North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association Workforce Development Initiative

Project Description:

The North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association is well into the second year of a major workforce development initiative, already producing positive results, which has implications for workforce development and recruitment all across the country. “Best practices” and templates for recruitment programs are already being shared with sister masonry promotional groups.

The initiative is successfully underway with NCMCA utilizing reserve funds to cover the expense until it can become self-sustaining with anticipated grants and pledge funds. NCMCA is seeking additional funding sources to secure the future of the initiative.

NCMCA has learned from past experience that recruitment and workforce development efforts will fall short if they are simply included among a list of other responsibilities. NCMCA has learned that success requires constant cultivation and follow-up.

Much of the credit for North Carolina’s traditionally strong high school masonry instruction programs goes to the old Brick Association of North Carolina, who for many years, even after expanding to both Carolinas, maintained staff dedicated to calling on high school and other masonry training programs. Changes in the industry and in the economy eventually ended those staff positions.

In recent years, the industry has continued to support training programs in the state, but not in a coordinated and systematic fashion that ensures adequate connections between industry and the training programs. To finally address the issue, in 2017 the NCMCA Board of Directors appointed a committee, chaired by then President-Elect Kent Huntley to define the need and develop a plan of action. The conclusion was to implement a program totally focused on workforce development managed by staff with experience in the industry and with masonry training experience.

Scope of Project:

As Workforce Development & Training Coordinator, Ryan Shaver serves as an ombudsman for masonry training especially within public education. He maintains an extensive database of instructors, school administrators, Career and Technical Education Directors, and other decision makers. He maintains regular contact with masonry classes and coordinates the involvement of masonry contractors and other masonry industry in local high school programs. Ryan uses his industry connections to recruit instructors for new programs and his extensive personal experience to help new and struggling instructors become successful masonry teachers. Ryan has assumed leadership responsibility for NCMCA sponsored masonry competitions as well as other competitions for which the masonry industry is involved. He has assumed a significant role in the NC SkillsUSA Regional and State Masonry competition and the Annual North Carolina State Fair Masonry Apprentice Contest. Ryan serves as co-chairman of the SkillsUSA National Conference Annual Masonry Championship competition. Ryan has an exceptional talent for relating to young people.

In one of the program’s first successes, NCMCA worked with the North Carolina Community College system’s Apprenticeship NC division to create the state’s first association-sponsored pre-apprentice program. The new program allows high school students sixteen or older to work for masonry contractors for a guaranteed hourly wage of at least twelve dollars an hour and to earn a high school credit toward graduation. The program was approved and implemented just as the 2018 school year was ending but yet was able to place twenty-four students last summer. Post-summer interviews with both students and employers revealed a very successful start. NCMCA anticipates approximately one hundred students will participate as masonry pre-apprentices during the summer of 2019.

The NCMCA/ApprenticeshipNC pre-apprentice program is a good example of a recruitment tool that can now be implemented in other parts of the country. There was a great deal of discouraging bureaucratic red tape to navigate and without knowledgeable staff dedicated to seeing it through, the program would not have happened.

Other early success includes support for school masonry instructors with daylong workshops and assisting new instructors adapt and succeed in their new roles as teachers. NCMCA now takes the lead in recruiting masonry instructors for schools and in assisting schools start and maintain new masonry training programs. NCMCA has staff qualified to spend days at a time in classrooms working with new instructors in learning the methods of teaching masonry and in becoming comfortable relating to students.

The program is making one-on-one connections between students/potential employees and masonry contractors in a way that has rarely happened previously, at least in recent history. Because NCMCA can now visit with students (and instructors) on a regular and systematic basis, important relationships, not previously possible, are now an expected occurrence that result in appropriate and regular workplace placements. NCMCA has learned that, while videos, websites, social media and such, are good supplemental recruitment tools, true recruiting success only comes with sincere one-on-one interaction.

The NCMCA Workforce & Training program is already making a difference. The program Ryan Shaver manages is working and it is just getting started! The NCMCA Board of Directors made a very wise and forward-thinking decision in bringing Ryan Shaver on staff to manage this effort. It was an opportunity not to be missed and an important investment in the future of the industry. Ryan’s research and development work in workforce development in North Carolina will translate into methods and practice that will be utilized in other parts of the country.

Summary of Qualifications:

Ryan Shaver stood out as the clear choice to manage the program. Ryan was a national masonry champion (1993) as a student of award-winning instructor Doug Drye at Mount Pleasant High School in Cabarrus County, North Carolina. He was a successful young journeyman mason at McGee Brothers Company and later managed his own masonry company. He was drawn to teaching and proved to be very successful in attracting and training young folks for masonry careers at Mount Pleasant High School. During his teaching career, he produced state and national masonry champions. He was Mount Pleasant High School Teacher-of-the-Year and a finalist for Cabarrus County Teacher-of-the-Year in 2014. More recently, Ryan gained valuable experience working with Johnson Concrete Products/Carolina Stalite promoting and demonstrating patented new masonry products across the entire nation.

NCMCA Executive Vice President Lynn Nash has been in his position managing the association for more than twenty-two years and competently conducts the association’s finances and business as well as the association’s meeting planning, publications, communications, membership and association development. NCMCA has a proven business management record in place to coordinate and manage the workforce development initiative project effectively and efficiently.

Anticipated Impact:

 The impact is already apparent. The new NCMCA program was barely a month old in the spring of 2018 and managed to place some twenty-four high school students in pre-apprentice positions with masonry contractors for the summer of 2018. This summer, 2019, more than 100 students are working in the pre-apprentice program with NCMCA member firms. Students from the 2018 summer program are now working for NCMCA member firms full time as a result of their introduction via the pre-apprentice program.

An increase in enthusiasm and professionalism among masonry instructors in North Carolina is readily apparent and can be attributed to NCMCA’s coordinated and systematic visits to classrooms and the never-before availability of a knowledgeable, proven expert in masonry instruction to assist new and struggling instructors and to encourage veteran instructors.

There is no reason not to believe the impact of this program has just begun.

Budget:

Anticipated annual expense for the workforce development initiative is $138,540.

Maintaining the new program will be a direct annual expense of approximately $140,000, an amount expected to increase over the coming years as the program’s objectives are expanded and more clearly defined.

Request Payment Procedure:

NCMCA requests the trustees of The Masonry Foundation to provide a grant, totaling $125,000 paid in $25,000 annual installments for a period of five years, to the North Carolina Masonry Contractors Association for the purpose of sustaining and expanding this important workforce development initiative, already successfully underway and already providing tangible results.

Other Funding Sources:

NCMCA is fully funding the balance of this project.

The Masonry Foundation Board awarded a grant for this project. The following guidelines exist for this grant:

Foundation’s policies, deliverables for this grant will be as follows:

1. An update on the activities of Mr. Ryan Shaver twice a year. Once no later than March 2, 2019 and the last one on September 1, 2020.
2. The development of a “How to” Guide for other organizations throughout the country to utilize no later than September 8, 2020.
3. ***A check for $20,000 from the Masonry Foundation to be released upon the foundations signed agreement of the terms being returned to the MCAA office***
4. Future years fulfillment of a request for this program can be made based on compliance with the above line items and a very short re-submission or request that would give a brief update on the program (could utilize the March and September update for this, plus name of the grant to be funded, the amount requested and any change in terms to the request (this re-submission should be no greater than 2 pages in length minus the updates.