



**Panel Project Final Report
For
Build Your Future: Shipbuilding and Ship Repair Works!**

NSRP BASE TASK ORDER AGREEMENT 2019-471

Final Report

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Project Background

With an aging workforce, competition among industry sectors for workers with similar skillsets, and other challenges, building the talent pipeline for the Shipbuilding and Ship Repair (S & R) industry is becoming increasingly critical. Unlike other industry sectors such as construction and manufacturing, prior to the launch of BYF Shipbuilding, the industry did not have a cohesive, national message to change outdated public perceptions and, more importantly, tools to recruit and inspire the next generation's workforce, an issue that addressed NSRP's topic of interest—Enhanced workforce excellence. In fact, a national study found that 89% of Americans felt that the manufacturing sector was stagnant. Two-thirds of those responding attributed their perceptions to "a lack of jobs rather than the lack of skilled talent to fill the jobs." It is not surprising that 70% of respondents would not recommend a career in manufacturing for their kids.

Lead by the National Maritime Education Council (NMEC), this project sought to investigate and identify best practices related to the recruitment of the next generation workforce within the S & R industry, to identify gaps, and to design, and develop tools and strategies to close those gaps. The project also sought to design, develop, and pilot an online image enhancement and career awareness platform and an ambassador program to determine their efficacy in terms of attracting talent for the S & R industry. Preliminary research in other industry sectors indicated positive outcomes. In fact, the construction industry utilizes a widely recognized national career awareness platform (BYF.org) to generate awareness and attract talent. Several states have adopted the model and launched ambassador programs with positive outcomes. The Louisiana Career and Technical College System reported that yearly program completions increased 145% since BYF Louisiana launched in 2011. BYF-Indiana reported a 3.9% increase in CTE secondary programs and 1008 high schools requesting customized resources.

NSRP Workforce Development Panel Members Austal, Ingalls Shipbuilding, and Continental Maritime, as well as Bollinger Shipyard agreed to support the project by providing input and feedback on brand development, website design, collaterals, and career paths; providing raw footage/video and images; and/or promoting the campaign at career day and other workforce events. In addition, Austal and Bollinger agreed to pilot a replicable S & R Ambassador program to develop and empower craft professionals to reach out to high schools and community colleges and inspire the next generation's workforce at the local level.

Project Deliverables

- A recruiting best practice toolkit that shipyards can use internally to inform practice.
- A branded, image enhancement and career awareness initiative
- Regional career pathways for production crafts for shipyards to share with local high schools, community colleges and others interested in pursuing a career in shipbuilding and ship repair.
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- A formal S & R Career Ambassador program and downloadable Career Ambassador Toolkit for shipyards to help identify craft workers within their yards and to empower selected craft workers to conduct meaningful, engaging outreach activities.

- Videos targeting women and veterans produced and hosted on BYF Shipbuilding's newly established YouTube channel.

Recruiting Best Practice Toolkit – *[Recruiting for the Skilled Trades in Shipbuilding and Repair: Current Practice and Emerging Trends](#)*

Focusing primarily on talent acquisition, NMEC surveyed shipyard human resource managers from shipyards across the country using an online survey tool to gain a better understanding of current practice. The anonymous, online survey was open from November 5, 2019 to December 2, 2019. Shipyards from across the country were invited to participate through NMEC, NSRP's Workforce Development Panel, the BYF Collaboration Team, and various national and regional industry trade associations.

The study sought to explore the following topics:

- Driving factors behind shortages among skilled trade workers
- Recruitment strategies utilized
- Metrics used to assess recruitment strategies
- Sources of candidates
- Methods of communication

In addition to recruiting practice, employee retention and development practice as it related to the trades was also explored. Once data were collected and examined, a comparative analysis of the data; examination of similar industry sectors as it related to recruiting skilled trade workers; and exploration of current trends in the areas of recruitment, retention, and development was conducted to establish benchmarks for future study and to inform future practice.

Survey findings revealed that the lack of technically skilled workers and poor industry image were key factors driving the skilled trade shortage. This challenge is not unique to the shipbuilding industry. With record low unemployment and an increasingly competitive job market compounded by the growing number of retiring workers exiting the workforce each day and other factors, talent acquisition managers will have to build upon the recruiting strategies that have proven successful in the past and explore new and innovative ways to attract talent to the skilled trades. Shipyards reported that the employer brand was an important part of their recruiting strategy. The employer brand and online reputation as well as the employee value proposition (EVP) will become increasingly important as today's candidates search for jobs where they are valued and that offer opportunities for growth. Focusing on the candidate experience—one that keeps the candidate engaged throughout the hiring process and works to minimize the frustrations often associated with the application process—is a key strategy that can improve a number of key recruiting metrics.

The career webpage was the top channel used for candidate sourcing, which aligned with current trends. A review of company sites is recommended to ensure that features that drive action are incorporated into the site and given the increasing reliance on cell phones, that the site is mobile friendly.

Survey findings revealed that social media is an underutilized recruiting strategy. With strategic diversification and the right content, social media channels can offer recruiters a broader candidate reach—including passive candidates as well as underrepresented groups. Applicant tracking systems, another underutilized tool, can save time and money and increase engagement when used effectively by automating routine tasks associated with the recruiting and hiring process.

The candidate journey does not end when the job is accepted; employers should consider adopting practices that keep employees engaged by grooming managers to lead their teams effectively while providing career paths and meaningful learning opportunities to realize real business impacts.

Branded, Career Awareness Initiative

Utilizing a collaborative, grassroots approach to workforce development and in cooperation with our partner, NCCER, BYF Shipbuilding (shipbuilding.byf.org) established a national brand for the industry. Launched in February 2020, the program delivers a standard message and single voice to inspire individuals—including youth—to pursue a career in shipbuilding and repair, to connect students with professionals in the industry, to help bridge the skills gap, and to provide a path from career exploration through education and training, to career launch.



Students, student influencers, and job seekers visiting the online career exploration platform will find

- an interactive career pathway
- trading cards—complete with job descriptions, education options and qualifications—to learn more about specific production crafts and the career opportunities offered
- training providers where they can get the skills they need to help them achieve their career goals
- partnering employers with links to their respective websites or career page if available
- a branded Career Day loaner kit program that includes print collateral and giveaways

Employers and educators will find awareness and recruitment resources such as trading cards, posters, and fliers that can be downloaded and printed locally or customized and ordered through NCCER.

The intended audiences for this project were and continues to be students, student influencers, women, transitioning military, and the under/unemployed in the 18-40 age group.

BYF Shipbuilding Social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) have been established and the platforms are the primary source for marketing the image enhancement and career awareness program.

Although COVID-19 greatly restricted opportunities to participate in Career Day events, the Gulf States Shipbuilders Consortium distributed BYF collateral materials as part of the Virtual Worlds of Opportunity event in Mobile, Alabama, in March of 2021. Approximately 6,000 students from an eight-county region received BYF Shipbuilding bookmarks with the national career pathway printed on the back in the small box they received prior to the event.

Regional Career Pathways

Recognizing the uniqueness of the industry geographically, regional shipyard career pathways for production crafts for shipyards were developed for the gulf coast, the west coast, and the east coast/north shore for employers to share with their local high schools, community colleges and others interested in pursuing a career in shipbuilding and ship repair. Although outside the scope of this project but needed to support the national brand, a national career pathway also was developed and is available on the online portal.

Career Ambassador Program and Toolkit

The Career Ambassador Program deliverable called for the development of a toolkit to serve as a guide to empower employers to launch a successful Career Ambassador Program (CAP) internally and to aid them in identifying, training, and developing champions from among their craft professionals to serve as Career Ambassadors (CAs) at outreach events such as career days and career fairs.

Originally, this deliverable called for two pilots to test the efficacy of the program. Unfortunately, to the pandemic, school closings, and mandated restrictions once schools reopened made it impossible to conduct the pilots two no-cost extensions. The downloadable version of the Career Ambassador Toolkit is available online at NSRP.org. An online version of the Toolkit will be hosted on NMEC's website (maritimeeducationcouncil.org).

Technology Transfer Activities

Throughout the panel project, the project lead presented the project and regular updates at NSRP meetings and national and regional trade association meetings including:

- NSRP Virtual Workforce Development/Environmental Health and Safety Joint Panel Meeting, September 14, 2021
- NSRP Virtual All Panel Meeting, March 25, 2021
- NSRP Virtual Workforce Development Panel Meeting, December, 2020
- NSRP Virtual Panel Meeting, June 26, 2020
- Gulf States Shipbuilders Consortium Meeting – December 3, 2020
- Shipbuilders Council of America Winter Meeting – Presentation and Exhibitor Booth, February 2020
- NSRP Day, November 19, 2020
- NSRP Joint Panel Meeting-Welding Technology and Workforce Development, Cincinnati, OH, August 13, 2019
- NSRP DAY, November 2019 (Presentation by Ryan Lee, Austal)

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