



5 Winning Strategies for Incorporating Workforce Provisions in BIL Projects

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) provides several critical opportunities for workforce development, including direct funding through specific grants. Importantly, the BIL includes provisions that promote diversity and equity in an infrastructure workforce that has traditionally been white- and male-dominated. Below are five winning strategies for cities to incorporate workforce development provisions into BIL projects:

#1 Include workforce and labor plans in BIL grant applications

The majority of BIL grant opportunities include selection criteria focused on broadening workforce opportunities, meaning that in order to develop [competitive applications](#), it is important for cities to develop workforce and labor plans, which detail how applicants plan to create pipelines for jobs on a specific project. The Department of Transportation has developed a [checklist](#) for developing strong plans; it is important for cities to engage relevant stakeholders—including workforce boards, education and training partners, unions, the business community, and frontline community groups – when developing these plans.

#2 Promote equity through hiring and procurement processes

A chief [objective](#) of the Biden-Harris Administration is to promote racial equity and expand support for underrepresented populations. This is particularly relevant for BIL workforce provisions, given that Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and women, have traditionally been underrepresented in infrastructure jobs. Some BIL funding opportunities—for example, the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant—rates applications based on how proposals expand workforce opportunities for BIPOC and women (see page 43 of the [NOFO](#)). And importantly, BIL [ended a prohibition on local hiring preferences](#) for construction projects, which paved the way for grantees being allowed to set goals around the share of work performed by underrepresented populations.

Cities should work with community stakeholders to set [diversity and equity goals for hiring](#) on BIL projects to ensure adequate representation among BIPOC, women, and members of the local community. For example, the city of Inglewood, CA's winning RAISE application includes a [Community Benefit Agreement](#) (CBA) that specifies that 35% of hiring go to local residents, and 10% go to disadvantaged workers. Cities should also seek to [expand contracting opportunities](#) for BIPOC- and women-owned firms.

#3 Leverage workforce funding opportunities in BIL

The BIL allows funding from a variety of programs to be used for workforce development. The White House released [guidance](#) (page 13) specifying that the grant opportunities listed [here](#) allow workforce as an eligible expense. This is governed by the same cost allocation rules as RAISE, which means that funds can be used to support jobs on the project, including



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flexibility for hiring a “jobs coordinator” or funding for short-term training (both described in the [RAISE FAQ](#), questions 34-36). DOT also publishes [summaries](#) of workforce provisions in winning BIL applications. Note that applicants must explicitly include a line item in the budget for workforce development in order for it to be an eligible expenditure under a BIL project.

#4 Forge partnerships with workforce stakeholders

Partnerships are crucial for the successful implementation of BIL workforce provisions. Cities should work closely with workforce development experts, such as [local workforce boards](#), unions, and community colleges. These entities have access to data, existing programs, and processes that can be leveraged or re-tooled for BIL workforce development, such as apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and student outreach services. Mayors can use their convening power to encourage meaningful collaboration between transportation/public works agencies and local workforce boards, ensuring that BIL grant applications include equitable workforce development strategies—this will also make those applications more competitive.

Cities can also forge partnerships to promote equity in BIL projects. For example, the city of Portland, OR worked with its county, regional government, and external stakeholders to develop [a workforce equity plan](#) used to improve racial and gender diversity and equity in the construction industry.

#5 Consider funding wraparound supports for workers

Workforce development isn’t limited to training and educational opportunities. Providing [wraparound supports](#)—like childcare and funding for emergencies—are crucial interventions that can [boost retention and the completion](#) of training programs, especially for low-income workers and women. Cities should think creatively about providing these opportunities as part of their projects, and look towards [evidence-based interventions](#) to improve outcomes.