

Apprenticeship Utilization Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary
June 9, 2021
1:30 – 3:30 PM

Attendees

WSDOT:

Chris Christopher	Jon Deffenbacher	Heidi Jensen
Rebecca Howe	Jane Rockwell	

Labor:

Billy Wallace	Chris McClain	Mark Riker
Cory Elliott		

Contractors:

Jerry Vanderwood	John Hurd	Pamp Maiers
Tom Zamzow	Valerie Whitman	Jodie Harris
Julie Printz	Sarah Swarthout	

L&I:

Jim Kaltenbaugh

Welcome/Introductions

Chris welcomed everyone to the meeting, and everyone introduced themselves.

Chris first mentioned the agenda items list. He shared with the group that Denys Tak has left WSDOT. He noted that Earl Key from OEO may join the meeting later, then turned it over to Heidi.

Heidi started presenting her screen and went through the agenda items. Said she is cleaning up the CC list and is requesting folks respond to the email she sent out if they want to stay on the list. If there is anyone else that should be on the list, please send their contact information to Heidi.

Program Update

Heidi brought up the Completed Projects Report on screen. This includes projects completed through May 2021, with 22 projects on the report. That's more projects that were closed out in 2020. A couple of reasons this may be – COVID shut our projects down for three months; we previously relied heavily on wet signatures; the transition to PWIA for Apprenticeship reporting. Noteworthy that we went from using contract completion date to NOC file date. Heidi explained the data on the report, the discrepancies between hours reported/etc.

Heidi noted that 7999 was moved into the completed projects – simply because of the large volume of hours reported on this project. This has been reported on active projects so long and is so large that it majorly influenced our overall utilization. This is not included in the calculation for this sheet, but when NOC is filed it will be moved into the completed and those hours will count.

Currently at 15.35% for Apprenticeship utilization. 8 GFEs accepted, 1 rejected.

Group discussion ensued regarding GFEs:

Jerry Vanderwood – asked why the GFE was rejected in the one case where it was? Now what happens in regards to that Contractor? **Heidi**: Not sure on this specific one, but can find this information. Since they failed to meet the goal or have GFE accepted, they got a disciplinary strike letter and must either allow two years to pass or get two projects with passing requirements.

Mark Riker – the question Jerry asked is information we'd like to have every time a GFE is rejected. Asked for more description for reason on lack of apprentices?

Heidi – Currently contractor is required to submit evidence that they consistently reached out to inquire about apprentices.

Mark Riker – would like to be notified any time there appears to be a lack of apprentices.

Some general group discussion about reasons why lack of apprentices may be an issue – specialty work, some union shops only have a handful of apprentices, etc.

Chris – a couple of years ago you walked the group through the typical GFE process and it was quite enlightening. In order for a Contractor to successfully obtain approval on a GFE, it's quite rigorous – this is by no means a simple piece of paper filled out. Has to happen continuously throughout the project, not once at the beginning – if evidence of communication is not provided GFE will not be granted.

Valerie – it is quite challenging – would always prefer to meet the goal through labor hours rather than meet GFE requirements.

Heidi – Mark, on future reports, you'd like us to provide information on rejected GFEs? (Group consensus: yes)

Heidi then moved on to the active projects report, and explained the data presented on the screen. On active projects, we are currently at 16.2% overall utilization. This figure excludes AWV, when calculating AWV it drops overall by approximately 1%.

Heidi then moved on to the pass/fail/GFE breakdown chart.

Group discussion:

Jerry – asked why 2021 seems to have more GFEs than 2020/2019?

Pamp – a lot of apprentices graduating, a lot not getting re-certified and coming back. Classes shut down and apprentices left the market, and will be some time before they come back.

Mark – Do you anticipate this to be a temporary trend?

Pamp – As far as contractor goes we anticipate it to be temporary.

Heidi next moved on to the Overall participation summary (this year versus previous years). Noted the lower apprentice attainment is lower than previous report– this was largely due to a large project (520)

reported on the last one that had 500,000+ labor hours, that did exceptionally well with apprenticeship and caused a temporary spike in that year. Any questions? (None)

Heidi then opened the WSDOT Apprenticeship Program flyer, which is produced annually. She shared that the information reported on page one is basically what has been presented in the first few slides – the second slide shows how the apprenticeship program breaks down on our projects. We seem to hover around 60% Caucasian males overall – the second pie chart breaks out minority hours. We are working with L&I to get data for current year as well.

Group discussion:

Jerry: In the Transportation budget, was more money provided for PASS and other programs or am I thinking of the proposed package that didn't happen?

Jane: Yes, additional dollars were allocated for PASS for this next biennium – still trying to nail down correct number. (Many different versions going around and not sure how it breaks down into the programs in OEO.)

Apprenticeship Challenges

Chris shared a spreadsheet he put together to highlight the broad apprenticeship program. From Agency perspective, we spend a lot of time and money on apprenticeship hours, and it is a great thing. Has attended several pre-apprenticeship graduation programs – when you see what takes place in some of those people's lives as they graduate, you can tell the difference it really makes. On one level, that in turn makes all this effort worth it. "It's about careers – not hours. It's about changing peoples' lives." Chris explained his chart in more detail, showing the different steps an apprentice would normally go through.

Some group discussion – re: attrition, is this happening in earlier stages or later stages? Could be due to folks not liking the type of work.

Billy – looking at remaking our apprenticeship school, have a new business manager.

Some group discussion about attrition, reasoning, etc. – in many cases, attrition happens during the earlier years of the apprenticeship.

Jon D – would it be beneficial to include goals in the project to have apprentices journey out on bigger projects? Valerie noted that from the Contractor side – any time we have new requirements it makes it more difficult. It's always our goal to journey out our apprentices – not sure a requirement would be necessary.

Pre-Apprenticeship Support Services – Office of Equal Opportunity

Jane Rockwell shared they are working on wrapping up biennium. Has seen some good results in spite of challenges related to COVID. No announcements as to successful vendors since they are not quite finished with the solicitation. Funding has increased in latest transportation package. Excited for next two years, going to be a robust construction environment. Would like to address barriers pre-apprentices face when going into apprenticeship – looking at implementing more robust support

programs. If you don't see this information for vendor in WEBS please reach out to Jane for more information.

Jim Kaltenbaugh, L&I – PWIA Update

On all projects with bid due date on/after 2/1/2020 – have had nine completed so far (mix of WSDOT/other public agencies). Of these, three met, three did not meet, three met with GFE. Some challenges so far – basically not understanding the law. A lot of employers were given exemption to take Public Works training – those seem to be the ones who aren't meeting the 15% and not getting the GFE. Seems they weren't doing it correctly before when they thought they were. L&I trying to reach out to the companies to assist them further. Questions?

Heidi – is it lack of certified payrolls? **Jim** – no, it's part of it in other areas but not an issue on these particular projects. It's not understanding registered apprenticeship, successful GFEs, etc.

Jon Deffenbacher – Return to Building (WSDOT)

Jon shared that most of our workforce has been teleworking for over a year. WSDOT is planning to start the transition back into the building over the summer, lots of moving parts and not much known yet – looking at mid-August. Even with returning to physical space, anticipating approximately 40% of work to be done via telework. For some HQ groups it's functioning well, and it has been a recruiting advantage when filling vacant positions. One thing that is interesting, is plans will look different from HQ to regions, and even regions to PE offices will be two different plans. We are seeing increased meeting participation when virtual options are offered.

Chris noted that DOH guidelines currently allow non-state employees return to work without masks, etc. in certain situations (vaccinated/protocols in place/etc.) – that guidance doesn't currently apply to state employees. Two sets of rules going on – so vaccinated contractor staff might not have to social distance whereas WSDOT staff still do.

Action Items

- Make sure that in future, we include information on rejected GFEs in Program Update
- Heidi will follow up with Jim about keeping Apprenticeship number regardless of whether they switch trades
- Next agenda – Consider including presentation that dives into GFE process requirements
- Send out meeting invite for next meeting – December 9th, 1:30 – 3:30

Valerie asked request for Jim – when they upload Apprentice Utilization plan, there's no option to categorize it as plan. Can a tab for the utilization plan be added? **Jim** – will check in with Jolene Skinner to see if we could get that done.

Chris (to Heidi, Jon) – After this meeting let's look at GFEs over the last few months, what are key components, is this COVID issue short term or larger issue that needs addressing?