



A New, Culturally Specific Workforce & Business Development Center in Portland, Oregon Focused on Construction, Manufacturing, Architecture, Engineering, and Entrepreneurship

The Vision: People of color will be overrepresented in the AEC industries and entrepreneurship from apprentice to CEO.

Once built, The Center will provide state-of-the-art training and networking space, bringing together jobseekers who have been historically excluded from the highlighted sectors, emerging businesses and entrepreneurs often locked out of economic opportunities and other supports, union and non-union apprenticeship programs, and experienced businesses to provide connections and mentorship.

This innovative project is a one-stop shop where people of color and other historically marginalized community members can access a variety of culturally specific training and supports. The Center also capitalizes on the billions of dollars that are available (or will be soon) at the federal, state, and local levels to support infrastructure, including President Biden's \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This project is long overdue in our state, and ensures available funding reaches the intended populations via a project *led by and for* people of color. This also means people of color will have the chance to see individuals from their same cultural background in leadership roles at the Center and in action among Portland's business community.

Further, the 2021 State of Oregon Employment Department Occupation Report estimated there will be over 20,000 high-wage, construction field job vacancies throughout Oregon from 2020 to 2030. The Center creates a much-needed, vital pipeline of workers who can support massive infrastructure projects occurring in Oregon, including long-term projects to reinforce our public buildings, bridges, and roads to withstand natural disasters.

The Key Project Leaders: The three creating organizations are well-known leaders in the workforce development field in Oregon. They have strong relationships built on decades of trust and successful delivery of services to individuals from communities of color, and each organization brings a unique lens and type of experience to the project. Partner profiles are provided below.

National Association of Minority Contractors – Oregon (NAMC)	Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center (POIC)	Black Business Association of Oregon (BBAO)
<p>NAMC-Oregon has a staff of nine employees, an active board of directors, and a cadre of consultants and advisors available to assist with the effort to get firms prepared and ready to work. In addition, NAMC has a large membership of certified and non-certified firms in the design and construction trades, while also serving as a consultant to a broad array of different organizations. As a consultant, NAMC provides equity analysis focusing on racial and economic justice related to capital improvement projects and housing developments, including policies, project forecasting, procurement, equity plan creation and implementation, project administration, and reporting. NAMC also provides training and education through the NAMC-University program to ensure that the membership of minority-owned businesses has the capacity and ability to serve on even the most demanding construction projects.</p> <p>Learn more about NAMC here.</p>	<p>POIC has been creating economic opportunities for Portland’s communities of color for over 50 years. Today, POIC supports and trains more than hundreds of community members each year, helping them become work-ready and placing them into living-wage careers in a variety of industries through long-standing partnerships in all sectors.</p> <p>POIC achieves a job placement and retention rate around 90% among trainees served after program graduation. Each trainee also has access to important wraparound services such as food, housing, counseling, and more.</p> <p>Across the organization, POIC serves around 3,000 individuals annually at 12 service locations.</p> <p>Learn more about POIC here.</p>	<p>The BBAO’s services help new and established businesses achieve their goals for the betterment of Oregon as a whole. The BBAO has 700 Black-owned businesses on its contact list and nearly 80 Black-owned businesses on its membership roster.</p> <p>Services offered by The BBAO include business retention and expansion supports, entrepreneurial development, workforce development, and Black business recruiting.</p> <p>The BBAO is also developing a Regional Dashboard of Black Prosperity. The dashboard will measure key metrics that track the economic state of Black residents in the region. The dashboard will also analyze trends and produce public reports. This will be an important tool informed by and utilized at the Center.</p> <p>Learn more about The BBOA here.</p>

The Need & Community Benefit: We can offer the following benefits exclusive to Portland Public School (PPS) students at the Center:

- Current PPS students are exposed to the AEC industries and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- PPS Career Days that focus on a different industry each quarter where students can visit the Center to meet prominent business leaders in the community including CEOs and Directors.

- All PPS graduates gain direct entry and enrollment into training courses.

Overall, the Center responds to critical and urgent problems within the construction, manufacturing, architecture, and engineering sectors expressed by jobseekers and businesses alike. The pandemic and its continued impacts have dramatically heightened these problems by magnifying historical and structural inequities faced by workers of color, immigrants, those with a high school diploma or less, and other historically excluded populations. Just a few of these challenges include:

1) Barriers for Jobseekers from Underserved Communities

- Absence of a comprehensive system to connect marginalized community members to employers and *sustain these connections*.
- A scarcity of culturally specific resources tailored to teach and support BIPOC jobseekers.
- Cultural, financial, and personal barriers that prevent marginalized community members from entering trade school programs.
- Lack of exposure to diverse career opportunities among Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian Pacific Islander, and individuals from low-income communities.
- Lack of access to culturally specific mentors and coaches to support jobseekers entering the workforce, and that spans readiness, training, placement, and retention.

2) Challenges Experienced by Diverse, Emerging Businesses

- Lack of access to technical assistance services such as bookkeeping, legal, marketing, and more.
- Lack of access to wraparound services like affordable housing, transportation, mental health counseling and more that are vital to entrepreneurs' and business owners' ultimate success.
- Very few opportunities to receive mentorship from established businesses or professionals in their sector, especially among established BIPOC-owned businesses.
- Lower visibility of BIPOC contractors and BIPOC-owned firms due to a system heavily influenced by implicit bias and historically racist policies and systems.
- Lack of connections within the construction industry and with "primes" that can help contractors and firms land high-paying jobs and contracts.
- Financial barriers that prevent entrepreneurs and businesses from launching, growing, and thriving. People of color are much more likely to live in poverty. This affects their ability to use their savings and assets to self-finance, to qualify for bank loans, and to undertake entrepreneurial ventures, such as starting their own construction firm.
- Systemic barriers that prevent many BIPOC contractors and construction firms from submitting bids and/or being awarded projects. This includes a lack of capacity to respond to time-consuming and complicated RFPs, an inability to meet contracting requirements (such as insurance obligations), and more.

The Details: The Center will be 50,000 square feet – 30,000 square feet dedicated to training for jobseekers and 20,000 square feet reserved for office spaces for emerging and established businesses. The training spaces will include sections for welding, plumbing, HVAC, carpentry, and electrical, along with a design studio, classrooms, and a computer center. There will also be a daycare center available to trainees to remove participation barriers

related to a lack of access to childcare.

The office space will include small and large rentable working spaces, various conference rooms, a second computer center, and a large networking and break room shared with trainees. Outside the building, there will be ample parking available as well as nearby access to public transportation. The final location of The Center is pending, though we have been working with partners locally to discuss and vet several available, potential locations.

The Programming: We estimate The Center will serve around 200 trainees each year. Ultimately, The Center will provide a pipeline of both employees and jobs for BIPOC community members. Programming options available at The Center will be varied and comprehensive, including:

- Mentorship and Network Building – The Center will have a shared networking space for trainees and existing businesses. There will also be opportunities for trainees to receive sector-specific mentorship.
- Culturally Specific Incubator for Workforce Development – The Center will provide opportunities for individuals to meet with and learn from industry leaders and business owners. They will then have access to the tools and information needed to launch and grow a business of their own across multiple potential sectors.
- Education and Training – The Center will be a training location certified by the Council on Occupational Education. Job placement rates for technical colleges far outpace those of traditional four-year colleges. For example, for the 2015-2016 academic year, the statewide job placement rate at Tennessee Colleges of Applied Technology institutions (accredited by the Council on Educational Occupation) was 86%. This will provide those we serve with a “leg up” as they begin their job searches. The training spaces will provide access to a variety of cutting-edge equipment to support them in gaining transferable, sector-specific skills. Trainees will also participate in hands-on community projects.
- Culturally Informed Strategies – Some of the unique strategies that will be utilized at The Center include programming offered at no cost to trainees, paid training opportunities (either through hourly wages or stipends), childcare on-site, and access to many other wraparound services, including food, mental health counseling, mentorship, and more.

The Timeline: We currently estimate The Center will be completed by January 2025. We anticipate construction will begin within the next year.

The Collaborators

Early Collaborators	Anticipated Future Collaborators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worksystems, Inc., Oregon’s workforce development board • Associated General Contractors of Oregon • The Portland Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program Consortium (POIC, Oregon Tradeswomen, Constructing Hope, and Portland YouthBuilders – see attached document to learn more) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAMC members and partners (directory available here) • Oregon Native American Chamber • Black American Chamber • Philippine American Chamber of Commerce • Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber