



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Transit Administration



Innovative Transit Workforce Development Projects of 2011

Background

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) believe that developing and maintaining human capital is as important as the investment in physical capital. With the resurgence of public transportation in recent years, transit systems face a number of challenges: rapidly changing technologies, an aging workforce, and increasing ridership. These challenges make attracting and preparing new talent increasingly important. To help address these challenges, FTA sought proposals for Innovative Workforce Grants and, based on a competitive application process, awarded a total of \$3 million for 12 workforce development projects to transit authorities that applied with supporting partners. These projects would demonstrate innovative transit workforce development approaches that could serve as models for other transit organizations.

Objectives

In 2013, FTA contracted Axiom Corporation to conduct a summary evaluation of the Innovative Transit Workforce Development projects awarded in 2011. The evaluation was to gauge the effectiveness of each project and help justify the federal investment. Axiom was tasked with reviewing the projects to determine their goals, the measures of achievement, and the potential impact on local or national transit workforce development needs.

Findings and Conclusions

The Innovative Transit Workforce Development projects produced participants who were trained, placed in employment, promoted, earned certifications, or introduced to transit careers and developed products useful to FTA and the transit industry.

This report provides the results of the Innovative Transit Workforce Program Evaluation of projects awarded in fiscal year 2011. The evaluation was conducted via review of updates and final report submitted by grantees and telephone interviews with grantees.

Of the 12 funded projects, the majority involved the training of incumbent workers; 8 provided training aimed at leaders or aspiring leaders or for existing technicians or line-staff to improve the skills of those already in the transit sector, 2 were designed to target new hires or entrants into the transit industry, and 2 targeted students. As a whole, the projects were successful and produced participants who were trained, placed in employment, promoted, earned certifications, or introduced to transit careers. In addition, several products developed through the projects were provided to FTA for availability to all transit agencies, including computer-based training courses for supervisors, participant/instructor manuals on supervisory functions, a Succession Planning Toolkit, and a Transit Leadership Competency Model.

Based on this evaluation, a number of conclusions can be drawn about the projects:

- **Grantees met or exceeded their goals**, as specified in their proposals, suggesting that the programs funded were generally well-planned and executed.
- **Projects were successful at identifying promising approaches for workforce development.** FTA selected projects that varied in scope and type to explore different avenues for addressing common transit workforce issues.
- **Partnerships with community colleges and universities were a good way to develop courses**, bringing academic rigor and innovation to course development, with transit personnel serving as subject matter experts.
- **American Job Centers were a good source of recruits** and were effective in recruiting unemployed, underemployed, or displaced workers to the programs, providing wrap-around services, or leveraging other programs to fund on-the-job training.
- **eLearning cut overhead and increased access to training**, proving successful for cutting travel, time, time away from the office, and other overhead costs and creating the opportunity for more people to take the courses and to share programs with agencies nationwide.
- **Programs with even a moderate impact on important sub-groups can be worthy of investment** if they affect subgroups that FTA and local transit agencies consider important targets, such as college graduates.

Program outcomes included the following:

• Youth introduced to transit industry careers	2,608
• Participants trained (leadership and technical)	1,527
• Participants who attained a certification	242
• Participants placed into employment	183
• Participants promoted to a higher position	83
• Computer or web-based training courses created	23
• Workshops on Public Transit Issues for Industry	2
• Web-based training virtual clearinghouse (C-TEL)	1
• Succession Planning Software created	1

Benefits

Projects funded under the Innovative Transit Workforce Development program explored different avenues for addressing common transit workforce issues that result from rapidly changing technologies and an aging workforce. Through partnerships with educational and other institutions to develop and provide training, certifications, and increased knowledge as well as courses and tools, these innovations can assist the U.S. transit industry with meeting the workplace demands of the future to maintain mobility for all citizens.

Project Information

FTA Report No. 0094

This research project was conducted by Axiom Corporation. For more information, contact FTA Project Manager Mackenzie Thiessen at (202) 366-0290, Mackenzie.thiessen@dot.gov. All research reports can be found at www.fta.dot.gov/research.