



**Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative and
GREAT (Gulf Rebuild: Education, Advancement and Training) Campaign**

Q&A

Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative

Q1. What is goal of the Initiative?

A1. The Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative (the Initiative) is a partnership – involving federal, state and local government agencies, businesses, community organizations and construction trade groups and associations – with a goal of **recruiting and training up to 20,000 new construction craft workers for the Gulf Coast region by the end of 2009**. The Initiative supplements ongoing efforts in both the public and private sectors to **develop the skilled workforce needed to help the Gulf Coast region rebuild following the devastation of the 2005 hurricane season** and is primarily funded through Business Roundtable members.

Q2. Who is involved in the Initiative?

A2. The Initiative was started by Business Roundtable (www.businessroundtable.org), an association of 160 CEOs of leading U.S. companies, and involves significant collaboration between **businesses, construction trade groups and associations, community organizations, as well as local, state and federal government agencies**. A complete list of partners is available on the website – www.imgreat.org.

Q3. Who is funding the Initiative?

A3. **Business Roundtable companies are committing up to \$5 million over the next four years** to fund the Initiative. While Roundtable member companies are the primary funders, many other companies and partner organizations are also providing both cash and in-kind contributions to the Initiative. To fund the actual training, both Louisiana and Mississippi have received funding made available through the U.S. Department of Labor's Pathways to Construction program and

National Emergency Grants. A complete list of contributors and partners is on the website – www.imgreat.org.

Q4. How much do you think is needed to train 20,000 new workers?

A4. That's a **difficult question to answer at this point**, when we're just getting this multi-year Initiative underway. We hope to use a **mix of private and public money for the training programs**. Business Roundtable companies have committed up to \$5 million for the project, and this funding is being used to help coordinate the training and to assist in recruiting participants. Federal emergency grants also are being used in the Initiative, as well as funding from the Department of Labor's Pathways to Construction program.

Q6. How much of the \$5 million has Business Roundtable already committed to date?

A6. We're not disclosing details regarding our private funding effort, but I can tell you that we're making **significant progress toward our goal** of raising \$5 million for the Initiative.

Q7. Why are you launching the Initiative now, almost a full year after Hurricane Katrina brought devastation to the area?

A7. The **initial clean-up phase, which follows a catastrophe like Katrina, does not require the depth and array of construction trade skills** required to rebuild the area. We are taking steps now to deal with a real shortage of skilled construction labor in the Gulf Coast in the months and years ahead. Starting in December 2005, we have been **working on building an effective public-private partnership to bring this much needed training to the region to support to the actual reconstruction effort**.

Q8. Are you concerned that you will have trouble attracting trainees with the current labor shortage on the Gulf Coast? Why would people sign up for an unpaid training program when they could get a paying job right now?

A8. We are confident that the training opportunity offered by the Initiative will **help people gain skills and begin to build a career in construction**. Although there may be other jobs available in the Gulf, construction offers residents a career with great pay and benefits, and a meaningful future.

Q9. How does the program work?

A9. The Initiative calls for participants to enroll in a **free skills course which will provide intensive training to prepare them for careers in construction**. Participants are trained in local community and technical colleges by instructors certified by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER), a not-for-profit education foundation dedicated to helping address the critical workforce shortage facing the construction industry, and a partner of the

Gulf Coast Workforce Development Initiative. Training courses offered at local community and technical colleges in Mississippi and Louisiana will be expanding. For a current list of training locations, please visit - www.imgreat.org.

Q10. What are the eligibility criteria?

A10. In order to be eligible for the free training, a participant must be a **legal U.S. resident and complete a basic skills assessment. In Mississippi, participants will also be required to submit to a drug test**

Q11. What are areas of construction in which training is offered?

A11. The **free skills courses provided by the program offer a core safety instruction, an overview of the construction trades, and give participants the basic skills necessary to start a career in construction.** Additional training in various construction specialties will be made available in the future as the program expands.

Q12. How many construction jobs are open now in the Gulf Coast?

A12. The number of available construction jobs varies from day to day and we are not aware of any single source that tallies all the available job openings on any given day. All forward-looking labor studies, however, confirm that thousands of additional construction workers will be required in the region to support the rebuilding effort. While many of these needs will be for experienced workers, many entry level jobs will also be created. Based on the projections we have seen, the goal of 20,000 new construction workers is a conservative estimate of the ultimate need.

Q13. Are you guaranteeing jobs for people who graduate from your training program?

A13. While there is no guarantee of employment by completing the training course, the Initiative will actively work with local contractors to place training participants. To do this, the Initiative will communicate training class size and graduation dates to local contractors and will assist with job fairs to get training participants hired. In some cases, the initiative will also provide career placement assistance.

Q14. Are there any costs to trainees?

A14. No, at this time the training is free.

Q15. Are recruitment efforts focused on those displaced by Katrina?

A15. We are **piloting recruitment efforts in Baton Rouge, LA and Jackson, MS with the expectation of expanding quickly into other Gulf Coast communities.** But, anyone can apply for training. The training counselors at the local community and technical colleges can provide specific information on

residency requirements for the training. In the case of training funded by National Emergency Grants, participants must have been impacted by the hurricanes. The Pathways to Construction grant does not contain a similar stipulation.

Q16. How do you plan to accomplish the goal of recruiting these workers?

A16. In early August we are launching what we're calling the **GREAT (Gulf Rebuild: Education, Advancement and Training) campaign** to reach out to residents across the Gulf Coast through various **advertising, a website, a special toll-free number and events** to communicate the free construction training and career opportunities that are available. **Billboards will soon go up in Baton Rouge, LA and Jackson, MS** to draw attention to the training. Gulf area residents interested in learning more about the GREAT campaign and the training can call **1-888-52-GREAT (1-888-524-7328)** or visit - www.imgreat.org.

Q17. Once people have completed the four-week training on basic construction skills, what will they be qualified to do? What kinds of jobs can they get with these skills? What do those jobs generally pay?

A17. Participants who successfully complete the four-week training courses **will have completed the NCCER core safety training requirement and be exposed to basic construction skills**. The basics of construction safety is the most important aspect of the training course. Participants will be **qualified to be hired for entry-level construction jobs**. Generally, entry-level construction workers can expect to earn between \$10 and \$14 per hour. Additional training in various construction specialties will be made available in the future as the program expands.

Q18. Are you working with construction trade unions in this training program? Do unions support this effort?

A18. The Initiative has reached out to businesses, government, community groups and labor unions. The Initiative has met with representatives of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO to discuss common goals. Participants who complete the entry-level training are available for employment by either union or merit-shop contractors. Participants who are hired by union contractors would enter the existing union apprenticeship program.

Q19. What are you doing to provide housing to the people in the program? How can they participate in a four-week training program if they don't have a place to live?

A19. Right now, this program seeks to provide training for people in the Gulf Region who have a place to stay while they are training – and when they get their jobs. We are starting with pilot programs in Jackson, Mississippi and Baton Rouge, Louisiana because those areas didn't suffer as much devastation as harder hit areas where larger numbers of homes were destroyed. There's no question that the

Gulf Region needs to rebuild homes for residents there, and this program will help recruit and train the construction workers who can help with that work.