KEY PRIORITY: CAREER LADDERS

A CITY-WIDE POLICY REQUIRING CERTIFIED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS ON ALL TRADES

“We’re rebuilding New Orleans, but rebuilding doesn’t start with a building, it doesn’t start with a school . . . Rebuilding New Orleans starts with the people.”

-- Commissioner Chased Smith (Aug. 1, 2014)

New Orleans is growing, and we need to be a part of that growth. I see a lot of young people who are looking for jobs, looking for training, and looking for a way to make ends meet for themselves and for their families. This is a beginning for all of us to say, ‘Stop, take a look, we’re here and we need to be a part of what’s going on in New Orleans.’”

“We’re investing our money in [public works construction companies]. They should invest in our people. . . . [They should be] showing that they’re really investing in the people of New Orleans, to make sure the people of New Orleans have a way of growing in jobs and in their economic value.”

“The people of New Orleans need to be invested in [through] this project -- training that is adequate along with apprenticeship programs that would create job opportunity.”

-- Commissioner Janell Perry (Aug. 1, 2014)

THE PRINCIPLE

Jobs are not enough. For jobs to provide a level of economic security, to lift families out of poverty, to realize genuine equality, jobs must lead to careers. New Orleanians locked out of work should have predictable opportunities to enter job pipelines, job training should be connected to job hiring, and once people are hired, they should have opportunities to build their skills and progress up a career ladder. Requiring Certified Apprenticeship Programs across all trades on city contracted construction projects would allow workers to build their skills as they work, investing not only in the individual, but in their family, and the broader community by training a skilled workforce to build New Orleans future.

THE REASONING

Pre-Apprenticeship and Certified Apprenticeship programs help to build a quality workforce and grow the local economy. Louisiana is in the middle of a construction boom and Louisiana needs
to recruit about 50,000 additional workers into construction careers through 2016, according to a recent study by the Craft Workforce Development Task Force of the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council.\(^1\) Furthermore, the Task Force concluded that these workers should be recruited from among high school graduates, the long-term unemployed, the under-employed, veterans, ex-offenders, people receiving government assistance, and other groups.\(^2\)

Training and pre-apprenticeship programs must be connected to hiring commitments and certified apprenticeship programs. The Craft Workforce Development Task Force also recommended that “[i]n addition to providing on-the-job training, industry must ensure that employers are hiring students immediately after they complete basic training programs and are certified. Absent hiring commitments from employers, students will be leery to enroll into training.”\(^3\)

New Orleans has a high poverty rate and earnings differ greatly based on race. Nearly one-third of New Orleans in the metro area live in poverty, a figure that remains virtually unchanged since 1999.\(^4\) Access to jobs and earnings differ enormously based on race. In addition to the 52 percent of Black men that are unemployed, the Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy reports that 27 percent of African American men in New Orleans live in poverty compared to just 15 percent of white men.\(^5\) Over the last ten years, the median earnings of Black men in New Orleans who work full-time, year-round has decreased by 11 percent to $31,018.\(^6\) Over the same time period, the earnings of white men in New Orleans has risen 9 percent to $60,075.\(^7\) Thus, white male New Orleans working full-time earn nearly twice as much as Black men. While the statistical research has focused on Black men, we know that Black women face enormous challenges finding good work and apprenticeships would provide greater career opportunities for women also.

Certified Apprenticeship Programs benefit not only individual workers, but can reduce unemployment, reduce crime, and build the local tax base. The airport project is an extremely important opportunity to address the jobs crisis. A recent report by the Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy, housed at Loyola University, concluded that a focus on recruiting and building the skills of local African Americans to fill the jobs in the petrochemical and construction industries could “not only help meet employers’ pressing workforce needs, it can also have additional benefits of reducing chronic unemployment, reducing crime, and increasing the local tax base;” the “triple bottom line.”\(^8\)

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5 Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy, RECOGNIZING THE UNDERUTILIZED POTENTIAL OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN IN NEW ORLEANS (June 2013), at 12.
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8 Lindy Boggs National Center for Community Literacy, RECOGNIZING THE UNDERUTILIZED POTENTIAL OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN IN NEW ORLEANS (June 2013), at 16.