5 Increase Participation in Career & Tech Education

Expanding Opportunities for Underrepresented Groups

Career and Technical Education (CTE) provides pathways to skilled employment, yet access to these opportunities is not always equitable. Limited career exposure, insufficient outreach, and a lack of mentoring can create barriers for students who might have pursued rewarding careers in construction and other skilled trades.

Career opportunities can only be pursued if people are aware that they exist.

NCCER's own research reinforces the importance of career awareness and exposure. In a recent survey of construction professionals who had not initially selected construction as their first choice, most reported that they lacked sufficient information about the industry when considering jobs.

Underrepresented Groups	Workforce Percent (%)
Women (Construction Industry) [90, 91]	~11%
Women (Skilled Trades)	~4%
Black or African American	6 - 7%
Asian	2%

Increasing participation requires intentional efforts to help prospective workers discover, understand, and explore career opportunities.

Early career exploration, partnerships with schools and community organizations, and mentoring relationships can help prospective students connect their interests and abilities with opportunities in CTE. Additionally, it's important that these efforts extend beyond just recruitment or inspiring them to join CTE programs . . . it should include supporting participation, encouraging program completion, and successfully transitioning these students into full-time construction employees.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

CTE providers, employers, and community partners should collaborate to expand outreach to underrepresented populations, provide meaningful opportunities for career exploration, and establish mentoring and support systems that help learners enter and successfully complete training programs.

Read all 7 recommendations in the 2026 update to Restoring the Dignity of Work
Find the full report at www.NCCER.org/research/

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