

Evaluation of the Ironworkers Pre-Apprenticeship Program



SeattleJobs
Initiative

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Purpose and Goals

Seattle Jobs Initiative provides career navigation and wrap-around support services to those Ironworkers Pre-Apprenticeship program participants who qualify for SJI services. The goal is to help SJI's target populations to attain living wage careers. The 4-week program offers a path to a well-paying field: upon successful completion of the Pre-Apprenticeship, the participants can continue to a four-year long Apprenticeship program, where participants start with an hourly wage of \$25.41 and receive a pay raise every six months. At the end of the Apprenticeship, as Journeymen, the participants earn \$42.35/hour.

Project Description

The Ironworkers Pre-Apprenticeship program is a four-week program that prepares its participants for the JATC 86 Ironworker Apprenticeship. The union runs the pre-apprenticeship training, and the subsequent apprenticeship training, on the basis of contractor demand. In order to be accepted in the Pre-Apprenticeship and the Apprenticeship, applicants must pass a test that assesses their ability to perform rigorous manual labor. They also must meet a list of additional criteria, including possession of a valid driver's license or the ability to get one before the beginning of the Apprenticeship program, and the ability to pass random drug and alcohol tests.

SJI has partnered with the union to provide career navigation and wrap-around support services to all Pre-Apprenticeship program participants who qualify for SJI support. This evaluation report assesses how well the program serves SJI's target populations, and whether the supports that SJI offers for enrolled participants helps the participants to succeed in the program. The analysis finds that 90% of the participants come from SJI's target populations, making the program a good fit for SJI. Moreover, since SJI's program participants complete the training at a higher rate (97%) than all program participants (91%), SJI's services seem to impact program participants' lives in a positive way. The report recommends that SJI continues to support the program. The final section presents feedback from the Career Navigator and a program participant, and proposes measures to further improve the program.

Does the Program Serve SJI's Target Populations?

SJI's five target populations are: 1) youth (16-29 old), 2) justice involved, 3) individuals without high school diploma or GED, 4) homeless and housing instable, 5) recent refugees and immigrants.

In 2018-2019, SJI enrolled 31 Ironworkers Pre-Apprenticeship program participants. They represented SJI's target populations as follows:

1. 25 of the participants (81%) were between 16 and 29 years old.¹
2. Fourteen participants (45%) were justice involved.
3. Five participants (16%) did not have high school diploma or GED.
4. Three participants (10%) were homeless at the time of enrollment.

¹ The ages of all program participants ranged from 19 to 40, with a median age of 26. The appendix presents additional demographics of the participants.

5. Two participants (6%) held an immigrant or refugee status.

The analysis of the participants' characteristics suggests that the program serves well SJI's target populations: the vast majority of the program participants, 81%, were between 16 and 29 years, thus belonging to SJI's target group of youth. 45% of the participants were justice involved and 16% had not completed high school or obtained a GED. In fact, only three program participants did not come from any of the target populations. This suggests that the program is a good fit to SJI's programming.

Do SJI's Support Services Help Participants Succeed?

The effectiveness of SJI's services can be assessed by comparing the completion rates of those program participants who receive SJI's support to those of all program participants. Of the 31 participants that SJI enrolled in 2018-2019, only one participant left the program before completion; all other participants completed their training successfully. With these outcomes, the completion rate for SJI's participants is 97%. The completion rate for all program participants, regardless of whether they receive SJI's support services or not, is 91%². In other words, SJI's participants complete the program at a higher rate than their peers who do not receive SJI's supports. This is remarkable, since SJI's services are directed to those in most need – a group of participants that one could expect to have a lower completion rate than the average.

The placement record for the participants that SJI supports is high, as well, though SJI's participants move on to the apprenticeship program at somewhat lower rate than all pre-apprenticeship participants. Of the 31 participants who SJI supported, 25 were placed to the apprenticeship program as Apprentice Ironworkers and one participant obtained a Fire Watch position. The overall placement rate is 84%, with 81% of the pre-apprenticeship graduates moving on to the apprenticeship. The union reports that 89% of all pre-apprenticeship graduates continue on to the apprenticeship program.

The program has improved the income of SJI's participants dramatically. For the four participants who had reported a salary at the time of program enrollment, the average wage gain was \$7.71/hour. However, most of the program participants were unemployed when entering the program. These participants went from not earning a steady income before the start of the program to working 40 hours a week at an average wage of \$24.85/hour after graduation. The retention data shows that 23 of SJI's participants who continued on to the apprenticeship program remained in the apprenticeship beyond the 90-days retention date. Of the remaining participants, only two left the apprenticeship and five have not met the 90-days retention date yet, having graduated from the pre-apprenticeship program in late 2019.

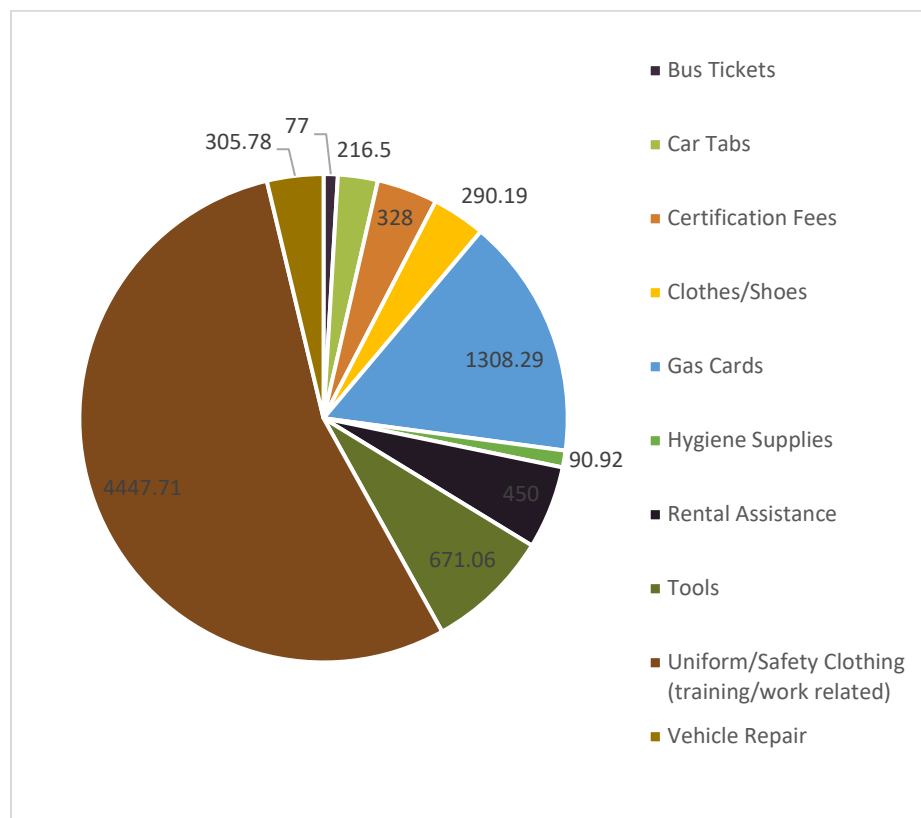
In order to evaluate the effectiveness of SJI's services, we can also examine whether the support services help participants to address the barriers to success they face. Overall, since the union selects the program participants, they tend to face less barriers than participants in SJI's other trades programs. The average number of barriers for the Ironworkers program participants was 2.8, compared to the averages 3.8 and 4.1 barriers per participant in the Vigor Welding and Diesel programs, respectively. The Navigator interviewed for this report confirmed that the Ironworkers program participants tend to face less barriers and have access to more resources than participants in other programs. The most common barrier that they identified was transportation (26 participants), followed closely by resource deficiency

² Data for all program participants is the union's data for Pre-Apprenticeship participants between 2015-2019.

(25). Some of the other commonly identified barriers were education (8 participants), criminal history (6), and housing issue (3).

All 31 of the participants who signed up for SJI services received some wrap-around supports and most of these supports were directed at addressing the barriers identified above. The total CIF spending for the program in 2018-2019 was \$8,185.45 and the average spending per participant was \$255.80. The most used support services were related to transportation and work clothing: all participants received gas cards for a total CIF spending of \$1,308.29 and 24 participants purchased work clothing with SJI's support for a total CIF spending of \$4,447.71. Figure 3 presents the CIF spending used in the program.

Figure 1.



In addressing a key barrier to all program participants, transportation, and in providing nearly everyone in the program with training related work clothing, SJI is supporting the participants to succeed in the program. The participants occasionally receive support services from other organizations, as well. The union sometimes has funding available for small stipends that assist participants with food or gas. The union also invites Urban League to the Pre-Apprenticeship orientation, along with Seattle Jobs Initiative, and some of the Pre-Apprenticeship participants sign up for Urban Leagues' services. To our knowledge, however, support services are not duplicated.

To conclude, SJI is helping participants succeed, as the completion rate for SJI's participants, 97%, is higher than the completion rate for all program participants, 91%. In more concrete terms, SJI is helping the participants by providing transportation assistance and tools and other work gear, and addressing

some of the other key barriers to success that the participants face. Since 90% of the participants represent SJI's target populations, we can conclude that the program is a good fit for SJI's programming and, with the positive outcomes, SJI is making a positive impact. The remainder of this report presents feedback from a program participant and the Career Navigator. This feedback, in turn, informs the recommendations presented in the end of the report.

Feedback from a Program Participant and the Career Navigator

The recent program participant interviewed for this report spoke very highly of the program and was satisfied with her experience with SJI. The participant had no previous experience in trades and she considered the Pre-Apprenticeship program a great introduction to the field. She especially appreciated the chance to practice the skills needed for the apprenticeship evaluation and the opportunity to learn from the more advanced Apprentices who were doing parts of their training at the same time with the Pre-Apprenticeship participants. As one of the few female participants in the program, she had found both the instructor and fellow program participants as extremely supportive.

During the Pre-Apprenticeship program, the participant had received support from SJI for her certification fees, work clothing and gas. She was placed to the Apprenticeship after finishing the Pre-Apprenticeship program and did not require further assistance after that. Her only recommendation for change in the program related to outreach and recruitment phase: she had learned about the Pre-Apprenticeship program only after participating in the apprenticeship evaluation and would have appreciated the chance to know more about the Pre-Apprenticeship program earlier. Moreover, she had not been aware of all support services provided for participants before entering training and many of her fellow participants had not been able to take advantage of all the support services available. By advertising the Pre-Apprenticeship and the supports better, the union and SJI could increase the awareness of the program.

As mentioned above, the Career Navigator noted that the Ironworkers Pre-Apprenticeship participants tend to have fewer barriers to success than participants in other trades programs. On average, the participants seem to require less personal support while in the program and the Navigator recalled multiple times when participants decided not to pursue SJI assistance for things like rental assistance or car repairs after having learned about the paperwork required. However, there were some Pre-Apprenticeship program participants who would have benefitted from some SJI support services but did not qualify because they were not city of Seattle residents.

The Navigator enjoyed working with the union and found the union contact person very cooperative and communicative. The Navigator also appreciated the coordination between the union and employers, noting that the high placement rates of the program were in great part because of that coordination and the union's commitment to run the program based on employers' staffing needs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

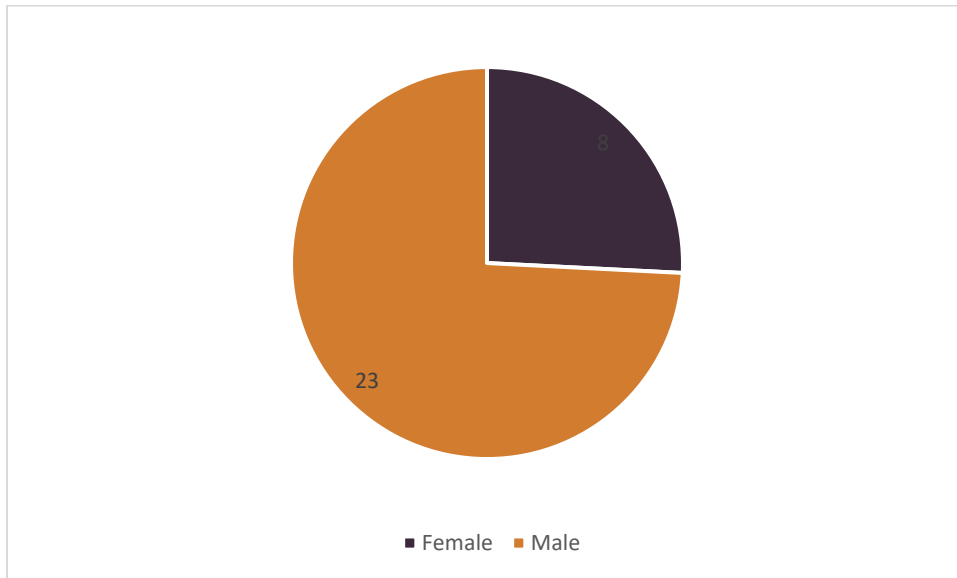
By participating in the Ironworkers Pre-Apprenticeship program, SJI is serving many of its key target populations. In fact, 90% of the 31 participants represent either one or many of SJI's target populations: 81% were between 16 and 29 years old, 45% were justice involved, and 16% had not completed high school or obtained a GED. SJI's supports are making a positive impact on their program participation, as suggested by the higher completion rate of SJI's participants: 97% compared to the 91% completion rate of all program participants. The placement rate of SJI's participants is also high: 25 of the 30 graduates

received an Apprentice Ironworkers spot in the apprenticeship program and one graduate was placed into a Fire Watch position. The placements translate into very concrete improvements in the participants' earnings: 22 participants who were unemployed when they signed up for the program and, after graduation, they reported an average wage of \$24.85/hour. Since the program is only four weeks long, it offers a fast path to a living wage career. On the basis of the positive outcomes, we recommend that SJI continue to support the program. We make the following recommendations to improve the experience of program participants:

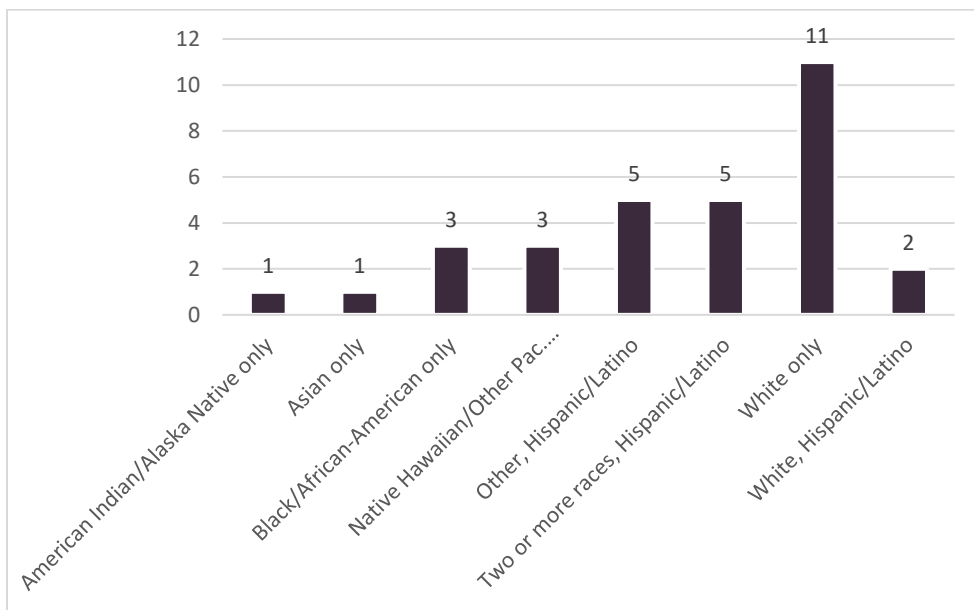
- Consider partnering with other organizations or **finding alternative funding resources** in order to be able to **support non-Seattle residents** in the program. Meet with the union in order to clarify and coordinate the support services available for program participants.
- Work together with the union to **publicize the program better**. Increase awareness of the supports available for program participants.
- **Encourage the union to schedule the program to run at regular intervals**, rather than sporadically based on employer needs. With a more regular schedule, SJI could attract more participants to the program.

Appendix

Gender of Program Participants



Race and Ethnicity of Program Participants



Educational attainment of Program Participants

