

Now, more than ever, our future depends on construction workers

Written by By Clinton Beall, Board President Associated General Contractors New Mexico Chapter James Fields
Board President Associated Contractors of New Mexico
Friday, 17 December 2021 06:31

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 is now law and will provide an estimated \$3.725 billion to New Mexico for highway improvements, bridge replacement and repairs, expanding connections to high-speed internet, improvements in water and wastewater systems, building energy infrastructure, and more.

As of right now we don't have enough skilled construction workers to build these projects.

New Mexico's construction employment has decreased steadily over the last decade and is now about 11 percent below its peak in 2006. From February 2020 to October 2021, our state ranked 38th in the nation in terms of construction employment growth.

Construction firms are struggling to find enough qualified workers as they continue to be impacted by volatility in materials costs, project delays, and supply chain disruptions that are part of today's pandemic reality.

Nationwide, experts are forecasting a one million-person shortage in the construction industry by 2023, and that about 29 percent of the workforce will retire by 2026.

That is why Associated General Contractors, New Mexico Chapter and Associated Contractors of New Mexico have launched a campaign called "Let's Get New Mexico Working" to grow our construction workforce.

Both of our organizations have promoted careers in construction for decades. In 2010, we founded ACE Leadership High School, a free public charter school for grades 9-12. ACE provides hands-on education through daytime and nighttime programs aimed at producing job-ready graduates. More information is available at <https://www.aceleadership.org/>.

We also offer Multi-Trade Apprenticeship Programs to prepare adults and students for a career in construction. Information is available by calling (505) 842-1462.

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As part of this campaign we are also providing:

A resume and job board website – agc-nm.org/resume_job_board.php where anyone can post their resume for free, see jobs advertised by members in the southwestern U.S., and seek out career coaching, assistance with writing a resume, reference testing, and a career learning center.

Social media – A Facebook page – facebook.com/letsgetNMworking - and an Instagram account – instagram.com/letsgetnmworking/
- that will feature testimonials from a wide variety of New Mexicans in the construction industry.

A career in construction offers many benefits. Young adults can begin work right after high school and receive on-the-job training. Workers displaced by the pandemic can change careers. Construction companies offer full benefits and the opportunity to advance rapidly.

Even entry-level construction jobs pay above minimum wage. For those who want to go to college, a degree in construction management can provide a lucrative, exciting career.

In response to the pandemic, both AGC NM and ACONM have strengthened not only our own programs, but also our support for Career Technical Education programs throughout the state.

We need our state legislature to do the same. The fact is, only one in three jobs require a college degree, yet the federal government invests one dollar into career technical training for every six dollars it puts into college preparatory programs. More funding to support training for our vital construction workforce is urgently needed.

Now that President Biden has signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 into law, we are ready to begin the hard, but necessary work of rebuilding our state's infrastructure while we also begin to build rewarding careers for a new generation of construction

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professionals.

If you or someone you know is searching for a career, consider a career in construction. There has never been a better time to do so.

For more information, visit our website at <https://www.agc-nm.org> or call (505) 842-1462.

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