

She Drives the Future Abstract

Applicant Name

Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership | Building Industry Group Skilled Trades Employment Program (WRTP | BIG STEP)

Project Purpose

WRTP | BIG STEP's She Drives the Future program trains Wisconsin women to fill persistent vacancies in union jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and increases the number of women entering and staying in registered apprenticeships. This program pairs certified pre-apprenticeship training with commercial driver's license (CDL) preparation to make program graduates more employable.

Wisconsin is projected to add 14,550 new construction jobs by 2032, according to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. At the same time, 62% percent of Wisconsin contractors are concerned about an insufficient supply of workers or subcontractors, according to a 2025 Associated General Contractors of America survey. To find enough workers for registered apprenticeships in construction, Wisconsin employers will need to consider non-traditional candidates. Women are underrepresented as both construction workers and CDL drivers. Just 6% of Wisconsin CDL holders and 9% of construction workers are women. She Drives the Future provides technical assistance that employers and unions need to prepare women to enter and succeed in registered apprenticeships and other non-traditional occupations that require a CDL.

Grant-Funded Activities

She Drives the Future is a 12-week program that combines WRTP | BIG STEP's Entry-Level Construction Skills Training curriculum and CDL preparatory instruction. Training includes CDL permit prep, new driver orientation and assessment, classroom instruction, OSHA certification, first aid/CPR, hands-on projects, and more. WRTP | BIG STEP will run five cohorts of approximately 12 participants each over the two-year grant period to serve at least 60 women.

Each participant will receive a total of \$800 for several benchmark-based training incentives throughout the program. WRTP | BIG STEP has found that a milestone-based stipend model incentivizes completion and increases graduation rates, compared to non-incentivized programming. The expected outcome is that at least 85% of women who graduate with pre-apprenticeship credentials will secure full-time employment as a result of completing the She Drives the Future program.

The budget for She Drives the Future includes funding for the personnel, participant stipends and supplies, equipment, contractual CDL permit and behind-the-wheel training, and staff travel necessary for achieving success with She Drives the Future.

Expected Outcomes

Outcomes for She Drives the Future align with Wisconsin employers' needs for more CDL drivers and construction workers. By upskilling a demographic underrepresented as CDL drivers and in construction, She Drives the Future builds a talent pipeline to address state workforce issues by bringing more women into apprenticeships. Anticipated outcomes for this project are:

1. Increased awareness among Wisconsin women about the proven “earn-and-learn” model of apprenticeship and career opportunities in the skilled trades with at least 60 women enrolling in She Drives the Future.
2. At least 45 participants enrolled in She Drives the Future (75%) complete pre-apprenticeship training by the end of the 24-month WANTO grant period.
3. At least 38 participants who graduate with certified pre-apprenticeship credentials (85%) secure full-time employment as a result of completing the program.

Intended Beneficiaries

She Drives the Future serves women across Wisconsin with training taking place at WRTP | BIG STEP's Milwaukee, Southeastern, Northeastern, and Northwestern Wisconsin offices. In year one of the WANTO grant, WRTP | BIG STEP will hold She Drives the Future training programs in Milwaukee and Racine. Training locations in Northeast Wisconsin and Northwest Wisconsin will be added in year 2 of the grant. She Drives the Future coincides with WRTP | BIG STEP's expansion into northern Wisconsin and focuses on serving Wisconsin women for improved program delivery and outcomes.