Per Participant	Share of Expenditures
Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Direct Administration	$6,895,388	$265,207	$6,223	36.3%
Contractual Services and Subawards	$3,506,169	$134,853	$3,164	18.5%
Consultant (Professional Services)	$640,528	$24,636	$578	3.4%
Occupancy (Rent & Utilities)	$607,664	$23,372	$548	3.2%
Equipment and Supplies	$703,893	$27,073	$635	3.7%
Telecommunications	$124,484	$4,788	$112	0.7%
Staff Training, Education, and Travel	$178,176	$6,853	$161	0.9%
Miscellaneous Costs	$5,565,569	$214,060	$5,023	29.3%
Other and Indirect Costs	$763,075	$29,349	$689	4.0%
Total Expenditures	**$18,984,945**	**$730,190**	**$17,134**	**100.0%**
Total Grant Funding (26 Programs)	*$11,315,477*	*$435,211*	*$10,213*	--
Grant Share	*59.6%*	*59.6%*	*59.6%*	--
Provider Share (Match)	*40.4%*	*40.4%*	*40.4%*	--

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2024 Periodic Financial Reports (PFRs) submitted to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) for 26 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship providers with complete information, obtained a July 2024 Freedom of Information Act request (DCEO, 2025a).

Periodic Financial Reports (PFRs) in the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program reveal that the total investment equated to a little over $17,000 per participant in 2024 (Figure 12). State grants covered 60 percent of total costs, with nonprofits, community colleges, and local governments delivering a 40 percent match on average. The takeaway is that these two pre-apprenticeship programs require *both*

[15] For examples, see the Provider Case Studies in the Appendix.

[16] Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program providers received $12.7 million in funding in Fiscal Year 2023, which was generally used in 2024 to train 1,247 participants. The 26 providers with PFR data received $11.3 million in funding (88.9 percent) and trained 1,108 participants in 2024 (88.9 percent).

taxpayer funding and supplemental support via fundraising from the community, donations from industry stakeholders, or the institutional backing of community colleges or local governments.

Impact of the Two Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

The Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program have had noticeable effects on Illinois' registered apprenticeship programs in the construction industry (Figure 13). Between 2017 and 2024, construction apprenticeship programs enrolled more than 40,000 new apprentices. HCCTP completers accounted for more than 900 of these apprentices (2 percent) and Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program completers accounted for nearly 1,000 of the new apprentices (3 percent). As a result, at least 5 percent of all new construction apprentices in Illinois between 2017 and 2024 were graduates of one of these two pre-apprenticeship programs.

Impacts have been largest for Black and women pre-apprentices (Dougherty, 2025). The number of Black completers who entered construction apprenticeship programs was about 500 from the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and nearly 600 from the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program. These two pre-apprenticeship programs thus accounted for at least 35 percent of all incoming Black construction apprentices between 2017 and 2024. Similarly, just under 200 women who completed the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and more than 200 women who completed the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program were enrolled in construction apprenticeship programs. With construction apprenticeship programs newly enrolling 2,000 women, these two pre-apprenticeship programs were responsible for at least 21 percent of all incoming female construction apprentices between 2017 and 2024. By contrast, the two programs represented 2 percent of white enrollees, 3 percent of Hispanic enrollees, and 4 percent of male enrollees in registered apprenticeship programs in the construction industry (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Impact of HCCTP and IL Works on New Construction Apprentices in Illinois, 2017–2024

Program Impact	HCCTP Placements (2017-2023)	Illinois Works Placements (2022-2024)	New Construction Apprentices (2017-2024)	HCCTP Share of Placements	Illinois Works Share of Placements	Both Share of Placements
White	316	211	24,315	1.3%	0.9%	2.2%
Black	509	580	3,147	16.2%	18.4%	34.6%
Hispanic	88	166	8,334	1.1%	2.0%	3.0%
Male	716	749	37,734	1.9%	2.0%	3.9%
Female	180	247	2,023	8.9%	12.2%	21.1%
Total	**919**	**997**	**40,079**	**2.3%**	**2.5%**	**4.8%**

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and 2022 through 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from two July 2024 Freedom of Information Act requests as well as from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) for new apprentices enrolled in programs located in Illinois in the construction and utilities industries (IDOT, 2024b; DCEO, 2025a; ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a).

Figure 14 utilizes the data to illustrate the influence of the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program from a slightly different perspective. The table shows the shares of new construction apprentices from 2017 through 2024 by demographic group and compares them with the breakdown of all enrollees who did *not* graduate from either pre-apprenticeship program. Contrasting actual results with data on individuals who get admitted without the two programs uncovers the industrywide impact of pre-apprenticeship.

Once again, the impacts are largest for Black apprentices and women apprentices (Figure 14). Excluding the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, only 5 percent of new construction apprentices were Black and 4 percent were women. However, these two pre-apprenticeship programs lifted incoming construction apprentice cohorts to 8 percent Black and 5 percent female. The Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program increased the share of construction apprentices who were Black by 3 percentage points and the share who were women by 1 percentage point. The two programs had little effect on the Hispanic share of new construction apprentices (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Impact of HCCTP and IL Works on Demographic Shares of New Apprentices, 2017–2024

Program Impact (2017-2024)	New Apprentices Share	New Apprentice Share without Two Programs	Two-Program Difference
White	60.7%	62.3%	-1.7%
Black	7.9%	5.4%	+2.5%
Hispanic	20.8%	21.2%	-0.4%
Male	94.1%	95.0%	-0.9%
Female	5.0%	4.2%	+0.9%
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**±0.0%**
Total New Apprentices	*40,079*	*38,163*	*+1,892*

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and 2022 through 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from two July 2024 Freedom of Information Act requests as well as 2017 through 2024 data from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) for new apprentices enrolled in programs located in Illinois in the construction and utilities industries (IDOT, 2024b; DCEO, 2025a; ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a).

Figure 15: Construction Apprentice Enrollment by Demographics and Selected Year, 2017–2024

Newly Enrolled Construction Apprentices	2017	2022	2024	Change: 2017 to 2024	Change: 2022 to 2024
New Apprentices Enrolled	4,080	5,496	6,202	+52.0%	+12.8%
White	2,469	3,283	3,340	+35.3%	+1.7%
Black	272	405	531	+95.2%	+31.1%
Hispanic	712	1,279	1,492	+109.6%	+16.7%
Men	3,953	5,135	5,716	+44.6%	+11.3%
Women	126	293	381	+202.4%	+30.0%
Share of New Apprentices	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	±0.0%	±0.0%
White	60.5%	59.7%	53.9%	-6.7%	-5.8%
Black	6.7%	7.4%	8.6%	+1.9%	+1.2%
Hispanic	17.5%	23.3%	24.1%	+6.6%	+0.8%
Men	96.9%	93.4%	92.2%	-4.7%	-1.2%
Women	3.1%	5.3%	6.1%	+3.1%	+0.8%

Source(s): Authors' analysis 2017 through 2024 data from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) for new apprentices enrolled in programs located in Illinois in the construction and utilities industries (ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a).

Annual data from the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration's (DOLETA) Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) corroborates this finding (Figure 15). In 2024, registered apprenticeship programs in the construction industry enrolled about 6,200 new apprentices, a growth of 52 percent over 2017 levels. While the number of new white construction apprentices increased by 35 percent, new apprentices doubled for Black enrollees (95

percent) and Hispanic enrollees (110 percent). New female construction apprentices tripled, growing by 202 percent, while the number of new men enrolled increased by 45 percent. As a result, the share of new construction apprentices who are Black increased by 1 percentage point and the share who are women increased by 2 percentage points from 2017 to 2024 (Figure 15).

The annual enrollment data from RAPIDS shows the effect of the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program in particular. The first Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program sessions were in 2022, with most placements from that cohort occurring in the following year. Consequently, Figure 15 includes new construction apprentice enrollments from 2022 through 2024. During that timeframe, annual new enrollments grew by 13 percent overall, but by 31 percent for Black construction apprentices and 30 percent for female construction apprentices. Hispanic construction apprentices increased by 17 percent while white enrollments went up by 2 percent. As portions of all new construction apprentices annually, the Black, Hispanic, and women shares each improved by 1 percentage point (Figure 15).

The Return on Investment (ROI) Per Pre-Apprentice

Since 2017, more than 1,900 pre-apprenticeship completers have proceeded into "priority placements" as enrollees in joint labor-management registered apprenticeship programs (Figure 16). Data from the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration shows that these programs pay between $24 and $26 per hour to first-year apprentices and between $49 and $52 per hour to apprentices who have completed their training. Based on 2017 through 2024 apprenticeship completion by racial or ethnic background and by gender identification, the data also suggests that 56 percent of pre-apprenticeship placements are likely to go on to graduate from their joint labor-management programs (Figure 16).[17]

Figure 16: HCCTP and IL Works Apprenticeship Placements, Wages, and Completion Rates

Pre-Apprenticeship Placements	Priority Placements	Starting Wage	Exit Wage	Apprenticeship Completion Rate
Total or Weighted Average*	1,916	$24.49	$49.35	55.6%
White	527	$24.39	$49.47	67.2%
Black	1,089	$24.19	$48.74	46.2%
Hispanic	254	$25.93	$51.70	69.9%
Men	1,465	$24.72	$49.46	64.9%
Women	427	$24.57	$48.97	55.4%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and 2022 through 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from two July 2024 Freedom of Information Act requests as well as from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) for new apprentices enrolled in programs located in Illinois in the construction and utilities industries (IDOT, 2024b; DCEO, 2025a; ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a). *The weighted average is determined using placement data by racial and ethnic background.

Figure 17 shows the average expected annual wage incomes of pre-apprenticeship placements who enroll in joint labor-management programs. In their first year, registered apprentices who work approximately 1,500 on-the-job hours earn about $37,000 annually—ranging from $36,000 for Black apprentices to $39,000 for Hispanic apprentices. Subsequently, pre-apprentices who go on to complete registered apprenticeship programs would be expected to earn nearly $81,000 in annual wage income.

[17] See also Figure 2 and Figure 3. Note that this analysis assumes that pre-apprenticeship completers will have similar completion rates in joint labor-management programs as those who did not participate in pre-apprenticeship programs. This could be a *conservative* assumption because pre-apprenticeship completers may be more likely to complete registered apprenticeships since their pre-apprenticeship program gave them prior exposure to the construction trades.

Journeyworker earnings range from about $72,000 per year for Black workers in the trades to $94,000 per year for Hispanic workers in the trades, a difference that is mostly driven by historically higher unemployment rates among Black construction and extraction workers in Illinois and across the country relative to other racial or ethnic backgrounds.

Figure 17: Career Outcomes of Pre-Apprentices Who Complete Apprenticeships in Current Dollars

Expected Incomes of Pre-Apprenticeship Placements	Year 2: First Year Income	Unemployment Rate (2014-2023)	Hours Worked Last Week (2014-2023)	Year 10: Ninth Year Income
Weighted Average*	$36,732	21.3%	40.1	$80,887
White	$36,585	9.3%	39.8	$92,894
Black	$36,285	30.7%	40.8	$71,610
Hispanic	$38,895	8.2%	38.1	$94,069
Men	$37,080	10.9%	39.4	$90,373
Women	$36,855	10.3%	37.3	$85,190

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and 2022 through 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from two July 2024 Freedom of Information Act requests as well as from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) for new apprentices enrolled in programs located in Illinois in the construction and utilities industries and 2014 through 2023 data from the *Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Groups* (CPS-ORG) for Illinois workers employed in construction and extraction occupations, which is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau and provided in a user-friendly format by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) (IDOT, 2024b; DCEO, 2025a; ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a; EPI, 2024). Since most apprenticeships require 6,000 hours of on-the-job training, the analysis assumes that registered apprentices are employed 1,500 hours each year over four years. Ninth year incomes are calculated by multiplying exit wages, weekly hours worked, and 52 weeks together and then multiplying that value by the expected "employment rate," which is 100 percent minus the unemployment rate. *The weighted average is determined using placement data by racial and ethnic background.

Figure 18: Return on Taxpayer Investment Metrics of Illinois' Pre-Apprentices in Current Dollars

Return on Investment (ROI) of Grant Funding for Pre-Apprenticeship Placements	Funding Per Placement	Year 2: First Year Apprentice Earnings	Year 5: Expected Apprentice Earnings*	Year 10: Expected Nine Year Earnings*	ROI: Year 2*	ROI: Year 5*	ROI: Year 10*
Weighted Average**	$35,310	$36,732	$129,036	$353,740	+4.0%	+265.4%	+901.8%
White	$35,271	$36,585	$148,261	$460,385	+3.7%	+320.4%	+1,205.3%
Black	$35,314	$36,285	$112,096	$277,514	+2.8%	+217.4%	+685.9%
Hispanic	$35,353	$38,895	$160,988	$489,759	+10.0%	+355.4%	+1,285.4%
Men	$35,307	$37,080	$145,401	$438,660	+5.0%	+311.8%	+1,142.4%
Women	$35,328	$36,855	$128,523	$364,499	+4.3%	+263.8%	+931.7%

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and 2022 through 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from two July 2024 Freedom of Information Act requests as well as from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) for new apprentices enrolled in programs located in Illinois in the construction and utilities industries and 2014 through 2023 data from the *Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Groups* (CPS-ORG) for Illinois workers employed in construction and extraction occupations, which is collected by the U.S. Census Bureau and provided in a user-friendly format by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) (IDOT, 2024b; DCEO, 2025a; ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a; EPI, 2024). Since most apprenticeships require 6,000 hours of on-the-job training, the analysis assumes that registered apprentices are employed 1,500 hours each year over four years. *These expected earnings values also account for attrition rates from joint labor-management apprenticeship programs. The analysis assumes that apprentice dropouts all occur after one year of training, and that every other apprentices completes training; in other words, income from wages is multiplied by the apprenticeship completion rate starting after one year. Apprentices are assumed to earn 62.5 percent, 75 percent, and 87.5 percent of their exit wages in years two through four. Years five through nine as journeyworkers are calculated by multiplying exit wages, weekly hours worked, 52 weeks, the expected "employment rate," and the apprenticeship completion rate all together. **The weighted average is determined using placement data by racial and ethnic background.

These values can be utilized to estimate the return on investment for each pre-apprentice participant in Illinois (Figure 18). Calculating a return on investment, however, requires that apprenticeship completion rates be accounted for. This analysis thus assumes that pre-apprentices who are placed in joint labor-management programs complete at least one year of training and that those who drop out do so after the first year. All other apprentices are assumed to complete their training, earning graduated wage rates as they work an average of 1,500 hours in each of their second, third, and fourth years. Then, those apprentice completers are presumed to work annual hours that are consistent with historical averages based on weekly hours worked from 2014 through 2023 as well as 10-year unemployment rates.

Illinois pre-apprenticeship programs offer positive returns on investment (Figure 18). While pre-apprenticeship placements require average public investments of just over $35,000, those workers earn about $37,000 in annual incomes in the first year as registered apprentices in joint labor-management programs. Accordingly, Illinois' pre-apprenticeship programs have a 4 percent initial return on investment in year two—or one year for pre-apprenticeship training and applications plus one year of post-admittance apprenticeship training. The initial ROI is positive across the board: 4 percent for white participants, 3 percent for Black participants, 10 percent for Hispanic participants, 5 percent for male participants, and 4 percent for female participants.

Illinois pre-apprenticeship programs deliver considerably larger returns on investment after multiple years (Figure 18). By year five, when participants have either completed four years of apprenticeship training or dropped out of their apprenticeship programs, expected cumulative incomes total between $112,000 and $161,000 in current dollars—with an average of $129,000 in earnings. The result is a 265 percent ROI for the average pre-apprentice participant, with a range of 217 percent to 355 percent depending on demographics. Furthermore, by year 10 after participants have completed their apprenticeship training and worked for five years as union journeyworkers, expected total earnings amount to $354,000 in current dollars, which is 10 times the original grant investment or a return on investment of over 900 percent. ROIs after 10 years are high regardless of background: nearly 700 percent for Black participants, over 1,200 percent for white and Hispanic participants, more than 1,100 percent for male participants, and more than 900 percent for female participants.

Implications for Clean Energy Pre-Apprenticeship Programs

The Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program have invested a combined $66 million from grant funding since 2017. Together, they have trained nearly 5,900 participants over that time, graduating about 3,500 participants (59 percent). More than 2,200 completers—the majority of whom are people of color and women—have transitioned into registered apprenticeship programs and other employment opportunities, expanding qualified labor supply pools for Illinois' construction industry.

These findings may have implications for the clean energy pre-apprenticeship programs that were created under the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) and which received state grants in 2024 to start providing services. The Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program is modeled off the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program and delivered $13.6 million in funding to support three regional hubs in

northern Illinois, central Illinois, and southern Illinois (Figure 19).[18] Based on the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program financial metrics, this investment is likely to result in about 1,100 new pre-apprentice participants and at least 400 new placements annually (Figure 20).[19]

Figure 19: Announced DCEO Grant Funding to CEJA Pre-Apprenticeship Programs in 2024

#	CEJA Pre-Apprenticeship Program	Region	2024 Funding
--	*Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program*	*Totals*	*$13,636,858*
1	548 Foundation	Chicago Metro and Northern Illinois	$4,839,193
2	HIRE360	Central and Southern Illinois	$8,797,665
--	*CEJA Workforce Hubs*	*Totals*	*$27,253,446*
1	Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership	Chicago South, Southwest, and West	$6,531,229
2	Safer Foundation	Chicago South	$1,585,271
3	The Workforce Connection	Rockford	$1,585,271
4	Parkland College	Champaign	$3,288,741
5	Lewis & Clark Community College	Alton	$1,491,788
6	548 Foundation	Chicago South and West	$998,777
7	College of DuPage	Aurora	$3,040,780
8	Joliet Junior College	Joliet	$3,051,486
9	College of Lake County	Waukegan	$3,086,111
10	Richland Community College	Decatur	$2,593,992

Source(s): Authors' analysis of "CEJA Grants as of July 8, 2024" from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (DCEO, 2024b).

Figure 20: Potential Impact of DCEO Grant Funding to CEJA Pre-Apprenticeship Programs, 2024

Column	Metric	Math	Value
A	Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Funding (2024)	--	$13,636,858
B	Illinois Works Grant Investment Per Participant (2022-2024)	--	$12,143
C	Illinois Works Grant Investment Per Placement (2022-2024)	--	$35,465
D	Potential Climate Works Participants*	A÷B	1,123
E	Potential Climate Works Placements*	A÷C	385
F	CEJA Workforce Hubs Program Funding (2024)	--	$27,253,446
G	HCCTP Grant Investment Per Participant (2021-2023)	--	$12,947
H	HCCTP Grant Investment Per Placement (2021-2023)	--	$35,141
I	Potential CEJA Workforce Hubs Participants*	F÷G	2,105
J	Potential CEJA Workforce Hubs Placements*	F÷H	776
K	Total Potential CEJA Pre-Apprenticeship Participants*	D+I	3,228
L	Total Potential CEJA Pre-Apprenticeship Placements*	E+J	1,161

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and 2022 through 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from two July 2024 Freedom of Information Act requests as well as "CEJA Grants as of July 8, 2024" from DCEO (IDOT, 2024b; DCEO, 2025a; DCEO, 2024b). *Estimates assume similar program costs and effectiveness as the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program and the HCCTP.

The Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program aims to create 13 CEJA Workforce Hubs and includes elements of the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program and Highway Construction Careers

[18] HIRE360, which currently provides Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program training in the Chicago metropolitan area, was selected to expand its operations and deliver clean energy pre-apprenticeship training through two new regional hubs in central Illinois and southern Illinois. For more, see the "Provider Case Study: HIRE360" in the Appendix.

[19] This analysis assumes, however, that State grant funding will continue at current levels despite an expected decline of more than 50 percent in overall clean energy investments through 2035 in Illinois and across the United States following passage of the federal 2025 budget reconciliation legislation, which repeals certain climate provisions from the Inflation Reduction Act and phases out clean energy tax credits (King et al., 2025; Energy Innovation, 2025).

Training Program but adopts its own "Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework." In 2024, DCEO distributed $27.3 million funding to providers for 10 CEJA Workforce Hubs, including six community colleges (Figure 19). Three of those community colleges—Parkland College in Champaign, Richland Community College in Decatur, and Lewis & Clark Community College in Godfrey—have been HCCTP providers.

There are two concerns with the CEJA Workforce Hubs. First, Richland Community College and Lewis & Clark Community College both ceased HCCTP operations after 2021, and had the two lowest completion rates (61 percent and 58 percent, respectively) of the 13 community colleges providing HCCTP services since 2017 (Figure 5). These two community colleges, Parkland College, and the three other new providers—the College of DuPage, Joliet Junior College, and the College of Lake County—will need to deliver better outcomes to have a similar (or better) impact as the existing HCCTP and Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Programs.

The second concern is that the "Clean Jobs Curriculum Framework" requires specialized training in a clean energy job-specific area. These include solar photovoltaic training, energy auditor training, weatherization training, HVAC training, construction and building inspection training, hybrid and electric vehicle technician training, or wind turbine construction and maintenance training. While specialization can be beneficial to the clean energy industry specifically, it can reduce the appeal of these pre-apprentices to all employers more broadly, resulting in lower-paying opportunities. For example, a worker receiving solar photovoltaic training may be able to secure employment installing solar panels on residential rooftops but may not be able to repair electrical lines in schools, to install streetlights for cities, or to work at nuclear plants owned by utility companies. Union electricians, on the other hand, are trained to perform the full scope of electrical work, which increases their bargaining power in the labor market, and thus their hourly wage and fringe benefits, relative to nonunion solar installers. The Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3)—which is one of the two curricula that participants of the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program and Highway Construction Careers Training Program are required to receive—aims to prepare pre-apprentices for joint labor-management apprenticeship programs but is not required in the Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program.

Nevertheless, if the CEJA Workforce Hubs can match the effectiveness of the Highway Construction Careers Training Program overall, the state's investment could create about 2,100 new pre-apprenticeship openings across multiple sessions annually and produce at least 800 new placements per year. Note that, in May 2025, 541 participants were already actively enrolled in ongoing sessions (Schoenberg, 2025). In total, the data suggests that the two clean energy pre-apprenticeship programs initiated under CEJA could create 3,200 new pre-apprenticeships and at least 1,200 new registered apprenticeship placements each year (Figure 20).[20]

[20] This analysis assumes, however, that State grant funding will continue at current levels despite an expected decline of more than 50 percent in overall clean energy investments through 2035 in Illinois and across the United States following passage of the federal 2025 budget reconciliation legislation, which repeals certain climate provisions from the Inflation Reduction Act and phases out clean energy tax credits (King et al., 2025; Energy Innovation, 2025).

From Their Perspective: The Stories of 25 Pre-Apprentices

Many participants of pre-apprenticeship programs express appreciation for their training. To understand their perspectives, qualitative data was collected using interviews from five different pre-apprenticeship program providers in Illinois. Two of the provider organizations were part of the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and three were involved with the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program. All information was publicly available on the provider organizations' websites or social media channels, including participant names, demographic information, previous employment occupations or industries, and placement unions or employers.

In total, 25 pre-apprentice testimonials were ascertained (Figure 21).[21] While this is a nonrepresentative sample, it does illuminate experiences of individuals who come from all types of backgrounds and participate in these programs. In total, the case study includes perspectives from 18 men (72 percent) and seven women (28 percent) as well as 14 Black participants (56 percent) and eight Hispanic participants (32 percent).[22] By location, 20 resided in Chicago or its suburbs (80 percent) and the other five were based Downstate (20 percent). All 25 successfully matriculated into joint labor-management registered apprenticeship programs, including seven training to become electricians (28 percent), five to become plumbers, pipefitters, or sprinkler fitters (20 percent), and four to become carpenters (16 percent) (Figure 21).

Some participants provided details about their previous jobs, including those who earned at or slightly above the adult minimum wage as fast-food workers, cashiers, or in the nonunion residential segment of the construction industry (Figure 21). Others worked as warehouse workers or as delivery drivers (including for the U.S. Postal Service), but careers in the unionized construction trades offered upward economic mobility. Managers, real estate agents, and chemists even decided to change professions via pre-apprenticeship programs, finding enjoyment in working with their hands and with heavy machinery.

There were three common themes present across the 25 success stories. First, participants celebrated the impact of pre-apprenticeship programs on their personal finances and ability to earn family-sustaining incomes. One participant stated that "my life has completely changed" due to the Highway Construction Careers Training Program, noting "I have a chance to have a career that will help me thrive and be able to provide a better life to both my family and myself." Another reported that "being in the trades has changed my life. I love going to work. I'm excited and engaged daily. I no longer dread the 'nine-to-five' for less than it costs to raise a family." A working mother said, "I knew after having my first child that I wanted a good life for her and me. I had to do something to better our lives. Getting into debt from college loans was not an option." After successfully completing the Chicago Women in Trades' pre-apprenticeship program, becoming a painter apprentice, and welcoming two more children, she expressed fulfillment: "I've worked hard for my family; we have security and independence."[23] A Black male participant provided a similar sentiment about pre-apprenticeship programs delivering an alternative to college. After leaving his hometown of Des Moines, Iowa to pursue a degree at South Suburban Community College in Worth, he "realized that college was not for him" and found an enjoyable career in the building trades through his pre-apprenticeship provider.

---

[21] See the "Citations for the 25 Pre-Apprentice Testimonials" subsection in the Sources section for full references.

[22] Although not shown in the table, testimonials published by the five pre-apprenticeship programs indicate that at least 12 participants in the sample (48 percent) had children of their own. Additionally, in the 11 testimonials that mentioned participant ages, the range was 19 years old to 40 years old, with a median of 25 years old.

[23] For more on Chicago Women in Trades, see the "Provider Case Study: Chicago Women in Trades" in the Appendix.

> ***"I knew after having my first child that I wanted a good life for her and me. I had to do something to better our lives. Getting into debt from college loans was not an option. I Googled the trades and found [Chicago Women in Trades], I learned that it's possible for a woman to do a nontraditional job and make a good living. I love what I do and being a part of the union. I've had two more children while working in the painting trade. I've worked hard for my family; we have security and independence."***

Second, participants underscored the wraparound services of their provider organizations. A Hispanic female participant said that her provider exposing her to every trade helped her realize that she wanted to become an ironworker. Moreover, four HIRE360 participants explicitly mentioned financial support from the organization.[24] One discussed HIRE360 delivering "weekly stipends, books, tools, and boots" and another mentioned his ability "to obtain an OSHA card, First Aid/CPR certification, and the MC3 certificate." The other two highlighted HIRE360's efforts to overcome barriers that prevent some people from entering the trades. One participant said that HIRE360 "helped me out financially when it came to the application fee for the union," while another Black male participant received support from the Barrier Reduction Fund to purchase equipment and supplies that were necessary for working in construction.

> ***"HIRE360 provided me with the information on where and how to apply to the trade I was pursuing. They provided me with the information I needed to study for the test properly and they also helped me out financially when it came to the application fee for the union."***

Third, participants emphasized their sense of connection with specific communities. A female participant said that she was "incredibly grateful" for the Chicago Women in Trades' pre-apprenticeship program and for the peer women who pushed her to succeed. "We have each other's backs," she said. A Black male participant stated that he was proud to represent "people of [his] community" and those who have "had to overcome some of the same obstacles." Finally, a military veteran expressed gratitude that he found an opportunity to apply skills that he learned while on active duty and found a specialized trade that made him feel part of the mission to serve Americans by building the nation's infrastructure.

> ***"I'm so incredibly grateful for [Chicago Women in Trades], allies, and my sisters who help me push myself to reach my fullest potential. We have each other's backs. The best decision I ever made was choosing a career in the trades."***

[24] For more on HIRE360, see the "Provider Case Study: HIRE360" in the Appendix.

Figure 21: Demographic, Geographic, Employment, Program, and Placement Data from 25 Pre-Apprentice, 2021–2024

Participant Name	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender Identity	Metro Area	Previous Employment	Program	Placement Trade	Placement Union/Employer	Year of Placement
Andrea Kelly	Black	Woman	Decatur	Fast food	Decatur BCTC, One Level	Electrician	IBEW Local 146	2023
Jakivin Jenkins	Black	Man	Decatur	Other construction	Decatur BCTC, One Level	Electrician	IBEW Local 146	2023
Steve Gadamowitz	White	Man	Rockford	--	HCCTP: Rock Valley College	Laborer	LiUNA Local 32	2021
Jesus Ortiz	Hispanic	Man	Rockford	--	HCCTP: Rock Valley College	Pipefitter	UA Local 23	2022
Luna Gonzalez	Hispanic	Woman	Rockford	--	HCCTP: Rock Valley College	Ironworker	Ironworkers Local 498	2021
Vickie Svoboda	White	Woman	Chicago	Cashier	Chicago Women in Trades	Electrician	IBEW Local 134	--
Emma Williams	Black	Woman	Chicago	--	Chicago Women in Trades	Electrician	IBEW Local 134	--
Laura Doligosa	Asian	Woman	Chicago	Nonunion residential construction ($15/hour)	Chicago Women in Trades	Ironworker	Ironworkers Local 1	--
Monique Gutierrez	Hispanic	Woman	Chicago	--	Chicago Women in Trades	Painter	Chicago Painters District Council 14	--
Amena Muhammad	Black	Woman	Chicago	Polymer chemist	HCCTP: Dawson Technical Institute	Operating Engineer	IUOE Local 150	2023
Jalen Evans	Black	Man	Chicago	Parcel delivery driver	HIRE360	Pipefitter	UA Local 597	2024
Laurence Jackson	Black	Man	Chicago	Servicing rail cars for Chicago Transit Authority	HIRE360	Electrician	IBEW Local 134	2024
Alonso Hernandez	Hispanic	Man	Chicago	Fast food	HIRE360	Electrician	IBEW Local 134	2024
Reshaun Scott	Black	Man	Chicago	U.S. Postal Service	HIRE360	Laborer	LiUNA Chicagoland Laborers' District Council	2023

Source(s): See the "Citations for the 25 Pre-Apprentice Testimonials" subsection in the Sources section for full references.

Figure 21 Continued: Demographic, Geographic, Employment, Program, and Placement Data from 25 Pre-Apprentices, 2021–2024

Participant Name	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender Identity	Metro Area	Previous Employment	Program	Placement Trade	Placement Union/Employer	Year of Placement
Alyias Gallardo	Hispanic	Man	Chicago Suburbs	Warehouse worker	HIRE360	Carpenter	Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council	2023
Joshua Turner	Black	Man	Chicago	Farming; installation of green roofs	HIRE360	Roofer	Roofers Local 11	2023
Perry Sanders	Black	Man	Chicago	--	HIRE360	Pipefitter	UA Local 597	2022
Christian Searles	Hispanic	Man	Chicago Suburbs	Realtor	HIRE360	Laborer	LiUNA Chicagoland Laborers' District Council	2022
Jonathan Little	Black	Man	Chicago	--	HIRE360	Plumber	UA Local 130	2022
Lonnie Baker	Black	Man	Chicago Suburbs	--	HIRE360	Plumber	UA Local 130	2023
Ethan Jones	Black	Man	Chicago	Merchant marine	HIRE360	Carpenter	Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council	2023
Joshua Jackson	Black	Man	Chicago	Warehouse worker & residential construction	HIRE360	Laborer	LiUNA Local 4	2022
James Banks	Black	Man	Chicago	U.S. Army & general laborer	HIRE360	Boilermaker	Boilermakers Local 1	2021
Rodrigo Ontiveros	Hispanic	Man	Chicago	Shipping and receiving manager	HIRE360	Sheet Metal Worker	Sheet Metal Workers Local 73	2021
David Castrejon	Hispanic	Man	Chicago	Bartender, manufacturing worker, manager	HIRE360	Electrician	IBEW Local 134	2022

Source(s): See the "Citations for the 25 Pre-Apprentice Testimonials" subsection in the Sources section for full references.

Potential Policy Options

Pre-apprenticeship programs have expanded access to in-demand construction careers for thousands of workers across Illinois. Participants who complete their programs and are admitted into registered apprenticeship programs secure good jobs and can have positive impacts on their communities. However, steps can be taken to increase opportunities to more residents, improve completion rates, and boost the effectiveness of pre-apprenticeship programs—in Illinois and beyond.

Both Illinois and the nation must work to address systemic issues that limit the employment prospects of all residents across all industries. Uneven racial and gender representation is an issue in most occupations that offer middle-class incomes or better; it is not unique to the construction industry (Zharvoronkova, Khattar, & Brady, 2022; Wilson, Miller, & Kassa, 2021; Bahn & Sanchez Cumming, 2020). For example, while Black residents account for 14 percent of Illinois' population, they account for just 12 percent of Illinois' workers, 13 percent of non-international students enrolled at Illinois' community colleges and public universities, and 7 percent of construction apprentices across the state (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Enrollment and Employment Shares in Illinois by Demographics, Selected Years

Enrollment Shares (Years)	All	White	Black	Hispanic	Male	Female
Community Colleges (2024)	100.0%	45.4%	12.5%	30.2%	42.9%	57.1%
Public Universities (2024)	100.0%	49.3%	12.8%	18.6%	46.7%	53.2%
Construction Apprenticeship Programs (2017-2024)	100.0%	61.6%	7.2%	20.1%	94.9%	4.6%
HCCTP Pre-Apprenticeship Program (2017-2023)	100.0%	30.1%	56.2%	11.1%	76.3%	21.1%
Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program (2022-2024)	100.0%	15.3%	62.0%	18.3%	76.1%	23.2%
Comparison: Illinois Workers Age 18-64 (2017-2023)	*100.0%*	*62.4%*	*12.0%*	*12.0%*	*52.5%*	*47.5%*
Comparison: Illinois Population Age 18-64 (2017-2023)	*100.0%*	*60.3%*	*13.9%*	*18.2%*	*49.5%*	*50.5%*

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2017 through 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and 2022 through 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from two July 2024 Freedom of Information Act requests, 2017 through 2024 data from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) for new apprentices enrolled in programs located in Illinois in the construction and utilities industries, "Enrollment and Degree Data Tool" information for 2024 from the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), and 2017 through 2023 *Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Groups* (CPS-ORG) data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau and provided in a user-friendly format by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) (IDOT, 2024b; DCEO, 2025a; ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a; IBHE, 2025; EPI, 2024).

Systemic societal change is necessary to remove racial and gender barriers, including illegal forms of discrimination, that hinder enrollment into and completion of apprenticeship programs. Occupational segregation and educational attainment gaps exist across industries and institutions.[25] However, an evidence-based review of the root causes of these systemic problems and potential reforms to address them are beyond the scope of this present study.

[25] Like the colleges and universities that also deliver upward economic mobility, both pre-apprenticeship programs and registered apprenticeship programs typically require high school degrees as prerequisites for admission. As an example, Black students in Illinois have historically had lower high school graduation rates than white students (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023). Lower high school graduation rates translate into smaller enrollment shares at community colleges, public universities, pre-apprenticeship programs, and registered apprenticeship programs. Moreover, Black enrollees have lower rates of obtaining degrees and certifications *after* the high school level. In 2021, graduation rates for Black students were 33 percentage points lower than for white students at Illinois' public universities (37 percent compared to 70 percent) and 25 percentage points lower at its community colleges (15 percent compared to 40 percent) (IBHE, 2024). Black completion rates have been 21 percentage points lower for joint labor-management apprenticeship programs in construction (46 percent compared to 67 percent) (see Figure 2 in this report). Note that the Black completion rate in joint labor-management apprenticeship programs in construction (46 percent) is higher than the Black graduation rate at public universities (37 percent) and community colleges (15 percent).

Policymakers, elected officials, employers, labor unions, and industry stakeholders do have options to *expand* pre-apprenticeship programs in Illinois. First, lawmakers should consider increasing state grant funding both to bolster the services of existing providers, allowing them to add more participants and hold more sessions, and to cultivate innovative new pre-apprenticeship providers in communities and schools across the state. Lawmakers should also consider moving from annual funding announcements to grants that distribute funding over multiple years, as "pre-apprenticeship programs require consistent funding to maintain program capacity and to build collaborative relationships with registered apprenticeship programs, employers, and industry associations" (Conway, Gerber, & Helmer, 2010). This change would allow provider organizations to budget effectively while giving stakeholders and the community confidence that the programs are not at risk of shutting down.

Second, apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship program leaders emphasize the importance of strong employer engagement (Herzenberg & Polson, 2019). Put simply, most apprenticeship programs and pre-apprenticeship programs are willing to train anyone, but contractors need to hire them. This is especially important at a time when 88 percent of construction firms are reporting that they have openings for skilled tradespeople and that those openings have been difficult to fill (Leggate, 2024).

To promote greater employer engagement and buy-in, lawmakers could boost incentives for construction contractors to employ graduates of Illinois' pre-apprenticeship programs. The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity already "worked with the Governor's Office and the General Assembly to pass House Bill 2300" in 2023, which requires that 10 percent of the total labor hours worked on public works projects estimated to cost $500,000 or more be performed by registered apprentices and that at least half of *those* hours (or 5 percent at minimum) must be performed by graduates of the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, or the Highway Construction Careers Training Program (DCEO, 2023b). Contractors that employ apprentices who have completed pre-apprenticeship programs are eligible for bid credits to increase their chances of winning public infrastructure projects (ILGA, 2023). Lawmakers could consider lifting apprenticeship goals—for example, from 10 percent of total labor hours to 15 percent—and reducing the contract threshold for coverage—for example, from $500,000 down to $250,000—while augmenting the credit amount awarded to contractors that hire graduates of pre-apprenticeship programs. Lawmakers could also consider applying these standards to other projects that are sometimes excluded under traditional definitions of public works, including broadband internet expansions, clean energy infrastructure, affordable housing projects, and projects subsidized by taxpayers using economic development incentives or tax increment financing (TIF) districts. These changes would lead to more hiring of pre-apprenticeship graduates on additional projects in more sectors of the construction industry.

Contractors seeking apprentices who are graduates of pre-apprenticeship programs should be able to easily partner with program providers who can connect their candidates to available jobs. Right now, pre-apprenticeship program providers do not get information on which contractors are hiring for state-funded public works projects. The State of Illinois could create a job order tool in which contractors can enter the types of apprentices they need for the specific location, jobsite, craft, and time period, and that information can be sent out to every Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, and the Highway Construction Careers Training Program provider across the state would could deliver qualified graduates with the appropriate skills, certifications, and tools for the dates needed. HIRE360 has pioneered a job order tool that the State of Illinois could seek to build upon, learn from, or replicate.

Third, policymakers and employers could continue to forge close relationships with building trades unions. Grant funding should be distributed to provider organizations that graduate high shares of participants and that promote job quality, rather than those which pay low wages and have low retention rates (Herzenberg & Polson, 2019). Pre-apprenticeship programs that have direct relationships with joint labor-management apprenticeship programs are the most effective at accomplishing these goals. Pre-apprenticeship program providers and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity could work with USDOL-approved registered apprenticeship programs to accept more applications from pre-apprenticeship graduates and to reduce waiting periods between pre-apprenticeship completion and matriculation into registered apprenticeship programs (DCEO, 2024d).

Policymakers, elected officials, employers, labor unions, and industry stakeholders can also *enhance* pre-apprenticeship programs in Illinois. First, as elected officials increase funding for pre-apprenticeship programs, they should consider supplemental support to raise the stipend paid to participants. Currently, stipends range from $10 to $15 per hour for Illinois' pre-apprenticeship programs, and in 2024 were capped at $14.25 per hour for Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program participants and just $13 per hour for both Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program and Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program participants (DCEO, 2024a; DCEO, 2023c; Parkland College, 2024). As of 2025, Illinois' minimum wage is $15 per hour and the City of Chicago's minimum wage is $16.60 per hour (IDOL, 2025; BACP, 2025).

While state agencies point out that "the stipend is not a wage" and that it "is intended to cover incidental costs incurred while attending the pre-apprenticeship training program," pre-apprenticeship programs ask participants to devote between 150 and 450 hours to classroom instruction and hands-on training, typically amounting to 25 to 40 hours per week (DCEO, 2024e). Many participants need to quit jobs in order to commit to pre-apprenticeship training. If the stipend is less than their current wage, or even below the legal minimum wage, then many potential candidates may decide not to apply—despite the possibility of someday becoming an apprentice and maybe one day earning $50 per hour after a half decade of training. Establishing a new stipend range of between $17 and $20 per hour would bring participant compensation above the state's minimum wage ($15 per hour) but below the typical starting wage for registered apprenticeship programs (about $24 to $25 per hour) and help to attract more qualified applicants.[26] A higher stipend would also improve retention and completion rates.[27]

Second, more work could be done to tear down barriers to entry and deliver effective wraparound services. Research shows that pre-apprenticeship participants who receive supportive services are 14 percentage points more likely to enroll in and complete registered apprenticeship programs (Wilkinson & Kelly, 2018). In particular, non-financial services such as mentoring initiatives and childcare services statistically boosted completion rates for women, while gas and travel services had positive impacts on people of color (Kelly et al., 2022; Dougherty, 2025). Expanding these non-financial supportive services can improve recruitment and retention of construction apprentices (Kelly et al., 2022). More research is necessary, though, to fully understand the reasons why some participants drop out and why some completers do not apply for registered apprenticeship programs.

Lastly, steps can be taken to promote accountability to taxpayers and ensure consistent standards across pre-apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship programs are registered with the U.S. Department of Labor, which establishes and maintains quality standards while collecting data and making it

[26] See Figure 3 in this report.

[27] One pre-apprenticeship program provider told the authors of this report that "we have had multiple candidates quit because the stipend wasn't enough. That is why we shortened our program."

available to the public (Belman, 2022). This is similar to the "accreditation" process for colleges and universities, which safeguards the quality of higher education institutions by focusing on the retention, progression, and graduation of enrollees (Higher Learning Commission, 2025).

There is no analogous nationwide system of registration or accreditation for pre-apprenticeship programs. It is the "wild, wild West" across America, with no quality standards, no census of programs, and no tracking of participant outcomes. Federal lawmakers should consider creating a registered system within the Office of Apprenticeship at the U.S. Department of Labor to improve transparency, accountability, and standardization. However, in lieu of federal action, Illinois policymakers could fund the Office of Employment and Training at the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity or a new division at the Illinois Department of Labor and direct it to establish statewide pre-apprenticeship standards, collect data from participants and providers (including those which do not receive State grants), publicly report metrics on effectiveness and progress, and advise awarding agencies—including DCEO and IDOT—on underperforming providers that may not merit further taxpayer-funded grants.

Conclusion

Registered apprenticeship programs are training programs in which participants "earn while they learn" and sponsoring employers and labor unions gain access to pools of qualified workers. They are vital to the success of Illinois' construction industry, and can deliver firmly middle-class wages of around $50 per hour to workers regardless of their racial or ethnic background or their gender identification. Despite the promise of equal pay for equal work, these programs have historically faced challenges in providing proportionate opportunities to all residents. Pre-apprenticeship programs, or apprenticeship readiness programs, have emerged as a potential solution.

Illinois' two largest pre-apprenticeship programs, the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, have invested a combined $66 million from grant funding since 2017. Together, they have trained nearly 5,900 participants over that time, graduating about 3,500 participants and helping to place more than 2,200 completers into construction apprenticeship programs and other employment opportunities. In recent years, the grant investment has been $12,000 to $13,000 per pre-apprentice. A portion of this investment is dedicated to participant compensation, which generally ranges from $2,500 to $6,750 for successful program completers.

As demand for construction apprentices has increased, the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program have been integral in expanding the pool of qualified applicants to Illinois' registered apprenticeship programs. Since 2017, the number of newly enrolled construction apprentices has increased by 52 percent, with new Black construction apprentices doubling (+95 percent) and new female construction apprentices tripling (+202 percent). Graduates from the Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program accounted for 35 percent of all new Black construction apprentices and 21 percent of all new female construction apprentices. Due to these two pre-apprenticeship programs, Black enrollees have been 8 percent of all new construction apprentices and women have been 5 percent of all new construction apprentices since 2017, respectively up 3 percentage points and 1 percentage point compared to their shares without the programs.

The Highway Construction Careers Training Program and the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program deliver positive returns for workers. Pre-apprentices who go on to become registered apprentices typically earn about $37,000 in their first year of training and between $72,000 and $94,000 upon

graduating to journeyworker status. As a result, Illinois' pre-apprenticeship programs deliver a 4 percent return on investment initially, but a 900 percent cumulative return on investment over 10 years.

Testimonials from participants who succeeded in completing their programs and becoming registered apprentices revealed that pre-apprenticeship programs led to upward economic mobility, often from low-paying jobs to family-sustaining careers. Participants expressed appreciation for the wraparound services performed by their provider organizations. Many emphasized the connections they formed with other participants and the importance of representing their communities in the construction trades.

There are opportunities to expand and enhance pre-apprenticeship programs in Illinois. Increasing state grant funding and creating multiyear grants, boosting incentives for contractors to employ graduates of pre-apprenticeship programs, and doubling down on funding the most successful providers with close ties to joint labor-management apprenticeship programs would expand enrollments and improve both completion and placement rates. Raising stipends above the statewide minimum wage rate, developing more mentoring initiatives, and delivering childcare services would attract more qualified applicants. Finally, funding an accrediting agency to establish quality standards, collect data, and provide public reports on the effectiveness of each program would improve accountability to taxpayers.

Pre-apprenticeship programs have positive impacts on Illinois, expanding construction career opportunities to more individuals and replenishing the local supply of skilled tradespeople. Policymakers, elected officials, employers, labor unions, and industry stakeholders can strengthen these programs to help ensure that Illinois' infrastructure is built using skilled local workers who live in the communities where they are constructing and repairing roads, bridges, schools, parks, high-speed internet infrastructure, energy systems, affordable housing units, and other public works projects.

Sources

Allen, Lili, Vanessa Bennett, Patricia Maguire, Michael Sack, and Myriam Sullivan. (2021). *JFF's Framework for a High-Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Program: Opportunity Youth*. Jobs for the Future.

Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2023). "High School Graduation Rates by Race-Ethnicity in Illinois."

Apprenticeship Illinois. (2025). "Pre-Apprenticeship." Illinois workNet.

ApprenticeshipUSA. (2025). (a). "Apprentices By State: Apprentices by Program Location." U.S. Department of Labor.

ApprenticeshipUSA. (2025). (b). "Apprenticeship Job Finder: Apprenticeship Programs." U.S. Department of Labor.

Bahn, Kate and Carmen Sanchez Cumming. (2020). "Factsheet: U.S. Occupational Segregation by Race, Ethnicity, and Gender." Washington Center for Equitable Growth.

Belman, Dale. (2022). *Registered Apprenticeship in Construction: Built to Last?* Michigan State University; Institute for Construction Employment Research (ICERES).

Biernacki, Don. (2023). "Commentary: Hire360's Vision Becomes Reality and Changes Construction and Development in Chicago." *Crain's Chicago Business*.

Bilginsoy, Cihan, David Bullock, Amy Tracy Wells, and Roland Zullo. (2022). *Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives in the Construction Trades*. University of Utah; University of Michigan; Rutgers University; Institute for Construction Employment Research (ICERES).

Black Hawk College. (2025). "Why HCCTP."

Bruno, Robert and Frank Manzo IV. (2025). *Living Wages in Registered Apprenticeship Programs: An Assessment by Industry, Demographics, State, and Labor Policy Effects*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Illinois Economic Policy Institute.

Bruno, Robert and Frank Manzo IV. (2016). *The Impact of Apprenticeship Programs in Illinois: An Analysis of Economic and Social Effects*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Illinois Economic Policy Institute.

Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). (2025). "CPI Inflation Calculator." U.S. Department of Labor.

Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP). (2025). "Minimum Wage." City of Chicago.

Cheney, Gretchen. (2021). *Growing Equity and Diversity Through Apprenticeship: Business Perspectives*. Jobs for the Future.

Chicago Urban League. (2024). *Ready to Launch Your Construction Career?*

Chicago Women in Trades (CWiT). (2023). (a). "Mission & Impact."

Chicago Women in Trades (CWiT). (2023). (b). "CWIT's FREE Program Overview."

Citizens Utility Board (CUB). (2020). *What's Going on with Clean Jobs Training in Illinois?*

Conway, Maureen, Allison Gerber, and Matt Helmer. (2010). *Construction Pre-Apprenticeship Programs: Interviews with Field Leaders*. The Aspen Institute.

Currin, Joshua, Anthony Davis, and Eric McDowell. (2023). "Reflections on University of Chicago's Pre-Apprentice Program." *Facilities Manager*.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2025). (a). "Illinois Works Apprenticeship Initiative." State of Illinois.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2025). (b). "Illinois Works Bid Credit Program." State of Illinois.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2025). (c). *2024 Bid Credit Incentive Rates*. State of Illinois.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2025). (d). "Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program." State of Illinois.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2024). (a). *2024 Grantee Manual Updates*. State of Illinois.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2024). (b). "CEJA Grants as of July 8, 2024." State of Illinois.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2024). (c). *State of Illinois Uniform Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Summary Information: Illinois Clean Jobs Workforce Network Program*.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2024). (d). *Program Report on the Evaluation of the Illinois Works Apprenticeship Initiative and Preapprenticeship—Submitted on Behalf of the Illinois Works Review Panel*. State of Illinois.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2024). (e). *CEJA Policy: Stipends and Incentives*. State of Illinois.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2023). (a). *2023 Grantee Manual: Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program*. State of Illinois.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2023). (b). *Report on the Evaluation of the Illinois Works Apprenticeship Initiative and Preapprenticeship Program*. State of Illinois.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2023). (c). *State of Illinois Uniform Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Summary Information: Illinois Climate Works Pre-apprenticeship Program (CEJA).*

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2023). (d). "FEJA Multi-Cultural Jobs Program 2023." WIOA Works Illinois.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). (2022). "Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship NOFO 2022." WIOA Works Illinois.

Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA). (2021). "FY 2021 Data and Statistics." U.S. Department of Labor.

Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA). (2020). *Discover Apprenticeship: Earn While You Learn Today*. U.S. Department of Labor.

Dougherty, Maggie. (2025). "Challenges Persist for Women, Minorities Breaking into Illinois' Skilled Trades." *Capitol News Illinois*.

Economic Policy Institute (EPI). (2024). Current Population Survey Extracts, Version 1.0.59, https://microdata.epi.org.

Energy Innovation. (2025). *Economic Impacts of the U.S. "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" Energy Provisions on Illinois*. Energy Innovation Policy & Technology LLC.

Herzenberg, Stephen and Diana Polson. (2019). *Inventory of Pre-Apprenticeship Programs Across Pennsylvania*. Keystone Research Center.

Herzenberg, Stephen, Diana Polson, and Mark Price. (2018). *Construction Apprenticeship and Training in Pennsylvania*. Keystone Research Center.

Higher Learning Commission. (2025). "How Accreditation Works for You."

Hillery, Jewell. (2024). "Hire360 Open new Training Hub to Boost Diversity in Chicago's Construction Trades."

HIRE360. (2025). (a). "Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program."

HIRE360. (2025). (b). Home Page.

HIRE360. (2025). (c). "Take Charge: EV Charging Pre-Apprenticeship Program."

HIRE360. (2025). (d). "HIRE360 & Constellation's Empowering Futures Program."

HIRE360. (2025). (e). "Assessment Form: UNITEHERE! Chicago Hospitality Institute (UHCHI)."

HIRE360. (2025). (f). "Seize Your Opportunity to Join the Trades with the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program."

HIRE360. (2025). (g). "HIRE360 Business Development."

HIRE360. (2024). (a). "HIRE360 Expands 'Empowering Futures' Workforce Training Program with an Additional $250,000 Contribution from Constellation."

HIRE360. (2024). (b). "Applications Now Open: HIRE360 and Illinois AFL-CIO Launch Statewide 'Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program' to Train 500 Underserved Illinois Residents for Clean Energy Careers."

HIRE360. (2023). (a). "June 2023 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2021). (a). "August 2021 E-Newsletter."

Hutson, Wendell. (2024). "Hire360 Set to Open $9 Million Training Center After Donation from Billionaire MacKenzie Scott." *Chicago Business Journal*.

Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). (2025). "Enrollment and Degree Data Tool."

Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). (2024). *Underrepresented Groups Report 2023: Assessing Attainment and Equity in Illinois Higher Education*.

Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL). (2025). "Minimum Wage/Overtime FAQ."

Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). (2024). (a). *HCCTP: Build Your Story Here*.

Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). (2024). (b). "HCCTP Overview."

Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). (2024). (c). "HCCTP Enrollment."

Illinois Economic Policy Institute (ILEPI). (2025). "Rebuild Illinois Legislation."

Illinois General Assembly (ILGA). (2023). "Bill Status of HB2300: 103rd General Assembly."

Illinois Workforce Investment Board (IWIB). (2021). "IWIB Apprenticeship Illinois Committee Pre-Apprenticeship Work Group Approved Definition for Pre-Apprenticeship (12/09/2021)." Illinois workNet Center.

John A. Logan College (JALC). (2025). Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP).

Karmel, Tom and Damian Oliver. (2011). *Pre-Apprenticeships and Their Impact on Apprenticeship Completion and Satisfaction*. Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Kelly, Maura. (2023). "Improving the Recruitment and Retention of Construction Apprentices Through Oregon's Highway Construction Workforce Development Program." Institute for Construction Employment Research (ICERES).

Kelly, Maura and Lindsey Wilkinson. (2020). *2020 Evaluation of the Highway Construction Workforce Development Program*. Portland State University.

Kelly, Maura and Lindsey Wilkinson. (2017). *Evaluation of Pre-Apprenticeship and Retention Services in the Construction Trades in Oregon*. Portland State University.

Kelly, Maura, Lindsey Wilkinson, Affie Eyo-Idahor, and Larry S. Williams. (2022). "Improving the Recruitment and Retention of Construction Apprentices through Oregon's Highway Construction Workforce Development Program." *Journal of Applied Social Science*, 16(2): 459-481.

King, Ben, Hannah Kolus, Michael Gaffney, Nathan Pastorek, and Anna van Brummen. (2025). "What Passage of the 'One Big Beautiful Bill' Means for U.S. Energy and the Economy." Rhodium Group, LLC.

Kuehn, Daniel, Siobhan Mills De La Rosa, Robert Lerman, and Kevin Hollenbeck. (2022). *Do Employers Earn Positive Returns in Apprenticeship? Evidence from Registered Programs Under the American Apprenticeship Initiative*. Abt Associates; Urban Institute.

Leggate, James. (2024). "Contractors Struggle to Fill Craft Positions, AGC Survey Finds." *Engineering News-Record*.

LegiScan (2022). "Votes: IL SB2408 | 2021-2022 | 102nd General Assembly."

LegiScan. (2019). "Votes: IL SB0690 | 2019-2020 | 101st General Assembly."

Manzo IV, Frank and Robert Bruno. (2020). *The Apprenticeship Alternative: Enrollment, Completion Rates, and Earnings in Registered Apprenticeship Programs in Illinois*. Illinois Economic Policy Institute; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Manzo IV, Frank and Kevin Duncan. (2018). *An Examination of Minnesota's Prevailing Wage Law: Effects on Costs, Training, and Economic Development*. Midwest Economic Policy Institute; Colorado State University-Pueblo.

Manzo IV, Frank and Jill Gigstad. (2021). *Apprenticeship Training in Iowa: Enrollment, Completion Rates, and Earnings of Registered Apprentices in Iowa*. Midwest Economic Policy Institute.

Manzo IV, Frank, Nathaniel Goodell, and Robert Bruno (2021). *Apprenticeships as a Career Development Alternative: Enrollment, Hours, and Earnings in Registered Apprenticeship Programs in Wisconsin*. Midwest Economic Policy Institute; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Manzo IV, Frank, Andrew Wilson, and Robert Bruno. (2023). (a). *Construction Apprenticeships as a Career Development Alternative in Indiana: Enrollment, Diversity, Hours, Completion Rates, and Earnings in Registered Apprenticeship Programs*. Midwest Economic Policy Institute; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Manzo IV, Frank, Andrew Wilson, and Robert Bruno. (2023). (b). *Construction Apprenticeships as a Career Development Alternative in Michigan: Enrollment, Diversity, Hours, Completion Rates, and Earnings in Registered Apprenticeship Programs*. Midwest Economic Policy Institute; University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Marcus, Jon. (2024). "Apprenticeships Are a Trending Alternative to College — but There's a Hitch." *NPR*.

Moreland, Brianna. (2024). "ComEd, HIRE360 Celebrate New Graduating Class of EV Pre-Apprenticeship Program." *BusinessWire*.

Mullins, Michelle. (2024). "Naperville YMCA Offering Free Pre-Apprenticeship Trades Program with $2,500 Stipend for Completion." *Naperville Sun*.

Onsarigo, Lameck, Alan Atalah, Frank Manzo IV, and Kevin Duncan. (2017). *The Economic, Fiscal, and Social Effects of Ohio's Prevailing Wage Law*. Kent State University; Bowling Green State University; Illinois Economic Policy Institute; Colorado State University-Pueblo.

Ori, Ryan. (2019). "Nonprofit Aims to Train Women, Minorities in the Trades." *Chicago Tribune*.

Orr, Eugenia. (2018). "Construction Trades Fair: Connecting People to Life-Changing Careers." University of Chicago.

Parkland College. (2025). "HCCTP: FAQs."

Perna, Mark. (2022). "Apprenticeship Or College Degree? Today, Both Can Lead To Great Things." *Forbes*.

Philips, Peter. (2014). *Kentucky's Prevailing Wage Law: An Economic Impact Analysis*. University of Utah.

Quad City Urban League (QCUL). (2025). (a). "About Us."

Quad City Urban League (QCUL). (2025). (b). "IL-Works Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program."

Quad City Urban League (QCUL). (2025). (c). "CONSTRUCT Infrastructure Academy."

Quad City Urban League (QCUL). (2025). (d). "Nicor Gas Career Academy Tenth Cohort."

Quad City Urban League (QCUL). (2025). (e). "Solar Energy Jobs Training."

Quad City Urban League (QCUL). (2025). (f). "YouthBuild."

Quad City Urban League (QCUL). (2025). (g). "Youth Career Pathways."

Quad City Urban League (QCUL). (2025). (h). "JTED."

Reed, Debbie, Albert Yung-Hsu Liu, Rebecca Kleinman, Annalisa Mastri, Davin Reed, Samina Sattar, and Jessica Ziegler. (2012). *An Effectiveness Assessment and Cost-Benefit Analysis of Registered Apprenticeship in 10 States*. Mathematica Policy Research. Submitted to the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration (DOLETA).

Richard, Brian and Jennifer Foil. (2020). *Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning in Illinois: A Report Mandated by Public Act 101-364*. Northern Illinois University.

Schoenberg, Nara. (2025). "Clean Energy Job Training Offers Hope to Hundreds: 'It's Changed My Life.'" *Chicago Tribune*.

Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC). (2024). "Construction Training Program."

State of Illinois. (2024). (a). "Governor Pritzker Awards Over $18 Million in Grant Funding through the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program."

State of Illinois. (2024). (b). "Governor Pritzker Announces CEJA Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Grantees."

State of Illinois. (2023). (a). "Gov. Pritzker Announces $13 Million for Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Expansion."

State of Illinois. (2023). (b). "Gov. Pritzker Announces $16 Million in Funding for Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship, Barrier Reduction Programs."

State of Illinois. (2023). (c). "Gov. Pritzker Announces $38 Million for CEJA Workforce Hubs." State of Illinois.

State of Illinois. (2022). "Gov. Pritzker Announces $3 Million Investment in Hire360 Job Training Center."

State of Illinois. (2016). "Governor Signs Legislation to Protect Jobs, Ratepayers and Taxpayers."

Tieszen, Noel, Rosa Garcia, Asha Banerjee, and Cameron Johnson. (2020). *Principles for a High-Quality Pre-Apprenticeship: A Model to Advance Equity*. Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP).

UNITE HERE Chicago Hospitality Institute (UHCHI). (2025). (a). "Chef de Partie Apprenticeship Program."

UNITE HERE Chicago Hospitality Institute (UHCHI). (2025). (b). "Our Programs."

UNITE HERE Chicago Hospitality Institute (UHCHI). (2025). (c). "Your Hospitality Career Begins at UHCHI."

United States Department of Labor (USDOL). (2024). "US Department of Labor Awards $99.3M in Grants to Support Training, Job Services to Prepare Young People to Succeed in High-Demand Careers."

United States Department of Labor (USDOL). (2023). *Pre-Apprenticeship: Pathways for Women into High-Wage Careers – A Guide for Community-Based Organizations and Workforce Providers*.

Walsh. (2025). "Walsh Construction Pre-Apprentice Program." Walsh Construction.

Wilkinson, Lindsey and Maura Kelly. (2018). *Continuing to Build a More Diverse Workforce in the Highway Trades: 2018 Evaluation of the ODOT/BOLI Highway Construction Workforce Development Program*. Portland State University.

Wilson, Valerie, Ethan Miller, and Melat Kassa. (2021). *Racial Representation in Professional Occupations: By the Numbers*. Economic Policy Institute.

WRTP. (2025). "WRTP | Big Step."

Wuellner, Sara and David Bonauto. (2022). "Are Plumbing Apprentice Graduates Safer than Their Non-Apprentice Peers? Workers' Compensation Claims Among Journey Level Plumbers by Apprenticeship Participation." *Journal of Safety Research*, 83: 349–356.

Yoders, Jeff. (2019). "Chicago Contractors, Developers, Unions Launch HIRE360 Effort to Bring Minorities, Women into Construction." *Engineering News-Record Midwest*.

Zhavoronkova, Marina, Rose Khattar, and Mathew Brady. (2022). *Occupational Segregation in America*. Center for American Progress.

Citations for the 25 Pre-Apprentice Testimonials

Chicago Women in Trades (CWiT). (2023). (c). "Success Spotlights: Emma Williams."

Chicago Women in Trades (CWiT). (2023). (d). "Success Spotlights: Vickie Svoboda."

Chicago Women in Trades (CWiT). (2023). (e). "Success Spotlights: Lupe Hinojosa."

Chicago Women in Trades (CWiT). (2023). (f). "Success Spotlights: Laura Doligosa."

CREATE. (2019). "Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) Interview."

Gartner, Rachel. (2022). "Highway Construction Careers Training Program Partners with Spillertown on Playground." *WSIL 3*.

HIRE360. (2024). (a). "June 2024 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2024). (b). "May 2024 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2024). (c). "April 2024 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2023). (b). "December 2023 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2023). (c). "September 2023 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2023). (d). "August 2023 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2023). (e). "July 2023 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2023). (f). "May 2023 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2023). (g). "April 2023 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2023). (h). "March 2023 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2023). (i). "January 2023 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2022). (a). "August 2022 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2022). (b). "June 2022 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2022). (c). "May 2022 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2022). (d). "April 2022 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2021). (b). "June 2021 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2021). (c). "May 2021 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2021). (d). "April 2021 E-Newsletter."

HIRE360. (2021). (e). *Annual Report 2020*.

Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). (2024). (d). "HCCTP Success Story: Tim Clark, 2019 Graduate."

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW). (2023). "IBEW Sister Shines as Ambassador for Pre-Apprenticeships at State of the Union."

Rock Valley College. (2025). "Highway Construction Careers Training Program."

Cover Photo Credits

Kneschke, Robert. (Accessed January 28, 2025). "Welder Apprenticeship Lesson." *Canva.com Pro Subscription*.

Kozmoat98. (Accessed January 28, 2025). "Road Construction." *Canva.com Pro Subscription*.

Appendix

Table A: Construction Apprentice Enrollment by Demographics and By Year, 2017–2024

Newly Enrolled Construction Apprentices	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change: 2017 to 2024	Change: 2022 to 2024
All Programs	4,080	5,049	5,064	3,716	4,292	5,496	6,180	6,202	+52.0%	+12.8%
White	2,469	3,344	3,304	2,365	2,680	3,283	3,530	3,340	+35.3%	+1.7%
Black	272	438	372	283	306	405	540	531	+95.2%	+31.1%
Hispanic	712	913	922	682	791	1,279	1,543	1,492	+109.6%	+16.7%
Men	3,953	4,824	4,851	3,533	4,056	5,135	5,666	5,716	+44.6%	+11.3%
Women	126	218	210	181	222	293	392	381	+202.4%	+30.0%
Joint (Union)	3,819	4,815	4,872	3,604	4,181	5,240	5,954	5,844	+53.0%	+11.5%
White	2,337	3,174	3,193	2,304	2,631	3,172	3,445	3,184	+36.2%	+0.4%
Black	259	416	351	276	286	378	499	486	+87.6%	+28.6%
Hispanic	672	894	901	661	766	1,183	1,482	1,371	+104.0%	+15.9%
Men	3,694	4,601	4,665	3,422	3,959	4,893	5,460	5,390	+45.9%	+10.2%
Women	125	207	206	180	210	282	372	361	+188.8%	+28.0%
Employer-only	261	234	192	112	111	256	226	358	+37.2%	+39.8%
White	132	170	111	61	49	111	85	156	+18.2%	+40.5%
Black	13	22	21	7	20	27	41	45	+246.2%	+66.7%
Hispanic	40	19	21	21	25	96	61	121	+202.5%	+26.0%
Men	259	223	186	111	97	242	206	326	+25.9%	+34.7%
Women	1	11	4	1	12	11	20	20	--	--

Source(s): Authors' analysis 2017 through 2024 data from the Registered Apprenticeship Partners Information Management Data System (RAPIDS) for new apprentices enrolled in programs located in Illinois in the construction and utilities industries (ApprenticeshipUSA, 2025a).

Table B: Inventory of Active Highway Construction Careers Training Program Providers

#	Inventory of Active Highway Construction Careers Pre-Apprenticeship Program Providers	2023 Grant Funding	2025 Website
1	South Suburban College	$684,628	https://www.ssc.edu/non-credit-offerings/department-of-continuing-corporate-and-community-education-c3/corporate-education/highway-construction-careers/
2	Lincoln Land Community College	$520,376	https://www.llcc.edu/explore/workforce-institute/highway-construction-careers-training
3	Kankakee Community College	$382,420	https://www.kcc.edu/continuinged/hcctp/
4	Parkland College	$382,420	https://www.parkland.edu/Main/Academics/Academic-Resources/Community-Education/Professional/HCCTP
5	Black Hawk College	$382,420	https://www.bhc.edu/academics/programs/highway-construction-careers-training/
6	Illinois Central College	$382,420	https://icc.edu/programs/highway-construction/
7	Southwestern Illinois College	$382,420	https://www.swic.edu/community/adult-education/highway-construction-careers-training/
8	Dawson Technical Institute	$382,420	https://www.ccc.edu/kennedy/departments/dawson-technical-institute/
9	John A. Logan College	$382,420	https://www.jalc.edu/cwd/hcctp/
10	Rock Valley College	$336,419	https://rockvalleycollege.edu/academics/programs/hcctp
11	Shawnee Community College	$316,301	https://www.shawneecc.edu/business-and-workforce-development/hcctp/

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2023 Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) funding data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) from a July 2024 Freedom of Information Act request (IDOT, 2024b).

Table C: Inventory of Active Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Providers

#	Inventory of Active Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program Providers	2024 Grant Funding	2025 Website
1	Rincon Family Services	$1,650,000	https://www.rinconfamilyservices.org/construction-pre-apprenticeship-program/
2	IL Foundation of SkillsUSA	$1,301,000	https://www.skillsusaillinois.org/ready2
3	Sista Girls & Friends, Inc	$880,000	https://www.youthbuildillinois.org/program/sista-girls-and-friends/
4	Chicago Women in Trades	$770,343	https://cwit.org/trade-programs/career-prep-and-advocacy/
5	Community Assistance Programs	$656,639	https://capsinc.org/current-activities/
6	Chicagoland Prison Outreach	$550,000	https://www.cpoministries.org/vocational-training
7	Community Development Institute	$550,000	https://www.cydihs.org/il-works
8	Danville Area Community College	$550,000	https://dacc.edu/depts/tech/programs/IllinoisWorks
9	EDDR Foundation: Chicago	$550,000	https://www.eddrcorp.com/workforce-development/
10	HIRE360	$550,000	https://hire360chicago.com/ilworks_digital/
11	Hispanic American Construction Industry Assoc.	$550,000	https://www.haciaworks.org/programs/
12	Lewis University - Joliet	$550,000	https://www.iwetraining.com/
13	Metropolitan Family Services	$550,000	https://www.metrofamily.org/bridge-to-construction/
14	Metropolitan Family Services - North	$550,000	
15	Rebuilding Exchange	$550,000	https://rebuildingexchange.org/our-programs/
16	YMCA - Buehler Fry	$550,000	https://www.ymcachicago.org/ilworks/
17	YMCA - South Side	$550,000	
18	St. Augustine College - Aurora	$549,999	https://www.iwetraining.com/
19	St. Augustine College - Grayslake	$549,900	
20	Richland Community College	$495,000	https://www.richland.edu/academics/workforce/pre-apprenticeship/
21	Bethel Family Resource Center	$440,000	https://www.bethelfacility.org/programs
22	EDDR Foundation: Rockford	$440,000	https://www.eddrcorp.com/workforce-development/
23	Teens Against Killing Everywhere	$440,000	https://takeestl.org/programs-youth-career-pathwaysprograms-illinois-youth-investment-program/
24	Macon County	$429,000	https://worknetdecatur.org/pre-apprenticeship-program/
25	Southwestern Illinois College	$355,542	https://www.swic.edu/students/services/support-services/career-services/preapprenticeship/
26	Quad County Urban League	$330,145	https://www.qcul.org/ilworkspreapprenticeshipprogram
27	Lumity	$330,000	https://lumity.org/stem-programs/pre-apprenticeship-program/
28	YBLC, Inc	$330,000	https://yblc.org/pre-apprenticeship-program/
29	Women's Innovation Group	$260,000	https://www.womensinnovationgroup.org/pages/pre_apprenticeship-program
30	Children First Fund	$250,000	https://www.cps.edu/academics/work-based-learning/chicago-builds/
31	Project H.O.O.D. Communities Development Corporation	$250,000	https://www.projecthood.org/construction-cohort
32	Revolution Workshop	$220,000	https://www.revolutionworkshop.org/jobseekers.html#/
33	Awaken Foundation	$195,000	https://www.awakenfoundationl3c.com/construction
34	Rock Island County	$195,000	https://theamericanjobcenter.org/docs/IL-Works-Pre-Apprenticeship-Flyer.pdf
35	Associated Builders & Contractors, IL Chapter, Inc.	$165,000	https://www.mycommunitybuilders.org/

Source(s): Authors' analysis of 2024 Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship funding data from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) from a July 2024 Freedom of Information Act request (DCEO, 2025a).

Provider Case Study: HIRE360

HIRE360 is a Chicago-based nonprofit organization that aims to increase the participation of people of color and women in the construction industry, expand employment opportunities in the hospitality and manufacturing industries, and grow local businesses (HIRE360, 2025b). The nonprofit was formed in 2019 by the biggest developers, general contractors, labor unions, and community organizations in the Chicago area, including Related Midwest, Sterling Bay, the Chicagoland Associated General Contractors, James McHugh Construction, the Chicago and Cook County Building Trades Council, the Chicago Federation of Labor, and United Way of Metro Chicago among many others (Yoders, 2019; HIRE360, 2025b).[28] HIRE360 officially began operations in January 2020 (Biernacki, 2023).

The organization offers multiple training programs at its 40,000 square foot, state-of-the-art HIRE360 Training & Business Development Center located at 25th Street and State Street in Chicago. The $9 million training center officially opened its doors in September 2024 (Hillery, 2024).[29] In general, applicants must be at least 17.5 or 18 years old, have high school diplomas or their equivalents, possess valid driver's licenses, be authorized to work in the United States, and pass drug tests to be admitted.

1. The **Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program** is an eight-week program that enables participants to obtain Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3), First Aid/CPR, and OSHA-10 credentials to ensure their competitiveness and success in applying for joint labor-management apprenticeship programs (HIRE360, 2025a). The program received $1.65 million in Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) grant funding from 2022 through 2024, training more than 250 participants over that time.
2. The **Take Charge: EV Charging Pre-Apprenticeship Program**, made possible through a partnership with ComEd Exelon Company, is eight weeks long and introduces participants to the electric vehicle and green energy industry. Completers can transition into electrical trade apprenticeship programs affiliated with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 134 and IBEW Local 9 (HIRE360, 2025c). In 2024, the program graduated its second class, which consisted of 16 graduates (Moreland, 2024)
3. The **HIRE360 & Constellation's Empowering Futures Program** is a nine-week virtual program held in the evenings to prepare individuals for full-time mechanical maintenance roles at Constellation, a carbon-free energy producer, or for joint labor-management apprenticeship programs (HIRE360, 2025d). Participants are required to have associate degrees or two years of experience in industrial mechanical maintenance roles or two years of mechanical military experience. As of 2024, Constellation has invested $500,000 in the program (HIRE360, 2024a).
4. The **UNITE HERE Chicago Hospitality Institute (UHCHI)** is a culinary apprenticeship program that trains participants for Chef de Partie careers in world-class kitchens, hotels, banquet halls, restaurants, and sports arenas (HIRE360, 2025e). This is a fully registered apprenticeship program. It first consists of an eight-week classroom instruction program, during which participants receive stipends of approximately $5,500, an 18-piece professional knife kit, *The Professional Chef* textbook, and industry certifications (UHCHI, 2025a). Then, participants must complete 1,000 hours of on-the-job training and pass assessments, typically over six months to one year (UHCHI, 2025a). As of September 2023, UHCHI apprentices' average starting wage was $23 per hour (UHCHI, 2025b). From 2021 to 2023, the program trained nearly 150 apprentices—of whom 75 percent had completed the eight-week classroom program (UHCHI, 2025c).

[28] HIRE360 was modeled off a similar initiative in Milwaukee called the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership Building Industry Group Skilled Trades Employment Program, or simply WRTP | BIG STEP (Ori, 2019; WRTP, 2025).

[29] The training center received a $2 million investment from the State of Illinois, $1 million in federal Community Project Funding in April 2022, and a $3 million donation from billionaire philanthropist MacKenzie Scott (State of Illinois, 2022; Hutson, 2024).

HIRE360 was also selected by the DCEO to expand its operations beyond the Chicago metro area and deliver clean energy pre-apprenticeship training at a regional hub in central Illinois and a regional hub in southern Illinois. Similar to HIRE360's Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program, the **Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program** enables participants to obtain MC3, First Aid/CPR, and OSHA-10 credentials (HIRE360, 2025f). The program is currently partnering with 12 Downstate nonprofits, building trades unions, and community colleges located in Rockford, Peoria, East Peoria, Dekalb, Savoy, Decatur, East St. Louis, and Alton. In 2024, HIRE360 received $8.8 million in total DCEO grant funding to develop these hubs in central and southern Illinois and is expected to train nearly 500 Illinois residents annually (HIRE360, 2024b).

Finally, HIRE360 offers a private **Business Development Program** to increase the number of minority business enterprises (MBEs), women business enterprises (WBEs), disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs), and veteran-owned business enterprises (VBEs) participating in development, particularly on megaprojects in the Chicago metro area, and bidding on public works construction projects statewide (HIRE360, 2025g). Participants in this incubator program are provided with low-cost capital, business knowledge, technical assistance, back-office support, and a mentoring program. For example, Francis Construction Group is a certified MBE and DBE firm located in Chicago that performs excavation, concrete, demolition, and similar work. Francis Construction Group is signatory to local carpenters, laborers, and operating engineers' unions and became a client of HIRE360 to secure access to capital and get assistance with networking opportunities (HIRE360, 2023a). Through 2023, HIRE360 had facilitated nearly 70 small business loan applications totaling more than $10 million in funding for entrepreneurs to grow their small businesses (Biernacki, 2023).

Provider Case Study: Chicago Women in Trades

Launched in 1987, Chicago Women in Trades (CWiT) is a Chicago-based nonprofit organization that works to ensure all women who want to work with their hands and earn a good living have equal access to information, training, and employment opportunities (CWiT, 2023a). The organization offers three free training programs that provide pathways to high-wage careers in the union construction trades and manufacturing industry. Applicants must have high school diplomas or their equivalents, possess valid driver's licenses, be authorized to work in the United States, provide 6 months' proof of income or paystubs, and pass drug tests to be admitted (CWiT, 2023b).

1. **Women Build Illinois** is a 10-week, 280-hour program affiliated with the Illinois Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program. Women Build Illinois exposes students to career opportunities in the trades, equips them with basic construction tools, and prepares them to meet the expectations and physical challenges in the industry. The program connects students to registered apprenticeship programs, contractors, and mentors and prepares students to successfully take different joint labor-management apprenticeship programs' aptitude entry exams. The program received $1.77 million in Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) grant funding from 2022 through 2024, training nearly 200 participants over that time.
2. The **Technical Opportunities Program** is a 12-week, 180-hour accredited pre-apprenticeship program that prepares women for careers in union construction trades. The program provides hands-on skills, jobsite safety, and physical strengthening training as well as classroom instruction to prepare participants to successfully pass apprenticeship program entrance exams. The program serves an average of about 100 women annually.
3. The **Women in Welding Program** is a 10-week, 288-hour program that provides training for manufacturing, welding, and metalworking construction careers. Participants can obtain skills in three welding practices, American Welding Society credentials, OSHA 10 certification, and other workplace readiness skills.

Provider Case Study: Quad County Urban League

Founded in 1975, the Quad County Urban League (QCUL) is an Aurora-based organization that helps secure equal opportunities for people of color, women, and persons with disabilities in DuPage, Kane, Kendall, and Will Counties (QCUL, 2025a). The nonprofit conducts workforce development programs, youth and education programs, housing education and referral initiative, and various civic engagements, from get-out-the-vote (GOTV) campaigns to assistance with affordable health insurance open enrollment through Get Covered Illinois to disaster relief efforts. Its workforce development programs include:

1. The **IL-Works Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program**, which is open to all Illinois residents who are at least 18 years old, have high school diplomas or their equivalents, and the ability to pass drug tests. The program offers NCCER, OSHA 10, and First Aid/CPR certification, wraparound services, and bi-weekly stipends that are attendance- and performance-based. The program received $728,123 from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) in 2022 and 2024, training about 90 participants with the grant funding (QCUL, 2025b).
2. The **CONSTRUCT Infrastructure Academy** is an 11-week training program begins every February and equips participants with the skills training needed to compete for entry-level jobs in the construction and energy industries. As of early 2025, more than 700 students have participated in the program and nearly 75 percent have reportedly been offered employment (QCUL, 2025c).
3. The **Nicor Gas Career Academy** is a six-week unpaid job readiness program to prepare individuals for entry-level work in the utility industry. The program is a partnership between Nicor Gas, IBEW Local 19, NPL, Miller Pipeline, Pipe Strong, and the Quad County Urban League. Participants must have high school diplomas or their equivalents, pass criminal background and drug tests, pass in-person interviews, have valid driver's licenses, and score at a 12th-grade level in math and reading. Sessions are limited to 30 participants (QCUL, 2025d).
4. **Solar Energy Jobs Training** is a program that utilizes classroom training and hands-on lab activities to prepare students for work in the solar industry. The program establishes entry-level competencies that appeal to renewable energy employers and can result in North American Board of Energy Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) certification and other credential (QCUL, 2025e).
5. **Aurora YouthBuild** is a short-term program available to residents ages 16 to 24 years old where participants can earn high school diplomas or GEDs and acquire construction skills to perform construction-related community service projects. The program provide preparation for construction careers, college enrollment, registered apprenticeships, or business ownership, includes a bi-weekly stipend, and can lead to a pre-apprenticeship construction training certificate (QCUL, 2025f).
6. **Youth Career Pathways** is a work-based learning program for Aurora residents or students of Aurora Public Schools who are between the ages of 16 and 24 years old and who are academically at-risk, homeless, or unemployed youth. The programs partners with local employers and offers $15 per hour internships upon completion, with permanent job placements typically paying between $18 and $22 per hour (QCUL, 2025g).
7. The **Manufacturing Technician Training and Retail Sales Training** is open to participants ages 16 to 24 years old, provides work-based learning for manufacturing and retail careers, and allows participants to earn industry-recognized credentials such as OSHA 10 and National Retail Federation certifications (QCUL, 2025h).