



Photo courtesy of Seattle Public Schools' Skilled Trades Pre-Apprenticeship Program

 **Seattle**
Finance &
Administrative Services

2025 Priority Hire Annual Report

PURCHASING AND CONTRACTING

June 2026



This report is an annual programmatic review in response to the Priority Hire Ordinance (SMC 20.37) and Mayor's Office, City Council, and other stakeholder interests. More information about Priority Hire can be found at www.seattle.gov/priorityhire.

Cover: This photo is of Seattle Public Schools students from the school districts Skilled Trades Pre-Apprenticeship program touring the Memorial Stadium project organized by Sellen Construction, the general contractor on the project. The Memorial Stadium project is a Public Private Partnership (PPP) project between the City of Seattle, Seattle Public Schools, and Oak View Group. Many PPP projects are covered by Priority Hire.

Definitions

Acceptable Work Site

Contract provisions that set standards for acceptable behavior on City construction work sites. The provisions prohibit bullying, hazing, and related behaviors — particularly those based upon race, immigration status, religious affiliation, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

Apprentice

A worker enrolled in a Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council-approved training program.

Community Workforce Agreement (CWA)

A comprehensive pre-hire collective bargaining agreement between the City and labor unions that sets the basic terms and conditions of employment for public works construction projects. CWA projects include Priority Hire requirements, which increase access to construction jobs for workers living in economically distressed ZIP codes in Seattle and King County.

Dual Benefits Reimbursement

The City reimburses open-shop contractors on Priority Hire public works projects for payments into their existing benefits plans for workers on the project, as the CWA requires all workers to pay into union trusts.

Economically Distressed ZIP Codes

City-identified ZIP codes in Seattle and King County that have high densities of people living under 200% of the federal poverty line, unemployment rates, and those over 25 without a college degree.

Journey Worker

A worker who is not enrolled in a Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council-approved training program.

Open-Shop Contractor

A contractor that is not signatory to a union.

Pre-Apprentice

An individual who goes through a supportive and hands-on pre-apprenticeship training program that helps prepare people for entry and success in the building trades. These preparatory programs provide construction training and education, in addition to assisting with driver's licensing, transportation, child care, budgeting, etc.

Prime Contractor

The business contracting with the City to complete a construction project. Prime contractors may have contracts with subcontractors to perform part of the work.

Priority Hire

A program that increases the hiring of residents of economically distressed ZIP codes in Seattle and King County, women and people of color on City construction projects over \$5 million. The program intends to create equitable access to construction training and employment by focusing on the entire construction worker development process.

Priority Hire Worker

A worker who lives in an economically distressed ZIP code.

Priority Hire Advisory Committee (PHAC)

A committee that advises the City on Priority Hire implementation and effectiveness. Members are appointed by the Mayor and represent construction labor unions, training programs, contractors (including at least one women- or minority-owned contractor) and community.

Public-Private Partnership Project

Private construction projects with significant City investment that may include social and labor equity contract provisions, including Priority Hire, per Executive Order 2017-01.

Purchasing and Contracting (PC)

The division in the City of Seattle's Department of Finance and Administrative Services that oversees and implements Priority Hire.

Women- and Minority-Owned Businesses (WMBEs)

Businesses that are at least 51% owned by women and/or minorities.

The City of Seattle’s Priority Hire Program embodies the City’s commitment to advancing racial and economic equity through its investments on public construction projects. Priority Hire addresses the City’s broader challenges related to affordability, displacement, economic disparities, and homelessness by expanding access to living-wage construction careers.

Established by ordinance in 2015 in Seattle Municipal Code 20.37, **Priority Hire ensures economic opportunities generated by large public works projects are shared equitably with the people and communities who have historically been excluded from the construction industry.** Specifically, residents of economically distressed ZIP codes, women, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

Construction workers living in economically distressed communities have earned \$139 million in wages. Most of these workers are BIPOC, women, and apprentices. We estimate this is **110% more** than they would have earned without Priority Hire. Priority Hire ensures money stays local and helps stop displacement of communities. In 2025 alone Priority Hire workers earned \$19 million in living wages, plus benefits.

This report marks a decade of progress and provides a comprehensive look at how the City, community partners, labor, contractors, training partners, and workers have come together to build a more equitable regional construction workforce.

Priority Hire: A Community Effort
Creating economic opportunities by investing tax dollars back into the City’s communities



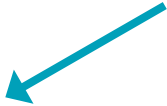
About **\$3.5 billion** spent on construction projects through taxpayer funds and private construction investments since September 2013.



Construction partners, construction labor unions, contractors, and training programs team up to get Priority Hire workers jobs.



Construction workers earn living wages. In 2025, apprentices averaged **\$44 an hour** on Priority Hire projects, and journey workers **\$62 an hour**.



Since late 2013, workers living in economically distressed communities earned **\$139 million in wages** on Priority Hire projects. We estimate that is **more than double** what they would have earned without Priority Hire. Those wages supported families and allowed neighborhoods to thrive.



Source: City of Seattle, 2026.

Looking forward: moving the equity needle

- **Working with partners to shape the next phase of Priority Hire.** We celebrated our 10-year CWA milestone in 2025, and are now evaluating refinements to the program. These include:
 - Working with our labor partners on CWA enhancements.
 - Developing an early-identification process for potential public-private partnership projects to support Priority Hire opportunities.
 - Coordinating with similar regional programs to further shared interests in supporting underserved communities in construction.
- **Diversifying our Priority Hire investments in construction, clean energy, and building maintenance.** In 2026, FAS and the Office of Sustainability & Environment (OSE) will issue a request for proposals to increase access to and retention in construction apprenticeship and living-wage clean energy jobs to Priority Hire workers. These jobs will focus on construction, including the installation, maintenance, and operation of clean energy systems and building maintenance.
- **Providing technical assistance for small and women and minority-owned businesses (WMBE) contractors.** To support small and WMBE contractor success on Priority Hire projects, the City is developing and implementing a training plan for the CWA in partnership with similar regional programs. This effort includes establishing regular hours at Tabor 100, where contractors can access a range of technical assistance services to support business development and growth. It will also feature CWA overview trainings covering key topics such as worker dispatch and pre-jobs.

Priority Hire Advisory Committee: Legacy Acknowledgement

The following statement was developed and approved by the Priority Hire Advisory Committee in November 2024 to recognize the purpose and collective efforts that led to Priority Hire.

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

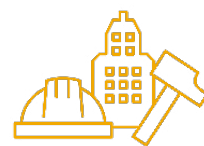
Working toward economic equity

The Priority Hire program requires contractors to meet specific targets for hours worked by residents of economically distressed ZIP codes and sets aspirational goals for increasing participation among women and BIPOC workers. Priority Hire requirements also extend to public-private partnership projects in which the City has a significant investment, broadening the program’s reach and increasing the overall demand for a Priority Hire workforce. In 2025, 12 projects were added to the Priority Hire program bringing the total to 91 projects with a total estimated value of \$3.5 billion.

Our work includes the following strategies:

- **Partnering** with community-based organizations and pre-apprenticeship programs to increase awareness and access to construction apprenticeship.
- **Investing** in ongoing worker support by addressing personal and systemic barriers to working in construction.
- **Creating** construction career opportunities by setting hiring requirements on construction projects.

Since Priority Hire started in 2013:



83 public works projects

8 public-private projects

91 total projects

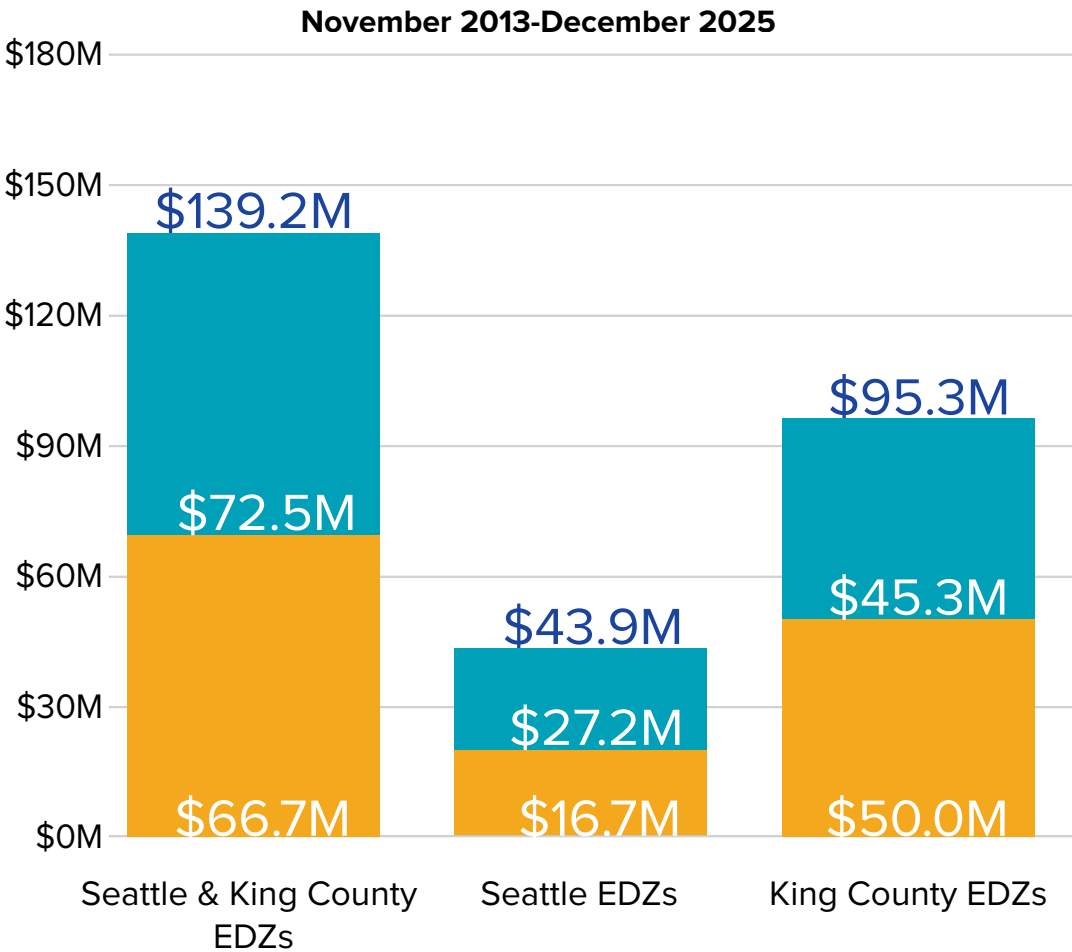


2,258,582,102 for public works covered

1,283,729,480 for public-private projects covered

3,542,311,582 total value covered by Priority Hire

How does Priority Hire impact economically distressed ZIP codes (EDZs)?



WAGES TYPICALLY EARNED
BEFORE PRIORITY HIRE

ADDITIONAL WAGES EARNED
DUE TO PRIORITY HIRE

Source: City of Seattle, 2026. Data reflects public works and public-private partnership projects. Dollar amounts may not add up due to rounding.

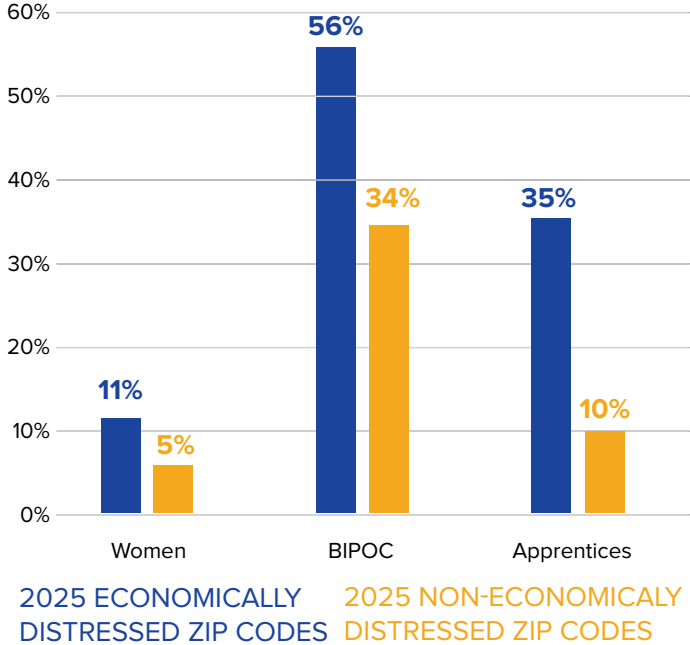
Working toward racial equity

In 2025, BIPOC workers produced 42% of all construction hours. We estimate this represents a 68% increase in hours since the start of Priority Hire, when BIPOC workers accounted for an average of 25% of hours before the program began. BIPOC share of hours has steadily increased since 2020, when share of hours fell to 30% with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Priority Hire has an opportunity to continue increasing the representation of BIPOC workers on City projects to better reflect regional demographics. One way of ensuring continued equitable and diverse outcomes for BIPOC and women workers on City projects is the direct employment of workers living in economically distressed ZIP codes. In 2025, hours from workers residing in economically distressed ZIP codes were more likely to be women, BIPOC, or apprentices when compared to workers living outside these ZIP codes.

Another strategy that is implemented to increase inclusion in construction is [Acceptable Work Site](#) training. This is a required training for prime contractors on Priority Hire projects. It aims to eliminate hazing, harassment, and bullying on projects to create a more culturally competent environment for all workers.

Are workers living in economically distressed ZIP codes more diverse?



Source: City of Seattle, 2026. Data includes public works and public-private partnership projects.

How does Priority Hire affect workers by race/ethnicity?

Race/Ethnicity	Share of Hours Before Priority Hire ¹	2025 Priority Hire Projects (927,088 hours)
African American/Black	4%	8%
Asian	3%	3%
Hispanic	16%	25%
Native American	3%	2%
Other	N/A	5%
White	75%	48%
Not Specified	N/A	10%
All BIPOC²	25%	42%

¹Share of hours before Priority Hire is based on hours from a sample of projects from 2009-2013. There is no prior data for Other or Not Specified. ²BIPOC exclude White and Not Specified.Source: City of Seattle, 2026. Data includes public works and public-private partnership projects. Percentages are based on share of hours or share of workforce and may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Hiring women in construction

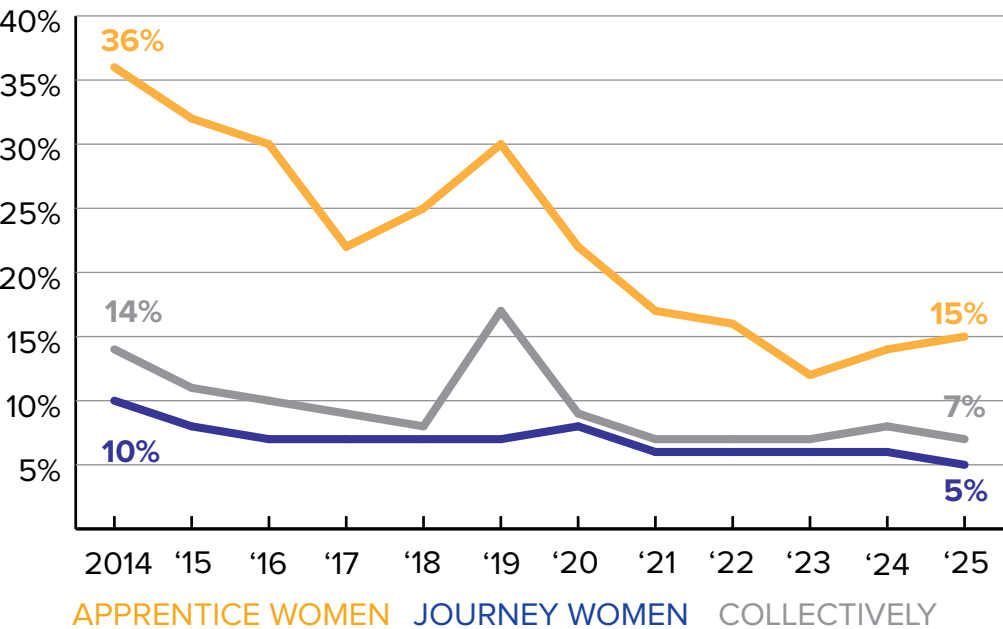
In 2025, women on Priority Hire projects worked 7% of all construction hours. While Priority Hire has helped increase women’s participation from pre program levels of 3%–5%, women’s hours have generally stabilized, fluctuating between 7%–8% in recent years. However, we are seeing meaningful growth among women apprentices. Women’s share of apprentice hours has increased by 25% over the last couple of years.

The slower growth in women’s participation on City projects reflects broader industry trends rather than issues specific to Priority Hire. Historically, women have been underrepresented in the construction trades. According to the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(BLS\)](#), 5% of women surveyed nationally were employed in construction and extraction occupations in 2024. A [study](#) produced by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research shows that discrimination, a lack of available childcare during work hours and bullying, hazing and harassment play a role in pushing women and other workers out of the industry.

The City will continue to invest in strategies that support women entering and staying in construction. These investments include:

- Pre-apprenticeship and training programs to train women. In 2025, those women made up 29% of the pre-apprenticeship graduates who entered apprenticeship.
- Wraparound support in the form of childcare assistance, gas, tools, and work clothes.
- Jobsite training for leaders and workers to identify and respond to bullying, hazing, and harassment.
- Conducting an analysis of Women in Construction for CWA projects to identify the root causes of the attrition rate for women in Priority Hire in the last five years with a general comparison to women in the construction trades industry. respective to the disparities in the data for women in Priority Hire and generally in the construction trades industry.

How did the share of hours worked by women on Priority Hire projects look in 2025 compared to prior years?



Source: City of Seattle, 2026. Data includes public works and public-private partnership projects.

Women in the industry

The pictures below were taken at the Memorial Stadium project. One shows pre-apprentices from ANEW's all-women cohort touring the site. The other shows a women operator loading a dump truck. Together, these images highlight Priority Hire's aim to grow the pipeline of women entering the industry and the demand for a more diverse and inclusive construction workforce.



Photo courtesy of Sellen Construction



10 Years of Priority Hire

In 2015, the City set an ambitious goal for Priority Hire to achieve 40% of labor hours produced by workers living in economically distressed ZIP codes by 2025. In 2025, Priority Hire surpassed that target, reaching an all-time high of 42%, 43% with good faith efforts. Good faith efforts occur when a contractor asks a union hall for a worker living in an economically distressed ZIP code and none are available.

This marks the strongest Priority Hire performance in the program’s history and demonstrates the measurable impact of more than a decade of focused equity work. The City’s 10-year celebration with community, labor, contractor, and training partners made it clear how far Priority Hire has come and the lasting impact it has made. Several factors that led to this success in performance include:

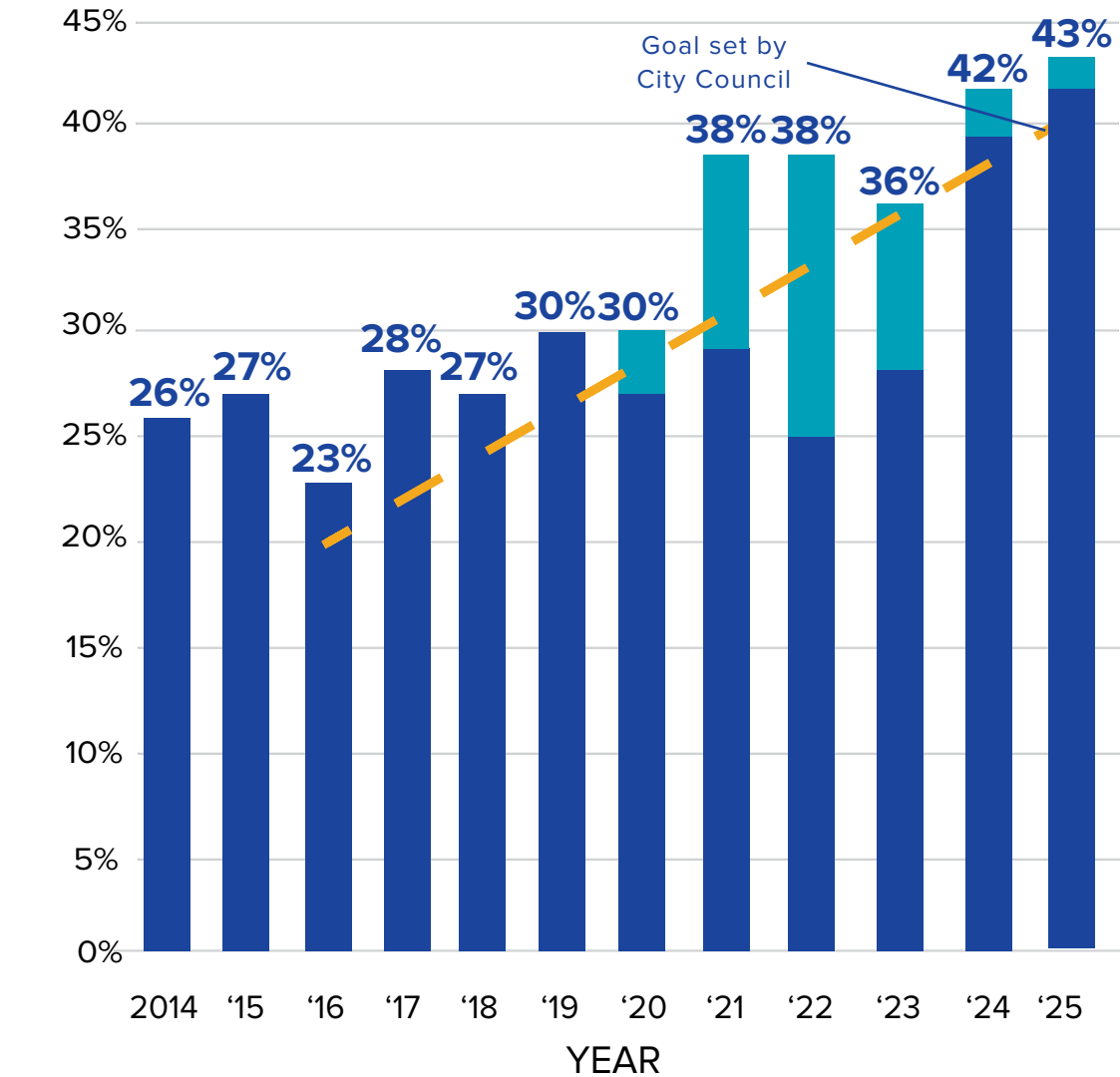
- In November 2024, the City rolled out the updated Priority Hire ZIP codes. These updated ZIP codes reach more workers living in economically distressed communities thereby increasing the pool of Priority Hire construction workers available for contractors to employ.
- Contractors made strong efforts to employ and retain Priority Hire workers. In 2025, a Priority Hire worker produced 246.8 hours on average. By comparison, a non-Priority Hire worker produced 182.0 hours on average.

10 Year Celebration

The City held a celebration commemorating the ten years of Priority Hire at the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute. Attendees included community, labor, contractor, and training partners.



Did Priority Hire meet Seattle City Council’s 2025 goal of 40%?



ACTUAL PERFORMANCE
GOAL GOOD FAITH EFFORTS

Source: City of Seattle, 2026. Data reflects public works projects only. Good faith efforts are when a contractor asked for a worker from an economically distressed ZIP code, but did not receive one. The City started tracking good faith efforts in 2020.

Supporting construction workers

Priority Hire removes barriers for people to enter and succeed in construction. We invest in and partner with community organizations to recruit workers, provide training with tools and construction math, help get drivers licenses, offer financial support services and more. These investments help provide the workforce needed to build the City’s future projects. The City plays an oversized role in supporting regional workforce development. Of the 328 pre-apprentices on Priority Hire projects since 2021, a fifth have received City-funded training or retention services, showing a strong connection between the City’s workforce investments and hiring requirements on Priority Hire projects.

On City construction job sites, contractors receive Acceptable Work Site training to prevent bullying, hazing and harassment and create a positive, healthy and safe work site. We regularly visit workers and partner with contractors, construction labor unions, apprenticeship coordinators, and community organizations to address barriers on and off the job that affect a worker’s success in construction.



A pre-apprentice's journey

Cash, a Cleveland High School graduate, completed the Seattle Public Schools Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program, which helped launch his career in construction. With support from his Training Director, he became a Laborer’s Apprentice with the Laborer's Union Local 242 and has already logged 1,000 work hours and finished his first General Construction class. He currently works as a 70% apprentice on the City of Seattle’s Ballard Tunnel Project for Flatiron, gaining hands-on experience while preparing to take college classes toward an engineering career. Cash attributes his success to dedication, consistency, and hard work. His advice for others considering the trades is to ask questions, take initiative, and actively pursue opportunities.

This picture is of Cash at the Ballard Tunnel Project.

Since 2016, the City invested

\$11.5 million

in recruitment, training and support services

for workers living in economically distressed ZIP codes, women and people of color

- 411** People recruited and placed into construction by community organizations
- 1,037** Trained pre-apprentices and Priority Hire clients placed in construction
- 85%** 241 of 284 apprentices who enrolled for retention servcies in 2024 were active in their apprenticeship program one year later
- 206** People obtained or regained their driver’s licenses

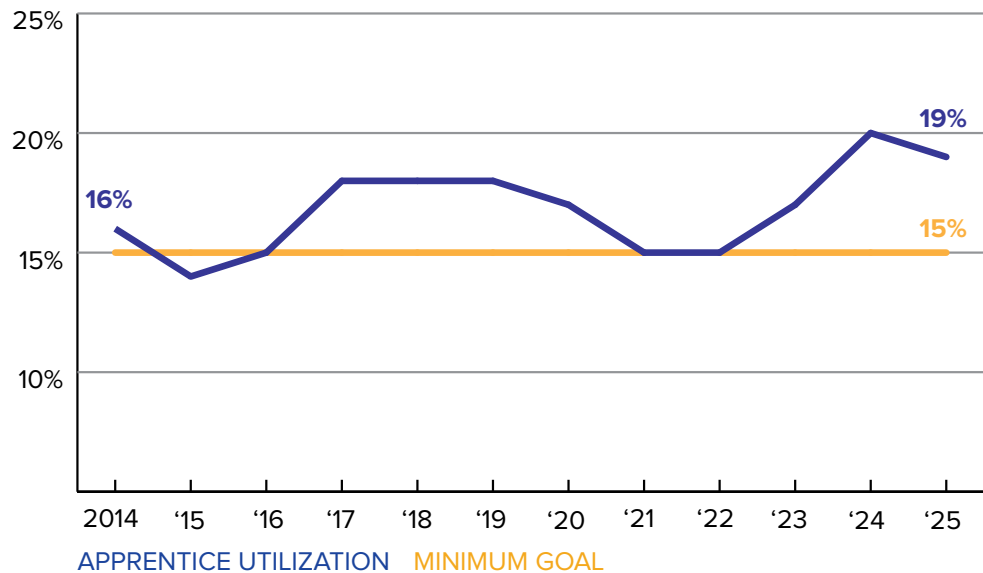
Source: City of Seattle, 2026. Data includes outcomes from partnershipships with the Office of Sustainability and Environment, the Port of Seattle and Sound Transit.

Growing the future workforce

In 2025, apprentices on Priority Hire projects worked 19% of all hours. This reflects one of the highest annual apprentice participation rates for the program. Apprentices on Priority Hire projects also continue to be more diverse than journey-level workers, with greater representation from economically distressed communities, women, and BIPOC communities. As a result, future journey workers should be more representative of our larger community.

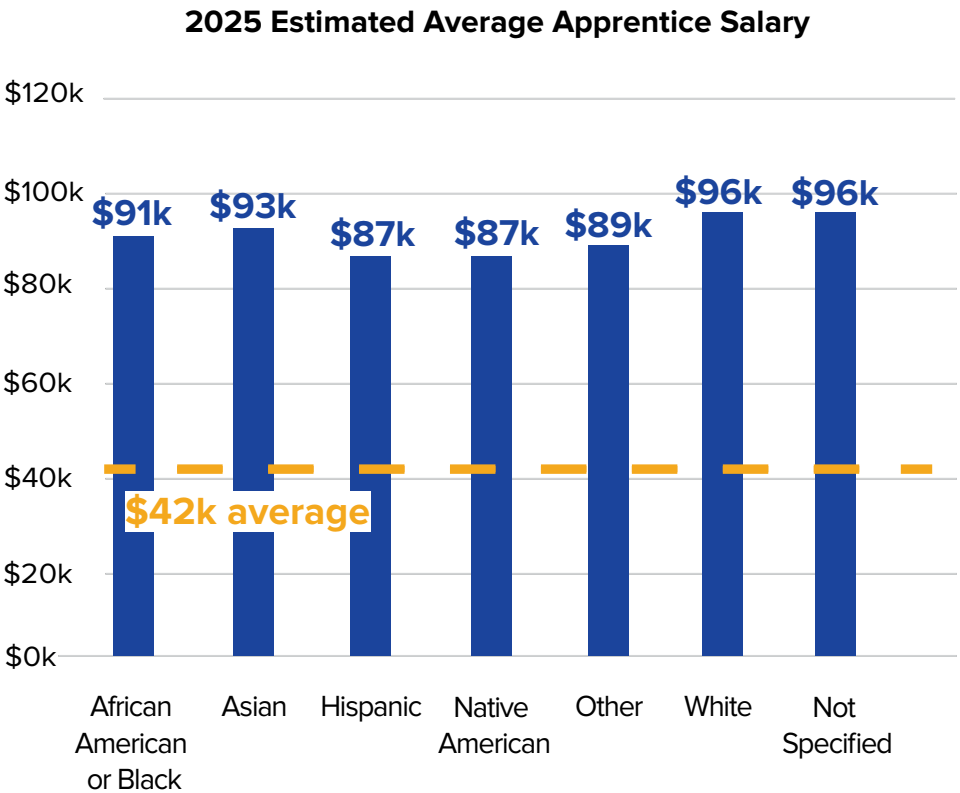
Priority Hire provides a real pathway to economic mobility. In 2025, BIPOC apprentices earned an estimated \$89,433, more than double the \$42,101 a full-time minimum wage worker in Seattle earned that year. This comparison highlights the immediate financial impact a construction career can have on young adults and their families. It is important that a range of opportunities exist for young adults. A career in the construction trades is a viable option, and Priority Hire maximizes these opportunities.

Are Priority Hire projects meeting apprentice utilization goals?



Source: City of Seattle, 2026. Data includes public works and public-private partnership projects.

How has Priority Hire cultivated the next generation of construction workers?



Sources: City of Seattle, 2026. Apprentice yearly income on all Priority Hire projects is based on 2025 average hourly wage multiplied by 2,080 hours. 2,080 is the number of construction hours typically available in a year.

Additional project information

Prime Contractor Bids

The number of prime contractor bids was lower on Priority Hire projects than non-Priority Hire projects in 2025, reversing a trend from previous years. This was partially due to a smaller number of Priority Hire projects going out to bid in 2025 than in prior years.

How do the number of prime contractor bids compare across projects?

	Priority Hire Projects (91 bid openings)	Non-Priority Hire Projects (640 bid openings)
2015-2024	3.9	3.6
2025	3.9	5.5
2015-2025	3.9	3.7

*Data begins in 2015 to align with the Priority Hire Ordinance and CWA. Prior to 2015, only the Priority Hire pilot, an alternative delivery project, was under construction. Alternative delivery contracts were excluded. Data reflects public works projects only.
Source: City of Seattle, 2026.*

Safety and Project Timelines

There were four reportable injuries on public works Priority Hire projects in 2025. Three projects completed construction. All three finished late due to circumstances unrelated to the CWA. There is insufficient data to measure the direct impact of the CWA on either safety or project timeline.

Dual Benefit Reimbursements

We offer dual benefits reimbursements to open-shop contractors on Priority Hire projects. The CWA requires that contractors pay into union trust funds for usual benefits on behalf of their workers on Priority Hire projects. This can be an extra cost for open shop contractors that have existing plans for their workers. We reimburse open-shop contractors for workers on those projects.

To date, open shop contractors have applied for and received \$852,501 in dual benefits reimbursement since the program started. This amount accounts for less than 1% of total spend on Priority Hire projects.

How much do dual benefit reimbursements cost?

November 2013-December 2025

Dual Benefit Reimbursement Paid (18 projects)	Priority Hire Project Spend (83 projects)	Share of Project Payments	Number of Workers Affected
\$852,501	\$1,911,461,049	.04%	182

Source: City of Seattle, 2026. Data reflects public works projects only.

Photo: Students from the ANEW pre-apprenticeship program touring inside the Magnolia Elevated Water Tank project organized by T. Bailey, LLC, the general contractor on the project.



Photo courtesy of T. Bailey, LLC

Contracting with WMBEs

WMBE contractors bring necessary skills and scopes to City work sites and employ diverse workforces. The City requires prime contractors bidding on public works projects over three hundred thousand dollars to develop an inclusion plan on how they'll include WMBE subcontractors and suppliers.

In 2025, both Priority Hire and non-Priority Hire projects exceeded their respective aspirational WMBE goals of 9% and 16%. However, while WMBE subcontractors saw an increase in their share of work on Priority Hire projects, non-Priority Hire projects experienced a decrease.

There are many factors that affect WMBE contractor spend, including the amount and type of work available in the year. As a City, we'll continue to focus on economic and racial equity in the WMBE program through increased technical assistance and partnerships to share information and build capacity. For information on the WMBE program, go to www.seattle.gov/purchasing-and-contracting/social-equity/wmbe.

What share of payments did WMBEs earn in 2025?

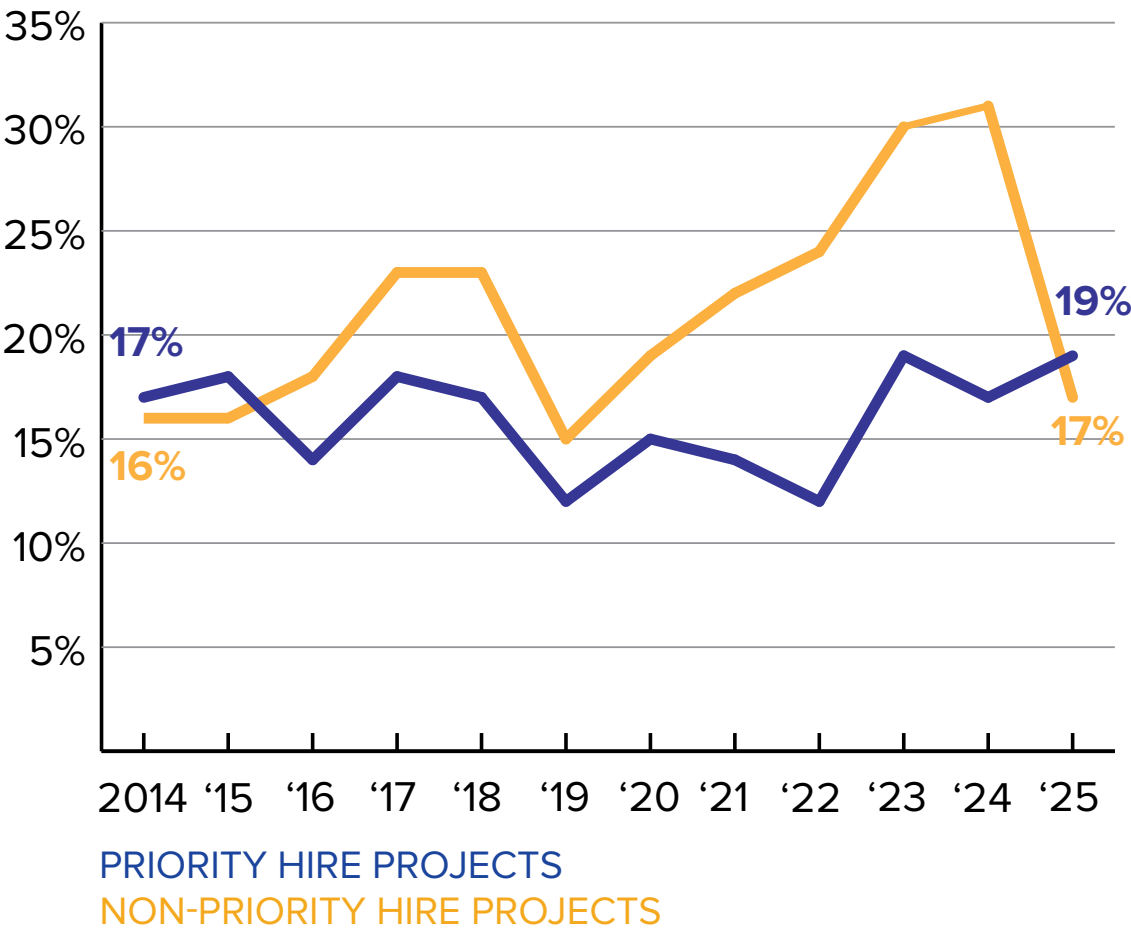
Project Type	Total Spent	Estimated Aspirational WMBE Goal for Projects with Payments in 2025 ¹	WMBE Utilization	MBE ² Utilization	WBE ² Utilization
Priority Hire Projects	\$215,945,630	9%	19%	11%	8%
Non-Priority Hire Projects	\$156,794,277	16%	17%	10%	7%
Total	\$372,739,907	11%	18%	11%	7%

¹Estimated aspirational WMBE goals were calculated by multiplying each projects' unique goal to their total contract amount, adding both up, and dividing to get the percentage. For example, if Project A was \$1 million with a 10% WMBE goal, we'd anticipate WMBEs earning \$100,000. If Project B was \$4 million with a 15% WMBE goal, we'd anticipate WMBEs earning \$600,000. When put together, you'd have an overall estimated aspirational WMBE goal of 14% (\$700,000/\$5,000,000=14%).

²Minority-owned contractors are MBEs and women-owned contractors are WBEs.

Source: City of Seattle, 2026. Data reflects public works projects only. Percentages may not add up due to rounding.

What is the WMBE trend over years?



Source: City of Seattle, 2026. Data reflects public works projects only.