



# LADOTD OJT Program



January 2024

## *LADOTD's OJT Program for 2024*

It was an exciting year for the LADOTD. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) brought much needed federal funds, increasing projects in Louisiana. The BIL commits that more funds will be provided for the LADOTD in 2024. The Contractors handled the recruiting needs, in 2023, as best as possible given the difficulty of hiring trades workers. This difficulty in hiring is expected to continue in 2024, due to the lack of expertise, ability, or interest in the construction trades.

Artificial intelligence (AI) will challenge us in ways with which we are not familiar, including in the construction work for highways. Will more automated equipment be provided? Will the cameras on construction sites enable construction project managers to monitor the entire construction site simply by sitting at a desk? Exciting

times are ahead as we experience the future of AI.

Regardless of the automation of some of the construction processes, the construction trades will continue to need hands-on workers. There has never been a better time for those seeking family sustaining jobs in the construction industry, together with the ability to become adept at handling automation. The On-the-Job Training (OJT) Program is available to the Contractors for training the employees to receive the additional skills, such as in automation.

The LADOTD encourages Contractors to implement the OJT Program to benefit both the company and the employee. It provides a \$3.00 per hour reimbursement for every hour of training. We, in the Compliance Programs Section, along with the OJT Supportive Services, are ready to help you to be successful

in implementing the OJT Program. Please reach out to us for the assistance. (Please refer to page 4 for contact information). Please also feel free to reach out to me directly by phone at (225) 379-1382, or by email at [Paula.Roddy@la.gov](mailto:Paula.Roddy@la.gov).

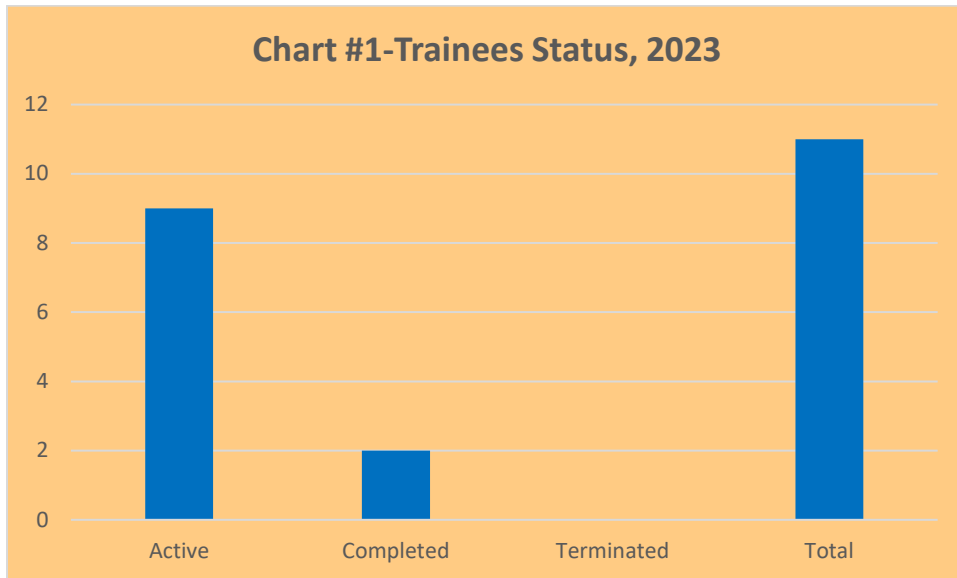
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### What's Inside

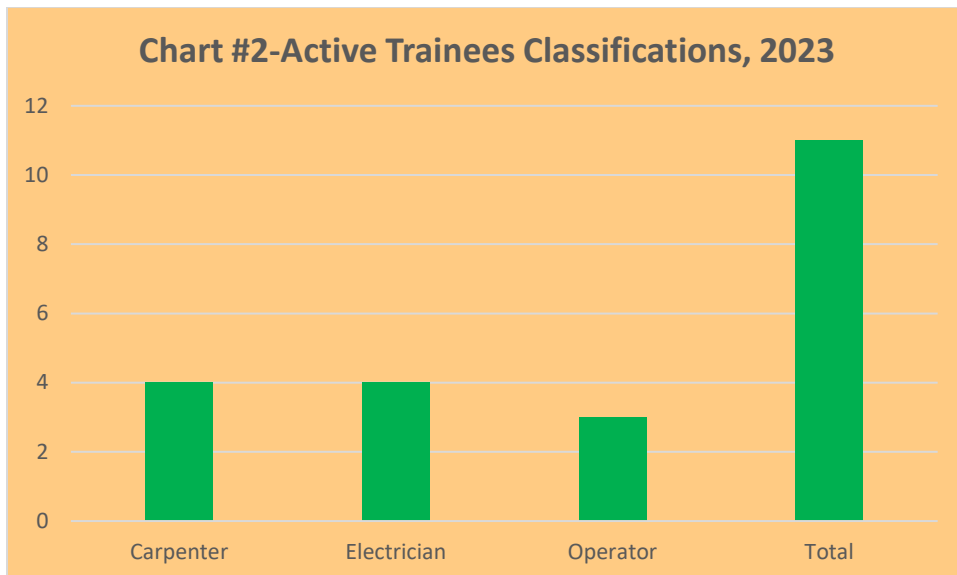
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## *Current Status of the OJT Program*

*Chart #1-Trainees Status, 2023* shows that 11 trainees were enrolled by three Contractors. Eight minority males and three non-minority males were active on the LADOTD projects in 2023. In 2024, more minority, and female trainees can be enrolled to ensure that the LADOTD produces accomplishments on the OJT Program.



*Chart #2-Active Trainees Classifications, 2023* indicates the total training classifications, with two Carpenters, four Electricians and two Operators that were minority trainees. As AI takes over some administrative and other jobs, more displaced jobseekers will apply to the skilled trades' openings. The OJT Program can be used to train the new eligible employees, while simultaneously enabling the Contractors to collect the reimbursement of \$3.00 per training hour.



## *Construction Job Security Amid Artificial Intelligence*

AI has arrived and will transform how we do work. Some jobs will disappear almost completely. The construction processes will be integrating the AI tools and technologies, which is beneficial. AI is projected to have many capabilities which will be beneficial. However, these very capabilities will also result in making, particularly white-collar work, more exposed to automation, eliminating some of those jobs. The good news is that blue collar jobs may be more immune. Pivoting to blue collar jobs can provide job security due to AI implementation risk.

AI tends to focus on obtaining data and performing analysis on that data. The blue-collar jobs, such as Carpenters, Electricians, etc. are difficult to automate. Contractors touting this advantage of the lack of effect of AI on blue collar jobs with the jobseekers could be an incentive during recruiting as AI changes in job markets are imminent. Add to that, a significant labor shortage exists in the construction trades industry. In the AGC's 2022 *Workforce Survey Result*, the companies indicated that trades positions are difficult to fill, as shown in the *Construction Jobs Hiring Difficulty Chart*.



Safety is projected to increase with AI hardware and software, which is another incentive for the jobseekers in considering the trades. For example, the construction worker will have automation signals that will alert the Operators of adjacent interferences.

The trades workers, combining physical work expertise with automation training using On-the-Job Training can soar in the construction work. AI will change how construction work is completed. Implementing AI in construction will not be an option, with the pace of AI improvements. Regardless, the future for trades' workers with AI is bright, albeit requiring more On-the-Job Training which includes automation skills.

## *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](mailto:joyce.brignac@la.gov).

## *Quality of OJT Program Training*

Minority or female employees may quietly quit without stating the true reasons to the supervisor. It is difficult for employees to ask companies to make changes ensuring a comfortable work environment. The highway jobs are family sustaining jobs, but if the minorities and women are not comfortable to work, these numbers will not increase. The quality of training matters.

A commitment of high-quality training is the key to hiring new OJT Program jobseekers which will ensure job success. What is high quality training? It is providing step-by-step instruction on the job tasks, ensuring safe work conditions, providing upward job opportunities, and safeguarding a work environment of respect for all.



### Step by Step Instruction

Technical instruction is the core bedrock of solid training. For example, for a Highway/Bridge Carpenter, providing hands-on training on bridge formwork, box culverts carpentry, forms' stripping, along with plans' reading, and tools' instructions ensures proficiency. The DOTD's *OJT Construction Classifications Manual* lists the training tasks for the supervisors to teach the trainees.

### Safe Working Conditions

Providing frequent safety training will be necessary. The construction worker must know the best methods for safe working conditions. If the trainees do not feel safe, they may quit in the middle of trainings.

### Upward Opportunities

The minority, female and disadvantaged employees will need to receive family sustaining wages in timely paychecks. Additionally, upward opportunities should be visible, with minority and women Forepersons, Superintendents, etc. on the construction site. If the trainees view minorities and women in higher paying positions, it demonstrates that it is possible to obtain higher positions and provides motivation to succeed.

### Construction Site Environment

Construction sites with an environment in which the trainees feel respected will ensure productive learning. The crew, in addition to the supervisor, welcoming the trainees to the team will increase morale, and ensure retention. Higher retention is a key to ensuring that enough workers exist to construct the projects funded in the BIL.

The four factors, *Step by Step instruction*, *Safe Work Conditions*, *Upward Opportunities*, and *Construction Site Environment* are keys to ensuring trainees' successes. Some DOTD companies have shown that it is possible and have enrolled and taught the various training programs. Why not adopt these four principles to ensure that more minorities, women, and disadvantaged individuals are being hired? Employing such individuals may also help to alleviate recruitment difficulties and fill the open jobs.

### **OJT Program Contacts**

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