

## **Sacramento Regional Construction and Transportation Initiative**

Sacramento Employment and Training Agency

As a single mom, I was desperate to find a 9-5 job with benefits, good pay, and weekends and holidays off. One day my neighbor asked me if I wanted to be an electrician. He told me how to sign up, and here I am a year later and loving it!  
--Renee Delucia, 1<sup>st</sup>-year electrician apprentice

In the early 1990s, few women or minorities participated in construction apprenticeship programs in the Sacramento area. At the same time, the construction sector was booming but suffered a shortage of skilled workers. Several local workforce leaders approached the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (SETA) about partnering to address the problem. SETA has worked to promote inclusion of women and minorities in the construction sector workforce ever since.

SETA, a joint powers agency of the City and County of Sacramento and home to Sacramento Works, the local Workforce Investment Board and One-Stop operator, has been successful through a combination of deep industry engagement, partnership development, and development of multiple programs tailored to meet the needs of women entering non-traditional occupations. SETA's Employer Leadership Team promotes non-traditional hiring and provides training to employers on how to do so. Pipeline programs, such as pre-apprenticeships, provide apprenticeship coordinators qualified women applicants. Targeted recruitment, in part through the One-Stop system by staff with deep knowledge of the sector who have received trained to promote non-traditional employment, helps to fill the pipeline. Some programs also pay wages to trainees, providing support to low-income parents who might not otherwise be able to access training; other programs are targeted toward specific opportunities.

Relevant initiatives which SETA has led or supported include:

- Construction Job Training Program: SETA partnered with the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, the Sacramento County Office of Education, and the Sacramento Sierra Building Trades Council to train workers to build houses in low-income neighborhoods.
- SETA/NTO County Public Works Project: SETA partnered with the City of Sacramento Utilities Department and County of Sacramento Public Works to develop career pathways for women.
- Sacramento Works for Women Construction Apprenticeship Conference: SETA and Sacramento Sierra Building and Construction Trades Council host a semi-annual event at apprenticeship training sites to promote women entering the construction apprenticeship programs.
- Construction Talent Transfer Program: SETA partners with the North State Building Industry Association and other partners to provide short-term training to help out-of-work residential contractors transition to commercial construction, infrastructure, or green technology.
- Sacramento Works Highway & Transportation Initiative: SETA partners with CalTrans, the Teamsters, and others to train low-wage workers, women, TANF recipients, and dislocated workers for highway construction.

SETA has increased participation by women in the area's construction workforce. In the case of the SETA/NTO County Public Works Project, the partnership not only more than tripled the number of women working in County Public Works blue-collar jobs, it also established a new trainee classification that makes it easier for women to access these jobs through training. SETA's pre-apprenticeship programs consistently reach 25% participation by women. In the most recent cohort of WIA-funded training, 25% of the graduates were women, and of these, 68% were placed in jobs averaging \$19.13/hour.

Policy changes have posed challenges to SETA's work. Since Proposition 209 eliminated all state and local preferences and goals for minority and women-owned business enterprise procurement, employer commitment to training and employing women in non-traditional occupations has dropped, creating a need for supportive policies. This has coincided with an overall drop in Federal investment in training.

SETA has benefited from discretionary WIA dollars for the construction sector, as well as from grants from the California Department of Transportation targeting low-wage workers, women, TANF recipients, and dislocated workers. The designation of pre-apprenticeship as an allowable work activity for TANF recipients, most of them women, has also made their participation possible. Expanded discretionary funding for such industry sector-specific projects and similar policies to support the participation of low-income women would provide much-needed support for SETA's efforts.