



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration



Innovative Transit Workforce Development Projects of 2015: Summative Evaluation

Background

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) believe that developing and maintaining human capital is as important as the investment in physical capital. With the resurgence of public transportation in recent years, transit systems challenges such as rapidly changing technologies (to vehicles, rights-of-way, and customer information services), an aging workforce, and increasing ridership make attracting and preparing new talent increasingly important. To help address these challenges, FTA published a Notice of Funding Availability for proposals in 2014 and selected 17 applicants, awarding FY 2015 funding of \$8,308,882.

Objective

The objective of this project was to conduct a summative evaluation of the 2015 projects to determine if they met their goals and were scalable and worthy of further FTA funding and expansion.

Findings & Recommendations

Projects in the 2015 Innovative Transit Workforce Development Program, best viewed as pilot tests, were successful at identifying promising approaches for workforce development.

Axiom conducted the evaluation by reviewing documents and hosting structured interviews with each project participant. Of the funded projects, 12 focused primarily on new entrants to transit, 5 were designed primarily to provide training to existing technicians or frontline staff to improve the skills of those already in the transit sector, and 2 had leadership or supervisory development components. Overall, 13 were recommended for further investment, 2 were somewhat recommended for investment, and 1 was not recommended.

In total, 90% of all project goals were met, 57% of goals were exceeded, 10% were unmet, and the remainder were indeterminate or too early to draw a conclusion. Collectively, the projects provided training to nearly 5,000 participants for transit careers, with 2,217 certifications earned; 1,015 participants were placed into employment or apprenticeships; and 30 training courses and 2 apprenticeship programs were created.

Outcome	Number
Outreach*	11,548
Participants trained	4,996
Certifications earned	2,217
Participants placed – employment/apprenticeship	1,015
Training courses created	30
Promotions	18
Apprenticeships created	2

In addition, several products were developed for the 2015 project that can be made available to all transit agencies:

- 5 new training curricula for technical programs
- 2 skills crosswalks between military and transit jobs
- 1 institute created
- 1 competency model (Vehicle Maintenance)
- 1 toolkit for improving gender equity
- 1 program handbook for others to replicate
- 1 model application across programs
- 1 youth academy curriculum

Selected cross-project conclusions and implications offered in the evaluation report include the following:

- Grantees generally met, and often exceeded, their goals.
- Transit, workforce, and education agencies together make very strong partnerships.
- Pre-apprenticeship programs must be flexible to accommodate transit construction.
- Unions need to be included early in recruitment and training projects.
- Support is critical when expanding the talent pool to disadvantages or under-represented populations.
- Participant selection is critical to project outcomes.
- Projects should be selected based on criteria that are in line with agency and program goals.

Benefits

Partnerships among transit agencies, workforce agencies, and education entities can produce very productive workforce development programs, benefitting the entire transportation industry. Based on the evaluation results, the 2015 Innovative Transit Workforce Development Program projects identified several promising approaches that are worthy of consideration for further investment or investment on a broader scale.

Project Information

FTA Report No. 0153

This research project was conducted by Dr. Daniel Weissbein of Axiom Corporation. For more information, contact FTA Project Manager Betty Jackson at (202) 366-1730 or Betty.Jackson@dot.gov. All research reports can be found at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/research-innovation>.