HBI’s Five Steps of Service

Connecting diverse talent to the building industry

MODEL SUMMARY

The Home Builders Institute’s (HBI) Five Steps of Service is an “open entry, skilled exit” work-and-learn model that supports individuals at every stage of the employment continuum in the building industry. The Five Steps represent essential strategies for connecting talent to good jobs: Connect, Assess, Train, Certify and Place.

With a focus on underserved youth, transitioning military members, veterans, secondary school students, displaced workers and justice-involved youth and adults, HBI delivers technical and employability skills training combined with basic academics, moving hard-to-serve populations into high-growth construction careers.

BACKGROUND

Chicago-based Equity Residential struggled to find qualified talent who had both technical and employability skills (communications, teamwork, etc.) to succeed at the company. In 2009, the company decided to partner with HBI to build a six-week internship program that would recruit, train and place qualified candidates. The concept was to bring on dedicated, recommended students who still needed training, but whose attitudes and personal characteristics were a good fit for the company’s culture. The program leveraged HBI’s Five Steps of Service to build and deploy a program that trains and delivers skilled workers.

The foundation of HBI’s model began in the early 1970s with the Youthful Offender Program, which trained more than 500 youth offenders in entry-level construction skills. In 1974, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) approached the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), inviting the organization to join the Job Corps team as a national construction trade trainer. The concept was to utilize NAHB’s national network of home builders to employ Job Corps graduates.

Over the years, HBI has expanded its work-based learning programs outside of Job Corps to serve a diverse group of companies and talent pools. These programs include the company’s Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training (PACT), its Military and Veterans Program, Building Career Pathways Program in high schools and apprenticeships. The common thread throughout all of HBI’s programs is a focus on delivering high-quality training and positive experiences to participants.
“We are filling open positions at our company efficiently while giving back to the community and fulfilling our corporate social responsibility.”

-Jamie Preski, Recruiting Manager, Equity Residential of Arlington

HBI connects with students through relationships with the DOL, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Rebuilding Together, YouthBuild, the National Urban League, military installations and others. The partnerships strengthen HBI programs. HBI’s Board of Trustees and Executive Officers Advisory Council (EOAC) are strategic partners who help HBI connect with potential partners, funders and supporters, including homebuilders associations (HBAs) across the country.

HBI has relationships with many local and national governments, school districts, nonprofits, veterans’ organizations and others that support the HBI model. They include:

- Adventist University of Health Sciences
- Auberle
- Association for Career Technical Education
- Bank of America
- Bob Woodruff Foundation
- Cengage Learning, Inc.
- Coastal Workforce Services
- Crossroads Corral
- Daniels Foundation
- Department of Labor
- Eckerd Kids
- Florida Department of Corrections
- Florida Department of Economic Opportunity
- Florida Department of Juvenile Justice
- Florida Endowment Foundation for Florida’s Graduates
- Goodwill Industries International, Inc.
- Habitat for Humanity
- Heart of Florida United Way
- Herman and Patsy Smith
- Home Builders Associations
- Illinois Department of Corrections
- MAN UP Mentoring, Inc.
- National Apartment Association Education Institute
- National Occupational Competency Testing Institute
- Prudential Foundation
- Rebuilding Together
- Rosen Hotels & Resorts
- See Forever Foundation Maya Angelou Schools
- State Farm
- Taylor Morrison
- The Home Depot Foundation
- The Mission Continues
- Tucson Urban League
- United Way of Palm Beach County
- Weinberg Foundation
- Wounded Warrior Project
- YouthBuild USA, Inc.
- Youth Development, Inc.
NUTS AND BOLTS

The key elements of the model are:

- **Recruitment**: HBI looks beyond traditional talent sources and recruits students through innovative partnerships with youth organizations, ex-offender programs and military support programs, to name a few.

- **Pre-Assessment**: HBI assesses recruited students to gauge their academic and workplace readiness. The assessment includes their backgrounds, job experiences, math and reading levels and individual needs and service requirements. The results of the assessments help HBI develop customized training and job trajectories for each student.

- **Real-World, Hands-On Training**: Students undergo hands-on, competency-based training through a combination of classroom lessons and community-based service projects. The goal of the training is to provide a safe, structured environment in which students learn social skills, earn a high school diploma or GED, learn a trade, gain critical life and leadership skills and even acquire their driver’s license. Because the training is competency-based, students progress at their own pace. A large portion of the training is delivered through working on real construction sites, which enhances and expedites learning. The training mimics a real workweek as students work – rain or shine – 35-40 hours / week. HBI students learn classroom theory, followed by safety instruction and practice on training stations to gain skill proficiency in a safe, controlled environment – before working on an actual job site. This provides the students the opportunity to learn from mistakes and enhance skills before putting them to the test.

- **Industry-Recognized Credentials**: Upon completion of their training, students earn HBI’s award-winning and industry-validated Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training credential, OSHA 10 and OSHA 30, CPR, First Aid and other certifications that make them job ready.

- **Internships**: Companies like Equity Residential offer six-week internships at the conclusion of the training. Interns work at Equity Residential Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Each morning, interns meet with a team manager to discuss the day’s tasks, and are paired with a service manager or technician to work on real projects. Projects include getting apartments ready for new residents, painting and conducting inspections. Interns eventually learn the skills to prepare an apartment completely on their own.

- **Job Placement**: At the conclusion of the work-based learning internship, Equity Residential moves interns into vacant service technician roles either onsite or at another property. Graduates usually move right into interviews and then orientation, where they go through the official onboarding process.

PROGRAM BENEFITS, RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

HBI’s Five Steps of Service model provides youth and adults with career paths, while at the same time providing a continuous resource of skilled, trained and ready workers for the residential construction industry.

- **Common Employability Skills**: HBI training programs provide more than just job skills. They also provide training on the common skills necessary for success across all industries and along the whole career path, including work ethic, integrity and professionalism.

- **Positioning Students for Success**: HBI takes a holistic approach to preparing students for the workforce. From initially connecting with the individual to placing them in an industry job, HBI’s model helps position students for success.

- **Diversifying the Talent Pipeline**: Most students in HBI programs come from socio-economically distressed and challenged backgrounds and have not succeeded in traditional education systems. Many of these students do not have the infrastructure and support for some very basic needs, such as nutrition, transportation and safe and caring communities. This is where HBI excels, by finding ways to provide those necessities and creating a culture that motivates students to show up, learn and thrive.

- **Supporting Students**: At Equity Residential, interns are covered under worker’s compensation protections while receiving a stipend from Job
Corps. Students also have the benefit of the HBI support team who assists them in securing their first job and, if needed, finding reasonable and safe housing and transportation. These services are available for up to 12 months after separation from Job Corps and on average up to six months for HBI’s PACT program graduates.

- Building Company Morale: Equity Residential’s dedication to training has created a positive culture in which employees feel motivated to teach and support interns. The company provides extra recognition and monetary rewards for employees who go above the call of duty to train interns.

- Success Equals Jobs: HBI measures success through enrollments, certifications, job placements, community service hours, recidivism and employment sustainability. When a student succeeds through long-term career attachment and/or continuing education, apprenticeship or in the military, he or she becomes a productive, tax-paying citizen. In 2015, nearly 8,200 students were enrolled in all HBI programs, and more than 4,700 students completed training and more than 80 percent of these earned a certification. The job placement rate was 85 percent for qualified HBI students. Equity Residential has had more than 40 work-based learning internship placements since 2009 and has hired 98 percent of these interns.

- Realizing Returns: Investments in HBI training leverage capabilities, raise capacity and improve job performance, while reducing labor costs, error rates and project completion time. Services also enable businesses to obtain highly skilled, certified workers, which increases tax revenues and reduces unemployment. Ensuring that individuals earn wages helps communities minimize public housing, food support, medical assistance and incarceration costs. HBI’s models have a positive economic impact, especially for long-term dislocated workers who are reconnecting to the labor market.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Creating a business structure around education, training, certification and job placement is critical to improving chances for success and decreasing the likelihood of our students being involved in negative activity, costing taxpayers. These tools put youth and adults on a path to a successful future by teaching marketable skills that help them become wage-earning citizens; instilling a sense of confidence and excitement about their futures that keeps them engaged; and providing realistic viable career path options. Companies interested in building internships need internal resources and company-wide buy-in, particularly from senior management and human resources. Successful programs also rely on strong team members that invest time and effort up front to train interns and believe in the mission of training tomorrow’s leaders across the company. Rather than start from scratch, companies can work with career technical training programs that have access to HBI’s curriculum and other training tools.

SUSTAINABILITY & OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

The model is funded through contracts with the DOL and local governments, grants from foundations and funding via local workforce investment boards.

Budgets must be monitored to ensure adequate funding for materials, tools, uniforms, texts, instructor salaries, etc. This is accomplished with an annual budget that is carefully executed and monitored throughout the year.