



LADOTD OJT Program



April 2022

OJT Program Implementation with Infrastructure Investment

The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA) will provide more funding to improve the physical highway infrastructure of Louisiana. The infused funding will provide more work for the LADOTD Contractors, thus benefitting the companies. It may require Contractors to hire more employees, in addition to filling jobs left vacant, as a result of Covid-19.

The IIJA shines a spotlight on workforce training for minorities, females, and disadvantaged individuals interested in working in the highway construction trades. It provides funding for programs to help increase diversity. Improved access to broadband internet will facilitate the hirings of eligible individuals which will aid in filling the open positions and increase diversity.

We are excited for the many improvements that the IIJA will bring to the State of Louisiana. It will benefit roads and bridges, increase business opportunities, provide employment opportunities, bridge the digital divide, etc. The Contractors focusing on enrolling more minorities, females, and disadvantaged individuals will benefit the On-the-Job Training Program.

The Compliance Programs Section, along with the OJT Supportive Services will provide any assistance you may need to enroll trainees and to complete the trainings. Please reach out to us for assistance. (Please refer to page 4 for contact information). Please feel free to reach

out to me directly by phone at (225) 379-1382, or by email at Paula.Roddy@la.gov.

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What's Inside

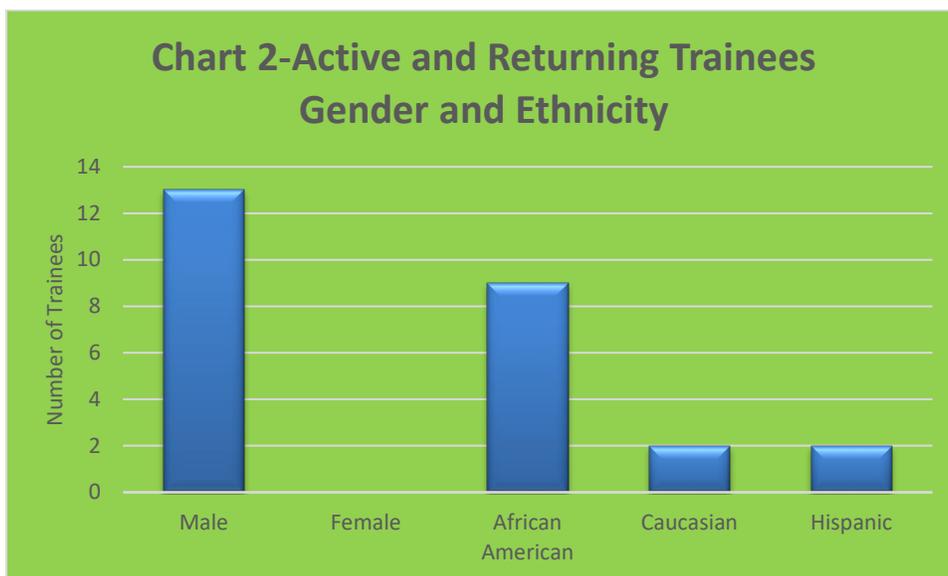
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Current Status of the OJT Program

Chart #1-Trainee Status shows that one trainee is active, and 12 trainees are currently inactive but may return to the trainings. These trainees are from five companies. More Contractors could enroll trainees to provide opportunities for women, minorities, and disadvantaged individuals to work in the highway construction industry, which the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act compels.



Chart #2-Active and Returning Trainees, Gender and Ethnicity shows that 13 male trainees were active or may return to active status in the OJT Program. Ten trainees are operators, two are carpenters and one truck driver who are enrolled in the programs. The Contractors should ensure that the trainees return to active status to complete the trainings and receive \$3.00 per hour reimbursements.



Diverse Workforce Development Components in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act



The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) of 2021 provides \$1.2 trillion for improving the infrastructure in the US. The IIJA provides federal funds for infrastructure related programs such as roads, bridges, etc. Also included with these “hard” infrastructure investments are funds for enhancing workforce development, and to increase diversity in the construction trades. Some of these diversity and workforce development components relate to promoting women in the trucking workforce, establishing pre-apprenticeships, and applying local hiring preferences.

According to the IIJA, females are underrepresented in the construction industry. Women hold 24% of transportation jobs, even though they are 47% of the entire workforce. In Section 23007, Promoting Women in the Trucking Workforce of the IIJA, it states that...*It is the sense of Congress that the trucking industry should explore every opportunity to encourage and support the pursuit and retention of careers in trucking by women, including through programs that support recruitment, driver training, and mentorship.* Specifically, Section 23007 establishes the Women of Trucking Advisory Board to...*identify barriers and industry trends that directly or*

indirectly discourage women from pursuing and retaining careers in trucking and examine ways to facilitate support for women pursuing careers in trucking including training and outreach programs. The Contractors could enhance opportunities for increasing the number of women on construction workforces by enrolling females in the Truck Driver Classifications for a total of 720 hours of training.

Section 25019, Local Hiring Preference for Construction Jobs requires the US Secretary of Transportation, to study approaches to increasing the diversity of the transportation workforce. One method is through the implementation of pre-apprenticeship programs to meet the needs of construction employers. This would include also establishing a direct connection of entry into the apprenticeships. The second method outlined in the IIJA is applying local hiring preferences on projects funded by grants. This is to address barriers to employment for former offenders, individuals with disabilities, and individuals that represent populations that are traditionally underrepresented.

Upcoming OJT Program Contractor Forum

Quarterly, the LADOTD will conduct Contractor’s Forums to discuss the OJT Forums. In these forums, come learn about the OJT Program. Get an overview, information on how to implement, provide input on the OJT Program and ask questions. Interact with the LADOTD staff to ensure meeting the OJT goals.

The date of the next OJT Program Contractor’s Forum will be announced. You will receive an email invitation for the Contractors’ Forum. Please accept the invitation and come join us. Please contact Ms. Joyce Brignac with any questions at (225) 379-1364 or joyce.brignac@la.gov.

Recruiting with Improved Broadband Access

The LADOTD Contractors express difficulties in hiring employees. Recruiting has become a challenge due to Covid-19. The virus closed the recruiting offices, including the Louisiana Workforce Commission's physical offices, although services continued to be offered virtually. The candidates searching for jobs had to access broadband internet to view job postings. However, some did not have high speed broadband internet access at home. Eventually, the jobseekers abandoned job searches.



Access to reliable high-speed broadband internet is essential in searching for employment. How can diversity be increased if minorities, females, and disadvantaged individuals cannot view the openings and apply? Increasing diversity includes providing access to high-speed broadband for the jobseekers. According to *Broadband Search*, in Louisiana, 99.3% of the population can get high internet speeds. However, 33.7% of the population has no internet service. Additionally, Covid-19 demonstrated the need for internet access for all, as services were provided virtually only.

The IIJA infused funding for broadband internet access to meet the needs of those without broadband access. The IIJA provides \$65 billion in federal funding for broadband infrastructure. Specifically, *Section 60102 Grants for Broadband Deployment* provides funding to access affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband. According to this Section, communities of color, lower income areas, and rural areas have been impacted by the digital divide. Providing broadband access is part and parcel of the initiatives to increase employments of underrepresented individuals.

The improvements of the broadband accesses for those seeking employments enables the candidates to view jobs and apply with many companies. This would yield a pool of qualified and interested candidates which, to date, has been limited. The LADOTD Contractors can interview more applicants for the positions.

In anticipation of the IIJA's implementation, Contractors could focus on ensuring that the application processes are easy. Hiring interested candidates ensures job retentions and results in successes for the Contractors. High speed broadband facilitates the hiring of talented minorities, females, and disadvantaged individuals to meet the stipulations of the On-the-Job Training Program.

OJT Program Contacts

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