

## Building professional development pathways through partnerships

-Susan Baillargeon, Front Range Community College

Two questions agencies need to ask themselves are-What kind of workforce do we need for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and how do we attract and engage a diverse workforce to meet those needs?

Education, training, and recruitment systems play an important part in developing today's transportation workforce. In the recruitment process, employees learn of the available opportunities for retirement and health care benefits, education, training, professional development, and career advancement opportunities. Most employees take advantage of the retirement and healthcare benefits, but how do we encourage them to continue their education specific to public works, technical skills, and communication to become the leadership we need for the future?

Through partnerships with training providers, agencies can offer employees a clear path to career advancement through education, experience, and credit awards for prior knowledge. Some of our partners include Local Technical Assistance Programs (LTAP/TTAP) [NLTAPA | National Local Technical Assistance Program Association](#), AASHTO TTS courses [AASHTO Technical Training Solutions - Course List](#), ATSSA TCS Course [Roadway Safety Training & Certifications | ATSSA](#), and many more.

Front Range Community College has a program model for an associate's degree in Highway Maintenance Management that relies on partnerships with transportation industry training providers to transcribe college credits for programs whose competencies align with ours. Up to 1/3 of the degree requirements are met through this prior learning assessment (PLA) process, which means students do not incur any costs for up to 27 credits. [Associate Degree in Highway Maintenance Management](#) Could your employees be seeking educational opportunities like this?

Upskilling the current workforce in technical and leadership skills is paramount to sustaining the



level of service state and local communities have come to expect, but it does not happen in a vacuum. Who can you partner with to add value to the investments you are already making?

Recruitment and retention strategies are critical to maintaining an educated and engaged workforce. Due to the difficulties finding employees to fill maintenance and operations positions, recruitment is often in the spotlight. However,

educational opportunity and professional development are just as necessary to retain the workforce you have invested so much in already. FRCC's Associate in Applied Science's in Highway Maintenance Management is one program that not only adds to your investment in your employees through our PLA process, but it also develops future leaders for your agency, demonstrates your commitment to their development, and awards a degree that provides evidence of their technical and management skills.