



Outreach for Inclusion

Women, minorities, people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and felons are not well represented in the transportation industry. Each of these groups could be a source of many new entrants into transportation careers. Reaching these people offers challenges that differ by group and by potential occupation.

Women tend to be underrepresented in the construction trades and in truck driving. Many women have never considered the possibility of entering what are often thought of as men's jobs. They may not understand that modern technologies have made handling a truck or an earthmover less physically demanding. They also may not understand the career opportunities in these jobs. They may not understand the process through which one can become qualified to work in various transportation fields. They may fear bias in the industries on the part of employers and coworkers against women in the field. Finally, they may lack role models and contacts that would help them move into these new fields.

Minority men also tend to be underrepresented in the industry for many of the same reasons: lack of understanding of the career potentials; lack of understanding how to become qualified for jobs in the field; a lack of role models and contacts; and a fear of bias among employers and coworkers.

Economically disadvantaged people face all of the issues of women and minorities plus they may lack the soft skills needed to succeed on the job.

Finally, felons may face all of these issues with the additional stigma of being a felon. In some cases, the stigma may simply be in the eyes of the employer; in others, it may actually bar a person from the industry or from specific careers within the industry.

Recruiting people from these groups will require different approaches. First of all, recruiters will have to go to where the people are. One truck driving school makes an effort to reach out to women's groups to talk about the possible careers in trucking. Another agency reaches out to schools in minority, low-income neighborhoods. Both have been successful in reaching some people within those groups. Other possibilities include reaching out to community groups and churches to find targeted people, or partnering with social service agencies that provide services to the chronically unemployed.

Success in reaching any of these groups will require partnerships between employers, social service agencies, workforce agencies, public sector transportation agencies, and, in the case of felons, correctional agencies. Such partnerships will allow more people to be reached.

As they are reached, the information and support brought will have to be tailored to the targeted group and the profession. That information should include:

- Descriptions of the opportunities available within transportation and specific careers within transportation.
- Information of the real nature of the specific careers being discussed: What is it really like to be a truck driver or a construction worker?
- How can you become qualified to have a career in the field?
- What support services are available to become qualified?
- What support services will be available in the workplace? For example, if a woman is moving into a career in construction, are other women in the workplace? Will there be opportunities for those women interact?



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Much of this information will help a potential career applicant to make an informed decision. Schools and employers will have to accept the responsibility of dealing with the unique needs to people in these categories.

- The chronically unemployed person who has been out of the workforce for some time, or the person who has never been in the workplace, may require assistance in learning a range of soft skills that will be needed for success.
- People with no experience in post-secondary education, or people who may not have been successful in high school, may require special assistance in understanding the process of becoming enrolled in a program.
- Similarly, people with no experience or role models in the world of apprenticeships will need help in becoming engaged in such an experience.
- Finally, many people will require financial assistance as they prepare to new careers. Partnerships between schools, workforce agencies, and the private sector will be needed to provide this support.

Reaching women for traditionally male occupations, minorities, economically challenged people, and felons is difficult. It requires and investment of time and money, but it can bring many new people into the industry.