Excitement Amongst Challenges

The Arkansas Department of Transportation’s newly implemented On-the-Job Training Supportive/Services Program (OJT/SSP) has dealt with unique challenges. These challenges are tri-fold, newly implemented program, pandemic issues, and individuals looking for opportunities that better fit their lifestyle. The initial challenge was the transition from being out-sourced to being brought in-house for coordination and oversight. It also dealt with a pandemic from 2020-2021, which slowed the growth of trainees actively participating in the OJT/SSP. The pandemic also caused pauses on jobs because crews would have to stop work due to outbreaks. This story has effected many, and is still a challenge we will continue to possibly face in the future. The third challenge, like other employers the OJT/SSP has faced the unexpected decline of individuals seeking employment. Vacancies are high around the country and this is no different within the construction industry.

Between the COVID surges and individuals understanding their worth the OJT/SSP is faced with these challenges, but it can overcome them. We are strategizing to combat these issues by working with stakeholders and contractors to help fix these problem in the construction industry.

First we must conquer this problem with small victories. This is what provides excitement. Fixing the problems are doable with small victories. The question you may be asking is “What are the small victories?”

- We are working with stakeholders to create pipeline partnerships and present this program as a springboard for individuals who are ready to enter the workforce and start a career in construction.
- Pipeline Partnerships for program success (page 4):
  - Agencies (Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, Veteran Affairs, Arkansas Parole and Probation Office)
  - Educational Institutions (Adult Education Centers, High Schools)
- Providing opportunities to the unemployed by working with workforce services around the state so this opportunity is available to individuals.
- The OJT/SSP is becoming an avenue of success for trainees who complete the program. This provides incentive to others who may be on the fence about the effectiveness of the OJT/SSP.
- First quarter data shows results that the OJT/SSP is on a path to success.
The data below shows the trainee enrollment in the first quarter was 14 total, 2 females and 12 males.

The data below shows the enrollment by demographic in the first quarter as 1 female and 2 males in October, 7 minority males in November, and 1 female and 3 minority males in December.
OJT/SSP Status Report
First Quarter October 2021-December 2021

*The data in the chart below shows the trainees completion for the first quarter.*

![Chart showing trainee completion for October, November, and December.](chart1.png)

*The data in the chart below shows the trainees incompletion for the first quarter.*

![Chart showing trainee incompletion for October, November, and December.](chart2.png)
THE OJT/SSP REFERRAL PROCESS

This process is a great opportunity for the OJT/SSP, Contractors, and Pipeline entities to work together to help individuals (*females, minorities, and disadvantaged individuals*) find jobs and become an asset to the construction industry. The process below should help bring understanding of the proposed referral process.

1. Outreach will be done by the OJT Supportive Specialist. Outreach has already begun with the entities below:
   - Arkansas Department of Workforce Services
   - Adult Education Center and High Schools
   - Arkansas Probation and Parole Office
2. After the partnership has been established the entities above will screen applicants and refer them to the OJT/Supportive Service Specialist.
3. After the referral the OJT Supportive Services Specialist will conduct an interview, enter the individual’s information onto a spreadsheet, which will be provided to the contractors and resident engineer’s offices on a bi-weekly basis. This purpose of this interview is to gauge the interest of the potential applicant and provide an overall view of the OJT/SSP to said applicant.
4. The spreadsheet mentioned in the prior bullet point will be dispersed via email.
   - *The creation of a database is being discussed to store potential applicant’s information for contractor’s access for referrals.*
5. Pipelines and partnerships will continue to be established by the OJT Supportive Services Specialist to create fluid avenues for referrals.
OJT/SSP UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday-April 15, 2022
Women in STEM Conference; 9:00am-3:00pm
Wyndham Riverfront Little Rock
North Little Rock, AR 72214

All events below are free to OJT/SSP Trainees:

Saturday-May 7, 2022
American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) Training
Traffic Control Coordinator Training (Flagger)
ARDOT Central Office
10324 Interstate 30
Little Rock, AR 72209

Saturday-Sunday May 14-15, 2022
Saturday-Sunday August 6-7, 2022
OSHA-10 Training
ARDOT Central Office
10324 Interstate 30
Little Rock, AR 72209

For Interest and/or Inquiries Contact:

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Joanna.McFadden@ardot.gov

Free language assistance for Limited English Proficient individuals is available upon request.

This notice is available from the ADA/504/Title VI Coordinator in large print, on audiotape and in Braille.

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