

CASE STUDY

Breaking Ground on the Next Generation:

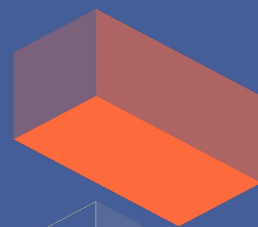
How AGC Maine Is Building Its State's Future Construction Workforce



AGC MAINE
THE CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION

NCCER

National Center for Construction
Education and Research



The Problem: A Need for Young Talent

The construction industry needs more young people. This is not a new idea for our industry, but it is one that many contractors have not yet incorporated into their strategic initiatives. Based on the data, this can no longer wait until next year's planning. In fact, in 2025, roughly 20% of construction workers were older than 55 while only 10% were under the age of 25 (Figure 1).¹ This disparity will continue to worsen if the industry does not find ways to attract, train, and retain the next generation.

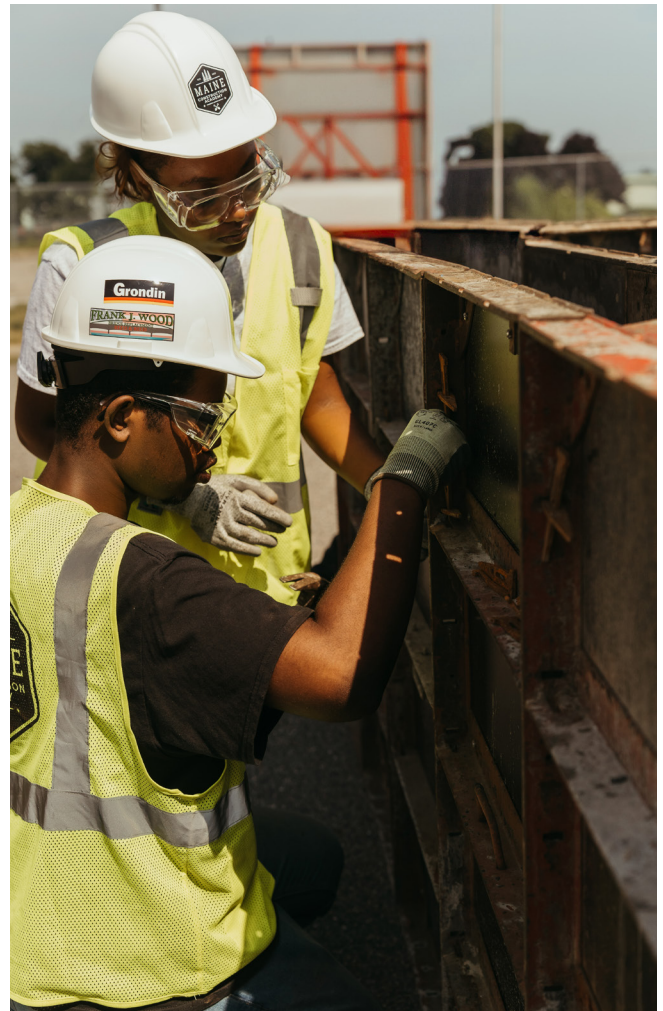
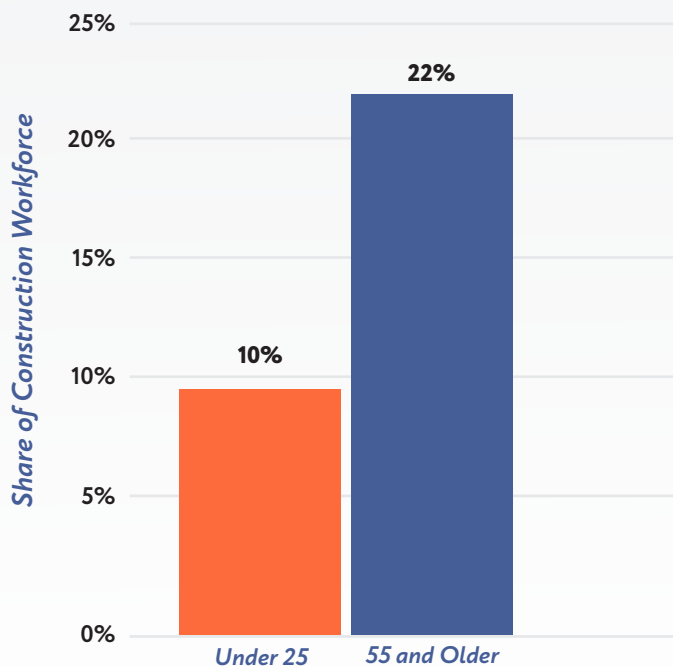
With the pace of work in the construction industry, many employers focus on the immediate needs of their organizations and work to attract only experienced workers. This practice neglects younger workers who are interested in entering the industry but don't have an

opportunity to do so. These dynamics are a major reason the average age of the construction workforce is steadily increasing.

Fundamentally, this problem is a question of short-term versus long-term strategy. Hiring and investing in workers who are already skilled solves today's problems, but investing in the future workforce solves for the next decade and beyond. In order to have a well-rounded workforce development strategy, contractors need to incorporate both short-term and long-term planning.

The good news is that addressing the aging construction workforce is possible, and AGC Maine is one organization doing exactly that.

Figure 1: Share of Construction Workforce by Age Groups



The Solution: The Maine Construction Academy

When Kelly Flagg became executive director of AGC Maine in the summer of 2022, local employers kept coming to her with the same message: We need more people in the industry. After receiving a \$1.47 million grant from the Maine Department of Labor, Flagg and her team worked to solve this issue by launching the Maine Construction Academy.

The Maine Construction Academy is a 20-day pre-apprenticeship program built to provide meaningful exposure to the construction industry. Students are given the opportunity to learn the basics of construction, visit and work on real job sites, interview with local employers, and earn a job to start a career in the industry.

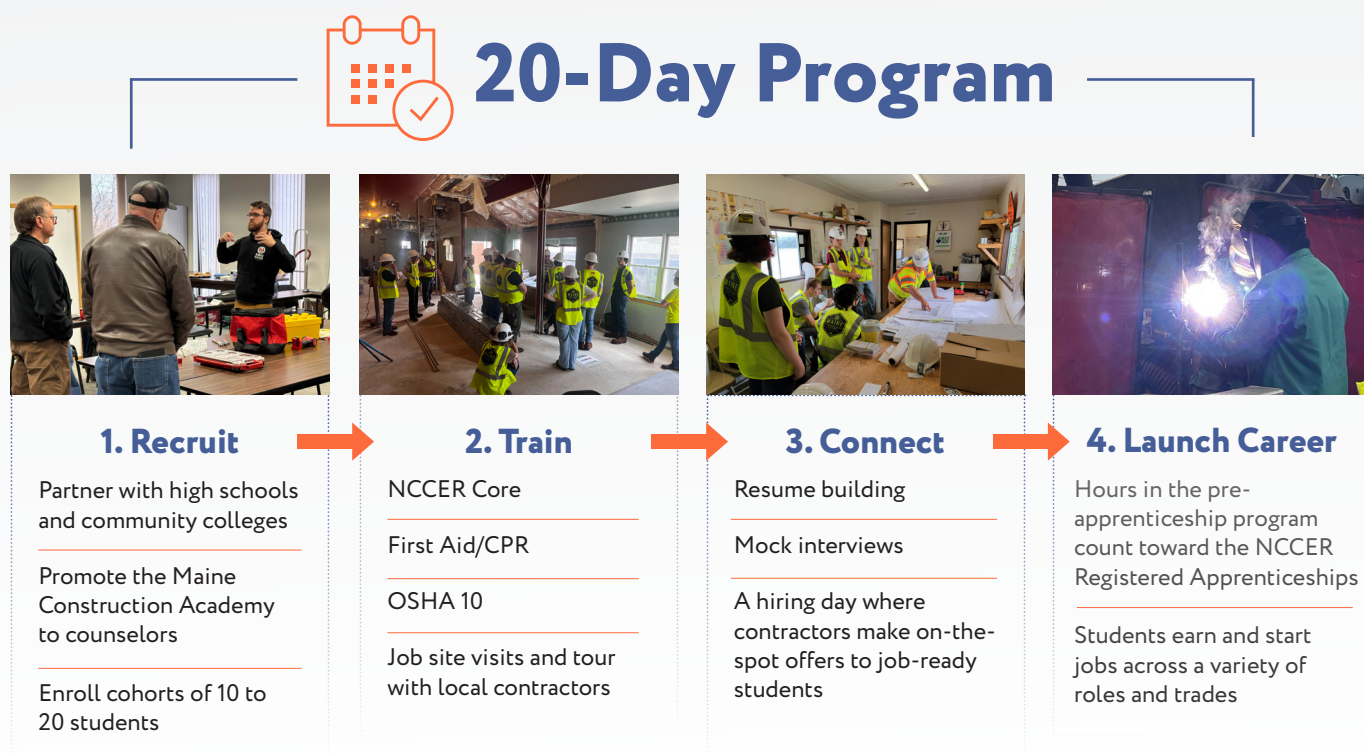
Local employers are especially eager to participate in the academy because it functions as an extended interview and recruiting process. Rather than assessing a candidate within a single 30-minute interview, employers get to observe students' work ethic and attitude firsthand over multiple days. Upon graduation, when employers formally interview students within the program, they

already have a strong sense of a given student's fit within their business.

Kevin Murphy, Vice President of Safety and Human Resources at R.J. Grondin & Sons, a family-owned earthmoving and construction company, describes the value of this approach to identifying and recruiting young talent:

"The interview process is awesome because I get to watch students work and interact with our team and managers at our facility. When you go to do the interview at their graduation ceremony, you already know something about this student and whether you want them to be an employee at your company... It really helps you focus on the people that could be a long-term solution for your company."

Figure 2: Design of Maine Construction Academy



While the academy helps employers identify young talent, it simultaneously provides students with an opportunity to explore what actually happens on the job. As Flagg put it, the academy's design (Figure 2) shows the students "what's behind the fences" within the industry.

A large part of the classroom instruction in the academy utilizes NCCER curricula and programs. Because NCCER's materials are consistent, standardized, and high quality, expanding the Maine Construction Academy to multiple locations across the state was practical and feasible.

According to Flagg, the quality and uniformity of NCCER's materials rank among the academy's greatest strengths:

"The academy is the same quality no matter where you go. This lets us market it easily through our social media and website. It doesn't matter if you're in northern Maine four hours north of me or in southern Maine two hours south, it's the same program."

This ease of use, along with the tenacity of Flagg and her team, has resulted in a powerhouse pre-apprenticeship program that has delivered exceptional outcomes.

The Results: Measurable Impact and Growth

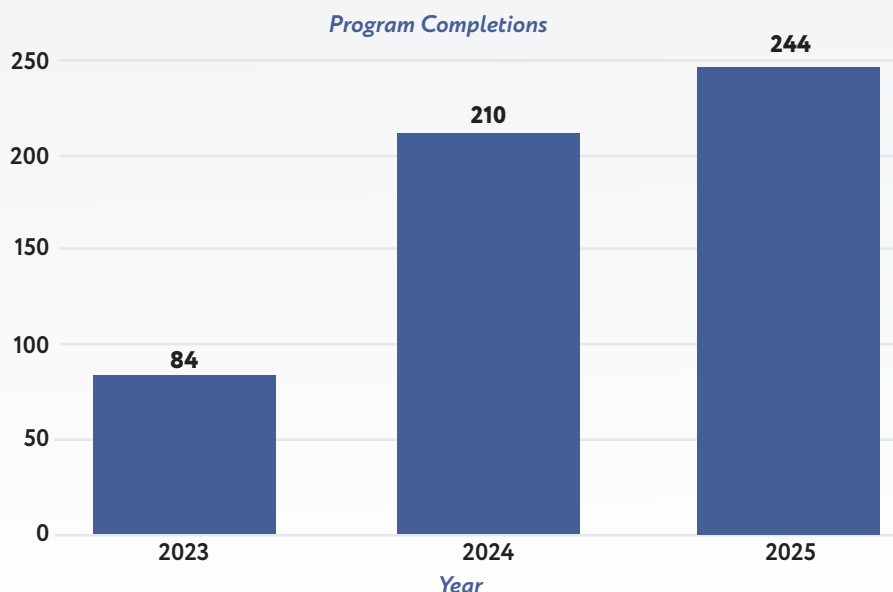
The Maine Construction Academy has seen phenomenal growth and delivered measurable impact over the past three years. The academy started with just three partnering employers and four programs (community colleges and high schools). Today, it has 35 partnering employers and 19 programs, with both numbers climbing weekly. To date, more than 500 students have completed the pre-apprenticeship program (Figure 3).

Students aren't just enrolling; they are also earning verifiable credentials in valuable skill sets to use on real construction job sites. As seen in Figure 4, since 2024 more than 400 NCCER Core

credentials have been earned by graduates of these programs. This credential attainment is significant to potential employers because it not only serves as an indicator of a student's skill set, but it also decreases the time it takes to complete an apprenticeship once hired, provided the employer utilizes NCCER for its apprenticeship training.

The Maine Construction Academy is also making an impact within the populations that need the most support. Roughly 50% of its students come from historically underserved populations, including women, people with disabilities, people of color, and those involved

Figure 3: Maine Construction Academy Completion by Year



with the justice system. Murphy highlights the quality of one such student his company hired out of the academy:

"She's a great worker. She's there early. She's willing to stay late. She works hard. She asks good questions and is very engaged. This is somebody that we want to promote within the company."

Without the Maine Construction Academy, this student may never have found her way into the industry, and Murphy's company may never have found her.

Figure 4: Maine Construction Academy Cumulative NCCER Core Credential Completions



Conclusion

The Maine Construction Academy is more than just a recruiting and training program. Yes, it produces graduates capable of addressing local labor demand, but its impact goes far beyond that. It sparks excitement, creates access, and provides the training and career opportunities needed for young people to stay in the industry.

With an aging construction workforce, the need to get more young people involved in the trades has never been more urgent, making programs like the Maine Construction Academy increasingly essential. This is a defining moment for the construction industry. More young people are showing interest in the skilled trades, and we must seize this opportunity by making pathways to construction careers attainable for everyone. The time to build the next decade's workforce is now.

Sources

¹ [BLS.gov](https://www.bls.gov)



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