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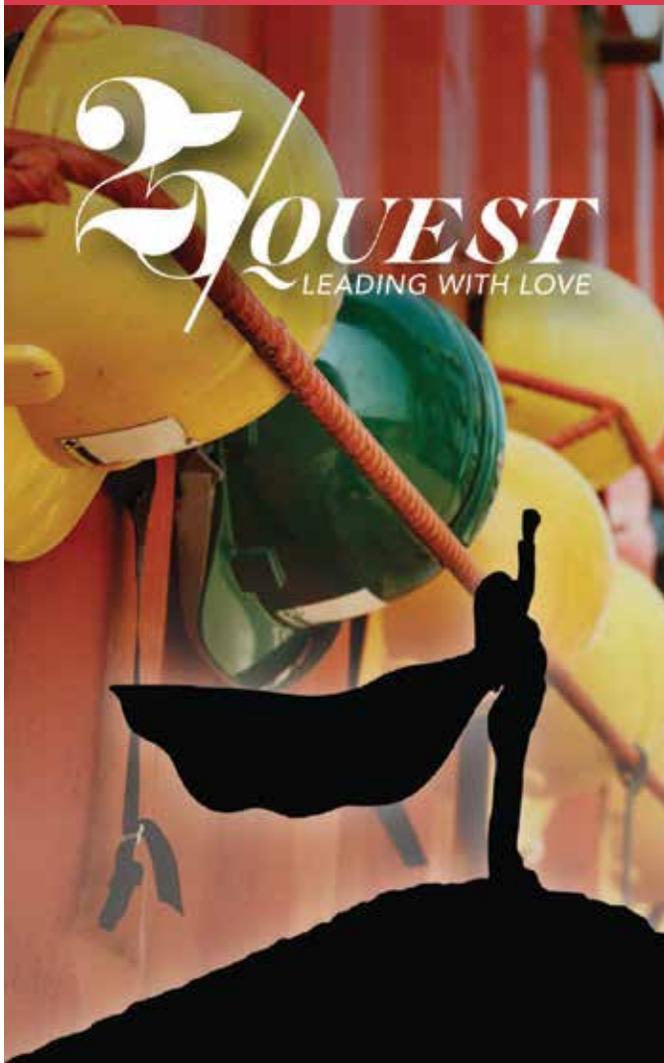
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Workforce Development at Its Best

BY SHARLENE FRANCOIS LAIRSCEY, PRESIDENT
QUEST CORPORATION OF AMERICA

Bringing new ideas, renewed passion and fresh talent to Florida's construction industry requires a huge commitment from all of us. It also requires that we care.

Building on the momentum established by the contractors and consultants long committed to Florida Construction Career Days and OnBoard4Jobs Construction Careers program, the Florida Department of

Transportation (FDOT) expands how it is offering opportunities and changing lives.

In 2019, the Florida Senate Committee on Infrastructure and Security reported the highway, street and bridge construction industry will grow almost 9 percent over the next eight years.¹ Industry employment projections, however, indicate a shortage of trained workers. The Florida Transportation Builders Association and

leaders among Florida's road and bridge contractors have identified the need for more construction workers as a key priority for the industry.

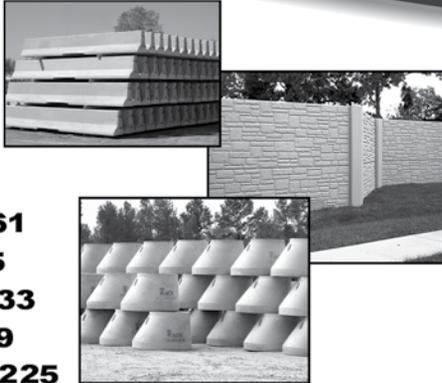
FDOT has implemented a Statewide Workforce Development Program in response to this need that includes working with community partners to identify and connect qualified workers with contractors for gainful employment on roadway

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construction projects. The agency is also working to identify unemployed and underemployed workers, as well as entry-level workers throughout the state, to provide opportunities to build successful careers to improve lives.

This program involves current and developing targeted activities to connect adult job seekers with contractors that are hiring, as well as initiatives to inform students about pathways to transportation industry careers.

Contractor Jobs-Readiness Training Initiative

One focus of FDOT's Statewide Workforce Development Program is to enable contractors to train road construction workers for employment. Under the Contractor Jobs-Readiness Training Initiative, contractors will receive reimbursement for recruiting, hiring, drug testing and training new employees to work on FDOT construction projects.

Correctional Transition Academy

Another key initiative is FDOT's partnering with the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) to present the Statewide Workforce Development Correctional Transition Academy. A large part of the FDC's mission, and a goal of the academy, is to enhance the abilities of inmates and offenders under supervision so they become productive members of their communities after serving their sentence. The academy hopes to support FDC's focus on inmate rehabilitation and successful re-entry into their communities.

"This is a second-chance program, an untapped resource of employable work-

ers throughout Florida that are receiving training while incarcerated in the Florida Department of Corrections," said Amy Lee Diel, Program Manager at Quest Corporation of America. "Most people are unaware that this training even occurs. We are here to help those behind the fence put that training to use to make a better life for themselves when they transition back into society. They need us, and we need them. We are here to build roads, bridges and lives together."

With the goals of increasing employment rates among transitioning inmates and decreasing the rate of returns to the correctional system, the Correctional Transition Academy will identify transitional adults (candidates) ready to enter the workforce; provide the training and skill set preparation necessary to enter industry workforce; connect them with contractors through our partner, OnBoard4Jobs Construction Careers Consultants; and work with the FDC Transition Team, OnBoard4Jobs and contractors to employ the candidate.

Build More Than a Job... Build a Life

FDOT is working today to tee up tomorrow's talent for building our state's roads.

Initiatives are being developed to facilitate partnering with contractors, community-based programs and institutions of learning for a win-win program.

Jill Cappadoro, Associate Vice President, Quest Corporation of America, said, "Through the Statewide Workforce Development Program, students and young adults will have a host of opportunities to learn what it takes to build highways that keep Floridians moving – and also explore possible careers in the transportation industry."

Footnotes

1. Florida Department of Economic Opportunity memo to Florida Senate Infrastructure and Security Committee dated February 22, 2019.

About the Author



Sharlene Francois Lairscey is President/Owner/CEO of Quest Corporation of America, a woman-owned communications firm with over 20 years of experience providing public involvement, outreach services, and marketing and communications products to complex and controversial projects of every size. She can be reached at (866) 662-6273 or sharlene@QCAusa.com.



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Interested in learning more about FDOT's Statewide Workforce Development Program?

Please email Quest Corporation of Florida at FloridaRoadJobs@QCAusa.com or call 833-Road-Job (833-762-3562).

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