

Black History Month

URBAN LEAGUE

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CEA and Urban League of Greater Cleveland Partner to Advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Urban League of Greater Cleveland's (ULGC) mission is to enable African Americans and other minority members to develop and exercise their potential on par with all other Americans through education, research, advocacy and provision of services. ULGC delivers services in three strategically aligned areas: Education and Youth Development, Entrepreneurship and Business Development, and Workforce Development. The Construction Employers Association (CEA) actively works to increase diversity and inclusion in the industry through training and mentoring programs, advocacy and support for the Contractors Assistance Association (CAA). These programs are designed to build a diverse talent pipeline for the union construction industry, connect Clevelanders to good careers, and support diverse businesses in construction. CEA and ULGC working together has been a recipe for advancing success.

CEA and ULGC have partnered on workforce initiatives for over 10 years. Construction trade careers are such lucrative career paths, especially for those who are not interested in, or cannot afford to go to, college.

One way to find emerging talent for the trades is through workforce development programs, like those offered by ULGC.

"The challenge for Urban League, was that we were investing a lot in these individuals up-front, sending them through training programs at Cuyahoga Community College, and then not always seeing the return on investment, as many students were not offered to join apprenticeships or start at a union job," says Marsha Mockabee, President/CEO of Urban League of Greater Cleveland. "So, how do we leverage connections within the industry to better prepare these individuals?" Some of these candidates were ready for work with minimal additional training post-program, so ULGC created a new program called Work Now. CEA provides many resources to enable Work Now to recruit, support and align those entering the trades.

To further prepare, an industry immersion program was developed to introduce workers to companies, and vice versa, establishing the relationships needed to actually get a job in construction and providing coaching and support to overcome challenges. Business owners are able to observe growth in these potential candidates and utilize the resources provided by CEA to remove some barriers to entry in the industry. Over the next couple years, CEA has worked with ULGC to send their referral candidates through the Cleveland Builds program and continue to build off that relationship.

The partnership is mutually beneficial, and in 2021, ULGC recognized CEA with its *Workplace Development Award* as part of its *Equity on Display Program*. Demonstrating the long-standing partnership between the organizations, in 2015, CEA was awarded the *Whitney M. Young Jr. Diversity Champion Award* for trailblazing commitment to increasing diversity and inclusion in the construction industry. By being more than just a financial supporter, CEA has committed to the whole process of continuous improvement and engaging in opportunity for advancement in union construction, and the direct connection to construction owners provides access to the workforce for these students.

The program is ever evolving to keep up with the industry. Cleveland Builds and Urban League will partner on workforce development programs now and for years to come.

For more information about Work Now, please visit [Work Now: Construction Initiative | Construction Employers Association \(ceacisp.org\)](#)