

TRAINING FOR THE FUTURE II

LOS ANGELES'S UTILITY PRE-CRAFT TRAINEE PROGRAM:
PROGRESS TO DATE

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INTRODUCTION

This report discusses the progress of the Utility Pre-Craft Trainee (UPCT) program since its launch in 2011. The UPCT program, jointly operated by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 18, is an earn-and-learn, pre-apprenticeship training program in which entry-level trainees work full time weatherizing homes and small businesses while learning skills and preparing for civil service exams and career opportunities in the utility. Trainees receive \$16 per hour plus health and retirement benefits, considerably better compensation than most entry-level workers earn for weatherization work, and are union members represented by IBEW Local 18. In addition to classroom training, trainees receive on-the-job training to install energy efficiency measures for LADWP's Home Energy Improvement Program¹ and Small Business Direct Install program,² as well as solar installations on properties owned by LADWP. Trainees also rotate through the water, power, and support services

sides of the utility to gain broad exposure and try out different types of work before selecting a career path.

Our previous report, *Training for the Future*, describes the origins of the UPCT program and highlights features that make it a best practice model for entry-level workforce training in the green economy.³ As we discuss in that report, the program structure and content, the process by which it developed, and the partnerships it leveraged all contribute to the program's success. RePower LA—a coalition of community, labor, and environmental groups—advocated for the UPCT program and has supported efforts to have it meet the triple objectives of increasing energy savings, generating family-supporting jobs with career tracks, and increasing access to those jobs for workers from disadvantaged communities. RePower LA continues to play a critical role recruiting trainees and preparing them to be successful in the UPCT program.

LADWP’s rising retirement rates signal both a tremendous need and an opportunity to train a new generation of workers for utility careers. More than 40 percent of LADWP’s workforce is age 50 or older and 38 percent is due to retire in the next few years.⁴ In some occupations, such as steam plant supervisors, more than half of the workforce is eligible to retire. The UPCT program addresses the utility’s need for trained workers in conjunction with multiple goals identified by a diverse group of stakeholder partners: the community’s need for good jobs and energy savings; the union’s need to recruit and train young workers; and environmental stakeholders’ goal of replacing fossil fuels with clean energy.

Table 1. UPCT Hiring and Placement in Full-Time Employment

Class	Year Hired	UPCTs Hired	UPCTs Placed in Permanent Employment	Active UPCTs
1	2011	37	26	7
2	2012	25	11	8
3	2013	24	12	6
4	2014	25	10	15
5	2014	38	8	26
6	2015	25	-	21
7	2015	25	-	25
TOTAL		199	67	108

Source: LADWP data as of April 16, 2016.

PROGRESS & PLACEMENTS

While many green training programs around the country have been criticized for providing only short-term training with poor job placement rates, the UPCT program provides entry-level workers with pathways into real careers. The UPCT program has hired nearly 200 trainees since its launch in 2011 (see Table 1). The vast majority (88 percent) of hires are still working, either in the UPCT program (54 percent) or as full-time permanent employees of LADWP or the City of Los Angeles (34 percent). LADWP plans to hire an eighth class of 26 in May of 2016.⁵

For the 34 percent of trainees who have transitioned to full-time permanent positions, most have been placed at the LADWP. These workers now have further opportunities to build skills and embark on a utility career. Class six recently became eligible to take civil service exams so full-time appointments

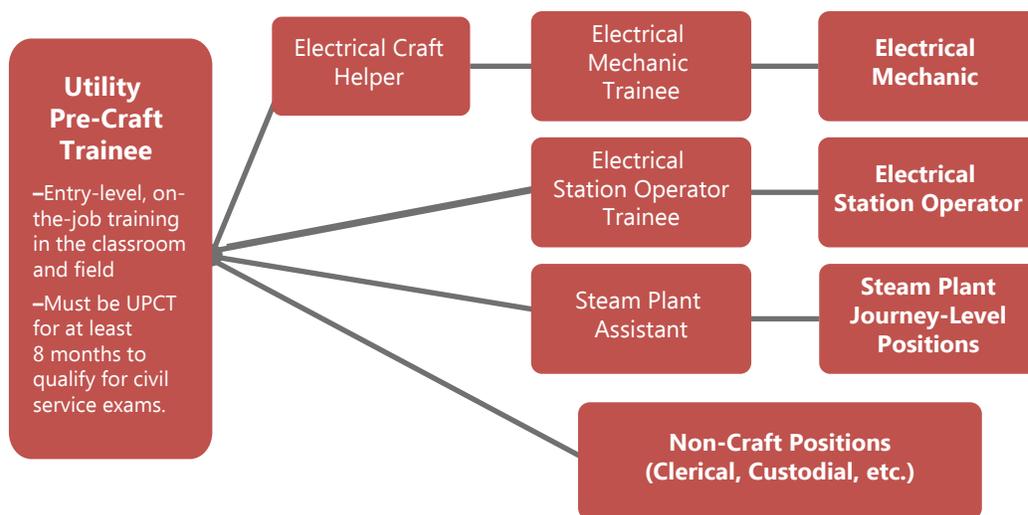
for this cohort may begin soon, depending on position requirements and civil service exam schedules.

The UPCT program offers entry-level training that connects to further apprentice and journey-level training to provide a broad set of skills that prepare workers for skilled trades and other career positions at the utility. Figure 1 (page 5) presents examples of training pathways at LADWP. Apprentice-level training ranges from 6 to 42 months, depending on the classification.

UPCT DEMOGRAPHICS

The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), and IBEW Local 18—organizations that are part of the RePower LA coalition—carried out a survey of UPCTs from the first seven classes to gather data on demographic

Figure 1. Examples of LADWP Training Pathways



characteristics, barriers to employment, and other information.⁶ Table 2 (page 6) presents our analysis of the survey data provided by IBEW Local 18, LAANE, and SCOPE in April 2016.

Key Findings

- The majority of UPCTs (69.4 percent) live in zip codes with very high unemployment rates, defined as more than 200 percent of the unemployment rate for Los Angeles County.⁷ Almost all (90.3 percent) live in zip codes where unemployment is more than 150 percent of the county rate.
- Most UPCTs come from neighborhoods plagued by high poverty. More than two thirds (68.3 percent) live in zip codes in which more than half the population lives below twice the federal poverty level.
- Thirteen percent of UPCTs are women in a traditionally male-dominated field. For comparison, in 2015, women accounted for just 2.6 percent of workers in construction and extraction occupations nationwide.⁸
- The median age for UPCTs is 34 years old and ages range from 21 to 61 years old. Nearly half of the trainees are between the ages of 25 and 34, which is unsurprising since the UPCT program provides entry-level training to prepare workers for a utility career.
- UPCTs are a racially and ethnically diverse group.
 - Roughly half of the trainees are Hispanic/Latino, which is proportional to Los Angeles County demographics. This is almost double the share of Latino construction workers in the U.S. in 2015 (28.5 percent).⁹
 - More than one in five UPCTs are African American, more than double the proportion of African Americans in Los Angeles County (8.0 percent) and more than triple

Table 2. UPCT Demographic Profile

	UPCTs (1)	Los Angeles County (2)
Gender		
Female	12.7%	50.7%
Male	87.3%	49.3%
Age		
20-24	9.3%	10.6%
25-34	46.0%	20.8%
35-44	19.3%	19.3%
45-54	19.9%	18.8%
55-59	3.7%	8.2%
60+	1.9%	22.4%
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	22.1%	8.0%
Asian American	2.5%	13.8%
Hispanic/Latino	50.3%	48.1%
Native American	0.6%	0.2%
Pacific Islander	2.5%	0.2%
White (Non-Latino)	15.3%	27.2%
Two or More Races	6.7%	2.2%
Education		
Less than 9th Grade	-	13.6%
Some High School	6.3%	9.6%
High School Diploma/ GED	32.5%	20.5%
Some College	39.4%	19.5%
Associate's Degree	13.1%	6.8%
Bachelor's Degree	8.8%	19.5%
Graduate or Professional Degree	-	10.4%
Have Children under 18 years old		
	35.4%	31.3%

Sources: (1) Authors' analysis of survey data collected by IBEW Local 18, LAANE, and SCOPE for the first seven UPCT classes; data provided as of April 7, 2016, and excluding blank answers. (2) L.A. County data from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 2010-2014 5-Year Estimates. Note that age is represented as a percentage of the county's adult population (20 years and older); all other categories are represented as a percentage of the county's total population.

the share of black workers employed in the U.S. construction industry in 2015 (6.0 percent).¹⁰

- Just over 2 percent of UPCTs are Asian American, compared to nearly 14 percent of Los Angeles County residents. Asian Americans are typically under-represented in the construction industry, accounting for 1.8 percent of U.S. construction workers in 2015.¹¹
- Roughly one-third of UPCTs report having a high school diploma or GED equivalent and nearly 40 percent have completed some college coursework.
- More than one-third of UPCTs have children under the age of 18, roughly on par with other Los Angeles County residents..

Table 2 illustrates that the UPCT program has been successful in recruiting and training a diverse workforce from across Los Angeles County, particularly from disadvantaged communities. This success is a result of meaningful partnerships between LADWP, IBEW 18, community organizations, and other members of the RePower LA coalition who have conducted outreach to potential trainees and helped to connect them with resources to qualify and prepare for the program. Nearly half (47.1 percent) of the trainees surveyed by LAANE and SCOPE report having faced barriers to finding a job, such as long-term unemployment, a conviction history, or being a single parent.¹²

LADWP and IBEW 18 are also helping trainees overcome barriers to moving through the city's hiring process. In order to qualify for permanent jobs, the UPCTs must earn high scores on civil service exams, which are offered infrequently and

Who is eligible for the UPCT program?

- Must be age 18 or older;
- Live in L.A. County;
- Have a valid California driver's license;
- Possess an 8th grade level math and reading proficiency;
- Sign a waiting list at IBEW Local 18 and re-sign quarterly to maintain spot;
- Once called and selected, go through a screening and program hiring process, which includes a medical exam, interview, and background check.



can be very competitive. The UPCT program helps trainees prepare for these exams and offers tutoring and mentorship opportunities for trainees, including those with test taking and learning challenges. LADWP employs fair hiring practices to ensure that all qualified Los Angeles County residents have a chance to receive training through the UPCT program. While LADWP has discretion to hire UPCTs with prior criminal records, the civil service system more often disqualifies people with prior records, a practice that has prompted legal and other challenges from the union. IBEW 18 and LADWP have written letters in support of UPCTs who have already proven themselves in the workplace for consideration on a case-by-case basis.

Trainees can continue to work as UPCTs if they are unable to transition into permanent civil service positions. LADWP is also considering creating two new classifications to expand pathways from UPCT positions to a variety of civil service careers. A soon-to-be-proposed Maintenance Assistant classification would create another rung on the career ladder for craft positions, opening up permanent, entry-level spots for UPCT hires. LADWP estimates that it will take at least 18 months to create this classification.¹³ LADWP is also considering a new entry-level classification for non-craft career pathways. This would be an entry-level training program, modeled after the UPCT program, for non-craft employees such as customer service representatives, clerical workers, clerk positions, and custodians. Finally, an LADWP

reform measure, now being debated by the Los Angeles City Council, aims to streamline the civil service hiring process and could lead to growth in hiring through the UPCT program.

The costs and savings associated with the UPCT program are estimated to balance each other out. The estimated annual expenditure for the UPCT program is \$1.7 million, which does not include the UPCTs' compensation. Their compensation is part of the utility's regularly budgeted items. The program provides savings to the utility in a couple of ways. UPCTs provide labor for already-budgeted projects. If traditional hiring practices were used, the cost of the work would be almost double. Furthermore, the program is intended to improve the success rate for the utility's higher level training programs for career positions, which cost as much as \$100,000 per trainee annually and which have success rates that are often below 60 percent. A modest improvement of 10 percent in the graduation rates for those programs will result in savings for the UPCT program that would offset the investment in the program.

CONCLUSION

The UPCT program is a model training program that provides good jobs and training pathways for entry-level disadvantaged workers. To date, 88 percent of hires are still working, either as UPCTs (54 percent) or full-time permanent employees of LADWP or the City of Los Angeles (34 percent).

The UPCT program is currently structured and funded to employ about 150 UPCTs at one time.¹⁴ The annual budget for energy efficiency is set to

increase from \$145 million (Fiscal Year 2015-16) to \$172 million (Fiscal Year 2019-20),¹⁵ suggesting that demand for UPCTs may further increase in coming years. Program expansion would require resources for additional trainers and journey-level hires to support UPCTs with on-the-job training. Resources for additional administrative staff may also be necessary depending on the extent to which the program grows.

Community solar is another potential area of expansion currently under consideration that would also increase demand for trainees. According to LADWP, a proposed program to build 40 megawatts (MW) of community solar on LADWP-owned properties would require hiring additional UPCTs.¹⁶ The RePower LA coalition is also advocating for LADWP to expand the number of funded UPCT positions to 200.¹⁷

LADWP is not the only utility facing an aging workforce crisis. Across the nation, the utility industry is grappling with how to replace its retiring workforce and ensure that new workers have the necessary skills for 21st century utility work. Other utilities should pay attention to the success of and lessons learned from the UPCT program, and explore opportunities to implement similar programs to prepare entry-level workers for utility careers.



Endnotes

¹ Jacot, David (2015, May 7). Next Century Water and Power: Efficiency Solutions for L.A. LADWP presentation at RePowerLA Coalition Meeting. See slide 14.

² Jacot. See slide 15.

³ Zabin, Carol and Ellen Avis (2013). Training for the Future. UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education. http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/greenjobs/training_future13.pdf.

⁴ Integrating the Utility Pre-Craft Trainee (UPCT) Program with LADWP Goals. LADWP and IBEW presentation. See slide 2. Also: Strathmann, Cynthia (2012). Clean Power, Good Jobs: Realizing the Power of Energy Efficiency in Los Angeles. Prepared by Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy for RePower LA. <http://www.repowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/RePower-LA-Clean-Power-Good-Jobs-Report-February-2012.pdf>.

⁵ Interview with Mike Coia, Assistant General Manager at LADWP. (2016, April 14).

⁶ 187 UPCTS were surveyed; however, some trainees did not provide answers for all of the questions. Percentages represent the breakdown of answers for those trainees who answered each respective question.

⁷ The unemployment rate in Los Angeles County was 5.5 percent as of February 2016 (not seasonally adjusted). U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016). Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map. data.bls.gov/map/MapToolServlet. Unemployment and poverty data by zip code from: California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (2015). CalEnviroScreen 2.0. <http://oehha.ca.gov/ej/ces2.html>.

⁸ Fatima Goss Graves et al. (2014). Women in Construction: Still Breaking Ground. National Women's Law Center. http://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/fnal_nwlc_womeninconstruction_report.pdf. The Bureau of Labor Statistics cites a higher percentage of women in construction in its 2015 population survey—9.3 percent—but this refers to the construction industry as a whole, not to specific occupations. U.S. Department of Labor (2015). Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Employed persons by detailed industry, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>.

⁹ U.S. Department of Labor (2015). Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Employed persons by detailed industry, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. <http://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Authors' analysis of survey data collected by IBEW Local 18, LAANE, and SCOPE; data provided as of April 7, 2016.

¹³ Interview with Mike Coia, Assistant General Manager at LADWP. (2016, April 14).

¹⁴ Interview with Mike Coia, Assistant General Manager at LADWP. (2016, April 14).

¹⁵ Jacot. See slide 7.

¹⁶ Interview with Mike Coia, Assistant General Manager at LADWP. (2016, April 14).

¹⁷ Interview with Jessica Goodheart, RePower LA Project Director at LAANE. (2015, August 26).



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