Sources such as the Associated General Contractors of America, the Construction Industry Institute, and the Construction Labor Research Council report that there is a growing need for new construction workers, especially among minority and immigrant populations. The numbers currently being trained are insufficient to replace an aging workforce and provide needed new workers in the construction trades. The goal of this project is to address the impending shortage of construction workers and increase the number of minorities entering the industry through the development of a short-term technical training program in construction trades. The proposed program will provide knowledge, skill development, and related experiences in construction in the areas of masonry, electricity, and carpentry. The training curriculum will include green-related competencies such as weatherization and retrofitting of buildings.

The PaCT Project will provide a bridge program linking adult basic education and English as a second language instruction to transition dislocated workers with linguistic and academic barriers into postsecondary training and to explore multiple career options as they engage in occupational training. The training will result in participants obtaining a skills certificate and post-secondary credit. A review of current offerings in Wisconsin and nationally failed to turn up any programs in integrated ESL/ABE Construction. The proposed program will not only provide participants with skills development in the basic construction trades, it will provide them with information on career pathways and assistance in planning their educational and career goals.

The proposed program will train up to 150 dislocated workers. Outcomes include successful completion of the training program and selection of a career pathway in a construction trade. This will include the development of an individual employability plan that could lead to enrollment in a post-secondary program in a construction trade or lead directly into employment.

The Pathways to Construction Trades (PaCT) Project will be administered by the Technical and Applied Sciences Division of the Milwaukee Area Technical College. The primary partner in this project is the Milwaukee HIRE Consortium. Consortium members include the Milwaukee County Labor Council, Wisconsin Job Service, AFL-CIO Labor Education and Training Center, MATC, Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership (WRTP), and the Milwaukee Area Workforce Investment Board (MAWIB). The HIRE Center is a specialty One-Stop Job Center that provides reemployment and retraining services for dislocated workers. A board made up of construction trade representatives and the key partners will advise and guide the project. The project will leverage WIA and Trade Adjustment Assistance Act funding from the Workforce Investment Board to cover the instructional costs.

At the conclusion of the project, MATC will continue to offer the program developed as a short-term training option for dislocated workers in partnership with the HIRE Center. Results of the PaCT Project will be extensively disseminated and technical assistance will be made available to agencies intending to replicate the project.