



Recognizing the need for a skilled public works workforce with the necessary capabilities to construct, maintain, and operate critical infrastructure, **APWA supports federal policies that will ensure a pipeline of public works professionals well into the future.** The public works workforce faces serious challenges – **aging workers, the growing ‘skills gap’, and a lack of awareness of public works careers.** The following key areas should be considered as workforce development legislation and regulations are drafted and implemented:



Awareness of Public Works Careers

Despite the importance of public works professionals to our communities and the stability of state and local government positions, many students, graduates, and mid-career jobseekers are **simply unaware of opportunities in public works.**



Efforts should be made to ensure **career counseling professionals**, including those in the **education system**, are equipped with the information to ensure individuals are aware of these possibilities.



Specifically, the Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics operates a **Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system** utilized by many of the nation’s career counselors. Ensuring the wide range of **public works careers are properly outlined in this system** is critical to raising awareness among jobseekers.



Workforce Development Programs and Integration of Public Works Careers

A wide range of federal, state, and local programs provide support to public works through **credentialing, on-the-job training, and certification.** These three main areas require continued federal investment and support:

1

Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs provide state and local workforce development boards with the resources to assist employers and jobseekers with hiring, training, and retention.

2

Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs under the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) provide the skills necessary for a wide range of public works careers.

3

Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs under the National Apprenticeship Act (NAA) provide on-the-job training, which is vital for many public works positions that require significant practical instruction outside of a classroom.



In addition to the need for support for these programs and other elements of the workforce development system, there are opportunities for improved alignment with the public works workforce. **Increased cooperation between workforce boards and public works agencies, establishment of clear public works career pathways in CTE, and greater engagement of sectors including the water and transportation workforces in apprenticeships** are examples of possibilities for increased engagement.



Eligibility of Public Works Agencies for Workforce Development Funds

Public works agencies are an important component of the transportation, water, and emergency management workforces, among others, but in some cases have been **excluded from eligibility for new workforce development funds and programs** aimed at these sectors.



Establishing a **clear legislative definition of public works agencies** and ensuring they are specified as **eligible recipients** in future bills/regulations could enhance their worker training capabilities and help prepare for changing technology and the future of work.



License Portability

Numerous public works professions, including water/wastewater operators, construction inspectors, and engineers, are **regulated by state licensing programs**. Despite broad consistency among most states' programs, **license portability is generally limited**.



Increased mobility of licensure would better allow for **training in areas with greater need of employment**, and the subsequent **relocation to areas with greater need of employees**.



Support for Innovative Training Programs

Public works departments across the nation have implemented innovative training programs targeting **populations in need**, including outreach to **veterans** and workforce reentry programs for **currently or formerly incarcerated individuals**. These programs provide a smooth transition into the workforce for individuals in need by providing them with the necessary **skills, training, and certifications** in public works professions.



Policies promoting and incentivizing these initiatives can **bring benefits both to individuals in need and the overall community**.

Policymaker Primers supplement APWA's official Public Policy Priorities, providing additional information and context for issues that do not strictly fall into the categories of transportation, water resiliency, or emergency management.

The American Public Works Association (APWA) represents over 30,000 public works professionals across North America, dedicated to providing essential, high-quality equitable and sustainable services to millions of people in rural and urban communities, both small and large.

APWA members serve in both the public and private sectors, providing expertise to the local, state, and federal government levels. Working in the public interest, our members plan, design, build, operate and maintain, and oversee America's vast infrastructure networks essential to our nation's economy, environment, safety, and way of life.

APWA collaborates with all levels of government and supports federal investment in our shared infrastructure. APWA is opposed to unfunded mandates and any effort to impede the appropriate use of public right-of-way, and strongly encourages industry to partner with public works, and all state and local government entities.

APWA supports federal investment and support for professional development training initiatives, including investment in apprenticeships, grants, career and technical education programs, to assist with the growth and utilization of innovative activities related to having a diverse, high-quality public works workforce.

It is important that federal regulations do not become onerous and burdensome to localities in their use of advancing technologies.