



YouthBuild USA

## **Resources and Tools for Recruiting, Hiring, Training and Retaining a YouthBuild Construction Trainer**

### **Tip Sheet**

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## I. The Challenge

DOL YouthBuild grantees' success depends on several factors, including hiring and retaining skilled and passionate staff. Hiring an experienced Construction Trainer to lead the required Construction component will help grantees maximize programmatic impact, maintain the health and safety of trainees, develop strong youth leaders, and manage the complexities of real-world Construction job sites successfully.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has made both in-person and virtual staff recruitment and training even more difficult. Grantees need tools that are adaptable to help manage virtual and hybrid work environments.

Hiring a high-quality Construction Trainer does not end after recruitment and selection; the training and retention of the Construction Trainer are equally as important.

Good retention starts with good recruitment and selection. A Construction Trainer with the necessary skills and experience for success will inherently gain more confidence and have more satisfaction in the role than one who does not. Skilled tradespeople must be vetted adequately, whether in-person or virtually, before being hired to ensure they have the recommended three or more years of quality construction experience. This is especially crucial as some tradespeople who come directly off the work site to apply for a Construction Trainer position generally present their experience without credentials or licensure. This is different, for example, from other licensed professions like a Registered Nurse.

### YouthBuild Program Tip Resource

Check out the [Construction Training at a YouthBuild Program Handbook](#), Appendix A, Construction Trainer Orientation Handbook, for more information and a sample Construction Trainer job description.

An additional complexity is that Construction Trainer candidates may be recruited, interviewed, and selected by a staff person with little to no construction background. As a result, the staff person charged with hiring a skilled Construction Trainer may not feel equipped to properly vet candidates to ensure the candidate has the necessary construction knowledge and experience. This challenge becomes even more difficult in an all-virtual setting.

Grantees are not always in a position to develop the deep specific construction knowledge of potential candidates. Instead, grantees are better-positioned to support new Construction Trainers with training and skill development related to virtual education, trauma-informed care, de-escalation trainings, and other soft skills needed to partner with opportunity youth successfully.

This Tip Sheet will serve as a complement to the information and resources within the [YouthBuild Blueprint](#) and [Construction Training at a YouthBuild Program](#)

[Handbook](#). It aims to provide additional considerations, resources, and tools to support DOL YouthBuild grantees with the recruitment, selection, training, and retention of Construction Trainers—in both an in-person and virtual environment.

## II. Key Strategies

### A. Recruitment

Effective hiring starts with recruitment. Casting a wide net is critical for attracting a diverse and skilled candidate pool. Limiting a job posting to one to two job boards may hinder the success of the job search for a Construction Trainer. Instead, it is a best practice to invest time in posting the position to a minimum of five to seven job boards, including potentially promoting it via platforms such as [LinkedIn](#), among others. The following sites may be helpful job boards to recruit a wide array of diverse and skilled Construction Trainer candidates, virtually and in-person:

- [Constructionjobs.com](#)
- [Ihireconstruction.com](#)
- [Idealist.org](#)
- [Constructionjobforce.com](#)
- [Jobs.google.com](#)
- [Procore](#)

### B. Candidate Screening, Interviewing, and Selection

Screening and interviewing candidates, particularly around their construction knowledge and experience, is critically important to finding the right Construction Trainer. Whether in-person or virtual, a sample process for advancing Construction Trainer candidates through an interview phase is as follows:

- After posting the job, wait three to four weeks before closing applications.
- Begin screening all applications at once and in an organized way to keep track of candidates. Using spreadsheets, such as Google Sheets or Excel, is a good way to keep track of candidates and rate them based on the quality of their application. This can be done by staff in a team setting, virtually or in-person. Complete a full first screening on all applicants and screen out applicants who do not include at least three years of construction experience on their resume.
- After the initial screening process has concluded, determine how many candidates are in the pool for a first-round interview. Try to refine the candidate pool down to 10 or fewer candidates.

YouthBuild USA staff created a [Construction Trainer screening survey tool](#) to support program staff who may have limited construction knowledge yet are responsible for hiring a skilled Construction Trainer. The survey is designed for virtual use—though programs can administer it in-person. Hiring staff can use this tool for candidates who have passed the initial resume screening process.

- The screening survey tool is based on similar surveys like the Union Carpenters Apprentices Exam and the NCCER Core Craft Curriculum.
- Using the screening survey tool can support grantees to thoroughly vet a candidate's construction knowledge across four main categories: basic construction knowledge, construction math, estimation, and health and safety.
- Program staff can use the screening survey tool on different virtual platforms (example below shows Google Forms).

**Construction Trainer Screening Survey Tool**

\* Required

1. What does RO stand for when hanging a door? (Construction Knowledge) \*

☐ A. Rule Obtuse

☐ B. Round Onset

☐ C. Rough opening

☐ D. None of the above

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. What does OC stand for when framing a wall? (Construction Knowledge) \*

☐ A. Off-center

☐ B. On center

☐ C. Overcast

☐ D. None of the above

- Hiring staff should cross-check the answers for each candidate with an [answer key](#).
- Identify what minimum score you would consider a passing score for the candidate. For example, a minimum score to pass the screening survey could be 14 out of 20 questions or a 70 percent success rate.

In addition to the screening survey tool and interview process for candidates, DOL YouthBuild grantees could consider engaging an outside entity to help with the process. This process could be done in-person or virtually. For example, a grantee could reach out to the local carpenters union and build a partnership to get support. A skilled member of the carpenters union could volunteer to take a 15-minute phone interview with each final candidate (e.g., two to three candidates) to support grantee staff in determining whether the candidates have the knowledge necessary to deliver both the construction activities and construction curriculum.

Once candidates have been effectively screened and have made it through to the second-round interview, it is good practice to include a current or former participant

trainee in the interview so hiring staff can observe the interaction between the Construction Trainer candidate and the trainee. Including youth voices and perspectives in the interview process can be helpful. Some experience or a natural ability to work with youth, especially the YouthBuild demographic, is critical.

As many Construction Trainers are coming directly from the trade field, it may be challenging to locate an individual with both the necessary construction knowledge and experience working and engaging with opportunity youth. In addition to bringing YouthBuild trainees into the interview process, hiring staff could consider asking candidates to conduct a 15-minute sample training exercise with the young people. This exercise gives hiring staff a chance to see the potential candidate working directly with the trainees.

Once a final candidate has been selected, it is time to make an offer. It is always a best practice to wait for an accepted offer from the potential new hire before notifying the other top candidates that the position is filled. This practice ensures that the hiring staff can make one to the next qualified candidate if the offer is not accepted.

### YouthBuild Program Tip

#### *Sample Exercise*

Program staff could ask candidates to conduct a simple safety training. Once the training is over, trainees could fill out an evaluation form to score the candidates' delivery of the content and overall engagement. Program staff could consider using the same group of trainees, for each cohort of candidates, to maintain a consistent and controlled process. It is advised that the 15-minute training not involve any hand tools, power tools or construction materials to avoid potential liabilities.

## C. Training

The Construction Trainer screening survey tool will be useful for program staff to help identify strengths and opportunities for growth of the Construction Trainer. Upon hire, the DOL YouthBuild grantee should create an onboarding plan tailored to the individual, which maximizes their strengths and provides support in the areas of growth. Development of the onboarding plan should consider both a virtual or in-person setting. Virtual tools like Google Sheets and [Google extensions like Ganttter](#) are designed to support virtual project management, including a Construction Trainer's onboarding plan.

The Construction Trainer Orientation Handbook (Appendix A- found within the [Construction Training at a YouthBuild Program Handbook](#)) is an excellent primer, easily accessed online, to prepare the new Construction Trainer for all aspects of their job and includes valuable tools and resources for onboarding. Weaving in the individual strengths and growth areas from the Construction Trainer screening survey tool will help personalize the onboarding journey for the new Construction Trainer and support their professional development, which is especially important in a virtual setting.

## D. Retention

Staff turnover is expensive and leads to many challenges for any organization, including DOL YouthBuild grantees. The job search engine Indeed provides a resource for employers to support them in creating [employee retention plans](#).

Retaining staff, including Construction Trainers, is critical. Programs should ensure the Construction Trainer role is integrated into the other components of YouthBuild programming, such as education, and not seen as “stand-alone.” Part of retention efforts should include professional development and providing resources to set Construction Trainers up for success, especially in a virtual environment. Below are resources to consider:

- [Teaching and Learning Using Instructional Design in YouthBuild: A Primer](#)
- [Virtual and Hybrid Learning Factsheet](#)
- Online courses and learning websites: [Coursera](#) and [Alison](#)

It is also important to provide resources for staff around the various types of trauma and create a trauma-informed workplace. Below are resources to consider:

- [Employers: Is Your Workplace Trauma-Informed?](#)
- [US Department of Veteran Affairs- Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Resources for Managing Stress](#)
- [Mental Health and Wellness at YouthBuild Programs Tip Sheet](#)

## III. Additional Resources

In addition to the material provided in this Tip Sheet, the resources below offer deeper and more specific information in various areas that apply to recruiting, selecting, training, and retaining high-quality Construction Trainers:

- LinkedIn: [How to Engage and Retain Remote Teams](#)
- Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) [“Managing for Employee Retention”](#)
- Harvard University: [“Recruiting for Diversity”](#)
- Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania: [“10 Hiring Best Practices and Lessons”](#)

## IV. Conclusion

It is critical program staff take the time to assess a potential candidate to ensure they have the knowledge and experience it takes to be a competent Construction Trainer. This includes the candidate's skill to provide training, and the ability to connect with opportunity youth. Doing so will help to ensure programmatic success as it relates to the construction component.