



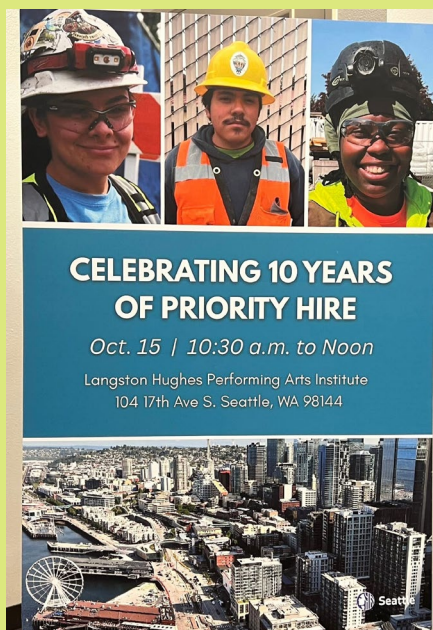
Annual Report

Priority Hire Advisory Committee

Attn: Office Of The Mayor, Katie Wilson & Seattle City Council

2025





PHAC Legacy Acknowledgement

We uplift the original organizers and activists who initiated and led a community-driven effort leading to the establishment of Priority Hire on the City of Seattle capital projects.

During the demolition and construction of the Rainier Beach Community Center in 2010, residents and experienced construction workers from Seattle's most racially diverse zip code 98118 uncovered the lack of contractor requirements to employ Seattle job seekers on city projects. These organizers and supporters formed a coalition of organizations, labor, and religious groups to remedy this industry-wide practice resulting in Seattle's historic Priority Hire Ordinance designed to expand economic opportunity and employment to racially diverse and economically disadvantaged Seattle area residents.

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Committee Membership

The Priority Hire Advisory Committee is made up of four constituent groups, appointed by the Mayor's Office. PHAC uses their own charter to guide their practices and inform such things as attendance, decision making, and to mediate conflicts. The four constituent groups that make-up PHAC are community members, labor representatives, contractors, and training providers. They are listed in alphabetical order here.

Claude Burfect	Coalition of Black Trade Unionist (Community)
Antonio (Tony) Butler	IBEW (Labor)
Gregory Davis	Rainier Beach Action Coalition (Community)
Karen Dove	ANew (Training Provider)
Tamara Harris	YWCF Corporation (Contractors)
Abdirahman Hashi	Global Reach Consultants (Community)
Marianna Hyke	Northwest Carpenter's Institute (Labor)
Jerry Jordan	PACT (Training Provider)
Marilyn Kennedy	OPCMIA Local 528 (Labor)
Andrea Ornelas	Laborers Local 242 (Labor)
Virginia Owens	Seattle Public Schools (Community)
Vicki Puckett	Cornerstone General Contractors, Inc (Contractor)
Steve Petermann	Washington State DOC (Training Provider)
Eric Sanchez	Ironworkers Local 86 JATC (Training Provider)
Jamie Stuart	Valley Electric (Contractor)
Jim Wilde	Gary Merlino Construction (Contractor)

SUBMITTED BY:
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FLICKR.

Priority Hire Goals

Priority Hire creates construction career opportunities in communities with social and economic disadvantages.

1. On the Job Compliance

Goal: Workers have an equitable opportunity to gain meaningful experience on job sites. Workers retained by contractor after project completion.

2. Reaching Target Populations of Priority Hire

Goal: Adequate/effective outreach and recruitment from Priority Hire ZIP codes.

3. Regional Collaboration for Priority Hire

Goal: Collaborate regionally to diversity the construction workforce.

4. Sufficient Training and Support Services

Goal: Sufficient pre-apprenticeship graduates to meet projected demand. Increased pre-apprentice/apprentice trainee retention. Service providers adequately connect people to training jobs and support services.

5. Job Assignment

Goal: Culture change on the job site resulting in equitable treatment.

Executive Summary

In its 10th year, the Priority Hire Advisory Committee looked back to the many significant accomplishments brought about through Priority Hire. BIPOC workers have increased their share of hours by 60%. Construction workers living in economically distressed communities have earned \$120 million dollars in wages. PHAC serves as a key driver in reviewing data, identifying program adaptations, and co-designing solutions and strategies.

PHAC presents its 2025 recommendations, advancing Priority Hire into its second decade.

Assess Changes to the \$5 million Project Threshold

PHAC would like information on the impact of lowering the current project threshold from \$5 million on the program's outcomes. PHAC recommends that the City conduct an analysis on the \$5 million threshold by answering a set of questions developed by the committee. While specific questions are named in the report, PHAC encourages the City to include additional questions and information to help PHAC understand the related and potentially unforeseen impacts of lowering or not lowering the threshold.

Targeted Outreach to WMBE firms and CWA Capacity

PHAC developed a list of outreach and retention activities designed to improve outcomes for people of color, emphasizing women in the construction trades, and agreed to put forward two recommendations. PHAC anticipates additional discussions and recommendations in 2026 on this subject and may amend this recommendation.

- PHAC recommends the City use readiness-capacity grants to support WMBE firms for Priority Hire projects.
- PHAC recommends the City use pre-apprenticeship training to direct readiness-capacity grantees, as a requirement of the grant, to network with pre-apprentices and training providers.

Support strategies that improve the employment environment for women in construction

PHAC recommends that the City invest in strategies that improve the employment environment for women in construction by investing in removing barriers to employment in construction.

1. To improve sustainability during economic downturns, PHAC recommends expanding Priority Hire implementation by adding Priority Hire language to City maintenance jobs and seasonal labor opportunities.
2. PHAC recommends that the City assess how Priority Hire can be applied to the housing development sector.
3. For the City to partner with general contractors and community-based organizations to host open houses specifically designed to connect women and WMBE firms with the Priority Hire network.
4. The City to sponsor and market career trade and training fairs, such as Rainier Beach Action Coalition's women's career fair.

Introduction

The 2025 report is the 9th PHAC Annual Recommendations Report since its inception in 2015¹.

Guided by the Priority Hire Ordinance, the City promotes access to construction careers for those living within economically distressed zip codes, people of color and women working on City public work jobs. PHAC discusses relevant issues impacting outreach, recruitment, and retention of historically underrepresented workers in the construction industry. Consisting of mayoral appointed representatives from the community, training providers, contractors, and labor, PHAC develops consensus strategies, policies, and practices in the form of annual recommendations to advance Priority Hire. Guided by its co-designed charter, PHAC works together with City staff to shape a work plan and develop annual recommendations.

PHAC's 2025 bi-monthly meetings occurred the 2nd Wednesdays in January, March, May, July, September, and November at the Tabor 100 building. In November, the committee agreed to continue its bi-monthly schedule for 2026, from 9 am to 11:30 am. PHAC members agreed to conduct in person meetings with a virtual link for those unable to attend in person due to travel or otherwise unable to meet in person. Each meeting begins with the adopted land and legacy acknowledgement. Supported by the department of Financial and Administrative Services (FAS), the committee co-designed its 2025 work plan in accordance with the Priority Hire ordinance goals and objectives.

Since Priority Hire began - 10th Anniversary²

- BIPOC workers have increased their share of hours by 60%.
- Construction workers living in economically distressed communities have earned \$120 million dollars in wages.
- Most of these workers are BIPOC, women and apprentices.
- The City estimates this is double than they would have earned without Priority Hire.

¹ Previous Priority Hire Advisory Committee Annual Reports can be found here [Priority Hire - Purchasing and Contracting | seattle.gov](https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/FAS/PurchasingAndContracting/Labor/Priority%20Hire%20Annual%20Report/2024%20Priority%20Hire%20Annual%20Report.pdf)

² <https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/FAS/PurchasingAndContracting/Labor/Priority%20Hire%20Annual%20Report/2024%20Priority%20Hire%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

2025 Annual Recommendations

Assess Changes to the \$5 million Project Threshold

The City of Seattle's Priority Hire program applies to public works construction projects and public-private partnership projects with an estimated project budget of \$5 million or more. Given the success of Priority Hire, PHAC would like information on the impact of lowering the current project threshold from \$5 million on the program's outcomes. In particular, for smaller WMBE firms, PHAC seeks to understand how the current threshold affects their success, challenges, and overall inclusion.

PHAC recommends that the City conduct an analysis on the \$5 million threshold by answering the following questions.

- How many projects have and will fall below the \$5 million threshold?
- How many construction hours do projects under the threshold produce?
- How would a \$2 million threshold impact WMBE firms?

PHAC requests that the City include in its analysis the original rationale for setting the initial \$5 million threshold. While specific questions are noted above, PHAC encourages the City to include additional questions and information to help PHAC understand the related and potentially unforeseen impacts of lowering or not lowering the threshold.

Targeted Outreach to WMBE firms and CWA Capacity

In 2025, PHAC continued to focus on women in the construction industry as it did in its 2024 report. Discussions focused on how to target outreach to enroll more people of color/women in the trades, current barriers to employment, and how Priority Hire can improve opportunities for women in the construction industry. PHAC anticipates additional discussions and recommendations in 2026 on this subject and may amend this recommendation based on the University of Washington women in construction study that will be released in Fall 2026.

PHAC brain stormed a list of outreach activities and agreed to put forward two recommendations. The first recommendation, PHAC determined that grants addressing the readiness and capacity of WMBE firms for Priority Hire projects, may help incentivize hiring opportunities for women in the construction industry. This identifies the relationship between successful WMBE firms and increasing hiring opportunities.

1. PHAC recommends the City use readiness-capacity grants to support WMBE firms for Priority Hire projects. The City should identify WMBE firms already in the system and conduct a pre-screening assessment to ensure the WMBE firm can benefit from a Priority Hire readiness-capacity grant. These grants serve as a dedicated resource for smaller WMBE contractors and are a targeted approach to removing the systemic barriers to women and women-owned businesses in construction.
2. PHAC recommends the City use pre-apprenticeship training to direct readiness-capacity grantees, as a requirement of the grant, to network with pre-apprentices and training providers. The recommendation encourages the City to facilitate a more supportive business development environment, connecting pre-apprentists with Priority Hire ready-WMBE firms through training providers/partners.

Support strategies that improve the employment environment for women in construction.

PHAC recommends that the City invest in strategies that improve the employment environment for women in construction. The purpose is to support those most affected by economic downturns and to continue investing in and assessing removing barriers to employment in construction. PHAC recommends the following strategies:

1. To improve sustainability during economic downturns, PHAC recommends expanding Priority Hire implementation by adding Priority Hire language to City maintenance jobs and seasonal labor opportunities. The purpose of this strategy is to retain pre-apprentices by providing provisional employment through the City of Seattle.
2. PHAC recommends that the City assess how Priority Hire can be applied to the housing development sector.
3. For the City to partner with general contractors and community-based organizations to host open houses specifically designed to connect women and WMBE firms with the Priority Hire network.
4. The City to sponsor and market career trade and training fairs, such as Rainier Beach Action Coalition's women's career fair.