



## **Washington State Construction Workforce Conference**

### **Construction Skill Panels Showcase**

**March 2, 2006**

#### **What is an Industry Skill Panel?**

- Panels, comprised of business, labor, and education, are “think tanks” that focus on the existing and future workforce development needs in key industries.
- Panels provide forums for discussion with multiple stakeholders who are vested in a particular industry.
- Panels create industry-driven teams that find solutions for short-, mid-and long term challenges and opportunities for an industry workforce.
- Panels foster an environment of knowledge sharing among individuals who make recommendations for immediate and future action to a local region, the state, or the legislature for policy changes necessary to keep an industry’s workforce competitive.

#### **Suggested Guidelines for Skill Panels:**

- Is the Industry important to the area’s economic base?
- Is the Industry likely to grow and offer High Skill / High Wage jobs?
- Does the Industry offer a career ladder for advancement?
- Is the Industry currently experiencing critical shortages of skilled workers? Will the Industry experience a shortage of skilled workers in the future?
- Will the Industry participate through monetary investment in upgrading the skills of the workforce?

#### **South Central Workforce Council – Construction Skill Panel**

While the South Central Workforce Council region, comprised of Yakima, Kittitas, Klickitat and Skamania counties, continues to see high unemployment and industry closures due to outsourcing of jobs and global competition, the area does have bright spots. The one area that has seen positive change across the four counties is the construction industry and the good news is that there are many new projects slated for the next couple of years. Ultimately, that translates to JOBS available.

Although the construction industry will continue to improve, contractors state that they face shortages of skilled workers to fill job opportunities with the local workforce. Clearly, this shortage provided an opportunity to build a partnership with business and labor to address this skilled worker shortage. Hence, the TAPIT (Tri-County Apprenticeship, Pre-Apprenticeship and Incumbent Worker Training) project was developed. Using the sector approach adopted by the then Tri-County Workforce Council, the project established a Construction Skill Panel which serves as an oversight body in the development of career ladders, curricula for customized training, allocation of resources, identifying training needs, as well as outcome assessment and evaluation.

TAPIT was built on a firm partnership comprised of local business, labor organizations, the Yakama Nation, local community college, construction associations, and workforce development organizations. The following partners pledged a commitment to the project goals and strategies: Laborers' Union Local No. 614, Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters, and Eastern Washington Northern Idaho Painters and Allied Trades, the Yakama Nation Tribal Employment Rights Office (TERO), Associated General Contractors of Central Washington, Associated General Contractors Education Foundation, Yakima Valley Community College, WIA Adult, Dislocated Workers, and Youth Service Providers, WorkSource, and 29 local Construction Industry businesses.

Prior to the TAPIT project, the construction industry did not have a structure in place, locally, to address the industry's workforce needs. TAPIT focused and provided incumbent worker training on a broad range of construction occupations and also targeted the unemployed, harder-to-serve residents, recruiting from those under-represented groups in the trades for the pre-apprenticeship /core training component.

TAPIT has achieved many successes over the past year and a half, a few are listed below:

- A Construction Trades Core Curriculum was jointly developed by the building trades and other TAPIT partners to ensure that the basic elements for entry into their respective apprenticeship programs were taught within the 88 hour core class. (e.g. reading a tape measure, construction math, confined space, etc.)
- Two core classes were taught specifically targeting the Yakama Nation. As an outcome an Indian lead mentoring program for the construction industry was developed. Native Americans from around the State who are successful in the trades have volunteered time to share their stories and offer support to other Native Americans who are entering the construction industry.
- The Yakama Nation Housing Authority now recognizes the value of apprenticeship programs, and the TAPIT project has been the catalyst in the development of a Building Apprenticeship Training program for the Yakama Nation Housing Authority. Currently there are 35 certified new apprentices in the program.
- Other core classes have been offered in Yakima, Kittitas, and Klickitat counties. Forty-seven people received core training and 91% of those successfully completed the training. To our knowledge at least 78% of those have entered employment and/or apprenticeship programs.
- Over the past year, 353 incumbent workers have received skill upgrade training in areas identified by their employer or their respective trade and 100% of those workers have earned a credential and/or certification recognized by the construction industry.
- Public and private industry funds have combined to elevate the work of this team. Training costs to date have exceeded \$120,000 with the initial construction trade industry match at over 70%.

The TAPIT project has assisted the local area in strengthening its relationship with apprenticeship programs and has been the springboard for development of the Construction Industry Skill Panel which will continue to address current and future workforce needs.

*For more information please contact:  
Kathy Thomas, Program Manager  
South Central Workforce Council  
[kathy.thomas@co.yakima.wa.us](mailto:kathy.thomas@co.yakima.wa.us)  
(509) 574-1950*