

WORKFORCEALERT

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Transportation Alliance for New Solutions (TrANS) is a public-private model for collaboration and success in preparing Wisconsin's untapped workforce with the skills needed to gain access to the road construction industry as laborers and apprentices.

The TrANS model integrates five components to facilitate a diverse pool of ready, willing and able laborer and apprentice candidates for the road construction industry. The components are outreach and marketing; recruitment and screening; industry awareness, and retention of candidates and contractors.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation contracts with community-based organizations to provide services to screen, orient and prepare people for employment as laborers in the road building industry.

TrANS service providers work closely with potential employers to identify their labor needs and tailor their classroom instruction to help prepare potential employees to be placed in jobs offered by the contractors.

TrANS participants undergo an intensive 120-hour soft and hard skills to include physical conditioning, job-site safety issues, tool identification/usage, map reading, construction terminology, CDL written test preparation, construction math, hands-on projects, apprenticeship overview and test preparation and work ethics.

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT THE WALBEC GROUP



As a member of the Walbec Group's Human Resources team, Tracey Griffith has a full plate; balancing the requirements of an entire family of construction companies is no light task. Multiple construction and engineering companies call the Walbec Group home, including Payne & Dolan, Inc., Northeast Asphalt, Inc., Zenith Tech, Inc., Premier Concrete, Inc., and Construction Resources Management, Inc. Together, this family of companies has been serving customers and communities for over 85 years. And Griffith serves each of them.

After her tenure as a Director at WRTP/BIG STEP, Griffith joined the Walbec Group as an Outreach Manager, where she currently oversees outreach and community partnerships, working closely with recruitment and the WRTP/BIG STEP's Department of Transportation's (DOT) TrANS Road-building program. Her history with WRTP/BIG STEP, combined with her position at the Walbec Group, has made for a truly effective and satisfying partnership for both entities.

"WRTP's TrANS program has been a fantastic tool for both recruiting and training candidates," says Griffith. "Providing candidates with soft skills and real-world experience are the hallmarks of a successful and effective training program; TrANS road-building certificate program through WRTP works closely with the Department of Transportation to increase participants' chances of landing not just a job in the trades, but a career with family sustaining wages."

While the Walbec Group is traditionally considered a company solely focused on heavy highway construction, it actually has vested interests in many different sectors of construction and the trades, as a whole. "The problem," Griffith says, "is that when people think of 'construction,' they only think of commercial construction. But the Walbec Group's duties are intertwined with many branches of trade work on the road-building side. We work with carpenters and pile drivers, operating engineers, cement masons, and general laborers. We also have a need for Project Managers and Engineers; there are so many opportunities."

Then there's the misconception of what construction actually entails. "Both WRTP/BIG STEP and the Walbec Group are committed to broadening public understanding of what, exactly, the trades can offer potential candidates," Griffith continued. "It's in this overlap of missions where we find the heart and soul of our partnership."

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THE WALBEC GROUP: CONTINUED

While the fate of the trades has been thrown around recently, The Walbec Group hasn't suffered from a lack of candidates; it's finding the right person for the right job (at the right time) that is the largest obstacle. "We're never short on applicants. The challenges we face are finding applicants that both meet our requirements and can do the job," Griffith commented. Beyond the desire to learn and the willingness to work hard, participants must also meet other requirements, such as:

- Possession of a driver's license and transportation (Building highways and bridges requires employees to consistently and reliably get to locations that are oftentimes inaccessible by public transportation.)
- A clean driving record
- Commercial Driver's Licensure is preferred
- Ability to pass a drug screen
- A history of impeccable attendance (Believe it or not, half of the battle of finding quality employees is finding those who will show up! If you show up early, you're already ahead of 75% of candidates.)
- Ability to withstand the physical demands of the job

Applicants must also meet the requirements of their specific union, as the Walbec Group hires through unions.

Griffith knows that a large portion of her job's responsibilities centers around defining the scope, nature, and inherent limitations of the work. For example, many field positions end up being seasonal, as "weather dictates how and when we work." She's also actively involved in the selection process for classes, remaining engaged with students who have been selected and putting as many of them to work as possible. In her time with The Walbec Group, Griffith has seen nearly 20 people from WRTP/BIG STEP hired on, many of whom were graduates of the TrANS Program.

Apprenticeships, depending on the trade, can last anywhere from 3-5 years; wages begin in the low \$20s with competitive benefits and progressive wage increases. For more information, feel free to get in touch by calling (414) 342-9787 or joining us for one of our informational sessions: <https://wrtp.org/events>.



READY, WILLING & ABLE TrANS GRADUATES

FORWARD SERVICES TrANS GRADS

Brenda Grinwald	brendaalford72@gmail.com
Cory Holiday	coryh587@gmail.com
Gregory Webster	allrise15@aol.com
Joe Pavia	jpavia.apex@gmail.com
Robert Wallace	wallacenterprises@gmail.com
Tyson Miller	tysonmiller86@gmail.com
Amy Ellis	mamaellis1@yahoo.com
Chris Humphrey	humphreyc 74 @gmail.com
Janie McCaa	mccaaJanie@yahoo.com
Lola McCaa	mccaalola@gmail.com
Roshanda Ellison	roshondaterreece@gmail.com
Elic Bankhead	andrewbanks074@gmail.com
Rashaun Taylor	rashauntaylor37@gmail.com
Ricardo Lucero	Ricardolucero1 86@gmail.com



WRTP/BIG STEP TrANS GRADS

Aaron Townsend	Aarontownsend4@gmail.com	Malcolm Holliman	Amalikholliman 4@gmail.com
Aidan Alcaraz	aaidan0 26@gmail.com	Pablo Zielinski	pablozielinski711@gmail.com
Aidan Erickson	ajerickson0611@gmail.com	Rico Hill	Rico2Breeze@yahoo.com
Alessandro Alcaraz	Alessandroalcaraz@gmail.com	Robert Seelig	Robseeligjr1 0@gmail.com
Aron Triplett	arontriplett44@gmail.com	Ronnie Bentley	rben1558@yahoo.com
Cedric Watkins	cwatck24@gmail.com	Tiana Fanning	tifanf 5@gmail.com
David Cheng	gmongorilla@gmail.com	Timothy Wilke	timslim676@gmail.com
Frederick Jenkins	frederickejenkins@gmail.com	Travon Moore	mtravon@yahoo.com
Frederick Lee	leefrederick87@yahoo.com	Tyresha Devine	tyreshad7@gmail.com
Jacob Safransky	Jacobsafransky@gmail.com		
Jake Phillips	jakephillips21@icloud.com		
Joshua Jackson	Joshua.Jackson5@yahoo.com		
Leon Peterson	peterleon3@gmail.com		



To interview a TrANS graduate please contact their respective TrANS provider.

Forward Service: Lorie Thompson | E: Lthompson@fsc corp.org or NE Coordinator: Renard Morris | E: RMorris@fsc corp.org

WRTP/BIG STEP: Jacob Walton | E: jwalton@wrtp.org