

# 2008 On-the-Job Training Program Trainee Interview Report



*North Carolina Department of Transportation*

Prepared by:

Mr. Marvin T. Butler, OJT Program Manager  
Ms. Jorgelia Nino, OJT Coordinator



## 2008 On-the-Job Training Program Personal Interviews with Active Trainees and Recent Graduates

### PREFACE

Every year the North Carolina Department of Transportation's On-The-Job Training Program conducts a series of interviews of trainees enrolled in the program. The interviews are conducted across the state at the various jobsites to ensure that both trainee and contractor do not have to be interrupted during the normal course of their work.

During 2008 calendar year, the OJT Program staff conducted 241 interviews statewide. There were three types of interviews conducted: **initial**, **follow-up**, and **graduate**. This periodic feedback is intended to help the OJT Program achieve its stated goal: "...to provide training opportunities for women and minorities which will increase their participation in every skill craft/operator classification in the highway construction industry."

### DATA OF INTERVIEWS

The OJT Program conducted Initial, Follow-up, and Graduate interviews with OJT participants employed with thirty-seven (37) contractors. Between January 2008 and December 2008, the OJT Program staff interviewed one hundred ninety-two (192) active trainees. We conducted one hundred thirty-one (131) Initial Interviews, thirty (30) Follow-up Interviews, and eighty (80) Graduate Interviews. It should be noted that in May 2008 we changed the questions on the interview forms. Therefore, we are presenting this report in two parts. Of the total of 241 interviews conducted in 2008, 51 interviews were conducted with the old interview forms. Of these 51 interviews, we conducted twenty-five (25) Initial Interviews, five (5) Follow-up Interviews, and twenty-one Graduate Interviews.

### The Interview Process:

- Upon entry into the program each trainee receives a letter, in either English or Spanish, welcoming them to the program. Additionally, the letter indicates that an OJT program representative will be in contact within 30 days to schedule an interview as well as answer any questions they may have.

- The first interview is scheduled within 30 days with each trainee. The initial interview gathers data as well as serves as an informal informational session for the trainee.
- Should a trainee be enrolled in a program that requires 1000 hours or more, a follow-up interview is scheduled approximately half way through the training process to ensure that the trainee is learning.
- Upon graduation, a Graduate Interview is scheduled, determine how the success of the training process. Additionally, the graduate interview process provides the trainees the opportunity to make any program recommendation.

In our efforts to improve the administration and quality of the training program, interviews are significant to gain insight from trainees who are enrolled. This feedback helps to ensure the success of the program, not only for the industry, but for the trainees themselves. The demographics of the interviewees are shown in the following analysis.

## **Initial Interviews**

### **Demographics**

Demographic data indicate that seventy-five percent (75%) of program participants are between the ages of 25 and 50. Whites thirty-nine percent (39%) make up the largest ethnic group of interviewed with Hispanics providing a close second thirty-eight percent (38%). African Americans make up twenty-two percent (22%) of the participants. Native Americans are one percent of the North Carolina population and one percent of the participants. Not surprisingly, eighty-nine percent (89%) of the interviewees were male compared with eleven percent (11%) female.

### **Summary**

The majority of the recruitment into the program appeared to have occurred between March and July of 2008 with fifty-eight percent (58%) learning about the program from their supervisors. The vast majority of interviewees stated that they were new to the program, participated in an orientation and received training requirements. All but a few said that they were mentored and received support from their supervisors. An unusually large percentage (35%) indicated that they did not receive a periodic report documenting their performance. With just a few dissenters, interviewees overwhelmingly felt that they had enough time to learn, received appropriate safety training, and were aware of NCDOT's role in the program. The majority expected the program to help them get a better position, develop new skills and increase their salary. Sixty-three percent (63%) of

interviewees were working with the contractor for over six months before enrolling in the program.

## **Follow-Up Interview**

### **Demographics**

The follow-up interviews find the majority of the program participants in the 25 – 50 age group which is consistent with numbers in the initial interviews; however, there is a much larger Hispanics contingency (17 out of 30) for the second interview. There were two female interviewed during the follow-up.

### **Summary**

Data from the second interview mirror the responses to the initial interview with interviewees finding the contractors overwhelmingly supportive in providing training and encouragement. A few (11) interviewees answered “no” to questions about support in the first interview. In the second interview only two (2) participants said that they were not getting the support, encouragement, and feedback expected. One indicated that his expectations of the employer were not being met. The list of questions used in the second interview was reduced to 10 while there were fifteen (15) in the initial interview.

## **Graduate Interview**

### **Demographics**

Eighty graduates participated in this interview process with eighty percent (80%) of those coming from the middle two age groups (25 – 50). This ratio is consistent with percentages for the two interviews. Under the ethnicity category, however, a much larger percentage of Hispanics (36) are interviewed and a much smaller percentage of African Americans (8). Fifteen percent (15%) of the graduates interviewed were female.

### **Summary**

One hundred percent (100%) of graduates were continuing to develop skills they learned during training and were satisfied with the training they received in the program. Seventy-nine of the eighty interviewees commented that the training had provided them personal benefits. While most indicated that all aspects of training were important and needed emphasis, some indicated that they would like to focus more attention on particular areas like electronics, backhoe, grading, and reading plans. Graduates indicated preferences for further training opportunities with the majority interested in construction. Seventy-eight (78) of the eighty (80) would recommend the OJT Program to friends and seventy-nine (79) found it beneficial to meet with a NCDOT representative.

Twenty-three (23) interviewees did not get a certificate form their employer or NCDOT.

## **Overall Summary**

During the initial interviews, thirteen (13) interviewees said that they did not know that NCDOT managed the OJT Program and twenty (20) said that they did not know that NCDOT monitored their progress monthly. It is possible that these issues relate to language barriers. At any rate, this should be investigated to assure that program participants understand who is sponsoring and monitoring the program. Eleven (11) interviewees claimed to have not gotten feedback on their progress form their supervisors. Feedback is crucial to learning and a critical element in the success of this program. Also, forty-eight (48) interviewees indicated that they did not get periodic report documenting their performance. This high number should trigger a review of these procedures to address this problem.

The pool of interviewees for the graduate interviews notably shifted the demographics, especially in terms of ethnicity. Far fewer African Americans (8) took part in this interview segment as compared with the initial interviews (29). This could be an indication of a dropout trend among African Americans or lack of availability among this group to be interviewed. Comparatively speaking, Hispanics and females have a good representation in the pool of graduate interviewees.

Overall, it appears that the program is hitting its target and meeting its mission. Issues related to support from supervisors, documenting performance and explaining NCDOT's role could still exist in some companies and need to be monitored. Certainly, recruitment and participation in the program are trending towards Hispanic from this data. Efforts should be made to ensure that language is not a barrier in training and understanding of the program. African American participation is not consistent across the interview schedule. Their recruitment and participation in the program, and graduation rates should be monitored to ensure that enrollment opportunities are reaching this intended audience. Finally, attention should be given to ensuring that participants who have completed the requirements for training are provided and receive appropriate certificates from contractors and NCDOT.

Please note: Dr. Philip N. Henry, NCDOT Productivity Services Management Engineer contributed to the summary analysis of this 2008 Trainee Interview Report.