



# Innovative Strategies for Recruiting and Retaining Maintenance Workers

AASHTO Committee on Maintenance  
Annual Meeting  
July 19, 2023

Heath Patterson, Mississippi DOT  
Sandi Sauter, Maryland DOT  
Steve Spoor, Idaho Transportation  
Department

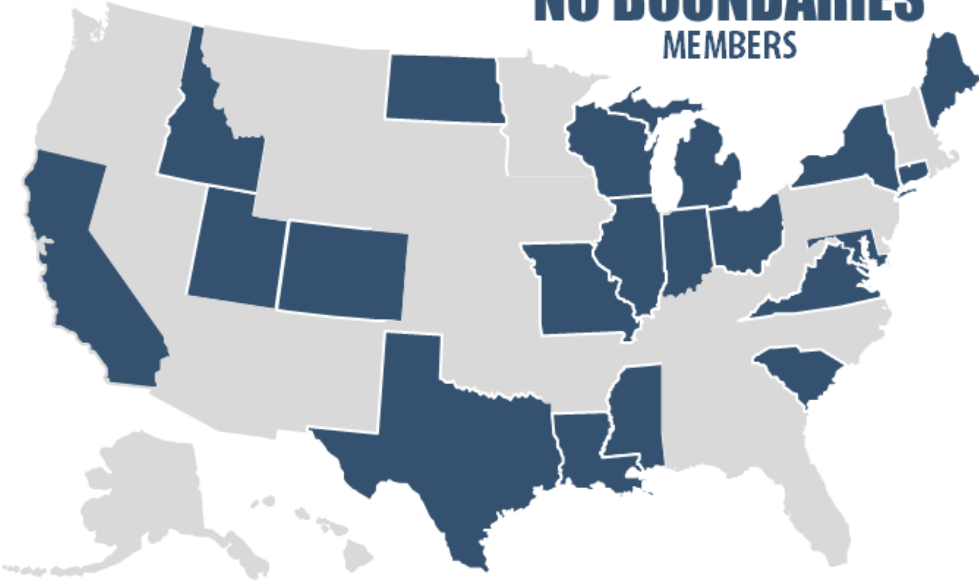
# About No Boundaries

- 20 member states
- Focus areas include:
  - Core maintenance areas (bridges, pavements, operations, roadside, equipment)
  - Asset management for maintenance
  - Training, recruitment and retention
- [maintainroads.org](https://maintainroads.org) documents all resources
- Two meetings annually provide peer exchanges and technical site visits
- Weekly news posts
- Informal surveys of peer agencies



# Current Member States

**NO BOUNDARIES**  
MEMBERS



# Current staffing issues

- A 2022 No Boundaries synthesis report investigated:
  - Members' maintenance staffing levels, changes and trends
  - Agency short- and long-term impacts
  - Successful practices to expand applicant pools, recruit and retain workers
  - Impacts of new federal commercial driver's license requirements
- 15 member states responded
- Final report available at <https://maintainroads.org/download/no-boundaries-synthesis-responses-to-staffing-shortages/>



## No Boundaries Synthesis: Responses to Staffing Shortages

Prepared for  
No Boundaries Transportation Maintenance Innovations

Prepared by  
CTC & Associates LLC

July 22, 2022



No Boundaries Synthesis: Responses to Staffing Shortages

### Summary

Agencies are struggling to fill maintenance staff vacancies and retain the skilled staff needed to keep the roads clear and safe. Staffing shortages have generally been an issue for some agencies, considerably longer.

This report documents an effort by the No Boundaries Transportation Maintenance Innovation Center to gather data and anecdotal evidence from pooled fund members that describe their maintenance staffing environment and highlight the practices member agencies are using to attract and retain maintenance staff. Surveys of No Boundaries members and their human resources departments sought information about the changes and trends in maintenance staffing. The No Boundaries Synthesis Subcommittee was also interested in agency responses to new federal commercial driver's license (CDL) requirements and information about the recruitment and retention practices member agencies use to sustain, expand and diversify the applicant pool and retain workers. This report gathered information to supplement survey results.

### Mitigating Staffing Challenges with Innovative Practices

The No Boundaries mission to identify and promote maintenance innovations, including innovative practices to address staffing shortages. These are a result of member practices examined



**Training programs.** These programs can be targeted to underrepresented communities and provide a broader approach to bring in entry-level staff for hard-to-fill positions.

**Recruitment efforts.** Hosting career fairs, collaborating with universities and other partner organizations, sponsoring high school and university student events and programs are a few of the ways member agencies are seeking out and engaging with potential maintenance workers.

**Retention practices.** No Boundaries members employ a range of payment practices designed to attract and retain existing staff and persuade job seekers to join the agency. These include equity pay adjustments, geographic pay differentials, longevity premiums, and specialty pay.

**Retention staff.** Training academies, career ladders, career progression and succession planning are all part of cultivating existing talent and retaining maintenance staff.

Periodic polls and surveys can assess the level of satisfaction with pay, benefits and other factors and gather critical information about employee needs and interests.

This synthesis offers a window into the experiences of selected transportation agencies across the country. (Responses were received from 15 of the 21 No Boundaries member state HR departments participated.) While not a representative sampling of all departments, these findings provide useful insight for agencies seeking to mitigate maintenance staffing shortages. Many of the agency programs and practices that are briefly

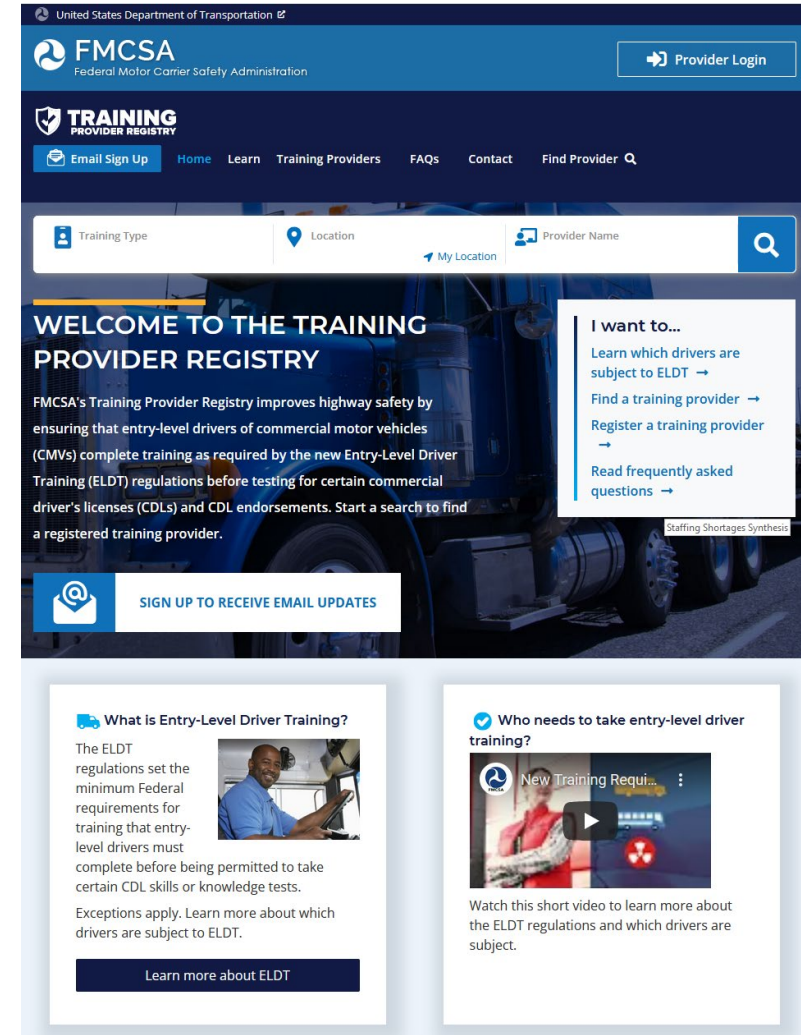
Produced by CTC & Associates LLC

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# Current staffing issues (continued)

- Agencies' ongoing challenges include
  - Maintaining an adequate applicant pool
  - Shifting employment preferences
  - Retirements
- New federal rules on commercial driver's license (CDL) requirements
  - Facilities providing training for entry-level CDLs must follow a certain curriculum and be listed on the federal [Training Provider Registry](#)
  - Applicants seeking a CDL must demonstrate certain proficiencies in knowledge and skills



The screenshot shows the FMCSA Training Provider Registry website. The header includes the United States Department of Transportation logo, the FMCSA logo, and a 'Provider Login' button. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for 'Email Sign Up', 'Home', 'Learn', 'Training Providers', 'FAQs', 'Contact', and 'Find Provider'. A search bar is located below the navigation menu, with fields for 'Training Type', 'Location', 'My Location', and 'Provider Name'. The main content area features a large blue banner with the text 'WELCOME TO THE TRAINING PROVIDER REGISTRY' and a description of the registry's purpose. A 'SIGN UP TO RECEIVE EMAIL UPDATES' button is visible. On the right side, there is a 'I want to...' menu with options: 'Learn which drivers are subject to ELDT', 'Find a training provider', 'Register a training provider', and 'Read frequently asked questions'. Below the banner, there are two featured articles: 'What is Entry-Level Driver Training?' and 'Who needs to take entry-level driver training?'. The first article includes a video player and a 'Learn more about ELDT' button. The second article includes a video player and a 'Watch this short video to learn more about the ELDT regulations and which drivers are subject.' button.

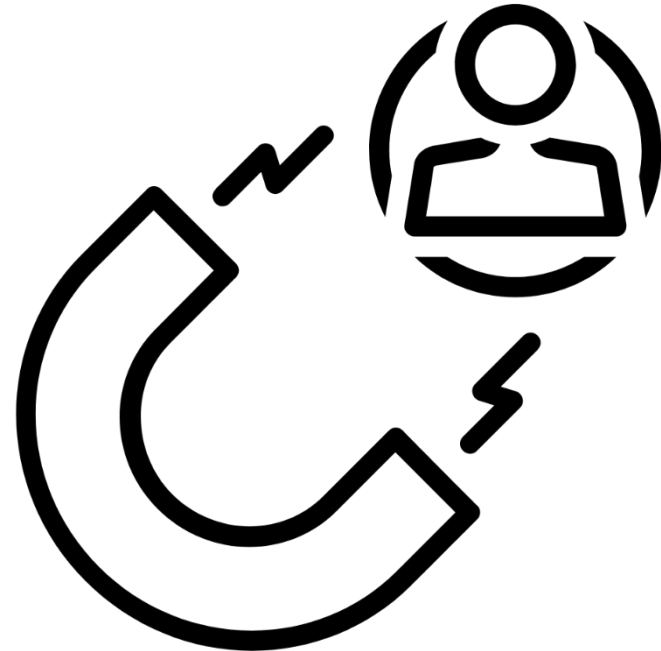
## To recruit and retain staff, member states are:

- Expanding applicant pools
- Establishing new training programs or broadening existing ones
- Developing career ladders, career pipelines and apprenticeship programs
- Introducing pay differentials and potential pay increases



## Expanding applicant pools

- General strategies to identify and attract maintenance workers:
  - Altering hiring requirements
  - Enhancing benefits
  - Introducing innovative payment practices (competency pay, geographic pay differential)
  - Adjusting messaging
  - Applying innovative outreach strategies



## Expanding applicant pools - State-specific examples

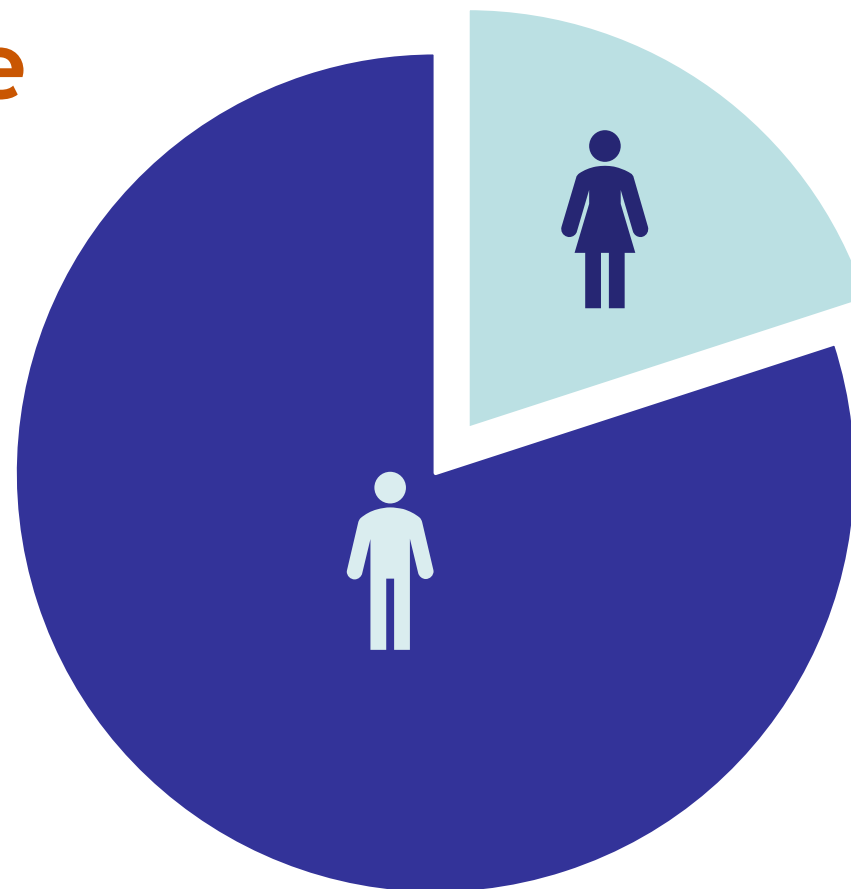
- Using temp agencies to conduct initial screening and hiring for entry-level highway maintenance workers (South Carolina)
- Hosting 2<sup>nd</sup> chance career fairs (Louisiana)
- Opening positions to non-residents (Colorado)
- Eliminating requirement for medical exam (California)





## Closeup: Women in maintenance

- Less than 20% of leadership roles in public works departments are held by women
- Of snowplow operators, fewer than 10% are women
- Reaching this demographic may mean promoting a job and its benefits differently



Information courtesy D.W. Clonch, LLC

## State-specific strategies to recruit women

- Highlighting women in transportation-related fields on social media (Texas) →
- Painting snowplows pink to raise awareness of women drivers (Maryland)



# New and expanded training programs

- General strategies:
  - Targeting underrepresented communities or veterans
  - Bringing in entry-level staff for hard-to-fill positions



# New and expanded training programs - State-specific examples

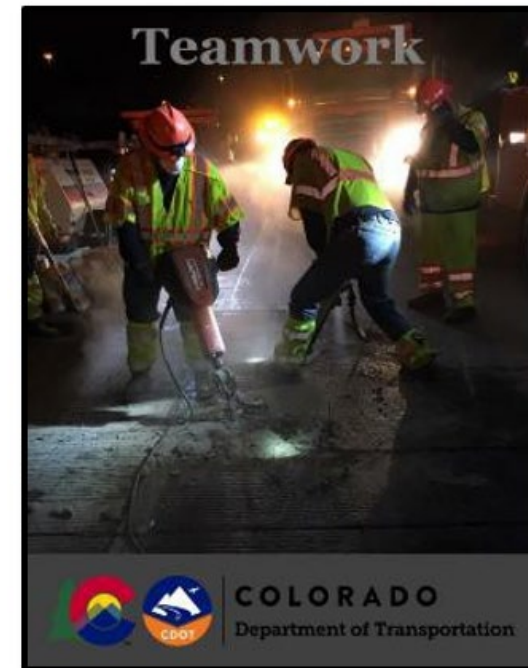
- Maintainer Apprenticeship Program (Colorado) →
- In-house CDL Training program (Michigan)
- Preference to veterans for hiring and retention in the event of layoffs (Idaho)
- Paid summer internship program for qualified students (Mississippi)

We can't find them we have to make them!

## New Maintainer Apprenticeship Program

Focused on High School Seniors  
(recent grads) 2 Year Program


This program has been officially  
approved as a registered  
apprentice program by the USDOL





# Pay differentials, bonuses and increases - State-specific examples

- Snow and Ice Incentive (Ohio) →
  - \$2,500 to eligible employees if they stay through May 1, 2023
- Equity adjustment (Texas)
  - Additional compensation for workers living in oil, gas and wind energy production areas
- Longevity premium (California)
  - Rewards long-serving staff with additional pay



**SNOW & ICE INCENTIVE**

A \$2,500 INCENTIVE PAYMENT will be available to eligible employees. The payment will be in two installments, the first being \$1,000 on January 13, 2023 and the second being \$1,500 on May 19, 2023. Both payments will be included in your paycheck.

The only permanent employees eligible for the incentive include those in the classifications below who hold a valid Class A or Class B CDL license at the time of the agreement:

- Highway Technician 1 - 5,
- Highway Technician Equipment Specialist,
- Auto Mechanic,
- Auto Technician,
- Auto Body Repair Worker,
- Routemarker,
- Bridgeworker,
- Machinist,
- Welder, or
- Highway Maintenance Worker

**QUALIFICATIONS**

- Must be employed by December 1, 2022 and remain continually employed with no break in service through May 1, 2023.
- Any eligible employee covered by this agreement will not be entitled to the second installment if they separate prior to May 1, 2023.
- Employees who ODOT trained to obtain their original CDL in 2022 (i.e., employees hired as permanent Highway Maintenance Worker 1s who may have been reclassified to Highway Technicians) are not eligible for the \$2,500 incentive payment. We are creating a list of these HT's who are not eligible for the incentive and will distribute that soon.

## Other innovative strategies

- Reducing timeframe between initial contact and start date
  - Job Fairs - Reduced an average time from application to start date from 80+ to 7 days (Louisiana) →
- Partnering with vocational/ trade schools
  - On-the-job credit toward an Associate's degree (Front Range Community College and Illinois DOT)



**DOTD** HIRING EVENT  
Louisiana Department of Transportation & Wildlife

### Mobile Equipment Operators

**Date:** May 12, 2023  
**Time:** 9:00 am - 1:00 pm  
**Location:** Lafayette Headquarters  
228 Rue des Voyages, Lafayette, LA 70508

- No experience required!
- On-site interviews until vacancies are filled.
- If selected, conditional job offer on the spot!
  - Conditional offer requires driver's license and Social Security card.

For more information, contact Britney Noland, DOTD Recruiter, at [Britney.Noland@la.gov](mailto:Britney.Noland@la.gov).



Scan with your mobile device or click here for more details.

## Other innovative strategies (continued)

- CDL Training Reimbursement Agreement (North Dakota)
  - 2-year commitment with repayment if employment term is not completed.
- Using QR codes to share information with younger recruits (Utah)
- Housing stipends for maintainers (Colorado) →
  - Stipends up to \$2,000 per month in high-cost areas.



# Connect with us for more innovative staffing solutions

- Upcoming events
  - New York State in Fall 2023
  - Louisiana in Spring 2024
- On our website: [maintainroads.org](https://maintainroads.org)
  - Read the No Boundaries Synthesis: Responses to Staffing Shortages
  - Subscribe for weekly news posts

**[Maintainroads.org](https://maintainroads.org)**