

Apprentice Skills Achievement Program (ASAP)

Location: Cleveland, Ohio

Host Organization: Union Construction Industry Partnership

Partner Organizations: Cleveland Hard-Hatted Women, Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council, Building and Construction Trades Council, Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services of Cuyahoga County, Ohio Department of Labor, Ohio State Justice Department, Cuyahoga County/Cleveland Workforce Development Board

Target Population: Minorities, Women, and Low-Income Adults in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County

Program Innovations

- Mentoring and support for program graduates aimed at improving job placement and retention.
- Direct entry and partnerships with 17 unions

Program History

The Union Construction Industry Partnership (UCIP) is a labor-management coalition. UCIP brings union contractors and construction-trades union labor groups together to promote the use of union construction and advance the construction industry in Cleveland and Northeast Ohio. UCIP aims to promote fair wages and working conditions, to increase workplace safety, and to increase job opportunities

In 2003, the Cleveland City Council discovered construction projects funded by the City were not using a high proportion of Cleveland residents. The Fannie M. Lewis Cleveland Resident Employment Law was subsequently passed to address this problem, and mandated that City-funded projects include a labor force that is 20 percent Cuyahoga County residents and four percent low-income individuals. To help union contractors meet these new requirements, UCIP with assistance from the City of Cleveland and the Mayor's Office, created the Apprentice Skills Achievement Program (ASAP). The ASAP program is

designed to train Cleveland area minorities and females, who have not traditionally been represented in the industry, for a career in union construction.

Program Summary

Participants in the ASAP program are referred and recruited from a variety of sources. The Ohio Department of Labor and the Department of Justice both refer participants for training. Local community-based organizations, such as Cleveland Hard-Hatted Women, also refer clients to ASAP to participate in the pre-apprenticeship program. ASAP is also beginning to work with local high schools to expose minority youth to the opportunities present in the building trades.

To be eligible for the program, participants must demonstrate 8th-grade math proficiency and 7th-grade English proficiency. Trainees must have a GED or high school diploma, be at least 18 years old, and live in Cleveland or Cuyahoga County. The majority of the participants are African-American males, many of whom have a criminal history.

After outreach and screening, trainees participate in eight weeks, or 320 hours, of classroom and hands-on training. Industry Training Coordinators from the Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council, which manages the Building Trades apprenticeship programs in Cuyahoga County, along with the instructor, helped design the **curriculum** with assistance from other union representatives. The curriculum is consistently evaluated and improved upon with assistance from the program's primary instructor who is a former carpenter and who helped develop the Carpenters International Apprenticeship program. Trainees cover a wide range of topics and skills during the program, including construction math and measurement, blueprint reading, safety, and construction terminology. Physical conditioning classes help prepare trainees for the physical rigors of working in construction. Welding was also added to provide trainees with an additional qualification and skill to enhance their resume, and increase their value on a work site. During the hands-on component of the training, participants build a model home, which is housed at Max Hayes Vocational High School. While the program provides a basic introduction to green construction in the classroom, a current discussion is underway in 2010 to also incorporate green skills into the hands-on component.

Trainees build upon their soft skills by engaging in conflict resolution exercises and improving their overall communication skills. Trainees, who often include a high proportion of ex-offenders, access numerous **support services** during the program. A partnership with the Alcohol and Drug Board in Cleveland provides counseling to trainees who are still battling substance abuse. In addition, through a grant provided by the United Black Fund of Greater Cleveland, the

program coordinates license reinstatement services with the Department of Motorized Vehicles for trainees with revoked or suspended licenses.

With assistance from the Program Coordinator and the instructors, students receive an orientation to multiple trades and are then counseled to help them choose a trade to pursue as a career. Visiting apprenticeship training facilities and job sites also exposes the students to the trades and further assists them in selecting the trade of their choice.

Once a participant completes the training, the graduate is eligible for **job placement** and to enter an apprenticeship into one of the 17 participating trades. The program's direct entry arrangement with partnering unions allows graduates primary consideration for entry if an apprenticeship slot is available. With the recession, few apprenticeship opportunities now exist. As a result, the program has been creative in finding other related employment opportunities for graduates to pursue. For example, some graduates may work with a contractor in temporary positions, while some are now working at the Cleveland Clinic Foundation as paid interns. As interns, they work for 12 weeks in the Facilities Maintenance Department, where they gain hands-on experience and work alongside electricians, plumbers and others, developing skills and knowledge relevant to the construction industry.

To help with job retention, ASAP developed a mentoring program. The program holds a monthly meeting for program graduates, where they have the opportunity to share their experiences working in the construction sector and sometimes listen to a guest speaker. On average, 20 participants attend the meeting each month.

“It is a group mentoring program where everyone is invited to come and share their issues or challenges that they are being faced with at the jobsite. We are able to hear both negative and positive exchanges and to redirect energies to help turn negatives into positives.”

--Cindy Marizette, Executive Director of ASAP

Program Funding

ASAP trainees receive funding from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to participate in the training. Thus, participants must meet certain eligibility requirements to participate in the training such as proficiency in 8th-grade math and 7th-grade reading skills. Recently, UCIP received an earmark from the Ohio Department of Labor that will allow them to enroll and train 48 pre-apprentices from March 2010 to March 2012.

Because of the restrictive nature of WIA funding, the program must also obtain support from additional sources. Fundraising events with corporate and celebrity sponsorship, such as UCIP's Annual Celebrity Golf Outing and Scholarship Drive are held. Individual contributions are also raised to help support the program.

Industry Engagement

As a labor-management coalition, UCIP includes representatives from both union contractors and labor groups, including The Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council, which played an instrumental role in creating the ASAP program. The Board of Trustees includes current and retired journeymen, contractors and educators, and these members are actively involved in shaping the program's design and implementation, and in helping advocate for ASAP graduates' entry into union apprenticeships.

“Individuals at the Building Trades are people we reach out to on a regular basis and exchange information with. They're able to express to us any areas we need to enhance our program or curriculum in, and we're able to address their recommendations needed.”

--Cindy Marizette, Executive Director of ASAP